

Symposium



Apollodorus. In my opinion, I am not unprepared
for what you ask about; for just the other day—

ST. III
172A

when I was on my way up to town from my home in Phaleron—one of my acquaintances spotted me a long way off from behind and called, playing with his call: “Phalerian,” he said. “You there, Apollodorus, aren’t you going to wait?” And I stopped and let him catch up. And he said, “Apollodorus, why, it was just recently that I was looking for you; I had wanted to question you closely about Agathon’s party—the one at which Socrates, Alcibiades, and the others were then present at dinner together—to question you about the erotic speeches. What were they? Someone else who had heard about the party from Phoenix the son of Philippus was telling me about it, and he said that you too knew. As a matter of fact, there wasn’t anything he could say with certainty. So *you* tell me, for it is most just that you report the speeches of your comrade. But first,” he said, “tell me, were you yourself present at this party or not?” And I said, “It really does seem as if there were nothing certain in what your informant told you, if you believe that this party which you are asking about occurred so recently that I too was present.” “That is indeed what I believed,” he said. “But how could that be, Glaucon?” I said. “Don’t you know that it has been many years since Agathon resided here, but that it is scarcely three years now that I have been spending my time with Socrates and have made it my concern on each and every day to know whatever he says or does? Before that, I used to run round and round aimlessly, and though I believed

172A

I was doing something of importance, I was more miserable than anyone in the world (no less than you are at this moment), for I believed that everything was preferable to philosophy." And he said, "Don't mock me now, but tell me when this party did occur." And I said, "When we were still boys, at the time of Agathon's victory with his first tragedy, on the day after he and his choral dancers celebrated the victory sacrifice." "Oh," he said, "a very long time ago, it seems. But who told you? Was it Socrates himself?" "No, by Zeus," I said, "but the same one who told Phoenix. It was a certain Aristodemus, a Kydathenean, little and always unshod. He had been present at the party and, in my opinion, was the one most in love with Socrates at that time. Not, however, that I have not asked Socrates too about some points that I had heard from Aristodemus; and Socrates agreed to just what Aristodemus narrated." "Why, then," Glaucon said, "don't you tell me? The way to town, in any case, is as suitable for speaking, while we walk, as for listening."

So as we walked, we talked together about these things; and so, just as I said at the start, I am not unprepared. If it must be told to you as well, that is what I must do. As for me, whenever I make any speeches on my own about philosophy or listen to others—apart from my belief that I am benefited—how I enjoy it! But whenever the speeches are of another sort, particularly the speeches of the rich and of money-makers—your kind of talk—then just as I am distressed, so do I pity your comrades, because you believe you are doing something of importance, but in fact it's all pointless. And perhaps you, in turn, believe that I am a wretch; and I believe you truly believe it. I, on the other hand, do not believe it about you, I know it.

Comrade. You are always of a piece, Apollodorus, for you are always slandering yourself and others; and in my opinion you simply believe that—starting with yourself—everyone is miserable except Socrates. And how you ever got the nickname "Softy," I do not know, for you are always like this in your speeches, savage against yourself and others except Socrates.

Apollodorus. My dearest friend, so it is plain as it can be, is it, that in thinking this about myself as well as you I am a raving lunatic?

Comrade. It is not worthwhile, Apollodorus, to argue about this now; just do what we were begging you to do; tell what the speeches were.

Apollodorus. Well, they were somewhat as follows—but I shall just try to tell it to you from the beginning as Aristodemus told it.

He said that Socrates met him freshly bathed and wearing fancy slippers, which was not Socrates' usual way; and he asked Socrates where he was going now that he had become so beautiful.¹

And he said, "To dinner at Agathon's, for yesterday I stayed away from his victory celebration, in fear of the crowd, but I did agree to come today. It is just for this that I have got myself up so beautifully—that beautiful I may go to a beauty. But you," he said, "how do you feel about going uninvited to dinner? Would you be willing to do so?"

"And I said," he said, "I shall do whatever you say."

"Then follow," he said, "so that we may change and ruin the proverb, 'the good go to Agathon's feasts on their own.' Homer, after all, not only ruined it, it seems, but even committed an outrage [*hybris*] on this proverb, for though he made Agamemnon an exceptionally good man in marital matters, and Menelaus a 'soft spearman,' yet when Agamemnon was making a sacrifice and a feast, he made Menelaus come to the dinner uninvited, an inferior to his betters."

He said that when he heard this he said, "Perhaps I too shall run a risk, Socrates—perhaps it is not as you say, but as Homer says, a good-for-nothing going uninvited to a wise man's dinner. Consider the risk in bringing me. What will you say in your defense? For I shall not agree that I have come uninvited but shall say that it was at your invitation."

"With the two of us going on the way together,"² he said, "we shall deliberate on what we shall say. Well, let us go."

He said that once they had finished their conversation along these lines, they went on. And as they were making their way Socrates somehow turned his attention to himself and was left behind, and when Aristodemus waited for him, he asked him to go on ahead. When Aristodemus got to Agathon's house, he found the door open, and he said something ridiculous happened to him there. Straight off, a domestic servant met him and brought him to where the others were reclining; and he found them on the point of starting dinner. So Agathon, of course, saw him at

1. The word *beautiful* (*kalo*), which is distinct from *good* (*agathos*), also means fair, fine, and noble; and everything outstanding in body, mind, or action can be so designated. What is lovable, either to sight or mind, is beautiful. It is the Greek term for what is moral, with the qualification that it designates what is beyond the sphere of obligation and duty, what one cannot expect everyone to do. It has a higher rank than the just.

2. 'Soft spearman' is from *Iliad*, 17.587; the uninvited Menelaus from 2.408; and "With the two of us going on the way together" from 10.224.

once, and said, "Aristodemus, you have come at a fine time to share a dinner. If you have come for something else, put it off for another time, as I was looking for you yesterday to invite you but could not find you. But how is it that you are not bringing our Socrates?"

"And I turn around," he said, "and do not see Socrates following anywhere. So I said that I myself came with Socrates, on his invitation to dinner here."

"It is a fine thing for you to do," Agathon said, "but where is he?"

"He was just coming in behind me. I am wondering myself where he might be."

"Go look, boy," Agathon said, "and bring Socrates in. And you, Aristodemus," he said, "lie down beside Eryximachus."

And he said the boy washed him so he could lie down; and another of the boys came back to report, "Your Socrates has retreated into a neighbor's porch and stands there, and when I called him, he was unwilling to come in."

"That is strange," Agathon said. "Call him and don't let him go."

And Aristodemus said that he said, "No, no, leave him alone. That is something of a habit with him. Sometimes he moves off and stands stock still wherever he happens to be. He will come at once, I suspect. So do not try to budge him, but leave him alone."

"Well, that is what we must do, if it is your opinion," he said Agathon said. "Well now, boys, feast the rest of us. Though you always serve in any case whatever you want to whenever someone is not standing right over you, still now, in the belief that I, your master, as much as the others, has been invited to dinner by you, serve in such a way that we may praise you."

After this, he said, they dined; but Socrates did not come in, and though Agathon often ordered that Socrates be sent for, Aristodemus did not permit it. Then Socrates did come in—he had lingered as long as was usual for him—when they were just about in the middle of dinner. Then he said that Agathon, who happened to be lying down at the far end alone, said, "Here, Socrates, lie down alongside me, so that by my touching you, I too may enjoy the piece of wisdom that just occurred to you while you were in the porch. It is plain that you found it and have it, for otherwise you would not have come away beforehand!"

And Socrates sat down and said, "It would be a good thing, Agathon, if wisdom were the sort of thing that flows from the fuller of us into the

emptier, just by our touching one another, as the water in wine cups flows through a wool thread from the fuller to the emptier. For if wisdom too were like that, then I set a high price on my being placed alongside you, for I believe I shall be filled from you with much fair wisdom. My own may turn out to be a sorry sort of wisdom, or disputable like a dream; but your own is brilliant and capable of much development, since it has flashed out so intensely from you while you are young; and yesterday it became conspicuous among more than thirty thousand Greek witnesses."

"You are outrageous, Socrates," Agathon said. "A little later you and I will go to court about our wisdom, with Dionysus as judge, but now first attend to dinner."

After this, he said, when Socrates had reclined and dined with the rest, they made libations, sang a song to the god and did all the rest of the customary rites,³ and then turned to drinking. Then Pausanias, he said, began to speak somewhat as follows. "All right, men," he said. "What will be the easiest way for us to drink? Now I tell you that I am really in a very bad way from yesterday's drinking, and I need a rest. I suspect many of you do too, for you were also here yesterday. So consider what would be the easiest way for us to drink."

Aristophanes then said, "That is a good suggestion, Pausanias, to arrange our drinking in some easier way, for I too am one of yesterday's soaks."

Eryximachus, he said, the son of Akoumenos, heard them out and then said, "What a fine thing you say. But I still have need to hear from one of you—from Agathon—how set he is on heavy drinking."

"Not at all," Agathon said, "nor do I have the strength."

"We seem to be in luck," Eryximachus said, "—myself, Aristodemus, Phaedrus, and those here—if you who have the greatest capacity for drink have now given up, for we are always incapable. And I leave Socrates out of account—as he can go either way, he will be content with whatever we do. Now, since in my opinion none of those present is eager to drink a lot of wine, perhaps I should be less disagreeable were I to speak the truth about what drunkenness is. For I believe this has become

3. The customary rites at the end of a banquet are six in number: 1) a libation of unmixed wine to *agathos daimon* (the "good Genius"); 2) the clearing of the tables; 3) the washing of the hands; 4) the distribution of wreaths among the guests; 5) three libations, one each to Zeus Olympus and the Olympian gods, to the heroes, and to Zeus Soter; 6) the singing of a song to the god.

d quite plain to me from the art of medicine. Drunkenness is a hard thing for human beings; and as far as it is in my power, I should neither be willing to go on drinking nor to advise another to do so, particularly if he still has a headache from yesterday's debauch."

"Well, as for myself," he said Phaedrus the Myrthousian said, interrupting, "I am used to obeying you, particularly in whatever you say about medicine; and now the rest will do so too, if they take good counsel."

e When they heard this, all agreed not to make the present party a drinking bout, but for each to drink as he pleased.

"Since, then, it has been decreed," Eryximachus said, "that each is to drink as much as he wants to, and there is to be no compulsion about it, I next propose to dismiss the flute girl who just came in and to let her flout for herself, or, if she wants, for the women within, while we consort with each other today through speeches. And as to what sort of speeches, I am willing, if you want, to make a proposal."

177a All then agreed that this was what they wanted and asked him to make his proposal. Eryximachus then said, "The beginning of my speech is in the manner of Euripides' *Melanippe*,⁴ for the tale that I am about to tell is not my own, but Phaedrus' here. On several occasions Phaedrus has said to me in annoyance, 'Isn't it awful, Eryximachus, that hymns and paeans have been made by the poets for other gods, but for Eros, who is so great and important a god, not one of the many poets there have been has ever made even a eulogy? And if you want, consider, in their turn, the good Sophists, they write up in prose praises of Heracles and others, as the excellent Prodicus does. Though you need not wonder at this, for I have even come across a volume of a wise man in which salt got a marvelous puff for its usefulness, and you might find many other things of the kind with eulogies. So they employ much zeal in things like that, yet to this day not one human being has dared to hymn Eros in a worthy manner; but so great a god lies in neglect.' Now, Phaedrus, in my opinion, speaks well in this regard. So, as I desire to make a comradely loan to please him, it is, in my opinion, appropriate for those of us who are now here to adorn the god. And if you share in my opinion, we should find

4. The line from Euripides' (mostly lost) *Melanippe* is: "The tale is not my own but from my mother"; and the fragment then goes on: "how sky and earth were one shape; but when they were separated from one another, they gave birth to everything and sent them up into the light, trees, birds, wild beasts, those the salt sea nourishes, and the race of mortals."

enough of a pastime in speeches. For it is my opinion that each of us, starting on the left, should recite the fairest praise of Eros that he can, and Phaedrus should be the first to begin, inasmuch as he is lying on the head couch and is also the father of the argument."

"No one," Socrates said, "will cast a vote against you, Eryximachus. For I would surely not beg off, as I claim to have expert knowledge of nothing but erotic; nor would Agathon and Pausanias beg off, to say nothing of Aristophanes, whose whole activity is devoted to Dionysus and Aphrodite. And none of the others I see here would refuse either. And yet it is not quite fair for those of us who lie on the last couches; but if those who come first speak in a fine and adequate way, we shall be content. Well, good luck to Phaedrus then. Let him make a start and eulogize Eros."

178a All the others then approved and urged it as Socrates had done. Now, Aristodemus scarcely remembered all that each and every one of them said, and I in turn do not remember all that he said; but I shall tell you the noteworthy points of those speeches that, in my opinion, most particularly deserved remembering.

8 First of all, as I say, he said that Phaedrus began his speech at somewhat the following point: that Eros was a great and wondrous god among human beings as well as gods, and that this was so in many respects and not least in the matter of birth. "For the god to be ranked among the oldest is a mark of honor," he said, "and here is the proof: the parents of Eros neither exist nor are they spoken of by anyone, whether prose author or poet; but Hesiod says that Chaos came first—

Then thereafter

Broad-breasted Earth, always the safe seat of all,

—And Eros.⁵

After Chaos, he says, there came to be these two, Earth and Eros. And Parmenides says that Genesis,

5. Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 116, 117, 120. Our manuscripts of Hesiod read, after 117, "of all immortals, who hold the tops of snowy Olympus [18], and gloomy Tannarus in the recesses of the broad-winged Earth [119]." Line 118 is also not read by other sources; and the Hesiod scholium says that line 119 is abetized. After "Eros" in line 120, Hesiod goes on: "who is the most beautiful among the immortal gods, the dissolver of care, who overpowers the mind and thoughtful counsel in the breast of all gods and human beings."

First of all gods, devised Eros.

- c Akousilaus agrees with Hesiod as well. So there is an agreement in many sources that Eros is among the oldest. And as he is the oldest, we have him as the cause of the greatest goods, for I can hardly point to a greater good for someone to have from youth onward than a good lover, and for a lover, a beloved. For that which should guide human beings who are going to live fairly throughout their lives can be implanted by neither blood ties, nor honors, nor wealth, nor anything else as beautifully as by love. Now what do I say this is? It is shame in the face of shameful things and honorable ambition in the face of beautiful things; for without them neither city nor private person can accomplish great and beautiful deeds. So I assert that in the case of any real man who loves, were it to come to light that he was either doing something shameful or putting up with it from another out of cowardice and without defending himself, he would not be as pained on being observed by either his father, his comrades, or anyone else as by his beloved. We observe that this same thing holds in the case of the beloved; he is exceptionally shamed before his lovers whenever he is seen to be involved in something shameful. So if there were any possibility that a city or an army could be composed of lovers and beloveds, then there could be no better way for them to manage their own city; for they would abstain from all that is shameful and be filled with love of honor before one another. And besides, were they to do battle alongside one another, then even a few of this sort would win over just about all human beings; for a real man in love would of course far less prefer to be seen by his beloved than by all the rest when it comes to deserting his post or throwing away his weapons; he would choose to be dead many times over before that happened. And, to say nothing of leaving behind one's beloved or not coming to his aid when he is in danger, there is no one so bad that, once the god Eros had entered him, he would not be directed toward virtue—to the point where he is like one who is best by nature: and simply, as Homer said, 'the strength that the god breathed'⁶ into some of the heroes, Eros supplies from himself to lovers.
- ^a And what is more, lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another; and that is not only true of real men but of women

6. At *Iliad*, 10.482, Athena breathes strength into Diomedes, and at 15.262 Apollo does the same for Hector.

- as well. Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, offers a sufficient testimony for Greeks on behalf of this argument. She alone was willing to die on behalf of her husband, though his father and mother were alive; but through her love she so much surpassed his parents in friendship that she showed them up as alien to their own son and only related to him in name. Her performance of this deed was thought to be so noble in the opinion not only of human beings but of the gods as well that, although there have been many who have accomplished many noble deeds, the gods have given to only a select number of them the guerdon of sending up their souls again from Hades, and hers they did send up in admiring delight at her deed. So gods, too, hold in particular esteem the zeal and virtue that pertain to love. Orpheus, the son of Oeagrus, they sent back from Hades unfulfilled; and though they showed him a phantom of his wife, for whom he had come, they did not give her very self to him, because it was thought he was soft, like the lyre player he was, and had not dared to die for love like Alcestis, but contrived to go into Hades alive. Consequently, they imposed a punishment on him, and made him die at the hands of women, and did not honor him as they had Achilles, the son of Thetis.
- ^e For Achilles they sent away to the Isles of the Blest, because, though he had learned from his mother that he would be killed if he killed Hector, and that if he did not, he would return home and die in old age; still he dared to choose to come to the aid of his lover Patroclus; and with his vengeance accomplished, he dared not only to die on his behalf but to die after him who had died. On this account, the gods were particularly impressed and gave him outstanding honors, because he had made so much of his lover. Aeschylus talks nonsense in claiming that Achilles was in love with Patroclus (rather than the other way around), for Achilles was more beautiful than not only Patroclus but all the other heroes as well; and besides, he was unbearded, and thirdly, far younger than Patroclus, as Homer says.⁷ Well, anyhow, though the gods really hold in very high esteem that virtue which concerns love, they wonder, admire, and confer benefits even more when the beloved has affection for the lover than when the lover has it for the beloved. A lover is a more divine thing than a beloved, for he has the god within him. This is the reason why they honored Achilles more than Alcestis and sent him to the Isles of the Blest.

7. Homer, *Iliad*, 2.673, 11.786.

"So this is how I assert that Eros is the oldest, most honorable, and most competent of the gods with regard to the acquisition of virtue and happiness by human beings both when living and dead."

c He said that Phaedrus made some such speech, and after Phaedrus there were some others that he scarcely could recall; he passed them over and told of Pausanias' speech. He said that Pausanias said, "Phaedrus, in my opinion it is not noble the way the argument has been proposed to us—commanding us to eulogize Eros in so unqualified a fashion. For were Eros one, it would be noble, but as it is, it is not noble, for he is not one; and as he is not one, it is more correct that it be declared beforehand which Eros is to be praised. So first I shall try to set the record straight, to point out the Eros who is to be praised, and then to praise him in a manner worthy of the god. We all know that there is no Aphrodite without Eros; and were she one, Eros would be one; but since there are two Aphrodites, it is necessary that there be two Erores as well. Who would deny that there are two goddesses? One surely is the elder and has no mother, the daughter of Uranos, the one to whom we apply the name Uranian; the other is younger and the daughter of Zeus and Dione, the one we call Pandemus.⁸ So it is necessary that the Eros who is a fellow worker with one correctly be called Pandemus, and the other one, Uranian. Now all gods must be praised, but one must still try to say what has been allotted to each god. Every action is of the following sort: When being done in terms of itself, it is neither noble nor base. For example, what we are now doing, either drinking, singing, or conversing, none of these things is in itself a noble thing, only in terms of how it is done in the doing of it does it turn out to be the sort of thing that it is. For if it is done nobly and correctly, it proves to be noble, and if incorrectly, base. So, too, in the case of loving and Eros, for Eros as a whole is not noble nor deserving of a eulogy, but only that Eros who provokes one to love in a noble way.

b "Now the Eros who belongs to Aphrodite Pandemus is truly pandemian and acts in any sort of way. And here you have the one whom good-for-nothing human beings have as their love. Those who are of the same sort as this Eros are, first of all, no less in love with women than with boys; secondly, they are in love with their bodies rather than their souls;

8. *Pandemus*, which is a cult title, literally means "common to all the people" and does not necessarily mean something vulgar and base. Pandemian has the same meaning.

and thirdly, they are in love with the stupidest there can be, for they have an eye only to the act and are unconcerned with whether it is noble or not. That is how it happens that it turns out for them, however it turns out, with the same likelihood of its being good as the opposite. For Eros Pandemus depends on the Aphrodite who is far younger than the other goddess, and who partakes in her birth of female as well as of male. But the other Eros is of Uranian Aphrodite, who, first of all, does not partake of female but only of male (and this is the love of boys); and secondly, is the elder and has no part in outrage. That is how it comes about that those inspired by this kind of love turn to the male, with an affection for that which is naturally more vigorous and has more sense. And one might recognize in pederasty itself those who have been prompted purely by this kind of love; for they do not love boys except when boys start having sense, and that is close to the time when the beard first appears. For those who start loving a boy at this point in time are in a position I believe to be with him and live with him for their whole life and not—once they have deceived and seized a young and foolish boy—to laugh at him and then run away to another. There should have been a law as well to prohibit the loving of boys, in order that a lot of zeal would not have been wasted for an uncertain result; for it is not clear where the perfection of boys has its end with regard to the vice and virtue of both soul and body. Now, the good willingly lay down this law upon themselves, but there should have been applied the same sort of compulsory prohibition to those pandemian lovers, just as we compel them as far as we can not to love freeborn matrons. For here you have those who have made pederasty a disgrace, so that some have the nerve to say that it is shameful to gratify lovers. They say it is shameful with an eye to those pandemian lovers, observing their impropriety and injustice, since surely any action whatsoever that is done in an orderly and lawful way would not justly bring reproach.

b "Now in general the law about love in other cities is easy to understand, for it has been simply determined; but the law here and in Sparta is complicated. In Elis and among the Boeotians, and where they are not wise in speaking, the gratification of lovers has been unqualifiedly legalized as noble, and no one, whether young or old, would say that it is shameful. This is so, I suspect, in order that they might have no trouble in trying to persuade the young by speech, because they are incapable of speaking. In Ionia, on the other hand, and in many other places

(wherever they live under barbarians), it has been customarily held to be shameful. In the eyes of barbarians, on account of their tyrannies, pederasty as well as philosophy and the love of gymnastics is shameful, for I suspect that it is not to the advantage of the rulers that great and proud thoughts be engendered among their subjects, any more than strong friendships and associations. It is precisely this that love, as well as all these other things, especially tends to implant. And the tyrants here [in Athens] actually learned this by deed; for the love of Aristogeiton and the friendship of Harmodius, once it became firm, dissolved the tyrants' rule.⁹ So wherever it has been laid down as shameful to gratify lovers, it has been through the vice of those who have done so—the hankering after more on the part of the rulers, and the lack of manliness on the part of their subjects; and wherever the gratifying of lovers has been held to be a fine thing without qualification, it has been through the slothfulness of soul of those who have so ordained. But here [in Athens] there are much finer customs than elsewhere; yet just as I said, they are not easy to understand. Let one just reflect that it is said to be a finer thing to love openly than in secret; and particularly to love the noblest and best, even if they are uglier than others; and again, that everyone enthusiastically encourages the lover, and not as if he were doing anything shameful; and if a lover makes a successful capture, it is thought to be fine, and if he fails, shameful; and that, for making an attempt at seizure, the law grants the lover the opportunity to be praised for doing amazing deeds. If one dared to do any of these deeds in pursuing and wishing to accomplish anything else whatsoever except this, one would reap the greatest reproaches leveled against philosophy. For if, in wanting to take money from someone, or to take a governmental office, or any other position of power, one were willing to act just as lovers do toward their beloved—making all sorts of supplications and beseechings in their requests, swearing oaths, sleeping at the doors of their beloveds, and being willing to perform acts of slavishness that not one slave would—he would be checked from acting so by his enemies as much as by his friends, the former reproaching him for his flatteries and servilities, the latter admonishing him and feeling ashamed on his behalf. But if the lover does all of this, there is a grace upon him; and the law allows him to act without

⁹ Aristogeiton was the lover of Harmodius, with whom he slew Pisistratus' son Hipparchus in 514 B.C. It did not, however, end the tyranny but made it harsher.

reproaching him, on the ground that he is attempting to carry through some exceedingly fine thing; and what is most dreadful, as the many say, is that, if he swears and then departs from his oath, for him alone there is pardon from the gods—for they deny that an oath in sex is an oath. Thus the gods and human beings have made every opportunity available to the lover, as the law here states. Now on these grounds one might suppose that it is customarily held to be a very fine thing in this city both to love and for lovers to have friends. But on the other hand, when fathers set attendants in charge of the beloveds and prohibit them from conversing with their lovers, and the attendant has this as a standing order, and the beloved's contemporaries and comrades blame him if they see anything like this going on; and the elders, in turn, do not stand in the way of those who cast reproaches or abuse them on the grounds that they are speaking incorrectly—then, if one glances in this direction, one would believe that such a thing is customarily held to be most shameful. This is to be explained, I believe, as follows. The matter is not simple; and, as was said at the start, it is neither noble nor base in itself, but if nobly done, noble, and if basely done, base. Now, it is base to gratify one who is no good and to do so in a bad way; while it is noble to gratify the good and to do so in a noble way. It is the pandemian lover who is no good, the one in love with the body rather than with the soul. He is not even, for example, a lasting lover, because he is in love with a thing that is not lasting either. As soon as the bloom of the body fades—which is what he was in love with—the is off and takes wing; having made a foul shame of many speeches and promises. But he who is in love with a good character remains throughout life, for he is welded to what is lasting. So our law, in good and noble fashion, really wants to test these and to have the beloved gratify one group of lovers and escape from the others. On account of this it exhorts lovers to pursue and beloveds to flee, setting up a contest so that there may be a test as to which group the lover belongs and to which the beloved. And because of this, first, to let oneself be caught too quickly is customarily held shameful, since it is precisely the passing of time that is thought to test many things nobly; and secondly, to be caught by money and political power is shameful, regardless of whether a hurt humbles the beloved and prevents him from resisting, or a benefit consisting of money or political favors prevents him from feeling contempt; for neither money nor political favors are thought to be stable or lasting; to say nothing of the fact that in the natural course of things

no noble and generous friendship comes out of them. So there is only one way left according to our law, if a beloved is to gratify a lover in a fine way. For just as we have a law that in the case of lovers to be enslaved willingly in any slavery to the beloved is agreed not to be flattery nor a matter of reproach, so too there is only one other willing enslavement that is not a matter of reproach. This is the enslavement regarding virtue; for it is customarily held by us that if anyone is willing to devote his care to someone in the belief that he will be better because of him, either in regard to some kind of wisdom or any other part of virtue whatsoever, this willing enslavement is not disgraceful nor is it flattery. So these two laws (the law about pederasty and the law about philosophy and the rest of virtue) must contribute to the same end if it is going to turn out that a beloved's gratification of a lover is noble. For whenever lover and beloved come to the same point, each with a law, the one, in serving a beloved who has granted his favors, would justly serve in anything; and the other, in assisting him who is making him wise and good, would justly assist. And the one is able to contribute to prudence and the rest of virtue, while the other stands in need of them for the acquisition of education and the rest of wisdom. Then and only then—when these laws converge—does it result that a beloved's gratification of his lover is noble; but in any other circumstance it is not. Even to be deceived in this regard is no disgrace; but in all other cases, whether one is deceived or not, it does involve disgrace. If someone granted his favors to a lover for the sake of wealth because he thought him rich, and then were deceived and got no money when the lover was found to be poor, it is no less a disgrace; for a beloved of that sort is thought to display his very self as one who for the sake of money would serve anyone in anything, and this is not noble. So along the same line of argument, were someone to grant his favors because he thought that his lover was good and that he himself would be better through his friendship with this lover, then even if his lover is found to be bad and without virtue, the deception is noble all the same. For he too is thought to have made plain what holds in his own case—that strictly for the sake of virtue and of becoming better he would show his total zeal in everything, and this is the noblest thing of all. Thus, for the sake of virtue, one is it wholly noble to grant one's favors. This is the love of the Uranian goddess, and it is Uranian and very worthwhile for both city and private men, for it compels both the lover himself and the beloved—each in his own case—to exercise much concern for vir-

tue. All the other loves are of the other goddess, the pandemian. Here, Phaedrus," he said, "you have my extemporary contribution to Eros."

With Pausanias' pause—the wise teach me to talk in such balanced phrases—Aristodemus said that it was Aristophanes' turn to speak; however, he had just got the hiccups (from satiety or something else) and was unable to speak, but he did say—the doctor Eryximachus was lying on the couch next to him—"Eryximachus, it is only just that you either stop my hiccups or speak on my behalf until I do stop." And Eryximachus said, "Well, I shall do both. I shall talk in your turn, and you, when you stop hiccupping, in mine. And while I am speaking, see if by holding your breath for a long time, you make the hiccups stop; but if they do not, gargle with water. And if they prove very severe, take something with which you might irritate your nose, and sneeze; and if you do this once or twice, even if the hiccups are severe, they will stop." "Go ahead and speak," Aristophanes said. "I shall do the rest."

Then Eryximachus spoke. "Well, in my opinion, since Pausanias made a fine start to his speech but did not adequately complete it, it is necessary for me to try to put a complete end to the argument. Inasmuch as Eros is double, it is, in my opinion, a fine thing to divide him; but that he presides not only over the souls of human beings in regard to the beautiful but also in regard to many other things and in other cases—the bodies of all the animals as well as those things that grow in the earth, and just about all the things that are—that, in my opinion, I have come to see from medicine, our art. For how great and wondrous the god is in his comprehensive aims, both in terms of human things and in terms of divine things! I shall begin my speech with medicine, so that we may venerate that art as well. The nature of bodies has this double Eros, for the health and the sickness of the body are by agreement different and dissimilar; and the dissimilar desires and loves dissimilar things. Now, there is one love that presides over the healthy state, and another over the sickly. Just as Pausanias was saying, it is a fine thing to gratify those who are good among human beings and disgraceful to gratify the intemperate, so too, in the case of men's bodies taken by themselves is it a fine and needful thing to gratify the good and healthy things of each body (this is what has the name 'the medical'); but it is shameful to gratify the bad and sickly things, and one has to abstain from favoring them, if one is to be skilled. For the art of medicine is, to sum it up, the expert knowledge of the eros of the body in regard to repletion and evacuation, and he who

diagnostically discriminates in these things between the noble and base love is the one most skilled in medicine; while he who induces changes, so as to bring about the acquisition of one kind of love in place of the other, and who, in whatever things where there is no love but there needs must be, has the expert knowledge to instill it, or to remove it from those things in which it is [but should not be], would be a good craftsman. For he must, in point of fact, be able to make the things that are most at enmity in the body into friends and to make them love one another. The most opposite things are the most at enmity: cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and moist, and anything of the sort. Our ancestor Asclepius, who had the expert knowledge to instill love and unanimity into these things—as the poets here assert and as I am convinced is so—put together our art. Not only medicine, as I say, is entirely captained by this god, but likewise gymnastics and farming. And it is plain to anyone who pays the slightest attention that music is also on the same level as these—as perhaps Heraclitus too wants to say, though as far as his actual words go, what he says is not fine. For he says that the one ‘alone in differing with itself agrees with itself,’ ‘as is the harmony of lyre and bow.’¹⁰ It is a lot of nonsense to affirm that a harmony differs with itself or is composed of still differing things. But perhaps he wanted to say that, from the prior differences between the high and the low, there arises from their later agreement a harmony by means of the art of music; for there surely would no longer be a harmony from high and low notes while they were differing with each other; for harmony is consonance, and consonance is a kind of agreement. But it is impossible to derive agreement from differing things as long as they are differing; and it is impossible, in turn, to fit together the differing or nonagreeing—just as rhythm arises from the fast and the slow, from their prior state of difference and their subsequent agreement. Here, music inserts agreement in all these things (just as, there, medicine does) as it instills mutual love and unanimity; and music, in turn, is expert knowledge of the erotics of harmony and rhythm. And in the simple constitution of harmony and rhythm it is not at all hard to diagnose the erotics; for the double eros is not yet present there; but whenever rhythm and harmony have to be employed in regard

10. The complete fragment (Diels-Kranz) runs: “They do not know how it [presumably the one] in differing with itself agrees with itself; a countermoving fitting together [harmony] as that of bow and lyre.” “Counter-straining” is an old variant for “countermoving.”

to human beings, either by making rhythm and harmony (what they call lyric poetry) or by using correctly the songs and meters that have been made (what has been called education), it is difficult and a good craftsman is needed. For the same argument returns here—namely, that decent human beings must be gratified, as well as those who are not as yet decent, so that they might become more decent; and the love of the decent must be preserved. And this love is the beautiful one, the Uranian, the Eros of the Uranian Muse. But the pandemic one is Polyhymnia’s, which must, whenever it is applied, be applied cautiously, in order that it might harvest its own pleasure but not instill any intemperance—just as in our art it is a large order to employ in a fair way the desires that cluster around the art of making delicacies so as to harvest their pleasure without illness. And in general, in music, in medicine, and in all other things—the human and the divine—each Eros must be watched as far as practicable; for both of the Erotes are present in these things. The composition of the seasons of the year, for example, is also full of both these Erotes; and whenever the hot and the cold, and the dry and the moist, which I mentioned before, obtain decent love for each other and accept a moderate harmony and mixture, they come bearing good seasonableness and health to human beings and to the rest of the animals and plants and commit no injustice. But whenever Eros with his hybris proves to be too strong with regard to the seasons of the year, he corrupts and commits injustice against many things. For plagues as well as many other diseases are wont to arise for wild beasts and plants from things like that. Frosts, for example, and hailstorms and blights arise from the greediness and disorderliness of such erotic things in relation to one another; and the science of these erotic things in regard to the revolutions of stars and seasons of the years is called astronomy. Furthermore, all the sacrifices and things over which divination presides—these are concerned with the communing of gods and human beings with one another—involve almost nothing else but the protection and healing of Eros. For impiety as a whole is wont to arise if one does not gratify the decent Eros and honor and venerate him in every deed, but instead gratifies and honors the other one, in matters that concern parents, both living and dead, and gods. And so it is, accordingly, that divination is charged with the overseeing and healing of lovers; and divination, in turn, is the craftsman of friendship between gods and human beings, since it has expert knowledge of human erotics, as far as erotics has to do with sacred law and piety.

"This is the great and overwhelming power that Eros as a whole has (and indeed it is rather close to total power); but the Eros concerned with good things, consummately perfected with moderation and justice, among us and among gods, this has the greatest power and provides us with every kind of happiness, making us able to associate with one another and to be friends even with the gods who are stronger than we are. Now, perhaps in praising Eros I too am omitting many things; but I have done that unwillingly. For if I did omit anything, it is your job, Aristophanes, to fill it in; or if you intend to make a different eulogy of the god, proceed to do so, since you have stopped hiccupping."

He then said that Aristophanes accepted and said, "It has stopped, to be sure; not, however, before sneezing had been applied to it. So I wonder at the orderly decency of the body desiring such noises and garglings as a sneeze is; for my hiccupping stopped right away as soon as I applied the sneeze to it."

And Eryximachus said, "My good Aristophanes, look at what you are doing. You have made [us] laugh just as you were about to speak, and you compel me to be a guardian of your own speech, lest you ever say anything laughable—though you did have the chance to speak in peace."

And Aristophanes laughed and said, "You have made a good point, Eryximachus, and please let what has been said be as if it were never spoken. But do not be my guardian, for in what is about to be said I am not afraid to say laughable things—for that would be a gain and native to our Muse—but only things that are laughed at."

"You believe you can hit and run, Aristophanes," he said, "but pay attention and speak as though you are to render an account; perhaps, however, if I so resolve, I shall let you go."

"Well, Eryximachus," Aristophanes said, "I do intend to speak in a somewhat different vein from that in which you and Pausanias spoke. Human beings, in my opinion, have been entirely unaware of the power of Eros, since if they were aware of it, they would have provided the greatest sanctuaries and altars for him, and would be making him the greatest sacrifices, and not act as they do now when none of this happens to him, though it most certainly should. For Eros is the most philanthropic of gods, a helper of human beings as well as a physician dealing with an illness the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness for the human race. So I shall try to initiate you into his power; and you will be the teachers of everyone else. But you must first understand hu-

man nature and its afflictions. Our nature in the past was not the same as now but of a different sort. First of all, the races of human beings were three, not two as now, male and female; for there was also a third race that shared in both, a race whose name still remains, though it itself has vanished. For at that time one race was androgynous, and in looks and name it combined both, the male as well as the female; but now it does not exist except for the name that is reserved for reproach. Secondly, the looks of each human being were as a whole round, with back and sides in a circle. And each had four arms, and legs equal in number to his arms, and two faces alike in all respects on a cylindrical neck, but there was one head for both faces—they were set in opposite directions—and four ears, and two sets of genitals, and all the rest that one might conjecture from this. Each used to walk upright too, just as one does now, in whatever direction he wanted; and whenever he had the impulse to run fast, then just as tumblers with their legs straight out actually move around as they tumble in a circle, so did they, with their eight limbs as supports, quickly move in a circle. It is for this reason that the races were three and of this sort: because the male was in origin the offspring of the sun; the female, of the earth; and the race that shared in both, of the moon—since the moon also shares in both. And they themselves were globular, as was their manner of walking, because they were like their patrons. Now, they were awesome in their strength and robustness, and they had great and proud thoughts, so they made an attempt on the gods. And what Homer says about Ephialtes and Otus,¹¹ is said about them—that they attempted to make an ascent into the sky with a view to assaulting the gods. Then Zeus and the other gods deliberated as to what they should do with them. And they were long perplexed, for the gods knew neither how they could kill them and (just as they had struck the giants with lightning) obliterate the race—for, in that case, their own honors and sacrifices from human beings would vanish—nor how they could allow them to continue to behave licentiously. Then Zeus thought hard and says, 'In my own opinion,' he said, 'I have a device whereby human beings would continue to exist and at the same time, having become weaker, would stop their licentiousness. I shall now cut each of them in two,' he said; 'and they will be both weaker and more useful to us through the increase in their numbers. And they will walk upright on two legs. But if they are thought

11. Homer, *Odysses* 11.307–20; *Iliad*, 5.387–91.

to behave licentiously still, and are unwilling to keep quiet, then I shall cut them again in two,' he said, 'so that they will go hopping on one leg.' As soon as he said this he began to cut human beings in two, just like those who cut sorb-apples in preparation for pickling, or those who cut eggs with hairs. And whenever he cut someone, he had Apollo turn the face and half the neck around to face the cut, so that in beholding his own cutting the human being might be more orderly; and he had him heal all the rest. Apollo turned the face around, and by drawing together the skin from everywhere toward what is now called the belly (just like drawing string bags) he made one opening, which he tied off in the middle of the belly, and that is what they call the navel. He shaped up the chest and smoothed out many of the other wrinkles, with somewhat the same kind of tool as shoemakers use in smoothing the wrinkles in leather on the last; but he left a few wrinkles, those on the belly itself and the navel, to be a reminder of our ancient affliction. When its nature was cut in two, each—desiring its own half—came together, and throwing their arms around one another and entangling themselves with one another in their desire to grow together, they began to die off due to hunger and the rest of their inactivity, because they were unwilling to do anything apart from one another; and whenever one of the halves did die and the other was left, the one that was left tried to seek out another and entangle itself with that, whether it met the half of the whole woman—and that is what we now call a woman—or of a man; and so they continued to perish. But Zeus took pity on them and supplies another device: He rearranges their genitals toward the front—for up till then they had them on the outside, and they generated and gave birth not in one another but in the earth, like cicadas—and for this purpose, he changed this part of them toward the front, and by this means made generation possible in one another, by means of the male in the female; so that in embracing, if a man meets with a woman, they might generate and the race continue; and if male meets with male, there might at least be satiric in their being together; and they might pause and turn to work and attend to the rest of their livelihood. So it is really from such early times that human beings have had, inborn in themselves, Eros for one another—Eros, the bringer-together of their ancient nature, who tries to make one out of two and to heal their human nature. Each of us, then, is a token of a human being, because we are sliced like fillets of sole, two out of one; and so each is always in search of his own token. Now all who are the men's slice from the common genus, which was then called androgynous, are lovers of

women; and many adulterers have been of this genus; and, in turn, all who are women of this genus prove to be lovers of men and adulteresses. And all women who are sliced off from woman hardly pay attention to men but are rather turned toward women, and lesbians arise from this genus. But all who are male slices pursue the males; and while they are boys—because they are cutlets of the male—they are friendly to men and enjoy lying down together with and embracing men; and these are the best of boys and lads, because they are naturally the manliest. Some, to be sure, assert that such boys are shameless, but they lie. For it is not out of shamelessness that they do this but out of boldness, manliness, and masculinity, feeling affection for what is like to themselves. And there is a great proof of this, for once they have reached maturity, only men of this kind go off to political affairs. When they are fully grown men, they are pederasts and naturally pay no attention to marriage and procreation, but are compelled to do so by the law; whereas they would be content to live unmarried with one another. Now it is one of this sort who wholly becomes a pederast and passionate lover, always feeling affection for what is akin to himself. And when the pederast or anyone else meets with that very one who is his own half, then they are wondrously struck with friendship, attachment, and love, and are just about unwilling to be apart from one another even for a short time. And here you have those who continue through life with one another, though they could not even say what they want to get for themselves from one another. For no one would be of the opinion that it was sexual intercourse that was wanted, as though it were for this reason—of all things—that each so enjoys being with the other in great earnestness; but the soul of each plainly wants something else. What it is, it is incapable of saying, but it divines what it wants and speaks in riddles. If Hephaestus with his tools were to stand over them as they lay in the same place and were to ask, 'What is it that you want, human beings, to get for yourselves from one another?'—and if in their perplexity he were to ask them again, 'Is it this you desire, to be with one another in the very same place, as much as is possible, and not to leave one another night and day? For if you desire that, I am willing to fuse you and make you grow together into the same thing, so that—though two—you would be one; and as long as you lived, you would both live together just as though you were one; and when you died, there again in Hades you would be dead together as one instead of as two. So see if you love this and would be content if you got it.' We know that there would not be even one who, if he heard this, would

refuse, and it would be self-evident that he wants nothing else than this; and he would quite simply believe he had heard what he had been desiring all along: in conjunction and fusion with the beloved, to become one from two. The cause of this is that this was our ancient nature and we were wholes. So love is the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole. And previously, as I say, we were one; but now through our injustice we have been dispersed by the god, just as the Arcadians were dispersed by the Spartans. There is the fear, then, that if we are not orderly in our behavior to the gods, we shall be split again and go around like those who are modeled in relief on stelae, sawed through our nostrils, like dice. For this reason every real man must be exhorted to be pious toward the gods in all his acts, so that we may avoid the one result and get the other, as Eros is our guide and general. Let no one act contrary to Eros—and he acts contrary whoever incurs the enmity of the gods—for if we become friends and reconciled to the gods, we shall find out and meet with our own favorites, which few at the moment do. And please don't let Eryximachus suppose, in making a comedy of my speech, that I mean Pausanias and Agathon—perhaps they have found their own and are both naturally born males. For whatever the case may be with them, I am referring to all men and women: our race would be happy if we were to bring our love to a consummate end, and each of us were to get his own favorite on his return to his ancient nature. And if this is the best, it must necessarily be the case that, in present circumstances, that which is closest to it is the best; and that is to get a favorite whose nature is to one's taste. And were we to hymn the god who is the cause of this we should justly hymn Eros, who at the present time benefits us the most by leading us to what is our own; and in the future he offers the greatest hopes, while we offer piety to the gods, to restore us to our ancient nature and by his healing make us blessed and happy.

"Here, Eryximachus," he said, "is my speech about Eros, different from yours. So, just as I begged you, don't make a comedy of it, in order that we may listen to what each of the others—or rather, what each of the two—will say; for Agathon and Socrates are left."

"Well, I shall obey you," he said Eryximachus said. "Your speech was indeed a pleasure for me. And if I did not know that both Socrates and Agathon were skilled in erotics, I should be very much afraid of their being at a loss for words on account of the fullness and variety of what has been said; but as it is, I am confident."

Socrates then said, "That is because you yourself put up a fine show in the contest, Eryximachus; but if you were where I am now, or rather where I shall be when Agathon has spoken well, then you would really be afraid and as wholly baffled as I am now."

"You want to bewitch me, Socrates," Agathon said. "You would have me believe that the audience is full of expectation that I shall speak well, and in that way, I shall be in turmoil."

"I should surely be forgetful, Agathon," Socrates said, "if I did that. I saw your courage and greatness of mind in mounting the platform with the actors and in facing so large an audience when you were about to display your own speeches, and I saw that you were in no way disturbed—should I now believe that you will be in a turmoil on account of us few human beings?"

"What's this, Socrates?" Agathon said. "You really do not believe that I am so wrapped up in the theater as not to know that to a man of sense a few who are sensible are more terrifying than many fools?"

"Well, I should surely be in disgrace, Agathon," he said, "were I to presume any lack of urbanity in you; for I know very well that were you to meet any you believed wise, you would think more of them than of the many. But I suspect that we shall not prove to be of the wise, for we too were present there and were part of the many; but if you were to meet others who were indeed wise, then you might be ashamed before them—if you were perhaps to believe that you were doing something that is disgraceful. Is this what you mean?"

"What you say is true."

"But you would not be ashamed before the many if you believed you were doing something disgraceful?"

Phaedrus then interrupted and said, "Dear Agathon, if you answer Socrates, it will not make any difference to him what effect this might have on our present arrangements, provided only that he has someone to converse with, especially if he is beautiful. And I myself listen to Socrates' conversation with pleasure; but I am compelled to attend to the eulogy to Eros and to receive from each one of you your speech; so let each of you repay the god and then go on conversing as you were."

"Well, what you say is fine, Phaedrus," Agathon said, "and nothing keeps me from speaking; for it will be possible for me to converse with Socrates on many other occasions."

"I want first to say how I must speak, and then to speak. For in my

own opinion all the previous speakers did not enlorge the god but blessed human beings for the goods of which the god is the cause; yet no one has said what sort is he who makes these gifts. There is one proper manner in every praise of anything: to tell in speech—whomever the speech is about—what sort he is and what sort of things he causes. This is the just way for us too to praise Eros—first what sort he is, and then his gifts. I declare that though all gods are happy, Eros (if sacred law allow it and it be without nemesis to say so) is the happiest of them, as he is the most beautiful and the best. As the most beautiful he is of the following sort: First, he is the youngest of gods, Phaedrus; and he by himself supplies a great proof for this assertion, for with headlong flight he avoids old age—swift though it plainly is, coming on us, at any rate, swifter than he should. It is precisely old age that Eros naturally detests; he does not even come within hailing distance of it. He is always with and of the young. For the old saying holds good, that like to like always draws near. Though I agree with Phaedrus in many other respects, I do not agree that Eros is more ancient than Kronos and Iapetos; but I affirm his being the youngest of gods and ever young. And the events of old about gods of which Hesiod and Parmenides speak belong to Necessity and not Eros, if what they say is true. Otherwise there would not have been castrations and bindings of each other, and many other acts of violence among the gods, had Eros been among them; but there would have been friendship and peace, just as there is now since Eros became king of the gods. So he is young, and besides being young, he is tender. But there is need of a poet as good as Homer was to show a god's tenderness. Homer says that Ate is a goddess and tender—her feet at any rate are tender—saying:

'Tender are her feet, for she does not on the threshold
Draw near, but lo! she walks on the heads of men.'¹²

So in my opinion it is with a fine piece of evidence that he shows her softness, because she walks not on the hard but on the soft. And we too shall use the same piece of evidence about Eros to prove that he is soft; for not upon earth does he walk nor even on skulls, which are hardly soft, but on the softest of beings he walks and dwells. For he has set up his

12. Homer, *Iliad*, 19.92-93.

dwelling place in the characters and souls of gods and human beings, and not in each and every soul—for whichever soul he finds to have a hard character, he goes away from, and whichever he finds to have a soft one he dwells in. So, as he is always touching with his feet and every other part the softest of the softest, it is necessary that he be most tender. Now besides being youngest and tenderest, he is supple in his looks. Otherwise he would not be able to fold himself around everywhere, nor to be unobserved on first entering or on departing from every soul, if he were hard. The harmony of his figure is a great piece of evidence for his proportioned and supple appearance, and on all sides it is agreed that Eros is exceptionally harmonious; for lack of harmony and Eros are always at war with one another. The god's way of living among blooming flowers means that his complexion is beautiful; for Eros does not settle on what is fading and has passed its bloom, whether it be body or soul or anything else, but wherever a place is blooming and scented, there he settles and remains.

"Now this is enough about beauty as attributable to the god, though many points are still omitted; but Eros' virtue must next be spoken of. The greatest thing is that Eros neither commits injustice nor has injustice done to him, neither against a god nor by a god, neither against a human being nor by a human being. For it is not by violence that Eros is affected, if he is affected at all—for violence does not touch him; nor does he act with violence, for everyone of his own accord serves Eros in everything. And whatever anyone of his own accord agrees upon with another of his own accord, the 'royal laws of the city' declare to be just. And besides the share he has in justice he has his fullest share in moderation. For it is agreed that to be moderate means to dominate over pleasures and desires; but no pleasure is stronger than Eros; and if other pleasures are weaker, they will be dominated by Eros; and since it is he who is dominant, then in dominating, pleasures and desires Eros must be exceptionally moderate. And besides, in point of courage, 'not even Ares resists' Eros; for Ares does not possess Eros (for Aphrodite, as the story goes), but Eros Ares. And he who possesses is stronger than he who is possessed; and in dominating the bravest of all the rest, he must be the bravest. Now that the god's justice, moderation, and courage have been mentioned, all that remains is wisdom; so, as far as I can, I must try to supply the omission. And first—that I too might honor our art as Eryximachus did his—the god is a poet of such wisdom that he can make poets of others too; at any