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# *Eryximachus' Tale: The Symposium's Role in Plato's Critique of Medicine*

Susan B. Levin

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## I Introduction

Commentators have typically dismissed Eryximachus' speech as Plato's caricature of the self-important physician preceding speeches distinctly more salient from his philosophical standpoint. This view of the *logos* as unworthy of serious consideration represents a great oversimplification and undervaluing of its import. Despite Edelstein's challenge thereto in 1945, constructions of Eryximachus' speech as a parody have endured.<sup>1</sup> In recent decades, however, a number of prominent scholars have contested that position,<sup>2</sup> and this shift in orientation has had a salutary impact on explorations of his *logos*.

While this stance is valuable as a corrective to earlier dismissals, I believe that it goes too far in its depictions of the merit and cogency

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1 See A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff, *Plato: Symposium* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1989), xvi; S. Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 2nd edn. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1987), 119; and K. Dover, *Plato: Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980), 105.

2 See M.L. McPherran, 'Medicine, Magic, and Religion in Plato's *Symposium*', in J.H. Leshner, D. Nails, and F.C.C. Sheffield, eds., *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies 2006) 71-95; R. Hunter, *Plato's Symposium* (New York: Oxford University Press 2004); C.J. Rowe, 'The Speech of Eryximachus in Plato's *Symposium*', in J.J. Cleary, ed., *Traditions of Platonism: Essays in Honour of John Dillon* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999) 53-64; and D. Konstan and E. Young-Bruehl, 'Eryximachus' Speech in the *Symposium*', *Apeiron* 16 (1982) 40-6.

of the doctor's presentation. Plato's vying with prominent opponents — poets, sophists/rhetoricians, and doctors — for primacy on questions of human nature and thriving occupies a central place in his reflections. Plato targets the former two rivals via the *technê* framework articulated in the *Gorgias*, under whose highly normative guidelines they, unlike medicine, never make the grade. In this paper I argue that the *Symposium* reflects a stage in Plato's engagement with medicine that is intermediate between the *Gorgias*' overt lauding of it, contra *empeiriai* like cookery, as a *technê* and his position in the *Republic*, where several factors, including a more complex relationship between soul and body, commit him to retract its very status as such.<sup>3</sup> 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*<sup>4</sup> — thus setting the stage for the latter's withdrawal of its *technê* standing *tout court*. Exploring the *Symposium*'s role in Plato's critique of medicine is crucial insofar as it deepens and enriches our appreciation of the depth of his preoccupation with this central opponent.

At *Gorgias* 501a, Socrates had claimed that medicine looks into (1) the nature of what it treats (τούτου οὗ θεραπεύει ... τὴν φύσιν) and (2) the cause (αἰτία) of what it does, and can offer an account (λόγον δοῦναι) of each. These contentions — both foregrounded in Hippocratic treatises<sup>5</sup> — are largely asserted and assumed to be true at this juncture, when Plato's rigorous conception of *technê* is debuted and the points of open comparison are *empeiriai*, not other *technai*. The *Symposium*, I maintain, inaugurates their critical assessment through Eryximachus' articulation

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3 In the *Gorgias* see 456a-c, 459a-60a, 464b-5e, and 521e-2a. For a defense of this position involving the *Republic*, see S.B. Levin, 'Is Medicine a *Technê*? Health and End-of-Life Care in Plato's *Republic*', in A. Chu and R. Polansky, eds., *Reflections on Bioethics and Ancient Philosophy* (*Philosophical Inquiry* suppl.; Athens 2007) 125-53.

4 See S.B. Levin, *The Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited: Plato and the Greek Literary Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press 2001), Chap. 5. I concentrate here exclusively on the sequence *Gorgias*-*Symposium*-*Republic*. For discussion of Plato's subsequent reappraisal of medicine, see S.B. Levin, 'A Rivalry Dissolved: The Restoration of Medicine's *Technê* Status in the *Laws*', forthcoming in *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek Political Thought*.

5 Concerning *physis* see, e.g., *De vetere medicina* 3.29, 7.9, 14.18, 24, 20.11; *De victu* I, 2.3, 6.9, 11.3, 12.16, 16.4, 24.20, 32.77, and 35.91. For remarks featuring *aitia*/*aition*, one may consult, e.g., *De vetere medicina* 1.5, 6.15, 11.1, 16.3, 20.16, 21.10 (which distinguishes the falsely-dubbed explanatory factor from a genuine τὸ αἴτιον), 23.8; *De victu* I, 36.2, 9, and 12.

of what he, qua medical professional, views as the governing nature of all. This account indicates what are from Plato's standpoint grave shortcomings in physicians' orientation toward nature and flourishing: Eryximachus, standing in here for physicians as a class, has not — and cannot, given his fundamental orientation qua medical practitioner — explored what they genuinely comprise. The *Symposium* does not dispute the *technê* status of true medical expertise if its applications are kept within proper bounds (as when Eryximachus cures the hiccups of Aristophanes, 185d-e with 189a). The physician's *logos*, however, far from centering on such matters, purports to offer a comprehensive account of *physis* and *eudaimonia*. It is medicine's capacity to speak meaningfully here that Plato is compelled to challenge as he seeks to fortify philosophy's preeminence in this all-important domain.

## II Medicine as the *Technê* Par Excellence

According to Edelstein, Eryximachus' speech 'is not a caricature but rather an historically correct picture of a medical man of that time. It cannot have been Plato's intention to deride Eryximachus as a pedant, a system-monger, unduly fond of medicine.'<sup>6</sup> While Edelstein rightly declines to endorse the received position centering on parody, his claim that Eryximachus is not irrationally attached to (i.e., 'unduly fond' of) his art is, I believe, untenable. Having argued for the ancient pedigree of medicine qua dietetics (Chaps. 3-5), in Chapter 20 of *De vetere medicina* — which vigorously targets the foundational role that philosophy had thus far played in grounding medical theorizing<sup>7</sup> — the Hippocratic author observes that

certain physicians and philosophers assert that no one can know medicine who lacks understanding of what man is ... But the question they raise is one for philosophy ... My view is that ... clear knowledge

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6 L. Edelstein, 'The Rôle of Eryximachus in Plato's *Symposium*', in O. and C.L. Temkin, eds., *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1987) 153-71, at 159.

7 On this function see J. Longrigg, *Greek Rational Medicine: Philosophy and Medicine from Alcmaeon to the Alexandrians* (London: Routledge 1993); and J. Jouanna, 'The Birth of Western Medical Art', in M.D. Grmek, ed., *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998) 22-71.

about nature can be acquired from medicine and from no other source (οὐδαμῶθεν ἄλλοθεν ... ἢ ἐξ ἰητρικῆς), and that one can attain this knowledge when medicine itself has been properly comprehended, but until then it is quite impossible — I mean to possess this information, what man is, by what causes he is made, and similar points accurately.<sup>8</sup>

The work of philosophers like Empedocles (polemically engaged by the author at 20.5-6) offers accounts *peri phuseōs* including man, whose broad sweep encompasses all based on the same *archai*. The Hippocratic author's perspective grounded in medicine leads him to claim, against philosophy, that, for instance, there is no single human nature but rather varying constitutions (ἀί φύσεις, 20.41; cf. 12.1); moreover, the salience of hot and cold — which figure heavily as opposites in philosophic *logoi* — is deemphasized at length in accounting for health and disease (Chaps. 15-19). Having inverted the direction of inquiry involving nature — with medicine quite pointedly taking precedence over philosophical investigation *peri phuseōs* — the author makes no attempt to offer the equally comprehensive account that a full reversal of authority requires. The more modest scope of *De vetere medicina* 20 is suggested by the author's contenting himself with stating that the physician must, at any rate (ἐπεὶ τοῦτό γε), know 'regarding nature' (περὶ φύριος) 'what man is in relation to foods and drinks' — differential reactions across constitutions involving cheese serves for purposes of illustration — and to his lifestyle more generally.

What the Hippocratic author provides here, and in the treatise as a whole, is starkly inadequate as a *logos* grounding the all-embracing epistemological priority of medicine. Even if one concurs with Longrigg that this work construes *physis* narrowly, Hippocratic medicine relied on the placement of man in the broader setting of his environment — a view itself inherited from philosophy, as Longrigg

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8 Renderings of Hippocratic treatises are from *Hippocrates*, W.H.S. Jones, tr., Vols. 1 and 4, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1923 and 1931, respectively), at times with modifications. That the author views philosophical theorizing as well nigh useless to the inquiry in question is strongly suggested by his comment that 'all that philosophers or physicians have said or written on nature no more pertains to medicine than to painting (ἡσσον νομίζω τῆ ἰητρικῆ τέχνη προσήκειν ἢ τῆ γραφικῆ)' (20.9-11).

observes.<sup>9</sup> Notably, *De aere, aquis, locis* foregrounds an essential dependency of 'the greatest triumphs in the practice of his art' (2.20-1, cf. Chap. 1) on the physician's apprehension of wider phenomena falling in the domain of astronomy. Bringing medical expertise to bear in particular geographical settings necessitates his 'knowing the changes of the seasons, and the risings and settings of the stars, with the circumstances of each of these phenomena' (2.14-16).<sup>10</sup>

Like the author of *De vetere medicina*, Eryximachus begins by stressing that his knowledge entire was gained through medicine (ἐκ τῆς ἰατρικῆς, 186a7).<sup>11</sup> McPherran draws on *De vetere medicina* 20 to support the contention that 'given his grand theorizing and his citation of Heraclitus, Eryximachus seems very much the kind of physician targeted by this Hippocratic author.'<sup>12</sup> I maintain, in contrast, that the general stance taken is that of *De vetere medicina* but that here, with Eryximachus, we actually have in concentrated form an attempt of the broad sort ultimately required to support the Hippocratic author's claim for the epistemological preeminence of medicine. Though it reflects this general approach, Eryximachus' vision is more ambitious still since his cognitive authority allegedly encompasses not only the human and cosmological domains but also *hoi theoi*. While the theoretical orientation is that of *De vetere medicina*, Eryximachus' methodology parallels, and

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9 On these points see Longrigg, *Rational Medicine*, 84 with 239n2, and 99, respectively.

10 On *astronomia* for the Greeks as including meteorology, see Dover, *Symposium*, 110.

11 Citations of Plato are from the OCT editions. Those of Vol. 1 are from the edition of E.A. Duke, W.F. Hicken, W.S.M. Nicoll, D.B. Robinson, and J.C.G. Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), and the edition of S.R. Slings (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003) has been used for the *Republic*. Remaining references are to the edition of J. Burnet, 5 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1900-7). Translations of the *Symposium* are either drawn from Nehamas and Woodruff, with certain adjustments, or my own. Renderings of other dialogues are from J.M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1997), with some alterations.

12 'Medicine', 79. Cf. his assertion that Eryximachus is 'Plato's response to all other physicians who would rank the craft of medicine as superior to, rather than subordinate to, the new craft of philosophy' (87, emphasis added). While McPherran notes that 'Plato has no patience with medicine's overblown claims' (77n16), the aforementioned remark, combined with his assertion that Eryximachus 'serves as Plato's model of a properly philosophically-oriented physician' (94n52), commits him to the view that Eryximachus does not represent the targeted group.

is in fact a version of, *De victu* I's voluminous citing of *technai* (Chaps. 12-24) to support its case for the single governing nature of all.<sup>13</sup>

In *Symposium* 186a3-b2 the physician offers a general statement of his thesis (cf. its reiteration at 187e6-8a1), according to which medicine has taught him (καθεωρακέναι μοι δοκῶ ἐκ τῆς ἰατρικῆς, τῆς ἡμετέρας τέχνης) that

Love does not occur only in the human soul; it is not simply the attraction we feel toward human beauty: it is a significantly broader phenomenon. It certainly occurs within the animal kingdom, and even in the world of plants. In fact, it occurs everywhere in the universe (καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσι). Love is a deity of the greatest importance: he permeates everything (ὡς μέγας καὶ θαυμαστός καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν ὁ θεὸς τείνει), not only in the human domain, but also in that of the gods.

This opening grounds the claim that Eryximachus, like the author of *De vetere medicina*, considers *iatrikê* to be the preeminent *technê*:<sup>14</sup> it functions here as the source of his overarching vision, of which immediate appeal to the particulars of his own specialty (ἄρξομαι δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰατρικῆς λέγων, ἵνα καὶ πρεσβεύωμεν τὴν τέχνην, b2-3) — followed by theoretical treatment of other *praxeis* whose *technê* status the physician assumes — offers confirmation. In principle one might claim that groups of experts may access ultimate truths from, or through, different initial vantage points, with its being shown here how one might do so via medicine. Eryximachus' actual position, however, is that medicine's vantage point is unique by comparison with the other so-called *technai* discussed — thus paralleling methodologically Chapter 12 of *De victu* — and, most importantly, with philosophy. As we will see in Section IV, that for Eryximachus qua physician philosophy is the key rival for authority involving *physis* and *eudaimonia* is foregrounded significantly

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13 As all references to *De victu* in the paper are to Book I of that treatise, hereafter I cite it simply as '*De victu*'.

14 While I concur with the stress of L. Robin, *Platon: Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 4, pt. 2: *Symposium* (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres' 1929), lii and 24n2, on medicine à la Eryximachus as the *technê* par excellence, we underscore different ties to the Hippocratic corpus. On medicine as the 'primary' *technê* for Eryximachus, see Rosen, *Symposium*, 105. Cf. E. Hoffmann, *Über Platons Symposium* (Heidelberg: Kerle 1947), 11, who imbeds the point in a quite different interpretive structure.

in the longest segment of his speech, that concerning *mousikê*, by his semi-polemical naming of Heraclitus and stressing of the philosopher's wholesale dependence on *him* for appropriation in a manner that is clear and proper.

Reinforcing the substance of these framing remarks, Eryximachus avails himself of every conceivable opportunity to underscore (1) the *technê* status of his own pursuit and (2) the fact that its practitioners operate with knowledge — this abundance of mentions contrasting sharply with the case of other *technai*, including *mousikê* though discussion of it surpasses even that of medicine in length. Early on there are ten pertinent occurrences of the former variety involving medicine. We find τέχνη or a cognate on four occasions: τῆς ἡμετέρας τέχνης (186a7-b1), τὴν τέχνην (b3), τεχνικός (c5), τὴν ἡμετέραν τέχνην (e3); and ἰατρική or a cognate on six: ἐκ τῆς ἰατρικῆς (a7), ἀπὸ τῆς ἰατρικῆς (b3), τὸ ἰατρικόν (c3), ἰατρική (c5), ὁ ἰατρικώτατος (d1), ἡ ἰατρική (e4). The physician's superlative cognitive state is also foregrounded from the start: ἐπιστήμη (186c6), ὁ διαγιγνώσκων (c7), ἐπιστάμενος (d4), and ἐπισθηθεὶς (e1, in a reference to Asclepius). This emphasis continues as the speech unfolds: for pertinent remarks see 187a2 (τῷ καὶ συμικρὸν προσέχοντι τὸν νοῦν, doubtless meant in a self-congratulatory fashion); 187c2-3 (ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ ἡ ἰατρική); c6-7 (οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν τὰ ἐρωτικά διαγιγνώσκειν); e4 (ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ τέχνῃ); and e6 (ἐν ἰατρικῇ).

A supposed presiding role granted to Eryximachus in the proceedings has been cited as clear evidence of his distinctive import. According to Edelstein, Eryximachus is the 'peer [of his fellow symposiasts], nay, in some respects, their superior. For he exercises a certain authority over them. Within the framework of the dialogue, he is indeed more important than anybody else.'<sup>15</sup> While Edelstein's discussion rightly notes that the physician is an evident player on what I call the 'meta-level', this characterization of his import is too strong; moreover, it goes awry in maintaining that the role he possesses is unequivocally a point in Eryximachus' favor by helping to establish his positive weight as a presence on the occasion. Eryximachus assumes that, qua practitioner of *iatrikê*, he is the one most properly equipped to oversee a gathering that encompasses prominent poets and a highly esteemed philosopher — and to do so, moreover, in connection with a topic, namely, *erôs*, that

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15 'Rôle', 164. Cf. his reference to 'the [physician's] exceptional rôle' (164) and to the 'introductory scene ... [as] dominated by Eryximachus,' whose 'outstanding part' continues (163).



ostensibly has far more directly to do with these other domains. If Eryximachus' framing role were clearly overarching, this would arguably buttress the claim of his subsequent encomium that *iatrikê* is preeminent. Here, however, as in the content of his own *logos*, the physician's pretensions exceed his actual authority: in point of fact, Eryximachus' efforts on the meta-level do not patently stand above all others in import; in addition, they are far from rigorous and uncompromising regarding virtue qua *sôphrosunê* — this latter fact being suggestive for the light it casts on the construction of that *aretê* in his own contribution to the proceedings (regarding which see Section III below).

On the matter of drinking as discussed at the outset, Eryximachus actually takes his cue from others: It is Pausanias, supported by Aristophanes, who proposes a significant reduction in the accustomed level of drinking (176a-b); Eryximachus then consults Agathon's wishes — which happen to coincide with those of his fellow symposiasts — before identifying this expressed preference as a *ἔρμαιον* (c1).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, it is Phaedrus' putting his seal of approval (d5-7) on Eryximachus' urging against heavy drinking, particularly among those 'suffering the effects of a previous night's excesses' (d4), that clinches the company's decision to eschew de facto mandatory drunkenness, allowing each person, on Eryximachus' formulation — which echoes οὕτω πίνοντας πρὸς ἡδονήν (e2-3), as resolved by the group — to drink as much as he likes (πίνειν ὅσον ἂν ἕκαστος βούληται, e5). In the view of Rowe, Eryximachus' claim about heavy drinking as the fruit of insight gained from medicine (d1-3) is something that 'everyone ... knows perfectly well';<sup>17</sup> this suggestion finds support in the fact that the idea is generated and affirmed by non-specialists before Eryximachus himself weighs in. Given this broader context, I find the contention of Edelstein that the physician is 'responsible for the decision that the symposium be not devoted to excessive drinking' (emphasis added) to be too strong.<sup>18</sup>

Following dismissal of the flute-girl at his suggestion, Eryximachus, who has just received support from Phaedrus, his paramour, returns

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16 Deferential appeal to Agathon qua victor and host might well be expected, but this takes nothing away from the fact that Eryximachus' 'scientific' formulation is heavily nested in remarks by all of the original symposiasts besides Socrates.

17 C.J. Rowe, *Plato: Symposium* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips 1998), ad loc. Hence, 'Phaedrus' reply ... and everyone else's ready agreement that they should listen to the expert (e1-3) ... are then easily taken as mock-serious.'

18 'Rôle', 162

the favor, drawing Phaedrus into the spotlight by proposing a topic that originates with him (177a) — and whose own encomium, offered first, will be largely an *apologia* for the existing type of bond between *erastês* and *erômenos*. Socrates, like Phaedrus in what precedes — but clearly the attendee with the greatest cachet, as evidenced from the start by the latitude he receives for what would otherwise be viewed as merely an ill-timed arrival stemming from rudeness (175c-d) — throws his weight strongly behind the proposal, sealing thereby the company's approval of it (177e7-8a1).<sup>19</sup> Placed in its broader context, Eryximachus' presence at this juncture is less dominant than it might appear when isolated therefrom.

Phaedrus and Eryximachus' having been linked together at the outset through their reciprocal support, in what follows the role of authority is well-nigh evenly divided between the two: while Aristophanes' hiccups are addressed by Eryximachus (185d-e), Phaedrus is front and center when ensuring that the company stays on track prior to Agathon's speech (194d-e). Moreover, Socrates turns to Phaedrus thereafter for permission both to depart in his own *logos* from the traditional form of encomia and to question Agathon before so doing (199b-c); coming full circle, Socrates addresses Phaedrus twice more qua overseer at its close (212b-c). Eryximachus' final appearance, like that at the start, shows him once more prepared to defer to others where conduct bearing on *sôphrosunê* is involved: the physician is willing to tolerate the heavy drinking that Alcibiades had initiated upon his arrival (214a) if it is accompanied by either talk or song; given this fact, Alcibiades' pointed lauding of Eryximachus' father, but not the son, as 'most self-controlled' (b4) is arguably ironic.<sup>20</sup> Having acceded to Alcibiades on this crucial point of procedure — a marked departure from the less immoderate course that he had supported early on — Eryximachus urges him to praise Socrates (214d) in what the physician cannot know at that moment will be a *logos* that actually fits well with what precedes. As he was pivotal at the outset when the choice of *erôs* as topic was confirmed, Socrates now grants his acceptance to the course in ques-

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19 Socrates' distinctive status as someone for whom such conduct is habitual and accepted is reprised at 220c; cf. R.G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Heffer 1932), xix.

20 Eryximachus had been identified at the outset as the 'son of Acumenus' (176b5). For a different interpretation of this reference to Eryximachus' father, see both Rowe, *Symposium*, and Bury, *Symposium*, ad loc.

tion (214e).<sup>21</sup> That the lovers' departure, too, is joint (223b), as befits the nature of their tie, reinforces the collaborative nature of their earlier role.<sup>22</sup> Having underscored the limits of Eryximachus' role on the meta-level even as the physician views it as dominant — which discrepancy reinforces Plato's stress on the unbridled extravagance of the doctor's claim to cognitive authority in his own encomium of *Erôs* — let us now turn to that *logos* itself, which will be our focus in the remainder of the paper.

### III Desire, Self-indulgence, and Self-control

Central to judging the caliber of Eryximachus' *logos* is his remarks involving *akolasia* in 186b-c and 187d-e. The *Republic's* handling of the soul-body relationship devotes special concern to a tie in the case of appetite and self-control.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the *Gorgias's* account of well-being had already given particular weight to *epithumiai*, *akolasia*, and *sôphrosunê*. In both cases — as well as in the *Symposium* through Socrates' speech — Plato squarely opposes latitude for the indulging of desire, promulgated in Eryximachus' speech by the physician's retention of the self-serving dimension of his predecessors' *logoi* that sought to justify yielding, under 'proper' circumstances, to the sexual overtures of the *erastês*.

In 186b8-c1, Eryximachus offers an analogy involving body and soul — one simply assuming Pausanias' infrastructure regarding appropriate submission to its physical expression: 'Just as, following Pausanias, it's admirable to submit to good men but shameful to gratify those who

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21 As to why Socrates assents to this seeming departure, might we have reason to think that, based on his knowledge of what has — and has not — transpired between himself and Alcibiades, for him less of a shift than met the eye would be taking place? On the account of W.J. Prior, 'The Portrait of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006) 137-66, which provides such a justification, Alcibiades, having glimpsed the 'private face' of Socrates (160-1), sees that his evincing of 'erotic attachment to youths' qua sexual yearning is ironic (158), and Alcibiades' encomium 'affirms' Socrates' completion of the ascent (164).

22 Cf. Edelstein, 'Rôle', 164n38, though, as what follows will make clear, I diverge from his further claim that their being the sole individuals mentioned by name here is 'a feature that stresses their moderation.'

23 For supporting evidence see Levin, 'Technê', 128-30.

are self-indulgent, so too with the body' (ὥσπερ ἄρτι Πausανίας ἔλεγεν τοῖς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς καλὸν χαρίζεσθαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τοῖς δ' ἀκολάστοις αἰσχρόν, οὕτω καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς σώμασιν).<sup>24</sup> While the issue concerning the vice of *akolasia* is formulated here to preclude one's submitting to those who are *akolastoi* — with the implication that refraining is integral to one's own prospects for not becoming such oneself — the point is subsequently framed in terms of the agent's avoiding the formation of the negative character trait of *akolasia*. Hence the physician asserts (187d4-e6) that

the same account applies once again (πάλιν γὰρ ἦκει ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος), namely, that the love felt by good people — *and by those who though not yet good might become such* — must be gratified and protected. And this is the admirable, heavenly *Erôs*, the *Erôs* of the Ouranian Muse. The other, that of Polyhymnia, is boorish (πάνδημος), *and must be applied cautiously to those to whom it applies, in order that one enjoy the pleasure of it but instill no self-indulgence (ἀκολασία)*, just as (ὥσπερ) in our *technê* great effort is expended to use well the desires associated with the art of cookery in order that people take pleasure without illness (ταῖς περὶ τὴν ὀψοποικὴν τέχνην ἐπιθυμίαις καλῶς χρῆσθαι, ὥστ' ἄνευ νόσου τὴν ἡδονὴν καρπώσασθαι).

On the account of Rowe, 187d4-7 introduces 'the possibility of finding artfulness and wit in Eryximachus (things said with a nudge and a wink),' thereby offering a partial 'antidote to the attribution to him of

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24 Reinforcing the bond between the two *logoi* retrospectively is Aristophanes' use of a dual form (εἰπέτην, 189c3) to express his view that Eryximachus and Pausanias had adopted the same approach; cf. Rosen, *Symposium*, 92n8. The poet's later stress on the optimal interpersonal tie's not being grounded in sexual relations (192c-d) offers a pointed correction of the stance that he had opposed in 189c. As K. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1989), observes, the verb χαρίζεσθαι referred specifically to sexual activity (see 44, 83-4, and 157). It appears on numerous occasions in Pausanias' speech (182a2, b3, d1, 183d7, 184a2, b6, d2, e4, 185a1, 6, b5). The verb also occurs several times in Eryximachus' remarks (186b9, c3, 187d6, and 188c4); the first instance, as we saw, grounds an approving reference to Pausanias' account of the circumstances under which submission to an *erastês* is justified. In the view of G.F. Rettig, *Platons Symposium* (Halle: Waisenhause 1876), Eryximachus — whose speech is tied so closely to Pausanias' that the two 'gewisser Massen ein Ganzes bilden' (13) — 'die Lust als höchstes Ziel anerkennt und zu seiner Hauptaufgabe macht' (19).

mere pedantry.<sup>25</sup> I diverge from Rowe on this point, believing instead that Plato is dead serious here in attributing precisely the views he does to the physician. While at first blush this formulation may appear to concede more than its predecessor, I suggest that Plato simply spells out what the earlier, compact version amounts or commits one to, given human fallibility in assessments of character (acknowledged by Pausanias at 185a-b) issuing in conclusions about those with whom to engage and, most fundamentally, the fact that once such a desire is indulged, it is all but impossible for one to set limits to it. Indicating more overtly where the danger lies in practice brings to the fore what for Plato is so deeply problematic about the position.

According to Plato, *sôphrosunê*, integral to thriving, entails strict appropriateness in kinds and objects of desire, with that of a sexual nature centrally excluded as impermissible. Wardy refers aptly here to Diotima's 'systematic devaluation of the flesh.'<sup>26</sup> That the view expressed by Eryximachus is antithetical to Plato's own is manifest, for instance, in the dialogue's placement of the sexual expression of *erôs* on the lowest tier of pre-ascent forms thereof (207d) — which focus is contrasted with pursuing *erôs* correctly (ὀρθῶς, 210a6 and 211b5) where interpersonal ties are involved. It is also strongly evinced by Diotima's pointed juxtaposition of two incompatible lives (211d-12a) directly following her articulation of the ascent. In addition, Socrates' remarkable, unflinching resolve in the face of Alcibiades' persistent advances (a precise reflection of the stance expressed in 211d-12a) fundamentally juxtaposes two antithetical lives in a manner loosely analogous to the *Gorgias*' foundational clash between rhetoric and philosophy as grounding modes of existence — the former, qua *empeiria*, built around pleasure and flattery — with Socrates' conduct reflecting his embodiment of true *sôphrosunê* (217a-19d; Alcibiades' grudging respect for this *aretê* is expressed at 219d3-5).<sup>27</sup> Reinforcing the point, moreover, Plato's critical treatment of *mousikê* in *Republic* II-III culminates in a strong, express prohibition against 'excessive pleasure' (ἡδονῆ ὑπερβαλλούση, 402e3), with a special focus on sexual activity, as proper attraction to

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25 'Speech', 62

26 'The Unity of Opposites in Plato's *Symposium*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 23 (2002) 1-61, at 29

27 Cf. the reference of Bury, *Symposium*, 148, to 'the inner σωφροσύνη' of Socrates.

the fine and orderly, forged through *mousikê*, is a sine qua non of flourishing (402e-3c).<sup>28</sup>

A harbinger of Plato's stance regarding desire and self-control is evident in the *Gorgias*, where he foregrounds the nature of *epithumiai* and their relation to *akolasia*. Like Eryximachus, who singles out, in closing, *sôphrosunê* and *dikaiosunê*, the *Gorgias* puts special weight on these two *aretai* (478d, 493d, 504d-e, 507d-8a, and 519a). In this dialogue we find that one wishing to flourish must foster *sôphrosunê*, whose cultivation requires his 'flee[ing] away from lack of discipline (ἀκολασία) as fast as his feet will carry him' (507d2). The *Gorgias*' message, contra that of Eryximachus — who himself echoes Phaedrus and Pausanias — is that one cannot indulge inappropriate desires at all without capitulating to badness within. At 507e1-8a4 we find that one seeking to be good

should not allow his appetites to be undisciplined or undertake to fill them up (οὐκ ἐπιθυμίας ἐῶντα ἀκολάστους εἶναι καὶ ταύτας ἐπιχειροῦντα πληροῦν) — a never-ending evil — and live the life of a marauder. Such a man could not be dear to another man or to a god ... Wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice (τὴν κοινωσίαν ... καὶ φιλίαν καὶ κοσμιότητα καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ δικαιοσύνην) hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men, and that is why they call this universe a world order (κόσμον), my friend, and not an undisciplined world-disorder (οὐκ ἀκοσμίαν οὐδὲ ἀκολασίαν).

This passage is intriguingly juxtaposed against Eryximachus' culminating observations involving virtue and flourishing from a divergent ontological and epistemological standpoint:

Such is the power (δύναμιν) of Love — so varied and great that in all cases it might be called absolute. Yet its power (δύναμιν) is greatest when Love is directed, in self-control and justice, toward good things (ὁ δὲ περὶ τὰ γαθὰ μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀποτελούμενος), whether in heaven or on earth: happiness, the bonds of human society, concord with the gods above — all these are among his gifts (πάσων

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28 Plato's exclusion of sexual activity from the highest expression of *erôs* is, moreover, central to the *Phaedrus*' account (see 250e, 253d-4e, and 256a-b). On Plato and sexual activity, cf. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 163-4 and 167-8.

ἡμῖν εὐδαιμονίαν παρασκευάζει καὶ ἀλλήλοις δυναμένους ὀμιλεῖν καὶ φίλους εἶναι καὶ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἡμῶν θεοῖς). (188d4-9)

While Eryximachus' quest to showcase the all-encompassing cognitive reach of his *technê* is strikingly evident once again in these closing remarks, their glancing, ad hoc reference to virtue and thriving indicates a failure to treat them as properly integral, let alone reflect on what they actually entail. Though parallels between the two dialogues' comments may strike one at first blush, on closer inspection telling differences emerge: Eryximachus is at pains to stress that the power (*dýnamis*) to ensure virtue and flourishing stems from *Erôs* alone — the term appears twice in these lines (d4 and 7), and the participle at d8<sup>29</sup> — instead of, like Diotima, identifying the good as the arbiter of its proper role. In fact, the physician speaks of goods (*τὰγαθά*) instead of *the* good (d5) though the *Gorgias* had been at pains to keep externals (introduced at 451d-2d) sharply distinct from the good of the virtuous life (see 477-8, including *Εὐδαιμονέστατος μὲν ἄρα ὁ μὴ ἔχων κακίαν ἐν ψυχῇ* at 478d7-8). In addition, *Gorgias* 507e-8a ties excellence and well-being to order, prefacing its observations on *aretê* with a reminder that self-control and justice are accessible only to those whose *epithumiai* are rightly controlled (507d6-e3) — a tie that, as we have seen, Eryximachus had obtrusively declined to forge in what precedes.

Salient on the topic of desire and *technê* is, moreover, Plato's contention at *Gorgias* 503c7-d2 that 'a man should satisfy those of his appetites that ... make him better (*αἱ μὲν τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ... βελτίω ποιοῦσι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ταῦτα μὲν ἀποτελεῖν*), and not those that make him worse, and ... this is a matter of craft (*τοῦτο δὲ τέχνη τις εἶη*).' Recurring to the point shortly thereafter, but here formulating it in terms of justice, Plato maintains that a *technê* is required to keep one from its opposite (509d-10a).<sup>30</sup>

29 *Dunamis* is a quite salient term in the Hippocratic Corpus: see, e.g., *De veteri medicina* 3.24, 44, 13.33, 14.7, 15.17, 26, 16.2, 17.11, 15, 19.23, 27, 55, 22.2, 24.1; *De victu* 2.12, 15, 26, 3.3, 7, 4.10, 10.18, 20, 35.53, 87, and 102.

30 Socrates' status as a philosopher is stressed at 481d3-4 (cf. 482a2-b1, 484c5-6d1), and the philosopher's excellent soul is said to fare well in the afterlife (526c). 527d indicates that a turn to politics is appropriate only after one is secure in the practice of *aretê*, and at 521d7 mention is made of 'the true political *technê*.' Such passages, taken together, support the view that Plato envisions here a single *technê*, between the aspects of practitioners' role he has not yet clearly distinguished.

The *Gorgias* itself suggests that this *technê* cannot be medicine. As emphasized in the *Republic* (406c-e), a human existence is not worth preserving at all costs; in fact, so doing can undermine justice. Life with a ruined body should not continue (*Grg* 505a). Plato's elaboration of the claim in 511b-12e notes crucially that

if a man afflicted with serious incurable physical ailments did not drown [while with the helmsman], this man is miserable for not dying and has received no benefit from him. But if a man has many incurable diseases in what is more valuable than his body, his soul, life for that man is not worth living, and he won't do him any favor if he rescues him from the sea or from prison or from anywhere else. (512a2-b1)

Philosophically, the way was paved in part for this conclusion by Socrates' argument that 'injustice ... and lack of discipline (ἡ ἀδικία ... καὶ ἡ ἀκολασία) and all other forms of corruption of soul are the greatest evil there is (μέγιστον τῶν ὄντων κακόν)' (477e4-6) — far greater than any misfortune and misery tied to disease (477e-80d). Since medicine is not the *technê* whose subject matter is justice, and ensuring its implementation lies at the core of flourishing, medicine cannot occupy the pinnacle of *technai*. Indeed, restoring an individual to health can be at odds with the promotion of justice, as when the soul in question is incurable (477e-8d with 512a2-b1; cf. the closing myth at 525b-e). If this is so, it should turn out not only that medicine qua *technê* is not pre-eminent but also that, in certain types of situation, its operations will require supervision by the practitioner of the *technê* that presides over justice. This latter point is not showcased till the *Republic*, where it will be crucial to the further shift in Plato's stance toward medicine there.

At the close of the *Gorgias* (527e), Plato exhorts us to take the *logos* that he has provided as our guide to what flourishing consists in and the path toward its cultivation. Among the responsibilities of the *technê* referred to at 503c7-d2 would be an articulation of the nature of desire, including the allocation to classes of its types and their impact on the soul. Such an account, we are to learn, medicine cannot provide: if we follow Plato's own *logos* — as presented in the *Gorgias*, and expanded in the *Symposium* and *Republic* — the competing *logos* of Eryximachus is necessarily disqualified thereby as sure to lead us astray.

Finally, Eryximachus' close linkage of medicine with cookery reinforces the account provided above. He states: 'We must be careful to enjoy [the pleasure of Polyhymnia] without slipping into debauchery. This case, I might add, is strictly parallel to a serious issue in my own field,



namely, the problem of regulating the appetite so as to be able to enjoy a fine meal without unhealthy aftereffects' (187e1-6). As Rowe observes, Eryximachus' remark involving cookery 'hint[s] that medicine has a role to play in preventing "immorality."' <sup>31</sup> Notably, the doctor's provision of this function for cookery runs in tandem with his assumption of latitude for the indulgence of sexual desire. In the Hippocratic Corpus, cookery is deemed a *technê* whose proper aim includes the fostering of pleasure (τέρψις; *De victu* 18). Yet in the *Gorgias* cookery, whose *technê* status Eryximachus clearly takes for granted (περὶ τὴν ὀψοποιικὴν τέχνην, 187e4-5), is repeatedly and pointedly relegated, with rhetoric, to the lowly sphere of *empeiriai*. There we find, for instance, that *kolakeia* — an umbrella term for the modus operandi of *empeiriai* — 'considers not at all whatever is best; with the lure of what's most pleasant at the moment, it sniffs out folly and hoodwinks it, so that it gives the impression of being most deserving' (464d1-3, and 464b-6a more generally). In one of many disparaging remarks about cookery, specifically, Plato announces disdainfully that those adept at it are mere 'servants, satisfiers of appetites' (διακόνους ... καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν παρασκευαστάς, 518c3-4). <sup>32</sup> As Rettig rightly maintains, given this backdrop, Eryximachus' recourse to cookery cannot but lower medicine's standing in Plato's eyes. <sup>33</sup>

#### IV Heraclitus

Also key to the delineation of Plato's stance toward medicine in the *Symposium* is the physician's handling of *mousikê*, which follows that of medicine — exceeding it in length and featuring a pointed, subordinating invocation of an eminent Presocratic philosopher. Eryximachus shifts to his treatment thereof by stating that 'the entire *technê* of medicine is guided by *Erôs*, just as is the case with (ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ) gymnastics and farming; and it is clear to anyone who gives it a moment's thought (καὶ παντὶ κατάδηλος τῷ καὶ σμικρὸν προσέχοντι τὸν νοῦν) that the same is true also in the case of *mousikê*' (186e4-7a3, cf. 187c4-7). McPherran notes that 'Hippocratic physicians at the time did

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31 *Symposium*, 150

32 See also 462d-e, 463b, 500b, 500e-1a, 517d-18d, and 521e-2a.

33 *Symposium*, 165 and 172-3

take a self-conscious interest in such things as music.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with this inclination, Eryximachus takes it as natural that he is qualified to pronounce on this topic. His formulation here (καὶ παντὶ κατάδηλος τῷ καὶ μικρὸν προσέχοντι τὸν νοῦν, 187a2; cf. οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν, c6) is ironic insofar as, it turns out, the esteemed philosopher Heraclitus — himself influential in certain Hippocratic treatises, particularly *De alimento* and *De victu* — does not succeed in expressing this basic cosmic truth and hence depends on the aid of Eryximachus qua physician for the chance to be viewed as proffering an insight as opposed to an absurdity. Indeed, the Hippocratic distinction between experts and lay-people — and between better and worse physicians — would lose its force if such an insight were not in fact a challenge to achieve. Crucial to appreciating the full impact of Heraclitus' inclusion here is, first of all, the very mention of his name insofar as 'the use of proper names in a polemical context was not a custom typical of the fifth century.'<sup>35</sup> In fact, the use of adversaries' appellations by Hippocratic authors was so rare that there are just three such references across the entire corpus.<sup>36</sup> Let us now turn to the manner of Eryximachus' engagement with Heraclitus.

As Nehamas and Woodruff observe,<sup>37</sup> Eryximachus gets Heraclitus completely wrong in the exegesis that he proffers in 187a-c. Rowe diverges from this stance, interpreting the discussion as a 'transparent' instance (emphasis added) of 'artfulness and wit in Eryximachus (things said with a nudge and a wink).'<sup>38</sup> The physician is here 'pretending to put Heraclitus right, in a show of "learning"' (italics in original). Rowe elaborates:

[I]f Plato knows what Heraclitus actually meant, as he presumably did, there is no reason to suppose that Eryximachus is not supposed to know it — unless we have other grounds for thinking him (meant to be) ignorant of the field, including cosmology, in which he is operat-

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34 'Medicine', 77

35 Jouanna, 'Birth', 53

36 See J. Jouanna, 'Présence d'Empédocle dans la Collection Hippocratique', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, ser. 4 (1961) 452-463, at 461n68: as noted by Jouanna, these are to Empedocles (mentioned above) in *De veteri medicina* 20; Melissus in *De natura hominis* 1.34; and the physician Herodicus in *Epidemiarum* 6.3.18.

37 *Symposium*, ad loc

38 'Speech', 62. Cf. Hunter, *Symposium*, 55.

ing. But there are no such grounds (as everyone notices, he seems to know something about Empedocles).

As I argue in what follows, we have very good reason, indeed, for believing that Plato wishes to reveal the physician as ignorant here. In addition, the comparison to Empedocles is inapposite, as key notions of the Pluralist, himself impacted by Alcmaeon, are far more routine and pervasive as a backdrop for medical theorizing in the fifth century.<sup>39</sup>

While *De alimento* and *De victu* simply incorporate without comment versions of Heraclitean ideas, Eryximachus treats the philosopher in a semi-polemical fashion, as evidenced by the manner of his introduction of Heraclitus to ground his lengthy treatment of *mousikê* as, like medicine, 'everywhere guided by Love' (186e4-7a1): 'This is perhaps what Heraclitus, too, wanted to say though it is hard to tell because he does not express himself well' (ὥσπερ ἴσως Ἡράκλειτος βούλεται λέγειν, ἐπεὶ τοῖς γε ῥήμασιν οὐ καλῶς λέγει, 187a3-4); cf. Eryximachus' recurrence to the point at a8 (ἀλλὰ ἴσως τόδε ἐβούλετο λέγειν). Either Heraclitus also had the right idea — in which case it took Eryximachus to articulate the point effectively — or we must view the philosopher as endorsing the strikingly absurd position that harmony and discord may coexist (ἔστι δὲ πολλὴ ἀλογία ἁρμονίαν φάναι διαφέρεισθαι ἢ ἐκ διαφερομένων ἔτι εἶναι, a6-8).

As McPherran maintains, the speech of Eryximachus indeed shows that the physician is 'no slave to Presocratic science.'<sup>40</sup> This fact is not, however, as McPherran contends, a point in its favor. Quite the opposite is the case since Eryximachus proceeds to mangle the nuance in Heraclitus' position — as expressed by 'the one ... "being at variance with itself is in agreement with itself" "like the attunement of a bow or a lyre"' (187a5-6) — via a heavy-handed pronouncement on harmony's necessarily arising in a sequential manner (whose formulation features a sharp disjunction between πρότερον and ὕστερον, b1).<sup>41</sup> Eryxima-

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39 For detailed treatment of Empedocles' distinctive status qua philosophical influence on Hippocratic medicine in this period, see Longrigg, *Rational Medicine*, Chaps. 2-3 and Chap. 4, 91-2. On the formulation of Jouanna, 'Présence d'Empédocle', 462, 'imité ou critiqué, Empédocle reste un grand nom dans la médecine à la fin du cinquième siècle.'

40 'Medicine', 80n27

41 Konstan and Young-Bruehl, 'Speech', 41, note, though without exploring its implications for Eryximachus' standing in Plato's eyes, that the physician 'ignores

chus insists that there can be no harmony *as long as* high and low are at odds (οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἐκ διαφορομένων γε ἔτι τοῦ ὀξέος καὶ βαρέος ἁρμονία ἂν εἴη, b2-4) — promptly repeating the contention so that it becomes more emphatic still (ὁμολογίαν δὲ ἐκ διαφορομένων, ἕως ἂν διαφέρωνται, ἀδύνατον εἶναι διαφορόμενον δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ μὴ ὁμολογοῦν ἀδύνατον ἁρμόσαι, b5-7). The physician then makes the same point in the case of rhythm (ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὁ ῥυθμός, b7), again stressing temporal sequence via πρότερον and ὕστερον (c1).

The claim of Dover that Plato's interpretation of Heraclitus might not match the latter's intention, and that the construction attributed by Plato to Eryximachus might differ from either of these,<sup>42</sup> is true in an abstract exegetical way. At issue here — given that Eryximachus' *logos* proffers what he views as an account of reality proper, above all human flourishing — is the extent to which Eryximachus' construction reflects what can be unveiled as Plato's own. Most specifically, 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.

Crucially, Plato's own construction of Heraclitus is more nuanced than meets the eye based, for instance, on a cursory reading of *Cratylus* 439b-40d (cf. *Tht* 181e-2d) that is not placed in the broader context of his comments involving flux in the dialogues. In his discussion of the nature of Plato's Heracliteanism, Irwin — who does not mention our passage — distinguishes helpfully between 'self-change' ('s-change') — which centers on change over time — and 'aspect-change' ('a-change') involving the compresence of opposites at a single juncture.<sup>43</sup> Irwin rightly interprets Plato as being aware of both types and as acknowledging an engagement with both on the part of Heraclitus (5, cf. 12). The aforementioned passages from the *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus* leave no

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Heraclitus' concern with the tension in the bow or lyre themselves ... (the bow seems to be irrelevant to this line of reasoning).' K. Dorter, 'The Significance of the Speeches in Plato's *Symposium*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 2 (1969) 215-34, at 226, asserts that Eryximachus is 'almost, but not quite, aware' of his 'failure to understand' Heraclitus — without, however, indicating expressly what grounds this claim concerning the doctor's incipient awareness.

42 *Symposium*, ad loc.

43 T.H. Irwin, 'Plato's Heracliteanism', *Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1977) 1-13, at 4

doubt that Plato was cognizant of the former and associated Heraclitus therewith. As Irwin remarks (5), salient evidence of Plato's awareness that the Ionian also foregrounded what Irwin dubs 'a-change' is found in the *Hippias Major*, where Plato cites Heraclitus B82: 'Don't you know that what Heraclitus said holds good — "the finest of monkeys is foul put together with another class"' (289a2-4; cf. 289b3-5 and 293b-c). Regarding this type of flux in Heraclitus, one may also consult B8-9, 13, 37, 51 (on whose content Eryximachus draws), 59-61, 83, and 91 — the last of these being a place where, as Irwin (4n7) observes, Heraclitus 'clearly associates compresence of opposites with flux.' As commentators have recognized, the *Sophist* buttresses the view that Plato was aware of his predecessor's construction of opposites as compresent: according to the 'Ionian muse', namely, Heraclitus, 'in being taken apart they're brought together' (242d7-e3); Plato contrasts this stance straightaway with that of the 'Sicilian muse' (i.e., Empedocles) who focuses on alternation (242e3-3a1).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, as Irwin (5) rightly stresses in this connection, Plato foregrounds compresence as an instance of flux in the *Theaetetus*: 'If you call a thing large, it will reveal itself as small, and if you dub it heavy, it is liable to appear as light, and so on with everything, because nothing is one or anything or any kind of thing. What is really true, is this: the things of which we naturally say that they "are", are in process of coming to be' (152d4-e1).

Given that Plato himself (1) is aware of the two types of flux, (2) knows that Heraclitus had also identified such, and (3) like Heraclitus, ties compresence to flux, it is significant that he presents Eryximachus as evincing no element of this understanding — indeed, quite the opposite. Drawing on Irwin's terminology, one may attribute to Eryximachus the view that instantiating proper 's-change' eliminates tension — at least at the juncture in question. Plato foregrounds both the physician's ignorance and his presumption by having him contend that *Heraclitus* either had the wrong idea or expressed himself poorly by not declaring plainly that he had temporal sequences in view. Eryximachus — taking himself to provide the lucidity that, regrettably, Heraclitus did not — states explicitly that it is through temporal shifts that such harmony as exists is produced. Yet the material cited by Eryximachus, construed by him as an unmistakable instance of 's-change', is in fact a salient expression of 'a-change'. Hence Eryximachus allocates to Heraclitus a

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44 On the connection of this passage to Eryximachus' handling of Heraclitus, see also Robin, *Symposium*, livn2; and Rosen, *Symposium*, 109-10.

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. I cannot agree, therefore, with the contention of Wardy that 'Eryximachus' reading remains an option in the *Symposium*.<sup>45</sup> In my view, it cannot be an 'option' qua interpretation of the Heraclitean material in question here. The core issue is not that temporal sequences, too, figure in Heraclitus' thought and that Plato is aware of this: rather, Eryximachus both limits himself to temporal sequences in his construction of flux and distorts Heraclitean material that clearly singles out harmony through contemporaneous tension in order to force it into line with the sequential construction that he treats as exclusive.

Notably, in conjunction with this, the dialogue foregrounds, in the ascent, Plato's reconstituted notion of 'a-change': αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, in contrast to τὰ καλά, is not, for instance, 'beautiful in relation to one thing and ugly in relation to another; nor is it beautiful here but ugly there, as it would be if it were beautiful for some people and ugly for others' (211a3-5, cf. 211d8-e4). The distinction between an existent's being *F* without and with qualification, which lies at the core of Plato's metaphysics in the middle dialogues, anchors this crucial passage (210a-12a). In addition, earlier in Socrates' speech Plato invokes his revised construction of 's-change' in remarks stressing the existence of incremental shifts within individuals moving through the life cycle (208a-b).<sup>46</sup> Hence, in the very dialogue in which Eryximachus mangles Heraclitus, Plato incorporates his own constructions of Heraclitus' two-fold distinction — an inclusion that assumes the nuanced awareness of his predecessor treated above.

Two central procedural parallels come to mind here. First, Eryximachus' speech illustrates the flaw in craftspeople's construction of their own understanding, which, as fathomed by Socrates when striving to interpret the Oracle at Delphi in the *Apology*, consists in their wrongly

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45 'Unity', 7

46 Regarding 208a-b see Irwin, 'Heracliteanism', 6: 'Diotima shows how someone remains the same man throughout his lifetime; s-changes are regular and maintain a close qualitative similarity between the man at one time and at another.' For an unqualified reference to 'the flux doctrine' as involved at 207e1-8a3, see Wardy, 'Unity', 37. He later maintains that Diotima here 'asserts πάντα ῥεῖ' — treating the notion, however, as a Heraclitean idea rather than as reflecting a noteworthy Platonic reconstitution thereof (59-60).

assuming that their adeptness in one arena of craft automatically translates into insight regarding far more salient topics (22c9-e1).<sup>47</sup> Second, Eryximachus' presumption involving Heraclitus ties him to Protagoras' stance involving the poets, as characterized in the eponymous dialogue. Konstan and Young-Bruehl, too, note a link to the *Protagoras*, citing it as a point in Eryximachus' favor: aside from the *logos* of Socrates, Eryximachus' 'is the only one which rivals ... Protagoras' great speech, in the dialogue named for that sophist, for philosophical significance and coherence.'<sup>48</sup> I maintain, in contrast, that a comparison with the *Protagoras* illustrates from another setting Plato's concern to expose the presumption and danger of unbridled claims to authority that are lacking in justification.<sup>49</sup>

At 339a-d, the sophist maintains that Simonides contradicts himself, stating initially that it is quite difficult to become good but later rejecting Pittacus' contention that being good is such. The distinction between 'being' and 'becoming', which escapes Protagoras' awareness in his articulation of Simonides' confusion, plays a salient role in Socrates' response to the sophist's construction. According to Protagoras, others, including Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides, had shied away from dubbing themselves sophists due to their fear of censure (316d-17a); while the label's attachment to poets was others' doing, the fifth-century contemporaries of Socrates pointedly appropriate it for themselves (on which point see 317b4-5, with Socrates' later reaction at 348e5-9a4). In Protagoras' view, not only were ancient poets the earliest, albeit not self-identified, *sophistai*, but crucial to *paideia* is one's being 'in command of poetry,' which Protagoras construes as expertise in poetic exegesis (338e-9a). As one would expect given the competitive spirit of sophistic practice, the ensuing interpretation of Simonides (339a-41e) evinces Protagoras' conviction that this activity surpasses the poetic since the latter requires hermeneutical displays of sophistic virtuosity for the full attainment of its value to the soul.<sup>50</sup> Plato of course does not find such

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47 This parallel is also noted by M.P. Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2009), 30-1.

48 'Speech', 44

49 Naturally, parallels are drawn against a backdrop of difference; most salient here is the fact that, in Plato's view, sophistry lacks all legitimacy as a practice.

50 In these remarks on the *Protagoras*, I draw on S.B. Levin, 'Platonic Metaphysics

displays to be insightful and rejects the notion that sophists — not, in his view, in fact practitioners of a *technê* (and, moreover, directing their efforts toward poetic praxis, from which Plato also withholds this designation) — could correctly and reliably articulate what was and was not salutary, above all where the good is concerned, in their own or others' formulations. While there are differences between the scenarios of the *Symposium* and *Protagoras* — it suffices for Eryximachus' point if Heraclitus turns out to be demonstrably unclear rather than simply wrong, and if the latter obtains it is not, as with Simonides, because the philosopher contradicts himself — in both cases Plato targets the presumed authority of activities whose practitioners, ignorant of reality themselves, challenge the preeminence of those they deem rivals for supremacy on matters of greatest import.

A further piece of evidence for Eryximachus' critical engagement with philosophers on the topic of ultimate principles comes through what appears to be a correction of Anaximander's valuation of cyclical macrocosmic shifts. On the physician's formulation,

when ... hot and cold, wet and dry, happen to be governed by the proper form of Love toward one another, they exhibit harmony and a temperate mixture (καὶ ἁρμονίαν καὶ κρᾶσιν λάβη σὺμφρονα), they come bearing good harvest and health to human beings, other animals, and plants, and there is no injustice (οὐδὲν ἠδίκησεν). But when the *Erôs* powered by *hubris* controls the seasons of the year, destruction and injustice prevail (διέφθειρέν τε πολλὰ καὶ ἠδίκησεν). He spreads the 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 kind of Love (ἐκ πλεονεξίας καὶ ἀκοσμίας περὶ ἄλληλα τῶν τοιούτων γίγνεται ἐρωτικῶν) on the movements of the stars and the seasons of the year, that is, on the objects studied by the science called astronomy. (188a2-b6)<sup>51</sup>

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and Semantics: The *Cratylus*' Ties to the *Sophist* and *Politicus*', in D. Føllesdal and J. Woods, eds., *Logos and Language: Essays in Honour of Julius Moravcsik* (London: College Publications 2008) 73-98, at 87-8.

- 51 Interestingly, *Prt* 315c includes Eryximachus in a group of auditors who were 'asking Hippias questions on astronomy and physics, and he, from his high seat, was answering each of their questions point by point' (cf. 318d-e). The image of Hippias holding court, patiently taking questions from those wishing to receive the details of his wisdom, leads one to wonder whether Eryximachus has learned



On this account, justice prevails — emphatically, οὐδὲν ἠδίκησεν (188a6) — as long as each season is moderate in the way befitting it.<sup>52</sup> This position diverges significantly from the stance of Anaximander, who had claimed that ordinary seasonal shifts themselves comprise a state of affairs in which ‘the things that are perish into the things out of which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time (διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν)’ (B1).<sup>53</sup> Famously, of course, Anaximander is subsequently corrected by Heraclitus (B80), from whose position Eryximachus also departs insofar as Heraclitus’ construction — according to which εἰδέναί δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔοντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριον — includes no proviso marginalizing ‘extreme’, or ‘extraordinary’, occurrences as infelicitous; quite the opposite. That Eryximachus would not gravitate toward this position is to be expected given his stance toward Heraclitus in the preceding treatment of *mousikê*.

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some of what he ‘knows’ (and perhaps also how to present ideas involving *physis* with maximal rhetorical effectiveness) from the likes of Hippias. Reinforcing this picture of Hippias as a self-proclaimed authority on such matters is *Hp ma* 281c-d, where the sophist maintains that his wisdom surpasses that of all other ‘wise’ individuals, including philosophers from Thales through Anaxagoras; subsequently, astronomy is described (by Socrates, with irony) as a domain comprising things that Hippias ‘know[s] most finely’ (285b8-c1). For Hippias as impacting both the form and the content of Eryximachus’ *logos*, see Rettig, *Symposium*, 16-17 and 179. Given Plato’s vigorous, unrelenting challenge to the *technê* status of sophistry, such a link would necessarily reflect quite badly on Eryximachus. For a different construction see Edelstein, ‘Rôle’, 160, according to whom the doctor’s ‘interest in questions of natural philosophy and astronomy,’ as evinced at *Prt* 315c, will, in Plato’s view, ‘have stood him in good stead.’

52 Cf. Bury, *Symposium*, ix.

53 Tr. R.D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1994), 43. Konstan and Young-Bruehl, ‘Speech’, 43, state simply that the term ἠδίκησεν ‘underscores the anthropomorphic attribution of good and bad impulses to the cosmos.’ According to C.H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press 1960), 179, Eryximachus’ concern here is quite different from that of Anaximander, involving as it does the human body exclusively. I maintain, in contrast, that Eryximachus also has a broader, more ambitious aim stemming from his rivalry with philosophy for governing insight into overarching cosmic principles.

## V Eryximachus' Loose Construction of *Technê*

Eryximachus' unreflective assumption that *mousikê* numbers among *technai* (see esp. 187b2 and c4-5) typifies his approach throughout with respect to the *praxeis* treated: indeed, his methodology rests on the illustration of his general thesis by appeal to a range thereof. This assumption reflects a freewheeling approach to the classification of activities, given poetic expression in *Prometheus Bound* (442-506), with which Plato takes forceful issue in the *Gorgias* through his systematic account of a highly normative notion of *technê*. The key *technê* criteria articulated in that dialogue are: (1) *peri ti*, or 'aboutness' (i.e., the practice in question requires a genuine 'subject matter'); (2) understanding: those engaged in the pursuit must operate with *epistêmê*, not mere belief; and (3) goodness: the activity must be of genuine benefit to its objects.<sup>54</sup>

Even as Eryximachus elevates his own *technê* above all others, his liberal use of the designation grants it to *praxeis* whose status as such is rejected by Plato. The physician is remarkably more generous than Plato, considering that, of those activities discussed — medicine, *mousikê*, cookery, astronomy, and *mantikê* — only one, namely, astronomy, will still make the cut by the time of the *Republic*.<sup>55</sup> Most of Eryximachus'

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54 For further discussion see Levin, *Ancient Quarrel*, 82-4.

55 Astronomy figures in the advanced curriculum of *Republic* VII and belongs in the group of *technai* below that of philosophy in the hierarchy articulated at 533a-d. Gymnastics and farming are mentioned only in passing (*Smp* 187a1). There is no reason to think that the latter is a *technê* on Plato's highly normative conception according to which certain types of artifact production make the grade — though their standing is lower given the ontological status of the pertinent Forms, construed as 'functional specifications' (see J.M.E. Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism: Plato's Conception of Appearance and Reality in Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics, and Its Modern Echoes* [Oxford: Blackwell 1992], 66-8), and the fact that *orthê doxa* is sufficient to apprehend them (see Levin, 'Technê', 135-6). Cookery's deriding as an *empeiria* was discussed in Section III above. Concerning medicine (and gymnastics) in the *Republic*, see Levin, 'Technê'; for more on poetry, the focus of Section V, one may consult Levin, *Ancient Quarrel*. Features prized most highly by Plato (e.g., being eternal and unaltered) are ascribed to Forms (as, e.g., at *Phd* 80b and *Smp* 211a-b); notably, his description of *eidê* in the former passage includes the term τὸ θεῖον (b1). Viewed through the lens of the *Gorgias* — whose subject-matter criterion comes to be met by Forms, true exemplars of order, upon their subsequent introduction — *mantikê* as treated by Eryximachus cannot make the grade; for instance, its subject matter does not exhibit the requisite orderly constitution, and its practitioners do not operate with genuine insight and hence cannot offer

*logos* focuses on *technai* other than medicine; this, I submit, supports the view that it is qua medical practitioner that he reaches his overarching insight. Eryximachus assumes that his competency in the domain of medicine is not in question; hence, he does not devote his *logos* to its defense. What requires support, however, is his broader claim about the cognitive authority of *iatrikê*, and Eryximachus would not concentrate so extensively on other *technai* in his own valorization of medicine if he lacked confidence that, qua doctor, he was qualified to properly grasp their *dunameis*. I thus diverge from the stance of McPherran, according to which ‘we are no doubt supposed to read all this as a parodic example of high-flying medical rhetoric, but at the same time we should appreciate the extent to which Eryximachus is himself merely entering into the general light-hearted sympotic spirit of things by speaking as bombastically as he does.’<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, McPherran’s comments on Eryximachus’ ‘good familiarity’ (76) with the Hippocratic corpus do not include mention of the striking parallel involving the wealth of *technai* drawn on in full seriousness to support the author’s claim in *De victu* about overarching cosmic principles — a less protracted version of which methodology Eryximachus deploys here, omitting discussion, unlike the Hippocratic author, of forms of artifact-production such as cobblerly (Chap. 15) and basket-making (Chap. 19).<sup>57</sup>

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the necessary rational account (*logon didonai*) of the core features of their pursuit. Though Plato sometimes appropriates religious language and imagery to convey ideas that have been fundamentally reconstituted, Diotima’s role as a functioning Platonist is evident already prior to the ascent through, e.g., her definition of what lies between (μεταξύ) wisdom and ignorance as τὸ ὀρθὰ δοξάζειν καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ἔχειν λόγον δοῦναι (202a2-5); cf. *Meno* 98a3-4 and *R* 476e-8e. And the final ‘mysteries’ into which she ‘initiates’ (210a1) Socrates in 210a-12a are none other than the details of how recollection transpires in the case of Beauty — whose articulation, as Rowe, *Symposium*, ad loc., observes, also introduces participation (μετέχοντα, 211b2). For a different view of *mantikê* in the *Symposium*, one assigning it a prominent role, see McPherran, ‘Medicine’.

56 ‘Medicine’, 76-7

57 Like the speech of Eryximachus, *De victu* construes *technê* in the loose sense challenged by Plato in the *Gorgias*. In Chaps. 12-24 the Hippocratic author underscores what he views as fundamental common ground between the nature of man, grasped by medicine, and a wide range of other *technai*: since only the physician apprehends human παθήματα, ‘both visible and invisible’ (καὶ φανεροῦσι καὶ ἀφανέσι, 12.2-3), he alone is in a position to adduce this broad spectrum of illustrations. Therefore, though *De victu* does not frame the point expressly in this manner, its working assumption is that medicine is preeminent in relation to this

For the purposes of illustration I concentrate here on *mousikê* since (1) Eryximachus' treatment of it is the longest in his speech and (2) the discussion is particularly significant, as we saw, for its inclusion of the physician's most pointed challenge to the preeminence of philosophy. Eryximachus' improperly generous deployment of the *technê* designation shows him to lack that understanding of reality in light of which one could ascertain what *praxeis* did and did not engage with elements thereof. 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.

Plato's critique of poetry's *technê* status unfolds in the *Ion*, *Gorgias*, and *Cratylus*, and culminates in the *Republic*. As *Republic* III makes clear, the target of his challenge is *mousikê* in its entirety, that is to say, the language of poetry, along with rhythm and modes.<sup>58</sup> I argue elsewhere that the *Republic*'s critique of poetic content revolves around the goodness, understanding, and subject-matter (*peri ti*) conditions on *technai* enunciated in the *Gorgias*.<sup>59</sup> The goodness criterion is salient already in Book I, where Plato stresses that the exclusive aim of each *technê* is to do what is best (τὸ βέλτιστον) for its objects (347a1-3). Turning subsequently to poetry, Plato underscores repeatedly that its creators seek to please the audience without a concern for its well-being (see, e.g., 387b, 389e-90a, 398a-b, 493c-d, 607a, and 607d-e). In *Republic* II-III, Plato takes poets to task for treating as salutary that damaging state of affairs in which one has a reputation for morality but is actually immoral. He bases poetry's failure to meet the goodness condition on its shortcomings with respect

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comparison group, practitioners of whose member activities are not in a position to achieve the overarching insight in question. While the author foregrounds analogy elsewhere in the book (see that between the human body and the ruler [δυνάστης] in Chap. 25), the illustrations involving *technai* in Chaps. 12-24 stress that all, operating with uniform materials governed by identical principles, share something truly basic with human nature (24.19-21) in a manner that transcends a merely analogical tie.

58 For Eryximachus' treatment of *mousikê* as encompassing poetry, with supporting reference to *Republic* II-III, see also Rowe, *Symposium*, on 187d2.

59 See Levin, *Ancient Quarrel*, Chap. 5; in the remainder of this paragraph I draw on that discussion (132-5). On the *Cratylus*' investigation, see *Ancient Quarrel*, Chaps. 1-3.

to understanding and subject matter (see, e.g., 363e-4c, 365b-c, 493a-4a, 597e, and 598d-602b). The conclusion to draw from the *Republic's* extensive critique of poetry is not that virtue fails to be the province of a genuine *technê*. It is, indeed, such; that *technê*, however, is philosophy, not poetry.

Eryximachus' focus is on rhythm and harmony as traditionally construed<sup>60</sup> — the dimension of *mousikê* that Plato takes up in *Republic* 398d-403c, where he articulates precisely the worries about a pernicious impact on character that he had stressed earlier in Books II-III concerning poetic language. The key, Plato tells us, is to ensure that these dimensions of *mousikê* properly serve the words of poetic compositions: 'If ... rhythm and mode must conform to the words and not vice versa, then good rhythm follows fine words and is similar to them, while bad rhythm follows the opposite kind of words, and the same for harmony and disharmony' (400c12-d3, cf. 399e-400a). Proper *paideia* involving *mousikê* is crucial to one's cultivation and grasp of virtue, and one's prospects for achieving *sôphrosunê* and the rest hinge on the right exposure thereto (402b-c). Notably, Plato underscores here that 'excessive pleasure' (ἡδονὴ ὑπερβάλλουσα) is incompatible with this *aretê* or any other (402e), proceeding to single out sexual pleasure as the worst culprit in this regard (403a-b). Such remarks make clear that all of *mousikê* as practiced to date is Plato's critical target; hence, it is *mousikê* in its entirety that, in his view, does not — and, moreover, cannot — qualify as a *technê*.

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60 According to Konstan and Young-Bruehl, 'Speech', 42, the medical foundation for Eryximachus' doctrine of harmony is *De victu*, which 'exhibits the closest agreement in both theory and association of topics.' Yet on their interpretation of *mousikê* in Eryximachus' speech, *erôs qua philia* — versus *erôs qua epithumia* as in medicine — governs there, such that the musician 'is doing what the doctor does when he rearranges the elements in the body. But there is nothing in a musical harmony or discord that corresponds to the various desires of bodies healthy or ill' (41-2). This construction undermines the tenability of their stress on *De victu's* foundational role insofar as, on their account, in contrast to that involving *mousikê* in *De victu* 18, the relationship between medicine and music — so crucial to Eryximachus' discussion — becomes in effect one of analogy.

## VI The Physician's Wrap-up

*Mousikê*, treated at length by Eryximachus, is a domain in which the topic of *aretê* figures prominently. Prior to his closing remarks, the physician himself has not spoken of virtue though he gestures toward it — albeit, as we saw, in a highly problematic manner from Plato's standpoint — through comments involving the vice, *akolasia*, corresponding to self-control.<sup>61</sup> It is only in his wrap-up that Eryximachus turns, briefly, to *aretê* — in a passage, previously discussed in Section III, whose juxtaposition against *Gorgias* 507e-8a and what transpires earlier in the physician's *logos* was shown to reflect quite poorly on his construction of human flourishing: 'Such is the power (δύναμιν) of Love — so varied and great that in all cases it might be called absolute. Yet its power (δύναμιν) is greatest when Love is directed, in self-control and justice, toward good things (ὁ δὲ περὶ τὰγαθὰ μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀποτελούμενος), whether in heaven or on earth: happiness, the bonds of human society, concord with the gods above — all these are among his gifts (πάσαν ἡμῖν εὐδαιμονίαν παρασκευάζει καὶ ἀλλήλοις δυναμένους ὁμιλεῖν καὶ φίλους εἶναι καὶ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἡμῶν θεοῖς)' (188d4-9).

As Dorter observes, *erôs* and the good are the dialogue's two overarching themes.<sup>62</sup> For each speaker prior to Socrates, 'love acquires the status of a *telos*, an end pursued or the terminus of an appetite, and for that reason stands as a final state of perfection, i.e., a god.'<sup>63</sup> From Plato's standpoint, in contrast, as stressed in Section III, grasping the good is the point of departure for everything else, including one's arrival at the true nature and capacity of *erôs* pertaining thereto. His pointed and vigorous subjection of *erôs* to the good begins with Diotima's comment, well prior to the ascent, that 'on my account, a lover does not seek the half or the whole, unless ... it turns out to be good as well' (205e1-3). The ascent, which, from Plato's standpoint, renders *erôs* properly subordinate to virtue and the good,<sup>64</sup> systematizes his reversal of the

61 Thus far the sole use of pertinent terminology has come in 188a5, where *σώφρονα* is employed regarding the seasons.

62 'Speeches', 234n10

63 D.C. Schindler, 'Plato and the Problem of Love: On the Nature of Eros in the *Symposium*', *Apeiron* 40 (2007) 199-220, at 207

64 On the limited role of *erôs* there, see J.M.E. Moravcsik, 'Reason and Eros in the

physician's ordering with regard to fundamental principles and pointedly excludes (207d with 210a6, 211b5, and 211d-12a) all indulgence of sexual desire — which Eryximachus pointedly wished to encompass — as a manifestation of *erôs* that is wholly antithetical to one's prospects for *eudaimonia*.

Far from being tied organically to what precedes, let alone providing the foundation for an account that authoritatively addresses human flourishing, Eryximachus' brief comments are merely tacked on at the end as obligatory for one who wishes to encompass human *erôs* in an all-embracing account of 'what is' that privileges balance and what is sound as involving the absence of tension and extremes. Though Eryximachus mentions *sôphrosunê* (with *dikaiosunê*), his *logos* makes clear that he has no idea what such is or how it is produced. In fact, as we have seen, his own pertinent remarks reflect a flawed construction that, if followed, would be decidedly hostile to individuals' cultivation of it and *eudaimonia* more generally.

In closing, Eryximachus states that 'if I omitted anything from my encomium, it wasn't intentional (οὐ μέντοι ἐκῶν γε)' (188d9-e2).<sup>65</sup> Given Eryximachus' pointed concern that his account be all-encompassing, the comment of Dover — 'we can well believe that' — is apposite.<sup>66</sup> Aristophanes' *logos* inaugurates a focus on the nature of *erôs* as conceptually and existentially prior to its effects.<sup>67</sup> This puts the proceedings on a more direct course toward Plato's articulation of his own stance concerning the nature and role of *erôs* in the ascent (210a-12a).

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"Ascent"-Passage of the *Symposium*', in J.P. Anton and G.L. Kustas, eds., *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1971) 285-302.

65 Bury, *Symposium*, construes καὶ ἐγώ in 188e1 to mean 'I as well as Pausanias'.

66 *Symposium*, ad loc. Cf. Robin, *Symposium*, lvi: 'Il ne doute pas du succès de son entreprise.'

67 See Nehamas and Woodruff, *Symposium*, xvii. As they observe (xv), Eryximachus' encomium, along with those of Phaedrus and Pausanias, concentrates on the effects of *erôs* rather than on its nature, which — as we know, e.g., from the *Meno*'s handling of *aretê* and its teachability — is precisely the reverse of how one ought to proceed. In this respect it may be grouped with the dialogue's less perspicacious offerings.

## VII Conclusion

According to McPherran, at 194a 'Plato has Socrates praise the beauty — hence, the correctness, it seems — of Eryximachus' speech.'<sup>68</sup> The argument of this paper supports the view that such 'praise' is ironically meant.<sup>69</sup> And in fact Socrates' remark here is accompanied by laudatory words regarding Agathon's *logos-to-be*, which — given what is to follow involving the poet — should render one suspicious of his sincerity in either case. The physician, Socrates tells us, fears (193e) lest there remain nothing to say at this point 'because you did beautifully in the contest, Eryximachus. But if you ever get in my position, or rather the position I'll be in after Agathon's spoken so well, then you'll really be afraid' (194a1-4). Subsequently, Eryximachus believes that Agathon has excelled (198a), and Socrates states that the poet's remarks were delivered 'with ... beauty' (198b2-3, cf. b7). Yet Socrates proceeds to challenge the veracity of Agathon's *logos* on salient fronts, which fact both indicates that the earlier observation was made ironically and reflects poorly once again on Eryximachus' judgment — this time for having lavished praise on Agathon's contribution, which, like his own, displays faulty constructions of *aretai* (196b-7b).

Any *technê* whose cognitive authority is overarching, and whose comprehensive grasp of principles warrants its serving as monitor of whether good outcomes in all specific arenas have been attained, is virtually certain not also to involve the practical facility needed to produce those same results in each and every human activity. Notably, despite his almost boundless inclination to self-aggrandizement where his profession is concerned, Eryximachus' awareness of this difference in scope between cognitive and practical competence is indicated by his pointed distinction, in the case of *mousikê* (187c-d), between a theoretical grasp of rhythm and harmony as such — καὶ ἐν μὲν γε αὐτῇ τῇ συστάσει ἁρμονίας τε καὶ ῥυθμοῦ οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν τὰ ἐρωτικά διαγιγνώσκειν (c5-7) — and their application to people (introduced by ἀλλ' ἐπειδάν, c8) in order to produce the proper effect: the latter, but not the former, requires a skilled practitioner (ἀγαθοῦ δημιουργοῦ δεῖ, d3-4) of the *technê* in question.<sup>70</sup>

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68 'Medicine', 77n17

69 Cf. Rettig, *Symposium*, ad loc.

70 Eryximachus had previously gestured toward a distinction between theory and



As the *technê* par excellence in the *Republic*, philosophy is the overseer both of other *technai* and of pertinent non-*technai* due to the superlative and unique insight of its practitioners. As Plato makes clear via the Principle of Specialization<sup>71</sup> (370a-c, 374b-c) and subsequent discussion of individual *praxeis* and their interrelations, this understanding does not equip philosophers to undertake all activities that benefit the polis but rather only those bearing directly on rule. Thus, for instance, Plato remarks that the state's founders, already possessing distinct responsibilities of their own, are not also to assume the task of composing stories: 'Their job is to know the patterns according to which poets must construct their tales and from which they mustn't deviate' (379a1-3). Their insight does, however, permit philosophers to ensure that other activities bearing on individual and communal flourishing, both *technai* and non-, promote this goal reliably. In the *Symposium* the rivalry between medicine and philosophy for primacy in determinations involving nature and flourishing is clearly in evidence.<sup>72</sup> Through the character of Eryximachus — who embraces the subordination of philosophy to his own profession in *De vetere medicina* and whose methodology crucially parallels that of *De victu* — medicine goes head-to-head with philosophy for the title of preeminent *technê*. In Plato's eyes, medicine, as I have argued, loses this battle decisively.

McPherran aims to reconcile or effect a 'combination' of (86) the two depictions — those of physician and philosopher — through invocation of a notion of the physician-philosopher (e.g., 'true physicians must be philosophers,' 93). What McPherran has in view here is not wholly evi-

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practice in his remarks concerning medicine at 186c5-d5; on the distinction there see Bury, *Symposium*, ad loc. When the doctor serves as theoretician, and medicine rather than *mousikê* is involved, a single person can adopt both vantage points.

71 So dubbed by J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1981), 73.

72 S.A. Brill, 'Medical Moderation in Plato's *Symposium*', *Studies in the History of Ethics* 11 (2006) 1-28, at 12, notes a clash, albeit limited, between the two practices, but grounds it in medicine's exploitation of human fears of death, not fundamentally different approaches to nature and thriving more generally. Though G.A. Scott and W.A. Welton, *Erotic Wisdom: Philosophy and Intermediacy in Plato's Symposium* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2008), stress Plato's rivaling of alternative *praxeis* in the *Symposium*, they focus on poetry, specifically. Medicine's shortcoming is its 'incomplete[ness]' (199), not fundamentally flawed constructions of *physis* and *eudaimonia*; on their interpretation, Socrates' *logos* 'synthesize[s] the rationalism of Eryximachus and the piety of Aristophanes' (152, cf. 192).

dent, as he does not elaborate the concept or clearly distinguish it from that of the 'properly philosophically-oriented physician' (94n52) — of whom Eryximachus is said to be the model though, due to the doctor's 'physicalistic' approach, which is wholly rejected by Diotima (87), 'the complete physician who would bring us a return to our original wholeness ... is no Eryximachus' (95). This lack of transparency stems in part from the fact that McPherran assumes an essential uniformity in Plato's stance involving medicine across the corpus (e.g., 77, 79). In any case, as a notion attributed to Plato, the physician-philosopher is untenable for the same reason that Tate's construction of the poet-philosopher fails,<sup>73</sup> namely, due to the Principle of Specialization, which precludes one and the same individual's being naturally suited to two distinct tasks.

Alternatively, if by this rubric McPherran simply wishes to single out the philosopher as a kind of 'soul-doctor', this function is already encompassed by what Plato places in his purview. Though analogized or otherwise related at times to bodily care and condition, the philosopher's actual task centers on tending the soul; how medical practice itself, even a revamped version thereof, would be accommodated on McPherran's picture is not addressed. At this juncture, contra McPherran, it would seem that Plato agrees with the author of *De vetere medicina* that medicine and philosophy must go their separate ways. However, medicine's special status vis-à-vis the good — according to which its promotion may necessitate the doctor's not deploying his skill though a condition of manifest illness may be ameliorated thereby — will be crucial to its subsequent removal from the ranks of *technai* and the reconstitution of its dependency, contra Hippocratic medicine's grounding in Presocratic thought, on philosophy à la Plato in the *Republic*. Thus, rather than consolidating the two forms of expertise, Plato argues there that the physician's properly executing his societal task will necessitate, where appropriate, collaboration with the philosopher and subordination to his vision of the Good.<sup>74</sup> This further step in Plato's critique of medicine — a key opponent as he seeks to bolster philosophy's role as

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73 See J. Tate, 'Plato, Art and Mr. Maritain', *New Scholasticism* 12 (1938) 107-42; 'Plato and "Imitation"', *Classical Quarterly* 26 (1932) 161-9; and ' "Imitation" in Plato's *Republic*', *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928) 16-23.

74 In the *Republic*, Plato does not relinquish the notion that medicine holds up well by comparison with certain other activities (e.g., sophistry/rhetoric). As with poetry and the work of auxiliaries, while not a *technê* in the *Gorgias*' sense, it may contribute, nonetheless, to communal welfare.

arbiter on the all-important topics of *physis* and *eudaimonia* — is made possible by the *Symposium*, whose central role in the *agôn* between philosophy and medicine I have sought to illuminate here.<sup>75</sup>

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