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**Marsilio Ficino's Notebooks**  
**A Case of Renaissance Reading Practices**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
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**The University of Warwick**  
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## Abstract

This thesis focusses on three compilations, extant in three manuscripts —Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 92; Milan, Venerabile Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS F 19 sup.; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Borgianus graecus 22— These three manuscripts were produced by one of the most important representatives of the Italian Renaissance: Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). The Florentine scholar was largely responsible for the revival of Platonism in Western Europe during the Renaissance and beyond.

MS Ricc. 92 contains an anthology of Greek and Latin texts on the theme of love, which Ficino presumably compiled with a view to writing his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. MS Ambr. F 19 sup. is a collection of excerpts from Plato, Plotinus and Proclus on the theme of the soul, which Ficino produced before starting writing his major philosophical work: the *Platonic Theology*. Finally, MS Borg. Gr. 22 was likely used by Ficino as a textual basis for his translation of Dionysius the Areopagite's *De divinis nominibus*. These three notebooks have been hitherto largely ignored or only partially studied by modern scholars.

Through a contextualized analysis of these manuscripts, this work aims to give insight into Ficino's reading practices and methodology, and show that they are crucial to reconstruct his scholarly activity. By using an interdisciplinary approach, it will provide a more nuanced view and more exhaustive reconstruction of the ways in which

Ficino actually read, selected and used ancient and medieval authors and also of the ways in which he quoted, codified their doctrines and appropriated them in his own work. More broadly, it will offer insight into Renaissance reading practices and some important aspects of Early Modern culture.

## Introduction

The aim of my thesis is to focus on three anthologies, extant in three manuscripts —Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 92; Milan, Venerabile Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS F 19 sup.; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Borgianus graecus 22— These three manuscripts were produced by one of the most important representatives of the Italian Renaissance: Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Through a contextualized analysis of these manuscripts, I will seek to give insight into Ficino's reading practices and methodology, and show that they are crucial to reconstruct his scholarly activity.

As is well known, Marsilio Ficino was largely responsible for the revival of Platonism in Western Europe and his work had a strong impact on his time and on the following ages.<sup>1</sup> Ficino's importance in Western culture is commonly associated with a crucial event: in 1462, the young Marsilio was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici to translate the Platonic *corpus*. The translation was completed around 1469 and was printed in 1484 in Florence.<sup>2</sup> This work had a

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning Ficino's biography see Raymond Marcel, *Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1958); Cesare Vasoli, 'Ficino, Marsilio', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997), XLVII, 378-95. For the critical bibliography see Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino and His Work after Five Hundred Years', *Quaderni di Rinascimento* 7 (1987), 36-66, 188-89; Teodoro Katinis, 'Bibliografia Ficiniana', *Accademia* 2 (2000), 101-36; Id., 'Bibliografia Ficiniana', *Accademia* 3 (2001), 9-21; Id., 'Bibliografia Ficiniana', *Accademia* 4 (2002), 7-18; Id., 'Bibliografia Ficiniana', *Accademia* 5 (2003), 9-16; Id., 'Bibliografia Ficiniana', *Accademia* 8 (2002), 7-21. See also Marsilio Ficino, *Teologia Platonica*, ed. and trans. by Errico Vitale (Milan: Bompiani, 2011), pp. VI-XCI.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the chronology, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino as a Beginning Student of Plato', *Scriptorium* 20 (1966), 41-54 (p. 43). On the edition, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Supplementum ficinianum. Marsilio Ficini philosophi Platonici opuscula inedita et dispersa* (Florence: Olschki, 1937; rpt. 1973) II, I, LX, CLIV; Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The First Printed Edition of Plato's Works and the Date of its Publication (1484)', in *Science and History. Studies in Honor of E. Rosen*, ed. by Edward Rosen, Erna Hilfstein, Pawel Czartoryski, Frank D. Grande (Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences Press, 1978), pp. 25-35; *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone. Mostra di Manoscritti, Stampe e Documenti* (17 maggio-16 giugno 1984), ed. by

strong influence on Western culture during the Renaissance and beyond and determined, at least in part, what authoritative studies have defined as 'the Return of Plato': 'Throughout Europe, many people read Plato through Ficino's translation. Even when they did study the text in the original Greek, they had often approached it first through Ficino's *argumenta* and commentaries, so it can fairly be said that many people knew Plato through Ficino, absorbing in their reading process some measure of both'.<sup>3</sup> Since Ficino sought to revive the Plato of the Neoplatonists, many dialogues were read through the lens of what Neoplatonic commentators had made of it.

Marsilio Ficino is often presented by his contemporaries and modern scholars alike as a prophet who underwent a profound religious experience, nourished by his reading of pagan and Christian literature, in the 'spiritual' retreat of Careggi, which Cosimo de' Medici had given him. Undoubtedly, Ficino himself contributed to the development of this traditional image: that of the *sacerdos* of the Platonic wisdom, responsible for the revival of the Platonic Academy, the divinely inspired translator and commentator of Plato's 'oracles' and of those of his Neoplatonic successors.

This is how Ficino presents himself in many of his letters, which circulated widely in Europe during his time and long after. In a letter to Martinus Uranius, Ficino describes Plato as the figure who perfected the art of uniting religion and philosophy and defines him as *disputator subtilis, pius sacerdos*,

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Sebastiano Gentile, Sandra Niccoli and Paolo Viti (Florence: Le Lettere 1984), pp. 116-19. Regarding the reasons for such a deferment in the printing, see Riccardo Fubini, 'Ficino e i Medici all'avvento di Lorenzo il Magnifico', *Rinascimento* 24 (1984), 3-52; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill 1990; rpt. with corrections, 1991), II, pp. 300-304; see also Paola Megna, 'Lo Ione platonico nella Firenze medicea', *Quaderni di Filologia Medievale e Umanistica* 2 (1999), 1-206 (pp. 60-61).

<sup>3</sup> 'Introduction', in *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, ed. by Stephen Clucas and Valerie Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 3.

*facundus orator*. When commenting on this letter, Brunello Lotti states that 'È indubbio che nel definire Platone, Ficino definisca anche se stesso'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Ficino saw and represented himself as an inspired *sacerdos* of Plato, whose mission was to revive the union of philosophy and religion that had been initiated by Plato.

Modern scholars too have often adopted this representation without question, as it fitted the highly idealized vision of the Renaissance constructed by fifteenth-century and modern interpreters. However, in the past decades, a large number of biographical, historical and philosophical surveys have enabled us to question constructively this idealization of Ficino's activity as a scholar and see a more concrete, 'practical' facet of his work, as well as more historically accurate picture of his life.<sup>5</sup> First, scholars have been providing new insight into the so-called Platonic Academy in Florence.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, with their seminal studies, leading scholars, such as Paul Oskar Kristeller, Eugenio Garin, Cesare Vasoli, Michael J. B. Allen and Stéphane Toussaint, contributed to demonstrating that Ficino was not merely the philosopher of the Laurentian age, who worked solely at the service of the Medicean *principato*.<sup>7</sup> Ficino was also one of the philosophers who most influenced the history of European thought between the

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<sup>4</sup> Brunello Lotti, 'Mente, riflessione e consapevolezza di sé in Marsilio Ficino', *Esercizi Filosofici* 2 (2007), 137-65 (p. 140). The letter is published in Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1939).

<sup>5</sup> For an account, see Cesare Vasoli, 'Marsilio Ficino e la sua *Renovatio*', in *Marsilio Ficino. Fonti, testi, fortuna*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Firenze 1-3 ottobre 1999), ed. by Sebastiano Gentile and Stéphane Toussaint (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006), pp. 1-25.

<sup>6</sup> See Arthur M. Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); James Hankins, 'The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (1991), 429-75.

<sup>7</sup> See Riccardo Fubini, 'Ficino e i Medici all'avvento di Lorenzo il Magnifico', *Rinascimento* 14 (1984), 3-52; Id., 'Ancora i Medici e il Ficino', *Rinascimento* 27 (1987), 275-91.

end of the fifteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, several studies shed light on Ficino's youth and his early intellectual experiences and on the complex elaboration of his main writings.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, further research has been carried out on Ficino's disciples and friends and on his relation to other scholars, showing that Ficino's work was also the result of an intense collaboration with his peers.<sup>10</sup>

Since the end of the eighties, historians of textual transmission and philologists have developed an interest in Ficino's translations, contributing to a reconstruction of his philological activity, his translation techniques and his methodology.<sup>11</sup> As such, these studies helped to modify the image of Ficino as a translator having little or no interest in philology. They have shown, for instance, that his translations hold a prominent position not only in the history of transmission of philosophical thought but also in the history of textual transmission. In other words, Ficino's work is the result of a complex process,

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<sup>8</sup> See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1988); Eugenio Garin, 'Immagini e simboli in Marsilio Ficino', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento. Studi e Ricerche*, ed. by Eugenio Garin (Rome: Laterza, 1976), pp. 269-88; Id., 'Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti* ed. by Giancarlo Garfagnini, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1986), I, pp. 3-13; Michael J. B. Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino: a Study of His Phaedrus Commentary, its Sources and Genesis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Id., *Plato's Third Eye: Studies in Marsilio Ficino's Metaphysics and its Sources* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1995); *Marsilio Ficino: his Theology, his Philosophy, his Legacy* ed. by Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2002); *Marsile Ficin ou les mystères platoniciens, Actes du XLII<sup>e</sup> Colloque International d'Etudes Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tour, 7-10 juillet 1999*, ed. by Stéphane Toussaint (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002); *Il pensiero di Marsilio Ficino*, Atti del Convegno (Figline Valdarno, 19 maggio 2006) ed. by Stéphane Toussaint, *Cahiers d'Accademia* (2007); Cesare Vasoli, 'Marsilio Ficino', in *Storia della Teologia, Età della Rinascita*, ed. by Giulio D'Onofrio (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1995), III, pp. 230-39; *Quasi sit deus. Studi su Marsilio Ficino* ed. by Cesare Vasoli (Lecce: Conte, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> See Sebastiano Gentile, 'Per la storia del testo del 'Commentarium in Convivium' di Marsilio Ficino', *Rinascimento* 21 (1981), 3-27; Id., 'In margine all'epistola 'De divino furore' di Marsilio Ficino', *Rinascimento* 23 (1983), 33-77; Id., 'Sulle prime traduzioni dal greco di Marsilio Ficino', *Rinascimento* 30 (1990), 75-104.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Pico della Mirandola. See Michael J. B. Allen, 'The Second Ficino-Pico Controversy. Parmenidean Poetry and the One', in *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti*, II, pp. 417-55.

<sup>11</sup> For the relevant bibliography, see Chapter V.

during which the Florentine scholar not only wished to provide an elegant translation, but also to establish the best possible Greek text.

However, in most cases, modern scholars have so far consistently made a distinction between Ficino's philological and philosophical approaches, establishing little or no relation between the two. My study aims to fill this gap by focusing on Ficino's extant working notebooks, which provide an ideal tool to explore how the Florentine scholar developed his philosophical ideas, whilst at the same time engaging in a philosophical reconstruction of the texts he was working on. In this context, Ficino's manuscripts offer a different image of the Florentine scholar, providing a unique insight into this 'concrete', practical side of Ficino's work mentioned above.

MS Ricc. 92 contains an anthology of Greek and Latin texts on the theme of love, which Ficino presumably compiled with a view to writing his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*; MS Ambr. F 19 sup. is a collection of excerpts from Plato, Plotinus and Proclus on the theme of the soul, which Ficino arguably produced before starting to write his major philosophical work: the *Platonic Theology*. Finally, MS Borg. gr. 22 was likely used by Ficino as a textual basis for his translation of Dionysius the Areopagite's *De divinis nominibus*. These three notebooks have been hitherto largely ignored or only partially studied by modern scholars: MS Ambr. F 19 sup. has been described by Paul Henry, but only as much as this could serve his study of Plotinus's text, whilst Ernesto Berti has focused on Ficino's transcription of Plato's *Phaedo*. As far as MS Borg. gr. 22 is concerned, Pietro Podolak has recently described its structure and content and

studied the text of the *De divinis nominibus*.<sup>12</sup> However, all three studies mainly focused on the philological value of the texts preserved in the manuscripts, rather than focussing on the anthologies as a whole.

In contrast, my research will seek to offer a more ‘global’ analysis of Ficino’s three notebooks, by focussing on both their materiality and their textuality, rather than considering solely their philological values. As I will argue, Ficino’s notebooks represent a precious insight into his *scriptorium*: first of all, they represent an important stage in the compiler’s production of a future work to be written and then published. Secondly, they show an unusual and more concrete image of the Florentine scholar than the one portraying Ficino as the mere recipient of divine inspiration: a scholar at work, and who is concerned both with the philological study of ancient texts and with extracting from the immense mass of ancient doctrines at his disposal the material he needs to develop his own philosophical thought.

Furthermore, the study of Ficino’s notebooks is crucial to determine the ways in which Renaissance scholars related to the texts that they inherited from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. As we will see, Ficino’s manuscripts are tightly connected to a particular typology of manuscript production, which recent studies defined as ‘miscellaneae umanistiche’. Humanist miscellanies are the result of a common practice among Renaissance scholars. Whilst reading ancient texts, humanists selected and transcribed passages of special interest in notebooks. The textual material transcribed in these manuscripts during intense *plume à la main* readings, represented the basis for the writing of entirely new works.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapters I and IV.

<sup>13</sup> For the relevant bibliography, see Chapter II.

Taking advantage of the latest developments in the fields of reception studies, book history, history of reading, my study will underline a hitherto ignored aspect of Ficino's activity: that of Ficino the compiler and author of *excerpta*, who selected in notebooks passages of special interest in order to use them in the writing of his original works. When producing his compilations, the Florentine scholar employed strategies and processes of text storing, information management and textual abridgment that Renaissance scholars had inherited from the past.

Ficino's notebooks provide evidence of another key aspect of Early Modern culture, which scholarship, has to some extent, albeit in a different context, emphasized. Although a strict separation between manuscript and printing culture is often upheld, recent studies on Renaissance scribal and reading practices called into question any clear-cut division between print and manuscript. In spite of the advent of printing in the fifteenth century, texts continued to circulate among Renaissance readers in the form of manuscripts. Scribal and manuscript practices offered rapidity and convenience to scholars, who either compiled for themselves private notebooks and working copies or commissioned professional scribes to perform transcriptions.<sup>14</sup>

Despite their importance, a considerable number of miscellaneous manuscripts produced by Renaissance scholars are still awaiting an in-depth analysis, which would see them as useful case studies of the way in which scholars worked in the Renaissance. My study seeks to offer a first step to address this question, and to provide for the first time a global analysis of Ficino's

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<sup>14</sup> See Brian Richardson, *Manuscript culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

manuscripts, by focusing on both their materiality and textuality. To achieve this, my work relies on significant developments that have occurred in philology, palaeography, codicology and history of the book, and contributed to modifying their status and to opening new avenues of enquiry. My study takes as a starting point recent research on the codex, which is no longer seen as a 'text container', but also as a material item, whose meaning goes beyond the text that it preserves. Each book, whether manuscript or printed, is the result of a project and has got its own specific purpose and function. As such, the book is the outcome of a precise cultural context and should be studied in order to reconstruct and understand the context itself.<sup>15</sup>

From the second half of the twentieth century, numerous studies, discussions and publications led to renew and redefine the boundaries of palaeography and codicology.<sup>16</sup> According to such a renewed perspective, Armando Petrucci has conceived a set of key questions, which may be applied to both codicology and history of the book: 1) What? 2) When? 3) Where? 4) How? 5) Who? 6) Why?<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, the first four questions refer to the

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<sup>15</sup> See Marilena Maniaci, *Archeologia del manoscritto* (Rome: Viella, 2002; rpt. 2005), p. 15; see also Paul Canart, *Dispense di palaeografia e di codicologia Greca* (Vatican City: 1980) (typewritten), p. VII; Guglielmo Cavallo, 'Dalla parte del libro: Considerazioni minime', in Guglielmo Cavallo, *Dalla parte del libro* (Urbino: Quattroventi, Ludus Philologiae, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> See Paul Canart, *Dispense*, pp. VII-VIII. The first International Congress of Greek Palaeography, which took place in Paris in 1974 and resulted in the publication of the Proceedings in 1977, represented a crucial turning point in the development of the discipline. See *La paléographie grecque et byzantine*: Paris, 21-25 octobre 1974: Actes du Colloque international sur la paléographie grecque et byzantine, ed. by Jean Glénisson, Jacques Bompaire and Jean Irigoin (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977). According to Jean Irigoin's definition, palaeography and philology, as interacting and collaborating sciences, may be conceived as 'deux servantes maîtresses en alternance'. Jean Irigoin, 'Deux servantes maîtresses en alternance: paléographie et philologie' in *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito*. Atti del V Colloquio Internazionale di Paleografia Greca (Cremona 4-10 ott. 1998) ed. by Giancarlo Prato (Florence: Papyrologica Florentina, 2000), pp. 592-94.

<sup>17</sup> Armando Petrucci, *Breve storia della scrittura latina* (Rome: Bagatto Libri, 1989), pp. 18-21; See also *La scrittura greca dall'antichità all'epoca della stampa*, ed. by Edoardo Crisci and Paola Degni (Rome: Carocci, 2011), p. 29.

traditional function and aims of palaeography and codicology, concerning the task of reading, transcribing, dating, locating and describing scripts and manuscripts. On the other hand, the last two lead the palaeographer and the codicologist to focus on the cultural contexts.

In addition, this increasingly strong interest in the materiality of manuscript books considerably affected philology and its scientific approach. A more in-depth knowledge of the physical features of the codex has allowed for a more concrete understanding of textual transmission and its mechanism. As a result, 'La ricostruzione della genesi e della storia dei singoli testimoni ha contribuito a trasformare uno schema astratto di relazioni tra varianti (stemma) in una trama di rapporti fra oggetti, che rinvia necessariamente alle relazioni intellettuali fra chi li ha commissionati, allestiti e trascritti, posseduti e/o consultati'.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, building on recent trends and developments in the fields of book history and manuscript studies, my research on Ficino's manuscripts at the same time offers a detailed analysis on Ficino's relation to ancient texts and

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<sup>18</sup> Maniaci, *Archeologia*, p. 18. See also Guglielmo Cavallo, 'Dalla parte del libro: Considerazioni minime', pp. 11, 13: 'Il libro, insomma, nella stemmatica è ignorato come oggetto di studio storico e culturale o, nel migliore dei casi, è indagato in modi subalterni. [...] In questa prospettiva, i *formative stages* della tradizione vanno ripercorsi come una storia continua di testi e nel contempo di libri, ma di libri intesi non come modelli astratti o solo come entità grafiche che generano errori o come semplici portatori di varianti, ma come prodotti di movimenti storico-culturali e di vicende materiali da cui ciascun libro è rimasto profondamente segnato e che vanno indagati e, tutte le volte che sia possibile, rivelati e interpretati. È questo uno sforzo di ricostruzione totale al fine di attingere a quella verità ultima (l'originale? l'archetipo? più edizioni antiche? un assetto testuale incerto ma il migliore possibile?) che non è soltanto la verità del testo ma anche la verità del libro'. Regarding this renewed approach, Guglielmo Cavallo 'Un'aggiunta al "decalogo" di Giorgio Pasquali', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 112 (1984), 374-77 (p. 377), states: 'I caratteri materiali connotanti i vettori del testo possono in determinati casi indicare fatti, modi, fasi della sua storia (e talora della sua stessa scrittura)'. See also Guglielmo Cavallo, 'Caratteri materiali del manoscritto e storia della tradizione', in *Filologia classica e filologia romanza: esperienze ecdotiche a confronto*, Atti del Convegno (Roma 25-27 maggio 1995), ed. by Anna Ferrari (Spoleto: Centro di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Incontri di Studio, 1999), pp. 389-97; rpt. in G. Cavallo, *Dalla parte del libro*, pp. 15-23.

methodology, and sheds light on complex scholarly practices and on the cultural universe within which Ficino was operating. Hence, the intellectual contribution of my project is twofold: first, by offering a ‘global’ analysis of these anthologies, it will provide a more nuanced view and more exhaustive reconstruction of the ways in which Ficino actually read, selected and used ancient and medieval authors and also of the ways in which he quoted, codified their doctrines and appropriated them in his own work. More broadly, it will offer insight into Renaissance reading practices and important aspects of Early Modern culture.

My work consists of six chapters, which I shall now briefly present. The first chapter will be devoted to a detailed description of both the physical structure and textual content of the three manuscripts. As we will see, my own study of the material has enabled me to discuss and complement previous descriptions, and will in turn provide the foundations for the analysis that I intend to carry out in the subsequent chapters. More specifically, I will show that both MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and MS Borg. gr. 22 are the result of two distinct stages, which will allow me to set up a relative chronology and to understand the stages by which the manuscripts were produced and identify the purpose and function of these compilations. As part of the description, I will also focus on Ficino’s handwriting, providing new insight into Ficino’s Greek script, which has not yet been carefully studied and described. Finally, I will provide a brief account of Ficino’s main manuscript sources, particularly focussing on those manuscripts that are connected with the textual material contained in his three working notebooks.

After this preliminary description of the manuscripts, my thesis consists of two main parts. The first section, including Chapters II, III and IV, focusses on

the way Ficino's actually produced the compilations contained in his notebooks. Chapter II will seek to situate Ficino's manuscript in the wider context of Renaissance scribal and reading practices, methods of note-taking, and manuscript production. My analysis will then focus on the set of texts that Ficino collected in MS Ricc. 92 and presumably used as a textual basis for his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. My study will provide further insight into the study of the genesis of his philosophical treatise. More specifically, special emphasis will be placed on a set of hitherto unexplored and unpublished Latin excerpts from Plotinus's *Enneads*. The analysis of the texts forming this section of the manuscript, which I transcribed, identified and reconstructed, will complement and correct previous descriptions, offer further evidence of Ficino's long-time relationship with the text of the *Enneads* and provide insight into Ficino's treatment and reuse of Plotinus's philosophy.

In Chapter III, I will carry out the analysis of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., placing emphasis on the link between the materiality and textuality of the notebook. Through a set of case studies, I will explore how Ficino stored and managed the selected texts in his notebooks by using anthologization techniques and strategies of text condensation, as well as study in detail his treatment of philosophical sources. As a result, focussing on this hitherto unexplored aspect of his activity, I will shed light on Ficino's principles of selection and arrangement of the texts he selected and used as a basis for the writing of his major philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology*.

Chapter IV will be devoted to a set of unpublished and unexplored texts forming the Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22. My own transcription and analysis

will first complement previous descriptions, which only partially identified the passages forming this section, and provide further insight into Ficino's excerpting and anthologization techniques, which the Florentine scholar employed for collecting texts and sources as preparatory materials. My study of this section of MS Borg. gr. 22 will therefore shed light on the process by which Ficino collected, epitomized and incorporated in his own thought, arguments and doctrines from different *auctoritates* and philosophical systems.

The following section of my thesis consists of two chapters, which will explore Ficino's reading practices by focussing on his philological concerns and methodology. In Chapter V, I will first carry out the palaeographical analysis of a set of Latin notes and demonstrate that they were written by one of the professional scribes working on Ficino's behalf. Secondly, I will discuss some issues concerning the chronology and function of the manuscript and seek to provide a more exhaustive and nuanced definition for the Milan manuscript, than that provided by previous scholars.

Berti's studies, which I mention in Chapter V, established the foundations for carrying out my own analysis of another section of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., concerning a set of marginal notes that Ficino wrote next to a famous passage from Book X of Plato's *Republic*. My analysis of this *marginalia* will allow for the reconstruction of the stages of Ficino's close reading of the Platonic text. These notes first provide evidence of a complex exegetical approach and reflect Ficino's interpretation of the passage, as well as secondly confirm what previous studies have pointed out about his philological activity.

# **Chapter I**

## **Description of the manuscripts**

### **I. 1 Introducing Ficino's notebooks: a preliminary stage**

As mentioned in the introduction, each manuscript has to be considered as a physical object bearing invaluable information, not only for establishing a text but also for illuminating the history of book production and its cultural implications. The aim of this chapter is to produce a description of Ficino's manuscripts, which is the result of a direct inspection and will provide the foundations for my study of his reading practices. First of all, taking previous descriptions as a starting point, I will carry out a detailed analysis of the physical structure of Ficino's notebooks and will seek to reconstruct the process by which they came into being. At the end of each description, I will summarize all the relevant information in a table. Secondly, I will focus on Ficino's script, particularly discussing some aspects of his Greek handwriting as well as connecting them with the context within which the Florentine scholar was working. In one case in particular, I shall show the tight connection between the physical structure of the notebook and the script used by Ficino for transcribing the texts. Lastly, in order to contextualize more clearly my study, I will provide a brief account of Ficino's main manuscript sources, particularly focussing on those connected with the texts contained in his working notebooks.

## I. 2. 1 MS Riccardianus 92

The manuscript (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 92) is a working notebook, small in format (140x110 mm), dating from the second half of the fifteenth century –presumably the early 1470s–, containing an anthology compiled by Marsilio Ficino.<sup>19</sup>

The codex is made up of 115 paper folios and two parchment flyleaves (fols I, 116). The numbering is modern (stamped). The 115 folios consist of cheap Italian paper, which is rough and opaque. The state of preservation is good. The parchment flyleaves were used as pastedowns and pasted onto the inside of the boards. As far as the *mise en page* is concerned, the writing space measures approximately 110/110x70/80 mm (16/18 lines per folio).

The binding consists of wooden boards covered with leather and a leather spine. On the bottom edge of the text block, we read three Greek letters, β. π. υ., whose exact meaning remains obscure. We find the same letters in MS Ambrosianus F 19 sup.

At fol. I, we read a Latin description of the manuscript, which was written by a modern hand:

Codex hic Chartaceus Saeculo prout | adparet XIV conscriptus continet |  
excerpta quaedam cum ex Platonis | Symposio, sive de Amore, tum | <sup>5</sup>ex  
Phaedro, sive de honesto, et | alia quae habentur in Platonis | Vita ex Laertio  
| Orphei Argonautica Hymnos | eiusd(em) et Musaei graeci | <sup>10</sup>Insuper  
Excerpta quaedam Ex Plotino | Latine

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<sup>19</sup> For a description of the manuscript, see *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone, Mostra di Manoscritti*, p. 59.

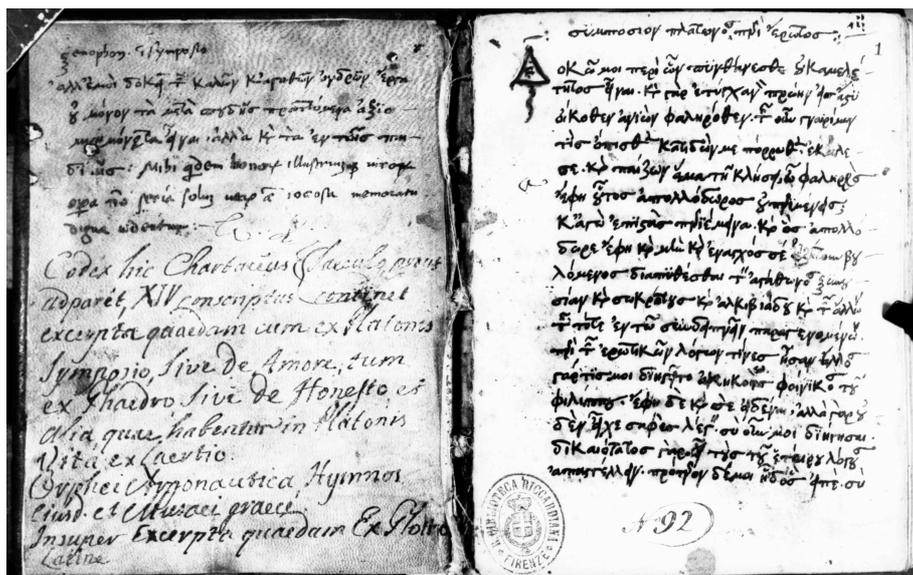


Figure 1. At fol. I, description of the manuscript. At fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, incipit of the *Symposium*

At fol. 116, we find Ficino’s note of possession, which is almost erased: *Marsili Ficini liber*. There is also a modern note, which refers to the numbering: ‘Carte 115 nuov(amente) num(erate)’. At fol. 115<sup>v</sup>, there is another annotation, which is difficult to read, mentioning the day (Adi 22 novembre, i.e. on the 22 November) when the manuscript was purchased by a modern buyer (Piero Rosati). The note is followed by two surnames: Rosati and Francini.

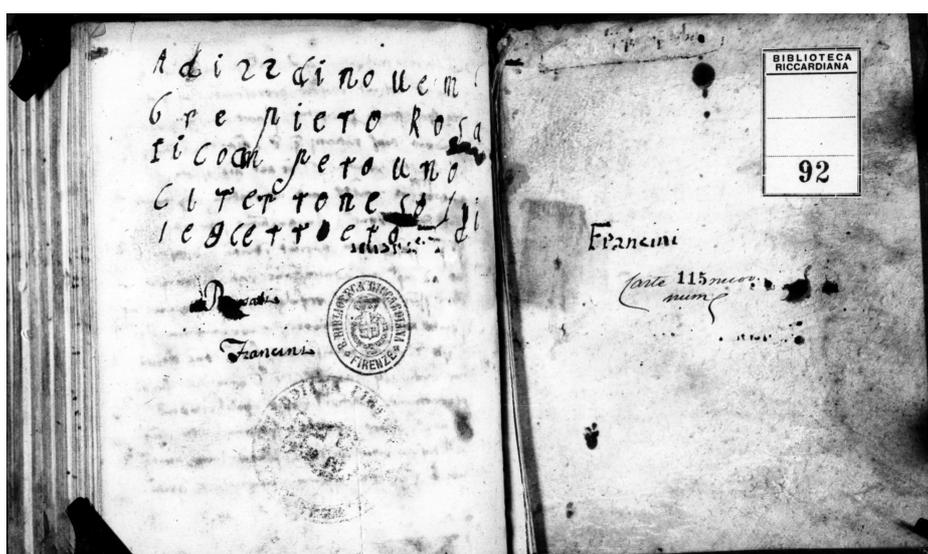


Figure 2. MS Ricc. 92: fols 115<sup>v</sup>-116

### •Watermarks

During my direct inspection of the manuscript, I have analysed all the folios forming the codex by using a watermark reader. The use of this optical fibre device enabled me to detect two watermark types, which I shall now describe:

-*Chapeau de cardinal*, exclusively Italian typology, similar to Briquet 3373 (fols 2, 19, 36, 39, 45, 49, 61, 66, 67, 80, 83, 95, 98, 99);

-Ladder, exclusively Italian typology (fols 100, 111, 112). Two rungs are visible (30x15 mm). Although there are numerous examples of this form, there is no exact match in the repertoires.

### •Quire structure

As far as the codicological features are concerned, the material structure of the manuscript looks compact: the book is the result of the joining of nine quires, dating back to the same period and forming a single 'monogenetic' codicological unit.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, the quire structure consists of four settenions (fols 1-56), an ottonion whose last folio is now missing (fols 57-71), two settenions (fols 72-99), a quaternion (100-107) and a quinion whose last two folios are missing (fols 108-115). Where the folios were removed, the stubs are still visible. At fols 14<sup>v</sup>, 28<sup>v</sup>, 42<sup>v</sup>, 56<sup>v</sup> and 85<sup>v</sup>, which are the last folios of quires 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 respectively, in the centre of the lower margin, the incipit of the following quire is written: these words are the so-called *reclamantes*, or catchwords, which were used in order to facilitate the arrangement of quires during binding.

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<sup>20</sup> According to J. P. Gumbert's definition a codicological unit is 'a discrete number of quires, worked in a single operation, containing a complete text or set of texts'. Monogenetic means produced by the same scribe. See J. P. Gumbert, 'Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex', in *Segno e Testo* 2 (2004), 17-42.

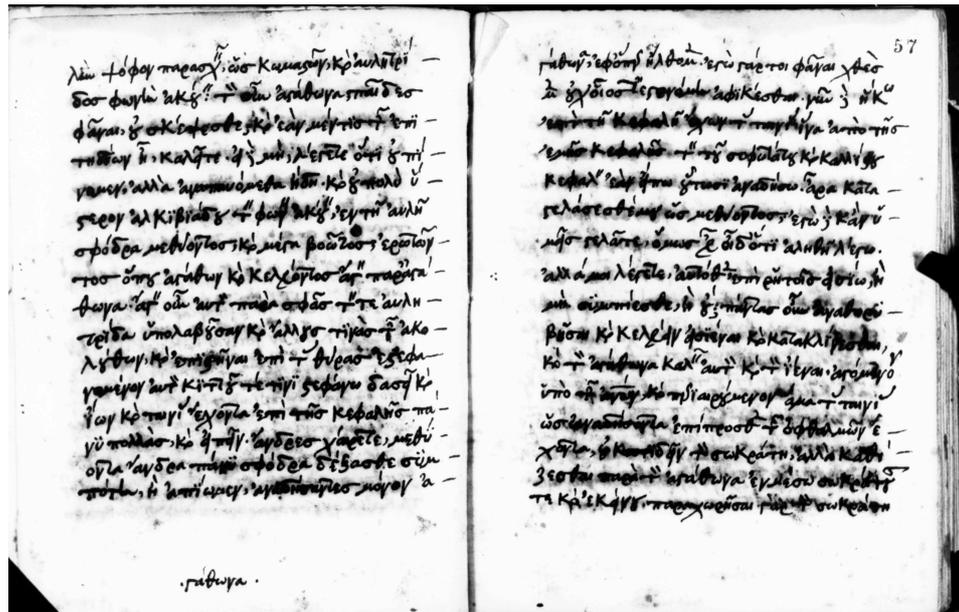


Figure 3. MS Ricc. 92, fols 56<sup>v</sup>-57<sup>r</sup>. At fol. 56<sup>v</sup>: *reclamans*

## I. 2. 2 Contents of MS Ricc. 92

The compilation consists of the full transcription of Plato's *Symposium* (fols 72<sup>r</sup>-95<sup>v</sup>), some excerpts from the *Phaedrus* (fols 72<sup>r</sup>-95<sup>v</sup>; 97<sup>r</sup>-104<sup>v</sup>), fourteen epigrams traditionally ascribed to Plato (fols 95<sup>v</sup> ll. 5-96<sup>v</sup>).<sup>21</sup> In addition, the compilation includes several poems produced by Greek poets and philosophers: Proclus's *Hymn to Aphrodite* (fols 105<sup>r</sup>-105<sup>v</sup> l. 9),<sup>22</sup> Orpheus's *Hymn to Aphrodite* (fols 105<sup>v</sup> l. 10-106<sup>v</sup> l. 6) and *Hymn to Eros* (fol. 106<sup>v</sup> ll. 8-18)<sup>23</sup> and some verses from his *Argonautica* (fols 108<sup>r</sup> ll. 3-16; 108<sup>v</sup> ll. 10-16),<sup>24</sup> one fragment of 'Ibycus

<sup>21</sup> Plato's erotic epigrams are contained in the *Greek Anthology. Anthologia Graeca*, ed. by Hermann Beckby, 2nd edn (Munich: Heimeran, 1965-1968) is the reference critical edition. In MS Ricc. 92 we find the following epigrams: A.G. VII, 699, VII 99; VII, 100; VII, 217; V, 78; V, 79; V, 80; VII, 259; IX, 39; IX, 44; III, 33.

<sup>22</sup> Procl. *Hymn. II*. Reference critical edition: *Procli hymni*, ed. by Ernst Vogt (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1957).

<sup>23</sup> Orph. *Hymn. LV; LVIII*. Reference critical edition: *Orphei hymni*, ed. by Wilhelm Quandt, 3rd edn (Berlin: Weidmann, 1962; rept. 1973).

<sup>24</sup> Orph. *Arg. 12-14; 866-69; 421-26; 226-29; 649-50*. Reference critical editions: *Les argonautiques d'Orphée*, ed. by Georges Dottin (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1930); *Les argonautiques orphiques*, ed. by Francis Vian (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003).

(fols 107<sup>v</sup> l. 15-108<sup>f</sup> l. 2);<sup>25</sup> Moschus's *Amor fugitivus* (fols 107<sup>f</sup>-107<sup>v</sup> l. 13);<sup>26</sup> Musaeus's *Hero et Leander* (fol. 108<sup>v</sup> ll. 1-9). In the final part of the notebook Ficino transcribed a set of Latin excerpts, summarizing passages from Plotinus's *Enneads* (fols 109<sup>f</sup>-115<sup>f</sup>).<sup>27</sup> I will discuss these texts in detail in Chapter II.

In order to visualize the manuscript structure more clearly, I will now summarize all the relevant information in the following table:

**Table 1**

Structure of MS Ricc. 92				
QUIRES	FOLIA	TYPE OF QUIRE	Nr of lines per folium (writing space)	TEXTS
	I		18	Excerpt from Xenophon's <i>Symposium</i> (ll. 1-5)  Brief description of the MS written by a modern hand (ll. 6-18)
1	fols 1-14	<i>settenio</i>	17-18	Plato's <i>Symposium</i>
2	fols 15-28	<i>settenio</i>	17-18	Plato's <i>Symp.</i>
3	fols 29-42	<i>settenio</i>	17-18	Plato's <i>Symp.</i>
4	fols 43-56	<i>settenio</i>	17-18	Plato's <i>Symp.</i>
5	fols 57-71	15 <i>folia</i> <sup>28</sup>	17-18	Plato's <i>Symp.</i>
6	fols 72-85	<i>settenio</i>	17-18	Excerpts from Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>
7	fols 86-99	<i>quaternio</i>	17-18	Excerpts from Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i> (fols 86-95 <sup>v</sup> l. 4) Plato's erotic epigrams (fols 95 <sup>v</sup> l. 5-96 <sup>v</sup> ) Excerpts from Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i> (fols 97 <sup>f</sup> -99 <sup>v</sup> )
8	fols 100-107	<i>quaternio</i>	17-18	Excerpts from Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i> (fols 100 <sup>f</sup> -104 <sup>v</sup> ) Proclus's <i>Hymn to Aphrodite</i> (fols 105 <sup>f</sup> -105 <sup>v</sup> l. 9) Orpheus's <i>Hymn to Aphrodite</i> (fols 105 <sup>v</sup> l. 10-106 <sup>v</sup> l. 6)

<sup>25</sup> Fragment 6/286 Page. Reference critical edition, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. by Denys Lionel Page (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>26</sup> A.G. IX, 440.

<sup>27</sup> Fols 109<sup>f</sup>-113<sup>v</sup>: *Enn.* I, 6 (*De pulchro*); fols 114<sup>f</sup>-115<sup>f</sup>: *Enn.* III, 5 (*De amore*).

<sup>28</sup> The quire consists of eight *bifolia*, but the final *folium* is missing

				Orpheus's <i>Hymn to Eros</i> (fol. 106 <sup>v</sup> ll. 8-18) Moschus's <i>Amor fugitivus</i> (fols 107 <sup>r</sup> -107 <sup>v</sup> l. 13) 'Ibycus's fragment (fol 107 <sup>v</sup> ll. 15-18)
9	fols 108-115	8 folia <sup>29</sup>	16-18	'Ibycus's fragment (fol. 108 <sup>r</sup> ll. 1-2) Excerpts from Orpheus's <i>Argonautica</i> (fol. 108 <sup>r</sup> ll. 3-16) Excerpts from Musaeus's <i>Hero and Leander</i> (fol. 108 <sup>v</sup> ll. 1-9) Excerpts from Orpheus's <i>Argonautica</i> (fol. 108 <sup>v</sup> ll. 10-16) Latin Excerpts from Plotinus's <i>Enneads</i> (fols 109 <sup>r</sup> -115 <sup>r</sup> ) Piero Rosati's note (fol. 115 <sup>v</sup> )
	II			Ficino's note

### I. 3. 1 MS Ambrosianus F 19 sup.

Turning now to the Milan manuscript (Milan, Venerabile Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS F 19 sup.), it is described in detail by Henry in his study on the manuscript tradition of Plotinus's *Enneads*, where the codex is referred to as Ambrosianus graecus 329 (*siglum* Fam.).<sup>30</sup>

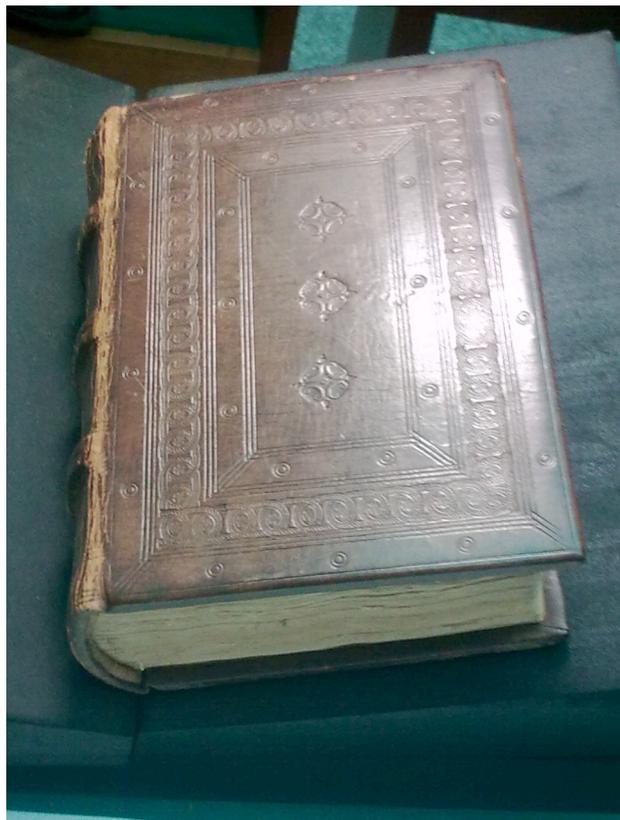
The codex is small in format (144x108 mm), and is made up of 236 paper folios and 4 parchment flyleaves (fols I, II, 237, 238). In the numbering of the folios, fol. 143bis has been omitted, which at a later stage was numbered as 143α. The 236 folios consist of cheap Italian paper, which is rough, opaque and

<sup>29</sup> The quire consists of a *quinio*, which is lacking the last two *folia*.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, *Les manuscrits des Ennéades* (Brussels: L'Édition Universelle, 1948), pp. 37-42. For a description of the manuscript see also: Emidio Martini and Domenico Bassi, *Catalogus codicum graecorum Bibliothecae Ambrosianae* (Milan: Hoepli, 1906), I, pp. 375-38; Raymond Marcel, *Marsile Ficin (1433-1499)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1958), p. 254; Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Some Original Letters and Autograph Manuscripts of Marsilio Ficino', in *Studi di bibliografia e storia in onore di Tammaro de Marinis* ed. by Romeo de Maio (Verona: Stamperia Valdona, 1964), III, pp. 5-33 (pp. 28-32); Robert S. Brumbaugh and Rulon Wells, *The Plato Manuscripts. A New Index* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 43-45; *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno, Mostra di Manoscritti*, p. 59; Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino and His Work', pp. 93, 135, 138, 141 and 147; 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone* di Platone', in *Les traducteurs au travail. Leur manuscrits et leurs méthodes*, Actes du Colloque d'Erice, 30 septembre-6 octobre 1999, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 349-425 (p. 354).

yellowish. The state of preservation is fair: at fols 6, 7, 16, we can notice damp patches and holes. Fols I and 238 were used as pastedowns and pasted onto the inside of the boards: they are quite damaged, so that it is difficult to read the texts contained in these folios. As far as the layout is concerned, the writing space measures 105x80 mm (15/23 lines per folio).

The binding consists of wooden boards covered with leather and a leather spine (Figure 4). On the top edge of the text block we read the word *Familiaris*, written in a black ink; under this word, on the left, three Greek letters, β. π. υ., were drawn. Their meaning remains obscure.



**Figure 4. MS Ambr. F 19 sup. The binding**

The same set of letters also recurs at fol. II<sup>r</sup>, in the upper margin, next to Ficino's autograph note of possession: *Marsilii Ficini florentini* (Figure 5). The

Greek letters and the note are framed by a long ink stroke; the signature of the manuscript (F 19) has been written under the note of possession.

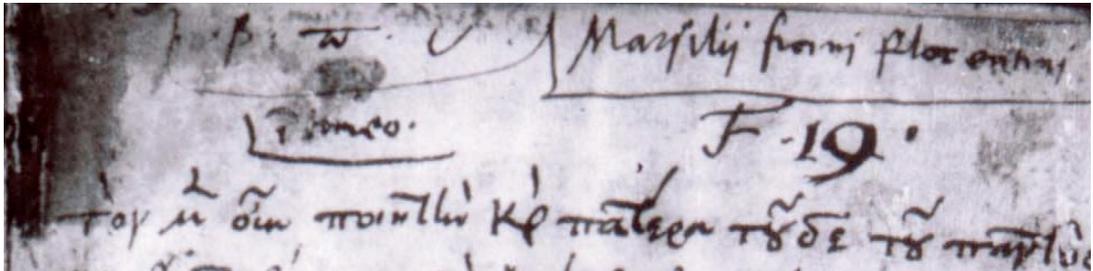


Figure 5. Detail of fol. II<sup>r</sup>: set of Greek letters by the note of possession

Fol. 1 is quite damaged, but in the top left-hand corner, we can see the traces of three Greek letters (Figure 6). Each letter is followed by a pointed *obelos*. Since we can clearly read  $\pi$  and  $\upsilon$ , it seems safe to advance the hypothesis that the first letter is a  $\beta$ : thus these letters would form the same sequence, i.e.  $\beta$ .  $\pi$ .  $\upsilon$ ., as the one that we detect in the top edge of the text block and at fol. II<sup>v</sup>.

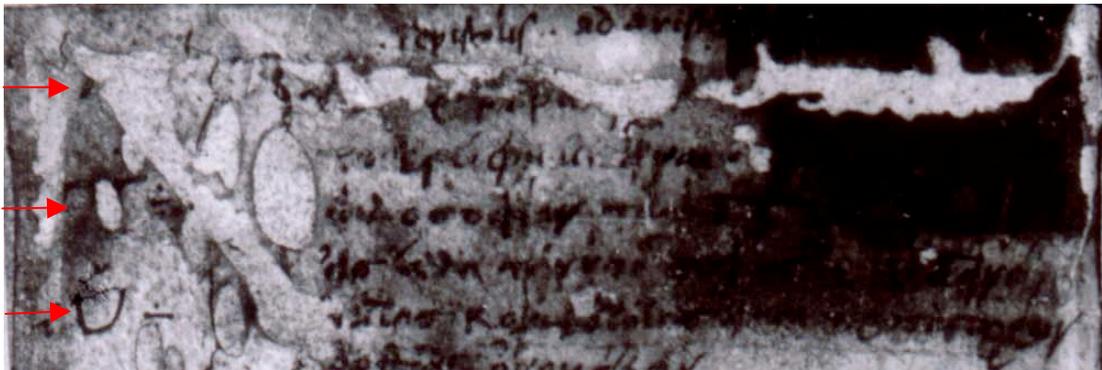


Figure 6. Detail of fol. I: traces of a set of Greek letters

### I. 3. 2 The anonymous hand

A paper leaf (275x193 mm) has been inserted into the manuscript before fol. 1. The support was first folded in order to obtain the *in –folio* format: the resulting *bifolium* has received writing; at a later stage, the *bifolium* has been further folded in order to gain the *in –octavo* format and has been tipped in (see Figure 7). When opening the insert, we detect a foliation in Roman numerals (fols III e IV): fol. III contains a description of the manuscript (24 lines at fol. III<sup>r</sup>, 11 at fol. III<sup>v</sup> respectively).

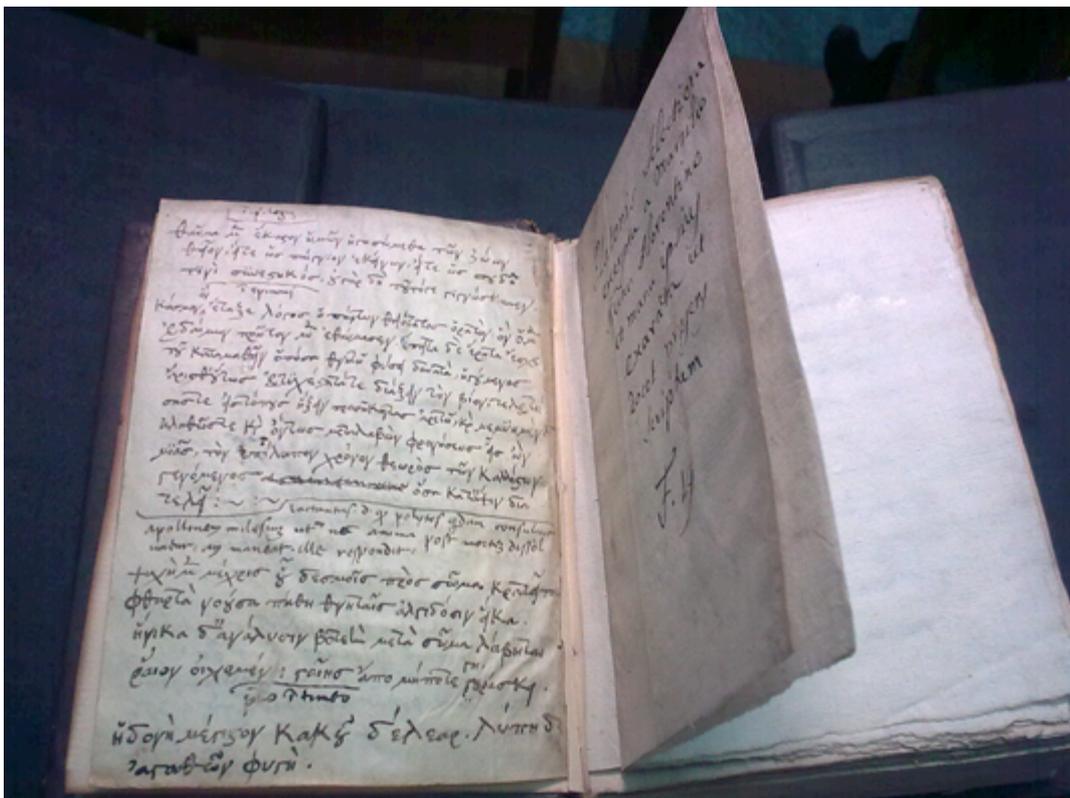


Figure 7. MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Insert containing the anonymous scribe's description

The description was written in Latin by a cursive hand, which Henry dated to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Henry's study includes a

transcription of the text, but the Latin passage has never been translated. After a direct inspection, I was able to correct some inaccuracies in Henry's transcription.<sup>31</sup> I shall first provide a critical transcription of the text, which I corrected and normalized according to modern editing conventions.<sup>32</sup>

Fol. III<sup>r</sup>

Marsilium Ficinum philosophiae Platonicae sacris, ut ipse loquitur, initia|tum fuisse scimus, ac ex eo non mediocrem sibi laudem tam apud sui | temporis viros doctos quam apud posteros comparasse. Habuit ille | inter possessiones suas hunc codicem manuscriptum, in quo Platonis | <sup>5</sup> subtilissima quaeque et elegantissima seorsum notata et descripta sunt. | Quem quidem librum sic illi in deliciis, ac in amoribus fuisse, ut in sinu gestaret | assidue, vixque umquam e manibus poneret, titulus *familiaris libri* | operi praefixus, satis aperte declarat. Paraverat sibi

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<sup>31</sup> This is a diplomatic transcription, reproducing the text exactly as it stands in the manuscript: Fol. III<sup>r</sup>. Marsilium Ficinum philosophiae Platonicae sacris, ut ipse loquitur initia|tum fuisse scimus, ac ex eo non mediocrem sibi laudem tam apud sui | temporis uiros doctos quam apud posteros comparasse. Habuit ille | inter possessiones suas hunc codicem manuscriptum, in quo Platonis | <sup>5</sup> subtilissima quaeq(ue) et elegantissima seorsum notata et descripta sunt. | Quem quidem librum sic illi in deliciis, ac in amoribus fuisse, ut in sinu | gestaret assidue, uixq(ue) unquam e manibus poneret, titulus familiaris libri | operi praefixus, satis aperte declarat. Parauerat sibi namq(ue) uir doctus et | Platonis in primis studiosus, sylvam hanc Platoniorum locorum quos di|<sup>10</sup>urno ac nocturno labori uersans memoriae commendaret atq(ue) imbiberet anim|um, ut quotiescunq(ue) iis uti uellet non curandae arculae aut implorandi indices | essent sed leuiter excussa memoria quaecunq(ue) seruanda accepisset, illico sine | cunctatione responderet. Huius autem operis non architectum modo sed fabrum | quoque Marsilium extitisse, nec per librariorum aut scribendi artifices compilari | <sup>15</sup> codicem sed ipsius Marsilii manu excerptum ac descriptum fuisse, haud dubiis coniecturis suspicamus. Fuit hoc pridem solenne magnis uiris, et iam olim | Demostheni, qui Marsilio haud minor Thucididem haud meliorem Plato|ne scriptis suo labori ac manu excipit. Factitatum hoc idem aliis illius | aevi, imo et nostri, quo a typographica copia, nihil eiusmodi industriae loci | <sup>20</sup> relictum uidetur. Sed nimirum non caeca auri cupiditas, uerum incensus | sapientiae amor, ad minima quaeq(ue) ac maxima elaboranda, noua quoq(ue) in dies excogitanda, generosos animos exaemulabat. Eodem hoc quasi oestro | primus Ficinus, Platonem totum ita percurrit ut selectissima quaeq(ue) in hunc | codicem reportaret ac sibi uelut in thesaurum seponeret. Quin absoluto. Fol. III<sup>v</sup>. etiam, ut uidebatur, opere, quae ubiq(ue) spatia uacarent, in fronte, in tergo | libri, quaeue interstitia aut lacunae alicubi superessent, omnia impleuit, | ut mihi quidem maxime mirandum uideatur qui tam amplam messem | fecisset spicilegio quoq(ue) tam auide ditari uoluisse. Deniq(ue) hoc opus Fici| <sup>5</sup> ni manu exaratum fuisse, qui emendatissimum scriptionis genus, ua|rias lectiones, notas non e scrinio petitas, demum characterum for|mam cum prima inscriptione ubiq(ue) congruentem notauerit, minime | inficiabitur. Ut proinde non mediocrem gratiam doctissimo uiro ha|bere debeamus, qui non modo thesaurum hunc nobis Platonicae opulen|<sup>10</sup>tiae conrogauerit, sed uiam praeterea minus tritam et compendiarum | ad sapientiae adyta penetrandi, studiosis hominibus commonstrarit.

<sup>32</sup> All corrections are introduced by using angle brackets. The normalization concerns mainly orthography: I therefore introduced the distinction between 'u' and 'v' and replaced the forms *unquam*, *quotiescunque*, *quaecunque*, *sylvam* with the classical Latin's forms *umquam*, *quotiescumque*, *quaecumque*, *silvam*. I also replaced the form *Thucididem* with the corresponding form *Thucydidem*.

namque vir doctus et | Platonis in primis studiosus, silvam hanc Platoniorum  
locorum quos di<sup>10</sup>urno ac nocturno labori versans memoriae commendaret atque  
imbiberet anim<sup>um</sup>, ut quotiescumque iis uti vellet non curandae arculae aut  
implorandi indices | essent sed leviter excussa memoria quaecumque servanda  
accepisset, illico sine | cunctatione responderet. Huius autem operis non  
architectum modo sed fabrum | quoque Marsilium extitisse, nec per librariorum aut  
scribendi artifices compilari | <sup>15</sup> codicem sed ipsius Marsilii manu excerptum ac  
descriptum fuisse, haud dubiis coniecturis suspicamur. Fuit hoc pridem solemne  
magnis viris, et iam olim | Demostheni, qui Marsilio haud minor Thucydidem  
haud meliorem Platone scriptis suo labori ac manu ex<s>cripsit.<sup>33</sup> Factitatum hoc  
idem aliis illius | aevi, im<m>o et nostri, quo a typographica copia, nihil eiusmodi  
industriam loci | <sup>20</sup> relictum videtur. Sed nimirum non caeca auri cupiditas, verum  
incensus | sapientiae amor, ad minima quaeque ac maxima elaboranda, nova  
quoque in dies excogitanda, generosos animos exaemulabat. Eodem hoc quasi  
oestro primus | Ficinus, Platonem totum ita percurrit ut selectissima quaeque in  
hunc | codicem reportaret ac sibi velut in thesaurum seponeret. Quin absoluto |

Fol. III<sup>v</sup>

etiam, ut videbatur, opere, quae ubique spatia vacarent, in fronte, in tergo | libri,  
quaeve interstitia aut lacunae alicubi superessent, omnia implevit, | ut mihi  
quidem maxime mirandum videatur qui tam amplam messem | fecisset spicilegio  
quoque tam avide ditari voluisse. Denique hoc opus Fici<sup>5</sup>ni manu exaratum  
fuisse, qui emendatissimum scriptionis genus, varias lectiones, notas non e scrinio  
petitas, demum characterum formam cum prima inscriptione ubique congruentem  
notaverit, minime | inficiabitur. Ut proinde non mediocrem gratiam doctissimo  
viro habere debeamus, qui non modo thesaurum hunc nobis Platonicae  
opulen<sup>10</sup>tiae conrogaverit, sed viam praeterea minus tritam et compendiarium ad |  
sapientiae adyta penetrandi, studiosis hominibus commonstraverit.

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<sup>33</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 39, probably to normalize the text, proposed this correction. Renaissance scholars, following an ancient and medieval tradition, commonly wrote 'exc-'.

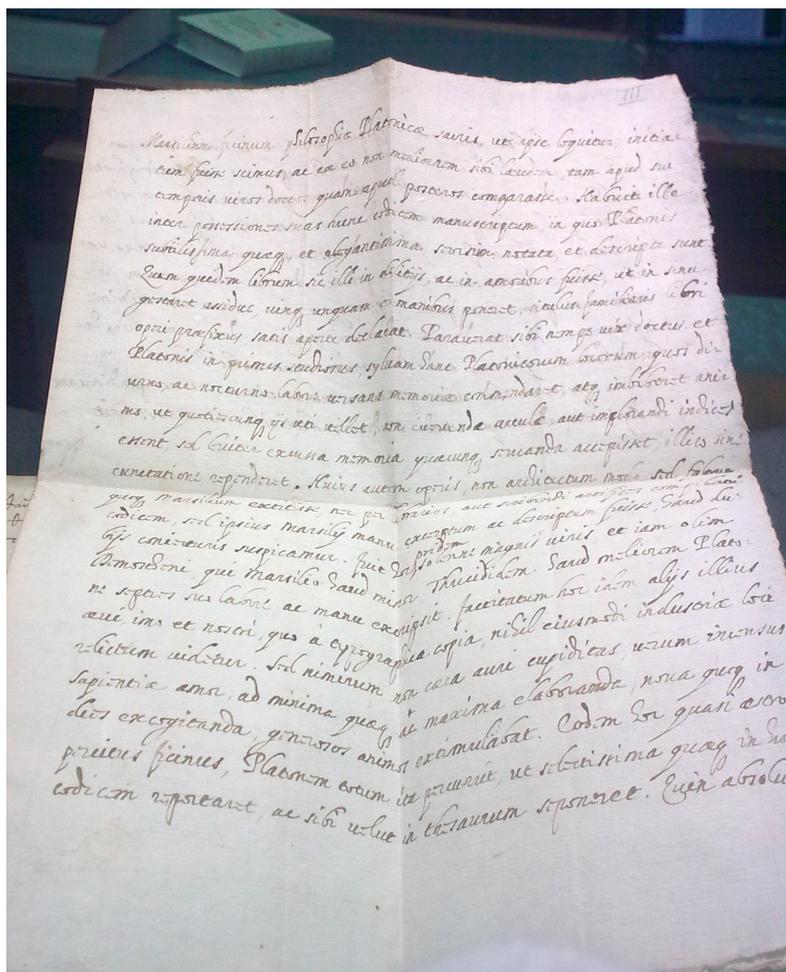


Figure 8. MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Fol. III<sup>v</sup>: description of the manuscript

Additionally, I shall now provide a translation of the Latin text. In order to make the text more accessible and understandable, I will also provide the text with a set of explanatory notes:

We know that Marsilio Ficino, as he himself relates, had been initiated to the mysteries of Platonic philosophy and that, as a result of this, he received high praise among the scholars both of his time and later. He had this manuscript codex among his possessions, in which all the finest and most elegant material from Plato was excerpted and copied. The title *liber familiaris*, (which was) given to the codex,<sup>34</sup> demonstrates quite clearly that this book was so cherished and dear to him, that he was always holding it in his lap and barely let it out of his hands. This erudite man, one of the greatest students of Plato, has indeed prepared for himself this collection of Platonic passages, which he, working on them night and day, might memorize and drink in the spirit, intending that,

<sup>34</sup> *Opus* refers to the product of somebody's work. Thus in this context, I shall consider it as a synonym of 'codex' or 'book'.

whenever he might want to use them, he would not have to consult shelves<sup>35</sup> or to resort to indexes, but that, shaking his memory just a little, he would be able to relate on the spot all the things he had stored in his memory. Furthermore, undoubtedly Marsilio was not only the architect, but also the smith of this work and that this codex was not compiled by booksellers or professional scribes, but that the texts were rather chosen and written down in Ficino's own hand.<sup>36</sup> This was a usual activity for great men of the past, even as early as Demosthenes, who –not inferior to Marsilio– through his hard work and all by himself, transcribed Thucydides, who is not superior than Plato.<sup>37</sup> And this same task was usually performed by other men in antiquity, even in our times, when typographic reproduction does not seem to leave any room for such diligent task.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, what undoubtedly led those generous souls to put great effort into all things, big and small, and to devise something new every day, was not a blind greed for gold, but a fervent love for wisdom. With essentially the same initiative, Ficino was the first systematically to go through all of Plato's oeuvre in such a way that he would copy all the most notable passages in this book and store them for his personal use as though in a treasure chest. For in fact, when this work seemingly was complete, Ficino filled all the remaining blank spaces, on the front and back, and all the blank spaces everywhere, so that it seems to me to be absolutely extraordinary that someone who had gathered such an abundant crop also wished so eagerly to grow rich by gleaning a *spicilegium*.<sup>39</sup> Finally, it will hardly be denied that this book was written by Ficino's hand, since he transcribed an extremely correct version of the text, noted variant readings, wrote notes not drawn from (other) books<sup>40</sup> and finally used a script that matches that of the first superscription in the minutest detail.<sup>41</sup> Thus let us be most grateful to this learned man, who not only amassed for us this treasure of Platonic opulence, but also indicated to scholars an otherwise little known shortcut to access the innermost core of wisdom.

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<sup>35</sup> *Arcula* refers to a case, a chest or a cupboard. Thus the expression *curandae arculae* seems to refer to the action of consulting books that are preserved in a trunk or in a cupboard with shelves.

<sup>36</sup> The verb *excerpere* refers to the the task of making up excerpts (*excerpta*) from books. Hence, the expression 'codicem [...] ipsius Marsilii manu excerptum ac descriptum fuisse' is likely a brachylogy, meaning that the excerpts contained in the codex were selected, gathered and transcribed by Ficino himself.

<sup>37</sup> Ficino's *nocturnus ac diurnus labor*, i.e. the task of transcribing selected passages from Plato's *opera omnia*, is compared to the task that Demosthenes performed in Antiquity. According to ancient sources –for instance, Lucianus, *Adversus indoctum et lib.* IV 4-9–, Demosthenes transcribed Thucydides's *Histories* eight times. As a result, he learnt Thucydides' work by heart and was able to reconstruct its text when it was destroyed by a fire. Thus the expression 'Thucydidem haud meliorem Platone scriptis', seemingly states that Thucydides, as far as his writings are concerned –*scriptis* is to be read as an ablative of limitation– is not easier (*melioerem*) to transcribe than Plato: in both cases, these ancient authors produced impressively long works.

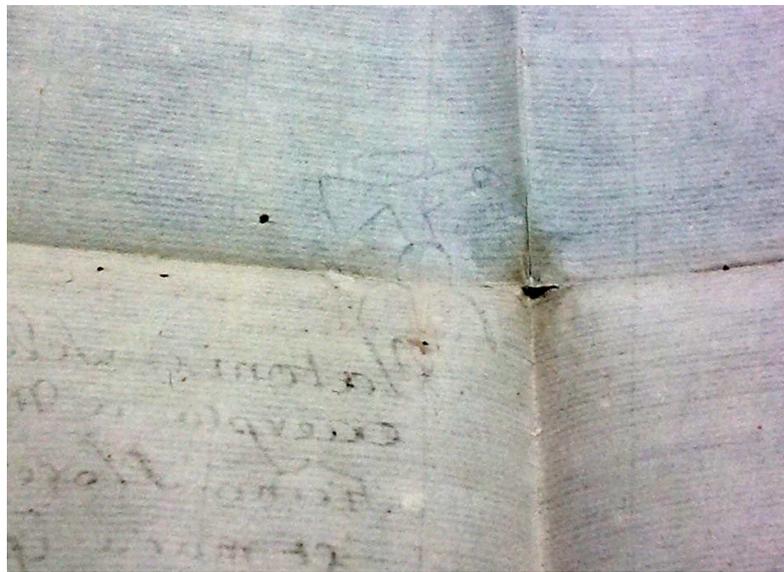
<sup>38</sup> The sentence is based on the dichotomy between printed and manuscript book: thus *industria* is likely synonymous with 'manual transcription'. The anonymous points out that, due to the technological progress, this practice was increasingly abandoned.

<sup>39</sup> The word is synonymous with *florilegium*. In order to refer to the practice of collecting selected passages, the anonymous recalls the image of the crop and the gleanings rather than using the more common metaphor of the picking up flowers.

<sup>40</sup> The expression *e scrinio* is probably a technical term, likely a *variatio* recalling the previous *arcula*. Thus it would mean 'from a repertoire', 'from a library', or 'from other books'.

<sup>41</sup> According to Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 40, when writing 'demum characterum formam cum prima inscriptione ubique congruentem notaverit', the anonymous aims to demonstrate that Ficino produced the whole codex. His argument likely relies on the correspondence between the script of the *marginalia* contained in the manuscript and that of the note of possession at fol. II<sup>r</sup>.

The insert containing the anonymous's description is made of a quite subtle type of paper, so that we can easily detect a zoomorphic watermark in the centre of fol. IV. The watermark design consists of the profile of an eagle, facing right, perching on a three-peak mountain. We may find similar watermark types in the repertoires, which date back to the seventeenth century, but not the same iconography as the one described.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 9. Detail of fol. III. Zoomorphic watermark: eagle on three-peak mountain**

On the outside of the folded insert, an anonymous hand, which according to Henry is more recent than the one that wrote the description of the manuscript at fol. III, wrote a title, referring to such description: 'Platonis Selectiora excerpta a Marsilio Ficino Florentino et manu ipsius exarata, ut docet presens scriptum. F. 19' (Figure 10).

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<sup>42</sup> For instance, Piccard Dreiburg 1049 (Freiburg 1600).

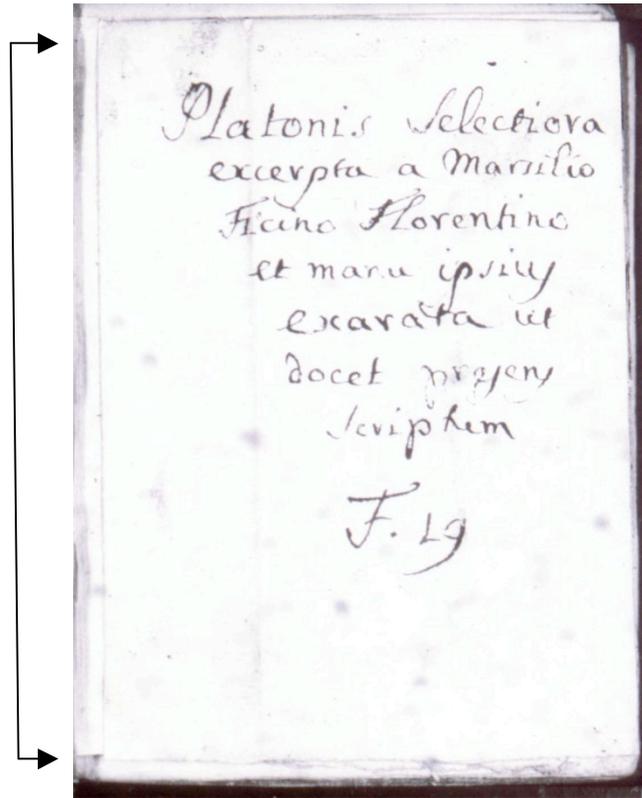


Figure 10. The insert's title. The arrows indicate the stub to which the insert was attached

### I. 3. 3 Watermarks and chronology

As far as the watermarks are concerned, the manuscript has been first analysed by Henry, who detected the following typology: 'Chapeau de cardinal, variante similaire de Briquet 3373 (28,5x43, Florence, 1474/83; var. simil.: Florence 1476; Fabriano 1475; Naples, 1468-71), mis le dessin est un peu plus grand et les puntuseaux son plus écartés'.<sup>43</sup> As a result of his analysis, Henry proposed the chronology 1468-1483.

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<sup>43</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 38.

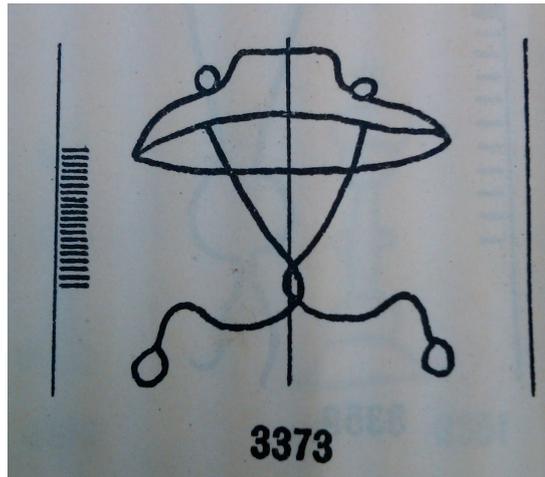


Figure 11. Watermark: *chapeau de cardinal*

Ernesto Berti proposed a different chronology (1470-74): in order to confirm it, Berti asked Antonietta Casagrande to analyse the manuscript's paper and watermarks. Berti reports Casagrande's analysis in his study: 'Si distinguono tre tipi di carta, contrassegnati da tre differenti filigrane, tutte italiane, riscontrabili in tre regioni durante tutta la seconda metà del sec. XV (fino a c. 89, cc. 90-194, cc. 195-238 –le filigrane non corrispondono a quelle indicate da Henry) e [...] l'osservazione filigranologica non smentisce l'arco 1470-74 da me ipotizzato'.<sup>44</sup>

However, Berti's statement needs to be complemented: first, it does not refer to any specific watermark type. Secondly, the reference to Henry's survey is erroneous, since Henry had previously detected only one watermark type.

With the aim to clarify which watermarks are actually detectable in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., I carried out further analysis of the manuscript's paper. My direct inspection was performed by using a watermark reader, which enabled me to detect six different typologies, including the one already detected by Henry in the course of his inspection.

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<sup>44</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo del *Fedone*', p. 354.



**Figure 12. Direct inspection of MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Watermark reader**

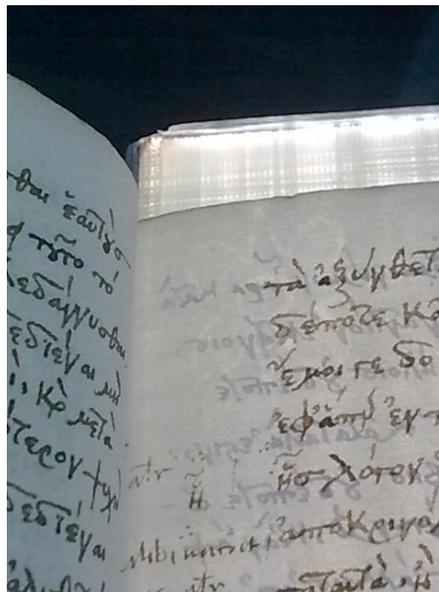
I shall now describe their shape and signal their distribution in the manuscript:

-*Chapeau de cardinal*, exclusively Italian typology, similar to Briquet 3373- (fols 2, 7, 8, 96, 110, 114, 115, 116, 117, 126, 127, 132, 133, 144, 168, 169, 170, 229, 230);

-Ladder, exclusively Italian typology. Two rungs are visible (30x15 mm). Although there are numerous examples of this form, there is no exact counterpart in the repertoires (fols 28, 29, 30, 31, 196, 197, 205, 213, 215, 216, 218);

-Dagger, 40x27 mm. There is no precise correspondence in the repertoires (fols 47, 55, 59, 63, 75, 82);

- Four-leaved clover, 25x20 mm. The design is similar to that of other watermarks in the repertoires, but there is no exact match (fols 48, 56, 60, 64, 76, 85);
- Two signs, consistent with the wheels of a cart. However, it is not possible to detect a precise correspondence in the repertoires (fols 97 and 111);
- Traces of a watermark, 30x25 mm, which is not clearly detectable (fols 144, 168, 169, 170, 171, 178, 194)



**Figure 13. MS Ambr. F19 sup. Four-leaved clover watermark**

My analysis allowed for a more detailed description of the set of watermarks that are detectable in the manuscript. Although watermarks do not constitute an absolute criterion to reach precise date, nevertheless they enable us to determine a relative chronology for this case in particular. Among the watermark types that I detected in the Milan manuscript, two types, such as the *chapeau de cardinal* and the ladder, are the same as those in MS Riccardianus 92. As stated above, MS Ricc. 92, presumably dates to the early 1470s. Thus we can suppose that Ficino likely started gathering textual material in MS Ambros. F 19 sup. approximately in the same years.

### I. 3. 4 Quire structure and signature

The quire structure consists of 18 quires. Quires 1, 3-6, 16, and 18 are ottonions. According to Henry's hypothesis, quire 17, which was originally an ottonion as well, was likely inserted into an additional *bifolium*; quires 7-12, 14-15 are senions. Henry also advances the hypothesis that quire 2 was in origin a senion as well and that three folios which contained texts –called by him fols 16 bis, ter, q.ter<sup>45</sup>– were removed at a later stage. Through a direct inspection, it is possible to detect traces of letters, which are still visible on the stubs–on 16 bis<sup>v</sup>, 16 ter and 16 q.ter<sup>r/v</sup> respectively– (Figure 14). Quire 13 is a quinion.

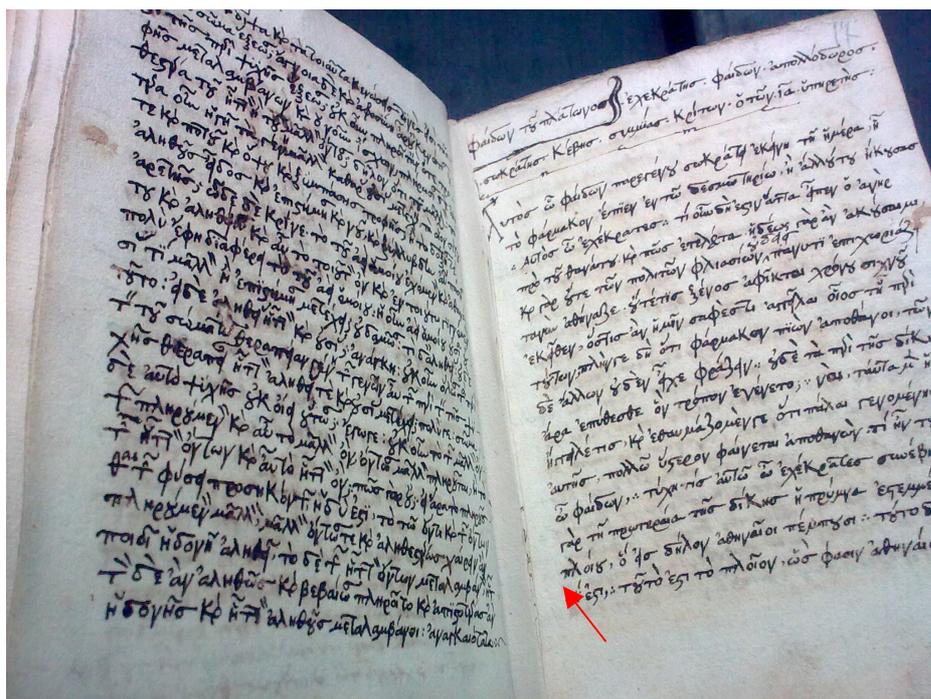


Figure 14. MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Traces of letters on the stubs of fols 16 bis, ter, q.ter

<sup>45</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes II*, pp. 37-43

Among the 18 quires forming MS Ambr. F 19 sup., quires 5-10 (fols 58-137) and 12-17 (fols 149-228) are provided with a numbering. The quire signature was written in Arabic numerals in the lower margin of the first folio of each quire.

Quires 5-8 (fols 42-101) bear a signature in the right lower margin (Figure 15): at fols 58<sup>r</sup>, 74<sup>r</sup>, 90<sup>r</sup>, 102<sup>r</sup>, which are the initial folios of each quire respectively, there are the Arabic numerals 4, 5, 6, and 7 (recorded in blue on Table 2).

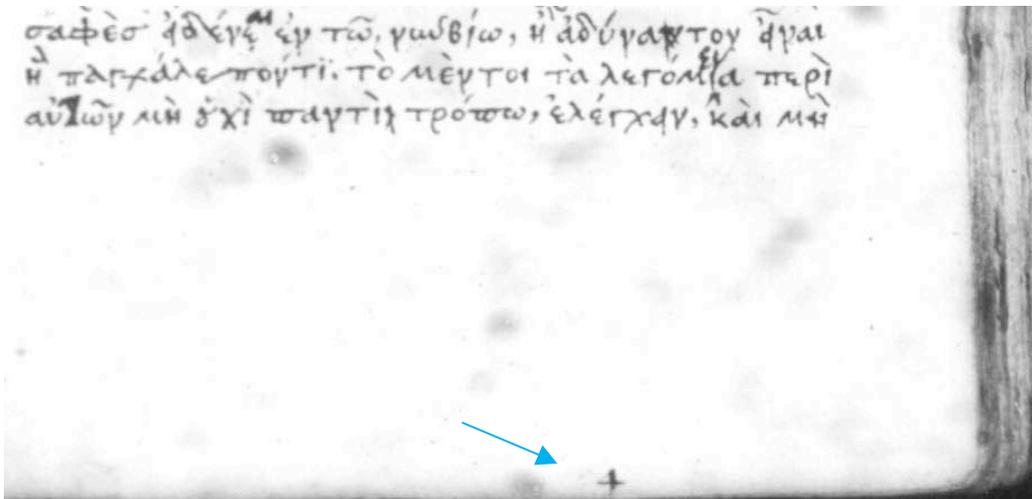


Figure 15. Detail of fol. 58<sup>r</sup>: quire signature

Quires 12-17 (fols 149-228) are signed in Arabic numerals in the centre lower margin (Figure 16): at fols 149<sup>r</sup>, 161<sup>r</sup>, 171<sup>r</sup>, 183<sup>r</sup>, 195<sup>r</sup>, 211<sup>r</sup>, which are the initial folios of each quire respectively, we read the numbers 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 (recorded in green on Table 2).

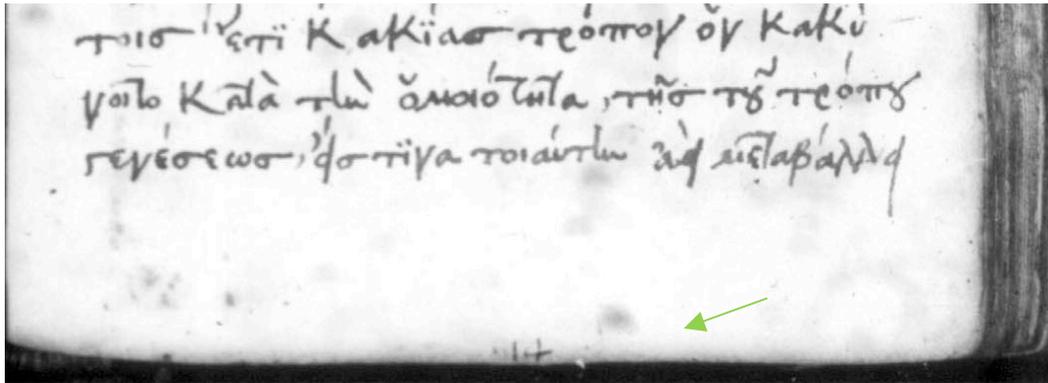


Figure 16. Detail of fol. 183<sup>r</sup>: quire signature

There are also traces of further signatures, which Henry defined as '*supplémentaire*' (recorded in red on Table II): at fols 58<sup>r</sup>, 74<sup>r</sup>, 102<sup>r</sup>, 114<sup>r</sup>, 126<sup>r</sup>, i.e. the initial folios of quires 5, 6, 8-10, we read the numerals 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, drawn in the bottom left-hand corner (Figure 17).

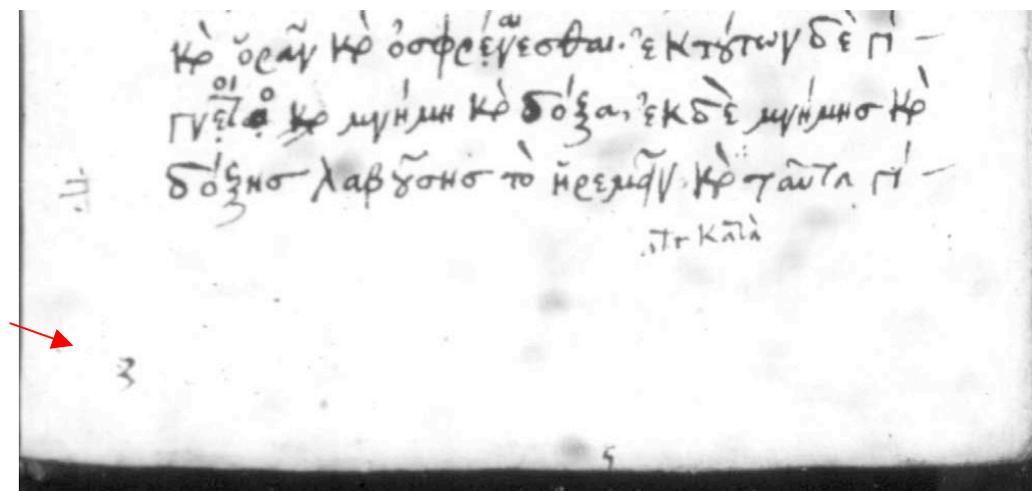


Figure 17. Detail of fol. 74<sup>r</sup>: quire signature, defined by Henry as '*supplémentaire*'

It is possible to detect the codicological units through a further element, which was not recorded in Henry's description: at fols 25<sup>v</sup>, 41<sup>v</sup>, 57<sup>v</sup>, 73<sup>v</sup>, 89<sup>v</sup>, 101<sup>v</sup>, 113<sup>v</sup>, 125<sup>v</sup>, 148<sup>v</sup>, 160<sup>v</sup>, 170<sup>v</sup>, 182<sup>v</sup>, 194<sup>v</sup>, which are the last folios of quire 2-9 and 11-15 respectively, in the centre of the lower margin, the incipit of the

following quire is written: these words are the so-called *reclamantes*, or catchwords (Figure 18).

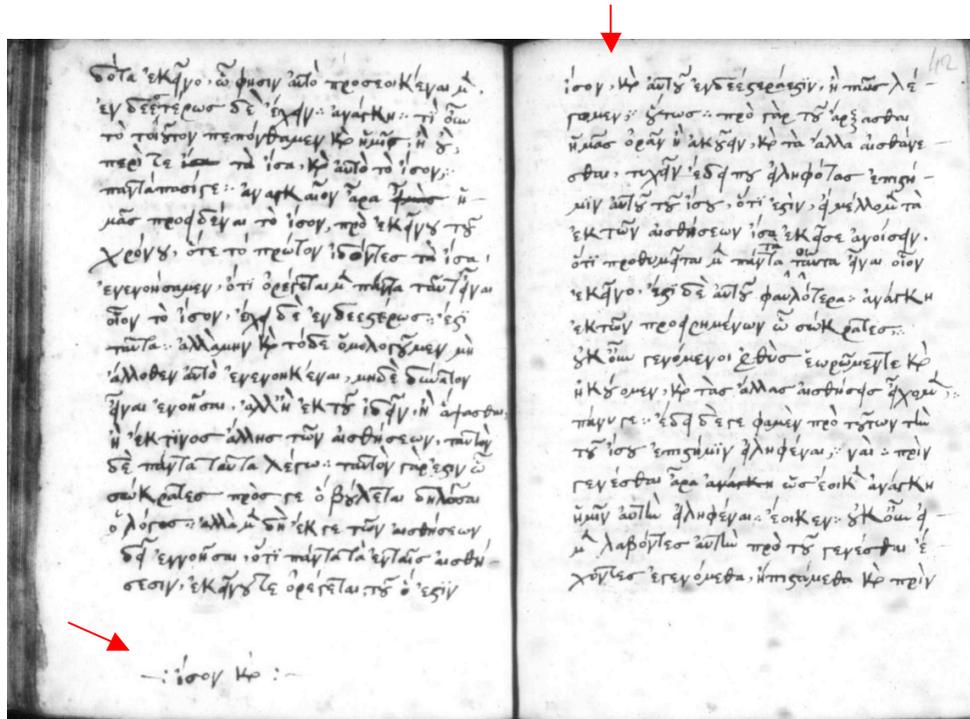


Figure 18. Fol. 41<sup>v</sup>: *reclamans*; fol. 42<sup>r</sup>: incipit of quire 4

### I. 3. 5 Contents of MS Ambr. F 19 sup.

The collection includes the full transcription of Plato's *Phaedo* (fols 17<sup>r</sup>-108<sup>v</sup>), ninety-five *excerpta* from other Platonic dialogues (fols 108<sup>v</sup>-145<sup>v</sup>/ 179<sup>v</sup> l. 10-214<sup>v</sup> l. 6/ 227<sup>r</sup>-238); four of Plotinus's treatises on the soul (fols 146<sup>r</sup>-179<sup>v</sup> l. 8);<sup>46</sup> two sections of excerpts (fols 212<sup>r</sup>-226<sup>v</sup>) from Proclus (one excerpt from his *Platonic Theology*,<sup>47</sup> thirty-two excerpts from *The Elements of Theology*;<sup>48</sup> vv. 1-5

<sup>46</sup> *Enn.* IV, 2, 1, 7, 8. The standard text is the following: *Plotini Opera*, Editio maior, ed. by Paul Henry and Hans Rudolf Schwyzer, 3 vols (Paris: Desclée de Brouwe, 1951-1973).

<sup>47</sup> Procl. *Plat. Th.* 1. 60. 12-1. 63. 15. The numeration is that of the following critical edition: *Procli in Platonis theologiam libri sex: Théologie Platonicienne*, trans. and ed. by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, 6 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-1997).

of Orpheus' s *Hymn to Proteus* (fol. II<sup>r</sup> ll. 15-19),<sup>49</sup> two lines from Lactantius' s *Oraculum Apollinis*.

Brumbaugh and Wells provided a brief description of the content of the manuscript, whilst Martini and Bassi gave a more detailed one.<sup>50</sup> However, the texts contained in the flyleaves were recorded less accurately, since the paper is extremely damaged and hard to read. My direct inspection has enabled me to reconstruct the set of texts written on the flyleaves and therefore complement previous descriptions. I will focus on the relevant texts more in detail in Chapter III.

I have summarized all the information concerning the structure as well as the description of the manuscript in the following table. I have also included a scheme of the textual content, recorded in the last column:

**Table 2**

<b>Structure of MS Ambr. F 19 sup.</b>					
<b>QUIRE</b>	<b>FOLIA</b>	<b>TYPE OF QUIRE</b>	<b>Nr of lines per folium (writing space)</b>	<b>(Double) QUIRE SIGNATURES<sup>51</sup></b>	<b>TEXTS</b>
	I II		28 19 (II <sup>r</sup> ) 22 (II <sup>v</sup> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Excerpts from Plato</li> <li>•vv. 1-5 <i>hymni Orphici</i> XXV</li> <li>•<i>Oraculum Apollinis apud Lactantium</i></li> <li>•Exc. from Plato.</li> </ul>

<sup>48</sup> Procl. *Elem. Th.* XX, XV-XVII, LXXXII-LXXXIII, XLIII-XLIX, XLI, CLXXXVI-CXCIX, CCVI-CCX, LXXX. The numeration is that of Dodds' critical edition: Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; rpt. 1963).

<sup>49</sup> Orph. *Hymn.* XXV.

<sup>50</sup> Robert S. Brumbaugh and Rulon Wells, *The Plato Manuscripts. A New Index* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 43-45; Emidio Martini and Domenico Bassi, *Catalogus codicum graecorum Bibliothecae Ambrosianae*, I (Milan: Hoepli, 1906), pp. 375-78.

<sup>51</sup> Quires 5-8 bear a signature in the right upper margin (I have recorded it in blue on the table). Quires 12-17 are signed in Arabic numerals in the centre lower margin (I have recorded it in green). At the beginning of quires 5. 6. 8-10, there are traces of a further numeration, signed in the left lower margin (recorded in red on the table).

1	fols 1-16	<i>ottonio</i>	18/24			Exc. from Plato
2	fols 17-25	<i>olim senio</i> <sup>52</sup>	18/19			Plato's <i>Phaedo</i>
3	fols 26-41	<i>ottonio</i>	17/19			Plato's <i>Ph.</i>
4	fols 42-57	<i>ottonio</i>	15/18			Plato's <i>Ph.</i>
5	fols 58-73	<i>ottonio</i>	15/21	2	4	Plato's <i>Ph.</i>
6	fols 74-89	<i>ottonio</i>	15/19	3	5	Plato's <i>Ph.</i>
7	fols 90-101	<i>senio</i>	15/17		6	Plato's <i>Ph.</i>
8	fols 102-113	<i>senio</i>	15/18	5	7	• Plato's <i>Ph.</i> (fols 102 <sup>r</sup> -108 <sup>v</sup> l. 4) • Exc. from Plato. (108 <sup>v</sup> l. 5-113 <sup>v</sup> )
9	fols 114-125	<i>senio</i>	16/19	6		Exc. from Plato
10	fols 126-137	<i>senio</i>	16/21	7		Exc. from Plato
11	fols 138-148	<i>senio</i>	17/20			• Exc. from Plato. (fols 138 <sup>r</sup> -145 <sup>v</sup> ) • Excerpts from Plotinus's <i>Enneads</i> (146 <sup>r</sup> -148 <sup>v</sup> )
12	fols 149-160	<i>senio</i>	17/21		11	Ex. Plot. <i>Enn.</i>
13	fols 161-170	<i>quinio</i>	15/19		12	Ex. Plot. <i>Enn.</i>
14	fols 171-182	<i>senio</i>	17/21		13	• Ex. Plot. <i>Enn.</i> (fols 171 <sup>r</sup> -179 <sup>v</sup> l. 8) • Exc. from Plato (179 <sup>v</sup> l. 10-182 <sup>v</sup> )
15	fols 183-194	<i>senio</i>	16/21		14	Exc. from Plato
16	fols 195-210	<i>ottonio</i>	17/23		15	Exc. from Plato
17	fols 211-228	18 <i>folia (olim ottonio)</i> <sup>53</sup>	18/22		16	• Exc. from Plato. (fols 211 <sup>rv</sup> ) • Excerpts from <i>Proclus</i> (fols 212 <sup>r</sup> -226 <sup>v</sup> ) • Exc. from Plato. (fols 227 <sup>r</sup> -228 <sup>r</sup> )
18	fols 229-236	<i>quaternio</i>	16/22			Exc. from Plato
	fol. 237		20 (237 <sup>r</sup> ) 23 (237 <sup>v</sup> )			Exc. from Plato
	fol. 238		22			Exc. from Plato

<sup>52</sup>According to Paul Henry's reconstruction three leaves (called by Henry himself fols 16 bis, ter, q. ter.) have been removed from an original *senio* at the time of the second binding.

<sup>53</sup>According to Henry's codicological analysis an original *ottonio* has been inserted into an additional *bifolium* at the time of the first binding.

### I. 3. 6 Henry's description: some issues and remarks

In this section I shall discuss some aspects of Henry's description and interpretation of the manuscript's structure. In spite of some inaccuracies, his description has provided the foundations for my own analysis.

As far as the quire structure and numbering are concerned, Henry states that, with the exception of the first and the last, Ficino himself numbered the quires.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he argues that, besides quires 5-8, quires 2-4 (fols 17-57) and 9-10 (fols 114-137), which do not bear any traces of signatures, were also numbered in the bottom right-handed margin. Thus he advances the hypothesis that there was a set of quires (now quires 2-10) numbered from 1 to 9.<sup>55</sup> Following the description, he eventually raises the doubt that quire 11 was never provided with a signature (fols 138-148).<sup>56</sup> On the basis of these data, Henry argues that the manuscript was in origin made up of 16 quires and that what now are quires 2 e 17 were respectively the first and the last quire of the book. Quire 1 and 18 were added just at a later stage.

Concerning the ink used to transcribe the texts in the manuscript, Henry detected a persistent dichromy in the ink used by Ficino. First of all, he states that the second part of the manuscript was written with a light red ink, but without clarifying which part of the manuscript he is actually referring to. Secondly, he argues that the variant readings and corrections recorded by Ficino in the manuscript were written by using a red ink.

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<sup>54</sup> See Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, 1948, p. 37: 'Sauf le premier et le dernier, les 18 cahiers du manuscrit ont été numérotés par le copiste, mais à diverses reprises et à divers endroits'.

<sup>55</sup> See Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, pag. 37: 'Du 2<sup>e</sup> au 10<sup>e</sup> (fols 17-137), ils furent numérotés de <I> à <9>, en bas et à droite du premier folio'.

<sup>56</sup> See Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 38: 'Le 11<sup>e</sup> cahier (fols 138-148), qui dans cette numérotation était le dixième, ne fut sans doute jamais numéroté'.

A direct inspection of the manuscript enabled me to complement some of Henry's remarks. Through my analysis, I actually detected some differences in the shades of the ink used by Ficino. In the flyleaves and in quires 1 and 18 the ink has a very dark blackish cast. In quires 2-17 it initially has a lighter blackish cast: from fol. 122<sup>v</sup> till fol. 228<sup>v</sup> (which is the last folio of quire 17), the script becomes less thick and the ink acquires a lighter cast, fading to a red-brown.

However, the differences detected in this section of the manuscript do not seem to depend on the use of different types of ink, but rather on the paper's different kind of reactivity to the ink. On the other hand, concerning both cast and consistency, the ink used for transcribing the texts in quires 1-18 and in the flyleaves appears to be different from the one used for the rest of the manuscript.

Additionally, we actually find in the manuscript numerous variant readings, but these are noted in black ink: the shade of the ink and the thickness of the script make it sometimes possible to determine whether the variant readings were noted at the time of the transcription of the texts they refer to, or were added at a later stage. The annotations written with an ink having a cast that is lighter than the one used for transcribing the text, seem to be posterior to the transcription. Therefore, they likely refer to a later stage of reading, revision and study of the set of texts.

On the basis of his own analysis of the quire structure, quire signature and type of ink used by Ficino, Henry sets up a chronology, including three stages in the making up of the manuscript:<sup>57</sup>

1. Ficino transcribes the text at fols 16 bis, ter, q,ter, 17-228.

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<sup>57</sup> See Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 43.

2. Ficino removes fols 16 bis, ter, quater (and maybe transcribes the same texts at fols 1, 2, 3) and then fills fols 1-16, 229-236 by using a very dark ink. The manuscript is bound and provided with four flyleaves.
3. Ficino fills the flyleaves with excerpts and notes.

Henry also detects what he sees as an evidence of a previous binding, i.e. the Arabic numeral 12 in the top right-hand corner at fol. 26<sup>r</sup> (Figure 19). According to his interpretation, what is now fol. 26 must have been in origin the twelfth folio of the codex. The rest of the original foliation arguably disappeared at the time of the second binding.

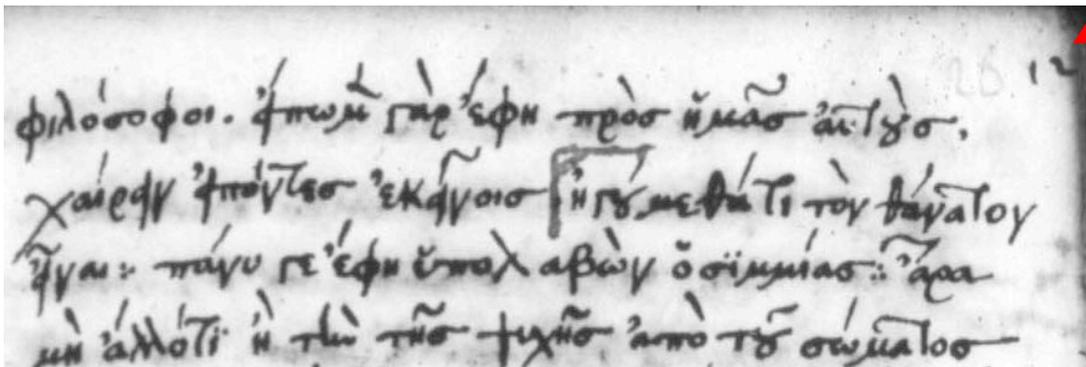


Figure 19. Detail of fol. 26<sup>r</sup>: number 12 situated next to the numeration

In order to confirm his hypothesis, Henry refers to what he believes to be further evidence: if the content of quire 18 had been transcribed straight after quire 17, Ficino would have not needed to add a supplementary *bifolium* to quire 17.<sup>58</sup>

Henry's description is important in that he detected the existence of an original codicological nucleus –quires 2-17–, to which quires 1 and 18 were added at a later stage. My direct inspection of the manuscript seems to confirm his

<sup>58</sup> See Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 43: 'Enfin, si le dernier cahier avait été copié tout de suite après le 17<sup>e</sup> Ficino n'aurait pas atout à ce dernier, avant de le commencer, un folio supplémentaire'.

hypothesis. However, Henry's remarks on the quire signature are questionable: regarding the quires that do not bear any signature, it is not clear on what basis Henry distinguished the following quires:

- quires which were numbered but not by Ficino (1 and 18);
- quires which were not numbered at all (11);
- quires included in a sequence (2-10) bearing a signature in the bottom right-hand margin.

Furthermore, Henry's argument regarding the Arabic numerals 12 at fol. 26<sup>r</sup>, as a trace of a previous binding, seems to contradict the reconstruction of the quire structure. If the original quire 1, now quire 2, had been a senion, fol. 12 should have been the last folio of quire 1 and not the first folio of quire 2. As far as the making up of the codex is concerned, those that Henry defines as stage 2 and stage 3, actually correspond to two moments of the same stage of 'growth' of the manuscript due to the addition of codicological units. The data at our disposal seem to confirm this hypothesis: as mentioned above, the texts transcribed in the flyleaves are written by using the same black ink.

Given these assumptions, in the course of my study, I will refer to two stages of the composition of the manuscript, corresponding to its first and second binding. In sum, when referring to the codicological units forming the codex, I will call the original core composed by quires 2-17, *sectio prior*, whilst quire 1-8 and the flyleaves, *sectio recentior*.

#### I. 4. 1 MS Borgianus graecus 22

The Vatican manuscript to which I shall now turn (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Borg. gr. 22), belongs to the last period of Ficino's life and activity.<sup>59</sup> MS Borg. gr. 22 is miscellaneous in terms of both textuality and materiality. The manuscript is made of both parchment and paper and the set of texts that it contains is the result of the work of two scribes: Ficino himself and Johannes Scoutariotes, a professional scribe who is known to have transcribed various Greek texts on behalf of the Florentine scholar.<sup>60</sup>

The codex is small in format (165x110 mm), dating from the end of the fifteenth century, and is formed by the following folios:

fol. I-II-III (flyleaves): paper

fol. 1-154: parchment;

fol. 155: parchment

fol. 156-167: paper

fol. 168: parchment.

The folios were numbered manually. The state of preservation of the writing material is good. As far as the *mise en page* is concerned, the writing space measures as follows: parchment folios, 105x65mm (18 lines per folio);

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<sup>59</sup> For a description of the manuscript, see Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, *Codices Graeci Chisiani et Borgiani* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1927), pp. 137-58; Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, p. 44; Martin Sicherl, 'Zwei Autographen Marsilio Ficinos: Borg. Gr. 22 und Paris. Gr. 1256', in *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone. Studi e Documenti*, I, pp. 220-22; Dionysius Areopagite, *De mystica theologia. De divinis nominibus Marsilio Ficino interprete*, ed. by Pietro Podolak (Naples: D'Auria, 2011), pp. LI-LIV

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed account of Scoutariotes' activity and for a complete list of the manuscripts transcribed by the scribe for Ficino, see Stefano Martinelli Tempesta, 'Il codice Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana B 75 sup. (Gr. 104) e l'evoluzione della scrittura di Giovanni Scutariota', in *The legacy of Bernard de Montfaucon. Three hundred years of studies on Greek handwriting, Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium of Greek Palaeography (Madrid - Salamanca, 15-20 September 2008)*, ed. Antonio Bravo García, Inmaculada Pérez Martín, Juan Signes Codoñer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), I, pp. 171-186.

paper folios, 120x85mm (21/26 lines per folio). The binding consists of wooden boards covered with leather and a leather spine.

Fols I-II are blank and did not contain any text. Fol. III<sup>r</sup> is blank too. At fol. III<sup>v</sup>, we read a Latin description of the manuscript, which was written by a modern hand (XVIII-XIX cent.) and reads as follows:

Continet hic codex opus S. Dio|nysii Areopagitae de divinis no|minibus, eleganter,  
ac correcte scri|ptum Accedit in fine Platonis Epi|<sup>5</sup>nomis id est Philosophus eadem  
| manu conscriptus. Hunc codi | cem ad Marsilium Ficinum | spectasse, [[non]] ex  
epigrammate | ipsius Ficini nomine insignito, |<sup>10</sup> quod in fine Codicis habetur,  
infer|ri potest.

At fol. 168, we find Ficino's note of possession, which is almost erased, which reads *Marsilii Ficini*.

#### •Watermarks

I have analysed all the paper folios forming the codex by using a watermark reader. By using the device I was able to detect two watermark types, which I shall now describe:

-Ladder, exclusively Italian typology. Two rungs are visible (15x30 mm). Although there are numerous examples of this form, there is no exact counterpart in the repertoires (fols 160, 163).

-Traces of a watermark which is not clearly detectable (fols 157, 159, 164, 166)

#### •Quire structure

As far as the codicological features are concerned, the material structure of the manuscript looks quite complex: the book is the result of two different stages, which reflect both Scoutariotes's and Ficino's activity. More specifically,

the codicological structure consists of 16 quires, numbered with Greek numerals and provided with *reclamantes*. The quires are preceded by a parchment *bifolium* (fols 1-2). Quires 1-14 are quinions, quire 15 is a senion and quire 16 is formed by a parchment *bifolium* (fols 155, 168) into which a paper senion was inserted (fols 156-167). The paper flyleaves (fols I-III) were inserted at a later stage, at the time of a more recent binding.

#### I. 4. 2 Contents of MS Borg. gr. 22

Ficino commissioned Scoutariotes to compile a miscellany containing Dionysius the Areopagite's *De divinis nominibus* (fols 5<sup>r</sup>-116<sup>r</sup> l. 8) and a collection of Platonic texts: the full transcription of Plato's *Epinomis* (fols 116<sup>r</sup> l. 9-145<sup>v</sup>) and six excerpts from his *Letters* (146<sup>r</sup>-154<sup>v</sup>).<sup>61</sup>

At a later stage, Ficino transcribed some epigrams on Dionysius's works (fols 4<sup>r</sup> l. 10-4<sup>v</sup>)<sup>62</sup> and poems by Gregorius Nazianzenus on the blank parchment leaves situated at the beginning and at the end of the original book (fols 1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>, 155 and 168).<sup>63</sup> Lastly, the Florentine scholar adds several Latin excerpts summarizing passages from Thomas Aquinas (fols 156<sup>r</sup>-165<sup>v</sup>), Proclus (fol. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 1-11), Plotinus (fol. 166<sup>r</sup> l. 12-167<sup>r</sup> l. 17) and Plato (fol. 167<sup>r</sup> l. 18-167<sup>v</sup>).

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<sup>61</sup> Fols 146<sup>r</sup>-146<sup>v</sup> l. 3: *Ep.* II (311c3-311d6); fol. 146<sup>v</sup> ll.4-18: *Ep.* II (312d7-313a2); fols 146<sup>v</sup> l. 18-147<sup>v</sup> l. 15: *Ep.* II (314a1-314c4); fols 147<sup>v</sup> l. 15-148<sup>r</sup> l. 7: *Ep.* VI (323c8-323d6); fols 148<sup>r</sup> l. 8-148<sup>v</sup>: *Ep.* VII (334e1-335c1); fols 149<sup>r</sup>-154<sup>v</sup>: *Ep.* VII (341b1-344c3).

<sup>62</sup> Fol. 4<sup>r</sup> mg. inf., fol. 4<sup>v</sup> ll. 6-7, ll. 11-12, ll. 16-17: PG 3 coll. 116-17; fol. 4<sup>v</sup> ll. 8-10: AG I, 88. PG= *Patrologiae Graecae cursus completus*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris 1844-1864).

<sup>63</sup> Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>-.2<sup>r</sup> l. 6: *Hymnus ad Deum*, (PG 37 col. 508); fol. 2<sup>r</sup> l. 7- 2<sup>v</sup> l. 9: *Hymnus vespertinus* (PG coll. 511-14); fol. 2<sup>v</sup> ll. 10-23: *Actio gratiarum* (PG 37 coll. 515-517); fol. 155 *Hymnus XXXI* (PG 37 coll. 510-11); fol. 168: *Hymnus ad Deum* (PG 37 col. 508).

In Chapter IV, I will focus on this set of Latin texts in detail. My analysis enabled me to provide a more precise reconstruction and therefore complement previous descriptions.

In sum, the manuscript's stratigraphy suggests that Scoutariotes and Ficino produced the codex as follows:

1. Scoutariotes transcribes the set of Greek texts in the parchment MS (fols 3-154);
2. Ficino fills all the blank spaces with further Greek texts (fols 1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>; 4<sup>r</sup> l. 10-4<sup>v</sup>; fols 155 and 158);
3. Ficino inserts the paper folios containing a set of Latin excerpts into the parchment *bifolium* (fols 156-167).

The following table provides a summary of my description. I emphasized the texts transcribed by Ficino:

**Table 3**

<b>Structure of MS Borg. Gr. 22</b>						
<b>Q U I R E S</b>	<b>FOLIA</b>	<b>Type of quire</b>	<b>Nr of lines per folium</b>	<b>Quire signatures</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>	<b>TEXTS</b>
	I II III				paper paper paper	fol. I <sup>r</sup> : blank fol. II <sup>r</sup> : blank fol. III <sup>r</sup> : blank; fol. III <sup>v</sup> : brief description of the MS written by a modern hand (XVIII-XIX cent.)

	1-2	<i>bifolium</i>	21/23		parchment	fol.1 <sup>r</sup> : blank  <b>Gregorius Nazianzenus's</b> • <i>Hymnus ad Deum</i> , (fol.1 <sup>v</sup> -2 <sup>r</sup> l. 6)  • <i>Hymnus vespertinus</i> , (fols 2 <sup>r</sup> l. 7-2 <sup>v</sup> l. 9)  • <i>Actio gratiarum</i> (fol. 2 <sup>v</sup> ll. 10-23)
1	3-12	<i>quinio</i>	18	α'(1)	parchment	πίναξ (fols 3-4 <sup>r</sup> l. 9)  • <i>epigrammata in S. Dionysii Opera</i> (fols 4 <sup>r</sup> l. 10-4 <sup>v</sup> )  •Dyonisius the Areopagite's <i>De divinis nominibus</i> (DN) (fols 5 <sup>r</sup> -12)
2	13-22	<i>quinio</i>	18	β' (2)	parchment	DN
3	23-32	<i>quinio</i>	18	γ' (3)	parchment	DN
4	33-42	<i>quinio</i>	18	δ' (4)	parchment	DN
5	43-52	<i>quinio</i>	18	ε' (5)	parchment	DN
6	53-62	<i>quinio</i>	18	ς' (6)	parchment	DN
7	63-72	<i>quinio</i>	18	ζ' (7)	parchment	DN
8	73-82	<i>quinio</i>	18	η' (8)	parchment	DN
9	83-92	<i>quinio</i>	18	θ' (9)	parchment	DN
10	93-102	<i>quinio</i>	18	ι' (10)	parchment	DN
11	103-112	<i>quinio</i>	18	ια' (11)	parchment	DN
12	113-122	<i>quinio</i>	18	ιβ' (12)	parchment	DN (fols 113-116 <sup>r</sup> l. 8)  Plato's <i>Epinomis</i> (fols 116 <sup>r</sup> l. 9-122)
13	123-132	<i>quinio</i>	18	ιγ' (13)	parchment	Plato's <i>Epinomis</i>

14	133-142	<i>quinio</i>	18	ιδ' (14)	parchment	Plato's <i>Epinomis</i>
15	143-154	<i>senio</i>	18		parchment	Plato's <i>Epinomis</i> (fols 143-145 <sup>v</sup> )  Excerpts from Plato's <i>Epistulae</i> (fols 146 <sup>r</sup> -154 <sup>v</sup> )
16	155-168	<i>bifolium</i> + <i>senio</i>	18/26		Parchment <i>bifolium</i> (fols 155,168) + paper <i>senio</i> (fols 156-167)	Excerpts from Plato's <i>Epistulae</i>  <b>Gregorius Nazianzenus's Hymnus XXXI (155<sup>rv</sup>)</b>  Excerpts from Thomas Aquinas's <i>Summa contra Gentiles</i> and <i>Quaestiones Disputatae de anima</i> (fols 156 <sup>r</sup> -165 <sup>v</sup> )  Excerpt from Proclus's <i>Elementatio Theologica</i> (fol. 166 <sup>r</sup> ll. 1-11)  Excerpts from Plotinus's <i>Enneads</i> (fols 166 <sup>r</sup> l.12-167 <sup>r</sup> l. 17)  Excerpts from Plato (fols 167 <sup>r</sup> l. 18-167 <sup>v</sup> )  <b>Gregorius Nazianzenus's Hymnus ad Deum (fol. 168)</b>

### **I. 5. 1 Marsilio Ficino and his script: Ficino's Greek hand**

Ficino's manuscripts are typical scholarly notebooks: they are the result of his readings and studies and are intended for private use. Thus they were produced and arranged without any particular aesthetic purpose: the type of script used by the Florentine scholar reflects this process. Indeed, neither the script that Ficino used when transcribing the Greek texts nor the script that he used for the sets of notes and Latin excerpts are what we would define as book hands. Such scripts present a variety of aspects falling into the category of informal scripts that Renaissance scholars used in the course of their readings.

In a recent publication edited by Edoardo Crisci and Paola Degni, Ficino's Greek hand has been included in a category of humanist scripts defined as 'ricercate e ricche di stilemi barocchi'.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, if we analyse Ficino's Greek hand in detail, we may readily call such a definition into question.

Unlike baroque hands, the script that Ficino used for transcribing the Greek texts in his notebooks is characterized by a high degree of legibility, as exemplified by the clear division between single letters and single words. The set of letter-shapes essentially corresponds to the modern one, but is limited: only few letters have variations; abbreviations are scant. Furthermore, ligatures are reduced to a minimum –letters rather bite each other– and do not deform or distort the *ductus* of the letters. Given these key features, we may argue that Ficino's hand belongs to those humanist scripts that are heavily reliant on Manuel Chrysoloras's influence and teaching.

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<sup>64</sup> *La scrittura greca dall'Antichità all'epoca della stampa*, p. 37.

Manuel Chrysoloras arrived at Florence in 1397 and during the three he spent teaching in the city he revived the study of Greek in the West.<sup>65</sup> His handwriting was the concrete tool that enabled his disciples to become familiar with the Greek script. Therefore, it was intended for practical goals, aiming at both rapidity and clarity. As a result, Chrysoloras's script became the graphic model that inspired several generations of scholars.

Ficino's script is therefore consistent with those scripts that Daniele Bianconi defines as having 'una certa *allure* crisolorina'.<sup>66</sup> This does not mean that his script represents a case of graphic mimesis, i.e. a mechanical reproduction of Chrysoloras's handwriting, but that Ficino's hand is rather the result of the same functional purposes: rapidity and clarity.

I shall now analyse in detail some characteristic features of Ficino's Greek hand, which have not yet been extensively described by scholars. As pointed out above, it is not a book hand but a quite rapid and fluent informal script. The Florentine scholar tends to write with a thick ductus, which we similarly detect in his Latin script and which I shall describe in the next section. Ficino's script shows a slight degree of contrast in the size of the letters, between letters projecting above or below ( $\delta$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\zeta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\lambda$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\rho$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\chi$ ,  $\psi$ ), which interrupt the regular rhythm of the script, and smaller letters ( $\alpha$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\iota$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\omicron$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\upsilon$ ,  $\omega$ ). The script is predominantly minuscule, but there is often a coexistence of

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<sup>65</sup> For a detailed account of Manuel Chrysoloras and his activity, see *Manuele Crisolora e il ritorno del greco in Occidente*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Napoli, 26-29 giugno 1997), ed. by Riccardo Maisano e Antonio Rollo (Naples: D'Auria, 2002). See also Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'Umanesimo, I: Manuele Crisolora* (Florence: Centro Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1941); Nigel Wilson, *Da Bisanzio all'Italia, Gli Studi Greci nell'Umanesimo Italiano* (Alessandria: Dell'Orso, 2000), pp. 9-15; For a description of the scripts influenced by Chrysoloras, see Bianconi 'La minuscola greca dal 1204 al 1453 (e oltre)' in *La scrittura greca dall'Antichità all'epoca della stampa*, p. 31.

<sup>66</sup> Bianconi, 'La minuscola greca dal 1204 al 1453 (e oltre)', p. 31.

minuscule and majuscule letters ( $\gamma$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\phi$ ). The use of abbreviation is limited to the conjunction  $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ , the ending  $-\epsilon\nu$  (only in the form  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ ) and the consonants  $\sigma\tau$ . The limited use of ligatures concerns  $\sigma\nu$ ,  $\epsilon\iota$ ,  $\epsilon\rho$ , and  $\epsilon\nu$ . *Iota* and *ypsilon* are sometimes provided with a *trema*. We shall now describe form and *ductus* of the most peculiar letters of Ficino's script:

- *beta*: minuscule, is formed by a vertical stroke extending beyond the baseline and by a three-like stroke;
- *gamma*: there are two types, the former type is bigger, majuscule but small sized. The vertical stroke often touches the following letter; the latter type is minuscule;
- *delta*, minuscule, it is drawn so that the ascender is parallel to the baseline;
- *zeta* shows the typical three-like form;
- *eta*, majuscule, small sized and tends to be squared;
- *theta*, majuscule, narrow and upright; the central dot is quite often touching the following letter;
- *ny*, minuscule; extremely narrow and upright; it looks like a minuscule gamma;
- *pi* is drawn in three movements and tends to be squared. Sometimes it is drawn in two movements and has two loops;
- *tau* is drawn in two different ways: it may be either minuscule or majuscule; the minuscule one is bigger, with the headstroke very much extending to the left; sometimes it is drawn by forming a loop and curving the lower part of the shaft. The curved shaft is often touching the following vowel. The majuscule one is smaller in format: the headstroke is perpendicular to the shaft and it is often touching the preceding or following letter;

- *phi* is majuscule and is drawn by extending the central stroke above or below the base line: the letter is touching the following letter;
- *chi* is formed by crossing two slightly curved stokes, forming 'x' and standing out in the writing space due to his larger size;
- *psi* : is shaped like a cross, by drawing two perpendicular stokes.

I summarize what I have described so far in the following table:

**Table 4**

Letters Abbreviations and Ligatures	<i>SPECIMENS</i>	
β		
γ		
δ		
ζ		
η		
θ		
ν		
π		
τ		

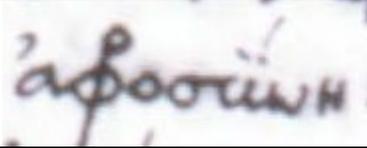
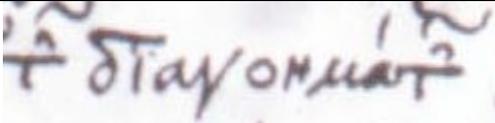
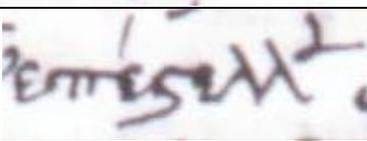
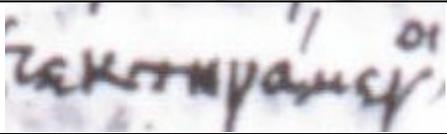
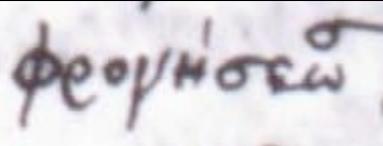
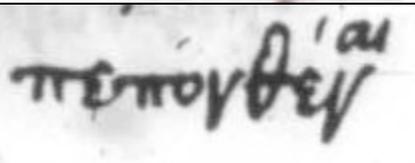
φ	
χ	
ψ	
καί	
στ	
μέν	
ου	
ει	
ερ	
ευ	

By analysing Ficino's script in quires 1 and 18 of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., one can detect some ligatures and abbreviations that are not used in the *sectio prior* (table 5):

- use of the ligature φρ;
- use of abbreviation for the endings –ov, –ων;
- use of abbreviation for the ending –εν in any case;

- letters piled up in final position.

**Table 5**

<i>SECTIO RECENTIOR</i>	<i>SPECIMENS</i>
• ligature φρ	
• abbreviation for -ov	
• abbreviation for -ων	
• abbreviation for -εν	
• letters piled up	
• letter piled up	
• letters piled up	

The use of these forms seems to be the result of a precise strategy, reflecting a tight connection between the textual material and the medium for writing. Once the *sectio recentior* is added and a second binding is performed, the notebook completes its 'growth' and acquires its final arrangement. Thus when copying the text, Ficino seeks to make sure that the excerpts fit perfectly into the definitive and limited writing space available. In order to achieve this goal, the

Florentine scholar resorts to specific means: the script becomes more compressed and abbreviations are used more extensively.

As we shall see in Chapter III, this palaeographical aspect is consistent with a different way of making up the excerpts and managing the set of texts transcribed in the *sectio recentior*.

At fol. 58<sup>r</sup>, which is the first folio of quire 5, starting from l. 10, one can detect a considerable and isolated change, which interrupts the continuity of the general appearance of the script: the *ductus* gets slower and the drawing of the letters becomes more rigid. From the end of l. 14, the letters tend to get squared and smaller and to be drawn in a paler ink. As mentioned above, what makes the phenomenon unusual is the fact that it is isolated: starting from fol. 58<sup>v</sup>, the script recovers its main features and general aspect.

At a glance, this sudden change, together with a set of errors that are corrected by using a thicker and more fluid script, might suggest that in this isolated part of the manuscript the transcription was performed by somebody else. When detecting the phenomenon, Henry ascribes it to a change in the writing instrument.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes* II, p. 38

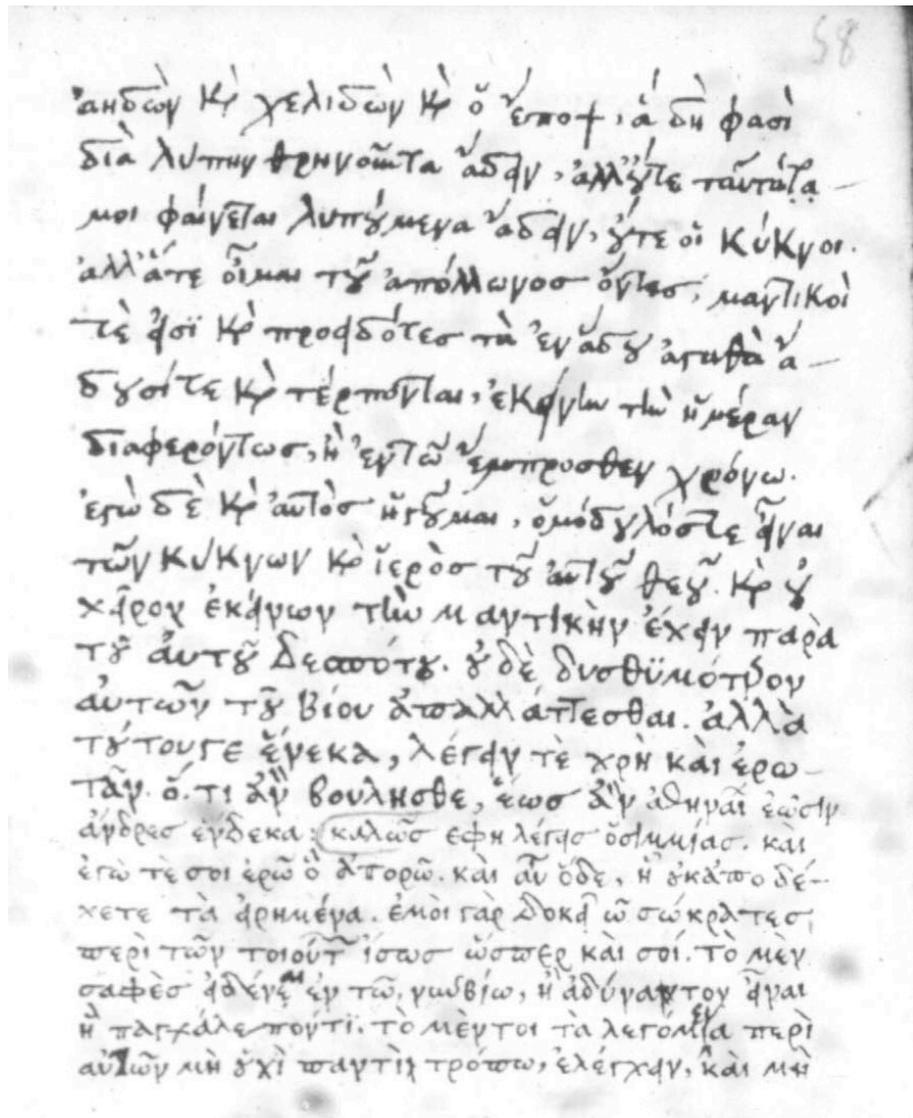


Figure 20. Fol. 58<sup>r</sup> ll. 10-21: change of hand?

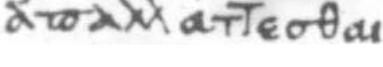
An analysis of the letter-forms and their *ductus* makes it possible to detect a few differences (table 6):

- we detect a minuscule *alpha*, formed by a single stroke and drawn in a single movement, which is consistent with the type that is present in the rest of the manuscript. Besides this form, there is a majuscule *alpha* formed by a lobe and a descender;

- *beta* is similar to those that are visible in the rest of the manuscript, but the letter is drawn without extending the mainstroke below the base-line and looks like a majuscule letter;
- *delta* may be majuscule, triangular, provided with a curl at the top of the descender; otherwise, it is minuscule but it is drawn differently. Unlike in the rest of the manuscript, the ascender is not parallel to the baseline;
- a minuscule *epsilon* alternates with a majuscule *epsilon*, formed by a semicircular lobe and a central upright stroke;
- besides a majuscule *theta*, one can detect a minuscule *theta*, which represents an *unicum* in the whole manuscript;
- *my* has a different *ductus*: the letter does not have any strokes dropping the base line and in some cases it is very similar to a majuscule *my*;
- double  $\tau$  is usually formed by a majuscule *tau* and a minuscule *tau*, which is bigger. By contrast, in this section of the manuscript, it is formed by two majuscule letters, having different size.

**Table 6**

LETTERS AND LIGATURES	SPECIMENS		
	FICINO'S SCRIPT	SCRIPT AT fol. 58 II. 10-21	
$\alpha$			
$\beta$			
$\delta$			

ε			
θ			
μ			
ττ			

A change in the writing instrument and in the *ductus* may considerably affect the letter-forms and the way they are drawn. Nevertheless, the analysis that I have carried out highlights a considerable number of differences.

### I. 5. 2 Ficino's Latin script

Some of the Greek texts transcribed in the notebooks are provided with Latin headings and *marginalia*, in Ficino's own hand. The Florentine scholar used his characteristic *minuta corsiva*, which Sebastiano Gentile has described in detail:

È una scrittura, se vogliamo, 'da dotto', ricca di caratteri distintivi, che le conferiscono un aspetto difficilmente confondibile. Vi si ravvisa, accanto ad un limitato uso di legature, una spiccata tendenza a mantenere le single lettere ben distinte, accompagnata e messa in risalto da un tratto di penna generalmente assai marcato. Questa tendenza non viene meno neppure negli esempi più veloci della sua scrittura, dove la rapidità è favorita da un ricorso puntuale alle risorse del sistema abbreviativo tardo-medievale, piuttosto che ad un aumento della corsività del tracciato.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Sebastiano Gentile, 'Note sullo 'scrittoio' di Marsilio Ficino', in *Supplementum festivum. Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. by James Hankins, John Monfasani and Frederick Purnell Jr. (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), p. 341

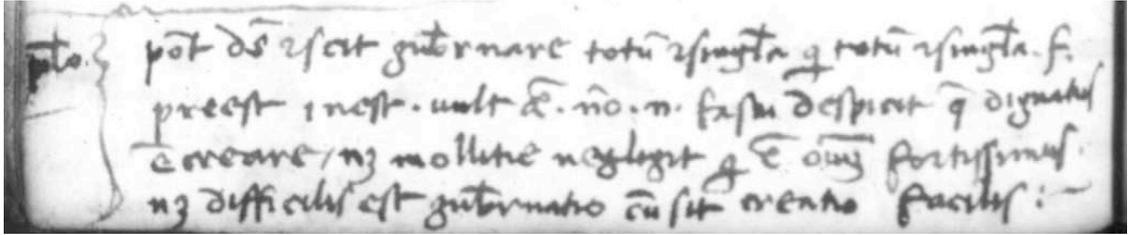


Figure 21. Ficino's *minuta corsiva*. Detail of fol. 204<sup>v</sup>: in the bottom margin, *marginale* to Plato's *Leg. X* 903b-905c

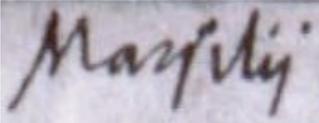
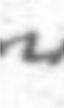
Furthermore, Kristeller and Gentile's studies provide descriptions of some of the peculiar letter-forms of Ficino's script.<sup>69</sup> I shall now provide a further description, which combines the insights of the two scholars with new elements. Additionally, I shall provide the relevant specimens (table 7):

- 'd' is drawn in one movement and recalls a  $\delta$  with the ascender sloping to the left: in this case, it has no ligatures. Otherwise, it may be cursive, drawn in one movement and similar to a  $\mathcal{D}$ : in this case is joint to the following letters through a ligature;
- 'f' is drawn in two movements and is formed by two strokes crossing perpendicularly; the mainstroke slopes to the right. Otherwise, the letter may be cursive: it is drawn in one movement and quite often it has a double loop, forming '8';
- 'g' is shaped like '8' and is formed by a lobe and a large loop below that;
- 'h' is formed by an ascender and a small limb, dropping below the baseline;
- 'i' in final position, in most cases drops below the baseline;
- a rounded 'r' alternates with an upright 'r';
- 's' has the characteristic upright form;

<sup>69</sup> See P. O. Kristeller, 'Some Original Letters and Autograph Manuscripts of Marsilio Ficino', III, p. 10; Gentile, 'Note sullo scrittoio', p. 341.

• 'x' is cursive, it consists of a single stroke drawn in one movement and has a large loop.

**Table 7**

LETTER	SPECIMENS		
d			
f			
g			
h			
i			
r			
s			
x			

According to Gentile, Ficino's *minuta corsiva* seems to be characterized by a considerable combination of 'modern' elements –i.e. belonging to late medieval tradition- and ancient elements –i.e. 'humanistic' elements–, particularly in the case of some letters who alternate different forms –for instance the two types of 'r' mentioned above– This combination seems to reflect, from a palaeographical point of view, Ficino's complex education.<sup>70</sup>

## I. 6 Ficino's sources

The manuscripts that I have described in this chapter contain a wide range of Greek and Latin texts, providing invaluable information on Ficino's activity. Ficino's working notebooks are the product of an intensive close reading of various philosophical sources. In order to contextualize more thoroughly my study, I will now provide a brief account of the manuscript sources that Ficino had at his disposal when reading and working on Plato and the philosophers belonging to the Neoplatonic tradition. As we shall see, these manuscripts are closely connected with Ficino's notebooks.

### •Plato

As stated in the introduction, thank to his translation of Plato's corpus, Ficino was largely responsible for the revival of Platonism in Western Europe. In the preface to his 1492 translation of Plotinus, Ficino informs us of the events leading him to translate Plato's dialogues.<sup>71</sup> In 1462, Cosimo De' Medici

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<sup>70</sup> See Gentile, 'Note sullo scrittoio', p. 341.

<sup>71</sup> Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, II, pp. 87-88: 'Magnus Cosmus, Senatus consulto Pater Patriae, quo tempore concilium inter Graecos atque Latinos sub Eugenio Pontefice Florentiae tractabatur, philosophum graecum nomine Gemistum, cognomine Plethonem, quasi Platonem

commissioned Ficino to perform this task, which the Florentine scholar performed in the years 1463-69.

According to two letters we know that Ficino had at least two manuscripts at his disposal, which he used as a textual basis for his own translation. In a letter dated 1462, Ficino thanks the Lord of Florence for providing him with a manuscript containing Plato's *opera omnia*.<sup>72</sup> In a letter to Amerigo Benci, the Florentine scholar refers to a manuscript that Benci gave to him, containing several Platonic dialogues.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Ficino mentions these codices in his wills: the first is described as a manuscript *in carta bona cum omnibus dialogis*, whilst the latter as a codex *cum certis dialogis in carta bombycina*.<sup>74</sup>

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alterum de mysteriis platonice disputantem frequenter audivit. E cuius ore ferventi sic afflatus est protinus, sic animatus, ut inde academiā quandam alta mente conceperit, hanc oportuno primo tempore pariturus. Deinde, dum conceptum tantum magnus ille Medices quodammodo parturiret, me electissimi medici sui Ficini filium, adhuc puerum tanto operi destinavit, ad hoc ipsum educavit in dies. Operam praeterea dedit, ut omnes non solum Platonis, sed etiam Plotini libros graecos haberem. Post haec autem anno millesimo quadringentesimo sexagesimo tertio, quo ego trigesimum aebam aetatis annum, mihi Mercurium primo Termaximum, mox Platonem mandavit interpretandum. Mercurium paucis mensibus eo vivente peregi, Platonem tunc etiam sum aggressus<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, II, p. 88: 'Quo tandem pro tantis muneribus referam aliud nihil habeo, nisi ut platonice voluminibus que nobis porrexisti sedulus incumbam, Academiā quam nobis in agro Caregio parasti veluti quoddam contemplationis sacellum legitime colam ibique, dum spiritus hoc regit corpusculum, Platonis pariter ac Cosmi Medicis natalem diem celebrem'.

<sup>73</sup> Marsili Ficini Florentini *Opera quae hactenus extitere et quae in lucem nunc primum prodire omnia*, Basel 1576, rist. an., con una lettera di Paul Oskar Kristeller e una premessa di Mario Sancierpiano (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1962), p. 609 (hereafter *Ficini Opera*): 'Accepi hodie tuo nomine grecos Platonis nostri dialogos, munus certe magnificum, animo tuo dignum, meo gratissimum [...] imitari in hoc sicut plerisque aliis magnum Cosmum, ut arbitror, voluisti: is enim superioribus diebus bibliothecam meam graeco ornavit Platone'.

<sup>74</sup> Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, II, p. 195: 'Item mandavit librum Platonis in greco in carta bona cum omnibus dialogis existentem in domo sui habitationis consignari debere Magnifico Laurentio Pierfrancesco de Medicis tanquam de se bene merito et ob certas iustas causas animum et conscientiam suam moventes. Item similiter mandavit librum Platonis in greco cum certis dialogis in carta bombycina existentem penes prudentem virum Franciscum Zenobii de Ghiacceto restitui debere heredibus Amerigi de Bencis, ostendendo dicti heredes per scripturas fide dignas dicti Amerigi dictum librum donatum vel compositum fuisse ad tempus dicto testatori. Alias ipsum eundem librum legavit eidem Francisco amico suo et de se bene merito'.

To date, Benci's manuscript has not been identified. The codex *in carta bona*, could be one of two Florentine manuscripts containing Plato's *opera omnia*: a fourteenth-century paper codex, MS Laur. 59. 1 (Laur. a) and a fifteenth-century parchment one, MS Laur. 89. 5 (Laur. c). Interpreting *in carta bona* as referring to paper, Raymond Marcel and Martin Sicherl identified the codex that Ficino received from Cosimo de' Medici, as MS Laur. a.<sup>75</sup> At a later stage, Diller and Sebastiano Gentile in turn demonstrated that *carta* might indicate both paper and parchment: as a result, they identified Ficino's manuscript as MS Laur. c.<sup>76</sup>

As I will mention in more detail in Chapters V and VI, several philological studies demonstrated the text of Plato's *Symposium* in MS Ricc. 92, as well as most excerpts contained in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., derive from MS Laur.c.

### •Plotinus

As mentioned above, we know that as early as September 1462, Cosimo de' Medici provided Ficino with MS Laur. 89.5 (Laur. c), containing Plato's corpus, from which Ficino was to translate Plato into Latin. Cosimo de' Medici also gave Ficino a manuscript containing Plotinus's *Enneads*, now registered as MS Laurentianus 87. 3. The Florentine scholar used this manuscript, along with a copy produced by Johannes Scouariotes, MS Parisinus graecus 1816, for his

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<sup>75</sup> Raymond Marcel, *Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 253-55; Martin Sicherl, 'Neuentdeckte Handschriften von Marsilio Ficino und Johannes Reuchlin', *Scriptorium* 16 (1962), 50-61 (pp. 51-53 and 59).

<sup>76</sup> Aubrey Diller, 'Notes on History of Some Manuscripts of Plato', in *Studies in Greek Manuscript Tradition*, ed. by Aubrey Diller (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1983), pp. 251-58 (p. 257); *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Mostra di manoscritti*, pp. 28-31; Sebastiano Gentile, 'Note sui manoscritti greci di Platone utilizzati da Marsilio Ficino', in *Scritti in onore di Eugenio Garin*, ed. by Giancarlo Garfagnini (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1987), pp. 51-84 (p. 55).

translation of Plotinus (1484-86).<sup>77</sup> In Chapters II and IV, I shall focus more extensively on Ficino's translation.

As far as MS Laur. 87. 3 is concerned, Ficino provided the text of the *Enneads* with a chapter division, which he noted in the codex. Such a division was adopted in the 1492 printed edition that Ficino produced and is still in use in modern critical editions. Through his philological analysis, Henry identified the Florentine manuscript as the model for the *excerpta* contained in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. According to Henry, Ficino transcribed the Plotinian texts in the Milan manuscript before noting the chapter division in MS Laur. 87. 3.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, if one is to except two cases, these texts are not provided with any chapter division.

#### •Proclus

Several studies have identified some of the Proclean manuscripts that Ficino read and used during his scholarly activity. More specifically, the texts contained in MSS Ambr. F 19 sup. and Borg. gr. 22, provide further insight into Ficino's study of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, which the Florentine scholar read in MS Ricc. 70. In Chapters III and IV, I will focus in detail on these texts.

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<sup>77</sup> For a detailed account, see Christian Förstel, Christian, 'Marsilio Ficino e il Parigino Greco 1816 di Plotino', in *Marsilio Ficino Fonti, testi, fortuna*, pp. 65-88.

<sup>78</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, pp. 38-39.

## Chapter II

### **'Selecta colligere': Marsilio Ficino and Renaissance reading practices**

L'umanesimo è, tra tante cose, un mondo di antologie.

Agostino Sottili<sup>79</sup>

#### **II. 1 Humanist miscellanies: cultural context and definitions**

As stated in the Introduction, Marsilio Ficino's notebooks provide invaluable information on his activity as well as on the intellectual universe within which the Florentine scholar was operating. They are the result of a complex interplay of tightly interwoven cultural processes, such as the Renaissance reception of ancient texts and their reuse, scholarly reading practices, strategies of text storing, techniques of text abridgement, methods of note-taking, scribal practices, and manuscript production.

In order to contextualize more thoroughly my analysis, I will seek to provide a brief account of these processes, taking as a starting point Pierre Hadot's insightful remarks on ancient philosophy:

The ancient author's art consists in his skillfully using, in order to arrive at his goals, all of the constraints that weigh upon him as well as the models furnished by the tradition. Most of the time, furthermore, he uses not only ideas, images, and patterns of argument in this way but also texts or at least pre-existing formulae. From plagiarism pure and simple to quotation or paraphrase, this practice includes - and this is the most characteristic example - the literal use of formulae or words employed by the earlier tradition to which the author often gives a new meaning adapted to what he wants to say. [...] What matters first of all is the prestige of the ancient and traditional formula, and not the exact meaning it originally had. The idea itself holds less interest than the prefabricated elements in which the writer believes he recognizes his own thought, elements that take on an unexpected meaning and purpose when they are integrated into a literary whole. This sometimes brilliant reuse of prefabricated elements gives an impression of "bricolage", to take up a word currently in fashion, not only among anthropologists but among biologists.

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<sup>79</sup> Agostino Sottili, 'Università e Umanesimo', *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 207 (2000), 603-10 (p. 608).

Thought evolves by incorporating prefabricated and pre-existing elements, which are given new meaning as they become integrated into a rational system.<sup>80</sup>

This passage places emphasis on some key points concerning the reception and reuse of previous ideas and information: works and texts have no stable and fixed meaning and they are invested with new signification. Quite often texts are shaped and reworked through the complex interplay between the text and the reader, leading to the appropriation and thus the incorporation of pre-existing elements in a new text.<sup>81</sup>

Hadot's remarks can be indeed applied to the Renaissance, which inherited and refined earlier reading and text-recycling practices. Ficino's manuscripts illustrate the way in which this process of reception, appropriation and reworking actually took place in the Early Modern period. Indeed, they refer to a common practice among Renaissance scholars. Whilst reading ancient texts, humanists selected and transcribed passages of special interest in notebooks. These intense close readings resulted in the creation of collections of texts that compilers could recall and reuse, at a later stage, in their scholarly activity.

Such collections are the result of different impulses: the first one is preservative and leads scholars to select, collect, and organize ancient texts. On the one hand this impulse reflects a sort of encyclopaedic ambition, which was a central aspect of the Renaissance interest in storing information.<sup>82</sup> On the other

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<sup>80</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson and trans. by Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 64-65.

<sup>81</sup> See, Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books. Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. VII-XI.

<sup>82</sup> See Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know. Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 33; Ead., 'Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism',

hand, as Ann Blair put it, 'distinctively new to the Renaissance was the awareness of the great cultural trauma suffered through the loss of ancient learning during what Petrarch was the first to call the middle Ages'.<sup>83</sup> Although scholars were proud of the recovery of many lost texts, they felt that most of ancient literature remained irrecoverable. As a result, they developed strategies of text storage in order to avoid any further loss.

The second impulse is practical: it concerns information management. Scholars articulated concerns about the overabundance of books (*multitudo librorum*) and the frailty of human resources, such as time and memory, for managing information.<sup>84</sup> Thus authors and compilers produced collections of textual material, often arranged under headings, in order to facilitate access to a mass of texts considered authoritative.

The last impulse is creative: the textual material transcribed in these manuscripts, often reduced to brief excerpts and sometimes assembled in sequences which are different from the original text, represents the basis for entirely new works.

The process that I have described does not exclusively concern Renaissance Europe. In many cultures, the transmission of ancient *auctoritates* stimulated an increasing accumulation of texts and strategies of information management. Ancient, medieval and early modern authors working either in Western or non-Western contexts, such as Byzantium, Islam and China,

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in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013), pp. 379-97.

<sup>83</sup> Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>84</sup> See Ann Blair, 'Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload, ca. 1550-1700', *Journal of History of Ideas* 64 (2003), 11-28; Ead., *Too Much to Know*, pp. 23 and 83-89.

articulated similar concerns.<sup>85</sup> For example, the perception of textual overload and of the slipperiness of memory can be traced in different times and places. As a result, such concerns led to ‘the collection and arrangement of textual excerpts designed for consultation’, which Ann Blair defined as ‘reference books’.<sup>86</sup>

As far as the Renaissance is concerned, Blair states that ‘developed from medieval and ancient models, early modern reference tools spanned a wide range of genres that can be difficult to distinguish from one another by hard and fast criteria’.<sup>87</sup> Among these genres, we find the *florilegium*, selecting the best passages, or ‘flowers’, from authoritative sources and the commonplace-book, i.e. collections of authoritative sentences and quotations. As I will show in the course of my analysis, Ficino’s notebooks present similarities with these reference tools.<sup>88</sup>

Concerning commonplace-books, Ann Moss states that the feature which distinguished them from any other random collection of quotations was the fact that the selected excerpts were gathered under headings: the textual material ‘was arranged by headed sections in such a way to ensure maximum ease and efficiency in retrieving the information it contained’.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, Moss argues that among other examples of Renaissance compilation literature, the commonplace-book was part of the early stages of scholarly intellectual

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<sup>85</sup> For a comparative analysis and the relevant bibliography, see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 45-57.

<sup>86</sup> Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 24.

<sup>88</sup> The practice existed in Antiquity, but the term *florilegium* (from *flores* for flowers and *legere* in the sense of ‘selecting’) dates from the early modern period and was likely first used by Aldus Manutius of the Latin translation of a collection of Greek epigrams. See Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 59 and 163-170.

<sup>89</sup> Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. V. See also Ann Blair, ‘Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The commonplace-book’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992), 541-51.

experience. Every Latin-literate individual started to construct textual repertoires as soon as he could properly read and write: schoolboys were encouraged to cull passages, collect excerpts from their readings and compile themselves commonplace-books. When they came to write works and compositions of their own, they were exhorted to use their repertoires as a resource, taking from them passages and quotations. Thus the commonplace-book was one of the most important tools of Renaissance readers and writers and it is evidence of peculiar features of early modern culture in general and of the working practice and methodology of individual scholars in particular.

As stated above, different cultures in different times and geographical contexts developed strategies for storing texts. The variety of genres and compilations of excerpts that authors devised involved various combinations of methods of collecting texts. In her study on the process of managing scholarly information, Blair distinguishes four key operations, defined as 'the four S's': storing, sorting, selecting and summarizing.<sup>90</sup> When discussing these processes in the Byzantine culture, Rosa Maria Piccione draws up a similar distinction, including three principles: scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare (selecting, collecting, and organizing).<sup>91</sup>

More specifically, the criteria by which the excerpts are made up are the result of practicalities: brevity and conciseness, the ease of the use and consultation of the material, as well as the desire to isolate and point out concepts and ideas originating from more complex syntactical structures by the removal of

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<sup>90</sup> Ann Blair, 'Note-Taking as an Art of Transmission', *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2004), 85-107 (pp. 85-90).

<sup>91</sup> R. M. Piccione, 'Scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare. La letteratura di raccolta e la trasmissione del sapere', *Bisanzio tra storia e letteratura*, ed. by E. V. Maltese (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003), pp. 44-63.

elements which slowed down the logical progression of reading. Through this process of reduction and rework, formulae, images, ideas, patterns of argument and models employed by the earlier tradition acquired a new meaning as they were selected and displayed in the textual repertoire and then integrated into a new work.<sup>92</sup> As such, the operation involves a wide range of closely overlapping textual and intellectual processes, such as epitomizing, abbreviating, condensing, compressing, paraphrasing, anthologizing, excerpting and epitomizing.<sup>93</sup> In the Renaissance, the production of reference tools dramatically increased: therefore, 'the increased scale of compilation and range of sources inspired new methods of working and new kinds of finding devices'.

As stated above, the creation of reference tools for information storing is the result of intensive close reading. As such, this process of selection involved *plume à la main* readings, that is, a type of reading that was supposed to include note-taking.<sup>94</sup> In her study on note-taking, Blair states that this practice constitutes a central but often hidden phase in the transmission of knowledge, which

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<sup>92</sup> See, Piccione, 'Scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare', p. 47.

<sup>93</sup> Regarding this topic, see *Selecta Colligere I. Akten des Kolloquiums 'Sammeln, Neuordnen, Neues Schaffen. Methoden der Überlieferung von Texten in der Spätantike und in Byzanz'* (Jena, 21-23 November 2002), ed. by R.M. Piccione and Matthias Perkams (Alessandria: Dell'Orso, 2003); *Selecta Colligere II, Beiträge zur Technik des Sammelns und Kompilierens griechischer Texte von der Antike bis zum Humanismus*, ed. by R. M. Piccione and Matthias Perkams (Alessandria: Dell'Orso, 2005); *Condensing Texts-Condensed Texts*, ed. by Marietta Horster and Christiane Reitz (Stuttgart: Verlag, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> For an account of this mode of reading in different contexts and from different perspectives, see Anthony Grafton, 'The Humanist as Reader', in *A history of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 179-212 (pp. 206-09); Guglielmo Cavallo, 'Le pratiche di lettura', in *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo III. La cultura bizantina*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo (Rome: Salerno Editore), pp. 569-603 (pp. 579-86); Blair, 'Reading Strategies', p. 19; Guglielmo Cavallo, *Leggere a Bisanzio* (Milan: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2006), pp. 87-101; Blair, 'The Rise of Note-Taking in Early Modern Europe', *Intellectual History Review* 20 (2010), 303-16; Ead., *Too Much to Know*, pp. 91-118.

perpetuates a cycle of transmission and transformation of knowledge, ideas and experiences.<sup>95</sup>

The scholarly transcription of ancient texts therefore represents a key component of Renaissance culture and sheds light on another crucial aspect: the persistence of scribal practices and the survival of manuscript culture in spite of the advent of printing.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, most collections of texts produced in the Renaissance were preserved in the form of manuscripts.

Sebastiano Gentile and Silvia Rizzo define these manuscripts as *miscellanee umanistiche* (humanist miscellanies) and point out that a systematic census of these collections has never been conducted, even if a careful and extensive research might well demonstrate that most of the manuscripts produced in the Renaissance period consisted of miscellanies.<sup>97</sup>

Gentile and Rizzo's study on humanist miscellanies represents one of the most recent attempts at describing and categorizing these manuscripts. The two scholars have drawn a distinction, between *miscellanee* and *zibaldoni*, which is based on three manuscripts produced by Giovanni Boccaccio, the so-called Boccaccio's *zibaldoni* (MSS Laur. Plut. 29. 8; Laur. Plut. 33. 31, Banco Rari 50).<sup>98</sup> According to their content and features, the two manuscripts from the Biblioteca Laurenziana are defined as *miscellanee*, i.e. anthologies of passages gathered in order merely to be read and studied. MS Banco Rari 50, the so-called

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<sup>95</sup> Blair, 'Note-Taking as an Art of Transmission', p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> See Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy*.

<sup>97</sup> Sebastiano Gentile and Silvia Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia delle miscellanee umanistiche', *Segno e Testo* 2 (2004), 379-407 (p. 380).

<sup>98</sup> The term *zibaldone* was first used by Giovanni Rucellai in 1457, who entitled a manuscript, containing private and family miscellaneous material, *Zibaldone quaresimale*. Rucellai defined the manuscript as 'una insalata di più erbe'. See Alessandro Perosa, *Giovanni Rucellai e il suo zibaldone: 'Il zibaldone quaresimale'*, (London: The Warburg Institute, 1960); Gentile e Rizzo 'Per una tipologia', p. 393.

*zibaldone Magliabecchiano*, differs from the two other manuscripts in the criteria by which the compilation was constructed. The book was conceived by Boccaccio as a collection of texts gathered with a view to writing a future original composition. As such, it is defined by Gentile and Rizzo as a proper *zibaldone*.<sup>99</sup>

This distinction between *miscellanea* and *zibaldoni* may be useful in the study of humanist miscellanies. However, it remains quite artificial, and fails to take into account a vast number of mixed content manuscripts, which do not fit easily into precise and strict categories. For instance, in the case of Boccaccio's *zibaldoni*, MS Laur. Plut. 33. 31, defined by Gentile and Rizzo as *miscellanea*, could also be defined as a proper *zibaldone*: it includes some texts belonging to the misogyny tradition (e.g. pseudo-Theophrastus' fragment the *De nuptiis*, quoted by Saint Jerome and Walter Map's *Dissuasio Valerii ad Rufinum ne ducat uxorem*). Authoritative studies have demonstrated that Boccaccio's interest in this misogynistic material, gathered at various times, had a key role in the conceiving and composing of his last masterpiece, the *Corbaccio*.<sup>100</sup> Thus MS Laur. Plut. 33. 31 was used by Boccaccio as a textual basis for the composition of an original work, which according to Gentile and Rizzo's definition would make it a *zibaldone* rather than a *miscellanea*.

Gentile and Rizzo's study also focusses on the material structure of these manuscripts. The humanist miscellany is often characterized by a specific physical appearance: it usually looks like a private notebook, modest and small; the writing material is cheap paper and the script used for transcribing the texts is generally cursive. The typical humanist miscellany was a work in progress, whose

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<sup>99</sup> See Gentile and Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', pp. 390-92.

<sup>100</sup> See in particular Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, ed. by Vittore Branca, 5 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1994), II: *Corbaccio*, ed. by Giorgio Padoan, pp. 421-22.

content and structure grew as the author's reading and studies advanced. The material structure is the result of the joining of quires or blocks of quires, which had often had an independent and separate life, and only at a later stage were assembled into a proper codex.<sup>101</sup> Angelo Poliziano's *zibaldoni* provide evidence of this practice: they result from the joining of several working notebooks, compiled in different moments and assembled at a later stage. The joining was performed either by Poliziano himself or by his disciple Pietro Crinito, who sought to preserve as much as possible of Poliziano's scholarly inheritance after his death.<sup>102</sup>

A considerable number of these miscellaneous manuscripts are still in need of in-depth analysis. This neglect is partly due to their nature of random collections of excerpts, which are not easy to identify, and partly, to the difficulty of reading and transcribing the extremely cursive script used by humanists when taking their notes. Ficino's notebooks, which Gentile and Rizzo defined as *zibaldoni filosofici*, have been only partially studied by modern scholars.<sup>103</sup> My analysis will focus on both their material structure and place them in the cultural context that I have briefly outlined above. It will identify, first, the way in which a Renaissance scholar actually read, selected, transcribed and reused ancient and medieval authors; secondly, it will determine Ficino's approach to ancient texts in all its complexity; lastly, it will underline the difficulty of categorizing or defining such miscellanies (anthologies, *florilegia*, compilations, collections, commonplace-books, *zibaldoni filosofici*?).

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<sup>101</sup> Gentile and Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', pp. 393-95.

<sup>102</sup> See Gentile and Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', p. 395; See also Luigi Silvano, 'Estratti dal Commento all'Odissea di Eustazio di Tessalonica in due zibaldoni autografi di Angelo Poliziano (MSS Mon. gr. 182 e Par. gr. 3069)', in *Selecta Colligere II*, pp. 403-33.

<sup>103</sup> Gentile and Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', p. 395.

## II. 2. 1 MS Riccardianus 92 and Ficino's *De Amore*

The first working notebook that I will analyse is MS Riccardianus 92. The manuscript contains a collection of texts on the theme of love, arranged under headings, indicating either the title or the author of the work from which each passage is taken. Thus the manuscript is an 'organic miscellany': in other words, the collection compiled by Ficino consists in the filing of texts and passages on the same theme.<sup>104</sup>

It has been conjectured that Ficino produced this anthology on the theme of love with a view to writing his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, the *Commentarium in Convivium De Amore*.<sup>105</sup> before composing his commentary, the Florentine scholar selected and collected in his working notebook texts related to the topics he wanted to cover in his commentary. A careful textual analysis confirms this hypothesis. More importantly, it provides a unique insight into Ficino's criteria for transcribing and using the selected text.

My analysis will be carried out as follows: first, in order to contextualize my study, I will provide a brief account of the story of Ficino's commentary and its impact on Renaissance culture. Secondly, I shall focus on the Greek texts included in the anthology and compare them with the sources used in Ficino's commentary. Furthermore, I shall provide a transcription and a contextualized analysis of a set of Latin texts included in the last section of the manuscript. These

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<sup>104</sup> Codicologists define a manuscript including different texts on a common theme as 'organic miscellany'. Otherwise, a miscellany is defined as non-organic: see Armando Petrucci, 'Introduzione', *Segno e Testo* 2 (2004), 3-13.

<sup>105</sup> See, Henri Dominique Saffrey, 'Florence 1492: the Reappearance of Plotinus', *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), 488-508 (p. 491); Marsilio Ficino, *De Amore. Comentario a «El Banquete» de Platón*, ed. and trans. by Rocío de la Villa Arduro (Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 2001), pp. XXI-XXII; Sebastiano Gentile and Silvia Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', p. 395.

texts, presented here for the first time, provide important information on Ficino's methodology and on the various stages of his writing activity.

## II. 2. 2 'Multa De Amore non imperite compilavit'

Ficino's *De Amore* is a work of the utmost importance, in which the Florentine scholar expounds his interpretation of Plato's doctrine of Love, which had a lasting impact on subsequent accounts of the concepts of love and beauty.<sup>106</sup>

Ficino presumably completed the first version in 1469: we read the date July 1469 at the end of Ficino's autograph manuscript, MS Vat. Lat. 7705.<sup>107</sup> The commentary, which was also translated into Italian by the author himself in 1474 under the title *El libro dell'Amore*, was first printed in 1484.<sup>108</sup>

Ficino presents his commentary as the report of a historical event, a banquet attended by nine guests at Francesco Bandino's home. The text's structure consists of seven speeches given by five of the participants, all of whom were prominent Florentine figures of the time: Giovanni Cavalcanti (Speeches I,

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<sup>106</sup> For the text, I use Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon*, ed. and trans. by Raymond Marcel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956); Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon*, De l'Amour. *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis De Amore*, ed. and trans. by Pierre Laurens (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012). On the circumstances and stages of composition, see Sebastiano Gentile, 'Per la storia del testo del *Commentarium in Convivium* di Marsilio Ficino', *Rinascimento* 22 (1981), 3-27. See also Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, I, pp. CXXIII-CXXV; J. A. Devereux, 'The Textual History of Ficino's *De Amore*', *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975), 173-82; For a detailed bibliographical account, see Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. by Sears Jayne (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1985; rpt. 1999); Marsilio Ficino, *De Amore*. ed. by Rocío de la Villa Ardura; Mario Corradi, 'Alle origini della lettura neoplatonica del *Convivio*: Marsilio Ficino e il *De Amore*', *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* 69 (1977), 406-22; Cesare Vasoli, 'Il De Amore e l'itinerario della «deificatio»', in *Filosofia e religione nella cultura del Rinascimento*, ed. by Cesare Vasoli (Naples: Guida, 1988), pp. 76-117.

<sup>107</sup> Critical editions are based on this manuscript.

<sup>108</sup> For the critical edition, see Marsilio Ficino, *El libro dell'Amore*, ed. by Sandra Niccoli (Florence: Olschki, 1987).

II, III), Cristoforo Landino (s. IV), Carlo Marsuppini (s. V), Tommaso Benci (s. VI) and Cristoforo Marsuppini (s. VII).<sup>109</sup>

Ficino's work had an extraordinary impact on European philosophy and literature during the Renaissance and beyond. Before being printed in 1484, the work had already been circulating in manuscript copies and had achieved a tremendous popularity among Europeans courts. For almost two centuries, the *Symposium* commentary 'played a role in Cinquecento society not unlike that of semi-popular books on psychoanalysis in our days'.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, it exerted a strong influence on artists, poets and writers.

Concerning the *De Amore* and its relevance, 'the main point made by most literary scholars is that Ficino was responsible for shifting the emphasis in treatises on love from an Aristotelian (and medieval) emphasis on the physiology and psychology of love to a Platonic (and Renaissance) emphasis on love as desire for ideal beauty'.<sup>111</sup>

Although the commentary is generally viewed as an example of literary *trattato d'amore*, modern readers have given it numerous interpretations.<sup>112</sup> Drawing on Agostino Nifo (c. 1473-1546)'s statement that: 'Ficino vero amplificans ea quae Plato De Amore tradidit, partim allegorizando, partim addendo, multa De Amore non imperite compilavit', Jayne stated that 'The best way to go about a first reading of the *De Amore* is to think of it exactly as Nifo

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<sup>109</sup> On the structure and sources of the commentary, see Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, pp. 9-105; Ficino, *Commentary*, trans. by Jayne, pp. 4-7; Sebastiano Gentile, 'Il ritorno di Platone, dei Platonici e del "corpus" ermetico. Filosofia, teologia e astrologia nell'opera di Marsilio Ficino', in *Le filosofie del Rinascimento*, ed. by Cesare Vasoli (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2002), pp. 202-205.

<sup>110</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Boulder: Icon Press, 1972), p. 145-46. See also Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 16-23.

<sup>111</sup> Ficino, *Commentary*, trans. by Jayne, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> See Ficino, *Commentary*, trans. by Jayne, pp. 2-4.

suggests, not as a commentary on the *Symposium*, but as a compilation of ideas about love'.<sup>113</sup>

Such a definition is consistent with the contents of MS. Ricc. 92: a compilation of texts on the theme of love, which represents an important stage of Ficino's writing activity. In other words, in order to write on the doctrine of love, the Florentine scholar methodically collected ancient sources in his notebook. Thus Ficino did not limit himself to using Plato's dialogue, but used other texts from the literary, medical and philosophical traditions. As a result, he produced a new and original synthesis.<sup>114</sup> This can be explained theoretically by Ficino's belief in the universality of knowledge: according to him, all cultures and traditions share the same truth. Practically, as we will see, MS Ricc. 92 reflects this belief in the *prisca theologia*.<sup>115</sup>

As highlighted above, the manuscript has been traditionally viewed as a source for Ficino's *De Amore*, since most of the texts contained in the collection

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<sup>113</sup> 'Amplifying Plato's view on love partly by allegorizing Plato and partly by adding to him, Ficino made a not unskillful compilation of many different ideas about love', trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> Rocío de la Villa Ardura summarizes quite effectively how Ficino actually worked: 'Actualmente conservamos una antología de textos griegos *Sobre el amor* manuscrita por Ficino, en la que aparecen las principales citaciones del *Comentario*. Evidentemente, nos encontramos ante un material de trabajo de Ficino cara a la elaboración de su propia teoría. Ficino utiliza el *Simposium* de Platón como un estribillo alternativo, al que va poniendo su música y, así, va apareciendo toda una temática inexistente en el diálogo de Platón y, sobre todo, bajo el tratamiento, bajo el enfoque particular de Ficino'. Ficino, *De Amore*. ed. by de la Villa Ardura, p. XXI.

<sup>115</sup> On the *prisca theologia*, see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958); F. A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology. Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); Ilana Klutsein, 'Marsilio Ficino et la Théologie Ancienne. Oracles Chaldaïques, Hymnes Orphiques, Hymnes de Proclus', *Quaderni di Rinascimento* 5 (1987); Eugenio Garin, *Ermetismo del Rinascimento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1988); Paola Zambelli, *L'ambigua natura della magia* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1991); Michael J. B. Allen, 'Golden Wits, Zoroaster and the Revival of Plato', in *Synoptic Art. Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation*, ed. by Michael J. B. Allen (Florence: Olschki, 1998), pp. 1-49; Cesare Vasoli, 'Il mito dei "prisci theologi" come ideologia della *renovatio*', in *Quasi sit deus. Studi su Marsilio Ficino*, ed. by Cesare Vasoli (Lecce: Conte, 1999), pp. 11-50.

are actually quoted in Ficino's commentary. My examination of the content of the manuscript and my comparative analysis with the text of the *De Amore* confirms this and enables us to reconstruct the stages of Ficino's work.

### II. 3 Anthologization techniques and quotations: the *Phaedrus*

At a first stage, Ficino transcribes the full text of Plato's *Symposium* (fols 1-71), which is the main subject of his commentary.

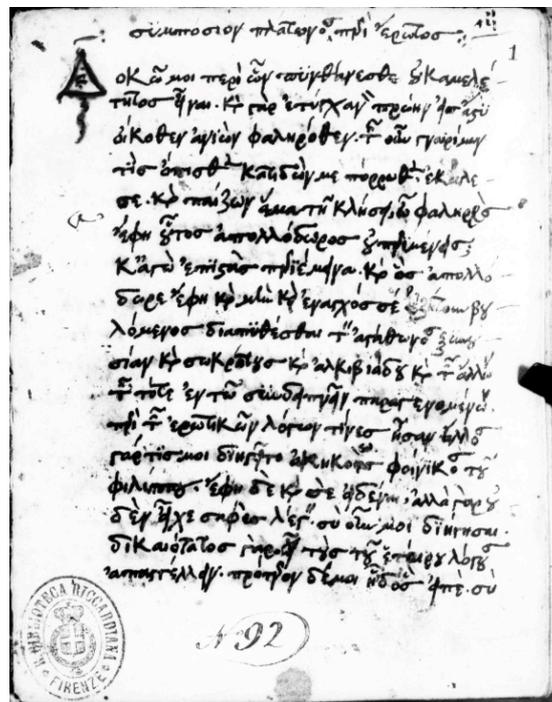


Figure 1. MS Ricc. 92, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. *Incipit* of Plato's *Symposium*

In the next section of the codex (fols 72<sup>r</sup>-95<sup>v</sup>; 97<sup>r</sup>-104<sup>v</sup>), Ficino transcribes the *Phaedrus*. This is not surprising: the dialogue was traditionally considered as the text that complements the *Symposium*, the former focussing on Beauty, the

latter on Love.<sup>116</sup> Ficino explicitly draws on this tradition, when he states that the ‘*Symposium* de amore quidem precipue tractat, consequenter vero de pulchritudine. At *Phaedrus* gratia pulchritudinis disputat de amore’.<sup>117</sup>

In MS Riccardianus 92, the Florentine scholar does not transcribe the full text of the dialogue, but selects two different sections. In the first one we find the following excerpts:

**Table 1**

<b>Folium</b>	<b>Excerpt</b>	<b>Content</b>
fols 72 <sup>r</sup> -83 <sup>v</sup> 1.6	( <i>Phaedr.</i> 237 a4-245 b6)	Socrates’ first speech on love (237a4-243 e8)  Socrates’ second speech: the four kinds of divine madness (244a-245b6)
<b>Not transcribed in this section</b>	<b>245b7-249e3</b>	<b>Demonstration of the immortality of the soul</b> <b>The chariot allegory</b> <b>The hyperouranios, Zeus and his retinue, the immortal souls.</b>
fol. 83 <sup>v</sup> l. 7-95 <sup>r</sup>	(249 e4-257 c4)	The madness of love: one comes to sense love rising after seeing beauty on earth. Thanks to such beauty the lover is reminded of the Idea of true Beauty.
fol. 95 <sup>r</sup> -95 <sup>v</sup> l. 5	(265 a6-265c2)	Summary of Socrates’ reasoning on love
fol. 95 <sup>v</sup> ll. 5-	(279b 9-c 3)	End of the dialogue: Prayer to Pan
fol. 95 <sup>v</sup> l.-fol. 96 <sup>v</sup>	Plato’s erotic epigrams	

<sup>116</sup> Michael Allen has explored in detail the importance of the *Phaedrus* in Ficino’s *De Amore*, stressing that ‘Ficino thought of the two dialogues as natural twins’. Michael J. B. Allen, ‘Cosmogony and love: the role of *Phaedrus* in Ficino’s *Symposium* Commentary’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 10 (1980), 131-153 (p. 134).

<sup>117</sup> ‘The *Symposium* treats principally of love, and beauty as a consequence; but the *Phaedrus* talks about love for beauty’s sake’, in Allen, ‘Cosmogony and love’, p. 131.



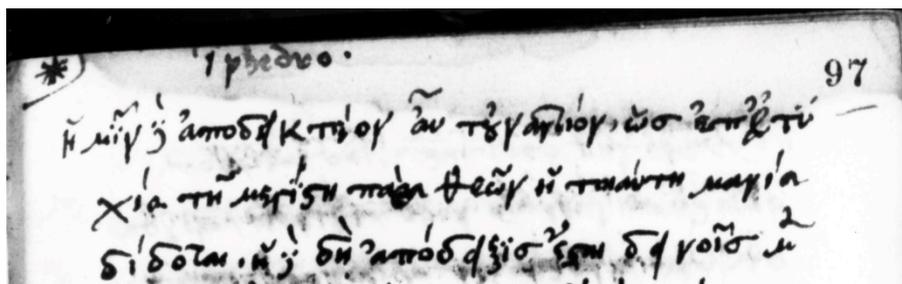


Figure 3. Detail of fol. 97<sup>r</sup>. The part that was previously omitted (*Phaedr.* 249e4-257 c4) is copied in a separate section

Thus Ficino created two thematically separate and distinct sections: one on Socrates' speeches on love, the other on the immortality of the soul. Since *Phaedr.* 249e4-257 c4 does not strictly concern Eros, the passage has been transcribed in an independent section. This also explain why Ficino transcribes Plato's erotic epigrams at the end of the first section (fols 95<sup>v</sup> l.-fol. 96<sup>v</sup>): the poems are consistent with the topic of the section itself. They come immediately after the passage dealing with the prayer to Pan (*Phaedr.* 279b 9-c 3), because they belong to the same literary genre. In other words, Ficino arranged his material associatively and therefore used the same collecting criteria as excerptors, compilers and anthologists commonly used in transcribing selected passages and making up *excerpta*.<sup>120</sup>

As stated above, in Ficino's commentary there is mention of Plato's *Phaedrus* at various times. As the example below shows, in some cases the reference consists of a precise quotation:

<sup>120</sup> On the method of arranging the material associatively, 'in a way that invited sequential reading', see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 40; See also Piccione 'Scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare', pp. 51-53; Francesca Maltomini, 'Le antologie epigrammatiche: linee di trasmissione, metodi di creazione e meccanismi di fruizione dall'Ellenismo all'età bizantina', in *Selecta colligere I*, pp. 35-46.

Ideo **livor, ut Plato inquit in Phedro, abest a divino choro** (*Phaedr.* 247 a7). Cum enim omnium iocundissimum sit re amata potiri, quilibet in eo potiundo quod amat contentus plenusque vivit (*De Amore* IV, 6)<sup>121</sup>

In other cases, the reference consists of sentences summarizing or commenting on passages of the dialogue, such as the following passage:

Cupidinis autem sagiptis cum omnes homines, tum quatuor maxime illorum genera vulnerantur. Nam animas Iovis, Phebi, Martis, Iunonis, id est, Veneris pedissequas vulnerari potissimum Plato in Phedro significavit (*Phaedr.* 252 c3-253c). Easque ab ipsis generationis primordiis ad amorem pronas, eos summopere homines amare solere, qui sub iisdem sint orti sideribus. Hinc Ioviales Iovialibus. Martialibus Martiales atque alii similiter alii vehementer afficiuntur (*De Amore* VI, 5).<sup>122</sup>

As pointed out above, Ficino created two interconnected sections, dealing with the four kinds of divine madness, and the famous chariot allegory (*Phaedr.* 245c-249d) respectively. This is not a coincidence: I would argue that these passages are key to the main argument of the *De Amore*.

According to Ficino, the universe consists of a hierarchy of being extending from God (the One) to the physical world (Matter / multiplicity). As such, the universe consists of degrees (hypostases) of decreasing perfection: Mind, Soul, Nature and Matter.<sup>123</sup> In this system, each being is involved in a process of emanation from God and desires to rise to the level above it in an

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<sup>121</sup> I emphasized the quotation in the text: **Therefore Envy, as Plato says in the *Phaedrus*, is absent from the divine chorus**. For, since the most pleasing of all things is to achieve the beloved thing, anyone lives content and satisfied in possessing that which he loves', trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 80.

<sup>122</sup> 'Not only all men, but especially four kinds of men are wounded by Cupid's arrows. For Plato points out in the *Phaedrus* that souls which are followers of Jupiter, Apollo, Mars and Juno (that is, Venus) are wounded the most. And that being disposed to love from the very beginnings of their creation, they are accustomed to love especially those men who are born under the same stars. Hence Jovians are strongly affected by Jovians, Martians by Martians, and similarly the others by the others', trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, p. 113.

<sup>123</sup> See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1988), pp. 66-123; See also Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 132-138; Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, p. 7.

ascending return to God.<sup>124</sup> This desire is called love, and the quality in the source which stirs this desire is called beauty. As part of the hierarchy, the human soul is involved in this process. The process of return is performed through the four kinds of divine madness: poetic, hieratic, prophetic, and erotic. The chariot allegory, a passage from the *Phaedrus* that Ficino analyses at various times in his works, and transcribes in his notebook, represents the paradigm for the supra-rational ascent of the soul.<sup>125</sup>

## II. 4 An erotic *corpusculum*

It is striking that the passages from the *Phaedrus* that Ficino transcribes in MS Ricc. 92 are the same as those he uses in his published work. In addition, the manuscript contains several erotic poems, including Proclus's *Hymn to Aphrodite*, Orpheus's *Argonautica* and *Hymns* and Museus's *Hero et Leander*. We know that some of these texts were transmitted to us together, as part of the same textual tradition.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> In the *Platonic Theology*, Ficino describes this process as a *circuitus spiritualis*: 'Divinus influxus, ex Deo manans, per coelos penetrans, descendens per elementa, in inferiorem materiam desinens'. 'The divine influence flowing from God, penetrating the heavens, descending through the elements and halting in inferior matter'. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, X, 7, ed. and trans. by James Hankins, 6 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001-06), III (2003), pp. 172-173.

<sup>125</sup> If one is to exclude his commentary on the *Phaedrus* (1496), Ficino analyses the myth in at least five works: the opening chapter of the *De voluptate* (1475), the *argumentum* to the *Ion* (1466-68), the *De Amore*, the *Philebus* Commentary (1469-74) and the *Platonic Theology*. See Michael J. B. Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino. A Study of His Phaedrus Commentary, Its Sources and Genesis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 205. See also Christophe Poncet, 'L'image du char dans le commentaire de Marsile Ficin au *Phèdre* de Platon: le véhicule de l'âme comme instrument de retour à Dieu', *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 2 (2010), 249-86.

<sup>126</sup> Seven of Proclus's hymns have been preserved in a collection of manuscripts containing a compilation of Greek hymns, which includes the Homeric Hymns, those by Callimachus and the so-called Orphic Hymns. For a more detailed account of manuscript tradition, see *Proclus' Hymns*, essays, translations, commentary by R. M. van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 5-6.

Ficino's compilation, including in the same manuscript an erotic *corpusculum*, may be the result of a previous arrangement. This part of the notebook therefore deserves further study, in order to clarify whether Ficino found this compilation in a manuscript and copied these texts from a more ancient compilation. In this context, I will restrict myself to making some remarks concerning the way the texts were arranged by Ficino in the collection and how they were actually incorporated in the *Symposium* commentary.

Ficino arranged under the same heading the full text of Orpheus's *Hymn to Aphrodite* and *Hymn to Eros* (fols 105<sup>v</sup> l. 10-106<sup>v</sup> l. 18), whose verses are quoted in the *De Amore* in the description of Eros' attributes and prerogatives:<sup>127</sup>

*Hinc Orpheus:* μῦθος γὰρ τούτων πάντων οἴηκα κρατύνεις. *Solus horum omnium tu regis habenas* (*De Amore*, III, 2).<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> As far as Orpheus is concerned, we know that 'among the first Western students of Greek to use pseudo-Orpheus was Marsilio Ficino, who translated the *Orphic Argonautica* and *Hymns* in his youth, perhaps in the 1450s'. Paul Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe (1396-1529). Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2010), p. 110. In a letter to Martino Uranio, Ficino claims that he has translated Orpheus's works in his youth: 'Argonautica et hymnos Orphei et Homeri et Proculi, Theologiamque Hesiodi [...] adolescens, nescio quomodo, ad verbum mihi soli transtuli'. See *Marsili Ficini Florentini Opera quae hactenus extitere et quae in lucem nunc primum prodire omnia*, Basileae 1576, Ristampa anastatica, con una lettera di Paul Oskar Kristeller e una premessa di Mario Sancipriano (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus 1962), p. 386. For a detailed account of the manuscript tradition, see Klutsein, 'Marsilio Ficino et la Theologie Ancienne'.

<sup>128</sup> 'Hence, Orpheus: "You alone, O love, rule the reins of all these things." ', trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, p. 65.

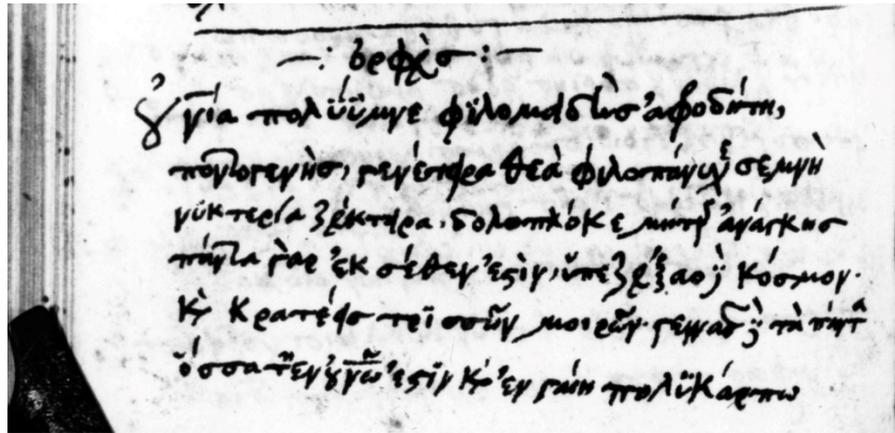


Figure 4. Detail of fol. 106<sup>v</sup>. Incipit of Orpheus's *Hymn to Aphrodite*

As far as the excerpts of Orpheus's *Argonautica* are concerned, Ficino arranges some verses in two distinct sections. The former consists of three sets of verses (fol. 108<sup>r</sup>, vv. 12-14; 866-69; 421-26), which Ficino transcribes randomly; the latter consists of two sets of verses (fol. 108<sup>v</sup>, vv. 226-29; 649-50) dealing with Hylas, Heracles' lover. Orpheus's poem includes two cosmogonical tales (vv. 12-20; 421-31), relating Eros' birth. Both passages (12-14; 421-26) are transcribed in MS Ricc. 92 and Ficino actually quotes v. 424 in the *De Amore* to illustrate his account of the origin of the cosmos and that of love:

Orpheus in *Argonautica*, cum de rerum principiis coram Chirone heroibusque cantaret, Mercurii Trismegisti theologiam secutus, chaos ante mundum posuit, et ante Saturnum, Iovem ceterosque deos amorem in ipsius chaos sinu locavit his verbis: *πρεσβύτατόν τε καὶ αὐτοτελῆ πολύμητιν ἔρωτα Antiquissimum, seipso perfectum, consultissimumque amorem* (*De Amore* I, 3).<sup>129</sup>

In one chapter, Ficino mentions Musaeus and the role of sight in love, in a way that echoes the verses from *Hero et Leander* transcribed in MS. Ricc. 92. The

<sup>129</sup> I emphasized the quotation in the text: 'In the *Argonautica*, when Orpheus, in the presence of Chiron and the heroes, sang about the beginnings of things, following the theology of Hermes Trismegistus, he placed Chaos before the World, and located Love in the bosom of that Chaos, before Saturn, Jove, and the other gods: and he praised Love in these words: *Love is the oldest, perfect in himself, and best counseled*'. Trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 37-38.

same *topos* is developed in the famous 'Ibycus's fragment as well, which Ficino includes in his textual repertoire:

Quo autem pacto fascinentur amantes, satis supra dixisse videmur, si modo illud addamus mortales tunc summopere fascinari quando frequentissimo intuitu aciem visus ad aciem dirigentes, lumina iungunt luminibus et longum, miseri, combibunt amorem. Huius profecto morbi, ut Museo placet, causa omnis et origo est oculus (*De Amore* VII, 10).<sup>130</sup>

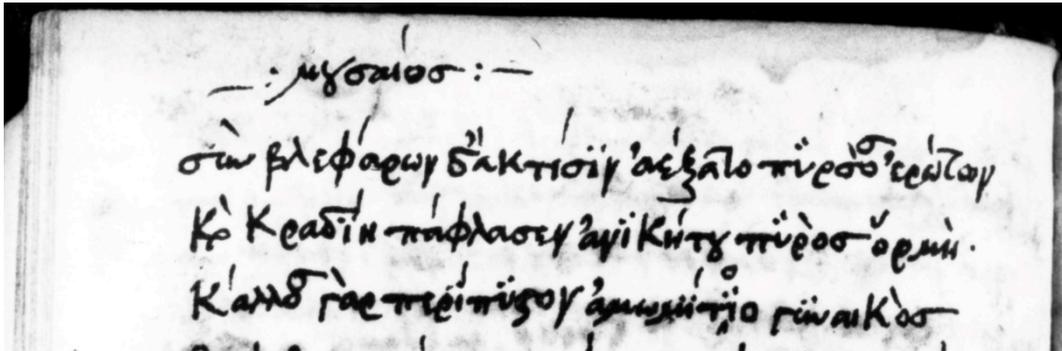


Figure 5. Detail of fol. 108<sup>v</sup>. *Incipit* of Musaeus's verses

The analysis therefore suggests that the texts contained in this section of the manuscript had a twofold function in the writing of the commentary. In some cases the *auctoritas* is merely recalled and quoted by Ficino in order to support arguments or doctrines he expounded in his work. In many other cases, ideas, images and concepts contained in such texts are reworked, amplified or allegorized, thus resulting in a personal and original synthesis.

## II. 5. 1 The Latin excerpts: Ficino and Plotinus

As Jayne has already stated, Ficino's *De Amore* relies heavily on three Plotinian treatises, *Enn.* V 8, I 6 (*De pulchro*) and III 5 (*De Amore*).<sup>131</sup> This is

<sup>130</sup> I emphasized the quotation in the text: 'How lovers are bewitched we seem to have explained sufficiently above, if only we may add that mortals are bewitched the most when, by very frequent gazing, directing their sight eye to eye, they join lights with lights and drink a long love together, poor wretches. **As Musaeus says, the whole cause and origin of this illness is certainly the eye**', trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 37-38.

<sup>131</sup> For a brief account, see Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 11-15. Regarding *Enn.* V 8, Allen stated that Ficino 'had used it repeatedly in the course of writing his own *Symposium*

confirmed by the presence of two sections of Latin excerpts on beauty and love in Ficino's notebook, which Rocío de la Villa Ardura also referred to as an important source for the *De Amore*.<sup>132</sup> In what follows, I will offer an extensive analysis of these Latin passages, in order to clarify the extent to which this material is connected with the *De Amore*. As we will see, my analysis provides further evidence of Ficino's long-time familiarity with the text of Plotinus and gives us a rare insight into the process of writing a commentary.

It has been argued that Ficino spent many years preparing his translation and commentary on the Platonic dialogues (printed in 1484). According to our sources, it was only thereafter that he worked systematically on a translation of Plotinus.<sup>133</sup> If one is to believe Ficino's own, idealized account in his preface to Plotinus, it was his younger colleague Pico della Mirandola who persuaded him to undertake this new ambitious translation on the very day the translation of Plato's corpus left his hands for the printer. Therefore, the Florentine scholar would have started translating Plotinus in 1484, probably not before February or March and the task was completed on January 16, 1486. In other words, Ficino prepared a first draft of the translation of the entire Plotinian corpus in less than two years (1484-86). At a later stage, he revised the translation and added commentaries on each Plotinian treatise, which he completed in August 1490. A dedication copy of the entire work, in two codices, was then presented to Lorenzo de' Medici, who

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Commentary (so much that its status as a source for that Commentary is on a par with of the *Symposium* itself): Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino*, p. 234.

<sup>132</sup> Ficino, *De Amore*, ed. by de la Villa Ardura, p. XXII.

<sup>133</sup> See Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, I, pp. CXXVI-CXXVIII; *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone, Mostra di manoscritti*, pp. 150-51; see also, Albert M. Wolters 'The First Draft of Ficino's Translation of Plotinus', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti*, II, pp. 304-29; Henri Dominique Saffrey, 'Florence 1492: the Reappearance of Plotinus', *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), 488-508; Förstel, 'Marsilio Ficino e il Parigino Greco 1816 di Plotino', pp. 65-88.

thereupon agreed to finance its printing. Finally, on May 7, 1492 –a month after Lorenzo’s death– the complete edition of the *Enneads*, including Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini* and Ficino’s commentaries, was printed in Florence.

Ficino’s own account presents some important problems. Evidence shows that Ficino knew Plotinus well by the time he was working on the Platonic dialogues. By the 1460s, Ficino not only had access to a Byzantine manuscript of the entire *Enneads* (MS Laur. 87, 3), but had also a working copy (MS Par. gr. 1816) transcribed by Johannes Scutariotes. Ficino extensively annotated his manuscript: these *marginalia* have been carefully studied by Paul Henry, who detected different stages in Ficino’s handwriting, and concluded that the Florentine scholar studied the Greek text over a period of thirty years.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, the existence of a first draft of the translation, made in 1484-86 and now in MS Conv. Sopp. E.1 2562 of the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence provides clear evidence that Ficino revised the text.

The Plotinian material contained in MS Ricc. 92 confirms Ficino’s familiarity with Plotinus’s text. Let us now focus on these excerpts more in detail.

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<sup>134</sup> See Paul Henry, *Les Manuscrits des Ennéades* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1948), pp. 16-36, 45-62; Paul Henry, ‘Les manuscrits grecs de travail de Marsile Ficin, le traducteur des *Ennéades* de Plotin’, in *Congrès de Tours et Poitiers de l’Association Guillaume Budé* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954), pp. 323-28. See also Albert M. Wolters, ‘Ficino and Plotinus’ Treatise On Eros’, in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986), pp. 189-97 (pp. 191-92).

## II. 5. 2 The first Latin section: Ficino's 'unofficial' Plotinus

The first Latin section of the manuscript (fols 109r-113v) includes a summary, in Latin, of *Enn.* I 6. This treatise had a strong influence on speech V of Ficino's commentary, focussing on the theme of beauty.<sup>135</sup>

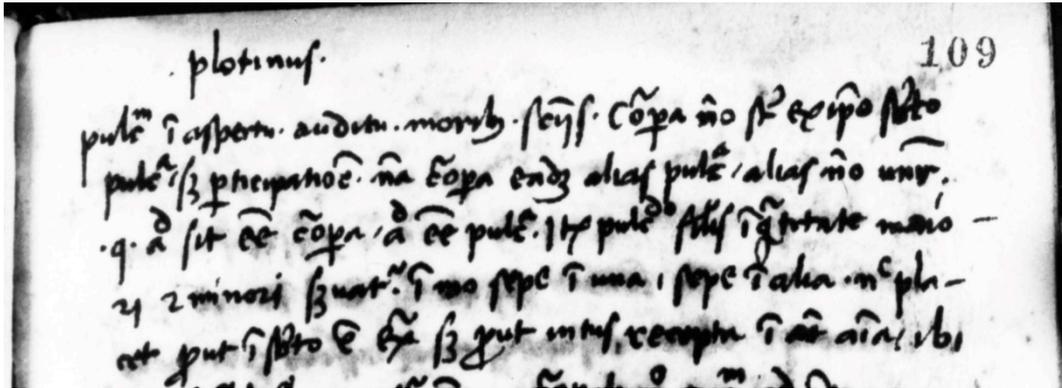


Figure 6. Detail of fol. 109<sup>r</sup>. *Incipit* of the first Plotinian section (*Enn.* I 6)

Since this translation differs from both the first draft and the published version, it offers further insight into the genesis of Ficino's Plotinus, showing an hitherto unknown version of Ficino's translation. Table 2 provides a summary of the set of Plotinian texts. Columns one and two show the structure of the section, whilst columns three and four give my own reconstruction.

<sup>135</sup> Regarding Ficino and the theme of beauty in his philosophy, see Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, pp. 284-88; Nicola Ivanoff, 'La beauté dans la philosophie de Marsile Ficin et de Léon l'Hebreu', in *Humanisme et Renaissance* 3 (1936), 13-21; Laura Westra, 'Love and Beauty in Ficino and Plotinus', in *Ficino and Renaissance Platonism*, pp. 175-87.

**Table 2**

<b>First Plotinian section in MS Riccardianus 92 (fols. 109<sup>r</sup>-113<sup>v</sup>)</b>			
<b><i>Enn. I 6</i></b>			
<b>Structure of the section</b>		<b>Proposed Reconstruction</b>	
<b>1. Folium</b>	<b>2. Incipit and explicit of the excerpted chapter</b>	<b>3. Plotinus's <i>Enneads</i></b>	<b>4. Content</b>
fol. 109 <sup>r</sup> – 109 <sup>v</sup> , line 2	Pulchrum in aspectu, auditu, moribus, scientiis ~ Item. Mens ipsa solitaria pulchra	<i>Enn. I 6. 1</i>	Sensible beauty. According to the Stoic view, beauty is entirely a matter of good proportion. According to Plotinus, beauty is not symmetry.
fols 109 <sup>v</sup> , l. 2–110 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5	Quid ergo in corporali pulchrum; certe est aliquid primo aspectu perceptum ~ Sic corpus pulchrum fit communione rationis a divino descendens	<i>Enn. I 6. 2</i>	Beauty in the bodies. A body is beautiful due to the presence of form from the intelligible world.
fols 110 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5 – 111 <sup>r</sup> , l. 2	Cognoscit autem ipsum potentia ad ipsum ordinata ~ Hactenus de sensibilibus pulchris quae sunt idola et umbrae ab incorporali manantes in naturam in qua cum sunt ornant eam et cum apparent statim stupefaciunt	<i>Enn. I 6. 3</i>	We recognize and appreciate beauty by our inward knowledge of intelligible form.
fol. 111 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 2 – 18	Sed et mores animae habitusque et pulchri sunt ~ Sic et anima	<i>Enn. I 6. 5</i>	The beauty of virtue and its opposite, moral ugliness.
fols 111 <sup>v</sup> – 112 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1	Puchritudo animae virtus. Virtus puritas. Vitium labes ~ Ipsa enim tanquam divinum et portio quaedam pulchri quicquid attingit, pro capacitate facit pulchrum	<i>Enn. I 6. 6</i>	We attain to beauty by purifying ourselves.
fol. 112 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1 – 112 <sup>v</sup>	Adscendendum ad	<i>Enn. I 6. 7-8</i>	The supreme and

	ipsum bonum quod omnis anima cupit ~ Quod significat Narcissus qui imaginem suam in aqua quaeritans ibi lacrimando perit		absolute beauty, the Good, and the way to it.
	Sicut sculptor in lapide auferendo superflua, obliqua dirigendo pulchram reddit statuum ~ Ipsum vero bonum quod superius, quod fons est pulchri. Vel in eodem primum bonum et primum pulchrum ponimus	<i>Enn. I 6. 9</i>	The power of inner sight and how to develop it.
fol. 113 <sup>rv</sup>	Si pulchra sunt corpora ab anima formata ~ tunc ideae lux maxime fulget, qui nitor est pulchritudo	Draft chapters of the <i>De Amore</i>	

The table shows that each excerpt is a condensed translation of *Enn. I, 6*. This summary provides insight into the process by which Ficino actually read and appropriated Plotinus's arguments.

For instance, in the very first chapter of the section, summarizing *Enn. I 6, 1* (fol. 109<sup>r</sup> – 109<sup>v</sup>, l. 2) Ficino writes:

Videtur quibusdam pulchritudo esse animae commensuratio partium ad se et ad totum cum coloris bonitate (fol. 109<sup>r</sup>, ll. 7-8).

This sentence provides a concise and condensed version of the classical definition of *pulchritudo* as proportion (*commensuratio*), which in the official translation reads as follows:

Tradunt enim ferme omnes, commensurationem quadam partium et invicem et ad totum una cum coloris gratia, pulchritudinem pertinentem ad oculos procreare,

atque in eo pulchritudinem omnium esse sitam, ut moderata commensurataque sint.<sup>136</sup>

We know that in his commentary (*De Amore*, I 4), at a first stage, the Florentine scholar adopts the classical doctrine of beauty.<sup>137</sup> The relevant passage reads as follows:

Pulchritudo autem gratia quedam est, que ut plurimum in concinnitate plurium maxime nascitur. Ea triplex est. Siquidem ex plurium virtutum concinnitate in animis gratia est; ex plurium colorum linearumque concordia in corporibus gratia nascitur; gratia item in sonis maxima ex vocum plurium consonantia. Triplex igitur pulchritudo: animorum, corporum atque vocum (*De Amore*, I 4).<sup>138</sup>

In *Enn.* I, 6, 1, Plotinus criticizes this definition of beauty as proportion of individual parts, by stating that there are many uncombined things that are beautiful, such as lightning by night, the light of the sun, gold, a single musical tone, and, supremely so, the beautiful.<sup>139</sup> In the excerpt, the argument is summarized by Ficino as follows:

Contra. Nobis enim simplex esset pulchrum nec desiderium movetur delectaturque quod est pulchri proprium. Et compositum ipsum totum pulchrum erit, partes non, et ita erit pulchrum ex non pulchris. Item. color, lumen, vox una, aurum cum simplicia sunt non sunt commensuratione pulchra (fol. 109<sup>f</sup>, ll. 9-12).

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<sup>136</sup> *Plotini Opera Omnia Cum latina Marsilii Ficini interpretatione et commentatione*. Fac-similé de l'édition de Bâle, Pietro Perna, 1580, ed. by Stéphane Toussaint (Villiers-sur-Marne: Phénix Éditions, 2005), pp. 50-51.

<sup>137</sup> 'The essence of beauty [...] consists for Ficino, according to the ancient doctrine, in proportion – that is, in the symmetric and pleasant relationship of individual parts', Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. by Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 208; See also Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 133.

<sup>138</sup> Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, p. 142. 'Beauty is a certain grace which most often originates above all in harmony of several things. It is three-fold. For from the harmony of several virtues in souls there is grace; from the harmony of several colors and lines in bodies a grace arises; likewise there is a very great grace in sounds from the harmony of several tones. Beauty, therefore, is three-fold: of souls, of bodies, and of sounds'. Trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 40-41.

<sup>139</sup> See John P. Anton, 'Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry Source', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23(1964), 233-237.

The same Plotinian argument against the theory of beauty as symmetry is repeated in the *De Amore*.<sup>140</sup> Thus the translation from the notebook shows how Ficino read and studied these arguments, which he reused, at a later stage, in his commentary.

In order to show more closely how Ficino actually translated and summarized Plotinus's text, I will now provide a comparative table, concerning *Enn. I 6. 3*. The table includes the original text (left column), Ficino's Latin excerpt (central column) and Ficino's official translation (right column):

**Table 3**

<b>Plotinus's text</b> <i>Enn. I 6. 3</i>	<b>Ficino's excerpt in MS Ricc. 92</b> (fols 109 <sup>v</sup> , l. 2–110 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5)	<b>Ficino's official translation</b> (1492)
<p>Πάλιν οὖν ἀναλαβόντες λέγωμεν τί δητὰ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τοῖς σώμασι καλὸν πρῶτον. Ἔστι μὲν γάρ τι καὶ βολῆ τῆ πρώτῃ αἰσθητὸν γινόμενον καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ὡσπερ συνεῖσα λέγει καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα ἀποδέχεται καὶ οἶον συναρμόττεται. Πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχροὺν προσβαλοῦσα ἀνίλλεται καὶ ἀρνεῖται καὶ ἀνανεύει ἀπ' αὐτοῦ οὐ συμφωνοῦσα καὶ ἀλλοτριουμένη. Φαμὲν δὴ, ὡς τὴν φύσιν οὔσα ὅπερ ἐστὶ καὶ πρὸς τῆς κρείττονος ἐν τοῖς οὔσιν οὐσίας, ὃ τι ἂν ἴδῃ συγγενὲς ἢ ἴχνος τοῦ συγγενοῦς, χαίρει τε καὶ διεπτότητα καὶ ἀναφέρει πρὸς ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἀναμυμήσκειται ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῶν ἑαυτῆς. Τίς οὖν ὁμοιότης τοῖς τῆδε πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ καλά; καὶ γάρ, εἰ ὁμοιότης, ὅμοια μὲν ἔστω· πῶς δὲ καλὰ κάκεῖνα καὶ ταῦτα; Μετοχῆ εἶδους φαμὲν ταῦτα. Πᾶν μὲν γάρ τὸ ἄμορφον πεφυκὸς μορφήν καὶ εἶδος δέχασθαι ἄμοιρον ὄν λόγου καὶ εἶδους αἰσχροὺν καὶ ἔξω θεοῦ λόγου· καὶ τὸ πάντα αἰσχροὺν τοῦτο. Αἰσχροὺν δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ μορφῆς καὶ λόγου</p>	<p>Quid ergo in corporali pulchrum. certe est aliquid primo aspectu perceptum</p> <p>et anima quasi cognoscens indicat</p> <p>et illi corrui copulaturque. cum vero in turpe quod incidit se contrahit refugitque tanquam dissonum sibi. Dicimus ergo quod anima talis in sua natura existens qualis est</p> <p>et cum essentia superiori conveniens quando percipit cognatum quid et cognati vestigium gratulatur exultat, refert ad seipsam, sui que ipsius reminiscitur atque suorum.</p> <p>Quae vero similitudo istorum ad illa per quam ista sunt pulchra.</p> <p>Speties.</p> <p>Omne enim natura aptum ad formam recipiendam cum est</p>	<p>Repetamus iterum a principio, quaerentes quidnam sit ipsa in corporibus pulchritudo. Principio quidem est quiddam primo intuitu sensui se patefaciens: idque animus apprehendens familiariterque agnoscens suscipit, et quasi accomodatissimum approbat, et amplectitur. At vero in turpe incidens, sese recipit: et velut abhorrens ob discordiam respuit ut alienum. Existens nimirum anima id quod naturaliter est, ac prope est secundum essentiam in rerum ordine praestantissimam, quandocunque aspexerit cognatum quidam, cognatique, vestigium, congratulatur et stupet, refertque in seipsam: sui que recordatur atque suorum. Quae nam igitur similitudo his quae apud nos pulchra videntur, ad illa quae super nos sunt pulchra. Etenim si qua similitudo est, similia quidem sint. At quonam pacto pulchra simul et haec et illa. Participazione utique speciei nostra haec dicimus esse pulchra. Omne namque informe aptum natura ad formam,</p>

<sup>140</sup> For a detailed account on Ficino's refutation of the doctrine of beauty as symmetry, see Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Laurens, pp. 282-83.

<p>οὐκ ἀνασχομένης τῆς ὕλης τὸ πάντη κατὰ τὸ εἶδος μορφοῦσθαι. Προσιδὼν οὖν τὸ εἶδος τὸ μὲν ἐκ πολλῶν ἐσόμενον μερῶν ἐν συνθέσει συντάξέ τε καὶ εἰς μίαν συντέλειαν ἤγαγε καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ πεποίηκεν, ἐπεὶ περ ἐν ἧν αὐτὸ ἐν τε ἔδει τὸ μορφοῦμενον εἶναι ὡς δυνατὸν αὐτῷ ἐκ πολλῶν ὄντι. Ἰδρυται οὖν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ κάλλος ἤδη εἰς ἐν συναχθέντος καὶ τοῖς μέρεσι διδὼν ἑαυτὸ καὶ τοῖς ὅλοις. Ὅταν δὲ ἐν τι καὶ ὁμοιομερῆς καταλάβῃ, εἰς ὅλον δίδωσι τὸ αὐτό· οἷον ὅτε μὲν πάσῃ οἰκίᾳ μετὰ τῶν μερῶν, ὅτε δὲ ἐνὶ λίθῳ διδοίη τις φύσις τὸ κάλλος, τῇ δὲ ἡ τέχνῃ. Οὕτω μὲν δὴ τὸ καλὸν σῶμα γίγνεται λόγου ἀπὸ θείων ἐλθόντος κοινωνία.<sup>141</sup></p>	<p>informe est turpe omnino. Est etiam expers, turpe quod non bene superatum est a forma rationeque,</p> <p>cum non sit natura ad totam sui formationem preparata.</p> <p>Accedens ergo species, quod unum ex multis partibus compositione est futurum coordinat et in unam correspondentiam conduit et unum per concordiam facit cum enim ipsa sit una, unum oportet esse formatum. Quoniam potest quod est ex multis.</p> <p>Locatur ergo in ipso pulchritudo, cum iam unum est factum. datque se ipsam toti et partibus.</p> <p>Quando vero unumquiddam consimilium partium nanciscitur, in totum idem dat.</p> <p>ceu nunc quidem domui toti cum partibus suis nunc lapidi uni sedat.</p> <p>illi quidem partem huic per naturam.</p> <p>sic corpus pulchrum fit communione rationis a divino descendentis.</p>	<p>ac speciem capiendam quatenus rationis et speciei est expers, turpe est, atque a divina ratione semotum. Idque omnino turpe est, quod omnino semotum. turpe quinetiam quod a forma, rationeque minime superatur: materia videlicet formationem integram minime sustinente. Accedens itaque species, id quod ex multis partibus unum est compositione futurum, simul ordinat conciliatque invicem, atque ipsa consensione conficit unum; quandoquidem et ipsa erat unum, ideoque unum oportuit esse formatum, quatenus quod ex multis componitur, unum effici potest. Fundatur ergo pulchritudo in ipso, quando in unum fuerit iam redactum, atque seipsam partibus totisque impertit. At quando species unumquiddam similibusque partibus constitutum nanciscitur, seipsam et idem tradit in totum. Aliquando enim exempli gratia toti se aedificio simul partibusque communicat, aliquando vero unico lapidi: et tunc quidem in arte fit, alias vero fit natura. Hac itaque ratione formosum corpus efficitur communione videlicet rationis a divinis desuper venientis.<sup>142</sup></p>
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<sup>141</sup> 'So let us go back to the beginning and state what the primary beauty in bodies really is. It is something which we become aware of even at the first glance; the soul speaks of it as if it understood it, recognizes and welcomes it and as it were adapts itself to it. But when it encounters the ugly it shrinks back and rejects it and turns away from it and is out of tune and alienated from it. Our explanation of this is that the soul, since it is by nature what it is and is related to the higher kind of reality in the realm of being, when it sees something akin to it or a trace of its kindred reality, is delighted and thrilled and returns to itself and remembers itself and its own possessions. What likeness, then, is there between beautiful things here and There? If there is a likeness, let us agree that they are alike. But how are both the things in that world and the things in this beautiful? We maintain that the things in this world are beautiful by participating in form; for every shapeless thing which is naturally capable of receiving shape and form is ugly and outside the divine formative power as long as it has no share in formative power and form. This is absolute ugliness. But a thing is also ugly when it is not completely dominated by shape and formative power, since its matter has not submitted to be completely shaped according to the form. The form, then, approaches and composes that which is to come into being from many parts into a single ordered whole; it brings it into a completed unity and makes it one by agreement of its parts; for since it is one itself, that which is shaped by it must also be one as far as a thing can be which is composed of many parts. So beauty rests upon the material thing when it has been brought into unity, and gives itself to parts and wholes alike. When it comes upon something that is one and composed of like parts it gives the same gift to the whole; as sometimes art gives beauty to a whole house with its parts, and sometimes a nature gives beauty to a single stone. So then the beautiful body comes into being by sharing in a formative power which comes from the divine forms'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, ed. and trans. by A. H. Armstrong, 7 vols (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969-1988), I (1969), pp. 237-39.

<sup>142</sup> *Plotini Opera Omnia*, ed. by Toussaint, pp. 51-52.

The table suggests that Ficino produced a condensed version of the Plotinian chapter, and that his choice of terminology changed over time. It also points to Ficino's extraordinary ability to understand as well as translate the Plotinian text. In the translation in MS Ricc. 92, Ficino tends to follow more closely the logical and syntactic order of the original text than in that printed in 1492.

### II. 5. 3 The hierarchy of the universe and the 'splendor divinae bonitatis'

The Plotinian excerpts reveal the use of another interesting technique: in the last part of the first section, Ficino no longer provides a translation of Plotinus's treatise, but rather develops images, concepts and arguments that he then will use in Speeches II, III and V of the *De Amore*.

At. fol. 113<sup>r</sup>, ll. 11-19, in a passage dealing with sensible beauty as a reflection of the divine beauty, Ficino refers to the hierarchical structure of the universe:

**Centrum rerum omnium ipsum unum. Circa illud tres circuli: mens, anima, corpus.** In his fulgor eius relucet, id est rationum series. **Haec pulchritudo est circulis a centro tributa.** Quae a bono est et in bonum allicit intuentes. **In circulis est et circulariter operatur.** Pulchritudo nihil corporale est. Sed in ipsis corporibus est fulgor quidam ipsius boni, sicut lumen solis in corporibus. Eam dicimus gratiam rebus a bono datam quae in obiectis est pulchritudo, in visu voluptas. Sicut sol ultra primam vim datam visui et obiectis.

This image is found in one of the best known passages of Ficino's *De Amore* (III, 2), defining beauty as *splendor divinae bonitatis*.<sup>143</sup> The same image

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<sup>143</sup> I emphasized the key concepts in the text: 'Neque ab re theologi veteres bonitatem in centro, pulchritudinem in circulo posuerunt. Bonitatem quidem in centro uno, in circulis autem quatuor pulchritudinem. **Centrum unum omnium deus est, circuli quatuor circa deum, mens, anima, natura, materia.** Mens stabilis circulus. Anima per se mobilis. Natura mobilis in alio, non ab alio. Materia ab alio et in alio mobilis. **Ceterum cur deum quidem centrum, quatuor illa cur circulos apellemus. [...] Bonitas siquidem rerum omnium unus ipse est deus, per quem cuncta**

is developed in Ficino's major philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology* (XII, 3) and in *In Parmenidem* 84, 1.<sup>144</sup>

The passage from the Florentine manuscript presents a striking discrepancy: unlike the 'official' version of Ficino's argument, where there are four hypostases (Mind, Soul, Nature and Matter), the hierarchical structure described in this case consists of only three 'degrees' following God: Mind, Soul and Body.<sup>145</sup>

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**sunt bona; pulchritudo autem, dei radius quatuor illis insitus circulis circa deum quodammodo revolutis.** Huiusmodi radius omnes rerum omnium speties in quatuor illis effingit. Speties illas in mente ideas, in anima rationes, in natura semina, in materia formas appellare solemus. Iccirco quatuor in circulis, quatuor splendores esse videntur. Idearum splendor in primo, rationum in secundo, in tertio seminum, formarum in ultimo'. Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, pp. 147 and 149: 'Beauty is the splendor of the divine goodness, and God is the center of four circles. And not without point, the ancient theologians located goodness in the center and beauty in the circle. Or rather goodness in a single center, but beauty in four circles. The single center of all is God. The four circles around God are the Mind, the Soul, Nature, and Matter. The Mind is a motionless circle. The Soul is self-moving. Nature is movable in another but not by another. Matter is movable by another and in another. On the other hand, the reason why we call God the "center" and the other four "circles", we explain briefly thus. [...] If the Goodness of all things is the one God Himself, through whom all things are good, then beauty is the ray of God, infused in those four circles revolved around God in a certain way. This ray forms in those four circles all the species of all things. Those species we are accustomed to call in the Mind, Ideas; in the Soul, Reasons; in Nature, Seeds; and in Matter Forms. Therefore in the four circles there seem to be four splendors. The splendor of the Ideas in the first, of Reason in the second, in the third of Seeds, of Forms in the last'. Trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 47, 49. See also Marsilio Ficino, *The Philebus Commentary*, ed. by Michael J. B. Allen (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975; rpt. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), p. 109: 'Quo fit ut pulchritudo circulus quidam divinae lucis existat, a bono manans, in bono residens, per bonum et ad bonum sempiternae reflexus'. Regarding the image of the circles, de la Villa Ardura states that 'La metáfora de los cuatro círculos no está contemplada presumiblemente porque aquí los diferentes filosofemas y modelos están entrelazados; un resumen corto de esto en el VII 13 y *Op.* 1797 y 1799 ss. (en Plotino, VI 9, 8)'. See, Ficino, *De Amore*, ed. by de la Villa Ardura, p. 26.

<sup>144</sup> I emphasize the key terms in the passage: 'Quando verum unum bonumque dicunt, idem semper intellegunt. Sicut enim in ordine rerum bene esse in unione consistit, quoniam malum dissensione et divisione contigit, sic et super ordinem universi idem est unum ipsum atque bonum, cuius splendor est pulchritudo, quae nihil est aliud quam multarum rationalis ordo formarum in **mente, anima, natura, materia** inde refulgens'. 'But when they speak of the one and the good, they always mean the same thing. For as wellbeing in the order of things consists of unity, since evil is contingent on dissension and division, so above the universal order the one itself and the good are identical. Its splendor is beauty, which is nothing other than the refulgence of the rational order of the many forms in the mind, the soul, nature, and matter'. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. and trans. by James Hankins, 6 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001-06), IV (2004), 38-39.

<sup>145</sup> As far as the tetradic framework (God, mind, soul, body) is concerned, we find mention of the three hypostases *mens, anima, corpus* in Chapter III of the *Oratio Prima* of the *De Amore*. Giovanni Cavalcanti speech, i.e. the *Oratio Prima*, deals with Love's antiquity and origin from

Scholars have pointed out that this hierarchical system derives from Plotinus.<sup>146</sup> Kristeller has also stressed the fact that Ficino ‘parte manifestamente dalla dottrina plotiniana delle ipostasi, e comincia a trasformarla tralasciando singoli elementi’.<sup>147</sup> Ficino gave different accounts of the number of degrees in the Universe, oscillating between six and three hypostases.<sup>148</sup>

The framework adopted in the passage from the Riccardianus provides further evidence of Ficino’s varying approach to Plotinus’s system. In sum, the passage represents an intermediate stage in his understanding of Plotinus, and in the process by which he conceived and wrote the passage on the *circuli* that we read in the *De Amore*. Finally, in the last sentence of the passage cited above, Ficino develops an argument that strongly echoes his deep interest in the theme of light, which was central to the *De Amore*:<sup>149</sup>

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Chaos. See, Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, p. 139. For an analysis of the passage, see Michael J. B. Allen, ‘Cosmogony of love’, p. 140-41.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Infatti per Ficino la bellezza non è limitata al solo mondo empirico, ma diffusa in vari gradi per l’intera regione dell’essere e deriva da Dio stesso. Perciò afferma nel libro *De Amore*, secondo la teoria plotiniana delle ipostasi, che Dio come totalità del bene è il centro dell’universo e che la bellezza è lo splendore di questo bene e si realizza in quattro circoli graduati, cioè **mente, anima, natura e materia**’. Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, p. 285. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Quanto al libro *De Amore*, scritto in un tempo anteriore, si trova in un suo passo una serie di sei sostanze che corrisponde in tutto alle ipostasi di Plotino, mentre in alcuni altri passi sono enumerate delle serie di cinque o quattro elementi, che si distinguono dalla serie plotiniana soltanto per la mancanza del quarto grado ovvero del quarto e del quinto. Il Ficino dunque parte manifestamente dalla dottrina plotiniana delle ipostasi, e comincia a trasformarla tralasciando singoli elementi.’ Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, p. 103.

<sup>148</sup> Regarding Ficino’s ontology and his indebtedness to Plotinus’s system, Allen states that the Florentine scholar elaborates ‘a system which is a wholly conscious modification of Plotinus and is arrived at in several stages’. Additionally, he states that ‘Plotinus oscillates between four, five, and six hypostases. The full hexad is: the one, mind, soul, sensation, nature, body. Plotinus’ oscillation is reflected in Ficino’s *Symposium* commentary. It has the full hexad. It has the pentad: God, mind, soul, body, where sensation has been omitted and matter has replaced body. And it also has the prevailing scheme in Plotinus, the tetrad: God, mind, soul, body, where both sensation and nature have been omitted’. Michael J. B. Allen, ‘The absent angel in Ficino’s philosophy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975), 219-40 (p. 225). For a detailed account, see Michael J. B. Allen, ‘Ficino’s theory of the five substances and the Neoplatonists’ *Parmenides*’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 12 (1982), 19-44.

<sup>149</sup> See Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, pp. 89, 90, 113, 270, and 418; Andrea Rabassini, ‘«Amicus Lucis». Considerazioni sul tema della luce in Marsilio Ficino’, in *Marsilio Ficino, Fonti, testi, fortuna*, pp. 255-93.

Sed in ipsis corporibus est fulgor quidam ipsius | boni, sicut lumen solis in corporibus. Eam dicimus gratiam | rebus a bono datam quae in obiectis est pulchritudo, in visu voluptas. Sicut sol ultra primam vim datam visui et obiectis.

According to Ficino, divine beauty, defined as *splendor divinae bonitatis*, has a reflection in the physical world. The sentence from the notebook is consistent with this image: sensible beauty is conceived as a reflection of the Good (*sed in ipsis corporibus est fulgor quidam ipsius boni*), and the Good is compared to the sunlight shining over the physical world (*sicut lumen solis in corporibus*). In the passage, the expression *fulgor quidam ipsius boni*, recalls the definition of beauty as *splendor divinae bonitatis*.

In turn *fulgor* is defined as a *gratia rebus a bono data quae in obiectis est pulchritudo, in visu voluptas*, referring to another key concept expounded in Ficino's thought, the close relation between *pulchritudo* and *voluptas*: the pleasure generated by the visual experience of beauty in the physical world induces one to turn towards divine beauty and to unite with God. André Chastel pointed out the relevance of the tight connection between the light and the universal *voluptas* in Ficino's philosophy, sight (*visus*) being 'l'instrument privilégié par lequel nous accédons à la réalité métaphysique de la beauté'.<sup>150</sup>

The same theme is explored in the last part of the first Plotinian section (fol. 113<sup>v</sup>), where Ficino draws on the famous Platonic comparison between the Good and the light of the sun (*Rep.* 508b3). Here, Ficino states that just as the sunlight shines over all things in the world, the Good is an eternal light shining over the intelligible substances: *Lumen iugiter unum omnibus superfundit, ita*

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<sup>150</sup> André Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, (Geneva: Droz, 1954), p. 95. See also pp. 97-101, 113-14, 116; Rabassini, '«Amicus Lucis»', p. 265

*bonum propriis cognitivis cogniscibilibusque*. The Good (*bonum*), which is unity (*unum*) can infuse action (*actum dare*) to the lower levels in the hierarchy. In the passage, we find the expressions *Id primum actum dat, actum iugem ceu lumen solis unum omnibus superfundit*, and *actus omnium et roboratio bonum est omnium*. This image is consistent with the hierarchical structure of the universe, as consisting of ‘five levels of unity and efficacious power’.<sup>151</sup>

Beauty (*pulchrum*), which is compared to the Good (*bonum*) as well as the truth (*veritas*), is defined as *agilitas* and *gratia*. A similar terminology is employed at the very beginning of *De Amore* V, 6, dealing with ‘How many things are required that a thing be beautiful and that beauty is a spiritual gift’.<sup>152</sup> The terms *actus*, *agilitas* and *gratia*, employed in the commentary, seem to correspond to *actus*, *vivacitas* and *gratia*.

In the final part of the first Plotinian section, Ficino states that:

Sed boni gratia in corporibus non refulget multum et sensibiliter, nisi | materia ita disposita sit ut idea eius rei requirit. | Quoniam igitur talis est dispositio materiae qualem connotat idea | tunc ideae lux maxime fulget. Qui nitor est pulchritudo.

These images and arguments are similarly developed in the *De Amore*, where Ficino states that *actus*, *vivacitas* and *gratia* shine in the body ‘through the influence of its own idea. This splendor does not descend before the matter has been appropriately prepared’. The passage from Ficino’s manuscript therefore

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<sup>151</sup> Ardis Collins, *The Secular is Sacred. Platonism and Thomism in Marsilio Ficino’s Platonic Theology* (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1974), p. 8.

<sup>152</sup> Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, p. 188: ‘Quid tandem est corporis pulchritudo? **Actus, vivacitas et gratia quedam idee sue influxu in ipso refulgens. Fulgor huiusmodi in materiam non prius quam aptissime sit preparata descendit.** His vero tribus, ordine, modo, spetie, constat viventis corporis preparatio’. ‘Finally, what is the beauty of the body? Act, vitality and a certain grace shining in itself through the influence of its own Idea. This splendor does not descend before the matter has been appropriately prepared. But the preparation of the living body consists of these three things: Arrangement, Proportion, and Aspect’. trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, p. 93.

shows the first elaborations of images and arguments that are more extensively developed in his commentary.

## II. 5. 4 The second Plotinian section. The birth of Eros and the twin Venuses

The second Latin section of MS Riccardianus 92 concerns Plotinus's treatise on love, *Enn.* III 5, more specifically the episode of Poros (Resource) and Penia (Poverty), generating Eros in the garden of Jupiter.

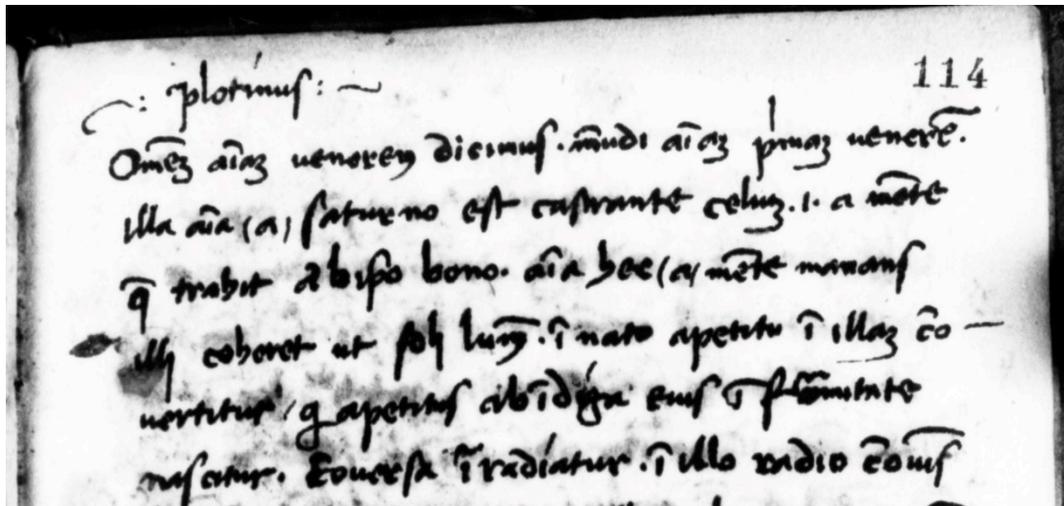


Figure 7. Detail of fol. 114<sup>r</sup>. *Incipit* of the second Plotinian section

In his interpretation of this famous passage from Plato's *Symposium* (203b-c), the Florentine scholar draws upon Plotinus's *Enn.* III, 5 (*De Amore* VI, 7).<sup>153</sup> The tight connection between the *De Amore* and Plotinus's treatise is

<sup>153</sup> See, Wolters, 'Ficino and Plotinus', pp. 194-95. Concerning Ficino and the relevance of the theme of love in his philosophy, see James A. Devereux, 'The Object of Love in Ficino's philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30 (1969), 161-70; Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, pp. 274-310; Jill Kraye, 'The Transformation of Platonic love in the Italian Renaissance', in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 76-85; Bernard Mc Ginn, 'Cosmic and Sexual Love in Renaissance Thought: Reflexions on Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Leone Ebreo', in *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of J. B. Russel*, ed. by Alberto Ferreiro (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 191-209; Katherine Crawford, 'Marsilio Ficino,

confirmed by Ficino himself in his commentary on *Enn.* III, 5, where Ficino informs Lorenzo de' Medici that his main discussion concerning love is already included in the book *De Amore*.<sup>154</sup>

When mentioning this section of MS Riccardianus 92, scholars have described it as a summary of *Enn.* III, 5. However, my analysis demonstrated that the section does not contain an excerpted translation or paraphrase of the treatise, but a hitherto unidentified draft of two chapters of Ficino's commentary (*De Amore* VI, 7 and VI, 8). I will provide a transcription of the whole passage in the Appendix.

In the first part of the second section (fol. 114<sup>r</sup>-114<sup>v</sup> l. 11), Ficino refers to Plato's account of the mythical birth of Love as the son of Poros and Penia. Penia is described as *indiga infirmitas*, *indigentia* and *prima infirmitas*, Poros as the ray containing the concepts of all things in a unitary way (*radius in quo infunditur communis ratio rerum*). Through a process of intellectual illumination, described as *notio*, the undistinguished reason of things (*confusa ratio rerum*) is given form. As a result, an innate desire is set alight (*innatus appetitus accenditur*). This

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Neoplatonism and the Problem of Sex', *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance and Reform* 28 (2004), 3-35; Achim Wurm, *Platonikus Amor: Lesarten Der Liebe Bei Platon, Plotin Und Ficino* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>154</sup> When introducing his commentary, Ficino explains why this work does not comment on the Plotinian text more in detail, thus being considerably shorter than the other commentaries: 'Arbitror equidem, Magnanime Laurenti, te non longam De Amore disputatione a Marsilio tuo nunc exacturum: tum quia multa de hoc in Symposio disputavimus, tum maxime quoniam tu plurima De Amore divinitus invenisti, elegantibusque carminibus cecinisti. Ergo, summa sequar fastigia rerum'. *Plotini Opera Omnia*, ed. by Toussaint, p. 287. 'I judge, magnanimous Lorenzo, that you are not going to require from your Marsilio a long discussion of love. This is both because we have discussed this at length in the *Symposium*, and especially because you yourself have discovered much concerning love by divine inspiration, and sung of it in elegant poems. Therefore I will only touch upon the high points'. Trans. by Wolters, 'Ficino and Plotinus', p. 195. In addition, when concluding the commentary, Ficino states that 'Caetera quae De Amore diisque disputantur, in libro De Amore satis confirmavisse videmur'. *Plotini Opera Omnia*, ed. by Toussaint, p. 290. 'The remaining matters which are discussed concerning love and the gods, seem to us have been sufficiently established in the book *De Amore*'. Trans. by Wolters, 'Ficino and Plotinus', p. 195.

innate desire is love, son of Poros and Penia (*accensio appetitus est amor, qui ut ab indigentia nascitur*).

The opposition between Penia and Poros is ultimately connected with Venus, representing the power of understanding. In the passage, Ficino draws a distinction between the heavenly Venus (*Venus Caelestis*), daughter of Uranus, and the vulgar/earthly Venus (*Venus Vulgaris*), daughter of Jupiter and Dione (*quae est ex Iove a Dione*).

Each Venus has a corresponding form of love. Both aim at procreating beauty, but each in its own way (*In prima Venere est amor et in secunda modo suo*). The former represents the desire to contemplate intelligible beauty (*Ibi est nixus ad intelligendam pulchritudinem*). The latter is the desire to procreate and produce beauty in the physical world (*Hic ad gignendam pulchritudinem*). Finally, Love directed to intelligible beauty is defined as a *deus*, whilst love connected with procreation is a *daemon*.

As we will see, the text from Ficino's notebook represents a draft of *De Amore* VI, 7. As shown in the following table, there is a tight connection both in the terminology and in the main philosophical argument:<sup>155</sup>

**Table 4**

Text of the Second Plotinian Section in MS Ricc. 92	<i>De Amore, Oratio Sexta, Caput VII</i>
Omnem animam <b>Venerem</b> dicimus. Mundi animam primam Venerem. Illa anima a Saturno est castrante caelum, id est a mente quae <b>trahit ab ipso bono</b> . Anima haec a <b>mente manans illi cohaeret ut soli lumen</b> .	[...] Habet insuper intelligendi potentiam quam esse <b>Venerem</b> arbitramur. Potentia huiusmodi sua natura <b>informis</b> est et obscura, nisi a <b>deo illuminetur, quemadmodum oculi vis ante solis</b>

<sup>155</sup> The comparative table includes sentences from the Florentine manuscript (left column) and passages from *De Amore* VI, 7 (right column). I emphasized in bold all terms and sentences that provide evidence of the connection existing between these two texts.

<p><b>Innato apertu in illam convertitur.</b>  <b>Qui apertu ab indiga eius informitate nascitur, conversa inradiatus.</b></p> <p><b>In illo radio communis et confusa quaedam rerum ratio illi tribuitur, per quam notionem apertu accenditur. Accensus inhaeret vehementius per quam inhaesionem distractius cognoscendo rationibus omnibus formatur. Accensio apertu est amor qui ut ab indigentia nascitur semper naturam sequens suam et re presente desiderat. Prima illa informitas πένια est, communis ratio πόρος, radius in quo infunditur communis ratio</b></p> <p><b>In prima Venere est amor et in secunda modo suo. Ibi est nixus ad intelligendam pulchritudinem. Hic ad gignendam. Immo ibi ad gignendam intellectuali modo. Hic sensibili.</b></p>	<p><b>adventum.</b> Hanc obscuritatem <b>Peniam, quasi inopiam</b> et luminis <b>defectum</b> esse putamus. Ceterum vis ea intelligendi naturali <b>quodam instinctu</b> ad suum reflexa parentem, divinum ab eo <b>radius</b>, qui <b>Porus</b> est et affluentia, suscipit. <b>In quo</b> veluti semine quodam <b>rationes rerum omnium includuntur.</b> Huius <b>radii flammis</b> naturalis ille <b>instinctus accenditur. Hoc incendium, hic ardor ex obscuritate priori et accedente scintilla exoriens, amor est ex inopia natus et affluentia.</b></p> <p>[...] <b>ex indigentia</b> quadam et affluentia mixtus est <b>amor.</b> Hac utique ratione <b>Venus</b> illa superna, <b>per primam ipsam divini radii gustationem accensa</b>, amore fertur ad integram totius luminis plenitudinem, hoc nixu parenti efficacius <b>herens</b> plenissimo statim illius <b>fulgore</b> coruscat, <b>rerumque rationes ille confuse, que in radio quem Porum dicimus ante fuerant implicate</b>, explicantur iam in potentia illa Veneris <b>inherente et clarius distincte</b> lucescunt.</p> <p>[...] Venerem hic geminam rursus aspicimus. Alteram sane vim anime huius <b>ad superna cognoscenda; alteram vero vim eiusdem inferiorum procreatricem.</b> Illa quidem non est anime propria, sed contemplationis angelice imitatio, hec autem nature anime propria. Ideo quotiens unam in anima Venerem ponimus, vim eius peculiarem et Venerem eius propriam intelligimus. Quotiens duas, alteram communem cum angelo, alteram ipsius anime propriam. Sint igitur due in anima Veneres: prima celestis, secunda vero vulgaris. <b>Amorem habeant ambe, celestis ad divinam pulchritudinem cogitandam. Vulgaris ad eandem in mundi materia generandam.</b> Qualem enim videt illa decorem, talem vult ista pro viribus mundi machine tradere. <b>Immo vero utraque fertur ad pulchritudinem generandam sed suo utraque modo.</b> Celestis Venus</p>
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<p>Et utrobique est hypostasis aeterna <b>amor et daemon,</b></p> <p><b>sed in prima est deus</b></p> <p><b>in secunda daemon solus.</b></p>	<p>intelligentia sua effingere in seipsa exactissimam supernorum pulchritudinem nititur, vulgaris divinorum seminum ubertate conceptam, apud se divinitus <b>pulchritudinem in mundi materia parere. Amorem illum quandoque deum iccirco vocamus quoniam ad divina dirigitur, ut plurimum demonem,</b> quoniam inter inopiam copiamque est medius. <b>Amorem alterum semper demonem,</b> quoniam affectum aliquem ad corpus habere videtur et ad inferiorem mundi plagam esse proclivior. Quod quidem a deo alienum est, demonum nature conveniens</p>
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In Ficino's commentary, Poros and Penia are described, first, as respectively *affluentia et egestas* and secondly, as respectively *dei radius* and *obscuritas*.

Poros, described as the ray of God, who is the truth and goodness of all things, contains the concepts of all things (*rationes rerum omnium*). The opposition formed by Penia, i.e. the deficiency of light (*inopia et luminis defectum*) and Poros, *summi dei scintilla*, is connected with Venus, representing the power of understanding (*potentia intelligendi*). When describing the power of understanding, Ficino states that is *informis et obscura nisi a deo illuminentur*. That power of understanding receives the divine ray and as a result *instinctus accenditur*. This instinct is love, son of Poros and Penia.

When the power of understanding, i.e. Venus, is illuminated by god, the disordered Reasons of things (*rerumque rationes ille confuse*), which before were entangled in the ray of God, are put in order and shine out more clearly (*clarius distincte lucescunt*). In both the notebook and the commentary, this process of

intellectual illumination is described by the word *inhaesio* and the corresponding verbal form *inhaerere*.

In *De Amore* II, 7 and VI, 7, Ficino draws a similar distinction between the ‘Two Venuses’ or ‘Twin Venuses’.<sup>156</sup> The *Venus Caelestis*, that is the celestial/heavenly Venus, is daughter of Uranus and has no mother. The *Venus Vulgaris*, that is the vulgar Venus, is daughter of Zeus-Jupiter and Dione-Juno. The former Venus represents the *vis intelligendi*, that is, the power of understanding superior things, whilst the latter is the *vis generandi*.<sup>157</sup>

Each Venus has a corresponding Eros. The former represents the desire to contemplate the intelligible splendour of divine beauty, the latter stirs men to procreate, thus producing a likeness of divine beauty in the physical world. Ficino explains that the former Love is a *deus*, as it is directed towards divine things

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<sup>156</sup> See Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, p. 154: ‘Veneres autem duas commemorat [Plato], quas itidem gemini cupidines comitentur. Venerem, alteram quidem celestem ponit; alteram vero vulgarem. Celestem illam celo sine matre natam. Vulgarem ex Iove et Dione genitam. [...] Venus prima, que in mente est, celo nata sine matre dicitur, quoniam mater apud Physicos materia est. Mens autem illa a materie corporalis consortio est aliena. Secunda Venus, que in mundi anima ponitur, ex Iove est et Dione genita. Ex Iove, id est, ex ea virtute ipsius anime que celestia movet. Ea siquidem istam creavit potentiam que inferiora hec generat. Matrem quoque illi ideo tribuunt, quia materie mundi infusa cum materia commertium habere putatur. Denique ut summatim dicam, duplex est Venus. Altera sane est intelligentia illa, quam in mente angelica posuimus. Altera, vis generandi anime mundi tributa. Utraque sui similem comitem habet amorem. Illa enim amore ingenito ad intelligendam dei pulchritudinem rapitur. Hec item amore suo ad eandem pulchritudinem in corporibus procreandam’. ‘He [Plato], mentions two Venuses, whom twin Cupids likewise accompany. One Venus he certainly calls Heavenly, but the other Vulgar. That Heavenly Venus was born of Uranus, without mother. The Vulgar Venus was born of Jupiter and Dione. [...] The first Venus, which is in the Mind, is said to have been born of Uranus without a mother, because mother, to the physicists, is matter. But that Mind is a stranger to any association with corporeal matter. The second Venus, which is located in the World Soul, was born of Jupiter and Dione. *Born of Jupiter* – that is, of that faculty created the power which moves the heavenly things since that faculty created the power which generates these lower things. They also attribute a mother to the second Venus, for this reason, that since she is infused into the Matter of the world, she is thought to have commerce with matter. Finally, to speak briefly, Venus is twofold. One is certainly that intelligence which we have located in the Angelic Mind. The other is the power of procreation attributed to the World Soul. Each Venus has as her companion a love like herself. For the former Venus is entranced by an innate love for understanding the Beauty of god. The latter likewise is entranced by her love for procreating the same beauty in bodies’, trans. by Jayne in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, p. 53.

<sup>157</sup> The Venus Vulgaris, i.e. the power to create inferior things, ‘like Lucretius’ Venus Genetrix, gives life and shape to the things in nature and thereby makes the intelligible beauty accessible to our perception and imagination’: Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 142.

(*quoniam ad divina dirigitur*). By contrast, the latter Love is a *daemon*, since it is 'more inclined toward the lower region of the world' (*ad inferiorem mundi plagam [...] proclivior*).

This crucial passage of the *De Amore* had a tremendous influence, either directly or indirectly, not only on poets and writers, but also on major Renaissance artists.<sup>158</sup> Thus the study of the preliminary material contained in Ficino's notebook, provides invaluable insight into the process of elaboration of these images and doctrines.

## II. 5. 5 The twin Venuses: terminological discrepancies

My analysis indicates the tight correspondence between the text from Ficino's notebook and *De Amore* VI, 7. Nevertheless, there are also several discrepancies.

As pointed out above, when focussing on the heavenly Venus, i.e. the power of understanding superior things, Ficino describes in both texts a process of illumination. In the *De Amore*, the *potentia intelligendi*, i.e. Venus, is described as *informis et obscura nisi a deo illuminetur*. By contrast, in the notebook, the Venus is described as the Soul turning towards God, who is compared with the light of

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<sup>158</sup> 'La influencia del *De Amore* no sólo va a marcar la sensibilidad cultural del Cinquecento. La poética originalidad de Ficino iluminará la base iconográfica de las obras de los principales artistas italianos de la época, como Botticelli, Miguel Angel, Rafael o Tiziano'. Ficino, *De Amore*. ed. by de la Villa Ardura, p. XXI. On the iconography of the two Venuses, their corresponding Loves, and the impact of Ficino on Renaissance art, see E. H. Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of his Circle', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 8 (1945), 7-60; Chastel, *Marsilio Ficino et l'art*; Arnolfo Ferruolo, 'Botticelli's Mythologies, Ficino's *De Amore*, Poliziano's *Stanze Per La Giostra*: Their Circle of Love', *The Art Bulletin* 37 (1955), 17-25; Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 146-69; Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Boulder: Icon Editions, 1972), pp. 188-200; Edith Balas, *Michelangelo's Medici Chapel: A new Interpretation* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995), p. 114; Francis Ames-Lewis, 'Neoplatonism and the Visual Arts at the time of Marsilio Ficino', in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. by Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, Martin Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 327-338.

the Sun. Thus the Latin text reads as follows: *Illa anima a Saturno est castrante caelum, id est a mente quae trahit ab ipso bono. Anima haec a mente manans illi cohaeret ut soli lumen. Innato appetitu in illam convertitur.* In this case, the expressions *trahere a ipso bono, a mente manare, illi* (i.e. *bono*) *cohaerere ut soli lumen.* Here Ficino's translation seems to recall more closely the Plotinian framework of the hierarchy of the hypostases as well as that of the *processio* and the *reditus* than in the corresponding passage of the *De Amore*.

Secondly, when elaborating upon the theme of the two Venuses, Ficino uses a terminology that is absent from the *De Amore*. As stated above, in the *De Amore* the heavenly Venus represents the *potentia intelligendi*, whilst the vulgar Venus is the *vis generandi*. By contrast, in MS Ricc. 92, Ficino establishes a threefold distinction: the power of understanding, which is defined as *vis intellectiva*, and is associated to Jupiter; the Heavenly Venus, defined as *anima per vim discursivam*; the vulgar Venus, associated with the *vis vegetativa*.

In addition, Ficino distinguishes between the former Venus, responsible for creating love in an intelligible way (*intellectuali modo*), whilst the latter is responsible for creating it in a sensible way (*sensibili modo*). As pointed out above, the sentence is tightly connected to a similar passage from the *De Amore*. Nevertheless, the expressions *intellectuali modo* and *sensibili modo*, as well as the terms *vis intellectiva*, *vis discursiva* and *vis vegetativa*, seem to belong to a slightly different technical terminology, probably an Aristotelian one.

The following table provides an account of the terminology used in the passage from the Florentine manuscript. I have emphasized in bold the terminology that does not correspond to that used in the *Symposium* commentary:

**Table 5**

<b>Terminology used in the second Plotinian section in MS Riccardianus 92</b>	
Πόρος	Communis rerum ratio Radius in quo infunditur communis ratio
Πενία	Indiga informitas Indigentia Prima informitas
Iuppiter	<b>Vis intellectiva</b> Anima per <b>vim intellectivam</b>
Venus Caelestis	A Saturno castrante Caelum Anima per <b>vim discursivam</b>
Venus Vulgaris	Per <b>vim vegetativam</b> est Est ex Iove a Dione
Amor	Apetitus qui ab indiga informitate/ab indigentia nascitur  Utrobique est hypostasis aeterna amor et daemon  Deus (in prima Venere)/nixus ad intelligendam pulchritudinem/ad gignendam (pulchritudinem) <b>intellectuali modo</b>  Daemon solus (in secunda Venere)/nixus ad gignendam pulchritudinem <b>sensibili modo</b>

As far as this technical terminology is concerned, further evidence is provided by the text forming the very last part of the second Plotinian section (fol. 115<sup>r</sup> ll. 5-15). In this passage, we detect the terms *ratio cognitiva*, *ratio genitiva*, *anima vegetativa*, *imaginatio*, *intuitum animae discursivae*, *potentia discursiva*. In this context, the *potentia discursiva* is associated with a *amor per reminescentiam*, whilst the *ratio ingenitiva* with a *amor* that *cohitus excitatur*. In other words, we detect the usual opposition between two different types of Love, the former concerning intelligible beauty, the latter the creation of beauty in the physical

world. Nevertheless, in the description of the two types of love, we find again a terminology (*vis discursiva* and *vis genitiva*) that is different from the one used in the *De Amore* (*vis intelligendi* and *vis generandi*).

These technical terms, which are used to produce a text that has no precise counterpart in the *De Amore*, seemingly reflect a different framework. We may argue that, when reading and drawing upon Plotinus, Ficino conflates medieval/Aristotelian terminology with Neoplatonic terminology, because he recognizes in the Platonists the traces of doctrines that were already present in medieval sources, but were expressed in a different way.<sup>159</sup>

## II. 5. 6 'Sunt quinque amores in animis nostris'

Before concluding this analysis, let us focus on one further case study, concerning the final part of the second section (fols 114v, l. 11- 115r, l. 2):

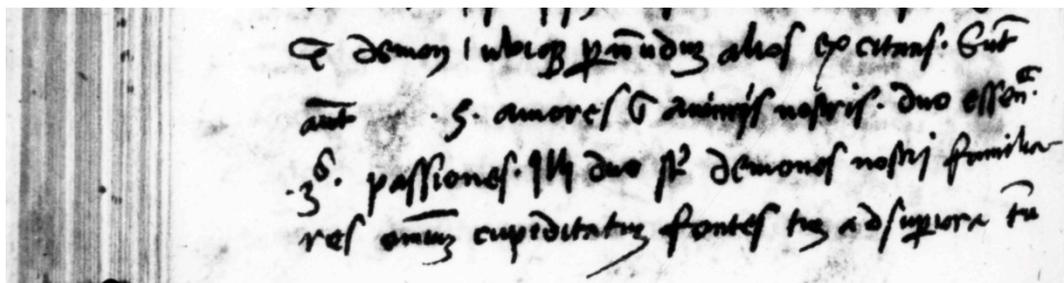


Figure 8. Detail of fol. 114<sup>v</sup>: *Sunt autem quinque amores in animis nostris*

In this passage, Ficino states that *ista*, i.e. the twin Venuses, as well as the twin Loves, are present in all souls (*in omnibus animis*). Since all souls depend on

<sup>159</sup> The distinction *vis discursiva/vis intellectiva*, is present in some medieval philosophers, such as Nicholas of Cusa. For instance, in the *De visione Dei*, XXII, the philosopher draws a distinction among *vis sensibilis*, *vis discursiva*, *vis intellectiva*.

the First Soul (*dependentiam aliquam habent a prima*), it follows that all types of love depend in some way on the First Love (*omnes amores a primo quoquomodo dependent*). That great First Love is a *daemon*, stimulating all the others everywhere in the world (*ille primus magnus est daemon ubique per mundum alios excitans*). According to the passage, in our souls there are five types of love (*sunt autem quinque amores in animis nostris*): two of them are *essentiae*, whilst three are *passiones*. The two *essentiae* are *daemones*, source of all forms of desire (*omnium cupiditatum fontes*). Sometimes these *cupidines* raise us towards the superior things, sometimes they turn us down to the inferior things (*tum ad superiora tum ad inferiora trahentium*). The three other are *passiones*, as they begin, cease, grow, and decrease (*quia incipiunt, desinunt, crescunt, decrescunt*).

In this passage, Ficino develops concepts that are not expounded in Plotinus's *Enneads*, but are present in *De Amore* VI, 8, where the Florentine scholar explains that 'In all souls there are two loves, but in ours there are five'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Marcel, pp. 211-12. I emphasized in bold all sentences matching with the text from Ficino's working notebook: **Gemine autem Veneres iste geminique amores non solum in anima mundi, verum etiam in sperarum, siderum, demonum hominumque animis insunt. Cumque anime omnes ad primam illam competenti naturalis ordinis serie referantur, necesse est amores quoque omnium ad illius amorem ita referri ut aliquo modo ab illo dependeant.** Propterea hos quidem simpliciter demones, **illum vero magnum demonem** appellare Diotima consuevit. **Qui per universum mundum omnibus imminens, torpere corda non sinit sed passim suscitatur ad amandum. In nobis autem non duo tantum sed quinque amores reperiuntur. Duo quidem extremi, demones. Medii tres,** non demones solummodo, sed affectus. Profecto in hominis mente eternus est amor ad divinam pulchritudinem pervidendam, cuius gratia et philosophiae studia et iustitiae pietatisque officia sequimur. Est etiam in generandi potentia occultus quidam stimulus ad sobolem procreandam. Isque amor perpetuus est, quo assidue incitatur, ut superne pulchritudinis illius similitudinem in procreate prolis effigie aliquam effingamus. **Hi duo amores in nobis perpetui duo sunt demones,** quos Plato nostris animis semper adesse vaticinatur, **quorum alter ad superna erigat, alter deprimat ad inferna,** alter *Calodemon*, id est, bonus demon sit, alter *Cacodemon*, id est, malus sit demon. Revera utriusque sunt boni, quoniam tam sobolis procreatio quam indagatio veritatis necessaria et honesta censetur. Verum secundus ideo dictus est malus, quia propter abusum nostrum sepe nos turbat et animum a precipuo eius bono quod in veritatis speculatione consistit, avertit maxime et ad ministeria viliora detorquet. **Horum medium amores in nobis tres obtinent, qui cum non sint in animo eque ut isti firmissimi, sed incipient, crescunt, decrescant et desinant,** rectius motus atque affectus quam demones vocabuntur. Horum unus equis intervallis ab utrisque distat extremis'. 'But these twin Venuses and twin loves are present not only in the World Soul but also in the souls of the

As the following table shows, there are striking similarities between the two texts:

**Table 6**

MS Ricc. 92 (fols 114 <sup>v</sup> , l. 11- 115 <sup>f</sup> , l. 2)	<i>Commentarium in Convivium De Amore, Oratio Sexta, Caput VIII</i>
<p>In omnibus animis ista sunt.</p> <p>Cumque omnes animae dependentiam aliquam a prima habeant, omnes amores a primo quoquomodo dependent et ille primus magnus est daemon ubique per mundum alios excitans.</p> <p>Sunt autem quinque amores in animis nostris. Duo essentiae. Tres passiones.</p> <p>Illi duo sunt daemones nostri familiares</p>	<p>Gemine autem Veneres iste geminique amores non solum in anima mundi, verum etiam in sperarum, siderum, demonum hominumque animis insunt. Cumque anime omnes ad primam illam competenti naturalis ordinis serie referantur, necesse est amores quoque omnium ad illius amorem ita referri ut aliquo modo ab illo dependeant. Propterea hos quidem simpliciter demones, illum vero magnum demonem appellare Diotima consuevit. Qui per universum mundum omnibus imminens, torpere corda non sinit sed passim suscitatur ad amandum.</p> <p>In nobis autem non duo tantum sed quinque amores reperiuntur. Duo quidem extremi, demones. Medii tres</p> <p>Hi duo amores in nobis perpetui duo sunt</p>

spheres, of the stars, of daemons, and of men. And since, in the normal sequence of the natural order, all individual souls are related to that first Soul, it follows that the loves of all individuals souls must similarly be related to the World Soul's love, in such a way that they derive from it in some way. That is why Diotima used to call individual loves simply "daemons", but love of the World Soul "the great daemon" which, hanging over all things throughout the whole universe, does not permit hearts to sleep, but everywhere wakens them to loving. But in us are found not two loves only, but five. The two extreme loves are certainly daemons. The middle three are not daemons but passions. Certainly in the intellect of man there is an eternal love of seeing the divine beauty, thanks to which we pursue both the study of philosophy and the practice of justice and piety. There is also in the power of procreation a certain mysterious urge to procreate offspring. This love too is eternal; by it we are continuously driven to create some likeness of that celestial Beauty in the image of a procreated offspring. These two eternal loves in us are daemons which Plato predicts will always be present in our souls, one of which raises us to things above; the other presses us down to things below. One is a kalodaemon, that is, a good daemon; the other is kakodaemon, that is an evil daemon. In reality both are good, since the procreation of offspring is considered to be as necessary and virtuous as the pursuit of truth. But the second is called evil because, on account of our abuse, it often disturbs us and powerfully diverts the soul from its chief good, which consists in the completion of truth, and twists it to baser purposes. Between these loves in us there are three which will more properly be called emotions or passions rather than daemons, since they are not uniformly strong in the soul, as the other two are, but begin, grown decrease, and cease. Of these, one is equidistant from both extremes', trans. by Jayne, in Ficino, *Commentary*, ed. by Jayne, pp. 118-20.

omnium cupiditatum fontes tum ad superiora tum ad inferiora trahentium.	demones, quos Plato nostris animis semper adesse vaticinatur, quorum alter ad superna erigat, alter deprimat ad inferna
[[cum]] tres alii sunt passiones, quia incipiunt, desinunt, crescunt, decrescunt.	Horum medium amores in nobis tres obtinent, qui cum non sint in animo eque ut isti firmissimi, sed incipiant, crescant, decrescant et desinant.

In spite of slight differences, either in the terminology or in the *ordo verborum*, the correspondence is almost literal. The text from Ficino's working notebook appears to be a concise draft, briefly outlining concepts, images and ideas that the Florentine scholar, at a later stage, developed more extensively: each key concept included in the outline is expanded to form the definitive version of the corresponding chapter of Ficino's final commentary.

## II. 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Ficino used in the *De Amore* specific passages and quotations, as well as images and philosophical concepts that he had compiled in the notebook. Thus Ficino's reading practices and methodology are consistent with Agostino Nifo's remarks on Ficino's *Commentarium in Convivium De Amore*: it is to write 'a compilation of many different ideas about love' that Ficino collected a wide range of sources from previous literary, medical and philosophical traditions.

As far as the Greek texts of the collection are concerned, Ficino used passages from a given *auctoritas* to back up doctrines or arguments he expounded in his work. The Florentine scholar also isolated a number of ideas, metaphors and patterns of arguments contained in these texts, which were subsequently

reworked, expanded or allegorized in an original and more complex philosophical argument. Additionally, we can argue that the collection of Greek texts represents an important textual basis for the writing of the commentary, but does not consist of a draft or a preliminary outline of Ficino's work. The set of texts, assembled by using selection criteria and anthologization techniques that were not dissimilar to traditional reading practices, is at the same time an original product, a proper anthology.

As far as the Latin section is concerned, my reconstruction demonstrates the presence of two distinct parts: a condensed Latin translation of Plotinus's treatise on beauty, *Enn.* I 6, and a draft of concepts that we find in some chapters of the *De Amore*.

The Plotinian treatise contains images and arguments that had strong echoes in the *De Amore*. First of all, this 'unofficial' translation of Plotinus provides further evidence of Ficino's long-time familiarity with the text of the *Enneads* and his extraordinary ability to understand as well as translate Plotinus. Secondly, the translation provides information on the way in which the Florentine scholar actually appropriated Plotinian arguments through a process of note-taking. When conceiving his commentary, Ficino translates and summarizes his source: this activity, encompassing both reading and scribal practices, sheds light on a process of consumption and reception of the Plotinian text and therefore represents an important stage in the writing of the *De Amore*.

By contrast, the final part of the first Plotinian section provides evidence of a different activity. The text forming this part is not a translation, but a draft of passages that are similarly developed in Ficino's commentary. One passage in

particular provides the very first extant elaboration of Ficino's theory of the hierarchic structure of the universe, which is expounded both in the *De Amore* and in the *Platonic Theology*.

As far as the second Plotinian section is concerned, the heading 'Plotinus' introducing the Latin passage, is rather confusing and it deceived those who described the text contained in the section without systematically reading and analysing it. My analysis indicates that the passage introduced by the heading 'Plotinus' is neither a translation or a *résumé* of Plotinus's treatise on love, *Enn.* III 5. The passage in question contains drafts of *De Amore* VI, 7 and VI, 8. Concerning the draft of Chapter VII in particular, this text constitutes the earliest elaboration of Ficino's allegorical reading of the Platonic episode of the birth of Eros, including the famous distinction between the Heavenly Venus and the Vulgar Venus and their corresponding Loves.

As far as Ficino's technical vocabulary is concerned, most of the images developed in these drafts concern the theme of light. The terminology adopted is consistent with the one used in the *De Amore*, and therefore provides evidence of the elaboration of images that are crucial in the subsequent development of Ficino's philosophy.

In spite of the connection between the drafts contained in the notebook and the passages from Ficino's commentary, there are also several discrepancies. In the passage dealing with the two Venuses, Ficino uses a set of technical terms that is never employed in the *De Amore*, which may reflect a previous philosophical tradition.

In describing Ficino's treatment of Plotinus's philosophy, an anonymous author of a *Vita di Marsilio Ficino*, stated that the Renaissance scholar was so much in tune with Plotinus that when he quotes and comments on Plotinian arguments 'non pare che si scorga differenza molta fra l'autore stesso e il commentatore'.<sup>161</sup> The title 'Plotinus', introducing Ficino's drafts, may be seen as confirmation of the anonymous author's remark. Undoubtedly, this title reflects Ficino's indebtedness to Plotinus; nevertheless, It can also be seen as the result of the encounter –to use Paul Ricoeur's terminology– between the so-called 'world of the text' and 'world of the reader'. This encounter gives a new life to the text of the *auctoritas* through the reader's own creative power and interpretation.<sup>162</sup> In other words, the *titulatio* likely marks a more complex process of reception and appropriation of the philosophical source. When taking his notes, Ficino relies heavily on his source, but at the same time is an active reader. The Florentine scholar reworks Plotinus's doctrines and produces an original passage, which he will then use in his own philosophical treatise.

When discussing note-taking methods in the early modern period, Ann Blair argues that 'by looking at practices of note-taking for their own sake we get a better idea of how people performed intellectual work in the past, what caught their attention and how they moved from reading to producing a finished work, often via note-taking'.<sup>163</sup> Regarding drafts in particular, she uses the terms

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<sup>161</sup> See Marcel, *Marsilio Ficino*, p. 707.

<sup>162</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-88); See also Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books*, p. 3; Karlheinz Stierle, 'Studium: Perspectives on Institutionalized Modes of Reading', *New Literary History* 22 (1991), 115-127 (p. 119).

<sup>163</sup> Ann Blair, 'The Rise of Note-Taking', p. 5.

‘compositional drafts’, ‘intermediate’ and ‘compositional’ notes.<sup>164</sup> My analysis is consistent with Blair’s remarks, as well as with the conclusions drawn by the so-called genetic criticism, that is, the study of the development of a work from reading notes and drafts.<sup>165</sup>

Karlheinz Stierle aptly pointed out that ‘every commentary is a new stage in the life of the text’ and that the commentator ‘intends to enrich the original meaning through the work of interpretation’.<sup>166</sup> The study of Ficino’s manuscript provides insight into the process whereby the Florentine scholar invested Plato’s text with new meaning. This working notebook shows Ficino engaged in selecting, collecting and storing the mass of ancient texts he was going to quote and incorporate in his philosophical work. In sum, MS Riccardianus 92, represents the germinal moment of a creative process that results in the composition of a new work.

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<sup>164</sup> Ann Blair, ‘Note-Taking as an Art of Transmission’, pp. 89 and 95.

<sup>165</sup> When describing this research approach, Pierre-Marc de Biasi states as follows: La génétique des textes [...] renouvelle en profondeur la connaissance des textes à la lumière de leurs manuscrits de travail, en déplaçant la réflexion de l’écrit vers l’écriture, de la structure vers les processus, de l’auteur vers l’écrivain, de l’oeuvre vers sa genèse. Le texte est ainsi réinterprété à travers la succession des esquisses, notes et brouillons qui lui ont donné naissance et l’ont conduit à sa forme imprimée à travers de multiples métamorphoses. Pierre-Marc de Biasi, *Génétique des textes* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), p. 11. See also Blair, ‘The Rise of Note-Taking’, p. 6.

<sup>166</sup> Stierle, ‘Studium: Perspectives’, pp. 117-18.

## Chapter III

### ‘Il libro che cresce’: MS Ambr. F 19 sup.

#### III. 1 A work in progress

My analysis will now focus on MS Ambrosianus F 19 sup. As mentioned in Chapter I, an anonymous seventeenth-century hand inserted a long description into the manuscript (fol. III<sup>v</sup>). According to the anonymous writer, ‘Ficino was the first who systematically went through all of Plato’s oeuvre in such a way that he would copy all the most notable passages in this book and store them for himself as though inside a treasure chest’ (*Platonem totum ita percurrit ut selectissima quaeque in hunc codicem reportaret ac sibi velut in thesaurum seponeret*). Furthermore, Ficino did not limit himself to conceiving a collection of Platonic texts (*silva Platoniorum locorum*), but also transcribed the texts himself (*codicem [...] ipsius Marsilii manu excerptum ac descriptum fuisse*), without the help of professional scribes.

Ficino’s work, described as a *nocturnus ac diurnus labor*, i.e. the day-night task of transcribing selected passages from Plato’s *opera omnia*, is compared with the task that Demosthenes performed in antiquity. According to ancient sources the famous Athenian orator transcribed Thucydides’ *Histories* eight times, and memorized Thucydides’ work with so much precision that he was able to reconstruct the text when it was destroyed by a fire. Taking the seventeenth-century anonymous scribe’s words as a starting point, I will explore

in detail the process of text storing that led Ficino to produce his *silva platoniorum locorum* in the Milan manuscript.

Like MS Ricc. 92, the Milan manuscript is an organic miscellany: it is an anthology of texts from Plato, Plotinus and Proclus on the immortality of the soul compiled by Marsilio Ficino. The texts, of different length, are arranged under headings –either Greek or Latin *titulationes*–, used to facilitate the retrieval of the selected passages. Recent scholarship has conjectured that the notebook was a compilation of texts that Ficino gathered with a view to writing his major philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology*, which was printed in 1482.<sup>167</sup> Following this interpretation, when starting to write the work around 1469-70, Ficino produced a manuscript containing texts related to the Platonic doctrines on the immortality of the soul. Most of these texts were quoted and used by Ficino in an impressive effort to produce a doctrinal synthesis, which is at the same time the result of an original philosophical thought-process.<sup>168</sup>

As far as the codicological structure is concerned, MS Ambr. F 19 sup. is more complex than MS Ricc. 92: the compilation is a work in progress, a book made up of two chronologically distinct parts. We know that there was an original book made of sixteen quires (*sectio prior*), and that at a later stage two quires (current quires I and XVIII) and the parchment flyleaves (*sectio recentior*) were added to the original nucleus. In other words, the length of the book increased as

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<sup>167</sup> See Ernesto Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 354; see also Gentile and Rizzo, 'Per una tipologia', pp. 395-96.

<sup>168</sup> The work was reviewed by Ficino after 1474 and printed on the 7 November 1482. See Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, I, pp. LXXIX-LXXXI; Marsile Ficin, *Théologie Platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, ed. by Raymond Marcel, 3 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964-1970) (I, 1964), 17; *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone. Mostra di manoscritti*, pp. 111-13. For a detailed introduction and the relevant bibliography, see Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by Hankins and trans. by Allen; Marsilio Ficino, *Teologia Platonica*, ed. and trans. by Errico Vitale (Milan: Bompiani, 2011).

Ficino worked on the text of Plato. The first textual unit of the original book consists of the full transcription of Plato's *Phaedo* (fols 17<sup>r</sup>-108<sup>v</sup>), which does have peculiar editing features and bears evidence of an intense activity of collation. Hence, I have formulated the hypothesis that what was originally a philological notebook, in which Ficino worked on the text of the *Phaedo*, probably became, at a later stage, an anthology of excerpts compiled with a view to writing the *Platonic Theology*. Once a new section was added, and after a second binding, the manuscript achieved its definitive structure. The physical structure of the Milan manuscript is consistent with the terminology employed by Rosa Maria Piccione and Claudia Sode for describing MS Monacensis graecus 182: 'il libro che cresce', a book that grows.<sup>169</sup>

What Ficino did in the *sectio recentior* is interesting, and represents another way of managing the set of texts transcribed in the notebook. This is clear from the *mise en page*, that is, the way the page is formatted and the text is actually laid out on the page, as well as from the anthologization techniques used by Ficino. As highlighted in the physical description of the manuscript, the margins and the line-spacing are reduced, the script is more compressed and there is a more extensive use of abbreviations. Furthermore, the excerpts underwent a process of interpolation and abbreviation, illustrating Ficino's effort to make sure that the excerpts fit perfectly into the limited writing space available. In sum, the analysis of the set of texts copied in the Ambrosianus shows that there is a tight connection between the materiality of the notebook (the availability of writing space) and the way the texts are actually transcribed and arranged.

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<sup>169</sup> The miscellany, containing a collection of ancient maxims, is the result of two different compositional stages. See R. M. Piccione and Claudia Sode, 'Il libro che cresce', in *Selecta Colligere, II*, pp. 403-33.

This chapter focusses mainly on the *sectio recentior* of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., whilst the *sectio prior* will be the focus of Chapter V. First of all, placing emphasis on this connection between materiality and textuality mentioned above, I will explore Ficino's anthologization techniques and, more specifically, his indebtedness to previous traditions and processes of storing texts and knowledge, as well as his treatment of philosophical sources. Secondly, I will discuss Paul Henry's remarks on the purpose of the Milan manuscript and provide a different interpretation, thus shedding new light on Ficino's principles of selection and arrangement of the philosophical texts. Lastly, in the light of the outcomes of my analysis, I will seek to provide a contextualized reading of the insert compiled by the anonymous scribe, and place Ficino's work in the wider context of Early Modern reading practices.

### **III. 2 Anthologization techniques and quotations**

Concerning the techniques used by Ficino to produce the excerpts from Plato's dialogues, in the earlier section of the book, the Florentine scholar tends merely to select and transcribe passages that are arranged in the order in which they appear in the original text, without any alteration. By contrast, in the *sectio recentior*, most of the passages undergo a change, according to a wide range of processes and techniques of condensing texts. The following examples illustrate how these processes actually take place.

At fols 10<sup>r</sup> l. 6-11<sup>r</sup> l. 17, Ficino transcribes an *excerptum* from Plato's *Philebus* (29b-30d), concerning the connection between microcosmos and macrocosmos. The Florentine scholar modifies the textual structure by omitting

the responses of Protarchus, Socrates' interlocutor: in other words, the dialogic text has turned into a narrative text.

This process of reduction is also connected to the so-called *mise en texte*, concerning the set of 'dispositivi di differenziazione, gerarchizzazione e indicizzazione del flusso testuale' used by the copist at work, such as headings and paratexts.<sup>170</sup> The use of this anthologization technique seems to be signalled by the *titulatio* introducing the excerpt: **ἐν φιλήβω : σόκρατες** (sic) :~ The heading indicates that the excerptor is collecting only Socrates' arguments.

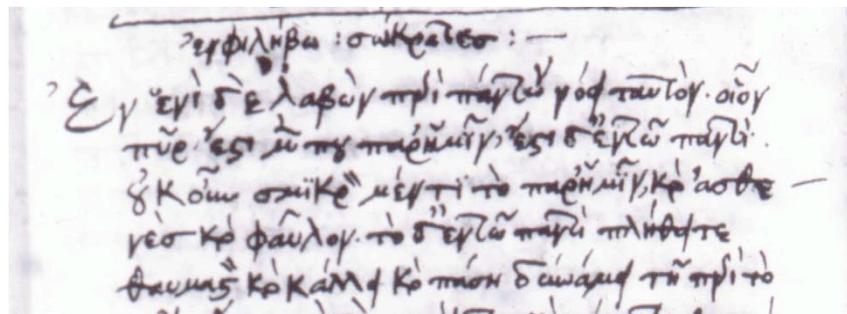


Figure 1. Detail of fol. 10<sup>r</sup>: *incipit* of the *excerptum* from Plato's *Philebus* (29b-30d)

At fols 7<sup>v</sup> l. 12-9<sup>v</sup> l. 19 we find a similar case, showing the same technique. The heading **πλάτων - ἐν πολιτικῶ : ξένος ἐλεάτης** :~ introduces an excerpt from Plato's *Statesman* (269c-272e), concerning the theme of the different motions of the cosmos. When selecting this passage, Ficino transcribed only the arguments expounded by the main character – the Stranger – and omitted his interlocutor's responses.

<sup>170</sup> Marilena Maniaci, *Archeologia del manoscritto* (Rome: Viella, 2002), p. 103.

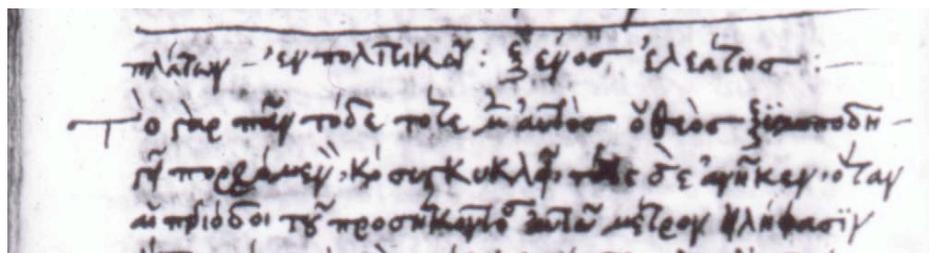


Figure 2. Detail of fol. 7<sup>v</sup>: *incipit* of the excerpt from Plato's *Statesman* (269c-272e)

This technique was quite common in anthologization processes, from Antiquity onward. In her study on the *lemmata* in Johannes Stobaeus's *Anthologion*, Piccione dwells on a case that is similar to the one that I have analysed and describes the excerptor's *modus operandi* as follows:

L'intervento di riduzione e adattamento consiste dunque, in buona sostanza, nell'omissione delle parti che l'escertore sente come squisitamente narrative, introduttive o di ricapitolazione, e in generale di quei segmenti in cui i due interlocutori si soffermano su considerazioni ritenute in qualche modo non funzionali allo sviluppo del tema, rallentando o interrompendo il ritmo del discorso dialogico.<sup>171</sup>

In sum, this case shows that Ficino is using a methodology that early modern scholars inherited from antiquity and enabled them to condense the textual content of the passages that they collected in their notebooks.

Let us now focus on another anthologization technique. At fols 1<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>v</sup> l. 19 Ficino has collected under the same heading some excerpts from Plato's *Timaeus*: in this section, the Florentine scholar omits parts of the dialogue and does not follow the order in which the passages appear in the original text. The following table provides my reconstruction (columns one and three) and a summary (column three) of the relevant section:

<sup>171</sup> R. M. Piccione, 'Caratterizzazione di lemmi nell'*Anthologion* di Giovanni Stobaeo. Questioni di metodo', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 127 (1999), 139-75 (p. 158).

**Table 1**

<b>Excerpts from Plato's <i>Timaeus</i> in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. (fols 1<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>v</sup> l. 19)</b>		
<b>Folium</b>	<b>Incipit and explicit of the excerpt</b>	<b>Content</b>
fols 1 <sup>r</sup> - 4 <sup>v</sup> l. 18	ὥσπερ γὰρ οὖν ~ καὶ πεφάσθω (69b-72d)	The divinity and the creation of the cosmos
fol. 4 <sup>v</sup> l. 18	τέλος δέ~ἢ λύπης. (81d-e)	Natural death
fols 5 <sup>r</sup> l. 8- 5 <sup>v</sup> l. 7	τῆς γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνης ~ ἐστερηῆσθαι (77a-c)	Origin of the vegetal beings
fol. 5 <sup>v</sup> ll. 7-10	καὶ τὴν μὲν τὸ θεῖον ~ ἐγκέφαλον (73c-d)	God calls 'encephalon' that part of the marrow which is destined to receive the divine seed
fol. 5 <sup>v</sup> l. 10	νόσον μὲν ~ τότε δὴ δυνατός (86b-c)	The soul diseases and the two types of insanity: madness and ignorance
fol. 6 <sup>r</sup>	τρία τριχῆ ψυχῆς ~ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον (89e-90d)	The three parts of the soul
fol. 6 <sup>v</sup> ll. 16-18	τῶν γενομένων ἀνδρῶν ~ γενέσκει (90e)	Those who had been men and had spent their life likely turned into women when they were born again.
fol. 6 <sup>v</sup> l. 19	τὸ δὲ τῶν ὀρνέων ~ ὅδε μονογενῆς ὄν (91d <i>ad finem</i> )	Origin of the animals The cycle of reincarnations End of the description of the universe and end of the <i>Timaeus</i>

The way Ficino is managing the texts in this part of the manuscript shows an interesting aspect of his activity and approach to philosophical texts. In this case, the Florentine scholar is interested neither in preserving Plato's *verbum* and its textual integrity, nor in reconstructing a philologically accurate version of Plato's *opera omnia* through a process of *constitutio textus*. In the anthologization process, Ficino is rather engaged in creating a compilation by using techniques that are quite common among excerptors. In other words, when collecting Platonic texts in his notebooks, the compiler is not interested in the text itself and in

preserving it as it stands, but in its doctrinal and conceptual content –even though, paradoxically, the very dialogical form in which this content was presented in Plato’s work was crucial to Plato’s philosophy. Hence, he operates according to practical needs: since the writing space available is limited, the text is reduced, condensed and modified. Ficino’s intent is twofold: first of all, by reducing and modifying the text the Florentine scholar discards all that he considers superfluous and that in some way slows down the logical progression of the text as well as of its reading and memorizing. Secondly, by making a synthesis, the collector creates a shorter textual unit and saves space and writing material as well.

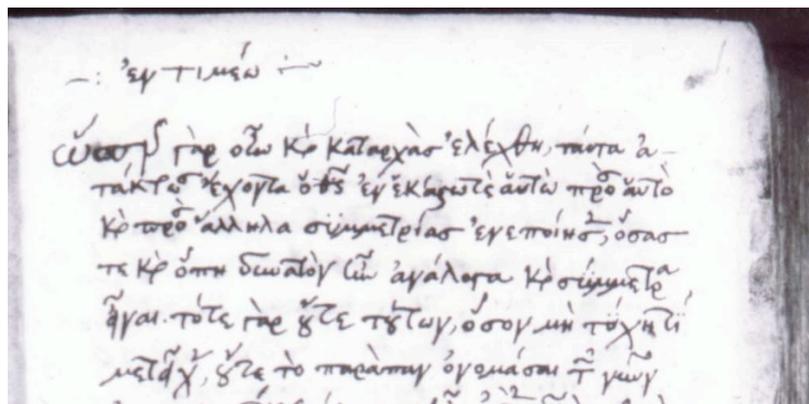


Figure 3. Detail of fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. Excerpts from Plato’s *Timaeus*: incipit of the section

This process of reduction is even more evident in the initial and in the final part of the manuscript. When taking his notes, the Florentine scholar seeks to exploit all the writing space available. Thus he writes on the parchment flyleaves (fols I-II, 237-38), which protect the cover of the book: in such a limited space, passages and structures which are syntactically complex are reduced to brief maxims. For instance, at fol. II<sup>v</sup>, ll. 20-22 a short excerpt from Plato’s *Timaeus* (79c-d) reads as follows:

*Plato in Timaeo*

ἡδονὴ μέγιστον κακοῦ δέλεαρ. λύπη δὲ ἀγαθῶν φυγή

Pleasure is the most mighty lure to evil. By contrast, pain puts good to rout.

The original text reads as follows:

οἱ δὲ μιμούμενοι, παραλαβόντες ἀρχὴν ψυχῆς ἀθάνατον, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο θνητὸν σῶμα αὐτῇ περιετόρνευσαν ὅχημά τε πᾶν τὸ σῶμα ἔδοσαν ἄλλο τε εἶδος ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχῆς προσφοδόμοον τὸ θνητόν, δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα ἐν ἑαυτῷ παθήματα ἔχον, πρῶτον μὲν ἡδονήν, μέγιστον κακοῦ δέλεαρ, ἔπειτα λύπας, ἀγαθῶν φυγᾶς, ἔτι δ' αὖ θάρρος καὶ φόβον, κτλ.<sup>172</sup>

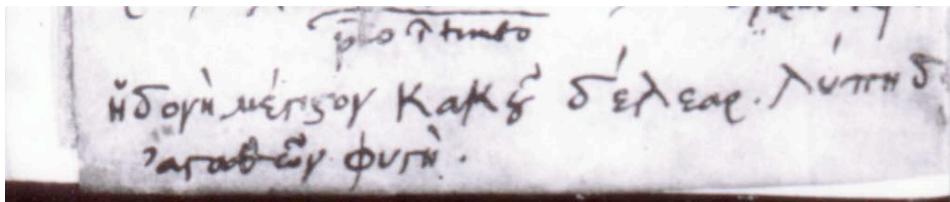


Figure 4. Detail of fol. II<sup>v</sup>: excerpt from Plato's *Timaeus* (79c-d)

As the emphasized text shows, Ficino has selected a sentence belonging to a longer and more complex syntactical structure. By modifying and adapting its structure, the Florentine scholar has turned the sentence into a brief γνώμη. A similar case is found at fol. 237<sup>v</sup> ll. 19-20, where Ficino transcribes a passage from the *Menexenus* (237d-e):

*In Menexeno*

·Ι· ζῶων

ἄνθρωπος συνέσει τε ὑπερέχει τῶν ἄλλων καὶ δίκην καὶ θεοὺς μόνον νομίζει  
Man surpasses all other animals in intelligence and alone of animals regards  
justice and the gods.

This is the original passage from Plato's dialogue:

ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ χρόνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἡ πᾶσα γῆ ἀνεδίδου καὶ ἔφυε ζῶα παντοδαπά, θηρία τε καὶ βοτᾶ, ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἡμετέρα θηρίων μὲν ἀγρίων ἄγονος καὶ καθαρὰ ἐφάνη,

<sup>172</sup> Plato, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, trans. by Robert G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929, rpt. 1957), pp. 179-81: 'And they, imitating Him, on receiving the immortal principle of soul, framed around it a mortal body, and gave it all the body to be its vehicle, and housed therein besides another form of soul, even the mortal form, which has within it passions both fearful and unavoidable—firstly, pleasure, a most mighty lure to evil; next, pains, which put good to rout; and besides these, rashness and fear'.

ἐξελέξατο δὲ τῶν ζώων καὶ ἐγέννησεν ἄνθρωπον, ὃ συνέσει τε ὑπερέχει τῶν ἄλλων καὶ δίκην καὶ θεοῦς μόνον νομίζει.<sup>173</sup>

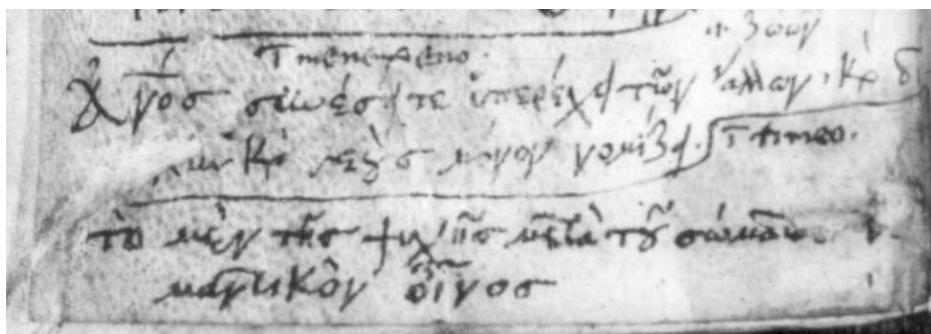


Figure 5. Detail of fol. 237<sup>v</sup>. Excerpt from Plato's *Menexenus* (237d-e)

In this case, in order to produce a maxim, Ficino does not restrict himself to reducing and modifying the structure of the original sentence: he also changes the *ordo verborum* and places the genitive ζῶων in a position that is different from the original. The insertion of the word is signalled by the use of the diacritical sign ·|·.

In the last *folium* of the manuscript (fol. 238), Ficino produces a brief anthology on pederastic love made of Socrates' maxims and arguments and taken from different Platonic dialogues. The parchment leaf is considerably damaged, but the direct inspection that I conducted allowed me to reconstruct the set of texts and to complement previous descriptions of the manuscript.

<sup>173</sup> Plato, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus*, trans. by Bury, p. 343: 'during that period in which the whole earth was putting forth and producing animals of every kind, wild and tame, our country showed herself barren and void of wild animals, but chose for herself and gave birth to man, who surpasses all other animals in intelligence and alone of animals regards justice and the gods'.

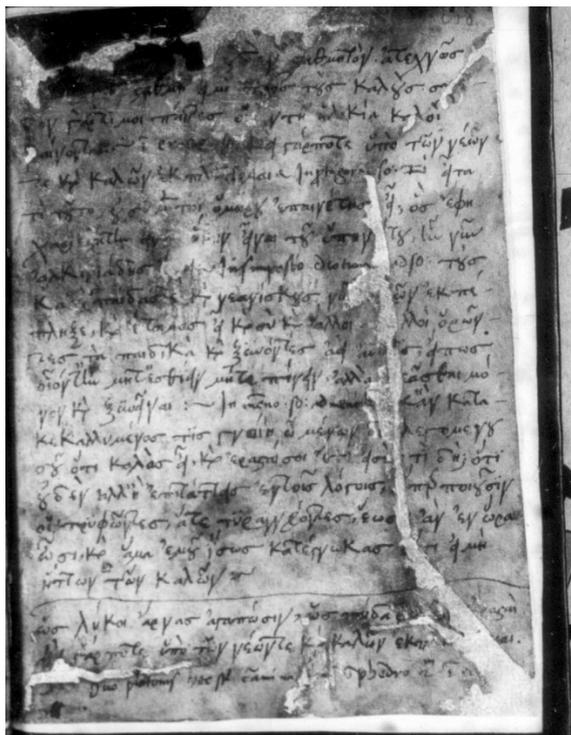


Figure 6. Fol. 238. Brief anthology on pederastic love

The table below shows how Ficino actually selected and arranged the texts:

Table 2

fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> ll. 1-5	In Charmide :So: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν, ὦ ἑταῖρε, οὐδὲν σταθμητόν: ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ λευκὴ στάθμη εἰμι πρὸς τοὺς καλοὺς— σχεδὸν γὰρ τί μοι πάντες οἱ ἐν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ καλοὶ φαίνονται ( <i>Charm.</i> 154b)	Now I, my good friend, am no measurer: I am a mere “white line” in measuring beautiful people, for almost everyone who has just grown up appears beautiful to me. Nay and this time, moreover, the young man appeared to me. <sup>174</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> ll. 5-7	: In Erastis :So: ἀεὶ γὰρ ποτε ὑπὸ τῶν νέων τε καὶ καλῶν ἐκπλήττομαι. ( <i>Amat.</i> 133a)	For every time I am staggered by handsome young people. <sup>175</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> ll. 7-9	: In Protagora :So: εἶτα τί τοῦτο; οὐ σὺ μέντοι Ὅμηρου ἐπαινέτης εἶ, ὃς ἔφη χαριστάτην ἦβην εἶναι τοῦ πρώτου ὑπηγήτου, ἦν	And what of that? Do you mean to say you do not approve of Homer, who said that youth has highest

<sup>174</sup> Plato. *Charmides. Alcibiades I and II. Hipparchus. The Lovers. Theages. Minos. Epinomis*, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1927, rpt. 1979), p. 13.

<sup>175</sup> Plato, *Charmides. Alcibiades I and II. Hipparchus. The Lovers*, trans. by Lamb, p. 315.

	νῦν Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔχει; ( <i>Prot.</i> 309a-b)	grace in him whose beard is appearing, as now in the case of Alcibiades? <sup>176</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> ll. 9-14	In C(on)v(ivio) :So: τοὺς καλοὺς παῖδάς τε καὶ νεανίσκους δόξει σοι εἶναι, οὓς νῦν ὀρῶν ἐκπέπληξαι καὶ ἔτοιμος εἶ καὶ σὺ καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί, ὀρῶντες τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ συνόντες ἀεὶ αὐτοῖς, εἴ πως οἶόν τ' ἦν, μήτ' ἐσθίειν μήτε πίνειν, ἀλλὰ θεᾶσθαι μόνον καὶ συνεῖναι. ( <i>Symp.</i> 211d)	Your beautiful boys and striplings, whose aspect now so astounds you and makes you and many another, at the sight and constant society of your darlings, ready to do without either food or drink if that were any way possible, and only gaze upon them and have their company. <sup>177</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> ll. 14-20	: In Meno(ne) :So: κᾶν κατακεκαλυμμένος τις γνοίη, ὃ Μένων, διαλεγομένου σου, ὅτι καλὸς εἶ καὶ ἐρασταί σοι ἔτι εἰσίν. τί δή; ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἐπιτάττεις ἐν τοῖς λόγοις, ὅπερ ποιοῦσιν οἱ τρυφῶντες, ἅτε τυραννεύοντες ἕως ἂν ἐν ὥρᾳ ᾧσιν, καὶ ἅμα ἐμοῦ ἴσως κατέγνωκας ὅτι εἰμὶ ἥττων τῶν καλῶν ( <i>Men.</i> 76b-c)	One might tell even blindfolded, Meno, by the way you discuss, that you are handsome and still have lovers. Why so? Because you invariably speak in a peremptory tone, after the fashion of spoilt beauties, holding as they do a despotic power so long as their bloom is on them. You have also, I dare say, made a note of my weakness for handsome people. <sup>178</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> l. 21	Duo Platonis carmina: [1°] in Phedro2° in E[rastis] ὡς λύκοι ἄρνας ἀγαπῶσιν, ὡς παῖδα φιλοῦσιν ἐρασταί. ( <i>Phaedr.</i> 241d)	Just as the wolf loves the lamb, so the lover adores his beloved. <sup>179</sup>
fol. 238 <sup>f</sup> l. 22	ἀεὶ γάρ ποτε ὑπὸ τῶν νέων τε καὶ καλῶν ἐκπλήττομαι. ( <i>Amat.</i> 133a)	For every time I am staggered by handsome young people

Like the pieces of a patchwork, sentences coming from different Plato's works, but having in common the same *persona loquens* – Socrates, whose name is indicated by the abbreviation *So:* –, get assembled to form a new text.

The examples above show that this process is consistent with techniques of selection and reduction that led in Antiquity and the Middle Ages to the tradition

<sup>176</sup> Plato, *Laches. Protagoras. Meno. Euthydemus*, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1924, rpt. 1977), p. 93.

<sup>177</sup> Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925, rpt. 1975), p. 207.

<sup>178</sup> Plato, *Laches. Protagoras. Meno. Euthydemus*, trans. by Lamb, pp. 283-85.

<sup>179</sup> Plato, *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, trans. by Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914), p. 457.

of *gnomologia* and collections of maxims, such as the *Menandri sententiae*, the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.<sup>180</sup> In sum, Ficino is using a wide range of strategies connected with the transmission of knowledge in abbreviated or summarized form.

Considering the last example, it is quite striking that Ficino isolated these texts, especially in the light of the problems connected with the theory of Platonic love. For we know that one of the main problems with the reception of Platonism among Italian scholars in the fifteenth century was the homosexual and pederastic orientation of Platonic love.<sup>181</sup> As far as Ficino is concerned, the Florentine scholar condemned homosexual love, since it was to be considered against the order of nature, but ‘completely accepted the idea that Platonic love involved a chaste relationship between men’.<sup>182</sup> However, when translating Plato’s corpus, Ficino censored all passages on homosexuality. In his preface to the argument to Plato’s *Charmides*, he openly admits what he has done and explains that he has deleted these passages or translated them in a new way – for instance ‘lover’ becomes ‘friend’ (*amicus*) and *καλός* is translated as *honestus* – on the grounds that the real meaning and significance of these passages would be lost on his contemporaries.<sup>183</sup>

Etsi omnia in hoc dialogo mirificam habent allegoriam, amatoria maxime, non aliter quam Cantica Salomonis, mutauit tamen non nihil, non nihil etiam pretermisi.

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<sup>180</sup> For a brief account and the relevant bibliography, see Piccione, ‘Scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare’, pp. 59-60; Ead. ‘Forme di trasmissione della letteratura sentenziosa’, in *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico*, ed. by M. S. Funghi, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 2003-2004), II (2004), pp. 403-41. See also *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico*, I (2003).

<sup>181</sup> For an account, see Maude Vanhaelen, ‘Marsile Ficin, traducteur et interprète du Charmide de Platon’, *Accademia* 3 (2001), 23-52 (pp. 24-28); Kraye, ‘Platonic Love’, pp. 76-81. James Hankins, ‘Socrates in the Italian Renaissance’, in *Socrates, from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, ed. by M. B. Trapp (Aldershot: Ashgate; 2007), pp. 179-208 (pp. 185-88).

<sup>182</sup> Kraye, ‘Platonic Love’, p. 79.

<sup>183</sup> See, Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 312-13; Vanhaelen, ‘Marsile Ficin, traducteur et interprète’, pp. 25-26.

Quae enim consonabant castigatissimis auribus Atticorum rudioribus forte auribus minime consonarent. Ideoque Aristarchus quidam homericus, immo vero platonicus, que minus consonant diceret non Platonis esse, sed Chroni.<sup>184</sup>

Among the passages from the *Charmides* that Ficino omitted, there is one depicting Socrates as feeling a burning desire for the beauty of a young boy (155d). Similar contents are expounded in the texts collected in the brief anthology in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. The selection is therefore particularly interesting, since it likely provides further evidence of Ficino's reading of these passages as well as of his reflection on a controversial and debated aspect of Platonic love.

Many of the passages forming the compilation contained in the Milan manuscript are quoted by Ficino in his *Platonic Theology*. Sometimes the reference consists of a precise quotation, whilst in other cases it is more general and summarizes a given Platonic doctrine. For instance, the passage from Plato's *Statesman* (272e) that I have analysed above, concerning cosmic motion, is quoted in *Theol. Plat.* IV, 2, 1. In this section, Ficino explains how the celestial souls move their own spheres:

Quonam pacto caelestes animae sphaeras suas movent? Profecto quemadmodum placet Platonibus, sicut corpus tuum anima tua per appetitum. Qui appetitus illic quoque a	How then do celestial souls move their spheres? According to the Platonists in the same way as your soul moves your body: through desire. The desire in a celestial
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<sup>184</sup> *Ficini Opera*, p. 1304. 'Although everything in this dialogue has a marvelous allegory, most of all the love-passages –just like the *Song of Salomon*– I have nevertheless changed a few things and have even omitted a few things. For things which once sounded harmonious to the pure ears of the Attic Greeks will perhaps sound much less harmonious to cruder ears. Thus a certain Homerican (or rather Platonist), Aristarchus, used to say that whatever things seem less than harmonious should be set down not to Plato but to Chronus [i.e. to Time]'. Trans. by Hankins in *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, p. 313.

cogitatione excitatur, cogitatio ibidem a fatali illius animae lege. Ideo **Plato in libro De regno inquit: caelum movet fatum et innata cupiditas.**

sphere too is aroused by reflection; and reflection there by its soul's fatal law. Thus Plato says in his book, *The Statesman*, "Fate and inborn desire moves the heavens."<sup>185</sup>

In *Theol. Plat.* III, 1, 13, Ficino quotes two famous Platonic passages, concerning a demonstration of the immortality of the soul based on the argument of motion:

Quod quidem intellexisse Platonem in *Legibus* arbitror, ubi inquit: «Si nunc stent omnia, et paulo post moveri aliquid debeat, quid primo movebitur? Ipsum videlicet quod per se ipsum agile est ad motum, tamquam movendi virtuti propinquius, cuius motum caetera quoque motui subiecta sequentur». Id vocat in *Phaedro* «fontem et principium motionis». Fontem, quia ex se eam habet; principium, quia effundit in alia

I think Plato realized this when asked in the *Laws*: "If everything were currently at rest and somewhat later something had to move, what would be the first thing to move?" Obviously it would be what moves easily on its own, as being closest to the power of moving and whose motion is followed by everything else also subject to motion. In the *Phaedrus* Plato calls this the source and principle of motion: "the source" because it has motion from itself, "the principle" because it pours it out into other things."<sup>186</sup>

Both passages from Plato are transcribed in the codex (fols 108<sup>v</sup>-109<sup>v</sup>: *Phaedr.* 245c; fol. 203<sup>v</sup>: *Leg.* X, 895a-b).

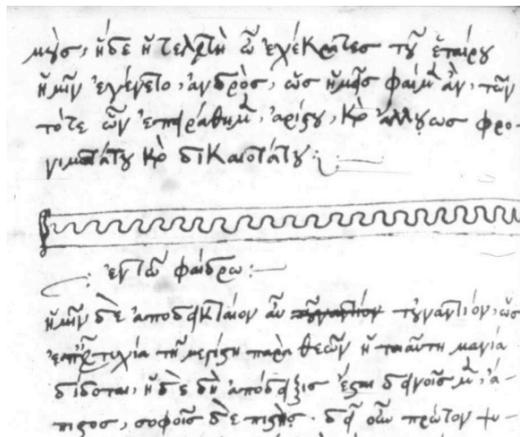


Figure 7. Detail of fol. 108<sup>v</sup>. *Incipit* of the excerpt from the *Phaedrus* (245c)

<sup>185</sup> Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by James Hankins and trans. by Allen, I (2001), p. 297.

<sup>186</sup> Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I, p. 227.

Interestingly, Ficino adds a marginal note at the end of the excerpt from the *Phaedrus*, which Henry transcribed and analysed in his description of the manuscript and to which I will return in the last section of this chapter.

### III. 3 The Latin notes

MS Ambr. F 19 sup., also includes several Latin notes, which roughly fall into two categories: those written in the marginal space, and those in the writing space. Some of them are philological and will be the focus of Chapters V and VI of my thesis. Other *marginalia*, which I will now focus on, are mostly concerned with doxography and provide brief information on the content of the passages they refer to, including indications of *loci similes*.

For instance, the passage from the *Laws* (X, 895a-b) mentioned above (fol. 203<sup>v</sup>), concerning motion, is provided with a note, summarizing the argument in the bottom margin. The *marginale* reads as follows:

Quia anima dominatur, corpus servit. Et quia motus, illud movetur. Illa per se | movens, illud per aliud, ideo anima est prior corpore. Ergo et animae | affectus, ergo vitia et virtutes non sunt a corpore. Ergo | anima libera. Hoc est Platonis argumentum in *Legibus* :~

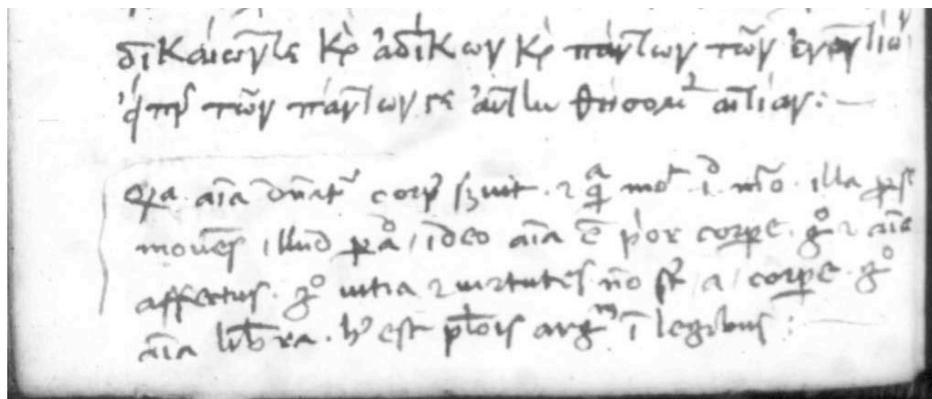


Figure 8. Detail of fol. 203<sup>v</sup>. *Marginale* to Book X of Plato's *Laws* (895a-b)

At fol. 227<sup>r</sup>, a passage from Plato's *Letter VII* (341b-342a) is introduced by the heading 'Plato ad Dionis amicos, Dionysio expulso'. A marginal note, providing a relative chronology of the writing of Plato's Letters, follows the passage:<sup>187</sup>

Plato scribit se 40 annos natum cum primum in Siciliam ivit. | Post discessum scribit primam epistolam. Post Dionysium expulsum istam. Ergo erat senex :~

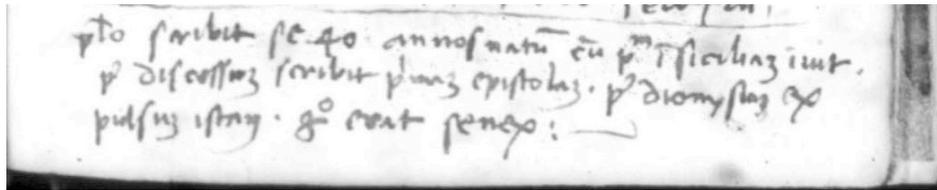


Figure 9. Detail of fol. 227<sup>r</sup>: marginal note to Plato's *Letter VII* (341b-342a)

The Latin notes in the writing space reflect the processes of textual reduction and condensation that I have analysed so far. Furthermore, they include another aspect, i.e. the act of translation. For instance, at fol. 236<sup>r</sup> we find a note introduced by the *titulatio* 'In Protagora', which reads as follows:

In Protagora

Dii quondam soli erant. venit fatale tempus ut animalia mortalia fierent. Genuerunt ea sub terra cum essent perditura. Epimetheus | armavit bruta robore, celeritate, pennis, cornibus et cetera | Hominem dimisit inermem. Prometheus ab officina Palladis |<sup>5</sup> et Vulcani accepta sapientia artificiosa et igni, ea tradidit homini. Per haec omnes artes homo invenit et arma, religionem, aedificia, urbes sed non perseverabant una in urbi|bus. Quia sibi invicem iniuriabantur, carebant enim civili gu|bernatione. Amisit Iuppiter Mercurium qui afferret ad eos |<sup>10</sup> civilitatem e Iovis arce sumptam daretque eam | hominibus omnibus ut eius legis natura omnes essent participes | quae duabus partibus constaret, verecundia et iustitia.

<sup>187</sup> For fifteenth-century ideas about the chronology and authenticity of the Platonic letters, see Paul Botley, 'Greek Epistolography in Fifteenth-Century Italy', in *Greek into Latin from Antiquity until the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by John Glucker and Charles Burnett (London: Warburg Institute Studies and Texts, 2012), pp. 187-205.

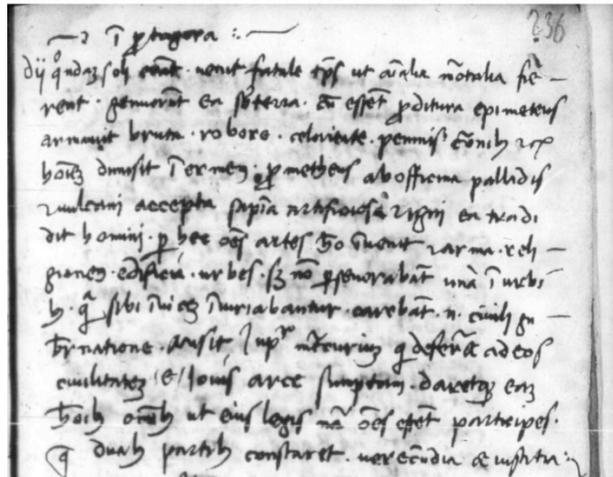


Figure 10. Detail of fol. 236<sup>r</sup>: paraphrase of a passage from Plato's *Protagoras* (320c-322d)

The note deals with the famous myth of Prometheus, concerning human civilization through the introduction of fire, scientific wisdom and progress, which Plato narrated in the *Protagoras* (320c-322d). In order to analyse more closely the note, I will now quote Ficino's translation of the relevant passage, included in his 1484 version of Plato's corpus:

**Olim quandoque dii soli erant, nulla uero mortalium genera. Sed cum tempus generationis fatale venisset, ipsa dii in terris uisceribus ex igni terraque finxerunt, interuenientibus his que igni terreque miscentur.** Cum uero educere illa in lucem uellent, Prometheo Epimetheoque mandarunt, ut competentibus uiribus singula premunirent. Prometheus itaque rogauit Epimetheus distributionis illius officium ipsi concederet, dispertientemque consideraret. Consensit Prometheus: distribuit ille. Quibusdam **robor** absque **celeritate indidit**, quaedam imbecilliora uelocitate donauit. **Firmauit** nonnulla. Inermibus autem aliud quoddam ad salutem machinamentum excogitauit. Que enim exiguo corpore clauserat, partim per aërem **pennis** attolli, partim per terram subrepere iussit. Que uero in molem amplam auxerat, ea ipsa mole ad salutem suam muniuit: similiterque in ceteris exequans dispertit singula, adeo ut nullum genus penitus deperdatur. Postquam ipsa ita instruxit, ut uoraginem mutuam deuitarent, excogitare iam cepit, qua ratione quam facillime sub diuo agere uitam possent. Uestiuit itaque illa confertissimis pilis setisque, pellibusque durissimis, quibus facile tum hiemis, tum estus intemperiem tolerarent: et naturalia illis stramenta hisdem ex rebus cubiliaque parauit: pedibusque soleas addidit, ungulas, setas, callum, pelles itidem quam durissimas. Deinde alimenta aliis alia suppeditauit, quibusdam ex terra herbas, nonnullis ex arboribus poma baccasque, radices aliis. Nec defuerunt, quibus daret ex alterna uoragie uictum. Ceterum uoracibus animalibus genus quodammodo sterile: aliis autem fecundum dedit, ut hoc modo genus conseruaretur. Cum uero non esset admodum sapiens Epimetheus, dotes omnes inscius effudit in **bruta**, neque aduertit nihil ex tanta sibi elargitione superfore, quo genus nostrum deinde donaret. Restitit ergo hominum genus immune: unde quo se uerteret ambigebat, Dubitanti Prometheus adstitit partitionis illius considerator, uiditque cetera animalia suis queque fulcita muneribus bonisque referta. **Hominem autem nudum, inermem, calceorum, stramentorumque indigum.** Iam uero iminebat **fatalis ipse dies,**

qui iu lucem terra exire cogeat. Cumque aliam salutis humanae uiam consultans Prometheus non inueniret, **surripuit Uulcani Mineruseque artificiosam cum igne pariter sapientiam**. neque enim fieri poterat, ut eam **sine igne** nancisceretur quis, uel etiam uteretur. **Eam itaque sic hominum generi Prometheus est largitus** : atque ita sapientiam que uictum suppeditat consecuti sumus. **Deerat adhuc ciuilibus hominibus sapientia**. Erat illa quidem apud Iouem, cuius **arcem** ascendere Prometheo nondum licebat. horribiles enim Iouis ipsius custodes circumstantes arcem Prometheum deterrebant. Ceterum communem **Uulcani Minerueque officinam**, in qua **artes** excolebantur, clam ingressus furatus est igneam Uulcani artem, aliamque Minerue, atque **homini tradidit**: qua uiuendi facultas obtigit. Prometheus autem, ut fertur, propter Epimetheum furti poenas dedit. Quoniam uero solus ex omnibus animantibus homo diuine sortis particeps effectus est, principio solus ob hanc cognationem deos esse putauit, **arasque illis statuasque dicauit**. Deinde uocem in uerba articulatim arte distinxit, **edes construxit, uestes calceosque confecit**, stramenta elaborauit, ex terra alimenta collegit. **Ita homines ab initio constituti sparsim uagabantur habitabantque: nam urbes nondum construxerant**. Ergo a feris, cum imbecilliores essent, passim laniabantur. Artium enim facultas ad uictum comparandum sufficiens erat, ad pugnam uero contra bestias truculentas minime. **Ciuilibus** namque **peritie**., cuius pars quedam est res militaris, expertes erant. Ut igitur se aduersus eam pestem munirent, structis **urbibus congregati sunt**. **Congregati autem inuicem iniuriabantur**, quippe **qui ciuili arte carerent**. Quare **dispersi** iterum a feris lacerabantur. Uerum **Iupiter**, humane saluti consulens, **Mercurium misit, pudorem et iustitiam hominibus asserentem**, ut **duo hec ciuitates ornarent deuincirentque**, et mutua beneuolentia ciues conciliarent. Interrogauit ergo **Mercurius**, qua conditione **pudorem et iustitiam hominibus traderet**. Utrum ita hac, ut **artes**, distribui debent, inquit Mercurius. Ille siquidem ita distribute sunt, ut unus in arte medicine peritus pro rudibus multis sufficiat, ceteraque similiter, numquid ita pudorem et iustitiam hominibus dabo? an omnibus inseram? Omnibus, respondit Iupiter: omnes siquidem horum participes esse debent. neque enim ciuitates ulle constarent, si horum pauci, ut artium aliarum, participes essent. Legem preeterea meo nomine condas, qua quisquis omnino iustitie.

Comparison shows that the note in the Ambrosianus is not a proper translation, but a brief paraphrase, summarizing the main concepts expounded by Plato in the myth. The emphasized text in the 1484 translation demonstrates that, when translating the Greek text, Ficino selected only a set of key concepts forming the mythical tale, such as the human condition without fire, progress and living within urban communities ruled by laws and justice. As a result, the Florentine scholar produced an epitomized version of the passage, which is useful for the writing of the *Platonic Theology*. The passage is quoted and echoed in *Plat. Theol.* XIV, 9:

Homo, ut aiunt, est animal naturaliter sociabile, eget enim necessario multis, quae singuli comparare non possunt, cuncti uero in unum congregati mutua sibi vicissim opera subministrant. Praeterea quod sociabile sit, indicat sermo quasi quidam alterius ad alterum humanae mentis interpres, quem natura homini non dedisset, nisi fuisset in coetu victurus. **Quamobrem naturalis est homini congregatione uerum si absque lege concurrant, paulo post mutuis disgregabuntur iniuriis, disgregati uero tum**

**multorum defectu peribunt, tum velut inermes laniabuntur a feris. Ut ergo vivant, et bene vivant, congregari eos necesse est.** Sed rursus ut in coetu permaneant, omnino opus est lege —ea inquam lege, cuius tanta sit auctoritas, ut nemo vel violentia vel dolo praevaricari se posse aut debere confidant. Talis autem esse non potest, nisi legislator sit existimeturque divinus. Denique ut talis sit habeaturque, oportet eum manifestis quibusdam miraculis ad homines divina providentia mitti. Quem sane prophetam humani generis divinum ducem Plato et Avicenna cognominant. Huc tendit Platonicum illud in libro De regno: ‘Quemadmodum bestiae nequeunt a bestia feliciter sine homine duci, ita neque homines ab homine sine deo’. **Rursus in Protogora inquit non potuisse homines simul vivere absque lege, neque legem ad hoc sufficientem accipere a Prometheo, id est creata quadam providentia potuisse, sed Iovem ipsum omnium creatorem ad homines una cum lege misisse Mercurium, id est prophetam aliquem et divinae voluntatis interpretem et legis tam divinae quam humanae latorem.**<sup>188</sup>

### III. 4 The Proclean section

MS Ambr. F 19 sup. also includes a long section composed of excerpts that Ficino took from Proclus’s *Platonic Theology* and *Elements of Theology* (fols 212<sup>r</sup>-220<sup>v</sup>), providing further insight into Ficino’s techniques and criteria for collecting texts. Regarding Ficino and his relationship with Proclus, scholarship has demonstrated the influence of the Proclean metaphysical system on Ficino’s doctrine of the hierarchical structure of the cosmos.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, Ficino

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<sup>188</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by Hankins and trans. by Allen, IV (2004), 296-97: ‘Man they say is a naturally sociable animal, for he necessarily lacks many things, which individuals cannot acquire but which all men gathered into a community can supply for each individual in turn by working together. Speech too shows that man is sociable in that it is the interpreter so to speak of the human mind of one person to another; and nature would not have given it to man unless he were going to live in a community. So assembling together is natural for man. But if men assembled in the absence of law, they would soon be torn asunder by mutual injustices; as such, they would perish from the lack of many things, and in their helplessness be devoured by wild beasts. So in order to live and to prosper, they must come together. But in order to stay together in turn, they absolutely must have law, a law whose authority is such that no man is confident that he has the power or the right to violate it by violence or deceit. But the law cannot be such unless the lawgiver is, and is thought to be, divine. But to be and to be deemed divine, he must be sent to men by divine providence accompanied by certain manifest miracles. Plato and Avicenna call such a prophet the divine leader of mankind. The following quotation from Plato’s book on the state points in this direction: “Just as beasts cannot be led successfully by a beast without a man, so neither can men be led by a man without God”. In the *Protagoras* in turn he says that men cannot live together without law; that they had been unable to receive enough law to do this from Prometheus, from the providence, in other words, that is particular and created; and that Jove himself, the creator of all, had sent Mercury down to men with the law—had dispatched, that is, a prophet, an interpreter of the divine will and a giver of both divine and human law’.

<sup>189</sup> For the most recent account and the relevant bibliography, see Michael J. B. Allen, ‘Marsilio Ficino’, in *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Stephen Gersh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 353-79. See also Collins, *The Secular is Sacred*, pp. 20-22.

translated several Proclean works into Latin.<sup>190</sup> Evidence shows that Ficino knew Proclus pretty well and read his work in Greek early on. As far as *The Elements of Theology* are concerned, the Florentine scholar had at his disposal MS Ricc. 70, containing both Proclus's *Elements of Physics* and *Theology*.<sup>191</sup>

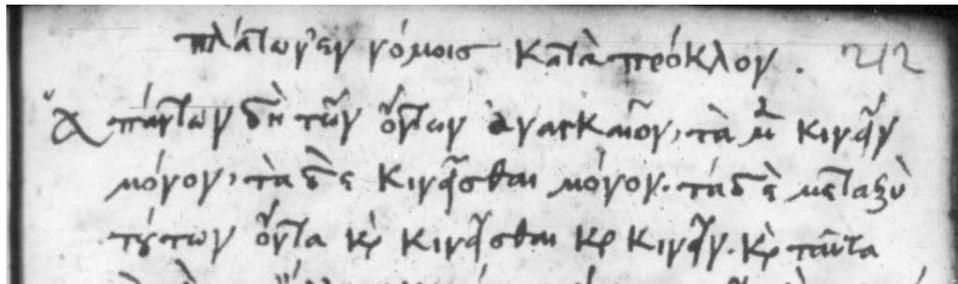


Figure 11. Detail of fol. 212<sup>r</sup>: *incipit* of the Proclean section

MS Ambr. F 19 sup. provides further evidence of Ficino's familiarity with Proclus's text. I will therefore focus on the Proclean section in more detail, in order to understand Ficino's principles of selection. The following section provides my reconstruction (left column) and a summary of the content (right column):

Table 3

Proclean section in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. (fols 212 <sup>r</sup> -220 <sup>v</sup> )	
<i>Folium</i>	Content <sup>192</sup>
fols 212r - 214v l. 6	<b>Proclus's <i>Platonic Theology</i> (1. 60. 12 - 1. 63. 15)</b>  The immortality of the soul: argument of the motion
fols 214 <sup>v</sup> l. 6-	<b>Proclus's <i>Elements of Theology</i></b>

<sup>190</sup> I will focus more extensively on this aspect of Ficino's activity and provide the relevant bibliography in the next chapter.

<sup>191</sup> The notes that Ficino wrote in MS Ricc. 70 are published in H. D. Saffrey, 'Notes platoniciennes de Marsile Ficin dans un manuscrit de Proclus (Cod. Riccardianus 70)' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 21 (1959), 161-84.

<sup>192</sup> I am quoting the *incipit* of each proposition. The translation is from Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) (repr. 1977).

215 <sup>v</sup> l. 7	<b>Proposition 20.</b> Beyond all bodies is the soul's essence; beyond all souls, the intellectual principle and beyond all intellectual substancys, the One
fols 215 <sup>v</sup> l. 8-216 <sup>r</sup> l. 4	<b>15.</b> All that is capable of reverting upon itself is incorporeal
fol. 216 <sup>r</sup> l. 5	<b>16.</b> All that is capable of reverting upon itself has an existence separable from all body.
fol. 216 <sup>v</sup>	<b>17.</b> Everything originally self-moving is capable of reversion
fol. 217 <sup>r</sup> ll.1-9	<b>82.</b> Every incorporeal, if it be capable of reverting upon itself, when participated by other things is participated without loss of separateness
fol. 217 <sup>r</sup> l. 10	<b>83.</b> All that is capable of self-knowledge is capable of every form of self-reversion.
fol. 217 <sup>v</sup> ll. 1-10	<b>43.</b> All that is capable of reversion upon itself is self-constituted
fols 217 <sup>v</sup> l. 11-218 l. 4	<b>44.</b> All that is capable in its activity of reversion upon itself is also reverted upon itself in respect of its existence
fol. 218 <sup>r</sup> ll. 5-15	<b>45.</b> All that is self-constituted is without temporal origin
fols 218 <sup>r</sup> l. 16-218 <sup>v</sup> l. 7	<b>46.</b> All that is self-constituted is imperishable
fol. 218 <sup>v</sup> l. 8	<b>47.</b> All that is self-constituted is without parts and simple
fol. 219 <sup>r</sup> ll. 1-7	<b>48.</b> All that is not perpetual either is composite or has its subsistence in another
fol. 219 <sup>r</sup> ll. 8-13	<b>49.</b> All that is self-constituted is perpetual
fols 219 <sup>r</sup> l. 14-219 <sup>v</sup> l. 10	<b>41.</b> All that has its existence in another is produced entirely from another; but all that exists in itself is self-constituted
fols 219 <sup>v</sup> l. 11-220 <sup>r</sup> l. 5	<b>186.</b> Every soul is an incorporeal substance and separable from body
fol. 220 <sup>r</sup> ll. 6-15	<b>187.</b> Every soul is indestructible and imperishable
fol. 220 <sup>r</sup> l. 16- fol. 220 <sup>v</sup>	<b>188.</b> Every soul is at once a principle of life and a living thing
fol. 221 <sup>r</sup> ll. 1-15	<b>189.</b> Every soul is self-animated (or has life in its own right)
fols 221 <sup>r</sup> l. 16-222 <sup>r</sup> l. 3	<b>190.</b> Every soul is intermediate between the indivisible principles and those which are divided in association with bodies
fol. 222 <sup>r</sup> ll. 4-22	<b>191.</b> Every participated soul has an eternal existence but a temporal activity

fol. 222 <sup>v</sup> ll. 1-13	<b>193.</b> Every soul takes its proximate origin from an intelligence
fol. 222 <sup>v</sup> ll. 14-22	<b>194.</b> Every soul possesses all the forms which intelligence possesses primitively
fol. 223 <sup>r</sup> l. 1-17	<b>195.</b> Every soul is all things, the things of sense after the manner of an exemplar and the intelligible things after the manner of an image
fols 223r l. 18-223v l. 10	<b>196.</b> Every participated soul makes use of a first body which is perpetual and has a constitution without temporal origin and exempt from decay
fols 223v l. 11-224r l. 4	<b>198.</b> All that participates time but has perpetuity of movement is measured by periods
fol. 224r ll. 5-16	<b>199.</b> Every infra-mundane soul has in its proper life periods and cyclic reinstatements
fols 224r l. 17-224v l. 15	<b>206.</b> Every particular soul can descend into temporal process and ascend from process to being an infinite number of times
fols 224v l. 16-225r l. 6	<b>207.</b> The vehicle of every particular soul has been created by an unmoved cause
fol. 225v ll. 7-20	<b>208.</b> The vehicle of every particular soul is immaterial, indiscerptible in respect of its existence, and impassible
fols 225v-226r l. 3	<b>209.</b> The vehicle of every particular soul descends by the addition of vestures increasingly material; and ascends in company with the soul through divestment of all that is material and recovery of its proper form, after the analogy of the soul which makes use of it: for the soul descends by the acquisition of irrational principles of life; and ascends by putting off all those faculties tending to temporal process with which it was invested in its descent, and becoming clean and bare of all such faculties as serve the uses of the process
fol. 226r ll. 4-15	<b>210.</b> Every congenital psychic vehicle keeps the same shape and size perpetually, but is seen as greater or smaller and in varying shapes by reason of the addition or removal of other bodies.
fols 226r l. 16-226v	<b>80.</b> The proper nature of all bodies is to be acted upon, and of all incorporeals to be agents, the former being in themselves inactive and the latter impassible; but through association with the body the incorporeal too is acted upon, even as through partnership with incorporeals bodies too can act

The table above shows how Ficino actually selected and transcribed the material. The first excerpt consists of a passage from the *Platonic Theology*, containing a reference to soul's motion. As highlighted in the course of my

analysis, Ficino transcribed other texts containing the same argument in his notebook: a passage from the *Phaedrus* (245c) and another from the *Laws* (X, 895a-b). These passages are also quoted in Ficino's *Platonic Theology* (III, 1). The thematic link between this passage and Plato's argument on the immortality of the soul is signalled by the *titulatio* introducing the excerpt: *πλάτων ἐν νόμοις κατὰ πρόκλον* (Plato in the *Laws* according to Proclus).

Proclus's *Elements of Theology* is a list of propositions thematically arranged, which provide a summary of Proclus's entire metaphysics. Having a fixed structure, the text can be easily excerpted by anyone wishing to select a number of given propositions and combine them according to his own purposes and interests. This is what Ficino does: rather than transcribing the theorems in the order in which they occur in Proclus's work, he assembles them with the aim of producing an original synthesis. As a result, he makes a patchwork of Proclean arguments concerning the theme of the soul: the metaphysics of self-constituted beings capable of reverting upon themselves (propositions 20, 15-17, 82-83, 47-49, 41); the soul as an incorporeal, separate, and eternal substance, capable of self-motion (prop. 186-199); the descending and ascending movement of the soul and the theme of the *vehiculum animae* (prop. 206-210);<sup>193</sup> the distinction between corporeals as beings that are acted upon and incorporeals as agents (prop. 80).

This selection reflects Ficino's treatment of Proclus's philosophy, particularly in a view to developing the arguments for the immortality of the soul in his *Platonic Theology*. My analysis shows that the Florentine scholar finds in

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<sup>193</sup> Regarding the theme of the *vehiculum animae* (i.e. a physical envelope for the soul) in Ficino and the influence of Proclus's thought on Ficino's elaboration of this doctrine, see Stéphane Toussaint, 'Zoroaster and the Flying Egg: Psellos, Gerson and Ficino', in *Laus Platonicæ Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, ed. by Stephen Clucas and Valerie Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 105-115 (pp. 108-109).

the Platonic tradition the arguments for the justification for the immortality of the soul. As mentioned above, Ficino's doctrine of the hierarchical structure of the universe, including five levels of unity and efficacious power, heavily relies on Proclus. Within this framework, 'each level in the hierarchy of the universe is related to its superior as moved to mover'.<sup>194</sup>

The patchwork of Proclean arguments contained in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. is the result of 'Ficino's technique of collecting documents and sources as preparatory materials before producing original compositions'.<sup>195</sup> Such an approach fits with the methodology employed by Ficino in the writing of his *Platonic Theology*. In her study on Ficino's commentary on the *Timaeus*, Paola Megna described this methodology and pointed out that in the *Platonic Theology*, the Florentine scholar tends to mix and summarize in the same passage doctrines and concepts taken from different parts of Proclus's works:

Ficino, come è sua abitudine, traduce, riassume, accenna, sempre con grande libertà e spesso utilizzando contestualmente passi di altri neoplatonici o inserendo riflessioni personali, che alterano in modo anche consistente il testo originario; per non dire poi, la tendenza a rifondare in uno stesso brano passi di Proclo prelevati da sezioni varie dell'opera del filosofo, un fatto che, come è facile capire, rende spesso arduo ai non specialisti del testo procliano l'individuazione dei capitoli presenti in un dato punto a Ficino.<sup>196</sup>

In MS Borg. gr. 22, Ficino produces another Proclean section, which I shall analyse in the next chapter. This text, consisting of a Latin paraphrase of passages from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, includes a selection of theorems that is similar to the initial part of the patchwork from the Ambrosianus and therefore provides further information on Ficino's methodology. In sum, this

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<sup>194</sup> Collins, *The Secular is Sacred*, p. 21.

<sup>195</sup> Valerio Sanzotta, 'Some Unpublished Notes by Marsilio Ficino on Plato's *Parmenides* in MS Laur. 89 Sup. 71', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 77 (2014), 211-24 (p. 223).

<sup>196</sup> See Paola Megna, 'Marsilio Ficino e il commento al *Timeo* di Proclo', *Studi medievali e umanistici* 1 (2003), 93-135 (pp. 103).

technique offers evidence that Ficino 'is never a compiler of texts, but an intelligent reader [...]. He rewrites the texts not only stylistically, but shortens or develops the argument, and focuses on what he considers to be essential'.<sup>197</sup>

### III. 5 The Plotinian part and Ficino's principles of selection

At fols 146r-179v l. 8, Ficino produces a long section, including four passages from Plotinus, such as *Enn.* IV, 1, 1 and IV, 1, 2 (on the essence of the soul); IV 7 (on the immortality of the soul); IV 8 (on the descent of the soul into the bodies).

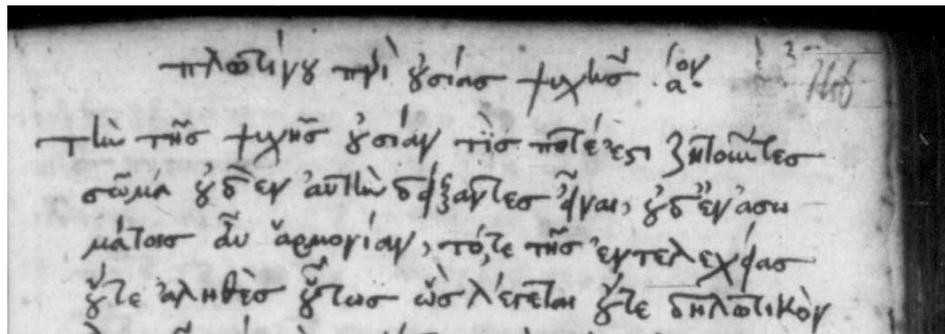


Figure 12. Detail of fol. 146<sup>r</sup>: *incipit* of the Plotinian section

In the previous chapter, I have discussed in detail the relevance of the influence of Plotinus on Ficino's thought. This influence is quite strong in Ficino's *Platonic Theology*, which includes many quotations from the *Enneads*, either direct or indirect.

In his description of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Paul Henry establishes a tight connection between the *excerptum* from Plato's *Phaedrus* (245c) at fol. 109<sup>v</sup>, and the Plotinian section. As a result, he provides an elaborate interpretation,

<sup>197</sup> Carlos Steel, 'Ficino and Proclus: Arguments for the Platonic Doctrine of the Ideas', in *The Rebirth of Platonic Theology*, ed. by James Hankins and Fabrizio Meroi (Florence: Olschki, 2013), pp. 63-118 (p. 93).

concerning the principles of arrangements of the selected texts in the Milan manuscript. Let us focus on this material in more detail.

At the end of the excerpt at fol. 109<sup>v</sup>, Ficino writes a brief Latin note. This is Henry's transcription of the *marginale*:

[Quare reliquum in...] eadem argumentatio est in X de Legibus quam **iste operculus colliget** post Plotini verbum de immortalitate.<sup>198</sup>

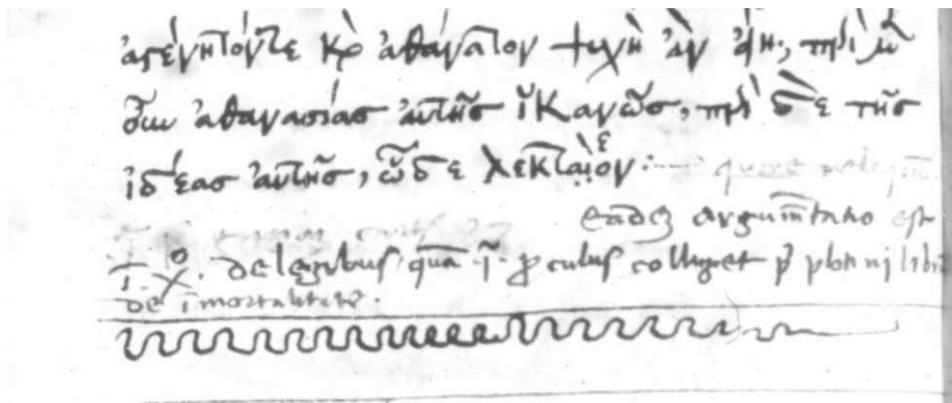


Figure 13. Detail of f. 109<sup>v</sup>: Ficino's *marginale* at the end of *Phaedr.* 245c

As the text above shows, Henry transcribes the form *operculus* and believes it to be a synonym for 'book'. According to his interpretation, *iste operculus* refers to the manuscript, which shall contain (*colliget*) an excerpt from Book X of the *Laws* in a section situated after Plotinus's doctrine of the immortality of the soul (*post Plotini verbum de immortalitate*). Henry mentions a passage from Plato's *Laws* (fol. 209<sup>r</sup>), which is after the Plotinian section (fols 146<sup>r</sup>-179<sup>v</sup> l. 8) of MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and contains the same argument (*eadem argumentatio*) as the one that we read in the excerpt from the *Phaedrus* at fol. 109<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>198</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, p. 38.

According to Henry, this note provides evidence of Ficino's methodology and of the way the sylloge was conceived and structured. Since in the note there is reference to Plotinus, Henry formulated the hypothesis that in the years 1468-83, whilst preparing his translation of Plato's *opera omnia*, Ficino produced an anthology, in order to explain more thoroughly Plato's doctrines. The Florentine scholar transcribed four treatises of Plotinus's *Enneads* in the anthology according to a sequence corresponding to a precise exegetical purpose: first of all, *Enn.* IV 7, since Plotinus draws on doctrines expounded in Plato's *Phaedo*; secondly, IV 2, as it consists of Plotinus's interpretation of the psychogony which Plato illustrates in his *Timaeus*; furthermore, IV 1, since it is a sort of appendix of this interpretation; lastly, IV 8, since it represents an effort at reconciling the contradictions existing between the *Phaedo*, (fols 17r-108v), and the *Timaeus* (fols 1<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>v</sup> l. 19).<sup>199</sup> Thus the choice of the Plotinian excerpts corresponds to a dialectical structure, with *Enn.* IV 7 as thesis, *Enn.* IV 2-IV 1 as antithesis and *Enn.* IV 8 as synthesis.

In this context, Henry argues that the note at fol. 109<sup>r</sup> demonstrates 'que dès le début Ficin avait l'intention de compléter Platon par Plotin' and that the Florentine scholar tried to solve the doctrinal contradictions existing between the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* by using Plotinus' treatises.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, p. 41: 'Fam. a dû être écrit en 1468 et 1483, c'est-à-dire à l'époque où Ficin préparait sa traduction de Platon. Le contenu des extraits, presque tous tirés de Platon, confirme cette date. Quoi du plus naturel qu'au moment où il traduisait cet auteur, il s'en soit fait un florilège, dans lequel il aurait recueilli des textes propres à éclairer la doctrine des dialogues. Tel était bien le cas des traités de Plotin ici recopiés: dans IV, 7 Plotin reprend le thème du *Phédon*, mais combien plus sèchement IV, 2 qui y est étroitement associé, n'est qu'une exégèse de la psychogonie du *Timée* (34c-35a), IV 1 en forme comme un appendice, et IV 8 s'efforce de concilier, tan bien que mal, les textes parfois contradictoires du *Phédon* et du *Timée*. La note du folio 109<sup>v</sup>, écrite toute de suite après la citation du *Phédon*, montre que dès le début Ficin avait l'intention de compléter Platon par Plotin'.

<sup>200</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, p. 41.

Henry's interpretation had a strong impact on subsequent descriptions of the Ambrosianus: for instance, when mentioning MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Saffrey states that 'it contains excerpts from Plato (*Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*, etc.), and four extracts from Plotinus, which he copied in his own hand. Each of the Plotinus extracts is in fact an exegesis of one of the Plato extracts'. In the introduction to his edition of Ficino's *De amore*, Pierre Laurens provides a similar description of the manuscript, which clearly relies on Henry and Saffrey.<sup>201</sup>

However, Henry's argument on the chronology and function of the notebook needs to be reconsidered in the light of a more careful analysis. Henry states that the notebook was produced in the years 1468-83, while Ficino was translating Plato's *opera omnia*. As I have mentioned above, and will clarify more extensively in Chapter V, the manuscript in fact looks as if it is the result of two different chronological stages, likely corresponding to two distinct purposes: first, carrying out a philological study of the *Phaedo*; secondly, collecting preliminary materials for the writing of the *Platonic Theology*.

More importantly, Henry bases his interpretation on an erroneous reading of the note. This is my proposed transcription:

Eadem argumentatio est in X (i.e. decimo) de legibus quam **infra Proculus** colliget post Plotini **librum** de immortalitate

The same argument is in Book X of the *Laws*, which [argument] Proclus will later collect after Plotinus's book on immortality.

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<sup>201</sup> Marsile Ficino, *Commentaire*, ed. by Laurens, p. LXXVIII: 'Le P. Henry [...] attire par ailleurs l'attention sur l'Ambrosianus cod. F 19 sup. contenant des extraits de Platon (*Phédon*, *Timée*, *Phédre*, etc.) et des commentaires de Plotin à ces extraits, qui semble avoir été le livre de chevet familier de Ficino: signe qu'il travaillait sur les *Ennéades* au moment où traduisait Platon'.

As the transcription shows, rather than writing *iste operculus colliget*, Ficino wrote *infra Proculus colliget*.<sup>202</sup> We know that Proclus draws on the argument of Plato's *Laws* on the immortality of the soul in his *Platonic Theology* (1.60.12-1.62.15): thus this is likely the meaning of the expression *Proculus colliget*. Furthermore, Ficino did not write *Plotini verbum de immortalitate* but *Plotini librum de immortalitate*. Therefore, in contrast with Henry's interpretation, the expression refers merely to *Enn.* IV 7, i.e. Plotinus's treatise specifically focusing on the immortality of the soul.

If we consider the contents of the anthology, we notice that Ficino transcribed in his notebook all the passages that he quoted in the note at fol. 109<sup>v</sup>. The following table provides a summary of the texts mentioned in the note (columns two and three) and their position in the manuscript (column four):

**Table 4**

**Texts mentioned in the note at fol. 109<sup>v</sup>**

<b>Ficino's note</b>	<b>Corresponding passage</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Position in the MS</b>
Eadem argumentatio	<i>Phaedr.</i> 245b-246a	Demonstration of the immortality of the soul (argument of the motion)	fols 108 <sup>r</sup> -109 <sup>v</sup>
est in X de Legibus	<i>Leg.</i> X 895e-896d	Demonstration of the immortality of the soul (argument of the motion)	fol. 203 <sup>v</sup>
quam infra Proculus colliget	<i>Theol. Plat.</i> 1.60.12-1.63.15	In the excerpt there is mention of the argument	fols 212 <sup>r</sup> -214 <sup>v</sup> l. 6

<sup>202</sup> The form *operculus* is unattested. In scholarly Latin, only the form *opercula* is attested, which is used by Filelfo to refer to the binding of the book. See Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1973), p. 65.

post librum immortalitate	Plotini de	<i>Enn.</i> IV 7	expounded in <i>Leg.</i> X 895e-896d	Treatise on the immortality of the soul	fols 146 <sup>r</sup> -179 <sup>v</sup>
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Nevertheless, my transcription and analysis show that there is no connection between the note at fol. 109<sup>v</sup> and the selected texts forming the anthology. First of all, the note does not provide any information on their purpose and their arrangement in the notebook. Secondly, the *marginale* is neither a paratext nor a heading, aimed at describing, linking and retrieving more easily passages contained in the manuscript, but rather a proper scholarly note.

As my translation shows, the forms *infra colliget* and *post*, refer to a chronological sequence: according to the note, Plato expounded an argument, which Plotinus in turn adopted in the *Enneads* and then, at a later stage, Proclus collected in his works. Thus, according to a process that is quite common in doxography, the aim of the *marginale* is to connect mutually corresponding passages of the philosophical tradition. In other words, when writing this note, Ficino is just linking and making reference to passages drawing on the same argument and expounded by different philosophers, such as Plato Plotinus and Proclus, in different ages. Therefore, he stresses the continuity existing among these sources.

In sum, when combining different passages from the *Enneads* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Ficino likely produces a summary of Plotinus's thought, rather than sorting out contradictions within Plato's *verbum*. Furthermore, the presence of Proclus in the compilation means that Plotinus is not the only Platonist whom

Ficino drew upon, as Henry suggested, but that Proclus too played an important role in Ficino's thought. As scholarship has pointed out, Ficino 'rispetto ai nostri approcci esegetici godeva del vantaggio di credere che nel *corpus* degli scritti di Platone si trovasse consegnato un messaggio religioso e filosofico profondamente unitario, e perciò anche unitariamente interpretabile e chiaramente presentabile in sede di esposizione e di commento'.<sup>203</sup> In other words, Ficino firmly believed that every Neoplatonist was expressing the same truth – that of Plato – in different fashions. As Ficino states in the preface to his translation of Plotinus's *Enneads*, he firmly believes that Plato is speaking through the mouth of Plotinus, and so on for all the successors of Plotinus.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, this approach also sheds light on the way the Florentine scholar collected his sources in his notebook. The excerptor was interested in creating a textual repertoire by using what Plato and the Neoplatonists stated on a particular topic: ancient *auctoritates* and the theme of the soul represent Ficino's main principles of selection and arrangement.

Although it presents several inaccuracies, Henry's interpretation raises key questions concerning Ficino's understanding of philosophy in general, and more specifically, his criteria for selecting texts in his notebook. As far as the *sectio recentior* is concerned, some aspects of Ficino's principles of selection are interesting. Indeed, the flyleaves at the beginning of the notebook include texts focussing on the divinity and its attributes, whilst the first quire includes a summary of the cosmogony and psychogony described in the *Timaeus* and

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<sup>203</sup> Ernesto Berti, 'Osservazioni filologiche alla versione del Filebo di Marsilio Ficino', in *Il Filebo di Platone e la sua fortuna. Atti del Convegno di Napoli (4-6 novembre 1993)*, ed. by Paolo Cosenza (Naples: D'Auria, 1996), pp. 93-167 (p. 95).

<sup>204</sup> For an exhaustive account, see Förstel, 'Marsilio Ficino e il Parigino greco 1816', pp. 65-67.

excerpts from other dialogues concerning the themes of the cosmos and the soul. The set of texts, starting with the divinity, and then moving to the creation up to the more specific topic of the soul look like a sort of preliminary introduction to the *Phaedo*, which mainly focusses on the theme of the soul and is copied in the following part of the manuscript.

We know that in the anthological tradition, when structuring their collections, compilers produced a similar thematic progression. This structural theme was based on a hierarchical conception of reality. For instance, this scheme informs the most important anthology of *excerpta* from Late Antiquity, Johannes Stobaeus's *Anthologion*.<sup>205</sup>

However, most of the anthologies presenting such features consist of a set of texts arranged within a unitary exegetical and didactic structure. By contrast, Ficino's anthology has a completely different nature and purpose: as I have pointed out above, the compilation appears to be a work in progress, used as a textual basis for the composition of a new work.

### III. 6 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned what the anonymous scribe stated about Ficino's notebook. In his description, the scribe refers to the traditional image of Ficino as *sacerdos* of the Platonic philosophy, but at the same

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<sup>205</sup> We know that Ficino was unlikely to read Stobaeus before the 1490s: see Sebastiano Gentile, 'Pico e la biblioteca medicea privata' in *Pico, Poliziano e l'umanesimo di fine Quattrocento*, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 4 novembre-31 dicembre 1994, Catalogo a cura di Paolo Viti (Florence: Olschki, 1994), pp. 90-92. For a detailed account of the *Anthologion*, see R. M. Piccione, 'Le raccolte di Stobaeo e Orione. Fonti, modelli, architetture', in *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico*, I, pp. 241-261; Ead., 'Materiali, scelte tematiche e criteri di ordinamento nell'*Anthologion* di Giovanni Stobaeo', in *Condensed texts-condensing texts*, pp. 619-47.

time makes surprisingly modern observations. When stating that Ficino transcribed the texts himself, without the help of professional scribes, the anonymous scribe underlines the persistence of traditional transcription practices in spite of the advent of printing. In other words, he refers to the practice that I am exploring in my study, that of the scholarly transcription of ancient texts, which gave rise to the phenomenon of humanist miscellanies.

Undoubtedly, the comparison that the scribe made between Ficino and Demosthenes is a rhetorical device, stressing the importance of the task performed by the Florentine scholar, but at the same time it firmly establishes a link between ancient and Renaissance practices. The terminology employed by the anonymous, such as *excerpere, (Platonici) loci, selecta in codicem reportare*, refer to the process of selecting, excerpting, and storing texts that early modern scholars inherited from Antiquity.

In his insert, the anonymous scribe states that ‘Ficino amassed for us this treasure of Platonic opulence’ (*thesaurum hunc nobis Platonicae opulentiae conrogaverit*). This statement highlights a key principle informing the process of *selecta colligere*: a preservative impulse leads the compiler to store the knowledge at his disposal. Additionally, the anonymous scribe mentions another crucial principle. Ficino stored the selected text in his notebook with a practical aim: ‘So that whenever he might want to use them, he would not have to run to shelves or to resort to indexes’ (*ut quotiescumque iis uti vellet non currendae arculae aut implorandi indices essent*) and that, just by jogging his memory a little, he would be able to relate on the spot all the things he had stored in his memory.

As I have already pointed out, these statements reflect a quite common theme among Early Modern scholars, the perception of an overabundance of books: the *multitudo librorum*. When exploring the reading strategies that the scholars adopted for coping with information overload, Blair states that ‘The multitude of books was a subject of wonder and anxiety for authors who reflected on the scholarly condition in the sixteenth through the eighteenth century’. ‘The multitude of books, the shortness of time and the slipperiness of memory’ stimulated the production of *florilegia* and compilations.<sup>206</sup>

The analysis of Ficino’s notebooks confirms what the anonymous scribe’s description highlights quite effectively. Through a process of selection and storing, Ficino produces his own ‘virtual library’, which is the result of his own interests and scholarly purposes, by using strategies of textual abridgment.<sup>207</sup>

When addressing these processes, recent scholarship also focussed on the connection between ‘il libro intellettuale, vale a dire ciascun *corpus* di unità testuali, riunite e trasmesse insieme, e il libro fisico, cioè l’oggetto-contenitore, il codice che del corpus è vettore’.<sup>208</sup> In the light of such studies, my analysis has focussed on both the materiality and the textuality of Ficino’s notebook, demonstrating that the limited availability of writing space in the *sectio recentior* caused the Florentine scholar to make a more extensive use of all the anthologization techniques that he has at his disposal.

The study of Ficino’s anthologization techniques also shows the striking difference between Ficino’s self-representation in the prefaces to his Letters and

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<sup>206</sup> Ann Blair, ‘Reading Strategies’, p. 12.

<sup>207</sup> The term ‘virtual library’ is employed for defining Stobaeus’s *Anthologion* and Photius’s *Bibliotheca* in *Condensing Text, Condensed Texts*.

<sup>208</sup> Piccione, ‘Forme di trasmissione’, pp. 404-405.

translations and his actual reading practices. We know that in the *Phaedrus* (274 c-276 a) and in *Letter VII* (341c-342a), Plato condemns the use of writing in philosophy. If one stores away thoughts in written works, one risks forgetting the importance of philosophy as a way of life. What matters most is the everyday relationship between master and disciple. Plato himself wrote down his ideas, but his writings are dialogues, i.e. idealized representations of this philosophical and oral practice (the dialectic process). In contrast, Ficino, who subscribes to Plato's ideal and is often portrayed as such, does not hesitate to carve out of the text of Plato what interests him and reduce the 'sacred' dialogues to a list of sayings he can reuse whenever he wishes to.<sup>209</sup>

As mentioned above, the collection provides evidence that Ficino is ready to 'corrupt' the text of Plato for the purpose of quick quoting. Nevertheless, my study also shows that Ficino is not just a passive reader, but operates according to a creative impulse, which is another key principle informing the phenomenon of scholarly miscellanies. A close textual analysis demonstrates that the collection contains passages and doctrines that played a key role in the writing of Ficino's major work, the *Platonic Theology*, 'autentico bacino collettore delle sue letture neoplatoniche'.<sup>210</sup> In other words, the collection is the result of a creative –rather than mechanical– process of selective reading, which reflects the author's intellectual maturation as well as his treatment of ancient philosophical sources.

The anonymous hand describes Ficino's manuscript as a *silva platoniorum locorum*. This terminology refers to both the practices of producing anthologies and commonplace-books. Additionally, he uses the term *spicilegium*,

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<sup>209</sup> See Michael J. B. Allen, 'Parole sepolte: Marsilio Ficino and Theut', in *Marsilio Ficino. Fonti, testi, fortuna*, pp. 241-53.

<sup>210</sup> Paola Megna, 'Marsilio Ficino e il commento al *Timeo*', p. 103.

which is synonymous with *florilegium*. In order to refer to the practice of *selecta colligere*, the anonymous recalls the image of the crop and the gleanings rather than use the more common metaphor of the picking up flowers.

However, all these definitions, such as anthology, commonplace-book, compilation, *spicilegium* are not completely exhaustive. The anonymous himself is capable of detecting another important facet of Ficino's activity. Indeed when describing Ficino's work, he affirms that the Florentine scholar provided the texts that copied in his *liber familiaris* with notes, corrections and *variae lectiones*. In other words, he highlights Ficino's philological attitude.

Gentile and Rizzo's defined the Milan manuscript as a *zibaldone filosofico*. A careful analysis of both the stratigraphy and content of the manuscript demonstrates that there are additional rubrics under which it can be classified. Indeed, the original nucleus of MS Ambr. F 19 sup. provides evidence of an intense activity of collation. This process reflects Ficino's profound interest in textual and philological issues, which I will explore in the second section of my thesis. As a result, I will seek to provide a more nuanced definition of Ficino's notebook.

## Chapter IV

### MS Borgianus graecus 22

#### IV. 1 A textual and codicological miscellany

MS Borg. gr. 22, now in Rome, will be the focus of the present chapter. The manuscript belongs to the last period of Ficino's life and activity, when the Florentine scholar undertook the task of translating two theological treatises he believed were the work of Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles: *De mystica theologia* and *De divinis nominibus*.<sup>211</sup> The translation and commentary were completed between 1490 and 1492 and were printed in 1496.<sup>212</sup>

The manuscript is miscellaneous in terms of both textuality (the corpus of texts) and materiality (the body of the manuscript): it is made of both parchment and paper and the collection is the result of the work of two scribes: Ficino himself and Johannes Scoutariotes.

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<sup>211</sup> The question concerning the authorship of the treatise was solved at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the scholarly world accepted the independent conclusions of Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr's studies, published in 1895. These scholars established that Dionysius's overall terminology and conceptual framework, as well as certain precise arguments, were heavily reliant on the writings of the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proclus, particularly on the doctrines expounded in his *Elements of Theology*. See Hugo Koch 'Proklos als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen', *Philologus* 54 (1895), 438–54; Josef Stiglmayr, 'Der Neuplatoniker Proklos als Vorlage des sogenannten Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre von Übel', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), 253–73. For an account, see Christian Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: An Introduction to the Structure and the Content of the Treatise 'On the Divine Names'* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 17–18.

<sup>212</sup> For the text and a detailed bibliography, see Marsilio Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite, Mystical Theology and The Divine Names*, ed. and trans. by Michael J. B. Allen, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015); Dionysius Areopagite, *Tutte le opere*, ed. by Giovanni Reale and trans. by Piero Scazzoso (Milan: Bompiani, 2009); See also, Thomas Leinkauf, 'Marsilio Ficino e lo Pseudo-Dionigi: ricezione e trasformazione', in *Le Pseudo-Denys à la Renaissance*, ed. by Stéphane Toussaint and Christian Trottman (Paris: Champion, 2014), pp. 127–42; John Monfasani, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in mid-Quattrocento Rome', in *Supplementum Festivum*, pp. 189–219; rpt. in John Monfasani, *Language and Learning in Renaissance Italy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), pp. 189–219.

More specifically, Ficino commissioned Scoutariotes to compile a miscellany containing the *De divinis nominibus* and a collection of Platonic texts: after the completion of Scoutariotes' task, the Florentine scholar collated the texts by using other Greek manuscripts and noted some variant readings. According to a recent study by Podolak, the manuscript contains a sort of critical edition of Dionysius's work: this means that Ficino did not restrict himself to providing an accurate Latin translation, but was also interested in reconstructing and establishing the best possible Greek text.<sup>213</sup>

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Ἡὼ δὲ, ὦ μακαρίε, μετατάσθε  
 ῥητορικάς, ὑποτυπώσθε, ἀδί-  
 κτην τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασίων, ἀγα-  
 πησίην, ὡς ἐφικτοῦ μετὰ κόσμου.  
 ἄσῳ δὲ καὶ ῥῶν ἡμῶν, ὅτι ῥητορί-  
 θῶμος προδιορισμένος, τὸ ἴ-  
 ἀλήθειαν ἡμῶν καταδύσασθαι.  
 τῶν περὶ θύλετομεγῶν.  
 Οὐκ ἐπιπέθοις σοφίας, ἀνθρώπων  
 λόγοις. ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει, τῆς  
 παραματοκινῆτου, τῶν θεολογ-  
 λῶσμεως. καθὼς τοῖς ἀφθε-  
 γκτοῖς καὶ ἀγνώστοις. ἀφθῆκτ  
 καὶ ἀγνώστος σώσαστομεθαι.  
 κτ' ἴτω κρῆστον καὶ καθ' ἡμῶν  
 λογικῆς καὶ νοεράς λῶσμεως  
 καὶ ἐρεθῆσας ἐρωστὴν καθόλου  
 τοι γὰρ ὡς οὐτο λμκτε ὄν ῥητορ, οὐτ

Figure 1. Fol. 5<sup>r</sup>: incipit of the *De divinis nominibus*. Johannes Scoutariotes's hand

<sup>213</sup> See Dionysius Areopagite, *De mystica theologia*, ed. by Podolak, pp. LI-LIV.

After correcting and collating the texts, the Florentine scholar progressively added further codicological and textual units to the initial parchment nucleus, which presumably contains passages and doctrines he was interested in. In other words the manuscript, like MS Ambr. F 19 sup., is the result of Ficino's work in progress: its content and structure developed as Ficino's work progressed. As a result, from a standard Byzantine manuscript, written in a very elegant and fluid handwriting, the codex became a Renaissance scholarly notebook.

In this chapter, I shall focus on the additional part of the manuscript, which provides further insight into the study of Ficino's reading practices and methodology. In this section, Ficino transcribed Latin excerpts summarizing passages from Thomas Aquinas (fols 156<sup>r</sup>-165<sup>v</sup>), Proclus (fol. 166<sup>f</sup> ll. 1-11), Plotinus (fol. 166<sup>r</sup> l.12-167<sup>r</sup> l. 17) and Plato (fol. 167<sup>r</sup> l. 18-167<sup>v</sup>). When producing this section, Ficino seems to have selected and gathered texts produced by authors who dealt with doctrines connected to Platonism in general, and to Dionysius's work in particular.

This aspect is quite interesting, especially when one considers the role played by Dionysius's philosophy in the indirect transmission of Neoplatonism in both mystical and scholastic writings and the essential affinities existing between Thomas Aquinas, Plotinus and Proclus.<sup>214</sup> Ficino precisely selected and collected these texts in MS Borg. gr. 22 because he had detected the doctrinal affinity among these authors.

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<sup>214</sup> See Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Proclus as a Reader of Plato and Plotinus, and his Influence in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance', in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, IV, ed. by Paul Oskar Kristeller (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), pp. 122-23.

This chapter provides for the first time a description and analysis of the Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22, which has so far escaped the attention of modern scholars. I will first offer a contextualized study of the excerpts, underlining the metaphysical and/or theological connections between each author included in the section and Dionysius, as well as the links among the different authors selected by Ficino. I then focus on Ficino's relation with these philosophers. Additionally, I will provide a transcription of the texts, identify them, and summarize their philosophical content.

#### IV. 2 Thomas Aquinas

The first part of the Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22 includes *exerpta* from Thomas Aquinas. As mentioned above, the presence of Thomas Aquinas's work in a manuscript containing Platonic and Neoplatonic texts might look unusual, but seems to reflect some facets of Thomas Aquinas's thought (i.e. his indebtedness to some Neoplatonic doctrines), as well as Ficino's indebtedness to this philosopher.

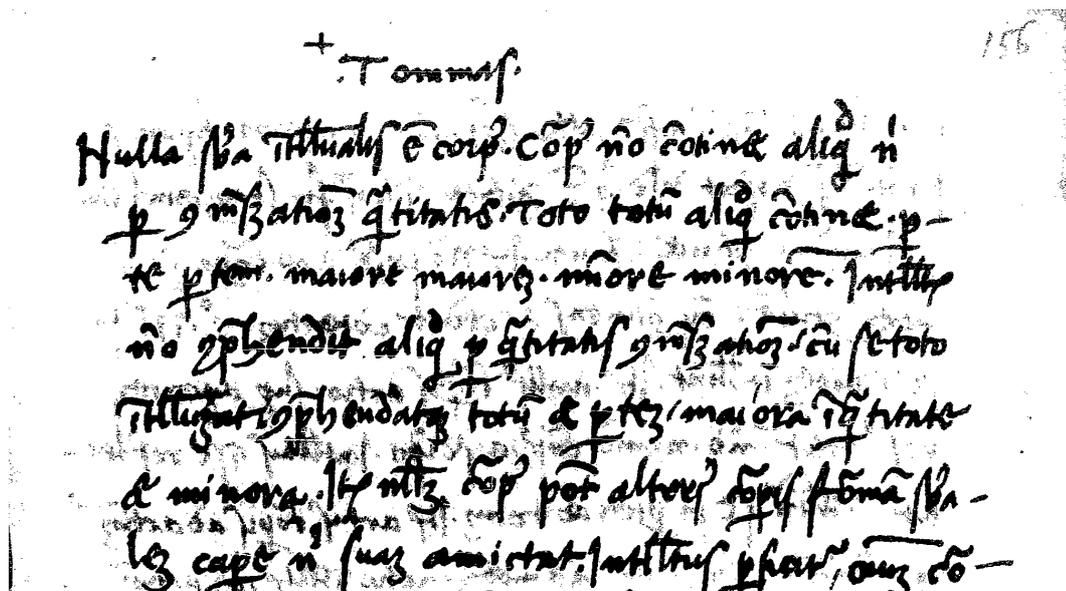


Figure 2. Detail of fol. 156<sup>r</sup>: *incipit* of the Latin section. Excerpts from Thomas Aquinas

For a long time, most scholars tended to emphasize the impact of Aristotle on Thomas Aquinas, minimizing *de facto* the influence of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy. However, in the last decades, numerous studies have shown the relevance of the Platonic tradition in his philosophical thought, pointing out the importance of two Neoplatonic sources, which he commented on: the *Liber de causis* and the *De divinis nominibus*. This in turn explains why Thomas Aquinas's works, especially his later writings, include conceptions and arguments that he inherited from a wide variety of ancient, Arabic and medieval sources.<sup>215</sup> As a result, Josef Pieper could state that 'Thomas was neither Platonist nor Aristotelian, he was both'.<sup>216</sup>

As pointed out by Paul Rorem, Thomas Aquinas makes no fewer than 1,702 direct and explicit quotations from Dionysian treatises throughout all his own writings.<sup>217</sup> The philosopher also wrote a full commentary on the *De divinis nominibus*, which indicates his indebtedness to Neoplatonism. In this commentary, Thomas recognizes that Dionysius incorporated Platonic ideas in his thought.<sup>218</sup> Given this context, the presence of *excerpta* from Thomas Aquinas's

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<sup>215</sup> See Wayne J. Hankey, 'Aquinas, Plato and Neo-Platonism', in *The Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, ed. by Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump Wayne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 30-43.

<sup>216</sup> Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), p. 22. Similarly, Brian Davies argued that 'Far from thinking that all wisdom resides in a single school of thought, his desire seems to have been to draw, with gratitude for diversity, on as much as was available to him', Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 16. See also J. A. Aertsen, 'Thomas Aquinas: Aristotelianism versus Platonism?', in *Néoplatonisme et philosophie médiévale, Actes du Colloque international de Corfou, 6-8 octobre 1995*, ed. by L. G. Benakis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 147-162.

<sup>217</sup> Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 169. This statistical survey ranks Dionysius as one of Saint Thomas's main sources, to be compared with Aristotle and Saint Augustine. Undoubtedly, Dionysius's presumed Christian antiquity enabled him to hold a prominent position over all other authors, after the biblical books themselves.

<sup>218</sup> For an account and the relevant bibliography, see Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, pp. 183-87. See also Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, p. 16.

works in Ms. Borg. gr. 22 does not seem to be accidental. Ficino may well have recognized the connections existing between Thomas Aquinas and Platonism. Thus this section shows that to a certain extent Marsilio anticipates modern scholars.

Evidence indicates that Marsilio Ficino read Thomas' works, and in particular the *Summa contra gentiles*, from his earliest youth. In the prologue to his own translation of Theodoret of Cyrillus's *Graecorum affectionum curatio*, Zenobi Acciaiuoli states that Antonio Pierozzi discouraged Ficino from reading pagan authors and exhorted him to read Thomas instead.<sup>219</sup> Thus Pierozzi suggested that Marsilio should take Thomas's work as a guard against any heresy he might encounter in Platonic philosophy. Various modern studies have pointed out Ficino's indebtedness to Thomas Aquinas, ranging from Kristeller's study of Ficino's positive use of his *Summa contra gentiles*,<sup>220</sup> to Étienne Gilson, Cornelio Fabro and Eugenio Garin's studies, which confirmed the influence of the *Summa contra gentiles* on Ficino's writings.<sup>221</sup> Starting from different perspectives, their

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<sup>219</sup> Acciaiuoli's text, contained in Ms Ottob. Lat. 1404 (f. 2r) is transcribed in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone, Mostra di Manoscritti*, pp. 172-73: 'Bonus enim pastor, cum adulescentem clericum suum nimio plus captum Platonis eloquentia cerneret, non ante passus est in illius philosophi lectione frequentem esse, quam eum divi Thomae Aquinatis quattuor libris contra gentes conscriptis quasi quoadam antipharmaco praemuniret'.

<sup>220</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Scholastic Background of Marsilio Ficino', *Traditio* 2 (1944), 257-318, rpt. in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, I, ed. by Paul Oskar Kristeller (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969), pp. 35-97. Kristeller pointed out numerous similarities between Ficino's thought and Thomas's philosophy and listed a set of twenty-four texts in which Ficino mentions, always in agreement, Saint Thomas and his works, particularly the *Summa contra Gentiles*. On Ficino and Thomas Aquinas see also Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University press, 1974; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 71-91; Amos Edelheit, *Scholastic Florence. Moral Psychology in the Quattrocento* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 153-57 and 258-59.

<sup>221</sup> Étienne Gilson, 'Marsile Ficin et le *Contra gentiles*', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 32 (1957), 100-113; Cornelio Fabro, 'Influenze tomistiche nella filosofia del Ficino', *Studia Patavina* 3 (1959), 396-413, rpt. in *Esegesi tomistica* (Rome: Libreria Editrice, 1969), pp. 313-28; Eugenio Garin, 'Marsilio Ficino e la *Contra gentiles*', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 38 (1959). 'This evidence places under grave suspicion any attempt to dismiss the similarity between Ficino's thought and that of Aquinas as a matter of mere terminology': Ardis Collins, *The Secular is Sacred*, p. IX.

analyses demonstrated that Ficino not only shares with Thomas Aquinas a specific philosophical vocabulary, but also the development of thought that gives meaning to that technical lexicon.

In the light of the outcomes of these studies, Ardis Collins carried out a comparative analysis between Ficino's *Platonic Theology* and Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles*, in order to explore the impact of Thomas on his philosophy. Comparison provided further evidence that several crucial parts of Ficino's work heavily rely on Thomas Aquinas's thought.<sup>222</sup> The proemial section of the *Platonic Theology*, where the Florentine scholar expounds his main purposes, reflects his attitude towards Saint Thomas.<sup>223</sup> In order to reunify philosophy and theology and 'to paint a portrait of Plato as close as possible to the Christian truth',<sup>224</sup> Ficino integrates doctrines from Thomas Aquinas in his philosophical arguments. As mentioned above, Collins discussed the implications of Ficino's recourse to Thomas Aquinas mainly in terms of integration. Conversely, Ada Palmer investigated Ficino's treatment of Thomas's philosophy

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<sup>222</sup> These sections focus on key questions concerning Ficino's philosophical system, such as the hierarchical structure of the universe, God –defined in terms of unity, power and good– and his relation with creatures, the composite nature of creatures, as well as the major theme of the immortality of the soul.

<sup>223</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, trans. by Allen and ed. by Hankins, I (2001), p. 11: 'Reor autem (nec vana fides) hoc providentia divina decretum, ut et perversa multorum ingenia, quae soli divinae legis auctoritati haud facile cedunt, platonicis saltem rationibus religioni admodum suffragantibus acquiescent et quicumque philosophiae studium impie nimium a sancta religione seiungunt, agnoscant aliquando se non aliter aberrare quam si quis vel amorem sapientiae a sapientiae ipsius honore vel intellegentiam veram a recta voluntate disiunxerit'. 'I believe –and it is no empty belief– that divine providence has decreed that many who are wrong-headed and unwilling to yield to the authority of divine law alone will at least accept those arguments of the Platonists which fully reinforce the claims of religion; and that irreligious men who divorce the study of philosophy from sacred religion will come to realize that they are making the same sort of mistake as someone who divorces love of wisdom from respect for that wisdom, or who separates true understanding from the will to do what is right'.

<sup>224</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, trans. by Allen and ed. by Hankins, I (2001), p. 11. On Ficino's project, see Charles Trinkaus *In Our Image and Likeness. Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 463-65. Trinkaus argued that this was part of a broader scholarly endeavour to elaborate a new concept as well as understanding of human activity.

in terms of conflict. Palmer pointed out that if Marsilio's aim was to revive the wisdom of the *prisci theologi*, he thus needed to demonstrate how the Platonic wisdom moved beyond the dominant Aristotelian system.<sup>225</sup>

Further studies have confirmed what previous scholarship emphasized regarding Ficino's complex relationship towards Thomas Aquinas. For instance, in her edition of Ficino's *Commentary on Parmenides*, Maude Vanhaelen has recently pointed out Ficino's indebtedness to Thomas Aquinas's technical terminology.<sup>226</sup> Podolak in turn has demonstrated that Ficino drew on Saint Thomas's commentary on Dionysius in his own commentary: in fact, it is possible to detect a close correspondence between Ficino and Thomas Aquinas's text.<sup>227</sup> According to this study, it is also possible to detect the influence of Saint Thomas' commentary in a note to the *De divinis nominibus* in MS Borg. gr. 22 (fol. 48<sup>r</sup>), in which Ficino erroneously attributes a *sententia* to Philo of Alexandria.<sup>228</sup> This wrong attribution presumably derives from Thomas Aquinas and confirms that Ficino read and studied the Greek text of Dionysius's work with the support of Saint Thomas's commentary. Additionally, Podolak's comparison of the two commentaries provided further evidence of the complex nature of Ficino's reception and understanding of Thomistic philosophy. Again, this study showed that Ficino's attitude towards Saint Thomas is twofold: on the one hand, Ficino conceives Thomas, who had already detected in Dionysius's text the presence of Platonic doctrines, as an *auctoritas*; on the other hand, Marsilio proves himself to

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<sup>225</sup> Ada Palmer, 'Lux Dei. Ficino and Aquinas on the Beatific Vision', *Memini, Travaux et documents publiés par la Société des études médiévales du Québec* 6 (2002), 129-52.

<sup>226</sup> See Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on the Parmenides*, ed. and trans. by Maude Vanhaelen, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), II, pp. XXXI-XXXVII.

<sup>227</sup> Pietro Podolak, 'Unitas Apex Anime. Il Commento Ficiniiano allo Ps. Dionigi Areopagita fra Aristotelismo, Platonismo e Mistica Medievale', *Accademia* 11 (2009), 27-60. See in particular pp. 26-37.

<sup>228</sup> At fol. 48<sup>r</sup>, Ficino wrote *Filon* by the text of the *De divinis nominibus*.

be critical towards Aquinas, often adopting different or even opposite doctrinal stances.

Given these assumptions, my analysis will seek to offer further insight into Ficino's treatment of Thomas Aquinas's thought, stressing how the Florentine scholar was able to detect in Thomas's philosophy the presence of Platonic doctrines. Let us focus on the Thomistic texts that Ficino transcribed at fols 156<sup>f</sup>-165<sup>v</sup>. As mentioned in chapter one, where I described the textual content of Ms Borg. gr. 22, modern scholars have usually considered that this part of the manuscript contain only passages from the *Summa contra gentiles*. A careful transcription of the texts has enabled me to provide a more precise description. My analysis indicates that, when creating a summary of philosophical arguments on the same theme, Ficino consulted another Thomistic source, the *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*.

The section, introduced by the Latin heading 'Tommas', is quite long –five thousand words– and consists of sixteen distinct parts, separated by a diacritical sign (:~) commonly used by Greek scribes. In most cases, the beginning of the following part is signalled by a double-pointed *obelos* (see Figure 3).

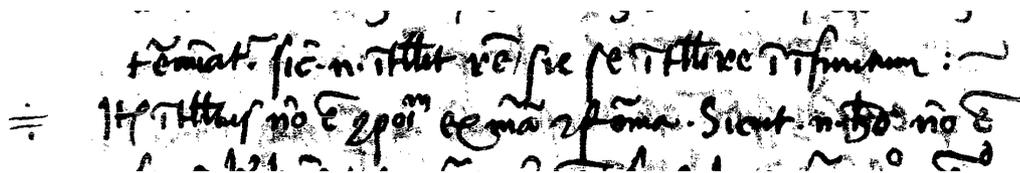


Figure 3. Detail of fol. 156<sup>v</sup>. Diacritical signs, indicating the end of CG 49 and the beginning of CG 50

The following table provides a list of the passages, indicating the position (column one) of the relevant texts (column two) as well as summarizing their philosophical content (columns three and four):

**Table 1**

<b>Excerpts from Thomas Aquinas in MS Borg. gr. 22 (fols 156<sup>r</sup>-165<sup>v</sup>)</b>			
<b>Structure of the section</b>		<b>Proposed Reconstruction</b>	
<b>1. Folium</b>	<b>2. Incipit and explicit of the excerpted chapter</b>	<b>3. Thomas Aquinas's <i>Summa contra gentiles</i> and <i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i></b>	<b>4. Doctrine</b>
fols 156 <sup>r</sup> -156 <sup>v</sup> 1. 9	Nulla substantia intellectualis est corpus ~ sicut enim intelligit rem sic se intelligere infinitum.	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i> (hereafter CG) II 49, 1-9	The intellectual substance is not a body
fols 156 <sup>v</sup> 1. 10-157 <sup>r</sup> 1. 16	Item. Intellectus non est compositum ex materia et forma ~ Impeditur in intelligendo per motum.	CG II 50, 3-9	The intellectual substances are immaterial
fols 157 <sup>r</sup> 1.16 -157 <sup>v</sup> 1. 2	Intellectus non est forma materialis ~ Item si non subsistit, recipit omnia in materia. Non autem est ita.	CG II 51, 1-4	The intellectual substance is not a material form
fols 157 <sup>v</sup> 1. 2-160 <sup>r</sup> 1. 8	Intellectus est incorruptibilis ~ proprium intellectum est ut sint perpetui.	CG II 55, 1-14	The intellectual substances are incorruptible and eternal
fols 160 <sup>r</sup> 1. 8-160 <sup>v</sup> 1. 4	Anima non est corpus ~ Intelligere non potest esse actio alicuius corporis. Est actio animae.	CG II 65, 1-6	The soul is not a body. Understanding cannot be the action of a body but is the action of a soul.

fol. 160 <sup>v</sup> ll. 5-161 <sup>r</sup> l. 1	Anima non est ex materia et forma ~ Non ergo id quod ponebatur compositum est anima, sed sola forma eius.	<i>Quaestio Disputata De Anima</i> , a. 6 co.	The soul is not composed by matter and form
fol. 161 <sup>r</sup> ll. 1-18	Anima non est complexio ~ Item anima regit corpus et repugnat passionibus, quae complexionem sequuntur.	CG II 63, 3-5	The soul is not a temperament, as Galen maintained
fol. 161 <sup>r</sup> l. 19-161 <sup>v</sup> l. 12	Item anima non harmonia est ~ aliam os, caro, nervus, cum sint diversa compositione composita.	CG II 64, 1-4	The soul is not a harmony
fol. 161 <sup>v</sup> l. 13-162 <sup>v</sup> l. 6	Anima hominis est immortalis quia est intellectiva substantia ~ Nam in quibusdam nihil prohibet: ut si est anima tale; non omnis sed intellectus.	CG II 79, 1-5, 8, 11, 13.	The human soul does not perish when the body is corrupted
fol. 162 <sup>v</sup> l. 6-163 <sup>r</sup>	Quod per se consequitur ad aliquid, non potest removeri ab eo ~ appetatur naturaliter esse simpliciter, secundum omne tempus.	<i>Quaestio disputata De Anima</i> a. 14 co.	
fol. 163 <sup>v</sup> ll. 1-16	Intellectus non est praeparatio materialis secundum Alexandrum ~ Non ergo potest anima vegetativa a mixtione	CG II 62, 1, 4, 7, 8	Against Alexander's opinion concerning the possible intellect

	elementorum produci. Multo minus sensus et intellectus possibilis.		
fols 163 <sup>v</sup> ll. 16- 164 <sup>v</sup> l. 6	Averroes dicit quod intellectus unicus inest sibi ita continuatus ut per eum intelligeremus ~ Oportet ergo eum uniri nobis formaliter, et non modum per obiectum suum.	CG II 59, 7-12	Man's possible intellect is not a separate substance
fols 164 <sup>v</sup> l. 6-165 <sup>r</sup> l. 9	Item. Omne movens se ipsum, VIII <i>Physicorum</i> , componitur ex motore et moto ~ Non ergo accipit eam a phantasmatis: quia natura non abundat in superfluis.	CG II 60, 1, 4, 5, 20	A man derives his specific nature, not from the passive, but from the possible intellect
fol. 165 <sup>r</sup> ll. 9-17	Aristoteles primo in secundo De Anima definit animam primum actum corporis physici~ Dico autem intellectum quo opinatur et intelligit anima	CG II 61, 2-6	According to Aristotle's teaching, the soul is the first act of the physical body
fols 165 <sup>r</sup> l. 17-165 <sup>v</sup> l. 7	Idem in <i>Physicis</i> ostendit quod caelum movet se et quidquid se movit vult esse animatum ~ potest ergo intellectus uniri corpori ut forma.	CG II 70, 2, 4-7	According to Aristotle's words, the intellect must be said to be united to the body and its form
fol. 165 <sup>v</sup> ll. 7-26	A conceptione universali non sequitur motus et actio nisi mediante	CG II 48, 5, 6	Intellectual substances have freedom of choice in acting

	particulari apprehensione ~ Ergo anima per se mouetur, vivit, agit, est, ergo et semper.		
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As the table suggests, Ficino used the same techniques he employed to produce the Greek *excerpta* in MSS Ricc. 92 and Ambr. F 19 sup.: when summarizing doctrines and texts which he was interested in, Ficino transcribed and mixed passages from two different works written by Saint Thomas, namely Book II of the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, but without following the order in which they appear in the original text. The Florentine scholar assembles them as if they were the pieces of a patchwork and creates an original synthesis, which likely matches his own philosophical interests.

This section mainly focusses on Thomas Aquinas's arguments on the immateriality of the rational soul, its separation from the bodies, and the role it plays in providing life and intelligence to inferior beings. As the second table below clearly shows, which provides a detailed analysis of one of the excerpts from the *Summa contra gentiles* (II, 49, 1-9), Ficino considerably shorten the original text. The table includes Ficino's excerpts (left column), Thomas Aquinas's original text (central column), and the English translation (right column):

**Table 2**

Ficino's excerpts (fols 156 <sup>r</sup> -156 <sup>v</sup> l. 8)	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i> (II, 49, 1-9)	English Translation
Nulla substantia intellectualis est corpus	Quod substantia intellectualis non sit corpus [1] Ex praemissis autem ostenditur quod nulla substantia intellectualis est	That the intellectual substance is not a body [1] From the foregoing we proceed to show that no intellectual substance is a body.

<p>Corpus non continent aliquid nisi per commensurationem quantitatis. toto totum aliquid continet. parte partem maiore maiorem. minore minorem.</p> <p>Intellectus non comprehendit aliquid per quantitatis commensurationem. cum se toto intelligat comprehendatque totum et partem, maiora in quantitate et minora.</p> <p>Item. nullum corpus potest alterius corporis formam substantialem capere nisi suam amittat. Intellectus perficitur omnium corporum formas recipiendo.</p> <p>Item. principium diversitatis individuorum eiusdem speciei est divisio materie secundum quantitatem: forma huius ignis non differt nisi qua est in diversis materie partibus per divisionem quantitatis, sine qua substantia est indivisibilis.</p> <p>Quod autem recipitur in corpore, recipitur secundum quantitatis divisionem. Ergo si intellectus esset corpus, formae reciperentur in eo individuatae. Intelligit res per formas earum quas habet. Ergo non intelligit universalia.</p>	<p>corpus.</p> <p>[2] Nullum enim corpus invenitur aliquid continere nisi per commensurationem quantitatis: unde et, si se toto totum aliquid continet, et partem parte continet, maiorem quidem maiore, minorem autem minore. Intellectus autem non comprehendit rem aliquam intellectam per aliquam quantitatis commensurationem: cum se toto intelligat et comprehendat totum et partem, maiora in quantitate et minora. Nulla igitur substantia intelligens est corpus.</p> <p>[3] Amplius. Nullum corpus potest alterius corporis formam substantialem recipere nisi per corruptionem suam formam amittat. Intellectus autem non corrumpitur, sed magis perficitur per hoc quod recipit formas omnium corporum: perficitur enim in intelligendo; intelligit autem secundum quod habet in se formas intellectorum. Nulla igitur substantia intellectualis est corpus.</p> <p>[4] Adhuc. Principium diversitatis individuorum eiusdem speciei est divisio materiae secundum quantitatem: forma enim huius ignis a forma illius ignis non differt nisi per hoc quod est in diversis partibus in quas materia dividitur; nec aliter quam divisione quantitatis, sine qua substantia est indivisibilis. Quod autem recipitur in corpore, recipitur in eo secundum quantitatis divisionem. Ergo forma non recipitur in corpore nisi ut individuata. Si igitur intellectus esset corpus, formae rerum intelligibiles non reciperentur in eo nisi ut individuatae. Intelligit autem intellectus res per formas earum quas penes se habet.</p>	<p>[2] For it is only by quantitative commensuration that a body contains anything at all; so, too, if a thing contains a whole thing in the whole of itself, it contains also a part in a part of itself, a greater part in a greater part, a lesser part in a lesser part. But an intellect does not, in terms of any quantitative commensuration, comprehend a thing understood, since by its whole self it understands and encompasses both whole and part, things great in quantity and things small. Therefore, no intelligent substance is a body.</p> <p>[3] Then, too, no body can receive the substantial form of another body, unless by corruption it loses its own form. But the intellect is not corrupted; rather, it is perfected by receiving the forms of all bodies; for it is perfected by understanding, and it understands by having in itself the forms of the things understood. Hence, no intellectual substance is a body.</p> <p>[4] Again, the principle of diversity among individuals of the same species is the division of matter according to quantity; the form of this fire does not differ from the form of that fire, except by the fact of its presence in different parts into which the matter is divided; nor is this brought about in any other way than by the division of quantity—without which substance is indivisible. Now, that which is received into a body is received into it according to the division of quantity. Therefore, it is only as individuated that a form is received into a body. If, then, the intellect were a body, the intelligible forms of things would not be received into it except as individuated. But the</p>
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<p>Item. Nihil agit nisi secundum suam speciem quae forma principium est agendi. si intellectus sit corpus, actio eius ordines corporum non excederet. Sola ergo corpora intelligeret.</p> <p>Iem si est corpus, aut infinitum finitum. corpus esse infinitum actu non potest. Est ergo finitum quod non potest esse. In corpore finito non est potentia infinita. potentia intellectus quodammodo est infinita intelligendo: infinitum intelligit species numerorum augendo, figurarum proportionum. Noscit universale, quod est virtute infinitum secundum suum ambitum, quod individua continet infinita.</p> <p>Item. Non possunt duo corpora se invicem continere: cum continens excedat contentum. Duo intellectus se invicem intelligunt.</p>	<p>Non ergo intellectus intelligit universalia, sed solum particularia. Quod patet esse falsum. Nullus igitur intellectus est corpus.</p> <p>[5] Item. Nihil agit nisi secundum suam speciem: eo quod forma est principium agendi in unoquoque. Si igitur intellectus sit corpus, actio eius ordinem corporum non excedet. Non igitur intelligeret nisi corpora. Hoc autem patet esse falsum: intelligimus enim multa quae non sunt corpora. Intellectus igitur non est corpus</p> <p>[6] Adhuc. Si substantia intelligens est corpus, aut est finitum, aut infinitum. Corpus autem esse infinitum actu est impossibile, ut in physicis probatur. Est igitur finitum corpus, si corpus esse ponatur. Hoc autem est impossibile. In nullo enim corpore finito potest esse potentia infinita, ut supra probatum est. Potentia autem intellectus est quodammodo infinita in intelligendo: in infinitum enim intelligit species numerorum augendo, et similiter species figurarum et proportionum; cognoscit etiam universale, quod est virtute infinitum secundum suum ambitum, continet enim individua quae sunt potentia infinita. Intellectus igitur non est corpus.</p> <p>[7] Amplius. Impossibile est duo corpora se invicem continere: cum continens excedat contentum. Duo autem intellectus se invicem continent et comprehendunt, dum unus alium intelligit. Non est igitur intellectus corpus.</p>	<p>intellect understands things by those forms of theirs which it has in its possession. So, if it were a body, it would not be cognizant of universals but only of particulars. But this is patently false. Therefore, no intellect is a body.</p> <p>[5] Likewise, nothing acts except in keeping with its species, because in each and every thing the form is the principle of action; so that, if the intellect is a body, its action will not go beyond the order of bodies. It would then have no knowledge of anything except bodies. But this is clearly false, because we know many things that are not bodies. Therefore, the intellect is not a body.</p> <p>[6] Moreover, if an intelligent substance is a body, it is either finite or infinite. Now, it is impossible for a body to be actually infinite, as is proved in the <i>Physics</i> [III, 5]. Therefore, if we suppose that such a substance is a body at all, it is a finite one. But this also is impossible, since, as was shown in Book I of this work, infinite power can exist in no finite body. And yet the cognitive power of the intellect is in a certain way infinite; for by adding number to number its knowledge of the species of numbers is infinitely extended; and the same applies to its knowledge of the species of figures and proportions. Moreover, the intellect grasps the universal, which is virtually infinite in its scope, because it contains individuals which are potentially infinite. Therefore, the intellect is not a body.</p> <p>[7] It is impossible, furthermore, for two bodies to contain one another, since the container exceeds the contained. Yet, when one intellect has knowledge of another, the two intellects contain and encompass one another. Therefore, the intellect is not a body.</p>
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<p>Item. Nullius corporis actio super agentem reflectitur: non enim movetur corpus a seipso. Intellectus in se reflectitur intelligendo se secundum partem et totum.</p> <p>Item actus corporis ad actionem non terminatur, nec motus ad motum. actio intellectus ad actionem terminatur: sicut enim intellegit rem sic se intelligere in infinitum</p>	<p>[8]. Item. Nullius corporis actio reflectitur super agentem: ostensum est enim in physicis quod nullum corpus a seipso movetur nisi secundum partem, ita scilicet quod una pars eius sit movens et alia mota. Intellectus autem supra seipsum agendo reflectitur: intelligit enim seipsum non solum secundum partem, sed secundum totum. Non est igitur corpus.</p> <p>[9] Adhuc. Actio corporis ad actionem non terminatur, nec motus ad motum: ut in physicis est probatum. Actio autem substantiae intelligentis ad actionem terminatur: intellectus enim, sicut intelligit rem, ita intelligit se intelligere, et sic in infinitum. Substantia igitur intelligens non est corpus.</p>	<p>[8] Also, the action of no body is self-reflexive. For it is proved in the <i>Physics</i> that no body is moved by itself except with respect to a part, so that one part of it is the mover and the other the moved. But in acting the intellect reflects on itself, not only as to a part, but as to the whole of itself. Therefore, it is not a body.</p> <p>[9] A body's action, moreover, is not terminated in action, nor movement in movement-a point proved in the <i>Physics</i> [V, 2]. But the action of an intelligent substance is terminated in action; for just as the intellect knows a thing, so does it know that it knows; and so on indefinitely. An intelligent substance, therefore, is not a body.<sup>229</sup></p>
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Thus for instance, in the case of CG II 49, 8. Ficino's excerpt reads as follows:

Item. Nullius corporis actio super agentem reflectitur: non enim movetur corpus a seipso. Intellectus in se reflectitur intelligendo se secundum partem et totum.

The original text reads as follows:

**Item. Nullius corporis actio reflectitur super agentem:** ostensum est **enim** in physicis quod nullum **corpus a seipso movetur** nisi secundum partem, ita scilicet quod una pars eius sit movens et alia mota. **Intellectus** autem **supra seipsum agendo reflectitur:** **intelligit** enim **seipsum** non solum **secundum partem**, sed secundum **totum**. Non est igitur corpus.

The passages that I have emphasized suggest that Ficino does not paraphrase, but reduces the original text. As the first sentence shows, Ficino tends to follow quite closely the logical and syntactic order of the original text. In some cases, as in the last sentence for instance, longer sentences are shortened by producing less complex syntactic structures. In the excerpt, the gerund

<sup>229</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Book 2: Creation*, ed. and trans. by James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 146-48.

*intelligendo* condenses and encompasses in one sentence the concepts expressed by two verbal forms (*agendo* and then *intelligit*) in two longer sentences. This strategy enables the excerptor to express the same concept, but more concisely.

As highlighted above, Ficino produces a summary of arguments on the rational soul. This description of the soul as an incorporeal, eternal being may be reminiscent of the Platonic doctrine of the soul.<sup>230</sup> Nevertheless, unlike the Platonic doctrine of the soul, Thomas Aquinas's soul cannot operate without the body and relies on the flesh for its functions: cognition involves sensation and only occurs through the examination of an intelligible form that the agent intellect extracts from the image.

In spite of this important difference, Ficino seems to have taken into account mostly the similarities existing between the Thomistic and Platonic doctrines of the soul. Drawing on Collins' comparative analysis, we notice that some of the chapters from the *Summa contra gentiles* forming the section in MS Borg. gr. 22 (48, 50, 55, 59, 63, 65) are the same as those that Ficino incorporated in his *Platonic Theology*, and used as a basis for his own arguments on the immortality of the soul.<sup>231</sup> When dealing with the theme of the soul in general, with the process of cognition in particular, Ficino establishes a fusion between two doctrines, one Aristotelian and Thomistic, the other Platonic. Like Thomas, Ficino describes cognition as both a process that starts off through sense perception and a process that requires divine illumination. In sum, when selecting passages from Thomas Aquinas's book II of the *Summa contra gentiles* and the

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<sup>230</sup> See Patrick Quinn, 'St. Thomas Aquinas's Concept of the Human Soul and the Influence of Platonism', in *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul: Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions*, ed. by Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth and John M. Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 179-185.

<sup>231</sup> See Collins, *The Secular is Sacred*, pp. 115-215.

*Quaestiones disputatae de anima* 6 and 14 in his notebook, Ficino gathers all doctrines from Thomas on the soul, with a view to using them as he sees fit in the *Platonic Theology*.

### IV. 3 Proclus

At fol. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 1-11, Ficino creates a section containing passages from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. The presence of the Proclean text is not accidental, given the affinities between Dionysius and Proclus and the importance of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* in the Middle Ages, which was transmitted under the title *Liber de causis* and falsely attributed to Aristotle.<sup>232</sup>

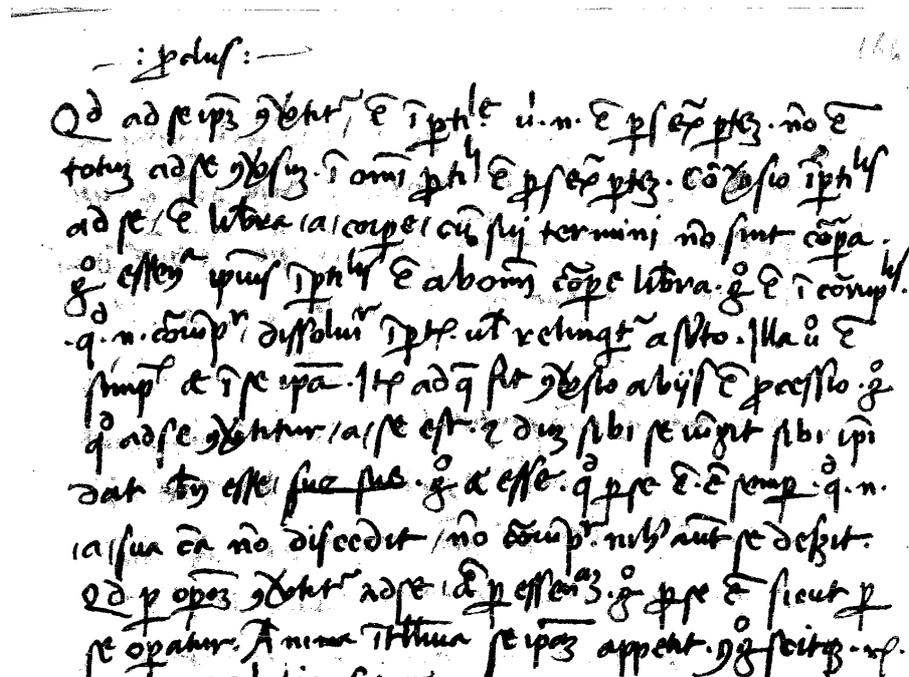


Figure 4. Detail of fol. 166<sup>r</sup>: the Proclean section

<sup>232</sup> Modern scholarship has demonstrated that the author of the *De divinis nominibus* was a Neoplatonic philosopher who did not merely appropriate certain technical terminology or themes from Plotinus and Proclus but 'takes up their deep philosophical insight into his own thought'. Eric David Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), p. 2. For a complete account on the *Liber de causis* and for the relevant bibliography, see Cristina d'Ancona Costa, *Recherches sur le Liber de causis*, (Paris: Vrin, 1995); See also Cristina d'Ancona Costa, 'Proclus, Denys, le *Liber de causis* et la science divine', in *Le contemplateur et les idées: modèles de la science divine du Néoplatonisme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. by Olivier Boulnois and Jean-Luc Solère (Paris: Vrin, 2002), pp. 19-44.

Concerning the impact of Proclean thought on Dionysius and the reception of Proclus in Western Europe, Kristeller made the following remarks:

The earliest and most important Greek writer influenced by Proclus was Dionysius the Areopagite. His writings contain a number of doctrines derived from Proclus and their authority and diffusion in the East and later in the West was so great that we may assert that Proclus had a much wider and deeper impact on medieval and early modern thought through the Areopagite than through his own writings. Indeed the earliest influence of Proclus in the West is due to the Latin translations of the Areopagite.<sup>233</sup>

At a later stage, several Latin translations allowed for a direct access to Proclus's writings: the *Elements of Theology* were translated by William of Moerbeke and his translation was well known both to Thomas Aquinas and Ficino. Carlos Steel has recently demonstrated that Ficino's study of Moerbeke's translation dates back to 1463-64 and that the Florentine scholar extensively used it later on in his activity.<sup>234</sup>

As I have mentioned in Chapter III, scholarship has demonstrated the influence of the Proclean metaphysical system on Ficino's doctrine of the hierarchical structure of the cosmos. Furthermore, 'Ficino himself contributed four extant additions to the Latin corpus of Proclus' works'.<sup>235</sup> We also know that Ficino translated Proclus's *Hymns*, the *Elements of Theology* and the *Elements of*

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<sup>233</sup> Kristeller, 'Proclus as a Reader of Plato', pp. 116-17.

<sup>234</sup> Steel, 'Ficino and Proclus', pp. 73-78. Steel argues that Ficino studied Moerbeke's translation in four stages: in 1463-64, when the Florentine scholar wrote his *argumentum* to the *Parmenides*; in 1469, when he was working on his commentary on the *Philebus*; in the 1470s, when he was writing the final books of the *Platonic Theology*; between 1492 and 1494, when he was composing his commentary on the *Parmenides*. See also Sebastiano Gentile, 'Il manoscritto della *Theologia Platonica* di Proclo appartenuto al Ficino', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Ermete Trismegisto*, ed. by Sebastiano Gentile and Carlos Gilly (Florence, Centro Di, 1999), pp. 76-80; Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 476-78; Sanzotta, 'Some Unpublished Notes', pp. 212-13. Concerning Ficino and Proclus, the notes contained in MS Ricc. 70 provide further evidence that Ficino knew Proclus very well early on.

<sup>235</sup> Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', in *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 358-361.

*Physics*, but these translations have not come down to us.<sup>236</sup> Ficino mentions the *Elements of Theology* in two letters. In a letter sent to Martin Prenninger in 1489, Ficino refers to Proclus's *Elements* among the Platonic works that have been transmitted in the Middle Ages in Latin, thus clearly referring to William of Moerbeke's translation:

Interrogas qui rursus apud Latinos inueniantur Platonici libri: Dionysii Areopagitae omnia sunt Platonica, Augustini multa, Boëtii consolatio, Apulei de daemonibus, Calcidii commentarium in Timaeum, Macrobiani expositio in somnium Scipionis, Auicennae de fonte uitae, Alpharabii de causis, et HERRICI Gandauensis, Auicennae Scotique, multa Platonem redolent. **Leguntur etiam utcunque traducta elementa theologiae Procli, atque ipsa eius theologia, et liber de providentia simul atque fato.** Similiter et nos utcunque traduximus Hermiam in Phaedrum, et Iamblichum de Pythagorica secta.<sup>237</sup>

He only mentions his own translation of the *Elements of Theology* in a 1474 letter to Angelo Poliziano: 'E Greca lingua in Latinam transtuli Proculi Platonici *Physica et Theologica elementa* [...]'.<sup>238</sup>

Let us now focus on the Proclean section of Ficino's notebook. Kristeller defined it as 'a free Latin paraphrase of a passage that is hard to identify' and adds that Beierwaltes and Boese's analysis of the passage confirmed his impression that 'it does not correspond to any single passage in Proclus'.<sup>239</sup> My own transcription and analysis of the passage, confirms Kristeller's opinion. I have sought to identify the theorems of *The Elements of Theology* that might be the source for Ficino's *excerpta*.

This is my transcription of the relevant passage:

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<sup>236</sup> For an exhaustive account, see Denis Robichaud, 'Fragments of Marsilio Ficino's Translations and Use of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* and *Physics*: Evidence and Study', in *Proclus in Byzantium*, ed. by Charles Barber and Stephen Gersh (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 1-45.

<sup>237</sup> *Ficini Opera*, p. 899.

<sup>238</sup> *Ficini Opera*, p. 619.

<sup>239</sup> Kristeller, 'Proclus as a Reader of Plato', pp. 122-23.

Quod ad se ipsum convertitur, est impartibile. Ubi enim est pars extra partem non est | totum ad se conversum. In omni partibili est pars extra partem. conversio impartibilis | ad se est et libera a corpore cum sui termini non sint corpora | ergo essentia ipsius impartibili est ab omni corpore libera. Ergo est incorruptibilis. |  
<sup>5</sup>Quod enim corrumpitur dissolvitur in partes vel relinquitur a subiecto. Illa vero est | simplex et in se ipsa. Item ad que fit conversio ab iis est processio. Ergo | quod ad se convertitur, a se est, et dum sibi se iungit sibi ipsi | dat bene esse, [[sue sub]] ergo et esse. Quod per se est, est semper. Quod enim | a sua causa non discedit, non corrumpitur. Nihil autem se deserit. |  
<sup>10</sup>Quod per operationem convertitur ad se, etiam essentiam. Ergo per se est, sicut per | se operatur. Anima intellectiva se ipsam appetit ergo scitque, etc.

The following table provides my own reconstruction of the Proclean section:

**Table 3**

**Proclean section in MS Borg. gr. 22 (fol. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 1-11)**

**Proposed reconstruction**

**Ficino's excerpt**

Quod ad se ipsum convertitur, est impartibile. Ubi enim est pars extra partem non est totum ad se conversum. In omni partibili est pars extra partem.

conversio impartibilis ad se est et libera a corpore cum sui termini non sint corpora ergo essentia ipsius impartibili est ab omni corpore libera.

**Proclus's *Elements of Theology*<sup>240</sup>**

**15.** Πᾶν τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν ἄσώματόν ἐστιν. οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν σωμάτων πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πέφυκεν ἐπιστρέφειν.

εἰ γὰρ τὸ ἐπιστρέφον πρὸς τι συνάπτεται ἐκείνῳ πρὸς ὃ ἐπιστρέφει, δῆλον δὴ ὅτι καὶ τὰ μέρη τοῦ σώματος πάντα πρὸς πάντα συνάγει τοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστραφέντος· τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφειν, ὅταν ἐν γένηται ἄμφω, τὸ τε ἐπιστραφέν καὶ πρὸς ὃ ἐπεστράφη. ἀδύνατον δὲ ἐπὶ σώματος τοῦτο, καὶ ὅλως τῶν μεριστῶν πάντων· οὐ γὰρ ὅλον ὄλω συνάπτεται ἑαυτῷ τὸ μεριστὸν διὰ τὸν τῶν μερῶν χωρισμόν, ἄλλων ἀλλαχοῦ κειμένων. οὐδὲν ἄρα σῶμα πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πέφυκεν ἐπιστρέφειν, ὡς ὅλον ἐπεστράφηται πρὸς ὅλον. εἰ τι ἄρα **πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν ἐστιν**, ἄσώματόν ἐστι καὶ **ἀμερές**

**16.** Πᾶν τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν χωριστὴν οὐσίαν ἔχει παντὸς σώματος. εἰ γὰρ ἀχώριστον εἴη σώματος οὐτινοσοῦν, οὐχ ἔξει τινὰ ἐνέργειαν σώματος χωριστήν. ἀδύνατον γὰρ, ἀχώριστου τῆς ἐνέργειαν σώματος χωριστήν. ἀδύνατον γὰρ, ἀχώριστου τῆς οὐσίας σωμάτων οὐσης, τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἐνέργειαν εἶναι χωριστήν· ἔσται γὰρ οὕτως ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας κρείττων, εἴπερ ἡ μὲν ἐπιδείξ ἐστι σωμάτων, ἡ δὲ αὐτάρκης, ἑαυτῆς οὔσα καὶ οὐ σωμάτων. εἰ οὖν τι κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστὶν ἀχώριστον, καὶ κατ' ἐνέργειαν ὁμοίως ἢ καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἀχώριστον. εἰ δὲ

<sup>240</sup> I am quoting the text established by Dodds: Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; rpt. 1963).

Ergo est incorruptibilis. Quod enim corrumpitur dissoluitur in partes vel relinquitur a subiecto.

Ille vero est simplex et in se ipsa

Item ad que fit conversio ab iis est processio.

Ergo quod ad se convertitur, a se est, et dum sibi se iungit sibi ipsi dat bene esse, ergo et esse.

τοῦτο, οὐκ ἐπιστρέφει πρὸς ἑαυτό. τὸ γὰρ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφον, ἄλλο ὄν σώματος, ἐνέργειαν ἔχει χωριζομένην σώματος καὶ οὐ διὰ σώματος οὐδὲ μετὰ σώματος, εἴπερ ἢ τε ἐνέργεια καὶ τὸ πρὸς ὃ ἢ ἐνέργεια οὐδὲν δεῖται τοῦ σώματος. χωριστὸν ἄρα πάντη σωμάτων ἐστὶ τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφον.

**46. Πᾶν τὸ ἀθυπόστατον ἀφθαρτὸν ἐστίν. εἰ γὰρ φθαρήσεται, ἀπολείψει ἑαυτὸ καὶ ἔσται ἑαυτοῦ χωρὶς. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ἀδύνατον.** Ἐν γὰρ ὄν, ἅμα καὶ αἰτίον ἐστὶ καὶ αἰτιατόν. πᾶν δὲ τὸ φθειρόμενον ἀποστὰν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ αἰτίας φθίρεται· ἐν ὅσῳ γὰρ ἂν ἐξέχεται τοῦ συνέχοντος αὐτὸ καὶ σώζοντος, ἕκαστον συνέχεται καὶ σώζεται. οὐδέποτε δὲ ἀπολείπει τὴν αἰτίαν τὸ ἀθυπόστατον, ἅτε ἑαυτὸ οὐκ ἀπολείπον· αἰτίον γὰρ αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ἐστίν. ἀφθαρτὸν ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ ἀθυπόστατον πᾶν.

**47. Πᾶν τὸ ἀθυπόστατον ἀμερές ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπλοῦν.** εἰ γὰρ μεριστόν, ἀθυπόστατον ὄν, ὑποστήσει μεριστόν ἑαυτό, καὶ ὅλον αὐτὸ στραφήσεται πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καὶ πᾶν ἐν παντὶ ἑαυτῷ ἐστὶ. τοῦτο δὲ ἀδύνατον. ἀμερές ἄρα τὸ ἀθυπόστατον. ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀπλοῦν. εἰ γὰρ σύνθετον, τὸ μὲν χεῖρον ἐστὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δὲ βέλτιον, καὶ τὸ τε βέλτιον ἐκ τοῦ χείρονος ἐστὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δὲ βέλτιον, καὶ τὸ τε βέλτιον ἐκ τοῦ χείρονος ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ χεῖρον ἐκ τοῦ βελτίονος, εἴπερ ὅλον ἀφ' ὅλου ἑαυτοῦ πρόεισιν· ἔτι δὲ οὐκ αὐταρκες, προσδεῆς ὄν τῶν ἑαυτοῦ στοιχείων, ἐξ ὧν ὑφέστηκεν. ἀπλοῦν ἄρα ἐστὶ πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν ἀθυπόστατον ἦ.

**42. Πᾶν τὸ ἀθυπόστατον πρὸς ἑαυτό ἐστὶν ἐπιστρεπτικόν.** εἰ γὰρ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ πρόεισι, καὶ τὴν ἐπιστροφήν ποιήσεται πρὸς ἑαυτό· ἀφ' οὗ γὰρ ἢ πρόοδος ἐκάστοις, εἰς τοῦτο καὶ ἢ τῇ προόδῳ σύστοιχος ἐπιστροφή. εἰ γὰρ πρόεισιν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ μόνον, μὴ ἐπιστρέφοιτο δὲ προϊὼν εἰς ἑαυτό, οὐκ ἂν ποτε τοῦ οικείου ἀγαθοῦ ὀρέγοιτο καὶ ὃ δύναται ἑαυτῷ παρέχειν. **Δύναται δὲ πᾶν τὸ αἰτίον τῷ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ δίδοναι μετὰ τῆς οὐσίας, ἧς δίδωσι, καὶ τὸ εἶ τῆς οὐσίας, ἧς δίδωσι, συζυγές·** ὥστε καὶ αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ. τοῦτο ἄρα τὸ οικεῖον τῷ ἀθυποστάτῳ ἀγαθόν. Τούτου δὲ οὐκ ὀρέζεται τὸ ἀνεπίστροφον πρὸς ἑαυτό· μὴ ὀρεγόμενον δέ, οὐδ' ἂν τύχοι, καὶ μὴ τυγχάνον, ἀτελές ἂν εἴη καὶ οὐκ αὐταρκες. ἀλλ' εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ, προσήκει καὶ τῷ ἀθυποστάτῳ αὐτάρκει καὶ τελείῳ εἶναι. καὶ τεύξεται ἄρα τοῦ οικείου καὶ ὀρέζεται καὶ

Quod per se est, est semper.

Quod enim a sua causa non discedit, non corrumpitur. Nihil autem se deserit.

Quod per operationem convertitur ad se, etiam essentiam. Ergo per se est, sicut per se operatur.

Anima intellectiva se ipsam appetit ergo scitque, etc.

πρὸς ἑαυτὸ στραφήσεται.

**49. Πᾶν τὸ αὐθυπόστατον αἰδιὸν ἐστὶ.**

δύο γάρ εἰσι τρόποι, καθ' οὓς ἀνάγκη τι μὴ αἰδιὸν εἶναι, ὃ τε ἀπὸ τῆς συνθέσεως καὶ ὁ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ἄλλῳ ὄντων. τὸ δὲ αὐθυπόστατον οὔτε σύνθετόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἀπλοῦν· οὔτε ἐν ἄλλῳ, ἀλλ' ἐν ἑαυτῷ. αἰδιὸν ἄρα ἐστίν.

**46. Πᾶν τὸ αὐθυπόστατον ἄφθαρτόν ἐστιν.**

εἰ γὰρ φθαρήσεται, ἀπολείψει ἑαυτὸ καὶ ἔσται ἑαυτοῦ χωρὶς. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ἀδύνατον. ἐν γὰρ ὄν, ἅμα καὶ αἰτιὸν ἐστὶ καὶ αἰτιατόν. πᾶν δὲ τὸ φθειρόμενον ἀποστὰν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ αἰτίας φθίρεται· ἐν ὅσῳ γὰρ ἂν ἐξέχηται τοῦ συνέχοντος αὐτὸ καὶ σώζοντος, ἕκαστον συνέχεται καὶ σώζεται. **οὐδέποτε δὲ ἀπολείπει τὴν αἰτίαν τὸ αὐθυπόστατον, ἅτε ἑαυτὸ οὐκ ἀπολείπον· αἰτιὸν γὰρ αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ἐστίν.** ἄφθαρτον ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ αὐθυπόστατον πᾶν.

**44. Πᾶν τὸ κατ' ἐνέργειαν πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν καὶ κατ' οὐσίαν ἐπέστραπται πρὸς ἑαυτό.**

εἰ γὰρ τῇ μὲν ἐνεργείᾳ δύναται ἐπιστρέφεσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτό, τῇ δὲ οὐσίᾳ ἀνεπίστροφον ὑπάρχει, κρεῖττον ἂν εἴη κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν μᾶλλον ἢ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, τῆς μὲν ἐπιστρεπτικῆς οὐσης, τῆς δὲ ἀνεπίστροφου· τὸ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ ὄν κρεῖττον ἢ τὸ ἄλλου μόνον, καὶ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σωστικὸν τελειότερον ἢ τὸ ὑπ' ἄλλου μόνον σωζόμενον. εἰ ἄρα τι κατ' ἐνέργειάν ἐστὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσίας πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικόν, καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ἐπιστρεπτικὴν ἔλαχεν, ὡς μὴ ἐνεργεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτὸ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι καὶ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ συνέχεσθαι καὶ τελειοῦσθαι.

**186. Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἀσώματός ἐστιν οὐσία καὶ χωριστὴ σώματος.**

**εἰ γὰρ γινώσκει ἑαυτήν, πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἑαυτὸ γινώσκον πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφεται,** τὸ δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφον οὔτε σῶμά ἐστὶ (πᾶν γὰρ σῶμα πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἀνεπίστροφον) οὔτε σώματος ἀχώριστον (καὶ γὰρ τὸ σώματος ἀχώριστον οὐ πέφυκε πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφειν· χωρίζοιτο γὰρ ἂν ταύτῃ σώματος), ἢ ἄρα ψυχὴ οὔτε σωματικὴ ἐστὶν οὐσία οὔτε σώματος ἀχώριστος. ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γινώσκει ἑαυτήν, φανερόν· εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν γινώσκει, καὶ ἑαυτήν πέφυκε γινώσκειν πολλῶ μειζόνως, ἀπ' αἰτίων τῶν πρὸ αὐτῆς γινώσκουσα ἑαυτήν.

We know that Ficino had at his disposal MS Ricc. 70, containing both Proclus's *Elements of Physics* and *Theology*, and Ms Ambr. F 19 sup., containing excerpts of the *Elements of Theology*. These excerpts are almost certainly based on the Greek original, since Ficino's rendering is very faithful to Proclus's text.

As the table shows, Ficino selected in the section all the passages related to the doctrine of the separate substances. Ficino presented a summary of arguments concerning Proclus's metaphysics of self-constituted beings (τὸ αὐθυπόστατον) capable of reverting upon themselves. These arguments are connected to the *anima intellectiva*, which is mentioned in the concluding part of the section.

This part of MS Borg. gr. 22 has been studied by Denis Robichaud, in a recent study on Ficino's use of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. Robichaud argues that Ficino almost certainly produced this excerpted summary of Proclean propositions with the support of both a manuscript containing the Greek text and William of Moerbeke's Latin translation. Thus he produces a comparative analysis, which I will summarize in the following table:

**Table 4**

<b>Ficino's excerpt</b>	<b>William of Moerbeke's translation<sup>241</sup></b>	<b>Proclus's <i>Elements of Theology</i></b>
Quod ad se ipsum convertitur, est impartibile.	palam utique quia et partes corporis omnes eius quod ad se ipsum convertitur ad omnes copulabuntur... Si quid ergo ad se ipsum conversium est, incorporeum est et impartibile	Proposition 15
Ubi enim est pars extra partem non est totum ad se conversum. In omni partibili est pars extra	Impossibile autem in corpore hoc et totaliter in partibilibus omnibus; non enim totum toti sibi	Prop. 15

<sup>241</sup> For the text, see Proclus, *Elementatio Theologica*, trans. by William of Moerbeke, ed. by Helmut Boese (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987).

partem.	copulatur partibile propter partium separationem, aliis alibi iacentibus.	
conversio impartibilis ad se est et libera a corpore cum sui termini non sint corpora	Quod enim ad se ipsum convertitur, aliud existens a corpore, operationem habet separatam a corpore et non per corpus neque cum corpore, siquidem operatio et id ad quod operatio nichil indiget corpore.	Prop. 16
ergo essentia ipsius impartibili est ab omni corpore libera.	Omne ad se ipsum conversuum habet substantiam separabilem ab omni corpore	Prop. 16
Ergo est incorruptibilis. Quod enim corrumpitur dissolvitur in partes vel relinquitur a subiecto.	Omne authypostatum incorruptibile est. Si enim corrumpetur, derelinquet se ipsum et erit extra se ipsum.	Prop. 46
Illa vero est simplex et in se ipsa	Omne authypostaton impartibile est et simplex.	Prop. 47
Item ad que fit conversio ab iis est processio.	Si enim a se procedit, et conversionem faciet ad se ipsum.	Prop. 42
Ergo quod ad se convertitur, a se est, et dum sibi se iungit sibi ipsi dat bene esse, ergo et esse.	Potest autem omnis causa ei quod ab ipsa dare cum substantia quam dat et id quod bene substantie quam dat coniugum; quare et ipsum sibi.	Prop. 42
	Si igitur sibi ipsi bene esse exhibet, et esse utique sibi ipsi exhibebit et erit sui ipsius ypostasi dominans.	Prop. 43
Quod per se est, est semper.	Omne authypostatum perpetuum est.	Prop. 49
Quod enim a sua causa non discedit, non corrumpitur. Nihil autem se deserit.	derelinquit causam quod authypostaton tanquam se ipsum non derelinquens: causa enim est ipsum sibi ipsi. Incorruptibile ergo est authypostaton omne.	Prop. 46
	Aut compositum est aut in alio subsistit. Aut enim dissolubile est in ea ex quibus est et semper componitur ex illis in que dissolvitur; aut subiecto indigens, e derelinquens subiectum vergit in non ens. Si autem simplex fuerit et in se ipso, indissolubile erit et indispergibile.	Prop. 48

Quod per operationem convertitur ad se, etiam essentiam. Ergo per se est, sicut per se operatur. Anima intellectiva se ipsam appetit ergo scitque, etc.	Omne quod secundum operationem ad se ipsum est conversiuum et secundum substantiam conversum est ad se ipsum.	Prop. 44
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Although I generally agree with Robichaud’s reconstruction, I propose another interpretation of the final part of the excerpt (fol. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 10-11): ‘Quod per operationem convertitur ad se, etiam essentiam. Ergo per se est, sicut per se operatur. Anima intellectiva se ipsam appetit ergo scitque, etc’.

In his reconstruction, Robichaud refers both sentences to Proclus’s proposition 44, concerning ‘All that is capable in its activity of reversion upon itself is also reverted upon itself in respect of its existence’. By contrast, in my own analysis, I argue that the final sentence, concerning the *anima intellectiva*, may be referred to proposition 186, stating that ‘Every soul is an incorporeal substance and separable from body’ (Πᾶσα ψυχή ἀσώματός ἐστιν οὐσία καὶ χωριστὴ σώματος).<sup>242</sup>

Robichaud also highlights Ficino’s use of ‘scholastic mereological terminology’ in the expression *partem extra partem* and states that this terminology provides evidence that Ficino ‘is working with a Medieval tradition for understanding Proclus’.<sup>243</sup> Among the potential sources for Ficino’s treatment of Proclus’s arguments, Robichaud also includes Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome and Niccolò Tignosi da Foligno (1402-1474). Robichaud’s considerations on

<sup>242</sup> The expression *se ipsam appetit ergo scitque* seems to echo the second sentence of proposition 186, stating that ‘For if it knows itself, and if whatever knows itself reverts upon itself’ (εἰ γὰρ γινώσκει ἑαυτήν, πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἑαυτὸ γινώσκον πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφεται). In Ficino’s sentence, the verbal form *scit* corresponds to the Greek γινώσκει. In the other parts of the section, Ficino always translate ἐπίστρέφω and its derivatives with *ad se convertitur*, *conversio*, *ad se conversum*. The expression *se ipsam appetit* appears to be a sort of *variatio* of the concept of self-reversion (πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφεται).

<sup>243</sup> Robichaud, ‘Fragments of Marsilio Ficino’s Translations’, p. 19

Tignosi are based on the assumption the Ficino studied medicine and scholastic philosophy under him in the 1450s.<sup>244</sup>

As stated above, my analysis confirms that Ficino probably had access to the Greek original. However, his choice of terminology is not necessarily and always Moerbekian. For instance, unlike William of Moerbeke, Ficino does not use the term *authypostatum*, a mere transliteration of the Greek. Furthermore, when writing *anima intellectiva se ipsam appetit ergo scitque*, the Florentine scholar uses a terminology deriving from both Neoplatonic and Christian mysticism. Indeed, in these doctrines, the *appetitus naturalis* is the innate desire of all beings for God.<sup>245</sup> Finally, Robichaud's remarks concerning Tignosi as a potential source are questionable, since there is no conclusive evidence that Tignosi was actually Ficino's teacher.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Robichaud, 'Fragments of Marsilio Ficino's Translations', pp. 14, 15 and 19. Tignosi wrote two commentaries, one on Aristotle's *Ethics*, and the other on the *De Anima*. In the latter commentary, Tignosi focusses on the sense's capacities for self-reversion and his arguments draw on Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, particularly on proposition 15. On Tignosi, see Antonio Rotondò, 'Niccolò Tignosi da Foligno (Polemiche aristoteliche di un maestro del Ficino)' *Rinascimento* 9 (1958), 217-55; Ernesto Berti, 'La dottrina platonica delle idee nel pensiero di Niccolò Tignosi da Foligno', in *Filosofia e cultura in Umbria tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Perugia: Centro di studi umbri, 1967), pp. 533-65; David A. Lines, "'Faciliter Edoceri': Niccolò Tignosi and the Audience of Aristotle's *Ethics* in Fifteenth-Century Florence"; *Studi Medievali* 40 (1999), 139-68; Id. *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1300-1650): The Universities and the Problem of Moral Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 192-220. Arthur Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, pp. 138-58; Dag Hasse, 'Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance: Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino Nifo, Francesco Vimercato', in "*Herbst des Mittelalters*"? *Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by J. A. Aertsen and Martin Pickavé (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 447-73.

<sup>245</sup> See Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*, pp. 180-212; Endre Von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus. Le réception critique du platonisme chez les Pères de l'Eglise*, trans. by Elisabeth Kessler (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), pp. 175-193 and 229-239.

<sup>246</sup> Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, p. 140 provides a detailed outline of the arguments supporting the assumption that Ficino was a student of Niccolò Tignosi. Among these arguments, there is the statement that Ficino's notes on MS Ricc. 135 were taken from Ficino's lectures: see Arnaldo Della Torre, *Storia dell'accademia platonica di Firenze* (Florence: Carsenecchi, 1902), p. 499; Rotondò, 'Niccolò Tignosi da Foligno', p. 228. However, Field pointed out that it is rather difficult to match Ficino's notes with Tignosi's commentary on the *Ethics*. Lines, "'Faciliter Edoceri'", pp. 143-44 and *Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 192, who agrees with Field's remarks on MS Ricc. 135, has recently challenged this long-held assumption on Ficino and Tignosi.

MS Borg. gr. 22 provides further evidence that Ficino actually worked on translating Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, but it does not provide us with a proper translation. What the Florentine scholar is doing here is to create a set of excerpted propositions focussing on the same topic: this scholarly paraphrase is similar to the other parts forming the Latin section of the manuscript. Ficino could have combined and summarized the Proclean arguments on his own initiative or 'could possibly have been encouraged to do so by Thomas Aquinas who offers a similar reading of Proclus, combining the propositions 15, 16, 43, and 44 in his discussion from lectio 15 in his *Super Librum de causis expositio*'.<sup>247</sup> In sum, the Proclean section of the manuscript is unlikely to be a part of the lost translation of the *Elements of Theology* that Ficino mentions in his letter to Poliziano.

#### IV. 4 Plotinus

The Latin section of the manuscript also includes excerpts from Plotinus's treatise on the immortality of the soul, *Enneads* IV 7 (fols 166<sup>r</sup> l. 13-167<sup>r</sup> l. 17). This section is quite similar to the longer Plotinian section that Ficino included in MS Ricc. 92.

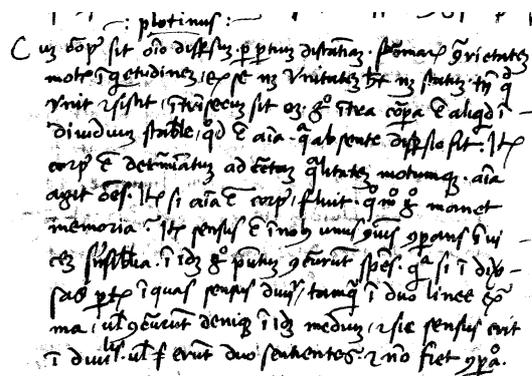


Figure 5. Detail of fol. 166<sup>r</sup>: Incipit of the Plotinian section

<sup>247</sup> Robichaud, 'Fragments of Marsilio Ficino's Translations', p. 20. For the passage, see Thomas Aquinas, *Supra librum de causis expositio*, ed. by H. D. Saffrey (Paris: Vrin, 2002), pp. 88-89.

The following table provides my reconstruction of the set of Plotinian texts. Columns one and two illustrate how the section is arranged, whilst columns three and four give my own reconstruction:

**Table 5**

<b>Plotinian section in MS Borg. gr. 22 (fols 166<sup>r</sup> l. 13-167<sup>r</sup> l. 17) <i>Enn. IV 7</i></b>			
<b>Structure of the section</b>		<b>Proposed Reconstruction</b>	
<b>1. Folium</b>	<b>Latin excerpts forming the Plotinian section (transcription)</b>	<b>Plotinus's <i>Enneads</i></b>	<b>Content</b>
fol. 166 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 13-19	Cum corpus sit omnino dispersum per partium distantiam, formarum contrarietatem, motus inquietudinem, ex se nec unitatem habet nec statum. Tamen quod unit et sistit, intrinsecum sit oportet. Ergo intra corpora est aliquid individuum stabile, quod est anima, qua absente dispersio sit. Item corpus est determinatum ad certam qualitatem motumque. Anima agit omnes. Item si anima est corpus, fluit. Quomodo ergo manet memoria?	?	This part is a sort of summary of key concepts concerning the soul. Man is a composite of soul and body; the body perishes, but the soul, which is the real self, survives. The soul is an incorporeal, subsistent entity, which is capable of self-motion.
fol. 166 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 19-23	Item sensus est in nobis unus contrarius comparans invicem sensibilia. In idem ergo punctum concurrunt species, quia si in diversas partes in quas sensus dividitur, tamquam in duo lineae extrema, ut concurrunt denique in idem medium, et sic sensus erit individualis vel erunt duo sensationes. Et non fiet comparatio.	<i>Enn. IV 7.</i> 6, 5-20	On sense-perception If anything is going to perceive anything, it must itself be one and perceive every object by one and the same means.
fol. 166 <sup>v</sup> , ll. 1-18	Certe in unum conducuntur species in pupillis. Alioque quomodo per istas maxima sentiremus Multo magis in sensu communi ergo et iste est impartibilis. Nam si sit partibilis, simul cum ipso ingrediens dividitur ut aliud alia pars sentiat. Nec quidquam nostrum totum sensibile percipiet. Est tamen unum omne quomodo enim dividitur.	<i>Enn. IV 7.</i> 6, 21-47	On sense-perception If the object of perception was one, either it will be gathered together into a unity—which is what does obviously happen; for it is gathered together in the pupils of the eyes themselves: or how could the largest things be seen through the pupil of our

	<p>Nec enim aequali aequale coaptatur.</p> <p>Quia ipse sentiens non est aequalis omni sensibili. In quot vero partes dividitur? An in tot quot habet in se ingrediens sensibile? Et quaeque pars animae sentit partem illius aliquam. Utrum et partium particulae sentiant particulas? Sed impossibile hoc: si autem aliquid quidquam totum sentiat, cum magnitudo sit apta dividi in infinitum, infinite sensationes erunt circa unumquodque sensibile suique, tamquam infinitae sint eiusdem in sensu imagines. Item si anima est corpus corporaliter imagines suscipit ut cera a sigillo. [[Si]] ergo tanta iudicabitur res quanta est pars accipiens imaginem ac si anima est corpus fluidum, non tenet eas.</p> <p>Ergo deest memoria. Si solidum, novae imagines non imprimuntur nisi deleantur priores.</p>		<p>eye? The sections aims to demonstrate that it is impossible for the soul to be a body.</p>
<p>fol. 166v, l. 18 – 167r, l. 8</p>	<p>Item dolet pes. Anima sentit. Consentit tota quia tota compatitur et concurrat per omnia membra ad remedium. Si hoc fit sine remedio anima est ubique tota.</p> <p>Si per successionem itaque una pars tradit alii usque ad principale.</p> <p>Oportet si primum patiens sensit, aliam sensationem esse secundi, et aliam tertii. Si sit per successionem sensus et infinitas sensationes unius passionis fieri et post [[stremo]] omnes sentire ipsum principale, et suam praeter alias. Et revera quamlibet illarum non sentire dolorem in pede. Sed aliam altioris partis, aliam altioris multosque esse dolores. Et principale sentire tamen passionem sui. Ergo cum non fiat per successionem anima est ubique tota, tota sibi compatiens et consentiens. Quod corpus non facit.</p>	<p><i>Enn.</i> IV 4. 19, 14-25</p> <p><i>Enn.</i> IV 7. 8, 10-30</p>	<p>The section from IV 7 is introduced by a sentence recalling concepts which are expounded in <i>Enn.</i> IV 4</p> <p>The soul is <i>ubique tota</i>, i.e. is present as a whole everywhere in the body. Although the soul is different from the suffering part, the ruling principle perceives that it is affected, and the whole soul is affected in the same way.</p>
<p>fol. 167r, ll. 8-12</p>	<p>Item intelligere est percipere sine corpore cum percipiat incorporea. Ergo quod intelligit est sine</p>	<p><i>Enn.</i> IV 7. 8, 1-14</p>	<p>It would not be possible to think if soul was any kind of body. Thinking</p>

	corpore. Quod enim partibile est. Quomodo impartibile percipit? An aliquo sui impartibili. Si ita quod intelligit non est corpus non enim opus est toto ad attingendum.		cannot be comprehension through the body, otherwise it will be the same as sense-perception.
fol. 167 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 12-17	Item. Ut intellectus est perceptio omnino separatorum et sic ipse est separatus ut abstractorum a materia per vim suimet et sic erit separatus, quod alia separat. Item anima quicquid mali habet, habet per admixtionem corporis, quicquid boni per separationem. Nihil addendum ipsi ut perfecta sit, sed eat in se ipsam. Omnia reperit divisa aeterna. Subiectum vero istorum tale est qualia ista.	?	This part is similar to the first part of the section. Sort of paraphrastic summary concerning intellect and the noetic process and the perfection of the soul.

My analysis of the section confirms what Paul Henry argued in his brief description of the Borgianus, namely that the *excerpta* 'contiennent non pas une traduction de certains fragments, mais une sorte de résumé de quelques arguments du traité IV, 7'.<sup>248</sup> Ficino produces an excerpted translation, summarizing passages from the Plotinian treatise. The summary concerns arguments on the immortality of the soul, focussing in particular on sense-perception and the noetic process.

When making up the excerpt, Ficino used two different approaches to Plotinus's text. Table 5 shows that the central core of the section, mainly concerning sense-perception, consists of a paraphrastic translation of several chapters of Plotinus's treatise (*Enn.* IV 7, 6 and IV 7, 8). This translation, like the one produced by Ficino in the first Plotinian section of MS Ricc. 92, is heavily reliant on the original text. By contrast, the first and final parts of the section

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<sup>248</sup> Henry, *Les Manuscrits*, II, p. 44.

consist of an excerpted summary of some Plotinian passages that are harder to identify.

Given that MS Borg. gr. 22 dates back to the 1490s, I expected Ficino's direct source to be his own Latin translation of Plotinus's *Enneads*, completed in 1486 and printed in 1492. The following table shows more clearly the extent to which the Plotinian section in MS Borg. gr. 22 relates to Ficino's translation. The table provides the original text of *Enn.* IV 7.6 (left column), Ficino's translation (central column) and Ficino's excerpt (right column):

**Table 6**

<i>Enn.</i> IV 7. 6, 21- 47	Ficino's official translation 1492	Ficino's excerpt in Ms Borg. gr. 22 (fol. 166 <sup>v</sup> , ll. 1-18)
<p>συναίρειται γὰρ καὶ ἐν αὐταῖς ταῖς κόραις· ἢ πῶς ἂν τὰ μέγιστα διὰ ταύτης ὀρῶτο; ὥστε ἔτι μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ ἡγεμονοῦν ἰόντα οἷον ἀμερῆ νοήματα γίνεσθαι—καὶ ἔσται ἀμερὲς τοῦτο· ἢ μεγέθει ὄντι τοῦτῳ συμμερίζοιτο ἂν, ὥστε ἄλλο μέρος καὶ μηδένα ἡμῶν ὅλου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ τὴν ἀντίληψιν ἴσχειν. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἔν ἐστι τὸ πᾶν· πῶς γὰρ ἂν καὶ διαίροιτο; Οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ ἴσον τῷ ἴσῳ ἐφαρμόσει, ὅτι οὐκ ἴσον τὸ ἡγεμονοῦν παντὶ αἰσθητῷ. Κατὰ πηλίκα οὖν ἡ διαίρεσις; Ἡ εἰς τσαυτὰ διαιρεθήσεται, καθόσον ἂν ἀριθμοῦ ἔχοι εἰς ποικιλίαν τὸ εἰσιὸν αἴσθημα; Καὶ ἕκαστον δὴ ἐκείνων τῶν μερῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἄρα καὶ τοῖς μορίοις αὐτοῦ αἰσθήσεται. Ἡ ἀναίσθητα τὰ μέρη τῶν μορίων ἔσται; Ἀλλὰ ἀδύνατον. Εἰ δὲ ὅτιον παντὸς αἰσθήσεται, εἰς ἅπειρα διαίρεσθαι τοῦ μεγέθους πεφυκός τις ἀπείρους καὶ αἰσθήσεις καθ' ἕκαστον αἰσθητὸν συμβήσεται γίνεσθαι ἕκαστῶ οἷον τοῦ αὐτοῦ αἰσθητὸν συμβήσεται γίνεσθαι ἕκαστῶ οἷον τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπείρους ἐν τῷ ἡγεμονοῦντι ἡμῶν εἰκόνας. Καὶ μὴν σώματος ὄντος τοῦ αἰσθανομένου οὐκ ἂν ἄλλον τρόπον γένοιτο τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ οἷον ἐν κηρῷ ἐνσημανθεῖσαι</p>	<p>Congregantur enim et in pupillis, alioquin non possent per eas maxima quaeque videri. Quamoberem quae ad ipsum animae principale proveniunt, multo magis velut notiones quaedam sunt individuae: ideoque id quoque erit indivisibile: alioquin si habeat magnitudinem una cum re sensibili dividetur. Itaque pars alia sentiet aliam, nihilque in nobis sentiendam rem totam percipiet. At enim unum est id totum: quo enim pacto dividi potest? Nam si dividatur, nequit tamquam aequale aequali prorsus accommodari: quoniam principale nostrum cum omni re sentienda aequale esse non potest. In quot igitur divisio fiet. Numquid in tot secabitur in quot partes numero quod incidit sensibile distribuitur. Et quaelibet partium animae particula sentiet idem? An forte particulae partium sensu carebunt. At vero id fieri nequit. Sin autem quodlibet totum sentiat, cum magnitudo dividi queat in infinitum, nimirum innumerabiles quoque sensus circa unumquodque sensibile in unoquoque contingent, quasi innumerabiles in principali nostro rei eiusdem sint imagines. Praeterea si corpus sit quod sentit, non alio modo sentire contingent quam si quaedam ab anulo in cera imprimantur imagines, sive in</p>	<p>Certe in unum conducuntur species in pupillis. Alioque quomodo per istas maxima sentiremus</p> <p>Multo magis in sensu communi ergo et iste est impartibilis</p> <p>Nam si sit partibilis, simul cum ipso ingrediens dividitur ut aliud alia pars sentiat. Nec quidquam nostrum totum sensibile percipiet. Est tamen unum omne quomodo enim condiditur. Nec enim aequali aequale coaptatur.</p> <p>Quia ipse sentiens non est aequalis omni sensibili. In quot vero partes dividitur? An in tot quot habet in se ingrediens sensibile?</p> <p>Et quaeque pars animae sentit partem illius aliquam. Utrum et partium particulae sentiant particulas? Sed impossibile hoc: si autem aliquid quidquam totum sentiat, cum magnitudo sit apta dividi in infinitum, infinite sensationes erunt circa unumquodque sensibile suique, tamquam infinitae sint eiusdem in sensu imagines.</p> <p>Item si anima est corpus corporaliter imagines suscipit ut cera a sigillo.</p>

<p>ἀπὸ δακτυλίων σφραγίδες, εἴτ' οὖν εἰς αἷμα, εἴτ' οὖν εἰς ἀέρα τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐνημαιομένων. Καὶ εἰ μὲν ὡς ἐν σώμασιν ὑγροῖς, ὅπερ καὶ εὐλογον, ὥσπερ εἰς ὕδωρ συγχυθήσεται, καὶ οὐκ ἔσται μνήμη· εἰ δὲ μένουσιν οἱ τύποι, ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλους ἐνημαίνεσθαι ἐκείνων κατεχόντων, ὥστε ἄλλαι αἰσθήσεις οὐκ ἔσονται, ἢ γινομένων ἄλλων ἐκείνοι οἱ πρότεροι ἀπολοῦνται· ὥστε οὐδὲν ἔσται μνημονεύειν.<sup>249</sup></p>	<p>sanguine, sive in aere quodam sensibilia imprimantur. Ac si tamquam in corporibus humidis, quod et probabile est, certe tamquam in aqua confundentur imagines, neque memoria erit ulla. Quod si figurae permaneant, aut non licebit alias ibi fingi prioribus permanentibus.<sup>250</sup></p>	<p>[[Si]] ergo tanta iudicabitur res quanta est pars accipiens imaginem ac si anima est corpus fluidum, non tenet eas. Ergo deest memoria. Si solidum, novae imagines non imprimuntur nisi deleantur priores.</p>
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It is clear that the excerpts considerably differ from Ficino's 1492 translation. They also differ from the version in MS Conv. Sopp. E. 1. 2562 (fols 275<sup>r</sup>-283<sup>r</sup>), containing the first draft of Ficino's translation. Additionally, I did not find any relevant information in MS Par. gr. 1816, the working copy transcribed by Scoutariotes and extensively annotated by Ficino.<sup>251</sup>

As the table suggests, the Latin paraphrase in MS Borg. gr. 22 may be the result of a different approach and use of Plotinus's text. In this case, Ficino does not focus on the philological reconstruction and translation of the *Enneads*, but on

<sup>249</sup> 'for it is gathered together in the pupils of the eyes themselves: or how could the largest things be seen through the pupil of our eye? So still more when they reach the ruling principle they will become like partless thoughts—and this ruling principle will be partless; or if this is a size the sense-objects would be divided up along with it, so that each part would perceive a different part of the object and none of us would apprehend the perceptible thing as a whole. But the whole is one: for how could it be divided? So equal will certainly not fit equal, because the ruling principle is not equal to every perceptible object. Into how many parts, then, will its division be? Will it be divided into a number of parts corresponding to the varied complexity of the entering sense-object? And of course each of those parts of the soul will perceive with its own subdivisions. Or will the parts of the parts be without perception? But this is impossible. But if any and every part perceives the whole, since a size is naturally capable of division to infinity, there will come to be an infinity of perceptions for each observer regarding the sense-object, like an infinite number of images of the same thing in our ruling principle. Again, since the object being perceived is a body, perception could not occur in any other way than that in which seal-impressions are imprinted in wax from seal-rings, whether the sense-objects are imprinted on blood or on air. And if this happens as it does in fluid bodies, which is probable, the impression will be obliterated as if it was on water, and there will be no memory. But if the impressions persist, either it will not be possible for others to be imprinted because the first will prevent them, so that there will be no other sense-impressions, or if others are made, those former impressions will be destroyed: so that there will be no possibility of remembering'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. by A. H. Armstrong, IV (1984), pp. 354-57.

<sup>250</sup> *Plotini Opera Omnia*, ed. by Toussaint, pp. 461-62.

<sup>251</sup> The text of *Enn.* IV 7 is copied at fols 73<sup>v</sup> l. 26 - 85<sup>r</sup> l. 11.

collecting all available sources in a given theme. The Plotinian passages here have close affinity with the passages from Thomas Aquinas and Proclus: they concern the theme of the soul as incorporeal, subsistent entity. This explains why the Florentine scholar produces an excerpted, condensed summary, which we may define as a scholarly paraphrase, rather than a faithful rendering of the original. Additionally, unlike Thomas Aquinas's and Proclus's texts, which consist in a set of theorems, Plotinus expounds his ideas in a free, fluid way, and his thought progresses as he writes. This style does not fit the purpose of the manuscript. Thus when producing this section, Ficino seeks to reduce and condense the text into a set of fixed ideas and concepts.

#### **IV. 5 Plato**

The final part of the Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22 (fol. 169<sup>f</sup> l. 18- 169<sup>v</sup>) consists of a long passage introduced by the heading 'Plato'. I will now provide a transcription of the relevant text:

fol.168<sup>f</sup>

Alia sunt ista pulchra, aliud pulchritudo ipsa. Haec multa, ipsa una | ratio. Haec esse et videri possunt non pulchra, illa non [hic est pull<sup>20</sup>chritudo]. Haec partim pulchra, partim turpia. Illa suo contrario non | est mixta. Haec et pulchra sunt et aliquid aliud. Illa solum pulchritudo est. Illa certe in istis non est. Quia super omne quod in aliol

fol. 169<sup>v</sup>

et per participationem est, est quod per essentiam in se ipso. Animus noster | rationem illius habet per quam iudicat quam ista pulchritudini accedant | et quam distent nec comparare ista ad tertium ipsum sibi ignotum potest, | nec ab istis haurit illam. Imperfecta enim species non facit perfectam. | <sup>5</sup>Et particularis forma non celat universalem ergo vel a se ipso vel | divinitus. Aeterna est ratio universalis pulchritudinis. Aeterna anima | illius subiectum. Haec nec magna est quia parvis non competeret nec | parva, quia non magis. Ergo incorporea est. Habet item animus universales species, habet | rationes: veri, boni, iusti, circuli, quadrati, ad quas comparans sin<sup>10</sup>gula iudicat, et anima quae a nullo didicit. innatas igitur | habet. Hae non possunt aliter se habere ergo perpetuae. Ergo et animus. | Veritas

tantam habet vim ut interempta vivat, si | modo sit verum eam interiisse. Anima subiectum veritatis perpetuae perpetua est ne intereat veritas. Item vera rei | <sup>15</sup>ratio non est in materia quia et subiecto inficitur et contrario miscetur. Veram habet animus, per quam falsas emendet et | sensus [de] ab illis deceptos corrigat. Item quo magis | naturae spiritali aeternae haeret animus, magis acuitur et gaudet. Quodlibet vero simili perficitur atque gaudet. Contrario. Contra. | <sup>20</sup>animus per coniunctionem ad corpus debilitatur, per abstractionem | roboratur. Ergo per summam abstractionem maxime. Item pro proprio vitio non perit animus, ergo nullo. Externum | enim materiam non obest, nisi prius internum inferat. | Item appetitio veritatis est naturalis. Cum corpore impediendo non | <sup>25</sup>habetur. Ergo post illud. Si quidem quod naturale est non frustratur.

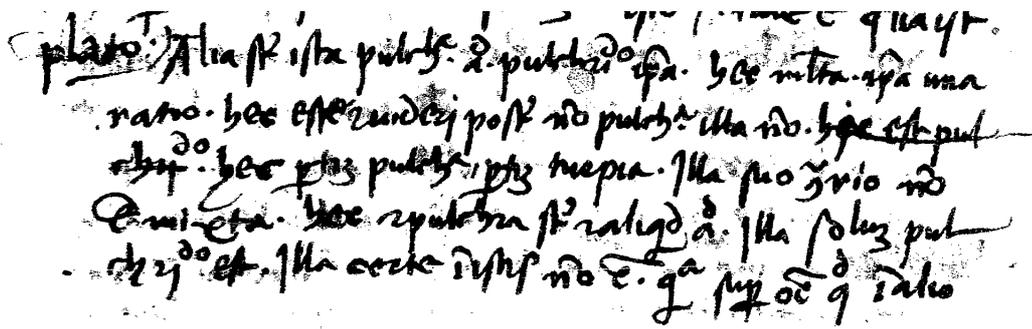


Figure 6. Detail of fol. 169<sup>r</sup>. *Incipit of the Platonic passage*

The first part of the text deals with a distinction between physical and universal beauty. According to this distinction, Beauty is different from beautiful objects (*alia sunt ista pulchra, aliud pulchritudo ipsa*). Indeed, there are many beautiful bodies, but only one Beauty itself (*haec multa, ipsa una ratio*). Moreover, some corporeal objects can seem, and can be, not beautiful, but beauty itself cannot be not beautiful (*haec esse et videri possunt non pulchra, illa non*). Bodies are partly beautiful and partly ugly, whilst beauty is not mixed with its opposite (*haec partim pulchra, partim turpia. Illa suo contrario non est mixta*). Objects can be beautiful and something other (*haec et pulchra et aliquid aliud*). Beauty itself is solely Beauty (*Illa solum pulchritudo est*). Our soul possesses the concept of Beauty (*Animus noster rationem illius habet*): according to this

concept, the soul estimates how close and how distant to beauty things are (*per quam iudicat quam ista pulchritudini accedant et quam distent*). The idea of universal beauty is eternal and so is the soul, which is the subject of universal beauty (*aeterna est ratio universalis pulchritudinis, aeterna anima illius subiectum*). Beauty is not large, because it would not accord with small bodies (*haec nec magna est, quia parvis non competeret*) and is not small, because then it would not form large bodies: therefore, it is not corporeal (*nec parva, quia non magis. Ergo incorporea est*).

After these arguments concerning the *ratio universalis pulchritudinis*, the passage focusses on other universal rational principles (*rationes*). The soul possesses the universal *rationes* of truth, goodness, justice, circular and squared shapes (*habet item animus universales species; habet rationes veri, boni, iusti, circuli, quadrati*). It is through comparison with these reasons that it may know individual objects (*ad quas comparans singula iudicat*). The *rationes* cannot be other than they are (*hae non possunt aliter se habere*), thus they are eternal (*ergo perpetuae*) and so is the soul (*ergo et animus*). Regarding truth in particular, the soul is defined as subject of eternal truth, thus being eternal in turn (*anima subiectum veritatis perpetuae perpetua est*). The true rational principle of things is not in the matter (*vera rei ratio non est in materia*) and the soul possesses the true *ratio*, through which it amends errors and corrects the senses when they are deceived by rational errors (*per quam falsas emendet et sensus ab illis deceptos corrigat*). Therefore, the closer the soul gets to the spiritual and eternal nature (*quo magis naturae spiritali aeternae haeret animus*) the sharper it gets and the more it rejoices (*magis acuitur et gaudet*). By contrast, through its conjunction

with the body, the soul weakens (*animus per coniunctionem ad corpus debilitatur*), since the body hinders the soul's natural desire for truth (*naturalis appetitio veritatis*).

The passage that I have summarized is similar to the drafts that Ficino produced in MS Ricc. 92. Although the section is introduced by the *titulatio* 'Plato', referring to a philosophical *auctoritas*, the text is not a paraphrase or a translation of a specific passage from a Platonic dialogue. It rather includes 'Platonic' images, doctrines and arguments that Ficino previously developed in his major philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology*. More importantly, the first part of the passage concerns the process of cognition: love for physical beauty is the starting point for the soul's elevation towards divine Beauty. The final part expounds concepts related to the cognition process as well.

As far as the parts on beauty are concerned, a similar distinction is drawn in *Theol. Plat.* XI, 4, dealing with the theme of Platonic ideas. The relevant passage reads as follows. I have highlighted the sentences that are echoed in MS Borg. gr. 22:

**aliud pulchritudo quam res pulchrae** similiterque de ceteris speciebus quas Plato vocat ideas. Corpora enim pulchra multa sunt, ipsa vero pulchritudo una est; nam omne primum summumque in aliquo rerum genere unum est solummodo. Rursus haec pulchra duas habent naturas, turn materiam corporalem, quae fit particeps pulchritudinis, turn pulchritudinis qualitatem; **ipsa vero pulchritudo nihil est aliud quam pulchritudo**, quoniam quicquid est in genere aliquo primum tale nihil aliud est quam tale. **Item, corpora haec partim pulchra sunt, partim etiam turpia, nam ex ipsa sua materia, quae aliud aliquid est quam pulchritudo, deformia iudicantur; ipsa vero pulchritudo turpitudinem non admittit, si modo opposita vicissim se fugiunt.** Corpora quoque pulchra mutantur et modo pulchra sunt, modo contra. **Pulchritudo vero ideo immutabilis est, quia et nihil est aliud quam pulchritudo**, et quantum pulchritudo est, non mutatur, quia sic neque vertitur in contrarium, neque privatur quandoque fundamento et sustentaculo, cum seipsa sustineat. **Adde quod corporalia quaeque aliis pulchra videri possunt, aliis vero non pulchra; ipsa vero pulchritudo carere pulchritudine cogitari non potest.** Praeterea corpora formosa divisibilia sunt, pulchritudo autem indivisibilis. **Non parva est, quia magna corpora non formaret; non magna, quia parvis corporibus non congrueret.** Denique non est

corporea, quoniam rebus spiritalibus non competeret. Non est etiam temporalis, quia rebus non inesset aeternis. Inest autem multo magis animabus et mentibus quam corporibus.<sup>252</sup>

Concerning the definition of *rationes*, which ‘cannot be other than they are’ (*haec non possunt aliter se habere*), a similar definition is provided in *Theol. Plat.* VIII, 2: ‘Praetera rationes rerum immutabiles sunt, nam aliter se habere non possunt; omnia vero corporalia mutabilia sunt’.<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, the definition of soul, indicated as ‘subject of the eternal truth’ (*anima subiectum veritatis perpetuae*) echoes a similar definition provided in *Theol. Plat.* XI, 6, dealing with mind as subject of the eternal truth (*mens est subiectum veritatis aeternae*).<sup>254</sup> In addition, we notice that Ficino uses the term *subiectum* in the final part of the Plotinian section, concerning arguments that are similarly developed in the conclusion of the passage that I have analysed. Indeed, the Plotinian passage states that what is negative for the soul derives from its conjunction with the body, what is positive is the result of the separation of the eternal soul from the body: ‘anima quicquid mali habet, habet per admixtionem corporis, quicquid boni per

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<sup>252</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by Hankins, trans. by Allen, III (2003), pp. 243-45: ‘beauty is other than beautiful objects, and so on for the rest of the species which Plato calls Ideas. For there are many beautiful bodies, but only one beauty itself; for everything that is first and highest in some universal genus is one in one way alone. Again, beautiful things have two natures, the corporeal nature which becomes a participant in beauty, and the quality of beauty. But beauty itself is nothing other than beauty, because whatever is first in some genus is nothing else but such. Again, bodies are partly beautiful and partly ugly; for they are adjudged ugly because of their matter, which is something other than beauty; but beauty itself does not admit of ugliness if only [because] opposites in turn shun each other. Beautiful bodies also change: they are beautiful at one moment and not at another. But beauty is unchangeable precisely because it is nothing other than beauty, and to the extent that it is beauty, it does not change because it neither turns towards its opposite, nor is ever deprived of its basis and support since it sustains itself. Moreover, some corporeal objects can seem beautiful to some people but not to others; but beauty itself cannot be conceived of as lacking beauty. Beautiful bodies are divisible, beauty is indivisible: it is not small, because then it would not form large bodies; it is not large, because then it would not accord with small bodies; and it is not corporeal, because it would not accord with things spiritual. It is not temporal even, because it would not be present in things eternal’.

<sup>253</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by Hankins, trans. by Allen, II (2002), pp. 282-83: ‘Again, the universal rational principles are unchangeable, for they cannot be other than they are. But all corporeals are changeable’.

<sup>254</sup> See Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. by Hankins, trans. by Allen, III (2003), pp. 297-98.

separationem. Nihil addendum ipsi ut perfecta sit, sed eat in se ipsam. omnia reperit divisa aeterna'. Finally, the expression *naturalis appetitio veritatis*, recalls the terminology previously used by Ficino to define the *anima intellectiva* in the Proclean section.

#### **IV. 6 Conclusion**

After a careful analysis of both the physical and textual features of Ms. Borg. Gr. 22, we can argue that the manuscript, belonging to a later stage of Ficino's activity, seems to be the result of a well-established methodology, since it shows once again that the Florentine scholar was interested in both philosophical doctrines and textual problems. As far as the Greek section of the manuscript is concerned, Ficino was engaged in a process of *constitutio textus* by using different Greek manuscripts. Whilst producing the additional section of the manuscript, Ficino collected texts that were available to him on the specific doctrine of cognition, from Thomas Aquinas to Plotinus and Proclus, evidently to use them in his original works and point out the essential affinity among seemingly diverse traditions. This methodology seems to be the result of two coexisting aspects of Ficino's work: first of all, his critical and philological attitude; secondly his firm belief that different texts and sources belonged to the same doctrinal and philosophical matrix, that of the *prisca theologia*.

As stated in the introduction, the manuscript is not only a textual, but also a codicological miscellany. The original manuscript is made of parchment, whilst the additional section consists of paper. In her study on note-taking in Early Modern Europe, Ann Blair states that 'the explosion of excerpting in the

Renaissance can be in part explained by the use of paper'.<sup>255</sup> When discussing the use of parchment and paper among humanists, Silvia Rizzo argues that 'trattandosi di materiale meno robusto e meno pregiato, si scrive su carta ciò che è provvisorio, non definitivo, non destinato a sfidare i secoli: così ad esempio le lettere private, gli abbozzi e le prime stesure di opere letterarie'.<sup>256</sup> The Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22, as well as the Plotinian section of MS Ricc. 92, provide further evidence of this practice in general, and more specifically of Ficino's excerpting and anthologization techniques: the compilation of sources was a tool that would help Ficino's development of ideas in more permanent works.

The set of texts contained in the section shows Ficino's different approaches to his *auctoritates*. When excerpting Thomas Aquinas's text, the Florentine scholar produces a patchwork of arguments and theorems taken from two different works. In this process, each theorem represents the ideal component for using this technique and producing these 'philosophical patchworks'. Every component consists of a brief conceptual unity, developing an argument and a conclusion from an initial statement. Ficino employs the same methodology in the Proclean and the Plotinian section. The text of each argument is translated, paraphrased and assembled in sequences that differ from the original text. In other words, Ficino stitches together different fragments and creates sections related to the broader theme of the separate substances and the cognition process: the soul as an incorporeal, subsistent entity, the metaphysics of self-constituted beings able to revert upon-themselves, the immortal soul and sense-perception.

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<sup>255</sup> Blair, 'The Raise of Note-Taking', p. 16.

<sup>256</sup> Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti*, p. 17.

The final part of the Latin section shows the use of a different technique and is similar to the final part of the Plotinian section of MS Ricc. 92. Ficino writes down a set of notes focussing on the theme of universal beauty and cognition under the heading 'Plato', but the text does not correspond to any Platonic passage in particular. Indeed, the text is a summary of arguments and images developed in the *Platonic Theology*.

My analysis shows that, in contrast to the texts contained in the Riccardianus, the Latin section of the Borgianus is not directly related to Ficino's commentary on the *De divinis nominibus*. In Chapter VII of the *De divinis nominibus*, there is indeed a long reasoning on the theme of wisdom, which might partly explain Ficino's interest in producing a section focussing on the soul as well as on the process of cognition. However, in Ficino's Latin commentary there is no trace of sentences or ideas deriving from these excerpts. Nevertheless, the section of MS Borg. gr. 22 provides insight into the process by which Ficino collected and incorporated in his own thought, arguments and doctrines from different and even conflicting *auctoritates* and philosophical systems. This approach is consistent with Pierre Hadot's remarks on the art of the ancient philosopher. When describing this art, Hadot refers to 'the brilliant reuse of prefabricated elements', giving 'an impression of bricolage'.<sup>257</sup> Ficino's excerpting and note-taking techniques provide material evidence of how this process of appropriation actually took place. Just like ancient and medieval philosophers before him, Ficino creates his original synthesis by incorporating in his own philosophy a 'patchwork' of ideas, images and patterns of arguments

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<sup>257</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 65.

taken from earlier traditions and skillfully read, translated and excerpted. In this process, the very act of transcription, represents 'la sola lettura che porti ad una piena appropriazione del testo'.<sup>258</sup>

In sum, the set of texts contained in the additional section of MS Borg. gr. 22 provides further evidence that Ficino's Platonism includes a rather complex body of ideas. It also confirms the importance of the theme of the immortality of the soul and its philosophical implications in his thought. Furthermore, it shows the relevance of Ficino's *auctoritates*, such as Plato, Plotinus, Proclus and Thomas Aquinas at every stage of his activity and their strong impact on his philosophical outlook.

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<sup>258</sup> Luciano Canfora, *Il copista come autore* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2002), p. 18.

## Chapter V

### Ficino the philologist

#### V. 1. 1 A long-standing prejudice

The aim of this chapter is to focus on Marsilio Ficino's philological activity. For a long time in the history of modern studies, Ficino has been regarded chiefly as a philosopher, translator and commentator, concerned with the Platonic doctrines and having little or no interest in textual and ecdotic problems. Accordingly, a number of scholars have excluded him from the ranks of the philologists. For instance, Roberto Weiss stated that 'Marsilio Ficino, despite his immense achievement as a Platonist, was ultimately but a translator and speculative philosopher, whose only real purpose was the resurrection of Plato, and who was not prepared to stoop down to the level of the grammarian'.<sup>259</sup> Similarly, another leading scholar, Michael Allen, stated that 'Ficino was not a philologist or a grammarian, he was untouched by the philological zeal of humanists like Valla and Politian, and was concerned solely with exposition, not with textual problems'.<sup>260</sup>

Undoubtedly, Ficino's main concern was to uncover the secrets of Platonic wisdom. However, his translation of Plato's corpus holds a prominent position not only in the history of the transmission of philosophical thought, but also in the history of textual transmission.<sup>261</sup> Recent studies focussing on the

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<sup>259</sup> Roberto Weiss, 'Scholarship from Petrarch to Erasmus', in *The Age of the Renaissance*, ed. by Denys Hay (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), pp. 111-22 (pp. 117-18).

<sup>260</sup> Michael J. B. Allen in Marsilio Ficino, *The Philebus commentary*, ed. by M. J. B. Allen, p. 21

<sup>261</sup> As far as Ficino's translation is concerned, Antonio Carlini pointed out that 'Se percorriamo, velocemente, la storia delle edizioni di Platone dal primo Ottocento, constatiamo che la versione di Marsilio Ficino, da un lato continua ad imporsi, accanto alla *vulgata editio* di Enrico Stefano,

genesis of 'Ficino's Plato', have provided the foundations for reconstructing his philological activity, his translation techniques and his methodology.<sup>262</sup> First of all, their studies have demonstrated that Ficino used previous translations; secondly, that the Florentine scholar did not merely base his translation on the text of the manuscript that he received from Cosimo de' Medici, MS Laur. 89. 5 (Laur. c.), but collated it with other manuscripts. His work on Plato's text seems to represent a proper *constitutio textus*, resulting from an activity of collation, in which the humanist is thought to have used a multiplicity of manuscripts.

In the following part of this chapter, in order to contextualize more thoroughly Ficino's work, I shall provide a brief account of the results of the most recent studies on his philological activity. Furthermore, I shall focus on the description and analysis of a section of MS Ambr. F 19 sup. This section, containing the full transcription of Plato's *Phaedo* (fols 77<sup>r</sup>-108<sup>v</sup> l.4), provides

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come *vulgata interpretatio* (naturalmente da *emendare* e *castigare* secondo le nuove acquisizioni critiche), dall'altro è considerata come prezioso serbatoio di varianti e congetture da ricostruire (a volte in modo discutibile) con la retroversione'. Antonio Carlini, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo di Platone', in *Marsilio Ficino. Fonti, testi, fortuna*, pp. 25-65 (p. 25).

<sup>262</sup> See James Hankins, 'Some Remarks on the History and Character of Ficino's Translation of Plato', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti*, II, pp. 287-304; Gentile, 'Note sui manoscritti greci di Platone', pp. 76-80; Gerard J. Boter, 'The Textual Tradition of Plato's *Republic*', *Mnemosyne*, Supplementum 107 (1989); Gijsbert Jonkers, *The manuscript Tradition of Plato's Timaeus and Critias* (Amsterdam: Centrale Huisdrukkerij, 1989); James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 465-78; Christian Brockmann, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung von Platons Symposium* (Wiesbaden: Verlag, 1992); Bruno Vankamp, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'*Hippias majeur* de Platon', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 25 (1995), 1-60; Bruno Vankamp, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'*Hippias mineur* de Platon', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 74 (1996), 27-55; Berti, 'Osservazioni filologiche alla versione del *Filebo* di Marsilio Ficino'; Stefano Martinelli Tempesta, *La tradizione testuale del Liside di Platone* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1997); Maria Cristina Zerbino, 'Appunti per uno studio della traduzione di Marsilio Ficino del *Timeo* platonico', *Res publica Litterarum* 20 (1997), 123-65; Mark Joyal, 'The Textual Tradition of Plato's Theages', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 28 (1998), 1-53; Paola Megna, 'Lo *Ione* platonico nella Firenze medicea', *Quaderni di Filologia Medievale e Umanistica* 2 (1999); Ernesto Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone* di Platone'; Maude Vanhaelen, 'Marsilio Ficino's version of Plato's *Euthyphro*', *Scriptorium* 56 (2002), 20-47; Antonio Carlini, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo di Platone', pp. 25-65; D. J., Murphy, 'The basis of the text of Plato's *Charmides*', *Mnemosyne* 55.2 (2002), 131-58; Francesca Lazzarin, 'Note sull'Interpretazione ficiniana del *Parmenide* di Platone', *Accademia* 5 (2003), 17-37.

evidence of an intensive scholarly activity and gives key insights into Ficino's philological methodology.

Drawing on Berti's philological survey of the text of Plato's *Phaedo* copied in the Milan manuscript,<sup>263</sup> I shall first, focus on the way in which Marsilio Ficino actually transcribed, edited, and corrected the text. More specifically, I will focus on the palaeographical analysis of a set of notes, thus complementing Berti's previous remarks. Furthermore, I shall focus on some facets of Ficino's philological activity. Berti's relevant remarks and results are of outstanding importance and led me to carry out the study of another section of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., which I shall analyse in Chapter VI. This chapter therefore serves as foundation for the following one. Lastly, by combining Berti's remarks and the results of my own analysis, I shall seek to make further remarks on the manuscript's structure, function and purpose.

### **V. 1. 2 The *status quaestionis***

Paul Oskar Kristeller emphasized at various times which scientific questions were still open and in need of further research. Among other problems, Kristeller mentioned the need for a detailed study on the genesis of Ficino's commentaries and translations. In 1966 he stated that:

The task to study Ficino as a translator and commentator of Plato thus assumes a great significance, but the difficulties of such a study are obviously great. The Greek manuscripts of Plato which Ficino used for his translation have been identified, but nobody has yet attempted to collate his Latin translations with the Greek text, or with any of the Latin translations that had been made of individual dialogues before Ficino's time, to determine which of these translations were available to him, and what use, if any, he may have made of them. In the case of Ficino's introductions and commentaries, it would be necessary to show how Ficino understood or judged the authenticity and relative importance, the aim and

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<sup>263</sup> Ernesto Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', pp. 349-425.

content of each Platonic dialogue, which doctrines he accepted or rejected, emphasized or neglected, how he understood certain difficult or corrupt passages, and what use he made of earlier Greek or Latin commentaries available to him.<sup>264</sup>

On the one hand, thanks to Allen's studies and editions in particular, our knowledge of Ficino's commentaries has considerably increased. On the other hand, Kristeller's call for a philological study of Ficino's translation remained unheeded for a long time. In 1984, Kristeller stated that 'a detailed comparison of Ficino's translation with the Greek text has not yet been made'.<sup>265</sup>

At the end of the eighties, a decisive change took place, when Sebastiano Gentile identified several *marginalia* written in Ficino's hand in MS Laur. Conv. Sopp. 180 (Laur. o), a manuscript that Antonio Corbinelli bequeathed to the Badia Fiorentina.<sup>266</sup> Ficino noted corrections and variant readings in the text of Plato's *Timaeus*: Gentile noticed that the Florentine scholar adopted variant readings from manuscript sources differing from MS Laur. 85. 9, as they belonged to other branches of textual transmission. Gentile also demonstrated that Ficino translated the *Timaeus* by taking these *variae lectiones* into account. This meant that Ficino used a third manuscript, differing from both MS Laur. Conv. Sopp. 180 and MS Laur. 85. 9. Additionally, these findings led Gentile to state that this manuscript likely represents the textual basis for Ficino's translation rather than Ms Laur. 85. 9. In sum, in the process of translating Plato's text, Ficino collated different manuscripts to which he had access.

In the same years, historians of textual transmission developed a keen interest in Ficino's translation. The surveys carried out by Boter, Jonkers and

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<sup>264</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino as a Beginning Student of Plato', *Scriptorium* 20 (1966), 41-54 (p. 42).

<sup>265</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino and His Work', p. 6.

<sup>266</sup> Gentile, 'Note sui manoscritti greci di Platone', pp. 51-84.

Brockmann demonstrated that ‘il testo greco di Ficino non poteva essere ricondotto precisamente a nessuno dei codici superstiti testimoni di una delle tradizioni precostituite, ma che sia prima di lui sia ad opera dello stesso Marsilio bisognava presupporre svariati processi di contaminazione delle lezioni greche tradizionali e l’impiego di procedimenti congetturali’.<sup>267</sup> In other words, Ficino’s translation of Plato’s dialogues is not reliant on one extant witness of Plato’s text transmission in particular. Thus the textual basis of his versions is the result of a process of *contaminatio* and *emendatio*.

Some of the studies that I have mentioned above also concern the anthologies on love and on the soul preserved by MS Ricc. 92 and Ms Ambr. F 19 sup. respectively. In his study on the textual transmission of Plato’s *Republic*, Boter advanced the hypothesis that the *excerpta* that Ficino copied in MS Ambr. F 19 sup, derive from MS Laur. c. In his survey on the manuscript tradition of the *Symposium*, Brockmann demonstrated that Ficino seemingly had at his disposal a manuscript that is currently lost, differing from Laur. c. This manuscript was likely to be the textual basis for Ficino’s translation of the Platonic dialogue and also the model for the text that he transcribed in MS Ricc. 92. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the anthology on the theme of love contained in this manuscript begins with the full transcription of the *Symposium*.

In his study of Ficino’s translation on Plato’s *Philebus*, Berti demonstrated that Ficino’s activity on the Greek text ‘rappresenta spesso una consapevole *constitutio textus*’ and that the Florentine scholar collated a number

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<sup>267</sup> Berti, ‘Marsilio Ficino e il *Fedone*’, p. 351. See also Boter, ‘The Textual Tradition’, pp. 270-75; Jonkers, *The Manuscript Tradition of Plato’s Timaeus*, pp. 305-309; Brockmann, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung von Platons Symposium*, pp. 220-29.

of different manuscripts.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, Berti formulated the hypothesis that Ficino used a working copy in the process of establishing the Greek text of the *Philebus*. This study also contains some remarks on MS Ambr F 19 sup. too: Berti argues that in the case of some dialogues, for instance the *Republic* and the *Philebus*, the *excerpta* copied by Ficino in the manuscript derive from Ms Laur. c. On the other hand, the excerpts from the *Timaeus*, which were studied by Jonkers in his study of the Platonic dialogue, probably rely on a currently lost manuscript. This manuscript derived from MS Laur. 59. 1 (the so-called Laur. a) and received a set of variant readings through a process of horizontal transmission. In other words, when transcribing the excerpts from the *Timaeus* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Ficino likely had at his disposal another manuscript containing the dialogue, which is currently lost.

In addition, Berti states that the *excerpta* contained in MS Ricc. 92 and MS Ambr. F 19 sup. that do not derive from MS Laur. c provide evidence that Ficino also possessed one or more working copies, which are currently lost. As far as their stemmatic position is concerned, although they do not belong to branches of the text transmission which are distant from MS Laur. c, nevertheless they differ from it. As a result of his analysis, Berti argues that the excerpts from the *Timaeus* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. –which were studied by Jonkers– and the text of the *Symposium* transcribed in full in MS Ricc. 92 –which was studied by Brockmann– derived from the same lost manuscripts that Ficino used as textual basis for his translations of the *Timaeus* and the *Symposium* respectively. These

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<sup>268</sup> Berti, 'Osservazioni filologiche alla versione del *Filebo*', pp. 93-167. See also Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 351.

working copies were likely the result of a complex phenomenon of *contaminatio* and horizontal transmissions of the variants.

Recent studies have confirmed what we have summarized so far. The study carried out by Stefano Martinelli Tempesta on the manuscript tradition of Plato's *Lysis* showed that Ficino's translation is not based on any extant manuscript in particular, but is the result of a philological activity 'che comprende congetture e contaminazione di varianti greche nelle più varie direzioni'.<sup>269</sup> In her study on the Latin translation of Plato's *Ion*, Paola Megna confirms that Marsilio Ficino translated several variant readings that MS Laur. c does not provide.<sup>270</sup> When analysing Ficino's translation of Plato's *Euthyphro*, Maude Vanhaelen drew similar conclusions: 'Ficino's exemplar was a manuscript that is currently lost, of which it is impossible to determine the exact stemmatic position because of the phenomenon of *contaminatio* and emendation'.<sup>271</sup>

All the studies that I have mentioned so far have demonstrated that the traditional image of Ficino as a merely speculative philosopher and translator, having no philological skills and ecdotic interests, is quite reductive. In his study on Plato's *Republic*, Boter could formulate a judgement on Ficino's work that differs considerably from Allen and Weiss' statements: 'as a textual critic, Ficino has consulted several MSS and made a number of conjectures, some of which are felicitous'.<sup>272</sup> A similar judgement was formulated by Saffrey regarding Ficino's activity on Plotinus's text: Saffrey refers to Ficino's 'exceptional gifts as a

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<sup>269</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco', p. 352. See Stefano Martinelli Tempesta, *La tradizione testuale del Liside di Platone* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1997).

<sup>270</sup> Paola Megna, 'Lo *Ione* platonico nella Firenze medicea', *Quaderni di Filologia Medievale e Umanistica* 2 (1999).

<sup>271</sup> Maude Vanhaelen, 'Marsilio Ficino's version of Plato's *Euthyphro*', *Scriptorium* 56 (2002), 20-47 (p. 41).

<sup>272</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', p. 275.

philologist'. Ficino knew only one branch of the textual traditions of Plotinus's *Enneads*, so he could not perform a proper collation of texts. Nevertheless he formulated numerous conjectures, which modern scholars took into account as valuable readings and 'demonstrated the great quality of Ficino's readings and translations'.<sup>273</sup>

Ficino's textual concerns and philological approach are also reflected in the anthology contained in MS Borg. gr. 22. Pietro Podolak's philological study showed that this manuscript, belonging to the last period of Ficino's life and activity, seems to reflect a well-established methodology, since it shows once again that the Florentine scholar was interested in the philological reconstruction of the text he intended to translate, Dionysius the Areopagite's the *De divinis nominibus*.<sup>274</sup> In order to provide a proper translation, the humanist sought to establish the Greek text by collating different manuscripts. It is against this background that we shall now consider the text of Plato's *Phaedo* contained in MS Ambr. F 19 sup.

### **V. 2. 1 Plato's *Phaedo* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Editing the dialogue**

Ficino transcribed Plato's *Phaedo* in full in Ms Ambr. F 19 sup. (fols 17r-108v l. 4). The aim of this section is to discuss how the text was actually laid out on the page as well as the editing devices that Ficino employed. The dialogue differs from the set of excerpts contained in the manuscript due to its peculiar *mise en texte*. As I will discuss more in detail in the conclusion, this aspect

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<sup>273</sup> Saffrey, 'Florence, 1492: The Reappearance of Plotinus', pp. 504-505.

<sup>274</sup> See Dionysius Areopagite, *De Mystica Theologia*, ed. by Podolak, pp. LVIII-LIX.

provides information on the process by which the anthology came into being. Let us now focus on the editing of the dialogue.

At fol. 17<sup>r</sup>, in the upper margin, Ficino wrote a Greek title (Φαίδων τοῦ Πλάτωνος), framed by a sort of ornamental band. The title is followed by the *dramatis personae*: Ἐχεκράτης. Φαίδων. Ἀπολλόδορος. Σωκράτης. Κέβης. Συμμία. Κρίτων. ὁ τῶν. ιᾶ. ὑπηρετῆς (sic):<sup>275</sup> A line, provided with a set of small loops regularly spaced out, frames this heading. The *incipit* of the Platonic dialogue is signaled by a penwork initial, set in *ekthesis* (Figure 1).

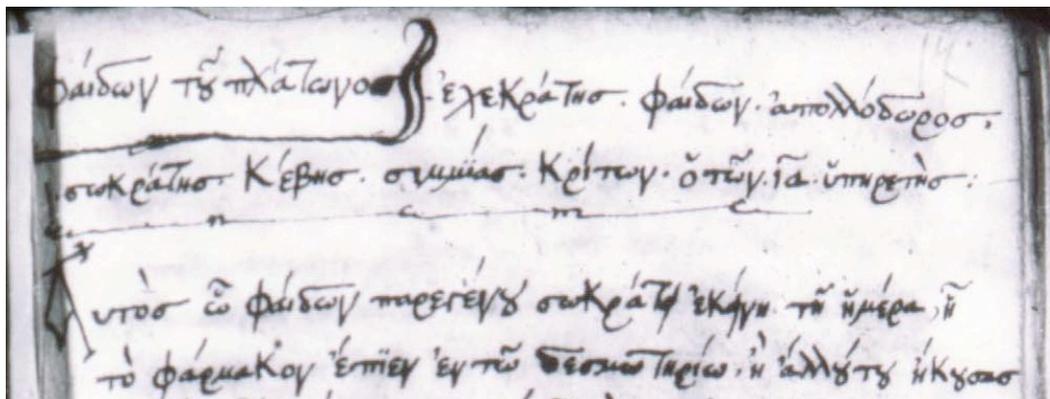


Figure 1. Detail of fol 17<sup>r</sup>: heading and *incipit* of the *Phaedo*

Several section marks and a partial numbering recur within the text. The task of providing the text with these marks was probably not performed all at once: indeed, we may detect three distinct sets of numbers. In the first part of the dialogue, Ficino drew a set of gallow-like marks. Each sign is matched with Arabic numbers, proceeding from 2 to 6 (Figure 2).<sup>276</sup>

<sup>275</sup> The abbreviation refers to ὁ τῶν ἑνδεκα ὑπηρετῆς, i.e. of the official of the Eleven, a character of the dialogue who makes his entrance at *Phaed.* 116c.

<sup>276</sup> Fol. 19<sup>v</sup> l. 19 **2) ὡς ἄτοπον** (60b: reasoning on the connection between pleasure and pain. In order to show that pleasure and pain are tightly interwoven, Socrates tells an Aesopic fable on this theme); fol. 21<sup>v</sup> l. 5 **3) Καὶ ὁ Συμμία**. (61c: human beings are gods' property: they therefore have no right to commit suicide); fol. 24<sup>r</sup> l. 8 **4) δίκαια, ἔφη, λέγεται** (63b: Socrates' 'defence'); fol. 26<sup>r</sup> l. 2 **5) ἠγοῦμεθά τι τὸν θάνατον εἶναι**; (64c: true philosophers are verging on death and

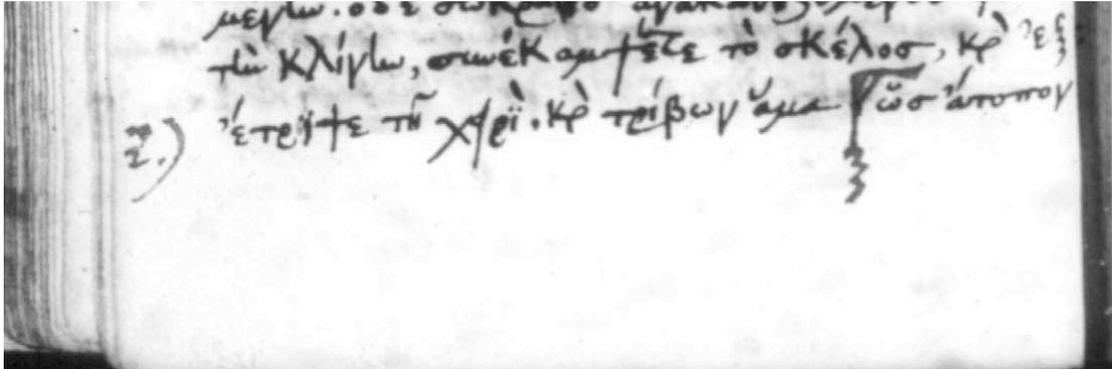


Figure 2. Detail of f. 19r: Arabic numbers and gallows-like marks (*Phaed.* 60b)

Later on, Ficino wrote the Arabic numbers 7, 8, 9, which are enclosed between two dots. The corresponding paragraph marks recur in a different shape. In his description of the Milan manuscript, Henry defines them as *courbes elliptiques*.<sup>277</sup> This set of numbers and the matching section marks are characterized by a thinner pen track, as well as by the use of a lighter shade of ink (Figure 3).

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deserving of it); fol. 27<sup>v</sup> l. 10 6) τί δὲ δὴ τὰ τοιάδε, ὦ Σιμμία; (65d: only once released from the body, the soul perceives the Being).

<sup>277</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, pp. 38-39. The relevant signs are as follows: fol. 34<sup>r</sup> l. 3 :7 : εἰπόντος δὴ τοῦ Σωκράτους ταῦτα (69e: demonstration of the immortality of the soul); fol. 38<sup>r</sup> l. 16 :8 : καὶ μὴν, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης ὑπολαβών. (72e: second demonstration of the immortality of the soul); fol. 44<sup>v</sup> l. 4 :9: ἄρ' οὖν οὕτως ἔχει, ἔφη, ἡμῖν, ὦ Σιμμία; (76d: Socrates replies to Simmias' objection).

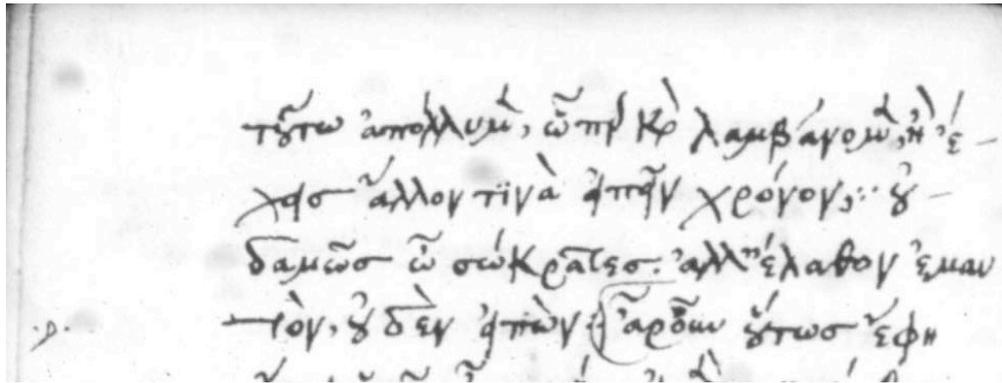


Figure 3. Detail of fol. 44<sup>v</sup>: Arabic number matching with *courbe elliptique* (Phaed. 76d)

The third set consists of Roman numerals, from X to XIII and followed by parentheses: each numeral is matched with an elliptical curve (Figure 4).<sup>278</sup>

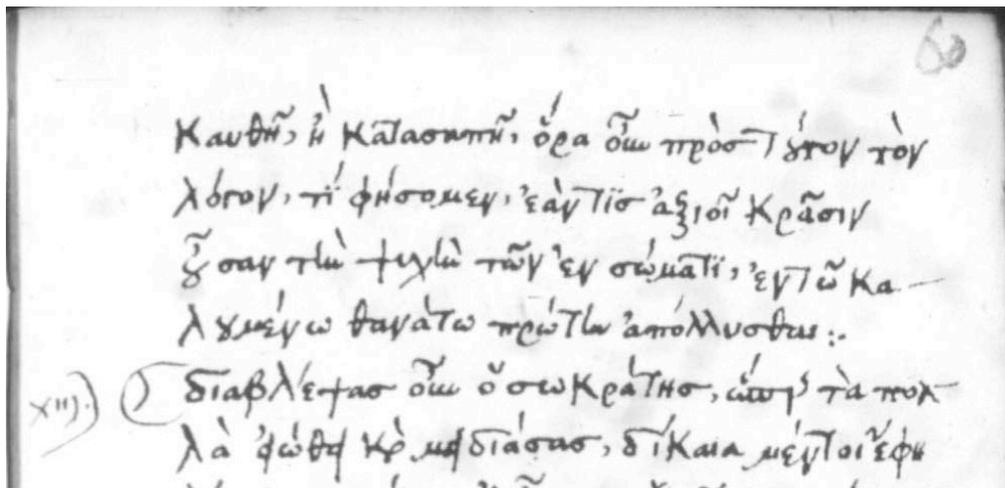


Figure 4. Detail of fol. 60<sup>r</sup>: Roman numeral and corresponding elliptical curve (Phaed. 86d)

Lastly, after the three sets of numbers, we find the Arabic number 14, followed by a parenthesis and matched with an elliptical curve (Figure 5).<sup>279</sup>

<sup>278</sup> fol. 47<sup>r</sup> l. 5 X) οὐκοῦν τοιόνδε τι, ἢ δ' ὅς ὁ Σωκράτης (78b: third demonstration of the immortality of the soul); fol. 54<sup>r</sup> l. 3 XI) ἀλλὰ τούτων ἕνεκα, ὃ ἑταῖρε Σιμμία τε καὶ Κέβης. (82c: the perfect ethic life and the true wisdom; the philosopher is the only person who may get closer to the nature of the gods); fol. 57<sup>r</sup> XII) Σιγή οὖν ἐγένετο (84c: incipit of the interlude); fol. 60<sup>r</sup> l. 5 XIII) Διαβλέψας οὖν ὁ Σωκράτης (86d: Cebes' doubt).

<sup>279</sup> fol. 62<sup>v</sup> l. 9 14) Πάντες οὖν ἀκούσαντες (88c: the dismay of those present).

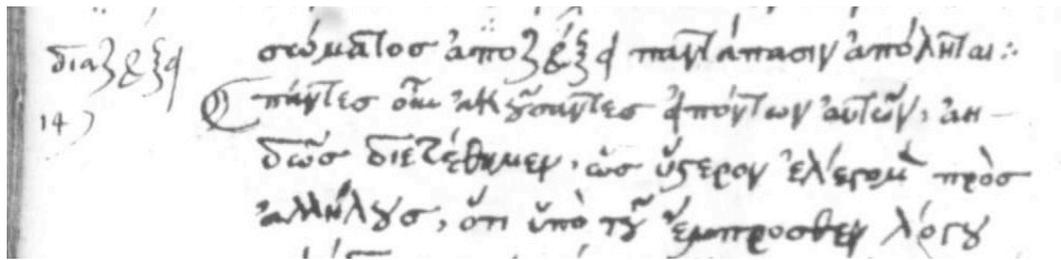


Figure 5. Detail of fol. 62<sup>v</sup>: elliptical curve and corresponding Arabic number in the margin (*Phaed.* 88c)

In Henry's description there is no mention of this numbering, whilst Berti erroneously includes it in the third set of numbers. Thus he transcribed XIV rather than 14.

As mentioned above, the three sets of numbers are matched with section marks. Additionally, there are also numerous paragraph signs, which are not matched with any numeration (Figure 6).

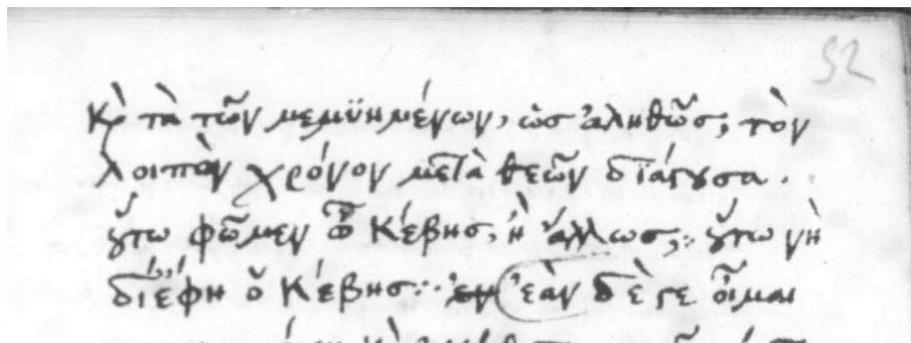


Figure 6. Detail of fol. 52<sup>r</sup>: elliptical curve (*Phaed.* 81b)

This textual division, indicated either by the division marks or the paragraph numbering, is integrated by the use of further editing marks. In the first section of the dialogue in particular, several passages are highlighted by drawing wavy and interlacing lines (Figure 7).

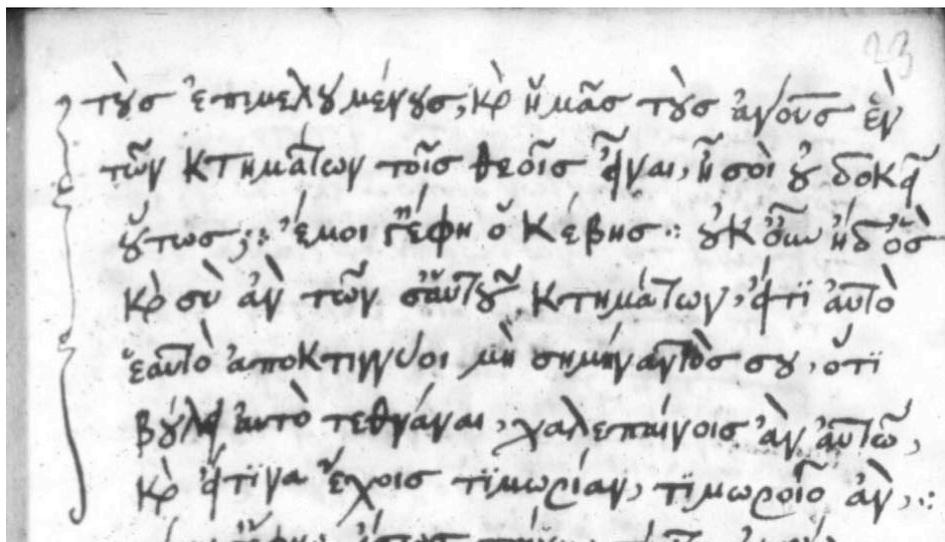


Figure 7. Detail of fol. 23<sup>r</sup>: wavy line framing the text of *Phaed.* 62b

Henry argues that after the third paragraph numbering, the chapter division is consistent with that of the Latin translation of Plato's dialogues, which was printed in 1484.<sup>280</sup> However, aptly Berti points out that in this printed edition in general there is no paragraph division and that in the case of the *Phaedo* in particular there are no formal *distinctiones capitum*.<sup>281</sup>

According to Berti, the colour of the ink used to draw the last set of section marks, including the Roman numerals XI, XII, XIII, suggests that these paragraphs were written whilst Ficino was transcribing the *Phaedo*. Berti therefore formulated the hypothesis that these numerals were already included in the exemplar from which Ficino copied the text. On the other hand, the two other sets did not belong to the original text and were the result of Ficino's subsequent effort at completing the chapter division. However, this task was never completed.<sup>282</sup>

<sup>280</sup> Henry, *Études Plotiniennes*, II, p. 38.

<sup>281</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 360.

<sup>282</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 360.

Berti's interpretation is questionable, since it does not rely on sufficiently sound evidence. The differences in the ink colour may be evidence of just different stages of Ficino's reading and task of dividing the sections of Plato's dialogue. Thus the Florentine scholar may be the author of the full set of section marks. This operation is consistent with Ficino's approach to the texts that he copies in full in his notebooks and working copies. For instance, Ficino provides the texts of the *Symposium*, which he transcribes in MS Ricc. 92, with a similar set of section marks. He did the same with the texts of the *Enneads* and the *De divinis nominibus*, which Johannes Scutariotes transcribed on Ficino's behalf in MSS Par. gr. 1816 and Borg. gr. 22 respectively.

In some cases – the *Enneads* and the *Divinis nominibus* – this division constitutes the basis for the one adopted by Ficino in his translations. In other cases – Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedo* – the paragraph numbering is not included in the printed edition. This activity reflects an interesting aspect of Ficino's reading: the Florentine scholar does not transcribe the text mechanically, but he is interested in detecting and signaling the different sections of the Platonic dialogue as well as the corresponding arguments expounded in the work.

## V. 2. 2 A set of marginal notes: palaeographical issues

The editing of the dialogue is complemented by a set of notes, concerning the contents of the Platonic dialogue. The first two are in Greek, whilst all the following notes are in Latin.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Fol. 20<sup>v</sup> τίς μουσική ἀληθινή (sic) (the note refers to 60e-61a); fol. 21<sup>v</sup> τίς ποιήτης (sic) (61b); fol. 23<sup>f</sup> *ut(ru)m liceat seip(sum) p(er)imere* (61d); fol. 24<sup>f</sup> *ut(ru)m ph(ilosoph)us debeat mortem timere* (62c); fol. 24<sup>f</sup> *quod ph(ilosoph)us mortem formidare no(n) debet* (63b); fol. 26<sup>v</sup> *Philosophi vita victus* (64d); fol. 28<sup>v</sup> *veritas i(n) hac vita h(abe)ri no(n) pot(est), s(ed) verisimile | Q(u)ot*

Ficino does not comment on the text uniformly. Many sections of the dialogue are not provided with *marginalia*. If one is to exclude those at fols 21<sup>v</sup> and 26<sup>v</sup>, all the other notes are placed in the lower margin. Up to the note at fol. 38<sup>v</sup> included, the *marginalia* are framed by wavy and interlacing lines, which are similar to those used to frame and highlight some passages of the dialogue (Figure 8).

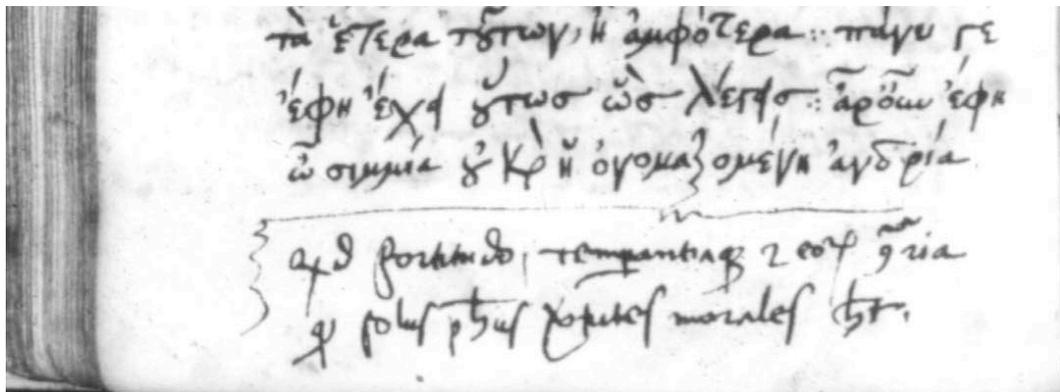


Figure 8. Detail of fol. 31<sup>v</sup>: Latin note in the lower margin

Among these notes, those at fols 44<sup>v</sup>. 45<sup>r</sup>. 78<sup>v</sup>. 79<sup>r</sup>. 79<sup>v</sup>. 80<sup>r</sup> differ from the others in the ink and the thinner ductus. Furthermore, they refer to the contents of the dialogue less precisely (Figure 9).

Berti states that the script used to write this set of notes is not Ficino's *minuta corsiva*, but 'una scrittura libraria umanistica nettamente più calligrafica'.<sup>284</sup> Additionally, he argues that the different ink colour provides

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*i(m)pedi(m)enta corp(or)is ad veritate(m)* (66b); fol. 31<sup>v</sup> *Q(ui)d Fortitudo temp(er)antiaq(ue) et eor(um) (contra)ria | Q(uod) solus ph(ilosoph)us virtutes morales h(abe)t* (68c); fol. 35<sup>r</sup> *Sempite(r)na vicissitudo (contra)rior(um) ex (contra)riis* (70d); fol. 38<sup>v</sup> *Q(uod) sc(ient)ia e(st) reminescentia* (72e); fol. 44<sup>v</sup> *A(n)i(m)a referendo singula ad ideas o(sten)dit se una cu(m) illis sempiterna(m) e(ss)e* (76d-e); fol. 45<sup>r</sup> *Affirmat o(mn)i(n)o p(ra)e ceteris ideas sep(ar)atas e(ss)e* (77a); fol. 78<sup>v</sup> *Causa o(mn)ium finalis ab ip(s)o bono* (99c); fol. 79<sup>r</sup> *Causa omniu(m) formalis ab ideis* (99d); fol. 79<sup>v</sup> *Assiduu(m) certumq(ue) circa ideas studium et i(n) dubia asseveratio* (100a); f. 80<sup>r</sup> *Immortalitas a(n)i(m)a potissimu(m) ab ideis ex quibus pendent omnia* (100b); fol. 101<sup>r</sup> *Inferor(um) iter (in)remeabile purgatoriu(m)q(ue)* (113e).

<sup>284</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 361.

evidence that most of the notes were written by Ficino when he transcribed Plato's *Phaedo* in the manuscript. Conversely, the notes at fols 44<sup>v</sup>, etc. were written at a later stage by a different hand.

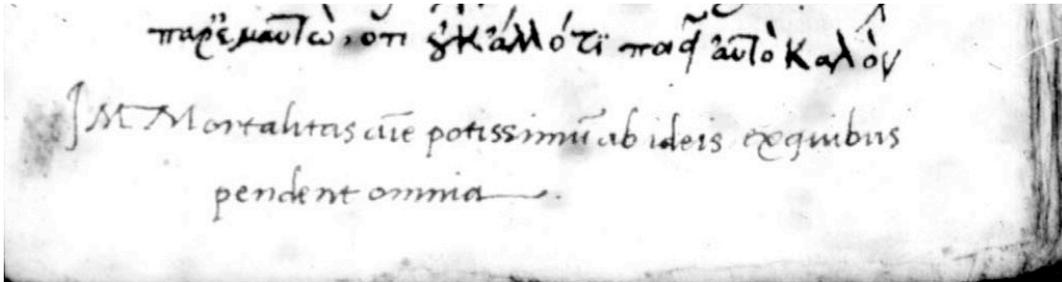


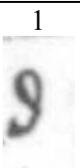
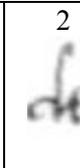
Figure 9. Detail of fol. 80<sup>r</sup>: Latin marginal note (different hand)

Berti's remarks seem to make sense in the light of both palaeographical and functional issues: first, the set of notes that may undoubtedly be attributed to Ficino look like proper paragraph titles. In other words, they are the result of Ficino's attempt to scan the narrative and logical progression of the dialogue. Conversely, the other notes look like more generic references to the text. Secondly, the script used to write the six notes is not consistent with Ficino's script. A close analysis of some elements enables us to detect important discrepancies, which I shall now describe:

- in Ficino's notes, 'd' is drawn in two different ways. In most cases, the letter is cursive and very similar to a minuscule *theta*, and is drawn in one movement. The ligature with the following letter is executed from above. In only one case, at fol. 23<sup>v</sup>, it is cursive and consists of a lobe and an ascender, drawn in two movements. In the set of six notes, the letter-form is similar to that of the letter drawn at fol. 23<sup>v</sup>. However, the ascender is slightly sloping and culminates in a thickening;

- the enclitic *-que* is formed by drawing a 'q' with a long descender followed by a three-like abbreviation; conversely, in the set of more calligraphic notes, the descender is followed by a nine-like scroll;
- 'f' is cursive and is drawn as to form '8' in the notes written by Ficino; in the other set of notes, the letter consists of two strokes crossing perpendicularly;
- the conjunction *et* is always drawn by using a two-like abbreviation in the notes written by Ficino; in the set of six notes, at fol. 79<sup>v</sup>, we detect the use of the tironian note '&'.

**Table 1**

Letters and abbreviations	Ficino's hand			Different hand		
	Folio	Specimina			Folio	Specimina
<b>d</b>	1) fol. 31 <sup>v</sup> 2) fol. 31 <sup>v</sup> 3) fol. 23 <sup>r</sup>	1 	2 	3 	1) fol. 79 <sup>v</sup> 2) fol. 80 <sup>r</sup>	1  2 
<b>-que</b>	fol. 31 <sup>v</sup>				fol. 79 <sup>v</sup>	
<b>f</b>	fol. 24 <sup>r</sup>				fol. 78 <sup>v</sup>	
<b>et</b>	fol. 31 <sup>v</sup>				fol. 79 <sup>v</sup>	

A close examination of these notes confirms that they were not written in Ficino's hand.

Berti's statements seem to be consistent with the results of the most recent studies carried out on Ficino and his *scriptorium*. As mentioned above, Berti drew a distinction between Ficino's *minuta corsiva* and a calligraphic and cursive humanistic bookhand. The coexistence of these two script types does not concern MS Ambr F 19 sup. exclusively. In numerous manuscripts related to Ficino and his activity, it is possible to detect the presence of a calligraphic hand, alternating with his characteristic *minuta corsiva*. Such an alternance recurs particularly in manuscripts containing Ficino's translations and Neoplatonic commentaries, in long marginal notes contained in some Greek manuscripts and in two famous manuscripts now preserved at the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence, MSS Magliabecchiano VIII 1441 and XX 58. In some of these manuscripts, we quite often detect an apparently unmotivated shift from one script type to another, recurring even in the same line and using the same ink shade cast.

The coexistence of these two hands led Martin Slicherl to formulate an hypothesis on Ficino's script. According to Slicherl's hypothesis, conceived first in 1962 and then more extensively expounded in 1977, Ficino used two script types: his characteristic *minuta corsiva* (*Gelehrtenschrift*) and an elegant chancery script (*Reinschrift*), defined by Slicherl as 'almost calligraphic'.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, Sebastiano Gentile's studies have demonstrated that the script defined by Slicherl as Ficino's *Reinschrift* was not his calligraphic hand, but Luca Fabiani's script.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> See Martin Slicherl, 'Neuentdeckte Handschriften von Marsilio Ficino und Johannes Reuchlin', p. 55; Id. 'Die Humanistenkursive Marsilio Ficanos', in *Studia codicologica*, ed. by Jürgen Dummer and Kurt Treu (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1977), pp. 443-50. See also Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Some Original Letters and Autograph Manuscripts of Marsilio Ficino', III, pp. 5-33.

<sup>286</sup> On Luca Fabiani, see Vanna Arrighi, 'Marsilio Ficino e Luca Fabiani. Nuovi documenti', in *Letteratura, verità e vita. Studi in ricordo di Gorizio Viti*, a cura di Paolo Viti, 2 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), I, pp. 227-233; A. C. De la Mare, 'New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence', in *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440-1525. Un primo censimento*, ed. by Annarosa Garzelli (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1985), I, pp. 393-600 (p. 511);

Luca Fabiani was Ficino's secretary, living in a sort of symbiosis with the Florentine scholar between the 1470s and the early 1490s. This relationship was so close that at some point in his life Fabiani adopted the name Luca Fabiani de Ficinis.<sup>287</sup> The professional scribe copied several fine manuscripts on Ficino's behalf, and most of his original letters. Fabiani's hand is also present in most of Ficino's working copies and alternates with Ficino's hand in the process of writing and revising the texts transcribed in these manuscripts. Gentile suggests that in some cases, concerning passages that were extensively annotated and heavily corrected, Fabiani operated by taking dictation: 'Per questi interventi si deve ovviamente pensare che il Fabiani agisse sotto dittatura del Ficino, lavorando al suo fianco'.<sup>288</sup>

Given the alternance between two script types in the set of six notes in Ms Ambr. F 19 sup., I supposed that the six notes at fols 44v. 45r. 78v. 79r. 79v. 80r were written by Luca Fabiani's hand. Sebastiano Gentile confirmed that the notes in the Milan manuscript are a typical example of Fabiani's script in the 1470-80s and that we detect the same script type in several of Ficino's original letters and working notebooks. This case in particular shows a characteristic feature of Fabiani's hand: the shafts of 's' and 'f' extend below the base line only

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Marsilio Ficino, *Lettere*, ed. by Sebastiano Gentile (Florence: Olschki, 2010), II, p. XVI; Sebastiano Gentile, 'Note sullo "scrittoio" di Marsilio Ficino', pp. 339-97; Sebastiano Gentile, 'Nello "scriptorium" ficiniano: Luca Fabiani, Ficino Ficini e un inedito', in *Marsilio Ficino. Fonti, testi, fortuna*, pp. 145-182; Id., 'Questioni di autografia nel Quattrocento fiorentino', in «*Di mano propria*». *Gli autografi dei letterati italiani. Forlì, 24-27 novembre 2008*, ed. by Guido Baldassarri, Matteo Motolese, Paolo Procaccioli, and Emilio Russo (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2010), pp. 185-210 (p. 186, nr 4 and 198, nr 38).

<sup>287</sup> In a *subscriptio*, dating back to 1491, the scribe signs the name 'Luca Fabiani de Ficinis'. In a 1503 epigram by Alessandro Bracessi, he is mentioned merely as 'Luca Ficini'. We also know that around 1490, the scribe became a notary and entered the chancery of the Florentine Republic, where he worked until 1517. In his chancery activity, he used to sign the documents as 'Luca di Fabiano Cappuccioni'. See Arrighi, 'Marsilio Ficino e Luca Fabiani', p. 232; Gentile, 'Nello "scriptorium" ficiniano', p. 146.

<sup>288</sup> Gentile, 'Nello "scriptorium" ficiniano', p. 146.

to a limited degree. Such a feature recurs in some Greek manuscripts noted by Ficino and Fabiani: MSS Ricc. 36, Ricc. 37 (Figure 10) and Laur. 85. 9.

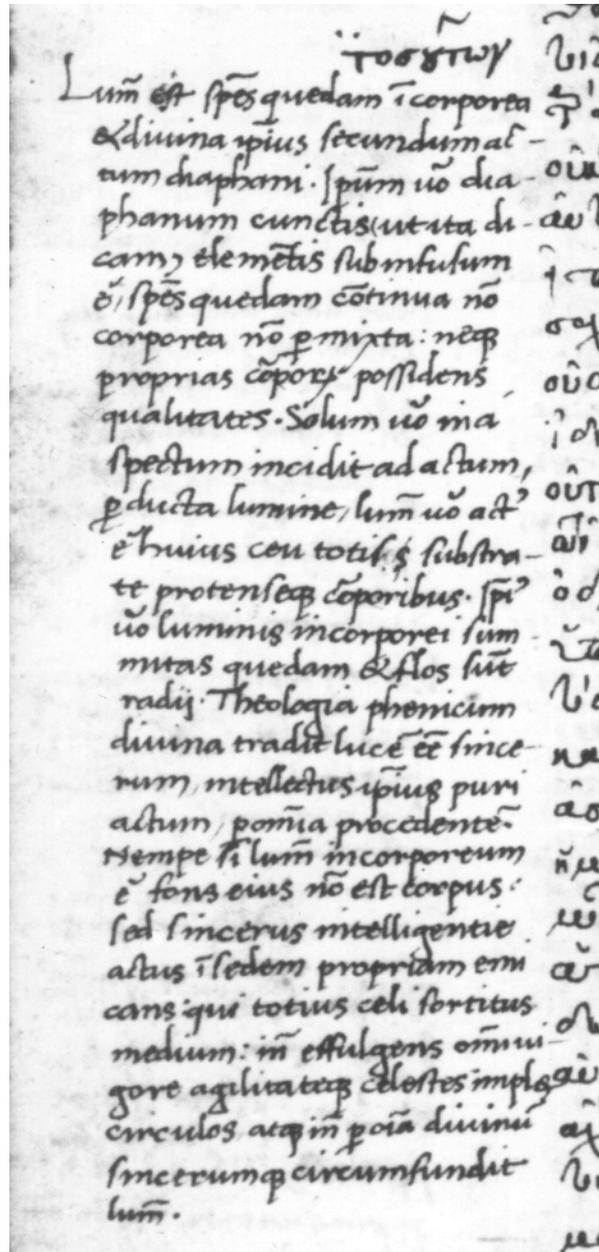


Figure 10. Detail of MS Ricc. 37, fol. 117<sup>v</sup>: Luca Fabiani's hand

In sum, the set of notes that I have analysed is consistent with the cases that Gentile detects during his studies and provides further evidence of the close work relationship between Ficino and Fabiani. The notes were probably written

by Fabiani by taking dictation and shed light on the process by which Ficino studied and edited the text of Plato's *Phaedo* in his working notebook.

### V. 2. 3 Correcting the text: types of error and methods of correction

Having shown Ficino's interest in editing and glossing the text of the *Phaedo*, I will now focus on another aspect of his scribal practices. In MS Ambr. F 19 sup., there are frequent cases of errors related to the process of transcription, which Ficino corrected. Among the two most commonly used methods of correcting in scribal practices, i. e. erasure and subpunction (or expunction), the Florentine scholar predominantly used the latter.<sup>289</sup>

In most cases, Ficino made some corrections whilst in the process of copying. By using a pen stroke, he struck through the incorrect word or group of words. Then he rewrote the matching correct form. For instance, at fol. 22<sup>v</sup>: ll. 4-5 *εις βελτίον οἷς βελτίον ζῆς ζεῖν ζῆν* (Figure 11).

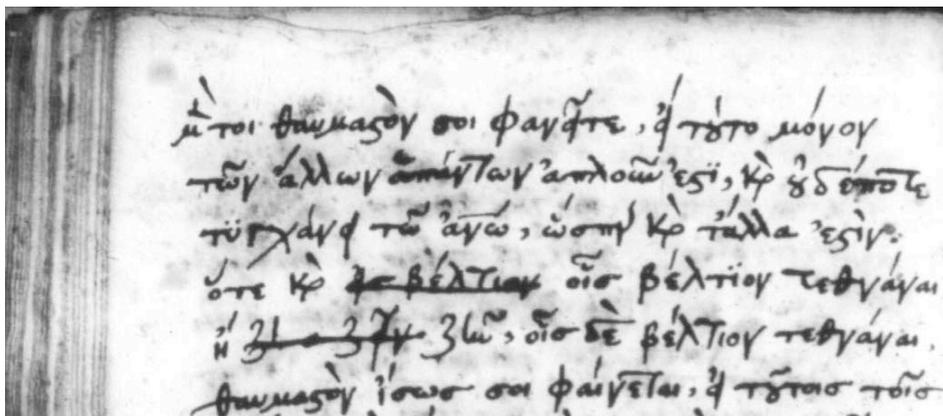


Figure 11. Detail of fol. 22<sup>v</sup>: at ll. 4-5 corrections of some wrong forms, performed *in scribendo*

<sup>289</sup> For a detailed account on the methods of correction in scribal practice, see Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 35-48.

As mentioned above, in many cases a typical method of correcting a letter as erroneous was to place dots under the wrong letters (subpunction). Then the correct letters were written above the original letters. The following instance provides an illustration of this process:

• At fol. 103<sup>v</sup> ll. 6-13 we read the following passage. I have emphasized in bold the relevant corrections:

καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς καὶ ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς ἐν χάριτι **ποιήσετε** ἅττ' ἂν ποιῆτε, κἂν μὴ νῦν **ὁμολογήσητε**: ἐὰν δὲ ὑμῶν μὲν αὐτῶν ἀμελήτε καὶ μὴ **θέλητε** ὥσπερ κατ' ἴχνη κατὰ τὰ νῦν τε εἰρημένα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνῳ ζῆν, οὐδὲ ἐὰν πολλὰ ὁμολογήσητε ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ σφόδρα, οὐδὲν πλέον **ποιήσετε**. (*Phaed.* 115b-c)

By using the dots, Ficino corrected four wrong verbal forms, which he had previously misspelt (Figure 11):

- ποιήσεται *ante correctionem* ποιήσετε *post correctionem*;
- ὁμολογήσετε a.c. ὁμολογήσητε p.c.;
- θέληται a.c. θέλητε p.c.;
- ποιήσεται a.c. ποιήσετε p.c.

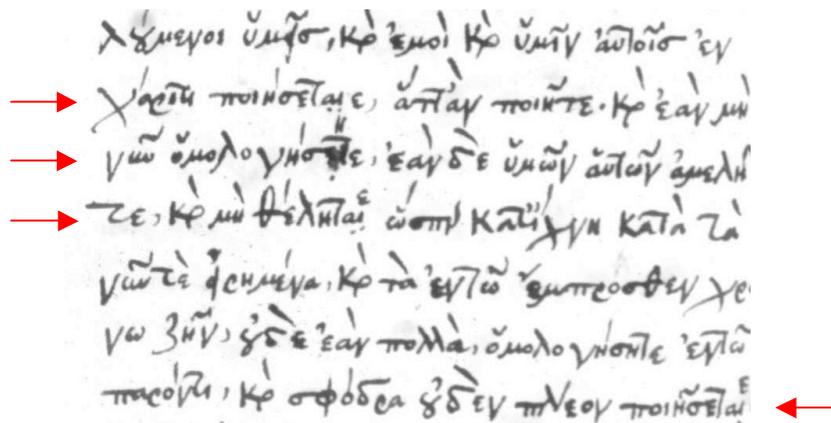


Figure 12. Detail of fol. 103<sup>v</sup>: subpunction and correction of four verbs (*Phaed.* 115b-d)

The words signalled by using subpunction are evidence of the typical error of iotacism, a frequent error among Byzantine and Renaissance scribes and

scholars who read Greek according to the modern pronunciation. This explains the frequent recurrence of this kind of error.

An interesting case is to be found at fol. 98<sup>r</sup> ll. 10-11: Ficino highlights a typical error due to eyeskip, the so-called *saut du même au même* (Figure 13). The text in which the error occurs reads as follows. I have emphasized in bold the word causing the eyeskip:

ἐν τι τῶν χασμάτων **τῆς γῆς** ἄλλως τε μέγιστον τυγχάνει ὄν καὶ διαμπερὲς  
τετρημένον δι' ὅλης **τῆς γῆς**, τοῦτο ὅπερ Ὅμηρος εἶπε, λέγων αὐτό κτλ (*Phaed.*  
111e-112a)

Using a pen stroke, Ficino strikes through the section of text which he has erroneously copied in advance and highlights it by using four dots placed in the left margin. The same dots are used below, by the same textual section, in order to signal its exact position in the copied text.

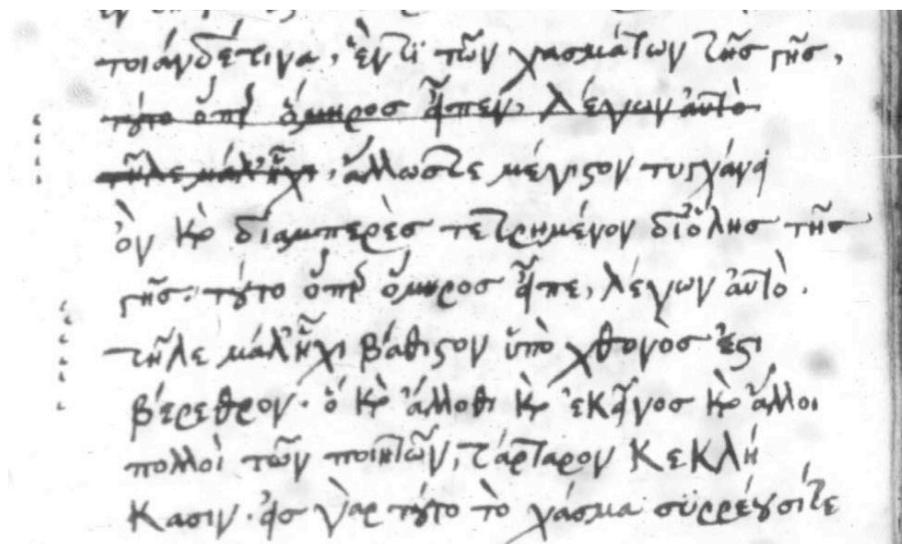


Figure 13. Detail of fol. 98<sup>r</sup>: *saut du même au même* (*Phaed.* 111e-112a)

As I have shown so far, Ficino used methods of correcting that were quite common in the tradition of scribal practice. Sometimes he inserted

corrections in the margins rather than within the block of text copied in the writing space, using *signe-de-renvoi* (i.e. tie mark)  $\wedge$  to correct errors due to an omission of a portion of text. The easily recognizable sign marks the place where the text should be inserted. A corresponding symbol, written in the margin, introduces the insertion. For instance:

- At fol. 64<sup>v</sup> l. 10, Ficino used the matching *signes-de-renvoi* in order to correct the omission of a word of *Phaed.* 89e (Figure 14). The text reads as follows. I have emphasized in bold the omitted word:

καὶ ἡγεῖται οὐδενὸς οὐδὲν **ὕγιες** εἶναι τὸ παράπαν. ἢ οὐκ ἦσθησαι σὺ πῶ τοῦτο γινόμενον;

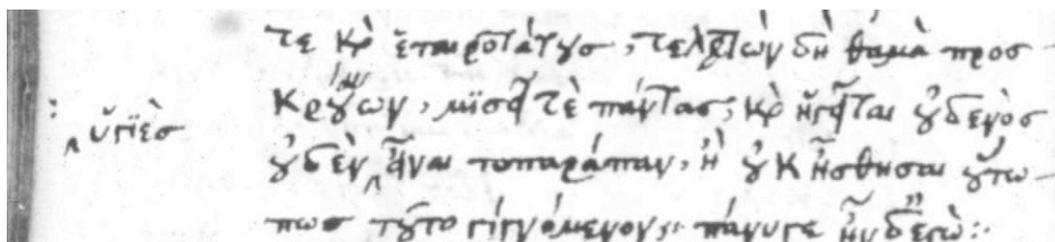


Figure 14. Detail of fol. 64<sup>v</sup>: in the margin, a tie mark introduces a correction (*Phaed.* 89e)

### V. 3. 1 The text of Plato's *Phaedo* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and its genealogical relations with MS Laur. 89. 5

The previous sections show Ficino's interest in the critical editing of the Platonic dialogue that he transcribed in his notebook. The Florentine scholar annotated some passages with the help of his scribe Luca Fabiani and corrected the text by using common scribal practices. The text of Plato's *Phaedo* also provides invaluable information on Ficino's philological activity, which will be the focus of the following sections.

The text transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. represents one of the three main sources at our disposal to analyse Ficino's philological approach to the Greek text of Plato's *Phaedo*. The other two sources in our possession consist of the fine manuscript *in charta bona*, MS Laur. 89. 5 (Laur. c), in which the dialogue was copied at fols 44<sup>r</sup>-56<sup>v</sup>, and Ficino's Latin translation. The Latin version is relevant, since it provides information on the Greek text that Ficino established philologically and chose to translate. As I have mentioned in the introduction, authoritative studies have demonstrated that the Greek text of the Platonic dialogues that Ficino translated is the result of a conscious and intentional *constitutio textus*.

Unlike the text transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., the text of the *Phaedo* contained in MS Laur 89. 5 (Laur. c), carries occasional traces of Ficino's reading and study: there are no paragraph marks, chapter numerations, translations, exegetical notes, corrections or variant readings. This seems to be the result of Ficino's intention to keep the manuscript exactly as it was when Cosimo de' Medici gave it to him.

Scholars provided different explanations to explain this preservative attitude. Sicherl argues that the manuscript was not actually donated to Ficino, who rather borrowed it.<sup>290</sup> According to Berti, Ficino's attitude is evidence of a sort of reverence and respect towards the Platonic text, which the Florentine scholar venerated as sacred.<sup>291</sup> However, given Ficino's attitude towards other 'sacred' texts, the latter explanation seems to be questionable.

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<sup>290</sup> See Sicherl 1986, p. 227. See also Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 357; Carlini, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo di Platone', p. 28.

<sup>291</sup> See Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 358.

Undoubtedly, Ficino did not wish to corrupt the text preserved in the fine copy. Nevertheless, as I have highlighted in Chapter III, MS Ambr. F 19 sup. shows the striking difference between Ficino's self-representation in the prefaces to his works and his letters and his actual reading practices. The Florentine scholar does not hesitate to select in the text of Plato what interests him, by excerpting as well as reducing the 'sacred' dialogues to a set of extracts and maxims he can reuse whenever he wishes to. Similarly, if Ficino had been unwilling to modify the text of the manuscript on the grounds that it was the depositary of a sacred and therefore unalterable *verbum*, we could not understand why Ficino modified and emended the Platonic text in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and in other manuscripts.

Additionally, this kind of treatment of Plato's text does not concern merely the text of the *Phaedo*. For instance, in MS Laur. c there are few traces of Ficino's reading and study of the *Timaeus*, the *Symposium* and the *Philebus* as well. Authoritative studies have demonstrated that Ficino used to work on the Greek text of the Platonic dialogues by using working copies.<sup>292</sup> Regarding the text of the *Timaeus*, the *Symposium* and the *Philebus* in particular, scholars reconstructed the existence of working copies which are currently lost and 'dimostravano marcate divergenze testuali rispetto al Laur. c'.<sup>293</sup> In his study on the *Phaedo*, Berti drew similar conclusions. In sum, we may argue that MS Ambr. F 19 sup. clearly reflects Ficino's *modus operandi*.

Through a detailed philological analysis, Berti demonstrated that the text preserved by MS Ambr. F 19 sup. relies on MS Laur. 89. 5 (Laur. c). First, both

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<sup>292</sup> See Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 357.

<sup>293</sup>. Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 357.

the manuscripts share a set of common variant readings; secondly, if MS Laur. c bears corrections, the Milan manuscript reproduces the text of the Laurentianus *post correctionem*. Thus MS Ambr. F 19 sup derives from MS Laur. c.<sup>294</sup>

Ficino added and noted in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. many corrections and variant readings that do not occur in MS Laur. c, but do in other previous Greek manuscripts. Some of these variant readings are noted in the margins or in the interlinear space. Ficino introduced them by using the same tie marks as he used to insert portions of texts he had omitted in the process of copying.

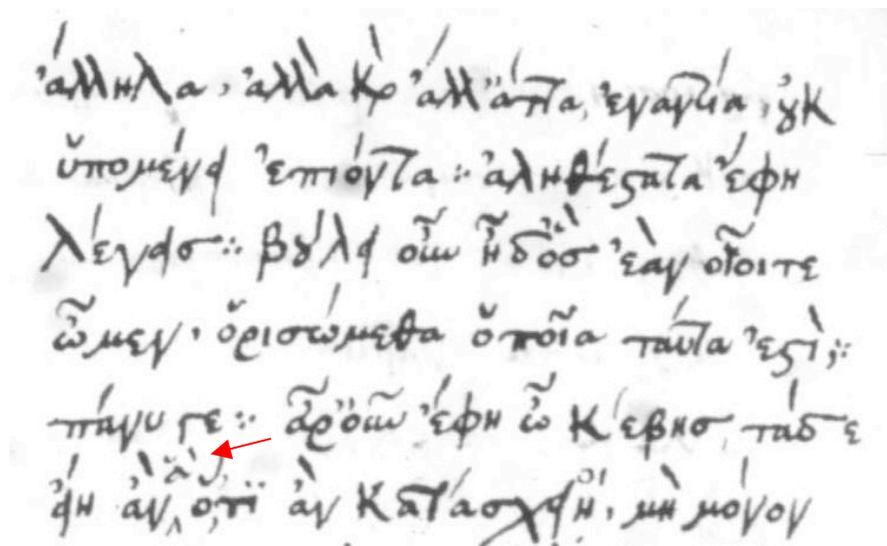


Figure 15. Detail of fol. 86<sup>v</sup>: *lectio* inserted in the interlinear space

In other cases, Ficino noted some variant reading in the margin or in the interlinear space without using any sign. These revisions are the result of a coherent activity of emendation. This suggests that Ficino accepted the new variant reading as a substitute for the one that he had previously copied in the manuscript.

<sup>294</sup> See Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 377

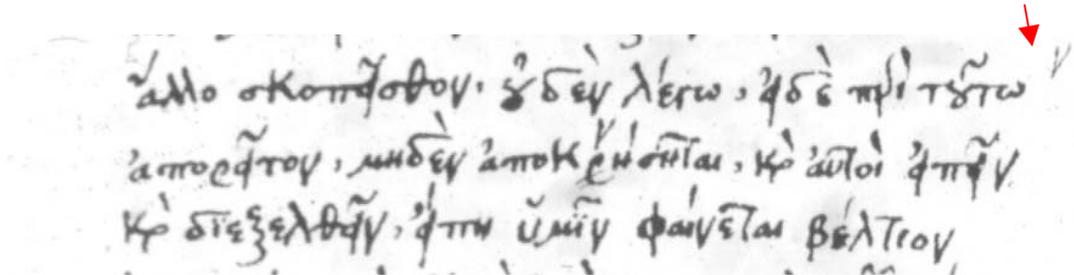


Figure 16. Detail of fol. 57<sup>r</sup>: variant reading that is not present in Ms Laur. c

In many cases, Ficino noted some variant readings in the margins and linked them to the text by using either the abbreviation *alr.* (*aliter*) or the abbreviation *al.* (*alibi*). Such abbreviations correspond to those which were commonly used in the Greek manuscripts: γράφε or γράφεται.

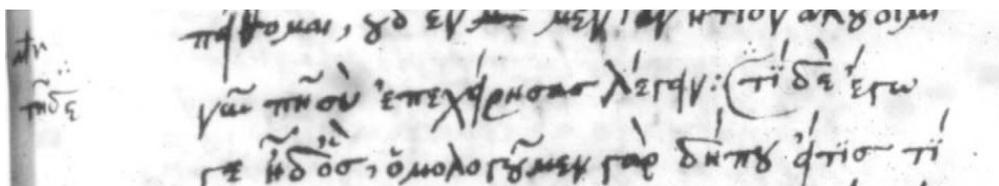


Figure 17. Detail of fol. 39<sup>r</sup>: variant reading noted in the left margin (*Phaed.* 73c)

In these cases, the use of the abbreviations *alr.* *al(iter)* or *al.* (*alibi*) for introducing the *variae lectiones*, seems to reflect the intention to keep the choice of the readings open.<sup>295</sup>

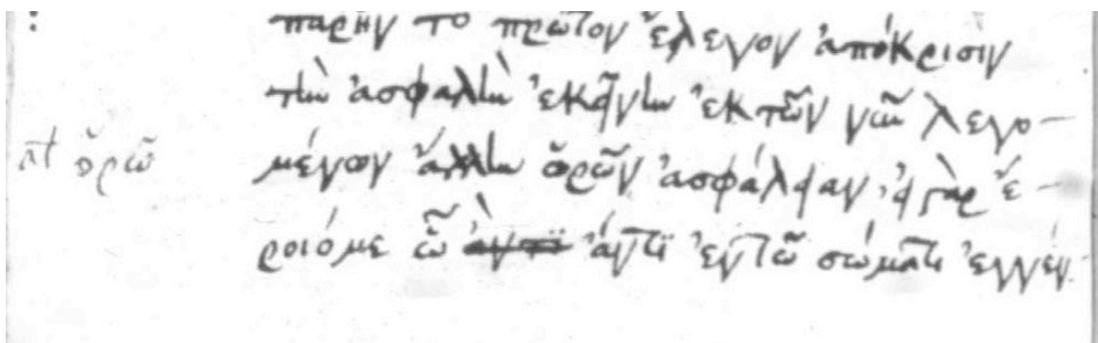


Figure 18. Detail of fol. 87<sup>r</sup>: variant reading in the left margin (*Phaed.* 105c)

<sup>295</sup> Nevertheless, Berti 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 363, observed that 'in alcune occorrenze l'annotazione *alr.* oppure *al.* sembra impiegata in maniera pressoché meccanica in quanto si giustappone a lezione palesemente errate'.

These abbreviations explicitly refer to a process of collation. Thus all the *variae lectiones* not occurring in MS Laur. c are of great significance, as they provide evidence that the text of the *Phaedo* transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. is not merely a mechanical reproduction of the Laurentianus. Ficino studied the text and sought to establish the best possible version by collating numerous manuscripts and noting the variant readings in his working copy. This means, as previous studies have already pointed out, that the vertical transmission of the variant readings is affected by a phenomenon of *contaminatio* and *emendatio*.

In this context, Berti makes further remarks: the phenomenon of *contaminatio* is not restricted to the variant readings noted in the manuscript but 'si riscontra anche al livello della prima scrittura del codice'.<sup>296</sup> In other words, the *contaminatio* did not take place only when Ficino corrected the text and noted the variant readings but also during the process of copying itself. Berti therefore argues that we should reconstruct the existence of a working copy intervening between MS Laur. c and MS Ambr. F 19 sup. According to this reconstruction, Ficino first collated the text of the Laurentianus with other manuscripts and noted corrections and variant readings in his working copy, which is currently lost. When copying the text of the *Phaedo* from the lost working copy in the Milan manuscript, he then copied the variant readings straight into the text.<sup>297</sup>

### **V. 3. 2 Ficino and Leonardo Bruni's translation**

Berti's study highlighted another key aspect of Ficino's activity, which provides the foundations for the analysis that I will carry out in Chapter VI: the

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<sup>296</sup> See Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 363.

<sup>297</sup> See Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 377.

use of previous Latin translations for his own version of Plato's *Opera omnia*. This fact was progressively highlighted by a number of studies, which provided some evidence of Ficino's indebtedness to the medieval and early humanistic tradition of the *Plato Latinus*. In order to shed light more thoroughly on this phenomenon, James Hankins carried out a systematic comparison between Ficino's translation and previous Latin versions, demonstrating Ficino's partial dependence on previous translators.<sup>298</sup> Hankins stated that 'in general it may be remarked that Ficino's use of earlier versions passes through every degree of dependence, from word-for-word borrowing, to occasional extracts, to critical revisions, to "lexical" consultation, to complete independence'.<sup>299</sup>

Thus Ficino's approach was selective, and this was largely determined by the quality of the translations available to him. For instance, as Martinelli Tempesta as shown in the case of the *Lysis*, Ficino's translation is completely independent of Pier Candido Decembrio's translation.<sup>300</sup> By contrast, Paola Megna showed that Ficino extensively borrowed from Lorenzo Lippi's version of the *Ion*, often repeating *ad verbum* terms and portions of Lippi's text.<sup>301</sup> In some cases, he uses the text as a syntactical basis, which is then reworked and sharpened.

These studies cast light on Ficino's methodology: the Florentine scholar performed his task of translation by using every critical tool at his disposal, such

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<sup>298</sup> Leonardo Bruni for Plato's *Apologia*, *Symposium*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo* and *Letters*; George of Trebisond for the *Laws* and the *Epinomis* and the *Parmenides*; William of Moerbeke for the *Parmenides*; Manuel Chrysoloras and Uberto Decembrio for the *Republic*; Bessarion for the passages of the *Laws* and the *Phaedrus* that he quoted in the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*; Lorenzo Lippi del Colle for the *Ion*; Cincio de' Rustici for the *Axiochus*. See Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 465-82; See also Carlini, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo di Platone' pp. 52-54.

<sup>299</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, p. 465. See also Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 387.

<sup>300</sup> See Martinelli Tempesta, *La tradizione testuale del Liside*, pp. 145-155.

<sup>301</sup> See Megna, 'Lo *Ione* platonico', pp. 57-106.

as previous translations, paraphrases, humanist and medieval commentaries. Nevertheless, it never used this material passively, but thoroughly and by having a critical attitude, 'sottoponendolo a una continua verifica sul testo greco'.<sup>302</sup>

We can detect a similar *modus operandi* in the case of Leonardo Bruni's translations. Ficino's familiarity with his translations is evident. Indeed, Ficino's versions are quite often reliant on the work of this previous translator. If we use Hankins' terminology, Ficino's translations of some Platonic dialogues may be defined as 'critical revisions' of Bruni's translations, such as in the case of the *Apology*, the *Criton*, the *Letters* and parts of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* that Bruni had translated. As far as the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo* are concerned, Hankins argues that Ficino's dependence on Bruni's versions is less strong.<sup>303</sup>

Berti provides further insight into Ficino's indebtedness to Bruni, showing that it not only concerned Ficino's translation, but also its textual basis.<sup>304</sup> In other words, the Ficinian translation presents some textual features that recall the Greek manuscript used by Bruni for his translation, rather than the Greek text preserved in MSS Laur. c and Ambr. F 19 sup, thus suggesting that Ficino collated his Greek text with Bruni's translation.<sup>305</sup>

The influence of Bruni's version and its textual basis on Ficino's work is also reflected in the Greek text of the *Phaedo* that the Florentine scholar transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. As Berti noticed, some of the variant readings noted in the notebook are retroversions based on Bruni's Latin version. According

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<sup>302</sup> See Megna, 'Lo *Ione* platonico', p. 102.

<sup>303</sup> Hankins, *Plato*, p. 468. See also Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 387.

<sup>304</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 387

<sup>305</sup> Bruni's translation of Plato's *Phaedo* is reliant on MS Bodmer 136. Berti states that the manuscript is Bruni's autograph. See Ernesto Berti, 'La traduzione di Leonardo Bruni del *Fedone* di Platone ed un codice greco della Biblioteca Bodmeriana', *Museum Helveticum* 35 (1978), 125-48 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 387

to Berti, the source that Ficino signalled with the abbreviation *al(ite)r* was not a Greek manuscript, but Leonardo Bruni's Latin translation of Plato's *Phaedo*: 'Ficino ha trattato la versione di Bruni anche come una fonte del testo tra le altre, si può dire alla stregua di uno dei manoscritti greci di collazione da cui ha tratto correzioni e varianti'.<sup>306</sup> It should be noticed, however, that these variant readings were not used in the text of Ficino's published translation (1484), which suggests that this process of collation and recovery of the variant readings took place in a moment separate and distinct from Ficino's specific task of translating Plato's corpus for publication.

### V. 3. 4 A set of key points

Berti's study on Ficino and Plato's *Phaedo*, leads to a series of important conclusions, which can be summarized as follows:

1. When working on his translations, Marsilio Ficino collated several different Greek manuscripts.
2. When establishing the text that he was going to translate, the Florentine scholar used working copies, which are the result of a process of *contaminatio* and *emendatio*.
3. The phenomenon of horizontal transmission of the variant readings 'non si riferisce soltanto a flussi di contaminazione anteriori al Ficino, ma anche ad un'attività del Ficino medesimo di collazione e trasferimento di varianti da un manoscritto all'altro'.

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<sup>306</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', p. 402.

4. Ficino read and collated the text of Plato also in circumstances which were not necessarily related to his task of translation: 'l'umanista doveva leggere e studiare il testo di Platone anche indipendentemente dall'impresa della traduzione latina dei suoi dialoghi'.<sup>307</sup>

Concerning point 4 in particular, MS Ambr. F 19 sup. provides further evidence that Ficino showed a peculiar interest for the text per se, not merely as a basis for the task of translating Plato, but also as a direct subject of study. Furthermore, Berti was able to identify an interesting phenomenon: Ficino used previous Latin translation also in the process of collation. Drawing on Berti's findings, my study of another section of Ms Ambr. F 19 sup., will illustrate a complex exegetical and philological approach to Plato's text. This section of the Milan Manuscript, which is consistent with Berti's remarks, particularly with point 4, shall be the focus of the following chapter. But before going further, let us draw some remarks on the chronology and purpose of Ficino's notebook.

#### **V. 4 Berti's chronology: final remarks**

As mentioned in Chapter I, Berti concluded from an analysis of the watermarks that MS Ambr. F 19 sup. dates from the years 1470-74, when Ficino presumably started collecting textual material for the writing of his *Platonic Theology*. Additionally, Berti set up the following chronology, which I will use as

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<sup>307</sup> Berti, 'Osservazioni filologiche', pp. 146-47. D. L. Blank, 'Ammerkungen zu Marsilio Ficin's Platonhandschriften', in *Symbolae Berolinenses für Dieter Harlfinger* ed. by Friederike Berger and Christian Brockmann (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1993), pp. 1-22, first noted this particular aspect of Ficino's philological activity.

a starting point for my own remarks on the structure and function of Ficino's notebook:<sup>308</sup>

1. Already before starting to translate Plato's body of works –4 September 1462– Ficino, had at his disposal a manuscript given to him by Cosimo de' Medici, containing Plato's complete works: MS Laur 85.9 (Laur. c).
2. The Florentine scholar translated the dialogue between 1466 and 1468-69. He performed the task of studying and translating the text of the *Phaedo* by using a working copy, which derived from MS Laur. c.
- 3 In the years 1470-1474, whilst collecting textual material for the *Platonic Theology* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Ficino transcribed the *Phaedo* in the codex. The text transcribed in the Milan manuscript likely derives from a working copy, which is currently lost and Ficino previously used as a textual basis for his translation of Plato's *Phaedo*. This working copy presumably included *emendationes* and *variae lectiones*.
4. In the following years, either when revising the translation or when reading and studying the text of Plato's *Phaedo*, Marsilio Ficino further corrected some passages of the text and noted further variant readings in the manuscript.

Accordingly, Berti argues that Marsilio Ficino copied the Platonic dialogue in full whilst he was gathering textual material that he needed for the *Theologia Platonica*.

My own analysis of the physical structure of the manuscript, as well as of the stages by which the collection was produced, led me to formulate a further

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<sup>308</sup> Berti, 'Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*', pp. 422-23.

interpretation of the purpose and destination of the manuscript, thus providing a relative chronology rather than an absolute chronology. In the case of notebooks, intended for private use, it is indeed difficult to establish an absolute chronology.

As mentioned in Chapters I and III, the compilation is a work in progress, a book made up of two chronologically distinct parts. The original book was made of sixteen quires (*sectio prior*). At a later stage, two quires –current quire I and XVIII– and the parchment flyleaves (*sectio recentior*) were added to the original nucleus. In other words, the length of the book increased as Ficino worked on the text of Plato.

Plato's *Phaedo* represents the first textual unit of the original nucleus: it consists of the full transcription of the dialogue. As we have seen in Chapter III, the *excerpta* contained in the manuscript are the result of the use of typical anthologization techniques and processes of text abridgment. Unlike the other texts collected in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., the *Phaedo* did not undergo the same processes: it differs from the other sections due to its peculiar editing. Furthermore, the Florentine scholar provided some passages with *marginalia* and corrected the text by using common scribal practices. In spite of the seventeenth-century scribe's description, stating that Ficino produced the whole manuscript without the help of professional scribes, my analysis showed that Ficino was helped by one of the scribes working in his *scriptorium*, Luca Fabiani. Additionally, the Platonic dialogue is evidence of an intense philological activity, which is not detectable in the other textual units forming the collection.

All these aspects concerning the manuscripts led me to formulate the following hypothesis: an original working copy, intended for the philological

study of Plato's *Phaedo*, became at a later stage an anthology of excerpts on the theme of the soul. It is only when the *sectio recentior* was added and a second binding was performed that the manuscript gained its definitive structure. Due to the addition of further textual and codicological units, the philological notebook turned into a repertoire of texts gathered in view to writing a philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology*.

In Chapter III, I argued that the definitions *silva platoniorum locorum* and *spicilegium*, provided by the anonymous scribe, as well as the definition *zibaldone filosofico*, proposed by modern scholars, are not entirely satisfactory. The analysis that I have carried out so far, stressing some key aspects of Ficino's reading practices, such as his techniques for storing texts as well as his philological concerns, enabled me to provide a more nuanced view of his activity. I therefore suggest the definition *zibaldone di erudito*, i.e. scholarly miscellany, rather than *zibaldone filosofico*, which better reflects the complexity and versatility of Ficino's approach to the texts belonging to the Platonic tradition.

## Chapter VI

### The spindle of Necessity: Marsilio Ficino's close readings of Book X of Plato's *Republic*

Evidenter deinde octo depingit sphaeras, quae a natura quidem agitantur sed a fato naturae praeside immutabiliter agitantur et instrumenta fati esse dicuntur. Inculcantur inter haec multa ad mensuras, profunditates, intervalla, motiones, harmonias, formas, virtutes sphaerarum caelestium pertinentia.

Marsilio Ficino, *In decimum dialogum de Republica, vel de Iusto, Epitome*.<sup>309</sup>

#### VI. 1 Reconstructing the stages of Ficino's work

The aim of this chapter is to focus on a set of autograph *marginalia* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. Through a contextualized analysis, I shall seek first, to reconstruct Ficino's complex exegetical approach and the stages of a close reading of a passage from Plato's *Republic*, as well as to provide further insight into the study of Ficino's philological activity.

As mentioned in Chapter V, Berti's studies played a key role in showing how Ficino carried out the philological study and reconstruction of the Greek text he was preparing as a basis for his translation. Berti also produced a set of key points concerning Ficino's philological activity and was able to shed light on a specific aspect of his work: Ficino collated the text of the Platonic dialogues also when he was not engaged in the task of translating. He therefore shows a specific philological attitude and an interest in textual problems that went beyond the purpose of providing a Latin version of Plato's corpus.

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<sup>309</sup> *Ficini Opera*, II, p. 430.

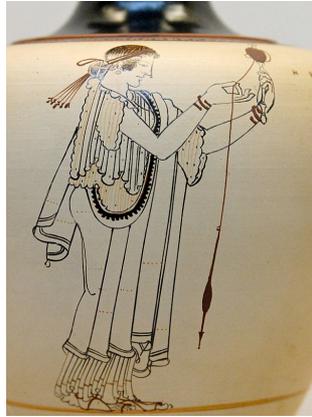
This aspect of Ficino's activity —a return to the text not merely motivated by the task of translation— seems to be confirmed by my own analysis of another part of the manuscript, where Ficino's marginal notes provide precious insight into the way he worked. At fols 109<sup>v</sup> l. 10 - 126<sup>v</sup> l. 9, Ficino transcribed a long excerpt from Book X of Plato's *Republic* (608d13 *ad finem*), containing the account of a myth, the famous myth of Er (*Rep.* 614b2 – 620d).

My analysis will be carried out as follows: first, in order to contextualize more thoroughly my study of Ficino's work, I shall summarize the main contents of the Platonic passage, an extremely complex and challenging section of the dialogue, which has been the subject of many differing interpretations both in ancient and modern times. Secondly, by using the information provided by Ficino's *marginalia*, I shall seek to reconstruct the way Ficino actually understood the passage. Furthermore, by focussing on one of Ficino's notes in particular, I shall explore his philological approach to the Platonic passage and seek to identify the sources that the Florentine scholar consulted and had access to when reading and studying the text. Lastly, I shall summarize the most significant results of my analysis and outline some conclusions on Ficino's reading practices and philological activity.

## **VI. 2 Necessity, the 'cosmic spinner'**

In a famous passage from Book X of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates tells the story of Er, son of Armenius. Twelve days after his death in a battle, the Pamphylian warrior is about to be burnt on a pyre, when he suddenly revives and

tells of his journey in the afterlife. Er's tale includes an account of the reincarnation of the souls and a description of the cosmos.<sup>310</sup>



**Figure 1. Woman spinning. Detail from an Ancient Greek Attic white-ground oinochoe, ca. 490 BC, from Locri Epizefiri, Italy. British Museum, London**

<sup>310</sup> For an analysis of the passage, see *Platonis Politia sive De Republica Libri Decem*, ed. by Gottfried Stallbaum, 3 vols (Gothae et Erfordiae: Sumptibus Hennings, 1858, rpt. with corrections 1859), II, pp. 437-46; J. W. Donaldson, 'On Plato's Cosmical Systems as Exhibited in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*', in *Transactions of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 10 (1864), 305-16; August Boeckh, *Gesammelte kleine Schriften* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1866), III, pp. 294-320; Plato, *Republic*, ed. by Benjamin Jowett and Lewis Campbell, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), III, pp. 473-78; John Cook Wilson, 'Plato, *Republic* 616e', *Classical Review* 16 (1901), 292-93; James Adam, 'On Plato, *Republic* X 616e', *Classical Review*, 15 (1901), 391-93; James Adam, 'A Correction: On Plato, *Republic* X 616e', *Classical Review* 15 (1901), 466; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by James Adam, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), II, pp. 440-53 and 470-79; John Alexander Stewart, *The Myths of Plato* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1905), pp. 133-64; D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, 'Plato's Theory of the Planets, *Republic* X, 616e', *Classical Review* 24 (1910), 137-42; Thomas Heath, *Aristarchus of Samos. The Ancient Copernicus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 148-58; Hilda Richardson, 'The Myth of Er (Plato, *Republic*, 616b)', *Classical Quarterly* 20 (1926), 113-33; Albert Rivaud, 'Le système astronomique de Platon', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie* 2 (1928), 8-14; Plato, *La Repubblica*, ed. by Emidio Martini and Domenico Bassi (Turin: Paravia 1940); P. M. Schuhl, 'Autour du fuseau d'Ananke', *Revue archéologique* 32 (1930), 58-64; Plato, *Repubblica, Libro X*, ed. by Mario Untersteiner (Milan: Cristofari, 1931), pp. 230-38; J. S. Morrison, 'Parmenides and Er', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 75 (1955), 59-68; Plato, *Repubblica, Libro X*, ed. by Mario Untersteiner (Naples: Luigi Loffredo Editore, 1965), pp. 207-45, 309-15 and 327-34; D. R. Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy to Aristotle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 109-14; Proclus, *Commentaire sur la République*, ed. and trans. by André-Jean Festugière, 3 vols (Paris: Vrin, 1969-70), pp. 39-316; Plato, *Republic X*, ed. and trans. by Francis Stephen Halliwell (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1988), pp. 180-83; Griet Schils, 'Plato's Myth of Er: The Light and the Spindle', *Antiquité classique* 62 (1993), 101-14; Vassilis Kalfas, 'Plato's Real Astronomy and the Myth of Er', *Elenchos* 17 (1996), 5-20; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. by Tom Griffith, pp. 339-40; Francesca Calabi, 'Il mito di Er: le fonti', in Plato, *La Repubblica, Traduzione e commento*, 7 vols, ed. by Mario Vegetti (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1998-2007), VII (2007), 277-310; Ferruccio Franco Repellini, 'Il fuso e la Necessità', in Platone, *La Repubblica, Traduzione e commento* ed. by Mario Vegetti (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2007), VII, pp. 367-397; Silvia Campese, 'La filatrice cosmica', in Plato, *La Repubblica*, ed. by Vegetti, VII, pp. 399-411; Stephen Halliwell, 'The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul. Interpreting the Myth of Er' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 445-73.

The souls that will be reincarnated are led to a place where they can see a pillar of light, very similar to the rainbow, but brighter, which likely represents the axis of the universe, and the spindle of Necessity, hanging on it.<sup>311</sup>



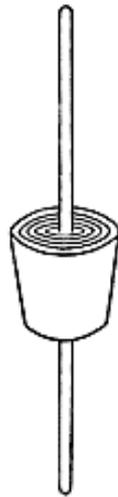
**Figure 2. The spindle and his components in Adam's commented edition of Plato's *Republic*, p. 445: the shaft (a), the hook (b) and the whorl (c)**

The whorl, i.e. 'the thick circular disc that serves to balance the spindle and allows it to be rotated easily by the fingers', of the spindle of Necessity has a peculiar structure:<sup>312</sup> It is composite and consists of eight whorls (σφόνδουλοι) fitting closely into each other like pots (κάδοι), so that their rims form the continuous surface of a single whorl. The shaft of the spindle, which is made of

<sup>311</sup> Both Theon of Smyrne (*De ut. math.* 143) and Proclus (*In remp.* II 139, 31) already identified the pillar of light with the axis of the universe. Proclus (*In remp.* II 194, 19), informs us that previous commentators identified the light with the Milky Way. This interpretation is advanced also by some modern scholars: e.g., see Boeckh, *Gesammelte Kleine Schriften*, p. 296. Nevertheless, the first hypothesis is the most widely accepted: see Plato, *Repubblica, Libro X*, ed. by Untersteiner, pp. 328-29. In addition, Richardson, 'The Myth of Er', p. 127, suggests that we should identify the axis of the universe, represented by the pillar of light, with the *Anima Mundi*.

<sup>312</sup> Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy*, p. 109. See also Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by Adam, II, p. 451; Schils, 'Plato's Myth of Er', p. 109.

adamant, passes through the whorl.<sup>313</sup> The eight concentric σφόνδυλοι are arranged in order, first by the width of their rims, secondly by their characteristic colours,<sup>314</sup> and lastly by the speed of their motion (616e-617b).<sup>315</sup> I shall focus more in detail on the section concerning the width on the rims in the course of my analysis of Ficino's exegetical and philological approach.



**Figure 3. The concentric whorls (Penguin Classics Edition of Plato's *Republic*)**

<sup>313</sup> The shaft and the hook of the spindle are made of adamant, the hardest metal: 'The legendary metal adamant is chosen for the cosmic spindle on account of its supposedly unbreakable strength'. Plato, *Republic X*, ed. by Halliwell p. 179.

<sup>314</sup> The σφόνδυλοι are made of different metals, and therefore look chromatically different. Joseph Bidez, 'Les couleurs des planètes dans le myth d'Er au livre X de la *République* de Platon', *Bulletin de la classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l'Académie royale de Belgique* 21 (1935), 257-77, first stated that the different colours mentioned in the Platonic description are reminiscent of Babilonian astrology. These colours are approximately the same as the ones that we can detect in cuneiform tablets.

<sup>315</sup> The whole spindle revolves East to West, whilst the seven concentric whorls rotate in the opposite direction at varying paces, with the exception of the outermost one, which revolves in the same direction as the whole. Concerning the heavenly bodies and their movement in the Platonic passage, numerous interpretations have been provided: see Heath, *Aristarchus of Samos*, pp. 156-57; Rivaud, 'Le système astronomique', p. 11; Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy*, pp. 112-13; W. R. Knorr, 'Plato and the Planetary Motions', *Journal of the History of Astronomy* 21 (1910), 313-28; Kalfas, 'Plato's Real Astronomy', pp. 16-17; Franco Repellini, 'Il fuso e la Necessità', pp. 338-389.

The eschatological myth of Er includes allusions to obscure doctrines so that the meaning of the the passage as well as Plato's sources are unclear.<sup>316</sup> In his work on ancient astronomy, D.R. Dicks properly explains how complex and controversial the Platonic text is: 'This highly fanciful, visionary picture has given raise to numerous equally fanciful interpretations at the hands of commentators, both ancient and modern, and desperate attempts have been made to find some sort of scientific coherence in Er's description. The difficulties, however are insuperable'.<sup>317</sup>

Despite the difficulty of both visualising and reconstructing the cosmic model described by Plato, modern scholarship was nonetheless able to explain most of the main elements composing Er's description. Thus the σφόνδυλοι forming the spindle of Necessity probably represent the celestial bodies and their motions according to Pythagorean doctrines.<sup>318</sup> In the passage from the *Republic*, there is no mention of the names of the heavenly bodies. However, we can detect them in a passage from the *Epinomis* (986c-987d), describing the eight celestial powers, their respective names and motions.<sup>319</sup> By combining the information at

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<sup>316</sup> For a recent study on Plato's sources and for an account of the relevant bibliography, see Francesca Calabi, 'Il mito di Er: le fonti'.

<sup>317</sup> Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy*, p. 110.

<sup>318</sup> Plato may have learned these theories by Eudoxus of Cnidus, who was a disciple of the Pythagorean Architas of Samos. See Plato, *Repubblica, Libro X*, ed. by Untersteiner, p. 331. See also Calabi, 'Il mito di Er: le fonti', pp. 303-306. Both ancient and modern commentators also connected the σφόνδυλοι of the Platonic description with Parmenides' στεφάναι (DK 28 A37; B12), representing the celestial bodies and their orbits. Necessity is part of Parmenides' system too: the goddess, placed in the centre of the universe, keeps the being united (DK 28 B8-12). See Proclus, *In remp.*, II 94, pp. 11-12. For a detailed study, see Morrison, 'Parmenides and Er'. Necessity might also recall Love (Φιλότης), which is placed in the centre of the cosmos in Empedocles' system (DK 31 B35). See Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy*, p. 111. See also Platone, *Repubblica, Libro X*, ed. by Untersteiner, p. 311; Richardson, 'The Myth of Er', p. 123.

<sup>319</sup> In the dialogue, Plato informs us that the earliest efforts at observing and studying the celestial bodies date back to ancient Near Eastern civilizations. At a later stage, their astronomical knowledge must have been transmitted to the Greeks (*Epin.* 986a). In *Tim.* 38d, containing another cosmic description, there is mention of Venus and Mercury. See Ferruccio Franco Repellini, 'La

our disposal, we may argue that the eight concentric whorls represent the following order, proceeding from the outer to the innermost orbit:

1. Fixed Stars
2. Saturn
3. Jupiter
4. Mars
5. Mercury
6. Venus
7. Sun
8. Moon

### **VI. 3. 1 Ficino's exegetical approach: the souls and the astral plane**

By using the image of the spindle, 'a combination of traditional mythology and a typically Platonic use of simile drawn from human craft occupations' Plato creates a magnificent and complex cosmic view.<sup>320</sup> The main difficulty with the passage, combining cosmology and eschatology, lies in the fact that the Athenian philosopher concealed the scientific and astronomical contents behind literary and metaphorical expressions. Ficino's exegetical approach seeks to uncover the meaning of the passage behind these mysterious images, focussing on the astronomical core of the Platonic scene, i.e. the description of the eight σφόνδυλοι that form the spindle of Necessity. The relevant passage (*Rep.* 616d-617b) reads as follows. I have indicated in bold the terms on which Ficino focused when reading the text:

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'vera' astronomia e la sapienza', in *Epinomide: studi sull'opera e la sua ricezione*, ed. by Francesca Alesse and Franco Ferrari, (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2012), pp. 59-92.

<sup>320</sup> Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy*, p. 111.

τὴν δὲ [616d] τοῦ σφονδύλου φύσιν εἶναι τοιάνδε: τὸ μὲν σχῆμα οἷαπερ ἡ τοῦ ἐνθάδε, νοῆσαι δὲ δεῖ ἐξ ὧν ἔλεγεν τοιόνδε αὐτὸν εἶναι, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐν ἐνὶ μεγάλῳ σφονδύλῳ κοίλῳ καὶ ἐξεγλυμμένῳ διαμπερὲς ἄλλος τοιοῦτος ἐλάττων ἐγκέοιτο ἀρμόττων, καθάπερ οἱ κάδοι οἱ εἰς ἀλλήλους ἀρμόττοντες, καὶ οὕτω δὴ τρίτον ἄλλον καὶ τέταρτον καὶ ἄλλους τέτταρας. ὀκτῶ γὰρ εἶναι τοὺς σύμπαντας σφονδύλους, ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐγκειμένους, [616e] κύκλους ἄνωθεν τὰ χεῖλη φαίνοντας, νῶτον συνεχῆς ἐνὸς σφονδύλου ἀπεργαζομένους περὶ τὴν ἡλακᾶτην: ἐκείνην δὲ διὰ μέσου τοῦ ὀγδόου διαμπερὲς ἐληλάσθαι. τὸν μὲν οὖν πρῶτόν τε καὶ ἐξωτάτῳ σφόνδυλον πλατύτατον τὸν τοῦ χεῖλους κύκλον ἔχειν, τὸν δὲ τοῦ ἕκτου δεύτερον, τρίτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τετάρτου, τέταρτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ ὀγδόου, πέμπτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ ἑβδόμου, ἕκτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ πέμπτου, ἑβδομον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τρίτου, ὀγδοον δὲ τὸν τοῦ δευτέρου. καὶ τὸν μὲν τοῦ μεγίστου ποικίλον, τὸν δὲ τοῦ ἑβδόμου λαμπρότατον, τὸν δὲ [617a] τοῦ ὀγδόου τὸ χρῶμα ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑβδόμου ἔχειν προσλάμποντος, τὸν δὲ τοῦ δευτέρου καὶ πέμπτου παραπλήσια ἀλλήλοις, ξανθότερα ἐκείνων, τρίτον δὲ λευκότερον χρῶμα ἔχειν, τέταρτον δὲ ὑπέρυθρον, δεύτερον δὲ λευκότητι τὸν ἕκτον. κυκλεῖσθαι δὲ δὴ στρεφόμενον τὸν ἄτρακτον ὅλον μὲν τὴν αὐτὴν φορᾶν, ἐν δὲ τῷ ὅλῳ περιφερομένῳ τοὺς μὲν ἐντὸς ἐπτὰ κύκλους τὴν ἐναντίαν τῷ ὅλῳ ἡρέμα περιφέρεσθαι, αὐτῶν δὲ τούτων τάχιστα μὲν ἰέναι τὸν ὀγδοον, δευτέρους δὲ καὶ ἅμα [617b] ἀλλήλοις τὸν τε ἑβδομον καὶ ἕκτον καὶ πέμπτον: τὸν τρίτον δὲ φορᾶ ἰέναι, ὡς σφίσι φαίνεσθαι, ἐπανακυκλούμενον τὸν τέταρτον, τέταρτον δὲ τὸν τρίτον καὶ πέμπτον τὸν δεύτερον.

The nature of the whorl is as follows: [616d] its shape is like the ones we use, but you have to imagine what it is like from his description of it, just as if in a large hollow whorl scooped out right through, another one of the same sort lies fitted inside it, and so on, just like boxes that fit into one another, with a third and a fourth and four more. The total number of whorls is eight, each lying inside the other. [616e] Their edges seen from above are circles, forming from the back a continuous single whorl around the shaft, the latter being driven right through the center of the eighth. The first and outermost whorl is the broadest in the circle of its rim, that of the sixth is second, that of the fourth is third, that of the eighth is fourth, that of the seventh is fifth, that of the fifth is sixth, that of the third is seventh, and that of the second is eighth. Furthermore, that of the largest is star-studded, that of the seventh is brightest, and the color of the eighth [617a] comes from the shining of the seventh. The colors of the second and fifth are nearly the same as each other, more yellow than the others; the third has the whitest light, the fourth is reddish, and the sixth is second in brightness. The whole of the spindle revolves in a circle on the same course, but in the whole revolution the seven inner circles revolve silently in the opposite direction to the whole and the fastest of these is the eighth, [617b] second the seventh, sixth, and fifth all moving together. The third fastest, so it seemed to them, was the fourth, and the third was fourth, and the fifth second.<sup>321</sup>

First of all, Ficino noted the Latin translation of three Greek words from the passage (fol. 120<sup>r</sup>):

ἄνωθεν /i(d est) nobis sup(er)nos

<sup>321</sup> Plato. *Republic*, ed. and trans. by Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013), II, pp. 470-75.

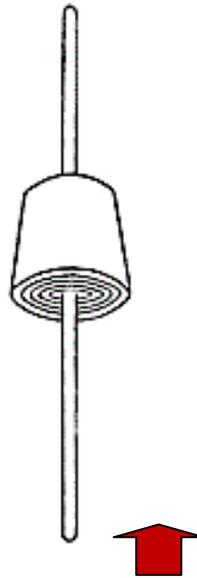




**Figure 5. The shape of the whorls: cylindrical or spherical**

As far as the position of the souls towards the astral plane is concerned, commentators have given various interpretations of the expression κύκλους ἄνωθεν τὰ χεῖλη φαίνοντας (616e1). Ferruccio Franco Repellini focused on the use of the adverb ἄνωθεν, which means ‘from above’, and which he takes to refer either to the souls’ observation point or to the whorls themselves and their own form and orientation. In the former case, the rims of the σφόνδυλοι are facing upward. Conversely, in the latter case, they are facing downward. In agreement with Schils’ reconstruction, Franco Repellini states that the second option is more convincing and therefore translates the expression κύκλους ἄνωθεν τὰ χεῖλη φαίνοντας as follows: ‘[I fusaioli] mostranti dall’alto i bordi come cerchi (i.e. [the whorls] showing their rims as circles from above)’. The eight σφόνδυλοι look like eight hemispheres, fitting into each other and forming the section of a sphere. The convexity is placed in the upper part, whilst the rims are situated in the lower part, facing downward. Thus the souls face upward as they look at the astral plane (see Figure 6).<sup>325</sup>

<sup>325</sup> Franco Repellini, ‘Il fuso e la Necessità’, pp. 380-81. See also Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by Adam, II, p. 448; Schils, ‘Plato’s Myth of Er’, 111-13.



**Figure 6. The whorls' orientation and the souls's observation point**

Proclus is the earliest commentator to provide such an interpretation. In his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, he states that the whorls look like hemispherical vases and argues that Plato chose the image of the spindle and the whorls since they are curved and they have the same shape as the celestial vault as it appears from upward to those who look at it: Τὸν σφόνδυλον ὅτι ἀνάλογον λαμβάνει τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τμήματι τῷ ἄνωθεν φαινομένῳ τῶν ὁρώντων (Kroll II, 213, 17-21).<sup>326</sup>

When translating ἄνωθεν with *nobis supernos*, Ficino seems to adhere to Proclus's interpretation. Furthermore, by translating τὰ χεῖλη with *concauitates*, the Florentine scholar appears to refer to the image of the concave pots that Plato used to describe the eight whorls. Nevertheless, as we shall see in Section 4.2, at the time of the composition of the anthology (1470-74), Ficino was unable to read Proclus's commentary: the text is preserved in two manuscripts, which arrived in Florence from the Byzantine Empire only at the end of the fifteenth century.

<sup>326</sup> Reference critical edition: *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*, ed. by Wilhelm Kroll, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899-1901).

Hence, we must deduce that Ficino conceived this interpretation independently, or by using a different source, which to date I have been unable to identify.

### VI. 3. 2 ‘De mensuris profunditatum sperarum’: Ficino’s scheme

The main difficulty with the passage concerning the whorls that form the spindle of Necessity lies in three numeric sequences used by Plato to describe the width of the rims of the σφόνδυλοι, i.e. the distances of the orbits, the colours and the pace of the whorls (616e-617b3).<sup>327</sup> To explain the complex passage, modern scholars have attempted to elaborate various explanatory schemes, such as in figure 7.<sup>328</sup>

The following table gives the order of orbital distances, or breadths of rims of whorls, as compared with the order of the whorls themselves, the order of *relative* speeds, and the relation of the colours of the planets respectively :

Whorl.	Planet.	Order in breadth of rim according to our reading.	Order in breadth of rim according to Proclus's 'old' reading.	Order of relative speeds.	Relation of colours.
1 =	Sphere of fixed stars	1	1	—	Spangled.
2 =	Saturn	8	7	5	Yellower than sun and moon.
3 =	Jupiter	7	6	4	Whitest.
4 =	Mars	3	5	3	Rather red.
5 =	Mercury	6	8	2	Like Saturn in colour.
6 =	Venus	2	4		2
7 =	Sun	5	2	2	Brightest.
8 =	Moon	4	3	1	Light borrowed from sun.

Figure 7. Exegetical scheme, concerning the three numerical sequences (*Rep.* 616e-617b3), contained in *Aristarchus of Samos* by T. Heath (1913)

<sup>327</sup> The interpretation identifying the width of the rims with the distances of the orbits is the most widely accepted. See, Plato, *Republic*, ed. by Jowett and Campbell, III, p. 475; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by Adam, II, pp. 450 and 472; Plato, *Republic X*, ed. by Halliwell, p. 180; Kalfas, ‘Plato’s Real Astronomy’, 5-20; For a detailed analysis, see Thompson, ‘Plato’s Theory of the Planets’, 137-142; Rivaud, ‘Le système astronomique’.

<sup>328</sup> Heath, *Aristarchus of Samos*, p. 157; Aldo Mieli, *La scuola jonica, pythagorica ed eleata* (Florence: Libreria della Voce, 1916), p. 426; Untersteiner, *The Republic*, II, p. 312; Halliwell, *Plato: Republic X*, p. 180; Franco Repellini, ‘Il fuso e la Necessità, p. 387’.

In his interpretation of the passage, Ficino focused on the first numerical sequence, which reads as follows.

τὸν μὲν οὖν πρῶτον τε καὶ ἐξωτάτω σφόνδυλον πλατύτατον τὸν τοῦ χεῖλους κύκλον ἔχειν, τὸν δὲ τοῦ ἕκτου δεύτερον, τρίτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τετάρτου, τέταρτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ ὀγδόου, πέμπτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ ἑβδόμου, ἕκτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ πέμπτου, ἑβδομον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τρίτου, ὀγδοον δὲ τὸν τοῦ δευτέρου (616e3-8).

I shall now provide the translation of the passage by matching each numeral with the relevant celestial body. The translation is followed by the diagram that Adam produced in his commented edition of the *Republic*. The aim of the diagram is to visualize the different width of the rims resulting from the numerical sequence:

Now the first (Fixed Stars) and outmost whorl had the broadest circular rim, that of the sixth (Venus) was second, and third was that of the fourth (Mars), and fourth was that of the eighth (Moon), fifth that of the seventh (Sun), sixth that of the fifth (Mercury), seventh that of the third (Jupiter), eighth that of the second (Saturn).

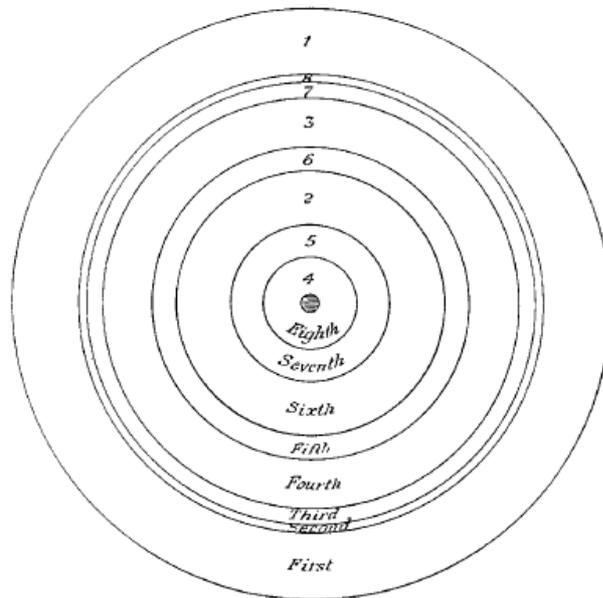


Figure 8. The order of decreasing width of the rims of the σφόνδυλοι in Adam's edition

Let us now focus on the arrangement of the numerical sequence. With the exception of the first element of the series, i.e. the Fixed Stars, the first numerical

sequence consists of ordinal numerals set in pairs. A numeral in the accusative and another in the genitive respectively form each pair. The former numeral indicates the position held by each celestial body in the order of decreasing width. The latter numeral signals the position held by the celestial body in the Pythagorean system. The following table summarizes how the numerical sequence is arranged and the resulting order of decreasing width:

**Table 1**

<b>THE FIRST NUMERICAL SEQUENCE (<i>Rep.</i> 616e3-8)</b>				
<b>Position of the celestial body in the order of decreasing width</b>		<b>Position of the celestial body in the Pythagorean system</b>		<b>Order of decreasing width according to the first numerical sequence</b>
(πλατύτατον)	outmost whorl	πρῶτον	the first	I. Fixed Stars
δεύτερον	second	ἕκτου	that of the sixth	II. Venus
τρίτον	third	τετάρτου	that of the fourth	III. Mars
τέταρτον	fourth	ὀγδόου	that of the eighth	IV. Moon
πέμπτον	fifth	ἑβδόμου	that of the seventh	V. Sun
ἕκτον	sixth	πέμπτου	that of the fifth	VI. Mercury
ἑβδομον	seventh	τρίτου	that of the third	VII. Jupiter
ὀγδοον	eighth	δευτέρου	that of the second	VIII. Saturn

As mentioned above, Ficino focusses on the first numerical sequence and draws an exegetical scheme that matches some numerals forming the sequence to astronomical terms:

V(idetu)r loqui(?)<sup>329</sup> de me(n)suris profunditatu(m) sperar(um) et ponere | primam ut ·8· [8] profunditate(m) sexte ut ·7· quarte ·s(cilicet)· spe|re ut ·6· s(cilicet) gradus octaue s(cilicet) lunaris ut ·5· septime | ·4· quinte ·3· tertie ·2· secu(n)de s(cilicet) solaris ·1·

<sup>329</sup> We clearly identify the final abbreviation for ‘qui’. On the other hand, it is not clear whether the abbreviation is preceded by ‘h’ or by the letters ‘l’ and ‘o’.

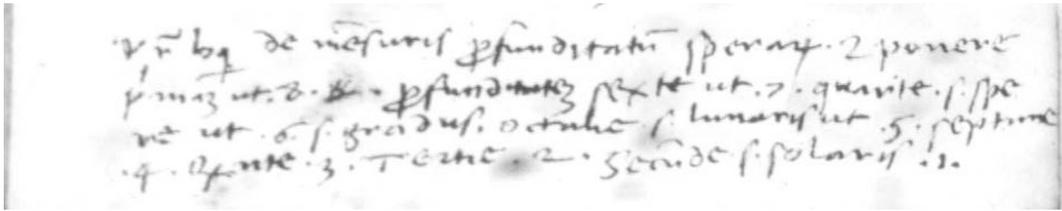


Figure 9. Detail of fol. 120<sup>r</sup> mg. inf. Ficino's exegetical scheme (*Rep.* 616e3-8)

The following table summarizes how the numerical sequence is arranged in Ficino's exegetical scheme:

**Table 2**

<i>DE MENSURIS PROFUNDITATUM SPERARUM</i>	
i.e. Order of decreasing width of the rims of the σφόνδουλοι	
Position of the celestial body in the Pythagorean system	Position of the celestial body in the order of decreasing width
primam	8
septe	7
quarte	6
octave/lunaris	5
septime	4
quinte	3
tertie	2
secunde/solaris	1

Unlike the Platonic text, each pair composing the numerical sequence is formed by an ordinal numeral in the genitive and by an Arabic number respectively. The ordinal numeral indicates the position held by each celestial body in the Pythagorean system. The Arabic number signals the position held by

the celestial body in the order of decreasing width. Unlike in the Platonic passage, the numbers indicating the order of decreasing width are set in a decreasing progression, going 8 to 1. If we combine the numerical sequence in the Platonic passage and the numerical sequence in Ficino's scheme we obtain the following table:

**Table 3**

ORDER OF DECREASING WIDTH OF THE RIMS OF THE σφόνδυλοι ACCORDING TO THE FIRST NUMERICAL SEQUENCE				
Numerical sequence in the Platonic passage		Celestial Bodies  (denomination and respective position in the order of decreasing width)	Numerical sequence in Ficino's scheme (fol. 120 <sup>r</sup> mg. inf.)	
Increasing progression (ordinal numeral)=  Order of decreasing width	Ordinal numeral=  position of the celestial body in the Pythagorean system		Ordinal numeral=  position of the celestial body in the Pythagorean system	Decreasing progression  (Arabic number)=  Order of decreasing width
(πλατύτατον)	πρῶτον	I. Fixed Stars	<i>primam</i>	8
δεύτερον	ἕκτου	II. Venus	<i>sexe</i>	7
τρίτον	τετάρτου	III. Mars	<i>quarte</i>	6
τέταρτον	ὀγδόου	IV. Moon	<i>octave/lunaris</i>	5
πέμπτον	ἑβδόμου	V. Sun	<i>septime</i>	4
ἕκτον	πέμπτου	VI. Mercury	<i>quinte</i>	3
ἑβδομον	Τρίτου	VII. Jupiter	<i>tertie</i>	2
ὀγδοον	Δευτέρου	VIII. Saturn	<i>secunde/solaris</i>	1

With the exception of a discrepancy, to be discussed in the following section, the table shows that Ficino's exegetical scheme represents a Latin paraphrase of the Greek passage.<sup>330</sup>

### VI. 3. 3 Two methods of computing

As mentioned in the previous section, if we compare the numerical sequence in the Platonic passage with Ficino's exegetical scheme, we indeed detect almost a precise correspondence, except in the case *secunde/solaris*, where Ficino replaces the Sun by Saturn, which is the second planet of the Pythagorean system.

The last marginal note at fol. 120<sup>v</sup> mg. sn. provides an explanation for this discrepancy between Ficino's scheme and the Platonic description. Next to the passage concerning the second numerical sequence, which describes the different colours of the celestial bodies (*Rep.* 616e8-617a4), Ficino writes as follows:

*solis* (referred to τοῦ δευτέρου *Rep.* 617a2) *et* | *martis* (referred to τοῦ πέμπτου *ibid.*)

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<sup>330</sup> The correspondence between Ficino's exegetical scheme and Plato's passage is confirmed by the content of two marginal notes at fol. 120<sup>v</sup>, drawn in the upper margin and at ll. 1-2 in the interlinear space. These *marginalia* refer to the ordinal numerals δεῦτερον and τέταρτον respectively: δεῦτερον / *i(d est) i(n) s(ecun)do gradu ab illo quod e(st) 7 s(cilicet) post 8*. τέταρτον / *i(d est) i(n) quarto gradu a su(m)mo*. The former note looks like a translation of the ordinal numeral used by Plato to indicate the decreasing order of width: *in secundo gradu*, i.e. δεῦτερον, *ab illo*, i.e. πρῶτον/πλατύτατον. The following part of the note, which is introduced by an explanatory *quod est*, looks like a conversion of the ordinal numeral of the increasing progression into the Arabic number of the decreasing progression used by Ficino in the exegetical scheme. In other words, the ordinal numeral δεῦτερον is converted into the Arabic number 7 (consider the relevant table). On the other hand, the latter note consists of a translation of the ordinal numeral, but without converting it into the numeral used in the Ficinian scheme: *in quarto gradu*, i.e. τέταρτον, *a summo*, i.e. πρῶτον/πλατύτατον.

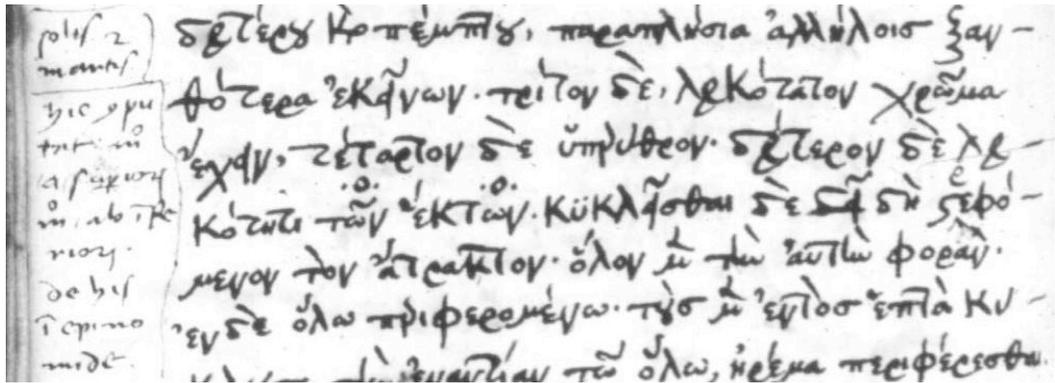


Figure 10. Detail of fol. 120<sup>v</sup>: *marginalia* next to Rep. 616e8-617a4

Ficino writes *solis* and *martis*, where we would expect to find Saturn and Mercury, which hold the second (τοῦ δευτέρου) and the fifth (τοῦ πέμπτου) place in the Pythagorean system. The content of the final part of the note seems to explain why the numerals τοῦ δευτέρου and τοῦ πέμπτου are matched to the sun and to Mars respectively rather than to Saturn and Mercury. The note reads as follows:

*hic (com)pu|tat m(od)o |a sup(er)iori | m(od)o ab i(n)fe|riori. | de his | i(n) epino| mide.*

The former sentence, *hic computat modo a superiori modo ab inferiori*, seems to refer to two ways of computing the position held by each celestial body in the Pythagorean universe: *a superiori*, i.e. from the Fixed Stars to the Moon or viceversa *ab inferiori*, i.e. from the Moon to the Fixed stars. The following table summarizes what I have explained so far. I have emphasized in bold the sun and Mars and their position in the Pythagorean system.

**Table 4**

<i>a superiori</i>		
1	Fixed Stars	8
2	Saturn	7
3	Jupiter	6
4	<b>Mars</b>	<b>5</b>
5	Mercury	4
6	Venus	3
7	<b>Sun</b>	<b>2</b>
8	Moon	1
<i>ab inferiori</i>		

If we apply the system defined as *ab inferiori* to the sun and Mars, these celestial bodies hold the second and fifth position respectively in the Pythagorean cosmos. Furthermore, if we apply the same mode of computing to the scheme at fol. 120<sup>f</sup>, we may explain the apparent contradiction in the binomial *secunde/solaris*.

The latter sentence probably refers to a passage from Plato's *Epinomis* (986d-987d), containing another description of the celestial bodies. Nevertheless, this reference does not merely concern a *locus similis*. More specifically, it seems to signal a passage containing the same interchange in the way of computing the position of the orbits of the celestial bodies. Let us analyse the relevant text more in detail.

The passage from the *Epinomis* quoted in the marginal note contains a description of the eight celestial bodies, their movement and respective denominations. After describing the sun, moon and stars, Plato describes the other

five celestial bodies. Each of them is matched to the name of a deity. When describing the orbits of the five planets, Plato first mentions Venus and Mercury, whose orbits are similar to that of the sun. After Venus and Mercury, Plato refers to the last three celestial bodies: he proceeds from the planet having the slowest orbit to the one having the fastest orbit. In the passage concerning the description of the celestial bodies, we may therefore detect two different sequences:

- Former sequence: Sun, Aphrodite/Venus , Hermes/Mercury (*ab inferiori*, i.e. from the inner most to the outer orbit)
- Latter sequence: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars (*a superiori*, i.e. from the outer most orbit to the inner orbit.)

In sum, the information provided by Ficino's marginal note, as well as the content of the passage from the *Epinomis*, seem to offer evidence that the Florentine scholar refers to a twofold method of computing. Thus when writing *secunde/solaris*, and *solis et martis*, Ficino states that Plato is computing *ab inferiori*. However, it is uncertain whether Ficino conceived this interpretation independently, or by drawing on an earlier exegetical source.

#### **VI. 4. 1 Textual problems: Proclus's commentary**

In order to contextualize more thoroughly my analysis of Ficino's philological approach to the Platonic passage, I shall now provide a brief account of a complex question. The first numerical sequence, describing the order of decreasing width of the rims of the σφόνδυλοι, involves a textual problem. In his commentary on the *Republic* (II 218, 1-219, 11), Proclus refers to a significant variant reading, based on a twofold textual tradition and producing differing

orders of width of the rims: διττή δ' ἐστὶν ἡ γραφή τῆς ταῦτα τὰ βάθη διοριζούσης λέξεως (II, 218, 1-2). The former *lectio* is defined as προτέρα καὶ ἀρχαιότερα (II, 218, 28-29), i.e. as an earlier and older variant reading. According to this variant reading, each concentric hemisphere has a decreasing width, which is proportional to the size of the celestial body.<sup>331</sup> The latter *lectio* is defined as δευτέρα καὶ νεωτέρα (II 218, 28-29), i.e. as the second and more recent variant reading, and corresponds to the text that has been transmitted to us over the centuries. The following tables provide a scheme of the two variant readings (table 5) and the resulting different order of decreasing width of the orbits (table 6):

**Table 5**

<b>Variant readings according to Proclus's commentary on the <i>Republic</i></b>	
<b>ἀρχαιότερα γραφή</b>	<b>νεωτέρα γραφή</b>
ἑβδόμου	ἕκτου
ὀγδόου	τετάρτου
ἕκτου	ὀγδόου
τετάρτου	ἑβδόμου
τρίτου	πέμπτου
δευτέρου	τρίτου
πέμπτου	δευτέρου

<sup>331</sup> In Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by Adam, II, pp. 475-76, an extensive analysis of the whole passage on the spindle of Necessity is provided. Adam also reconstructed the text of the first numerical sequence according to the προτέρα καὶ ἀρχαιότερα γραφή.

**Table 6**

<b>Position of the celestial body in the order of decreasing width according to:</b>		
<b>Nr of order</b>	<b>ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή</b>	<b>νεωτέρα γραφή</b>
<b>I</b>	Fixed Stars	Fixed Stars
<b>II</b>	Sun	Venus
<b>III</b>	Moon	Mars
<b>IV</b>	Venus	Moon
<b>V</b>	Mars	Sun
<b>VI</b>	Jupiter	Mercury
<b>VII</b>	Saturn	Jupiter
<b>VIII</b>	Mercury	Saturn

In the manuscript tradition, there is no trace of Proclus's ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή and modern critical editions are based on the so-called νεωτέρα γραφή. Nevertheless, modern scholars have formulated differing and opposing theories about the textual problem.<sup>332</sup> Wilhelm Kroll affirms that the ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή is the correct *lectio*, as it seems to show a more logical order.<sup>333</sup> By contrast, August Bouché-Leclercq argues that both variant readings are by Plato.<sup>334</sup> In turn, Giorgio

<sup>332</sup> For a detailed account, see Plato, *Repubblica Libro X*, ed. by Untersteiner, pp. 333-34.

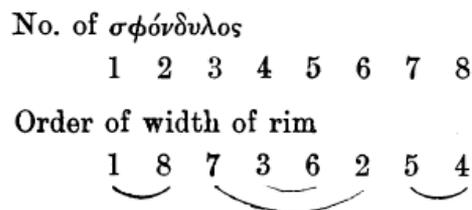
<sup>333</sup> *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam*, ed. by Kroll, II, p. 414.

<sup>334</sup> August Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie Grecque* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), p. 106. According to this interpretation, when writing the *Republic*, Plato seemingly established a perfect correspondence between the width of the orbits and the presumed size of the planets. At a later stage, Plato's view may have changed: as a result, when writing the description of the cosmos contained in the *Timaeus* (38b), the philosopher adopted an order matching the duration of the planetary revolutions. Thus in order to avoid any potential contradiction, the passage of the *Republic* was corrected in the light of this changed view, either by Plato himself or his ancient editors. A similar hypothesis is advanced by Constantin Ritter, 'Bericht über die in den letzten Jahrzehnten über Platon erschienenen Arbeiten', *Jahresbericht für Altertumswissenschaft* 157 (1912, I), p. 127; 161 (1913, I), pp. 55-56; Henry Alline, *Histoire du Texte de Platon* (Paris: Champion, 1915), p. 170.

Pasquali states that both the *lectiones* circulated in Antiquity, so that we cannot establish which the genuine variant reading is.<sup>335</sup>

Adam produced a detailed commentary on the astronomical description contained in Book X of Plato's *Republic*. In this context, he rejects the ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή and states that the νεωτέρα γραφή is the correct reading as it is the *lectio difficilior*. Additionally, by recalling W. A. Craigie and Cook Wilson's remarks on the passage, Adam provides his interpretation with further supporting argument. According to these remarks, the νεωτέρα γραφή is the genuine *lectio*, since the resulting arrangement of the planets follows a numerical principle.<sup>336</sup>

If we write down the numbers which express the order of the whorls, and under each set the number which its rim has in the order of breadth, and then join "those σφόνδυλοι whose united numbers produce a sum of 9, we have a symmetrical figure with its centre between the 4th and the 5th".<sup>337</sup>



**Figure 11. Diagram illustrating the numerical principle that underlies the νεωτέρα γραφή in Cook Wilson's article**

By contrast, this numerical principle does not underlie the order resulting from the ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή.

<sup>335</sup> Giorgio Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1935; rpt. 1988), p. 269.

<sup>336</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by Adam, II, pp. 474. Craigie's observations are contained in, Plato, *Republic*, ed. by Jowett and Campbell, III, pp. 475-76. Cook Wilson, 'Plato, Republic 616e', p. 292, in turn discussed Craigie's remarks.

<sup>337</sup> Cook Wilson, 'Plato, Republic 616e', p. 292.

## VI. 4. 2 Ficino's philological approach: three *variae lectiones*

Let us now focus on Ficino's philological approach to the passage in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. The Florentine scholar focusses on a textual problem concerning the first numerical sequence. Ficino collates the text and notes some *variae lectiones*. Furthermore, he notes several astronomical terms, matching with some of the numerals forming the sequence:<sup>338</sup>

fol. 120<sup>v</sup> mg. sup. *al(ite)r πέμπτου (pro ἕκτου)*;

fol. 120<sup>v</sup> l. 3 *al(ite)r δευτέρου (pro πέμπτου)*;

fol. 120<sup>v</sup> l. 4 *al(ite)r ἕκτου (pro δευτέρου)*.

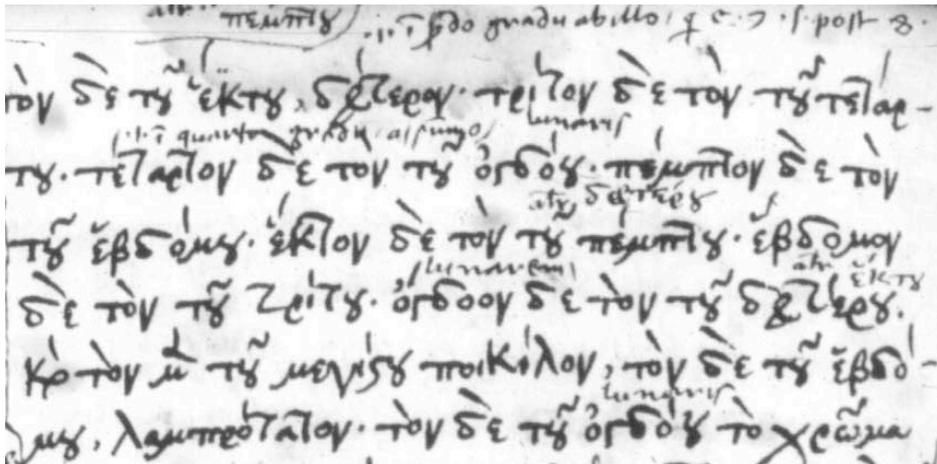


Figure 12. Detail of fol. 120<sup>v</sup>: translations and variant readings

According to Ficino's *variae lectiones*, we can reconstruct the following numerical sequence. I have emphasized the variants in bold:

<sup>338</sup> Fol. 120<sup>v</sup> l. 2 ὀγδόου/*lunaris*; l. 4 ὀγδοον/*lunarem*; l. 6 ὀγδόου/*lunaris*. The binomial ὀγδόου/*lunaris* is consistent with Ficino's exegetical scheme: the moon holds the eighth position in the Pythagorean cosmic system. By contrast, the term *lunarem*, matching the numeral ὀγδοον, is the result of Ficino's misreading the passage. This numeral does not refer to the moon but to the position – ὀγδοον, i.e. the eighth – held by Saturn – τοῦ δευτέρου, i.e. the second celestial body in the Pythagorean system – in the order of decreasing width.

τὸν μὲν οὖν πρῶτον τε καὶ ἐξωτάτῳ σφόνδυλον πλατύτατον τὸν τοῦ χείλους κύκλον ἔχειν, τὸν δὲ τοῦ **πέμπτου** δεύτερον, τρίτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τετάρτου, τέταρτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ ὀγδόου, πέμπτου δὲ τὸν τοῦ ἑβδόμου, ἕκτον δὲ τὸν τοῦ **δευτέρου**, ἕβδομον δὲ τὸν τοῦ τρίτου, ὀγδοὸν δὲ τὸν τοῦ **ἕκτου**.

The following table summarizes what I have explained so far:

**Table 7**

<b>ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή (Proclus)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>νεωτέρα γραφή (Proclus)</b></li> <li>• <b>Manuscript tradition and printed editions</b></li> <li>• <b><i>Excerptum</i> in MS Ambr. F 19 sup.</b></li> </ul>	<b>Variant readings noted by Ficino in MS Ambr. F 19 sup.</b>
ἑβδόμου	ἕκτου	<b>πέμπτου</b>
ὀγδόου	τετάρτου	τετάρτου
ἕκτου	ὀγδόου	ὀγδόου
Τετάρτου	ἑβδόμου	ἑβδόμου
Τρίτου	πέμπτου	<b>δευτέρου</b>
Δευτέρου	τρίτου	τρίτου
Πέμπτου	δευτέρου	<b>ἕκτου</b>

According to the table, we notice that the text of Plato's *Republic* transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. corresponds to the so-called νεωτέρα γραφή. However, if we observe the numerical sequence resulting from Ficino's variant readings, we notice that it corresponds neither to the ἀρχαιοτέρα γραφή nor to the νεωτέρα γραφή. The numerical sequence therefore produces a different order of width of the orbits of the celestial bodies forming the Pythagorean universe:

**Table 8**

<b>Position of the celestial body in the order of decreasing width according to</b>			
<b>Nr of order</b>	<b>ἀρχαιότερα γραφή</b>	<b>νεωτέρα γραφή</b>	<b>Ficino's <i>lectiones</i></b>
<b>I</b>	Fixed Stars	Fixed Stars	Fixed Stars
<b>II</b>	Sun	Venus	Mercury
<b>III</b>	Moon	Mars	Mars
<b>IV</b>	Venus	Moon	Moon
<b>V</b>	Mars	Sun	Sun
<b>VI</b>	Jupiter	Mercury	Saturn
<b>VII</b>	Saturn	Jupiter	Jupiter
<b>VIII</b>	Mercury	Saturn	Venus

We know that Marsilio Ficino had access to part of Proclus's commentary on the *Republic* only after 1492. The text of the Proclean commentary is preserved in two manuscripts, forming in origin a single codex: MSS Laur. 80. 9 and Vat. gr. 2197. The Florentine manuscript contains the first twelve *Dissertationes*, up to *Rep.* VII and the famous myth of the cave. It arrived in Florence only in 1492 with Ianus Lascaris. The story of the vicissitudes of the Vatican manuscript is less easy to track down: we do not know at what point it was separated from MS Laur. 80. 9, nor when it arrived in Florence. The manuscript belonged to the holdings of the library of the Salviati, who must have purchased the book around 1500. In the eighteenth century, the codex was acquired by the library of the Colonna and it eventually ended up in the Vatican Library. As mentioned above, Ficino could only consult MS Laur. 80. 9 from 1492, when he borrowed the book.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>339</sup> The fact is documented by the register of the Medicean Library. When translating some excerpts from Proclus's commentary on Book VI and Book VII of Plato's *Republic* into Latin,

In sum, according to the information at our disposal, we may draw the following conclusions: first, in the process of transcribing the text of Plato's *Republic* in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Ficino was not aware of the διττή γραφή that Proclus mentioned in his commentary. Secondly, even when noting the *variae lectiones* in the manuscript, the Florentine scholar seems to ignore the existence of the Proclean variant readings. Lastly, when noting the variant readings, he consulted a source that differs from both Proclus's commentary and most of the manuscript tradition. To identify this source, I checked first the critical editions, which merely refer to Proclus's ἀρχαιοτέρα and νεωτέρα γραφή. I then consulted Boter's study on the textual tradition of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>340</sup>

#### VI. 4. 3 Boter's study and Ficino's sources

In Boter's study, there is mention of the variant readings 616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου, which Ficino noted in MS Ambr F 19 sup. (*siglum*: Ambr.).<sup>341</sup> Furthermore, Boter informs us that the same variant readings are noted *supra lineam* in MS Marc. Z gr. 187 (N). According to Boter's reconstruction, MS Marc. Z gr. 187 belongs to the first family (A) of the medieval manuscripts of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>342</sup>

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Ficino used and consulted the manuscript. In the manuscript there are the typical diacritical signs used by Ficino, which Sabastiano Gentile first detected. As to the writing of the *argumenta* to the Platonic dialogue, which where printed in 1496, Ficino was able to consult the Florentine but not the Vatican manuscript. In order to fill this exegetical gap, he may have used Christian and Neoplatonic sources differing from Proclus as well as other Proclean works he had access to, such as the *Platonic Theology*. For an exhaustive account, see Paola Megna, 'Percorsi classici e dibattito umanistico nel *De republica* di Marsilio Ficino', in *I Decembrio e la tradizione della Repubblica di Platone tra Medioevo e Umanesimo*, ed. by Mario Vegetti and Paolo Pissavino (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2005), pp. 267-340 (p. 270).

<sup>340</sup> Gerard J. Boter, 'The Textual Tradition of Plato's *Republic*', *Mnemosyne*, Supplementum 107 (1989).

<sup>341</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', p. 234. See also Berti, 'Osservazioni filologiche', p. 138.

<sup>342</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', pp. 111 and 231-34.

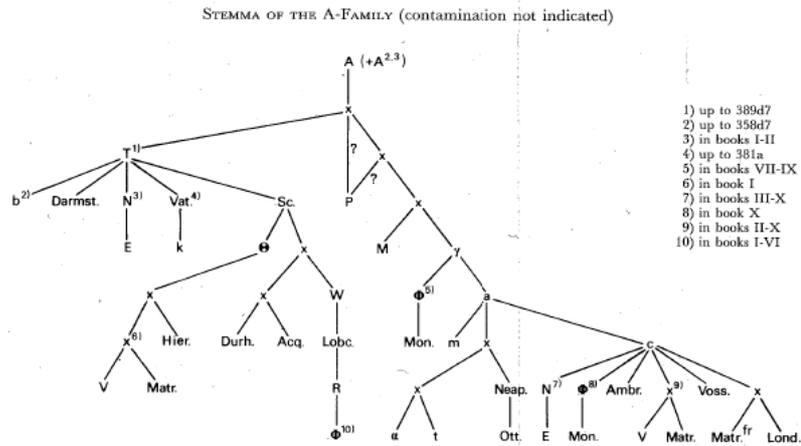


Figure 13. Boter's stemma of the A family

In addition, Boter states that the *lectio* 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου is present in D. In his study, the *siglum* D is mentioned as follows: D = *lectio apographorum* D (*ubi deest D ipse*). The *siglum* D indicates MS Ven. Marc. Z gr. 185. According to Boter's reconstruction, this manuscript is a primary witness of the second family (D) of the manuscripts of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>343</sup>

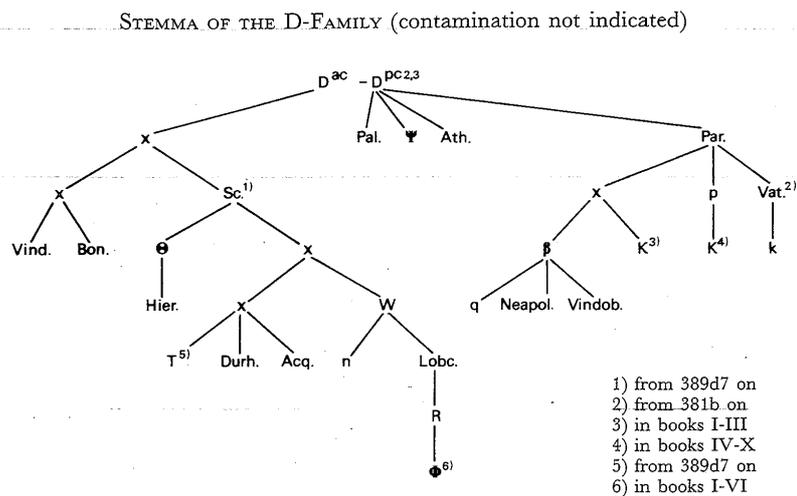


Figure 14. Stemma of the D family in Boter's study

<sup>343</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', pp. XVII, 169.

According to these data, we may summarize as follows:

616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου Ambr. N<sup>sl</sup>

616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου Ambr. N<sup>sl</sup> D

616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου Ambr. N<sup>sl</sup>

Additionally, Boter states that the variant reading 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 'undoubtedly provided the basis for the two other readings in N as well'.<sup>344</sup> However, he does not provide any potential explanation for the process originating these variant readings.<sup>345</sup>

It is actually rather difficult to establish whether the *variae lectiones* are the result of a deliberate interpolation of the text, due to scientific motivations, or an attempt to correct a scribal error produced in the process of copying. Nevertheless, we may observe that the numerical principle mentioned by Adam, concerning the so-called νεωτέρα γραφή, does not underlie the order of decreasing width resulting from the variant readings 616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου.

MS Marc. Z gr. 187 (N), was owned by Cardinal Bessarion (1403-1472), who noted corrections and variant readings in the codex.<sup>346</sup> Boter takes it for granted that, when collating the text of Plato's *Republic*, Ficino had this manuscript at his disposal. According to him, the excerpts from the *Republic*

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<sup>344</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', p. 234.

<sup>345</sup> Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', p. 234: 'I will refrain from discussing the implications of these variant readings here, as it would involve too much detail'. Furthermore, Boter refers to Adam's remarks on the Platonic passage.

<sup>346</sup> As far as Books I and II of the *Republic* are concerned, the manuscript derives from MS Marc. Append. Class IV 1 (T). Concerning Books III-X, the manuscript is apograph of MS 85. 9 (Laur. c). See Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', p. XVI.

contained in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. (Ambr.), derived from MS 85.9 (Laur. c), and ‘In some places, variant readings in **Ambr.** are borrowed from **N** (Bessarion’s working copy)’.<sup>347</sup>

Boter makes similar remarks regarding Ficino’s Latin translation of Plato’s *Republic*. Since he was unaware of Diller and Gentile’s studies, Boter first identifies Ficino’s primary source as either MS Laur. 59.1 (Laur. a) or MS Laur. 85. 9 (Laur. c). He also notices the presence of several variant readings that are absent from both MS Laur. a and MS Laur. c. These *variae lectiones* actually derive from another branch of the tradition, which includes Bessarion’s manuscript. This leads Boter to conclude that ‘it is certain that Ficino used **N**’.<sup>348</sup>

The earliest testimony of Ficino’s relation with Bessarion dates back to 1469, although they were probably in contact in early 60s already, since a letter sent by Bessarion to Ficino in 1469 seems to imply that the two scholars had already a well-established epistolary relation by that time.<sup>349</sup> However, a weakness with Boter’s argument is that by 1470s the cardinal had donated his library to the Republic of Venice and most of the books forming the stock were preserved and locked away in chests, which means that Ficino would have had some difficulty in accessing Bessarion’s manuscript.<sup>350</sup> When studying the variant

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<sup>347</sup> Boter, ‘The Textual Tradition’, p. 41.

<sup>348</sup> Boter, ‘The Textual Tradition’, p. 274. See also Berti, ‘Osservazioni filologiche’, p. 137.

<sup>349</sup> See James Hankins, ‘Bessarione, Ficino e le scuole di Platonismo nel sec. XV’, in *Dotti Bizantini e libri greci nell’Italia del secolo XV*, Atti del Convegno internazionale (Trento 22-23 ottobre 1990), ed. by Mariarosa Cortesi and E. V. Maltese (Naples: D’Auria, 1992), pp. 117-28. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 472-73, also demonstrated the indebtedness of Ficino’s translation of the *Phaedrus* towards the long passages from the Platonic dialogue that Bessarion translated in his *In Calumniatorem Platonis*.

<sup>350</sup> In 1469, Bessarion sent the Doge and the Venetian senate the act of donation of his library. The act was accompanied by a letter stating both Bessarion’s motivations for such a gift and the conditions for using the books. The first delivery of books, maybe thirty chests, arrived at Venice in the spring of 1470. The rest of the books, together with those that the Cardinal purchased between 1469 and 1472, arrived in the city after 1472, Bessarion’s year of death. For a detailed

readings 616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου  
 Boter focused solely on the text and failed to take Ficino's *marginalia* into  
 account. In the following section, I shall argue that these marginal notes are key to  
 identifying Ficino's source.

#### VI. 4. 4 Ficino and Chrysoloras's translation of Plato's *Republic*

As mentioned above, I shall now seek to identify the source that Ficino  
 used when writing the variant readings 616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου]  
 δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου, concerning the first numerical sequence and the  
 resulting order of decreasing width of the rims of the σφόνδυλοι. In the first  
 marginal note at fol. 120<sup>v</sup>, we read the following statement:

*In tri(bus) | exe(m)plis | e(st) ut hic | p(rim)o scribi|t(ur). sup(er)|scriptio | est  
 ema|nuelis. forte me(n)|dosa*

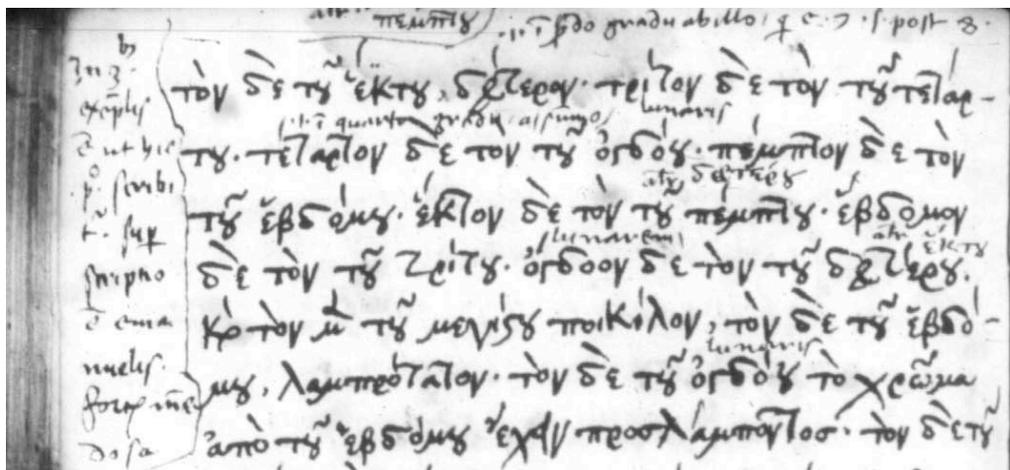


Figure 15. Detail of fol. 120<sup>v</sup>. *Marginalia* providing information on Ficino's sources

This Latin annotation, as well as the *variae lectiones* noted in the  
 marginal and interlinear space, clearly refer to a process of collation. The shade of

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account, see Lotte Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana: Six Early Inventories* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1979).

the ink used to write the *marginalia*, as well as the variant readings and the translation of some terms, provide evidence that the collation took place at a time separate from the process of transcribing the excerpt from Plato's *Republic* in MS Ambr. F 19. This means that after transcribing the text in the manuscript, Ficino read and studied the text concerning the astronomical description at various times, focussing particularly on the first numerical sequence.

In the *marginalia*, Ficino first states *in tribus exemplis est ut hic primo scribitur*.<sup>351</sup> The expression means that there is no difference between the text that Ficino has previously transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and the one contained in three other manuscripts consulted in the process of collating the passage. Secondly, he states *superscriptio est emanuelis*. The word *superscriptio* seemingly refers to 'what has been written above' the text, i.e. the variant readings 616e5 ἔκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἔκτου written in the marginal and interlinear space.

*Emanuelis* certainly refers to Manuel Chrysoloras (1355 ca-1415), who had translated Plato's *Republic* at the beginning of the fifteenth century in collaboration with Uberto Decembrio during his stay in Pavia (1400-1403).<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> In humanist philological terminology, the word *exemplum* may indicate either the antigraph/model or the apograph/copy. See Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti*, pp. 189-92.

<sup>352</sup> As far as the translation is concerned, see Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'Umanesimo, I: Manuele Crisolora* (Florence: Centro Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1941), pp. 123-24; Eugenio Garin, 'Ricerche sulle traduzioni di Platone nella prima metà del sec. XV', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento. Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), pp. 339-74; Eugenio Garin, *Il ritorno dei filosofi antichi* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1983); Gianvito Resta, 'Antonio Cassarino e le sue traduzioni di Plutarco e Platone', *Italia Medievale e Umanistica 2* (1959), 254-56; Diego Bottoni, 'I Decembrio e la traduzione della *Repubblica* di Platone: dalle correzioni dell'autografo di Uberto alle integrazioni greche di Pier Candido', in *Vestigia. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Bilanovich*, ed. by Rino Avesani, Mirella Ferrari, Tino Foffano, Giuseppe Frasso, Agostino Sottili (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984), I, pp. 75-91; James Hankins, 'A manuscript of Plato's *Republic* in the Translation of Chrysoloras and Uberto Decembrio with Annotations of Guarino Veronese (Reg. Lat. 1131)', in *Supplementum Festivum*, pp. 149-88; Sebastiano Gentile, 'Note sulla traduzione crisolorina della *Repubblica* di Platone', in

Moreover, by stating *forte mendosa*, Ficino calls this authority into question. The expression *superscriptio est Emanuelis* led me therefore to formulate the hypothesis that the Greek variant readings noted by Ficino in the Milan manuscript were retro-version based on Chrysoloras's Latin translation. In other words, I wondered whether Ficino took some Latin *lectiones* from Chrysoloras's translation and translated them back into Greek.

The text of Chrysoloras's translation, which has not yet been published, is preserved in eight extant manuscripts.<sup>353</sup> According to Diego Bottoni the original translation is contained in one section (fols 132<sup>v</sup>-215<sup>v</sup>) of MS Ambr. B 123, a family *zibaldone* compiled by Pier Candido Decembrio, Uberto's son.<sup>354</sup> This section of the Milan manuscript represents Uberto's working copy. By using this manuscript, Uberto Decembrio continued to revise and work on the translation after Chrysoloras's departure from Pavia. Chrysoloras and Uberto intended this working copy to be the basis for further copies of the translation. These copies might be produced in order to meet any potential requests from other scholars keen to read their translation.<sup>355</sup>

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*Manuele Crisolora e il ritorno del greco in Occidente*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Napoli, 26-29 giugno 1997), ed. by Riccardo Maisano e Antonio Rollo (Naples: D'Auria, 2002), pp. 151-173; Daniela Mugnai Carrara, 'La collaborazione fra Manuele Crisolora e Uberto Decembrio: ideologia signorile all'origine della prima versione latina della *Repubblica* di Platone e problemi di traduzione', in *I Decembrio e la tradizione della Repubblica di Platone*, pp. 177-234.

<sup>353</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Ms 194; Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms 89 sup. 50; Milan, Venerabile Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Mss A 96 inf., B 123 sup.; Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms VII G 51; Sevilla, Biblioteca Colombina, Ms 5.6.21; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Mss Ottob. Lat. 2050, Reg. Lat. 1131. See Bottoni, 'I Decembrio', p. 75.

<sup>354</sup> See Bottoni, 'I Decembrio', pp. 75-79. For a description of the manuscript, see Antonio Zanella, 'Uberto Decembrio e un codice bergamasco', *Bergomum* 38 (1964), 57-73; Mirella Ferrari, 'Dalle antiche biblioteche domenicane a Milano: codici superstiti nell'Ambrosiana', *Ricerche Storiche sulla Chiesa Ambrosiana* 8 (1978-79), 170-97 (pp. 185-86). Daniela Mugnai Carrara is currently working on the critical transcription of the translation contained in the manuscript: see Mugnai Carrara, 'La collaborazione', p. 177.

<sup>355</sup> Bottoni demonstrated that MS Ambr. B 123 sup. contains the original translation and therefore is the archetype of the manuscript tradition by providing both palaeographical and textual evidence. First, Bottoni identified the script used to write the translation as Uberto Decembrio's

My examination of the text of *Rep.* 616e1-617b3 first in MS Ambr. B 123 sup., containing Chrysoloras's original translation, as well as in MS Laur. 89 sup. 50, a Florentine copy confirmed this hypothesis.<sup>356</sup> This is the text preserved by the Milan manuscript:

**Fol. 214<sup>r</sup> ll. 34-40**

octo eni(m) illa e(ss)e uertigia adinuice(m) circularit(er) | <sup>35</sup> inserta narrant(ur). Labia desup(er) ostendentia, dorsu(m) uero uni(us) uertigii co(n)ti|nuu(m) circa astam agentia. Astam uero illam p(er) mediu(m) octauu(m) ac p(er) totu(m) | e(ss)e traiecta(m). primu(m) igit(ur) et exterius uertigiu(m). latissimu(m) labii circulu(m) posside(re). | **Qui(n)ti** se(cun)d(u)m, tertiu(m) uero quarti. Quartu(m) octavi et quintu(m) septimi. Sextu(m) | u(er)o **se(cun)di**. Septimu(m) tertii, et octauu(m) **sexti**. primi ite(m) atq(ue) max(im)i circulu(m) | <sup>40</sup> uariu(m) existe(re). Septimi u(er)o lucidissimu(m), octaui uero colore(m) a septimo irra|dia(n)te suscip(er)e. Secu(n)di u(er)o ac qui(n)ti similes, illis aliq(uan)tulo flauiores. Tertiu(m) u(er)o

**Fol. 214<sup>v</sup> ll. 1-6**

colore(m) albissimu(m) posside(re). quartu(m) subrubeu(m). secundu(m) u(er)o sextu(m) albedi(n)e | sup(er)are. fusum aut(em) cu(m) uolueret(ur), giratio(n)e simili circu(m)ferri. cu(m) totu(m) u(er)o uolua|t(ur) septe(m) interiores circulos motu toti(us) contrario tepide circu(m)ferri. de his a(u)t(em) | octauu(m) uelocissimu(m) cerni. se(cun)dos u(er)o alteru(m) alteri conseq(ue)ntes, septimu(m) quintu(m) | <sup>5</sup> et sextu(m). Tali u(er)o tertiu(m) motu ferri, ut quartu(m) circu(m)uolue(r)e uideret(ur). Quar|tu(m) u(er)o tertiu(m) et qui(n)tum secundu(m).<sup>357</sup>

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handwriting. Secondly, except for the Milan manuscript, all the other manuscripts preserving the translation contain the prologue written by Uberto. Once all the copies had already been produced, Pier Candido Decembrio rewrote the prologue that was previously written by his father Uberto and inserted it into MS Ambr. B 123 sup. The aim of Pier Candido's prologue was to defend the translation from its detractors. See Bottoni, 'I Decembrio', p. 78; Garin, 'Ricerche sulle traduzioni', pp. 341-44; Zanella, 'Uberto Decembrio', pp. 66-67; Gentile, 'Note sulla traduzione', pp. 152-154; Mugnai Carrara, 'La collaborazione', pp. 217-18.

<sup>356</sup> For a description of MS Laur. 89 sup. 50, see *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone. Mostra di Manoscritti*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>357</sup> The series *septimum, quintum et sextum* differs from the text of *Rep.* 617b1: δευτέρους δὲ καὶ ἄμα ἀλλήλοις τὸν τε ἕβδομον καὶ ἕκτον καὶ πέμπτον. According to the Greek text, the correct sequence should be *septimum, sextum et quintum*.

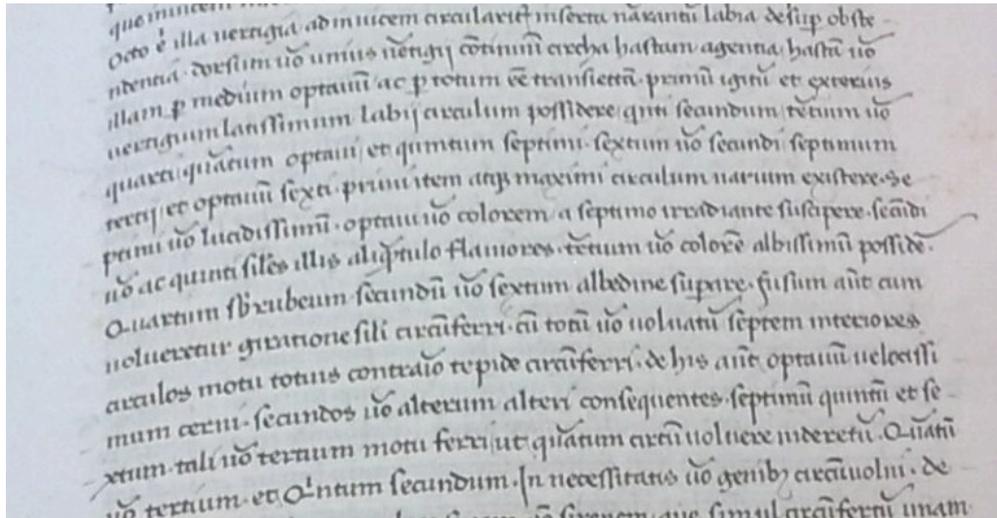


Figure 16. Detail of MS Ambr. B 123 sup., fol. 214r: *Rep.* 616e3-8.

With the exception of some orthographic errors, the text preserved in MS Laur. 89 sup. 50 is identical to the one contained in MS Ambr. B 123 sup.

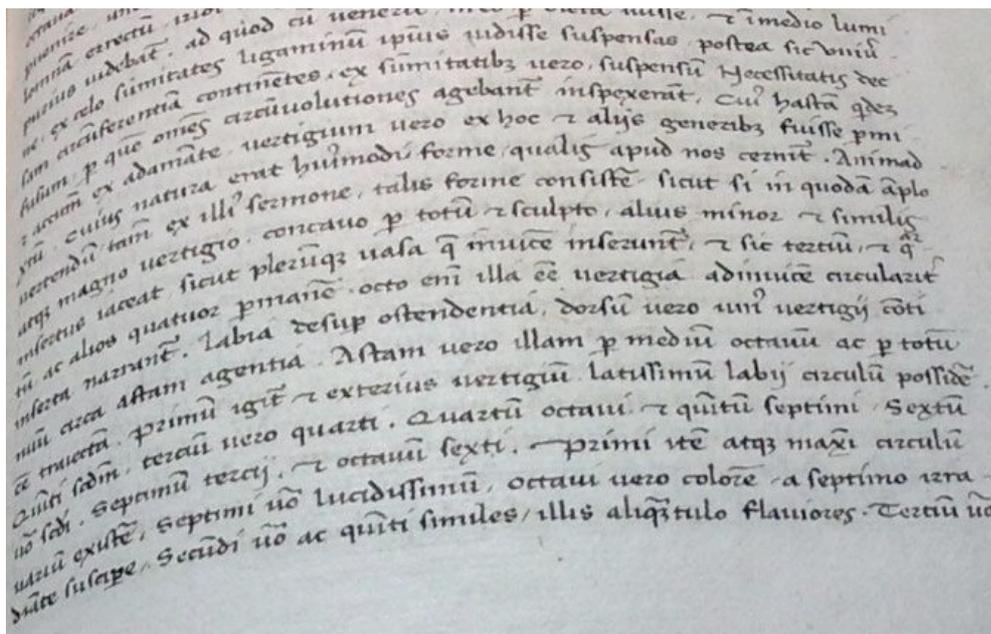


Figure 17. Detail of Ms Laur. 89 sup. 50, fol. 106r: *Rep.* 616e3-8

As table 9 shows, there is absolute correspondence between Ficino's variant readings noted in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. and Chrysoloras's Latin translation:

**Table 9**

<b>Ficino's variant readings in Ms. Ambr. F 19 sup.</b>	<b>Chrysoloras's translation in MSS Ambr. B 123 sup. Laur. 89 sup. 50</b>
<b>πέμπτου</b>	<b>QUINTI</b>
τετάρτου	QUARTI
ὀγδόου	OCTAUI
ἐβδόμου	SEPTIMI
<b>δευτέρου</b>	<b>SECUNDI</b>
Τρίτου	TERTII
<b>ἕκτου</b>	<b>SEXTI</b>

My direct inspection of both the Milan manuscript and the Florence manuscript confirmed the hypothesis: the *variae lectiones* indicated as *superscriptio emanuelis* are retroversions based on Manuel Chrysoloras's translation of Plato's *Republic*. In other words, Ficino did not take the variant reading from a Greek manuscript but from Chrysoloras's Latin translation. Thanks to Hankins we already knew that Ficino read a copy of Chrysoloras's translation: Ficino used it as a basis for his own Latin translation of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>358</sup> My own analysis of the *marginalia* at fol. 120<sup>v</sup> first confirms Hankins' remarks, as well as, secondly, providing evidence that Ficino also used Chrysoloras's translation in the process of collating Plato's text.

As far as Chrysoloras's sources are concerned, Gentile argued that, when producing his translation of the *Republic*, Chrysoloras used MS Vat. gr. 226

<sup>358</sup> Hankins 'Some Remarks on the History and Character of Ficino's Translation of Plato', pp. 289 and 298-304; Id., *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 471-72.

(Θ).<sup>359</sup> This manuscript belongs to branch W of Plato's textual tradition. This means that its stemmatic position differs from that of Ficino's primary source, MS Laur. 85.9 (Laur. c). This manuscript, containing Plato's complete works, belongs to branch T of the textual tradition. As previously mentioned, Ficino used the Laurentianus as a basis for his own Latin translation of Plato's works as well as source for the *excerpta* contained in his *zibaldone*.

As I have demonstrated in my analysis, when reading and studying the passage concerning the first numerical sequence, Ficino collated the text and noted the set of variant readings taken from Chrysoloras's Latin translation in his working copy. Nevertheless, the set of *variae lectiones* noted in the process of collation did not form the basis for Ficino's translation of the passage. The relevant text, printed in 1484, reads as follows:

Octo enim illa uertigia esse, insertos inuicem circulos, labia superne ostendentia: dorsum uero unius uertigii continuum circa hastam efficientia. Hastam uero illam per medium octauum, perque totum esse transiectam. Primum igitur extimumque uertigium labii circulum habere latissimum. Sexti autem secundum. Tertium quarti. Quartum octauum. Quintum septimi. Quinti sextum. Tertii septimum. Octauum uero secundi. Primi item atque maximi circulum uarium esse. Septimi lucidissimum. Octauum uero uertigii circulum colorem a septimo irradiante suscipere. Secundi uero ac quinti similes inuicem, illis aliquantulo flauiores. Tertium sane colorem candidissimum possidere. Quartum, subrubeum. Secundum uero sextum albedine superare. Ac fustum quidem totum uolutione simili circumferri. Cum uero totum uoluatur, septem interiores circulos motu totius contrario tardius circumuerti. Ex his plane octauum motu rapidissimo agitari. Secundos uero alterum alteri consequenter: septimum, sextum et quintum. Tali uero tertium motu ferri, ut quartum circumuoluere uideatur. Quartum autem tertium et quintum secundum.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Some discrepancies occurring between MS Vat gr. 226 and the translation led Gentile to advance the hypothesis that Chrysoloras did not work directly on this Greek manuscript. When translating the text of Plato's *Republic*, Chrysoloras rather used a working copy. Chrysoloras likely corrected the Greek text and noted variant readings in this manuscript. Gentile stated that we should identify this working copy with a manuscript mentioned in a list of books belonging to the humanist Bartolomeo Petroni. See Gentile, 'Note sulla traduzione', pp. 155. On MS Vat gr. 226, see also Boter, 'The Textual Tradition', pp. 51-52, 157-58; Mugnai Carrara, 'La collaborazione', pp. 230-31.

<sup>360</sup> Plato, *Opera nonnulla traducta cum commentariis a Marsilio Ficino* (Florence: Lorenzo di Francesco di Alopa 1484), fol. 172<sup>f</sup>.

If we compare Ficino's Latin translation and Plato's text, we notice that the text corresponds to the so-called νεωτέρα γραφή.

**Table 10**

<b>Plato's established text = Proclus's νεωτέρα γραφή</b>	<b>Ficino's translation (1484)</b>
ἕκτου	<i>sexti</i>
τετάρτου	<i>quarti</i>
ὀγδού	<i>octavi</i>
ἑβδόμου	<i>septimi</i>
πέμπτου	<i>quinti</i>
τρίτου	<i>tertii</i>
δευτέρου	<i>secundi</i>

The analysis I have carried out provides further insight into some aspects of Ficino's activity and methodology. The information at my disposal confirms Ernesto Berti's conclusions: first, when collating the text he was working on, Ficino did not restrict himself to using Greek manuscripts, but consulted also previous Latin translations he had access to. Secondly, the Florentine scholar read and studied the text of the dialogue at a time distinct from the specific task of translation, showing an interest in textual problems that went beyond the purpose of providing a Latin version of Plato's corpus. Let us now briefly focus on the final sentence of Ficino's marginal note.

In the last part of the marginal note, Ficino calls Chrysoloras's *auctoritas* into question: the statement *forte mendosa*, shows Ficino's critical attitude towards his sources. As we have seen in Chapter V, when describing Ficino's *ratio vertendi* as well as his relation to previous translators, Hankins states that

sometimes Ficino's translation represents a critical revision of previous versions and that the Florentine scholar questioned his sources.<sup>361</sup> In this case in particular, Ficino consulted a previous translation, but rejected it as *mendosa* in a context that is not directly related to the task of translating Plato's works.

We know that Chrysoloras's translation was fiercely criticized by Renaissance scholars. Thus Leonardo Bruni commented on the translation: 'me hortaris ad traductionem librorum Platonis de Republica et ais vidisse te eosdem libros a nescio quo interprete ineptissime traductos'.<sup>362</sup> Nevertheless, Ficino's statement on the *superscriptio Emanuelis* does not seem to rely on stylistic or rhetorical criteria. The expression *forte mendosa* seems rather to be the result of a purely philological reasoning and relies on what the Florentine scholar states in the first part of the marginal note: *in tribus exemplis est ut hic primo scribitur*. In other words, Ficino states that the variant readings 616e5 ἕκτου] πέμπτου 616e7 πέμπτου] δευτέρου 616e8 δευτέρου] ἕκτου, taken from Chrysoloras's translation, seem to be incorrect, since three other manuscripts contain a text that is the same as the one he had previously transcribed in his notebook.

## **VI. 5 Ficino's critical and philological attitude: new findings**

Kristeller argued, a few decades ago, that Ficino's work 'is still in need of much further study' and that 'we probably shall not discover many more unknown works of Ficino, but several of his unpublished translations as well as many glosses found in the manuscripts and books owned and annotated by him

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<sup>361</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II, pp. 465 and 468.

<sup>362</sup> Ep. IX, 4, in Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII, recensente Laurentio Mehus (1741)*, ed. by James Hankins, 2 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), II, p. 148. On the negative judgements on Chrysoloras and Decembrio's translations, see Garin, 'Ricerche sulla traduzione', p. 345; Hankins, 'A manuscript', p. 155; Mugnai Carrara, 'La collaborazione', p. 178.

should be studied and perhaps published'.<sup>363</sup> My study of Ficino's notebook and marginal notes has attempted to respond, at least in part, to this. The reading of the complex passage and the analysis of Ficino's marginal notes allowed for the reconstruction of various stages of Ficino's work, which I shall now summarize.

In the years 1470-74, when collecting texts concerning the immortality of the soul in MS Ambr. F 19 sup., Marsilio Ficino transcribed a long excerpt from book X of Plato's *Republic*. The passage from the Platonic dialogue deals with the famous eschatological myth of Er, including an account of the reincarnation of the souls as well as a description of the universe. The description of the cosmos relies on Pythagorean doctrines. In this section of the text, Plato depicts the highly fanciful image of the spindle of Necessity, producing a complex interplay between cosmology and eschatology.

After transcribing the passage, Ficino went over it and focused on the cosmological and astronomical core of the myth, particularly on the view of the composite structure of the spindle of Necessity. Ficino's approach to the Platonic passage was both exegetical and philological. First of all, the Florentine scholar translated several words from the passage. The translation reflects his understanding and interpretation of the passage, particularly concerning the shape and orientation of the whorls forming the spindle of Necessity as well as the position of the souls towards the astral plane. Secondly, Ficino focused on the numerical sequence used by Plato for describing the order of decreasing width of the rims of the σφόνδυλοι. As a result, the Florentine scholar drew an exegetical scheme, consisting of a Latin paraphrase of the Greek text. The scheme includes

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<sup>363</sup> Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino and His Work', p. 14.

several astronomical terms matching with the numbers of the sequence. The analysis of the last two *marginalia* of the set showed that the scheme reflects two different ways of computing the position of the celestial bodies in the Pythagorean system.

In addition, Ficino collated the text of the numerical sequence. In the process of collating the text, he first consulted three Greek manuscripts preserving the same text as the one he had transcribed in his *zibaldone* and then a further manuscript containing a different set of variant readings, which I have shown to be retroversions based on Manuel Chrysoloras's Latin translation of Plato's *Republic*. Lastly, one of the statements forming the marginal note clearly shows that, when carrying out the philological study of the text, Ficino engaged critically with Chrysoloras's version.

## **VI. 6 Conclusion**

I shall now seek to summarize the main conclusion that may be drawn from the present chapter. First, by combining previous research findings and the information retrieved in Ficino's *marginalia*, we may partially reconstruct which manuscripts and texts he actually had on his desk during his work session:

1. MS Ambr. F 19 sup., i.e. Ficino's *zibaldone*;
2. MS Laur. 85.9 (Laur. c), i.e. the manuscript that Cosimo de' Medici gave Ficino in 1462 and the Florentine scholar used as main textual basis for his translation of Plato's corpus in the years 1463-69. As mentioned in Section 4. 3, Boter's study demonstrated that the

excerpts from the *Republic* transcribed in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. derive from MS Laur. c;

3. Three manuscripts containing Plato's *Republic*, which Ficino consulted when collating the text of the first numerical sequence. Among these manuscripts, there may be the one that Amerigo Benci donated to Ficino. This manuscript, containing a selection of Plato's dialogues and used by Ficino as further source for his translation, has not yet been identified;
4. A manuscript containing Manuel Chrysoloras's Latin translation of Plato's *Republic*. As mentioned above, the translation is preserved in eight extant manuscripts. When seeking to identify the source of Ficino's variant readings, I first checked the text in MS Ambr. B 123 sup, containing the original translation, and then a Florentine copy, MS Laur. 89 sup. 50. At a later stage, I also checked the other six manuscripts. During my direct inspections, I was unable to identify Ficino's script or traces of his activity in these manuscripts. We may therefore argue that Ficino's copy of Chrysoloras's translation is currently lost. Otherwise, he may have consulted one of them without annotating the copy in question;
5. Plato's *Epinomis* or any other exegetical source mentioning this Platonic dialogue, which I have been unable to identify. When studying the astronomical contents concerning the description of the spindle of Necessity, Ficino may have consulted it. Otherwise, he may have conceived his own exegetical interpretation independently.

Secondly, the results of my own analysis are consistent with Ernesto Berti's recent findings. As stated above, Berti was the first to show that Ficino read and collated the text of the Platonic dialogues also in circumstances which were not necessarily related to his task of translating Plato's corpus, showing a particular interest for the text per se. Berti also demonstrated that Ficino not only used previous Latin translations as a model for his own translations, but also in the process of collation. The analysis that I have carried out provides further evidence that Ficino studied and worked on the Platonic text at a time distinct from the specific task of translating Plato's corpus. The translations noted by the Florentine scholar in MS Ambr. F 19 sup. represent a paraphrase rather than a straightforward rendition of the passage. Such a paraphrase is the result of Ficino's exegetical approach, aiming at uncovering the scientific and astronomical content that Plato concealed behind mythical and metaphorical expressions. The translations, as well as the set of *variae lectiones* noted in the process of collation, did not form the basis for Ficino's official translation of Plato's *Republic*, printed in 1484. This translation is based on the variant reading defined by Proclus as νεωτέρα γραφή. By calling into question Chrysoloras's *auctoritas*, Ficino shows his critical attitude towards his sources.

In addition, the *marginalia* that Ficino noted in his private notebook, containing a set of notes, translations and variant readings that the Florentine scholar did not include in his official translations and commentaries, seem to reflect what has been recently highlighted on Renaissance reading practices in general. Anthony Grafton points out that humanist reading practices were usually *plume à la main* readings, i.e. a process combining reading and copying. Grafton

states that ‘Writing, after all, was in itself a form of reading, a letter-by-letter homage to the power of the original. [...] Just as a schoolboy might know his text word for word because he had memorized and recited it, the mature scholar often knew his because he had copied it out line by line –and **enjoyed consulting it not in a form that shared with others, but in that imposed by his own script as well as his own choice of readings**’.<sup>364</sup>

In sum, the study of the marginal notes that Ficino wrote in the margin of the passage from Plato’s *Republic* seems to confirm and reflect what many studies have been trying to demonstrate: ‘un’attenzione “filologica” ai testi prima inaspettata in un umanista come Ficino, relegato con facile approssimazione in un mondo di astratti furori neoplatonici e impermeabile, quasi idiosincratico alle ragioni più pure e nobili della filologia quattrocentesca’.<sup>365</sup>

In other words, Ficino works with the text and on the text of the ancient philosophers showing an interest in philological questions.<sup>366</sup> The text is not merely the basis for the task of translating Plato, nor a mere source of knowledge about Plato’s doctrines, but it is also a direct subject of study. This is evidence of Ficino’s critical and philological attitude.

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<sup>364</sup> Anthony Grafton, ‘The humanist as reader’, p. 207. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>365</sup> Paola Megna, ‘Per Ficino e Proclo’, in *Laurentia Laurus. Per Mario Martelli, Biblioteca Umanistica* 1, ed. by Francesco Bausi and Vincenzo Fera, (Messina, Centro di Studi Umanistici, 2004), pp. 361-362. By ‘astratti furori’, Megna means a sort of divine inspiration.

<sup>366</sup> See Berti, ‘Marsilio Ficino e il testo greco del *Fedone*’, pp. 352-53.

## Conclusion

We often identify Renaissance scholars with the arguments and thoughts expounded in their works, or with the idealized image that they offer in their correspondence, where carefully chosen biographical details merge with the beauty of literary and metaphorical images. Humanist miscellanies, those working tools that might look arid and chaotic, were an integral part of the material and intellectual equipment of every Renaissance scholar, and show a less abstract aspect of their activity. These notebooks are also relevant because they constitute an important stage in the compiler's production of a future work. They shed light on complex scholarly practices and on the cultural universe within which the compiler was operating, with or without the help of professional scribes. Additionally, the compositional structure and content of these manuscripts, as well as the principles of selection and arrangement that led these compilations to come into being, reflect their author's personality, which complements the 'official' personality presented in the author's letters and prefaces.

The case of Ficino and his notebooks shows the significant contrast existing between the way a Renaissance scholar self-represented and the way he actually worked.<sup>367</sup> In a letter to Braccio Martelli, Ficino explains how he has accessed Plotinus's doctrines on demons:

Cum superioris diebus apud Philippum et Nicholaum Valores in agro Maiano versarer, et in quodam ibi secessu naturam daemonum indagarem, affuit repente Plotinus divinumque oraculum de daemonibus

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<sup>367</sup> On the theme of authorial self-representation in the Renaissance, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning. From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980).

nobis effudit verbis et brevissimis et obscurissimis involatum. Visum itaque nobis operae pretium accire Porphyrium tum Plotini discipulum perscrutandis daemonibus deditissimum, qui facile daemonicum sui praeceptoris involucrum nobis evolueret. Adventavit ergo Porphyrius et per Plotinum suum et per suos daemones advocatus aperuit nobis, quae preceptor senserat. Confirmavit quae Origenes de daemonibus disputauerat. Porphyrius quidem Graecis nobiscum locutus est verbis, quorum ego summam verbis tibi Latinis interpretabor. Hanc tu summam si cum epistola quam de Moysis Platonisque concordia tibi dicavi convixeris plane cognosces quantum non Plato solum, verum etiam Platonici cum nostra religione consentiant.<sup>368</sup>

According to the letter, Ficino isolated himself in Maiano, near Florence, and summoned the pagan theologians to help him understand how to communicate with superior realities. In his prayer, Plotinus appeared to Ficino and infused into him a mysterious oracle on demons, which in turn led Ficino to read and translate other interpreters —Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus— to grasp the truth about Neoplatonic demonology. To be sure, Ficino’s tale enables him to justify why he decided to translate and paraphrase some of the most delicate doctrines on Neoplatonic demonology. Beyond the literary and metaphorical undertones of the letter, however, Ficino presents himself as a divinely inspired interpreter seeking to communicate with pagans in the Tuscan hills, in terms that have captured the imagination of modern scholars.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Marsili Ficini Epistolarum Liber VIII, 27 (= *Ficini Opera*, p. 875). ‘As I was spending the past days in Maiano at the house of Philip and Nicholas Valori, studying the nature of demons in a secluded place, Plotinus suddenly appeared and infused into us his divine oracle on demons, which he expressed in very brief and obscure terms. For that reason, it seemed reasonable to summon Plotinus’ disciple Porphyry, who devoted so much time to the study of demons, and ask him to reveal to us his master’s secret meaning on demons. Thus Porphyry appeared and, interrogated through Plotinus and his own demons, he revealed to us what his master had meant, and confirmed what Origenes has said about demons. Now Porphyry spoke to us in Greek; I have therefore summarized and translated into Latin what he said. If you read this summary together with the Concord between Moses and Plato that I have dedicated to you, you will certainly realize the extent to which both Plato and the Platonists agree with our religion’. Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters*, trans. by members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science London, 10 vols (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1975-2015), VII (2003), p. 33.

<sup>369</sup> For an analysis, see Maude Vanhaelen, ‘Liberté, astrologie et fatalité: Marsile Ficin et le *De Fato* de Plotin’, *Accademia* 7 (2007), 45-60 (p. 48).

This image, however attractive, does not do justice to another, equally important facet of Ficino's personality: that of a scholar who performed a more concrete and complex intellectual work, who was engaged in the reading, transcription and translation of ancient texts, relentlessly combing through the writings of his *auctoritates* for anything that might confirm his own belief in the universality of religious truth. In order to perform his task, he was also helped by professional scribes, who transcribed and produced manuscripts on his behalf. In that respect, my research provides new, unpublished material that documents the way Ficino actually selected passages from the mass of ancient texts he was going to quote and integrate in his works in order to construct his own philosophical outlook as well as 'revive' pagan wisdom.

In recent years, attention to working methods has grown in different areas of intellectual history. The study of personal notes and private notebooks was pioneered by literary scholars practicing 'genetic criticism' and examining the succession of working papers and drafts. This approach, aiming to reconstruct the stages of the creative process of great writers, mainly focused on major authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for whom abundant papers were available.<sup>370</sup> From earlier periods, the preservation of drafts, preliminary notes, and working notebooks is less predictable, thus making this kind of approach less possible. In the case of Ficino, however, we have the fortune to possess extant manuscript notes and drafts in addition to finished and printed works. These notes shed light on the evolution of his thinking and writing process as well as on his working methods in various contexts. The study that I have carried out, drawing

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<sup>370</sup> See Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 96-97 and 326.

on distinct but closely related fields such as book history, manuscript studies, intellectual history, reception studies and textual criticism, allows a better understanding of Ficino's activity.

A close examination of the texts collected in MS Ricc. 92, containing preliminary materials for the writing of Ficino's *De Amore*, 'a compilation of ideas about love', provided invaluable insight into the genesis of one of the most influential Renaissance works. I was able to identify hitherto unidentified compositional notes included in the Plotinian section of the Florentine manuscript, and to show that Ficino's work was the result of a complex and lengthy process of reading, translation and transcription of sources.

The study of MS Ambr. F 19 sup., a 'libro che cresce', showed how a Renaissance scholar produced his own 'virtual library' to write a new original work on the immortality of the soul, the *Platonic Theology*. In order to produce his *silva platoniorum locorum*, Ficino employed common methods of text storing and anthologization processes, which are tightly connected with the physical structure of the book and its progressive development from an initial codicological nucleus.

Unlike the texts collected in the other manuscripts, the *excerpta* contained in the Latin section of MS Borg. gr. 22 did not present any direct connection with Ficino's translation and commentary on Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*. However, my analysis complemented previous descriptions of the set of texts and provided further information on the way in which Ficino read, studied and epitomized his sources as preparatory material. Just like ancient and medieval philosophers before him, Ficino does not merely juxtapose notions and arguments

taken from earlier traditions, he creates his original synthesis by incorporating in his own philosophy a 'patchwork' of ideas. Ficino's excerpting techniques provide material evidence of how this process of appropriation and 'critical rethinking' of his *auctoritates* actually took place.<sup>371</sup>

Ficino's notebooks shed light also on another important aspect of his activity: the Florentine scholar was interested in philology and collated the texts he intended to translate. More specifically, my study of MS Ambr. F 19 sup. demonstrates that Ficino was also interested in the text *per se*, and not necessarily as a basis for the task of translating the Platonic corpus. The set of hitherto unexplored *marginalia* written next to the passage from Book X of the *Republic* represents an exceptional case, first, since they enable us to question and confirm previous studies and analyses of Ficino's philological activity. Secondly, as they allow for the reconstruction of the stages of his work, not merely through conjectures or theoretical reasoning, but directly through his very statements and reasoning on the text he was reading.

Additionally, Ficino's working manuscripts provide evidence of a sort of paradox. On the one hand, they reflect the stages of a complex and original process of intellectual work; on the other hand, they show that the Florentine scholar achieved his goals and his impressive and unique doctrinal synthesis by using conventional scribal practices, and note-taking techniques, which were very common among his contemporaries. In other words, Ficino has to be seen as part of a larger context and as part of a broader tradition of readers and of reading and scholarly practices.

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<sup>371</sup> A. H. Armstrong, *Le sources de Plotin. Dix exposés et discussions. Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classiques V* (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), p. 408, uses this definition for describing Plotinus's skilful reusing and incorporating previous sources in his own thought.

In the course of my study, I referred to an anonymous seventeenth-century hand and to the description that he inserted into MS Ambr. F 19 sup. The anonymous scribe's remarks on Ficino's manuscript simultaneously refer to Ficino the philosopher and the philologist, the scribe and the scholar. Ficino's manuscripts and their compositional stratigraphy reflect in a similar way the coexistence of different facets in the same versatile personality. As such, they are the result of Ficino's complex work and therefore do not fit easily into precise categories: they are anthologies, produced by using specific anthologization techniques and philological notebooks, in which Ficino gathers variant readings and performs a proper *constitutio textus*, but also *zibaldoni*, compiled with a view to writing a future original composition. My research, which sought to question constructively the traditional image of Marsilio Ficino, also enables us to provide his working notebooks with a more nuanced and exhaustive definition, that of scholarly miscellanies. More broadly, this study, carried out within an interdisciplinary framework, also sought to make a contribution to the study of early modern reading and textual cultures and to promote a 'global' approach in the study of similar miscellaneous manuscripts.

Regarding the phenomenon of miscellanies, Gentile and Rizzo argue that 'di per sé la miscellanea umanistica tipica è in un certo senso un manoscritto d'autore: nella scelta e nell'assemblaggio dei singoli pezzi già si rispecchia un intervento personale che va ben al di là della semplice opera di un singolo copista [...]. Deve esserci del resto un rapporto fra la passione umanistica per il codice miscellaneo (e lo zibaldone) e la composizione che riutilizza l'antico per tasselli

giustapposti come in un mosaico'.<sup>372</sup> Ficino's notebooks, providing key insight into this scholar's activity and methodology and containing a 'mosaic' of excerpted texts, reflect the stages of a complex process of intellectual maturation, by which ancient texts and doctrines were read, studied, interpreted and used by the Florentine scholar to construct his own philosophy.

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<sup>372</sup> Gentile e Rizzo 'Per una tipologia delle miscellanee umanistiche', p. 407.

## Appendix

In this appendix, I will provide the critical transcription of the Plotinian section of MS Ricc. 92. I have normalized orthography according to Classical Latin and punctuation according to modern editing conventions. I have also included letters and words that Ficino erased during the process of writing, which I have placed between []

### MS Ricc. 92 (fols 109<sup>r</sup>-115<sup>r</sup>)

#### fol. 109<sup>r</sup>

##### Plotinus

Pulchrum in aspectu, auditu, moribus, scientiis. Corpora non sunt ex ipso subiecto | pulchra, sed participatione. Nam corpora eadem alias pulchra, alias non videntur, | quasi adsit aliud esse corpora, aliud esse pulchra. Item. pulchritudo sensibilis in | quantitate maiori et minori sed naturaliter. Immo saepe in una, saepe in alia nec | placet prout in subiecto est extra, sed prout intus recepta in animi anima, ibi | autem spiritualiter recipitur non enim corporali modo magna quod in parva | pupilla reciperetur. Videtur quibusdam pulchritudo esse animae commensuratio | partium ad se et ad totum cum coloris bonitate. Contra. nobis enim | simplex esset | pulchrum nec desiderium movetur delectaturque quod est pul<sup>10</sup>chri proprium. Et | compositum ipsum totum pulchrum erit, partes non, et ita | erit pulchrum ex non | pulchris. Item. color, lumen, vox una, aurum | cum simplicia sint non sunt | commensuratione pulchra. Item. Manente | eadem commensuratione quandoque | placet vultus idem quandoque non, quasi | aliud sit pulchritudo quam | commensuratio. Et saepe in uno commensuratio maior | <sup>15</sup>quam in alio, tamen | alius magis placet et allicit. Item. officia, | rationes, scientiae, pulchrae quomodo | sunt commensuratae? An quam concordēs? | At et mala et turpia saepe invicem

conveniunt. Item. virtus | animae magna pulchritudo est. Quomodo vero commensurata est? Certe non ut

**fol. 109<sup>v</sup>**

magnitudo et nuper et in unaquaque parte animae est virtus et pulchritudo. Item. | mens ipsa solitaria pulchra est. Quid ergo in corporibus pulchrum? Certe | est aliquid primo aspectu perceptum et anima quasi cognoscens indicat | admittitque et illi corrui copulaturque. Cum vero in turpe quod | <sup>5</sup>incidit se contrahit refugitque tanquam dissonum sibi. Dicimus | ergo quod anima talis in sua natura existens qualis est et cum essentia | superiori conveniens quando percipit cognatum quid et cognati vestigium | gratulatur exultat. Refert ad seipsam, suique ipsius reminiscitur atque suorum. Quae vero similitudo istorum ad illa per quam ista | <sup>10</sup>sunt pulchra? Species. Omne enim natura aptum ad formam recipiendam cum est informe est turpe omnino. Est etiam ex parte<sup>373</sup> | turpe quod non bene separatum est a forma rationeque, cum non | sit natura ad totam sui formationem praeparata. Accedens ergo species, quod unum ex multis partibus compositione est futurum, | <sup>15</sup>coordinat et in unam correspondentiam conducit et unum | per concordiam facit. Cum enim ipsa sit una, unum oportet esse formatum. Quam potest quod est ex multis. Locatur ergo in ipso pulchritudo,

**fol. 110<sup>r</sup>**

cum iam unum est factum. Datque se ipsam toti et partibus Quando | vero unumquiddam consimilium partium nanciscitur in totum idem dat. | Ceu nunc quidem domui toti cum partibus suis nunc lapidi uni | se dat, illi quidem partem huic per naturam. Sic corpus pulchrum fit | <sup>5</sup>communionem rationis a divino descendens. Cognoscit autem ipsum | potentia ad ipsum ordinata, qua nihil validius ad sui propria cognoscenda † quando alia anima etiam iudicat, pronuntiat coaptans | sui [[ipsum]] ipsius spetiei qua utitur ad iudicium, quasi | regenda ad

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<sup>373</sup> In the official translation there is the form *expers*. In this context, the expression *ex parte* does not make sense.

recti iudicium. Quomodo concordat quod est circa | <sup>10</sup> corpus illi quod superius?  
Quomodo vero externam domum interiori domui | spetiei aedificator coaptans  
pulchrum pronuntiat? | Certe quia species externa si lapides separentur, species est  
| interna. Divisa quidem per externam materiae molem. Indivisible | quiddam  
unum in multis apparens. Quando ergo sensus externam | <sup>15</sup> videt speciem  
conligantem superantemque contrariam naturam per se infor|mem, et formam  
formis aliis superstantem decenter aptaltam, simul colligit formam extra sparsam,  
transfertatque ad

**fol. 110<sup>v</sup>**

interiorem speciem impartibilem. Datque illam interiori concordem con|gruam et  
amicam. Quemadmodum viro bono congruum | et gratum est virtutis vestigium  
apparens in iuvene, cum concordet cum sua interiori vera virtute. Pulchritudo est  
coloris simplex: in hoc | <sup>5</sup> consistat. Quando scilicet praesentia luminis quod ipsum  
incorporale est ratioque | et species, superat materiae umbram et ornat. Unde ignis  
aliis | elementis est pulchrior, quia locum speciei ad alia tenet cum sit | super alia  
et tenuissimum omnium quasi incorporali proximum. Et ipsum solum | alia non  
recipiens recipiatur ab aliis. Calent enim alia | <sup>10</sup> ipsum vero non frigefit. Ipsum  
primo colorem habet, alia aliquo colorantur. Refulget igitur tanquam species  
existens. Quando vero lumen materiae | umbram non superat non est res pulchra,  
quasi non participet tota | coloris specie. Harmoniae autem quae sunt in vocibus  
insensibiles | ipsae quidem manifestas faciunt harmonias. Et hac ratione | <sup>15</sup> monent  
animam ad pulchri intelligentiam capiendam in alio | idem demonstrantes.  
Sensibiles autem non in omni sed manet. Mensuran|tur numeris se ubi insensibiles  
superant ad speciem faciendam. Hacltenus de sensibilibus pulchris quae sunt idola  
et umbrae ab incor-

**fol. 111<sup>r</sup>**

porali manantes in naturam, in qua cum sunt, ornant eam, et | cum apparent, statim  
stupefaciunt. Sed et mores animae | habitusque et pulchri sunt, cum ardorem

desiderii moveant oblectentque. Haec pulchritudo mentis oculo cernitur et quia |  
<sup>5</sup>eam in se ipso videt, vehementer secum concreditur ab aliis | separatus. Horum  
pulchritudo non figura non colore. Sed virtutum fullgor et divinae mentis multis  
[[mult]] in his refulgens. | Animam turpem, dicimus vitiosam. Hanc perturbatam.  
Hanc per | sensus imaginationem et affectus ad corpus declinantem. | <sup>10</sup>Ea iam  
mera sui que iuris non est, sed corporis speciem induta et corporibus mancipata. Si  
turpitude animae positione | externorum fit, pulchritudo eorum fiet ablatione.  
Remota | ergo omni corporea macula et labe turbationum. Anima | ipsa per se  
mera pulchra est et ipsa mera sui species, eius | est pulchritudo. Quemadmodum  
si aurum terra opertum sit, | <sup>15</sup>additione turpe est, abstersione per se pulchrum. | Et  
sicut humanum corpus si nudum est pulchrum, quoniam luto | illinitur turpe,  
abstersum pulchrum. Sic et anima.

**fol. 111<sup>v</sup>**

Pulchritudo animae virtus. Virtus puritas, vitium labes. Temperantia est, non esse  
infectum cupidine corporalium. Fortitudo | non timere mortem quae est solutio  
animae a corpore. Prudentia | et sapientia, actus animae eam ab inferioribus  
†alibusque ad | <sup>5</sup>divina convertens. Virtute ergo fit anima, mera anima, sola |  
species et ratio incorporalis. Fitque intellectualis solique divino | dedita. Unde  
pulchri fons est et cognata animae omnia | talia sunt. Anima ergo redacta ad  
intellectum, magis pulchrum est. Intellectus vero in intellectualia omnia, propria  
sunt animae pulchritudo. Quia [[tu]] | <sup>10</sup>tunc solum est anima. Solum animam  
bonam et pulchram fieri, est | eam deo assimilari. Quia inde est pulchritudo. Certe  
prima illa essentia pulchrum et bonum est. Nam materialis turpe et malum. Est  
enim | materia primum malum et turpe primum. Essentia bonum et pulchrum.  
Quod superius est ipsum | bonum et ipsa pulchritudo. Et similiter quaerendum est  
bonum pulchrumque et malum tur<sup>15</sup>peque. Prima ipsa pulchritudo idem quod  
ipsum bonum a quo mens statim pulchra anima autem per mentem pulchrum. Alia  
per formationem ab | anima pulchra quae facit pulchra: actiones, officia, corpora. |  
Ipsa enim tanquam divina et portio quaedam pulchri quiquid attin-

**fol. 112<sup>r</sup>**

git pro capacitate facit pulchrum. Adscendendum ad ipsum bonum quod omnis | anima cupit. Deponenda omnia quae anima descendendo induta | est, ut se sola ipsum videat solum sit, vivat intelligat illi | soli quod omnium istorum est causa. Hoc quod videt ardenter amat | <sup>5</sup>illi misceri. Stupetque cum voluptate. Qui nondum videt, ipsum | ut bonum appetit, qui videt ut in pulchro delectatur. Stupetque, | amat vero amore, acerrimo cupit desiderio, contemptio aliis id solum. Qui id attingit quod in se ipso manens facit omnia | pulchra ipsi unitus fit similis pulcher scilicet et amabilis. Maximum vero | certamen animis propositum est ad ipsum consequendum, sed anima volens | <sup>10</sup>consequi sciat corporum pulchritudinem esse imaginem illius et per | hanc illam recognoscat. Nam si huic ut vere incumbat, perit anima, cum infra se descendat et corporis infecta | species corpus fiat et caeca sit, mentis orbata lumine. Quod | significat Narcissus qui imaginem suam in aqua queritans ibi | <sup>15</sup>lachimando perit. Sicut sculptor in lapide auferendo | superflua, obliqua dirigendo pulchram reddit statuam, | sic tu auferendo ab anima tua corporeas labes et diri-

**fol. 112<sup>v</sup>**

gendo intentionem animae quomodo oportet, eam reddes pulchram. | Tibi eris unitus et unus maxime factus, videbis | te ipsum merum sine admixtione aliorum, lumen solum | ac verum totumque lumen nulla magnitudine divil<sup>5</sup>sum aut figura circumscriptum, quod et maius et pretiosius | est [[omni]] omni mole. Iam eris factus ipsa interior | mentis acies qui solus oculus magnam respicit pulchritudinem. Non enim solem videt oculus nisi fiat | solaris neque anima pulchrum nisi fiat pulchra. Cum talis | <sup>10</sup>facta est sine inditiis aliis per se videt. Fiat ergo quisque | tota mens sua et in totam adscendat mentem, ibi videbit | oculus pulchras species et dicet [[pulchr]] pulchrum hoc esse | ideas. Omnia enim per has mentis germina existentes, pulchra sunt. Quod superest ipsum bonum vocamus, quod coram se circum<sup>15</sup>fusum habet pulchrum. Ipsum quidem unite loquendo primum pulchrum | est, dividendo vero intelligibilia intelligibile

pulchrum locum dicimus superiorum. Ipsum vero bonum quod superius, quod fons est pulchri. Vel in | eodem primum bonum et primum pulchrum ponimus.

**fol. 113<sup>r</sup>**

Si pulchra sunt corpora ab anima formata, pulchrior est anima. | Non enim speciem dat quod non habet, sicut parieti pictor. Sed nos | consueti non sumus animam intueri, ideo insueti videre ininteriorem speciem, exteriorem sequimur, ignorantes quod | <sup>5</sup>non exterior, sed interior per exteriorem nos trahit. | Quemadmodum si quis sui simulachrum videns, et ignorans | unde veniat illud sequatur. Lumen solis hoc omnibus | rerum omnium formis † sculptum subtracta memoria | cogita, iam pulchritudinem habens intelligibilem. Id enim ipsa est | mens in qua vis, forma, lumen totum. Ibi distinctio ral<sup>10</sup>tionum luminaris essentiae unitas. Centrum rerum | omnium ipsum unum. Circa illud tres circuli: mens, anima, corpus. In his | fulgor eius relucet, id est rationum series. Haec pulchritudo | est circulis a centro tributa. Quae a bono est et in bonum | <sup>15</sup>allicit intuentes. In circulis est et circulariter operatur. | Pulchritudo nihil corporale est. Sed in ipsis corporibus est fulgor quidam ipsius | boni, sicut lumen solis in corporibus. Eam dicimus gratiam | rebus a bono datam quae in obiectis est pulchritudo, in visu voluptas. Sicut sol ultra primam vim datam visui et obiectis.

**fol. 113<sup>v</sup>**

Lumen iugiter unum omnibus superfundit, ita bonum propriis cognitivis cognoscibilibusque. Id primum actum dat. [[deinde]] | illis factum proprium quemadmodum plurimi colores | proprii sunt rebus. Deinde actum iugem ceu lumen solis | <sup>5</sup>unum omnibus superfundit, nulli proprium ut omnibus | sit contrarie. Id ut est actus omnium et roboratio bonum | est omnium, ut est agilitas et gratia pulchrum. Ut in propriis | iungit eas obiectis veritas, ut in obiectis proprias allicit pulchritudo. Huic sequitur quod in *Lyside* dicit Plato, | <sup>10</sup>non inferiora haec nos amare, sed ipsum bonum in istis. | Sed boni gratia in corporibus non refulget multum et sensibiliter, nisi | materia ita disposita sit ut idea eius rei

requirit. | Quoniam igitur talis est dispositio materiae qualem connotat idea | tunc  
ideae lux maxime fulget. Qui nitor est pulchritudo.

**fol. 114<sup>r</sup>**

### **Plotinus**

Omnem animam Venerem dicimus. Mundi animam primam Venerem. | Illa anima  
a Saturno est castrante caelum, id est a mente | quae trahit ab ipso bono. Anima  
haec a mente manans | illi coheret ut soli lumen | innato appetitu in illam  
con<sup>5</sup>vertitur. Qui appetitus ab indiga eius informitate | nascitur, conversa  
inradiatur. In illo radio communis | et confusa quaedam rerum ratio illi tribuitur,  
per quam | notionem appetitus accenditur. Accensus inhaeret vehementius per  
quam inhaesionem distinctius cognoscendo | <sup>10</sup>rationibus omnibus formatur.  
Accensio appetitus est | amor qui ut ab indigentia nascitur semper naturam  
sequens | suam et re presente desiderat. Prima illa informitas πένια est, communis  
ratio πόρος, radius | in quo infunditur communis ratio, Iovis hortus. Vis autem |  
<sup>15</sup>animae ipsius intellectiva eius caput est Iuppiter. Ergo anima | per vim  
intellectivam est Iuppiter, per discursivam Venus caelestis quae a caelo per  
Saturnum manat et solis illis inhaeret.

**fol. 114<sup>v</sup>**

Per vim vegetativam est Venus vulgaris quae est ex Iove | et Dione. Quia habet  
dependentiam a suo capite intellectu et iam ad materiam declinat ideo matrem |  
respicit. In prima Venere est amor et in secunda modo suo. | <sup>5</sup>Ibi est nixus ad  
intelligendam pulchritudinem, hic ad gignendam. Immo ibi ad gignendam  
intellectuali modo, hic | sensibili. Et utrobique est hypostasis aeterna | amor et  
daemon, sed in prima est deus in secunda daemon solus. | Daemon [[quia]]  
passionem aliquam habet cum prope nos sit. Ergo | <sup>10</sup>merito amor propter  
indigentiam passione affectus | [[amor]] dicitur daemon. In omnibus animis ista  
sunt. Cumque | omnes animae dependentiam aliquam a prima habebant, omnes |  
amores a primo quoquomodo dependent et ille primus magnus | est daemon

ubique per mundum alios excitans. Sunt | <sup>15</sup>autem quinque amores in animis  
nostris: duo essentiae, | tres passiones. Illi duo sunt daemones nostri familiares |  
omnium cupiditatum fontes tum ad superiora, tum

**fol. 115<sup>r</sup>**

ad inferiora trahentium; [[cum]] tres alii sunt passiones, quia | incipiunt, desinunt,  
crescunt, decrescunt. Cum pulchra species sensu percipitur, placet amaturque,  
quia | quadrat eius rationi quae est in anima, tum rationi | <sup>5</sup>cognitivae, tum  
genitivae. Tunc aut anima consueta est | [[ratione]] saepe uti et mente. Aut  
vegetativa ut plurimum. | Aut indifferenter et imaginatione saepe est usa. | Si  
primum, species percepta excitat intuitum animae discursivae ad caput eius  
mentem, tunc ratio et idea pul<sup>10</sup>chrae speciei et imaginis refulget in potentiam  
discursivam | scintillando, cuius fulgorem admiramur amamusque. | Et iste est  
amor per reminescentiam. Sin secundum, tunc excitatur ratio illius imaginis quae  
est ingentiva. Illa ad | generationem pulchritudinis rapit, pulchritudinem | <sup>15</sup>vero  
maxime generare in pulchro speramus. Ideo amor | coitus excitatur. Sin tertium,  
placet imago amaturque | nec aliud quidquam praeter aspectum et imaginationem  
quaeritur.

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