

does not possess or know himself. And who will deny that it is by the wisdom of Love that all living things are begotten and born? Do we not know that in the practice of a craft any man who has this god for a teacher will turn out to be brilliant and famous, while the man untouched by Love will remain obscure? Similarly it was under the guidance of love and desire<sup>128</sup> that Apollo discovered archery and medicine and divination, so that he too can be called a pupil of Love. So also the arts<sup>129</sup> of the Muses, the metal-work of Hephaestus, the weaving of Athena and Zeus's governance of gods and men were all learnt by those gods under the tutelage of Love. Thus the particular interests of the gods were established only when Love had been born among them, love of beauty obviously, since there is no love of ugliness. Before that time, as I said at the start, many terrible deeds were done among the gods, so the story goes, under the rule of Necessity. But ever since this god was born, from the love of the beautiful every good thing for gods and men has come into existence.

'So it is my belief, Phaedrus, that Love is not only supreme in beauty and goodness himself but is also the source of beauty and goodness in all other things. Indeed, I feel I must speak about him in verse and say that it is he who creates

Peace among humankind, windless calm on the open sea,  
Rest for the winds and sleep in sorrow.

'It is Love who takes from us our sense of estrangement and fills us with a sense of kinship; who causes us to associate with one another as on this occasion, and at festivals, dances and sacrifices is the guiding spirit. He imparts gentleness, he banishes harshness; he is lavish with goodwill, sparing of ill-will; he is gracious and kindly; viewed with admiration by the wise and with wonder by the gods; coveted by those with no share of him, precious to those whose share is large; the father of luxury, delicacy, glamour, delight, desire and longing. He looks after good and cares nothing for bad; in toil, in fear, in longing, in discourse, he is steersman, defender, comrade and saviour without compare, who confers order<sup>130</sup> upon gods and humans alike, the finest and best guide, whom every man should follow, singing beautiful hymns in his honour, taking part in the song he sings to enchant the minds of all gods and humans alike.

<sup>128</sup> *epithumia*.    <sup>129</sup> *mousike*.    <sup>130</sup> *kosmos*.

'This, then, Phaedrus, is my speech, to be offered up to the god. I have made it playful in part but moderately serious too, to the best of my ability'.

198a Aristodemus said that when Agathon finished speaking all the guests burst into applause, and everyone thought that the young man had spoken in a manner worthy of the god and of himself. Socrates turned to Eryximachus.

'Well, son of Acumenus, do you still think that my earlier fears were unfounded? Was I not a true prophet when I said just now that Agathon was going to deliver a brilliant speech and that I should be left with nothing to say?'<sup>131</sup>

'As far as Agathon's speech is concerned', replied Eryximachus, 'I accept that you spoke like a true prophet, but as for your having nothing to say, I think not'.

198b 'My dear man', exclaimed Socrates, 'how can I or anyone else not be left feeling that he has nothing to say, when he has to follow a discourse of such beauty and variety! The earlier parts were wonderful of course, but it was the final passage which must have stunned every listener with the beauty of its language. As I reflected that I would not be able to give a speech myself anywhere near as fine, I almost turned tail with shame – or would have done so if I could have escaped. The speech reminded  
198c me of Gorgias, so much so that I had the Gorgon experience as in Homer:<sup>132</sup> I was afraid Agathon would conclude his speech by challenging mine with the eloquence of Gorgias, that brilliant orator, and – like the Gorgon – would turn me into stone, unable to utter a word.  
198d It was then I realised what a fool I had been in agreeing with you to take my turn and deliver a eulogy of Love, and in saying I was an expert on the subject of love, despite, as it turned out, knowing nothing about how to compose a eulogy of anything. For in my naivety I thought I had only to speak the truth about the subject of the eulogy. This should be the foundation, I thought, and on the basis of the facts one selected the finest examples and arranged them to best effect. Assuming, then, that I knew the true way to eulogise, I even felt confident that I was going to

<sup>131</sup> See *aporein* in glossary.

<sup>132</sup> The reference is to *Odyssey* 11.634–5, where Odysseus retreats at the threat of the Gorgon's head. This is a punning joke based on the similarity of name between the mythological female monsters the Gorgons and the contemporary Sicilian Greek orator Gorgias, Agathon's stylistic exemplar. The head of the Gorgon Medusa turned to stone anyone who looked at it.