

Avoiding Disaster

Before getting into what this article is all about, allow me to say that I had felt a certain frustration relative to composing it. Such a tone might sound a bit too negative, but I prefer stating it right off the bat. However, for the moment I'll let this ride until later in the article when we come to the excerpts from Plato's **Symposium**. In the meantime I prefer to offer some thoughts leading up to these excerpts which originally were intended as independent of them.

I started out with a fairly clear idea of where I wanted to go and began writing several pages to flesh it out. Some difficulty emerged when I got involved with several excerpts from Plato's **Symposium** pertaining to beauty. Though that was my original aim, somewhere along the line I got interrupted, if you will, by a desire to examine a specific Greek word, *apokalupsis*. It means an uncovering and is relative to what Christians call "last things." That involves both what's pertains to us as individuals and a more inclusive grasp of the world around us. As for the former, I refer to one's death and as to the latter, the tumultuous events commonly associated with the end of the world. While that idea has always enjoyed popularity, discussion about it has increased significantly. At the same time such a dramatic view of events is bound to be moderated by a certain skepticism.

I can't help but add an important point, something akin to a supplement to what was discussed in the paragraph above. In addition to the focus upon dramatic events synonymous with the end of the world, to be sure a definite thrill with it is involved. This thrill associated with something ominous about to happen is kept under wraps perhaps because it's somewhat embarrassing of being exposed. Nevertheless, it's certainly real. I liken it to the pseudo-experience of fear and horror we get while watching a movie. We may be caught up in the action but know it's just a visual depiction. Actually we look forward to such an experience (popcorn and soda in hand) and seamlessly return to normal life once the movie is finished. No doubt we bring some of this attitude of entertainment to our consideration of the so-called last things.

The idea that the world as we know it is coming to an end has taken root in our collective unconscious. This almost near obsession about last things compelled me to see if there might be a constructive way to handle the pessimism as well as the thrill normally associated with it. As for the latter, better to have something to look forward even if it kills you than nothing at all.

One possible contribution—certainly not a solution—is to focus upon the idea of

beauty. How or why that came to mind I am not certain. All I know is that it appeared on my radar screen, and I'm sure glad it did. This insight led me to look for sources to back up my discovery. I'd say scramble is a more accurate way of putting it because I felt a genuine sense of excitement at the prospect of discovering something new and exciting. It simply couldn't be otherwise. I could tell right away that this insight was pure...clean...as well as wholly other. The reason? I had a clear sense that it didn't come from me. Also the word "discovery" is apt for the occasion because it intimates that something had been dropped in my lap without looking for it. All I had to do now was take it up and enjoy.

The next step can naturally enough in my quest to back this up. When you hit upon something wholly other that doesn't derive from yourself, you don't dilly-dally but fly—make a beeline—to your goal. It turned out that without much hesitation I headed directly for Plato's dialogues, an important source for the Western civilized world. When I mention Plato, almost always I mean Socrates, the real star of the show. I've accessed the dialogues on other occasions so why not again, this time the **Symposium**. That document seemed to have the best source for a discussion of beauty.

Still, I felt a certain unease with regard to the text. Three factors were at work behind the scene. The first pertains to the original Greek text. I'm fully...almost painfully aware...that any translation cannot grasp the subtly involved. In addition to this, the way Plato expresses himself is beyond my pay grade which is bound to leave some frustration. Many a time I found myself at the door of one of his dialogues about to enter and found it abruptly closed. I could go no further. The only option was to retreat, and retreats usually leave a bad after taste.

The second unease pertained to those parts of a given dialogue I could grasp ranging from "sort of" to what can be described as pretty much straight-forward. In these instances I'd make notes with regard to the Greek text usually focusing upon prepositions which I found important. However, the notes came across somewhat awkwardly. In fact, looking back, I felt uncomfortable with this approach since I feared repeating what others had said far more eloquently. And so this unease affected my presentation of the excerpts pertaining to beauty even though I was moved with a profound appreciation of their content.

A third factor consists in how I've approached a good number of texts on this homepage relative to books of the Bible. The general thrust was not to make a commentary but to expand upon a given text through the lens of *lectio divina*. I won't bother describing it here because I had discussed it in many other documents on this

homepage. In sum, it was something that came naturally to me. I've found it's easier to expand upon those books with a narrative style compared with, for example, the epistles of St Paul. The latter are more matter-of-fact presentations offering little or no wiggle room. While rich in their own right, they don't fit as easily under the umbrella of "expansion" texts.

It turned out that the expansion approach was something I took to more spontaneously compared with the dialogues of Plato. At the same time whenever I sat down to read a dialogue in the original Greek—and again I stress with my limited understanding—the same insight kept returning. I saw the profound beauty present in the text but just couldn't bring the same energy that had gone into the expansion texts. Obviously we're dealing with two different types of writing and traditions. Then I stopped and wondered if I could ever respond adequately to the dialogues. In sum, was I wasting precious time?

This led to the sixty-four thousand dollar question. Should I stop then and there not bothering to inflict anyone reading this with my imprecision? Another factor at work was that I had been fully aware of the generations of saints and scholars who had worked on Plato. By any standard, their collective witness indeed was an inescapable weight. I could almost feel them looking straight at me or better, straight through me saying that I was not qualified to read The Master. That insight turned out to be a kind of mental straight-jacket preventing me from going ahead with any project no matter how insignificant it happened to be.

Although the title of the current article **Avoiding Disaster** may suggest something to do with the observations just presented, that's not entirely the case. It pertains more specifically to the excerpts from the **Symposium** and their notations which follow. Shortly I'll get into the original reason why I chose the title, but I felt it was timely to present the observations I had just laid down.

On the larger scale of things I decided to take a step back and see if the temptation to throwing in the towel could be viewed positively and put at the service of the original intent of this article, that is, the excerpts on beauty from the **Symposium**. More precisely, I wished to counter any disaster we may face with an appreciation of these wonderful texts. In essence this consists of taking something positive...beauty...and using it as a tool to look at it's opposite. That's a somewhat clumsy way of putting it. However, better to express it that way than to pass it over. To set out on this task isn't as easy as it sounds. As for negativity, I found a particularly difficult one to overcome was a sense of all pervasive listlessness. This pervasiveness is as inescapable as gravity and requires constant attention.

With regard to beauty, the dominant word is *kalos* which is often tied in with *eros*, love as well as desire. As the text from the **Symposium** reveal, they are the very pillars on which everything rests. I figure putting my trust in them would see me through.

With regard to the title which has a certain apocalyptic character to it, I use the word “disaster” in two ways. First, there’s a growing sense something is a-brewing that will burst on the scene in an ugly way. I’m disinclined to entertain the how and why of such thoughts, but this feeling is more persistent than normal and is shared by a wider variety of people. The first candidate is of course nuclear war. That may be true, but I lean more towards an overall breakdown of society worldwide perhaps induced by a virus set in motion by AI. Even if nothing dramatic takes place along these lines, the fear needs to be addressed.

Then we have the second use of the word “disaster” as associated with apocalyptic which is less familiar. Looking at it from the perspective of biblical Greek, there comes to mind the literal definition of the noun *apokalupsis*. This infers an uncovering, the preposition *apo-* or from signifying a removal with regard to that which is hidden, *kalupto*. It is a gesture usually associated with some future event. Regardless of when the *apo-* happens, implied is a reality that had always been present to us which at some time will be out there for all to behold. Obviously such a view is fraught with the danger of being misled, for it’s a situation where we can easily read into our own fanciful ideas.

Despite the Hollywood-ish character associated with the adjective apocalyptic in the popular mind, the second presentation of *apokalupsis* (I favor the noun) is not just less known but close to being completely ignored. Most of us go along in life not aware that some unknown reality is in right under our eyes waiting to become manifest. This hiddenness doesn’t mean it’s lingering in the background ready to pounce upon us unawares like a wild beast. It’s a reality always with us which we may designate as transcendent and is layered over by spacial and temporal reality. In the meanwhile it’s awaiting a predetermined time to manifest itself which most likely will give little or no warning¹. In sum, awareness of that reality under the guise of *apokalupsis* always accompanies us. Most people have a negative view of it as out there eager to snatch us away. Perhaps such a view reflects an inner guilt, personal and collective. As we know, the media loves to capitalize on this, transferring, if you will,

¹Some scriptural passages convey this suddenness, for example, Mt 24.27: “For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man.”

apokalupsis to apocalyptic.²

Usually the first thing that comes to mind when we hear the word *apokalupsis* is the Book of Revelation which goes by that name. Really, the imagery there is beyond belief. At the same time the overall theme seems to be upon hidden realities—the *kalupto-* noted in the first paragraph—which are always active. Consider how this biblical book starts out after some introductory words. Verse ten of Chapter One has three parts which set the tone: first, John was in the Spirit or *Pneuma* which fundamentally means breath. That means he was caught up in a kind of whirlwind which can't be visualized because it's invisible.

Secondly, this happened literally “in the Lord’s day” and thirdly, John heard behind (*opiso*) him a loud voice. The voice told John to write what he sees or rather what he’s about to see and send it to the seven churches. Note that John does the seeing in this invisible *Pneuma*. He’s situated within two “ins” from which he hears a voice neither in front nor above him but from behind. That is to say, the one speaking was not visible but hidden just like John, again in the *Pneuma*. Then in vs. 12 John turned and saw one like a son of man who’s not explicitly identified but certainly is Jesus Christ. From this point onward we have an abundance of seeing...visual objects and events...all mediated through the *Pneuma*.

Reading this biblical account helps us tune into our everyday lives where we have a reality which is covered and waiting to be revealed. In the case at hand, the covering is the written word, the letters to the seven churches. The requirement to see the *kalupto-* or hidden-ness is for the churches to pay close attention, to listen carefully to John’s letter. If they do so, they become aware of a constant tumultuous activity ready to be set in motion when it’s uncovered. That thrill mentioned earlier associated with expectation of something exciting now dissipates at once for hardcore reality.

As the seven churches read the letters given to John when heard that divine voice from behind, we get a distinct impression that the appearance of Jesus Christ as he brings to completion his incarnation involves a lot more than anticipated. His presence is tied in with Satan as the source of the turmoil which remains covered except for glimpses we get here and there. Though this proper name is used, we need to take care not to perceive him with horns and a pitchfork. As for his presence, it’s

² Here is where beauty comes to the rescue. Like love, it’s less concerned with anything apocalyptic and focused upon that which...is beautiful in and by itself. Actually beauty turns out to be a great relief from any serious, stressful elements that may assail us with a commanding authority. And by authority I mean a widely accepted source which presumably has greater wisdom than any one of us.

as though his hidden-ness...his *kalupto*-...breaks forth into our domain from time to time. As soon as we're aware of his activity, it disappears from our view. Satan prefers to remain invisible to our eyes. If these experiences are correctly informed as by the reading of Scripture, we become aware of a struggle going on between Jesus and Satan which doesn't necessarily involve us even though it attracts our attention. Putting it somewhat awkwardly, our role is secondary to this transcendent struggle but by no means an after-thought. Usually we're not as mindful of this but once we are, it's an occasion of great relief. What we do know through divine revelation is that with Jesus' coming as in the Book of Revelation this turmoil has come into the open. Even though nowadays it's not visible, we can be assured that it's very real in daily life.

Once we've become aware of the turmoil and confusion going on just off the scene, everything for us has changed. By that I mean we've become aware of the turmoil present beneath the surface, that it isn't something theoretical or fanciful but very much real.³ Getting a handle on this can be overwhelming and can make us fall easy prey to the evil we've come up against. Right away we find that our resources are to no avail, that we're left pretty much stymied. It's a question now of flight or fright. However, at this critical juncture it helps to hold our breath for a short while and refrain from moving. Even after a short time of remaining still we get enough space to assess the situation better and capitalize on that brief pause we had just taken. With this in mind, why not extend it? By that I don't mean remaining still like a stone but still in the sense of not caving in to a desire to thrash about like Satan in the above mentioned footnote.

One sound means of fostering this stillness is by slowing down time. There's no magic involved, but it is well within our means. Actually the means has a long historical precedent. At this juncture we can introduce a word found in several other article on this homepage, namely, *otium*. Originally it was described to live a life in the countryside by a well-off retired Roman more or less free from work. There comes to mind the image of a farm, true enough, characterized by heavy-duty work. However, such work was done either by hired hands or slaves or both.

From what I've garnered, *otium* traces its root back to a way of describing the soldier-farmer's time off from military service and came to mean the time that one controls for themselves. The Latin term *otium* encapsulates a concept of great dept, often interpreted as the opposite of work or commitment. As for the opposite...*negotium*...it

³ I can't help but think of the example the Book of Job (1.7) when the Lord asks Satan "Whence have you come?" The response: "From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it." Such activity is a frantic back and forth where Satan is attempting to perform all kinds of mischief.

represents being engaged in business affairs and intimates downright busyness. In sum, this word is associated with the opposite of life in the country, that is, city life. As one can see, *ne-* is the negative prefaced to *otium*. In reality, the meaning of *otium* goes beyond simple inactivity or lack of occupation. Instead, it represents a time of quiet, reflection and intellectual pleasure in the classical sense of being associated with scholarly pursuits.

While talk about *otium* is certainly helpful and much needed in today's world, it has general appeal by reason of its innate attractiveness. Not only that, it leads to another insight, the one of beauty already noted. It's ⁴, one of the traditional three famous transcendentals, a philosophical concept originating with the ancient Greeks. As for the other two (truth and goodness), they are fine but intimate a certain difference where we have to rise to their level. Effort is involved in order to overcome a disparity between them and us.

More often than not we fail to measure up to these transcendentals, so always we make a comparison with them and a need to be on the same plane which we know is next to impossible. This can make for a feeling of inferiority. As for beauty, it seems to belong to a different order. Each and every one of us has a natural affinity for beautiful things. The appeal is direct, no striving nor overcoming of differences are required. Beauty has no room for fear as with *apokalupsis* or that which lays hidden but remains unknown.

While mention of beauty's appeal is quite helpful, it shouldn't be interpreted as a quick fix nor as a cure-all. It goes a long way to assuage the common perception that our civilization is teetering on the edge of destruction. One good shove and it will collapse. Whether or not that's true is of no concern here except mention of the general air of anxiety that seems to have touched so many people. This, however, provides an opportunity to look for a source to back up our preference for beauty. The place to go? Obviously as mentioned above The Source, Plato, or more specifically, one of his dialogues, the **Symposium**.

With this in mind, I present a series of passages and notations pertaining to beauty. The adjective is *kalos* which usually involves an outward form. It also implies elegance, shapeliness as well as excellence. Thus the noun to *kalon* or the beautiful can more readily apply to virtue. That word too is not unlike beauty in the sense of having a definite appeal. The noun is *arete* which means the best of anything and by best, that's pretty much the same as beauty.

⁴ There's a brief article on this homepage entitled **On Beauty**.

I hope reflection on this modest compilation sheds some light upon *kalon* or beauty in order to bring light and life to one's existence. Often when a situation like this presents itself I feel obliged "to be scholarly" which doesn't apply in my case. Instead, I prefer looking at them from my limited point which I'd put under the guise of *lectio divina*. The delight in doing so is wonderful that it comes close to being overwhelming. All I can do is read a few words, put down the text and sit in silence, thankful at having had the opportunity to be exposed to such a gift. In a way, a lot of people miss out on that approach when it comes to reading a seminal source as Plato. Often he's treated as someone to be studied and write a paper upon. And so I decided to toss aside any fears and proceed with the excerpts from the **Symposium**. Obviously other references could be taken, but what we have here suffices.

Permit me to add one final note which sums up everything above. It's the naturalness of beauty that I find so attractive. Indeed, it's a common experience that's bound to impact anyone almost immediately. Simple as that.

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*The following excerpts are from Plato's Symposium. Words which reoccur are followed by a plus sign, + in order to avoid repeating the definition. However, often the meaning of a given word differs from place to place, and this will be noted. Also if a word is mentioned several times in a given excerpt, it won't be marked by a plus sign. Words such as eros or kalos (love and beauty) which occur frequently are not designated as such and aren't transliterated. The * sign designates separation of excerpts.*

But if I have learned a single lesson from my own field, the science of medicine, it is that Love does not occur only in the human soul; it is not simply the attraction we feel toward human beauty: it is a significantly broader phenomenon. It certainly occurs within the animal kingdom, and even in the world of plants. In fact, it occurs everywhere in the universe. Love is a deity of the greatest importance: he directs everything that occurs, not only in the human domain, but also in that of the gods.
186.a-b

Socrates posits a close connection between love and beauty, *eros* (also as desire) and *kalos*. The science (*techne*, also as skill) of medicine attracts souls (*psuche*) to human beauty, the preposition *pros* indicative of direction towards-which with *kalos* being in the plural.

Eros also extends (*teino*, to stretch out) to what is in accord with (*kata*) human and divine affairs, *pragma* also as a business transaction. It seems that this relationship between *eros* and *kalos* as present in all the following excerpts is key to

understanding that natural, un-mechanical and even un-disciplined way we are attracted to beauty. The just mentioned verb *teino* is important to understand how this works, that it does so freely and without compulsion.

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I maintain, then, that while all the gods are happy, Love—if I may say so without giving offense—is the happiest of them all, for he is the most *beautiful* and the best. His great *beauty* lies in this: First, Phaedrus, he is the youngest of the gods. He proves my point himself by fleeing old age in headlong flight, fast-moving though it is (that's obvious—it comes after us faster than it should). Love was born to hate old age and will come nowhere near it. Love always lives with young people and is one of them: the old story holds good that like is always drawn to like. 195.a-b

Here Socrates maintains (*epaineo*, to approve, commend) that *eros* is the happiest of all the gods, *eudaimoneo*. Within this verb we have the noun *daimon* which can be rendered as the power governing a person and prefaced with the adverbial form of *agathos* (good), *eu-*. Thus it can infer being supervised or managed well. Such *eros* is the most beautiful and best, *kalos* and *aristos* (the superlative of *agathos*), the latter as noblest or virtuous.

Love has the ability to flee (*phugo*, to take flight) old age and comes too fast for us mere mortals, the verb being *erchomai* or to come prefaced with the preposition *pros-*, direction towards-which. And so love hates old age and won't come near it, *plesiazo* also as to approach. For that reason it always lives with young people, the verb *eimi* or to be prefaced with *sun-* or with, to be with. Thus the old story (*logos*, word as expression) maintains that like is attracted to like, *pelazo* also to approach, to come near.

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That too is how the gods' quarrels were settled, once Love came to be among them—love of *beauty*, obviously, because love is not drawn to ugliness. Before that, as I said in the beginning, and as the poets say, many dreadful things happened among the gods, because Necessity was king. But once this god was born, all goods came to gods and men alike through love of *beauty*. This is how I think of Love, Phaedrus: first, he is himself the most *beautiful* and the best; after that, if anyone else is at all like that, Love is responsible. 197.b-c

Here *pragma* + is presented as a quarrel which had arisen among the gods but now is settled. *Eros* has become present among them, *eggignomai* also as to spring up,

to appear, that is to say, love of beauty (*kallos*¹¹), for it is not drawn to ugliness. *Aischos* also means disgrace and here is literally not upon *eros*, *epi* + *eros*.

Once the god Necessity (*Anagke*) is born, all goods came to both gods and men through love of beauty, the verb *erao* and the adjective *kalos*. Socrates things of *eros* as being the most beautiful and best, *kallos* and *aristos*. And so love is the cause (*aitios*, adjective also as responsible).

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The following excerpt is divided into two parts for the convenience of inserting notations.

Now, remember, in addition to these points, what you said in your speech about what it is that Love loves. If you like, I'll remind you. I think you said something like this: that the gods' quarrels were settled by love of *beautiful* things, for there is no love of ugly ones. Didn't you say something like that?

"I did," said Agathon.

"And that's a suitable thing to say, my friend," said Socrates. "But if this is so, wouldn't Love have to be a desire for *beauty*, and never for ugliness?"

He agreed.

Note that Socrates uses the verb *anamimnesko* once or to remember to his interlocutor and again to himself. At hand is more than just recalling things from the past but a making-present again inferred by the preposition *ana-*, on, upon. The subject at hand is *Eros*.

All the quarrels which took place among the gods (*pragma*) were resolved by the love of beautiful things, the verb being *kataskeuazo* (the preposition *kata-* indicative of putting in order with *eros* prefaced with *dia* or through. As for *eros*, it does not apply to anything which is not beautiful, *aischros* also as that which causes shame.

And we also agreed that he loves just what he needs and does not have.

"Yes," he said.

So Love needs *beauty*, then, and does not have it.

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The verb *homologeo* means to agree, to have common consent with regard to *Eros* needing beauty. *Endees* also means to be deficient, at a loss.

"Necessarily," he said.

¹ This word is often spelled with a double lambda.

So! If something needs *beauty* and has got no *beauty* at all, would you still say that it is *beautiful*?

Certainly not.

Then do you still agree that Love is *beautiful*, if those things are so?

Then Agathon said, “It turns out, Socrates, I didn’t know what I was talking about in that speech.”

“It was a *beautiful* speech, anyway, Agathon,” said Socrates. “Now take it a little further. Don’t you think that good things are always *beautiful* as well?”

I do.

Then if Love needs *beautiful* things, and if all good things are *beautiful*, he will need good things too.”^{201.a-c}

Socrates comes off with the observations that is something requires beauty and lacks it completely (*endees* +), how could anyone say that it’s beautiful? Agathon can’t help but agree. Finally he gives in by admitting that he doesn’t know what he was talking about, *oida* also to be acquainted with, to acknowledge. You could almost say that Agathon admitted he wasn’t speaking beautifully. To his credit he had the humility to admit it. Socrates chimes in by saying that Agathon gave a beautiful speech, the adverb *kalos*²².

If *Eros* needs beautiful things and if all good things are as such, he will need good things as well. Thus *kalos* and *agathos* (good often in the moral sense) are similar if not the same.

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You see, I had told her almost the same things Agathon told me just now: that Love is a great god and that he belongs to *beautiful* things. And she used the very same arguments against me that I used against Agathon; she showed how, according to my very own speech, Love is neither *beautiful* nor good. ^{201.e}

I found this short excerpt a bit confusing about Diotima when she says that Love is neither beautiful nor good.³³ From what follows this prompts Diotima to explain to Socrates who had put her on the spot, demanding an exclamation. After a brief give and take about this puzzling remark, Diotima offers a clarification.

There exists something between two opposing realities, *kalos* and *aischros* + or that which is beautiful and that which is ugly. This is totally puzzling to Socrates who never heard of it. She has him revert to a consideration of love which she says is halfway between mortal and immortal and is a powerful spirit. This is where the

² Omega being used instead of omicron as in the adjective.

³ Diotima of Mantinea is either a historical person or a character in the dialogue at hand.

text gets into the notion of a *daimon* and the adjective *daimonion* related to it, difficult to render adequately. One way would be the power which controls the destiny of a person. It's something very intimate, almost like one's soul yet in a way distinct from the person associated with it.

Diotima continues to inform Socrates about these beings which are envoys and interpreters plying between heaven and earth, *hermeneuo* and *diaporthmeuo*, to explain, expound or put into words and to carry over or across a message. From here Diotima speaks of the parents of Love in the next excerpt, this having been dealt with in **Diotima and her Philosophy** (taken from Perseus website) also on this homepage.

Diotima seemed to have opened up to Socrates a reality of which he was unaware, that is, *metaxu* or between. It's something quite unusual yet very much with us, not unlike the notion of *apokalupsis* or the uncovering of a reality that always is with us but one we're not tuned into. As for this business of *metaxu*, the following excerpts delve into it.

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For the sake of convenience this section is in two paragraphs.

When Aphrodite was born, the gods held a celebration. *Poros*, the son of Metis, was there among them. When they had feasted, *Penia* came begging, as poverty does when there's a party, and stayed by the gates. Now *Poros* got drunk on nectar (there was no wine yet, you see) and, feeling drowsy, went into the garden of Zeus, where he fell asleep. Then *Penia* schemed up a plan to relieve her lack of resources: she would get a child from *Poros*. So she lay beside him and got pregnant with Love. That is why Love was born to follow Aphrodite and serve her: because he was conceived on the day of her birth. And that's why he is also by nature a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite herself is especially *beautiful*.

I have an article dealing exclusively with *Poros* and *Penia* posted on this same homepage.

The context is a celebration regarding the birth of Aphrodite, goddess associated with love or *eros*. *Poros*, the personification of resourcefulness or expediency, was present. During the celebration *Penia*, the personification of poverty, came begging. The two have intercourse with the latter having become pregnant with *Eros*. It's for this reason that *Eros* follows Aphrodite and serves her. For this reason by nature he's a lover of beauty, *erastes*, the latter prefaced with the preposition *peri* or around.

“As the son of *Poros* and *Penia*, his lot in life is set to be like theirs. In the first place, he is always poor, and he's far from being delicate and *beautiful* (as ordinary people

think he is); instead, he is tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless, always lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping at people's doorsteps and in roadsides under the sky, having his mother's nature, always living with Need. But on his father's side he is a schemer after the *beautiful* and the *good*; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life, a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings. 203.b-d

The son at hand is *Eros*, offspring of two opposites, resourcefulness and poverty. He's not just poor but always (*aei*, also *forever*) as such. Furthermore, he's not in the least gentle (*hapalos*) and beautiful as many people think, *polus* and *oiomai*, the verb also as to suppose. This is an opinion countered by the conjunctive *alla* or but. There then follows a whole list of rough-and-ready descriptions of *Eros* ending with always living with Need or *Penia*. However, this is countered by *Eros* being a schemer (*epiboulos*: plotting against or literally upon, *epi*-) after both the *kalos* and the *good*, *agathos* +, both in the plural. After this come another slew of adjectives, etc., praising the cunning nature of *Eros*.

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For the sake of convenience this section is in two paragraphs.

"That's obvious," she said. "A child could tell you. 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. This, too, comes to him from his parentage, from a father who is wise and resourceful and a mother who is not wise and lacks resource. "My dear Socrates, that, then, is the nature of the Spirit called Love. Considering what you thought about Love, it's no surprise that you were led into thinking of Love as you did. On the basis of what you say, I conclude that you thought Love was being loved, rather than being a lover. I think that's why Love struck you as *beautiful* in every way: because it is what is really *beautiful* and graceful that deserves to be loved, and this is perfect and highly blessed; but being a lover takes a different form, which I have just described."

This excerpt follows a question by Socrates who asked Diotima about the identity of seekers after truth, the verb being *philosopheo* (*philos* as friend of *sophia*) since they're neither wise nor ignorant, *sophos* and *amathes* also as stupid.

Diotima responds with somewhat of a put-down but affectionately to Socrates. Those at hand are *metaxu* + or between the two extremes, one of which is *Eros*. Wisdom is concerned with the loveliest of things, *sophia* + and superlative of *kalos*. In

light of this it follows that *Eros* is a lover of wisdom, *Eros* being used a second time with *kalos* and the preposition *peri* or around. By reason of this *Eros* is *metaxu* being wise and ignorant, *sophos* and *amathes*. This is traceable to his parents: the father being wise and resourceful while the mother is devoid of both, *euphoros* and *aporos*.

Diotima then tells Socrates that such is the Spirit of Love, *daimon* + and *Eros*. She points out that being a lover assumes a different form from what Socrates had in mind, *idea* also as semblance, outward appearance.

All in all it seems that Socrates—and this is completely understandable—cannot grasp the reality signified by *metaxu*. He has an *idea* as just noted about *Eros*, but fails to grasp that space-in-between all perceptions. Diotima is gently teaching Socrates to pause or slow down in order to grasp what she means by *metaxu*. Once this is understood, his perception of reality is changed permanently.

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So I said, “All right then, my friend. What you say about Love is *beautiful* (*kalos*, adverb +), but if you’re right, what use is Love to human beings?”

“I’ll try to teach you that, Socrates, after I finish this. So far I’ve been explaining the character and the parentage of Love. Now, according to you, he is love for *beautiful* things. But suppose someone asks us, ‘Socrates and Diotima, what is the point of loving *beautiful* things?’

“It’s clearer this way: ‘The lover of *beautiful* things has a desire; what does he desire?’”

“That they become his own,” I said.

“But that answer calls for still another question, that is, ‘What will this man have when the *beautiful* things he wants have become his own?’”

I said there was no way I could give a ready answer to that question.

Then she said, “Suppose someone changes the question, putting ‘good’ in place of ‘beautiful,’ and asks you this: ‘Tell me, Socrates, a lover of good things has a desire; what does he desire?’”

“That they become his own,” I said.

“And what will he have when the good things he wants have become his own?”

“This time it’s easier to come up the answer,” I said. “He’ll have happiness.” 204.b-e

The gist of this excerpt is that Socrates asks what use is *Eros* for humans, *chreia* also as advantage or service. Diotima responds that *Eros* is *eros* for beautiful things, *kalos*. A key sentence here is when Socrates responds to Diotima with regard to a question concerning a desire for beautiful things: “That they become his own.” The noun “desire” is rendered by the dative case of *autos*, “to himself.”

The excerpt ends with Diotima substituting the good or *agathos* + for the

beautiful. To this Socrates responds with the same words as above, “That they become his own.” Diotima then questions him as to what he will then have. His response is happiness. The verb *eudaimoneo* which consists of the verbal root for *daimon* prefaced with the adverbial *eu-* or well. In sum it’s well-being and the good wrapped into one and describes a life lived to the full.

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“Well, I’ll tell you,” she said. “It is giving birth in *beauty*, whether in body or in soul.” “It would take divination to figure out what you mean. I can’t.”

“Well, I’ll tell you more clearly,” she said. “All of us are pregnant, Socrates, both in body and in soul, and, as soon as we come to a certain age, we naturally desire to give birth. Now no one can possibly give birth in anything ugly; only in something *beautiful*. That’s because when a man and a woman come together in order to give birth, this is a godly affair. Pregnancy, reproduction—this is an immortal thing for a mortal animal to do, and it cannot occur in anything that is out of harmony, but ugliness is out of harmony with all that is godly. *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; but near ugliness they are foul-faced and draw back in pain; they turn away and shrink back and do not reproduce, and because they hold on to what they carry inside them the labor is painful. This is the source of the great excitement about *beauty* that comes to anyone who is pregnant and already teeming with life: *beauty* releases them from their great pain. You see, Socrates,” she said, “what Love wants is not *beauty*, as you think it is.”

“Well, what is it, then?”

“Reproduction and birth in *beauty*.” 206.b-e

Diotima responds to Socrates wanting to know about pursuing *eros* and adds that it’d take divinization to figure out what she means, *manteia* also as oracle, prophecy. She uses the example of giving birth in to *kalon* whether according to (*kata*) body or soul, *soma* and *psuche* +. Also she stress that this is a natural desire. This is rendered by the noun *helikia* or prime of life along with *phusis* or nature and *epithumeo*, to set one’ heart upon with regard to *tikto* or giving birth.

No one gives birth to what’s ugly, just what’s beautiful, *aischros* + vs. *kalos*. Diotima takes the example of a man and woman coming together to give birth which she calls a godly affair, *pragma* + modified by *theios* also as divine. It’s an immortal thing for mortals to do, *eneimi* literally to be in with regard to *thnetos* and *athanatos* or mortal vs. immortal. Such an act can’t occur in anything which lacks harmony,

anarmostos also as not fitting or out of tune. By its very nature ugliness (*aischros* +) is out of harmony with that which is godly while beauty is in harmony with the divine, *harmozo*, to fit or to join together.

The goddess who presides at childbirth is indeed beauty (*kallone*, a form of *kalos*) and called *Moira* or *Eilithuia*, Fate and Offspring or Travail. For this reason when pregnant animals or people draw near to beauty—the root *pelazo* intensified by *pros-* (direction towards-which) prefaced to it—they become gentle and well disposed, *hilaos* and *euphraino* also as gracious and to cheer, to delight. The opposite is true if they draw near to ugliness, *aischros* +.

Ptoiesis is the noun for passionate excitement with regard to beauty at it pertains to anyone who's pregnant or teeming with life, the latter verb being *spargao* or to be full to the bursting point. Beauty's benefit is that it releases such persons from great pain, *apoluo* or to loosen from and *odis*. And so Diotima tells Socrates that *Eros* doesn't want beauty as he thinks it is, *oimai* +.

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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, while he is still a virgin, and, having arrived at the proper age, desires to beget and give birth, he too will certainly go about seeking the *beauty* in which he would beget; for he will never beget in anything ugly. Since he is pregnant, then, he is much more drawn to bodies that are *beautiful* than to those that are ugly; and if he also has the luck to find a soul that is *beautiful* and noble and well-formed, he is even more drawn to this combination; such a man makes him instantly teem with ideas and arguments about virtue—the qualities a virtuous man should have and the customary activities in which he should engage; and so he tries to educate him. In my view, you see, when he makes contact with someone *beautiful* and keeps company with him, he conceives and gives birth to what he has been carrying inside him for ages. And whether they are together or apart, he remembers that *beauty*. And in common with him he nurtures the newborn; such people, therefore, have much more to share than do the parents of human children, and have a firmer bond of friendship, because the children in whom they have a share are more *beautiful* and more immortal. 209.a-d

Diotima describes *phronesis* or wisdom in the practical or applied sense modified by the superlative of *kalos*. It's for the proper ordering of cities and households, *diakosmesis*. The literal sense can be taken as *kosmeo* or an arranging of that which is *kalos* through (*dia-*) these two social groupings. Such is another definition of moderation and justice, *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune*, the former also as

soundness of mind. It's accompanied by both what's lawful and fitting.

A person pregnant with these in his soul or *psuche* + from youth (*helikia*, prime of life) upon reaching maturity desires to beget (*tikto*). The verb is *epithumeo*, important in that it takes our native *thumos* or spirit, courage and places it upon something, that is, *epi*- . This *epi*-, if you will, makes one go around (*perieimi*) seeking the beauty in which he'd give birth. That is, *kalos* is the prime motive for this begetting, never what is *aischros* + or shameful. And so this desire to beget is attracted to a beautiful body, not one just described as *aischros* +. The verb is *aspazomai* or to welcome kindly.

Should this person find (*aspazomai* +) a *psuche* + that's not just beautiful but noble and well-formed (*kalos* and *euphues* also as shapely), he's drawn more (*aspazomai* +) to such a combination, *sunamphoteroi* or both together. The discovery of such a person makes it easier for him to thrive at once (*euporeo*, to be able to and *euthus* also as immediately) while speaking of virtue or *arete* + (words or *logos* + of *arete*). Thus he tries to educate him, *epicheiro* and *paideuo*, the former as to put one's hand upon and the latter to engage in an educative process which lasts for one's entire life.

So when a person as this makes contact with someone who's *kalos* and keeps company with him (*homileo*, also to associate with), he conceives and gives birth to what he has been carrying inside him for ages (*palai*, a long time ago). Whether the two persons are together or apart (*pareimi* and *apeimi* or *para-* and *apo-*), he remembers that beauty, *mimnesko*⁴⁴. Such persons have a greater fellowship or *koinonia* with (*pros*, indicative of directness) each other. Their affectionate regard or *philia* is stronger (*bebrios*, firm) than those who've begotten children because they've brought into existence something more beautiful and freer from death (*kalos* and *athanatos* +) which is an active form of friendship, *koinoneo*. This is more binding (*koinos*, being in common) than parents of children as well as a firmer bond of friendship (*bebrios* or strong modifying *philia*), *koinonia* as with *koinos*).

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For the sake of convenience this section is in two paragraphs.

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. When he grasps this, he must become a lover of all *beautiful* bodies, and he must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it. After this he must

⁴ *Kalos* not mentioned but inferred.

think that the *beauty* of people's souls is more valuable than the *beauty* of their bodies, so that if someone is decent in his soul, even though he is scarcely blooming in his body, our lover must be content to love and care for him and to seek to give birth to such ideas as will make young men better.

At issue here is being initiated into the mysteries of love, *mueo* and *ta erotika*. ⁵⁵ A lover who deals with this in the right manner (*orthos*, in an upright fashion) while young must devote himself to beautiful bodies, *eimi* or here to go with *pragma* +. The preposition *epi* or upon is with *soma* + modified by *kalos*. If the one leading him does his job well (*orthos* +), he should consider how the beauty of one body is related to that of another body.

Should he pursue (*dioko*, to run after) the beauty of form (*eidos*, fundamentally that which is seen), it's be absurd (*anoia*, want of *noos* or understanding) to deny that the beauty of each body is the same. When he comes to comprehend this (*kathistemi* with *ennoeo*), he because a lover or *erastes* of all beautiful bodies. Then he considers (*hegeomai* +) that this grasping after one body is a small thing and despises it, *kataphroneo* (to look down with *chalao*, to despise).

Now for the important part. Now he must think that the beauty of souls (*psuche* +) is more valuable than that of their bodies, *timios* also as costly. Even should a person be scarcely blooming (*anthos*) in his body, the lover must love and care (*kedeuo*: to attend to) for him. Not only that, he's to give birth (*zeteo* and *tikto*: to seek and to beget) such ideas to make youths better.

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⁵ 209e.5-6