



Immortality in Diotima of Mantinea (ca. 440 B.C.E.)

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Immortality, the insatiable thirst for existence without end, is the underlying motivation that drives both Diotima's philosophy of love and her philosophy of beauty, as shared with her student Socrates: "if [...] love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good: Wherefore love is of immortality." Paralleling the desire for genetic immortality by means of procreation, Diotima expounds on a more elevated and personal form of immortality that is possible for the soul through creativity in the noumenal realm. Love, the offspring of Plenty and Poverty, is said to serve as a bridge between the divine and the mortal realms. By harnessing the erotic desire for physical beauty, the soul motivated by rational desire is able to gradually transcend to the realm of pure Beauty, unsullied by phenomenal degradations. The final step advances one to the eternal perfection of Goodness (the all-illuminating light of the sun that shines on the lesser Forms outside of Plato's cave). *Eros* mutates into *logos* guided by the philosopher's "eye of the mind" that "will bring forth true creations of virtue and wisdom, and be the friend of God and heir of immortality."

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