

May 16

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MARSILIO FICINO



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- × Life
- × Renaissance Man
- × Platonic Academy of Florence
- × Christian Thinker
 - + Theory of the Soul
 - + Emanation and Return
 - + The Person of Christ
 - + Theory of Redemption

MARSILIO FICINO (1433-1499)

- ✘ Born in Figline in the Val d'Arno October 19th 1433
- ✘ Father was doctor to Cosimo de' Medici
- ✘ 1462 became the head of the Florentine Platonic Academy
- ✘ Became a priest in 1473 and later a Canon of Florence

RENAISSANCE MAN

- ✘ Understood the principles of every art
- ✘ Embodied the Renaissance ideal of the complete man
 - + Philosopher, scholar
 - + Skilled doctor who like Hippocrates never took a fee
 - + Musician – main objective was to arouse devotion
 - + Visual arts were of especial importance
 - ✘ Their function was to remind the soul of its origin in the divine world by creating through art resemblances to that world
 - + Priesthood – highest function of all

FICINO – TRANSLATING THE CLASSICS

- ✘ Translated into Latin the whole of Plato and many of the classical writings
 - + Hymns of Orpheus
 - + Sayings of Zoroaster
 - + Hermetic writings
 - + Plato's Dialogues
- ✘ Remained the standard until the 19th century

FICINO – PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

- ✘ *De Amore* – commentary on Plato's *Symposium* – explains how creation is brought into being
- ✘ *The Platonic Theology or the immortality of Souls* – 18 books
- ✘ *The Christian Religion* – emphasizes in addition to the divinity of Man's soul the personal relationship between Man and God
- ✘ *The Three Books on Life* – a medical and astrological work

DIVINITY OF MAN'S SOUL

“Let him revere himself as an image of the Divine God. Let him hope to ascend again to God, as soon as the Divine Majesty deigns in the same way to descend to him. Let him love God with all his heart, so as to transform himself into Him, who through singular love wonderfully transformed himself into Man” (Opera Omnia)

PLATONIC ACADEMY OF FLORENCE

- ✘ Established by Cosimo de' Medici in 1439 – selected Ficino to run it in 1462
- ✘ Lorenzo de' Medici, Alberti, Poliziano, Landino, Pico della Mirandola
- ✘ 1462 Villa at Careggi became the headquarters
- ✘ Associated with his Academy and under his influence
- ✘ Awoke Europe to the significance of the Platonic tradition



FICINO AND THE RENAISSANCE ARTISTS

- ✘ Inspired Botticelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Durer and others
- ✘ Directed the painting of Botticelli's *Primavera*



MARSILIO FICINO
CHRISTIAN THINKER

THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HIS PLATONISM

- ✘ Pursued the idea of a Christian Platonism
- ✘ Exact account of why Christian theology can/should use Platonic reasoning
- ✘ Dealt with the theological questions the tradition of Christian thinking presented
 - + *De Christiana religione* – a apology (defense) of the Christian religion
 - + *Letter De Raptu Pauli* – St. Paul's rapture to heaven to explain his theory of the soul's ascent to God
 - + *Opera Omnia* – discusses problems of Christian theology for example the resurrection of the body or the doctrine of the Sacraments
 - + Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans - Central position of Paul among the apostles

FICINO AND PLATO

- ✘ Writings of Plato and his followers contained the key to the most important knowledge for Man:
 - + Knowledge of the divine and immortal principle within Man
 - + This knowledge appears to have been an actual experience for Ficino
 - + Made faith in this principle a living ideal for his age

FICINO - IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

- ✘ Important in the revival of religion
- ✘ Became central to Christian thought
 - + Frequent subject for reflection
 - + **Lateran Council in 1512 it was made part of the dogma of the Catholic Church**
 - + Emphasis on the individual soul led to the devotional step of a “personal relationship” with God
- ✘ Immortality and divinity of the soul was the basis of “the dignity of Man”

FICINO – VIEW OF MAN

- ✘ His theory of the soul is the foundation of his view of man
- ✘ Order of Being:
 - + God
 - + Angels
 - + Souls
 - + Material sphere Quality
 - + Body
- ✘ Emphasizes the middle position of the soul in the Universe
- ✘ Soul - mediates between the divine and the material spheres of the cosmos

FICINO – NEO-PLATONIST

- ✘ Neo-Platonist conception of emanation and return as a basis of his idea of man as the image of God
- ✘ Characterized the human *mens* (mind) as a ray of the divine Spirit which descends into the soul and from there it ascends again back to God
- ✘ Metaphor of the soul as a mirror of God to describe the quality of the soul
 - + Trace of God
 - + Image and likeness of God

SOUL AS MIRROR OF GOD

“You see, O my mind, you see that you are a mirror of God, when the ray of your intelligence in him was let loose to rebound from him. If you are a reflection (that is without a doubt) to him in the mirror and he to you, it follows that what is of God, that is within you is only the trace and shadow, of the image of God in you is expressed more as a likeness, as was said with merit, it is in the image and likeness of God that you are the created” (De raptu Pauli)

INCLINATION OF THE SOUL TOWARDS THE BODY

- ✘ Through union with the body, the soul communicated the principles and laws of the divine/immaterial sphere to the sensible/material sphere
 - + This connection and guidance gives sense to the earthly existence of man
 - + The soul has to care for the body and the material sphere – an imitation of the “divine providence”
 - + Emphasized the role of men as “God’s representatives on earth”
 - + Using this power man acts on earth as the subduer of nature and the founder of culture

MAN ON EARTH

- ✘ Man could and should be like God on earth – not automatically
- ✘ The soul can give up its proper task and succumb to material influence is what Ficino calls sin
- ✘ When that inclination excludes the divine and intellectual affinity of the soul

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

- ✘ Tries to verify the divinity of Christ with a Trinitarian argument
 - + Accepts Thomas Aquinas - God does not only think His perfect image, He is His perfect image and this constitutes the ideal conception of the whole cosmos in God himself
 - + Ficino highlights the cosmological aspects of Christ as the Logos
- ✘ Incarnation – The descent of the pre-existent Logos into the sensible world
 - + God in His goodness became man so that man could become God
 - + The presentation of the divine sphere in the sensibly perceptible person of Christ abolishes the perverted orientation of the soul towards the sensible and material sphere
 - + Makes the ascent of the soul towards God possible and establishes the basis for redemption

FICINO VIEW OF CHRIST

- ✘ In Christ one person exists in three natures: God, Soul and Body – through the soul, God and body are connected
- ✘ Christ is the highest and most perfect realization of the ideal and exemplary destination of man
- ✘ Christ discloses the divine sphere through the example of his life and through his teaching
- ✘ Being divinely influenced through Christ is the decisive impulse for the soul's ascent to God and creates those forces which move the soul towards God

THEORY OF REDEMPTION

- ✘ Redemption is the ascent of the soul to God
 - + The soul ascends from the material sphere into the intelligible and from there to God himself
 - + The soul's ascent is dependent on divine influence
 - + Characterizes the ascent as purgation and deification
 - + Using intellectual power, the soul ascends from sensible perception to the contemplation of the Ideas
 - + Based on the Platonic doctrine of ideas, the cognition of the world leads automatically to the cognition of God

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

- ✘ Besides the intellectual cognition of God - Main factors in redemption
 - + Faith - organ which allows the soul to perceive the divine
 - + Hope - overcomes the resistance of the material sphere because it can perceive the love of God toward the world
 - + Love - redemption without love is impossible. Love is an activity of the soul caused by God
- ✘ The ascent of the soul happens through the intellect by thinking and through the will by faith, hope and above all love
- ✘ Divine ray is a special form of grace but it does not remove free will

SUMMARY

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