

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Antonio degli Agli's Defence of Immortality

Joanna Papiernik

Volume 44, Number 4, Fall 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1089348ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38598>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Papiernik, J. (2021). Antonio degli Agli's Defence of Immortality. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 44(4), 87–110.  
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38598>

#### Article abstract

In the article, the author briefly explains the popularity of the question of the immortality of the soul in the fifteenth century, presents the intellectual activity and bibliography of Antonio degli Agli, a prominent Tuscan humanist of the Quattrocento, and analyzes the content of Agli's treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul* (*De immortalitate animae*). The short treatise remains only in manuscript and is rarely mentioned by scholars dealing with the history of the problem of immortality; however, it is a witness to the considerable popularity of the issue during the Renaissance. The article shows that the main arguments used by Agli relate to the metaphysics of light and the ontic affinity between the human mind and its most perfect objects of cognition. It is also demonstrated that these arguments largely coincide with those found in Marsilio Ficino's *opuscula theologica* and the *Platonic Theology*.

# Antonio degli Agli's Defence of Immortality<sup>1</sup>

JOANNA PAPIERNIK

University of Lodz

*In the article, the author briefly explains the popularity of the question of the immortality of the soul in the fifteenth century, presents the intellectual activity and bibliography of Antonio degli Agli, a prominent Tuscan humanist of the Quattrocento, and analyzes the content of Agli's treatise On the Immortality of the Soul (De immortalitate animae). The short treatise remains only in manuscript and is rarely mentioned by scholars dealing with the history of the problem of immortality; however, it is a witness to the considerable popularity of the issue during the Renaissance. The article shows that the main arguments used by Agli relate to the metaphysics of light and the ontic affinity between the human mind and its most perfect objects of cognition. It is also demonstrated that these arguments largely coincide with those found in Marsilio Ficino's opuscula theologica and the Platonic Theology.*

*Dans cet article, l'auteur explique brièvement la faveur dont jouissait la question de l'immortalité de l'âme au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, présente l'activité intellectuelle et la bibliographie d'Antonio degli Agli, un éminent humaniste toscan du Quattrocento, et analyse le contenu du traité De immortalitate animae. Ce court traité d'Agli ne nous est parvenu que sous forme manuscrite et il est rarement cité par les spécialistes s'intéressant à l'histoire du problème de l'immortalité. Toutefois, il témoigne de l'intérêt considérable que soulève cette question à la Renaissance. Le présent article montre que les principaux arguments dont Agli tire profit sont en lien avec la métaphysique de la lumière et l'affinité ontique entre l'esprit humain et ses objets cognitifs les plus parfaits. Il met également en évidence le fait que ces arguments coïncident pour la plupart avec ceux que l'on trouve dans les opuscula theologica et la Théologie platonicienne de Marsile Ficin.*

The problem of the immortality of the human soul was undoubtedly one of the most popular philosophical issues in early modernity. Although it was especially widely analyzed in the sixteenth century,<sup>2</sup> already in the

1. In the course of researching and writing this article, I have greatly benefitted from financial support provided by the National Science Centre, Poland (UMO-2018/29/B/HS1/00462). I gratefully acknowledge the help and suggestions of Elżbieta Jung, Dariusz Gwis, Richard Blum, and two anonymous reviewers.

2. The papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* issued in 1513 at the Fifth Lateran Council encouraged intellectuals in the defence of individual immortality. The famous treatise of Pietro Pomponazzi published in 1516 brought on further debates. Finally, at least two other factors—to some extent connected with the ones listed above—played an important role: 1) new translations of Aristotle's works and of the most famous commentaries to the Stagirate's *De anima*, and 2) objections raised again concerning the individual

Quattrocento we observe a significant increase in interest in the problem—the most illustrious example being Marsilio Ficino’s *Platonic Theology* published in 1482. During the fifteenth century, the question was partly discussed in direct connection with the dispute over the unity of the potential intellect, and partly, in a much broader perspective, in reference to the issues of human dignity and nobility popular among humanists, as well as to newly translated Platonic and Neoplatonic works. However, in the fifteenth century a considerable number of texts entitled explicitly *De immortalitate* were written, and among them we find one composed by Antonio degli Agli.<sup>3</sup> In my article, I briefly present the author, then provide information about the source of the text, explain its characteristics, and analyze the considerations contained in the work. Finally, I specify the arguments used, and note that many arguments and references contained in Agli’s treatise are similar to those found in some Ficinian works.

Agli was a figure of significant importance in the Tuscan intellectual life for several decades of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Born in 1400, Agli was a talented humanist writer with very good knowledge of Greek and Latin, a poet, an

---

immortality (or the possibility of proving it) of Alexander of Aphrodisia, Averroes, and Duns Scotus. As Bruno Nardi writes: “the question of the immortality of the soul is debated in the sixteenth century as much, if not more, as the Copernican doctrine” (Nardi, 375). About the problem of immortality in the Renaissance in general, see primarily Blum, 211–33.

3. Authors of fifteenth-century works with *de immortalitate* (or the equivalent in Italian) in the title include Giovanni Cocchi vel Canali, Leonardo Nogarola, Agostino Dati, Jacopo Campora, Johannes de Trevio, Philippus de Barberiis, Samuel Cassini, Pier Candido Decembrio, Roberto Caraccioli, and Paolo Orlandini. Many fifteenth-century authors considered the immortality of the soul in works devoted to other topics, but the unusually high number of texts devoted to this issue clearly shows its popularity at the time.

4. There are several arguments for such a claim, one of the most important being the intellectual activity reflected in his letters as well as in his literary, theological, and philosophical works. However, it seems worth accentuating that Agli appears in some *opera* of his contemporary intellectuals, e.g., in the *Dialogi quinque* and in the dialogue *De amore*, both written by Lorenzo Pisano, as well as in Marsilio Ficino’s *Commentary on Plato’s “Symposium.”* On Pisano, see Field, *The Origins*, 12, 136, 158–74, 277–81; Terzi; and Edelheit, 263–86. The literature regarding Ficino’s *Commentary* is quite vast. Among the most important references are an English translation of the text preceded by the introduction by Jayne Sears Reynolds (Ficino, *Marsilio Ficino’s Commentary*); Raymond Marcel’s edition and translation of the commentary (Ficin, *Commentaire* [1956]); Festugière; Magnard; and Laurens. See also a newer edition and translation into French: Ficin, *Commentaire* (2002). Agli is one of the invited guests at a banquet organized by Lorenzo de Medici in *De vera nobilitate* written by Cristoforo Landino. On this work, see Rabil, 182–94, where a more extensive bibliography can be found.

aficionado of philosophy, and a man of the church; he was a doctor of canon law and an archbishop of Ragusa, a bishop of Fiesole and of Volterra.<sup>5</sup> He was the patron of one of the most prominent philosophers of the Quattrocento, Marsilio Ficino, who counts him as one of his *familiares*.<sup>6</sup> However, despite his interesting and quite comprehensive contribution to the religious and literary life of that time, the sources of his activities and works are scarce and most of his writings remain in manuscript.

Agli, despite many difficulties in the first several decades of his life,<sup>7</sup> held typical humanist interests in various disciplines; he was engaged in broad literary, historical, philosophical, and theological problems, which is very well reflected in his texts. Agli's writing includes poetry, laudations, biblical commentaries, occasional writings, ethical treatises, works regarding public and administrative matters, biographical and hagiographic texts, and letters. The whole corpus of his literary activity is quite comprehensive, as we can conclude from the enumeration included in the autobiographical *Dialogus* and other sources. However, the extant texts are not numerous and it is worth listing

5. These are the most prominent posts held by Agli in the church, but his ecclesiastical life was connected to various positions in different places, and to some of them he was especially attached (e.g., the sanctuary of Santa Maria dell'Impruneta).

6. Marsilio Ficino in a letter to Martinus Uranius composes a catalogue of his friends whom he describes as "familiar friends, fellow interlocutors, so to speak, and mutual communicators of opinions and studies" ("consuetudine familiares, ut ita loquar, confabulatores, atque ultro citroque consiliorum disciplinarumque communicatores"). To this group Antonio degli Agli belongs. Ficino is precise; he adds that Agli was one of "not listeners, [but] familiar friends of his mature age" ("in aetate mea iam matura familiares, non auditores"). In Ficino, *Opera*, 936–37. (All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.) See also Swogger, 161n229; Hankins, 443n48. Their close relationship is also confirmed by the fact that Agli dedicated to Ficino his dialogue written between the late 1450s and early 1460s, *De mystica statera* (Naples, Bibl. Naz., cod. VIII F 9, ff. 19v–33r); what is more, they are both interlocutors in this work. See Kristeller, *Supplementum*, 2:369–71; Marcel's introduction in Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet* (1956), 31–32; Swogger, 19, 21, 58–61, 128n28; Celenza, 26–31; Field, "The Platonic Academy," 375. It is also worth mentioning here Ficino's letters to Agli: one is a consolatory letter (*Consolatio in alicuius obitu*, in Ficino, *Opera*, 660–61), another (*Perversis animis adversa sunt omnia*, in Ficino, *Opera*, 729) may be written in the context of the conflict between Volterra and Florence in 1472, when Agli was the bishop of the former (see Manni, 4–5).

7. For the life of Agli, see Tiraboschi, 313–14; Mazzuchelli, 185–86; da Bisticci, 295–97; Moreni, 131–43; Della Torre, 775–76; D'Addario, 400–01; Cosenza, 141; Miglio, 177–80; Swogger; Minnich, 177–91 and throughout; Webb, 297–308; D'Angeli, 253–57.

them:<sup>8</sup> *Sermo de summi pontificis atque universalis consilii potestate*,<sup>9</sup> *Capitolo sopra l'amicizia*,<sup>10</sup> *De vitis sanctorum*,<sup>11</sup> *Hystoriarum libri*, *Explanatio symbolorum Pythagore*,<sup>12</sup> *De mystica statera*, *Liber iubilei*, *Explanatio in Ecclesiastem*, *Epistola consolatoria ad Cosmum Medicem*, *Epistola consolatoria ad Petrum Medicem obiti patri*, *De rationibus fidei*, *Epithalamii libri I–III cum praefatione ad Paulum PP. II*, *Panegyricus*, *De immortalitate animae*, *Epistula ad Pontificem Sixtum IV*, *Dialogus de vita eiusdem auctoris*. *Laus librorum*, *Oration on Behalf of the Citizens of Volterra*,<sup>13</sup> and *Laudatio Leonardi historici*.<sup>14</sup> Several of Agli's letters also survive.<sup>15</sup>

The *De immortalitate animae*, which is found in the BAV's codex Vat. Lat. 1494, consists of just a couple of folios (91r–97v) and hardly can be considered as the most important work of the author, especially with regard to the length and complexity of some of his other extant treatises, like *Liber iubilei* or *De rationibus fidei*, but certainly it is worthy of our attention. It reveals the author's extensive interests and his philosophical inspirations. It is also a witness to the considerable popularity of the issue of the immortality of the soul in the fifteenth century. Even if philosophical inquiries were not the main subject of the intellectual activity of Agli, he apparently considered the aforementioned question to be important, and this work may indicate its significance for the intellectual environment of the author and his times.

8. For Agli's works see some of the books and articles listed above, especially Moreni, Swogger, D'Angeli, D'Addario, and Webb. Two important sources, from which some of the aforementioned authors derived their information about Agli's bibliography, are *Archivio mediceo* and Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*.

9. In his doctorate, Swogger (123n14) announced the preparation of the edition of this treatise, but there is no evidence that he finished his work.

10. This poem is available both in manuscript (see Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, 1:215, 222, 257; 2:488, 606; and Minnich, 190) and in modern editions (e.g., Degli Agli, "Poesie", 29–49). It is also available online: "Agli, Antonio Degli: Poesie," Biblioteca Italiana, 20 January 2022, [bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000542](http://bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000542).

11. The preface to this work is edited in Migilio.

12. This work is critically edited by Swogger (191–313).

13. See Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, 1:71.

14. It regards Leonardo Bruni. This is quite a recent discovery of Arthur Field and James Hankins; see Field, *The Intellectual Struggle*, 128n4.

15. D'Angeli (257) claims that she identified thirty-five letters written by Agli in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, most of them addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici.

The manuscript Vat. Lat. 1494 contains the only known copy of the treatise.<sup>16</sup> It is uncertain whether it is the autograph of the treatise or text copied from some other witness, but I will provide several arguments to support the opinion that the treatise probably was copied by a scribe.<sup>17</sup> Such a view seems plausible when we take into consideration the kinds of correction, the grammar mistakes made in the text, and analyses of other extant manuscripts that are thought to be written by Agli himself. First, it is worth considering the character of corrections in the manuscript: they are not numerous and most are minor, which can be due simply to the text's brevity. However, some are informative. There are a few phrases in which some short fragments or single words are simply repeated or repeated and then crossed out, which is a common mistake in copying.<sup>18</sup> What is more, there are just two notes in the margins: they are short and do not constitute substantive comments of the kind often found in autographs (i.e., comments that add something relevant to the content).<sup>19</sup> In addition, the longest crossed-out fragment of the main text does not make any sense where it was originally entered, which suggests that it was transcribed by someone else and not the author.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, there are a couple of serious

16. The detailed description of the codex can be found in Nogara, 24–27.

17. According to Swogger (132), it is the autograph. He writes that folios 85r–98v make one collection because they have the same watermark and handwriting, apart from the table of contents on folio 98v, but the handwriting on folios 85r and 90r–v differs from that on the rest of the folios in the aforementioned part of the codex. In fact, folios 85r, 90r–v, and 98v share the same handwriting.

18. For example, on folio 91rb, “in eo” is repeated and deleted in the phrase “Sed licet sit factus in eo tamen archanis quibusdam modis, hec intelligit is, qui minime factus est”; on folio 96ra, in the phrase “Informis enim ac plane tenebrosus est intellectus, potentia videlicet intellectiva hac luce non predata, ut oculus in tenebris positus, sicuti vel supra pluries dictum est,” the utterance “luce non” is repeated; on folio 97ra, in the fragment “[...] aliquid habeat commune cum summo, aliquid cum infimo: immortale cum angelo quod est anima, mortale cum pecude quod est quidquid inferius, est anima igitur immortalis,” the word “anima” is repeated. Note: I keep the original orthography while quoting Agli's treatises.

19. On folio 93ra, in the main text, there is an abbreviated word “snia,” whose part “nia” is underlined, and in the left margin there is an abbreviation “semia”; the former is clearly an incorrect abbreviation for “semina,” but in the latter it is easy to read the word, so it is a simple correction. On folio 93rb, in the bottom margin are the words “homines in quo”; the whole sentence, which finishes on folio 93va, reads: “Sed quid multa, nihil agimus aut loquimur aut cogitamus aut comprehendimus utpote homines in quo hec animorum immortalitas non plene cernatur.” The words in the margin seem to be an integral part of the whole sentence.

20. The discussed fragment is on folio 97rb: “cum autem hoc iustissimum desiderium sit nisi anima sit immortalis.” It is necessary to quote a broader section to see the context and improper place of

grammar mistakes in the text, including wrong cases in sentence structures, which may be due to the incorrect reading of the abbreviations in the original text by someone who probably does not know Latin grammar very well, but surely this person could not have been Agli himself, as he was famous for both his excellent knowledge of Latin and his sophisticated style.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, according to J. H. Swogger, the Naples manuscript (Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli VIII.F.9) comprising five works by Agli is an autograph manuscript, as it contains a significant number of corrections, additional explanations in the margins, and many deleted paragraphs.<sup>22</sup> However, there the handwriting for both the corrections and the main text is different from the handwriting of the Vatican manuscript containing *De immortalitate*. Thus, it seems that the Vatican text was transcribed and not written by Agli himself.

As for dating the treatise, there are several aspects to consider. First of all, in the top margin it is written: "A. de aliis Episcopi Volaterani." Agli became the bishop of Volterra in April 1470<sup>23</sup> and the handwriting of this inscription is the same as the one of the treatise itself. What is more, on folio 90r-v there is a short text in Latin with the *explicit* in the same language, but written in

---

the deleted passage: "Nam etiam illi insitum videre remunerationem iustorum et supplicia iniquorum quod quare iustum est desiderium ac etiam divinitus motum compleri necesse est; quod fieri nequit nisi anima sit immortalis. Non enim nisi in altera vita videri contingit, quo adiri nequit [**the deleted phrase**] ab anima nisi viva post hanc permaneat, ergo, etc. Agnoscere facie ad faciem Deum omnes optant quod in hac vita fieri nequit. Cum autem hoc iustissimum desiderium sit a Deo animo insitum, expleri necesse est, ne frustra id Deus dedisse videatur, ut igitur impleri possit, necesse est immortalem esse animam." As is clearly seen, one sequence of words from the deleted passage is put in a preceding phrase, while another sequence makes part of a phrase below the deleted passage.

21. For example, on folio 92va the phrase reads: "Non turbari, non irasci, non ultionem decernere, non iniuriam ipsam agnoscere statuat, hoc autem ne corporis lesio ad animum transeat, quod **multi** nostrorum **fecisse** constat [...]" After "constat" we should expect the syntactic construction *accusativus cum infinitivo*, but as we can see, there is *nominativus cum infinitivo*. On folio 97ra: "Inter creata enim quedam sunt simplicia et incorruptibilia que sunt substantie separate, quedam composita et corruptibilia que sunt alia ab homine omnia, necesse est igitur, ut ordo rerum constet, ut sint quedam que ex incorruptibili et corruptibili mixta sint que sunt homines, quorum pars simplex et incorruptibilis est anima, ex quo etiam **immortalem** deprehenditur." The passive form of the verb ("deprehenditur") requires the nominative, not the accusative case. Agli is called by Da Bisticci (254) "dottissimo in greco e in latino" (very learned in Latin and Greek). He had a very good knowledge of Latin, so it was improbable for him to make such mistakes.

22. See Swogger, 60. Kristeller also suspects that it can be the autograph (*Iter Italicum*, 1:427).

23. Eubel, 271. See also Minnich, 182, 190.

Greek characters, which reads: “epistola Tulii ad M. C. Octaviano. Salutem. Anno Domini 1470. Die XXV.” On folios 97vb–98ra there is also a letter of the people of Volterra to Pope Paul II, also written in Latin but in Greek characters (in the same hand), which may suggest that the treatise *De immortalitate* was transcribed at the same time, in 1470.<sup>24</sup>

With regard to language, it is worth noticing that there are multiple complex sentences containing several syntactic constructions, but with limited semantics (the philosophical conceptual apparatus is not extensive), frequent words emphasizing the truth of the sentences, like “vel” and “vero,” and many impersonal verbs for the expression of certainty of the considerations, like “manifestum est,” “constat,” “plane est,” etc.

The whole treatise is full of references to philosophical teachings and to the Bible (at one time, quotations to the Old and New Testaments confirm rational inquiries, at other times they are the starting point for analyses).<sup>25</sup> At the very beginning of the work, Agli admits that he hesitantly began to write about the question of immortality, asks God to watch over his work, and notes that even if the proposed considerations do not find recognition among others, he himself will have them to read and analyze. What seems especially important here is that the author stresses that for him the belief in the immortality of the soul is sufficient, and that rational analysis is of less value.<sup>26</sup> Such a declaration clearly indicates the direction of the author's considerations and conclusions:

24. Swogger (30) is of the opinion that Agli himself likely transcribed this letter, being pleased by his reception by habitants of Volterra, and that he chose the Greek alphabet because he wanted it to be legible only to people knowing the language of Plato.

25. According to Swogger (25–27) the treatise is of an uneven character; in the beginning, Agli gives sophisticated philosophical arguments, but in the following text he refers more often to authority than to reasoning. The researcher indicates that already on folio 94rb of *De immortalitate* the humanist appeals to authority, the fragment that is probably meant (94ra–b) reads: “Sed hee auctoritates considerantibus auctorum dignitatem, maiestatem, divinitatem ac celsitudinem rationibus potiores validioresque sunt universis; qua propter rationes auctoritatibus et auctoritates rationibus miscere non piguit” (These authorities, however, are more appropriate and more powerful than any reasoning for the authors who respect dignity, majesty, divinity, and sublimeness. For this reason, it should not be irritating to mix reasoning with authority, and authority with reasoning). However—as mentioned above—at the beginning of the text, Agli admits that the belief in immortality is sufficient, and if we consider the references to the Bible, they are on folio 91rb.

26. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 91ra: “Preterea sciat unusquisque potius querendo et hanc materiam ventilando disceptandoque tante rei me sufficere posse sperando, me aggredi ausum” (I also would like



according to him, it is worth presenting rational arguments in favour of immortality, and many of them are confirmed in the Bible, but in themselves they do not constitute the final point of reference for the issue under study. In conclusion, Agli encourages his readers to take the authority of scripture as the touchstone for the content presented by him.<sup>27</sup> Bearing all this in mind, it must be emphasized, however, that in order to show the immortality of the soul, Agli refers to various philosophical concepts and arguments, seeing them usable for his purpose. He is not always able to explain precisely the terms or to justify his reasoning, so he often uses adverbs like “quodammodo”<sup>28</sup> and “tamquam,” but he is convinced that his efforts can be useful in discovering what is most important for people.<sup>29</sup>

The main arguments for the immortality of the human soul<sup>30</sup> are built around two basic and recurring themes that are related to each other: namely, the metaphysical concept of light and the relation of the soul to what it is capable of understanding, receiving, grasping, or contemplating.<sup>31</sup> The latter is strongly

---

everyone to realize that I have dared to undertake this task for analysis, consideration and explanation, hoping that I will carry through such a great question).

27. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 97vb: “si quem hec legere fortasse contingat, sic teneat, sic probet, ut sacrarum litterarum auctoritatibus ac testimoniis in cunctis adhereat, quibus si quis non movetur, hiis moverii haud quaquam sperandum est” (If someone happens to read [this essay], he should put and consider it this way: in all its arguments the text adheres to the authority and testimony of scripture; if someone is not convinced by them, under no circumstances should he be expected to be persuaded by this treatise).

28. The adverb is used in this short treatise nineteen times.

29. See Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 97vb: “Omnia tamen quibus fides, spes et caritas libenter legenda sunt studioseque amplectenda cuiusmodi, que hoc libello a me scripta sunt, esse credimus non igitur penitus aspernanda” (I believe that everything from which faith, hope and love should be read and that allows you to zealously respect them—what has been written by me in this book—should not be the subject of complete contempt).

30. Swogger (26) writes that on the basis of the first several folios, which—as he sees it—have a philosophical value, the essay should be titled *De immortalitate rationis* instead of *De immortalitate animae*. While Agli’s considerations really regard *animus*, which means “the rational soul,” it is completely understandable, as the history of the polemics about immortality relates mainly to the possibility of an individual intellect, not the lower parts of the soul, surviving the death of the body.

31. Eugenio Garin enumerates three arguments: the power of human speech, the divine of syllogism, and the infinite power by which, if people know themselves, they will know the necessity of God’s existence and they will be happy (Garin, 112–13). He adds that on the closeness of humans with God—our divinity—immortality is founded. However, outstanding qualities of human language and syllogisms

connected to the concept that the divine light is a substantial part of the human soul; it comprises numerous examples of the soul's intellectual work and its effects on comprehending what is eternal. It testifies to the soul's similarity to what it knows and what it wants. Interestingly, these considerations resemble the arguments contained in the works of Marsilio Ficino. Perhaps this is due to the philosophical and religious sources shared by both authors, which were widely discussed in Ficino's circle. It is also likely that Agli drew inspiration directly from the famous Florentine scholar; after all, the metaphysics of light is extensively explained in Ficinian works, and numerous arguments for immortality can be found not only in the *Platonic Theology* but also in many smaller treatises by Ficino.<sup>32</sup> Although it should be noted that in *De mystica statera* Agli criticizes his younger friend for his attachment to pagan philosophers,<sup>33</sup> nevertheless, referring to the philosophical aspects of considerations about the immortality of the soul, Agli points to concepts and arguments that were included in Ficino's main strategies for defending immortality. To be more precise, reasonings contained in the *De immortalitate anime* of the bishop of Volterra are similar to ideas expressed in many Ficinian works, including commentaries, but I would like to focus on works chronologically closest to Agli's treatise: *Platonic Theology* and some *opuscula theologica*, with particular emphasis on *De raptu Pauli*.<sup>34</sup>

---

are indicated only at the beginning of the treatise, and as such they fit in with the remarkable cognitive ability of the soul, emphasized repeatedly in the treatise. Human divinity is explicitly expressed at the end of the text, although it can be argued that it is inextricably linked with the specificity of the soul's activity and its ability to know the truth and to enjoy the good. These issues dominate the whole work.

32. However, it should be stressed here that many works by Ficino, which express the metaphysics of light, were written after 1470, e.g., the collection of small treatises contained in the second volume of Ficino's *Letters* (especially *Quid sit lumen*, which is the earlier version of *De lumine*), *On the Sun* (*De sole*), *On light* (*De lumine*), commentaries on Dionysius the Areopagite, commentaries on Plotinus, etc. As for *Platonic Theology*, Ficino himself states in a letter to Bandini dated 1474 that he had conducted research for ten years before writing this work, and that the process itself took him five years. Ficino, *Opera*, 660: "O quam perspicax es, Bandine, qui subito intuitu cernas, quod ego primum per longas ambages decem annos investigavi, deinde composui hac de re quinquennio octo decemque libros!") See Della Torre, 590.

33. Degli Agli, *De mystica statera*, 32v–33r; see Field, *The Origins*, 173–74.

34. The *opuscula theologica* were written in 1476 (on this see Marcel); this is why Agli could not have followed these texts; besides, it is worth stressing that his work does not resemble them at all in terms

Agli argues that God is identical with the light that is received by people; this light, moreover, guarantees the union of God and humans. This union can be likened to the influence of sunlight on mirrors: it is reflected in them and has a similar effect to the Sun itself, because the light from mirrors both illuminates and warms. Therefore, the image of the eternal Sun-God dominates in the rational soul, and thus the soul can grasp what is divine: that is, what is eternal.<sup>35</sup> He also claims that the light coming from the Sun is supernatural, while the light coming from the Moon is natural; where the former characterizes a religious attitude, the latter represents a commitment to art and knowledge.<sup>36</sup> What is more, light should be understood as the source of cognitive power, which comes from the divine life-giving breath (*spiraculum vitae*), and since the intellect is the essence of the soul, people are related to God and cannot grasp any knowledge without the divine light.<sup>37</sup> Through this light, the soul comprehends itself, comprehends light itself, and is comprehended by the light.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the light is called the form of the intellect and without it the intellect would not be fit for its purpose. Insofar as the light is divine, eternal, and unchangeable, the intellect is the source of the soul's immortality.<sup>39</sup> Finally, life and light are almost the same, and God is the source of life, so the life of the soul is incorruptible.<sup>40</sup> All these considerations are accompanied by several quotations from both the Old and New Testaments; explicit references to philosophers are much

---

of structure and does not exhaust the entire content of them. Nevertheless, one can find in them a large part of Agli's arguments. This is especially true of *De raptu Pauli*.

35. See Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 91rb–va

36. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 91vb.

37. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 93vb–94ra. The same reference to the Book of Genesis (2:7) is also found in *De rationibus fidei* (32v).

38. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 95ra: "Ea enim luce intelligit se, intelligit ipsam lucem, intelligitur ab ipsa luce" (Thanks to this light, the soul comprehends itself and comprehends the light itself, and is also comprehended by the light itself). In the following part, Agli repeats that the light is somehow essential for the soul and that the human soul would not be what it is if it lacked this light. Very similar considerations can be found in *De rationibus fidei* (33v), where Sophia, a character of this dialogue, explains that it is in the light and thanks to the light that people understand: "Hec [i. e. eternitatis coniunctio et communication] enim ea lux vera est, qua omnes homines illuminari dicuntur, in qua et per quam ipsamet ii intelliguntur." ("This [connection and communication with eternity] is the true light by which all people are illuminated, in which and by which they are comprehended.")

39. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 96ra.

40. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 96ra.

less frequent, but it does not mean that these considerations are not rooted in philosophy, as they in obvious ways bring to mind the Neoplatonic metaphysics of light, reinterpreted, however, in its Christian version.

What is worth noticing here is the fact that this is not the only collection of light metaphors in Agli's works. In *De mystica statera* he describes the divine light as the source of truth<sup>41</sup> and writes that the Sun is an extraordinary spirit (*spiritus*) in humans. The spirit is part of the soul in us, which is a mirror reflecting the image of the Sun itself, so that it shines with its light and warms with its warmth, and also thrives thanks to its power. As a result, the light in the soul acquires a lunar nature, giving rise to scientific knowledge and prudence.<sup>42</sup> In *De rationibus fidei* the bishop of Volterra writes about light several times, pointing out that it comes from God (and is God Himself) and that it is thanks to this light that people are able to comprehend. To strengthen his arguments, he quotes the Gospel of St. John 1:3–5 as well as referring to Augustine,<sup>43</sup> who writes that the Platonists already taught that God, who is the Creator of the whole world, is the light of our understanding.<sup>44</sup> In the same work, Agli also

41. See Field, *The Origins*, 173.

42. Degli Agli, *De mystica statera*, 22v–23r: “Sol enim in homine est spiritus divino atque increato lumine caloreque insignis. Spiritus enim in nobis est ea pars anime, que ceu speculum ad increatum Solem conversa ipisus Solis imaginem percipit ita, ut eius lumine luceat, eius calore flagret, eius rursus vi ac potentia sola vigeat, quo fit ut vel ad Lunam, hoc est ad animam flagrantis ispius luminis vis et natura descendat, qua scientia prudentiaque exoritur [...]” (For the sun in man is—through the divine and uncreated light and heat—an outstanding spirit. For the spirit in us is that part of the soul, which, like a mirror, turned to the uncreated Sun perceives the image of the Sun in such a way that it shines by its light, it burns with its heat, and thrives only by its force and power; the result is that the force and nature of that blazing light descends to the Moon, that is, to the soul, by which knowledge and prudence arise [...]).

43. Augustine, bk. 8, ch. 7, p. 332.

44. Degli Agli, *De rationibus fidei*, 17v: “Cum de verbo loqueretur, ait [Johannes]: ‘omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est, in ipso vita erat et vita erat lux hominum et lux in tenebris lucet’. [...] Scio plane Augustinum in libro *De civitate Dei* dixisse a Plotino Platonis sensum explanante dictum lumen esse mentium ad discenda omnia eum ipsum Deum a quo facta sunt omnia” (Speaking on the Word [John] says: Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness. [...] I know that Augustine, in his book *On the City of God*, clearly said, that Plotinus explained the sense of Plato in this way: the light of our intellects, by which all things are learned, is this selfsame God by whom all things were made). The quotation of John 1:3–5 in my English translation is taken from the New International Version, online, [biblica.com/bible/niv/john/1/](http://biblica.com/bible/niv/john/1/).

explains that the light of truth is something divine and unchanging and can only be known by what is related to it. Reaching the truth itself, i.e., God, is impossible for a nature that is mortal; therefore, the rational soul, as an image of this truth, is immortal.<sup>45</sup>

The Ficinian metaphysics of light is much more complex than Agli's considerations on the topic and finds its expression in many writings. Here, however, it is worth focusing on those elements of it that are expressed by Agli. Ficino calls God the immense light,<sup>46</sup> the father of light,<sup>47</sup> or even the light of lights.<sup>48</sup> In the last case, the lights should be interpreted as minds or intellects. One of the sections of *De raptu Pauli* significantly refers to the relationship—emphasized in Agli's *De immortalitate*—between God understood as the source of life, as well as the light and the human mind receiving life from Him and illuminated by Him. As we read in Ficino, the divine ray reaches the mind and illuminates every human coming into this world,<sup>49</sup> and thus all things are seen in God, and God Himself is also known, because of God's simplicity; everything that is in

45. Degli Agli, *De rationibus fidei*, 34r: "Veritatis lumen divinum quid est et incommutabile quod vero nisi cognatis naturis penitus innoscit. Quisquis autem veritatis tendet rationem, ceu a termino radii ascendere incipiens, ad eum denique elatus pervenit qui veritatem esse se ait. Impossibile autem est eam indolem que tanti capax est luminis esse mortalem. Inde enim probatur quanti sit animus in quo nisi esset imago veritatis, qui Deus est, haud quaquam sentire posset influxum in se veritatis. Illa siquidem imago tanti roboris est, ut id cui insita est, sic simile sibi reddat, ut immortalem esse necesse sit, quam sane naturam inesse animis nullus non stultus ignorat. Immortalis igitur est animus" (The divine light of truth is what is unchangeable and what becomes known only to related natures. But whoever will strive for the reason of the truth, as starting to ascend from the end of the rays, finally, being elevated, arrives at him, who says that he is the truth. It is impossible for that nature, which is capable of ascending to so great a light, to be mortal. Hence it is proved that the rational soul is so great: if there were not the image of the truth—that is, God—this soul would not be able to experience the influence of the truth in itself. That image indeed is of such outstanding strength that it makes similar to itself the thing in which it is implanted, so this thing must necessarily be immortal; everyone who is not stupid knows that such a nature is in the rational soul. Therefore, the rational soul is immortal).

46. Ficino, *Quid sit lumen*, 720; *De raptu Pauli*, 700; and *Argumentum*, 236. In the *Compendium* (694), Ficino calls God "the brightness overtopping all brightness" ("Deus supereminens claritas claritatum").

47. Ficino, *Quid sit lumen*, 718.

48. Ficino, *Quid sit lumen*, 720 and also Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 702.

49. Agli writes similar words, quoting a passage from the Gospel of St. John (1:9), on 95rb: "Cum enim Iohannes ait: 'erat lux vera que illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum,' lucem illam intelligit [...]" (When John says: "the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world," he understands that light [...]). (The quotation of John in the English translation is taken from the New

God is God Himself.<sup>50</sup> The relationship between the ray of divine light and human comprehension is further discussed in the *De raptu Pauli*: the light poured into the mind by God does not leave itself, nor does it leave the mind when it returns to itself. It is like the light of the Sun: when it is in the body of the Sun, it is invisible; when it spreads from the Sun over the colours of things, it becomes visible; when it infuses itself into the eye, it becomes something visual; and when it returns to the Sun it becomes something which sees. This metaphor explains the circle from God through intelligible principles (*rationes*) to minds and back to God. Thus, the same light takes different forms in illuminating different beings. Eternal God constitutes the beginning and the end of the process, and therefore the other entities included in it are also entitled to eternity. What is more, the mind acts in accordance with what it grasps, yet it comprehends intelligible unchanging principles, and therefore is also eternal.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, in the first chapter of book 12 of *Platonic Theology*, Ficino writes about God as the source of rational principles and about the divine ray through which the mind sees them. As he explains, our minds understand the light in terms of different ideas and principles, but we can see the pure light of God—and thus all the ideas together—when we attain the state of mental purity. Such a state, however, is hardly probable in this life.<sup>52</sup> In the *Quid sit lumen*, the mind is called a ray of the divine and angelic light; in minds, the light manifests itself as an ability to reason.<sup>53</sup> The light in minds is also an abundance of life (*vita exuberans*), a certain truth and full joy.<sup>54</sup> What is more, in the *Argumentum*,

---

International Version, online, [biblica.com/bible/niv/john/1/](http://biblica.com/bible/niv/john/1/).) The same passage appears in a similar context in Ficino's *Platonic Theology* (4:24, bk. 7, ch. 1)

50. Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 702: the chapter titled "God Is Infinite Life of Lives and Light of Lights" ("Deus est infinita vitarum vita lumenque luminum"). See also Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 5:318, bk. 16, ch. 8, and 6:166, bk. 18, ch. 9.

51. Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 705: the chapter titled "Soul Sees Its Immortality When It Sees That the Ray of the Intellect Is Infused in It by God and Is Reflected Back to God" ("Anima immortalitatem suam videt, quando videt radium intelligentiae infundi sibi a Deo atque in Deum reflecti"). See also Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 3:160, bk. 10, ch. 5; 4:22, bk. 12, ch. 1; 4:32, bk. 12, ch. 3; 6:132–34 and 140–52, bk. 18, ch. 8; 6:210, bk. 18, ch. 11.

52. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 4:22, bk. 12, ch. 1.

53. Ficino, *Quid sit lumen*, 720. Similarly, in Ficino's *Compendium* (693–94) we read that there is brightness (*claritas*) in the mind which was infused into it in the beginning, i.e., at mind's creation.

54. Ficino, *Quid sit lumen*, 720. In *Platonic Theology* (3:21, bk. 9, ch. 3) souls are identified with incorporeal light, replete with all the forms. In a different passage of this work (3:52, bk. 9, ch. 4) it is explained

Ficino calls God the abyss of light, and in this context also the source of essential forms.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, the Florentine philosopher also uses the metaphor according to which our mind is a mirror of God. The mind itself sees it when the rays of understanding, placed in the mind by God Himself, reflect back to their source. As a result, we reflect God in us and are ourselves reflected in Him. This is the reason for saying that we “are made in God’s image and likeness.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, as the image of God, we truly recognize Himself when we discover that He is eternal truth itself and true eternity, and from this in turn it follows that we ourselves are immortal.<sup>57</sup>

Metaphysics of light is not the only point of reference for Agli in terms of the characteristics of the human soul and its immortal status. He also presents a number of arguments supporting the opinion that the rational soul knows what is eternal and that it desires eternity. Such a process can take place only when there is a compatibility between a thing—in this case, the soul—that knows and desires and what is known and desired.

Agli begins his main argumentation with a description of linguistic specificity, emphasizing that properly apposed words allow us to express something that always has the same meaning, even if synonyms or equivalents in other languages are used.<sup>58</sup> He also indicates that during discursive reasoning the mind connects, separates, establishes, assumes, and concludes. All these operations lead to the discovery of the eternal meaning or essence of things, in which the eternal rationality is revealed, and it turns out to be inseparable from the human soul.<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting here that this topic is also present in Ficino’s thought: namely, discursive reasoning as a special human trait distinguishing

---

that human minds receive intellectual light through angelic minds; see also 1:228, bk. 3, ch. 1; 3:174, bk. 10, ch. 7; 5:318, bk. 16, ch. 8.

55. Ficino, *Argumentum*, 236: the chapter titled “On God’s Light and on the Shadow of Matter” (“De luce Dei ac de umbra materiae”).

56. Genesis 1:27.

57. Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 705–06: the chapters titled “Mens est Dei speculum” (The mind is the mirror of God) and “Corpora sunt umbrae Dei, animae vero Dei imagines immortals” (Bodies are shadows of God, and the souls are immortal images of God). About the mind being the mirror of God, see also Ficino, *Compendium*, 693, and *Platonic Theology*, 2:290, bk. 8, ch. 5.

58. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 91ra–b.

59. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 92ra–b.

us from all other beings. On the one hand, such activity is an indispensable part of the process that leads to knowledge of unchanging forms and species. This is illustrated, for example, by a fragment from the *Compendium*, in which inference allows us to grasp the eternal essences of things.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, in *Quaestiones quinque de mente* (Five questions concerning the mind), Ficino interprets the myth of Prometheus as follows: the tortures experienced by the Titan are torments of discursive reason, which finds no relief in constant inquiry. Humans, in a state of soul-body connection, cannot reach their goal as a result of constant research and search. During the earthly life—that is, in the state of uniting the soul with the body—it is difficult to gain certain knowledge because of incessant discursive inquiries, and the most perfect way of knowing, i.e., contemplation, is hindered.<sup>61</sup>

The intellect's ability to analyze and synthesize, as well as build syllogisms, is a prelude in the *De immortalitate* to the main set of arguments for the immortality of the soul: the intellect's similarity to what it captures, which is eternal and unchanging. Agli accentuates that the rational soul, thanks to the process of abstraction carried out by the active intellect,<sup>62</sup> grasps eternal forms and principles, which are called divine because of their immutability and indestructibility.<sup>63</sup> Since they are so, the rational soul must also be eternal, for it would not be able to know them if there were no similarity and proportion between the soul and them. As Agli writes, "Something that is eternal could not be seized by a rational soul, unless the soul itself were eternal."<sup>64</sup> He further explains that the power of the human intellect stands out from other abilities

60. Ficino, *Compendium*, 697.

61. Ficino, *Quaestiones quinque de mente*, 680. On the role of this myth in Ficino's works, see Chastel, 174–75; Raggio, 54; Allen, 27–44; Robichaud, 163–69.

62. Agli does not develop the concept of the powers of the human soul, but he explicitly uses the notion *intellectus agens*. This means that he was familiar with the distinction between the active and the material intellect and that he considered these powers to belong to the individual soul, as had St. Thomas and Marsilio Ficino. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 93rb: "Animus item intelligit longitudinem, latitudinem, sublimitatem et profundum, rationem videlicet horum quattuor tenet abstrahens per intellectum agentem" (The rational soul also comprehends length, breadth, height, and depth, namely it grasps by abstraction the form of these four through the agent intellect).

63. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 93rb.

64. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 93ra: "Eternum enim quoddam est quod ab animo capi non posset nisi vel ipse eternitate praeditus esset" (For eternity is something which could not be grasped by the rational soul unless it itself had been endowed with eternity).



because it knows and contemplates perfection and beauty not only in bodies but also in non-corporeal things. The soul is also beautiful when it has moral valour.

Indeed, virtue, moral duty, what is appropriate and what is morally good—all based on divine and eternal principles—cause special and exquisite beauty to emerge in the human soul under the influence of divine flame and power. If, then, the rational soul were not divine and eternal, and if it were not adapted to receiving them by some proportion and similarity to them, it would never by any means be capable of grasping something so great, so difficult to capture, so pure, so simple.<sup>65</sup>

Again, similar arguments can be found in Ficino's works. In the *De raptu Pauli* we read that mind finds out about its eternity when it understands eternal forms and principles and relates them to God's life and understanding. This, however, is possible as long as the mind itself is immortal, capable of divine eternal life and understanding.<sup>66</sup> In the same work, the philosopher also points out that the soul could not have comprehended eternal objects if there were no proportion between it and them. However, since the soul knows them to be eternal, its own nature too must be equal to them. By contemplating, it separates what is destructible and singular from what is indestructible and universal. God makes the human soul as such in its essence and makes it equal to eternal reason (*ratio aeterna*) in both understanding and love.<sup>67</sup> In the *Argumentum*, moreover, one of the proofs of the immortality of the rational soul is its being proportional to the separable forms.<sup>68</sup> Finally, one can also read about proportion between the

65. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 93vab: "Quin etiam virtus, offitium, decorum et honestum, pulcritudinem in humano animo divino fulgore numineque conspicuam illustremque | conficiunt, que divinis eternisque constant rationibus, que animus nisi divinus esset et eternus, et ob quamdam proportionem ac similitudinem hiis capiendis aptus, haud quaquam tam magna, tam angusta, tam pura, tam simplicia capere umquam sufficeret." The same correspondence applies to the eternal divine rationality that resides in the soul of humans. Since there must be compatibility between what is in the substrate and the substrate itself, the soul is immortal. See Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 94 rb.

66. Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 702.

67. Ficino, *De raptu Pauli*, 703: the chapter titled "Immortalitas animi ex proportionem ad immortalia" (Immortality of the soul from the ratio to what is immortal).

68. Ficino, *Argumentum*, 260.

intellect and eternal forms or principles of things in *Quaestiones quinque de mente*.<sup>69</sup>

Generally, it can be said that in both *opuscula theologica* and *Platonic Theology*, Ficino widely uses arguments for the similarity of eternal objects with the most perfect part of the soul, i.e., the mind. The reference to the structure of *Platonic Theology* seems particularly important here. First, Ficino presents a metaphysical structure in which the soul takes the middle place, because God and angels (the higher spheres) are more perfect than it, while the quality and the body (the lower spheres) are less perfect. It can therefore be said that the soul is the lowest in the hierarchy of spiritual beings, and from such an ontological status it is already inferred that the soul is immortal. Moreover, this hierarchy of things sets the perspective of further arguments for such a conclusion, an important element of which is the principle of affinity. As the objects of contemplation are intelligible forms and principles, the metaphysical “kinship” between them is indispensable, so the mind has to be intelligible and incorporeal, too. Consequently, this relation is also characterized by other attributes of such objects, and they are eternal and unchanging, *ergo* the mind is also eternal and unchanging.<sup>70</sup>

Yet another important element of the argumentation for the immortality of the soul in Agli's treatise is our desire to be immortal. The author points out that life on earth is full of worries and suffering, and if it were the only life available to us, it would contradict God's goodness. God would create a human being endowed with reason in vain if, after this short life filled with misfortunes

69. Ficino, *Quinque quaestiones*, 678–80: the chapter titled “Animus optatum finem bonumque suum quandoque consequi potest” (The soul can achieve its desired end and good at some time).

70. Kristeller emphasizes the importance of the principle of affinity in the Ficinian concept of the soul's immortality (Kristeller, *Theory of Immortality*, 299–319). He writes: “(...) the most important of all the metaphysical attributes of the soul is immortality; to demonstrate it, Ficino frequently again uses the principle of affinity” (303). He also states: “This argument from affinity, which had already been emphasized by Plato in the *Phaedo*, is in Ficino one of the pillars of the whole theory of immortality” (304). Books 5–14 of *Platonic Theology* contain arguments for the immortal nature of the soul, which is a consequence of its place in the structure of the ontic reality presented in the opening parts of the work. Most of them are based on the aforementioned principle. Book 11 plays here a special role, where the author argues that the soul is immortal because of its uniting with eternal objects and its catching of pure forms and eternal principles (*species absolutas* and *rationes sempiternas*), and on the basis that the mind is the subject of eternal truth.

and problems, nothing would remain of humanity.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the soul must survive the death of the body so that people can be punished or rewarded fairly. Besides, people long for a perfect life, one in which there is no feeling of lack and one in which it is possible to know and worship God without hindrance. In fact, man wants to become a god-man. This desire was placed in him by God, and it cannot be fulfilled unless the soul is immortal, therefore it does not die.<sup>72</sup>

Once again, we find comparable considerations in some *opuscula theologica* and *Platonic Theology*. The famous first chapter of the first book of *Platonic Theology* is entitled: “Were the Soul Not Immortal, No Creature Would Be More Miserable than Man.”<sup>73</sup> The grammatical structure itself indicates a counterfactual situation, but Ficino explains in more detail the impossibility of such a *status quo*. The philosopher states that thanks to the close relation between humans and God, it is impossible for humans to be the most unhappy among creatures: God Himself is the source of their happiness.<sup>74</sup> What is more, the natural desire (*appetitus naturalis*) for immortality coming from God is immediately present in the human soul, i.e., not proceeding from any deliberation,<sup>75</sup> and such a natural desire cannot be given to the soul in vain. Thus, Ficino’s reasoning goes as follows: the mind’s pursuit of the divine is the eternal life of its own substance, since it subsists in itself, and this desire placed in the mind by God is natural, *ergo* it has to be attainable.<sup>76</sup> Finally, similarly to Agli, here Ficino also connects the desire for immortality to the deification of the soul, because when it becomes independent of the body, it gains divinity; it becomes

71. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 94va–b. This is a popular argument found in the writings of St. Bonaventure and other Franciscans.

72. Degli Agli, *De immortalitate*, 96vb.

73. Ficino, *The Platonic Theology*, 1:14, bk. 1, ch. 1. We also read in some *opuscula theologica* that here and now, i.e., when the soul remains connected with the body, our condition is miserable. Compare with Ficino, *Quinque quaestiones*, 680: the chapter titled “Immortalis animus in corpore mortali semper est miser” (The immortal rational soul is always miserable in the mortal body). See also Ficino, *Argumentum*, 250: the chapter titled “Gustus animi amaro corporis humore infectus divinorum saporem aut nullo modo aut vix et rarissime gustat” (The rational soul’s taste, tainted by the body’s bitter humor, savors either not at all or scarcely or very rarely the flavor of things divine; translation by M. J. B. Allen).

74. Ficino, *The Platonic Theology*, 1:14, bk. 1, ch. 1.

75. Ficino, *The Platonic Theology*, 4:259, bk. 14, ch. 5: “(...) will’s desire for immortality is natural because it is an instantaneous act consequent upon the pure nature of the intellect and the will.”

76. See Ficino, *The Platonic Theology*, 4:252–62.

quasi-god.<sup>77</sup> It is worth stressing that the concept of the natural desire is extensively described in *Quinque quaestiones*. The essay discusses the appetite (*appetitus*) that leads a certain nature to unite with what is appropriate for it. The soul's activity to seek God is due to the relationship between what acts and the purpose of this activity, and it also takes into account the highest good—that is, this activity is directed by God's relationship to the world. The observable order of things indicates that a thing can attain its own perfection by nature; this perfection is the good it strives for, so the soul can become godlike. In effect, its life cannot end, and this is why it is eternal.<sup>78</sup>

The juxtaposition of the arguments from the essay *De immortalitate animae* with those found in several (written or published shortly after) works by Ficino clearly shows that specific philosophical traditions and certain argumentation schemes were very popular in Ficino's milieu. Although Agli's work is quite short and his level of reasoning differs significantly from the impressive arguments of the author of *Platonic Theology*, it is an important text documenting the intellectual culture of the Quattrocento. It is reasonable to assume that this atmosphere was conducive to the question of immortality—to be taken up not only by professional philosophers but also by people with a different formation, such as churchmen and theologians. In the case of Antonio degli Agli, it is probable that his considerations on the problem of immortality were influenced by Ficino's discussions on this topic.

### Works Cited

- Allen, Michael J. B. 2011. "Prometheus among the Florentines: Marsilio Ficino on the Myth of Triadic Power." *Rinascimento* 51:27–44. dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315087597-17.
- Archivio mediceo avanti il principato. Inventario*. 1951–63. Curato da Francesca Morandini e Arnaldo d'Addario. Vols. 1–4. Roma: Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato. Online version: [archiviodistato.firenze.it/asfi/strumenti/inventari-on-line/inventari-m/mediceo-avanti-il-principato](http://archiviodistato.firenze.it/asfi/strumenti/inventari-on-line/inventari-m/mediceo-avanti-il-principato).
- Augustine. 1921. *De civitate Dei*. Edited by Bernhard Dombart. Vol. 1. Lipsiae: In aedibus B. G. Teubneri.

77. Ficino, *The Platonic Theology*, 4:224–26, bk. 14, ch. 1.

78. Ficino, *Quinque quaestiones*. On this, see Burroughs, 188–89. The Ficinian theory is discussed in detail in this regard by Kristeller (*Il pensiero*, 180–212). On this, see also Lauster, and Robichaud.

- Blum, Richard. 2007. "The Immortality of the Soul." In *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by James Hankins, 211–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burroughs, Josephine L. 1948. "Introduction." In *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, edited by Ernst Cassirer, Paul O. Kristeller, and John H. Randall, 185–92. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Celenza, Christopher. 2001. *Piety and Pythagoras in Renaissance Florence: The Symbolum Nesianum*. Leiden: Brill. dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004475878.
- Chastel, André. 1954. *Marsile Ficin et l'art*. Geneva: Droz.
- Cosenza, Mario E. 1962. *Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists and of the World of Classical Scholarship in Italy 1300–1800*. Vol. 1. Boston: G. K. Hall.
- Da Bisticci, Vespasiano. 1970. *Le vite*. Critical edition by A. Greco. Vol. 1. Florence: Istituto di Palazzo Strozzi.
- D'Addario, Antonio. 1960. "Agli Antonio." In *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, edited by Alberto M. Ghisalberti, 1:400–01. Rome: Treccani. Online version: [treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-agli\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-agli_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/).
- D'Angeli, Mariagrazia. 2006. "Nota su Antonio degli Agli." In *Il Capitolo di San Lorenzo nel quattrocento (Convegno di studi, Firenze, 28–29 marzo 2003)*, edited by Paolo Viti, 253–57. Florence: L. S. Olschki.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Dialogus de vita eiusdem auctoris*. Ms. 78. Camerino, Biblioteca Comunale Valentiniana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Epistula ad Pontificem Sixtum IV*. Vat. Lat. 1494. Stato della Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Epistola consolatoria ad Cosmum Medicem*. VIII F 9. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale; Plut. 54.10. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Epistola consolatoria ad Petrum Medicem obiti patri*. Aldini, 304. Pavia, Biblioteca Universitaria; Plut. 54.10. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Epithalamii libri I–III cum praefatione ad Paulum PP. II*. Vat. Lat. 1064. Stato della Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Explanatio in Ecclesiastem*, VIII.F.9. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale.
- Degli Agli, *Explanatio symbolorum Pythagore*. VIII.F.9. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Hystoriarum libri*. Conventi Soppressi, A.2.1737. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *De immortalitate animae*. Vat. Lat. 1494. Stato della Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Laudatio Leonardi historici*. Laur. 90 sup. 5. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Laus librorum*. Conventi Soppressi, J IX 10. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Liber iubilei*. VIII.F.9. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *De mystica statera*. VIII F 9. Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Panegyricus*. Vat. Lat. 3698. Stato della Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. 1973. "Poesie." In *Lirici toscani del Quattrocento*, edited by Antonio Lanza, 29–49. Rome: Bulzoni. Online version: Biblioteca Italiana, [bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000542](http://bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000542).
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *De rationibus fidei*. Conventi Soppressi, B.9.1268. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *Sermo de summi pontificis atque universalis consilii potestate*. A.VI.53. Siena, Biblioteca Comunale.
- Degli Agli, Antonio. *De vitis sanctorum*. Nuovi Aquisti, 399. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale; Vat. Lat. 3742. Stato della Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
- Della Torre, Arnaldo. 1902. *Storia dell'Accademia platonica di Firenze*. Florence: G. Canesecchi e figli.
- Edelheit, Amos. 2014. *Scholastic Florence: Moral Psychology in the Quattrocento*. Leiden: Brill. [dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004266285](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004266285).
- Eubel, Conrad. 1914. *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*. Monasterii: Librarie Regensbergiane.
- Festugière, Jean. 1941. *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVIe siècle*. Paris: Vrin.

- Ficin, Marsile. 1956. *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon*. Text of the autograph manuscript presented and translated by Raymod Marcel. Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres."
- Ficin, Marsile. 2002. *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon, de l'amour* (*Commenatarium in convivium Platonis, de amore*). Text compiled, translated, presented, and annotated by Pierre Laurens. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 2006. *Argumentum in Theologiam Platoniam*. In Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 6:220–75.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1576. *Compendium Platonicae Theologiae*. In Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 1:690–97. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1944. *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium*. English translation of the text preceded by the introduction by Jayne Sears Reynolds. Columbia: University of Missouri.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1576. *Opera omnia*. Vol. 1. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 2001–06. *The Platonic Theology* (*Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*). English translation by Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden; Latin text edited by James Hankins with William Bowen. Vols. 1–6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1576. *Quaestiones quinque de mente*. In Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 1:675–82. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1576. *Quid sit lumen*. In Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 1:717–20. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina.
- Ficino, Marsilio. 1576. *De raptu Pauli*. In Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 1:697–706. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina.
- Field, Arthur. 2017. *The Intellectual Struggle for Florence: Humanists and the Beginnings of the Medici Regime, 1420–1440*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Field, Arthur. 1988. *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [dx.doi.org/10.1515/9781400859764](https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400859764).
- Field, Arthur. 2002. "The Platonic Academy of Florence." In *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J. B. Allen and Valery Rees with Martin Davis, 359–76. Leiden: Brill.
- Garin, Eugenio. 1961. *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano. Ricerche e documenti*. Florence: Sansoni.

- Hankins, James. 1991. "The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence." *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (3):429–75. doi.org/10.2307/2862593.
- Kristeller, Paul O. 1965–1967. *Iter Italicum. A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and Other Libraries*. Vols. 1–2. London: Warburg Institute.
- Kristeller, Paul O. 1988. *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino*. Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere.
- Kristeller, Paul O. 1937. *Supplementum Ficinianum: Marsilii Ficini Florentini philosophi Platonici opuscula inedita et dispersa; accedunt indices codicum, editionum, operum Ficini nec non documenta quaedam et testimonia ad eundem pertinentia*. Vol. 2. Florence: Olschki.
- Kristeller, Paul O. 1940. "The Theory of Immortality in Marsilio Ficino." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (3):299–319. doi.org/10.2307/2707089.
- Laurens, Pierre. 2002. "Platonism aperiamus sententiam: la 'lectura Platonis' dans le Commentaire sur le 'Banquet'." In *Marsile Ficin Ou les Mystères Platoniciens. Actes du XLIIe Colloque International d'Etudes Humanistes, Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, 7–10 Juillet 1999*, edited by Stéphane Toussaint, 2:17–28. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Lauster, Jörg. 2002. "Marsilio Ficino as a Christian Thinker: Theological Aspects of His Platonism." In *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies, 45–69. Leiden: Brill.
- Magnard, Pierre. 2001. "Platon pour disposer au christianisme." In *Marsile Ficin: les platonismes à la Renaissance. Actes du Colloque Marsile Ficin tenu à la Sorbonne les 28 et 29 mai 1999*, edited by Pierre Magnard, 195–204. Paris: Vrin, 2001.
- Manni, Domenico M. 1772. *Osservazioni e giunte istoriche di Domenico M. Manni ... circa i sigilli antichi dei secoli bassi*. Vol. 22. Florence: appresso Giovanni Risalti.
- Marcel, Raymond. 1970. "Introduction." In *Théologie platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, by Marsilio Ficino, 3:247–61. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Mazzuchelli, Giammaria. 1753. *Gli Scrittori d'Italia*. Part 1, vol. 1. Brescia: Giambattista Bossini.
- Miglio, Massimo. 1975. *Storiografia Pontificia del Quattrocento*. Bologna: Pàtron Editore.



- Minnich, Nelson H. 1985. "The Autobiography of Antonio degli Agli (ca. 1400–1477), Humanist and Prelate." In *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, edited by Andrew Morrogh, Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi, Piero Morselli, and Eve Borsook, 1:177–91. Florence: Giunti Barbèra.
- Moreni, Domenico. 1817. *Cotinuazione delle memorie istoriche della Basilica di S. Lorenzo*. Vol. 2. Florence: Francesco Daddi.
- Nardi, Bruno. 1965. *Studi su Pietro Pomponazzi*. Florence: F. Le Monnier.
- Nogara, Bartolomeo. 1912. *Codices Vaticani Latini: Codices 1461–2059*. Vol. 3. Stato della Città del Vaticano: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis.
- Rabil, Albert, Jr. 1991. "Introduction." In *Knowledge, Goodness, and Power: The Debate over Nobility among Quattrocento Italian Humanists*, edited, translated, and with introductions by Albert Rabil, Jr., 182–94. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies.
- Raggio, Olga. 1958. "The Myth of Prometheus: Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1/2):44–62. doi.org/10.2307/750486.
- Robichaud, Denis J.-J. 2017. *Plato's Persona: Marsilio Ficino, Renaissance Humanism, and Platonic Traditions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Swogger, John. H. 1975. *Antonio degli Agli's "Explanatio Symbolorum Pythagorae": An Edition and a Study of Its Place in the Circle of Marsilio Ficino*. PhD dissertation, University of London.
- Terzi, Adrianna. 2006. "Lorenzo da Pisa." In *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Vol. 66. [treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-da-pisa\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-da-pisa_(Dizionario-Biografico)).
- Tiraboschi, Griolamo. 1807. *Storia della letteratura italiana*. Vol. 6. Florence: presso Molini, Landi, E. C.
- Webb, Diana. 1988. "Sanctity and History: Antonio degli Agli and Humanist Hagiography." In *Florence and Italy: Renaissance in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, edited by Peter Denley and Caroline Elam, 297–308. London: Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies.