

whole combination of soul and body is called a living thing, or animal, and has the designation 'mortal' as well. Such a combination cannot be immortal, not on any reasonable account. In fact it is pure fiction, based neither on observation nor on adequate reasoning, that a god is an immortal living thing which has a body and a soul, and that these are bound together by nature for all time—but of course we must let this be as it may please the gods, and speak accordingly.

Let us turn to what causes the shedding of the wings, what makes them fall away from a soul. It is something of this sort: By their nature wings have the power to lift up heavy things and raise them aloft where the gods all dwell, and so, more than anything that pertains to the body, they are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort. These nourish the soul's wings, which grow best in their presence, but foulness and ugliness make the wings shrink and disappear.

Now Zeus, the great commander in heaven, drives his winged chariot first in the procession, looking after everything and putting all things in order. Following him is an army of gods and spirits arranged in eleven sections. Hestia is the only one who remains at the home of the gods; all the rest of the twelve are lined up in formation, each god in command of the unit to which he is assigned. Inside heaven are many wonderful places from which to look and many aisles which the blessed gods take up and back, each seeing to his own work, while anyone who is able and wishes to do so follows along, since jealousy has no place in the gods' chorus. When they go to feast at the banquet they have a steep climb to the high tier at the rim of heaven; on this slope the gods' chariots move easily, since they are balanced and well under control, but the other chariots barely make it. The heaviness of the bad horse drags its charioteer toward the earth and weighs him down if he has failed to train it well, and this causes the most extreme toil and struggle that a soul will face. But when the souls we call im-

than ever by those who are beautiful. If Phaedrus and I said anything that shocked you in our earlier speech, blame it on Lysias, who was its father, and put a stop to his making speeches of this sort; convert him to philosophy like his brother Polemarchus so that his lover here may no longer play both sides as he does now, but simply devote his life to Love through philosophical discussions."

PHAEDRUS I join you in your prayer, Socrates. If this is really best for us, may it come to pass. As to your speech, I admired it from the moment you began: You managed it much better than your first one. I'm afraid that Lysias' effort to match it is bound to fall flat, if of course he even dares to try to offer a speech of his own. In fact, my marvelous friend, a politician I know was only recently taking Lysias to task for just that reason: All through his invective, he kept calling him a "speech writer." So perhaps his pride will keep him from writing this speech for us.

SOCRATES Ah, what a foolish thing to say, young man. How wrong you are about your friend: he can't be intimidated so easily! But perhaps you thought the man who was taking him to task meant what he said as a reproach?

PHAEDRUS He certainly seemed to, Socrates. In any case, you are surely aware yourself that the most powerful and renowned politicians are ashamed to compose speeches or leave any writings behind; they are afraid that in later times they may come to be known as "sophists."

SOCRATES Phaedrus, you don't understand the expression "Pleasant Bend"—it originally referred to the long bend of the Nile.²⁷ And, besides the bend, you also don't understand that the most ambitious politicians love speechwriting and long for their writings to survive. In fact, when they write one of their speeches, they are so pleased when people praise it that they add at the beginning a list of its admirers everywhere.

PHAEDRUS What do you mean? I don't understand.

b ing one another as each tries to get ahead of the others. The result is
terribly noisy, very sweaty, and disorderly. Many souls are crippled by
the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their
plumage. After so much trouble, they all leave without having seen re-
ality, uninitiated, and when they have gone they will depend on what
they think is nourishment—their own opinions.

c The reason there is so much eagerness to see the plain where truth
stands is that this pasture has the grass that is the right food for the
best part of the soul, and it is the nature of the wings that lift up the
soul to be nourished by it. Besides, the law of Destiny is this: If any
soul becomes a companion to a god and catches sight of any true thing,
it will be unharmed until the next circuit; and if it is able to do this
every time, it will always be safe. If, on the other hand, it does not see
anything true because it could not keep up, and by some accident takes
on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down,
d sheds its wings and falls to earth. At that point, according to the law,
the soul is not born into a wild animal in its first incarnation; but a soul
that has seen the most will be planted in the seed of a man who will
become a lover of wisdom²² or of beauty, or who will be cultivated in
the arts and prone to erotic love. The second sort of soul will be put
into someone who will be a lawful king or warlike commander; the
third, a statesman, a manager of a household, or a financier; the fourth
will be a trainer who loves exercise or a doctor who cures the body;
e the fifth will lead the life of a prophet or priest of the mysteries. To the
sixth the life of a poet or some other representational artist is properly
assigned; to the seventh the life of a manual laborer or farmer; to the
eighth the career of a sophist or demagogue, and to the ninth a tyrant.

Of all these, any who have led their lives with justice will change
to a better fate, and any who have led theirs with injustice, to a worse
one. In fact, no soul returns to the place from which it came for ten
249 thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for

d which are its natural route to the soul; there it waters the passages for
the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one
with love in return. Then the boy is in love, but has no idea what he
loves. He does not understand, and cannot explain, what has happened
to him. It is as if he had caught an eye disease from someone else, but
could not identify the cause; he does not realize that he is seeing him-
self in the lover as in a mirror. So when the lover is near, the boy's
pain is relieved just as the lover's is, and when they are apart he yearns
as much as he is yearned for, because he has a mirror image of love in
him—'backlove'—though he neither speaks nor thinks of it as love, but
as friendship. Still, his desire is nearly the same as the lover's, though
weaker: he wants to see, touch, kiss, and lie down with him; and of
course, as you might expect, he acts on these desires soon after they
occur.

When they are in bed, the lover's undisciplined horse has a word to
say to the charioteer—that after all its sufferings it is entitled to a little
fun. Meanwhile, the boy's bad horse has nothing to say, but swelling
with desire, confused, it hugs the lover and kisses him in delight at
his great good will. And whenever they are lying together it is com-
pletely unable, for its own part, to deny the lover any favor he might
beg to have. Its yoke-mate, however, along with its charioteer, resists
such requests with modesty and reason. Now if the victory goes to the
better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the as-
signed regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and
shared understanding. They are modest and fully in control of them-
selves now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into
the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue. After death, when they
have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of
three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests. There is no greater
good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can
offer a man. If, on the other hand, they adopt a lower way of living,

e what is down below—and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad. This is the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone who has it or is connected to it, and when someone who loves beautiful boys is touched by this madness he is called a lover. As I said, nature requires that the soul of every human being has seen reality; otherwise, no soul could have entered this sort of living thing. But not every soul is easily reminded of the reality there by what it finds here—not souls that got only a brief glance at the reality there, not souls who had such bad luck when they fell down here that they were twisted by bad company into lives of injustice so that they forgot the sacred objects they had seen before. Only a few remain whose memory is good enough; and they are startled when they see an image of what they saw up there. Then they are beside themselves, and their experience is beyond their comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what it is that they are seeing.

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Justice and self-control do not shine out through their images down here, and neither do the other objects of the soul's admiration; 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 (we²³ were with Zeus, while others followed other gods), saw that blessed and spectacular vision and were ushered into the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all. And we who celebrated it were wholly perfect and free of all the troubles that awaited us in time to come, and we gazed in rapture at sacred revealed objects that were perfect, and simple, and unshakable and blissful. That was the ultimate vision, and we saw it in pure light because we were pure ourselves, not buried in this thing we are carrying around now, which we call a body, locked in it like an oyster in its shell.

d Well, all that was for love of a memory that made me stretch out my speech in longing for the past. Now beauty, as I said, was radiant

tire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire. As for the horses, the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame, and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy. The other one, however, no longer responds to the whip or the goad of the charioteer; it leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yoke-mate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex. At first the other two resist, angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong.

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At last, however, when they see no end to their trouble, they are led forward, reluctantly agreeing to do as they have been told. So they are close to him now, and they are struck by the boy's face as if by a bolt of lightning. 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. At the sight he is frightened, falls over backwards awestruck, and at the same time has to pull the reins back so fiercely that both horses are set on their haunches, one falling back voluntarily with no resistance, but the other insolent and quite unwilling. They pull back a little further; and while one horse drenches the whole soul with sweat out of shame and awe, the other—once it has recovered from the pain caused by the bit and its fall—bursts into a torrent of insults as soon as it has caught its breath, accusing its charioteer and yoke-mate of all sorts of cowardice and unmanliness for abandoning their position and their agreement. Now once more it tries to make its unwilling partners advance, and gives in grudgingly only when they beg it to wait till later. Then, when the promised time arrives, and they are pretending to have forgotten, it reminds them; it struggles, it neighs, it pulls them forward and forces them to approach the boy again with the same proposition; and as soon as they are near, it drops its head, straightens its tail, bites the bit, and pulls without any shame at all. The charioteer is now struck with the same feelings as

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d cles flowing into it from his beauty (that is why this is called 'desire'²⁴),
 when it is watered and warmed by this, then all its pain subsides and is
 replaced by joy. When, however, it is separated from the boy and runs
 dry, then the openings of the passages in which the feathers grow are
 dried shut and keep the wings from sprouting. Then the stump of each
 feather is blocked in its desire and it throbs like a pulsing artery while
 the feather pricks at its passageway, with the result that the whole soul
 is stung all around, and the pain simply drives it wild—but then, when
 it remembers the boy in his beauty, it recovers its joy. From the out-
 landish mix of these two feelings—pain and joy—comes anguish and
 e helpless raving: 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. When it does see him, it opens the sluice-
 gates of desire and sets free the parts that were blocked up before. And
 now that the pain and the goading have stopped, it can catch its breath
 and once more suck in, for the moment, this sweetest of all pleasures.
 232 This it is not at all willing to give up, and no one is more important
 to it than the beautiful boy. It forgets mother and brothers and friends
 entirely and doesn't care at all if it loses its wealth through neglect. And
 as for proper and decorous behavior, in which it used to take pride, the
 soul despises the whole business. Why, it is even willing to sleep like
 a slave, anywhere, as near to the object of its longing as it is allowed to
 get! That is because in addition to its reverence for one who has such
 b beauty, the soul has discovered that the boy is the only doctor for all
 that terrible pain.

This is the experience we humans call love, you beautiful boy (I
 mean the one to whom I am making this speech). You are so young that
 what the gods call it is likely to strike you as funny. Some of the suc-
 cessors of Homer, I believe, report two lines from the less well known
 poems, of which the second is quite indecent and does not scan very
 well. They praise love this way:

*Yes, mortals call him powerful winged 'Love';
 But because of his need to thrust out the wings,
 the gods call him 'Shove'.²⁵*

c You may believe this or not as you like. But, seriously, the cause of
 love is as I have said, and this is how lovers really feel.

If the man who is taken by love used to be an attendant on Zeus, he
 will be able to bear the burden of this feathered force with dignity. But
 if it is one of Ares' troops who has fallen prisoner of love—if that is the
 god with whom he took the circuit—then if he has the slightest suspi-
 cion that the boy he loves has done him wrong, he turns murderous,
 and he is ready to make a sacrifice of himself as well as the boy.

d So it is with each of the gods: everyone spends his life honoring the
 god in whose chorus he danced, and emulates that god in every way he
 can, so long as he remains undefiled and in his first life down here. And
 that is how he behaves with everyone at every turn, not just with those
 e he loves. Everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from among
 those who are beautiful, and then treats the boy like his very own god,
 building him up and adorning him as an image to honor and worship.

Those who followed Zeus, for example, choose someone to love who
 is a Zeus himself in the nobility of his soul. So they make sure he has
 a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others, and once they have
 found him and are in love with him they do everything to develop
 that talent. If any lovers have not yet embarked on this practice, then
 they start to learn, using any source they can and also making progress
 on their own. They are well equipped to track down their god's true
 nature with their own resources because of their driving need to gaze
 at the god, and as they are in touch with the god by memory they are
 inspired by him and adopt his customs and practices, so far as a human
 being can share a god's life. For all of this they know they have the