

It is true that the _form_ of the body lasts for a time, but only on condition that the matter is constantly changing, that the old matter is thrown off and new added. And it is the chief work of all living creatures to secure a constant supply of suitable matter. At the same time, they are conscious that their existence is so fashioned as to last only for a certain time, as has been said. This is why they attempt, when they are taking leave of life, to hand it over to some one else who will take their place. This attempt takes the form of the sexual instinct in self-consciousness, and in the consciousness of other things presents itself objectively--that is, in the form of genital instinct. This instinct may be compared to the threading of a string of pearls; one individual succeeding another as rapidly as the pearls on the thread. If we, in imagination, hasten on this succession, we shall see that the matter is constantly changing in the whole row just as it is changing in each pearl, while it retains the same form: we will then realise that we have only a quasi-existence. That it is only Ideas which exist, and the shadow-like nature of the thing corresponding to them, is the basis of Plato's teachings.