

## References to Beauty in the Dialogues of Plato

### Phaedo

-Simmias, as I believe, is in doubt and fear that the soul, though it is more divine and *beautiful* than the body, yet predeceases it, being a kind of harmony. 91.d

-Those who have purified themselves sufficiently by philosophy live in the future altogether without a body; they make their way to even more *beautiful* dwelling places which it is hard to describe clearly. 114.c

### Parmenides

-“Is it your view that, as you say, there are certain forms from which these other things by getting a share of them, derive their names—as, for instance, they come to be like by getting a share of likeness, large by getting a share of largeness, and just and *beautiful* by getting a share of justice and *beauty*?” “It certainly is,” Socrates replied. 131.a

-Surely you would say that if in fact there is knowledge—a kind itself—it is much more precise than is knowledge that belongs to us. And the same goes for *beauty* and all others. 134.c

### Philebus

-But now we notice that the force of the good has taken refuge in an alliance with the nature of the *beautiful*. For measure and proportion manifest themselves in all areas as *beauty* and virtue. 64.e

-If we cannot capture the good in one form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: *beauty*, proportion and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for its goodness is what makes the mixture itself a good one. 65.a

### Symposium

-Those who love wisdom fall in between those two extremes. And love is one of them, because he is in love with what is *beautiful*, and wisdom is extremely *beautiful*. It follows that Love must be a lover of wisdom and as such is in between being wise and being ignorant. 204.b

-*Beauty*, however, is in harmony with the divine. Therefore the goddess who presides at childbirth—she’s called Moira or Eilithuia—is really *Beauty*. That’s why, whenever pregnant animals or persons draw near to *beauty*, they become gentle and joyfully disposed and give birth and reproduce. 206.d

-But by far the greatest and most *beautiful* part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of cities and households, and that is called moderation and justice. When someone has been pregnant with these in his soul from early youth...desires to beget

and give birth, he too will certainly go about seeking the *beauty* in which he would beget. 209.a

-A lover who goes about this matter correctly must begin in his youth to devote himself to *beautiful* bodies. First, if the leader leads aright, he should love one body and beget *beautiful* ideas there; then he should realize that the *beauty* of any one body is brother to the *beauty* of any other and that if he is to pursue *beauty* of form he'd be very foolish not to think that the *beauty* of all bodies is one and the same. 210.b

-The result is that our lover will be forced to gaze at the *beauty* of activities and laws and to see that all this is akin to itself, with the result that he will think that the *beauty* of bodies is a thing of no importance. After customs he must move on to various kinds of knowledge. The result is that he will see the *beauty* of knowledge and be looking mainly not at *beauty* in a single example...but the lover is turned to the great sea of *beauty*, and gazing upon this, he gives birth to many gloriously *beautiful* ideas and theories, in unstinting love of wisdom, until, having grown and been strengthened there, he catches sight of such knowledge, and it is the knowledge of such *beauty*. 210.c

## Phaedrus

-The unreasoning desire that overpowers a person's considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in *beauty*, its force reinforced by its kindred desires for *beauty* in human bodies—this desire, all-conquering in its forceful drive, takes its name from the word for force (**rhome**) and is called **eros**. 38.c

-The fourth kind of madness—that which someone shows when he sees the *beauty* we have down here and is reminded of true *beauty*; then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so; and he gazes aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below—and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad. 249.d

-The senses are so murky that only a few people are able to make out with difficulty the original of the likenesses they encounter here. But *beauty* was radiant to see at that time when the souls, along with the glorious chorus...saw that blessed and spectacular vision and were ushered into the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all. 250.b

-It would awaken a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as *beauty* does, and the same goes for the other objects of inspired love. But now *beauty* alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved. 250.e

-A recent initiate, however, one who has seen much in heaven—when he sees a godlike face or bodily form that has captured *Beauty* well, first he shudders and a fear comes over him like those he felt at the earlier time. 251.a

-But when the soul looks upon the *beauty* of the body and takes in the stream of

particles flowing into it from his *beauty* (that is why this is called desire<sup>1</sup>), when it is watered and warmed by this, then all its pain subsides and is replaced by joy. 251.c.6  
-In its madness the lover's soul cannot sleep at night or stay put by day; it rushes, yearning, wherever it expects to see the person who has that *beauty*. 251.e  
-In addition to its reverence for one who has such *beauty*, the soul has discovered that the boy is the only doctor for all that terrible pain. 252.a  
-When the charioteer sees that face, his memory is carried back to the real nature of *Beauty*, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control. 254.b

## Republic

-But the right kind of love is by nature the love of order and *beauty* that has been moderated by education in music and poetry? That's right. 403.a.7  
-The lovers os sights and sounds like *beautiful* sounds, colors, shapes and everything fashioned out of them, but their thought is unable to see and embrace the nature of the *beautiful* itself.  
    That's for sure.  
    In fact, there are very few people who would be able to reach the *beautiful* itself and see it by itself. 476.b  
-But someone who, to take the opposite case, believes in the *beautiful* itself, can see both it and the things that participate in it and doesn't believe that the participants are it or that it itself is the participants—is he living in a dream or is he awake?  
    He's very much awake.  
    So we'd be right to call his though knowledge, since he knows, but we should call the other person's thought opinion, since he opines?  
    Right. 476cd  
-As for those who study the many *beautiful* things but do not see the *beautiful* itself and are incapable of following another who leads them to it, who see many just things but not the just itself, and so with everything—these people, we shall say, opine everything but have no knowledge of anything they opine. 479e  
-Can the majority in any way tolerate or accept the reality of the *beautiful* itself, as opposed to the many *beautiful* things, or the reality of each thing itself, as opposed to the corresponding many?  
    Not in any way.  
    Then the majority cannot be philosophic. 493e  
-And I supposed that, as they work, they'd look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice, *beauty*, moderation and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they're trying to put into human beings, on the other. And in this way they'd mix and

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<sup>1</sup>“Desire” is himeros: the derivation is from **mere** (‘particles’), **ienai** (‘go’) and **rhein** (‘flow’). This is a footnote in the text itself.

blend the various ways of life in the city until they produced a human image based on what Homer too called “the divine form and image” (for example, **Iliad**, I.131) when it occurred among human beings. 501.b

-We say that there are many *beautiful* things and many good things, and so on for each kind, and in this way we distinguish them in words.

We do.

And *beauty* itself and good itself and all the things that we thereby set down as many, reversing ourselves, we set down according to a single form of each, believing that there is but one, and call it “the being” of each. 507.b

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References to Beauty in the **Commentary on the Song of Songs** by St. Gregory of Nyssa<sup>2</sup>

-The form constituted by these terms is blessedness, detachment, union with God, alienation from evil and likeness to what is truly *beautiful* and good. 28.23

-The person considering what belongs to human nature (that is, reason), will disdain human custom as irrational nor choose as *good* that which is disadvantageous for his soul. 66.6

-Since nothing seems *beautiful* to me now that I have turned away from everything which I had first estimated as good, no longer is my judgment of beauty in error. 106.11

-How can anything be *beautiful* which lacks substance? 106.18

-The bride hears the command, is strengthened by the Word, arises, comes forward, approaches, becomes *beautiful* and is called a dove. 150.12

-Now that human nature rose up, turned to face the good and turned its back on evil, it was conformed to what it beheld, the archetypal *beauty*. 150.19

-We must take for our guide our own longing for what is *better*. 160.17

-For if anything *lovely* should be found in the bridegroom, the prophet sings of it [Zach 9.17]. 306.2

-Among such exceedingly *beautiful* things is man; rather, he was adorned with a *beauty* better than other created beings. What can be better than the image of incorruptible *beauty*? 348.2

-However, man was the image and likeness of eternal life, truly *beautiful* and exceedingly good, adorned with the radiant form of life. 348.14

-These words (2 Cor 12.9) show us the *beautiful* wound which removed the bride’s veil. In this way the soul’s *beauty* is revealed, no longer overshadowed by a covering. 366.6

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<sup>2</sup>References are according to **Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Canticorum** edited by Hermann Langerbeck (Leiden, 1960).

-The bride says that she is thoroughly *beautiful* and cleansed from every stain and that she utters nothing worthless. 373.10

-This (Jn 14.2) analogically corresponds to the *good* state of each person and to the rejection of evil prepared as a remedy. 459.6

-The soul obtains a secondary position after the queen; its *beauty* comes from bear, not love, and is multiplied by the number eighty. 465.7

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