Marsilio Ficino and Avicennian Psychology:
on Prophecy and Miracles

Naznin Idris Patel
School of Religious Studies
McGill University, Montreal
August 2017

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Abstract

Marsilio Ficino's *Platonic Theology* is a philosophical work whose aim is to establish the immortality of the soul. Book XIII contains an account of prophetic visions and miracles that is often compared to Avicenna's accounts found in his *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*. Indeed, Ficino's relation to Avicenna cannot be overlooked. However, the nature and scope of this relation is not well understood. I argue that a close analysis of both of their psychologies will elucidate the debt Ficino owes to Avicenna as well as Ficino's motives in doing so. A comparison of their theories reveals that Ficino's synthetic use of Avicennian ideas allows him to make a compelling case for the immortality of the soul and its divine origins. He uses prophecy and miracles in order to demonstrate the power inherent in the rational soul when it manages to transcend its body.

Résumé

La *Théologie Platonicienne* de Marcil Ficin est un texte philosophique dont le but est d'établir l'immortalité de l'âme. Le treizième livre contient une description des visions prophétiques et des miracles qui est souvent comparée aux rapports d'Avicenne d'après son *de Anima* et *La métaphysique.* Certes, la relation entre Ficin et Avicenne ne peut être ignorée. Toutefois, la nature et portée de cette relation ne sont pas bien comprises. Je soutiens qu'une analyse approfondie de la psychologie des deux penseurs élucidera la dette que Ficin a envers Avicenne, ainsi que ses intentions. Une comparaison de leurs théories révèle que Ficin se sert des idées avicenniennes de manière synthétique ce qui lui permet de formuler un raisonnement convaincant pour l'immortalité de l'âme et ses origines divines. Il se sert de la prophétie et des miracles pour démontrer le pouvoir inhérent de l'âme rationnelle quand elle parvient à transcender le corps.

Acknowledgments

I begin by thanking my supervisor Professor Torrance Kirby for his enthusiasm and support from the outset. I am especially grateful for his help during the final stages of this project. I thank the wonderful staff at the School of Religious Studies – Sami, Debbie, and Francesca – provided swift assistance whenever requested, but in addition to their administrative tasks, they were always quick to offer comfort and support. I am especially grateful to Sami for going out of her way to help me through the down times. I would like to thank Dr. Paolo Livieri for his kindness and readiness to help me with Italian translations.

My office buddies Jingjing Li, Isabel Essebag, Helena Reddington, and Jennifer Guyver proved to be wonderful company and formed a support group that I could rely on. I thank them for sharing both laughs and tears and a genuinely positive spirit. Warm thanks go to Hadi Fakhoury for his friendship and humor, and the many conversations that ensued – sometimes morbid but always enlightening.

I thank my husband Muhammad Fariduddin Attar whose guidance and feedback, as well as his support and encouragement has been invaluable. His keen knowledge of Islamic philosophy allowed me to navigate this field with a fair amount of unmerited confidence!

I am grateful to Dr. Valery Rees who has enthusiastically supported this project and given thoughtful advice whenever I sought it.

I am grateful to my family for supporting me even when they were sceptical of my academic pursuits and, of course, for trusting me with an endearing blind faith of which only they are capable.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

De Anima	Avicenna, and Simone van Riet. *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus, édition critique de la traduction latine médiévale, par S. Van Riet.* Vol. 1–2. 2 vols. Louvain: Peeters, 1968.
Hankins	Hankins, James. "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul." In *La Magia nell'Europa Moderna: Tra Antica Sapienza E Filosofia Naturale*, edited by Fabrizio Meroi and Elisabetta Scapparone, 35–52. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007.
Hasse	Hasse, Dag Nikolaus. *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*. London: Warburg Institute, 2000.
Metaphysics	Avicenna, and Michael E Marmura. *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text = Al-Ilahīyāt Min Al-Shifā'*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2004.
PT	Ficino, Marsilio, Michael JB Allen, and James Hankins. *Platonic Theology*. 6 vols. I Tatti Renaissance Library. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Introduction

Arabic and Islamic philosophy have been part of western philosophy long before the Renaissance. The idea that Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499), the great Renaissance Platonist, had been influenced by Avicenna or Ibn Sina (d. 1037), the famous Islamic philosopher and physician, is an old one. This fact had not escaped Ficino's own contemporaries and subsequent early modern thinkers. Indeed, it is safe to say that almost no one denied that Avicenna had some place in Ficino's thought. This is confirmed by Ficino himself; he makes various references to Avicenna throughout his *Platonic Theology* and *De Vita Libri Tres*. That Avicenna had a place in many Latin thinkers' philosophies is, of course, nothing unusual. Avicenna's texts were translated into Latin as early as the 11th century and Avicenna's appeal to Latin thinkers from Sicily to Paris and England to Spain can be evidenced from the works of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Jean de la Rochelle and many more.[1] In Renaissance Italy too, many thinkers such as Agostino Nifo (d. 1538) and Pietro Pomponazzi (d. 1525) drew from Avicenna's ideas.[2] Marsilio Ficino's

---

[1] See, Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300* (London: Warburg Institute, 2000); Anna Akasoy and Guido Giglioni, *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe* (Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 2013); C. J Mews and John N Crossley, *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100-1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Charles Burnett, "Arabic into Latin: The Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C Taylor (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 370–404; Charles Burnett, "Arabic Philosophical Works Translated into Latin," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina van Dyke (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[2] Hasse shows that the areas of influence were different during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. See, Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 113–36. Burnett traces the development of the second translation movement which occurred during the Renaissance. See, Charles Burnett,

case, however, is a little peculiar. This has not so much to do with Avicenna as with Ficino himself especially since Avicenna's influence only became popular in Renaissance Italy through the "second wave of translations" that began in 1496, after Ficino had already written all his major works.[3]

This Italian Renaissance thinker stands almost alone somewhere in the early pages of the history of the Platonic revival in Europe. Ficino is nearly a mythic character: magus, physician, priest, and head of the legendary Platonic Academy of Florence. His Platonism however, is not only what sets him apart. Ficino was sometimes a lone voice during his time.[4] Celenza explains that, not only his ideas, but also a series of social and political factors play into this, and, during his own lifetime, Ficino witnessed his popularity rise and fade.[5] Celenza is not alone either in suggesting that Ficino did not express his true position on various topics out of fear of persecution.[6] Whatever the case may be, it is clear that Ficino's ideas were remarkable enough to get noticed and singular enough to be praised or criticised.

There is no shortage of studies on this central figure of Renaissance Florence. He has been read and studied by the generations that immediately followed him and was in certain important ways part of the shift in European consciousness that marked the

---

"The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science, 1492-1562," in *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Anna Contadini and Charles Burnett (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1999), 185–99.

[3] Burnett, "The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science, 1492-1562."

[4] Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 100.

[5] Celenza, 100–14.

[6] See also James Hankins, "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul," in *La Magia nell'Europa Moderna: Tra Antica Sapienza E Filosofia Naturale*, ed. Fabrizio Meroi and Elisabetta Scapparone (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 35-52.

departure from medieval thinking, namely the central role of the individual within the universe, which his student Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494) is better known to have made explicit.[7] As a result of his many interests – medicine, religion, philosophy, mysticism and magic – Ficino's appeal is also just as diverse. In scholarship, he is part of two distinct yet overlapping narratives: philosophy and the occult sciences.[8] On the one hand, Paul Oskar Kristeller (d. 1999), Michael J. B. Allen, Brian Copenhaver, Charles Schmitt and James Hankins, to name only a few, place Ficino primarily in the tradition of Renaissance philosophy.[9] On the other hand, Antoine Faivre, D.P. Walker (d. 1985), Frances Yates (d. 1981) and, more recently, Wouter J. Hanegraaff have sought in various capacities to emphasize Ficino's role in the tradition of magic and his connections to

---

[7] Despite important changes that set the Renaissance apart from the Middle Ages, one cannot overlook the philosophical continuities between the two periods. Ficino himself is a prime example of this continuity. See, Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49–71. Pico's *Oration* is frequently referred to as the "Renaissance manifesto." Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*, trans. Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[8] Recent scholarship on Islamic intellectual history has been making significant efforts to understand the role of occult sciences in the Islamic intellectual tradition. See, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Introduction: De-Orienting the Study of Islamicate Occultism," *Arabica* 64, no. 3–4 (September 13, 2017): 287–95.

[9] See, Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Lanphear Conant, Columbia Studies in Philosophy 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); Brian P Copenhaver and Charles B Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1990); Michael J. B Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino: A Study of His Phaedrus Commentary, Its Sources and Genesis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Michael J. B Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies, *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002).

modern theosophy and esotericism.[10] These two narratives are not mutually exclusive and help highlight the multifaceted nature of Ficino's thought and the vast array of sources and traditions he was drawing from. Nevertheless, this very eclectic aspect of Ficino's thought has led to a long-standing convention to describe his works and theories as syncretic.[11] There are many instances in Ficino's thought that seemingly cannot be accounted for beyond the specific topic he is discussing. This also poses a problem in understanding whether he was working on developing any meaningful philosophical system. One such instance is Ficino's relationship with Avicennian philosophy.

Avicenna and Ficino

Ficino's use of Avicennian ideas had been noticed early on. The most significant critical study was published by Marian Heitzmann in 1936. In her essay on "Avicennian Augustinianism" in Marsilio Ficino's philosophy, Heitzmann argued that Ficino was indebted to Avicenna on account of his identification of the universal intellect with

[10] For Ficino's role as one of the first figures of early modern western esotericism and magic see: Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000); D. P Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Frances Amelia Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999); Wouter J Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[11] Syncretism has been used to explain disparities within Ficino's thought (as well as Pico's thought) and to account for the various ideas and sources they both attempted to reconcile. For instance see, S. A Farmer and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Introduction in *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486) : The Evolution of Traditional, Religious, and Philosophical Systems : With Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998).

God.[12] This theory of Avicennian Augustinianism was proposed by Etienne Gilson in 1929. He claimed that many well-known medieval thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, had incorporated into their philosophy and theology the Avicennian notion that illumination through the universal intellect is the same as illumination through God. In other words, God is the active intellect. Kristeller, in the *Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (1943), relies almost exclusively on Heitzmann's study when considering the Avicennian influences on Ficino although he does disagree with him on some points.[13] Eugenio Garin and D. P. Walker, who have both considered the issue also rely on Heitzmann to draw their conclusions.[14] In sum, most of the twentieth century studies on Ficino and Avicenna consider Heitzmann's conclusions as definitive. Paola Zambelli also acknowledges Heitzmann's hypothesis but does not dwell on it in her consideration of Avicenna's theory of prophecy during the Renaissance.[15]

Recent scholarship has questioned the theory of Avicennian Augustinianism with respect to Ficino, primarily because this distorts Ficino's emanative scheme.[16] Instead, a second more immediate relation between the two thinkers is brought to light and emphasized. Here, Avicenna's role in Ficino's work has been identified in relation

---

[12] Marian Heitzmann, "L'agostinismo Avicennizzante e il Punto di Partenza Della Filosofia di Marsilio Ficino," *Giornale Critico Della Filosofia Italiana* 16 (1935): 295–322. It must be noted that modern scholarship does not necessarily recognize this debt to Avicenna. See Hankins, cf. 28.

[13] Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, ix-x.

[14] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 2003, 20; Eugenio Garin, "Phantasia e Immaginatio fra Marsilio Ficino e Pietro Pomponazzi," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana.* 5, no. 3 (1985): 349–61.

[15] Paola Zambelli, *Astrology and Magic from the Medieval Latin and Islamic World to Renaissance Europe: Theories and Approaches* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2012), 23.

[16] Hankins, cf. 28.

to the occult sciences. In a recent study on the Arabic influence on Renaissance and early modern occult philosophy, Liana Saif argues that Ficino (and other thinkers too) relied on Latin translations of Arabic astronomical and astrological treatises for some of their magical theories.[17] Soleymani identifies the salient features of Ficino's theory on prophecy and miracles with Avicenna's, illustrating that Ficino sometimes borrows Avicenna's ideas verbatim.[18] These two studies however make no attempt to situate these borrowings within Ficino's system at large. Hankins explores these similarities from a different angle by focusing on Ficino's conception of the soul more broadly, concluding that there are strong grounds for supposing that not only Ficino's theory of prophecies and miracles, but his theory of the soul might have a lot more in common with Avicenna than previously thought. In Hankins's study, an attempt is made to restore the older idea that part of Ficino's psychology and metaphysics is indebted to Avicenna while staying clear of the now outdated theory of Avicennian Augustinianism. It is the goal of this present work to explore Hankins's proposition more extensively.

The topic of magic often comes up when studying Ficino in relation to the Arabs. The most prominent field of influence is astrology and associated areas. And the most important text for these studies is Ficino's *Three Books on Life* (*De Vita Libri Tres*). Hankins points out the main problem with this approach, that of relying too heavily on *De Vita*, is that it fails to capture Ficino's broader philosophical vision, especially since

---

[17] Liana Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, 2015.
[18] Masoumeh Soleymani Chaharfarsakhi, "Avicenna and Ficino on Divine Prophets," *Accademia: revue de la Société Marsile Ficin* 13 (2012): 23–43.

De Vita does not pose itself as a metaphysical work but rather as a kind of handbook for good living.[19] This approach does address issues pertaining to the occult sciences but even here it fails to reveal the "more ambitious strain" in Ficino's magical theories.[20] Hankins aims to correct this by setting out to examine Ficino's *Platonic Theology* in which, he claims, the theories for *De Vita* are laid.[21] By doing so, Hankins accepts the possibility that Ficino's magical ideas go beyond astrology and healing and that they stem directly from his psychology. He looks specifically at the influence of Avicenna on Ficino's prophetology. He concludes that Ficino's theory on prophecy can be described as "transitive soul-magic," that it is rooted in a more ambitious project which aims to bring out the powers of the rational soul.[22] The main objective of Hankins's study is to show that in the *Platonic Theology* (and in the *Laws*):

> [W]e find a theory of magic derived primarily from Avicenna that emphasizes the extraordinary power over nature that can be exercised by the highest power of the human soul, the *animus* or rational soul, both within one's own body and upon other bodies and indeed upon the whole body of nature. Using this more ambitious mental (or angelic) magic the human soul can exploit occult correspondences in the cosmos to cause paranormal phenomena such as telepathy, levitation, prophecy, sorcery, and miracles.[23]

In the present study, I take up this conclusion and examine it further through the *Platonic Theology* as well. But Hankins's study remains preliminary because he does not examine Avicenna's own texts closely enough to draw his final conclusion that

---

[19] Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life - De Vita Libri Tres*, trans. Carol V Kaske and John R Clark (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989), 3–4.
[20] Hankins, "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul," 2007, 37.
[21] Hankins, 37.
[22] Hankins, 37.
[23] Hankins, 36.

Avicenna was Ficino's primary source for the theory of the powerful soul. I address this lacuna by examining the psychologies of Ficino as laid out in the *Platonic Theology* and making comparisons with Avicenna. The *Platonic Theology* is a large work consisting of eighteen books whose main purpose is to establish the immortality and divine origins of the rational soul.[24] Book XIII of the work discusses prophecies and miracles in relation to these two issues. The purpose of this essay, then, is to investigate the affinity of Ficino's description of prophecy and miracle to Avicenna's through the framework of their theoretical psychologies. Hankins is careful to note that Avicenna's influence in this regard is on a general level only. What he wishes to emphasize is that Ficino's theory of the powerful soul relies not only on the faculty of imagination but also on will power and the intuitive intellect just as is the case with Avicenna: "[M]odern students of Avicenna have emphasized that the Arabic philosopher's theory of the occult powers of the prophetic soul is based not only on the soul's power of imagination, but also on its powers of will and intuitive intellect. This makes it all the more remarkable that modern scholarship has practically ignored this more ambitious strain in Ficino's magical theory."[25] However, what remains unclear is Hankins's claim that Avicenna is the "primary" source for these ideas while also acknowledging the deeply Neoplatonic character of Ficino's work. The question that arises from this conclusion is whether Ficino follows Avicenna on these topics because he considers the Avicennian

---

[24] Marsilio Ficino, Michael JB Allen, and James Hankins, *Platonic Theology, Volume 1: Books I-IV*, vol. 1, 6 vols., I Tatti Renaissance Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), Book 1.

[25] By "modern students of Avicenna" Hankins in this paper is referring to Dag Hasse and Dimitri Gutas in particular. Hankins, 37.

explanations the most convincing, or because Ficino's own theoretical psychology leads to an Avicennian culmination. If the former is true then Ficino's psychology will be unable to accommodate the Avicennian theories in question without hiccups. The latter case on the other hand, suggests that Ficino is aware of the implications of Avicenna's theories at a much deeper level; they would affect his psychological and ontological schemes at their bases.

The first chapter outlines the common features that are typically mentioned in scholarship between Avicenna and Ficino as well as introduces the basic structure of Avicenna's theories of prophecy and miracles. Chapter two turns to Ficino's theory of prophecy and visions as laid out in the *Platonic Theology* and attempts to place it within his psychology. It also outlines Ficino and Avicenna's structure of the soul in detail, bringing out the similarities and disparities between them. The final chapter explores both thinkers' thaumaturgy in relation to their psychologies and argues that it is here that Ficino departs most significantly from Avicenna's original ideas. Avicenna writes on these topics in a few of his works, especially in his later treatise *Ishārāt wa-Tanbīhāt* (*Pointers and Reminders*), however, Ficino only had access to his *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*.[26] I will therefore limit myself to these to works of Avicenna as well.

[26] Ficino also had access to Avicenna's medical work *The Canon of Medicine*, however it does not bear any immediate relation to the topic at hand. Refer to the conclusion for additional remarks. For Avicenna's theory of miracles see mainly, *De Anima*, IV,4 and *Metaphysics* X.2.

Avicenna and the Occult Sciences

There is a disparity between the Avicenna of Renaissance scholarship and that of Islamic philosophy. Hankins nonchalantly uses terms such as "transitive soul-magic" and "occult powers" to describe both Ficino and Avicenna's principles that the soul has the ability to affect other bodies and the existence of non-material causation. When delving into an analysis of these ideas, we must find adequate equivalents in Avicennian vocabulary in order to draw meaningful comparisons. However, such equivalent terms are lacking. While Avicenna does have a theory of thaumaturgy, scholarship hardly ever refers to it as magic.[27] For instance, Hasse refers to it as the theory of non-material causation or simply, his theory on miracles.[28] The omission of the term magic is important because its presence or absence subtly hints at the philosophical character scholars' – both past and present – imprint on these thinkers. So, while it may be that Avicennian thaumaturgy was seen as magic in Renaissance Europe, it was simply accepted as a naturalistic explanation for seemingly supernatural phenomena in Islamic philosophy. Hence, another question follows: if Ficino's "transitive soul-magic" is derived from Avicenna's naturalistic terms, what is it that imparts to it the magical character? Hankins himself believes that D.P. Walker, in his well-known work *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* (1958), had erred in describing Ficino's prophetology as natural philosophy.[29] Hankins's main argument is that natural

---

[27] I refer primarily to English scholarship on Avicenna within the field of Islamic Studies. Reference to Avicenna within Renaissance studies, in contrast, makes use of a 'magical' vocabulary quite flexibly.
[28] See, Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism," 121-124; Hasse, *Avicenna's* De Anima, 170-183.
[29] Hankins, 35–36.

philosophy cannot explain non-material causation and therefore the relationship lies elsewhere, namely in their psychologies. However, whether Ficino's prophetology and thaumaturgy can be described as magic is something that can only be answered by deciding how we want to qualify Ficino's ideas and not necessarily by the actual meaning the term magic ought to carry. Besides, the question of magic is irrelevant to the immediate topic which seeks only to establish and understand the role of visions and miracles in Ficino's "Platonic" theology and Avicenna's role in the explication of those phenomena. Nevertheless, the problem of terminology is important to be aware of as a reminder that in subtle ways it influences the portrait of our subjects and how we read them by calling attention to the contrast that exists between the Renaissance Avicenna who is often associated with magic and occult sciences and the Avicenna of Islamic philosophy, the latter having almost no associations with such themes.[30]

[30] Charles Burnett identifies a pseudo-Avicennian work called *Magical Practices* about *niranj*, a "magical practice which includes the mixing and processing of ingredients, the recitation of magical words, the burning of incense, and the making of figurines, in order to manipulate spiritual forces." However, even if Ficino had access to this work it does not have any bearing on his use of Avicennian philosophy in the *Platonic Theology* which draws primarily from Avicenna's *De Anima* and occasionally from his *Metaphysics*. See, Charles Burnett, "Niranj: A Category of Magic (Almost) Forgotten in the Latin West," *Natura, Scienze E Società Medievali*, 2008, 37–66.

Chapter 1: The Prophet and the Philosopher

One of Ficino's most controversial ideas was intimately related to Avicenna, namely that the soul is so extraordinarily powerful that it can affect physical matter without even making any contact with it. The soul is so mighty, being of the same substance as the heavens, that it has the potential to surpass even the abilities of the heavens. The idea is not new and its source is familiar. Among scholastics and Aristotelians beginning in the 12th century, this was one of the less favorite doctrines of Avicenna. Ficino's knowledge of it is therefore not unusual; his acceptance, however, left many of his readers rather distraught.[31] Others thought that Avicenna's theory of non-material causation was best left ignored.[32] It was known among Renaissance and early modern thinkers that Ficino's magical theories were identifiable with Avicenna's theory of prophecy and "soul-magic."[33] Despite this, many scholars have tended to overlook this connection. The main reason for this is that Avicenna's philosophical writings especially

---

[31] D. P. Walker gives the example of Thomas Erastus (d. 1583), a Swiss physician and theologian, who attacks Ficino of impiety on account of this doctrine. See, Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 156-166.

[32] Hasse notes that this doctrine of Avicenna was unpopular among medieval Europeans and many chose to overlook it rather than engage with it compared to his other ideas. See, Hasse, 165-174.

[33] James Hankins, "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul," in *La Magia nell'Europa Moderna: Tra Antica Sapienza E Filosofia Naturale*, ed. Fabrizio Meroi and Elisabetta Scapparone, Atti Del Convegno (Firenze, 2-4 Ottobre 2003, Istituto Nazionale Di Studi Sul Rinascimento) (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 37; Paola Zambelli, "L'immaginazione e il suo potere : Da al-Kindī, al Fārābī e Avicenna al Medioevo latino e al Rinascimento," in *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg, and Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 188–206; Garin, "Phantasia e Immaginatio fra Marsilio Ficino e Pietro Pomponazzi, "349-361.

are generally not very well known to Renaissance and early modern scholars.[34] Besides this, Avicenna's treatment of occult subjects is less substantial than Ficino's, but not less inconsequential. This may partly be due to the fact that Ficino takes his theories in the occult sciences several steps ahead of Avicenna and thus, the final product, it would seem, has little in common with Avicenna's own magic. For instance, the celestial souls occupy a much more central role in their effects on the temperament for Ficino than they do for Avicenna. Most notably, Klibansky highlights the prominent role of Saturn in Ficino's theory on temperaments and dispositions.[35] This theory of strong astral influences is likely taken from other thinkers such as Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhi, and works such as Maslama al-Qurtubi's *Picatrix* and al-Kindi's *De Radiis*.[36] Avicennian influences, on the other hand, are most immediately noticeable in Ficino's treatment of prophecy and miracles.

1.1 The Prophet and the 'sacred faculty'

Let us begin with the most obvious and salient philosophical features that Ficino and Avicenna share. Ficino's theories of prophecy and miracles are strikingly similar to

---

[34] That Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* was an integral part of European medical curriculum is common knowledge. Furthermore, the lack of access to translated editions of Avicenna's philosophical writings makes research in this area without knowledge of Arabic difficult. Critical editions of the Latin Avicennian corpus by Simone van Riet have been unsuccessful in garnering interest in this area until quite recently. Most notable among these recent scholars are Nikolaus Dag Hasse and Stéphane Toussaint.

[35] See, Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (Nendeln/Liechstein: Kraus, 1979), 254–74.

[36] See, Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, 2015; Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, F Hudry, and Yaqqub ibn Ishaq Abu Yusuf al-Kindi, *Al-Kindi: "De radiis* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1975); David Edwin Pingree, *Picatrix: the Latin version of the Ghāyat al-hakīm* (London: Warbarg Institute, 1986).

Avicenna's not only in terms of contents but in their articulations as well. Central to some condemnations of Ficino was his acceptance of Avicenna's articulation of the principle of non-material causation.[37] The most blatant ramifications of this principle are manifested through their accounts of prophecy and miracles. It must be noted that the theory of prophethood and prophecy in both thinkers can be approached from two angles, exoteric and esoteric. By exoteric I mean simply the societal, communal, and political consequences of the esoteric cause, i.e. the psychological and metaphysical. These two aspects of prophecy do not appear together in either thinker. Concerning the exoteric aspect, Ficino designates the prophet as the most legitimate ruler for humankind because he receives the divine laws.

> [I]n order to stay together in turn, [the people of the community] absolutely must have a law, a law whose authority is such that no man is confident that he has the power or right to violate it by violence or deceit. But the law cannot be such unless the lawgiver is, and is thought to be, divine. But to be and to be deemed divine, he must be sent to men by divine providence accompanied by certain manifest miracles. […] That God sends prophets in certain ages to perform this office we can demonstrate with an argument from Avicenna.[38]

The argument Ficino present is from book X of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*. Chapter two deals with the "proof of prophecy," Avicenna writes:

> [W]ith respect to the survival and actual existence of the human species, the need for this person [i.e. divine lawgiver] is greater than the need for such benefits as the growing of hair on the eyebrows, […], that are not necessary for survival but are, at best, useful for it. [Now,] the existence of the righteous man to legislate and to dispense justice is possible […]. It becomes impossible, therefore, that divine providence should ordain the existence of those [former] benefits and not these [latter], which are their bases. […] He must also possess a special characteristic not present in other people so that people would recognize in him

[37] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 159, 162.
[38] *PT* IV, 14.9.3.

> something which they do not have, whereby he is differentiated from then. Therefore, he will perform the miracles about which we have been informed.[39]

Ficino's explanation for prophethood mirrors Avicenna's. One thing immediately apparent is that neither provides a psychological cause for prophethood in these passages; rather the reason for prophecy is primarily a teleological necessity of divine Providence. While they mention that the prophet should be able to perform miracles, these passages do not address the conditions for becoming a prophet, that is, the psychological traits that make one person more suitable for prophecy than another. These conditions are found elsewhere, and they are linked to Avicenna's theory of soul and emanation.[40] Avicenna distinguishes three (or four) types or levels of prophecy.[41] Three are discussed in the *De Anima* and the last one in the *Metaphysics*: the first is associated with the imaginative faculty (Ar. *qūwa mutakhayyila*, Lat. *virtus imaginativa*), the second with the motive faculties, and the third with the intellect.[42] The fourth type is the socio-political one, quoted above.

---

[39] Avicenna and Michael E Marmura, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text = Al-Ilahīyāt Min Al-Shifā'* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2004), X.2. Avicenna's distinction between survival and benefits goes back to ancient and late-antique Greek distinction between "being" (*to einai*) and "well-being" (*to eu einai*), see Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Cornell University Press, 2003), 72–74.

[40] Michael E Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1 (1963): 49.

[41] Hasse, 154. Hasse does not include the socio-political level of prophecy cited at the start of this section. He argues that it is "only loosely connected with the teachings on prophecy in *De Anima*, which form a relatively coherent theory." Rahman does include it. Marmura (1963) only includes the imaginative and intellectual levels, overlooking the motive faculty. See Fazlur Rahman, "Ibn Sina," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy. With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands.*, ed. Mian Mohammad Sharif (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963), 498; Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," 1963, 51.

[42] Hasse, 154. For the discussion on the first three levels of prophecy, I am relying largely on Hasse.

In *De Anima* IV.2, Avicenna describes the first level of prophecy: the imaginative faculty "separates and combines sense-data, which it retrieves from their storing place," that is, from the imagination (Ar. *khayāl*).[43] The rational soul can disrupt this function "either by occupying imagination with the storing of sense data or by a direct order not to produce anything unreal."[44] These possible disruptions are removed during sleep (or by swoon and in those with a tempered complexion (temperamental balance)) when it becomes possible to have visions.[45] The condition for having a vision, besides a powerful soul, is establishing "a connection between the divine realm, the soul and the imaginative faculty."[46] More specifically, the prophet is able to receive images from the celestial souls.[47] The imaginative faculty (*virtus imaginativa*) is different from the faculty of imagination (or simply, *imaginatio*).

The imagination (*imaginatio*) is tasked with the storing of sense data received from common sense.[48] The imaginative faculty (*virtus imaginativa*), also called the cogitative faculty, properly 'imagines' (Ar. *takhayyul*), that is, it is concerned with the "combination and separation of sense data and connotational attributes."[49] The Latin readers of *De Anima* were not always aware of this distinction. The terms *khayāl*

---

[43] Hasse, 154.
[44] Hasse, 154.
[45] Hankins, 47; Hasse, 154; Avicenna, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus, édition critique de la traduction latine médiévale* (Louvain: Peeters, 1968). By "tempered complexion" Avicenna means a perfect balance of the four humors in the body.
[46] Hasse, 155; *De Anima*, IV,2.
[47] Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," 1963, 51.
[48] *De Anima*, I.5, IV.4; Hasse, 157.
[49] Hasse, 157.

(imagination) and *takhayyal* (imagining) were both translated in Latin as *imaginatio*.[50] Hence, Latin readers had no way of distinguishing "imagining" as the activity of the imaginative faculty from the separate faculty of imagination whose task is to store sense data.

The second level of prophecy comes about through the motive faculty. It is this faculty that allows for the performances of 'miracles'. The soul is able to "produce a change of temperament in the elements of its own body […] because of the origin of the soul from higher principles."[51] As such it is also possible that the soul "effects these changes without any physical contact" through "[s]heer will power" on other bodies as well.[52] A corrupt soul can cause harms such as the Evil Eye while a noble soul, depending on its power, can have "matter throughout the world obey it."[53] Such a soul can "heal the sick, make evil persons ill, turn something into fire or earth, produce rain and fertile seasons."[54]

The third level of prophecy relates to the intellect and to how the rational soul acquires knowledge. Individuals have different capacities to gain knowledge because they differ in their ability to make contact with the active intellect. For Avicenna, knowledge implies the acquisition of the middle term in a syllogism.[55] The ability to

---

[50] Avicenna and Simone van Riet, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus, édition critique de la traduction latine médiévale, par S. Van Riet.*, vol. 2 (Louvain: Peeters, 1968), 232.
[51] Hasse, 155.
[52] Hasse, 155.
[53] Hasse, 155.
[54] Hasse, 155.
[55] Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), 160; Dimitri Gutas, "Intuition and

correctly identify the middle term comes about through instruction or intuition. Those with an especially strong disposition for intuition have no need for instruction and it "seems as if they know everything of themselves."[56] In addition, a very high degree of intuition implies that the individual is able to obtain the middle term and all forms without thinking and in as little time as possible, that is instantaneously. This Avicenna calls having Acuman (*dhakā'*).[57] This is the highest level:

> [K]eenness of mind and contact with the universal intellect may so predispose the rational faculty as to free it from having recourse to syllogisms and reasoning in order to acquire knowledge; inspiration and revelation, rather, are sufficient sustenance for it. This specific property of the rational faculty is called sanctification, in accordance with which it is then called the sanctified spirit. None shall gain the enjoyment of this rank except prophets and messengers of God.[58]

Furthermore,

> In this state the material intellect ought to be called "sacred intellect," since it partakes of the genus of intellect *in habitu*, except that it is so lofty that it is not something shared by all people. It is not unlikely that some of these acts pertaining to the sacred spirit because of their powerful and overwhelming nature deluge the imagination which then produces them in terms of perceptible and audible linguistic images in the way in which we have previously indicated.[59]

The prophet is, therefore, according to Avicenna, distinguished by his capacity to have visions, affect matter through sheer will power, and through his highly developed intuitive abilities. Avicenna does not say that the prophet must possess all three kinds

---

Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, ed. Robert Wisnovsky (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Pub., 2001), 3.

[56] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*., 161; Avicenna, *De Anima*, 248.9-250.5.

[57] Hasse, *Avicenna's* De Anima, 155. Gutas, "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," 3.

[58] Avicenna, *Compendium on the Soul* in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 161.

[59] Avicenna, *The Salvation*, translation is from Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 161.

of prophecy,[60] but based on the above it appears that the sacred intellect is a necessary prerequisite. As for the socio-political aspect of prophecy, which is the knowledge of the divine laws, it seems that it can only be possible through the third kind of prophecy. In order effectively to guide a community, the prophet must possess the sacred intellect, i.e. he must be able to receive knowledge through inspiration and revelation. The first three kinds of prophecy do not make the existence of a prophet necessary but merely possible. The proof of the necessity of a prophet is based on the socio-political proof quoted previously. Finally, according to Avicenna, the prophet is the 'philosopher king' in the truest sense; the prophet is an individual who has attained wisdom through inspiration and, ultimately, is qualified to act as the divine law-bearer.

The philosophers are the inheritors of the prophets in the sense that they are capable of understanding what the prophets know by intuition.[61] Unlike the prophet who is capable to exercise sheer will power and access the intelligibles instantaneously and intuitively, by receiving direct emanations from the heavens, the philosopher needs an additional step to process these emanations. Nevertheless, an exceptional philosopher (and Avicenna gives his own example) has a very strong intuition such that he needs little instruction.[62] The other two aspects, visions and miracles (on a visible

---

[60] Hasse, 157.
[61] Philosopher refers to those able to use their intellect to obtain knowledge of universals. See chapter 2.
[62] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 159. A strong intuition might still take time to intuit the middle term. Time is irrelevant to intuition generally but Avicenna identifies a sub-category of intuition called acumen (*dhakā'*). To possess Acumen means having the ability to intuit in no time, or instantaneously. See, Gutas, "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," 3.

scale at least) are lacking in the philosopher. The philosophers also have the task to elucidate what the prophets, God's lawgivers, bring as laws and wisdom in naturalistic terms. Avicenna clearly states that the prophet, when commanding his people, should not teach them things beyond basic notions of theology and salvation lest they fall into confusion.[63] In any case, the fundamental difference between the philosopher and the prophet pertains primarily to knowledge obtained through intuition or intellection. On a final note, it is sufficiently clear that underlying Avicenna's and Ficino's theories on prophecy is a theory of emanation and the soul, which encompasses their theories on non-material causation. How Ficino makes use of these Avicennian doctrines in his own theory of prophecy and his occult philosophy will be explored through the structure of his psychological and emanative schemes.

1.2 Ficino's debt to Avicenna

The term 'magic' is not particularly helpful in this type of comparative study; Ficino's and Avicenna's respective accounts of magic do not align very well, each having different notions of what we might include in such an ambiguous term. Besides, this can be further justified by adding that most scholars of Avicenna are hesitant to ascribe any theory of 'magic' to the Islamic philosopher. Part of the worry is that this may theurgize Avicenna much more than is warranted. It is important to keep sight of the fact that Avicenna tries to give a naturalistic account as much as possible and identifies himself strongly with the Aristotelian tradition.[64] Ficino, in contrast, ascribes himself as

---

[63] *Metaphysics*, X.2.

[64] Wisnovsky places Avicenna within a continuous tradition of Peripatetic commentaries while also accounting for the Neoplatonic ideas that Avicenna inherited. Hence, Avicenna is an inheritor of Wisnovsky identifies as the "Ammonian Synthesis," which consisted in an

a Platonist. Openness to this fact might perhaps be useful in relation to Ficino because he might not only be attracted by Avicenna's Neoplatonic ideas only. If this is the case, it might help us situate Avicenna within Ficino's work beyond the few instances wherein the former's name appears.

Identifying Avicenna's influence on Ficino based on their shared Neoplatonic tendencies is especially unfair to the former. Three major problems have arisen from this approach; first, Ficino's reading of Avicenna's prophetology has been hastily associated with Plato's theory found in the *Protagoras*; secondly, Ficino's broader theory of the soul has been given little attention in the role it plays in his doctrine of prophecy[65]; and finally, as a result, Avicenna's influence on Ficino's theory of the soul has likewise received little attention. Ficino is perhaps somewhat to blame, for he explicitly draws attention to the notion of a 'divine ruler for mankind' in *Protagoras* and Avicenna's *Metaphysics*. However, what goes unaccounted is the elaborate system that Ficino devises to make possible the existence of such an accomplished individual, and the same is true for Avicenna. This leads to the second problem and the solution is not simply that he has a Neoplatonic understanding of emanation as Walker concludes.[66] Hankins stresses that Ficino and Avicenna's magical theories are more aptly described

---

active effort to reconcile Aristotle with Neoplatonism. Wisnovsky traces the philosophical history of the relation of soul and body as well as the relation of God to the world and identifies Avicenna's central role in its development. See Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*.

[65] Hankins, 37.

[66] D. P Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic* Magic, 75–76; Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, 98.

as 'transitive soul-magic' or 'mental (or angelic) magic'.[67] This, he argues, has also led modern scholarship to underestimate the "ambitious strain in Ficino's magical theory."[68] Hankins is also correct in drawing attention to Ficino's *Platonic Theology* and away from *De Vita* in order to understand the true scope and complexity underlying Ficino's magic.[69]

Unlike *De Vita*, which engages directly with magical healing and well-being, the *Platonic Theology* can be said to lay down the theory for the practice of such magic, which only makes up a part of a larger philosophical system. An identifiably "magical" language is lacking in the *Platonic Theology* since this is principally a philosophical work and its primary focus is on the nature and the abilities of the soul and its place in and in relation to the cosmos. But this 'non-magical' approach is precisely what brings Ficino closer to Avicenna. Ficino, like Avicenna, might consider magic as nothing more than an extension of natural philosophy. As Garin observes, for Ficino "the order of the natural world is not changed at all when the imagination performs miracles."[70] It may be this that led Walker to describe Ficino's magic as "natural (or spiritual) magic."[71] How then to reconcile this aspect of Ficino's magic with Hankins's claim that it is a "mental (or angelic) magic"?

Hankins's main contention deals with the fact that Ficino's contemporaries knew

---

[67] Hankins, 36–37.
[68] Hankins, 37.
[69] Hankins, 36.
[70] Garin, "Phantasia e Immaginatio fra Marsilio Ficino e Pietro Pomponazzi," 356.
[71] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 149.

his magic was derived from Avicenna, hence it could not have escaped Ficino that the former's "theory of the occult powers of the prophetic soul is based not only on the soul's power of imagination, but also on its powers of will and intuitive intellect."[72] The place of will power and intuition, especially the latter, is central in Avicenna's theory of prophecy as we shall see.[73] If, as Ficino's contemporaries understood, the Florentine based his magic on Avicenna's, the role of will-power and intuition must be accounted for along with that of the imagination. Because he ignores that Avicenna could have any significant role to play, Walker wrongly concludes that Ficino's magic is naturalistic more than anything else by putting all the emphasis on the Neoplatonized understanding of imagination alone. According to Saif, by treating this "ability of the soul to interpret codes of resemblances as the nexus of early modern occult philosophy and the base of magical theory," Walker achieves only a "reductionist Neoplatonic reading" of Ficino's magic.[74] So how is one to account for the other aspects of Avicenna's occult philosophy in Ficino? Ficino borrows from Avicenna more so than he acknowledges. Again, Hankins hypothesizes that this may be because Ficino feared being persecuted for heterodoxy.[75] Yet, even Walker knew that Thomas Erastus (d. 1583) had called out Ficino as a follower of Avicenna because he had "attributed the powers of prophecy and miracle-working, possessed by certain noble souls, to the

---

[72] Hankins, 37; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*.
[73] Hasse, 154.
[74] Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, 97.
[75] Hankins, 52. Hankins is not alone in thinking that Ficino censored some of his ideas out of fear of persecution. See also Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism"; Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*.

influence of the Intelligences which move the heavenly bodies."[76]

While more recent scholarship has not missed the connection between Avicenna and Ficino's theories of prophecy, a satisfactory investigation is nonetheless still wanting. The possible implications of these two differing views of Ficino's theory of magic are rather significant. On the one hand, Walker's 'natural magic' is much more Neoplatonic and also reinforces the notion of a 'syncretic' philosophy similar to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's because it omits certain key relationships that link Ficino's occult philosophy to his broader philosophical system.[77] On the other hand, Hankins's brief study opens up the possibility of viewing Ficino in a slightly more Aristotelian light consistent with his dependence upon Avicenna.[78]

---

[76] See fn. 31. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 162.
[77] The description of Ficino's philosophy as being syncretic can still be found in modern scholarship, see Liana Saif. The implications of characterising it as 'syncretic' rather than 'synthetic' will be discussed in the conclusion.
[78] Recent scholarship attempts to place a greater emphasis on the role of Peripatetic thought in Ficino's philosophy. See for instance Liana Saif, cf. n. 22.

Chapter 2: Prophecy and the Rational Soul

Ficino's theory of prophecy, as we have seen, takes into account a living and animated Platonic cosmology. It is this aspect of the cosmos that makes prophetic miracles possible. Two themes that stem from this cosmology are the questions of causality and psychology. Rutkin appears to be correct in pointing out that too strong an emphasis on Ficino's use of Platonic, Neoplatonic and Hermetic texts has resulted in a tendency to "focus almost exclusively on the metaphysical dimension of Ficino's magic over the physical."[79] This, among other things, has led to a "significant underappreciation of the medieval Arabo-Latin traditions in astrology, magic and natural knowledge on which Ficino also drew."[80] If we accept this, then we must turn our attention beyond the metaphysics of prophecy in both Ficino and Avicenna towards the inclusion of the physics and metaphysics of causality and psychology as aspects of the natural knowledge Rutkin is referring to. As noted in the previous chapter, one of the contentions medieval thinkers held with regard to Avicenna concerned his support of non-material causation. According to Hasse, the main reason the medievals rejected Avicenna's theory was owing to its non-Aristotelian nature, the Aristotelian principle being: "there is no causation between things separated without any mediation."[81] Combining this with the fact that Avicenna worked largely within a peripatetic

---

[79] H. Darrel Rutkin, "The Physics and Metaphysics of Talismans (Imagines Astronomicae) in Marsilio Ficino's De vita libri tres: A Case Study in (Neo)Platonism, Aristotelianism and the Esoteric Tradition," in *Platonismus und Esoterik in byzantinischem Mittelalter und italienischer Renaissance*, ed. Helmut Seng (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013), 149.
[80] Rutkin, 149.
[81] Hasse, 170.

framework leads us to ask how Avicenna developed this theory within his own peripatetic system and why Ficino found it reasonable to welcome it into his own philosophy.

One of the aims here is to highlight the possibility of reading Ficino in light of Avicenna. This is useful because it can help us examine the topic in a more systematic manner. Avicenna's psychology includes a well-developed theory of prophecy and miracles.[82] It is not easy to make such a claim in Ficino's case, not because he has no such psychology, but because systematic studies of his theory of the rational soul in connection to his prophetology have only just begun. For instance, while Kristeller provides a useful overview of Ficino's doctrine of prophecy, he does not explain Ficino's possible sources for his psychology apart from Plotinus primarily, even though he is aware of the presence of Avicenna in the Florentine's work in relation to miracles and prophecy.[83] Hankins on the other hand illustrates, through a study of Ficino's prophetology, the possibility of Avicennian influence of the development of his psychology.

This chapter, therefore, describes and highlights salient features of Ficino's theory of the rational soul before proceeding to examine his prophetology in more detail. This is warranted not only because of its necessity in the comparative study of

---

[82] See, Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal, "De la multiplicité des modes de la prophétie chez Ibn Sīnā," in *Etudes sur Avicenne*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Rushdī Rāshid (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1984), 125–42.

[83] Specifically, teleological prophethood. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, 342–46.

Ficino and Avicenna's prophetologies; but more importantly, Ficino's theory is intimately related to his psychology because he attributes great capabilities to the various faculties of the soul.

Ficino's theory of prophecy, as we have seen, appears to have easily identifiable debts to Avicenna. This is what, for many scholars, prompts a connection between the two thinkers in the first place. Nevertheless, to appreciate the relation between Ficino's prophetology and Avicennian philosophy, it is more rewarding to look beyond mere similarities and first consider Ficino's theories on their own. The largest discussion on prophecy occurs in Book XIII of the *Platonic Theology* and proceeds in two steps. The first describes the framework for a coherent theory of prophecy and the second describes the instances in which prophecy can occur.

In the second chapter of Book XIII, Ficino sets out to prove that the soul is immortal because of the "signs" (*signis*) it exhibits. The signs here can be gauged from the effects of reason (*ab effectibus rationis*).[84] In other words, Ficino attempts to showcase the abilities of the rational soul (*anima rationalis*). In this context, reason can be used by four types of people, philosophers, poets, priests, and prophets. These four groups of people highlight different capacities of the rational soul. Briefly, the philosophers display certain abilities of the soul by way of their contemplation, namely, the abstraction of the soul from the body, the reception of celestial influences with fewer impediments, and the changing of corporeal habits instantly.[85] Through their songs,

---

[84] *PT* IV, 13.2.1.
[85] *PT* IV, 13.2.2-4.

poets display knowledge and skill that can only be accomplished through the aid of something beyond an education in art or even rhetoric. This state is achieved only when the poet is "taken up by divine frenzy."[86] As for the priests, these individuals seem to be the most accomplished in their ability to abstract from the body and can do so for much longer periods. They are able to get access to spiritual teachings directly from the heavens and are "steeped in the highest mysteries."[87] This allows them to be the truly perfect ones. They are often considered mad because they are filled by God.[88] Theologians, shamans, and specifically religious mystics fall into this category. Finally, the prophets, as the name implies, are able to foretell the future, near and far.

Ficino reserves the longest discussion for prophecy whereas the three previous categories of people are discussed within a few paragraphs only. In all four cases, Ficino is clear that the soul needs to transcend the body. Only then can reason truly exhibit its powers. The extent of this power is ultimately what signals the divine origins, and hence immortal nature, of the rational soul. Fundamentally, in order to prophesy, the soul must have access to so-called 'hidden' knowledge. But before Ficino can explain prophecy and its kinds, he must explain why and how prophecies are possible in the order of things in the first place.

In the first section therefore, Ficino wants to explain the freedom of reason and the types of prophecies it can receive or experience. This allows Ficino to identify the

---

[86] *PT* IV, 13.2.4. For more on Ficino's concept of divine frenzy, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Platonic Frenzies in Marsilio Ficino," in *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen, and Yme Kuiper, 2010, 553–68.
[87] *PT* IV, 13.2.4.
[88] *PT* IV, 13.2.4.

different types of prophecies and rank them in terms of their nobility. Two main ideas need to be sorted before Ficino can begin discriminating between the types of prophecies. First, he must address the relationship of the soul and the faculty of reason with the world, or rather, the "world machine" (*mundi machinae*). For this he must also distinguish what is fate and providence, and what is truly choice and freedom. Secondly, he must address the relation of the rational soul to its various faculties. Reason can allow us to assess prophetic experience as mere phantasy or as a truly divine communication. This requires both a psychological as well as physiological explanation. For Ficino, as we shall consider in the next chapter, a true prophet plays a pivotal role in the making of society and civilization. Hence, the true prophet must be distinguished from other kinds of prophets and seers. The characteristics of the true prophet allow the learned (namely the philosophers) to recognize him.

2.1 The rational soul and the universe

The rational soul has four main aspects, namely the mind (*mens*), the *idolum* (sometimes spirit (*spiritus*) or even soul (*anima*)), reason (*ratio*), and the body in which it inheres.[89] The first three Ficino calls the non-intermediary faculties.[90] These are part of the three universal orders as he explains: "Three universal orders obviously pertain to the human soul: providence, fate, and nature. Providence is the succession of minds, fate is the

[89] Ficino is not always consistent in his use of terminology. In the early sections of 13.2 mind (*mens*) and intellect (*intellectus*) are used interchangeably. The human rational soul has both a mind/intellect and intellectual reason. Ficino also seems to equate reason (specifically intellectual reason) and intellect and use them interchangeably as well. However, mind and reason (*mens* and *ratio*) are not used interchangeably and seem to retain separate meanings distinct meanings.

[90] *PT* IV, 13.2.19.

succession of souls, nature is the succession of bodies."[91] These three universal orders refer to the three types of cosmic events that can occur and affect the human soul, those pertaining to the mind, the spirit, or the body.

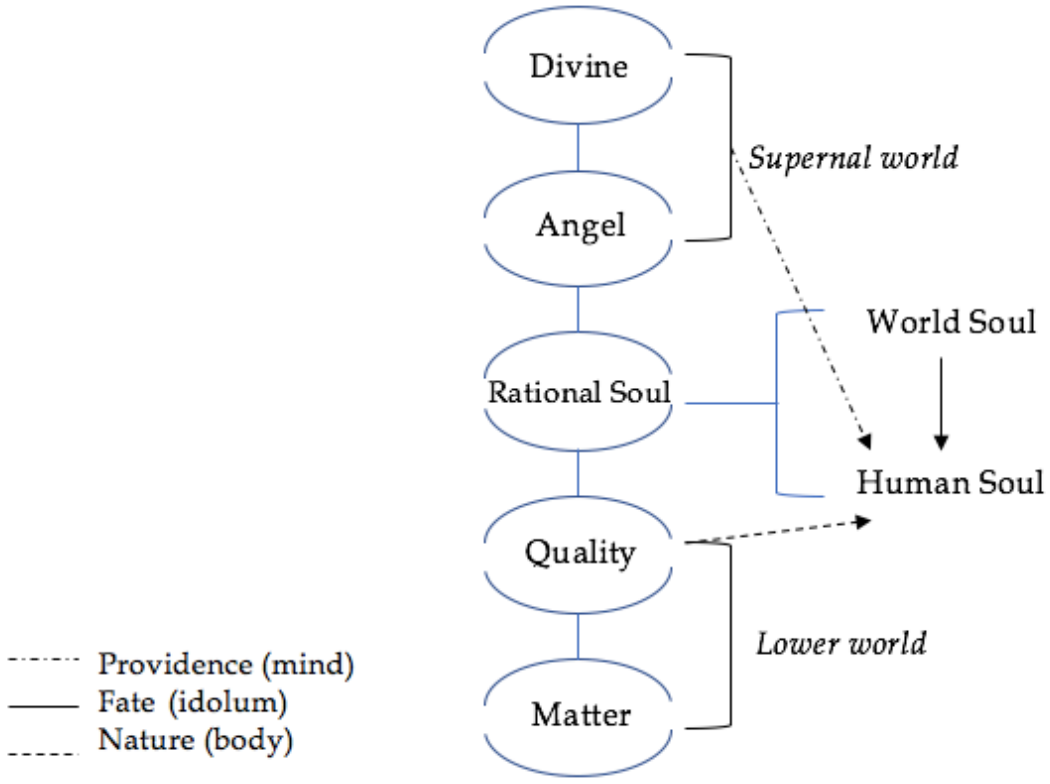

Figure 1. Ficino's emanative scheme.

The succession of minds is basically the emanation of intellects beginning with God who sends his 'ray' (*radium*) containing the rational principles all the way to the rational souls. As a recipient of rational principles, the rational soul is considered to be a lower

[91] *PT* IV, 13.2.9, "Tres rerum ordines ad humanam animam pertinere videntur: providentia, fatum, natura. Providentia est series mentium, fatum series animarum, natura series corporum."

level of angels of sorts because of its intellectual capacities.[92] This proximity to the divine intellect, despite being tied to the body, gives the rational soul an angelic status. This bestowing of rational principles, and inclusion of the rational soul in the participation of the activity of the incorporeal intellects, that is the power of understanding, Ficino calls Providence (*Providentia*). Ficino further adds that the rays of the divine reach the lowest level of minds and that they are reflected back to the highest.[93] The former is clearly emanation. The ascension, or reversion, that is the lowest reflecting the raysback through to the highest, seems unclear. It might be that the lower can tap into some kind of knowledge and what it understands the higher levels come to know as well. This would certainly make sense from a Christian perspective, God (and the angels) know what humans are thinking but Ficino does not expand further on its meaning.

Secondly, the "succession of souls" gives the soul its life-giving power.[94] This allows the body to be governed and sustained. It also gives it the faculty of perception. This power is the *idolum*, the "simulacrum of the rational soul" (*simulacrum rationalis animae*).[95] The *idolum* is a constituent of the soul which allows the body to be animated and governed. Without it, the body would not 'perceive' or be capable of motion. The *idolum* is what enables the body to be alive and to fulfill the functions of the various

---

[92] By angel, Ficino means 'intellect'. *PT* IV, 13.2.10, "Neque solum sublimes illos intellectus angelosque purissimos sic exornat, verumetiam per illos tamquam medios in mentes quoque rationalium animarum quasi quosdam infimos angelos radium eundem traducit, iisdem praeditum rationibus."
[93] *PT* IV, 13.2.14 "a postremis per medias in sublimes iterum reflectantur."
[94] *PT* IV, 13.2.11.
[95] *PT* IV, 13.2.11.

organs of perception and motion. Finally, the "succession of the body" is the imparting of nature, that is, the body's particular disposition for the soul.[96] The body is animate not only because the soul gives it life but because it has the disposition to be animated if the soul were to enter it. Ficino calls the body the "vestige or shadow of the soul."[97] Hankins cautiously describes nature to be somewhat akin to Aristotle's "vegetative power."[98]

These three aspects represent the relationship of the individual soul with the world outside itself. The world is a "machine" in which everything is bound up. The mind, which is the head of the soul, provides a link outside the corporeal world to the supranatural world. As mind, it allows the whole to be united and to participate with the minds.

The lowest power of the soul, the *idolum*, is tied to the highest *idolum* (the World Soul) from which it inherits (or is capable of participating) in the life-giving power.[99] And finally, the body as nature ties itself to other natures. That is, it inherits the instincts of its species or in Ficino's words "in it [the body] the instincts of the higher natures are transmitted to lower natures."[100] Ficino compares this system to the mother's womb which, through the cords of soul, body and spirit, enables the foetus to perceive the "passions of the mother's soul, body, and spirit."[101]

---

[96] *PT* IV, 13.2.12.
[97] *PT* IV, 13.2.12, "Hanc volunt esse Platonici naturam corporum, quasi quoddam vestigium animae in corpore sive umbram."
[98] Fn. 47 in Book 6, *PT* II.
[99] *PT* IV, 13.2.12.
[100] *PT* IV, 13.2.16, "Atque haec dependentia series naturalis cognominatur, in qua naturarum superiorum instinctus in naturas inferiores transfunditur".
[101] *PT* IV, 13.2.16, "[N]on aliter ac foetus in alvo toti corpori materno per continuata

The mind, spirit, and body have more or less fixed roles. The fourth aspect, reason, is what makes the soul an active agent and places the rational soul above fate and into the realm of choice and freewill.[102] As such, it has the capacity to make certain choices and is not utterly surrendered to fate in the way that the body or the intellects are. Because the soul belongs to the order of minds, it possesses the ability to govern what is inferior to it: its own body but also other things that humans can rule such as the "home, the state, the arts and the animals."[103] In this sense, the soul 'bestows' fate to the things which it rules. The *idolum* does not bestow fate but carries it out. It is in the order of soul (or spirit) because while it cannot choose, it enables choice to be fulfilled. Finally, the body is below fate because it is passive. It cannot act without the *idolum*. This means that nature (the order to which bodies belong) do not have the capacity to act on their own. They are always ruled. By giving reason the autonomy of choice, Ficino stresses that "[f]ortune, demons, and even God is not to be blamed for the wrong choices the soul makes."[104]

Whereas the mind, *idolum*, and nature bind us to the universal order, it is reason that gives us our freedom and individuality. But more importantly, Ficino seems to suggest that it is reason, and not the mind (intellect), that makes our soul a rational soul

---

ligamenta connectitur; unde et animae maternae et corporis et spiritus materni ipse quoque per animam suam, corpus et spiritum percipit passiones."

[102] *PT* IV, 13.2.17.

[103] *PT* IV, 13.2.17, "Ipsa enim, tamquam providentiae particeps ad divinae gubernationis exemplar regit se, domum, civitatem, artes et animalia."

[104] *PT* IV, 13.2.17, "Ideo Plato in libro *De republica* decimo virtutem animi, inquit, non esse servilem; daemonem vitae ducem ac rursus vitae fortunam eligi a nobis, non nos a daemone vel fortuna; culpam eligentis esse, non dei."

properly speaking.[105] The ability to reason is what connects the body to the mind and allows in a way for individuation. It enables an individual to choose what to make of herself or himself. Reason is associated with choice and freedom while the intellect/mind is not. The latter can only contemplate the universals.[106] Ficino describes the consequences of three possible choices: 1) when reason attaches to the mind, it "rises into providence," 2) when it follows the *idolum* and nature, then it "submits to fate," and 3) when it turns towards itself, it investigates things and itself.[107] Hence, it is reason, as the intermediate "power of the soul" that allows individuals to discern what they perceive.[108] The non-intermediate faculties perceive immediately but do not recognize or discern without the intermediary of reason. In this sense, the 'accurate' grasping of what is perceived rests with reason.[109] It is this last part that makes different types of prophecy possible. However, what reason perceives may still be subject to distortion, either because of the *idolum*, nature, and even reason itself. For a clear perception of what the mind (*mens*)[110] receives, either the intermediary of the reason must be removed or it must be "cleav[ed] to its mind" so that it may "ris[e] into providence."[111] This middle power is what makes us human (as a species). Even if sight

---

[105] *PT* IV, 13.2.18.
[106] Ficino individuates both mind (intellect) and reason. Reasoning allows the rational soul to make judgments regarding particulars while the intellect gives access to universal truths. Although Ficino sometimes uses intellect interchangeably with reason, he is referring to the intellectual reason specifically.
[107] *PT* IV, 13.2.19. When reason turns to itself, it concerns itself with scientific inquiry and self-knowledge.
[108] *PT* IV, 13.2.19.
[109] *PT* IV, 13.2.19.
[110] Ficino's use of 'mind' can be ambiguous since he uses the same term in reference to the agent intellect, the higher intellects and human intellect.
[111] *PT* IV, 13.2.19.

and hearing "fulfill their office," the "rational soul does not yet recognize that it sees and hears unless our middle power [i.e. reason] focuses on these [two] senses."[112] In the same way, "the higher minds are always moving our mind which is united to them, yet we do not notice this imparted motion."[113] And the same is true for the *idolum* and for nature.

What Ficino ultimately wants to draw attention to here is that the empty reason (one that is unhindered by its discursive activities) is an invitation for the successions from the higher *idola* or minds to get recognized. Reason that is attentive to these processions, especially the angelic ones, opens itself up to gaining knowledge and understanding. This he says is evidenced by those who have discovered "absolutely outstanding things" without a teacher or in a state of calm "even when they were not looking for them."[114] The reason when actively emptied makes itself vulnerable to divine inspiration.

2.2 The rational soul and its faculties

According to Ficino, prophecy is possible because of the configuration of the universe and different kinds of prophecies are possible because of the configuration of the rational soul and the body. Ficino gives a description of this latter configuration which here I attempt to systemize and clarify.

---

[112] *PT* IV, 13.2.20, "nondum tamen animus et videre se et audire animadvertit, nisi media nostri potentia sese ad haec intendat."
[113] *PT* IV, 13.2.20, "Sic mentes superiores movent semper nostram mentem illis annexam; impulsum tamen huiusmodi ideo non advertimus."
[114] *PT* IV, 13.2.22.

The rational soul is comprised of the mind, the *idolum*, the reason and, loosely, the body in which it inheres. The mind is—to some extent—angelic because it receives the universal rational principles. The most important for our discussion is the *idolum* and the reason. The relationship between these two establish, primarily, the possibility of prophecy. The *idolum* is Ficino's way of resolving the issue regarding the relationship between body and soul. Ficino knows that it is not possible to go from one kind of substance or thing to another without some kind of bridge. This is evidenced very early on in the first book of the *Platonic Theology* when he enumerates the five principal levels of being, namely God, Angel, Soul, Quality, and Body:

> Because the genus of rational soul, which occupies the mid-point of these five levels, appears to be the link that holds all nature together–it controls qualities and bodies while it joins itself with angel and with God—I shall demonstrate: [first,] that it is in fact completely indissoluble, because it holds together the different levels of nature; next, that it is preeminent, because it presides over the framework of the world; and finally, that it is most blessed when it steals into the bosom of the divine.[115]

Ficino is often uncomfortable establishing relationships between different kinds or substances without intermediaries. For instance, on the link between Angel and Soul, Ficino writes:

> But since in every respect these two are the opposite of each other, they cannot come one immediately after the other: they need some connecting link. Now angel precedes soul, which is plurality in motion, without any intermediary. Therefore angel cannot be motionless unity, otherwise the two extremes would be joined without an intermediary. But we have already demonstrated that angel

---

[115] *PT* I, 1.1.3 "Quoniam autem ipsum rationalis animae genus, inter gradus huiusmodi medium obtinens, vinculum naturae totius apparet, regit qualitates et corpora, angelo se iungit et deo, ostendemus id esse prorsus indissolubile, dum gradus naturae connectit; praestantissimum, dum mundi machinae praesidet; beatissimum, dum se divinis insinuat."

> is certainly motionless. Thus it cannot be unity. It remains then that angel is motionless plurality. It conforms to soul in that like soul it is a plurality; but it differs from soul in that it is motionless while soul is moved.[116]

At the celestial level, Angel (Intellect) is the link between God and Soul, while Soul is the link between Intellect on the one hand and Quality and Matter on the other. Within the soul itself, there are several more bridges between the various faculties. The soul is a complex structure with several tasks for different faculties of the soul connecting it to the body on one hand and the intellects on the other. Ficino puts forth a rather complex set of relationships between the faculties that are not always clear. This in part seems to be necessary for Ficino because he wants to preserve the definitions he has for different substances and avoid contradictions. The terminological clarity that at times Ficino sacrifices at the level of minutiae is recovered at the macro level.

The mind which is at the head of the rational soul is the link between the Intellects' emanations and reason. Reason is the link between mind and *idolum*. The *idolum* is the bridge between the body and the soul.[117] It shares certain properties with the soul as well as with the body. It also, in conjunction with reason, makes perception possible. Reason has two aspects, the intellectual reason (*ratio intellectualis*) and the

---

[116] *PT* I, 1.6.2, "Quoniam ergo res illae ab omni parte invicem opponuntur, proxime sibi non succedunt, sed medio quodam indigent copulante. Animam vero ipsam, quae est mobilis multitudo, angelus absque medio antecedit. Ideo non potest angelus esse immobilis unitas, ne duo extrema sine medio coniungantur. Immobilis certe est, ut supra probavimus, ergo non unitas. Restat ut sit angelus immobilis multitudo. Ubi cum anima convenit in eo, quod ipse multitudo est, sicut et illa; discrepat autem, quia illa est mobilis, hic immobilis."

[117] See, Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino,* trans. Virginia Lanphear Conant, Columbia Studies in Philosophy 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 375-378.

cogitative opnion-forming reason (*cogitatrix* and *opinatrix*).[118] The intellectual reason is tasked with the contemplation and understanding of universals and causality.[119] The cogitative is concerned with particulars and tries to work up to the universals.[120] The cogitative is informed by two "irrational perceiving powers located in the *idolum*" namely, the 'confused' phantasy "which follows natural instincts," and the imagination, "the assembler of the five senses."[121] The *idolum* is the sum of the faculties of perception, the imagination, and the phantasy. It is concerned with ruling the animated body and giving life to the faculties of perceptions, of gathering and processing corporeal information. The *spiritus* is a subtle vapor that communicates changes in the humors to the idolum. The four humors can have different impacts on the temperaments and complexions of the individuals based on their quantitative configuration.

When the *idolum* receives information from the perceptive faculties, this then goes to the imagination (*imaginatio*) where it is sorted and organized. Then to the phantasy, which is the first faculty that attempts to make a judgment concerning the data received by the faculties of perception and transmitted through the imagination.[122] The imagination itself has no capacity for judgement. It merely associates images with their other attributes, for instance, a certain yellow liquid is sweet. The phantasy will then conclude that this sweet yellow liquid is honey. The phantasy however, lacks any

---

[118] *PT* IV, 13.2.18.
[119] *PT* IV, 13.2.18.
[120] *PT* IV, 13.2.18.
[121] *PT* IV, 13.2.18. By 'confused' phantasy, Ficino might also be referring to the phantasy's ability to bring together but in an inadequate manner, which is part of its task.
[122] *PT* II, 7.6.1.

knowledge of rational principles; Ficino describes it as 'confused' because it functions as a type of "irrational intellect." Because of this Ficino places it in the idolum, the "irrational soul." As such it cannot make any claims related to universals like goodness and beauty.[123] Its judgement remains confined to particulars. This, by the way, is the plight of most human beings, who spend most of their days concerned with life's mundane affairs.[124] The images envisioned by the phantasy are stored in memory.

The phantasy is also accompanied by four emotions, namely desire, pleasure, fear, and pain.[125] These emotions can create physiological changes in the body so intense that they can sometimes even affect other bodies. These emotions sometimes misrepresent or exaggerate the reality as when "they see a bitter drink being offered to someone, children and sometimes older people too taste a bitter saliva immediately in their mouths, so vehement is the force of the imagination!"[126] Intense feelings, such as jealousy, paired with "intense gazing" can even harm others as in the case of the "evil eye."[127] The fact that these emotions and the physiological reactions they cause are external to the body's own capacities, reinforces the soul's power and thus its supranatural origins.

Nevertheless, the phantasy remains an impediment to the intellect/reason especially when it is more active than the latter. It can misguide or misinform reason

---

[123] *PT* II, 8.1.3.
[124] *PT* IV, 13.2.25.
[125] *PT* IV, 13.1.1.
[126] *PT* IV, 13.1.2. Ficino sometimes uses imagination to refer to the phantasy and does not always rigidly differentiate between the two.
[127] *PT* IV, 13.1.1.

especially if reason itself has not been sharpened sufficiently to tell truth from fiction. Ficino places the *idolum* at the 'foot' of the soul because it is closest to body and also because it is tasked with translating corporeal cues into images for reason to process. It is also weaker than reason and mind because it is more easily influenced by the body. Directly below the *idolum* is the spirit, which mediates between soul and body by communicating humoral changes to the *idolum*. The spirit (*spiritus*) is a "blood-constituted vapor and the four humors are present in the blood, the four powers of the humors and of the elements are present in the spirit."[128] It is separate from the *idolum* and the *idolum*, itself having a very keen sensibility to detect variations in the humors by way of the spirit, is able to respond accordingly by creating emotions or images in the phantasy. While the phantasy can choose what to make (or not) of the images it receives from perception, it is in turn also influenced by the humoral changes in the body. This kind of interdependence between body and soul does not exist beyond the *idolum*.

Reason on the other hand is intellectual reason and cogitative reason. These two types of reasons are concerned with interpretation and deliberation as opposed to the idolum which is simply tasked to collect and store images and make preliminary judgments. The cogitative receives images from the phantasy and subjects them to further scrutiny away from the influences of sense-perception and humoral changes. It is akin to particular reason as it "enables us to recognize the usefulness or harmfulness of something and to consider images perceived by the senses."[129] The cogitative

[128] *PT* IV, 13.2.23.
[129] Cf. 60 in *PT* V, p. 337.

validates images (and emotions) based on its knowledge of the particulars.

Finally, we reach intellectual reason. This is the higher reason which can know and can contemplate Forms and universals. The human mind, as we have seen, is endowed with an angelic quality. Intellectual reason enables the rational soul to ascend to angelic heights by allowing it to discern the truth. Reason is not always in accordance with the intellect. Most individuals are too preoccupied by particulars that they never take the time to contemplate the universals. Reason must be trained to resist the senses, if it does not it will incline to the needs of the body.[130]

2.3 The Avicennian rational soul

For both Avicenna and Ficino, prophecy is primarily a psychological phenomenon. The types of prophecies depend on the activities of the soul. However, the two thinkers have slightly different configurations for the rational soul. Ficino ascribes certain functions within the soul to faculties different from Avicenna's. So while the main steps that enable prophecies are similar in both thinkers, Ficino uses his own scheme of the rational soul to explain the phenomenon. In the Avicennian scheme, the perceptive and motive powers belong to the animal soul. Whatever the five external senses perceive is sent firstly to a single power in the rational soul where it administers the body, the common sense (*sensus communis*), which brings the sensibilia together into a coherent whole and make associations. In Ficino's scheme, it is the *idolum* that perceives, as such

[130] Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, "Five Questions Concerning the Mind," in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man; Selections in Translation,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 185–212.

it is as a kind of animal soul, or more accurately as we have seen, an irrational soul. The *idolum* sorts and assembles what it perceives in the common sense (*sensus communis*). However, Ficino refers to the common sense as such only once, and uses the term imagination (*imaginatio*) more consistently. This can lead to some confusion, since Avicenna's usage of imagination (*khayāl*) refers to another activity of the rational soul, namely the one that stores the images.[131]

Then comes Avicenna's imaginative faculty (or compositive, cogitative; Lat. *virtus imaginativa*). This is closest to Ficino's cogitative faculty. In both cases, the imaginative/cogitative assesses the images it receives. For Avicenna, the imaginative/cogitative faculty is located in the same faculty but fulfils one of the two functions depending on whether the activity is akin to the animal or rational part of the human soul. Depending on the circumstances, it is either the imaginative or the cogitative that will act. Avicenna considers the activities of the imaginative faculty to be "random and undirected in themselves, perhaps even subconscious. Inasmuch as it is inherently active, the compositive imagination [viz. imaginative faculty] does not appear capable of being 'shut off' and thus its activities predominate when the animal is asleep, in the form of dreams."[132] Furthermore, "the compositive functions of imagination can, however, be consciously harnessed and controlled by either the estimative faculty or reason, and when the latter is the case this faculty functions not as

---

[131] Hasse, 2; *De Anima*, IV, 1. The confusion here might be due to a translation issue in the Latin edition by Gundissalinus. Refer to previous discussion on p. 18.
[132] Deborah L. Black, "Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations," *Topoi* 19, no. 1 (2000): 60.

imagination, but as the cogitative faculty."[133] So for Avicenna, if the imaginative faculty "acts freely (as in sleep or madness), unreal forms are perceived. In some people the imaginative faculty and the soul are so powerful that they have visions in waking life (IV,2)."[134] When considering prophecy, however, Ficino puts most of the activities of the cogitative into the phantasy. As such, it is the phantasy that will act in sleep or madness to produce these visions without the imaginative having any influence on it. In doing so, Ficino might be following Albertus Magnus and Algazel (al-Ghazali) who described Avicenna's imaginative-cogitative as *phantasia*.[135] It must also be noted that while Ficino does acknowledge a cogitative faculty (apart from the phantasy), its role is not well expounded and remains somewhat superfluous in his theories on prophecy. It seems more likely, however, that Ficino consciously separates the Avicennian imaginative and the cogitative into two distinct faculties. By doing so, he subsumes the imaginative into the phantasy which is part of the lower "irrational" soul, the *idolum*. The discursive cogitative faculty is categorized within the "rational" soul properly speaking.

Ficino does not make use of Avicenna's estimative faculty. This specifically Avicennian faculty is supposed to account for the perception of 'intentions.' Intentions are a kind of perceptibles that cannot be sensed by the five external senses. Specifically, the human estimative faculty accounts for complex judgments that are not merely sensible but nevertheless are pre-intellectual.[136] The most famous example is when a

---

[133] Black, "Imagination and Estimation," 60.
[134] *De* Anima, IV,2; Hasse, 2.
[135] Hasse, 150.
[136] Black, "Imagination and Estimation," 59.

sheep senses danger as a wolf approaches.[137] Danger is not associated with any particular sensible aspect of the wolf (sight, smell, etc.) but by what it represents.[138] When Ficino makes reference to this example, he does so with the objective of illustrating the sheep's natural instinct to flee the wolf.[139] There is no mention of the estimative faculty.[140] Ficino does not deny the sheep a complete lack of liberty in judgment, but describes this judgement as instinct: "with its nature compelling it, it cannot but flee."[141] Ficino does not attribute functions of the estimative faculty to animals. On the other hand, the human estimative faculty sometimes seems to align most closely with Ficino's cogitative faculty but owing to Ficino's scarce account of it, it is difficult to make any meaningful comparisons.

Avicenna's scheme of the human soul has a greater number of divisions to account for different tasks than Ficino's does. Nevertheless, they share many similarities when considered more closely. While Avicenna is more meticulous in describing the roles of the various faculties involved in prophecy, Ficino ascribes many of these tasks to the phantasy. The result, as we shall see below, is that the phantasy becomes the primary faculty for most types of prophecy encompassing both the Avicennian imagination as well as the imaginative/cogitative faculty. The most crucial for Ficino is that a sharp distinction remain between intellectual reason and whatever is below it.

---

[137] *De Anima*, I,5.
[138] *De Anima*, I,5.
[139] *PT* III, 9.4.3.
[140] The doctrine of the faculty of estimation had been dismissed by Averroes stating that it was superfluous. See Black, "Imagination and Estimation," 59.
[141] *PT* III, 9.4.3, "Naturali enim existimatione iudicat ovis lupum sibi perniciosum ac fugit, neque potest non fugere, impellente natura."

This in fact, is also the line between particular and universal reasons, between the mundane and the divine.

For Ficino, prophecy is the result of psychological and physiological causes in addition to an active component resulting from reason's activities. Ficino maintains an almost substantial difference between the activities of the rational soul (specifically reason) and those of the irrational soul (*idolum*). Avicenna, on the other hand, while distinguishing between these two sets of activities, ascribes them all to reason. His image of reason is that of possessing two faces: one that faces the Active Intellect and the heavens, and one that gazes upon the worldly. The functions too are similar, the reason that faces the heavens thinks and wonders (intellect and cogitation), while the one facing the world collects and stores (imagination, memory and phantasy).[142] Ficino's deliberate distinction between reason proper and the *idolum* hints at his desire to maintain for reason an absolutely bodiless angelic quality that is closer to the higher souls and intellects rather than the lower souls. This is also compelled by his project to establish the rational soul as divine in nature, which he continuously points to throughout the *Platonic Theology*. Ficino is very much concerned with preserving the sanctity of the human soul. This may partly explain why he prefers to associate certain functions to the *idolum* (the lower rational soul) rather than to what might traditionally

[142] *De Anima*, I.5; Gundissalinus, *Liber de Anima*, 10, p. 86, lines 27-31: "Quae duae vires sive duo intellectus sunt animae rationali quasi duae facies; una quae respiciat deorsum ad regendum suum inferius quod est corpus; et aliam qua respiciat sursum ad contemplandum suum superius quod est Deus."

be categorized as functions of the animal soul.

2.4 Types of prophecies

Ficino presents seven types of prophecies that are the result of what he calls emptyings (*vacatio*). The seven types of emptyings occur in sleep, in syncope or swoon, in the melancholic humor, in the tempered complexion, in solitude, in wonder, and in chastity. The emptyings refer to the freeing of the rational soul from bodily and worldly cares. In these states, the rational soul can notice the influences of the higher minds, *idola* and natures. However, not all of these can qualify as prophetic. Unlike Avicenna, reason not only receives emanations from a single Active Intellect but from three different sources. But like him, Ficino's different types depend on the dynamics between the body and the rational soul. The types of dynamics required are also similar.

The first kind of prophetic activity is dreams. Most of these are "vain" dreams; but some, under the right conditions, can bear news from the cosmos.[143] Two types of prophetic dreams are possible but all dreams in general occur under the same principle. Most dreams are the product of the phantasy which, during sleep, recalls images from memory and presents them back to us through the common sense. The kinds of images we see depend on the state of our bodies as well as our souls. These images are made up of things perceived in the waking state and because the phantasy is that part of the rational soul we use most often, it is the most active even when our external activities

[143] *PT* IV, 13.2.25.

are suspended. The dreams of one steeped in desire and food will reflect this kind of lifestyle.

According to Ficino, the dreams of pious and devout individuals are more likely to be prophetic. "In wakefulness their rational soul is more emptied than other men; in sleep it is entirely emptied. So the movement imparted from on high, the supernal impulse, is easily noticed by this soul."[144] When awake, reason is active with external sensibilia; but the unique properties of such individuals is such that they are not so preoccupied with them that it may not discern supernal emanations from the World-Soul or from the Intellects. The extent of this ability depends on their own dispositions: those who are more drawn to the divinity through worldly phenomena will recognize the *idola*'s emanations, while those who are more drawn to the divinity through the intellect will recognize the Intellect's emanations. In the former case, dreams will reveal the "passions of the world, and the things to which it is more attracted compared to the rest, so that it sees future rain, war, pestilence, and the like."[145] This happens in the same way as a dream of the first type described above, namely through the phantasy. This type of dream is connected to the body in that the *idolum* detects the movements in the higher *idola* and also recognizes the subtle changes in the bodily humors. The images that these movements conjure appear in the phantasy but need to be committed

[144] *PT* IV, 13.2.28, "Horum animus in vigilia vacat prae ceteris; vacat in somnis omnino. Quapropter supernus impulsus ab eo facile animadvertitur."
[145] *PT* IV, 13.2.29, "Illorum animo per somnum quieto passiones mundi monstrantur, et illae prae ceteris ad quas magis afficitur, ut pluviam videat futuram, bellum, pestem atque similia."

to memory. If they are not, then an interpreter is required to decipher their meanings.[146] However, the dreams that reach and remain in the memory must be true predictions "because these dreams are proper to those pious men who admire this divine temple [of the world] and marvel at it."[147]

The one who is drawn to the divinity will recognize emanations from the Intellects. This is the first type of dream in which prophecy strikes the mind/intellect rather than the phantasy. So in the state of sleep, the pious, because they are free of worldly cares (such that worldly images do not busy the phantasy) the divine rays emitted by the intellects are recognized by the rational soul. In these individuals, the mind dominates over the phantasy, so reason is able to access this revelation. Nevertheless, it is still possible that the phantasy is active (but it is not producing its own images). If so, it will take the images received by the mind and reason and begin to sort them according to its own manner. However, if it is very slow to move, then reason will commit the revelation to memory in purity.[148] Ficino says that this type of dream vision occurs mostly to the pious. However, he does state that by stroke of luck it could strike others too. Ficino only gives the example of kings. It is possible that this group is one for whom this kind of prophecy would enable to make decisions regarding their

---

[146] *PT* IV, 13.2.29. However, while Ficino insists that the interpreter must be of a "quick and nimble wit," he requires also that the prophet be of a "calm and peaceful" wit and states that these two opposing dispositions are not easily reconciled in a single person. In the *Timaeus*, Plato does not describe the latter as such. See, *Timaeus* 71E-72B.
[147] *PT* IV, 13.2.30, "Propterea horum praesagia interpretatione non indigent. Atque haec sunt praesagia somniorum, quae religiosis illis conveniunt, qui divinam hanc aedem admirantur et stupent."
[148] *PT* IV, 13.2.31.

kingdoms or societies, a recurrent theme in biblical narratives.[149]

Another important remark is the physical explanation for this kind of prophecy. We already know that the soul whose worldly cares are few is more prone to discerning the influences of the minds. However, at the physiological level, Ficino explains that these dreams occur "especially near dawn" when we are most tempered since the "riot of vapors and outer cares" are calm. The veracity of these dreams however, depends not only on temperance but also on natural conditions: "prophecy is strengthened by the coming of the sun and of Apollo, the prophet; and the sanguineous and fiery spirits dominant in that solar hour contribute by their clarity to the clarity of the vision."[150]

After speaking of the ways the soul can empty itself in sleep in order to receive prophecies, Ficino speaks of the emptying in syncope or swoon (i.e. "the fainting of the half-dead body"). In this case, prophecy occurs in the same manner as in sleep.[151] When someone faints, the rational soul is active in the same way as in dreams. This is because, physiologically, the body's spirits are all attentive to the weakened heart. It enters a state similar to sleep where the body is not concerned with external stimuli. Here, the rational soul is affected in the manner suited to its disposition and temperament.

---

[149] *PT* IV, 13.2.31.
[150] *PT* IV, 13.2.31, "Quamquam, quod vulgo fertur, matutina somnia esse veriora, non ob id solum provenit quod magis sobrii sumus (saepe enim sobrii dormitum accedimus, neque tamen tunc fiunt perspicuae visiones), verumetiam ex eo quod et solis Phoebique vatis accessu vaticinium roboratur, et sanguinei igneique spiritus ea hora dominantes claritate sua ad claram conferunt visionem, et quod videmus, quia statim expergiscimur, turba imaginum consequentium non confundimus."
[151] *PT* IV, 13.2.32.

The third kind of emptying comes from the "contraction of the melancholic humor[152]: it separates the soul from external affairs so that the soul is emptied in the waking man as it is customarily emptied at times in the sleeping."[153] This is the first instance of prophecy in waking state. This specific case seems to be, primarily, a physiological one. It is the contraction of the melancholic humor that enables an abstraction from the body. Of course, reason is positively affected by this humoral inclination to melancholia because it requires a particularly calm demeanor that is unaffected by the images of the phantasy. Ficino maintains that Socrates was susceptible to this type of prophecy owing to his melancholic nature. Curiously, Ficino mentions the effect of Socrates' daemon on those around him. This suggests that the state of his soul and his daemon had an effect beyond Socrates' own body. Ficino is here describing an instance of non-material causation which seems to be beyond the topic of prophetic vision, belonging instead to a discussion of miracles.

A fourth type of emptying results from a tempered complexion, "since such a complexion does not admit the tumult that comes with some dominant humor that might move the phantasy towards any one image."[154] And "[m]en exist of this kind

---

[152] *PT* IV, 13.2.2. On the contraction of the melancholic humor, Ficino writes, "I believe the reason for this is that the nature of the melancholic humor accompanies the quality of earth, which is never widely diffused like the other elements but contracted tightly into itself. Thus the melancholic humor both invites and helps the soul to gather itself into itself."
[153] *PT* IV, 13.3.33, "Tertius vacationis modus fit ex melancholici humoris contractione animam ab externis negotiis sevocantis, ut anima tam vacet homine vigilante, quam solet dormiente quandoque vacare."
[154] *PT* IV, 13.2.34, "Est et quartus a temperata complexione vacandi modus, siquidem talis complexio nullum infert tumultum alicuius superantis humoris, qui ad ullam imaginem commoveat phantasiam."

who are moderate in their feelings and activities, and thus they live with such a tranquil rational soul that even when they are awake they are subject to supernal influences." Here, Ficino singles out Plotinus in particular.[155] We may ask here what is the difference between this kind of influence and those experienced by philosophers? This type of emptying is achieved by those of a tempered complexion. This seems close to Avicenna who describes the most perfect body as the one in which all humors are in balance, although Avicenna reserves perfect humoral and compositive balance to account for the angelic faculty.[156] This is also the strongest complexion because it is not easily swayed. Ficino, however, does not limit the ability to discern divine emanations only to divine law-bearing prophets as we might traditionally understand the term. It does not escape any reader that Ficino is an admirer of Plotinus. Does he consider Plotinus as a type of prophet? What is the difference between the prophetic experience of supernal influence and that of philosophers? It seems that there are two different things to consider. The first is that philosophers do not prophesy in so far as they are philosophers. In sleep at least, Ficino explains that prophecy excludes philosophy and discursive reasoning.[157] In both cases of reasoning, even if the phantasy is sleeping, reason—whether discursive or speculative—is still active. As such, it is possible for philosophers to discover something in sleep because the reason is not disturbed by the phantasy but this does not count as prophecy since it does not rely on influences external to the soul. On the other hand, a philosopher may also have other dispositions that would allow him or her to prophesy.

---

[155] *PT* IV, 13.2.34.
[156] Refer to Chapter 3. See also Hasse, 161-164.
[157] *PT* IV, 13.2.27.

In the case of Plotinus, it is not his discursive or speculative skills that enable prophecy but rather his tempered or balanced disposition.

The fifth emptying seems to result from solitude, "when the rational soul, no longer distracted by the troubles of human affairs [and] under the impulse a little of the divinities or of the heavens, thinks daily about the same things that the celestial divinities are thinking of doing."[158] Ficino does not elaborate much on this. This type of emptying seems something of an extension of the previous type, where the individual forces and disciplines the body away from distractions thereby clearing the phantasy and reason in order to perceive the supernal influences. This is an active type of emptying (which can take years to achieve) and is reached through focus and meditation. This is not a physiological type of emptying because the body's complexion may not be well-disposed for it. It has to be done through training the body and the mind. In this case, the phantasy does not move to any one image. The balance of humors can prevent the phantasy from being swayed. As such, because the phantasy is unpreoccupied, it can perceive the supernal influences even in waking. The rational soul does not need to wait for the body and the phantasy to sleep.

"The sixth emptying results from wonder."[159] What Ficino calls wonder, we might understand as a state of ecstasy or epiphany. This is also a deliberate form of emptying but is short term rather than long term. This kind of prophecy results from

---

[158] *PT* IV, 13.2.35, "Quinta vacatio fieri videtur a solitudine, ubi animus nullis humanorum negotiorum curis distractus paulo vel numinum vel caelorum momento eadem quotidie cogitat, quae caelestia numina cogitant facere."
[159] *PT* IV *4*, 13.2.36, "Sexta fit ab admiratione vacatio."

the senses, phantasy, and reason "instantly intermit[ing] their activities" thus freeing the mind and exposing it to the divinity.[160] This happens when the individual thinks about (or wonders about) the "divinity's majesty with such overwhelming awe and veneration."

Lastly, the seventh and final type of remission is "most outstanding" of the soul's "alienations": that which "results from the chastity of a mind devoted to God."[161] This is not only the most pious state, but also the only permanent state where the reason and the soul are one with God. We might call this the mystical union with God or any state achieved through utter devotion to God with one's body, mind and soul. This state allows the individual to transcend time and view past, present and future as one. This results in the most religious type of prophecy. It is not achieved merely through the body's physiology, or the phantasy's stillness, nor even through rigorous discipline but through an internalized form of spiritual purity and chastity. And this seems to be not only the most noble type of prophecy but also the most powerful.

Ficino ends by saying that the religious individuals who become vessels of God need an interpreter for their mind's visions.[162] It would seem most likely that this interpreter would be the philosopher (who's general melancholic spirit is most capable

---

[160] *PT* IV, 13.2.36, "[t]anto admirationis venerationisque stupore de maiestate numinis cogitabant, ut sensus, phantasia, ratioque actus suos illico praetermitterent."
[161] *PT* IV, 13.2.37, "Septima et omnium praestantissima ea animi alienatio est quae fit castitate mentis deo devotae."
[162] *PT* IV, 13.2.37, "Sed ii omnes, quemadmodum et somniantes, quicquid mente cerebant, phantasiae velaminibus statim operiebant, ita ut visa mentis, phantasiae umbraculis obscurata, interprete indigerent."

of interpreting such things). Here it seems that Ficino also confirms Avicenna's proposition that philosophers are the true interpreters of the Prophets whose visions come directly from the emanations of the intellects (not idola or nature).

2.5 Avicenna and Ficino: the prophetic imagination and the 'sacred faculty'

Avicenna proposes three main types of prophecy and they have three distinct manifestations. The first is connected to the imaginative faculty and produces visions;[163] the second is concerned with the motive faculties and produces changes in one's own body or in other bodies (ie. evil eye, miracles, etc.);[164] and the third is connected to the intellect and results in an individual being able to make instant contact with the Active Intellect through intuition.[165] He calls this the "sacred faculty" and considers it the highest of prophetic powers, as does Ficino.[166] Of these three, Ficino seems to put most emphasis on the first. However, even in the description of visions, Ficino incorporates elements of the other two kinds of prophecies. His final and most noble type of prophetic vision aligns with Avicenna's third kind since both pertain to reason and intellect and not to the imaginative faculty (or the phantasy in Ficinian terms). While Avicenna distinguishes between prophecies based on the faculties in which they originate, Ficino prefers to organize prophecies based on their manifestations and the levels of the soul's power in ascending order. This makes sense because their schemes of the human soul are different. Ficino's division is consistent within his own system

[163] *De Anima*, IV,2.
[164] *De Anima*, IV,2..
[165] *De Anima*, IV,4.
[166] Hasse, 155.

which demonstrates a careful reading of Avicenna's theories and their implications for the human body.

For both thinkers, truthful visions usually only occur to those who possess a powerful soul (or—the complete opposite—someone whose power of discernment is not very strong) because visions require a countercurrent flow of the images that make them up. Under normal circumstances, images proceed from the external senses to the common sense, then to memory, and finally they proceed to the phantasy (imaginative and cogitative) to be sorted and evaluated. In order to produce visions, the images must first strike the phantasy and make their way to the common sense for them to be 'seen'.[167] The striking comes about from the emanations. However, emanations cannot strike the phantasy directly since it is an intermediary faculty of the rational soul. Both Avicenna and Ficino know this.

Avicenna's explanation of this type of prophecy focuses primarily on the abilities of the imaginative faculty itself and not so much on emanation. For him, a powerful soul must be able to retrieve images from memory and have an unusually well-developed capacity to combine and separate data.[168] Much like Ficino, once the vision has been completed, the imaginative faculty (or the phantasy) starts to wander off. It is the rational soul which must stabilize the vision and commit it to memory.[169]

---

[167] Hasse, 158.
[168] Hasse, 158.
[169] Hasse, 158; Ficino, *PT* IV, 13.2.29. See note 64 above.

Ficino resolves this problem through the body in the case of worldly visions in order to distinguish vain dreams from prophetic visions. In the case of vain dreams and visions, Avicenna considers them as belonging to a distinct type of prophecy, because these visions come about mainly in the lower rational powers. Ficino incorporates more elements into his theory that go beyond what happens in the lower rational powers and so the lower rational powers can also receive emanations. As Ficino sees it, visions and intuition distinguish themselves from miracles because the former require emanations first and foremost. Prophetic visions always occur through emanations, whether they are from the intellects, the idola or the natures.

Ficino's theory of prophetic visions and intuition can be said to have been influenced by Avicennian doctrines insofar as it presents a hierarchy and classification of prophecies based on the Neoplatonic elements of Avicenna's psychology. However, his most creative use of Avicennian ideas is in combining and adapting them into his own scheme of the rational soul and its relationship to the body. So, while Avicenna distinguishes three distinct kinds of prophecies and assigns each to a different faculty of the soul, Ficino erodes this separation and combines them to bring out more transparently the relationship between mind, body and soul.[170] This kind of holistic view of prophecy is not present as such in Avicenna but can be cautiously inferred.[171] Ficino is also not simply following a scholastic reading of Avicenna but rereading it himself. As such he accepts Aquinas' view that prophets require all three Avicennian

[170] Refer to Chapter 1 for Avicenna's three types of prophecies.
[171] Hasse, 156.

conditions only as a possibility but not a necessity. This bring him closer to Avicenna himself. His fuller incorporation of the role of the humors in prophecy adds depth to his theory, points to a creative and holistic understanding of Avicenna and suggests a synthesized rather than syncretic use of Avicennian philosophy. Ficino incorporates Avicenna's conclusion about prophecy and reworks them in his own system, it overlaps at significant points because both share fundamental ideas on what is the rational soul.

Chapter 3: On Miracles

3.1 The powerful soul

In Book XIII of the *Platonic Theology*, Ficino uses miracles as the fourth (and final) sign that points to the immortality of the soul. The previous three are signs from the phantasy's emotions, from what reason accomplishes (including prophecy), and from the arts. Miracles are presented as the last in this set of signs because they are a combination of reason's power over the phantasy and the soul's sovereignty over matter. Ficino describes miracles not as something supernatural but as a work of wonder:

> Not only in forming and shaping matter through the rational principle of art, as we said, does the human mind appropriate for itself the divine right; it does so too through [its] sovereignty in transmuting the species of things. The resulting work is called a miracle, not because it is the supernatural work of our soul when it becomes God's instrument, but because it induces wonder, being a mighty event and one that happens rarely. Hence, we are in awe when souls of men dedicated to God command the elements, rouse winds, compel clouds to rain, dispel mists, cure the diseases of human bodies, and so on.[172]

Ficino makes two important claims in this passage; that miracles are the result of human sovereignty over matter and secondly, their extremely rare occurrence. Their rarity is due to the incredible amount of psychological strength required in their realization. This aligns well with Avicenna who also does not believe miracles to be

---

[172] *PT* IV, 13.4.1, "Non solum vero in formanda et figuranda per rationem artis materia, sicut diximus, mens humana ius sibi divinum vendicat, verumetiam in speciebus rerum per imperium transmutandis. Quod quidem opus miraculum appellator, non quia praeter naturam sit nostrae animae, quando dei fit instrumentum, sed quia, cum magnum quiddam sit et fiat raro, parit admirationem. Hinc admiramur quod animae hominum deo deditae imperent elementis, citent ventos, nubes cogant in pluvias, nebulas pellant, humanorum corporum curent morbos et reliqua."

purely the result of supernatural interference.[173] Rather, the capacity to affect matter external to one's usual control already exists within human beings. What really sets miracles apart is their rarity.

Ficino's account of thaumaturgy is based on two premises: 1) that "there is a third essence under the Angel (universal intellect) but above the whole matter of the world, an essence which is formed by the divinity but itself forms matter, and which receives spiritual forms from the divinity but gives corporeal forms to matter;" and 2) that "the third essence is nothing other than [all] rational souls, both our souls and souls higher than ours."[174] Ficino thus argues: "It follows that for the Platonists and the followers of Avicenna every rational soul through its essence and power is above the whole matter of the world and can move and form the whole—when, that is, it becomes God's instrument for doing so."[175]

The first premise is established in the first book of the *Platonic Theology*. The third essence is Ficino's manner of describing the soul. It is in the middle of a five-fold division of being. The third essence is below two celestial beings, namely God and Angel, and above quality and matter. Quality is similar to the platonic form. Furthermore, the third essence is *essentially* motion. It moves itself and the matter in which it inheres. It gives motion to the body not only in which it inheres but on all bodies within its reach. Because all rational souls are above matter, it follows that the rational soul of every individual is also above matter. And because rational souls are

---

[173] In fact, while Ficino does make allowance for divine interference, Avicenna does not. See, Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism," 123.
[174] *PT* IV, 13.4.2.
[175] *PT* IV, 13.4.2.

essentially capable of forming matter it follows that the soul of every individual rational soul is capable of forming matter. Inherence is necessary. The soul may not move matter without coming into contact with it. As such, when we speak of miracles, the third essence−the rational soul−does in fact gain control over the matter it is moving. What is not necessary is that the body of that particular soul come into contact with the object. How then can the rational soul possess sovereignty over matter of a body outside its own?

Every rational soul has a body, and just as the body has its own dispositions, so does the rational soul. In this way, the rational soul "chooses" the body most suitable for it. "From certain dispositions of the inner seeds established by providence various human souls are more suited to ruling various human bodies."[176] The soul rules a particular body because of its "amatory instinct" (*amatorium instinctum*).[177] It is love, "the overflowing desire of an overflowing life to give life to what is closest to itself" that binds the soul to a body.[178] This love is not blind however; the "amatory instinct" is so powerful that a soul usually governs only its own body. Miracles require that the soul free itself from its own body and temporarily inhere in another one. In order words, it

---

[176] *PT* IV, 13.4.3.

[177] Avicenna's *Treatise on Love* (*Risala fi al-'Ishq*) has a notion similar to Ficino's "amatory instinct". However, I am only aware of one published article about this particular Avicennian work having some influence in the Latin West, specifically on the development of the notion of courtly love. It is highly speculative and it does not convincingly demonstrate that the *Treatise on Love* was indeed available to the Latins. See, G. E von. Grunebaum, "Avicenna's Risâla Fî 'l-'išq and Courtly Love."*Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 4 (1952): 233–38. See also Avicenna, *Risala fi al-'ishq (Treatise on Love)*. Transl. Emil Fackenheim, "*A Treatise on Love* by Ibn Sina," *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945): 211-28.

[178] *PT* IV, 13.4.3.

must overcome and renounce the particular instinct that binds it to its own body and "be affected by a new instinct and in a way to rule and move another body."[179]

The basic form of the amatory instinct is attributed to the lowest part of the soul (the *idolum*) and it allows it to govern one body at a time. The faculty of reason also possesses this instinct but it may be refined.[180] Reason can govern multiple bodies through its ability to fashion matter. The soul is endowed with an additional power that Ficino calls the ruling power which allows the soul to have control over bodies, whether its own or another. "These two powers [reason and the ruling power], though they are equally potent with regard to all the world's bodies because of the common nature of the third essence, nevertheless act most on the body to which they are more disposed, as long, that is, as that divine tempering of the seeds [within] is not preventing them."[181]

Ficino explains that emotions live in the soul and impart physical changes to the body. The role of the phantasy is to channel these emotions. For Ficino, all these are types of miracles because they imply the soul's power to rule over (and impart life to) the body. However, this does not fully merit to be called a 'miracle' because it does not

---

[179] *PT* IV, 13.4.4.
[180] *PT* IV, 13.4.4.
[181] Ficino recognizes various dispositions of human souls but it seems he cannot find an adequate naturalistic explanation for this diversity. Hence, his explanation based on the "divine tempering of seeds" is almost theological. Furthermore, it must be noted that the imagery of "seeds" and its associated meanings are an important part of Ficino's philosophy. However, on this particular topic, that of miracles, Ficino does not elaborate on how these seeds are particularized since this occurs prior to any astronomical or astrological event. He must therefore provide a theological explanation for their differentiation. See Hiroshi Hirai, "Concepts of Seeds and Nature in Marsilio Ficino," in Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 266-276.

arouse wonder.[182] Nevertheless, the mechanics are more or less similar. In the lowest rank of powerful souls, this life-giving power can affect other bodies through spells and charms.[183] The body's own humoral disposition can facilitate some of these operations. In particular, the melancholic spirit is most capable of carrying out such deeds.[184] This points to the ability of material substances to influence or shape, to a certain degree, the powers of the soul.

In prophecy, remission (the abstraction of the soul from the body)[185] allows the mind to become aware of the emanations it receives. The more the soul distances itself from the influence of the phantasy, the clearer the mind is able to perceive the emanations. With regard to miracles, Ficino describes a second consequence of remission:

> To what is all this leading? That we might understand that it is possible for man's soul to be turned at times towards mind, its head, by the total concentration of its reason, just as it is turned at other times towards the phantasy, as we have already said, and towards the reason. Which soul does this? It is the one which orders the phantasy to be silent and which, burning with desire too for supernal divinity, does not trust itself to the customary discursiveness of the reason natural to it, but lives in the mind alone, issues as an angel, and takes God into its whole heart. […] For the influence of God on high, flowing down through the angelic minds to man's soul, daily moves the soul, immersed as it is in the body, to cast off its fleshly clothing, to lay aside its own soul-powers and activities, and instead of a soul to become an angel [*angelus*].[186]

---

[182] *PT* IV, 13.4.6.
[183] *PT* IV, 13.4.7.
[184] *PT* IV, 13.4.7. Melancholic sorcerers are more effective at evil magic. Furthermore, whenever the magic pertains to the phantasy and lower soul, the non-material causation occurs through vapours. In this sense, although it is invisible to the senses it is not immaterial. There's still a material substance that exits from one body and affects another.
[185] See chapter 2.
[186] *PT* IV, 13.4.12.

Ficino claims that if the soul is sufficiently steeped within the influences and emanations of the mind, it loses itself within them and loosens its grip on its own body. This allows the soul to extend itself beyond its body and affect other matter. This is only possible when the soul becomes "angelic."[187] Ultimately, this angelic soul is akin to the World Soul. When liberated from its actual body it mingles with the World Soul and takes command of the elements:

> If the soul naturally surpasses the world machine [*mundi machinam*], and if it performs wonders even in foreign bodies through its inferior powers, what do we suppose it will do when it ascends to its head and emerges as angelic? […] When liberated, it therefore emerges from this body into the great [world] body, and, filled now with God, moves the humors of this greater animal, the four elements, that is, of the greater world, as if they were its own. For it has now emerged as a kind of World Soul, the soul of that part of the world with respect to which it is most disposed. […] If the life-giving power of the rational soul has the power from God Himself over the world's spheres, then the affective power of the reason and the mind will also have power over them. With that power alone, therefore, it will, under God's command, rouse the winds and drag clouds into the clear sky and compel them to rain; then it will allay the winds and clear the air.[188]

Remission, combined with the powers of reason and will, is the primary process through which miracles occur. The quality of the miracle depends on the extent of the

---

[187] *PT* IV, 13.4.13.

[188] *PT* IV, 13.4.13, "Si anima natura sua excedit mundi machinam perque vires inferiores mira operatur in corporibus etiam alienis, quid illam putamus acturam, quando in caput surrexerit suum evaseritque angelica? […] Ideo quando soluta ab hoc, emergit in amplum, deo iam plena, animalis huius grandioris humores, id est quatuor elementa maioris mundi, movet ut sua. Siquidem iam quasi evasit anima mundi, eius videlicet mundi partis erga quam afficitur maxime. […] Si vim ab ipso deo videlicet habet vivifica vis rationalis animae in mundi sphaeras, vim quoque habet in eas rationis ac mentis affectus. Solo igitur affectu citabit ventos deo duce ac caelo nubes inducet sereno easque coget in pluvias. Rursus sedabit ventos et aerem serenabit."

soul's transcendence from the body. The further the soul abstracts from the body, the closer it becomes to the minds. The proximity to the minds determine the kind of miracles that can be possible. A soul which relies heavily on the phantasy is capable only to go as far as sorcery but cannot produce changes within the elemants. Goodness requires at least the involvement of reason and, further, of mind. The miracles that ensue from this ability belong to the pious.

3.2 Avicenna's theory of miracles

Let us now briefly consider Avicenna's related theory of miracles and prophethood. For Avicenna, a prophet is one who possesses the angelic intellect.[189] This is apart from the prophecies considered in the previous chapter regarding visions and dreams. In the latter case, Avicenna and Ficino both argue that the capacity for various kinds of prophecies exists within the human soul, although they vary in strength depending on the state of the imagination (phantasy) and the rational soul. Ficino takes the additional step of expounding on the qualities that differentiate one type of prophecy from the others and makes an important distinction between visions received through the lower soul and those received through the rational soul proper. However, the prophetic disposition as the defining characteristic of a so-called divinely elected lawgiver is not only concerned with the ability to foretell the future. This office requires, besides, the ability to affect other souls in some way. These influences can be categorised into three kinds: those stemming from the imaginative faculty, the reason, and the angelic

[189] Hasse, 158-160.

intellect.[190] The first two produce effects such as sorcery and some form of healing. Miracles *as* white magic however, those that involve affecting the elements of the World as such, are properly the offices of those endowed with the angelic intellect.[191]

Avicenna defines the angelic intellect as the ability to receive intelligibles directly from the Active Intellect (akin to the universal intellect and the Ficinian Angel) and almost instantaneously.[192] Avicenna distinguishes two kinds of intelligibles, primary and secondary. Primary intelligibles are self-evident truths and secondary intelligibles consist of knowledge of the middle term of syllogisms and of universal concepts.[193] The main difference between the prophet and ordinary learned individuals is in the manner they receive secondary intelligibles from the Active Intellect. The prophet receives them directly while everyone else receives them indirectly through discursive reasoning and the preparation of the soul through cogitative activities.[194] The prophet is exempted from undergoing this process. This does not mean that the prophet does not need to have recourse to reason, nevertheless, he possesses the ability to learn without guidance or a teacher, and his knowledge is intuitive and has a strong acumen.[195]

Another important remark concerning the prophetic (also angelic or sacred faculty) is that it is not acquired necessarily through certain practices but exists accidentally in some individuals. That is, some individuals are naturally endowed with

---

[190] Refer to Chapter 1.
[191] *Metaphysics*, 365, 10.2.3.
[192] Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1 (1963): 54.
[193] Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof," 51.
[194] Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof," 51.
[195] Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof," 51.

it and this is the primary means of possessing it. What accounts for it is a material cause. Avicenna explains that the temperament and complexion of the body is involved in the equilibrium of the soul. The more balanced the bodily temperament, the greater the soul's intuitive abilities. A perfectly balanced complexion means that the soul is unhindered by the body and can establish contact with the Active Intellect almost seamlessly.[196] Those who do not possess perfectly balanced bodily complexions can acquire the angelic intellect through acts of purifications.[197]

This is as much abilities Avicenna grants the angelic intellect. So how does he explain miracles and their relationship to the prophetic faculty? Miracles are possible through will power and the motive faculty. Since souls are superior to matter it follows that individual souls are also more powerful than matter.[198] And when the will power of a given soul reaches a certain elevated degree it can begin affecting matter outside of its own body. As such, the possession of the angelic faculty is not strictly required to perform miracles. But Avicenna needs to make recourse to it in order to distinguish the types of miracles that one may perform, namely differentiating, for instance, the evil eye from prophetic miracles. Even then, Avicenna does not ascribe miracles to the angelic intellect directly as we shall see. Rather, he differentiates good miracles from evil ones through the noble soul. This is not a faculty but a quality of the soul acquired through purification. A prophet, it goes without saying, not only possesses an angelic intellect

---

[196] Avicenna and Ján Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre Aš-Sifā'*. (Prague: Académie tchécoslovaque des sciences, 1956), IV,4.
[197] Hasse, 163.
[198] Avicenna and Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā*, IV,4.

but a noble soul as well. The noble soul, in addition, makes the soul even more powerful.

3.3 The Avicennian angelic faculty

When it comes to miracles and non-material causation, Avicenna is often cited as Ficino's main source.[199] The striking resemblance of the theory of an angelic faculty and its effects on other bodies and souls is one of the main indications of Avicenna's influence on the Renaissance philosopher. The relationship between Ficino's angelic soul/mind and the rest of his own psychology is similar. Ficino claims to have had a larger vision from the outset of the *Platonic Theology*, in Book XIII he emphasizes this vision:

> In the first book it was argued that there is a third essence under the angel but above the whole matter of the world, an essence which is formed by the divinity but itself forms matter, and which receives spiritual forms from the divinity but gives corporeal forms to matter. In the third book it was also established that the third essence is nothing other than [all] rational souls, both our souls and souls higher than ours. It follows that for the Platonists and the followers of Avicenna every rational soul through its essence and power is above the whole matter of the world and can move and form the whole—when, that is, it becomes God's instrument for doing so.[200]

---

[199] See, Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism"; James Hankins, "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul"; D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*; Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*.

[200] *PT* IV, 13.4.2, "In primo libro disputatum est essentiam tertiam esse sub angelo et super totam mundi materiam; a numine formari, formare materiam; accipere quidem formas spiritales a numine, dare vero materiae corporales. In tertio quoque libro constitit essentiam tertiam nihil esse aliud quam rationales animas tam nostras quam nostris superiores. Hinc efficitur apud Platonicos sectatoresque Avicennae, ut omnis rationalis anima per essentiam suam atque poten- tiam super totam sit mundi materiam, totam movere possit atque formare, videlicet quando ad haec dei fit instrumentum."

The idea of the angelic mind is part of the central idea of the *Platonic Theology* that the soul is divine in nature—divine not only in the sense that its source is divine but that this divine source has also imparted some of its divine qualities to the rational soul, and that this is the case even for the lowest rational souls. Hence, individual human beings are also endowed with the capability of tapping into a divine power within themselves. While in theory this power exists in all individuals, there are many other factors that determine the extent to which this power is available for use. The most important consideration for Ficino is that soul conquer not only the body but also itself.

Ficino's view is that a rational soul completely free from any worldly and bodily cares, which also includes chastity, is intrinsically bound to become angelic. While Ficino seems to follow Avicenna's general theory, he departs from it in many significant ways. The main difference between Ficino's thaumaturgy and Avicenna's is the attribution of miracles to two different faculties and processes. For Ficino, the primary process occurs through remission−the same process that explains prophecy and vision−that is the transcendence of the soul from the body and union with the universal intellect. The last part is akin to the seventh type of prophecy considered in the last chapter. There is nevertheless a slight modification to this process, which is the inclusion of will power. It is the combination of the theory of remission and the presence of a very high degree of will power that enables miracles. The degree of remission from the body (whether the individual depends on the lower or higher soul) determines the quality of the miracles. Avicenna on the other hand, attributes prophecy primarily to the faculty of imagination and perception while miracles are attributed to

the motive faculty. Ficino does not make a distinction between these two faculties at all, as we have seen. However, it is important to remember that Ficino does account for motion by qualifying the activity of the third essence as motion. Whereas for Avicenna the motive faculty is assigned to the animal soul, Ficino ascribes it to the rational soul.

In addition, Ficino does not make any distinction between the angelic intellect and the angelic soul. Both seem to be used interchangeably. This is so because whoever has achieved seamless contact with the Angel intellect has also purified his or her soul completely. This is not at all the case with Avicenna. The angelic intellect is a faculty of the soul that is separate from the idea of the noble soul. And while it is possible for a noble soul to acquire an angelic intellect, the latter is usually either present or not and has little to do with acquisition. This is especially true if we simply rely on the *De Anima,* as Hasse points out.[201]

The psychological theories of both thinkers follow different patterns. Ficino's psychology consists of a ladder-like distribution of faculties, it is essentially an ascent which depends primarily on reason. Reason enables the soul to ascend to the angelic sphere or remain trapped in the material world. Avicenna's scheme does not seek to justify this type of vision but actually to account for the various observable psychological phenomena and the forming of a coherent whole. In this sense, Avicenna's theory can be described as bottom-up while Ficino is working from within a top-down approach.

---

[201] Hasse, 161. Hasse remarks that *De Anima* does not contain much detail on this point. Hence, Ficino would have been unaware of Avicenna's more detailed account of the relationship between the angelic soul and the angelic intellect found in another work untranslated in Latin, namely his *Ishārāt wa-Tanbihāt*. See Introduction.

3.4 Teleological miracles

Ficino and Avicenna explain miracles and prophecy primarily through their psychologies. Both, however, possess a second explanation for prophethood based on teleological necessity. This is because Avicenna recognizes (and so does Ficino) that their psychologies establish miracles and prophecies as possibilities but not as necessities. Therefore, they also offer a kind of proof for their necessary existence by justifying the necessary existence of a prophet (in whom these powers are present). The two explanations are strikingly similar in their articulation. Avicenna writes in his *Metaphysics*:

> Thus, with respect to the survival and actual existence of the human species, the need of this person [lawgiver] is greater than the need for such benefits as the growing of hair on the eyebrows, the concave shaping of the arches of the feet, and many others that are not necessary for survival but are, at best, useful for it. [Now,] the existence of the righteous man to legislate and to dispense justice is possible, as we have previously remarked. It becomes impossible, therefore, that divine providence should ordain the existence of those [former] benefits and not these [latter], which are their bases. Nor [is it possible] that the First Principle and the angels after Him should know [the former] but not [the latter]. Nor yet [is it possible] that that whose existence (in the order of the good) He knows to be [only] possible [in itself and yet] necessary for introducing the order of the good should not exist. And how can it not exist, when that which depends on its existence, [and is] built on its existence, exists? A prophet, therefore, must exist, and he must be a human. He must also possess a special characteristic not present in other people so that people would recognize in him something they do not have, whereby he is differentiated from them. Therefore, he will perform the miracles about which we have been informed.[202]

Ficino provides a similar argument:

> So assembling together is natural for man. But if men assembled in the absence of

[202] *Metaphysics*, 365, 10.2.3.

> law, they would soon be torn asunder by mutual injustices; as such they would perish from the lack of many things, and in their helplessness be devoured by wild beasts. So in order to live and to prosper, they must come together. But in order to stay together in turn, they absolutely must have law, a law whose authority is such that no man is confident that he has the power or the right to violate it by violence or deceit. But the law cannot be such unless the lawgiver is, and is thought to be, divine. But to be and to be deemed divine, he must be sent to men by divine providence accompanied by certain manifest miracles. Plato and Avicenna call such a prophet the divine leader of mankind.[203]

Avicenna's argument is based on the logic that if humans naturally need to work in partnership for their survival then the need for a cohesive and well-ordered association or city is crucial. And if such a thing is a natural necessity then Providence would not deprive a species of that which is required for their survival while granting them that which is not required. A teleological order of priority determines the necessity of a prophet. Therefore, it is not only that prophethood is possible from a psychological standpoint but necessary from a teleological one. Ficino follows Avicenna (and Aristotle) in justifying this necessity.

Here the notion of the angelic intellect shares a common function; both Avicenna and Ficino necessitate that the divinely-elected lawgiver possess an angelic intellect and an angelic soul that will enable the prophet not only to give laws but also to have

---

[203] *PT* IV, 14.9.3, "Quamobrem naturalis est homini congregatio. Verum si absque lege concurrant, paulo post mutuis disgregabuntur iniuriis, disgregati vero turn multorum defectu peribunt, turn velut inermes laniabuntur a feris. Ut ergo vivant, et bene vivant, congregari eos necesse est. Sed rursus ut in coetu permaneant, omnino opus est lege —ea inquam lege, cuius tanta sit auctoritas, ut nemo vel violentia vel dolo praevaricari se posse aut debere confidat. Talis autem esse non potest, nisi legislator sit existimeturque divinus. Denique ut talis sit habeaturque, oportet eum manifestis quibusdam miraculis ad homines divina providentia mittL Quem sane prophetam humani generis divinum ducem Plato et Avicenna cognominant."

influence over the people he governs. This influence is not only through preaching but he must also persuade through his noble temperament and an ability to perform miracles. As such, all the powers of the soul are fully realized in the prophet. Once the prophet's existence is established as necessary, the accompanying prophetic powers' existence become not only possible but also necessary.

Ficino and Avicenna's theories, while similar in their outcome, differ in their articulation. Ficino follows Avicenna in explaining miracles using psychological and teleological approaches. At the psychological level, Avicenna explains miracles through the motive faculty as well as the angelic faculty. Ficino does so using and building upon the theory of *vacatio* that he uses to explain visions. The angelic faculty for Ficino, is not only the result of a perfectly balanced complexion of the body, but an overall perfected mental and spiritual state, which may be more easily actualized within a perfectly balanced body.

Conclusion

Is an Avicennian reading of Ficino justified?

The main purpose of this essay was to investigate the relationship between Avicenna and Ficino through an inspection and comparison of their psychologies. Approaching Ficino's theories on miracles and prophecies from a psychological framework is the most effective way of understanding his debt to Avicenna since it is within this context that the Islamic philosopher frames his own theory. Chapter 1 outlined how Avicenna offers a naturalistic explanation for prophecies and miracles, which he attributes to three separate faculties. I also highlighted the main areas where Ficino borrows directly from Avicenna. In Chapter 2, Ficino's theories were analyzed from the perspective of the psychology he himself elaborates. This was compared to Avicenna's explanation for visions. Chapter 3 followed a similar approach in understanding Ficino's thaumaturgy. Based on these analyses, it is clear that Ficino relies on Avicenna as a blueprint in developing his own theory of prophecies and miracles. He borrows cautiously from the Islamic thinker and departs from him in significant ways.

The major differences between the two systems are better understood as Ficino's disagreement with or departures from key aspects of Avicennian psychology (which is then reflected in his prophetology). We have seen how Ficino differentiates the various types of visions and miracles on slightly different grounds. Avicenna attributes prophecies (as visions) to the imagination and miracles to the motive faculty and the angelic faculty. Ficino uses the basic principles in Avicenna's theories but combines them within a single seemingly linear theory of prophecy, the basic insight of which is

the claim that the quality of prophecy increases based on the degrees of perfection of the rational soul as a whole. The consequences are important; Ficino's theory culminates in the attainment of the angelic faculty, that is, the perfection of the faculties of imagination, reason, and the intellect. Ficino's prophetic qualities exhibit fully the powers of the rational soul within a single individual. It is on account of this all-around perfection that such an individual is elected as the divine lawgiver. On the other hand, Avicenna does not argue that these abilities be present in their fullest extent in a single individual since each type of prophetic power (imagination, the motive faculty, and the intellect) can also function independently of the other two.

Ficino's use of Avicennian ideas is an active and careful appropriation. He attempts to develop a theory of the rational soul whose main objectives is to demonstrate the immortality and divine nature of the soul. Ficino He finds important insights in Avicenna's work which help him achieve a complete account of the soul. This means that Ficino adapts Avicenna's ideas into his own psychology, rather than incorporating disparate elements without a consistent theoretical framework; his reading of Avicenna is anything but passive. This psychological theory insists, firstly, on the intimate relationship between mind, soul and body, and secondly, on the divine and angelic status of the higher part of the rational soul. In this regard, Avicenna's naturalistic explanation for prophecy and miracles, which operates on commensurate principles, is especially attractive to Ficino since it enables him to illustrate most compellingly in analytic detail just how powerful the soul is.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Avicenna. "A Treatise on Love by Ibn Sina." Translated by Emil L Fackenheim. *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945): 208–28.

Avicenna, and Simone van Riet. *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus, édition critique de la traduction latine médiévale*. Vol. 1–2. 2 vols. Louvain: Peeters, 1968.

Avicenna, and Ján Bakoš. *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre Aš-Sifā'*. Prague: Académie tchécoslovaque des sciences, 1956.

Avicenna, and Michael E Marmura. *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text = Al-Ilahīyāt Min Al-Shifā'*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2004.

Ficino, Marsilio, Michael JB Allen, and James Hankins. *Platonic Theology*. 6 vols. I Tatti Renaissance Library. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Ficino, Marsilio. *Three Books on Life - De Vita Libri Tres*. Translated by Carol V Kaske and John R Clark. Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989.

Gundissalinus, Dominucus. "The Treatise De Anima of Dominicus Gundissalinus." Edited by Joseph T. Muckle. *Mediaeval Studies* 2, no. 1 (1940): 23–103.

Secondary Sources

Akasoy, Anna, and Guido Giglioni. *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*. Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 2013.

Allen, Michael J. B, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies. *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002.

Black, Deborah L. "Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations." *Topoi* 19, no. 1 (2000): 59–75.

Burnett, Charles. "The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science, 1492-1562." In *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, edited by Anna Contadini and Charles Burnett, 185–99. London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1999.

____ "Niranj: A Category of Magic (Almost) Forgotten in the Latin West." *Natura, Scienze E Società Medievali*, 2008, 37–66.

Cassirer, Ernst, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall. "Five Questions Concerning the Mind." In *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man; Selections in Translation,* 185–212. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

Celenza, Christopher S. *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Copenhaver, Brian P, and Charles B Schmitt. *Renaissance Philosophy*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Elamrani-Jamal, Abdelali. "De la multiplicité des modes de la prophétie chez Ibn Sīnā." In *Etudes sur Avicenne*, edited by Jean Jolivet and Rushdī Rāshid, 125–42. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1984.

Faivre, Antoine. *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.

Farmer, S. A, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486) : The Evolution of Traditional, Religious, and Philosophical Systems : With Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998.

Garin, Eugenio. "Phantasia E Imaginatio Fra Marsillo Ficino E Pietro Pomponazzi." *Giornale Critico Della Filosofia Italiana* 5, no. 3 (1985): 349–361.

Grunebaum, G. E von. "Avicenna's Risâla Fî 'l-'išq and Courtly Love." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 4 (1952): 233–38.

Gutas, Dimitri. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2014.

____. "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology." In *Aspects of Avicenna*, edited by Robert Wisnovsky, 1–39. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Pub., 2001.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. "The Platonic Frenzies In Marsilio Ficino." In *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity*, edited by Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen, and Yme Kuiper, 553–68, 2010.

____. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Hankins, James. "Ficino, Avicenna and the Occult Powers of the Rational Soul." In *La Magia nell'Europa Moderna: Tra Antica Sapienza E Filosofia Naturale*, edited by Fabrizio Meroi and Elisabetta Scapparone. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007.

Hasse, Dag Nikolaus. *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*. London: Warburg Institute, 2000.

____. "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by James Hankins, 113–36. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Heitzmann, Marian. "L'agostinismo Avicennizzante E Il Punto Di Partenza Della Filosofia Di Marsilio Ficino." *Giornale Critico Della Filosofia Italiana* 16 (1935): 295–322.

Hirai, Hiro. "Concepts of Seeds and Nature in Marsilio Ficino." In *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J. B Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies, 266–76. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002.

Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*. Translated by Virginia Lanphear Conant. Columbia Studies in Philosophy 6. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

Marmura, Michael E. "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1 (1963): 49–56.

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*. Translated by Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Pingree, David Edwin. *Picatrix: the Latin version of the Ghīyat al-hakīm*. London: Warbarg Institute, 1986.

Rahman, Fazlur. "Ibn Sina." In *A History of Muslim Philosophy. With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands.*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif, 480–506. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963.

Rutkin, H. Darrel. "The Physics and Metaphysics of Talismans (Imagines Astronomicae) in Marsilio Ficino's De vita libri tres: A Case Study in (Neo)Platonism, Aristotelianism and the Esoteric Tradition." In *Platonismus und Esoterik in byzantinischem Mittelalter und italienischer Renaissance*, edited by Helmut Seng, 149–174. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013.

Saif, Liana. *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, 2015.

Soleymani Chaharfarsakhi, Masoumeh. "Avicenna and Ficino on Divine Prophets." *Accademia: revue de la Société Marsile Ficin* 13 (2012): 23–43.

Walker, D. P. *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

Wisnovsky, Robert. *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Yates, Frances Amelia. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.

Zambelli, Paola. "L'immaginazione e il suo potere : Da al-Kindī, al Fārābī e Avicenna al Medioevo latino e al Rinascimento." In *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter*, edited by Albert Zimmermann, Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg, and Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem, 188–206. Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985.

____. *Astrology and Magic from the Medieval Latin and Islamic World to Renaissance Europe: Theories and Approaches*. Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2012.