

Xenophon, *Works on Socrates*

Symposium

V. Callias now said, "Critobulus, are you going to refuse to enter the lists in the beauty contest with Socrates?"

"Undoubtedly!" said Socrates; "for probably he notices that the procurer stands high in the favour of the judges."

[2] "But yet in spite of that," retorted Critobulus, "I do not shun the contest. So make your plea, if you can produce any profound reason, and prove that you are more handsome than I. Only," he added, "let some one bring the light close to him."

"The first step, then, in my suit," said Socrates, "is to summon you to the preliminary hearing; be so kind as to answer my questions."

"And you proceed to put them."

[3] "Do you hold, then, that beauty is to be found only in man, or is it also in other objects?"

Crit. "In faith, my opinion is that beauty is to be found quite as well in a horse or an ox or in any number of inanimate things. I know, at any rate, that a shield may be beautiful, or a sword, or a spear."

[4] Soc. "How can it be that all these things are beautiful when they are entirely dissimilar?"

"Why, they are beautiful and fine,"¹ answered Critobulus, "if they are well made for the respective functions for which we obtain them, or if they are naturally well constituted to serve our needs."

[5] Soc. "Do you know the reason why we need eyes?"

Crit. "Obviously to see with."

"In that case, it would appear without further ado that my eyes are finer ones than yours."

"How so?"

"Because, while yours see only straight ahead, mine, by bulging out as they do, see also to the sides."

Crit. "Do you mean to say that a crab is better equipped visually than any other creature?"

Soc. "Absolutely; for its eyes are also better set to insure strength."

[6] Crit. "Well, let that pass; but whose nose is finer, yours or mine?"

Soc. "Mine, I consider, granting that Providence made us noses to smell with. For your nostrils look down toward the ground, but mine are wide open and turned outward so that I can catch scents from all about."

"But how do you make a snub nose handsomer than a straight one?"

Soc. "For the reason that it does not put a barricade between the eyes but allows them unobstructed vision of whatever they desire to see; whereas a high nose, as if in despite, has walled the eyes off one from the other."

[7] "As for the mouth," said Critobulus, "I concede that point. For if it is created for the purpose of biting off food, you could bite off a far bigger mouthful than I could. And don't you think that your kiss is also the more tender because you have thick lips?"