**PLATO’S *SYMPOSIUM***

**Introduction**

-Plato’s *Symposium* in a nutshell (within a nutshell):

-Recounts a dinner party attended by Socrates (Plato’s teacher and the ultimate troll).

-Plato wasn’t there, but Apollodorus (who also wasn’t there) told him about it. Sounds legit.

🡪 Shocker! Many scholars think Plato made it up (the details, if not the whole thing).

**-**On to the party:

-The year is 416 B.C. The place is Athens (you know the foundation for w. civilization and democracy).

-The tragic(ally attractive and narcissistic) poet Agathon has just won a dramatic contest for his very first play, N.B.D. So the party’s at his place.

-*Symposion* literally means “drinking together,” and loosely means “dinner party” or “feast” (note that the strict translation makes no mention of food).

-Traditionally, the “leader” (*symposiarchos*) would propose toasts. Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!

-They agree to give speeches praising Love (*eros*), in the proper and common noun sense of the word.

-Speeches are given from left to right (Socrates is last).

-**The first three speeches** concern the benefits of love:

1. **Phaedrus** says love is the best guide to virtue, and virtue is most valuable when connected with love.

🡪Most interested in courage leading to self-sacrifice (and has the stories to prove it!).

2. **Pausanias** distinguishes between vulgar and noble love: the former being purely physical and the latter being concerned with the soul as well as the body. He’s a little uptight. Aristophanes gets the hiccups.

3. **Eryximachus** (a physician) stretches “love” to mean “attraction” and even “harmony,” and credits love with beneficial effects in medicine (which is most important, obviously), music, meteorology, and divination. Did I mention that he’s a physician?

-**The second three speeches** explore the origin and nature of love:

1. **Aristophanes** says humans originally had twice as many limbs/organs, but the gods split us in half; we must spend our lives looking for our literal other-half. But even if we find it, we’ll never feel whole. Yay?

**2. The Speech of Agathon**

-Correct method of praise:

1) Praise Love’s nature

2) Praise Love’s gifts

-Love=happiest b/c he is

A. Most beautiful

B. Best

A. Most beautiful

1) Youngest

-Feels from old age

🡪Only the young love

-If Love was ancient, there would have always been peace

🡪Therefore, Love is young

2) Delicate

-Homer: Mischief delicate b/c she walks on heads

🡪Proof applies to Love, except he lives in souls

🡪only good souls

🡪Therefore, Love is *most* delicate

3) Fluid shape

-Able to slip in and out of souls

-Love’s good looks prove fluid (according to “everyone”)

🡪eternal war between Love and ugliness

-only stays w/ flowers and flowery

B. Best

-Determined by moral character:

-Justice, Moderation, Bravery, and Wisdom

1) Justice

-Violence never touches love

🡪never forced=willingly

-Whatever is done willingly=Just

2) Moderation

-Moderation–power over pleasure

🡪Love=most powerful pleasure

-People are under Love’s power

=Love has power over pleasure

=Love is moderate

3) Bravery

-Love has hold on Ares (god of war)

=Love > Ares

-Ares=bravery

🡪Therefore, Love=bravest

4) Wisdom

-Love can make anyone a poet (according to Euripides)

🡪Love=good poet=good at all artistic endeavors

🡪can’t give what you don’t have/can’t teach what you don’t know

-Animals created through Love’s skill

-Love’s teaching=fame

-Love=desire

🡪Love=teacher of anyone who desires to learn

🡪Love responsible for all the god’s gifts

🡪Love of beauty>Necessity=solution to all war

🡪Love=all good

🡪Therefore,

🡪Love is responsible for all good things

-Socrates’ “thought” method for praise=telling the truth

🡪Agathon “taught” him that it was to apply the grandest qualities, true or not.

🡪supposed to make everyone think he was praising Love, not actually praise him.

🡪Socrates didn’t understand before, can’t speak like that.

🡪will tell truth

**Socrates Questions Agathon**

Point 1.

-Does Love= of something or of nothing?

🡪A father is a father *of* a son/daughter? Y

🡪Mother? Y

🡪Brother–*of* something (a brother or sister) Y

🡪Therefore: Love=of something

Point 2.

-Does Love desire what it loves?

🡪Does he have what he desires? N (unlikely)

🡪Necessary>Likely

🡪Desire=what you needed=necessary? Y

🡪Does someone tall want to be tall? N

🡪No one longs for what you already have

🡪Desire for what you already have=desire you *will* have them in the future

🡪Love of what you don’t have=desire to have what you have (now) in the future

🡪Desire=

-not present

-you do not have

-you are not

-what you need

🡪Therefore: Love=what you need, but don’t have? Y

Point 3.

-Reminds Agathon he said gods ≠ fights b/c love of beautiful things (can’t love ugly things)

🡪Love=desire for beauty (never ugliness)? Y

🡪Love loves what he needs, but doesn’t have (see Point 2).

🡪If Love needs beauty, he doesn’t have it.

🡪If something needs beauty, doesn’t have it, is it beautiful? N

🡪Therefore: Love is not beautiful

Point 4.

-Good things=beautiful? Y

🡪Love needs beautiful things

🡪Good things=beautiful

🡪Love needs good things

🡪Therefore: Love is not responsible for all good things