

THE WOMAN IN THE ROMAN SOCIETY

Ideals – Law – Practice

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Meeting 5 **Biology of marriage. Roman marriage: aim, social function. Why should one marry? Marriage in law and in customs. Ways of contracting.**

Suggested readings:

1. S. Treggiari, Roman Marriage

A. THE BIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

1. **The female role in generation. Athens, 4th cent. B.C. (Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 716a5-23, 727a2-30, 727b31-33, 728b 18-31, 765b8-20, 766a17-30, 783b26-784a2. Tr. A.L. Peck, LCL. G)**

Aristotle's explanation of the process of conception is deduced from external secretions: male semen has primary generative importance, female semen (i.e. menstrual fluid, which also sustains the developing embryo) purely nutritive value.

Male and female defined

As far as animals are concerned, we must describe their generation just as we find the theme requires for each several kind as we go along, linking our account on to what has already been said. As we mentioned, we may safely set down as the chief principles of generation the male [factor] and the female [factor]; the male as possessing the principle of movement and of generation, the female as possessing that of matter. One is most likely to be convinced of this by considering how the semen is formed and whence it comes; for although the things that are formed in the course of Nature no doubt take their rise out of semen, we must not fail to notice how the semen itself is formed from the male and the female, since it is because this part is secreted from the male and the female, and because its secretion takes place in them and out of them, that the male and the female are the principles of generation. By a 'male' animal we mean one which generates in another, by 'female' one which generates in itself. This is why in cosmology too they speak of the nature of the earth as something female and call it 'mother', while they give to the heaven and the sun and anything else of that kind the title of 'generator', and 'father'.

Now male and female differ in respect of their logos in that the power or faculty possessed by the one differs from that possessed by the other; but they differ also to bodily sense, in respect of certain physical parts. They differ in their logos, because the male is that which has the power to generate in another (as was stated above), while the female is that which can generate in itself, i.e. it is that out of which the generated offspring, which is present in the generator, comes into being ...[1]

Male and female secretions

This much is evident: the menstrual fluid is a residue, and it is the analogous thing in females to the semen in males. Its behaviour shows that this statement is correct. At the same time of life that semen begins to appear in males and is emitted, the menstrual discharge begins to flow in females, their voice changes and their breasts begin to become conspicuous; and similarly, in the decline of life the power to generate ceases in males and the menstrual discharge ceases in females. Here are still further indications that this secretion which females produce is a residue. Speaking generally, unless the menstrual discharge is suspended, women are not troubled by haemorrhoids or bleeding from the nose or any other such discharge, and if it happens that they are, then the evacuations fall off in

quantity, which suggests that the substance secreted is being drawn off to the other discharges. Again, their blood vessels are not so prominent as those of males; and females are more neatly made and smoother than males, because the residue which goes to produce those characteristics in males is in females discharged together with the menstrual fluid. We are bound to hold, in addition, that for the same cause the bulk of the body in female vivipara^[2] is smaller than that of the males, as of course it is only in vivipara that the menstrual discharge flows externally, and most conspicuously of all in women, who discharge a greater amount than any other female animals. On this account it is always very noticeable that the female is pale, and the blood-vessels are not prominent, and there is an obvious deficiency in physique as compared with males.

Now it is impossible that any creature should produce two seminal secretions at once, and as the secretion in females which answers to semen in males is the menstrual fluid, it obviously follows that the female does not contribute any semen to generation; for if there were semen, there would be no menstrual fluid; but as menstrual fluid is in fact formed, therefore there is no semen ...

There are some who think that the female contributes semen during coition because women sometimes derive pleasure from it comparable to that of the male and also produce a fluid secretion. This fluid, however, is not seminal; it is peculiar to the part from which it comes in each several individual; there is a discharge from the uterus, which though it happens in some women does not in others. Speaking generally, this happens in fair-skinned women who are typically feminine, and not in dark women of a masculine appearance. Where it occurs, this discharge is sometimes on quite a different scale from the semen discharged by the male, and greatly exceeds it in bulk. Furthermore, differences of food cause a great difference in the amount of this discharge which is produced: e.g. some pungent foods cause a noticeable increase in the amount ... Further, a boy actually resembles a woman in physique, and a woman is as it were an infertile male; the female, in fact, is female on account of inability of a sort, viz. it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of the nourishment (this is either blood, or its counterpart in bloodless animals) because of the coldness of its nature. Thus, just as lack of concoction produces in the bowels diarrhoea, so in the blood vessels it produces discharge of blood of various sorts, and especially the menstrual discharge (which has to be classed as a discharge of blood, though it is a natural discharge, and the rest are morbid ones).

Hence, plainly, it is reasonable to hold that generation takes place from this process; for, as we see, the menstrual fluid is semen, not indeed semen in a pure concoction, but needing still to be acted upon. It is the same with fruit when it is forming. The nourishment is present right enough, even before it has been strained off, but it stands in need of being acted upon in order to purify it. That is why when the former is mixed with the semen, and when the latter is mixed with pure nourishment the one effects generation, and the other effects nutrition ...

The role of heat

Now the opinion that the cause of male and female is heat and cold, and that the difference depends upon whether the secretion comes from the right side or from the left, has a modicum of reason in it, because the right side of the body is hotter than the left; hotter semen is semen which has been concocted; the fact that it has been concocted means that it has been set and compacted, and the more compacted semen is, the more fertile it is. All the same, to state the matter in this way is attempting to lay hold of the cause from too great a distance, and we ought to come as closely to grips as we possibly can with the primary causes.

We have dealt already elsewhere with the body as a whole and with its several parts, and have stated what each one is, and on account of what cause it is so. But that is not all, for (1) the male and the female are distinguished by a certain ability and inability. Male is that which is able to concoct, to cause to take shape, and to discharge, semen possessing the 'principle' of the 'form'; and by 'principle' I do not mean that sort of principle out of which, as out of matter, offspring is formed belonging to the same kind as its parent, but I mean the proximate motive principle, whether it is able to act thus in itself or in something else. Female is that which receives the semen, but is unable to cause semen to take shape or to discharge it. And (2) all concoction works by means of heat. Assuming the truth of these two statements, it follows of necessity that (3) male animals are hotter than female ones, since it is on account of coldness and inability that the female is more abundant in blood in certain regions of the body. And this abundance of blood is a piece of evidence which goes to prove the opposite of the view held by some people, who suppose that the female must be hotter than the male, on account of the discharge of menstrual fluid.

When the 'principle' is failing to gain the mastery and is unable to effect concoction owing to deficiency of heat, and does not succeed in reducing the material into its own proper form, but instead is worsted in the attempt, then of necessity the material must change over into its opposite condition. Now the opposite of the male is the female, and it is opposite in respect of that whereby

one is male and the other female. And since it differs in the ability it possesses, so also it differs in the instrument which it possesses. Hence this is the condition into which the material changes over. And when one vital part changes, the whole make-up of the animal differs greatly in appearance and form. This may be observed in the case of eunuchs; the mutilation of just one part of them results in such a great alteration of their old semblance, and in close approximation to the appearance of the female.

The reason for this is that some of the body's parts are 'principles', and once a principle has been 'moved' (i.e. changed), many of the parts which cohere with it must of necessity change as well ...

Also, the fact that the menstrual discharge in the natural course tends to take place when the moon is waning is due to the same cause. That time of month is colder and more fluid on account of the waning and failure of the moon (since the moon makes a summer and winter in the course of a month just as the sun does in the course of the whole year) ...

So that if you reckon up (a) that the brain itself has very little heat, (b) that the skin surrounding it must of necessity have even less, and (c) that the hair, being the furthest off of the three, must have even less still, you will expect persons who are plentiful in semen to go bald at about this time of life.^[3] And it is owing to the same cause that it is on the front part of the head only that human beings go bald, and that they are the only animals which do so at all; i.e. they go bald in front because the brain is there, and they alone do so, because they have by far the largest brain of all and the most fluid. Women do not go bald because their nature is similar to that of children: both are incapable of producing seminal secretion. Eunuchs, too, do not go bald, because of their transition into the female state, and the hair that comes at a later stage they fail to grow at all, or if they already have it, they lose it, except for the pubic hair: similarly women do not have the later hair, though they do grow the pubic hair. This deformity constitutes a change from the male state to the female.

Notes:

1. Cf. Apollo's argument in Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 658-61, which helps win the case for Orestes: 'She who is called the child's mother is not its begetter, but the nurse of the newly sown conception. The begetter is the male, and she as a stranger for a stranger preserves the offspring, if no god blights its birth' (tr. H. Lloyd-Jones).

2. Animals that give birth to live offspring, as opposed to those that lay eggs.

3. In the Hippocratic Corpus (*On the Nature of the Child* 20), baldness is also attributed to excess fluid.

2. Intercourse, conception and pregnancy. Cos, 4th cent. B.C. (Hippocrates, *On the Generating Seed and the Nature of the Child* 4-7, 13, 30.4=VII.474-80, 488-92, 536-8 Littré. Tr. I.M. Lonie. G)

(4) In the case of women, it is my contention that when during intercourse the vagina is rubbed and the womb is disturbed, an irritation is set up in the womb which produces pleasure and heat in the rest of the body. A woman also releases something from her body, sometimes into the womb, which then becomes moist, and sometimes externally as well, if the womb is open wider than normal. Once intercourse has begun, she experiences pleasure throughout the whole time, until the man ejaculates. If her desire for intercourse is excited, she emits before the man, and for the remainder of the time she does not feel pleasure to the same extent; but if she is not in a state of excitement, then her pleasure terminates along with that of the man. What happens is like this: if into boiling water you pour another quantity of water which is cold, the water stops boiling. In the same way, the man's sperm arriving in the womb extinguishes both the heat and the pleasure of the woman. Both the pleasure and the heat reach their peak simultaneously with the arrival of the sperm in the womb, and then they cease. If, for example, you pour wine on a flame, first of all the flame flares up and increases for a short period when you pour the wine on, then it dies away. In the same way the woman's heat flares up in response to the man's sperm, and then dies away. The pleasure experienced by the woman during intercourse is considerably less than the man's, although it lasts longer. The reason that the man feels more pleasure is that the secretion from the bodily fluid in his case occurs suddenly, and as the result of a more violent disturbance than in the woman's case.

Another point about women: if they have intercourse with men their health is better than if they do not. For in the first place, the womb is moistened by intercourse, whereas when the womb is drier than it should be it becomes extremely contracted, and this extreme contraction causes pain to the body. In the second place, intercourse by heating the blood and rendering it more fluid gives an easier passage to the menses; whereas if the menses do not flow, women's bodies become prone to sickness.

(5) When a woman has intercourse, if she is not going to conceive, then it is her practice to expel the sperm produced by both partners whenever she wishes to do so. If however she is going to conceive, the sperm is not expelled, but remains in the womb. For when the womb has received the sperm it closes up and retains it, because the moisture causes the womb's orifice to contract. Then both what

is provided by the man and what is provided by the woman is mixed together. If the woman is experienced in matters of childbirth, and takes note when the sperm is retained, she will know the precise day on which she has conceived.

Male and female sperm

(6) Now here is a further point. What the woman emits is sometimes stronger, and sometimes weaker; and this applies also to what the man emits. In fact both partners alike contain both male and female sperm (the male being stronger than the female must of course originate from a stronger sperm). Here is a further point: if (a) both partners produce a stronger sperm, then a male is the result, whereas if (b) they produce a weak form, then a female is the result. But if (c) one partner produces one kind of sperm, and the other another, then the resultant sex is determined by whichever sperm prevails in quantity. For suppose that the weak sperm is much greater in quantity than the stronger sperm: then the stronger sperm is overwhelmed and, being mixed with the weak, results in a female. If on the contrary the strong sperm is greater in quantity than the weak, and the weak is overwhelmed, it results in a male. It is just as though one were to mix together beeswax with suet, using a larger quantity of suet than of the beeswax, and melt them together over a fire. While the mixture is still fluid, the prevailing character of the mixture is not apparent: only after it solidifies can it be seen that the suet prevails quantitatively over the wax. And it is just the same with the male and female forms of sperm.

(7) Now that both male and female sperm exist in both partners is an inference which can be drawn from observation. Many women have borne daughters to their husbands and then, going with other men, have produced sons. And the original husbands-those, that is, to whom their wives bore daughters-have as the result of intercourse with other women produced male offspring; whereas the second group of men, who produced male offspring, have with yet other women produced female offspring. Now this consideration shows that both the man and the woman have male and female sperm. For in the partnership in which the women produced daughters, the stronger sperm was overwhelmed by the larger quantity of the weaker sperm, and females were produced; while in the partnership in which these same women produced sons, it was the weak which was overwhelmed, and males were produced. Hence the same man does not invariably emit the strong variety of sperm, nor the weak invariably, but sometimes the one and sometimes the other; the same is true in the woman's case. There is therefore nothing anomalous about the fact that the same women and the same men produce both male and female sperm: indeed, these facts about male and female sperm are also true in the case of animals.

A spontaneous abortion

(13) As a matter of fact I myself have seen an embryo which was aborted after remaining in the womb for six days. It is upon its nature, as I observed it then, that I base the rest of my inferences. It was in the following way that I came to see a six-day-old embryo. A kinswoman of mine owned a very valuable danseuse, whom she employed as a prostitute. It was important that this girl should not become pregnant and thereby lose her value. Now this girl had heard the sort of thing women say to each other-that when a woman is going to conceive, the seed remains inside her and does not fall out. She digested this information, and kept a watch. One day she noticed that the seed had not come out again. She told her mistress, and the story came to me. When I heard it, I told her to jump up and down, touching her buttocks with her heels at each leap. After she had done this no more than seven times, there was a noise, the seed fell out on the ground, and the girl looked at it in great surprise. [1] It looked like this: it was as though someone had removed the shell from a raw egg, so that the fluid inside showed through the inner membrane-a reasonably good description of its appearance. It was round, and red; and within the membrane could be seen thick white fibres, surrounded by a thick red serum; while on the outer surface of the membrane were clots of blood. In the middle of the membrane was a small projection: it looked to me like an umbilicus, and I considered that it was through this that the embryo first breathed in and out. From it, the membrane stretched all around the seed. Such then was the six-day embryo that I saw, and a little further on I intend to describe a second observation which will give a clear insight into the subject. It will also serve as evidence for the truth of my whole argument-so far as is humanly possible in such a matter.

(30) ... In fact it is impossible for pregnancy to last longer than ten months, and I shall explain why. The nutriment for growth which the mother's body provides is no longer sufficient for the child after ten months are up and it is fully grown. It is nurtured by drawing the sweetest part of the blood towards itself, although it is fed to some extent from the milk as well. Once these are no longer

sufficient and the child is already big, in its desire for more nutriment than is there it tosses about and so ruptures the membranes. This occurs more frequently in women who are bearing their first child; with them, the supply of nutriment for the child tends to give out before the ten months are up. This is the reason; the menstrual flow of some women is sufficiently abundant, while with other women the flow is less. (If this is always the case it is the result of the constitution which the woman has inherited from her mother.) Now it is the women whose menses are small in quantity who also provide their infants with insufficient nutriment towards the end of their term when the infant is already large, and so cause it to toss about and bring on birth before ten months are up. The reason is their small flow of blood. Usually too these women cannot give milk; this is because they have a dry constitution and their flesh is densely packed.

Notes:

1. The flute-girl's gymnastics would not have aborted a healthy pregnancy, but they helped eject more quickly an early defective embryo (or 'blood mole') that would soon have been miscarried in the normal course of events. The embryo was of course much older than six days. See A. Guttmacher's note in Ellinger 1952, 113-7.

3. Comparison of male and female anatomy. Pergamum, 2nd cent. A.D. (Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6-7, exc. Tr. M.T. May. G)

Galen, born and educated in **Pergamum**, the great Hellenistic seat of learning in Asia Minor, was philosopher, physician, and eclectic dogmatist. He began his career as a gladiators' doctor, but eventually became physician to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His pathology was speculative and based on the doctrine that health depended on the balance of the four humours (black bile, yellow bile, blood and phlegm). His reliance on philosophical premise and astrological prognostication has little connection with modern scientific technique. Some of his anatomical conclusions are based on inaccurate comparisons between animals, which he dissected, and humans, whom he did not. But he made significant contributions to diagnosis and prognosis.^[1]

The female is less perfect than the male for one, principal reason because she is colder, for if among animals the warm one is the more active, a colder animal would be less perfect than a warmer. A second reason is one that appears in dissecting ...

All the parts, then, that men have, women have too, the difference between them lying in only one thing, which must be kept in mind throughout the discussion, namely, that in women the parts are within [the body], whereas in men they are outside, in the region called the perineum.^[2] Consider first whichever ones you please, turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak and fold double the man's, and you will find them the same in both in every respect. Then think first, please, of the man's turned in and extending inward between the rectum and the bladder.

If this should happen, the scrotum would necessarily take the place of the uteri, with the testes lying outside, next to it on either side; the penis of the male would become the neck of the cavity that had been formed; and the skin at the end of the penis, now called the prepuce, would become the female pudendum [the vagina] itself. Think too, please of the converse, the uterus turned outward and projecting. Would not the testes [the ovaries] then necessarily be inside it? Would it not contain them like a scrotum? Would not the neck [the cervix], hitherto concealed inside the perineum but now pendent, be made into the male member? And would not the female pudendum, being a skinlike growth upon this neck, be changed into the part called the prepuce? It is also clear that in consequence the position of the arteries, veins, and spermatic vessels [the ductus deferentes and Fallopian tubes] would be changed too. In fact, you could not find a single male part left over that had not simply changed its position; for the parts that are inside in woman are outside in man. You can see something like this in the eyes of the mole, which have vitreous and crystalline humours and the tunics that surround these and grow out from the meninges, as I have said, and they have these just as much as animals do that make use of their eyes. The mole's eyes, however, do not open, nor do they project but are left there imperfect and remain like the eyes of other animals when these are still in the uterus ...

So too the woman is less perfect than the man in respect to the generative parts. For the parts were formed within her when she was still a foetus, but could not because of the defect in the heat emerge and project on the outside, and this, though making the animal itself that was being formed less perfect than one that is complete in all respects, provided no small advantage for the race; for there needs must be a female. Indeed, you ought not to think that our creator would purposely make half the whole race imperfect and, as it were, mutilated, unless there was to be some great advantage in such a mutilation.

Let me tell what this is. The foetus needs abundant material both when it is first constituted and for the entire period of growth that follows. Hence it is obliged to do one of two things; it must either snatch nutriment away from the mother herself or take nutriment that is left over. Snatching it away would be to injure the generant, and taking left over nutriment would be impossible if the female were perfectly warm; for if she were, she would easily disperse and evaporate it. Accordingly, it was better

for the female to be made enough colder so that she cannot disperse all the nutriment which she concocts and elaborates ... This is the reason why the female was made cold, and the immediate consequence of this is the imperfection of the parts, which cannot emerge on the outside on account of the defect in the heat, another very great advantage for the continuance of the race. For, remaining within, that which would have become the scrotum if it had emerged on the outside was made into the substance of the uteri, an instrument fitted to receive and retain the semen and to nourish and perfect the foetus.

Forthwith, of course, the female must have smaller, less perfect testes, and the semen generated in them must be scantier, colder, and wetter (for these things too follow of necessity from the deficient heat). Certainly such semen would be incapable of generating an animal, and, since it too has not been made in vain, I shall explain in the course of my discussion what its use is: The testes of the male are as much larger as he is the warmer animal. The semen generated in them, having received the peak of concoction, becomes the efficient principle of the animal. Thus, from one principle devised by the creator in his wisdom, that principle in accordance with which the female has been made less perfect than the male, have stemmed all these things useful for the generation of the animal: that the parts of the female cannot escape to the outside; that she accumulates an excess of useful nutriment and has imperfect semen and a hollow instrument to receive the perfect semen; that since everything in the male is the opposite [of what it is in the female], the male member has been elongated to be most suitable for coitus and the excretion of semen; and that his semen itself has been made thick, abundant, and warm ...

It is clear that the left testis in the male and the left uterus in the female receive blood still uncleansed, full of residues, watery and serous, and so it happens that the temperaments of the instruments themselves that receive [the blood] become different. For just as pure blood is warmer than blood full of residues, so too the instruments on the right side, nourished with pure blood, become warmer than those on the left ... Moreover, if this has been demonstrated and it has been granted that the male is warmer than the female, it is no longer at all unreasonable to say that the parts on the right produce males and those on the left, females. In fact, that is what Hippocrates meant when he said, 'At puberty, whichever testis appears on the outside, the right, a male, the left, a female.'^[3] That is to say, when the generative parts first swell out and the voice becomes rougher and deeper for this is what puberty is—Hippocrates bids us observe which of the parts is the stronger; for of course, those that swell out first and have a greater growth are the stronger.

Notes:

1. See [number 352](#), and Scarborough 1977. Cf. Jackson 1988, 86-111.

2. This notion may go back to the third-century B.C. doctor Herophilus of Alexandria, Galen On Seed 2.1= F 61 (von Staden 1989).

3. *On Common Diseases* 6.6.21.

4. Menstruation, conception, contraception and abortion. Rome, 1st cent. A.D. (Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.24, 26, 34, 36, 39, 40, 60, 61, 64. Tr. O. Temkin. G)

Soranus, a Greek from Ephesus in Asia Minor who practised in Rome, approaches his topic with more sympathy and common sense than his colleagues, and, unlike other practitioners, includes in his account of gynaecology all aspects of the female reproductive system, normal as well as abnormal.

Menstruation

(24). One has to infer approaching menstruation from the fact that at the expected time of the period it becomes trying to move and there develops heaviness of the loins, sometimes pain as well, sluggishness, continual yawning, and tension of the limbs, sometimes also a flush of the cheeks which either remains or, having been dispersed, reappears after an interval; and in some cases approaching menstruation must be inferred from the fact that the stomach is prone to nausea and it lacks appetite. Menstruation which is about to occur for the first time must be inferred from the same signs but above all from the growth of the breasts which, broadly, takes place around the fourteenth year, and from the heaviness, irritation and pubescence in the region of the lower abdomen.

(26). In women who have already menstruated often, each must be allowed to do according to her own custom. For some habitually take a rest, while others go on with moderate activities. But it is safer to rest and not to bathe especially on the first day. But in women who are about to menstruate no longer, their time for menstruation having passed, one must take care that the stoppage of the menses does not occur suddenly. For in regard to alteration, even if the body be changed for the better, all abruptness disturbs it through discomfort; for that which is unaccustomed is not tolerated, but is like

some unfamiliar malaise. The methods we employ at the approach of the first menstruation must now be marshalled forth during the time when menstruation is about to cease; for that which is able to evoke the as yet absent excretion is even more able to preserve for some time menstruation which is still present. In addition, vaginal suppositories capable of softening and injections which have the [same] effect should be employed, together with all the remedies capable of rendering hardened bodies soft. But if the menstruation is too much for the strength of the patient, or again, if it is impeded by abnormal factors, then there is need for therapeutic measures which we shall elaborate in the section on 'things abnormal'.

Conception

(34). One must judge the majority from the ages of 15 to 40 to be fit for conception, if they are not mannish, compact, and oversturdy, or too flabby and very moist. Since the uterus is similar to the whole [body], it will in these cases either be unable, on account of its pronounced hardness, easily to accept the attachment of the seed, or by reason of its extreme laxity and atony [let it fall again]. Furthermore they seem fit if their uteri are neither very moist or dry, nor too lax or constricted, and if they have their catharsis regularly, not through some moisture or ichors of various kinds, but through blood and of this neither too much nor, on the other hand, extremely little. Also those in whom the orifice of the uterus is comparatively far forward and lies in a straight line (for an orifice deviated even in its natural state and lying farther back in the vagina, is less suited for the attraction and acceptance of the seed).

(36). The best time for fruitful intercourse is when menstruation is ending and abating, when urge and appetite for coitus are present, when the body is neither in want nor too congested and heavy from drunkenness and indigestion, and after the body has been rubbed down and a little food been eaten and when a pleasant state exists in every respect. (1) 'When menstruation is ending and abating,' for the time before menstruation is not suitable, the uterus already being overburdened and in an unresponsive state because of the ingress of material and incapable of carrying on two motions contrary to each other, one for the excretion of material, the other for receiving.

39. (2) In order that the offspring may not be rendered misshapen, women must be sober during coitus because in drunkenness the soul becomes the victim of strange fantasies; this furthermore, because the offspring bears some resemblance to the mother as well not only in body but in soul ...

40. (3) Together with these points it has already been stated that the best time is after a rubdown has been given and a little food been eaten. The food will give the inner turbulence an impetus towards coitus, the urge for intercourse not being diverted by appetite for food; while the rubdown will make it possible to lay hold of the injected seed more readily. For just as the rubdown naturally aids the distribution of food, it helps also in the reception and retention of the seed, yesterday's superfluities, as one may say, being unloaded, and the body thoroughly cleansed and in a sound state for its natural processes. Consequently, as the farmer sows only after having first cleansed the soil and removed any foreign material, in the same manner we too advise that insemination for the production of man should follow after the body has first been given a rubdown.

Contraception

60. A contraceptive differs from an abortive, for the first does not let conception take place, while the latter destroys what has been conceived ... And an expulsive some people say is synonymous with an abortive; others, however, say that there is a difference because an expulsive does not mean drugs but shaking and leaping ... For this reason they say that Hippocrates, although prohibiting abortives, yet in his book 'On the Nature of the Child' employs leaping with the heels to the buttocks for the sake of expulsion.^[1] But a controversy has arisen. For one party banishes abortives, citing the testimony of Hippocrates who says: 'I will give to no one an abortive'; moreover, because it is the specific task of medicine to guard and preserve what has been engendered by nature. The other party prescribes abortives, but with discrimination, that is, they do not prescribe them when a person wishes to destroy the embryo because of adultery or out of consideration for youthful beauty; but only to prevent subsequent danger in parturition if the uterus is small and not capable of accommodating the complete development, or if the uterus at its orifice has knobbly swelling and fissures, or if some similar difficulty is involved. And they say the same about contraceptives as well, and we too agree with them. And since it is safer to prevent conception from taking place than to destroy the foetus, we shall now first discourse upon such prevention.

61. For if it is much more advantageous not to conceive than to destroy the embryo, one must consequently beware of having sexual intercourse at those periods which we said were suitable for

conception. And during the sexual act, at the critical moment of coitus when the man is about to discharge the seed, the woman must hold her breath and draw herself away a little, so that the seed may not be hurled too deep into the cavity of the uterus. And getting up immediately and squatting down, she should induce sneezing and carefully wipe the vagina all round; she might even drink something cold. It also aids in preventing conception to smear the orifice of the uterus all over before with old olive oil or honey or cedar resin or juice of the balsam tree, alone or together with white lead; or with a moist cerate containing myrtle oil and white lead; or before the act with moist alum, or with galbanum together with wine; or to put a lock of fine wool into the orifice of the uterus; or, before sexual relations to use vaginal suppositories which have the power to contract and to condense. For such of these things as are styptic, clogging and cooling cause the orifice of the uterus to shut before the time of coitus and do not let the seed pass into its fundus. [Such, however, as are hot] and irritating not only do not allow the seed of the man to remain in the cavity of the uterus, but draw forth as well another fluid from it.

62. And we shall make specific mention of some. Pine bark, tanning sumach, equal quantities of each, rub with wine and apply in due measure before coitus after wool has been wrapped around; and after two or three hours she may remove it and have intercourse. Another: Of Cimolian earth, root of panax, equal quantities, rub with water separately and together, and when sticky apply in like manner. Or: Grind the inside of fresh pomegranate peel with water, and apply. Or: Grind two parts of pomegranate peel and one part of oak galls, form small suppositories and insert after the cessation of menstruation. Or: Moist alum, the inside of pomegranate rind, mix with water, and apply with wool. Or: Of unripe oak galls, of the inside of pomegranate peel, of ginger, of each 2 drachms, mould it with wine to the size of vetch peas and dry indoors and give before coitus, to be applied as a vaginal suppository. Or: Grind the flesh of dried figs and apply together with natron. Or: Apply pomegranate peel with an equal amount of gum and an equal amount of oil of roses. Then one should always follow with a drink of honey water. But one should beware of things which are very pungent, because of the ulcerations arising from them. And we use all these things after the end of menstruation ...

Abortion

64. In order that the embryo be separated, the woman should have [more violent exercise], walking about energetically and being shaken by means of draught animals; she should also leap energetically and carry things which are heavy beyond her strength. She should use diuretic decoctions which also have the power to bring on menstruation, and empty and purge the abdomen with relatively pungent clysters; sometimes using warm and sweet olive oil as injections, sometimes anointing the whole body thoroughly therewith and rubbing it vigorously, especially around the pubes, the abdomen, and the loins, bathing daily in sweet water which is not too hot, lingering in the baths and drinking first a little wine and living on pungent food. If this is without effect, one must also treat locally by having her sit in a bath of a decoction of linseed, fenugreek, mallow, marsh mallow, and wormwood. She must also use poultices of the same substances and have injections of old oil, alone or together with rue juice or maybe with honey, or of iris oil, or of absinthium together with honey, or of panax balm or else of spelt together with rue and honey, or of Syrian unguent. And if the situation remains the same she must no longer apply the common poultices, but those made of meal of lupines together with ox bile and absinthium, [and she must use] plasters of a similar kind.

65. For a woman who intends to have an abortion, it is necessary for two or even three days beforehand to take protracted baths, little food and to use softening vaginal suppositories; also to abstain from wine; then to be bled and a relatively great quantity taken away. For the dictum of Hippocrates in the Aphorisms, even if not true in a case of constriction, is yet true of a healthy woman: 'A pregnant woman if bled, miscarries.' For just as sweat, urine or faeces are excreted if the parts containing these substances slacken very much, so the foetus falls out after the uterus dilates. Following the venesection one must shake her by means of draught animals (for now the shaking is more effective on the parts which previously have been relaxed) and one must use softening vaginal suppositories. But if a woman reacts unfavourably to venesection and is languid, one must first relax the parts by means of hip-baths, full baths, softening vaginal suppositories, by keeping her on water and limited food, and by means of aperients and the application of a softening clyster; afterwards one must apply an abortive vaginal suppository. Of the latter one should choose those which are not too pungent, that they may not cause too great a sympathetic reaction and heat. And of the more gentle ones there exist for instance: Of myrtle, wallflower seed, bitter lupines equal quantities, by means of water, mould troches the size of a bean. Or: Of rue leaves 3 drachms, of myrtle 2 drachms and the same of sweet bay, mix with wine in the same way, and give her a drink. Another vaginal suppository which produces abortion with relatively little danger: Of wallflower, cardamom, brimstone, absinthium, myrrh, equal quantities, mould with water. And she who intends to apply these things should be bathed beforehand or made to relax by hip-baths; and if after some time she brings forth

nothing, she should again be relaxed by hip-baths and for the second time a suppository should be applied. In addition, many different things have been mentioned by others; one must, however, beware of things that are too powerful and of separating the embryo by means of something sharp-edged, for danger arises that some of the adjacent parts be wounded. After the abortion one must treat as for inflammation.

Lucretius, On the nature of things
Nor do the powers divine grudge any man
The fruits of his seed-sowing, so that never
He be called "father" by sweet children his,
And end his days in sterile love forever.
What many men suppose; and gloomily
They sprinkle the altars with abundant blood,
And make the high platforms odorous with burnt gifts,
To render big by plenteous seed their wives-
And plague in vain godheads and sacred lots.
For sterile are these men by seed too thick,
Or else by far too watery and thin.
Because the thin is powerless to cleave
Fast to the proper places, straightaway
It trickles from them, and, returned again,
Retires abortively. And then since seed
More gross and solid than will suit is spent
By some men, either it flies not forth amain
With spurt prolonged enough, or else it fails
To enter suitably the proper places,
Or, having entered, the seed is weakly mixed
With seed of the woman: harmonies of Venus
Are seen to matter vastly here; and some
Impregnate some more readily, and from some
Some women conceive more readily and become
Pregnant. And many women, sterile before
In several marriage-beds, have yet thereafter
Obtained the mates from whom they could conceive
The baby-boys, and with sweet progeny
Grow rich. And even for husbands (whose own wives,
Although of fertile wombs, have borne for them
No babies in the house) are also found
Concordant natures so that they at last
Can bulwark their old age with goodly sons.
A matter of great moment 'tis in truth,
That seeds may mingle readily with seeds
Suited for procreation, and that thick
Should mix with fluid seeds, with thick the fluid.
And in this business 'tis of some import
Upon what diet life is nourished:
For some foods thicken seeds within our members,
And others thin them out and waste away.
And in what modes the fond delight itself
Is carried on- this too importeth vastly.
For commonly 'tis thought that wives conceive
More readily in manner of wild-beasts,
After the custom of the four-foot breeds,
Because so postured, with the breasts beneath
And buttocks then upreared, the seeds can take
Their proper places. Nor is need the least
For wives to use the motions of blandishment;
For thus the woman hinders and resists
Her own conception, if too joyously
Herself she treats the Venus of the man
With haunches heaving, and with all her bosom
Now yielding like the billows of the sea-Aye,
from the ploughshare's even course and track

She throws the furrow, and from proper places
Deflects the spurt of seed. And courtesans
Are thuswise wont to move for their own ends,
To keep from pregnancy and lying in,
And all the while to render Venus more
A pleasure for the men- the which meseems
Our wives have never need of.

B. WHY MARRY?

5. [Demosthenes] Against Neaira

122. This is matrimony: when a man begets children and presents his sons to his phratry and deme, and gives his daughters, as being his own in marriage to their husbands. Hetaerae we keep for our pleasure, concubines/servants (pallakai) for daily attendance upon our person, but wives for the procreation of legitimate children and to be the faithful guardians of our households.

6. Cato the Younger and Hortensius: Marriage as a mean of political force:

25 Then he married a daughter of Philippus, Marcia, a woman of reputed excellence, about whom there was the most abundant talk; and this part of Cato's life, like a drama, has given rise to dispute and is hard to explain. However, the case was as follows, according to Thræsea, who refers to the authority of Munatius, Cato's companion and intimate associate. 2 Among the many lovers and admirers of Cato there were some who were more conspicuous and illustrious than others. One of these was Quintus Hortensius, a man of splendid reputation and excellent character. This man, then, desiring to be more than a mere associate and companion of Cato, and in some way or other to bring his whole family and line into community of kinship with him, attempted to persuade Cato, whose daughter Porcia was the wife of Bibulus and had borne him two sons, to give her in turn to him as noble soil for the production of children. 3 According to the opinion of men, he argued, such a course was absurd, but according to the law of nature it was honourable and good for the state that a woman in the prime of youth and beauty should neither quench her productive power and lie idle, nor yet, by bearing p295more offspring than enough, burden and impoverish a husband who does not want them. Moreover, community in heirs among worthy men would make virtue abundant and widely diffused in their families, and the state would be closely cemented together by family alliances. And if Bibulus were wholly devoted to his wife, Hortensius said he would give her back after she had borne him a child, and he would thus be more closely connected both with Bibulus himself and with Cato by a community of children.

4 Cato replied that he loved Hortensius and thought highly of a community of relationship with him, but considered it absurd for him to propose marriage with a daughter who had been given to another. Then Hortensius changed his tactics, threw off the mask, and boldly asked for the wife of Cato himself, since she was still young enough to bear children, and Cato had heirs enough. 5 And it cannot be said that he did this because he knew that Cato neglected Marcia, for she was at that time with child by him, as we are told. However, seeing the earnestness and eager desire of Hortensius, Cato would not refuse, but said that Philippus also, Marcia's father, must approve of this step. Accordingly, Philippus was consulted and expressed his consent, but he would not give Marcia in marriage until Cato himself was present and joined in giving the bride away.²⁷ This incident occurred at a later time,²⁸ it is true, but since I had taken up the topic of the women of Cato's household I decided to anticipate it.

C. ROMAN MARRIAGE: THE RITE AND THE LEGAL STATUS

Plutarch, Roman Questions

1 Why do they bid the bride touch fire and water?

Is it that of these two, being reckoned as elements or first principles, fire is masculine and water feminine,¹ and fire supplies the beginnings of motion and water the function of the subsistent element or the material?

Or is it because fire purifies and water cleanses, and a married woman must remain pure and clean?

Or is it that, just as fire without moisture is unsustainable and arid, and water without heat is unproductive and inactive,² so also male and female apart from each other are inert, but their union in marriage produces the perfection of their life together?

Or is it that they must not desert each other, but must share together every sort of fortune, even if they are destined to have nothing other than fire and water to share with each other?

29 Why do they not allow the bride to cross the threshold of her home herself, but those who are escorting her lift her over?⁶⁵

Is it because they carried off by force also the first Roman brides and bore them in in this manner, and the women did not enter of their own accord?

Or do they wish it to appear that it is under constraint and not of their own desire that they enter a dwelling where they are about to lose their virginity?

Or is it a token that the woman may not go forth of her own accord and abandon her home if she be not constrained, just as it was under constraint that she entered it? So likewise among us in Boeotia they burn the axle of the bridal carriage before the door, signifying that the bride must remain, since her means of departure has been destroyed.

30 Why do they, as they conduct the bride to her home, bid her say, “Where you are Gaius, there am I Gaia”?⁶⁶

Is her entrance into the house upon fixed terms, as it were, at once to share everything and to control jointly the household, and is the meaning, then, “Wherever you are lord and master, there am I lady and mistress”? These names are in common use also in other connexions, just as jurists speak of Gaius Seius and Lucius Titius,⁶⁷ and philosophers of Dion and Theon.⁶⁸

Or do they use these names because of Gaia Caecilia,⁶⁹ consort of one of Tarquin’s sons, a fair and virtuous woman, whose statue in bronze stands in the temple of Sanctus?⁷⁰ And both her sandals and her spindle were, in ancient days, dedicated there as tokens of her love of home and of her industry respectively.

31 Why is the far-famed “Talassio”⁷¹ sung at the marriage ceremony?⁷²

Is it derived from talasia (spinning)? For they call the wool-basket (talaros) talasus. When they lead in the bride, they spread a fleece beneath her; she herself brings with her a distaff and her spindle, and wreaths her husband’s door with wool.

Or is the statement of the historians true? They relate that there was a certain young man, brilliant in military achievements and valuable in other ways, whose name was Talasius; and when the Romans were carrying off the daughters of the Sabines who had come to see the games, a maiden of particularly beautiful appearance was being carried off for him by some plebeian retainers of his. To protect their enterprise and to prevent anyone from approaching and trying to wrest the maiden from them, they shouted continually that she was being brought as a wife for Talasius (Talasio). Since, therefore, everyone honoured Talasius, they followed along and provided escort, joining in the good wishes and acclamations. Wherefore since Talasius’s marriage was happy, they became accustomed to invoke Talasius in other marriages also, even as the Greeks invoke Hymen.

D. LEGAL NATURE OF ROMAN MARRIAGE

D. 23.2.1 (Modestinus, [28] *Rules*, book 1). Marriage is the union of male and female and the sharing of life together, involving both divine and human law.

D. 23.2.24 (Modestinus, *Rules*, book 1). Cohabitation with a free woman is to be considered marriage not concubinage, unless she is a prostitute.

D. 23.2.2 (Paul, *Edict*, book 35) A marriage can only exist if all agree, that is the parties and those in whose power they are.

Excerpts from the Works of Ulpian, 5.2:

A valid (legitimate) marriage is made, when there is conubium between the contracting parties, and if the man is adult and the woman is able to procreate, and if both of them agree, if they are

autonomous or also their fathers, if they are still in their power.

Plutarch, Roman Questions:

108 Why do they not marry women who are closely akin to them? Do they wish to enlarge their relationships by marriage and to acquire many additional kinsmen by bestowing wives upon others and receiving wives from others? Or do they fear the disagreements which arise in marriages of near kin, on the ground that these tend to destroy natural rights? Or, since they observe that women by reason of their weakness need many protectors, were they not willing to take as partners in their household women closely akin to them, so that if their husbands wronged them, their kinsmen might bring them succour?

D. 23.1.11 (Julianus, [29] *Digest*, book 16). Engagement like marriage comes about by the consent of the parties, and so a daughter-in-power's consent is needed for an engagement as it is for a marriage.

D. 23.2.22 (Celsus, [30] *Digest*, book 15). If under pressure from his father a man takes a wife, whom he would not have married if he had followed his own inclination, still, though there is no marriage without consent, he contracted a marriage; he is regarded as having preferred to do so.

23.1.12 (Ulpian, *On Betrothal*, sole book) (pr.) A daughter who does not oppose her father's will [as regards her engagement] is taken to agree. (i) She is free to disagree [31] only if her father chooses her a fiancé who is unworthy or of bad character.

23.1.7.1 (Paul, *Edict*, book 35) For an engagement the same people have to agree as for a marriage. Nevertheless, Julian writes that the father of a daughter-in-power is understood to consent unless he explicitly disagrees.

Notes

27. 'Marriage in the later Republic and Empire was always consensual, that is, by agreement. It existed if the man and woman intended their relationship to be a marriage (and had the necessary parental consent, etc.), symbolized usually by the husband carrying her over the threshold of his house or flat. It ended when one or both of them ceased to have this (firm) intention. Notification (*repudium*) meant telling the other party that the notifier no longer had the intention to be married, whereupon divorce took effect without more formality. Divorce (*divertere*) means going one's own way, and since if one spouse goes his or her own way, they are no longer going the same way, either spouse could divorce the other (and originally either spouse's father could do so if the child remained in his power). There was no requirement of mutual consent to divorce, and it made no legal difference.' (Honoré, 1991).

28. Herennius Modestinus was the last classical jurist of consequence. Ulpian alludes specifically to him as a student in responding to a letter Modestinus wrote to him from Dalmatia (*Digest* 47.2.52.20). He was *praefectus vigilum* at Rome sometime between A.D. 224 and 244. Among other works, he wrote ten books of *Rules*.

29. Generally regarded as one of the most brilliant of the classical jurists, Publius Salvius Julianus, consul in A.D. 148, enjoyed a distinguished career that spanned the reigns of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. Hadrian entrusted to him the task of producing the final edition of the Praetor's Edict. He wrote a number of works and is much cited in the *Digest*.

30. Prominent as a legal thinker in his day, Publius Iuventius Celsus was praetor in A.D. 106 or 107 and consul for the second time in 128. He also served as governor of Asia and on Hadrian's council. His major work was the *Digests* in thirty-nine books.

31. Some scholars believe that Justinian changed the text from "she is *taken*" to disagree.

Different Desires:

A Dialogue Comparing Male and Female Love, attributed to Lucian of Samosata

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Lucian of Samosata, the prolific second century CE Greek satirist and tireless traveler, is thought by many not to have authored the present text, *Erotes*. The various descriptions of the places visited by the protagonists seem rather to fix the date of the work around the beginning of the fourth century CE. Nonetheless, even though its style is unlike that of his other works, its essence is in keeping with Lucian's custom: 'ridendo dicere verum,' laughingly to say the truth.
Lycinus:

1. All day long, my dear Theomnestus, you've spoken of nothing but love and its games. Still I have not tired of listening to you pour out your joyful themes. I'd had an earful of serious matters, and thirsted for such diversion. The spirit does not suffer restraint gladly; it needs a bit of relaxation, a taste of pleasure. The whole morning your stories, as delightful as they are vivid, have so thrilled me that I felt

like Aristides of Miletus, that enchanting spinner of bawdy yarns. I swear upon these loves, to which you have presented such a large target, I would resent it greatly were you not to tell me more! I beseech you — in the name of Aphrodite herself should you think I am not serious — to draw from your memory another of your sweet adventures with this or that sex. Besides, today is Hercules' holiday, to whom we must sacrifice, and you are not unaware, I trust, of how much this god was captivated by the subject of Aphrodite; your tales will please him more than victims.

Theomnestus: 2. You could sooner, Lycinus, count the waves in the sea, or the rushing flakes of snow, than my many loves. I truly believe I have exhausted all their arrows so that, should they want to mount another attack, their unarmed hand will only draw laughter. Almost from the day my childhood gave way to youth I yielded myself to them to feast upon me. Loves followed thick upon each other — before one had ended another began; true Lernean heads, more numerous than that of the Hydra, and defying the flaming brands of Iolaus, as if fire could ever put out fire. Without a doubt there is a lodestone in my eyes that tirelessly draws all who are beautiful. I have even asked myself more than once whether so many favors were not some curse of Aphrodite. And yet I'm not a daughter of the Sun, nor an insolent Lemnian, nor some hypocritical Hippolytus.

Lycinus: 3. Spare me your hypocrisy, Theomnestus! What? You would blame Fortune for a life awash in pretty women, and boys in the flower of their youth? Perhaps we should hold atonement sacrifices to cure you of such a dread disease. All kidding aside, consider yourself lucky that the gods did not fate you to the grimy toil of the farmer, the peregrinations of the merchant, or the dangers of army life. Your only care in the world is to stroll through the athletic fields, to primp the folds of your purple robe, or to do up your hair more artfully. Besides, these torments of love you gripe about only heap delight upon delight, and desire's bite is sweet. When you have set upon a conquest you know the joys of hope. When you are the victor you know those of enjoyment: the present and the future hold nought but delectation for you. Just now, as you were drawing up the tally of your loves with a precision worthy of a Hesiod, your eyes were bathed in joyous drunkenness, your voice flowed more sweetly than that of the daughter of Lycambes, and your whole demeanor shouted out that you were not left cold by the recollection of your delights. Therefore I beg of you, if you have neglected some little corner of your voyage with Aphrodite, repair the fault right away: Hercules will have his victim whole.

Theomnestus: 4. This god, Lycinus, is an eater of oxen. What's more, he likes his victims steaming. If we should limit our offerings to stories, mine have dragged on long enough and will soon become tiresome. Your turn, please. Let your own Muse, casting off her usual gravity, chant us songs to put a pleasing end to our day with the god! There is a subject you have not broached, and which I would like to put to the test of your judgement: Which in your opinion is best: the love of boys, or that of women? I, who am smitten by both, lean neither this way nor that, but keep in balance the two arms of the scale. You who are not involved, give me your impartial opinion. Tell me frankly, o dear friend, which side you are on, now that I have told you of my loves.

Lycinus: 5. Do you imagine, Theomnestus, this is some kind of game? This is a matter requiring serious study. I myself have recently given it thought, and well do I know its complications, having been present at a heated debate between two friends whose words still ring in my ears. Their arguments reflected the opposition of their views, which was absolute. They did not enjoy this happy mean for which I congratulate you, and which lets you collect double pay, since you, sleepless shepherd, 'First guard the cattle, and then the sheep.' The first of these gentlemen found his delight in boys, and compared feminine Aphrodite to the pit of doom; the second, unstained by male love, was crazy about women. They asked me to referee their battle of words, and I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it. Their arguments are engraved in my memory as if they had just uttered them. I will try to recall them faithfully, to give you some small proof of my good will.

Theomnestus: Allow me to shift my seat the better to see you, 'Waiting for Achilles to make an end of his song,' and you, please give voice to the melodious glory of this debate on love.

Lycinus: 6. Intending to head for Italy, I had a speedy vessel readied, the kind of bireme used above all by the Liburnians of the Ionian Gulf. After having paid my respects to the gods of the fatherland, and supplicated Zeus the Protector to look with favor upon this lengthy expedition, I had the mules saddled and headed for the shore. I said my goodbyes to the men who had accompanied me; they were gentlemen of wit and knowledge who, after having sought my company, wanted to convey their sadness at my leaving. Upon boarding the vessel I took my seat at the stern beside the helmsman. The oarsmen had already rowed us offshore when the wind rose. Soon the mast was stepped, the yard was run up and we made sail. The canvas filled, and we shot like an arrow over the foaming waves, noisily rent asunder by our plunging bow.

7. But the details of our voyage, interesting or not, are beside the point. After having followed the Cilician coast and having reached the Gulf of Pamphylia we passed, not without some trouble, the Swallow Islands, those happy boundaries of ancient Greece. Then we visited the main towns of Lycia, interesting more for their history than for their monuments, since they have retained none of their former splendor. Finally, upon reaching Rhodes, the City of the Sun God, we decided to take a break from our travels.

8. The ship was hauled out and the sailors pitched their tents nearby. As for me, having taken lodgings across from Bacchus' temple, I headed for it at my leisure, abandoning myself to a thousand impressions, one sweeter than the other. By its beauty, the City of the Sun God is indeed worthy of the name. Along the way I made the rounds of the portico in the temple of Bacchus, admiring the paintings that retrace the heroic fables and are as pleasing as they are instructive. At any rate, two or three guides had already taken charge of me and, in exchange for a couple of obols, explained that which I had not understood or only suspected.

9. After having my fill of this spectacle I was getting ready to return to my lodgings when I had the most enjoyable surprise that a trip abroad can offer: that of meeting old friends, ones who are not unknown to you since you have run into them often at my house. One was Charicles of Corinth, a young man whose good looks are matched by his elegance, since he always wants to stand out to please the ladies. With him was Callicratidas, the Athenian, a man of the simplest appearance, as behooves one of our principal orators and lawyers. This latter besides is devoted to physical exercise, not so much for the love of the gym as for the love of the boys, a passion which totally transports him – he detests the fair sex to the point where he often curses Prometheus. As soon as they saw me, the two ran up, overjoyed; after the customary embraces each clasped me by the hand and insisted that I accept his hospitality. Seeing that their friendly rivalry was growing heated, I said, “Today, Callicratidas and Charicles, I will resolve your dispute by inviting you to my place. The following days, for I expect to stay here three or four, I will take turns being the guest of each of you, and we will draw lots to determine who will be first.”

10. And so it was decided. That day they were my guests. The next day I was hosted by Callicratidas, and the following by Charicles. I discerned in the arrangements of each household the proof of their tastes. The Athenian was surrounded by beautiful boys. All his servants were beardless, and remained at his side only upon that condition. As soon as the least down shaded their cheeks they were sent to work his lands in Attica. Charicles, in comparison, was surrounded by a veritable orchestra of female dancers and musicians, and his house was filled with women as if at a feast of Demeter. You could not have found a single representative of the other sex, unless it was perhaps a little child or some old cook who, due to his age, could not inspire any jealousy. There you had, as I have said, clear indications of their respective inclinations. Often brief skirmishes broke out between them on this topic, but the issue was never settled. That is how things stood when the time came for me to continue my voyage. But this time I was no longer leaving alone: my two friends had decided to accompany me, wanting to visit Italy as well.

11. We could not pass up the chance to stop in Cnidus, where there is so much to be seen, notably the temple of Aphrodite which encloses the statue by Praxiteles, so admired for its beauty. We made a gentle landfall amid a splendid calm, as if the goddess herself had propelled our vessel. After alighting, and while rooms were being arranged, I took the two experts on love by the arm and we went round Cnidus, delighting in the erotic terra cottas, worthy of a town dedicated to Aphrodite. After having seen the portico of Sostratos and a couple of other landmarks, we directed our steps towards the temple of the goddess, Charicles and I with the greatest satisfaction, but Callicratidas not without some reservations, as if this visit were an homage to a woman. He would have, I believe, willingly traded the Aphrodite of Cnidus for the Eros of Thespieae.

12. As soon as we reached the confines of the temple we felt as if caressed by the very breath of the goddess. The floor of the court had not been doomed to sterility by a stone pavement, but on the contrary, it burst with fertility, as behooves Aphrodite: fruit trees with verdant foliage rose to prodigious heights, their limbs weaving a lofty vault. The myrtle, beloved by the goddess, reached up its berry-laden branches no less than the other trees which so gracefully stretched out. They never know foliage grown old, their boughs always being thick with leaves. To tell the truth, you can notice among them some infertile trees, but they have beauty as their fruit. Such were the cypress and the planes which towered to the heavens, as well as the tree of Daphnis, who once fled Aphrodite but now has come here to seek refuge. Ivies entwine themselves lovingly around each of these trees. Heavy clusters of grapes hang from the gnarled vines: indeed, Aphrodite is only more attractive when united with Bacchus; their pleasures are sweeter for being mixed together. Apart, they have less spice. Under

the welcome shade of the boughs, comfortable beds await the celebrants - actually the better people of the town only rarely frequent these green halls, but the common crowds jostle there on festive days, to yield publicly to the joys of love.

13. When we had exhausted the charms of these places we pressed on into the temple itself. The goddess stands in the center; her statue made of marble from Paros. Her lips are slightly parted by a lofty smile. Nothing hides her beauty, which is entirely exposed, other than a furtive hand veiling her modesty. The art of the sculptor has succeeded so well that it seems the marble has shed its hardness to mold the grace of her limbs. Charicles, dazed by this spectacle, impulsively burst out, "Lucky Mars, to be chained by such a goddess!" He rushed forward as he spoke, lips pursed, neck stretched to give her a kiss. Callicratidas watched the display in silence. The temple has a second entrance for those who wish to contemplate the goddess from behind, for none of her parts should escape admiration. It is easy in that fashion to gaze upon her hind beauty.

14. Wanting to see the goddess entire we approached this gate. Upon being let in by the woman who kept the keys, we were overwhelmed by her abundant beauty. As soon as the Athenian, who had so far been indifferent, glimpsed this side of the goddess, which reminded him of boys, he exclaimed with even greater enthusiasm than that of Charicles, "By Hercules, what a harmonious back. What rounded thighs, begging to be caressed with both hands! How well the lines of her cheeks flow, neither too skinny, showing the bones, nor so voluminous as to droop! How inexpressible the tenderness of that smile pressed into her dimpled loins! How precise that line running from thigh, to leg, to foot! Now I can understand why Zeus' nectar is so sweet when Ganymede pours it. As for me, I would never take it from Hebe's hand." While Callicratidas was declaiming this speech with much elan, Charicles remained fixed in place, the tenderness of his gaze betraying his emotions.

15. Filled with admiration, we noticed behind one of the thighs a stain like one on a robe, which only brought out the whiteness of the marble. It seemed a flaw in the stone. This kind of defect is not uncommon, and fate thus tends to thwart that which otherwise would reach perfection. Supposing this dark stain was natural, my admiration for Praxiteles only increased, for having so skillfully hidden it where it would least be noticed. But the groundskeeper, who had stayed by our side, recounted an extraordinary and barely believable tale on this subject. "A young man from a distinguished family," said she, "but whose act has made the name unspeakable, came often to the temple, where an evil spirit had made him fall in love with the goddess. As he spent his whole day there, it was first believed to be due to a faith bordering on superstition. In fact he was up way before the dawn, and only went home after sunset, having spent all his time seated before the goddess, his eyes constantly fixed upon her. You could hear him murmuring sweet nothings to her.

16. When he wanted to quench his passion a bit, he would make an invocation, cast on the table four small bones of Libyan gazelle, and read the future in them. If the throw was lucky, especially if it was the one called 'of Aphrodite,' when none of the dice shows the same number, he would prostrate himself, certain his desire would soon be fulfilled. But the opposite was more common, and when the dice were unfavorable he cursed all of Cnidus and, as if his misfortune were incurable, was overwhelmed by sadness. In the next moment he would gather up the dice and try his fortune again. His passion only grew stronger, and he carved on every wall and tree the name of Aphrodite the Beautiful. He worshiped Praxiteles as equal to Zeus. Any beautiful or valuable thing he found in his house he offered to the goddess; finally, the violence of his desires made him lose his reason, his audacity serving him for pimp. One evening, at sunset, he slid unseen behind the temple door and hid in the darkest corner, holding his breath. The keepers closed the gate as usual, and this new Anchises found himself alone inside. Who would dare recount the sort of deeds he consummated that wicked night? In short, at daybreak this sign of his amorous embraces was discovered, a sign which ever since has marked the goddess as a reminder of her suffering. As for the young man, they say he threw himself upon the rocks, or into the sea. In any case he disappeared forever."

17. Before the attendant could make an end to her story Charicles exclaimed, "So! Even made of stone, a woman wants loving. How then if such a beauty came to life? Would not a night with her be worth Zeus' very scepter?" Callicratides replied, smiling, "We don't know yet, Charicles, whether many more such stories lie in store for us once we reach Thespieae." "What do you mean?" asked Charicles. Callicratides answered, not without reason. "It is claimed," said he, "that this young lover had a whole night to satisfy his passions at his leisure. Yet he dealt with the statue as with a boy, thus proving he was not seeking the woman in front." When other comments along these lines brought tempers to a boil, I said to them, after calming them down, "O very dear friends, if you are going to argue, do it properly, according to the blessed rules of contest. Stop this disorderly and fruitless spat. Let each of you defend his cause in proper fashion. It is not yet time to board. Let's put this moment to good use in the service of enjoyment, exploring these serious matters in a way that combines pleasure and

profit. Let's leave this temple since people are starting to crowd in for their devotions, and let us repair to the garden, there to listen and talk to our heart's content. But remember, he who is bested today is never again to reopen this discussion."

18. It seems I had not spoken in vain, for both agreed. We left, I thrilled to have nought to do but listen, they deeply absorbed in thought, as if upon this debate hung in balance an Olympic prize.<4> When we arrived in a suitably shady nook, offering shelter from the heat of the day, I said to them, "Here is a splendid spot. The songs of the cicadas overhead will be our accompaniment." I sat down between the two antagonists like a true judge, the weight of the Athenian Tribunal heavy on his brow. I had them draw lots to choose the first speaker. Charicles won, and I bade him begin his speech at once.

19. He passed his hand over his brow and, after a moment of silence, began thus: "O Lady mine, O Aphrodite, my prayers call upon you to sustain my plea for this your cause. Every undertaking, no matter how small, attains perfection if you but bestow upon it the least measure of your mercy; but matters of love have special need of you, for you are after all their natural mother. Come as a woman to defend women, and grant that men remain men, as they were born to be. At the very start of this debate I call as witness of the truth of my words the primordial Mother, original source of all creation, by which I mean the sacred nature of the universe, she who, having been the first to unite the elements of the world — earth, air, fire and water — wrought through their mingling all living creatures. As she knew we were a meld of perishable stuffs, granted an all too short existence, she made it so that the death of one would be the birth of another, and that procreation would keep in check mortality, so that one life could send forth another in infinite succession. Since a thing cannot be born of a single source, to each species she has granted the two genders, the male to which she has given the seed principle, and the female which she has shaped into a vessel for that seed. She draws them together by means of desire and unites one to the other in accordance with the healthy requirement of necessity, so that, each remaining within its natural bounds, the woman will not pretend improbably to have become a man, nor will the man wax indecently effeminate. It is thus that the unions of men with women have perpetuated to this day the human race, through an undying chain of inheritance, instead of some man claiming the glory of being uniquely the product of another man. Quite the contrary, all honor two names as equally respectable, for all have a mother and at the same time a father.

20. Thus in the beginning, when men lived imbued with feelings worthy of heroes they honored that virtue that makes us akin to the gods; they obeyed the laws fixed by nature and, conjoined with a woman of appropriate age, they became fathers of virtuous children. But little by little the race fell from those heights into the abyss of lust and sought pleasure along new and errant paths. Finally, lechery, overstepping all bounds, transgressed the very laws of nature. Moreover, the man who first eyed his peer as though a woman, could he have helped but resort to tyrannical violence, or else to deceit? Two beings of one sex met in one bed; when they looked at one another they blushed neither at what each did to the other, nor at what each had suffered to be done to him; sowing their seed (as the saying goes) upon sterile rocks they traded slight delight for great disgrace.

21. Effrontery and tyrannical violence have gone as far as to mutilate nature with a sacrilegious steel, finding, by ripping from males their very manhood, a way to prolong their use. But these unfortunates in order to remain like young boys no longer remain men, and are nothing but an ambiguous enigma of dual gender, not having kept the one they were born to, and not having acquired the one they have attained. This flower of childhood, having thus lingered a while into their youth, wilts into a premature old age. Yes, we still count them boys, who are already old, for they know not real maturity. Thus vile lust, mistress of all evils, contriving ever more shameful pleasures and ready to stoop to any baseness, has slid all the way to that vice which cannot decently be mentioned.

22. If all obeyed the laws given us by Providence, relations with women would satisfy us, and the world would be washed clean of all crime. Animals cannot corrupt anything through depravity, and the law of nature remains unpolluted. Male lions do not get excited over other male lions, and when in their heat, Aphrodite awakens their desires for females. The bull, master of his herd, mounts the cows; the ram fills all the sheep with his male seed. What else? The boars, do they not cover the sows in their sty? The wolves, do they not mix with she-wolves? In one word, neither the birds who ride the winds, nor the fishes fated to their wet element, nor the animals on land seek dealing with other males, and for them the decrees of Providence remain inviolate. But you, men of over-estimated wisdom, you truly perverted animals, what novel raving drives you to rise up against the laws and commit a double crime? What blind insensibility blankets your souls, to doubly stray from the good road, chasing that which you should flee? If everyone did like you there would be no one left!

23. Socrates' disciples wield truly admirable arguments with which they fool young boys not yet in full possession of their reason, but anyone endowed with a modicum of sense could hardly be swayed by them. They feign love of the soul and, as if ashamed to love the beauty of the body, style themselves 'lovers of virtue.' Often I had a good laugh over that. How is it, o venerable philosophers, that you dismiss with such disdain that age where one has long since proven one's worth, and whose gray hairs vouch for its virtue? How come your love, so full of wisdom, lunges avidly for the young, whose judgement is not yet fully formed, and who know not which road to take? Is there some law tainting lack of beauty as perverse, and decreeing the beautiful as always good and praiseworthy? Yet, to quote Homer, that great prophet of truth:

His looks were wanting,
But a god granted him beauty of speech,
And all were charmed. He speaks sweetly
Yet firmly too, amid the crowd.
Throughout the city he walks like a god.<5>

And elsewhere he also said:

In your case, wits do not match beauty.<6>

Indeed, prudent Odysseus is favored over beautiful Nireus.

24. How is it your love does not pursue prudence, or justice, or the other virtues which upon occasion crown maturity, and why is the beauty of the young the only thing to inflame your ardent passions? Ought one have loved Phaedrus, the betrayer of Lysias, o Plato? Was it right to love the virtues of Alcibiades, he who mutilated the statues of the gods, and revealed the Eleusinian mysteries between cups of wine? Who would confess to being his lover when he fled Athens to make his stand in Decelea and aspire openly to tyranny? As long as he remained beardless, according to the divine Plato, he was loved by all, but as soon as he became a man and his intellect, previously unripe, acquired its full dimension, he was hated by all. Why is that? It is because these men who call 'virtue' the beauty of the body put an honorable label on a shameful affection, and are sooner lovers of children than lovers of wisdom.<7> But so as to not seem to recall the famous only to besmirch them I will not speak further of these matters.

25. Let's now descend from these lofty considerations to an examination of your lusts, Callicratidas; I will demonstrate that the use of women is better far than that of boys. To start, I deem enjoyment to be more satisfying the longer it continues. Desire that departs too quickly ends, as they say, before it has begun. Real pleasure lies in that which lasts. Would that it had pleased the gods for stingy Fate to spin long the thread of our life, granting enjoyment of perpetual health with no foothold for grief. Then we would spend our days in feasts and celebrations. But since some nefarious demon has begrudged us such great boons, the sweetest of real pleasures are the lasting ones. And woman, from maidenhood until middle age, before the wrinkles of old age have carved her face, is worthy indeed of commerce with men and, even when her beauty is gone,

With wiser tongue
Experience speaks,
Than can the young.<8>

26. On the other hand, the one who courts boys of twenty seems to me a seeker of passive pleasures, a votary of an ambivalent Aphrodite. The body of those become men is hard, their chin, once soft, has become bristly, and their muscular thighs are soiled by hairs. As for what is most hidden, I leave that knowledge to you, men of experience. Any woman's skin, on the other hand, shines with grace. Her thick locks crown her head like the purple flower of the hyacinth — some spill over her back to embellish her shoulders, others frame the ears and the temples, curlier than parsley in a field. Her entire body, devoid of the least hair, has, as has been said, more brilliance than amber or glass from Sidon.

27. Why not seek, when it comes to desires, those which are mutual, and which equally satisfy the one who gives and the one who receives? We do not like, in truth, to lead a solitary life like the dumb beasts, but rather, joined by our mutual feelings, we find our happiness greater and our pains lighter when shared. Hence the invention of the communal table, which one brings out to be the center of a gathering of friends. If we grant our belly the pleasure it demands, we will not, for example, drink Thasian wine by ourselves, and we will not stuff ourselves in solitude with fancy dishes. Each finds more pleasant that which is shared with another, and we prefer enjoyments which are reciprocal. One

unites with a woman in mutual desire; the two partners part equally satisfied one with the other, after having tasted the same delights, unless we are to believe Tiresias, who claimed the pleasure of the woman far surpasses that of the man. I consider therefore that men should value not the selfish pleasure which they aim to take, but the one which they can afford in exchange. Nobody, lest he be mad, could say that to be the case with boys: the lover gets up and leaves after having tasted pleasures to him beyond compare, but his victim begins with pains and tears; even later, when, I am told, his suffering grows less acute, you will never be anything other than a bother to him, because of pleasure he has none. If we can speak more freely, as suits the woodlands of Aphrodite, I will say, Callicratidas, that it is allowed to make use of a woman in the fashion of a boy, the road being open to a double enjoyment, but the male must never lend himself to effeminate delights.

28. That is why, if a woman can satisfy the lover of boys, let him abstain from the latter, or else, if males can conjoin with males, then in the future allow women to love each other. Come, men of the new age, you legislators of strange thrills; after having blazed unfamiliar trails for men's pleasures, grant women the same licence: let them come as do the males; let a woman, girded with those obscene implements, monstrous toys of sterility, lie with another woman, just as a man with another man. Let those filthy lesbians – a word that only rarely reaches our ears since modesty forbids it – triumph freely. Let our schools for girls be nothing but the domain of Philenis, dishonored by androgynous loves. And yet would it not be better to see a woman play the man than to see men take on the role of women?"

29. Having uttered these words with fire and conviction, Charicles grew quiet, his gaze still terrible, almost ferocious. He seemed to have made a conjuration to atone for all love of boys. As for me, I glanced at the Athenian with a gentle smile and said, "I had thought, Callicratidas, that I would merely be judging some game, or lark, but here I find myself, due to Charicles' vehemence, referee over a more serious cause. He has grown heated beyond measure, as if on the Aeropagus, pleading for a murderer, or a criminal arsonist, or, by Zeus, for an affair of poison. It is time now to make recourse to Athena's help: may the eloquence of Pericles and the tongues of the ten orators marshaled against the Macedonians make your harangue worthy of those declaimed on the Aeropagus!"

30. Callicratidas collected his thoughts a moment or two. To the extent I could judge by his expression, he too seemed ready for combat. Finally he began his reply: "If women took part in government meetings, in the courts and in public affairs you would surely be a general, Charicles, or a president, and they would raise bronze statues in the public squares to you. In fact, the wisest among them, were they to speak in favor of their cause, could not have outdone you — neither Telesilla, who fought against the Spartiates and in whose honor, at Argos, Ares is considered one of the gods of women, nor Sappho, that sweet glory of Lesbos, nor Theano, daughter of the wise Pythagoras. It may even be that Pericles defended Aspasia with less eloquence. But if men are now to speak on behalf of women, then let us men speak on behalf of men. And you, Aphrodite, grant me favor, for we too honor Eros, your son!"

31. I had thought our argument would remain on friendly footing, but since Charicles in his speech started philosophizing on the topic of women I will readily seize the opportunity to tell him this: only male love is the joint product of virtue and desire. I wish we stood, were such a thing possible, beneath that plane tree that upon a time heard Socrates' speeches – happier tree than the Academy or the Lycaeum – and against which young Phaedrus leaned, as the holy man, <9> best beloved of the Graces, tells us. From its branches, as from those of the talking oak of Dodona, we might have heard a voice defending the love of boys, in memory of handsome Phaedrus. Alas, that cannot be,
For between us stretch
Shady mountains and the bellowing sea.<10>

We have halted here, strangers in a foreign land, and Cnidus is the domain of Charicles. But I will not succumb to fear.

32. Only do you come to my aid divine spirit, protector of friendship, hierophant of its mysteries, Eros, not the mischievous child drawn by the hands of painters, but Him whom the first principle of the seed made perfect from birth: it is you, in fact, who formed the universe, until then shapeless, dark and confused. Pulling the world as if out of a grave you have pushed back Chaos which enveloped it and flung him into the deepest abyss of Tartarus, there where there truly are 'gates of iron and doorsteps of bronze,' <11> so that he may never return from the prison in which he has been chained. Then, beating back the night with your dazzling light, you became the demiurge of all beings, animate or inanimate. You have inspired in men, by means of the exalted sentiment of harmony, the noble passions of friendship, so that a soul still innocent and tender, nurtured in the shade of goodwill, will ripen into maturity.

33. Marriage is a remedy devised by the necessity of procreation, but male love alone must rule the heart of a philosopher. Everything fashioned uniquely for luxury is valued far above that which arises from need, and everywhere people prefer the beautiful to the merely useful. As long as men were ignorant and lacked the ease for seeking something better than the fruit of their daily experiences, they deemed themselves content with bare necessities - they had not the time to worry about a better way of life. But once urgent needs were satisfied, the men who followed after, freed from the shackles of necessity, could improve things; the whole gradual development of the sciences and of the arts that we see today is one interesting result. The first men were hardly born before they had to seek a remedy for daily hunger. Caught by these pressing needs, and deprived by poverty of the freedom to pursue refinements, they subsisted on roots and herbs, or above all on the fruits of the oak tree. But shortly thereafter these foods were relegated to the beasts, and the farmer's toil was directed to sowing wheat and oats, which they had noticed grew anew each year; no one is so mad as to claim the fruit of the oak is tastier than grain.

34. Furthermore, in ancient times did men not cloak themselves in the pelts of flayed animals? Did they not seek refuge from cold in mountain caves or in the hollows of old stumps or in the old trunks of dead trees? But leaving behind little by little these primitive ways, they wove wool, built houses, and imperceptibly the art of these diverse crafts, with time for teacher, produced beautiful lace in place of simple cloth and lofty roofs instead of simple cabins; magnificent stonework was erected and the sad nakedness of the walls was painted in flowery colors. Thus these arts and sciences, once mute and sunk in oblivion, shone bright after their sleep. Each artist handed down to his successor that which he had invented, and successive beneficiaries, each adding to his own heritage, filled out what was lacking.

35. Let us not expect male love from these ancient times; men had to conjoin with women so that the race would not die out for lack of seed. Multifaceted wisdom and the virtuous desires, fueled by love of the beautiful, could only come to light in a century that has left nothing unexplored; thus love of youths has blossomed together with divine philosophy. That's why, Charicles, do not condemn as evil all which was not invented long ago and, just because commerce with women has an older pedigree than that with boys, do not disdain the latter. Let's remember that the very first discoveries were prompted by need, but those which arose from progress are only the better for it, and worthier of our esteem.

36. I could barely stifle my laughter when I heard Charicles praise the beasts, and the barren wastes of the Scythians — in the heat of the argument he seemed almost sorry to be Greek. Heedless of undermining his own argument, he did not hide his thoughts by speaking in low tones. Quite the contrary, he raised his voice and fairly roared: "Neither lions, nor bears, nor boars love another male, but their desires drive them solely towards their females." What's so amazing about that? What man chooses by dint of reason cannot be attained by animals, blocked from thought by their stupidity. If Prometheus or some other god had endowed them with human reason they would not be living in the desert or the forest and they would not be devouring each other but, like us, they would be building temples, living in houses by the hearth, and subjecting themselves to common laws. Animals are condemned by their own nature to miss out on the Providential gifts afforded by intellect. Is it any wonder that they should be deprived, among other things, of male love? Lions do not love each other, but they are not philosophers; bears do not love each other, but they have no understanding of the beauty of friendship. Among men, however, wisdom joined with knowledge, having chosen after numerous trials that which it found most beautiful, has decreed that male loves were the most sound.

37. So, Charicles, spare me these lectures more befitting the wanton lives of courtesans. Don't insult our dignity and modesty in such crude terms, and do not make out Divine Eros to be a little fool. Consider, though it is late to educate oneself at your age, consider now, since you have not done so before, that Eros is a double god, who does not always arrive by the same path, and who does not always excite the same desires in our souls. One, I would say, is a ceaseless prankster; no reason governs him; he inhabits the souls of the foolish and from him come the yearnings for women; he is the inspirer of rapes, for he pushes with irresistible force towards that which we crave. But the other Eros — father of the Ogygian age, honest and profoundly sacred vision, the propagator of healthy desires — fills the souls with sweetness. Under the protection of this god we taste pleasure mixed with virtue. As the tragic poet once said, love has two breaths, and two completely different passions bear the same name. Shame also is a twofold goddess, simultaneously good and evil:

Shame can good and evil weave alike
And men in warring camps divide.
For the first she can't be praised too highly
From the bottom of our hearts we blame her for the other.<12>

So it is not at all surprising if, passion taking the name of virtue, we should call “Eros” both sordid lust as well as compassionate affection.

38. “Is marriage nothing then,” said Charicles, “and shall we banish the race of women? How then will men perpetuate themselves?” I shall answer with the words of the all-wise Euripides: ‘It will be better, rather than have dealings with women, to go into the temples and the sacred places and purchase children in exchange for gold and silver, so as to assure our posterity.’ In truth, necessity burdens us down under her heavy yoke, and forces us to obey. If, by dint of intellect, we choose the beautiful, then on the other hand let what is useful yield to what is needful: Let there be women for making children, but as for the rest, I will have none of it. What sane man could stand a woman who, from morning on, bedecks herself with strange artifices? Her true figure is devoid of beauty, and she covers up the indecencies of nature with borrowed ornaments.

39. If we were to see women as they rose from their bed we would consider them uglier than those animals which it is thought ill luck to mention before noontime — the monkeys that is. That is why they lock themselves in and do not wish to be seen by any man. A flock of old and young servants, equal to them in beauty, swarm around them, offering the disagreeable face all sorts of pomades. They do not refresh their mistress after the sloth of sleep with a splash of clear water before moving on to serious concerns; no, they merely lend, by means of their cosmetics, a bit of color to an unpleasant appearance. Just as at public processions, each one has her function: one holds a silver plate, another a pincushion, a mirror, a host of little boxes just like in a drugstore, vases filled with a thousand poisons which hold the secret of whitening teeth, or blackening eyelids.

40. But it is above all the care of the hair that takes the most time. Some, by means of concoctions which make the curls shine brighter than the noontday sun, dye them as if they were wool and turn them blond, making them lose their natural tint; others, imagining themselves more beautiful with black hair, spend on that the wealth of their husbands, and reek of all Arabia. The iron heated over glowing embers will curl even the most unruly hair, and the forehead, rimmed with curls to the very eyebrows, is only glimpsed through a narrow opening, while behind them their tresses drape magnificently over their shoulders.

41. Next, they put on flower-colored shoes that cut into the the flesh and pinch their feet. A veil light as air keeps them from appearing totally naked. All that is hidden by this veil is even more evident than their face; only women with ugly breasts wrap them in a net. Why bother listing here their spendthrift ways? those Eritrean pearls hanging from their earlobes, worth many a talent! those serpents twisted around their wrists and arms — were they were real and not golden! A crown star-studded with Indian gems circles their forehead, rich necklaces hang from their neck; the gold must lower itself even to their feet to wrap what’s left showing of their heels — it were better to put their legs in irons. After their whole body, through some kind of witchcraft, has traded in its bastard ugliness for an ersatz beauty, they redden with makeup their shameless cheeks, so as to spruce up their oily skin with a bit of purple.

42. How do they behave, after all these preparations? They promptly leave the house, and all the gods take their side against the husbands: the women have in fact such gods as wretched men do not even know their names. They are, I believe, Coliades, Genetylides, or that Phrygian goddess whose ceremonies commemorate her unfortunate love for a shepherd.<13> Later they go to unspeakable initiations, to suspicious mysteries that exclude men — I will not reveal any further the corruption of their souls. Upon their return they take interminable baths, then they sit down to sumptuous meals and ply their men with come-ons. When their gluttony has had its fill and they can no longer stuff their mouth they daintily finger the foods brought before them, and talk among themselves about their nights, their multi-colored dreams, and about their beds, filled with such feminine softness that one needs a bath upon rising.

43. That is how the more subdued among them live. But if we look closely at those who are less so, we would curse Prometheus, all the while reciting the imprecations of Menander:

Is it not good justice, O Prometheus,
To have you chained to the Caucasian rock?
The torch is your only notable gift,
And all the gods hate you, I am sure,
For having made woman, a race impure.
The men marry, alas they wed!
And then begin furtive desires.
Adultery lies down in the nuptial bed,

And poison in the end, and jealous torment:
That is what woman brings to your life.<14>

Who would seek such boons? Who would enjoy such a miserable life?

44. It is only fair now to contrast to these foul women the manly conduct of a boy. Rising early from his solitary bed he splashes pure water over his eyes, still veiled by the night's sleep; then he pins his sacred mantle over his shoulder with a clasp. 'He leaves his father's house with downcast eyes,'<15> not staring at any passers by. His slaves and tutors are his honorable entourage, carrying the revered implements of virtue: not combs with close-set teeth to caress his hair, nor mirrors where shapes reflect as in a portrait, but many-leaved writing tablets, or tomes relating the virtues of olden days or, if bound for his music master, his melodious lyre.

45. After having well tempered his mind with philosophical teachings and nourished his soul with all kinds of knowledge, he develops his body with noble athletics. He takes an interest in Thessalian horses and, his youth once tamed, he makes use of peace to prepare for war, hurling spears and javelins with a sure hand. Then come the games of the palestra, glistening with oil, wrestling in the dust under the searing noonday sun, his sweat running in rivulets, a quick bath, then a frugal meal, allowing him shortly to resume his activities. Anew his tutors return to relate to him the ancient deeds, and engrave into his memory which heroes distinguished themselves by their courage, by their prudence, by their restraint, or by their fairness. After thus pouring upon his soul the dew of these virtues, evening brings his labors to an end. He metes out the tribute demanded by his stomach, and then sleeps surrounded by dreams all the sweeter for that his rest follows the toils of the day.

46. Who would not be the lover of such a youth? Who so blind of sight, or dense of mind? How could one not love him, a Hermes at the palestra, an Apollo with his lyre, as fine a horseman as Castor, manifesting divine virtues in a mortal body. As for me, heavenly gods, may my life eternally be spent seated before such a friend, hearing his gentle voice up close, sharing with him in all things! A lover would wish to see him reach, after joyful years, an old age free of ills, without ever having felt the spite of Fate. But if, as is the wont of human nature, he is struck by sickness, I will ail with him; and should he put to a stormy sea, I will sail with him; and if a powerful tyrant should cast him in irons, I will be chained with him. Whoever would hate him will be my enemy, and I will love those who would wish him well. If I were to see bandits or enemies fall upon him I would take up my weapons and fight beyond my strength. If he were to die I could not bear to live, and my last wishes to those, after him, dearest to me would be these: That one grave be dug for both of us, and that our bones be mixed so that none could tell apart our dumb ashes.

47. Nor is my love for those worthy of it the first one to be written down: those heroes close to the gods have thought up this law whereby the love born of friendship breathes till the moment of death. Phocis joined Orestes and Pylades together from infancy; they took a god for witness of their mutual love, and sailed through life on one ship. Together they put Clytemnestra to death, as though both had been sons of Agamemnon; by both was Aegisthus slain. Pylades suffered more than Orestes, when the latter was hounded by the Furies; he stood by his side when he was accused of being a criminal. Their loving friendship was not bounded by the boundaries of Greece, they sailed together to the farthest shores of Scythia, one ill and the other nursing him. When they had reached the land of the Tauri, the Fury, avenger of a mother's death, welcomed them, and the barbarians attacked them from all sides at the very moment Orestes was laid low by his mad ravings, 'but Pylades wiped away the foam and tended him, covering him with a well-woven robe,'<16> showing not so much the tenderness of a lover as that of a father. When it was decided that one would remain behind to be sacrificed while the other was to journey to Mycenae to deliver the letter, each wanted to remain to spare the other, deeming he would live on in the one to survive. Orestes refused the letter, as if Pylades was worthier of carrying it, and was the beloved and not the lover: 'If he were to die I could not bear the torment, for my ship is already overburdened with misery.'<17> And later he says: '...Give him the letter. He will go to Argos as you have wished, and as for me, let me die as you see fit.'<18>

48. That's how things stand. When an honest love, nourished from childhood, gathers strength and reaches the manly age of reason, then he whom we have long loved is able to return that love. It is hard to tell who is whose lover; just like in a mirror, the tenderness of the lover is reflected by that of the beloved. Why ever do you reproach us with a lust alien to human life, when it is one decreed by divine law, and handed down from one generation to another? That which we have received with joy we cherish as sacred treasure. Truly happy is he, as the wise have justly said, who has:

Young boys and strong-hooved horses!

Joyfully ages the old man

Whom youths do love.<19>

The precepts of Socrates, that admirable judge of virtue, were sanctified by the Delphic tripod. The Sybil spoke sooth when she said: 'Of all men, Socrates is the wisest...' Besides all the teachings by which he benefited the human race, did he not teach us that there is nothing better than the love of boys?

49. There is no doubt that we must love boys the same way in which Socrates loved Alicibiades, who slept with him under one cloak the sleep of a father. As for me, I will end this speech with a bit of advice useful for all, taken from these verses of Callimachos:

You who upon youths cast your longing eyes,
The sage of Erchius bids you be lovers of boys.
Love then the young, the city with upstanding men to fill.

But know this, young lovers, if you would be wise: have dealings only with virtuous boys: Do not barter a long term devotion for a cheap thrill, otherwise your love will in short order be nothing but a lie. If, on the other hand, you worship divine Eros, your beloved's sentiment will remain constant from childhood until old age. Those who love in this fashion live delightful lives, their conscience unstained by anything shameful, and after death their glory spreads their renown to all men. If one is to believe the children of philosophers, the heavens receive, after their departure from this world, those who gave themselves over to this love: they go towards a better life, enjoying that immortality which is the reward of virtue."

50. After Callicratidas had thus spoken, with a certain gravity and at the same time filled with youthful elan, I stopped Charicles, who was about to reply, and pointed out that it was time to go down to the ship. They however pressed me to pass judgement. I reflected briefly on their speeches, and then said, "You do not seem, my friends, to have spoken thoughtlessly or idly; by Zeus, your words are proof of lengthy and profound thought. You have left hardly anything for another to use of what needs be said on this topic, and your eloquence was equal to your knowledge; that is why I wish I were Theramenes the Buskin, so that you could both remain on equal footing, winners both. But since you will not spare me, and also since I wish the rest of our trip to not be troubled by such debates, I will tell you what, at this point, seems the most fair.

51. Marriage is a useful thing for men, and a happy one, if one makes a good match. But I believe that boyish loves, to the extent they obey the chaste laws of friendship, are the only ones worthy of philosophy. Therefore all should be compelled to marry, but let only philosophers be permitted the love of boys. In truth, virtue does not reach perfection among women. So do not be angry, Charicles, if Corinth yields to Athens."

52. Having pronounced this verdict in spare and subdued terms I rose to my feet. Charicles hung his head like a man condemned to death. But the Athenian, his brow held high, stepped forward joyfully. He looked as if he had just defeated the Persians in the bay of Salamis. I received from him the reward for my decision, for he invited us to a splendid triumphal feast; he was truly quite magnificent in his style of life. I quietly consoled Charicles, praising the force of his eloquence, and I told him I admired him all the more for having defended the weaker cause.

53. Thus ended our stay in Cnidus and our conversation by the temple of the goddess, which mixed playfulness with erudition. But you, Theomnestus, who have evoked these old remembrances of mine, what would have been your decision, had you been appointed judge?

Theomnestus: In the name of the gods, do you think me such a fool as Melitides or Coroebus to render an opinion contrary to yours? Through my great enjoyment of your words I felt I was in Cnidus myself, and I almost took this little house to be the temple of Aphrodite. Nevertheless — since one is allowed to say anything on a holiday, and the merriment, even if excessive, is a part of it — I was somewhat surprised at the pretentious seriousness of the discussion on the love of boys. In fact, it seems to me hardly pleasant to pass all your days in the company of a boy already past puberty, bearing the torments of Tantalus and suffering from thirst, his beauty bathing your eyes yet you unable to drink of it. It is not enough to see the one you love, to remain seated before him, nor to just listen to him talk. Pleasure to Eros is like a ladder; the first step is sight, but as soon as he has beheld, he desires to get closer and to touch; and as soon as he has touched with his fingertips, enjoyment runs through his whole body. When the occasion presents itself, he risks, thirdly, a discreet kiss, lips gently touching lips, and hardly have they met when he draws back, to quell suspicion. Taking advantage of new opportunities he indulges in longer embraces; his mouth draws back time and again, but his hands must not remain still - daring caresses through the clothes excite desire. Or perhaps he will gently slide his furtive right hand into the bosom, to press nipples that swell a bit more than usual;

he then slowly explores the whole expanse of a firm stomach, then the flower of puberty in its early down. But why must I spell this out?<22> Finally, Eros, having attained the power, goes about a warmer business and, leaping from the thighs, as the comic poet says,<23> ‘strikes where he must.’

54. That, in my opinion, is how one should love boys. May these sublime sayers of nothings and all those who aspire to highbrow philosophy nourish the ignorant with the ringing sound of honest words. Socrates was a true lover, if ever there was one, and Alcibiades who lay down under the same tunic with him did not get up unstruck. Do not be surprised: Patroclus in fact, was not loved by Achilles just because he was seated before him, Waiting for Achilles to finish his song...<24>

but it was lust that mediated their friendship. For Achilles, moaning upon the death of Patroklos, allows his unrestrained passion to burst out with the power of truth when he says, ...the holy commerce of your thighs my tears do mourn...<25>

I also believe that those whom the Greeks call ‘comastes’<26> are none other than professional lovers. Some might call this a shameful thing to say, but at least it is the truth, by the Aphrodite of Cnidus!

Lycinus: I will not allow you, my dear Theomnestus, to lay the foundation for a third speech, only the beginning of which would I be able to hear this holiday - the rest remaining far from my ears. Let us not tarry any further, and let’s get to the marketplace: The pyre of Hercules is about to be put to the torch. The show is not devoid of interest, and brings to mind his sufferings on Oeta.

Notes:

1. Ironic allusion to a passage in the Odyssey X.85
2. Another ironic allusion, this time to the Iliad IX.191
3. At the time, the location of a famous statue of Eros, Aphrodite’s son.
4. I apologize for substituting the Olympics for the prize mentioned in the text (leading the procession at Plataea), but it is an occasion of such modern obscurity that it would leave even some historians perplexed.
5. Odyssey XIII.169
6. Odyssey XVII.454
7. A play on philoneoi (lovers of the young) and philosophoi (lovers of wisdom).
8. Euripides, Phoenissae, 529-530
9. Plato, Phaedrus, 229 B
10. Iliad I.15, 6
11. Iliad VIII.15
12. Hesiod, Works and Days, 318, 11, 12, & 13.
13. Adonis
14. Menander, Koerte, 718
15. Comic fragment of uncertain origin.
16. Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris 311
17. Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris 598
18. Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris 603
19. Callimachus, Aetia Fr. 41
20. Xenophon, Symposium VIII, The Lacedaemonian Republic, II
21. A buskin is a thick-soled shoe that can be worn on either foot.
22. Euripides Orestes 14.
23. Unknown
24. Iliad IX.191 (cited at the beginning)
25. Aeschylus, Myrmidons, fragment 136
26. Participants at certain feasts of Bacchus