

# Ficino's Efforts to Reunite Philosophy and Religion

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

Marsilio Ficino (1433 to 1499) was the first Renaissance philosopher to have access to the full Platonic corpus. He desired to use these ancient writings, plus faith, scripture, and reason to reunite religion and philosophy into one mutually supportive system, and was perhaps motivated to do so by circumstances arising from the era in which he worked, his life, context and writing style. His background and motivations are reviewed, followed by an examination of his philosophical arguments about God's five main attributes: existence, simplicity, goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence. Finally the divine/human relationship is examined using the uniqueness of the divine's relationship with humans, divine illumination, hierarchies and love. This assessment of the Godly attributes and the divine/human relationship finds that, although Ficino did use Platonic ideas that were new to the Renaissance period, his failure to construct strong philosophical arguments made his work ultimately less enduring than that of his contemporaries. My transcription of the 1495 edition of Ficino's *De raptu Pauli* is included as an appendix.

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## Introduction

Marsilio Ficino, who lived from 1433 to 1499, was the epitome of a Renaissance man: a doctor, scholar (tutor, translator, and author), philosopher, musician, astrologer, and Christian priest. In his written works he hoped to weave together reason and faith to demonstrate that each informs and supports the other and that the two should be reunited.

The first chapter of this thesis sets Ficino in context. The first section examines the historical and political context in which Ficino lived. Three generations of the Medici family and their relationships with Ficino are reviewed. The second section is a Ficinian biography covering how Ficino was introduced to the Medici and some of Corsi's comments about Ficino's personality. Ficino's progression from translator to priest is outlined and his patrons and sources of income are summarized. The section 1.3 briefly covers the intellectual context in which Ficino worked, with particular attention paid to humanism. The next section covers the sequence of works produced by Ficino and includes a listing of known works with the timeframe in which they were written and publication dates (if known). Section 1.5 is the final section in the first chapter and it contains an examination of Ficino's writing style. Ficino often wrote in a style that was metaphorical and allegorical. It was also the mindset of his time that everything was related, so science, literature, art, medicine, philosophy and religion were seen as components of a unity. He liked to find the connections and similarities between things so his works are often very syncretic in nature. Fifteenth century Florence did not have the same academic standards that we have to today, so we often find Ficino using second-hand citations and rarely acknowledging his sources. Those who have translated works by Ficino have tried to supply some sources were possible, but much work remains to be done in this regard.

The second chapter covers Ficino's arguments about why he believes philosophy and religion can and should be reunited. Florence in the 1400's had more than 15 different religious orders; however Ficino was not a member of any of them. Cosimo de' Medici's manuscript-hunters acquired a copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Cosimo had Ficino stop translating Plato from Greek to Latin and instead work on the newly recovered *Hermetica*. In these works, Hermes Trismegistus is portrayed as the founder of theology so both men felt this manuscript contained conclusive evidence that ancient Greek philosophy and Christianity were strongly related. The ideas contained in the *Hermetica* strongly influenced Ficino's theory of how and why ancient philosophy and the Christian religion were mutually supportive and should be reunited. A number of quotes from *De Christiana religione* and his letters provide his rationale for the reunification. To help focus this thesis, Ficino's writings pertaining to the image of God, the Godly attributes and the human/divine relation will be examined.

The third chapter is an examination of his philosophical arguments about God's five main attributes: existence, simplicity, goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence. Section 3.1 examines Ficino's belief that God's existence is necessary, however we find that his arguments for God's existence are more claims for the sense in which God exists rather than novel proofs for God's existence. In Section 3.2 Ficino's ideas about God's simplicity or unity are investigated. The medieval theology of Ficino's time followed the concept that God is simplicity and Ficino's theology was no different. In the Renaissance period there was an ongoing debate pertaining to Averroes' theory of one material intellect and Ficino argued against Averroes. Ficino's discussions about one God and the Trinity are also covered. Ficino's arguments about the goodness of God are explored in section 3.3. Ficino found that God's goodness resulted from God's simplicity. He takes great pains to emphasize that God and the highest good (in the Platonic sense of good) are different. One of his rare discussions about evil is also examined as he argues that there is no model for evil in God's presence, due to God's supreme goodness. Section 3.4 presents Ficino's arguments about God's omniscience, and



again we find that one attribute is derived from another. In this case omniscience comes about due to goodness. Ficino's arguments about God knowing all true things and truth being timeless are examined along with the medieval notion of man as a microcosm (God is with you and within you). The final section of this chapter, 3.5, examines God's omnipotence in Ficino's works. Like omniscience, omnipotence arises from God's goodness. Ficino believes that God does everything through his own being (relying on nothing else), God's power is innate and that he is the prime mover. Following the Peripatetic tradition, Ficino argues that God has the power to create anything as long as there is no contradiction and that his creations must be properly ordered.

In the fourth chapter the arguments used to rationalize the divine/human relationship are examined. In section 4.1, Ficino's arguments about the relationship between God and humans are highlighted and the relationship is found to be unique among the earthly creatures. This cyclical relationship is started by God creating and loving humans, humans doing their part to venerate God and God granting the moral and pious humans a future life. Ficino believes that humans have free will (although God is omniscient and knows what the individual humans will choose to do) and must choose to be active participants in the human/divine relationship. In section 4.2 we find that people require guidance from God (if they are open to it) and it arrives in the form of divine illumination. Ficino uses both Platonic and Plotinian arguments to explain how God shares his wisdom with humans. Augustine also relied on divine illumination to guide humans but his theory was more epistemological while Ficino's is more ontological in nature. In Ficino's time, the medieval celestial hierarchy of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite was the predominant explanation of how the cosmos, with God at the highest level, was organized and Ficino fully accepted this arrangement. Divine illumination provided a methodology for God's love and knowledge to travel down the hierarchy to individual humans. For Ficino, the ontological hierarchy had five levels, with soul as the middle level. It was like the hierarchy in Plato's divided line scenario, but the soul sits on the divided line and

sometimes moves up the hierarchy and sometimes travels down the hierarchy. Given the differences in the composition and behaviour of the soul, Ficino has confused a member (mobile soul) of the hierarchy with an immobile level of the hierarchy. The final section 4.4 examines some of Ficino's ideas about love because love is what motivates the human soul to try to move up the hierarchy to rejoin God; the wrong kind of love causes the soul to move down the hierarchy. Love is also what enables divine illumination to function. Interestingly, Ficino argues that human will enjoys God more than our intellect.

The fifth and final chapter summarizes the finds of the preceding chapters. Ficino's arguments and ideas were part of the gradual shift from medieval traditions to the Renaissance notion of 'the dignity of man' as he argued that humans are in God's image in a positive way, and that humans can be part of a positive, loving relationship with God. Ficino had hoped to bring the Florentine *intelligensi* back to the church through the use of philosophy. The examination of his philosophical arguments pertaining to religious topics finds many arguments by analogy and from authority, but no significant new arguments. He did successfully employ many new Platonic and Plotinian ideas (he avoided censure by the authorities), but they were not enough for him to achieve his desire to reunite philosophy and religion.

The original text is often presented, rather than summarized so that the reader may compare Ficino's own words and arguments with my interpretation. To properly address the topic at hand, this thesis also includes the translation and exposition of portions of some Ficinian works not currently available in English, particularly his *De Christiana religione* and *De raptu Pauli*. My transcription of the 1495 Latin edition of *De raptu Pauli* is included in the Appendix.

# Chapter 1

## Ficino in Context

### 1.1 Historical Context

By the end of the middle ages, the power of the Holy Roman Emperors had begun to decline in northern Italy. Local nobility had a monopoly on the politics of most city states, and the Pope also wielded considerable influence politically. Florence survived the battles between the Ghibellines (those aligned with the Emperor) and the Guelphs (those aligned with the Pope), and by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, the Italian city states (as a mode of civic governance) were well established, with the Guilds growing in economic and political power. Over time, Florence developed (although not without struggle, e.g., the Revolt of the Ciompi) a complex system of government, with its ranks drawn from the middle class. It is noteworthy that the complexity of the social and political systems helped to prevent a tyranny from developing. Even though the Medici were the most powerful family in Florence for several generations, they never held an official government office.

The Medici family had moved from rural Mugello to Florence late in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when they abandoned agriculture and began to pursue commercial ventures. By the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Giovanni de' Medici (1360-1428) was a leading banker, who had branches in Italy, France, England, Germany, and the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1400s, he began to involve himself in city politics and made large contributions for the betterment of Florence (e.g., providing financial aid during an outbreak of plague and for renovations to San Lorenzo). Despite the malicious gossip of rivals in commerce and

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<sup>1</sup> Cesati, p. 19

banking, by the time Giovanni de' Medici died in 1428, he was seen as a business visionary and a generous man. This image provided a basis from which the Medici family fortunes would grow. Their influence on the people and fortunes of Florence would be immeasurable.

Giovanni's son, Cosimo the Elder (1389-1464), took over the direction of the family fortunes. Political maneuvering had the Medici exiled from Florence for a time; however, with the demise of the short-lived Albizzi dictatorship, Cosimo and his family returned to Florence. Cosimo was active in the culture and arts of the city. Over the years, artists such as Brunelleschi, Luca della Robbia, Fra Angelico, Andrea del Castagno, Donatello, and Paolo Uccello executed works for him. In 1444, Cosimo founded the Medici library at San Marco, the first public library in Europe.<sup>2</sup> Fired by his thirst for ancient works, he sent collectors out to acquire manuscripts. The collection of ancient manuscripts grew rapidly and included works by Cicero, Tacitus, Virgil, and Pliny the Elder. Cosimo also added several works by Florentine writers, including Dante and Petrarch.<sup>3</sup> Ficino claims his father was Cosimo's favourite doctor and that the elder Ficino planned for his son to also become a doctor. Hence the younger Ficino accompanied his father, Dietifeci (the doctor) to see Cosimo de' Medici and according to the stories, Cosimo saw different talents in the younger Ficino and supported his education. For the remainder of his life, Cosimo continued to build the Medici empire, foster the intellectual life of Florence, and encourage artists. When Cosimo died in 1464 at Careggi, his son Piero, the Gouty (1416-1469), took over the Medici holdings and challenging political legacy. Piero continued to support the arts, most notably Botticelli, and continued some patronage for Ficino, including having him tutor his son Lorenzo. During his five years as head of the Medici family, Piero

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<sup>2</sup> Schevill, p. 87

<sup>3</sup> Cesati, p. 26

survived many challenges, including an assassination attempt by the Pazzi family<sup>4</sup> and a war with Vienna. The stress of leading took its toll, however, and Piero died in December 1469.

Piero's son Lorenzo, the Magnificent (1449-1492), now came to the fore. He had his grandfather's political astuteness as well as a love of the arts and literature. Under his leadership, Florence became the universal capital of culture and the arts. Thanks to the circle of intellectuals and artists living at the Magnificent's court, Humanism and the Renaissance continued to spread from Florence throughout Europe, giving impetus to a movement of ideas destined to influence history profoundly for two centuries to come.”<sup>5</sup> Lorenzo helped revive the University of Pisa in 1472. At his urging, the University of Florence (also known as Studio Florentine or Studium Generale) took in several Greek scholars who had fled Constantinople when it fell in 1453, and by 1488, they had published the first printed collection of Homeric poems.<sup>6</sup> Lorenzo also continued the family tradition of procuring ancient manuscripts, and the copies made by his scribes and miniaturists made these works more widely available than ever before. These manuscripts became the first holdings of the Biblioteca Laurenziana. He also became an art connoisseur and collector. He founded a sculpture school in his courtyard, and it was there that he discovered the young Michelangelo.<sup>7</sup>

Lorenzo lacked a strong business sense, yet he could be cunning and cold in his political dealings. Pope Sixtus IV wanted to expand his power by controlling Florence, and he enlisted the Pazzi family, bitter Medici rivals in commerce, to assist with his plans. The Pazzi conspiracy, as it came to be known, failed however; while the attackers murdered his brother Giuliano, Lorenzo escaped and survived. The backlash was swift and violent; over eighty people died, including the Archbishop, and

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<sup>4</sup> Ficino, 1988 “The Pazzi Conspiracy and Ficino,” provides a detailed account of Ficino's involvement with both sides of the dispute.

<sup>5</sup> Cesati, p. 33

<sup>6</sup> Cesati, p. 44

<sup>7</sup> Schevill, p. 163

the Pazzi family was ruined. Nevertheless, Lorenzo's troubles with the Pope continued and, finally, in 1480, Lorenzo secured the support of Ferdinand, King of Naples, and brought the conflict to a peaceful end.<sup>8</sup> The Medici family suffered losses over the next few years, but politically, life was relatively stable except for Savonarola who declared Florence to be morally corrupt, and held the Medici responsible for the de-christianization of the Republic. By this time, Lorenzo was in poor health and did not engage Savonarola.

When Lorenzo died in April 1492, the leadership the Medici family passed to his son, Piero (the Unfortunate). Less than successful war negotiations with Charles VIII of France made Piero a traitor in the eyes of the Florentines. In 1494, the remaining Medici fled Florence under the cover of darkness. Savonarola emerged as a leader in the new republic and sought to make Florence a living model of the Christian religion. Savonarola continued his quest for religious and political power, and in 1496, the infamous “Bonfire of the Vanities” was held. A republic which had lived life to the fullest now lived in fear of the Dominican friar’s growing political influence. In response, an anti-Savonarola party formed and grew, eventually seeking support from the Pope. In 1497, the Pope intervened, and Savonarola was tried and condemned to death. Ironically, he was burned at the stake in 1498 at the same place where the 1496 Bonfire had burned. The new Florentine government formed in 1498, and one of its lesser officials was Niccolò Machiavelli. Florence, in a weakened political and military state, moved into the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## **1.2 Brief Ficinian Biography**

Marsilio Ficino was born October 19, 1433, near Florence. His father was an eminent doctor who tended the important families of Florence, including the Medici. Ficino often went with his father on medical rounds, presumably to learn the trade. Later in life, when called upon as a doctor he provided

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<sup>8</sup> Ficino, 1988, pp. 73-91

the appropriate service (medicines, advice, or music) and never accepted payment (in the Hippocratic tradition). During such visits to the Medici household, the young Ficino's extraordinary desire to learn and intellectual prowess impressed Cosimo the Elder. It is reported that Cosimo said "You, Ficino ... have been sent to us to heal bodies, but your Marsilio here has been sent down from heaven to heal souls."<sup>9</sup> Cosimo ensured that the young Marsilio receive a good education (which included learning the Greek language)<sup>10</sup> and likely financed his studies at the University of Florence, where he was a student in Logic as early as 1451.<sup>11</sup>

Corsi's biography<sup>12</sup>, *The Life of Marsilio Ficino*, extols Ficino's accomplishments in bringing Plato back to prominence and claims that "This was made possible by the astonishing fecundity of his mind, his burning zeal, and his extraordinary indifference to all pleasure and, above all, to material wealth."<sup>13</sup> Corsi goes on to describe Ficino as a man who struggled to maintain his health, and who, "By nature ... was mild, refined and gentle; ... He easily forgot injury, but was never forgetful of obligations."<sup>14</sup> Corsi notes that although Ficino ate sparingly, "he did select the most excellent wines. For he was rather disposed towards wine, yet he never went away from parties drunk or fuddled, though often more cheerful."<sup>15</sup> He also claimed that Ficino was a model son and always helped his friends, using his influence with the Medici if necessary: "He was swift to comfort those afflicted by misfortune; indeed, he exercised more gentleness in comforting those in distress than severity in reproving wrongdoers. In short, he showed humanity, gentleness, and love to all alike."<sup>16</sup> By all accounts, Corsi's in particular, Ficino was respected and loved by the people of Florence. Kristeller notes that Ficino's writings were of interest to the middle class of Florence and that it was for some

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<sup>9</sup> Ficino, 1981, p. 138

<sup>10</sup> Schevill, p. 90

<sup>11</sup> Davies, p. 785

<sup>12</sup> Ficino, 1981, pp. 135-148

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 136

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 143-144

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 144

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 145

important people (e.g. Clarice Orsini, Giovanni Rucellai, Jacopo Guicciardini, and Bernardo del Nero) in this economic class that he wrote some of his treatises.<sup>17</sup>

Cosimo de' Medici helped to lure the Council for Reconciliation between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches from Ferrara to Florence. The Council worked from 1439-1443, and it was during this time that Cosimo was first introduced to Plato's philosophy. The Greek scholar Gemisthos Plethon gave talks on Platonic ideas, about which Cosimo had a burning desire to know more.<sup>18</sup> He set about procuring a comprehensive copy of Plato's works (in Greek), and in 1452, years after the Council, set Marsilio Ficino to the task of mastering the Greek language and then translating the collected Platonic works into Latin. Cosimo gave Ficino access to the Medici family estate at Careggi (outside of Florence) in 1462, so that Ficino could be in an atmosphere conducive to translation and philosophical work. The Careggi estate was a favorite haunt of the Medici and those artists and intellectuals the family supported (Brunelleschi, della Robbia, della Mirandola, Donatello, and Botticelli, among others) as well as important government and religious officials who often stayed at Careggi and made Ficino's acquaintance. Ficino corresponded with many of these influential people and late in life (1495) published these letters as a twelve-volume set. When Cosimo acquired a newly discovered manuscript of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, he ordered Ficino to stop translating Plato's works and instead work on the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Both men felt it contained conclusive evidence that Christianity and Greek philosophy were linked because Hermes Trismegistus was identified as the "founder of theology."<sup>19</sup> This finding formed the basis for Ficino's claim that the two ideological systems, Greek philosophy and the Judeo-Christian religion, were compatible and hence informed his ideas about the image of man, and God's image which are reflected in his many writings. Initially, Cosimo provided for Ficino's basic needs, but he did not

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<sup>17</sup> Kristeller, 1983 p. 19 and p. 28

<sup>18</sup> Schevill p. 75

<sup>19</sup> Kristeller, 1964b, p. 25 (translation of Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, Basel 1561 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1576) p. 1836)



financially support Ficino in all his endeavours. Ficino worked as a part-time tutor to Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo de' Medici. A friendship (and patronage) between Ficino and Lorenzo then endured and the strength of the relationship varied over the years as evidenced by the many letters they exchanged. After Cosimo's death in 1464, support from Piero de' Medici was inconsistent so Ficino turned to other patrons, such as Filippo Valori and Francesco Berlinghieri, who paid for the printing of some of Ficino's books. Ficino was lecturing at the Studio Florentine beginning in 1466,<sup>20</sup> but his main income (albeit meager) came from his religious appointments. In 1470, Ficino was given the benefice of Santa Maria a Monte Vargi, three years before his ordination (it is likely he had taken minor orders). He became an ordained deacon in September 1473, and in December of the same year was ordained as a priest by Mgr. Giuliano de Antonio.<sup>21</sup> In 1473 Lorenzo de' Medici then arranged two church benefices for Ficino: as *pievano* of St. Bartholomew in Pomino, and in Novoli, he was the parish priest for St. Christopher. Later, in 1488, Lorenzo successfully petitioned the Pope to procure Ficino a third benefice as Canon at Santa Maria del Fiore, the Florentine cathedral. This move was highly unusual as a maximum of two appointments "for the care of souls" was the official church policy.<sup>22</sup>

Ficino did not live exclusively at Careggi, nor in a monastery, as his church responsibilities meant some travel (e.g., to St. Christopher in Novoli and the Cathedral in Florence), although the majority of his public activities appear to have taken place in Florence (e.g., his lectures at S. Maria degli Angeli<sup>23</sup>), and later in life he had a house in Florence, where he took care of his mother, niece, and

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<sup>20</sup> Davies, p. 785

<sup>21</sup> Serracino-Inglott, pp. 8-9

<sup>22</sup> Bullard, pp. 468-470

<sup>23</sup> Lackner, p. 32

nephew.<sup>24</sup> While Ficino focused on religion and philosophy, everyday life in Renaissance Florence went on.

In a religious context, Conciliarism and the Western Schism both influenced the time in which Ficino lived. The question of whether the Pope or a king had ultimate authority led to conflicts and eventually resulted in the Avignon Papacy (1305-1377). In response to the Pope moving from Rome to Avignon, many believed that the Pope was no longer the best choice to decide on spiritual issues. The theologians advocated that a council of Christians should be the final authority on spiritual matters, not the Pope. Pope Gregory XI returned the Papal court to Rome in 1378, however after his death the College of Cardinals elected two popes and the church's Western Schism began (one Pope in Rome, one Pope in Avignon). The Council of Constance (1414-18) ended the schism with the election of Martin V; however the Papacy essentially became a monarchy.<sup>25</sup>

Politically, times were turbulent. Buonaccorso Pitti's<sup>26</sup> diary outlines his personal role in numerous political situations and negotiations in the late 1390s and early 1400s, some of which would impact events in Ficino's lifetime. There was the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and an increasing threat from the Turks. The Peace of Lodi (Venice, Milan, Florence and Naples) provided a temporary calm between some of the Italian city states. It worked for a few years, but was then shattered by Lorenzo de' Medici's actions. The expulsions of the Medici, the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 (Ficino had corresponded with some of the plotters), Florentine political jockeying between different branches of the government, the influence of the guilds, various papal alliances, the fundamentalism of Savonarola, and political tensions with France and Spain were among the intrigues of the times.

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<sup>24</sup> Bullard, p. 484

<sup>25</sup> Lindberg, pp. 99-103

<sup>26</sup> Pitti, pp. 19-106

In spite of the political goings-on, there was an active intellectual community in Florence. Where and when various groups met has been the subject of vigorous debate and part of that debate has been about the “Platonic Academy” that may have existed in Florence during the latter half of the 1400s.<sup>27</sup> It appears that there were gatherings to discuss the new translations of Plato and Ficino's commentaries on them; however, these gatherings cannot really be called an “Academy” if one uses “academy” in the same sense as Plato's Academy. Perhaps it was a self-styled “academy.” Ficino claims that his commentary on Plato's *Symposium* is based on a dinner party held in honour of Plato's birthday.<sup>28</sup> Were the dinner guests members of the so-called Academy? Possibly, but not likely. In a letter to Francesco Musano, Ficino writes, “You asked me yesterday to transcribe for you that maxim of mine that is inscribed around the walls of the Academy. Receive it: ‘All things are directed from goodness to goodness. Rejoice in the present; set no value on property, seek no honors. Avoid excess; avoid activity. Rejoice in the present.’”<sup>29</sup> It is uncertain whether this reference to walls indicates that the Academy had a meeting place or whether the words were inscribed in one of Ficino's rooms at Careggi (or elsewhere). Weissman proposes that Ficino may have been involved in a confraternity,<sup>30</sup> and perhaps some of Ficino's talks and discussions at the confraternity gatherings have been misconstrued as an academy.

While there are questions about the academy, there is no question that Ficino was an active translator and prolific writer. Cosimo the Elder died before Ficino had completed translating all the available works by Plato. Cosimo's son Piero encouraged Ficino to continue the translations and commentaries. He also encouraged Ficino to make the translations and commentaries publically available and thereby share these “new” ideas with the public. After Piero's death in 1469, Lorenzo

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<sup>27</sup> see particularly Kristeller 1939, 1961, 1980, Field 1988, and Hankins 1991

<sup>28</sup> Ficino, 1996, p. xiv

<sup>29</sup> Ficino, 1996, p. 64

<sup>30</sup> Weissman p. 252

maintained the Medici's patronage of Ficino. As Bullard notes, it is rare for someone to maintain the patronage of a family for three generations.<sup>31</sup> The Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola was elected prior of San Marco and arrived in Florence in 1490 to fulfill this role. Initially, Ficino engaged Savonarola in debating the role of religion in everyday life and praised him as a prophet in a December 1494 letter.<sup>32</sup> Quickly Savonarola's sermons became more anti-humanistic, with frequent verbal attacks on the Medici, Plato (e.g., "An old woman knows more about the Faith than Plato"<sup>33</sup>), and anything else he felt was non-Christian. Ficino disagreed with Savonarola's austere practices and vitriolic sermons and ceased all contact with him. In 1498 (after Savonarola's death) Ficino wrote a piece condemning Savonarola's beliefs and practices.<sup>34</sup> Marsilio Ficino died on October 1, 1499, and was entombed at Santa Maria del Fiore, the Cathedral of Florence.

### 1.3 Intellectual Context

Humanism, from *studia humanitatis*, is a term used to distinguish the seven Liberal Arts, the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) from more vocationally-oriented studies such as engineering. Humanistic studies

were approached in a spirit of enquiry often entailing little respect for the intellectual authority traditionally exercised by the Catholic church. Humanism also involved the culture and institutions of classical antiquity and a desire to restore them in the contemporary world: the wish to communicate new and revived knowledge by reformed educational practices, improved texts and learned discourse in academies, universities and informal gatherings.<sup>35</sup>

The humanists focused on the centrality, dignity, freedom, and worth of man via the literature of the day. It was not a philosophical movement, nor was it religious. The humanists Petrarch and Salutati seem to have influenced a number of Ficino's ideas. Like them, Ficino apparently hoped to elevate

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<sup>31</sup> Bullard, p. 477 [Bullard said 'four generations'; I count Cosimo, Piero and Lorenzo as three generations]

<sup>32</sup> Ficino, 1576b, p. 963

<sup>33</sup> Burckhardt, p. 476

<sup>34</sup> Kristeller, 1973, pp. 76-79 "Apologia contra Savonarolam"

<sup>35</sup> Kekewich, pp. 51-52

the status of the church and the value of religion for the humanists by associating classical writings with elements of Christian scripture.

Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) was seen as “the supreme example of a mind free of all scholasticism, which considered itself and man's destiny in the light of the eloquent philosophy of Cicero or Seneca and the intimate religious experience of St. Augustine.”<sup>36</sup> He “dominated the spiritual horizon of Florence,”<sup>37</sup> inspired the humanists, and influenced a generation of thinkers with the ideal that “goodness and virtue should permeate every aspect of civic life and unite with the ideal of civic glory.”<sup>38</sup>

One of Petrarch's followers, Coluccio Salutati, was elected Chancellor of the Florentine Republic in 1375. Despite much political turmoil and the increased strength of the Guilds, Salutati continued to emphasize a republic “where liberty still had meaning and value.”<sup>39</sup> Hard-working citizens mattered because virtue was obtained from honest work and achieved in daily struggles, which allowed the Florentine republic to set itself apart from the system of feudal aristocracy and privilege.

The leading men (civic, religious and business) of the Republic often gathered to discuss ancient texts, the art of politics and rhetoric, education, the etymology of the Latin language, and lessons from history. For this reason, ancient texts were often sought and brought back to Florence. Salutati established a Studium and brought Greek studies and the Greek language to the West. Many wealthy citizens established private libraries. One of the Studium's best pupils, Leonardo Bruni (1374-1444), succeeded Salutati as Chancellor in 1410 and continued the established humanist tradition. The leading philosophical trend, particularly in the universities, was Aristotelian-Christian. As no

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<sup>36</sup> Adorno, p. 9

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Adorno, p. 10

comprehensive set of Platonic works was available, Aristotle was the best available philosophy of the time.

The increasingly “human” focus in the cultural mindset permeated all levels of society. The Italian Renaissance was underway, and it was into this atmosphere that the Medici family entered with enthusiasm. By the time Marsilio Ficino was born in 1433, it was firmly entrenched in Florentine culture that everyday life had profound meaning and religious validity.

## 1.4 Ficino’s Works

Ficino’s first philosophic undertaking, *The Platonic Institutions*, was written in 1456, but no copies are known to exist.<sup>40</sup> Kristeller published the Latin text of some very early Ficino works (~1454-55), likely from his student days.<sup>41</sup> Ficino began his translations of Platonic works, but this was interrupted by the discovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Cosimo’s desire to have the latter translated immediately. Ficino’s translations and works were put into wider circulation than those of many of his predecessors due to the arrival of the printing press in Florence. This dramatic shift from scribes copying manuscripts to book production by a printing press occurred in the very early 1470s.

In 1469, Ficino completed and circulated the Platonic translations and went on to translate many other “ancient” works by authors such as Plotinus (*The Enneads*), Iamblichus (*On the Pythagorean School*), Porphyry (*Means for Reaching the Divine*), Proclus (*On Priesthood*), and Psellus (*On Daemons*). He also provided commentaries and chapter summaries for many of his translations. Ficino did for Plato, Plotinus, and other ancient philosophers what the literary humanists did for the ancient orators, poets, and historians, that is, he saved them from obscurity and brought them to prominence where they contributed to the religious, philosophical and intellectual discussions of the time. In addition, Ficino

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<sup>40</sup> Ficino, 1975, p.21

<sup>41</sup> Kristeller, 1944b, pp. 257-318

wrote several of his own works, including *De Christiana religione* (1474), *De raptu Pauli* (1474-5), *Platonic Theology* (1479), *Advice against the Plague* (1479), and *Three Books on Life* (1489).

Ficino's works were not meant solely for scholars or theologians; his target audience was the Florentine *intelligensi*. Ficino's aim was to keep the intellectuals and politically powerful faithful to Christianity by using well reasoned arguments and intellectual conviction.<sup>42</sup> In early 1490, the Roman Curia accused him of at least one unknown offence against religion based on his writing in Book III of *Three Books on Life*. Ficino enlisted the help and support of his colleagues and a lawyer, such that nothing became of the charge.<sup>43</sup> During Savonarola's time in Florence, Ficino kept a low profile, finishing the twelve books of *Epistolae* for publication in 1495 and working on commentaries. His last work was a commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, which he left unfinished. The table below provides a listing of when Ficino's works were written and published.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1 Works by Ficino**

Written	Printed	Title
1454-1455		Manuscripts: <i>Summa philosophie ad Michaelem Miniatensem</i> ; <i>Tractatus physicus</i> ; <i>Tractatus de Deo natura et arte</i> ; <i>Tractatus de anima</i> ; <i>Tractatus physicus</i> ; <i>Questiones de luce et alie multe</i> ; <i>De sono</i> ; <i>Divisio philosophie</i> .
1456		<i>The Platonic Institutions</i> (lost)
1457		<i>On the Moral Virtues</i> ; <i>On the Four Schools of Philosophers</i> ; <i>On God and the Soul</i> (all three were not published)
1457	1497	<i>De divino furore</i>
1457-8	1497	<i>De voluptate</i>
1458		Translations of <i>Hymns of Orpheus</i> and <i>Hymns of Proclus</i> (not published); <i>Sayings of Zoroaster</i>
1463	1471; several reprints	Translation: <i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>
1464-69	1496	10 Platonic translations: <i>Hipparchus</i> , <i>On Philosophy</i> ,

<sup>42</sup> Ficino, 2001, p. xiii

<sup>43</sup> Ficino, 1998, p. 56

<sup>44</sup> Compiled with information from: Allen, 1975, p. 4; Ficino, 2009a, pp. 95-96; Ficino, 1996, p. xiv; Kristeller, "1944b

Written	Printed	Title
		<i>Theages, Meno, Alcibiades I, Alcibiades II, Minos, Euthyphro, Parmenides, Philebus</i>
1469	1484	<i>Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love</i>
1474	1474, and 1484 (with revisions by Ficino) – Tuscan 1476 - Latin	<i>De Christiana religione</i>
1474-75		<i>Epistolae, I</i>
1476		<i>Epistolae, II (including De raptu Pauli)</i>
1476	1476 – Latin 1477 - Tuscan	<i>De raptu Pauli</i>
1479	1479 – Tuscan 1518 - Latin	<i>Consiglio contro la pestilenza</i> – Translated into Latin by Augusta Vindelicorum
1470's	1482, 1491	<i>Platonic Theology</i>
	1484; several reprints	<i>Complete Works of Plato (includes Commentaries on Symposium and Timaeus)</i>
1485-90?	1492	Translation of <i>Enneads</i> by Plotinus (includes Commentaries)
1488	1497	Translations of works by Porphyry, Priscian, Proclus, Psellus, Synesius and Iamblichus' <i>De mysteris Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, atque Asyriorum,</i>
		Translations of <i>Aurea verba</i> and <i>Symbola</i> by Pythagoras
	1489	<i>De vita libri tres</i>
1490		<i>Commentary on Lucretius (The Nature of Things)</i> lost/destroyed?
	1491; several reprints	<i>Opera Omnia</i>
	1493	<i>Apologia in lib. suum de sole &amp; lumine</i>
	1495, several reprints	<i>Epistolae (Books 1-12)</i>
1492?	1496	<i>Mystic Theology and Divine Names</i> , by pseudo-Dionysius (translations)
1498?		<i>Apologia contra Savonarolam</i>
1497-99		<i>Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul (unfinished)</i>



## 1.5 Ficino's Writing Style

As Ficino's personality is complex, his works are very syncretic in nature; for example, he connects the Christian trinity and Platonic triads,<sup>45</sup> numbers and cosmology,<sup>46</sup> and human health with planetary influences.<sup>47</sup> Ficino's writing style differs markedly from that of the majority of today's philosophical writers. He wrote in a very metaphorical and allegorical style and clearly took his cue from the ancients: "It was the custom of Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato alike to hide divine mysteries everywhere behind the mask of figurative language, to conceal their wisdom discreetly in contrast to the Sophists' boasting, to jest in seriousness and play in earnest."<sup>48</sup> At times, Ficino was very direct about this, as, for example, in his letter, *The Allegory of Mercury* where he illustrates why God wished to signify wisdom, the greatest of the virtues, through Mercury, the smallest of the heavenly bodies.<sup>49</sup> However, most of the time, readers must invoke their imagination, knowledge of mythology, ancient medicine, history, Christian religion, Platonic and neoplatonic philosophy, Florentine personages, astronomy and ancient cosmology if they hope to understand what Ficino was saying. Standards of scholarship that are generally adopted today were not part of Ficino's awareness. He is known to have used direct quotation and mildly altered portions of the works of others.<sup>50</sup> Ficino also reused small sections of his own material in various works. For example, he uses the story – found in Plato's *Statesman* [269C-274D] – about the east to west rotation of the earth someday reversing itself, in both the *Platonic Theology*<sup>51</sup> and his commentary on the *Statesman*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Allen, 1984, pp. 569-571

<sup>46</sup> Ficino, 2010, pp. 26-27

<sup>47</sup> Ficino, 1998, e.g. Book Three "On Obtaining Life from the Heavens"

<sup>48</sup> Ficino, 2008b, p. 5

<sup>49</sup> Ficino, 1495, *Liber X*, p. CCXIIIa and Ficino, 1576b, p. 919

<sup>50</sup> e.g. "Occasionally Ficino took passages almost verbatim from, or paraphrased or adapted, Thomas's argumentation..." Ficino, 2001, p. xi.

<sup>51</sup> Ficino, 2006b, §8.7

<sup>52</sup> Ficino, 2006a, p. 63

In Ficino's syncretic style, it can be hard to tell if one idea directly influenced another, or if the idea was just a good example to illustrate the point being made. It has taken this author a great deal of time and reading to begin to understand the rich implications of Ficino's many puns (e.g., Cosimo and Cosmos), his reuse and reformulation of the theses of other writers (both philosophic and religious), his late medieval Catholicism, planetary attributes and the medieval cosmology, renaissance medicine – particularly the concepts involving humours – and the many metaphorical references to planetary gods and their perceived attributes.

Many Renaissance writers saw literature, science, medicine, art, philosophy, and religion as components of a unity and, hence, to be studied and contemplated in a holistic manner. Ficino was no different. He writes metaphorically and allegorically, with a heavy reliance on imagination, so his ideas and arguments are often expressed as poetic images, not logical, linear statements. However, the scholasticism of medieval philosophy did influence Ficino and is evident in his terminology, method of argumentation, many of his ontological principles, and the respect he gives to Aristotle and some of his commentators.<sup>53</sup>

Comprehending the true meaning of something required people to earn their understanding through faith, study, and deep thought. Metaphorical images succeed when what is written (painted, mimed, etc.) resonates with the same core meaning in different people, but the edges of understanding are slightly different for each member of the audience. If a person could be at the core of the sun, the super bright light would be seen, while the further away a person moves from the center, the light becomes more diffused. The beauty of metaphors is that people do not always consciously recognize why something resonates with them, just that it does. For Ficino, metaphors were where his esoteric notions gained value when set in a Christian context. He could safely bring in non-Christian elements

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<sup>53</sup> Kristeller, 1944b, p. 260

and let individuals find their own meaning within their own comfort level. Ficino himself recognized what he was doing with his creative imagery and states in *De sole* that the only way to speak of God is metaphorically: “Words to the reader: this book is allegorical and anagogic, rather than dogmatic.”<sup>54</sup> He seemed to believe that his interpretations could provide lay readers with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the topic at hand. In addition, Ficino strived to make his works available to a wider audience by providing some of them in the vernacular (e.g., *Della religione cristiana* and *Consiglio contro la pestilenza*).

It can be useful to try to understand and interpret Ficino’s works as one would the images in art or poetry. For instance, in *Three Books on Life*, Ficino uses the planets as a way of imagining our inner world as a reflection of the outer world, not as astrology in the sense of birth charts, zodiacal signs, or horoscopes. Some of the commonly-found planetary attributes and associations he uses are as follows:

- Sun: active, male
- Moon: passive, female, moist, reflexive, continuous motion
- Jupiter: nourishing, moderation, tolerance, god of common life
- Mars: anger, violence, hot, dry, iron (metal)
- Mercury: bright, quick, light, moist, messenger of the Greek gods
- Saturn: aloof, cold, heavy dark, lead (metal), dry, depression, fall season
- Venus: spirituality, sensuality, love, moist, spring season

Kaske and Clark, translators of Ficino’s *Three Books on Life*, suggest that Ficino’s citations are often second-hand and note that he only occasionally acknowledged his sources. Editors and translators including Kaske and Clark, Kristeller, and Allen, have supplied some notes about possible sources; however, much work remains to be done in this area. Many editors have chosen not to worry excessively about the citations, and Kaske and Clark warn the reader that “to second-guess him in

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<sup>54</sup> Ficino, 1967, p. 118

every case would be an endless task; hence we usually take him at his word and hereby warn the reader of his oversimplification and our own. Nor have we felt obligated always to note all of Ficino's distortions of the sources.”<sup>55</sup> Fardell took the same approach in his collection of Ficino's Platonic commentaries. Although not all of Ficino's sources have been identified, three main themes in his writing are clear: promoting the Christian traditions (e.g., pushing away the physical world, and Christ imparting God's sacred knowledge) especially as they relate to ancient-inspired philosophic knowledge; revealing and saving the old wisdom; and protecting the ancient (Plato, Plotinus, etc.) philosophic truths from erroneous and improper interpretation. Ficino claims that the two ideological systems, Greek philosophy and the Judeo-Christian religion are compatible. There are several articles and books about Ficino's formulation of Platonic love, immortality of the soul, the dignity of humankind and the philosophical arguments he makes to support those ideas. Trinkaus has provided a look at Ficino's man in God's image<sup>56</sup>, with his main focus on Ficino's philosophy as it pertained to the human soul's immortality. Kristeller focused on Ficino's humanism and philosophy<sup>57</sup>.

Currently, few of Ficino's religious works are available in the English language. While all eighteen books of the *Platonic Theology* can be found in translation, works such as *De Christiana religione*, *Praedictiones*, *Epistolas D. Pauli*, and Ficino's second book of letters, including *De raptu Pauli* are not. The London School of Economics has produced translations Ficino's letters from books 1 and 3-9, but passed over the second volume as it “is a work of rather a different kind, and the translators therefore felt it would be desirable to continue to translate Ficino's correspondence in sequence and defer work on Book II until a later date.”<sup>58</sup> The translators felt that the letters of Book II were more like essays laden with philosophical and theological themes. The letter from Book II, known as ‘The

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<sup>55</sup> Ficino, 1998, p. 16

<sup>56</sup> Trinkaus, 1970

<sup>57</sup> Kristeller, 1964b and 1962

<sup>58</sup> Ficino, 1978, p. xix

Star of the Magi,' has been translated into English and published by Thomas Moore.<sup>59</sup> Walker<sup>60</sup> and Copenhaver<sup>61</sup> have focused their Ficino research on *spiritus* and magic as presented in *Three Books on Life*, and his translation and interpretation of the *Hermetica*. Kristeller's extensive work on Ficino focuses on the humanist and philosophical works, but very little on the faith-related treatises, although he did examine some of Ficino's ideas about the nature of God as presented in *Platonic Theology* (but the examination did not include Ficino's more religious works).<sup>62</sup> Collins has examined Ficino's reliance on Aquinas in the *Platonic Theology*.<sup>63</sup> Edelheit has looked at most of the theological works, but in the context of a religious crisis in Renaissance Florence.<sup>64</sup> 'Ficino the Priest' by Serracino-Inglott examines Ficino's conception of a priest as a healer.<sup>65</sup> Allen's scholarly output tends towards Ficino's Platonic and neo-platonic translations and accompanying commentaries, although he has addressed some of Ficino's theological issues such as angelic hierarchies and the *prisca theologia*. Allen comments that Ficino may have been driven by "the conviction that he was discovering something that had been lost and would be lost again if it were not caught in his exegetical net."<sup>66</sup> He notes that Ficino wrote in the "time –honoured erotic imagery of unveiling the nakedness of truth or of penetration to the core, to the fruit of a mystery; at other times he thought of it as establishing contact with a forgotten philosophical or – since he thought ecumenically – a theological past."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Moore, Thomas 1994, "The Star of the Magi" *Sphinx: Journal for Archetypal Psychology and the Arts*, **6**, 100-113. Reprinted in Voss.

<sup>60</sup> Walker

<sup>61</sup> Copenhaver

<sup>62</sup> Kristeller, 1964b, pp. 231-253

<sup>63</sup> Collins

<sup>64</sup> Edelheit

<sup>65</sup> Serracino-Inglott

<sup>66</sup> Allen, 1998, p. ix

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

There has been very little analysis of Ficino's belief in the compatibility of philosophy and religion, and his notions about God. This thesis examines whether or not Ficino was successful in arguing for the reunion of philosophy and religion based on the idea of their compatibility.

## Chapter 2

### Ficino's Reasons for Reuniting Religion and Philosophy

By 1454 or 1455, Ficino was already producing religious writing. The *Tractatus de Deo*<sup>68</sup> examines act, form and potency in the nature and craft of God. It is interesting to note that at this early stage of his career he states “it [the mind] is as a blank slate on the entry to the body”.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps this conviction is why he never subscribed to Plato's theory of learning by recollection. His description of the mind as a *tabula rasa* also predates John Locke's famous theory of education by over two hundred years. Ficino's *Tractatus de Deo* was written almost twenty years before he became a priest and before he knew Greek or Plato's works.

Florence in the 1400's was home to many types of religious houses: Benedictine, S. Salvatore, Augustinian, S. Basil, Franciscan, Camaldolese, Sylvestrine, Carmelite, Cistercian, Dominican, Observant Dominican, Gesuati, Oliventan, Servite, Humiliati, Vallombrosan, Celestine and Augustinian Hermits.<sup>70</sup> Ficino, however, was not a monk or friar, nor was he a member of a religious order as he had patrons and did not live in a monastery. Given that he was not a member of a monastic order, Ficino therefore had more intellectual freedom in his religious interpretations and presentations. Ficino did associate with members of other religious orders such as Antonio Serafico Morali (San Miniato, Oliventan), Lonardo Perugino and Girolamo Rossi (Dominicans), and one of his own benefices, Saint Bartholomew's, was part of the Benedictine order. Ficino's initial contact with the Camaldolese order is likely a result of his father, Dietifeci (the doctor) serving as a witness for

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<sup>68</sup> Kristeller, 1944b, pp. 283-286

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 285 Est autem tanquam tabula rasa in ingressu corporis [note: where the Latin text is provided in the footnote, the translation from Latin is my own]

<sup>70</sup> Brucker, pp. 45-49

various legal dealings of the Camaldolese church.<sup>71</sup> During his adult life, Ficino had numerous Camaldosian friends. Ambrogio Traversari of the Florence Camaldelesians translated many works such as those by Aeneas of Gaza, pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Diogenes Laertius, and a number of the Greek Fathers. These Greek to Latin translations later became valuable resources for Ficino.<sup>72</sup> Santa Maria degli Angeli belonged to the Camaldolese brethren, and it was a place that Ficino gave talks on Plato and Plotinus.<sup>73</sup> According to Lackner, Ficino also “preached sermons, celebrated the monastic offices and developed a circle of initiates among the white-robed [Camaldolese] brethren.”<sup>74</sup>

Several Camaldolese tenets meshed well with Ficino’s ideas. Saint Romuald, founder of the order, espoused a theology of mystical ascent in which there were “[a]scending hierarchies of being ... [and a] vision of cosmic harmony illumined by heavenly love.”<sup>75</sup> The Camaldolese idea of ‘climbing a ladder to heaven’ was a way to express the belief that natural desires could be transformed into a desire for God. We find these Camaldolesian ideas expressed often in Ficino’s writings. For example the first sermon in *Opera Omnia* contains this notion:

I pray my brothers ... see the ladder, with God leading, we succeed. Certainly on this [ladder] the heavenly angels ascend and descend equally. Indeed they ascend contemplating the God of Gods in Zion. Meanwhile they descend soon looking after the men. They descend, I say, seizing the hands of men. They [the angels] ascend again, soon leading [us], seized to the heights. O the valuable ladder! O the incomparable steps forwards! O the indescribable ascent, and the wonderful descent.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Lackner, p. 26

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21

<sup>73</sup> Allen, 1975, pp. 8-9

<sup>74</sup> Lackner, p. 16

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 17

<sup>76</sup> Ficino, 1576b, Praedicationes, p. 503 Videte precor fratres mei, ... scalam Deo duce, prouenimus. In hac sane coelestes angeli, et ascendunt pariter et descendunt. Ascendunt quidem contemplantes Deum Deorum in Sion. Descendunt interim hominibus prouisuri. Descendunt, inquam, manus hominum apprehensuri. Ascendunt iterum nos iam apprehensos ad excelsa ducturi. O scalam extimabilem, O gradus prorsus incomparabiles, O ascensum ineffabilem, mirabilemque descensum.



This passage is reminiscent of two biblical verses: “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,”<sup>77</sup> and “he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”<sup>78</sup> One also finds the image of a ladder in *Platonic Theology* §XII.3.3, and Ficino likens the ladder imagery to Homer's golden chain in *Platonic Theology*, §XIII.4.15. It appears that he also adapted the idea of the great shining chain of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>79</sup>

Ficino was not a humanist in the same sense as Salutati or Bruni, but more of a religious humanist.

As Kristeller says,

Renaissance humanism as such was not Christian or pagan, Catholic or Protestant, scientific or antiscientific, civic or despotic, Platonist or Aristotelian, Stoic or Epicurean, optimistic or pessimistic, active or contemplative, although it is easy to find for any of these attitudes, and for many others, a certain number of humanists who favored them. What they all have in common, is something else: a scholarly, literary, and educational ideal based on the study of classical antiquity.<sup>80</sup>

Renaissance humanism was a diverse synthesis of theological, ideological, and religious ideas, not a single overriding orientation. If one considers Ficino a religious humanist, it is possible to argue that he went one step further than many of his literary contemporaries in his use of sources from classical antiquity by adding philosophy into the mix. His theory of how the Christian religion and ancient philosophy ought to co-exist and be mutually reinforcing is one formulation of a *prisca theologia*.

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<sup>77</sup> John 1:51

<sup>78</sup> Genesis 28:12

<sup>79</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987, “Divine Names” p. 69. Imagine a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below. We grab hold of it with one hand and then another, and we seem to be pulling it down toward us. Actually it is already there on the heights and down below and instead of pulling it to us we are being lifted upward to that brilliance above, to the dazzling light of those beams.

<sup>80</sup> Kristeller, 1962, p. 22

Ficino uses the *prisca theologia* to confirm for believers and to convince non-believers of the validity of fundamental ideas such as the Trinity and Christ as the Son of God. He believes that God inspired Orpheus, Plato, Trismegistus and Zoroaster to discover these mysterious religious truths.

Orpheus called this Pallas, the [one] born from only the head of Jupiter {Zeus}. Plato in the *Letter to Hermias*, named this the son of father God. In *Epinomis* he [Plato] called [it] the Word, that is, the reasoning and the Word saying: The most divine Word of all has encouraged this visible world. Mercury Trismegistus often mentions the Word and the Son of God and the Spirit also. Zoroaster likewise attributes an intellectual offspring to God. Indeed those men have said what they could and indeed [said] that with God's help. But only God understands this and to the man whom God will have wished to reveal [it].<sup>81</sup>

By joining these ancient writings with Christian truths, Ficino seems to be pointing out that Christianity has existed for all of eternity; the ancients just did not realize it, but they were able to identify some valuable religious truths.

His formulation of the *prisca theologia* was not a rigid catholic dogma, but more of an inclusive synthesis (inevitable given that most of the *prisci theologi* were pagan). In his view, philosophers and priests used to be one and the same. He believed that religion and philosophy were once united in the ancient traditions. Ficino pointed to the Persians, Indian Brahman, Egyptians and Ethiopians and their traditions where the same men were both wise men and priests (and in some cases healers too). He moved forward in time and pointed to the Druids in Gaul and several ancient Greeks as having the same combined skill set. He ends the argument here with examples of more recent Romans,

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<sup>81</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XIII Hanc Palladem appellavit Orpheus, solo Iovis capite natam, hunc Dei patris filium Plato in *Epistola ad Hermiam* nominavit. In *Epinomide* nuncupavit logon, id est rationem ac verbum dicens: Logos omnium divinissimus mundum hunc visibilem exortavit. Mercurius Trismegistus, de verbo et filio Dei ac etiam de spiritu saepe mentionem facit. Zoroaster quoque intellectualem Deo prolem attribuit. Dixerunt isti quidem quod potuerunt et id quidem adiuvante Deo. Deus autem hoc solus intelligit et cui Deus voluerit revelare.

“Likewise, who is unaware how great was the zeal for wisdom and the sacred among the Romans on the part of: Numa Pompilius, Soran Valerius, Marcus Varro, and many others?”<sup>82</sup>

In his day, Ficino was keenly aware of the rift between wisdom and religion, and his hope was to reunite the two in the minds of everyone by demonstrating that philosophy and Christianity had been united and should return to supporting each other. In *De Christiana religione*, he bemoans the current state of religion.

O happy times, this divine bond of wisdom and religion which you have protected whole, particularly among the Hebrews and Christians. O then excessively unfortunate times, when the separation and wretched divorce of Pallas and Themis (that is, wisdom and honesty) happens. Oh the horror, thus the holy gift is to be mangled by dogs. Indeed, for the most part, the doctrine was transferred to the impious, where it has become, as much as possible, an instrument of evil and lewdness, and is said to be evil rather than science. But the pearls of the most precious religion are often discussed by the ignorant and they [the pearls] are crushed as if by pigs.<sup>83</sup> Indeed often it is seen: the laziness of the ignorant and the care of the lazy should be called superstition rather than religion.<sup>84</sup>

Philosophy and religion had been thoroughly separated as a result of the scholastic tradition and impious religious officials. Universities teaching theology focused on Christian revelation and those teaching philosophy, such as the Universities of Padua, were concerned mainly with Aristotle and Averroes.<sup>85</sup> Ficino felt that there were many impious priests and churchmen, hence he wrote about

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<sup>82</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §Prooemium Quantum apud Romanos Numae Pompilio, Valerio Sorano, Marco Varroni multisque aliis sapientiae simul sacrorumque studium fuerit, quis ignoret?

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

<sup>84</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §Prooemium O felicia secula, quae divinam hanc sapientiae, religionisque copulam, presertim apud Hebraeos, Christianosque integram servavistis. O secula tandem nimium infelicia, quando Palladis, Themidisque (id est, sapientiae et honestatis) separatio et divortium miserabile contigit. Proh nephas, sic datum est sanctum canibus lacerandum. Doctrina enim magna ex parte ad Prophanos translata est, unde ut plurimum iniquitatis evasit et lasciviae instrumentum, ac malitia dicenda est potius, quam scientia. Margaritae autem religionis preciosissimae saepe tractantur ab ignorantibus, atque ab his tanquam suis conculcantur. Saepe enim iners ignorantum ignavorumque cura superstitione potius, quam religio appellanda videtur.

<sup>85</sup> Collins, p.1 and Rubenstein, pp. 168-176

how to select the best people to appoint to religious duties.<sup>86</sup> And yet, Ficino believed that it was possible to reunite religion and philosophy.

O men, citizens of the heavenly Fatherland, and inhabitants of the earth, I beseech [you] that we might liberate philosophy, the sacred gift of God, from impiety, if we are able. But we are able if we are willing. Let us redeem the holy religion to the best of our abilities, from the accursed stupidity. Therefore I pray and encourage all, indeed the philosophers, either so that they inwardly strive for or attain religion, so that the priests diligently press on with the study of legitimate wisdom.<sup>87</sup>

In a letter to the Venetian ambassador Antonio Zilioli, Ficino says that philosophy and religion are true sisters and presents the following argument:

For it is the work of the true philosopher always to search out the particular principles and causes both of the parts and of the whole, and also to teach them; then in finding the real principles and causes of things he should finally ascend to the highest principle and cause of all. Beyond this he should with all his powers lead everyone else with him to the realms above. And as he shows how wisely the universe is ordered, it is likewise his work to demonstrate how it is arranged for the great benefit of mankind by the principles of providence that he has understood. The whole universe in every part cries out that we should acknowledge and love God. The true philosopher, intermediary between the universe and god, carefully points out and exhorts us to the same. Therefore unless we are entirely deprived of every sense we must now openly acknowledge that nothing in the great order of the universe is at all accidental, except perhaps those men who suppose that so skilful a work itself is accidental! Thus the philosopher should be called wise when he raises us to the contemplation of God, and pious and religious when he kindles within us the love of divine goodness. For this reason the whole philosophy of the ancients is simply religion united with wisdom.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ficino, 1975, pp. 121-122

<sup>87</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §Prooemium O viri coelestis patriae cives, incolaeque terrae, liberemus obsecro quandoque philosophiam, sacrum Dei munus, ab impietate, si possumus, possumus autem, si volumus, religionem sanctam pro viribus ab execrabili inscita redimamus. Hortor igitur omnes, atque precor, philosophos quidem, ut religionem vel capessant penitus, vel attingant: sacerdotes autem, ut legitimae sapientiae studiis diligenter incumbant.

<sup>88</sup> Ficino, 1999, p. 32-33

Ficino's vision of *prisca theologia* is based on certain fundamental assumptions. His faith in Christianity and one God was absolute; hence, he did not need to question or critically examine the tenets of his faith. He believed that everything (corporeal and non-corporeal) came from God, the Good, the Ultimate One, and in God we find what we truly seek: "Certainly, all the time that we are pursuing merely one thing after another, we are running away from the One itself, which is everything. But he who simply pursues the One itself, in that One soon attains everything."<sup>89</sup> He assumed that while the philosophies and religions of the past claimed a God, really they were (without realizing it), proclaiming the singular Christian God. He felt that even though Christianity appeared after their time, ancient writers were 'hinting' at the truth to come. "Numenius, Iamblichus and Amelius, who did not condemn Christian theology, but rather they desired to imitate [it]."<sup>90</sup> By examining these ancient philosophies and religions, Ficino believed that it was possible to adapt, explain and mold their 'wisdom' to demonstrate that philosophical (particularly Platonic) and religious knowledge shared a common foundation and that there was no conflict between religion and philosophy. The unity of wisdom and the existence of eternal truths were also underlying assumptions.

From this it can now be quite clear that philosophy in every part accords, as I have said, with the Godhead whole and perfect, and contains, so far as it is revealed to us, a full and complete image of the power, wisdom, and goodness of Father, Son and Spirit. Thus it is, that of all the faculties of men none appears closer or more similar to the Godhead than philosophy, and so nothing available to us, save God Himself, is seen as more perfect or more excellent. For which reason Hermes [Trismegistus] ... seems, through godlike power, to have explained this, when he declared that men become gods through the light of philosophy.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ficino, 1988, p. 26

<sup>90</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XI Numenius, Iamblicus et Amelius, qui Christianam Theologiam non reprobare, sed emulari potius studuerunt.

<sup>91</sup> Ficino, 1981, p. 20 [the reference is to *Corpus Hermeticum*, X.6]

If Christianity was to be recognized as the ultimate wisdom, thereby situating Christianity over all other religions, it must present the ancient wisdom, the inspired and revealed religion, and philosophy as consistent and mutually reinforcing. Note that in this process Ficino did not worry about the authenticity of his sources. He believed that these ancient writers were expressing eternal truths about God; therefore these truths could not be wrong no matter who wrote them down.

This stability of truth was taken as proof of the eternity and immutability of the spirit. The ontological priority of the spirit was based on its immutability; this immutability of the spirit was a divine attribute. Participation in the eternal spirituality of truth was the condition of personal and individual spirituality. ... Spirituality was the participation in the ideas of God. If the human notion of God is eternal and necessary, then the necessity of God himself had to partake in the *notion* of necessity.<sup>92</sup>

However, Ficino had a very specific orientation: Platonism and Christianity. He drew a connection between Moses and Plato, noting that when Numenius (a Pythagorean philosopher) had read from the works of Plato and Moses, he declared “that he had recognized Moses in Plato and that Plato was none other than a second Moses speaking in the Athenian tongue.”<sup>93</sup> This allowed Ficino to point out that the Christian theology of creation reflected Plato’s philosophy, hence philosophy, in a sense, is an offspring of religion, and divine revelation is the source of philosophic truths. He maintained this theme by also linking Socrates and Christ. He enumerated the many parallels between the life, acts, and deaths of both men: they endured hardships such as hunger, exposure and poverty, extended love to all, expected no reward on earth, taught others, offered no defense in court, and were killed by the state.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Schmidt-Biggemann, p. 29

<sup>93</sup> Ficino, 2003b, p. 9; see also Ficino, 1576a, §XXVI Plato usque adeo Judaeos imitatus est, ut Numenius Pythagoricus dixerit, Platonem nihil aliud fuisse quam Mosen Attica lingua loquentem; likely source is Eusebius XI, 10 p. 526 “Thus then speaks Numenius, explaining clearly both Plato’s doctrines and the much earlier doctrines of Moses. With reason therefore is that saying currently attributed to him, in which it is recorded that he said, ‘For what else is Plato than Moses speaking Attic Greek?’ ”

<sup>94</sup> Ficino, 2003b, pp. 12-14.

Ficino hoped to emulate those before him who united the religious and philosophic. He saw the ancients such as Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, and Pythagoras to have been both holy and wise, and wished himself to be seen in the same light. He writes of himself: “Next, it is so that you may understand why Marsilio, a follower of the ancients, always joins the religious with the philosophical to best of his ability, not only in this one book on religion ... but in all his writings.”<sup>95</sup> By using the writings and ideas of the ancient philosophers to give credence to his ideas about the elements of Christian theology, Ficino strove to close the rift and rejoin philosophy and religion through his works such *Platonic Theology*, *De Christiana religione*, and *De raptu Pauli*. Ficino ignored, by omission, many works by earlier theologians and Popes, such as Anthony (father of monasticism 251 – 356), Benedict (480 – 550), Boethius (480 – 524), Pope Gregory VII (1073 – 1085), and Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226). Excerpts of works by Augustine and Aquinas make appearances in Ficino’s works, but he often relied on those writers he perceived as having been alive closer to the time of Christ (i.e. pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Eusebius). One exception to this is Ficino’s *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* which has been studied extensively by Walter Dress, who has found that “The whole organization of Ficino’s work – argument, the order of ideas, the sentence structure – follows that of Aquinas.”<sup>96</sup>

Was Ficino writing Christian apologetic works? He was not writing in the context of clarifying misunderstandings about literal readings of biblical passages. Ficino was an apologist in the sense that he was working from the premise that people are rational beings. By using well reasoned arguments, Ficino believed that these reasoning people could see the objective, well-reasoned truths about God and Christianity, thereby providing the basis for deciding that this religion was the only

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<sup>95</sup> Ficino, 1999, pp. 33-34 The ‘book on religion’ being referred to is his *De christiana religione*

<sup>96</sup> Collins, pp. viii-ix

reasonable choice and superior to all other religions. He also believed that it was natural for all healthy, adult humans to believe in God, morality and destiny.<sup>97</sup>

While many intellectuals in 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence and Europe supported and accepted Ficino's ideas,<sup>98</sup> this was not always the case. Allen observes that occasionally in Ficino's writing we find

a sense of being under attack, of guarding a truth that has ubiquitous and implacable foes confronting her: the bold but ineffective materialists and epicureans, the clandestine and therefore more dangerous sophists, mocking poets, pseudo-Aristotelians, Averroists. This defensiveness derived in part from the Platonic tradition with its persistent, perhaps originally Pythagorean sense of insidership, of discipleship; of being the *katharoi*, whose enemies abounded and whose sacrificial victim had been Socrates.<sup>99</sup>

There was questioning and pushback on his Platonic ideas from ecclesiastics and other Aristotelians, the poet Luigi Pulci, Johannes Pannonius (a Hungarian), and Ficino's former student Pico della Mirandola. The politically challenging times, the plague, the charge of heresy, and the events surrounding Savonarola's time in Florence would have been stressful for Ficino. Ficino was also challenged by personal issues, caring for various family members on a very limited income, bad health, and depression (reported by Ficino himself and the biographer Corsi). Allen also suggests that Ficino struggled with "a fatalistic impulse to believe, incompatible with his basic philosophical and ethical assumptions, that his physical and temperamental life was subject to the baleful starry configurations that reigned at his nativity when Saturn was in the house of Aquarius;"<sup>100</sup> however, he does also recognize that Ficino's primary program was in fact to bring Plato and other ancient authors' works back to prominence by translating and commenting upon said works - a program of 'revelment' and 'correct interpretation' as he calls it.

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<sup>97</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §III; Ficino, 2004, §XIV.9.2

<sup>98</sup> Shepherd, p. 1

<sup>99</sup> Allen, 1998, pp. ix-x

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. x



Allen wrote that Ficino was writing from a besieged mindset, “one consonant with medieval Christianity’s emphasis on the soul’s being encompassed on every side by the powers of darkness and deceit.”<sup>101</sup> While this description is appropriate for Dante’s *Inferno*, a close examination of Ficino’s more theologically oriented works and letters show more of an emphasis on what is uplifting, great, and good. One seldom finds references to evil, powers of darkness, or malign demons trying to deceive humans in his independent works, although he does discuss them in the context of Platonic works such as his commentary on Plato’s *Phaedrus*. His belief in the concordance of philosophy and religion means that philosophy directs humankind to the divine, and therefore, it is required for the reverence and worship of God.

## 2.1 Ficino’s Philosophical Image of God

Why is the image of God in Ficino’s writings worthy of examination in a philosophical context? As mentioned earlier, Ficino’s notion of God has not been examined to see if he is successful in supporting his beliefs with good philosophical arguments. Like all Christians of his time, Ficino believed that humankind was made in God’s image. In chapter 31 of *De Christiana religione* he states “God has said ‘Let us make man according to our image and likeness’, and he [Moses] supplies, ‘God made man’.”<sup>102</sup> Then he uses another variation, near the end of the second last chapter: “God has said ‘We make man in our image and likeness, and also many other things more illustrious’.”<sup>103</sup> How humans view themselves, their constitution, composition and creation, their place in the world and cosmos, their purpose for living, and their responsibilities (to self and others) are all tied into a world view which is influenced by religious faith or lack thereof.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXI Dixit Deus faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, et subdit, fecit Deus hominem.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., §XXXVI Dixit Deus: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem, et similitudinem nostram, atque alia multa etiam clariora.; compare with the *Vulgate*: Genesis 1:26 [E]t ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram et praesit piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae

Ficino uses the image of God for a number of purposes, particularly in his efforts to give Platonic perspectives a Christian gloss. The main sources used for examining Ficino's God image present themselves in *De raptu Pauli*, *De Christiana religione*, *Praedicationes*, *Platonic Theology*, some of his Platonic commentaries and many of his letters. This thesis discusses the five main attributes of God, the relationship between humans and the divine, and Ficino's philosophical arguments for each. An examination of God's attributes helps to inform the arguments for how humanity is reflected as and made in God's image. God created humans, and treats humankind better than the other creatures; therefore, we must be responsible, worship, etc. Ficino uses the idea of a cycle to express a relationship where God's love descends to humankind and human love ascends back to God. He believes that this relationship is unique to humanity (over the other earthly creatures) and that divine illumination, love and proper human behaviour are key features for the relationship to be successful. Religion is important to Ficino because "[m]ost human pursuits usually separate us from the divine and yoke us to what is mortal, but religion releases us from the mortal and binds us again to the divine."<sup>104</sup> He also believed that religion was unique to humans and was the only unchanging thing (just like a Platonic form) in humans, although there could be minor differences of ideas between men:

If religion were empty, men would be the most imperfect of all [animals] because of it, since through it he would be the most demented and most miserable. ... But it is obvious that such is the claim of religion not only from the fact that it belongs to man alone and to every man, but also from the fact that apart from a certain common religion, all men's beliefs, dispositions, customs, [and] laws are modified.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ficino, 1994, pp. 41-42

<sup>105</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §I Si religio esset inanis, per eam rursus homo omnium esset imperfectissimus, quoniam per eam dementissimus esset, atque miserimus. ... Talem autem esse religionis assertionem apparet, non solum ex eo, quod solius omnisque hominis est, verum etiam ex eo quod omnes hominum opiniones, affectus, mores, leges, excepta communi quadam religione, mutantur.

Religion affects humans as they should be thinking of God daily, and yet, Ficino believes that only the right kind of person may practice both philosophy and religion: “The eternal wisdom of God established the divine mysteries, at least in accordance with the beginnings of religion itself, to be discussed only by those ones who might be the true lovers of true wisdom.”<sup>106</sup> Ficino did not believe humans were forever tainted by original sin, but instead took a very positive view of humankind, although due to a person’s free will, evil could come from humans (but this tendency was likely influenced by an evil daemon or an unfortunate alignment of the planets). The immortality of the soul was not a formally recorded church doctrine in Ficino’s time, but it was widely discussed and accepted in medieval theology and philosophy. The main theme of his *Platonic Theology* was to prove the immortality of the human soul. Incidentally, this work had a significant impact as it was one of the primary sources used by the Lateran Council of 1512/13, which formally confirmed the immortality of the human soul as Catholic church dogma. If every human soul is immortal, then the value of each person’s relationship with God must be emphasized, enhanced, and well reasoned so that the arguments would resonate with everyone. If God is immortal and eternal, and the human soul is most like God, then the soul must be immortal. Ficino believes that the human soul strives to reunite permanently with God, otherwise, what is the point of living if not to make the soul better for the purpose of joining God in the eternal immortal realm? This notion is part of what has become recognized as one of the Renaissance themes, the glorification of man. Ficino sought to use philosophy and Christian theology to further enhance the perception of human dignity. His overall concept of God is very different from the common view today.

A number of biblical passages refer to humankind as the image of God, yet there is no definition or description of God's image in the Christian Bible. The Bible does provide some analogies to get us

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., §Prooemium Aeterna Dei sapientia statuit divina mysteria, saltem in ipsis religionis exordiis, ab illis dumtaxat tractari: qui veri essent verae sapientiae amatores.

closer to the idea, such as “God is light.” If humans are created in God's image, we are somehow like God. Ficino does not have an explicit piece on the image of God, so we must seek out where he sought to identify and further explain what God is, what the similarities between God and humankind might be, and how we may also become more like God.

In the Bible we find the most famous image of God in *Genesis* 1:26-27: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Also from *Genesis* comes: “This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them ‘Humankind’ when they were created”<sup>107</sup> and “[w]hoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.”<sup>108</sup> Other biblical verses referring to the image of God are *Genesis* 9:6, *1 Corinthians* 11:7 and 15:4, *Isaiah* 40:18 and *Wisdom* 2:23. As previously mentioned, Ficino does make explicit reference to portions of *Genesis* 1:26-27 in *De Christiana religione*. At this time I have not yet found any of the other ‘image of God’ bible passages quoted in the works of Ficino.

Given that Ficino’s ontology is thoroughly hierarchical, it helps to understand that the celestial hierarchy of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite appears to be a primary source for Ficino. According to pseudo-Dionysius,

[A] hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. ... The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible

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<sup>107</sup> *Genesis* 5:1-2

<sup>108</sup> *Genesis* 9:6

to God and to be at one with him. A hierarchy has God as its leader of all understanding and action. It is forever looking directly at the comeliness of God. A hierarchy bears in itself the mark of God. Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed to God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale. ... Therefore when the hierarchic order lays it on some to be purified and on others to do the purifying, on some to receive illumination and on others to cause illumination, on some to be perfected and on others to bring about perfection, each will actually imitate God in the way suitable to whatever role it has.<sup>109</sup>

The themes of being like God, being one with God, hierarchy members bearing the image of God, divine illumination, and descent and ascent form the foundation of Ficino's philosophically religious writing and will be examined in the chapters to come.

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<sup>109</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987, "Celestial Hierarchy" pp. 153-154; note that Paul Rorem (translator) gives pseudo-Dionysius credit for creating the term hierarchy (Foreward of same book, p. 1)

## Chapter 3

### The Main Attributes of God

The five most central and traditional attributes of God, as noted by Gerard Hughes<sup>110</sup>, are existence, simplicity, goodness, omniscience and omnipotence. These attributes have been used by numerous theologians and writers since the beginning of Christianity and at various times Ficino draws them into some of his writings. In the Appendix to the *Platonic Theology*, Ficino provides the following description of God and attributes it to the Platonists:

What is God therefore? He is the rational principle of rational principles and the fount of things, the artificer of all, the uniform and omniform form<sup>111</sup>, the immobile substance moving all, the rest in motion, the eternity in time, the continuous in space, in the heights the depth, in the depths the height, the unity in multiplicity, in weakness the power, the most fertile nature of natures, the most natural fertility of fertilities, the eternal life of living things and of lives, the light of sense and sensibles, and the perspicacity of the senses, the sense sensing in the outer rinds of the very pith of sensibles and in the pith the outer rinds, and such an understanding that it is itself the goodness of the things to be understood and the truth of every intellect and the joy of the will.<sup>112</sup>

In this chapter these five attributes will be used to give a focus to the examination of Ficino's notions about God.

#### 3.1 Ficino's Proofs for God's Existence

As discussed earlier, one of Ficino's fundamental assumptions is that God exists and that "No one denies the existence of God."<sup>113</sup> If God's non-existence had been definitively proven, there is nothing

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<sup>110</sup> Hughes

<sup>111</sup> The concept of 'omniform form' may be based on Trismegistus, 1992 "Corpus Hermeticum" §XI.16 and "Asclepius" §34-35. Thank you to Dr. David Porreca for this reference.

<sup>112</sup> Ficino, 2006b, Appendix §20 pp. 245, 247

<sup>113</sup> Ficino, 2005, §XV.2.12

that Ficino could have written to describe God, but this is not the case. Ficino's notion that God's existence is necessary and is one of his essential attributes was common for his time. In fact, he thought it blasphemous of anyone to think that "God exists and acts by chance."<sup>114</sup> Later philosophers such as Hume and Kant<sup>115</sup> were critical of this assumption and worked to show that the proof of the existence of a necessary existent being is a logical error; however Ficino had no interest in proving that God does not exist.

Although Ficino presents a limited number of arguments to support the Christian notion of God's existence, these are not pure arguments for it, but rather claims for the sense in which God exists. In his *De raptu Pauli*, he uses arguments of affirmation and negation about God's existence and nature:

It is true that what you see in this [third] heaven, you are not able to speak [of] – that is to proclaim and affirm this absolutely. As often as you deny other things about God, thus whenever you are discoursing about God, speaking thus: "God is not any body, nor the quality nor the soul nor the angel of a body," nor are you truly denying if that thing is considered more highly. Whenever you relate other things to God, thus comparing: God is the beginning, because from him all [things] emanate; God is the end, because all [things] flow back to him; God is life and intelligence, because through him souls live and minds understand; likewise you are truly relating. But if you will have affirmed, "God himself is in himself, absolutely, this very one which I have either discovered or thought" you will be greatly deceived. Obviously if he is greater than you, that highest one, the originator of all, he is not able to be that which, circumscribed by your intellect, is concluded to be the limit. If the beginning of the beginnings and the end of the ends is infinite, he is not any of these which devised and comprehended by you are now seen [by you] to be finite.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.12.9

<sup>115</sup> Hughes, p. 4

<sup>116</sup> Ficino, 1495, "De raptu Pauli" (hereafter DRP) f. LXVIIIv Verum quid ita in hoc coelo vides non potes loqui: hoc est absolute pronuntiare atque affirmare. Quotiens de Deo alia negas ita discurrens Deus neque est corpus ullum: neque corporis qualitas neque anima neque angelus neque si quid altius cogitetur vere negas. Quotiens ad Deum alia refers ita comparans Deus principium est quia ab illo profluunt omnia Deus est finis quia ad illum omnia refluunt Deus vita et intelligentia est quoniam per illum vivunt animae ac mentes intelligunt vere quoque refers. At si affirmaveris Deus ipse in se absolute hoc ipsum quod vel repperi vel cogitavi valde decipieris. Quippe si major te est summus ille omnium auctor non potest id esse quod tua

With the negation argument Ficino is demonstrating that God is not matter or quality (i.e., not corporeal), nor is God motion (i.e., like a soul or angel). In his argument by affirmation, God is the beginning and end of a cycle which is in part a reflection of the medieval celestial hierarchy of his time. God is also the ‘prime mover’ and seminal cause of life, intelligence and soul. God does not exist in the way that our limited minds exist or think, but God ‘is’ beyond and above all in the sense that one can conceive of nothing greater.<sup>117</sup>

At the end of the same work, there is a weak argument for God’s existence (where God is seen in the guise of joy or eternal blessing):

If everyone did everything for the sake of avoiding sorrow and pursuing joy, and they reject life itself without joy itself, manifestly joy is the end of all things and it is therefore also the beginning: by what indeed are all things moved, since all things are moved and become. Therefore what else is that very joy except God?<sup>118</sup>

In this argument, joy is the final cause for humans. God is the source of joy because every thing must have a source, joy is the final cause for humans, and as God is the beginning and end of joy, God exists. At times, but not frequently, Ficino uses arguments leaning on the four causes. He believes that “So wherever one discovers or conceives of what is a universal effect, there God is present who is the universal cause. And wherever there is a product which necessarily comes into being through one specific cause and without an intermediary, there God must be the cause of it.”<sup>119</sup> In a discussion of why the soul is independent of matter, Ficino discusses the four causes of things: material, formal, efficient and final. The human material cause is the body and the soul is our formal cause. Humans have two efficient causes, universal nature and ‘man,’ and happiness (joy) is the final cause.

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intelligentia circumscriptum cogitur esse terminus. Si principiorum principium finiumque finis infinitus est non est aliquid horum quae abs te adinventata et comprahensa iam finita videntur.

<sup>117</sup> Anselm’s ontological argument, *Proslogium*, chapter 2

<sup>118</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXIXr Si omnia vitandi doloris et consequendi gaudii gratia omnes agunt et absque gaudio ipso vitam ipsam respuunt manifeste gaudium est finis omnium: est igitur et principium: quo enim moventur cuncta inde cuncta moventur et fiunt. Quid ergo aliud est gaudium ipsum nisi Deus?

<sup>119</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.6.1



As part of his fifth proof that the soul is independent of matter, Ficino lists the “four causes of natural things: efficient, final, material and formal. The efficient cause of a man is universal nature and a man; the final cause is human happiness; the material cause is body; the formal cause is soul.”<sup>120</sup> God exists without any cause and does not have any of the four natural causes. Given that humans exist due to a cause, we must exist through another and that other is God. Does the nature of God have any type of cause in Ficino’s works? His *Platonic Theology* provides the best answer:

Whenever something is said to exist through itself, it means it exists without a cause. ... God alone exists through Himself such that He exists without any cause. He exists entirely through Himself, therefore, in that He excludes from Himself the four genera of causes. ... Below God nothing can exist which is without efficient cause and end, for the one God is the creator and end of all things. So nothing will be found other than God which can properly be said to exist through itself such that it has neither efficient cause nor end.<sup>121</sup>

For Ficino, God is the first cause or, in Aristotle’s term, the prime mover. If there is a cause from which all follows, this implies a hierarchy of some sort below God. One of his clearest statements on the hierarchical orders differing by degree also comes from the *Platonic Theology*:

So we must proceed step by step from the four contraries to their four opposites by three and by two, so that, just as we rise from four causes for body and three causes for quality, so we may rise from three causes for quality to two causes for the third essence. Wherefore this essence will have an efficient and final cause only, but not have form or matter [like soul], since it is directly possessed by God.<sup>122</sup>

For Ficino, humans perceive themselves to exist and likewise assume that God exists, so he tries to find examples in the natural world to demonstrate this belief. In his book *De Christiana religione*, he argues for God’s existence by analogy and from effect to cause: “Indeed so as the Sun is not discerned without Sun, and as air is not heard without air, and the eye full of light sees the light, the

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<sup>120</sup> Ficino, 2002, §V.5.1

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., §V.5.1

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., §V.5.4

ear filled with air hears the air resonating, thus neither is God recognized without God.”<sup>123</sup> His argument from analogy implies that there must be a source for the ideas we have (i.e., the sun gives rise to the idea of light), so there must be a God to give us the idea that God exists. Finally God’s existence is necessary and forever. Ficino argues that God is everlasting, outside of time and an absolutely necessary being because

[t]he stronger the power by which anything endures and is preserved, the longer that thing lasts. If this is so, then God by His infinite power endures Himself and preserves all other things to infinity. ... Again if God exists totally beyond movement and time, then He does not sustain change within time and mutate with regard to being and non-being from an earlier to a later state. If God is absolutely necessary being, He could never have not been and He could never not be.<sup>124</sup>

Ficino was a firm believer in God’s existence, so he did not concentrate on writing proofs for God’s existence. His statements from *De raptu Pauli* and *Platonic Theology* do not provide any novel arguments for God’s existence. Next we examine Ficino’s arguments about the other four attributes of God, for which there is more material for discussion.

### 3.2 Ficino’s Arguments about God’s Simplicity

With God’s existence assumed to be true, but not well proven by Ficino, are his claims about God’s simplicity well-supported philosophically? The concept that God was unity or simplicity was part of the medieval theology prior to and during Ficino’s time. If God’s existence is first among attributes, then God as single, simple or unity is the next most important as it is from this that the other attributes must necessarily follow. If God is simple, there is no difference between God and his essence. If God is simplicity, there are no parts, so there is no distinction between God and his attributes (e.g.,

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<sup>123</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §II Sicut enim Sol sine Sole non cernitur, et sicut aer sine aere non auditur, ac plenus lumine oculus videt lumen, plena aere auris audit aerem resonantem, ita neque Deus sine Deo cognoscitur.

<sup>124</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.5.1

omnipotence or omniscience). If God is the only true unity, God has total independence from everything different and distinct from himself.

Ficino's longest sustained argument about the unity of God is found in the *Platonic Theology*:

[S]omething else must exist above angel that is not only motionless but entirely one and simple. This is God, the most powerful of all in that He is the simplest of all. Since union consists in simplicity, and power in unity, no one would dare say that God is compounded from many things, because if God were compounded correctly, he would consist of something resembling a substrate and of something else resembling a form. In that case, God would not be in every respect the most perfect, since one part in Him would be less perfect than the other and both parts less perfect than the whole. Nor would God be the highest agent, because He would do whatever he does, not by way of His whole self, but by way of one of His parts, the form. Nor would he be most blessed, because He would not be delighting everywhere in Himself; for He would not be embracing His whole self in every part. He would be seeing something in Himself other than God, since the part and the whole are not the same.<sup>125</sup>

This argument places God in the highest position of the medieval celestial hierarchy. Ficino uses the 'whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-the-parts' argument and points out that God's omnipotence and omniscience are derived from unity. Another of his arguments for God as unity is based on the authority of the Platonists giving a series of statements about why God is one.

God then is the single agent who gives order to the single universe.  
... God is one, by the Platonists' first argument, because He is unity.  
... God is one, by the Platonists' second argument, because He is truth. The highest truth is one. ... God is one, by the Platonists' third argument, because He is the highest goodness.<sup>126</sup>

With this argument, Ficino has added goodness and truth to God's attributes, and these are also founded on the notion of God's unity. He follows Augustine in this (as did everyone else in his time). Ficino disagrees with the Gnostics and Manichaeans who say that there are two gods, one good and one evil. He believes that God is goodness and cannot be a source of evil because "just as God, who

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<sup>125</sup> Ficino, 2001, §I.6.3

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., §II.2

is the author of good things, is the highest good and totally without evil, so His opposite is the highest evil, deprived of all good.”<sup>127</sup> In his *De raptu Pauli*, he clearly positions evil below God in the celestial hierarchy when he writes “But go further, if what you think [is] below the order of things, you say [is] evil without limit, why do you not also confess what exists above the order of things as infinitely good?”<sup>128</sup>

Another difference in the ideas about the one and the many arise over the concept of mind. It was an ongoing debate<sup>129</sup> during the Renaissance between those who agreed and disagreed with Averroes’ theory<sup>130</sup> that there is one material intellect (below God) participated in by everyone. In his *Long Commentary on De Anima* Averroes wrote that the human intellect is eternal but that there is only one intellect for all human kind. A brief summary of his theory is that it is matter that differentiates individuals; minds are not matter; therefore, all minds are one. Two of the premises that this theory relies on are that the material intellect is hierarchically above the human species and that if two humans are thinking about the same intelligible, they must be drawing on the same intelligible found in the material intellect; otherwise, it would be impossible for two people to consider the same intelligible at the same time. From Averroes’ formulation of the material intellect it followed that individual humans do not exist in any manner after death, although life continues for other members of the species so long as other members physically exist. Ficino believes the soul is immortal, every human is an individual and has their own intellect, so there is no shared intellect of any kind: “In one man the intellect is very learned, and in another, untaught; in this man just and honourable, in that unjust and dishonourable; here happy, there miserable. It cannot therefore be the same intellect in all

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., §II.2

<sup>128</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIv Sed ultra progredere: si quod infra rerum ordinem cogitas dicis infinite malum cur non etiam quod supra rerum ordinem extat fateris infinite bonum.

<sup>129</sup> Hankins, 2007, chapter 7

<sup>130</sup> Adamson & Taylor, eds., 2005 chapter 9. Averroes of Cordoba [Ibn Rushd] (1126-1198)

men. If the intellects of men are diverse, their souls are much more so.”<sup>131</sup> If people are to be in God’s image, humankind cannot share one intellect as each human is a slightly different image of God (hence the multiplicity of humans). Ficino argues that

[j]ust as Averroes’ words produce a superfluous assumption in these three kinds of knowledge, so do they in the three kinds of forming. If the receptive intellect has once been formed by the agent intellect through essence, as he supposes, it is superfluous to have it forever being formed anew by that same agent intellect through the images of all men; and also superfluous to have it being formed by that same intellect daily through the images [solely] of wise and happy men.<sup>132</sup>

This is one of the arguments found in the *Platonic Theology* where Ficino provides five proofs and multiple arguments against Averroes’ theory of one intellect. Ficino’s remaining arguments on this topic are left for readers to explore on their own, since this topic falls beyond the remit of this thesis.

Leaving Averroes and continuing on with the idea of God relating to all humans, of particular interest for the examination of God’s simplicity is Ficino’s argument that relates the unity of God and multiplicity of people. “Furthermore, since God is not mixed with anything, He is the particular leader of no one thing but the common leader of all.”<sup>133</sup> For Ficino, the unity of God is the very quality that enables the human connection with God. In his *De Christiana religione* he argues thus:

Moreover, it is fitting [that] the whole creation, in a certain way [is] to be joined with God the common leader of all, (indeed not scattered here and there), because God is the highest unity. I might even say therefore, God ought to be united to humankind’s nature (as taken all together), in which all things are. If it were joined with these things above it as if to the limits of created things, a union of this sort would not extend to either the middles of things nor to the other extremes. Similarly if he was joining himself with those ones which are below us, surely the infinite unity has united with extreme diligence, his very many works both reciprocally and to himself,

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<sup>131</sup> Ficino, 1975, pp. 82-83.

<sup>132</sup> Ficino, 2005, §XV.14.4

<sup>133</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.7

since from the beginning he has included all in humans, then he will have closely united humankind to himself.<sup>134</sup>

If one is going to have a celestial hierarchy with one God above all, by the time one travels down through the hierarchies to humans, there has to be many humans. Humans must also have their own individual intellects for Ficino's ideas about human free will and individual salvation to be valid.

So if God is simplicity, how can God also be described as a trinity? Ficino has many discussions about God and the Trinity. Ficino believed that the neoplatonists and their interpretation of the trinity was not the true Christian sense of the triune God because they viewed the Trinity as three substances, not as consubstantial.<sup>135</sup> In addition to his differences with the neoplatonists, Ficino also believes Mohammed is in error about the relation of God, the Spirit and Jesus with the Trinity:

And in the *Qur'an* he detests this double numbering of gods which is also foreign to Christians who think that Father, Son, and Spirit are one God. However, he himself, stirred by the miracles of Christ, (although he did not know how) confesses him to be the Son of God and God born of a perpetual virgin with God's breath, where he names him [the Son] the breath and the spirit of God, the very soul of God, the virtue of God, the word of God. Besides, how often he runs into the name of the Trinity, a man absolutely ignorant of so great a thing, wrongly he misrepresents Christians, excessively and unsuitably, that they honour three gods, while he does not know how to distinguish the qualities of the divine persons while at the same time protecting the unity of the divine substance. Yet he himself compelled by the truth, introduces God speaking about himself everywhere in the plural number. This is something Moses himself had observed in *Genesis*, he attributed to God sometimes the singular name and sometimes the plural term, surely protecting the unity of substance in God and likewise the number of persons.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVI Decet autem Deo communi omnium duci universam creaturam quodammodo iungi, non quidem sparsim, quia Deus summa unitas est, imo vero summatim, naturae igitur humanae Deus uniatur oportet, in qua sunt omnia. Si enim illis quae supra eam sunt, tanquam creaturarum rerum extremis iungeretur, neque ad media rerum, neque ad alia extrema coniunctio eiusmodi pertineret. Similiter si illis quae infra nos sunt iungeret semetipsum, profecto infinita unitas opera sua univit summopere et invicem et ad ipsam, cum ab initio in homine cuncta concluderit, deinde sibi devinxerit hominem.

<sup>135</sup> Allen, 1984

<sup>136</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXVI Atque hunc in *Alcorano* binarium deorum numerum detestatur, quod etiam a Christianis est alienum, Deum unum Patrem, Filium, Spiritumque putantibus. Ipse autem licet nesciat quo

Ficino's views on the many (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the one (Trinity) follow the traditional Christian belief of his time, that the entities of the Trinity are consubstantial. Ficino follows Augustine in believing that it is possible to demonstrate that the Trinity can be understood through reason (this differs from Aquinas and many other medieval thinkers). One of Ficino's clearest arguments about the value of this arrangement in the Trinity comes from his *De raptu Pauli*:

If any of the three things is equally infinite, they are also equal and most like among themselves. If the infinite nature and fullness, when it leaves nothing outside of itself and comprehends its whole self inwardly, then it cannot but be one. Single is the nature of the trinity, and most simple. If however it must be the most powerful, as power exists in union so weakness exists in division. Now therefore, o soul, the triple and single, a single spirit with intellect, will, [and] constant memory, you have climbed up the ether together with me, to the single and triple heaven.<sup>137</sup>

The power of the unity will be weakened by division, even though it is like three powers and three persons in one entity:

Moreover only in God and as if always, the sacred scriptures join the plural with the singular, because namely in him alone there is one nature and three persons, and in him there are not only three strengths, just as in the artist, but also three persons in a certain wonderful way distinct from one another and united.<sup>138</sup>

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modo, tamen miraculis Christi commotus, ipsum Dei filium Deumque fatetur, ubi eum nominat Dei flatum spiritumque, propriam Dei animam, virtutem Dei, verbum Dei, afflante Deo, ex virgine perpetua natum. Praeterea, quotiens incidit in Trinitatis nomen, homo tantae rei prorsus ignarus, Christianos falso nimium, et inepte calumniatur, quod tres Deos adorent, nesciens proprietates divinarum distinguere personarum ac simul servare divinae substantiae unitatem, ipse tamen veritate coactus, Deum ubique in plurali numero de se loquentem inducit, quod et Moses observaverat, qui in Genesi Deo, modo singulare nomen, verbumque modo plurale attribuit, certe unitatem substantiae in Deo servans simul ac numerum personarum.

<sup>137</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIv Si quilibet trium eque infinitus est etiam aequales inter se sunt atque simillimi. Si infinita natura atque plenitudo cum nihil relinquat extra se sui totumque penitus comprahendat, non nisi unica esse potest. Unica est substantia trium. Adde et simplicissima. Si modo potentissima esse debeat ac tam potentia in unione consistat quam in divisione debilitas. Iam igitur o anima trina et una spiritus unus intellectu voluntate memoria constans etherem una mecum unicum conscendisti coelumque trinum.

<sup>138</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXI In solo autem Deo et quasi semper sacrae literae cum singulari plurale coniungunt, quia videlicet in illo solo unica natura est, ac tres personae, atque in eo non modo sunt tres vires, quemadmodum in artifice, sed tres etiam personae mirabili quodam pacto distinctae invicem et unitae.

This is a rather weak argument by analogy comparing the three powers of the artist to God the creator. In *De raptu Pauli*, God is presented as the ‘single source’ who acts infinitely, and the reason is the Platonic forms.

But behold I see a certain commonality in the machine of the universe: mass. I consider the diverse forms in the mass. I know the one to be formed mass, the other forms to be forming, and because I understand this mass as the foundation that precedes the forms with a certain order, and I separate the mass from these with my mind and I envision it to be dispersed or to be collected separately into the point. But I protect whatever forms I am able [to]. But to what purpose do I protect them? In a certain essence common to all. In fact, all convene in common in him because they exist. [They convene] in the indivisible essence, I say, the absolutely indivisible forms. Indeed now we have removed the dimensions from them all. Moreover, I want one form to exist here from whatever species of things. And just as all the natural forms which by a certain participation are such, or such that are per se infinite gathered in a single subject that is passive, i.e. in prime matter: so all which are such by their essence, i.e. I wish the natures of the forms be brought together and I see [them] in a single source acting per se infinitely.<sup>139</sup>

While God is infinitely forming and sourcing, humans must be distinguishable from God yet somehow remain connected to God. Through a description of why God is not multiple, Ficino connects the many (man) to the one (God) when he writes that “Indeed God does not become properly the natural form of man, but man becomes the proper and conjoined instrument of God for completing the proper works of God most distinguishedly.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP ff. LXVIr-LXVIIv Sed ecce video communem quandam in mundi machina molem. Intueor formas in mole diversas. Scio aliud esse formatam molem aliud formas esse formantes: et quia molem hanc tanquam fundamentum intelligo ordine quodam antecedere formas segrego mente hanc ab illis: eamque vel in abyssum dispergi vel colligi in punctum seorsum excogito. Servo autem utcunque possum formas. Sed in quo eas servo? In una quadam communi cunctis essentia. Cuncte enim communiter in eo quod sunt conveniunt. In essentia inquam indivisibili formas prorsus indivisibiles. Iam enim dimensiones ab iis omnibus segregavimus. Volo insuper ex qualibet rerum specie unam hic existere formam. Et quemadmodum omnes naturales formae, quae participatione quadam tales sunt vel tales in uno quodam subjecto per se infinitae patiente id est in prima materia congregantur: sic omnes quae per essentiam tales sunt: id est formarum rationes congregari volo et video in uno quodam fonte per se infinite agente.

<sup>140</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVII Non enim fit Deus proprie naturalis hominis forma, sed homo fit proprium coniunctumque instrumentum Dei, ad opera Dei propria excellentissime peragenda.



A slightly better argument in *De Christiana religione* has God as a unity, the ultimate good and the source of the good: “And let this substance – unity that is true and good, truth that is one and good, goodness that is one and true – be the one, the good, the true God.”<sup>141</sup> This is a very simple argument taking the form of

$$P1: U = T + G$$

$$P2: T = U + G$$

$$C: G = U + T$$

This argument provides one basis for the human/divine cyclical relationship as Ficino then goes on to say

Because He is unity, He is truth; because He is true unity, He is goodness. He enfolds all in unity, He unfolds all in truth, He pours forth all in goodness. After all things have issued from Him, they flow back again through goodness, are reformed through truth, [and] are restored to oneness through unity.<sup>142</sup>

Here we find a representation of the Platonic notion that unchanging goods are superior to changing goods. God’s immortal, unchanging unity provides a home, a place where human souls can stop moving and find peace and rest. The unity of God leading to his goodness segues into a discussion on the goodness of God.

### 3.3 Ficino’s Arguments about the Goodness of God

As seen in some of the preceding arguments, God as goodness is a result of God’s unity. The Platonic notion of the Good appears frequently in Ficino’s statements about God and a variety of his works. For example in the *Platonic Theology* we find “Thus God has understanding not only of genera and species, as some have claimed, but of individual things as well. For knowledge of each individual thing is desirable as a good, and God lacks nothing that is good.”<sup>143</sup> In *De raptu Pauli*, he

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<sup>141</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.3

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., §II.3

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., §II.9

states “in order that you might see that invisible one who is everywhere, just as he is in the third [heaven], and if he is anywhere, chiefly he is rather in the supreme heaven.”<sup>144</sup> In *De Christiana religione*, Ficino says that “Indeed God is the force, the wisdom and the immeasurable goodness.”<sup>145</sup> Ficino is very clear that God and the good are different, and yet God is the ultimate exemplar of goodness to be desired by those hierarchically below.

Moreover, given that all things desire the good, if another principle exists above the good, we should ask whether they do or do not desire it. If they are said to desire it, it follows that they seek something beyond and greater than the good. If we deny they desire it, we would be saying – and this is folly – that effects do not desire the first cause by which they are preserved. Indeed, even goodness itself would be forced to seek a higher principle, although that is absurd; for every reason for desiring is embraced by goodness itself. Therefore nothing exists above goodness which can be loved. Therefore there is no principle above it. So the absolute unity, truth, and goodness we find above angel constitute, as Plato believed, the universal principle. It is the one, true and good God.<sup>146</sup>

This argument is entirely consistent with his argument for God’s unity as seen earlier in §3.2 of this thesis. Ficino followed the medieval hypothesis that the good and being are synonymous: if it is good to exist, and something exists, it is good. Anselm’s cosmological argument<sup>147</sup> states that goodness must have an origin. Thus, by extension if it has an origin and good things exist, it follows that an ultimate good also exists. If God is the ultimate good, then God must be the originator who creates everything else that is good. Which leads back to, if good things exist, it follows that there must be a source of good.

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<sup>144</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXIIIv [U]t invisibile illud videres quod et ubique est sicut in tercio. Ac si usquam est praecipue est potius in supraemo.

<sup>145</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVI Est enim Deus potentia, sapientia bonitasque immensa.

<sup>146</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.2

<sup>147</sup> Anselm, *Monologion*

As discussed in §3.2, God is without evil and evil is below God in the medieval celestial hierarchy.

In his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, Ficino furthers the cause of good in one of his rare discussions about evil:

Evils have no ideal model in the presence of God. ... Indeed, God would be evil if He had His own Idea of evil, for God Himself is every Idea. But when Plato says that the architect of the world wanted to make everything as similar as possible to Himself, yet nothing evil but everything supremely good, he is clearly proclaiming that there exists no model for evils in the presence of God.<sup>148</sup>

Discussing the good in *De raptu Pauli*, Ficino suggests we should pursue the good and will someday be able to overtake it if we live our lives correctly. In his view, our desire for the good is innate and we must go through many goods to get to the ultimate good:

In the order of the world, as you know, all things are good, especially because they are beautifully and usefully arranged, and naturally they desire the good. If all good in the order of things comes together in the one certain good common {shared} nature, in which all goods are one good, then necessarily in the power of the ordainer of things, the one good is every good. That sound nature is the common and one, which lies in the multitude of all, and is contained by the all, emanates from one certain form, which is in it itself, over the entire multitude, and it contains all.<sup>149</sup>

If the desire for the good is truly innate in us, as Ficino assumes, then the desire for the good helps humans participate in the human/divine relationship and motivates humans to try to achieve the reunion with God. Ficino makes claims about God's goodness and how it relates to one and many goods, and the connection goodness helps to provide between God and humans, but there are no strong philosophical arguments about God's goodness. His works are laden with many references to

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<sup>148</sup> Ficino, 2008b, pp. 17-18

<sup>149</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIv In rerum ordine sicut nosti bona sunt omnia. Praecipue quia pulchre utiliterque ordinata sunt: et bonum naturaliter appetunt. Si cuncta bona in rerum ordine in una quadam communi bona natura conveniunt: in qua cuncta bona sunt unum bonum. Necessario penes rerum ordinatorum: unum bonum est cuncta bona. Sana natura illa communis et una quae in multitudine omnium iacet et continetur ab omnibus ab una quadam emanat forma quae in seipsa super omnem multitudinem est et continet omnia.

the good, God as the ultimate good and God as the source of all good, but a thorough study of Ficino and the good is beyond the scope and focus of this thesis. If God is immortal, the highest good, and infinite with some of his goodness pouring forth to all below, God must have infinite wisdom to be able to recognize and then dispense his goodness to all lower creations.

### 3.4 Ficino's Discussions of God's Omniscience

In *De Christiana religione*, Ficino writes that “God, who is infinite wisdom, goodness [and] clarity, is not able to be ignorant, ungrateful or cruel”<sup>150</sup> and thereby links infinite wisdom with goodness.

Ficino has no direct proofs or arguments about God's omniscience, but evidence of his thoughts about it can be derived from his arguments about infinite wisdom, humans as a microcosm of the cosmos, and God seeing all.

In a letter, Ficino describes God as “the everlasting fountain of all wisdom.”<sup>151</sup> In another letter about happiness, he describes the value of wisdom to humans and then relates this to God, the source of wisdom:

Of everything that is ours, wisdom alone is good in itself. Only ignorance is bad in itself. Since therefore we all wish to be happy, and happiness cannot be obtained without the right use of our gifts, and since knowledge reveals their proper use, we should leave all else aside and strive with the full support of philosophy and religion to become as wise as possible. For thus our soul becomes most like to God, who is wisdom itself.<sup>152</sup>

Ficino appeals to philosophy's authority to explain God's knowledge, “True reason teaches us that God knows not only individual things – even the lowest – but also things infinite.”<sup>153</sup> Which is

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<sup>150</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §II Deus autem, qui infinita sapientia, bonitas, claritas est, ignorans, vel ingratus vel crudelis esse non potest.

<sup>151</sup> Ficino, 1975, p. 96

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 34

<sup>153</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.10

related to an earlier statement in the *Platonic Theology*: “Understanding is desirable as a good. For through understanding each thing can enjoy itself and everything else.”<sup>154</sup>

Ficino’s definition of truth is almost like a Platonic ‘form’ and illustrates why truth is essential to God’s omniscience.

I consider that which does not vary to be nothing other than truth. Indeed, truth itself is so totally unmoving that the truth even of movement is unmoving. ... Truth is such that it can never be other than itself. Consequently, truth is eternally present and neither passes from the past into the present nor flows from the present into the future. ... Truth is so eternal that even if it is said to have had a beginning at some time, it would certainly have been true before the beginning at some time, it would certainly have been true before the beginning of time, and it would not have been true except through the same truth, that truth itself would at some time be. ... If truth is unmoving in movement, if it is present in past and future, if it is in the beginning without a beginning, if likewise in the end without an end, it is certainly nothing other than the eternal unmoving itself.<sup>155</sup>

His argument is: truth does not vary, truth is unmoving, truth cannot be false (or otherwise); therefore, truth is eternally present. The lack of time is an important element in God’s omniscience, while for humans, time is a factor. Ficino describes the human prophets’ knowledge of the past and future as something that comes from God’s omniscience: “Why are the prophets speaking about things which are future often as though they are past? Because in the divine mind, to which they are all present, they see as present the present and after they have seen them, they see them as the past, that is, they speak of them as manifest and already complete.”<sup>156</sup>

If God is with you and within you, this is equivalent to omniscience. It is as though the infinite God is in the finite human, and yet God’s knowledge of an individual human means that the finite is also

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., §II.9

<sup>155</sup> Ficino, 1994, p. 40

<sup>156</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXVII Cur Prophetæ quæ futura sunt, sæpe tanquam præterita narrant? Quia in divina mente, cui sunt præsentia omnia illa, tanquam præsentia vident et postquam viderunt tanquam præterita, id est, manifesta et iam consummata loquuntur.

in the infinite. This idea is often called the microcosm/macrocosm. Ficino retains the medieval notion of man as a microcosm of the hierarchical universe. During a discussion of the steps to reach God in the third heaven, Ficino writes that

[K]now how in you who are a small world, there are three spirits: the natural in the liver, the vital in the heart, and the animal in the brain, where only you perceive the finite light. Thus around this very large world exist three armies of divine spirits, as if [they are] the three intelligible globes, continually revolving themselves around the divine centre.<sup>157</sup>

He also employs the microcosm/macrocosm concepts with individual persons and their relationship with God. In his letter to Michele Mercati of San Miniato, where God is speaking to Ficino's soul

I am indeed with you, because I am in you; I am in you, because you are in me. ... Your father is the least of all things in size, just as he is the greatest of all things in excellence; and since he is very small he is within everything, but since he is very great he is outside everything. See, I am here with you, both within and without, the greatest smallness and the smallest greatness. ... I fill heaven and earth, I penetrate and contain them. I fill and am not filled, for I am fullness itself. I penetrate and am not penetrated, for I am the power of penetration itself. I contain and am not contained, for I am containing itself. I, who am fullness itself, am not filled, for that would not be worthy of me. I am not penetrated lest I cease to exist, being myself existence. I am not contained lest I cease to be God, who is infinity itself. ... I pass into everything unmingled, so that I may surpass all; for I am excellence itself. I excel everything without being separate, so that I am also able to enter and permeate at the same time, to enter completely and to make one, being unity itself, through which all things are made and endure, and which all things seek.<sup>158</sup>

In speaking about God Ficino finds that God can be in humans, but still be different from us: “[W]e recognize that we remain in God and himself in us, because he has given to us from his spirit and we both see and testify that the father has sent his son, the saviour of the world, and we have recognized

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<sup>157</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVv ... scito quemadmodum in te qui parvus es mundus tres sunt spiritus: naturalis in iecore: vitalis in corde: animalis in cerebro quo solo finitum percipis lumen: ita circa ampliorem hunc mundum tres esse spirituum exercitns [used *exercitus* from *Opera Omnia* 1576] divinatorum quasi tres speras intelligibiles circa divinum centrum iugiter se volventes.

<sup>158</sup> Ficino, 1975, p. 36; see also *Platonic Theology* §IX.3.14 and §X.8

[him] and we have believed the truth, which God has in us.”<sup>159</sup> In the preceding sentence, Ficino is using ‘to see’ in the sense of ‘to understand’ and does so interchangeably in his writing, much like we do today when we say ‘I see’ but really mean ‘I understand.’ He wrote that “*All eyes* comes next, meaning all the powers of the soul which are concerned with knowing.”<sup>160</sup> In Book II of his *Epistolae*, one letter, entitled “God sees all and creates all,” expands on God’s power. The reader must also keep in mind that Ficino often uses the sun to represent God,<sup>161</sup>

If the light of the sun by which the eye sees the Sun had an eye, certainly while our eye sees itself, it sees itself also much more clearly because all clarity emanates from it, it would look at our eye in return. And yet we doubt, whether that divine eye by which also proximately and which the eyes of our minds see everywhere, [the divine eye] itself may in turn see ours? Surely we would nowhere see anything, unless it [divine eye] sees us who by continually seeing us, always illuminates us, and by illuminating gives us the power and act of seeing. Just as we do not see anything unless the light of the Sun painted the colours and shapes of all things, we who certainly understand nothing beyond the light of the highest intelligible, filled all around with colours and shapes of all things.<sup>162</sup>

Similarly, one finds in the *Platonic Theology*,

God sees and can do infinite things over and beyond those that exist in nature. For if the mind does not understand God’s substance, it certainly does not understand either His understanding or His power, and therefore all those things which God both understands and is able to do. ... Accordingly it is proper that the divine mind, in

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<sup>159</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §VIII Rursum, in hoc cognoscimus quod in Deo manemus et ipse in nobis, quoniam de spiritu suo dedit nobis et nos videmus et testificamur quod pater misit filium suum, Salvatorem mundi, et nos cognovimus et credidimus veritati, quam habet Deus in nobis.

<sup>160</sup> Ficino, 2006b, §XIII.4

<sup>161</sup> Ficino is not unique in this notion. e.g. *Corpus Hermeticum* V. 2-3 “Can you have a vision of the image of god? If what is in you is also invisible to you, how will god reveal his inner self to you through the eyes? If you want to see god, consider the sun, consider the circuit of the moon, consider the order of the stars.”

<sup>162</sup> Ficino, 1495, ff. LVr-v Si Solis lumen quo Solem videt oculus haberet oculum, certe (used ‘certe’ from *Opera Omnia*, 1576 pp. 685-686) dum oculus noster ipsum videt, ipsum quoque et multo clarius quia omnis ab eo claritas emanat, oculum mutuo nostrum inspiceret. Et dubitamus adhuc? Utrum divinus ille oculus quo etiam proxime, et quem passim mentium nostrarum vident oculi, nostros ipse vicissim videat oculus? Nisi nos ipse videret, qui nos continue videndo, nos semper illuminat atque illuminando vim nobis videndi actumque largitur, certe nusquam aliquid videremus. Qui certe nihil aliud intelligimus preter intelligibilis summi lumen intelligibilis cuiuslibet rationibus undique plenum. Sicuti neque videmus quicquam nisi Solis lumen, rerum omnium coloribus figurisque depictum.

everywhere contemplating itself, sees more and sees subject to more rational principles than any [created] intellect may see.<sup>163</sup>

These views are consistent with what he wrote in *De Christiana religione*: “God always sees men with the intellect, but in addition he has seen with [his] eyes.”<sup>164</sup> In *De raptu Pauli*, in a discussion on the nine choirs of angels and their relation to humans, Ficino says that “To this all blessed spirits continually direct the eyes of the mind.”<sup>165</sup> This idea is derived from the formulation of the medieval celestial hierarchy. In the following passage, phantasy should be understood to mean imagination:

A higher power should know all that a lower power knows and more. This is clear in the case of our own souls. What each of our five senses perceives separately our phantasy discerns in summary fashion and to some extent more excellently. What the phantasy sees in many images, the intellect sees in a single image and more clearly: it sees the individual objects that the phantasy sees, but in addition it sees the universal rational principles which the phantasy is unaware of. Thus God with one power knows everything we come to know with three powers, that is, with the senses, the phantasy, and the intellect. Therefore God sees universal and individual things.<sup>166</sup>

Omniscience is akin to knowledge of all true propositions. Ficino includes God’s ‘future’ knowledge (what humans would call foreknowledge) in a way that does not conflict with human free will. God can know the future without conflict with human free will, given that God is not temporal and knows all knowable things for any time. God’s knowledge does not depend on causal processes as Ficino believes that God is the first cause. God causes processes, not the other way around, and processes do not cause God, hence God’s existence does not depend on causal processes.

As final note on God’s omniscience and human free will, while Ficino’s writing is often in accord with Augustine’s, one major area of difference was fate. Augustine held that a person’s fate was predetermined by God, while Ficino felt it was up to the individual person to choose a path to God or

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<sup>163</sup> Ficino, 2006b, §XVIII.8 p. 149; the editors note that Ficino is following Aquinas *Summa contra Gentiles* 3.56.2326

<sup>164</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXIII Videt semper Deus homines intellectu, sed oculis insuper vidit.

<sup>165</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVr Huc omnes beati spiritus assidue oculos mentis intendunt.

<sup>166</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.9



go astray. Ficino believes that humans have free will and that it is truly free because “For just as He foresees what you are going to do, so He foresees that you are going to do it voluntarily and freely.”<sup>167</sup> In a religious context, this argument works as follows “God does not force men to salvation. He has begat [man] free who, from the beginning, but with constant inspirations, he gently draws each one.”<sup>168</sup> People’s free will to choose their soul’s ultimate destination is consistent with the lofty Renaissance view of humans. Ficino’s expression of such Renaissance humanist truths was likely inspired, in part, by his translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>169</sup>

### 3.5 Ficino’s Proofs of God’s Omnipotence

Ficino believes that God’s power arises because of his goodness. “God is what He is such that He could not be something else, because He is, so to speak, all being and all power; or rather, He would not want to be something else because He is all good.”<sup>170</sup> God’s unlimited power is also derived from his unity. Ficino argues that “Just as extreme dispersion leads to infinite weakness, so in the highest unity dwells infinite power.”<sup>171</sup> He also gives an argument from Aquinas to support the notion that “In infinite being is infinite power just as in finite being is finite power”<sup>172</sup> when God is the infinite entity.

Ficino follows the Christian tradition that God does what he does through his own being. “For if the divine being itself were of insufficient strength to work through itself, but needed some deliberation that differed from its being, certainly the being of no other things would do anything through

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<sup>167</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.13.10

<sup>168</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXV Non cogit ad salutem Deus homines, quos ab initio liberos procreavit, sed assiduis inspirationibus singulos allicit.

<sup>169</sup> e.g. Trismegistus, Ch. 8

<sup>170</sup> Ficino, 2001, §II.12.9

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., §II.4.1

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., §II.4.2

itself.”<sup>173</sup> He points out that some powers are naturally innate in things and come forth without the thing’s conscious choice, such as the heat of fire, the soul giving life to a body or the light shining from the sun. Based on these natural analogies, he concludes that

If action which is brought about by natural being is present in all things, but not the action brought about by choosing..., and if too the action brought about by being itself and nature always precedes the action brought about by choice and deliberation, then it is obvious that the action brought about by being is proper to the first and universal cause, which is God, in order that the prime universal action might be that of the prime universal agent.<sup>174</sup>

God is portrayed as the prime mover, first cause and wellspring of everything, through only himself.

Ficino elucidates how God’s omnipotence is used by God, in connection with sharing his goodness with the worthy people, “Because truly God makes all potently, wisely, in a spirit of good will thus it is fitting to restore those things so that he might reveal power, wisdom and benevolence. What is more powerful, than to bring extremes into one person and to the highest infinite things?”<sup>175</sup> and given that God is the source of all God “acts on everything but is never acted upon.”<sup>176</sup>

When referring to the various types of minds he says that “Similarly, soul participates in mind, angel possesses the form of mind, but God is the all-effecting source of mind. ... He is understanding existing in itself and of itself.”<sup>177</sup> It is important to note that minds and other things created by God are in some degree like God:

It is reasonable to suppose that the all-powerful Creator of the universe had the capacity, the knowledge and the will to render His work as most like Himself as possible. He has created it most like Himself in that He has taken the pure minds, which of all things are

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., §II.8.1

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., §II.8.1

<sup>175</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVIII Quoniam vero Deus cuncta facit potenter, sapienter, benevole decuit ita restituere illa, ut potentiam, sapientiam benevolentiamque ostenderet. Quid potentius, quam extrema in unam personam et infinita ad summa redigere?

<sup>176</sup> Ficino, 2001, §I.2

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., §I. 6

most like Himself, and has exalted and extended them over and above the forms that are combined with matter by an immeasurable space (if I may call it such).<sup>178</sup>

Ficino believes that God is eternal and omnipotence is one reason for this is: “The stronger the power by which anything endures and is preserved, the longer that thing lasts. If this is so, then God by his infinite power endures Himself and preserves all other things to infinity.”<sup>179</sup>

Ficino argues that God has the power to create anything, so long as there is no contradiction (following the Peripatetic tradition) and he believes that God makes only some of the things that are in his power to make. He states that finite and infinite entities are subject to divine power as long as they do not include a contradiction. This proviso is important because “God makes, and does not make, only some of the things in His power to make, that He does such by the free choice of His will, and not by any necessity of either His nature, His understanding or His will.”<sup>180</sup> Given that God has free will to choose what is made and what is not, in a way, if man is in God’s image, then man too should have free will. And this is just what Ficino argues for, but with the constraint of ‘order’.

Lest someone think perhaps that the divine will, whenever it looks to created things, imposes its power on individuals, we should recall that the will of God puts the good of the whole before the apparent advantage of any particular small part. For in the whole the image of the divine goodness shines out the more clearly... But God not only wills things themselves to exist, He also wills the ways of being which are required for them consequently. Since some things, however, by way of their own nature are meant to be contingent one might say, God chooses, as some theologians put it, for something to happen, as it were, contingently. But nothing strays so far off track that it troubles the universal order or escapes the providence of the orderer.<sup>181</sup>

The real-world example he uses is of an army, where a general commands the troops and they are all working for a common goal, yet the individuals each have to choose and do their individual duty (and

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., §I. 5

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., §II. 5

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., §II.12.9

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., §II.12.11

hopefully they do it well). Ficino also references Plato's *Republic* (book 10), *Statesman* and *Critias* to explain

that providence does not impair the freedom of our will to choose, but rather serves that freedom... because God makes not so much by knowing as by willing, otherwise He would have made and would make all things simultaneously, and additionally would make bad things. Again, just as all future events are written down in God's foreknowledge, so too are the causes of those events and their modes of action. Just as our deeds are known to God, so too is our will which is the cause of our deeds and the manner of freely doing them.<sup>182</sup>

When our immortal soul recognizes that it is the likeness of God, we recognize God: "It happens in you as the true likeness of God, truly you recognize God, when you approve this to be the eternal truth itself and true eternity."<sup>183</sup>

The author has not yet found any discussions by Ficino about the paradoxes of God's omnipotence, such as whether or not God can stop being omnipotent, God can create another omnipotent being, or God can create a stone that is too heavy for God himself to move. Ficino's formulation of God has the attributes of existence, simplicity, goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence. All of God's attributes are forever and in the highest degree. These attributions are no different from those espoused by his predecessors such as Augustine and Aquinas. The most identifiable difference is Ficino's belief in individual free will as opposed to Augustine's belief that fate influenced a person's choices.

Given the Christian belief that God is All, and that humans are created as a likeness thereof (and that no other creature or thing was given such a privilege), humans therefore have a sense of dignity and duty accorded to no other. Humanity's uniqueness requires them to strive to have their soul return to God, to be one with whom they came from.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., §II.13.10

<sup>183</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP p. LXIXa Fit in te tanquam vera Dei similitudine vere agnoscis Deum quando probas hunc ipsam esse veritatem eternam veramque eternitatem.

## Chapter 4

### Ficino on the Reasons for the Divine/Human Relationship

If humans are truly an image of God, this implies a relationship between humans and God. In a Christian context, the relationship begins with God creating humankind. When Ficino uses Genesis 1:26-27<sup>184</sup> in *De Christiana religione*, he shortens it to “God has said ‘We make man according to our image and likeness’, and he [Moses] supplies, ‘God made man’.”<sup>185</sup> For Ficino, the relationship between humans and the divine is a cycle unique to the human creatures, involving divine illumination, hierarchies, and love. The notion of a cyclical relationship between humans and God is used continuously by Ficino throughout his career. After Ficino translated Plato’s works, the concept of this cycle also resonates in his commentaries on the *Timaeus*, *Parmenides* and *Symposium*. For example, in his *Compendium on the Timaeus*, he says

But since there is a double order of creation in relation to God – that whereby all things come forth from Him and that whereby all things that come forth are turned back to Him – Plato is following the order whereby things come forth, when he says, ‘God placed the intellect within the soul, and the soul within the body.’ But he is thinking of the return process when he says, ‘God spread out the soul, which had been placed in the mean position, to fill the whole, and in the meantime brought forth something of it outside the world, so that, while it was providing for the world, it was being turned back to God.’<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>185</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXI Dixit Deus faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, et subdit, fecit Deus hominem.

<sup>186</sup> Ficino, 2010, p. 46

In his more religious writings, one finds it in *De raptu Pauli*<sup>187</sup> and *De Christiana religione*<sup>188</sup> and later several times in the *Platonic Theology*.<sup>189</sup> Later in his career Ficino also translated works of Plotinus and Dionysius, where again, God relates to humans in certain cyclical ways.

## 4.1 The Uniqueness of the Relationship

Ficino believes that religion is unique to and innate in humans.

Beasts display no sign of religion as it is unique to us. Just as the lifting up of the mind to God, the king of heaven, is proper to us as the lifting up of the body toward heaven [i.e. walking erect] is proper to us and thus divine worship is almost as natural to men as neighing [is] to horses or barking [is] to dogs.<sup>190</sup>

In this one sentence he captures the notions of elevation and erectness in the human species. It situates humans in both the abstract/eternal (mind elevated to God) and the physical/temporal (walking upright). Ficino likewise reads into Plato's *Timaeus* a Christian gloss, when he says "the gods are enjoined by their Father to ennoble man, the lord of all creatures, whom He wishes to be pre-eminent and to be in His image and likeness. ... that, of all the creatures on earth, man alone would honour justice and the gods, so that it is in full accord with reason for the gods to have carefully nurtured the birth of man."<sup>191</sup>

The ancient Greeks had very different ideas about their gods, as compared to Renaissance Catholicism. Ficino ascribes to Plato the idea of a single god in a variety of relationships with humans, but without any true philosophical reasoning. He uses only an appeal to the implied authority of Plato.

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<sup>187</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIIIr Ch. Anima immortalitatem suam videt quando videt radium intelligentiae infundi sibi aDeo atque in Deum reflecti

<sup>188</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVI

<sup>189</sup> Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, §VI.12.15, VIII.16.1, XVI.7.7

<sup>190</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §I Nullum bruta prae se ferunt religionis indicium, ut propria nobis sit mentis in Deum coeli regem erectio, sicut corporis in coelum erectio propria, cultusque divinus, ita ferme hominibus naturalis, quemadmodum equis hinnitus canibusve latratus. [See also *Platonic Theology* §XIV.9]

<sup>191</sup> Ficino, 2010, pp. 96-97

Our Plato in *Protagoras*,<sup>192</sup> wants the greatest indication of our divinity to be that we alone on earth, as participants of the divine lot, recognize God on account of a certain affinity and we desire [God], as we call upon him as progenitor {author} and we love [him] as the Father, as we adore as the king, and we fear [God] as the Lord.<sup>193</sup>

For the ancient Greeks and Ficino, God is perceived as a dynamic entity, hence individual persons must also be active. For the soul to be able to ascend to God, humans must work, worship and live in the right way to become like God.

The civil and purifying virtues of the purified soul: they cause you not to know whether you are in the body or outside the body.<sup>194</sup> After having been formed by these [virtues of the soul], at last you will attain the exemplary virtues, which are nothing other than God. Drawn by the spirit of the Lord from clarity into clarity, you will see the nature of virtue advance in these three types gradually more and more. Indeed you will recognize that this could not happen except by certain nearer and again nearer access to that divine and highest idea of virtue, in order that you are transformed into the same [God's] image.<sup>195</sup>

As previously seen in §3.2 in an argument on God's simplicity, Ficino also argues that the relationship is a union between God and humankind. "Similarly if he [God] were joining himself with those ones which are below us, surely the infinite unity has exceedingly united his very many

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<sup>192</sup> Protagoras 322a

<sup>193</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §II Plato noster in *Protagora*, maximum esse vult nostrae divinitatis indicium, quod soli nos in terris tanquam sortis divinae participes ob cognationem quandam Deum recognoscimus, et cupimus, tanquam authorem invocamus, et amamus ut patrem, ut regem veneramus, timemus ut Dominus.

<sup>194</sup> 2Corinthians 12:2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven-- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows.

<sup>195</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXIIIr Civiles virtutes et purgatorie animi purgati. Quae quidem faciant ut nescias utrum in corpore sis an extra corpus. Quibus formatus exemplares denique virtutes attinges quae nihil aliud sunt quam Deus. Videbis enim tractus a Domini spiritu a claritate in claritatem in tribus hisce generibus rationem virtutis magis gradatim magisque proficere. Quod quidem fieri non posse cognosces nisi propinquiore quodam rursusque propinquiore accessu ad divinam ipsam summamque virtutis ideam: ut in eandem imaginem transformeris.

works reciprocally and to himself, since from the beginning he has included all in humans, then he will have closely united humankind to himself.”<sup>196</sup>

In chapter 17 ‘What Kind of Union may be that of God and Humankind’ of *De Christiana religione* Ficino says that humans and God may have the same sort of nature, but the important difference is in quality.

Because the union of God to man occurred according to the divine person rather than according to the divine nature, so when the word is united to man, it is not fitting that the father and spirit be united to man who, although they agree in nature, yet they differ between themselves by the individuality of person.<sup>197</sup>

Interestingly, he also feels that the human/divine relationship is one of equals:

Hence because God has connected himself to humans without an intermediary, we ought to remember, our happiness is situated in him, in order that we stick to God without an intermediary; and because friendship is between equals, provided that you consider God in a certain way made himself to be equal to humans.<sup>198</sup>

The relationship between God and humans is reciprocal, both must participate. God creates and loves the people, the people give God their gratitude and God then gives them a future life:

Religion is also true by reason of the common prophesy of men, insomuch as all [people] everywhere always worship God, for the sake of a future life. Therefore the truth is God provides for us, and the other life will exist, supposing that only the most perfect species

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<sup>196</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XVI Similiter si illis quae infra nos sunt iungeret semetipsum, profecto infinita unitas opera sua univit summopere et invicem et ad ipsam, cum ab initio in homine cuncta concluderit, deinde sibi devinzerit hominem.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., §XVII Qualis coniunctio sit Dei et hominis. ...Quoniam unio Dei ad hominem secundum personam divinam potius, quam secundum divinam naturam facta est, ideo cum unitur homini verbum, non oportet patrem similiter spiritumque uniri, qui licet natura convenient, differunt tamen inter se proprietate personae.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., §XIX Proinde quia Deus homini absque medio se coniunxit, meminisse oportet, nostram felicitatem in eo versari, ut Deo absque medio haereamus: et quia inter aequales amicitia est, dum consideras Deum quodammodo se homini adaequasse.



of the animals [man] has that most true judgment, which to the greatest extent, it is natural to him of all [animals].<sup>199</sup>

While humans as a species are the best of the mortal animals, this does not guarantee anything. An individual must be a devoted and pious Christian, as well as an enlightened and moral human being.

Nothing displeases God more than to be scorned, nothing pleases [God] more than to be adored, he punishes more lightly the humans, the transgressors of some part of the divine laws.... He [God] prefers to be worshipped in any manner, even unsuitably, in a humanly manner, than not to be worshipped at all through arrogance. ... Therefore they, and indeed they alone worship God sincerely above others by action, goodness, by true speech, by a clarity of mind by which they are able and by a clarity<sup>200</sup> {love of God} by which they ought, they venerate attentively.<sup>201</sup>

Ficino's God is one who is active, and so too must mankind be. For example, if a relationship is to be successful, the relationship by nature requires a dynamic of some kind between the parties of the said relationship. A person must be an active participant in the relationship, yet God plays a role in guiding the human mind:

The human mind is excited about God daily, the heart burns with God, the chest sighs for God, the tongue sings the same, and also the head, hands and knees honour [God], the arts of men refer back to the same [God]. If God does not hear these, he is ignorant, if he does not listen, he is ungrateful; [he is] entirely cruel if he compels us to utter a loud cry daily, whom he hears not. But God, who is infinite wisdom, goodness [and] clarity, is not able to be ignorant, ungrateful or cruel. But since the superior mind entirely comprehends the inferior mind, rather than the converse, if the human mind reaches

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., §I Communi quoque hominum vaticinio religio vera est, omnes namque semper ubique colunt Deum, vitae futurae gratia. Verum est igitur providere nobis Deum, et vitam aliam fore, si modo perfectissima species animalium verissimum habet iudicium illud, quod sibi est maxime omnium naturale.

<sup>200</sup> 'charitate' in 1641 *Opera Omnia* changes the sentence to: ... by a clarity of mind by which they are able and by a love of God by which they ought, they venerate attentively.

<sup>201</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §III Nihil Deo magis displicet quam contemni, nihil placet magis quam adorari, homines divinarum legum aliqua ex parte transgressores levius punit. ... Coli mavult quoquo modo, vel inepte, modo humane, quam per superbiam nullo modo coli. ... Illi igitur Deum prae caeteris, imo soli sincere colunt, qui eum actione, bonitate, veritate linguae, mentis claritate, qua possunt, et caritate qua debent, sedulo venerantur.

the divine mind, it is necessary [that] the human [mind] be comprehended and guided by the divine mind.<sup>202</sup>

As hinted at above, God recognizes individuals, but individuals act independent of God.

Since every agent acts in accordance with its own nature, any product made directly from itself, in that it is produced immediately from the agent's nature, necessarily resembles it as much as possible.<sup>203</sup>

Given that God has created humankind as the most perfect species and in his image, it is also important to recognize that religion was given to people by God so that they might know God. In Ficino's view, "Moreover the natural and common belief about God has been inserted into us by God, the common origin, and chief of natures."<sup>204</sup> The mechanism for the knowledge to flow from God to humans is divine illumination.

## 4.2 Divine Illumination

Ficino's abundance of references to light and the use of light to illustrate concepts, points, dogma, etc. rely on divine illumination; the concept is essential to his philosophical system. This section examines Ficino's use of divine illumination, with respect to religious and philosophical ideas, and demonstrates how his illuminist ideas provide the underlying methodology or mechanism to connect his formulations of the image of God, the cycle of love, and the situating of humankind. For a Christian theologian, light is almost the perfect choice for use in metaphors arguing for Christian doctrine. What better than God's first creation to bolster one's arguments. What better to use from the ancients than their similar functions and purposes of light?

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., §II Deum agitat mens humana quotidie, Deo ardet cor, Deum suspirat pectus, eundem cantat lingua, eundem caput, manusque adorant, et genua, eundem referunt hominum artificia. Si non audit haec Deus, est ignorans, si non exaudit, ingratus, crudelis omnino, si vociferari nos compellit quotidie, quos non exaudit. Deus autem, qui infinita sapientia, bonitas, claritas est, ignorans, vel ingratus vel crudelis esse non potest. Omnino autem cum superior mens comprehendat inferiorem potius, quam est converso, si mens humana mentem divinam attingit, necessarium est a divina mente humanam comprehendere et gubernari.

<sup>203</sup> Ficino, 2002, §V.5.2 p. 29

<sup>204</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §I Naturalis autem communisque opinio de Deo inserta nobis est a Deo communi origine, ac principe naturarum.

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates does not speak of the Good directly, but examines the Sun, Eye and Light in Book VI as one of the 'offspring of the good.' The role of the sun is of primary importance to all that follows: "Plato chose the Sun as the first of the symbols ... because it was a natural visible counterpart of the invisible and was usefully molded by Greek tradition with a nature and character capable of expressing the immanent, yet transcendent, status of Being in the world of Becoming."<sup>205</sup>

Ficino too sees the sun in this way and finds it to be a good method for giving Christian scripture a Platonic justification through metaphor.

To demonstrate God's presence in the physical world, Ficino relates the Sun, the light of the Sun and the shadow of God.

What then is the light of the sun? It is the shadow of God. So what is God? God is the sun of the sun; the light of the sun is God in the physical world, and God is the light of the sun above the intelligences of the angels. My shadow is such, O soul, that it is the most beautiful of all physical things. What do you suppose is the nature of my light? If this is the glory of my shadow, how much greater is the glory of my light? Do you love the light everywhere above all else? Indeed, do you love the light alone? Love only me, O soul, alone the infinite light; love me, the light, boundlessly, I say; then you will shine and be infinitely delighted.<sup>206</sup>

He even conveys these ideas to his family. In an August 1455 letter to some of his siblings he writes about a hierarchy, God being like the sun radiating goodness to all and the innate love that directs all lower things in the hierarchy to return to God.<sup>207</sup>

The relationship is a cycle that begins with God, flows down through some hierarchies to man and then back up to God. The downward flow has been called divine illumination and in some cases emanation theory. The divine being represented by the sun was not a new idea and had many ancient sources which Ficino worked to unite with Christian theology.

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<sup>205</sup> Notopoulos, p. 223

<sup>206</sup> Ficino, 1975, p. 38

<sup>207</sup> Kristeller, 1937b, p. 111

In his commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Ficino draws in other Platonic works to clarify what light is and how it delivers unseen benefits from God.

Moreover, the light that flows out of the Good through intellects and through intelligibles Plato calls in the *Republic* the truth. As the *Philebus* says, we cannot gaze on this, the Good's light and nature, with a simple glance: we divide it among ourselves by our particular condition. So we call this light good insofar as it proceeds from the Good itself as something desirable and leads intelligences back to the Good. We call it wise too for the reason it is the cause that other things are known and know. And we call it beautiful, finally, because it fills knowers and things known alike with a marvelous splendor and establishes them with grace. Here Plato calls this beautiful [light] the clearest light for the reason we mentioned. In the *Symposium* he calls it, in addition, soft, delicate, and charming, as it delights those contemplating it in wonderful ways. Both there and here he adds that it is lovable too, since it is the cause of love, and with absolute grace and wonder it summons those contemplating it to itself with utmost effectiveness and gentleness alike.<sup>208</sup>

The concept of light emanating from a higher cause appears a number of times in Plato's works and undoubtedly influenced later philosophers and theologians.

Plotinus used a theory of emanation to explain his version of the chain of being. His 'One' was a triune entity (One, Divine Mind, and All-Soul), much like the Christian trinity. Similar to Plato, Plotinus believed that a higher level in the ontological hierarchy was the cause of the next level down, and that perfection was diluted more and more with each successively lower level. This causal emanation also taught that all things flow from the One and all below it strive to rejoin and remain with it. The concept of emanation comes from *The Enneads* (which Ficino translated from Greek to Latin), and the notion that the soul has its own light is described by Plotinus in this way:

The life in the Divine Intellect is also an Act: it is the primal light outlamping to itself primarily, its own torch; lightgiver and lit at once; the authentic intellectual object, knowing at once and known, seen to itself and needing no other than itself to see by, self-sufficing to the vision, since what it sees it is; known to us by the very same

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<sup>208</sup> Ficino, 2008a, p. 81 [Ficino is commenting on *Phaedrus* 250-251]

light, our knowledge of it attained through itself, for from nowhere else could we find the means of telling of it. By its nature, its self-vision is the clearer but, using it as our medium, we too may come to see by it. In the strength of such considerations we lead up our own Soul to the Divine, so that it poses itself as an image of that Being, its life becoming an imprint and a likeness of the Highest, its every act of thought making it over into the divine and the Intellectual.<sup>209</sup>

Plotinus, in an argument akin to Plato's, describes sun and light as an analogy of how something moves from the One down to the next level of the second hypostasis (i.e., the intelligible world):

Given this immobility in the Supreme, it can neither have yielded assent nor uttered decree nor stirred in any way towards the existence of a secondary. What happened, then? What are we to conceive as rising in the neighbourhood of that immobility? It must be a circumradiation – produced from the Supreme but from the Supreme unfaltering – and may be compared to the brilliant light encircling the sun and ceaselessly generated from that unchanging substance. All existences, as long as they retain their character, produce – about themselves, from their essence, in virtue of the power which must be in them – some necessary, outward-facing hypostasis continuously attached to them and representing in image the engendering archetypes: thus fire gives out its heat; snow is cold not merely to itself; fragrant substances are a notable instance; for, as long as they last, something is diffused from them and perceived whenever they are present.<sup>210</sup>

Heat emanates from its source, the fire and without the fire, there is no heat. Plotinus presents an argument about fire giving off heat. Without the fire, there would be no heat (likewise with snow and cold)<sup>211</sup> similar to Plato's argument in the *Phaedo* 106a-b. Similarly Dionysius the Areopagite wrote that "God himself is really the source of illumination for those who are illuminated, for he is truly and really Light itself. He is the Cause of being and of seeing."<sup>212</sup> He also has a discussion on the sun representing God in *The Divine Names*.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Plotinus, §V.3.8

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., §V.1.6

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., §V.4

<sup>212</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987, "Celestial Hierarchy," 301D p. 178

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., "The Divine Names," chapter 4

For Ficino, the sun is the visible symbol of God. In *De sole*, Chapter 9 enumerates why the sun is the image of God as he compares the sun and God. He cleverly uses Platonist, neoplatonist and Christian writers to argue his case. A number of his letters cover the same topic. For example, among the letter titles are: ‘A Comparison of the Sun to God,’<sup>214</sup> ‘It is not required to honour the Sun,’<sup>215</sup> and ‘The sun’s image is the vicar of God.’<sup>216</sup> In his commentary to St. Paul’s letters, Ficino titled Chapter 6 ‘Against the pagans, [how they were] unpleasant and failed in their duty to God, and how they have recognized God by the Divine Light.’<sup>217</sup> Here, divine illumination is the knowledge of God, a form of revelation and a tool for conversion.

Even though humans can work at receiving God’s light, God’s light is always greater than what the human mind can perceive and receive:

The mind sees that God is not at all able to be seen in himself because of his excessive brilliance. Moreover you never comprehend God Himself in himself because the third heaven remains for you, in which I myself saw those hidden things which man may not speak of. You perceive the light of the sun in the elements and you look up to it in the stars. You are not able to contemplate it in itself and yet, if you are wise, you are satisfied that your sun is so great that it surpasses the capacity of your eyes. Similarly you recognize the divine light in things created by him, and in the natures of things created. But the absolute [light] in itself you do not sustain.<sup>218</sup>

Ficino believes that the human soul requires God’s assistance, in the form of divine illumination, to achieve union with God. This argument is based on the perceived authority of Xystus the Pythagorean who is thought to have said that the human soul, being filled with God, has been raised

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<sup>214</sup> Ficino, 1495, Book 11 f. CCXXXr Prohemium in comparationem solis ad deum.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., Book 11 f. CCXXXIr Solem non esse adorandum.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., Book 12 f. CCXXXVIr Sol imago vicariusque dei

<sup>217</sup> Ficino, 1576b, p. 435

<sup>218</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIIIv Mens Deum in seipso videt ob nimium splendorem omnino videri non posse. Caeterum nunquid Deum ipsum in seipso comprahendis quod tertium tibi superest coelum: in quo illa ipse archana vidi quae non licet homini loqui lumen Solis perspicis in elementis suspicis et in stellis: in seipso non potes inspicere et tamen homo si sapis contentus es tantum esse Solem tuum ut capacitatem superet oculorum. Divinam lucem similiter in rebus ab ea creatis agnoscis agnoscis et in rerum rationibus creatarum. Sed absolutam in seipsa non substines.

to God and is illuminated by the divine light that permits the soul to recognize God. However, the soul cannot achieve such heights alone. It needs strength from above to be elevated to the infinite. Only with the divinely given strength may the soul be elevated and become God's temple, and this temple is eternal, never to be destroyed.<sup>219</sup>

For Augustine, divine illumination was the non-sensory knowledge of eternal concepts that were made available to the human mind and soul by God. Augustine did not leave a definition of divine illumination, so the preceding is the author's definition based on her understanding of it from *The Teacher* and the *Confessions* of Augustine.<sup>220</sup> This definition implies the assumptions that one has faith in God: God is perfect; the human mind and soul are imperfect; that there is divine, eternal knowledge (not found in the corporeal world), and that humans are able to receive this special knowledge. There is also the assumption that humans should strive to learn the eternal concepts, even though we are not immortal (for Augustine that term included body and soul). Divine illumination was a core component of his theory of knowledge in the sense that he believed in order to understand.<sup>221</sup> Ficino would concur that one must have faith and believe in God, humans are imperfect while God is perfect and immortal, humans should desire comprehension of the eternal knowledge, and that humans are mortal, but their souls are immortal.

Augustine was well versed in the thought of Plato<sup>222</sup> and Plotinus. Two Platonic works in particular, the *Meno* and the *Republic*, along with *The Enneads* of Plotinus, seem to have provided the main impetus for Augustine's formulation of divine illumination. In the *Meno*, a slave boy learns by

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<sup>219</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §II Sed animus Deo plenus, tantum in Deum erigitur, quantum et divino lumine illustratus agnoscit Deum et divino calore accensus sitit eundem. Non enim ad id quod supra est et infinitum, nisi virtute superioris, infinitique attolitur, hinc animus Dei templum efficitur, ut Xistus Pythagoricus arbitratur, Dei vero aeterni templum nunquam existimat ruiturum.

<sup>220</sup> My research into Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination was for an undergraduate course, PHIL 382, Fall 2001, taught by Professor E. J. Ashworth, University of Waterloo.

<sup>221</sup> Augustine, 1988, Tractate 29

<sup>222</sup> E.g. *Confessions*, book 7, ch. 9

recollection. Recollection incorporated Plato's hierarchy of knowledge types and his ontological chain of being, and Augustine used these concepts in *The Teacher* but presented them to form a theory of knowledge (i.e., illumination) where God was portrayed a kind of teacher for the human soul, showing the human soul this 'light of knowledge'.<sup>223</sup> So far the author has not found any evidence that Ficino accepts the notion of learning by recollection, not surprising in view of his idea that the mind is a blank slate upon the soul's entry into the physical body. He does, however, have a strong belief in divine illumination conveying knowledge from God to humans, much like Augustine does.

Augustine found strong parallels between the idea of knowledge as an ascending process (Plato's cave story), Plotinus' causal emanation, and man's journey to happiness in God.<sup>224</sup> Divine illumination was a primary method of travel for a person's many journeys to try to reach and understand God. Time and time again, the human must return to divine illumination so that over time, a soul can move closer to achieving full happiness: "[A man] can't consult that light regarding the whole matter. Yet he is prompted to do it part-by-part."<sup>225</sup> For Ficino, divine illumination seems to be more about God revealing himself and Christ to humankind (descent), and expressing his love for humans. It then motivates humans to desire God, thus prompting their love to ascend back to God. For Ficino, the inspired prophets of the Old Testament received and shared divine knowledge from God about God himself and the coming of Christ. From the New Testament, Ficino points to the apostles and their revelations about God and Christ's life and teachings. In Ficino's interpretation, divine knowledge descends from God to the faithful humans, who in turn recognize and appreciate the love and knowledge. The humans then give their love and praise to God. As discussed earlier in this thesis,

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<sup>223</sup> Augustine, 1966, "The Teacher," §xii, p. 40

<sup>224</sup> Augustine, 1953, i.e. Happiness in God as humanity's goal; Book 10, esp. ch. 22

<sup>225</sup> Augustine, 1966, "The Teacher," §xii, p. 40



Ficino believes this expression of religion is something that makes humans distinct in the animal kingdom. Ficino draws together sun imagery, love and divine illumination in *De raptu Pauli*:

From the Empyrean, the summit of this you will recognize immediately, because the entire heat is most salubrious, the vital light of God by means of whose extraordinary goodness so great and salubrious a fire there arises. Most clearly you will see the divine light and the truth itself in that fire, that is, in love something most capable of living in the temple of the sun and, that the fire is able to both be born and flourish by the light.<sup>226</sup>

Ficino uses divine illumination differently from Augustine; Augustine's is an epistemological theory (theory of knowledge) - God's input in to humans - Ficino's emphasis is more ontological and at times an argument for God's very existence. We find both in the following passage:

However, where the eternal act and immense life flourishes there is the most absolute light of intelligence. But where the everlasting act and immeasurable life thrives, there is the most perfect light of the intelligence. Since intelligence is the perfection of life and the reflection of it into itself. Therefore this life is the light of men, and it shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not comprehended it. Indeed the daily light is pleasant to sound eyes, [and] to sickened [eyes] most annoying. The kind ray of God reaches the good mind, and it is named the father and grace. ...Through this true light, which illuminates all men coming into this world, only you have seen all things in God, and God himself. Indeed whatever is in the most simple God, is God himself. Therefore, that series of ideas, which you have understood in God, is the divine wisdom itself, which is the word of God, is with God, and is God himself, and through himself all things are made. And therefore God himself is found in all, and all are discovered in him.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVv Ex huius vertice statim in empyreo quod totum ardor quidam est saluberrimus agnosces vitale illud Dei lumen: cuius exuberante bonitate tantus tamque saluber illic ardor accenditur. Planissimeque perspicias et divinum lumen veritatemque ipsam in ardore illo id est amore potissimum habitare tanquam in tabernaculo Solis: et ardorem illum lumine nasci atque vigere.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., f. LXVIIv Quod ergo factum est ab eo ipsa vita erat. Ubi autem perennis actus et vita viget immensa ibi absolutissima est intelligentiae lumen: siquidem intelligentia est absolutio vite reflexio quod eius in semetipsam. Ergo vita haec est lux hominum. Quae et in tenebris lucet. Sed tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. Diurnum lumen sanis quidem oculis est jocundum: egrotantibus molestissimum. Radius Dei bone menti benignus advenit paterque et gratia nominatur. ... Per hanc lucem veram quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum: modo vidisti res omnes in Deo ipsumque Deum. Quicquid enim est in Deo simplicissimo est ipse Deus. Illa igitur series idearum quam in Deo intellexisti divina ipsa sapientia est quae verbum Dei est apud Deum atque ipse Deus, per quae [used *perque* as in 1576 and 1641

The cycle of light is dynamic and allows the soul to ‘see’ its immortality.

And just as the light of the sun is invisible as it remains in the sun, so as it flows out from the sun into the colours it is visible, as it flows to the eye and the natural goes out of it, it becomes visual when from that place it flows back into the sun, then one is made seeing, thus the light of God insofar as it is collected absolutely in himself, is above intelligence. Then insofar as it explains in itself the reasons of the things, it is intelligible. Insofar as it poured in to the intellect, it becomes natural to itself, it results as intellectual. When it [light] truly rebounds into God himself, it is intelligent. For this reason a certain cycle is effected here, wonderfully shining from the divine truth itself into the intellect, when from the intellect back into itself, God is the beginning and end of this cycle. The intellect is the middle. If the first and farthest boundary of this circle is eternity, insofar as an eternity, surely the middle is eternal indeed because it partakes in the boundaries.<sup>228</sup>

Divine illumination helps the relationship to function. It communicates God’s expectations for humans and what he does with and for us. Divine illumination conveys what God is and is not (attributes), and what God does and does not do. Divine illumination keeps the relationship going by giving humans more information to help them grow and better understand God.

### 4.3 Hierarchy

In discussing the cosmos, Ficino says that “From this marvelous harmony of all the cosmic constituents it therefore happens that the movements of each belong to all, that the gifts of those that are higher pour down upon those that are subsequent, and that the prayers of the lower beings arise to

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editions of *Opera Omnia*] ipsum facta sunt omnia. Ideo et ipse Deus reperitur in omnibus: et omnia inveniuntur in ipso.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., f. LXIXv Atque sicut Solis lumen prout in Sole manet est invisibile ut autem e Sole effluit in colores est visibile prout influit oculo eique naturale evadit sit visivum: quando inde refluit in Solem: tunc videns efficitur ita Dei lux quantum in ipso absolute se colligit est super intelligentiam. Quantum inde in rerum se explicat rationes intelligibilis est. Quantum infusa intellectui ipsi sit naturalis evadit intellectiva. Quando vero in ipsum Deum resilit est intelligens. Quamobrem circulis [used *circulus* for translation; from *Opera Omnia* 1576] quidam hic efficitur: mirifice lucens ab ipia [used *ipsa* for translation; from *Opera Omnia* 1576] divina veritate in intellectum ab intellectu rursus in ipsam circuli huius principium finisque est Deus. Intellectus est medium. Si huius circuli primus ultimusque terminus est eternitas in quantum eternitas certe medium est eternum quod quidem est particeps terminorum.

the higher beings.”<sup>229</sup> Humans are part of a hierarchy below God, but as he argues, we are the best of the beasts and therefore of the earthly species, hence, we are closest to God:

But in fact, in order that we return to the proposition, man, the most perfect animal, is connected to the most perfect, that is, the divine, by means of that property [religion]; especially man is both made strong by that perfection and separated out from animals. Again if man is the most perfect of the mortal animals, he is the most perfect of all on account that particular endowment [religion], as among these [animals] he has the characteristic himself, not shared with the other animals. That [endowment] is religion. Therefore through religion man is the most perfect [animal].<sup>230</sup>

This argument was commonly found in religious ideas current in Ficino’s day. The argument runs: human are the only animal species with religion; religion is perfect; humans are the most perfect of animals; therefore humans are the most perfect animal.

Even philosophy and the ascent to God are hierarchical:

Since philosophy is defined by all men as love of wisdom ... and wisdom is the contemplation of the divine, then certainly the purpose of philosophy is knowledge of the divine. This our Plato testifies in the seventh book of *The Republic*, where he says that true philosophy is the ascent from the things which flow and rise and fall, to those which truly are, and always remain the same. Therefore philosophy has as many parts and ministering powers as it has steps by which it is climbed from the very lowest level to the highest. These steps are determined partly by the nature and partly by the diligence of men.<sup>231</sup>

While all humans may have a relationship with God, some do a better job of it than others and, hence, get closer to or more like God than others. Ficino, like pseudo-Dionysius, sees a hierarchy within the human species. Pseudo-Dionysius makes his human hierarchy quite explicit in the *Celestial*

*Hierarchies* when he says:

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<sup>229</sup> Ficino, 2010, p. 86

<sup>230</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §I Sed re vera, ut ad propositum revertamur, homo perfectissimum animal, ea proprietate maxime tum perfectione pollet, tum ab inferioribus discrepat; qua perfectissimis, id est divinis coniungitur. Rursus, si homo animalium mortalium perfectissimus est, ..., ob eam praecipue dotem est omnium perfectissimus, quam inter haec habet ipse propriam, caeteris animalibus non communem, ea religio est, per religionem igitur est perfectissimus. [see also Ficino, *Platonic Theology* §X14.9]

<sup>231</sup> Ficino, 1981, p.28

The revealing rank of principalities, archangels, and angels presides among themselves over the human hierarchies, in order that the uplifting and return toward God, and the communion and union, might occur according to proper order, and indeed so that the procession might be benignly given by God to all hierarchies and might arrive at each one in a shared way in sacred harmony.<sup>232</sup>

Dionysius defines a hierarchy as

[A] sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it.<sup>233</sup> ... If one talks then of hierarchy, what is meant is a certain perfect arrangement, an image of the beauty of God which sacredly works out the mysteries of its own enlightenment in the orders and levels of understanding of the hierarchy, and which is likened toward its own source as much as is permitted. Indeed for every member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible and, more wonderful still, that it becomes what scripture calls a ‘fellow workman for God’ and a reflection of the workings of God.<sup>234</sup>

Ficino is never quite as explicit as pseudo-Dionysius, yet in a letter to Count Giovanni Francesco Ippoliti, he proposes that philosophers are above regular men in the human hierarchy because “philosophy is defined by all men as love of wisdom ... and [as] wisdom is the contemplation of the divine, then certainly the purpose of philosophy is knowledge of the divine.” It follows that those pursuing God’s gift of philosophy become more like God. Included in the human hierarchy are the priests who also have an elevated status above the common person. For Ficino, the most important job a human could do on earth was to be a good priest. In a letter on “The dignity of the priest”

Ficino writes that

after God nothing is more virtuous than a good angel, and nothing more pernicious than an evil one, so nothing on earth is fairer than an honourable priest, and nothing more disgraceful than a base one. The former is the salvation of religion and mankind, the latter their

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<sup>232</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987, “The Celestial Hierarchy,” p. 171

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 153

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 154; Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2

destruction. What is a real priest, but a soul dedicated to God? A priest is a kind of temporal God, but God is priest eternal.<sup>235</sup>

At different times, Ficino utilizes different hierarchies and these have been much studied (e.g., Allen<sup>236</sup> and Kristeller<sup>237</sup>). In Ficino’s five-level ontological hierarchy should ‘soul’ be removed as the middle hierarchical level, given that the soul moves up and down amongst the other four levels? The author believes that the ‘soul’ really should not be classified as its own hierarchical ‘level’ in Ficino’s ontology as the other four levels do not ‘move’ or ‘visit’ the other levels. Ficino has confused a member of the hierarchy with a level of a hierarchy. The differences can be enumerated as follows (Table 2):

**Table 2 Soul versus Hierarchy**

<b>Soul</b>	<b>Hierarchy</b>
1 soul	multiple levels
soul belongs to an individual	each level can be partaken of by many souls
moves	stationary (a level doesn’t move up or down)
partakes of all other hierarchy levels	a level does not partake of soul; a level does not partake of other levels

By Dionysius’ definition of hierarchy, a hierarchy is an ‘arrangement’ not a moving, constantly re-organizing entity. The soul is like those angels ascending and descending the ladder to heaven (which is equivalent to a hierarchy). We never find eternal immortal God in a physical body (Christ had to do that for God), and we never find a physical entity that is eternal – these levels do not mix. In some ways, the soul sits on the fence of the divided line, and sometimes it falls off the fence to the abstract/eternal realm and other times it falls off the fence into the temporal/mortal realm. As discussed earlier, due to the prominence of the medieval celestial hierarchy in Ficino’s time, there were many examples of the soul’s ascent and descent. In the celestial hierarchy the souls are

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<sup>235</sup> Ficino, 1975, pp. 121-122

<sup>236</sup> Allen, 1982

<sup>237</sup> Kristeller, 1964b

ascending and descending the ladder between heaven and earth to change their hierarchical level, for example, “The souls ascend and descend through the regions/zones of heaven.”<sup>238</sup> What motivates the soul to try to ascend the celestial hierarchy to God? For Ficino, the answer is love motivates the soul.

#### 4.4 Love

Ficino writes that “The work emphasizes, in addition to the divinity of Man’s soul, the personal relationship between Man and God ...”<sup>239</sup> and in *De Christiana religione* he says

They may revere themselves as divine and they may hope [that] they are able to ascend to God, since as it were the divine majesty deigned to descend to them. May they love God with the whole heart, into whom they may be transformed, who on account of a remarkable love, he [God] has marvelously transformed himself into man.<sup>240</sup>

God’s love is a key ingredient of the God/human relation as God made himself visible on earth through Christ. The motivating force of the relationship is love for both God and humans. Ficino’s emphasis is on the individual person and his or her relationship with God. Many passages in *De Christiana religione* examine the personal relationship between God and humans. Early in the work, Ficino goes to great lengths to show that humans have a special relationship with God (unlike the other beasts on earth), why Christianity is better than the other religions, and then how all people can best fulfill their role on earth and participate in a loving relationship with God. The only way to love God is non-physical, but religious love and philosophical love can fulfill the non-physical function.

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<sup>238</sup> Ficino, 1495, Book 10 f. CCXI<sup>r</sup> Per quas coeli plagas animae descendunt atque ascendunt.

<sup>239</sup> Ficino, 1975, p. 22

<sup>240</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XIX Revereantur seipsos tanquam divinos sperentque se posse ad Deum ascendere, quandoquidem ad eos dignata est quodammodo maiestas divina descendere. Ament toto pectore Deum, in quem transformantur, qui ob ingentem amorem se mirabiliter in hominem transformavit. [see also *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino (Volume 1)*, letter #4]

In a 'discussion' between St. Paul and Marsilio (assume Ficino), Marsilio asks Paul why he has been enraptured and so many others have not. Paul answers that the relation between man and God must be one of love and describes how it works.

He [God] seizes the one whom he loves more passionately, before the others. Passionately he [God] loves the lover. For that most kind seizer wishes nothing other from you than you be happily taken by him, unless you wish to be seized even moderately, but likewise you would will this at no time, unless God had willed [it] before. Just as the Moon does not reflect into the Sun, unless kindled earlier by the Sun, so you do not love that lover, unless you have been inflamed by that very love, loving and affecting you.<sup>241</sup>

For the soul to ascend to God, one must also have faith, hope and charity, and without charity, the ascent is not possible.

Venus in that place will further give to you, so far as she will be able, what the others have not been able to fulfill.<sup>242</sup> Venus is said to give common love to the common-people. Indeed surely the angel increases the extraordinary love of God to exceptional men. The love of God, I say, which flows from the triple celestial heave above as much into the third heaven and into its angel as into our soul.<sup>243</sup>

Again we find the notion that not everyone is successful in their quest to return to God and this is often due to their inability to love God appropriately.

For no one returns to heaven except those who have pleased the King of the Heavens. They please Him who love Him exceedingly. Certainly, to know Him truly in this life is completely impossible. But to love Him truly in what ever way He is known is both possible and easy. Those who know God do not yet please Him unless they love Him when they know Him. Those who know Him and love

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<sup>241</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP, f. LXIIIv Rapit ille prae [*prae* not in 1495; in *Opera Omnia* 1576 & 1641] caeteris quem amat ardentius. Ardenter amat amantem. Non vult benignissimus ille raptor abs te aliud quo foeliciter rapiaris ab ipso nisi ut vel mediocriter velis rapi; sed hoc quoque nunquam velles nisi ille antea voluisset. Quemadmodum Luna non refulget in Solem nisi a Sole prius accensa: sic ipsum non amas amorem [used *amatorem* from *Opera Omnia* 1576] nisi amore ipso te amante atque afficiente fuerit inflamatus.

<sup>242</sup> i.e. Venus = love. Love is doing the 'moving' to cause the ascent to God.

<sup>243</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP, f. LXIIIv Venus illic tibi protinus quo ad [used *quoad* as found in *Opera Omnia* 1576] ipsa poterit largietur quod alii praestare non potuerunt. Dare dicitur Venus amorem vulgo vulgarem. Auget certe enim angelus egregiam viris egregiis charitatem. Charitatem inquam a triplici super coelesti coelo tam in celum tercium eiusque angelum quam in nostrum animum influentem.

Him are loved by God, not because they know him, but because they love Him. ... Therefore what restores us to heaven is not knowledge of God but love.<sup>244</sup>

When it comes to God's love, it trumps knowledge! Ficino believes that our will enjoys God more than our intellect does. His reasoning is as follows:

Behold! I see where in a certain way the intellect fails, the will succeeds. Behold, the love of God enters, where knowledge is not able to enter entirely. Indeed, you make out in the distance the infinite, although not most clearly. You love this [God's love] most passionately [and] with this you are most vehemently glad. Indeed, you see how much is visible to you and you love how much you see those things, and how much you by yourself, because he is exceedingly abundant, that [He] cannot be seen clearly, and this fact is especially helpful to you because even without any anxiety, even with satiety you enjoy the good, because since he is infinite, and he is infinitely sufficient for you, and he [God] delights infinitely. In the present circumstances, if the intelligence discerns the immense light by a reason not entirely infinite, still it is affected by the immeasurable love and joy, while the infinite will enjoys the good.<sup>245</sup>

Love is what makes the divine/human relationship go around. It overcomes the levels of the hierarchy and enables divine illumination.

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<sup>244</sup> Ficino, 1985, Speech 4, Ch 6 p. 79 [based on Plato's *Phaedrus* 247]

<sup>245</sup> Ficino, 1495, DRP f. LXVIIIr Ecce video ubi quodammodo deficit intellectus sufficere voluntatem. Penetrat ecce charitas: quo non potest omnino scientia penetrare. Infinitatem [used *Infinitam* as found in *Opera Omnia* 1576] quidem prospicis quamvis non clarissime. Hanc ardentissime amas: hac gaudes vehementissime. Vides tu quidem quantum est tibi visibile. Amas et quantum vides ipsa et quantum vides abs te quia nimis exuberat non posse plane videri et hoc ipsum te iuvat maxime quod sine ulla vel sollicitudine vel satietate fruaris bono: quod cum sit infinitum: et infinite tibi suppetit et infinite delectat. Hic si non infinita omnino ratione discernit immensum intelligentia lumen: tamen immenso amore gaudioque afficitur dum fruitur bono infinito voluntas.



## Chapter 5

### Final Observations

It is possible to argue that Ficino, in fact, moved away some medieval traditions by showing that humans are in God's image in a positive way, the soul is able to ascend to God, and can have a positive relationship with God and the Good by living a Christian and philosophic life on earth. In a very bold statement for his time, Ficino assigns philosophy the lofty responsibility of assisting the human soul to become more God-like. In one of his earlier letters, he states:

We believe that the supreme bliss consists in a condition of the will which is delight in and love for divine wisdom. That the soul, with the help of Philosophy, can one day become God, we conclude from this: with Philosophy as its guide, the soul gradually comes to comprehend with its intelligence the natures of all things, and entirely assumes their forms; also through its will it both delights in and governs particular forms, therefore, in a sense, it becomes all things. Having become all things through this principle, step by step it is transformed into God, who is the fount and Lord of them all. God truly perfects everything both within and without.<sup>246</sup>

In Chapter 2 we found that his lofty goals of reuniting philosophy and religion, and good philosophy bringing people back to the church, while admirable, were not philosophically rigorous by today's standards. Ficino presents the arguments for consideration, as part of a greater whole that he wants his readers to examine and discern the value of. Ficino translated both the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the works of Plato before writing his more religious works. This made him the first to translate all of Plato's works into Latin since the advent of Christianity. While others had tried to incorporate scholastic arguments into Christianity, Ficino found that Plato's ideas were more compatible and sought to incorporate these into his religious works and did so in such a way as to avoid censure by both the Pope and Inquisition. By relating the ancient ideas to Christian tenets, Ficino sought to

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<sup>246</sup> Ficino, 1975, p. 190

demonstrate that Christianity had always existed and that while the ancients did not realize it, they in fact recognized some valuable religious truths. Ficino believed that philosophy and religion had once coexisted and lists examples of persons who were both religious leaders and wise men (and in some cases healers too) to support his argument. He felt it was time to overcome the rift between the two caused by scholasticism and impious priests, and that the Florentine intellectual community could be brought back to the church's fold by demonstrating the rationality of Christianity. Ficino offered the readers of his time a way to understand how ancient philosophy could enrich their faith and help them to see the historical development of Christianity.

Chapter 3 examined Ficino's image of God and the five main Godly attributes - existence, simplicity, goodness, omniscience and omnipotence. We found that while some philosophical arguments were used, Ficino did not present any new arguments. His novel contribution was to use Platonic ideas that were new to the Renaissance period, such as attributing his description of God to the Platonists. In section 3.1 when discussing the existence of God, Ficino uses arguments from affirmation and negation, a weak syllogism, an appeal to Aristotle's authority (God as prime mover) and argument by analogy. There was no compelling reason for him to expend significant effort to prove God's existence as others before him had done. Ficino thought it was innate for humans to believe in God, and that the human soul desired to return to God, so his efforts focused more on the sense in which God exists.

In discussions about God's simplicity in section 3.2, he uses a scholastic-style argument to establish that the whole (God) is greater than the sum of the parts, and an appeal to the authority of the Platonists. Ficino also develops arguments against Averroes, for the soul's immortality, and Mohammed's notions about the Trinity. He differs from Aquinas, but is quite similar to Augustine in his efforts to show that the Trinity can be understood using reason. Ficino follows the traditional

belief of his time that the beings of the Trinity are consubstantial. Ficino argues that God is the infinitely-acting, single source who created the universe, and bases his argument on the Platonic forms. A weak argument by analogy and a simple argument round out the types of arguments Ficino used in discussions of God's unity.

In section 3.3 we examined Ficino discussions about God's goodness in the medieval context where good and being are synonymous, and this relies on Anselm's cosmological argument that goodness must have a first cause. Ficino believes that the human desire for the good is innate and that life must be lived morally, religiously and philosophically in order to reach the ultimate good, God. In his arguments, it is the Good in the Platonic sense that is often used. In his discussion of why God contains no evil, Ficino draws in Plato's 'architect of the world' to explain why there is nothing evil in God, only the supremely good. There are no novel arguments put forth by Ficino in his discussions of God's goodness, however he does use some new Platonic premises to enhance the existing arguments.

In a different approach, Ficino appeals to the authority of philosophy to explain God's omniscience in section 3.4. He also identifies truth as a core component of God's omniscience as truth is timeless, cannot be false and is unchanging, just like God's knowledge. When Ficino defines truth, it sounds as though he is defining a Platonic form. His argument that truth is immortal and essential to God's omniscience is a philosophically weak argument. Ficino also relies on the medieval notion of man as a microcosm where God is in man, and man is in God, to demonstrate God's omniscience. While Ficino believes that God knows all, he maintains that all humans have true free will because God knows every human choice and that those choices are made freely by each human.

In section 3.5 we find that Ficino invokes Plato's authority to prove that God's omnipotence does not interfere with human free will and this is quite different from Augustine who believed human fate

was predetermined by God, although Ficino is more in tune with the humanist notions of Florence in the 1400's. When discussing God's omnipotence, Ficino uses the Thomistic argument about infinite being having infinite power and some nature-based analogies. Following the Peripatetic tradition, Ficino draws on the traditional formulation that God can create anything as long as there is no contradiction. Ficino's new contribution to the discussion on human free will is his referencing three works of Plato when explaining that providence serves human free will rather than impairing it.

Chapter 4 discussed Ficino's notion that if the Christian religion is to be viable, it espouses a relationship between humans and God. His God is not an impersonal God, but a personal God. For Ficino this relationship is unique to humans (among the earthly animals) and functions with a cycle of love, hierarchies and divine illumination. In section 4.1 we examine his view that religion is unique to humans because the other animals do not show any signs of religious behaviour. Ficino argues that humans are more God-like because they have the same sort of nature as God, but one that differs in quality. He argues that the value of following a Christian life is the promise of a better future life and that humans and God must both be active participants in the relationship. Ficino often draws Platonic ideas into discussions about Christianity, and he also includes Christian ideas (such as ascribing to Plato the idea of a single god in relationships with many humans), in his commentaries on Platonic works.

Section 4.2 finds Ficino arguing that, given that God is not corporeal, there must be a mechanism for God's knowledge to reach individual humans. For Ficino, this is divine illumination. Given that light was the first thing created by God (in the Christian tradition), it is an excellent metaphor to describe how divine knowledge and love can be conveyed to humans. He often uses the Sun to represent God and makes numerous references to arguments from Plato, Plotinus and Dionysius. He also argues based on the authority of Xystus, the Pythagorean, that the human soul cannot achieve a

reunion with God, unless God provides assistance via divine illumination. While Augustine uses divine illumination in an epistemological way, Ficino's approach is ontological.

Section 4.3 examines Ficino's use of hierarchy in his various discussions. The Ptolemaic universe and Dionysian celestial hierarchy were the standard world perspectives of Ficino's time, therefore it is not surprising to find his religious writings referring to hierarchies in various contexts. For Ficino, the celestial hierarchy is the mechanism for the soul to ascend on its way to achieving a reunion with God. He appeals to Plato's and philosophy's authority to help explain the soul's ascent. Ficino also argues that there is a hierarchy amongst humans where good priests are above the common person. One puzzle Ficino left for scholars is his use of hierarchies with different levels, including the five-level ontological hierarchy, where soul is in the middle, but moves up and down the hierarchy. Today, we would consider the use of the soul as a 'level' in this manner to be inaccurate. Given that a soul is a member of the hierarchy that is singular and mobile, it is quite different from the levels of a hierarchy that are fixed and immobile. Ficino's use of soul in this manner also contradicts pseudo-Dionysius' original notion of hierarchy.

Section 4.4 briefly considers the role of love in the divine/human relationship. The human soul ascends the celestial hierarchy, because as Ficino believes, love motivates the human/divine relationship and the soul has an innate desire to reunite with the infinite goodness. The universe is a hierarchy and God's love flows down through the levels to all created things. In addition to love, divine illumination may also flow down to some humans. The cycle of love finds it descending from God, and returning to God from the humans, over and over again. In Ficino's arguments about the role of love, we find arguments based on analogies and appeals to authority (especially St. Paul).

For Ficino, faith and scripture, plus reason and ancient writings were the way to reunite the Christian religion and philosophy. He is inclusive of ancient and pagan sources in his formulation of an inclusive Christianity.

Faith, as Aristotle is inclined, is the foundation of knowledge. With only faith, as the Platonists approve, we approach God. 'I have believed,' David said, 'and therefore I have spoken'. Therefore believing and approaching the font of truth and goodness, we will drink the wise and blessed life.<sup>247</sup>

He starts with ancient and medieval ideas, and changes them slightly by giving them a Christian and philosophical gloss but Ficino wants no part of being original. He often stresses that others have said 'it' before and only wishes to explain what the church approves of. The impression is that he is conveying the ancient knowledge and providing ancient 'philosophic' revelations (not his own 'discoveries') to the *intelligensi* and religious colleagues of his time. History tells us that Ficino's dream of reuniting philosophy and religion has not yet happened, but his noble aspiration remains:

[In the] *Timaeus* Plato asserts that philosophy is a gift of God, and nothing more excellent has ever been granted to us by God than this. For the good itself, which is God, could bestow nothing better on a man than a complete likeness of its own divinity, as near as possible. ... Thus it comes about that philosophy is a gift, a likeness, and a most happy imitation of God. If anyone is endowed with philosophy, then out of his likeness to God he will be the same in earth as He who is God in heaven. For a philosopher is the intermediary between God and men; to God he is a man, to men God. Through his truthfulness he is a friend of God, through his freedom he is possessor of himself, through his knowledge of citizenship he is a leader of all other men.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ficino, 1576a, §XXXVII Fides, ut vult Aristoteles, est scientiae fundamentum; fide sola, ut Platonici probant, ad Deum accedimus. 'Credidi' inquit David, 'et propterea sum locutus.' Credentes igitur, propinquantesque veritatis bonitatisque fonti sapientem beatamque vitam hauriemus.

<sup>248</sup> Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino (Liber IV)* pp. 30-31

## Appendix A: *De raptu Pauli*

This transcription is based on Ficino's *Epistolae* 1495 Venice edition [pp. LXIIIr - LXIXv] with occasional reference to *Opera Omnia*, Basel, 1576 [Epistolarum Lib. II, starting page 697] and *Opera Omnia*, Paris 1641 [Epistolarum Lib. II, starting page 678]. The *Epistolae*, 1495 Venice edition is available online from the Herzog August Bibliothek, Germany, <http://diglib.hab.de/inkunabeln/24-3-rhet-1/start.htm>. This edition was selected because it was printed in Ficino's lifetime. In addition, the Basel and Paris editions of Ficino's *Opera Omnia* are known to be corrupted (e.g., punctuation added) and contain many spelling errors.<sup>249</sup>

For readability, abbreviations have been spelled out (e.g., *ee* is transcribed as *esse* and *&* becomes *et*) and spelling modernized (e.g. *u* becomes *v* when appropriate and *i* becomes *j* where appropriate). Some mid-sentence words have been capitalized where it appears that Ficino is referring to God or a stellar entity representing a god. The reader will find many colons in the text and the publisher has used them as we would use a comma today. This transcription is intended to provide a useable text rather than a philologically rigorous edition.

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<sup>249</sup> Allen, 1975 p. 2

## *De raptu Pauli*

### **Marsilii Ficini Florentini ad Ioannem Cavalcantem amicum unicum de raptu Pauli ad tertium coelum: et animi immortalitate.**

Non licet nobis, mi Ioannes, his temporibus ob epidimiae suspensionem una sicuti consuevimus familiariter in terra vitam agere. Verum quid nam prohibet interim nos in coelo, ubi nulla pestis formido sollicitat nos versari? Ergo amice age iam refugiamus in coelum. At inquires forsitan in quod nam et multis<sup>250</sup> potissimum? In illud certe cuius radiis inflammati tam diu in terra coelestem una vitam agimus. Nunquid meministi Ioannes cum olim nobiscum in edibus tuis cenaret vir ille probatissimus Bernardus tenerius<sup>251</sup> noster qua de ra-/ [f. LXIIIv]ptu Pauli in tertium coelum disservimus? Instauremus convivium illud hodie: ut in eo invita epidimia convivamus.

### **Dyalogus inter Paulum et animam: quod ad Deum non ascenditur sine Deo: et de fide spe charitate.**

*Marcus.* Dic oro beatissime Paule si modo licet homini loqui quomodo in coelum ascenderis et cur in tertium.

*Paulus.* Absit a nobis absit Marsili procul impietas tam superba: ut illuc ascendisse dixerimus. Nolo enim me ipso in huiusmodi revelationibus gloriari. Gloria mea omnis solus ille rex gloriae Deus. Non ego ascendi Marsili sed raptus sum in coelum. Gravia elementa mundi alta non petunt nisi eleventur ab altis. Incole<sup>252</sup> terrae coelestes non scandunt gradus nisi coelestis Pater traxerit illos.

*Marcus.* Doce obsecro et hoc Paule per illum qui te rapuit quos nam ille ex omnibus rapit potissimum.

*Paulus.* An hoc ignoras: quod nemo potest quisquis vel rapit aliquid vel rapitur ignorare? Rapit ille [prae<sup>253</sup>] caeteris quem amat ardentius. Ardenter amat amantem. Non vult benignissimus ille raptor abs te aliud quo foeliciter rapiaris ab ipso nisi ut vel mediocriter velis rapi: sed hoc quoque nunquam velles nisi ille antea voluisset. Quemadmodum Luna non refulget in Solem nisi a Sole prius accensa:

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<sup>250</sup> *et multis* not in 1576 *Opera Omnia*; the year will be used to denote the edition(s) of *Opera Omnia* with significant variation from the *Epistolae*, 1495 edition. In most cases if a variation is in the 1576 edition, it is also found in the 1641 edition.

<sup>251</sup> *Tenerius* in 1576

<sup>252</sup> *colae* in 1576

<sup>253</sup> *prae* in 1576; not in 1495



sic ipsum non amas amorem<sup>254</sup> nisi amore ipso te amante atque afficiente fuerit inflamatus: hunc rursus non invocas instar eccho nisi prius te vocantem: non apprehendis eum sicuti neque locum nisi comprehendentem. Finita quidem ut plurimum capere potes etiam si ab illis non capiaris. Infinitum vero capere nihil aliud est quam capi. Et quemadmodum imago in speculo non respicit vultum nisi ipsam vultus aspiciat immo etiam quando haec vultum videtur aspicere: nihil hoc aliud est quam aspici hanc a vultu. Rursus quemadmodum actio motusque non metiuntur nobis tempus nisi tempus haec ipsa revera dimetiatur: sic anima neque respicit Deum nisi ipsam prius aspicientem neque iudicat nisi di iudicantem.

*Marcus.* Sed age o nimium dilecte Deo doce nos tercio; cur in tertium coelum maxime fueris elevatus: ut invisibile illud videres quod et ubique est sicut in tercio. Ac si usquam est praecipue est potius in supraemo.

*Paulus.* Non sic ha nimium terrestris homo non sic supercoelestia capiuntur. Mitte secundi coeli argutias a Mercurio adinventas. Mitte sexti leges conditas ut vultis ab Jove. Mitte septimi philosophiam ut aiunt hominibus a Saturno donatam. Non attingunt ista veritatem ipsam Mercurii Jovis Saturni procreatricem. Vis solem attingere quarto currentem coelo in quo rex ille mundi suum posuit tabernaculum? Eia scande coeli tercii dorsum quarto contiguum. Venus illic tibi protinus quo ad<sup>255</sup> ipsa poterit largietur quod alii praestare non potuerunt. Dare dicitur Venus amorem vulgo vulgarem. Auget certe enim angelus egregiam viris egregiis charitatem. Charitatem inquam a triplici super coelesti coelo tam in celum tertium eiusque angelum quam in nostrum animum influentem. Hanc siquidem sanctus Dei spiritus primum Seraphinis inurit. Il-/[f. LXIIIr]li secundo principatibus principale huius mysterium obsequiumque iniungunt. Hi terciam regentes speram accendunt ibi Veneris angelum. Unde charitas insita nobis a Deo continue alitur adolescit atque perficitur. Quid plura? Vis ne dimissis ambagibus breniori tramite solis attingere solem. Primum sit tibi coelum fides. Qua firmiter credas hunc esse tibi in primis amandum a quo et tu hoc ipsum habes quod posses amare quicquid usquam ames et quae diliguntur id ipsum quod diligenda sint habent. Secundum spes. Per quam proculdubio expectes ardentem redamari ab illo: quem nisi ante amatus ab eo amare non posses. Tertium charitas: quae te et sponte cogat et necessario alliciat caeteris omnino dimissis illum amplecti quo solo dimisso nihil possides: quem si possides solum nihil est ex omnibus quod dimiseris: sine cuius ulnis neque amplecti te ipsum vales neque alia neque illum. Hic ego o anima

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<sup>254</sup> *amatorem* in 1576

<sup>255</sup> *quoad* in 1576

nimum vagabunda hic solum praeciosissima Dei penetralia penetravi. Quae nisi a patrefamilias aperiantur non videntur. Non autem panditur domus omnipotentis olimpi nisi mentibus hoc ipsum fide quaerentibus spe petentibus charitate pulsantibus. Charitas autem aliorum finis est omniumque perfectio: cuius igniculis quondam accensus helias igneo quodam curru raptus ad coelum fuit. Cuius et ego flamis raptus sum ad coelum. Denique hoc tibi maneat alta mente repostum. Frigus a tenebris: tenebrae a morte dependent. Calor autem a lumine: lumen dependet a vita. Quapropter frigus ad tenebras tenebrae deducunt ad mortem. Calor autem ad lumen lumen perducit ad vitam.

### **Curru fidei spei charitatis species in tertium ascenditur coelum.**

#### ***Primo quidem per virtutes civiles purgatorias animique purgati.***

Trino autem hoc coelo quasi vehiculo quodam id est fide recta: spe firma ardentissima charitate: species percurrens triplex coelum. Ubi dulcem patrem patriamque revises. Unde ter quaterque id est septies foelix evades. Primo quidem horum trium meritis tria quoque virtutum tibi genera divinitus donabuntur. Civiles virtutes et purgatorie animi purgati. Quae quidem faciant ut nescias utrum in corpore sis an extra corpus. Quibus formatus exemplares denique virtutes attinges quae nihil aliud sunt quam Deus. Videbis enim tractus a Domini spiritu a claritate in claritatem in tribus hisce generibus rationem virtutis magis gradatim magisque proficere. Quod quidem fieri non posse cognosces nisi propinquiore quodam rursusque propinquiore accessu ad divinam ipsam summamque virtutis ideam: ut in eandem imaginem transformeris.

#### ***Secundo in coelum itur tertium per regionem planetarum per coelum stelliferum per christallinum.***

Secundo per planetarum septem regionem quod coelum quasi primum vagumque est ad speram transibis octavam quod est ordinatissimum syderum firmamentum coelumque secundum. Ab hoc quia motu gemino agitatur atque diverso ad christallinum id est perspicuum nitidumque te conferes quasi tertium quoddam coelum: cuius unus -/[f. LXVv] est motus et simplex. Ibi aquae quae super coelos sunt laudant nomen Domini.<sup>256</sup> Ex huius vertice statim in empyreo quod totum ardor quidam est saluberrimus agnosces vitale illud Dei lumen: cuius exuberante bonitate tantus tanque saluber illic

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<sup>256</sup> Daniel 3, 60

ardor accenditur. Planissimeque perspicies et divinum lumen veritatemque ipsam in ardore illo id est amore potissimum habitare tanquam in tabernaculo Solis: et ardorem illum lumine nasci atque vigere.

***Tertio tertium coelum scanditur per mundum visibilem per mundum phantasticum per mundum intelligibilem.***

Tertio totum mundi corpus tanquam coelum unum transibis oculis manifestum. Atque ad eius imaginem phantasia depictam tanquam secundum coelum te conferes. Deinde et universum corpus visibile et imaginem corporis phantasticam dimittens ad naturam ipsam qua necessario constat et rationem qua definitur intelligentia perges. Quod tertium tibi erit in mente coelum super sensum et phantasiam. Hic subito intelligentiae tuae intelligentia divina subrutilat. Quid enim aliud est ratio universi partiumque illius quam ars illa aeterna qua eum suus disposuit architectus? Si enim a corporeo quodam artificio materiam relicto ordine subtrahas quod reliquum est mens est artificis tuae iam menti conspicua.

***Quarto tertium coelum petitur per spiritus inrationales<sup>257</sup> racionales intellectuales.***

Quarto esto primum tibi coelum spiritus omnis infra tuum. Secundum tuus spiritus sit ob rationis munus quo inrationalia iudicat quidem: sed ab eis non iudicatur illis longe praestantior. Tertium angelus qui oculos quidam est lucidissimus: cui quidem nota momento stabili sunt: quae tu temporali quodam discursu aucuparis. In angelo Deum continuo conspice: tanquam lumen in oculo lucido et in momento stabili aeternitatem.

***Quinto ad tertium transitur coelum per tres angelicas hierarchias.***

Quinto scito quemadmodum in te qui parvus es mundus tres sunt spiritus: naturalis in iecore: vitalis in corde: animalis in cerebro quo solo finitum percipis lumen: ita circa ampliorem hunc mundum tres esse spirituum exercitus<sup>258</sup> divinorum quasi tres speras intelligibiles circa divinum centrum iugiter se volventes. Sed alios regionem mundi Lunae subjectam praecipue gubernare. Alios coelestia regere. Alios super coeli verticem volitare.

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<sup>257</sup> *irracionales* in 1576

<sup>258</sup> *exercitus* in 1576

*Tenebrae lucidae: lux tenebrosa: lux mera. Novem angelorum chori.*

Volito et ego hac et illac ad votum aliis sublatus Seraphinorum. Et si nihil usquam reperio extra immensum bonum quod universum et omnino intrinsecus imbuit et infinite extrinsecus ambit: tamen quicquid reperio quod non sit ipsum bonum video ex lucidis quibusdam tenebris et tenebrosa quadam luce componi. Scio neque tenebras posse seipsas -/[f. LXVr] illuminare neque lucem a tenebris comprehensam ex seipsa lucere: alioquin se vigeret ac purissime plenissimeque luceret. Lucere ergo eam animadverto ex ipsa luce in qua tenebrae non sunt ullae. Ideoque quando lucet in tenebris tenebre ipsam non comprahendunt. Hoc autem est absolutum ipsum in se bonum neque subjecti neque causae neque graduum neque loci neque temporis limitibus comprahensum. Quoniam vero omnia naturali instinctu bonum appetunt tanquam finem: quo solo perficiantur concludo bonum idem esse principium a quo cuncta efficiantur. Hoc cum ex sui<sup>259</sup> gratia efficiat omnia et perficiat certe ad sui ipsius exemplar tanquam medium cuncta disponit. Est ergo principium medium finisque cunctorum. Et quia omnino indivisibile est in quolibet trium continentur et reliqua. Finis autem actionis movet quodammodo principium ad agendum. Principium movet exemplar operis atque formam. Huc omnes beati spiritus assidue oculos mentis intendunt: singuli tria haec intuentur sed diversa ratione diversi. Atque in his inspiciunt veras rerum omnium quae in universo sunt rationes. Seraphini finem ipsum proprius attentiusque quam reliqua contemplantur. Cherubini in fine principium. Throni in fine medium speculantur. Dominationes autem ipsum principium. Virtutes in principio finem. Potestates medium in principio. Principatus et si mirantur omnia tamen medium proprius et ut ita dicam libentius intuentur. Archangeli in medio finem. Angeli principium in medio contemplantur. Foelices animae pro diversis piae vitae meritis morumque ad angelos diversos similitudine novem gradibus in spheris patriae novem sequuntur novem ordines angelorum. Mitto libenter animas infoelices: quae infra lunam sub terra caligine ubi eas novies stix interfusa coerchet novem turbas malignorum spirituum comitantur.

*Dei lumen in ardore empyrei coeli refulget.*

Cum dimisi spiritus tenebrarum subito e summa lucentium spirituum specula lumen mihi corruscavit immensum. Vidi illic Seraphinos amore ardentis immenso. In ardore huiusmodi lumen infiniti boni infinitum mihi refulsit. Saepe numero cogitaneram<sup>260</sup> ante raptum si bonum ipsum est voluntatis

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<sup>259</sup> 1576 has *ex se et gratia* and 1641 has *ex se et sui gratia*

<sup>260</sup> *cogitaveram* in 1576

potius quam intellectus objectum sequi ut animus voluntatis flagrantia ipso bono fruatur magis quam intelligentiae claritate. Agnovi illic statim raptus me vera cogitavisse: cum viderem non Cherubinorum scientiam imo charitatem Seraphinorum Deo esse quam proximam. Merito cum omni natura sit ut appetatur: et appetibilis ipsius ratio ut sit bonum infinitum ipsum bonum proxime sequitur flagrantissimus amor subitoque consequitur.

*Sexto in tertium confugitur coelum per tres Trinitatis personas.*

Huc age me sequere sexto quantum potes: o mens proprie infiniti boni ipsius avida mens proprie infiniti filia boni. Ha propera nec te pigeat nam potes o bona mens tantum quantum velis. Ubi enim so-/[f. LXVIv]la voluntate proceditur et proficitur: ibi sequi nihil aliud est quam velle sequi. Bono igitur animo esto. Nempe si finis ad quem quodammodo sine fine moveris proprie est infinitum bonum necessario principium a quo proprie moveris est infinitum bonum. Quod quidem cum ex seipso sui que ipsius gratia sit omnium que origo: certe ex se et sui gratia movet omnia. Praecipue vero ac proprie spiritum praecipue hoc ipsum et proprie appetentem. Pater tuus usque adeo bonus quando non male id est non frustra tibi dedit ut naturaliter huiusmodi bonum usque adeo sequi velles dedit simul et ut assequi quandoque posses et consequi. In rerum ordine sicut nosti bona sunt omnia. Praecipue quia pulchre utiliterque ordinata sunt: et bonum naturaliter appetunt. Si cuncta bona in rerum ordine in una quadam communi boni natura conveniunt: in qua cuncta bona sunt unum bonum. Necessary penes rerum ordinatorem: unum bonum est cuncta bona. Sana natura illa communis et una quae in multitudine omnium iacet et continetur ab omnibus ab una quadam emanat forma quae in seipsa super omnem multitudinem est et continet omnia. Sed ultra progredere: si quod infra rerum ordinem cogitas dicis infinite malum cur non etiam quod supra rerum ordinem extat fateris infinite bonum: si ad bonum propagatio pertinet quo enim et quando quaelibet perfectiora sunt eo et tunc magis propagari videntur proculdubio penes infinitum bonum existit infinita propago. Propago inquam intima. Nihil enim infinitum revera existit extra ipsum. Ibi est igitur pater et filius. Penes patrem bonum infinite filiumque infinite bonum infinitus viget et amor. Si quilibet trium eque infinitus est etiam aequales inter se sunt atque simillimi. Si infinita natura atque plenitudo cum nihil relinquat extra se sui totumque penitus comprahendat non nisi unica esse potest. Unica est substantia trium. Adde et simplicissima. Si modo potentissima esse debeat ac tam potentia in unione consistat quam in divisione debilitas. Iam igitur o anima trina et una spiritus unus intellectu voluntate memoria constans etherem una mecum unicum conscendisti coelumque trinum. Intra coelum tria in

uno sole vidisti equalia inter se et similia. Formam figuram atque lucem. Solemque in tribus his non triplicem sed unicum judicasti. Supra coelum in una bonitatis ipsius natura propagantem invenisti ab aeterno propaginem et amorem. Neque tres in his naturas sed unicam agnovisti in seipsa se iugiter propagantem plenissime similiterque amantem et quod hic divinitus aspexisti haud quaquam licet aliter unquam homini loqui quam tres personas unumque Deum.

*Septem circa animam septennarii.*

Septimo considera mecum o anima septem capitalibus sceleribus expurgata a septem malignis spiritibus: libera quam septem planetarum munera extrinsecus ornant ut foelix appareas: septem Spiritus sancti dona intrinsecus imbuunt; septem Angeli Dei thronum circumdantes ducunt ut revera sis foelix considera mecum septima hac lucis die in qua revera quiesces hora scilicet diei septima qua clarissime perspicias: ut septies in ea luce sis beata quae indulgere tibi dum misera vivis septuagies septies pollicetur.

***Septimo<sup>261</sup> mens tertium coelum attingit dum considerat Deum in creaturis. Creaturas in Deo Deum in seipso.***

Considera mecum unum trinumque supercoeleste coelum: videlicet primo Deum patrem tuum in rebus ab eo creatis. Res deinde creatas in Deo. Tertio Deum ipsum in semetipso. In quod quidem tertium coelum optime raptus sum olim ut et ipse haud ulterius pessime raperet et quicumque in terris miserime rapiuntur illuc mecum beatissime raperem.

**Trinitas creatoris in novem creaturarum trinitatibus reperitur.**

Divinam trinitatem in rebus cunctis agnosces dum in eis novem trinitates considerabis quas imitantur novem ordines angelorum. In una scilicet coeli machina figuram lucemque et motum. In quolibet spiritu supra coelum substantiam et vim et actionem. In omni spirituum numero tres hierarchias: in qualibet hierarchia tres ordines in quovis composito sub coelo materiam formam virtutem. In omnibus mensuram numerumque et pondus. Rursus potentiam ordinem utilitatem. Praeterea principium mediumque et finem. In te ipsa memoriam: intelligentiam voluntatem. In scientiis

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<sup>261</sup> *Tertio* in 1576

naturalem rationalem moralemque facultatem. In qualibet trinitate primum Dei potentiam patremque refert. Secundum sapientiam et filium. Tertium amorem spiritumque benignum. Sic invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur.

### **Definitio et divinitas animi.**

Hic dum in rebus tanquam divina Deum reperis reperis et teipsum. Quippe si in corporibus iuvenis spiritum: in tenebris lucem: in malis bonum. In morte vitam: aeternitatem in tempore. In rebus finitis infinitum memento te esse spiritum incorporeum: lucidum natura bonumque immortalem aeternae veritatis ac stabilitatis immensique boni capacem. Huc usque primum sit tibi coelum e cuius vertice tam Deum quam te in rebus cunctis agnoveris.

### **Quod res creatae in creatore reperiuntur per rationes ideasque divinas.**

Accede amabo ad secundum ut inde in Deo res omnes inspicias: cuncta Dei opera cernit in Deo: quisquis dispositionem formamque domus in patrefamilias. Regni in rege artificii in artifice scientiarum in sapiente considerat: semper tamen huius memor quod quaecunque hi cum tempore et labore meditantur et agunt: aeterna veritas infinitaque illa virtus momento prout vult et facillime peragit praesertim cum et intelligere in Deo non aliud sit quam esse et agere non aliud sit quam velle.

### **Sicut cuncte naturales formae in una materia: sic cuncte earum rationes in uno artifice congregantur.**

Sed ecce video communem quandam in mundi machina molem. Intueor formas in mole diversas. Scio aliud esse formatam molem aliud -/[f. LXVIIv] formas esse formantes: et quia molem hanc tanquam fundamentum intelligo ordine quodam antecedere formas segrego mente hanc ab illis: eamque vel in abyssum dispergi vel colligi in punctum seorsum excogito. Servo autem utcunque possum formas. Sed in quo eas servo? In una quadam communi cunctis essentia. Cuncte enim communiter in eo quod sunt conveniunt. In essentia inquam indivisibili formas prorsus indivisibiles. Iam enim dimensiones ab iis omnibus segregavimus. Volo insuper ex qualibet rerum specie unam hic existere formam. Et quemadmodum omnes naturales formae, quae participatione quadam tales sunt vel tales in uno quodam subjecto per se infinitae patiente id est in prima materia congregantur: sic

omnes quae<sup>262</sup> per essentiam tales sunt: id est formarum rationes congregari volo et video in uno quodam fonte per se infinite agente.

### **Deus est infinita vitarum vita lumenque luminum.**

Ubi actus est infinitus est et vita atque illa quidem poenitus<sup>263</sup> infinita. Siquidem vita est intimus et absolutus actus essentiae. In vita infinita nihil est quod non perfectissime iuvat<sup>264</sup>. Quod ergo factum est ab eo ipsa vita erat. Ubi autem perennis actus et vita viget immensa ibi absolutissima est intelligentiae lumen: siquidem intelligentia est absolutio vite reflexio quod eius in semetipsam. Ergo vita haec est lux hominum. Quae et in tenebris lucet. Sed tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. Diurnum lumen sanis quidem oculis est jocundum: egrotantibus molestissimum. Radius Dei bone menti benignus advenit paterque et gratia nominatur. Male autem rigidus iudex est et furia: Per hanc lucem veram quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum: modo vidisti res omnes in Deo ipsumque Deum. Quicquid enim est in Deo simplicissimo est ipse Deus. Illa igitur series idearum quam in Deo intellexisti divina ipsa sapientia est quae verbum Dei est apud Deum atque ipse Deus per quae<sup>265</sup> ipsum facta sunt omnia. Ideo et ipse Deus reperitur in omnibus: et omnia inveniuntur in ipso.

### **Mens reperit aeternitatem suam in rationum idearumque eternitate.**

Invenisti et hoc tu modo immortalitatem tuam. Quo enim pacto potuisses a mundi formis mortales conditiones discernere et rationes inde immortales concipere: in eternam Dei vitam intelligentiaque huiusmodi rationes redigere actuum illum cogitatione quodammodo ut ita dicam efficere effectorem: nisi ipsa immortalis esses eterneque Dei vitae et intelligentiae capax. Diffidant ergo diffidant de sua immortalitate homines flagitiosissimi quorum animulae quaerentes vitam solum in regione mortis iam diu mortuae sunt vitiorumque sceno<sup>266</sup> sepultae.

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<sup>262</sup> quae in 1576

<sup>263</sup> poenitus in 1576

<sup>264</sup> vivat in 1576

<sup>265</sup> perque in 1576

<sup>266</sup> coeno in in 1576



### **Immortalitatis fiducia accepta ex gradibus contemplationis quatuor.**

Tu vero confide mecum coelestis anima quae dum apud Deum contemplaris veras creaturarum rerum omnium eternitasque rationes quodammodo comprahendis cuiusque rationis eternitatem. Eternitatis rationem. Veritatem eternitatis. Veritatis eternitatem. -/[f. LXVIIr]

### ***Gradus quatuor.***

Profecto rationis aeternitatem sentis quando iudicas speciei cuiusque rationem diffinitionemque adeo certam consistere ut aliter unquam se habere non possit. Puta quod homo sit animal rationale: et quod circulus sit figura in seipsam conversa a cuius centro ad circumferentiam omnes rectae lineae ductae sunt aequales necessario semper fuit semperque erit verum. Rationem aeternitatis intelligis: quando aeternitatis naturam ita definis. Eternitas est nomentum<sup>267</sup> sive punctum per se semper stabile: cuique neque<sup>268</sup> antecedit punctum neque succedit ita mensura quietis ut motionis mensura est tempus. Eternitatis veritatem cognoscis quando probas in eo solum esse veram aeternitatem quod ex se et in seipso sine principio ac fine quiescit. Veritatis cernis aeternitatem ubi argumentaris neque incoepisse unquam neque desinere veritatem. Alioquin fuisset veritas ante seipsam foretque post seipsam. Nempe si coepisse dicatur quandoque ante ab aeterno verum fuit et non nisi per veritatem fuit verum veritatem ipsam quandoque fore. Ac etiam desinere cogitur: deinde in aeternum verum erit et non nisi per ipsam met veritatem erit verum veritatem aliquando extitisse.

### **Immortalitas animi ex proportione ad immortalia.**

Attende anima sitibunda liquoris aeterni. Memento te non posse<sup>269</sup> aeternum omnino objectum attingere nisi tibi aliqua cum illo inesset proportio. Ergo si non ab evo saltem vivis in evum. Neque solum attingis cum aliqua esse aeterna et qualia sint argumentaris. Sed etiam pro natura tua penetras quando intrinsecam illorum naturam quasi in suas quasdam partes viresque distinguis. Imo etiam quodammodo comprahendere videris quando diffinis. Mitto quod videri posset alicui si mens sempiternam comprehendit rationem: rationem illa esse majorem ideoque aeternam: satis esto si suo modo capit eam equalem saltem quodammodo esse oportere. Sive autem iam aequalis sit natura sive

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<sup>267</sup> *momentum* in 1576

<sup>268</sup> *Cui neque* in 1576

<sup>269</sup> *potuisse* in 1576

capiendo fiat aequalis tanquam a Deo rationum fonte ob mutuam quandam amorem iugiter dilatata sufficienter ostenditur mentem esse sempiternam Dominique<sup>270</sup> animam ab initio quantum ad essentiam vitamque ut ita dicam parem aeternae rationi fecisse postquam quotidie quantum ad intelligentiam et amorem quoad fieri potest reddit aequalem. Denique quaecumque vis capit aliquid pro natura sua capit et ad suam retrahit rationem. Si ergo mortales esses nunquam aeterna in quantum aeterna sunt et sub aeternitatis ratione nunquam rationis aeternitatem aeternitatisque conciperes<sup>271</sup> rationem. Sed sicut rubris oculis et amare linguae rubra et amara sunt singula ita mortali animo mortalia cuncta judicarentur. Nunc vero tantum abest quod quae sempiterna sunt rite contemplando caduca putentur ut mens contemplatrix etiam a mortalibus singulisque conditiones mortalitatis discernat atque sub universali ratione percipiat. Haec materia corruptioneque separare<sup>272</sup> nunquam posset nisi et ipsa multo longius esset ab iis seiuncta. Capis ergo in coelo hoc secundo aeternitatem tuam quando hic rationis cuiusque aeternitatem pro viribus capis in Deo fonte rationum immenso. -/[f. LXVIIIv]

**Mens Deum in seipso videt ob nimium splendorem omnino videri non posse.**

Caeterum nunquid Deum ipsum in seipso comprahendis quod tertium tibi superest coelum: in quo illa ipse archana vidi quae non licet homini loqui lumen Solis perspicis in elementis suspicis et in stellis: in seipso non potes inspicere et tamen homo si sapis contentus es tantum esse Solem tuum ut capacitatem superet oculorum. Divinam lucem similiter in rebus ab ea creatis agnoscis agnoscis et in rerum rationibus creatarum. Sed absolutam in seipsa non substines. Gaudes autem thesaurum tuum esse ut sit prorsus innumerabilis: innumerabilis inquam non quod tibi desit ars numerandi quae tibi illic est plenissima sed quod ille virtutis gradibus summum artis exsuperet. Satis tamen numeravisse videris quando cunctis quae vel esse vel intelligi possunt dinumeratis recta computas ratione Deum ipsum tale nihili<sup>273</sup> esse: et quando quomodo innumerabilis sit virtus intelligis. Satis vides quando quomodo fit invisibilis vere vides. Satis comprahendis cum quam sit incomprahensibilis comprahendis. Nunquam enim clarius veritatem ipsam intelligis quam cum recte quo pacto super intelligentiam sit intelligis. Ubi summa lux tibi summae tenebrae: summae quoque tenebrae lumen

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<sup>270</sup> *Deumque* in 1576

<sup>271</sup> *conceperas* in 1576

<sup>272</sup> *separare* in in 1576

<sup>273</sup> *nihil* in 1576

summum. Unde hoc nihil notius: nihil rursus ignotius, hoc nihil praesentius. Nihil absentius. Nihil magis visibile. Nihil visibile<sup>274</sup> magis. Hinc exclamat David: Nox illuminatio mea in delitiis meis.<sup>275</sup>

**Rectius de Deo loquimur negando et referendo quam affirmando.**

Verum quid ita in hoc coelo vides non potes loqui: hoc est absolute pronuntiare atque affirmare. Quotiens de Deo alia negas ita discurrens Deus neque est corpus ullum: neque corporis qualitas neque anima neque angelus neque si quid altius cogitetur vere negas. Quotiens ad Deum alia refers ita comparans Deus principium est quia ab illo profluunt omnia Deus est finis quia ad illum omnia refluunt Deus vita et intelligentia est quoniam per illum vivunt animae ac mentes intelligunt vere quoque refers. At si affirmaveris Deus ipse in se absolute hoc ipsum quod vel repperi vel cogitavi valde decipieris. Quippe si major te est summus ille omnium auctor non potest id esse quod tua intelligentia circumscriptum cogitur esse terminus. Si principiorum principium finiumque finis infinitus est non est aliquid horum quae abs te adinventata et comprahensa iam finita videntur.

**Anima beata<sup>276</sup> contenta est hoc ipso quod bonum suum incompraehensibile sit. Neque esset contenta si comprahensibile esset.**

Quid ergo an contenta vivis anima: quod vitam tuam non penitus comprahendas finiasque quia sit infinita. Imo scio te hoc ipso gaudere quod absque fine sit vita tua bonumque tuum. Sufficit tibi ab incompraehensibili foeliciter comprahendi neque tibi aliquid nisi sit incompraehensibile sufficit. Quicquid enim aut veri aut boni offertur quod certos habeat gradus quamvis quam plurimos adhuc plures intellectu requiris et ulterius appetis voluntate. Unde nusquam nisi in vero bonoque immenso potes quiescere neque finem nisi in infinito -/[f. LXVIIIr] potes facere. Quippe quae a solo infinito dependeas: atque inde vim habeas ratione aliqua infinitam qua ad infinitum vergas: atque progrediaris.

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<sup>274</sup> *invisibile* in 1576

<sup>275</sup> Vulgate: Psalm 139:11 et dixi forsitan tenebrae conculcabunt me et nox inluminatio in deliciis meis

<sup>276</sup> *beata* in 1576

### **Voluntas Deo fruitur magis quam intellectus.**

Ecce video ubi quodammodo deficit intellectus sufficere voluntatem. Penetrat ecce charitas: quo non potest omnino scientia penetrare. Infinitatem<sup>277</sup> quidem prospicis quamvis non clarissime. Hanc ardentissime amas: hac gaudes vehementissime. Vides tu quidem quantum est tibi visibile. Amas et quantum vides ipsa et quantum vides abs te quia nimis exuberat non posse plane videri et hoc ipsum te iuvat maxime quod sine ulla vel sollicitudine vel satietate fruaris bono: quod cum sit infinitum: et infinite tibi suppetit et infinite delectat. Hic<sup>278</sup> si non infinita omnino ratione discernit immensum intelligentia lumen: tamen immenso amore gaudioque afficitur dum fruitur bono infinito<sup>279</sup> voluntas. Quae quidem si plena est ad quam pertinet esse contentam totus omnino contentus est animus.

### **Mens immortalitatem suam metitur in objecto suo quod est sine mensura.**

Animus dum in tercio coelo exactius admodum quam in aliis quam immensus sit Deus ut ita loquar metitur simul quantum propria vita naturae temporisque cuiusque mensuram excedat agnoscit. Neque enim infiniti imo infinitatis ipsius rationem attingeret animus: si vita eius finem esset aliquem habitura: neque objecto immenso magis quam terminatis contemplando delectaretur si in numero<sup>280</sup> esset naturalium temporaliumque formarum. Quarum vires objectis non quidem maximis sed mediocribus solum eisque proportionem quadam congruentibus oblectantur si vitae vis qualis est intelligentia et voluntas ultra quemlibet loci: temporis, gradus finem sibi oblatum sine fine intelligendo amandoque progreditur certe vita ipsa loci limitibus non constringitur certi temporis terminis non exceditur contrariae qualitatis gradibus non obruitur: determinati veri bonique praesentia non impletur.

### **Coeleste lumen lumine coelesti perspicitur supercoeleste supercoelesti.**

Dic age quo lumine suspicis coeleste lumen? Profecto coelesti. Dic ergo quo lumine vidisti modo supercoeleste lumen: certe supercoelesti.<sup>281</sup> Lux ita mundi sensibus manifesta una quaedam qualitas est: ergo diversa corpora non aliter eam capiunt quam per unam quandam naturam illis insitam et luci

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<sup>277</sup> *Infinitam* in 1576

<sup>278</sup> *Hoc* in 1576

<sup>279</sup> *infinita* in 1576

<sup>280</sup> *immenso* in 1576

<sup>281</sup> *supercoelesti. Lux ista mundi...* in 1576

convenientem. Natura huiusmodi perspicuitas nominatur. Quoniam vero perspicuitas in oculo est sensibili luci cognatior quam in caeteris hisce corporibus: est enim in eo perspicuitas sensualis iccirco<sup>282</sup> lux postquam illi infusa est reflectitur quodammodo in seipsam: quando scilicet oculus sentit illam. Ubi videtur oculus non solum a luce pati dum suscipit ipsam: verum etiam in eam quodammodo nonnihil agere suo modo iudicat eam.

**Anima immortalitatem suam videt quando videt radium intelligentiae infundi sibi a Deo atque in Deum reflecti.** -/[f. LXIXv]

Eadem ratione spiritale lumen unum quiddam est id est veritas ipsa. Hoc spiritus diversi non capiunt aliter quam spiritalem quandam perspicuitatem eis innatam. Quoniam vero in spiritibus praeditus<sup>283</sup> ratione perspicuitis<sup>284</sup> huiusmodi luminum<sup>285</sup> huic similior et propinquior inest fit ut ii spiritus non solum id capiant sed etiam iudicent atque ita reflectantur in ipsum. Ubi videtur lumen hoc spiritale intelligibileque: primo quidem intelligentiam influere se ipsum<sup>286</sup> minime deserens. Deinde reflere in seipsum intelligentiam non derelinquens. Atque sicut Solis lumen prout in Sole manet est invisibile ut autem e Sole effluit in colores est visibile prout influit oculo eique naturale evadit sit visivum: quando inde refluit in Solem: tunc videns efficitur ita Dei lux quantum in ipso absolute se colligit est super intelligentiam. Quantum inde in rerum se explicat rationes intelligibilis est. Quantum infusa intellectui ipsi sit naturalis evadit intellectiva. Quando vero in ipsum Deum resilit est intelligens. Quamobrem circulis<sup>287</sup> quidam hic efficitur: mirifice lucens ab ipia<sup>288</sup> divina veritate in intellectum ab intellectu rursus in ipsam circuli huius principium finisque est Deus. Intellectus est medium. Si huius circuli primus ultimusque terminus est eternitas in quantum eternitas certe medium est eternum quod quidem est particeps terminorum. Quo enim pacto splendor ab eternitate fluens in mentem. Rursus in eternitatem inde reflueret per intelligentiam scilicet quae rapit objectum et per voluntatem quae transit in objectum rapiturque ab ipso nisi in mente vim suam eternitatemque servaret. Qua ratione hunc mens suscipit eadem per ipsum agit. Non enim potest praestantius per illum agere quam susceperit. Agit vero per illum absoluto quodam eternoque modo quandoquidem

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<sup>282</sup> *idcirco* in 1576

<sup>283</sup> *praeditis* in 1576

<sup>284</sup> *perspicuitas* in 1576

<sup>285</sup> *lumini* in 1576

<sup>286</sup> *seipsum* in 1576

<sup>287</sup> *circulus* in 1576

<sup>288</sup> *ipsa* in 1576

eius radiis supra locum et tempus erectis indivisibiles eternasque rerum rationes attingit atque in ipsam sese eternitatem miris modis insinuat.

### **Mens est Dei speculum.**

O sagacissimum venatorem qui in profunda hac mundi silva occultissima Dei vestigia investigat et reperit. O argutissimum racionacinatorem<sup>289</sup> qui rationes rerum invenit in summa omnium ratione: o perspicacissimum rimatorem qui adita Dei penetrat quodammodo in eius ab ipso<sup>290</sup> et ut summatim dicam in iis omnibus peragendis speculatur in se Deum velut in speculo. Suspicit se in Deo velut in Sole: o speculum divinissimum divini Solis et radiis illustratum et flammis accensum. Nempe ipsius veritatis radiis vera ubique discernit: ac in omnibus veris et super omnia ipsam. Ipsius boni flamis bona omnia passim ardet et sitit: ac in omnibus bonis et super omnia ipsum.

### **Corpora sunt umbrae Dei: animae vero Dei imagines immortales.**

Vides o mea mens vides esse te Dei speculum quando intelligentiae tuae radii in eum ab eo immissi resiliunt. Si eius speculum es ut es absque dubio quandoquidem eum in te specularis teque in eo: sequitur ut quod ex Deo infra te vestigium quoddam dumtaxat est et umbra id in te imago Dei similitudoque sit expressior: ut merito dictum sit ad ima-/[f. LXIXr]ginem similitudinemque<sup>291</sup> Dei te esse creatam. Umbra corpus intuenti distincte non repraesentat. Imago autem ad corporis<sup>292</sup> similitudinem expressa refert expressius. Mundi machina tanquam umbra Dei Deum tibi ipsum non monstrat nisi eius ad te redigas ordinem et examine tuo clarissimo discutias umbram. Tunc demum in te tanquam imagine Dei mundus ex umbra fit imago. Fit in te tanquam vera Dei similitudine vere agnoscis Deum quando probas hunc ipsam esse veritatem eternam veramque eternitatem. Tempus autem eius esse umbram et temporalia umbratilia omnia. Postquam vera es eternitatis imago super umbram et umbratilia quandoquidem quasi media horum haec scernis<sup>293</sup> ab illa certe eterna es nullis aut loci limitibus aut certi temporis terminis circumscripta. Alioquin non posses vel per immensum spacium tempusve cogitatione discurrere vel ultra haec ad indivisibilem eternamque transire naturam.

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<sup>289</sup> *ratiocinatorem* in 1576

<sup>290</sup> *eius abisso, & ut summatim* in 1576

<sup>291</sup> *similitudinemque* in 1576

<sup>292</sup> *corporis* in 1576

<sup>293</sup> *secernis* in 1576

### **Mens quia est divini vultus imago Deum semper suspicere debet.**

O imago Dei in mentis speculo quamdiu es in enigmate id est umbra corporis cognoscis per speculum. Sed extra umbram facie videbis ad faciem: o divini vultus imago in speculo vultum aspice tuum. Quem adspicere nihil ferme aliud est quam aspici. Quandoquidem oculi illius radius ipse est qui inspicit ipse est qui a seipso respicitur: cognosce teipsam mens aliarum rerum cognoscendarum usque adeo cupida quid es o mens cedo quid es? Imago universi exemplaris exacta. Legitima patris omnium filia. Supercoelestis Solis radius sempiternus iugiter natura reflexus in Solem. Deus ergo te libentissime tanquam suam imaginem intuetur. Amat omnino te tanquam filiam. Fulget tibi tanquam radio suo inngitque<sup>294</sup> te sibi. Ergo iam moribus et pietate ad exemplar compone te tuum quo integerrime reformaris. Ama ante omnia patrem illo<sup>295</sup> quo foeliciter generaris foelicius regeneraris. Gaude dumtaxat lumine sine quo neque aliis potes unquam neque te ipsa gaudere. Terribiles ante omnia tenebre: quia et vita consistit in luce et lux in vita: et quo interiores eo terribiliores adveniunt. Horribiles extra corpus tenebre cunctis. Horribiliores intra corpus sunt melancholicis. Horribilissime in anima miseris. Jocundum<sup>296</sup> ergo aeris lumen omnibus quia vitali spiritui<sup>297</sup> cognatissimum est rerumque innumerabilium varietate delectat et docet jocundius<sup>298</sup> lumen in spiritibus corporis est sanguineis suavissimum lumen intimum mentis beatis.

### **Deus ipsum gaudium. Per ipsum duntaxat gaudemus ipso solo beate gaudemus.**

Si omnia vitandi doloris et consequendi gaudii gratia omnes agunt et absque gaudio ipso vitam ipsam respuunt manifeste gaudium est finis omnium: est igitur et principium: quo enim moventur cuncta inde cuncta moventur et fiunt. Quid ergo aliud est gaudium ipsum nisi Deus? Bonorum bonum: gaudium gaudiorum. Cum tantum his bonis gaudeas atque illis dicito mihi si modo dici potest quantum illo bono quantumve idea illa gaudii gaudeas sine cuius illecebris sine cuius forma neque his bonis gaudes neque -/[f. LXXv] illis. Bono hoc et hac idea gaudent continue quicumque re aliqua gaudent vel ingrati. Sed non bene beateque gaudent nisi grati quibus multo gratius hoc advenit quam ingratis. Ergo si vis ipso bono ipsoque gaudio optime beatissimeque gaudere memento in omnibus quae tibi placent nihil tibi aliud placere quam ipsum. FINIS.

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<sup>294</sup> *inngitque* in 1576

<sup>295</sup> *illum* in 1576

<sup>296</sup> *Jocundum* in 1576

<sup>297</sup> *spiritus* in 1576

<sup>298</sup> *iucundius* in 1576

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