

VALERY REES, ANNA CORRIAS, FRANCESCA M. CRASTA, LAURA FOLLESA, GUIDO GIGLIONI (EDS.), *PLATONISM, FICINO TO FOUCAULT*, LEIDEN–BOSTON, BRILL 2021 (BRILL’S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY, 320), 357 PP., ISBN: 9789004358935.

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Valery Rees dedicated her intellectual life to Platonism by focusing on Ficino. Apart from her scholarly work, she is in charge of numerous editions, publications, workshops, and conferences that promote Ficinian studies in the broad sense. Her last accomplishment – along with Anna Corrias, Francesca M. Crasta, Laura Follesa and Guido Giglioni – is the volume of collected essays entitled *Platonism, Ficino to Foucault* (Leiden–Boston, Brill 2021).

It is a splendid volume originating in three conference panels held at the Xth meeting of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (Cagliari 2012). The papers focus on different aspects of the long Platonic tradition. The choice of Ficino as for a starting point is obvious, according to my understanding. Marsilio Ficino determined the course of Platonism in Western Europe. His translations, commentaries and original works shaped the way the Western European audience received the philosophy of Plato and of later Platonists for many centuries. Foucault’s choice, as end point of the volume, is not so obvious. Still, Michel Foucault did have a genuine interest in Platonism. In his second volume of *The History of Sexuality* (The Use of Pleasure), as well as throughout several lectures he presents his original and thought-provoking insights into the Platonic conception of philosophy. Foucault’s reception of Platonism proves the latter’s lasting and multifaceted influence on European philosophy.

In the opening essay, « Philosophy on the Defensive: Marsilio Ficino’s Response in a Time of Religious Turmoil », Valery Rees discusses the heated relation between Platonic philosophy and Christianity in fifteenth century Florence. Ficino, in order to persuasively reply to Savonarola’s accusations, reoriented his philosophical program. Rees highlights the ways and the extent to which his philosophy was affected. Regarding the confluence of Platonism and Christianity, of seminal importance is Ficino’s late work on St Paul, which expresses his belief that Christian theology is an organic part of ancient theology, as he understood it.

In « Ficino, Plotinus, and the Chameleonic Soul » Anna Corrias focuses on the reception of Plotinian psychology by Ficino. While there is a vast bibliography on

the subject, Corrias makes a persuasive case for Ficino's using Plotinian insights so as to support his belief in self-transformation. Corrias' paper, apart from its significance for historians of philosophy, could be also useful for scholars interested in transhumanism.

The third of the editors, Guido Giglioni, in his « Healing Rituals and Their Philosophical Significance in Marsilio Ficino's Philosophy », stresses his interest in theurgy. Namely, Ficino studies Iamblichus and other Neoplatonists in order to harmonize their views on theurgy with the Christian doctrines. His main aim is to contribute to the *concordia* between paganism and Christianity in the early modern world.

The torch passes to Angelo Maria Vitale's « A Platonic Light Metaphysics between St Augustine and Ficino: Girolamo Seripando's *Quaestiones CIX de re philosophico-theologica* », which comments on the relation of Platonism and Christianity according to Ficino. Vitale brings to light a mostly neglected treatise of Girolamo Seripando. The latter focuses on the metaphysics of light, a seminal subject for Renaissance Platonists. Vitale persuasively shows that Christian thinkers, like Augustine, contributed heavily to this discussion.

In chapter 5, « The Letter of Lysis to Hypparchus in the Renaissance », Eva del Soldato discusses the reception and influence of the pseudo-Pythagorean tradition on Renaissance Platonists. She holds that texts like Lysis' epistle to Hypparchus were of seminal importance for key figures, like Pico and Copernicus. Greek scholars, including Bessarion and George of Trebizond, played a major role in the dissemination of dubious sources.

In the next chapter, « Niccolò Leonico Tomeo's Accounts of Veridical Dreams and the Idola of Synesius », Nicholas Holland focuses on a mostly neglected figure, Niccolò Leonico Tomeo. His work has not been thoroughly studied by modern scholars, despite his contributions and innovative teaching in universities of northern Italy. Holland attempts to show that daemonology, which is an important aspect of *scientiae occultae* in the Renaissance, is founded also on Aristotelian grounds. Holland's argument is that Tomeo achieves a fruitful blending of Aristotelian and Platonic views on prophecy and daemonic interventions.

Pasquale Terracciano, in his « The Platonic Stain: Origen, Philosophy and Censorship between the Renaissance and the Counter Reformation », highlights a very interesting aspect of Renaissance Platonism. Particularly, Terracciano examines the reception of Origen by Francesco Zorzi, a well-known Christian Kabbalist. Origen's reception of Platonism was controversial and innovative. Moreover, he determined, more or less, the discussion about the so-called Christian Platonism in the ages to come. Terracciano shows how Reformation and Counter Reformation determined the reception of Origen during the sixteenth century.

The next chapter, « Francisco de Hollanda on Artistic Creation, the Origin of Ideas, and Demiurgic Painting » by Paula Oliveira e Silva, opens a new perspective of Renaissance Platonism, namely its influence on visual arts. Since the practical aspects of Platonism were mostly appealing to Renaissance scholars, and arts were the core of Renaissance civilization, the interplay between them is crucial for our understanding of this period. Moreover, Hollanda combines Christian and Platonic elements in art theory, attempting to renew Renaissance aesthetics.

In « 'Platonic-Hermetic' Jacob Böhme, or: Is Böhme a Platonist? » Cecilia Muratori brings forth the discussion of a seminal question for modern scholarship. Böhme was a major figure of Northern Renaissance. He was interested in any aspect of Platonism, mysticism included. Muratori aims to clarify Böhme's reception of Plotinus, because he finds Colberg's critique of Böhme's views as partial and misleading.

In the next chapter, « The Theory of Ideal Objects and Relations in the Cambridge Platonists (Rust, More, and Cudworth) », Brunello Lotti stresses his interests in major figures of Cambridge Platonism, a highly influential movement for the promotion of Platonism in the age of modernity. Lotti offers us a detailed overview of Cambridge Platonists' commitment to ancient and Renaissance Platonism. Furthermore, he argues that Cambridge Platonism could be perceived as a reply to Descartes' voluntarism, which was influential in the seventeenth century.

Following Lotti, Francesca Maria Crasta, in her "Platonism, Metaphysics, and Modern Science: Rüdiger and Swedenborg" traces the Platonic echoes in eighteenth and nineteenth century natural philosophy. She focuses on philosophers who were skeptical towards Cartesian mechanism and reappraised early modern vitalism as a counter exemplar to Descartes' philosophy. Plotinus' and Proclus' views, mediated by key figures of Renaissance Platonism, were crucial for the shaping of their alternative paradigm. Despite the dominant view that Platonist natural philosophy was out of date after the seventeenth century and the scientific revolution, Crasta argues that it was used by thinkers during the Enlightenment, so as to shape an alternative natural philosophy, based on both mechanism and vitalism.

German Idealism is one of the most influential movements in European philosophy. Laura Follesa, in her « Schelling and Plato: The Idea of the World Soul in Schelling's *Timaeus* », examines the ways Schelling perceived and used Platonic philosophy. According to Follesa, the influence of Plato to Schelling is discernible in the latter's early writings. Schelling read both Plato's dialogues and Ficino's works, so as to enrich his views on psychology and natural philosophy. Schelling is critical toward Plato and discusses critically the Platonic views about the World Soul. Although he appreciates the usefulness of the concept for Platonists, he does

not share their enthusiasm. Nevertheless, Platonic philosophy was a useful tool for the shaping of Schelling's ideas on absolute unity.

Pierpaolo Ciccarelli, in his « On the Phenomenological 'Reactivation' or 'Repetition' of Plato's Dialogues by Leo Strauss », focuses his interest in Leo Strauss' *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, where Strauss discusses thoroughly Platonic political philosophy, so as to reappraise the relationship between philosophy and politics in the works of the Athenian philosopher. According to Ciccarelli, the concept of exactness is indispensable for an understanding of the differences between natural sciences and politics. He also holds that Strauss interprets Hobbes' return to Euclid as, in fact, a resort to Plato.

In the next chapter, – « Care of the Self and Politics: Michel Foucault, Heir of a Forgotten Plato? », Laura Candiotta examines the ways Michel Foucault, in his late years, studied the Platonic dialogues and used Plato's views so as to reshape crucial aspects of his own political philosophy, such as the « government of the self » and the « government of others ».

In « Dialectic in Plato's *Sophist* and Derrida's 'Law of the Supplement of *Copula*' », Arnold Oberhammer turns to ontology and focuses on Derrida's criticism of Emile Benveniste's treatise « The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics ». The author attempts to clarify the dispute between the two French scholars by resorting to Plato's *Sophist*. In fact, Oberhammer connects Plato, Heidegger and Derrida, focusing on Platonic negative theology.

Last but not least, Andrea Le Moli, in his « Image and Copy in French Deconstruction of Platonism », boldly enough, attempts to put in dialogue Plato, Derrida and Deleuze. According to him, Derrida and Deleuze, among other continental philosophers, fundamentally reappraise Platonic philosophy. Le Moli focuses on the discussion of metaphysics and language, providing his readers with rich material.

The volume is addressed predominantly to an audience familiar with the topic. The reader will find in the volume innovative approaches and a wide variety of topics, including a compelling introduction by the editors. The chapters cohere well with each other, despite their thematic variety. The volume offers important contributions, exemplifying some of the best scholarship to date, and provides a broad and rich discussion of the reception of Platonism in modern and contemporary Europe. In conclusion, the volume is a worthwhile addition to the subject's literature.