

Marsilio Ficino's Renaissance Platonism
and John Donne's "Extasie"
(A Defence for Ezra Pound)

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Ezra Pound's remark on Donne's "Extasie," "Platonism believed,"¹ arose a very scholarly dispute which involved such eminent people as Pierre Legouis, Merritt Hughes, C. S. Lewis, and which Helen Gardner summarizes in "The Argument about 'The Ecstasy'"² in 1959. Certainly the poem that argues soul must have body for love can not be so readily taken for a poem of Platonism. Donne's sparkling paradox,

So must pure lovers soules descend
T'affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies,³

exactly reverses the Platonic assumption that a soul is imprisoned in the grave of a body, claiming instead that soul without body is deprived of means for love. For concluding the subject, Gardner presented Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore*, and proved how Donne follows Ebreo's idea that the unity of souls must lead to the unity of bodies.⁴ This does not close the case, however, because the reader of Gardner's paper is entirely puzzled to apprehend whether Leone Ebreo, a Jewish scholar who lived in Spain and friend to Pico della Mirandola's nephew,⁵ was a Platonist or not. Nor is Theodore Redpath's vindication of Pound's claim sufficiently conclusive, when he defends Pound in the "Appendix" to *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*,

Pound does not mean that Donne is asserting in the poem that spiritual union is enough for human lovers; but that he believes in an immaterial soul, and that in a human being this is simply embodied—and is not for instance simply a 'form,' or an epiphenomenon, of the body, or itself material. Pound's remark, 'Platonism believed,' so understood, is a perfectly true statement about the poem . . . ,⁶

for Redpath has left unexplained why the immaterial soul seeks the union of bodies.

Furthermore, the problem Pound presented about Donne's "Extasie" lies far beyond the problem of mere Platonism. The American poet, who investigated in details the Medieval current of Neo-Platonism while interpreting Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna Mi Prega" (A Lady Asks Me) in *Guido Cavalcanti Rime* (1932), tried to read Donne's "Extasie" in the tradition of *dolce stil novo*, which stored the fresh current of Medieval Platonism trickling into the heavy intellectual atmosphere of dominant scholasticism on the one hand, and on the other hand in relation to Marsilio Ficino's Renaissance Platonism.

Donne stating a thesis in precise and even technical terms . . . You have here a clear statement, worthy to set beside Cavalcanti's 'Donna Mi Prega' for its precision, less interesting metrically, but certainly not less interesting in content,⁷

continues Pound after his comment in question, "Platonism believed." It was Ficino, who confessed that he had first seen his well-known concept of the duplicate Venus, celestial and vulgar in Cavalcanti's "Canzone d'Amore," which means "Donna Mi Prega."⁸ Here the relationship of a poet and a philosopher is reversed from what is usually assumed. It is a poet who teaches a philosopher, and not a philosopher who teaches a poet. Hence, when Pound places Donne in the tradition of Cavalcanti, he did not suggest that Donne's thought remains within the limit of thought by some eminent Platonists, but that Donne extended his thought to whatever unique Platonistic experience he enjoyed. A reader's work is to check whether Donne's "Extasie" is situated broadly in the Literary tradition that links the English Renaissance poem with Cavalcanti through Ficino, and what unique invention Donne has contrived there.

Our present Ficinoesque interpretation of "The Extasie" is attempted for such work of placing Donne in the Cavalcanti-Ficino's tradition. Helen Gardner well convinced the reader that Donne read Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore*,⁹ and certainly Donne must have read it. But her succeeding inference that by following Ebreo Donne balanced "the Platonic view of the soul imprisoned in the flesh with the Aristotelian conception of the union of the soul and body in man,"¹⁰ is not entirely acceptable. First of all, nobody will write poetry for such philosophical purpose of balancing Plato and Aristotle. Second, the first half of the poem definitely describes Plotinian unity of the soul with God through love, and such Neo-Platonic theories of love were all expressed by Ficino.¹¹ Third, Ebreo's acceptance of the love of body differs radically from Donne's glorification of body in the latter half of the poem. Fourth, the lovers' returning to their bodies in love in the latter half of "The Extasie" does not so diametrically oppose Ficino's theory of Platonic love, for Ficino's "Platonism" does not entirely deny body but rather redeems it.

First, Gardner points out Donne used Ebreo's comparing of the relationship of soul and body with that of intelligence (=stars) and sphere.¹² True it is that Donne uses the figure of speech in "Aire and Angels"¹³ as well as in "The Extasie,"

They [bodies] are ours, though they are not wee, Wee are
The intelligences, they the spehere (ll. 51-52.)

Here evidently Ebreo balanced Plato and Aristotle. Quoting from F. Friedeberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes' translation of *Dialoghi* which Gardner uses:

This [end], says Aristotle, is loved and desired by the soul of [each] heaven, and for love of thereof the said intelligence eternally moves the heavenly body . . . loving the sphere and animating it, although it is of less worth than and inferior to itself, since this is a body and that an intelligence,¹⁴

one recognizes here easily that Aristotelian concept of the end as the final cause in *Metaphysics*¹⁵ and Plato's *Timaeus*, where stars are identified as intelligences,¹⁶ are com-

bined together. But such philosophical equilibrium is a philosopher's concern and not of a poet who comprehends the bringer of his joy. Ebreo apparently makes a part of the influences on Donne, but can not be a major influence, for Ebreo's dull, uninspired eclecticism is far below the acute rapture of Donne's "Extasie."

Second, Ficino takes so important a part of the intellectual climate of Donne's poem as in Book III of *The Fairie Queene* that one never understands why Gardner excludes Ficino's influence from her argument. Spenser's Britomart falling in love with Arthegall's figure reflected in Merlin's magic mirror (III, ii, 21-25) exactly fits in Ficino's idea of the beginning of the spiritual love:

Quemadmodum Solis radio speculum modo quodam percussum
splendet iterum et proxime sibi appositam lanam reflexione illa
splendoris inflammat, ita ille partem anime quam obscuram phan-
tasiam vocat atque memoriam, ceu speculum, pulchritudinis ipsius
Solis locum habentis simulacro tamquam radio quodam per oculos
hausto, censet ita pulsari¹⁷

Here the mirror represents the prenatal memory from which the image of Beauty itself descends.

In quella parte—dove sta memora
Prende suo stato,—si formato,—come
Diaffan da lume . . . ,¹⁸

(In that part where memory resides
It makes appearance; as transparence shows
Through which light flows . . .)¹⁹

writes Guido Cavalcanti, depicting the spiritual love that Ficino calls the celestial Venus. Spenser, in arresting this birth of the celestial Venus so skillfully in the image of the mirror, stands right in the Cavalcanti-Ficino tradition where the Medieval Neo-Platonism is transfigured into the Renaissance Platonism through the catalyst of Ficino's translation of Plato. Why should we not presume that Donne wrote in the same tradition? It is true that we do not have any such written evidence of Donne's reading Ficino as he left in the supreme joke he made of reading the "Superseraphic" Pico della Mirandola.²⁰ If, however, Sears Jayne assumes the direct influence of Ficino on Spenser through the evidences within the poetry only,²¹ certainly we can do the same for Donne. The ardent adoration of love by Pietro Bembo, one of Ficino's popularizers, was Donne's adoration of love in "The Extasie." In Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, Bembo intently addresses himself to love for its beatific joy, "Accept the sacrifice of our souls . . . that we, liberated from our own selves, like true lovers can be transformed into the object of our love and soar above the earth to join the feast of angels" ²² Moreover, the three steps on the ladder of love which lovers climb, the love of reproduction like plants, the rational love of man, the heavenly love of angels, are apparent in "The Extasie" taken from Ficino's philosophy, whether through Castiglione or not.²³ The most crucial image of the magnified and multiplying violet is so Ficinoesque that the poet can not have created it unless immersed long in the contemplation of the Italian Platonist's theories.

Thirdly, Gardner of course struck at the idea that Donne followed Ebreo's *Dialoghi* because Ebreo does not consider copulation to be harmful for the spiritual love, but "it makes possible a closer and more binding union."²⁴ Yet in "The Extasie" Donne goes far beyond such docile acceptance of body love, but he simply glorifies body. Note the lines,

Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
But yet the body is his booke (ll. 70-71).

By the virtue of love, one's soul is given vigorous wings to fly to the mystical union with God, but even after the flight is over, the mystery is registered in the body, even as the mystery of the holy mass is registered in a missal. Here the union of bodies must be a proper and virtuous one. Then just as the missal not only proclaims the present transubstantiation of mere bread and wine into Christ's body and blood but also guarantees the future recurrent transubstantiation, the lovers' souls returning to the bodies from their ecstasy will proclaim through their bodies the same ecstasy and guarantees that it will take place again in future! This signifies a radical alteration in the function of body because of the souls' mystical union with God. Here we see Donne's some unique contribution to the idea of souls' Plotinian flight to God. Such alteration of the material to the spiritual is alchemical, and certainly not Aristotelian. One recalls here Ficino's translation from *Hermetica* was borrowed both by Raleigh and Burton in their works.²⁵

Fourthly, Ficino's Renaissance Platonist love does not take body for such an enemy as Medieval poets did. Ficino's mystical union with God and divine vision of beauty will be gone when one succumbs to touch ("ad venereum coitum forte delabitur."),²⁶ and then one will never recover altogether the wings of his soul. Nevertheless, thanks to the marvellous power of love, one is always ready to receive love's elevating power so far as it can, "quantum in se est elevare non desinat."²⁷ In other words, it is seen only through the subsequent acts of lovers whether one abides in love, waiting for its beneficent power or goes to lust, losing the privilege of being raised to God. By comparing body to a missal, Donne with a skilful mastery solved this misgiving of being fallen forever from heaven. So far as the body is a missal, the lover can wait for the next opportunity of participating the love's mystery with real assurance. Ficino an ordained priest of the Catholic Church has left vague the problem of bodies' union in the uncloistered, wedded love, while Donne and Spenser as English Protestants elevated the virtuous union of bodies in matrimony as high as the most sacred love of the soul. Britomat and Arthegall's love started as an entirely spiritual one but ends up in marriage blessed with their numerous royal descendants down to the Virgin Queen (III, iv, 3).

Now that Donne's position in Ficino's more orthodox tradition of the Renaissance Platonism rather than in Ebreo's off orthodox stand is sufficiently proved, one can proceed and observe how Ficino's divine frenzy (*furor divinus*)²⁸ makes a background of Donne's ecstasy. In Ficino's Platonic genesis, the unified intelligence was first born out of God, still unformed and in chaos.²⁹ When the intelligence turns to God, attracted by the divine beauty, love was born first in the world. This divine ray of God infused

in the intelligence and nourished the love, “Primam ipsius in deum conversionem, amoris ortum. Radium infusionem, amoris pabulum.”³⁰ Presented with divine ray, the intelligence was given the forms, and ornamented with forms and ideas, the intelligence was made mundus (world) or *Χόσμον*, which means in Greek “ornament.”³¹ Second, *anima mundi* (the soul of the world) was born out of the intelligence again unformed and in chaos, received the beauty and forms when it turns to the intelligence in love, “et cum primo informis sit et chaos, amore in mentem directa, acceptis ab ea formis fit mundus.”³² Out of this *anima mundi* was born the matter of the world, formless in chaos again, but as love attracted the world, and matter together, they received from the soul all the forms that are seen in the world. Thus the ornament or the cosmos was born, and the world is constructed out of the chaos, “atque hoc amore conciliante, ab anima formarum omnium que in mundo videntur, nacta ornamentum mundus ex chaos effecta est.”³³ Actually this characteristically beautiful image of Ficino’s, of the divine fire wrapping the whole cosmos through love seemed to extend an intense appeal to the Renaissance imagination. Pietro Bembo in Castiglione’s dialogue calls it “a most happy death in life.”³⁴ Shakespeare may or may not have read Guy le Feure de la Boderie’s French translation of Ficino’s *De Vita Triplix* published in 1581.³⁵ Yet if he knew somehow the hermetic conception therein that the virtue of the planet Venus was drawn by turtle-doves,³⁶ the beautiful infusion of the divine ray which mystically flames up the ornament of the cosmos is wittily caught in the image of a phoenix that burns herself in order to reduce the cosmos to ashes, as the love represented in a turtle-dove perches besides her,

So between them Love did shine,
That the *Turtle* saw his right,
Flaming in the *Phoenix* sight;
Either was the others mine.³⁷

Yet this image of the pious death of soul in love is rather implied or taken for granted in Donne’s “Extasie.” Instead, the poet surprises us, first of all, with the earthy image of

A Pregnant bank swel’d up, to rest
The violets reclining head (ll. 2–3).

What does the pregnant bank mean in the Platonic context of the first part of the poem? According to Ficino’s Commentary for Plato’s Symposium, all the bodies, including *corpus mundi* meaning nature, are pregnant: “*Omnium*, inquit [Plato], *homines pregnans et gravidum corpus est, pregnans et animus*,”³⁸ and fecund with seeds, just as the soul is rich with reason; “*Si fecundum corpus est gravidumque seminibus, multo magis animus prestantior corpore uberimus est, atque suorum omnium ab initio semina possidet*.”³⁹ According to Ficino, the emanation from God forms four-fold circles in order to shape the cosmos, with God Himself or the Good in the center: intelligence, soul, nature and matter:

Pulchritudo actus quidam sive radius inde per omnia penetrans;
primo in angelicam mentem, secundo in animam totius et reliquos
animos, tertio in naturam, quarto in materiam corporum. Mentem

idearum ordine decorat. Animam rationum serie complet.
Naturam fulcit seminibus. Materiam formis exornat.⁴⁰

Thus beauty emanated from the Good penetrates first the intelligence, second anima mundi and all other souls, third nature and fourth the corporeal matter. As the love conveys the beauty of God, the bright ray decorates the intelligence with the order of ideas, fills the soul with the series of reason, fertilizes nature with seeds and ornates the matter with forms. Since the love distributes thus the gift of generation in beauty and good, which are communicated to the outermost end of the creation up to the image of matter, "Generatio autem cum mortalia divinis continuatione similia reddat, munus est profecto divinum,"⁴¹ wrote Ficino. Generation thus makes mortal things resemble the divine, assures their continuation. Hence the function of generation is doubtless sacred.

Hence the violets blooming on the pregnant *corpus mundi* (the body of the world) must be a proper emblem for such divine, generative power of love. Ebreo certainly uses the image of a tree with fruit for love,⁴² but Ficino's comparison of the beauty of love to a flower is far more adequate to be noted here, "Quocirca bonitatis florem quemdam esse pulchritudinem volumus,"⁴³ says he. The Good of love abides within and the Beauty of love is revealed in the exterior, as "Herbas preterea et arbores innata radicibus medullisque fecunditas florum et foliorum gratissima vestit varietate."⁴⁴ In herbs and trees the Good penetrates as the innate fecundity in roots and marrows, and apparels with the most gratifying variety of beauty of flowers and leaves. For such images of love, violets, whose Elizabethan connotation is "'modest,' 'pure' and 'the virgin of the year,'" as Gardner writes,⁴⁵ are almost flawless. This image most fittingly unifies the virtue of the lovers' souls and the generative power working in the nature at spring, suggesting faintly even the virgin, pure power of intelligence far within the circles of the cosmos. With this one image of violets on the bank, Donne takes out the most significant characteristic of Ficino's love contemplation: that the Italian philosopher always observes intelligence, soul, nature and matter work in unity and in perfect accord.

Now the violets signifying the human love is suddenly metamorphosed in the climactic scene to be single and mystically progenitive:

A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour and the size,
(All which before was poore and scant,)
Redoubles still, and multiplies (ll. 37-40).

"The strength, the colour and the size" of this transfigured violet reminds us of the gladiolus of the tremendous size at the end of Mallarmé's "Prose pour des Esseintes."⁴⁶ Evidently the modest, small violets in the first scene are withdrawn back into the realm of the divine intelligence and take their single, epiphenomenal figure of the Idea! The direct contact with the Good in the center of the quadruplicate circles of the divine procreation magnifies, strengthens and illuminates now this single violet, which begins to multiply itself endlessly! Here the modest, poor human love like reclining violets

[Created hence; nature of sense bestows
Its name, and pose of soul, and heart's desire.]⁴⁹

These lines of Cavalcanti appealed immensely to the outstanding intellectual perceptivity of Ficino and struck him with the conception of the duplicate Venus. Donne on the other hand, with his amazing conceit, transfigured the duplicate Venus into the duplicate violet. Since his conceit is just too successful, no reader of Donne has been recalled Spenser's Belpheobe and Amoretta by these violets.⁵⁰

The violets reclining on the bank suggest also that the lovers' souls remain still in the non-rational stage. Their love ascends from the circle of matter to the circle of intelligence only when their souls awake to be rational, and when reason works as intermediary. Their souls first have to leave their bodies and talk in reason only,

As 'twixt two equall Armies, Fate
Suspend uncertaine victorie,
Our soules, (which to advance their state,
Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee (11. 13-16),

and bodies must be so completely laid aside that,

Wee like sepulchrall statues lay . . . (1. 18).

Otherwise the irrational soul in love is altogether embraced by the procreative power of nature and matter. A more comical form of this situation is seen in Donne's "Loves Growth." Here the irrational soul in love is bewildered to find that his soul is completely absorbed in its material manifestation. A naive, unphilosophical man whose love is

. . . not so pure, and abstract as they use
To say, which have no Mistresse but their Muse (11. 11-12),

is amazed to see his love grows when spring returns with the strengthened power of the sun as if the love were a plant or an animal whelp. Surprised, he concluded that like everything on earth, love is elemented (1. 13).

Recalling this conceit and laughter in "Loves Growth," one can realize Donne's disincarnation of Venus in the glorified and unified violet is his wittiest reversal of what Andrew Marvell called "vegetable love" in "To His Coy Mistress." Now the conceit of the vegetable love itself is rooted in Ficino's Hermetic parallelism of heart and the sun in the quadruplicate structure of the universe where the human soul, the human body, the World-Soul and the World-Body work in vital associations reciprocally. Since the visible world is of course the soul's manifestation, the human soul produces a power of life common everywhere, with the heart as its center of life:

Certainement notre Ame outre les propres vertus des nombres
produit par tout en nous une commune vertu de la vie, principalement
par le Coeur . . .⁵¹

In the same way, the World-Soul reveals her vigour everywhere, especially in the sun, and develops the common life all over the World-Body, "Pareillement l'Ame du Monde ayant par tout vigueur, principalement par le Soleil déploye en tous lieux la vertu de la vie commune."⁵² Hence, of course the heart is strengthened in love as the heat of

the sun increases for spring. Especially the irrational soul, according to Ficino's commentary to Plato's *Phaedrus*, is moved by the World-Soul, and the soul of its sphere, that is, the sphere of the particular planet the particular soul is responded to, "ab anima mundi atque sphere sue moveri . . ."53

"Loves Growth" is hence another poem of Donne's, where the celestial Venus and the Vulgar Venus are used together. The Celestial Venus is hidden in the curious image of the concentric circles with the love in the center,

If, as in water stir'd more circles be
 Produc'd by one, love such addition take,
 Those like so many spheares, but one heaven make,
 For they are all concentric unto thee (11. 21–24).

The love's heaven is not scholastic but Ficinoesque, because the love of God is in the center. The emanation of the divine love adds up at the outermost edge of body love, but its divine nature does not change, even though it is spread through the vulgar Venus. Even the conception, "Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do" (1. 14), is seen also in Ficino's *Convivium*. The Italian commentator of Plato asserts three desires or inclinations of love between the two Venuses, celestial and vulgar: the inclination to the contemplative life, the inclination to the active life and to the voluptuous life, "Aut enim ad contemplativam, / aut activam, aut voluptuosam vitam . . ."54

Since Donne's juxtaposing the Neo-Platonic flight of soul out of the body and the love of body together intrigues so many scholars to the variety of perplexities,⁵⁵ one had better clarify here how in Ficino's theories the love of body and the love of soul are linked or separated. As Festugière most lucidly argues,⁵⁶ Ficino's love is differentiated from libido only in the former's leading soul to beauty. The latter leads only to fury and intemperance. Ficino's own Italian translation of *Convivium* most simply and clearly distinguishes love and libido:

. . . quella luce del corpo non è conosciuta dagli orecchi, naso, gusto o tatto, ma dall'occhio . . . Ed essendo l'Amore desiderio di fruire Bellezza, e questa conoscendosi dagli occhi soli, l'amatore del corpo è solo del vedere contento: sì che la libidine del toccare non è parte di Amore, nè affetto di amante, ma spezie di lascivia e perturbazione di uomo servile.⁵⁷

[. . . that light of the body not recognized by the ears, nose, taste or touch, but by the eye . . . And the Love being desire to enjoy the beauty and this being recognized by the eyes alone, the lover of the body is only contented with seeing; so that the libido for touch is not part of Love, nor affectation of a lover, but a sort of lasciviousness and perturbation of a seville man.]

The pleasure of touch here is the pleasure of copulation against whose dangerous charm the angel Raphael advised the prelapsal Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (VIII, 581–582). Yet even if one can not be so entirely contented by the sight of beauty as Michaelangelo must have been, one can adore the beauty of the body in the wedded love and contemplate a superior love of soul, unless he is completely carried away by generation

and abandons the contemplation:

Si quis generationis avidior contemplationem deserat aut generationem preter modum cum feninis vel contra nature ordinem cum masculis prosequatur . . . is utique dignitate amoris abitur . . . Quo qui recte utitur, corporis quidem formam laudat, sed per illam excellentiorem animi mentisque et dei spetiem cogitat eamque vehementius ammiratur et amat. Generationis autem et congressus officio eatenus utitur, quatenus naturalis ordo legesque civiles a prudentibus statute prescribunt.⁵⁸

Here Ficino advocates the love of contemplation and temperance, but no more denies a virtuous union of body than Ebreo. When Ebreo writes, "Love is of two kinds. Of these, one is engendered by desire or sensual appetite . . . Perfect and true love, as such I feel for you, begets desire, and is born of reason,"⁵⁹ he does not say anything much different. Adam's angel also tells man's first parent to use reason and "think the same [the pleasures of touch] voutsaf't / To Cattle and Beast . . ."⁶⁰ The crucial difference between Ficino and Ebreo is only that the former believes the union of soul is its own end, and does not necessarily end in the union of bodies. Here Milton also believes to choose marriage is left free to anybody (*PL*, IV, 747).

Moreover, a human love can not exist for Ficino without body even though he placed the unity with God separated from body at the highest step on the ladder of love. For who can admire the beauty of body if eyes do not exist? The quadruplicate association of soul, body, the World-Soul and the World-Body functions even in admiring beauty. The sun, as Plato writes in *The Republic* creates the visible bodies and the eyes to see. It is already noted that this sun is the center of the procreative power of the World-Soul. Into the eyes the sun pours the lucid spirit, so that the eyes can see, whereas the same sun paints the bodies with colors so that bodies can be seen. Yet the ray proper to the eye or the colors proper to the bodies do not suffice for perfecting vision unless the one light itself comes from above. Thus argues Ficino in his *Commentarium for Philebus*,

Sol profecto, ut in Republica tradit Plato, corpora visibilia et oculos videntes procreat: oculis ut videant lucidum infundit spiritum; corpora ut videantur coloribus pingit. Neque tamen proprius oculis radius proprii corporibus colores ad visionem perficiendam sufficiunt, nisi lumen ipsum unum supra multa, a quo multa et propria lumina oculis et corporibus distributa sunt, adveniat, illustret, excitet atque roborat.⁶¹

The eyes, colors, bodies all belong to the power of the World-Soul as well as the sun. Yet the visible world is only the manifestation of the many (multum) or the metaphysical division of the one light of the Beauty and the Good, Ficino's Platonic equivalent of the Christian God.⁶² In the circle of the soul, the many are the divisions of reason. Out of this one light itself (lumen ipsum unum) the many and the lights proper to the eyes and to the bodies are distributed (a quo multa et propria lumina oculis et corporibus distributa sunt). It is this one divine light that illuminates, excites and strengthens the vision of beauty. Hence one can not adore beauty at all unless through love this divine

light flashes all over the circles of intelligence, soul, nature and matter. On the other hand, so far as beauty is revealed, love can always awake the soul to the light of her procreator.

How accurately Donne seizes Ficino's thesis of love, when the two lovers, lying on the pregnant bank exactly as the violets, propagate "the pictures in the eye" (1. 11), whether our poet read Ficino himself or any other follower or popularizer of him, Bembo, Ebreo, Castiglione, La Primaudaye or Pico.⁶³ Gardner found the source of the twisted eye-beams in Robert Burton's quotation from Ficino's *Phaedrus* in *Anatomy of Melancholy*,⁶⁴ for the lines,

Our eye-beams twisted, and did thred
Our eyes, upon one double string . . . (11. 7-8).

The same passage is seen also in Ficino's *Convivium*. When the lovers are fascinated, they direct their sight fixed, eye to eye, and unify their light, "intuitu aciem visus ad aciem dirigentes, lumina iungunt luminibus. . ."⁶⁵ This twisting of eye-beams definitely prepares the lovers to ascend to the superior stage of the love of reason in their soul, for with their pictures reflected in each other's eyes, the flashing light of heaven awakes them to see the existence of the incorporeal Idea of Beauty. In other words, here each other's eyes function as the mirror to reflect the heavenly Beauty of the invisible realm. Thus lovers' souls will be separated from their bodies, whereas their bodies will serenely stay in the sphere of matter. Soon matter, nature and soul will all return to the celestial sphere of the intelligence and shine out in that superb figure of magnificent, enormous violet! The duplicate Venus, celestial and vulgar, pursues the twin pleasure here, thinking and generation, and both operations are divine:

Item voluptas et in considerando actionem reddit quasi perpetuam,
et in nutritione conservat diu individuum, et in generatione speciem
facit sempiternam et transformat amantem in amatum et omnia
procreat in arte et natura. Haec divina opera sunt ideo appellatur
dea.⁶⁶

When the celestial Venus turns the soul to its own knowledge, the love of soul opens its miraculous field of work. The soul understands the true reasons of things which are in itself, produces outside itself to its own likeness laws, artifices, books, words and morals: "Anima, cum se noverit et rationes veras rerum quae in se sunt comprehenderit, ad sui similitudinem extra se porrigit leges, artificia, libros, verba, mores . . ."⁶⁷ The awakened soul thus traces the division and development of the one ray of the Beauty into reason, while the celestial Venus shines the whole circle of the soul, opening its sight to the enormous realm of reason's activity. Hence "while our soules negotiate there, they could not move. They had so much to talk, so much to think about in that incredible richness in the division of Reason, so that

All day, the same our postures were,
And wee said nothing, all the day (11. 19-20),

for the souls can communicate silent, marvelling to see the same infinite realm together.

When the souls ascend approaching the circle of intelligence, the divisions of the

many are suddenly resolved like fire,⁶⁸ and the soul meets face to face the very source of all the motions and love of the universe. The experience can not be anything but the intense burning which is expressed in Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle." Instead of following the image of Shakespeare's pyre, Donne most ingeniously compares the burning flame of heavenly love working here to the concoction or heating of alchemical fire,⁶⁹

If any, so by love refin'd,
That he soules language understood,
And by good love were growen all minde,
Within convenient distance stood,
He (though he knew not which soule spake,
Because both meant, both spake the same) . . . (11. 21–26).

The connotation of alchemy is most remarkable in these lines. The listener here who knows "the language of love" is identified by Redpath to be a true Platonist.⁷⁰ The heavenly love burns so intent that it purges and transubstantiates not only the lovers' body but also would purify even a listener if he were versed in the activity of soul's thinking.

Love now exerts its true unifying power as soon as it reveals to the lover how it set the whole world, body and soul together to motion. The lovers confess,

We see, we saw not what it did move (1. 32).

Now love unifies all the souls in the circles of soul, where the two lovers join their souls: the World-Soul, the rational human souls awakened to themselves, irrational human souls⁷¹ sleeping in nature and the celestial soul that awakes when drawn into intelligence. Love's ordinary function is to keep harmony in different things in nature and in human things as well, for "In rebus etiam humanis *trahit sua quemque voluptas.*"⁷² (Yet in human things each pursues its pleasure). On the contrary, the many being resolved into one,

. . . as all severall soules containe
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe
And makes both one, each this and that (11. 33–36).

Just as the Idea is one though the separate ideas are all individualized within, the unified soul keeps their separatedness, each being "this and that." More significantly the circles of intelligence, of soul, of nature and of matter all join into one transparent whole of wonder. The radiance and unity characteristic of intelligence, the virtue of modesty and power of generation belong to soul, the growth and lovely forms attributable to nature and matter are all collected in one single violet, transplanted in that burning circle of intelligence where the sacred procreative power gushes out.

What does Donne mean by "that abler soule" (1. 43) which outflows from this miraculous unity? Ficino refers to a tremendous power of a rational soul whenever it recovers itself in its fullness, understand all the forms, notions and powers,

Tanta quoque potestas est cuiuslibet rationalis anime ut quelibet quodammodo sit universum; et siquando in suam amplitudinem se

receperit, omniformes in se notiones et vires explicatura sit, providentiamque universalem prosequutura, quasi collega celestis cuiuslibet anime atque mundane.⁷³

Such is the enormous capacity of a rational soul that whoever regains it will pursue the universal providence as if it were a colleague of any soul in heaven or of the World-Soul. Assuming Donne's "abler soul" to be Ficino's rational soul, one can comprehend the most abstruse passage in "The Extasie,"

That abler soule, which thence doth flow
Defects of loneliness controules.
Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
Of what we are compos'd, and made,
For, th'Atomies of which grow,
Are soules, whom no change can invade . . . (11. 43-48).

Transfigured into this abler soul, single but procreative, unified but retaining all separate elements in the lower circle, the lovers are now drawn into the immutability as they were first conceived in God's intelligence.⁷⁴ Intelligence is an immobile circle, made for the purpose that it may work in such a way as the substance would persist and be operated likewise, "Sed mens, immobilis orbis, propterea quod tam operatio eius quam substantia semper eadem permanet et similiter operatur . . ." ⁷⁵

So far a commentator can follow Ficino's guidance and interpret "The Extasie" line by line. Can one still pursue the resemblance between Donne's lines and Ficino's philosophy to interpret the poem till the end? To some extent one can. As Redpath complains,⁷⁶ Donne's transition from the ecstasy to the soul's return to body is certainly too abrupt. The soul very casually seems to remember the body,

But O alss, so long so farre,
Our bodies why do wee forbear? (11. 48-49)

Yet Ficino again tells us that since soul is the least of the deities and the governor of our bodies on the most difficult earth it can not fulfill both of celestial life and terrestrial life simultaneously but probably in turn:

Quoniam vero et ipsa est ultimum divinorum, et hec in terris nostri corporis gubernatio difficillima, ideoque utrumque simul prorsus implere non potest, probabiliter per vices implet, tum quidem celestem vitam agens tum vero terrenam.⁷⁷

Ficino's dialectic also explains why soul descends into body. The infinite must always be succeeded by the finite and the finite again by the infinite. The ray of intelligence proceeds from the one, the Good and the Beauty into soul where the unified and infinite intelligence are divided within the reason of soul, first into genera, and then to species before being drawn into matter and things.⁷⁸ The infinite one is succeeded by the finite many. The last individual things are, however, infinite, because though they perish constantly, the species constantly work and produce new things endlessly:

Singula vero sub speciebus infinita dicuntur, propterea quod species, ut de ideis probavimus, aeternae sunt. Semper ergo agunt, ne sint otiosae. Quaeque vero plurimis se communicat, quibus intereuntibus, nova, ut Platonici volunt, sine fine succedunt.⁷⁹

Hence the soul simply takes its natural process in Ficino's dialectical motion of the cosmos.

Nevertheless, the soul does not return to the earthly body, nor the body remains entirely terrestrial. Donne's comparison of the soul to intelligence or stars (11. 51-52) is more significant than a simple borrowing from Ebreo. The soul still remains as a separate intelligence, though it descends from the burning fire of the sphere of intelligence. Donne used Ficinoesque dialectic with an amazing skill in "Aire and Angels," and proves how the heavenly love can not simply stay in an ordinary body. The celestial Venus first abides in "some lovely glorious nothing" (1. 6), or the idea of the beloved in the infinite intelligence. When it finds a lover's body, however, it is overwhelmed with the infinite many,

Ev'ry thy haire for love to worke upon
Is much too much, some fitter must be sought . . . (11. 19-20).

Hence the lover resorts to the intermediary of the finite reason to settle down as a star or separated intelligence being loved by its sphere. Notice here the soul that has once participated the intelligence never loses its heavenly glory. The body is also changed by being a sphere, uplifted from the sublunary, imperfect matter to superlunary perfection! No wonder Donne writes,

We owe them [bodies] thanks, because they thus,
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their forces, senses, to us,
Nor are drosse to us, but allay (11. 53-56).

Part of the confusions and perplexities of Donne's commentators comes hitherto because they have ignored such alchemical change of the body. A. B. Chambers followed the alchemical images in Donne's "Valediction: Forbidding mourning," and discovered that Donne glorifies the lovers' refined bodies to the finest possible gold!⁸⁰ This study already has pointed out that Donne compares the soul's entering the circle of the burning intelligence to the alchemical "concoction" or heating. We have observed also how nature and matter participated the unifying and glorifying process of love then. The alchemical connotation continues to the latter half of the poem and extends the transubstantiation of soul to intelligence up to body's alchemical perfection. With characteristic hyperbole, Donne glorified the body of Elizabeth Drury, into a being as transparent as soul,

. . . her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheekes, and so distinckly wrought,
That one might almost say, her bodie thought . . . 81

Because of such assumed transparency which the refined and purified body should have, does the poet not conclude the poem with that enigmatic but not incomprehensible passage,

And if some lover, such as wee,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change, when we' are to bodies gone (11. 73-76),

emphasizing what an unearthly clarity the lovers' bodies now acquired?

Having traced thus far any Ficinoesque passages of Donne, we finally seize here his originality: to combine the Renaissance Platonist love theory with the alchemical change of body. Neither is rare in the Renaissance poetry, but both sparkle when put together with the catalyst of Donne's wit. Ficino's Platonism had always an alchemical undertone. Nature and body are not an individual soul's representation in Ficino's philosophy but God's representation, participating the World-Soul and the World-Body. Gifted with such vitalizing power, body itself produces spirits out of blood and heat.⁸² With the help of the sense organs, these spirits receive the images of the exterior body and transmit them to soul.⁸³ These delicate functions of the body are seen in Ficino's *Convivium* and meditated by Donne in "The Extasie,"

As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like soules as it can . . . (11. 61-62).

The body thus helps the soul admire the ray on the face of God when it flashes on matter as beauty. Yet the notion of such matter as includes the spiritual power within is fundamentally alchemical. Donne was never a servile admirer of Platonism but rather struggled with it. The narrator of "Elegie XVIII" finds neither virtue nor beauty to love with woman, but decides to start with loving the foot, "Lovely enough to stop, but not to stay at . . ." (1. 76). The wit to emphasize the firmness of his stand is startling, but the love of a foot is curiously Platonic, because a Platonic lover should not stay in love with a beautiful body but proceed to a spiritual contemplation, and none can admire a foot long. Struggling, meditating, analyzing, synthesizing deep in the meditation of Platonic love's philosophy, Donne takes out its hidden alchemical qualities and fully developed them. Donne's indebtedness to Ficino is now forgotten because Ficino's philosophy is forgotten as alchemy lost its intellectual appeal. Yet is it not for such elevation of matter that the Renaissance Platonism produced that efflorescence of fine art? As observed in details in this paper, the ray of God through love illuminates the four circles simultaneously, beautifying and radiating intelligence, soul, nature and body together. In Medieval Scholasticism body and stone fall while soul and fire arise. In Ficino's Renaissance Platonism, both stone and body can shine with the divine beauty, and one glorifies God for the rare transformation.

NOTES

1. *ABC of Reading*, 1934, rpt. (New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 140.
2. Julian Lovelock, ed. *Donne: Songs and Sonets: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 218-248.
3. Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed. *The Poems of John Donne* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1912), I, 53. Hereafter all poems of Donne cited will refer to this text with the line number in parentheses.
4. Gardner, "The Argument about 'The Ecstasy,'" p. 232.
5. See Jean Festugière, *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 1941), pp. 53 f. As a follower of Pico della Mirandola, Ebreo tried to balance Ficino's Platonic religion of love with Aristotle.
6. (2d ed.; London: Methuen, 1983), p. 327. This paper started from my casual talk with Prof. Sachiko Yoshida on our way back from Ezra Pound Conference, 1983. I acknowledge her sending

me copies of Gardner's and Redpath's arguments.

7. Pound, p. 140.
8. "Guido Cavalcantes philosophus omnia hec artificiosissime videtur carminibus suis inseruisse . . . Addit amorem / hunc primum in appetitu sensus accensum a forma corporis per oculos inspecta creari. Sed eam ipsam formam non eo modo quo in corporis materia est, in phantasiam imprimi sed sine materia, ita tamen ut certi cuiusdam hominis signato in loco et tempore positi sit imago." "Oration Septima," Caput I, *Commentarium Marsilii Ficini Florentini in Convivium Platonis, de Amore*. *Commentaire de Marsile Ficin sur le Banquet de Platon ou de L'Amour*, textualized and translated by Raymond Marcel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956), pp. 240–241. Cited hereafter as *Convivium*.

"Guido Cavalcanti, the philosopher, seems to have woven all of these most skilfully into his verse . . . He adds that his first love, kindled in the sensual desires, is created from the form of a body seen through the eyes, but that this form itself is impressed on the fancy not in the mode in which the form exists in the matter of its body, but without its matter; and yet in such a way that it is the image of a certain definite man placed in a designated time and place." *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, textualized and translated by Sears Reynolds Jayne, *The University of Missouri Studies*, XIX (1944), 216. Cited hereafter as Ficino, *Symposium*.

Cavalcanti's work referred here is "Donna Mi Prega." Merritt Hughes also notes, "And the best read of Donne's audience might have known that Cavalcanti's recognition in his *Canzone d'Amore* that love is "both intellectual and sensual . . ." "Some of Donne's 'Extasy,'" *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry*, ed. John R. Roberts (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1977), p. 269.
9. See Gardner, "Appendix," *John Donne: The Elegies and the Sonnets* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 186 & p. 261.
10. Gardner, *ibid.*, p. 265.
11. See Donald L. Guss's summary of all Ficino's theory of love in *John Donne, Petrarchist* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1966), pp. 131–132.
12. Gardner, p. 263.
13. *The Philosophy of Love (Dialoghi d'Amore)*, tr. F. Friedeberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes (London: The Soncino Press, 1937), p. 183.
14. Ebreo, p. 183.
15. *Metaphysics*, I, iii, 1–2. *Aristotle: The Metaphysics*, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 17.
16. *Timaeus*, 34. *Plato with an English Translation*, VII, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 63.
17. *Convivium*, Oratio VII, Caput. 1, p. 240. "In the same way in which a mirror, struck in some way by the light of the sun, shines back and, by the reflection of the glow, sets on fire [a piece of] wool placed next to it, so he thinks that that part of the soul which they call the dark fancy and the memory, like a mirror, is struck by an image of Beauty itself (instead of one of the sun), as though by some beam taken in through the eyes . . ." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 216.
18. *Guido Cavalcanti Rime* (Genova: Marsano, 1968), p. 37.
19. Jayne, p. 239. "Appendix B. Ode of love by Guido Cavalcanti," tr. Jefferson B. Fletcher.
20. "Pythagoras Judaeo-Christianus, Numerum 99 et 66 verso folio esse eundem per super-seraphicum Io: Picum." John Donne, *The Courtier's Library, or Catalogue Liberorum Aulicorum in comparabilium et non vendibilium*, ed. Evelyn Mary Simpson, with a translation ([n.p.]: The Nonesuch Press, 1930), p. 32. "The Judaeo Christian Pythagoras proving the Number 99 and 66 to be identical if you hold the leaf upside down, by the super-seraphical John Picus." *Ibid.*, p. 45. "Super-seraphicum Io: Picum" is identified by Simpson as Pico della Mirandola. See *ibid.*, p. 60.
21. "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," *Comparative Literature*, IV (Spring 1952), 217.
22. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, tr. George Bull (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 342.
23. The three steps of ladder in love are discussed in *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 341.
24. Ebreo, p. 54.

25. Jayne, *Comparative Literature*, IV, 218.
26. *Commentarium in Phaedrus, Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer*, textualized & tr. J.B. Allen (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 190–191.
27. Ibid.
28. *Convivium*, Oratio VII, Caput. 14, p. 259.
29. Ibid., Oratio I, Caput. 3, p. 140.
30. Ibid. “. . . the first turning toward God we call the birth of Love; the infusion of the divine light, the nourishing of love . . .” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 128.
31. *Convivium*, Oratio I, Caput. 3, p. 140.
32. Ibid., p. 141. “And, although it was at first formless and a chaos, it was directed by love toward the Angelic Mind [intelligence], and of forms received from the Mind became a world. . .” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 129.
33. Ibid., p. 141. “. . . and by the mediation of this love, it found ornament, from the Soul, of all the forms which are seen in this world; and thus out of a chaos was made a world.” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 129.
34. Castiglione, p. 342.
35. “. . . Of all Ficino’s writings, Robert Burton draws most heavily upon the medical work, *De Vita*.” Jayne, p. 218.
36. “Or comment la vertu de Venus est attirée par les tourterelles, les colombes, les branlequeues & autres, l’honnesteté ne permet pas de le démonstrer.” *Les Trois Livres de la Vie*, tr. Guy le Fevre de la Boderie (Paris: Libraire Jure, 1581), II, 96. See also *The Book of Life*, tr. Charles Boer (Irving, Texas: Spring Publications, 1980), p. 91.
37. *The Metaphysical Poets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 42. This poem, added to Robert Chester’s *Loves Martyr*, apparently is a dirge for Lord Essex’s death. See *The Dictionary of the National Biography*, IV, 203, 1950.
38. *Convivium*, Oratio VI, Caput. 12, p. 226. “. . . Plato says: *In all men the body is pregnant and rich, and the soul is pregnant also.*” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 204.
39. *Convivium*, ibid. “If the body is rich and heavy with seeds, the soul, being nobler than the body, ought even more certainly to be rich, and possesses the seeds of all its qualities from the beginning also.” Ficino, *Symposium*, ibid.
40. *Convivium*, Oratio II, Caput. 5, p. 152. “Beauty is a kind of force or light, shining from Him through everything, first through the Angelic Mind [intelligence], second through the World-Soul and the rest of the souls, third through Nature, and fourth through corporeal Matter. It [the light] fits the Mind [intelligence] with a system of Ideas; it fills the Soul with a series of Concepts [Reason]; it sows nature with Seeds; and it provided Matter with Forms.” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 140.
41. *Convivium*, Oratio VI, Caput. 11, p. 223. “But since generation, by continuation, render mortal things like divine, it is certainly a divine gift.” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 203.
42. Ebreo, p. 64.
43. *Convivium*, Oratio V, Caput. 1, p. 179. “For just this reason, we say that beauty is the blossom, so to speak of goodness.” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 164.
44. *Convivium*, Oratio V, Caput. 1, p. 178. “Likewise, an innate fecundity in the heart and roots clothes plants and trees with the most pleasing variety of fruits [*sic.*] and foliage.” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 164. Obviously, “fruits” is a mistake for “flowers.”
45. Gardner, “Appendix,” p. 264.
46.

Avant qu’un sépulchre ne rie
 Sous aucun climat, son aïeul,
 De porter ce nom: Pulchérie!
 Caché par le trop grand glaïeul.

Oeuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor & G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 57. Here the gladiolus of the enormous size represents also the abstract idea of beauty.
47. *Convivium*, Oratio II, Caput. 7, p. 154. “The first Venus, which is in the Angelic Mind, is said to

have been born of Uranos 'of no mother,' because for the natural philosophers, *mother* means *matter*, and the Angelic Mind [intelligence] is completely foreign to any relationship with corporeal matter.

The second Venus, which is in the World-Soul, was born of Jupiter and Dione: born of Jupiter, that is, of the faculty of the World-Soul which moves the heavens. She it was who created the power which generates these lower forms. The philosophers attribute a mother as well as a father to this Venus because she is thought to be related to matter, since she is incorporated in the matter of the world." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 142.

48. *Rime*, p. 37.
49. Ficino, *Symposium*. "Appendix B," p. 239.
50. One interesting paper was written about Ficino's duplicate Venus by Bettie Anne Doebler, "Donne's Incarnate Venus," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 71 (Autumn 1972), Essays in the Renaissance in Honor of Allan H. Gilbert. Though she did not discuss much about "The Extasie" there, the most remarkable example of the Incarnate Venus is, as she claims, "Aire and Angels." At the end of the paper she attributed the idea that spirituality for human beings is necessarily incarnate to Leone Ebreo, but this idea, like many of Ebreo's, derived from Ficino's theories. See Doebler, p. 512.
51. *Les Trois Livres de la Vie*, II, 94. "Our soul, beyond the powers of the limbs, produces a power of life common everywhere in us, but especially in the heart . . ." Boer, *The Book of Life*, p. 89.
52. *Ibid.* "The *anima mundi* [The World-Soul] flourishes everywhere in the same way, but it especially unfolds its own power of life in the Sun." Boer, *ibid.*
53. *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer*, p. 91. "Siquis autem obiciat animam irrationalem videri principium motus quatenus ipsa ex se vegetales actus vitalesque qualitates edit in corpus, respondimus non habere veram principii rationem sed instrumenti. In hoc enim opere sic ab anima mundi atque sphere sue moveri . . ." *ibid.*
 "If somebody objects that the irrational soul appears to be the principle of motion in that it introduces from itself vegetative activities and vital qualities to the body, I will reply that it is not the principle, but an instrument. For in so doing the irrational soul is moved by the world-soul and the soul of its sphere." *Ibid.*, p. 90.
54. *Convivium*, Oratio VI, Caput. 8, p. 212. ". . . to the contemplative, the practical or the voluptuous life." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 193.
55. Robert Nye, for instance, worked over the lines, "Loves mysterie in souls do grow, / But yet the body is his book . . ." and concluded, "Donne like Swift . . . experienced doubt as another facet of faith." "The Body Is His Book: The Poetry of John Donne," *Critical Quarterly*, 14 (Winter 1972), 354. Elizabeth Teresa Howe compares Donne with Spanish mystical poets such as San Juan de la Cruz, because their highly sensual details in describing the spiritual union with God in "Donne and the Spanish Mystics on Ecstasy," *Notre Dame English Journal*, XIII (Spring 1981), 30-31.
56. See Fustugière, p. 30.
57. *Sopra lo amore o ver' Convito di Platone*, ed. G. Ottaviano (Milano: Celuc, 1973), p. 36.
58. *Convivium*, Oratio II, Caput. 7, p. 155. "If a man is too eager for procreation and gives up contemplation, or is immoderately desirous of copulation with women, or consorts unnaturally with men . . . insofar he abuses the dignity of love . . . Therefore, a man who properly respects love praises, of course, the beauty of the body; but through it he contemplates the more excellent beauty of the soul, the mind, and God, and admires and loves this more fervently than the other. Moreover, he performs the functions of generation and coition within the bounds prescribed by natural law and civil laws drawn up by men of wisdom." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 143.
59. Ebreo, pp. 56-57.
60. *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 376. *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 581-582.
61. *Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus Commentary, Commentaria Marsiini Ficini Florentini in Philebum Platonis de Summo Bono*, with a translation by Michael J. B. Allen (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1975), p. 109. "As Plato says in the *Republic*, certainly the sun produces both visible bodies and eyes that

- see. It pours lucid spirit into the eyes so that they may see. It paints bodies with colours so that they may be seen. Still, a light-ray belonging to the eyes, or colours belonging to bodies, are not enough to perfect vision, unless the one light itself above the many (from which the many and appropriate lights are distributed to eyes and bodies) comes down, illuminates, stimulates and strengthens.” *Ibid.*, p. 108.
62. “. . . ita quod in mundo superno primum, hoc est, ipsum bonum et unum rerum principium species rerum mentesque omnes suo procreat lumine, eodemque fulgore et mentes illustrat et species.” *Philebus*, p. 239. “. . . so in the higher world the first thing, that is, the good itself and the one principle of things, creates with its light all the species of things and all intelligences and illuminates the intelligences and the species with the same radiance.” *Ibid.*, p. 238.
 63. N. J. C. Andreason, *John Donne: Conservative Revolutionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 69. Quoted by T. Katherine Thomason, “Plotinian Metaphysics and Donne’s ‘Extasie,’” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 22 (Winter 1982), 91.
 64. Gardner, “Appendix,” p. 262.
 65. *Convivium*, Oratio VII, Caput. 10, p. 254. “. . . directing eye to eye, they join lights with lights . . .” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 228.
 66. *Philebus*, p. 139. “Again, the pleasure in thinking imparts an almost ceaseless action; and the pleasure in nourishment preserves the individual for a long time, and in generation makes the species everlasting and transforms the lover into the beloved and creates all things in art and nature. These operations are divine, so people call pleasure a goddess.” *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 67. *Ibid.*, pp. 203–205. “The soul, when it knows itself and understands the true reasons of things which are inside itself, produces outside itself in its own likeness laws, artifacts, books, words, morals . . .” *Ibid.*, pp. 202–204.
 68. *Ibid.* p. 229. “. . . et uniens cum anima purius, quod ignis est proprium.” “. . . and joining the purer thing to the soul. This is proper to fire.” *Ibid.*, p. 228.
 69. Redpath, p. 222.
 70. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
 71. Concerning the “several soules” (1. 33), Redpath interpreted “several” to be “separate.” See p. 223. Gardner quotes from Leone Ebreo that soul must have “a nature compounded of spiritual intelligence and corporal mutabilities . . .” See Gardner, “Appendix,” p. 185. Ebreo has certainly rationalized Ficino’s more mystical works. I keep Ficino’s theories since ecstasy itself is mystical anyway.
 72. *Convivium*, p. 220.
 73. *Phaedrus*, p. 93. “Also, any rational soul’s power is so great that any one soul in a way may be the universe. Whenever it withdraws into its own fullness, it will unfold all the varieties of notions and powers in itself; and it will pursue the universal providence as if it were the colleague of any celestial soul and even of the world-soul.” *Ibid.*, p. 92.
 74. “Concepta ergo sunt omnia Dei mente antequam in materiam educantur.” *Philebus*, p. 209. “So all things are conceived in God’s intelligence before they are drawn out into matter.” *Ibid.*, p. 208.
 75. *Convivium*, Oratio II, Caput. 3, p. 148. “The Angelic Mind [intelligence] is immovable because its operation, like its essence, remains always the same and it functions in the same way . . .” Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 136.
 76. See p. 325.
 77. *Phaedrus*, pp. 159–161. “But since our soul is the lowest of the divinities, and the governing of our body on earth most difficult, and since it thus cannot fulfill both tasks absolutely simultaneously, it probably fulfills them alternately, now pursuing the celestial life, now the earthly.” *Ibid.*, p. 160.
 78. See *Philebus*, p. 265.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 253. “But the individual things under the species are said to be infinite, because of the fact that the species are eternal, as we proved in the case of the Ideas. Therefore the species are always active, lest they become idle. But each species communicates itself to many things and when these perish new things succeed them endlessly, as the Platonists maintain.” *Ibid.*, p. 252.

80. "Glorified Bodies and the 'Valediction: forbidding Mourning,'" *John Donne Journal*, I (1982), 14.
81. "The Second Anniversary: Of the Progress of the Soule," *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, ed. with Commentary by Frank Manley (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 99. 11. 244–246.
82. *Convivium*, Oratio VI, Caput. 6, p. 207. "Anima et corpus natura longe inter se diversa spiritu medio copulantur, qui vapor quidam est tenuissimus et perlucidus per cordis calorem ex subtilissima parte sanguinis genitus." "Soul and body, naturally very different from each other, are joined by the median, spirit, which is a certain very thin and clear vapor, created through the heat of the heart from the purest part of the blood . . ." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 189.
83. *Convivium*, *ibid.* "Accipit item per organa sensuum corporum externorum imagines, que in anima propterea figi non possunt, quia incorporea substantia, que corporibus prestantior est, formari ab illis per imaginum susceptionem non potest." "On the other hand, the spirit receives through the instruments of the senses the images of external bodies; these images cannot be communicated directly to the soul, because incorporeal substance, which is more excellent than bodies, cannot be given form by them through the reception of images." Ficino, *Symposium*, p. 189.

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