

The Letters of Marsilio Ficino



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著者:Ficino, Marsilio

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'[Ficino] was at the very fountainhead of some of the most characteristic and influential aspects of the Italian Renaissance' - "The Times Literary Supplement". Marsilio Ficino

of Florence (1433-99) was one of the most influential thinkers of the Renaissance. He put before society a new ideal of human nature, emphasizing its divine potential. As teacher and guide to a remarkable circle of men, he made a vital contribution to changes that were taking place in European thought. For Ficino, the writings of Plato provided the key to the most important knowledge for mankind, knowledge of God and the soul. It was the absorption of this knowledge that proved so important to Ficino, to his circle, and to later writers and artists. As a young man, Ficino had been directed by Cosimo de' Medici towards the study of Plato in the original Greek. Later he formed a close connection with Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici, under whom Florence achieved its age of brilliance. Gathered round Ficino and Lorenzo were such men as Landino, Bembo, Poliziano (with whom Ficino maintains a correspondence in this volume) and Pico della Mirandola. The ideas they discussed became central to the work of Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, Durer, and many other writers and artists. This volume contains letters written in 1488 and 1489, with a preface added in the summer of 1490. There are also four important letters written in 1489 not included in the printed edition of his letters published in 1495, no doubt because they concern Ficino's "Three Books on Life (De vita)" and were published with it, together with a note to the reader printed there. These five items are appended to the present volume (Appendices A to E) as they help to complete the record of Ficino's engagement with other scholars at this period. In addition, some letters have been provided from his correspondents: Appendix F is Poliziano's reply to a request for help, G is a letter from Valori, and H is the covering letter Ficino wrote at the time he composed Book I of De vita. Appendix letters I to K are from Ermolao Barbaro, presenting the other side of the correspondence between him and Ficino. They date from 1484, 1488 and 1491 but are given together here. Appendix L presents another letter from Poliziano to Ficino, and M to Q are letters of dedication written by Filippo Valori for presentation copies of Ficino's work discussed in this volume. Valori personally paid for these presentation copies and for the publication in print of "De vita". Volume 8 in the Shephard-Walwyn edition, the first English translation of "The Letters", corresponds with "Book IX" of the Latin edition.

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