

# *Philosophia picta*

## *On the Reception of the Neo-Platonism of Florence in Buda*

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RÉSUMÉ : La présente étude analyse une enluminure du bréviaire de Domonkos Kálmáncsehi (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Cod. Lat. 446), daté vers 1481 et rédigé à la cour du roi Matthias Corvinus. Sur le f. 88v, une image décorative et surprenante a été insérée dans une série d'illustrations consacrées à la Vierge : deux couples nus font l'amour autour d'une fontaine. L'auteure considère qu'il ne peut pas s'agir de l'amour vulgaire et pécheur (*nuditas criminalis*), ni d'une fonction strictement ornementale. Puisque la cour de Buda était influencée par les modes de la Renaissance florentine, notamment par le néoplatonisme de Ficino, il est fort possible que l'image doive être décryptée selon l'interprétation de Panovsky sur la diffusion de la conception ficinienne de l'amour dans les milieux humanistes, surtout si l'on considère que l'un des amis de Ficino, Francesco Bandini, était arrivé à la cour de Buda en 1476. Dans ce cas, les deux couples enlacés ne représenteraient pas l'amour charnel en tant que péché, mais la force génératrice de l'amour sur terre. Selon l'interprétation ficinienne du *Symposium*, l'amour est l'expression même de l'émanation du pouvoir divin, qui crée le monde dans sa beauté.

MOTS-CLÉS : humanisme, enluminures de manuscrits, néoplatonisme, Renaissance florentine, bréviaire.

REZUMAT: Studiul de față analizează o miniatură din breviarul lui Domonkos Kálmáncsehi (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Cod. Lat. 446), datat în jurul anului 1481 și redactat la curtea regelui Matia Corvin. O imagine decorativă și surprinzătoare a fost inserată într-o serie de ilustrații dedicate Fecioarei la f. 88v: două cupluri nude fac dragoste în jurul unei fântâni. Autoarea consideră că nu poate fi vorba despre dragostea vulgară și păcătoasă (*nuditas criminalis*) și nici de o reprezentare pur ornamentală. Întrucât curtea din Buda era influențată de modelele Renașterii florentine, în special de neoplatonismul lui Ficino, s-ar cuveni ca imaginea să fie descifrată în cheia de lectură aplicată de Panovsky difuzării concepției lui Ficino despre dragoste în mediile umaniste. Unul dintre prietenii lui Ficino, Francesco Bandini, ajunsese de altfel la curtea din Buda în 1476. În acest caz, cele două cupluri îmbrățișate nu ar reprezenta iubirea trupească, deci un păcat, ci forța care generează dragostea pe pământ. În interpretarea *Banchetului*, Ficino consideră că iubirea este expresia emanației puterii divine, care creează lumea în toată splendoarea ei.

CUVINTE CHEIE: umanism, miniaturi de manuscrise, neoplatonism, Renaștere florentină, breviar.

to Karsay Orsolya

The Kálmáncsehi breviary is one of the best known and most valuable Hungarian medieval manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> It was purchased by the National Széchényi Library in 1939,<sup>2</sup> and has since then been thoroughly studied again and again.<sup>3</sup> Its reputation is mainly due to its extraordinarily rich illuminations rendering the breviary one of the most important products of the late fifteenth-century book painting activity at or around the royal court of Buda.<sup>4</sup> The aim of the current study is to provide some new perspectives regarding a single disputed element of that rich illumination.

Research unanimously agrees that the codex was produced around 1481 in Buda for Domonkos Kálmáncsehi (died 1503) provost of Székesfehérvár. The prelate, who also played a role in the royal administration, is primarily known in Hungarian cultural history for his remarkable bibliography.<sup>5</sup> Besides the Budapest breviary, three more books belonging to his library are documented: a missal with a breviary, now in the Morgan Library and Museum of New

York;<sup>6</sup> a prayer book in the National Library in Paris;<sup>7</sup> and a missal in the treasury of the Zagreb cathedral.<sup>8</sup> The chief miniaturist of the Budapest breviary was Francesco da Castello,<sup>9</sup> a master from Milan, who autographed his work in no fewer than four instances to indicate that he considered the manuscript to be one of his major works.<sup>10</sup> The commissioning prelate himself is depicted twice<sup>11</sup> and is also named in the manuscript. On one occasion – at the Feast of Corpus Christi – his name appears together with that of the miniaturist. All this suggests that the manuscript was designed and produced with special care.<sup>12</sup>

Among the illuminations decorating the main feasts<sup>13</sup> and surrounding the text on all its four margins, the one accompanying the Christmas Vigil in particular seems to be crafted with great care (f. 88v) (Fig. 1). The miniature analysed in the current article is an intricate part of this composition. The scene, a fountain full of water with two embracing nude couples sitting on its rim, can be found in the struc-



▲ Fig. 1. Breviary of Domanok Kálmáncsehi. Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 446., f. 88v. Courtesy of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár.

turally important place of the full-page decorative sheets of Renaissance codices, more or less at the golden section point of the framing decoration's vertical side. The series of scenes in the decorative sheet depicts the cycle of the Life of the Virgin, as is appropriate for the feast of Christmas, with small medallions illustrating certain parts. The Annunciation is represented in the upper left corner, while in the top middle there is the Engagement of Joseph and Mary, in the upper right corner the Visitation, in the bottom right corner the Bathing of Jesus, and the scene in the bottom left corner shows the twelve-year-old Jesus teaching in the temple. The historiated initial depicts Mary kneeling and adoring the swaddled Christ Child, who is radiating light. The reader would automatically ask how such an image could be placed next to a series of pictures depicting a most sacred event.

If we want to set up an order among the different groups of the elements of the full-page illumination, it is obvious that the main theme – the unequivocally sacred theme clearly embedded in the relevant medieval tradition – is conveyed by the historiated initial and framed medallions. The miniature with the fountain belongs to the space with a more decorative function. This space, which, due to its seemingly ordinary and random nature, usually attracts less attention, also represents a certain tradition. The subject of this ornamental part differs by periods, places and themes. At the same time, when producing this part, the artist definitely had more freedom than in the case of the main iconographic program. As a result, the secondary ornamentation as a whole often produces a more complicated and more challenging structure than the main theme. It can certainly be maintained that in most cases, as well as in our case, there is some kind of a dialogue between the secondary ornamentation / border decoration and the main theme. Above the fountain, putti blow their downward-held trombones, in the middle of the border on the right there is a putto playing the pipe, while at the bottom of the sheet two hybrid creatures (a centaur and a sphinx-like figure) ready to fight one another fill the rest of the decorative space. The latter are placed at the two sides of the coat of arms.

In order to have a more or less clear picture of what the contemporary observer could have thought when looking at the page in question, one should also take into consideration the text of the well-known antiphon that begins the feast of Christmas Eve in the breviary. The picture and the text of the antiphon emerge in the observer's mind together, complementing and interpreting each other:

*Ave, spes nostra,  
 Dei Genetrix intacta,  
 Ave, illud ave per angelum accipiens.  
 Ave, concipiens Patris splendorem, benedicta.  
 Ave, casta, sanctissima virgo sola innupta.  
 Te glorificat omnis creatura matrem Luminis.  
 Alleluja, alleluja, alleluja.*

Hail, our hope, pure Mother of God!  
 Hail, who received that 'hail' from the angel.  
 Hail, conceiving the Father of light, O blessed one.  
 Hail, pure and most holy maiden and virgin.  
 Every creature glorifies you, mother of Light.  
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

(transl. Susan Hellauer)

Just like the picture cycle depicted here, the text of the antiphon focuses on the Holy Mary, mother of God giving birth to him while remaining a virgin.

In art history research, Mikó Árpád drew the attention to the miniature and formulated some fundamental questions about it. He also identified the context providing the starting point of a possible interpretation, allowing at the same time room for further considerations.<sup>14</sup> He suggests on the one hand that the interpreter should follow the *interpretatio christiana* when approaching the miniature. The image in this case would represent the dichotomy / opposition of *amor sanctus* (holy love) and *amor carnalis* (carnal love), and perhaps through the amoreto blowing his pipe and the hybrid creatures also symbolises natural wilderness as opposed to the Immaculate Conception. On the other hand, and independently from the previous interpretation, the image could also belong to the sardonic *all'antica* pictorial commentaries. Mikó Árpád argued that this latter idea could be supported by Domonkos Kálmáncsehi's 'robust' personality, emerging from the scarce sources. Accepting that these representations allow by their nature for several approaches, in this case we think that the uniqueness of the final result, lacking any antithetic emphasis, calls for a different interpretation.

Contrasting the vulgar and the holy (and the jokes emerging from this contrast or based upon it) are of course not alien to the painted illustrations of medieval prayer books.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this also clearly appears on the examined page, as the little *amoreto* blowing the pipe in the middle of the border on the right-hand side represents, in its modest way, such a tradition.<sup>16</sup> However, the composition of the border on the left (as we shall see later, the entire left-hand side part of the decorative border makes up a connected whole) would be difficult to put under the categories of vulgar or profane in a general sense of the word. In a way, it does not fit into the simple, robust, sometimes unsightly and, last but not least, easy to interpret embellishments meant to represent such contrast in the contemporary and earlier codices. The reason behind this is partly its emphatic position, and partly a certain solemnity in the way it is presented (the means to achieve this effect include stylisation and finely painted images). The result is a picture that – although depicting the most vulgar activity – is close to the sacred character otherwise dominating the page.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the truly vulgar subject of the illustration cannot be ignored. Indeed, medieval art 'allowed' this subject to appear only in a strictly regulated way and sense, and always with a highly negative connotation, referring it to matters of hell. At the same time, it is highly difficult (if not impossible) to find examples such as this, where an embracing nude couple presented in this negative sense is placed next to the most sacred events. This must have been far above the range of the variations allowed for example in the art of decorating books of hours to counterpoint the sacred and the profane. In addition, as one can see, in our case there are no attributes of negativity or sin. The Nativity is accompanied by an embrace rendered beautiful and solemn. In the light of medieval iconography, there must have been some significant change in attitude and a crucial element of thought must have appeared in the background to make this possible. It is probably wrong to look for the explanation in the stereotype of the "light-hearted spirit of the Renaissance", and it is also wrong if this scene is placed in the category of jokes. It is perhaps best to keep in mind only that the emerging new world, conventionally

called the Renaissance, whose main explicit aim was the *renovatio* of religion, education and sciences, did not cause an automatic and fundamental change in the mindset of the generations living in that era, who were still rooted in the Middle Ages.

When searching for an explanation, one should not ignore the place and time where the manuscript was created, as these elements might prove to be crucial in its interpretation. As already mentioned, the illumination was produced in c. 1481 in Hungary, at the royal court of Buda, a piece of information which provides the context where the clue to this phenomenon must be explored. The importance of the place and time are confirmed by the above-mentioned uniqueness of this composition, namely that no parallel has so far been found to it in the codex material of either the Middle Ages or the Renaissance.

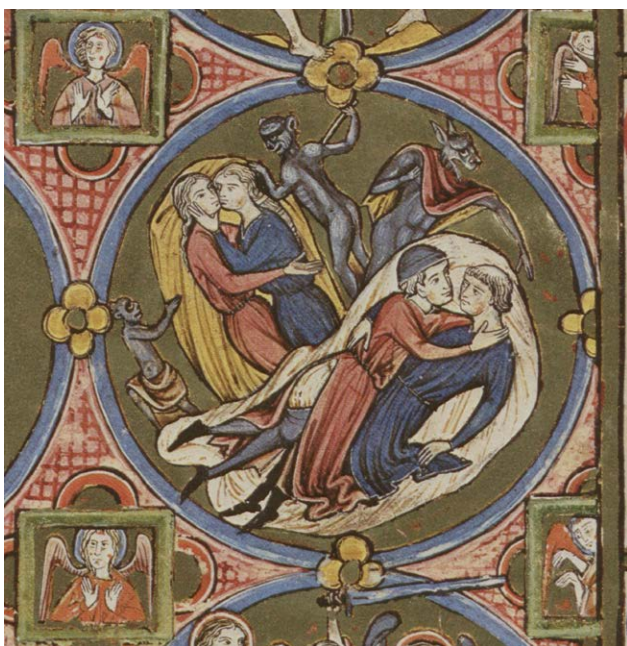
Although Renaissance art accepted nudity to a certain extent, it was inconceivable to depict embracing nude couples in such a position, especially with such positive connotation. According to Erwin Panofsky's typology, medieval moral theology distinguished four symbolical meanings of nudity.<sup>18</sup> The first is *nuditas naturalis*, the natural state of man, also expressing humility. The second is *nuditas temporalis*, the lack of earthly goods, which may occur as a necessity, because of poverty, or voluntarily, as in the case of the apostles or in that of monks. The third, *nuditas virtualis*, may be equated with the symbol of innocence acquired through confession. And finally, the fourth, *nuditas criminalis*, is a sign of lust, vanity, and the absence of all virtues. *Nuditas naturalis* occurs in the last scenes of Genesis and The Last Judgment, in scenes of martyrs and in scientific images. *Nuditas criminalis* is the nudity of pagan gods, devils, sinful human beings, as well as that of the personified sins. Images of nude cupids and, in the Gothic period, most of the profane images, are examples of this. According to Panofsky, only the spirit of the Proto-Renaissance could interpret the nudity of Cupid as a

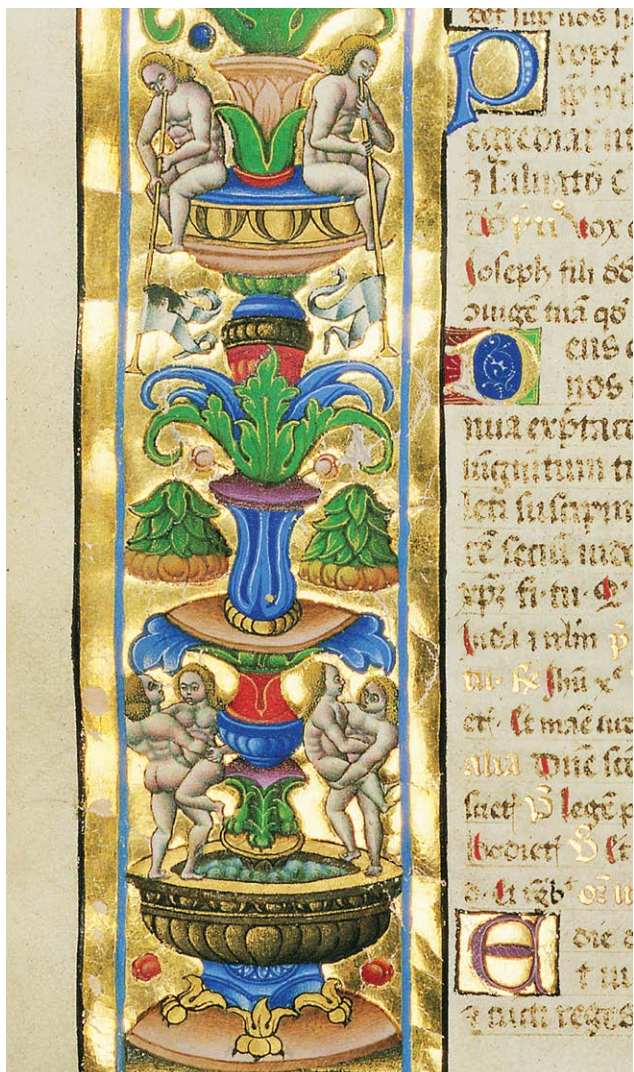
symbol of love's spiritual nature, or indeed to employ an entirely naked figure for the representation of a virtue. However, depicting a man was still less scandalous than depicting a woman.<sup>19</sup> Embracing nude couples could only appear, if at all, in the context of *nuditas criminalis*, as a symbol of sin. An illuminative example of this is the *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* (c. 1500) of Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516).<sup>20</sup> Clothed embraces were also depicted, but they too were represented as sinful acts, like for example in the *Bibles moralisées* (Fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> Thus, the *interpretatio christiana* does not allow for interpreting the picture, as it is so strikingly different from the possible ways of depiction. If in this Christmas context the aim would simply be to represent *amor carnalis*, then the image could only occur with a negative association, containing some allusion to the sinful earthly life, in some kind of dual composition highlighting the contrast and clearly separating the couples from the sinless, holy sphere. This, however, was obviously not the case in the Kálmáncsehi breviary.

The elements composing the depiction currently under study come partly from medieval and partly from Renaissance motifs in manuscript illumination. The miniature in itself, taken out of its context, presents a popular element of Renaissance art: the 'fountain of love' (*fontana d'amore*) or 'fountain of youth' (*fontana di giovinezza*) as the complex symbol of rebirth (*rinascita*) in several different senses, with Cupid or cupids bending a bow.<sup>22</sup> The fountain is filled with the water of life. The fact that it was originally an established motif used in its own right is proven by Mikó Árpád's remarkable discovery of the miniature's probable prefiguration (Fig. 3-4).

One of these sources, or of the devices used by the illuminators, can be traced back to a drawing by Antonio Pollaiuolo, extant as a niello print and probably also circulated in that form. The free, creative use of engravings, as well as prefigurations produced by graphic reproduction was a standard practice employed by miniaturists. This happened here too. It is obvious that the illuminator simplified the scene.<sup>23</sup> He abandoned the two little putti looking around happily. The cupids bending their bows also seem to be missing from the top of the fountain, but a closer look at the left-hand side of the decorative border reveals that the little gods of love shooting arrows have become cherub-like putti, sitting high and holding their trombones strangely downward, most probably because this was suggested by the original composition, where the cupids hold their arrows downward. The artist cleverly dissected the composition and adapted it to the available space and subject matter. However, there is a small clue that the artist considered the given range of motifs – that is, the complete left-hand side border decoration – to be a whole, even though they were rephrased and dissected. There are two red flowers next to the fountain's pedestal, one to the left and another one to the right, and then the red spot is repeated on top of the decorative bar, in the form of a flower pistil. The miniaturist, certainly characterised by a highly conscious use of colours, imposed unity on the whole left-hand side border with these three red spots arranged in the shape of a triangle. For some reason he thought this to be necessary. On the one hand, he may have had the concise unity of the prefiguration on his mind, on the other, he may have unconsciously indicated by this arrangement that while recomposing the scene, he still considered it as a whole. This minor circumstance gives a glimpse of the reinterpretation process and reveals that the two components, the putti at the top and the fountain at the bottom,

▼ Fig. 2. Clothed embrace represented as a sinful act in the Bible moralisée of Vienna, manuscript of the Austrian National Library, cod. 2554, f. 2r. Print-screen of the facsimile available online. Source: <https://digital.onb.ac.at/>





must be interpreted in the context of their interrelation. In other words, it is significant that the cupids became cherub-like putti, playing the trombone as is appropriate for the subject, while the two embracing figures remained the same. It is yet unclear why the artist did not transform the figures of the embracing couples in the same manner in which he reinterpreted the cupids shooting the arrows, but this is certainly a sign of deliberate interpretation. Why is the arrow-shooting cupid too strong and profane (we can of course understand this in itself) and why less so the love-making couple? The fountain of love was thus put in a new interpretational context that was appropriate to the sacred theme.

Surviving contracts made with miniaturists show that the commissioners often ordered rather exactly what the pictures should contain (for example how many figures), what kind of and how much paint and gold should be used, what quality the lapis lazuli should be,<sup>24</sup> etc.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the choice of the motif and its incorporation in the Christmas illumination could not be accidental. At a first glimpse, one may imagine a scandalous outcome, but it was probably not at the level of the miniaturist that the decision was made. The author of the iconographic programme must have either come from the commissioner's close environment, or he was somebody not so close, but still aware of the fact that the owner would be able to

- Fig. 3. Detail of the fountain scene in the *Breviary of Domonkos Kálmáncsehi*. Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 446., f. 88v. Courtesy of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár.
- ▲ Fig. 4. *The Fountain of Love*. Niello proof attributed to Antonio Pollaiuolo (c. 1470). Museo Malaspina, Pavia. Source: Busignani 1970, p. LXXXIII.

interpret the composition. As in many cases, it may be argued that the person developing the iconographic programme was a humanist acting as an intellectual mediator between the commissioner and the artist.<sup>26</sup>

The conscious choices in the composition of the Christmas scene can also be noticed on another significant page in the manuscript, the Easter composition (f. 180r), where one may virtually recognize the same choices as those from the page of Christmas Eve:<sup>27</sup> at the golden mean point of the outer vertical border decoration, among the medallions of the Passion, there is an unusual scene: the fountain of youth with a well interpretable set of symbols, expressed at the same time in a novel way. To summarise, the traditional sacred content in the miniature depicting the loving couple is complemented by something new at the levels of both form and – because of its unusual nature – content. This new idea must have been acceptable and interpretable in the environment where the manuscript was

produced and for which was intended. As proven by the image itself, it must have been linked to the main teachings of religion. Otherwise, the medieval mindset and tradition simply could not have allowed the image to appear there.

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Relations between Italy and Hungary have always been intensive and have been further strengthened since the reign of the Hungarian kings of Anjou. These circumstances contributed to the dissemination of the ideas of Renaissance and humanism at a very early date. The mid-15<sup>th</sup> century generation of prelates was already acquainted with the new ideas. Even king Matthias himself was educated by “the first Hungarian humanist”, Johannes Vitéz of Zredna. As Hungarian cultural elite had already become sensitive and receptive to the beliefs of humanism and Renaissance, this greatly contributed to the development of a flourishing Renaissance court under Matthias in Buda. The former contacts of literate prelates with Florence, the focal point of the Italian Renaissance, led to a direct and well-established link between the Italian city and the Hungarian royal court. It is particularly important to note that, thanks to its humanists, the royal court was informed first-hand of the intellectual developments in Florence – including the emergence of the cult of Plato – within a short time and before any other northern country. The debate on Platonism vs. Aristotelianism became the cornerstone of endeavours towards the intellectual revival in the Quattrocento. Since József Huszti, Hungarian research agrees that the country’s great intellectuals having links to Italy were continuously informed of the state of that debate throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as well as of the rebirth of Platonism in Italy.<sup>28</sup> Surviving volumes in the libraries of Johannes Vitéz of Zredna,<sup>29</sup> Janus Pannonius,<sup>30</sup> Péter Garázda,<sup>31</sup> and later Matthias Hunyadi<sup>32</sup> provide evidence that the relevant literature was present in a significant number of books in Hungary.

Intellectual life in Florence in the second part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was greatly influenced by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and the *Platonica Familia*, the circle of scholars around him, including Lorenzo de Medici, Pico della Mirandola, Cristoforo Landino and Angelo Poliziano. Ficino can be credited with allowing Europe to get genuinely acquainted with Plato’s texts, as he was the first to translate from Greek into Latin the entire corpus of Plato’s works. It should be noted that at that time, and for a long time thereafter, the original teachings of Plato could not be really separated from other teachings superimposed upon them during millennia, so for a long time one can talk about a Platonic tradition which, following the example of none other than the influential Gemisthos Plethon, had a mainly Neoplatonic nature and represented the eclecticism of the Alexandrian School of Late antiquity. That is why, besides Plato, the teachings’ main representatives to be followed included Hermes Trismegistos, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, as well as the Neoplatonists: Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyrius, Iamblichus, Dionysius Areopagita. Ficino also translated a number of these latter authors’ works and embraced this tradition when he commenced his *opus magnum*, developing his own philosophy whose primary aim was to harmonise and reconcile Platonism and Christian teachings. Ficino gradually formulated his syncretistic views and in the first years of his activities he was inclined to embrace the pagan tradition in its original form.<sup>33</sup> He wrote his commentary on Plato’s *Symposium*, a work that later gained incomprehensible popularity throughout Europe, in his first

period.<sup>34</sup> Ficino also sent this opus to Janus Pannonius, “the most amorous man”, on August 5, 1469, with a dedication especially addressed to him: *Platonica ad Platonium, amatoria ad amantissimum retulerimus*. He asked Janus Pannonius, who had guided the Muses to the Danube, to do the same with his Plato.<sup>35</sup>

In the framework story, the noble custom of celebrating Plato’s birthday is renewed in Florence, under the organisation of Ficino’s friend, Francesco Bandini, and the first symposium of Renaissance Platonism was held in Villa Careggi near Florence.<sup>36</sup> At the end of the banquet, Plato’s *Symposium* was read aloud and the attendants took turns to comment on the speeches they had heard. In fact, Ficino’s work contains the elaboration of a complex philosophical system, the description of the world in Ficino’s Neoplatonic interpretation. Its essence is the ‘theory of love’, the most important part of Ficino’s teaching. Erwin Panovsky wrote the following about this teaching: “Originally, however, and in undiluted form, it had been part of a philosophical system which must be reckoned among the boldest intellectual structures ever erected by the human mind.”

Ficino’s friend, Francesco Bandini, arrived in Hungary in 1476 and remained a key figure in the intellectual life in Buda until the death of King Matthias. It is his merit that Ficino’s works arrived one after the other in the 1480s Buda (including *Theologia Platonica* – completed in 1474 and printed in 1482 – and the complete translation of Plato – printed at the end of 1484). Ficino had dedicated his *Vita Platonis* to Bandini, as early as 1477, and Bandini was at that time already staying in Buda. Furthermore, Ficino and Bandini constantly exchanged letters.<sup>37</sup> The great philosopher sent greetings through Bandini to his friends in Hungary: Péter Garázda, Péter Váradi, and Miklós Báthory.<sup>38</sup> Remarkably, some of the Italian humanists who became linked to the intellectual life in Buda at that time or later also came from this circle. Naldo Naldi, who later wrote the praise of the Corvinian Library, was a close friend of Ficino. Angelo Poliziano was a member of *Platonica Familia*. Taddeo Ugoletti also got acquainted with them and a certain kind of Platonic tendency can easily be detected in the development of the library in Buda. This was not only earlier pointed out by Huszti, but it is also confirmed by current research. All this suggests that in the royal court of Buda the key points of Ficino’s teachings – his intention to reconcile Christianity and Platonism, as well as the theory of love, the most characteristic element of his system – could really be familiar to a particular circle of intellectuals. It is undeniable that all this generated a certain Platonic intellectual milieu. On the other hand, there is hardly any information on the nature of this interest and its impact, or whether the teaching “became part of the souls”, *i. e.* whether there were a few people who seriously believed in this syncretistic philosophy / theology.

Only certain poems of Janus Pannonius can be cited as examples of knowledgeably elaborating on Renaissance Platonism. These include first of all the famous elegy, *Ad animam suam*, where the poet embraced the Platonic concepts of the soul’s fate in a creative way.<sup>39</sup> Without intending to take a position on the question of its author’s identity, which is beyond the scope of this article, one must mention Johannes Pannonius’s letter to Ficino from the mid-1480s as one of the documents proving Ficino’s presence in Buda.<sup>40</sup> Rózsa Feuerné Tóth already revealed the impact of Neoplatonism on the court culture in a completely different field. Her research suggests Matthias was ac-

tually influenced by his Neoplatonic humanists in the mid-1480s, when he, as a patron, developed an interest in architecture and thanks to them that the king became acquainted with the work of Leon Battista Alberti. In Italy, the Neoplatonists were the first to appreciate the teachings of Alberti, as they believed that architecture, just like music, could be related to mathematics and geometry, and thus belonged to the realm of *mens* or the sublime world of the intellect.<sup>41</sup> The king's special interest in Alberti is confirmed by the fact that there are two surviving copies of *De re aedificatoria* once belonging to Matthias's library.<sup>42</sup>

While researching the subject, Valery Rees revealed a detail that may prove the extent of the impact of Platonism in Buda, deepening during the last years of Matthias's reign.<sup>43</sup> Bonfini began his Hungarian history's prologue, addressed to king Vladislav II, with elaborating on the Apostle Paul's famous sentence and relating it to Vladislav's reign: "Because I already know from ample experience that – as the apostle said – all authority comes from God".<sup>44</sup> In order to prove the concept, Bonfini referred to Iamblichus and provided a peculiar cosmological description in whose background the hierarchic nature of the Neoplatonic universe shone with the hierarchy of the beings and those endowed with different rights to govern them. Earthly monarchs were part of this structure as well. The historian also mentioned divine unity and gave an impressive description of the process of *emanatio*. Valery Rees also showed that, although Bonfini refers to Iamblichus, in fact there are not even any similar ideas in the Greek author's work and the passage in question originates from Ficino's translation of Iamblichus in 1488 (*De mysteriis*). This is a not a verbatim translation; Ficino – according to his own account, because of the corrupt state of the manuscript available to him – had rather paraphrased Iamblichus. And Bonfini did the same to Ficino's text. The ideas formulated in the introductory lines hinted at the authors that Ficino was translating in the 1480s.<sup>45</sup> The passage in question suggests a knowledgeable and well-thought way of using Ficino's teachings. The fact that those ideas were employed at that important place and in such a context shows how accepted (and perhaps fashionable) they were in certain circles.

However, one might as well go one step further. The Didymus Corvina kept in New York<sup>46</sup> indicates the same phenomenon observed in the Bonfini prologue. It is quite close in time as well, as it was produced in 1488/89 in Florence at the workshop of Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni. Studying the manuscript's frontispiece, Dániel Pócs revealed its intricate iconographic structure, linking it to Matthias's political representation.<sup>47</sup> The composition built around the concepts of *amor*, *castitas*, and *iustitia*, while also connecting those concepts closely to the Holy Spirit, is permeated by the Neoplatonic way of thinking combined with Christianity. Indeed, this provides the foundation to the composition. In the frontispiece, the front part of the monument's pedestal is ornamented by a row of reliefs that can be fully interpreted only with the help of Neoplatonic philosophy. The picture of the soul's chariot was inspired partly by the tradition in the representation of Petrarch's highly popular *Trionfi* and partly by Plato's *Phaedrus*.

Platonism can equally be traced in other elements of the image. Since the Council of Florence (1439) was dominated by Pletho's and Bessarion's Platonism and convened in order to save Constantinople and Christianity, it also concerned the Hunyadis (see later Matthias's crusading mission to defeat the Turks). Furthermore, the question of the

Holy Spirit's origin as the council's overriding idea and relevant readings (including Didymus), as well as their translators – making up the Didymus Corvina – may be connected with the depiction of key elements of the Hungarian monarch's representation on its frontispiece. Neoplatonism seems to have become a stable element in this system by the end of the 1480s, which may explain why it was important for Bonfini to begin his dedication written to the monarch with this train of thought. However, by that time, almost ten years had already passed since the creation of the Kálmáncsehi breviary and during those ten years Platonism (a matter of genuine interest only for the humanists, within a narrow circle expanded from its original limited environment, at first) became 'official' and presumably also more rigid. As opposed to this, the Kálmáncsehi breviary's illustration can be seen as a testimony to the first, vivid stage of Platonism in Buda, when it was still in the making.

Valery Rees's previously mentioned study sheds light on another small element that has special significance from the point of view of the issue under discussion here. In Bonfini's prologue, cited earlier, there is a rare expression, *calodaemon*, meaning a "good spirit" appointed to individuals. According to Rees, who has a thorough knowledge of the Ficino corpus, this should be linked to the analogous use of the word in the commentary on the *Symposium* (vi. 8.).<sup>48</sup> This suggests that Bonfini gained his knowledge from several of Ficino's works that had reached Buda in some way and probably included *De amore*. Therefore, it should be examined whether the Neoplatonism established in Buda, and particularly Ficino's theory of love, could have been the conceptual background that influenced the creation of the unique Christmas composition in the Kálmáncsehi breviary, allowing and sanctioning such an astonishing and / or sinful image (for the medieval mind) to accompany the most sacred sequence of pictures.<sup>49</sup> This could add a special kind of testimony to the pieces of evidence witnessing the presence of Platonism in Buda. It is special in the sense of being not a text but a visual representation invoking a whole philosophy.

The 'recycled' motif of the fountain of love is completely transfigured in this context. Although its original content is unquestionable, the symbolic way of thinking in the Late Middle Ages did not see in it what was actually depicted at the level of forms, at least not in the first place. Once again, the context must be emphasised here. *Aliud dicitur, aliud demonstratur*. The picture of the embracing couples served as a means to direct the observers' thoughts to that fundamental and much more sublime subject matter that the picture is actually about. It is perhaps time to take a closer look at Ficino's theory of love.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most important questions in Neoplatonic philosophy is the union with God. At the end of the day, it was this issue that Ficino was exploring in his commentary. According to him, God is the same as Beauty (this concept also includes absolute Good), and love<sup>51</sup> is none other than the desire to unite with this beauty at all levels of the creation, that is, with God. According to the teaching of *emanatio* (*defluxio*) the power / energy / splendour emanating from God permeates the world reaching as far as the matter, and endows all creatures with the beauty of God, arousing a desire in them for God, which manifests itself in love, and then returns to its starting point. There are also possible connotations of splendor in the antiphon's text on the page examined; light in the Neoplatonic



world is the actual power emanating from God as well as its allegory, and it is a key concept<sup>52</sup> And in Ficino's interpretation – based on Plato – there are two kinds of love, celestial Venus and vulgar Venus, generally mentioned as earthly Venus. This latter name is easy to misunderstand and was in fact misunderstood. In Ficino's system both Venuses inhabit the celestial spheres. (Pico della Mirandola later actually introduced a third one that was genuinely a symbol of earthly love).

Celestial Venus, who is pure intelligence, belongs to the highest hierarchy, the Cosmic Mind (*mens mundana, intellectus divinus sive angelicus*). We can find here the eternal and unchangeable ideas and intelligences that can also be called angels. They observe God and delight in him. Celestial Venus also symbolises the universal and pristine beauty of the divine. In fact, it is comparable to *caritas* who mediates between the human mind (*mens humana, intellectus divinus sive angelicus*) and God. Earthly (vulgar) Venus is part of the World Soul (*anima mundana*), which is the same as the celestial or translunary world. This is not the world of pure forms anymore. It is incorruptible, but not any more unchangeable and not self-moving. The World Soul converts the static ideas and intelligences comprised in the Cosmic Mind into dynamic causes. They move and fertilise the sublunary world, and stimulate nature to produce visible things. The beauty symbolised by earthly (vulgar) Venus is the image of pristine beauty permeating individual things, manifested in the physical / tangible world. This Venus is actually the power to procreate (*vis generandi*) given to the world, which brings life to the things in nature and thereby makes the intelligible beauty accessible to our perception and imagination.

Either Venus is accompanied by a congenial Eros or Amor who is rightly considered her son because each form of beauty begets a corresponding form of love. The celestial love or *amor divinus* possesses itself of the highest faculty in man, *i. e.* the Mind or intellect, and impels it to contemplate the intelligible splendour of divine beauty. The son of the other Venus, the *amor vulgaris*, takes hold of the intermediary faculties in man, *i. e.* imagination and sensual perception, and impels him to procreate a likeness of divine beauty in the physical world,<sup>53</sup>

that is, to generate and create.<sup>54</sup>

With Ficino both Venuses and both loves are honourable, for both pursue the creation of beauty.... However, there is a difference in value between a 'contemplative' form of love which rises from the visible and particular to the intelligible and universal and an active form of love which finds satisfaction within the visual sphere; and no value whatever can be attached to mere lust which sinks from the sphere of vision to that of touch and should not be given the name of love.<sup>55</sup>

Human beings are in a special position, as they consist of body and soul. This duality results in a continuous fight in their world.<sup>56</sup> They are, at the same time, the connecting link between God and the world. During rare moments, they can experience the ecstasy when the soul withdraws from the body and from all kinds of perception, becoming God's tool. This is what Plato called *theia mania* or *furor divinus*; it is the beautiful madness of the poets, the delirium of the clairvoyants, the ecstasy of the mystics and the rapture of lovers – this last being the mightiest of all. Therefore, according to Ficino, love is the force through





which God is motivated to spread himself into the world and which motivates the creatures to seek reunion with Him. Amor was only another name for the current flowing from God to the world and from the world to God and mysteriously joined by human beings in love.

As for the visual representation of the process, Tibor Klaniczay explained it best:

However, this abstract, transcendental interpretation of love [...] does not prevent the theorists from using the concepts of earthly, human and sensual love in order to approach, grasp and understand the essence of love, or from imagining the ideal, transcendental and celestial love to some extent on the analogy to physical love.<sup>57</sup>

Plotinus himself used the following words to describe the mystic experience of meeting the divine:

...and it [the soul] sees it in itself suddenly appearing (for there is nothing between, nor are there still two but both are one; nor could you still make a distinction while it is present; lovers and their beloveds here below imitate this in their will to be united), ...<sup>58</sup>

It is only within the framework of this concept that the couples embracing on the edge of the fountain, at the celebration of God's birth, can convey their true meaning. The



▲ Fig. 5. Detail of lower margin of f. 88v in the Breviary of Domonkos Kálmáncsehi. Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 446.

Courtesy of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár.

▶ Fig. 6. Detail of the fountain scene in the same Breviary. Courtesy of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár.

two elements depicted here, the birth of Christ and the embrace of the couples, are two expressions of the same union. In the incarnation, the divine and human natures meet in one person, and the embrace (indicating sexual love) is none other than the divinisation of the human. We might as well trace the emanation of divine love and light and then its return to God in the page examined, as in the process of incarnation, with the coming of Christ, divine love pours out into the world and the Logos becomes a human being through love. This love generated in the world will urge creatures to long for their creator and desire to unite with him.<sup>59</sup>

In the end, what the image tells us is that procreation in man is a divine urge. This is how a human being can participate in the divine work of creation and partake in immortality. And this is also how Diotima and Socrates discuss this in Plato's *Symposium*:

'For, Socrates', she said, 'love is not, as you think, of the beautiful'.

'Well, then, what is it of?'

'Of procreation and giving birth in the beautiful.'

'All right', I replied.

'I can assure you it is,' she said. 'Why, then, is it of procreation? Because procreation is something everlasting and immortal, as far as anything can be for what is mortal; [...]'<sup>60</sup>

Or in Ficino's interpretation:

In what consists the love of men, you ask, and what end does it serve? The desire of generation in the beautiful so that everlasting life may be preserved in mortal things; this is the love of men living on the earth and this is the goal of our love. [...] In this way are preserved whatever things are changeable in the soul or body, not because they are always altogether the same, for this is the peculiar property of the divine, but because what fades and goes away leaves something new and like itself. By this remedy certainly mortal things become like immortale.<sup>61</sup>

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### Notes:

1 Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library], Cod. Lat. 446. For the description of the manuscript see Bartoniek 1940, p. 400-401, Nr. 446; Mikó 1994, p. 413-419, Kat. IX-5.; *Kódexek* 1985, p. 141-142, Kat. 139 (s. v. Zentai Loránd); Klaniczay, Török, Stangler 1982, p. 427-428, Kat. 413; Földesi 2008, p. 70-73, Kat. 11 (s. v. Körmendy Kinga); Zsupán 2020a, p. 194-197, Kat. D1 (s. v. Lauf Judit, Mikó Árpád).

2 The manuscript was discovered by Ipoly Fehér in 1867, in the Benedictine monastery in Lambach. Having been sold by the monastery in 1931, the codex circulated between different antiquaries of Europe. The National Széchényi Library was able to purchase it thanks to financial support of the foundation set up to develop the Todoreszku-Horváth Library; cf. Rómer 1867, p. 50-51, 124-128; Joó 1939, p. 183-185; Varga 2017, p. 329-350 (332, fig. 4); Zsupán 2020a, p. 194-197, Kat. D1 (s. v. Lauf Judit, Mikó Árpád).

3 Research has confirmed that its calendar is based on the Zagrebian liturgy, following closely the calendar of the printed Zagrebian missal (1511), while the part with the offices follows partly the Esztergom rite and partly also the Zagrebian rite; cf. Körmendy 2001, p. 113-114. According to Lauf Judit's recent discovery the breviary in question and that of Nagylaki István, canon of Székesfehérvár (*Alba Regia*) (Budapest, oszk, Cod. Lat. 343.) were copied by the same scribe. The latter codex was made, however, almost a decade later than Kálmáncsehi's luxury manuscript, in 1489. In Lauf's opinion, autograph notes by Kálmáncsehi can be found in both his Budapest breviary and in his New York breviary and missal (The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, ms G 7). Cf. Zsupán 2020a, p. 235-238, Kat. D13 (s. v. Lauf Judit, Mikó Árpád).

4 It is not the intention of the present study to discuss the complexities of the workshop established by King Matthias in the 1480s in the royal court in Buda for the purposes of the royal library. For a detailed and complex analysis see the above-cited catalogue (Zsupán 2020a) of the exhibition *A Corvina könyvtár budai műhelye (The Corvina Library and the Buda Workshop)*, organised by the National Széchényi Library between 6. November 2018 and 9. February 2019. See also the Guide of the exhibition: Zsupán 2018a.

A virtual – 3D – version of the exhibition can be accessed here: <https://exhibitioncorvina2018.oszk.hu/>.

5 The most comprehensive summary so far on the library of Domonkos Kálmáncsehi is Hoffmann, Wehli 1992, p. 111-119, 259-260. On other aspects of his patronage see Mikó 2010, p. 79-90.

6 New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, ms G 7, the most recent, detailed description of the codex: Zsupán 2020a, p. 198-203, Kat. D2 (s. v. Lauf Judit, Mikó Árpád).

7 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 3119. The prayer book was copied for Domonkos Kálmáncsehi in 1492 by *frater Stephanus de Cachol* (f. 166r); the most recent, detailed description of the codex: Zsupán 2020a, p. 352-356, Kat. G6 (s. v. Lauf Judit, Mikó Árpád).

8 Zagreb, Riznica zagrebačke katedrale, RK 355. In the missal, besides Kálmáncsehi's coat of arms, we can also find that of Osvát Thúz; cf. Hoffmann, Wehli 1992, p. 120.

9 Francesco da Castello was the most important figure of the scriptorium in Buda. His style had a great impact on the whole production of the atelier. His activity in Hungary can be traced around 1480 and again in the late '80s. His Hungarian work is various: he also illuminated grants of arms and codices with non sacred sacral and with classical content, while his surviving Italian work encompasses liturgical manuscripts commissioned by the monastery San Sisto in Piacenza and Carlo Pallavicino, bishop of Lodi. Attributions, dating of his works as well as his identity with the so called *Cassianus master* are the most discussed issues of the Da Castello research. For a select bibliography, see: Wittgens 1937, p. 237-282; Daneu Lattanzi 1972, p. 225-260; Bauer-Eberhardt 1997; Marubbi 1998; Marubbi 2003; Romano 2004; Alexander 2011; Theisen s.a., kat. cod. 24 (s. v. Zsupán Edina); Marubbi 2020. In this article, Mario Marubbi discusses the obvious style differences between the Kálmáncsehi breviary and the rest of the Da Castello oeuvre, suggesting the possibility that the codex in question might have been the product of team work rather than that of the master alone. For a new dating of Da Castello's works made in Hungary, see Zsupán 2020a, p. 21-62.

10 (f. 2r): *FRA*; the most complete autograph appears at the feast of Corpus Christi (f. 215r): OPUS / FRANCISCI / DE / KASTELLO / ITHAL-LICO / DE / MEDIOLANO. The inscription here is carried in the left-hand side border by a long ribbon twining around a tall-growing flower. The third signature was put on the decorative page introducing the feast of King St Stephen (f. 428r). Recently Mario Marubbi discovered a fourth one on f. 44v, cf. Marubbi 2020.

11 (f. 215r) *Corpus Christi*, (f. 308r) Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

12 On the prelate's bibliophily and library see note 5.

13 See the detailed description of the miniature decorations in Mikó 1994.

14 Mikó 2002, p. 365; Mikó 2010, p. 85.

15 The tradition of marginal *drolleries* could also be mentioned in this context. However, unlike the scene examined here, they are always just 'supporting characters', their figures being often mingled with the rest of border decoration. Couples making love can also be found among such *drolleries*. There is an interesting 15<sup>th</sup>-century 'hybrid' example in a Book of Hours, under the depiction of the Flight into Egypt (Bibliothèque de Genève, ms. lat. 33, f. 79v). Yet this theme (naked women sitting on a dressed male figure depicted in a bridge pose) can only be an allusion to a loving couple. The theme originates in the medieval tale of Aristotle and Phyllis, being interpreted as a warning against *amor carnalis*. Cf. *Lexikon*, vol. 1, s. v. 'Aristoteles', p. 182-183. I am grateful to Bolonyai Gábor for drawing my attention to this example.

16 The pipe in a sacred context always refers to something vulgar. It was especially often represented in French and Flemish books of hours and specifically in the Christmas cycle, linked to the Nativity. It is frequently the musical instrument of the shepherds visiting the infant Jesus. See e. g. Leonardi, Degl' Innocenti 2001, *passim*.

17 Together with the other elements of the ornamentation, the scene enhances that character and becomes a depiction of a mystic atmosphere. The atmosphere of what is happening in the medallions is depicted by elements outside them.

18 Panofsky 1980a, p. 219-220.

19 Panofsky 1980a, p. 220.

20 The left-hand side bottom medallion of the painting depicts the suffering of people in hell. In the left of the foreground we can see a canopy bed from where a man and a woman are dragged out by devils.

21 E. g. Wien, ÖNB, Cod. 2554, f. 2r. For a reproduction see e. g. Walther, Wolf 2005, p. 159. The page contains eight medallions arranged in lines of two, with short explanatory texts on the two sides. The medallions depict the fall of Adam and Eve and its consequences. The image cited here as an example can be found in the left-hand side column of the second line. The right-hand side medallion in the same line represents the Coronation of Mary. According to the explanation in the text next to it, here the marriage of the Church and Christ, i.e. the most perfect form of love and marriage is represented. In contrast to this, on the left-hand side there are two embracing couples, wearing clothes. They are surrounded by three black devils, one of whom is pointing his fork towards the couple on the left. The message of the picture and the contrast is obvious: this is what happened to the earthly love of human beings after the fall of Adam and Eve. The composition is genuinely a representation of the contrast between *amor sanctus* and *amor carnalis*. See further Bibles moralisées with the same type of images e. g. in Camille 1992, *passim*: London, British Li-

brary, MS Harley 1527; Paris, BnF, Lat. 11 560; Wien, ÖNB, Cod. 1179; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 270b. The explanatory text of the latter image is also revealing (f. 7v): *Hoc significat homines illos, qui per concupiscentiam transgrediuntur mandatum domini et oboediunt diabolicae voluntati. Tales remunerat diabolus et innectit per os per collum per renes per tibias et pedes et sic ligatos proicit in tenebras infernales.* "This denotes those people who transgress God's commandments through their lust and obey the devil's will. Such people are 'remunerated' by the devil, ties them around their mouth, neck, loins, shins and feet, and throws them thus bound into the darkness of hell". For the subject, related to Michelangelo's Doni Tondo, see Franceschini 2010.

22 Mikó 2010, p. 85.

23 Regarding the transformation of the original composition, Árpád Mikó draws our attention to the following: "It is also important to note that the left shoulder and arm of the left-hand side man is cut off by the golden bar border, as this clearly indicates that here a completed composition was used. At the same time the differences and simplifications cannot be ignored: the woman in the left-hand side is not grabbing at the man's mouth with her left hand but holding on to their hand; and the woman on the right is grabbing the man's waist instead of his flowing garments (as there are no such things here)." Mikó 2010, p. 89, note 354.

24 This semiprecious gemstone imported from the Far East was the basis of ultramarine. As it was extremely expensive due to transport and other costs, it was specifically included in the contracts; cf. De la Mare 1966, p. 186. Among other things, the commissioners could also specify which quality ultramarine should be used for which figure; cf. Baxandall 1986, p. 19-20. The extant manuscripts of the Buda workshop suggest that the ultramarine used in the royal court was of the best possible quality. The bright blues of the miniatures, still unimpaired in their beauty, bear witness to this. On the role of ultramarine and gilding of "Buda quality" in the attribution process see: Zsupán 2018b.

25 For the subject in general see Burke 1999, p. 110-120; Chambers 1970. For the contracts made with the miniaturists see Alexander 1994.

26 The advisory role of the humanists (in this case Angelo Poliziano) was pointed out by Aby Warburg while analysing Botticelli's paintings of mythological themes (Warburg 1995). Warburg quotes the relevant lines of Leon Battista Alberti from *Libro della pittura*: "It is clear, therefore, what praise such inventions bestow on the artist. I advise all painters to become friendly with poets, rhetoricians and other such lettered men, because these will provide new inventions or at least enrich the composition of their works, assuring them of great praise and renown for their painting". (Warburg 1995, p. 28; the translation's source being Warburg 1999). Besides Angelo Poliziano, Marsilio Ficino also contributed with his advice to the elaboration of the iconographical programme of the *Birth of Venus*, commissioned by the Medici family (Burke 1999, p. 119-120), and Ficino's role in creating *Spring* was equally crucial. (For the relationship between Botticelli and Ficino, see especially Gombrich 1945) Guarino Veronese advised Leonello d'Este on the iconographical programme of a painting depicting Muses (Burke 1999; the example's source: Baxandall 1965) See also Robertson 1982; Gombrich 1972, also on Annibal Caro, who created an iconographical programme for the Farnese Palace in Caprarola. In 1503, Paride da Cesarea gave Perugino detailed instructions for the allegorical composition for Isabella d' Este's studiolo. (Gombrich 1945, p. 8.). Concerning Buda, the research of Rózsa Feuerné Tóth can be referred to on this topic, as she revealed the important mediating/interpreting

role of the humanist/humanists in the court between the commissioner and the master-builders. (See Feuerné Tóth 1987, p. 36-39), furthermore Feuerné Tóth 1990).

27 The identical nature of the two pages is pointed out in Mikó 2010.

28 Huszti 1925. Johannes Vitéz of Zredna (see also note 29) and his circle have a specific role in this process. There are several implications that Vitéz was in some way connected to the most significant contemporary defender of Platonism, Cardinal Bessarion. The astronomer Regiomontanus arrived in Hungary from his environment in Rome to become the first chancellor of Academia Istropolitana founded in 1465. John Monfasani has pointed out that the Dominican theologian Giovanni Gatti – also a lecturer at the Academia in Pozsony (Bratislava) – stayed in Hungary in the years (1466-1469) when he was creating complementary chapters to the revised version of Bessarion's *In calumniatorem Platonis*. This work of Bessarion was a reply to George of Trebizond's treatise (*Comparatio Philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis*), where the author exalted Aristoteles and defended him against Platon. In his reply, Bessarion stands by his beloved Platon without impairing the merits of Aristoteles. George of Trebizond's work survived from Vitéz's library (Roma, BAV, Vat. Palat. Lat. 3382; the manuscript later belonged to the Corvinian Library), the prelate himself emended the text, writing the following sentence on the last page of the codex: *Contra hunc scripsit dominus Bessarion cardinalis Nicenus vir eruditissimus pro Platone non tamen contra Aristotelem* (f. 107r) ("Against him [i. e. against George of Trebizond] wrote Bessarion, cardinal of Nicea, a man of immense culture, supporting Platon but not against Aristoteles." This of course means that Bessarion's work could also be found in Vitéz's library, and also that the archbishop was well aware of the issue, moreover, thanks to Gatti, could have been directly informed of the debate; cf. Monfasani 2008; Földesi 2008, p. 162, Kat. 29, s. v. Zsupán Edina, Földesi Ferenc.

29 Supporter of the family Hunyadi and the later king, Matthias Corvinus, Johannes Vitéz of Zredna (c. 1408-1472) was a crucial figure on both, the political and the cultural palette of 15<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary. He is called „the first Hungarian humanist”. His famous Renaissance library proved to be an important reference factor and also a source for the royal library, founded by Matthias Corvinus. Through his complex cultural activity as bishop of Várad (Oradea, 1445-1465) and later archbishop of Esztergom (1465-1472), Vitéz contributed to the development of Hungarian culture to an extraordinary extent. For his person, education and library see: Csapodi-Gárdonyi 1984; Földesi 2008, with all the relevant earlier literature; Zsupán 2009; Kiss 2012; Szilágyi 2013; Zsupán 2020b; Zsupán 2020, *passim*.

30 A famous Neo-Latin poet, humanist, diplomat, chancellor, bishop of Pécs, Janus Pannonius (1434-1472) is one of the better-known figures of Humanist poetry in Europe. He was nephew of Johannes Vitéz of Zredna. For him in general see: Békés 2006; see also note 37, 38 and Zsupán 2020, *passim*.

31 The humanist, poet and prelate, Péter Garázda (c. 1448-1507) belonged to the circle of Johannes Vitéz of Zredna and Janus Pannonius. During his Italian years he also was an important intermediary between Hungary and Italy regarding the book purchases by Hungarian litterated man as Vitéz, Janus and György Handó, archbishop of Kalocsa. For him see Kovács 1987; C. Tóth 2016; Pócs 2019; Molnár 2019.

32 Regarding the Corvinian Library, we can only agree, even after so many years, with Huszti's summary: "And what is true for the humanists in general is also relevant for the library. [...] We have

evidence that the more intensive development of the library in the last decade coincides with the emergence of Platonism. And even the pace of progress is parallel: the fervent Platonist activity of the last years overlaps with the great crescendo in the library's development. It cannot be by chance either that the library was praised by Naldi the Platonist, and that it was overseen by Ugoletti and Bartolommeo della Fonte, both friends of Ficino. As for the stock of books, we can declare in general that a remarkable part of the extant books or those that certainly belonged to Matthias's library served for studying Platonism. [...] We are far from suggesting by all this that Matthias's library was a collection of resource material on Platonism. However, we could definitely not name any other movement in the history of ideas that is represented in Matthias's library to nearly the same extent as Platonism." (Huszti 1925, p. 89 [note 27]).

33 Johannes Pannonius's (the poet's namesake and not the poet himself) famous letter in a certain sense accuses Ficino of paganism and alludes to his "pagan" period in his youth. József Huszti drew attention to the letter surviving in Ficino's correspondence (Op. 871; Abel, Hegedüs 1903, p. 278-281) (Huszti 1925, p. 25, 64-68.) According to Huszti, its critical tone and sophisticated ideas prove that Ficino's teaching was present in Buda to such an extent and understood so profoundly that some people were even able to express criticism against it. (Huszti 1925, N.B. this is how the letter begins: *Legi Budae in epistola ad Bandinum, item in prooemio tuo super Platonem et in prooemio theologiae tuae...* Abel, Hegedüs 1903, p. 278 ("I have read in Buda in your letter to Bandini, as well as in your preface to Plato and in the preface to your..."). The author's identity, however, has raised some serious problems. There have been several attempts to identify the person. (See Banfi 1968 [Johannes Varadiensis, an Augustinian monk in Buda]; Klára Pajorin suggests identifying him with János Vitéz Jnr, bishop of Szerém; Pajorin 1999. The latest research, however, has not found these suggestions convincing. It was Valery Rees who first argued that the figure of Johannes Pannonius could be a literary fiction. Péter Kőszeghy agreed with her idea. Recently, Dávid Molnár argued for the real existence of the person, again. For all this see Rees 1999, p. 73; Rees 2011, p. 135; Kőszeghy 2011; Molnár 2017. Independently of Johannes Pannonius's identity, the correspondence definitely suggests that the reception of Florentine Neoplatonism in Hungary was of great significance, even by Ficino's standards.

34 Marcel 1956.

35 Abel 1880, p. 202-203; Kristeller 1937, vol. I, p. 87-88; Marcel 1956, p. 265-266. This copy sent to Janus Pannonius is kept now in ONB (Cod. 2472, the dedication to Janus f. 1r-v). The peculiarity of the manuscript is that it contains Ficino's autograph corrections. (cf. Kristeller 1964, p. 32.) He was also responsible for the Greek words in the text (cf. Gamillscheg 1994, p. 75-76, no 36). The coat of arms of Nagylucsei on the frontispiece proves that the manuscript was later owned by Orbán Nagylucsei. Galeotto Marzio's remark that Nagylucsei held several convivia while he was Bishop of Győr (cf. Galeottus Martius, *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae*, XXXII, 8-11. It is referred to by Pajorin 1981, p. 513, n 21) has special significance from our point of view. For the question whether the manuscript mentioned here could actually be owned by Janus Pannonius, see Edith Hoffmann's valuable thoughts: Hoffmann, Wehli 1992, p. 128-130.

36 On symposia in Italy and Hungary, as well as Bonfini's Symposium, see Klára Pajorin's seminal study referred to in the previous note.

37 Surviving codices sent as gifts by Marsilio Ficino to Matthias

Corvinus are kept now in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. cf. Zsupán, Heitzmann 2014.

38 Given the intellectual contacts linking him to Marsilio Ficino, Miklós Báthory is one of the most important Hungarian 'Platonist'. For this subject, see recently Molnár 2015; Molnár 2019. For Péter Garázda see note 31. For Péter Váradi see recently Véber 2016.

39 For an analysis of the poem, see especially Kocziszky 1980; and Jankovits 2002, p. 141-221 (chapter *Ad animam suam*, with a complete literature on the subject). For Janus Pannonius's Platonism see also the seminal works of Huszti 1931; and Huszti 1925; furthermore János 1990; János 1980; János 1979; Jankovits 1998; Bollók 2003. As it was earlier suggested in Huszti's analysis, Janus Pannonius's Platonism was mainly independent of Ficino's. For Janus Pannonius's philosophical literacy, see the extensive literature referred to in the previous note. Resources and some of his translations suggest that he read some of the most important texts of Platonism in the original. This is a complex and debated question and here we only refer to the issue concerning Plotinus and to Vespasiano Bisticci's famous account of how Janus Pannonius (on his way home from Rome through Florence as an ambassador in 1465) spent hours reading Plotinus at Bisticci, and how in his native country he translated Plotinus in his free time, according to his own account (cf. Jankovits 2002, p. 154. *sqq.*). Klára Pajorin thinks it is possible that the Plotinus manuscript kept now in Munich and considered to belong to the Corvina codices (München, BSB, Cod. Graec. 449, l. Pajorin 2008) was owned by Janus Pannonius.

40 See note 33.

41 Feuerné Tóth 1990, p. 147.

42 Olomuc, Státní archiv. Domské a Kapitolní knihovna, Cod. Lat. C. O. 330; Modena, Gallerie Estensi, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Cod. Lat. 419. Rózsa Feuerné Tóth also suggests that the mediating humanist in Buda could most probably be Francesco Bandini, a good friend of Cristoforo Landino, the man who actually "discovered" Alberti. Landino was the first author who in his commentary on Dante (written in 1481), based on Neoplatonic ideas, praised in this sense Alberti's work. See Feuerné Tóth 1990, p. 147.

43 Rees 2011, p. 143-148. The study also examines, from another aspect, the role of Matthias in Ficino the philosopher's work, providing a picture of intricate mutual interests, which shows that Buda genuinely meant an important base for relationships and a certain kind of mental refuge for the Florentine philosopher, and this probably also influenced the nature of his activities.

44 *Iam illud sat exploratum habeo, quod ex apostolico ore proditum est, omnem a deo esse potestatem.* Fögel, Iványi, Juhász 1936-1941, vol. 1, p. 1. The origin of the paraphrased sentence is Romans 13:1.

45 Rees 2010.

46 New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS 496. <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/thumbs/108936> (14.11.2020).

47 Pócs 2000; Pócs 2012.

48 Rees 2011, p. 147.

49 Florentine Platonism inspired the greatest artists. Besides Botticelli, who is mentioned several times, the best example is provided by Michelangelo, who, when planning the Medici Chapel, the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel and the Tomb of Julius II, as well as in other, minor works, presented an entire philosophical system in a genuinely creative way. See especially Panofsky 1980b; de Tolnay 1981, p. 250-271. The author here concludes that

the authentic means of expressing some philosophical content in that specific era was provided by the visual rather than the literary arts.

50 The overview of the Neoplatonic universe and theory of love is based on Erwin Panofsky's study, cited above (Panofsky 1980a, p. 205-213), and Ficino's original work (see note 34). More on this topic can be found in the allegorical interpretation of the myth of the birth of Venus in Ficino's Commentary on Philebus (I. XI.): Allen 1975, p. 135-141.

51 In order to properly understand the word love in this context, we can rely on Tibor Klaniczay's profound observation: "If we want to understand the Neoplatonic theory of love, ... then we must use [the word love] in its original, wider, more extended sense that is equivalent to the full range of meaning of the words *amor* and *amore*. We should consider here... the meanings *amor-caritas* or *amore-affezione*. In these cases what matters is not the distinction of the attraction according to whether or not it is about the relationship between the two genders, but according to whether it is dynamic or more gentle and static. Feelings between a man and a woman may only be called *affezione*, while a strong attraction to anything could be *amore*. Therefore, when we talk about the philosophy of love in the context of the history of philosophy, it is not about the theoretical questions of the relationship between the two genders or about some kind of sexology. By philosophy of love we mean a teaching about a force and bond that drive towards each other two entities of different kinds, which, however, by their nature are inclined to unite"; Klaniczay 1976, p. 313-314.

52 See e. g. Plotinos, *Enneades*, VI, 7, 21: "They [Life and Intellectual-Principle] have their goodness, I mean, because Life is an Activity in The Good or rather, streaming from The Good, while Intellectual-Principle is the Activity as already defined." (MacKenna 1956, p. 578); VI, 7, 36: "...but he himself is the ray which only generates Intellect..." (MacKenna 1956, p. 590).

53 Panofsky 1980a, p. 212.

54 Cf. *Denique ut summam dicam, duplex est Venus. Altera sane est intelligentia illa, quam in mente angelica posuimus. Altera, vis generandi anime mundi tributa. Utraque sui similem comitem habet amorem. Illa enim amore ingenito ad intelligendam dei pulchritudinem rapitur. Hec item amore suo ad eandem pulchritudinem in corporibus procreandam. Illa divinitatis fulgorem in se primum complectitur; deinde hunc in Venerem secundam traducit. Hec fulgoris illius scintillas in materiam mundi transfundit. Scintillarum huiusmodi presentia singula mundi corpora, pro captu nature, spetiosa videntur. Horum spetiem corporum humanus animus per oculos percipit, qui rursus vires geminas possidet. Quippe intelligendi vim habet, habet et generandi potentiam. He gemine vires, duo in nobis sunt Veneres, quas et gemini comitantur amores. Cum primum humani corporis spetiem oculis nostris offertur, mens nostra que prima in nobis Venus est, eam tamquam divini decoris imaginem veneratur et diligit perque hanc ad illum sepenumero incitatur. Vis autem generandi, secunda Venus, formam generare huic similem concupiscit. Utrobique igitur amor est. Ibi contemplande hic generande pulchritudinis desiderium. Amor uterque honestus atque probandus. Uterque enim divinam imaginem sequitur;* Marcel 1956, p. 154-155 (*Oratio secunda* VII, 17v-18v). See the translation of Sears Reynolds 1944, p. 142-143: "To sum it all up, Venus is two-fold: one is clearly that intelligence which we said was in the Angelic Mind; the other is the power of generation with which the World-Soul is endowed. Each has as consort a similar Love. The first, by innate love is stimulated to know the beauty of God; the second, by its love, to procreate the same beauty in bodies. The for-

mer Venus first embraces the Glory of God in herself, and then translates it to the second Venus. This latter Venus translates sparks of that divine glory into earthly matter. It is because of the presence of sparks of this kind that an individual body seems beautiful to us, in proportion to its merits. The human soul perceives the beauty of these bodies through the eyes. The soul also has two powers. It certainly has the power of comprehension, and it has the power of generation. These two powers in us are the two Venuses which are accompanied by their twin Loves. When the beauty of a human body first meets our eyes, the mind, which is the first Venus in us, worships and adore the human beauty as an image of the divine beauty, and through the first, it is frequently aroused to the second. But the power of generation in us, which is the second Venus, desires to create another form like this. Therefore, there is a Love in each case: in the former, it is the desire of contemplating Beauty; and in the latter, the desire of propagating it; both loves are honorable and praiseworthy, for each is concerned with the divine image”.

55 Panofsky 1980a, p. 212.

56 The role of the mixed creatures at the bottom of the manuscript page examined is exciting in this context (Fig. 5). Although one can talk about a well-established motif in medieval miniature painting in their case (cf. e. g. the *drolleries* mentioned in note 15), according to Platonic thought they may represent the struggle continuously carried on in this world by humans made of matter and intellect/soul, within themselves or against one another. In the manuscript the bottoms of the fully illuminated pages are clearly dedicated to the earthly sphere: everything there happens on earth, even if they are scenes from the life of Jesus.

57 Klaniczay 1976, p. 314. At the level of texts, a couple in love as the allegory of the soul longing for God had been for a long time a well-known and accepted image. This allegory was also adopted and employed in Christian tradition. Its most typical example is the Song of Songs. In the introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs, Origen refers to the pagan sages who describe the state of the soul through the images of the “outer man’s” earthly love. Here Origen refers directly to Plato’s *Symposium* (Pesthy 1993, p. 31-60). There are, however, much fewer examples of visually depicting the *unio mystica*, the soul’s or the Church’s union with Christ, as the union of a couple. An interesting example of this can be found in the iconographic tradition of *Christus und*

*die minnende Seele* (Christ and the Loving Soul), the 14<sup>th</sup> century illustrated verse dialogue from around Bodensee. The original text probably consisted of 21 “stations” or themes, the last of which was the Union. A rare version of both the text and the picture cycle is preserved in a print produced in Erfurt around 1500 (Wolfgang Shcenk) and now kept in Wrocław (Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, XV Q 329), where the union of the soul and Christ is illustrated by the two embracing in bed (D<sub>iii</sub><sup>v</sup>); see *Katalog* 1998, p. 106-129, the print described at p. 128-129, Kat. 25.4.a, Abb. 72 (*Veröff. der Kom. für Deutsche Lit. des Mittelalt. der Bay. Ak. der Wiss.*).

58 Plotinos, *Enneades*, vi, 7, 34.

59 The medallions in the upper margin of the page examined here could represent the coming of the divinity / light into the world. In this sense, the upper part of the illumination could be interpreted as a divine or semi-divine sphere. The miniature of the middle initial depicts the divinity’s / light’s arrival on earth. The putto with a pipe in the middle of the right border already belongs to the terrestrial sphere. The lower border with scenes from the life of Christ and the hybrid creatures are fully dedicated to the terrestrial sphere. As already mentioned, the latter could represent human beings having both divine and earthly components, constantly fighting against each other (see note 56). In the left margin, the divine element / light turns towards heaven once again: the scene with the couples making love could therefore symbolise a desire of the terrestrial sphere for the divinity as well as a possible way to unite with it.

60 Plato, *Symposion*, 206e-207a: ‘ἔστιν γὰρ, ὃ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔρωσ, ὡς σὺ οἶει’. | ‘ἀλλὰ τί μὴν;’ | ‘τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ’. | ‘εἶεν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ’. | ‘πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἔφη. τί δὴ οὖν τῆς γεννήσεως ὅτι ἀειγενές ἐστι καὶ ἀθάνατον ὡς θνητῷ ἢ γέννησις;’ Burnet 1903.

61 For the translation of *Oratio sexta* xi, see Sears Reynolds 1944, p. 203. For the original text, see Marcel 1956, p. 224: *Quid hominum amor sit postulatis? Ad quid conducat? Cupido generationis in pulchro, ad servandam vitam mortalibus in rebus perpetuam. Hic hominum in terra viventium amor est, hic nostri finis amoris. [...] Hoc utique pacto quaecumque in animo vel corpore mutabilia sunt servantur, non quia semper omnino eadem sint, hoc enim divinatorum est proprium, sed quoniam quod tabescit et abicit novum et simile sibi relinquit. Hoc certe remedio mortalia immortalibus redduntur similia.*

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