What beauty is Socrates seeking by chasing after handsome boys?

1. Plato, Charmides, 155c-e

And when, on Critias telling him that it was I who knew the cure, he gave me such a look with his eyes as passes description, and was just about to plunge into a question, and when all the people in the wrestling-school surged round about us on every side—then, ah then, my noble friend, I saw inside his cloak and caught fire, and could possess myself no longer; and I thought none was so wise in love-matters as Cydias,1 who in speaking of a beautiful boy recommends someone to “beware of coming as a fawn before the lion, and being seized as his portion of flesh” […]

2. Plato, Symposium, 216 d-e

[…] I tell you, all the beauty a man may have is nothing to him; he despises it more than any of you can believe […]

[…] ἵστε ὅτι οὐτε εἰ τις καλὸς ἔστι μέλει αὐτῷ οὐδὲν, ἀλλὰ καταφρονεῖ τοσοῦτον ὅσον οὐδ᾽ ἂν εἰς οἰηθεὶν […]

3. Plato, Symposium, 206b

“Well, I will tell you,” said she; ‘it is begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both the body and the soul.’

ἀλλὰ ἐγὼ σοι, ἔφη, ἔρῳ. ἔστι γὰρ τούτο τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχήν.

4. Plato, Symposium, 206c

‘All men are pregnant, Socrates, both in body and in soul: on reaching a certain age our nature yearns to beget’.

κυοῦσιν γὰρ, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, πάντες ἀνήρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἐν τινὶ ἡλικία γένονται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἢ φύσις.
But he who is newly initiated, who beheld many of those realities, when he sees a godlike face or form which is a good image of beauty, shudders at first, and something of the old awe comes over him, then, as he gazes, he reveres the beautiful one as a god, and if he did not fear to be thought stark mad, he would offer sacrifice to his beloved as to an idol or a god. And as he looks upon him, a reaction from his shuddering comes over him, with sweat and unwonted heat; for as the effluence of beauty enters him through the eyes, he is warmed; the effluence moistens the germ of the feathers, and as he grows warm, the parts from which the feathers grow, which were before hard and choked, and prevented the feathers from sprouting, become so moistened; for as he grows warm, the parts from which the feathers grow, which were before hard and choked, and prevented the feathers from sprouting, become so moistened. Now in this process the whole soul throbs and palpitates, and as in those who are cutting teeth there is an irritation and discomfort in the gums, when the teeth begin to grow, just so the soul suffers when the growth of the feathers begins; it is feverish and is uncomfortable and itches when they begin to grow. Then when it gazes upon the beauty of the boy and receives the beauty enters him through the eyes, he is warmed; the effluence moistens the germ of the feathers, and as he grows warm, the parts from which the feathers grow, which were before hard and choked, and prevented the feathers from sprouting, become so moistened; for as he grows warm, the parts from which the feathers grow, which were before hard and choked, and prevented the feathers from sprouting, become so moistened. Now in this process the whole soul throbs and palpitates, and as in those who are cutting teeth there is an irritation and discomfort in the gums, when the teeth begin to grow, just so the soul suffers when the growth of the feathers begins; it is feverish and is uncomfortable and itches when they begin to grow. Then when it gazes upon the beauty of the boy and receives the particles which flow thence to it (for which reason they are called yearning), it is moistened and warmed, ceases from its pain and is filled with joy [...]