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**Hankins, James and Fabrizio Meroi (eds.).**

***The Rebirth of Platonic Theology: Proceedings of a Conference Held at The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Villa I Tatti) and the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento (Florence, 26–27 April 2007): for Michael J. B. Allen.***

Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Atti di Convegni 27; Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies 30. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013. Pp. viii, 317 + 1 ill. ISBN 978-8-8222-6226-4 (paperback) €35.

The imposing figure of Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) and his monumental *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animarum* (Platonic Theology on the Immortality of the Soul) was at the centre of a bilingual conference organized in Florence in 2007, whose proceedings have now been published. The volume was dedicated to Michael J. B. Allen, a recently retired professor from the University of California, and it opens with a list of Allen's works (books and essays) devoted to Ficino (1–4). The proceedings, like the conference, consist of three sections: "Platonic Theology before Ficino"; "Ficino's Platonic Theology"; and "Platonic Theology after Ficino."

In the first part, Claudio Moreschini underscores the importance of the *scholia* of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* by Hermias of Alexandria (fifth century CE); Ficino translated the commentary into Latin but he did not publish his own translation, which means that he likely repudiated it. Stephen Gersh's essay delves into the Platonism of Nicholas of Cusa and its medieval roots. John

Monfasani carefully analyzes the concept of *prisca theologia* and its possible declinations before Ficino. In particular, Monfasani identifies three options: “the non-*prisca theologia* option” (47), which came from the doxographical tradition through Ambrogio Traversari’s translation of Diogenes Laertius (1430s); the belief that pagan philosophers had fraudulently obtained their best ideas from the ancient Hebrew theologians, as stated by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (translated by George of Trebizond in 1448); and the concept of *prisca theologia*, the most consistent of the three, which was elaborated by George Gemistus Pletho, who showed that Plato’s and Pythagoras’s ideas derive from Zoroaster.

The central section of the proceedings gathers the essays specifically devoted to Ficino’s *Platonic Theology*. As the editors point out in the preface, scholars analyzed the second and the third part of that Renaissance masterpiece and in doing so they continued Paul O. Kristeller’s extraordinary work on the first five books (7). Carlos Steel investigates the relationships between Ficino and Proclus (412–85 CE) in the eleventh book of the *Platonic Theology*, where the doctrine of the ideas is discussed, and in his commentary on Plato’s *Philebus*. Ficino knew Proclus’s commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* in the Latin version by William of Moerbeke.

The essays by Sebastiano Gentile and James Hankins examine Ficino’s challenge to Epicurean-Lucretian materialism from different points of view: Gentile invites us to consider as allies, not rivals, the atomist doctrine and the Platonic cosmology; Hankins underlines the early interest Ficino showed in Lucretius—he even wrote (and then destroyed) a commentary on the Latin poet—and the subsequent criticisms brought against Lucretius in the *Platonic Theology*.

The names of Averroes and Aquinas appear in Ficino’s work connected with the issues of the relations among body, soul, and intellect. This aspect is analyzed by Brian P. Copenhaver, who tries to identify the titles (and editions) that Ficino actually read of the two authors, especially Averroes. John M. Dillon considers how Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrines (especially, the pre-existence of souls and reincarnation) were interpreted by Ficino.

In the last section, scholars deal with the reception of Ficino’s thought in connection with other personalities. Maude Vanhaelen draws an outline of the complex relation between Ficino and Savonarola, and their different concepts of prophecy. Cesare Vasoli and Thomas Leinkauf devote their essays to Ficino’s influence on Francesco Patrizi of Cherso: Vasoli explains how much Patrizi’s cosmology (based on an infinite and strongly united universe) owes to Ficino;

Leinkauf enlightens Patrizi's idea of the thinking of the One, and its Ficinian pattern, which is, however, overcome in Patrizi by a new vision.

Nicoletta Tirinnanzi examines the presence of the *Platonic Theology* in works by Giordano Bruno, especially in his *De umbris idearum* (1582), which is divided into two sections: in the second, which was written before the first, the Ficinian masterpiece becomes a "powerful theoretical ally, repeatedly evoked against the most radical Aristotelianism" (285). Sarah Hutton focuses on the main exponent of the Cambridge Platonists, Ralph Cudworth (1617–88). Cudworth read and cited Ficino's translations of Plato's dialogues, while the *Platonic Theology* seems to have been quite overlooked by him.

This new Ficinian volume is the result of research carried out by some of the most prestigious Renaissance scholars. The publication of the proceedings extends the examination of a true milestone in the history of European thought and invites readers to consider how much the *Platonic Theology* contributed to keeping the ancient heritage alive.

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