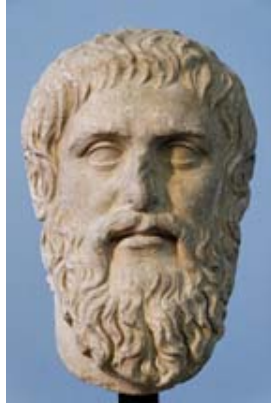


The Thiasos of Plato, Part 1



Plato sculpted
by Silanion
circa 370 BCE



Socrates
portrait by
Palermo copied
from the 4th-
century
original

Many images of Plato's Academy have come down to us through

the centuries: the idyllic robed band of secular humanists in every conceivable posture of inquiry and discussion that appears in Raphael's fresco *The School of Athens*, a guild of scientific theorists, the intellectual salon par excellence, the ideal preparatory school. All are the constructs of one or another academician, from the Renaissance to the present, and all are far from true. Academies produced those images: the new Platonic Academy "revived" in 15th-century Florence by Cosimo de' Medici; the ephemeral circles of friends that dotted the urban landscape of 16th-century Italy, who gave themselves fantastic names and called themselves academies; the technicians and researchers of the 17th- and 18th-centuries in the Academies of the Arts of Florence and Paris and London; the proliferation of Christian and secular and children's academies in the 19th- and 20th-centuries. All have projected their own images onto this institution of the distant past until it became to them little more than a newly hatched larva in the first stage of becoming themselves, after pupating through the Dark Ages, and ultimately becoming for us the grand hive of intellectual speculation, experimentation, and peer review of Platonic "right opinions" that is the modern



secular university.



Plato's Symposium by the German artist Anselm Feuerbach (1873)



Plato and His Disciples in the Garden of the Academy by Alexandre de Baer (circa 1874), from La Vie Des Savants Illustrés



Plato's Academy depicted by Jean Delville (1867-1953)

PHOTO:
theontologicalboy.blogspot.com

Whatever image we personally hold of Plato's Academy could only be derived from one of these, until recently. Arts and sciences of all kinds no doubt had their place in Plato's Academy, in all imaginable fields of study, as they do in the present global collective community of practitioners and transmitters of education and research that goes under the name of *academia* or *Acad me* or *Academy*. Yet the fact is that Plato's Academy resembles nothing in modern society so much as it resembles a 501(c)3 religious association; that is to say, a church. This may come as a surprise you. It was a surprise to me when I first found the hint of this fact in the writings of Purdue University classicist Christopher Planeaux. A personal conversation with him later confirmed it. (See Supplement 1) In the next few hundred words, I would like to share with you the image of Plato's Academy I have found.

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 1:



Christopher

Planeaux PHOTO

My Space

Plato Scholar Christopher Planeaux

I should mention that Dr. Planeaux has made it his life's work to determine the social and historical setting of each of Plato's Dialogues and that he shares my enthusiasm for his work but not for my search for the mystic underpinnings of Plato's teachings.

To him I owe the references "Plato: A Family History," "Plato: A Biography," and "Plato's Academy" on the website Christopher's Athens (<http://php.iupui.edu/~cplaneaux/Plato>) copyright © 1999, 2001 by Christopher Planeaux.

[<READ PART 2>](#)