Symposium

By Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

Persons of the Dialogue

APOLLODORUS, who repeats to his companion the dialogue which he had

heard from Aristodemus, and had already once narrated to

Glaucon

PHAEDRUS

PAUSANIAS

ERYXIMACHUS

ARISTOPHANES

AGATHON

SOCRATES

ALCIBIADES

A TROOP OF REVELLERS

Scene

The House of Agathon.

----------------------------------------------------------------------

Concerning the things about which you ask to be informed I believe

that I am not ill-prepared with an answer. For the day before yesterday

I was coming from my own home at Phalerum to the city, and one of

my acquaintance, who had caught a sight of me from behind, hind, out

playfully in the distance, said: Apollodorus, O thou Phalerian man,

halt! So I did as I was bid; and then he said, I was looking for you,

Apollodorus, only just now, that I might ask you about the speeches

in praise of love, which were delivered by Socrates, Alcibiades, and

others, at Agathon's supper. Phoenix, the son of Philip, told another

person who told me of them; his narrative was very indistinct, but

he said that you knew, and I wish that you would give me an account

of them. Who, if not you, should be the reporter of the words of your

friend? And first tell me, he said, were you present at this meeting?

Your informant, Glaucon, I said, must have been very indistinct indeed,

if you imagine that the occasion was recent; or that I could have

been of the party.

Why, yes, he replied, I thought so.

Impossible: I said. Are you ignorant that for many years Agathon has

not resided at Athens; and not three have elapsed since I became acquainted

with Socrates, and have made it my daily business to know all that

he says and does. There was a time when I was running about the world,

fancying myself to be well employed, but I was really a most wretched

thing, no better than you are now. I thought that I ought to do anything

rather than be a philosopher.

Well, he said, jesting apart, tell me when the meeting occurred.

In our boyhood, I replied, when Agathon won the prize with his first

tragedy, on the day after that on which he and his chorus offered

the sacrifice of victory.

Then it must have been a long while ago, he said; and who told you-did

Socrates?

No indeed, I replied, but the same person who told Phoenix;-he was

a little fellow, who never wore any shoes Aristodemus, of the deme

of Cydathenaeum. He had been at Agathon's feast; and I think that

in those days there was no one who was a more devoted admirer of Socrates.

Moreover, I have asked Socrates about the truth of some parts of his

narrative, and he confirmed them. Then, said Glaucon, let us have

the tale over again; is not the road to Athens just made for conversation?

And so we walked, and talked of the discourses on love; and therefore,

as I said at first, I am not ill-prepared to comply with your request,

and will have another rehearsal of them if you like. For to speak

or to hear others speak of philosophy always gives me the greatest

pleasure, to say nothing of the profit. But when I hear another strain,

especially that of you rich men and traders, such conversation displeases

me; and I pity you who are my companions, because you think that you

are doing something when in reality you are doing nothing. And I dare

say that you pity me in return, whom you regard as an unhappy creature,

and very probably you are right. But I certainly know of you what

you only think of me-there is the difference.

Companion. I see, Apollodorus, that you are just the same-always speaking

evil of yourself, and of others; and I do believe that you pity all

mankind, with the exception of Socrates, yourself first of all, true

in this to your old name, which, however deserved I know how you acquired,

of Apollodorus the madman; for you are always raging against yourself

and everybody but Socrates.

Apollodorus. Yes, friend, and the reason why I am said to be mad,

and out of my wits, is just because I have these notions of myself

and you; no other evidence is required.

Com. No more of that, Apollodorus; but let me renew my request that

you would repeat the conversation.

Apoll. Well, the tale of love was on this wise:-But perhaps I had

better begin at the beginning, and endeavour to give you the exact

words of Aristodemus:

He said that he met Socrates fresh from the bath and sandalled; and

as the sight of the sandals was unusual, he asked him whither he was

going that he had been converted into such a beau:-

To a banquet at Agathon's, he replied, whose invitation to his sacrifice

of victory I refused yesterday, fearing a crowd, but promising that

I would come to-day instead; and so I have put on my finery, because

he is such a fine man. What say you to going with me unasked?

I will do as you bid me, I replied.

Follow then, he said, and let us demolish the proverb:

To the feasts of inferior men the good unbidden go; instead of which

our proverb will run:-

To the feasts of the good the good unbidden go; and this alteration

may be supported by the authority of Homer himself, who not only demolishes

but literally outrages the proverb. For, after picturing Agamemnon

as the most valiant of men, he makes Menelaus, who is but a fainthearted

warrior, come unbidden to the banquet of Agamemnon, who is feasting

and offering sacrifices, not the better to the worse, but the worse

to the better.

I rather fear, Socrates, said Aristodemus, lest this may still be

my case; and that, like Menelaus in Homer, I shall be the inferior

person, who

To the leasts of the wise unbidden goes. But I shall say that I was

bidden of you, and then you will have to make an excuse.

Two going together, he replied, in Homeric fashion, one or other of

them may invent an excuse by the way.

This was the style of their conversation as they went along. Socrates

dropped behind in a fit of abstraction, and desired Aristodemus, who

was waiting, to go on before him. When he reached the house of Agathon

he found the doors wide open, and a comical thing happened. A servant

coming out met him, and led him at once into the banqueting-hall in

which the guests were reclining, for the banquet was about to begin.

Welcome, Aristodemus, said Agathon, as soon as he appeared-you are

just in time to sup with us; if you come on any other matter put it

off, and make one of us, as I was looking for you yesterday and meant

to have asked you, if I could have found you. But what have you done

with Socrates?

I turned round, but Socrates was nowhere to be seen; and I had to

explain that he had been with me a moment before, and that I came

by his invitation to the supper.

You were quite right in coming, said Agathon; but where is he himself?

He was behind me just now, as I entered, he said, and I cannot think

what has become of him.

Go and look for him, boy, said Agathon, and bring him in; and do you,

Aristodemus, meanwhile take the place by Eryximachus.

The servant then assisted him to wash, and he lay down, and presently

another servant came in and reported that our friend Socrates had

retired into the portico of the neighbouring house. "There he is fixed,"

said he, "and when I call to him he will not stir."

How strange, said Agathon; then you must call him again, and keep

calling him.

Let him alone, said my informant; he has a way of stopping anywhere

and losing himself without any reason. I believe that he will soon

appear; do not therefore disturb him.

Well, if you think so, I will leave him, said Agathon. And then, turning

to the servants, he added, "Let us have supper without waiting for

him. Serve up whatever you please, for there; is no one to give you

orders; hitherto I have never left you to yourselves. But on this

occasion imagine that you art our hosts, and that I and the company

are your guests; treat us well, and then we shall commend you." After

this, supper was served, but still no-Socrates; and during the meal

Agathon several times expressed a wish to send for him, but Aristodemus

objected; and at last when the feast was about half over-for the fit,

as usual, was not of long duration-Socrates entered; Agathon, who

was reclining alone at the end of the table, begged that he would

take the place next to him; that "I may touch you," he said, "and

have the benefit of that wise thought which came into your mind in

the portico, and is now in your possession; for I am certain that

you would not have come away until you had found what you sought."

How I wish, said Socrates, taking his place as he was desired, that

wisdom could be infused by touch, out of the fuller the emptier man,

as water runs through wool out of a fuller cup into an emptier one;

if that were so, how greatly should I value the privilege of reclining

at your side! For you would have filled me full with a stream of wisdom

plenteous and fair; whereas my own is of a very mean and questionable

sort, no better than a dream. But yours is bright and full of promise,

and was manifested forth in all the splendour of youth the day before

yesterday, in the presence of more than thirty thousand Hellenes.

You are mocking, Socrates, said Agathon, and ere long you and I will

have to determine who bears off the palm of wisdom-of this Dionysus

shall be the judge; but at present you are better occupied with supper.

Socrates took his place on the couch, and supped with the rest; and

then libations were offered, and after a hymn had been sung to the

god, and there had been the usual ceremonies, they were about to commence

drinking, when Pausanias said, And now, my friends, how can we drink

with least injury to ourselves? I can assure you that I feel severely

the effect of yesterday's potations, and must have time to recover;

and I suspect that most of you are in the same predicament, for you

were of the party yesterday. Consider then: How can the drinking be

made easiest?

I entirely agree, said Aristophanes, that we should, by all means,

avoid hard drinking, for I was myself one of those who were yesterday

drowned in drink.

I think that you are right, said Eryximachus, the son of Acumenus;

but I should still like to hear one other person speak: Is Agathon

able to drink hard?

I am not equal to it, said Agathon.

Then, the Eryximachus, the weak heads like myself, Aristodemus, Phaedrus,

and others who never can drink, are fortunate in finding that the

stronger ones are not in a drinking mood. (I do not include Socrates,

who is able either to drink or to abstain, and will not mind, whichever

we do.) Well, as of none of the company seem disposed to drink much,

I may be forgiven for saying, as a physician, that drinking deep is

a bad practice, which I never follow, if I can help, and certainly

do not recommend to another, least of all to any one who still feels

the effects of yesterday's carouse.

I always do what you advise, and especially what you prescribe as

a physician, rejoined Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian, and the rest of the

company, if they are wise, will do the same.

It was agreed that drinking was not to be the order of the day, but

that they were all to drink only so much as they pleased.

Then, said Eryximachus, as you are all agreed that drinking is to

be voluntary, and that there is to be no compulsion, I move, in the

next place, that the flute-girl, who has just made her appearance,

be told to go away and play to herself, or, if she likes, to the women

who are within. To-day let us have conversation instead; and, if you

will allow me, I will tell you what sort of conversation. This proposal

having been accepted, Eryximachus proceeded as follows:-

I will begin, he said, after the manner of Melanippe in Euripides,

Not mine the word which I am about to speak, but that of Phaedrus.

For often he says to me in an indignant tone: "What a strange thing

it is, Eryximachus, that, whereas other gods have poems and hymns

made in their honour, the great and glorious god, Love, has no encomiast

among all the poets who are so many. There are the worthy sophists

too-the excellent Prodicus for example, who have descanted in prose

on the virtues of Heracles and other heroes; and, what is still more

extraordinary, I have met with a philosophical work in which the utility

of salt has been made the theme of an eloquent discourse; and many

other like things have had a like honour bestowed upon them. And only

to think that there should have been an eager interest created about

them, and yet that to this day no one has ever dared worthily to hymn

Love's praises! So entirely has this great deity been neglected."

Now in this Phaedrus seems to me to be quite right, and therefore

I want to offer him a contribution; also I think that at the present

moment we who are here assembled cannot do better than honour the.

god Love. If you agree with me, there will be no lack of conversation;

for I mean to propose that each of us in turn, going from left to

right, shall make a speech in honour of Love. Let him give us the

best which he can; and Phaedrus, because he is sitting first on the

left hand, and because he is the father of the thought, shall begin.

No one will vote against you, Eryximachus, said Socrates. How can

I oppose your motion, who profess to understand nothing but matters

of love; nor, I presume, will Agathon and Pausanias; and there can

be no doubt of Aristophanes, whose whole concern is with Dionysus

and Aphrodite; nor will any one disagree of those whom I, see around

me. The proposal, as I am aware, may seem rather hard upon us whose

place is last; but we shall be contented if we hear some good speeches

first. Let Phaedrus begin the praise of Love, and good luck to him.

All the company expressed their assent, and desired him to do as Socrates

bade him.

Aristodemus did not recollect all that was said, nor do I recollect

all that he related to me; but I will tell you what I thought most

worthy of remembrance, and what the chief speakers said.

Phaedrus began by affirming that love is a mighty god, and wonderful

among gods and men, but especially wonderful in his birth. For he

is the eldest of the gods, which is an honour to him; and a proof

of his claim to this honour is, that of his parents there is no memorial;

neither poet nor prose-writer has ever affirmed that he had any. As

Hesiod says:

First Chaos came, and then broad-bosomed Earth,

The everlasting seat of all that is,

And Love. In other words, after Chaos, the Earth and Love, these two,

came into being. Also Parmenides sings of Generation:

First in the train of gods, he fashioned Love. And Acusilaus agrees

with Hesiod. Thus numerous are the witnesses who acknowledge Love

to be the eldest of the gods. And not only is he the eldest, he is

also the source of the greatest benefits to us. For I know not any

greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous

lover or to the lover than a beloved youth. For the principle which

ought to be the guide of men who would nobly live at principle, I

say, neither kindred, nor honour, nor wealth, nor any other motive

is able to implant so well as love. Of what am I speaking? Of the

sense of honour and dishonour, without which neither states nor individuals

ever do any good or great work. And I say that a lover who is detected

in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when

any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being

detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father, or by his

companions, or by any one else. The beloved too, when he is found

in any disgraceful situation, has the same feeling about his lover.

And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army

should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very

best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonour, and

emulating one another in honour; and when fighting at each other's

side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For

what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than

by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his

arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure

this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger?

The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest,

at such a time; Love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer

says, the god breathes into the souls of some heroes, Love of his

own nature infuses into the lover.

Love will make men dare to die for their beloved-love alone; and women

as well as men. Of this, Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, is a monument

to all Hellas; for she was willing to lay down her life on behalf

of her husband, when no one else would, although he had a father and

mother; but the tenderness of her love so far exceeded theirs, that

she made them seem to be strangers in blood to their own son, and

in name only related to him; and so noble did this action of hers

appear to the gods, as well as to men, that among the many who have

done virtuously she is one of the very few to whom, in admiration

of her noble action, they have granted the privilege of returning

alive to earth; such exceeding honour is paid by the gods to the devotion

and virtue of love. But Orpheus, the son of Oeagrus, the harper, they

sent empty away, and presented to him an apparition only of her whom

he sought, but herself they would not give up, because he showed no

spirit; he was only a harp-player, and did not-dare like Alcestis

to die for love, but was contriving how he might enter hades alive;

moreover, they afterwards caused him to suffer death at the hands

of women, as the punishment of his cowardliness. Very different was

the reward of the true love of Achilles towards his lover Patroclus-his

lover and not his love (the notion that Patroclus was the beloved

one is a foolish error into which Aeschylus has fallen, for Achilles

was surely the fairer of the two, fairer also than all the other heroes;

and, as Homer informs us, he was still beardless, and younger far).

And greatly as the gods honour the virtue of love, still the return

of love on the part of the beloved to the lover is more admired and

valued and rewarded by them, for the lover is more divine; because

he is inspired by God. Now Achilles was quite aware, for he had been

told by his mother, that he might avoid death and return home, and

live to a good old age, if he abstained from slaying Hector. Nevertheless

he gave his life to revenge his friend, and dared to die, not only

in his defence, but after he was dead Wherefore the gods honoured

him even above Alcestis, and sent him to the Islands of the Blest.

These are my reasons for affirming that Love is the eldest and noblest

and mightiest of the gods; and the chiefest author and giver of virtue

in life, and of happiness after death.

This, or something like this, was the speech of Phaedrus; and some

other speeches followed which Aristodemus did not remember; the next

which he repeated was that of Pausanias. Phaedrus, he said, the argument

has not been set before us, I think, quite in the right form;-we should

not be called upon to praise Love in such an indiscriminate manner.

If there were only one Love, then what you said would be well enough;

but since there are more Loves than one,-should have begun by determining

which of them was to be the theme of our praises. I will amend this

defect; and first of all I would tell you which Love is deserving

of praise, and then try to hymn the praiseworthy one in a manner worthy

of him. For we all know that Love is inseparable from Aphrodite, and

if there were only one Aphrodite there would be only one Love; but

as there are two goddesses there must be two Loves.

And am I not right in asserting that there are two goddesses? The

elder one, having no mother, who is called the heavenly Aphrodite-she

is the daughter of Uranus; the younger, who is the daughter of Zeus

and Dione-her we call common; and the Love who is her fellow-worker

is rightly named common, as the other love is called heavenly. All

the gods ought to have praise given to them, but not without distinction

of their natures; and therefore I must try to distinguish the characters

of the two Loves. Now actions vary according to the manner of their

performance. Take, for example, that which we are now doing, drinking,

singing and talking these actions are not in themselves either good

or evil, but they turn out in this or that way according to the mode

of performing them; and when well done they are good, and when wrongly

done they are evil; and in like manner not every love, but only that

which has a noble purpose, is noble and worthy of praise. The Love

who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common,

and has no discrimination, being such as the meaner sort of men feel,

and is apt to be of women as well as of youths, and is of the body

rather than of the soul-the most foolish beings are the objects of

this love which desires only to gain an end, but never thinks of accomplishing

the end nobly, and therefore does good and evil quite indiscriminately.

The goddess who is his mother is far younger than the other, and she

was born of the union of the male and female, and partakes of both.

But the offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother

in whose birth the female has no part,-she is from the male only;

this is that love which is of youths, and the goddess being older,

there is nothing of wantonness in her. Those who are inspired by this

love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant

and intelligent nature; any one may recognise the pure enthusiasts

in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys,

but intelligent, beings whose reason is beginning to be developed,

much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. And in choosing

young men to be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them,

and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in

their inexperience, and deceive them, and play the fool with them,

or run away from one to another of them. But the love of young boys

should be forbidden by law, because their future is uncertain; they

may turn out good or bad, either in body or soul, and much noble enthusiasm

may be thrown away upon them; in this matter the good are a law to

themselves, and the coarser sort of lovers ought to be restrained

by force; as we restrain or attempt to restrain them from fixing their

affections on women of free birth. These are the persons who bring

a reproach on love; and some have been led to deny the lawfulness

of such attachments because they see the impropriety and evil of them;

for surely nothing that is decorously and lawfully done can justly

be censured.

Now here and in Lacedaemon the rules about love are perplexing, but

in most cities they are simple and easily intelligible; in Elis and

Boeotia, and in countries having no gifts of eloquence, they are very

straightforward; the law is simply in favour of these connexions,

and no one, whether young or old, has anything to say to their discredit;

the reason being, as I suppose, that they are men of few words in

those parts, and therefore the lovers do not like the trouble of pleading

their suit. In Ionia and other places, and generally in countries

which are subject to the barbarians, the custom is held to be dishonourable;

loves of youths share the evil repute in which philosophy and gymnastics

are held because they are inimical to tyranny; for the interests of

rulers require that their subjects should be poor in spirit and that

there should be no strong bond of friendship or society among them,

which love, above all other motives, is likely to inspire, as our

Athenian tyrants-learned by experience; for the love of Aristogeiton

and the constancy of Harmodius had strength which undid their power.

And, therefore, the ill-repute into which these attachments have fallen

is to be ascribed to the evil condition of those who make them to

be ill-reputed; that is to say, to the self-seeking of the governors

and the cowardice of the governed; on the other hand, the indiscriminate

honour which is given to them in some countries is attributable to

the laziness of those who hold this opinion of them. In our own country

a far better principle prevails, but, as I was saying, the explanation

of it is rather perplexing. For, observe that open loves are held

to be more honourable than secret ones, and that the love of the noblest

and highest, even if their persons are less beautiful than others,

is especially honourable.

Consider, too, how great is the encouragement which all the world

gives to the lover; neither is he supposed to be doing anything dishonourable;

but if he succeeds he is praised, and if he fail he is blamed. And

in the pursuit of his love the custom of mankind allows him to do

many strange things, which philosophy would bitterly censure if they

were done from any motive of interest, or wish for office or power.

He may pray, and entreat, and supplicate, and swear, and lie on a

mat at the door, and endure a slavery worse than that of any slave-in

any other case friends and enemies would be equally ready to prevent

him, but now there is no friend who will be ashamed of him and admonish

him, and no enemy will charge him with meanness or flattery; the actions

of a lover have a grace which ennobles them; and custom has decided

that they are highly commendable and that there no loss of character

in them; and, what is strangest of all, he only may swear and forswear

himself (so men say), and the gods will forgive his transgression,

for there is no such thing as a lover's oath. Such is the entire liberty

which gods and men have allowed the lover, according to the custom

which prevails in our part of the world. From this point of view a

man fairly argues in Athens to love and to be loved is held to be

a very honourable thing. But when parents forbid their sons to talk

with their lovers, and place them under a tutor's care, who is appointed

to see to these things, and their companions and equals cast in their

teeth anything of the sort which they may observe, and their elders

refuse to silence the reprovers and do not rebuke them-any one who

reflects on all this will, on the contrary, think that we hold these

practices to be most disgraceful. But, as I was saying at first, the

truth as I imagine is, that whether such practices are honourable

or whether they are dishonourable is not a simple question; they are

honourable to him who follows them honourably, dishonourable to him

who follows them dishonourably. There is dishonour in yielding to

the evil, or in an evil manner; but there is honour in yielding to

the good, or in an honourable manner.

Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul,

inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which

is in itself unstable, and therefore when the bloom of youth which

he was desiring is over, he takes wing and flies away, in spite of

all his words and promises; whereas the love of the noble disposition

is life-long, for it becomes one with the everlasting. The custom

of our country would have both of them proven well and truly, and

would have us yield to the one sort of lover and avoid the other,

and therefore encourages some to pursue, and others to fly; testing

both the lover and beloved in contests and trials, until they show

to which of the two classes they respectively belong. And this is

the reason why, in the first place, a hasty attachment is held to

be dishonourable, because time is the true test of this as of most

other things; and secondly there is a dishonour in being overcome

by the love of money, or of wealth, or of political power, whether

a man is frightened into surrender by the loss of them, or, having

experienced the benefits of money and political corruption, is unable

to rise above the seductions of them. For none of these things are

of a permanent or lasting nature; not to mention that no generous

friendship ever sprang from them. There remains, then, only one way

of honourable attachment which custom allows in the beloved, and this

is the way of virtue; for as we admitted that any service which the

lover does to him is not to be accounted flattery or a dishonour to

himself, so the beloved has one way only of voluntary service which

is not dishonourable, and this is virtuous service.

For we have a custom, and according to our custom any one who does

service to another under the idea that he will be improved by him

either in wisdom, or, in some other particular of virtue-such a voluntary

service, I say, is not to be regarded as a dishonour, and is not open

to the charge of flattery. And these two customs, one the love of

youth, and the other the practice of philosophy and virtue in general,

ought to meet in one, and then the beloved may honourably indulge

the lover. For when the lover and beloved come together, having each

of them a law, and the lover thinks that he is right in doing any

service which he can to his gracious loving one; and the other that

he is right in showing any kindness which he can to him who is making

him wise and good; the one capable of communicating wisdom and virtue,

the other seeking to acquire them with a view to education and wisdom,

when the two laws of love are fulfilled and meet in one-then, and

then only, may the beloved yield with honour to the lover. Nor when

love is of this disinterested sort is there any disgrace in being

deceived, but in every other case there is equal disgrace in being

or not being deceived. For he who is gracious to his lover under the

impression that he is rich, and is disappointed of his gains because

he turns out to be poor, is disgraced all the same: for he has done

his best to show that he would give himself up to any one's "uses

base" for the sake of money; but this is not honourable. And on the

same principle he who gives himself to a lover because he is a good

man, and in the hope that he will be improved by his company, shows

himself to be virtuous, even though the object of his affection turn

out to be a villain, and to have no virtue; and if he is deceived

he has committed a noble error. For he has proved that for his part

he will do anything for anybody with a view to virtue and improvement,

than which there can be nothing nobler. Thus noble in every case is

the acceptance of another for the sake of virtue. This is that love

which is the love of the heavenly godess, and is heavenly, and of

great price to individuals and cities, making the lover and the beloved

alike eager in the work of their own improvement. But all other loves

are the offspring of the other, who is the common goddess. To you,

Phaedrus, I offer this my contribution in praise of love, which is

as good as I could make extempore.

Pausanias came to a pause-this is the balanced way in which I have

been taught by the wise to speak; and Aristodemus said that the turn

of Aristophanes was next, but either he had eaten too much, or from

some other cause he had the hiccough, and was obliged to change turns

with Eryximachus the physician, who was reclining on the couch below

him. Eryximachus, he said, you ought either to stop my hiccough, or

to speak in my turn until I have left off.

I will do both, said Eryximachus: I will speak in your turn, and do

you speak in mine; and while I am speaking let me recommend you to

hold your breath, and if after you have done so for some time the

hiccough is no better, then gargle with a little water; and if it

still continues, tickle your nose with something and sneeze; and if

you sneeze once or twice, even the most violent hiccough is sure to

go. I will do as you prescribe, said Aristophanes, and now get on.

Eryximachus spoke as follows: Seeing that Pausanias made a fair beginning,

and but a lame ending, I must endeavour to supply his deficiency.

I think that he has rightly distinguished two kinds of love. But my

art further informs me that the double love is not merely an affection

of the soul of man towards the fair, or towards anything, but is to

be found in the bodies of all animals and in productions of the earth,

and I may say in all that is; such is the conclusion which I seem

to have gathered from my own art of medicine, whence I learn how great

and wonderful and universal is the deity of love, whose empire extends

over all things, divine as well as human. And from medicine I would

begin that I may do honour to my art. There are in the human body

these two kinds of love, which are confessedly different and unlike,

and being unlike, they have loves and desires which are unlike; and

the desire of the healthy is one, and the desire of the diseased is

another; and as Pausanias was just now saying that to indulge good

men is honourable, and bad men dishonourable:-so too in the body the

good and healthy elements are to be indulged, and the bad elements

and the elements of disease are not to be indulged, but discouraged.

And this is what the physician has to do, and in this the art of medicine

consists: for medicine may be regarded generally as the knowledge

of the loves and desires of the body, and how to satisfy them or not;

and the best physician is he who is able to separate fair love from

foul, or to convert one into the other; and he who knows how to eradicate

and how to implant love, whichever is required, and can reconcile

the most hostile elements in the constitution and make them loving

friends, is skilful practitioner. Now the: most hostile are the most

opposite, such as hot and cold, bitter and sweet, moist and dry, and

the like. And my ancestor, Asclepius, knowing how-to implant friendship

and accord in these elements, was the creator of our art, as our friends

the poets here tell us, and I believe them; and not only medicine

in every branch but the arts of gymnastic and husbandry are under

his dominion.

Any one who pays the least attention to the subject will also perceive

that in music there is the same reconciliation of opposites; and I

suppose that this must have been the meaning, of Heracleitus, although,

his words are not accurate, for he says that is united by disunion,

like the harmony-of bow and the lyre. Now there is an absurdity saying

that harmony is discord or is composed of elements which are still

in a state of discord. But what he probably meant was, that, harmony

is composed of differing notes of higher or lower pitch which disagreed

once, but are now reconciled by the art of music; for if the higher

and lower notes still disagreed, there could be there could be no

harmony-clearly not. For harmony is a symphony, and symphony is an

agreement; but an agreement of disagreements while they disagree there

cannot be; you cannot harmonize that which disagrees. In like manner

rhythm is compounded of elements short and long, once differing and

now-in accord; which accordance, as in the former instance, medicine,

so in all these other cases, music implants, making love and unison

to grow up among them; and thus music, too, is concerned with the

principles of love in their application to harmony and rhythm. Again,

in the essential nature of harmony and rhythm there is no difficulty

in discerning love which has not yet become double. But when you want

to use them in actual life, either in the composition of songs or

in the correct performance of airs or metres composed already, which

latter is called education, then the difficulty begins, and the good

artist is needed. Then the old tale has to be repeated of fair and

heavenly love -the love of Urania the fair and heavenly muse, and

of the duty of accepting the temperate, and those who are as yet intemperate

only that they may become temperate, and of preserving their love;

and again, of the vulgar Polyhymnia, who must be used with circumspection

that the pleasure be enjoyed, but may not generate licentiousness;

just as in my own art it is a great matter so to regulate the desires

of the epicure that he may gratify his tastes without the attendant

evil of disease. Whence I infer that in music, in medicine, in all

other things human as which as divine, both loves ought to be noted

as far as may be, for they are both present.

The course of the seasons is also full of both these principles; and

when, as I was saying, the elements of hot and cold, moist and dry,

attain the harmonious love of one another and blend in temperance

and harmony, they bring to men, animals, and plants health and plenty,

and do them no harm; whereas the wanton love, getting the upper hand

and affecting the seasons of the year, is very destructive and injurious,

being the source of pestilence, and bringing many other kinds of diseases

on animals and plants; for hoar-frost and hail and blight spring from

the excesses and disorders of these elements of love, which to know

in relation to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies and the seasons

of the year is termed astronomy. Furthermore all sacrifices and the

whole province of divination, which is the art of communion between

gods and men-these, I say, are concerned with the preservation of

the good and the cure of the evil love. For all manner of impiety

is likely to ensue if, instead of accepting and honouring and reverencing

the harmonious love in all his actions, a man honours the other love,

whether in his feelings towards gods or parents, towards the living

or the dead. Wherefore the business of divination is to see to these

loves and to heal them, and divination is the peacemaker of gods and

men, working by a knowledge of the religious or irreligious tendencies

which exist in human loves. Such is the great and mighty, or rather

omnipotent force of love in general. And the love, more especially,

which is concerned with the good, and which is perfected in company

with temperance and justice, whether among gods or men, has the greatest

power, and is the source of all our happiness and harmony, and makes

us friends with the gods who are above us, and with one another. I

dare say that I too have omitted several things which might be said

in praise of Love, but this was not intentional, and you, Aristophanes,

may now supply the omission or take some other line of commendation;

for I perceive that you are rid of the hiccough.

Yes, said Aristophanes, who followed, the hiccough is gone; not, however,

until I applied the sneezing; and I wonder whether the harmony of

the body has a love of such noises and ticklings, for I no sooner

applied the sneezing than I was cured.

Eryximachus said: Beware, friend Aristophanes, although you are going

to speak, you are making fun of me; and I shall have to watch and

see whether I cannot have a laugh at your expense, when you might

speak in peace.

You are right, said Aristophanes, laughing. I will unsay my words;

but do you please not to watch me, as I fear that in the speech which

I am about to make, instead of others laughing with me, which is to

the manner born of our muse and would be all the better, I shall only

be laughed at by them.

Do you expect to shoot your bolt and escape, Aristophanes? Well, perhaps

if you are very careful and bear in mind that you will be called to

account, I may be induced to let you off.

Aristophanes professed to open another vein of discourse; he had a

mind to praise Love in another way, unlike that either of Pausanias

or Eryximachus. Mankind; he said, judging by their neglect of him,

have never, as I think, at all understood the power of Love. For if

they had understood him they would surely have built noble temples

and altars, and offered solemn sacrifices in his honour; but this

is not done, and most certainly ought to be done: since of all the

gods he is the best friend of men, the helper and the healer of the

ills which are the great impediment to the happiness of the race.

I will try to describe his power to you, and you shall teach the rest

of the world what I am teaching you. In the first place, let me treat

of the nature of man and what has happened to it; for the original

human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were

not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was

man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding

to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now

lost, and the word "Androgynous" is only preserved as a term of reproach.

In the second place, the primeval man was round, his back and sides

forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with

two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely

alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond.

He could walk upright as men now do, backwards or forwards as he pleased,

and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his

four hands and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and

over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast.

Now the sexes were three, and such as I have described them; because

the sun, moon, and earth are three;-and the man was originally the

child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the

moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and

moved round and round: like their parents. Terrible was their might

and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they

made an attack upon the gods; of them is told the tale of Otys and

Ephialtes who, as Homer says, dared to scale heaven, and would have

laid hands upon the gods. Doubt reigned in the celestial councils.

Should they kill them and annihilate the race with thunderbolts, as

they had done the giants, then there would be an end of the sacrifices

and worship which men offered to them; but, on the other hand, the

gods could not suffer their insolence to be unrestrained.

At last, after a good deal of reflection, Zeus discovered a way. He

said: "Methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve

their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in

two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in

numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more profitable

to us. They shall walk upright on two legs, and if they continue insolent

and will not be quiet, I will split them again and they shall hop

about on a single leg." He spoke and cut men in two, like a sorb-apple

which is halved for pickling, or as you might divide an egg with a

hair; and as he cut them one after another, he bade Apollo give the

face and the half of the neck a turn in order that the man might contemplate

the section of himself: he would thus learn a lesson of humility.

Apollo was also bidden to heal their wounds and compose their forms.

So he gave a turn to the face and pulled the skin from the sides all

over that which in our language is called the belly, like the purses

which draw in, and he made one mouth at the centre, which he fastened

in a knot (the same which is called the navel); he also moulded the

breast and took out most of the wrinkles, much as a shoemaker might

smooth leather upon a last; he left a few, however, in the region

of the belly and navel, as a memorial of the primeval state. After

the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came

together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual

embraces, longing to grow into one, they were on the point of dying

from hunger and self-neglect, because they did not like to do anything

apart; and when one of the halves died and the other survived, the

survivor sought another mate, man or woman as we call them, being

the sections of entire men or women, and clung to that. They were

being destroyed, when Zeus in pity of them invented a new plan: he

turned the parts of generation round to the front, for this had not

been always their position and they sowed the seed no longer as hitherto

like grasshoppers in the ground, but in one another; and after the

transposition the male generated in the female in order that by the

mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed, and the race might

continue; or if man came to man they might be satisfied, and rest,

and go their ways to the business of life: so ancient is the desire

of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature,

making one of two, and healing the state of man.

Each of us when separated, having one side only, like a flat fish,

is but the indenture of a man, and he is always looking for his other

half. Men who are a section of that double nature which was once called

Androgynous are lovers of women; adulterers are generally of this

breed, and also adulterous women who lust after men: the women who

are a section of the woman do not care for men, but have female attachments;

the female companions are of this sort. But they who are a section

of the male follow the male, and while they are young, being slices

of the original man, they hang about men and embrace them, and they

are themselves the best of boys and youths, because they have the

most manly nature. Some indeed assert that they are shameless, but

this is not true; for they do not act thus from any want of shame,

but because they are valiant and manly, and have a manly countenance,

and they embrace that which is like them. And these when they grow

up become our statesmen, and these only, which is a great proof of

the truth of what I am saving. When they reach manhood they are loves

of youth, and are not naturally inclined to marry or beget children,-if

at all, they do so only in obedience to the law; but they are satisfied

if they may be allowed to live with one another unwedded; and such

a nature is prone to love and ready to return love, always embracing

that which is akin to him. And when one of them meets with his other

half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or

a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love

and friendship and intimacy, and would not be out of the other's sight,

as I may say, even for a moment: these are the people who pass their

whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire

of one another. For the intense yearning which each of them has towards

the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse,

but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and

cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment.

Suppose Hephaestus, with his instruments, to come to the pair who

are lying side, by side and to say to them, "What do you people want

of one another?" they would be unable to explain. And suppose further,

that when he saw their perplexity he said: "Do you desire to be wholly

one; always day and night to be in one another's company? for if this

is what you desire, I am ready to melt you into one and let you grow

together, so that being two you shall become one, and while you live

a common life as if you were a single man, and after your death in

the world below still be one departed soul instead of two-I ask whether

this is what you lovingly desire, and whether you are satisfied to

attain this?"-there is not a man of them who when he heard the proposal

would deny or would not acknowledge that this meeting and melting

into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression

of his ancient need. And the reason is that human nature was originally

one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is

called love. There was a time, I say, when we were one, but now because

of the wickedness of mankind God has dispersed us, as the Arcadians

were dispersed into villages by the Lacedaemonians. And if we are

not obedient to the gods, there is a danger that we shall be split

up again and go about in basso-relievo, like the profile figures having

only half a nose which are sculptured on monuments, and that we shall

be like tallies.

Wherefore let us exhort all men to piety, that we may avoid evil,

and obtain the good, of which Love is to us the lord and minister;

and let no one oppose him-he is the enemy of the gods who oppose him.

For if we are friends of the God and at peace with him we shall find

our own true loves, which rarely happens in this world at present.

I am serious, and therefore I must beg Eryximachus not to make fun

or to find any allusion in what I am saying to Pausanias and Agathon,

who, as I suspect, are both of the manly nature, and belong to the

class which I have been describing. But my words have a wider application-they

include men and women everywhere; and I believe that if our loves

were perfectly accomplished, and each one returning to his primeval

nature had his original true love, then our race would be happy. And

if this would be best of all, the best in the next degree and under

present circumstances must be the nearest approach to such an union;

and that will be the attainment of a congenial love. Wherefore, if

we would praise him who has given to us the benefit, we must praise

the god Love, who is our greatest benefactor, both leading us in this

life back to our own nature, and giving us high hopes for the future,

for he promises that if we are pious, he will restore us to our original

state, and heal us and make us happy and blessed. This, Eryximachus,

is my discourse of love, which, although different to yours, I must

beg you to leave unassailed by the shafts of your ridicule, in order

that each may have his turn; each, or rather either, for Agathon and

Socrates are the only ones left.

Indeed, I am not going to attack you, said Eryximachus, for I thought

your speech charming, and did I not know that Agathon and Socrates

are masters in the art of love, I should be really afraid that they

would have nothing to say, after the world of things which have been

said already. But, for all that, I am not without hopes.

Socrates said: You played your part well, Eryximachus; but if you

were as I am now, or rather as I shall be when Agathon has spoken,

you would, indeed, be in a great strait.

You want to cast a spell over me, Socrates, said Agathon, in the hope

that I may be disconcerted at the expectation raised among the audience

that I shall speak well.

I should be strangely forgetful, Agathon replied Socrates, of the

courage and magnanimity which you showed when your own compositions

were about to be exhibited, and you came upon the stage with the actors

and faced the vast theatre altogether undismayed, if I thought that

your nerves could be fluttered at a small party of friends.

Do you think, Socrates, said Agathon, that my head is so full of the

theatre as not to know how much more formidable to a man of sense

a few good judges are than many fools?

Nay, replied Socrates, I should be very wrong in attributing to you,

Agathon, that or any other want of refinement. And I am quite aware

that if you happened to meet with any whom you thought wise, you would

care for their opinion much more than for that of the many. But then

we, having been a part of the foolish many in the theatre, cannot

be regarded as the select wise; though I know that if you chanced

to be in the presence, not of one of ourselves, but of some really

wise man, you would be ashamed of disgracing yourself before him-would

you not?

Yes, said Agathon.

But before the many you would not be ashamed, if you thought that

you were doing something disgraceful in their presence?

Here Phaedrus interrupted them, saying: not answer him, my dear Agathon;

for if he can only get a partner with whom he can talk, especially

a good-looking one, he will no longer care about the completion of

our plan. Now I love to hear him talk; but just at present I must

not forget the encomium on Love which I ought to receive from him

and from every one. When you and he have paid your tribute to the

god, then you may talk.

Very good, Phaedrus, said Agathon; I see no reason why I should not

proceed with my speech, as I shall have many other opportunities of

conversing with Socrates. Let me say first how I ought to speak, and

then speak:-

The previous speakers, instead of praising the god Love, or unfolding

his nature, appear to have congratulated mankind on the benefits which

he confers upon them. But I would rather praise the god first, and

then speak of his gifts; this is always the right way of praising

everything. May I say without impiety or offence, that of all the

blessed gods he is the most blessed because he is the fairest and

best? And he is the fairest: for, in the first place, he is the youngest,

and of his youth he is himself the witness, fleeing out of the way

of age, who is swift enough, swifter truly than most of us like:-Love

hates him and will not come near him; but youth and love live and

move together-like to like, as the proverb says. Many things were

said by Phaedrus about Love in which I agree with him; but I cannot

agree that he is older than Iapetus and Kronos:-not so; I maintain

him to be the youngest of the gods, and youthful ever. The ancient

doings among the gods of which Hesiod and Parmenides spoke, if the

tradition of them be true, were done of Necessity and not Love; had

Love been in those days, there would have been no chaining or mutilation

of the gods, or other violence, but peace and sweetness, as there

is now in heaven, since the rule of Love began.

Love is young and also tender; he ought to have a poet like Homer

to describe his tenderness, as Homer says of Ate, that she is a goddess

and tender:

Her feet are tender, for she sets her steps,

Not on the ground but on the heads of men: herein is an excellent

proof of her tenderness that,-she walks not upon the hard but upon

the soft. Let us adduce a similar proof of the tenderness of Love;

for he walks not upon the earth, nor yet upon skulls of men, which

are not so very soft, but in the hearts and souls of both god, and

men, which are of all things the softest: in them he walks and dwells

and makes his home. Not in every soul without exception, for Where

there is hardness he departs, where there is softness there he dwells;

and nestling always with his feet and in all manner of ways in the

softest of soft places, how can he be other than the softest of all

things? Of a truth he is the tenderest as well as the youngest, and

also he is of flexile form; for if he were hard and without flexure

he could not enfold all things, or wind his way into and out of every

soul of man undiscovered. And a proof of his flexibility and symmetry

of form is his grace, which is universally admitted to be in an especial

manner the attribute of Love; ungrace and love are always at war with

one another. The fairness of his complexion is revealed by his habitation

among the flowers; for he dwells not amid bloomless or fading beauties,

whether of body or soul or aught else, but in the place of flowers

and scents, there he sits and abides. Concerning the beauty of the

god I have said enough; and yet there remains much more which I might

say. Of his virtue I have now to speak: his greatest glory is that

he can neither do nor suffer wrong to or from any god or any man;

for he suffers not by force if he suffers; force comes not near him,

neither when he acts does he act by force. For all men in all things

serve him of their own free will, and where there is voluntary agreement,

there, as the laws which are the lords of the city say, is justice.

And not only is he just but exceedingly temperate, for Temperance

is the acknowledged ruler of the pleasures and desires, and no pleasure

ever masters Love; he is their master and they are his servants; and

if he conquers them he must be temperate indeed. As to courage, even

the God of War is no match for him; he is the captive and Love is

the lord, for love, the love of Aphrodite, masters him, as the tale

runs; and the master is stronger than the servant. And if he conquers

the bravest of all others, he must be himself the bravest.

Of his courage and justice and temperance I have spoken, but I have

yet to speak of his wisdom-and according to the measure of my ability

I must try to do my best. In the first place he is a poet (and here,

like Eryximachus, I magnify my art), and he is also the source of

poesy in others, which he could not be if he were not himself a poet.

And at the touch of him every one becomes a poet, even though he had

no music in him before; this also is a proof that Love is a good poet

and accomplished in all the fine arts; for no one can give to another

that which he has not himself, or teach that of which he has no knowledge.

Who will deny that the creation of the animals is his doing? Are they

not all the works his wisdom, born and begotten of him? And as to

the artists, do we not know that he only of them whom love inspires

has the light of fame?-he whom Love touches riot walks in darkness.

The arts of medicine and archery and divination were discovered by

Apollo, under the guidance of love and desire; so that he too is a

disciple of Love. Also the melody of the Muses, the metallurgy of

Hephaestus, the weaving of Athene, the empire of Zeus over gods and

men, are all due to Love, who was the inventor of them. And so Love

set in order the empire of the gods-the love of beauty, as is evident,

for with deformity Love has no concern. In the days of old, as I began

by saying, dreadful deeds were done among the gods, for they were

ruled by Necessity; but now since the birth of Love, and from the

Love of the beautiful, has sprung every good in heaven and earth.

Therefore, Phaedrus, I say of Love that he is the fairest and best

in himself, and the cause of what is fairest and best in all other

things. And there comes into my mind a line of poetry in which he

is said to be the god who

Gives peace on earth and calms the stormy deep,

Who stills the winds and bids the sufferer sleep. This is he who empties

men of disaffection and fills them with affection, who makes them

to meet together at banquets such as these: in sacrifices, feasts,

dances, he is our lord-who sends courtesy and sends away discourtesy,

who gives kindness ever and never gives unkindness; the friend of

the good, the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired

by those who have no part in him, and precious to those who have the

better part in him; parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness,

softness, grace; regardful of the good, regardless of the evil: in

every word, work, wish, fear-saviour, pilot, comrade, helper; glory

of gods and men, leader best and brightest: in whose footsteps let

every man follow, sweetly singing in his honour and joining in that

sweet strain with which love charms the souls of gods and men. Such

is the speech, Phaedrus, half-playful, yet having a certain measure

of seriousness, which, according to my ability, I dedicate to the

god.

When Agathon had done speaking, Aristodemus said that there was a

general cheer; the young man was thought to have spoken in a manner

worthy of himself, and of the god. And Socrates, looking at Eryximachus,

said: Tell me, son of Acumenus, was there not reason in my fears?

and was I not a true prophet when I said that Agathon would make a

wonderful oration, and that I should be in a strait?

The part of the prophecy which concerns Agathon, replied Eryximachus,

appears to me to be true; but, not the other part-that you will be

in a strait.

Why, my dear friend, said Socrates, must not I or any one be in a

strait who has to speak after he has heard such a rich and varied

discourse? I am especially struck with the beauty of the concluding

words-who could listen to them without amazement? When I reflected

on the immeasurable inferiority of my own powers, I was ready to run

away for shame, if there had been a possibility of escape. For I was

reminded of Gorgias, and at the end of his speech I fancied that Agathon

was shaking at me the Gorginian or Gorgonian head of the great master

of rhetoric, which was simply to turn me and my speech, into stone,

as Homer says, and strike me dumb. And then I perceived how foolish

I had been in consenting to take my turn with you in praising love,

and saying that I too was a master of the art, when I really had no

conception how anything ought to be praised. For in my simplicity

I imagined that the topics of praise should be true, and that this

being presupposed, out of the true the speaker was to choose the best

and set them forth in the best manner. And I felt quite proud, thinking

that I knew the nature of true praise, and should speak well. Whereas

I now see that the intention was to attribute to Love every species

of greatness and glory, whether really belonging to him not, without

regard to truth or falsehood-that was no matter; for the original,

proposal seems to have been not that each of you should really praise

Love, but only that you should appear to praise him. And so you attribute

to Love every imaginable form of praise which can be gathered anywhere;

and you say that "he is all this," and "the cause of all that," making

him appear the fairest and best of all to those who know him not,

for you cannot impose upon those who know him. And a noble and solemn

hymn of praise have you rehearsed. But as I misunderstood the nature

of the praise when I said that I would take my turn, I must beg to

be absolved from the promise which I made in ignorance, and which

(as Euripides would say) was a promise of the lips and not of the

mind. Farewell then to such a strain: for I do not praise in that

way; no, indeed, I cannot. But if you like to here the truth about

love, I am ready to speak in my own manner, though I will not make

myself ridiculous by entering into any rivalry with you. Say then,

Phaedrus, whether you would like, to have the truth about love, spoken

in any words and in any order which may happen to come into my mind

at the time. Will that be agreeable to you?

Aristodemus said that Phaedrus and the company bid him speak in any

manner which he thought best. Then, he added, let me have your permission

first to ask Agathon a few more questions, in order that I may take

his admissions as the premisses of my discourse.

I grant the permission, said Phaedrus: put your questions. Socrates

then proceeded as follows:-

In the magnificent oration which you have just uttered, I think that

you were right, my dear Agathon, in proposing to speak of the nature

of Love first and afterwards of his works-that is a way of beginning

which I very much approve. And as you have spoken so eloquently of

his nature, may I ask you further, Whether love is the love of something

or of nothing? And here I must explain myself: I do not want you to

say that love is the love of a father or the love of a mother-that

would be ridiculous; but to answer as you would, if I asked is a father

a father of something? to which you would find no difficulty in replying,

of a son or daughter: and the answer would be right.

Very true, said Agathon.

And you would say the same of a mother?

He assented.

Yet let me ask you one more question in order to illustrate my meaning:

Is not a brother to be regarded essentially as a brother of something?

Certainly, he replied.

That is, of a brother or sister?

Yes, he said.

And now, said Socrates, I will ask about Love:-Is Love of something

or of nothing?

Of something, surely, he replied.

Keep in mind what this is, and tell me what I want to know-whether

Love desires that of which love is.

Yes, surely.

And does he possess, or does he not possess, that which he loves and

desires?

Probably not, I should say.

Nay, replied Socrates, I would have you consider whether "necessarily"

is not rather the word. The inference that he who desires something

is in want of something, and that he who desires nothing is in want

of nothing, is in my judgment, Agathon absolutely and necessarily

true. What do you think?

I agree with you, said Agathon.

Very good. Would he who is great, desire to be great, or he who is

strong, desire to be strong?

That would be inconsistent with our previous admissions.

True. For he who is anything cannot want to be that which he is?

Very true.

And yet, added Socrates, if a man being strong desired to be strong,

or being swift desired to be swift, or being healthy desired to be

healthy, in that case he might be thought to desire something which

he already has or is. I give the example in order that we may avoid

misconception. For the possessors of these qualities, Agathon, must

be supposed to have their respective advantages at the time, whether

they choose or not; and who can desire that which he has? Therefore

when a person says, I am well and wish to be well, or I am rich and

wish to be rich, and I desire simply to have what I have-to him we

shall reply: "You, my friend, having wealth and health and strength,

want to have the continuance of them; for at this moment, whether

you choose or no, you have them. And when you say, I desire that which

I have and nothing else, is not your meaning that you want to have

what you now have in the future? "He must agree with us-must he not?

He must, replied Agathon.

Then, said Socrates, he desires that what he has at present may be

preserved to him in the future, which is equivalent to saying that

he desires something which is non-existent to him, and which as yet

he has not got.

Very true, he said.

Then he and every one who desires, desires that which he has not already,

and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is

not, and of which he is in want;-these are the sort of things which

love and desire seek?

Very true, he said.

Then now, said Socrates, let us recapitulate the argument. First,

is not love of something, and of something too which is wanting to

a man?

Yes, he replied.

Remember further what you said in your speech, or if you do not remember

I will remind you: you said that the love of the beautiful set in

order the empire of the gods, for that of deformed things there is

no love-did you not say something of that kind?

Yes, said Agathon.

Yes, my friend, and the remark was a just one. And if this is true,

Love is the love of beauty and not of deformity?

He assented.

And the admission has been already made that Love is of something

which a man wants and has not?

True, he said.

Then Love wants and has not beauty?

Certainly, he replied.

And would you call that beautiful which wants and does not possess

beauty?

Certainly not.

Then would you still say that love is beautiful?

Agathon replied: I fear that I did not understand what I was saying.

You made a very good speech, Agathon, replied Socrates; but there

is yet one small question which I would fain ask:-Is not the good

also the beautiful?

Yes.

Then in wanting the beautiful, love wants also the good?

I cannot refute you, Socrates, said Agathon:-Let us assume that what

you say is true.

Say rather, beloved Agathon, that you cannot refute the truth; for

Socrates is easily refuted.

And now, taking my leave of you, I would rehearse a tale of love which

I heard from Diotima of Mantineia, a woman wise in this and in many

other kinds of knowledge, who in the days of old, when the Athenians

offered sacrifice before the coming of the plague, delayed the disease

ten years. She was my instructress in the art of love, and I shall

repeat to you what she said to me, beginning with the admissions made

by Agathon, which are nearly if not quite the same which I made to

the wise woman when she questioned me-I think that this will be the

easiest way, and I shall take both parts myself as well as I can.

As you, Agathon, suggested, I must speak first of the being and nature

of Love, and then of his works. First I said to her in nearly the

same words which he used to me, that Love was a mighty god, and likewise

fair and she proved to me as I proved to him that, by my own showing,

Love was neither fair nor good. "What do you mean, Diotima," I said,

"is love then evil and foul?" "Hush," she cried; "must that be foul

which is not fair?" "Certainly," I said. "And is that which is not

wise, ignorant? do you not see that there is a mean between wisdom

and ignorance?" "And what may that be?" I said. "Right opinion," she

replied; "which, as you know, being incapable of giving a reason,

is not knowledge (for how can knowledge be devoid of reason? nor again,

ignorance, for neither can ignorance attain the truth), but is clearly

something which is a mean between ignorance and wisdom." "Quite true,"

I replied. "Do not then insist," she said, "that what is not fair

is of necessity foul, or what is not good evil; or infer that because

love is not fair and good he is therefore foul and evil; for he is

in a mean between them." "Well," I said, "Love is surely admitted

by all to be a great god." "By those who know or by those who do not

know?" "By all." "And how, Socrates," she said with a smile, "can

Love be acknowledged to be a great god by those who say that he is

not a god at all?" "And who are they?" I said. "You and I are two

of them," she replied. "How can that be?" I said. "It is quite intelligible,"

she replied; "for you yourself would acknowledge that the gods are

happy and fair of course you would-would to say that any god was not?"

"Certainly not," I replied. "And you mean by the happy, those who

are the possessors of things good or fair?" "Yes." "And you admitted

that Love, because he was in want, desires those good and fair things

of which he is in want?" "Yes, I did." "But how can he be a god who

has no portion in what is either good or fair?" "Impossible." "Then

you see that you also deny the divinity of Love."

"What then is Love?" I asked; "Is he mortal?" "No." "What then?" "As

in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in

a mean between the two." "What is he, Diotima?" "He is a great spirit

(daimon), and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine

and the mortal." "And what," I said, "is his power?" "He interprets,"

she replied, "between gods and men, conveying and taking across to

the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands

and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which

divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through

him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries

and charms, and all, prophecy and incantation, find their way. For

God mingles not with man; but through Love. all the intercourse, and

converse of god with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on.

The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom,

such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these

spirits or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them

is Love. "And who," I said, "was his father, and who his mother?"

"The tale," she said, "will take time; nevertheless I will tell you.

On the birthday of Aphrodite there was a feast of the gods, at which

the god Poros or Plenty, who is the son of Metis or Discretion, was

one of the guests. When the feast was over, Penia or Poverty, as the

manner is on such occasions, came about the doors to beg. Now Plenty

who was the worse for nectar (there was no wine in those days), went

into the garden of Zeus and fell into a heavy sleep, and Poverty considering

her own straitened circumstances, plotted to have a child by him,

and accordingly she lay down at his side and conceived love, who partly

because he is naturally a lover of the beautiful, and because Aphrodite

is herself beautiful, and also because he was born on her birthday,

is her follower and attendant. And as his parentage is, so also are

his fortunes. In the first place he is always poor, and anything but

tender and fair, as the many imagine him; and he is rough and squalid,

and has no shoes, nor a house to dwell in; on the bare earth exposed

he lies under the open heaven, in-the streets, or at the doors of

houses, taking his rest; and like his mother he is always in distress.

Like his father too, whom he also partly resembles, he is always plotting

against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty

hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, keen in the pursuit

of wisdom, fertile in resources; a philosopher at all times, terrible

as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist. He is by nature neither mortal

nor immortal, but alive and flourishing at one moment when he is in

plenty, and dead at another moment, and again alive by reason of his

father's nature. But that which is always flowing in is always flowing

out, and so he is never in want and never in wealth; and, further,

he is in a mean between ignorance and knowledge. The truth of the

matter is this: No god is a philosopher. or seeker after wisdom, for

he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom.

Neither do the ignorant seek after Wisdom. For herein is the evil

of ignorance, that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless

satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels

no want." "But-who then, Diotima," I said, "are the lovers of wisdom,

if they are neither the wise nor the foolish?" "A child may answer

that question," she replied; "they are those who are in a mean between

the two; Love is one of them. For wisdom is a most beautiful thing,

and Love is of the beautiful; and therefore Love is also a philosopher:

or lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom is in a mean between

the wise and the ignorant. And of this too his birth is the cause;

for his father is wealthy and wise, and his mother poor and foolish.

Such, my dear Socrates, is the nature of the spirit Love. The error

in your conception of him was very natural, and as I imagine from

what you say, has arisen out of a confusion of love and the beloved,

which made you think that love was all beautiful. For the beloved

is the truly beautiful, and delicate, and perfect, and blessed; but

the principle of love is of another nature, and is such as I have

described."

I said, "O thou stranger woman, thou sayest well; but, assuming Love

to be such as you say, what is the use of him to men?" "That, Socrates,"

she replied, "I will attempt to unfold: of his nature and birth I

have already spoken; and you acknowledge that love is of the beautiful.

But some one will say: Of the beautiful in what, Socrates and Diotima?-or

rather let me put the question more dearly, and ask: When a man loves

the beautiful, what does he desire?" I answered her "That the beautiful

may be his." "Still," she said, "the answer suggests a further question:

What is given by the possession of beauty?" "To what you have asked,"

I replied, "I have no answer ready." "Then," she said, "Let me put

the word 'good' in the place of the beautiful, and repeat the question

once more: If he who loves good, what is it then that he loves? "The

possession of the good," I said. "And what does he gain who possesses

the good?" "Happiness," I replied; "there is less difficulty in answering

that question." "Yes," she said, "the happy are made happy by the

acquisition of good things. Nor is there any need to ask why a man

desires happiness; the answer is already final." "You are right."

I said. "And is this wish and this desire common to all? and do all

men always desire their own good, or only some men?-what say you?"

"All men," I replied; "the desire is common to all." "Why, then,"

she rejoined, "are not all men, Socrates, said to love, but only some

them? whereas you say that all men are always loving the same things."

"I myself wonder," I said,-why this is." "There is nothing to wonder

at," she replied; "the reason is that one part of love is separated

off and receives the name of the whole, but the other parts have other

names." "Give an illustration," I said. She answered me as follows:

"There is poetry, which, as you know, is complex; and manifold. All

creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and

the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are

all poets or makers." "Very true." "Still," she said, "you know that

they are not called poets, but have other names; only that portion

of the art which is separated off from the rest, and is concerned

with music and metre, is termed poetry, and they who possess poetry

in this sense of the word are called poets." "Very true," I said.

"And the same holds of love. For you may say generally that all desire

of good and happiness is only the great and subtle power of love;

but they who are drawn towards him by any other path, whether the

path of money-making or gymnastics or philosophy, are not called lovers

-the name of the whole is appropriated to those whose affection takes

one form only-they alone are said to love, or to be lovers." "I dare

say," I replied, "that you are right." "Yes," she added, "and you

hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half; but

I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor

for the whole, unless the half or the whole be also a good. And they

will cut off their own hands and feet and cast them away, if they

are evil; for they love not what is their own, unless perchance there

be some one who calls what belongs to him the good, and what belongs

to another the evil. For there is nothing which men love but the good.

Is there anything?" "Certainly, I should say, that there is nothing."

"Then," she said, "the simple truth is, that men love the good." "Yes,"

I said. "To which must be added that they love the possession of the

good? "Yes, that must be added." "And not only the possession, but

the everlasting possession of the good?" "That must be added too."

"Then love," she said, "may be described generally as the love of

the everlasting possession of the good?" "That is most true."

"Then if this be the nature of love, can you tell me further," she

said, "what is the manner of the pursuit? what are they doing who

show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? and what is

the object which they have in view? Answer me." "Nay, Diotima," I

replied, "if I had known, I should not have wondered at your wisdom,

neither should I have come to learn from you about this very matter."

"Well," she said, "I will teach you:-The object which they have in

view is birth in beauty, whether of body or, soul." "I do not understand

you," I said; "the oracle requires an explanation." "I will make my

meaning dearer," she replied. "I mean to say, that all men are bringing

to the birth in their bodies and in their souls. There is a certain

age at which human nature is desirous of procreation-procreation which

must be in beauty and not in deformity; and this procreation is the

union of man and woman, and is a divine thing; for conception and

generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature, and in

the inharmonious they can never be. But the deformed is always inharmonious

with the divine, and the beautiful harmonious. Beauty, then, is the

destiny or goddess of parturition who presides at birth, and therefore,

when approaching beauty, the conceiving power is propitious, and diffusive,

and benign, and begets and bears fruit: at the sight of ugliness she

frowns and contracts and has a sense of pain, and turns away, and

shrivels up, and not without a pang refrains from conception. And

this is the reason why, when the hour of conception arrives, and the

teeming nature is full, there is such a flutter and ecstasy about

beauty whose approach is the alleviation of the pain of travail. For

love, Socrates, is not, as you imagine, the love of the beautiful

only." "What then?" "The love of generation and of birth in beauty."

"Yes," I said. "Yes, indeed," she replied. "But why of generation?"

"Because to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity

and immortality," she replied; "and if, as has been already admitted,

love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily

desire immortality together with good: Wherefore love is of immortality."

All this she taught me at various times when she spoke of love. And

I remember her once saying to me, "What is the cause, Socrates, of

love, and the attendant desire? See you not how all animals, birds,

as well as beasts, in their desire of procreation, are in agony when

they take the infection of love, which begins with the desire of union;

whereto is added the care of offspring, on whose behalf the weakest

are ready to battle against the strongest even to the uttermost, and

to die for them, and will, let themselves be tormented with hunger

or suffer anything in order to maintain their young. Man may be supposed

to act thus from reason; but why should animals have these passionate

feelings? Can you tell me why?" Again I replied that I did not know.

She said to me: "And do you expect ever to become a master in the

art of love, if you do not know this?" "But I have told you already,

Diotima, that my ignorance is the reason why I come to you; for I

am conscious that I want a teacher; tell me then the cause of this

and of the other mysteries of love." "Marvel not," she said, "if you

believe that love is of the immortal, as we have several times acknowledged;

for here again, and on the same principle too, the mortal nature is

seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and

this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always

leaves behind a new existence in the place of the old. Nay even in

the life, of the same individual there is succession and not absolute

unity: a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which

elapses between youth and age, and in which every animal is said to

have life and identity, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss

and reparation-hair, flesh, bones, blood, and the whole body are always

changing. Which is true not only of the body, but also of the soul,

whose habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears,

never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and

going; and equally true of knowledge, and what is still more surprising

to us mortals, not only do the sciences in general spring up and decay,

so that in respect of them we are never the same; but each of them

individually experiences a like change. For what is implied in the

word 'recollection,' but the departure of knowledge, which is ever

being forgotten, and is renewed and preserved by recollection, and

appears to be the same although in reality new, according to that

law of succession by which all mortal things are preserved, not absolutely

the same, but by substitution, the old worn-out mortality leaving

another new and similar existence behind unlike the divine, which

is always the same and not another? And in this way, Socrates, the

mortal body, or mortal anything, partakes of immortality; but the

immortal in another way. Marvel not then at the love which all men

have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for

the sake of immortality."

I was astonished at her words, and said: "Is this really true, O thou

wise Diotima?" And she answered with all the authority of an accomplished

sophist: "Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;-think only of the

ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their

ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality

of fame. They are ready to run all risks greater far than they would

have for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of

toil, and even to die, for the sake of leaving behind them a name

which shall be eternal. Do you imagine that Alcestis would have died

to save Admetus, or Achilles to avenge Patroclus, or your own Codrus

in order to preserve the kingdom for his sons, if they had not imagined

that the memory of their virtues, which still survives among us, would

be immortal? Nay," she said, "I am persuaded that all men do all things,

and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious

fame of immortal virtue; for they desire the immortal.

"Those who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women

and beget children-this is the character of their love; their offspring,

as they hope, will preserve their memory and giving them the blessedness

and immortality which they desire in the future. But souls which are

pregnant-for there certainly are men who are more creative in their

souls than in their bodies conceive that which is proper for the soul

to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions?-wisdom and

virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who

are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort

of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states

and families, and which is called temperance and justice. And he who

in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired,

when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. He wanders

about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring-for in deformity

he will beget nothing-and naturally embraces the beautiful rather

than the deformed body; above all when he finds fair and noble and

well-nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person, and to such

an one he is full of speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits

of a good man; and he tries to educate him; and at the touch of the

beautiful which is ever present to his memory, even when absent, he

brings forth that which he had conceived long before, and in company

with him tends that which he brings forth; and they are married by

a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget

mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are

fairer and more immortal. Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod

and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary

human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children

such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting

glory? Or who would not have such children as Lycurgus left behind

him to be the saviours, not only of Lacedaemon, but of Hellas, as

one may say? There is Solon, too, who is the revered father of Athenian

laws; and many others there are in many other places, both among hellenes

and barbarians, who have given to the world many noble works, and

have been the parents of virtue of every kind; and many temples have

been raised in their honour for the sake of children such as theirs;

which were never raised in honour of any one, for the sake of his

mortal children.

"These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates,

may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown

of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they

will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will

do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who

would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit

beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright,

to love one such form only-out of that he should create fair thoughts;

and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is

akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general

is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the

beauty in every form is and the same! And when he perceives this he

will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and

deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms;

in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is

more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a

virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to

love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts

which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate

and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that

the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty

is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the

sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in

love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a

slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating

the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts

and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows

and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single

science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will

proceed; please to give me your very best attention:

"He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who

has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when

he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous

beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)-a

nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying,

or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and

foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place

fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul,

as if fair to some and-foul to others, or in the likeness of a face

or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of

speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example,

in an animal, or in heaven or in earth, or in any other place; but

beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without

diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the

ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from

these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive

that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going,

or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the

beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty,

using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from

two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and

from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives

at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence

of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates," said the stranger of Mantineia,

"is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation

of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see

not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and

youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would

be content to live seeing them only and conversing with them without

meat or drink, if that were possible-you only want to look at them

and to be with them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty-the

divine beauty, I mean, pure and dear and unalloyed, not clogged with

the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human

life-thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple

and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty

with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images

of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a

reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become

the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be

an ignoble life?"

Such, Phaedrus-and I speak not only to you, but to all of you-were

the words of Diotima; and I am persuaded of their truth. And being

persuaded of them, I try to persuade others, that in the attainment

of this end human nature will not easily find a helper better than

love: And therefore, also, I say that every man ought to honour him

as I myself honour him, and walk in his ways, and exhort others to

do the same, and praise the power and spirit of love according to

the measure of my ability now and ever.

The words which I have spoken, you, Phaedrus, may call an encomium

of love, or anything else which you please.

When Socrates had done speaking, the company applauded, and Aristophanes

was beginning to say something in answer to the allusion which Socrates

had made to his own speech, when suddenly there was a great knocking

at the door of the house, as of revellers, and the sound of a flute-girl

was heard. Agathon told the attendants to go and see who were the

intruders. "If they are friends of ours," he said, "invite them in,

but if not, say that the drinking is over." A little while afterwards

they heard the voice of Alcibiades resounding in the court; he was

in a great state of intoxication and kept roaring and shouting "Where

is Agathon? Lead me to Agathon," and at length, supported by the flute-girl

and some of his attendants, he found his way to them. "Hail, friends,"

he said, appearing-at the door crown, with a massive garland of ivy

and violets, his head flowing with ribands. "Will you have a very

drunken man as a companion of your revels? Or shall I crown Agathon,

which was my intention in coming, and go away? For I was unable to

come yesterday, and therefore I am here to-day, carrying on my head

these ribands, that taking them from my own head, I may crown the

head of this fairest and wisest of men, as I may be allowed to call

him. Will you laugh at me because I am drunk? Yet I know very well

that I am speaking the truth, although you may laugh. But first tell

me; if I come in shall we have the understanding of which I spoke?

Will you drink with me or not?"

The company were vociferous in begging that he would take his place

among them, and Agathon specially invited him. Thereupon he was led

in by the people who were with him; and as he was being led, intending

to crown Agathon, he took the ribands from his own head and held them

in front of his eyes; he was thus prevented from seeing Socrates,

who made way for him, and Alcibiades took the vacant place between

Agathon and Socrates, and in taking the place he embraced Agathon

and crowned him. Take off his sandals, said Agathon, and let him make

a third on the same couch.

By all means; but who makes the third partner in our revels? said

Alcibiades, turning round and starting up as he caught sight of Socrates.

By Heracles, he said, what is this? here is Socrates always lying

in wait for me, and always, as his way is, coming out at all sorts

of unsuspected places: and now, what have you to say for yourself,

and why are you lying here, where I perceive that you have contrived

to find a place, not by a joker or lover of jokes, like Aristophanes,

but by the fairest of the company?

Socrates turned to Agathon and said: I must ask you to protect me,

Agathon; for the passion of this man has grown quite a serious matter

to me. Since I became his admirer I have never been allowed to speak

to any other fair one, or so much as to look at them. If I do, he

goes wild with envy and jealousy, and not only abuses me but can hardly

keep his hands off me, and at this moment he may do me some harm.

Please to see to this, and either reconcile me to him, or, if he attempts

violence, protect me, as I am in bodily fear of his mad and passionate

attempts.

There can never be reconciliation between you and me, said Alcibiades;

but for the present I will defer your chastisement. And I must beg

you, Agathoron, to give me back some of the ribands that I may crown

the marvellous head of this universal despot-I would not have him

complain of me for crowning you, and neglecting him, who in conversation

is the conqueror of all mankind; and this not only once, as you were

the day before yesterday, but always. Whereupon, taking some of the

ribands, he crowned Socrates, and again reclined.

Then he said: You seem, my friends, to be sober, which is a thing

not to be endured; you must drink-for that was the agreement under

which I was admitted-and I elect myself master of the feast until

you are well drunk. Let us have a large goblet, Agathon, or rather,

he said, addressing the attendant, bring me that wine-cooler. The

wine-cooler which had caught his eye was a vessel holding more than

two quarts-this he filled and emptied, and bade the attendant fill

it again for Socrates. Observe, my friends, said Alcibiades, that

this ingenious trick of mine will have no effect on Socrates, for

he can drink any quantity of wine and not be at all nearer being drunk.

Socrates drank the cup which the attendant filled for him.

Eryximachus said! What is this Alcibiades? Are we to have neither

conversation nor singing over our cups; but simply to drink as if

we were thirsty?

Alcibiades replied: Hail, worthy son of a most wise and worthy sire!

The same to you, said Eryximachus; but what shall we do?

That I leave to you, said Alcibiades.

The wise physician skilled our wounds to heal shall prescribe and

we will obey. What do you want?

Well, said Eryximachus, before you appeared we had passed a resolution

that each one of us in turn should make a speech in praise of love,

and as good a one as he could: the turn was passed round from left

to right; and as all of us have spoken, and you have not spoken but

have well drunken, you ought to speak, and then impose upon Socrates

any task which you please, and he on his right hand neighbour, and

so on.

That is good, Eryximachus, said Alcibiades; and yet the comparison,

of a drunken man's speech with those of sober men is hardly fair;

and I should like to know, sweet friend, whether you really believe-what

Socrates was just now saying; for I can assure you that the very reverse

is the fact, and that if I praise any one but himself in his presence,

whether God or man, he will hardly keep his hands off me.

For shame, said Socrates.

Hold your tongue, said Alcibiades, for by Poseidon, there is no one

else whom I will praise when you are-of the company.

Well then, said Eryximachus, if you like praise Socrates.

What do you think, Eryximachus-? said Alcibiades: shall I attack him:

and inflict the punishment before you all?

What are you about? said Socrates; are you going to raise a laugh

at my expense? Is that the meaning of your praise?

I am going to speak the truth, if you will permit me.

I not only permit, but exhort you to speak the truth.

Then I will begin at once, said Alcibiades, and if I say anything

which is not true, you may interrupt me if you will, and say "that

is a lie," though my intention is to speak the truth. But you must

not wonder if I speak any how as things come into my mind; for the

fluent and orderly enumeration of all your singularities is not a

task which is easy to a man in my condition.

And now, my boys, I shall praise Socrates in a figure which will appear

to him to be a caricature, and yet I speak, not to make fun of him,

but only for the truth's sake. I say, that he is exactly like the

busts of Silenus, which are set up in the statuaries, shops, holding

pipes and flutes in their mouths; and they are made to open in the

middle, and have images of gods inside them. I say also that hit is

like Marsyas the satyr. You yourself will not deny, Socrates, that

your face is like that of a satyr. Aye, and there is a resemblance

in other points too. For example, you are a bully, as I can prove

by witnesses, if you will not confess. And are you not a flute-player?

That you are, and a performer far more wonderful than Marsyas. He

indeed with instruments used to charm the souls of men by the powers

of his breath, and the players of his music do so still: for the melodies

of Olympus are derived from Marsyas who taught them, and these, whether

they are played by a great master or by a miserable flute-girl, have

a power which no others have; they alone possess the soul and reveal

the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries, because they

are divine. But you produce the same effect with your words only,

and do not require the flute; that is the difference between you and

him. When we hear any other speaker, even very good one, he produces

absolutely no effect upon us, or not much, whereas the mere fragments

of you and your words, even at second-hand, and however imperfectly

repeated, amaze and possess the souls of every man, woman, and child

who comes within hearing of them. And if I were not, afraid that you

would think me hopelessly drunk, I would have sworn as well as spoken

to the influence which they have always had and still have over me.

For my heart leaps within me more than that of any Corybantian reveller,

and my eyes rain tears when I hear them. And I observe that many others

are affected in the same manner. I have heard Pericles and other great

orators, and I thought that they spoke well, but I never had any similar

feeling; my soul was not stirred by them, nor was I angry at the thought

of my own slavish state. But this Marsyas has often brought me to

such pass, that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life which

I am leading (this, Socrates, you will admit); and I am conscious

that if I did not shut my ears against him, and fly as from the voice

of the siren, my fate would be like that of others,-he would transfix

me, and I should grow old sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess

that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul,

and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians; therefore I

hold my ears and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person

who ever made me ashamed, which you might think not to be in my nature,

and there is no one else who does the same. For I know that I cannot

answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave

his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me. And therefore

I run away and fly from him, and when I see him I am ashamed of what

I have confessed to him. Many a time have I wished that he were dead,

and yet I know that I should be much more sorry than glad, if he were

to die: so that am at my wit's end.

And this is what I and many others have suffered, from the flute-playing

of this satyr. Yet hear me once more while I show you how exact the

image is, and. how marvellous his power. For let me tell you; none

of you know him; but I will reveal him to you; having begun, I must

go on. See you how fond he is of the fair? He is always with them

and is always being smitten by them, and then again he knows nothing

and is ignorant of all thing such is the appearance </pre></body></html>