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Plato’s Symposium Reflection

There are many different explanations and views of the nature of love, but are any of them true? After reading Plato’s Symposium and reading an explanation from Agathon, Phaedrus and others, I came to a conclusion. I don’t believe that any of their explanations of the nature of love are correct when they stand alone. I believe that the true nature of love can only be found in a combination of their explanations. First, I am going to present various speeches and explain why they can’t stand on their own, then I’ll combine the speeches to make the best explanation of the nature of love.

Phaedrus centers his speech around the thought that love brings courage and bravery out of an individual. He also speaks about how lovers would make a perfect army because one lover wouldn’t do anything shameful in front of the other lover. I disagree with his claim and don’t believe it can stand alone. Although, many times lovers change for their loved one, the bravery and courageousness that comes out will not always be for the good. For instance, in Phaedrus’ claim, a lover would kill for his lover. This would make a great army, but in a functioning society, this would just be a never-ending cycle of killing one another for a loved one. So that speech on love is unable to stand on its own because love doesn’t have to result in death.

Next, Agathon’s speech tries to do the same as Phaedrus by presenting only the positive characteristics of love. Agathon throws everything that is good into a definition and states that it’s the explanation for the nature of love. He states no downsides, negatives or drawbacks to love, which is very unrealistic. He believes that love is everything good. This is wrong. As stated before, love can make lovers harm, kill or lie. These factors are totally left out of Agathon’s explanation of love, causing it to be unable to stand alone.

Lastly, we have Aristophanes, who presents the myth of people being cut apart and always looking for their other half. His speech presents the idea that people aren’t complete alone and that they need someone to complete them. This claim can’t stand alone. It is untrue that a person is incomplete alone. There have been many cases where a person has been alone, yet they were fully complete. Therefore, this claim is unable to stand alone.

All of the above claims held some validity, yet they weren’t strong enough to stand alone to explain the true nature of love. If we take the three speeches from above and combine them to make one explanation of the nature of love, this would get us as close to the true explanation as possible. If we take Phaedrus’ idea that love leads to virtue, and Agathon’s idea that love is everything good and added Aristophanes’ idea that everyone has another half they are searching for, we would have a great explanation of love. We would be able to say that love brings out courage and bravery in an individual, but this only applies to positive courage and bravery. Any negative courage or bravery, such as killing or lying, would not be characteristic of love because love is all things good. Also, we would add in that everyone is in search of their other half, and can’t be complete until they are found. This is because their other half will lead to virtue and everything good because they hold the truth of the nature of love.

In this paper, I presented speeches from Phaedrus, Agathon and Aristophanes and explained why they couldn’t stand on their own, then I combined the speeches to make the best explanation of the nature of love.