



Agathon

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Life

Although none of Agathon's (AG-uh-thahn) works are extant, he is described by [Plato](#) and [Aristophanes](#) as a tragic playwright. Plato's *Symposion* (388-368 b.c.e.; *Symposium*, 1701) depicts a celebration that takes place in Athens after the victory of one of Agathon's plays in 416 b.c.e. Plato portrays Agathon as a gentleman, well versed in the duties of hospitality. In this dialogue, Agathon joins his guests in eulogizing the god Eros. In a speech that [Socrates](#) compares to those of the Sophist Gorgias, Agathon initially describes Eros as both the most beautiful and the most virtuous among gods. However, like many of Socrates' interlocutors, after speaking with Socrates, Agathon admits to knowing nothing definite about the topic. In *De poetica* (c. 335-323 b.c.e.; *Poetics*, 1705), Aristotle says that Agathon's tragedies are among the first to be composed of fictitious characters and events. He also attributes to Agathon the inclusion of choral songs that are not connected to the plots of his plays. In Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai* (411 b.c.e.; *Thesmophoriazusae*, 1837), Agathon is comedically depicted as delicate and effeminate. However, in Aristophanes' *Batrachoi* (405 b.c.e.; *The Frogs*, 1780), Dionysus describes him as a decent poet who, in death, is lamented by his friends.

Influence

Because none of his works survives, it is difficult to attribute to Agathon any lasting influence. However, Aristotle's descriptions of his works suggest that he had an impact on the poetry of ancient Greece.

Additional Resources

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by S. H. Butcher. New York: Hill & Wang, 1989.

Plato. "Symposium." In *The Dialogues of Plato*. New York: Bantam Classics, 1986.

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