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FLORENTINE NEOPLATONISM BETWEEN HUMANISM AND PHILOSOPHY: VARIETY OF INTERPRETATIONS

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Стаття присвячена аналізу теоретичних підходів до інтерпретації та оцінки флорентійського неоплатонізму (вчення Марсіліо Фічино та Джованні Піко делла Мірандола) як специфічного типу ренесансної філософії.

Ключові слова: флорентійський неоплатонізм, гуманізм, Ренесанс.

Статья посвящена анализу теоретических подходов к интерпретации и оценке флорентийского неоплатонизма (учения Марсилио Фичино и Джованни Пико дела Мирандола) как специфического типа ренессансной философии.

Ключевые слова: флорентийский неоплатонизм, гуманизм, Ренессанс.

The focal point of this paper is the analysis of theoretical approaches to the interpretation and evaluation of Florentine Neoplatonism (Marsilio Ficino's and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's doctrines) as a specific type of Renaissance philosophy.

Key words: Florentine Neoplatonism, Humanism, Renaissance.

Introduction. Florentine Neoplatonism represented by doctrines of 15th century Italian thinkers Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola has always attracted attention of Renaissance scholars. Original type of thought produced within the “imaginary” precincts of Platonic Academy, became one of the brightest phenomena in Renaissance philosophy having far-reaching consequences for the future development of European culture and essentially influencing cultural activities of that time, such as literature, painting, and music.

The problematic issue. It is hard to define, whether Renaissance Neoplatonism was a particular school, movement or educational project. Moreover, some scholars have argued that Platonic Academy as an institution was a myth (for example, J. Hankins [8] and A. Field [7]). At the same time, activity of the aforementioned Italian philosophers has been interpreted and identified differently. Scholars are still debating various issues concerning doctrines of Ficino and Pico, and one of these issues is specific relations, which existed between Florentine Neoplatonism, humanism and scholasticism. This article analyzes the main theoretical approaches to this problem.

The object of the article is 15th century Renaissance philosophy.

The subject-matter of the article is 15th century Florentine Neoplatonism of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

The aim of the article was to analyze the main approaches to the problem of relations between Florentine Neoplatonism, humanism and scholasticism represented by scholars of different traditions including E. Cassirer, E. Garin, P.O. Kristeller, A. F. Losev, F. A. Yates and others.

Topicality of the article. In modern Ukrainian academic discourse, there is a series of theoretical gaps concerning Florentine Neoplatonism. These gaps arose owing to the lack of translations of the most important Ficino's and Pico's treatises into Ukrainian. Perhaps, Renaissance philosophy today does not attract so much attention of scholars as, e.g. German idealism or phenomenology. However, Ukrainian academic community, since Ukraine has gained independence, obtained access (in any case, partially) to foreign historical studies, including primary sources (original philosophical texts) and secondary sources (books, articles and other papers). Hence, today Ukrainian scholars

are facing the task of reevaluating the issues, which in Soviet times had only one generally accepted interpretation. During the Soviet period many treatises and letters of humanists have been translated into Russian, but they mostly concerned civil and ethical aspects of humanism. At the same time, religious, mystical and all other “irrational” elements of Renaissance culture have not been considered important. Hence, for the more objective evaluation of the philosophical legacy of Florentine Neoplatonism today, we should analyze original works of Ficino and Pico and rely on fundamental critical papers of European and American scholars on this topic. Also, we have strong Russian tradition of Renaissance studies represented in this paper by famous Russian philosopher A. Losev, whose book “Aesthetics of the Renaissance” (1978) made in a certain sense a revolution in Soviet history of philosophy. Losev interpreted Neoplatonism as the main type of thought, which represented Renaissance original philosophy and became a basis, on which humanism has grown.

Review of the recent researches and publications. Renaissance Neoplatonism still remains a subject of philosophical and cultural studies in Ukraine and other countries (Russia, European countries, USA). Among modern Renaissance scholars studying Florentine Neoplatonism are M.J.B. Allen, T. Albertini, J. Hankins, P. Casarella, E. Kessler, J. Lauster, J. Monfasani, etc.

Main body of the article. Any research starts from the definition of terms, in which it will be conducted. In order to determine relation between Florentine Neoplatonism, humanism and scholasticism, we should build our inquiry around several main questions. First of all, we should outline limits of the term “humanism”. Secondly, if we regard Neoplatonism as a philosophy, then we need to concretize relations between philosophical and humanistic type of thought. Thirdly, we should explain, how humanism and scholasticism manifested themselves in doctrines of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. These questions are not easy to answer since the term “humanism” has innumerable meanings despite hundreds of years spent on its study. Scholars are still discussing the value of the Renaissance in respect of its philosophical achievements and features of tangled, sometimes hidden ties between humanism and philosophy. Ficino and Pico show themselves both as humanists and philosophers, since Florentine Neoplatonism has developed new style of philosophizing in which elements of different cultures and epochs, ideas of Plato and pre-Socratic philosophers, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Augustine, ideas of Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Cusa can be traced.

Our inquiry starts from the question concerning the difference between philosophical and humanistic type of thought. An answer to this question presupposes appeal to the polemics between two prominent scholars who maintained friendly relationships during their whole life, having, nevertheless, absolutely opposed visions of the same phenomenon – humanism. The matter concerns American émigré scholar Paul Oskar Kristeller and Italian historian Eugenio Garin. In research papers of modern Renaissance scholars C.S. Celenza [see 4] and J. Hankins [see 10], positions of Garin and Kristeller are often presented together, since “The methods of investigation that each employed, however, are representative of two very different approaches not only to the Renaissance but to life itself...” [4, p. 17].

First of all, ideas of Garin and Kristeller have been formed in different philosophical traditions. Since the 19th century, humanism in Italian tradition has always been identified as a particular type of philosophy. Garin shared this idea and argued that humanism, first of all, had a philosophical background and also comprised philological and civil aspects. At the same time, Kristeller, who obtained education in Germany and shared Neo-Kantianism, stated that humanism had nothing in common with philosophy since it dealt with linguistic issues alone. Essential difference between approaches of Garin and Kristeller lies, as Celenza states, in a difference “between diachrony and synchrony, between philosophical historicism and philosophical idealism” [Ibid.].

Garin was confident that we should analyze culture only in its historical dynamics. The existence of an individual beyond history is impossible; therefore the main task of a historian of philosophy is to explain cultural phenomena in the light of historical process. Kristeller applied synchronic

approach to history and studied each epoch discovering certain universal principles, which reflected the spirit of this particular epoch. He tried to bring together diverse elements of the epoch on the basis of one universal idea. Kristeller identified himself as a nominalist, when matter concerned history: “Although I consider myself a realist in metaphysics, I am a thorough nominalist in reference to several terms employed in historical discourse” [12, p. 106]. “Several terms” are humanism, philosophy and tradition. Kristeller argued that Renaissance culture was heterogeneous and contradictory doctrines co-existed in this culture, therefore it is hard to reveal one ideological picture of this epoch: “Certainly the spirit of the Renaissance to which some historians like to refer should be defined and demonstrated rather than merely asserted; and it would be wise to treat the unity of the period, not as an established fact, but as a regulative idea in Kantian sense” [12, p. 107]. In this synchronic approach, the flow of time stops and events are analyzed as part of the universal moment of the epoch, in which these events co-exist.

Garin stated that humanism included philosophical and philological aspects. It was an educational movement, which produced a new type of thought. This new type of thought can be found in all spheres of culture of that time: natural sciences, law, literature, etc. To the opposite, Kristeller was convinced that humanism and philosophy represented two independent intellectual phenomena having different origin and significance. Humanism was an absolutely new phenomenon for the European culture, but it had no relation to philosophy. Humanists dealt with *studia humanitatis*, i.e. rhetoric, history, grammar, ethics and poetics. It is obvious that philosophy is not included in this list. Thus, Kristeller has restricted humanism to “philological” humanism. Since the term “humanism” in the 20th century European discourse was freely interpreted by different scholars, Kristeller’s restrictions were fair and relevant. The term “humanism” itself was uncertain, therefore Kristeller tried to define it as precisely as possible. He dreamt of returning humanism its initial meaning. Kristeller argued that there was only one meaning of humanism, which was shared by Renaissance humanists themselves. This term was connected with the word *humanista*. It was applied to anybody teaching or learning humanities, or in some other way were involved in *studia humanitatis*. Not all of the humanists shared the same political views, the same idea of active virtue and a place of man in the world and not all of them practiced the same religion. The only thing, which united them, was their interest in linguistic issues (five disciplines mentioned above). And what is philosophy for Kristeller? As we have asserted before, Kristeller’s approach was determined by German idealism, in which *ratio* was highly evaluated and put at the center of philosophy. Kristeller was a transcendentalist, and his thinking was determined in many ways by Plato and Kant. He stated that not all forms of thought were philosophical. On the one hand, philosophy is tightly connected with other aspects of human reality, such as religion, law, politics, etc. These connections are interesting to study, but philosophy has its own ‘professional tradition’: “If we want to understand the role of philosophy in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, we must consider both aspects of philosophy, that is, its close links with other subjects, and its independent place within a broader and more complex system of thought and of culture” [12, p. 110]. Kristeller regarded himself as a professional philosopher and this term has almost no relation to university education. According to Kristeller, Ficino was a professional philosopher, though his activity was not closely connected with Italian universities. Professional philosopher is a man, who follows Greek philosophical tradition, which originates from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Hence, only within this tradition, true and significant historical and philosophical inquiry can be conducted.

Thus, according to Kristeller, Ficino and Pico are regarded philosophers, rather than humanists in his sense of this word, since they were recipients of Platonic tradition and mostly were interested in typically scholastic issues – ontology and epistemology. However, many questions to Kristeller arise in this case. For example, how we should identify humanists, who referred themselves to the circle of philosophers? Could they be both humanists and philosophers or we should refer them only to the one particular type of thought?

If we recollect the viewpoint of M. Heidegger on humanism, we will be surprised, how close it was to the viewpoint of Kristeller. Heidegger argued that Renaissance humanism did not essentially influence development of philosophy and Italian Renaissance was nothing more than *renascentia romanitatis*: “Die sogenannte Renaissance des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts in Italien ist eine *renascentia romanitatis*. Weil es auf die *romanitas* ankommt, geht es um die *humanitas* und deshalb um die griechische *paideia*“ [11, p. 12]. Same as Heidegger, Kristeller associated philosophy with Greek tradition, particularly with metaphysics. C.S. Celenza underlines that there is a kind of twist of fate, since Kristeller’s project of Renaissance humanism was aimed against Heidegger. Kristeller believed in power of metaphysics, which Heidegger rejected. Hence, humanism for Heidegger was rooted in Roman culture, while the Renaissance philosophy as a particular type of thought was associated with Greek wisdom. Garin also could not agree with Heidegger and stated that humanism did not limit itself only to the renewal of Roman culture. Without a doubt, humanism was based on respectful attitude to the Ancient wisdom, but it was something larger than that. However, humanism and Neoplatonism for Kristeller belonged to different fields of knowledge. Hence, any attempts to analyze philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico as, e.g. “humanistic theology” (A. Edelheit [see 5]) or “humanistic Neoplatonism” (A. Losev [see 20]) are unsound. At the same time, according to Garin, such definitions can possibly be applied to Florentine Neoplatonism. The author of this article states that Ficino and Pico were both humanists and theologians and both their lives and activities were a demonstration of “transitivity” of the Renaissance epoch. It was Ficino and Pico who created ontological basis for the Renaissance epoch to justify it with its new comprehension of human being, God, creativity and beauty.

In this respect, it would be productive to bring one more original vision of Florentine Neoplatonism and humanism which belongs to Russian philosopher Aleksei Losev. He was concerned about the term “humanism” that was often associated with values common to all mankind. Such expressions, as “humanistic” and “humane” are frequently interpreted as equal. Losev proposed not to use the word “humanism” in academic discourse at all, or to use it with certain restrictions and remarks. Losev, same as Kristeller, was extremely concerned about a large diversity of interpretations of Renaissance humanism, but his interpretation of humanism was different. He stated that Renaissance could not be restricted to one type of thought, since the risk of running to extremes arises. Renaissance, argued Losev, was not just spontaneous exaltation of human individualism, but, at the same time, it was self-criticism of this individualism: “Aesthetics of the Renaissance was based on human personality, but it understood well enough the limited nature of this personality” [20, p. 64]. Losev did not assert sharp opposition between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. He regarded the Renaissance as a transitive epoch characterized by co-existence of contradictory elements in the same cultural field. Such approach allows us to find philosophy in what is often called “eclectics”, when characterizing philosophy of Ficino and Pico.

Losev stated that there were no “restorations” of previous epochs in the Renaissance. Kristeller also emphasized in his works that there was not one long-lasting and permanent tradition of philosophizing, but the same tradition arose in different epochs in a transformed way. Moreover, different traditions often co-existed in one epoch. When discussing continuity of medieval philosophical tradition or traditions, we should focus on elements which the Renaissance inherited from the Medieval culture and which of them disappeared forever. Ficino and Pico are hardly related to one peculiar tradition, since their outlook was rather at the intersection of different philosophical tendencies based on Christianity. Latin word *humanismus*, Losev argues, originates from *humus*, i.e. “soil, ground”. Thus humanistic movement became an ideological basis on which the Renaissance culture arose. Humanism, in turn, was inspired exactly by Neoplatonism. However, innumerable meanings of the term “humanism” should not lead us to its overly broad use and to the loss of its specificity. Both Losev and Kristeller impose limitations on the notion of humanism,

but they do it differently. Losev argued that humanism, setting a general fashion of the whole Renaissance epoch, was represented in three main types: 1) philosophical and theoretical type; 2) philosophical and practical type; 3) physical and mathematical type. Humanism has combined in itself both theoretical and practical aspects. Type, to which Losev referred Florentine Neoplatonism, was the first one – philosophical and theoretical type. The forerunners of Ficino and Pico were Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura and other theologians, whose treatises were rich on Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, and Areopagitic motives. Losev associated humanism with Neoplatonism and regarded humanism as a “practical consequence” from Neoplatonism. At the same time, Kristeller’s understanding of humanism was very close to what Losev called philosophical and practical type of humanism.

A man in the Renaissance needed creative approach to the world. He tried to embrace in one lifetime the whole space of beauty revealed to him. Therefore, Renaissance philosophers, such as Ficino and Pico, tried to do the impossible: to combine religious and philosophical ideas of many different schools in order to create a new synthetic, universal type of religious and philosophical doctrine and thus stop ideological conflicts between people. If we connect humanism and humanity, then Ficino and Pico were true humanists in their intentions, especially in modern understanding. Losev argued that Neoplatonism was the only system of thought, which could embrace “both real and ideal”, both man and world. Neoplatonism gave an ontological basis and a certain design to humanism. Platonic tradition attracted Ficino and Pico not as a system by itself, but as a system, which could serve their goals. This is the reason why Florentine Neoplatonism differed in many ways from both Ancient and Medieval types of Neoplatonism. Losev introduced the term “humanistic Neoplatonism”, though he called it “not critical”. The modern scholar A. Edelheit in his work “Ficino, Pico and Savonarola: evolution of humanist theology” (2008) also introduced a special term “humanist theology” for the designation of doctrines of Ficino and Pico. He was concerned about the fact that most of scholars paid attention to rationalistic (Kristeller) or political (Baron [see 1]) aspect of Florentine Neoplatonism and Renaissance as the whole, or exaggerated mystical or magic element in it (e.g. Cassirer or Yates). In our opinion, it is reasonable that every scholar had his own interpretation of the same problem, and in order to evaluate Florentine Neoplatonism in detail we should refer to their basic researches.

Losev argued that Neoplatonism manifested itself in all types of the Renaissance culture, and penetrated into the whole humanistic movement, while, according to Kristeller, humanism was only one of the tendencies of the Renaissance culture. At the same time, in one of his early articles [14], Kristeller has characterized Ficino and Pico as humanists, and Florentine Neoplatonism of the second half of the XV century – as a significant philosophical and humanistic movement. In later discussions, Kristeller has emphasized that the philosophical legacy of Florentine Neoplatonism belonged rather to the continuity of the scholastic tradition and had no relation to humanism, though it was developing in parallel with the latter. A. Edelheit fairly remarked that in case of Giovanni Pico, it was hard to imagine that he was not a humanist, since from under his pen an outstanding monument of humanistic thought *Oratio de hominis dignitate* has emerged. At the same time, the fact that in Pico’s treatises *De Ente et Uno*, *Conclusiones* or *Apologia* scholastic terminology and forms of argumentation are employed makes us hesitate about referring Pico to the “pure” humanists, such as Ermolao Barbaro, with whom Pico had important polemics on the relation between rhetoric and philosophy. The same is with Ficino whose *Theologia Platonica* by the form and content looks like a scholastic treatise. Thus, it is not hard to understand Kristeller’s evaluation of Florentine Neoplatonism as a continuity of philosophical tradition. In our opinion, Kristeller was right, when he stated that Ficino and Pico never wanted to break with scholasticism. However, there was something new and important in Florentine Neoplatonism except continuity of scholasticism, since Ficino and Pico influenced a lot the further development of the European

philosophy. We may remember the last passages of Cassirer's "Ficino's Place in Intellectual History" (review of Kristeller's book "The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino") in which he referred to Kristeller's analysis of "subtle influence" of Ficino on Kant [3, p. 501]. This influence is traced in Ficino's reasoning about the soul. Ficino states that every natural movement achieves its goal, and, since the soul is not able to achieve God in earthly life, then another life should exist, in which the soul can do it. This way Ficino, in particular, proves the immortality of the soul. Cassirer drew attention to this moment and argued that Kant even by his critics of "paralogisms of pure reason" did not destroy this argument of Ficino, and that this very argument appeared in Kant's work in the chapter on immortality of the soul as a postulate of the practical reason [Ibid.]. At the same time, Cassirer has noticed that Kristeller in "Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino" [14] did not pay much attention to Ficino's *De Christiana religione*. Probably, this treatise did not attract Kristeller, since he was interested in finding elements of rationalism in Ficino's doctrine, which cannot be found in religious thinking. Kristeller's Neokantian approach to philosophy did not allow him to estimate importance of Ficino's treatise devoted to the problem of universal religion. At the same time, we find quite an opposite approach to Florentine Neoplatonism in the famous work of the British scholar Francis A. Yates "Giordano Bruno and Hermetic Tradition" [18]. In contrast to Kristeller, Yates, who is considered to be the follower of Cassirer, highly appreciated religious nature of the Renaissance philosophy. Moreover, this religious aspect by its intensity went beyond all other features of the Renaissance culture. Thus, Yates exaggerated one particular feature of the epoch. She argued that a Renaissance philosopher was both a philosopher and *magus* whose outlook was formed under the influence of Hermetic tradition. Without a doubt, Ficino and Pico were familiar with ideas of the Hermetic Corpus, but these ideas represented only one element of their syncretic doctrines. However, Hermeticism was also a kind of synthesis of philosophy, theology and practical magic. Yates argued that manuscripts of the Hermetic Corpus which were considered Egyptian, but in fact were written in the 1st to 2nd century AD in Greece, were influenced by Platonic philosophy and other Greek schools of thought. In the Middle Ages, these texts were known due to the Latin treatise of Asclepius and fragments of early Church fathers. Yates stated that intensive interest in magic from the Renaissance philosophers had been evoked by the changes in the status of magic in the 15th century under the influence of Neoplatonic texts and fragments of Church fathers. Ficino played the leading role in this process as a translator and commentator of Hermetic Corpus from which he took the idea of *prisca theologia*. Ficino's interest in magic and astrology appears in his later treatise *De Vita Triplici*. Concerning Pico, Yates paid extreme attention to his interest in Kabbalah [18, see chap. 2, 4 and 5]. We stick to the opinion that magic in doctrines of Ficino and Pico did not gain the lead. Moreover, it is fair to take into account the opinion of Florentine Neoplatonists about themselves. At the beginning of *Theologia Platonica* Ficino proclaimed the following: "*In omnibus quae aut hic aut alibi a me tractantur, tantum assertum esse volo quantum ab ecclesia comprobatur*" ("whatever subject I discuss, here or elsewhere, I wish to state only what is approved by the Church") [6]. Ficino, who devoted his life to God and *ecclesia* (he was a priest), probably, associated himself not only with magic, but, first of all, with theology and religion. Ficino regarded himself a Christian and, as the German scholar J. Lauster has stated, we should respect Ficino's will to identify himself only as Christian [15, p. 47]. Certainly, Ficino's *De Vita Triplici* we can hardly call Christian, it was regarded heretic, but all other Ficino's works did not contain such radical ideas. At the same time, if we turn to Pico's *Apologia*, we will be surprised, how much scholasticism has influenced young Count of Concordia. This treatise, composed as defense against accusation of his *Conclusiones* in heresy, was a bright example of scholastic argumentation. Thus, in our opinion, Yates has overemphasized the mystic and magic elements in Ficino's and Pico's doctrines.

If we accept the idea that Ficino's and Pico's doctrines represented the continuity of scholasticism and had no relation to "philological" humanism, then what was the novelty of Florentine Neoplatonism? What exactly did Ficino and Pico contribute to the consolidation of such fresh and original vision of a man and the world which arose in the Renaissance? Ficino and Pico elaborated a new synthetic approach to the old, eternal philosophical problems. Ancient Neoplatonic cosmology provided Renaissance thinkers with the basis for deification of earthly beauty and nature, while Medieval Neoplatonism with its theological aesthetics gave Florentine Neoplatonists the cult of an independent and universal individual. This individual in the Renaissance was considered beautiful not because it was corporeal or spiritual alone, but because a man combined in himself/herself both corporeal and spiritual nature. It was a true and bright manifestation of the Renaissance anthropocentric ideology.

Finally, what was Florentine Neoplatonism? First of all, we should accept that doctrines of Ficino and Pico without a doubt were not examples of "unsuccessful eclecticism", but of unique synthetic philosophy, aiming at reconciliation of the conflicting types of thoughts and opinions. There is a widespread opinion that Florentine Neoplatonists opposition to scholastics can be debated, since Ficino and Pico never criticized Aristotle and scholasticism sharply. Moreover, they used scholastic terminology and forms of argumentation in their treatises. In the article of a modern American scholar J. Monfasani "Marsilio Ficino and Plato-Aristotle controversy", Ficino's attitude to Aristotle was analyzed in detail. The author concluded that Ficino by all means tried to escape polemics on Aristotle, since he did not want to diminish significance of this great thinker for the sake of harmonizing Aristotle's ideas with the doctrine of Plato [16].

Ficino and Pico elaborated a great project of synthesis of thought systems and tried to find universal philosophy encompassing wide range of human thought. With this regard we may state that Florentine Neoplatonism was rather "humanistic Neoplatonism" or "humanist theology", because strict definition would reduce this bright phenomenon of European philosophical thought. It would contradict the spirit and essence of Ficino's and Pico's philosophical project, which was a result of their belief in boundless opportunities of a man and his/her ability to do the impossible.

Ficino's attitude to scholastics was ambiguous. He was familiar with scholastic tradition, since *Summa contra Gentiles* of Aquinas in Ficino's youth was a kind of textbook for him. Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* may also be described as "Summa" on immortality of the soul by its form. Ficino respected representatives of scholasticism and cited their treatises in his own works. The use of scholastic terminology (*essentia, esse, perfectio*, etc.) was natural for him. Everyone who started to familiarize himself/herself with philosophy could not pass by scholasticism, since it was the only tradition in the 15th century Europe which elaborated its original language of philosophizing.

The treatises of Giovanni Pico (*Conclusiones, Apologia, De Ente et Uno*) both by their form and content are scholastic. It is not surprising, since Pico studied in Padua and Paris – Medieval centers of scholasticism. Thomas More wrote that Pico had obtained good theological education and was a theologian in the same way Joan Duns Scotus was [17, p.VII]. We can also turn to the polemics between Pico and Barbaro, which A. Buck characterized as an opposition between "ontological" or "philological" humanism [see 2]. In this polemics Pico showed his general attitude towards scholasticism which Barbaro charged with excessive formalism. Pico, in turn, defended scholasticism due to its depth and great scale of ideas. For Pico, true knowledge was more important and precious than victory in disputes regardless of means. Pico protected scholasticism from attacks of "philological" humanists, philosophy – from empty rhetoric, and content – from dictatorship of the form, using those fundamental methods of argumentation which had been developed in medieval universities. In other words, there were scholastic ideas which helped humanism to find its own ideological ground and preserve its specificity.

Conclusion. The aforesaid demonstrates that Florentine Neoplatonism was more complicated phenomenon than it could seem. We consider Ficino and Pico both humanists and philosophers. They have obtained their initial philosophical education in scholastic tradition, studied logic and theology using medieval textbooks. At the same time, it is hard to separate purely philosophical, mystical or religious elements in Florentine Neoplatonism, inasmuch all these types of thought are mixed together in it. Such diversity of thought can be characterized as a dialog between two epochs – the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Early humanists were convinced that medieval theologians had distorted the meaning of classical texts; therefore these texts should not be imitated, but renovated on the basis of its new reading. At the same time, Ficino and Pico understood well that the way to the comprehension of Ancient philosophy could not come out of the understanding of medieval theology, which Renaissance thinkers could evaluate in some sense from the outside. They have been analyzing and discussing medieval philosophical legacy in order to determine what place in history they held themselves.

Renaissance philosophy still remains the subject of inquiry for many historians of philosophy. We hope this article has shed light on the problem of interpretation of Florentine Neoplatonism as synthetic type of thought and demonstrated the ambiguity of theoretical approaches to this problem. However, there are many questions concerning Florentine Neoplatonism which can become subject of future historical and philosophical inquiry: analysis of Ficino's commentaries to Plato's dialogues, influence of the Eastern philosophical and religious doctrines on the ideas of Ficino and Pico, impact of Ficino and Pico on the 15th century political life in Florence, etc. These and many other issues need further studying and interpretation.

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