

How can the Concept of Immortality
be Understood in Plato's
Symposium?

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I, Chun-Yu Lai, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

My thesis explores the concept of immortality in Plato's *Symposium*. Diotima claims that 'Love must desire immortality' (207A) and that all lovers are 'in love with immortality' (208E). I endeavour to interpret these claims and how different types of lovers achieve a human version of immortality in the *Symposium*. I begin my thesis with presenting several scholars' interpretations of immortality in the *Symposium* and arguing that their interpretations are not entirely persuasive. Then I present Sheffield's interpretation of Diotima's claims and how the philosophical lover achieves immortality. I find her interpretation persuasive and base my interpretation on hers, particularly her proposed notion of psychic pregnancy and her interpretation of the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover as the perfection of soul. Inspired by Rowe's and Lear's interpretations, I argue that according to Diotima in the *Symposium*, the human desire for immortality is a desire to transcend limitations of mortality. And human agents take transcending mortality as a part of *eudaimonia*. That is, it is believed by agents that to attain *eudaimonia*, one has to transcend mortality in some way. Thus, the human desire for immortality is not separate from the *eros* for *eudaimonia*. In the later part of my thesis I present my interpretation of how different types of agent achieve immortality. I argue that the non-philosophical lovers transcend mortality via possessing certain goods which are able to last after their death. They take these goods to be parts of themselves, and thus the continual existence of these goods after their death is deemed as a transcendence over mortality. Perceiving mortality as non-divine, the philosophical lover transcends mortality via possessing divine things such as wisdom and virtues based on wisdom. That is, he

perfects his soul through realising his potentialities for knowledge of Beauty and virtues based on this knowledge.

Impact Statement

I anticipate that my research into the concept of immortality in Plato's *Symposium* will be primarily aimed at having an impact inside academia. Plato's *Symposium* is one of the two major works for scholars to understand his theory of *eros*. In the *Symposium*, it is described that human agents attempt to attain *eudaimonia* under the work of *eros*. An interesting thing is that a kind of immortality is introduced into Diotima's speech concerning *eros* and beauty. Hence, understanding the concept of immortality in the *Symposium* is beneficial to understanding Plato's view of *eros* and *eudaimonia* in the *Symposium*. I anticipate a benefit my research will potentially bring about is that it will generate discussion on the relationship between immortality and *eudaimonia* in Plato's ethical theory, since I argue that Diotima proposes a view that transcending the limitations of mortality is taken by human agents to be a constituent of *eudaimonia*. In addition, I argue that there are two types of immortality achieved by human agents, according to Plato in the *Symposium*. My research will therefore be of interest for philosophers who are interested in immortality in ancient philosophy.

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Introduction

In Plato's *Symposium*, it is claimed that 'Love must desire immortality' (207A). It is curious as to what role 'immortality' plays in Plato's theory of *eros*. What is the relationship between immortality, *eros*, and *eudaimonia*? Should immortality be understood literally or in any other sense in the *Symposium*? My thesis aims to answer these questions. I will argue that in the *Symposium*, neither should immortality be understood literally, nor should it be understood in the temporal sense only. Rather, it should be understood as a human version of immortality, which is a state that transcends mortality in some way and is achievable in action. In Plato's *Symposium*, the achievement of this human version of immortality is necessary for attaining *eudaimonia* but is not sufficient. I will also argue that the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers achieve two different types of immortality. In the first chapter, I will present four scholars' (Kraut, Hooper, Obdrzalek, Lear) interpretations of immortality in the *Symposium*, followed by my criticisms of and responses to their interpretations. In the second chapter, I will explain Sheffield's interpretations of Diotima's claims concerning immortality in the *Symposium* and her interpretation of how the philosophical lover becomes immortal, followed by my objection to an aspect of her interpretation. In the third chapter, I will present my understanding of what 'the human desire for immortality' is in Diotima's claim in the *Symposium*, followed by my interpretations of how the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers achieve a human version of immortality respectively.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, I will present four scholars' (Kraut, Hooper, Obdrzalek, Lear) interpretations of the concept of immortality in the *Symposium*, followed by my responses to their interpretations. I argue that, except for Lear's suggestion about how the fully initiated lover becomes immortal, their interpretations are not entirely persuasive.

1.1 Kraut on Immortality

In the first section, I will explain Kraut's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* and his suggestion about how the philosophical lover responds to his desire for immortality. I will then argue that Kraut's suggestion of creating virtue in others is not how the philosophical lover becomes immortal, according to Plato in the *Symposium*. Kraut does not directly elaborate on the concept of immortality in the *Symposium*. But he does suggest an interpretation of how the philosophical lover responds to his desire to possess the good things forever, since *eros* is claimed by Diotima as the desire to possess the good forever (*Sym.* 206A, 207A).

His interpretation implies that the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover consists of creating virtue in others who are loved by and will survive the philosophical lover. This sort of immortality is achieved in the sense that the philosophical lover becomes causally responsible for the continual existence of virtues in future generations. This interpretation follows from Kraut's understanding of the philosophical lover's desire to possess the good things forever as the desire to be virtuous forever. This understanding is based on how he interprets the following passage: 'Begetting and nurturing true virtue, he can become a friend to god, and if immortality belongs to any man, it belongs to him' (*Sym.* 212A). Kraut takes virtues

to be the good things that the philosophical lover would like to possess forever. But he concedes that being virtuous literally forever is unachievable. However, the desire for being virtuous forever can be satisfied by creating virtue in others for future generations, according to Kraut.¹

Kraut uses an analogy to explain why creating virtue in others can satisfy the desire for being virtuous forever. The analogy is an example of one's desire to paint something red. One desires to paint something red but red is unavailable. Thus, one paints it orange. Painting it orange is the second best alternative one could have to satisfy the original desire to paint it red, since painting it orange is a goal similar to the original goal. Kraut suggests that we can interpret the philosophical lover's desire to possess the good things forever in the same way. That is, according to Kraut, if the desire to paint something red cannot be satisfied, it will give rise to the desire to paint it orange (or another available similar colour), since this is a similar goal that can be achieved in action. Likewise, if the desire to be virtuous forever cannot be satisfied, it will give rise to the desire to create virtue in others, which is the second best option that is achievable in action. Kraut writes that 'In the same way, the love of one person, if it cannot be expressed, may give rise to the love of another person who is regarded as akin to the first.'² I take this to mean that causing others to be virtuous in the future is a goal similar to the goal of me being virtuous forever. If the desire of me being virtuous forever cannot be fulfilled, then what will arise is my desire for another person being virtuous in the future. Kraut takes it that me being causally responsible for someone or other being virtuous at every future time is similar to me being virtuous forever. He writes that if

¹ Kraut (1973, 339-341)

² (340)

I can create virtue in someone who will survive me and who will in turn create virtue in someone who survives him. If each member of this chain inculcates virtue in another who survives him, then there will always be some bit of virtue in the world for which I am a cause, and this is a state of affairs similar to the state of my being virtuous eternally.³

However, the apparent difference between these two goals lies in the fact that it is people other than me who become virtuous in the future. I will stop being virtuous once I die. How are these two goals similar, given that the subjects of being virtuous are quite different? In explanation, Kraut contends that although this seems odd at first sight, there is actually no significant difference between me being virtuous in the future and another person being virtuous in the future. This is because even present me and future me are different in beliefs and desires. Kraut draws upon Diotima's point that an individual is continually changing in both physical characteristics and 'in the "habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains and fears" of his soul' (207D-E). He contends that the desires of my future self are not the exact same desires of my present self, 'even if their objects are the same.' Thus, 'to care about my future self is already to care about things other than the habits, beliefs, and desires I now have, for these habits, beliefs, and desires will not exist far into the future.' It follows from these that there is no great difference between creating virtue in my future self and creating virtue in another person's future self, since the habits, beliefs, and desires of my future self are different from the ones I have now. Kraut thinks what the

³ (340)

philosophical lover does is to make sure that when his ‘present virtuous desires and beliefs no longer exist, they will be replaced by others that are also virtuous.’⁴

Furthermore, Kraut suggests in a footnote that though Plato does not have Diotima explicitly say the philosophical lover would create virtue in others after seeing the Form of Beauty, it is reasonable to suppose that the philosophical lover will:

Plato does not explicitly say in this passage that the philosopher who has seen the Form of Beauty creates virtue in another. But it is reasonable to understand him in this way, since at an earlier stage in his ascent to that Form the philosophical lover creates “such words ... as will make the youths better” (210C1-3). Since his love is expressed by creating virtue in others to begin with, why should it change, once he sees the Form of Beauty, so that he then creates virtue only in himself? Furthermore, Plato explicitly says in the *Phaedrus* (276E4-277A4) that the philosopher is “as happy as a man can be” because he creates virtue in others.⁵

Apart from the *Symposium*, Kraut also draws upon the *Phaedrus* in support for his suggestion that the philosophical lover would create virtue in others. Kraut writes that

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato explicitly connects attaining immortality and having a permanent effect when he says that the dialectician who morally educates youths engenders words which ‘are not fruitless but have a seed from which other words spring up in other characters. They are forever able to grant it immortality’ (276E-277A).⁶

⁴ (341)

⁵ (339, fn. 7)

⁶ (341)

Kraut seems to interpret this passage as suggesting that the philosophical lover (the dialectician) would create virtue in others through education (passing down his *logoi*), and the philosophical lover's *logoi* would bring about immortality for him because it will generate *logoi* about virtue in other persons. There will be more *logoi* about virtue in future generations and this is the immortality attained by the philosophical lover, namely, having a permanent effect on future generations by creating virtue in others.

Kraut supplements the above considerations with a point made in a later book.⁷ In the *Symposium*, Diotima claims that we are pregnant in both body and soul. And it is likely that there are people who are not pregnant in soul but only in body. Kraut attempts to explore what the good things people who are pregnant in body only would like to possess and how their activities achieve their intended eternal possession of the good. In short, although Kraut thinks it is a possibility that what people pregnant in body love is life itself, and that their activity of reproducing children is conducted for the sake of the eternal possession of life itself, he thinks that Diotima 'must also make room in her theory for the fact that nearly all parents want to transmit their values to their children.' That is, Kraut thinks whatever the parents love, e.g. money, health, or sports, 'they will do what they can to reproduce the love of these goals in their children' because they wish they could have these goods forever. Kraut contends that human beings can 'have health or wealth forever by giving to children a passion for these goals and the resources needed for sustaining them.' He writes that 'There is no reason, in fact, why Diotima should deny that ordinary parents (pregnant in body but not soul) might also love justice and virtue in general and try to possess these goods

⁷ (2008)

eternally by engendering this love in their children.’⁸ As I see it, Kraut suggests that the agents pregnant in body only would pass down their love for whatever they regard as good to their children. If their children develop the love for the same good, and thus strive to possess it, then in a sense the parents achieve their goal of the eternal possession of the good. This good can be health, wealth, or virtue such as justice. This suggestion indicates that on Kraut’s view, it is possible that agents pregnant in body only are virtue lovers as well.⁹

Kraut’s interpretation of the relationship between *eros* and immortality implies that *eros* would prompt us to have an effect on the world as a way to possess a certain good forever. He contends that *eros* leads to ‘an attempt to influence the younger generation in some way, either by bringing children into existence or by educating a young mind.’¹⁰ This is because we cannot literally possess anything forever; thus, we try to keep what we love in continual existence through educating the younger generation. If the good things we love, e.g. wealth or virtues, are possessed by the younger generation, and we are causes of the continual existence of these good things, then it is as though we possess these good things forever. We therefore approximate the eternal possession of the good things. Thus, as it seems to me, Kraut’s understanding is that the desired immortality mentioned in the *Symposium* is achieved by preserving the good things the individual loves through both educating the younger generation to love what the individual loves and creating conditions for them to possess and sustain these good things.

⁸ (2008, 291)

⁹ Kraut did not explicitly claim that people pregnant in body only could also be virtue lovers but his interpretation implies that people pregnant in body only could be virtue lovers as well.

¹⁰ (2008, 300)

I disagree with Kraut on his interpretation that creating virtue in others is the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover in the *Symposium*; for I do not think that, for Plato, creating virtue in others is how the philosophical lover responds to his desire for immortality in the *Symposium*. One reason against Kraut's interpretation is that Diotima does not explicitly claim that the philosophical lover would create virtue in others as a way of responding to his desire for immortality. Kraut is aware of this objection, since he notes that the philosophical lover is claimed to beget beautiful ideas (words) so as to make the youths better (*Sym.* 210C) and contends that there is no reason to think he would stop doing so after seeing the Form of Beauty.¹¹ However, I do not think this is the case. Educating others is not the way to satisfy the philosophical lover's desire for immortality because, if educating others was sufficient to satisfy the desire for immortality, why does the initiate's journey continue after he is claimed to make the youths better (210C)? The initiate continues his climb on the ladder of love, proceeding to appreciate the beauty of laws and knowledge after he is depicted as educating the youths (210C). This suggests that his desire for immortality cannot be fulfilled by educating others alone. Rather than educating others, what is most likely to satisfy his desire for immortality is seeing the Form of Beauty and the following production of true virtue, since it is claimed that the initiate would become immortal after seeing the Form of Beauty and producing true virtue (212B). Kraut might respond by claiming that it is the combination of both seeing the Form of Beauty and creating virtue in others that satisfies the philosophical lover's desire for immortality. But again, if educating others plays the determining role in the initiate's achievement of immortality, then Diotima should not omit this

¹¹ (1973, 339, fn. 7)

point after her description of the initiate's journey culminating at seeing the Form of Beauty.

One of Kraut's suggestions mentioned above is also unpersuasive. Kraut does not think there is a great difference between my future self and another person's future self since one's beliefs and desires are in a state of constant change. Another person's being virtuous in the future is similar to me being virtuous in the future. This suggestion seems to have unwanted implications. Firstly, it seems to dissolve the sense of self since another person's future self is not very different from my future self. If the sense of self is dissolved, then why would anyone care who is the cause of anyone's being virtuous in the future? The philosophical lover can be as happy as possible if there is another philosophical lover who takes up the task of causing others to be virtuous in the future. This can imply that a philosophical lover's desire for immortality, i.e., being virtuous forever as Kraut understands it, can be satisfied by another philosophical lover who can do the same job of causing the youths to be virtuous. Since there is no significant difference between two future selves, why should there be a significant difference between two present selves, i.e., two present philosophical lovers who both desire to be virtuous forever? But it does not seem right that the philosophical lover A would acknowledge that 'I do not need to do anything, and my desire for being virtuous forever can be satisfied by the philosophical lover B if B educates and causes young people to be virtuous in the future.' It seems in the context of the *Symposium* that one's desire has to be satisfied by what one does; it is not to be satisfied by what others do. Furthermore, if Kraut is right that being a cause of people's being virtuous in the future is a state similar to me being virtuous forever, then this can have the implication that my being virtuous now is only an effect of a virtuous person being a cause in the past. I might be nothing but

an effect due to a person's past work since my present virtuous self is similar to his present self. This can imply that the first virtuous person in the world is causally responsible for everyone after him or her being virtuous. I am only a part of this person's state of being virtuous forever. If it is the case that my being virtuous now is only an effect, a part of the state of being virtuous forever of someone before me in the temporal dimension, then there is no real sense of 'me' being virtuous forever even if I cause others to be virtuous in the future. Even if 'I' become a cause of others being virtuous, the 'I' in the present cannot be distinguished out from others' 'I', since this 'I' of myself is similar to someone's self from the past. And this would pose several other questions. For example, if there is no real sense of 'my' being virtuous forever, then how does the desire for 'being virtuous forever' arise, as 'being virtuous forever' implies there is a subject of being virtuous forever. Another question is that if the desire for being virtuous forever presupposes a subject, then how can this desire be fulfilled if the sense of self would be abandoned in realising this desire? In summary, Kraut's suggestion that there is no significant difference between my future self and another's person's future self is implausible for the reasons I have listed above.

1.2 Hooper on Immortality

In the second section, I will explain Hooper's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* and present my criticisms of his view. Hooper claims that the immortality mentioned by Diotima in the *Symposium* is achieved by means of the preservation of the good parts of individuals. He refers to this sort of immortality as 'human immortality.' In achieving immortality, agents would produce creations which serve to be memorials of their virtues, namely their good parts. That is, agents achieve

human immortality ‘by creating memorials (μνημῶν) that will outlast them.’¹²

According to Hooper, there are two things agents wish to preserve: the memories of their virtues and the virtues themselves.¹³ These two things are preserved through different media depending on individuals’ dispositions. Three kinds of media appear in the *Symposium*: children, fame, and *logoi*.

Hooper’s interpretation of human immortality in the *Symposium* as the preservation of the ‘good’ or ‘valuable’ parts of individuals is based on Diotima’s claim that people do not want everything to belong to them, but only what is good, since people are willing to amputate their diseased limbs (*Sym.* 205E). In the light of this claim, Hooper thinks that agents’ desire for immortality is a desire for the good parts of them to be immortal. That is, they only want the good parts of them to be immortal rather than the whole of them. But how exactly do agents achieve human immortality in the *Symposium*? Hooper thinks memory plays a crucial role in achieving this human version of immortality because memory helps preserve the good parts, namely the virtues, of agents. According to Hooper, agents described by Diotima not only hope to be remembered as being virtuous but wish that the external productions they create will inspire others to produce the virtues expressed by these productions. For example, Achilles sacrificed himself for Patroclus, and the fame of his noble deed causes people to remember him as courageous. Therefore, the memory of his virtue is preserved through his fame. As Hooper suggests, Achilles’ story will inspire others to become as courageous as he was, and this is how the virtue of courage is preserved through Achilles’ fame. Similarly, ‘Hesiod won immortality through the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, which are memorials to his piety, and Solon did the same

¹² Hooper (2013, 543)

¹³ (549-550)

through his system of laws, which preserve the memory of his justice.’ Hooper suggests that these people (Achilles and Hesiod) are lovers who create fame or *logoi* in order to be remembered as being virtuous and hope their fame or *logoi* will inspire others to become as virtuous as they were.¹⁴ This is how agents achieve human immortality: by producing memorials in order to preserve memories of virtues and to inspire virtues themselves in others.

Hooper’s reason for suggesting that agents would like to exert influences to inspire others to become virtuous by their created memorials is that if people only remember agents’ virtues without aspiring to become virtuous, this means only the memories of agents’ virtues are preserved. That is, only the images of virtues are preserved because memories of virtues count only as images. This sort of preservation hardly counts as successful preservation of the good parts of agents because the images of the good parts are not themselves the good parts.¹⁵ Thus, Hooper adds that memorials like literary works have two functions: a) preserving memories of virtues; b) preserving virtues themselves (the good parts of agents) via inspiring people to become virtuous. If people after Alcestis aspire to be as loving as Alcestis was on account of hearing or reading her story, it is Alcestis’ virtue of familial love that is preserved because this virtue is being reproduced by people after her. That is, Alcestis’ fame preserves this virtue by causing others to reproduce this virtue.

Another claim Hooper makes is that the philosophical lover has the best chance to achieve human immortality. This is because the medium the philosophical lover adopts, namely philosophical conversation and works, is more promising than other

¹⁴ (549)

¹⁵ (549)

media, e.g., children and fame.¹⁶ Hooper thinks argumentation in philosophical treatises produced by the philosophical lover is the best form of preserving virtues, because the philosophical works inspire people to explore what the discussed virtues are. The philosophical lover instils the desire for knowledge in other people through conversation or written works. Therefore, people reading the philosophical works will aspire to know what virtues are and be as virtuous as possible. In this case, the memories of virtues along with the virtues themselves are more likely to be preserved. Briefly, the philosophical lover achieves human immortality in the *Symposium* by preserving virtues for future generations through the produced works, which inspire others to become virtuous. This is how Hooper interprets the human immortality achieved in the *Symposium* – it is the preservation of the good parts (virtues) of the agents.

Hooper's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* does not seem persuasive to me. I do not agree with his understanding of immortality as the preservation of the good parts (virtues) of the agents and his suggestion that the philosophical lover achieves human immortality through his written works. As I see it, virtue does not always play a part in agents' desires for and achieving immortality. Immortality understood as the preservation of virtue is most problematic in the case of bodily lovers. As for the immortality the philosophical lover achieves, the text concerning this part mentions neither memory nor written works by the philosophical lover. Thus, I do not think being remembered through written works is the way for the philosophical lover to become immortal, according to Plato in the *Symposium*.

¹⁶ It is widely accepted by scholars that there are three types of lovers in the *Symposium*: the bodily lover, the honour lover, and the philosophical lover.

Hooper's interpretation requires agents who are to achieve immortality preserve both the memories of virtues and virtues themselves. However, this seems to assume that Plato thinks that the lovers described by Diotima in the *Symposium* all possess certain virtues and wish to preserve the virtues they possess. That is, Hooper seems to assume that virtues are considered as the 'good' parts of individuals by all types of agent. This interpretation works better with the philosophical lover but does not work very well with the other two types of lovers, the bodily lover especially. It seems doubtful that all the three types of lovers (the bodily lover, the honour lover, and the philosophical lover) necessarily possess or love virtues, let alone love preserving virtues. Firstly, according to Diotima, everyone desires immortality (207A) and no one desires anything unless it is thought to be good (205E). Hooper seems to move too quickly to equate 'desiring good things' to 'desiring virtues or desiring to preserve virtues.' It seems to me Diotima's claim that 'lovers want what is good to belong to them' (206A) does not entail the claim that 'lovers want to be virtuous or want to preserve virtues.' My reading of Diotima's claim is that lovers want to possess good things to achieve a human version of immortality and attain *eudaimonia*. This claim does not define what the good thing is to possess. Thus, individual agents might have very different conceptions about what is good. It is not clear that all types of agents consider virtue as good and would choose virtue as the good to preserve. Secondly, from the text, it does not seem that the bodily lovers possess or love virtues. In her account of bodily lovers, Diotima mentions nothing about virtue. She only mentions virtue after she starts speaking of people pregnant in soul (209A-B). She says that people who are more pregnant in soul than in body are pregnant with what is fitting for a soul, which is wisdom and the rest of virtue (209A), whereas she only says that people pregnant in body provide 'themselves through childbirth with immortality and

remembrance and happiness' (208E) in her account of bodily lovers. What seems certain is that childbirth is essential to bodily lovers' becoming immortal, but virtues make no appearance in this passage, and so this aspect of Hooper's interpretation lacks textual support. It is not certain that bodily lovers who reproduce children do so precisely for the sake of preserving virtue, and thereby achieve immortality. Instead, it is highly likely that Diotima is claiming that they only wish to be remembered by their children without necessarily giving a thought to virtue. Thus, it does not seem warranted to assume both that all bodily lovers have virtues to preserve and that they reproduce children in order to preserve virtues.¹⁷

Besides, beauty has to be considered here. In the case of bodily lovers, what attracts them is the beauty of the bodies. It seems doubtful that bodily lovers are able to properly appreciate the beauty of virtue. We could see from Diotima's speech about the initiated lover that one has to love correctly to gradually appreciate beauty with a higher value (210A-211A). The beauty of human bodies is on the lowest level and therefore, is the easiest to appreciate. What follows is the beauty of laws, customs, wisdom, and finally the Form of Beauty itself. In the light of this passage, it seems obvious that being able to appreciate the beauty of virtue requires a more developed cognitive capacity than the capacity merely sufficient to appreciate the beauty of bodies. And there is no textual evidence as to whether bodily lovers have acquired this higher-level cognition to appreciate the beauty of virtue. It seems reasonable to

¹⁷ Although Kraut (2008, 292) suggests it is possible that ordinary parents (lovers who are pregnant in body only) might possess virtues, I do not think that in the context of Diotima's speech, they can be seen as virtue lovers or lovers in possession of virtues. This is because Diotima's distinction between people pregnant in body and people pregnant in soul is meant to be a contrast. Diotima attempts to point out that psychic children are more beautiful and valuable than human children (*Sym.* 209C-E). Thus, although in reality, it is possible that people who love bodily beauty might also possess certain virtues, I do not think that in the context of Diotima's speech, bodily lovers are also virtue lovers.

suppose they have not; otherwise, they would not be classified as merely bodily lovers or lovers pregnant in body instead of lovers of all sorts of beauty. And we can see a contrast made by Diotima between human children and the ‘immortal children’, e.g., the works of Homer and Hesiod and laws of Solon (209E). Diotima praises the immortal children highly, and so they have a higher value than human children (209C-D). This seems to partly indicate that human children are not necessarily reproduced for the sake of preserving virtues or some noble aims. As I see it, the main points of the passage about bodily lovers are that the bodily lovers find human bodies beautiful and that they consider children as contributing to their happiness. It seems certain that the realisation of their desire for immortality relies on reproducing human offspring, but it does not seem that it is their virtues that has to be preserved or remembered. Briefly, Hooper’s interpretation does not work well with the case of bodily lovers because bodily lovers are attracted by physical beauty, and it is not clear that they would appreciate the beauty of virtue.

As for the honour lovers, it is explicitly stated by Diotima that they expect the memories of their virtue to be immortal (208D). But holding the expectation of being remembered as virtuous does not imply that honour lovers are truly virtuous or they sincerely wish to preserve true virtues themselves other than mere memories of virtues. This is because both a truly virtuous person and a non-truly virtuous person can be remembered as virtuous since memories could consist of both true and false beliefs. One’s expectation of others remembering one as virtuous does not entail one is truly virtuous. One could merely *appear* to others as virtuous without truly being virtuous, and one’s appearing virtuous can still cause others to remember one as being virtuous. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out as a possibility that the virtuous deeds performed by honour lovers are not for the sake of the virtues themselves, but for the

sake of fame or being remembered only.¹⁸ It seems to me that honour lovers might be virtuous, but whether they are virtuous or not is a contingent and separate matter.

There can be both truly virtuous honour lovers and honour lovers who only appear to be virtuous. Thus, a more plausible view of the honour lovers is that they love immortality and honour but they are not always truly virtuous and do not always have the desire to preserve virtues when they do virtuous deeds or anything that results in fame.

My second objection to Hooper's interpretation is textual and has been mentioned in my objections to Kraut's interpretation. Hooper claims that the philosophical lover produces philosophical works as a way of preserving virtues, thereby becoming immortal. However, there lacks textual support for this interpretation. After speaking about the initiate's ascent to seeing the Form of Beauty (starting from 210A), Diotima makes no mention of memory and producing written works on the part of the philosophical lover. So, it does not seem that producing works that inspire virtues in others is the way for the philosophical lover to become immortal.

In summary, Hooper's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* has a couple of difficulties. Firstly, Hooper assumes that all the lovers in the *Symposium* are virtue lovers but as pointed out, although all lovers desire immortality, they do not always desire or possess virtues. Therefore, it does not seem that preserving virtues is the way to secure immortality for all types of lover. Secondly, there lacks textual support for the claim that a condition for the philosophical lover to become immortal is producing philosophical works.

¹⁸ Obdrzalek has adopted this possibility and suggests that honour lovers do not beget true virtues but only take apparent virtuous deeds as a means to fame and immortality. (2010, 423)

1.3 Obdrzalek on Immortality

In the third section, I will explain Obdrzalek's view on immortality in the *Symposium* and her suggestion of how agents respond to their desires for immortality, followed by my objections to her view. Contrary to Hooper, Obdrzalek understands immortality in the *Symposium* as personal immortality. Personal immortality is not the preservation of good parts of an individual but the extension of an individual's existence in time.¹⁹ Obdrzalek does not think this sort of (personal) immortality is an achievable goal but the desire for immortality can be dissolved in the contemplation of the Form. She thinks that, for Plato, one can only achieve a mortal sort of perfection when one turns towards the truly perfect and immortal objects, namely the Forms.²⁰

Obdrzalek claims there are two forms of *eros* in the *Symposium*: the lower (ordinary) and the higher (extraordinary) form. The ordinary *eros* can be transformed into the extraordinary *eros* through philosophy and the love of beauty.²¹ She thinks the conversation between Socrates and Diotima is meant to unmask the misguided ordinary *eros* possessed by the non-philosophical lovers, namely the bodily and the honour lovers, whom Obdrzalek terms as the lower lovers in her paper. The reason why Eros desires completion and immortality can be found in the myth narrated by Diotima (203C-204C). Mortal nature is incomplete and imperfect, and it is the awareness of the imperfect human nature that gives rise to the desire for completion and immortality.²² Explaining the origin of Eros' desire for immortality is essential, because Obdrzalek makes the suggestion near the end of her paper that the

¹⁹ Obdrzalek (2010, 427)

²⁰ (417, 433)

²¹ (416)

²² (419)

philosophical lover's *eros* for immortality would be dissolved due to his contemplation of the perfect Forms.²³ The philosophical lover's attention on the Forms causes him to be less concerned about his shortcomings and imperfect mortal nature; hence the awareness of his incomplete and imperfect mortal nature is lessened. Therefore, the desire for immortality which originates from the awareness of his imperfection would be dissolved due to the lessened concern for the imperfect mortal nature.

It is Eros' nature to desire immortality, but according to Obdrzalek, the desire for immortality is misguided because immortality is neither achievable nor worth desiring.²⁴ Immortality is not worth desiring because the lower lovers desire immortality as such, rather than as a means to the eternal possession of the good. Diotima says that 'a lover must desire immortality along with the good' because 'Love wants to possess the good forever' (207A). Obdrzalek takes this to mean that immortality is supposed to be instrumental to 'the eternal possession of the good.' But as she understands it, the lower lovers do not desire immortality in order to possess the good forever. Obdrzalek points out that Plato never describes how the lower lovers pursue the good and what the good is these lovers pursue.²⁵ She also draws upon the passage (208D-E) where Diotima describes the heroic deeds performed by the honour lovers. In that passage, Diotima says that what Achilles and Alcestis did was 'for the sake of immortal virtue and the glorious fame.' Obdrzalek takes it that what is emphasised here is the immortality rather than the goodness of the progeny the lower lovers produce.²⁶ On Obdrzalek's understanding, the lower lovers do not

²³ (434-436)

²⁴ (420)

²⁵ (422, 426)

²⁶ (423)

produce true virtues but only images of virtues, because true virtues are grounded in knowledge of Beauty,²⁷ which the lower lovers have not yet acquired. Furthermore, Obdrzalek argues that not only do the lower lovers not desire immortality for the sake of possessing the real good forever, but that they only take virtues as a means to immortality.²⁸ In other words, they only appear to perform virtuous deeds, but they do so only for their own immortality – their selfish advantage – rather than for the sake of the beloved individuals. ‘*Eros* of the many is not, as they think, the disinterested admiration of the beloved, but is rather the self-serving pursuit of immortality.’²⁹ Obdrzalek explains this phenomenon by appeal to these lovers’ failure to recognise the real good other than themselves. She thinks this is also the reason why Plato did not describe how the lower lovers pursue the good: they only recognise their own existence as good, and hence ‘take eternal existence to be eternal possession of the good.’³⁰ That is, the lower lovers do not recognise the goodness of wisdom and other virtues but only take the apparent virtuous deeds as a means to their personal immortality, i.e., a sort of extension of their selves in time. In this sense, the desire for immortality is ultimately a manifestation of self-love, and hence immortality is not worth desiring because there is no recognition of real goodness. An implication of Obdrzalek’s interpretation is that the desire for immortality and the desire for the good could come apart; they are not always tied together. And this is why Obdrzalek thinks immortality is not worth desiring- because the desire for immortality is not based on the desire to possess the real good in the case of the lower lovers.

²⁷ (426)

²⁸ (424)

²⁹ (420)

³⁰ (427-428)

Not only does Obdrzalek think immortality is not worth desiring but she also thinks immortality is unachievable. She thinks the productive activities the lovers undertake face two difficulties bringing about immortality.³¹ The first is that reproduction does not offer real immortality. Even if we cause people like us to exist, we still cease to exist when we die. We do not succeed in becoming immortal but only approximate it. I take this to mean that the productive activities do not enable us to become literally immortal in the sense of living forever without death. What we do in reproduction or production cannot prevent us from death. The second difficulty pointed out by Obdrzalek is that even if a sort of immortality is offered by reproductive activities, reproductive immortality does not enable us to possess anything.³² In the case of the bodily lovers who reproduce children, Obdrzalek does not think children's possession of any good things can be seen as a sort of possession of the parents. She thinks death puts an end to the possessing relation. As for the psychic lovers who produce poems and laws, Obdrzalek thinks even if these psychic lovers become immortal in some sense by living on in the memories of others, they still cease to possess anything upon death. Furthermore, she points out the problem of becoming immortal by living on in others' memories: 'your line can die off, and your descendants can eventually forget you. Poems and laws, too, can be lost or forgotten.'³³ Thus, Obdrzalek does not think immortality is achievable, for both the lower and the higher lovers alike.

However, despite her claim that immortality in the *Symposium* is an unachievable goal, Obdrzalek suggests that the desire for immortality could be dissolved in the case of the higher (philosophical) lover and that we could achieve 'a sort of perfection and completion by standing in an admiring, contemplative relationship to the Forms.'

³¹ (420)

³² (421)

³³ (421-422)

Engaging in the contemplative activities which tie us to the best objects, the Forms, ‘we become as perfect as humans can be.’ She proposes the notion of ‘decentralisation’, claiming that this is what happens to the philosophical lover.³⁴ The initiate becomes decentralised; namely, detached from his self-centred viewpoint by undergoing a series of cognitive generalisations and abstraction while climbing on the ladder of love. For example, in recognising that ‘the beauty of all bodies is one and the same’ (*Sym.* 210B), the initiate has to undertake cognitive abstraction and generalisation in order to go beyond his limited viewpoint, namely going beyond recognising only particular beautiful objects. And Obdrzalek thinks this cognitive development enables the initiate to adopt a more objective world-view and become less self-centred. The initiate would gradually move away from judging what is beautiful based on his limited viewpoint and come to see the higher sort of beauty which requires a more developed cognition. Obdrzalek thinks that in contemplating the Forms, the philosophical lover would be so absorbed in something outside himself, and that therefore, he becomes less concerned about his own shortcomings. And as mentioned before, since the desire for immortality originates from the awareness of one’s imperfect and incomplete mortal nature, this desire would be dissolved when one’s awareness of one’s shortcomings is downplayed by one’s focus on something outside oneself. Obdrzalek emphasises that at this stage, the philosophical lover does not focus on possessing but on admiration, since the Forms are not what can be possessed. If one focuses on possessing, one is still self-absorbed and only sees the beloved ‘in terms of his relation to oneself.’³⁵ But if one focuses on

³⁴ (433-434)

³⁵ (435)

admiration of the Forms, the result is self-forgetting, and one ceases to be aware of one's imperfection because one is caught up in the perfection of the Forms.

In summary, Obdrzalek understands immortality in the *Symposium* as personal immortality, namely the extension of one's existence in time. She thinks the ordinary *eros* for immortality of the many is misguided because immortality is neither worth desiring nor achievable. The lower lovers do not recognise goodness other than their existence, and thus take their eternal existence as the eternal possession of the good. Due to this failure to recognise the real good, the lower lovers take virtues as a means to personal immortality. They do not beget true virtues. But immortality is unachievable because death puts an end to the possessing relation. Living on in others' memories does not seem promising either because people could eventually forget us. However, the desire for immortality can be dissolved. The philosophical lover's desire for immortality is dissolved when he focuses on contemplating the truly immortal and perfect Forms. He becomes less concerned about his shortcomings on account of his contemplation of the Forms, and therefore his desire for immortality originating from the awareness of the imperfect mortal nature is dissolved. He achieves a mortal sort of perfection in the contemplative activity as this activity ties him to the real perfect objects, namely the Forms.

Obdrzalek's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* and suggestion of the dissolution of the philosophical lover's desire for immortality does not seem persuasive. I take issue with her suggestion that the philosophical lover would dissolve his desire for immortality because he comes to focus on contemplating the Forms. Firstly, it does not seem that contemplation of the Forms would necessarily or always downplay the awareness of our imperfect mortal nature. That is, contemplation of the Forms does not always have a distracting effect. It seems it is

highly likely that if we happen to discover and learn about something other than ourselves that possesses an extremely desirable attribute that we do not have, we would be more aware of our lack of this attribute. For example, if I am a student who always gets low grades in maths, and I happen to have a close friend who always does well in maths, is it not the case that my sitting in the same maths class with him and my close friendship with him would heighten the awareness of my inferior math grades to his, at least sometimes? Positively, I might be able to admire his talent for maths, but my admiration is not incompatible with my awareness of his superiority (and therefore my inferiority) in the field of maths. Thus, it seems that the attentive contemplation and admiration of the immortal perfect Forms might even heighten the awareness of one's inferior imperfect nature of mortality. Therefore, it is not clear to me that contemplation of the Forms would necessarily cause the sort of distracting effect as Obdrzalek claims. Secondly, if all we need is a distraction in response to our desire for immortality, then it seems we do not really need to contemplate the Forms. There are numerous ways to distract ourselves other than being erotic lovers contemplating the Forms in Plato's terms. Many things other than the Forms could be distracting as long as we pay to them as much attention as required for distraction. Thirdly, it does not seem that Eros, who is a spirit aware of his own lack, would ultimately lead us to forget our own lack under the circumstance that we have not become immortal and perfect. Diotima (203E-204C) says that Eros is in between two extremes: ignorance and wisdom, mortal and immortal. And it is because Eros is in the intermediate position that he would strive for wisdom and immortality. The divine who is already wise and immortal does not strive for wisdom and immortality. Yet, on Obdrzalek's understanding, agents in the *Symposium* do not achieve immortality, which means they are still away from the end point of immortality. Thus, it does not

seem that they would stop desiring immortality, since they are not yet immortal. More plausibly, their *eros* would continue desiring immortality since it has not yet been achieved. Briefly, Eros is aware of his own lacking, and therefore causes the lover to desire wisdom and immortality. But on Obdrzalek's interpretation, one of the ultimate effects Eros brings on the lover is to forget the lover's own lacking. This interpretation seems to attribute an effect to Eros different from what we see in the myth told by Diotima.

In summary, I do not find Obdrzalek's interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium* persuasive, particularly her suggestion that the philosophical lover would dissolve his desire for immortality, for the reasons I have listed above. Contrary to Obdrzalek, I think the philosophical lover in the *Symposium* *does* achieve a sort of immortality in response to his desire for immortality. I will present my interpretation in the third chapter.

1.4 Lear on Immortality

In the fourth section, I will explain Lear's view on the relationship between Beauty and immortality in the *Symposium* and her suggestions for what sorts of immortality agents in the *Symposium* achieve. I do not agree with her on the suggestion about how the philosophical lover becomes immortal. Although her suggestion about how the fully initiated lover becomes immortal is persuasive, Lear seems to attribute two different kinds of immortality to the philosophical lover and the fully initiated lover respectively. However, I would argue that the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover and the fully initiated lover is the same, since as I read the text, the philosophical lover achieves immortality only after he sees the Form of Beauty, namely after becoming the fully initiated lover.

Lear thinks there are several links between beauty and immortality in the *Symposium*. The first link is that the instantiations of Beauty to a certain extent manifest immortality, transcendence, stableness, and unchangingness, which are all properties of the Form of Beauty.³⁶ Lear is aware that these properties are commonly shared by all the Forms.³⁷ However, Beauty is peculiar amongst all the Forms as Lear writes that the unchanging character of the Form of Beauty ‘shines out in the beautiful bodies, souls, laws, and sciences that participate in it.’ To support this suggestion, Lear points to a passage in the *Phaedrus* where it is claimed by Socrates that Beauty is especially ‘radiant’ and thus ‘its splendor “flashes out” like lightening in the physical objects which participate in it (*Phdr.* 250b5-6, 250d1-3)’.³⁸ Lear’s understanding of this claim is that:

when we perceive and speak about things participating in other Forms, we are unaware that our cognitive activity depends on our referring these sensible objects to something radically other than their imperfect, sensible nature. By contrast, when we perceive someone as beautiful, the transcendent, intelligible nature of Beauty appears to be present in the finite, sensible object which participates in it.³⁹

What Lear suggests is that the participants in the Form of Beauty manifest transcendence to us when we perceive them, while participants in the other Forms do not. According to Lear, to experience someone or something as being beautiful is to ‘experience a mortal thing as being or being filled with something immortal,

³⁶ These properties are mentioned in the passage describing the Form of Beauty (*Sym.* 210E-211B). Lear (2006, 117)

³⁷ (116)

³⁸ (117)

³⁹ (*ibid.*)

unchanging, and unchangeable ... It would be to experience the beautiful thing or person, insofar as he was beautiful, as being godlike in the stability and self-sufficiency of his being.⁴⁰ That is, when we experience objects or persons as beautiful, we kind of perceive something immortal and unchanging in the objects or persons we perceive. The experiences of beauty are therefore peculiar, since we do not perceive immortality, transcendence, and unchangingness in our experiences of participants in Forms other than Beauty.

Lear further suggests that the perception of immortality in experiences of the beautiful would awaken agents' desire for immortality and happiness, i.e., the eternal possession of the good. According to Lear, the experience of the beautiful serves the role of unleashing lovers' desire for immortality and inducing the lovers' labour to 'secure immortality insofar as that is possible for a mortal human being.'⁴¹ Our encounters with beauty waken the desire to transcend ourselves, to aspire to what is infinite and unchanging and cannot be achieved by finite mortals who are subject to change.⁴² One thing worth noting is that, according to Lear, the immortality of the Form of Beauty is a sort of immortality better than the sort of immortality of mere eternal existence. It is better because it does not merely exist forever, but it exists forever in virtue of being unchanging. It is a 'more perfect sort of immortality' because it is immortal by means of being unchanging rather than enduring over time only.⁴³ The Form of Beauty, along with every Form, 'escapes being affected by the passing of time'⁴⁴ in virtue of being unchanging. This sort of immortality is significant since Lear suggests that the fully initiated lover is inspired by this sort of

⁴⁰ (117-118)

⁴¹ (106)

⁴² (117)

⁴³ (116)

⁴⁴ (ibid.)

immortality, and therefore develops a more unchanging character after seeing the Form of Beauty. I will return to explain this suggestion shortly.

In summary, according to Lear, although all the Forms share the characteristics of immortality and unchangingness, only the participants in the Form of Beauty manifest these characteristics to a certain extent in our experiences of them. Their manifestations of immortality and unchangingness cause the agents to desire immortality and give birth in beauty, namely conducting various creative activities characteristic of *eros*, e.g., reproducing children, producing poems, and establishing laws, in order to secure immortality.⁴⁵

As for achieving immortality, Lear suggests that memory plays a part in the case of the non-fully initiated lovers' becoming immortal. Lear points out that different types of lover take different things to be central to their happiness: 'Those who think sheer physical existence is good create human children; those who think honor is good perform actions worthy of memory; those who think political power is good write constitutions that will influence the city after their death.'⁴⁶ According to Lear, the honour lover and the philosophical lover become immortal because they are remembered for their created works and speeches.⁴⁷ This is the second link between beauty and immortality, since beauty has this trait: being noticed and remembered. The beauty of the creator's creation confers the creator with immortality via causing the creator to be noticed and remembered by others. For instance, Homer is remembered as a good poet on account of the beauty of the *Iliad*, and thus achieves a quasi-immortal possession of the good on account of the beauty of his creation. As for

⁴⁵ (106)

⁴⁶ (108-111)

⁴⁷ A philosophical lover is not necessarily a fully initiated lover. A fully initiated lover seems to be the one who completes the ascent to the Form of Beauty, according to Diotima.

the philosophical lover, Lear thinks what is preserved is not honour but knowledge, because the philosophical lover does ‘not equate being honoured with being happy.’ Knowledge is a higher good than honour which can be preserved by memory for the philosophical lover. Lear draws upon a passage (208A) where Diotima claims that ‘the everyday experience of thinking “the same thought” from one day to the next is in fact a matter of creating a new memory to replace one that passed away by being forgotten.’ Lear takes this as indicating that remembering today what I knew yesterday is the way to preserve my knowledge. And if my knowledge is preserved through being remembered by others in the future after I die, I achieve a mortal version of immortality. She writes that ‘my own processing of remembering today what I understood yesterday counts as a case of achieving mortal immortality’ and suggests that this processing of remembering can apply to other people. That is, when other people remember my own thought, my thought transcends my finite ability to think it. My thought is preserved in others’ memories even after my death. Therefore, I achieve a type of mortal immortality. This is why philosophical lovers make their speeches beautiful, not for the sake of being noticed, but for their speeches to be more intelligible and persuasive so as to be remembered.⁴⁸ Lear draws upon the passage (210C) where it is said that the philosophical lover ‘speaks in order to teach the beautiful boy who has captured his attention’ in support for her suggestion that the philosophical lover would preserve his thought in others’ memories by delivering intelligible and persuasive speeches which are easily remembered. Briefly, Lear’s suggestion about how the honour lover and the philosophical lover become immortal indicates that the beauty of their offspring confers immortality on the producers on account of beauty’s feature of being easily noticed and remembered. In both cases,

⁴⁸ (110)

‘the beauty of the lover’s offspring might help them outlive their author and so achieve for him a sort of immortality.’⁴⁹

Lear’s suggestion about how the fully initiated lover becomes immortal seems promising. Lear speculates that the fact that Socrates does not explain how the lover of higher mysteries approximates immortality with his speeches makes one ‘wonder whether his quasi-immortality is not something altogether different from enduring for a very long time in the minds of others.’⁵⁰ Lear seems to embrace this possibility and suggests that the fully initiated lover achieves a sort of immortality different from that of preserving the good things through memory. A fully initiated lover is one who has attained the highest mysteries of love, experienced all sorts of beauty, and has finally seen the Form of Beauty. Lear speculatively suggests that the fully initiated lover achieves immortality in the sense of having acquired a more self-sufficient and stable character. He becomes less concerned about his self-extension in time achieved in reproducing children and winning fame but ‘more interested in being stable and unchangingly what he is.’⁵¹ Lear seems to suggest this is because he has seen the Form of Beauty, namely having learnt the unchangingness of the Form of Beauty. That is, the fully initiated lover is inspired by the unchangingness of the Form of Beauty, and thus develops a more stable and unchanging character. Lear thinks that Socrates in Alcibiades’ speech is a fully initiated lover who has achieved this sort of immortality, because he has developed a stable character which remains unaffected by external temptation and hardship as much as possible for mortals.⁵² That is, he has attained self-control as best as humans could do. This can be seen from Socrates’

⁴⁹ (111)

⁵⁰ (111)

⁵¹ (119-120)

⁵² (ibid.)

remaining unaffected by hunger, coldness, and Alcibiades' seduction in Alcibiades' speech (220A-B, 218D-19C). Lear notes that the point of Alcibiades' story of Socrates is to 'show that Socrates is surpassingly temperate (216d7).'⁵³

As I see it, Lear's suggestion is that the fully initiated lover becomes immortal in the sense of having acquired true virtue, because she emphasises that the fully initiated lover develops a 'stable and self-sufficient' character. But she does not elaborate on what virtue the fully initiated lover has acquired. The only virtue she explicitly ascribes to the fully initiated lover is the virtue of temperance. Nonetheless, on my understanding, Lear is likely to agree that the fully initiated lover has acquired all moral virtues. This is because Alcibiades ascribes the virtue of courage to Socrates several times (219D, 220D, 221B). In addition, it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates has acquired the virtue of courage in Alcibiades' speech, because an unchanging character seems to require possessing courage too. If he lacks courage, the fully initiated lover might not be able to remain unchanging on his stance in the face of fear. As I understand her, Lear's 'unchanging character' is a character which will always insist on doing the right thing without being affected by external conditions. If this is correct, then a stable and unchanging character requires the acquisition of all the true moral virtues.

In summary, according to Lear, there are several links between beauty and immortality. The first link is that the participants in the Form of Beauty manifest immortality and unchangingness in agents' experiences of them. These manifestations of immortality and unchangingness awaken agents' desire for immortality. The second link is that the beauty of the non-fully initiated lovers' creation would bring about immortality to them by causing others to remember them. The third link

⁵³ (119, fn. 30)

between beauty and immortality is that the immortality the fully initiated lover achieves (which is different from the immortality achieved by the non-fully initiated lovers) is inspired by the immortality of the Form of Beauty. The fully initiated lover learns about the unchangingness of the Form of Beauty, and thus becomes interested in developing a stable and unchanging character. That is, he becomes immortal in the sense of acquiring an unchanging character, namely a morally virtuous character.

I do not agree with Lear on the suggestion that the philosophical lover achieves immortality via preserving knowledge or thoughts in others' memories. My view is that the kind of immortality based on memory is less likely to be valued by the philosophical lover, because this sort of immortality is flimsy and unstable, since it would easily collapse once people lose their memories. However, the philosophical lover tends to value what is stable and unchanging, as Diotima says in the passage (210E-211B) about the initiate's ascent. Whether one's knowledge or thoughts would be remembered by others is a contingent event. It depends on many factors external to oneself, e.g., resources to make one's thoughts known to the public and how good peoples' memories are. The nature of depending on these external factors makes this sort of immortality flimsy and unstable. The philosophical lover is the lover of wisdom, and thus he tends to love and value the more stable and unchanging over the unstable and the flimsy. In the passage (210B-211A) about the ascent, the initiate comes to appreciate the more stable and unchanging sort of beauty over the changing sort, since at the end of the ascent is the knowledge of the Form of Beauty, which is most stable and unchanging. Thus, it seems reasonable to suppose that the philosophical lover's *eros* would not lead him to achieve an unstable kind of immortality because he is inclined to value what is stable. Furthermore, although Diotima says that the philosophical lover would speak to teach the beautiful boy

(210C), there is no mention of immortality in that passage. Thus, it does not seem to be the case that the immortality the philosophical lover achieves has to do with passing down his thought to others.

On the other hand, Lear's suggestion about how the fully initiated lover achieves immortality seems plausible. However, I think for Plato, the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover and the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover is identical. Firstly, the initiate is claimed to love wisdom (210D), and it seems that the 'philosophical lover' is just the lover of wisdom. This means that the initiate is just the philosophical lover in Diotima's account. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, there is no separate account of how the philosophical lover becomes immortal. The only mentioned immortality which can be reasonably ascribed to the philosophical lover appears at the end of the passage about the initiate's ascent, which is the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover (212B). As I see it, these suggest that the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover is identical with the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover. It also follows from this that the philosophical lover would not achieve immortality before seeing the Form of Beauty (having acquired the knowledge of Beauty), namely having become the fully initiated lover.

Lear must be aware that the philosophical lover is just the initiate, since the passage (210C) she cites to support her suggestion about how the philosophical lover becomes immortal is within Diotima's account of the initiate. So it seems Lear suggests that the philosophical lover would achieve a sort of immortality (the sort consisting in preserving knowledge in others' memories) at some point on his ascent and would achieve another sort of immortality after becoming a fully initiated lover. However, I do not think this is the case in Diotima's account; in my view, the philosophical lover does not achieve a sort of immortality at one point and another sort of immortality at a

later point. If he has already achieved a sort of immortality before seeing the Form of Beauty, why does he continue his journey to achieve another sort of immortality?⁵⁴

The fact that he continues his ascent and achieves another sort of immortality implies that his desire for immortality is not satisfied at the stage of passing down his thought to others, which happens before he sees the Form of Beauty. In other words, he has not yet achieved the sort of immortality that would satisfy his desire for immortality, and this is the reason why his *eros* keeps prompting him to climb higher on the ascent. As I see it, if the desire for immortality has not yet been satisfied, it cannot be claimed that immortality has been achieved or that the most desired immortality has been achieved, whether or not the philosophical lover is aware of this. To conclude, the philosophical lover does not achieve the desired immortality before seeing the Form of Beauty. In addition, the immortality the philosophical lover would achieve is identical to the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover.

In this chapter I have reviewed the accounts of immortality in the *Symposium* of several scholars (Kraut, Hooper, Obdrzalek, and Lear). Some suggest that immortality is achieved by the agent in the sense that virtue is created in others who survive the agent, or in the sense that the agent's virtue is preserved via being reproduced by people who are inspired by the agent's creations which are expressions of the agent's virtue. Some suggests that immortality is unachievable but the desire for immortality can be dissolved in the contemplation of the Form. Lear suggests that the philosophical lover achieves immortality via passing down his thoughts to others. I do not think these interpretations are persuasive for the reasons I have presented. In the

⁵⁴ This point has been mentioned in my objection to Kraut's suggestion that creating virtue in others can satisfy one's desire for being virtuous forever.

next chapter, I will present Sheffield's interpretation of Diotima's claims concerning immortality in the *Symposium* and what kind of immortality is achieved in the *Symposium*. As will become clear, I find her interpretation, that the philosophical lover achieves immortality in the sense of perfecting the soul, to be persuasive.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I will explain Sheffield's interpretations of Diotima's claims concerning immortality in the *Symposium* and her interpretation of how the philosophical lover becomes immortal, after which I will argue that, in addition to producing the virtue of *nous* as Sheffield claims, the fully initiated lover would produce true moral virtue after seeing the Form of Beauty.⁵⁵ Sheffield interprets the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover as a perfect state of the soul, a state in which the philosophical lover has fully realised the rational potentiality for knowledge of the Form of Beauty, namely achieving the virtue of *nous* in the activity of contemplating the Form of Beauty.⁵⁶ Sheffield's interpretation of how the philosophical lover becomes immortal is largely based on her reading of the reproduction passage (*Sym.* 206B-208C) and her suggestion of the notion of psychic pregnancy. I will focus on her interpretations of these two parts of the text before presenting her interpretation of how the philosophical lover becomes immortal.

2.1 Sheffield on the Claims concerning Immortality in the *Symposium*

Before explaining Sheffield's interpretations of the reproduction passage and psychic pregnancy in Diotima's speech, I shall present Sheffield's interpretation of how immortality fits in with the discussion of *eros* in the first place, since this is essential to understanding Sheffield's overall interpretation of immortality in the *Symposium*. In the chapter of her 2006 book discussing the aim of *eros* in Socrates' (Diotima's) speech in the *Symposium*, Sheffield points out that Socrates seems to

⁵⁵ Unlike Lear, Sheffield (2006) does not ascribe two different kinds of immortality to the philosophical lover and the fully initiated lover respectively.

⁵⁶ Sheffield (2006, 151); Bury is a preceding advocate who interprets the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover as the perfection of the soul; Bury (1932, xlv, fn. 2); See fn. 53 in ch. 5 of Sheffield (2006).

specify ‘three aims of *eros*: the good, reproduction in beauty, and immortality.’

However, Sheffield argues that these ‘three aims are, in fact, related under the more general desire for *eudaimonia*, the everlasting happiness characteristic of the divine.’⁵⁷ On Sheffield’s understanding, immortality is not a separate goal of *eros*. It is a goal within the larger goal of *eros*, which is *eudaimonia*. Sheffield examines closely Socrates’ claims that ‘we desire to possess the good always’ (206A) and ‘we desire immortality with the good’ (207A), since a proper understanding of these claims would help us better understand the role of immortality in Socrates’ speech.

First and foremost, the ‘good’ in the claims is clearly equivalent to or constitutes *eudaimonia*, since *eros* is aimed at *eudaimonia* (205D). Rather than any kind of good, it is the kind of good which constitutes the state of *eudaimonia* that is the object of *eros*. Secondly, Sheffield points out that for ancient Greeks, ‘*Eudaimonia* was not conceived as a state of felicity, or a transitory feeling of pleasure or contentment, but whatever it is that makes one’s life a worthwhile and flourishing one.’ This means that ancient Greeks would not say a person is *eudaimōn* for a brief time, although we moderns have no difficulty understanding the claim that a person is happy for a brief time. The ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia* implies that it is a state of one’s whole life instead of only a certain period of a lifetime. It would follow from these that the desired good has a specific nature that requires us to desire to possess it at all future times if we ever desire it at all. ‘Desiring to possess it at any given moment involves desiring to possess it at all moments.’ That is, ‘if one desires to be *eudaimōn* at any time, then one desires to be *eudaimōn* at all subsequent times.’ This is just ‘what it is to desire this particular good. It is the kind of good that must be possessed

⁵⁷ (75)

at all times if one is to have it at all.’⁵⁸ Briefly, the desired good is supposed to constitute the state of *eudaimonia*, which is conceived as a state of one’s whole lifetime by ancient Greeks. One has to desire to possess this sort of good at all future times if one desires *eudaimonia* at all. This is how Sheffield understands the claim that ‘we desire to possess the good always.’

As for the claim that ‘we desire immortality with the good’, Sheffield points out that this claim follows right after the claim that ‘we desire to possess the good always.’ But how this claim follows after the previous claim is unclear, since if *eudaimonia* only concerns one’s lifetime, it does not seem that (literal) immortality is necessary. It is right that one’s desire for *eudaimonia* has to be temporally extended throughout one’s lifetime, but it does not have to extend to eternity. In her book, Sheffield writes that Socrates must be making the stronger claim that ‘the desire for *eudaimonia* is one that extends to all future times (i.e. even those beyond my death), otherwise it would not follow that we desire immortality with the good.’⁵⁹ Therefore, Sheffield suggests that the claim that ‘we desire immortality with the good’ can be expressed as ‘we desire to possess the good at all future times.’ Sheffield and Howatson discuss the interpretation of this claim. There, it is asked, ‘why do we desire immortality with the good?’⁶⁰ Even if we recognise that what constitutes *eudaimonia* is not to be had in a moment in time but to be had in an enduring way, why is this desire ‘thought by Socrates to extend beyond a lifespan?’ Two interpretations of this claim are offered. The first interpretation suggests that agents might think the goods which survive their death still count as their own: ‘There might be some goods with which one identifies to such an extent that their survival entails

⁵⁸ (80-81)

⁵⁹ (81-82)

⁶⁰ Howatson and Sheffield (2008, x viii)

one's own, even though one's body has ceased to live.' Two examples of this kind of good are given: 'The flourishing of one's children' and 'the realisation of treasured projects one knows will unfold only after one's death.' People engage in projects that they know will come to fruition only after their death. It is conceivable that sometimes these people identify themselves with something good which will endure beyond their lifespan. The second interpretation is to understand 'the desire for immortality with the good' as 'the desire for a certain quality of existence which typically (for a Greek) characterised the divine.' And 'different desiring agents have different notions of how to achieve their share of the divine.' This approach does not require that the desire in the claim extend beyond one's lifetime, since what is emphasised as desirable is the *quality* of existence characterised by the divine.

Returning to her 2006 book, Sheffield's purpose of examining and explaining Socrates' two claims concerning immortality is to argue that immortality is not posited as a separate goal of *eros* in Socrates' speech. On her reading, these two claims, although introducing immortality as an object of *eros*, are still illustrating *eros* for the ultimate goal, *eudaimonia*. Sheffield also notes that there is no separate argument for the claim that *eros* is after immortality as such, which indicates that immortality is not a separate goal of *eros*.⁶¹ But underlying these two claims is an assumption that 'we desire to possess the good at all future times.' Thus, Sheffield writes that 'our desire for whatever good we take to be central to *eudaimonia* is one that involves the desire for that good to be had in an enduring way—for all future times. The paradigm of a happy life is the life of the gods and that life is clearly one where good and beautiful things are possessed in a stable and secure manner.' It is the

⁶¹ Sheffield (2006, 82)

everlasting happiness of the divine that we are aspiring to.⁶² On Sheffield's view, the salient point of these two claims is that we desire the kind of good that can be possessed in a *stable and secure* manner because we desire the happy life characteristic of the divine, which would be achieved by the *secure and stable* possession of the good that constitutes *eudaimonia*.

2.2 Sheffield on the Reproduction Passage

Sheffield's claim that immortality is not a separate goal of *eros* is related to her reading of the reproduction passage (206B-208C) as well. Her reading of this passage also partly indicates how she understands the kind of immortality achieved by the philosophical lover. It is, therefore, essential to present her reading here. Sheffield notes that there are at least two readings of the reproduction passage: the strong reading and the weak reading.⁶³ I shall give a few quotes from the passage before presenting these two readings. In that passage, Diotima claims that 'all of us are pregnant both in body and in soul, and, as soon as we come to a certain age, we naturally desire to give birth. Now no one can possibly give birth in anything ugly; only in something beautiful' (206C). Diotima claims that reproduction is an immortal thing for a mortal animal to do. It is also in this passage that Diotima explicitly claims that Love wants 'Reproduction and birth in beauty.' Beauty releases what the agents or animals have been carrying inside them, namely their pregnancy in body and soul. In a few words, individuals are pregnant in body and soul; upon a certain age, they naturally give birth in the presence of beauty. Diotima also notes that 'reproduction goes on forever; it is what mortals have in place of immortality.' This is because

⁶² (82-83)

⁶³ (103-108)

‘mortal nature seeks so far as possible to live forever and be immortal. And this is possible in one way only: by reproduction, because it always leaves behind a new young one in place of the old’ (207D). Diotima points out that a person does not remain exactly the same from childhood to old age. That is, a person never consists of the exact same physical and psychological features. A person’s hair and flesh are constantly being renewed, and the beliefs and desires of a person do not remain the same for all time. ‘Some are coming to be in him while others are passing away’ (207D-208A). Knowledge, too, leaves us when we forget. Thus, we need to put back a fresh memory in place of what went away in order to preserve knowledge. After presenting these examples of how reproduction works, Diotima says that:

And in that way everything mortal is preserved, not, like the divine, by always being the same in every way, but because what is departing and aging leaves behind something new, something such as it had been. By this device, Socrates, what is mortal shares in immortality (208A-B).

It is also noted that this is why ‘everything naturally values its own offspring, because it is for the sake of immortality that everything shows this zeal, which is Love’ (208B).

Now, according to Sheffield, on the strong reading, this passage is taken as suggesting a new theory of survival, which conveys the thought that we can survive our death by proxy. We live on after death in our offspring or products, and reproduction is the way to attain this goal. This would explain ‘how we can possess the good “always” by reproduction: this mechanism functions by creating (physical or psychic) offspring (which somehow embodies our desired good), and which will go

on and on and so allow us to survive (as possessors of that good) by proxy.’ If this is the case, according to Sheffield, this would ‘blur the distinction between reproduction and the kind of generation involved in the maintenance of a living being.’ Human beings survive by a certain kind of generation. For example, growing a new hair in place of an old one is a way to maintain a head of hair for a human being. Leaving behind a new hair in place of the old one is the generative activity involved in the maintenance of a living being. But on the strong reading, this mechanism is taken to be a way to survive by proxy instead of the generation for maintaining a living being. To survive by proxy, a person leaves behind an offspring or a product (a new thing) in place of herself (the old one). That is, a person could reproduce a child or create a certain product, which is like a surrogate, that is able to represent one after one’s death. The strong reading takes the generative activity, e.g. growing new hair (207D), as indicating the way to survive by proxy, namely the activity of producing external independently existing things which are able to represent the producers after the producers’ death. This is what Sheffield means that the distinction between reproduction and the kind of generation involved in the maintenance of a living being would be blurred. The strong reading lists two conditions for a living being to survive: a) a new thing which somehow embodies the agent’s desired good has to be left behind in place of the old one, i.e., the agent; b) the left thing has to be qualitatively similar to the old thing. It follows from these two conditions that an external offspring or product has to be generated into existence as a proxy of the agent to represent the agent after the agent’s death. Thus, ‘we will have reason to expect an external product generated by the philosopher (perhaps ‘in another’, as is often held) that enables him to possess the good always by proxy.’⁶⁴ That is, the strong reading requires agents to

⁶⁴ (104-105)

create external offspring or products that would serve as agents' proxy after their death. The case of honour lovers works well with this reading because children, poems, and laws are all external products which can serve as a proxy for an agent.⁶⁵ For example, a lawmaker's desired good might be the well-being of all the people in the country. If she writes good laws, which enhances the quality of all people's lives within the country, then the laws embody the lawmaker's desired good and bring her honour. Hence, the externally-created (established) laws meet the first condition. The established laws are qualitatively similar to the lawmaker in the sense that the laws reveal the values and thoughts of the lawmaker. Thus, they meet the second condition. This reading is not adopted by Sheffield, however, since on this reading, the philosophical lover would be required to create external products to meet the two conditions. Yet, as I argued in chapter 1, there is little textual support for the claim that the philosophical lover creates external products in the higher mysteries. Sheffield recognises this lack of textual evidence too:

There is no mention of external products such as children, poems, or philosophical *logoi* at the highest stage, which provide memorials for all time to come. Even if we assume that the model from the lower mysteries should be applied to the higher (a questionable assumption, as we shall see), the production of true virtue does not appear to require an external product

⁶⁵ Although it is received by many that there are three types of lovers in Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*, Sheffield only distinguishes between honour lovers and philosophical lovers. That is, she only distinguishes lovers who take honour as the good that is central to *eudaimonia* and lovers who take wisdom as this good. She thinks that the bodily lovers are honour lovers who employ reproducing children as the means to secure honour, namely the good that would constitute *eudaimonia*, as they think. Sheffield's evidence is drawn from other dialogues such as the *Laws* and the *Republic*. She writes in a footnote that 'in the *Laws* the desire to be remembered by one's descendants is cited as a reason for marriage and the production of offspring (721b–d). See also *Rep.* 618b, for the fame which derives from one's ancestors.' (2006, ch 4, fn. 19)

(e.g. child, or a poem) in which it is expressed. It is, unlike honour, just not that sort of good.⁶⁶

She also notes and that ‘there is no external product that results from the activity of contemplation.’⁶⁷

On account of this difficulty the strong reading faces, Sheffield endorses an alternative, weaker reading. On the weak reading, the reproduction passage does not suggest a new theory of survival but explains the mortal mode of possession: ‘the passage explains that production (i.e. generation) is the mortal form of possession, without specifying anything further about the nature of that production, or the precise form it takes.’⁶⁸ The salient point is that the productive activity is the way for mortals to possess the good that is constitutive of *eudaimonia*: ‘if we want to possess the good, this must be something produced if it is to be had at all ... It does not specify that all reproduction functions by the creation of new “person stages”, or external products that enable us to possess the good by proxy.’ That is, this weaker reading specifies neither which form that production will take nor how long the product has to last. These are simply other matters ‘dependent in part on how one conceives of the relevant good.’ This reading does not require the philosophical lover (and all agents) to create external products that serve as proxies, and therefore it fits better with the text.

Briefly, on Sheffield’s interpretation, the reproductive activity is not meant to be a way of maintaining living or producing proxies that live on after agents’ death but a

⁶⁶ (108)

⁶⁷ (150)

⁶⁸ (104-105)

way to possess the good; thus, what is to be produced in this activity has to be good (in the agents' view). The strong reading takes reproduction as a way to survive by proxy in offspring or products, and thus it has the implication that the desire for the reproductive activity and the desire for the good would come apart, since desiring to live on by proxy is not necessarily desiring the good. On the other hand, the weak reading has the merit of not requiring all agents to create external products as their proxies, and it does not imply that the desire for the reproductive activity and the desire for the good come apart, since the point of it is to explain how mortals possess the good things that constitute *eudaimonia*.

2.3 Sheffield on the Notion of Psychic Pregnancy

Closely related to the reproductive activity is the notion of 'pregnancy' in Diotima's account, since Diotima begins her account of reproduction by claiming that 'all of us are pregnant both in body and in soul' (206C). According to Diotima, those pregnant in body carry physical offspring (208E), while those who are more pregnant in soul carry 'what is fitting for a soul to bear and bring to birth' (209A). And what is fitting for a soul is 'wisdom and the rest of virtue' (209A). The reproductive activity, which takes place in the presence of beauty, is what humans and animals undertake in order to deliver the pregnancies carried within them. One thing worth noting is that the state of pregnancy is not caused by the encounter with beauty but a pre-existing state of the agents. Sheffield writes that 'The encounter with beauty does not make one pregnant, but delivers a pre-existing state of pregnancy.' Sheffield construes the states of pregnancies in Diotima's speech as 'potentialities.'⁶⁹ On this picture, to be

⁶⁹ (88-89)

pregnant is to have a certain sort of potentiality. Thus, the claim that ‘all of us are pregnant in body and in soul’ is understood as expressing the idea that human beings all have potentialities for children, wisdom, and the rest of virtue (those with which the soul is pregnant). The reproductive activity conducted in the presence of beauty, as the work of *eros*, is meant to *realise* or *express* these potentialities in human nature, according to Sheffield.⁷⁰ Briefly, pregnancy is understood as a natural state of potentiality, and giving birth in beauty is the expression of the potentiality. How do these two notions (pregnancy and the reproductive activity) relate to the goal of *eros*, namely the good? Sheffield points out that the potentialities for children, wisdom, and the rest of virtue are something good and divine in human nature, and this is also the reason why they can only be delivered in the presence of beauty but not in anything ugly.⁷¹ Thus, since these potentialities are something good and divine in human nature, realising these potentialities via the reproductive activity is, therefore, realising good things for the agents. This explains a previous point that the good desired by *eros* has to be produced in order to be possessed by mortals. That is, Plato has a fundamental claim that for human beings, in order to possess the desired good which constitutes *eudaimonia*, it is necessary for them to engage in some kind of productive activity. If human beings want to possess certain goods, e.g., children and wisdom, they have to realise their good potentialities for having children, wisdom, and virtue through some kind of productive activity. This explains the relationship between the good, the reproductive activity, and pregnancy. Sheffield writes that:

⁷⁰ (ibid.)

⁷¹ (ibid.)

All human beings carry potentialities for children and wisdom and virtue (albeit to varying degrees), and it is the task of our *ergon* to express these in actions (e.g. heroic deeds) or productions (e.g. poetic displays, or educational *logoi*). Having children, performing heroic deeds, creating poems, and making laws are all examples of reproductive activity. Such activities not only express the producer's nature (they 'deliver' a certain pregnancy type, 209a1, b2, 5–6, c3–4); various actions and productions make a certain good (e.g. psychic virtue) manifest for the desiring agent in question.⁷²

As for why the reproductive activity is desired, Sheffield writes that:

it enables the producer to realize himself in a certain good way and in so doing to secure the sorts of things believed to provide “*eudaimonia* for all time to come” (209e4–5). Giving birth in the presence of beauty is the way that desiring agents try to attain possession of the beautiful and good things that promise *eudaimonia*. And if that is the case then the good has not dropped from view in this discussion of reproductive activity.⁷³

Sheffield acknowledges that the notion of psychic pregnancy is ‘an epistemologically optimistic assumption.’⁷⁴ She suggests that we compare this assumption (of the notion of psychic pregnancy) with Plato's epistemological optimism, the theory of recollection, from the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*.⁷⁵ We can see that that theory of

⁷² (93)

⁷³ (93-94)

⁷⁴ (131-132)

⁷⁵ I take her suggestion as indicating that her proposed optimistic notion of psychic pregnancy can be supported by Plato's theory of recollection, which is also optimism.

recollection ‘has a clear explanation for our ability for knowledge: knowledge is recollection of what the soul once knew.’ As I understand her, what Sheffield suggests is that Plato’s theory of recollection is in the background in the *Symposium* but is not clearly stated. It is only hinted in the claim that ‘human beings are pregnant both in body and soul.’⁷⁶ If the theory of recollection is at work in the *Symposium*, then it is no surprise there is the assumption that the potentialities for developing knowledge and true virtue are grounded in human nature. She states this more explicitly in an earlier paper. Sheffield speculatively suggests that:

Plato in the *Symposium* is suggesting that the potential for knowledge is due to certain structural features of the soul itself. For in physical pregnancy the embryo’s potential to develop into a human being is grounded in certain physical properties such as, we would say today, a certain genetic structure. So, perhaps, in the case of psychic pregnancy, the potentiality for knowledge of beauty and virtue may be grounded in its possession of a certain sort of psychic structure.⁷⁷

Supposedly, then, it is just ‘a brute fact about our nature’ that we possess such structure. If the potentialities for knowledge and virtue are inherent in the structure of the soul itself, i.e., grounded in human nature, then this can explain why we naturally

⁷⁶ It is worth noting that although Sheffield thinks this claim can be taken as a hint to Plato’s theory of recollection, the non-philosophical lovers are not recollecting knowledge in the *Symposium*. There is a difference between Plato’s theory of recollection and Sheffield’s proposed notion of psychic pregnancy. Plato’s theory of recollection can be taken as suggesting that we all have potentialities for various kinds of knowledge. Sheffield’s notion of psychic pregnancy explains not only human potentialities for knowledge but also various potentialities for writing poems, creating artefacts, establishing laws, etc. I thank my supervisor, Dr Fiona Leigh, for pointing out this difference for me.

⁷⁷ (2001, 30)

desire to deliver these pregnancies upon reaching a certain age. As Sheffield notes, ‘For if the development of our psychic pregnancy were not to some extent grounded in our nature, it is hard to see why we should naturally desire to give birth when we reach a certain age.’⁷⁸ The fact that these good and divine potentialities are inherent in the structure of the soul in the first place also explains why the state of pregnancy is a *pre-existing* state of agents prior to the encounter with beauty.

2.4 Sheffield on the Immortality Achieved by the Philosophical Lover

Sheffield’s reading of the reproduction passage and her proposal of the notion of psychic pregnancy provide us with the necessary background to understand how she interprets the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover. Sheffield suggests that in the case of the philosophical lover, immortality resides ‘in a perfection of soul.’⁷⁹ According to Sheffield, in the *Symposium*, the perfection of the soul is achieved when the philosophical lover fully realises his potentiality for knowledge of the Form of Beauty. This realisation is achieved in the activity of contemplating the Form of Beauty, as Sheffield writes that the potentialities for wisdom and virtue are ‘only fully actualized in knowing the form of beauty.’ And when the rational potentiality for knowledge of the Form of Beauty is fully realised, the virtue of *nous* is produced. As Sheffield notes, ‘When the DHM⁸⁰ reaches such a point he is said to “Look there and behold it with that by which he ought’ (ἐκείνο ᾧ δεῖ, 212a1), a phrase which elsewhere in the dialogues is said to be *nous*.’⁸¹ By ‘the virtue of *nous*’, Sheffield takes *nous* as more of a virtue rather than only a faculty of thought. She draws on

⁷⁸ (2006, 132-133)

⁷⁹ (2006, 151)

⁸⁰ This abbreviation stands for the Desiring agent of the Higher Mysteries.

⁸¹ (129; By other dialogues, Sheffield refers to *Phaedrus* 247c, *Phaedo* 65e, *Republic* 490b, 518c, 532a; ch. 5 fn. 20)

Menn's conception of *nous* as a virtue, with particular reference to 'Phaedrus 241a3 and Laws 12. 963a6–9 (where *nous* is said to be the chief of the four virtues). Menn argues that *nous* is reason in a certain sense, "reserved for infallible direct intellectual intuition", it is "the virtue of thinking, not the faculty of thought."⁸² As I understand it, Sheffield uses '*nous*' and 'the virtue of *nous*' interchangeably in her book. '*Nous*' or 'the virtue of *nous*' is used to refer to the developed understanding which marks the full realisation of the innate disposition or power. Here, the innate disposition or power is the rational potentiality to know the Form of Beauty, namely one type of the psychic pregnancy which I have presented earlier. It is a *rational* potentiality because it requires the philosophical method for it to be fully actualised. Sheffield writes:

The fact that the soul is pregnant with "wisdom and the rest of virtue" (209a2–3) and requires the philosophical method of the ascent for its successful expression suggests that the potentiality has to be understood as rational. This is confirmed by the fact that the proper realization of this potentiality (a successful *tokos*)⁸³ results in *knowledge* of beauty and true virtue (211d1–3, 212a1–3).⁸⁴

Furthermore, the realisation of this rational potentiality can only be caused by the Form, as Sheffield notes that the Form causes the DHM to 'develop his ability to perceive the form, an ability which is innate, and the fullest expression of which is *nous* ... Only the form can cause the proper emergence of *nous* because this is what

⁸² (2006, ch. 5, fn. 27; Menn, 1995)

⁸³ *Tokos* means 'childbirth', 'offspring' in English.

⁸⁴ (2006, 128)

that potentiality is a potentiality for.’⁸⁵ Sheffield suggests that knowledge of the Form of Beauty is the end of this rational potentiality as she writes that ‘Since this potentiality is only fully actualized in knowing the form of beauty, it would seem to be a power directed towards a certain kind of end: knowledge of the form.’⁸⁶ That is, on Sheffield’s view, ‘Contemplation of the form is the *telos* of *erōs* (211c6–d3).’⁸⁷ The philosophical lover’s virtue is said to be produced at this point, according to Sheffield, in this activity of contemplating the Form, as she writes that ‘The philosopher’s virtue is occasioned by the most beautiful object—that for the sake of which all previous toils were performed’ (210E-211A).⁸⁸ Thus, on Sheffield’s interpretation, the ‘true virtue’ begot and nourished by the philosophical lover (212A) is the virtue of *nous*, and in Diotima’s speech, this virtue is knowledge of the Form of Beauty. Sheffield writes that:

...delivering true virtue is to beget *nous* and knowledge in the activity of contemplation. The DHM produces true virtue by grasping the truth (212a3–5). Since nothing further is required to deliver true virtue, it is suggested that true virtue is knowledge of the form of beauty. And it is further suggested, as we have seen, that this expresses, or is, the virtue of *nous*, for this is what emerges in the encounter with the form.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ (130-131)

⁸⁶ (129)

⁸⁷ (148)

⁸⁸ (141)

⁸⁹ (149)

One feature of this view is that contemplating the Form and producing true virtue are not two distinct events because the virtue (of *nous*) is produced right in the activity of contemplating the Form.⁹⁰ Sheffield also emphasises that apart from the contemplation of the Form, nothing further is required to attain *eudaimonia* for the philosophical lover. She notes that:

If we are to take seriously Socrates' claim that 'It is here, if anywhere, that life is worth living for a human being, in contemplation of beauty itself' (211d1–3), then it would seem that contemplation of the form of beauty is desirable for its own sake. If this is the life worth living, then nothing further will be sought beyond the activity of contemplation. Virtue in this instance (the virtue of *nous*) is constitutive of happiness. Nothing further seems to be required for *eudaimonia*.⁹¹

Since nothing further than contemplation is required to attain *eudaimonia* for the philosophical lover, which suggests that wisdom or contemplation is the final good for the philosophical lover, it is essential to understand how Sheffield interprets 'possessing the good always' in the case of the philosophical lover. As discussed above, Sheffield understands 'possessing the good always' as possessing the good in a *secure and stable* manner. Sheffield contends that 'Contemplation is not only a more final good, it is also a more secure good in at least two senses.'⁹² In the first sense, contemplation is a more secure good because the object of contemplation is changeless and perfect. The philosophical lover's virtue is grounded in knowledge of a changeless and perfect object, namely the Form. That is, contemplation is a secure

⁹⁰ (ibid.)

⁹¹ (143)

⁹² (144)

good because its object is changeless, and thus the knowledge of it is stable and can be possessed in a stable manner. In the second sense, Sheffield contends that ‘Contemplation is a more secure good for the DHM not just because it is grounded in knowledge of a stable object, but also because it is a good of his own soul. There is no further event upon which possession of the good relies in this case.’⁹³ In other words, contemplation is a secure and stable good because the possession of this good is not dependent on any further event. One does not depend on another person, for example, to possess this good. Whether other people have knowledge or not does not affect one’s possession of this good. Besides, one does not need to do anything other than contemplation to possess this good. An example in contrast, namely a kind of good that is dependent on further events, is honour. One’s possession of honour is dependent on events such as other people’s remembering one’s deeds and the preservation of one’s works by others. In summary, realising the rational potentiality for knowledge of the Form of Beauty (begetting the true virtue of *nous*) is how the philosophical lover’s soul becomes perfect. And this perfection of the soul is the kind of immortality achieved by the philosophical lover, according to Sheffield.

Sheffield’s interpretation faces an objection, which points to the reproduction passage in which generation is described as ‘leaving behind something “such as oneself.”’ That is, in that passage it is mentioned that one new thing is produced in place of the old one in the generative activity. But on Sheffield’s interpretation, the philosophical lover becomes immortal without leaving anything behind. Sheffield’s reply to this objection seems to be twofold. She reaffirms that as she has argued, we can endorse a weak reading of the reproduction passage. This is because it is unclear whether ‘reproduction—a special case of generative activity—necessarily involved

⁹³ (145)

the creation of an external product which will go on and on after one's death, or whether the point of the passage was simply that living beings require productive activity of various kinds in order to attain anything at all.⁹⁴ If the latter point is what Plato intended, then it leaves open the question regarding the form of the productive activity and how long the product has to last. Sheffield suggests that since there is 'no external product that results from the activity of contemplation', we can take this as evidence to endorse the weak reading of the reproduction passage. Sheffield also draws upon Aristotle's distinction between *poiēsis* and *praxis* and clarification of where the goal resides in either case.⁹⁵ In the case of *praxis*, the *telos* is in the activity itself, whereas in the case of *poiēsis*, the *telos* is in the production of external products. Aristotle clarifies 'the distinction between external products and internal activity and where the goal resides in either case.' According to Sheffield, what really matters to Aristotle 'in the end is the internal activity—doing our own *energeia*, so to speak.' With this distinction at her disposal, Sheffield suggests that in the *Symposium*,

The DLM⁹⁶ produces a law-abiding city, or a good student, whose *energeia* is his own, where the *telos* of the production is in another city or soul whose flourishing secures him honour. But the DHM reproduces in himself, so to speak, where the goal of the production lies in his own soul. This makes good sense of the emphasis on the state of the agent at the highest level of the ascent.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ (150)

⁹⁵ Sheffield refers to Aristotle's *NE* 1140a1-6, b6-7; Sheffield (2006, ch 5, fn. 50)

⁹⁶ The Desiring agent of the Lower Mysteries, namely the honour lover.

⁹⁷ (150)

As it seems to me, Sheffield suggests that the philosophical lover undertakes an internal activity (contemplation), which is a form of the generative activity, that has its *telos* in the activity itself, since wisdom is the final good pursued for its own sake. By contrast, the honour lover undertakes an activity of which the *telos* lies in the external production, since honour (the *telos* for the honour lover) can only be obtained from what an agent externally produces, e.g., external production like literary works and laws. Sheffield is aware that her approach might be concluded as ‘an Aristotelian development, rather than a Platonic interpretation, and one that relies on clarifying the distinction between *poiēsis* and *praxis*, and where the goal of the activities resides in either case.’⁹⁸ But she contends that her interpretation can account for ‘the emphasis on the activity of contemplation as itself the end of the best human life.’⁹⁹ That is, this interpretation has the merit of explaining why the contemplative life is the best human life in itself without further ends. Besides, her interpretation can account for the absence, in the text, of an external object produced by the philosophical lover.

2.5 My Response to Sheffield’s Interpretation

I agree with Sheffield on her interpretation that the kind of immortality achieved by the philosophical lover is the perfection of the soul. But I do not entirely agree that the ‘true virtue’ begot by the philosophical lover in Diotima’s final sentences refers solely to the virtue of *nous*. That is, it does not seem to me that the contemplative activity and producing true virtue are exactly the same event. I do not intend to object to Sheffield’s interpretation that the philosophical lover realises the virtue of *nous* in the activity of contemplating the Form of Beauty. But I would like to argue that the ‘true

⁹⁸ (151)

⁹⁹ (ibid.)

virtue' begot by the philosophical lover would include both the virtue of *nous* and moral virtues, such as courage and temperance, as well.

As mentioned in the first chapter, Lear speculatively suggests that the Socrates in Alcibiades' speech is a fully initiated lover, namely the philosophical lover who has completed the ascent.¹⁰⁰ And it can be seen that the Socrates in Alcibiades' speech clearly possesses the moral virtues of temperance and courage (*Sym.* 216D, 219D, 220D, 221B). Sheffield recognises that the Socrates in Alcibiades' speech possesses virtues other than the virtue of *nous*, as she writes that 'Socrates is shown to embody a host of social and civic virtues: he is temperate, wise, courageous, and pious, if we suppose, as I have suggested, that philosophical practice is itself an act of piety and service to the gods.'¹⁰¹ However, she does not think the Socrates in Alcibiades' speech has completed the ascent to the Form of Beauty. She has two reasons for this view. The first is that 'Socrates says he knows nothing but "erotic matters" (177d).' The second is that Sheffield thinks Socrates 'embodies the characteristics of *erōs* as a seeker after wisdom.' These seem to suggest that he has not yet achieved a godlike state of understanding since he is still a seeker after wisdom. Her conclusion is that 'Socrates can be used as a model of philosophical *erōs* but not as someone who has completed the ascent.'¹⁰² Destrée holds another view on this subject and has a persuasive observation of Socrates' courage in Alcibiades' speech. As he sees it, Socrates shows his intellectual commitment in his courageous action because he is described as being better 'at keeping a cool head (*emphrōn*)' than Laches (221B). Being better at 'keeping a cool head' suggests that he *knows* better than Laches about

¹⁰⁰ Lear (2006, 119)

¹⁰¹ Sheffield (2006, 195)

¹⁰² (2006, ch. 7, fn. 27)

how to be courageous. He does not merely possess courage as a natural virtue.

Destrée writes:

Socrates is more *emphrōn* than even Laches because, first of all, he knows full well what he is doing, and why he should behave the way he does: he is well aware that by showing the enemy that he is going to defend himself fiercely while retreating, he won't be attacked. His courage is thus much more than just a "natural," purely instinctive reaction towards the object that causes fear; it is a highly calculated way of behaving according to the circumstances.¹⁰³

In the light of this, it seems we have a good reason to believe that Socrates has completed the ascent to the Form of Beauty, since he does not merely possess the virtue of courage naturally but *knows* how to be courageous, which can be interpreted as a result of having seen the Form of Beauty.

Even if we set aside the question as to whether the Socrates in Alcibiades' speech has completed the ascent, there is still evidence to believe that the fully initiated lover, who has completed the ascent to the Form of Beauty, would produce true moral virtue besides the virtue of *nous*. The following thought is based on Sheffield's interpretation of states of pregnancies as potentialities in Diotima's speech. Recall that Diotima claims that those who are more pregnant in their souls than in their bodies are pregnant with 'what is fitting for a soul to bear and bring to birth.' And

¹⁰³ Destrée (2017, 228); In that chapter, Destrée concludes that 'the "true virtue" must refer to moral or political virtues once they have been enlightened by the knowledge, or "science of the beautiful" the philosopher has now acquired (even if imperfectly).' (231); My view is different from his in the respect that as I see it, 'the true virtue' refers to both intellectual and moral virtues, since 'wisdom and the rest of virtue' are fitting for a soul, and it can be reasonably supposed that the philosophical lover would be prompted by his *eros* to realise his potentialities for both intellectual and moral virtues.

what is fitting for a soul is ‘wisdom and *the rest of virtue*’ (209A, italics mine). A few lines later, when Diotima claims that the greatest and most beautiful wisdom concerns the proper ordering of cities and households, she claims that that is ‘*moderation and justice*’ (209A, italics mine), which can be reasonably included in what she means by ‘the rest of virtue.’ Now, it might be thought that in this context, there is no mention of the philosophical lover, since Diotima only mentions that the poets and all the craftsmen are those who beget ‘wisdom and the rest of virtue.’ Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suppose that the philosophical lover must be a person who is more pregnant in soul than in body, and thus is more pregnant with ‘wisdom and *the rest of virtue*’ since these are fitting for a soul. If this is right, then the philosophical lover must have the potentialities for developing both wisdom and other moral virtues, since the expression ‘the rest of virtue’ seems to imply moral virtues like moderation and justice, as these are mentioned by Diotima following her claim about wisdom and the rest of virtue. Thus, if the philosophical lover’s soul is also pregnant with ‘the rest of virtue’, it does not seem that he would produce only the virtue of *nous* at the end of the ascent. Although wisdom or *nous* is the most prominent virtue amongst all in Plato’s philosophy, it is more plausible that the philosophical lover would be driven to realise all his potentialities for knowledge and moral virtues on account of the work of *eros*, which, according to Sheffield, is to realise the *good* potentialities in human nature. The potentiality for moral virtue must be good as well, and thus it is reasonable to include it as one of the good things that can be realised through the work of *eros*. That is, it does not seem that the work of *eros* is restricted to realising the potentiality for knowledge only, since the potentialities for moral virtues are also fitting for the soul, and it is *eros*’ work to deliver the good pregnancies (potentialities), as Sheffield argued.

Furthermore, it is not incompatible to suggest both that the contemplative life is the truly happy life and that the philosophical lover would produce true moral virtues in addition to leading a contemplative life. Although both Sheffield and Sedley argue that the true virtue produced by the philosophical lover is the intellectual virtue and that the contemplative life is sufficient for the philosophical lover to attain *eudaimonia*, I do not think this is the case.¹⁰⁴ As I see it, Diotima's final account must make room for the production of true moral virtue in the case of the philosophical lover. I have given the textual reason for thinking that the philosophical lover would produce moral virtue besides intellectual virtue after completing the ascent. Another reason I hold for this suggestion is that if the immortality achieved in the case of the philosophical lover is the perfection of soul (as Sheffield suggests), this implies that what the philosophical lover cares about the most is perfecting his soul. Needless to say, producing and possessing more virtues is equivalent or conducive to possessing a more perfect soul. The philosophical lover who has acquired knowledge of the Form of Beauty supposedly has become wise, at least knowledgeable in relation to what makes everything beautiful, so he would be able to recognise that producing moral virtue would make his soul more beautiful, namely more perfect. In light of this, we can reasonably think that productive activities which result in perfecting the soul would be undertaken by the philosophical lover. Thus, it does not seem he would not produce true moral virtues after completing the ascent to the Form of Beauty. That is, it seems more plausible to suggest that the philosophical lover would produce moral virtue, whether or not he chooses to live a contemplative life alone.¹⁰⁵ Possessing more virtues enhances the philosophical lover's chance to

¹⁰⁴ Sedley (2017, 105)

¹⁰⁵ This line of thought echoes Lear's speculative suggestion that the fully initiated lover would like to develop an unchanging character after seeing the Form of Beauty, since he

lead a desired happy life, since there is no guarantee that the philosophical lover can always lead a contemplative life without disturbance from others. When it comes to the situation in which the philosophical lover is compelled to interact with others, it would be more ideal for him to have already possessed (or know) moral virtues, since being in possession of moral virtues would enable him to deal with mortal affairs properly at the time he interrupts his contemplative activity. And this in turn gives him a better chance to return to his contemplative activity without further disturbance resulting from improper handling of the inevitable mortal affairs. Therefore, possessing moral virtues is conducive to a more stable happy life. Producing and possessing true moral virtues does not impel one to lead a life in constant interaction with others, but it prepares one to live a better or happier life when one *has to* interact with others.

However, this does not amount to claiming that one has to complete the ascent to the Form of Beauty in order to possess moral virtues.¹⁰⁶ It is only a suggestion that knowing the Form of Beauty would lead one to produce true moral virtues, since acquiring knowledge of Beauty enables one to know why anything beautiful is beautiful. One would know why moral virtues are beautiful and producing true moral virtues is a beautiful thing to do. One would produce true moral virtues not only in the way of possessing these virtues naturally but also in the way of *knowing* what makes these moral virtues beautiful. As a consequence, one would be able to answer

realises that the better sort of immortality is being unchanging rather than simply enduring over time. To recapitulate, according to Lear, the fully initiated lover would be interested in developing an unchanging character after recognising the unchangingness of the Form of Beauty. And an unchanging character requires possessing moral virtue like temperance; Lear (2006, 119-120)

¹⁰⁶ Destrée, too, notes this point as he write that ‘obviously, no one needs to have reached the peak in the ascent towards the Form of the Beautiful, or the Good, in order to understand how to behave rationally towards enemies on a battlefield!’ (2017, 228)

questions like ‘Why is Courage a beautiful virtue?’ That is, having acquired knowledge of Beauty enables one to give accounts of why virtues (both intellectual and moral) are beautiful. Having acquired knowledge of why individual virtues are beautiful is conducive to producing ‘true virtue’, because it makes sense to say that the way to possess a *true* virtue, rather than possessing a virtue only as a natural quality, is to have an intellectual understanding to account for the virtue possessed.¹⁰⁷

In summary, although it is not clearly stated by Diotima that the true virtue produced by the fully initiated lover includes moral virtue, we still have both textual and philosophical reasons to believe that the fully initiated lover would produce true moral virtue after having completed the ascent. First, there is no reason for him not to realise the potentialities for moral virtues, since these must be fitting for the soul as well. Second, if the immortality achieved by him is the perfection of the soul as Sheffield claims, it is not unreasonable for him to produce more virtues in addition to the intellectual virtue to make his soul more perfect. That is to say, if there is a degree of the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover, i.e., the perfection of the soul, possessing more virtues is attaining a higher degree of immortality or of the perfection of the soul for him. This suggestion is still compatible with the claim that the contemplative life is the true happy life by Plato’s standard, because producing true moral virtue crucially does not hinder one from leading a contemplative life.

In this chapter I have presented Sheffield’s interpretation of the claims concerning immortality and how the philosophical lover achieves immortality in the *Symposium* as well as my objection to her interpretation that the true virtue produced by the

¹⁰⁷ The idea here is that one would not be able to give comprehensive definitions of virtues like courage unless one knows the Form of Beauty. I will explain in more detail in chapter 3.

philosophical lover is only the virtue of *nous*. In the next and final chapter, I will present my own interpretation of Diotima's claims concerning immortality and how the non-philosophical lovers and the philosophical lover achieve immortality respectively with the aid of Sheffield's and Lear's interpretations.

Chapter 3

In this chapter, I will present my understanding of the concept of immortality in the *Symposium*. I will present my understanding of what ‘the human desire for immortality’ is in Diotima’s claim in the *Symposium*, followed by my interpretation of how the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers achieve a human version of immortality respectively. My understanding of ‘the human desire for immortality’ is developed from Rowe’s and Lear’s interpretations.¹⁰⁸ I will argue that it is a desire to transcend mortality common in all types of agent, and that transcending mortality is taken to be part of *eudaimonia* by agents who have experienced beauty in the *Symposium*. I also draw upon Sheffield’s interpretation to argue that the type of immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover is a kind of self-sufficiency, namely a perfect state of the soul with properties of being wise and virtuous. This interpretation is close to Bury’s, Lear’s, and Sheffield’s interpretations.¹⁰⁹

3.1 The Human Desire for Immortality in the *Symposium*

In the previous chapter, I presented Sheffield’s interpretation of Socrates’ (Diotima’s) claims concerning immortality in the *Symposium*. In this section, I will present my objection to understanding immortality in Diotima’s claim as literal immortality, followed by my suggestion of how the desire for immortality can be better understood in Diotima’s claims.

To recapitulate, Sheffield understands the claim that ‘a lover must desire immortality along with the good’ as that a lover desires the good that can be possessed in a stable and secure manner, which means that the lover desires the kind

¹⁰⁸ Rowe (1998); Lear (2006)

¹⁰⁹ Bury (1932, xlv–xlvi); Lear (2006, 119-120); Sheffield (2006, 151)

of good that can be possessed at all future times, since this good would constitute *eudaimonia*, which is conceived by ancient Greeks as a state over one's lifetime. If one desires the good that would constitute *eudaimonia*, one must also desire to possess it at all future times because *eudaimonia* is a state over one's lifetime. Sheffield also thinks that immortality is not a separate goal of *eros*, since there is no separate argument in the *Symposium* for the claim that 'eros is after immortality as such.'¹¹⁰ With Sheffield, I will argue that Diotima should not be read as claiming that human beings desire immortality as such (literal immortality). Nonetheless, this does not entail that agents do not achieve any version of immortality, since 'not desiring immortality as such' does not imply that agents do not achieve any other version of immortality. In what follows, I will argue that, according to Diotima, human agents' desire for immortality is actually a reaction to the discontent with mortality. This desire is a striving to overcome the limitations of mortality in some way. The outcome of this striving is an achievement of a human version of immortality, which can be subdivided into two types belonging to the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers respectively. I will explain this shortly after I present my objection to understanding immortality literally in Diotima's claims.

Diotima's claim that 'we desire immortality along with the good' follows right after the claim that 'we desire to possess the good always' (206A-207A). It is tempting to understand immortality literally in her claim, especially when we understand immortality as instrumental to 'possess the good always.'¹¹¹ On my view, if we understand immortality in Diotima's claims as *only* having instrumental value,

¹¹⁰ (2006, 82)

¹¹¹ Both Obdrzalek (2010, 422, fn. 13) and Lear (2006, 106) have remarks suggesting that in the *Symposium*, immortality is desired instrumentally by agents in order to 'possess the good forever.'

namely merely being instrumental to possessing the good ‘always’, we would be restricted to understand it literally or at least in the temporal sense only. However, I do not think this is the case. I do not think immortality in Diotima’s claims has merely instrumental value. Neither do I think it should be understood literally or in the temporal sense only. Firstly, at the beginning of Diotima’s speech, it is claimed that Eros is a spirit between two extremes. He is in between immortal and mortal, wisdom and ignorance, beautiful and ugly (203C, 203E, 204A-B). It is because of his intermediate position that he desires what he has not yet attained, namely wisdom, beauty, and immortality. The significance of this myth seems to be that the *eros* of human beings is able to prompt humans to desire what humans do not have yet, particularly wisdom, beauty, and immortality, as they are mentioned in Diotima’s myth. Thus, this myth reveals to us that the human desire for immortality has more than instrumental value. It is a desire rising from the fact that human nature is not immortal. That is, at least one reason why we desire immortality is that we are not immortal. We do not desire immortality *only because* it is instrumental to a further end. Therefore, this myth does not restrict us to construe immortality in Diotima’s claim as literal immortality, since what is emphasised here is that humans desire what has *not yet be attained* because of the work of *eros* (204A). This myth does not specify a certain kind of immortality but only tells that what is desired is what one presently lacks. There can be more than one kind of immortality just as there is more than one kind of beauty, as Diotima later speaks about various kinds of beauty. Secondly, if immortality in Diotima’s claim is understood in the temporal sense only, then it should be the case that the immortality achieved by all types of agent, if they succeed at achieving it, would have to be lasting forever or at least enduring over time. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, there is no textual support for

understanding the immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover as necessarily involving the lasting of anything in the far future beyond the fully initiated lover's death. With Sheffield and Lear, I will argue that the fully initiated lover achieves a kind of immortality understood as the perfection of soul. If the interpretation of the perfection of soul is correct, it would seem inappropriate to understand immortality in Diotima's claims literally or in the temporal sense only, since it would seem odd if Diotima in the first place claims that we all desire immortality, understood in the temporal sense only, but at the end of her speech the fully initiated lover achieves a kind of immortality, which is the perfection of soul, that does not necessarily involve anything that endures over all time. In summary, I do not think Diotima claims that human beings desire literal immortality. Neither do I think Diotima means that the human desire for immortality is only instrumental to a further end. But rather, it is a desire rising from the fact about human nature.

How should Diotima's claim that 'humans desire immortality' (207A) be understood? My interpretation of this claim is based on parts of Rowe's and Lear's interpretations. Rowe has a persuasive suggestion concerning how we ought to understand the agents' desire for immortality in the *Symposium*. He asks the question of how the sorts of immortality achieved via the productive activities (the production of offspring that are like ourselves and achievements which will be remembered by others) have to do with the immortality that would be the condition of our literally possessing the good forever. He suggests that in reply to this question, Diotima would say that 'she is only trying to show that our behaviour, and that of mortal nature in general, shows a tendency to try to overcome the limitations set on us by our mortality...'¹¹² I find his suggestion fits better with the myth told by Diotima, since it

¹¹² (1998, 184)

explains the human behaviours of striving for immortality in terms of a tendency of human nature to overcome the limitations of mortality. This attempt to overcome mortality is very much like a tendency of Eros' in Diotima's myth. Eros is a spirit in between two extremes, and thus he has the tendency to acquire what has not yet been attained, and one of those unattained is immortality. One merit of Rowe's suggestion is that it does not restrict us to understand immortality in Diotima's claims literally or in the temporal sense only. If the human desire for immortality is understood as a striving to overcome the limitations of mortality in some way, then we can say that if one succeeds at overcoming the limitations of mortality in some way, one achieves a human version of immortality. This suggestion does not designate only one kind of immortality, since on this picture immortality is achieved when the limitations of mortality are overcome in some way. Thus, it makes room for the interpretation that different types of agent achieve different types of immortality, as I shall argue later. Human beings are mortal; however, under the work of *eros*, human beings attempt to overcome mortality, namely achieving a human version of immortality that is not yet attained. This explains the fact that human agents' desire to transcend mortality would lead them to achieve a human version of immortality. That is, the human desire to transcend the limitations of mortality can be understood as a desire for a kind of immortality that is achievable in action for human beings.¹¹³ Worth noting is that Rowe's suggestion implies that the human desire for immortality is a reaction to the awareness of mortality since one has to be aware of what mortality is first, then one would form a desire to overcome the limitations of mortality. As Diotima's speech

¹¹³ Diotima introduces the productive activity (206E-209E) as the way for humans to achieve a kind of immortality.

implies, one needs to be aware of and discontent with the fact that one is ignorant so as to form a desire for wisdom (204A).

Now, in order to explain why humans come to be aware of the limitations of mortality, I need to bring in Lear's interpretation of links between immortality and beauty, since her interpretation can help us to tie things together. I have presented in the first chapter that Lear advocates there are several links between beauty and immortality. What can be combined here with Rowe's suggestion is the first link between immortality and beauty proposed by Lear, which is that the participants in Beauty manifest immortality and transcendence to a certain extent. To repeat, Lear's interpretation is that to experience someone or something as being beautiful is to 'experience a mortal thing as being or being filled with something immortal, unchanging, and unchangeable ... It would be to experience the beautiful thing or person, insofar as he was beautiful, as being godlike in the stability and self-sufficiency of his being.'¹¹⁴ Lear also contends that the perception of immortality in experiencing the beautiful would waken agents' desire for immortality, and thus it would induce agents' labour to 'secure immortality insofar as that is possible for a mortal human being.'¹¹⁵

Based on Lear's interpretation and Rowe's suggestion, my view is that Diotima advocates a theory that human agents come to form a desire for immortality after they experience beauty because they perceive beauty as perfect, immortal, and even divine. They come to be aware of their mortality in contrast with the immortality of the beautiful they perceive.¹¹⁶ Their first reaction to the awareness of their mortality is a

¹¹⁴ Lear (2006, 117-118)

¹¹⁵ (106)

¹¹⁶ Obdrzalek has also noted that 'Our awareness—perhaps not fully articulated—of our mortality and imperfection gives rise to *eros*.' (2010, 419)

discontent, which leads to a striving to overcome mortality, and therefore they start pursuing immortality insofar as that is achievable in action. In Diotima's speech, what is needed for forming a desire for immortality is agents' awareness of and discontent with their mortality, both of which are the result of experiencing beauty as perfect and immortal.

Another question related to the interpretation that human agents pursue a certain version of immortality under the work of *eros* is this: What exactly is the goal of *eros*? Is *eros* a desire for immortality or a desire for *eudaimonia* in the *Symposium*? To recapitulate, in her book, Sheffield's answer to this question is that immortality is not a separate goal of *eros* but within the larger goal, namely *eudaimonia*.¹¹⁷ This is because Sheffield understands Diotima's claim that we all desire immortality along with the good as that we all desire to possess the good that will constitute *eudaimonia* in a stable and secure manner, since *eudaimonia* is a state over one's lifetime, and thus the good that constitutes *eudaimonia* must be had at all future times if it is to be had at all. I think this understanding is right to the extent that the good to possess must be had throughout one's whole lifetime, as *eudaimonia* concerns the state over one's whole lifetime. But, as I showed in chapter 2, Sheffield argued that there is an alternative way to interpret this claim concerning *eros*, which is to understand it as describing a 'desire for a certain quality of existence which typically (for a Greek) characterised the divine.'¹¹⁸ My view is closer to this interpretation. I take the tendency to transcend the limitations of mortality as a tendency within the human *eros* for *eudaimonia*. Moreover, I suggest that in the *Symposium* agents who have experienced beauty believe that *eudaimonia* partly consists in transcending the

¹¹⁷ (2006, 82)

¹¹⁸ Howatson and Sheffield (2008, x viii)

limitations of mortality in some way, and this transcendence will be achieved by possessing certain good things via production.¹¹⁹ The achievement of overcoming the limitations of mortality is a human version of immortality. And human agents believe that attaining *eudaimonia* includes overcoming the limitations of mortality in some way, namely achieving a human version of immortality.

I have two reasons for making this suggestion. The first reason is that this interpretation offers a plausible explanation for why all types of agent desire *eudaimonia* after experiencing beauty. According to Diotima's speech, the experiences of beauty invoke humans' desire for *eudaimonia* and immortality (205D, 208B). The reason why human beings desire immortality is that human beings perceive beauty as immortal, transcendent, and divine, as Lear has argued.¹²⁰ But, why, in Plato's view, do human beings desire *eudaimonia* after experiencing beauty, since human beings neither see *eudaimonia* in beauty nor directly perceive beauty as possessing *eudaimonia*? We know from Diotima's speech that Plato thinks that agents desire to possess good things after experiencing the beautiful (204E). And the real reason for desiring to possess good things is that the goods would bring about *eudaimonia* (205A). This argument implies the thought that human beings realise they have not yet attained *eudaimonia* in experiencing beauty, since it is *eros*' function to prompt human beings to pursue what is not yet attained, given the premise that they are aware of what they have not yet attained (204A-B). It follows that human beings must know they have not yet attained *eudaimonia* from their experiences of beauty. Yet how do they come to know they have not yet attained *eudaimonia* in their experiences of beauty? I suggest it is from the discontent with mortality that they

¹¹⁹ I will explain this suggestion in more detail throughout the whole chapter.

¹²⁰ (2006, 118)

realise they have not yet attained *eudaimonia*. They perceive beauty as immortal, and thus come to know they are not immortal. From the discontent with their mortality, which is the result of perceiving beauty as immortal, human beings realise they have not yet attained *eudaimonia*; otherwise, there would not be discontent. I admit this argument requires an assumption that discontent and *eudaimonia* do not come together. Nonetheless, I contend that this is a reasonable and plausible assumption. Although the ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia* is not the same as the modern concept of happiness, it is counterintuitive to think one could be in possession of *eudaimonia* and discontent at the same time. Typically, *eudaimonia* is translated into well-being and flourishing. If one discovers discontent with mortality, it seems certain one must come to be aware that one is not *eudaimōn*, since it is hard to see how one can flourish and be well if one is in constant discontent with things like mortality. Thus, if it is right that, in the discontent with mortality, one comes to be aware that one is neither immortal nor *eudaimōn*, then in attaining *eudaimonia* or in believing that one attains *eudaimonia*, one's discontent with mortality should eventually vanish. And the disappearance of the discontent with mortality implies one transcends or believes one transcends the limitations of mortality in some way. That is, eliminating the discontent with mortality is a necessary condition for attaining *eudaimonia*. And one could eliminate this discontent via transcending the limitations of mortality in some way. Therefore, if transcending mortality in some way could eliminate once and for all the discontent which does not come together with *eudaimonia*, then transcending mortality in some way is part of *eudaimonia*. This is why I suggest that in the *Symposium*, agents who have experienced beauty believe that transcending mortality in some way is part of *eudaimonia*. My second reason is that, according to Diotima's speech, the means to achieve *eudaimonia* and to transcend mortality is the

same, which is possessing certain goods via production. If both transcending mortality and achieving *eudaimonia* are to be accomplished through the exact same activity, it is hard not to think that these are more or less the same goal. After all, if conducting one activity brings about two outcomes, it makes sense to think there is a relation between these two outcomes. And I contend that the most plausible relation between immortality and *eudaimonia* in the *Symposium* is that immortality is part of *eudaimonia*. Diotima claims that the goods that will bring about *eudaimonia* have to be possessed through being produced by the agents (206E). That is, *eudaimonia* is attained through possessing certain goods via production. And the way to possess the goods, which is the productive activity, is claimed to be ‘an immortal thing for a mortal animal to do’ (206C), ‘what mortals have in place of immortality’ (207A), and a device by which ‘what is mortal shares in immortality’ (208B). These claims suggest that the way to attain *eudaimonia* is also a way to achieve a kind of immortality. That is, the way to attain *eudaimonia* is an immortal way of possessing good things and is claimed to enable mortals to share in immortality.¹²¹ Therefore, the success of possessing the good things in an immortal way, namely the success of attaining *eudaimonia*, implies the achievement of a kind of immortality. If successfully attaining *eudaimonia* implies successfully achieving a human version of immortality, given that they are brought about by the exact same activity, it does not seem implausible to suggest that immortality is part of *eudaimonia* in the *Symposium*. Briefly, without the means of possessing the goods via production, neither immortality nor *eudaimonia* would be achieved. *Eudaimonia* would be possible to be

¹²¹ This ‘immortal way’ of possessing good things is possessing good things via ‘producing’ them. I will explain in more detail in a later section.

attained only when the means that would also bring about a human version of immortality is adopted.

To conclude my interpretation, the ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia* includes well-being and flourishing. In the *Symposium*, however, '*eudaimonia*' also implies a state that transcends mortality in some way, namely a human version of immortality. My interpretation of Diotima's claim that 'A lover must desire immortality along with the good' (207A) is that a lover desires *eudaimonia* and believes that *eudaimonia* includes transcending mortality in some way. This is because one discovers discontent with mortality in experiencing beauty. One knows one has not yet attained *eudaimonia* from one's discontent, since it does not seem plausible to flourish with discontent with mortality. It is necessary to eliminate the discontent with mortality to attain *eudaimonia*. Furthermore, the way to eliminate the discontent with mortality and to attain *eudaimonia* are the same, which is possessing certain good things via production. But how can possessing certain good things help agents to transcend the limitations of mortality? I will explain in more detail how good things play the role of enabling agents to transcend mortality in some way shortly.

3.2 The Productive Activity is the Way to Achieve Immortality and *Eudaimonia*

I have argued that transcending the limitations of mortality is believed by agents who have experienced beauty to be part of *eudaimonia* in the *Symposium* and that the way to achieve this goal is through possessing certain good things via production. But what is special about this mode of possessing the goods that it is the way to achieve a human version of immortality and *eudaimonia*? I will attempt to answer this question in this section.

To quote a few sentences from Diotima's speech concerning this mode of possessing the goods, reproduction in beauty is what mortals have in place of immortality (206E-207A). 'Mortal nature seeks so far as possible to live forever and be immortal. And this is possible in one way only: by reproduction' (207D). Diotima gives similar remarks while describing the productive activity, as she says that by this device (reproduction), 'what is mortal shares in immortality' (208B). It has been presented in chapter 2 that Sheffield thinks the salient point of the reproduction passage is that 'production' is the way to possess the good things which are believed to bring about *eudaimonia*. The point of that passage is not leaving behind new things, i.e., living on by proxy. I agree with Sheffield that the salient point of the reproduction passage is not 'leaving behind new things' but that 'production' is the way to possess the good things.¹²² But, on my understanding, even though producing external things is not necessary, it does not follow that producing external things is not one of the ways to transcend mortality as there can be more than one way of transcending mortality. Leaving behind human children or things that represent the producers can be just one of the ways to transcend mortality. On my view, the point is not to read this passage as designating one very specific form of the productive activity, but to see that the productive activity in general is the way to possess good things that will bring about a certain kind of immortality and *eudaimonia*. There is, however, a puzzle about the productive activity: Why do the goods to possess have to be produced by human agents? The possessing relation established via production must have a bearing on achieving a certain kind of immortality and *eudaimonia*. As presented in chapter 2, Sheffield has pointed out that the feature of *eudaimonia* is that it concerns one's whole lifetime. If it is to be had, it has to be had at all future times.

¹²² Sheffield (2006, 104-105)

Therefore, the goods that are equivalent to or constitute *eudaimonia* have to be had at all future times if they are to be had at all. On my understanding, overcoming the limitations of mortality shares this feature too, since if one desires to overcome mortality, one desires to overcome it for the whole time to come in the future. That is, once achieved, immortality is a state that concerns one's whole lifetime. Thus, one's state of possessing the goods must have the feature of remaining the same for all time to come. As I see it, production seems to rightly serve the role of ensuring that the possessing relation remains the same for all future time. The possessing relation established from production is a specific type of possessing relation. It is a causal relation that cannot be changed once established. A producer begins possessing her product right from the point of time when the product is completed by her, and this possessing relation remains through the whole of time. For example, the biological reproduction is one type of the many productive activities. The relation between biological parents and the child never changes; it remains throughout the whole of time. This relation does not change after the parents pass away; the parents' child remains their child even if they are gone. This principle applies as well in the case of producing things like artworks. A painter possesses her painting once the painting is completed by the painter. Even if the painting is sold to a collector, it still stands in a type of possessing relation to its producer. The painter owns the painting not in the sense of having the absolute control of what can be done to the painting, e.g. hanging it in the house or putting it on public display, but in the sense of being the source (the creator) of the painting. That is, there is always a kind of possessing relation between a creator and the created works that cannot be changed by money or law, since the possessing relation established via trade and law implies that the owner of the products could be changed. And Plato seemed to think that the goods that are able to

bring about immortality and *eudaimonia* to the possessors must stand in this type of possessing relation; otherwise, Diotima would not spend time explaining the productive activity. On my view, Plato has a good reason for this thought because the relation between oneself and one's *eudaimonia* (and immortality) is similar to the possessing relation established from production in the respect that this relation does not change once it is created. If I am able to produce artworks, I am the cause of the artworks I produce. I possess the artworks through a causal relation. Similarly, if I am able to produce good things that are essential for me to transcend mortality in some way and attain *eudaimonia*, I am the cause of the good things I produce.¹²³ That is, I am the ultimate cause of my own *eudaimonia* and immortality. The relation between my *eudaimonia* (and immortality) and me does not change once it is established because it is a causal relation just like the relation between a painter and the painting created by the painter. One's *eudaimonia* (and immortality) cannot be given to others by means of money or law. The source of my *eudaimonia* must be myself; I cannot buy my *eudaimonia* from others. The goods that will bring about *eudaimonia* have the feature of having to be produced by the possessors. And this feature of having to be produced supports Sheffield's interpretation of pregnancies as potentialities in the *Symposium* because things that can be produced by me must be things for which I have potentialities. I will draw upon this aspect of Sheffield's interpretation in a later section. In summary, production is the way to ensure that the things produced stand in a relation with the producers throughout the whole of time. The relation between the creator and the created goods does not change; once it is established, it remains for

¹²³ As I shall present later, the achievement of a human version of immortality requires possessing certain good things, for the good things are deemed as parts of the creators.

the whole of time. The next question is: How can possessing certain good things via production help agents transcend mortality in some way?

3.3 The Types of Immortality Achieved in the *Symposium*

Diotima takes it as given that the possession of good things would bring about *eudaimonia* (205A). And I have argued that transcending mortality is believed to be part of *eudaimonia* by agents who have experienced beauty under the work of *eros* in the *Symposium*. If my interpretation is right, what is still in need of explanation is how possessing certain good things via production could enable agents to transcend the limitations set by mortality in some way. To answer this question, it is essential to understand what agents see as the limitations of mortality. My suggestion is that the non-philosophical lovers and the philosophical lovers focus on different aspects of mortality. The non-philosophical lovers focus on the ‘finitude’ aspect of mortality, namely the feature of mortality that is having a finite life that would be terminated by death, while the philosophical lovers focus on the ‘non-divine’ aspect of mortality. As mentioned earlier, agents experience the beautiful as divine, immortal, and perfect. Mortality is non-divine for various reasons, one of which is its imperfection. On my reading, in experiencing beauty, the philosophical lover realises that mortality is non-divine, namely imperfect.¹²⁴ The ‘finitude’ and the ‘imperfect’ aspects of mortality correspond to the ‘deathless’ and the ‘perfect’ aspects of the beautiful. As a result of focusing on different aspects of mortality, what the non-philosophical lovers pursue is the continual existence of certain good things that to an extent represents the continual

¹²⁴ The reason why I suggest it is the ‘imperfection’ of mortality that is noticed by the philosophical lover is that, as I shall present later, the philosophical lover’s productive activity is an activity of realising the potentialities for knowledge and various virtues, which is also an activity of ‘perfecting’ his soul.

existence of themselves, while the philosophical lovers pursue becoming as divine (perfect) as possible for human beings.

My reason for making this suggestion is that this reading could explain the fact that the nature of the good things the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers produce is significantly different. What is common in both types of lover is that they all experience the beautiful. But why did Plato depict agents in lower and higher mysteries as taking such different good things as what they want to possess (produce) under the work of *eros*? It seems there should be a reason for this phenomenon. I suggest that this phenomenon can be explained in terms of their focus on different aspects of mortality. On my reading, when moved (and impressed) by beauty and confronted with their own mortality, agents in lower and higher mysteries focus on different aspects of mortality; thus, they take different things as the goods they want to possess. Besides, there seems to be a correlation between the focus on different aspects of mortality and the conception of good things in agents' minds. That is, if an agent focuses on the aspect of mortality that is the finitude of life, what is taken to be good would be things that are able to exist beyond the agent's mortal life, whether or not the goods are divine is not the agent's main concern.¹²⁵ On the other hand, if an agent focuses on the non-divine aspect of mortality, what is taken to be good would be divine things like wisdom and virtue.¹²⁶ The non-philosophical lovers and the philosophical lovers focus on different aspects of mortality, and this causes them to take very different things to be good. That is, they have different conception about what is good on account of focusing on different aspects of mortality. In summary,

¹²⁵ I thank my supervisor, Dr Fiona Leigh, for suggesting to me the expression of 'the finitude of life.'

¹²⁶ I will argue in the later part of this section that according to Diotima's speech, wisdom must be divine, and that true virtue based on wisdom would be divine to a certain extent as well.

one's focus on a certain aspect of mortality has an effect on what one takes as good, and what one takes as good determines the type of immortality one is able to achieve.

The Non-Philosophical Lover's Immortality

Diotima's speech reveals that the category of non-philosophical lovers includes the bodily lover and the honour lover. The bodily lover reproduces human offspring, thinking that his descendants will bring him 'immortality and remembrance and happiness' (208E). The honour lovers perform honourable deeds, write poems, establish laws and so on, hoping that the honour following these things would endure beyond their death. Diotima describes the honour lovers' offspring as 'immortal children' (209E) and says that their psychic children are more beautiful and 'more immortal' than human offspring (209C). Their offspring are 'immortal themselves' so can provide them with 'immortal glory and remembrance' (209D). The comparative description here implies that the immortality achieved by agents in the lower mysteries is lasting in time, since the reason why the honour lovers' psychic children are 'more immortal' than the human offspring is apparently that they *endure longer* in time and can be remembered longer by future generations. That is, the immortality achieved by the honour lovers consists in lasting through time. It is curious as to whether the bodily lover is after honour as well.¹²⁷ But what is in common between agents reproducing human children and agents producing psychic children like poems and laws is that they all wish for their children to last in time beyond their death. In relation to their desire to overcome mortality, the reason why the bodily lover wishes

¹²⁷ Sheffield (2006, ch4, fn. 19) takes the bodily lover as amongst honour lovers; Lear (2006, 108) writes that the bodily lovers 'think of bodily existence as itself being something good'; Kraut (2008, 291) points out the possibility that what the bodily lover values might be life itself.

his children to last after his death might be that he wants his offspring to keep him in memory or for his bloodline to continue; the reason why the honour lover wishes his psychic children to last after his death is that after his death, people would remember his honour based on his written poems, established laws, etc. That is, the approach to overcome mortality in the lower mysteries is producing things, e.g., honour and life, which last longer in time beyond agents' death.

The question here is how reproducing human children and attaining honour can help agents transcend mortality. There is no doubt that, according to Plato, agents do not become literally immortal via reproducing children and attaining honour from various deeds. I draw upon Sheffield's interpretation of pregnancies as potentialities presented in chapter 2 to answer this question. On my view, the most plausible explanation is that via the productive activity, agents take the goods produced to be parts of themselves. The link between my creation and myself is not just a link consisting in people's memories. The link between the creator and the creation is a link between the creator and the creator's potentialities, like the link between a painter and a painter's painting, which has to be established by the productive activity rather than other activities like trading. Undertaking the productive activities, I realise my potentialities for children and honour. If human children reproduced and the honour resulted from various deeds are the realisations of my potentialities, it makes sense to view them as parts of me since they in a sense stem from me. If these parts of me continue to exist after I die, then it follows that I have managed to transcend the limitations set by mortality on me in some way. In other words, I cannot live forever, so under the work of *eros* I create good things for which I have potentialities. The link between the good things I produce and me is a link between my potentialities and me, which is established by the productive activity and would never change. These good

things are parts of me and last longer than me, which means that parts of me live on after I die as a person. Thus, I in a sense live on and mortality is in this sense overcome. Plato's doctrine that the goods that would bring about *eudaimonia* have to be produced by myself has a deeper meaning: they have to be things for which I have potentialities. This doctrine implies the thought that I am the ultimate source of my own *eudaimonia*. I cannot buy or ask others to give me *eudaimonia*.

Some philosophers have noted that the type of immortality achieved in the lower mysteries is a kind of vicarious immortality, which is not literal immortality.¹²⁸ If I understand them correctly, 'vicarious immortality' is achieved *through* the quasi-immortal existence of the good things the agents create. That is, it is because the good things the agents create last in time like immortals do (though not exactly) that the agents who create the good things attain a kind of immortality vicariously. Their analysis is compatible with my interpretation of the kind of immortality achieved by the non-philosophical lovers. However, I do not take the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover as a kind of vicarious immortality.¹²⁹ Although the non-philosophical lovers overcome mortality via creating things, which they take as parts of themselves, that last longer beyond their death, it does not follow that they achieve *eudaimonia* by Plato's standard. Honour does not seem to be a truly good thing for

¹²⁸ Price (1990, 31, 49) suggests that the immortality Diotima offers is a kind of quasi-immortality and the immortality achieved by the non-philosophical lovers is a vicarious immortality. I agree with him on the suggestion that the immortality achieved by the non-philosophical lovers is a vicarious immortality.

¹²⁹ Allen (1991, 73) writes that 'if Eros is love of immortality, it can only be of vicarious immortality' and 'Procreation is an image or imitation of immortality, and not in the strict sense immortality at all.' Allen is right in pointing out that the desired immortality in the *Symposium* cannot be literal immortality. I differ from Allen in thinking that the vicarious immortality is *only* achieved by the non-philosophical lovers, while the philosophical lover would achieve another kind of immortality. Cornford (1978, 126) is right in pointing out that the immortality achieved in the lower mysteries is 'immortality in time, not in an eternal world.' He also notes that Eros in the greater mysteries is transformed into 'a passion for immortality, not in time, but in the region of the eternal.' I agree with him on the point that the immortality to achieve in the lower and greater (higher) mysteries is different.

Plato, and thus does not bring about real *eudaimonia*, as we can see that Diotima has harsh words for the non-philosophical lovers: While she is describing the ascent of the initiate, she says that the initiate will ‘be looking mainly not at beauty in a single example — as a servant would who favored the beauty of a little boy or a man or a single custom (being a slave, of course, he’s low and small-minded)’ (210D).¹³⁰ A crucial difference between the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers is that the philosophical lover is claimed to produce ‘true virtue’ rather than images of virtue (212A). Thus, it seems that a plausible explanation why honour is not a truly good thing for Plato is that it does not make the soul beautiful, namely virtuous, since producing true virtue can be interpreted as making the soul beautiful.¹³¹ I will return to explain this shortly. The non-philosophical lovers focus on the finitude aspect of mortality and thus, create good things that last longer than themselves to transcend mortality. But the good things they create do not seem to be truly good things for Plato, since if they are, Diotima would have no need to continue her speech about the fully initiated lover’s ascent to the Form of Beauty and the production of true virtue. Thus, although the non-philosophical lovers might have successfully eliminated the discontent with mortality, an achievement that is essential to attaining *eudaimonia*, they fail to attain real *eudaimonia* because the good things they create are not the truly good things for Plato. At most, they only attain an image of *eudaimonia*. That is, they only *think* they attain *eudaimonia* without actually attaining it, as Diotima says that the bodily lovers provide themselves ‘through childbirth with immortality and remembrance and happiness, *as they think*, for all time to come’ (208E, italics mine).

¹³⁰ As Ferrari has noted, ‘She will have harsh words, in the course of describing the Greater Mysteries, for those whose horizons are bounded by custom (210d1-2).’ (1992, 255)

¹³¹ Plato wrote that a virtuous soul is a beautiful soul in the *Republic* (444D-E). See also Sheffield (2006, ch. 4, fn.17), White (2008, fn. 51).

Reproducing human offspring and attaining honour might successfully result in eliminating the discontent with mortality but these activities do not bring about real *eudaimonia* for these activities do not make the producers' souls beautiful.¹³²

In summary, human beings have potentialities for producing children and things that bring honour. The link between one and one's realised potentialities, i.e., the good things one produces, is established via a type of productivity, and thus cannot be changed. That is, this kind of link has the feature of unchangeableness, and this feature enables one to view one's creations as parts of oneself. Realising one's potentialities for producing children and attaining honour is a way to overcome the finitude aspect of mortality because children and honour, which can be taken as parts of one, last longer beyond one's death. The non-philosophical lovers eliminate the discontent with mortality and achieve a kind of vicarious immortality consisting in the continual existence of the good things, e.g. life and honour, they produce. However, they only *think* they attain *eudaimonia* without actually attaining real *eudaimonia* by Plato's standard, because the good things they produce are not truly good things and do not make their souls beautiful.

The Philosophical Lover's Immortality

As mentioned earlier, the types of immortality achieved by the non-philosophical and the philosophical lovers are different, which is a consequence of their focus on different aspects of mortality. The philosophical lover, namely the fully initiated

¹³² I agree with White (2008) on the point that the beauty of soul is more important than the communion with the Form of Beauty, since the end of *eros* is *eudaimonia*, and it is widely held that for Plato, a truly virtuous soul is a soul which attains real *eudaimonia*. But I differ from White in thinking that the kind of immortality the philosophical lover achieves does not consist of his enduring beautiful *logoi*.

lover,¹³³ focuses on the non-divine (imperfect) aspect of mortality, and thus he takes possessing things that are divine rather than things that last longer than him as the way to transcend mortality. It might be questioned how possessing divine things could transcend mortality in some way. My reasoning is that if one is able to realise one's potentialities for divine things, e.g., wisdom,¹³⁴ one in a sense perfects one's human nature, namely achieving a kind of perfection or transcendence, since the potentialities are within human nature. Successfully realising one's potentiality for wisdom is equivalent to possessing a divine thing since wisdom is divine. And possessing this divine thing, i.e., wisdom, enables one to become as divine as possible for human beings. This perfection of human nature can be taken as achieving a transcendence over the non-divine (imperfect) mortality, given that human nature is originally mortal and imperfect. This is why possessing divine things can be taken as a way to transcend mortality. Since the philosophical lover is described by Plato as manifesting 'the desire to understand' his experiences of beauty,¹³⁵ we can interpret Plato as suggesting that the philosophical lover takes wisdom to be the good thing he desires to possess. 'Having the desire to understand' implies that the desirer is a seeker after wisdom. Diotima says that the initiate would start by appreciating the

¹³³ I do not make distinction between the philosophical lover and the fully initiated lover in this chapter, since my view is that the immortality achieved by the philosophical lover and the fully initiated lover is the same, as I have argued in chapter 1.

¹³⁴ I will present that wisdom is divine shortly.

¹³⁵ This stands in contrast with the non-philosophical lovers who do not desire to understand their experiences of beauty. Cooper (1999, 672), citing from the *Republic* 581B, writes that 'merely in virtue of having minds— of having the capacity to inquire into and discover the truth— we possess the *desire* to do these things.' Cooper argues that for Plato, one's desire to know the truth is 'an original constituent of human nature.' I take him to mean that according to Plato, everyone has the desire of reason (the desire to understand) simply in virtue of having minds. However, as we can see from Diotima's speech, the non-philosophical lovers do not manifest the desire to understand in their experiences of beauty. Thus, although they should possess the desire to understand as every human being who has a mind does, their *eros* is either not the exact desire of reason; or if it is, their *eros* is likely to be repressed by other overly active desire(s), and thus does not successfully manifest the desire to understand.

beauty of one body and comes to realise that the beauty in all bodies is the same. After the stage of appreciating physical beauty, the initiate would move on to appreciate the beauty of laws, customs, and the beauty of knowledge (210A-D). At the end of climbing the ladder of love, the initiate would see the Form of Beauty (211A-E). He is prompted by his *eros* to improve his cognitive capability in order to better understand and appreciate the beautiful.¹³⁶ My reason for thinking that the philosophical lover focuses on the non-divine aspect of mortality is that he manifests the desire to understand, namely the desire for wisdom. If beauty is divine (for agents can perceive something divine and transcendent in experiences of beauty)¹³⁷ and wisdom is claimed to be extremely beautiful (204B), then seeking wisdom implies seeking what is divine. If the philosophical lover is after what is divine, it follows that he must have first noticed that mortality is non-divine and that he has not yet possessed the divine good thing, e.g., wisdom.¹³⁸ That is, the philosophical lover discovers his discontent with mortality in the experiences of beauty because he perceives divinity in beauty, confronted by his own mortal existence, and realises that mortality is not divine. Thus, under the work of *eros*, he feels the urge to possess divine things to become as divine as beauty is. Briefly, he takes possessing divine things as the way to transcend mortality, i.e., fulfilling his dissatisfaction with mortality. In what follows, I will present my interpretation of how the philosophical

¹³⁶ As Nehamas has correctly pointed out, ‘what distinguishes the philosophic lover from the lovers of the lower mysteries, who desire glory and fame, is that for him the desire to possess beauty is inseparable from the desire to understand it, to understand, that is, why he loves it, what makes it beautiful.’ He also writes that ‘The philosopher’s ascent is a continuing effort to understand the beauty of the objects of *eros*, an effort to determine what accounts for it.’ (2007, 10-11, 13)

¹³⁷ The thought that one can perceive divinity in experiences of beauty is based on Lear’s (2006, 117) interpretation as presented in section 3.1 and Diotima’s claim that ‘Beauty is in harmony with the divine’ (206D).

¹³⁸ This is based on Diotima’s reasoning that one needs to be aware that one is not wise yet so as to desire wisdom (204A-B). Similarly, one needs to be aware that one has not yet possessed something divine so as to form a desire to possess a divine thing.

lover becomes immortal. My interpretation is largely based on Sheffield's and Lear's interpretations. I draw upon Sheffield's interpretation of pregnancies as potentialities, and her interpretation that the philosophical lover achieves the virtue of *nous*, along with Lear's interpretation that the type of immortality the fully initiated lover achieves is a kind of self-sufficiency.

I take the type of immortality achieved by the fully initiated lover as a kind of self-sufficiency, which is the perfection of the soul. This perfect soul has the properties of being intellectually and morally virtuous. The content of 'self-sufficiency' includes the achievement of the virtue of *nous*, i.e., knowledge of Beauty, and the acquisition of sufficient true virtues, i.e., various virtues based on the virtue of *nous*. That is, the fully initiated lover becomes self-sufficient in the sense of acquiring knowledge of Beauty and sufficient knowledge of virtue Forms to become as divine as possible for human beings, namely leading a wise and virtuous life. He collects all he needs to attain *eudaimonia*, and what he needs is divine things such as wisdom and virtues based on wisdom. And this is his way to transcend the non-divine aspect of mortality. Besides, this kind of self-sufficiency is not literal self-sufficiency but the self-sufficiency that is achieved by the rational part of the soul. I will explain in more detail shortly.

As explained in the previous chapter, I follow Sheffield's persuasive interpretation of pregnancies as potentialities and agree with her that the philosophical lover, i.e., the fully initiated lover, produces the virtue of *nous* upon seeing the Form of Beauty. The productive activity explained by Diotima in the *Symposium* is the activity to realise one's potentialities, and on Plato's view, we all have the potentialities for various kinds of knowledge. Thus, if one successfully sees the Form of Beauty at the end of the ladder of love, it means one successfully realises the potentiality for

knowledge of Beauty, namely achieving the virtue of *nous*. It might be questioned how realising one's potentialities counts as a kind of productive activity. My view is that realising one's potentialities and undertaking a productive activity are similar in the way that both are activities involved with transformation and the actor's capabilities. Both are activities transforming A into B. For instance, a painter transforms a piece of canvas into a painting with the power to paint. Undertaking a productive activity, she produces a painting, and this is also an activity of realising her potentiality to paint. The canvas undergoes transformation, and this transformation can be deemed as an outcome of both a productive activity and an activity of realising a potentiality.

Sheffield argues that the fully initiated lover achieves the virtue of *nous* upon seeing the Form of Beauty. Lear's interpretation is that the fully initiated lover achieves immortality via developing a self-sufficient, namely unchanging character.¹³⁹ Relying on their interpretations, I take the self-sufficiency achieved by the fully initiated lover as the self-sufficiency achieved by his rational part of the soul. This is because only the rational part is able to do the work of transforming the philosophical lover's soul into a self-sufficient state.¹⁴⁰ The reason why it is the rational part of the soul that does the work is that only the rational part is able to acquire various kinds of knowledge, namely realising the potentialities for knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms. Possessing the knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms is the reason why the soul is transformed into a truly virtuous soul. The soul becomes truly virtuous because it acquires true virtues, and true virtues are based on

¹³⁹ Lear (2006, 119-120)

¹⁴⁰ There is no mention of the tripartite soul in the *Symposium*. My reason for emphasising that it is the rational part of the soul that transforms the soul into a self-sufficient state is to show that even if anyone reads the theory of the tripartite soul at the back of the *Symposium*, it would still be consistent with my interpretation.

knowledge of Beauty. I will return to explain this point shortly. As presented in the first chapter, Lear thinks that after seeing the Form of Beauty, the fully initiated lover would realise that ‘being unchanging’ is a better version of immortality compared to ‘merely enduring in time’, and thus would be interested in developing an unchanging character, namely a self-sufficient character. That is, Lear’s concept of self-sufficiency focuses on the ‘unchanging’ character of the fully initiated lover. But Lear did not say how the fully initiated lover develops this unchanging character. My version of ‘self-sufficiency’ is compatible with Lear’s, but mine offers the detail of how the fully initiated lover becomes morally virtuous. On my interpretation, in addition to becoming intellectually virtuous upon seeing the Form of Beauty, the fully initiated lover also acquires sufficient virtues in the way of having knowledge of these virtues based on the knowledge of Beauty. That is, his soul is transformed into a self-sufficient state with sufficient knowledge of virtues that he acquires based on the knowledge of Beauty. My interpretation focuses on the sufficient knowledge the fully initiated lover acquires to flourish. By ‘sufficient knowledge’, I mean all knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms such as Courage, Temperance, and Justice. I will explain this point in more detail in a later section. In summary, only the rational part of the soul is able to transform the philosophical lover’s soul into a self-sufficient state, i.e., an intellectually and morally virtuous state with sufficient knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms, because only it is able to achieve the virtue of *nous* and realise the potentialities for various kinds of knowledge, which causes transformation of the soul. In what follows, I will argue that the fully initiated lover would acquire sufficient knowledge of virtue Forms.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ This line of thought is extended from Sheffield’s (2006) interpretation that the fully initiated lover achieves the virtue of *nous* upon seeing the Form, with my suggestion that the fully initiated lover would produce moral virtues based on knowledge of Beauty.

I have presented both Sheffield's view that the 'true virtue' the fully initiated lover produces is the virtue of *nous* and my objection to her interpretation in the previous chapter. Sheffield's reason for her interpretation is that the fully initiated lover grasps the Form with *nous*, and thus the true virtue produced is the virtue of *nous*. What is implied in this interpretation is that one's intellectual capacity would be fully developed when one sees the Form of Beauty. In other words, one's potentiality for knowledge of the Form of Beauty would be fully realised when one finally grasps the Form of Beauty. However, this implication prompts us to ask why it has to be the Form of Beauty at the end of the ascent. Since all the Forms are abstract objects of knowledge for Plato, it should be the case that grasping any Form can be taken as an achievement of the virtue of *nous*. That is, successfully grasping any Form signifies the achievement of the virtue of *nous*. It is just that the content of knowledge depends on which Form is grasped. On my view, realising the rational potentiality, i.e. achieving the virtue of *nous*, does not have to culminate in grasping the Form of Beauty. So, there must be a particular role for the Form of Beauty to play in Diotima's speech. It has been mentioned and is widely agreed that in the *Symposium*, beauty plays the role of midwife in agents' experiences of *eros* because *eros* is particularly responsive to beauty and would impel agents to produce good things in the presence of beauty. But, in addition to this role, on my understanding, Beauty is closely related to virtue Forms like the Form of Good is. If one knows the Form of Good, one is able to know what makes Justice good, for example.¹⁴² By the same

¹⁴² As Sedley has written, 'Even if you have successfully formulated a definition of justice, you don't fully understand it until you have worked out what makes justice *good*. Since justice is a value, the point is a readily intelligible one: no one, it might be said, could fully understand any given value without even knowing what goodness itself is.' (2007, 269) As I understand it, what is claimed here is that knowing the Form of Good is a condition for fully knowing the Form of Justice, since only when one knows what makes justice good, one is able to claim one fully understands Justice.

logic, if one knows the Form of Beauty, one would be able to know what makes Justice beautiful. That is, seeing the Form of Beauty enables one to know what makes any virtue beautiful. As I have argued in the previous chapter, we can plausibly understand what Diotima means by the claim that the fully initiated lover would produce *true* virtue to be that he would produce virtue with knowledge of why virtue is beautiful. That is, according to Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, possessing the virtue of Justice is not equivalent to possessing the *true* virtue of Justice if one does not know what makes Justice beautiful. On my understanding, Diotima's theory is that one would be able to produce true virtue if one knows the Form of Beauty, because knowing the Form of Beauty enables one to know why the individual virtues (courage, justice, etc.) are beautiful. Besides, based on Diotima's theory, *eros* is particularly responsive to beauty and would impel one to produce the good things one has not yet attained. Seeing the Form of Beauty enables one to know why every virtue is beautiful, and thus it is more likely one would be able to perceive every virtue as beautiful if one does not before seeing the Form of Beauty. After seeing the Form of Beauty, if one is empowered to see every virtue as beautiful and if one has not yet possessed moral virtue(s), it seems that one's *eros* would impel one to produce the moral virtue(s) one has not yet attained, given that *eros* is after what is not yet attained.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Sheffield has claimed that the real end of *eros* is the contemplation of the Form of Beauty. Her reason is based on Diotima's teleological remarks: 'Contemplation of the form is that for the sake of which we do all that we do (206e10), the true end of all erotic aspiration. If it is the case that life is worth living in contemplation of the form, and that this is the best life for a human being, then contemplation would seem to be constitutive of the highest good for human beings. In other words, *eudaimonia* resides in contemplation of beauty; this is the highest virtue, the best good for human beings. At this stage notice that Socrates calls the acquisition of this good a *tokos*, thereby reminding us that this good is a final activity ('that for the sake of which we do all that we do...', cf. 206e10) that also expresses our nature.' (2006, 135-6) Sheffield's interpretation seems plausible. However, in the previous chapter I have argued that there does not seem to be a reason that the fully initiated lover would not realise his potentialities for moral virtues, given that the philosophical lover must also have

As I read Diotima's speech, seeing the Form of Beauty comes first and then true virtue is produced, since Diotima says that '*only then* will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue, but to *true* virtue' (211E-212A italics mine). My understanding of this claim is that it is because one *knows* the Form of Beauty, namely what makes virtue beautiful, that one is able to produce *true* virtue. That is, grasping the Form of Beauty enables one to know individual virtues more thoroughly, including what makes the individual virtues beautiful, and this is a condition for producing *true* virtue at the end of Diotima's speech. This is why I suggest that the self-sufficient state achieved by the fully initiated lover includes acquiring sufficient knowledge of virtue Forms to live virtuously. Briefly, seeing the Form of Beauty enables one to know why every virtue is beautiful, and this is a condition for one to acquire knowledge of all virtue Forms thoroughly, because if one does not know why a virtue is beautiful, one does not know that virtue very well. Given that virtues are values, it is essential to understand what beauty itself is. And if one has not yet attained moral virtue(s), under the work of *eros*, one would produce moral virtue(s) with the aid of knowledge of Beauty. One's soul is transformed into a state of self-sufficiency with sufficient knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms.

Earlier I have argued that transcending mortality is taken to be part of *eudaimonia* by agents who have experienced beauty in the *Symposium* and that different agents focus on different aspects of mortality. I have also argued that the philosophical lover

potentialities for moral virtues, and that the real reason why the fully initiated lover is able to produce 'true' virtue is that he knows why virtue is beautiful. He has an additional intellectual understanding of virtue because he has acquired knowledge of Beauty. Thus, even if Diotima does not mention there will be any further event, it would be the case that the fully initiated lover would be prompted by his *eros* to produce the virtue(s) he has not yet attained with knowledge of Beauty, even after seeing the Form of Beauty.

focuses on the non-divine aspect of mortality, given that his *eros* differs from the non-philosophical lovers' in manifesting the desire to understand, which implies that he is after wisdom. Besides, it can be seen that the Form of Beauty is divine, since Diotima refers to it as 'the divine Beauty' (211E). What can be extrapolated from this is that if the fully initiated lover is 'in touch with the true Beauty' (212A), namely in touch with what is divine, then the knowledge of Beauty he produces on account of being in touch with the true Beauty must be divine or at least semi-divine, which confirms my earlier point that wisdom is divine. And clearly, the fully initiated lover would actually attain *eudaimonia*, since he is claimed to produce *true* virtue (212A), which seems to be a truly good thing for Plato. In summary, in his experiences beauty is perceived as immortal and divine, which stands in contrast with his non-divine mortality, the philosophical lover finds discontent with mortality. He attempts to transcend mortality by means of becoming as divine as possible, and thus he starts pursuing wisdom. At the end of the ascent, he sees the Form of Beauty, namely realising his potentiality for knowledge of Beauty and achieving the virtue of *nous*, which is one of the true virtues. Then, he is able to produce true moral virtue(s) on account of being in touch with the divine true Beauty, because he knows why every virtue is beautiful. That is, in addition to producing the knowledge of Beauty, he will produce other virtues with an intellectual understanding, namely realising his potentialities for virtues like temperance and courage with the aid of knowledge of Beauty.¹⁴⁴ By acquiring knowledge of Beauty and knowledge of other virtue Forms, he will become as divine as possible because he is in touch with the divine Forms.

¹⁴⁴ As argued in the previous chapter, the philosophical lover must be pregnant more in the soul than in the body, and what is fitting for the soul is wisdom and the rest of virtue (209A). Since the work of *eros* is to realise the good potentialities, it seems he would be prompted by his *eros* to realise all these potentialities which are fitting for the soul.

That is, the philosophical lover's way of transcending mortality is to acquire sufficient knowledge and virtues, namely realising his potentialities for wisdom and the rest of virtue, so as to transform his soul into being self-sufficient. He becomes as divine as possible for human beings, and this is the kind of immortality he achieves in Plato's *Symposium*.

Conclusion

I hope to have presented in this thesis a better understanding of ‘immortality’ in the *Symposium*. To conclude my interpretation, ‘immortality’ in the *Symposium* is a state brought about by a kind of possession of goods that enables agents to transcend mortality in some way. Transcending mortality in some way is believed by agents who have experienced beauty to be part of *eudaimonia*, because agents need to eliminate the discontent with mortality, which they discover in the experiences of beauty. Thus, the human desire for immortality and the human desire for *eudaimonia* is the same desire in the *Symposium*. Nonetheless, eliminating the discontent with mortality is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for attaining real *eudaimonia*, since for Plato attaining *eudaimonia* requires possessing *truly* good things such as wisdom and virtue. Rather than literal immortality, agents achieve a human version of immortality, which is subdivided into two types depending on their focus on different aspects of mortality. The transcendence of mortality includes being deathless and perfect. The non-philosophical lovers, after experiencing beauty, reproduce human children or produce things that will bring them honour. They think of their children and the honour they attain as parts of them. Thus, the continual existence of their children and honour beyond their death is taken to be a transcendence over mortality. But they do not attain real *eudaimonia* because what they possess are not truly good things for Plato. The philosophical lover, after experiencing beauty, desires to possess divine things to become as divine as possible to transcend mortality. Upon seeing the Form of Beauty, he acquires knowledge of Beauty. With acquisition of knowledge of Beauty, he is able to know why virtue is beautiful, and thus he produces ‘true virtue’ in the sense of having a thorough

understanding of individual virtues, including why every virtue is beautiful. If he is able to explain why an individual virtue is beautiful, it can be taken to suggest that he has a thorough understanding of that virtue, instead of possessing that virtue merely as a natural quality. Thus, I suggest that the kind of immortality he achieves is a kind of self-sufficiency in the sense of possessing sufficient knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms. That is, the 'true virtue' begot includes both the virtue of *nous* and individual moral virtues with a thorough understanding of them. With the knowledge of Beauty and virtue Forms, his soul is able to be transformed from non-virtuous (not possessing true virtue) into virtuous (possessing true virtue). Briefly, the philosophical lover's way of transcending mortality, namely becoming immortal, is to realise his potentialities for wisdom and moral virtues. He becomes immortal, namely as divine as possible for human beings, via acquiring knowledge of the divine Beauty and producing individual virtues with an understanding of why every virtue is beautiful in the *Symposium*.

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