

## Philosophical and Systematic Analysis of Diotima's Definition of Love and Its Relation to Plato's Theory of Forms in the Symposium

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### Introduction

*The Symposium* belongs to the middle dialogues of Plato. It is perhaps the most artistic composition and purports to report the encomium of love made by several speakers at a party given by Agathon to celebrate his victory at the drama festival of the year 416 BC. Though the author of this philosophical discussion, which climaxes with the metaphysical conception, is Plato, the dialogue is attributed to Socrates, possibly historical Socrates. Each speaker makes a contribution to the nature of love, while Socrates brings the threads together in his own speech, though all the while he modestly claims that all that he says he learnt from the prophetess Diotima of Mantinea, of whom we know nothing beyond what he says of her.

From the different speakers, with their generic, genealogical, cosmic, romanticized paean and other diverse approaches contributing to the nature of the god of Love (sometimes goddess of Love) eulogize the multifaceted nature of the mysterious experience and their individual attempt to conceptualize it. Thus the dialogue is a concoction of comprehensive philosophical entity with an artistic touch. The most important among all comes from Diotima's definition of Love, embracing a broader outlook of moral psychology and the metaphysical doctrine of Plato's much used theory of forms directing towards unchanging, uniform, universal character to obtain the ultimate objective ground for knowledge using the vision of forms.

The other affiliated concepts that combine to build the totality of the nature of Love are definitions of beauty, desire, and good virtue that share with the Greek terminology of episteme (ἐπίστευμε) against doxa (δόξα), the concepts dealt in the other Platonic dialogues that I hope to discuss comprehensively in the paper taking in to account the issue raised by Friedlander who claims that Platonic articulation of the vision of forms is transcendental and nothing to do with this corporeal world. Yet the concepts of the Platonic corpus have become the centre for

numerous western scholars to propound the theory of knowledge.

The objective of this paper is basically an examination of the definition of love through Diotima's speech to examine the nature of the ladder of love in its broader perspective. Further, it examines the relationship of the theory of forms in Platonic philosophy to love.

### Materials and methodology

Since this brief review is entirely based on library research, primary texts and materials and some texts in their original language i.e. Greek, are used. Most of the dialogues of Plato are referred to in this study.

### Results

In order to fathom the complexities of the Platonic reality of forms with its philosophical attributes, the application of a Theory of Love proper is essential which is one main component used in the effort of unfolding the philosophical definition of forms accompanied with some important Socratic conceptualizations, such as Socratic virtues, definition of good, happiness, knowledge, desire which are sure ingredients of forming the whole-natured image of forms in which erotic love has the least role to play in this whole quest of intellectual vision of the highest reality.

### Discussion

Plato's definition of Love is not entirely an isolated attempt. It is one of the core issues of Platonic epistemology.

Among the chosen dialogues of Plato, the theory of Eros (Love), desire of what is beautiful (καλον), what is beautiful is closely akin to what is good (αγαθον) are prefigured in Plato's *Lysis*. In *The Republic* and *Phaedo* appear an inconclusive treatment of the doctrines of virtue, knowledge, education and happiness building up in this context to construct the ladder of love, fundamentally identical with the universal desire for good, of which a further developed and transformed

version of discussion had already appeared in *Gorgias* and *Meno*.

At the juncture of formulating appropriate instruments for the account of Platonic Love, Plato introduces different notions of erotic reciprocity, for example 'beloved seeing his own reflection on the lover's eyes' *Phaedrus*: 255 c-d.

As a whole, in this paper I attempt to incorporate all the constructive formulations of the Platonic conceptualization with a view to achieving the final composite picture of the conclusive philosophical doctrine of Love to view the whole-natured image of Platonic form.

