

Sky and Psyche – Week 3: The Renaissance

Purpose of the Week

This week we look at the changes from the Medieval cosmology to that of the Renaissance and focus on the writing of Marsilio Ficino.

Tasks this Week

- Do the required reading
- Check some of the recommended reading
- Watch the recordings on Moodle and consider the questions at the end of the page
- Share your thoughts on the Week 3 Forum
- Prepare to contribute to the discussion about Ficino in Week 4

Class Description

In the fifteenth century, the works of Plato and the Neoplatonists, which had largely been lost in the West, were translated into Latin by Marsilio Ficino. The revolutionary impact of Ficino's works was, according to Campion, as great as those of Aristotle had been and, arguably comparable to that of Newton's in the eighteenth century and, helped to usher in the eighteenth century Enlightenment and brought about a re-ordering of the relationship between the soul and the cosmos.¹ The influence of Plato and the Neoplatonists can be seen in Ficino's astrological writings which in turn have been influential on the Archetypal school of psychology; his thought therefore provides an underpinning to the material we shall meet in Week 8.

This week we look first at the historical context in which Ficino was writing and, then at the work of Ficino himself. We will set the scene with a brief view of Medieval cosmology and theology, including questions of soul and humankind's relationship to the divine in the Medieval world, and then explore the cultural and philosophical changes that took place during the Renaissance, fuelled by a growing humanism amid the rediscovery of Hermetic, Platonic and Neoplatonic texts.

For the discussion in Week 4: Consider Ficino's work relative to the era in which he lived. What was its impact? Did he take risks with his writing?

¹ Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*, Vol. II, *The Medieval and Modern Worlds*

(Continuum: London, 2009), p. 85.