

rate, everyone whom Eros touches proves to be a poet, 'though he be without the Muses before.' We can, accordingly, properly make use of this fact to infer that in every kind of musical making [i.e., poetry] Eros is a good poet [maker], for what one does not have and does not know, one could neither give to another nor teach another. And who will oppose the fact that the making of all animals is nothing but Eros' wisdom, by which all the animals come to be and grow? And don't we know that, in the case of the arts, whomever this god teaches turns out to be renowned and conspicuous in craftsmanship, and that he whom Eros does not touch remains obscure? Archery, for example, medicine, and divination were invented by Apollo when desire and love were his guides; and thus he too must be a pupil of Eros, as are the Muses in music, Hephaestus in blacksmithing, Athena in weaving, and Zeus 'the captain of gods and human beings.' So it is plain that, when Eros came to be among them, the affairs of the gods were arranged out of love of beauty—for there is no eros present in ugliness. But before that, as I said at the start, many awesome events took place among the gods, as is said, through the monarchy of Necessity; whereas since the birth of this god, all good things have resulted for gods as well as for human beings from loving the beautiful things.

^c "Thus Eros, in my opinion, Phaedrus, stands first, because he is the fairest and the best, and, after this, he is the cause for everyone else of the same sort of fair and good things. It occurs to me to say something in meter too, that he is the one who makes

Peace among human beings, on the open sea calm
And cloudlessness, the resting of winds and sleeping of care.

^d He empties us of estrangement, he fills us with attachment; he arranges in all such gatherings as this our coming together with one another; in festivals, in dances, in sacrifices he proves himself a guide; furnishing gentleness, banishing wildness; loving giver of amity; no giver of enmity; gracious, good; spectacular to the wise, wonder-ful to the gods; enviable to the have-nots, desirable to the haves; father of luxury; splendor, glory; graces, yearning, and longing—caring for good ones, careless of bad ones; in toiling, in fearing, in longing, in speaking, the best governor, mariner, fellow warrior, and savior; the ornament of all gods and human beings, the fairest and best guide, whom every real man must follow hymning beautifully, and sharing the song Eros sings in charming the thought of all gods and human beings.

"Here, Phaedrus, you have the speech from me," he said. "Let it be dedicated to the god, sharing, as far as I am able, partly in playfulness, partly in measured earnestness."

Aristodemus said that when Agathon had finished speaking, all those present applauded vigorously, as the youth had spoken in a way as suited to himself as to the god. Socrates then said, with a glance at Eryximachus, "Son of Akoumenos," he said, "is it your opinion that my long-standing fear was groundless, and that I was not prophetic, when I said before that Agathon would speak in a marvelous way, and that I should be at a loss?"

^a "In my opinion," Eryximachus said, "your first point was indeed prophetic, that Agathon would speak well; but as to the other, that you would be at a loss, that I do not believe."

^b "You blessed innocent! How can you say that?" Socrates said. "Am I and anyone else whatsoever not to be at a loss after so fair and varied a speech has been made? Though the rest was not quite so marvelous, that bit at the end—who would not be thunderstruck on hearing the beauty of its words and phrases? I for my part, on reflecting that I myself should be unable to say anything nearly as beautiful, almost ran off and was gone in shame—if I had any place to go. For the speech reminded me of Gorgias; so I was simply affected as in the saying of Homer's, I was afraid that Agathon in his speech would at last send the head of the dread speaker Gorgias against my speeches and turn me to very stone in speechlessness.¹³ And then I realized that, after all, I am to be laughed at for having agreed to eulogize Eros in turn with you, and for claiming that I was skilled in erotics; for as it has turned out, I know nothing of the matter, nor how one is to eulogize anything. For in my stupidity I believed the truth had to be told about anything that was given a eulogy, and that this was the underpinning, and that by selecting the most beautiful parts of the truth one was to arrange them in the seemliest manner possible. And I was quite filled with the proud thought that I should speak well, since I knew the truth about praising anything. But it was not this after all, it seems, that was meant by the fair praising of anything, but the attribution to the matter at hand of the greatest and fairest things possible regardless of whether this was so or not. And if the praise were false, it was of no importance anyway; for the injunction was, it seems, that each

¹³ A pun on Gorgias and Gorgon, whose head Odysseus was afraid Persephone would send against him if he lingered in Hades (*Odyssey*, 11.632). "Dread speaker" also means "skilled speaker."

of us should be thought to eulogize Eros, and not just eulogize him. It is for this reason, I suspect, that you leave no argument unturned and dedicate each and every argument to Eros. And you assert that he is of this sort and that sort and the cause of so many things, so that he may seem to be as beautiful and good as possible—plainly to those who do not know, for this surely is not the case for those who do know—and so the praise turns out to be beautiful and awesome. But after all I did not know that this was to be the manner of praise, and in ignorance I came to an agreement with you that I would take my turn in praising. So the tongue promised but the mind did not;¹⁴ let me then call it quits. I am not a eulogist in this fashion: I am simply incapable of it. Not that I am unwilling—on the contrary I am willing—if you want, to tell the truth on my own terms, so long as my words are not to be compared with your speeches, lest I be laughed at. Decide, then, Phaedrus, if you have any need for such a speech too, for hearing the truth being said about Eros, even though the phrasing and arrangement of the sentences just fall as they come.”

He said that Phaedrus and the others urged Socrates to speak in whatever way he himself believed he had to speak.

“Allow me further, Phaedrus,” he said, “to ask Agathon about a few small points, in order that when I have got him to agree with me I can go ahead and speak.”

“Well, I allow it,” Phaedrus said. “Ask.” After this he said that Socrates began from somewhat the following point.

“Well, dear Agathon, in my opinion you made a fine start to your speech, in saying that one had to show first what sort of being Eros himself is, and then his deeds. I very much admire this beginning. So come now, since you have explained fairly and magnificently all the rest about what sort he is, then tell me this as well about Eros: is Eros the sort that is love of something or of nothing? I am not asking whether he is of a mother or of a father (for the question whether Eros is love of mother or father would be laughable), but just as if I asked about this very word, *father*—is the father father of someone or not? You should doubtless tell me, if you wanted to give a fair reply, that the father is father of a son or daughter. Isn't that so?”

“Of course,” Agathon said.

“And the same is true of the mother?” This too was agreed upon.

14. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 612: “The tongue swore, but the mind did not.”

“Answer me just a little more,” Socrates said, “so that you might come to understand better what I want. Suppose I asked, ‘What about this point? Is a brother, just in terms of what he is, a brother of someone, or isn't he?’” He answered that he is.

“And of a brother or a sister, right?” He agreed.

“Do try, then,” he said, “to tell about love as well. Is Eros love of nothing or something?”

“Of course he is of something.”

“Keep this fast in your memory, this something of which you claim he is,” Socrates said, “but now say only this much: that Eros that is the love of something, does he desire this something or not?”

“Of course he does,” he said.

“And is it when he has, or does not have, that which he desires and loves, that he desires and loves it?”

“It is at least likely that he does not have it,” he said.

“Think,” Socrates said, “is it not a necessity rather than a likelihood that the desirous thing desires what it is in need of, and does not desire unless it is in need? For in my opinion, Agathon, it is a marvelous necessity. What is your opinion?”

“It's my opinion too,” he said.

“What you say is fair. Would anyone want to be tall if he were tall, or strong if he were strong?”

“From what has been agreed upon, that would be impossible.”

“For he surely would not be in need of those things that he already is.”

“What you say is true.”

“So that if he wanted to be strong being strong,” Socrates said, “and swift being swift, and healthy being healthy—I say this so that we may not deceive ourselves, for one might perhaps suppose with regard to these and all cases of this sort that those who are of this sort and have these things desire those things that they have—but if you have these cases in mind, Agathon, then who would desire each of those things that of necessity he has at the moment when, whether he wants to or not, he has it? For whenever anyone says, ‘I am healthy and want to be healthy or I am wealthy and want to be wealthy, and I desire those very things that I have,’ we should tell him, ‘You, human being, possessing wealth, health, and strength, want to possess them also in the future, since at the present moment at least, whether you want to or not, you have them. Consider then, whenever you say, ‘I want the present things,’ if you mean anything else than, ‘I want the things of the present moment to be

present also in future time." Would he agree to that? Aristodemus said that Agathon consented.

Socrates then said, "To want that those things be safe and present for him in future time, is to love that which is not yet at hand for him and which he does not have."

"Of course," he said.
 "So he and everyone else who desires what is not at hand desires what is not present; and what he does not have and what he himself is not and what he is in need of—it is things like that of which desire and love are, right?"

"Of course," he said.
 "Come then," Socrates said. "Let us draw up an agreement about what has been said. Eros is love, first of all, of some things, and secondly, of whatever things the need for which is present to him."

"Yes," he said.
 "Would you now think back then to what you asserted Eros to be of in your speech; but if you want, I shall remind you. I believe you spoke somewhat along these lines—that matters were arranged by the gods through love of beautiful things, for there would not be love of ugly things. Weren't you speaking somewhat along these lines?"

"I said so," Agathon said.
 "And what you say is reasonable, comrade," Socrates said. "And if this is so, Eros would be nothing else than love of beauty, but not of ugliness?" He agreed.

"Hasn't it been agreed that that of which one is in need and does not have one loves?"

"Yes," he said.

"So Eros is in need of and does not have beauty?"

"Of necessity," he said.

"What about this? That which is in need of beauty and in no way possesses beauty, do you say that it is beautiful?"

"Certainly not."

"Do you still agree then that Eros is beautiful, if this is so?"

And Agathon said, "It's probable, Socrates, that I knew nothing of what I had said."

"And yet spoke you beautifully, Agathon," he said. "But, still, tell me about a small point. Are the good things beautiful as well in your opinion?"

"Yes, in mine."

"So if Eros is in need of beautiful things, and the good things are fair, he would be in need of the good things as well."

"I, Socrates," he said, "would not be able to contradict you; so let it be as you say."

"Not at all, my dear Agathon. It is rather that you are unable to contradict the truth," he said, "since it is not at all hard to contradict Socrates."

"And I shall let you go for now, and turn to the speech about Eros that I once heard from a woman, Diotima of Mantinea. She was wise in these and many other things; when the Athenians once made a sacrifice before the plague, she caused the onset of the disease to be delayed ten years; and she is the very one who taught me erotics. The speech that she was wont to make, I shall now try to tell you all on the basis of what has been agreed on between Agathon and myself; and I shall try to do it on my own, as best I can. For just as you explained, Agathon, one must first tell who Eros himself is and what sort he is, and then tell his deeds. In my opinion, it is easiest to do this in just the same way that the stranger once did in quizzing me. For I came pretty near, in speaking to her, to saying the same sort of things that Agathon said to me now—that Eros was a great god, and was the love of beautiful things. She then went on to refute me with those same arguments with which I refuted him—that he is neither beautiful, according to my argument, nor good."

"And I said, 'How do you mean it, Diotima? Is Eros after all ugly and bad?'"

"And she said, 'Hush! Or do you believe that whatever is not beautiful must necessarily be ugly?'"

"Absolutely."

"And whatever is not wise, without understanding? Or were you unaware that there is something in between wisdom and lack of understanding?"

"What is this?"

"Don't you know," she said, "that to opine correctly without being able to give an account [*logos*] is neither to know expertly (for how could expert knowledge be an unaccounted for [*alogon*] matter?) nor lack of understanding (for how could lack of understanding be that which has it upon what is)? But surely correct opinion is like that, somewhere between intelligence and lack of understanding."

"What you say is true," I said.

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^B “Then do not compel what is not beautiful to be ugly, or what is not good, to be bad. So too since you yourself agree that Eros is not good or beautiful, do not at all believe that he must be ugly and bad; she said, but something between the two of them.”

“And yet,” I said, “it is agreed on by all that he is a great god.”

“Do you mean by all who do not know,” she said, “or by those who know?”

“No, by all together.”

^C “And she said with a laugh, ‘And how, Socrates, could he be agreed to be a great god by those who deny even that he is a god?’”

“Who are these?” I said.

“You are one,” she said, “and I am one.”

“And I said, ‘How can you say this?’ I said.

“And she said, ‘It’s easy. Tell me, don’t you assert that all gods are happy and beautiful? Or would you dare to deny that any one of the gods is beautiful and happy?’”

“By Zeus, I would not,” I said.

“But don’t you mean by the happy precisely those who possess the good things and the beautiful things?”

“Of course.”

^D “And do you hold to the agreement that Eros out of need for the good and beautiful things desires those very things of which he is in need?”

“Yes, I hold to it.”

“How then could he who is without a share in the beautiful and good things be a god?”

“In no way, it seems.”

“Do you see then,” she said, “that you too hold that Eros is not a god?”

“What would Eros then be?” I said. “A mortal?”

“Hardly that.”

“Well, what then?”

“Just as before,” she said, “between mortal and immortal.”

“What is that, Diotima?”

^E “A great daemon, Socrates, for everything daemonic¹⁵ is between god and mortal.”

15. *Daemonic* (*daimōnion*) is either a neuter diminutive of *daimon* or a neuter adjective, related to *daimon* as divine (*theion*) is to good (*theos*). This neuter, in any case, is the theme of the dialogue up to Socrates’ speech that concludes with “vulgar and low.”

“With what kind of power?” I said.

“Interpreting and ferrying to gods things from human beings and to human beings things from gods: the requests and sacrifices of human beings, the orders and exchanges-for-sacrifices of gods; for it is in the middle of both and fills up the interval so that the whole itself has been bound together by it. Through this proceeds all divination and the art of the priests who deal with sacrifices, initiatory rituals, incantations, and every kind of soothsaying and magic. A god does not mingle with a human being; but through this occurs the whole intercourse and conversation of gods with human beings while they are awake and asleep. And he who is wise in things like this is a daemonic man; but he who is wise in anything else concerning either arts or handicrafts is vulgar and low. These daemons are many and of all kinds; and one of them is Eros.”

“Who is his father?” I said, “And who is his mother?”

^A “It is rather long,” she said, “to explain; but I shall tell you all the same. When Aphrodite was born, all the other gods as well as Poros [Resource] the son of Metis [Intelligence] were at a feast;¹⁶ and when they had dined, Penia [Poverty] arrived to beg for something—as might be expected at a festivity—and she hung about near the door. Then Poros got drunk on nectar—for there was not yet wine—and, heavy of head, went into the garden of Zeus and slept. Then Penia, who because of her own lack of resources was plotting to have a child made out of Poros, reclined beside him and conceived Eros. It is for this reason that Eros has been the attendant and servant of Aphrodite, as he was conceived on her birthday; for he is by nature a lover in regard to the beautiful, and Aphrodite is beautiful. So because Eros is the son of Poros and Penia, his situation is in some such case as this. First of all, he is always poor; and he is far from being tender and beautiful, as the many believe, but is tough, squalid, shoeless, and homeless, always lying on the ground without a blanket or a bed, sleeping in doorways and along waysides in the open air; he has the nature of his mother, always dwelling with neediness. But in accordance with his father he plots to trap the beautiful and the good, and is courageous,

16. Metis is the first goddess Zeus marries after the wars among the gods are over. He is warned in time not to allow her child Athena to be born, lest Athena’s children overthrow him; he swallows Metis, and Athena is later born from the head of Zeus (see Hesiod, *Theogony*, 886–900).

stout, and keen, a skilled hunter, always weaving devices, desirous of practical wisdom and inventive, philosophizing through all his life, a skilled magician, druggist, sophist. And his nature is neither immortal nor mortal; but sometimes on the same day he flourishes and lives, whenever he has resources; and sometimes he dies, but gets to live again through the nature of his father. And as that which is supplied to him is always gradually flowing out, Eros is never either without resources nor wealthy, but is in between wisdom and lack of understanding. For here is the way it is: No one of the gods philosophizes and desires to become wise—for he is so—nor if there is anyone else who is wise, does he philosophize. Nor, in turn, do those who lack understanding philosophize and desire to become wise; for it is precisely this that makes the lack of understanding so difficult—that if a man is not beautiful and good, nor intelligent, he has the opinion that that is sufficient for him. Consequently, he who does not believe that he is in need does not desire that which he does not believe he needs.

“Then who, Diotima, are the philosophizers,” I said, ‘if they are neither the wise nor those who lack understanding?’

“By now it is perfectly plain even to a child,” she said, ‘that they are those between them both, of whom Eros would be one. For wisdom is one of the most beautiful things, and Eros is love in regard to the beautiful, and so Eros is—necessarily—a philosopher; and as a philosopher he is between being wise and being without understanding. His manner of birth is responsible for this, for he is of a wise and resourceful father, and an unwise and resourceless mother. Now the nature of the daemon, dear Socrates, is this; but as for the one whom you believed to be Eros, it is not at all surprising that you had this impression. You believed, in my opinion, as I conjecture from what you say, that the beloved is Eros, and is not that which loves. It is for this reason, I believe, that Eros seemed to you to be wholly beautiful. For the beloved thing is truly beautiful, delicate, perfect, and most blessed; but that which loves has another kind of look, the sort that I just explained.’

“And I said, ‘All right, stranger, what you say is fine. If Eros is of this sort, of what use is he for human beings?’”

“It is this, Socrates,” she said, ‘that I shall next try to teach you. Now, Eros is of that sort and was born in that way; and he is of the beautiful things, as you assert. But what if someone were to ask us, “What about those beautiful things of which Eros is, Socrates and Diotima?” It is more

clearly expressed as follows: He who loves the beautiful things loves—what does he love?’

“And I said, ‘That they be his.’”

“But the answer,” she said, ‘still longs for the following sort of question: what will he have who gets the beautiful things?’”

“I said that I was hardly capable of giving a ready answer to this question.

“Well,” she said. ‘What if someone changed his query and used the good instead of the beautiful? Come, Socrates, the lover of the good things loves: what does he love?’”

“That they be his,” I said.

“And what will he who gets the good things have?”

“This,” I said, ‘I can answer more adequately: he will be happy.’”

“That,” she said, ‘is because the happy are happy by the acquisition of good things; and there is no further need to ask, “For what consequence does he who wants to be happy want to be so?” But the answer is thought to be a complete one.’

“What you say is true,” I said.

“This wanting and this eros, do you suppose they are common to all human beings, and all want the good things to be theirs always, or how do you mean it?”

“That way,” I said. ‘They are common to all.’

“Why is it, then, Socrates,” she said, ‘that we deny that everyone loves—given, that is, that everyone loves the same things and always—but we say that some love and some do not?’”

“I too,” I said, ‘am amazed.’

“Well,” she said, ‘don’t persist in your amazement; for we detach from eros a certain kind of eros and give it the name eros, imposing upon it the name of the whole; while in the other cases we employ several different names.’

“What are those?” I said.

“I like the following: You know that “making” has a wide range; for, you see, every kind of making is responsible for anything whatsoever that is on the way from what is not to what is. And thus all the productions that are dependent on the arts are makings, and all the craftsmen engaged in them are makers.’

“What you say is true.”

“But nevertheless,” she said, ‘you know that not all craftsmen are

called makers but have other names; and one part is separated off from all of making—that which is concerned with music and meters—and is addressed by the name of the whole. For this alone is called poetry; and those who have this part of making are poets.'

"What you say is true," I said.

"So too in the case of eros. In brief, eros is the whole desire of good things and of being happy, "the greatest and all-beguiling eros." But those who turn toward it in many other ways, in terms of either money-making, love of gymnastics, or philosophy, are neither said to love nor called lovers; whereas those who earnestly apply themselves to a certain single kind, get the name of the whole, love, and are said to love and called lovers.'

"What you say is probably true," I said.

"And there is a certain account," she said, 'according to which those who seek their own halves are lovers. But my speech denies that eros is of a half or of a whole—unless, comrade, that half or whole can be presumed to be really good; for human beings are willing to have their own feet and hands cut off, if their opinion is that their own are no good. For I suspect that each does not cleave to his own (unless one calls the good one's own and belonging to oneself, and the bad alien to oneself) since there is nothing that human beings love other than the good. Or is it your opinion that they do?'

"No, by Zeus," I said, 'that is not my opinion.'

"Then," she said, 'is it to be said unqualifiedly that human beings love the good?'

"Yes," I said.

"What about this? Mustn't it be added,' she said, 'that they love the good to be theirs?'

"It must be added.'

"And not only that it be theirs,' she said, 'but always as well?'

"This too must be added.'

"So, in sum,' she said, 'eros is of the good's being one's own always.'

"What you say is most true," I said.

"Since eros is always this,' she said, 'then in what manner and in what activity would the earnestness and intensity of those who pursue the good be called eros. What in fact are they doing when they act so? Can you tell?'

"If I could, Diotima, then I should not, you know, in admiration of your wisdom,' I said, 'resort to you to learn this very thing.'

"Well, I shall tell you,' she said. 'Their deed is bringing to birth in beauty both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul.'

"Whatever it is that you mean,' I said, 'is in need of divination, and I do not begin to understand.'

"Well, I shall speak more clearly,' she said. 'All human beings, Socrates,' she said, 'conceive both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul, and whenever they are at a certain age, their nature desires to give birth; but it is incapable of giving birth in ugliness, but only in beauty, for the being together of man and woman is a bringing to birth. This thing, pregnancy and bringing to birth, is divine, and it is immortal in the animal that is mortal. It is impossible for this to happen in the unfitting; and the ugly is unfitting with everything divine, but the beautiful is fitting. So Kallone [Beauty] is the Moira [Fate] and Eileithyia¹⁷ for birth. It is for these reasons that whenever the pregnant draws near to beauty, it becomes glad and in its rejoicing dissolves and then gives birth and produces offspring; but whenever it draws near to ugliness, then, downcast and in pain, it contracts inwardly, turns away, shrinks up, and does not produce offspring, but checking the course of the pregnancy, has a hard time of it. So this is why someone who is pregnant, with breasts already swelling, flutters so much around the beautiful, because the one who has the beautiful releases him from great labor pains. For eros is not, Socrates,' she said, 'of the beautiful, as you believe.'

"Well, what then?'

"It is of engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful.'

"All right," I said.

"It is more than all right,' she said. 'And why is eros of engendering? Because engendering is born forever and is immortal as far as that can happen to a mortal being. From what has been agreed to, it is necessary to desire immortality with good, provided eros is of the good's always being one's own. So it is necessary from this argument that eros be of immortality too.'

"All of these things she used to teach me whenever she made her speeches about erotics. And once she also asked, 'What do you believe, Socrates, is the cause of this eros and desire? Or aren't you aware how uncanny is the disposition of all the beasts (the footed as well as the winged) whenever they desire to produce offspring? They are all ill and

17. Fate and Eileithyia are goddesses who preside over birth, and Kallone is a cult name of Artemis-Hecate.

^B of an erotic disposition, first concerning actual intercourse with one another, then later concerning the nurture of what is generated. And they are ready to fight to the finish, the weakest against the strongest, for the sake of those they have generated, and to die on their behalf; and they are willingly racked by starvation and stop at nothing to nourish their offspring. One might suppose,' she said, 'that human beings do this from calculation, but as for the beasts, what is the cause of their erotic disposition's being of this sort? Can you say?'

'And I again said that I did not know; and she said, 'Do you really think you will ever become skilled in erotics, if you do not understand this?'

"But you see, Diotima, that is the reason—as I said just now—why I have come to you: I know I am in need of teachers. But do tell me the cause of these things as well as of the rest that concern erotics.'

"If you put your trust,' she said, 'in the statement that by nature eros is of that which we have often agreed to, don't persist in your amazement. For in the eros of the beasts, in terms of the same argument as that concerning men, the mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be forever and immortal. Mortal nature is capable of immortality only in this way, the way of generation, because it is always leaving behind another that is young to replace the old. For while each one of the animals is said to live and be the same (for example, one is spoken of as the same from the time one is a child until one is an old man; and though he never has the same things in himself, nevertheless, he is called the same), he is forever becoming young in some respects as he suffers losses in other respects: his hair, flesh, bones, blood, and his whole body. And this is so not only in terms of the body but also in terms of the soul: his ways, character, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, each of these things is never present as the same for each, but they are partly coming to be and partly perishing. And what is far stranger still is that in the case of our sciences too not only are some coming to be while others are perishing (and we are never the same in terms of the sciences either); but also each single one of the sciences is affected in the same way. For studying, as it is called, is done on the grounds that the science is passing out from us; for forgetfulness is the exiting of science; and studying, by instilling a fresh memory again to replace the departing one, preserves the science, so that it may be thought to be the same. For in this way every mortal thing is preserved; not by being absolutely the same forever, as the divine is, but by

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^B the fact that that which is departing and growing old leaves behind another young thing that is as it was. By this device, Socrates,' she said, 'the mortal shares in immortality, both body and all the rest; but the immortal has a different way. So do not be amazed if everything honors by nature its own offshoot; for it is for the sake of immortality that this zeal and eros attend everything.'

'And when I had heard her speech I was amazed and said, 'Really?' I said, 'Wiseest Diotima, is it truly like this?'

"And she, like the perfect sophists, said, 'Know it well, Socrates,' she said, 'inasmuch as in the case of human beings, if you were willing to glance at their love of honor, you would be amazed at their irrationality unless you understand what I have said and reflect how uncanny their disposition is made by their love of renown, "and their setting up immortal fame for eternity"; and for the sake of fame even more than for their children, they are ready to run all risks, to exhaust their money, to toil at every sort of toil, and to die. For do you suppose,' she said, 'that Alcestis would have died for Admetus' sake, or Achilles would have died after Patroclus, or your own Codrus would have died before his sons for the sake of their kingship, if they had not believed that there would be an immortal remembering of their virtue, which we now retain? Far from it,' she said, 'but I believe that all do all things for the sake of immortal virtue and a famous reputation of that sort; and the better they are, so much the more is it thus; for they love the immortal. Now there are those who are pregnant in terms of their bodies,' she said, 'and they turn rather to women and are erotic in this way, furnishing for themselves through the procreation of children immortality, remembrance, and happiness (as they believe) for all future time. But there are others who are pregnant in terms of the soul—for these, in fact,' she said, 'are those who in their souls even more than in their bodies conceive those things that it is appropriate for soul to conceive and bear. And what is appropriate for soul? Prudence and the rest of virtue; it is of these things that all the poets and all the craftsmen who are said to be inventive are procreators; and by far the greatest and most beautiful part of prudence,' she said, 'is the arranging and ordering of the affairs of cities and households. Its name is moderation and justice. So whenever someone from youth onward is pregnant in his soul with these virtues, if he is divine and of suitable age, then he desires to give birth and produce offspring. And he goes round in search, I believe, of the beautiful in which he might generate; for he will

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never generate in the ugly. So it is beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones to which he cleaves because he is pregnant; and if he meets a beautiful, generous, and naturally gifted soul, he cleaves strongly to the two (body and soul) together. And to this human being he is at once fluent in speeches about virtue—of what sort the good man must be and what he must practice—and he tries to educate him. So in touching the one who is beautiful, I suspect, and in association with him, he engenders and gives birth to offspring with which he was long pregnant; and whether the [lover] is present or absent he holds the beautiful one in memory, and nurtures with him that which has been generated in common. Therefore, those of this sort maintain a greater association and firmer friendship with one another than do those who have children in common, because the children they share in common are more beautiful and more immortal. And everyone would choose to have for himself children like these rather than the human kind; and if one looks at Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets, one envies them: what offspring of themselves they have left behind! For as these offspring are in their own right immortal, they supply the poets with immortal fame and memory. And if you want, she said, 'think of the children that Lyncurgus left behind in Sparta, the preservers of Sparta and, to exaggerate a little, of Greece. Solon too is honored among you through his engendering of the laws; and other men as well in many other regions, among Greeks and among barbarians, by their showing forth of many beautiful deeds, have engendered every kind of virtue. It is to these that many sanctuaries are now dedicated through children of this kind; while through the human sort there are no sanctuaries for anyone yet.

"Now perhaps, Socrates, you too might be initiated into these erotics; but as for the perfect revelations—for which the others are means, if one were to proceed correctly on the way—I do not know if you would be able to be initiated into them. Now I shall speak, she said. 'I shall not falter in my zeal, do try to follow, if you are able. He who is to move correctly in this matter must begin while young to go to beautiful bodies. And first of all, if the guide is guiding correctly, he must love one body and there generate beautiful speeches. Then he must realize that the beauty that is in any body whatsoever is related to that in another body; and if he must pursue the beauty of looks, it is great folly not to believe that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. And with this realization he must be the lover of all beautiful bodies and in contempt slacken this

[erotic] intensity for only one body, in the belief that it is petty. After this he must believe that the beauty in souls is more honorable than that in the body. So that even if someone who is decent in his soul has only a slight youthful charm, the lover must be content with it, and love and cherish him, and engender and seek such speeches as will make the young better; in order that [the lover], on his part, may be compelled to behold the beautiful in pursuits and laws, and to see that all this is akin to itself, so that he may come to believe that the beauty of the body is something trivial. And after these pursuits, he must lead [the beloved] on to the sciences, so that he [himself, the lover] may see the beauty of sciences, and in looking at the beautiful, which is now so vast, no longer be content like a lackey with the beauty in one, of a boy, of some human being, or of one practice, nor be a sorry sort of slave and petty calculator; but with a permanent turn to the vast open sea of the beautiful, behold it and give birth—in ungrudging philosophy—to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts; until, there strengthened and increased, he may discern a certain single philosophical science, which has as its object the following sort of beauty. Try to pay as close attention as you can, she said. 'Whoever has been educated up to this point in erotics, beholding successively and correctly the beautiful things, in now going to the perfect end of erotics shall suddenly glimpse something wonderfully beautiful in its nature—that very thing, Socrates, for whose sake alone all the prior labors were undertaken—something that is, first of all, always being and neither coming to be nor perishing; nor increasing nor passing away; and secondly, not beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, nor at one time so, and at another time not—either with respect to the beautiful or the ugly—nor here beautiful and there ugly, as being beautiful to some and ugly to others; nor in turn will the beautiful be imagined by him as a kind of face or hands or anything else in which body shares, nor as any speech nor any science, and not as being somewhere in something else (for example, in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else), but as it is alone by itself and with itself, always being of a single form; while all other beautiful things that share in it do so in such a way that while it neither becomes anything more or less, nor is affected at all, the rest do come to be and perish. So whenever anyone begins to glimpse that beauty as he goes on up from these things through the correct practice of pederasty, he must come close to touching the perfect end. For this is what it is to proceed correctly, or to be led by another, to erotics—

beginning from these beautiful things here, always to proceed on up for the sake of that beauty, using these beautiful things here as steps: from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; and from beautiful bodies to beautiful pursuits; and from pursuits to beautiful lessons; and from lessons to end at that lesson, which is the lesson of nothing else than the beautiful itself; and at last to know what is beauty itself. It is at this place in life, in beholding the beautiful itself, my dear Socrates, the Mantinean stranger said, 'that it is worth living, if—for a human being—it is [worth living] at any place. Should you ever see the beautiful itself, it will be your opinion that it is not to be compared to gold and garments and the beautiful boys and youths at whose sight you are now thunderstruck. And you and many others are prepared, in seeing the beloved and in always being with him, neither to eat nor drink, if it were somehow possible, but only to behold him and be with him. What then, she said, 'do we believe happens to one, if he gets to see the beautiful itself, pure, clean, unmixed, and not infected with human flesh, colors, or a lot of other mortal foolishness, and can glimpse the divine beautiful itself as being of a single shape? Do you believe,' she said, 'that life would prove to be a sorry sort of thing, when a human being gazes in the direction of the beautiful and beholds it with the instrument with which he must and is together with it? Or don't you realize,' she said, 'that only here, in seeing in the way the beautiful is seeable, will he get to engender not phantom images of virtue—because he does not lay hold of a phantom—but true, because he lays hold of the true; and that once he has given birth to and cherished true virtue, it lies within him to become dear to god and, if it is possible for any human being, to become immortal as well?'

"Here, Phaedrus and you others, is what Diotima declared and what I am convinced of. And in this state of conviction, I try to persuade others that for this possession one could not easily get a better co-worker with human nature than Eros. Accordingly, I assert that every real man must honor Eros, as I myself honor erosics and train myself exceptionally in them; and I urge it on the rest, and now and always I enlorge the power and courage of Eros as far as I am able. Regard this speech, then, Phaedrus, if you want to, as spoken in eulogy of Eros; but if not, and your pleasure is to give it some other kind of name, so name it."

When Socrates had said this, some praised it; and Aristophanes tried to say something, because Socrates in speaking had mentioned him and referred to his speech. But suddenly a hammering on the courtyard door

made a lot of noise—revelers they thought—and they heard the sound of a flute girl. Then Agathon said, "Boys, go look. And if it is any one of our close friends, invite him in; but if not, say that we are not drinking but have already stopped."

Not much later they heard the voice of Alcibiades in the courtyard, very drunk and shouting loudly, asking where Agathon was and commanding them to lead him to Agathon. Then the flute girl who—together with some other of his attendants—supported him and led him before them; and he stood at the door, thickly crowned with ivy and violets, with many fillers on his head. And he said, "Men, hail! Will you welcome a man who's terribly drunk as a fellow drinker? Or shall we go away just as soon as we have wreathed Agathon, for which single purpose we have come? For I, you see," he said, "could not come yesterday, but now I have come with fillers on my head, so that from my own head I might wreath the head of the wisest and most beautiful—well! And if I shall say that, what then? Will you laugh at me because I am drunk? But all the same, even if you do laugh, I know well that I am telling the truth. Well, tell me on the spot, shall I enter on the said conditions or not? Will you join me in drink or not?"

Then they all applauded loudly and asked him to enter and lie down; and Agathon summoned him. And he came led by his creatures; and as he was taking off the fillers to do the crowning—he had had them before his eyes and so did not observe Socrates—he sat down alongside Agathon, between him and Socrates; for Socrates had made room for Alcibiades when he saw him. On sitting down he embraced Agathon and bound on the fillers.

Then Agathon said, "Take off Alcibiades' shoes, boys, so that he may lie down in the third place."

"Certainly!" Alcibiades said, "but who is here as our third fellow drinker?" And at once he turned around and saw Socrates; and as soon as he saw him he leapt up and said, "Hercules! What is the meaning of this? Socrates is here? Once again you lie in ambush; and just as is your habit, you appear suddenly wherever I believed you were least likely to be? And now, why have you come? And why did you lie down here? For it is not with Aristophanes, or with anyone else who is—or wants to be—laughable that you lie; but you managed it so that you might lie down beside the most beautiful of those in this room."

And Socrates said, "Agathon, consider! Are you going to defend me?"

The love I have of this human being has proved quite bothersome. For since the time that I first loved him, it is no longer possible for me to look at or converse with even one beauty; or else in jealousy and envy of me he does amazing things, and abuses me and hardly keeps his hands off me. Take care lest he do something now, and do reconcile us; or if he tries to use force, defend me, since I really quake with fear at his madness and love of lovers.¹⁸

"But," said Alcibiades, "reconciliation between you and me is impossible. Well, I shall take my vengeance on you for this at another time; but now, Agathon," he said, "spare us some of the fillets, so that I may wreath this amazing head of his; and he need not reproach me because I wreathed you, and not him; for he conquers all human beings in speeches, and not just the day before yesterday as you did, but at all times." And at once he took some of the fillets, wreathed Socrates, and lay down.

And when he lay down, he said, "All right, men. In my opinion you're sober. This cannot be allowed; you must drink, for we have agreed to it. And I choose as leader of the drinking—until you have drunk enough—myself. But let someone do the fetching, Agathon, if there is any large beaker. But there is no need really; just bring that wine cooler there, boy," he said, as he saw that it had a capacity of more than eight pints. Once he saw that it got filled he was the first to drink it off, and then, as he asked that it be poured for Socrates, he said, "It is no sophistic stratagem of mine against Socrates, men; for as much as one asks him to, so much he drinks off without any risk of getting more drunk."

Then the boy poured and Socrates drank. And Eryximachus said, "What are we to do, Alcibiades? Is this to be our way, to say nothing at all over our cups, nor sing anything, but simply to drink like the thirsty?"

Then Alcibiades said, "Eryximachus, best son of the best and most moderate father, hail!"

"You too," Eryximachus said. "But what shall we do?"

"Whatever you order. For we must obey you—"

'For a physician is worth the equivalent of many others.'¹⁸
Prescribe what you want."

18. Homer, *Iliad*, 11, 514.

"Listen then," Eryximachus said. "It was our resolution before you entered that each of us in turn, beginning on the left, should make as fair a speech as he could about Eros, and eulogize him. Now all the rest of us have spoken; and since you have not spoken but have drunk up, it is just that you speak. And after your speech prescribe for Socrates whatever you want; and then let him prescribe for him on his right, and so on for the rest."

"Well, Eryximachus," Alcibiades said, "what you say is fine, but I am afraid it is not quite fair for a drunkard to be matched against the speeches of the sober. And at the same time, you blessed innocent, has Socrates really convinced you of anything he just said? Don't you know that things are exactly the opposite of what he was saying? For if I praise anyone other than himself, whether god or human being, while he is present, he will not keep his hands off me."

"Hush," Socrates said.

"No, by Poseidon," Alcibiades said. "Say nothing against this, since there is no one else I should praise while you were present."

"Well, do so, if you want," Eryximachus said. "Praise Socrates."

"What are you saying?" Alcibiades said. "Is it thought that I should, Eryximachus? Shall I assault the man and take vengeance on him in your presence?"

"You there," Socrates said. "What do you have in mind? To praise me for the sake of raising a laugh? Or what will you do?"

"I shall tell the truth. See if you allow it."

"Well, if it is the truth," he said, "I both allow and order you to tell it."

"Your word is my command," Alcibiades said. "Now you do as follows. If I say anything that is untrue, check me in the middle if you want to and say in what respect I am telling a lie; for as far as my will goes, I shall not lie. Now if in reminiscing I speak of one thing and then another, don't be surprised; for it is not at all easy for me in the condition I am in to enumerate fluently and consecutively your strangeness."

"I shall try in this way, men, to praise Socrates, through likenesses. Now he perhaps will suppose it is for raising a laugh; but the likeness will be for the sake of the truth, not for the sake of the laughable. I declare that he is most strictly like those silenuses¹⁹ that sit in the shops of herm

19. Silenus was a woodland god, depicted as an old man with the ears of a horse, often drunk, and riding an ass or wine jar. If caught, Silenus was supposed to reveal his wisdom;

sculptors, the ones that craftsmen make holding reed pipes or flutes; and if they are split in two and opened up, they show that they have images of gods within. And I declare, in turn, that he bears a likeness to the satyr Marsyas. Now, that you are like them at least in looks, Socrates, surely not even you would dispute; and as for your likeness to them in other respects, just listen to what I have to say. You are hybridic, are you not? For if you do not agree, I shall get witnesses. Well, aren't you a flute player? You are far more marvelous, to be sure, than Marsyas. He used to charm human beings by means of instruments, with the power from his mouth, as anyone still does today who plays his flute songs. For I ascribe to Marsyas as what Olympos fluted since Marsyas had taught him; so that the songs of Olympos, whether a good flutist or a sorry sort of flute girl should play them, are the only ones—because they are divine—that cause possession and reveal those who are in need of the gods and initiatory rituals. And you differ from him only in that you do the same thing with bare words without instruments. We, at any rate, whenever we hear the speeches of anyone else—no matter how good a speaker he is—just about no one gets concerned. But whenever any one of us hears you or another speaking your speeches, even if the speaker is very poor, regardless of whether a woman, man, or lad hears them, we are thunder-struck and possessed. I, at any rate, men, were I not going to be thought utterly drunk, should tell you on oath exactly how his speeches have affected me, and still do to this very day. For whenever I listen, my heart jumps far more than the Corybants', and tears pour out under the power of his speeches; and I see that they affect many many others in the same way. When I heard Pericles and other good speakers, I thought they spoke well, but they could not affect me in any way like that, nor did my soul grow troubled and become distressed at my slavish condition. But I had so often been put in this state by this Marsyas you see before you that I came to the opinion that it was not worth living in the way I am. Now, Socrates, you will not say that this is not true. And even now I know within myself that were I willing to lend my ears, I should not be capable of holding out but should be affected in the same way. For he compels me to agree that, though I am still in need of much myself, I neglect

but nothing is known of his wisdom except that he said that it was better not to be born. He was associated since the sixth century with Dionysus. The *sileni* or *silenuses* were half-gods or spirits, with the same characteristics as Silenus, but often confused with the satyrs.

myself and handle instead the affairs of the Athenians. So it was by main force that I stopped my ears and took off in flight, as if from the Sirens, in order that I might not sit here in idleness and grow old beside him. In regard to this human being alone have I been affected in a way that no one would suspect was in me—to feel shame before anyone at all. Only before him do I feel shame. For I know within myself that I am incapable of contradicting him or of saying that what he commands must not be done; and whenever I go away, I know within myself that I am doing so because I have succumbed to the honor I get from the many. So I have become a runaway and avoid him; and whenever I see him, I am ashamed of what has been agreed upon. And many is the time when I should see with pleasure that he is not among human beings; but again, if this should happen, I know well that I should be much more greatly distressed. I do not know what to do with this human being.

*And I and many others have been affected in such ways by the flute songs of this satyr here before us. But as to the rest, hear me tell how he is like those to whom I have likened him, and how amazing is the power he has. For know well that not one of you is acquainted with him; but I shall make it plain, inasmuch as I have started on it. You see that Socrates is erotically inclined to the beauties and is always around them, and that he is thunderstruck; and again that he is ignorant of everything and knows nothing. Now isn't this guise of his silence? It certainly is. For he has wrapped this around himself on the outside, just as the carved silenus; but once he is opened up, do you suspect, fellow drinking men, how full he is of moderation? Know that he's not at all concerned if someone is beautiful—and he holds this in such great contempt that no one would believe it—any more than if someone is rich or has any other honor of those deemed blessed by the multitude. But he believes that all these possessions are worth nothing and that we are nothing. I tell you, and all his life he keeps on being ironical and playful to human beings. And when he is in earnest and opened up, I do not know if anyone has seen the images within; but I once saw them, and it was my opinion that they were so divine, golden, altogether beautiful, and amazing that one had to do just about whatever Socrates commanded. Believing him to be in earnest about my youthful beauty, I believed I had had a lucky find and an amazing piece of good luck: I had the chance—if I gratified Socrates—to hear everything that he knew; for I used to take an amazing amount of pride in my youthful beauty. So with this in mind, though I previously

was not in the habit of being alone with him without an attendant. I then sent the attendant away and was alone with him. (For the whole truth must be told you, but pay attention, and if I lie, Socrates, try and refute me.) So I was alone with him alone, men; and I believed he would converse with me at once in just the way a lover would converse with his beloved in isolation, and I rejoiced. But exactly nothing of the sort happened; but just as he used to do, he would converse with me; and having spent the day with me he would take his leave. After this I challenged him to join me in stripping; and I stripped along with him. Here, I thought, I shall get my way. So he joined me in stripping and often wrestled with me when no one else was present. And what need is there to say more? I got no advantage from it at all. And when I made no headway in this manner, I resolved that the man must be set upon by force and not be released, since I was already committed to the attempt, and now I had to find out what was really the matter. I invited him then to join me at supper, simply as a lover plots against a beloved. And he did not quickly yield to me in this, but in time, at any rate, he was persuaded. And when he came for the first time, he wanted, once he had dined, to go away. And then out of shame I let him go, but I renewed my plottings once more. And this time when we had dined I kept on conversing far into the night; and when he wanted to go away, I pretended that it was too late and compelled him to remain. So he took his rest in the bed next to me on which he had dined; and no one else slept in the room but ourselves. Now, what I have said up to this point in my speech could properly be told to anyone at all. And you would not hear any more from me than this were it not that, first of all, as the saying goes, wine—with boys and without boys—is truthful, and in the second place, that it is patently unjust for me, once I have come to the point of praising Socrates, to keep hidden his magnificently overweening deed. Furthermore, the affliction of a victim of the viper's bite is also mine. For they say, as you know, that anyone who has been so afflicted is unwilling to speak of what sort of thing it is except to those who themselves have been bitten, since they alone will recognize it and pardon him if his pain brought him to the point of doing and saying anything. Take me, for instance. I was bitten by a more painful viper in the place that is most liable to pain—the heart or soul or whatever name it must have—bitten and struck by philosophical speeches, which grip in a more savage way than the viper, whenever they get a hold on a young soul that is not ill-favored by nature, and

make it do and say anything whatsoever—and seeing in turn Phaedrus, Agathon, Eryximachus, Pausanias, Aristodemus, as well as Aristophanes . . . and what need is there to speak of Socrates and all the others? You all have shared in the philosophic madness and bacchic frenzy—so accordingly you all will hear; for you will pardon the things then done and now said. But you house servants—and if there is anyone else who is profane and rustic—put large gates over your ears.

"So, men, when the lamp was extinguished and the boys were outside, I resolved that I should in no way complicate the issue before him, but freely speak what were my opinions. And I nudged him and said, 'Socrates, are you asleep?' 'Certainly not,' he said. 'Do you know then what I have resolved?' 'What in particular?' he said. 'You, in my opinion,' I said, 'have proved to be the only deserving lover of mine; and it seems to me that you hesitate to mention it to me. Now I am in this state: I believe it is very foolish not to gratify you in this or anything else of mine—my wealth or my friends—that you need; for nothing is more important to me than that I become the best possible; and I believe that, as far as I am concerned, there is no one more competent than you to be a fellow helper to me in this. So I should be far more ashamed before men of good sense for not gratifying a man like you than I should be before the many and senseless for gratifying you.'

"And when he heard this, he said very ironically, and exactly as he is, and in his usual fashion, 'Really, my dear Alcibiades, you're no sucker if what you say about me is really true and there is some power in me through which you could become better. You must see, you know, an impossible beauty in me, a beauty very different from the fairness of form in yourself. So if, in observing my beauty, you are trying to get a share in it and to exchange beauty for beauty, you are intending to get far the better deal. For you are trying to acquire the truth of beautiful things in exchange for the seeming and opinion of beautiful things; and you really have in mind to exchange "gold for bronze."²⁰ But, blessed one, do consider better: Without your being aware of it—I may be nothing. Though, you know, begins to have keen eyesight when the sight of the eyes starts to decline from its peak; and you are still far from that.'

"And I heard this, and said, 'This is the way matters stand on my side—not one of my words has been said in a way different from what I

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20. Homer, *Iliad*, 6.236.

think; but you yourself take whatever counsel you believe to be best for yourself and me.

“Well, he said, ‘what you say is good; for in the future, after deliberating, we shall do whatever looks best to us two concerning these things and the rest.’

“So I, when I had heard and said these things, and had shot my darts as it were, though he had been wounded. And I got up, and did not allow him to speak any more, but wrapped my mantle around him—for it was winter—and lay down under his blanket; and I threw my arms around this truly daemonic and amazing being, and lay down beside him the whole night. And not even in this, Socrates, will you say that I lie. But when I had done this, he so far prevailed over me and despised and laughed at my youthful beauty and committed an outrage against it (and in that regard I believed I was something special, men of the jury—for you are the judges of Socrates’ arrogance) . . . for know well, by the gods, by the goddesses, that though I slept the night through with Socrates I got up without anything more unoward having happened than would have been the case if I had slept with my father or elder brother.

“So after this, what notion do you suppose I had? I believed I had been dishonored, and yet I still admired his nature, moderation, and courage; I had met a human being whose prudence and endurance were such as I believed I should never encounter. Consequently, I did not know how I could be angry at him and be deprived of his association; nor did I have any resources whereby I could attract him. I knew well that—on all sides—he was far more invulnerable to money than Ajax was to iron; and even at that one point where I believed he could be taken, he had escaped me. So I was in a quandary; and enslaved by this human being as no one has been by anyone else, I wandered about in distraction. Now, all this had happened to me earlier; and after this we went together on the expedition to Potidaea, and we shared our mess there. Now first of all he faced trials not only better than I did but better than all others. Whenever we were cut off somewhere and compelled to go without food, as happens in campaigns, the others were nothing compared to him in self-control. And again at festivities he alone was able to take pleasure in other things, and in drinking as well; for even though he wasn’t willing to drink, whenever he was compelled to do so, he outdid everybody; and what is the most amazing thing of all, no human being has ever seen Socrates drunk. Now it is my opinion that there will soon be a test of

this. And again, in regard to resistance against the winter—for winters are terrible there—all the rest that he did was amazing. And once when the frost was the most terrible imaginable, and no one went outdoors (or if any did go out, they wrapped themselves in an amazing number of garments and put on shoes and tied up their feet in felt and sheepskins), he went out among them with the same sort of mantle as he wore at any time, and without shoes he marched through the ice more easily than the others did shod; and the soldiers looked askance at him as if he were despising them. And that is the way things were.

“What sort of thing the strong man did and dared”²¹ there on campaign once, is worth hearing. Once, he had gotten a thought, and he stood on the same spot from dawn on, considering it; and when he made no progress, he did not let up but stood searching. And it was already noon, and the men became aware of it; and in amazement one said to another that Socrates had stood there in reflection since dawn. And finally some Ionians, when it was evening and they had dined—for it was then summer—brought out their pallets and slept in the cold and watched to see if he would also stand during the night. And he stood until it was dawn and the sun came up; and then having made a prayer to the sun he went away. And in combat, if you want to hear about it—for it is just to credit him with this—once when there was a battle for which the generals gave me the prize of excellence, no other human being saved me but he; for he was not willing to leave me wounded, but saved both myself and my weapons. And I even then, Socrates, asked the generals to offer you the prize of excellence. And in this too you will not blame me and say that I lie; but as a matter of fact, when the generals looked to my rank and wanted to offer me the prize of excellence, you proved more eager than the generals that I take it rather than yourself. Furthermore, men, it was worthwhile to behold Socrates when the army retreated in flight from Delium; for I happened to be there on horseback and he was a hoplite. The soldiers were then in rout, and while he and Laches were retreating together, I came upon them by chance. And as soon as I saw them, I at once urged the two of them to take heart, and I said I would not leave them behind. I had an even finer opportunity to observe Socrates there than I had had at Potidaea, for I was less in fear because I was on horseback. First of all, how much more sensible he was than Laches;

21. Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.244, 271.

and secondly, it was my opinion, Aristophanes (and this point is yours); that walking there just as he does here in Athens, 'stalking like a pelican, his eyes darting from side to side,'²² quietly on the lookout for friends and foes, he made it plain to everyone even at a great distance that if one touches this real man, he will defend himself vigorously. Consequently, he went away safely, both he and his comrade; for when you behave in war as he did, then they just about do not even touch you; instead they pursue those who turn in headlong flight.

"Now, one could praise Socrates for many other amazing things; but whereas for the rest of his pursuits—one might perhaps say the like about someone else as well—what deserves all wonder is that respect in which he is like no human being; neither the ancients nor those of the present day. For one might liken Brasidas and others to such a one as Achilles was; and, in turn, liken the sort that Pericles was to both Nestor and Antenor (and there are others as well); and of the rest one might make likenesses in the same way. But the sort that this human being in his strangeness proved to be, both in himself and in his speeches, one could not even come close to finding, whether one looked among the men of today or among the ancients; unless, after all, one were to liken him in himself and in his speeches to those I say—to no human being but to silenuses and satyrs.

"And what is more, I omitted to say at the beginning that his speeches too are most like the silenuses when opened up. For were one willing to hear Socrates' speeches, they would at first look altogether laughable. The words and phrases that they wrap around themselves on the outside are like that, the very hide of a hybriatic satyr.²³ For he talks of packasses, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and tanners, and it looks as if he is always saying the same things through the same things; and hence every inexperienced and foolish human being would laugh at his speeches. But if one sees them opened up and gets oneself inside them, one will find, first, that they alone of speeches have sense inside; and, second, that they are most divine and have the largest number of images of virtue in them; and that they apply to the largest area, indeed to the whole area that it is proper to examine for one who is going to be beautiful and good.

"Here, men, is what I praise Socrates for; and I mixed in with it what,

22. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 362.

23. An allusion to the flaying of Marsyas by Apollo.

in turn, I blame him for, when I told you how he committed an outrage against me. And what is more, he not only did this to me, but to Charmides the son of Glaucon, Euthydemus the son of Diocles, and many many others—for while deceiving them into thinking of him as the lover, he brings it about that he is the beloved rather than the lover. It is this that I am telling you, Agathon. Do not be deceived by him; but with the knowledge of our afflictions be on your guard, and do not, as in the proverb, like a fool realize it after you have suffered."

"When Alchiades said this, there was laughter at his outspokenness because it was thought that he was still erotically inclined toward Socrates. Then Socrates said, "You are sober, in my opinion, Alchiades, for otherwise you would never have so elegantly cast a screen about yourself and tried to conceal why you said all this; for you spoke of it as if it were a side-issue by inserting it at the end, as though you had not said everything for its sake—to set Agathon and me at odds, believing that I must love you and no one else, and that Agathon must be loved by you and by no one else. But you did not get away with it; this satyr and silentic drama of yours was quite obvious. Well, my dear Agathon, see that he does not get the advantage—and prepare yourself against anyone setting you and me at odds."

Then Agathon said, "Why, Socrates, I am afraid that what you say is true. My evidence is the fact that he lay down between you and me so that he may hold us apart. Well, he will not get the advantage, but I shall come and lie down beside you."

"Yes," Socrates said, "do come lie down in the place beside me."

"Zeus!" Alchiades said. "What the fellow does to me! He believes he must surpass me everywhere. Well, if nothing else, you wondrous being, let Agathon lie down between us."

"But that is impossible," Socrates said. "For you praised me, and I in turn must praise the one on the right; surely if Agathon lies down next to you, he will not praise me again, will he, before he has been praised by me? But leave it as it is, daemonic being, and do not begrudge the lad's being eulogized by me, for I want very much to sing his praises."

"Now I get it, Alchiades," Agathon said. "It is impossible for me to remain here; and I shall not fail to change my place so that I may be praised by Socrates."

"This is the usual thing," Alchiades said. "When Socrates is present it is impossible for someone else to get hold of the beauties, just as now

you see how resourcefully he has found a persuasive argument to get Agathon to lie down beside him."

^b Now Agathon got up to lie down beside Socrates; but suddenly a large crowd of revelers came to the door; and finding it open—someone had gone out—they walked straight in among the guests and lay down. And everything was full of commotion, and everybody was compelled—but no longer with any order—to drink a great deal of wine. Now Aristodemus said that Eryximachus, Phaedrus, and some others went away, but he himself was overtaken by sleep. And he slept very deeply, because the night was far gone and the cocks were already singing when he woke toward daybreak. And on awakening he saw that the rest were sleeping or had gone away; but Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates were the only ones who were still awake, and they were drinking from a large cup, passing it from left to right. Socrates was conversing with them. And Aristodemus said, he did not remember the other points of the speeches—for he was not only absent at the start, but was dozing—however, the chief point, he said, was that Socrates was compelling them to agree that the same man should know how to make comedy and tragedy; and that he who is by art a tragic poet is also a comic poet. They were compelled to admit this, though they were not following too well and were nodding. Aristophanes went to sleep first, and then, when it was already day, Agathon. Then Socrates, having put them to bed, got up and went away, and he (Aristodemus) followed, just as he was accustomed to; and Socrates went to the Lyceum, washed up, and spent the rest of his day just as he did at any other time. And once he had passed the time in this way, toward evening he took his rest at home.



The Ladder of Love

BY ALLAN BLOOM

"I" SOCRATES IS THE MOST erotic of philosophers. Of the many beautiful Socratic dialogues, perhaps the most beautiful is Plato's *Symposium*, which was an inspiration for lovers throughout the ages, especially in those two fertile moments of return to classical antiquity that so marked our past, the Renaissance and Romanticism. Socrates says that he is an expert in the science of eros (177D),¹ which must mean that he knows something that very many people think is important. But Socrates is also the prince of the skeptics, the man who said, "All I know is that I know nothing."² This contradiction is usually resolved by taking Socrates' assertions about eros to be an example of the famous Socratic irony, a kind of joke. This is a solution, but not a very satisfactory one, since it only fits our own sense of what a man like Socrates could take seriously, instead of being based on

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1. All parenthetical citations are to the Stephanus numbers used in this edition (and in most editions) of Plato's *Symposium*. When referring to classic works, generally accepted systems of reference are used (e.g., Stephanus numbers for Plato, Bekker numbers for Aristotle, or standard book, chapter, or section numbers), rather than page numbers in any particular current edition. This should facilitate reference for readers using any of a wide variety of available editions.

2. *Apology of Socrates*, 21D. Unless otherwise indicated, all words cited are by Plato. All translations from the Greek are the author's unless otherwise indicated. [Notes in brackets indicating places where the difference between Bloom's translation or paraphrase and Bernardete's translation might be confusing have been added to the present edition by Nathan Tarcov with the assistance of Paul Ludwig. Ed.]