

Add to this his amazing resistance to the cold—and, let me tell you, the winter there is something awful. Once, I remember, it was frightfully cold; no one so much as stuck his nose outside. If we absolutely had to leave our tent, we wrapped ourselves in anything we could lay our hands on and tied extra pieces of felt or sheepskin over our boots. Well, Socrates went out in that weather wearing nothing but this same old light cloak, and even in bare feet he made better progress on the ice than the other soldiers did in their boots. You should have seen the looks they gave him; they thought he was only doing it to spite them! So much for that! But you should hear what else he did during that same campaign,

The exploit our strong-hearted hero dared to do.¹⁰⁷

One day, at dawn, he started thinking about some problem or other; he just stood outside, trying to figure it out. He couldn't resolve it, but he wouldn't give up. He simply stood there, glued to the same spot. By midday, many soldiers had seen him, and, quite mystified, they told everyone that Socrates had been standing there all day, thinking about something. He was still there when evening came, and after dinner some Ionians moved their bedding outside, where it was cooler and more comfortable (all this took place in the summer), but mainly in order to watch if Socrates was going to stay out there all night. And so he did; he stood on the very same spot until dawn! He only left next morning, when the sun came out, and he made his prayers to the new day.

And if you would like to know what he was like in battle—this is a tribute he really deserves. You know that I was decorated for bravery during that campaign: well, during that very battle, Socrates single-handedly saved my life! He absolutely did! He just refused to leave me behind when I was wounded, and he rescued not only me but my armor as well. For my part, Socrates, I told them right then that the

- 95 The leader: Love.
 96 I.e., philosophy.
 97 Reading *teleutēsēi* at c7.
 98 Cf. 203d–e.
 99 *Iliad* xi.514.
 100 This is the conventional translation of the word, but the *aulos* was in fact a reed instrument and not a flute. It was held by the ancients to be the instrument that most strongly arouses the emotions.
 101 Satyrs had the sexual appetites and manners of wild beasts and were usually portrayed with large erections. Sometimes they had horses' tails or ears, sometimes the traits of goats. Marsyas, in myth, dared to compete in music with Apollo and was skinned alive for his impudence.
 102 Olympus was a legendary musician who was said to be loved by Marsyas (*Minos* 318b5) and to have made music that moved its listeners out of their senses.
 103 Legendary worshippers of Cybele, who brought about their own derangement through music and dance.
 104 *Iliad* vi.232–36 tells the famous story of the exchange by Glaucus of golden armor for bronze.
 105 Ajax, a hero of the Greek army at Troy, carried an enormous shield and so was virtually invulnerable to enemy weapons.
 106 Potidaea, a city in Thrace allied to Athens, was induced by Corinth to revolt in 432 B.C. The city was besieged by the Athenians and eventually defeated in a bloody local war, 432–430 B.C.
 107 *Odyssey* iv.242, 271.
 108 At Delium, a town on the Boeotian coastline just north of Attica, a major Athenian expeditionary force was routed by a Boeotian army in 424 B.C. For another description of Socrates' action during the retreat, see *Laches* 181b.
 109 Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 362.

For we might be able to form an idea of what Achilles was like by comparing him to Brasidas or some other great warrior, or we might compare Pericles with Nestor or Antenor or one of the other great orators.¹⁰⁰ There is a parallel for everyone—everyone else, that is. But this man here is so bizarre, his ways and his ideas are so unusual, that, search as you might, you'll never find anyone else, alive or dead, who's even remotely like him. The best you can do is not to compare him to anything human, but to liken him, as I do, to Silenus and the satyrs, and the same goes for his ideas and arguments.

Come to think of it, I should have mentioned this much earlier: even his ideas and arguments are just like those hollow statues of Silenus. If you were to listen to his arguments, at first they'd strike you as totally ridiculous; they're clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyrs. He's always going on about pack asses, or blacksmiths, or cobblers, or tanners; he's always making the same tired old points in the same tired old words. If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you'd find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments. But if you see them when they open up like the statues, if you go behind their surface, you'll realize that no other arguments make any sense. They're truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside. They're of great—no, of the greatest—importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man.

Well, this is my praise of Socrates, though I haven't spared him my reproach, either; I told you how horribly he treated me—and not only me but also Charmides, Euthydemus, and many others. He has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you're in love with him yourself! I warn you, Agathon, don't let him fool you! Remember our torments; be on your guard: don't wait, like the fool in the proverb, to learn your lesson from your own misfortune.¹¹¹

- 68 Arcadia included the city of Mantinea, which opposed Sparta, and was rewarded by having its population divided and dispersed in 385 B.C. Aristophanes seems to be referring anachronistically to those events; such anachronisms are not uncommon in Plato.
- 69 Contrast 178b.
- 70 *Iliad* xix.92–93. “Mischief” translates *Atē*.
- 71 “Moral character”: *aretē*, i.e., virtue.
- 72 A proverbial expression attributed by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1406a17–23) to the fourth-century liberal thinker and rhetorician Alcidas.
- 73 *Sōphrosunē*. The word can be translated also as “temperance” and, most literally, “sound-mindedness.” (Plato and Aristotle generally contrast *sōphrosunē* as a virtue with self-control: the person with *sōphrosunē* is naturally well-tempered in every way and so does not need to control himself, or hold himself back.)
- 74 From Sophocles, fragment 234b Dindorf: “Even Ares cannot withstand Necessity.” Ares is the god of war.
- 75 See *Odyssey* viii.266–366. Aphrodite’s husband Hephaestus made a snare that caught Ares in bed with Aphrodite.
- 76 “Wisdom” translates *sophia*, which Agathon treats as roughly equivalent to *technē* (professional skill); he refers mainly to the ability to produce things. Accordingly “wisdom” translates *sophia* in the first instance; afterwards in this passage it is “skill” or “art.”
- 77 At 186b.
- 78 Euripides, *Sthenobea* (frg. 666 Nauck).
- 79 After these two lines of poetry, Agathon continues with an extremely poetical prose peroration.
- 80 Accepting the emendation *aganos* at d5.
- 81 “Gorgian head” is a pun on “Gorgon’s head.” In his peroration Agathon had spoken in the style of Gorgias, and this style was considered to be irresistibly powerful. The sight of a Gorgon’s head would turn a man to stone.

Look how smoothly and plausibly he found a reason for Agathon to lie down next to him!”

And then, all of a sudden, while Agathon was changing places, a large drunken group, finding the gates open because someone was just leaving, walked into the room and joined the party. There was noise everywhere, and everyone was made to start drinking again in no particular order.

At that point, Aristodemus said, Eryximachus, Phaedrus, and some others among the original guests made their excuses and left. He himself fell asleep and slept for a long time (it was winter, and the nights were quite long). He woke up just as dawn was about to break; the roosters were crowing already. He saw that the others had either left or were asleep on their couches and that only Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates were still awake, drinking out of a large cup which they were passing around from left to right. Socrates was talking to them. Aristodemus couldn’t remember exactly what they were saying—he’d missed the first part of their discussion, and he was half-asleep anyway—but the main point was that Socrates was trying to prove to them that authors should be able to write both comedy and tragedy: the skillful tragic dramatist should also be a comic poet. He was about to clinch his argument, though, to tell the truth, sleepy as they were, they were hardly able to follow his reasoning. In fact, Aristophanes fell asleep in the middle of the discussion, and very soon thereafter, as day was breaking, Agathon also drifted off.

But after getting them off to sleep, Socrates got up and left, and Aristodemus followed him, as always. He said that Socrates went directly to the Lyceum, washed up, spent the rest of the day just as he always did, and only then, as evening was falling, went home to rest.

ENDNOTES

- ⁴⁰ Hippias of Elis was born in the mid-fifth century and traveled widely teaching a variety of subjects, including mathematics, astronomy, harmony, mnemonics, ethics, and history as well as public speaking.
- ⁴¹ Polus was a pupil of Gorgias; Plato represents him in the *Gorgias*, esp. at 448c and 471a–c. He was said to have composed an *Art of Rhetoric* (*Gorgias*, 462b).
- ⁴² Licymnius of Chios was a dithyrambic poet and teacher of rhetoric.
- ⁴³ Protagoras of Abdera, whose life spanned most of the fifth century B.C., was the most famous of the early sophists. We have a vivid portrayal of him in Plato's *Protagoras* and an intriguing reconstruction of his epistemology in the *Theaetetus*.
- ⁴⁴ Literally, "the night of the Chalcedonian": a Homeric figure referring to Thrasymachus, who came from Chalcedon. Cf. 261c.
- ⁴⁵ Pericles, who dominated Athens from the 450s until his death in 429 B.C., was famous as the most successful orator–politician of his time. The quotation is from the early Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, fragment 12.8 (Edmonds). Adrastus is a legendary warrior hero of Argos, one of the main characters in Euripides' *Suppliants*.
- ⁴⁶ Hippocrates, a contemporary of Socrates, is the famous doctor whose name is given to the Hippocratic Oath. None of the written works that have come down to us under his name express the view attributed to him in what follows. All doctors were said to be descendants of Asclepius, hero and god of healing.
- ⁴⁷ Socrates may be referring to Corax, whose name is also the Greek word for "crow."
- ⁴⁸ Naucratis was a Greek trading colony in Egypt. The story that follows is probably an invention of Plato's (see 275b3) in which he reworks elements from Egyptian and Greek mythology.
- ⁴⁹ Theuth (or Thoth) is the Egyptian god of writing, measuring, and calculation. The Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes, perhaps because of his role in weighing the soul. Thoth figures in a related story about the alphabet at *Philebus* 18b.
- ¹ Cephalus is prominent in the opening section of Plato's *Republic*, which is set in his home in Piraeus, the port of Athens. His sons Lysias, Polemarchus, and Euthydemus were known for their democratic sympathies.
- ² Acumenus was a doctor and a relative of the doctor Eryximachus who speaks in the *Symposium*.
- ³ Morychus is mentioned for his luxurious ways in a number of Aristophanes' plays.
- ⁴ Pindar, *Isthmian* 1.2, adapted by Plato.
- ⁵ Herodicus was a medical expert whose regimen Socrates criticizes in *Republic*.
- ⁶ According to legend, Orithuia, daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus, was abducted by Boreas while she was playing with Nymphs along the banks of the Ilissus River. Boreas personifies the north wind.
- ⁷ Typhon is a fabulous multi-form beast with a hundred heads resembling many different animal species.
- ⁸ Achelous is a river god. The Nymphs are benevolent female deities associated with natural phenomena such as streams, woods, and mountains.
- ⁹ This is classic behavior in ancient Greek literature of a lovesick man pursuing his prey.
- ¹⁰ The archons were magistrates chosen by lot in classical Athens. On taking office they swore an oath to set up a golden statue if they violated the laws.
- ¹¹ The Cypselids were rulers of Corinth in the seventh century B.C.; an ornate chest in which Cypselus was said to have been hidden as an infant was on display at Olympia, perhaps along with other offerings of theirs.