# Symposium

PLATO

c. 428–348 BC

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Συμπόσιον

*Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited*



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*Symposium* · Plato (c. 428–348 BC)

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# INTRODUCTION

At a dinner party in 416 BC, celebrating the playwright Agathon's first victory, the guests decide to skip the heavy drinking and each give a speech in praise of Love.

What follows is Plato at his most brilliant and funniest: Aristophanes' tale of the round people split in two, Socrates' account of what the priestess Diotima taught him about the ladder of love, and a drunk Alcibiades crashing the party to tell the truth about Socrates.

# Symposium

*Athens. Apollodorus retells a story he heard from Aristodemus.*
*Guests at Agathon's dinner give speeches praising Love, and Alcibiades praises Socrates.*

APOLLODORUS 172a I think I'm not unprepared for what you're asking about. As it happens, the day before yesterday I was going up to town from my home in Phalerum, when one of my acquaintances caught sight of me from behind and called to me from a distance, making a joke of the summons as he did: "Hey, you from Phalerum! You there, Apollodorus! Won't you wait?" So I stopped and waited. And he said, "Apollodorus, I was looking for you just recently, as a matter of fact. I wanted to hear all about the party at Agathon's 172b with Socrates and Alcibiades and the others who were at the dinner that time—what the speeches about love were. Someone else was telling me about it, who'd heard it from Phoenix, son of Philip, and he said you knew too. But he couldn't tell me anything clearly. So you tell me. You're the one with the best right to report your friend's words.[1] But first tell me," he said, "were you at this party yourself, or not?" And I said, "It really does seem your informant told you nothing 172c clearly, if you think the party you're asking about happened so recently that I could have been there too." "I certainly did think so," he said. "How could that be, Glaucon?" I said. "Don't you know that Agathon hasn't lived here for many years? And it isn't yet three years since I started spending my

1 Phalerum was a harbor village on the coast a few miles from the city of Athens.

time with Socrates and made it my business to know every day whatever he says or does.

173a "Before that I was running around wherever chance took me, thinking I was accomplishing something, when I was more miserable than anyone—no less than you are now, thinking you should do anything rather than philosophy." And he said, "Don't mock me. Just tell me when this party took place." And I said, "When we were still children, when Agathon won with his first tragedy—the day after he and his chorus held the sacrifice for the victory." "Then it really was a long time ago, it seems," he said. "But who told you about it? Socrates himself?" 173b "No, by Zeus," I said, "the same man who told Phoenix. It was Aristodemus, from Cydathenaeum—a small man, always barefoot. He'd been at the party, since he was one of Socrates' most devoted lovers in those days, I think.[2] Still, I've also asked Socrates about some of the things I heard from Aristodemus, and he agreed they were as Aristodemus told them." "Well then," he said, "why not tell me? The road into town is just the thing for talking and listening as we go."

So as we walked along we talked it all over, 173c and that's why, as I said at the start, I'm not unprepared. If I have to tell it to you as well, then that's what I must do. For my part, whenever I'm having philosophical conversations myself or listening to others have them, quite apart from thinking I'm getting some benefit, I enjoy it tremendously. But when it's any other kind—especially your kind, the talk of rich men and moneymakers—I'm annoyed myself, and I pity you, my friends, because you think you're accomplishing something 173d when you're accomplishing nothing. And perhaps you, for your part, think I'm the unfortunate one, and I suppose you think truly. But I don't suppose it about you—I know it for certain.

FRIEND You're always the same, Apollodorus. You're always running down yourself and everyone else, and you seem to me to think simply everyone is miserable except Socrates—starting

2 Agathon's first victory came at the Lenaea, a dramatic festival, in 416 BC.

with yourself. Where you ever got that nickname, "the soft one," I really don't know. In the way you talk you're always like this: savage with yourself and everyone else except Socrates.

APOLLODORUS 173e My dear friend, so it's obvious, is it, that thinking like this about myself and about you means I'm mad and out of my mind?

FRIEND It isn't worth quarreling about that now, Apollodorus. Just don't refuse what we asked you: tell us what the speeches were.

APOLLODORUS Well, they went something like this—no, rather, 174a I'll try to tell it to you from the beginning, the way Aristodemus told it.

### ARRIVING AT AGATHON'S

*Socrates brings Aristodemus to Agathon's dinner, and the guests agree to give speeches praising Love.*

APOLLODORUS He said Socrates met him freshly bathed and wearing fancy sandals, which he seldom did, and he asked him where he was going, all spruced up like that.

And Socrates said, "To dinner at Agathon's. I avoided him yesterday at the victory celebration, because I was afraid of the crowd, but I agreed to come today. So that's why I've smartened myself up: to go beautiful to a beautiful man's house. But what about you?" he said. "How 174b would you feel about coming to dinner uninvited?"

And I said, he told me, "Whatever you say."

"Come along, then," he said, "so we can ruin the proverb by changing it: 'Good men go uninvited to Agathon's feasts.' Homer, in fact, seems to have done worse than ruin this proverb: he outraged it. He made Agamemnon an exceptionally good man 174c at war, and Menelaus 'a feeble spearman'; and yet when Agamemnon was offering a sacrifice and giving a feast, he had Menelaus

come uninvited to the banquet—the worse man to the feast of the better."[3]

When he heard this, Aristodemus said, he replied, "Perhaps I too will turn out to be, not what you say, Socrates, but as Homer has it: a nobody going uninvited to a wise man's feast. So if you bring me, think about what defense you'll make. I'm not going to admit I've come uninvited, 174d only that you invited me."

"'When two go together along the way,'" he said, "we'll work out what to say before we get there. Come on, let's go."[4]

They talked something like this, he said, as they went. Then Socrates, somehow absorbed in his own thoughts, fell behind on the road, and when Aristodemus waited for him he told him to go on ahead. When he reached Agathon's house 174e he found the door open, and there, he said, something funny happened to him. A slave from inside met him straight away and led him to where the others were reclining, and he found them just about to start dinner. And as soon as Agathon saw him he said, "Aristodemus! You've come at just the right time to dine with us. If you came for some other reason, put it off till later. I was actually looking for you yesterday to invite you, and couldn't find you. But how come you're not bringing us Socrates?"

And I turned around, he said, and saw Socrates wasn't following anywhere. So I said I had come with Socrates myself—he'd invited me here to dinner.

"Good for you," Agathon said. "But where is he?"

175a "He was coming in right behind me just now. I'm wondering myself where he can be."

"Boy," Agathon said, "go and look, won't you, and bring Socrates in? And you, Aristodemus," he said, "take a place next to Eryximachus."

And the slave washed him, he said, so that he could recline, and another of the slaves came with the news: "Your Socrates

3 The proverb ran "Good men go uninvited to the feasts of good men"; "of good men" (agathōn) sounds like Agathon's name.

4 Adapted from Homer's *Iliad*, where Diomedes says that when two go together, one sees what's best before the other.

has gone off and is standing in the neighbors' porch, and when I call him he won't come in."

"That's odd," Agathon said. "Go and call him, then, and don't let him get away." 175b

And Aristodemus said he told them, "No, don't—leave him alone. It's a habit of his. Every so often he goes off and stands still wherever he happens to be. He'll be here soon, I think. So don't disturb him; leave him alone."

"Well, if that's what you think, that's what we must do," Agathon said. "But serve the rest of us, boys. Put out whatever you like, the way you always do when there's nobody standing over you—which I've never done. So today, imagine that I've been invited to dinner by you, and these 175c others too, and look after us, so that we can praise you."

After that, he said, they started dinner, but Socrates didn't come in. Agathon kept telling them to send for Socrates, but Aristodemus wouldn't let him. Then he came—he hadn't spent as long as he usually did—when they were about halfway through dinner. Agathon, who happened to be reclining alone on the last couch, said, "Here, Socrates, lie down next to me, so that by touching you I can enjoy 175d the piece of wisdom that came to you in the porch. Obviously you found it and have it; you wouldn't have stopped otherwise."

And Socrates sat down and said, "It would be a fine thing, Agathon, if wisdom were the sort of thing that flowed from the fuller of us into the emptier when we touch each other, the way water in cups flows along a strand of wool from the fuller into the emptier. If wisdom too 175e is like that, I set a high value on my place beside you: I expect to be filled with a great deal of beautiful wisdom from you. Mine would be a paltry sort of thing, or even questionable, like a dream; yours is brilliant and has plenty of room to grow—yours that shone out so brightly from you while you're still young, and was on display the other day before more than thirty thousand Greeks as witnesses."

"You're outrageous, Socrates," said Agathon. "You and I will take this case about wisdom to court a little later, with Dionysus as our judge. For now, turn to your dinner first."[5]

176a After this, he said, when Socrates had taken his place and dined, along with the others, they poured libations, sang a hymn to the god, and did all the other customary things, and then turned to drinking. Then Pausanias, he said, opened the conversation roughly like this: "Well, gentlemen," he said, "what's the easiest way for us to drink? I'll tell you that I'm really in a bad way from yesterday's drinking and need a bit of a rest—and I think most of you do too, since you were there yesterday. So consider 176b how we might drink as easily as possible."

Then Aristophanes said, "You're quite right, Pausanias, that we should arrange for some relief from the drinking by any means possible. I'm one of the ones who got soaked yesterday myself."

Hearing them, he said, Eryximachus, son of Acumenus, said, "You're absolutely right. And there's one more of you I'd like to hear from: how strong does Agathon feel for drinking?"

"Not strong at all," Agathon said. "I'm not up to it either." 176c

"It would be a stroke of luck for us, it seems," said Eryximachus, "for me and Aristodemus and Phaedrus and the others here, if you, the ablest drinkers, have given up now—we're never able to. I leave Socrates out of the reckoning: he can do either, so he'll be content whichever we do. So since it seems to me that no one here is eager to drink a lot of wine, perhaps I'd be less tiresome if I told you the truth about what drunkenness is. This much, I think, has become 176d quite clear to me from medicine: drunkenness is bad for people. I wouldn't willingly drink too much myself, nor advise anyone else to, especially when he still has a hangover from the day before."

"Well," said Phaedrus of Myrrhinus, breaking in, "I always do what you say, especially when you're talking about medicine—and so will the rest, if they're sensible." 176e Hearing this, they all

5 Dionysus was the god of wine and also of the theater, in whose festival Agathon had just won.

agreed not to make this gathering a drunken one, but to drink only as much as they enjoyed.

"Well then," said Eryximachus, "since that's settled—each person drinks as much as he wants, and nobody is forced—my next proposal is that we let the flute-girl who just came in go, and play for herself, or for the women inside if she likes, while we spend today in each other's company in conversation. And if you like, I'm ready to propose what sort of conversation."[6]

177a They all said they'd like that and urged him to make his proposal. So Eryximachus said: My speech starts as in Euripides' *Melanippe*: "not mine the tale," but Phaedrus' here, which I'm about to tell. Phaedrus keeps complaining to me: "Isn't it awful, Eryximachus," he says, "that other gods have hymns and paeans composed for them by the poets, but for Love, so ancient and so great a god, not a single one of all the poets 177b there have been has ever composed any song of praise?[7] And if you care to look at our fine sophists, they write prose eulogies of Heracles and others, as the excellent Prodicus does. That's less surprising; but I once came across a book by a wise man in which salt got a marvelous eulogy for its usefulness, and you could see plenty of other such 177c things praised. So to think that people take such pains over things like that, and yet no human being has ever, to this day, dared to hymn Love as he deserves! That's how neglected so great a god has been." I think Phaedrus has a point. So I'd like to make him my contribution and do him a favor, and at the same time I think it's fitting on this occasion for those of us here to honor the god.[8] So if 177d you agree too, conversation would give us plenty to occupy us. I think each of us should give a speech in praise of Love, going around from left to right, as beautiful as he can make it, and Phaedrus should start first, since he's in the first place and is also the father of the subject.

"No one will vote against you, Eryximachus," said Socrates. "I could hardly say no, since I claim to understand nothing but the

6 The aulos, a double reed pipe usually called a "flute" in English, was standard entertainment at drinking parties, often played by hired women.

7 In Euripides' lost play the line runs, "Not mine the tale, but my mother's."

things of love; nor could Agathon and 177e Pausanias, nor Aristophanes, whose whole life is spent on Dionysus and Aphrodite, nor anyone else I see here. Of course, it isn't fair on those of us lying at the end; but if the ones before us speak well enough and beautifully, that will do for us. So good luck to Phaedrus: let him start, and praise Love."

At that the others all agreed and 178a urged the same as Socrates. Now, Aristodemus didn't remember everything each one said, and I in turn don't remember everything he told me. But I'll tell you the parts he remembered best, and the speeches of those I thought worth remembering, one by one.

### PHAEDRUS: LOVE THE OLDEST GOD

*Phaedrus praises Love as the oldest god, who inspires lovers to courage and self-sacrifice.*

APOLLODORUS First, as I say, he said that Phaedrus began from roughly this point: that Love is a great god, and marvelous among humans and gods in many ways, not least in his origin. Being among the very oldest 178b is an honor for the god, he said, and here is the evidence: Love has no parents, and none are mentioned by anyone, whether ordinary person or poet. Hesiod says that first Chaos came into being—"and then broad-breasted Earth, a secure seat for all forever, and Love." And Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod that after Chaos these two came into being, Earth and Love. And Parmenides says of his birth, "First of all the gods she devised Love." 178c So Love is agreed on many sides to be among the very oldest.[9] And being the oldest, he is the cause of our greatest goods. I, for one, can't say what greater good there is for a young man from the start than a good lover, or for a lover than a beloved. The thing that ought to guide people through their whole lives, if they're going to live well—

8 Prodicus of Ceos was a sophist famous for a fable about the choice of Heracles between Vice and Virtue.

9 Acusilaus of Argos wrote early prose genealogies of the gods; Parmenides was a philosopher who wrote in verse.

neither kinship, nor honors, nor wealth, nor anything else [178d] can instill it so well as love. What do I mean by this? Shame at what's shameful, and pride in what's fine. Without these neither a city nor an individual can accomplish great and fine deeds. So I say that a man in love, if he were caught doing something shameful, or submitting to shameful treatment from someone and not defending himself out of cowardice, would not be so pained at being seen by his father, or his friends, or anyone [178e] else as by his beloved. We see the same thing in the beloved: he is especially ashamed before his lovers when he's seen doing something shameful. So if there were some way for a city or an army to be made up of lovers and their beloveds, there's no way they could govern their city better than by holding back from everything shameful and competing for honor before [179a] one another; and fighting side by side, men like that, few as they were, would defeat practically all mankind.

A man in love would surely be less willing to be seen by his beloved leaving his post or throwing away his weapons than by anyone else in the world, and would choose to die many times over first. And as for abandoning his beloved, or not helping him when he's in danger—no one is so worthless that Love himself couldn't fill him with the god and inspire him to excellence, so that he's the equal of the man who is best by nature. [179b] Quite simply, what Homer says—that the god "breathed might" into some of the heroes—Love supplies to lovers, from himself.

What's more, only lovers are willing to die for someone else—not only men, but women too. Pelias' daughter Alcestis gives the Greeks sufficient proof of this claim. She alone was willing to die for her husband, though he had a father [179c] and mother; and she so far surpassed them in affection, because of her love, that she showed them up as strangers to their son, related in name only. And when she did this deed, it seemed so fine a deed, not only to humans but to the gods as well, that—though many have done many fine deeds, and the gods have given only a handful the privilege of letting their souls come back up from Hades—they let hers come back, in admiration [179d] of her deed. That's how

much the gods too honor devotion and excellence in love.[10] But Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent back from Hades empty-handed. They showed him a phantom of the wife he'd come for, but didn't give him the woman herself, because he seemed soft—he was a singer to the lyre, after all—and didn't dare to die for love like Alcestis, but contrived a way to get into Hades alive. So for that they punished him, and made his death come at the hands of women. 179e It was quite different with Achilles, son of Thetis, whom they honored and sent to the Isles of the Blessed. He had learned from his mother that he would die if he killed Hector, but if he didn't, he would go home and end his life an old man. Yet he dared to choose to help his lover Patroclus and 180a avenge him—not only to die for him, but to die after him, when he was already dead. That's why the gods were so delighted with him and honored him above all others: because he valued his lover so highly.[11]

Aeschylus talks nonsense when he claims that Achilles was Patroclus' lover. Achilles was more beautiful not only than Patroclus but than all the heroes, and still beardless, and besides, much younger, as Homer says. The truth is that while the gods do especially honor this excellence in 180b love, they marvel at it, admire it and reward it more when the beloved cherishes the lover than when the lover cherishes his beloved. A lover is a more divine thing than a beloved, because he has a god in him. That's why they honored Achilles more than Alcestis, sending him to the Isles of the Blessed.[12]

So that is my claim: Love is the oldest of the gods, the most honored, and the most powerful in helping human beings gain excellence and happiness, both in life and after death. 180c

10 Alcestis died in place of her husband Admetus, as told in Euripides' *Alcestis*.
11 Orpheus was said to have been torn apart by Thracian women; the Isles of the Blessed were a paradise at the edge of the world for favored heroes.
12 Aeschylus' lost play *Myrmidons* portrayed Achilles as Patroclus' lover.

## PAUSANIAS: TWO KINDS OF LOVE

*Pausanias distinguishes Heavenly from Common Love and describes Athenian customs about lovers.*

APOLLODORUS Phaedrus gave a speech something like that, he said, and after Phaedrus there were some others he didn't remember very well. He passed over them and told me Pausanias' speech. Pausanias said: I don't think the subject has been put to us properly, Phaedrus—this bare instruction to praise Love. If Love were one, that would be fine; but in fact he isn't one. And since he isn't one, it's more correct to state first 180d which one we're to praise. So I'll try to set this right: first to specify the Love we're to praise, and then to praise him in a manner worthy of the god. We all know there's no Aphrodite without Love. Now if there were one Aphrodite, there would be one Love; but since there are in fact two, there must be two Loves as well. And how could there not be two goddesses? One, surely, is the elder, with no mother, the daughter of Uranus—Heaven—and we call her Heavenly. The other is younger, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, 180e and we call her Common. So it follows that the Love who works with the one is rightly called Common, and the other Heavenly. Of course we should praise all gods; but we must try to say what has fallen to each of these two. For every action is like this: done by itself, in itself, it is neither fine nor shameful.[13]

181a Take what we're doing now—drinking, singing, conversing. None of these is fine in itself; it turns out one way or the other in the doing, depending on how it's done. Done finely and correctly, it becomes fine; done incorrectly, shameful. It's the same with loving: not every Love is fine and deserves praise, only the one that moves us to love finely.

The Love that belongs to Common Aphrodite is truly common 181b and does whatever it happens to do. This is the love that the

13 "Heavenly" (Ourania) and "Common" (Pandemos, "of all the people") were both real cult titles of Aphrodite.

lower sort of people feel. People like this, first, love women no less than boys; second, when they love, they love bodies rather than souls; and third, they love the most senseless partners they can find, since they look only to getting what they want and don't care whether it's done finely or not. So it turns out that they do whatever comes their way, good and its opposite alike. For this love comes from the goddess who is far younger 181c than the other, and who in her birth had a share of both female and male. But the Love of Heavenly Aphrodite comes, first, from a goddess who has no share of the female, only of the male—and this is the love of boys—and second, from the older goddess, who has no part in wantonness. That is why those inspired by this love turn to the male, cherishing what is by nature stronger and has more intelligence. And even within the love of boys itself you can recognize those who are driven purely 181d by this love. They don't fall in love with boys until the boys begin to show some intelligence, and that happens around the time the beard starts to grow. Those who begin to love at that point are prepared, I think, to stay with the beloved their whole life and live their lives in common—not to trick him, catching him young and foolish, and then laugh at him and run off after someone else. There ought to be a law, too, against loving 181e boys, so that a great deal of effort isn't squandered on an uncertain outcome. With boys, it's uncertain where they'll end up in the end, in vice or excellence of soul and body. Good men lay down this law for themselves willingly, but these common lovers ought to be compelled to observe it too, just as we compel them, as far as 182a we can, not to love freeborn women.

These are the men who have given the practice its bad name, so that some people go so far as to say it's shameful to grant favors to lovers. They say it with an eye on these men, seeing their bad timing and their injustice—since surely no act whatever, done in an orderly and lawful way, could justly bring blame.

Now the custom about love is easy to understand in other cities, since it is laid down in simple terms; but here 182b and in

Sparta it is complicated. In Elis and Boeotia, and wherever people aren't skilled at speaking, the law simply says that it's fine to grant favors to lovers, and no one, young or old, would call it shameful—so that they can spare themselves the trouble, I suppose, of trying to win over the young with speeches, since they're no good at speaking. But in Ionia and many other places —wherever people live under non-Greek rule—it's held to be shameful. Among non-Greeks, because of their tyrannies, this is shameful, and so are 182c philosophy and the love of athletics. It isn't in the rulers' interest, I suppose, for their subjects to develop great ambitions, or strong friendships and associations, which love, more than anything else, tends to produce. The tyrants here learned this from experience: the love of Aristogeiton and the friendship of Harmodius, once it grew firm, brought their rule to an end. So wherever it has been laid down that it is shameful 182d to grant favors to lovers, that rests on the badness of those who laid it down—the greed of the rulers and the cowardice of the ruled; and wherever it has been held to be simply fine, that's owing to the laziness of soul of those who laid it down. Here, though, the law is much finer than either of these, and, as I said, not easy to understand.[14]

Consider: it's said to be finer to love openly than in secret, and especially to love the noblest and best, even if they're less good-looking than others. And again, the encouragement everyone gives a lover is remarkable—not as if he were doing something shameful. If he makes his conquest, it's thought fine, 182e and if he fails, shameful. And in his efforts to make the conquest, the law has given the lover license to do astonishing things and be praised for them—things which, if anyone dared to do them in pursuit of anything else, 183a wanting to achieve anything but this, would earn him the harshest reproaches philosophy can give. For suppose he wanted to get money from someone, or to hold office, or to gain some other kind of power, and was willing to do what lovers do for their beloveds—plead-

14 Harmodius and his lover Aristogeiton killed Hipparchus, brother of the Athenian tyrant Hippias, in 514 BC; Athens honored them as the tyrant-slayers.

ing and begging in their entreaties, swearing oaths, sleeping on doorsteps, willing to endure a slavery that not even a slave would put up with—he'd be stopped from acting like this by friends and enemies alike, [183b] the enemies reproaching him for flattery and servility, the friends admonishing him and feeling ashamed on his behalf. But when a lover does all these things, it lends him charm, and the law grants him leave to do them without reproach, as though he were accomplishing something altogether fine. And what is most astonishing, as most people say, is that only a lover gets forgiveness from the gods when he swears an oath and breaks it—an oath sworn in love, they say, is no oath at all. So [183c] gods and men alike have given the lover complete license, as our law here says. On these grounds, then, one might think that in this city both loving and befriending lovers are held to be altogether fine. But then fathers put attendants in charge of the boys who are loved and won't let them talk with their lovers, and the attendant has orders to that effect; the boy's age-mates and companions taunt him if they see anything of the kind going on; and the [183d] older people don't stop the taunters or scold them for speaking wrongly. Looking at all this, one might think, on the contrary, that such conduct is held to be utterly shameful here. But the truth, I think, is this. It isn't a simple matter. As was said at the start, it is neither fine nor shameful itself by itself: done finely, it is fine; done shamefully, shameful. It is shameful to grant favors to a bad man in a bad way, and fine to grant them to a good man in a fine way.[15] And the bad man is that common lover, [183e] who loves the body rather than the soul. He isn't constant, either, since what he loves isn't constant. As soon as the bloom of the body he loved begins to fade, he "flies off and is gone," putting all his speeches and promises to shame. But the lover of a good character remains for life, since he has been fused with something constant.[16]

15 An attendant (*paidagōgos*) was a household slave who escorted a boy to school and around town and watched over his conduct.

16 The quoted phrase comes from Homer's *Iliad*, where a deceptive dream departs from Agamemnon.

Our law aims to test these lovers [184a] well and truly, so that the beloved grants favors to the one kind and escapes the other. That's why it urges lovers to pursue and beloveds to flee, staging a contest and testing which kind the lover belongs to and which kind the beloved. For this reason, first, it is considered shameful to be caught quickly, so that time may pass, which seems to be a good test of most things; and second, it is shameful to be caught by money or political power, [184b] whether the boy cowers under ill-treatment and fails to hold out, or fails to disdain benefits in the form of money or political advancement. None of these seems firm or lasting, quite apart from the fact that no noble friendship ever grows from them. So our law leaves just one path, if a beloved is going to grant favors to a lover in a fine way. We have a law that, just as it was not flattery or a matter for reproach for lovers to be willing to be slaves [184c] to their beloveds in any way at all, so there is one other kind of voluntary slavery, and only one, that remains free of reproach: slavery for the sake of excellence. It's our accepted view that if someone is willing to serve another because he believes that through him he'll become better, whether in some kind of wisdom or in any other part of excellence, this voluntary slavery, too, is neither shameful nor flattery. So these two laws must be combined into one—the law about the love of boys and [184d] the law about philosophy and excellence in general—if it is to turn out fine for a beloved to grant favors to a lover. When lover and beloved come together, each with his own law—the lover holding that he'd be right to do any service at all for a beloved who grants him favors, the beloved that he'd be right, in turn, to render any service at all to the one who is making him wise and good; the one able to contribute to understanding and [184e] excellence in general, the other needing to acquire education and wisdom in general—then, when these laws coincide, there and only there does it come about that it is fine for a beloved to grant favors to a lover, and nowhere else. In this case even being deceived is no disgrace; in every other case it brings disgrace whether one is deceived or not.

Suppose someone 185a grants favors to a lover for the sake of wealth, believing him rich, and is deceived and gets no money because the lover turns out to be poor: that's no less shameful. Such a person seems to have revealed what he himself is like—that he'd do any service for anyone for money—and that isn't fine. By the same reasoning, suppose someone grants favors to a lover believing him good, and expecting to become better himself through the lover's friendship, and is deceived, the lover turning out to be bad 185b and without excellence: the deception is fine all the same. He too seems to have shown what he himself is like—that for the sake of excellence and becoming better he'd be eager to do anything for anyone—and that, in turn, is the finest thing of all. So it is altogether fine, in every way, to grant favors for the sake of excellence. This is the love that belongs to the Heavenly goddess; it is heavenly itself, and of great value to the city and to individuals, since it compels both the lover 185c himself and the beloved to take great care over excellence. All the other loves belong to the other goddess, the Common one. That, Phaedrus, he said, is my contribution on Love, as well as I can manage on the spur of the moment.

When Pausanias had paused—the experts are teaching me to talk in these matching sounds—Aristodemus said that it was Aristophanes' turn to speak, but he happened to have been seized by hiccups, whether from overeating or something else, and couldn't speak. 185d So he said to the doctor Eryximachus, who was lying on the couch just below him, "Eryximachus, it's only fair that you either stop my hiccups or speak in my place until I've stopped." And Eryximachus said, "I'll do both. I'll speak in your turn, and you, once you've stopped, can speak in mine. While I'm speaking, see whether the hiccups will stop if you hold your breath for a long time. If not, gargle 185e with water.[17] And if they're really stubborn, take something you can tickle your nose with and sneeze. Do that once or twice and

17 The Greek *Pausaniou pausamenou* is a jingle mocking the balanced sound effects taught by fashionable teachers of rhetoric.

they'll stop, however stubborn they are." "Go ahead and start speaking," said Aristophanes. "I'll do all that."

### ERYXIMACHUS: LOVE THROUGHOUT NATURE

*The doctor Eryximachus argues that Love governs harmony in bodies, music and the whole of nature.*

APOLLODORUS Then Eryximachus said: Well, since Pausanias made a fine start on his speech but didn't [186a] bring it to an adequate finish, I think I must try to put an ending to the argument. His division of Love into two kinds seems to me a fine one. But Love is found not only in human souls, directed toward beautiful people, but also directed toward many other things and in other things—in the bodies of all animals, in the plants that grow in the earth, and, one might say, in everything that exists. This I think I have observed from medicine, our [186b] art: how great and wonderful the god is, and how he extends to everything, in human and divine affairs alike. I'll begin with medicine, so as to give pride of place to my art. The nature of bodies has this double Love. The healthy and the diseased in the body are admittedly different and unlike, and what is unlike desires and loves unlike things. So the love present in the healthy is one thing, and the love present in the diseased another. Now just as Pausanias was saying a moment ago that it is fine to grant favors to good people, [186c] and shameful to grant them to the licentious, so too in bodies themselves it is fine, and necessary, to gratify the good and healthy elements of each body —and this is what we call medicine—whereas it is shameful to gratify the bad and diseased elements, and one must deny them, if one is to be a true expert. For medicine, to put it in a nutshell, is the knowledge of the body's loves with respect to filling and emptying. The one who can diagnose in these the [186d] fine and the shameful love is the most accomplished physician. And the one who can bring about a change, so that the body acquires one love in place of the other, and who knows how to instill love where it is absent but ought to be present, and to remove it

where it is present, would be a good practitioner. He must be able to make the most hostile elements in the body friends, and get them to love one another. The most hostile are the most opposite: cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and wet, 186e and everything of that kind. It was by knowing how to instill love and concord in these that our ancestor Asclepius—as the poets here tell us, and I believe them—founded our art.[18]

So all of medicine, as I say, is steered by this god, 187a and likewise athletic training and farming. And it's obvious to anyone who pays the slightest attention that music is in the same case as these—which is perhaps what Heraclitus means to say, though he doesn't express it well. He says that the one, "in differing from itself, agrees with itself," "like the harmony of a bow and a lyre." But it's quite absurd to say that a harmony differs, or that it consists of things that are still differing. Perhaps what he meant was that harmony was produced by the art of music out of high and low notes that differed 187b earlier and later came to agree.[19] Surely there couldn't be a harmony made of high and low while they're still differing. Harmony is consonance, and consonance is a kind of agreement—and agreement between things that differ is impossible as long as they differ; and again, what differs and doesn't agree can't be harmonized. In the same way rhythm too comes from fast and 187c slow, which differed earlier and later came to agree. In all these cases it is music that instills the agreement here, as medicine did there, by producing love and concord between them. So music, in its turn, is the knowledge of love's workings in the field of harmony and rhythm. In the actual construction of a harmony or a rhythm it's not at all hard to discern love's workings, and the double love isn't present there yet. But when one has to put 187d rhythm and harmony to use on human beings—whether by composing, which people call song-making, or by the correct use of songs

18 Asclepius, god of healing, was claimed by physicians as their ancestor; "the poets here" are Agathon and Aristophanes.
19 Heraclitus of Ephesus (around 500 BC) was a philosopher known for riddling sayings about the unity of opposites.

and meters already composed, which has been called education —then it becomes difficult, and a good practitioner is needed. For the same argument comes round again: orderly people, and those not yet orderly so that they may become more so, must be gratified, and their love must be preserved. This is the fine love, the heavenly one, the Love that belongs to the Heavenly 187e Muse. The common love is Polymnia's, and one must apply it with caution to whomever one applies it, so as to reap its pleasure without instilling any licentiousness—just as in our art it is a major task to handle properly the appetites for fine cooking, so that people can reap the pleasure without falling ill.[20]

So in music, in medicine, and in every other sphere, human and divine, we must keep watch, as far as we can, on each of the two loves; for both are 188a present. Even the ordering of the seasons of the year is full of both. When the things I was just speaking of—the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet—meet with the orderly love toward one another, and take on a harmony and a moderate blend, they come bringing good harvests and health to human beings and to the other animals and to plants, and do no harm. But when the Love that goes with wantonness gains the upper hand in the seasons of the year, he destroys a great deal and does great harm. 188b Plagues tend to arise from such conditions, and many other diseases of various kinds among animals and plants. Frosts and hailstorms and blights, too, come from the overreaching and disorder of such loves toward one another; and the knowledge of these, concerning the movements of the stars and the seasons of the year, is called astronomy. Furthermore, all sacrifices and everything that divination presides over—that is, the communion between gods 188c and human beings—are concerned with nothing other than the protection and healing of Love. For all impiety tends to arise when someone fails to gratify the orderly Love, and to honor him and give him precedence in every action, but does all this for the other Love instead—whether in relation to parents, living

20 Urania ("Heavenly") and Polymnia ("Many Hymns") are two of the nine Muses; Eryximachus pairs them with the two Aphrodites.

or dead, or in relation to the gods. Divination is charged with watching over these loves and treating them; and divination, in turn, 188d is the craftsman of friendship between gods and human beings, because it knows which of the loves among human beings bear on what is right and pious.

So great and manifold, or rather all-embracing, is the power that Love as a whole possesses, taken all together. But the Love that is directed toward good things and is fulfilled with moderation and justice, among us and among the gods—he has the greatest power, and provides us with all happiness, enabling us to associate with one another and to be friends even with the gods, who are stronger than we are. Perhaps 188e I too am leaving out a great deal in praising Love, though certainly not on purpose. But if I've left anything out, Aristophanes, it's your job to fill the gap; or if you have in mind some other way of praising the god, go ahead and praise him, since your hiccups have stopped.

### ARISTOPHANES: THE SPLIT PEOPLE

*Aristophanes tells how Zeus split the first round humans, so that love is the search for one's other half.*

APOLLODORUS 189a So Aristophanes, he said, took over and said, "They did stop—though not before I applied a sneeze to them. It makes me wonder whether the orderly element in the body desires the sort of noises and ticklings that a sneeze involves; they stopped at once as soon as I applied the sneeze."

And Eryximachus said, "My good Aristophanes, watch what you're doing. You're clowning just when you're about to speak, and you're forcing me to stand guard over 189b your speech, in case you say something funny, when you could have spoken in peace."

Aristophanes laughed and said, "You're right, Eryximachus; let what I've said be unsaid. But don't stand guard over me. What I'm afraid of in what I'm about to say isn't that I'll say something

funny—that would be a gain, and native to our Muse—but that I'll say something ridiculous."

"You think you can take your shot, Aristophanes," he said, "and get away with it? Pay attention, and speak as someone who will be held to account. [189c] Still, if I see fit, perhaps I'll let you off."

Well, Eryximachus, said Aristophanes, I do intend to speak in a different way from you and Pausanias. It seems to me that human beings have entirely failed to perceive the power of Love. If they did perceive it, they'd have built him the greatest temples and altars and would offer him the greatest sacrifices—not as things are now, when none of this is done for him, though it ought to be done more than anything. For of all the gods he is the most loving toward human beings: [189d] he is our helper, and the physician for those ills whose healing would bring the greatest happiness to the human race. So I'll try to explain his power to you, and you will teach everyone else. But first you must learn about human nature and what has happened to it. Long ago our nature wasn't the same as it is now, but different. First of all, there were three kinds of human beings, not two as there are now, male and female. [189e] There was a third kind as well, which combined the two, and whose name survives today though the thing itself has vanished. There was then a single androgynous kind, combining male and female in both form and name; but now it no longer exists, except as a name used as an insult.[21]

Next, each human being's shape was a complete round, with back and sides forming a circle. It had four hands, and as many legs as hands, and two faces [190a] on a circular neck, exactly alike; and one head for the two faces, which looked in opposite directions; and four ears, and two sets of genitals, and everything else as you might imagine from this. It walked upright, as we do now, in whichever direction it wanted; and whenever it set off to run fast, it was like tumblers who turn cartwheels, swinging their legs round to the upright: propping themselves on their limbs,

21 In Plato's Athens, *androgynos* ("man-woman") survived mainly as an insult.

which were eight in those days, they went rolling rapidly round and round. The reason there were three kinds, 190b and of this sort, was that the male was originally the offspring of the sun, the female of the earth, and the one that shared in both of the moon, since the moon too shares in both. And they were round, both themselves and their way of moving, because they took after their parents. So they were terrifying in their strength and vigor, and they had grand ambitions. They made an attempt on the gods, and what Homer tells of Ephialtes and Otus is told of them: that they tried to make 190c a way up to heaven, meaning to attack the gods.[22] So Zeus and the other gods deliberated about what they should do with them, and they were at a loss. They couldn't kill them and wipe out the race by blasting them with thunderbolts, as they had the Giants—for then the honors and sacrifices they got from human beings would be wiped out too—and they couldn't let them run riot either. At last, after much hard thought, Zeus said: "I think I have a device by which human beings can go on existing and yet stop their unruliness by becoming 190d weaker. I'll now cut each of them in two," he said, "and they'll be weaker and at the same time more useful to us, because there'll be more of them. And they'll walk upright on two legs. If they still seem to run riot and won't keep quiet, I'll cut them in two again," he said, "so they'll go hopping about on one leg." With that he cut human beings in two, the way people cut sorb-apples 190e for pickling, or slice eggs with a hair. And as he cut each one, he told Apollo to turn its face and half its neck around toward the cut, so that by looking at its own cutting the human being would behave better; and he told him to heal the rest.

Apollo turned the face around. Then, drawing the skin together from all sides over what we now call the belly, like a drawstring purse, he made a single opening and tied it off in the middle of the belly—what people call the navel. He smoothed out most of the other wrinkles 191a and shaped the chest, using a

22 Ephialtes and Otus: giant brothers who, in Homer, piled mountain on mountain to storm heaven.

tool like the one shoemakers use to smooth the wrinkles out of leather on the last. But he left a few, the ones around the belly itself and the navel, as a reminder of what happened long ago. Now, since their nature had been cut in two, each half longed for its own other half and came together with it. Throwing their arms around each other and intertwining, longing to grow together, they began to die of hunger and of [191b] general idleness, because they refused to do anything apart from each other. And whenever one of the halves died and the other was left, the one left behind sought out another and intertwined with it, whether it met half of a whole woman—what we now call a woman—or of a man; and so they kept perishing. Zeus took pity and came up with another device: he moved their genitals around to the front. Until then they had these on the outside too, and they begot [191c] and gave birth not in one another but in the earth, like cicadas. So he moved them around to the front in this way and through them made reproduction happen in one another, through the male in the female. He did it for these reasons: so that in their embracing, if a man met a woman, they would beget children and the race would go on; and also, if male met male, they would at least have their fill of being together, and would take a rest, turn to their work, and look after the rest of their lives. It's from that far back, then, [191d] that love of one another has been inborn in human beings. Love gathers up our ancient nature, trying to make one out of two and to heal human nature. Each of us, then, is the matching half of a human being, since we've been cut like flatfish, two out of one; and each of us is always seeking his own matching half. Those men who are a slice of the combined kind—what was then called androgynous—are fond of women; most adulterers have come from this kind, and [191e] so, in turn, do the women who are fond of men and adulterous. The women who are a slice of a woman don't pay much

attention to men at all; they're drawn rather to women, and women who love women come from this kind.[23]

Those who are a slice of a male pursue males. As long as they're boys, being little slices of the male, they're fond of men and enjoy lying with men and being embraced 192a by them. These are the best of the boys and young men, since they are the most manly by nature. Some people say they're shameless, but they're lying. It isn't shamelessness that makes them do this but boldness, courage, and manliness: they welcome what is like themselves. And there's strong evidence for it: only men of this kind, when they're grown up, turn out to be real men in public life. Once they reach manhood, 192b they love boys, and by nature they have no interest in marriage and having children, though custom compels them to it; they're content to live out their lives with one another, unmarried. In every way, then, such a person becomes a lover of boys and, as a boy, one who loves his lover, always welcoming what is akin to him. Now when the lover of boys, or anyone else, meets that very half of his own, then they're struck in amazing ways by affection and 192c intimacy and love, and they're unwilling, so to speak, to be separated from each other for even a short time. These are the people who spend their whole lives together, and yet they couldn't even say what they want from each other. No one would think it was sex—that this is the reason each one delights so intensely in being with the other. No, it's clear that the soul of each wants something else, 192d which it can't put into words; it divines what it wants, and hints at it in riddles. Suppose, as they lay together, Hephaestus were to stand over them with his tools and ask: "What is it you want from each other, you human beings?" And suppose, when they were at a loss, he asked again: "Is this what you desire—to be together in the same place as much as possible, so that you're never apart from each other,

23 The word for "matching half" (symbolon) was a token broken in two, each party keeping one piece so that they could later identify each other by fitting the pieces together.

night or day?[24] Because if that's what you desire, I'm willing to melt you together and 192e weld you into one, so that the two of you become one, and as long as you live, you both live a shared life as a single person; and when you die, down there in Hades too you'd be one instead of two, having died a shared death. See whether that's what you long for, and whether you'd be satisfied if you got it." We know that on hearing this not a single one would refuse or show that he wanted anything else. He would simply think he had heard just what he had been desiring all along: to come together and melt into his beloved, and become one out of two.

The reason is this: that this was our ancient nature, and we were whole. So "love" is the name for the desire 193a and pursuit of the whole. Before, as I say, we were one; but now, because of our wrongdoing, we've been split up by the god, as the Arcadians were by the Spartans. So there's a danger that, if we don't behave properly toward the gods, we'll be split in two yet again, and go around like the figures carved in profile on gravestones, sawn in half down the line of the nose, like split dice. That's why every man should urge everyone to be reverent toward 193b the gods, so that we may escape the one fate and win the other, with Love as our guide and commander.[25] Let no one act against him —and whoever is hateful to the gods acts against him. For if we become his friends and are reconciled with the god, we will find and meet our very own beloveds, which few people today manage to do. And don't let Eryximachus take me up and make a comedy of my speech, as though I mean Pausanias and Agathon. Maybe 193c they do happen to be among these, and both are male by nature. But in any case I'm speaking about everyone, men and women alike: this is how our race would become happy—if we brought love to its fulfillment, and each of us found his own beloved and returned to our ancient nature. And if that's the best thing, then of what's possible now, whatever comes nearest

24 Hephaestus: the smith god, craftsman of the gods.
25 In 385 BC Sparta broke up the Arcadian city of Mantinea into separate villages—an event later than the party itself.

to it must be best: and that is to find a beloved whose nature suits one's mind. If we're to hymn the god responsible for this, 193d it's Love we would rightly hymn. In the present he does us the most good by leading us to what is our own, and for the future he offers the greatest hopes: if we show reverence toward the gods, he'll restore us to our ancient nature, heal us, and make us blessed and happy.

"That, Eryximachus," he said, "is my speech about Love—quite different from yours. So, as I asked you, don't make a comedy of it, so that we can hear what each of the rest 193e will say—or rather, what each of the two will say, since only Agathon and Socrates are left."

"All right, I'll do as you say," Eryximachus said, he told me, "since I enjoyed your speech. And if I didn't know that Socrates and Agathon were experts in matters of love, I'd be very much afraid they'd run short of things to say, since so much has been said, and of every kind. As it is, I'm confident all the same."

194a Then Socrates said: "That's because you competed well yourself, Eryximachus. But if you were where I am now—or rather, perhaps, where I'll be once Agathon has spoken well too—you'd be really afraid, and you'd be at your wits' end, just as I am now."

"You're trying to put a spell on me, Socrates," said Agathon, "so that I'll get flustered thinking the audience expects great things of my speech."

"I'd be forgetful indeed, Agathon," said Socrates, 194b "if, after I saw your courage and self-assurance as you stepped onto the platform with the actors, faced so huge an audience on the point of presenting your own words, and weren't rattled in the least, I now thought you'd be flustered on account of a few people like us."[26]

"What's this, Socrates?" said Agathon. "Surely you don't think I'm so full of the theater that I don't know that, to a man of

26 Before the dramatic festival, playwrights appeared on a platform with their actors to announce their plays; Agathon had just won the tragic competition.

sense, a few intelligent people are more frightening than many fools?" 194c

"I'd hardly be doing right, Agathon," he said, "if I held any boorish opinion about you. I know perfectly well that if you met people you thought were wise, you'd care more about them than about the many. But I'm afraid we aren't those people—we were there too, after all, and we were part of the many. But if you met others who were wise, you'd probably be ashamed before them if you thought you were doing something shameful. Or what do you say?"

"That's true," he said.

"But you wouldn't be ashamed before the many if you thought you were doing something shameful?" 194d

And Phaedrus, he said, broke in and said: "Agathon, my friend, if you answer Socrates, it will no longer matter to him in the least how anything here turns out, as long as he has someone to talk with—especially someone beautiful. I do enjoy listening to Socrates in conversation, but I have to look after the praise of Love and collect a speech from each one of you. So let each of you two pay his due to the god, and then you can talk." 194e

"You're quite right, Phaedrus," said Agathon, "and there's nothing to stop me from speaking. There'll be plenty of chances to talk with Socrates another time."

## AGATHON: THE YOUNGEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL GOD

*Agathon praises Love as the youngest, most beautiful and most virtuous of the gods.*

APOLLODORUS I want first to say how I ought to speak, and then to speak. It seems to me that all who have spoken before did not praise the god but congratulated human beings on the good things the god causes for them. But what sort of being he himself is, 195a who gave these gifts, no one has said. Yet there is one right way to praise anything, whatever it is: to set out in speech what sort of being the subject of the speech is, and of

what sort of things he is the cause. So it is right for us too to praise Love first for what he is, and then for his gifts. I say, then, that though all the gods are happy, Love—if it is lawful and no offense to say so—is the happiest of them, being the most beautiful and the best. And he is most beautiful in this way. First, he is the youngest of the gods, Phaedrus. He himself provides great 195b proof of this claim, fleeing in full flight from old age—which is swift, clearly; at any rate it comes on us faster than it should. Love by nature hates old age and won't come anywhere near it. He is always with the young, and is young himself; for the old saying holds good, that like is always drawn to like. Though I agree with Phaedrus about much else, on this I don't agree, that Love is older than Cronus and Iapetus. No, 195c I say he is the youngest of the gods and forever young, and that those ancient doings among the gods that Hesiod and Parmenides tell of came about through Necessity, not Love—if what they said was true. For there would have been no castrations or chainings of one another, and many other violent deeds, if Love had been among them, but friendship and peace, as there is now, ever since Love has been king of the gods. So he is young; and besides being young he is delicate. But it takes a poet 195d such as Homer to show the delicacy of a god.[27] For Homer says that Ate is a goddess, and delicate—her feet, at least, are delicate—when he says: "Delicate are her feet: she does not touch the ground, / but walks along upon the heads of men." So I think he offers fine proof of her delicacy: that she doesn't walk on what is hard but on what is soft. We too 195e will use the same proof about Love, that he is delicate. For he doesn't walk on the earth, or on skulls, which aren't very soft at all, but walks and dwells in the softest things there are. He has made his home in the characters and souls of gods and human beings—and not in every soul in turn: whenever he meets one with a hard character, he goes away, and wherever he finds a soft one, he settles in.[28]

27 Cronus and Iapetus were Titans of the older generation of gods; in Hesiod, Cronus castrates his father Uranus and is later imprisoned by Zeus.
28 Ate: Delusion, or Ruin, personified as a goddess.

Since he is always touching, with his feet and with every part of him, the softest of the soft, he must 196a be most delicate. He is the youngest, then, and the most delicate; and in addition he is supple in form. For he couldn't wrap himself around everything, or slip into and out of every soul unnoticed at first, if he were hard. Great proof of his well-proportioned and supple form is his grace, which everyone agrees Love has above all others; for gracelessness and Love are forever at war with each other. The beauty of his complexion is shown by the god's life among the flowers; for Love will not settle on what is flowerless 196b or has lost its flower, whether body or soul or anything else; but wherever there is a place full of flowers and full of fragrance, there he settles and there he stays.

About the god's beauty, then, this is enough, though much still remains to say. Next we must speak of Love's excellence. The greatest point is that Love neither does wrong nor suffers wrong, neither from a god nor to a god, neither from a human being nor to a human being. For if he suffers anything, he doesn't suffer it by force—force doesn't 196c touch Love—nor does he use force when he acts, since everyone willingly serves Love in everything; and whatever the willing agree on with the willing, "the laws, the city's kings," declare to be just. In addition to justice, he has the largest share of moderation. For moderation is agreed to be mastery over pleasures and desires, and no pleasure is stronger than Love. If they are weaker, they would be mastered by Love, and he would be their master; and being master of pleasures and desires, Love would be exceptionally moderate.[29] And as for courage, 196d "not even Ares stands against" Love. For Ares doesn't have Love; Love has Ares—love of Aphrodite, as the story goes—and the one who has is stronger than the one who is had. And being master of the bravest of all the others, he would be the bravest of all. So the god's justice, moderation, and courage have been spoken of; his wisdom remains. As far as possible, then, I must try not to fall short.

29 "The laws, the city's kings" is a phrase from Alcidamas, a rhetorician of Gorgias' school.

First—so that I too may honor my own art, as Eryximachus honored 196e his—the god is so wise a poet that he makes others poets too. At any rate everyone becomes a poet, "even if he was a stranger to the Muses before," once Love touches him.[30] We may fittingly take this as testimony that Love is a good poet—a good maker, in short, in every kind of making that belongs to the Muses. For what one doesn't have or doesn't know, one can neither give to another nor teach to someone else.

And 197a as for the making of all living things, who will deny that it is Love's wisdom by which all living things are born and grow? And in the craftsmanship of the arts, don't we know that whoever has this god for a teacher turns out renowned and illustrious, while whoever Love doesn't touch stays in obscurity? Apollo, too, discovered archery and medicine and prophecy with desire and love to lead him, 197b so that he too would be Love's pupil—as would the Muses in music, Hephaestus in metalwork, Athena in weaving, and Zeus in "the steering of gods and men." That is why the affairs of the gods were set in order once Love had come among them—love of beauty, obviously, since love has no place in ugliness. Before that, as I said at the beginning, many terrible things happened among the gods, so it is said, because of the reign of Necessity. But since this god was born, from loving beautiful things every good thing has come to be, for gods and human beings alike. 197c

So it seems to me, Phaedrus, that Love, being first himself most beautiful and best, is after that the cause of other such things in others. And something in verse comes to me to say, that it is he who makes "peace among men, and on the sea a calm, / windless stillness, rest for the winds, and sleep in sorrow." 197d He empties us of estrangement and fills us with belonging, bringing us together in all such gatherings as this, and leading the way in festivals, in dances, in sacrifices: bringing in mildness, banishing wildness; lavish with goodwill, never giving ill will; gracious and good; a sight for the wise, a delight for

30 The quoted phrases come from Sophocles and Euripides. In myth Ares, the war god, was Aphrodite's lover.

the gods; longed for by those without a share, owned by those with a fine share; father of luxury, delicacy, elegance, graces, yearning, longing; caring for the good, careless of the bad; in toil, in fear, in longing, in [197e] speech, our pilot, our shipmate, our comrade-in-arms and best savior; the glory of all gods and men, the most beautiful and best of leaders, whom every man should follow, singing beautiful hymns, joining in the song he sings to enchant the minds of all gods and men.

"This speech of mine, Phaedrus," he said, "let it be dedicated to the god—partly play, partly moderate seriousness, as far as I'm able."

## SOCRATES QUESTIONS AGATHON

*Socrates questions Agathon and shows that Love lacks beauty and goodness, since it desires them.*

APOLLODORUS [198a] When Agathon had finished, Aristodemus said, everyone there burst into applause, since the young man had spoken in a way that did credit both to himself and to the god. Then Socrates looked at Eryximachus and said: "Well, son of Acumenus, do you still think the fear I felt all along was nothing to fear? Wasn't I speaking like a prophet just now when I said that Agathon would speak marvelously and I'd be at a loss?"

"On one point," said Eryximachus, "I think you spoke like a prophet—that Agathon would speak well. But that you'll be at a loss—I don't believe it." [198b]

And how, my dear man, said Socrates, am I not going to be at a loss—me or anyone else—when I'm about to speak after a speech so beautiful and so varied? The rest wasn't equally marvelous, but the end—who wouldn't have been stunned hearing the beauty of the words and phrases? For my part, when I realized that I wouldn't be able to say anything even close to it in beauty, I was so ashamed that I nearly [198c] sneaked off and left, if I'd had anywhere to go. The speech reminded me of Gorgias, so that I had exactly Homer's experience: I was afraid that at the end Agathon would send the head of Gorgias, that terrible

speaker, against my speech, and turn me to stone—struck dumb.[31] And I realized then how ridiculous I'd been when I agreed to take my turn with 198d you in praising Love and said I was an expert in matters of love, when it turns out I knew nothing about the business of how one ought to praise anything. In my foolishness I thought one should tell the truth about whatever was being praised; that this should be the foundation, and that from these very truths one should pick out the most beautiful and present them as fittingly as possible. And I was very proud of myself, thinking I'd speak well, since I knew the truth about praising anything. But it turns out that this wasn't what it is to praise anything well; rather, it's to attribute 198e the greatest and most beautiful qualities possible to the thing, whether it has them or not. And if they were false, apparently that didn't matter at all. For what was proposed, it seems, was that each of us should look as if he were praising Love, not that he should actually praise him.

That, I suppose, is why you rake up every story there is and heap it on Love, and say that he is like this and the cause of so much, so that he will 199a appear as beautiful and as good as possible—to those who don't know him, obviously, since surely not to those who do—and the praise turns out beautiful and impressive. But the fact is that I didn't know how this praising was done, and it was in ignorance that I agreed to take my turn at praising too. So "the tongue promised, but the mind did not." Goodbye to it, then. I'm not going to give that sort of encomium anymore—I couldn't—but the truth, at least, 199b if you like, I'm willing to tell in my own way, not in competition with your speeches, so that I don't make myself a laughingstock.[32] So consider, Phaedrus, whether you have any use for a speech like this too—to hear the truth told about Love, but in whatever words and arrangement of phrases happen to come to mind.

31 A pun on the Gorgon's head, which in Homer turns those who see it to stone; Gorgias was the famous rhetorician whose jingling style Agathon imitates.
32 The quoted line adapts Euripides' *Hippolytus,* where Hippolytus says that his tongue swore an oath but his mind did not.

So Phaedrus and the others, he said, told him to speak in whatever way he himself thought he should.

"One more thing, then, Phaedrus," he said: "let me ask Agathon a few small questions, so that once I've secured his agreement I can go on to speak." 199c

"You have my leave," said Phaedrus. "Go ahead and ask." After that, he said, Socrates began somewhere about here:

"Well, my dear Agathon, I thought you led into your speech very well when you said that first one should show what sort of being Love is, and afterward what he does. I very much admire that opening. So come, tell me about Love: since you've described so beautifully and magnificently what he is like in everything else, 199d tell me this too. Is Love the sort of thing that is love of something, or of nothing? I'm not asking whether he is born of some mother or father—it would be a ridiculous question, whether Love is love of a mother or father—but it's as if I were asking about this very thing, a father: is a father the father of someone, or not? You'd surely tell me, if you wanted to answer properly, that a father is father of a son or a daughter. Wouldn't you?"[33]

"Certainly," said Agathon.

"And a mother the same way?" He agreed to that too. 199e

"Then answer a little more," said Socrates, "so that you'll understand better what I'm after. Suppose I asked, 'What about a brother—just insofar as he is a brother—is he the brother of someone, or not?'" He said he was.

"Of a brother or a sister, then?" He agreed.

"Now try to tell me about love too," he said. "Is Love love of nothing, or of something?"

"Of something, certainly."

200a "Then hold on to that," said Socrates, "and keep in mind what it's love of. But tell me this much: does Love desire the thing he is love of, or not?"

"Certainly," he said.

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33 In Greek, "of" can express parentage, so "Love of a mother" could also mean "Love, son of a mother"; Socrates is setting that reading aside.

"And does he desire and love the thing he desires and loves when he has it, or when he doesn't?"

"When he doesn't, probably," he said.

"Consider," said Socrates, "whether instead of 'probably' it isn't necessarily so: that what desires desires what it lacks, and doesn't 200b desire if it doesn't lack. To me, Agathon, it seems amazingly clear that it's necessary. How does it seem to you?"

"It seems so to me too," he said.

"Good. Now, would someone who is big want to be big, or someone who is strong want to be strong?"

"Impossible, given what we've agreed."

"Because someone who is those things couldn't be lacking in them."

"That's true."

"Suppose someone strong wanted to be strong," said Socrates, "and someone fast to be fast, and someone healthy to be healthy—since someone might perhaps think that in these cases and all others like them, people who are 200c like this and have these things also desire the very things they have; I bring it up so that we won't be misled—well, Agathon, if you think about it, these people necessarily have each of the things they have right now, whether they want to or not. And who, surely, would desire that? But when someone says, 'I'm healthy and I want to be healthy, I'm rich and I want to be rich, I desire the very things I have,' we would say to him, 'My good man, 200d you already possess wealth and health and strength, and what you want is to possess them in time to come as well, since at the present moment you have them whether you want to or not. So when you say "I desire what I have," consider whether you mean anything other than this: "I want the things I have now to be mine in the future too."' Wouldn't he agree?" Agathon agreed, he said.

Then Socrates said, "Well, isn't this loving what is not yet at hand for him and what he does not have—that these things be kept safe for him and present to him in time to come?" 200e

"Certainly," he said.

"So this man, and anyone else who desires, desires what is not at hand and not present; and what he doesn't have, and what he himself is not, and what he lacks—these are the sorts of things that desire and love are for?"

"Certainly," he said.

"Come, then," said Socrates, "let's go back over what we've agreed. Isn't Love, first, love of something, and second, of whatever he lacks?"

201a "Yes," he said.

"Now, on top of this, recall what you said in your speech Love was love of. Or, if you like, I'll remind you. I think you said something like this: that the gods' affairs were set in order through love of beautiful things, since there couldn't be love of ugly ones. Didn't you say something like that?"

"I did," said Agathon.

"And quite reasonably, my friend," said Socrates. "And if that's so, wouldn't Love be love of beauty, and not of ugliness?" He agreed. 201b

"Now haven't we agreed that he loves what he lacks and doesn't have?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then Love lacks beauty and doesn't have it."

"Necessarily," he said.

"Well then, what lacks beauty and in no way possesses beauty—do you call that beautiful?"

"Certainly not."

"Then do you still agree that Love is beautiful, if that's how things are?"

And Agathon said, "It looks, Socrates, as if I didn't know anything of what I said back then." 201c

"And yet you spoke beautifully, Agathon," he said. "But tell me one small thing more: don't good things seem to you to be beautiful as well?"

"They do."

"Then if Love lacks beautiful things, and good things are beautiful, he would lack good things too."

"I couldn't argue against you, Socrates," he said. "Let it be as you say."

"No, my dear Agathon," he said, "it's the truth you can't argue against; arguing against Socrates is no trouble at all." 201d

### DIOTIMA: LOVE AS A SPIRIT

*Socrates recounts Diotima's teaching that Love is a spirit between gods and humans, desiring the good forever.*

APOLLODORUS And now I'll let you be. But the account of Love that I once heard from a woman of Mantinea, Diotima—who was wise in this and in much else besides; once, when the Athenians offered sacrifices before the plague, she won them a ten-year postponement of the disease; and it was she who taught me about love—the account she gave, I'll try to go through for you, starting from what Agathon and I have agreed, on my own, as best I can. As you explained, Agathon, one must first 201e set out who Love is and what he is like, and then his works. I think the easiest way is to go through it the way the foreign woman once did when she was questioning me.[34] For I was saying to her pretty much the same sort of things Agathon was just saying to me: that Love was a great god, and that he was love of beautiful things. And she refuted me with the very arguments I used on him: that by my own account he was neither beautiful nor good.

And I said, "What do you mean, Diotima? Is Love ugly, then, and bad?"

And she said, "Watch what you say! Do you think that whatever isn't beautiful must be ugly?"

202a "Absolutely."

"And whatever isn't wise, ignorant? Haven't you noticed that there's something between wisdom and ignorance?"

"What's that?"

"Having correct opinions without being able to give an account of them," she said. "Don't you know that this is neither

34 Mantinea was a city in Arcadia, in the Peloponnese; Diotima is known only from this dialogue. The plague struck Athens in 430 BC.

knowledge—for how could something without an account be knowledge?—nor ignorance—for how could something that hits on what is be ignorance? Correct opinion is surely something like that: between understanding and ignorance."

"That's true," I said. 202b

"Then don't insist that what isn't beautiful must be ugly, or that what isn't good must be bad. So with Love too: since you yourself agree that he isn't good or beautiful, don't think he must therefore be ugly and bad, but something between the two," she said.

"And yet," I said, "everyone agrees that he's a great god."

"By everyone, do you mean everyone who doesn't know," she said, "or those who know as well?"

"All of them together."

And she laughed and said, "And how, Socrates, 202c could he be agreed to be a great god by people who say he isn't even a god?"

"Who are they?" I said.

"You're one," she said, "and I'm another."

And I said, "What do you mean by that?"

And she said, "It's easy. Tell me: don't you say that all gods are happy and beautiful? Or would you dare to say that any of the gods is not beautiful and happy?"

"By Zeus, not I," I said.

"And by 'happy' don't you mean those who possess good things and beautiful things?"

"Certainly." 202d

"But you've agreed that Love, because he lacks good and beautiful things, desires the very things he lacks."

"Yes, I've agreed."

"Then how could someone with no share of beautiful and good things be a god?"

"There's no way, it seems."

"So you see," she said, "that you too don't consider Love a god?"

"Then what would Love be?" I said. "Mortal?"

"Not at all."

"Well, what then?"

"As in the earlier cases," she said, "something between mortal and immortal."

"What, then, Diotima?"

"A great spirit, Socrates. For everything of the spirit kind 202e is between god and mortal."

"And what power does it have?" I said.

"It interprets and ferries to gods what comes from humans, and to humans what comes from gods: from the one, prayers and sacrifices; from the other, commands and returns for sacrifices. Being in the middle, it fills the space between the two, so that the whole is bound together with itself.

"Through it pass all divination and the art of priests concerned with sacrifices and initiations 203a and spells, and all prophecy and sorcery. God does not mingle with human; it is through this that all the dealings and conversation of gods with humans take place, whether they are awake or asleep. Someone wise in such matters is a spiritual man; someone wise in anything else, in some art or manual trade, is merely a mechanic. These spirits are many and of every kind, and one of them is Love."

"And who," I said, "are his father and mother?" 203b

That's rather a long story, she said, but I'll tell you anyway. When Aphrodite was born, the gods held a feast, among them Resource, the son of Cunning. When they had dined, Poverty came begging, as you'd expect when there's a banquet, and she was hanging about the doors. Now Resource, drunk on nectar—there was no wine yet—went into the garden of Zeus and, heavy with drink, fell asleep. So Poverty, plotting in her own lack of resource to get a child from Resource, lay down 203c beside him and conceived Love. That is why Love has become Aphrodite's follower and attendant: he was begotten on her birthday, and he is also by nature a lover of beauty, and Aphrodite is beautiful. So, as the son of Resource and Poverty, Love's lot is this.[35] First,

35 The parents are personifications: Poros ("Resource," "Means," "Way through"), son of Metis ("Cunning"), and Penia ("Poverty").

he is always poor, and far from being delicate and beautiful, as most people think; he's tough 203d and dirty, barefoot and homeless, always lying on the bare ground without bedding, sleeping in doorways and by the road under the open sky. He has his mother's nature: need is always his housemate. But on his father's side he schemes after the beautiful and the good; he's brave, bold, and intense, a formidable hunter, always weaving some plot, eager for understanding and full of resource, doing philosophy all his life, a formidable sorcerer, druggist, and sophist. He is by nature neither 203e immortal nor mortal: on the same day he sometimes flourishes and lives, when he finds resources, and sometimes dies, and then comes back to life again because of his father's nature. But what he gets always slips away, so that Love is never without resource and never rich, and he is in the middle between wisdom and ignorance.

204a Here's how it is. None of the gods does philosophy or desires to become wise—he already is—nor does anyone else who is wise do philosophy. Nor, again, do the ignorant do philosophy or desire to become wise. For that is exactly what's so hard about ignorance: that someone who is neither fine and good nor intelligent is satisfied with himself as he is. And one who doesn't think he's lacking doesn't desire what he doesn't think he needs.

"Then who, Diotima," I said, "are the ones who do philosophy, if it's neither the wise nor the ignorant?" 204b

"That's clear even to a child by now," she said: "those between the two, and Love would be one of them. For wisdom is among the most beautiful things, and Love is love of the beautiful, so Love must be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, and being a philosopher he must be between wise and ignorant. And the cause of this too is his birth: his father is wise and resourceful, his mother neither wise nor resourceful. That, then, my dear Socrates, is the nature of this spirit. As for what you thought Love 204c was, it's no wonder you thought so. You thought, as I gather from what you say, that Love was the beloved, not the lover. That's why, I think, Love seemed so utterly beautiful to

you. For what is lovable really is beautiful and delicate and perfect and blessed; but what loves has a different character, the kind I've described."

And I said, "All right, then, stranger—you put it well. If that's what Love is like, what use is he to human beings?" 204d

"That's what I'll try to teach you next, Socrates," she said. "Love is like this and was born like this, and he is love of beautiful things, as you say. But suppose someone asked us, 'In what way is Love love of beautiful things, Socrates and Diotima?' Or, more clearly, like this: 'The lover of beautiful things loves—what does he love?'"

And I said, "That they become his."

"But that answer still calls for a further question," she said: "what will he have when the beautiful things become his?"

I said I couldn't really give a ready answer to that question any more. 204e

"Well," she said, "suppose someone switched and used 'good' instead of 'beautiful,' and asked, 'Come, Socrates: the lover of good things loves—what does he love?'"

"That they become his," I said.

"And what will he have when the good things become his?"

"That one I'm better supplied to answer," I said: "he'll be happy."

205a "Yes," she said, "for it's by possessing good things that the happy are happy, and there's no further need to ask, 'And why does the one who wants to be happy want that?' The answer seems to have reached its end."

"That's true," I said.

"Now this wanting and this love—do you think it is common to all human beings, and that everyone wants good things to be theirs always? Or what do you say?"

"Just that," I said: "it's common to all."

"Then why, Socrates," she said, "don't we say that everyone loves, 205b if everyone loves the same things, and always? Why do we say that some people love and others don't?"

"I wonder about that myself," I said.

"Don't wonder," she said. "It's because we separate off one kind of love and give it the name of the whole, 'love,' while for the others we use other names."

"Such as what?" I said.

"Such as this. You know that 'making' is a broad thing: whatever is the cause of anything at all passing from not being into being is always 205c making, so that the work done in all the arts is making, and the craftsmen who do it are all makers."[36]

"That's true."

"And yet," she said, "you know that they aren't called makers but have other names, and that out of all making one part, the part concerned with music and meter, has been marked off and is called by the name of the whole. Only this is called 'making'—poetry—and those who have this part of making are called 'makers'—poets."

"That's true," I said. 205d

"So too with love. In sum, every desire for good things and for being happy is, for everyone, 'the greatest and wiliest love.' But those who turn to it in various other ways—through making money, or love of athletics, or philosophy—are not said to be in love or called lovers, while those who go after it in one particular kind, and devote themselves to that, get the name of the whole: love, being in love, and lovers."

"You may well be right," I said.

"And there is a certain story going around," she said, "that those who seek their other half 205e are the ones who love. But my account says love is neither of a half nor of a whole, unless, my friend, that happens to be good—since people are willing to have their own feet and hands cut off if they think those parts of them are bad.

"For I don't think each of us clings to what is his own, unless someone calls the good his own and belonging to him, and the bad foreign to him. For there's nothing else that 206a people love but the good. Or do you think there is?"

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**36** The Greek *poiēsis* means both "making" and "poetry," and *poiētēs* both "maker" and "poet."

"By Zeus, not I," I said.

"Then," she said, "can we simply say that people love the good?"

"Yes," I said.

"What? Mustn't we add," she said, "that they love the good to be theirs?"

"We must."

"And not only to be theirs," she said, "but to be theirs always?"

"We must add that too."

"In short, then," she said, "love is of the good's being one's own always."

"That's perfectly true," I said. 206b

"Since this is always what love is," she said, "in what way, and in what activity, must people pursue it for their eagerness and effort to be called love? What is this work, in fact? Can you tell me?"

"If I could, Diotima," I said, "I wouldn't be admiring you for your wisdom and coming to you to learn just these things."

### GIVING BIRTH IN BEAUTY

*Diotima explains love as giving birth in beauty, in body or soul, to share in immortality.*

APOLLODORUS "Well, I'll tell you," she said. "It is giving birth in beauty, both in body and in soul."

"It would take a seer to tell what you mean," I said. "I don't understand." 206c

"Well, I'll say it more clearly," she said. "All human beings, Socrates, are pregnant, both in body and in soul, and when they reach a certain age our nature desires to give birth. But it cannot give birth in ugliness, only in beauty. For the union of a man and a woman is a giving birth. This is a divine thing, and it is present as something immortal in the mortal creature: pregnancy and begetting. But these cannot happen in what is out of harmony. 206d And ugliness is out of harmony with everything divine, while beauty is in harmony with it. So Beauty is Fate and Eileithyia at

birth.[37] That's why, when what is pregnant draws near to beauty, it becomes gracious and melts with joy, and gives birth and begets; but when it draws near to ugliness, it shrinks up, gloomy and pained, turns away, curls in, and does not beget, but holds back what it has conceived and carries it with difficulty. Hence the great excitement 206e over beauty that comes to one who is pregnant and already swelling, because beauty releases its possessor from great labor pains. For love, Socrates," she said, "is not of the beautiful, as you think."

"Then what is it of?"

"Of begetting and giving birth in beauty."

"Very well," I said.

"It certainly is," she said. "And why of begetting? Because begetting is everlasting and immortal, as far as anything can be for a mortal. And from what we've agreed, one must desire immortality 207a along with the good, if love is of having the good for oneself forever. So by this argument love must be of immortality too."

She taught me all this whenever she talked about matters of love. And once she asked, "What do you think, Socrates, is the cause of this love and this desire? Don't you notice what a terrible state all the animals get into when they desire to breed, whether they walk or fly? They're all sick 207b with love, first to mate with one another, then to rear what's been born. For their young the weakest are ready to fight the strongest and even die for them; they let themselves be racked by hunger to feed them, and they'll do anything else. With human beings," she said, "you might suppose they do this from calculation. But what makes animals so affected by love? 207c Can you tell me?"

And again I said I didn't know. And she said, "Then do you expect ever to become an expert in matters of love, if you don't give any thought to this?"

37 Moira (Fate) and Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, were the deities who presided over births.

"But that's exactly why, Diotima, as I said just now, I've come to you: I knew I needed teachers. So tell me the cause of this, and of everything else to do with love."

Well, she said, if you're convinced that love is by nature of what we've agreed on several times, don't be surprised. For here too, 207d on the same principle as before, mortal nature seeks, as far as it can, to exist forever and be immortal. And it can do so only in this way, through generation, because it always leaves behind something new in place of the old. Even during the time each living thing is said to live and to be the same—as a person is said to be the same from childhood until he's an old man—he never has the same things in him, yet he's called the same; he is always becoming new and losing what he had, in hair and flesh and bones and 207e blood and the whole body. And not only in the body but in the soul too: ways, character, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears—none of these is ever present the same in anyone; some are coming to be, others passing away.

Stranger still: not only do some pieces of our knowledge 208a come to be while others pass away, so that we're never the same even in what we know, but each single piece of knowledge undergoes the same thing. What we call "studying" exists because knowledge goes out of us. Forgetting is knowledge departing, and study, by putting in a fresh memory in place of the one that's leaving, preserves the knowledge so that it seems to be the same. This is how everything mortal is preserved: not by being always entirely the same, as the 208b divine is, but by what departs and grows old leaving behind something new like itself. By this device, Socrates, she said, what is mortal shares in immortality, body and everything else. What is immortal does so in another way. So don't be surprised that everything by nature values its own offshoot. It's for the sake of immortality that this eagerness and this love go with every living thing.

When I heard her argument I was amazed, and said, "Well, wisest Diotima, is this really how things are?" 208c

And she, like the accomplished sophists, said: You can be sure of it, Socrates. Just look at human beings' love of honor, if you

will. You'd be amazed at how irrational it is—unless you bear in mind what I've said—when you consider how terribly they're gripped by love of becoming famous and "laying up undying glory for all time." For this they're ready to run every risk, even more than for their [208d] children, to spend money, to toil at any labor, and to die. Do you really think, she said, that Alcestis would have died for Admetus, or Achilles died after Patroclus, or your own Codrus died first to save the kingdom for his children, if they hadn't thought there would be an undying memory of their excellence—the memory we still keep of them now?[38] Far from it, she said. I think it's for undying excellence and that kind of glorious fame that everyone does everything, and the better they [208e] are, the more they do it: they're in love with what is immortal.

Now those who are pregnant in body, she said, turn more to women and are lovers in that way, providing themselves through childbearing, as they think, with immortality, remembrance and happiness for all time to come. But those who are pregnant in [209a] soul—for there are people, she said, who are pregnant in their souls even more than in their bodies, with what it is fitting for a soul to conceive and bear. And what is fitting? Understanding and the rest of excellence. All the poets are begetters of these, and so are those craftsmen who are called inventive. But by far the greatest and most beautiful part of understanding, she said, is the ordering of cities and households, whose name is moderation and justice. Now when someone has been pregnant in soul with these from [209b] youth, still unmarried, and has reached the right age and now desires to give birth and beget, then he too, I think, goes around looking for the beauty in which he might beget; for he will never beget in what is ugly. So, being pregnant, he welcomes beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones; and if he comes across a soul that is beautiful, noble and gifted, he warmly welcomes the combination. With this person he at once has plenty to say about excel-

38 Codrus was a legendary king of Athens who, told by an oracle that the invading Dorians would win if they spared the king, contrived to be killed.

lence, about what the good man [209c] should be like and what he should pursue, and he tries to educate him. For by touching the beautiful, I think, and keeping company with it, he gives birth to and begets what he has long been carrying; present or absent, he remembers it, and together with the other he raises what has been born. So people like this share a far greater partnership with each other than parents do in their children, and a firmer friendship, since the children they've had in common are more beautiful and more immortal. Anyone would rather have such children than human [209d] ones. He looks at Homer and Hesiod and the other good poets and envies the offspring they leave behind, which bring them undying fame and memory because they are undying themselves. Or, if you like, she said, think of the children Lycurgus left behind in Sparta, the saviors of Sparta and, you might say, of Greece. Among you Athenians Solon is honored for begetting the laws, and so are other men [209e] in many other places, among Greeks and non-Greeks alike, who have brought forth many fine works and begotten every kind of excellence. Many shrines have been set up to such men because of children like these, but never yet to anyone because of human children.[39]

Now into these mysteries of love, Socrates, perhaps even you could [210a] be initiated. But the final revelations, the highest vision, for whose sake these exist if one pursues them correctly—I don't know if you'd be capable of them. Still, I'll tell you, she said, and I won't spare any effort. You try to follow, if you can.[40]

### THE ASCENT TO BEAUTY ITSELF

*Diotima describes the lover's ascent from one beautiful body to beauty itself.*

APOLLODORUS Whoever goes about this matter correctly, she said, must begin while he's young by turning to beautiful bod-

39 Lycurgus was the legendary lawgiver of Sparta; Solon, the Athenian statesman and lawgiver of the early sixth century BC.

ies. First, if his guide guides him correctly, he must love one body and there beget beautiful words. Then he must realize that the beauty 210b in any one body is akin to the beauty in another, and that if he is to pursue beauty of appearance, it would be great folly not to regard the beauty in all bodies as one and the same. Having grasped this, he must become a lover of all beautiful bodies and relax his intense passion for just one, looking down on it and thinking it small. After this he must think beauty in souls more precious than beauty in the body, so that if someone is decent in soul even though he has little bloom, 210c that is enough for him: he loves him and cares for him, and gives birth to and seeks out the kind of words that will make young men better. That way he will be compelled in turn to behold the beauty in practices and laws, and to see that it is all akin to itself, so that he'll think the beauty of the body a small thing. After practices the guide must lead him to the branches of knowledge, so that he may see in turn the beauty of knowledge. Looking now at beauty in 210d abundance, he'll no longer be devoted, like a household slave, to the beauty of one individual—a boy, or some man, or a single practice—and be a mean and petty servant. Instead, turned toward the vast open sea of beauty and gazing on it, he will give birth to many beautiful and magnificent words and thoughts in boundless love of wisdom, until, strengthened and grown there, he catches sight of a single knowledge, the knowledge of a beauty 210e of the following kind. Now try, she said, to pay me the closest attention you can.

Whoever has been guided this far in matters of love, beholding beautiful things in the right order and correctly, will now approach the goal of love and suddenly catch sight of something wonderfully beautiful in its nature—the very thing, Socrates, for whose sake all the earlier labors were undertaken. First, 211a it always is, and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither grows nor diminishes. Next, it is not beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, nor beautiful at one time and not at

**40** Diotima uses the language of the Mysteries at Eleusis, where initiation culminated in a final "viewing" of sacred objects.

another, nor beautiful in relation to one thing and ugly in relation to another, nor beautiful here and ugly there, as if it were beautiful to some and ugly to others. Nor again will the beautiful appear to him as a face, or hands, or anything else the body has a share in, nor as some speech or some knowledge, nor as being somewhere in something else—in a living creature, or in earth, or in heaven, [211b] or in anything else. It is itself by itself, with itself, single in form, always being; and all the other beautiful things share in it in such a way that, while they come to be and pass away, it neither becomes more nor less nor is affected at all. So when someone rises from these things through loving boys correctly and begins to catch sight of that beauty, he has almost reached the goal. For this is the correct way to approach [211c] matters of love, or to be led by another: beginning from these beautiful things here, to keep climbing for the sake of that beauty, using them like steps on a stair—from one body to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from practices to beautiful studies, and from studies to end at that study which is the study of nothing other than beauty itself, so that in the end he knows what it is to be [211d] beautiful. There, if anywhere, dear Socrates, said the woman from Mantinea, life is worth living for a human being: in beholding beauty itself. If you ever see it, it won't seem to you to compare with gold or clothes or the beautiful boys and young men whose sight now stuns you, so that you and many others, seeing your beloveds and always being with them, are ready to neither eat nor drink, if that were somehow possible, but only to gaze at them and be with them. So what do we suppose, she said, it would be like if someone could see [211e] beauty itself, clear, pure, unmixed, not filled up with human flesh and colors and a great deal of other mortal nonsense—if he could look upon divine beauty itself, single in form?

Do you think, she said, that it's a poor life [212a] for a human being to look there and behold that beauty with what one must, and be with it? Don't you realize, she said, that only there, seeing beauty with what it can be seen by, will it be possible for him to

give birth not to images of excellence, since it's no image he's in touch with, but to true excellence, since he's in touch with the truth? And when he has given birth to true excellence and nurtured it, he can become dear to the gods, and he, if any human being can, can become immortal. 212b

This, Phaedrus and the rest of you, is what Diotima said, and I'm persuaded. And being persuaded, I try to persuade others too that for gaining this possession human nature couldn't easily find a better helper than Love. That's why I say every man should honor Love; I myself honor the things of love and practice them above all, and I urge others to do the same; and now and always I praise the power and courage of Love as far as I'm able. So 212c consider this speech, Phaedrus, if you like, as a speech in praise of Love; if not, call it whatever you like to call it, and however.

## ALCIBIADES ARRIVES

*A drunken Alcibiades bursts in, crowns Agathon and Socrates, and agrees to praise Socrates.*

APOLLODORUS When Socrates had said this, the others praised him, but Aristophanes was trying to say something, because Socrates had mentioned him when talking about his speech. Then suddenly there was a loud knocking at the courtyard door, as if from revelers, and they heard the voice of a flute-girl. So Agathon said, "Boys, 212d won't you go and see? If it's one of our friends, invite him in. If not, say we're not drinking but have already stopped for the night."[41]

Not long after, they heard Alcibiades' voice in the courtyard. He was very drunk and shouting loudly, asking where Agathon was and demanding to be taken to Agathon. So the flute-girl and some others of his companions helped him along and brought him to them, and he stood at the doorway, 212e crowned with a thick wreath of ivy and violets and with a great many ribbons on

41 Diotima had dismissed the idea that lovers seek their other half, an allusion to Aristophanes' speech.

his head, and said, "Gentlemen, greetings! Will you accept a very, very drunk man as a drinking companion? Or shall we just crown Agathon, which is what we came for, and leave? You see," he said, "yesterday I couldn't come, but now I'm here with these ribbons on my head, so that from my head I can crown the head of the wisest and most beautiful man—if I may put it like this.[42]

"Are you going to laugh at me for being drunk? Well, even if you 213a laugh, I still know perfectly well that I'm telling the truth. But tell me right now: do I come in on these terms or not? Will you drink with me or not?"

Everyone cheered and told him to come in and take a place, and Agathon called him over. So he came, led by his people, and as he was taking off the ribbons to crown Agathon, holding them in front of his eyes, he didn't notice Socrates, but sat down next to Agathon, 213b between him and Socrates—Socrates had moved over when he saw him. Sitting down beside him, he embraced Agathon and crowned him.

Then Agathon said, "Boys, take off Alcibiades' shoes, so he can recline here as the third of us."

"Certainly," said Alcibiades. "But who's this third drinking companion of ours?" And as he said it he turned around and saw Socrates, and on seeing him he leaped up and said, "Heracles! What's this? Socrates, here? Lying in wait for me here again, 213c the way you always used to pop up suddenly where I least expected you! And what are you here for now? And why did you settle down here, of all places? Not next to Aristophanes, or anyone else who's funny or wants to be—no, you've contrived to lie next to the most beautiful person in the room."

And Socrates said, "Agathon, see if you'll defend me. My love for this person has turned into no small trouble for me. Ever since I fell in love 213d with him, I haven't been allowed to look at or talk to a single beautiful person, or else he gets jealous and envious and does outrageous things—he abuses me and can barely keep his hands off me. So watch out he doesn't do some-

42 Alcibiades was a brilliant, rich and notoriously handsome Athenian politician and general, and a longtime companion of Socrates.

thing now too. Reconcile us, or if he tries to use force, defend me, because I'm terrified of his madness and his passion for his lover."

"There can be no reconciliation between you and me," said Alcibiades. "But I'll pay you back for this some other time. For now, [213e] Agathon," he said, "give me some of the ribbons, so I can crown his head too—this amazing head—so he won't blame me for crowning you but not crowning him, when he beats everyone in words, not just the other day as you did, but always." And with that he took some of the ribbons, crowned Socrates, and lay down.

Once he'd lain down, he said, "Well now, gentlemen, you look sober to me. That can't be allowed: you must drink. That was our agreement. So as master of the drinking, until you've had enough, I elect—myself. Agathon, have them bring a big cup, if there is one.

"No, never mind. Boy," he said, "bring that wine-cooler over there"—he'd noticed it held [214a] more than half a gallon. He had it filled and drained it first himself, then told the boy to pour for Socrates, and as he did he said, "Against Socrates, gentlemen, my trick is no use. However much anyone tells him to drink, he'll drink it all and never get drunk."

So the boy poured and Socrates drank. But Eryximachus said, "What are we doing, Alcibiades? [214b] Are we going to neither say anything over the cup nor sing anything, but simply drink like people who are thirsty?"

Then Alcibiades said, "Eryximachus, best son of the best and most sober of fathers, greetings!"

"Greetings to you too," said Eryximachus. "But what shall we do?"

"Whatever you prescribe. We have to obey you: 'a doctor is worth many other men.' So order whatever you like."[43]

"Listen, then," said Eryximachus. "Before you came in, we decided that each of us in turn, going to the right, should make a speech [214c] about Love, as beautiful as he could, and praise him.

43 A line from Homer's *Iliad*.

All the rest of us have spoken. Since you haven't spoken, and you have drunk, it's only fair that you speak, and when you've spoken, give Socrates whatever task you like, and he the man on his right, and so on for the others."

"Well, Eryximachus," said Alcibiades, "that's well said, but pitting a drunk man's words against sober men's may not be a fair contest. And besides, my dear fellow, do you believe anything 214d Socrates just said? Don't you know it's the exact opposite of what he was saying? If I praise anyone in his presence, god or human, other than him, he won't keep his hands off me."

"Watch your tongue!" said Socrates.

"By Poseidon," said Alcibiades, "don't say a word against it. I wouldn't praise a single other person with you here."

"Then do that, if you like," said Eryximachus. "Praise Socrates." 214e

"What do you mean?" said Alcibiades. "You think I should, Eryximachus? Shall I go after the man and take my revenge in front of you all?"

"Here, you," said Socrates, "what have you got in mind? Praising me to make me look ridiculous? Or what will you do?"

"I'll tell the truth. But see whether you'll allow it."

"Well, the truth, of course, I allow," he said, "and I urge you to tell it."

"I'll start right away," said Alcibiades. "And here's what you should do."

If I say anything that isn't true, interrupt me in the middle, if you like, and say that that's a lie; I won't knowingly tell 215a a single lie. But if I tell things in a jumble as they come back to me, don't be surprised. It's not easy for someone in my state to list your oddities fluently and in order.

## ALCIBIADES PRAISES SOCRATES

*Alcibiades compares Socrates to a silenus statue and tells of his failed attempt to seduce him.*

APOLLODORUS Gentlemen, I'll try to praise Socrates this way: through images. He may think it's to make him look ridiculous, but the image will be for the sake of truth, not laughter. I say he's very like those sileni 215b that sit in the statue-makers' shops, the ones craftsmen make holding panpipes or flutes: when you open them up in two, they turn out to have statues of gods inside. And I say too that he resembles the satyr Marsyas. That you're like them in looks, Socrates, not even you would dispute; but that you resemble them in other ways too, listen to this. You're insolent, aren't you? If you won't admit it, I'll produce witnesses. And aren't you a flute-player? Yes, and a far more amazing one than Marsyas.[44] 215c He enchanted people by means of instruments, through the power of his mouth, and still does, whenever anyone plays his tunes—for the tunes Olympus played I count as Marsyas', since he taught him. So his tunes, whether a good flute-player plays them or a poor flute-girl, are the only ones that make people possessed, and because they are divine they reveal who is in need of the gods and of initiation rites. You differ from him only in this: you do the same 215d thing without instruments, with bare words. At any rate, when we hear anyone else speaking, other speeches, even a very good orator's, practically nobody cares at all. But when anyone hears you, or your words spoken by someone else, even if the speaker is quite poor, whether it's a woman listening or a man or a boy, we are stunned and possessed. At any rate, gentlemen, if I weren't going to seem completely drunk, I'd have sworn to you on oath what I myself have experienced from this man's words, and still experience even 215e now. Whenever I listen to him, my heart

44 Sileni and satyrs were snub-nosed, goatish companions of Dionysus; the satyr Marsyas challenged Apollo to a music contest on the flute and was flayed for losing.

leaps far more than a Corybant's, and tears pour out of me at his words; and I see a great many others going through the same thing. When I listened to Pericles and other good orators, I thought they spoke well, but I never felt anything like this: my soul wasn't thrown into turmoil, or indignant at the thought that I was living like a slave. But this Marsyas here has often 216a put me in such a state that it seemed to me life wasn't worth living the way I am.[45]

And you won't say that isn't true, Socrates. Even now I know perfectly well that if I were willing to lend him my ears, I couldn't hold out; I'd go through the same thing again. He forces me to admit that, though I'm still lacking in so much myself, I neglect myself and busy myself with the affairs of the Athenians. So I stop my ears by force, as if against the Sirens, and run off, so as not to sit here beside him until I grow old. And with him 216b alone of all people I've experienced something no one would think was in me: feeling ashamed before anyone. He's the only one I'm ashamed in front of. I know perfectly well that I can't argue with him that I shouldn't do what he tells me; but when I go away, I give in to the honors the crowd pays me. So I run away from him like a runaway slave, and whenever I see him, I'm ashamed of what I've admitted. 216c Many times I'd be glad to see him gone from the world of the living; but if that happened, I know well I'd be far more miserable. So I don't know what to do with this man.

That's what I and many others have been through from the piping of this satyr. But hear from me how like he is to the things I've compared him to, and how amazing his power is. You can be sure none of you 216d knows him. But I'll show you, since I've started. You see that Socrates is erotically drawn to beautiful boys, is always around them and is dazzled by them; and again, that he's ignorant of everything and knows nothing. Isn't that look of his just like a silenus? Very much so. He has wrapped it around his outside, like the carved silenus; but open him up, my

45 Corybants were worshippers who danced themselves into an ecstatic frenzy to the music of pipes and drums.

fellow drinkers, and how full of moderation do you think he is inside? Believe me, it doesn't matter to him in the least whether someone is beautiful—he despises that more 216e than anyone could imagine—or whether someone is rich, or has any other honor of the kind the crowd counts blessed. He considers all these possessions worth nothing, and us nothing too—I'm telling you—and he spends his whole life being ironic and playing games with people.

But when he's serious and opened up, I don't know if anyone has seen the images inside. I once saw them, though, and they seemed to me so divine and 217a golden and utterly beautiful and amazing that, in short, I had to do whatever Socrates told me. I thought he was serious about my youthful bloom, and I considered it a godsend and an amazing piece of luck: by granting Socrates my favors I'd get to hear everything he knew. For I was incredibly proud of my bloom. With this in mind—though before this I wasn't in the habit of being alone with him without an attendant—I then began sending 217b the attendant away and being with him alone. (I have to tell you the whole truth. So pay attention, and if I'm lying, Socrates, refute me.) Yes, gentlemen, I was with him alone, just the two of us, and I thought he'd straightaway talk to me the way a lover talks to his beloved in private, and I was delighted. But nothing of the kind happened at all. He'd talk with me as he usually did, spend the day with me, and go off home. After that I invited him to exercise 217c with me, and I exercised with him, thinking I'd get somewhere that way. So he exercised with me and wrestled with me many times with no one else there. And what need is there to say it? I got nowhere. Since I was getting nowhere this way, I decided I had to attack the man head-on and not let up, now that I'd set my hand to it; I had to find out at last what was going on. So I invite him to dinner, exactly like a lover laying a trap for his beloved. He didn't 217d accept this quickly either, but in time he was persuaded. The first time he came, he wanted to leave after dinner, and on that occasion I was embarrassed and let him go. But I laid my trap again: after we'd eaten I kept on talking far into the

night, and when he wanted to leave, I made the excuse that it was late and made him stay. So he lay down to rest on the couch next to mine, the one he'd dined on, and no one else was sleeping in the room but 217e us. Up to this point in my story it would be fine to tell it to anyone. But what comes next you wouldn't have heard me say, if, first, wine—with or without children, as the saying goes—weren't truthful; and second, it seems unjust to me, when I've come to praise Socrates, to hide a proud deed of his.[46]

What's more, I'm in the state of a man bitten by a snake. They say someone this has happened to won't tell anyone what it was like except those who've been bitten, since only they will understand 218a and forgive him if the pain drove him to dare to do and say anything at all. Well, I've been bitten by something more painful, and in the most painful place anyone can be bitten—in the heart, or the soul, or whatever one should call it, I've been struck and bitten by the words of philosophy, which cling more savagely than a viper when they take hold of a young soul with some talent, and make it do and say anything at all. And then I look around and see Phaedruses, Agathons, 218b Eryximachuses, Pausaniases, Aristodemuses and Aristophaneses—and what need to mention Socrates himself, and all the rest? You have all shared in the madness and Bacchic frenzy of philosophy. So you'll all hear it, because you'll forgive both what was done then and what's being said now. But the servants, and anyone else here who's uninitiated and uncultured—put very large doors over your ears.

Well then, gentlemen, when the lamp had gone out and 218c the slaves were outside, I decided I shouldn't be subtle with him at all but say freely what I thought. So I nudged him and said, "Socrates, are you asleep?"

"Not at all," he said.

"Do you know what I've decided?"

"What exactly?" he said.

46 Alcibiades combines two proverbs, "wine is truth" and "children tell the truth"; the phrase may also mean "with or without the slaves present."

"I think you're the only lover who's worthy of me," I said, "and it looks to me as though you're hesitant to bring it up with me. Here's how I feel: I think it would be really stupid not to grant you this favor too, along with anything else you might need, whether from my property [218d] or my friends. Nothing matters more to me than becoming as good as I possibly can, and I don't think anyone could be a more effective helper to me in that than you. So with a man like you I'd be far more ashamed before sensible people if I didn't grant my favors than I'd be before the foolish crowd if I did."

When he heard this, he said, very ironically and quite in his usual manner, "My dear Alcibiades, it looks as though you really are no fool, if what you say about me [218e] happens to be true, and there's some power in me through which you could become better. You must be seeing an extraordinary beauty in me, far superior to your own good looks.

"So if you've caught sight of it and are trying to get a share of it and trade beauty for beauty, you mean to get much the better of me: you're trying to acquire the reality of beauty in return for its appearance, and you really [219a] intend to trade 'gold for bronze.' But look more carefully, my wonderful friend, in case you don't notice that I'm nothing. The mind's sight begins to see sharply when the eyes' sight starts to lose its edge; and you're still far from that."[47]

I heard this and said, "Well, that's my side of it, and I haven't said any of it otherwise than as I mean it. You decide for yourself what you think is best for you and for me."

"Well," he said, "you're right about that. In the time to come [219b] we'll think it over and do whatever seems best to the two of us, about this and about everything else."

So, having heard and said this, and having let fly my arrows, as it were, I thought I'd wounded him. I got up, and without letting him say another word, I wrapped my own cloak around him —it was winter—lay down under that worn old cloak of his, threw my arms around this [219c] truly uncanny and amazing man,

47 In Homer's *Iliad*, Glaucus foolishly swaps his gold armor for Diomedes' bronze.

and lay there the whole night. And you won't say I'm lying about this either, Socrates. But when I'd done all this, he so completely got the better of me, and scorned and laughed at my bloom and insulted it—and that was the one thing I thought was really something, gentlemen of the jury (you're the jury on Socrates' arrogance)—for you can be sure, by the gods and goddesses, that I got up after a night with Socrates having slept no differently [219d] than if I'd slept beside my father or an older brother.

### SOCRATES AT WAR

*Alcibiades describes Socrates' endurance and courage on campaign at Potidaea and Delium.*

APOLLODORUS After that, what state of mind do you think I was in? I considered myself humiliated, yet I admired his nature, his moderation and his courage; I had met a man whose understanding and endurance I never thought I'd meet in anyone. So I couldn't find a way to be angry with him and lose his company, nor any way to win [219e] him over. I knew well that he was far more invulnerable to money, every inch of him, than Ajax was to iron, and the one thing I thought he could be caught by had slipped away from me. So I was at a loss, and I went around enslaved to the man as no one has ever been enslaved by anyone. All this had already happened to me, and after that we served together on the campaign to Potidaea and messed together there.[48]

First of all, in hardships he outdid not only me but everyone else. Whenever we were cut off somewhere, as happens on campaign, and were forced [220a] to go without food, the rest of us were nothing compared to him at enduring it. And again, when there was plenty, he alone was able to enjoy it, especially drinking: though he didn't want to drink, when he was made to he beat everyone; and, most amazing of all, no human being has ever seen Socrates drunk. I think we'll have proof of that shortly, too.

48 Potidaea, a city in the northern Aegean, revolted from Athens and was besieged by the Athenians in 432–430 BC.

Then again, in enduring the winter—the winters there are terrible—he did amazing things. 220b Once in particular, when there was the most terrible frost, and everyone either stayed indoors or, if anyone went out, was wrapped up in an amazing amount of clothing, with shoes on and their feet bound up in felt and sheepskins, he went out in all this wearing the same sort of cloak he had always worn before, and he walked barefoot over the ice more easily than the others did in shoes. The soldiers eyed 220c him suspiciously, thinking he was looking down on them. So much for that. But "what a thing this was that the strong man did and endured" there once on campaign is worth hearing. Something occurred to him there early in the morning, and he stood in one spot considering it; and when he made no progress, he didn't give up but stood there searching.[49] By now it was midday, and people noticed, and in amazement they said to one another that Socrates had been standing there since dawn thinking about something. Finally, when evening came, some of the Ionians, after they'd eaten— 220d it was summer then—brought out their bedding and slept in the cool, while at the same time watching him to see whether he'd stand there all night as well. And he stood until dawn came and the sun rose; then he said a prayer to the sun and went away. And in battle, if you like—it's only right to give him credit for this—in the battle for which the generals gave me the prize for valor, no one 220e else saved me but this man. I was wounded, and he wouldn't leave me behind, but rescued both my armor and me. And I, Socrates, even then urged the generals to give you the prize—you can't blame me for this or say I'm lying. But when the generals, out of regard for my rank, wanted to give the prize to me, you yourself were more eager than the generals that I should get it rather than you.

What's more, gentlemen, Socrates was worth seeing when the army was retreating from Delium 221a in a rout. I happened to be there on horseback, and he was in infantry armor. The men were already scattered, and he was retreating along with

49 The quoted line is from Homer's *Odyssey*, where Helen describes Odysseus.

Laches. I come upon them, and as soon as I see them I tell them both to take heart, and I said I wouldn't abandon them. There I got an even better view of Socrates than at Potidaea—I was less afraid myself, being on horseback. First, how far he outdid 221b Laches in keeping his head; and then, Aristophanes, it seemed to me that he was making his way there just as he does here, in that phrase of yours, "strutting and casting his eyes from side to side," calmly watching both friends and enemies, making it clear to everyone, even from far off, that if anyone laid a hand on this man, he'd defend himself very vigorously.[50] That's why both he and his companion got away safely. In war, people pretty much don't touch those who carry themselves like that; they go after those fleeing 221c headlong.

Now, there are many other amazing things one could praise Socrates for. But of his other activities one might perhaps say the same sort of thing about someone else too; what deserves all our wonder is that he's like no other human being, either of the ancients or of those alive now. What Achilles was like, you could compare with Brasidas and others; and what Pericles was like, with Nestor and Antenor—and there are others too— 221d and you could make comparisons for the rest in the same way. But what this man is like in his strangeness, both himself and his words, you couldn't find anyone even close to if you searched, either among people now or among the ancients—unless, perhaps, you compared him as I do, not to any human being but to sileni and satyrs, both him and his words.[51]

In fact, there's this too that I left out at the start: his words are also very like the sileni that open up. 221e If you were willing to listen to Socrates' words, they would seem quite ridiculous at first: such are the words and phrases they wrap themselves in on the outside, like the hide of some outrageous satyr.

He talks about pack-asses and blacksmiths and shoemakers and tanners, and he always seems to be saying the same things

50 At Delium in Boeotia the Athenians were badly defeated in 424 BC; Laches was an Athenian general, and the quoted phrase is from Aristophanes' *Clouds*, which mocked Socrates.

in the same words, so that anyone inexperienced and foolish 222a would laugh at his words. But if you see them opened up and get inside them, you'll find first that they are the only words that have sense inside them, and then that they are utterly divine, and hold the most images of excellence within them, and reach furthest—or rather, reach to everything that anyone who means to be fine and good should look into.

That, gentlemen, is what I praise Socrates for; and I've mixed in what I hold against him, and told you how he insulted me. And it isn't 222b only me he's done this to, but also Charmides son of Glaucon, Euthydemus son of Diocles, and a great many others: he deceives them as if he were their lover, and then sets himself up as the beloved instead of the lover. So I'm telling you too, Agathon: don't be deceived by this man; learn from what we went through and be on your guard, and don't, as the proverb has it, learn like a fool by suffering. 222c

### THE PARTY BREAKS UP

*Revelers overrun the party, the guests drink or sleep, and Socrates leaves at dawn for the Lyceum.*

APOLLODORUS When Alcibiades had said this, there was laughter at his frankness, since he seemed to be still in love with Socrates. So Socrates said, "You seem sober to me, Alcibiades. Otherwise you'd never have circled round so cleverly, trying to hide the reason you said all this, and slipped it in at the end as if in passing, as though you hadn't said everything for this very purpose: to set me and 222d Agathon at odds, thinking I should love you and no one else, and Agathon should be loved by you and not by a single other person. But you didn't get away with it: this satyr play of yours, this silenus play, has been exposed.

51 Brasidas was a Spartan general killed in 422 BC; Nestor and Antenor were the wise, eloquent elders of the Greeks and Trojans in Homer.

Now, my dear Agathon, don't let him gain anything by it; take steps so that no one will set you and me at odds."[52]

Then Agathon said, "You know, Socrates, you may well be 222e right. I take it as a sign, too, that he lay down between you and me, to keep us apart. Well, he won't gain anything by it; I'll come over and lie down next to you."

"By all means," said Socrates. "Lie down here, on my other side."

"Zeus!" said Alcibiades. "What I have to put up with from this man, once again! He thinks he has to get the better of me at every turn. But at least, you amazing man, let Agathon lie between us."

"But that's impossible," said Socrates. "You praised me, and now I have to praise the person on my right.

"So if Agathon lies down on your other side, surely he won't praise me all over again before he's been praised by me instead? Let it be, 223a my dear fellow, and don't begrudge the young man being praised by me. I really do want to sing his praises."

"Oh, wonderful!" said Agathon. "Alcibiades, there's no way I could stay here. I'm moving, no matter what, so I can be praised by Socrates."

"There it is, the usual thing," said Alcibiades. "When Socrates is around, no one else can get a share of the beautiful boys. And look how easily he's found a plausible argument now, to get this one lying beside him." 223b

So Agathon got up to go and lie down beside Socrates. But suddenly a great crowd of revelers arrived at the doors, and, finding them open because someone was going out, they walked straight in to join them and lay down. The whole place was in an uproar, and with all order gone, everyone was made to drink a huge amount of wine. Aristodemus said that Eryximachus and Phaedrus and some others went off home, and that he himself fell asleep 223c and slept a very long time, since the nights were long, and woke up toward daybreak, when the cocks were

52 A satyr play was a bawdy burlesque with a chorus of satyrs, performed after a set of three tragedies.

already crowing. When he woke up, he saw that the others were either asleep or gone, and that only Agathon, Aristophanes and Socrates were still awake, drinking from a large bowl that they passed to the right. Socrates was talking with them. As for the rest 223d of the conversation, Aristodemus said he didn't remember it, since he hadn't been there from the beginning and kept nodding off; but the gist of it, he said, was that Socrates was pressing them to agree that the same man should know how to write comedy and tragedy, and that someone who is a tragic poet by skill is a comic poet as well. They were being driven to this, and weren't following very closely, and kept nodding off; Aristophanes fell asleep first, and then, when it was already day, Agathon. Once he'd put them to sleep, Socrates got up and left, and Aristodemus followed him, as he usually did. Socrates went to the Lyceum, washed, and spent the rest of the day as he would any other; and having spent it that way, he went home in the evening to rest.[53]

53 The Lyceum was a gymnasium just outside Athens, one of Socrates' favorite haunts.