The comic playwright Aristophanes has recovered from his hiccups (thanks to the “sneeze treatment”).

Aristophanes tells Erixymachus he’s going to take a different approach. He says, “I think people have entirely missed the power of Love, because, if they had grasped it, they’d have built the greatest temples and altars to him and made the greatest sacrifices.”... For he loves the human race more than any other god, he stands by us in our troubles, and he cures those ills we humans are most happy to have mended.”

Aristophanes talks about human nature and how it has changed.

**What are the three kinds of humans that used to exist?**
**What did they look like?**
**Where did they come from?**

These early humans, like the Giants Homer tells us about, were very strong and decided to conquer the gods. The gods had wiped out the Giants, but couldn’t bring themselves to do the same with humans because humans worshipped them, and the gods liked all of that positive attention.

**How does Zeus decide to punish humans?**
**What are the two ways gods will benefit from this punishment?**
**And if the humans try something like that again, what will happen?**

Aristophanes’ idea goes nicely with the idea of “soul mates.” Each half looks for and tries to unite with the other half of their original self. When the halves of the former whole would find each other, they’d cling to one another and starve to death and waste away, wanting nothing but to be whole again.

**What did Zeus do to help these poor schmucks out?**

So, Aristophanes clarifies, androgynous circle-people split into one man and one women, women circle-people split into two women and man circle-people split into two men. Each prefers to have the kind lover that corresponds to their original form.

**Does Aristophanes indicate that everyone approves of pederasty?**
What is Hephaestus’ offer? Would you take it? Do you yearn for your missing half?

After Aristophanes’ speech, Erixymachus praises it and says he’s glad he’s not in the position of Agathon or Socrates, for they are the only two left to speak. He, unlike Agathon and Socrates, is not a master of love, so he wouldn’t have anything left to say.

Socrates claims that he’s “at [his] wit’s end” thinking about having to go “after Agathon’s spoken so well.” Agathon gets flustered and claims that Socrates is putting too much pressure on him to perform well, building up the crowd like that. Socrates cries “bullshit” – he saw Agathon stand up and present his play to an enormous audience without being flustered. Agathon says the crowd is senseless, but he has higher regard for this intelligent audience he’s with now. Socrates asks him if it is true that he “wouldn’t be ashamed to do something ugly in front of ordinary people.” (Does this question remind you of anything from earlier in the dialogue?) Phaedrus then interrupts and asks Agathon to stop answering Socrates’ questions, because Socrates won’t stop on his own (especially if he’s asking questions of a handsome man like Agathon).

So Agathon speaks. He says that everybody else has only talked about the good that comes to human from the god, but that he will first praise Love for what he is, and second praise him for for his gifts.

Phaedrus had said Love was the most ancient of the gods. What does Agathon say to contradict what Phaedrus said? With whom does Agathon say Love lives?

As a young god, Love, like Michief’s (feet, anyway) is delicate.

What does Love walk on? What kind of shape does he have?

Agathon explains Love’s justice, moderation and bravery and then comes to the god’s wisdom (synonymous with skill) which the god passes on to anyone he touches, turning them inot poets. Love makes all things a person does better. Love is love of beauty.

Agathon’s conclusion, much like the rest of his speech, is flowery and poetic.

For next time, Socrates quesitons Agathon and Diotima questions Socrates (through section 212c).