

Plato on Divinization and the Divinity of the Rational Part of the Soul

and attentive engagement with the sensible world, other interpretations that take it to be an exclusively intellectual endeavor or a dismissive flight from the sensible world are mistaken.

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ABSTRACT

The divinity of the soul in Plato is analyzed into three aspects, one metaphysical, one epistemological, and one ethical, namely: (1) its immortality and kinship to the Forms, (2) its ability to know them, and (3) its ability to live by them, respectively. I argue that these aspects in combination naturally suggest a process of Platonic divinization or "becoming like god" according to which the person being divinized would be expected to gain (3) increasing moral virtue, which depends on (2) an increasing knowledge of the Forms, which in turn prepares the soul for reunification with (1) its metaphysical kin, the Forms. This interpretation of divinization is confirmed by successively comparing Plato's discussion of "becoming like god" in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*. Since divinization on this understanding requires moral virtue

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What does Plato mean when he claims, in the middle and late dialogues, that the soul, and in particular the rational part of the soul, is divine? Answers to this question have not, to my knowledge, received any systematic treatment. Dodds (1945, 19), recognizes the soul's divinity in passing, and Guthrie (1957, 10-12) points out its probable Orphic and Empedoclean heritage, but without developing the theme in Plato himself. My own analysis, in addition to illuminating a recurrent theme in Plato's philosophy of interest in its own right, will provide a basis upon which to build an adequate interpretation of the intrinsically related Platonic idea(1) of ὁμοίωσις θεῶν, "becoming like god."¹ Having done so, I will then be able to correct misplaced emphasis, flaws, and tension created by other interpretations of that idea(1).

I. ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINITY OF THE RATIONAL PART

The divinity of the rational part consists of three features. First, it is divine on account of its metaphysical status: it is, for Plato, both (1a) immortal and, even more importantly, (1b) akin to those supremely divine objects, the Forms (see, e.g., *Smp.* 211e, which refers to "divine Beauty itself"; though, it must be granted, Plato calls many other things divine: see Hackforth, 1936, 4). (1a) The immortality of the soul, argued for at length throughout the *Phaedo*, in *Republic* 10 (608c-612a), and in the *Phaedrus* (245c-e), makes the soul just as "deathless" (ἀθάνατον), and therefore divine, as the Homeric gods (see *Phd.* 73a, 79d, 80b, 81a, 100b, 105e, 106b-e, 107c, 114d; *R.* 610c, 611a-b, 611e, 621c; *Phdr.* 245c, 246a, 247b; see also the entry on 'god' in *Def.*, θεός ζῶον ἀθάνατον). But can we be sure that the rational part of the soul specifically is divine because of its immortality? Indeed, of the three psychic

parts distinguished in the *Republic*, the rational is called the "most divine" (θειότατον, 589e). Thus, even if it should turn out that there are no parts in the soul when it is separated from the body—a possibility Plato seems to acknowledge (612a, but see Guthrie, 1957, 12-13, and Hall, 1963, 65ff)—we would expect the rational part above all to survive death intact. We are not surprised, then, to find the *Timaeus* (41c-d, 69c-70b, 90a-c) explicitly separating the mortal soul (with its two parts, spirited and appetitive) from the immortal and divine soul (identified as our rational part: see Hall, 1963, 63).

The soul, and in particular the rational part, is also divine, or at least has some degree of divinity, due to (1b) its metaphysical kinship with the Forms. Making use of a particular expression reserved for the Forms alone ("what always is"), Plato informs us that the soul is "akin (συγγενής) to the divine (θείω) and immortal and what always is" (*R.* 611e). But again, can we be sure that this type of divinity, or at least this kinship or likeness to true divinity, applies to the rational part in particular? We can. The rational part, to anticipate one of my later points, is our only means of knowing "what always is," the purely intelligible Forms. The spirited and appetitive parts, on the other hand, have no direct link or intrinsic connection to these divine objects. If any particular part of the soul is responsible for its being "akin to the divine and immortal and what always is," it must be the rational part.

We can gain an even more vivid sense of the rational part's kinship with divine, intelligible objects from a neglected aspect of the image of the Cave. The prisoners, as Plato's Socrates points out, being completely unaware of anything beyond their immediate surroundings, mistake what is less real for what is more real (515c-d). Chained in such a way that they can only see the play of shadows on the wall in front of them, unable even to move their heads (514a), they mistakenly think,

for example, that the shadow of some animal-statue cast by the fire behind them is the real animal, not suspecting the existence of either the animal-statue or the true, above-ground animal itself. They do not realize the greater level of reality such things possess in comparison with mere shadows. In short, they do not recognize shadows as shadows. Likewise, because all that they see of themselves are their own shadows (515a), unaware that there is more to their own being than what they see, they do not realize the particularly privileged level of reality that they possess as human souls. For they are not merely statues of men (ἀνδριάντας) like those being carried in front of the fire (514b-c), but real, living, breathing men. As such, they do not belong in the world of shadows and images. Metaphysically, they are the kind of thing properly found in the realm above the Cave, which represents the intelligible as opposed to the visible and sensible world (517b). They belong with the other real men who live above ground. (The existence of men above ground is implied because there are images of them in water: see 516a.) Thus, though human souls are not themselves Forms, it is safer to classify them with such intelligible, immaterial, divine objects than with visible, material, mortal ones. And because the image of the Cave itself represents the ascent of the soul to the intelligible realm (517b), we can be confident that the role of the rational part is being especially emphasized. If anything in our souls is akin to purely intelligible Forms, it would be our intellectual, rational part.

The soul's natural kinship with intelligible objects is the foundation of the second argument for the soul's immortality in the *Phaedo*. After dividing reality into "two kinds of beings, one visible and the other invisible," the former always changing and perceptible to the senses but the latter always the same and accessible only to our rational powers (79a), Plato's Socrates goes on to conclude that "the soul is most like the

divine (θείω) and deathless and intelligible and uniform and indissoluble and always being the same as itself" (80b), "being akin (συγγενής)" to "what is pure and always existing and immortal and unchanging" (79d). While it cannot itself be a Form, the soul, and in particular its rational powers, should be categorized in the realm of divine, immaterial, intelligible objects. The same point is also conveyed by the imagery of the heavenly chariots in the *Phaedrus*, where we learn that the soul finds its true nourishment and fulfillment in gazing on the reality of the Forms in the intelligible realm amidst the gods, to which realm, if it has since fallen, it is ever striving to re-ascend (246b-248a). In addition to being divine due to one of its properties (immortality), it is also divine to some extent simply due to the kind of thing it is.

So much for the divine metaphysical status of the soul and, in particular, of its rational part. The second and third features of its divinity are based on its operations. The first of these, as I have already mentioned, is (2) its theoretical function as the sole instrument of our knowledge of the divine Forms. It is "that by which we learn," which "is always straining towards knowing the truth" as the "learning-loving and philosophical" part of the soul (*R.* 581a; see 611d-e). True learning and philosophy consist in the intellectual grasping of the essences of authentic realities, the Forms (*R.* 475e-476b, 479d-480a, 484b; *Th.* 175c-d; *Phd.* 63e-66e). The other parts of the soul, the spirited and appetitive, have no share in learning or philosophy except insofar as they enforce and obey the reasoned dictates of the rational part (*R.* 441e-442d; *Phdr.* 253e-254e; *Ti.* 70a-71e); they cannot learn or philosophize themselves. Only the rational part has the divine privilege of knowing the divine Forms.

The third and final mark of the rational part's divinity is (3) its practical ability to rule, regulate, and organize the other parts of the

soul. It is this function of the rational part that Plato chose to emphasize in selecting its name, “calling that part of the soul with which it rationally calculates, rational” (τὸ μὲν ᾧ λογίζεται λογιστικὸν προσαγορεύοντες τῆς ψυχῆς, *R.* 439d). The ideal person (i.e., the philosopher), having used his or her rational part to gain adequate knowledge of the relevant Forms, especially the Good, then proceeds by means of the same part to ‘calculate’ or ‘reason’ what is good for the whole soul, transforming his theoretical knowledge of the Forms into practical directives for his own regulation (441e, 442c). Having seen the Form of the Good, he is able to determine what is good, advantageous, and beneficial for himself (and, if need be, for others), and so live a just and virtuous life (see 500d-501c).

For Plato, the ability to rule is a characteristic mark of divinity. In the *Phaedo*, having pointed out that the soul is the natural master of the body (see also *R.* 590c, *Lg.* 896c), Plato has Socrates ask Cebes, “Which seems to you like the divine (θεῖον) and which the mortal? Or does it not seem to you that the divine (θεῖον) is such as to rule and to lead by nature, but the mortal to be ruled and to be subject?” To which he answers: “Clearly, Socrates, the soul is like the divine, and the body the mortal” (80a). When a soul does successfully rule itself and the body it inhabits, it lives a life of virtue—especially in the case of the philosopher, who is constantly purifying himself of contact with the body by subduing it and who acquires true virtue and self-mastery through philosophical wisdom (64a-69d). Similarly in the *Timaeus*, when the Demiurge addresses the gods, he describes how he himself will fashion man’s (immortal) soul, associating its ruling power with its divinity and the life of virtue:

And to the extent that it is fitting for them to possess something that shares our name of ‘immortal’, something described

as *divine* (θεῖον) and *ruling* within those of them who always consent to *follow after justice* and after you, I shall begin by sowing that seed, and then hand it over to you (41c-d, my emphasis, trans. Donald Zeyl, *Plato: Complete Works*, 1997; see 69c, 90a; *Lg.* 713e-714a, 899a-b).

To rule oneself, and hence to live justly and virtuously, is divine. Likewise in the *Phaedrus*, the rational part of the soul, its ruler and charioteer, must steer the other parts in harmony together (i.e., justly and virtuously) in imitation of the gods (246a-b, 248a, 252d-254e). Plato’s message is clear: ruling oneself by one’s rational power, and hence living a life of justice and virtue, is divine.

The rational part of the soul, then, is divine for three reasons: not only (1) for what it *is*—namely, both (1a) immortal and (1b) metaphysically akin to the Forms, but also for what it is able to *do*—namely, (2) to know these Forms and, subsequently, (3) to rule the other parts and enable a person to live an ordered, just, and virtuous life. It is evident that these three aspects of rationality are not separate and isolated from one another, but inseparably connected. How, then, would they all work together in a given individual, and how might we expect that dynamism to play out, ideally, in the course of his or her development?

First, we may observe that (3) the practical ability to rule is intrinsically dependent upon, though more than a mere side effect of, (2) the theoretical ability to know the Forms. The task of ruling is a serious responsibility, but its execution would be impossible, or at least gravely inadequate, without the knowledge of how to do it which can only come from a grasp of the relevant Forms (*R.* 505a). But why, on the basis of the evidence considered so far, would we expect human beings, (1) whose level of reality, insofar as they are rational, is akin to the Forms which reside in the intelligible world, (3) to employ their

rational part in the difficult and laborious task of ruling themselves (*Phdr.* 253e-254e) or others (*R.* 519c-520e) in this sensible world? Why would a person choose to engage in the affairs of this world, even if such engagement, as we know from the grand cosmic operations of the Demiurge and the gods of the stars and planets (*R.* 508a; *Ti.* 38c-40d; *Lg.* 821a-d, 898c-899b), is a divine task, worthy of the rational part's divinity? If the intelligible world is our true home, and it is there that our metaphysical kin reside, would we not rather intensely desire and eventually attempt to return to that realm from which we have, in some way or other, descended? Furthermore, wouldn't we expect that (2) the profound intelligible grasp of the Forms necessary for (3) an adequate commitment to a life of virtue in the sensible world would, in the process, awaken our nostalgia for our true habitation (*Phdr.* 250c-d), and a deep philosophical longing for what is most beautiful and good (*Smp.* 201a-c, 203e-204b, 206c-e)? Why, in short, would we tie ourselves to the earth, when heaven beckons us skyward (*Tht.* 174a, *Ti.* 90a-b)?

The solution to this apparent difficulty, if the three divine aspects of the rational part are truly unified, must lie in the fact that a life of virtue engaged with the sensible realm is an essential preparation for one's return to the intelligible realm, however this return may ultimately play out.² If ruling ourselves according to the informed dictates of our rational part were a suitable method for facilitating the ascent back to the Forms, then it would be easy to see how all three aspects of the rational part's divinity might work together. In the long-term course of a person's development, then, we would ideally expect (3) a life of increasing self-rule, justice, and virtue, which requires (2) an increasing intellectual grasp of the Forms, thereby drawing one ever closer to (1) one's true metaphysical kin. By cultivating the practical *and* theoretical

abilities of one's rational part, a person would become as ordered ethically and intellectually as the Forms are metaphysically, preparing the way for reunification. If this expectation is correct, then, though one's rationality is already divine in three ways, there would still be a great work to be accomplished in the life of each person, or at least, each philosopher. And that work, ending as it does in communion with divine objects (the Forms), proceeding by divine means (the theoretical and practical abilities of the rational part), and originating from a divine source (the rational part itself), we are entitled to call a process of divinization. Though we are already divine, there would still be a sense in which we must be divinized—or, in other words, become like god.

II. BECOMING LIKE GOD

I have argued that an understanding of the threefold divinity of the soul's rational part naturally suggests a certain process of divinization or "becoming like god." I will now proceed to confirm that suggestion by studying the passages in which Plato explicitly discusses divinization. It will be my goal in this section to demonstrate that the Platonic idea(1) of "becoming like god" involves just the sort of process outlined above: living a life of moral virtue, which requires both an adequate intellectual grasp of the relevant Forms and a certain commitment to the sensible world as an essential preparation for, and ultimately for the sake of, a reunion of some kind with our metaphysical kin, the Forms (for Plato's commitment to the sensible world, see Duerlinger, 1985, 319; Armstrong, 2004, 174-6; Mahoney, 2004, 329-33, and Mahoney, 2005, 87-91; contrast their views with Lännström, 2011, 113-24). After this, certain flaws and errors in other interpretations of Plato's account of divinization will be corrected.

The fact that becoming morally virtuous presupposes increasing knowledge of the Forms (i.e., philosophical wisdom) has, I take it, been sufficiently demonstrated in section I. What remains to be shown is that “becoming like god” consists in practicing moral virtue and gaining philosophical wisdom as an essential preparation for the transition from the sensible world (or at least, the earthly sensible world) to the intelligible world (or at least, the heavens, where intelligible principles hold most sway). This ‘otherworldly’ aspect of the ὁμοίωσις θεῶ is clearly stated in the *locus classicus* of its expression, *Theaetetus* 176a-b:

One must attempt to escape from here [earth] to there [heaven] as quickly as possible. And escape is becoming like god as far as possible (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν); and becoming like is to become just and pious with sound judgment.

Attaining moral virtue is, evidently, essential to divinization and its goal, the ascent to a higher realm.³ Nevertheless, it is not the whole story. When we consider that the preceding context of this passage is an exploration of the unusual, otherworldly behavior of the philosopher, who pays more attention to essences or natures (i.e., Forms) than to individual instances of them in the sensible world (174a-175e), it is natural to conclude that in doing so such a person, though perhaps he is a caricature in other respects (see Rue, 1993, 72-92, especially 91) has already begun readying himself for the “escape from earth to heaven” precisely by being a philosopher. Thus a life of justice, combined with philosophical thinking, advances the process of divinization and its ultimate goal, the ascent to a higher realm.

In fact, we can detect just such a notion of “becoming like god” in every single middle and late dialogue mentioned so far (see Armstrong,

2004, 171, 172 n. 3 and Duerlinger, 1985, 313ff; also, on the *Philebus*, which I do not discuss, see Armstrong, 2004, 174-6; Russell, 2004, 246-50; Dombrowski, 2005, 100; and Obdrzalek, 2012, 1-6, 12-5). We find it in the *Phaedo*, where after death the just and pious are said to be freed from this earth, which we think is the true earth, but is in fact below its real surface (107e-114d); and of these, those who “have sufficiently purified themselves by philosophy” (114c) will dwell in even more beautiful regions, able to contemplate “the true heaven and the true light and the true earth” (110a). Having always done philosophy, they have prepared themselves to separate from the body and the visible world by associating with the intelligible Forms while still in this life (64a-68c), thus attaining true virtue (68c-69e). The goal of divinization, the ascent to a higher realm (indeed, the intelligible realm itself), is accomplished through philosophy and moral virtue. We find it in the *Republic*, where the true heavens and earth above the Cave are discovered by the escaped prisoner (514a-517b), whose “upward ascension” represents “the ascent of the soul to the intelligible realm” (517b). But this ascent, while primarily intellectual, must also have ethical consequences, insofar as the philosopher who studies the Forms inevitably “imitates them and becomes as like them as possible,” and so, “associating with [what is] divine and ordered, becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can” (κόσμιός τε καὶ θεῖος εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ γίγνεται, 500b-d). The philosopher’s observation of the order present in the divine Forms induces him to the divine life of justice, advancing the process of divinization and preparing him for the ultimate ascent to the intelligible world. Thus, by both philosophy and “practicing virtue, [he desires] to become like god to the extent possible for a human being” (ἐπιτηδεύων ἀρετὴν εἰς ὅσον δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῶ, 613a-b). We find it also in the

Symposium, where the lover ascends through sensible objects all the way up to the supreme object of his philosophical ἔρωσ, the immaterial, incorporeal, “divine Beauty itself” (211e), the vision of which alone lets him achieve “true virtue” (212a). And, as Diotima says, “the love of the gods belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal, it would be he” (212a, trans. Paul Woodruff and Alexander Nehamas, *Plato: Complete Works*, 1997; see 207c-d). Divinization is achieved through cultivation of virtue and intellectual union with the Forms through philosophy. We find it in the *Phaedrus* (246b-253b), where the gods ascend in their chariots to “the place beyond heaven” (247c) and behold the magnificent, purely intelligible Forms. The philosopher, who had followed in Zeus’ train (250b, 252e), is especially blessed with this vision (248d, 249c, 250b-c). But if he should fall, he must re-ascend through a life of justice (248e-249b), being “lifted up by justice into a heavenly place” (249a). As an embodied being, inspired by the memory of his association with Zeus, he comes to adopt his customs and habits “to the extent that a human being can participate in god” (καθ’ ὅσον δυνατόν θεοῦ ἀνθρώπων μετασχεῖν, 253a). Likewise, his philosophical recollection of the Forms in this life, constantly refreshed, draws him back “towards the divine” and the intelligible (249c-d). Once again, the goal of divinization, the return to a higher (intelligible) realm, comes about through virtue and knowledge (or rather, recollection) of the Forms. We find it in the *Timaeus*, where we learn that human souls were born in heaven and that the rational part was placed in our topmost member, the head, which “raises us up away from the earth and toward our kindred (συγγένειαν) in heaven” (90aff). The divine Demiurge wants us to become like him (29e), and we can do this by cultivating our rational part, both intellectually and ethically;

and the one who does so, “to the extent possible for human nature, participates in immortality” (καθ’ ὅσον δ’ αὖ μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, 90c). For by studying the order of the heavens intellectually (47b-c, 90c-d) and by pursuing justice morally (41c-d), ordering our own thoughts and internal constitution (42b-c) as the Demiurge orders the universe and the gods ordered us (69b-70b), we advance the process of divinization. Hence I disagree with Sedley (2000), 807 (=Sedley, 1997, 336; see also Sedley, 2017, 327-8) and Lännström (2011), 112 n.4, who agrees with him, when he argues that “in recommending assimilation to that cosmic god Plato is advising us to emulate him, *not as an administrator*, but as something better, a pure intellect directly contemplating eternal truths” (my emphasis; see Mahoney, 2005, 77-91 *contra* Sedley). And finally, we find it in the *Laws*, where the unjust are sent to Hades, and the just, we may infer, to the heavens (904c-e). Thus, as much as the *Laws* is concerned with human affairs, it still considers the ultimate purpose of a just life to be ‘otherworldly’: for through it, we are divinized and brought to another, higher realm. As Plato himself writes: “Whenever, having associated with divine virtue, it [the soul] becomes surpassingly such [i.e., divine], it moves to a surpassingly, altogether holy place, being transported to another, better location” (904d-e). If virtue makes us “like” god (ὁμοιος, 716d), then the process of becoming virtuous—which not only presupposes the theoretical exercise of the intellect (713e-714a) but also leads us away from this world—is a process of becoming like god, a ὁμοίωσις θεῶ.

In view of such evidence, we must conclude that Plato’s concept of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ maintained a consistent unity throughout his mature thought, always implying the fulfillment of the three aspects of the rational part’s divinity: the return to a higher realm (i.e., reunion with the Forms in

some fashion), intellectual development, and moral development, corresponding to its metaphysical kinship with the Forms, its theoretical ability to know them, and its practical ability to live by them, respectively. Though admittedly certain aspects of the ὁμοίωσις θεῶν may seem to be emphasized in certain dialogues more than others (escape from the sensible world in the *Theaetetus*, intellectual development in the *Timaeus*, moral virtue in the *Laws*), it would be a mistake to single out one element at the expense of the others in our overall interpretation. Thus I cannot endorse Sedley's reading of ὁμοίωσις θεῶν as "one which leaves moral virtue behind and focuses instead on pure intellectual development" (Sedley, 2000, 806 [=Sedley, 1997, 335]).³ Likewise, I cannot agree with Armstrong's assertion that "assimilation to god takes on *new* meaning in the *Laws*, involving concern for the order of human affairs rather than a dismissive flight from them" (Armstrong 2004, 174, my emphasis). Even in the *Theaetetus*, in which such a "flight" or "escape" was recommended, it had been urged by way of a life of justice, which necessarily involves concern for human affairs. Thus, the flight itself need never have been a dismissive one (see Rue, 1993, 90-2; Mahoney, 2004, 323-4, 329-31; and Reydam's-Schils, 2017, 152-4). Nor, finally, would I assert that "There is a rift in Plato's thought, as he is torn between conceptions of virtue as, on the one hand, an uncompromising but committed engagement with the world and, on the other, a flight from and rejection of it" (Annas, 1999, 70). While Plato did think that the philosopher must ultimately leave this world behind, he also demanded a life of virtue from him, which by its nature cannot simply reject the world. The philosopher must be invested in this world to a certain extent, though not engrossed by it; for his engagement with it is also his means of overcoming it. The apparent "rift in Plato's thought" is only apparent. Plato did not reject the world outright: in fact, he often encouraged us to

use sensible objects and images as reminders of what is more real, sending us to the intelligible world precisely through the sensible (*Smp.* 210a-211d; *Phdr.* 249c-251c; *Men.* 81b-86b; *Phd.* 75a-e; *R.* 521cff; see Dombrowski, 2005, 97-9). He was not so otherworldly as to completely disavow, or even merely to ignore, the value and goodness of the sensible world; but Raphael was right, in the *School of Athens*, to paint him pointing to the sky.

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Endnotes

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Greek are my own.
- 2 I.e., whether one's reunion with the Forms occurs in the intelligible realm itself or in the sensible heavens, where intelligible principles have most sway. The *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, as will become evident, suggest the former; *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*, the latter.
- 3 The logic of my argument requires no particular stance on the relationship between divinization and human happiness. Nevertheless, because the two have usually been identified since antiquity, the objection could be raised that since in my account divinization has a goal, but happiness can have no goal beyond itself, then divinization cannot constitute human happiness. If happiness is a final end, but divinization is a means to some further end, how could divinization possibly be happiness? One plausible answer relies on the qualification Plato consistently attaches to his comments on becoming like god, i.e., "to the extent possible for human nature, participates in immortality" (*Ti.* 90c); "to the extent that a human being can participate in god" (*Phdr.* 253a); "if any human

being could become immortal, it would be he," (*Smp.* 212a, trans. Paul Woodruff and Alexander Nehamas, *Plato: Complete Works*, 1997); "becomes as like [the Forms] as possible...becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can...to become like god to the extent possible for a human being" (*R.* 500b-d). I take this qualification to mean that as long as a human being remains fundamentally human, some aspects of divinity, including its ability to achieve divine happiness, must remain beyond human capacity. Being a fulfilled, happy human is not the same as being a fulfilled, happy god, even if both forms of happiness include intellectual contemplation as an essential component. Thus what a human being pursues as its own proper happiness, chosen for its own sake as an end goal, may turn out to be, from the divine perspective, only partially fulfilling, a stepping-stone that naturally leads to the higher form of happiness proper to divine nature. In practice this means that while the process of divinization is still ongoing, i.e. when a particular philosopher is becoming more like god but still remains fundamentally human, his or her happiness would still consist in human happiness: living a life of moral and intellectual development guided by one's rational principle. But if the process of divinization were ever actually completed, then the subject of the process, having been fully divinized, and presumably no longer being human, would then become capable of a higher (but intrinsically related) kind of happiness or fulfillment—in this case, some kind of reunification with, or intellectual 'beatific vision' of, the Forms not possible for mere mortals.

- 4 The extent of the divergence between Sedley's views and my own depends on what he means by "leaves moral virtue behind." If he means that the definition or concept of divinization does not include continual moral development, that the essence of becoming godlike "leaves moral virtue behind" in that sense (see Sedley, 2017, 328), then we disagree sharply. But if he means that the process of divinization, while perhaps starting with moral development, has as its ultimate goal a contemplative grasping of the Forms—a 'beatific vision' in which perhaps moral virtue no longer plays any role, and to that extent "leaves moral virtue behind"—then I am inclined to agree (see Sedley, 2017, 334), with an important caveat. I would maintain that for Plato there is always a need for moral development before that heavenly reunification with the Forms has been fully and completely achieved. As long as the philosopher still lives as an embodied human being in the world, he or she will still need moral virtue to deal with it effectively. Only when the process of divinization is complete, and therefore no longer exists as such (the philosopher having been completely divinized), could moral virtue be totally left behind, or rather surpassed. Hence on my interpretation of divinization, Plato cannot be recommending a *purely* intellectual life in this world. I suspect that Sedley would disagree with me on that point.

