



THE DIALOGUES OF
PLATO

VOLUME II
 THE SYMPOSIUM

TRANSLATED WITH COMMENT BY
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Kylix (wine cup), Attic red-figured, early fifth century B.C. Louvre AGR G. 144.
 © Photo R.M.N. Potter: Hieron. Height 0.12 cm, diameter 0.315 cm. Formerly in Campana Coll. Hoppin, *Handbook of Attic Red-Figured Vases*, no. 23*. Signature painted on handle: HIEPON.

TOP: Dionysus between two ithyphallic satyrs with wine pot and flute, and two maenads with castanets, thyrsus, and cup.

BOTTOM: Satyr with flutes between four maenads, two with thyrsus, one with lyre, one with mixing bowl. The posture of the last is twisted, in a triumph of composition, as though to represent not only motion but the mixing.

Such a cup might have graced Agathon's tables the evening of the banquet. (The medallion is reproduced on page xii.)

Wish and What Is Primarily Valuable	62
Of Human Bondage	65
Abraham Lincoln and the Pig	68
<i>The Works of Eros: Begetting in Beauty (206b-207a)</i>	70
<i>Immortality and the Mortal Nature (207a-208b)</i>	73
<i>Creation in Respect to Body and Soul (208b-209e)</i>	76
<i>The Ladder of Love (209e-210e)</i>	77
<i>The Ascent to Beauty Itself (210e-212a)</i>	82
The Idea of Beauty	83
Beauty and Goodness	84
Contemplation	85
Virtue and Contemplation	88
Recollection	89
The Descent of Eros	90
Eros and Psyche	91
Eros and Agape	95
<i>Socrates' Peroration (212b-c)</i>	98
Aristophanes Redivivus	99
<i>Interlude: the Arrival of Alcibiades (212c-215a)</i>	102
<i>The Speech of Alcibiades (215a-222b)</i>	104
<i>Socrates Replies (222c-223b)</i>	108
<i>Conclusion (223b-d)</i>	109
TRANSLATION	111
INDEX	171

PREFACE

The *Symposium* is the most widely read of Plato's dialogues with the single exception of the *Republic*, and this for good reason. Its literary merit is unsurpassed, and beneath the shining splendor of its surface it is constructed with the precision and something of the intricacy of a Swiss watch. Its philosophical, psychological, and religious force is revolutionary, offering a vision of what it means to live a human life founded on a transcendent principle of Beauty which, itself intelligible, is the source of all intelligibility and the ultimate aim of all loving. The *Nachleben* of the dialogue, as the Germans call it, its afterlife and influence, is very nearly as broad as the breadth of humane letters in the West; in the matter of *Quellenstudien*, it is not a spring, but a mighty river. Aristotle's theory of contemplation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as his theology in *Metaphysics* XII, where God is the primary object of both intellect and desire, and moves by being loved, is indebted to Diotima. So is Plotinus's account of beauty. Through Plotinus and, in aftertime, Aristotle, the indirect effect of the *Symposium* on medieval philosophy and theology, on Augustine and Bonaventure and Aquinas, was very great. Ficino picked up Pausanias's muddled distinction between sacred and profane love, which the *Symposium* clarifies in the contrast between the speeches of Aristophanes and Alcibiades and the speech of Diotima, and, combining with it much that is borrowed from Plotinus, forged it into a theory of the relation of art and beauty which guided the mind of Michelangelo and helped sustain the Renaissance. In nineteenth-century Germany, Aristophanes and Romanticism triumphed over Diotima's rationalism, and the triumph of the drunken comedian was ratified by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which presents an incongruous counterpart of the symposium, inverted. After Nietzsche came Freud, to make the divorce between desire and reason

final and to proclaim that sacred love is in its inner essence profane, even as Diotima had proclaimed that profane love is in its inner essence sacred.

An account of the afterlife of the *Symposium* might easily grow into a general survey of Western culture—and a very large book. A commentator may properly be excused from such a task. What follows is an introductory account of this singularly powerful dialogue, along with some cursory remarks on its *Nachleben*, and a translation meant to allow the Greekless reader to follow the thought of the dialogue for himself with some degree of literalness. In making the translation, I have relied on Burnet's text, occasionally departing from it where variance seemed trivial, or where manuscript readings seemed to me to preserve a satisfactory sense without emendation. I have constantly consulted R. G. Bury's edition, which is especially valuable for its insight into structure and its sensitiveness to rhetorical shading, as well as Kenneth Dover's, from whom I have silently adopted many suggested translations of words and phrases. Among translators, I have usefully consulted W. R. M. Lamb in the Loeb Classical Library, Léon Robin in the Budé edition, and the fourth edition of Jowett, revised by D. J. Allan and H. E. Dale; the version by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, eagerly anticipated, proved unhelpful.¹ I must also acknowledge with gratitude the criticism and suggestions of students and friends, Dougal Blyth, now lecturer in classics at Auckland, and David Ambuel of Northwestern, as well as the helpful comments of such colleagues as John Anton, Daniel Garrison, David Konstan, Stuart Small, and David White.

A word needs to be said, I suppose, even in so short a preface as this, about Platonic love. The late Renaissance made that love a kind of companionship between persons of opposite sex in which there was no element of sexual desire, and the notion has stuck. But for Plato, or if you will, Diotima, love implies active concern for the virtue and goodness of another soul, founded on the love of Goodness itself; it also implies sexuality, since sexuality finds its purpose in the intercourse of man and woman for the procreation of children and the continuation of the race. Still, there is an important truth encapsulated in the Renaissance mistake. Freud, analyzing the neurotics of Vienna at the end of the Victorian era, concluded that much mental disorder arose from sexual repression. It is

1. R. G. Bury, ed., *The Symposium of Plato*, 2d ed., Cambridge, 1932 (hereafter cited as Bury, *Symposium*). Kenneth Dover, ed., *Plato: Symposium*, Cambridge, 1980 (hereafter, Dover, *Symposium*). *Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Boston, 1926. *Platon: Le Banquet*, trans. Léon Robin, Paris, 1929. *Plato: Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Indianapolis, 1989. Compare *Plato: The Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton, New York, 1951.

not a cause likely to have troubled an Athenian of the fifth century B.C., and the *Symposium* may be read, at one level at least, as an argument that a bit more in the way of sexual repression might prove conducive to mental health. The *Symposium*, indeed, offers an argument for a degree of abstinence verging on asceticism.

A further word, both literary and logical, about Eros as personified and as a relation in the speech of Diotima. It may be said that Plato treats Eros as the domain of a relation, taken distributively. The personification of Eros in the speech of Diotima is not merely a literary device: Eros is the lover qua lover, each lover just insofar as he loves. It will be evident that the lover qua lover cannot be identified with the lover considered apart from that relation. If the soul is immortal, as Socrates argues in the *Phaedo*, then, given Diotima's claim that the lover qua lover lacks immortality and desires to possess it, this must imply that Eros is not Psyche, and it is a root of error to confound them.

The numbers and letters in the margins of the translation represent a conventional way of locating and referring to passages in the dialogue. They derive from the Stephanus edition of 1578, succeeding the Aldine edition of 1513: Henri Estienne edited and printed, in three volumes, a folio edition of numbered pages, with columns divided on the page—whence the letters. The edition is set in type whose design had been commissioned by Francis I, king of France. It is a very beautiful book.

TRANSLATION

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

^{172a} APOLLODORUS. I think I'm not unprepared in what you ask about. In fact, I happened to be coming into town the other day from my home in Phalerum, when someone I know caught sight of me from behind and called to me at a distance with a playful summons—"Hey there, you Phalarian," he said, "Apollodorus! Won't you wait up?" So I stopped and waited.

And he said, "Why really, Apollodorus, I was just looking for you a little while ago, because I wish to learn all about the meeting of Agathon and Socrates and Alcibiades and the others, the time they were together at the banquet, and what the speeches were about love. Someone else heard it from Phoenix, son of Philippus, and related it to me, and he said you knew too; but he had nothing clear to say. So please relate it to me; for it's very right of you, after all, to report the discussions of your friend. But first tell me," he said, "were you present at this gathering yourself?"

And I said, "It seems he related nothing clear to you at all, if you think the meeting occurred so recently that I was present too."

"Yes, I did think that," he said.

"How so, Glaucon?"¹⁶⁴ I said. "Don't you know that Agathon

¹⁶⁴ Perhaps Glaucon, son of Ariston, Plato's elder brother and a leading speaker in the *Republic*; but if so, and if he, like Apollodorus, was only a child when the banquet occurred in 416 B.C. (173a), he must have been very close in age to Plato, for Plato was then about twelve years old.

173a hasn't lived here for many years, whereas it's not even three years yet that I've associated with Socrates and made it my care each day to know what he says or does? Before that I ran round every which way and thought I was doing something when I was more wretched than anybody, no less than you are right now, thinking one must do anything else at all except pursue wisdom."

"Don't jest," he said. "Tell me when this meeting took place."

"We were still children," I said. "It was when Agathon won with his first tragedy, the day after he and his chorus celebrated their victory feast."

"Quite a while ago, it seems," he said. "But who told you? Socrates himself?"

b "No indeed," I replied. "It was the same person who told Phoenix, a certain Aristodemus of Cydathenaeum, a little fellow, always barefoot. He was present at the meeting, and he was I think one of Socrates' most devoted lovers¹⁶⁵ at the time. But of course I afterwards also asked Socrates about some of the things I heard from him, and he agreed it was as Aristodemus related it."

"Then why not relate it to me?" he said. "The road into town is surely well suited for talking and listening."

c Well, we walked on together and discussed it, so as I said to begin with, I'm not unprepared. If I'm obliged then to relate it to you as well, it must be done. And anyway, when I talk about philosophy myself or listen to others do so, quite apart from thinking I'm benefited, it's extraordinary how much I enjoy it; but when I hear other kinds of talk, especially from you rich businessmen, I feel irritation myself and pity for you and your friends, because you think you're doing something and you're d accomplishing nothing. On the other hand, maybe you'll believe I'm unfortunate too, and I think you're right. But I don't just think it about you, I well know it.

COMPANION. You're always the same, Apollodorus; you're always speaking ill of yourself and others, and I think you believe that everyone without exception, beginning with yourself, is wretched except Socrates. I don't know where you ever got the name of being soft! For you're always like this in argument, provoked at yourself and everyone else except Socrates.

165. *ἑταίρος*, 173b2. Note that there is here no sexual implication in the word, which might be translated "admirer" or perhaps even "disciple" (cf. 218c, 219c-d), though its use is proleptic for the discussion of Eros to follow. See also, for example, *Protagoras* 317c.7, *Euthydemus* 276d.2.

e APOLLODORUS. Dear friend, is it then really so clear that in thinking this way both about myself and the rest of you, I've gone crazy and lost my wits?

COMPANION. It's not worth quarreling about that now, Apollodorus; please don't do other than what I asked of you, but relate what the speeches were.

174a APOLLODORUS. Well, they were something like this—. No, I'll start at the beginning, and try to relate it to you just as he did.

Aristodemus's Prologue (174a-175e)

Aristodemus said Socrates met him bathed and anointed and with slippers on his feet, which he seldom wore; and he asked Socrates where he was going so beautifully dressed.

To a banquet at Agathon's, he replied. I stayed away from his victory feast yesterday because I was afraid of the crowd; but I agreed to be present today. So that's why I got dressed up, to be beautiful when going to beauty. But how about you? he said.

b Would you be willing to go to a banquet uninvited?

Aristodemus said he replied, Whatever you say.

c Then come along, he said, so that we may also spoil the proverb by changing it to mean that "the good go of their own accord to the feasts of the Good."¹⁶⁶ Homer, indeed, comes close not only to spoiling that proverb but to committing outrage on it, for he makes Agamemnon a surpassingly good soldier but Menelaus a "soft warrior,"¹⁶⁷ and then makes Menelaus go uninvited to the feast when Agamemnon was offering a sacrifice and entertaining—a worse man going to the feast of the better.

Aristodemus said that when he heard this he said, But maybe I won't fit your version but Homer's, Socrates, an inferior going uninvited to the feast of a wise man. So consider what defense you're going to make for bringing me, because I won't agree that d I came uninvited, but that I was invited by you.

"When two go together,"¹⁶⁸ he said. We'll take counsel about what to say on the way. But let's go.

166. Socrates here puns on Agathon's name—Good.

167. *Iliad* xvii 587: Apollo's taunt to Hector. Socrates' misuse of the passage is very much in the sophistic manner. Cf. *Republic* III 411b.

168. Socrates allusively quotes *Iliad* x 224, "When two go together, one of them knows before the other" (cf. *Protagoras* 348d). Two heads are better than one.

After some such discussion as this, he said, off they went. Well, Socrates turned his thought inward as they proceeded along the road, and fell behind; when Aristodemus waited for him, he bid him go on ahead. He found the door open when he reached
 e Agathon's house, and he said it put him in a ridiculous position: for one of the servants inside immediately met him and took him to where the others were reclining, and he found them just about to dine. Well, as soon as Agathon saw him, he said, Hello, Aristodemus, you're just in time to join us; if you've come for something else, put it aside for another time, because I looked for you yesterday to invite you and couldn't find you. But how is it you don't bring Socrates for us?

I looked around, Aristodemus said, and Socrates was nowhere to be seen following, so I said that I had myself come with Socrates, because he invited me here to dine.

It's good of you to come, said Agathon. But where is he?

175a He was right behind me just now. I wonder where he is myself.

Aristodemus said that Agathon said to a servant, Won't you go find Socrates and bring him in? And you, Aristodemus, he said, please recline here by Eryximachus.

He said the servant washed him¹⁶⁹ so that he might lie down; another servant came and announced, Socrates is here. He's withdrawn to the porch next door, he's standing there, and he won't come when I call.

That's strange, Agathon said. Keep calling him and don't give up.

b And Aristodemus said he said, No, let him be. That's his way; he sometimes stops and stands wherever he happens to be. He'll be along presently, I think. Don't disturb him, but let him be.

He said that Agathon said, Then we must do so, if you think it best. But servants, serve dinner to the rest of us. You always put out whatever you wish in any case, when there's no one supervising you—which I've never yet done—so now assume that you've invited me with these others to dine as your guests, and
 c serve us so that we may praise you.

After this they dined, he said, but Socrates didn't come in. Well, Agathon several times suggested they send for Socrates, but Aristodemus wouldn't allow it. Then after a little while Socrates came, having spent the time in his accustomed way, when they

169. That is, his feet and perhaps his hands, a gesture of customary hospitality.

were right in the middle of dinner. Well, Agathon—for he happened to recline last and by himself—said, Come here, Socrates, and recline by me, so that in touching you I'll get the benefit of
 d the wisdom that came to you on the porch. For you've clearly found it and you've got it; otherwise, you wouldn't have left.

Socrates sat down and said, It would indeed be well, Agathon, if wisdom were the sort of thing that might flow from the fuller of us into the emptier if only we touch each other, as water flows through a woollen thread from a fuller into an emptier cup.¹⁷⁰ If
 e wisdom is that way too, I value the place beside you very much indeed; for I think I will be filled from you with wisdom of great beauty. My own wisdom is a worthless thing, as disputable as a dream, but yours is bright and full of promise, that wisdom which, young as you are, shone out from you in such manifest splendor the other day, with more than thirty thousand Greeks to witness.

You're outrageous, Socrates, Agathon replied. You and I will adjudicate our claims about wisdom a little later, using Dionysus as judge. But now please first turn to your dinner.

Eryximachus Proposes Speeches in Praise of Eros (176a–178a)

176a After this, he said, when Socrates had lain down and dined along with the others, they offered their libations and sang a hymn to the god and did the other customary things, and turned to the drinking. So Pausanias, Aristodemus said, led off with some such speech as this: Very well, gentlemen, he said, how shall we drink most at our ease? I tell you, I'm really quite uncomfortable from yesterday's bout and I need some relief—I think
 b most of you do too; for you were there yesterday—so consider how we may drink most at our ease.

So Aristophanes replied, You're quite right, Pausanias, about being in every way prepared to take it easy in our drinking; in fact, I'm among those who got a dipping yesterday myself.

Aristodemus said that when Eryximachus, son of Acumenus,

170. The reference is to wicking. "Two cups, one empty the other full, are placed in contact: a woollen thread, with one end inserted in the full cup, the other hanging into the empty cup, serves by the law of capillarity to convey the fluid from the one to the other." Bury, *Symposium*, on this passage.

heard this, he said, Fine. But I still need to hear from one more of you: How is Agathon's strength for drinking?

I myself have no strength at all, he replied.

- c Well, that's a stroke of luck for the rest us, he said—me and Aristodemus and Phaedrus and the others here—if you, the most able drinkers, have now given up; for we're never up to it. I leave Socrates out of account; he's sufficient either way, so whatever we do will suit him. Well, since I think no one here is eager to drink a lot of wine, perhaps I'd be less displeasing in telling you what sort of thing being drunk is. For I think it has become very clear to me from the art of medicine that drunkenness is hard on people. I would not myself be willing to drink deeply if I could help it, nor would I advise it for someone else, especially if still hungover from the previous day.

Aristodemus said that Phaedrus of Myrrhinus interrupted and said, Why really, I'm accustomed to obey you, especially in whatever you say about medicine, and the rest will now do so too, if they're well advised.

- e Hearing this, everyone agreed that the gathering should not be a drunken affair, but they would drink only for enjoyment.

Then, said Eryximachus, since it's been decided that each of us should drink only as much as he wishes, nothing compulsory, I next suggest that the flute-girl who just came in be let go;¹⁷¹ she can play to herself or to the women within the house if she wishes, while we continue our present gathering through conversation. As to the sort of conversation, I'm willing to make a proposal to you, if you wish.

- 177a They all said that they did indeed wish, and bid him make his proposal.

So Eryximachus said, The beginning of what I have to say fits Euripides' Melanippe, for "mine is not the tale"¹⁷² I'm about to tell. It belongs to Phaedrus here. Phaedrus often complains to me and says, "Isn't it terrible, Eryximachus, that the poets make hymns and paeans for other gods, yet not a single one of them,

- b despite their number, has ever offered an encomium to Eros, a

171. The flute, or *αὐλός* (actually, a single- or double-reed instrument and strictly not a flute but more like a clarinet or an oboe), had a shrill, piercing tone, and was especially associated with Dionysus, as the lyre was with Apollo. In the *Republic* (III 399d-e; cf. *Laus* VII 812c-813a), *αὐλός*-players and *αὐλός*-makers are to be excluded from the Ideal State: Apollo and his instruments are to be preferred to Marsyas and his.

172. Euripides, fr. 488 (Nauck): "Mine is not the tale; my mother taught me."

god so venerable and so great? Or if you wish, take our worthy sophists: they write prose elegies of Heracles and others as the excellent Prodicus did, and maybe that's not so very surprising, but I once came upon a book by a wise man in which salt was most astonishingly eulogized for its usefulness, and you see other such stuff given lengthy praise—much ado over things like that, and yet no one ever down to the present day has ventured worthily to hymn Eros. So neglected is so great a god!"

- I think Phaedrus was right about this. So I not only want to make a contribution of my own and gratify him, but at the same time I also think it's presently fitting for those of us here present to adorn the god. So if you agree too, this would be a sufficient topic for our conversation: I think each of us should make as beautiful a speech as he can in praise of Eros, from left to right starting with Phaedrus, since he lies first and at the same time is father of the discourse.

- No one will vote against you, Eryximachus, said Socrates. For I who claim to know nothing except the things of love¹⁷³ could scarcely decline, and neither can Agathon and Pausanias, nor Aristophanes, whose whole occupation concerns Dionysus and Aphrodite, wine and sex; nor anyone else among those I see here. And yet it isn't fair to those of us who lie last; if those ahead speak sufficiently and beautifully, it will do for us too. Let Phaedrus begin and offer his encomium to Eros, and good luck to him.

- 178a Well, all the others therefore agreed and bid him do as Socrates suggested. Aristodemus did not quite remember all of what each of them said, nor do I in turn remember everything that he said; but I'll tell you what he especially remembered in the speech of each, and which seemed to me worthy of mention.

The Speech of Phaedrus (178a-180b)

First of all, as I say,¹⁷⁴ he said Phaedrus led off with something like this: Eros is a great god, wonderful among gods and men in many other ways, but not least in respect to his birth.

- b For the god is held in honor as eldest among them, said he.

173. A claim Socrates is able to make, though he is otherwise ignorant, because he has been instructed by Diotima.

174. 177d-e.

An indication of this is that Eros has no parents, nor does anyone, layman or poet, claim he does. Hesiod says that first Chaos came to be, "But then broad-bosomed Earth, ever safe abode for all, and Eros."¹⁷⁵ Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod too that next after Chaos this pair was born, Earth and Eros. And Parmenides says of the birth that "very first of all gods she devised Eros." So it is agreed in many places that Eros is eldest among them.¹⁷⁶

Being eldest, he is cause to us of greatest goods. For I cannot say what good is greater, from youth on, than a worthy lover, and for a lover, a worthy beloved. For those who intend to live beautifully must be led through the whole of life by what neither kinship nor honors nor wealth nor aught else can instill so beautifully as Eros. What do I mean by this? Shame for things ugly, ambition for things beautiful; for without these, neither city nor private person can do great and beautiful deeds. I say then that a man in love, if discovered doing something shameful, or suffering it from another and failing through cowardice to defend himself, would not be so pained at being seen by his father or friends or anyone else as by his beloved. We see this same thing too in the beloved, that it is especially before his lovers that he feels shame when seen in something shameful. If then there were some device so that a city or an army might be made up of lovers and their beloveds, it is not possible that they could govern their own affairs better than by abstaining from all things shameful and vying for honor among themselves; fighting side by side, men of this sort would be victorious even if they were but few against nearly all mankind. For a man in love would surely not let himself be seen by his beloved, beyond all others, deserting his post or throwing down his arms; he would choose to die many times before that. And again, as to deserting his beloved or not helping him in danger—no one is so bad that Eros would not inspire him to virtue so as to be equal to him who is by nature best. What Homer said is absolutely true, that god "breathes valor" into certain of the heroes, a thing that Eros provides to lovers from his own resources.

175. *Theogony* 116ff., 120. Phaedrus truncates the passage.

176. Aristotle relies on this passage at *Metaphysics* I 984b 23–31. The cosmological implication that "among existing things there must be from the first a cause which will move things and bring them together," and the connection of this claim with Empedocles, are his own, but they are anticipated in the speech of Eryximachus, for example at 186d–e.

And again, only lovers are willing to die in behalf of others—not only men but women too. Of that, Alcestis, daughter of Pelias, provides sufficient proof to the Greeks in behalf of this argument. She alone was willing to die in behalf of her husband, although he had both father and mother. Due to Eros, she so much surpassed them in friendship that she made them appear alien to their own son and related to him only in name.¹⁷⁷ When she did this, the deed seemed not only to men but also to gods so beautifully done that, although many have done many beautiful deeds, those whom the gods have rewarded by sending their souls back from the Place of the Dead are easily numbered; yet hers they sent back in admiration of her deed. So even the gods especially honor zeal and virtue concerning Eros. But Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent back from the Place of the Dead empty-handed, showing him an appearance of the wife he'd come for but not giving her, because they thought he was soft due to being a musician, and didn't dare die for the sake of Eros as Alcestis had, but contrived to go the Place of the Dead alive.¹⁷⁸ For this reason, then, they punished him and caused his death at the hands of women. In contrast, they honored Achilles, son of Thetis, and sent him to the Isles of the Blest, because when he learned from his mother that he would die if he killed Hector but that if

177. Admetus was fated to die. Apollo, by making the Fates drunk, persuaded them to promise that Admetus might live if someone else were willing to die in his place. No one would consent to do so, including his aged parents, except Alcestis, his wife.

178. Orpheus was the great musician, charming trees, wild beasts and even stones with his song. His wife, Eurydice, was killed by the bite of a snake, and Orpheus journeyed alive—this is why Phaedrus claims he was a coward—to the Underworld to bring her back.

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as warbled to the string
Drew Iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek.
(Milton, *Il Penseroso*, lines 104–108)

But Eurydice was released on the condition that Orpheus not turn and look back at her during the ascent. He did look back, and lost her forever. He was afterward torn to pieces by Maenads, and his severed head floated down the stream, still singing.

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore.
(*Lycidas*, lines 58–64)

180a he did not he would go home and live out a long life, he dared choose to help his lover Patroclus and avenge him, not only dying in behalf of but also in addition to the slain.¹⁷⁹ This is why the gods in high admiration surpassingly honored him, because he counted his lover so important. Aeschylus talks nonsense in claiming that Achilles was the lover of Patroclus, when he was not only more beautiful than Patroclus but doubtless than all the other heroes too, and still beardless, since he was very much younger, as Homer tells.¹⁸⁰ For though the gods really do honor this virtue
 b of Eros in highest degree, they marvel and admire and reward it still more when the beloved cherishes the lover than when the lover cherishes the beloved. For lover is more divine than beloved: the god is in him and he is inspired. That is also why they honored Achilles more than Alcestis, and sent him to the Isles of the Blest.

Thus then I claim that Eros is eldest and most honored of gods, and most authoritative in respect to possession of virtue and happiness for men both living and dead.

The Speech of Pausanias (180c–185c)

c Phaenias gave some such speech as this, Aristodemus said, and after Phaenias there were some others he didn't remember very well. Passing them by, he related the speech of Pausanias, who said:

Phaenias, I don't think the plan before us, being thus enjoined simply to offer an encomium to Eros, is a good one. It would be fine if Eros were one, but as it is he is not one. Since he is not one, it is more correct to be told in advance what sort of Eros
 d ought to be praised. So I'll undertake to correct this, first by describing the Eros that ought to be praised, and next by worthily praising the god. For we all know there is no Aphrodite, no sex, without Eros. If then there were but one Aphrodite, Eros would be one, but since in fact there are two, Eros is necessarily also two.

How are there not two goddesses? The one, surely, is elder, the motherless daughter of Uranus, whom we therefore name Our-

179. Cf. 208d 2, 3.

180. *Iliad* xi 786. Homer does not in fact represent the relation of Achilles to Patroclus as homosexual.

ania, Heavenly. The other is younger, the daughter of Zeus and
 e Dione,¹⁸¹ whom we call Pandemus, Popular or Vulgar. Necessarily then it is also right to call the Eros who is partner to this one vulgar, but to the other heavenly. One must of course praise all gods, but one must also try to say what province falls to the lot of each. For every action is as follows: in and of itself it is neither beautiful nor ugly. For example, none of the things we are doing
 181a now, drinking or singing or conversing, is in itself beautiful; it turns out that way according to how it is done. If done beautifully and correctly, it becomes beautiful; if incorrectly, ugly. Thus, then, not all loving and Eros are beautiful nor worthy of an encomium, but only the Eros that turns us toward loving beautifully.

Now, the Eros of Vulgar Aphrodite is truly vulgar, and works
 b at random; this is the Eros of common sorts of men. First, such men love women no less than boys; next, they love their bodies rather than their souls; again, they love the stupidest they can find, looking only to the act, careless of whether or not it is done beautifully. Whence then it follows that they do whatever they happen to do, good or the opposite alike. For this Eros derives
 c from the goddess who is younger by far than the other, and has a share of both male and female in her birth.

But the Eros of the Heavenly Aphrodite, first, does not partake of female but only of male—it is the Eros for boys—and next is elder, and without share of outrage or wantonness. This is why those inspired by this Eros turn to the male, delighting in what is by nature stronger and possessed of more intelligence. One might recognize those moved purely by this Eros even in the love
 d of boys itself: for they do not love boys except when they begin to get intelligence, that is, when they are on the verge of getting a beard. Those who begin to love them at this point, I think, are

181. Heavenly Aphrodite, Aphrodite Ourania, is the daughter of Uranus; more precisely, she sprang from the severed member of Uranus, who had been castrated by his son Cronus, as it floated in the sea and gathered foam (*ἀφρός*; cf. *Cratylus* 406b–c) about it. This is a story that Plato particularly condemned as false to the nature of divinity: *Euthyphro* 6a–b, *Republic* II 377e–378a. Popular Aphrodite, Aphrodite Pandemus, is identified by Pausanias as the daughter of Zeus and Dione; Dione is simply the feminine form of Zeus (genitive, *Διός*); in Homer she consorted with Zeus to become the mother of Aphrodite, but there is a later tradition in which she is, by Ares, the mother of Eros. (See H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, New York, 1959, pp. 22, 53.) Pausanias, with his two Aphrodites and two Erotes, exploits in the sophistic manner a characteristic inconsistency in the mythological tradition, and uses it to imply a distinction between good Eros and an Eros that isn't as good, and which, after an apotropaic compliment, he treats as bad.

prepared to be with them through the whole of life and pass their lives in common, rather than deceiving them by catching them in the thoughtlessness of youth and then contemptuously abandoning them and running off to someone else. There ought to be a law against loving boys,¹⁸² so that great effort is not wasted where the outcome is unclear; for what a boy will be when he grows up is unclear, and how he will turn out in respect to virtue and vice both of body and soul. Now, good men lay down this law for themselves voluntarily, but vulgar lovers ought also be compelled to do the same, just as we compel them, so far as we can, not to make love to free-born women. For it is they in fact who have caused reproach, so that some people even venture to say it is shameful to gratify lovers; they look to them in saying this, seeing their impropriety and injustice, since surely what is done in a lawful and orderly way could not justly bear reproach.

Again, the law and custom in other cities concerning Eros are easy to know, for they are simply defined; but here and in Sparta they are complex. In Elis and Boeotia, and where there is no skill in speaking, it is simply given as law that gratification of lovers is beautiful, and no one, young or old, would claim it is shameful or ugly—in order, I suppose, not to have the trouble of trying to persuade the young by speech, because they cannot speak. But in Ionia and many other places ruled by barbarians, it is held shameful.¹⁸³ Yes, it is actually held to be shameful by the barbarians, along with philosophy and the love of exercise, due to their tyranny; for it is not, I think, to the advantage of rulers to have great thoughts engendered in those ruled, nor strong friendships and associations, which Eros above all others is especially wont to instill. Tyrants, in fact, have here learned this by actual deeds; for the Eros of Aristogiton and the friendship of Harmodius, steadfastly abiding, overthrew their rule.¹⁸⁴ Thus, where it is set-

182. Pausanias now means children, where before he meant adolescents; the verbal confusion is an index of his precision of thought.

183. Pausanias's suggestion that Ionia is under barbarian rule suggests a date after the King's Peace in 387 B.C. Since not only the dramatic but the narrative date of the *Symposium* is before the death of Socrates in 399, this appears to be deliberate anachronism.

184. Aristogiton and Harmodius were Athenian tyrannicides; they attempted to kill the tyrant Hippias, succeeded in killing his brother, Hipparchus, and were executed in 514 B.C. The tyranny was overthrown a few years later, and they were honored and called Liberators. Simonides composed a poem to them, statues of them were erected in the Agora, and their descendants were given the right to public subsistence, meals in the Prytaneum—an honor Socrates suggested as a counter-penalty at his trial.

tle that it is shameful to gratify lovers, it is settled by the badness of those who settled it, by the overreaching of the rulers, by the cowardice of the ruled; but where it is acknowledged simply and without qualification, it is due to the laziness of soul of those who settled it. But the law here is much more beautiful than that and, as I said, not easy to comprehend.

Bear in mind that it is held to be more beautiful to love openly than in secret, and especially to love the most noble and best even if they are uglier than others; and again, that the encouragement everyone gives to the lover is astonishing and not as if he were doing something shameful, and that it is regarded as beautiful to capture and shameful to fail, and that relative to the attempt to capture, law and custom have given liberty to the lover to be praised for doing quite extraordinary deeds, deeds which, if anyone dared do them in pursuit of anything else at all, wishing to accomplish anything except this, would issue in greatest blame for philosophy.¹⁸⁵

For if anyone, wishing to get money or obtain office or some other position of power from someone, were willing to do the sorts of things lovers do for their beloveds, making supplications and prayers in their entreaties, swearing oaths, sleeping on doorsteps, willing to do slavish acts of a sort not even a slave would do, he would be prevented from acting this way both by his friends and his enemies, these rebuking him for his flattery and servility, those admonishing him and ashamed for them. Yet people are charmed by the lover who does all this, and the law allows it without reproach, as though he were doing something quite beautiful. But the strangest thing, as most people say, is that only to the lover is forgiveness granted by the gods for breach of oaths—for they deny that a sexual vow is a vow. So both gods and men have granted full liberty to the lover, as the law here declares.

For this reason, then, one might suppose that loving and the friendship got from lovers would be acknowledged in this city as quite beautiful. But when fathers set tutors over those loved and

185. *φιλοσοφίας*, 183a.1, obelized by Burnet and excluded by Bury and Dover, following Schleiermacher, but read by all major manuscripts and supported by 184c.8-d.1; cf. 182c.1. The *Symposium* has been a much emended text, but a conservative hand is perhaps more than usually justified; the speakers are sometimes drunk not only on wine but on their own rhetoric, and this is specifically true of Pausanias.

forbid them to talk with their lovers, and the tutor is so ordered, while companions of his own age also rebuke him if they see anything of that sort going on, and their elders do not in turn prevent the rebuke or criticize it as ill founded—looking to these things, one might believe again in turn that this sort of thing is here regarded as most shameful.

But the fact, I think, is this: it is not simply good in and of itself, nor yet ugly and shameful, but as I said to begin with, beautiful if done beautifully, shameful if done shamefully. Shamefully in gratifying a base lover basely, but beautifully in gratifying a worthy lover beautifully. The vulgar lover, who loves the body more than the soul, is base; he is inconstant because the thing he loves is inconstant. For as soon as the bloom of the body he once loved fades, "he takes off and flies," many speeches and promises disdained. But the lover of a worthy character abides through life, for he is joined to what is constant.

Our law and custom therefore wishes to test them beautifully and well, those to be gratified, those to be shunned. For this reason, then, it commands pursuit to these, flight to those, organizing a competition to test of which sort the lover is and of which sort the beloved. It is due to this cause, first, that the law deems quick capture shameful, in order that time may pass—which indeed seems to be an excellent test for most things—and next deems it shameful to be captured by money or political power, or if he cowers when ill treated and is not staunch, or if when offered favors of money or political success he does not despise them; for none of these seems abiding or constant, quite apart from the fact that a noble friendship does not naturally result from them.

One way then is left in our law, if beloved intends to gratify lover beautifully. For it is law among us that, just as it is not flattery or in any way subject to reproach for lovers to be willing to submit to every kind of slavery for their beloved, so also there is only one kind of voluntary slavery not subject to reproach: that involving virtue. For it is held by us that if someone is willing to serve someone in the belief that through him he will become better, in respect either to some kind of wisdom or to any other part of virtue whatever, this voluntary servitude is on the contrary not shameful, nor is it flattery.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶. Cf. *Euthydemus* 282b—if wisdom can be taught.

One must then combine these two laws, the law concerning pederasty and the law concerning philosophy and the rest of virtue, if it is to result that it is good for the beloved to gratify a lover. For when lover and beloved come together in the same place, each governed by his own law, the one would serve justly in serving in any way at all the beloved who has gratified him; the other would submit justly, on the other hand, in submitting in any way at all to one who makes him wise and good. The one is able to contribute intelligence and the rest of virtue, the other needs to possess it in respect to education and the rest of wisdom: only at that point, when these laws combine in the same place, does it happen that it is beautiful for the beloved to gratify the lover, but elsewhere not at all.

In such a case, there is no shame even in being deceived and seduced, but in all other cases it bears shame whether seduced or not. For if one gratified a lover for money because he was rich, and was deceived and got no money because the lover turned out to be poor, it would be no less shameful; 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 beautiful. By the same account, even if one gratified someone because he was good, intending that he himself might be better through the friendship of a lover, and was deceived when he turned out to be bad and not to possess virtue, the deception is nevertheless good; for it is again thought that he has made clear exactly what he is, that he would eagerly do everything for everyone for the sake of virtue and his own improvement, and this in turn is of all things most beautiful. So it is in every way beautiful to provide gratification for the sake of virtue. This is the Eros of the Heavenly Goddess, and heavenly himself, and of great worth both to city and to private citizens, compelling the lover to be much concerned for his own virtue, and the beloved too. Lovers of the other sort all belong to the other goddess, the vulgar one.

This is what I have to offer you just on the spot, Phaedrus, he said, about Eros.

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

Pausanias paused—for the wise men teach me to speak in equal measures like this—and Aristodemus said that Aristophanes was

supposed to speak, but he came down with hiccups from being full or something else and wasn't able to speak. He said—Eryximachus, the doctor, was lying right below him—"Eryximachus, you must either stop my hiccups or speak for me until I can stop them on my own."

And Eryximachus said, "Why, I'll do both. I'll take your turn speaking, and you take mine when you stop. But while I'm speaking, if you'll hold your breath a long time the hiccups will stop. If not, gargle with water. But if they're perhaps very strong, get something to tickle your nose, and sneeze; if you do this once or twice, even if they're very strong, they'll stop."

"On with your speech," said Aristophanes. "I'll do it."

The Speech of Eryximachus (185e–188e)

186a So Eryximachus said, Well, since Pausanias began his speech beautifully but didn't end it satisfactorily, it seems it's up to me to try to bring the account to a conclusion. He did well, I think, to divide Eros in two. But Eros exists in the souls of men not only toward 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 think I have seen from medicine, our art,¹⁸⁷ how great and wonderful is the god, how he extends over everything both human and divine. I will start then from medicine in my speech, so that we may also venerate the art.

For the nature of bodies has this twofold Eros; the health and sickness of the body are admittedly different and unlike, and what is unlike desires and loves unlike things. So the Eros in the healthy body is one thing, that in the diseased body another. As Pausanias just now said, it is beautiful to gratify what is good for men but shameful to gratify the intemperate; so also among bodies themselves it is beautiful to gratify what is good and healthy for each body, and it must be done, and this has the name of medicine, but it is shameful to gratify what is bad and diseased, and it must not be gratified if one intends to be a real practitioner.

For medicine, to speak summarily, is knowledge of the things

187. Eryximachus speaks as an Asclepiad, a member of the guild of physicians whose founder was Asclepius (cf. 186e), hero and god of healing. In the *Iliad* Asclepius is a mortal; to Hesiod and Pindar, he was the son of Apollo.

d of love belonging to the body relative to filling and emptying,¹⁸⁸ and he who diagnoses the beautiful and shameful Eros in these things is the genuine physician, and he effects change so that the body possesses one Eros instead of the other. He who knows how to instill Eros where it is not present but ought to be, and to remove it where it is present and ought not to be, is the good practitioner: for it is necessary to be able to make the most inimical elements in the body friendly and love each other. But the most inimical are the most opposite: cold to hot, bitter to sweet,
e dry to wet, all such as that; it is by knowing how to instill Eros and unanimity that our progenitor Asclepius, as these poets here say¹⁸⁹ and I myself believe, established our art.

187a So all medicine, as I said, is governed by this god, as are gymnastics and agriculture. It is also obvious to anyone who pays the slightest attention that music is in this respect the same, as Heraclitus also perhaps meant to say, though his actual words don't put it well. He says that the One, "being at variance with itself, is drawn together with itself, like the attunement¹⁹⁰ of bow and lyre."¹⁹¹ But it is utterly absurd to say that attunement is at variance, or derives from things still at variance.¹⁹² Perhaps he meant to say instead that it has come to be from things formerly at variance, namely, the high and the low, when they afterward are brought into agreement by the art of music. Surely attunement could not derive from continuing discord of high and low. For attunement is concord, and concord a kind of agreement—it is

188. Dover quotes Hippocrates, *De flatibus* I, "Emptying cures fullness, filling emptiness, and rest exertion," because a medical condition is cured by its opposite.

189. The reference is presumably to Aristophanes and Agathon.

190. ἀγυορία. It is important to bear in mind F. M. Cornford's remark (*The Unwritten Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 19): "Tradition, truly as I believe, reports that Pythagoras declared the soul to be, or to contain, a harmony—or rather a *harmonia*. For in Greek the word *harmonia* does not mean 'harmony,' if 'harmony' conveys to us the concord of several sounds. The Greeks called that *sympheia*. *Harmonia* meant originally the orderly adjustment of parts in a complex fabric; then, in particular, the tuning of a musical instrument; and finally the musical scale, composed of several notes yielded by the tuned strings. What we call the 'modes' would be the Greek *harmoniai*." The closest analogue to a mode, in our music, is the difference between major and minor.

191. The reference is presumably to Heraclitus, Diel-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* B 51: "They do not understand how being at variance with itself, it is drawn together with itself: a back-stretched [or backward-turning] attunement, like a bow or a lyre." As the bow is drawn, its tips are drawn together; Eryximachus interprets so as to avoid the apparent paradox Heraclitus intended, namely, that the world-process is a dynamic equilibrium of opposite tensions.

192. Eryximachus has himself already said almost exactly this at 186d–e.

impossible for agreement to derive from things at variance so long as they are at variance; on the other hand, it is impossible to attune what is at variance and does not agree—just as rhythm too derives from the quicker and slower, which had before been at variance but afterward come to agree. Music here, like medicine there, puts agreement into all these things, implanting Eros and unanimity with each other. And music in turn is knowledge of the things of love concerning attunement and rhythm. It is not hard to diagnose the things of love in the very constitution of attunement and rhythm, nor is the twofold Eros there yet.¹⁹³

But when one needs to apply rhythm and attunement to men, either in composing, which is called musical composition, or in correct use of melodies and meters once composed, which is called education and culture—here there is indeed difficulty, and need for a good practitioner. For the same account recurs: one must gratify orderly men, and those not yet orderly in such a way that they may become more orderly, and watch out for their Eros, and this is the beautiful, heavenly Eros of the Heavenly Muse.

But as for the Vulgar Eros of the many-tuned Muse Polyhmnia,¹⁹⁴ one must apply it with caution to those to whom one applies it, in order to harvest its pleasure but plant no intemperance, just as in our own art it is an important task to make proper use of desires involving the art of cookery, so that its pleasure is harvested without disease. In music and medicine and all other things, human and divine, one must, so far as practicable, watch out for each kind of Eros; for both are present.

188a Indeed, even the constitution of the seasons of the year is filled with them both, and whenever the things I was just now mentioning, hot and cold and wet and dry, attain orderly Eros relative to each other and receive mixture and attunement in a temperate way, it comes bearing prosperity and health to men and to the other animals and plants, and does no injustice;¹⁹⁵ but when the Eros, accompanied by outrage and wantonness, gains mastery of

193. Or perhaps, reading *πας* for Badham's *πω*, "the twofold Eros is in no sense there." See David Konstan and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, "Eryximachus's Speech in the *Symposium*," *Apeiron* 1985, p. 41.

194. A pointless substitution for the Aphrodite Pandemus of Pausanias, as the "Heavenly Muse" was for the Heavenly Aphrodite: sophistical metonymy.

195. Perhaps an echo of the single surviving fragment of Anaximander, in which the opposites pay penalty to each other in the cycle of days and seasons, according to the assessment of Time, for their injustice, that is, their encroachment on the proper provinces of one another.

the seasons of the year, it destroys many things and does injustice.

- b For plagues like to arise from such things as these, and many other unusual diseases both in beasts and plants; in fact, frost and hail and blight arise from mutual overreaching and disorder among things of love such as these, knowledge of which, as it concerns motions of stars and seasons of years, is called astronomy. Still further, all sacrifices and the objects of the seer's art—
- c that is, the mutual intercourse of gods and men—have to do with nothing other than protection and cure of Eros. For all kinds of impiety, concerning parents both living and dead and concerning the gods, like to arise if one does not gratify the orderly Eros and honor and revere him in every action, but instead gratifies the other Eros. The seer's art has therefore been ordained to oversee these kinds of Eros and heal them, and the seer's art,
- d again, is a craftsman of friendship between gods and men, by knowing which things of love among men tend toward piety and what is religiously right.

So all Eros has, in summary, very great power, or rather all power, but it is the Eros fulfilled in good things accompanied by temperance and justice, both among us and among gods, that has the greatest power and provides all happiness to us and enables us to associate with each other and be friends, even with the gods, who are stronger than we are.

- e Well, perhaps I too have left out many things in praising Eros, but at least not willingly. If I did leave something out, it's your job, Aristophanes, to fill it in. Or if you intend to offer some other kind of encomium to the god, please do so, because your hiccups have stopped.

Second Interlude: Aristophanes Recovered from His Hiccups (189a–c)

- 189a Well, Aristodemus said that Aristophanes took over and said, Yes, the hiccups did indeed stop, though not before I applied the sneeze, so I wonder if the more orderly element of the body doesn't desire the sorts of noises and tickles a sneeze is. Because it stopped right away, when I applied the sneeze to it.

And Eryximachus said, My dear Aristophanes, look what you're doing. You make jokes just when you're going to speak, and you compel me to become a guardian of your own speech, to see that

you don't say something ridiculous, when you could have spoken in peace.

- b Aristophanes laughed and said, You're right, Eryximachus. Let me unsay what was said. Please relax your guard, because I'm worried about what I'm going to say, not lest I say something ridiculous—that would be gain, and native to my Muse—but lest it make me a butt of ridicule.

Having let fly with this, Aristophanes, he replied, do you think you'll escape? Pay attention and speak as if you'll be called to

- c account for it. Perhaps, however, if I think fit, I'll let you off.

The Speech of Aristophanes (189c–193e)

Why really, Eryximachus, said Aristophanes, I intend to say something a bit different from what you and Pausanias said. For I think people do not fully perceive the power of Eros, since if they did, they'd build him their greatest temples and altars and offer their greatest sacrifices, whereas now they do nothing of the kind, though it very much needs doing. For he is the most

- d philanthropic of gods, a helper of human beings and a physician for those ills whose cure would be greatest happiness for the human race. So I will try to describe to you his power, and you will teach others.

You must first learn human nature and its condition. For our ancient nature was not what it is now, but of another kind. In the first place, there were three sexes among men, not two as now,

- e male and female, but a third sex in addition, being both of them in common, whose name still remains though the thing itself has vanished; for one sex was then derived in common from both male and female, androgynous both in form and name, though the name is now applied only in reproach.

Again, the form of each human being as a whole was round, with back and sides forming a circle, but it had four arms and an equal number of legs, and two faces exactly alike on a cylindrical neck; there was a single head for both faces, which faced

190a

in opposite directions, and four ears and two sets of pudenda, and one can imagine all the rest from this. It also traveled upright just as now, in whatever direction it wished; and whenever they took off in a swift run, they brought their legs around straight and somersaulted as tumblers do, and then, with eight limbs to support them, they rolled in a swift circle.

- b The reason there were three sexes of this sort was that the male originally was the offspring of the Sun, the female of the Earth, and what has a share of both of the Moon, because the Moon also has share of both. They were spherical both in themselves and in their gait because they were like their parents. Well, they were terrible in strength and force, and they had high thoughts and conspired against the gods, and what Homer told of Ephialtes and Otus¹⁹⁶ is told also of them: they tried to storm Heaven in order to displace the gods.

- c Well, Zeus and the other gods took counsel about what they ought to do, and were at a loss, for they didn't see how they could kill them, as they did the Giants, whose race they wiped out with the thunderbolt—because the honors and sacrifices they received from human beings would disappear—nor yet could they allow them to act so outrageously. After thinking about it very hard indeed, Zeus said, "I believe I've got a device by which men may continue to exist and yet stop their intemperance, namely, by becoming weaker. I'll now cut each of them in two," he said, "and they'll be weaker and at the same time more useful to us by having increased in number, and they'll walk upright on two legs. But if they still seem to act so outrageously and are unwilling to keep quiet," he said, "I'll cut them in two again, so that they'll have to get around on one leg, hopping."

- d So saying, he cut human beings in two the way people slice serviceberries¹⁹⁷ to preserve them by drying, or as they cut eggs with a hair; he ordered Apollo to turn around the face and the half-neck of whoever he'd cut to where the cut was made, so that the man would be more orderly by contemplating his own division, and he bid Apollo heal the other wounds. Apollo turned the face around and drew together from all sides the skin on what is now called the belly, as purses are closed by a drawstring, and, tying it off in the middle of the belly, he made a single mouth which people call the navel. And he smoothed out most of the other wrinkles and carefully shaped the chest with a tool of the sort shoemakers use to smooth out wrinkles in the leather on a last; but he left a few wrinkles around the belly and the navel, as a reminder of the ancient suffering. Now when their nature was divided in two, each

191a

196. Who planned to overthrow the gods by piling Mount Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa, to climb the sky (*Odyssey* xi 307–320). Apollo destroyed them.

197. The European *Sorbus domestica*, of the apple family; it resembles the mountain ash, but with larger leaves and fruit, which is edible.

half in longing rushed to the other half of itself and they threw
 b their arms around each other and intertwined them, desiring to
 grow together into one, dying of hunger and inactivity too because
 they were unwilling to do anything apart from one another.
 Whenever any of the halves died and the other was left, the one
 left sought out another and embraced it, whether it met half of a
 whole woman—what we now call a woman—or of a man. And so
 they perished.

But Zeus took pity and provided another device, turning their
 pudenda to the front—for up till then they had those on the out-
 c side too, and they used to beget and bear children not in each
 other but in the earth, like locusts—well, he turned them to the
 front and so caused them to beget in each other, in the female
 through the male, for this reason: so that if male met female, they
 might in their embrace beget and their race continue to exist,
 while at the same time if male met male, there'd at least be satiety
 from their intercourse and they'd be relieved and go back to work
 and look after the other concerns of life. So Eros for each other
 d is inborn in people from as long ago as that, and he unites their
 ancient nature, undertaking to make one from two, and to heal
 human nature.

Each of us then is but the token of a human being, sliced like a
 flatfish, two from one; each then ever seeks his matching token.¹⁹⁸
 Men sectioned from the common sex, then called androgynous,
 e are woman-lovers; the majority of adulterers are from this sex,
 while on the other hand women from this sex are man-lovers and
 adulteresses. Women sectioned from a woman pay scant heed to
 men, but are turned rather toward women, and lesbians come
 from this sex. Those sectioned from a male pursue the masculine;
 because they are slices of the male, they like men while still boys,
 192a delighting to lie with men and be embraced by them. These are
 the most noble boys and youths because they are by nature most
 manly.¹⁹⁹ Some say they're most shameless, but they're wrong: they

198. *σύμβολον*. Corresponding pieces of a knucklebone or other object which contracting parties broke between them, each party keeping one piece to match in order to have proof of the identity of the presenter of the other. The indenture, at common law, originally an irregularly torn parchment, had an equivalent use.

199. This and what follows is ironical and sarcastic: "Since it is a taunt in Old Comedy (e.g., Aristophanes *Knights* 875–880, Plato *Comicus*, fr. 186) that eminent politicians in their youth submitted shamelessly (or for money) to homosexual importunities, and this taunt, characteristic of the cynical attitudes of comedy (cf. Dover *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 147f.), must have been familiar to Plato, he means Aristophanes to be speaking tongue-in-cheek." Dover, *Symposium*, on this passage.

don't do it out of shamelessness but out of boldness and courage
 and masculinity, cleaving to what is like themselves. A great proof:
 actually, it is only men of this sort who, when they grow up, enter
 b on political affairs. When they reach manhood they love boys, and
 by nature pay no heed to marriage and the getting of children
 except as compelled to it by custom and law; it suffices them to
 live out their lives unmarried, with one another. So this sort be-
 comes wholly a lover of boys or a boy who loves having lovers, ever
 cleaving to what is akin.

When the lover of boys and any every other lover meets his own
 particular half, they are then marvelously struck by friendship
 and kinship and Eros, and scarcely willing to be separated from
 c each other even for a little time. These are the people who pass
 their whole lives with each other, but who can't even say what they
 wish for themselves by being with each other. No one can think it
 is for the sake of sexual intercourse that the one so eagerly delights
 in being with the other. Instead, the soul of each clearly wishes for
 d something else it can't put into words; it divines what it wishes,
 and obscurely hints at it.

Suppose Hephaestus with his tools stood over them as they lay
 together and asked, "What is it you people wish in being at each
 other's side?" And suppose if they were perplexed he further
 asked, "Is this your desire—to be in the same place with each other
 as much as possible, so that you're not parted from each other
 night and day? Because if that's what you want, I will fuse and
 e weld you into the same thing, so that from being two you become
 one and, as one, share a life in common as long as you live²⁰⁰ and
 when you die, even there in the Place of the Dead you'll again be
 one instead of two, and share being dead in common. See if it is
 this you love, and if it will suffice for you should it happen."

We know that not a single lover on hearing this would refuse it
 nor appear to wish for anything else; he'd simply think he'd heard
 what he desired all along, namely, to join and be fused with his
 beloved, to become one from two. The cause is that this was our
 ancient nature, and we were wholes. Eros then is a name for the
 193a desire and pursuit of wholeness. And as I say, before we were one,
 but now we have been dispersed by the god due to our injustice

200. Aristotle refers to this passage at *Politics* II 1262b 11ff., where he refers to "the erotic discourses."

as the Arcadians were dispersed by the Spartans.²⁰¹ So there is fear that if we should not be well ordered toward the gods, we shall be split in two again and go around like the people molded in profile on tombstones, sawed in half through the nose, born like split dice.²⁰²

b This is why all men should urge each other in all things to worship the gods, so we may escape this and meet with that, because Eros is our guide and general. Let no one act to the contrary—whoever acts to the contrary is hated by the gods—for by becoming friends and reconciled to the god we shall discover and meet with our own beloved, which few now do.

c And Eryximachus must not interrupt me and poke fun at this account on the ground that I only mean Pausanias and Agathon—perhaps they really are of this kind and are both masculine in nature—but I'm saying about everyone, men and women alike, that this is how our race would become happy, if we should fulfill our love and each meet with his own beloved, returning to his ancient nature.

d If this is best, then necessarily what is nearest to it under present circumstances is also best: that is, to meet a beloved who is naturally likeminded and congenial. In singing praises to the god responsible for it we would rightly hymn Eros, who at present brings us the greatest benefits and leads us into what is properly our own, and provides greatest hope in future that if we offer reverence to the gods, he will restore us to our ancient nature, and heal us, and make us blessed and happy.

e There, Eryximachus, he said. That's my speech about Eros, of a different kind than yours. As I begged you, don't poke fun at it, so that we may also hear what each of the remaining speakers will say—or rather, what each of the two will say: for only Agathon and Socrates are left.²⁰³

201. The reference is almost certainly to the Spartan dispersion of the Mantineans in 385 B.C. The city was razed and the inhabitants dispersed to separate villages. Since the narrative date of the *Symposium* is before the death of Socrates in 399, this again (cf. 182b) is an anachronism.

202. Dice were split as tallies, that is, as *σύμβολα*. Cf. 191d.

203. Since Aristodemus, the narrator, is lying next to Eryximachus (175a), he would have been next to speak. But he was skipped over when Eryximachus took Aristophanes' turn, and Aristophanes, following the order originally laid down, now looks to Eryximachus's right, to Agathon and Socrates.

Third Interlude: Socrates and Agathon (193e–194e)

Aristodemus said that Eryximachus said, Why, I'll obey you, for I certainly enjoyed your speech. And if I were not aware that Socrates and Agathon are clever about the things of love, I'd very much fear they'd be at a loss for words, because of the many and varied things already said; but as it is, I'm nonetheless confident.

194a So Socrates said, Yes, Eryximachus, because you yourself competed so well; but if you were where I now am, or rather perhaps where I'll be once Agathon also speaks, you'd be very afraid and quite as bewildered as I am now.

You mean to cast a spell on me, Socrates, said Agathon, so that I'll be thrown into confusion by thinking my theater has great expectation I'll speak well.

b I would be forgetful indeed, Agathon, said Socrates, if, after seeing your courage and self-confidence in going up on the stage with the actors and looking out on so great an audience, about to exhibit your own play and in no way at all disconcerted, I now thought you'd be thrown into confusion because of a few people like us.

Really, Socrates? said Agathon. You surely don't believe I'm so full of theater that I don't even know that to a person of good sense, a few intelligent men are more formidable than many fools?²⁰⁴

c No, Agathon, I said, I'd hardly do well to think you capable of anything boorish; I well know that if you met someone whom you believed wise, you'd give heed to them rather than the multitude. But maybe we're not they—for after all, we were also there, and among the multitude—but still, if you met others who are wise, you'd perhaps feel shame before them, if you thought you were perhaps doing something shameful. Do you agree?

You're right, he said.

d But wouldn't you feel shame before the multitude if you thought you were doing something shameful?

Aristodemus said Phaedrus interrupted and said, My dear Aga-

204. See Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics* III 1232b 6ff. (trans. Solomon): "The magnanimous man would consider rather what one good man thinks than many ordinary men, as Antiphon after his condemnation said to Agathon when he praised his defense of himself."

thon, if you answer Socrates it will no longer make the slightest difference to him how anything else turns out here, if only he has someone to converse with, especially someone handsome. But though I enjoy hearing Socrates converse, I am necessarily concerned about the encomium of Eros, and I have to exact a speech from each one of you; so the two of you may talk this way only after rendering what is due the god.

- e Why, you're right, Phaedrus, said Agathon, and nothing prevents my speaking; for it will be possible to converse often with Socrates later.

The Speech of Agathon (194e–197e)

- 195a I wish first then to say how I must speak, and then to speak. For all who spoke before seem to me not to offer encomium to the god, but to felicitate men for the good things of which the god is to them cause; but of what sort he himself is who gave them, no one has spoken. There is one right way to praise anyone in anything, namely, to describe in speech the nature of the subject of the speech, and the nature of that of which he is the cause. It is right then for us to praise Eros this way too, first his nature, then his gifts.

- b I say then that though all gods are happy, Eros, if it is meet and right to say so, is happiest among them, because he is most beautiful and best. He is most beautiful for these reasons: first, Phaedrus, he is youngest of gods. He himself provides a great proof of this account, fleeing old age by flight, though it is clearly quick; at any rate, it comes on us quicker than it should. But Eros by nature hates it and will not go anywhere near it. But he is ever with the young, and he is young; for the ancient account is sound, that "like ever draws near to like." And though I agree with Phaedrus in many other things, I do not agree in this, that Eros is older than Cronos and Iapetus;²⁰⁵ I claim on the contrary that he is c youngest among gods, and ever young, and the ancient affairs of the gods that Hesiod and Parmenides tell, if they were telling the

205. Cf. 178b. Cronus castrated Uranus, his father (cf. 180d), and was put in bonds and fettered by Zeus, his son. Iapetus was a Titan, father of Prometheus and one of the first inhabitants of earth, blasted by Zeus with the thunderbolt (cf. 190c). "Older than Cronus and Iapetus" was a proverbial expression for being really out of date; it is a jibe at Phaedrus, and a conclusion that necessarily follows from his claim that Eros is eldest among gods.

truth, have taken place through Necessity and not through Eros; for there would have been no castrations and fetherings of each other nor all that other violence if Eros had been present among them, but friendship and peace, as there now is since Eros rules the gods as king.

- He is young, then, and in addition to being young, delicate.
d There is need of a poet such as Homer to show a god's delicacy. Homer says that Ate, goddess of delusion, is also delicate—her feet at any rate are delicate—for he says,²⁰⁶

her feet are delicate; for she steps not
on the ground, but walks upon the heads of men.

- So she shows her delicacy, I think, by a pretty proof, because she walks not on what is hard but on what is soft. But we may also use e the same proof to show that Eros is delicate: he does not walk on earth, nor on heads, which are after all not very soft anyway, but he walks and dwells in the softest things there are. For he makes his home in the characters and souls of gods and men, though not in every soul one after another; on the contrary, any soul he comes upon that is hard in character he leaves, but the soft he dwells in. So ever touching with his feet and in every way the most soft of 196a softest things, he is necessarily most delicate. He is youngest, then, and most delicate, and in addition his shape is most supple. For he could not twine himself round in every direction and through every soul and yet escape notice when first entering and departing, if he were hard. His gracefulness, which everyone agrees Eros surpassingly possesses, is a great proof of his well-proportioned and supple form, for awkwardness and Eros are ever at war with one another. The god's dwelling among flowers signifies beauty of b color, for Eros does not pitch his seat in a body or soul or anything else from which the bloom is faded and gone. But where a place is well flowered and fragrant, there he takes his seat and abides.

- Concerning the beauty of the god, then, this is sufficient, and more still remains; but one must next speak about the virtue of Eros. What is most important is that Eros neither does injustice to god or man nor suffers injustice from god or man. For if affected by anything, he is himself not affected by violence—violence does not touch Eros, nor does he act violently when he acts— c for everyone willingly serves Eros in everything, and what is will-

206. *Iliad* xix 92–93.

ingly agreed by willing parties, "the Laws, kings of our city," hold to be just.²⁰⁷

In addition to justice, he partakes of temperance in fullest measure. For it is agreed that temperance is mastery of pleasures and desires, and no pleasure is stronger than Eros; but if weaker, they are mastered by Eros and he masters them, and, as mastering pleasures and desires, Eros would be surpassingly temperate.²⁰⁸

d Again, in respect to courage, "not even Ares withstands"²⁰⁹ Eros. For Ares does not possess Eros, but Eros Ares—an Eros for Aphrodite, as the story goes²¹⁰—and the possessor is stronger than the possessed. But, mastering him who is most courageous among others, he would be most courageous of all.

Let this be said of the justice and temperance and courage of the god, but it remains to speak of his wisdom: as far as possible, one must leave nothing out. First of all, then, in order that I may in turn honor my own art as Eryximachus honored his, the god e is a poet so wise that he also makes others poets; all whom Eros touches, at any rate, become poets, "even if he was without music before."²¹¹ So we may fittingly use this as proof that Eros is a poet who is, in sum, good in respect to all creation over which the Muses preside; for one could not give someone else or teach another what one neither has nor knows.

197a Again, who will deny that the creation of all animals is the wisdom of Eros, by whom all animals are born and begotten? But do we not also know in the craftsmanship of the arts that he of whom this god becomes teacher turns out to be notable and illustrious, but he whom Eros leaves untouched remains in the shade? Yes, and surely Apollo invented the arts of archery and medicine and prophecy under the guidance of Eros and desire, so that even he would be a pupil of Eros, along with the Muses of music and poetry, and Hephaestus in metalworking, and Athena in weaving, and Zeus "in guiding of gods and men." Whence it is then that

207. An early statement of "volunt non fit injuria" as a legal principle—voluntary assumption of risk.

208. Bury compares *Euthydemus* 276ff., Aristotle *De sophisticis elenchis* 163b 32ff. Having identified Eros as mastery of pleasures and desires, Agathon proceeds to identify Eros with the strongest desire.

209. Sophocles, fr. 235, said of Necessity, not Eros.

210. *Odyssey* viii 266ff. Aphrodite and Ares were lovers. Hephaestus, her husband, set a trap with chains to catch them in bed, and did catch them, and summoned the other gods to witness their crime. But the gods laughed and envied Ares, chains and all.

211. From Euripides, fr. 663, also quoted in Aristophanes *Wasps* 1074.

the affairs of the gods were arranged when Eros was born among them, Eros for beauty, obviously—for there is no Eros of ugliness—though before that, as I said to begin with, many terrible things occurred among the gods, as is told, through the sovereignty of Necessity. But since this god was born, all good things have come to be from love of beautiful things, both for gods and men.

c So it seems to me, Phaedruss, that Eros, being himself first, as most beautiful and best, is, next, cause of other such things in others. I am moved to speak in verse, though it is he who composes it:

Peace among men, waveless calm at sea,
Rest from winds, slumber for our grief.

d He empties us of estrangement but fills us with kinship, causing us to come together in all such gatherings as these, in festivals, in dances, in sacrifices a leader; he introduces gentleness, but banishes rudeness; giving of goodwill, un giving of ill will; gracious, good; gazed upon by the wise, delighted in by the gods; coveted by those without portion, possessed by those of good fortune; father of delicacy, of luxury, of charm, of graciousness, of desire, of longing; caring for good things, uncaring for bad things; in labor, e in fear, in longing, in discourse a guide, defender, comrade in arms and best savior; beauty and good order of all gods and men, leader most beautiful and best, whom every man must follow chanting beautifully, sharing the song that he sings, touching with magic power the thought of all gods and men.²¹²

There is my speech, Phaedruss, he said. Let it be dedicated to the god. It has a share, some of it, of play, but also of measured seriousness so far as I can provide it.

Fourth Interlude: Two Kinds of Encomium (198a–199c)

198a Aristodemus said that after Agathon spoke, everyone in the company applauded, because the young man's speech did so much credit both to himself and to the god. Then, he said, Soc-

212. Dover (*Symposium*, p. 124) has analyzed the rhythms of this passage and shown that it consists in metrical units characteristic of Greek lyric poetry.

rates glanced at Eryximachus and said, Well, son of Acumenus, do you think I've been troubled all this while by a groundless fear? Was I not prophetic when I said just now that Agathon would speak wonderfully and I would be at a loss?

You were prophetic in the one thing, I think, said Eryximachus—that Agathon would speak well: But as to you being at a loss, I doubt it.

- b And how am I not to be at a loss, dear friend, said Socrates, both I and anyone else who intends to speak after so beautiful and varied a speech? The other parts were wonderful, but not equal to the end: who could fail to be astonished at hearing the beauty of its words and phrases? Since I realize I will not be able to say anything nearly as beautiful as this myself, I'd leave and run away for very shame if I could. Actually, the speech reminded me of Gorgias, so that I experienced exactly what Homer described: I was afraid that Agathon at the conclusion of his speech would send up the head of Gorgias, formidable in speaking, against my speech, and turn me to mute stone.²¹³ And then I realized how ridiculous I was to agree to take turns with you in offering an encomium to Eros, to claim I was clever in the things of love when actually I knew nothing about how one should offer any sort of encomium at all. For in my foolishness I supposed one should tell the truth about each thing praised, and this should be the basis for picking out from that the most beautiful things and putting them in the most suitable way; I was overly confident that I would speak well because I knew the truth about how to praise things. But it turns out, it seems, that fine praise is not this at all, but consists in ascribing the highest and most beautiful attributes to a thing whether it has them or not; it really doesn't matter if it's false.²¹⁴ For it was earlier proposed, it seems, not that each of us should offer an encomium of Eros, but that each of us should seem to offer an encomium to him. That's why, I suppose, you stir up every kind of story and apply it to Eros, and claim he is of such sort and cause of such great things, so that he may appear as beautiful and good as possible; and clearly to those who do not know him—not, surely, to those who do—your praise is beautiful and impressive. But I really didn't know the manner of praise, and not knowing, I agreed with you to take my turn in praising too. So,

199a

²¹³. *Odyssey* xi 632–635. Socrates puns on Gorgon/Gorgias: according to Pindar, the sight of the head of the Gorgon Medusa turned men to stone.

²¹⁴. Cf. *Menexenus* 234c–235c, *Phaedrus* 272a.

- "the tongue swore, but not the mind."²¹⁵ But let it go. For I don't any longer offer encomium in this manner—indeed, I cannot—but I'm nevertheless willing to tell you the truth in my own way if you wish, though not in competition with your speeches so that I may not incur your laughter. Consider then, Phaedrus,²¹⁶ whether there is really any need for a speech of this kind, to hear the truth spoken about Eros in such words and arrangement of phrases as may happen to occur.²¹⁷

Well, Aristodemus said that Phaedrus and the others bid him speak in whatever way he thought he should.

Why then, Phaedrus, Socrates said, please let me ask Agathon just a few small questions still, so that I may speak thus after getting his agreement.

- c Why, I do permit it, said Phaedrus. Ask your questions.

The Speech of Socrates (199c–212c): The Elenchus of Agathon (199c–201c)

After this, then, Aristodemus said, Socrates began somewhat as follows:

- Really, my dear Agathon, I thought you introduced your speech beautifully when you said it would first be necessary to show of what sort Eros is, and his works afterward. I like that beginning very much. Come then, since you've explained of what sort Eros is so beautifully and imposingly in other respects, tell me this too: is Eros of such sort as to be love of something or of nothing? I'm not asking if he is of some mother or father—the question whether Eros is love of mother or father would be absurd—but as if I were asking about father by itself, Is father father of something or not? You would doubtless tell me, if you wished to answer properly, that father is father of son or daughter. Not so?
- Of course, said Agathon.
- And so similarly for mother?
- He agreed to that too.
- e Then answer still a bit further, said Socrates, so that you may

²¹⁵. Euripides *Hippolytus* 612.

²¹⁶. Socrates turns to Phaedrus because he is acting as master of ceremonies (194d), and Agathon addressed his speech to him (195a).

²¹⁷. Socrates throughout this passage parallels the introduction to his speech of defense in the *Apology* (17b–c), anticipating the many parallels to the *Apology* in the speech of Alcibiades.

better understand what I mean. Suppose I asked, Really? Is brother, what this is by itself, brother of something or not?

It is, he said.

Namely, of brother or sister?

He agreed.

Then try and tell about Eros as well, he said. Is Eros love of nothing, or of something?

Of something, surely.

200a Keep in mind what that something is. But tell me this: Does Eros of that of which he is love desire it, or not?

Of course, he said.

Does he have the very thing he desires and loves and then desire and love it, or does he not have it?

It seems likely he does not have it, he said.

But consider whether it isn't necessarily so, instead of only likely, said Socrates, that what desires, desires what it lacks, or does not desire if it does not lack? For that seems remarkably necessary to me, Agathon. How about you?

I think so too, he said.

Excellent. Then could anyone, being large, wish to be large or, being strong, strong?

Impossible, from what has been agreed.

No, for he surely could not lack these things, which he is.

True.

For if being strong he could wish to be strong, said Socrates, and being quick, quick, and being healthy, healthy—for one perhaps might suppose in these and all such cases that those who are of this sort and have these things also desire the things they have, and I mention this so that we may not be misled—for in these cases, if you think about it, Agathon, he necessarily at present has each of the things he has, whether he wishes or not, and who could possibly desire that? Whenever someone says, "Being healthy I also wish to be healthy, being wealthy I also wish to be wealthy, and I desire the very things I have," we'd say to him, Sir, being in possession of wealth and health and strength, you wish also to possess them in future, since at least at present you have them whether you wish or not. So when you say, "I desire things that are present," consider whether you mean anything except, "I wish things now present also to remain present in future." Can he do other than agree?

He said Agathon assented.

So Socrates said, Then this is to love that which is not yet at hand for him and what he does not yet have, namely, that these things be preserved and present to him in future.

e Of course, he said.

And so he and everyone else who desires, desires that which is not at hand and which is not present, and what he does not have, and what he himself is not, and what he lacks—desire and Eros are of such things as these.

Of course, he said.

Come then, said Socrates. Let us recapitulate what has been said. Is it not that Eros in the first place is *of* something, and next, of those things of which a lack is present to it?

201a Yes, he said.

Then next recall of what things you said Eros is in your speech. If you wish, I'll remind you. I think you said something to the effect that affairs are arranged by the gods by reason of love of beautiful things; for there would be no love of the ugly.²¹⁸ Didn't you say something like that?

I did, said Agathon.

Yes, my friend, and very properly too, said Socrates. And if this is so, would Eros be anything except love of beauty, but not of ugliness?

He agreed.

b Now, it is agreed that he loves what he lacks and does not have? Yes, he said.

So Eros lacks and does not have beauty.

Necessarily, he said.

Really? Do you say that what lacks beauty and in no way possesses beauty is beautiful?

Of course not.

Then do you still agree that Eros is beautiful, if these things are so?

And Agathon said, Very likely I didn't know what I was talking about then, Socrates.

c And yet you spoke so beautifully, Agathon. But a small point still: don't you think good things are also beautiful?

I do.

So if Eros is lack of beautiful things, and good things are beautiful, he would also lack good things.

218. Socrates recalls Agathon's remark at 197b.

He said, I cannot contradict you, Socrates. Let it be as you say.
My beloved Agathon, it is the truth you cannot contradict, since
it's surely not hard to contradict Socrates.

The Speech of Diotima (201d–212a):
Eros as Intermediate (201d–202d)

d And now I'll let you²¹⁹ go. But the account of Eros I once heard
from a Mantinaean woman, Diotima, who was wise in this and
many other things—she once caused the Athenians, when they
offered sacrifices before the Plague,²²⁰ a ten-year delay in the onset
of the disease, and it was she who instructed me in the things of
love—well, the account she used to give I will myself try to describe
to you²²¹ on my own, from the agreements which Agathon and I
have reached, as best I can.

e It is necessary then, Agathon, as you explained, first to recount
who Eros is and of what sort, and his works afterwards.²²² Now, I
think I can most easily recount it as she used to do in examining
me. For I used to say pretty much the same sort of thing to her
that Agathon was saying now to me, that Eros would be a great
god, but of beautiful things; but she refuted me by these argu-
ments I offered him, that Eros by my account would be neither
beautiful nor good.

And I said, How do you mean, Diotima? Eros then is ugly and
bad?

And she said, Hush, don't blaspheme! Or do you suppose that
whatever is not beautiful is necessarily ugly?

202a Yes, of course.

And not wise, ignorant? Are you not aware that there is some-
thing intermediate between wisdom and ignorance?

What is it?

Don't you know, she said, that right opinion without ability to
render an account is not knowledge—for how could an unac-
countable thing be knowledge?—nor is it ignorance—for how

219. Singular, addressed to Agathon.

220. In 430 B.C. See Thucydides II 47.

221. Plural. Socrates is now addressing the company.

222. Socrates loosely repeats Agathon's formula at 195a, but with significant em-
phasis on who Eros is (*τίς ἐστίν*).

could what meets with what is be ignorance? Right opinion is
surely that sort of thing, intermediate between wisdom and ig-
norance.

True, I said.

b Then don't compel what is not beautiful to be ugly, nor what is
not good to be bad. So too for Eros, since you yourself agree that
he is neither good nor beautiful, do not any the more for that
reason suppose he must be ugly and bad, she said, but rather
something between these two.

And yet, I said, everybody agrees he is a great god.

You mean everybody who doesn't know, or also those who
know? she said.

Why, absolutely everybody.

c She laughed and said, And how would he be agreed to be a great
god, Socrates, by those who say he is not even a god at all?

Who are these people, I said.

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

And I said, How can you say that?

Easily, she replied. For tell me: don't you claim that all gods are
happy and beautiful? Or would you dare deny that any god is
beautiful and happy?

Emphatically not, I said.

But you say that it is those who possess good and beautiful
things who are happy?

Of course.

d Moreover, you have agreed that Eros, by reason of lack of good
and beautiful things, desires those very things he lacks.

Yes, I have.

How then would what is without portion of²²³ beautiful and
good things be a god?

In no way, it seems.

Then you see, she said, that even you do not acknowledge Eros
to be a god?

Then what is he? I said. A mortal?

Hardly.

But what, then?

As I said before, she said, intermediate between mortal and
immortal.

223. *μοῖρος*, an unusual word used by Agathon at 197d; cf. 181.

Eros as Daimon (202d–203a)

What is he, Diotima?

A great divinity, Socrates; for in fact, the whole realm of divinities is intermediate between god and mortal.

Having what power? I said.

Interpreting and conveying things from men to gods and things from gods to men, prayers and sacrifices from the one, commands and requitals in exchange for sacrifices from the other, since, being in between both, it fills the region between both so that the All is bound together with itself. Through this realm moves all prophetic art and the art of priests having to do with sacrifices and rituals and spells, and all power of prophecy and enchantment. God does not mingle with man, but all intercourse and conversation of gods with men, waking and sleeping, are through this realm. He who is wise about such things as this is a divine man, but he who is wise about any other arts or crafts is a mere mechanic.²²⁴ These divinities, then, are many and manifold, and one of them is Eros.

The Myth of Poros and Penia (203a–e)

Who is father and mother?²²⁵ I said.

It's a rather long story, she replied; nevertheless, I will tell you. When Aphrodite was born, the gods banqueted, both the others and Poros, Resourcefulness, son of Metis, Wisdom. When they dined, Penia, Want, came to beg, as one would expect when there is a feast, and hung about the doors. Well, Poros got drunk on nectar—for there was as yet no wine—and went into the garden of Zeus where, weighed down by drink, he slept. So Penia plotted to have a child by Poros by reason of her own resourcelessness, and lay with him and conceived Eros. This is why Eros has been a follower and servant of Aphrodite, because he was begotten on the day of her birth,²²⁶ and at the same time it is why he is by nature a lover of beauty, since Aphrodite is beautiful.

²²⁴ Cf. *Republic* VI 495d–e.

²²⁵ The question arises from the fact that Eros is a "divinity," and so either a god or a child of gods.

²²⁶ Dover, *Symposium*, remarks on this passage: "Hesiod's injunction (*WD* 735 f.) 'do not beget offspring when you have come home from a funeral, but from a festival of the immortals,' shows the existence of a belief in some kind of connection between the character or fortunes of a child and the occasion of his or her conception."

Because then Eros is son of Poros and Penia, this is his fortune: first, he is ever poor, and far from being delicate and beautiful, as most people suppose,²²⁷ he on the contrary is rough and hard and homeless and unshod, ever lying on the ground without bedding, sleeping in doorsteps and beside roads under the open sky. Because he has his mother's nature, he dwells ever with want. But on the other hand, by favor of his father, he ever plots for good and beautiful things, because he is courageous, eager and intense, and clever hunter ever weaving some new device, desiring understanding and capable of it, a lover of wisdom through the whole of life, clever at enchantment, a sorcerer and a sophist.²²⁸ And he is by nature neither mortal nor immortal, but sometimes on the same day he lives and flourishes, whenever he is full of resource, but then he dies and comes back to life again by reason of the nature of his father, though what is provided ever slips away so that Eros is never rich nor at a loss . . .

Eros as Philosopher (203e–204c)

. . . and on the other hand he is between wisdom and ignorance. For things stand thus: no god loves wisdom or desires to become wise—for he is so; nor, if anyone else is wise, does he love wisdom. On the other hand, neither do the ignorant love wisdom nor desire to become wise; for ignorance is difficult just in this, that though not beautiful and good, nor wise, it yet seems to itself to be sufficient. He who does not think himself in need does not desire what he does not think he lacks.

Then who are these lovers of wisdom, Diotima, I said, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?

Why, at this point it's clear even to a child, she said, that they are those intermediate between both of these, and that Eros is among them. For wisdom is surely among the most beautiful of things, but Eros is love of the beautiful, so Eros is necessarily a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, and, being a philosopher, intermediate between wisdom and ignorance. His birth is the cause of this too: for he is of a wise and resourceful father, but of an unwise and resourceless mother.

²²⁷ And as Agathon did, 195c 7.

²²⁸ Diotima is herself said to be "most wise," and her mode or reply compared to "an accomplished sophist" at 208b–c.

- c This then is the nature of the divinity, my dear Socrates; but there is nothing surprising about what you thought Eros is. You thought, as I gather from what you say, that Eros is what is loved, not the loving. That is why, I think, Eros seemed utterly beautiful to you. In fact, it is what is beloved that is really beautiful and charming and perfect and deemed blessed; but loving has this other character, of the sort I described.

Eros as Wish for Happiness (204c–205a)

- And I said: Very well then, my dear lady; you speak beautifully. But if Eros is of this sort, what usefulness does he have for men?
- d That's the next thing I will try to teach you, Socrates, she said. For since Eros is of this sort and this parentage, he is of beautiful things, as you say. But suppose someone asked us, Why is Eros of beautiful things, Socrates and Diotima? I will ask still more clearly: Why does he who loves, love beautiful things?
- And I replied, To possess them for himself.
- But the answer still longs for the following kind of question, she said: What will he have who possesses beautiful things?
- I still can't quite readily answer that question, I said.
- e But suppose someone changed "beautiful" to "good," she said, and then inquired: Come, Socrates, he who loves, loves good things. Why does he love them?
- To possess them for himself.
- And what will he have who possesses good things?
- This I can answer more easily, I said. He will be happy.
- 205a Yes, she said, for the happy are happy by possession of good things, and there is no need in addition to ask further for what purpose he who wishes to be happy wishes it. On the contrary, the answer seems final.
- True, I replied.

Diotima's Definition of Eros (205a–206a)

- Do you think this wish and this love are common to all men, and that everyone wishes to possess good things for themselves forever?
- Yes, I said: it is common to everyone.
- b Why is it then, Socrates, she said, that we do not say that every-

- one loves, if indeed everyone loves the same things, and always, but we rather say that some love and some do not?
- I'm also surprised myself, I said.
- Don't be, she said. It is because we subtract a certain species of eros and name it Eros, applying the name of the whole, but we use other names for the others.
- As what? I said.
- As this. You know that making [poiesis] is something manifold; for surely the cause of passing from not being into being for anything whatever is all a making, so that the productions of all the arts are makings, and the practitioners of them are all makers [poietai].
- True.
- But nevertheless, she said, you know that they are not called makers [poietai] but have other names, while from all making one single part has been subtracted, that concerned with music²²⁹ and meter, and given the name of the whole. For this alone is called poetry [poiesis], and those who have this part of making are called poets [poietai].
- True, I said.
- d So also then for Eros. In general, it is every desire for good things and happiness, "Eros most great, and wily²³⁰ in all"; but those who turn to him in various other ways, either money-making or athletics or philosophy, are neither said to love nor to be lovers, while those who sedulously pursue one single species get the name of the whole, Eros, and are said to love and be lovers.
- Very likely true, I said.
- e Yes, and a certain story is told, she said, that those in love are seeking the other half of themselves. But my account is that love is of neither half nor whole, my friend, unless it happens to be actually good, since people are willing to cut off their own hands and feet if they think these possessions of theirs are bad. For they each refuse, I think, to cleave even to what is their own, unless one calls what is good kindred and his own, and what is bad alien;²³¹ because there is nothing else that men love than the good. Do you agree?
229. *μουσική* (scilicet *τέχνη*) was any art over which the Muses preside, but especially poetry, which was sung. Cf. *Republic* II 376e.
230. *δολιγρός*. The adjective is otherwise rare in Plato, but applied at *Hippias Minor* 365c to Odysseus. See above, 203d.
231. Cf. *Lysis* 210b–c, 221d–222e.

- 206a I most certainly do, I said.
 Then one may state without qualification that men love the good? she said.
 Yes, I said.
 Really? Is it not to be added, she said, that they also love the good to be their own?
 It must.
 And not only to be theirs, she said, but also to be theirs forever?
 This too is to be added.
 In sum, then, she said, Eros is of the good, being his own forever.
 Very true, I replied.

The Works of Eros: Begetting in Beauty
 (206b–207a)

- b Then given that Eros is ever this, she said, in what way, and in what activity, would eagerness and effort among those pursuing it be called Eros? What does this work happen to be? Can you say?
 No, I said. If I could, I would not admire your wisdom so much, Diotima, and keep coming to you to learn these very things.
 But I will tell you, she said: this work is begetting²³² in beauty, in respect to both the body and the soul.
 What you say needs divination, I said, and I don't understand.
 c Why, I'll put it more clearly, she said. All men are pregnant in respect to both the body and the soul, Socrates, she said, and when they reach a certain age, our nature desires to beget.²³³ It cannot beget in ugliness, but only in beauty. The intercourse of man and woman is a begetting. This is a divine thing, and pregnancy and procreation are an immortal element in the mortal living creature.
 d It is impossible for birth to take place in what is discordant. But ugliness is in discord with all that is divine, and beauty concordant. So the Goddess of Beauty is at the birth Moira, Fate, and Eilithyia, She Who Comes in Time of Need. That is why, when what is pregnant draws near to the beautiful, it becomes tender and full of gladness and pours itself forth and begets and procreates; but when it draws near to the ugly, it shrivels in sullen grief and turns away and goes slack and does not beget, but carries with difficulty

232. Or bearing children, *τόκος*.

233. *τίκτειν*, the verb of which *τόκος* is the corresponding noun.

- the conception within it. Whence it is that one who is pregnant and already swollen is vehemently excited over the beautiful, because it releases its possessor from great pangs. For Socrates, she said, Eros is not, as you suppose, of the beautiful.
 But what, then?
 It is of procreation and begetting of children in the beautiful.
 Very well, I said.
 To be sure, she said. But why of procreation? Because procreation is everlasting and immortal as far as is possible for something mortal. Eros necessarily desires immortality with the good, from what has been agreed,²³⁴ since its object is to possess the good for itself forever. It necessarily follows from this account, then, that Eros is also love of immortality.

Immortality and the Mortal Nature (207a–208b)

- All these things she taught me at various times when she discoursed about matters of love. Once she asked, Socrates, what do you think is cause of this love and desire? Or are you not aware how strangely all beasts are disposed, footed and winged, when they desire to reproduce—all sick and erotically disposed, first for intercourse with each other and next for the nurture of the offspring? In their behalf the weakest are ready to do battle with the strongest, to die in their behalf,²³⁵ to be racked with hunger themselves so as to feed them, to do anything else. One might suppose, she said, that men do these things on the basis of reflection; but what is the cause of beasts being erotically disposed this way? Can you tell?
 c And I again used to say I didn't know.
 She said, Then do you think you'll ever become skilled in the things of love if you don't understand this?
 Why, that's why I keep coming to you, Diotima, as I just now said,²³⁶ knowing I need instruction. Please tell me the cause of this, and other things concerning matters of love.
 If then you are persuaded, she said, that love is by nature of what we have often agreed, do not be surprised. For here, in the animal world, by the same account as before, the mortal nature

234. 206a.

235. Compare Phaedrus's speech, 179b.

236. 206b.

seeks so far as it can to exist forever and be immortal. It can do so only in this way, by giving birth, ever leaving behind a different new thing in place of the old, since even in the time in which each single living creature is said to live and to be the same—for example, as a man is said to be the same from youth to old age—though he never has the same things in himself, he nevertheless is called the same, but he is ever becoming new while otherwise perishing, in respect to hair and flesh and bone and blood and the entire body.

- c And not only in respect to the body but also in respect to the soul,²³⁷ its character and habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears are each never present in each man as the same, but
208a some are coming to be, others perishing. Much more extraordinary still, not only are some kinds of knowledge coming to be and others perishing in us, and we are never the same even in respect to the kinds of knowledge, but also each single one among the kinds of knowledge is affected in the same way. For what is called studying exists because knowledge leaves us; forgetting is departure of knowledge, but study, by introducing again a new memory in place of what departs, preserves the knowledge so that it seems to be the same.²³⁸

- b For it is in this way that all that is mortal is preserved: not by being ever completely the same, like the divine, but by leaving behind, as it departs and becomes older, a different new thing of the same sort as it was. By this device, Socrates, she said, what is mortal has a share of immortality both body and everything else; but what is immortal by another device. Do not be surprised, then, if everything by nature values its own offshoot; it is for the sake of immortality that this eagerness and love attend upon all.

Creation in Respect to Body and Soul (208b–209e)

When I heard this account I was surprised and said, Why really, my most wise Diotima, are these things actually true?

- c And she replied as the accomplished sophists do, Know it well, Socrates. Since indeed if you will look to the love of honor among

²³⁷. Application of the claim to the second case distinguished at 206b.

²³⁸. Compare Aristotle's account of perception, memory, and experience at *Metaphysics* I 980a 29ff., *Posterior Analytics* II 99b 35ff.

- men, you'd be surprised by the unreasonableness of which I've spoken, unless you keep in mind and reflect on how strangely disposed men are by Eros to make a name and "lay up store of immortal glory for everlasting time"; for this they are ready to run
d every risk, even more than for their children, to spend money, to perform labors of every sort, to die for it. Do you think, she said, that Alcestis would have died for Admetus, or Achilles after Patroclus, or our own Cadmus for his children's kingdoms, if they had not thought the fame of their own virtue, which we now cherish, would be immortal?²³⁹ Far from it, she said; rather, I think, it is for immortal virtue and the sort of fame which brings glory that everyone does everything, and the more insofar as they are better.
e For they love the immortal.

- Some men are pregnant in respect to their bodies, she said, and turn more to women and are lovers in that way, providing in all future time, as they suppose, immortality and happiness for themselves through getting children. Others are pregnant in respect to
209a their soul—for there are those, she said, who are still more fertile in their souls than in their bodies with what it pertains to soul to conceive and bear. What then so pertains? Practical wisdom and the rest of virtue—of which, indeed, all the poets are procreators, and as many craftsmen as are said to be inventors. But the greatest and most beautiful kind of practical wisdom by far, she said, is that concerned with the right ordering of cities and households, for which the name is temperance and justice.

- On the other hand, whenever one of them is pregnant of soul
b from youth, being divine,²⁴⁰ and reaches the age when he then desires to bear and beget, he too then, I think, goes about seeking the beautiful in which he might beget; for he will never beget in the ugly. Now, because he is fertile, he welcomes beautiful rather than ugly bodies, and should he meet with a beautiful and noble and naturally gifted soul, he welcomes the conjunction of both even more, and to this person he is straightway resourceful in speaking about virtue, and what sort of thing the good man must be concerned with and his pursuits; and he undertakes to educate him.

²³⁹. Diotima here contradicts Phaedrus's speech (179b–180a), arguing that Alcestis and Achilles sacrificed themselves not for love, but for love of honor, in order to be remembered.

²⁴⁰. Reading *θείος* with BTW Oxy. and Bury, against Parmentier's emendation *ἡθεός*, accepted by Burnet and Dover. The reading is supported by *Meno* 99c–d and anticipated by 206c.6.

- c For I think that in touching the beautiful [person] and holding familiar intercourse with it [him], he bears and begets what he has long since conceived, and both present and absent he remembers and nurtures what has been begotten in common with that [him],²⁴¹ so that people of this sort gain a far greater communion with each other than that of the sharing of children, and a more steadfast friendship, because they have held in common children more beautiful and more immortal. Everyone would prefer for himself to have had such children as these, rather than the human
- d kind, and they look to Homer and Hesiod and the rest of our good poets and envy offspring of the sort they left behind, offspring which, being such themselves, provide immortal fame and remembrance.

But if you wish, she said, look at the sort of children Lycurgus left behind in Sparta, saviors of Sparta and, one might almost say, of Greece.²⁴² Solon also is honored among you because of his begetting of the Laws,²⁴³ and other men in other times and many other places, both in Greece and among the barbarians, who have displayed many beautiful deeds and begotten every sort of virtue; for whom, also, many temples and sacred rites have come into being because of children such as these, but none because of children merely human.

The Ladder of Love (209e–210e)

- 210a Into these things of love, Socrates, perhaps even you may be initiated; but I do not know whether you can be initiated into the rites of and revelations for the sake of which these actually exist if one pursues them correctly. Well, I will speak of them and spare no effort, she said; try to follow if you can.

It is necessary, she said, for him who proceeds rightly to this thing to begin while still young by going to beautiful bodies; and first, if his guide²⁴⁴ guides rightly, to love one single body and beget

²⁴¹. This sentence is purposefully ambiguous: it refers to the beloved, but also anticipates what will be said in the Greater Mysteries of Eros about Beauty itself.

²⁴². Diotima speaks as a native of Mantinea, located in the Peloponnesus and allied with Sparta. Lycurgus, like Solon in Athenas, was supposed to have given laws to Sparta, and those laws are here regarded as his children.

²⁴³. The Laws of Athens were often referred to as the Laws of Solon, though there had been (sometimes unacknowledged) changes since his time. Plato was a direct and lineal descendant of Solon.

²⁴⁴. Cf. 210c, e, 211c.

- b there beautiful discourses; next, to recognize that the beauty on any body whatever is akin to that on any other body, and if it is necessary to pursue the beautiful as it attaches to form, it is quite unreasonable to believe that the beauty on all bodies is not one and the same. Realizing this, he is constituted a lover of all beautiful bodies and relaxes this vehemence for one, looking down on it and believing it of small importance.

- After this he must come to believe that beauty in souls is more to be valued than that in the body, so that even if someone good of soul has but a slight bloom, it suffices for him, and he loves and cares and begets and seeks those sorts of discourses that will make the young better, in order that he may be constrained in turn to contemplate what is beautiful in practices and laws and to see that it is in itself all akin to itself, in order that he may believe bodily beauty a small thing.
- c

- After practices, he²⁴⁵ must lead him to the various branches of knowledge, in order that he may in turn see their beauty too, and,
- d looking now to the beautiful in its multitude, no longer delight like a slave, a worthless, petty-minded servant, in the beauty of one single thing, whether beauty of a young child or man or of one practice; but rather, having been turned toward the multitudinous ocean of the beautiful and contemplating it, he begets many beautiful and imposing discourses and thoughts in ungrudging love of wisdom, until, having at this point grown and waxed strong, he beholds a certain kind of knowledge which is
- e one, and such that it is the following kind of beauty. Try, she said, to pay me the closest attention possible.

The Ascent to Beauty Itself (210e–212a)

He who has been educated in the things of love up to this point, beholding beautiful things rightly and in due order, will then, suddenly, in an instant, proceeding at that point to the end of the things of love, see something marvelous, beautiful in nature: it is *that*, Socrates, for the sake of which in fact all his previous labors existed.

- 211a First, it ever is and neither comes to be nor perishes, nor has it growth nor diminution.

²⁴⁵. That is, the guide mentioned at 210a.

Again, it is not in one respect beautiful but in another ugly, nor beautiful at one time but not at another, nor beautiful relative to this but ugly relative to that, nor beautiful here but ugly there, as being beautiful to some but ugly to others.²⁴⁶

Nor on the other hand will it appear beautiful to him as a face does, or hands, or anything else of which body partakes, nor as any discourse or any knowledge does, nor as what is somewhere in something else, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else; but it exists in itself alone by itself, single in nature forever, while all other things are beautiful by sharing in *that* in such manner that though the rest come to be and perish, *that* comes to be neither in greater degree nor less and is not at all affected.

But when someone, ascending from things here through the right love of boys,²⁴⁷ begins clearly to see *that*, the Beautiful, he would pretty well touch the end. For this is the right way to proceed in matters of love, or to be led by another²⁴⁸—beginning from these beautiful things here, to ascend ever upward for the sake of *that*, the Beautiful, as though using the steps of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from practices to beautiful studies, and from studies one arrives in the end at *that* study which is nothing other than the study of *that*, the Beautiful itself, and one knows in the end, by itself, what it is to be beautiful. It is there, if anywhere, dear Socrates, said the Mantinean Stranger, that human life is to be lived: in contemplating the Beautiful itself. If ever you see it, it will not seem to you as gold or raiment or beautiful boys and youths, which now you look upon dumbstruck; you and many another are ready to gaze on those you love and dwell with them forever, if somehow it were possible, not to eat nor drink but only to watch and be with them.²⁴⁹

What then do we suppose it would be like, she said, if it were possible for someone to see the Beautiful itself, pure, unalloyed, unmixed, not full of human flesh and colors, and the many other kinds of nonsense that attach to mortality, but if he could behold the divine Beauty itself, single in nature? Do you think it a worth-

²⁴⁶. Or "as being thought beautiful by some but ugly by others." *ōs* with participle: Smyth, 2086b; cf. 2996.

²⁴⁷. In contradiction to Pausanias's sexualized pederasty.

²⁴⁸. Cf. 210a, c, e.

²⁴⁹. Diotima directly recalls the speech of Aristophanes, 191a, 192b-d.

^{212a} less life, she said, for a man to look *there* and contemplate *that* with that by which one must contemplate it,²⁵⁰ and to be with it? Or are you not convinced, she said, that there alone it will befall him, in seeing the Beautiful with that by which it is visible, to beget, not images of virtue, because he does not touch an image, but true virtue, because he touches the truth? But in begetting true virtue and nurturing it, it is given to him to become dear to god, and if any other among men is immortal, he is too.

Socrates' Peroration (212b-c)

b These then, Phaedrus and you others, are the things Diotima said, and I am persuaded. Being persuaded, I try also to persuade others that one would not easily get a better partner for our human nature in acquiring this possession than Eros. Therefore I say that every man should honor Eros, and I myself honor and surpassingly devote myself to the things of love and summon others to do so; now and always, I praise the power and courage of
c Eros so far as I am able. Consider this speech then, Phaedrus, if you will, an encomium to Eros, or if you prefer, name it what you please.

After Socrates said this, the rest praised him, but Aristophanes tried to say something, because Socrates in speaking alluded to his own speech.²⁵¹

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

And suddenly, there was a loud knocking at the courtyard door, as of revelers, and they heard the voice of a flute-girl.

d So Agathon said, Boys, won't you see about it? And if it's one of our friends, invite him in; if not, say that we're not drinking but about to retire.

A moment later we heard in the courtyard the voice of Alcibiades, very drunk and shouting loudly, asking, Where is Agathon? and saying, Take me to Agathon. So they led him in to us, the flute-girl supporting him, with certain others of his followers,
e and he stood in the doorway crowned with a bushy wreath of ivy

²⁵⁰. That is, by mind or intelligence. See *Republic* VI 490a-b, VII 518c, 533c-d.

²⁵¹. 205c.

and violets²⁵² and a multitude of fillets²⁵³ on his head, and said, Greetings, gentlemen. Will you accept a man already quite drunk as a drinking companion? Or shall we leave after crowning Agathon alone, which is what we came to do? I couldn't come yesterday, he said, but I'm here now, with fillets on, to take a wreath from my own head and put it on the head of the wisest and most beautiful man here, if I may so speak of him—will you laugh at me for being drunk? Even if you do laugh, I still know I speak the truth. Tell me right now—do I come in on these terms or not? Will you drink with me or not?

Well, everybody applauded and bid him come in and recline, and Agathon invited him. And he did come in, led by his retinue, and because he was untying the fillets to put them on Agathon, he had them in front of his eyes and didn't see Socrates, but sat down beside Agathon, between him and Socrates, for Socrates moved over when he saw him. He sat down and embraced Agathon and crowned him.

So Agathon said, Boys, take off Alcibiades' shoes so he can recline as a third here.

By all means, said Alcibiades. But who's our third drinking companion? And at that he turned around, caught sight of Socrates, jumped up and said, Heracles! What's this! Socrates here! Lying in ambush for me again, suddenly appearing as you usually do where I least expect you will be. And why do you come now? And again, why lie here, and not beside Aristophanes or somebody else who's funny and wishes to be? Instead, you've contrived to lie next to the most beautiful person in the room.

And Socrates said, See if you can protect me, Agathon; because my love for this fellow has been no light matter. Ever since I fell in love with him, it's no longer been possible for me even to look at or talk to a single beautiful person, not even one, or this fellow here is jealous of me and envious, and does extraordinary things,

²⁵². Ivy was associated with Dionysus, and appropriate to a drunken reveler. Violets were associated with Aphrodite—fittingly enough, as we shall soon see—but also with Athens itself, "Violet-Crowned." The violets are *Viola hymettia*, the blossoms bright yellow and white against the dark green of the ivy. At present these violets bloom in March, and it is customary to identify the month Gamelion, on the twelfth day of which the Lenaea was celebrated, with January—the nights were long (223c). But the Athenian solar-lunar year made the dates of months in relation to the year as variable as Easter now is, and the presence of violets in the crown of Alcibiades indicates the first stirrings of spring.

²⁵³. Headbands or ribbons worn in sign of victory or sacrifice to the god.

upbraiding me and only just restraining himself from laying both hands on me. See to it then that he doesn't also start something now; reconcile us, or if he tries to use force, protect me, because I very much tremble at his madness and his love for having lovers.

Why, it's impossible to reconcile you and me, said Alcibiades. But I'll exact a penalty from you for that another time. Right now, Agathon, he said, give me back some of those fillets, so that I may crown his head too, this wonderful head, and he won't blame me because I crowned you when he is victorious in speech over all mankind, not only the other day as you were, but always, and I still didn't crown him.

And with that he took some of the fillets and crowned Socrates, and lay down.

After he had laid down, he said, Very well then, gentlemen. It seems to me you're sober. We can't have that, so drink up; for that was our agreement. I choose to take charge of the drinking myself until you've drunk enough. If there is a big wine bowl, Agathon, let it be brought. No, that's unnecessary. Boy, he said, observing that it held more than eight cups, Bring that wine cooler here instead.²⁵⁴

When it was filled, he drank it down first and then ordered them to pour again for Socrates, and at the same time said, My piece of cleverness won't work for Socrates, gentlemen. He'll drink as much as one bids and never be a bit more drunk for it.

Well, after the boy poured, Socrates drank.

Eryximachus said, What are we doing, Alcibiades? Aren't we going to say something over the cup, or sing something? Do we simply drink up as if we were thirsty?

So Alcibiades said, Hello there, Eryximachus, most excellent son of a most excellent and most temperate father.

Hello to you too, said Eryximachus. But what do we do?

Whatever you say. One must after all obey you: "For a healer is a man worth many others."²⁵⁵ So command what you wish.

Listen then, said Eryximachus. Before you came, it seemed best that each of us, from left to right, should give the most beautiful speech about Eros he could and offer an encomium. The rest of us have all spoken; but since you haven't and you've finished your drink, you ought to speak too. Once you've done so, you can pre-

²⁵⁴. Wine was always drunk mixed with water; the wine was kept in a cooler before being mixed. Alcibiades is calling for approximately two quarts of wine, straight.

²⁵⁵. *Iliad* xi 514.

scribe for Socrates as you wish, and he for the man on his right, and so on for the rest.

Why, Eryximachus, said Alcibiades, that's a beautiful suggestion, but perhaps it isn't fair to compare a drunken man to the speeches of the sober. At the same time, my friend, do you believe
d anything Socrates just now said? Don't you know it's all just the opposite of what he was saying? Because he's the one who won't keep his two hands off me if I praise anyone in his presence, either a god or a man other than him.

What a thing to say! said Socrates.

By Poseidon, said Alcibiades, don't add another word, because I couldn't praise one other person with you present.

Why, if you wish, do that, said Eryximachus. Praise Socrates.

e Do you mean it? said Alcibiades. Do you think I should, Eryximachus? Should I punish the man and inflict a penalty on him in front of you?

Whoa! said Socrates. What have you got in mind? To praise me in order to poke fun at me? Is that what you'll do?

I'll tell the truth. Just see if you allow it.

Why certainly I allow the truth, he said, and I insist you tell it.

I can hardly wait to start, said Alcibiades. But you must do this: if I say anything untrue, interrupt me right in the middle, if you wish, and say that I said it falsely; for I won't willingly say anything false. If, however, in recollecting, I say one thing here and another
215a there, don't be surprised; because it's no easy thing for someone in my condition to enumerate your peculiarities fluently and in good order.

The Speech of Alcibiades (215a–222b)

Praise by Images (215a–216c)

I will undertake to praise Socrates in this way, gentlemen, through images. Perhaps he'll think it's to poke fun at him, but the image will be for the sake of truth, not laughter.

b I say that Socrates is exactly like those silenoi sitting in the statuary shops, the kind the craftsmen manufacture holding flutes or pipes, but when opened in the middle, they prove to hold within them images of gods. And I say on the other hand that he is like the satyr Marsyas.²⁵⁶

256. Silenus appears in early Attic vase painting as a shaggy bearded man, with

That at least you look like them, Socrates, surely not even you yourself would dispute.²⁵⁷ But next hear how you're like them in other ways too. You're outrageous.²⁵⁸ No? Because if you don't agree I'll offer witnesses. But you're not a flutist? Yes, and one far
c more marvelous than Marsyas. He charmed people by the power of his mouth, using instruments, and those who play his music do so even now; for I claim that what Olympus used to play belonged to Marsyas—Marsyas was his teacher—but whether played by a good flutist or a worthless flute-girl, his music alone causes possession and reveals, because it is divine, those who need the gods and rites of initiation.

You differ from him only in this, that you accomplish the same thing by bare words without instruments. When we hear some
d other speaker, at any rate, even quite a good orator, speaking other words, it hardly matters to anyone at all; but when someone hears you or someone else repeating your words, then even if the speaker is quite worthless and whether it be man, woman, or child who hears, we are amazed and possessed. At any rate, gentlemen, if I weren't in danger of seeming completely drunk, I'd state to you on oath how I've been affected by his words, how I'm still
e affected even now. For when I hear him my heart leaps up, much more than those affected by the music of the Corybantes,²⁵⁹ and tears flow at his words—and I see many another affected the same way too.

I heard Pericles and other good orators and I believe they spoke well, but I was not affected at all like this, nor was my soul disturbed and angered at my being in the position of a slave; but due
216a to this Marsyas here I've often been put in that position, so that

the ears and sometimes the legs and tail of a horse, much given to pursuing nymphs. He knows important secrets, and if he is caught he can sometimes be forced to tell, but he was also associated with drunkenness, bestiality, and the worship of Dionysus.

Satyrs are very like silenoi, but usually young rather than old, and they took from Pan the attributes of a goat. By the time they appear in satyr plays, such as Euripides' *Cyclops* and Sophocles' *Ichneutae*, they are clearly human beings, with attributes of horses or, in Sophocles, perhaps of dogs.

Marsyas was a satyr who in his hubris competed in music with Apollo, and was worsted and flayed alive for his presumption.

257. Socrates had a snub nose and protruding eyes. *Theaetetus* 143e.

258. Recalling Agathon's challenge. Agathon had said exactly the same thing (175e) in suggesting that Dionysus would decide between himself and Socrates. See also 219c–d, where Socrates in effect brings this charge against Alcibiades, and 214d, where Alcibiades returns it. But see also 219c.

259. Cf. *Ion* 533e–534a, 536c, *Euthydemus* 277d, *Crito* 54d, *Laws* VII 790d.

it seemed to me it was not worth living to be as I am.²⁶⁰ And this, Socrates, you will not deny to be true.

- And still even now, I am conscious that if I were willing to give ear I could not hold out against him; I would suffer the same things. For he compels me to agree that though I am myself much in need, I neglect myself and attend to the affairs of Athens. So I stop my ears by force as if against the Sirens²⁶¹ and run away, in order that I may not grow old sitting here beside him. Before him alone among men I suffer what one might not have supposed is in me—shame before anyone. Before him alone I feel ashamed. For I am conscious that I cannot contradict him and say it isn't necessary to do what he bids, but when I leave him, I am worsted by the honors of the multitude. So I desert him and flee, and when I see him I am shamed by my own agreements. I'd often gladly see him dead, but I'm well aware that if it happened I'd be much more distressed; so I don't know what to do about this man.

Irony and Seduction (216c–219d)

- I and many another have been thus affected by the flutings of this satyr. But hear from me how alike he is in other respects to those to whom I compared him, and how wondrous is his power. Be assured that not one of you knows him. But I'll reveal him, since I've begun. You see how erotically disposed Socrates is toward handsome people, and always around them, and smitten; and on the other hand that he is ignorant of everything and knows nothing. As to his appearance—isn't it Silenus-like? Of course it is. His outside covering is like a carved statue of Silenus, but when he is opened, gentlemen and drinking companions, can you guess how he teems with temperance within? Do you know that it doesn't matter to him in the slightest if someone is beautiful, that he despises it to a degree one could scarcely imagine—or if someone is wealthy or has any other distinction counted fortunate by the multitude? He thinks all these possessions are worthless and that we are nothing, I assure you, but he is sly and dishonest and spends his whole life playing with people. Yet, I don't know whether any-

²⁶⁰. Cf. 211d.

²⁶¹. As Odysseus stopped the ears of his crew with wax and had himself lashed to the mast, so that they would not hear the Sirens' song and stay with them (*Odyssey* xii 37–54, 154–200). Alcibiades is an example of Aristotle's *ἀνπαρής*, the incontinent man: he knows what is good, but acts otherwise. For incontinence as to honor, see *Nicomachean Ethics* VII 1147b 29–35.

- one else has seen the images within when he is in earnest and opened up, but I saw them once, and I thought they were so divine and golden, so marvelously beautiful, that whatever Socrates might bid must, in short, be done.

- Believing he was earnestly pursuing my youthful beauty, I thought it was a stroke of luck and my wonderful good fortune, because by gratifying Socrates I could learn everything he knew; for I was amazingly proud of my vernal bloom. So with this in mind, though previously I wasn't accustomed to be alone with him unattended, I then dismissed my attendant and was with him alone—for I have to tell you the whole truth. Pay attention, Socrates, and if what I say is false, refute me—so we were alone with each other, gentlemen, one on one, and I thought at that point he would converse with me as a lover might converse in private with his beloved, and I rejoiced. But not a bit of it. Instead, he'd converse with me in his usual way, and after spending the day together he'd get up and go away.

- Next I invited him to exercise with me, and we did; I expected to accomplish something there. Well, he exercised and wrestled with me many times when no one was present. And what must I report? I got no farther.

Since I'd accomplished nothing at all this way, I thought I had to attack the man directly and not give up, since I'd taken the matter in hand; at that point I had to know how things stood. So I invited him to dine, exactly like a lover laying a plan for his beloved. Even in this he didn't yield to me quickly, but in time, he nonetheless obeyed.

- When he came the first time, he wished to leave after dinner. At that point I was embarrassed and let him go; but I laid plans for him again, and when we had dined I kept on talking far into the night, and when he wished to leave I used the excuse that it was late and made him stay. So he lay down on the couch next to mine, the couch on which he'd dined, and there was no one else sleeping in the room except us.

- Well, up to this point it would be fit to tell the story to anyone; but from here on you wouldn't hear a word from me if it were not that, first, wine with or without slaves²⁶² is truthful, as the saying

²⁶². *παῖδων*. The word translated "slaves" is also the word for children, and the underlying proverb probably was "Wine and children are truthful." But slaves, and perhaps others, are present, and asked not to listen (218b). This is dramatic foreshadowing: Plato's audience would have recalled that Alcibiades was to be prosecuted

goes, and next, if it didn't appear wrong in me to continue praising Socrates while concealing his arrogant deed. Then, too, I'm almost affected like a man who's been bitten by a snake. They say that anyone who's suffered it is unwilling to tell what it was like except to those who've been bitten, because they alone will sympathize and understand if one was driven to do and say everything in his pain. Well, I'd been bitten by something more painful, and in the most painful place one can be bitten—in the heart or soul or whatever one should name it, struck and bitten by arguments in philosophy that hold more fiercely than a serpent, when they take hold of a young and not ill-endowed soul and make him do and say anything whatever²⁶³—but again, I see here people like Phaedrus and Agathon, Eryximachus and Pausanias and Aristodemus and Aristophanes; and what should be said about Socrates himself and the rest of you? For you have all shared in philosophical madness and Bacchic frenzy²⁶⁴—so listen, all of you; for you will sympathize with the things then done and now told.

But let the servants, and anyone else profane and vulgar, put great gates over their ears.

Well, gentlemen, when the lamp was out and the slaves withdrew, I thought I shouldn't dissemble but tell him freely what I thought. And I nudged him and said, Socrates, are you asleep?

Of course not, he said.

Do you know what I think?

What, exactly? he said.

I think that you alone, I said, are worthy to become my lover, and you appear to shrink from saying it to me. But this is how it is with me: I believe I'd be very foolish not to gratify you in this, or if you may need anything else from my estate or my friends. For there is nothing more important to me than to become as good as possible, and I do not think there's anyone who can help me in this more authoritatively than you. I'd feel much more shame before wise men if I did not gratify such a man than before an ignorant multitude if I did.

during the next year, in 415 B.C., for mocking the Eleusinian Mysteries in the course of a drunken party, on the evidence of slaves and metics who were present. Thucydides VI 28 1.

²⁶³. Here and in what follows there is considerable inconsequentiality—*anacoluthon*—in Alcibiades' speech. He is under considerable emotion, and he is very drunk. Yet it will be observed that his speech as a whole is beautifully constructed.

²⁶⁴. In the plural, Bacchic orgies. Madness and Bacchic frenzy are, of course, precisely what, in Socrates' view, philosophy is not.

When he heard this, he said, with the usual sly dishonesty, that is typical of him, My dear Alcibiades, you are really not to be taken lightly, if indeed what you say about me happens to be true, and there is in me some power through which you might become better; you would then see inconceivable beauty in me, even surpassing your own immense comeliness of form. But if, seeing it, you are trying to strike a bargain with me to exchange beauty for beauty, then you intend to take no slight advantage of me: on the contrary, you are trying to get possession of what is truly beautiful instead of what merely seems so, and really, you intend to trade bronze for gold.²⁶⁵ But please, dear friend, give it more thought, lest it escape your notice that I am nothing. The sight of the mind begins to see sharply when that of the eyes starts to grow dull; but you're still a long way from that.

I heard this and said, That's how it is with me; I've only said what I think. Since that's so, you yourself must consider whatever you think is best for you and me.

Why, you're right, he replied. We'll in future consider and do what appears best to ourselves about these and other things.

In hearing and saying this, I'd loosed my arrows, as it were, and I thought I'd wounded him; I got up without letting him say another word, and I wrapped my own cloak around him—for it was winter—and I lay down on his threadbare coat, and I put my two arms around this genuine divinity, this wonderful man, and lay there the whole night through. And again, Socrates, you will not say I speak falsely. But when I did this, he was so contemptuously superior to my youthful bloom that he ridiculed and outrageously insulted it; and in that regard, at least, I thought I was really something, gentlemen and judges—for you are judges of the arrogance of Socrates—for know well, by gods and by goddesses, when I arose after having slept with Socrates, it was nothing more than if I'd slept with a father or an elder brother.

Can you imagine my state of mind after that? I considered myself affronted, and yet I admired his nature, his temperance and courage, having met a man of a sort I never thought to meet in respect to wisdom and fortitude. The result was that I could neither get angry and be deprived of his company nor yet find a way to win him over. For I well knew he was far more invulnerable to

²⁶⁵. Cf. *Iliad* vi 236, where Glaucus foolishly trades golden armor for bronze.

money than Ajax ever was to iron, and he'd escaped me in the only way I thought he could be caught. So I was at a loss, and I went around enslaved by this man as no one ever was by any other.

Courage and Contemplation (219d–221c)

All this happened to me before, and afterward we served together on the campaign to Potidaea,²⁶⁶ and we were messmates there. Well, first of all, he not only surpassed me but everyone else in bearing hardship—whenever we got cut off somewhere, as happens on campaign, and had to go without food, the others were nothing in respect to fortitude—but again, in times of good cheer, he alone was able to enjoy them to the full: in particular, though unwilling to drink, he beat everybody else at it when compelled to, and what is most remarkable of all, no man has ever seen Socrates drunk. I think that will be tested right now. Then again, there was his fortitude in winter—the winters there are dreadful.

He did other amazing things, but one time there was a truly terrible frost and everybody stayed inside and didn't go out, or if they did they wore an amazing amount of clothes and put on shoes after wrapping their feet in felt and fleeces, but he went around outside among them with the same sort of cloak he was accustomed to wear before, and got around on the ice without shoes more easily than the others did shod. But the soldiers looked askance at him, thinking he despised them.²⁶⁷

So much for that. "But here is a task such as that strong man endured and accomplished,"²⁶⁸ once there on campaign. It's worth hearing. One time at dawn he began to think something over and stood in the same spot considering it, and when he found no solution, he didn't leave but stood there inquiring. It got to be midday, and people became aware of it, wondering at it among themselves, saying Socrates had stood there since dawn thinking about something. Finally some of the Ionians, when evening came, after they'd eaten—it was then summer—carried their bedding out to sleep in the cool air and to watch to see if he'd also stand there all night. He stood until dawn came and the sun rose; then he offered a prayer to the sun, and left.

²⁶⁶. In 432 B.C. Alcibiades would then have been eighteen, Socrates not quite forty.

²⁶⁷. Some of those soldiers doubtless voted at Socrates' trial; the *Symposium*, then, suggests that this was one source of the prejudice against him, one that he himself could scarcely have mentioned.

²⁶⁸. *Odyssey* IV 242 (trans. Richmond Lattimore). Cf. IV 271.

But if you wish, take battles—it is only just to give him this. Because when the battle occurred after which the generals gave me the award for valor, no other man saved me but him; I was wounded and he refused to leave, but saved both me and my armor.²⁶⁹ I told the generals even at the time, Socrates, to give the award to you, and for this you'll surely neither fault me nor say I'm not telling the truth. But when the generals wished to give me the prize for valor out of regard for my rank and station, you yourself were more eager than the generals that I should receive it instead of you.

Still again, gentlemen, it was worth seeing Socrates when the army made its disorderly retreat from Delium;²⁷⁰ I happened to be mounted, but he was in the heavy infantry. Well, as the men were scattering, he and Laches together gave ground. I happened to be nearby, and as soon as I saw them I told them to have courage and said I wouldn't desert them. But here I could watch Socrates even better than at Potidaea—for I was myself less afraid because I was on horseback—and first, I saw how much he surpassed even Laches in self-possession, and then again, to quote that line of yours, Aristophanes, I thought that he proceeded there just as he does here too, "head held high, casting his eyes about,"²⁷¹ calmly surveying both friend and foe, making it clear to everyone, and at quite a distance, that if anybody touched this man he'd defend himself quite stoutly. That's why he and his comrade got away safe; they don't usually touch people who defend themselves like that in battle, but pursue those who flee headlong.

The Strangeness of Socrates (221c–222b)

Well, one could praise Socrates for many other remarkable things; with respect to other activities one might also perhaps say the same sort of thing about someone else, but unlikeness to any other man, past or present, is worthy of all wonder. One might compare the sort of man Achilles was to Brasisdas²⁷² and others,

²⁶⁹. Loss of arms in battle was a disgrace. "With your shield or on it" was no light saying; you could run faster without it.

²⁷⁰. In 424 B.C.

²⁷¹. Cf. *Clouds* 362 (not an exact quotation, at least from our present text). Laches himself, a general, refers to this incident and pays tribute to Socrates' courage at Delium in the *Laches* 181a–b. Socrates mentions his service at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium as an indication of his faithfulness to duty imposed by Athens, even to death. *Apology* 28d–e.

²⁷². A distinguished Spartan general killed at Amphipolis in 422 B.C.

- d and Pericles, again, to Nestor and Antenor, and there are others one might compare in the same way. But the sort of man this is and his strangeness, both himself and his words, one couldn't come close to finding if one looked, neither among people present nor past, except perhaps if one were to compare him to those I mention—not any man, but silenes and satyrs, him and his words.

- e Actually, I left this out at first, that even his arguments are exactly like silenes that have been opened. For if one is willing to listen to Socrates' arguments, they'd appear quite ridiculous at first; they're wrapped round on the outside with words and phrases like the hide of an outrageous satyr. He talks about pack-
asses and smiths and cobblers and tanners, and forever appears
222a experienced and unreasonable man might ridicule his arguments.²⁷³ But if the arguments are opened, and one sees them from the inside, he will find first that they are the only arguments with any sense in them, and next, that they contain within themselves utterly divine and multitudinous images of virtue, and that they are relevant to most or rather to all things worth considering for one who intends to be noble and good.

- This then, gentlemen, is my praise of Socrates. On the other hand, I've also mixed in the faults I find in him, and told you of his outrageous insult to me. It isn't just me he's treated this way,
b however, but also Charmides, son of Glaucon, and Euthydemus, son of Diocles, and many another as well, whom he seduces as a lover and ends up himself as beloved instead of lover. I warn you, Agathon, don't be deceived by him, but learn from our own experiences and watch out, instead of, as the proverb has it, learning by dumb suffering.²⁷⁴

Socrates Replies (222c–223b)

- c After Alcibiades said this, they laughed at his frankness, because he seemed still in love with Socrates. So Socrates said, I think you're sober, Alcibiades. Otherwise, you'd never try to disguise your intention so cleverly and conceal why you've said all this, and put it at the end as if it were merely an afterthought—as though

²⁷³. As Calicles does at *Gorgias* 490c–491a; but perhaps there is also a reference to Aristophanes and the *Clouds*.

²⁷⁴. *Iliad* xvii 32; Hesiod *Works and Days* 218.

- d you hadn't said it all to cause Agathon and me to quarrel, because you think I should love you and nobody else, and that Agathon should be loved by you and not one single other person. But you don't fool me; the point of your satyr play²⁷⁵—or rather your Silenus play—is perfectly obvious. My dear Agathon, don't let him get away with it; don't let anyone cause you and me to quarrel.
- e So Agathon said, Why really, Socrates, maybe you're right. I offer as proof the fact that he lay down between you and me in order to keep us apart. Well, he won't get away with a thing; I'll come lie next to you.

Yes, do, said Socrates. Come lie here below me.²⁷⁶

Zeus! said Alcibiades. The things I suffer from this man! He thinks he has to get the better of me in every way. If nothing else, my friend, at least let Agathon be set down between us.

- Impossible, said Socrates. You praised me, and I have to praise the person to my right. So if Agathon lies below you, won't he have to praise me again instead of being praised by me? Let him go,
223a my friend. Don't begrudge the lad my praises, for I very much want to offer him an encomium.²⁷⁷

Yes, Alcibiades! said Agathon. I can't possibly stay here. I'll absolutely have to change places in order to be praised by Socrates.

It's the same old story, said Alcibiades. When Socrates is around, it's impossible for anyone else to get a share of the beauties. And now what a convincing argument he's found, and so resourceful, too, to make this fellow sit next to him!

- b So Agathon got up to sit next to Socrates.

Conclusion (223b–d)

But at this point, suddenly, a mob of revelers came to the doors, and when they found them open because someone was leaving, they came straight in to us and lay down. Everything was in an

²⁷⁵. Tragic trilogies at the Dionysia closed with a humorous phallic play in which the chorus dressed as satyrs.

²⁷⁶. The original order of places was Agathon–Socrates (175c–d), and Alcibiades upon entering seated himself between them (213a–b), so that the order became Agathon–Alcibiades–Socrates. Socrates now invites Agathon to change his position so that the order becomes Alcibiades–Socrates–Agathon.

²⁷⁷. Alcibiades has suggested the order Alcibiades–Agathon–Socrates. Socrates objects, pleading the rule of procedure suggested by Eryximachus at 214b–c (cf. 177d).

uproar, there was no longer any order, and everyone was compelled to drink a great deal of wine.

Aristodemus said that Eryximachus and Phaedrus and some others got up and left, and he fell asleep and slept quite a while, because the nights were long, but he woke up toward daybreak, at cock-crow, to see some asleep and others gone. Only Agathon and Aristophanes and Socrates were still awake, drinking from a large bowl, and passing it from left to right.

Well, Socrates was discussing with them. Aristodemus said he couldn't remember the other arguments—he wasn't there at the beginning, and he was drowsy—but the main point, he said, was that Socrates was making them agree that the same man knows how to compose comedy and tragedy, and he who is a tragic poet by art is a comic poet too.²⁷⁸ Compelled to these admissions, and not quite following, they drowsed, and Aristophanes fell asleep first, and then, just as it was becoming light, Agathon.

So after putting them to sleep, Socrates got up and left, and Aristodemus as usual followed him. He went to the Lyceum and bathed, passed the rest of the day as he would any other, and after that he went home in the evening and rested.

²⁷⁸. The argument must have been that tragedy and comedy are opposites; the same art has knowledge of opposites; therefore, anyone who is by art a tragic poet is a comic poet too. The conclusion superficially contradicts *Ion* 531e–534e; but the *Ion* denies that the actor, and by implication the poet, has an art.

INDEX

References to author's comments are given according to the pagination of this book. References in italic are to Plato's *Symposium*, and are given by Stephanus pages in the margin of the translation; these pages are subdivided according to the letters *a, b, c, d, e*, answering to divisions in the original folio page.

- Abel, Donald C., 60n
 Achilles, 14, 71, 76, 77, 179e, 221c; honored by gods, 180b; as lover of Patroclus, 180a
 Actions: of lovers, 183a–b; as neutral, 63–64, 181a; virtue in, 63–64
 Acumenus, 176b
 Acusilaus, 178b
 Admetus, 12, 13, 71, 76, 119n, 179b, 208d
 Aeschylus, 180a
 Aesthetic theory, 80
 Agamemnon, 174c
 Agape, 95–98
 Agathon: absence from Athens, 4, 172c; beauty of, 38; death of, 4; dramatic victory of, 21, 173a, 194b; importance of speech of, 7; Pausanias as lover of, 17, 38, 193b; as playwright, 40; in *Protagoras*, 10; pun on name of, 174b; Socrates' refutation of, 7, 199c–201c; speech of, 38–40, 194e–197e; youth of, 3, 198a
 Agave, 23, 24, 26
 Ajax, 219d
 Alcestis, 14, 71, 76, 77, 179b
 Alcibiades: Aristodemus compared with, 6; arrival at Agathon's house, 99, 102–103, 212c–215a; beauty of, 217a, 218e–219a, 219c; on courage of Socrates, 219d–221a; failed seduction of Socrates by, 18, 216c–219d; human condition and, 103; importance of speech of, 105–106; life of, 102–103; mutilation of the herms and, 26n, 102, 102n; prize for valor and, 220e; in *Protagoras*, 10; relationship with Socrates, 10, 103, 213b–e; speech of, 104–108, 215a–222b; trial of Socrates and, 105, 106; wreath crowning, 158n, 212e
 Ambition, for things beautiful, 178d
 Amousos, 9
 Anachronism, 5, 122n, 134n, 182b, 193a
 Anaximander, 128n
 Androgyny, 32, 189e, 191e
 Animals: Dionysiac religion and, 21n, 25, 26; love of their offspring, 207a–b
 Anthesteria festival, 21
 Aphrodite: Aristophanes as occupied with, 21, 33, 37, 177e; Dionysus and, 21; Eros as companion to, 8, 15, 180d, 181a; as two goddesses, 180d–e; as Venus Genetrix, 16
 "Aphrodite," as Greek term, 16
 Aphrodite Pandemos. *See* Aphrodite, as two goddesses
 Apollo, 38n, 197a
 Apollodorus: accuracy of account of, 4; acquaintance with Socrates, 173a; figure of, and double narrative device, 5; as link between *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, 9; loss of wits, 173e; prologue of, 172a–174a; as "soft," 5, 173d

Continued from front flap

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