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THE INFLUENCE OF PLOTIN ON RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHERS IN THE 15TH CENTURY : MARSILIO FICINO AND GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

The subject of my PhD dissertation is the influence of Plotin's philosophy in Ficino's and Pico's writings.

In the preface I examine the relevance of studying antiquity and the spiritual horizon which could help the contemporary materialistic mind of man in everyday life. In the introduction I deal with Plotin's rediscovery in Italy from obtaining and copying manuscripts to the translation with abundant commentaries of Ficino, edited in print.

Since in the *Theologia platonica's* composition (shaping) Ficino shows much more the effect of Jamblichos and Psellos, I concentrate on his earlier *Commentary of Platon's Symposium*, finished in 1469 examining the speculative elements taken over from Plotin by Ficino in his cosmography and ontological structure.

First of all in the *Commentary of Platon's Symposium* I demonstrate that Ficino takes over Plotin's ontology in the description of creation. The role of light in Creation and the parallel between Sense and eyes and seeing drawn by Ficino has its archetype in Plotin's writings. By Plotin for every level of existence the light is the *Hypostasis* above, and contemplates it like an eye. The Sun in Plotin's analogies is either the symbol of the One or of Sense, in the first case the aureole rising from it and surrounding it is the Intelligence, in the second is the Soul. Ficino as Plotin, makes Love a means to become perfect and reach God. I examine other elements of Plotin's influence on Ficino principally following the contents of *Enneads III, 5*. I compare the two writings (*Commentary of Symposium* and *Enneads III, 5*) on the following four aspects: 1. the love as a state of mind; 2. the two Venus; 3. the caste of *daimons*; 4. Poros and Penia. Beauty according to Ficino as Plotin, is equal to the spiritual principle springing from God which emanates continuously from him nourishing all the levels of the lower creation and shapes it including Sense and matter. It's similar to the light, the brilliance of which guides the spectator to its source. It is this Beauty which leads to desire in everything. In Ficino, as in Plotin's view the aspiration to Beauty and its source, Good, and the love kindled by them is the promoter of the realization of the man re-united to the Origin, which is the highest level of human existence. This leading motif intersperses the whole *Commentary of Symposium*.

Out of the 900 theses intended for the philosophical dispute to be organized in Rome, 15 is concerned with the philosophy of Plotin selected by Pico. They are formulated by himself on the basis of his studies, so they aren't direct quotations. Nine of his own theses mention Plotin or deal with typical Plotinian problems. Three times he refutes Plotin's point of view: on the basic categories, on the immortality of Soul, and the reincarnation of human Soul in animals. Two times Pico interprets him: on the two Venus and on celestial love. Three times his opinion is exactly the same as that of Plotin's: on spiritual and physical beauty, on the marriage of Poros and Penia, and on the love appearing in the *Symposium*.

In the *Heptaplus* the Neo-Platonist author appears on the following subjects: 1. the One; 2. the birth of the Angel (Sense); 3. the Soul is a cycle; 4. God is not equal with Sense; 5. every life derives from a divine principle; 6. preparation for realization – the happiness of man.

In his analysis written to Benivieni's *Canzona d'amore* Pico makes a mention of Plotin's etimologization, according to which the name of Eros derives from contemplation or seeing (*ἡνάοέο*). In the III, 1. chapter treating the Angel's (coming from Sense) and the human's (coming from Soul) love, Pico dedicates a whole page to the explanation of the conception of love in Plotin's *Enneads III, 5*. In the IV, 4. chapter analysing the fourth *stanza* he declares that the beauty of the body comes from the quality of the soul, and the light of the soul suffuses the body by which it becomes nice. First he refers to Moses, then to Plotin, on whose face according to Porphyry some radiation could be seen during his meditation.

So it's obvious that in Pico's earlier writings, before his denigration by the Church of Rome, Plotin is his model quoted by name. Afterwards he mostly avoided those „speculative excesses” which could be suspicious for some cardinals.