

Plato, *Symposium* 203a-203e
[text discussed by Iain Ross]

ὄτε γὰρ ἐγένετο ἡ Ἀφροδίτη, ἡσιῶντο οἱ θεοὶ οἷ τε ἄλλοι καὶ ὁ τῆς Μήτιδος υἱὸς Πόρος. ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐδείπνησαν, προσαιτήσουσα οἶον δὴ εὐωχίας οὔσης ἀφίκετο ἡ Πενία, καὶ ἦν περὶ τὰς θύρας. ὁ οὔν Πόρος μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος— οἶνος γὰρ οὐπω ἦν—εἰς τὸν τοῦ Διὸς κῆπον εἰσελθὼν βεβαρημένος ἠΐδεν. ἡ οὔν Πενία ἐπιβουλεύουσα διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἀπορίαν παιδίον ποιήσασθαι ἐκ τοῦ Πόρου, κατακλίνεται τε παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκύησε τὸν ἔρωτα. διὸ δὴ καὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἀκόλουθος καὶ θεράπων γέγονεν ὁ Ἔρως, γεννηθεὶς ἐν τοῖς ἐκείνης γενεθλίοις, καὶ ἅμα φύσει ἐραστῆς ὦν περὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καλῆς οὔσης. ἅτε οὔν Πόρου καὶ Πενίας υἱὸς ὦν ὁ Ἔρως ἐν τοιαύτῃ τύχῃ καθέστηκεν. πρῶτον μὲν πένης ἀεὶ ἐστὶ, καὶ πολλοῦ δεῖ ἀπαλός τε καὶ καλός, οἶον οἱ πολλοὶ οἶονται, ἀλλὰ σκληρὸς καὶ ἀνυπόδητος καὶ ἄοικος, χαμαιπετής ἀεὶ ὦν καὶ ἄστρωτος, ἐπὶ θύραις καὶ ἐν ὁδοῖς ὑπαίθριος κοιμώμενος, τὴν τῆς μητρὸς φύσιν ἔχων, ἀεὶ ἐνδεία σύνοικος. κατὰ δὲ αὐτὸν τὸν πατέρα ἐπίβουλος ἐστὶ τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, ἀνδρείος ὦν καὶ ἴτης καὶ σύντονος, θηρευτῆς δεινός, ἀεὶ τινας πλέκων μηχανάς, καὶ φρονήσεως ἐπιθυμητῆς καὶ πόριμος, φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου, δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεὺς καὶ σοφιστής· καὶ οὔτε ὡς ἀθάνατος πέφυκεν οὔτε ὡς θνητός, ἀλλὰ τοτὲ μὲν τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας θάλλει τε καὶ ζῆ, ὅταν εὐπορήσῃ, τοτὲ δὲ ἀποθνήσκῃ, πάλιν δὲ ἀναβιώσκειται διὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς φύσιν, τὸ δὲ ποριζόμενον ἀεὶ ὑπεκρεῖ, ὥστε οὔτε ἀπορεῖ Ἔρως ποτὲ οὔτε πλουτεῖ, σοφίας τε αὖ καὶ ἀμαθίας ἐν μέσῳ ἐστίν.

For when Aphrodite was born, the gods had a feast, and among them was the son of Metis, Plenty. And when they had dined, Poverty arrived to beg, since there was a feast, and she was [hanging] around the doors. And so Plenty, drunk on nectar – for wine did not yet exist – came into the garden of Zeus and fell into a heavy sleep. And so Poverty, plotting because of her lack of plenty to have a child by Plenty, lay down beside him and conceived Eros. Because of this, Eros has become both a follower and servant of Aphrodite, having been conceived on her birthday, and likewise he is by nature a lover of beauty, since Aphrodite too is beautiful. And so, because he is the son of Plenty and Poverty, Eros is in the following condition. First, he is always poor and far from being soft and beautiful, as most people think, he is hard and rough and shoeless and homeless, always sleeping on the ground and blanketless, lying down in doorways and streets in the open air, since he has his mother's nature, always living with want. But by contrast, according to his father['s nature] he is a plotter after the beautiful and the good, and is brave and forward and eager, a clever hunter, always weaving some plan, and a striver for knowledge, and inventive, loving wisdom throughout his whole life, a clever wizard and a druggist and a sophist. And by nature he is neither immortal nor mortal, but at one time on the same day he will thrive and live, whenever he prospers, and at another time he dies, and comes back to life again because of his father's nature, and what he gains is always flowing out from under him, so that Eros is never either without resource or rich, but is in a state between wisdom and ignorance.

[translation by Iain Ross]