THE

PHILOSOPHY

OF LOVE

(Dialoghi d'Amore)

BY

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of recourse to withdrawal of the senses for its contemplation, since they are not concerned in its activities. Nor does it require abundance of natural heat which is needed in the digestive processes, nor even the spirits which attend on the senses; for the mind does not function by means of corporeal spirits since it is incorporeal. Why, therefore, should thought require the loss of the senses, and why are they thus discarded or withdrawn and concentrated?

P. The soul is in itself one and indivisible, but by distributing its powers throughout the body and permeating even its surface and extremities, it branches out for certain activities pertaining to perception, movement and nutrition among various organs and divides itself among many divers faculties. In this it resembles the sun which, though one, becomes many in the diffusion and multiplicity of its rays, according to the number and diversity of places on which they fall. When, therefore, the spiritual mind, (which is heart of our heart and soul of our soul), through the force of desire, retires within itself to contemplate a beloved and desired object, it draws every part of the soul to itself, gathering it into one indivisible unity. And though they serve no purpose, the spirits are withdrawn with the soul, and collected, either in the midst of the head, the seat of all knowledge, or in the centre of the heart, the abode of destiny, leaving the eyes bereft of sight, the ears of hearing, and the other organs of feeling and movement; even the inner organs of nutrition relax in their constant and necessary work of digestion and distribution of food. The human body then disposes only of the vital power of the heart which, as I have told you, is the continual custodian of life. This power holds the central position in both place and dignity amongst the powers of the human body, and binds together its upper and lower parts.

S. How is the vital power a link in its position and dignity alike, between the upper and lower parts of man?

P. The seat of the vital power is the heart, which is in the breast, and is midway between the lower part of the body, i.e. the belly, and the upper part, which is the head. It is thus midway between the inferior and nutritive part, which is in the belly, and the superior and cognitive part, which is in the head; and by its means these two parts and faculties are linked together in the human frame. For if the chain formed by this vital power did not exist, our mind and soul would, in the most ardent contemplation, be released from our body, and the mind would fly away from us, leaving the body bereft of soul.

S. Would it not be possible for the mind to be so far exalted in such contemplation that this chain of life would be drawn away with it too?

P. The desire might be so keen and the contemplation so intense that the soul would cast off all fetters and be withdrawn from the body, and by reason of the closeness of their aggregation the spirits would be dissolved, so that the soul, cleaving in love to the object of its desire and contemplation, might straightway leave the body devoid of all life.

S. Such a death would be sweet [indeed].

P. Such was the death of our blessed [forefathers] who parted from their bodies, contemplating with supreme desire and mingling their whole soul with the divine beauty. Wherefore Holy Writ speaking of the death of the two holy shepherds, Moses and Aaron, says they died according to the word of the Lord; and the sages declare metaphorically that God took away their souls with a kiss, or, being interpreted, rapt in loving contemplation and union with the Godhead.

1 V. Pentateuch and Heftoruth, Dr. J. H. Hertz; Note on Deut. xxxiv, 5.
S. It seems to me of no small import that our soul can so swiftly and easily turn to corporeal things, and thence withdraw its whole being to spiritual things; and although, as you say, it is one and indivisible, yet it can fly to and fro between things so entirely separate and opposed as body and spirit. I wish, Philo, that you would give me some explanation which would help me to a better understanding of this wondrous flight of our soul, and that you could tell me by what means the soul quits and rejoins the senses, and sets to or leaves off the habit of contemplation, as it lists.

P. In this the soul is inferior to pure intellect, which is in everything uniform, without motion from one thing to another, nor from itself to things foreign to it. The soul, however, which is inferior to it (because dependent on it) is not uniform, but is intermediate between the intellectual and corporeal world (I mean the medium and link connecting the one with the other). It must therefore have a nature compounded of spiritual intelligence and corporeal mutability, for otherwise it could not animate bodies. And so it happens that it often sets aside its intellectual nature to attend to corporeal things, and busies itself with the sustenance of the body through the medium of the nutritive faculty, or, through the activity of the sense organs, discerns those objects of perception which are necessary to life and thought. At certain times, however, the soul withdraws within itself and returns to its intellectual nature, when it connects and unites with the pure intellect above it; and so it is ever moving to and fro between body and intellect according to its passing inclination. For this reason Plato said that the soul is composed of itself and of another, of the indivisible and the divisible, and also that it is a number which moves itself. By this he means that its nature is not uniform like that of pure intellect, but that it has a number of natures; for it is neither corporeal nor spiritual, and moves continually from one nature to another. And he holds its motion to be circular and perpetual, not, however, that it moves from place to place as body, but as spirit and in the fulfilment of its various activities it moves within itself, that is from its intellectual to its corporeal nature, and thence returns again to the intellect, in unceasing circular motion.

S. I have almost understood this dual nature which you assign to the soul; but you would indeed earn my thanks if you could find some good example, the better to set my mind at rest.

P. What better example is there than that of the two rulers of the heavens whom the Infinite Creator made to be the patterns of the intellect and of the soul?

S. What are they?

P. The two luminaries, the greater giving light to the day, and the lesser, which supplies the night.

S. You mean the sun and the moon?

P. The very same.

S. What have they to do with the intellect and the soul?

P. The sun is the copy of the divine intellect on which every intellect depends, and the moon is the copy of the soul of the world from which every soul proceeds.

S. In what way?

P. You know that the created world is divided into the corporeal and spiritual or incorporeal.

S. Yes, I know that.

P. And that the corporeal world is apprehended by sense and the spiritual world by intellect.

S. This also I know.
P. And you must be aware that of the five senses, that of sight alone gives us perceptual knowledge of the corporeal world, just as mental vision gives us intellectual knowledge of the incorporeal world.

S. Why, therefore, do the other four senses exist, to wit, hearing, touch, taste and smell?

P. Sight alone gives knowledge of all bodies. Hearing is its helmsman; and its knowledge is not gained directly from the substances themselves, like that of the eye, but through the medium of speech, from one who has already acquired this knowledge, either through sight or by hearing it from another whose knowledge comes from sight. Thus sight is prior to hearing, and the eye takes general precedence of the ear as the essential source of intellectual knowledge. The other three senses are all corporeal, created for the perception and use of those things which serve to nourish the body rather than to refresh the mind.

S. Yet animals which have no mind have both sight and hearing.

P. So they have, because they too require these senses for the sustenance of the body. In man, however, besideserving in the fulfillment of his corporeal needs, they are essential to his intellectual cognition; for corporeal things give knowledge of incorporeal things, which the soul receives through hearing when it learns from another or from sight, when itself taking cognition of bodies.

S. I have fully understood this: pray continue.

P. There can be neither corporeal nor intellectual vision without light to illumine it. The eye can have no sight without the light of the sun, which illumines both it and the object of its perception, through the medium of water, air, or any transparent or diaphanous substance.

S. Do fire and bright objects also give light and make sight possible?

P. Yes, but imperfectly, in so far as they partake of the light of the sun which is the primal luminary. And without this light, received either directly from the sun or indirectly from another substance which possess it as form, the eye would remain for ever bereft of sight. In the same way intellectual vision could in no wise apprehend incorporeal things and universal causes, were it not enlightened by the divine intellect. And not only the faculty of intellectual vision, but also the forms in the fantasy (by means of which the intellectual faculty acquires its knowledge) are illumined by the eternal forms which are in the divine intellect. These are the patterns of all created things, and pre-exist in the divine mind as the form which is the pattern of an artificial object pre-exists in the mind of the craftsman and is the very essence of his art. It is these forms alone which Plato calls Ideas. Intellectual vision, its object, and also the medium of intellect, are therefore all enlightened by the divine intellect, just as ocular vision, its object and medium are all illumined by the sun; so that the sun in the corporeal and visible world is clearly the image of the divine intellect in the intellectual world.

S. The resemblance of the sun to the divine intellect indeed affords an excellent simile, and although the true light is that of the sun, the influence of the divine intellect may aptly be termed light, as you called it.

P. The influence of the intellect is more accurately termed and more truly is light than that of the sun.

S. Why so?

P. As the intellectual faculty is more excellent and its perception more perfect and true than that of the eye, so the light illuminating the intellectual vision is more perfect and
more truly light than that of the sun which illuminates the eye of the body. And further, I would have you understand that the sun’s light is neither body, nor affection, nor quality, nor accident of bodies as some vulgar philosophers believe; but it is nothing but the shadow of the light of the intellect, or its splendour reflected in the most noble of all substances. Wherefore when the sage and prophet Moses told of the beginning of the creation of the world, he said that all things were but darkness and chaos, like an abyss of black waters, and the spirit of God, breathing over the waters of chaos, brought forth light. By this he means that the light of corporeal vision was produced from divine intellectual light on the first day of creation. And on the fourth day it was annexed to the sun, the moon, and the stars.

S. Tell me, I pray you, how is it that the light of the body is an incorporeal and almost intellectual thing? And if it is corporeal, how can you deny that it is either a body, or a quality, or an accident of a body?

P. The sun’s light is no accident, but its spiritual form which depends on and is formed by the intellectual and divine light. It is also light which informs the other stars, but of a lesser degree and dependent upon the light of the sun. In the corporeal and lower world it is imparted as form to fire and other bright substances; diaphanous and transparent bodies, however, such as air and water, transmit the light of other illuminants, and this activity is separable and spiritual and not corporeal after the manner of a quality or affection, for the diaphanous is only the medium of light and not a substrate to it.

S. Why not?

P. Because if light in the diaphanous were a quality predicated of a subject, it would conform to the six conditions which characterise quality. Firstly, it would be diffused through each part of the whole substance in succession, whereas light penetrates immediately throughout the whole of a diaphanous [object]. Secondly, an incidental quality changes the nature of a subject, but light brings no change to the diaphanous. Thirdly, a quality extends over a limited space, whereas light is diffused throughout the diaphanous without limit or measure. Fourthly, when the cause of the quality is removed some trace remains for a time in the object, just as water retains its heat after it is withdrawn from the fire; but when the illuminant is removed, the diaphanous is entirely bereft of light. Fifthly, a quality moves with its subject, but the light which illuminates an object such as air or water, does not move with the motion of that air or water. Sixthly, the several qualities in a subject combine and mingle together or form a whole, whereas many lights do not form a single light: you will see that if you walk by the light of two lanterns there will be two shadows and that the number of shadows will always correspond to the number of lanterns; again, if three or more lamps are placed at different angles to a chink in a wall, they will cast three separate lights through the hole. These characteristics of quality show us that light in a diaphanous or luminous body is no corporeal quality or affection, but a spiritual activity by means of which the diaphanous passes on the light of the illuminant; and this activity is separable through the removal of the illuminant. And as light is present in the diaphanous, so the intellect or intellectual soul is present in the body, and is linked with it as being or essence, but is not confused with it; therefore it is not changed when the body changes, nor does it suffer corruption with bodily corruption. And the true light is that of the intellect which, as essence, illumines the corporeal and incorporeal world and enlightens the soul of man and his intellectual vision. From this light is derived the light of the sun, which is the formal and efficient
cause of the light of the corporeal world, and brings light to the eyes of man that he may apprehend not only all substances in the lower world of generation (for these are also perceived by the other senses), but even the divine and eternal bodies of the heavenly universe. This is the chief cause of man's intellectual cognition of incorporeal things: for seeing the stars and the heavens in perpetual motion we realise that their movers are intellectual and incorporeal, and conscious of the wisdom and power of the universal creator who fashioned them, we can say with the Psalmist, 'when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,' etc.

S. You reckon sight far more excellent than all the other senses together; nevertheless, I see that these, and in particular touch and taste, are more necessary to the life of man.

P. They are more necessary to corporeal life, whereas sight is more essential to the spiritual life of the intellect, and therefore is more excellent in its organ, its object, its medium and its function.

S. Explain these four excellencies to me.

P. You have seen how the organ of sight is clearer, more spiritual, and more delicately fashioned than those of the other senses; for the eyes are unlike the rest of the body not canal but full of light, diaphanous and spiritual; like stars are they, and their beauty surpasses that of the other parts of the body, while the composition of their seven humours or tunicæ bears witness to the art with which they were fashioned, more wondrous than that which went to the making of every other limb or organ. The object of sight is the whole corporeal universe, both the heavenly and the lower worlds, whereas the other senses can only apprehend imperfectly a part of the lower world. The medium of touch is flesh; of smell, vapours; of taste, humidity; and of hearing, air in motion; but the medium of sight is the luminous, the spiritual, and the diaphanous, to wit: the air illumined by the light of heaven, which exceeds all other parts of the world in beauty as the eye all other parts of the body. The activity of the other senses covers but few things in the objects which they apprehend: the organ of smell only reacts to the stimulus of vapours, that of taste to the stimulus of wetness in food and drink, and that of touch to the stimulus of the passive qualities; and [contributing but] little to the common sense, they are sensible only to matter, and their perception is imperfect. The forms of these three senses are therefore only affections and proximate stimuli. Hearing, although more spiritual and with a wider range of activity, is only sensible to the heavy or sharp repercussion of the air, set in motion by the impact of one body with another, and this at a short distance; and its form is closely bound up with the affection of impact and corporeal motion. The eye, on the other hand, beholds objects on the furthest horizon, and in the highest heaven, and through the medium of light apprehends all bodies, near and far, perceiving their forms without being subject to any affection, and recognising the distance, colour, luminosity, size, shape, number, position and movement of everything, as if the eye were a scout of the intellect and of all intelligible things. For this reason, Aristotle says that we cherish sight more dearly than any of the other senses because it contributes the most to our knowledge. Therefore, as in man (who is a world in miniature), the eye bears the same relation to the other parts of the body as the intellect to the faculties of the soul, and is its image and disciple; so in the world, the sun bears the same relation to all corporeal things as the divine intellect to all spiritual things, and is its image and true disciple. And as the light of the human eye and its vision is in every particular dependent on and subservient to the light and vision of the intellect, so the sun's light depends on and is
subordinate to the primary and true light of the divine intellect. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the sun is the true copy of the divine intellect; and above all, it resembles it in its beauty; for as supreme beauty resides in the divine intellect, in which the whole universe is most beautifully portrayed, so in the corporeal world the highest beauty is that of the sun, giving light and beauty to the whole universe.

S. As you say, the sun is the true copy of the divine intellect and the eye of the human intellect, and there is indeed a great similarity between the human intellect and the eye and the divine intellect and the sun. I find, however, a disparity between our eye and the sun which does not exist between our intellect and the divine intellect. For our intellect resembles the divine in that both see and impart light; and as the divine intellect not only apprehends all the Forms of things contained in it, but also enlightens every other intellect with its luminous and eternal Ideas or Forms, so our human intellect not only apprehends the Form of everything but also enlightens all the other cognitive faculties of man, so that even though their cognition is of individual and material things, it is controlled by the intellect and is not irrational like that of all other animals. The resemblance, however, is less perfect between the eye and the sun, for the eye sees and gives no light, whereas the sun imparts light and does not see.

P. Perhaps even in this they are alike: for the eye not only sees by virtue of the universal illumination of the diaphanous, but also by virtue of the particular illumination [of the object of vision] by light rays which proceed from the eye to this object. These rays are not sufficient of themselves to illuminate the medium and the object; none the less without them the universal light would not suffice for actual vision.

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S. Do you then believe that the eye sees by transmitting rays from itself to the object?

P. Certainly I do.

S. Then in holding this opinion you are no Peripatetic: for Aristotle censures it and maintains that vision is produced by the representation of the form of the object in the pupil of the eye, and not by the transmission of rays as Plato avers.

P. Aristotle’s teaching was not contrary to that of Plato: for I hold that both the transmission of rays from the eye to apprehend and illuminate the object and the representation of the form of the object in the pupil are necessary to sight; and further, these two contrary motions are not sufficient without a third and final motion, namely that the eye directs its rays for a second time on to the object to make the form impressed [on the pupil] tally in every respect with the external object. And in this third action consists the true essence of vision.

S. Your opinion seems new to me.

P. Yet it is as old as it is true. And my purpose is to prove to you that the eye not only sees, but first illuminates what it sees. In the same way, you must not believe that the sun only gives light and does not see: for of all the senses, sight alone is judged to exist more perfectly in the heavens than in man or in any other creature.

S. But can the heavens see like ourselves?

P. Better than we can.

S. Have they eyes?

P. And what eyes are more excellent than the sun and stars which in Holy Writ are called the eyes of God on account of their vision? For one of the prophets calls the seven planets the seven eyes of God which encompass the
whole earth; and another declares that the starry heaven is His body and full of eyes; again, they call the sun an eye, and speak of the eye of the sun. These celestial eyes can both see and illumine, and their apprehension and knowledge of every object in the corporeal world and its mutations is derived from vision.

S. If they have vision only, how can they apprehend the objects of the other senses?

P. Those things which are purely affections are not apprehended as such by the heavens; thus they sense neither flavours by taste, nor qualities by touch, nor vapours by smell. But as the heavenly beings are the causes of the natures and qualities of the elements, (for the latter are derived from the heavens), they have causal foreknowledge of them, and also apprehend by means of sight the causes of their affections and qualities.

S. And what of hearing? Do they hear?

P. Not by their own organ, for they only have that of sight; but by seeing the movements of the body, and of the lips, tongue, and other organs of speech, they understand their significance. In the same way, you may observe a skilled lip-reader watch the movements of the lips and mouth and without hearing the voice understand what is being said. How much stronger then will be the vision of the great and shining stars, and more especially that of the sun which, as I believe, alone enables it to penetrate all the substances in the world, even through the opacity of the earth, as is testified by the natural heat which the sun infuses into its very centre. Thus, by means of the single faculty of sight, it apprehends with all subtlety and perfection every object, quality, affection, and act of the corporeal world. In the dual activity of seeing and of imparting light, the human intellect may therefore be likened to the divine, the eye to the sun and to the human intellect, and finally the sun to the divine intellect.

S. I am satisfied with your account of the resemblance of the sun to the divine intellect; tell me something of the resemblance which you say the moon bears to the soul of the world.

P. As the soul is the mean between the intellect and the body, and is made and compounded of the singleness and immutability of the former and the variance and mutability of the latter; so the moon stands midway between the sun, the image of the intellect, and the earth, the [home of] corporeal [things], and is thus compounded of the single, immutable light of the sun and the varying and mutable darkness of the earth.

S. I understand you.

P. If you have understood me, explain what I have said.

S. It is clear that the moon is midway between the sun and the earth, since its position is below the sun, above the earth and between them both. Ancient authorities, in particular, declared that the sun is directly above the moon. Moreover, that the moon is composed of solar light and terrestrial darkness is proved by the appearance of the dark spots in its midst when it is full, so that its brightness is mingled with shadow.

P. You have understood a part of what I have said, and that the most simple; but the essential you have omitted.

S. Explain to me, then, what is lacking.

P. This must you add to your discourse. Because the light which shines forth in this same luminary, the moon, is but wan and pale, it is set as a mean between the clear light of the sun and the darkness of the earth. Moreover the moon is ever composed of light and darkness, for (except when it is
towards the earth, and beholds us, and which we perceive when either a whole or a part of it is lit up. The upper part is turned towards the heaven of the sun which is above it, and we do not perceive it even when it is illuminated. Once every month the sun pours its light on to the whole of the lower half, and we behold it full of light; and this is on the fifteenth day of the lunar month when the moon is in opposition to the sun. At another time the upper half is lit up, when the moon is in conjunction with the sun which is above it and gives light to the whole of its upper part; and the lower side turned towards us remains in utter darkness, and for two days we do not see the moon. On the other days of the month the illumination of a half of the moon's globe continually varies: for after conjunction, as the moon travels away from the sun, the light begins to leave the upper part and to pass gradually to the lower, turned towards the earth. One half, however, will always be full of light, for the light which is needed to complete the circle in the lower half is received by the upper, and we do not always see a complete half of the moon. This process continues until the fifteenth day, when the whole of the lower part turned towards us is illumined and the upper part is in darkness. From then on, the light begins to travel to the upper part, passing upward out of our ken, until we are left in darkness and the upper part, invisible to us, is all bathed in light.

S. I have fully understood the passage of light and darkness from one half of the moon to the other, from the upper side turned towards the heavens to the lower turned towards us, and vice versa. But will you not tell me how it is thereby the image of the soul?

P. The light of the intellect is stable, but when imparted to the soul, it becomes inconstant and confused with darkness: for the soul is composed of intellectual light and
corpooreal darkness, as the moon of solar light and corporeal darkness. The mutation of light in the soul is like that of the moon, passing from the upper to the lower part turned towards us and vice versa, [and it happens on this wise]. The soul sometimes employs the whole of its cognitive and intellectual light in the ordering of corporeal things, so that its superior and intellectual part remains in utter darkness; putting off all contemplation of things divorced from matter, denuded of true wisdom and wholly absorbed in the prudent administration of the body. And as when the moon is full and in opposition to the sun, the astrologers say that its aspect is one of maximum hostility to the sun, so when the soul draws all the light which it receives from the intellect to its inferior part turned towards the body, it is in opposition and hostile to the intellect, and completely cut off from it. The opposite occurs when the light is received by the superior and spiritual part of the soul, turned towards the intellect: for then soul and intellect are united as the moon in conjunction with the sun. It is true that this divine union causes the soul to abandon all care of corporeal things, so that this side of its nature remains in darkness, like the lower side of the moon turned towards the earth; and the soul being then rapt in contemplation and in union with the intellect, takes no heed for the things of the body, nor for their wise administration. Yet, in order that the whole body should not be dissolved, the soul is constrained to draw apart from its union with the intellect, imparting the light gradually to the lower part, even as the moon after conjunction. The more the lower part receives of this intellectual light, the greater will be the loss in the upper; and as perfect union is incompatible with the welfare of the body it follows that the soul, just as the moon, turns to direct its light and cognitive faculty towards the body, gradually forsaking the spiritual, until it takes no thought save for the body and has entirely abandoned to the life of contemplation. And then, it may be compared to the moon on the fifteenth day, when the half of its globe turned towards us is filled with light, and that turned towards heaven remains in darkness. Again, it follows that the soul (like the moon) withdraws its light from the lower world and gradually returns to the spiritual and upper world until it returns to perfect union with the intellect, contemporaneous with total corporeal darkness. In this way the light of the intellect is continually following its opposite, darkness, from one part of the soul to the other, and forms a remarkable counterpart to the solar light in the moon.

S. I cannot but marvel and rejoice to see how excellently the all-perfect Creator of the universe has drawn for us, in the two spiritual luminaries of the heavens, the sun and the moon, the portrait of the two spiritual luminaries [in man]; so that when we behold those (for they cannot be hid from the human eye), the spiritual luminaries may be apprehended by the eyes of our mind, to which alone they can be revealed. I would, however, perfect my knowledge, and that as you told me of the resemblance in the soul to the conjunction and opposition of the moon with the sun, so you would also tell me something of its resemblance to the two quadrature aspects which are called the quarters of the moon (the one seven days after conjunction and the other seven days after opposition), and if perchance they are in any way indicative of the changes in the soul.

P. Yes, they too have a like significance. For the moon reaches its quarter when exactly one half of its light is in the upper part and one half in the lower; wherefore the astrologers call the quartile aspect that of semi-hostility and contention, for since the opposite parts are equal, and have an equal share of the light, they dispute as to which shall
seize the remainder. Similarly, when the intellectual light of the soul is equally divided between the superior part of man which is his reason or mind, and his inferior and sensitive part, the one contends with the other as to whether reason shall hold sway over the senses, or the senses over reason.

S. And what is the significance of the two quarters?

P. The one falls after conjunction, and from then on the light in the lower part begins to exceed that in the upper. And thus it is in the soul when it turns from conjunction to opposition: for after its two parts have partaken equally of the light, the superior is overcome by the superior and sense triumphs over reason. The other quarter falls after opposition, and from then on the light in the upper part, which is invisible to us, begins to exceed that in the lower and visible part. The same occurs in the soul when it turns from opposition to union with the intellect: for after the light has been distributed equally among both its parts, the intellectual and superior part begins to regain its preeminence and reason overcomes sense.

S. I do not think that we have even yet exhausted this subject. Tell me also, if you have a ready answer, whether the four amicable aspects of the moon to the sun, that is the two sextile and the two trinal, have any counterpart in the changes of the soul.

P. The first sextile aspect of the moon to the sun falls on the fifth day after conjunction, and is one of amity, because the upper part shares the light with the lower without contention, being still the stronger and the lower subordinate to it. Likewise the soul, when it leaves its union with intellect, bestows a little of its light on corporeal things for their needs, although reason still has the mastery over sense. Therefore corporeal things receive but scant sustenance, and astrologers, who read men’s fortunes, call this the aspect of imperfect friendship. The first trinal aspect of the moon to the sun falls ten days after conjunction, when the greater part of the light is already turned towards us; the upper part, however, is not entirely devoid of light, but subordinate to the lower. And so, when the soul passes from the first quarter to opposition, reason is not bereft of all light, although it is for the most part exercised without question in corporeal pursuits. And since at that time corporeal things prosper, astrologers with reason call the trinal aspect that of perfect amity. The second trinal aspect of the moon to the sun falls twenty days after conjunction, that is, after opposition and before the second quarter, when the upper part of the moon, which was completely dark in opposition, already receives some light; there is still, however, no strife between the two parts since the greater part of the light remains in the lower, turned towards the earth. The same occurs in the soul when it turns from the body, in which it has been wholly absorbed, to give some part of itself to reason and intellect, so that corporeal things are still in the ascendant and joined with the splendour of the intellect; and this astrologers call the second aspect of perfect amity. The second sextile aspect of the moon to the sun is on the twenty-fifth day after conjunction, that is, after the second quarter and before the following conjunction. The upper part has already regained the greater part of the light, although a sufficient measure still remains to the lower, and such that it is subordinate without conflict to the upper. In the same way the soul, when it has turned away from the things of the body, gives reason not only equal but greater power than sense; yet there is no conflict between them, inasmuch as the soul still provides for the needs of the body, though always with due respect to the demands of reason. And because corporeal things are then in want, astrologers,
who judge by their fortunes, call this the aspect of imperfect friendship. Finally, if the soul tends to the spiritual after leaving the fourth and last amicable aspect, it attains to divine union which is its supreme happiness and the vanishing of all material ties. In this way, Sophia, the soul is a number which moves itself in circular motion, and the number of the numbers is the same as the number of the lunar aspects with the sun, which are seven; and its union represents the highest number and unity, the beginning and end of the seven numbers, as the conjunction of the moon is the beginning and end of its seven aspects.

S. I am well content with this account of the moon's resemblance to the human soul. I would fain know, however, if you consider there is any counterpart of the moon's eclipse amongst the activities of the soul.

P. He who designed the world was mindful of this also. The moon is eclipsed by the interposition of the earth between it and the sun, the source of its light, when the earth's shadow falls upon every part of the moon, both the upper and lower, and fills it with darkness; and the moon is said to be eclipsed because there is a total absence of light in both its halves. The same occurs in the soul when corporeal and terrestrial things come between it and the intellect, whereby it loses all the light which it received from the intellect, not only in its superior, but also in its inferior and practical corporeal part.

S. How can body come between soul and intellect?

P. When the soul is too much inclined towards material and corporeal things and is entangled in their meshes, it loses all power of reason and intellectual enlightenment; for it not only sacrifices its divine intercourse and intellectual contemplation, but even its practical life becomes entirely irrational and purely bestial, and mind and reason have no place in it nor in its wanton practices. The soul is then so miserable, being eclipsed from the light of the intellect, that it is as one with the soul of brute beasts and assumes their nature; and Pythagoras declares that such souls as these migrate into the bodies of wild beasts and animals. Therefore, just as the moon is sometimes totally and partially eclipsed, so the activities of the soul are sometimes wholly and sometimes partially bereft of intellectual light, and the soul becomes as that of the beasts. But whether this bestiality be total or only partial it signifies the utter destruction and the greatest possible corruption of the soul; wherefore David prayed to God, saying: 'deliver my soul from the sword, and my darling from the power of the dogs'.

S. This final portrayal of the corrupted, darkened and bestial soul in the moon's eclipse pleases me not a little. There is one thing, however, I would yet know: if the eclipse of the sun has some similar meaning.

P. The eclipse of the sun does not imply any privation of light in its body, like that of the moon; for the sun is never without light, and seems that light is its proper substance. The defect is in us creatures of the earth who, through the interposition of the moon between us and the sun, are deprived of its light and remain in darkness.

S. I have understood this; but tell me wherein lies the resemblance to the intellect.

P. In this—that the intellect is never deprived of, nor found wanting in its own intellectual light (as happens in the soul), for light is the very essence of the intellect, without which it would have no being. And it imparts its light to the soul which, as I have told you, through the interposition of corporeal sensuality between it and the intellect, suffers...
eclipse like the moon, and is obscured through the loss of its intellectual light.

S. I see plainly that the sun and the intellect are similar in that neither is subject to privation or defect; but what resemblance is there in the intellect to the loss of light which we suffer through the interposition of the moon between the earth and the sun, causing a solar eclipse on the earth?

P. When the moon passes between us who inhabit the earth and the sun, it deprives us of the sun's light, receiving it wholly on its upper part, while the lower side facing the earth remains in darkness; in the same way, when the soul comes between body and intellect, it receives the whole of the intellectual light on its superior part and its inferior and corporeal part remains in darkness. The body being thus cut off from all light is bereft of life and its ties with the soul are loosed. And this is that blessed death which is brought about by the marriage of soul and intellect, and which befall our holy fathers, Moses, Aaron, and others, of whom you may read in Holy Writ that they died according to the word of the Lord, with the kiss of God on their lips.

S. The similarity is indeed pleasing. And it is but fitting that the soul, joining in such perfect union with the divine intellect, should be released from its ties with the body; for thereby only the body is eclipsed, and not the intellect, which knows no change, nor the soul, which even rejoices in the eclipse; just as the sun only appears eclipsed to us, and is not so in itself, for it is never in darkness, nor is it hidden from the moon, which then receives the whole of its rays on its upper part. May God, therefore, make our souls worthy of such a blessed end. But tell me, I pray you, the soul being spiritual, what fault or affection can it possess which makes it subject to so many changes, at one instant turning towards the body and at another towards the intellect: For the locomotion of the moon away from the sun is manifestly the cause of its changes relative to the sun and to the earth, but this cause is not found in the spiritual soul.

P. The cause of so many mutations in the soul is the twin love which resides within it.

S. What is the love of the soul, and why is it two-fold?

P. Since the divine intellect is the seat of the highest and most perfect beauty, the soul, which is but a splendour emanating from it, becomes enamoured of this supreme intellectual beauty from whose lofty source it springs: such is the love of the imperfect female for the male by whom she is made perfect, and such her desire to enjoy perpetual union with him. The soul has yet another love, the twin of the former, and this is for the corporeal world inferior to it (like that of the male for the female), which it desires to make more perfect, impressing that beauty upon it which it receives from the intellect by virtue of its first love: as if the soul were made pregnant of the beauty of the intellect and desired to give birth to it in the corporeal world, or as if it had gathered up the seed of that beauty to implant it in the body, like a craftsman who weaves beautiful patterns in his mind that he may give them proper being in the objects which he fashions. This love is not only found in the soul of the world, but also in the soul for the intellect in the miniature world of man; and because the love of the human soul is two-fold, it is directed not only towards the beauty of the intellect, but also towards the image of that beauty in the body. It happens that at times the love of intellectual beauty is so strong that it draws the soul to cast off all affection for the body; thus body and soul in man fall apart, and there follows that joyful death in union with the divine, of which I spoke when discussing the eclipse of the
sun. At other times the contrary may occur when the soul, submitting unduly to the attractions of the love of corporeal beauty, loses all affection and love for the beauty of the intellect and hides its face from it, becoming thereby wholly corporeal and devoid of intellectual light and beauty, just as the moon when it is eclipsed. At other times expression is given to both intellectual and corporeal love, and there is forbearance and equality in the soul. Then either reason contends with sensuality (for an example I gave you the two quadrate aspects of the moon to the sun), or else the soul inclines to one of the loves (corresponding to the four amicable aspects, two trival and two sextile). When the inclination is towards intellectual love, if it is small and still subject to the tricks of sensuality, man is called continent; and if it is great and the senses keep silence, he is called temperate. But if the soul inclines more to the love of corporeal things, the very opposite will occur: if the inclination is small and the intellect offers some resistance, man is called incontinent, and if it is great and the intellect is entirely passive, he is called intemperate.

S. I am fully persuaded that this two-fold love of intellectual and corporeal beauty is the cause of the changes in the soul; and therefore, even as the love of man has two different aspects, so his beauty is of two different kinds, intellectual and corporeal. And I am well aware that beauty of mind far excels that of body and is an ornament of far greater price. I have now only to learn from you if perchance the moon, like the soul, has this affection for the sun and the earth, and if in this also it is the image of the soul.

P. Undoubtedly it is, for the love which the moon bears to the sun, on which its light, life and perfection depend, is like that of the woman for the man; and this love makes it eager for union with the sun. The moon also loves the earth,

as the man the woman, to perfect it by its light and influence, which it in turn receives from the sun. It is, therefore, subject to the same changes as the soul; but of these I will give you no [further] examples, for we have talked long enough of this matter. Only one thing more will I tell you, that as the soul in its changes transmits the light of the intellect to the corporeal world by reason of the love it bears them both, so the moon transmits the light of the sun to the earth by reason of its two-fold love.

S. I am glad you have told me of this point of resemblance between the soul and the moon, and you have certainly set my mind at rest concerning this question.

P. Will not this lengthy discussion persuade you, Sophia, that when our soul contemplates an object with intense love and desire, it can abandon the senses together with the other powers of the body, and moreover that this is customary to it?

S. Without a doubt.

P. Your complaint against me, Sophia, is therefore unjust: when you saw me rapt in thought and bereft of perception, my mind had withdrawn with all the faculties of the soul to contemplate the image of your beauty; and having lost all power of sight, hearing and movement, only that power which we have in common with the animals supported me along the road whither I first intended to direct my steps. Therefore, if complain you must, let it be against yourself who have locked the door in your own face.

S. Nay, I lament rather that the image of my person has more sway over you than my person itself.

P. It is more potent: because the image within our mind is stronger than that [impressed upon it] from without, since, being within, it has already become matter over the