

理性的慾望： 柏拉圖對慾望的看法 與《饗宴》裡厄律克希馬可斯「愛的醫療」

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摘要

面對一般對柏拉圖「理性主義」的刻板印象，這篇論文試圖論述：對柏拉圖而言，「慾望」本身具有價值。為進一步探討柏拉圖哲學中慾望和理性的關係，文中將以《饗宴》裡厄律克希馬可斯的醫學談話，作為比較的對象。厄律克希馬可斯的「技藝」(τέχνη)，即，希波克拉底派的醫學，符合柏拉圖早期對知識的要求，也就是：知識必須要能提出合理的說明；此外，當時的醫學是在藉由好慾望與壞慾望之間的平衡，而使人內在各成分達致健康與和諧。然而，這裡提出的解釋是：柏拉圖的哲學超出了理性科學或技藝的知識範本；在對慾望的處理上，他不依循醫學對慾望好壞的區分，他的和諧概念也保留了理性與非理性慾望並存的差異。柏拉圖哲學需要慾望的力量，慾望雖然可能變成非理性，卻也是靈魂追求哲學不可缺少的力量。

關鍵詞：柏拉圖、靈魂三分、慾望、技藝、希臘醫學

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Plato's Treatment of Desire and Eryximachus' Medicine in the *Symposium*

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Abstract

Confronted with the stereotype of a rationalistic Plato, the paper argues for the value of desire at its own right in Plato. To explore the relation between desire and rationality in Plato, I choose Eryximachus' medicine in the *Symposium* as an object of comparison. Eryximachus' τέχνη, representing the Hippocratic medical knowledge, is in conformity with Plato's earlier requirement of knowledge, that is, giving a rational account. The medicine achieves the harmony by balancing the good and bad desires. Plato's philosophy, however, goes beyond the epistemic model of rational science or τέχνη. On the treatment of desire, he does not follow the discrimination of good and bad desires in medicine, nor does he even out the different desire, because as the doctor. Plato's philosophy needs the strength of desire, because—though desire sometimes becomes irrational—it is the vital strength of the soul to pursue philosophy.

Keywords: Plato, the tripartite soul, desire, expertise (techné), Greek medicine

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I. Desire in Plato

What is Plato's treatment of desire? A stereotyped picture of a rationalistic Plato is to control desire by rationality. It presumes a struggle between some rationality and irrationality, and that irrationality is naturally inherent in desire. But the picture is oversimplified. When we read into Plato, we would find that the concept of "desire" in Plato is in fact very elastic. In the well-known doctrine of the tripartite soul in the *Republic*, Plato calls one part of the soul the "desiring" element (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν). But he also tells us that all the three parts of the soul have their own desires (ἐπιθυμίας). (*Republic* 580 d)¹ The

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¹ For the Greek texts, I use Plato's *Republic* in Slings (2003), his other works in Burnet (1901-1903), Aristotle's *De Anima* in Ross (1956), Hippocratic *On Ancient Medicine* in Jones (1868), *On the Nature of Man* in Jones (1959) and *On the Sacred Disease* in Littré (1839-1861). Except where noted, translations of Greek citations are my own.

desiring element is named as “desiring” because it is most characterised by the intensity of desires (διὰ σφοδρότητα τῶν... ἐπιθυμιῶν) which are concerning pleasures such as those for food, drink, and sex. (580 e - 581 a; cf. 436 a) But in an ideal case, the desires can be directed toward learning in the soul. (485 d) The psychic element by which we do learning is distinguished from the one by which we desire for bodily pleasures. (436 a) This means that the “desires” in Plato are not confined to what counts as “the desiring element”. As cited above, all the three parts of the soul have their own desires. (580 d) Even in the middle of the argument of partitioning the soul, the “desires” are not confined to a single desiring element, but refer to some strength in opposite directions² (437 b-c) which are crucial in justifying the partition of the soul. (439 a-d) The elastic terminology might be the cause of Aristotle’s perplexity when he criticizes those who claim for the doctrine of the tri- or bi-partite soul. (*De Anima* 432 a 25 - 432 b 7)³ Among his criticisms, an apparent absurdity in Aristotle’s eyes is this: on the one hand, these people

² The wording “strength” here is based on Plato’s description of drawing toward and pushing away at 437 b-c, with reference to 439 a-c. For an analysis on the opposite forces at work in the soul in these two pieces of texts, see Stalley (2007: 70-72). In a more moral-psychological tone, the three elements are understood as “forms of human motivation” (Lorenz, 2006: 1) or “motivational springs of action”. (Burnyeat, 2006: 18)

³ Aristotle does not specify his target in the text, but both the tripartition and the bipartition of the soul can be found in Plato’s *Republic*. The tripartition of the soul as the reasoning, the spirited and the desiring can be found in the *Republic* books 4 and 9; the bipartition of the soul as the rational and the irrational is in the *Republic* 10, when he explores the psychological effects of the mimetic arts. (*Republic* 4.436a - 441c and 9.580 e - 590 a; *Republic* 10.602 c - 606 d) Both the spirited and the desiring (appetitive) of the tripartite soul can be included in the irrational element of the bipartite soul, since it involves with sex, spirit (θυμοῦ) and all the appetitive desires. (606 d) In the discussion on the psychological influence of drama, the irrational element involves more with the element by which we feel sorrows. (603 e - 604 d) In this case, it is closer to the spirited than to the appetitive in the tripartite soul. As Burnyeat notes in his analysis on the passage at 604 a, “[t]he role of shame... suggests some involvement of the middle part as reason’s ally or executive, contrary to the claim some have made that the middle part is dropped in Book X”. (Burnyeat, 2006: 18)

divide the soul into three, including the desiring part, whereas, on the other hand, they assert that “in each part of the soul, there would be desire (ὄρεξις)”. (*De Anima* 432 b 4-7)⁴ However, it is not an absurdity for Plato, but a vital feature in his treatment of desire. Along with Plato’s line of thinking, there can be some “rational desire”, the desire of the rational element in the soul. This is an essential detail in Plato’s doctrine of the tripartite soul. Just because there are different desires which sometimes draw toward the opposite directions in the soul, Socrates in the *Republic* can apply the principle of opposites⁵ to the soul, and thus argues for the division of the soul. (437 b - 439 a) The claim that “all people desire the good things” (πάντες γὰρ ἄρα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν, 438 a) is taken into consideration, but not supported directly as in the earlier dialogues. (*Meno* 77 b-c; cf. *Gorgias* 468 c)⁶ Now, the sheer desire as thirst is defined as the drive heading toward their proper objects only, without the qualification of “the good”. Thus this

⁴ A note on terminology: By the term ὄρεξις, Aristotle refers to the “desire” in general as a generic name (including ἐπιθυμία, θυμὸς and βούλησις, *De Anima* II.3, 414 b 2); while the term ἐπιθυμία is limited to the bodily appetite throughout the thematic discussion in the *De Anima* III.9-11. By contrast, Plato uses ἐπιθυμία to mean the desire in general without demarcation. The usage is indeed different from Aristotle’s. The bodily appetite is usually connected to the desiring element in the tripartite soul in Plato. As for the desiring element, most commonly it is expressed as a dative with the verb ἐπιθυμέω, or an article with a neutral adjective, τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, when he needs to label it as a particular entity in the *Republic* 4 and 9. (The word “entity” does not endorse any solid position in metaphysical debates such as whether the three parts of the soul are separate beings, subjects or agents, and so on. See Williams (1973); Annas (1981) and Bobonich (2002) for the more substantial parts of the soul; Stalley (2007) and Lorenz (2006) for different views.) Τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν is also translated as “the appetitive”.

⁵ That is, the same thing cannot be in two opposite states, in the same respect, at the same time, in relation to the same thing. (436 b 8-9) I follow Burnyeat and Stalley to name it “the principle of opposites”. (Burnyeat, 2006: 3; Stalley, 2007: 69) It is also called “the principle of contraries”. (Irwin, 1995: 204)

⁶ For scholars who distinguish Plato’s early dialogues as Socratic from the middle Plato, the passage is read as Plato’s revision of Socrates’ position. (Irwin, 1995: 206-211) But recently, a challenging paper by Lloyd Gerson gives rise to controversy on this reading. (Gerson, 2014: 422-424)

kind of desire is distinguished from the desire for the good. (*Republic* 437 d-e, 439 a) The desire for the good is attributed to the rational element. The idea of “rational desire” does not fit in the stereotyped picture of controlling desire by rationality. What Plato concerns, I will argue that, is not the struggle between desire and rationality, nor a superficial balance resulted from eliminating desires, but a dynamic harmony among desires which may come into either the rational or the irrational drives in the soul. More crucially, though Plato remains cautious about desires, desire is not a negative item in Plato, nor the irrationality inherent in desire.

To signify Plato’s departure from a negative attitude toward desire, I will draw attention to Eryximachus’ speech in the *Symposium*. It is not to say that the *Symposium* solves the problem of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* on a chronological background, though, broadly speaking, the *Symposium* is composed in the same period as *Republic*.⁷ Rather, this is a try to establish a more coherent and comprehensive view of “rational desire” which we may meet in different pieces in Plato.⁸ The *Symposium* can be understood as a work on the rational desire.⁹ For the purpose of understanding the relation between desire and rationality in Plato, Eryximachus’ speech is significant on an

⁷ For the date of composition, scholars mostly accept Dover’s study in 1965. (Also cf. Brandwood, 1992: 91 and 110) In a paper of one year earlier than Dover’s, Morrison analyses the development of Plato’s thoughts on immortality, and argues that *Symposium* should be composed earlier, even earlier than *Meno*. (Morrison 1964: 42-46) But, in the past two decades, *Symposium* is usually supposed to be dated in the same period of *Republic*. (Cf. Howatson & Sheffield, 2008: vii; Hunter, 2004: 3; Gill, 1999: xvi etc.)

⁸ In interpreting Plato, I adopt the “principle of charity” which is well-known as Davidson’s “assumption that the speaker is largely rational and that most of his environmentally directed beliefs are true”. (Lepore and Ludwig’s introduction in Davidson (2006: 15); Davidson’s own expression: *ibid.* 234-235) As Davidson emphasizes, for any meaningful interpretation, the charity is “unavoidable”. (*Ibid.* 116, 150, 163) My adoption of this principle is inspired by Stalley (2007: 68).

⁹ This is borrowed from Kahn (1996: 221), “the doctrine of the *Symposium* is best understood as a theory of (rational) desire rather than as a theory of love.”

epistemological reason. The main body of Plato's *Symposium* consists of seven speeches on ἔρωσ (love/desire)¹⁰ which are made by seven distinguished figures. Eryximachus is one of them. In the context, Eryximachus is a representative of his τέχνη (expertise), medicine. Medicine is an exemplar of the genuine τέχνη. It meets Plato's requirement of knowledge in the earlier dialogues, that is, to require the possessor of knowledge as a practitioner of the τέχνη to give a rational account. Later in the next section, it will be expounded that the emphasis on rational explanation seems to be a common feature of medicine of that time and Plato's philosophy, in their avowals of knowledge. In addition to the epistemological consideration, there is another common feature which can be found in their aim. Medicine aims at health by harmonizing different elements in the body. Eryximachus in the *Symposium* applies this concept of harmony to the nature and everything concerned. (*Symposium* 188 a-b) The emphasis on health and harmony of different elements is not unfamiliar to Plato's readers. (*Republic* 443 e, 444 d, 554 e, 591 d) These similarities make Eryximachus' speech a good object of comparison by which we may scrutinize the relation between desire and rationality in Plato.

The theme of the *Symposium* is ἔρωσ. Plato's accent on ἔρωσ shows one important characteristic of his philosophy which helps us to re-evaluate his rationalistic image. Ἐρωσ is praised in the place of medicine in Eryximachus' speech, but the doctor does not praise all kinds of ἔρωσ. On the contrary, Plato sometimes labels ἔρωσ as νόσος (disease); however, the blame on bad

¹⁰ In Greek, ἔρωσ does not only mean "love" but "love" which is accompanied with passionate desire, compared with φιλία (love, affection or friendship). Therefore the discussions on ἔρωσ in texts will be associated with the views on desire.

ἔρωϑ is stepping down from the stage just after the doctor finishes his speech in the *Symposium*.¹¹ It is worthy of seeing the difference between the roles of love in the medical discourse and the philosophical conversation in Plato. The connection of Plato's love to disease marks the divergence of Plato's treatment of desire from the medical view. It leads to a different idea of harmony too, especially when the issue comes to the harmony of the elements in the soul. This calls more attention to Plato's complex attitude toward desire. Philosophy cannot be deprived of desire whether it comes into the rational or the irrational, since philosophy is ἔρωϑ for wisdom. Before making a discrimination of the good and bad desires, ἔρωϑ is valued in its own right. This is distinguished from the balanced calculation or rational science like medicine.

In the next section, I shall locate the role of Eryximachus in the *Symposium* as the representative of medicine of that time, and show the similarities of Plato's philosophy to medicine. After that, I shall compare Plato's connection of ἔρωϑ to disease on the one hand, and the insufficiency of Eryximachus' speech and the treatment of mental disease in the Hippocratic writings on the other hand, to highlight the dissimilarity between the doctor's medicine and Plato's love. In this way, the paper aims to argue that, for Plato, the relation between desire and rationality is not fixed. This is not to say that all desires are rational, but to emphasize the significance of the rational

¹¹ Aristophanes speaks next to Eryximachus. Afterwards, speakers do not insist on the distinction between good and bad ἔρωϑ any longer. (189 c ff.) The final speaker Alcibiades himself gives us an example of bad ἔρωϑ. But in speech, he does not mention the distinction. His speech is devoted to praise Socrates who shows us how ἔρωϑ of the philosopher would be like. (215 a - 222 a; Socrates' madness for philosophy is pointed out at 218 b.)

desire. Desire is not inherently irrational, but becomes irrational, just as it becomes rational as well.

II. Eryximachus and his τέχνη

Eryximachus' speech runs from 186 a to 188 e in the *Symposium*. In the context of the dialogue, his speech is sandwiched between Pausanias' and Aristophanes'. He continues Pausanias' distinction between good and bad desires and tries to apply the thesis to the whole universe. The distinction between good and bad desires in Pausanias' speech is delivered in the language of myth. There is a division of double Ἔρως (the god), along with double Aphrodite, representing the double face of ἔρως (love/desire). (180 c-e) Eryximachus translates the distinction into a more scientific language which contains more of rational explanation from the view of a practitioner of medicine. Here the distinction between good and bad desires is understood in the same way as the distinction between health and disease (τὸ ὑγιὲς... καὶ τὸ νοσοῦς). (186 b 5 ff.) The main principle is to gratify the good and healthy desires in each body. (186 b-c) He defines medicine as knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the love-matters in respect of “filling and emptying” (πλησμονὴν καὶ κένωσιν). In practice, it is to distinguish the good love from the bad ugly one, and to produce love where it ought to be, or conversely to remove love from where it ought not to be. (186 d) In this way it achieves a balance of the opposites like cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and wet. (186 d-e) This is “our expertise” (τὴν ἡμετέραν τέχνην), the doctor says. (186 e 3)

Traditionally, the role of Eryximachus in the *Symposium* has been dismissed as a pompous caricature of doctor. The unfriendly reading has

once been widely, almost unquestionably, accepted in the first half of the twentieth century, before Edelstein challenges the reading.¹² Edelstein defends that the “ironical portrait of the pedantic expert and scientist” is “hardly justified”. Throughout the dialogue, Eryximachus’ medical knowledge does work. He proves to be a genuine expert. “By making Eryximachus act as physician whenever the occasion calls for medical opinion, Plato can hardly have intended to satirize him”. (Edelstein, 1945: 85-86) Moreover, at the end of his speech in the *Symposium*, the doctor says he might omit many things and expects Aristophanes to fill up. (188 e) The modest words “betray belief in his own wisdom and superiority”. (Edelstein, 1945: 91)

To a certain extent, I follow Edelstein’s suggestion: Eryximachus does have his importance. However, to the eye of readers after a half century, still, Eryximachus looks “pompous, over-emphatic about his *expertise*” and “imposing ‘orderliness’ on the conduct of the symposium”.¹³ But two points are noteworthy here. Firstly, Eryximachus is a representative of his expertise, medicine, and medicine is regarded as an exemplar of the genuine τέχνη in Plato. Secondly, even if Plato’s representation appears satirical, features in the speech here properly match the principal ideas of medical discourse of Plato’s days.

Readers of Plato might be very familiar with the epistemic significance of τέχνη in the early dialogues. Τέχνη requires rational explanations. This constitutes an essential requirement of knowledge. As mentioned in the previous section, in the earlier dialogues, Plato submits the requirement for

¹² A brief history of the hostile reading and relevant debate, see Craik (2001: 110, n.7).

¹³ In words of Gill (1999: xxiii). Italics mine.

the people who appear to possess knowledge. With the very requirement, Socrates disproves the wisdom or knowledge of politicians and poets in the *Apology*. Those who appear to but not really have knowledge fail to meet the requirement for the τέχνη of rhapsody in the *Ion*, that of sophistry in the *Protagoras*, that of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, and so on. The requirement of the rational account (λόγος) is a manifest feature in Plato's theory of knowledge. (*Meno* 98 a, *Gorgias* 465 a) Some argue that it is a constant feature also throughout the so-called middle dialogues, including the classic text of Plato's epistemology, the *Theaetetus*. (Fine, 1979: 100; Waterfield, 2004: 224; Ho, 2012; Cf. *Symposium* 202 a and *Republic* 534 b)

In the *Symposium*, Eryximachus contrasts medicine with cookery which aims at pleasing our appetites and is not a genuine τέχνη. (187 e 4-6) The contrast is exactly the same one drawn by Socrates at *Gorgias* 464 d, where Plato is making a sharp distinction between τέχνη and ἐμπειρία (sheer experience, 464 b - 466 a). For what appears to be but not really is a τέχνη, Plato sometimes uses a more offensive term τριβή (knack). One crucial point of his distinction is that ἐμπειρία or τριβή does not give any rational account (λόγον, 465 a 3) and thus is with-no-account/ irrational (ἄλογον, 465 a 6).¹⁴

It is not surprising that Plato chooses the τέχνη of medicine to be a model of knowledge. The Hippocratic physicians of the fifth century BC differentiate themselves from other healers by giving rational explanations. It is the way in which they display their superiority in knowledge and τέχνη, probably with a certain degree of self-consciousness. One author of the *Hippocratic*

¹⁴ This distinction is more related to the purpose of this paper. The other crucial distinction is that knack is flattery (κολακεία) which aims at the pleasant rather than the good. (*Gorgias* 464 b - 465 a) But it is not an easy issue which can be coped with here.

Corpus provides us some report of the competitive environment where the practitioners of medicine have to confront public debates. (*On the Nature of Man* 1) To display their knowledge, they are debating (ἀντιλέγουσιν, 1. 22). The tone of the author implies a disapproval of the person “with the most glib tongue in the face of the crowd”. (1. 27-28)¹⁵ However, it is apparently an advantage if one can “provide his own explanation always victorious” (παρέχειν αἰεὶ ἐπικρατέοντα τὸν λόγον τὸν ἕωτοῦ). (1. 29-30) The author of *On Ancient Medicine* shows their emphasis on giving rational explanations in another way. As the author says, although it is impossible for human being to attain the perfect accuracy,¹⁶ they can reach the greatest accuracy by reasoning (λογισμῶ). (*On Ancient Medicine* 12. 9-16) The need of giving an account and the emphasis on rationality make medicine the best candidate to show what knowledge is like in Plato.

How can we give an account with reasoning but not become a sophistic “glib tongue”? This question draws philosophers and physicians into the same array. In a paper on the relation between rhetoric and medicine, Jouanna, pacing Festugière, points out the existence of the group of “oral works” in the Hippocratic writings, that is, the works which “have been spoken out loud before an audience”. Both *On Ancient Medicine* and *On the Nature of Man* belong to the group either in his or in Festugière’s list. (Jouanna, 2012a: 41) Jouanna takes the uses of φημί (I say) in the first person as an important feature in the oral works to claim for the unity of the

¹⁵ In the phrase of Jones’ translation. (Jones, 1959: 5)

¹⁶ A brief discussion on the exactness in medicine, see Lloyd (1991: 257). The practitioners of the Hippocratic medicine are clearly aware of their limitation. This also supports Edelstein’s reading on Eryximachus’ modest attitude in the *Symposium*.

group of works. (Ibid. 43-44) For some diversity in the group, he points out the “rhetorical character” in *Breaths* and *The Art*. But even the work in the sophistic language of eulogy “remains faithful to the rational spirit of Hippocratic medicine”. Here, he appeals to Eryximachus’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium* as side evidence. (Ibid. 51)

The role of Eryximachus cannot be merely a caricature, in the context that both philosophers and practitioners of medicine differentiate themselves from those with “glib tongue” of the rhetoric. Be back to the plot of the *Symposium*. As a professional practitioner of medicine, Eryximachus’ advice is decisive when the participants in the drinking party are making the regulation not to indulge their desires, but to entertain themselves with speeches on desire/ἔρωσ. (*Symposium* 176 b-e) As a physician, he stops Aristophanes’ hiccups. (185 c-e) It is true that even a layman can do this by knack. But Eryximachus’ τέχνη can be supplied with an account by his speech in addition to the behaviour of stopping Aristophanes’ hiccups. His speech on ἔρωσ typically reflects the discourse of Greek medicine which emphasizes harmony as the health of body. (185 e - 188 e)

Now we turn to the content of Eryximachus’ speech which represents the medical discourse of Plato’s days in the dialogue. The concept of “harmony” calls for more attention. The harmony in Eryximachus’ speech is defined by a balance of the opposites like cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and wet. (186 d-e) Eryximachus’ thesis of balancing elements corresponds to the relevant claims in the Hippocratic writings. (Cf. *On the Nature of Man* 4.1-9 and *On Ancient Medicine* 12) The balance and continuous interaction of the opposites play an important role in Greek medicine and early nature

philosophy.¹⁷ The well-known medical thesis of four humours depends on the notion of balance “of the right proportion”. (Eijk, 2008: 402) With a relationship “of correspondence, analogy, or imitation”, it does not only explain the structure and processes in the body, but also “the elements and forces that are at work in the universe”. (Ibid.) Against the background, Eryximachus is not exaggerating when he applies the harmony of balanced elements to other fields. He values harmony and emphasizes that it is impossible to achieve harmony as long as the elements stay at variance as Heraclitus insists. (187 a-b) Now the doctor in the *Symposium* applies the medical thesis of balance into μουσική (music/arts, 187 c 4). When he goes further to the harmony achieved via education (παιδεία, 187 d 3), here occurs an interesting ambiguity: On the one hand, Eryximachus claims that the love here is “not the double love” (οὐδὲ ὁ διπλοῦς ἔρωσ, 187 c 7);¹⁸ but on the other hand, based on the distinction of good and bad desires, his medicine still plays the role of guarding (φυλακήν) and healing (ἴασιν) of love. (188 c 2; cf. 187 d-e.)

The pursuit of health and harmony is also a point in Plato’s doctrine of the soul in the *Republic*.¹⁹ Eryximachus mentions of arts and education. In

¹⁷ For Eryximachus’ connection to the theory of filling and emptying in the Hippocratic treatises, see Hunter (2004: 55-6). On the balance of the hot and cold, dry and wet, the first extant text in medicine is *On the Nature of Man*. (Lloyd, 1964: 92) The underlying thoughts can be traced to Anaximander’ cosmological theory. (Ibid. 100) Early Greek thinkers tend “to divide opposites into a positive and a negative pole”. (Ibid. 104) Eryximachus’ speech exhibits the features of Greek medicine and natural philosophy. The division of the opposites is coherent with his acceptance of the division of double love.

¹⁸ Waterfield suggests that “Eryximachus seems to be losing the thread” (of “Love’s duality”). His criticism against Heraclitus leads to a position that cannot admit of bad Love in music. (Waterfield, 1994: 79, note on 187c.) The doctor’s criticism against Heraclitus will be revisited in section III below.

¹⁹ For the justification of my connection of the *Republic* and *Symposium*, see section I notes 7 and 8

the *Republic*, the aim of μουσική and παιδεία is to educate the perfectly harmonious person. (412 a) The inner state of the just person resembles the musical harmony. (441 e - 422 a, 443 d-e) In the language of “health” and “disease”, Plato describes the inner harmony as the “health” of the soul. (444 c-e) Eryximachus’ “guarding and healing” of love also reminds us of the guardian (φύλαξ) in the *Republic*. Plato’s guardians of the city-state, in the strict sense, are the philosophers who really possess knowledge. Medicine continues to be taken as a typical example of τέχνη by which Plato expounds the features of knowledge in *Republic* 1. (350 a-b)²⁰ Plato’s guardians are those who truly have knowledge concerning the soul just as the physicians are those who truly have knowledge concerning the body. In the *Republic*, Plato submits the doctrine of the tripartite soul. (436 a - 441 c) There are three elements, there are also three kinds of desire (ἐπιθυμίας). (580 d) The doctor knows how to achieve the health of the body by harmonizing the opposites. Similarly, Plato’s philosopher knows how to achieve the health of the soul by harmonizing the opposite desires of different elements in the soul.

III. The Disease of ἔρως

In spite of the similarities of philosophy to medicine, surely philosophy is not medicine. The dissimilarity is shown by the difference between the

above. Though the approach is obviously different, Irwin also connects the two dialogues and elucidates that Plato’s ἔρως helps to “fill a gap in the argument of the *Republic*”. (Irwin, 1995: 312 & 315)

²⁰ Hunter reads Plato’s “exaggerated claims of medicine, which had little in common with what he saw as the true pursuit of understanding (philosophy)”. (Hunter, 2004: 54) But one should not simply ignore Plato’s positive evaluation of medicine as a genuine τέχνη in *Republic* 1. Though book 1 might be dated earlier than the rest of the *Republic*, it is unreasonable to suppose that Plato compiles inconsistent pieces into one work.

roles of love in medicine and in Plato. Plato's ἔρωσ is a disease. Yet his treatment of ἔρωσ is dissimilar to the doctor's.

A feature of “the rational spirit of Hippocratic medicine”²¹ in Eryximachus' speech is to explain everything by a universal power, rather than reference to the divine. The universal power in question is ἔρωσ. Eryximachus significantly draws the distinction between good and bad ἔρωσ which is understood in terms of the distinction between health and disease. Medicine is to gratify the good and healthy elements and not to gratify the bad and diseased elements. (*Symposium* 186 b-c) Thus the divine colour of Ἐρῶσ (the god) has been naturalised by human conditions of health. Just as the divine is “rationalised” or “naturalised” in the Hippocratic writings. (Cf. Eijk, 2008: 392) The communications between gods and men are also naturalised as an expertise, divination, which is understood in terms of “the healing” (ἰασιν) of ἔρωσ. (188 c) He praises that ἔρωσ brings us the highest happiness. But it is conditional. It is limited to the ἔρωσ concerning the good, with self-control and justice. (188 d)

Plato's attitude toward ἔρωσ is complex. He seems to agree with the doctor to a certain extent. Later in the *Symposium*, in Diotima's teaching, people in the intensive ἔρωσ are described as diseased (νοσοῦντά, 207 a 9 - b 1). In the *Phaedrus*, the companion dialogue of the *Symposium*, ἔρωσ is labelled as the fourth kind of madness. (*Phaedrus* 249 d) Madness is counted as disease in Greek medicine. (Cf. *On the Sacred Disease*) So is in Plato. (*Timaeus* 86 b) Furthermore, when Plato explains the work of love that “the stream of beauty flowing through the eyes”, he uses the metaphor of infecting “the disease of the eyes”. (*Phaedrus* 255 d) “Disease” seems a negative label. But, interestingly,

²¹ In words of Jouanna (2012a: 51), cited above in section II.

the bad ἔρως in Eryximachus' speech disappears in Diotima's teaching. Ἐρως is neither good nor bad, but in between; as that philosophy is neither wisdom nor ignorance, but in between. (Symposium 201 e - 202 a) For Plato, philosophy is ἔρως for wisdom. How can ἔρως be counted as disease but draw us to philosophy?

To reply this, it is needed to revisit the concept of harmony. Dorter suggests that the doctor fails to give a fair account of the concepts like health and harmony, because of "its narrow materialism". (Dorter, 1969: 220) I suggest that the problem does not directly lie in the "narrow materialism", but in the concept of "harmony" resulted from it. Medicine, as shown in the previous section, is a genuine τέχνη which meets the requirement of knowledge in Plato. Nevertheless, in the case of philosophy, the model of medicine is not sufficient any longer. The model of medicine becomes insufficient not simply because that it deals with the body rather than the soul. The limited scope of the doctor's speech may be counted as a weakness. But Plato is not totally anti-materialist. The dialogue tells us in the mouth of Eryximachus, some gaps in his speech will be filled up by the next speaker Aristophanes rather than the converse. (188 e) Aristophanes delivers a story about how human beings were split into two halves and how ἔρως leads us to embrace our "another-halves". (189 c - 191 d) It is heavily concerning the body and physical needs. According to the literary arrangement, dealing with the body is not the main insufficiency of medicine.

What is problematic is the side effect when the scope is limited in the physical material world. "Harmony" explained by physical causes, is a result of adding or removing some material elements from certain physical places.

It is to even out variance. This is also pointed out by Dorter: “Mediation is possible in two ways, depending on whether or not one preserves the natures of the things mediated”. Eryximachus only focuses on one kind of mediation, but fails to notice the other kind. (Dover, 1969: 226-227) The other kind of mediation is Heraclitean harmony. It is agreement of things at variance, like of the bow and of the lyre.²² Eryximachus criticizes Heraclitus. He declares that it is impossible to achieve harmony when the elements still preserve their differences. (*Symposium* 187 b) In the context, the next speaker Aristophanes mocks Eryximachus’ prescription of healing hiccups by sneezing and mocks the doctor’s concept of harmony in this way. (189 a) But it is true that if the superfluous air remains in different parts of body, the hiccups will not stop. There are different amounts of air in different parts of the body. The differences need to be evened out. If the passage appears satirical, it may satirize not only Eryximachus but the very concept of harmony in medicine. Based on the concept, Eryximachus’ treatment of desire is a kind of calculation. It measures different desires and pleasures. With the correct measurement, the doctor helps people to maintain the good desires but remove the bad desires. Then the elements in the body are balanced.

Mental disease may be also healed in this way. Madness is counted as disease in the Hippocratic medicine, and can be explained by physical causes. It can be given an account by the condition of the brain where our emotions, perceptions and knowledge come from. (*On the Sacred Disease* 14) The brain is the interpreter of understanding. (15, 16, 17) When it is too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry, it becomes unhealthy. Madness is caused by too much

²² Fr. 51, Kirk and Raven (1957: 193).

moisture inside the head. Then the brain needs to be put into motion in order to remove the superfluous humidity. The phenomena caused by the motions are that the sight and hearing cannot be at rest, and that the person cannot reason properly. (14) When the brain is damaged by phlegm and bile, people become mad. Being heated or being cooled may change the condition of the brain. (15) These physical conditions explain the mental health and disease.

Plato shares the medical view at this point.²³ Epilepsy as a “sacred disease” is caused by phlegm and bile in the brain. It is called sacred simply because the brain is the sacred part of our body. (*Timaeus* 85 a-b) At this point, Plato adopts the medical explanation to regard the diseases of the soul as resulted from the condition of the body. Madness is one of the two kinds of disease of the soul (the other kind is ignorance). (86 b) Considering these, once again we find that Plato’s position could not be too anti-materialist. However, he seems not as eager to discharge the divine matters by physical causes as the Hippocratic physicians.

In the *Symposium*, philosophy is coloured with a divine hue. This brings a new reflection on the relation between desire and rationality. Plato’s early model of knowledge is τέχνη. Medicine is a good representative of τέχνη for Plato by its rational spirit which departs from the divine.²⁴ Take the dialogue *Ion* as an example, the requirement of giving a rational account distinguishes the genuine τέχνη from the divine inspiration; the rhapsody inspired by divinity

²³ McPherran notes that both Plato and the Hippocratic medicine adopt the physical explanation instead of appealing to divinity. (McPherran, 2006: 77, esp. n.18)

²⁴ However, we must be cautious on the term “rational spirit”. As Jouanna reminds us, it “is not only the age of the triumph of rationalism”. Even within the field of healing, the rational Hippocratic medicine co-exists with the miraculous medicine in Aesclepius’ temple. (Jouanna, 2012b: 79) Besides, even for the Hippocratics, the influence of divinity might still remain. (McPherran, 2006: 81)

is not a genuine τέχνη and thus not knowledge. Ion chooses to be thought divine when he fails to provide rational explanations for his poetic performance. (*Ion* 542 a-b) This is very similar to the ignorant people whom the author of *On the Sacred Disease* distinguishes himself from. The author emphasizes that the “sacred disease” is “no more divine nor sacred than other diseases” but can be explained by natural causes. The reason why people call it divine is that they are unable to comprehend it. (*On the Sacred Disease* 1) It is the case how Ion is called divine. But in the *Symposium*, the divine, or what goes beyond the rational explanation, earns back its epistemic value. In Diotima’s teaching, the communication between god and human takes place through ἔρωσ. As cited above, Eryximachus understands the communication between god and human in terms of human expertise. (188 c) However, Diotima announces further that this kind of wisdom is something different from wisdom concerning expertises (περὶ τέχνας, 203 a). When one ascends from the physical level to the end of the education in love, and catches the sight of the beauty of its wonderful nature, the beauty will appear “nor as a particular rational explanation nor as a particular knowledge” (οὐδέ τις λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη, 211 a 7). The role of Diotima as a priestess from Mantinea (punning on μαντική) strengthens the divine tone of her teaching. Now it is not the fake τέχνη which fails to give an account as in the *Ion*. The ἔρωσ for wisdom is the rational desire which combines both rationality (toward the rational aim, wisdom) and irrationality (urged by irrational ἔρωσ if one regards the strength of desire as irrational). It does not come short of rationality, but go beyond.

A final note on the relation between desire and rationality in Plato: The rational desire, either in the form of the desire of the reasoning element in the

soul in the *Republic* or the passionate desire leading us to knowledge in Diotima's teaching in the *Symposium*, is not equal to the good desires in Eryximachus' speech. In the climax of *Symposium*, Diotima's ladder of love illustrates the process how $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$ leads us to the philosophical pursuit of knowledge. One step of the ladder—from the particular beloved body to all beautiful bodies (210 a-b)—corresponds to Eryximachus' cosmic $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$. Nonetheless, Plato's true lover of knowledge does not stop on this step.

The doctor's treatment of desire is a compromise between good and bad desires, and also a compromise of the resultant pleasures. The next speaker Aristophanes breaks such a kind of "compromise". He abandons the doctor's distinction between the good and bad desires and thus does not need "compromise" any more. From the beginning of his speech, he replaces the doctor's "healing of desire" with "healing *by* desire" and praises the cure by $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$ to be the highest happiness for human beings. (189 d) The turning is made particularly noticeable by the change of the order of these two speakers. Aristophanes should speak before Eryximachus by their regulation, but the order changed because of his hiccups. (185 c-e) Surely Aristophanes' speech does not complete the process. However, it presents a step higher than Eryximachus' speech on the ladder of love. That is, we should turn to a concept of harmony which does not depend on the compromise of good and bad desires.

Compare with the *Republic*. The desires of different psychic elements are metaphorically described as streams in different directions. The stronger the desires are in one direction, the weaker they will be in other directions. (*Republic* 485 d-e) Diverting desires, rather than removing them, is crucial in

educating true philosophers. The philosophical pursuit of knowledge requires desires, given that the desires are diverted to the right direction. When the desires flow into different directions, they become distinguishable as those from different elements in the soul. However, philosophy depends on desire before it makes the discrimination of good desires and bad desires, the rational and the irrational. Medicine remains a genuine τέχνη which meets the requirement of giving the rational explanation, and is knowledge producing harmony and health. But now, Plato goes beyond the model. Philosophy as ἔρως for wisdom is not confined by τέχνη and aims at the harmony of the soul in a different sense. Medicine achieves the harmony by a rational balance of the opposite desires, on its presumption of good and bad desires. The harmonious soul of Plato's philosopher on the other hand, contains both rational and irrational elements, and can never be reduced to pale rationality. It forms a harmonious unity based on desire as the common root of motivations. All inner elements of the soul share in the strength of desire. Though desire sometimes becomes irrational, it would be directed into the love of learning, and become the vital strength of the soul to pursue philosophy.

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