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Health and Harmony: Eryximachus on the Science of Eros

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Health and Harmony: Eryximachus on the Science of Eros

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Abstract

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Plato's *Symposium* masterfully depicts several different explanations of the phenomenon of Eros or love. The physician Eryximachus depicts Eros as a cosmic force that can bring harmony to a number of areas, from medicine and music to astronomy and divination. Most readers of the *Symposium* have read Eryximachus in an unflattering way, as a pompous know-it-all who fails to give a speech that meets either his high aspirations or his high opinion of himself. In this paper I argue that this reading of Eryximachus and his speech is unpersuasive. My defense of Eryximachus has three components: (1) Plato treats Eryximachus sympathetically in the *Symposium* and elsewhere, and has him deliver a modest and perfectly coherent speech about the science of Eros. (2) Eryximachus's speech can only be properly understood if we read it in the context of Hippocratic medical theory, which infuses the speech throughout. (3) Outside the *Symposium*, Plato views medicine as a model *technē,* and health as a central philosophical concept; inside the *Symposium*, Plato has his mouthpiece Socrates give a speech on behalf of the priestess Diotima that agrees with Eryximachus on nearly every point of his speech. This indicates that Plato would have viewed Eryximachus's speech quite favorably, and that modern readers should follow suit. I conclude by suggesting how this reading of Eryximachus should influence how we read the *Symposium* as a whole.

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Introduction

Of all Plato's dialogues, the *Symposium* shows most vividly Plato's ability to take on the voice of other people, including expert wordsmiths like the comic poet Aristophanes and the tragedian Agathon. The *Symposium* features seven speeches praising Eros, each of which expresses a different view in a unique style. While this makes the *Symposium* an enjoyable read, it also makes the dialogue's interpretation that much more difficult.

We can fairly confidently assume that Plato himself agrees with the speech of Diotima relayed by Socrates, a speech which presents Plato's Theory of Forms in broad agreement with other texts like the *Republic*. But why, then, did Plato write the other speeches? A full answer to this question would requiring a close examination of all the speeches in the *Symposium*. In this paper I will focus on just one, the speech of Eryximachus. Eryximachus, unlike the other speakers, is a physician rather than a rhetorician or playwright, and his speech presents, in essence, a science of Eros. Eryximachus has been subjected to criticism that is out of proportion with its *prima facie* quality. But this dismissiveness is, I argue, unmerited. Eryximachus is a more important character in the *Symposium,* and his speech more important to Plato's thinking, that the almost unanimous sanction of modern commentators would suggest.

My argument will go in three stages. First, I will address the most common criticism of Eryximachus and his speech, that Eryximachus is a humorless pedant whose intellectual abilities fall far short of his aspirations to subsume all *technai* to medicine. Instead, I argue that the Eryximachus in Plato's text is a respected and respectable scientist who appreciates other sciences and who presents a coherent view of how these sciences related to one another. Second, I will examine in detail the many connections between Eryximachus and the Hippocratic corpus. Many of the features of Eryximachus's speech which come in for criticism are hallmarks of the medical

school which Eryximachus represents, a school which is certainly not incoherent (even if it is rather misguided in the light of modern medicine). Modern readers may fail to appreciate Eryximachus's speech if they do not realize the extent to which it is embedded in the context of what was, in Plato's day, cutting edge physical science. Third, I will argue that Plato himself viewed Eryximachus's speech quite favorably. Plato was a fan of the Hippocratic school of medicine, and used the physician and his art as a model for both theoretical wisdom and practical virtue.[1] In his own works outside the *Symposium* Plato agreed with many of the specifics of Eryximachus and the Hippocratic school, concerning both methodology and doctrine. Moreover, in the same speech where Plato presents his own favored metaphysical view, the Theory of Forms, Plato also has its speaker, Diotima, agree with much of what Eryximachus says in his speech.

If these three arguments are correct, then the *Symposium* should be read in a rather different way than it standardly is. Rather than a progression from worst to best speech, with Eryximachus third from the bottom, the structure of the *Symposium* is one of alternating pairs of speeches, with Eryximachus and Diotima, who comprise what is in Plato's eyes the correct pair, giving a comprehensive account of physics and metaphysics. In the conclusion I will suggest some reasons for thinking that this reading of the *Symposium* is a plausible one. But even absent this conclusion, it is nevertheless the case that (i) the received view of Eryximachus is not just unobvious, but implausible, (ii) Eryximachus's speech must be appreciated in its historical/intellectual context, and (iii) the evidence from the whole of Plato's writings suggest that Plato's own view of medicine and other *technai* is much closer to Eryximachus's speech than is generally acknowledged.

[1] I will use the term 'Hippocratic school' rather loosely throughout, as an easy way to refer to a certain approach to medicine exemplified by the set of Hippocratic treatises I discuss in §2.1. While there certainly was a Hippocratic school of medicine (on which see Jouanna (1999) 42-55), and Plato does distinguish between Hippocratics (i.e. 'Asclepiadae') and other physicians, it is not clear to what extent Plato thought in terms of a formal Hippocratic school, for instance, whether he distinguished between the approaches at Cos versus Cnidos. As I'll argue in §3.2, in Plato's mind medicine was a *technē* that could be practiced more or less well, and he identified Hippocrates and like-minded physicians as those who practiced it well.

§1 - Eryximachus and the Science of Eros

§1.1 – Introduction: *Eryximachus's Reputation*

Eryximachus is a curiously maligned character in the *Symposium*. Though many characters in the Platonic *corpus* are presented in an unflattering light, Eryximachus is unique in the amount of derision he receives from modern scholars. The most common criticism is that Eryximachus is a pedant, an accusation which, as we will see in this chapter, was made over and over again in the secondary literature. 'Pedant', however, can mean different things; complaints tend to focus on the following three charges:

1) Eryximachus is a fool with an inflated sense of self-importance
2) Eryximachus's speech is an imperialistic aggrandizement of medicine over all science
3) Eryximachus's speech is an incoherent jumble of faux-scientific nonsense

In this chapter I will argue that all three of these criticisms of Eryximachus are unsupported by the text.[2] Eryximachus is an important and sympathetic character in the *Symposium*'s proceedings, not simply the butt of Plato's joke. The theory Eryximachus presents is, if read carefully and charitably, a coherent one. But it is not an imperialistic theory: though Eryximachus does argue for a single science, namely *ta erōtika,* the science of *erōs,* he does not claim that medicine is this science, nor that medicine is more important than other sciences.

Why is this important? It seems almost taken for granted that Eryximachus's speech contains little of interest, either in terms of its philosophical merits or in the larger context of interpreting the *Symposium*. I believe this is incorrect. This first step in defending Eryximachus's speech is removing many of these misconceptions. Quick dismissals of Eryximachus and his theory of the science of Eros will only obscure important considerations not only about how we

[2] Edelstein (1945), Konstan and Young-Bruehl (1982), and McPherran (2006) all provide explicit defenses of Eryximachus's speech, while Hunter (2004), and Rowe (1999) also provide sympathetic treatments. The arguments I will give in the following sections are influenced by these treatments in a number of ways, though I will note as we progress where I diverge from these (themselves non-unanimous) treatments.

should read Plato's *Symposium*, but about how Plato views medicine as a science and its importance to philosophy. Eryximachus, I will argue, should not be seen as a comedic or pathetic character; rather, he is the *Symposium*'s avatar for an important area of knowledge.

§1.2 – Eryximachus's Role in the Symposium

We will begin with the most superficial objection to Eryximachus, that he displays some deficiency of character which Plato intends us to take as a literary clue against the content of Eryximachus's speech. Why is this objection worth entertaining? There are two main reasons. First, as Rowe as argues, "There is not good reason not to operate on the same principle of charity with Eryximachus as with anyone else."[3] The derision with which Eryximachus is often treated, which is ubiquitous in the secondary literature, may prevent us from giving Eryximachus a fair read, and so it will be helpful to address these issues from the outset. Second, Plato often combines substantive critiques of a position with unflattering depictions of its representative (the *Ion, Euthyphro,* and *Euthydemus* are clear examples of this tendency). If Plato presented Eryximachus in a poor light in the *Symposium*, it could be a clue to what Plato wants us to think about Eryximachus's theory. But as I will show in this section, this is not the case. Plato draws a sympathetic portrait of Eryximachus, which is some evidence that Eryximachus's speech should be read sympathetically as well.

One common criticism of Eryximachus is that he represents the stereotypical stuffy, humorless know-it-all. Bury charges that "He is incapable of laying aside his professional solemnity even for a moment", and Sheffield characterizes his demeanor as "pompous polymathy".[4] This criticism often centers on Eryximachus's interaction with Aristophanes on either end of Eryximachus's speech. Aristophanes famously gets a case of the hiccups which

[3] Rowe (1999) 57.
[4] Bury (1932), xxviii; Sheffield (2006a) 222.

prevents him from speaking in his assigned order, Eryximachus offers to trade places while Aristophanes follows the treatment that Eryximachus has suggested (185c-e), and Aristophanes jokes with Eryximachus about the success of the treatment once Eryximachus's speech has concluded (189a-c). Scott and Welton claim that "Eryximachus, not surprisingly, takes Aristophanes to be clowning and reacts defensively", while Wardy charges that

> Thus, although the doctor remains blissfully unware of the pantomime and only unwittingly participates in the funny harmonization of his high with Aristophanes' very low tone, he none the less helps to turn the serious into comedy…. Eryximachus, priggish and dictatorial as ever, is on the qui vive: Aristophanes, he says, is perversely 'making jokes' (γελωτοποιεῖς) when it is open to him to speak 'in peace'. The doctor must be on his guard lest Aristophanes say anything 'humorous' (γελοῖον), probably on the assumption that any jokes will be at his personal expense.[5]

The underlying idea here is that Eryximachus takes himself so seriously that no one else can afford to, especially not his readers.

Now, it is undeniable that Eryximachus is a serious character. This is most easily seen in his role as co-*symposiarch* of the night's proceedings. It is Eryximachus who recommends that the group spend their time giving speeches rather than drinking heavily and listening to music (176c-e), and it is Eryximachus who scolds Alcibiades for wantonly disrupting the party, calling Alcibaides's behavior "uncivilized" (ἀτεχνῶς, b2). But certainly it is Alcibiades who is meant to look bad in this exchange, not Eryximachus. Moreover, Eryximachus's interaction with Aristophanes is not pompous or priggish or defensive. Rather, Eryximachus engages in a good-natured back-and-forth with Aristophanes. When Aristophanes jokes that the orderly Eros of Eryximachus's speech desires (the obviously disorderly) sounds and itches of a sneeze, Eryximachus responds "Good one, Aristophanes, but watch out. You're making jokes before you speak, and you're making me guard against you in case you say something funny, when it's open

[5] Wardy (2002) 19-20.

to you to speak in peace" (189a7-b2). It is sometimes hard to tell when a text is meant to be funny, but it is quite likely that here Plato intends us to take Eryximachus's retort in a humorous light. After all, Eryximachus puns off his speech in the same way that Aristophanes did, claiming that he has to guard against Aristophanes much like how the power of Eros must be guarded in order to bring peace between basic elements. Aristophanes's response to Eryximachus's retort is to laugh, indicating that Eryximachus was in fact making a joke, rather than to try to mollify him. Aristophanes continues this trend during his speech, where he asks Eryximachus not to take his remarks as a barb against Pausanias and Agathon (193b6-7). When Aristophanes ends his speech, Eryximachus praises it as "delightful" (ἡδέως, 193e4) rather than critiquing it or sulking in silence.[6] It should be pointed out that Eryximachus engages in friendly banter with Socrates as well, where Eryximachus praises the speeches already given and the speakers yet to contribute , and Socrates adds that Eryximachus spoke "beautifully" (Καλῶς), (193e-94a, 198a). In his interactions with both Aristophanes and Socrates, Eryximachus is presented as an amiable companion, not a killjoy "who was only on sufferance in that brilliant company".[7]

Another reason to reject the supposition that Plato painted a negative portrait of Eryximachus in order to prompt us to read the content of his speech negatively is that Eryximachus is in fact treated with respect both by the other participants in the *Symposium*'s proceedings (with the possible exception of the sarcastic Alcibiades at 214b) and by Plato elsewhere. Phaedrus purports to always follow Eryximachus's medical advice (176d5-7), and Aristophanes playfully obeys as well (185e4-5). Even Alcibiades defers to Eryximachus's admonishment to moderate his behavior and participate in the speeches like the rest of the group (214c-e). Eryximachus's speech is the only one singled out by Socrates for praise (194a1-2), and Eryximachus and Socrates speak

[6] Compare this to Aristophanes's own behavior when he tried to respond to Socrates's speech at 212c.
[7] Gildersleeve (1909) 109.

to one another as peers throughout the dialogue (193e-94a, 198a). Socrates treats Eryximachus, together with his father Acumenus, as medical experts at *Phaedrus* 268a8-b5,[8] and Plato places Eryximachus in the company of many public intellectuals, including sophists but also associates of Socrates, at Callias's home during the events of the *Protagoras* (315c2).[9] In short, Plato consistently writes about Eryximachus in a way that makes him appear respected by his peers and at home in a sophisticated intellectual discussion.

Finally, Eryximachus has been given a central role in the plot of the *Symposium*.[10] He implements the plan to drink moderately, though not before consulting with the host and honoree, Agathon (176b-d); he suggests that the group spend the evening in conversation rather than listening to music (176e); he proposes the topic of encomia to Eros, though he is careful to give credit for the idea to Phaedrus (177a-d); he is frequently addressed as the person in charge (177d, 185d-e, 193d); and he does his best to maintain order when Alcibiades crashes the party, even managing to overrule Alcibiades's self-nomination as *symposiarch* (213e-14e). But lest we worry that Eryximachus is a killjoy who insists on running the show to his liking, we should also note that Phaedrus takes over during Agathon (194d-e) and Socrates's (199b-c, 212c) speeches, and Eryximachus does not complain, only reasserting himself once things begin to get out of hand.[11] And it is surely no coincidence that our source for the night's proceedings, Aristodemus, shares a couch with Eryximachus (175a).

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[8] This passage leads to Plato praising Hippocrates, which we'll return to in §3.2.

[9] Is being shown in the company of sophists evidence of an inclination to sophistry in the pejorative sense? Not necessarily, otherwise we would have to condemn Socrates for studying with Prodicus and either conversing with, or attending the presentations of, a number of sophists including Euthydemus, Gorgias, Hippias, and Protagoras.

[10] Edelstein (1945) makes this argument in more detail. See especially pp. 94-96.

[11] I am not sure what to make of this temporary change in role; there is, as far as I can tell, no indication in the text that the change is important.

This leaves us with two interpretive options. We either grant or reject the assumption that Eryximachus's depiction as a *dramatis persona* in the *Symposium* is relevant in assessing the quality of his speech. If we reject this assumption, then the criticisms levied against Eryximachus which I discussed above are irrelevant, *ad hominem* attacks. If we grant this assumption, then we should conclude that Plato means us to read Eryximachus's speech favorably, at least insofar as it is presented by a sympathetic character.

§1.3 – Eryximachus on the Importance of Medicine

We can now move on to a more substantive objection to Eryximachus. Eryximachus is frequently charged with being obsessed with medicine. Bury charges that Eryximachus "seizes every possible occasion to air his medicinal lore", and goes on to complain

> As regards *literary style* there is little to notice in the speech, beyond its plainness and lack of ornament. The monotony of expression… marks it as the product of a pedantic, would-be scientific mind, in which literary taste is slightly developed and the ruling interesting is the schematization of physical doctrines. [12]

Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan argue that "Eryximachus purports to speak with authority about the multiplicity of the sciences, yet everywhere he introduces the unity and forced harmony of his own preferences."[13] Levin contends that Eryximachus displays "almost boundless inclination to self-aggrandizement where his profession is concerned."[14] Scott and Welton maintain that

> Eryximachus's speech is arguably the most derivative of the six speeches on *Erôs* in the *Symposium*. Eryximachus seems to represent a kind of intellectual temperament that is still familiar today: the sort of specialist or expert who filters everything through the lens of his or her expertise and becomes too narrowly focused, unaware of how the part he or she studies is related to the whole.[15]

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[12] Bury (1932) xxviii, xxix.
[13] Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004) 63.
[14] Levin (2009) 305.
[15] Scott and Welston (2008) 63.

Hence Dover concludes that "It is tempting to believe that Plato composed this speech… in order to ridicule the tendency of scientific theorists to formulate excessively general laws governing the phenomena of the universe."[16]

There are two ways of characterizing this criticism of Eryximachus. The first is that Eryximachus arrogantly assumes that the only way to knowledge is through the study of medicine. The second is that all other sciences should be subsumed under medicine, if not reduced to it. Both of these charges are false. Eryximachus actually minimizes the important of medicine as a science, as well as his own contribution to knowledge.

It is true that, outside his speech, Eryximachus frequently his medical knowledge into the discussion, most famously his medical analysis of drinking (176c-d) and his cure of Aristophanes's hiccups (185d-e). But Eryximachus is far from single-minded. If he were, we would have expected him to suggest conversation on a more obviously medical topic, perhaps the proverbial debate over whether health, wealth, or virtue is the greatest good. Instead, he recommends giving encomia of Eros, and he gives the credit for this idea to Phaedrus (177d). Indeed, the vast majority of Eryximachus's activities outside his speech deal not with medicine, but with either friendly banter between speakers or comments about the progression of the night's activities (176c-177d, 189b-c, 193d-e, 198a, 214a-d, 214d-e).

The same is true inside Eryximachus's speech: surprising as it may sound, Eryximachus spends relatively little time discussing medicine in his speech. [17] Eryximachus's speech is roughly 109 lines in the OCT text, but he explicitly discusses medicine in only around 30 lines, plus a few other mentions comparing medicine to other fields. For comparison, Eryximachus spends 33 lines discussing music, 14 on astronomy/meteorology, and 12 on divination. Moreover, Eryximachus

[16] Dover (1980) 105. Cf. Sheffield (2006a) 21 n .16
[17] Edelstein (1945), p. 87; Rowe (1999), p. 62.

never claims that medicine is a master science which encapsulates all others or worse, makes them unnecessary. He does honor his profession (πρεσβεύωμεν τὴν τέχνην) by discussing it first (186b3), but all of the speakers in the *Symposium* do the same, at least implicitly. We should also note that Eryximachus is rather humble in the introduction of his speech, unlike the other speakers. Pausanias began his speech with an explicit censure of Phaedrus (180c4-5), and Aristophanes begins by complaining that Pausanias and Eryximachus, and indeed everyone but Aristophanes himself, fail to perceive the true power of Eros (189c1-4). Agathon accuses all the previous speakers of congratulating themselves rather than praising Eros (194e5-7), and Socrates begins with a point-by-point rebuttal of Agathons's view (199c-201c), not to mention the criticisms contained in Diotima's speech.[18] Eryximachus, on the other hand, praises Pausanias for beginning his speech well, and only chides him for failing to sufficiently complete the view, leaving it up to Eryximachus to *try* (πειρᾶσθαι) to finish things off (185e5-86a2). Eryximachus ends his speech with an admission that he has likely, though inadvertently, also left out important matters, and invites Aristophanes to bring things to completion (188e1-2).

Further evidence against the charge that Eryximachus is obsessed with medicine is found in the content of the speech. Rather than exaggerating the importance of medicine, Eryximachus repeatedly argues that medicine is only one of many comparable fields where the same phenomenon can be observed. Medicine is where Eryximachus first learned about the true nature and power of Eros, but it does not have special claim on this knowledge. In other words, rather than extrapolating that the whole *kosmos* works the way medicine does, Eryximachus does the opposite: the same forces that work in the medical sphere can be observed in non-medical contexts as well. This pattern is evident from the outset. Eryximachus does not begin his remarks by arguing

[18] I will address this point in more detail in §3.4.

'Pausanias speech about human interaction is really a speech about medicine, though he didn't know it', but rather 'Pausanias said some accurate things about human interaction, and the same phenomenon can be observed in many other areas, including but not limited to medicine' (185e6-a2, cf. 186b8-c5). Eryximachus begins his argument by noting that healthy bodies and diseased bodies desire and love (ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἐρᾷ, 186b6-7) different things. This is evidence for there being two species of Eros, one of which must be gratified, the other rebuffed. Eryximachus notes that this is consistent with what Pausanias has already argued. He then goes on to define a doctor as one who encourages the good kind of Eros, that is, as a person who has the same kind of knowledge which Pausanias had argued was important. So from the outset medicine is explained in terms of something else. This pattern holds throughout Eryximachus's speech. Phenomena in areas like music and astronomy are explained in terms of the reconciliation of basic elements via the gratification of the orderly Eros. Sometimes these are the same basic elements (188a3-4), but not always (187b1-4, b7-c2). The unifying factor here is the ability to bring about harmony through Eros, not medicine as such. The effect of Eryximachus's speech is to downplay the importance of medicine, not to exaggerate it.

This reading of Eryximachus in the *Symposium* is a far cry from the caricature found in much of the modern literature on the topic. Eryximachus is not a pompous windbag who acts as if medicine is the most important science or indeed the only science. Rather, Eryximachus is a gracious speaker who is friendlier to his peers than the other speakers in the dialogue, and who spends much more time trying to make the evening go smoothly than he does lecturing about medicine. The content of Eryximachus's speech is not an attempt to subsume other fields under medicine, let alone an attempt to show that medicine is the only real *technē*. Rather, Eryximachus's speech is an exercise in induction: the same phenomenon can be observed in a number of areas, of

which medicine is only one. Eryximachus learned about the natural world through medicine, but one could in principle start with any domain. If there is a master science, it is not medicine, but rather the science of *ta erōtika.*

§1.4 – The Science of Eros

This brings us to the final argument of this chapter, where we will focus specifically on the substance of Eryximachus's speech. Eryximachus attempts to outline a science of *ta erotika,* where the same basic phenomenon is seen in a number of domains. Eryximachus's speech is one of startling breadth, covering a number of topics in addition to medicine. This has led several scholars to complain about the coherence of Eryximachus's speech. Moreover, Eryximachus is charged with committing an obvious misinterpretation of Heraclitus. This is taken as further evidence that Eryximachus is rather unintelligent, which undermines the plausibility of the theory presented in his speech. In this section I will argue that worries about Eryximachus's philosophical competence are overblown.

Let us begin with Eryximachus's treatment of Heraclitus. At 187a3-6 Eryximachus argues that many disciplines are governed by the power of Eros, and that

> It is altogether clear to anyone giving it a little thought that music is similarly situated, as perhaps Heraclitus also meant to say, since he did not communicate clearly with his aphorisms (ἐπεὶ τοῖς γε ῥήμασιν οὐ καλῶς λέγει). For one of them says "being in variance with itself the same thing is in agreement, as in the harmony of the bow and the lyre" (διαφερόμενον αὐτὸ αὑτῷ συμφέρεσθαι, ὥσπερ ἁρμονίαν τόξου τε καὶ λύρας, 187a1-6)

The aphorism Eryximachus has in mind comes down to us in the following form:

> οὐ ξυνιᾶσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογέει· παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.
>
> They are unacquainted with how the thing at variance with itself is in agreement: the turning away is a harmony, just like of the bow and the lyre. (DK B51)[19]

[19] Some of our sources record παλίντονος, meaning "backward stretching" instead of παλίντροπος. See Diels-Kranz (1966), *ad. loc.*

Eryximachus goes on to argue that Heraclitus couldn't have meant that an object can be harmonious and discordant at the same time, and so must have meant instead that harmony is created out of disharmony (187a6-b2). There are two issues here: whether Eryximachus's omission of words in his quotation is evidence of a mistake, and whether Eryximachus's interpretation of the quotation is evidence of shoddy thinking.

Many commentators have found Eryximachus's interpretation of Heraclitus to be obviously flawed. Bury charges that Eryximachus treats Heraclitus in a "dogmatic manner" and Mitchell calls his treatment "downright cryptic"[20] Dorter contends that Eryximachus's "obliviousness to the other type of mediation is evident in his failure to understand Heraclietus – a failure of which he is almost, but not quite, aware."[21] Levin argues that

> if it can be shown that the physician's interpretation of Heraclitus is distinctly shallower than Plato's, this would offer support to the view that Eryximachus, qua physician, far from offering his own tenable account of these pivotal phenomena, cannot even grasp with any subtlety what pertinent others have said.[22]

She goes on to endorse this reading, arguing that "Eryximachus allocates to Heraclitus a confusion that is in fact his own. Plato attributes this striking muddle to Eryximachus, I believe, in order to make a point about the physician's lack of insight and of a refined capacity for reflection."[23] And finally, Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan claim based on his treatment of Heraclitus that "Eryximachus's capacity simultaneously for the illogical and the pedantic imposes itself on us from the beginning." [24]

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[20] Bury (1932) xxix; Mitchell (1993) 54.
[21] Dorter (1969) 226.
[22] Levin (2009) 293.
[23] Levin (2009), 294-5.
[24] Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004) 64.

The first point we must address concerns the accuracy of the quotation. Plato himself does not always accurately reproduce the words of other thinkers; perhaps the most notable example is the discussion of Simonides's poem in the *Protagoras*.[25] This may even be the case regarding Plato's view on Heraclitus.[26] Plato also has Socrates correct Homer at 174b-c of the *Symposium*, an activity no different from what Eryximachus does in our passage. And the fact that our sources provide variant readings at exactly the point where Eryximachus leaves out a word should caution us against criticizing Eryximachus too harshly for giving a slightly different version. We cannot assume without argument that Plato either intentionally gave Eryximachus a distorted version of Heraclitus's dictum, rather than making the mistake himself, or that Plato himself did not think that Heraclitus was due for a clarification.[27]

As for the way Eryximachus interprets the quotation, there are two relevant points to raise. The first has already been remarked upon in the literature, and needs little explanation.[28] The notion that Heraclitus *obviously* meant one thing, and so Eryximachus is *obviously* wrong in suggesting something else, unfairly assumes that Heraclitus is a far clearer writer than he actually was. Heraclitus was famously cryptic, and we cannot assume that one reading of a given fragment is uncontroversially superior to another. Third, it is clear from the context that Eryximachus is not dogmatically misinterpreting Heraclitus. Eryximachus explicitly notes that he isn't sure what Heraclitus meant, because of the obscurity of the original claim. Eryximachus is trying to give a charitable reading to what, on the face of it, looks like a paradoxical claim (note the repeated "what he probably meant to say" at 187a4 and a8). Eryximachus's solution is that the object must have

[25] On which see Beresford (2008).
[26] On which see Kahn (1985), who gives a more sympathetic reading of Eryximachus at pp. 247-8.
[27] Cf. Dover (1980), 107: "What Heraclitus meant and what Plato thought he meant might be different; and what Plato wished to portray Eryximachus as thinking Heraclitus meant might be different again."
[28] Dover (1980) 107; Rowe (1998) 149. To be fair, this point is also noted by Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004) 63.

opposing components which can be brought into harmony. Rowe, who tends to read Eryximachus charitably, complains that

> It is not easy to believe that Eryximachus is supposed to be serious here (*of course* something can be simultaneously in disagreement and in agreement, if what's meant is something like a bow or a lyre: both exhibit an organized structure based on tension in two opposite directions).[29]

But this is essentially the same interpretation Eryximachus gives. He rejects the obviously paradox that a single object can be both harmonious and disharmonious with itself, at one and the same time and without being analyzed into parts (187a6-8). High and low notes can be opposed to one another and yet arranged in a harmonious way, just like the ends of a bow can pull away from one another and yet stand in a kind of harmony.

So much, then, for Eryximachus's treatment of Heraclitus. Eryximachus's treatment of the science of *ta erōtika* has not been received any better. Bury writes

> The theory of the duality of Eros Eryximachus takes over from Pausanias, but he naturally finds a difficulty in applying this concept to other spheres, such as that of music, and in attempting to elude the difficulty he falls into the sophistical vices of ambiguity and inconsistency.[30]

Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan argue that

> Eryximachus's capacity simultaneously for the illogical and the pedantic imposes itself on us from the beginning.…The apparent incompatibility between the two statements [good love and bad love] Eryximachus is plainly unaware of; nor in the string of examples of opposites he then produces does he consider whether the healthy and the sick are opposite in the same sense as the cold and the hot, the bitter and the sweet, the dry and the moist, and so on. Eryximachus plainly wants *his* single theory to cover all cases, to be comprehensive without any troubling instances that will not quite fit.[31]

Dover complains that

> Eryximachus…runs together (1) the contrast between good desires or tendencies and bad desires or tendencies, and (2) the contrast between the good consequences

[29] Rowe (1998) 149.
[30] Bury (1932) xxix.
[31] Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004) 64.

> of reconciling opposites and the bad consequences of failure to reconcile them. In (1) he stretches the denotation of the word 'eros' wide enough to diminish its utility very greatly, and in (2) he stretches it even further by treating an adjustment between two extremes as creating an eros of extremes for each other.[32]

These flaws lead Gould to conclude that "We are nevertheless made aware of the fact that Eryximachus understands little of the philosophical complexities involved in what he is saying."[33] Rosen agrees, arguing "Though not stupid, Eryximachus himself is an incoherent thinker".[34]

The common thread connecting these criticisms is that Eryximachus's speech unwisely attempts to apply the principles of his own area of expertise, medicine, to other domains. There is little reason to doubt that Plato means to present Eryximachus as a capable physician. He depicts Eryximachus as such in the *Symposium* and elsewhere (*Phaedrus* 268a8-b5), and after all, the treatment which Eryximachus recommends to cure Aristophanes's hiccups actually works.[35] This means that Eryximachus starts on a firm foundation with his remarks about medicine. But what many commentators have failed to notice is that Eryximachus's method is not one of generalization from his field to others. Rather, Eryximachus grounds the theory in his speech in repeated observations of similar phenomena in different areas, and infers the existence of a unifying explanation. In other words, as I will argue in what follows, Eryximachus uses a perfectly respectable scientific procedure.[36]

As we saw in the last section, Eryximachus begins his speech by connecting it to Pausanias's. He agrees with Pausanias that there are opposing forces at work when explaining Eros's effect on human relationships, but he argues that there are many additional places where Eros operates (186a2-b2). This is the first of several instances where Eryximachus notes that a

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[32] Dover (1980) 105.
[33] Gould (1981) 32.
[34] Rosen (1987) 119.
[35] Cf. Scott and Welton (2008) 57.
[36] I return to this topic in §2.2.

certain phenomenon can be observed in multiple domains (cf. 186b8-c3, 186e4-87a3, 187c2-4, 187d4, 187e3-6, e6-88a2, 188b6-c2). In the same way that there are both good and bad erotic attractions between people, there are also good and bad erotic attractions between the basic elements of the body. Eryximachus begins his argument with the claim that healthy bodies and diseased bodies love different things (186b6-7). This suggests that there are two different kinds of Eros, presumably because a single Eros would have a single kind of object. Eryximachus then argues that the healthy Eros must be gratified and the unhealthy Eros rebuffed, in the same way that Pausanias's honorable pederastic Eros should be gratified and the dishonorable Eros rebuffed (181b-82a). A physician, Eryximachus claims, is simply someone who is able to appropriately deal with Eros vis-à-vis the human body (186c3-5). A good doctor can both identify the two kinds of Eros, as well as implant one and remove the other (186d4-5).

Eryximachus then turns to the specifics of this claim. Eryximachus defines medicine as "the science (ἐπιστήμη) of the erotic effects (τῶν ἐρωτικῶν) of the body regarding repletion and depletion (πλησμονὴν καὶ κένωσιν)" (186c6-7). In particular, the physician "makes the hostile elements (τὰ ἔχθιστα ὄντα) in the body friends (φίλα) and love (ἐρᾶν) one another" (186d5-6). The hostile elements are the many opposing pairs in the body, including but not limited to hot/cold, bitter/sweet, and wet/dry (186d6-e1). Medicine was apparently invented by Asclepius when he learned how to engender love (ἔρωτα) and concord (ὁμόνοιαν) between these elements (186e1-3).

Though Eryximachus does not explicitly tell us how the two forces of Eros operate, it is easy enough to piece together. Healthy bodies manifest attraction toward the opposite kind of thing from sick bodies, and healthy bodies are bodies where the opposing elements in the body love one another. Sick bodies, then, must be bodies where elements love themselves rather than their opposites, for example, when hot loves hot rather than cold. In other words, the Eros of health

would follow the maxim 'Opposites attract', while the Eros of disease would follow the maxim 'Like loves like'. Harmony would result from opposing elements being attracted to one another, and therefore balancing one another out, while disharmony would result from an imbalance of elements, where a single element would dominate its opposite by attracting more of itself.

The ability to recognize and control the forces of Eros is so important to the function of medicine that Eryximachus defines medicine as an erotic *epistēmē*. The same applies to the other fields which Eryximachus discusses. Music is later defined as the "science of erotic effects concerning harmony and rhythm" (187c4-5), where the relevant basic elements are high/low (187b1) and fast/slow (187b7-c1) notes. Astronomy is defined as the science of erotic effects on the celestial bodies and the season (188b5-6), where the relevant basic elements are hot/cold and wet/dry (188a3-4). Divination (μαντικὴ) is defined the science of the erotic effects of justice and piety (θέμιν καὶ εὐσέβειαν), where the basic elements are humans and gods. In each case, the same principles explain diverse phenomena. The powers of attraction between likes and between opposites are apparently universal forces which can be observed across domains (186a5-b2, 187e6-a1).

So rather than haphazardly meandering through unconnected topics, Eryximachus carefully unifies apparently disparate phenomena under a pair of principles which he takes to be observable and well-documented. The basic concepts in Eryximachus's theory are harmony and disharmony, brought about by attraction between either likes or opposites. Medicine is an example of these concepts in action, but it is only one example. Health in the body is a kind of somatic harmony, just as good music is the result of tonal and rhythmic harmony, good climate is a kind of cosmic harmony, and justice and piety are the result of harmony between men and gods. In each case, this harmony is brought about through an attraction of opposing elements, and disharmony

is caused by the attraction between like elements. And at each step of his argument, Eryximachus is careful to connect his present topic to his overarching *epistēmē* of Eros.

I should also stress that the unity in Eryximachus's speech does not come from imposing *a priori* postulates to make each domain fit a predetermined mold. Rather, Eryximachus's approach is bottom up: at each stage, Eryximachus notes that observation confirms the presence of a similar pattern. In medicine, the basic observation is that physical health is a state of harmony between bodily elements, and that bodies become unhealthy through an imbalance of elements. The observed behavior of physical bodies leads Eryximachus to infer, rather than postulate, that there must be two distinct attractive forces to explain how both balance and imbalance can occur, not to mention how to bring a body from one state to the other. In music, the role of the disorderly Eros is not deduced from a prior *a priori* commitment, but rather observed in the activity of composition or application of music (187c8-d4). It is noteworthy that Eryximachus is careful to warn us that disorderly Eros is not found in rhythm and harmony as such (187c7-8), presumably because by definition harmony cannot be disharmonious (187b5-6). This would be an embarrassment if Eryximachus were trying to apply an *a priori* commitment to a double Eros and could not do so in this domain. As it stands, however, it is a clear sign that Eryximachus is letting his inquiry be guided by the observable facts rather than starting assumptions. The same inferential pattern holds in the other cases. Temperate weather is observed to occur when hot/cold, wet/dry are balanced, and intemperate weather when they are imbalanced, and so two forces of Eros are inferred to explain them. The explanation of Eros's role in divination is explained via the observation that impiety is caused by one element (humans) loving themselves more than their opposing elements (gods and ancestors), an imbalance that can be rectified by using the power of the orderly Eros to bring the elements back into harmony.

All this shows that Eryximachus's speech demonstrates a respectable unity. Throughout the speech Eryximachus applies the same method to explain apparently disparate phenomena by appealing to the activity of the same forces on the same kinds of objects.[37] The speech is, admittedly, compressed and frequently unspecific, but this should be no surprise given the dramatic context (this feature is also inconsistent with the charge that Eryximachus is a pedant). While the number of topics may initially give the speech an unorganized appearance, a careful analysis reveals that Eryximachus proceeds systematically throughout.

§1.5 - Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Eryximachus is not guilty of the charges of pedantry so frequently lodged against him. Plato portrays Eryximachus in a favorable light throughout the *Symposium* and elsewhere, as a capable intellectual and a moderate person. He is friendly to his fellow symposiasts, especially Aristophanes and Socrates. His speech is neither self-important nor single-minded; rather, it treats medicine as one *technē* among many. And while his theory of Eros is unlikely to persuade modern readers, it is nonetheless a coherent view that makes sense in its intellectual environment. None of this, by itself, proves that Plato would have thought well about the content of Eryximachus's speech. But it does show that the received view of Eryximachus's speech is unwarranted. At the very least, Plato would want us to grapple with Eryximachus's speech more seriously than modern commentators have tended to do.

[37] Kontsan & Young-Bruehl (1982) is one of the few attempts to treat Eryximachus's speech charitably. Unfortunately, their attempt involves committing Eryximachus to a number of equivocations (see especially 40-41). Rowe (1999) 56-60 for an argument against their reading.

§2 - Eryximachus and the Hippocratic Corpus

§2.1 – Hippocratic Texts and Context

The secondary literature tends to make Eryximachus the representative of one of three famous Greek scientists. Some see the influence of Empedocles on Eryximachus's speech[38], while others make him a student of Hippias (in whose audience Plato places Eryximachus at *Protagoras* 315c).[39] A third group tends to highlight the Hippocratic themes in Eryximachus's speech, and it is no coincidence that this group also tends to be the most sympathetic.[40] By noting the many parallels between Eryximachus's speech and the Hippocratic corpus, we can see that the progression of the speech makes perfect sense in context. Eryximachus, just like the other speakers in the *Symposium,* is simply explaining Eros the way a member of his profession would, appealing to topics which a Hippocratic physician would naturally associate with medicine.

I should make clear at the outset, however, that it is in many ways too simple to talk about Eryximachus's speech as 'Hippocratic' full stop. The Hippocratic corpus, as we have it, is a wide collection of texts, written by many authors over a significant period of time. Consequently, many of these texts disagree with one another in significant ways, and so it is difficult to come up with a collection of doctrines that all and only Hippocratic writers shared. To minimize this problem, I will focus only on those texts which (i) are likely early enough to have either been accessible to Plato, or more plausibly, to reflect ideas that were 'in the air' in Plato's lifetime, and which (ii) form a roughly, though not perfectly, coherent subset of ideas found in the corpus. Specifically, I will rely on the following texts: *Airs, Waters, Places; Ancient Medicine; Aphorisms; Regimen in*

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[38] Anderson (1993), Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004), Dorter (1969), Gould (1981), Mitchell (1993), Nichols (2008), Rowe (1998) and (1999), Scott and Welton (2008), Wardy (2002).
[39] Duncan (1977), Sheffield (2006a)
[40] Allen (1984), Edelstein (1945), Hunter (2004), McPherran (2006). Though critical of Eryximachus, Levin (2009) also spends some time noting the Hippocratic influences in Eryximachus's speech.

Acute Diseases; Prognostic, Prorrhetic I & II, *Sacred Disease.* I will supplement these works, when appropriate, with *Affections*; *Humours*; *Nature of Man* (including *Regimen in Health)*.[41] In what follows I will use the term 'Hippocratic' to refer to ideas found within these works. I should stress that I am not arguing that Plato actually read any of these texts, nor that they were written by the same author or small set of related authors. Rather, I argue only that these texts present a picture of the sort of theory that a fifth-century physician might hold, a theory of which Plato would have enough awareness to emulate in composing Eryximachus's speech. I should also note that, though Eryximachus was an actual historical figure and an actual physician, we know nothing about the man's views, only the views of the character in Plato's writing, and so should be careful not to be too hasty in inferring something about the former from the latter.

Why think that Eryximachus's speech should be understood in a Hippocratic context? For one, the views presented in the speech overlap too closely, and too frequently, to be coincidental, as I will argue in the rest of this chapter. But we should also note that Plato explicitly tells us that Eryximachus is a physician in the Hippocratic tradition. Early in his speech, Eryximachus refers to Asclepius as "our forefather" (ὁ ἡμέτερος πρόγονος), the man who "invented our profession" (συνέστησεν τὴν ἡμετέραν τέχνην), the profession, of course, being medicine (186e2-3). Hence Eryximachus identifies himself as a member of the Asclepiadae, a hereditary professional guild of physicians centered in Kos and Knidos of which Hippocrates was a member. Eryximachus's father Akoumenos is also identified as a physician in the same tradition (176b5; cf. *Phaedrus.* 268a9). Plato elsewhere refers to Hippocrates as an Asclepiad (*Phaedrus.* 270c3, *Protagoras.* 311b6), and he often uses the term 'Aslcepiadae' to refer to the physicians whose practices he respects, not to

[41] For a short overview of each text, including its likely time of composition, see Jouanna (1999) 373-416.

mention repeatedly praising Asclepius himself (*Republic* 405d4, 406a6, 599c4).[42] Hence we can be confident that Plato purposefully presented Eryximachus as a physician in the Hippocratic tradition, and can consequently expect to find Hippocratic themes in his speech. It is to those themes that we now turn.

§2.2 – Hippocratic Methodology

We will begin with some comments on Hippocratic philosophy of science. The Hippocratic tradition is known, among other things, for two features in particular. The Hippocratic school distinguishes itself from philosophy by grounding its theorizing in empirical observation, and it distinguishes itself from religious practice by explaining health and disease without recourse to the gods. Eryximachus's speech would appear to conflict with these features, as it explains medicine, and indeed all science, as the work of Eros, a being which is presumably outside the scope of empirical observation. A closer look at the key Hippocratic texts on these issues will reveal that this conflict is only apparent. In both cases, Eryximachus follows the methodology of these texts.

The treatise where methodological issues are most directly addressed is *Ancient Medicine.*[43] The central point of *Ancient Medicine* is that a number of earlier philosophers (of whom Empedocles is singled out for criticism in §20) approach medicine incorrectly by working from *a priori* postulates rather than observation. The work opens with the claim that:

> All who, on attempting to speak or write on medicine, have assumed for themselves a postulate as a basis for their discussion – heat, cold, moisture, dryness, or anything else that they may fancy – who narrow down the causal principle of diseases and

[42] See Jouanna (1999, 33-35) and Nutton (2004, 70-71) for background on the Asclepiadae and Hippocrates' association with the group.

[43] Cf. Levin (2009) 279-80. *The Art* also deals with methodological issues, but this work is very likely the work of a sophist rather than a physician, though perhaps one with some medical knowledge. See also Mann (2012).

> of death among men, and make it the same in all case, postulating one thing or two, all these obviously blunder in many points in their statements. (§11.6)[44]

The charge here, we should be careful to note, is not that it is wrongheaded to analyze medicine in terms of elements like hot/cold or wet/dry, but rather that it is a mistake to postulate without empirical confirmation a single such element, or a single pair, to explain the whole of medicine. Our author later argues:

> I am at a loss to understand how those who maintain the other view, and abandon the old method to rest the art on a postulate, treat their patients on the lines of their postulate. For they have not discovered, I think, an absolute hot or cold, dry or moist, that participates in no other form. But I think that they have at their disposal the same foods and the same drinks as we all use, and to one they add the attribute of being hot, to another, cold, to another, dry, and to another, moist, since it would be futile to order a patient to take something hot, as he would at once ask, "What hot thing?" So that they must either talk nonsense or have recourse to one of these known substances. (§15.1-11)

This incorrect view is contrasted with our author's preferred alternative:

> Now I consider that herein lies my strongest evidence that men are not feverish merely through heat, and that it could not be the sole cause of the harm; the truth being that one and the same thing is both bitter and hot, or acid and hot, or salt and hot, with numerous other combinations, and cold again combines with other powers. It is these things which cause the harm. Heat, too, is present, but merely as a concomitant, having the strength of the directing factor, but having no power greater than that which properly belongs to it. (§17.4-12)

In other words, the author of *Ancient Medicine* thinks that the body is composed of a number of elements, including but not limited to hot/cold and wet/dry, which combine in a various ways. It is too simplistic to appeal to only one factor, e.g. heat, to explain illness. This defect is revealed, the author argues, through observation:

> For [the discoverers of medicine] did not consider (ἡγησάμενοι) that the dry or the moist or the hot or the cold or anything else of the kind injures a man, or that he has need of any such thing, but they consider that it is the strength of each thing, that which, being too powerful for the human constitution, it cannot assimilate,

[44] All Hippocratic sources used throughout this chapter use the translations of W.H.S. Jones from the Loeb Classical Library. However, the citations correspond to the pagination of Littré's Greek text, which does not always correspond to the Loeb text.

> which causes harm, and this they sought to take away…. For these they saw (ἑώρων) are component parts of man, and they are injurious to him; for there is in man salt and bitter, sweet and acid, astringent and insipid, and a vast number of other things, possessing properties of all sorts, both in number and in strength. (§14.15-25)

And how did the discoverers of medicine first come to this realization? According to our author, it was due to the observation of differences between the sick and the healthy, in particular with reference to diet:

> But the fact is that sheer necessity has caused men to seek and to find medicine, because sick men do not, and did not, profit by the same regimen as do men in health…. For this reason the ancients too seem to me to have sought for nourishment that harmonized with their constitution (ἁρμόζουσαν), and to have discovered that which we use now…..Experimenting (πρηγματευσάμενοι) with food they boiled or baked, after mixing, many other things, combining the strong and uncompounded with the weaker components so as to adapt all to the constitution and power of man… (§3.5-33)

Rather than deduce that some foods are always healthy because of their intrinsic properties, our author observes that there are many relevant causal properties that interact with one another in complex ways. These interactions must be recorded and then examined for patterns.[45] The same method is followed in *Airs, Water, Places,* where our author enjoins the physician to make note of a number of factors when arriving at a new city:

> Using this evidence he must examine the several problems that arise. For if a physician know these things well, by preference all of them, but at any rate most, he will not, on arrival at a town with which he is unfamiliar, be ignorant of the local diseases, or of the nature of those that commonly prevail; so that he will not be at a loss in the treatment of diseases, or make blunders, as it likely to be the case if he have not this knowledge before he considers his several problems. (§2.1-9)

On the other hand, following this method "he will have full knowledge of each particular case, will succeed best in securing health, and will achieve the greatest triumphs in the practice of his art" (§2.17-21).

[45] See Schiefsky (2005b) for a more thorough treatment of this topic.

One other feature of *Ancient Medicine* is worth mentioning. As I mentioned above, our author contrasts his approach to medical theory with that of a certain kind of philosopher, such as Empedocles, who deduce the nature of the body from higher principles of nature. He writes

> Certain physicians and philosophers assert that nobody can know medicine who is ignorant what man is; he who would treat patients properly must, they say, learn this….I also hold that clear knowledge about natural science can be acquired from medicine and from no other source, and that one can attain this knowledge when medicine itself has been properly comprehended, but till then it is quite impossible – I mean to possess this information, what man is, by what causes he is made, and similar points accurately. Since this at least I think a physician must know, and be at great pains to know, about natural science, if he is going to perform aught of his duty, what man is in relation to foods and drinks, and to habits generally, and what will be the effects of each on each individual. (§20.1-17)

The view presented here is one which knowledge of "what man is, by what causes he is made, and similar points" works from the bottom up; by observing the effects of various regimens on different people, we learn that the human body is a highly complex entity which can lose its equilibrium in a number of ways.[46] This tells us that (i) there must be a number of basic elements of the human body that can cause disease, not just one or a pair, and (ii) the proper starting point for learning about the nature of man is the observation of differences in constitutions, which form the basis for generalizations about the body's constituents and their interactions. These generalizations can then be applied to areas outside medicine.

The outlook of *Ancient Medicine* should seem rather familiar. Eryximachus too begins his argument from the observation that healthy bodies and sick bodies want different things (186b6-7). He too concludes that the basic elements of the body are many: opposing elements, "as hot is to cold, bitter to sweet, wet to dry, and many such others" (πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα, 186d7-e1).[47] And

[46] The precise meaning of this passage is controversial. See Cooper (2002) and Schiefsky (2005a) *loc.cit.* for a defense of this reading of the text, and Barton (2005) for a more general analysis of *Ancient Medicine*'s method.
[47] It is interesting, though perhaps just a coincidence, that Eryximachus mentions bitter/sweet in addition to hot/cold and wet/dry. The author of *Ancient Medicine* also emphasizes this element over others (§14, §24)

Eryximachus attributes to Asclepius the discovery of how to bring about "concord and love" (ἔρωτα ἐμποιῆσαι καὶ ὁμόνοιαν) among the elements (186e2-3), just as the author of *Ancient Medicine* calls the beginning of medicine the discovery of how to use food whose elements harmonize with the body. Eryximachus's method, like the author of *Ancient Medicine*, is to start by noting the differences between constitutions (i.e. sick vs. healthy) and to use this knowledge to explain what the basic constituents of the human body are and how to affect them. And Eryximachus follows *Ancient Medicine*'s method of beginning with medicine as a starting point for developing a broader knowledge of the universe.

Despite these parallels, one might still worry that Eryximachus speech is distinctly un-Hippocratic in its attempt to explain medicine, and indeed the *kosmos* in general, by appealing to the forces of the god Eros. One of the purported hallmarks of the Hippocratic tradition is its attempt to explain the world naturalistically, that is, without recourse to mysterious divine causes.[48] The most celebrated instance of this attempt is *The Sacred Disease*, whose central argument is that certain illnesses (likely epilepsy or similar maladies) that carried the name 'the sacred disease' (ἡ ἱερή νόσος) can be fully explained with reference to the obstructed passage of air in the body.

It would be inaccurate, however, to read *The Sacred Disease* as fully rejecting the notion that divine forces play a role in the *kosmos*.[49] The author of *The Sacred Disease* does not say that the disease is definitively not divine, but rather that this disease is not "more divine or more sacred than other diseases" (οὐδέν … θειοτέρη εἶναι νούσων οὐδὲ ἱερωτέρη, §1.1-2), and that "other diseases are no less wonderful and portentious, and yet nobody considers them sacred" (§1.10-11).

[48] This assumption leads McPherran, who is otherwise sensitive to the Hippocratic influences in Eryximachus's speech, to call Eryximachus an iconoclastic Hippocratic (2006, 78). McPherran, however, underestimates the role of divination and the divine in Hippocratic texts (though see 81-83).
[49] See Hankinson (1998) for a similar argument regarding the Hippocratic corpus more broadly. See also Jouanna (1999) 181-209.

For instance, certain regular fevers are "no less god-sent than this disease, but nobody wonders at them" (§1.12-13). This disease, he reiterates, is "no more divine than any other; it has the same nature has other disease" (οὐδέν … θειότερον εἶναι τῶν λοιπῶν, ἀλλὰ φύσιν μὲν ἔχει ἣν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα νουσήματα, §5.1-2). The thesis, then, is not that the disease is *not* divine, but that it is not different than any other disease. The language "no more" or "no less" can sometimes mean "actually not", but these locutions are rather flexible, and must mean something else in the context.[50] Our author cannot mean that diseases are neither divine nor natural, because he affirms the latter. Nor can he be using the phrase skeptically, because he is offering a positive account of the phenomenon in question. The fact that our author uses both 'no more A than B' and 'no less A than B' suggests that what he means is 'equally A and B', that is, that the disease is both divine and natural. The concluding chapter of the treatise makes this explicit:

> This disease styled sacred comes from the same causes as others, from the things that come to and go from the body, from cold, sun, and from the changing restlessness of the winds. These things are divine. So that there is no need to put the disease in a special class and to consider it more divine than the others; they are all divine and all human. (§21.1-8)

Hence even the Hippocratic text which most directly critiques the idea that diseases are caused by the gods is happy to conclude that diseases have divine causes.[51]

If this is right, then why does *The Sacred Disease* argue against calling the disease sacred? The answer is that our author distinguishes two senses of the term 'sacred', and rejects one of them. His objection is as follows:

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[50] See DeLacey (1958) and Woodruff (1988), pp. 146-153, for discussion of the wide range of uses of this formulation.

[51] *Airs, Waters, Places*, which many take to have been written by the same author as *The Sacred Disease*, expresses a very similar sentiment in §22, writing about impotence among the Scythians that "I too think that these diseases are divine, and so too are all others, no one being more divine or more human than any other; all are alike, and all are divine. Each of them has a nature of its own, and none arises without its natural cause" and "But the truth is, as I said above, these affections are neither more nor less divine than any others, and all and each are natural."

> My own view is that those who first attributed a sacred character to this malady were like the magicians, purifiers, charlatans, and quacks of our own day, men who claim great piety and superior knowledge. Being at a loss, and having no treatment which would help, they concealed and sheltered themselves behind superstition, and called this illness sacred, in order that their utter ignorance might not be manifest. (§1.22-28)

The objection, then, is that the purported healers who would compete with Hippocratic physicians do not understand the nature of the disease; their use of the term 'sacred' does not say something about the disease itself, but rather of their own ignorance. In response, our author provides two arguments: (i) an account of the disease meant to show that he does not suffer the same ignorance (§5-20), and (ii) an objection that the way these charlatans treat the disease is impious, because it entails that the gods can be overcome by human efforts (§2-4). These practitioners claim that the disease is sacred, but "they really disprove its divinity by the facile method of healing which they adopt" (§1.8-10). Our author's final verdict is that diseases *do* have a divine cause, provided that we use the term 'divine' correctly.

Once again, Eryximachus's speech is right at home alongside *The Sacred Disease*. Eros in Eryximachus's speech is not some capricious anthropomorphized agent, but a force of nature. Unlike the targets of *The Sacred Disease*, Eryximachus can both provide a successful treatment (e.g., avoiding hangovers and curing hiccups), but can also give a theoretical basis for this treatment. The *Sacred Disease* claims that diseases are "all divine and all human" (πάντα θεῖα καὶ ἀνθρώπινα πάντα, §21.8), while Eryximachus argues that Eros extends "over all human and all divine affairs" (καὶ κατ' ἀνθρώπινα καὶ κατὰ θεῖα πράγματα, 186b1-2). And Eryximachus is careful to avoid the problems with *The Sacred Disease* raises, namely of purporting to control the gods' power. Throughout his speech Eryximachus only says that the orderly Eros should be "gratified" (χαρίζεσθαι, 186b9, c2, 187d6, 188c4) and "guarded" (φυλάττειν, 187d6, e8) or "observed" (ἐπισκοπεῖν, 188c7). It is also notable that when Eryximachus discusses astronomy

and meteorology, he drops all language of human agency, saying instead only that the effects of love in the celestial realm are in the domain of the science called astronomy (188b5-6).[52] The impiety of claiming the ability to control celestial bodies or to control the weather is one of the main criticisms *The Sacred Disease* lodges against the charlatans (§4).

All in all, then, Eryximachus's speech fits nicely in the broad intellectual method outlined in *Ancient Medicine* and *The Sacred Disease*. Eryximachus follows *Ancient Medicine* in using a bottom-up approach grounded in observation to find patterns which serve as the basis for generalizations. Eryximachus follows *The Sacred Disease* in articulating the causes of diseases and other phenomena as forces that are both natural and divine, forces which can be explained in a well-formulated theory. In the same way that Aristophanes approaches the topic of Eros as a comic playwright, and Agathon as orator, Eryximachus discusses Eros much the way we would expect from a Hippocratic physician.

§2.3 – Eryximachus's Hippocratic Medical Doctrine

In addition to the broad agreement in approach discussed in the last section, Eryximachus's speech also agrees with several specific points of Hippocratic doctrine. In this section I will present the largest and most striking points of agreement.

But first, we should look a little more closely at what the precise content of Eryximachus's speech is. If Eryximachus were really a myopic, self-obsessed pedant, as the arguments I addressed in the last chapter contend, then we would expect his speech to be replete with medical details. Sadly, this is not the case. Eryximachus's speech gives us a broad outline of this theory, but is somewhat short on specifics. As I mentioned in the last chapter, Eryximachus only spends about 30 lines discussing medicine as such. This makes perfect sense in the speech's rhetorical context,

[52] This point can address Hunter's criticism that Eryximachus stays at the theoretical rather than practical level when discussing divination (2004, 59).

but it requires us to do a small amount of interpretation to flesh out the details. But luckily, the entire speech is useful for this task, because we are repeatedly told that the same principles apply across domains (186a3-b2, c1-2, 186e4-87a3, 187c2-3, d4, e3-5, e6-188a2, 188b6-c2). Hence we can extract the details of Eryximachus's view from his comments on other areas, in addition to medicine.

Eryximachus's theory, in its broadest form, holds that any science (*epistēmē*) has three tasks: (i) identify the basic elements in its domain, (ii) to monitor the effects of Eros on those elements, and (ii) to gratify the orderly Eros and rebuff the disorderly Eros to maintain a balance between those elements. When it comes to medicine specifically, Eryximachus endorses the following claims:

- Healthy and diseased bodies are attracted to opposite things (186b5-8)
- Eros operates on the body through repletion and depletion (πλησμονὴν καὶ κένωσιν, 187c6-7)
- The basic elements of the body are opposing pairs. There are many such pairs, including hot/cold, wet/dry, bitter/sweet, and many others (186d6-e1)
- Health is a state of harmony, concord, or love between opposing elements (186d2-3, e1-2)
- Health is brought about by implanting a love of elements for their opposites and excising a love of elements for themselves (186d1-4)
- The disorderly Eros can, with caution, be used to good effect (187e1-6)
- Athletics operates according to the same principles as medicine (186e4-87a1)
- Diet is an important factor in health and disease (187e4-6)
- Weather and climate are also important factors in health and disease (188a6-7, b1-3)

In sum, health is an equilibrium state between the various opposing elements of the body. A principle of 'opposites attract' is used to maintain a healthy state. This state is disrupted when some of the elements overpower their opposites, e.g. when the body has too much heat relative to cold. This disruption is caused by an attraction of like-to-like, e.g. when cold attracts more of itself, thereby causing an imbalance of cold to hot. Disequilibrium can result from internal causes, but also from external causes, in particular by diet and weather. But these factors also provide the tools

for healing. Weather or food can introduce an overpowered element back into the body, causing it to regain equilibrium, i.e. treat opposites with opposites. But sometimes one can use the contrary principle, and treat like with like, by using attraction between like elements to strengthening the overpowered element rather than weakening its opposite.

Let us start with Eryximachus's definition of medicine, "the science of the effects of Eros on repletion and depletion of the body" (186c5-7). The terms "repletion and depletion" (πλησμονὴν καὶ κένωσιν) may appear to come out of nowhere, but they are actually central concepts in Hippocratic medicine. *Aphorisms,* for instance, gives us the following tenet of medical theory: "Diseases caused by repletion are cured by depletion; those caused by depletion are cured by repletion, and in general contraries are cured by contraries" (§2.22). The author of *Nature of Man* expresses a similar view; "Furthermore, one must know that diseases due to repletion are cured by depletion, and those due to depletion are cured by repletion; those due to exercise are cured by rest, and those due to idleness are cured by exercise" (§9.1-6). Examples of this view are found throughout the corpus. *Ancient Medicine,* for example, tells us that "Depletion produces many other evils, different from those of repletion, but just as severe" (§9.11-13), and another entry in *Aphorisms* states that "Convulsions occur either from repletion or from depletion." (§7.39). This leads Barton to conclude that "*observation-based* assessment of balance and harmony is central to the understanding of the work of the doctor."[53]

The reason that repletion and depletion are important in Eryximachus's speech is because these are the mechanisms by which the body's basic elements can come in or out of harmony. Eryximachus endorses the view that the body has several basic elements, including hot/cold, bitter/sweet, wet/dry, and "many other such" (186d7-e1). The number of basic bodily elements is

[53] Barton (2005) 40 (original emphasis).

a point of contention in the Hippocratic corpus. As we saw in §2.1, *Ancient Medicine* critiques attempts to explain disease by appeal to a small set of elements. Yet some texts included in the corpus do exactly that, for instance, *Breaths* or *Fleshes.* But there are nevertheless several important Hippocratic texts which agree with Eryximachus that the body has several elements, including at least hot/cold and wet/dry, with several others. *Ancient Medicine* is, of course, one such text:

> The strongest part of the sweet is the sweetest, of the bitter the most bitter, of the acid the most acid, and each of all the component parts of man has its extreme. For these they saw are component parts of man, and that they are injurious to him; for there is in man salt and bitter, sweet and acid, astringent and inspid, and a vast number of other things, possessing properties of all sorts, both in number and in strength. (§14.27-35)

Nature of Man presents a similar view: "For in the body there are many constituents, which, by heating, or cooling, by drying or by wetting one another contrary to nature, engender diseases; so that both the forms of diseases are many and the healing of them is manifold" (§2.16-21). The author of *The Sacred Disease* ends his text by claiming that "Whoever knows how to cause in men by regimen moist or dry, hot or cold, can cure this disease also, if he distinguish the seasons for useful treatment" (§21.22-25), but he appeals to other properties throughout his text (e.g., the quality of winds in §16). *Airs, Waters, Places,* likewise appeals to various properties to explain why certain diseases correlate with particular regions, for instance, "how the natives are off for water, whether they use marshy, soft waters, or such as are hard and come from rocky heights, or brackish and harsh. The soil too, whether bare or dry or wooded and watered, hollow and hot or high and cold" (§1.18-25).

As mentioned above, Eryximachus defines health as a state of love between opposing elements, and it is the job of the physician to bring about this state. Eryximachus's language about *erōs* or *philia* is rather poetic, which is not surprising given the context. Hippocratic texts do not

quite discuss health in these terms, though *Aphorisms* includes the claim that heat is "friendly" or "welcome" (φίλιον) to a variety of ailments (§5.22), and *The Sacred Disease* tells us that the physician must treat illnesses by applying what is "most hostile (τὸ πολεμιώτατον) to each and not what is a friend (τὸ φίλον) and customary (σύνηθες) to it" (§18.14).[54] But Eryximachus also uses a number of other terms to refer to a friendly balance of elements, which we also find throughout the Hippocratic corpus.[55] Eryximachus says that Asclepius invented medicine by learning how to create "agreement (ὁμόνοιαν) between bodily elements (186e2). The author of *Nature of Man* diagnoses a variety of conditions as resulting from a change in bodily conditions, "such that there is no longer agreement" (ὥστε μὴ ὁμονοεῖν, §12.10). Eryximachus also refers to a healthy equilibrium state as a "blending" (κρᾶσιν, 188a4) a term which appears at *Aphorisms* §5.22 as a prerequisite for conception, in *Ancient Medicine* as a key component in the foods which constitute a healthy regimen (§5) and as an explanation for how to treat various ailments (§19).[56] And of course Eryximachus repeatedly calls the balance of elements a "harmony" (ἁρμονία, 187a6-7, b3-4, c5-6, d1, 188a4). *Regimen in Acute Diseases* tells us that one should give patients either hydromel or wine if a disease is overly dry, depending on which "suits" (ἁρμόζῃ) that particular disease (§4.21); likewise, bathing soothes pain associated with pneumonia, and therefore suits it (§18.25-26). The author also complains that the treatments recommended by the Knidian school do not suit their diseases (§1.13-15). *Aphorisms* reports that milk harmonizes with consumption (§5.64) *Ancient Medicine* tells us that the ancients discovered medicine by finding food that harmonized with their constitutions (§3.25-27).

[54] Here I follow Littré against the Loeb text, which omits τὸ φίλον without explanation. The translation is therefore my own, not Jones's.
[55] See also Craik (2001) *passim*.
[56] Cf. Dover (1980) 110.

The underlying idea of health as a balance of elements is also expressed in different terminology. For instance, *Ancient Medicine* §14 argues that "it is the strength of each thing, that which, being too powerful for the human constitution, it cannot assimilate, which causes harm, and this they sought to take away" (§14.18-20, cf. §3.24-36). It goes on to argue

> Moreover, of the foods that are unsuitable for us and hurt a man when taken, each of them is either bitter, or salt, or acid, or something else uncompounded and strong, and for this reason we are disordered by them, just as we are by the secretions separated off in the body. But all the things that a man east or drinks are plainly altogether free from such an uncompounded and potent humour…. And from such foods, when plentifully partaken of by a man, there arises no disorder at all or isolation of the powers resident in the body, but strength, growth, and nourishment in great measure arise from them, for no other reason except that they are well compounded, and have nothing undiluted and strong, but form a single, simple whole. (§14.29-43)

The same sentiment is expressed again still later: "A man is in the best possible condition when there is complete coction and rest, with no particular power displayed" (§19.40-41; cf. §16.3-7). *Prognostic* §13 tells us that uncompounded vomit is a sign of a particularly bad illness, and warns that "For the head, hands, and feed to be cold is a bad sign if the belly and sides are warm; but it is a very good sign when the whole body is evenly warm and soft" (§9.1-3). *Regimen in Acute Diseases* recommends the use of several herbs together to treat pain in the diaphragm, since "the blending of these constituents gives a harmonious compound" (§23.17-32). The author of *Nature of Man* argues that "generation will not take place if the combination of hot with cold and of dry with moist not be tempered (μετρίως) and equal (ἴσως) – should the one constituent be much in excess of the other, and the stronger be much stronger than the weaker" (§3.4-7). The same work goes on to define health as follows:

> Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned (μετρίως) to one another in respect of compounding (κρήσιος), power, and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled. Pain is felt when one of these elements is in defect or excess, or is isolated in the body without being compounded with all the others. (§4.3-10)

This view presented in these texts are, clearly, very close to the view Eryximachus endorses.

Eryximachus argues that the job of a physician is to gratify orderly Eros by implanting it in the body and to rebuff disorderly Eros by removing it (186b8-d6). However, Eryximachus also says that the disorderly Eros can be used to good effect so long as one is careful (187e1-3). This suggests two different ways for a physician to treat diseases: they can apply opposites to opposites, in an attempt to minimize the excessive element, or they can apply like to like, in order to bolster the deficient element.

The Hippocratic corpus gives us many examples of both kinds of treatment. *The Sacred Disease* argues that

> So the physician must know how, by distinguishing the seasons for individual things, he may assign to one thing nutriment and growth, and to the other diminution and harm. For in this disease as in all others it is necessary, not to increase the illness, but to wear it down by applying to each what is most hostile (τὸ πολεμιώτατον) to it, not that to which it is friendly and conformable (τὸ φίλον καὶ σύνηθες). For what is conformity gives vigour and increase; what is hostile causes weakness and decay. (§18.9-15).

This view is applied practically to a variety of circumstances. *Ancient Medicine* argues that "when there is an outpouring of the bitter principle, which we call yellow bile, great nausea, burning and weakness prevail…. But so long as these bitter particles are undissolved, undigested and uncompounded, by no possible means can the pains and fevers be stayed" (§19.21-27). *Aphorisms* says that "Starving should be prescribed for persons with moist flesh; for starving dries the body" (§7.60). *Airs, Waters, Places* tells us that "Those whose digestive organs are hard and easily heated will gain benefit from the sweetest, lightest and most sparkling waters. But those whose bellies are soft, moist, and phlegmatic, benefit from the hardest, most harsh and saltish waters, for these are the best to dry them up" (§7.59-65).

There is one particular condition treated by application of opposites to which I would like to draw attention. In one of the more humorous episodes in the *Symposium,* Aristophanes is forced to trade places with Eryximachus because he has a bad case of the hiccups. We get an editorial aside that the hiccups were likely caused by Aristophanes "stuffing himself" (πλησμονῆς, 185c5), the same word translated as 'repletion' in Eryximachus's speech and in Hippocratic texts. Eryximachus then suggests a progression of remedies:

> While I am giving my speech, you should hold your breath for as long as you possibly can. This may well eliminate your hiccups. If it fails, the best remedy is a thorough gargle. And if even this has no effect, then tickle your nose with a feather. A sneeze or two will cure even the most persistent case." "The sooner you start speaking, the better" Aristophanes said. "I'll follow your instructions to the letter." (185d4-e5).

After Eryximachus finishes his speech, we learn that his prescription was successful. Aristophanes reports that

> The hiccups have stopped, all right – but not before I applied the Sneeze Treatment to them. Makes me wonder whether the 'orderly sort of Love' in the body calls for the sounds and itchings that constitute a sneeze, because the hiccups stopped immediately when I applied the Sneeze Treatment. (189a1-6)

Though Aristophanes jokes about the mechanism by which his cure succeeded, we should not overlook the fact that Eryximachus's treatment follows from Hippocratic doctrine. *Aphorisms* §6.13 reports that "In the case of a person afflicted with hiccough, sneezing coming on removes the hiccough." Why does this work? Well, we are told at §6.39 of the same work that "Convulsions occur either from repletion or from depletion. So too with hiccough." The implication is that Aristophanes would be diagnosed as suffering from a surfeit of air, which can be treated either by preventing further air from accumulating by holding one's breath or by expelling the excess through sneezing. In other words, Eryximachus demonstrates Hippocratic doctrine both practically and theoretically.

§2.4 – Other technai in Hippocratic Texts

As we saw in §1.3-4, Eryximachus's speech discusses many other *technai* in addition to medicine. Some commentators have seen the breadth of the speech as an indication that Eryximachus is recklessly extrapolating to areas he doesn't understand. But this reading fails to appreciate the range of interests held by ancient physicians. Like Eryximachus, the Hippocratic corpus views several other areas of inquiry as closely related to medicine.[57]

After medicine, Eryximachus spends the most time in the speech discussing music. With one exception which I will discuss in the next section, music is rarely discussed in the corpus. But Eryximachus argues that μελοποιία, the process of using the Eros to compose pleasurable music that is not harmful, operates on the same principles as ὀψοποιία, the process of creating a fine meal that can provide pleasure without disease (187e1-6). The close connection between medicine and dietetics is an important one in the Hippocratic Corpus. As we saw in §2.1, the author of *Ancient Medicine* goes so far as to identify the physician with the craftsman who prepares nourishment (§7.1-4). He also argues, in a passage quite reminiscent of Eryximachus's claim, that most foods that people eat are healthy, with the exception of "the highly seasoned delicacies which gratify his appetite and greed" (§14.37-38). The author of *Humours* holds that an intemperate (ἀκρασίη) appetite is a symptom of disease (§9.1). *Regimen in Acute Diseases* §37 cautions against rapid changes in diet even between foods that are normally considered healthy. One of the many features of water discussed in *Airs, Waters, Places* is which kinds of water are good or bad for drinking and cooking (§7.58-72). And of course several texts go into considerable detail about how to incorporate food into a proper regimen (δίαιτα, from which the English 'diet' originates), e.g.

[57] McPherran (2006) 77.

Aphorisms §1.11, 16-18, §2.11, 16-18, 32; *Regimen in Acute Diseases* §4, 6-8, 10; *Regimen in Health* §1, 4.

The next big topic of Eryximachus's speech is astronomy, a *technē* which encompasses both the celestial bodies and the weather. This topic is also an important one in Hippocratic texts. The most obvious case is *Airs, Waters, Places,* which, not surprisingly, details the many ways meteorological and geographical phenomena can influence health. In fact, Eryximachus's speech contains a passage which is strikingly similar to a passage from *Airs, Waters, Places*. Eryximachus says that

> When the elements to which I have already referred – hot and cold, wet and dry - are animated by the proper species of Love, they are in harmony with one another: their mixture is temperate, and so is the climate. Harvests are plentiful; men and all other living things are in good health; no harm can come to them. But when the sort of Love that is crude and impulsive controls the seasons, he brings death and destruction. He spreads plague and many other diseases among plants and animals; he causes frost and hail and blights. All these are the effects of the immodest and disordered species of Love on the movements of the stars and the seasons of the year, that is, on the objects studied by the science called astronomy. (188a1-b6)

Compare this to the following remarks on temperate climate from *Airs, Waters, Places*:

> For everything in Asia grows to far greater beauty and size; the one region is less wild than the other, the characterization of the inhabitants is milder and more gentle. The cause of this is the temperate climate, because it lies towards the east midway between the risings of the sun, and farther away than is Europe from the cold. Growth and freedom from wildness are most fostered when nothing is forcibly predominant, but equality in every respect prevails….. Here the harvests are likely to be plentiful, both those from seed and those which the earth bestows of her own accord, the fruit of which men use, turning wild to cultivated and transplanting them to a suitable soil. The cattle too reared there are likely to flourish, and especially to bring forth the sturdiest young and rear them to be very fine creatures. The men will be well nourished, of very fine physique and very tall, different from one another but little either in physique or stature. This region, both in character and in the mildness of its seasons, might fairly be said to bear a close resemblance to spring. (§12.7-13, 20-29)

While we do not get the promised description of Europe's climate, we are told later that "The other people of Europe differ from one another … because of the changes of the seasons, which are

violent and frequent, while there are severe heat waves, severe winters, copious rains and then long droughts, and winds, causing many changes of various kinds" (§23.1-5), which is quite close to Eryximachus's description of the disorderly Eros's effect on weather.

Airs, Waters, Places, however, is not an anomaly in the Hippocratic corpus. *The Sacred Disease* §13 cites rapid changes in weather as one cause of epilepsy. *Ancient Medicine* §16 uses the effects of winter weather as evidence for the easiness with which hot and cold pass into one another. *Humours* argues that "Countries badly situated with respect to the seasons engender diseases analogous to the season" (§12.4-5), and goes on to outline numerous examples in §12-19. Like *Airs, Waters, Places, Humours* holds that

> It is changes that are chiefly responsible for diseases, especially the greatest changes, the violent alterations both in the seasons and in other things. But seasons which come on gradually are the safest, as are gradual changes of regimen and temperature, and gradual changes from one period of lie to another." (§15.1-5)

The third section of *Aphorisms* is devoted mainly to discussing climate's effects of health, arguing, among other things, that "It is chiefly the changes of the seasons which produce diseases, and in the seasons the great changes from cold or heat, and so on according to the same rule" (§3.1) and "In seasons that are normal, and bring seasonable things at seasonable times, diseases prove normal and have an easy crisis; in abnormal seasons diseases are abnormal and have a difficult crises" (§3.8). *Nature of Man* infers from the correlation between seasons and particular ailments that climate and the body are structurally similar:

> All these elements then are always comprised in the body of man, but as the year goes round they become now greater and now less, each in turn and according to nature. For just as every year participates in every element, the hot, the cold, the dry, and the moist… even so, if any of these congenital elements were to fail, the man could not live. In the year sometimes the winter is most powerful, sometimes the spring, sometimes the summer and sometimes the autumn. So too in man sometimes phlegm is powerful, sometimes blood, sometimes bile, first yellow, and then what is called black bile. (§7.34-47

Regimen in Health (which is part of the same work as *Nature of Man*) begins its outline of recommended regimens in §1 by distinguishing what is best for each season. It is no surprise, then, that the author of *Airs, Waters, Places* cautions us that "If it be thought that all this belongs to meteorology, he will find out, on second thought, that the contribution of astronomy to medicine is not a very small one but a very great one indeed" (§2.15-19).

Finally, we turn to divination. Eryximachus argues that divination is "about nothing other than maintenance (φυλακήν) and healing (ἴασιν) concerning Eros" (188c1-2) and that the mantic's job is "to inspect (ἐπισκοπεῖν) and to medically treat (ἰατρεύειν)" the forces of Eros (188c6-7), where the object of this activity is the relationship between gods and mortals. One might think that the kind of rationalist, empirically-driven approach to medicine advocated by Hippocratic physicians would be opposed to theological arts, but as we saw in §2.2 above, this is a false dichotomy. It is true that *mantikē* is sometimes singled out for criticism, e.g. when *Regimen in Acute Diseases* worries that medicine will be regarded as a pseudo-*technē* on the grounds that it is as inconsistent as divination (§3.12-24). The charge here, however, is that *technai* must be consistent; a consistently applied divination should, at least in principle, be acceptable. Both the *Sacred Disease* and *Airs, Waters, Places,* as we saw above, contend that all diseases are divine.

The main argument in *The Sacred Disease* is that the practices adopted by the "magicians, purifiers, charlatans, and quacks of our own day" (§1.23-4) are self-refuting. These practitioners "claim great piety and superior knowledge… Being at a loss, and having no treatment which would help, they concealed and sheltered themselves behind superstition, and called this illness sacred, in order that their utter ignorance might not be manifest" (§1.24-28). But this procedure, we are told, is backwards: "in my opinion their discussions show, not piety, as they think, but impiety

rather, implying that the gods do not exist, and what they call piety and the divine is, as I shall prove, impious and unholy" (§1.65-68).

The basis of this objection is that these practitioners advice treatments and claim powers which reveal that they cannot actually think the gods cause disease. This is because they treat the disease by changing behavior. The author reasons that "if to eat or apply these things engenders and increases the disease, while to refrain works a cure, then neither is the godhead to blame nor are the purifications beneficial; it is the foods that cure or hurt, and the power of godhead disappears" (§1.50-54) and similarly that "when [diseases] are removed by such purifications and by such treatment as this, there is nothing to prevent the production of attacks in men by devices that are similar. If so, something human is to blame, and not godhead" (§1.56-59).

The author of *The Sacred Disease* also objects to the magicians' professed claim to be able to control astronomical and meteorological phenomena, arguing

> For if a man by magic and sacrifice will bring the moon down, eclipse the sun, and cause storm and sunshine, I shall not believe that any of these things is divine, but human, seeing that the power of godhead is overcome and enslaved by the cunning of man" (§1.76-79).

He goes on to argue that "All such they ought to have treated in the opposite way; they should have brought them to the sanctuaries, with sacrifices and prayers, in supplication to the gods. As it is, however, they do nothing of the kind but merely purify them…Yet, if a god is indeed the cause they ought to have taken them to the sanctuaries and offered them to him" (§1.97-103). The author concludes that

> a god is more likely to purify and sanctify [the body] that he is to cause defilement. At least it is godhead the purifies, sanctifies and cleanses us from the greatest and most impious of our sins; and we ourselves fix boundaries to the sanctuaries and precincts of the gods, so that nobody may cross them unless he be pure. (§1.105-110)

In other words, *The Sacred Disease* argues that the heavens are controlled by the gods, not men, that health is likewise a function of divine power, and that divine power also allows us to maintain or retain a pious state of being.

This position from *The Sacred Disease* is very similar to the parallel passage in Eryximachus's speech. Both agree that the heavens are governed by the divine, not by men, and both agree that attempts to overstep humanity's bounds are impious. Though Eryximachus's speech does not quite articulate the details, we can easily supply them. On his view gratifying the disorderly Eros results in an imbalance between elements, in this case between mortals and immortals. An excess of concern with the mortal element, which we might call hubris, leads to impiety, which can be diagnosed and cured by the art of divination. That is, we can use the power of the orderly Eros to cleanse ourselves of impiety, much as *The Sacred Disease* suggests.

In short, then, it is notable that each of the topics discussed by Eryximachus in his speech closely parallel discussions in the early Hippocratic corpus, both in topic and in tone. To the uninitiated reader, Eryximachus's speech may look unorganized or overly broad, but once we read Eryximachus's speech in its Hippocratic context this messiness goes away. Eryximachus, much like the other speakers in the *Symposium,* composes a speech which closely aligns with the interests associated with his occupation.

§2.5 – Eryximachus and On Regimen

As I mentioned in §2.1 above, the Hippocratic corpus includes works written over centuries by a variety of hands, and so contains some rather fundamental inconsistencies. So far I have concentrated on a small number of works which are mostly in agreement and which we can be reasonably certain would have been available to Plato, or at least have expressed ideas "in the air" at the time of the *Symposium*'s writing. There is one work, however, which does not neatly fit into

this category, but which nevertheless merits special mention. This is *On Regimen*, a work which is likely to have been written in the late fifth or early fourth centuries BCE, roughly contemporaneously with the other texts we have examined.[58] *On Regimen* disagrees with these texts because it endorses a theory in which fire and water are the two most basic physical entities, as opposed to a more complex set of basic elements. Nevertheless, it is worth discussing the treatise, because more than any other single Hippocratic text, *On Regimen* closely parallels Eryximachus's speech.[59] This is true not only in terms of its general outlook and in the specific topics it mentions, but also in terms of its vocabulary and style.

We can begin with the overall tone of *On Regimen*. Many of the Hippocratic texts we've seen are explicitly polemical. *Ancient Medicine* is a clear example, for example in saying, of those who postulate a small set of causes of disease, that "all these obviously blunder in many points even of their statements, but they are most open to censure because they blunder in what is an art" (§1.4-8). *The Sacred Disease,* as we've seen, is unforgiving in its assessment of "charlatans and quacks". But *On Regimen* is much more conciliatory. In begins:

> If I thought that any one of my predecessors to write on human regimen in its relation to health had throughout written with correct knowledge everything that the human mind can comprehend about the subject, it would have been enough for me to learn what had been correctly worked out by the labours of others, and to make use of these results in so far as they severally appeared to be of use. As a matter of fact, while many have already written on this subject, nobody yet has rightly understood how he ought to treat it….Now none of them is blameworthy for being unable to make complete discoveries; but all are praiseworthy for attempting the research. Now I am not prepared to criticise their incorrect statements; nay, I have resolved to accept what they have well thought out (§1.1.1-11)

The tone here is humble and respectful. Compare this passage to the following lines of Eryximachus's speech.

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[58] Jouanna (1999), p. 409.

[59] Some of these parallels are noted by Allen (1984) 29, Dover (1980) 104, Hunter (2004) 56, Konstan & Young-Bruehl (1982) 42, Levin (2009) 279-80, McPherran (2006) 76.

> Pausanias introduced a crucial consideration in his speech, though in my opinion he did not develop it sufficiently. Let me therefore try to carry his argument to its logical conclusion. His distinction between the two species of Eros seems to me very useful indeed…. And now recall that, as Pausanias claimed, it is as honorable to yield to a good man as it is shameful to consort with the debauched. Well, my point is that the case of the human body is strictly parallel. (185e6-86c2)

In both cases, we see a thinker who is aware of the contributions of his predecessors, and sees his own project as one of furthering scientific progress. It is notable that, of all the speeches in the *Symposium*, it is only Phaedrus and Eryximachus who do not begin their speeches by explicitly criticizing an earlier speech, and for Phaedrus this is a trivial accomplishment since he spoke first.

Like Eryximachus, who argues that medicine was invented when Asclepius discovered how to engender harmony between the bodies basic elements, *On Regimen* argues

> I maintain that he who aspires to treat correctly of human regimen must first acquire knowledge and discernment of the nature of man in general – knowledge of its primary constituents and discernment of the components by which it is controlled. (§1.2.4)

These constituents, we are told, are fire and water, out of which not only humans, but animals and indeed everything else, are composed (§1.3.1-5). Fire and water, we learn in the next chapter, are composed of hot, dry, wet and cold (§1.4.1-3), and while our author does not mention other elements in the first book of *On Regimen,* we are told in §2.39 that it is simplistic to talk about, say, sweetness in absolute terms, and instead goes on to talk about the sundry properties of each kind of food. This is at least broadly in line with Eryximachus's claim that the basic elements that medicine is concerned with are hot/cold, wet/dry, bitter/sweet, and many others (186d8-e1).

Like Eryximachus and the authors of the Hippocratic texts surveyed in this chapter, *On Regimen* views health as a balance of the basic elements just mentioned, and in particular hot/cold and wet/dry. A physician treats a patient by using food, drink, and exercise as a means of controlling the balance of these elements; hence we are told that "it is necessary to know both how

one ought to lessen the power of these when they are strong by nature, and when they are weak to add by art strength to them, seizing each opportunity as it occurs" (§1.2.10-13). It is through mechanisms like these that

> All other things are set in due order (διακοσμέεται), both the soul of man and likewise his body. Into man enter parts of parts and wholes of wholes, containing a mixture of fire and water, some to take and others to give. Those that take give increase, those that give make diminution. (§1.6.1-4)

This process is used to bring about a friendship between elements: "Now such wander without thought, but combining with one another they realize what they are joining. For the suitable joins the suitable, while the unsuitable wars and fights and separates itself" (§1.6.18-21). It is no surprise, then, when we are told in a later chapter that "The finest water and the rarest fire, on being blended together (σύγκρησιν) in the human body, produce the most healthy condition" (§1.32.1-2). The author goes on in the rest of the chapter to detail the various ways that the elements can be blended, the specific tendencies associated with each, and the regimen needed to maintain health in each case.

§1.8 of *On Regimen* puts this point in an interesting way. While describing the effects of nutrition on the body, the author writes that

> For each separates first, and at the same time also comingles. And if, on changing position, they achieve a correct attunement (ἁρμονίης ὀρθῆς), which has three harmonic proportionals, covering altogether the octave, they live and grow by the same things as they did before. But if they do not achieve the attunement, and the low harmonize now with the high in the interval of the fourth, of the fifth, or in the octave, then the failure of one makes the whole scale of no value, as there can be no consonance, but they change from the greater to the less before their destiny. (§1.8.6-13).

This passage has two interesting features, both closely parallel to Eryximachus's speech. First, it conceives of bodily health as a kind of harmony. Second, it analyzes medicine and music according to the same principles.

The idea that medicine is one of many *technai* that all operate according to the same principles is the central insight of Eryximachus's speech. Eryximachus argues that the same pattern is at work across *technai,* from medicine to music to astronomy to divination (he also mentions farming, athletics, and cooking). The author of *On Regimen* does the same, arguing from §§13-24 that a wide range of *technai* all operate according to the same principles as medicine. While *On Regimen* extends this treatment far wider than Eryximachus does, the underlying idea is the same, and *On Regimen* treats each of the *technai* mentioned by Eryximachus.

Let us begin where we left off, with music. In addition to the passage quoted above, *On Regimen* makes the following claim in a later chapter:

> From the same notes come musical compositions that are not the same, from the high and from the low, which are alike in name but not alike in sound. Those that are most diverse make the best harmony; those that are least diverse make the worse. If a musician composed a piece all on one note, it would fail to please. It is the greatest changes and the most varied that please the most. (§1.18.2-6)

The idea expressed here is precisely the same one found in Eryximachus: music is a literal harmony of high and low, and the pleasures of music are due to its variation. Eryximachus warns us that this pleasure must be carefully enjoyed, lest we slip into debauchery, and suggests that this worry is parallel to the problem in medicine of regulating food so as to be able to enjoy fine meals without unhealthy effects (187e1-6). It is notable, then, that *On Regimen* immediately follows the passage just quoted with the following:

> Cooks prepare for men dishes of ingredients that disagree while agreeing, mixing together things of all sorts, from things that are the same, things that are not the same, to be food and drink for a man. If the cook make all alike there is no pleasure in them; and it would not be right either if he were to compound all things in one dish. The notes struck while playing music are some high, some low. The tongue copies music in distinguishing, of the things that touch it, the sweet and the acid, the discordant from the concordant. Its notes are struck high and low, and it is well neither when the high notes are struck low nor when the low are struck high. When the tongue is well in tune the concord pleases, but there is pain when the tongue is out of tune. (§1.18.6-16)

In both Eryximachus's speech and *On Regimen,* music and cooking are closely connected, and both operate according to the same principles as medicine.

The next important *technē* in Eryximachus's speech is astronomy, and this is a topic *On Regimen* discusses at length. In Eryximachus's speech, astronomy is related to medicine in two ways: it operates according to the same principles, and it is one of the causes of health and disease. *On Regimen* agrees on both points. As we've already seen, *On Regimen* holds that meteorological and astronomical phenomena are constituted by the same elements and governed by the same forces as the human body (§1.3.1-5). This idea is made even more explicit in a later chapter, where our author makes the following striking argument:

> In a word, all things were arranged in the body, in a fashion conformable to itself, by fire, a copy of the whole, the small after manner of the great and the great after the manner of the small. The belly is made the greatest, a steward for dry water and moist, to give to all and to take from all, the power of the sea, nurse of creatures suited to it, destroyer of those not suited. And around it a concretion of cold water and moist, a passage for cold breath and warm, a copy of the earth, which alters all things that fall into it…And in this fire made for itself three groups of circuits, within and without each bounded by the others: those towards the hollows of the moist, the power of the moon; those towards the outer circumference, towards the solid enclosure, the power of the stars; the middle circuits, bounded both within and without. (§1.10.1-15)

Poetic language aside, this passage argues that the human body is a microcosm of the whole *kosmos,* by having the same elements and operating according to the same principles.

It is no surprise, then, that the competent physician must attend to the skies as well as to their patients' bodies. Hence we are told "A man must observe the risings and settings of stars, that he may know how to watch for change and excess in food, drink, wind and the whole universe, from which diseases exist among men" (§1.2.25-28). Like other Hippocratic texts, *On Regimen* associates particular constitutions with certain diseases at certain seasons (e.g. a body with an abundance of heat will be disposed to fever in the summer) (§1.32), and also associates diseases

with certain regions and climates (§1.37-2.38). Though *On Regimen* focuses much more on unhealthy climates than on healthy, it does argue that

> The winds which strike regions from off the sea, or from snow, frost, lakes or rivers, all moisten and cool both plants and animals, and are healthy unless they be cold to an excess, when they are hurtful by reason of the great changes of cold and heat which they make in bodies…. All other winds which blow from the foresaid places are beneficial, as they afford a pure and serene air, and a moisture to temper the heat of the soul. (§2.38.37-46)

The basic idea here is the same as we saw in Eryximachus's speech and in *Airs, Waters, Places*: Excessive climatic elements cause disease, while balance between the elements causes health.

Like Eryximachus, *On Regimen* also gives a prominent role to the divine. Though *On Regimen* never mentions Eros specifically, its author does think that the *kosmos* is controlled by divine forces: "all things take place for them through a divine necessity… And as the things of the other world come to this, and those of this world go to that, they combine with one another, and each fulfills its allotted destiny, both unto the greater and the lesser" (§1.5.9-13) *On Regimen* even devotes a chapter to the art of divination, arguing

> I will show that arts are visibly like to the affections of man, both visible and invisible. Seercraft is after this fashion. By the visible it gets knowledge of the invisible, by the invisible knowledge of the visible, by the present knowledge of the future, by the dead knowledge of the living, and by means of that which understands not men have understanding – he who knows, right understanding always, he who knows not, sometimes right understanding, sometimes wrong. Seercraft herein copies the nature and life of man. (§1.12.1-6)

This ability is grounded in a claim made in the preceding chapter:

> For the mind of the gods taught them to copy their own functions, and though they know what they are doing yet they know not what they are copying. For all things are like, through unlike, all compatible through incompatible…The fashion of each is contrary, through in agreement…. For custom was settled by men for themselves without their knowing those things about which they settled their custom; but the nature of all things was arranged by the gods. Now that which men arrayed never remains constant, whether right or wrong; but whatsoever things were arranged by the gods always remain right. So great the difference between the right and the wrong. (§1.11.1-12)

In other words, the gods have arranged things such that opposites are compatible and in agreement, and humans can have some awareness of this underlying nature even if they don't understand why. The art of divination is one example of this awareness in action.

So far we've seen that *On Regimen* bears a striking similarity to the content of Eryximachus's speech. The similarity also extends to some of the less central aspects of the speech. As we saw above, *On Regimen* shares a modest, collaborative approach with Eryximachus's speech. They also share some important vocabulary. Eryximachus uses a variety of terms to refer to the balance of basic elements which constitute health, which, as we saw in §2.2 above, are used in similar ways in the Hippocratic corpus. *On Regimen* is no exception. The most notable example is one we've already seen, ἁρμονία, which is used in both the literal sense in music (§1.18.2), as well as a figurative sense to refer to health (§1.8.8-10, 1.9.3). The same sections use συμφωνία in a similar way (§1.8.8-11, 1.18.15). *On Regimen* also emphasizes how opposites agree with one another (ὁμολογέεται) at §1.11.7-8.

There is one final notable feature of *On Regimen* which connects it to Eryximachus's speech. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, *On Regimen* is somewhat of an outlier among Hippocratic texts. This is primarily because it (i) discusses a much broader range of phenomena, and (ii) expresses a strange mix of influences from Empedocles, Heraclitus, and the Pythagoreans (see esp. §1.3-12). One might be tempted to ignore *On Regimen* as a serious work in medical theory and natural philosophy. But I think this would be too hasty. Who else is an eclectic physician/philosopher who discusses a wide range of phenomena and draws ideas from Empedocles, Heraclitus, and the Pythagoreans? The answer is obvious: Eryximachus himself. The possible influence of Empedocles (which applies to many Hippocratic thinkers, not just

Eryximachus) has been well-noted and needs no further discussion.[60] Eryximachus explicitly discusses Heraclitus at 187a-b, in terms very similar to *On Regimen* §1.8. And the influence of the Pythagoreans is easily seen in Eryximachus's discussion of music, astronomy, and divination. *On Regimen* also explicitly discusses hermaphrodites (§1.28.31) in part of a larger discussion of how offspring exhibit various combinations of male/female pairings; Aristophanes, of course, raises a similar point (191d6-e1). Though *On Regimen* may be an outlier among Hippocratic texts, it nevertheless shares with them an intriguing number of commonalities with Eryximachus's speech in the *Symposium*.

§2.6 – Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Eryximachus's speech is informed throughout by (at least one version of) Hippocratic theory. This is true regarding the philosophical method that Eryximachus uses, his vocabulary and choice of basic concepts, and his treatment of specific issues regarding both medicine and other *technai* that we would view as unrelated, such as astronomy. To modern readers, Eryximachus's speech looks overly broad if not haphazard. But when the speech is read in its proper context, Eryximachus can be seen the way Plato intends to present him. Eryximachus is a Hippocratic physician discussing Eros in a scientific way. In this respect, at least, he is certainly no worse than any of the other speakers in the *Symposium,* each of whom approaches the topic of Eros from the perspective of his own profession. If we do not note this feature of Eryximachus's speech, we will certainly misunderstand it. As in the last chapter, this does not prove that Plato would want us to read Eryximachus's speech favorably. But it does at least require us to give Eryximachus the benefit of the doubt, and treat it as a representative of a school of thought that, even if wrong by Plato's lights, is at least worthy of careful consideration.

[60] See the first footnote of this chapter.

§3 - Eryximachus and Plato

§3.1 – Introduction: Plato on Eryximachus

In the last two chapters I argued that Eryximachus presents a coherent theory that is thoroughly Hippocratic in both tone and content, a speech which matches Eryximachus's status as a serious intellectual peer to the likes of Aristophanes and Socrates. This undermines two of the biggest criticisms of Eryximachus, that Plato depicts him as a buffoon and that his speech is a jumble of faux-scientific nonsense. But what we've seen so far only shows that Eryximachus is a fairly standard Hippocratic physician. It does not follow that Plato would have viewed this as a good thing.

So in this final chapter I will discuss Plato's on views on medicine and related fields, both in general and with respect to the particulars of Eryximachus's speech. I will make three arguments in particular: (1) Plato consistently shows respect for medicine, which Eryximachus represents, throughout the corpus, and he uses medical concepts to illustrate important ideas of his own, especially regarding virtue and wisdom; (2) Plato agrees with each of the substantive points of Eryximachus's speech when he discusses them in his own work; and (3) Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* agrees with Eryximachus in many important respects.

These three points show that Plato views both the perspective and the content of Eryximachus's speech much more favorably than most commentators have. Plato uses Eryximachus to express views which he endorses himself. Why, then, is Eryximachus merely one of several speakers in the *Symposium,* and one which is apparently superseded by Diotima? The answer, as I will argue below, is that Eryximachus gets most of the facts right, but fails to provide the correct underlying metaphysical foundation, which Diotima later supplies. Hence Diotima's speech should be read as completing Eryximachus's, rather than competing with it.

§3.2 – Plato on Medicine

Several commentators read Eryximachus, and often the speakers in the *Symposium* as well, as competitors for a prize which Plato ultimately wishes to award to philosophy. Hunter puts this point clearly:

> Plato seems to have no time for the exaggerated claims of medicine, which had little in common with what he saw as the true pursuit of understanding (philosophy), and we are clearly meant to sympathize with Aristophanes' obvious amusement at Eryximachus' performance.[61]

Likewise Dover argues that

> It is tempting to believe that Plato composed this speech… in order to ridicule the tendency of scientific theorists to formulate excessively general laws governing the phenomena of the universe. Medical writers sometimes criticise such generalization… but they are none the less addicted to it.[62]

And Hunter, who has probably done the best job of noting the extent to which Eryximachus's speech is infused with Hippocratic influence, charges that "Plato seems to have no time for the exaggerated claims of medicine, which had little in common with what he saw as the true pursuit of understanding (philosophy), and we are clearly meant to sympathize with Aristophanes' obvious amusement at Eryximachus' performance."[63] On this view, Eryximachus is subjected to the same sort of treatment which the sophists, rhetoricians, and poets so often experience in the Platonic corpus. Like the others, Eryximachus must lose the competition to the true philosopher, in this case Socrates and his purported mentor Diotima.

This reading of the *Symposium* is typically motivated by a focus on the *Republic*, and in particular *Republic* III, where Plato has Socrates ask

> Yet could you find a greater sign of bad and shameful education in a city than that the need for skilled doctors and lawyers is felt not only by inferior people and

[61] Hunter (2004) 54.
[62] Dover (1980) 105.
[63] Hunter (2004) 54.

> craftsmen but by those who claim to have been brought up in the manner of free men? (405a1-4)[64]

Based on this passage, Levin argues that

> Here in the *Symposium* Plato rejects medicine's claim to be the *technê* par excellence – a rank for whose undisputed allocation to philosophy he argues in the *Republic* – thus setting the stage for the latter's withdrawal of its *technê* standing *tout court.*[65]

Likewise Rosen contends that

> In the *Republic* the conflict between medicine and justice, suggested above by the words of Aristophanes and Eryximachus, is explicit. Medicine is linked with legal rhetoric or sophistry (as was historically the case); an excessive dependence upon "skilled doctors and jurors" is a sign that political justice and virtue have succumbed to the disease of selfishness and fear of death…. One must also notice that medicine is not subjected to the rule of political justice…but to philosophy.[66]

If this reading of the *Republic* is right, then Plato must view medicine with suspicion, even if he does not express the outright hostility to it that he does to sophistry. Since Eryximachus is the obvious avatar for medicine, his speech must contain whatever it is that leads Plato to denigrate his *technē.*

Is this reading of Plato correct? I think it is not. In fact, I think the opposite is true: Plato consistently praises medicine, using it as the model *technē* in both epistemology and ethics.[67] There are two main sources of evidence for this view: (1) Plato's repeated praise of physicians and their art; and (2) the status of health as a good throughout the Platonic corpus, and its connection to virtue and wisdom.

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[64] All translations of Plato outside the *Symposium* in this chapter come from the Hackett editions.

[65] Levin (2009) 276. The issue of what exactly Plato thinks about *technai* and whether philosophy should count as one is a large and complex topic, especially if the answers differ between dialogues. Levin's argument is that Plato changes his view on medicine *because* of his changing views on philosophy's status as a *technē.* I will only comment on the first part of this statement. I will argue that Plato's view of medicine in the *Symposium* and *Republic* are not materially different from the views in earlier or later dialogues. What Plato thinks about philosophy as a *technē* is an independent question which I will leave to one side.

[66] Rosen (1987) 93-4.

[67] See Agarwalla (2010) 82-4 for a similar argument focusing on the *Gorgias* rather than the *Symposium*.

Let us begin with Plato's treatment of medicine. As I argued in §1.1, Eryximachus is treated rather respectfully throughout the *Symposium;* Phaedrus and Aristophanes defer to his medical judgment, the whole party follows his suggestion for the night's activities, and Socrates and Aristophanes banter with him as peers. This is not an anomaly; Plato regularly speaks well of physicians. The two most relevant cases come from the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, where Plato explicitly praises Hippocrates and Asclepius, respectively. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates claims that both "Hippocrates and true argument" endorse the same philosophical strategy (270c9-10), and that "Proceeding by any other method would be like walking with the blind" (270d9-e2). Hippocrates is also the first example given in the *Protagoras* of an expert (one of that dialogue's main themes) to explain the idea to a young man of the same name what studying with an expert entails (311b-c).

Like Eryximachus, Hippocrates is identified in the *Phaedrus* as the one of the Asclepidae (270c3). Asclepius is praised extensively in *Republic* III, in the same part of text cited by those who take Plato to be hostile to medicine. But I think this interpretation of Plato misreads the text. It is true that Socrates claims that the need for skilled doctors in a city is a sign of a "bad and shameful education" (405a6). But he goes on to agree that Kallipolis will have good doctors (408c-e). How can both these claims be true? Because Plato distinguishes between two kinds of medicine, corresponding to two different kinds of need. One kind of medicine, which Plato attributes to a physical trainer turned physician named Herodicus (406a), cares about the body at all costs, and will therefore prolong the length of life even at the expense of its quality. Plato repeatedly emphasizes that Asclepius did not practice this kind of medicine (405d7, 406a5-7, c1-5). The good kind of medicine, which Asclepius did practice, is intended "for those whose bodies are healthy in their natures and habits but have some specific disease" (407c7-d1) or who need medical help "for

wounds or because of some seasonal illness" (405c8-9). This is in contrast with those who become ill through poor lifestyle or whose bodies are naturally incurable (405d1-2, 407b4-7, 407d4-e2). According to Plato, Asclepius was the inventor of the good kind of medicine (just as Eryximachus says), and he is ascribed a kind of practical wisdom beyond the mechanics of treating disease (406c, 407c-d).[68] This tradition is twice described as "ingenius" (κομψοὺς, 405d4, 408b6), and most notably, Socrates calls Asclepius a "statesman" (Πολιτικόν, 407e3), which is rather high praise in a book called Πολιτεία.

The *Republic* is not the only place where the physician is held in high esteem. The *Statesman* also argues for a close connection between physicians and kings:

> Doctors provide the clearest parallel [to rulers]. We believe in them whether they cure us with our consent or without it, by cutting or burning or applying some other painful treatment, and whether they do so according to written rules or apart from written rules, and whether as poor men or rich. In all these cases we are no less inclined at all to say they are doctors, so long as they are in charge of us on the basis of expertise, purging or otherwise reducing us, or else building us up – it is no matter, if only each and every one of those who care for our bodies act for our bodies' good, in making them better than they were, and so preserves what is in their case. It's in this way, as I think, and in no other way that we'll lay down the criterion of medicine and of any other sort of rule whatsoever; it is the only correct criterion. (293b1-c3)[69]

A similar idea is hinted at, though not quite explicitly articulated in the *Euthydemus*, where medicine and farming are the two examples given to elucidate the idea that the so-called 'kingly art' must have a product (291e-92a). The *Gorgias* famously makes the same point when distinguishing between *technai* and mere knacks. Here Socrates argues

> S: I'm saying that of this pair of subjects there are two crafts. The one for the soul I call politics; the one for the body, though it is one, I can't give you a name for offhand, but while the care of the body is a single craft, I'm saying it has two parts:

[68] A similar point is made at *Euthydemus* 289a and *Laches* 195c-e.

[69] Cf. *Statesman* 2970e11-13 where the Eleatic Visitor argues that the two likeness of a ruler are "the noble steersman and the doctor who is 'worth many others'", a quote from the *Illiad* repeated at *Symposium* 214b7 when Alcibiades greets Eryximachus.

> gymnastics and medicine. And in politics, the counterpart of gymnastics is legislation, and the part that corresponds to medicine is justice. (464b3-8)

This idea is revisited once again in the *Laws,* where then Athenian is explaining how reason rules:

> A: We've no need to multiply examples, but take a general in command of his army, or any doctor tending to a human body. What will they each aim at, on the assumption that they intend, as they should, to preserve their charges safe and sound? Won't the general aim at victory and control over the enemy, and won't doctors and their attendants aim to keep the body in a healthy condition? (961e7-a3)

This shows that Plato is consistent about the value of medicine throughout the corpus; the *Symposium* is no exception.[70]

The similarity between physicians and rulers is not the only parallel Plato draws. Plato also frequently likens physicians to philosophers.[71] As we saw above, Plato praises Hippocrates in the *Phaedrus* for advocating the right method of inquiry. It is on these grounds and similar that Jouanna concludes

> The importance assigned by Plato to the comparison with the art of medicine, and more particularly with the medicine of Hippocrates, in his epistemological reflections upon the art of rhetoric indicates that the epistemological analysis of the physicians of the fifth century was regarded by their contemporaries as pioneering work. It was also transferrable: Plato was to borrow the epistemological model of medicine, the science of the body, and apply it to rhetoric, the science of the soul.[72]

The *Charmides* also praises Greek doctors for following this method, though it also criticizes some for not extending this treatment to the soul (156b-e). In the *Statesman,* Plato claims that the physician's art has two aims, "health and truth" (299b3-4). The first example given in the *Crito* to show that one should only listen to the advice of those with knowledge is the case of doctors and

[70] Cf. Allen (1984) 30, Edelstein (1945) 98. Edelstein also argues that Plato does not compare the physician to the philosopher (92, 99), which we will see below is incorrect.
[71] Cf. Dean-Jones (2003) 104, McPherran (2006), 79-80.
[72] Jouanna (1999) 256.

trainers (47a-b). And the *Laws* distinguishes between two kinds of doctors, only one of which had understanding of the essence of health and disease. The Athenian makes the following claim:

> Make no mistake about what would happen, if one of those doctors who are innocent of theory and practice medicine by rule of thumb were ever to come across a gentleman doctor conversing with a gentleman patient. *This doctor would be acting almost like a philosopher*, engaging in a discussion that ranged over the source of the disease and pushed the inquiry back into the whole nature of the body. (857c6-d4, emphasis added)[73]

The same position is also suggested by the *Republic*. As we saw above, physicians are like rulers and physicians have knowledge. In Kallipolis the rulers are also those with knowledge, i.e. philosophers. This view also provides the basis for Socrates's warning to Hippocrates about studying with Protagoras. Socrates argues that, in the same way that only doctors or trainers know what is good to buy at the market, neither buyer nor merchant knows what one should study, "unless one happens to by a physician of the soul" (313e2).

The idea that physicians are analogous to philosophers (or to the *Republic*'s philosopher-kings) makes more sense if we include our secondary source of evidence for Plato's respect for medicine: the conceptual link between health and goodness or virtue.[74] This theme is, of course, a crucial part of the *Republic*, where we are told that "Virtue seems, then, to be a kind of health, fine condition, and well-being of the soul, while vice is disease, shameful condition, and weakness" (444d13-e2).[75] This view is the cornerstone of the *Republic*'s answer to the challenge of whether injustice is more choiceworthy than justice, as Glaucon reveals:

> But, Socrates, this inquiry looks ridiculous to me now that justice and injustice have been shown to be as we have described. Even if one has every kind of food and

[73] Cf. *Laws* 965b: "Didn't we say that a really skilled craftsman or guardian in any field must be able not merely to see the many individual instances of a thing, but also to win through to a knowledge of the single central concept, and when he's understood that, put the various details in their proper place in the overall picture?" (965b)

[74] See Holmes (2010) for a more in-depth treatment of this topic.

[75] Cf. *Gorgias* 504c-d: "S: I think that the name for the states of organization of the body is "healthy", as a result of which health and the rest of bodily excellence comes into being it is. Is this so or isn't it? C: It is. S: And the name for the states of organization and order of the soul is "lawful" and "law", which lead people to become law-abiding and orderly, and there are justice and self-control."

> drink, lots of money, and every sort of power to rule, life is thought to be not worth living when the body's nature is ruined. So even if someone can do whatever he wishes…how can it be worth living when his soul – the very thing by which he lives – is ruined and in turmoil? (445a5-b4)

In other words, Glaucon sees that injustice is not worth choosing because it is a kind of psychic disease, and so is at least as bad as somatic disease obviously is. This idea is not just found in the *Republic,* however. As early as the *Crito* we get the following argument between Socrates and Crito:

> S: Come now, if we ruin that which is improved by health and corrupted by disease by not following the opinions of those who know, is life worth living for us when that is ruined? And that is the body, is it not? C: Yes. S: And is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in bad condition? C: In no way. S: And is life worth living for us when that part of us corrupted that unjust action harms and just action benefits/ Or do we think that part of us, whatever it is, that is concerned with justice and injustice, is inferior to the body? C: Not at all. (47d8-e6)

The close connection between disease and vice is also an important premise in the *Gorgias*, as shown in this exchange between Socrates and Callicles:

> S: What about that of a person's physical condition? Would you say that what is bad here consists of weakness, disease, ugliness, and the like? P: Yes, I would. S: Do you believe that there's also some corrupt condition of the soul? P: Of course. S: And don't you call this condition injustice, ignorance, cowardice, and the like? P: Yes, certainly. S: Of these three things, one's finances, one's body, and one's soul, you said that there are three states of corruption, namely poverty, disease, and injustice? P: Yes. (477b3-c2)

Likewise *Laws* argues that

> I suppose our view is that this vice we've named – acquisitiveness – is what is called 'disease' when it appears in flesh and blood, and 'plague' when brought by the seasons or at intervals of years; while if it occurs in the state and society, the same vice turns up under yet another name: 'injustice'. (906c2-6)

This argument follows an earlier pronouncement that "These benefits fall into two classes, "human" and "divine"….Health heads the list of lesser benefits… good judgment itself is the leading "divine" benefit" (631c1-6).

What all this shows us is that Plato is consistent throughout his dialogues in presenting medicine and medical experts in a favorable light. In the whole corpus I have found only two cases where Plato appears to speak ill of medicine. One is the passage from the *Charmides* cited above, where Socrates praises a fictitious Thracian physician/king over the vague "Greek doctors". The other is *Philebus* 56a-b, where medicine is included in a list of *technai* which are learned by trial-and-error. In both cases, Plato's complaint is not about medicine as such, but rather merely that there is a wrong way of practicing it. But there is also a correct method, a method which Plato attributes to other doctors, and in particular to Hippocrates and the Asclepiadae, in many other works. Consequently, we should not take these two remarks to constitute Plato's final judgment about physicians, especially not the kind of physician that Eryximachus represents, because Plato is sensitive to the difference between good and bad practitioners of a craft. The same goes for the *Republic*, which Levin, Rosen, and others have misread as being far more hostile to medicine than it actually is. Plato does not view medicine as a rival with philosophy or for statecraft. Instead, he views it as a kindred discipline, one with a legitimate claim to both practical and theoretical wisdom.

§3.3 – Plato on Health and Harmony

Even if Plato is favorably disposed toward medicine as a discipline, it does not follow that Plato views Eryximachus's speech favorably. Plato may have still meant to ridicule Eryximachus's position, even if he is otherwise sympathetic to physicians. Levin argues that "The fact that Eryximachus speaks so confidently, yet ignorantly, on what is for Plato a crucial question – namely, what does and does not qualify as a *technê*? – helps to undermine his alleged insight and authority, serving thereby once again to cast the physician in a negative light."[76] And in one of the

[76] Levin (2009) 301.

earliest and most colorful examples of this line of thought, Gildersleeve writes in a review of Cesareo that "one of the commentators on the Symposium, whom he cites, identifies Eryximachos with Plato himself, as monstrous a theory in my eyes, as if Shakespeare had been supposed to identify himself with Malvolio."[77]

This reading of Plato, I will argue, would be a mistake. Eryximachus advocates a specific methodological approach, which he applies to five areas: medicine, music, astronomy, divination, and ethics. Plato does not only agree with this methodology, as we saw in the last section. He also agrees with Eryximachus on the details of each of these five areas. In other words, Plato himself endorses the substance of Eryximachus's speech throughout his own work.

We can begin where Eryximachus begins, with health. Eryximachus defines medicine as the art of bringing about love or friendship or agreement between the basic elements of the body, which is accomplished by using the power of Eros to get the basic elements to be attracted toward one another rather than toward themselves via a process of repletion and depletion. On this view health is a state of harmony between the elements, and disease is a state of disharmony. This is a view which Plato endorses as well. The earlier dialogues do not go into detail on this matter, but the middle and later dialogue explicitly define health in this way. The clearest expression of this point comes from the *Timaeus*, much of which Plato devotes to discussion of the human body.[78] Here Plato writes

> But if [one] models himself after what we have called the foster mother and nurse of the universe and persistently refuses to allow his body any degree of rest but exercises and continually agitates it through its whole extent, he will keep in a state of natural equilibrium the internal and the external motions. And if the agitation is a measured (μετρίως) one, he will succeed in bringing order and regularity (κατακοσμῇ) to those disturbances and those [elemental] parts that wander all over the body according to their affinities in the way described in the account we have earlier about the universe. He will not allow one hostile element to position itself

[77] Gildersleeve (1909) 110. The passage Gildersleeve has in mind is from von Sybel (1888) 29-30.
[78] Cf. Allen (1984) 29 n. 51.

> next to another (ἐχθρὸν παρ' ἐχθρὸν) and so breed wars and diseases in the body. Instead, he will have one friendly element placed by another (φίλον παρὰ φίλον), and so bring about health. (88d6-89a1)

This point emphasizes both of the central elements of Eryximachus's account. Health is a state of harmony (i.e. order) between the elements of the body, elements which can either be hostile toward one another or friendly toward one another. These elements are the same ones which constitute the universe as a whole, as Plato notes when he writes

> How diseases originate is, I take it, obvious to all. Given that there are four kinds of stuff out of which the body has been constructed – earth, fire, water, and air – it may happen that some of these unnaturally increase themselves at the expense of the others. Or they may switch regions, each leaving its own and moving into another's region. Or again, since there is in fact more than one variety of fire and the other stuffs, it may happen that a given bodily part accommodates a particular variety that is not appropriate for it. When these things happen, they bring on conflicts and diseases. (81e6-82a7)[79]

Plato goes on to give surprisingly specific views on the various humors that constitute the body (humors themselves made of the four basic elements), all in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of the Hippocratic corpus (82e-84e).[80] Plato even analyzes epilepsy, i.e. the 'sacred disease', in the same way that the Hippocratic author of *Sacred Disease* does, as a blockage of air caused by excess phlegm and bile (85a-b).[81] And like Eryximachus and the Hippocratic physicians, Plato argues in the *Timaeus* that the mechanism for producing health is repletion and depletion (80e4-81a2).[82]

Though not as explicit as the *Timaeus,* other Platonic dialogues express the same view. The *Philebus,* in its discussion of pleasure, gives the following argument after noting that health and harmony are in the same ontological category (31c10-11).

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[79] Similar sentiments are expressed at 82b2-7, 83a2-4, and 87c4-d3.
[80] Demont (2005) 277-8. Cf. *Rep.* (564b-c): "These two [drones & followers] cause two problems in any constitution in which they arise, like phlegm and bile in the body. And it is against them that the good doctor and lawgiver of a city must take no less advance precaution than a wise beekeeper."
[81] McPherran (2006) 77.
[82] Cf. Nutton (2004) 117-8. Jouanna (2012) details further influences of *Regimen* on the *Timaeus,* on perception and the rotation of the soul specifically.

> S: What I claim to find when we find the harmony in living creatures disrupted, there will at the same time be a disintegration of their nature and a rise of pain. P: What you say is very plausible. S: But if the reverse happens, and harmony is regained and the former nature restored, we have to say that pleasure arises, if we must pronounce only a few words on the weightiest matters in the shortest possible time. (31d4-10)

The *Philebus* also recommends treatment by opposites to create balanced mixtures, arguing

> Take the case that we just mentioned, of itching (ψώρας) and scratching (γαργαλισμῶν), as an example where the pains outweigh the pleasures. Now, when the irritation and infection are inside and cannot be reached by rubbing and scratching, there is only a relief on the surface. In case they treat these parts by exposing them to fire or it's opposite – they go from one extreme to the other in their distress – they sometimes procure enormous pleasures. But sometimes this leads to a state inside that is opposite to that outside, with a mixture of pain and pleasures, whichever way the balance may turn, because this treatment disperses by force what was mixed together or mixes together what was separate, so that pains arise besides the pleasures. (46d7-47a1)[83]

Like the *Timaeus,* the *Philebus* endorses the notion that basic elements can be either friendly or hostile to one another:

> Pleasure and pain may rather turn out to share the predicament of hot and cold and other such things that are welcome (ἀσπαστέον) at one point but unwelcome (οὐκ ἀσπαστέον) at another, because they are not good, but it happens that some of them do occasionally assume a beneficial nature. (32d)

And like the *Timaeus,* the *Philebus* gives an important role to the processes of repletion and depletion:

> It has now been said repeatedly that it is destruction of the nature of those entities through combinations and separations, through processes of filling and emptying as well as certain kinds of growth and decay, that gives rise to pain and suffering, distress, and whatever else comes to pass that goes under such a name. (42c9-d3)

It is also notable that the agent responsible for the process of order and limit on basic elements in the *Philebus* is Aphrodite (12b-c, 26b), whom Diotima makes Eros's liege (*Symp.* 203b-c) and whom Eryximachus equates with Eros (185e2-3).[84]

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[83] Note too the parallels with Eryximachus's treatment of Aristophanes hiccups.

[84] McPherran (2010) explores this point in more detail.

The *Republic* express similar views, though less explicitly. As we saw in the last section, the *Republic* defines virtue as a kind of psychic health, and virtue as a kind of psychic illness. Just before this point Plato has Socrates claim that "To produce health is to establish the components of the body in a natural relation of control (κρατεῖν) and being controlled (κρατεῖσθαι), one by another, while to produce disease is to establish a relation of ruling (ἄρχειν) and being ruled (ἄρχεσθαι) contrary to nature" (444d3-6). Justice and injustice are also conceived as states of ruling and being ruled between the parts of the soul. This sounds only vaguely similar to Eryximachus's view in the *Symposium,* until we remember that in the *Republic* the just soul is moderate, and moderation exists when "the ruler and the ruled in any city share the same belief about who should rule" (431d9-e1), and that this makes moderation a kind of harmony (431e7-8). The same point holds, of course, for the parts of the soul as well:

> And isn't he moderate because of the friendly (φιλίᾳ) and harmonious (συμφωνίᾳ) relations between these same parts, namely, when the ruler and the ruled believe in common that the rational part should rule (ἄρχειν) and don't engage in civil war against it? (442c10-d1).

If this is right, then one part "ruling" another is, at least in the healthy cases, one part being friendly and harmonious with another. *Laws* agrees with the *Republic* about the parallels between body and state, and makes the following claim straight out of *Ancient Medicine*:

> Take as an example the way the body gets used to all sorts of food and drink and exercise. At first they upset it, but then it the course of time it's this very regimen that is responsible for its putting on flesh. Then the regimen and the flesh form a kind of partnership, so that the body grows used to this congenial and familiar system, and lives a life of perfect happiness and health. (797e2-98a2)[85]

These works are all consistent in showing that Plato is sympathetic to Eryximachus's theory.

Our next topic is music, which Eryximachus defines as the science of Eros on rhythm and harmony (187c4-5). According to Eryximachus, music and medicine operate according to the

[85] Cf. *Lysis* 217a-c, where Socrates argues that the healthy body loves medicine for the sake of health.

same principles. Plato, apparently, agrees, as the following exchange between Socrates and Glaucon shows.

> S: Now, isn't the best physical training akin to the simple music and poetry we were describing a moment ago? ... I believe that we'd be right to compare this diet and this entire life-style to the kinds of lyric odes and songs that are composed in all sorts of modes and rhythms. G: Certainly. S: Just as embellishment in the one gives rise to licentiousness, doesn't it give rise to illness in the other? But simplicity in music and poetry makes for moderation in the soul, and in physical training it makes for bodily health? G: That's absolutely true. (404b-e)

As we'll see, Plato agrees not only that music and medicine are similar; he also agrees with Eryximachus on both the nature of music and its moral relevance.

Regarding the nature of music, Eryximachus claims that a literal, musical harmony is created when high and low notes are brought into agreement, and a rhythm is created when fast and slow beats are brought into agreement (187a8-b4, b7-c2). This is something Plato agrees with. For instance, *Laws* writes that "Order in movement is called 'rhythm', and order in the vocal sounds – the combination of high and low notes – is called 'harmony'" (664e8-665a3). And when discussing expertise in the *Sophist* the Eleatic Visitor asks "Well then, isn't it the same with high and low notes? The musician is the one with the expertise to know which ones mix and which ones don't, and the unmusical person is the one who doesn't understand that" (253b1-4). The *Philebus* goes into even more detail:

> S: We should posit low and high pitch as two kinds, and equal pitch as a third kind. Or what would you say? P: Just that. S: But you could not yet claim knowledge of music if you knew only this much, though if you were ignorant even about that, you would be quite incompetent in these matters, as one might say. P: Certainly. S: But you will be component, my friend, once you have learned how many intervals there are in high pitch and low pitch, what character they have, by what notes the intervals are defined, and the kinds of combinations they form – all of which our forbears have discovered and left to us, their successors, together with the names of these modes of harmony. And again the motions of the body display other and similar characteristics of this kind, which they say should be measured by number and called rhythm and meters. (17c4-d6)

It may look at first like the *Philebus* goes beyond the framework of Eryximachus's speech by suggesting that there are three distinct pitches, but this isn't quite right. High, low, and equal here are comparative terms, and having two equal notes is equivalent to having a second either high or low note, which is consistent with Eryximachus's view.[86]

The second and more important component of Eryximachus's comments on music, however, is its role in moral education. Eryximachus argues that

> It is not difficult to diagnose the erotic effects in the arrangement itself of harmony and rhythm, for the double Eros is in no way present there. But when one has to make use of the application of rhythm and harmony to people, either in making it (which is called 'songwriting'), or in the correct use of the melodies and rhythms already produced (which is called 'education), here a good craftsman is sorely needed. The same principle applies once again, that it is necessary to gratify and preserve the Eros of orderly people, and make those who aren't more orderly. One must be careful in the application [of disorderly Eros] when one applies it, so that one may enjoy its pleasure but not foster debauchery. (187d7–e3)[87]

In other words, Eryximachus advocates using the literal harmony of music to make one's audience internally harmonious. This is an issue which Plato spends a great deal of time discussing. The idea that a good person should be considered harmonious or musical is a common one in the Platonic corpus. For instance, in his eponymous dialogue Laches says

> Whenever I hear a man discussing virtue or some kind of wisdom, then, if he really is a man and worthy of the words he utters, I am completely delighted to see the appropriateness and harmony existing between the speaker and his words. And such a man seems to me to be genuinely musical, producing the most beautiful harmony, not on the lyre or some other pleasure instrument, but actually rendering his own life harmonious by fitting his deeds to his words in a truly Dorian mode, not in the

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[86] There is one puzzling counter-example to this view, when in the *Laws* the Athenian enjoins "The lyre should not be used to plan an elaborate independent melody: that is, its strings must produce no notes except those of the composer of the melody being played; small intervals should not be combined with large, nor quick tempo with slow, nor low notes with high. Similarly, the rhythms of the music of the lyre must not be tricked out with all sorts of frills and adornments. All this sort of thing must be kept from students who are going to acquire a working knowledge of music in three years, without wasting time" (812d4-e5). Presumably this point is meant to apply only to musical education.

[87] I depart from most commentators in following manuscripts **W**'s "μέλεσί τε καὶ ῥυθμοῖς" rather than **BT**'s "μέλεσί τε καὶ μέτροις". For a defense of this reading, see Green (forthcoming), which goes into more detail than is necessary here on Plato's use of meter and rhythm throughout the corpus.

> Ionian, nor even, I think, in the Phrygian or Lydian, but in the only harmony that is genuinely Greek. (188c6-d8)

The Visitor in the *Sophist* claims that a misapplication of the method of collection and division would be an indication of "a completely unmusical and unphilosophical person" (259e1-2). Similarly, the *Statesman*

> We say on each occasion that they are 'quiet and moderate', admiring things done in the mind, and in the sphere of actions themselves, that are slow and soft, and also things the voice does that turn out smooth and deep – and all rhythmic movement, and the whole of music when it employs slowness at the right time. We apply to them all the name, not of courage, but of orderliness. (307a7-b3)

The *Timaeus* also endorses this view:

> And all such composition as lends itself to making audible musical sound is given in order to express harmony, and so serves this purpose as well. And harmony, whose movements are akin to the orbit without our souls, is a gift of the Muses, if our dealings with them are guided by understanding, not for irrational pleasure, for which people nowadays seem to make use of it, but to serve as an ally in the fight to bring order to any orbit in our souls that has become unharmonized and make it concordant with itself. Rhythm, too, has likewise been given us by the Muses for the same purpose, to assist us. For with most of us our condition is such that we have lost all sense of measure, and are lacking in grace. (47c6-e2)

And of course, the notion that the good person is harmonious is a central theme in the *Republic*, as we can see for instance when Socrates argues

> He [the just person] regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale – high, low, middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. (443d3-e2)[88]

Plato also notes that "a musical person would love such [beautifully harmonious] people most of all, but he wouldn't love anyone who lacked harmony" (402d8-9).

[88] We should not take the three notes in this passage to be a departure from Eryximachus's view of music. Plato is focusing here on his tripartite psychology and applying a musical metaphor to it, not talking about music as such.

Plato also agrees with Eryximachus regarding the importance of music to education, which Plato expounds as some length in the *Republic* and the *Laws*.[89] In both cases, the youth of the *polis* are habituated to have the kind of souls discussed above through musical education. Hence in the *Republic* Socrates argues

> Aren't these the reasons, Glaucon, that education in music and poetry is most important? First, because more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bringing it grace, so that if someone is properly educated in music and poetry, it makes him graceful, but if not, then the opposite. (401d5-e1)

He adds later that

> But [music], if you remember, is just the counterpart of physical training. It educated the guardians through habits. Its harmonies gave them a certain harmoniousness, not knowledge; its rhythms gave them a certain rhythmical quality; and its stories, whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these. (522a)

The *Laws,* like Eryximachus, at one point explicitly defines education in terms of music, writing "When the sound of the voice penetrates the soul, we took that to be an education in virtue, and we hazarded the term 'music' to describe it" (673a3-5). The Athenian details the mechanism of this procedure as follows:

> Virtually all young things find it impossible to keep their bodies still and their tongues quiet. They are always trying to move around and cry out; some jump and skip an do a kind of gleeful dance as they play with each other, while others produce all sorts of noise. And whereas animals have no sense of order and disorder in movement ('rhythm' and 'harmony', as we call it), we human beings have been made sensitive to both and can enjoy them. This is the gift of the same gods who we said were given to us as companions in dancing… and as this naturally 'charms' us, they invented the word 'chorus'. So shall we take that this point is stablished? Can we assume that education comes originally from Apollo and the Muses, or not? (653d7-54a7).

[89] Mitchell goes even farther: "Having mentioned a portion of the "educational" discussions of the *Republic*, Books II and III, we might note that we have in fact just covered in a highly condensed way, exactly that material. That, perhaps, is where the most satisfactory exegesis of the present text may be found. And it would even be less misleading than one might think to suggest that the main speaker in that portion of the *Republic* is not Socrates at all but Eryximachus" (1993, 57).

The Athenian goes on to argue

> Once again, education has proved to be a process of attraction, of leading children to accept right principles as enunciated by the law and endorsed as genuinely correct by men who have high moral standards and are full of years and experience. The soul of the child has to be prevented from getting into the habit of feeling pleasure and pain in ways not sanctioned by the law…. That is why we have what we call songs, which are really 'charms' for the soul. They are in fact deadly serious devices for producing this concord we are talking about. (659d1-e4)

This passage is reminiscent of two claims from earlier dialogues. One is from the *Protagoras*, where the sophist explains the importance of moral education in very similar terms, arguing

> In a similar vein, the music teachers too foster in their young pupils a sense of moral decency and restraint, and when they learn to play the lyre they are taught the works of still more good poets, the lyric and choral poets. The teachers arrange the scores and drill the rhythms and sacles into the children's souls, so that they become gentler, and their speech and movements become more rhythmical and harmonious. For all of human life requires a high degree of rhythm and harmony. (326a4-b6)

The second comes from the *Charmides,* where Socrates tells Charmides that he has learned from a Thracian doctor how to use the charm of beautiful words to heal the soul by means of implanting temperance, and so heal the body thereby (156a-157b). Plato may be alluding to this passage from the *Charmides* when he continues the last cited passage from the *Laws* by arguing

> So we use the terms 'recreation' and 'song' for the charms, and children treat them in that spirit. We have an analogy in the sick and ailing; those in charge of feeding them try to administer the proper diet in tasty foods and drinks, and offer them unwholesome items in revolting foods, so that the patients may get into the desirable habit of welcoming the one kind and loathing the other. This is just what the true legislator will persuade (or, failing persuasion, compel) the man with a creative flair to do with his grand and marvelous language: to compose correctly by portraying, with appropriate choreography and musical setting, men who are moderate, courageous, and good in every way. (659e4-60a8)

This analogy between music and medicine should remind us of yet another passage. Just like the *Laws,* Eryximachus draws the same connection at the end of his discussion of music:

> One must be careful in the application [of disorderly Eros] when one applies it, so that one may enjoy its pleasure but not foster debauchery, just as in our own *technē*

> it is an important task to use desire well vis-à-vis the art of cooking so that one can enjoy its pleasure without disease. (187e1-6)

Clearly, then, Plato and Eryximachus are on the same page regarding music and its relation to medicine.

The same is true regarding astronomy and meteorology. Eryximachus maintains that Erotic forces extend beyond the realm of music and medicine to the *kosmos* itself (186a3-b2, 187e6-88a1). He argues that

> Even the composition of the seasons of the year is full of both of [the Erotic forces]. Whenever the elements which I was just talking about – hot and cold, wet and dry – exhibit an orderly love toward one another, whenever they possess a harmony and moderate mixture, then they bring prosperity (εὐετηρίαν) and health to humans and to other plants and animals, and it harms no one. But whenever the Eros accompanied by hubris becomes more in control of the seasons of the year, it harms and destroys many things. Plagues tend to happen from these sorts of things, and many other dissimilar diseases both to animals and to plants. For frosts and hails and blights result from the excess and disorder toward one another from these sorts of Erotic forces, the science of which regarding the movement of the stars and the seasons of the year is called 'astronomy'. (188a1-b6)

Though Eryximachus does not put it into quite these terms, the human body is a kind of literal microcosm, a smaller version of the same phenomenon that governs the universe as a whole.

This view is one Plato also endorses. We've already seen a passage from the *Laws* where Plato identifies a single condition, excess (τὴν πλεονεξίαν), which causes disease in the body and plague in the weather (906c2-6). There is also the famous case of the praise of Hippocratic method in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates says that it is not possible to understand the body without comprehending "the nature of the whole" (τῆς τοῦ ὅλου φύσεως, 270c1-5), a phrase which may mean 'the whole universe'.[90] Plato also connects music to astronomy in the *Republic*, where he

[90] What precisely Plato takes "the nature of the whole" to entail, and which extant Hippocratic work, if any, Plato is referring to, is a contentious question which I cannot address here. Galen thought the reference was to *Nature of Man,* Littré to *Ancient Medicine* §20 (see Jones 1923, xxxiii-xxxv, for a quick overview and endorsement of Littré). Garcia Novo (2005) agrees. I think that *On Regimen,* especially §1.2-11, is also a good candidate for Plato's

attributed to the Pythagoreans the notion that "as the eyes fasten on astronomical motions, so the ears fasten on harmonic ones, and that the sciences of astronomy and harmonics are closely akin" (530d6-8).

When discussing astronomical or meteorological phenomena in their own right, Plato is quite likely to sound like Eryximachus, who, we should remember, is depicted at *Protagoras* 315c as quizzing Hippias about astronomy. For instance, in the *Gorgias* Socrates tells Callicles that "Wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men, and that is why they call this universe a *world-order*, my friend, and not an undisciplined world-disorder" (507e6-508a4). The *Republic* downplays the importance of visible astronomy compared to *a priori* astronomy (530a-c), but it nevertheless argues that "The same disease that developed in oligarchy and destroyed it also develops here…. In fact, excessive action in one direction usually sets up a reaction in the opposite direction. This happens in seasons, in plants, in bodies, and, last but not least, in constitutions" (563e6-64a1). The *Republic* also mentions seasonal illnesses as one of the legitimate causes of medical treatment at 405c8-9, and notes the importance of climate to health and happiness at *Critias* 111e, *Laws* 709a and 747d-e, and *Timaeus* 24b-d.

In other passages Plato is still more explicit in making claims that agree with Eryximachus. The *Statesman,* for example, argues that the *kosmos* is governed by two forces, one orderly and one disorderly, which mix with one another under the control of the gods:

> So all the gods who ruled over the regions together with the greatest divinity, seeing immediately what was happening, let go in their turn the parts of the cosmos that belonged to their charge; and as it turned about and came together with itself, impelled with opposing movements, both the one that was beginning and the one that was now ending, it produced a great tremor in itself, which in its turn brought about another destruction of all sorts of living things. After this, when sufficient

reference, based in part on the similarity between it and Eryximachus's speech which I detailed in §2.5. Jouanna argues that Plato's text cannot conclusively point to precisely one text (1999, 59-60), as does Nutton (2004) 57.

> time had elapsed, it began to cease from noise and confusion and attained calm from its tremors; it set itself in order, into the accustomed course that belongs to it, itself taking charge of and mastering both the things within it and itself, because it remembered so far as it could the teaching of its craftsman and father. At the beginning it fulfilled his teaching more accurately, but in the end less keenly; the cause of this was the bodily element in its mixture, its companion since its origins long past, because this element was marked by a great disorder before it entered into the present world-order…. But as time moves on and forgetfulness increases in it, the condition of its original disharmony also takes greater control of it, and, as this time ends, comes to full flower. Then the goods mixed in are slight, but the admixture it causes of the opposite is great, and it reaches the point where it is in danger of destroying both itself and the things in it. It is for this reason that now the god who ordered it, seeing it in difficulties, and concerned that it should not, storm tossed as it is, be broken apart in confusion and sink into the boundless sea of unlikeness, takes his position again at its steering-oars, and having turned round what had become diseased and been broken apart in the previous rotation, when the world was left to itself, orders it and by setting it straight renders it immortal and ageless. (272e6-73e4)

A more detailed version of Plato's cosmology is found in the *Timaeus*, which exhibits many of the same themes. Here Plato writes that

> The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible, and so he took over all that was visible—not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion—and brought it from a state of disorder to one of order, because he believed that order was in every way better than disorder. (30a2-6)

This condition was brought about in the following way:

> Hence the god set water and air between fire and earth, and made them as proportionate to one another as was possible, so that what fire is to air, air is to water, and what air is to water, water is to earth. He then bound them together and thus he constructed the visible and tangible universe. This is the reason why these four particular constituents were used to beget the body of the world, making it a symphony of proportion (ἀναλογίας ὁμολογῆσαν). They bestowed friendship (φιλίαν) upon it, so that, having come together into a unity with itself, it could not be undone by anyone but the one who had bound it together. (32b3-c4)

Plato even goes so far as to treat the *kosmos* itself as an animal, and hence subject to the principles of medicine. Plato argues that the demiurge arranged the *kosmos* such that

> it should not get old and diseased. He realized that when heat or cold or anything else that possesses strong powers surrounds a composite body from outside and attacks it, it destroys that body prematurely, brings disease and old age upon it and

> so causes it to waste away. That is why he concluded that he should fashion the world as a single whole, composed of all wholes, complete and free of old age and disease, and why he fashioned it that way. (33a2-b2)

While the specific divinity Plato puts in charge of the *kosmos* is Reason rather than Eros (cf. *Philebus* 28d-e), the underlying theory of how the gods created and control the universe, and what elements and forces they use, is nonetheless quite similar to Eryximachus's speech.[91]

We turn now to the final component of Eryximachus's speech, divination. Eryximachus defines the mantic as "the craftsman who understands friendship between gods and humans, and human erotic forces insofar as they extend to righteousness (θέμιν) and piety (εὐσέβειαν)" (188d1-3). The basic idea is that the orderly Eros leads to orderly behavior, and therefore harmony between a person, her family and community, and the gods, while disorderly Eros does the opposite (188c2-6). Plato's most important discussion of this issue comes from the speech of Diotima (the mantic from Mantinea), which we will discuss in detail in the next section. But Plato makes a few comments elsewhere which show that, once again, Plato and Eryximachus are in agreement.

We can start with the idea that divination operates according to the same principles as music and medicine. This point is made explicit in the *Cratlyus*, where Socrates argues that Apollo is well named because

> I think no single name could be more in keeping with the four powers of the god. It comprehends each of them, expressing his power in music, prophecy, medicine, and archery. H: It's a pretty remarkable name you're talking about; so go ahead and explain it. S: It's certainly a harmonious one. After all, it's the name of the god of music. To begin with, the purgations and purifications that doctors and prophets use, the fumigations with medicinal and magical drugs, and the various washings and sprinklings that are involved in these processes, all have the same effect, don't they, namely, to make a person pure in body and soul? (404e7-405b4)

A similar point is made early in the *Timaeus*, where Critias alleges that Solon was once told by an Egyptian priest that

[91] Cf. Jouanna (1999) 435 n. 19.

> In our study of the world order we have traced all our discoveries, including prophecy and health-restoring medicine, from those divine realities to human levels, and we have also acquired all the other related disciplines. This is in fact nothing less than the very same system of social order that the goddess first devised for you when she founded your city. (24b7-c5)

The *Charmides* hints at a similar notion, though it does not fully explore it:

> If temperance really ruled over us and were as we now define it, surely everything would be done according to science: neither would anyone who says he is a pilot (but is not) deceive us, nor would any doctor or general or anyone else pretending to know what he does not know escape our notice. This being the situation, wouldn't we have greater bodily health than we do now, and safety when we are in danger at sea or in battle, and wouldn't we have dishes and all our clothes and shoes and things skillfully made for us, and many other things as well, because we would be employing true craftsmen? And, if you will, let us even agree that the mantic art is knowledge of what is to be and that temperance, directing her, keeps away deceivers and sets up the true seers as prophets of the future. I grant that the human race, if thus equipped, would act and live in a scientific way—because temperance, watching over it, would not allow the absence of science to creep in and become our accomplice. (173a9-c7)

This passage expresses some ambivalence about the status of divination as a *techne,* which is not rare in the Platonic corpus (e.g. *Apology* 22c, *Ion* 534b-c, *Meno* 99c-d, *Philebus* 44c-d). But Plato seems to at least allow for the possibility of a kind of genuine divination, even while criticizing the counterfeit kind (cf. *Phaedrus* 244b-d).

What makes genuine divination the real thing? There appear to be two components in Plato's thought, both of which correspond to aspects of Eryximachus's speech. First, divination acts a kind of conduit between gods and mortals, typically through some kind of supernatural liaison. This is how Socrates describes his own *daimōn* in the *Apology* (27d, 30e, 31d).[92] In the *Timaeus* Plato even locates the physical seat of mantic abilities in the liver, and explains why prophets often need an interpreter (71c-72b).

[92] Cf. McPherran (2006) 86.

The second component is that divination is a way of bringing about just and pious behavior which creates friendship between humans and their community, or between humans and the gods. In addition to Socrates's famous claim that his *daimōn* prevents him from doing wrong (*Apology* 31d) and the claim from the *Charmides* quoted above that divination is governed by temperance, Plato frequently writes of how divination results in friendship and moral behavior. For instance, the *Menexenus* stresses the importance of prayers and sacrifice to maintaining civic accord:

> And the sole cause for all that [moderately ending civil war] was their genuine kinship, which provided them, not in word but in fact, with a firm friendship based on ties of blood. We must also remember those who died at each other's hands in that war and try to reconcile them in ceremonies such as today's by what means we have—prayers and sacrifices—praying to the gods below who have power over them, since we ourselves are reconciled as well. For they did not lay hands on each other through wickedness or enmity, but through misfortune. And we, the living, are witnesses of this ourselves, since we, who are of the same stock, have forgiven each other for what we did and for what we suffered. (244a1-b3)

The *Statesman* also gives an important role to divination.

> There are those who have a part of a subordinate sort of expert knowledge in relation to divination; for they are, I believe, considered to be interpreters from gods to men. YS: Yes. V: And then too the class of priests, in its turn, has—as custom tells us—expert knowledge about the giving through sacrifices of gifts from us to the gods which are pleasing to them, and about asking from them through prayers for the acquisition of good things for us. (290c4-d2)

The full range of relations between humans, gods, and ancestors, however, is most clearly articulated in the *Laws*, where the Athenain proposes the following system.

> The first weapon in our armory will be to honor the gods of the underworld next after those of Olympus, the patron-gods of the state; the former should be allotted such secondary honors as the Even and the Left, while the latter should receive superior and contrasting honors like the Odd. That's the best way a man can hit his target, piety. After these gods, a sensible man will worship the spirits, and after them the heroes. Next in priority will be rites celebrated according to law at private shrines dedicated to ancestral gods. Last come honors paid to living parents. It is meet and right that a debtor should discharge his first and greatest obligation and pay the debt which comes before all others; he must consider that all he has and holds belongs to those who bore and bred him, and he is meant to use it in their service to the limit of his powers. (717a4-c2)

Plato goes on to argue that these practices are also important for civil accord, writing "the citizens will recognize and greet each other at the sacrifices in mutual friendship—and there can be no greater benefit for a state than that the citizens should be well-known one to another" (738d6-e2).

Plato would also appear to agree with Eryximachus's contention that piety has a close conceptual connection to justice and temperance. This is first suggested in the *Euthyphro*, where the final proposed definition of piety is that "the godly and pious is the part of the just that is concerned with the care of the gods, while that concerned with the care of men is the remaining part of justice" (12e4-8). Euthyphro, of course, has difficulty filling out the details of this view, but it should be noted that the reason it is rejected is not because it has some logical problem, but rather because Eryximachus defended it in a way that brought the discussion back to an earlier, abandoned point (15b-c). Socrates appears to endorse this position himself in the *Protagoras,* where he famously argues that

> 'Isn't piety the sort of thing that is just, and isn't justice the sort of thing that is pious? Or is it the sort of thing which is not pious? Is piety the sort of thing to be not just, and therefore unjust, and justice impious?' What are we going to say to him? Personally, I would answer both that justice is pious and piety is just, and I would give the same answer on your behalf (if you would let me), that justice is the same thing as piety, or very similar, and, most emphatically, that justice is the same kind of thing as piety, and piety as justice. (331a7-b8)

The *Laws* also connects piety to morality more generally, arguing that

> If a good man sacrifices to the gods and keeps them constant company in his prayers and offerings and every kind of worship he can give them, this will be the best and noblest policy he can follow; it is the conduct that fits his character as nothing else can, and it is his most effective way of achieving a happy life. But if the wicked man does it, the results are bound to be just the opposite. (716d6-e2)

As before, Plato can agree with Eryximachus that divination (at least properly practiced) is an important area of expertise, one which follows the same principles as other *technai,* which leads

to friendship between gods and humans and between one human and another, and which is closely connected to the virtues of both piety and justice.

We've seen, then, that Plato is surprisingly sympathetic with the content of Eryximachus's speech. This is true regarding (i) the analysis of various phenomena in terms of friendship or hostility between basic elements, (ii) the parallels between how different *technai* operate, and (iii) the notion of harmony or agreement as a basic normative concept. All this suggests that most commentators on the *Symposium* are off the mark when they suggest that Plato meant Eryximachus to be read in a negative way. It would be very strange for Plato to want his readers to scoff at Eryximachus's views when Plato is willing to endorse them himself. And given the breadth of this agreement across the Platonic corpus, we should not think that Plato came to agree with Eryximachus only in later works. Our evidence suggests that Plato would have been sympathetic to Eryximachus at the time of writing the *Symposium*.

§3.4 – Diotima and Eryximachus

This brings us to our final section. So far I have argued that (1) Plato presented the character of Eryximachus in a favorable light, (2) Eryximachus's speech not only internally consistent, but an expression of a Hippocratic tradition which Plato held in esteem, and (3) Plato agrees with all of the main points of Eryximachus's speech in his own writing, especially his later more dogmatic texts like the *Laws, Philebus, Statesman,* and *Timaeus.* All in all, Plato is rather amenable to both the style and substance of Eryximachus's speech.

But this leaves us with an important interpretative question. If Plato agrees with Eryximachus so much, why did he make Eryximachus only the third of several speakers, and put what we can safely assume is his own view in the mouth of Diotima? The answer is, I think, a fairly easy one. Eryximachus got a lot of things right, but he did not go far enough in grounding

his theory in the right metaphysics. That is, Eryximachus did not make use of Plato's Theory of Forms, and this is in Plato's eyes a crucial oversight. Diotima's speech is not meant to compete with Eryximachus's speech, but rather to complete it. Or so I shall argue in what follows.

I want to begin with a few observations which I take to motivate the possibility of looking for connections between the speeches of Eryximachus and Diotima. Socrates begins by saying that he learned his account of Eros from "a woman named Diotima from Mantinea, who is wise about this and many other things: once before the plague, by directing the Athenians' sacrifices, she held off the disease for ten years, and she also taught me about *ta erotika*" (201d3-5). From the very beginning, Diotima is associated with the bookends of Eryximachus's speech, medicine and divination (note especially the verbal parallel between Μαντινικῆς and Diotima's profession, μαντική),[93] and she is called an expert in other fields too. It is also notable that Socrates claims to have learned about *ta erotika* from Diotima. This is one of the few times in the Platonic corpus that Socrates claims to know anything, but this is not the only time that Socrates claims mastery of this particular subject (cf. *Lysis* 204c1-2, 206c; *Phaedrus* 257a8), and he repeats this claim often in the *Symposium* (177e1, 198d1, 201d5, 207a5, 207c3-7, 209e5). Of course, knowledge of *ta erotika* was also the central focus of Eryximacus's speech, in medicine, divination, and other areas.

It is also worth noting that Eryximachus is the only previous speaker not specifically singled out for criticism in Diotima's speech. Phaedrus claims that Eros is the oldest god (178b), and that the sign of a true lover is her willingness to die for her beloved (179a-80a). But Diotima makes Eros the offspring of other gods (203b-c), and hence not the oldest, and she argues that lovers seek immortality rather than death, and that honor is the explicit means for this immortality rather than an *ex post facto* reward from the gods as Phaedrus suggests. Pausanias focus almost

[93] Cf. Dover (1980) 137, Rowe (1998) 152, Sheffield (2006a) 67 n. 34.

exclusively on the virtues of monogamous homosexual pederasty in his speech (see especially 181c), but Diotima makes attraction to a single person the lowest kind of love (210a4-8) and perhaps an obstacle to wisdom rather than the pinnacle of virtue as Pausanias would have it. More famously, Aristophanes's myth is centered on the idea that lovers seek their other halves (191a-b, 191d), a conceit which Diotima brings up in order to explicitly reject (205d10-e3). And of course, Socrates claims that his refutation of Agathon (199d-201c) is one that he had himself learned from Diotima (201e), who had taught him that Eros is a lover not a beloved (204c1-3, cf, 203c6-7).[94] Eryximachus, on the other hand, is never criticized this way. In fact, he is singled out for praise by Socrates (194a1-2). Many commentators have supposed that Eryximachus's speech must have been rejected due to the use of the second-person plural in Socrates' complaint about the early speeches at 198e4-6.[95] But there is no reason to think that the plural must refer to each and every speaker as opposed to some subset of them. And in any case the substance of Socrates's criticism, that the speakers used fancy but empty language to make Eros sound better than he actually is (199a1-3), is certainly not one that applies to Eryximachus, whose speech is anything but adorned, and who notes that Eros is powerful and all-encompassing but does not actually praise it as good in itself. Rather, Eryximachus's Eros is capable of both good and bad, remaining intermediate between the two much like Diotima's Eros.

One final interesting feature of Diotima's speech in relation to Eryximachus is the famed 'ladder of love' (211c3). We will discuss the ladder of love in more detail below; for now it suffices to note that it progresses from (i) love of a single beautiful body to (ii) love of all beautiful bodies to (iii) love of beautiful souls to (iv) love of customs and laws to (v) love of knowledge to (vi) love

[94] This is not to say that there is nothing from the earlier speeches which Diotima agrees with, only that rhetorically Plato sets Diotima in opposition to the other speakers in a way he does not with Eryximachus.
[95] See, e.g. Bury (1932) liii, Rowe (1999) 55 n. 16, Sheffield (2006b) 29.

of Beauty itself (210a-e). Eryximachus, with his focus on the various *epistemai* of Eros and its effects, and his relative silence regarding human relationships, would clearly land on the penultimate rung of the ladder, though many of his comments would apply to rung (iv). The other speakers would land somewhere lower. Phaedrus, with his focus on particular couples, is stuck at (i). Pausanias could be read as occupy spot (iv), though his focus on monogamous relationships and his tendency to make law and custom a means to good relationships rather than the other way around suggest that he too is at the first rung. Aristophanes also focuses primarily on a single person finding her unique match, suggesting that he is also stuck at the first rung. Agathon, perhaps, could be seen as occupying rung (iii), though his focus on physical beauty (196a-b) also hints that Agathon is preoccupied with (i). If this is right, then Eryximachus would qualify as a lover of wisdom (210d6), and would be closest of all the speakers to Diotima's conception of Eros.

These observations should, I hope, give us reason to take seriously the possibility that Diotima's speech is closely connected to Eryximachus's. This hypothesis is corroborated by the many similarities between the two speeches. The role of medicine in Diotima's speech is one of these similarities. As we saw above, Diotima's authority is grounded in her expertise in both medicine (preventing a plague) and divination (directing sacrifices). And she makes reference to medical concepts throughout her speech. She rejects Aristophanes's view by appealing to the phenomenon that one would cut off one's own limbs if they were diseased (205e3-5). She describes Eros as a clever magician and apothecary (203d8), which recalls *Charmides* 156a-157b and *Laws* 659e-60a on the use of charms and drugs. Diotima describes pregnant animals as "erotically diseased" (207a9-b1), and describes procreation in terms reminiscent of the Hippocratic corpus, which features several works on women and reproduction. For instance, *Generation/ Nature of the Child* explains reproduction as the result of an intermingling of sperm from male and female

(§12.1-2), and argues that the characteristics shown by an offspring are a combination of those from the parents (§8.1-9), just as Eros gets his properties from his parents, Poros and Penia (203c-204a).[96] Finally, the methodology that Diotima advocates in order to climb the ladder of love is the same one demonstrated by Eryximachus, namely that of noting a feature of a particular body, observing a pattern among other similar bodies, and then extrapolating to see the same feature in other domains (210a1-210e1, 211b7-d1). Eryximachus learned about Eros by first learning medicine (i.e. physical bodies) and then noting the similarities to other areas of knowledge, and Diotima advocates seeing Beauty first in physical bodies, then the soul, then laws and sciences.[97]

The second major parallel between Eryximachus and Diotima involves Diotima's second area of expertise, divination. Eryximachus describes the role of divination as the art which uses prayer and sacrifice to maintain harmony and affection between gods and humans. Diotima defines Eros in exactly the same role.[98] Eros, she argues, is a *daimōn*, an intermediate entity between gods and mortals (202d13-e1).

> They interpret and ferry from humans to gods and from gods to humans; from humans prayers and sacrifices, and from gods commands in exchange for the sacrifices. Being in the middle, they fill out both of them, so that the whole is bound together with itself. And through this divination and the art of holy things contains everything concerning sacrifices and initiations and songs and all prophesy and magic. (202e3-203a1).

Diotima then concludes that wisdom in any *technē* requires an understanding of how a *daimōn* like Eros functions. People who lack this knowledge are mere "vulgar mechanics" (203a6). Some commentators have argued that Eryximachus is one of these vulgar mechanics.[99] But Eryximachus

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[96] The Hippocratic gynecological works and their possible influence on Plato's construction of Diotima's speech deserve much more treatment than I can give them here.

[97] Diotima also discusses poetry and music at 205c4-9, and emphasizes that reproduction can only occur when things are in harmony, and in particular when beauty harmonizes with divinity (206c5-d1). Diotima does not mention astronomy, for reasons which we will discuss below.

[98] Cf. Scott & Welton (2008) 62, Wardy (2002) 36-7.

[99] Hunter (2004) 84; McPherran (2006) 91.

is in fact the only other speaker in the *Symposium* who has shown any aptitude with this latter kind of wisdom, since throughout his speech he connects expertise to understanding the effects of Eros. Hence Eryximachus is no vulgar mechanic, no more than Diotima would qualify as one of the charlatans derided in *Sacred Disease*.[100]

When Diotima describes Eros in more detail, she does so using the same conceptual tools deployed by Eryximachus, namely the combination of opposing properties.[101] The various properties possessed by Eros are explained etiologically, resulting from Eros' parentage (203b-204b). Eros is the son of Poros (lit: Resource) and Penia (lit: Poverty). Poros was a god who got drunk on nectar at a celebration of Aphrodite's birth, while he was in this state Penia managed to conceive a child with him. Eros serves Aphrodite because he was conceived on her birthday, and he strives for beauty because Aphrodite is beautiful. But more importantly, Eros takes after both his parents with respect to their strongest or most essential properties. So, for example, Eros is poor and unkempt just like Penia, but he is also resourceful and cunning like his father. However, since both parents exemplify some opposing properties, Eros consequently possesses their intermediates. He is neither mortal nor immortal; instead he is ever dying and springing back to life. He is never completely without resources nor in possession of them, but is instead constantly striving after them. And he is neither wise nor ignorant, but is instead a philosopher, literally a lover of wisdom. Eryximachus presents Eros as the force that brings opposing elements together, and while Diotima agrees, she goes further in making Eros itself an example of this force applied to itself (i.e. Penia's love/desire for Poros brought into being an entity that is intermediate between them). Moreover, in the same way that Eryximachus gives Eros two aspects, orderly and

[100] As McPherran (2006) 91 n. 45 notices, the author of *Sacred Disease* uses the same term, βάναυσος, to describe the magicians, purifiers, charlatans, and quacks vilified at §2.3-4.
[101] Cf. Allen (1984) 27 n. 47.

disorderly, and so make Eros all powerful but not all good, Diotima depicts Eros as a somewhat ambiguous figure which can bring about good things but is not quite good itself.

These similarities between Eryximachus and Diotima suggest that Eryximachus's speech should be taken rather seriously. If Eryximachus's speech is as bad as most commentators argue, then Diotima's speech should have the same flaws, at least insofar as they agree. Conversely, to the extent that Diotima and Eryximachus express similar ideas, their speeches should be treated with similar respect. That said, it would be too quick to infer that Diotima's speech is superfluous, that all Plato wanted to us to think about Eros could be gleaned from Eryximachus's speech alone.[102] Early on in Diotima's purported refutation of Socrates, she claims that "there is something between wisdom and ignorance … judging correctly without being able to give an explanation" (202a2-6). Eryximachus's speech, I argue, has this character. It is correct, but incomplete, because it does not go far enough to explain how or why it is correct. This explanation, at least in Plato's mind, requires a metaphysical theory that goes beyond the physical world, i.e. the Forms. Because Eryximachus limits himself to the physical world (where 'physical' includes the gods), his theory is incomplete, and needs to be brought together with Diotima's, just as Eros brings together the realms of gods and mortals.

The first problem Plato would have with Eryximachus's speech is that it is limited to the physical world, and the physical world is constantly changing. As I argued above, Eryximachus occupies the penultimate rung of the ladder, with its focus on knowledge and wisdom. But his speech also mentions each of the lower rungs. He first talks about Eros's effects on health, a

[102] There are at least two notable points of divergence between Diotima and Eryximachus. First, Diotima makes some room in her theory for attraction between individuals, while Eryximachus, at best, only hints at this kind of love when he uses Pausanias's speech to begin his own. Second, Diotima is explicit that Eros is a *daimōn*, and while Eryximachus distinguishes between Eros and the gods when discussing divinity, he nevertheless calls Eros a god at 186b1.

phenomenon which can be first observed in a single body but generalized to all bodies. He then moves to music, and focuses in particular on music's role in education, that is, in making the soul harmonious. In other words, Eryximachus moves from physical health to mental health, i.e. to virtue. Though he spends relatively little time on it, Eryximachus also mentions the social virtues of righteousness, piety, and justice later in his speech (188d2-3, d5-6), which suggests a focus on customs and laws. Moreover, Eryximachus's speech exhibits a second kind of progression, from the mundane realm of animal bodies, to souls, to celestial bodies, and finally to the divine.[103] Though Eryximachus is working his way up a kind of progression, he does not go high enough. Diotima argues that

> Even when each single individual animal is said to live and to be the same, for instance one is said to be the same person from childhood to old age, it never remains the same as itself, though he is called the same. Rather, it is always becoming new, and perishing, with respect to its hair and flesh and bones and blood and entire body. And not just with respect to its body, but also its soul, for its manners, habits, beliefs, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, each of these never remains the same as itself, but is always becoming in one way, perishing in another. And far stranger still than these, it's not only true for branches of knowledge, that some are coming to be and others perishing, but even each single case of knowledge suffers the same fate. (207d3-208a3)

In other words, the physical world is in constant flux, the sort of flux which Plato attributes elsewhere to Heraclitus (*Cratylus* 401d-2a, 440a-d; *Theatetus* 152e-53a); it is surely no coincidence that Eryximachus mentions Heraclitus in his own speech.[104] And as Eryximachus realizes, friendship and harmony are not something to be achieved in any permanent sense; rather, they must be maintained through constant effort, hence Eryximachus's repeated uses of the terms

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[103] Cf. Edelstein (1945) 93. Eryximachus appears to think of the gods in the popular sense, as powerful but anthropomorphized agents. They are immortal in some sense, but not in the way that Plato requires when he talks about the immortality of the Forms. Plato distinguishes between "Heaven" and the realm of the Forms both in making the object of Eros distinct from either Eros itself or his parents, and in claiming that the Form of Beauty is not present in any other thing "in earth or in heaven" (211a8).

[104] Levin (2009) 294 raises a more hostile version of this same point, based on her view addressed above that Eryximachus obviously misinterprets Heraclitus. See also Kahn (1985) 249-251 Taylor (1957) 218 and Wardy (2002) 6-8.

'gratify' (χαρίζεσθαι) and 'preserve' (φυλάττειν), both of which suggest repeated or continuous activity (186c3, 187d6, 187e8, 188c2, c4).[105] But because there is nothing truly permanent in Eryximachus's metaphysics, Plato thinks it is not possible for someone to truly have the good forever on his view.[106] The Forms, and in particular the Form of Beauty, though, are permanent in the right way. Plato argues that "All the earlier labors were for the sake of this which, first of all, always is and is never coming to be or perishing, nor waxing and waning, and secondly, not beautiful at one time and not beautiful at another" (210e5-211a3).[107] In other words, Plato thinks that Eryximachus's story about how Eros works in the physical world can only make sense if it has the right metaphysical underpinnings, which Diotima's speech supplies.[108]

The second problem Plato would have with Eryximachus's speech regards the relationship between Eros and the good. As Dorter notes, "each speech must present not only a view of Eros, but also a concept of goodness according to which Eros is praised. The philosophical adequacy of each speech must therefore be measured by two standards: the adequacy of its conception of Eros and the adequacy of its conception of goodness."[109] Eryximachus concludes his encomium with the following peroration.

> In short, such is the greatness and might, and moreover the complete power, of all-encompassing Eros. But the Eros concerned with the good, including temperance and justice, revered both by us and by the gods, this one has the greatest power and provides us all with *eudaimonia* and the ability to consort and be friends one another, and with our betters the gods. (188d4-9)

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[105] This is especially true if, as I argued in §2.5, Eryximachus's speech is modelled after *On Regimen,* which spends several chapters endorsing flux (§1.4-7) and several other Heraclitean themes.
[106] Cf. McPherran (2006) 87.
[107] See Lear (2006), especially 106-120, for an explication and defense of this reading of Diotima's speech.
[108] Scott & Welton make a similar point (2008, 127, 151-2), but they read Diotima as containing a religious message rather than a metaphysical one.
[109] Dorter (1969) 216. See also 219-20.

Unfortunately, this is all Eryximachus says about the good. The orderly Eros is directed toward the good, and it brings about *eudaimonia* and virtue by bringing about friendship and harmony. But Eryximachus does not give us the details on what precisely the good is. He does, however, give us a (presumably non-exhaustive) list of good things: health, musical harmony, moral education and virtue, good food, temperate weather, pious behavior, and, presumably, knowledge itself or at least knowledge of Eros and its effects. We can perhaps reduce this list to a few core concepts, namely harmony or order in various domains (somatic, psychic, social, cosmic). But what makes harmony itself good? Eryximachus does not answer this question, but Plato does. In the *Republic*, in an argument for the immortality of the soul no less, Socrates tells Glaucon that

> The bad is entirely coterminous with what destroys and corrupts, and the good is what preserves and benefits….And when one of these [natural badnesses and sicknesses] attaches itself to something, doesn't it make the thing in question bad, and in the end, doesn't it disintegrate it and destroy it wholly?... Therefore, the evil that is natural to each thing and the bad that is peculiar to it destroy it. However, if they don't destroy it, nothing else will, for the good would never destroy anything, nor would anything good nor bad. (608e3-609b2)

While the *Symposium* apparently abandons the *Republic*'s attempt to make the soul literally exist forever, it agrees with the *Republic* that there is a tight conceptual connection between the Good and stability or permanence. Hence the *Republic* argues that

> S: But the best things are least liable to alteration or change, aren't they? For example, isn't the healthiest and strongest body least changed by food, drink and labor, or the healthiest and strongest plant by sun, wind, and the like? A: Of course. S: And the most courageous and most rational soul is least disturbed or altered by any outside affection? A: Yes. (380e3-81a9)

After extending this argument to natural artifacts, Socrates argues that the gods are also unchangeable, on the grounds that "Since they are the most beautiful and best possible, it seems that each always and unconditionally retains his own shape" (381c8-9). This argument applies even more to the Form of the Beauty. In addition to being eternal, as we saw above, the Form of

Beauty "is not beautiful by one standard but ugly relative by another, nor beautiful in one man but ugly in another, nor beautiful to some but ugly to others. It will never appear…in something else, but will always have the same form as itself, according to itself, with itself" (211a3-b2). The Form of Beauty is, unlike the physical world, "pure and unmixed" (211e1). Eryximachus is on to something when he thinks about goodness in terms of health and harmony, but he fails to see (i) the need for something permanent to ground that goodness, and (ii) the need for there to be a single, unifying explanation of why, on his view, the items on his list of good things are, in fact, good. The Form of Beauty fills the gap in Eryximachus's theory.

The Form of Beauty also addresses a closely related epistemological problem.[110] As I argued in §1.4 and §2.2, Eryximachus generalizes from his experience in medicine to see a single explanation for a disparate range of phenomena. And as we saw above, Eryximachus shows some awareness of a progressing scale of value, from physical health to virtue to divinity. But how does he make these inferences? On Plato's view, some awareness of the Forms is required: "All other beautiful things have a share of it in such a way that, though they come to be and perish, it does not become either more or less, nor does it suffer any change" (211b2-5). It is this fact which explains how one progresses up the ladder of love. Eryximachus may have gotten the facts right, but without some explanation that appeals to the Forms, Plato would think he is correct but still lacks knowledge.

If this is right, then we can see both why Plato would agree with Eryximachus's speech and why he would write another to supplement it. Eryximachus was right about many things about the physical world and about goodness, but his speech was limited to the physical world, and so therefore crucially incomplete. It can be completed, however, with the addition of Plato's

[110] On which see Ionescu (2007) and Moravcsik (1971).

metaphysical view, which Plato uses Diotima to deliver (in addition to criticizing the other earlier speakers). Eryximachus advanced farther along the ladder of love than the rest, but he not yet been initiated to the "final and highest mysteries" (210a1). If this is a criticism of Eryximachus, it is a small one. After all, Eryximachus has demonstrated a mastery of *ta erōtika* in many domains, and only remained ignorant of those issues which had puzzled Socrates himself until his own initiation.

§3.5 - Conclusion

I've argued in this chapter that Eryximachus's speech represents a tradition which Plato respects and in many instances agrees with. Plato views medicine as a paradigmatic *technē,* one which can provide real and important knowledge. The physician for Plato is a model for both the philosopher and the statesman, and health is a model for virtue and wisdom. Moreover, Plato endorses much of the specific claims in Eryximachus's speech throughout his other writings, regarding the nature of health, music, astronomy, and divination, and the set of principles which underlie each. Within the *Symposium* itself, Diotima parallels Eryximachus in a number of ways, including the close relationship between medicine and divination and the progression from lower to higher realms which all express the same values to different degrees. Eryximachus, in other words, has scaled almost to the top of the ladder of love, while the other speakers of the *Symposium* remain stuck at lower levels. Eryximachus's only shortcoming, it appears, is that he was unaware of the Forms, and is therefore unable, in Plato's eyes, to provide the right metaphysical foundation for his explanation of the physical world, or to explain why it is that good things like health and piety have in common. Plato uses Diotima to address this oversight, hence completing a view to which he is otherwise sympathetic.

Conclusion

The standard reading of Eryximachus's speech in Plato's *Symposium* is that Eryximachus is a pedant who is the intellectual inferior of the group, who attempts to make his own profession the chief science but ends up with an incoherent and superficial view of Eros. I have argued that this reading is unmotivated. Eryximachus is treated as a serious and capable intellectual figure in the *Symposium,* not a humorless buffoon. He does not relegate other sciences beneath medicine, but rather makes medicine one of several *technai* that all operate according to the same principles. If there is a chief science, it is *ta erōtika,* not medicine. Moreover, his speech is carefully crafted around a single unifying theme, that many apparently disparate phenomena in fact operate according to the same principles. Though we modern readers know that his view is incorrect, it is nevertheless carefully bolstered with both empirical and theoretical support, and it represents the cutting edge theorizing of its day.

The criticisms lodged against Eryximachus also fail to appreciate the speech's intellectual context. Eryximachus's speech is thoroughly Hippocratic in style and in substance, at least for a certain set of Hippocratic texts. But few would argue that the Hippocratic writers were incoherent and superficial. To the extent that Eryximachus is represented as an avatar for this school of thought, his speech should be extended the same respect given to these influential early scientists.

Moreover, the way Plato treats Eryximachus outside the context of his speech shows that Plato viewed it much more favorably than modern commentators have. Plato praises medicine, and in particular the Hippocratic school, as a model for theoretical inquiry, and health is a core concept in his illustration of moral virtue and wisdom. In Plato's own works, especially the later more dogmatic treatises, Plato endorses all of the main tenets of Eryximachus's speech. And in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, Diotima is made to pick up where Eryximachus left off, using

the same combination of medicine and divination as a source of authority to support the metaphysical view needed to make sense of Eryximachus's treatment of the physical world.

These considerations undermine a standard reading of the *Symposium*, and in what space remains I will suggest a more viable alternative. I should stress, however, that a validation of this reading would require treating each of the *Symposium*'s speeches with the same attention I have given to Eryximachus's speech, which I obviously cannot do here. So the following should be read as a suggestion for further research, not as a conclusive argument in favor of my proposal.

One common reading of the *Symposium* is that the ladder of love discussed by Diotima (210a-211d) is mirrored by the structure of the whole dialogue. That is, each speech is a progression over the previous speech, coming closer and closer to a truth ultimately articulated by Diotima and expressed in action by Socrates.[111] A more sophisticated version of this interpretation is not committed to a linear progression within the earlier speeches, but holds that each speech, though flawed, holds a kernel of truth which is extracted and systematized by Diotima.[112] On either reading, however, Eryximachus is given short shrift. As we saw in §3.4, Diotima agrees with Eryximachus on several points, and criticizes every other speech but his. While Diotima's speech is surely the philosophical culmination of the dialogue, the importance of Eryximachus's speech is difficult to square either with a progressive reading of the text or with a reading that makes the five earlier speeches roughly equal in philosophical insight.

As I argued in the last chapter, Diotima's speech is meant to complete Eryximachus's theory rather than compete with it. It does this by providing the metaphysical foundations, the Theory of Forms, which Plato would have thought necessary to explain the facts which Eryximachus got right. In other words, Diotima and Eryximachus constitute a pair whose speeches

[111] Dorter (1969), Foley (2010), Rosen (1987), Seung (1996).
[112] Reid (forthcoming), Scott & Welton (2008), Sheffield (2006b).

should be read together. In a dialogue about love, finding a pair that goes together is significant; after all, most instances of love take place between a pair of individuals, a couple.[113] If Eryximachus and Diotima are a philosophical couple, then perhaps the other speeches should be read the same way.[114]

How should the other speeches be grouped? My proposal is that the *Symposium* is structured to show three pairs of speeches, with the first three speeches representing the first half of each pair, and the second three speeches the second half. That is, the couples are: Phaedrus/Aristophanes, Pausanias/Agathon, Eryximachus/Diotima. Each couple represents a different way of thinking about Love, and indeed about value in general. Alcibiades's speech, in combination with Socrates's behavior in the beginning and end of the evening's proceedings, show us another pair: Socrates represents the genuine lover as depicted by Eryximachus and Diotima, while Alcibiades manifests in action the failure shown by the earlier speeches.[115]

There are several points which suggest that this way of reading the *Symposium* is a plausible approach that merits further study. One is that it can explain the disruptive episode of Aristophanes's hiccups and the attention it draws to Eryximachus and Aristophanes trading places. This incident highlights two things: (1) Eryximachus is an authority on his topic, as evidenced by the success of his recommended treatment, and (2) Eryximachus is speaking third, which would line him up with Diotima. Given that Eryximachus is the one who orchestrates the encomia in the first place, and whom Plato depicts as being concerned with the "proper order" of the speeches (177d1-2, 214a7-b2, 214b9-c5), the fact that Plato makes Eryximachus restore the order of the

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[113] It is perhaps also significant that the speakers in the *Symposium* occupy couches big enough for two; cf. Dover (1980) 11. Eryximachus, notably, shares a couch with Aristodemus (175a4-5), who was the source of the *Symposium* narrator Apollodorus.

[114] For a different way of pairing Eryximachus with Socrates, see Kreft (2011).

[115] Duncan (1977), Wardy (2002) and Ziolkowski (1999) also suggest reading the speeches in pairs, but because they underestimate Eryximachus's importance in the dialogue they pair him off with the wrong person.

speeches by taking Aristophanes's place is likely a significant textual clue to Plato's thinking about how the speeches relate to one another.

Another piece of evidence in favor of this reading is the real-life relationship between Pausanias and Agathon (193b6-c2, *Protagoras* 315e1-3).[116] If Pausanias and Agathon were an actual couple, then it is very natural to couple their speeches. This makes two pairs of speeches, in which case it is sensible to take Phaedrus and Aristophanes as a pair as well. And of course Alcibiades and Socrates are paired in many places in the Platonic corpus; beyond Alcibiades's speech and his (possibly non-Platonic) eponymous dialogue, Socrates is made to claim a relationship with him at *Protagoras* 309a and *Gorgias* 481d.[117]

So suppose the speeches are meant to be paired in this way. What would an interpretation of this dialogue based on this pairing look like? One option is as follows. Phaedrus and Aristophanes both focus on using emotion to promote pro-social behavior. Phaedrus focuses on a sense of shame as a negative incentive toward acting honorably (178d-79a). Aristophanes uses sex as a positive incentive toward piety (193a-d).[118] In both cases the emphasis is on somewhat commonplace and unsophisticated values of a kind that are found in "popular morality".[119] Pausanias and Agathon are somewhat more sophisticated, but they still express a deficient view of morality. In both cases, the speaker uses rhetorical tropes to, in effect, praise himself. Pausanias makes sophistical distinctions, such as the claim that no action is good or bad in itself (180e4-5), or the observation that different cultures engage in opposing behaviors (182a-183c), in order to

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[116] See also the entries 'Agathon' and 'Pausanias' in Nails (2002).

[117] Many commentators have argued that Eryximachus is the lover of Phaedrus; see Anderson (1993) 39; Bury (1932) xxxviii,; Edelstein (1945) 95; Levin (2009) 283; Mitchell (1993) 59; Nichols (2008) 44; Pender (1992) 78; Rosen (1987) 104. Eryximachus and Phaedrus are certainly friends (cf. *Phaedrus* 268a8-9), but it is highly unlikely that they were lovers. They were never labelled as such in the *Symposium*, unlike Pausanias and Agathon. They did leave the party together, but they left with other people, not alone (223b). Moreover, they are almost assuredly too close in age. Nails (2002) *ad. loc.* puts them at roughly four years apart in age.

[118] Rowe (1999) 63.

[119] On which see Dover (1974), especially 205-214, 246-243, and 246-250.

argue that the most honorable person is the one who wins the competition for a young man's virtuous permanent affection (183e-184a). Agathon, on the other hand, uses Gorgianic language (198c1-2) to make Eros his own avatar by praising the qualities that Eros and Agathon share: youthfulness, beauty, a reputation for softness or femininity, and virtue understood in a rather superficial way.[120] Plato explicitly notes how Agathon's speech was received by his guests as befitting both its subject and its speaker (198a1-3). Eryximachus and Diotima, as I've argued, represent a philosophical couple, with Eryximachus addressing physics (broadly construed) and Diotima metaphysics. In each case, the second speech is better than the first, but each pair is significantly improved over the previous. Socrates, then, would represent the Eryximachus/Diotima pair, as both a good human being and a philosopher. Alcibiades, on the other hand, would demonstrate the shortcomings of the other two pairs of speeches. He is worried about shame (215e-216b), and tries to win over Socrates using sex (217c-e, 219b-e). He views his interactions with Socrates as a lost competition (216a-b, 217c, 219c-e), and cannot understand either why the traits he values so highly in himself don't win Socrates over (216a, 216d-e) or what Socrates's call to philosophy really means (218a, 218d-e, 221e-22ea). Hence he describes Socrates's virtue in terms of conventional accomplishments like being physically tough (219e-220b) and military bravery (220e-221b).

Is this reading of the *Symposium* correct? As I said above, it would take much more than I can do here to demonstrate it. But it is, I think, a plausible hypothesis. And something like it must be right, given what we've seen about Eryximachus's speech and its place in the *Symposium.* The operant metaphor for interpreting the *Symposium* as a whole is not Diotima's ladder of love. Perhaps it is instead a ring of symposiastic couches, each with room for two.

[120] Nehamas and Woodruff (1989) 34 n. 34.

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