

Aristophanes' Hiccups

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SINCE ANTIQUITY Aristophanes' hiccups in Plato's *Symposium* have attracted attention.¹ Our earliest critics thought that the episode was intended to deride Aristophanes.² Nineteenth-century scholars concurred with this view or suggested, for various reasons, that Pausanias or Eryximachus was the object of ridicule.³ Although certain more recent critics still believe that the scene is merely "humorous and dramatic" and consequently does not merit "a 'serious' explanation,"⁴ a greater awareness of the significance of dramatic action in Platonic dialogues generally has led to more careful consideration of this passage.

¹ Subsequent reference is made to the following works by author's name alone: R. G. BURY, *The Symposium of Plato* (Cambridge 1932); D. CLAY, "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the *Symposium*," *Arion* n.s. 2 (1975) 238-61; P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Plato*, tr. H. Meyerhoff (New York 1958-69); G. GIERSE, "Zur Komposition des platonischen *Symposium*," *Gymnasium* 77 (1970) 518-20; W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *History of Greek Philosophy* IV (Cambridge 1975); E. HOFFMANN, "Über Platons *Symposium*," *Neue HeidelbJahrb* n.f. 1941, 36-58 [reprinted separately, Heidelberg 1947]; A. HUG, *Platons *Symposium** (Leipzig 1884); M. W. ISENBERG, *The Order of the Discourses in Plato's *Symposium** (Chicago 1940); J. L. PENWILL, "Men in Love: Aspects of Plato's *Symposium*," *Ramus* 7 (1978) 143-75; G. K. PLOCHMANN, "Hiccups and Hangovers in the *Symposium*," *Bucknell Review* 11.3 (1963) 1-18; S. ROSEN, *Plato's *Symposium** (New Haven 1968); A. E. TAYLOR, *Plato: The Man and his Work* (London 1926).

There has been no adequate review of the literature since that of Bury (Guthrie 382 n.2, for instance, sends the reader to Rosen's scanty discussion of recent criticism [90f]). This lack and the need to clarify certain questions of methodology have prompted the somewhat full summary that follows.

² Olympiodorus (*Vit. Plat.*) obscurely observes that Aristophanes is mocked when the hiccups prevent him from completing the speech that he had begun. In a discussion of anachronism in Plato, Aristides (3.581 Behr) digresses to make the comment that the hiccups are introduced to ridicule the poet's ἀπληστία. It is presumably to this passage that Wilamowitz (*Platon* I [Berlin 1920] 367 and n.2) is referring when he states that the ancient interpretation explained the hiccups as a result of the previous night's drinking; I take Aristides' ἀπληστία, like Plato's πλεθρομονῆς (185c6), to denote overeating, not overdrinking. Athenaeus 187c is more general in suggesting that Plato was striving for humor and ridicule, presumably of Aristophanes. He proceeds to speak of Plato's mockery of Agathon and Alcibiades.

³ Bury xxxiif and Hug 70f review literature prior to the twentieth century; for the bibliography of the last thirty-five years, see *Lustrum* 4 (1959), 5 (1960), 20 (1977), and 25 (1983).

⁴ Taylor 219. The first phrase is derived from Hug's note to 185c7: "Dieser Schlucken des Aristophanes gehört zu den dramatischen und humoristischen Zügen, mit welchen Platon seine Erzählung belebt. . . ."

George Plochmann was the first critic to present a comprehensive literary interpretation. He avers, in the first place, that,

of course, the hiccups are a disharmony of the diaphragm, which in the *Timaeus* is listed as the point of separation between the respective seats of the appetitive and the ambitious parts of the soul. It is the maladjustment of bodily love and ambition that for Aristophanes is the very point in question (10).

This view has been justly questioned by Diskin Clay, who simply points out that “we do not know that Plato connected hiccoughs with the diaphragm” (259 n.8). Plochmann is more plausible, however, when he argues (10) that the speeches of Aristophanes and Eryximachus

are somehow transposed in their subject matter and treatment. Normally Aristophanes would be expected to talk about love in a very general way, making it a universal and perhaps blind passion; and Eryximachus would then talk about the phylogenesis of love, its possible mutations.

Although Plochmann’s reading may be too subtle and ingenious to account for the hiccups, it does suggest a useful method of approaching the problem. For the aim of Aristophanes’ seizure cannot be ascribed to Plato’s desire merely to have Eryximachus speak before the comic poet: if an alteration of speaking order had been Plato’s only aim, “he could have altered the table plan.”⁵ Plochmann’s interpretation is significant because it attempts to account for the way in which Plato has called attention to the change in the order of speeches.

The actual hiccups, which the narrator of the *Symposium* had ascribed to *πλησμονῆς ἢ ὑπό τινος ἄλλου* (185c6f), are interpreted by Plochmann as the result of “a surfeit of speeches” (18). Clay suggests something similar when he notes that “as Eryximachus is delivering himself of his pompous and profound description of Eros, his unfortunate neighbor is hiccoughing, gasping, gargling, wheezing, snorting and sneezing” (241). This line of interpretation, which had already been suggested in less overdrawn fashion by Ast and others, has been properly questioned by Röchert and Bury, who argue that such rude antics seem out of place in so convivial a setting.⁶ But

⁵ Guthrie 382 n.2; cf. Plochmann 10 and Friedländer I 161.

⁶ See Bury xxiii for discussion. Plochmann’s presumably tongue-in-cheek conclusion is that we require Socrates’ philosophy to prevent the occurrence of hiccups. Clay speaks of the “rare comedy” (241) of the disturbances issuing from the comic poet but does not assert explicitly that its aim is ridicule of a previous speaker.

while there can be no doubt that the scene is suffused with a wonderful humor and jovial playfulness (e.g. 189A1–C1), it is unlikely that Plato is merely adding honey to the draught with such pleasantries (as suggested at *Leg.* 659E–660A): if the humor serves to draw attention to the incident, we cannot avoid pursuing the question why Plato created the episode itself.

Hoffmann devised the fruitful method of comparing the initial speaking order with the actual sequence resulting from Aristophanes' disability. He suggests that there would have been a numerical progression in the topics of the original order: Phaedrus' single Eros, Pausanias' two Erotes, Aristophanes' three sexes, and Eryximachus' four areas of Medicine, Music, Astronomy, and Religion (the last three speeches, in Hoffmann's view, fall outside this scheme and are treated in a different way). He concludes that Plato rejected this order because his belief in numbers as symbols made it desirable that "Zwischen Einheit und ternarischer Ganzheit stehen Dualität und quaternarische Proportionalität (Aufteilung und harmonische Zusammenfügung)" (44). This interpretation has never received acceptance: it has been questioned whether Eryximachus' four sciences are really comparable to three sexes and any number of Erotes, whether the doctor in fact discusses only four areas of knowledge, whether it is correct to exclude Agathon's speech from the order, and finally whether the number theory really functions in this dialogue at all.⁷

Gierse follows Hoffmann's method because, he asserts, all other critics have treated the hiccups in isolation without relating them to their most important consequence, the revised speaking order. Although he ignores the contribution of Plochmann, Gierse correctly observes that any comprehensive interpretation must explain both the hiccups and the transposition of speeches. Further, unlike Hoffmann (who had argued that there was an intimate connection between the first four speeches), he believes that Agathon must also be brought into consideration. The result is that the original speaking arrangement of the first five speeches would have led to a perfect interlocking ring composition: Gierse finds thematic links between Phaedrus and Agathon (in, for example, their emphasis on essence, poetry, myth, and the gods' gifts), and also between Pausanias and Eryximachus (in their focus on two Erotes). Aristophanes is said to be unique but to have ties with both Phaedrus and Agathon. Moreover, this order is interlocking because Phaedrus and Eryximachus

⁷ K. Schilling, *ZPhF* 2 (1947) 193f (I am not, however, convinced by Schilling's arrangement of the speeches); Rosen 94 n.16, Gierse 519 and n.5.

are lovers, as are Agathon and Pausanias. Gierse argues that Plato rejected this original order because it would have created "ein harmonisch geschlossenes, fünfgliedriges Kunstwerk" that excluded Socrates, who is to present the correct interpretation of eros (520). The revised order of speeches no longer separates Socrates from his predecessors but provides a smooth transition.

Although Gierse's insights are of interest, he presents Plato as a bungler who could not even conceal his mistakes: for, again, if Plato had determined that Eryximachus' speech should follow that of Pausanias in order to prevent a premature ring structure, he could have changed the original seating arrangement.

Three additional interpretations may be mentioned briefly. Rosen suggests that the hiccups are a "discreet and ironical reference by Plato to the importance in the *Clouds* of breaking wind" (126). He argues further that since Aristophanes cannot deliver his speech without the medical aid of Eryximachus, poetry is shown to be subordinate to science ("technicism"). This statement is immediately contradicted, however, when Rosen asserts that Plato prefers Aristophanes, "who is given a higher position in the dialectical ascent" than Eryximachus.⁸ Similarly Penwill (149) interprets the episode as indicating "the dependence of the *poiêtês* on the *demiourgos*, of art on technology"; again it is alleged that the "higher place in ascending order of encomia suggests that the creative artist's insights are superior to those of the materialistic technician."⁹ Both these readings are based on the assumption that the speeches are arranged in a qualitative progression, but this point has not been demonstrated; and in any case the motivations imputed to Plato are insufficient to occasion the drama of the hiccups and the revised speaking order.

Guthrie, on the other hand, argues that the alteration of the sequence as a result of something so trivial as hiccups serves "to warn the reader that the order of the speeches is not significant but acci-

⁸ Rosen 91f. In fact, as we learn in Socrates' speech, the sciences *can* occupy a higher dialectical position than poetry (208E5–210E1). Further, if poetry were dependent upon science, one would expect Aristophanes' speech to precede that of Eryximachus, not follow it. The confusion results from Rosen's failure to define properly the meaning and relation of "subordination" in the order of speaking and the "dialectical ascent." Earlier he has questioned attempts to demonstrate a dialectical hierarchy (31f and n.94), with particular criticism of Isenberg, whose interpretation of the hiccups he describes here as unclear (Rosen 91 n.6). In fact what Isenberg had argued was that the hiccups are intended to reverse the speaking order because "the function of Aristophanes . . . [is that he] criticizes and satirizes the previous speakers and brings their discourses down to the lowest level of Becoming" (Isenberg 60).

⁹ Although Penwill (171 n.22) criticizes Rosen's treatment as "forced," it is unclear how their interpretations differ.

dental.”¹⁰ This is perhaps the least likely interpretation. What would a Platonic dialogue look like if the author inserted a dramatic action every time he wanted to indicate that something was not important? The actual order of the speeches is significant, as will be argued below. Guthrie, however, is arguing against the interpretation that the speeches advance qualitatively.¹¹ One might agree that each of the first four speeches is an improvement over the last; but despite the esteem that Agathon’s encomium has gained with Rosen (158–96) and Penwill (151–55), most scholars have found this speech to be the stumbling block to such an interpretation. Guthrie may be right in dismissing the idea of a qualitative progression, but it is unlikely that the hiccups episode can be explained as he does.

At this point we may summarize the guidelines for further discussion suggested by this survey of interpretation. First, the hiccups themselves cannot be treated in isolation but must be considered in relation to the transposition of speeches. Next, we need to explain why Plato did not merely alter the order but allowed the reader to observe the change. The method of Hoffmann and Gierse in comparing the original to the revised order can be valuable in this respect. Finally, any discussion of the speeches should consider whether in general there is a meaning to the whole order of encomia. Is there, in fact, a significant progression in the speeches?

I will argue here that Plato devised the original sequence of the first five speeches in such a way as to introduce topics in the precise order in which Socrates would take them up later. That is, the major subjects raised by the first speakers in their original order are arranged in the same sequence in Socrates’ discourse when he treats the various means by which humans seek immortality.¹² As such, since Socrates’ survey moves from the lowest objects of desire to the highest, there is an ascending order not so much in the quality of the first five speeches as in the sublimity of their subject matter.

This interpretation, however, requires two qualifications. The first is, I believe, obvious. No one speaker can be credited with introducing and focusing on sexuality. Since the first four speakers to

¹⁰ Guthrie 382 n.2. Cf. Plochmann 10, who stands at the other end of the spectrum: “these hiccups are one of the surest indications in the dialogue that *nothing* is wholly casual. . . .” Friedländer (I 161) argues that the revised speaking order calls attention to Socrates’ approaching turn to speak.

¹¹ See Bury liii; cf. Taylor 213, Rosen 31f and 91f, Guthrie 368 n.1, and Penwill 149.

¹² Plochmann (17) attempts to correlate the previous speakers to the philosophical hierarchy alone. His results, however, do not demonstrate an orderly progression; Rosen (31 n.4) points out that “Plochmann’s characterizations of the speeches are . . . seriously incomplete.”

some degree comprehend eros in sexual terms, each discusses coitus in both homosexual and heterosexual terms. (It is therefore interesting from what follows that Agathon never explicitly alludes to sexual relations.) As far afield as their discourses go, they lead ultimately to conclusions about the relationship of the lover and the beloved, both sexually and otherwise. One might therefore say that sexuality is common property at the symposium. Similarly, physical beauty is a topic that is raised either implicitly or explicitly by all the speakers.

The second qualification is that poetry is also a shared topic, not the express area of one of the early speakers. Each of the first five encomiasts quotes or alludes to poetic passages.¹³ Further, not one but two poets are present; and if we accept Helen Bacon's cogent interpretation of the end of the dialogue, there is a third: Socrates is the poet laureate.¹⁴ In fact we could argue that everyone at the symposium is a poet: Socrates, through the mouthpiece of Diotima, argues that, just as everyone is a lover or desirer (*ἐραστής*, 205D 1–8), so everyone who creates is a poet (*ποιητής*, 205B8–c9). By making a speech "from scratch" (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*, 205B9), each of our speakers thus becomes a poet.¹⁵ Further, each deals with invention, which Socrates connects with poetry.¹⁶ While there is no need to insist on this latter point, it is clear that poetry, as well as sexuality, is treated by more than one speaker and should therefore be considered common property.

Again, the order of topics introduced by the first speakers can be related to the organization of Socrates' argument for immortality. The last half of his speech is devoted to the three means by which humans seek immortality. The first approach, which is shared by animals, is that of procreation. Secondly, there are the seekers of fame, who are evaluated according to the degree of immortality their

¹³ Phaedrus quotes Hesiod, Parmenides, and Homer (178B5–7, 11; 179B1) and alludes to Homer and Aeschylus (180A4–7). Pausanias cites a line in Homer (183E3f). Eryximachus mentions "the poets" (186E2f). Aristophanes cites Homer (190B7). Agathon quotes Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and probably himself (195D4f, 196D1, 196E2f, 197C5f).

¹⁴ H. H. Bacon, "Socrates Crowned," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 35 (1959) 415–30: "Does the end of the 'Symposium' tell us that, in the judgement of Dionysus, it is not Agathon or Aristophanes but Socrates who carries off the prize for poetry?" (424); the answer is that Socrates "wins the crown of tragedy and comedy from Agathon and Aristophanes" (430).

¹⁵ There is a close connection between this passage, in which everyone who creates something from non-being is called a poet (205B8–c9), and 209A3–5, in which poetry and invention are discussed as a means to immortality, although the latter passage is more restrictive.

¹⁶ Most obvious is Eryximachus, who least grounds his speech in poetry (*supra* n.13); he does, however, discuss the invention of medicine (186E1–3).

deeds or creations attain. The ascending order that serves as the organizing principle in this passage proceeds from performers of noble deeds (Alcestis, Achilles, Codrus) to poets and inventors (Homer, Hesiod) and, at the highest level, codifiers of law (Lycurgus, Solon). The third means to immortality is similarly hierarchical, inasmuch as the philosopher carries out a process of abstraction from those things that least partake of the Idea to the Form of beauty itself. The sequence of topics here is abstract physical beauty,¹⁷ (beauty of soul,) the beauty of ethics and laws, beauty of sciences, the science of beauty, and finally the Form of beauty.

The introduction of these elements by previous speakers can be traced as follows. *Procreation* cannot be identified with any particular speaker, because, as we have noted, all the earlier encomiasts to some degree equate eros with sexuality. *Performance of noble deeds* is the topic on which Phaedrus concentrates; indeed, two of the exemplars whom Socrates discusses in his speech (Alcestis and Achilles) are first mentioned by Phaedrus. Moreover, it is Phaedrus who first touches upon *poetry* by quoting Hesiod, Parmenides, and Homer, and by mentioning Aeschylus and Homer. It is better, however, as we have suggested, to consider poetry and invention common property, as in the case of sexuality, for each of the speakers deals with this topic.¹⁸ If we do not assign poetry and invention to any one encomiast, there is a slight break in order; this hiatus is reflected in the dialogue itself: we are told that there were other speeches between those of Phaedrus and Pausanias that are not recounted (180c1–3).

The next recorded speech is that of Pausanias, who is interested in attitudes towards homosexuality; he pursues this topic largely by discussing how various *law codes* deal with pederasty. The connection between Pausanias' speech and the comparable passage in Socrates' is emphasized by the repetition of an important phrase: Socrates asserts that the greatest accomplishment of the pursuers of fame is *φρόνησίν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν*, which is best achieved by the codifiers of laws (208E5–209A8). He extracts these words directly from Pausanias' description of the lover's contribution to the beloved (184D–E1). The subject of Pausanias' speech, however, is not so much the reality as the semblance of justice and virtue. Guthrie

¹⁷ Subdivided into appreciation of the beauty of one person, then of two, and finally of all beautiful persons (211c1–4). This process of abstraction is to be assumed for all the steps; e.g. one, two, all excellent laws. That a subdivision is being discussed, and not a new area, can be deduced from 210A4–B6, where “two bodies” is omitted. For beauty of soul see n.22 *infra*.

¹⁸ Cf. *supra* nn.13 and 15.

recognizes this in his discussion of the non-philosophical means to immortality (procreation and fame), the pinnacle of which is “good sense and justice in the political sphere perpetuated in constitutions and other laws” (his adept rendering of *φρόνησίν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν*):

The means to it [non-philosophical immortality] do not go beyond what in the *Phaedo* is designated “popular and political virtue,” which is not true virtue and is practiced for the wrong motives (82A, 68B–69D). As in the *Symposium*, philosophical virtue is contrasted with it and compared to the state of the fully initiated (389).

Although none of the encomiasts treats a topic as Socrates will, it is Aristophanes who introduces this true virtue and justice (*ethics and laws*) in contrast to their mere appearance. Unlike Pausanias, who attempts to demonstrate that his self-serving definition of sexual relations can be justified by an examination of existing law codes, the comic poet argues that human happiness can only be attained through the disavowal of *aselgeia*, *akolasia*, and *asebeia*.¹⁹ If the reasons for affirming this belief are less philosophical and less conducive to a proper appreciation of *τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα* (211c5), this point only indicates that we are dealing with a speech of Aristophanes and not of Socrates.

Eryximachus not only discusses his own science of medicine but also treats the sciences of music, education, agriculture, astronomy, and religion. That he is dealing with fields of knowledge considered as *sciences* is made clear by his repetition of the word *ἐπιστήμη* (186c6, 187c5, 188b5). In Socrates’ speech the sciences are denoted by the same word (*e.g.* *ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος*, 210c7) as well as by *μαθήματα* (211c6), a term employed by no other speaker in the *Symposium*. The use of *ἐπιστήμη* is limited to Eryximachus and Socrates.

Agathon complains that all the previous speakers have addressed themselves to the consequences of desire, not to its actual nature (*οἷός ἐστιν*, 195A4).²⁰ Clearly the level (but not necessarily its treat-

¹⁹ Cf. Plochmann 13: “Aristophanes takes justice as the paramount virtue, treats it as a restraint, a holding-back of ambition to supersede the gods.”

²⁰ Cf. Penwill 152: “Agathon is the first of the encomiasts to praise love for what he is”; Isenberg 37: “The place of Agathon’s discourse in the order of the speeches is due only to the fact that he has raised the discussion from the level of Becoming to Being, not to the superior intricacy of his dialectic.” Isenberg arranges the seven speeches of the *Symposium* according to whether they deal with Being or Becoming, and whether their structure is “one-term,” “two-term,” or “three-term.” The first four speeches are wholly concerned with the realm of Becoming, with Pausanias and Eryximachus employing two-term dialectics (Ouranian and Pandemian Eros) and Phaedrus and

ment) is raised when the emphasis turns to essence. Agathon's discussion of the properties of desire begins with the premise that Eros is most beautiful (*κάλλιστον ὄντα*, 195A7). In other words, he introduces the *science of beauty* (in Socrates' speech: *τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα ἵνα γνῶ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἐστι καλόν*).²¹ To be sure, Agathon does not touch upon any of the complexities that will be raised by Socrates; the point is that Agathon, like all the previous speakers, does broach a subject that only Socrates will be able to treat properly.

Socrates' speech follows; and if we wish to grant him a rôle in his own speech, one can point out that he is the first to discuss the *Form of beauty*. After the transcendent heights of Socrates' discourse there must be a descent; consequently Alcibiades' speech strikes a lower level. Since the latter relates how he saw beyond Socrates' physical ugliness and observed as never before the philosopher's inner beauty, we may assign *beauty of soul* to him. Again, at this point we need not press for exact correspondence: when the philosophical hierarchy is recapitulated in 211B5–D1, beauty of soul is deleted: it may be coterminous with the other non-physical objects of desire.²² That Alcibiades' speech is, however, out of order may be indicated not only by his arrival after all the other speeches had been delivered, but also by his attempted demotion in the seating order when Agathon decides to sit by Socrates (223B1f).

In sum, then, the topics of Socrates' speech are first raised by the previous encomiasts in a definite order: procreation (topic in common), performance of noble deeds (Phaedrus), poetry and invention (topic in common), codification of laws (Pausanias), abstract physical beauty (topic in common), [abstract beauty of soul (Alcibiades),] ethics and justice (Aristophanes), sciences (Eryximachus), science of beauty (Agathon), [Form of beauty (Socrates)].²³ Excluding Alcibia-

Aristophanes exhibiting only one-term. Agathon employs a one-term dialectic of Being, Socrates three terms (Being, Intermediate [*~ daimon*], and Becoming), and Alcibiades two terms (Intermediate [Socrates] and Becoming [Alcibiades]).

²¹ 211C8–D1. I follow the text of K. Dover, *Plato. Symposium* (Cambridge 1980), although it is not required for my argument. For the manuscripts' *καί* Dover reads *ἵνα*.

²² A. J. Festugière, *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon* (Paris 1950) 165, merges abstract beauty of soul with ethics and justice. In discussing the philosophical hierarchy, he asserts that "on commence par la beauté sensible, on passe ensuite à la beauté des âmes, c'est à dire au plan moral, invisible, immatériel, puis à la beauté des sciences. . . ." On the other hand, beauty of soul may denote the entire philosophical hierarchy above beauty of body. Since Alcibiades describes Socrates' beauty of soul so skillfully, it is suitable for Alcibiades' speech to be given the position in this hierarchy that it in fact occupies.

²³ At the lower level of the hierarchy there is a perfect alternation between common topics and subjects particularly treated by one speaker. This arrangement, however, is

des, this order is identical to the seating plan: the speeches would have been given in this sequence if Aristophanes had not been afflicted with hiccups. Since this speaking order makes perfect sense, the question is why it was changed.

As a result of the transposition of speeches, the two poets, Aristophanes and Agathon, speak directly before Socrates, and it is these three who will continue to talk until dawn.²⁴ The connection between them is more crucial than that between Socrates and the first three encomiasts. For although Socrates rejects all the previous speeches (while appropriating material from each), he explicitly repudiates only these two: first he deflates the tragedian with the elenchus of his main argument, then he out-anachronizes the comic poet in discarding his viewpoint.²⁵ These refutations are not merely skirmishes in the battle between Poetry and Philosophy: we are faced with an odd situation, for at different points in the dialogue Socrates maintains both the views expressed by the poets.

At the outset Socrates informs Aristodemus that he, Socrates, has beautified himself in preparation for visiting a beautiful one (*παρὰ καλόν*, 174A9). He continues by citing (in a transposed word-order) the proverb that the good freely visit the good.²⁶ Aristodemus demurs and asserts that in his own case the wise must be sought by the unlearned. This repartee raises the very question with which the dialogue deals:²⁷ are the good and beautiful approached and desired by those who have already become good and beautiful or by those who wish to be so? At this point we find Socrates maintaining the same view that Agathon will later in the evening, when he argues that Eros embodies happiness, beauty, justice, moderation, courage, wisdom, and poetry. (The philosopher may be alluding to this fact when he admits that he once held the view expounded by Agathon [201E3–5].)

obviously composed less for symmetry than to avoid the need for three more speeches, which would have vitiated the present balance between the views of Socrates and those of the other speakers. What is important is that the main steps of the philosophical hierarchy be represented by speakers, as in fact they are. It should be noted that although there is a correspondence between Agathon's speech, for instance, and the science of beauty, this need not indicate that Agathon has mastered the philosophical hierarchy up to this point. It is safe to assume that none of the banqueters—with the exception of Socrates—has ventured onto the philosophical ladder.

²⁴ Hoffmann 44, Clay 243.

²⁵ 205D10–206A1, where Socrates avers that Diotima had dismissed Aristophanes' argument. For anachronism as a comic device, and the possibility that Plato is attempting to outdo the historical Aristophanes with this device, see K. J. Dover, "Aristophanes' Speech in Plato's *Symposium*," *JHS* 86 (1966) 45.

²⁶ See A. Allen, "Plato's Proverbial Perversion," *Hermes* 102 (1974) 505–07.

²⁷ Cf. Friedländer III 7f.

On the other hand, it is Aristophanes who first clearly enunciates the notion that one lacks what one desires, most concisely stated as τοῦ ὅλου οὖν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ διώξει ἔρως ὄνομα (192E10–193A1). Socrates chooses to take this statement and the myth behind it literally; but in his own speech he asserts not only that one lacks what one desires, but also that it is desire that unifies disparate entities (τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι, 202E6f). The ultimate object of desire is the Form, which makes everything whole (210A4–211B5). Hence Agathon argues that the desirer possesses the object of his desire, while Aristophanes asserts that the lover lacks it. None of the previous speakers had conceived of eros in terms of a lack or possession: Eryximachus, for instance, had spoken of eros as a harmony.

The dialectic of the speeches explores these two propositions (the desirer always lacks/possesses the object of his desire) and finds neither adequate.²⁸ As Alcibiades indicates, for instance, Socrates is blessed, beautiful, just, moderate, courageous, wise, and poetic like a Siren; in fact he possesses the qualities that Agathon had ascribed to Eros. On the other hand, no one is more willing than Socrates to admit that he lacks what he desires. This, indeed, is the plight of philosophers: they can come to possess what is most valued and desired, the good and the beautiful, but in their mortal state they fail to obtain their ultimate desire, the perpetual possession of goodness and beauty (206A11f). Since Eros can be perceived in terms of both a lack and an abundance, for maximum effect the speeches that contribute most to this dialectic should be clustered together. The poets introduce opposite viewpoints; next, Socrates presents the first mediation; finally, Alcibiades unwittingly places all three speeches into perspective when he speaks not of Eros the *daimon* but of Socrates, the human Eros. The cohesion of the dialectic, as it develops, would be impaired if Eryximachus' speech were to come between those of the poets.

In sum, then, there is an unreconciled tension between the two plans of organization: the ascending levels of human immortality (the correspondence between the arrangement of the material in Socrates' speech with that of the other speakers) and the dialectic of desire (the clustering of the speeches that deal with possession and desire). Lesser craftsmen might have sacrificed one to the other, like those artists who cover one version of a painting with another. Plato contrived to preserve both. With the reader placed in the position of observing the transposition of speeches, both orders are visible and

²⁸ This topic is explored in further detail in my article, "Paradoxes in Plato's *Symposium*," *Ramus* 14 (1985) 85–104.

can be interpreted where they belong. Although the way in which this point is being presented may seem to suggest it, I do not think that one need assume that Plato suddenly discovered that his two plans of organization were incompatible and consequently required some harmonizing device. If that were the case, the easiest solution would have been to reconstruct Eryximachus' speech on sciences in such a way as to introduce the first step of the dialectic. Instead, Plato has emphasized the two plans by interlocking them. The transposition occasioned by Aristophanes' hiccups draws the reader's attention to the order of encomia and raises the question whether there is an ascending sequence. The initial order—with Phaedrus' heroes and heroines, Pausanias' law codes, Aristophanes' discourse on the results of *ἀδικία* (193A2), Eryximachus' sciences, and Agathon's emphasis on the essential features of Eros—suggests the steps or method by which the philosopher and coveter of fame pursue the Form of excellence (*τὸ καλόν*). The revised order, on the other hand, brings together the three speeches essential to the dialectic, namely those that treat Eros as a lack or fullness. The episode of Aristophanes' hiccups and the resulting change in speaking order bind together the subject of Desire with its means.

This interpretation, then, requires that the actual hiccups be considered secondary to the rearrangement of the speeches. They cause and call attention to the change in order. This is not to say, however, that Plato makes little use of them. We are told that Aristophanes' malady is probably caused by overeating (*πλησμονῆς*), which provides Eryximachus with an opportunity not only to verbalize his medical knowledge, but to demonstrate it by producing an emptying by forced sneezing. The physician then proceeds to define the art of medicine, which turns out to be none other than the knowledge of the body's desires with regard to emptiness and fullness (186c5–7).²⁹ The theory is expounded after we have observed an instance of its practice. Ultimately, then, the episode of the hiccups might be considered a typical example of the way in which Plato illustrates dialogue with dramatic action.³⁰

²⁹ Cf. K. Dorter, "The Significance of the Speeches in Plato's *Symposium*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 2 (1969) 226, and Penwill 149. Hoffmann 43 takes the opposite approach. Citing Aristophanes (189A1–6), he argues that Eryximachus' practice of curing one disorder with another calls the theory into question. According to Hoffmann, the physician is only interested in physical results, but the poet is superior because he knows the heart. The implications of fullness and emptiness are discussed in the article mentioned *supra* n.28.

³⁰ The genesis of the hiccups episode is suggested by the name Eryximachus, "Belch-battler" (this interpretation goes back at least to W. S. Teuffel, cited by Bury xxix;

But the episode is not an isolated one, since it is connected with the seating arrangement as a basis for the original speaking order, and thus part of a complex of motifs to which Plato makes reference throughout the dialogue. We are told that Phaedrus, “the father of the discourse,” sat at the highest position (*πρῶτος κατάκειται*, 177D4), while initially Agathon held the last position (*τυγχάνειν γὰρ ἔσχατον κατακείμενον*, 175C6f). When Socrates arrives, however, he is asked by Agathon to take the ἔσχατος position, causing him to be the last encomiast of Eros. As the dialogue progresses, the full meaning of the word ἔσχατος is revealed: it can denote both ‘last’ and ‘highest’, and it becomes clear that Socrates’ speech is not only the last of the speeches originally planned but also treats the highest material on the most comprehensive plane. If the speakers introduce and in a sense represent essential steps in the dialectical hierarchy, it may at first seem strange that Alcibiades initially sits between Socrates and Agathon (213A7–B1) and that Socrates then asks Agathon to become ἔσχατος in position (222E4f). Nevertheless, to avoid having Socrates removed from the highest position in the arrangement, Plato introduces the revelers to disrupt the proceedings; as a result we are never told what immediately transpired. The seating arrangement at the end of the party, when Aristodemus has awakened from his nap, consists of Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates. Like the original encomiasts who had spoken from left to right (*ἐπὶ δεξιὰ*, 177D3), these three are drinking from left to right (*ἐπὶ δεξιὰ*, 223C5), and Socrates is again prevailing in his argument. Hence, Socrates remains ἔσχατος, both logistically and qualitatively.

It may, as we have noted, seem odd that Alcibiades is placed between Agathon and Socrates at the *ἔσχάτη κλίνη*; but as in the episode of the hiccups, when Aristophanes and Eryximachus trade speaking positions, there are several important effects gained: the humor and irony of the ‘seating’ motif is emphasized when we see Agathon and Alcibiades jockeying for position relative to Socrates, and again there may be more serious implications. While Alcibiades is sitting between Agathon and Socrates, the latter suggests that Aga-

Rosen 91 n.5 cites O. Apelt; Guthrie 382 n.2 provides no references). It is possible that Eryximachus himself was attractive to Plato as a dramatic character not only because he was a physician but also because (along with Phaedrus and Alcibiades) he was one of the suspected profaners of the Mysteries (J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy I: Thales to Plato* [London 1914] 190; Rosen 8; the evidence is based solely on Andoc. 1.35: the name does not appear on the Hermocopidae Stele, and F. Kudlein, *KIPauly* 2 [1967] 368f s.v., considers Eryximachus an invented figure). The profaners are set in contrast to the “lovers” who experience *τὰ τέληα καὶ ἐποπτικά* of philosophy (210A1).

thon move to the center of the couch, which would place Socrates in his favorite position of being the go-between, like Eros. Alcibiades responds by suggesting that Agathon take the central position. Thus Alcibiades, Socrates' eulogist, would keep Socrates εἰσχατος. These ideas are no sooner hinted at than abandoned, as Plato quickly introduces the band of revelers.³¹

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