



The Temple of Apollo at Delphi

# The Symposium of Plato

(Translated freely from the Greek by Professor E. Piscitelli)

## Prologue: Apollodorus to a Companion (172a-174a)

Apollodorus:

I think I know well the story you are asking about. The day before yesterday I happened to be going downtown from my house in Phalerum, when a friend of mine while still far off recognized me from behind. He called out to me making fun of me, "Hey, there, Mr. Phalerian, wait up for me, Apollodorus." So I stopped and waited for him.

Then he addressed me, "Apollodorus, do you know you are the very person I wanted to see. I want to hear about the drinking party which brought Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades together and some others. I want to hear what they all said about love on that occasion. Somebody gave me the account he had from Phoenix, son of Philip, and he said you knew all about it. But he was confused about the details; so you must give me the whole story, for who could report the speeches of your dearest friend better than you." "But," he continued, "first tell me whether you yourself were at the party?"

I replied, "Sir, you have anything but a clear account from your source of information if you think the party in question occurred so recently that I could have attended it."

"In fact," he replied, "I did think it was recent."

"How could that be, Glaucon?" I said. "Don't you realize that Agathon has been living out of town for several years now, while, for less than three years, I have been a follower of Socrates and have made it my daily practice to find out everything he says and does. Before I met him I was running around in circles with no idea what I was doing, but thinking I was accomplishing something, though I was a most wretched person. Something like you are right now, thinking, as you do, that doing anything practical is more important than philosophy."

"Stop making fun of me and tell me just when this party took place," he retorted.

"When both you and I were still children," I replied, "on the occasion of Agathon's winning first prize for his first tragedy, on the day after his victory celebration with his chorus."

"That is a long time ago," he said, "but then how did you come by the story? Did you get it from Socrates himself?"

"Heavens, no," I said, "it was the same person who related it to Phoenix, it was Aristodemus of Cydathenaeum, a short fellow who always went barefoot." "He himself attended the party with Socrates. He was one of the greatest admirers (erasthV) of Socrates at the time, I think. All the same, I have since then questioned Socrates himself on the details of the story which Aristodemus told me and he himself confirmed his account."

"Come on, then," he said, "tell me the whole story. The walk to town is a good occasion for talking and listening to a story."

"Thus it was that we walked together and as we went we talked about what happened and what was said at that party a long time ago. It is for this reason, as I started to say, that I am now well prepared to recount the whole thing for you. Quite apart from its practical benefits, I find that any sort of philosophical conversations I have are extremely delightful whether I myself actively engage in them or just listen to them. When I hear other kinds of talk, especially the conversations you carry on with those wealthy business friends of yours, I become annoyed with you. I pity you and your friends for thinking you are doing something when you are just wasting your time. I am sure you think the same of me, that I am a pitiful creature and you might be right. I, for my part, do not just think this of you: I know it."

Companion:

"Same old Apollodorus, always criticizing yourself and everyone else! You hold, I take it, that all men are miserable with the sole exception of Socrates, and that you are in the worst shape of all. You really do deserve the nick name "the maniac" because you certainly talk like one, raging against yourself and everyone else, everyone except Socrates, of course!"

Apollodorus:

"My dear friend, is it really that crazy to be self-critical and critical of others as well? Do you really think I have lost my wits?"

Companion:

"We are wasting time, Apollodorus, arguing about such matters just now. Come on, without further ado, keep your promise and tell me what was said at that [memorable] party."

Apollodorus:

"Well then, the story goes something like this -- but just a minute, I should try to tell you what happened from beginning to end, in [the same] order that my friend (Aristodemus) told me."

### **Aristodemus' Prologue (174a-175e)**

"He began by telling me how he met Socrates coming from the baths downtown and how Socrates was wearing his good shoes -- something he rarely did. So he asked Socrates where he was going all dressed up."

"To Agathon's victory party," He answered. "I avoided him at his cast party yesterday, dreading the crowds, but I agreed to go to his house today. So I got all dressed up like this to be good looking for my "Good" (Agathon = Good)) good looking host. What about you? Would you like to accompany me as an uninvited guest to the party?"

"Whatever you like," he said.

"Come along then, so we can corrupt the saying by turning it around and making it run, "To the banquets of good [named] men (Agathon), the [really] good [Aristodemus] go uninvited," he quipped. For his part Homer not only dares corrupt the proverb, he debases it. For he presents Agamemnon as an outstandingly courageous man in warfare and Meneleus as the weaker warrior. But after Agamemnon offered the sacrifice [to the gods], he allows Meneleus to go to the feast uninvited, the lesser man guest to the greater."

To this my friend told me he replied, "I fear my case does not fit your version, Socrates, but Homer's original -- an unlettered man coming to the banquet of an educated man. You better be ready with some explanation when you arrive with me; for I will not admit to tagging along uninvited, and [if Agathon asks me,] I will tell him you invited me."

He quoted [from Homer] again, " `When two are traveling together one is always ahead of the other' [two heads are better than one] in figuring out on the way what excuse we shall give. So let's be off."

The two of them went along talking as they strolled together. Socrates became absorbed in his own thoughts as they walked and he fell behind as they approached [their destination]. But when Aristodemus stopped to wait for him, Socrates motioned him to go on ahead. So he arrived at Agathon's house and found the door ajar. He found himself in an embarrassing position. He was met immediately by a house servant who led him to where the company were reclining and about to have dinner. As soon as Agathon spied him, he cried, "Hello, there Aristodemus, I am so glad you are here, you are just in time to join us for dinner. If you have come for some other reason, put it off till another time. I looked for you yesterday to invite you, and I could not find you! How is it you have not brought Socrates straight to us?"

"At that I turned around," he said, "but I could not see Socrates behind me. He explained that he had come with Socrates because he had invited him to dine with him.

"How good of you to come," he said, "but where is the man?"

"He was behind me a minute ago, but now I am wondering where he is myself."

Agathon said to his servant, "See whether or not you can find Socrates and bring him to us." You, Aristodemus, please recline beside Eryximachus."

One attendant helped him wash up and prepared him to lie down at the table, while another servant reported that Socrates had arrived, but he was standing outside on the neighbor's porch. The servant said, "He won't come when I call him."

"How strange!" said Agathon, "you must keep calling him and don't give up."

But Aristodemus forbade them to bother Socrates: "No," he said, "let him alone. He has a habit of doing this. Occasionally he will turn aside from whatever he is doing and will stand still right where he is. He will be here shortly, I expect. So don't disturb him, but let him be."

"Very well, then," said Agathon, "whatever you think is best. "Come," Agathon called to the servants, "serve the dinner for the rest of us. You always put out whatever you wish in any case, when there's no one supervising you - which I have not yet tried - "Today you should imagine," said Agathon, "that I and my guests have come to your house at your invitation, so look after us and earn our compliments. Make everyone feel at home!"

"With that," he said, "they started dinner without Socrates." Agathon several times ordered his servants to fetch Socrates, but Aristodemus would not allow it. After a little while Socrates came in, having spent the time in his accustomed way. He arrived when they were right in the middle of dinner. Agathon who happened to be sitting at the end of the table all by himself said, "Here Socrates, come sit by me so that by rubbing shoulders with you some of that wisdom that inspired you on the porch might rub off on me. Clearly you found what you were looking for or you would not have abandoned your thoughts."

As Socrates took his seat beside him he remarked, "Agathon, how I wish that wisdom were the sort of thing that could flow from the fuller of us to the emptier by our touching each other the way water flows through a woolen thread from the fuller to the emptier cup. If wisdom were such, it is I who would prize place beside you very much for I would be filled with your beautiful wisdom. My own wisdom is scant and foggy like a dream while yours shines brightly and generously. Just the other day we saw it radiating brilliantly from your splendid youthful mind with more than thirty thousand Greeks as your witness!"

"You're outrageous, Socrates," Agathon protested. "A little later you and I shall go before the bar of justice to be tried for our respective wisdom where Dionysus will be the judge. But for now please have your dinner."

### **Pausanias Proposes Moderation and Eryximachus Proposes Speeches in Praise of Eros (176a-178a)**

After this encounter, he told me, Socrates reclined and dined with the company. They offered libations and sang a hymn to the god (Dionysus) and did the other things required by religious custom. Finally it came time for serious drinking. But just at that point Pausanias began with a speech that went something like this: "Well gentlemen, what is the best way for us to drink at our ease. I must confess for my part that I am in very bad shape after getting plastered in yesterday's bout. So I would like to claim a respite. Isn't this so with the rest of you, for most of you were at yesterday's cast party weren't you? Let's try to find some way to get drunk without getting ourselves sick."

At this Aristophanes chimed in, "Now, my dear old Pausanias, that is a good idea. Let's find some way to take it easy in our drinking, for I am one of those people who got really stoned yesterday."

Having heard this Eryximachus, son of Acumenus, chimed in saying, "You are right worthy sirs, but there is another question I would like to ask, how Agathon feels about drinking?"

"I could also do without it, I am not really up to it at this point," said the host.

The speaker continued, "Well, that's a stroke of luck for the rest us, he said- me and Aristodemus and Phaedrus and the others here- since you are the ablest drinkers and you are exhausted; for we're never up to it. I'm not talking about Socrates, of course, he is prepared either way and whatever we choose to do will be alright with him. Now since it seems nobody here is eager for serious drinking, perhaps it will be less tiresome for you to hear the truth about the nature of intoxication. The art of medicine makes it clear that drunkenness is harmful to human beings. I myself never willingly drink to excess nor would I prescribe it for another, especially when their heads are still spinning from the day before."

At this point Phaedrus, the Myrrhinian, spoke up. "You know I always follow your advice especially in medical matters and on this the others would be well advised to heed your counsel."

At this they all agreed not to turn the party into a drunken affair, but to drink only to the point where it would make them feel good.

Eryximachus went on, "What is more now that we have decided that each man should drink only as much as he wishes with no compulsion to get smashed, I propose that the flute-girl who had just come in be dismissed. She can play for herself or if she wants for the women inside, but let us seek our entertainment today with pleasant conversation. As to the kind of conversation, I would like to suggest a topic for our discussion if you all agree."

They all agreed and urged him to make his proposal.

So Eryximachus continued. "I begin my speech in the manner of Euripides of Melanippe, for 'it is not my tale I intend to tell;' but the one my mother taught me. For it comes from my own [student] Phaedrus. Phaedrus often complains to me, saying, "Isn't it a terrible thing that the poets compose hymns and sacred songs to the other gods, but to *Eros*, so great and venerable a god, not a single song of real praise has been written by any of the innumerable poets? Then when we consider the learned, professional teachers who write their scholarly treatises praising, for example, Hercules and other worthies the way the renowned Prodicus did, even this is not so astounding, for I once came upon a book by a wise man in which common table-salt was most remarkably eulogized for its *usefulness*, and a lot of other like things celebrated in a similar manner. Think of all the fuss over the *usefulness* of such trifles while not a single man to this day has attempted to make a similarly fitting hymn in praise of Love's usefulness. So great a god as Eros is badly neglected!"

I, for one, think Phaedrus is right and so I willingly give in to him and will make my contribution. But I think our present gathering offers a good occasion for us to adorn the god. If all of you approve, we might make good use of the time by pursuing the topic in our conversation. I propose that we make as beautiful a speech as we can praising love, each taking our turn going from left to right. Phaedrus will go first because he is reclining at the head of the table and besides he is the "father of the subject under discussion."

"No one, Eryximachus, will vote against your proposal." said Socrates, I don't see how even I could refuse you since I myself claim to know nothing but the things pertaining to love (ta erwtika). Nor could Agathon and Pausanias refuse. Aristophanes could hardly decline to participate since he divides his time between Dionysus and Aphrodite, wine and sex. Nor could anyone else I see in the present company refuse to accept your challenge. Of course, your proposal is unfair to those of us who are reclining at this end of the table, but if the first speakers rise sufficiently to the occasion and speak beautifully and well, we shall be content. Let us wish Phaedrus good luck and give him the floor so he can give his speech in praise of Love."

They all consented and urged Phaedrus to begin as Socrates said. Aristodemus did not remember every word of every speech nor do I remember everything he told me; but I will tell you what he especially found memorable from each speakers' speeches. I will recount the speeches in the order they were delivered one after the other.

### **The Speech of Phaedrus (178a-180b)**

Aristodemus told me what Phaedrus said first. Phaedrus spoke and made the following points: He said, "Among men and gods Love is a great and wondrous god in many different ways, and not the least of which concerns his birth.

He is honored as the most ancient of the gods. The proof of his antiquity is that he has no parents; nothing is said about his birth by poet or layman. Hesiod mentions in the beginning there was

Chaos first then full breasted Mother-Earth arose.

The safe resting place of all living things and then Love.

[The genealogist] Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod claiming that after Chaos both Earth and Love were born. Parmenides says of Birth that She invented Love before the other gods. Thus the authorities hold *Eros* to be the eldest of divinities and as the eldest he is the source of the greatest blessings for all.

I cannot think of a greater blessing for a young man to have than to have a useful lover (erwsteV crhstoV) or for a teacher-lover to have than a devoted student.

For living a good life cannot be achieved through kinship or office or wealth or anything else as well as it can be through *Eros* [desire]. What is the nature of this erotic power? Is it [Eros] not the shame we feel for shameful things and the ambition we feel for noble things? Without this passion it is impossible for either cities or individuals to do great and beautiful deeds. Let me say that if a lover-teacher is caught in some shameful act or in the cowardly submission to shameful treatment by another, he would not be half as disturbed by someone observing it, even his father or his friends, as he would be by his beloved-student seeing him.

Similarly we can see how the beloved student is shamed before his [mentor] lover when he is compromised by some shameful act. Thus, if we could construct a city or an army composed of [teacher] lovers and their beloved [students], they would become the best citizens because they would refrain from all that is dishonorable and strive to win one another's mutual respect. If such men as these fought side by side, as the saying goes, "even a little troop, would be able to conquer the whole world." For a lover surely would choose to have the entire army rather than his beloved behold him desert his station or throw down his arms in surrender. Rather than feel such shame, he would sooner die many times. At the same time he would never desert his beloved in battle or refuse to aid him when wounded or in peril. No man is so base that love could not inspire him with such valor that he could become the equal of the greatest born heroes. Doubtlessly when Homer exclaims that the god breathes a fury into certain heroes, he is talking about love inspired powers.

Furthermore only lovers will consent to die for others. And it's not only men, but women too who will die for their beloved. Among us Greeks Alcestis, daughter of Pelius, gives ample evidence to support my claim. For she alone was willing to die in her husband's place even though his elderly father and mother were still living and refused to sacrifice themselves. Her love placed her so much higher than his parents that they seemed like strangers to their own son and to be related to him in name only. When she took his place in death, not only men, but the gods judged it so noble, that they granted her the gift few who perform such noble acts are given: they brought her back to life from death. How much they must have admired her courageous deed! Thus the gods greatly honor men of zeal and courage in matters pertaining to love.

In contrast the gods allowed Orpheus, son of Oeagrus to leave Hades, but he left empty-handed. They permitted him only to look upon the shade of the woman for whom he had come. They refused to return her to him in life. For Orpheus was considered a coward, like the scheming minstrel he was, since he refused to die for *Eros* and for his beloved as Alcestis had done. Instead he contrived by his art to enter Hades alive to bring her back. Thus the gods punished him as he deserved by causing him to die at the hands of women.

But Achilles, son of Thetis, was honored by the gods and sent to his place in the Isles of the Blest --Homer places him in Hades. For even though he learned from his mother that he would himself die if he were to kill

Hector, and that if he had refused to kill him, he would have gone home and lived to a ripe old age, he dared to vindicate his lover Patroclus. He avenged his death, not only by dying for his sake, but also by joining his friend in death. The gods were pleased by his [gracious] act and, therefore, especially honored him because he made such a fuss over his lover.

Aeschylus confuses the issue when he claims it was Achilles who was the lover in pursuit of Patroclus. Imagine what nonsense! The beloved Achilles, a lover, a man more glorious, not only than Patroclus, but than all the other heroes put together! Achilles did not even have a beard yet, as Homer says, because he was the younger of the two.

Truly the gods give the greatest honor to manliness wrought by love. They are more full of admiration and delight and bestow greater rewards when the beloved [student] is fond of his lover [teacher] than when the lover [teacher] is fond of his beloved [student]. Since the lover [teacher] is filled with the god, he surpasses his beloved [protégé] in divinity. For this reason the Gods loved Achilles over Alcestis, granting him an abode in the Isles of the Blest.

This is my praise of Love. I claim that of the gods, Love is the most Ancient and Venerable. He is the most noble and benevolent in bestowing manliness, happiness, and well-being on all men in life and death.

### **The Speech of Pausanias (180C-185C)**

I was informed that the speech of Phaedrus went something like the account I have just given. It was followed by several similar speeches that my friend [Aristodemus] could not recall very clearly so he skipped over them and reported on the speech of Pausanias. The old academician's speech went something like this:

"Phaedrus, I don't think our program is a worthy one if what we are going to do is to praise Love as a abstraction. If there were only one kind of love that would be fine; but since love is not just one sort of thing, it would be more correct to announce at the start what sort of love we ought to commend. I am going to try to correct this and set the record straight. I will begin with a discussion of the kind of love that is praiseworthy and then proceed to praise the god appropriately.

We all know Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic passion, is never without love. If she were only one divinity, there would be only one kind of love. But since there are actually two different Aphrodites, we must conclude there are really two different kinds of love. Does anyone doubt her duplicity? On the one hand, there is the motherless daughter of Uranus, the Heaven-Begotten Love. Hence we call her the Heavenly Love. Then there is the other younger one, the child of Zeus and Dione, whom we call Pandemus, or Common, Vulgar Love. We should, therefore, describe *Eros* also as "Common" when he is the sidekick of the earthly Aphrodite and as "Celestial" when he works with the other Heavenly One. While we ought to praise all the gods, we must also try to say what sphere of influence belongs to each. I shall deal with each separately.

No action is either noble or base when taken in isolation from life. For example, take our present conduct, whether we drink, sing, or converse, -- none of these are in themselves noble [or base]. Each act turns out to be noble or base by the way it is done. For when each act is performed nobly, then it becomes noble. When it is done basely, it becomes base. So also is it with loving. Thus, Love is not, in every case, noble or worthy of praise, but only the *Eros* that inspires us to honorable love.

The *Eros* proper to the Vulgar Aphrodite is truly vulgar and works haphazardly. We observe this vulgar love in the average man. First, common men love women and boys indiscriminately. Second, they love the body rather than the soul. Thirdly they love the shallowest people they can find, since they look for gratification

and do not care whether the act is a fine thing or not. They take it where they can get it, regardless whether it is ennobling or degrading. This [Eros] is the nature of the goddess who has a share of both female and male in her birth.

The other love springs from the Celestial Aphrodite. First, he partakes, not of the female, but only of the male. Second, he is the elder untouched by outrageous lust. Therefore, those who are inspired by this love are attracted to the male and love what is more manly and intelligent.

As every connoisseur of pederastic love knows, young men are not attractive until they begin to think for themselves. This is about the same time as the beard begins to grow. I think teachers who fall in love with young men at an early age will always love them and will live with them as long as they live. They will not take advantage of the youth's naiveté, deceive him, and mock him by going to bed with other young men as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

A law should be passed against falling in love with very young boys [students] to prevent older lovers [teachers] from wasting their passions on children whose future prospects are so uncertain. For who can tell how a child will turn out whether an excellent specimen or a bad piece of work in body and soul? While refined men follow this rule voluntarily, it is a rule vulgar lovers ought to be forced to obey it, just as the law forbids them from committing adultery with freeborn women. These people are responsible for the kinds of disgrace that prompt some folks to say it is shameful to gratify your lover. The common rake's reckless and criminal acts are the kinds of things to which people refer in their condemnation. If these same acts were done lawfully and gracefully, they would bear no just reproach.

In other cities the laws and customs dealing with love-making are easy to understand since they are expressed in the simplest terms. But in Athens and Sparta the laws about love-making are complicated. For example, in Elis or Boeotia and places where people are not so articulate, the law plainly says to give oneself to a lover is a good thing. No one, either young or old, would call it shameful. Since the citizens of these cities have little or no talent for persuasive speech, they don't even try to talk young people out of it. In Ionia and territories under barbaric rule, gratifying [homosexual] lovers is considered a disgrace. As a result of their tyrannical regimes, barbarians think gratifying a lover [of the same sex] along with training in philosophy and gymnastics are decadent sports. I suppose it is not in the interest of their rulers to engender lofty thoughts, to create strong friendship ties, and camaraderie in their subjects, all the things Eros is preeminently apt to foster.

This is a lesson our own tyrants learned from experience. For Aristogeiton's [legendary] love and the friendship of Harmodius, after achieving constancy, grew so strong that it drove out the evil power of the tyrants. Thus where it is thought an evil to give oneself to a lover, it is really a result of evil, tyrannical lawmakers. It is a result of the arrogance of the rulers and the cowardice of the ruled. Where it is accepted as honorable without qualification it is because of intellectual sloth in the legislators. In our city the law deals with erotic matters more appropriately and beautifully; but as I said earlier, it is not easy to understand.

Take, for example, our saying that it is more honorable to love in the open than in secret, especially when the beloved excels not so much in physical attractiveness as in nobility and manly excellence. What a wonderful encouragement a lover gets from all of us! We do not think that anything he does in the pursuit of love is unseemly. Winning over the beloved is held to be a fine thing while failing in the pursuit is considered base. Our law grants freedom to a lover who is trying to seduce his beloved by doing marvelous feats to win him praise. The same deeds, if attempted for another end or purpose, would bring down upon them the greatest blame for its practice as philosophy.

Suppose a person were trying to obtain money from someone, or to get some government appointment, or to obtain some other position of influence and they would act like lovers commonly do with the ones they love:

pursuing the other with entreaties, swearing oaths of fidelity, sleeping at their doorsteps, and being willing to do things for the beloved that no slave would be willing to do, this person would be prevented from acting in this dishonorable way by friends and foes alike. His enemies would put him down for his obsequiousness, while his friends would chastise him and be ashamed of him. When a lover does these same things, people think these things are charming. The law allows him to act without reproach as though his behavior were thoroughly acceptable. The strangest thing of all is that people claim the gods will forgive him when he breaks an oath. The saying goes: An oath taken under Aphrodite's influence is not binding. Thus both the gods and men have given complete license to the lover as our Athenian law provides.

For this reason we might suppose that here in Athens being a lover [teacher] and being a beloved [student] would be held in the highest honor. But as it happens, fathers appoint chaperons over their sons when they are wooed by their teachers, to stop them from intimate exchanges with their teacher-lovers. The chaperon has strict orders in this regard. When a young man is observed indulging in acts of intimacy, his playmates and companions scold him. By the same token they are not in their turn admonished by their elders for speaking wrongly. From this custom you might think such behavior is held to be disgraceful here in Athens.

I think the truth in this case is not such a simple matter. Remember we said that in itself giving love's favors was neither noble nor base, but rather honorable if honorably done and base if basely done. When one gives one's favors to a base man clumsily, it is basely done. When one gives oneself to a good man gracefully, it is nobly done. By 'base lover' we mean the vulgar lecher who craves the body rather than the *soul*.

Since the base lover is not constant, because the thing he loves is inconstant. As soon as the bloom of the body for which he lusts fades, he slinks away and is gone, leaving all his fine words and promises broken. But the honorable lover is by nature, faithful throughout life and identifies himself with fidelity.

Our laws have an excellent and unerring test to determine which lovers are to be gratified and which are to be shunned. In some cases our customs encourage pursuit, in others flight. Like a judge, the law applies ordeals and tests by which lover and beloved can be reckoned on the side of the base or the fine. This is why it is considered disgraceful to give in to a lover too quickly. Time is the best test of such things. Next it is considered base to give sexual favors to gain wealth or political power or out of fear of suffering and enduring ill-treatment. It is base to yield to a lover for these reasons since it shows the person to be incapable of scorning the benefits of property and political success. Some even give themselves to others with only the hope of getting a political appointment. None of these practices result in stability. Apart from the fact that they do not foster genuine and honorable friendships.

According to Athenian practice, there is only one way by which a beloved student may honorably gratify his mentor. Just as it is not considered flattery or something shameful when lovers enslave themselves to their beloved, so similarly our law allows a form of voluntary servitude to be without shame: when sexual favors are given to the lover for the sake of wisdom or virtue.

It is our tradition that when a man freely serves another in the belief that his lover will better him in the acquisition of wisdom or in other excellence, then giving sexual favors is not disgraceful behavior or mere flattery. Let us put together both our conventions: the one concerning pederasty and the other concerning philosophy and the acquisition of excellence. We can conclude it is good for a favorite student to gratify his lover teacher. For when the lover and his favorite come together each governed by their own principles, the teacher is justified in doing any service for his favorite student and the favorite is justified in acquiescing [by giving sexual favors] to the person who offers him wisdom and virtue. In this case the older man gives of his fullness and contributes to the younger man intellectual and other excellences while the younger in his need or emptiness acquires an education and the rest of wisdom.

Only under these specific circumstances when these two principles come together, but under no other

circumstances, can a favorite [student] honorably indulge his [teacher] lover. Though it is dishonorable for a student to give himself to a lover under other circumstances whether he is deceived or not, it is no disgrace under these circumstances even if the student is deceived. Suppose a young man had a lover, whom he thought was wealthy, and after giving in to him on account of his wealth, were to find himself hoodwinked because the lover turned out to be penniless. This would still be a dishonorable liaison for it is thought such a man shows himself for what he is, that he would submit to anyone in anything for money, and this is not a fine thing. But when a young man gratifies a [teacher] friend thinking he is a man of excellence and expecting to become excellent himself on account of his lover's affection, but then finds himself deceived when his [teacher] friend proves to be vile and destitute of excellence, even in these circumstances the deception would be honorable for it is again thought that he has made clear exactly what he is, that he would eagerly do anything for anyone for the sake of virtue and his own improvement, and this in turn is of all things most fine. In contrast to the aforementioned situation he proves himself supremely upright. This is the most beautiful thing, and for this reason I believe that to give oneself to another for the sake of excellence is [the essence of] true nobility. Such a love is a love of the Heavenly Goddess, who is for most of us celestial and precious in our public and private life, This love compels both lover and beloved alike to feel a zealous concern for virtue. All other forms of love are from the other goddess, the goddess of vulgar lust.

And he concluded, Phaedrus, in our discussion of love I offer you this on the spur of the moment as my contribution."

### **First Interlude: Aristophanes and His Hiccups (185c-e)**

With this PAUSE PAUSanias took his proverbial Paws off of Agathon--see how punny our academicians make me!

According to Aristodemus the next speaker was supposed to be Aristophanes, but it turned out that either because of his overeating or for some unknown reason he came down with a case of hiccups and was unable to deliver his speech in his turn. Since Eryximachus the physician was lying next to him, he said, "Be a good chap, Eryximachus, and cure my hiccups or else speak in my place until I can stop them myself.

Eryximachus replied, "Why, I shall do both. To begin with I'll take your place, and when you've stopped hiccuping, you can take mine. While I'm speaking, if you hold you breath for a long time, perhaps the hiccups will go away. If they don't, you can gargle with water. If they are really stubborn, get something to tickle your nose to make you sneeze! If you do this once or twice, they will go away no matter how bad they are.

"I'll take your advice, Eryximachus," said Aristophanes, "get on with your speech."

### **Eryximachus (185e-188e)**

So Eryximachus said, "The speech, that Pausanias had begun so beautifully, but did not complete properly, I must try my best to complete. His division of love into two kinds seems to me a good one. But, the great field of medical research has taught me by the observation [of nature] that love not only moves the human *psyche* towards beautiful people, but also toward many other things and in other things in the bodies of all animals, in what grows in the earth, and in general in all that is. I have learned from medicine how great, wonderful, and all-embracing is the divine force which pulsates in everything human and divine. Out of a deep respect for the theory and practice of medicine, I shall start with the evidence of the medical profession itself.

The double love referred to belongs to the nature of all bodies. There is an observable difference between bodily health and illness: Things that are unlike desire things unlike themselves. So while eros [desire] is one

thing in a healthy body, it is something else in a diseased one. As Pausanias said it is right to gratify honorable but base to gratify intemperate men. So it is with the body, it is fitting and right to yield to the good and wholesome desires of every body. This is what medical practice is all about. For a master of the art of medicine, it would be a disgrace to do anything but frustrate the desires of the diseased body.

The art of medicine can be summarily described as the knowledge of bodily love-matters like ingestion and evacuation. The master physician can diagnose the nobler and baser desires in relation to these basic bodily functions. Moreover he can effect a change so that the one desire is replaced by the other. A good medical practitioner is an expert at producing eros [desire] where it ought to flourish, but does not, and in removing eros [desire] from where it thrives but should not. Indeed the good physician must be able to make the most antagonistic elements in the body friendly lovers of each other. The most contrary things are direct opposites to each other: cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and moist, and so forth. Our forefather Aesclepius, who established the medical profession, knew how to bring about love and concord in bodily things as our two poets here have professed [in their works]. And I agree with them.

The art of medicine is ruled by the god, *eros*, along with gymnastics and agriculture. The same also holds in the case of the musical arts, as is perfectly clear to anyone who has given his attention to these matters. Perhaps Heraclitus means the same thing, but he did not express himself very well on the matter. For he says,

"The one, a thing at odds with itself is drawn into a union

just as in the case of the bow in tension with the lyre."

Now it is absurd to speak of harmony in discord or of harmony arising out of discordant things. Perhaps he meant by this that out of things which at first were discordant, like treble and base, later a harmony can be drawn out [or brought about] by the art of music. Still it is not really out of the discord between treble and base that harmony arises, For attunement is concord, and concord a kind of agreement- it is impossible for agreement to derive from things at variance so long as they are at variance. There is a kind of discordance that is incapable of reconciliation. But sometimes discord can be harmonized just as rhythm develops out of fast and slow movements which at first are at variance with each other, but then later become reconciled in the rhythmic movement. As we saw earlier in the art of medicine, so now we see the practitioner of the science of music can bring concord to each case of discord by implanting the principle of mutual love and harmony. Hence music is the science of love as it pertains to harmony and rhythm in life movements. When the musician tries to establish harmony and rhythm, he can readily distinguish these [different] erotic forces.

The double-*Eros* is not as yet at work in the natural world. But when we come to the application of rhythm and harmony to the human world, whether we construct what are called "melodic compositions" or whether by what is called "education or culture" we correctly arrange already constructed standard melodies and measures, we run into a further difficulty and need a good technician. So we come back to the same principle: we ought to give ourselves over only to orderly men or to those who may not yet be, but wish to become more orderly. We should cherish the love of these men [for they cultivate] the noble and heavenly Eros, sprung from the Heavenly Muse. But the Vulgar Eros comes from the "Many Discordant Jingles of the Masses" or Polyhymnia.

We must indulge cautiously in the mundane form of eros being careful about those with whom we share our erotic pleasures so that we can enjoy the pleasures of *eros* without contracting sexual disorders. Similarly in my profession, you have to be very careful to make proper use of the desire men have for rich food so that they can enjoy the pleasure of eating it without making themselves sick [or unhealthy]. Whether in music or in medicine or any other human or divine affair, we should take care as much as possible to distinguish these two different kinds of love, for both are always present [in everything].

Notice how even the arrangement of the seasons is replete with both love-forces. Observe how the qualities I just mentioned: hot and cold, dry and moist, achieve harmony in the weather when they occur in due proportion. They become purveyors of fertility bringing well-being to men and all other animals as well as plants. When these conditions hold sway, the love-forces contain no injustice. But when the wanton and outrageous love-forces get control of the seasons of the year, then destruction and injustice results. Epidemics develop out of just these types of things and many other anomalous maladies that occur among the flora and fauna. I am referring to such things as hoarfrosts, hailstorms, and mildews arising out of the uncontrolled excesses and disorderly activities of the love-forces acting against one another. What we call "astronomy" is a knowledge of these love-forces as they influence the course of the stars and the seasons of the year.

Similarly all religious sacrifices and rituals, controlled by the art of divination-- the domain in which gods and men have communion and intercourse with one another--, are about nothing less than either the preservation [of the healthy] or cure of [the sick] *Eros*. All kinds of impiety concerning parents both living and dead and concerning the gods, are likely to arise when a person has failed to gratify the orderly *erotic force* or has honored and revered the disorderly *erotic force* in their love affairs but instead gratifies the disorderly *eros*. We rightly assign the supervision and medical care of these love-forces to priestly divination. So divination is the technical skill of regulating the affections existing between men and the gods. It depends upon a knowledge of the love-forces which drive men, and its purpose is to direct them toward holy piety and what is religiously right.

Thus when we consider *Eros* in its totality it has a very great power over things, nay, the love-force has the greatest power over everything. With self-control and justice, *Eros* accomplishes good among men and the gods. This is his greatest power and through it, he provides us with the greatest bliss. The power of love brings us humans together and allows us to befriend the gods who are mightier than we are.

Perhaps I too have left out many things in praising *Eros*, but at least not on purpose. If I have omitted anything important, it will be your job, Aristophanes, to complete the picture. But, if you plan to praise the god in a different way, please begin, since your hiccups have just stopped.

## **Second Interlude: Aristophanes Recovered from His Hiccups (189a-c)**

Aristodemus said that Aristophanes replied thus:

"Indeed they have stopped, but only after I applied your sneeze treatment to them. This leaves me wondering whether the orderly principle in my body lusts after such noises and ticklings as there are in sneezing-- for, honestly, they stopped completely only after I applied the sneeze technique."

"My dear Aristophanes", exclaimed Eryximachus, "be careful what you say. You are already clowning around before you even begin [your speech]. You are forcing me to put a stop to the nonsense you might say when you might have spoken in peace."

Laughing, Aristophanes replied, "You are right, Eryximachus, I will take back everything I said. Put down your guard, for as far as what I am going to say is concerned, I am not so much worried that I will produce a farce (that's native to my Muse and would be a real feather in my cap.) as I'm afraid of making a complete fool of myself."

"Do you think you can get away with a hit and run approach, Aristophanes? Feel free to speak your piece, but be ready to defend what you say. Perhaps then I'll let you off the hook."

## **The Speech of Aristophanes ( 189c-193e)**

"In point of fact, Eryximachus, I intend to say something a bit different from what you and Pausanias said. For in my view human beings have completely mis-perceived the power of Eros. If humans had [rightly] perceived his power, they would have built him splendid temples and altars and would have honored him with magnificent sacrifices. But we see nothing like this done in his honor although, as the greatest of them all, such things are especially his due. Of all the gods, he is the god who most loves and befriends human beings. He cares for and cures humans of those things whose cure provides the greatest pleasure for mankind. I will try to describe the great power of this god so that you can instruct others.

You must first learn the nature of human beings and their predicament. For our original condition was by no means like our present one. At first there were three types of human sexuality, not just male and female as now. There was a third type which shared in both. This third kind survives in name only, the thing itself has become extinct. In the beginning Androgyny was a unity in form as well as in name. Now the name is used only as a reproach. In the beginning human beings were in the form of perfect circles or spherical. Their backs and sides formed a circle. They had four hands, the same number of legs and two faces completely the same sitting atop a cylindrical neck. The two faces were set on opposite sides of a single head with four ears. There were two sets of private parts and all the proper accessories we imagine that go with them. They walked about in an upright position just as we do now, but in whatever direction they wished. Whenever they took off in a swift run, they brought their legs around straight and somersaulted as tumblers do! Then they supported themselves with their eight extremities as they rolled swiftly around in circles.

In the beginning the three sexes had the following origins: The males were sun descendants, the females were earth-born, and the mixed breed were moon-children because the moon shares in both natures. Thus the Circle People were spherical resembling their [divine] parents in the way they moved around [so gracefully]. They had surprising power and energy. They got big ideas and outrageously defied the gods. Homer tells a similar story in his tale of Ephialtes and Otus and how, while ascending to heaven to displace the gods, they were thrown back [to earth].

Whereupon Zeus took counsel with the gods to discuss what was to be done with these creatures, but the gods were baffled. They did not want him to destroy them and annihilate the race with a lightning bolt like Zeus had done with the Titans. In that case, the gods would lose the sacrifices and honors [given to them by men] along with mankind itself. But neither could they allow them to act so outrageously. After much deliberation, Zeus finally said, "I think I have come up with a neat solution whereby we can allow humans to continue to exist, but at the same time put an end to their waywardness: We'll debilitate them by slicing each one in two. This will both weaken them and make them more useful to us by virtue of their increased numbers. They'll have to learn to walk erect on only two legs. If they continue in their outrageous behavior and refuse to keep the peace and get their act together, why I'll slice them in two again, and then they can hippity-hop around on one foot!

With these words Zeus sliced each human being in two pieces the way a chef slices serviceberries to preserve them by drying, or as he cuts eggs with a hair. For each one he sliced in half, he asked Apollo to turn the face and half of the neck around towards the incision so that by contemplating the wound human beings might be made more orderly. After this Apollo was to sew them up and heal them.

So Apollo turned their faces around and pulled their skin together over the edges covering what is now called the abdomen by drawing the skin together like a leather purse with drawstrings. He left a single opening and made a knot in the middle of the stomach which people call the belly button. He smoothed out other rough spots and he used an instrument like the tool shoemakers use to smooth away wrinkles in the leather to mold [the flesh of] the breasts. He left a few wrinkles around the belly and navel to remind us of our ancient misery.

After their natural being was severed into two parts, each half yearned for its other half. When they would

meet, they would rush to each other and throw their arms around each other and try to get back together again. They yearned to heal their [severed] bodies into one again. Since they wanted to do nothing apart from each other, they began dying from hunger and inactivity. Whenever one half died and the other half was left, it would hunt around to involve itself with another semi-woman (now called woman) or semi-man (now called man) which it might meet. So they perished.

After they began dying this way, Zeus took pity upon them and devised another plan. He reset their genitals around in the front (until this time they were in the back and they generated and begot children, not with each other, but in the ground like grasshoppers). He reset the sex organs in the front to beget by having sex with the male inside the female. In this way when a male happened to come upon a female while they were embracing, she would conceive and bear a child. If it happened between two men, they would get the pleasure of having sex together, but after orgasm, with satiety they would stop, return to their work, and look after the other concerns in life. So that is why things are the way they are. Love has been inborn in humans as long ago as that. Restoring humans to [a semblance of] their original, natural condition, *Eros* strives to remake one out of two and, therefore, to heal the deepest wounds of human nature.

Each of us then is but a symbol or matching, half-token. Humans are like flatfish sliced in half with two made out of one. Everyone searches incessantly for their other half. The half-men cut from the middle sex called Androgyny are lovers of women. Most philanderers and adulterers come from this type. From the female side, adulteresses and man-crazy women come from this same [original] sex. But women cut from the total female have no predilection for men. They are strongly attracted to other women. The Lesbians are from this group. Those cut from the whole male, while still young boys, befriend men, lie with them, and delight in having sexual intimacy with them. From this group come the noblest of lads and young men. They are by nature the most manly. The common folk who call these youths shameless are wrong. These lads do not act out of a misplaced sense of shame, but out of courage. They act out of virility and manliness because they cherish what is like themselves. There is further proof of this: the only men who succeed in public affairs are adults who were like this as boys. When they grow up, they still take to boys. They show no natural interest in marriage and child-begetting. When they marry, they yield to the pressures of convention. They would be content to live with men without marrying. This type of man is a natural boy-lover [pederast], someone who always delights in erotically embracing men like himself.

When lovers of boys or any other sexual type comes upon their other half, they are marvelously enthralled with affection, kinship, and love for each other. They want never to be separated from each other, not even for a moment, one might say. Living their whole lives together like this, they could not say what it was one really wanted from the other. No one would believe that this is merely a sexual union, or that two people could enjoy each other's company with such eager delight merely on the basis of a sexual relationship. Clearly each desires something else in his heart. Though the soul of each lover divines and darkly hints at what it wants, yet it is incapable of articulating the [dark and hidden] truth.

Suppose that while the lovers are lying together in each others arms in a love embrace, Hephaestus should appear standing over them poised with his fiery tools and say, "What do you mortals really want from each other?" Suppose further he turned to them as they lay together helpless and relaxed after orgasm and said, "Do you long to be melded together as completely as possible and not to be separated from each other night or day? If this is what you really want, I am willing to weld and fuse you into one and the same entity. You will be made one whole self from two and you can live as a whole person with two selves sharing a life in common as one complete being. Even when you die you, will remain a single being, instead of two. There will be one single person even in the Place of the Dead. Think about it! Isn't this what you really want? Won't you finally be satisfied when this happens?"

We are sure that no lovers hearing this proposal would demur nor find themselves really wanting anything else. Each would openly admit [if they were completely honest] that this is precisely what he or she was

longing for all the time: to be so perfectly fused and united with his beloved that the two would become one whole human being. I have given the reason for this: our original nature was to be one whole thing, an original integrity. The craving for and pursuit of that wholeness is called "Love" or *Eros*. In ancient times we were whole, as my story goes, but, now, on account of our injustice [primordial crime], we were split apart by the god (just as the Archaedians are by the Spartans). We might well fear that if we again revolt against heaven because of our disorderly ways, we will be cut in two again. Then we will have to go about looking like those bas-relief carvings on tombs, with our noses sliced right down the middle. We'll be born looking like broken dice tokens. Therefore we should exhort each other to worship the gods piously and respect them in all things, so that all of us will escape from harm and find bliss under the courageous leadership of *Eros*.

No one should act in opposition to Love-- the man who opposes Love is hateful to the gods. If we befriend the god (*eros*), we shall have the good fortune of finding our true beloved, something that happens to very few people at the present time. Eryximachus, don't poke fun at what I said with that smirk on your face and think I am only mocking Pausanias and Agathon. They might, indeed, be among the fortunate few who are male-lovers by nature. But I am really talking about all men and women. The human race can find well-being if we fulfill our erotic longing by finding our proper beloved and return to our primal state.

If returning to our original state is best, then the nearest thing we can come to this at present must be the best we can choose to do for now: finding a like-minded and congenial beloved. Since *Eros* is the god who consummates our fate, he rightly deserves our hymns of praise. He presently helps us most by leading us back and binding us to our very own. For the future he gives us hope that if we render the gods pious service, he will restore us to our primal condition and by his healing power, full of well-being and bliss will we [finally] be re-created."

"There it is, Eryximachus, my speech on Love, one very different from yours. So, as I earlier begged you, I repeat now, don't ridicule it yet, for we want to hear what all the rest of the speakers will say, I mean, of course, the other two speakers, since Agathon and Socrates are the only two left.

### **Third Interlude: Socrates and Agathon (193e-194e)**

"I will oblige you this time," said Eryximachus, "because I found your speech so delightful. If I had not known that Socrates and Agathon were masters of love-matters, I would be afraid that they will be at a loss for words after the rich variety of the things already said on the subject, but my confidence in their rhetorical prowess remains unshaken."

Socrates broke into the discussion, "That's all well and good for you to say, Eryximachus, since your speech went over so well. But if you had to speak where I am to speak now, or rather where I will have to speak after [our brilliant young host] Agathon has spoken with great eloquence, you would be beside yourself with anxiety as I am right now."

"You want to bewitch and enchant me, Socrates," said Agathon, "and unsettle me by creating great expectations of my eloquence in the minds of the audience."

"Not at all, Agathon," Socrates replied, "how could I [so soon] forget, after so recently noticing your noble and manly spirit when you stepped out upon the stage with your troupe the other day. Could I forget how you looked the vast, assembled audience straight in the eye to show you meant to do yourself credit with your play and how you were not the least disturbed by the multitude? How could I suppose you would become flustered now by the likes of a few people like us."

"Why, Socrates, what do you take me for? One of those puffed up, air heads, those melodramatic types! I am

not so stupid as to fail to realize an intelligent speaker is more concerned about the reactions of a few wise [and educated] men than of an audience full of [untutored] fools."

"No indeed," Agathon, Socrates rejoined, "I would surely be wrong to associate you with such a boorish notion. I am certain that, when you find yourself with a small group of persons whom you consider clever, you take more account of them than the rabble. Yet the present company, perhaps, is not in the class of the sagacious few, for we too were part of the crowd on the day of your triumph. But let's say you were to meet other people who were really wise [and learned] men, you would probably feel ashamed in their presence if you thought you were actually doing something dishonorable. Isn't that true?"

"Quite true," he replied.

"Whereas in the presence of the theatergoing public, you wouldn't feel any shame if you thought you were doing something dishonorable, would you?"

At this point Phaedrus rescued his host by interrupting:

"My dear Agathon if you continue to answer Socrates he will be totally oblivious to the outcome of our project so long as he has someone with whom to dialogue, (dialeghtai) especially someone as good looking as you are! While I enjoy listening to Socrates philosophize, I am responsible for administering our project of praising Eros. My duty is to exact the speech you owe the god from each of you in your turn. Both of you must render what you owe to the god before you launch into any more dialectical arguments."

"Right you are, Phaedrus," said Agathon, "and nothing is going to stop me from speaking. I am sure I'll have plenty of other opportunities to converse with Socrates.

### **Agathon's Speech ( 194e-197e)**

"First I shall propose a plan [telling you] what I must say and then I will execute it. Instead of praising the God himself, all the previous speakers celebrated the human condition upon which the god bestows such great benefits. Not one of the speakers has really enlightened us on the true nature of the benefactor himself. There is only one right method to follow in giving a speech in praise of anything: we should let our words exhibit, first, the character of our theme, and then, the blessings he bestows. Thus it is right and proper for us to praise *Eros*, first, for what he himself is, [his nature] and then, for what he gives us." [his effects]

"Hence I claim that while all the gods are full of bliss and well-being, *Eros* is the most blissful [most *daimonic*] because he is the most beautiful and the best. I say this without offense against the gods. I shall explain how he is the happiest of the Gods.

First, Phaedrus, he is the youngest of the gods. He witnesses to this himself for he always abhors old age and avoids it like the plague. Old age is a swift pursuer who gains on us more swiftly than we would like! *Eros* naturally hates old age and refuses to come anywhere near it. He always associates with the young just like himself. Thus the old saying, "Birds of a feather flock together."

Though I agree with Phaedrus in many other things, I disagree with him when he claims that Eros is more ancient than Cronos and Iapetus. On the contrary, I claim he is the youngest of the gods and remains ever young. If there is any truth in the stories about the earlier dealings of the gods [with the world] related by Hesiod and Parmenides, I take these workings to be the function of Natural Necessity, not of Liberating Love. For the gods would not have castrated one another nor bound one another with chains nor any of those other forms of violence [recounted by those tales] if Eros were with them from the beginning. But rather

affection and peace, by which *Eros* rules the gods, would have prevailed then, as they do now. So Love is a young and tender youth. *Eros* requires a poet like Homer to describe the exquisite delicacy of this God. Homer sings of the goddess Ath as divine and delicate -- her name means Distraction. Recall how he speaks of those delicate feet of hers,"

So delicate are her feet that she walks not

upon the ground, but only on the heads of men.

She shows her delicacy by a nice proof since she associates, not with the hard but with the soft. The same proof shows the delicacy of Love. For Love does not walk on the earth nor upon our brows, which are not very soft after all, but rather he comes and dwells in the softest, intimate parts of living things. He makes himself at home and snuggles in the gentle characters of gods and men. But we must add that he does not come into any and every soul.

For when he comes upon a hard souled character, he flees from him, but if he be soft and delicate, he makes his abode with him. Touching with his feet or any thing he can, he treads on the softest parts of the gentlest men. So he must himself be most delicate. If he is the youngest and the tenderest of the gods, then he has a most supple form. If he were not so supple, how could he wrap himself around everything. If he were hard and rigid, he would not be able to steal so secretly in and out of every heart as he does. The best evidence of his shapeliness and suppleness of form is found in his gracefulness in which everyone concedes Love alone excels. Love is ever at war with the graceless and the ugly. His beautiful complexion reflects his dwelling among flowers. For Love will not dwell in body or soul or aught else withered or past its bloom. When someone is fragrant and filled with sweet smelling blossoms, there he will alight and abide."

Though much remains to be said, enough has been said of the natural beauty of our god. Next, I shall speak of Love's virtue. His strongest claim to goodness is that he neither does harm nor injustice to god or man nor suffers harm nor injustice from god or man. Love abides not violence. When we act on love, violence is out of the question. Nor does Love itself ever act with violence. All men serve Love willingly. What we do freely or the agreements we make voluntarily, freely entered into by both sides, are declared just by our "Cities Ruled by Laws and Not Men".

In addition to justice, Love is richly endowed with self-control. Everyone agrees that self-control means restraint of pleasure and desire. But no pleasure is stronger than Erotic Pleasure: if other pleasures are weaker, then they are under the control of *Eros*. Since Love presides over desire and pleasure, he himself would be preeminently self-controlled."

Notice that "not even Ares, the God of War, can resist" the courage of Love. As the story goes, it is not Ares that captures Love, but Love--Aphrodite--that captures Ares. The one who captures is stronger than the captive. If *Eros* overpowers one who is known most for his bravery, Love must be the bravest of all."

"So his justice, his self-control, and his courage have been described. It remains for me to speak of his wisdom. On this matter I will do the best I can and try not to fall too far short of his excellence."

"First, as Eryximachus did, I too will honor my art and claim that our God is a Poet, so masterful as to make others into poets too. When love gets hold of someone, he becomes a poet 'though before he were but a stranger to the Muse.' In summary, this is an appropriate proof that Love is [the most] gifted poet in all the musical arts. For what we do not possess ourselves, we cannot give to another. What we do not know for ourselves, we cannot teach another. For who could deny that the making or poetizing of all living things has its source in the poetizing of *Eros*, Is it not by Love's Poetry that all living things are begotten and grow?"

Furthermore do we not know that the craftsman who has this god as his teacher becomes a brilliant success and is celebrated, while the one whom Love neglects remains unknown. Under the power of desire and Love, certainly Apollo invented Archery, but under its sway he invented also Medicine and Prophecy, making Apollo himself a student of Love. So likewise are the Muses his apprentices in music, Hephaestus in metallurgy, Athena in weaving, and even Zeus in the art of 'political rule over gods and men' also are Love's disciples. Thus even the affairs of the gods are arranged by Love-- the love of beauty because there is nothing ugly about love. Before Love came on the heavenly scene, the gods did many terrible things under the compulsion of Necessity. But when the god of Love was born, from then on the love of beauty bestowed every good thing upon the gods and men.

Thus it seems to me, Phaedrus, Eros was originally the most beautiful and, hence the most excellent of the gods and since the beginning the cause of like excellences in others. I am inspired to resort to poetry to tell how he creates:

Peace among men,

Tranquillity to the seas,

All calm to the windy storms and

For man's sorrowful cares,

Post-orgasmic sleep.

He banishes our alienated affections and beckons intimacy to enter, among us. He draws us together in friendly gatherings like our drinking party -- in festivals, dances, and sacrificial rites, he becomes the master of ceremonies. He bestows benevolence, banishes brutality, loves giving pleasure and preventing pain, and spreading graceful cheer. He confounds the wise and delights the gods. He is envied by those out of love and treasured by those deeply in love. He begets delicacy and elegance, sensuality and beneficence, desire and longing. He is full of care for good men and takes no care of evil men. In work and worry, in drink and dialectic our true captain, boatswain, champion, and savior is he. His laurels encircle both gods and men; he is the leader of the finest and best whom all men must follow; he enchants gods and men filling them with his thoughts." (nohna).

"There you have it," Phaedrus, "the speech I offer at his [sacred] altar. Using all my rhetorical skills, I have mingled play with the serious."

## **Agathon and Socrates**

### **Fourth Interlude: Two Kinds of Encomium (198a-199c)**

Aristodemus reported that upon completing his speech, the company responded with tumultuous applause because "the speech was so much like the young man who had given it and so like the god praised by it!"

Glancing toward Eryximachus Socrates said, "Son of Acumenus, do you still think my fear all this while was unfounded? Was I not a prophet, when I said just now, that Agathon would give such a brilliant speech and leave me at a complete loss for words?"

I agree you were prophetic when you said Agathon would speak well," said Eryximachus, "but I doubt that you, of all people, Socrates, will ever be at a loss for words."

"How could I not be at a loss for words," said Socrates, "I or anyone else for that matter, when I'm expected to follow such a brilliant display of eloquence. Most of it was not that extraordinary, but that part at the end -- who wouldn't have been amazed at hearing those magnificent words and phrases. When I realized I would not be able to say anything even half as fine, I wanted to slink away and escape for shame if only I had some place to go. His speech so reminded me of Gorgias that I felt just like Homer's character. I was afraid that in his conclusion Agathon was holding up to my face the awful Gorgion Head for me to look upon, and by juxtaposing his speech to mine he would dumbfound me turning me into stone. At that moment I realized how ridiculous it was for me to agree to take my turn after you in praising Love and to call myself an expert in Love-matters when I was really ignorant of the proper way to sing Love's [just] praises."

"To begin with I foolishly assumed we ought to speak the truth about anything we are praising. With truth as the foundation, the speaker could cherish the most beautiful aspects of the thing and present them in the most fitting way. I was musing to myself how beautifully I would speak since I knew the truth of the matter. But now it turns out this is not the way to discourse upon something "beautifully" at all, but rather, you ascribe the greatest and most beautiful qualities to the subject whether the thing you are praising possesses them or not. It doesn't matter if what you say is false. It seems our previous arrangement was that each of us should appear to praise love, but not really and truly praise him. That's why, I think, you dredged up all those stories and applied them to love, claiming him to be such and such and to be the cause of such and such so he would appear as the most beautiful and the best. Obviously you did this for people who have not paid [much] attention to what he is, since this trick wouldn't work on the people who really know him, but so you might praise him beautifully. No, indeed, I find I was mistaken about the way to proceed to praise him. So I ignorantly agreed to offer my praise in turn. 'Say one thing with your lips and believe another in your mind.'"

Farewell to my promise to speak. Count me out, I cannot make such a speech in praise of anything this way! I'm not up to it. But if you like, I am willing to speak only the truth, in my own style. I am unwilling to compete with your rhetorical flourishes and become a laughing-stock. So, Phaedrus, decide whether or not you want to hear such a speech and to listen to the truth about Love told in words and phrases expressed in just the form and order that they occur to me as I am speaking?"

So Phaedrus and the others bade him speak in the way he himself thought most fitting.

"First, then," Phaedrus, "allow me to ask Agathon a few small questions so I can come to some agreement with our host first before I speak."

"You have my permission," replied Phaedrus, "Go right ahead and cross-examine him."

## **The Speech of Socrates (199c-212c):**

### **The Elenchus of Agathon (199c-201c)**

After this verbal sword play, Socrates began his questioning."

"My dear Agathon, I must admit that you gave your speech a fine introduction by stating that you ought first to show the nature of love and then to present the nature of his works. I thoroughly admire your opening statement. Come on now, complete your dandy description of love and tell me this: Are we to understand what love is by taking it to be a love of some object or of nothing? My question is not whether Eros is the love of a mother or father. How ludicrous it would be to ask whether *Eros* is love of a mother or father! Rather it is as though I were asking whether the notion of 'Father' implies that a father is always a father of somebody. Isn't that so? In other words if you answered correctly, surely you would say that a father is a father of a son or daughter, would you not? "

"Yes, most assuredly," said Agathon.

"And would you not say the same of the mother?"

"Yes." he agreed.

"Then would you answer just a few more questions," said Socrates, "so you will understand better what I mean?" "Let me put the question this way: Isn't a brother, even taken by himself, the brother of someone?"

Agathon agreed he is.

"I mean he is the brother to a brother or sister."

Again. he agreed.

"Now, what do you say about Eros, Is he love of something or nothing?"

"Of something, of course."

"Now then," said Socrates, "carefully keep in mind what the object of love is. Whatever the object might be, tell me whether *Eros* desires this particular thing or not."

"Certainly he does," he said.

"Does he or does he not possess the object of his desire and love before he desires and loves it?"

He said, "Most likely he does not possess it."

"This is not a mere probability," said Socrates, "but a clear necessity. For consider that the one who desires something must have a desire for what he lacks and if he does not lack what he desires, then he cannot desire it. At least I, Agathon, am perfectly sure this is a necessity. How does it appear to you?"

"I too am certain you are right," he replied.

"That's right, for how could a tall man desire to be tall or a strong man strong?"

"Considering what we have admitted, this is not possible," Agathon replied.

"Since I suppose that in each case the man would not be lacking the aforementioned qualities."

"That's right," the younger man said deferring to Socrates.

"For if one were already strong, but would still wish to be strong," said Socrates, "or if one were already a fast runner, but would still wish to be a fast runner, or if one were already healthy, but would still wish to be healthy, what one means is that one wants to continue to possess what one now possesses since we suppose in these and other like cases that people want the things which they already possess, I add this reflection to help prevent our being deceived. For consider, Agathon, that these men necessarily possess what they possess at the very moment they have these qualities whether they desire to have them or not. So I ask you, how can a man desire what he already has? He can't strictly speaking. So when a person says, "Being healthy, I want to be healthy; being rich, I want to be rich and, hence, I do desire the things I already have." We shall

tell him, "My good man, the riches you possess, the health, and strength, which you enjoy, are things you desire to possess in the future as well as in the present. For now, you have them whether you want them or not. When you say -- "I desire these things! -- we suggest that what you really mean is: that you wish these things now present to be yours also in the future. Would he not grant our point?"

Agathon nodded his head in agreement.

Socrates continued, "Thus a man may be said to love such things as are not yet given to him or possessed by him insofar as he does not have them, namely, he can desire the future existence of these possessions, and that they be preserved and provided for him always."

"That's it, then," said Agathon.

"Let us recapitulate what has been said," said Socrates. "First, is it not true that Love is directed to certain objects and second, that those things or objects are the very things he lacks?"

"Quite true," he said.

"If you concede this," said Socrates, "then remember what you called the objects of *Eros* in your speech. If you don't mind, I'll remind you. What you said, as I recall, was that the gods fashioned the world for the love of beautiful things, since no one loves what is ugly. Didn't you say something like that?"

"Indeed, I did."

"And right too, my good friend," said Socrates; "and if such is the case, then must not Love be a desire for beauty and not for ugliness?"

He agreed.

"Well, we have agreed that *Eros* loves what he lacks and does not possess."

Again he agreed.

"And what *Eros* lacks and does not possess is beauty."

"That has to be so," he replied.

"Well now, would you say that what lacks beauty and does not [simply] possess it, is itself [simply] beautiful?"

"Certainly not."

"If this is so, would you still maintain that *Eros* is [simply] beautiful?"

Whereupon Agathon [shaking his head] replied, "I am terribly afraid, Socrates, I didn't know what I was talking about at the time."

"Ah yes, but your words were so beautiful, so please, oblige me with one or two more of them. Do you not also claim that good things are beautiful?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then if *Eros* lacks beautiful things and if good things are beautiful, he must also lack some good things."

"I see no way I can disagree with you, Socrates," he stammered, "so I must let what you said stand."

"Oh No, my Beloved Agathon (Good), it is not with me you cannot disagree, it's with the Truth you cannot disagree. For Socrates all by himself you can easily refute."

## **The Speech of Diotima (201d-212a):**

### **Eros as Intermediate (201d-202d)**

"Now I will let you go. But I will give the account of *Eros* I heard once upon a time from a Mantinean woman named Diotima. She was well versed in this subject and many others. A long time ago she gained a ten year respite from the plague for the Athenians by inducing our fellow countrymen to offer sacrifices [to the gods]. She was my teacher in Love-matters. I shall try to relate to you in my own words, as best I can, what she told me using the agreements and expanding the points Agathon and I just reached.

Just as you said, Agathon, the right procedure is first to define *Eros* and describe his nature, and then, to proceed to his works. I think the easiest way would be to use the dialogue form of question and answer the foreign woman used as her method with me that day. For at that time I was saying to her pretty much the same things you were just saying to me, Agathon; namely, that *Eros* was a great god and was filled with beautiful things. She cross-examined me and refuted my claims with the same arguments I just brought against my young friend. She showed me that, by my own account, the god was neither [simply] beautiful nor [unequivocally] good."

"What do you mean, Diotima," I retorted, "Is Love then ugly and evil?"

"Hold your tongue, for shame, don't blaspheme!" she replied, "Do you think whatever is not [simply] beautiful must necessarily be ugly?"

"Indeed I do!"

"[Do you think] those who are not wise are [simply] ignorant? Have you not noticed that there is something intermediate between knowledge and ignorance?"

"What is that?"

"Don't you know [what's 'In-Between']," (meqaxu) she said. It's having right opinions [or beliefs] without being able to give the reasons for them. This would be neither knowledge (amaqia) -- for how can you have knowledge without having the evidence for your proposals? -- nor is it [simply] ignorance, for what attains the truth is not [simply] ignorance (amaqia). Thus correct opinion (orqh doxa) holds just that very place 'In-Between' (meqaxu) knowledge and ignorance."

"Very neatly put!" I said.

"Then please, don't insist on a thing which is not [simply] beautiful being ugly or a thing which is not [simply] good being evil. Similarly concerning *Eros*: when you recognize that he is not [simply] good or beautiful, don't suppose, therefore, that he is [simply] ugly and evil, but rather something 'In-Between'

(meqaxu) the two."

So I asked, "And what about the fact that everyone agrees he is a great god?"

"Whom do you mean by 'everyone,' she rejoined, "the people who know what they are talking about or those who do not?"

"I mean everybody in the whole world!"

At this she burst out laughing, and said, "But how can those, who say he is not a god at all, agree that he is a great god, Socrates?"

"Who are those people?" I asked.

"Why, you are one and I am another," she replied.

"So, how did you come to that conclusion?" I said.

"Quite easily," she said [confidently]. "Tell me don't you claim that all the gods are well-off (eudaimonoV) and beautiful?" Or would you dare deny a god beauty and well-being (eudaimonoV)?"

"My God, no, not me!" I exclaimed.

"Do you not call "well-off" (eudaimonoV) those who possess good and beautiful things?"

"Certainly I do."

"But you just conceded that since Love desires good and beautiful things, he lacks those things in some way."

"Yes, I have."

"How then can he be a god if he is lacking a portion of beautiful and good things?"

"It appears now, that he is not a god at all?"

"So you see," she said, "you yourself are a person who thinks *Eros* is not a god."

"What, then," I inquired, "can *Eros* be? A mortal?"

"Anything but."

"Well, then, what?"

"As I suggested before, something 'In-Between' a mortal and an immortal."

### **Eros as Daimon (202d-203a)**

"And just what kind of thing is that, Diotima?"

"A great Daimon, Socrates, the whole daimonic *metaxis* is 'In-Between' the divine and the mortal."

"Having what power?" I asked.

"It interprets and conveys things from men to the gods and things from the gods to men. It carries prayers and sacrifices from below and divine commands and gifts from above. Because of its intermediary place, it allows each [the divine and the human] to complement the other and makes the whole universe one community [of gods and men]. It mediates all religious practices, mystery rites, incantations, prophecies, and enchantments. The divine does not directly mix with the human. But the daimonic realm is the medium through which all conversations of gods with men take place whether awaking or sleeping. If someone is knowledgeable (has wisdom) in these things, he is daimonic. One who is adept in the works of the arts is just a technician [by comparison]. There are many and different kinds of Daimon. One of these is *Eros*."

### **The Story of Poros and Penia (203a-e)**

"Who are his father and mother?" I asked.

"Even though it's a long story," she replied, "I'll tell you."

"On the day Aphrodite was born, the gods gave a great banquet and *Poros* [Resource], son of Metis [Invention] was at the party. While they were banqueting, as might be expected, Penia [Poverty] came to beg. A party is an opportune place to beg, so Penia [Poverty] hung around the doorways. Having gotten drunk with nectar, (for wine had not yet been invented), *Poros* [Resource] went into Zeus' garden and in his drunken condition fell fast asleep. Lacking resources herself, *Penia* [Poverty] schemed to have a child by *Poros* [Resource]. So she lay down with him and there conceived *Eros* [Love]. So it has been from the beginning that *Eros* is always an follower and servant of Aphrodite because he was begotten on her birthday. He is by nature a lover bent upon beauty since Aphrodite is so beautiful."

"As the son of Poros and Penia, *Eros* has the following destiny: First he is always poor, and far from being soft and beautiful, as most people suppose, he is hard and rugged. Barefoot and homeless, he always lies unsheltered on the ground and sleeps on doorsteps and roadways in the open air. Taking after his mother's side, he is always in need. But then he also takes after his father since he conspires after good and beautiful things. He is bold, impetuous, and high-strung. He is an awesome hunter always devising some trick. He is ever eager to understand and discover new things. A veritable philosopher is he, a seeker of wisdom and truth throughout his life (filosofwn). And so he is also a juggler, bewitcher, healer, and a clever talker!"

"He was born neither a mortal nor an immortal. One day he is alive and flourishing abounding in resources, the next he is dying in want, but always brought back to life by his father's [divine] nature. The resources he is forever receiving are always ebbing away so that Love is never poor nor wealthy (In-Between). He stands midway between wisdom and ignorance.

### **Eros as Philosopher (203e-204c)**

This is the way it is: the gods do not desire wisdom or long to become wise since they are already wise. Nor would anyone who is wise desire wisdom. But then again, neither do those who are ignorant desire wisdom nor long to become wise. Herein lies precisely the problem with human ignorance; namely, people who lack beauty, goodness, or intelligence seem to be perfectly content with themselves. A person who does not think of himself as needing [lacking] anything will not desire what he thinks he doesn't need [lack]!"

"Who, then, Diotima, are the true lovers of wisdom, the real philosophers if they are neither the wise nor the

ignorant?"

"It should be obvious, even to a child, that the true lovers of wisdom are those living in the Middle, in the MetaxiV -- and Love himself is one of these. Wisdom has to do with the finest things and Love is directed at what is finest. So Love must needs be a philosopher, a friend to wisdom, and as such must be In-Between wisdom and ignorance. This again comes from his birth. For while he comes from a wise and resourceful father, his mother is unwise and resourceless."

"Such is the nature of the Love Daimon, my good Socrates. Nor is it an accident that you should have come to think about Love the way you did. If I take your words at face value, you thought Love was the beloved (eromenoV) and not the lover (erosteV). I assume this led you to think that Love was Totally Beautiful. What is beloved is truly all-beautiful, delicate, perfect, and blessed. But the lover is of a different ilk according to the account I have given."

### **Eros as Wish for Happiness (204c-205a)**

At this I remarked, "Well done, my good woman, you are right. But if Love is as you have described him, of what real use is he to human kind?"

"This is what I will try to teach you next," she answered.

"Love's nature and origin are just as I have described, but his mind is set on 'fine and beautiful things,' as you have said, Suppose someone were to ask us, Socrates and Diotima, 'Why is Love directed to beautiful and fine things?' Or let me put this more clearly: If love is always of beautiful and fine things, Why does he who loves, love beautiful things?"

I answered to make the beautiful and fine things one's own.

"But this answer raises a further question," she continued, "for once these beautiful and fine things are possessed by someone, what will they have?"

"Quite frankly, off the top of my head, nothing occurs to me as an answer to your question," I said.

"Well, then," she proceeded, "suppose we substituted 'the Good' for 'the Fine and Beautiful' and posed the question: 'Look here, Socrates, he who loves, loves good things. Why does he love them?'"

"To make them his own," I replied.

"And what does the person get who gets good things?"

"That's easy, he gets "well-being, happiness (eudaimon)," I said.

"Yes," she said, "those who are well off are happy by the acquisition of good things. We have no need to ask why a man who wishes for happiness and well-being, wishes for it. In other words the desire for happiness or well-being requires no further justification. The answer [the desire for well-being] seems final.

"Quite true," I replied.

### **Diotima's Definition of Eros (205a-206a)**

"Now, then, do you suppose this desire or love is common to all mankind and that everyone wishes to have good things for themselves always? What do you say?"

"Why, yes," I said, "It is common to everyone."

"Well, then Socrates," she continued, "why don't we say that all men are lovers, if all human beings love the same things always? Rather we say some men are lovers while others are not."

"I'm puzzled by that myself," I said.

"You shouldn't be, Socrates," she said, "What has happened is that we took a certain form of love and called that "Love" which is really the name of a whole group of things. We misapply the names of other things as well."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Take, for example, the word *poiesis* or making, for making refers to very different kinds of activities. The entire process of transforming a thing from what it was not into something that it now is, is called poetry or *poiesis*. Thus the making of all kinds of things in the arts are examples of poetry and the artisans who make them are all [in some sense] poets."

"What you say rings true."

"As you know," she went on, "they are not all called 'poets', but have other names. From the whole of poetry we choose only one form: that which is concerned with harmony [music] and meter. This form we give the name of the whole. By poetry [*poiesis*] we mean this form of making alone, and nothing else, and only those who perform this kind of 'making' do we call poets."

"Quite so," I agreed.

"So there you are, it's the same with 'Love,' In its broadest meaning 'The Most Powerful and Wily Love' is the universal desire for good things and for the well-being (*eu-daimonein*) they bring.

Those who cultivate him in his other aspects in trade or sport or philosophy are not said to love nor to be lovers. In contrast, those who diligently pursue only one of love's many activities are given the name that should apply to all the rest as well.

"I think you are right," I said.

She continued, "Someone might even make up a story that people who are in love are pursuing their other halves. But by my account Love is neither for the half nor for the whole unless, of course, either happens to be something good, since people are even ready to have their hands and feet cut off if they seem to be harmful to them. No one cherishes what is his own just because it is his own, unless he were to call 'good' only what is his own, and call 'evil' only what is foreign.' So what human beings love, they love because it is good. But, tell me, what do you think?"

"By God, I think I agree," I said.

"Then, " she said, "may we state without qualification that what human beings love is the good?"

"Yes, indeed."

And then she added, "Should we not include that they desire the good to be theirs?"

"Let's do so, by all means."

"And do they want it, not only to be theirs, but also to be theirs forever?"

"Include that also."

To put it briefly, love is a desire for the good to be one's own forever.

Veritably spoken," I declared.

### **The Works of Eros: Begetting in Beauty (206b-207a)**

"If love is always of this nature," she continued, "what course will love's followers pursue? In what field will this zeal and eagerness be called 'Love'? What are the works of Love concretely? Can you tell me this, Socrates?"

"If I could," I replied, "I would not be so amazed at your wisdom and grasp of the subject. I would not keep coming to you to be enlightened.

"Well, then, I'll tell you," she said. "It is the begetting in beauty of the body and the soul.

"I'm afraid you are over my head," I said. "I need some explanation. I don't understand."

"I'll try to put it more simply, then. Socrates, all human beings are life-bearing in body and soul. When we reach adulthood, our nature yearns to beget. Nature cannot beget and bring forth life from the ugly, but only from the beautiful. Begetting, bearing, and bringing to birth [procreation] are divine acts which impart immortality to mortal, living beings. This divine activity is incompatible with disorder. The ugly is at odds with the divine, while the beautiful is in accord with it. In procreation Beauty is the goddess who presides over both Fate and Childbearing. Hence, whenever someone fecund with life approaches someone beautiful, they become gracious and so ecstatic that they are overcome with begetting and birth follows quickly upon conception. But when they meet with the ugly, they are overcome with gloom and they shrivel up and get all uptight. They are repelled by ugliness and refuse to labor and bring forth life. They carry their burden painfully within themselves. Therefore, when a person is fertile and teeming with life, they tremble uncontrollably before the beautiful which alone can release them from the great pangs of having to bring forth life. But eros is not a desire for the beautiful in itself, as you tend to think, Socrates," she warned.

"If not for the beautiful, for what then?"

"For begetting, bearing, and bringing forth children in the Beautiful. [Procreation In the Beautiful]."

"So that's it, then?"

"That's precisely it", she confirmed. "That's why the world is replete with procreation and giving birth. Through giving birth the eternal and immortal enters into the mortal. Consonant with what we have agreed upon (that Love is a desire for the good to be one's own forever) it is necessary to desire immortality along with the good. Thus it follows that love is the desire for immortality."

## **Immortality and the Mortal Nature (207a-208b)**

"On many different occasions I was instructed by her on love-matters. Once she asked me, "Socrates, what do you think is the cause of this Love and Longing? Surely you've noticed how frenziedly it moves all wild animals of earth or sky when they desire to mate. They get love-sick and deranged first with a desire for sexual copulation and then to nourish and raise their offspring. Are not the weakest prepared to take on the strongest and to die if they threaten their offspring? Do not the beasts wear themselves out with hunger to feed their brood, and do whatever else is necessary? You might think that human beings do these things because they are reasonable or sensible. But that cannot be what causes wild animals to be moved by Eros, can it? Do you have an explanation?"

Once again I professed my ignorance.

She continued, "How can you hope to become a master in the matter of Love if you do not understand these basic facts?"

"It is for this very reason, Diotima, as I just said, that I keep coming to you because I know I need instruction. I would be grateful if you would enlighten me on the cause, not only of these, but also of all the other effects of Love."

"Well then," she answered, "if you believe what we have often agreed the nature of Love is, then you know it is simple enough to derive its effects. The principle is the same: mortal things seek, as best they can, to achieve immortality [to possess the good in life forever]. But mortals can do this only by generation and procreation. Mortal nature tries perpetually to leave a new individual behind to replace the old. For only a short time can a living individual be said to be the same individual. For although a human being is said to be the same person from childhood to old age, yet even though he is called the same, he does not at any time possess the same properties. He is continually becoming a new person, losing parts, portions of hair, flesh, bones, blood, and all the rest of the body. We observe this not only of his body, but also of his psyche. His habits, his character, his beliefs, his desires, his pleasures, his pains, his fears, none of these remain the same. Some flourish, while others vanish."

"What is even stranger is that we not only acquire knowledge and lose it, so that we don't even remain the same person with respect to what we know, but we also discover that every single kind of knowledge suffers the same fate. When we say we are studying, we imply that our knowledge is slipping away. We forget [what we know] because our knowledge slips away and we have to study to make up for its loss. Study makes our knowledge seem to be the same [when it is not]."

"In this fashion every mortal thing is preserved, not by staying exactly the same forever like the divine, but because the old withdraws and leaves behind something else, a new version of itself. By this trick (mechanism), Socrates, the mortal partakes of immortality in the body and all other ways," she explained. "There is no other way. On account of this, it is no wonder that every living thing by nature favors its own progeny since all living things are moved by this love and passion for immortality."

## **Poetics in Respect to Body and Soul (208b-209e)**

After hearing this account (logos), I was amazed and asked the sagacious Diotima whether this was really possible and whether such [marvelous] things were really true.

And she replied just like our 'professional sophists', "You're right on target, Socrates!" "Just consider the love of honor or [political] ambitions of your fellow men. Though at first the facts [in the political domain] may

strike you as overturning my argument, yet you will see how right I am, if only you recall that man's greatest passion is the love of honor and glory and that human beings are singularly driven 'to win a name of immortal fame'. For fame, even more than for their children, they will run any risk, spend money like it's going out of style, work their fingers to the bone, and if it comes to this, even to die."

"Do you suppose," she asked, "that Alcestis would have died for Admetus or that Achilles would have offered up his life for the love he bore Patroclus, or that Codrus, your own king, would have welcomed death for the sake of his kingdom's children if they had not believed they were securing for themselves 'an immortal memory of virtue and excellence (arhteV)'? Of course not! I believe they performed all their well-known deeds for the sake of, and to establish a reputation for immortal virtue. The nobler they were the more they acted for this reason. For the best humans are in love with the immortal."

"But," she said, "those who are pregnant in the body turn to women as the object of love so that, by conceiving children, they achieve immortality. They suppose they can keep their memory alive in their progeny 'through all time and eternity.' But those who are pregnant in the psyche, for some are more creative in their souls than in their bodies, are pregnant with things more appropriate for the soul to conceive and bring to life." "To what sort of things am I referring?" you might ask: Practical wisdom (fronhsin) and all the other related virtues. For the poet and every artist, whom we call creative, begets them. Now the most important and fairest part of practical wisdom is that which governs the ordering of the Polis and the households. The virtues of which are called self-control and justice."

"When a man's psyche is closely akin to the divine, he is pregnant with these virtues from his youth. When he reaches manhood, he yearns to beget and bring them forth. So, he seeks the beautiful object through which he can generate his progeny. For he cannot beget in the ugly. With his psyche ripe with fine ambition [at first] he welcomes handsome companions [beautiful bodies] and if, perchance, he comes also upon a psyche, which is beautiful, noble, and well-endowed, he delights greatly in the conjunction of beauty in body and soul. Subsequently, he will indulge in conversations about human excellence with this person and about what constitutes the character of a good man. He will inquire into how a good man should conduct himself. In short, he will involve himself in the other person's education. For, I believe, after attaching himself to this beautiful person, having constant intimacy with him, and being mindful of his friend's beauty either in his presence or in his absence, he will be able to bring to birth [and expression] fine things which, until that time, he has been carrying around [only secretly] in his heart. What is more, he and his friend will help each other develop their mutual friendship. Such men share an intimacy with each other far more profound than one coming from [the generation and raising of] children because they have created something together which is more beautiful and less mortal than human progeny. Anyone would choose, if they could, to give birth to immortal children such as these rather than those destined to die."

"When men consider Homer and Hesiod and the other great poets, they envy the kind of children which they left behind, progeny who afford such men immortal fame and glory in the memories of men. Consider the fine offspring that Lycurgus left behind in the laws of Sparta which saved his country from ruin and I might add the whole of Hellas, while Solon is highly revered as the father of our Athenian Laws. So it is with other men in many other places among Greeks and Barbarians alike. These men produced many beautiful works and brought forth many forms of excellence. Many a shrine has been erected in the names of such men and dedicated to them to honor their fine, political offspring whereas no one has ever had a memorial built to honor them for bringing forth mortal, human children."

### **Mounting the Ascent of Love (209e-210e)**

"My dear Socrates, even you, perhaps, can be initiated into the mysteries of love. But I don't know whether you are the kind of person who can understand the higher mysteries, the end to which these avenues lead when you are properly instructed. Still I will tell you about them," she promised, "and I will spare no effort

[in helping you understand, but you must do your best to follow my discourse."

"The initiate, who would proceed rightly in this undertaking, must begin being drawn to bodily beauty as a young man. First, if he is guided properly by his mentor, he will love the beauty in one body and this love will issue in fine conversations. Next, the initiate will recognize how the beauty of one particular person's body is related to the beauty of another. If he wants to pursue the form of beauty itself, then it would be foolish to deny that bodily beauty [as such] is not all fundamentally the same. Once he grasps this, he will become a lover of all forms of bodily beauty. He will come to despise his lust for any single body and see it as trivial."

"After this he will come to find the beauty existing in the psyche to be worth much more than bodily beauty. Thus when he finds someone with a fine character, although he may be less physically attractive, he is satisfied to love and care for him and beget the sort of conversations [with him] that help make young men excellent. In this way he will be compelled further to contemplate the beauty that exists in [all] human enterprises and laws and to find here also that every kind of beauty is akin to every other kind. So he will conclude that the beauty of the body is not, after all, of so great a moment as it at first appeared.

"After a consideration of human practices he comes to ponder different kinds of knowledge so that he contemplates the beauty of the sciences. Contemplating this vast arena of beauty, he can no longer be the mean and petty slave of an isolated instance of beauty. He can no longer cherish like a lackey the beauty of a single young boy or of some individual person, or even of a single [human] activity. For now he will turn towards and contemplate the great sea of beauty from which he brings forth many beautiful and magnificent theories. An understanding of universal beauty, then, will lead him towards a productive [the harvest of] philosophy. And after growing strong and thriving in this environment, he will contemplate in a single, comprehensive vision the ineffable beauty of which I am about to speak. From now on," she said, "I need your full attention."

### **The Ascent to Beauty (210e-212a) "Climbing the Staircase"**

"Up to this point, the man who has been instructed in an understanding of love-matters (erotika) by beholding beauty rightly and in due order, will arrive at the culmination of his contemplation of the mysteries of love, and **all at once (exaifnhV)** the most wondrous vision of Beauty will reveal itself to him. For the sake of this vision, Socrates, all his earlier hardships were undergone!"

"Absolute Beauty is, first of all, Self-Existent; it neither comes to be nor passes away; it neither waxes nor wanes. Next, it is not partially beautiful and partially ugly. It is not at one time beautiful and at another not. Nor is it in one respect beautiful and in another ugly. Nor is it beautiful from one viewpoint, but ugly from another. It does not appear beautiful to some but not to others.

Again the beautiful cannot be pictured (fantasqhsetai) by the student of eros as having a face or hands, nor does it share in any other part of the human body. Nor is it a theory (logos) nor any science. Nor does it exist in anything else: such as in an animal, or on the earth, or in the heavens or in anything whatsoever. But it is always simply Itself in perfect accord with itself (auto kaq auto) alone with itself (meq' autou), of a single unique form (monoeideV) in which all the other beautiful things share in such a way that, while other things come to be and pass away, it becomes neither more nor less, nor undergoes any change."

"Thus when a man ascends from the previously mentioned stages through the right kind of love for young men (pederasty) and begins to envision Beauty Itself, he is nearly ready to grasp the final mystery (scedon an ti aptoito tou telouV)."

"Next I will describe what it means to progress rightly to an understanding of Love-Matters or to be guided rightly by another."

"Beginning from sensuous beauty, for the sake of the vision of Beauty Itself, the student must mount up constantly (as if he were climbing a staircase), from one to two from two to all beautiful bodies, from corporeal beauty to beautiful behavior from beautiful human acts to the beauty of learning, from the beauty of knowledge to a revelation of Beauty Itself, so that at last he will come to know what Beauty Itself is. My dear Socrates, such a life above all others is most worthy for a human being, a life lived in contemplation of the Beautiful Itself."

If you ever achieve this vision, it will appear to you very different from the gold or clothing or beautiful boys you now look on with amazement. Like so many others, when you are feasting your eyes on your darlings, you want to be with them always, to give up eating and drinking (if such a thing were possible), just behold them, and finally make love to them. What would it be like do you suppose, what would happen, then, to him who sees Beauty itself, whole, pure, unmixed, not filled up with human flesh and colors and other mortal trash. What if he were able to behold Divine Beauty itself in its unique form? Do you think a man would be living a worthless life if he contemplated Beauty itself, envisioning Beauty properly and living in its Presence (gignesqai)?

You realize only in that way will it come about (gignesqai), as he contemplates Beauty through the proper faculty by which it can be envisioned, -- only in that way-- can he [the lover] generate (tiktein), not mere images of virtue, but true instances of excellence, since he is grasping no mere image [of beauty], but the very thing itself [the true beauty]. When he has generated (tekonti) and cultivated true virtue, he will become most loved by the gods (uparch qeophile genesqai), and if any man can become immortal, he will be the one!

### **Socrates' Peroration (212b-c)**

"So, Phaedrus, and the rest of you gentlemen, that was what Diotima told me and I am [now] persuaded she's right. Since I believe her, I try to persuade others that, given human nature, we human beings cannot easily find a better helper than Eros to live an excellent life. That is why I claim that every human being ought to honor Eros, as I myself honor him. I devote myself religiously to Love Matters and urge others to do the same. Now, as always, I praise the power and courage of Eros as much as I can. So Phaedrus, please, consider my speech in praise of Eros given to honor the god. If you don't want to call this speech a speech of praise, then call it what you please by whatever name."

After Socrates finished his speech, the company began to clap. All but Aristophanes who was trying to get the floor to say something about how Socrates had made a [disparaging] reference to his speech.

### **Interlude: The Arrival of Alcibiades (212c-215a)**

But, then 'all at once' (**exaifnhV**). there was a loud noise like a party of drunken revelers and a banging at the courtyard door. [In the tumult] everyone heard the music of a flute-girl. Whereupon Agathon called out to the servants, "Go see who it is. If it is one of our friends, go let him in. If it isn't, say we've decided not to drink and having finished our dinner, we are going to bed."

A moment later they all heard the voice of Alcibiades in the hallway -- shouting loudly -- a boisterous and extremely drunk voice -- demanding to know the whereabouts of Agathon and insisting they should take him in to Agathon. So the attendants supporting him between them brought him into the house, with the flute-girl and several others helping him stand up and walk. There he stood, propped up in the doorway, garlanded with ivy and violets wound round a thick wreath and with a great array of ribbons of flowers encircling his

head.

Alcibiades addressed the company: "Hail, Gentlemen, Will you accept another drinking partner in your midst? But, I must warn you, I am already plastered! Or shall I just crown Agathon with a victory wreath, which is what I came to do, and then promptly leave you in peace? I couldn't make it yesterday [to the cast party], you see," he went on, "so I've come now with these garlands around my head. And I want to take them off my head and tie them on the head of this brilliant and most beautiful fellow, if I may say so! You are all laughing at me now for being drunk like this, aren't you? Laugh away, I know perfectly well that I'm telling the truth. But tell me right away, can I join you on these terms or not? Will you have a drink with me or not?"

Then they all shouted to him together beckoning him to come in and make himself at home. Agathon invited him in. With his entourage assisting him, he [staggered in and] joined them. While unwinding the garlands tied about his head, his eyes were covered blocking his view. So he laid down next to Agathon failing to notice Socrates. Without realizing it, he reclined between Socrates and his host. Socrates began making room for Alcibiades when he saw him come in. So he sat down, embraced Agathon and placed the wreath on his head. After this Agathon instructed the servant, "Remove Alcibiades' shoes so he can recline as a third here."

"By all means," Alcibiades said, "but who else is at the table with us? At that he turned around and saw Socrates. He jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "By Hercules! What *have* we here? Is that *you* again, Socrates! Are you once again lying in wait for me? So you followed and ambushed me here. You're up to your old tricks again, as always suddenly [exaifneV] appearing where I least expect you! What are you doing here now? And why do you recline at this table and not next to Aristophanes or someone else who chooses to play the clown? Why do you always contrive to get a seat next to the best looking person in the room?"

Socrates replied, "Agathon, you must do your best to protect me from this fellow, for I have found being in love with him very demanding. From the moment we were lovers it became impossible for me to look at or talk to any other single, good looking person without him becoming jealous of me. [If I pay attention to anyone else,] he flies into an envious rage and reviles me. [When we're together,] he can barely keep his hands off of me! Look at that! [Look what he is doing now!] I am afraid he's going to carry on this very moment! Please, help make peace between us or protect me if he gets violent. I am scared to death of this fellow's amorous rage. He loves having lovers."

"No way," said Alcibiades, "There can be no reconciliation between you and me. Later on I'll have my revenge on you for what you just said. "For now, Agathon," he went on, "give me some of your garlands back so I can bedeck this wondrous head of his. Then he won't be able to accuse me, after crowning you, of leaving uncrowned the champion speaker of all time, unlike you the winner of just the competition of the day before yesterday."

Saying this, he took some flowers and made a garland wreath for Socrates and laid down beside him. Leaning back he said, "Well then, gentlemen, you look too sober for me. I can't allow this. You must all drink to fulfill our agreement. So I proclaim myself Master of Revelry until you are all drunk. Agathon, let the boy here bring me the largest vessel you have. On second thought never mind. Young man, bring me that wine cooler there," he called out, for he noticed that it held more than half a gallon or so. After having it filled to the brim, he emptied it himself and then had it refilled for Socrates. While doing this, he commented, "My trick won't work with Socrates, Gentlemen. No matter how much anyone dares him to drink, he drains the cup and never gets stoned. After the boy had filled the cooler, Socrates emptied it as well.

Eryximachus complained, "Are we going to act like animals? Shouldn't we toast our health and say or sing something over our cups? Are we just going to gulp it down like a bunch common drunks?"

"Alcibiades turned and responded, "Ah Ha, Eryximachus, O Excellent son of a noble and sober sire! -- Hail to you!"

"Same to you," he replied, "But how shall we do it?"

"However you order us to do it, for we are bound to obey you, A single physician is worth a pack of commoners. Prescribe what you please."

"All right, then," said Eryximachus, "listen. Before you arrived we agreed among ourselves that each of us, going from left to right around the couch, would take our turn and make as fine a speech as he could in praise of Eros, the God of Love. All of us here have complied and have given our speeches. Since you've been drinking and haven't spoken yet, it is only right that you also should make a speech. After you have given your speech, you can command Socrates to do anything you like and he can command the one on his right and so on with the rest of the company."

Why, Eryximachus, he said, that sounds like a marvelous idea, but it isn't fair to pit a drunken man against sober speakers. Besides, my clever friend, I hope Socrates has not convinced you of the things he just finished saying, has he? Don't you know that everything is the opposite of what he tells you? This man cannot keep his hands off of me if I praise any god or any man in his presence other than himself !"

"Keep still," retorted Socrates, "enough of your nonsense."

"By Poseidon!" exclaimed Alcibiades, "Don't you deny it, I cannot praise anyone but you when you're around!"

"Well, do that if you like," said Eryximachus. "Praise Socrates!"

"Do you really mean it?" asked Alcibiades. "Do you think I should, Eryximachus? Can I really have at the fellow and get my revenge before all of you right here?"

"Look here," Socrates snapped, "what are you up to now? Are you about to praise me with ridicule by making fun of me?"

"The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I will speak, if you allow me!"

"Allow you," Socrates replied, "of course, I will allow you, in fact, I order you to tell the truth!"

"I'm aching to speak the truth," replied Alcibiades, "I beg you, if I say anything that isn't true, stop me in the middle of my speech and say what I've got wrong because I refuse to say what is false if I can help it. Still don't be surprised if I get somethings I'm trying to remember mixed up since it is not easy for someone in my condition to give a lucid and orderly account of your eccentricities."

### **The Speech of Alcibiades (215a-222b)**

#### **Praise by Images (215a-216c)**

"Gentlemen, my praise of Socrates will proceed by way of images or through pictures (eikonwn). He will assume that I am making fun of him, but the picture, or the vignette will be for the sake of the truth, not ridicule."

"I confess he is most like the Silenus-figures sitting in our statuary shops. You know the ones I mean. They are those our craftsmen make with pipes and flutes in their hands. When their two halves are opened up, they are found to possess images of the gods within them. Furthermore, I will compare him to Marsyas, the satyr,"

"You yourself, Socrates, will not deny that you look just like those funny things. But you are also like them in other respects as well! Listen, are you not outrageous? If you deny it, I can bring witnesses [to testify against you]. And aren't you also a piper, a far more wondrous one than the old satyr? In days of old Marsyas was able to enchant mortals with his lips using instruments. Even now those who play his tunes on the flute can charm their listeners. Olympus used to play the music of Marsyas, his teacher, so whenever a good flutist or even a common flute girl [like this one] plays his songs unaccompanied, because the songs are themselves divine, they disclose those who have divinity within them and have accepted the divine mysteries.

You differ from him in one thing alone; for you can do the same thing without instruments using plain, unadorned speech. Whenever we hear anyone else proposing arguments, even a first rate speaker, we don't give it a second thought. But when someone hears you or someone speaking your words [using your arguments], however inept a speaker he might be; whether the audience be composed of women, men, or children, they are all stunned and enchanted. As for myself, gentlemen, were it not that I might appear totally stoned, I would take an oath and testify to all the strange effects I felt from his words. Even now I am still affected by them. For when I hear him, I become worse than a wild maniac. I find my heart throbbing and leaping into my throat and tears gushing from my eyes at the sound of his voice. And I see a great many others affected the same way.

When I heard Pericles and other skilled orators, I thought them eloquent; but never felt anything like this. With them my spirit was not left in turmoil. I was not angered about being in the condition of a common slave. Whereas under the influence of our Marsyas here, I have often been thrown into such a state of confusion that I thought my life not worth living anymore on my own terms. In all this, my dear Socrates, there is nothing you can say is untrue."

"Even now I am aware that, if I were willing to listen to him again, I could hardly resist him, and I would have the same emotional reaction. For he makes me admit that even though I myself am in great need, I neglect my own interests and instead conduct the public affairs of Athens. So I forcibly block my ears as though I were [Odysseus] trying to block out his Siren Song, and I run away lest I grow altogether old sitting at his feet."

"There is one experience I have only in the presence of this man and no one would expect it of me: that I would feel shame in the presence of any man. He alone can make me feel ashamed of myself. For he alone makes me see I cannot disown the obligation to do what he tells me [in argument] I must do, but no sooner than I turn away from his presence, I become a victim of pleasing the crowd. So like an unruly child, I scurry away from him. When I encounter him again, I am reminded of my former regrets and once again I become embarrassed. Oftentimes I wish he would just disappear from this world and cease to exist altogether. Yet if this were to happen, I am sure I would be even more distressed than ever. So I don't know what to do about this fellow."

### **Irony and Seduction (216c-219d)**

"This is the effect that our satyr can work upon me and many another with his piping. But let me tell you how much he is in other respects like the figurines of my metaphor, and what a wondrous power he wields. I know no one of you really knows him. So I shall expose him now that I have started down this road. Notice how Socrates is amorously attracted to good looking men and how he is always busy with, involved with, and captivated by them. He affects an utterly simple and ignorant countenance. Is this not just like a Silenus? Exactly. It is an outward molding, a mask he wears just like the sculptured Silenus. But if you opened up his

insides, you would not imagine, my fellow drinking partners, how full he is of self-control. I warn you that all the beauty a man might possess is like nothing to him. He despises it more than you can believe. Nor does wealth attract him; nor any honor which is the envied prize of the masses. All these possessions he counts as worth nothing and all people like us as worthless. He spends his whole life in rebuffing and making sport of his fellow man. Whether anyone else has ever caught him in a reflective moment, opened him up, and got a glimpse of the images inside (agalmata), I cannot say. But I myself saw them one day, and thought they were so divine and glorious, so perfectly fair and wonderful, that I simply had to do just as Socrates bade me.

Since I [foolishly] supposed he was seriously attracted by my youthful beauty, I thought it a gift of Hermes and a stroke of marvelous good luck for me if, by sexually gratifying Socrates, I could learn all that he knew. For I had the highest estimation of my own good looks. So with this in mind, I dismissed the chaperon whom, until then, I usually brought with me to my meetings with Socrates and I went to meet him alone. I swear to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. You must all mark my every word; and, Socrates, you must refute me if I distort any of the facts.

"Gentlemen, I went and met him so that the two of us could be alone. I thought he would seize the opportunity and talk to me as a lover does to his beloved in private, and I was glad. But nothing of the sort happened at all. He only conversed with me in his accustomed manner. After he spent the day with me, he went on his way.

Next I proposed that he go with me to the gymnasium so we could workout together and I exercised with him expecting to get somewhere with him at the gym. He worked out and even wrestled with me, many times with no one else around. The same results! No erotic encounter. I was getting nowhere fast! Then I resolved to throw myself at the man and go for broke. For I refused to give up the contest now that I had set my mind on it. I wanted to know what was up and clear the air.

So I invited him to dine with me the way a lover schemes using a pleasant dinner alone to get his beloved into bed. He was slow to accept even dinner, but eventually I persuaded him. The first time he came, he insisted on leaving right after dinner. On that occasion, I was too embarrassed to stop him and so I let him go. The second time I had a plan: After we had dined, I continued talking with him far into the night and finally when he wanted to leave, I pretended it was too late and made him stay the night. So he fell asleep on the couch where we had had dinner together. Only the two of us were there in the room."

"Up to this point I could have told this story honorably to anyone. But you would not have heard me say what I am about to tell you, were it not first, as the saying goes, that wine and children tell the truth, -- in this case the wine applies without the children. So it seems unjust to me, having undertaken to praise him, that I should now hide his haughty, arrogant behavior. Besides, I share the plight of men who are snake-bitten. You know it is said of one in such a condition that he refuses to describe his pain to any but those who have been similarly bitten themselves. For only those who have been bitten will understand him and sympathize with him when, in his agony, he loses his composure and then speaks and acts out of control. Now I have been bitten by a more lethal creature than a viper, in the most painful way anyone can be bitten: I am wounded in my heart and my soul, or whatever you call it. I am stricken and stung by the venom of his philosophical discourses. For they adhere more fiercely than a viper's fangs once they get hold of a young and talented soul and compel it to say or do whatever they will."

"I have only to look around me and there I see a Phaedrus here, an Agathon there, an Eryximachus, a Pausanias, an Aristodemus, and an Aristophanes, I need not mention Socrates himself, and all the rest of the company. Everyone of you, I am sure, has had his share of philosophic madness and ecstasy and so all of you are allowed to stay and listen. You will all understand the plight I am about to recount. But I warn the servants and all the ordinary, innocent folk to clap heavy doors over their ears.

Well, gentlemen, after the lights were extinguished and the servants had withdrawn, I determined not to beat around the bush, but to say openly what I wanted to do. So I shook him and said, "Socrates are you asleep?" "Why no," he replied drowsily. "Let me tell you what I have decided."

"What is the matter," he asked.

"I consider you to be the only man worthy of being my lover, but it looks to me as though you are too shy to speak to me of love. Let me state my position straightforwardly: I think it is foolish not to gratify you this way, or for that matter any other way. If you had any need of my property or of my friends, I would surely offer them to you. To me nothing is more important than the attainment of the highest possible virtue. To achieve this end I believe I can find no abler ally than yourself. So I would feel far more shame before enlightened and worthy people for not giving love's pleasures to such a friend than I would feel before the unthinking riffraff for satisfying him."

When he heard this, he put on that sly, dishonest, and ironic air which was so characteristic of him and he replied, "My dear Alcibiades, I dare say you are not stupid, so if what you say of me is actually true, and there is a certain power in me that could help you to be a better human being; then what you must recognize in me is a stupendous beauty which would be vastly superior to your own good looks. And if upon envisioning this, you are attempting a mutual exchange of physical beauty for intellectual beauty, you are trying to get quite an advantage of me, aren't you? For you are trying to barter lasting for ephemeral beauty. In fact, you would be pulling off the age-old con game of trading gold for bronze. But you should be more wary, my excellent friend. For you could be deceived and I might be a nobody [no one] (me se lanthano ouden on). Intellectual vision begins to sharpen when bodily vision is in decline; but you are a very long way from the sharper vision of old age.

To this I replied, "You have heard what I had to say; not a word differed from what was on my mind. Now the ball is in your court and you must consider what you think is best (ariston) for you and me."

"Ah! here you have a point," he said, "for in the days that are to come we shall deliberate on and do what appears to be the best for each of us in this and other affairs."

"Well, after I exchanged these words with him and, as it were, shot my bolt, I imagined he felt wounded by my frankness. So I got up and, without making him say another word, I wrapped my gown around both of us for it was winter. Then I snuggled close to his body under the covers, wound my arms around this truly daimonic, wonderful man, and cuddled close to him like that all night long. You have to admit I am not distorting the facts here either, Socrates."

"Despite my having done all of this, he showed a supercilious contempt for my youthful charms, outrageously laughing them to scorn and insulting the very thing I held most dear. Gentlemen of the jury -- for you are here to try Socrates for his outrageous behavior -- I swear by all the gods and goddesses, that when I got up, I had no more euphemistically 'slept with' Socrates than if I had spent the night with my father or my older brother."

"After that you could imagine what a state of mind I was in! I felt rejected by him, yet I marveled at his self-control and manliness. For I had chanced upon a man such as I never would have dreamt of meeting, a man of genuine practical wisdom (phronesis) and courage. I could find no reason either for being angry with him or for depriving myself of his society. Nor was there any easy way of seducing and possessing him. I came to realize that he was far less vulnerable to the lure of money than Ajax had been to the sword. In the only domain I thought he could be vanquished, he eluded me. So I was at a total loss and wandered around enthralled by him as no one ever before or since has been enthralled by any man!"

## Strange Courage and Stranger Contemplation (219d-221c)

"All this was already ancient history for me when we later went on a campaign together to Potidaea. We were messmates there. First he surpassed, not only me, but everyone else with his ability to bear hardships. Whenever we were compelled to go without food, when we were cut off from the main forces, as often happens on such campaigns, everyone but Socrates could hardly endure the deprivations. In the times of plenty, he alone could enjoy himself to the fullest. Again although he never seemed to need a drink, when he was compelled [by camaraderie] to drink, he would drink us all under the table. And what is most astonishing is that no man has ever seen Socrates intoxicated. I think we shall shortly see the proof of this!"

"Even more remarkable were his deeds of endurance in the winter. And they have horrible winters there. We witnessed other marvels! Once there was an extreme frost when no one went out of doors. Or if they did, they bundled themselves up from head to toe meticulously. We would put on our shoes and then wrap our feet in wool and sheep-skins. But not him, he walked around outside clad in ordinary clothes! He walked over ice barefoot more easily than the rest of us did wearing shoes. The common soldiers thought he looked down on them.

So much for that incident. 'Next, the valiant deed our mighty souled hero once dared' during that campaign is well worth hearing about. At dawn he was immersed in deep contemplation. He stood perfectly still in the same spot pondering some question. When the question would not yield, he refused to abandon it, but stood there absolutely still, wrapped in thought. Time passed and it became midday when the men started noticing him. They began talking about him. They spread the word among themselves in wonderment, "Socrates has been standing there in a trance ever since sunrise. The incident ended in the following way. In the evening, this time it was summer, after dinner, some of the Ionians brought out their mattresses and rugs and bedded down in the shade for the evening. Settled down thus, they were waiting to see whether Socrates would remain wrapped in contemplation all night. He stood perfectly still until dawn broke and the sun rose again. Then, after offering a prayer of thanks to the Sun, he strolled quietly away.

"You ought to hear how he conducted himself in battle, for it is only just to give him his due. On the day of the engagement, in which I won the prize for bravery from the commanders, he was the one who saved my life! I was wounded and he would not leave my side. He helped to save my life and my armor. Socrates, you know how I straight away asked the commanders to award you the prize for valor instead of me. So you cannot blame me for what happened afterwards. Nor can you charge me with not telling the truth. For when, in proper deference to my noble rank and station, the commanders were inclined to award me the medal instead of you, you yourself were more eager for me to have it than they were!"

"Finally, gentlemen, let me tell you what a distinguished figure he cut when the army was in full retreat fleeing from Delium. I happened to be there, mounted on horseback, while he was on foot marching under arms. The troops were in complete disarray. He was retreating with Laches when I chanced to catch up with both of them. As soon as I saw them, I told them not to be afraid. I gave my word I would not abandon them to danger. Here I had a better chance to observe Socrates than at Potidaea, for I had less to fear than they because I was on horseback."

"First I noticed how much he surpassed even Laches in self-composure. Next I noticed how he strutted along, just as he does here in the city, -- to use a description of yours, Aristophanes, -- "swaggering proudly and rolling his eyes from side to side." He calmly stared everyone down, friends and enemies alike. He made it clear to everyone, even those at a distance, that if anyone so much as touched this man (androv), he would defend himself [to the death] by fighting furiously. As a result, he and his comrades escaped unscathed. For scarcely anyone who behaves in this lunatic fashion will be touched by an enemy. The enemy pursues only those who scatter chaotically in headlong flight."

## **The Strangeness of Socrates (221c-222b)**

There are many other wonderful [or strange] (qauomasia) qualities we could praise in Socrates. Perhaps I could speak volumes about any one of his character traits, but I will choose his unlikeness to anyone else past or present, as the peculiarity that elicits the greatest astonishment (qaumatoV). For example, we might compare Brasidas to Achilles or Pericles to Nestor, or to Antenor, or others I could name. In other words, we could liken other great men to one another. But given the strange qualities of this human being (anqropoV) both in his person and in his manner of speech, no inquirer could come close to finding anything like him, whether in the present or the past. The only exception is, perhaps, if you compared his character and his discourses, as I have done, not with mere mortal, human beings (anqropoV), but with Silenes and satyrs.

This reminds me of an important point I missed in my opening remarks. I am referring to his speeches, which, when you open them up, are themselves like [those little statues of] the Silenoi. When you listen to the speeches of Socrates, your first reaction is that they are preposterous. For on the surface they are clothed in preposterous turns of speech befitting, of course, the hide of the mocking Satyr he is! His speeches are all about pack asses, smiths, cobblers, and tanners. He seems always to be saying the same thing in the same way, so that someone untutored and unprepared would laugh his speeches to scorn. But, when they are opened up and you look into them and see them from the inside, first you discover they are the only speeches that make any sense. After you understand their deeper meaning, you find that no other speeches are so divine, so rich in the images of virtue. His discourses so abundantly and so completely encompass everything it befits a man to contemplate who seeks to attain a life of the finest beauty and greatest nobility."

Gentlemen, this is the praise I offer to Socrates, praise seasoned with some faultfinding when I told you of his outrageous behavior towards me. But, I am not the only person he has treated this way. There is also Charmides son of Glaucon, Euthydemus, son of Diocles, and any number of others. They have found his friendship tricky since he gets them to fall in love with him and thus, makes himself more their beloved than their lover. I tell you this, especially you, Agathon, to save you from his cunning. By taking our sad experiences to heart, you might be on your guard and escape having to learn the hard way from your own suffering like the fool in the adage who has to learn from his own mistakes."

## **Socrates Replies (222c-223b)**

When Alcibiades finished speaking in this fashion, there was some nervous laughter (parrasia) at his candor. For his speech betrayed that he was still in love with Socrates.

Socrates remarked at this point, "You must be sober, Alcibiades, otherwise you could not have wrapped yourself so cunningly in the circle (of words) you used to try and cover up the real purpose for telling us all of this. Everything you said was to set Agathon and I at odds, or you would not have mentioned it as an afterthought, slyly tacking it on to your conclusion the way you did. You think I must be in love you and no one else. At the same time, you think Agathon should be in love with you and no one else. But you won't escape undetected; for your satiric, Selenic farce is transparent. But, my dear Agathon, don't let him get his customary lion's share of the goodies (meden pleon auto genetai). Don't let him set you and I at odds with each other.

Agathon broke in, "Socrates, what you are saying is probably true. I think he reclined between you and me to keep us apart. I won't let him get his customary pig-share (ouden ouk pleon auto esti). So I will come and lie next to you."

"By all means," said Socrates, "here is an empty place on my other side."

"Zeus," said Alcibiades, "how I suffer from this mere mortal (apo ton anqropou). He thinks he has to get the better of me in everything. But if nothing else, O [Strange and] Wondrous One (O qaumasie) allow me only this one favor: let Agathon lie between both of us."

"I cannot do it," protested Socrates, "for you have just praised me and so I must praise my neighbor on the right. Thus if Agathon lies beside you, he will have to praise me instead of receiving his praise due from me. So let him alone, you maniac (daimonie). Don't begrudge the lad my praise, for I really want to say good things to him."

"Yes, Alcibiades," said Agathon, "there can be no question of my staying where I am. I shall leap to my feet and switch places at once if that will get Socrates to praise me."

"There you have it!," replied Alcibiades, "It is always the same when Socrates is around. Nobody else has a chance with the best looking guys. You see how resourceful he is at devising a good argument for why our young friend should sit beside him."

## **Conclusion (223b d)**

Agathon was getting up to seat himself beside Socrates, when all of a sudden (**exaiphnes**) a great throng of party crashers arrived at the door. They found the door ajar because one of the guests had just left. They marched straight in and made themselves at home. The whole place went into an uproar. The break down of order created just the right atmosphere for drinking vast quantities of wine.

At this point Aristodemus said he believed that Eryximachus, Phaedrus and some others took their leave and left while he fell fast asleep. He thinks he remained asleep for a long time since the nights were still long.

Toward morning, Aristodemus was awakened at cockcrow. Right away he noticed that everyone in the company were either asleep or had departed except Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates. They alone remained awake. The threesome were drinking out of a large vessel passing it from left to right. Socrates was conversing with them.

Aristodemus could not remember most of what was being said, for he had missed the beginning of the discussion and besides he was still drowsy. But, he gave me the gist of the conversation. Socrates was trying to get them to admit that it is possible for the same person to write both comedy and tragedy. And the tragic poet by his art is also a comic poet. While they were being driven to this conclusion, and barely following his argument, both of them began to nod and fall asleep. First Aristophanes dozed off and then, as daylight began to break, Agathon. After tucking them in, Socrates left with Aristodemus as usual following him.

When he reached the Lyceum he bathed and spent the remainder of the day as he always did. When the day ended and evening had come, he went home to rest.

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