

# *Homoiōsis Theōi*: Plato's Ultimate Educational Aim

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**Abstract.** Many academics and researchers who publish scholarly articles on Plato's philosophy of education claim that the ultimate educational goal for Plato is simply the acquisition of virtues. While such a claim may not be entirely incorrect, it is nevertheless substantially wanting; for although the acquisition of virtue is no doubt paramount, for Plato it primarily serves as a means to another end. In this paper, I aim to show that, for Plato, the final summit of all educational enterprise is not really to become virtuous but rather to attain the state of becoming like God, and that is, *homoiōsis theōi*.

**Keywords:** Plato, education, *homoiōsis theōi*, becoming like God, virtue

## *Homoiōsis Theōi*: aukščiausias ugdymo tikslas Platono filosofijoje

**Santrauka.** Daugelis akademikų, tyrinėjančių Platono ugdymo filosofiją, teigia, kad, anot Platono, aukščiausias ugdymo tikslas yra dorybių įgijimas. Toks požiūris nėra visiškai klaidingas, tačiau jis iš esmės nepakankamas; nors dorybių išugdymas iš tiesų yra pirmaeilės svarbos, visgi, anot Platono, ugdymas pirmiausia tarnauja kitam tikslui. Šiame straipsnyje siekiu parodyti, kad Platonui ugdymo viršūnė iš tikrųjų yra ne tapti dorybingam, o veikiau pasiekti būklę, kurioje tampama panašiam į Dievą, ir tai yra *homoiōsis theōi*.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** Platonas, ugdymas, *homoiōsis theōi*, tapimas panašiu į Dievą, dorybė.

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## Introduction

Many academics and researchers who publish scholarly articles on Plato's philosophy of education claim that the ultimate educational goal for Plato is simply the acquisition of virtues – the *sine qua non* for personal development, the knowledge of the Forms, and becoming a good citizen in the *polis*.<sup>1</sup> While such a claim may not be entirely incorrect, it is nevertheless substantially wanting; for although the acquisition of virtue is no doubt paramount, for Plato it primarily serves as a means to another end, man's final *telos*, and that is: *homoiōsis theōi*, the state of becoming like God.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas in antiquity it was common knowledge that *homoiōsis theōi* was the ultimate existential *telos* for Plato, in our time, it is something that has become rather uncommon. Sedley (1999: 309) reveals how these days, only very few – even among “those well informed about Plato” – can correctly identify *homoiōsis theōi* as the final *telos* of human existence. As Annas (1999: 53) likewise observes, there is “almost a total absence of this idea from modern interpretations and discussions of Plato.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is only in the last six years that new additional studies – though still not that many – offering fresh insights on *homoiōsis theōi* have been published.<sup>4</sup> One of these recent studies is particularly

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Kotsonis (2021: 349), in which one can read: “The main goal of the Platonic educational regime, as presented in the *Republic* [...] is the cultivation of virtue in students. It is through the possession of virtue that the different parts of the soul will function well, and the soul of the individual will be in harmony—and, following Plato's soul–state analogy ... it is through the possession of virtue that the different parts of the city–state (i.e., the producers, the soldiers and the guardians) will operate well and the city will flourish.” There are many other similar studies, some recent and others not quite, whose common denominator is the idea that acquiring virtues is the main or ultimate educational aim for Plato. It is not possible to name them all here but to mention a few, we have the following studies: Roy (2022); Kotsonis (2020); Marshall (2020); and Murphy (2015).

<sup>2</sup> See Annas (1999: 52): “Our final end, according to Plato, is to become like God.” Following Annas, Sedley (1999: 309) likewise argues that, indeed, the ultimate human *telos* for Plato “is *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton*, ‘becoming like god so far as is possible’ ... *Homoiōsis theōi* [was] universally accepted in antiquity as the official Platonic goal.” Armstrong (2004: 171) supports Annas' and Sedley's contention, claiming that “[s]everal Platonic dialogues indicate that humans should strive to become like god.” Torri (2019: 233) affirms Annas', Sedley's, and Armstrong's view, saying that, in the ancient Platonic tradition, it was all too clear that “the goal of human life ... [is] to transcend our human condition in order to reach the nature of the divine.” One important work from the ancient Platonic tradition written sometime in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, *The Handbook of Platonism* by Alcinous (2002: ch. 28), testifies that “the *telos*, or final good for man ... [is] ‘likeness to God’ (*homoiōsis theōi*).” And one cannot simply brush aside the testimony of Alcinous by resorting to the argument that Platonism does not necessarily reflect Plato's original view. According to Gerson (2013: 7), “Plato was himself always a Platonist because he embraced Platonism.” Hence, “fidelity to Platonism is actually a multifarious fidelity to Plato himself” (*ibid.*: 19).

<sup>3</sup> Albeit both Sedley and Annas made their studies before the turn of the millennium, in the succeeding years, there seems to be not much progress on the study of *homoiōsis theōi*. About five years after the publication of Sedley's and Annas' studies, Mahoney (2004: 321) admits that in “the voluminous secondary literature” on Plato, one can still rarely find detailed discussions about *homoiōsis theōi* as the ultimate human *telos*. A year later, Mahoney (2005: 77) expresses the same disappointment, saying that “the modern neglect of this important Platonic theme” continues to be the norm. More than a decade later, there is hardly any improvement, as Torri (2017: 6) still notices “that a complete study of *homoiōsis theōi* in Platonism has yet to see the light ... due to the fact that modern interpreters of Plato have not generally considered it a core doctrine in Platonic works themselves.”

<sup>4</sup> These studies include the following: Sedley (2017); Torri (2017a); Torri (2017b); Zovko (2018); Annas (2019); Larsen (2019); Torri (2019); Keena (2021); and Giardina (2022). I personally do not know any other studies on *homoiōsis theōi* from 2017 up to the present aside from the ones I just mentioned. I may have missed to include a few studies, but I am confident they are not that many. Before 2017, focused studies on *homoiōsis theōi* in Plato were few and far between.

significant in that, for the first time, *homoiōsis theōi* is now categorically identified as an “educational ideal in Plato” (Zovko 2018). Although *homoiōsis theōi* does not cease to become the existential *telos* here, Zovko’s study has opened a new perspective about what becoming like God essentially is: an educational goal and process. I disagree with Zovko (2018: 8), however, that godlikeness and virtuousness “comprise in tandem the *telos* of Plato’s educational theory.” I agree that attaining virtues and living a virtuous life is “essential to divinization and its goal, the ascent to a higher realm. Nevertheless, it is *not the whole story*,” as Keena (2021: 92; emphasis mine) puts it. So I maintain that acquiring virtues and living virtuously is not on par with becoming like God; and that while virtuousness is indispensable as a stepping stone to godlikeness, it is not its equal in standing or in eschatological significance.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I aim to show that for Plato, the final summit of all educational enterprise is not really to become virtuous but rather to become godlike – the ultimate educational aim and ideal that many studies on Plato fail to capture. I argue that Plato’s philosophy of education remains incomplete if it fails to take into account *homoiōsis theōi*. The significance of the present study is therefore twofold: firstly, while countless new studies on Plato appear year after year, there is still a dearth of literature that focuses on *homoiōsis theōi*; and, secondly, if I may borrow the words of a respected scholar on Platonic philosophy, “many of those who are most interested in and familiar with Plato’s work do not have a corresponding interest in education or educational thought. This may be because they do not think that thinking about education has any intellectual or philosophical worth” (Barrow 2007: 140).<sup>6</sup>

## Plato’s Moral Psychology

For Plato, man is his soul (*psykhē*).<sup>7</sup> He did not view man as a body *having* a soul; rather man for him is a soul *having* a body. Plato believed that, originally, man did not have a body. Man used to be just *soul*. And, back then, he did not live in this material world. He dwelt in the spiritual world where he lived a blessed life, enjoying a blissful and godlike existence. Plato thought that this original condition of man is man’s ideal state of being.

But what happened? Upon birth, man finds himself imprisoned in a material body.<sup>8</sup> Poor man, he is no longer a free spirit. He is now a prisoner of his newly acquired body.

<sup>5</sup> My position is the same as that of Drefcinski (2014: 411), for whom “to become like God [means] we should live virtuously in order to escape the cycle of reincarnation and achieve a specific, fulfilling kind of immortality.”

<sup>6</sup> I should note here that, even for Barrow (2007: 75), when it comes to Platonic education, the “ultimate aim is the cultivation of a morally good person.” In short, to be educated is ultimately to attain and practice virtue. Barrow never mentions “becoming like god,” “godlikeness,” or “pursuing divinity” as part of the educational process for Plato.

<sup>7</sup> See Annas (2003: 65): “Plato never doubts that when I ask what I, myself, really am, the answer will be that I am my soul, rather than my animated body.” To directly read Plato’s discussions on the soul as the real self, see *Laws* 959a, *Apology* 29a, *Charmides* 164d, *Phaedo* 115 d–e, and *Republic* 589a–b.

<sup>8</sup> There is no consensus among Plato scholars on why the soul is born into a body. Plato himself has conflicting positions about the body: on the one hand, he views it negatively, comparing the body to a prison cell (*Phaedo* 62b), a shell that we have to carry, just like oysters do (*Phaedrus* 250c), and a tomb (*Gorgias* 493a); on the other hand, he seems to view the body positively, recognizing its instrumental value as a vehicle for the soul (*Timaeus* 69c), a conduit

Fortunately, man's case is not hopeless. He can break free from his bodily imprisonment and return to the spiritual world where he once lived. That is why, for Plato, man's chief task is to seek liberation, because this entails not only getting out of the confines of the body but also eventually becoming godlike (see *Theaetetus* 176b–e). As Dombrowski (2005: 99) notes, “Assimilation to God is a return to the soul's ‘original’ nature [...] To see assimilation to God as our *telos* means that such assimilation is both a goal aimed for and a supreme fulfillment.”<sup>9</sup> But how can man do it? What is the means by which he can get back home and reacquire his lost divine nature?

Suicide is definitely not the answer; for even if the body dies, the soul will again be imprisoned in another body. The continuous cycle of metempsychosis – that is, the transmigration of the soul from one body to another – must first be totally broken so that man will finally acquire absolute and unconditional emancipation (see *Timaeus* 92c1–3). Incidentally, the means to man's liberation is all within man himself. He does not have to look elsewhere. In fact, he has within himself all the power to bring about his own deliverance. So, for Plato, man's way out is practically simple. Man has to simply utilize all this power and break free. But what exactly is this power?

In Plato's view, man has three seats of power. They are reason (*logistikon*), spirit (*thumoeides*), and appetite (*epithumetikon*) (*Republic* IV, 436b). All three constitute the entire man. In man's embodied state, reason resides in the head, spirit in the heart, and appetite in the stomach. Reason is responsible for thinking and rationalizing; spirit for feeling and apprehending; and appetite for sensing and desiring. Thus, for Plato, man is a tripartite soul.<sup>10</sup> As such, it is by optimizing these three power cores that man acquires the key that releases him from his bondage and leads him to *homoiōsis theōi*.

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for language (*Cratylus* 400c), and as a general tool for the soul (*Alcibiades* 128a–131a. *Note*: Not all scholars accept that the *Alcibiades* belongs to the authentic Platonic corpus). In *Phaedrus*, however, Plato gives a lengthy discussion on the possible causes of embodiment. He says: “All soul looks after all that lacks a soul, and patrols all of heaven, taking different shapes at different times. So long as its wings are in perfect condition it flies high, and the entire universe is its dominion; but a soul that sheds its wings wanders until it lights on something solid, where it settles and takes on an earthly body, which then, owing to the power of this soul, seems to move itself. The whole combination of soul and body is called a living thing, or animal, and has the designation ‘mortal’ as well” (246c). As for the specific reasons why a soul would lose its wings, Plato explains that “foulness and ugliness make the [soul's] wings shrink and disappear” (246e); and, if the soul “does not see anything true because it could not keep up, and by some accident takes on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings and falls to earth” (248c–d) and consequently becomes incarnated. *Note*: All direct quotations from Plato are from his *Complete Works* (1997, ed. J. M. Cooper).

<sup>9</sup> *Homoiōsis theōi*, aside from being translated as “becoming like God,” is also translated as “assimilation to God,” or “assimilation to the divine.”

<sup>10</sup> Some scholars find the tripartition of the soul rather problematic. Burnyeat (2006: 2), for example, questions “whether the soul really has three parts as the ideal city does.” But that is not the only issue. Other scholars question the real function of the three parts of the soul, whether “we are to understand the parts as real agents, having something of the completeness and autonomy of different kinds of organism” or we are to understand “the lower parts of the soul [as] temporary additions which develop to serve our needs at incarnation and disappear, or are reabsorbed into the rational part – though how to reconcile this with the *Phaedrus* myth, which uses the image of charioteer and horses to depict an immortal tripartition, is a perennial interpretive puzzle” (Barney et al. 2012: 3). Personally, I subscribe to the view that the three parts of the soul are real and autonomous agents. However, I do not support the view that the lower parts disappear at death. I am more inclined to believe that they remain but are controlled by reason, especially when – postmortem – man already regains and completes his godlikeness. To read more on the nature and function of reason, see Kamtekar (2012: 77–101); of spirit, see Brennan (2012: 102–127); and, of appetite, see Wilberding (2012: 128–149).

To fully develop his rational, spiritual, and appetitive parts, man has to attain the virtues proper to each part. Now, for his rational part, man needs wisdom (*phronēsis*; also *sophia*). For his spiritual part, man needs courage (*andreia*). For his appetitive part, man needs temperance (*sōphrosynē*) (*Republic* IV, 439a–440e). These virtues are very important for man to have. Without them, he will have no control over his reason, spirit, and appetite (*Republic* IV, 444e). But with these virtues at hand, man is the captain of his fate and master of his soul. And that is not even all. For, in addition to these virtues, another virtue will arise combining all three, gathering them together as one. This virtue is justice (*dikaiosynē*) (*Republic* IV, 442d). It is wisdom, courage, and temperance all rolled into one (see *Republic* IV, 441d–442a; see also Kepreotes 2022: 56 and 78; Kraut 2022: 299 and 304; Dahl 1999: 209; and Armstrong 2004: 180).

In *Phaedrus* 245c–249d, Plato depicts the soul as a flying chariot driven by a charioteer aided by two-winged horses. The charioteer represents reason, while the horses represent spirit and appetite, respectively. Now, to reach its destination, the chariot must fly and fly. That is why, it must have a competent charioteer and properly trained horses. Otherwise, the chariot will stop and cease to fly or else go to an altogether different route and direction. The charioteer’s competence, then, represents wisdom; the proper training of the horses represents courage and temperance.

But again, how will man attain wisdom? How will he gain courage? How will he develop temperance? And how will he become just? The answer is somewhat complex, but, in essence, it is through education (*paideia*)<sup>11</sup> that man will acquire the four virtues that he needs.

## The Need for Virtue and Education

There is no question that, for Plato, to become a virtuous person is imperative, because “if one of us aspires to become like a god, this is the state he *must* try to attain” (*Laws* 792d; emphasis mine).<sup>12</sup> The process of acquiring virtues, however, is not a quick and easy undertaking; it involves a rather long and challenging process of *paideia* “because Platonic education is a preparation of the tripartite soul” (Kepreotes 2022: 60) for *homoiōsis theōi*.<sup>13</sup>

I cannot discuss all the major themes and terms in Plato’s educational philosophy here, but I would like to take as a starting point a general truth about *paideia*: that for Plato, it “is education from childhood in *virtue*” (*Laws* 643e; original emphasis by the editor).<sup>14</sup> Obviously, there are two major elements that we can readily identify here: childhood and

<sup>11</sup>For a thorough discussion of the Greek and Platonic notion of *paideia*, see Jaeger (1986) and Kepreotes (2022).

<sup>12</sup>Annas (1999: 53) would even say that “becoming like God is what becoming virtuous is.” However, I do not agree with this idea. I believe that while becoming like God entails becoming virtuous, the two are not the same; the latter serves as the prerequisite for the former, not as its co-equal. See Note 5.

<sup>13</sup>For further reading of one of the most recent studies on education as a ‘lifelong learning’ for Plato in the *Laws*, see Lefka (2023).

<sup>14</sup>In the *Laws*, Plato recommends basic education for everyone, regardless of their social class. Higher education, however, as in the *Republic*, is reserved for the few from among whom will be chosen those who will be tasked with either running the affairs of the State (the philosopher-kings in the *Republic*), or providing relevant philosophical and political advice (the members of the Nocturnal Council in the *Laws*) to those overseeing the State.

virtue. But before I say anything about these two, it should be noted that “Plato’s educational proposals are rooted in his distinctive understanding of the soul” (Patterson 2013: 373). For him, “all education was moulding the soul” (Jaeger 1986: 247), and it ought to begin in man’s earliest years, that is, during his childhood.<sup>15</sup> This is called *propaideia* (προπαιδεία), the education of the children and the youth, especially in the areas of music, gymnastics, grammar, geography, and arithmetic (*Republic* VII, 536d).<sup>16</sup>

Plato is keenly aware of how much children tend to develop lasting habits that could either be beneficial or detrimental to their souls (*Laws* 792e). For this, “the soul of the child has to be prevented from getting into the habit of feeling pleasure and pain in ways not sanctioned by the law” (*Laws* 659d). That means that the soul, starting from childhood, should be trained to control its appetitive and affective proclivities; otherwise, the child will “become the wildest animal on the face of the earth. That’s why the legislator should not treat the education of children cursorily or as a secondary matter” (*Laws* 766a).<sup>17</sup>

It may not be that readily apparent, but I believe that, in the Platonic *paideia*, there “lies a deeper rationale” for why children have to be educated early on and for a very long time: because by letting them attain virtues, they will hopefully arrive at godlikeness. As Cleary (2013: 101) asserts, “*homoiōsis theōi* plays an implicit yet very important role” in Plato’s overall conception of education. Of course, *homoiōsis theōi* is not possible “without first preparing the non-rational parts of the soul through prolonged education in the arts and physical training” (Kepreotes 2022: 65). Thus, for Plato, all children until they reach twenty have to go through the same basic education program that focuses on learning the arts (music, poetry, etc.) and physical education (*Republic* VII, 537c).

After the age of twenty, those who have no aptitude for higher education yet stand out for their virtue of temperance, are incorporated back into the state, where they function as producers – i.e., as farmers, craftsmen, or artisans, offering different goods and services.<sup>18</sup> The rest, meanwhile, go through yet another phase of education (focused on higher mathematics, geometry, and astronomy) that lasts a decade – i.e., until they all turn 30 (*Republic* VII, 537d). When this ten-year educative period is over, one group returns to the state and serves as auxiliaries – i.e., as soldiers and military personnel – having been noted for their virtue of courage; the remaining group, found to be outstanding in their virtue of wisdom and exceptional intelligence, continues with their higher education until they reach thirty-five, focusing their attention on the study of dialectic (*Republic* VII, 437c).<sup>19</sup> The next educational stage that follows is a 15-year-long practicum where the

<sup>15</sup> Plato, in fact, recommends ‘educating’ the child even while still in the womb, suggesting to pregnant women to perform certain exercises that could help in a lot of ways the unborn baby that is still developing inside their own body. For details, see *Laws* 789a–e.

<sup>16</sup> I cannot discuss anymore the importance of each of these school subjects in the Platonic curriculum, but suffice it to say that each of these is essential in helping man develop virtues.

<sup>17</sup> The necessary interference of the state in the education of children suggests that, for Plato, education is not just a private or family undertaking; it is a social enterprise that affects everyone in the State.

<sup>18</sup> To read more about a rather unique study told from the perspective of the producers, see Jeon (2014).

<sup>19</sup> See Sfetcu (2002): “Dialectics [is] a process that leads us to the knowledge of Forms and ultimately to the highest Form of the Good ... through discussion, reasoning, questionnaire, and interpretation.” See also Blackburn (2005: 99): “In the middle dialogues of Plato ... [dialectic refers] to the total process of enlightenment, whereby the philosopher is educated so as to achieve knowledge of the supreme good, the Form of the Good.”

students are compelled “to take command in matters of war and occupy the other offices suitable for young people, so that they won’t be inferior to the others in experience” (*Republic* 539e–540a). Finally, “at the age of fifty, those who’ve survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything” (*Republic* VII, 540a). This final educational stage is called *philosophia* (φιλοσοφία), and the aim here is no longer simply the attainment of any virtue, but “becoming as like God as possible” (*Theaetetus* 176b).

### The Godlikeness of the Highly Educated<sup>20</sup>

After half a century of educational journey, the final escape or the liberation of man from his bodily detention now seems within reach for the chosen few who make it to the stage of *philosophia*.<sup>21</sup> Even so, nothing is yet totally guaranteed; for although *philosophia* will most likely make the highly educated no longer be reincarnated after their death, there are enlightened people who will still get corrupted, and hence, have to be reborn (see *Republic* VI, 491b–e and 496c–d). Does it mean, then, that, after reaching the summit of knowledge and contemplating the sun of truth, man should just remain outside the cave of ignorance, impiety, injustice, and vice to ensure that he will never be corrupted?

Indeed, if the highly educated have to be “as like God as possible”, does godlikeness mean they should remain ‘otherworldly’, detached from the affairs of this world? Or does godlikeness mean they should still be ‘worldly’, in the sense that they remain involved in the social, political, and economic activities in the *polis*? Scholars continue to debate on this issue. On the one hand, Annas (1999 and 2019) and Sedley (1999 and 2017) believe that godlikeness presupposes that the highly educated do not really have any moral obligation to engage themselves in the affairs of this material world. Both Annas and Sedley hold that having made it outside the cave of darkness, the main concern of the enlightened is now to simply bask in the sun of truth. On the other hand, Armstrong (2003) and Mahoney (2004 and 2005) are convinced that godlikeness entails that the enlightened have the duty to share their wisdom and knowledge with the world. Taking the ‘middle’ position, we have Jenkins (2016) and Lännström (2011), who accept and deny a part of both Annas’ and Sedley’s, and Armstrong’s and Mahoney’s, claims. I will no longer discuss their views, but I would recommend their works to scholars who are interested in the debate on the characteristics of godlikeness in Plato.

As for my view, I take the side of Armstrong and Mahoney. I believe that to be like God is to be like Him, foremost by imitating His being just. As Mahoney (2005: 90) un-

<sup>20</sup> I purposely use the terms ‘the highly educated’ and ‘the enlightened’ (I use them interchangeably) instead of ‘the philosophers’ or ‘the guardians’ because not all who reach *philosophia* become philosophers, philosopher-kings, or guardians.

<sup>21</sup> For Plato, the final liberation is of course only possible after one’s bodily demise (see Drefcinski 2014). That is precisely why Plato considers *philosophia* as a preparation for death (*Phaedo* 67c and 81a); one does not really become like God in the fullest sense while still trapped in a human body.

derlines, “because god is supremely just, justice is the most salient feature of our likeness to god.” And what is justice if not the striving for “the harmonious good of all” (Mahoney 2005: 90)? And how can one become just if one remains detached from and indifferent to what is going on in the world around him? For this reason, I agree with Armstrong (2003: 180) that the enlightened “must follow justice.” It is not an option; for a godlikeness that does not translate into concrete acts of justice makes no sense. Justice is never an abstract virtue for Plato, because, as Mahoney (2004: 329–330) shares, “to follow the pattern of the gods, one cannot simply refrain from unjust actions; one must also engage in positive action for the sake of others.” We can look at justice, then, as a barometer of how godlike we have already become.

Unfortunately, many of those who write about Plato's philosophy of education – either through pure negligence or sheer ignorance – often fail to mention that the highly educated have also the task of educating others (*Republic* VII, 540b). For once a person has succeeded in going out of the cave, he still must go back there – even if it means no one would be willing to listen to him, even if he would be rejected, or even if he should lose his life in the process. This is actually what Plato calls *periagōgē* (περιαγωγή) – the necessary turning–about that all those who have been and are truly highly educated must make (*Republic* VII, 518c–d). For, as true justice demands, knowledge and wisdom are not meant to be kept; they are always meant to be shared. This is what the godlikeness of the highly educated is and should be: not fleeing away from, but rather going towards those in need.

## Conclusion

Now if we go back to the thesis that *homoiōsis theōi* is the ultimate educational aim for Plato, is this pathway open to everyone? The producers and the auxiliaries certainly do not enjoy the same privileges that the enlightened few do, but if in *paideia homoiōsis theōi* is already the implicit *telos* in the pursuit of virtue, then is godlikeness also a possibility for ordinary citizens? Scholars do not have a uniform answer to these questions. My answer, though, would be ‘yes’. Plato himself affirms that godlikeness is open to “*anyone* who eagerly wishes to become just and who makes himself as much like a god as a human can by adopting a virtuous way of life” (*Republic* X, 613a–b; emphasis mine). Although the highly educated, thanks to *philosophia*, have “a much easier access” to godlikeness, that does not mean that ordinary folks have zero opportunity to become godlike. And a very recent study confirms my view that, indeed, “the ideal of godlikeness is no longer intended for an exclusive club of philosophers, but for a diverse population of a city. This means that [...] everyone in the city can ‘become like god so far as is possible’ ” (Bartninkas 2023: 205).

Thus truly, Plato's educational philosophy is so much richer in reality. For this reason, readily equating his ultimate educational goal with the mere acquisition of virtue omits a very important component that would have afforded a much, much better appreciation for Plato's philosophy of education. As we have seen, in Plato's view, education is a lifelong



journey towards liberation, an epic coming home; but education is not just meant for man to be back home. For Plato, this is what education is really for: to restore the original ideal nature of man – blessed, pure, and godlike. This is why the end of ends of all educational enterprise is *homoiōsis theōi* – man’s “becoming like god,” the very state in which man’s humanity becomes deified (*Theaetetus* 176bc). That explains why, for Plato, this particular state is also the very *telos* and apotheosis of human existence.

Now is it correct to claim that the ultimate educational goal for Plato is simply the acquisition of virtue? The answer is a big *No!* While the acquisition of virtue is certainly a must before attaining liberation, for Plato, it is only a means to an end: *homoiōsis theōi* – man’s eschatological deification. So those who write about Plato’s philosophy of education who fail to include this important concept also fail to capture the entirety of his educational philosophy. Therefore, there is really a need today to recover Plato’s ultimate educational aim.

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