

The Closing Paragraph of the Letter to Menoecus

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"AFTER THE ASCENT: PLATO
ON BECOMING LIKE GOD" -- JOHN M. ARMSTRONG

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=0385716796962ba73a5a32453511cd201>

From the opening paragraph:

Quote

Platonic dialogues indicate that humans should strive to become like god. Until recent work by Julia Annas and David Sedley, this had gone largely unnoticed in contemporary Plato scholarship.¹ In this article I explore the idea further by arguing that Plato's later conception of god made a difference to how he conceived of becoming like god. In particular, I argue that Plato's identification of god with νοῦς or intelligence in the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws* influences his conception of assimilation to god. Rather than fleeing from the sensible world, becoming like this god commits one to improving it. In the *Laws* especially, following god requires an effort to unify the city under intelligent law and to educate the citizens in virtue. Plato's otherworldliness is therefore tempered by—of all things—his theology.

Ever since ancient Platonists such as Eudorus, Philo, and Alcinous, Plato's notion of 'becoming like god' (μοῦωσις θε-) or 'following god' (ἰκθλουθος θε-) has been understood to be a flight from this world to a higher one.² This is due partly to the ancients' heavy reliance on this *Theaetetus* passage: But bad things cannot be destroyed, Theodorus, for there must always be something opposed to the good. Nor can they gain a place among gods. Rather, by necessity they haunt mortal nature and this place here. That's why one must try to flee from here to there as quickly as possible. Fleeing is becoming like god so far as one can, and to become like god is to become just and pious with wisdom. (176 a 5-b 2)

This shows that there was already the idea of becoming like the gods before Epicurus, but Epicurus has his very different methodology, as we see in the Letter to Menoecus - and which says "living like a god among men". And this also does bring up a necessity for Epicureans to understand what is meant by "gods".

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4658-the-closing-paragraph-of-the-letter-to-menoecus/?postID=36807#post36807>