generations of Chaos. Time, he says, is also eternal, not as dependent on the motion of the heaven, but on the eternal motion of the successive generations of Chaos.

S. I am well pleased with Plato's answer to Aristotle's arguments, and you have told me much of the creation of the world according to three different opinions, to wit: the eternity of one single world, according to Aristotle; the eternity of many successive worlds, according to Plato; and the creation of one single world, and of the whole universe, according to the faithful. Now it seems fully time that we should return to our subject of love, and that you should answer my second question, to wit, when love was born and what was the first love.

P. The first love is that of the first lover for the first beloved. But since neither of these was ever born, but both are eternal, it follows that their love, which is the first love, was never born, but is eternal as they are, having been created by them from all eternity.

S. Tell me who are the first beloved and the first lover; for if I know of their love I shall know what is the first love.

P. The first lover is God, knowing and desiring. The first beloved is God, the supremely beautiful.

S. The first love, therefore, is of God for Himself.

P. Certainly.

S. Many contradictions and absurdities would follow from this. Firstly, the absolutely simple and divine essence would be divided into a part loved and not loving and a part loving and not loved. Secondly, God the lover would be inferior to Himself as beloved, for, as you yourself have shown me, every lover in that he is a lover is inferior to himself as beloved; for if love is a desire for union (as you have said), God in loving desires to unite Himself with Himself, and although He is always one with Himself, yet it would follow that God lacked some part of Himself. Such love presupposes privation, and many other similar objections would arise which I will not enlarge upon here because they will be clear to you and to anyone who has understood the conditions which you have prescribed for love.

P. It is not meet, Sophia, to speak of the intrinsic love of God, as lover and beloved, with the same tongue and lips with which we are wont to speak of earthly loves. The coexistence of lover and beloved creates no diversity in Him, but rather it is this intrinsic relation which makes His unity more perfect and more truly one; because His divine essence would not represent the highest form of life did it not reflect in itself the beauty and wisdom of the beloved, the wise lover, and the perfect love of them both. And as in God the knower, the thing known and the act of knowing are all one and the same, although we say that the knower is made more perfect by increase of knowledge and that both he and the object known are necessary to cognition; so also in God the lover, the beloved and their love are all one and the same, and although we count them to be three and say that the lover is informed by the beloved and that love derives from them both (as from the father and mother), yet the whole is one simple unity and essence or nature, which can in no way be divided or multiplied.

S. If He is naught else save pure unity, whence comes this threefold reflection of which we speak?

P. When His pure clarity is impressed on an intellectual mirror it makes this threefold reflection, as you yourself have understood it.

S. Then our cognition of Him would be false and deceptive, since out of the single and the one it makes three.
P. It is not false, for our intellect cannot apprehend the Divinity, which infinitely exceeds it in its intellectual nature. And you would not call the eye or a mirror delusive, although it cannot apprehend the sun in all its splendour and greatness, nor yet the terrible burning nature of fire; for it is enough that the eye or mirror should receive the impression of these things according to its capacity and nature, and in this it is a faithful recipient even though it cannot apprehend the whole nature of the object perceived. In the same way it is enough for our intellectual mirror to receive and image the infinite divine essence according to the capacity of its intellectual nature; though there is a measureless gulf fixed between them, so far does its nature fall short of that of the object of its understanding.

S. Enough, yes, to prevent it from apprehending the object in all its greatness, but not to explain its conversion of absolute unity into three.

P. On the contrary, being unable to understand the pure unity of the divine object, it multiplies it relatively and by reflection into three, for a clear and single object cannot be impressed upon another less clear [and more complex] than itself unless its own exceeding brightness be multiplied into several lesser lights. Behold the sun, when it casts its rays upon the clouds, forming the bow: into how many colours its light is transformed by them reflecting it, or by water or a mirror. And in itself it is pure light without any colour of its own, yet it transcends and contains every other hue; so divine formality, which is perfect unity and simplicity in itself, cannot be imaged in another: except by the reflection of its light and the multiplication of its formality.

S. And why does our intellect make the one into three and not into some other number?

P. Because one is the origin of the numbers and it represents primary form, while two represents primary matter, and three the first being composed of both one and two. Moreover, since our intellect is both threefold and the first of composites it cannot apprehend unity save by a threefold relation; not that it makes three of one, but apprehends the one in a threefold form. And by judgement it recognises divine unity to be absolute and to contain in perfect oneness the nature of the beloved, the lover and love without suffering either multiplication or division, just as the sun contains the essence of every particular light and colour in its single and surpassing brightness. It is the inferiority and impotency of the intellect which causes it to receive this unity of love in the threefold form of beloved, lover and love, as three joined together in one. May this, Sophia, avail you in your difficulties and in any others which might trouble you concerning the intrinsic love of God as lover for Himself as beloved.

S. I think I have understood your meaning; but you would bring me even greater peace of mind could you explain to me more fully how the beloved, the lover and love are one and the same in God.

P. Just as the understanding, the object understood and the intellect are divided in potentiality and united in actuality, so the lover, the beloved and love are divided in potentiality and one and the same and indivisible in actuality. If it is actual being which makes them one and indivisible, then, when they exist in the highest and purest divine actuality, they must be one in single and absolute unity, and in every other lesser grade of actual being their unity is not so perfect nor so untramelled by the threefold nature of love and intellect.

S. This abstraction greatly pleases me, but there is one thing
with which I cannot agree; although I will allow you that our intellect apprehends the divine unity as transcending in its extreme simplicity and containing in a threefold relative form the three aspects of love, to wit, beloved, lover and love, yet I cannot grant you that it perceives one of these three aspects as depending on the other, namely, the lover on the beloved, and that the third which is love is born of these first two as of a father and mother, which would seem to be your opinion. For all production and birth is in every way alien and opposed to the simplicity of the divine unity.

P. It is not only fitting but necessary that divine unity should be impressed on us even in this creative form; for just as one must be multiplied into three in our intellect, so this threefold nature must be represented in it as interdependent, for otherwise it would be three natures and not one, and moreover, our intellect would be deceptive. And it is impossible to conceive of the multiplication of unity if that unity is not preserved within the product. This is why I have told you that in the Divinity the mind or wisdom, which is the lover, eternally proceeds from beauty which is the beloved, and the eternal love of these two is born of beauty or the beloved as the father and of wisdom or the lover as the mother. And therefore the lover was produced but not born, because he has not two parents which are essential to birth but only one forbear, just as Eve our mother was produced from our father Adam, and Chaos or matter the universal mother from the divine intellect which is the universal father. But love, I say, was born, because it was begotten of the father or beloved, and the mother or lover, just as every man has been born since Adam and Eve, and also the whole world of intellect and matter. If, Sophia, you would lighten your mind of the burden of my speech, you shall hear the reason for this generation and multiplication.

S. Explain this to me also, for of myself I cannot understand it.

P. The first universal intellect together with all the Ideas was produced from the splendour of the beloved divine beauty, and is the father of the universe and the form, husband and beloved of Chaos. Chaos, the mother of the world and lover and wife of the first intellect, was produced from the clear and wise mind of the Divinity, the lover. And from the noble and divine love which was born of these two the loving universe was conceived and is thus the child of the intellect, its father, and of Chaos, its mother. Much more could I tell you of this matter for your ease of mind, but it would be too far removed from our purpose, and this must suffice for the present.

S. Nay, explain the whole to me more fully.

P. Man is intelligent and the nature of fire is a thing which he understands. Now when man and fire are in potentiality with respect to understanding they are two separate things, and the intellect, also in potentiality, makes a third; but when the human intellect actively apprehends fire it unites with its essence and is one with the fire in the mind, and so too this same intellect, when active, is the same as the intellect and the intellectual fire, and they are no longer divided. In the same way the potential lover is other than the potential beloved and they are two persons, while potential love makes a third which exists neither in the beloved nor in the lover; but when the potential lover becomes actual he is made one and the same with the beloved and with love. If, then, you can see how these three different natures may become one and the same in actuality, how much greater will be their union in supreme and divine actuality where
they form one pure and single nature without division of any kind.

S. I have understood your doctrine of the intrinsic love of God, namely, that although we speak of it as having been born and allow that it was born of God as both lover and beloved, none the less this love was born of God from all eternity and is one with His eternal unity to all eternity. Therefore there is no necessity to enquire when this love was born, since God is eternal and knew no birth; but I would know when the first love of the world was born after this intrinsic love.

P. The first love after this intrinsic love which is one with God was that by virtue of which the world was made or created; and it was born at the same time as the world because it is the cause of its birth, and the true and immediate cause must exist at the same time as the effect and the effect as the cause.

S. How is love the cause of the birth of the world?

P. The world, like every other thing which is begotten and made, is born of two parents, father and mother; and it could never be conceived were it not for the mutual love which unites them in the act of generation.

S. Who are these two parents or procreators?

P. The first parents are one with God, as I have already told you, and are the supremely beautiful or the supremely good, as Plato calls it, which is the true father and the first beloved, and the lover which is one with the Divinity and is wisdom or division. The latter, being aware of this division, loves and produces intrinsic love; and the first mother together with the father are one and the same with the Divinity. The Godhead, therefore, loving its own beauty, desired to bring forth a son in its own image, which desire was the first extrinsic love, that is of God for the created world, and its birth caused the first production of the first parents of the universe and of the earth itself.

S. What others do you call the parents of the world?

P. The two first begotten of God in the creation of the world, viz., the first intellect which is resplendent with all the ideas of the supreme Creator, and this is the father, the former and generator of the world; and Chaos, dark with the shades of all the Ideas, and containing all their essences, and she is the mother of the world. Through the medium of these two as the first instruments and parents, God in the guise of amorous desire, created, formed and fashioned the whole world in the image of beauty and wisdom, that is, the divine essence. A second love besides the divine extrinsic love was also present at this creation, that of Chaos for the intellect as the wife for her husband, and this was returned by the intellect as the husband returns the love of his wife, and through their love the world was conceived. A third love was also necessary for the creation and existence of the world, that which all its parts bear one for another and for the whole, and this I discussed at length with you when we spoke of the unity of love. These three loves were all born with the world, and when the two first parents were born. Therefore, if the world is eternal, as Aristotle holds, these first loves were born from eternity together with the intrinsic divine love which is one with God (upon which point I need not dwell). And if the world and both its parents were created at the beginning of time, as we faithful believe, these three loves were born successively at the beginning of creation: for first was born that love and desire of God for the creation of the world in the image of His beauty and wisdom; secondly, when the first parents had been created, love was born between them which is the second love; then,
after the formation of the universe with all its parts was born the third love, uniting [the whole]. And if perchance the world was created in time of two eternal parents, as Plato holds, then the first love of God which produced the first instruments or parents of the world, the intellect and Chaos, was born from eternity together with these parents; and the other two loves which accompany the divine love were born at the beginning of time when the world was made, the love between the parents being born at the beginning of the creation of the world, the other, the love of union, at the end of its formation; and these two loves were born as many times as the world was made. Opinions, therefore, concerning the birth of love depend upon belief concerning the generation of the world. You, Sophia, who are of the faithful, must believe that divine extrinsic love and worldly intrinsic love, which are the first loves after the intrinsic love of God, were born when the world was created by Him ex nilo.

S. I am content to have heard from you all these things concerning the time of the birth of love, and not only the various opinions of the sages, but also the belief of the faithful, to which we must adhere. Enough of the second question; let us pass to the third, and tell me, if it is needful, where love was born, whether, perhaps, in the lower world of generation and corruption or in the heavenly world of perpetual motion, or in the spiritual world of pure intellectual vision.

P. Since you have already learnt from me that the first love to be born was the extrinsic divine love by virtue of which the world was created by God the creator, it must be clear to you that love was born in God.

S. I well remember this; my question, however, does not concern divine love, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, which is more exalted than that to which my mind can attain, but I am asking you of worldly love.

P. Of this I have told you that the first was the mutual love which was born of the first intellect and Chaos, so that love was first born in them.

S. Indeed I had not forgotten; but according to what you said, this love is rather of the procreators of the world, its father and mother, than of any of its parts. I would know of the love which exists in the created world, in which of its parts it was born, whether in the corruptible, the celestial or the angelic, and in what part of each of these parts.

P. When the question is expressed more clearly the solution becomes less controversial. My reply is that love was first born in the angelic world and thence was imparted to the heavenly and corruptible.

S. What reason moves you to give this opinion?

P. Since love, as I have told you, proceeds from beauty, where beauty is greatest, oldest and coeternal, there must love first be born.

S. It seems that you wish to deceive me.

P. In what way?

S. Because you tell me that where beauty is there is love; and you have already shown me that love is where beauty is not.

P. I do not deceive you; it is you who deceive yourself. I did not tell you that love consists in beauty, but that it proceeds from it, and that love exists where there is beauty which causes it, not, however, that it exists in this beauty, but in that which lacks and desires the beautiful.

S. Therefore where beauty is most lacking there should be the most love, and there it was first born. And since the lower
world is more wanting in beauty than the heavenly, and the angelic, love must exist there in greater abundance, and this we must consider to have been its original birthplace.

P. Again, Sophia, I find you more subtle than wise, and I could wish that the recollection of our past converse served you to find rather than to contradict the truth. Do you not see that not only a lack of beauty causes love and desire for it, but more especially a knowledge of it in the lover who lacks it and esteems it as good, excellent, desirable and beautiful, so that he desires it to enjoy it? And as the knowledge of this beauty is clearer in the lover, so is his desire more intense and his love more perfect. Tell me, therefore, Sophia, whether this knowledge will be more perfect in the angelic or in the corruptible world.

S. In the angelic, certainly.

P. Therefore love is more perfect in the angelic world, and there it took its origin.

S. If love exists in the lover according to the extent of his knowledge, then you are right in placing its origin in the intellectual world. Yet it is my experience that love presupposes a lack of beauty as well as a knowledge of it, and proceeds no less from the one than from the other. Nay, privation even seems to be the first condition of love, and the second a knowledge of the beauty which is wanting and which is desired in that it is beautiful. Reason, therefore, would lead us to suppose that where the lack is greatest there love was born, that is in the lower world where, although knowledge is not so great as in the angelic, yet there is greater privation, and this is the first condition in the production of love.

P. Although both a lack and a knowledge of the beautiful are causes productive of love, not only does privation yield the first place to knowledge but cannot even compare with it.

S. Why not? For privation must precede knowledge, as a thing must exist before knowledge of it, and an object must first be lacking before one can become aware of its absence.

P. Privation certainly precedes knowledge in time and origin, because, as you say, a thing must first be missing before it is missed. But privation is not first in importance amongst the causes of love, for without knowledge it produces neither love nor desire of a good or beautiful thing. Hence you will see men with neither wit nor knowledge who have no love of wisdom nor desire of learning; but when knowledge is added to the lack of a beautiful or a good thing, it is this knowledge which principally induces love and desire of it. Where, then, knowledge is accompanied by the lack of a certain degree of beauty, as in the angelic world, there love is born, and not in the lower world, where there is lack in plenty but no knowledge.

S. I will not yet admit myself defeated, nor can I allow you that knowledge is thus more important than privation amongst the causes of love; for knowledge can exist together with beauty, in fact, in the universe those who have the most beauty have the most knowledge. What beauty is there more excellent than knowledge itself? Knowledge, therefore, rather goes hand in hand with beauty than flourishes in its absence, and the greater it is the less [desire has it to] remain where beauty is lacking. Therefore where knowledge is great as in the angelic world, there can be but little privation and in consequence little desire and love, for he who has few wants has but faint desire. In the lower world, however, where the privation is great and knowledge and beauty small, desire and love must be more intense and there they must first have been born.

P. I am glad, Sophia, that your mind will not rest contented
until in harmony with every aspect of the truth which it is contemplating. In your argument you make use of certain ambiguous statements which make it appear valid to you, such that knowledge exists together with beauty, that it is beauty itself, and that it does not exist in the absence of beauty; and you speak truly of actual knowledge, which is the most perfect, but not of potential knowledge of that which is lacking.

S. Explain this difference more clearly to me, for I do not think I understand it well.

P. That is excellent beauty which knows itself, and lofty knowledge which is of its own beauty, and this knowledge does not presuppose a lack, but rather the possession of the beautiful thing which is its object. And in the universe, as the beauty is more excellent so it has greater knowledge of itself, and this induces neither desire nor love, except, perhaps, through contemplation of itself. There is another kind of knowledge, however, the object of which is not the beauty which the knower possesses but that which he lacks; and this is the knowledge which engenders desire and love in all things which are inferior to the supremely beautiful.

S. Since this second knowledge presupposes privation and is of beauty which is lacking, it must cause greater love in the lower world where there is a dearth of beauty, than in the angelic world where the want is but small; for this knowledge must be proportionate to the beauty which is wanting and which is its object.

P. In this you are deceived a second time. You must know that as the first possessive knowledge is more excellent as the beauty is greater, and therefore more excellent in the angelic than in the lower world, so this second knowledge of what is lacking is greater in the superior than in the inferior, except in the most high God Who knows no privation, since His knowledge is of His supreme beauty which lacks no degree of perfection.

S. However, you will not deny that these superior, heavenly and angelic beings are less wanting in beauty than the lower and corruptible: wherefore the desire of that beauty which they lack must be greater amongst the lower beings in their poverty than amongst the angelic in their riches.

P. Your conclusion is not correct: for not that in which the most good is lacking most desires the good which it lacks, but that which has the greatest knowledge of the good which it lacks. You have but to observe the various species of lower being: the elements, stones and metals, which lack beauty to a high degree, yet have little or no desire for it because they have no knowledge of the good which they lack.

S. Yet you have shown me that they also have natural love and desire.

P. Yes, but only for that degree of perfection natural to them: as weight tends towards the centre, lightness to the circumference, and iron towards the nearest magnet.

S. None the less they have no knowledge.

P. I have already told you that the knowledge of nature which propagates them is sufficient to direct them towards their natural perfection, without any other cognition on their own part; hence their love and desire is neither intellectual nor sensitive, but only natural, that is, governed by nature and not by themselves. And so plants, which are the least perfect of animate beings as most lacking in beauty, because they have no knowledge have no desire of it, except slightly in so far as appertains to their natural perfection. Again, in animals endowed with sense, who are far more lacking in beauty and perfection than men who are endowed with reason, the desire and love for the good which they lack
is infinitesimal compared with that of man: for their knowledge of that beauty which they lack is but slight and only extends to pleasures of the body, and their love, being sensitive, cannot be directed towards the intellectual beauty which they lack and which is the most excellent of all beauty. Moreover, amongst men themselves, as I have already explained to you, those who are of lesser parts and whose knowledge is more scanty are the most deficient in beauty and perfection and desire it least; and as their intelligence and wisdom increase so their lack of intellectual perfection and beauty decreases, and their love and desire of it becomes more intense. For this reason Pythagoras called wise men philosophers because they are lovers and seekers after wisdom: for he who excels in wisdom has a better understanding of what he lacks to perfect it, and desires it all the more keenly. And as wisdom is far broader and deeper than the human intellect, he who strikes out the farthest into its divine ocean has a greater knowledge of its width and depth and a greater desire to arrive at those shores of perfection which are within his reach. Its waters are like salt water, for the more a man drinks the thirstier he becomes; for the delights of wisdom can never cloy like those of other pleasures, but with every hour they become more estimable and less satisfying. Wherefore Solomon, in his Proverbs, compares wisdom to the loving mind and the pleasant roe, saying that her affections will abundantly delight you at all times, and you will ever increase in her love. When, Sophia, you mount this ladder to the heavenly and angelic world, you will find that those who participate the most in the intellectual beauty of the supremely beautiful have a greater knowledge of how much of the beauty of their Creator is lacking even in the most perfect of His creatures. And their love and desire is accordingly strengthened that they may enjoy to all eternity the highest degree of participation and union possible to them; and in this their ultimate happiness consists. The foremost seat of love, therefore, is that first and most perfect created intelligence, which by reason of its love enjoys in union the highest beauty of its Creator, upon Whom it depends. From it the other intelligences and heavenly creatures are successively derived, descending from one degree to another down to the lower world, where man alone can be likened to it in his love of the divine beauty through his immortal intellect which the Creator vouchsafed to bestow upon his mortal frame. And it is only through the love of man for the divine beauty that the lower world, which is his domain, is united to the Divinity, the first cause and final end of the universe and the highest beauty universally loved and desired; for otherwise the lower world would be wholly cut off from God. Love, therefore, was born in the created universe in its angelic part, and was thence imparted to its other parts.

S. My mind would be contented with this account, and I could certainly grant that love was first born in the angelic world, where it reaches the peak of its desire, did it not seem strange to me to associate the smallest lack of beauty with the greatest knowledge and desire of what is lacking, as you affirm to be true of the intellectual world. For, as I have already told you, these things should logically be proportional and the knowledge and desire of the beauty which is lacking should be proportionate to the lack. And although, Philo, you with your subtle reasoning allege the contrary to be true and your arguments cannot be refuted, none the less your conclusion seems contradictory in that it makes the lack disproportionate to the desire and knowledge of that which is lacking.

P. Although we said that the angelic world was more beautiful than the corruptible, and therefore was less
deficient in beauty than the lower [worlds], for where there is greater perfection there must be less privation and lack of beauty; none the less when you consider the measure of the deficiency in beauty relative to the love and desire of which it is the cause, you will find not only that it is equal in the angelic world to the deficiency in the lower worlds, but even exceeds it and is greater in that it induces greater love and desire [than in the] corruptible [world].

S. Your talk grows ever stranger. Tell me why there is equal privation in both worlds and also (if you are able) why it is even greater in the angelic world compared with that of the corruptible.

P. Since the beauty of the Creator is more excellent than any which is created and is the only perfect beauty, you must grant that it is the measure of all other beauty and that the lack of perfection in others is measured by it.

S. I will certainly grant you this, for it is indeed true that divine beauty is the cause, end, and measure of all created beauty. But tell me further.

P. You will also allow me that divine beauty is immense and infinite; therefore it can in no wise be proportionate to or commensurate with the most excellent of created beauty.

S. This also seems necessary; for the beauty of the Creator cannot in any way be proportionate to that of any created thing, and those perfections which are found in His creatures are not comparable to His beauty, wisdom and every other perfection. But I do not understand this title of infinity which you give to beauty, for infinity means an indeterminate, imperfect dimension, and a perfect quantity has its limits which make it perfect. If, then, divine beauty is the most perfect, it must be whole and have its boundaries and

be not infinite, as you say. Moreover, finitude and infinity are conditions of an extended or numerical quantity which is only found in bodies. Since divine beauty is incorporeal and abstracted from every corporeal affection, I do not understand how you can make it infinite.

P. Be not deceived by the meaning of the word 'infinite', which signifies an indeterminate and imperfect quantity, far removed from divine beauty; for we can only speak of God and incorporeal things in words which in some sense are corporeal, since our tongue and speech are corporeal in themselves. Again, 'perfect' is a word inapplicable to the Divinity, because it means entirely made, and there is nothing made in the Divinity. But by 'perfect', we mean free from all defect and containing every perfection, and by 'infinite', that the perfection, wisdom and beauty of God the Creator cannot be related to or compared with any other created perfection. For the perfection of Him Who created all things out of nothing must exceed that of all His creatures, who in themselves are as naught, just as supreme being is greater than pure nothingness. This excess is immeasurable, and there is nothing which may be proportioned or compared to it; and it is this which we call infinite, although in itself it is whole and perfect. Again, beauty, wisdom, being and every divine virtue are called infinite because they are not confined within any essence of their own, nor to any finite subject, but all the perfections in God are abstracted, transcendent and infinite, since they are not limited in their own subject and essence as are the being and beauty of every created thing by its proper essence.

S. I am indeed glad to understand how the word 'infinity' can be applied to divine perfections. Tell me further how the lack of beauty in the angelic world is equal to that in the corruptible.
P. The infinite is equally removed from every finite thing, whether it be large or small, because it cannot be measured by the multiplication of a large or small finite value.

S. This seems to accord with reason; yet it is difficult to conceive that a large quantity should not have more affinity with and approximate more closely to the infinite than a small one, and that they are not more commensurate. I pray you, explain this to me more fully.

P. Imagination should not be a stumbling-block to reason in such as you, Sophia. You must understand that: infinity cannot be measured by any kind of measure, great or small, because it would then be contained by that measure and not be infinite. Therefore, neither a half, nor a third, nor a quarter, nor any fraction whosoever can be related to it, because that fraction would then give its measure. It is therefore prime, indivisible and immeasurable, without limit and without end, and no finite thing, however great or excellent it may be, can be proportional to it by any kind of relation.

S. Give me an example, that my imagination may be the better appeased.

P. Time, according to the philosophers, is infinite; it had no beginning and will have no end, although we of the faithful believe the contrary. According to the philosophers, then, time, because it is infinite, cannot be measured by any quantity of finite time, great or small. Hence it cannot be related to or measured by a thousand years any more than by one hour, for infinite time contains and exceeds many thousands of years no less than a few hours, and neither the one nor the other can measure its infinity. You will not deny, therefore, Sophia, that infinite time exceeds a thousand years no less than one hour.

S. It cannot be denied that the difference between the

P. Therefore divine beauty, which is infinite, exceeds the most beautiful of the intelligences separated from matter no less than the least beautiful of corruptible bodies, since it is the measure of them all and none can measure it. The first angel, therefore, lacks as much of the divine beauty as the meanest worm upon the earth. There will thus be equal degrees of privation, in that the lack of beauty of every creature relative to that of the Creator is infinite, and infinity may in some sense be said to be equal to infinity although equality is a condition of the finite. And divine beauty, being wholly abstracted from any subject and intrinsic limit, can never be compared to any created and limited beauty, just as the infinite can never be related to the finite.

S. I understand that the deficiency must be equal in one sense; but two difficulties still trouble me. Firstly, if the angelic and corruptible worlds are equally distant from the infinite divine beauty, the one should not be more perfect than the other, because the perfection of created beings seems to exist in their greater or less approximation to their Creator. Secondly, you say that no creature can be compared with the Creator: how can this be, seeing that the Scriptures declare that man is made in the image and likeness of God? And you have told me ere now that the world too is an image and likeness of God, nor is there any doubt that the angelic world bears far more resemblance to the Divinity than the rest of creation. Moreover, the image must be proportionate to the form which it portrays and the copy to its original; the creation must therefore be proportionate to its Creator, as made in His image.

P. Your objections are ingenious, but their solution is not difficult. Although divine beauty in itself is immense and
infinite, that portion which God vouchsafed to impart to
the created universe is finite, and was imparted variously in
finite degrees, less, and more. For every created beauty
is created with its own essence and finite subject within
which it is confined. The largest share fell to the angelic
world, the next to the celestial, and the least to the
corporeal. These shares are proportional one to another,
and that which has the largest is said to partake in the highest
degree of the Divinity and to approximate the most closely
to it, not because it is more proportionate to divine infinity,
since there can be no relation between them, but because a
higher measure of the beauty imparted by the Creator to
the created world has fallen to its lot, and it is less restricted,
less concrete and less limited by its own essence. So that
when a creature is said to approximate to its Creator more
than another this is not because it is more proportionate to
Him, as you imagined in your first objection, but because it
partakes more liberally of the divine gifts. And this should
solve your second difficulty, for God has implanted His
image and likeness in His creatures through this finite beauty
imparted to them from His surpassing beauty. And the
image of the [in]finite must needs be finite, otherwise it
would not be a copy, but that of which it is the image. The
infinite beauty of the Creator is depicted and reflected in
finite created beauty like a beautiful face in a mirror, and
although the image is not commensurate with its divine
pattern, none the less it will be its copy, portrait and true
likeness. Man, the created world, and more especially the
angelic world, can therefore be made in the image and like-
ness of God without bearing any proportion to His great
beauty, as I have explained to you. Wherefore the prophet
says: 'To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye
compare unto Him?' And again: 'To whom ther will ye
liken Me, or shall I be equal saith the Holy One Lift up
your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things,
that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all
by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong
in power; not one faileth.' Behold, Sophia, how clearly this
prophet in his wisdom showed how the inmeasurable
excellency of the Creator cannot be compared with that
of His creatures, even of the heavenly and angelic beings, all
of whom He telleth by number and has created with their
own essence and name, and through His power and great
strength they have being and do not fail, yet of themselves
they are as naught. For how can nothingness be likened or
compared with that fount of being which of itself converts
nothingness into being and confers upon it the highest
degree of perfection? Wherefore Hannah prayed to God,
saying, 'There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none
beside Thee', which means that the recipient of being cannot
be compared with the giver thereof.

S. You have shown me that beauty is equally lacking in the
angelic and corporeal worlds, but you have still to show me
how the privation is even greater in the angelic world, which
seems not only strange but contradictory, for if it is equal
in both cases it cannot be greater in the one than in the other.

P. You have heard the reason of their equality; and I have
told you that the lack of beauty is greater in the angelic
world because it is more conscious of it. For when two per-
sons lack something in equal measure, the deficiency is
greater in him who has most knowledge of it, and therefore
his desire for what he lacks is the stronger. If a nobleman
and a peasant are equally lacking in courtesy and chivalry, in
whom is the deficiency greater, in the nobleman who is
conscious of his lack or in the peasant who does not
understand what these things are, and who desires them the
more strongly?
S. The nobleman, certainly, for he who is insensible feels neither the want nor the desire of those things which he has not.

P. In the same way, although there is an equal deficiency of infinite beauty in the heavenly and corruptible worlds, yet in the angelic world, which has a greater knowledge of the immense beauty which it lacks, the privation is greater, and therefore the desire and love more intense than in the lower world. And although in the latter there is an equal deficiency of beauty relative to that of the Divinity, it is lessened by want of knowledge, and the desire and love of beauty are weaker. The privation in the two worlds is therefore equal with respect to that which is lacking, which is infinite in both cases, and is greater or less with respect to that which suffers the privation according to the measure of its knowledge, desire, and love of what it lacks.

S. I understand sufficiently well why the lack of beauty in the angelic world is not only equal to that in the lower world but even greater, and therefore that its love and desire is more ardent and intense and of greater worth, so that the place where love was first born is rightly taken to be the angelic world. But my mind is still troubled concerning its nobility; for since lack of beauty is an imperfection, where the lack is greater the imperfection must also be greater. Therefore, it would follow that the angelic world which, according to you, is most wanting in beauty, would be more defective and less perfect than the corruptible world, which is absurd.

P. This objection would follow, as you say, if the lack of beauty, which I have told you is greater in the angelic world than in the corruptible, were an absolute and total privation; for if this were greater it would truly cause a greater defect in that which suffers it. I did not say, however, that this kind of privation was greater in the angelic world, but only that which promotes love and desire and which is no defect in created things but rather a perfection. It is only natural, therefore, that it should be greater in the angelic world than in the corruptible.

S. This verbal difference does not satisfy me: explain these two kinds of lack, the one privative and the other productive of love and the distinction between them.

P. A perfection may only be lacking in actuality but not in potentiality, and this is properly called lack; or it may be lacking both actually and potentially, and this is called absolute privation.

S. Give me an example of both of these.

P. Amongst artificial things you may see a piece of rough wood which lacks the form and beauty of a statue of Apollo, nevertheless it has these qualities potentially; water, however, lacks the form of the statue both actually and potentially, because a statue cannot be made of water as it can of wood. The former lack, which does not exclude potentiality, is called lack, the second, which covers actuality and potentiality, is called absolute privation. And in nature, the first matter which is in fire and water, though actually lacking the form and essence of air, is not, however, potentially lacking in it, because air can be obtained from fire and from water; but it lacks the form of the stars, sun and moon, or of a heavenly being, not only actually but potentially, for first matter has no power or possibility of becoming heavenly or stellar. This difference exists between the lack of beauty in the angelic and corruptible worlds: for in the angelic world the lack is only in actuality but not in knowledge and inclination, which is equivalent to potentiality in first matter. And as in the latter, lack of actuality gives it inclination and
desire for every form which it has potentially, so the cognition and inclination of the angelic world towards the highest beauty which it lacks gives it an intense love and burning desire. This lack is not absolute privation, for he who knows and desires what he lacks is not entirely deprived of it, since knowledge is a potential mode of being of what is lacking; and the same is true of love and desire. But in the lower world, where there is no such knowledge and desire of this supreme beauty, the latter is lacking both actually and potentially; and this lack is absolute privation and true defect, and not the lack which spells knowledge, inspiring and creating love, which is a perfection in created things. And in the most excellent of these this lack is greater in that it brings more knowledge and it rouses greater love than in the corruptible world, and the privative lack is less whereas the contrary holds in the corruptible world, for the lack which inspires love is the less and the privative the greater, so that this world is less perfect and more defective.

S. I see clearly the difference between the cognitive lack of beauty, productive of love, which is greater in the intellectual world, and the privative lack, devoid of knowledge and love, which prevails in the corruptible world. And I know that one brings perfection in its wake, and the other defect. Three difficulties, however, still beset me. Firstly, the lack in the lower world cannot be called absolutely privative, for even here supreme beauty is known and desired by men who form part of this world. Secondly, the cognitive and desiderative lack of the highest beauty does not seem compatible with the potential being of the thing which is actually lacking, as you have said, because potentiality can be reduced to actuality but no finite beauty can have infinite beauty, which you call the object of its knowledge and desire. Thirdly, it seems strange to me that

God should place in any created thing knowledge and desire of what it lacks and cannot attain, as would be the case you were describing of the angelic world. O Philo, solve these difficulties for me, that my mind may be set at rest concerning the birthplace of love.

P. I expected such questionings from you, and they are pertinent, because with their solution you will understand more fully why love was born in the angelic world, as I have told you. And firstly, I would have you know that in the corruptible world there is no clear cognition of the supreme divine beauty; for this can only be attained by the active intellect, separated from matter, which is a mirror capable of reflecting the divine beauty. Such an intellect does not exist in the lower world, because the inanimate compounds, plants and animals have no intellect; and man only has potential intellect in that he understands corporeal essences, apprehended by the senses, and his highest achievement, when he is sustained by true wisdom, is to attain to a knowledge of incorporeal essences through the medium of corporeal essences. So, from the movements of the heavens, we come to know that their motors are incorporeal and intellectual powers, and subsequently we attain to a knowledge of the first cause as of the first motors. But this is like seeing the shining orb of the sun in water or in any other diaphanous body, since through the frailty of our sight we cannot bear to look on it directly. Even so our human intellect perceives the incorporeal in the corporeal, and though it knows the first cause to be measureless and infinite, this knowledge is derived from the effect of this cause, which is the corporeal universe: thus the Master is known by His works, and not by direct perception of Himself or of the design of His work in His mind. For this is the manner of the cognition of the angelic world where
the intelligences, being separated from matter, can look directly and immediately upon the brightness of the divine beauty, and it is impressed upon them plainly and not in the riddles, just as the eye of the eagle can look directly on the brilliant light of the sun.

S. Have you not shown me that the human intellect sometimes attains to such perfection, and that it can rise to union with the divine or angelic intellect, separated from matter, and have active enjoyment of it, beholding it directly and not through any potential reason or corporeal medium?

P. This is indeed true, and the philosophers hold that our intellect can be united with the active disembodied intellect which is of the angelic world. When it attains to this state, however, it is no longer potential human intellect, nor corporeal, nor is it of the corruptible world; but either it is already made part of the angelic world, or it is midway between the human and the angelic.

S. Why midway and not wholly angelic?

P. Because in uniting itself with the angelic it must be inferior to it, for that which is joined is inferior to that to which it is joined, just as the angelic is inferior to the divine beauty in union with which it takes its highest pleasure. The intellect, therefore, in union with angelic being almost bears the relation of the angelic to the divine, and is midway between the human intellect and the angelic, as the angelic is midway between it and the divine, although the divine, being infinite, greatly exceeds the half, and is the final grade of beauty, not to be proportioned to any other. There are, therefore, four degrees of intellect, the human, the copulative, the angelic and the divine. The human is divided into the potential (that of an ignorant man) and the active (that of a wise man), thus making five degrees. Whence you see the human intellect, even the copulative, according to

the philosopher, cannot apprehend divine beauty directly, nor have any vision and knowledge of it. Therefore love and desire cannot be directed immediately towards this unknown beauty, but only indirectly by a knowledge of the first cause and first motor, through the medium of the [heavenly] bodies. This knowledge is neither perfect nor absolutely true, nor can it induce that pure love and intense desire which the highest beauty requires of its lovers. None the less, through union with the active intellect the [human intellect] can become acquainted with its essence, the beauty of which is finite, and towards which its love and desire are directed; and through it, or rather in it, it sees and desires divine beauty as in a crystal or a clear mirror, but not directly in itself after the manner of the angelic intellect.

S. Yet I remember that you said that the souls of the holy fathers and prophets were united with the Divinity itself.

P. What I have now told you is in conformity with the philosophy which seeks after the highest perfection to which man can attain by his own nature. But Holy Writ reveals to what loftier heights the human intellect may soar when, through the grace of God, it becomes His chosen vessel and prophet; for then it can be united with the divine beauty directly, as one of the angels.

S. Has every prophet attained to such a measure of the divine vision?

P. None, except Moses, who was the first of the prophets, because all the others received their vision through an angel, and their imagination shared with their intellect in its union. Hence their prophetic vision came to them for the most part in dreams and in sleep with figments and patterns of the imagination. Moses, however, prophesied waking, with his mind clear and free from phantasy and
united with the Divinity, without the medium of angels and without [the intervention of] shapes or fancies, except on the first occasion when it was new to him. Wherefore Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, spoke against him, saying that they were prophets even as he. And God declared that they were not like Him, saying to them, 'if God prophesy unto you, it is in a mirror or in a dream', to wit, through the mirror of the angelic intellect with a host of dream phantasies; and again: 'My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.' Thus he was the faithful recipient of all the Ideas which are in the divine mind, for he prophesied by word of mouth and not through the medium of angels, but with clear intellectual vision, unsullied by dreams and riddles; and finally, like the foremost of angels, he beheld the most beautiful face of God. And we are told that he alone and no other prophet received the divine vision after the manner of the angelic intellect. Wherefore in Holy Writ it is said that Moses spoke with God face to face, as one man speaks with another; and in this way he received the vision of God and prophesied directly.

S. If his exaltation was so great in life what must it have been in death when the soul was already loosed from the body?

P. You must believe that union with the Divinity would then be effected more easily and would be closer, more intimate, perpetual and without interruption, which could not come to pass during life on earth. For we believe that not only Moses was immediately united with the Godhead in death, but also that many of the other prophets and holy fathers have attained to this divine union at their end, although Moses alone experienced it in life.

S. I have a sufficient understanding of the solution of the difficulty. Now, will you not solve the second for me, namely, how the angelic intellect can have infinite beauty potentially although it can never attain to it in actuality.

P. It is impossible that the finite should become infinite as it is impossible that the creature should become the creator. And it is not an acquisition such as this which exists potentially in the souls of the blessed, but the copulation and union with the infinite beauty of God, even though they be finite, and to this end they are assisted by their knowledge of His measureless beauty, and to their love and desire is turned.

S. How can the infinite be known by the finite? and how can infinite beauty be impressed upon a finite mind?

P. There is nothing strange in this, because the thing known exists in and is impressed on the knower according to the mode of being of the latter and not of the thing known. Behold how a half of the heavens is seen by the eye and impressed on the infinitely small pupil, not according to the nature and greatness of the heavens, but according to the scope and power of the pupil. In the same way infinite beauty is impressed on the finite angelic or blessed intellect, not according to its infinite nature but according to the finite capacity of the mind which apprehends it. The eye of the eagle sees and mirrors the brilliant light of the sun directly, not according to the intrinsic nature of the light but according to the power of the eagle’s eye to receive it. There is, further, a knowledge of the infinite divine beauty which is comparable with its object, and this is the knowledge of the most high God of His own beauty; and it is as if the sun were to behold itself with the brightness which renders it visible, for that would be perfect vision, the knowledge being equal to its object. So there are three kinds
of vision of God, as of the sun. The weakest is that of the human intellect, which sees divine beauty obscurely in the corporeal universe, which is its copy, just as the human eye sees the luminous orb of the sun mirrored in water or in any diaphanous body, because it is unable to look on it directly. The second vision is that of the angelic intellect, which perceives the immense divine beauty directly though not on equal terms, but receiving it according to its finite capacity, just as the eye of the eagle looks on the bright light of the sun. The third is the vision of the divine intellect of its own infinite beauty, and this knowledge is commensurate with its object, as if the luminous sun could perceive itself.

S. Your answer to this second difficulty is pleasing to me; but I am still troubled by a problem. Since the angels are immutable and in a state of similar happiness, how can they have some perfection of actual being potentially, as you implied of their divine union? And if they are always united with the Divinity, they have no need of desire or love for that which they constantly possess; for (as you yourself maintain) desire is of that which is lacking and not of that which is eternally possessed.

P. Since in this case the object of knowledge is so much more excellent than the knower, it is not strange that the knowledge and copulative union of the finite mind with infinite beauty should always be capable of increase; and this is because the immense lack of the highest beauty known causes love and desire for greater enjoyment of unitive contemplation of this beauty. And although the angels are not temporal, their eternity is not infinite, nor entirely without succession like that of the Godhead. Therefore, although they are incorporeal and have no corporeal motion, they have intellectual motion towards their first cause and ultimate end, with successive contemplation and copulation. Philosophers call this succession ‘angelic time’, and it is a mean between the time of the corporeal world and divine eternity. Potentiality, love, intellectual desire and successive copulation and union can exist in this succession (as I have told you), and even if I granted you that the angels always enjoy the same degree of union they would not lack love and desire for its continuation to all eternity. For we have already seen how we love the good things which we possess, desiring that we may ever enjoy them with everlasting pleasure. Thus angelic love is always directed towards divine beauty intensively and extensively.

S. My mind is set at rest concerning the second difficulty. Tell me something of the third.

P. The solution of the third is clear from what has already been said of the second. I will grant you that no pure love, desire, inclination or tendency has been implanted in any creature, either by God or by nature, save to achieve or to become something possible, and not for the purely and manifestly impossible. Hence you will observe that a man has no desire to reach heaven on foot, or to fly with wings, or to be a star or to take one in his hands, and such like; for although these things are excellent enough in themselves, and although man is both deficient in them and conscious of their value, yet he does not desire them, for they are clearly impossible, and where there is no hope of achievement neither is there desire. For the hope of acquiring something pleasurable which we know and lack, gives rise to love and desire to possess it: where the hope is small the love is never intense nor the desire hot, and where all hope fails because the possession is impossible the love and desire of the knower also fall. The love and desire of the angels to enjoy infinite divine beauty is not, however, of something
impossible and despaired of, for (as I have told you) they hope and are able to attain to that enjoyment of it in which lies their true happiness. And they are ever bent on this quest, as towards their natural end, though it be infinite and they themselves finite.

S. I have a clear understanding of the solution of the third problem, and I see that you add a fourth condition to love: for not only must its object be beautiful and known to the lover, and in some sense lacking or potentially lacking in him, but (according to you) it must also be possible to attain this object and there must be some hope of its acquisition. This opinion seems reasonable, but we find that experience proves the contrary to be true: for men naturally desire to escape death—which thing is clearly impossible and a vain hope.

P. Those who desire this do not believe it to be entirely impossible, and have learnt from the study of Holy Writ that Enoch and Elias and also St. John the Evangelist are immortal in body and soul, although this was brought about by a miracle. Wherefore each one thinks that God can perform the same miracle in him. To this possibility, moreover, is joined a remote hope which gives rise to a weak desire, and this is chiefly because death is ugly and the corruption of the body loathsome to all alike; and our desire is not that we may attain to something new, but that we may cling to that which we already possess, to wit, present existence, so that man easily deceives himself into desiring that he may not lose his life, although by nature this is impossible. This species of desire is so sluggish that it can be felt for an impossible and imaginary object when the latter is of so great importance to the desirer. And further you must know that the foundation of this desire is not vain in itself, although somewhat delusive, because the

desire of man to become immortal is truly possible, since man’s essence (as Plato correctly holds) is none other than his intellect which, through virtue, wisdom, knowledge and love of God, is made resplendent and immortal. Those who are in eternal punishment are not called wholly immortal because they are cut off from divine vision, and this is regarded as the death of the soul, though it is not thereby entirely annihilated. And men, who deceive themselves into thinking that their corporeal being is their proper essence, believe that the immortality which they naturally desire is for their corporeal being, whereas, in truth, it is but for the spiritual, as I have explained to you. From this, Sophia, you may have sure proof [of the continued existence] of the human intellect, for if man were not truly immortal in his intellect, which is the true man, immortality so generally desired. The other animate beings, as they are wholly mortal, may be considered to have no thought, knowledge, desire, or hope of immortality; nor, perchance, do they even know what mortality is, though they flee from danger and pain. For since knowledge of one opposite necessarily includes that of the other, man, who is acquainted with death, knows and seeks immortality for himself; i.e., the immortality of his soul. And this he would not do were it not possible of attainment, after the manner of which I have told you. From this true desire derives the false desire that the body should not die, aided and abetted by the other reasons which I have explained to you.

S. I am indeed content with the answers to my questions, and I recognise that the love of the created universe was in truth born in the angelic world. Only one thing seems inconsistent to me which you told me concerning Plato, namely, that he holds that love is not a god but a powerful spirit; and I have already learnt that Plato makes the hierarchy
of spirits inferior to that of the gods, that is, of the angels. Therefore according to him, love does not originate in the angelic world, but in the ‘spiritual’. For this reason the angels must be wholly devoid of love, since it is not meet that the spirit which is inferior should inspire love in its superiors, to wit, the angels, as it does in men, to whom it is superior.

P. We have discussed the love of the universe more widely than Plato in the Symposium, and here we are considering the origin of love in the whole created world while he only treats of the origin of human love. Some held this to be a god or goddess who eternally incites love amongst men; Plato retorts that love cannot be a god because the gods bestow actual perfection and beauty like their own, for they are truly perfect and beautiful. But human love is neither possession nor perfection of beauty, but desire of that which is lacking. Its beauty is, therefore, only potential and neither actual nor possessed like that of the angels; for love is truly the first affection of the soul, and its being consists in a potential tendency to the beauty which it loves. Wherefore Plato makes the origin of love to be a spirit inferior to the gods, whose beauty is potential compared with actual angelic beauty. And as he makes the Ideas to be the source of the actual human perfections, knowledge and wisdom, so he makes the spirits which are inferior to the gods the source of the powers, faculties and affections of the soul; and since love, as I have told you, is the primary affection of the soul, he gives it a great and powerful spirit: as its origin. The love, however, of which we were speaking is not a corporeal affection in the angels, but an intellectual tendency towards the highest beauty. It is, therefore, more exalted than man or spirit and is the origin of love in the created world. Plato himself does not deny this, because he holds that love exists in the Most High God and is imparted to the other gods as that of the spirit is imparted to man; but because this love is of a higher nature than the latter, he does not treat of them both at once as we have done.

S. My mind is now lightened even of its last burden. Only there is one thing I would know of you: how love which is born in the angelic world proceeds thence and is imparted to the whole of the created universe, and if the angels all partake of the love of divine beauty directly or each through the medium of the angel next above it in excellence.

P. The angels partake of the divine love in the same way as they enjoy union with it, and here philosophers, theologians, and Arabic thought are at variance. The school of Avicenna and Al-Ghazali and our own rabbi Moses and others hold that the primary cause is above all the intelligences which move the heavens [and is] the beginning and end, beloved by all. And this perfect singleness and unity, by love of its infinite beauty, produces out of itself alone the first intelligence and mover of the first heaven; and this intelligence alone enjoys direct vision of the Divinity and direct union with it, for its love is turned immediately towards the Godhead as its own cause and blissful end. This intelligence has two modes of contemplation: the first of the beauty of its cause by virtue and love of which in turn produces the second intelligence; the second is the contemplation of its own beauty, by virtue and love of which it produces the first sphere, composed of incorruptible and circular body and intellect, which is its own lover, and it is itself the perpetual mover of this sphere, which is the true object of its love. The second intelligence contemplates divine beauty, not directly, but through the medium of the first, as one who beholds the light of the sun in a crystal. And it also has two modes of contemplation:
that of the beauty of its cause by virtue and love of which it produces the third intelligence; and that of its own beauty through which it produces the second sphere and governs its perpetual motion. They postulate the same sort of production and contemplation of all the intelligences and heavenly spheres, each successively bound up with the next. The Greeks counted eight spheres, the Arabians nine, and the ancient Hebrews and some modern thinkers ten. However this may be, the number of the motor intelligences is the same, as the number of the spheres, by virtue of their souls, and the motion of the spheres is perpetual circular motion about their own axis, by reason of the knowledge and love which their soul bears for its intelligence and for the supreme beauty which it reflects; and this beauty they all pursue that they may achieve blissful union with it, as their final beatitude. The least of all the motors which moves the lunar sphere, through contemplation and love of its own beauty, produces and perpetually moves the sphere of the moon; and through the contemplation of the beauty of its cause it is said to produce the active intellect which is the intelligence of the lower world and almost its soul. For these thinkers hold, with Plato, that this last intelligence, through contemplation and love of its own beauty, confers upon the lower world the forms in their various degrees and species which are found in first matter, and its beauty moves perpetually from form to form in continual generation and species which are found in first matter, and its beauty moves perpetually from form to form in continual generation and succession. And through contemplation and love of the beauty of its cause, this last intelligence produces the human intellect, the least of the intellects and the highest of all potential being; and by its light the human intellect is reduced to actuality and acquires wisdom, so that through the force of love and desire it can be exalted in union with this same active intellect, and behold in it, as in a medium or crystal mirror, the immense beauty of the

divinity, rejoicing therein with eternal gladness as in the final end of the whole created universe. Thus the hierarchy of created beings descends not only to the last sphere of the moon, but even to first matter, the least of all things; and thence it turns again with the inclination, love and desire of this first matter to approximate to divine perfection, from which it is the most removed, ascending step by step through the forms and formal perfections; firstly in the forms of the elements; secondly in those of inanimate compounds; thirdly in those of the plants; fourthly in those of animals; fifthly in potential human understanding; sixthly in the active human intellect; and seventhly in the copulative intellect united with the highest beauty through the medium of the active intellect. In this way the Arabs make the universe to be a circle, the beginning of which is God; and from Him a continuous chain of being descends to first matter, which is the most removed from the Divinity, and there the circle turns and ascends through the various degrees of being until it reaches the point of origin, to wit, divine beauty, with which the human intellect is finally united.

S. I understand this from Arabic teaching; that love descends from the summit of the angelic world to the nethermost point of the lower world, and thence ascends to its first origin, passing successively from one degree of being to another, with wondrous order and in the form of a circle with a point of origin marked on its circumference. I would not as yet venture to judge of the truth of this opinion, although it is clearly ingenious and pleasing in form, and has much show of probability. Tell me how the opinions of the Arabians differ one from another in this matter.

P. I think I have already told you that Averroes as a pure
Aristotelian took care to contradict and refute everything which he did not find in Aristotle, either because all his works did not come into his hands, notably the metaphysical and theological works, or because they did not accord with his own opinion and judgement. Not finding this hierarchy of the universe in Aristotle, he consequently refuted it, saying that it was not in accordance with Aristotelian philosophy, and thereby departing from his Arabic predecessors. For he sees no reason why the interrelated and multifarious essences in the universe should not depend directly on the one perfectly simple Deity provided they are all united as members of one body; and through this union of the whole all the parts can depend on the supremely simple and divine unity. And in the mind of God is laid up the pattern of the whole universe as the form of his work in the mind of the craftsman. But the Forms in the mind of God do not imply multiplication of His essence, nay, in respect of Him they are one; though they are multiplied in His work because it lacks the perfection of its Maker. Thus the Ideas of the Divinity are many relative to the created essences, but inasmuch is they are in the divine mind they are one with it. Averroes, therefore, maintains that divine beauty is directly impressed on all the intelligences which move the heavens, and that they are all immediately derived from it, together with their respective spheres, and all the Forms, first matter, and the human intellect, which alone are eternal in the lower world. Although, however, they all receive this impression directly, none the less it is graded according to whether the impression is greater or less. For the divine beauty is impressed on the first intelligence with greater nobility, spirituality and perfection, and with a greater resemblance to its pattern, than on the second, and on the second with greater perfection than on the third, and thus in continual succession down to the human intellect, which is the least of the intelligences. In corporeal substances the manner of its impression is inferior, for there it can be measured and divided; nevertheless it is impressed more perfectly on the first sphere than on the second, and so in succession until, reaching the sphere of the moon, it comes to first matter, wherein all the Ideas of the divine beauty are impressed, as they are on each of the intelligences, the motors and souls of the heavens, and on the wise and active human intellect. The impression, however, is not so clear and luminous, but overcast and subject to corporeal potentiality; and the impression on first matter bears the same relation to that on heavenly bodies as the impression on the potential human intellect to that on all the other actual intellects. And there is no difference between these two impressions save that in first matter all the formal Ideas are impressed potentially and corporeally, since it is the least of all corporeal substances, and in the potential intellect they are impressed potentially, yet not corporeally but spiritually or intellectually. To these successive degrees of impression of the divine beauty corresponds the love and desire of it in the intellectual world, passing from one degree to another, from the highest intelligence to the potential or lowest form of human intellect. And in the corporeal world, where love depends on the intellectual, it passes in the same way from the highest heaven down to first matter, which thus resembles each one of the heavenly spheres: for as these in the insatiable love which they have for divine beauty, and to increase their participation in and enjoyment of it, move in perpetual circular motion and know no rest, so first matter, in its insatiable desire to partake of divine beauty by the reception of forms, moves continually from one form to another in the unceasing circular motion of generation and corruption. I could tell you more...
fully of each of these two opinions concerning the nature of the succession of the essences and loves in the universe, with the differences and reasons which each one adduces in favour of his opinion and against that of his opponent; but I will leave them on one side lest I should digress without due cause. May it suffice you that each of these two opinions will give you an answer to your question, namely, how love in the heavenly and lower worlds depends on the angelic world, its birthplace, so that it is common to the whole created universe.

S. I have understood these two distinctions in Arabic thought concerning the hierarchy of the impression and love of divine beauty in the different grades of intellectual being in the universe. And I would liken the first to the impression of the sun in a clear crystal, through which medium it is impressed upon another and less clear, until it reaches the human intellect, which is the last crystal and the dimmest of them all. And the second hierarchy, passing from the first intelligence to the human intellect is like the impression of the sun falling directly on several mirrors, each one less clear than the last. Therefore, for one reason or another, I see that love depends on the angelic world in the whole created universe; and I am perfectly content with the answer to my third question concerning the birthplace of love, for I am assured that in the created universe it first took its birth and origin in the first intelligence and head of the angelic world, as you have said. I think the time has come for you to reply to my fourth question concerning the parents of love, how many they were and what was their nature and quality?

P. The Greek and Latin poets, who number Love amongst the gods, attribute different parents to him, and some call him Cupid, others Amor. Of Cupids they hold there to be more than one; but the chief is that blind, naked and winged boy who carries a bow and arrows. And some say he is the son of Mars and Venus, and others that he was born of Venus without a father.

S. What would they signify by this?

P. Cupid the god of love represents voluptuous and wanton love and the lust of the body, and therefore they imagine Voluptuousness to be his daughter. This immoderate and burning desire is found in those men at whose birth Mars and Venus are in the ascendant, in friendly aspect and in conjunction. For Venus gives an abundance of natural moisture, concocted and disposed to lust, and Mars the burning and pricking desire, so that one contributes excessive potency and the other, excessive desire. And Mars, who bestows this burning desire, is called the father of Love by the poets because he is active, and Venus the mother because humidity appertains to matter and is passive. Those who say that Love has no father wish to imply that burning lust knows not intellectual reason, which is the father and governor of the voluntary affections; and therefore he has a mother only, the planet and goddess Venus, who presides over amorous delights. The other Cupid is said to have been the son of Mercury and Diana, and to have been winged; and he represents the inordinate desire of riches and possessions and the love of the profitable which makes a man swift, nay, almost winged, in its pursuit. This love is found to be excessive in those who are born when Mercury and the moon are in the ascendant, in conjunction, in amicable aspect and in favourable signs; because Mercury makes these men eager and keen-witted in their dealings, and Diana, that is the moon, bestows great earthly riches upon them. Hence the poets call Mercury, being active, the father of the love of the
profitable, and Diana, being material and passive, the mother.

S. Of the three species of love—the pleasurable, the profitable, and the virtuous,—the poets have assigned a Cupid to preside over two species. Have they perchance conceived yet another to be the god of virtuous love?

P. No, because Cupid signifies burning and inordinate love and desire which knows no restraint; and these excesses are found with respect to pleasure and profit but not to virtue, for virtue spells moderation, temperance and order, and however great, it can never be immoderate or excessive. The poets, however, speaking of the origin of Love, sometimes depict him as virtuous and sometimes as representing all three aspects of his nature at once.

S. Tell me what they say of the parents of Love as you have told me of Cupid’s parentage.

P. I was about to tell you. Some hold Love the son of Erebus and Night, and even the first born of her many children, as I taught you when we spoke of the universality of love.

S. Which love is this, and what do they signify by these two parents?

P. They speak of love in general, which is the first amongst all the affections of the soul. Erebus, as I have told you, they imagine to be the god of all the affections, and thus of the potentialities of matter, and by him they understand the tendency and potentiality of the soul and of matter towards good and evil. And because love is the first affection of the soul, they make him to be the first born of Erebus; and they attribute other sons of a like nature to him, which are all affections consequent upon love, and of this I have given you a full explanation. The poets call Night the mother of Love, to show how love is begotten of privation and

lack of beauty together with an inclination for it; because night is simply privation of the beautiful light of the day. In this universal love all three species meet together without distinction. [Later] poets imagine another god of love, the son of Jupiter and the greater Venus, who is said to have been twin.

S. Which species of love is this? and what do its parents signify?

P. By this is understood virtuous and temperate love for any kind of acquisition, whether for the pleasure or profit of the body, by virtue of which moderation the love of corporeal things is made virtuous; or else incorporeal, virtuous and intellectual love, the virtue of which consists in its being as ardent and intense as possible, while its disorders and vices consist but in its being dull and sluggish. The father of this species of love is Jupiter, whom the poets call the highest of the gods; for this virtuous love is divine, and the end of its desire is the contemplation of the beauty and omnipotence of Jupiter. And I have already told you that the beloved is the father of love and the lover its mother. The mother of this species of love is said to be great Venus, not she who incites sensual desire, but her intelligence who inspires virtuous and intellectual love and desire, as the mother desirous of the beauty of Jupiter, her husband and the father of virtuous love. According to the astrologers, if Jupiter and Venus, being in friendly aspect and conjunction, are in the ascendant at a man’s birth, because they are benevolent planets and both Fortunes, he will be generous, lucky, and a lover of every good and every virtue, and moreover endowed with virtuous and spiritual love. For in the love of the body, Venus gives the desire and Jupiter makes it virtuous, whereas in the love of the spirit it is Jupiter who is desired and Venus
who desires. And the one is the father and the other the
mother of virtuous love: for as Venus in conjunction with
the power of Mars makes human desire excessive and
licentious, so her conjunction and marriage with Jupiter
makes it honourable and virtuous.

S. I understand how virtuous love is the son of Jupiter
and Venus. Tell me now why these poets make him to
be twin.

P. Plato makes Pausanias, in the Symposium, say that love
is twin because in reality there are two Loves as there are
two Venuses. For each Venus is the mother of Love, therefore
as there are two Venuses, so there must also be two Loves;
and the first Venus, the great, being heavenly and divine,
his son is virtuous love, whereas the second Venus, being
lower and wanton in her pleasures, her son is evil love.
In this way love is twin, and there are two Loves, the
virtuous and the base.

S. This twin love is, therefore, not merely virtuous as you
said.

P. It combines in its dual aspect Cupid, the son of the lower
Venus and Mars, and Love, the son of the elder Venus and
Jupiter; but we follow the opinion which holds twin love
to be other than Cupid and to be the son of Jupiter and
great Venus, and this is virtuous love.

S. But how can virtuous love alone be twin?

P. For this reason. As you have heard, virtuous love may
be of corporeal or spiritual things, in the one by moderation
and restriction, in the other by every possible growth and
increase. He who is virtuous in the one will be virtuous in
the other, for as Aristotle says, every wise man is good and
every good man wise. Thus love is twin in having as its
object both body and spirit. Again, this twofold aspect

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accords with friendly feeling and honourable friendship,
because it is always mutual. For as Cicero said, friend-
ship is between virtuous men for the sake of virtue, so
that friends love one another on account of their respective
virtues. Furthermore, love is twin in each of the friends or
lovers, in that each is both himself and that which he loves,
and the soul of the lover’s soul is his own beloved.

S. I understand the parentage of Love as conceived by the
poets. I would fain know what the philosophers think on
these matters.

P. We find that even Plato attributes a mystical origin to
love and of another kind. In the Symposium, in the name
of Aristophanes, he declares that the beginning of love was
on this wise. At the beginning of all things, the human race
embraced a third species which was not mere man or woman,
but was called androgynous, being at once both male and
female. And as man derives from the sun and woman from
the earth, so that kind derived from the moon, which is made
up of the sun and earth. An androgyne was thus great,
mighty and terrible, having two human bodies joined

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unrebuked, because tolerance would bring insult upon the gods. Therefore he determined to divide them in twain, and he sent Apollo to cut them in half lengthwise and to make of one two, so that they could only walk upright on two feet; and in this way the number of divine worshipers would be doubled. Moreover, Apollo was to warn the androgynes that if they sinned further against the gods, he would return and divide each half into two, and they would be left with one eye and one ear, half a head and face, one hand and one foot, on which they would have to hob along as if lame, and thus they would be like figures sculptured on columns in basso-rilievo. Apollo then cut the androgynes in half through the breast and the belly, and turned the faces round towards the side which was cut so that, seeing the incision, man might be reminded of his evil ways and the better observe the section cut off from himself. Over the breast-bone he placed skin, and drew together all parts of the skin which had been cut over the belly and tied them together at the centre, and this knot is called the navel. And he left a few wrinkles round it made by the scars of the incision, that seeing them man might remember his sin and punishment. When each part saw that it lacked the other it became desirous of reintegration, and the two came together and were united in close embrace; and thus they stayed, taking neither food nor drink until they perished. For their parts of generation were behind, facing the same way as their shoulders, which before had been the front of man, so that they cast their seed upon the ground, where it bred mandrakes. Jupiter, therefore, seeing that the human race was completely dying out, sent Apollo to turn their parts of generation to the front of the belly, so that in mutual embrace they might beget their own kind and be satisfied and return to seek what is needful for the preservation of life. From that time forth, love, which heals man's wounds and restores the unity of his primeval nature, was engendered amongst men; and by its restoration of two into one it is the remedy of the sin which led to one being made into two. Love in every man is, therefore, male and female, for each of them is but a half and not a whole man, and therefore desires to be made whole in its other half. Wherefore, according to this legend, human love was born of the division of man. And its parents were the two halves, both male and female, loving each other that they might achieve their former unity.

S. The story is full of charm and beauty, and it is impossible not to believe that it signifies some philosophical beauty, more especially since it was composed by Plato himself, in the Symposium, in the name of Aristophanes. Tell me, therefore, Philo, what is the allegory.

P. The myth was handed down by earlier writers than the Greeks—in the sacred writings of Moses, concerning the creation of the first human parents, Adam and Eve.

S. I never heard that Moses composed this myth.

P. He did not so plainly, nor in such detail, but the substance of the story he told briefly; but it was from him that Plato took his myth, amplifying and polishing it after the manner of Greek oratory, thus giving a new and confused account of the Hebrew version.

S. In what way?

P. On the sixth day of the creation of the universe, man was made, the last of all its parts, and Moses gives us the following story. 'God created Adam (that is man) in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.' The universe was completed at the
end of the sixth day, and the sabbath or seventh day was hallowed as a day of rest. The story continues, telling how the earth began to bring forth grass after a mist had gone up from the earth giving birth to the rain. And God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. And God planted a garden, fair to look upon, with every beautiful tree and fruit to delight the heart of man, together with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And he placed man in the garden to dress it and to keep it, with the commandment that he should eat of every tree except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day he ate of its fruit he would surely die. The text then continues with the words of God: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' And God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and he called each one by his name; yet for man there was not found a help meet for him. God, therefore, having caused a sleep to fall upon him, took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place; and from this rib which he had taken from man he made woman and brought her unto the man. And the man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' The narrative continues with the deception of the serpent, the sin of Adam and Eve in eating of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the ensuing punishment; and further, how Adam knew Eve his wife and begot Cain and Abel, and how Cain killed Abel and was cursed as an outcast for his sake. There also you may read the number of the descendants of Cain. And the concluding words are these: 'This is the book of the generation of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam (that is man), in the day when they were created.'

S. What would you infer from this story of the creation of man in Holy Writ?

P. You must have perceived that this sacred narrative is contradictory in itself. For in the first place it says that God created Adam on the sixth day, both male and female; then that God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him,' that is, create his female counterpart. And so He did, taking one of his ribs from him in sleep. The woman, therefore, was not made in the beginning, as was first said. Again, at the end of the narrative, speaking of the offspring of Adam (as you have seen), we read that God created man in the likeness of God, male and female created He them, and He called their name Adam in the day that they were created. It would appear, therefore, that there was at once both male and female at the beginning of the Creation, and that the woman was not made subsequently by the withdrawal of the side or rib as is narrated. Again, in each of these texts appear clear contradictions. First, God is said to have created Adam in His own image, male and female created He them, and blessed them, etc. Adam is the name of the first man, and the woman was called Eve when she was created. God, therefore, in creating Adam and not Eve, only created a male, and not male and female as the text says. Moreover, the words at the end of the narrative are even more abstruse: 'These are the generations of Adam. In the day when God created him, male and female created he them, and called their name Adam in the day that they were created.' Here we observe that God, in creating Adam, made both male
and female; yet He called them both by the name Adam in the day that they were created. And no mention is made of Eve, which is the name of the female part of man, although we have already been told how Adam being alone and without woman, God created her out of his side and called her Eve. Do not these seem to you, Sophia, to be very great discrepancies in the writings of Moses?

S. Indeed, the variance seems very great, and it is inconceivable that the divine Moses should contradict himself so obviously as to seem deliberately. Hence it is credible that he wished to infer a hidden mystery beneath these obvious discrepancies.

P. You judge well; and in fact he wishes us to realise that he is contradicting himself, and to search for his reason in so doing.

S. What is the significance [of all this]:

P. The ordinary commentator wears himself to bring harmony into the literal text, saying that it first refers in brief to the creation of both man and woman, then extensively telling how the woman was made from the side of the man. This, however, is not really satisfactory, because from the first he infers a contradiction in the general account: for it does not say that God first created Adam and Eve, but Adam only, both male and female; and the final text also confirms this in saying that God called their name Adam, in the day that they were created. Moreover, no mention is made of Eve in this account of the creation of the whole man, except in the withdrawal of the rib from the side of Adam; hence the problem of the contradiction remains unsolved.

S. What, therefore, do you think is the meaning of these contradictions in the text:

P. This: that Adam, that is the first man, whom God created on the sixth day of the Creation, being a human individual, combined in himself male and female without division; and therefore the text says that God created Adam in His own likeness, 'male and female created He them'. And at one time it speaks of Adam in the singular as a man, at another in the plural—male and female created He them—to denote that, being one individual, he contained in himself both male and female. Wherefore the ancient Hebrew commentators in their Chaldean commentary here say, 'Adam was created of two persons, the one part male the other female'. Moreover, the last text, which says that God created Adam male and female and called their name Adam, they interpret as meaning that Adam alone contained both sexes, and that there was first an individual called Adam, because the woman was never called Eve until she was separated from the male, Adam. And this was the source of that ancient androgynie of Plato and the Greeks who was half man and half woman. Then we come to the saying of God: 'it is not good that man should be alone. I will make an help meet for him'. And this means that it did not seem good that Adam, male and female, should be contained in one single body, joined at the shoulders, with the faces turned in opposite directions; but it was better that the woman should be divided from him, and that they should come face to face, that she might be a mate for him. And God made trial of man by bringing all the beasts of the field and the birds before him to see if he would be content with any of the female species as his mate. And Adam named each of the animals after its own kind, but none was found meet to be his trusted companion. Therefore God caused a sleep to fall upon him, and took one of his sides, the word in Hebrew being equivalent to rib, but here and elsewhere it stands for side, that is, the side or feminine person which was behind Adam's shoulders. And he separated it from
Adam, and filled up the place of the division with flesh. And of this side he made the woman, separate from man, who was called Eve only when she was divided from him and not before, when she was but a side and part of Adam. When God had made her He presented her to Adam, awakened from sleep, who thereupon said: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.' Which means to say that man and woman, being two divided halves of a single individual, come together again as one body and individual in the marriage and union of the flesh. This is the source of Plato's division of the androgynne into two separate halves, male and female, and of the birth of love, which is the inclination remaining in each of the two halves to be made whole and reunited with the rest of the body. You will, however, find this difference between the two versions: Moses holds the division to be for the better, because he gives us the saying, 'it is not good that man should be alone; let us make an help meet for him'. And after the division he tells of the first sin of Adam and Eve through eating of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil for which they each received a distinct punishment. But Plato holds that man first sinned when joined together as male and female, and his punishment was this division into two halves, as you have already heard.

S. It is indeed pleasing to learn that Plato drank of the waters of the sacred fountain. But whence comes this difference, and why does he hold the division of man to be caused by and subsequent to his fall, contrary to the narrative in Holy Writ which makes the scission to be good and helpful to man and prior to his fall?

P. If you consider well, the difference will not be so great as it would appear: for Plato's intention is rather to uphold the Hebrew narrative than to refute it.

S. How can that be?

P. Sin is truly that which causes division in man and cuts his nature in twain, just as righteousness makes a man to be single and preserves the unity of his nature. Again, we can truly say that division in man produces sin, for in so far as he is single, he has no inclination to do evil nor to impair his union. Therefore since sin and division in man are almost one and the same thing, or at least two inseparable things, the one always implying the other, sin may be said to spring from division—according to the version of the Scriptures—and division from sin—according to Plato.

S. I wish that you would explain the reason of this similarity to me more clearly.

P. I will tell you first the meaning of the Hebrew narrative and then that of the Platonic myth. When man was first created as male and female in one person, as I have told you, there was no possibility of sin, because the serpent was unable to deceive the woman when she was joined to man, as he did when she was separated from him, and his cunning and wisdom did not avail to deceive both united as one. But when they were cut in twain by the hand of God for their own good that they might come together in the act of generation to perpetuate their race (the primary intent of the Creator), there followed the possibility of sin, because the serpent was able to deceive the woman separated from man, [and to tempt her] to eat of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the woman also made the man to eat with her, and so the punishment for the sin fell upon them both. Therefore we read first of the creation of the earthly paradise, and of the twofold Adam,
uniting both male and female, set to dress and to keep it, and warned that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then the narrative straightforwardly continues with the division of Adam into male and female, followed by the immediate deception of the serpent and the fall of Adam and Eve and their punishment. Thus in the Hebrew narrative the division had to precede the sin; but although the Platonic myth is taken from the Hebrew and one with it, it is cast in a different mould, and the sin occurs in the dual man in that he desires to make war against the gods. As a punishment, therefore, of his arrogance, he was split sunder into male and female, and his parts of generation were so turned that he should not perish. All this you have heard, Sophia, and if you knew the allegorical meaning of both these stories you would see that although their form is different their meaning is the same.

S. Not only does the Platonic myth show that it was designed with some wise intent, but the Hebrew also, of the original union and subsequent division of man, proves that something more is implied of the nature of man than would appear on the surface. For I do not believe that man and woman were at any time other than divided into two bodies as they are at present. I pray you, Philo, tell me the meaning of the one and the other.

P. The first purpose of the Hebrew narrative is to show that when man was created in a state of beatitude and placed in the earthly paradise he was male and female; because the human species is preserved not in one individual but in two, that is male and female, and both together make an individual man embodying the whole human species and essence. Nevertheless these two individuals and parts of man in their blessed state were linked at the shoulders with their faces turned from one another so that their intercourse was not conducive to union in the act of generation, nor were their faces turned towards one another as is usual for this end. In truth, it was because they were far removed from any such inclination that they were said to be united with their faces turned in opposite directions; to denote union not of the flesh, but of human essence and intellectual inclination, that is, they were united in blessed contemplation of the Divinity, not in sexual intercourse and carnal delights, but in order that they might be of greater assistance to one another. The woman, deceived by the serpent, brought about the sin of herself and of her husband, and they ate of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is carnal pleasure, seemingly good at the outset but leading in reality to evil, for it diverts man from the path of eternal life and dooms him to mortality. Therefore the text says that when they had sinned they became aware of their nakedness and ran to cover their privy members with leaves, for they were ashamed. For these diverted them from their spiritual inclination in which they formerly delighted. As a punishment for their sin they were cast forth from the heavenly paradise in which was all their spiritual delight, and were set to till the earth by the sweat of their brow because all corporeal pleasure is accompanied by trouble. And they were charged with the procreation of their kind as a remedy for their mortality. Hence the generations of Adam and Eve were not written until they were cast forth from the Garden of Eden, when Adam straightforwardly knew his wife and she conceived and bore Cain his son, etc. This, therefore, is the first purpose of Moses in recounting the story of the union and division of man and his sin and punishment: to show that God had made him potentially divisible so that his two parts being turned face to face might the more easily come together in the union of the flesh, their inclination being diverted from spiritual to corporeal things.
S. I should be content with this allegory did it not seem strange to me that God should not have made man and woman for the purpose of procreation, and that sin should be the cause of generation, which is essential for the perpetual preservation of the human race.

P. God made man and woman such that they could raise up children in their own image; but the true end of man is not generation, but happiness in the contemplation of the Divinity and in the Paradise of God. In this contemplation he remained immortal and had no need of generation, because in him the human essence and species was perpetually preserved, just as immortals have no need to beget children of their own species. Behold the angels, planets, stars and heavens, they do not give birth to children in their own likeness. And generation, as Aristotle says, was a remedy for mortality. Therefore man, as long as immortal, did not procreate his kind; but when through sin he was made mortal, he came to his own aid by raising up his like, which power God had bestowed potentially upon him, so that by one means or another the human race should not perish.

S. This first allegorical meaning pleases me not a little, and my desire for the second has waxed stronger in the hearing. I pray you, therefore, make no delay.

P. The first man, and indeed every other in the whole wide world, is made, as Holy Writ testifies, in the image and likeness of God, both male and female at once.

S. How every man? Every male or every female?

P. Every male and every female.

S. How can the female alone be at once both male and female?

P. Every man or woman has a masculine part which is perfect and active, to wit the intellect, and a feminine part which is imperfect and passive, to wit the body and matter. And thus the divine image is impressed upon matter, since the form which is masculine is the intellect, and the informed which is feminine is the body. In the beginning, therefore, these two parts, masculine and feminine, were joined in absolute union in the perfect man whom God had made, so that the sentient and feminine body was the obedient servant of the masculine intellect and reason. There was then no division in man, and his whole life was intellectual. And he was placed in the earthly paradise in which were all manner of beautiful trees and fragrant [shrubs], and the tree of life, the most excellent among them; in the same way in the intellect which is enlightened, such as that of Adam and of every other man equally perfect, there is knowledge of every eternal thing, and above all, pure and vital knowledge of the Divinity. Now God commanded Adam to eat of every tree in the garden, even of the tree of life, which would give him eternal life; so the intellect, through the knowledge of eternal things and more especially of the Divinity, becomes immortal and eternal and attains to its true happiness. But he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because he would thereby become mortal; in other words, he should not let his intellect be diverted by sensual activities and the things of the body, such as sensual pleasure and the pursuit of riches, for these are good in appearance and bad in reality. The tree is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because the knowledge of these things concerns neither the true nor the false, which relate to eternal things of the intellect, but only the good and the bad, as they affect the appetite of man. For to say that the sun is bigger than the earth can be called neither good nor bad, but true or false; to acquire riches, on the other hand, you would call neither