

CHAPTER 3

THE SPEECH OF ERYXIMACHUS IN
PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM¹

CHRISTOPHER ROWE

In 1945, Ludwig Edelstein wrote that '[t]here is almost general agreement among modern interpreters that Plato, in representing [Eryximachus], has drawn an ironical portrait of the pedantic expert and scientist'.² Underlying, or combined with, this judgement is another, summed up by a remark of Stanley Rosen's: '[a]lthough not stupid, Eryximachus himself is an incoherent thinker'.³ Edelstein's own modest attempt at rehabilitation, which saw in Plato's portrait of Eryximachus a figure of *authority*, and with a clear 'sense of humor',⁴ evidently failed to impress Rosen, or indeed others, despite widespread citation of his essay. David Konstan and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl reported in 1982, with appropriate documentation, that '[l]ittle has changed since [Edelstein wrote]', while referring to several attempts⁵ (none of which 'carries much conviction') to interpret the speech 'as part of a larger plan governing the sequence of discourses throughout the dialogue'.⁶ R.E. Allen's 1991 *Symposium* volume might indicate a turning of the tide, insofar as Allen refers with approval to both the Edelstein and the Konstan/Young-Bruehl articles, the latter in the context of a rejection of

1. For John Dillon, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, in friendship, and the small hope that it might approach his standards of sagaciousness and scholarship. (A first draft of this paper was presented to the Classical Association Conference in Lampeter in April 1998; I am grateful for comments and suggestions received on that occasion. I should also like to thank my colleague David Levene for saving me from one blunder, though he may wish that he had been able to save me from others).

2. Edelstein 1945, 85.

3. Rosen 1987, 119; for the pairing of the two judgements, see e.g. Bury 1932, xxviii-xxix. I shall not discuss the particular grounds for Rosen's verdict; but the main points of my disagreement with his analysis of the speech will emerge clearly enough in what follows.

4. Edelstein 1945, 89.

5. Isenberg 1940, Hoffmann 1947, Dorter 1969.

6. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 45 n.1.

Sir Kenneth Dover's criticisms of Eryximachus' argument.⁷ But Dover's own treatment of the speech, in what is now the standard commentary on the *Symposium*, underwrites the majority view of the speech as an ironic treatment of a particular form of pedantry which undermines (and is meant by Plato to undermine) itself.⁸

One of the strange features of the literature, noted by Konstan and Young-Bruehl, is 'a lack of a straightforward analysis of Eryximachus' argument'.⁹ That lack might perhaps count as partly remedied by the commentaries of Dover and Allen; but the second of these is insufficiently detailed, and the former markedly unsympathetic; like many others, Dover seems to begin from the assumption that Eryximachus is incompetent.¹⁰ Konstan and Young-Bruehl's article is probably the first attempt to take his speech with full seriousness, concluding that it contains 'a degree of systematic exposition and intellectual rigor ... that is incompatible with sheer parody'.¹¹ While I am inclined to disagree with their analysis of Eryximachus' argument (and to think that they overestimate the 'philosophical significance' of the speech),¹² they are surely right in suggesting that we can only assess the role of Eryximachus in the overall economy of the dialogue when we have established precisely what he is saying.

In the first two main sections of this paper I shall argue that close examination of Eryximachus' speech shows him to be not only coherent (I),¹³ but distinctly clever (II). Then in the last section (III) I shall use the

7. Allen 1991, 27 nn. 45 and 47; Dover 1980.

8. So too e.g. Nehamas and Woodruff 1989, xvi.

9. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, *ibid.*

10. Edelstein himself describes the 'teaching' of Eryximachus – along with that of the other speakers in the dialogue – as 'non-dialectical and therefore unphilosophical', proposing that '[e]ven Socrates is not in his usual mood' (Edelstein 1945, 101). 'That the content of the *Symposium* is mythical [i.e. consisting of 'mythical tales of the truth'] has been acknowledged by Friedländer ... and by Wilamowitz ... Fundamentally ... all orations are unphilosophical, at least from the standpoint of the Platonic system' (*ibid.*, n. 47). Most would now probably regard such a view as underestimating the philosophical content of the *Symposium* (on which see Rowe 1998 [forthcoming]).

11. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 44.

12. 'Of all the contributions in the *Symposium* apart from that of Socrates himself, it is the only one which rivals, for example, Protagoras' great speech, in the dialogue named for that sophist, for philosophical significance and coherence' (*ibid.*). Rather, I think, it is *no worse*, from Plato's point of view, than any of the others.

13. And, moreover, more obviously and straightforwardly coherent than Konstan and Young-Bruehl's excellent paper suggests.

results of the first two as the basis for a limited discussion of the purpose of the speech – that is, from Plato's point of view. One of the central assumptions of most interpreters of the *Symposium* is that (to quote Edelstein again) 'Plato apparently is interested in bringing out the typical characteristics of each speaker as well as the individual features of their personalities'.¹⁴ This assumption is well-grounded enough: no one can seriously deny either that the speeches represent *types* of approach to the subject of Eros and his manifestations, or that they provide sharply drawn portraits (in combination with the surrounding action) of *individuals*. However if we place too much emphasis on these facts, we shall be in danger of suggesting that we already know what the first five speeches are for: i.e. to offer a series of sketches of types of view and of individuals, which will stand in some sort of relationship with the portrait of Socrates, and his contribution to the feast. That this is part of Plato's intention¹⁵ is surely confirmed by what he has Socrates say at 198b–199b, where a verdict on Agathon gradually turns into a general verdict on the preceding speakers taken together.¹⁶ But I shall suggest that, at least with Eryximachus, our author is also up to something else.

I

Commentators have often complained about Eryximachus' use of the term *ἔρως*, and the apparent further stretching of an already over-stretched idea of 'love' at 186d5–6. Dover provides a convenient example:

Eryximachus ... runs together (1) the contrast between good desires or tendencies and bad desires or tendencies, and (2) the contrast between the good consequences 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) [first at 186d5–6] he stretches it

14. Edelstein 1945, 87.

15. Thinking back to what I believe was my first encounter with John Dillon, when I was invited to give a paper on 'Reading Plato' at Trinity College Dublin, I have every reason to suppose that he would applaud such talk of 'Plato's intention'; should anyone else take exception to it, I should beat my usual retreat into Eco-like talk about 'the intention of the *text*', and build barricades there.

16. The shift takes place at 198e4–6, where Socrates inconspicuously starts using the second person plural.

even further by treating an adjustment between two extremes as creating an eros of the extremes for each other. (Dover 1980, 105)

Konstan and Young-Bruehl's strategy is to turn the move between (1) and (2) into a virtue, claiming that Eryximachus is working throughout in a reasonably well-articulated way with 'two kinds of love', 'the first ... specified as *ἐπιθυμία* (desire), while the second is *φιλία* (concord)'.¹⁷ However I believe that it is in fact possible to see him working with a single 'kind of love'.

The moves are:

- (i) There is a double *ἔρως*, i.e. good and bad, in human bodies (186b4), because
- (ii) 'what is healthy in a body and what is diseased in a body are by common consent different and unlike' (b5-6); but
- (iii) 'what is unlike desires and loves unlike things' (b6-7); so
- (iv) there is one kind of *ἔρως* in the case of the healthy, another in the case of the diseased (b7-8).
- (v) Well (*δῆ*), just as Pausanias said it was *καλόν* to gratify (*χαρίζεσθαι*) the good man, *αἰσχροῦ* to gratify the *ἀκόλαστος*, so too in the case of bodies it is *καλόν* to gratify the good and healthy things in a body, and *αἰσχροῦ* to gratify the bad and diseased (b8-c5).
- (vi) The doctor must distinguish the *καλὸς ἔρως* from the *αἰσχροῦ* one, and implant the first while removing the second (c5-d5); *for* (*γάρ*)
- (vii) it is his job to make the most hostile things in the body friendly to each other, and love (*ἐρᾶν*) each other (d5-6);¹⁸ and
- (viii) 'the "most hostile things" are the things most opposed to each other, cold to hot, bitter to sweet, dry to wet, everything like that' (d6-e1).
- (ix) Medicine consists in knowing how to implant *ἔρως* and *ὁμόνοια* among these (e1-3).

Two questions immediately arise here: 1. what are the things which have the good and bad *ἔρως* in (v), and by implication in (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi); and 2. what is meant by the opposites' 'loving each other'? To 1., the most economical answer, and the one that best fits the shape of the argument, is that it is the *opposites* in a body which have the good and bad

17. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 40.

18. Here – despite the *γάρ* – is where the switch to a second sense of *ἔρως* is alleged to take place.

ἔρως; though presumably, as a result of *their* having them, the individual whose body it is will have them too. Only in this way can we begin to make sense of the 'for' in d5, which ought to provide some sort of explanation or justification for what precedes – not introduce an entirely new and different idea, i.e. 'love' between opposites, as opposed to the 'loves' of bodies, as it does on Dover's and Konstan and Young-Bruehl's readings. By the same token, the 'love' of opposites for each other ought to have at least something to do with their capacity for 'loving' unlike things (iii). There seems no good reason not to operate on the same principle of charity with Eryximachus as with anyone else: if there is a reading which makes sense of his argument, then other things being equal we should prefer it. What I propose, then, is that the 'good and healthy things in each body', and the 'bad and diseased things' (c2, 4) are – or perhaps better, become specified as – the instances of the opposites in bodies, and that when these cease to 'love' unlike things, their new state is (in some way yet to be determined) coherently expressible¹⁹ in terms of their 'loving' each other. If we jib at the idea that such things as opposites should be said to be 'healthy' and 'diseased', it is hardly more of a stretch than it is to suggest that they can be 'friendly to' and 'love' each other. The opposites, throughout the argument, are seen as *agents*, quasi-persons (by analogy with Pausanias' good and bad people) whom the doctor must either 'gratify' or refuse to 'gratify'.

So (question 2. above), how can opposites 'love each other'? We may perhaps approach this question by considering what makes them fall out with each other. If we go by what is later said to cause trouble at the cosmic level, this is *πλεονεξία καὶ ἀκοσμία περὶ ἄλλα* (188b4):²⁰ they fall out with each other when they get greedy and go for more than their share, and there ceases to be proper order between them (*ἀκοσμία*). This is presumably a case of their 'loving' unlike things; specifically, what they want is more – too much – of themselves. If so, then in their healthy state they will not want this. Rather, they will be 'of the same mind', in a state of *ὁμόνοια* (186e2, 187c4). It seems reasonable to connect this with moves (ii) and (iii) in the argument (and perhaps even to see *ὁμόνοια* as

19. That is, in Eryximachus' own terms; as I immediately go on to suggest, whether we should want (or whether Plato wants) to endorse these is of course a different matter.

20. The reference of *τῶν τοιούτων*, immediately following, is unclear, but since it cannot be to 'frost, hail and blight' (b3), it can only be, via the vague *ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων* in b1, to 'the things I was talking of just now, things like the hot, the cold, the dry and the wet' in a3-4 (i.e. the opposites).

punning on *ἀνόμους* in b6): if the opposites' becoming 'of the same mind' means their becoming healthy, and their unlikeness and 'love' of unlike things belong to them in their unhealthy state ('what is healthy in a body and what is diseased in a body are by common consent different and unlike, but what is unlike desires and loves unlike things'),²¹ then when healthy they will 'love' like things. 'Friendship' between the opposites (186d6) consists in just this. By analogy with ordinary friendship, they will, as it were, share in each others' projects; and given that the only 'project' of any opposite on its own will apparently be an increase in itself, that will actually amount to a kind of 'loving' each other. If so, then 'making the opposites love each other' in d5-6 expands the idea 'making them friends',²² and actually draws on the earlier sense of 'loving', rather than contradicting it (Dover) or introducing a new sense of 'loving' (Konstan and Young-Bruehl).

If this begins to look like over-interpretation, then we might fall back on the expedient of supposing that in d5-6 Eryximachus cavalierly takes the opportunity provided by the idea of 'friendship' and being 'of the same mind' to introduce another connection between his subject-matter and the theme of *ἔρως*, without thinking its implications through. That would indeed give us second sense of *ἔρως*, but the other would remain the dominant one, because 'friendship' between the opposites would still be a matter of the configuration of their desires, i.e. of their no longer desiring unlike things, or desiring excess (*πλεονεξία*). The rest of the speech operates with exactly this idea, not only in the cosmic context (see above), but also in the context of the treatment of music. Music in itself, Eryximachus suggests, does not exhibit the 'double *ἔρως*' (187c7-8), because it just *is* a matter of harmony, which implies *ἔρως καὶ ὁμόνοια*²³ of the relevant opposites; music comes about just when these come to agree,²⁴ having been previously – before the intervention of the musician's skill – at variance (187a8-b1, c1), i.e. presumably tending in opposite directions, or to use the terms proposed by the treatment of

21. Clearly the opposites will still remain importantly 'unlike' even when healthy, but for the purposes of the argument Eryximachus prefers to concentrate on the unlikeness caused by disease.

22. For the idea of 'friendship' between opposites as actually involving their 'desiring' each other, see the passage (drawing on an unidentified individual) at *Lysis* 215c-e, where the first three examples of pairs of opposites are those Eryximachus lists at *Symposium* 186d7.

23. Evidently, then, Eryximachus means to persevere with the idea of opposites as 'loving each other', however we are to interpret it.

medicine, 'desiring unlike things'. Where the 'double *ἔρως*' *does* come in is when music comes to be employed in relation to people, because then one has to take into account the fact that people's 'loves' in this sphere may be either orderly or not, and to make sure that one allows the enjoyment (even) of what is in the sphere of the Muse Polymnia²⁵ without implanting *ἀκολασία*; just as, Eryximachus adds, it is part of the task of medicine to allow the enjoyment of the cook's products without damaging the patient's health (187c8-e6). If we grant that the idea of the 'loves' of opposites is meant to explain the 'loves' of individual bodies or people, the analogy works well enough at the highly general level at which it is presented; we need not ask what 'opposing elements' would similarly explain different musical tastes.

To sum up: there appear to be four interpretations of Eryximachus' 'doctrine of *ἔρως*', one (of the type represented by Dover) which makes it incoherent, and three which make it coherent. These three are (a) Konstan and Young-Bruehl's, according to which it involves two distinct ideas of *ἔρως*, and moves in clearly marked ways between them;²⁶ (b) a variant of Konstan and Young-Bruehl's, which allows Eryximachus to combine coherence with a degree of cavaliness; and (c) an interpretation which – by however elaborate a route – discovers only a single idea of *ἔρως* in the speech. On grounds already given, I suggest we should reject the first type of interpretation, in favour of one of (a) – (c). I myself waver between (b) and (c), though ultimately I prefer (c). Konstan and Young-Bruehl's reading, though it has much going for it, seems in the end to come unstuck in its treatment of 187c-d, where there is no indication – as Konstan and Young-Bruehl claim²⁷ – of a shift back from *ἔρως* as *φιλία* to *ἔρως* as *ἐπιθυμία*: *πάλιν γὰρ ἡκεῖ ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος* in 187d4 must surely refer back, because of the following clause, to the mention in 186b8-9 to what Pausanias said. There also seems little hope of extracting the sense 'the double love does not exist *at all* in this case'²⁸ from an

24. On this account, 'music' which fails to exhibit 'agreement' between the opposites will not count as music, which seems reasonable enough, even in a modern context, as a layman's view. Dover, as usual thinking the worst of Eryximachus, comments 'it comes as a surprise, after reading c3-5 with 186c5-c3 in mind, to hear now that there is no bad *cros* in mode and rhythm'.

25. For interpretation of this context, and the contrast between the two Muses Urania and Polymnia, see sections II and III below.

26. So at 186d5-6; also at 187d4 (on which see below).

27. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 42.

28. Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 41 (my italics), rejecting Badham's emendation of *πῶς* (*πῶς*) to *πῶ*.

unemended 187c7–8, unless a parallel for such a use of *οὐ* ... *πως* in Plato can be supplied.²⁹

II

In this (rather shorter) section,³⁰ I propose to address the question of Eryximachus' 'cleverness', or in other words his *artfulness* (which may itself throw light on the choice between (b) and (c) above, insofar as the artful might include the cavalier). Here I am to some extent building on Edelstein's point about Eryximachus' possession of a sense of humour; my single example will, I hope, show just how far his didacticism is combined with, and qualified by, a sense of what may be called the symposiastic, and less than wholly serious, tone of the general proceedings.

My example is taken from 187d, where he brings Pausanias' theme in again:

... but when one needs to deploy rhythm and harmony in relation to human beings, whether one is composing, which they call musical composition, or making correct use of melodies and measures once composed, which is called education, here there really is something difficult, and which calls for a good practitioner. The same theme as before comes back again: that it is those people who are orderly that one must gratify, and in such a way that those who are not yet orderly might become more so, and it is these people's love that should be cherished (187c8–d7).

This at first sight looks like a misuse of Pausanias' idea. What Pausanias said was that 'one [i.e. a boy] must gratify a *κόσμιος* lover', whereas what Eryximachus seems to mean, and indeed must mean, given the sequence of his argument, is '(we need a good practitioner [*δημιουργός*] because

29. One may exist somewhere, but Konstan and Young-Bruehl do not supply one. The unanimity of the editors in rejecting *πως* probably rests as much on the difficulty of handling an *οὐ* ... *πως* as on the demands of the argument; and since what follows suggests that there is in a sense a 'double *ἔρως*' in the sphere of music, Badham's *πω* looks attractive enough.

30. The preceding section has given rather less than a complete analysis of the speech; in particular, it has omitted any specific reference to the puzzling passage on *μαντική* in 188b6–d3, and to the peroration (which includes a fleeting reference to real friendships). For these parts, and for more by way of detailed commentary on the whole, I refer to my forthcoming commentary on the *Symposium* (see n. 10 above).

one [sc. the musician, or more specifically the person 'deploying rhythm and harmony in relation to human beings'] must know how to gratify or please *κόσμιος* people with the right kinds of music'. However we should notice that the last part of the passage quoted, taken by itself, is simultaneously capable of being interpreted in Pausanias' terms. 'It is those people who are orderly that one must gratify, and in such a way that those who are not yet orderly might become more so, and it is these people's love that should be cherished': i.e. boys should gratify the *κόσμιος*, with a view to an increase in the *κοσμιότης* of those not yet *κόσμιος* [sc. their own], and cherish the love of the *κόσμιος*.³¹ On this reading, which provides an explanation of the otherwise – perhaps – puzzlingly contorted nature of the sentence, the *κόσμιος* are associated with the class of the 'good practitioner', a class to which Eryximachus himself claims to belong; he is also directly concerned with *κοσμιότης*, insofar as his medical art enables him to introduce order among the constituents of the body, and adjudicates between desires in relation to diet (187e).

My suggestion, then, is that this passage adds a sub-text to the main text of the speech. The main text runs, roughly: 'it is the business of experts in all spheres (as it is mine, in mine) to implant and encourage the good kind of love in the objects of their expertise, which will arise from the creation of harmony between their constituent elements'.³² The sub-text, serving to link the speech rather more closely with *ἔρως* in the ordinary sense, will run: 'and it is such experts (like me) to whom sexual favours should be granted'. But there is one category of experts which, it turns out, is not solely concerned with introducing order and harmony: the practitioners of the musical art. Their sphere is now said to be divided between two different Muses, Ourania and Polymnia, to which belong different 'loves', one itself 'heavenly', the other 'vulgar' (*πάνδημος*).³³ The latter love is curiously said to need to be 'applied' with caution (187e1–2): here too, it will help if Eryximachus is (also) thinking of musical practitioners *as lovers*, since as musicians they should presumably be 'applying' their *art* to the desires of their audiences.

As before, I suspect that I shall be accused of over-interpretation. I

31. Here we may compare especially 184b–c, where Pausanias advocated boys giving their favours to anyone capable of improving them in any way (including the acquisition of any sort of *σοφία*: 184e2).

32. Or, as in the case of astronomy, merely to *observe* the operations of 'love' in the world (188a–b).

33. Whatever *πάνδημος* may mean as applied to Pausanias' Aphrodite Pandemos and her Eros, the context clearly demands 'vulgar' here.

should not wish to advance my reading of 187d4–7 as anything more than a hypothesis with some explanatory power; on the other hand I shall be satisfied at least to have raised the *possibility* of finding artfulness and wit in Eryximachus (things said with a nudge and a wink),³⁴ as well as the kind of self-conscious humour identified by Edelstein, as a kind of antidote to the attribution to him of mere pedantry.

III

I turn, finally, to the issue of the role of Eryximachus' speech in the dialogue as a whole.³⁵ My starting-point here will be provided by another observation of Edelstein's: that '[Eryximachus]' analysis of medicine (186b–e) is shorter than his analysis of music'.³⁶ Given that he says he will begin from medicine, 'in order that we may also³⁷ give a special place to that branch of knowledge' (186b2–3), this is a striking feature of his speech, and one that looks in need of explanation. That explanation, I propose, is connected with the fact that he is not merely a 'physician',³⁸ or a theorizing physician, but a physician sitting next to someone whose sphere is intimately connected with music: someone to whom he will immediately pass the role of speaker, and from whom he has received it. The banter which follows his speech confirms his special relationship with Aristophanes, already well-established by the episode of the hiccups; and it is that relationship, I shall suggest, that partly determines the structure of Eryximachus' speech.

My thesis, in short, is that whatever other purpose Plato may be fulfilling through Eryximachus' speech (whether the description, or

34. But there is in any case a perfectly transparent example in his 'correction' of Heraclitus in 187a–b: if 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 operating. But there are no such grounds (as everyone notices, he seems to know something about Empedocles). If so, then he is *pretending* to put Heraclitus right, in a show of 'learning'.

35. Strictly speaking, this issue should not be considered separately from the general characterization of Eryximachus in the *Symposium*; but here it must suffice to say that nothing I propose to extract from his speech is obviously inconsistent with that wider characterization.

36. Edelstein 1945, 87.

37. He has already indicated one reason for starting from medicine, namely that that it has given him certain insights into things.

38. Edelstein, *ibid.*

parody, of a type, individual characterization, or anything else),³⁹ he is also using it to lead into *Aristophanes'* speech. The exchange between Eryximachus and Aristophanes in 188e2–189c1 centres around the question of the nature and status of what the poet is likely to produce as his contribution; that question, I propose, is already being raised by Eryximachus' speech, via his distinction between the two Muses, Ourania and Polymnia. He makes that distinction with an eye on Aristophanes, and perhaps on Agathon too: Aristophanes as representing Polymnia,⁴⁰ Agathon the tragic poet as putative representative of Ourania, Polymnia's ethereal counterpart. It is after all Aristophanes whose whole business, Socrates said (177e1–2), is with Dionysus and Aphrodite, i.e., as I take it, with drink and sex.⁴¹ In other words, Eryximachus is making a sly, and no doubt partly jesting (though he is generally presented as a sober sort of person),⁴² attack on Aristophanes on his own account: 'we doctors are upright people, of course, but you need to

39. Edelstein's own view, which links the treatment of Eryximachus with Plato's constant medical analogies, is surely mistaken: the doctor with whom the ideal statesman is compared, especially in the *Politicus*, must be an *ideal* practitioner of medicine, which Eryximachus is not – any more than the oratory exhibited by speakers in the *Symposium* approaches the ideal rhetoric of the *Politicus*. Cf. Konstan and Young-Bruehl's conclusion, that 'Eryximachus' views are a condensed but accurate expression of current medical theory' (Konstan and Young-Bruehl 1982, 42). They themselves suggest that 'it may be well [i.e. may well be?] enough to understand Plato's purpose in composing the speech as inclusiveness – the desire to represent fairly an important thesis on *eros* – rather than as a polemical intention to set off to advantage the position advanced by Socrates', while allowing that 'the arrangement of the speeches ... may [also] be motivated by some larger design' (*ibid.*).

40. 'The Muse of many voices', or the 'democratic', 'people's', Muse, in the terms of *Republic* Book VIII?

41. Aristophanes' speech, in fact, or so I believe (though I do not have space to give a justification for this radical view here), is about the origins of *sex*, not of 'love' in anything like our sense, i.e. as including e.g. romantic love. There is an old tradition, going back at least to Wilamowitz, that Socrates' remark at 177e1–2 is neutral rather than critical: after all, Dionysus is patron of the theatre, Aphrodite a respected goddess ... This view itself perhaps rests on a reading of Aristophanes' contribution as, to use Bury's words, 'not without depth and beauty' (Bury 1932, xxx); while I admit that it possesses a certain charm, it seems to me to be deliberately constructed *not* to possess 'depth'.

42. We may well ask whether *Plato*, too, is entirely jesting here; and that he allows Eryximachus to devote so much time to this element in his speech perhaps suggests not.

watch out for poets,⁴³ some of whose products need to be approached with caution ...' (and if my hypothesis in the last section were to be adopted, there would also be a warning about the suitability of Polymnia's followers as lovers).

This proposal I put forward as something rather stronger than a mere hypothesis, since otherwise the peculiarities of Eryximachus' treatment of music, i.e. its length, and especially the way it introduces the two Muses and their respective 'loves', seem to be left unexplained. The only alternative is probably to see them just as further examples of Eryximachus' incompetence as a speaker. But I hope that, if this paper has achieved nothing else, it will have succeeded in raising some doubts about the justification for writing him off so easily.

University of Durham

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43. If there is no direct reference to poets, it can scarcely be contested that poets of all sorts, including dramatic ones, 'deploy rhythm and harmony in relation to human beings'. That Eryximachus does not explicitly mention poets means that he could protest that of course he had absolutely no intention of referring to his neighbour. Aristophanes immediately responds with a jibe at Eryximachus' own professional competence (189a1-6).

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT IN PLATONISM

LLOYD P. GERSON

Concepts are rather mysterious entities. It seems a clear mistake to identify them with words, as is sometimes done. It also seems a mistake to identify concepts with dispositions or potencies, or worse, to deny their existence altogether, as has been done as well. Generally, the Platonic tradition is not recognized to be especially useful for the purpose of understanding concepts. As everyone knows, separate Forms are adduced by the Platonists to explain identity in difference, not concepts. Nevertheless, the Platonic tradition has quite a bit to say about the place of concepts in an articulated, hierarchical universe. This paper will explore some of the more interesting claims made within that tradition. It is offered in tribute to one to whom all students of Platonism are in debt.

I. Plato

A good starting-point for the the consideration of the place of concepts in Platonism is *Parmenides* 132b4ff. In reply to Parmenides' so-called "third-man regress argument," the young Socrates speculates that the regress can be avoided if the Form is a concept (*νόημα*) in minds (*ἐν ψυχῇ*). Parmenides replies in effect that for a Form to do what a Form is supposed to do, namely, explain identity in difference, it must be what a concept is a concept of and not a concept. Thus is raised, albeit indirectly, the question: how *are* concepts and thinking generally related to Forms? If concepts are representations of some sort, how do they represent Forms? And if they are not representations, what are they? If Helen's beauty and Socrates' courage are instances of the Forms of Beauty and Courage, are my concepts of these Forms also instances? If they are, do these sorts of instances suffer from the same imperfections as sensible instances? That is, is a concept of F in other circumstances equally a concept of G? If they are not instances of Forms in the same way, are they imperfect at all? That is, is the concept or its "content" identical with the Form? Does knowing a Form have anything to do with the acquisition, retention, and occurrence of concepts? If it does, will this affect how we

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