UDK 14 Платон
37.01
DOI https://doi.org/10.2298/FID251010013D
Original Scientific Article
Received 10.10.2025. Accepted 14.04.2026.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 0, NO. 0, 000–000

**To cite text:**
Itao, Alexis Deodato S. "Graded Paths to Godlikeness: Plato's Vision of Education and Its Contemporary Relevance." *Philosophy and Society* 0 (0):

Alexis Deodato S. Itao

# GRADED PATHS TO GODLIKENESS: PLATO'S VISION OF EDUCATION AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

**ABSTRACT**
In Platonic scholarship, it is commonly held that the ultimate goal of education is either the acquisition of virtue or the realization of the ideal *polis*. Recent studies, however, have begun to reposition *homoiōsis theōi* – the ideal of becoming like God – as the deeper *telos* of Platonic education. Building on this emerging consensus, the present study asks whether godlikeness, as Plato's ultimate educational aim, is reserved only for the intellectual elite or can be meaningfully pursued by ordinary citizens through moral formation. Through close readings of *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Laws*, this paper argues that Plato envisions two graded paths to godlikeness: an ethical path through moral training and civic virtue, and a philosophical path through contemplation and dialectic. These paths do not compete with one another but complement each other within a unified educational vision. By retrieving this layered ideal, this study reframes *homoiōsis theōi* as both a universal aspiration and the unifying framework of Platonic *paideia* and *philosophia*. For a better understanding of Plato's educational vision, this study first presents the historical context from which his views on education emerged, providing the background framework against which Plato introduced his educational reforms. This study then examines *homoiōsis theōi* as it appears in various places in Plato's corpus, and as it was appreciated and understood in Middle Platonism down to Neo-Platonism. Beyond its historical significance, this reinterpretation also bears contemporary relevance for ongoing educational debates on character formation, civic responsibility, and holistic human development.

**KEYWORDS**
Plato; *homoiōsis theōi*; godlikeness; virtue education; character formation; holistic development; civic education

## Introduction

This study aims to provoke a rethinking of the goals of Platonic education through the lens of the ideal of godlikeness (*homoiōsis theōi*).[1] The prevailing consensus among many scholars is that for Plato, education is ultimately and

1 A detailed discussion of this concept is found in the later sections of this paper. Other than godlikeness, *homoiōsis theōi* is also commonly translated as *becoming like God* or *becoming like the divine*, and *assimilation to God* or *assimilation to the divine*. It is in

Alexis Deodato S. Itao: University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, email: alexisdeodato.itao.gs@ust.edu.ph

CC BY NC ND

mainly meant for the educated to acquire moral excellence (*aretē*) – in a word, virtue (see, e.g., Kotsonis 2021: 3; Doner 2018: 719-720; Murphy 2015: 5; Caslib 2014: 67; cf. Jonas and Nakazawa 2021; Kotsonis 2020). As one scholar puts it,

> 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 (Kotsonis 2021: 3).

In other words, these scholars argue that for Plato, education is primarily a process of moral formation, transforming students into virtuous individuals capable of controlling both their spirited and appetitive natures. It means that education is there to produce persons of character, men and women who have reached a certain moral maturity.

However, not all scholars agree with this interpretation. Some contend that the ultimate aim of Platonic education is the realization of a well-ordered state (*kallipolis*) (see, e.g., Diener 2015: 23-34; Nasaina 2018: 41-42; Annas 2017: 8; cf. Strand 2022: 141). According to this view, education serves as a means to mold individuals who can embody the utopian ideal of a just society, where each citizen fulfills their role, resulting in harmony that brings about peace and the seamless blending of goodness and beauty (*kalokagathia*). Within this framework, education is primarily political: philosophers, excelling in the virtue of wisdom, are fit to rule; soldiers embody courage, and the working class exemplifies temperance. Virtue, then, is not education's ultimate goal but rather a necessary step towards the creation of the *kallipolis*, Plato's utopian city.

These two interpretations – the virtue-centered and the polis-centered views – continue to shape and inform modern readings of Platonic education. However, recent studies indicate that for Plato, education's final end is neither but rather the state of godlikeness (cf. Itao 2023; see also Murphy 2024: 144, 172, and 180, footnote 370; Lefka 2023: 9-10). Building on this perspective, I propose a rethinking of Plato's educational aims. In this study, I aim to offer fresh perspectives on the true function of moral education (through which virtues are acquired) and intellectual cultivation (through which the guardians develop the skill of realizing the ideal *polis*). I argue that while godlikeness functions as Plato's ultimate educational aspiration, it does not override the goals of *paideia* (basic education) and *philosophia* (higher education); rather, it gives them their fullest meaning.

However, even as recent studies increasingly recognize *homoiōsis theōi* as the ultimate Platonic *telos*, a central pedagogical question remains underexamined: Is godlikeness reserved only for the intellectual elite, or is it accessible

---

the following passages where *becoming like*, *having the characteristics of*, *imitating*, or *emulating God* (or *the divine*), are mentioned or clearly implied: *Alcibiades* 133c; *Laws* IV 716b-d, VII 792c-d; *Phaedo* 64a-67e, 80e-81a; *Phaedrus* 248a-c, 249c-d, 252d-253c; *Philebus* 28c-30e; *Republic* VI 500c-d, 501b, X 613a-b; *Symposium* 207c-208b; *Theaetetus* 176a-b; *Timaeus* 47b-c, 90b-d.

to all through moral education? This study focuses on that question. I argue that Plato envisions graded paths to godlikeness – two distinct but complementary routes: an ethical path through civic virtue (accessible via *paideia*) and a philosophical path through contemplative wisdom (achieved through *philosophia*) – both open to the philosophical few and the ethically educated many, respectively. This reinterpretation situates *homoiōsis theōi* not as an exclusive metaphysical ideal, but as the unifying aspiration of both *paideia* and *philosophia*. Beyond its historical and philosophical value, re-examining Plato's educational *telos* through the lens of *homoiōsis theōi* also sheds light on contemporary questions about the aims of education, particularly in debates on character formation, civic responsibility, and holistic human development.

## Brief Historical Context: Plato, *Paideia*, and the Sophists

Not everyone may agree with Alfred North Whitehead's (1979: 39) bold assertion that everything in the Western philosophical tradition is a mere "footnote to Plato"; however, no one can deny that Plato was a pioneer and an important figure in the field of philosophy of education (see Barrow 2012: 4; Mintz 2018: v, 62). He was the first in history "to systematically set forth a theory of education" (Keeney 2007: xiv). In fact, the entirety of "Plato's dialogues can be read as a carefully staged exhibition and investigation of *paideia*, education in its broadest sense, including all that affects the formation of character and mind" (LoShan 2005: 30). As Yun Lee Too (2001: 12) confirms, "Much of the Platonic corpus is concerned with the education of young men and indeed whole communities, precisely because ... [it] was the means by which the ideal community could be formed."[2] This more than tells us that "[e]ducation can be described as Plato's central concern" (Scolnicov 2012: 12; cf. Nakazawa 2021).

Certainly, Plato's educational philosophy did not materialize in a vacuum. To fully appreciate its significance, it is important to go back in history (even if only briefly) and consider the context from which it emerged. We need to understand that in Plato's time, Athens already had *paideia*, which functioned like an established system of education. However, it lacked the philosophical framework and the formal, structured curriculum that he later provided. Be that as it may, while pre-Platonic *paideia* (or "*arkhaia paideia*" as Aristophanes called it in *Nubes* 961) can be deemed as "old-fashioned" (compared with Plato's more developed educational system at the Academy or Aristotle's at the Lyceum), "it nevertheless represented a considerable advance from a warrior to a scribe culture ... for in Athens ... education lost its essentially military character" (Marrou 1964: 63).

Though no longer designed for military purposes, the Athenian *paideia* remained, in general, an educational program for boys and young men (*paides*,

2 According to Avi I. Mintz (2018: 20, footnote 9), 24 of Plato's dialogues (out of the traditional total of 36) are centered on education or have education as their main theme. For Mintz's complete list, refer to the same page.

thus the name *paideia*). Its core disciplines consisted of *gymnastikē* (physical training), *mousikē* (music and poetry), and *grammata* (literacy and literature) (see Joyal, McDougall, and Yardley 2009: 31-58; Pritchard 2015: 112-122; Mintz 2018: 5-7). *Gymnastikē* was supervised by an athletics trainer (*paidotribēs*), who ensured that his students learned "not only running and javelin throwing but also discus throwing and the long jump," thereby also preparing them for "the events of local and Panhellenic games." *Mousikē* "was the preserve of a *kitharistēs* or *kithara* teacher, who taught students how to play the *kithara*, which was a bit like a lyre, and to sing poems." Finally, *grammata* "was overseen by a *grammatistēs* or letter teacher. He instructed students in literacy and probably also numeracy and made them memorize and recite passages of Homer and other epic poets" (Pritchard 2015: 113).

The Athenian *paideia*'s "chief educational aims were manly valour (*aretê*, a word that would later be used to designate human excellence in general) and competitiveness" (Scolnicov 2012: 12). However, it was not for the general public. According to Avi Mintz (2018: 6),

> If you lived in Athens, if you were a boy, and if your family was wealthy, you likely would have attended school at your father's expense. If you were a girl, you were much less likely to have attended school, though some schooling (or tutoring, at least) may have been possible ... Among the poorer classes, schooling would have been unlikely, except for those studying trades [where] literacy would have been necessary.

This particular social setup, in which formal schooling was generally for the wealthy elite (*hoi plousioi*), made Athens a fertile ground for the arrival of the Sophists, a group of itinerant teachers from other city-states, who made education a business enterprise by charging their students (who were, of course, from affluent families) with typically high fees. And yet, despite gaining some renown among the Greeks, the Sophists for Plato

> seemed to stand for vocational training rather than education for its own sake; for useful knowledge at the expense of knowledge for the sake of truth; for applied knowledge rather than pure knowledge; for teaching people how to be successful rather than how to be good or live good lives; for treating knowledge as a commodity to sell rather than the outcome of a cooperative inquiry; for teaching that there were experts in morality and politics just as there were in shipbuilding or cobbling; for teaching that knowledge, in all fields, lay in mastery of a few skills or techniques of a practical sort, as opposed to understanding of principles at an abstract level (Barrow 2007: 24).

Notwithstanding Plato's negative portrayal of the Sophists, their advent marked a significant upgrade in Athenian education, establishing "a new level of advanced studies for students after they had passed from the hands of the *kitharistai* and *grammatistai* ... [and] an improvement in the way young Greek men of means were equipped with the skills for success" (Ford 2001: 88-89). These skills, among others, include mastering

> techniques of persuasion and exposition, platitudes dressed up in high rhetorical style, the kind of skills that could help young men to become excellent *qua* successful in public life by speaking effectively in the Athenian Assembly (*ekklēsia*) and courts of law (Nails 2006: 3).

The Sophists' educational goals were, thus, primarily oriented towards attaining a good social standing and being recognized as a "fine and good" man (*kalos k'agathos*) (Scolnicov 2012: 13). These were undoubtedly aimed more for the sake of the students' external well-being – a flaw that Plato would later correct by shifting the goals of education to the students' internal well-being. Still, the Sophists, along with the *arkhaia paideia* of Athens in his time, provided Plato with a concrete starting point from which to develop his philosophy of education – a redefined *paideia* aimed not at external success, but at the cultivation of the soul toward its highest fulfilment: godlikeness.

## Plato's Educational Reforms and Overarching Objectives

As the Sophists went about Athens, enjoying some considerable reputation and a handsome influx of money from their rich students' fees, Plato began lambasting their educational ways and claims through the sharp criticisms and piercing questions of Socrates,[3] Plato's very own teacher, who figured as the main character in most of Plato's dialogues. Through Socrates, Plato not only diverged from the Sophists but also corrected what he saw as their misguided conception of education. Although Plato agreed with the Sophists that education should aim at transforming students into virtuous men (*agathoi andres*) (see *Protagoras* 325d-e and *Meno* 94b), he held an altogether different view regarding what being virtuous entails and what virtue (*aretē*) essentially means.

Whereas the Sophists saw *aretē* as practical and political success (see Scolnicov 2013: 5), Plato understood it as something more fundamental: the moral and intellectual transformation of the soul through virtue (see *Laws* I 643e and *Phaedo* 93c-e). In Plato's view, practical success is of little worth unless it serves the good of the soul. For him, the soul's condition – not public acclaim – is the ultimate measure of life. Hence Socrates' famous claim in the *Apology* that "the unexamined life is not worth living" (38a): a life left unreflective and morally undeveloped is a life misdirected, regardless of success.

That is why, under Plato, education ceased to become a sheer instrument of external, ephemeral pursuits such as material wealth or reputation, as the Sophists designed it to be; instead, education effectively metamorphosed into a program of inner development. Plato refocused the purpose of education, centering it on the soul and what is beneficial for it, so much so that in the dialogues, Socrates would underline the importance of the "care of the self"

3 Some of these criticisms and piercing questions are found in these passages from the following dialogues (arranged in alphabetical order): *Apology* 19e-20c; *Gorgias* 447a-527e; *Greater Hippias* 281a-286b; *Lesser Hippias* 363a-376c; *Meno* 91b-96d; *Protagoras* 319c-328d; *Republic* I 337a-354c, VI 492a-502c; *Sophist* 231a-236d.

(*epimeleia heautou*) (see *Apology* 29d-30b; *Phaedo* 115b-c; *Alcibiades* 127e-128a, 128d; *Gorgias* 470e-471d); because to care for one's self is to care for one's soul (see *Phaedo* 115d-e and *Laws* XII 959a-b; cf. Annas 2003: 65). In other words, education is there so that our souls would be properly attended to; it is primarily meant for us *to nurture* – in Latin, "*educare*" – ourselves from within.

Since everything about education now had to do with what benefits the soul, with what brings about "the best possible state of [one's] soul" (*Apology* 29e and 30b), Plato also had to redefine *paideia*, transforming it into "education from childhood in *virtue*" (*Laws* I 643e; editor's emphasis). It is extensively different from the virtue education offered in *arkhaia paideia*, in that for Plato, virtue education (practically the entire *paideia*) is an endeavour of moral and intellectual development, and not anymore a mere training for practical skills to excel in physical prowess, musical performance, and literacy aptitude.

Plato expanded the core curriculum of *arkhaia paideia*, adding to it the broad discipline of mathematics, which comprised arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and harmonics (see *Republic* VII 526b-531c). Following Pythagoras, who tied the concept of the soul to numbers, Plato likewise believed that mathematics is a *sine qua non* in a genuine education for the soul. Plato's inclusion of mathematics into *paideia* was not a mere expansion of the curriculum but a deliberate step toward shaping the intellect for higher philosophical inquiry. While gymnastics and music cultivated character, mathematics honed the mind for the abstract reasoning necessary in dialectic – the highest stage of education, leading ultimately to *homoiōsis theōi* (cf. Jenkins 2015). By incorporating mathematics, Plato transformed *paideia* into a more balanced education for the young.

Perhaps the more significant difference between *arkhaia paideia* and Plato's reformed version of *paideia* was the latter's egalitarian and inclusive nature. Anyone was welcome to join the reformed *paideia*, regardless of one's social status[4] and gender.[5] Such an educational proposal was truly revolutionary in Athenian society and possibly even in the wider Western world at that time, for hitherto, education had been mainly reserved for male children from aristocratic and well-to-do families.

The reformed *paideia*, however, was not really Plato's counter to the educational practices of the Sophists, who were never involved in *arkhaia paideia*.[6]

4 See *Republic* VII 536d-537b. Here, Plato speaks about the importance of educating future rulers beginning from childhood. Plato implies that all the city's children, regardless of social class, should receive education; then out of them, the future rulers would be identified and made to undergo higher education in which they would be trained in dialectic, hoping that when it would be their turn to govern, they would do so with justice.

5 See *Laws* VII 805c-d. Here, Plato explicitly makes it clear that when it comes to education, girls and women should be given equal treatment as the boys and men. See also *Republic* V 451e: Here, Plato states that whatever is taught to men should also be taught to women.

6 *The Sophists* were solely concerned with higher education and had nothing to do with the basic education of children.

It was rather *philosophia*, higher education steeped in the rigorous study of higher mathematics and dialectic, which the Sophists did not (for they likely also could not) provide. Exclusively designed for the intellectual elite, *philosophia* was no longer egalitarian, unlike *paideia*. Even so, *philosophia* was far more systematic and much longer, lasting even up to thirty years for the *crème de la crème*.[7]

But what were the overarching objectives of Plato's educational reforms? What was his ultimate educational aim? To answer these questions, it is important not to forget that "Plato's educational proposals are rooted in his distinctive understanding of the soul" (Patterson 2013: 373). As Werner Jaeger (1986: 247) tells us, "Plato thought that all education was moulding the soul." From these considerations, we can infer that Plato's ultimate educational goal was the attainment of "the best possible state of [one's] soul" (*Apology* 29e and 30b). Recent studies (Itao 2023; Murphy 2024: 144, 172, and 180, footnote 370; Lefka 2023: 9-10) have identified godlikeness as Plato's ultimate educational aim. Building on this perspective, this study argues that assimilation to the divine is not only the final goal of education but also represents the best possible state of the soul in Plato's thought.

Since Plato's educational reforms are deeply rooted in his conception of the soul, it follows that their highest aim must be its fullest perfection. While many scholars argue that this state is realized through virtue or the establishment of the *kallipolis*, this study contends that Plato envisions godlikeness (*homoiōsis theōi*) as the true *telos* of education. And yet, despite its foundational role in his philosophy, *homoiōsis theōi* remains largely neglected in modern scholarship.[8] This persistent oversight explains why its educational significance remains underexplored, even amid the vast influx of Platonic studies year after year.

## *Homoiōsis Theōi* in the Platonic Corpus

Plato frequently invokes *homoiōsis theōi* across his dialogues (see *Alcibiades* 133c; *Laws* IV 716b-d, VII 792c-d; *Phaedo* 64a-67e, 80e-81a; *Phaedrus* 248a-c, 249c-d, 252d-253c; *Philebus* 28c-30e; *Republic* VI 500c-d, 501b, X 613a-b; *Symposium* 207c-208b; *Theaetetus.* 176a-b; *Timaeus.* 47b-c, 90b-d), yet its precise role in education remains underexplored. This section examines key passages from *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* to determine whether *homoiōsis theōi* is reserved for an intellectual elite or accessible to all through *paideia*. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that *homoiōsis theōi* is not an alternative to moral and intellectual cultivation, but the principle that unifies and gives them their fullest meaning in Platonic education.

7 Plato's *crème de la crème* was, of course, the elite group of philosopher-kings who, after an extremely lengthy period of specialized education, were expected to reign over the state with wisdom and justice. Plato highly esteemed this group, as can be read in *Republic* V 473c-d.

8 This scholarly *neglect* is attested to in the following studies: Li (2021: 90); Torri (2017: 6); Mahoney (2005: 77); Russell (2004: 241); Sedley (1999: 309); Annas (1999: 52).

The traditionally recognized *locus classicus* of *homoiōsis theōi* is the *Theaetetus,* especially in its digression (172c2–177c2),[9] in which we can find Socrates expressing the following:

> But it is not possible, Theodorus, that evil should be destroyed – for there must always be something opposed to the good; nor is it possible that it should have its seat in heaven. But it must inevitably haunt human life, and prowl about this earth. That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with understanding (176a-b).

The passage offers us a candid description of the perilous condition of human existence: it is surrounded by evil on all sides. Thus, to avoid being contaminated and corrupted by evil, the best response is to "flee" from evil by becoming as much like God as possible – through the cultivation of justice, piety, and understanding. In this context, flight does not mean withdrawal, but active moral and intellectual transformation. But how will this be done? If "a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with understanding," as Socrates tells us in the dialogue, then the only way to arrive at godlikeness is via education.[10] Without education, *homoiōsis theōi* is never possible, for it is only through education that the virtues necessary for man to become godlike are cultivated and made to mature over time.

From *Theaetetus*, we see that virtue is a means rather than the ultimate goal of education. But this raises a crucial question: does *homoiōsis theōi* require a specific kind of education? Is it accessible through *paideia*, or is it reserved for the intellectual elite in *philosophia*? While *Theaetetus* does not explicitly answer this, *Timaeus* (the next *locus classicus* of *homoiōsis theōi* in the Platonist tradition) provides a strikingly intellectualist perspective on how godlikeness is attained. In the *Timaeus*, Plato offers what appears at first glance to be a strikingly intellectualist account of *homoiōsis theōi*. Consider the following passage in full:

> [I]f a man has seriously devoted himself to the love of learning and to true wisdom, if he has exercised these aspects of himself above all, then there is absolutely no way that his thoughts can fail to be immortal and divine ... And to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality, he can in no way fail to achieve this: constantly caring for his divine part as he does ... Now there is but one way to care for anything, and that is to provide for it the nourishment and the motions that are proper to it. And the motions that have an affinity to the divine part within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe (90c-d).

9 In almost the entire *Theaetetus,* the main topic of conversation revolves around epistemology, except in 172c2–177c2 where Socrates seems to have 'digressed' to unrelated topics like the ideal of godlikeness.

10 Jens Kristian Larsen (2019: 19) holds that the digression in *Theaetetus* bears a close resemblance to the simile of the cave in the *Republic* in that, like the famous allegory, the digression also deals with the question about the qualities of those who are educated and those who are not.

Several features of this passage merit attention. First, Plato explicitly ties godlikeness to the cultivation of learning and wisdom – activities reserved for the intellectual elite. Second, the phrase "to the extent that human nature can partake" (*kath' oson endechetai tē anthrōpinē phusei*) qualifies the claim: even the philosopher achieves only the human maximum, not full divinization. Third, the passage suggests that becoming like God involves "the thoughts and revolutions of the universe" (90d). In short, assimilation to the divine requires a deeper knowledge of higher astronomy, a study absent in *paideia*, where only elementary astronomy is taught. Vilius Bartninkas (2023: 151) aptly describes the ideal of godlikeness in the *Timaeus* as "highly intellectualist and elitist." It is simply out of reach for those who do not possess the natural intellectual aptitude of the upper class, the only ones with privileged access to *philosophia*.

But is this also Plato's position in the other dialogues, where he discusses emulating God? Let us find out if that is the case in the *Laws*, his last and longest dialogue, though generally regarded as an unfinished opus.

Through the character of the Athenian Stranger, Plato shares the following thoughts about what the ideal of godlikeness entails:

> So what conduct recommends itself to God and reflects his wishes? There is only one sort, epitomized in the old saying "like approves of like" (excess apart, which is both its own enemy and that of due proportion). In our view it is God who is preeminently the "measure of all things," much more so than any "man," as they say. So ... you must do your level best to make your own character reflect his, and on this principle the moderate man is God's friend, being like him, whereas the immoderate and unjust man is not like him and is his enemy; and the same reasoning applies to the other vices too (*Laws* IV 716c-d).

What is the point here? The passage emphasizes that we must shape our character to reflect God's, for "like approves of like" (716c). The more we cultivate godlikeness, the more we are drawn toward the divine, turning away from what is base and disorderly. But how are we going to do it? The clue is provided at the end of the passage: we need to cultivate in ourselves the virtue of moderation (also called the virtue of self-control or temperance); for "the moderate man is God's friend, being like him" (716d).

The significance of the aforementioned clue is manifold: first, to become like God, one does not have to be intellectually superior or possess the virtue of wisdom; second, to be able to incarnate the ideal of godlikeness, moderation is enough, a virtue that can be learned in *paideia*; third, since moderation is enough to become godlike, then godlikeness is an open goal for anyone; and finally, it is never a question that moderation – or any virtue that we can possibly acquire and cultivate – is never the goal of *paideia* because for Plato, education is always and ultimately aimed to make the educated as godlike as possible.

However, I wish to clarify that what I am suggesting is that even without elite philosophical education, the virtue of moderation (which one can develop and nurture in the phase of *paideia*) can render one godlike in a meaningful, though limited, sense. This should not be understood as suggesting that

wisdom is unnecessary for the fullest form of godlikeness. If we read him carefully, Plato allows for a distinction between different kinds or degrees of divine likeness: one grounded in civic virtue like moderation, and another, more complete, grounded in philosophical wisdom and knowledge of the Forms.[11] This view is supported by a growing body of scholarship that has challenged the view that godlikeness in Plato is exclusively reserved for philosophers. Duerlinger (1985) and Cleary (2013) identify moral and civic routes to divine likeness; Obdrzalek (2012) and Jedan (2013) offer typologies of plural access; and Bartninkas (2023), Itao (2023), and Murphy (2024) explicitly argue that godlikeness extends beyond philosophers to ordinary citizens through moral formation and civic piety.

Now, if we go back to the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* and put them side by side, we get a picture of two ideals that seem to contradict one another: in the former, godlikeness is only for the intellectual elite, but in the latter, godlikeness is for everyone. How are we to reconcile this seeming contradiction? If we examine it closely, the *Timaeus* is an elaborate work of cosmology with profound discussions of higher astronomy, which is not expected to be understood by those without higher education. Therefore, we can conjecture that its intended audience is the highly educated, for whom *homoiōsis theōi* is only possible by means of *philosophia* (see Bartninkas 2023: 151, footnote no. 10). The *Laws*, on the other hand, being the last masterpiece that Plato produced, without doubt reflects his mature philosophical position, especially with regard to education: that its final end, which is assimilation to God, is an open pathway for everyone to traverse.[12]

If we go to the *Republic,* which most studies on Plato's educational philosophy are focused on, we can find him telling us that "the gods *never neglect 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). The same dialogue makes clear that the philosopher's assimilation to the divine begins long before the final vision. As Plato writes, "the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can" (500d). Moreover, the philosopherrulers "mix and blend the various ways of life in the city until they produced a human image based on 'the divine form and image' when it occurred among human beings" (501b). It is significant that Plato here emphasizes becoming divine and ordered, without at the same time explicitly requiring philosophical contemplation, reinforcing the view that godlikeness admits of both ethical and intellectual pathways. This pronouncement from Plato confirms his position in the *Laws* that the ideal of

11 Thus, wisdom remains essential for full assimilation to the divine, but this does not preclude a partial or symbolic form of godlikeness accessible to non-philosophers.

12 A recent study observes that, in fact, there has been a widespread misunderstanding that Plato's educational theory is nonegalitarian, believed to perpetuate a system of education that does not provide equal opportunity for all (Kotsonis 2023: 739).

godlikeness is, indeed, open to *anyone*, regardless of one's social class.[13] Thus, since *homoiōsis theōi* is attainable only through education and the cultivation of virtue, it follows that the ultimate aim of both *paideia* and *philosophia* is to transform the educated into the closest godlike state humanly possible.

## *Homoiōsis Theōi* as the Ultimate Existential and Educational *Telos*

In antiquity, from the era of Middle Platonism (*ca.* 100 B.C. to A.D. 300) down to Neoplatonism (300-600), there was a general understanding among the Platonists that for Plato himself, the final existential *telos* for humans "is *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton,* 'becoming like god so far as is possible'" (Sedley 1999: 309). As David Sedley (ibid.) puts it, "*Homoiōsis theōi* [was] universally accepted in antiquity as the official Platonic goal."

Alcinous (2002: chapter 28), the noted second-century Middle Platonist thinker, also tells us in his famous *Didaskalikos* (*The Handbook of Platonism,* also known as *De doctrina Platonis*), an important text of that period: "[T]he *telos,* or final good for man ... [is] 'likeness to God' (*homoiōsis theōi*)." For this, we can safely say with Julia Annas (1999: 52) that, indeed, "[o]ur final end, according to Plato, is to become like God." Moreover, what further strengthens this claim is the fact that "[s]everal Platonic dialogues indicate that humans should strive to become like a god" (Armstrong 2004: 171).

If *homoiōsis theōi* is Plato's ultimate existential *telos*, does it follow that it is also his ultimate educational aim? I argue that it does.[14] Plato's educational reforms were designed to cultivate "the best possible state of [one's] soul" (*Apology* 29e, 30b), and this state, I contend, is nothing other than *homoiōsis theōi* – the final aspiration of both education and human existence.[15]

Despite its prominence in antiquity, modern scholarship has largely neglected *homoiōsis theōi*. As Sedley (1999: 309) observes, "even those well informed about Plato are often unfamiliar with it" (cf. Russell 2004: 241). Indeed, in the past fifty years, only a few studies (at least those in English) have explored this theme in depth. That is so since we have "almost a total absence of this idea from modern interpretations and discussions of Plato" (Annas 1999: 53). As Paolo Torri (2017: 6) affirms, "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." And so, given "the modern neglect of this important Platonic theme"

13 Bartninkas (2023: 205) supports this view, affirming that for Plato, godlikeness is no longer an exclusive perk for the philosophers, but an ideal open for the rest of the *polis* who have every right to be educated.

14 Refer to the preceding section for my exegesis of Plato's works, where I discuss in detail my argument why *homoiōsis theōi* represents Plato's ultimate educational goal.

15 It is important to emphasize that for Plato, as in Aristotle, *telos* refers to what fulfils the nature of something. Thus, the ultimacy of human existence, its final *telos*, is the *homoiōsis* ideal because, for Plato, the ultimate fulfilment of human nature is precisely to assimilate the divine, becoming as godlike as possible.

(Mahoney 2005: 77), it is not surprising that until today, the educational significance of *homoiōsis theōi* remains underexplored. Hence, in contemporary academic explorations that center on Plato's educational philosophy, there is a dearth of studies that seek to investigate the educational significance of *homoiōsis theōi.*

## *Kata to Dunaton:* Why Full Divinization is Not the Goal

A critic might raise the following objection to the argument thus far. If *homoiōsis theōi* is the ultimate educational *telos*, yet no human being can ever fully become God – we remain human, mortal, and, in Socrates' own admission, ignorant – then is Plato not setting up an impossible goal? Does the impossibility of full divinization not collapse the very ideal this study has been defending?

The objection is a serious one, and it finds support in several Platonic passages. In the *Phaedrus* Palinode, for instance, Socrates describes how human souls, unlike their fully divine counterparts, only catch "a dim vision" of reality before falling back into the cycle of embodiment (248a-c). As Socrates further relates, although they

> are all eagerly straining to keep up, [they] are unable to rise; they are carried around below the surface, trampling and striking one another as each tries to get ahead of the others. The result is terribly noisy, very sweaty, and disorderly. Many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage. After so much trouble, they all leave without having seen reality, uninitiated (248 b-c).

In other words, even the best among them remain embodied, vulnerable to forgetfulness and failure. The *Symposium* reinforces this picture through Diotima's myth of Poros (Resource) and Penia (Poverty) at 203b-204a. Eros, the child of these two parents, is "always in need" yet always scheming to obtain what he lacks. He is "neither immortal nor mortal" but somewhere in between. The philosophical lover of wisdom, on this account, is constitutionally *neither fully divine nor fully bestial* – a perpetual mixture of resource and lack. And finally, there is Socrates' own lifelong avowal in the *Apology* (21d) that he is wise only insofar as he knows that he does not know. If anyone in the Platonic corpus had earned the right to claim divine wisdom, it would be Socrates. Yet he claims the opposite.

These passages seem to suggest that full divinization is impossible for embodied human beings. But does this undermine *homoiōsis theōi* as an educational *telos*? It does not. On the contrary, it defines what human godlikeness actually means.

The key is the phrase *kata to dunaton* – "so far as possible" – which appears in the *Theaetetus* passage (176b) and echoes throughout Plato's corpus (see also *Timaeus* 90c). This phrase is not a loophole or a qualification of failure. It is a precise description of the distinctly *human* form of divine likeness. A god does not need to strive to become like God. A human does. And that striving – the

*eros* for wisdom, the refusal to rest content in ignorance, the commitment to self-examination and moral cultivation – is itself an achievement. As Ferrari (1992) has shown in his reading of the *Phaedrus*, the soul's glimpse of the Forms leaves it aching for what it has lost, and that aching is not a defect but the very structure of embodied human life. Hyland (2008) presses this point further, arguing that Plato's dialogues gesture toward a path that is *longer* precisely because its goal cannot be achieved within the span of a single human life. McCoy (2013) reaches a complementary conclusion, showing that vulnerability – the recognition that one can be wounded, misled, or defeated – is not an obstacle to philosophy but its enabling condition. And Gordon (2012), speaking of the philosophical life, makes the case that Platonic *eros* is not a stepping stone to be left behind but rather its permanent motivational structure.

Here, however, we arrive at the paradoxical core of the matter. If God, as Plato conceives him, is self-sufficient (*autarkes*) – lacking nothing, needing nothing, perfectly complete in himself – then a human being who somehow "possessed" divine wisdom would no longer be human. To have no lack is to have no *eros*. To have no *eros* is to have no desire. To have no desire is to cease being the kind of being that Plato, in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, identifies as distinctly human. The paradox, then, is this: the most divine thing a human can do is to *desire* the divine perfectly. Not to possess it. Not to become it. But to orient oneself toward it so completely that the orientation itself becomes one's essence. Socratic ignorance is not a gap to be closed. It is the structural condition that makes Socratic *eros* possible. To close the gap would be to extinguish the desire. And to extinguish the desire would be to lose the very thing that makes the philosopher godlike in the human way.

A clarification is in order before proceeding further. Plato's myths of reincarnation – the myth of Er in the *Republic*, the Palinode in the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus*' account of souls returning to their native star – might suggest that full divinization is not impossible in principle but merely deferred across many lifetimes. On this reading, the "longer way" Hyland (2008) speaks of is not infinitely long; it is very long, but terminal. The present study does not adopt this reading. While reincarnation may provide a mechanism for progressive purification, Plato gives no indication that even the most philosophical soul – Socrates himself – ever achieves the terminus. Socrates' profession of ignorance (*Apology* 21d) is not a confession of temporary incompleteness. It is a description of the permanent human condition. The soul, for Plato, is not a god-in-waiting. It is what it is: a being between resource and lack, capable of glimpsing the divine but never possessing it. The *telos*, therefore, is not arrival but orientation. This is the sense in which *homoiōsis theōi* is asymptotic – and why the graded paths are best understood as different registers of divine participation rather than different rungs on a single ladder toward a common endpoint.

What does this asymptotic reading mean for the graded paths model proposed in this study? Two implications merit attention.

First, *homoiōsis theōi* is *asymptotic* in the strong sense.[16] One becomes like God *so far as possible for a human*, and that "so far as possible" includes the recognition that full divinization is impossible – not just in this life, but in any life. The philosopher who knows that he does not know is not less godlike than the one who claims divine wisdom. He is *more* godlike because he has understood what human godlikeness actually consists in: not identity with the divine but *assimilation* to it, which includes the recognition of non-identity.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the graded paths are not simply two rungs on a single ladder where the lower path is a defective version of the higher. Rather, they are two distinct yet hierarchically related modes of erotic orientation toward the divine – two different registers of divine participation, one of which (the philosophical) achieves a fuller, more conscious assimilation, while the other (the ethical) achieves a real but less comprehensive likeness. Both are genuine; neither is reducible to the other, but they differ in degree and kind.

Consider the *Laws* on this point. The Athenian Stranger repeatedly suggests that law (*nomos*) is a distribution of mind (*nous*) – an embodiment of divine order in the fabric of civic life.[17] When the ordinary citizen cultivates moderation, justice, and piety under the guidance of law, he is not merely "preparing" for something higher. He is already participating in the divine through the *mimicry* of its immutability and order. His soul becomes stable, harmonious, law-abiding – a reflection of the divine *cosmos* in miniature. The philosopher, by contrast, participates in the divine through *activity* and *vision* – the intellect's direct contemplation of the Forms, the soul's dynamic ascent through dialectic. Both are genuine modes of *homoiōsis theōi*. As already mentioned, neither is reducible to the other. The citizen mimics the divine *order*. The philosopher mimics the divine *activity*. And both, because both remain human, do so under the sign of *eros* – the perpetual reaching toward what neither can fully possess.

Thus, the impossibility of full divinization does not collapse the ideal. It completes it. Socratic ignorance is not the denial of *homoiōsis theōi* but its proper human form. The *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* do not undermine Plato's educational project. They reveal that education is not the delivery of a finished product – the divinized human – but the cultivation of a perpetual orientation: the soul turned toward the divine, desiring it, ordering itself in its image, and acknowledging its own finitude as the very condition of that desire. The reincarnation myths, read carefully, do not promise eventual arrival. They promise more opportunities to practice the same asymptotic orientation across multiple

16 The term "asymptotic" is borrowed from mathematics, where an asymptote is a line that a curve approaches indefinitely but never touches. Applied to *homoiōsis theōi*, it captures the idea that the human soul can draw ever closer to divine likeness without ever fully achieving identity with the divine.

17 This indicates that the asymptotic logic does not apply only to the individual soul. The *kallipolis* of the *Republic* is similarly presented as a "pattern laid up in heaven" (592a-b) – an ideal that orients the legislator's soul rather than a blueprint for terminal implementation on earth. A full treatment of the political implications of asymptotic *homoiōsis theōi*, however, lies beyond the scope of the present study.

lifetimes. The "longer way" is not a path to a terminus. It is a path that remains a path. For Plato, the only way to be "perfect" is to be perfectly aware of one's own imperfection. To be a god-in-possession is the divine's business; to be a god-in-desire is the highest calling of the human.

With this clarification in place, we can now turn to the conclusion.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrated that for Plato, *homoiōsis theōi* is the true final goal of education. The common view that education culminates in virtue or the realization of the ideal *polis* falls short of Plato's ultimate vision.

It should not be forgotten that for Plato, education is first of all meant to nurture the soul, to help people reach "the best possible state of [their] soul" (*Apology* 29e and 30b; cf. Patterson 2013: 373; Jaeger 1986: 247). In short, education is primarily for the benefit of the soul and only secondarily for society. As Li Fan (2021: 99, footnote 16) affirms,

> though it is true that, for the purpose of the city's legislators, philosophic education is employed to instruct the city's competent ruler, it is not right to say, in the context of the *Republic* (and other Platonic dialogues besides), that the purpose of philosophic education itself is political.

Thus, while philosophers are educated specially for the purpose of establishing a just and well-ordered society, ultimately, their main task is to be

> at the head of the procession toward god, [so that] no citizen will be left behind. … By inculcating justice, beauty, and moderation in all citizens, the philosophers fashion an entire city in 'the divine form and image' [*Republic* 501b]. Becoming like god, for Plato, is a civic mission: 'Every man must resolve to belong to those who follow in the company of god' [*Laws* 716b] (Murphy 2024: 206).

Therefore, as we have seen, approaching Plato through the lens of the ideal of godlikeness significantly changes our appreciation and understanding of this ancient Greek philosopher's educational philosophy. For, when we begin to reconsider Plato's philosophy of education and grant that his ultimate educational goal is *homoiōsis theōi,* we are forced to rethink the purpose and goals of Platonic education; we cannot but recognize that everything in its curriculum carries "a deeper rationale" (Cleary 2013: 101) – the ideal of godlikeness, which has not yet gained universal recognition but whose time is already ripe to be uncovered and brought to light.

In light of this study, *homoiōsis theōi* should not be understood as negating the educational aims of *paideia* and *philosophia*, but rather as their ultimate aspiration. Just as an institutional Vision gives deeper meaning to specific Goals without overriding them, godlikeness in Plato's philosophy provides the higher purpose that unites and directs virtue cultivation and intellectual development. This reading not only bridges competing interpretations of Platonic education

but also offers a new perspective on how education, ethics, and political philosophy converge in the Platonic tradition.

This dual accessibility to godlikeness – ethical for the many and philosophical for the few – does not render philosophical training redundant. On the contrary, it situates *philosophia* as the path to a fuller, more conscious participation in the divine. While civic virtues such as moderation enable a symbolic resemblance to the divine, it is only through wisdom and the dialectical ascent that the soul achieves complete *homoiōsis theōi*.[18] Thus, Plato's educational system does not flatten differences but dignifies each mode of soul-cultivation according to its capacities.

Moreover, the neglect of *homoiōsis theōi* in modern Platonic scholarship may not merely be an oversight but a reflection of deeper interpretative biases. If we take seriously the idea that godlikeness is Plato's ultimate educational goal, then we must also recognize that his entire philosophical system is anchored in a profoundly religious ideal: the soul's ascent to divinity. This view challenges many secular readings of Plato, which often prioritize his ethical and political teachings while downplaying their spiritual dimensions. Acknowledging this requires a rethinking of Platonic education, not merely as moral or intellectual formation, but as a transformative process aimed at nothing less than the divinization of the human soul.

Crucially, this study suggests a rethinking of the role of moral education and intellectual cultivation in Platonic philosophy. Rather than serving as ultimate *teloi*, they now function primarily as *sunaitia* – necessary but subordinate contributors to the soul's journey toward godlikeness. Moral education enables the soul to attain proper ethical disposition (virtue), while intellectual cultivation trains the mind to grasp reality as it truly is – not merely to realize the *kallipolis*, but more importantly, to prepare the soul for assimilation to the divine. Thus, the acquisition of virtue and the realization of the ideal *polis* are both essential means rather than final ends. In this way, *homoiōsis theōi* emerges not simply as an isolated concept in Plato's thought, but as the guiding principle that unifies his entire educational philosophy. *Paideia*, as we have seen, cultivates virtue and disciplines the soul, preparing it for the higher pursuit of wisdom. *Philosophia*, in turn, refines the intellect and guides the soul toward the eidetic vision. Both are essential, not as ends in themselves, but as necessary stages (*sunaitia*) in the soul's ascent to divinity.

In sum, Plato's concept of *homoiōsis theōi* is not monolithic but stratified. Moral education through *paideia* makes divine likeness meaningfully accessible to all, while *philosophia* provides its fullest realization. This graded accessibility affirms that Platonic education is both inclusive and aspirational, structured to meet the student where they are while guiding them toward their divine potential.

Finally, Platonic education can be seen as a kind of *nostos*, a homecoming – not to a physical place, but to the divine reality from which we originate. Like

18 To read more on how the education of philosophers culminates in the mystical stage of dialectic before it transforms them into godlike individuals, see Itao (2025).

Odysseus' journey back to Ithaca, the ascent to godlikeness is fraught with obstacles, illusions, and false comforts. Yet, through *paideia* and/or *philosophia*, all who are rightly educated – whether through philosophical contemplation or the practice of virtue – participate in this return. Just as Homer's hero ultimately reaches his rightful home, Plato's educational vision directs humanity back to its highest destiny: godlikeness. However, not all experience *eudaimonia* in the same way. Philosophers, through the *eidetic* vision, reach the highest level of godlikeness, yet ordinary citizens can still participate in the divine through the cultivation of virtue. Each, in their own way, embarks on the journey of return. This layered approach to *homoiōsis theōi* reveals that Plato's philosophy of education, rather than being exclusive, is ultimately inclusive – providing a path for all to return to their divine nature.

The implications of this re-examination extend beyond classical philosophy. In contemporary educational discourse – particularly within the Asia-Pacific region, where societies balance rapid modernization with enduring cultural and spiritual traditions – questions of education's ultimate purpose remain urgent. Plato's vision of *homoiōsis theōi* invites educators to move beyond narrow utilitarian aims and instead cultivate learners' moral and spiritual capacities alongside intellectual growth. Whether through civic virtues accessible to all or through higher intellectual training, education becomes a pathway toward human flourishing that integrates ethical, social, and transcendent dimensions. Recovering this Platonic ideal can therefore enrich current discussions on values education, lifelong learning, and holistic development, offering a conceptual framework that bridges ancient wisdom and present-day educational challenges.

So while there may be some ounce of truth to the claim that saying "something new about Plato's ideas on education is almost impossible, as his educational views, expressed mainly in [the] *Republic* and *Laws*, have been worked over for nearly two and a half thousand years" (O'Hear 2024: 43), re-examining Plato's educational philosophy through the lens of *homoiōsis theōi* reveals that his vision is far richer than commonly assumed. Perhaps, after two and a half millennia of interpretation, there is still more to discover about this ancient philosopher that we have not yet fully grasped.

## Funding Information

This study received no external funding and was conducted at the author's sole expense.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest relevant to the content of this article. The research was conducted independently, without any financial or personal relationships that could be construed as influencing the interpretation or presentation of the findings.

## References

Alcinous. 2002. *The Handbook of Platonism*. Translated by John M. Dillon. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Annas, Julia. 1999. "Becoming Like God, Ethics, and the Divine." In: *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*, 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: pp.: 52–71.

_____. 2003. *Plato: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. 2017. *Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Armstrong, John M. 2004. "After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God." In: Sedley, David, ed. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 26. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.: 171–183.

Barrow, Robin. 2007. *Plato*. London: Bloomsbury.

_____. 2012. *Plato and Education*. London: Routledge.

Bartninkas, Vilius. 2023. *Traditional and Cosmic Gods in Later Plato and the Early Academy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caslib, B. N., Jr. 2014. "On the Nature of Ethics for Teachers." *Philippine Social Sciences Review* 66: 67–90.

Cleary, John J. 2013. "Paideia in Plato's *Laws*." In: Dillon, John M., Brendan O'Byrne, and Fran O'Rourke, eds. *Studies on Plato, Aristotle and Proclus: Collected Essays on Ancient Philosophy of John J. Cleary*. Leiden: Brill: pp.: 99–110.

Diener, D. 2015. *Plato: The Great Philosopher-Educator*. Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press.

Doner, J. 2018. "Rebirth of Paideia: Ultimacy and the Game of Games." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50 (7): 719–727.

Duerlinger, James. 1985. "Ethics and the Divine Life in Plato's Philosophy." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13 (2): 312–331.

Ferrari, G. R. F. 1992. *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's* Phaedrus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ford, Andrew. 2001. "Sophists without Rhetoric: The Arts of Speech in Fifth-Century Athens." In: Too, Yun Lee, ed. *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill: pp.: 85–110.

Gordon, Jill. 2012. *Plato's Erotic World: From Cosmic Origins to Human Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, Drew A. 2008. *Plato and the Question of Beauty*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Itao, Alexis Deodato S. 2023. "*Homoiōsis Theōi*: Plato's Ultimate Educational Aim." *Problemos* 104: 36–46.

_____. 2025. "From the Religious to the Mystical: The Complementarity of *Methexis* and *Dialektikē* in Platonic Philosophic Education." *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy* 26 (3): 436–446.

Jaeger, Werner. 1986. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Vol. 3. Translated by Gilbert Highet. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jedan, Christoph. 2013. "Metaphors of Closeness: Reflections on *Homoiōsis Theōi* in Ancient Philosophy and Beyond." *Numen* 60 (1): 54–70.

Jenkins, M. 2015. "Early Education in Plato's *Republic*." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23 (5): 843–863.

Jonas, Mark E., and Yoshiaki Nakazawa. 2021. *A Platonic Theory of Moral Education: Cultivating Virtue in Contemporary Democratic Classrooms*. London: Routledge.

Joyal, Mark, Iain McDougall, and J. C. Yardley. 2009. *Greek and Roman Education: A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge.

Keeney, P. 2007. “Foreword.” In: Barrow, Robin. *Plato*. London: Bloomsbury: pp.: xiv–xvi.
Kotsonis, Angelos. 2020. “What Can We Learn from Plato about Intellectual Character Education?” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 52 (3): 251–260.
_____. 2021. “The Prominent Role of Education in the Platonic Account of Imperfect Political Systems.” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 55 (2): 347–357.
_____. 2023. “Plato’s Legacy to Education: Addressing Two Misunderstandings.” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 57 (4): 739–747.
Larsen, Jens Kristian. 2019. “Measuring Humans against Gods: On the Digression of Plato’s *Theaetetus*.” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 101 (1): 1–29.
Lefka, A. 2023. “The Citizens’ Lifelong Learning in Plato’s *Laws*.” *Philosophy and Society* 34 (1): 5–31.
Li, F. 2021. “Nature and Divinity in the Nature of Godlikeness.” In: Sattler, Barbara M., and Ursula Coope, eds. *Ancient Ethics and the Natural World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp.: 90–105.
LoShan, Z. 2005. “Plato’s Counsel on Education.” In: Rorty, Amélie O., ed. *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives*. London: Routledge: pp.: 30–48.
Mahoney, Timothy A. 2005. “Moral Virtue and Assimilation to God in Plato’s *Timaeus*.” In: Sedley, David, ed. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 28. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.: 77–91.
Marrou, Henri I. 1964. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Translated by George Lamb. New York, NY: The New American Library of World Literature.
McCoy, Marina. 2013. *Wounded Heroes: Vulnerability as a Virtue in Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mintz, Avi I. 2018. *Plato: Images, Aims, and Practices of Education*. Cham: Springer Nature.
Murphy, J. B. 2024. “Civic Deification in Plato.” In: *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp.: 129–212.
Murphy, M. M. 2015. “Plato’s Philosophy of Education and the Common Core Debate.” Paper presented at the Association for the Development of Philosophy Teaching (ADOPT) Spring Conference, De Paul University, Chicago, IL.
Nails, Debra. 2006. “The Life of Plato of Athens.” In: Benson, Hugh H., ed. *A Companion to Plato*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing: pp.: 1–12.
Nakazawa, Yoshiaki. 2021. “Plato: Philosophy as Education.” In: Mintz, Avi I., ed. *A History of Western Philosophy of Education in Antiquity*. London: Bloomsbury Academic: pp.: 53–74.
Nasaina, M. 2018. “Plato’s Educational System in Athens—4th Century.” *Open Journal for Studies in History* 1 (1): 39–48.
O’Hear, Anthony. 2024. “A Schooling on Goodness: Plato on Education.” *Principia: A Journal of Classical Education* 3 (1): 43–53.
Obdrzalek, Suzanne. 2012. “Next to Godliness: Pleasure and Assimilation to God in the *Philebus*.” *Apeiron* 45 (1): 1–31.
Patterson, Cynthia B. 2013. “Education in Plato’s *Laws*.” In: Grubbs, Judith Evans, Tim Parkin, and Roslyn Bell, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.: 365–380.
Plato. 1997. *Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Associate editor D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.
Pritchard, David M. 2015. “Athens.” In: Bloomer, W. Martin, ed. *A Companion to Ancient Education*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell: pp.: 112–122.

Russell, Daniel C. 2004. "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (3): 241–260.
Scolnicov, Samuel. 2012. "Education (*Paideia*)." In: Press, Gerald A., ed. *The Continuum Companion to Plato*. London: Continuum: pp.: 12–13.
_____. 2013. *Plato's Metaphysics of Education*. London: Routledge.
Sedley, David. 1999. "The Ideal of Godlikeness." In: Fine, Gail, ed. *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.: 309–328.
Strand, Tove. 2022. "What Promotes Justice in, for and through Education Today?" *Ethics and Education* 17 (2): 141–148.
Too, Yun Lee. 2001. "Introduction: Writing the History of Ancient Education." In: Too, Yun Lee, ed. *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill: pp.: 1–22.
Torri, P. 2017. "Homoiōsis Theōi: A Study of the Telos in Middle Platonism." PhD dissertation, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan.
Whitehead, Alfred North. 1979. *Process and Philosophy: An Essay in Cosmology*. Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne. Corrected ed. New York, NY: Free Press.
Zovko, Marie-Élise. 2018. "Worldly and Otherworldly Virtue: Likeness to God as Educational Ideal in Plato, Plotinus, and Today." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50 (6–7): 586–596.

Alexis Deodato S. Itao

## Slojeviti putevi ka bogolikosti: Platonova vizija obrazovanja i njena savremena relevantnost

**Apstrakt**

U istraživanjima o Platonu uobičajeno je shvatanje da je krajnji cilj obrazovanja ili sticanje vrline ili ostvarenje idealnog polisa. Novija istraživanja, međutim, počela su da ponovo pozicioniraju *homoiōsis theōi* – ideal postajanja sličnim Bogu – kao dublji *telos* platonovskog obrazovanja. Oslanjajući se na ovaj konsenzus u nastajanju, ova studija postavlja pitanje da li je bogolikost, kao Platonov krajnji vaspitni cilj, rezervisana samo za intelektualnu elitu ili je i obični građani mogu smisleno ostvarivati kroz moralno oblikovanje. Kroz pažljivo čitanje dijaloga *Teetet*, *Timaj*, *Država* i *Zakoni*, ovaj rad tvrdi da Platon zamišlja dva slojevita puta ka bogolikosti: etički put, kroz moralno usavršavanje i građansku vrlinu, i filozofski put, kroz kontemplaciju i dijalektiku. Ovi putevi se ne nadmeću jedan s drugim, već se međusobno dopunjuju unutar jedinstvene obrazovne vizije. Povratkom ovom slojevitom idealu, studija preoblikuje *homoiōsis theōi* kao univerzalnu težnju i ujedno kao objedinjujući okvir platonovske *paideia*-e i *philosophia*-e. Radi boljeg razumevanja Platonove obrazovne vizije, studija najpre predstavlja istorijski kontekst iz kojeg su proizašli njegovi pogledi na obrazovanje, pružajući pozadinski okvir u odnosu na koji je Platon uveo svoje obrazovne reforme. Zatim se ispituje *homoiōsis theōi*, kako se javlja na različitim mestima u Platonovom korpusu, kao i način na koji je bio vrednovan i shvatan u srednjem platonizmu sve do neoplatonizma. Pored svog istorijskog značaja, ovo novo tumačenje ima i savremenu relevantnost za aktuelne obrazovne debate o oblikovanju karaktera, građanskoj odgovornosti i holističkom razvoju čoveka.

Ključne reči: Platon; *homoiōsis theōi*; bogolikost; vaspitanje za vrlinu; oblikovanje karaktera; celovit razvoj; građansko obrazovanje