A Neoplatonic Reading Five Donne Poems

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A NEOPLATONIC READING

FIVE DONNE POEMS

(TITLE)

BY

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THESIS

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Among Donne's poems are a number which reflect the Neoplatonic theory of love, and which, therefore, suddenly make sense when read in the light of Neoplatonic concepts. Donne's statement of the concepts of love in his poems closely parallels the concepts of Marsilio Ficino, a representative philosopher of Neoplatonism during the Renaissance. Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium provides a philosophic statement of the Neoplatonic position prior to Donne's time. The ideas as found in Ficino's work would therefore provide a suitable yardstick by which to assess Donne's ideas. This paper will discuss "The good-morrow," "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," "Holy Sonnet XVII," "A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day," and "The Extasie," in relation to selected statements of Ficino on the Neoplatonic theory of love.

Ficino philosophically reconciles Platonism and Christianity. Rather, he interprets Platonism in terms of Christianity. One of the most unique aspects of his philosophy is his treatment of love. In Christianity, God is the Creator of all creatures, and the original source of the whole universe. Similarly, Ficino considers Love as "the motive force of the whole universe" and as "the source of all earthly goods." Thus, Love and God are identical. He also says that "Love has the enjoyment of Beauty as its end" (Commentary, P. 130).
Whoever sees and loves beauty in God's creatures, seeing and loving the image of God or the divine Beauty immanent in them, indirectly and directly, sees and loves the image of the Creator, that is, God ([Commentary], P. 140).

Therefore, as long as a lover loves divine Beauty in his mortal beloved, his earthly love is as good as divine love. In fact, Ficino says that any kind of love is good, and that earthly love and divine love are equally good. However, Ficino strongly recommends that human beings should love God as the universal Good and Beauty, because He is the source of the whole universe. On the other hand, human beings should love any earthly good and beauty derived from the universal good, since God created all earthly things. However, Love of God is much superior to any secular love, because it is spiritual, eternal, and infinitely satisfying to the human soul. The human soul is, because of its nature, never satisfied by any secular love or any earthly good and beauty, because its object is physical and mutable after all. Therefore, Ficino repeatedly says that man should sincerely love God alone.

However, he says that it is very difficult for men on earth to love God alone. He explains this difficulty that they must face on earth in terms of the nature of the human soul. The human soul has dual inclinations because of its middle and third position in Ficino's
hierarchy of Beings, in which there are God, Angelic Mind, Soul, Nature (Quality), and Body. Therefore, the Soul moves naturally both toward the Body and the corporeal, and toward God and the incorporeal. Although, the Soul is born whole, it is thus split (Commentary, p. 159). The Soul on earth is constantly prevented by the existence of the body from attaining its highest good, that is, to know and love God alone. Therefore, the body is the prisonhouse of the Soul.

Ficino justifies these two movements of the Soul -- one, toward the body, and the other, toward God -- in terms of the natural appetite of the Soul which results from the dual nature of the Soul. Even when the Soul descends toward the body, it is free from moral reproach (Kristeller, pp. 188-194). Nevertheless, when the Soul goes down toward the body, it is often "seized by sensuality and lust as though by a tyrant and his bullies" (Commentary, p. 159), and it can enjoy only physical and corporeal beauty, neglecting the divine, which is obviously against the other natural appetite of the Soul, that is, toward God.

However, the Soul, through learning of and recollecting its original nature, in which there are both the natural light to perceive corporeal and earthly beauty, and the supernatural light to perceive the incorporeal and divine (Commentary, p. 158), notices that the natural light is not sufficient to satisfy itself. For the Soul, by its nature, cannot
find rest or satisfaction until it reaches infinite Good and Truth, that is, God (Kristeller, pp. 190-191). So the Soul, according to its nature, begins to seek something divine by recovering its supernatural light in itself. Ficino says that on these two, that is, on natural light and supernatural light, "as though on a pair of wings, the soul is able to fly through the heavenly region" (Commentary, p. 158). Natural light is also explained as the Soul's power of propagation, and supernatural light, as its power of contemplation. Both powers of the Soul are thus justified (Commentary, p. 143. p. 158).

Ficino, who, as a Renaissance man, has a humanistic view of love, explains a great deal about earthly love and lovers. First, he quotes Plato's explanation that a lover is "a soul dead in its body and living in that of another." To love someone is to lose and forget one's self and to give one's self to the beloved. So, love causes the loss of self and the literal death of the soul of a lover. Ficino divides earthly love into two; one, simple love, and the other, mutual love. Simple love occurs when the beloved doesn't love his lover in return. In this case, "the lover is completely dead, for he neither lives in himself, nor does he live in his beloved" (Commentary, p. 143). On the contrary, mutual love makes the lovers live in each other after they die to themselves, that is, they lose themselves. Ficino explains:
Whenever two people are brought together in mutual affection, one lives in the other and the other in him. In this way they mutually exchange identities; each gives himself to the other, in such a way that each receives the other in return. . . . each has himself and has the other. . . . A has himself, but in B; B has himself, but in A. (Commentary, pp. 144-145).

Thus, mutual love causes the mutual exchange of identities. After each lover has lost himself, he recovers himself through his beloved and finds himself in his beloved's contemplation of him (Commentary, p. 145). Such kind of earthly love can lead the lovers to ascent toward God, because they love the divine Beauty immanent in each other. Therefore, Ficino seems to say that mutual earthly love is ideal human love on earth, from which the lovers can reach divine love by climbing up the ladder of love hierarchically.

What I have said above is the basic idea of Ficino's philosophy of love, a philosophy which we find reflected in Donne's poetry, especially in "The good-morrow," "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," "Holy Sonnet XVII," "A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day," and "The Extasie." 3

The speaker and his beloved in "The good-morrow" have been just awakened in the morning. And the speaker starts to wonder what they did until they began to love each other. For his newly discovered love makes him feel as if they had slept and snorted in their earlier lives and as if they had sucked on "the countrey pleasures" of sexual love
childishly, without being weaned from them. The speaker is astonished that their new love, unlike that of his former love affairs which gave him only pleasures of sexual love, gives him immutable, spiritual satisfaction and pleasures. Therefore, it seems to him that all pleasures he has had before are merely "fancies" and any beauty he has seen, desired, and got is only a "dream" of his new beloved, who is now lying in the bed next to him. His former lovers and love affairs were unreal and unsatisfying because they had nothing incorporeal and spiritual. In contrast, his newly discovered love is more real and true to him, because he loves his lady spiritually.

This is a reflection of Neoplatonism, which emphasizes the insubstantiality and mortality of the visible, and the superiority of the spiritual to the physical perceived through human senses. The speaker's former love affairs were merely based on the senses, and therefore, they were not sufficient to satisfy his soul. But, his new love, which is based on the spiritual rather than on the physical, can satisfy him and give him spiritual happiness. As in Ficino's idea of the two lights with which the Soul is endowed (Commentary, p. 158), the soul of the speaker, before he met his new beloved, only had natural light with which he only perceived the physical, and consequently, he simply indulged himself in such physical love. Nevertheless, when he started to love his new beloved, his soul became attracted by the spiritual beauty inherent in her.
Accordingly, his soul, by its nature, started to recover its inherent supernatural light to apprehend something spiritual and divine. Now his soul loves the divine image immanent in her.

As a result, the speaker says that it is now good-morrow not only to him and his beloved who have been just awakened, but also to their souls, which have been also awakened because of their new spiritual love, and have begun to perceive and love, through supernatural light, the spiritual beauty in each other. Thus, the title of the poem, "The good-morrow," metaphorically suggests the two lovers' souls' awakening.

In the second and third stanzas, Donne elaborately uses the metaphor of the microcosm in a Neoplatonic manner to present the lovers' amorous union. In contrast to the real and larger world, their amorous union is a perfect small world, which is composed of two hemispheres, that is, the speaker and his beloved. In consequence, the speaker says that "each has one, and is one"; each has his own hemisphere to make one complete small world. This implies the Neoplatonic idea of the lovers' oneness in which two lovers become united by mutual affection after exchanging their identities.

The speaker, fully content with their small world, cares little about the real and larger world, whose map has been extended as the result of the recent discovery of a new world. He also says that his
new love is so powerful that it controls "all love of other sights" and makes "one little roome, an every where." Small as it is, it is more perfect than the larger one, because, unlike the larger and real world, it has no "sharpe North," nor "declining West," and because the two hemispheres of the small world, that is, those of the speaker and his beloved, are far better than those of the real world.

In the last stanza, though Donne employs the cliche of Renaissance poetry that each lover's face is reflected in the other's eye,\(^4\) he vivifies it in the light of the Neoplatonic idea about the lovers' mutual exchange of their identities. Ficino uses the same kind of metaphor of reflection. According to him, the soul of a lover becomes a mirror in which the image of his beloved is imprinted and reflected, and "when the loved one recognizes himself in the lover, he is forced to love him" (Commentary, p. 146). Likewise, when the speaker and his beloved find their own images in each other's eye, they are forced to love their own beloveds more sincerely than before. Thus, their identities are exchanged and restored in their own beloveds who imprint the images of their lovers not only in their eyes but also in their souls (Commentary, pp. 145-146). Thus, they possess each other completely in their amorous union.

Similarly, Ficino claims that

\[
\text{if two lovers become possessors of their own beloveds, each rests easily in the possession of his own beloved and has no fear that the other will take possession of a fairer loved. (Commentary, p. 162).}
\]
In this poem, the speaker and his beloved also become true "possessors of their own beloveds," and therefore, they watch each other without fear (l.9).

Thus, they mutually love each other with "true plain hearts." The speaker concludes the poem by saying that their love is eternal, since they "love so alike," that is, they love equally and mutually. Whatever is not mixed equally would die. However, since the speaker and his beloved, like the two hemispheres, are mixed equally in their amorous union, their love cannot be slackened by anything, nor can it die.

The love of the speaker and his beloved in "The good-morrow" is spiritual love, in which they have recently started to contemplate the divine Beauty in their own beloveds. Through their earthly love, they love and contemplate God Himself. Donne thus presents the lovers whose earthly love is spiritual so that it leads them to ascent toward God. Their contemplation of God, through that of their own earthly beloveds, in fact, gives them such spiritual satisfaction and happiness.

"A Valediction: forbidding mourning" is one of Donne's separation poems, in which the speaker addresses his lady on the occasion of his departure on a journey. In the first stanza, Donne uses a dualistic contrast between the incorporeal and the corporeal, and between the spiritual and the earthly to present the superiority of the incorporeal and spiritual to the corporeal and earthly, by showing the complete
union of two lovers based on spiritual love. Obviously, this contrast is based on Neoplatonic dualism.

First, Donne compares virtuous men, who are now dying, with their friends. Virtuous men part with their lives mildly, even though their friends are sad and upset about their deaths. The calm attitude toward death of these virtuous men is a reflection of Neoplatonism, in which the Soul is imprisoned in the body on earth so that it cannot attain its highest good, that is, God Himself. Since death is the Soul's actual separation from the body, only after death can the Soul be free from the body and finally attain the highest good and enjoy it forever. Similarly, virtuous men can take their own deaths calmly because they believe that the Soul is immortal. So there is nothing for them to be afraid about in death. In contrast, their sad friends, considering that death is a crucial and important thing because it is the end of life, make noise about virtuous men's deaths.

The speaker, telling about virtuous men, suggests to his lady that they, like virtuous men, should part calmly, without making any noise, and without mourning, crying, and sighing. Here, the speaker begins the second contrast, that of earthly profane lovers and themselves. Profane lovers, such as the speakers in "A Valediction: of weeping" and "A Valediction: of my name, in the window," weep, mourn, and sigh, because they cannot endure their physical separation. Their soul
is "sense" and their love is based on the physical. Therefore, the separation, removing the most important element of their love, means the end of their love and causes the lover's literal death. So, floods of tears and tempests of sighs are Petrarchan cliches to describe such separations. Unlike that of these profane lovers, the love of the speaker and his beloved is based more on the spiritual than on the physical, and they care little if they should miss each other's physical beauty, such as, that of eyes, lips, and hands. For their souls are united even when they part physically from each other. Therefore, floods of tears and tempests of sighs, the speaker says, are only profanation of the true joy of their spiritual love.

The third contrast is that of the earth and the spheres. Donne uses it metaphorically to present the spiritual as superior to the physical. The movement of the earth is so irrational and intense that it brings harm and fear to men. As a result, men puzzle over what the movement meant. In contrast, "trepidation" of the spheres is much greater than that of the earth, but brings no harm or fear to men. Since the spheres move harmoniously according to the divine power, men cannot know their movement on earth. Their rational and orderly movement is quite different from the irrational movement of the earth. The speaker and his lady, like the spheres, move rationally and in orderly fashion, because they love something spiritual in their own beloveds. On the other hand,
profane lovers, like the movement of the earth, are always irrational and intense.  

The speaker, in the fifth stanza, says that they are refined by love so much that they themselves don't know what it is they love and desire. This also parallels Ficino's idea of earthly lovers. According to him, since a lover loves the divine image of God in his beloved, he never knows what it is he seeks and desires. Because the object of his love is divine, he cannot know it as long as he is on earth (Commentary, p. 140). Likewise, the speaker of the poem doesn't know the object of their love, either. The only thing he knows about their love is that they are dependent on their minds and are attracted by each other's spiritual rather than physical beauty, so that they can endure the temporary separation without mourning.

Not only can they endure the separation, but also they can expand their love like beaten gold when they part physically. Since their souls are united, there is no breach between them. Besides, the farther the speaker goes from his lady, the broader their love is. As in "The good-morrow," Donne employs the Neoplatonic idea of lovers' oneness by using the metaphor of beaten gold.

Although the two lovers are one, they are still separate beings. Ficino explains this, saying that "each gives himself up for the other, and has the other, yet does not cease to have himself" (Commentary, p.145).
By using the famous metaphor of a pair of compasses, Donne describes this Neoplatonic relationship between the two lovers in this poem. Like the lover in Ficino's definition, the speaker of the poem says that they become one because of their mutual spiritual love, yet they are, just like two feet of compasses, still two different selves. His lady's soul is the fixed foot, which doesn't seem to move, but does move when the other foot, his soul, moves, because their souls are one and move together, just as the two feet of compass are bound together and move together. Although the fixed foot sits in the center far from the other, it "leans and hearkens" after the other foot, when the other foot draws a circle. Similarly, no matter where and how far the speaker goes after the separation, his lady always "leans and hearkens" after him. Since their souls are united, he always comes back to her, just as the two feet of the compass meet each other after drawing a circle. As the foot of the compass can draw a circle justly because of the fixed foot, so the speaker can go and move in the right way because of the existence of his lady. Therefore, the speaker says to his lady, "thy firmness makes my circle just." Namely, his love for her and his contemplation of her leads him to the right way, in which he comes back exactly where he started.

Donne thus presents us with the idea that their separation is, not the end of their love, but a starting point for refreshing and strengthening
it, by using the metaphors of beaten gold and of a pair of compasses. The image of the circle drawn by the compass suggests the perfection of their unity. Moreover, a Neoplatonic idea seems to be illustrated in this metaphor. Ficino says that "each thing tends toward its origin, and, therefore, beginning and end are always identical" (Kristeller, p. 175). Like the continual circular motion of the compass, the speaker's soul always comes back where it started. Besides, his soul, at the beginning, seeks his lady's beauty, which is also identified with the final end of his soul. When it is united with what it loves, it finally finds rest and satisfaction. Thus, the beginning and the end of the movement of the speaker's soul are identical in this poem.

Moreover, the orderly movement of compasses is correlated to that of the spheres of the third stanza. As we have seen, all the contrasts between the corporeal and incorporeal, and the metaphors of beaten gold and of compasses are thus linked together to show the perfect union of the two lovers in the poem.

In Neoplatonism, everything except God and the Angelic Mind, has its natural appetite or natural movement to attain a good as its goal (Kristeller, pp. 171-184). Ficino defines Love as a form of appetite whose goal is beauty. Kristeller explains this:

...When the loving subject is united with its object, the movement stops, and love finds satisfaction in the enjoyment of its attained object, that is, beauty of the object. (Kristeller, p. 264)
In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," Donne creates the lover who finds such satisfaction after his soul is united with his beloved's. Although his love is secular love, this poem creates a spiritual atmosphere. For the speaker's love for his lady leads him to righteous love, through which he and his lady can ascend toward God. Such love is the ideal earthly love which Ficino defines.

The Neoplatonists justify secular love in terms of the Soul's dual nature. The human soul, when it is on earth, can turn equally toward God and the earthly (Kristeller, p. 192). Accordingly, they consider that earthly love is good, because human beings can reach divine love by climbing up the ladder of love hierarchically from earthly love. As C. S. Lewis points out, this justification of earthly love is one of the characteristics of Neoplatonism, for the Renaissance Neoplatonists think that love can attain the divine "without abandoning the human and becomes spiritual while remaining also carnal, but they don't find it in Plato." They modify Plato to satisfy Renaissance man's humanistic view of love.

Although Ficino also justifies earthly love, he explains that spiritual and divine love is much superior to the earthly in various ways. For example, he defines God as "the universal Good and Beauty" which is the source of all earthly good and beauty. In contrast to universal Good and Beauty, any earthly good and beauty is only "a particular good and beauty," because it is transient and physical (Kristeller, p. 193). Therefore, man should love God as his ultimate end even when he loves a
mortal being. As long as man considers his earthly love only as a means to ascend toward God, and God as the ultimate object of his love, it is justified as righteous earthly love. However, in its earthly life, the human soul is often tempted by its inclination toward the earthly to love only earthly good inordinately, forgetting its ultimate goal. In this case, love is classified as sinful earthly love. Kristeller explains Ficino's idea of two opposite destinies of the Soul determined according to these two kinds of earthly love:

...The future destiny of the Soul rests on this difference as developed during earthly life. For the one who follows virtue here below, that is, for him who turns his appetite immediately toward God, is reserved beatitude after death, that is, the unlimited vision and enjoyment of God. But he who turns his appetite toward earthly good, and thus falls into vice, faces after death condemnation and the eternal loss of the knowledge of God. (Kristeller, p. 193)

Among Donne's poems, we can see clearly these two opposite attitudes of the Soul toward its end. The speaker in "Holy Sonnet XVII" represents the righteous lover and the speaker in "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day" represents the sinful lover of Ficino's definition. Since both speakers themselves are, of course, not dead, we cannot discuss the future destiny of their souls. However, we can see the same kind of two opposite phenomena, as Ficino explains, when they are forced to face the reality of human mortality and the mutability of human love on the occasion of their beloveds' deaths.
In righteous earthly love, a lover loves the image of God immanent in his beloved and directly and indirectly contemplates God through his earthly love. He loves God as the universal Good and Beauty, and the object of his earthly love as a particular good. Ficino says that the soul of the lover thus always recollects and yearns to return to its original place, that is, to God (Kristeller, pp. 174-175). But it is very hard for the human soul to attain its goal on earth because of the existence of the body. Therefore, Ficino explains that the human soul always feels misery and unrest in the mortal body, and only when it separates from the body, can it attain its highest goal. He considers this separation of the Soul from the body as a "ravishment" or "rapture" (Kristeller, p. 216), which results in the state of ecstasy in which the Soul can enjoy the knowledge of God forever. He continues explaining that only a few men can experience this "ravishment" in their earthly lives, and most people first experience it after death, since it is the actual separation of their souls from their bodies. Therefore, the Soul can attain its highest Good, if not in its earthly life, then, after death.

The speaker of "Holy Sonnet XVII" loved his lady almost exactly in the righteous manner of Neoplatonism when she was still alive. He loved the divine Beauty inherent in his beloved, and therefore, his love was so spiritual that his admiration for her whetted his mind (soul) to seek God Himself as the ultimate source of his earthly love. His mind
(soul), with the aid of his love for his lady, recollected God as its original place and contemplated Him, just as streams look back at their head as their origin.

Since his earthly love was righteous and spiritual, he could confront his lady's death calmly, just as the virtuous men in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" face their own deaths mildly. The death of his beloved meant to him the separation of her soul from its body. Accordingly, he says that her soul was "ravished" into heaven by God's will. Now, after her death, he sincerely thinks that her soul, with great delight, can enjoy the knowledge of God infinitely, for the lower function of her soul, which had prevented it from knowing God before, was abandoned with its body by God's ravishment. Of course, there is a sense of loss in the speaker, who says that her soul was ravished "early." Although he is sorry about her death, he takes it happily because this ravishment of his beloved was from the will of the Creator.

Since she whom he loved paid her last debt to Nature and to her nature, "as a human being who is subject to death," the speaker says that his good is also dead. His soul loved her beauty as its good. However, as beautiful as she was, and although her beauty was also divine Beauty, she was after all a mortal woman. Her beauty was mutable and he recognized it as a particular good, in contrast to the infinite universal Good that is God. Therefore, when she died, his
mutable good, her beauty, died with her. Her death, having taught him that all earthly goods are not satisfying after all, makes his mind turn "wholly" toward heavenly things. For only God can extinguish his ardent thirst eternally and infinitely (Kristeller, p. 268). As Shawcross points out, "wholly" is a pun on "holy" (Shawcross, p. 309, n. 4), which emphatically presents the speaker's devotion to the heavenly and holy.

Even before his beloved's death, he found God in her, and He "fed" his thirst. But now, after her death, "a holy thirsty dropsy "of God's Love still melts him. Now, there is no one intervening between him and God, since his lady has died. He can now love God directly. Wondering at the infiniteness of God's Love, he asks, "But why should I begg more Love?" Having carried her away from him, God, like a new beloved, now woos his soul and infinitely offers him all His Love, instead of hers. God's Love is thus fully satisfying, so he thinks that he doesn't have to ask more Love from Him.

God, like earthly lovers, is jealous, too. He, in His "tender jealousy," not only fears that the speaker may offer his spiritual love too generously to the things divine, such as, Saints and Angels, but also fears that his love toward the earthly, such as, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, will put out His divine Love. His jealousy is always tender and rational, while human jealousy is irrational and
intense (Andreasen, pp. 235-236). God is only afraid in His tender jealousy that the speaker may love, not a right object, but a wrong object. God's "tender jealousy" thus leads men to righteous love in which God is the only object.

Before his lady's death, the speaker of the sonnet turned equally toward the earthly, his lady, and toward God. However, like the righteous lover in Ficino's definition, he immediately seeks God alone after her death. As a result, he receives God's infinite Love and reaches the enjoyment of God.

On the contrary, the speaker of "A nocturnall," is too sad and upset about his lady's death to turn his soul to seek God. Of course, there is nothing wrong with human love for another mortal being if one loves his beloved in a right way. However, the love of the speaker of this poem leads him to self-destruction and helpless despair after his lady's death, because he loved her as if she were the infinite Good, which love is only due to God. He becomes just like a dead person spiritually, although he is still alive physically. For, his love put too much emphasis on the mutable and he was not aware of his lady's mutability when she was alive. Therefore, his grief and despair about her death are so great that he doesn't even feel his own existence.

"A nocturnall" is dedicated to the memory of this speaker's lady. It begins with the description of Nature in the midnight of St. Lucy's day,
the shortest day of the year. St. Lucy's day falls on the winter solstice (December 13) (Shawcross, p. 155, n.), so it is very cold and we can easily imagine that all living things seem to be dead. Besides, it is the midnight of the day, the time of sleep of all the living. The darkness and quietness of the cold winter midnight fit his mournful mood.

It is the midnight of St. Lucy's day, the shortest day of the year. Lucy, the patron saint of light, who is metaphorically identified with the sun, unMASKS herself for only several hours in the day. Therefore, it is the midnight of the year as well. It is black and dark because the sun has spent his light, and now, only his invisible light, "flasks," makes stars visible, yet they are shining like "squibs" and there are no constant rays from them. To the mournful speaker, all the living in the world look like dead in such death-like darkness of the midnight. The world's whole sap is sunk, and the "thirsty" earth has drunk all the general "balm" which, as Shawcross suggests, probably implies "life-giving rain," that comforts such dry, thirsty earth (Shawcross, p. 155, n. 6). It seems to the speaker that life of Nature is shrunk, dead, and entered into the dry winter ground, just as life of a sick person gradually sinks to the bed-foot and finally ceases. Moreover, comparing these seemingly dead things in Nature with himself, the speaker says that they seem to laugh at him mockingly, because he is their "Epitaph."

Since his lady died, he feels helpless as if he were actually dead,
because he has lost the purpose of his life, that is, to love his lady with all his heart.

In the following stanza, he suggests to persons, who will be lovers at the next world, namely, at the next spring, that they should study him in order to know how and why his love has thus destroyed him and made him such an "Epitaph" of all dead things. He begins to explain that love wrought new alchemy in him and changed him into "every dead thing."

When his lady was still alive, he loved her so inordinately that he never imagined that she was mortal and that his love for her was also mutable. He simply believed in the immortality of his love. Now he mourns over her death intensely and still cannot believe her mortality. He thinks that love's art is all "imposture," like medieval alchemy. Just as alchemy seemed to change worthless metals into the most precious pure gold, so his love seemed to promise him the highest essence and "hidden mystery" of love, namely, eternal happiness ("Loves Alchemie", l. 5-6). Nevertheless, to his great disappointment, it actually brought him not eternal happiness, but the death of his lady, just as alchemy brought no gold.

Because of her death, he feels totally dead, a nothing, privative and empty. Blaming the false art of love, he sardonically says that love may swear that it can draw a quintessence of love even from such
"nothingness", "dull privations," and "lean emptiness" of his feeling. He thinks that he was deceived and finally ruined by love, which changed him into "every dead thing." But, he is re-begot, yet, out of "absence," "darkness," and "death" which all are not. Since he is reborn from these non-existent things, he himself doesn't exist, either. Therefore, he keeps calling himself "nothing" throughout the poem.

In the third stanza, the speaker confirms himself that he is "nothing" in comparison to all other people who exist. From all things, they draw all that's good which gives them being. In contrast, the speaker, distilled by the "alembic" of love's alchemy (Shawcross, p. 156, n.3), becomes "the grave" of all existing things, that is, nothing. Just like the speaker in "Holy Sonnet XVII," he loved the beauty of his lady as his good. However, his good which gave him being before her death died with her, so he doesn't have being (existence) in the ontological sense, although he is still alive physically.

When his lady was alive, he recollects, their love often caused sorrow. He didn't realize why, but it is because the object of their love was mutable and earthly, which never fully satisfied their souls. They often wept so intensely that the flood of their tears drowned "the whole world," that is, the small world of their amorous union. This intensity and irrationality of their feeling shows us that they were
typical Petrarchan lovers. Besides, they were too self-important to recognize the existence of the real world, and consequently, their amorous union was "the whole world" to them.

Ficino says that lover possess each other's soul. When a beloved doesn't love his lover in return, the soul of the lover becomes homeless and completely dead (Commentary, pp. 144-145). This idea is illustrated in a little different way in this poem to describe the unstableness of their love.

Even though the love of the speaker and his lady was mutual, they often grew to be two "chaoses" when they showed care for somebody or something other than their own beloveds. The word, "chaos," is related to "the first nothing" in the next stanza. God created, through His infinite power, His creatures out of "the first nothing" or "chaos" (Commentary, p. 129). Moreover, Love was accompanied by chaos in God's creation. Therefore, chaos means the stage without Love. Thus, the speaker and his lady became "chaoses" in which they could not find any love, when their love was not accepted by their own beloveds.

Furthermore, since their love was earthly, not spiritual, each other's physical presence was the most important element of their love. They could hardly endure their physical separation, because it meant to them the end of their love. Since they possessed each other's soul when they loved each other, each other's physical absence often
withdrew their souls and made them soulless bodies, that is, "caracasses."

In the previous stanza, the speaker presents their relationship and the characteristics of their love before his lady's death. Even though their love was reciprocal, he was often "chaos" and "caracass," and, in the fourth stanza, he says that he now becomes "the first nothing" by her death. Because of her death, which is, for him, physical deprivation of her, both his love and his soul lose their place to reside. His soul, after the loss of his lady, thus turned out to be "the first nothing."

Here, the speaker starts to prove himself as "the first nothing" by using the Neoplatonic idea of being. Ficino says that things which don't function don't exist, since function and existence (being) are almost equivalent (Commentary, p. 144). The speaker in this poem says that he doesn't even know whether he is a man or not. His soul has lost its function, Reason, and as a result, he is incapable of knowing what he is. Ficino also says that Reason is man's unique property which distinguishes man from other lower animals. Since the speaker's soul doesn't thus function, it doesn't exist. Besides, since he lost Reason, the unique property of man, he doesn't exist as a man, either, for this very property is supposed to give him being (Kristeller, pp. 40-41). Thus, he proves that he is not a man any more.

What is he, then? He says that he is not a beast, nor plants or stones, because they all have their own properties which give them being,
but he doesn't. He is not an ordinary nothing like shadow, either, which is always accompanied by some substantial body and light, for he is not accompanied by anything. Thus, he succeeds in proving himself as "the first nothing".

In the last stanza of the poem, he contrasts "his Sun," his lady, with "the lesser Sun," the real sun. While "his Sun" was the source of his life, "the lesser Sun" is the original source of light and life of the whole world. The speaker says that he is "None," nor will "his Sun" renew his life and save him any more from such nothingness because she is dead. On the other hand, though it is the midnight of the shortest day of the year, "the lesser Sun" is going to rise again and renew the light to make another day from such darkness of the night. This symbolically suggests the eternal cycle of rebirth from death in Nature. It is obvious for us to think that "the lesser Sun" represents the eternal and heavenly and "his Sun" represents the transient and earthly. However, instead of admitting the fact, the speaker still treats his dead lady as if she were greater and more eternal than the real sun. Moreover, he sardonically says that the lesser Sun is now running to the Goat to fetch new lust to give it to new lovers. And he tells the new lovers to enjoy their summer all, which implies that their pleasure from love is only as short as summer. According to his past experience, he knows that love can give lovers only "a winter-
seeming summer night" of the short pleasure of lust, even though they always dream to get "a rich and long delight" ("Loves Alchemie," l.l1-12) from their love.

The speaker changes his tone and seems to say mournfully, "let me prepare to go toward her, and let me call this hour her Vigil, and her Eve, since my beloved is enjoying her long night's festival in heaven after becoming a saint following her death." We can see that he still worships and loves his dead lady as if she were a saint identified with St. Lucy, without facing the fact of her human mutability.

Thus, his love, unlike that of the speaker in "Holy Sonnet XVII," doesn't lead him to righteous love to ascend toward God. He doesn't even try to seek something more eternal than his former earthly love. Since he loved his beloved in a wrong way, his love is sinful earthly love which makes him nothing and leads him to face the loss of his knowledge of God.

"The Extasie" begins with the speaker's recollection about what happened one day to him and his beloved. The speaker says that their souls went out from their bodies, and accordingly, they experienced an ecstasy of their souls, which is very rare for such human beings as them. For, human souls can hardly abandon their bodies during their earthly lives. However, ecstasy, the temporary separation of the Soul from the body, occurred to these two lovers even on earth, simply because
their love, according to the speaker, was very spiritual.

Before they experienced the ecstasy, the speaker says, they sat on a river bank where a violet rested its reclining head. Their hands were joined firmly and they were looking at each other with mutual affection. They loved each other, and consequently, they were "one another's best." This description might give us an impression that these two happy lovers were united thus completely in such a pastoral setting. Yet, the readers of the poem can't overlook the fact that there are profane sexual images from the beginning of the poem. Accordingly, they might start to wonder what kind of relationship these lovers actually had. The river bank where they sat seemed to the speaker to be "swelled up" and "pregnant" like "a pillow on a bed." Obviously, these words have sexual implications. Their hands were "firmly cemented" with a fast balm out of their perspiration, which suggests their intense and lustful emotion. Their eye-beams were "twisted" and "threaded" their eyes "upon one double string." This implies not only the close relationship and oneness of these two lovers, but also the intense and immoderate emotion of their love.

Although their love seemed to be thus intense and lustful, the speaker pretends that they had been very innocent, pure, and spiritual, so that joining their hands and reflecting their images in each other's eyes were their only means for making them one and for propagating themselves.
The desire for oneness and for propagation are the basic elements of the Neoplatonic theory of love, which are somehow perverted by Donne in this poem.

Ficino explains that mutual affection causes the mutual exchange of lovers' identities, in which "each gives himself up for the other, and has the other, yet does not cease to have himself" (Commentary, p. 145), and finally the two lovers become one. Of course, Ficino talks about this oneness of the lovers on a spiritual level in which their souls are united. Moreover, he says, "Love has enjoyment of Beauty as its end," and defines three kinds of beauty: the beauty of the Soul, that of the body, and that of Sound. Each beauty is perceived only through the mind, the eyes, or the ears. The beauty of the Soul is the highest beauty, because it is farthest from the corporeal. Ficino considers the senses of touch, taste, and smell, as lower senses which can perceive, not love, but lust. In this poem, touch and sight were contained in the love of the speaker and his beloved. As in lines 11-12, the lovers might perceive and love the beauty of their bodies with sight alone. However, we see them holding their hands firmly. Their oneness thus involved the desire to touch, which Ficino calls merely "lust" or "madness" (Commentary, p. 130).

According to Ficino, the Soul has two powers: the power of contemplation, and that of propagation. These two powers in the human soul result from the dual nature of Venus. He calls the former power,
Celestial Venus, and the latter, Terrestrial Venus. Both Venuses and both powers of the Soul are honorable, because they are the very aspects of human love. Consequently, human desire of propagation can be justified as long as man doesn't give up that of contemplation and prefers the beauty of the Soul to that of the body (Commentary, p. 143). Besides, sexual love is justified, as long as it is used, not as a means to satisfy bodily need, but as a selfless means to have offspring, since all men desire the eternal by generation (Commentary, pp. 202-203).

Similarly, the speaker of the poem has a desire for propagation. We easily associate the word, "propagation," with the words, "pregnant," and "a pillow on a bed," at the beginning of the poem. All the words obviously have sexual connotations. Therefore, the tone of the speaker's voice sounds regretful and discontented, because their only way for propagation was reflecting their own images in each other's eyes, and they had not yet fully satisfied their strong desire for propagation through actual sexual love.

Lines 9-12, which I have discussed above, contain the most important clue for understanding the conclusion of the poem. The true nature of these lovers first reveals itself to us in these lines. Their oneness implies not only spiritual union of their souls by Ficino's definition, but their physical union. Like Ficino's Neoplatonic lovers, they yearned for propagation of beauty, but it seemed to us that they were, in fact,
very anxious to experience sexual love as their end, rather than to
propagate beauty through sex as its means. By employing and somehow
perverting the Neoplatonic theory of love according to his preference,
Donne thus creates a speaker who falsely rationalizes physical love
and still believes in love's spirituality throughout the poem.

The lovers were now lying motionless without saying anything,
because their souls had gone out from their bodies, that is, they had
gone to their higher state of being, so that they were merely soul-less
bodies, like "sepulcheral statues." They remained in the same posture
all day. As Fate suspends uncertain victory between equal armies, so
the souls of the lovers hung, suspended between them, and negotiated
their love outside of their bodies. From now on, the poem presents us
the dialogue and conversation of their souls from outside their bodies.

The speaker says, if anyone, who was so refined by love, and who
had grown into purely mind by good love, could understand soul's
language, he might ruminate on the conversation of the pure souls of
the lovers and would be far purer than he came, simply because he had
heard their spiritual conversation even though he could not know which
soul spoke. Here, again, there is a reflection of Ficino's idea of a
lovers' union, in which each lover transforms himself in his beloved,
and each gives himself to his beloved in order to make them one.
Therefore, he and his beloved are almost identical (Commentary, p. 141).
The speaker in this poem, by using this Neoplatonic theory, presents the complete oneness of their souls in which one can hardly distinguish the soul of the speaker from that of his beloved.

Up till line 28, the poem is written in the past tense, and from line 29 to the end, the speaker talks in the present tense to describe this dialogue of the united souls. He says that this ecstasy unperplexes and tells them what they really love. Since their love was spiritual and the object of their love was divine, the united souls, when they still resided in their bodies, could not know exactly what they loved, because of the existence of the bodies. But now, because of the ecstasy, the souls, being away from the bondage of their bodies, can perceive the spiritual essence of their love. It was not sex, the souls say, but the spiritual beauty of their souls which moved them to love each other. Although they thus find out that they have loved each other's spiritual beauty, they still don't know exactly what they are composed of, since the soul contains a mixture of things. In these lines, we see Ficino's idea of the earthly lover: a mortal lover cannot know what he loves and desires, since the object of his love is divine. The mortal lover can not perceive it with his mortal senses (Commentary, p. 140).

However, since love mixed these two mixed souls again and made them one, the souls now know what they are composed of. Their love
consists of two atoms of souls. Since the soul is spiritual and immortal, their love made of the two souls is also unchangeable and eternal.

The united souls say that they become one abler soul through the power of love, explaining its tremendous power by using the metaphor of a transplanted violet. When one transplants a violet, it redoubles and multiplies its strength, color, and size, even though it was poor and scant, and though its head was reclining before (l. 3). Likewise, before the souls of the lovers were united, they yearned for each other, but they had not attained their goal yet. Therefore, they were lonely, poor, and frustrated. Now, love thus unites and interanimates them, and, as a result, they finally become one abler soul, which can overcome the defect of loneliness that they suffered before.

Ficino also explains this by adopting a mythological interpretation of human nature. He says that there were three kinds of human beings: male from the sun, female from the earth, and bi-sexual from the moon. The bi-sexual were proud of spirit and robust of body and tried to fight with the gods. Therefore, Jupiter cut them lengthwise and split them into half.

After the nature of man was divided, each part desired its other half, so they ran to each other. . .trying to recover their original form. Moreover, they would have perished of privation and inactivity if God had not furnished them a means of intercourse.
Hence mutual love, the restorer of their original nature, is innate in all men, striving to make the two one again, and to heal the nature of men.

(Commentary, p. 154)

Thus, any human being is incomplete and only a half of his original form. So man constantly feels lonely and desires to restore the whole. Ficino defines this desire and force to restore the whole as love (Commentary, pp. 154-155). Likewise, the souls in the poem praise the power of mutual love which makes them one to restore the whole and consequently controls their loneliness.

Mutual love not only restores man's original nature, but also reinforces and redoubles the lovers' union. Ficino explains its miraculous power as follows:

O, inestimable gain, when two so become one, that each of the two, instead of one alone, becomes two, and as though doubled, he who had one life before, with a death intervening, has now two. . . .

(Commentary, p. 145.)

Similarly, the speaker of the poem praises the wondrous power of the united souls, by calling it one abler soul, which, like the transplanted violet, redoubles and multiplies their spiritual union. Donne thus employs an idea similar to Ficino to present how the souls of the lovers create the complete spiritual union through their mutual love and enjoy it with eternal delight.

However, in line 47, the tone of the united souls suddenly changes from delight to lamentation. They ask themselves why they should be
so far from their own bodies so long and why they can do without their own bodies. They say that their bodies are not equal to themselves, but are their belongings, since the human soul governs and controls the body as its sphere.

Here, the united souls make use of the Neoplatonic theory of the interdependence of body and soul to convince us that it is natural for them to turn their attention to their bodies as well as to their souls. According to Ficino, since human beings on earth have both body and soul, and since the human soul has a natural appetite toward the body, which is completely free from moral reproach, it is very natural for them to love both.

... It is contrary to the universal as well as to its own nature that the Soul remain separated from the body. ... Since that which is contrary to nature cannot be eternal, it results that the Soul will again receive their bodies at some time. ... The individual Souls are naturally inclined to animate and to guide the individual bodies. ... Consequently, the Souls separated from the bodies will always be naturally inclined toward them. (Kristeller, p. 195).

Thus, the Soul and the body are inseparable and intimately interdependent. Therefore, the united souls yearn for their bodies simply because of their natural appetite, in Ficino's definition.

Fecino also defines the most important function of the Soul as intelligence, through which man can understand the incorporeal. On the other hand, through the function of the body, the senses, man can
understand only the corporeal. Both through intelligence and senses, man can completely perceive both incorporeal and corporeal things in human love (Commentary, p. 157). Although the lovers of the poem delight in the immutable spiritual oneness of the souls, the complete union of their love on earth can not be realized until they will experience their physical oneness, because human love is composed of both spiritual and physical things. Therefore, the united souls insist that it is not proper for them to abandon their love of the body, for it is against their own nature. In order to establish their more complete union, they continue, they must regain the appetite toward their bodies at some time. Thus, they begin to rationalize their physical love by using Neoplatonic ideas.

Ficino also says that the Soul governs the body through its intelligence. This Soul's power can be explained in his hierarchy of being.

...God benevolently governs the Angelic Mind, the Angelic Mind and God together govern the Soul; and the Soul, along with these two, rules and governs bodies with a certain natural affection.

(Commentary, p. 143.)

The metaphor of the intelligence and its sphere in the poem can be explained by this passage, too. Namely, God endows Angels with intelligence, through which they, according to Ptolemaic astronomy, govern the spheres. Although the body and the Soul are dependent on each other, the Soul can exist by itself without the body. Thus, the
Soul is independent from and superior to the body. Besides, Picino identifies the Soul with man, saying that "man is soul alone, and the body of man must be its instrument" (Commentary, p. 157). The united souls in the poem, therefore, explain their Neoplatonic relation to their bodies in terms of that of the intelligence and its sphere.

Thus, insisting, in the Neoplatonic manner, upon the interdependence of body and soul, the united souls say that they are very grateful to their bodies, because it is their bodies that first conveyed them to each other, and yielded their forces (senses) to them. Their bodily senses are not "dross" but "alloy" to the united souls. Both "dross" and "alloy" are impure and base because they are composed of two or more metals by being mixed in each other when they are molten. "Dross" is waste, a worthless product formed on the surface of molten metal. On the other hand, "alloy," according to Empson, is "a less valuable substance put into...gold to strengthen it for practical use."12 Though alloy is less pure and baser than gold, it is stronger than precious gold, and therefore, it is still valuable and more practical. Similarly, the compound of spirit and sense (of soul and body) is less pure and baser than the purely spiritual Soul, but the compound is valuable in its practicality, because it reinforces the spiritual union of the souls. Thus, by adopting the analogy between the relationship of alloy to gold to describe that of the compound of body and soul to
the pure soul, the united souls justify the practical necessity of their bodies in their human love.

Furthermore, in order to defend their physical love, the united souls present the relationship of the heavenly and the earthly, of the higher and the lower. They say that their bodies are not unnecessary to them, but useful compound materials of spirit and sense, which first brought them together and strengthened their physical union. In this case, it is the lower and earthly (bodies) that first acted upon the higher and heavenly (souls).

In contrast, heaven doesn't work this way. Heaven first molds the air to make the soul-substance in which the pure soul can be viable, when it flows its power of spiritual ethereal fluid into men on earth. In this case, it is the higher and heavenly (heaven) that first flows into and works upon the lower and earthly (men). In other words, in order to make possible the communication between heaven (extremely spiritual) and earth (extremely physical), heaven must take the air as a mediator, which is less pure than heaven, yet purer than earth. Moreover, the spiritual power of the pure soul (the spiritual) may stream forth into the human soul on earth (the physical), when the pure soul as air body first goes to the earthly body, in which the pure soul first becomes viable and embodies its spiritual power.

Thus, by presenting the two opposite relationships between the
heavenly and the earthly, the united souls want to say that both the heavenly and the earthly are interdependent and interrelated and that each works upon the other and vice versa. Similarly, the soul and the body are complements, each of the other. The united souls continue developing this idea till the end of the poem.

Next, the united souls bring up the physiological explanation of the nature of human beings, to rationalize their love of the body. Renaissance man believed that the body and the soul were joined together by spirit, the vapor of blood. Ficino also explains this as follows:

...souls, slipping down out of the milky way through Cancer into a body, are draped in a certain heavenly and clear wrap, clothed in which, they are then enclosed in earthly bodies. For the order of nature requires that the perfectly pure soul cannot descend into the more impure body until it receives a certain median and pure garment, which since it is baser than the soul, but purer and finer than this body, is judged by the Platonists to be the most fitting copula of the soul with the earthly body. (Commentary, p. 186).

As Jayne suggests in the footnotes, this median and pure garment is the spirit (Commentary, p. 186, n. 23). The soul can send its spiritual power of love to the body and animate it through the median spirit in the blood.

Accordingly, the united souls, by adopting this Renaissance physiological theory, say that their blood (the purely physical) tries to beget spirits, which are as spiritually like the soul as they can be.
Yet, the spirits are less spiritual and baser than the soul, but purer than the body, and consequently, they are just right to be the copula between the two; one, extremely spiritual, and the other, extremely physical. Therefore, the united souls say that such fingers of the spirits are necessary to "knit that subtle knot" which makes them men, who have both body and soul.

As we have seen above, these explanations (ll. 57-64) are used as a means to present the interdependence of body and soul. According to Ficino, the higher and the lower, the spiritual and the physical, and the soul and the body, always yearn for each other. However, there must be a certain mediator between these two extremes (Commentary, p. 186, p. 189). A mediator makes it possible for these two extremes to communicate and to love each other. Such mediators as the air between the heaven and the earth, and the spirits between the soul and the body, play very important roles in Ficino's philosophy. Likewise, the united souls say that they must take sense as the mediator of their spiritual love in order to work upon their bodies. Therefore, they declare that they must descend toward the affections and faculties of their bodies, "which senses may reach and apprehend." If spiritual love doesn't take human sense as its mediator, it can not reveal itself to men. In this case, "a great Prince," spiritual love of the soul, lies in prison. In order to set free this imprisoned Prince of spiritual love, the united souls say, they must take senses and return to their bodies.
Here, Donne uses the Neoplatonic idea in a completely opposite way. For, in Neoplatonism, the body is considered the prisonhouse of the Soul, because the body prevents the Soul on earth from attaining knowledge of God. However, the united souls in the poem reversely say that the body and physical love help to set free the imprisoned soul and spiritual love, which we don't find in Ficino.

The ultimate end of the Neoplatonists is to solve the problem of the human soul, and to find out how the human soul can ascend toward God even on earth. Ficino strongly recommends that the Soul must abandon the body (Commentary, p. 189), in order to attain its highest goal. For, the body along with its senses and physical love, often misguides the human soul and doesn't lead men to an ascent toward God (Kristeller, p. 94). The form of the body is merely the shadow of the true thing, that is, the Soul, and consequently, the body doesn't represent the true nature of the divine (Commentary, p. 140). Ficino explains the relationship between the body and the Soul:

The more the mind (the Soul) is plunged into this body, the more deficient it is. And the farther behind it leaves the body, the more perfect it is.

(Kristeller, p. 235).

However, the united souls blindly praise the power of senses and physical love. This is one of Donne's perversions of the Neoplatonic theory of love in "The Extasie."

Not only do they rationalize their desire of physical love, but also
they arrogantly think that their descent toward their bodies is useful for other men on earth. Their love is too spiritual for mortal men to apprehend. But now, since their spiritual love begets the physical expression, it becomes less spiritual than before, and therefore, it may be perceivable even for "weak men," who have only their mortal power, the senses. Although spiritual and abstract mysteries of love, of course, grow in the soul, the body is love's book in which love is expressed more completely and is accessible to mortals.

Thus, being convinced of the truth of their reasoning, the united souls conclude the poem, by saying that if some pure lover has heard this dialogue of the united souls, he shall see only "small change" in them, even when they return to their bodies after the spiritual ecstasy. For, their love is so spiritual and eternal that nothing can invade or change it (l. 47).

This may be derived from Ficino, too. According to him, once the Soul has attained the ultimate vision of God, it does not leave it any more, but remains united with it forever (Kristeller, p. 191). Since the united souls have had the rare experience of the ecstasy, in which they saw the spiritual and divine essence of love, they remain united with it eternally. Therefore, the united souls confidently say that their return to their bodies makes no difference to their spiritual love.

Throughout the poem, the speaker's attitude and tone in defending
physical love seem to be based on Picino's Neoplatonic idea in which both spiritual and physical love are equally justified under certain conditions. Picino says that love of the beauty of the body is inferior to that of the beauty of the Soul, but through it, "a man who properly respects love...contemplates the more excellent beauty of the Soul, the Mind, and God, and admires and loves this more than the other." (Commentary, p. 143). Standing on the ground of the Neoplatonic theory of the ladder of love, in which lower love can climb up hierarchically to attain the higher, he justifies physical love on the condition that it is directed only toward the contemplation of God.

If physical love is used, not as a means to ascend toward God, but as the final end to satisfy bodily need, it can not be love, but lust. In his definition of love, the lower and physical can ascend toward the higher and spiritual and, as a result, spiritual and selfless love leads man to an ascent toward God, just as in "Holy Sonnet XVII."

However, in "The Extasie," we don't see this movement of love from the lower to the higher. Instead, after swearing that their love is very spiritual, the united souls descend toward the lower, namely, physical love. Thus, we don't see that their love leads them toward the contemplation of God in the Neoplatonic sense. Rather, like the sinful earthly lover in "A nocturnall," who falls into vice and loves the earthly inordinately, instead of loving the divine image in his
beloved, the lovers in "The Extasie" seem to face the eternal loss of the knowledge of God. In this case, according to Ficino, they are committing the greatest mortal sin. Yet, the tone of "The Extasie" is not serious or dark, but rather light-hearted. Consequently, we get the impression from this poem that the speaker just makes use of the Neoplatonic theory of love partially, in order to rationalize their desire of physical love. During this procedure, Donne seems to make his speaker pervert Ficino's Neoplatonic theory of love.

In "The good-morrow" and "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," Donne presents an ideal righteous earthly love in which lovers are united by loving each other's inherent divine beauty, which reflects Ficino's Neoplatonism. Consequently, their love not only gives them spiritual satisfaction and immutable happiness, but leads them toward God. "Holy Sonnet XVII," also presenting such a righteous earthly lover, almost perfectly parallels Ficino's idea that the Soul can contemplate and love God sincerely because of its righteous earthly love, even though the lover is forced to face his beloved's death. In contrast, the soul of the speaker in "A nocturnall" is an example of the Soul which, according to Ficino, has to confront the eternal loss of the knowledge of God as the result of its sinful earthly love. Thus, these four poems almost parallel Ficino's theory of love. Although we also see a reflection of a Neoplatonism such as that in Ficino's
writings in "The Extasis," Donne seems to pervert and make use of it by presenting the lover who is anxious to defend his physical love, after rationalizing that his love is purely spiritual. We don't find this in Picino's Neoplatonism. Thus, Donne, in his poems, employs the Neoplatonic concepts of love in various ways.
FOOTNOTES


3"The good-morrow," "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," "A nocturnall," and "The Extasie" are based on Grierson’s text and "Holy Sonnet XVII" is based on Shawcross’s text. Hereafter Shawcross’s text is abbreviated as Shawcross.

4Donne uses the same cliche in "The Canonization," l. 39-44.


8Josephine Burroughs, "Introduction" to Ficino’s "Five Questions Concerning the Mind," in The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, p. 192.


10Goats are often associated with lechery. Donne says "lecherous goats" in "Holy Sonnet IX."

A LIST OF BOOKS CITED

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