Marsilio Ficino's Astral Psychology: The Inner Cosmos of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese on the Astronomical Ceiling Fresco of Sala del Mappamondo at Caprarola

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MARSILIO FICINO’S ASTRAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE INNER COSMOS OF CARDINAL ALESSANDRO FARNESE ON THE ASTRONOMICAL CEILING FRESCO OF SALA DEL MAPPAMONDO AT CAPRAROLA

by

RENATA REKA NAGY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors in the Major Program in Art History in the College of Arts & Humanities and in the Burnett Honors College at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Margaret Ann Zaho, Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

This thesis intends to explore the relationship between the Neoplatonist doctrines of the Renaissance philosopher, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), and astrological images in the Renaissance. The astrological ceiling fresco located in the Room of Maps in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola is in the center of the argument, which I analyze based on the metaphysical works of Ficino, the *Platonic Theology* (1482) and the *Three Books on Life* (1492). Authors have examined the fresco decoration and Ficinian philosophy individually, but never together. This study is the first to recognize Ficino’s influence on Renaissance astrological images in its entirety.

The present work synthesizes scholarship on Ficino and astrological image interpretations and provides a Neoplatonic reading of the fresco in question. The results demonstrate that the ceiling fresco at Caprarola is a visual manifestation of the principal Ficinian doctrines. The predominant decorative figures (Phaeton, Argo, Capella, and Jupiter) located at the four corners of the ceiling, communicate the importance of contemplation and introspection, the proper management of one’s vices and virtues, and the immortality of the soul. Together, they comprise the microcosm of the patron, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589). The decoration provides an insight into the inner world of Cardinal Farnese and represents his dominant personality traits. In the end, he triumphs over his sins, and his good deeds enable his soul to ascend to the divine
sphere. The current study opens the door to conducting psychoanalyses of other historical figures, who were major patrons of the art and involved with Ficino’s philosophy.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to Ludovico Einaudi. Your music was a celestial comestible to my mind that awakened what Ficino and Plato would call the divine particle of my soul. Your melody inspired every word of this work. Grazie mille. Special thanks to my sister, Judit, for believing in me, and to JS, for motivating me to surpass the impossible.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis Sections and Contents

Chapter one is an introduction to my thesis. I propose my research topic, argument, goals and the methodology, by which I am going to construct my thesis. I also review the main sources used in my thesis, to support my argument.

In chapter two my main concern is entirely theoretical and philosophical. First, I place Marsilio Ficino into the historical and philosophical context of Renaissance Florence. I provide a brief discussion of his early life, Cosimo de’ Medici’s patronage, and his theological, philosophical and intellectual influences. In analyzing his philosophy, I particularly focus on a fifteen-year period between the publication of Disputatio (1477) and De vita libri tres (Three Books on Life, 1492). Several scholars argued that during this period, his philosophy drastically changed and resulted in a metaphysics that was crucial for astrological frescoes. For my research, the tenets of Theologia Platonica (Platonic Theology, 1482), and the astrological instructions of the third book of De vita are crucial. I concentrate on the principle of the immortality of the soul and its conditions, the theory of the microcosm within the macrocosm, the proper balance of dualistic qualities, and their effects on the relationship of free will and fate. I also pay special attention to his remarks on the role of astrology and how he used it and mythology as frameworks for his astral psychology. All these premises are imperative to evaluating astrological images in the face of Ficinian philosophy, for they provide the very foundation to the philosophical and psychological concepts of these oeuvres. I also address the different influences that affected Ficino’s philosophy. Scholastic thinkers, such as Pierre d'Ailly and Thomas
Aquinas, Occultism and Hermeticism, and the thoughts of Plato and Plotinus have all contributed directly to the metaphysics of Marsilio Ficino.

In chapter three I discuss astrology and later astrological images in art possibly related to Ficino before the astrological ceiling fresco in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola. I demonstrate the important role of astrology in the political decisions of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan (b. 1452-1508). After Milan, I turn to the Kingdom of Hungary, whose king, Matthias Corvinus (b. 1443-1490) was famous for his reliance on astrology. The Hungarian king might have been one of the first to follow the philosophical tenets of Marsilio Ficino in his art projects, with whom he corresponded on a regular basis. Subsequently, I turn to astrological ceiling frescoes that predated Caprarola in Italy. I primarily focus on the astrological decorations of Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (b. 1500-1540), at the Sala dei Venti in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua (and also briefly the Camera dello Zodiaco in the Castello di San Giorgio in Mantua). I utilize them to provide predecessors to the astrological ceiling of Caprarola. Regardless of their differences with the sky map of Caprarola (they represent personal horoscopes of the patron), based on the studies conducted by Kristen Lippincott, both ceilings demonstrate a rich visual source of the individual "inner planets" of the patron.¹

In chapter four I focus on the history of the Farnese family, their ties to Ficino, Neoplatonism, and Humanism, and the life of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. I discuss particular events in his life that can provide the basis for some of the peculiarities of the sky map at

¹ Kristen Lippincott, “The Astrological Decoration of the Sala dei Venti in the Palazzo del Te.” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 47, (1984): 220. Fernando Gonzaga’s horoscope was even recast in order to show a more favorable man. It provides a good example to the relationship of the reality of his nature and how he wanted to be perceived publicly.
Caprarola (Jupiter, Phaeton). Clare Robertson's book, *Il gran cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, patron of the arts* is the only extant and comprehensive biography of the patron. Additionally, I also review previous scholars’ (Lippincott, Partridge, and Quinlan-McGrath) interpretations of the astrological ceiling fresco of Caprarola. Lippincott and Quinlan-McGrath provide valuable information regarding the zodiacal decorations of the *vele* (the area between the walls and the vault) and the patron’s horoscope. Partridge’s reading reveals a hermeneutical connection between key constellations and personal events in the life of the patron. Partridge’s studies on the other rooms of Caprarola also uncover much about the Cardinal and the history of the Farnese family.

Chapter five includes my conclusion, in which I synthesize the materials of chapters two and four to arrive at an interpretation of the ceiling fresco of Caprarola as a manifestation of Ficinian philosophy. I expound on how the philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and his astral psychology had a direct influence on the visual decoration of the vault of Sala del Mappamondo. I argue that the four corner constellations of the vault, Phaeton, Argo, Capella and Jupiter, represent stations in the patron’s spiritual quest to gain the immortality of his soul. Phaeton carries his personal star, with which he counterbalances between his vices and virtues, represented by Argo and Capella, respectively. Jupiter is a representation of the immortality of the patron’s soul.

1.2 Topic Overview

In the twenty-first century, people regard astrology as a superstitious folly, one that provides generalized and faulty predictions in magazines about one’s future. However, the
consensus about the science of the stars was not always as derogatory. Since antiquity through the Middle Ages, with a prominent position in the Renaissance, astrology was of particular scientific importance.\(^2\) It played a vital role in the Age of Exploration that depended on the development of navigation, cartography, and astronomy.\(^3\) The practical use of astronomy might have seemed more significant in the study of the stars, but it was also based on theoretical astrology, which was often deemed more consequential than astronomy.\(^4\) The two sciences were also often interchangeable. Astrology also penetrated the medical and political sciences.\(^5\) The majority of the leading noble families, monarchs and religious figures of early modern European history employed court astrologers on political and medical matters.\(^6\) Nevertheless, more importantly, astrology provided the frame for major theological and spiritual conundrums and debates, of which the most crucial were the questions of the relationship of volition and


\(^4\) Mary Quinlan-McGrath, *Influences: Art, Optics and Astrology in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 2. Astrology and astronomy were often employed synonymously. In the ancient times for instance, Ptolemy, the author of the *Almagest*, was considered both an astronomer and an astrologer. Astrology was the “interpretive study” of astronomy, which constituted technical facts.


\(^6\) Quinlan-McGrath, *Influences*, 1. Important families, such as the Sforza, the Este, and the Chigi relied on astrology in their daily endeavors. Even Popes Julius II della Rovere, Leo X Medici and Paul III Farnese were familiar with astrological practices. For monarchs, see Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 52. Notable examples include Charles V, whose astrologer, Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano was the famous female poet’s, Christine de Pizan’s father. Catherine de Medici was famous for carrying a gem with an engraving of Jupiter and Venus.
predestination and the immortality of the soul. Do humans have free will or are their fates written in the stars? Does the soul die with the body, or is it immortal and returns to God? Marsilio Ficino joined the bandwagon of philosophers who had sought for the answers of the most prominent mysteries of life. He demonstrated an evident influence of his foremost masters, Plato and Plotinus, but he also embodied several concepts of major scholastic thinkers, particularly those of Thomas Aquinas. Ficino represents an equilibrium: he offered a balanced proposition while he was scrutinizing the depths of the human soul through his astrological psychology. Ficino asserted that free will and fate could coexist and simultaneously have an impact on human life. Between the publication time of his two main works, *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (published in 1482 but written a decade earlier) and *De vita libri tres* (1489), he developed what Thomas Moore would later call “astrological psychology,” and formulated the idea of the “inner planets.” According to Ficino’s theory, humans carry the entire universe within themselves. Since the human soul was a microcosm of the macrocosm, the stars were present in the soul and asserted their influence as behavioral attributes from within. Humans, he

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7 Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Florentine Platonism and Its Relation with Humanism and Scholasticism,” *Church History* 8 (1939): 204. In contradiction with the general belief, Ficino, even though himself a humanist, never initiated a polemic against scholasticism. He revered Aristotle and completed his philosophy with scholastic elements, including the thoughts of Aquinas.

8 Melissa Meriam Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac: A Development in Ficino’s Thought on Astrology,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, (1990): 698-701. Ficino arrived at what Thomas Moore labelled as “astrological psychology” in his epistles that he had written to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, Giorgio Antonio Vespucci and Naldo Naldi between 1477-78. Ficino advised Lorenzo before his marriage in *Prospera in fato fortuna, vera in virtute felicitas* to seek the stars that are within us, and to “stock his inner planetary forces and learn to manage them.” According to Ficino, this was the key to true happiness.

9 Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan gods*, 65. The theory of the inner cosmos of humans is also visually validated in earlier medieval manuscripts in the depiction of the microcosms:
postulated, must find a balance between the different celestial forces that influence them both from the outside and burn them from the inside, to gain true happiness. 10 Humans were in possession of a divine essence, which enabled them to command their inner planets and to unite with God. If the human soul carries the universe and a godly divine particle within, it logically follows that it must be heavenly itself, and therefore, immortal.11

Astrology, because of its ubiquitous presence in the mundane and spiritual matters, became a popular theme in art during the Renaissance. Talismans, illuminated manuscript decorations, and grand astrological ceiling frescoes revived the spirits of the ancient Gods once again.12 Ficino’s De vita concerned astrology and occultism, and transformed art; particularly the decorations of the grand astrological ceiling frescoes of sixteenth-century princely and cardinal’s courts.13

Cardinal Alessandro Farnese the Younger (1520-1589), the grandson of Pope Paul III Farnese (né Alessandro Farnese the Elder, 1468-1549), commissioned one of the most impressive astrological frescoes at his summer villa in Caprarola.14 While the four walls of Sala

11 Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 12. The idea that a single Creator gave people a share of his divine intelligence (which is the immortal part of the soul) originates from Plato’s Timaeus.
12 Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods, 62-74. Artistic examples comprise the theme of the microcosm in earlier medieval manuscripts and the subject of planetary children on the walls of the Palazzo Schifanoia.
13 Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 161. See the author’s chapter on The Great Astrological Vaults of the Italian Renaissance.
14 For a comprehensive overview of the Farnese family and their artistic commissions, see Clare Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts (Yale University Press 1992).
del Mappamondo portrayed geographical maps, the ceiling (1573-1575) depicted magnificent constellations against a cerulean background. The twelve zodiacal constellations are pictured as mythologized figures in the vele.

1.3 Research Question

The "sky" of the Room of the Maps is peculiar in the series of astrological ceilings executed during the sixteenth-century. Even though it correctly depicts the forty-eight Ptolemaic constellations, it has some odd additions, among which the most significant is the presence of Jupiter. What was the fierce god of thunder doing in the sea of fixed stars?15 In addition to Jupiter, the inclusion of Capella (not one of the Ptolemaic constellations), the fall of Phaeton (unprecedented in astrological images) and a curious representation of Argo, suggest a peculiar portrayal of the universe. The cove of the room that portrays the zodics also has some deviations: the zodiacal signs are out of order, so that Capricorn, Libra, Aires and Gemini can be visually emphasized in the center of each four sides of the wall.16 My primary focus is the connection between the deviations of the ceiling and Ficinian metaphysics. Contemplation of the heavens is of primary importance to Ficino, for which an astrological image was an apt facilitator.17 Contemplation of the universe was necessary to understand the Creator, and introspection was essential to discover one’s internal universe.18 On the one hand, visual

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16 Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1075-1087.
18 Ibid, Contemplation of the universe was the primary purpose of life according to Ficino.
representations of the cosmos, served as tools to facilitate these contemplative activities and they helped to decipher the universe and God. On the other hand, since the human soul was a microcosm of the macrocosm, astrological frescoes often portrayed highly customized images of the patron’s inner universe. The creator of the invenzione (program) of the frescos used astrological images to paint a portrait of the patron’s soul and connect it to God. Pope Paul III, who was a devout follower of astrology, studied in the circles of Ficino during his youth at the court of Lorenzo de’ Medici. Ficino had a notable influence on the artistic and intellectual endeavors of his papacy (1534-1549), which echoed antique styles and philosophy. Cardinal Farnese had a Humanist education thanks to his pope grandfather and grew up in a milieu that ancient gods and astrology characterized. He also inherited his grandfather's passion for the stars himself and commemorated a space for the contemplation of the skies in his summer villa at Caprarola. In my thesis, I argue that Cardinal Farnese followed Ficino’s advice to practice

23 Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 22-25. Cardinal Farnese’s secretary and chief artistic adviser, Annibal Caro was a Humanist scholar versed in antiquity. Cardinal Farnese often supervised the artistic commissions of his grandfather, among which was the construction of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome.
introspection with the help of astronomical images to elevate his soul to higher levels. The puzzling elements of the ceiling, including the four corner figures - Jupiter, Capella, Argo, and Phaeton, are a visual representation of Ficinian metaphysics and astrological *dottrina* (knowledge), and a personalized portrayal of the patron’s spiritual development.

1.4 Literature Review

Only a handful of scholars have translated the celestial language of the cosmos of Caprarola. Kristen Lippincott, Loren Partridge, and Mary Quinlan-McGrath have published articles on the vault of heavens of Caprarola's state hall, in 1990, 1995 and 1997, respectively. They have identified the constellations and the mythological scenes, as well as the stellar handbooks and ancient primary sources on which they were founded. However, their approach to the ceiling’s heavens differs. They either have conducted a hermeneutical exegesis or have interpreted the fresco as an astrological allusion to the patron’s stars at birth. Partridge provided the most comprehensive list of the unusual components of the ceiling and the *vele*. Based on the principles of hermeneutics, he analyzed the different layers of the oeuvre. Partridge established an allegorical relationship between the decorative elements (particularly the main corner figures), in which he reconciled the personal events and ancient mythology with Church doctrines. Partridge interpreted the constellations of the vault as Christian allegories of the theological doctrines of the Council of Trent (1564). Lippincott and Quinlan-McGrath, on the other hand,

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24 Patridge, “The Room of Maps,” 413-418. The mythological scenes of the pendentives were most likely based on Hyginus. (second century AD).
25 For the hermeneutical analysis see Partridge, “The Room of Maps at Caprarola,” 413-444.
did not follow through with the fourfold interpretation of biblical hermeneutics. Instead, both scholars advocated a literal astrological meaning, even though they based the figures on different sources and events. On the ceiling, Quinlan-McGrath focused only on Jupiter and Phaeton and omitted Capella and Argo in her interpretation. She linked the two figures to the four visually conspicuous zodiacs in the vele. Quinlan-McGrath associates Jupiter, Phaeton, Capricorn, Libra, Aires, and Gemini with events from the life of the patron and the Farnese family, as well as with Cardinal Farnese’s personal and familiar horoscopes.

In her latest book, Influences (2013), Quinlan-McGrath was the first scholar to recognize the possibility of Ficino’s influence on astronomical ceiling frescoes, including that of Caprarola. Her argument is based on Ficino's De vita, and Quinlan-McGrath contends that the publication of his book (1492) directly influenced the proliferation of grand astronomical frescoes in sixteenth-century Italy. In the third book of De vita (dedicated to King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary) Ficino laid out a "how to" handbook for astronomical images: how they serve the purpose of the

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26 For the astrological understanding, see Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1045-1100.
28 Quinlan McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1057-1059 and 1076-1080. Jupiter, according to the horoscope chart erected by Lucas Guaricus, the Farnese family astrologer, had a prominent position at the cusp of the tenth house of Cardinal Farnese, which was personally “responsible” for making Alessandro Farnese a cardinal at the age of 14. The enlarged and centered scenes of the cove also relate to Farnese family events according to Quinlan-McGrath: Aries was prominent in both his grandfather’s and father’s horoscopes, Gemini refers to his nephews who were twins, Libra was his personal Sun sign and Capricorn was his Ascendant.
29 Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 161. See the author’s chapter on The Great Astrological Vaults of the Italian Renaissance.
contemplation of heavens and how they should be executed. Quinlan-McGrath relates Ficino's ideas to science, particularly to optics, and explains how celestial radiation was captured and stored by astronomical images, and then passed on to the beholder. Her argument illustrates the function of astronomical images and provides the reasons for which they might have been created.

However, no in-depth study has been written on the relationship between Ficinian metaphysics and its possible philosophical impacts on the Sala del Mappamondo. Paul Oskar Kristeller, Eugenio Garin, Carol V. Kaske, Melisa Meriam-Bullard, James Hankins and Michael J.B. Allen have all widely studied and published on the philosophy and life of Marsilio Ficino. Their works evince that Ficino struggled with the validity and the extent of the impact of astrology on his own life. At the center of Ficino’s studies was the immortality of the soul, he analyzed everything else in the light of the anima (soul). As mentioned above, the two landmarks in his career are the publication of Theologia Platonica (1482) and De vita libri tres (1492). The former was a treatise on the medicine of the body, while the latter was concerned the

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31 Garin, Astrology in the Renaissance, 75. Not only astronomical ceiling frescoes, but also any astrological images, including talismans, could work.
32 For the “saturnine melancholy” casting a shadow over Ficino’s life, see Michael J.B. Allen, “Marsilio Ficino on Saturn, The Plotinian Mind, and the Monster of Averroes,” Bruniana & Campanelliana 16 (2010): 2-6. James Hankins and Meriam Bullard have also discussed the unpropitious effects of Saturn in Ficino’s life.
33 Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Theory of Immortality in Marsilio Ficino.” Journal of the History of Ideas 1, (1940): 299-301. Even though the immortality of the soul has been discussed before by Plato, Plotinus and St. Augustine among others, Ficino was the first philosopher to whom it was a central doctrine around which his entire philosophy had been rendered.
medicine of the soul.\textsuperscript{34} Between these two dates, Ficino went through a transformation. He formerly had a firm belief that human free will would override stellar influence (which could only impact the body directly, but not the soul) and therefore, destiny. However, once we arrive at \textit{De vita}, we see equivocations and change in his stance, which Meriam-Bullard explains with the baleful events of the 1470's and the shadows of his saturnine melancholy.\textsuperscript{35} Ficino argued that even though humans have free will, the heavens bestowed upon them both vices and virtues. The celestial gifts created a boundary within which humans can practice their volition. Ficino’s conclusion is to accept both the negative and positive qualities offered by the divine and to harness them to our best advantage.\textsuperscript{36} This idea of the balance of virtues and vices is the foundation of his astrological psychology and the theory of the "planets within." It is also a proper reflection of Hermeticism according to which: "As above, so below, as within, so without, as the universe, so the soul…."\textsuperscript{37} Humans carry the entire universe with all its benevolence and malevolence within them, and therefore, the image of God and the creation itself. Since the soul is partly divine, it is thus immortal.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} Garin, \textit{Astrology in the Renaissance}, 64.
\textsuperscript{35} Meriam-Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac,” 695-696. He propagated gloomy and baleful prognostications after the Pazzi conspiracy. His pessimism was also visible in his letters to King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary regarding the Turk threat. They all contributed to the formation of his thought that volition had been circumscribed to a certain extent.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 704. The shift in his thoughts and approach is clearly demonstrated by his \textit{Philebus commentary} written in 1491. See the didactic anecdote of Paris to Lorenzo, where Ficino encourages the young Medici to seek the favors of all “gods,” so to speak all human qualities, both good and bad can be used to our advantage of employed well.
\textsuperscript{37} Hermes Trismegistus, \textit{Corpus Hermeticum}.
\textsuperscript{38} Kristeller, “The Theory of Immortality in Marsilio Ficino,” 300-308.
1.5 Goals and Methodology

Partridge accurately recognized that there was a deeper contextual meaning behind the decoration than a mere allusion to the horoscope of the patron. Partridge’s suggestion that the unusual elements of the ceiling symbolized Christian allegories was tenable, given that the patron was a cardinal of the Counter-Reformation.39 The present writer’s intention is not to refute any of the studies done by the afore-mentioned authors on Caprarola. On the contrary, I intend to justify their premises by completing the fresco with an extra layer of interpretation. Instead of stopping at an astrological reading of the vault, my goal is to offer an alternative meaning based on Ficinian metaphysics. I am going to utilize the observations of Quinlan-McGrath regarding the personal horoscope and life events of Cardinal Farnese and apply them to the four corner figures Partridge examined, that being Jupiter, Capella, Argo, and Phaeton. I believe that the planetary god and the star groups refer to not only events in the patron’s life, but that they also symbolize stages in his spiritual development, and that they operate as pillars of his microcosm. To prove this, I synthesize the practical astrological observations of previous scholars, the personal history of Cardinal Farnese, and the studies conducted on the philosophy of Marsilio Ficino.

Ficino contends that the different planets and constellations to which he referred as "gods," were, in fact, allegorical representations of human traits and personalities.40 When

39 For one of the most significant religious commissions of Cardinal Farnese, that bespoke of Counter-Reformatory concerns, see Patricia Rubin, “The Private Chapel of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in the Cancellaria, Rome,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 82-112.

humans pray to them, they are indirectly alluding to the One: they hope to conjure a particular divine quality attributed to a “god,” to get closer and feel connected to the source, which contains all. For the souls of humans are immortal and strive for the divine, they are also enclosed in the celestial spirit of the One. The qualities of the One are most represented by the nature of Jupiter, who also happened to be the most frequently used symbols and personal impresa of Cardinal Farnese.  

41 Partridge suggested that Jupiter represented papal power, which Quinlan-McGrath took further and stated that Jupiter represented the cardinal himself.  

42 Ficinian philosophy proves the latter: if human souls are part of the divine and are connected to the One, then Jupiter itself represents the soul of Cardinal Farnese. Cardinal Farnese places himself on the same level with God, for his soul is part of the One and therefore, constitutes the One. The qualities of Jupiter also seem to be the closest to the cardinal's personality and aspirations.  

43 Cardinal Farnese, with the help of Jupiter, is in guard of the effects of both the benevolent and malevolent star groups that challenge him every day. His divine soul overcomes his earthly sins and faults, to which he made public allusions on the vault.

Furthermore, if we observe what this fresco represents, then the following can be concluded: it is a work of art that depicts the grandest work of art ever created: the entire universe, whose artist is God. Hence, the artist of this work is a transcriber of the divine. In fact,

41 Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1056-1062. For a description, see Cardinal Farnese’s impresa designed by Paolo Giovio.  
42 Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 425 and Quinlan-McGrath “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1063. See the poem by Aurelio Orsi (mid 1580s) where Cardinal Farnese was described as Jupiter.  
the world as a work of art could be the title of the entire philosophy of Ficino.\textsuperscript{44} The observations of Partridge also support this, according to which the heavens of Caprarola projected a universal and comprehensive diagram of the skies portrayed from a God's eye view.\textsuperscript{45} On the one hand, the vault of the Sala del Mappamondo is a divine commission of a sky map, which revered the work of the One, the macrocosm, and on the other hand, is a chart of the microcosm of the human soul, in this case of the patron. It is an allusion to the grandness of God and his work, and by placing himself in the skies, an intimation of the immortality of the soul of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese.

\textsuperscript{44} Garin, \textit{Astrology in the Renaissance}, 76.
\textsuperscript{45} Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 421.
CHAPTER 2: THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARSILO FICINO

2.1 Philosophy and the Renaissance

Paul Oskar Kristeller argued that in order to comprehend the Renaissance in its entirety, we must not only examine it from an economic, political and artistic perspective, but we also have to understand the philosophical and scientific thought that shaped it in the background. However, we might argue that the most important discipline that shaped every other field was philosophy. The primary philosopher of quattrocento Florence, Marsilio Ficino, contended that the most divine entity, God, was the source of all beings and ideas. Ficino examined the different levels of the hierarchy of the universe as interconnected with God at its head. Likewise, we can regard philosophy as the source of all disciplines. It is the well of the most divine ideas, from whose water artists, scientists, and leaders had drawn and contributed to art, politics, economics and the sciences. The development of thought sewed the veil through which Renaissance people viewed the world. Therefore, in order to truly comprehend the reasons that altered these subject areas, we must understand the background philosophy that had triggered them in the first place. Correspondingly to Ficino’s philosophy, we ought not to examine these disciplines as isolated subjects independent of one another. On the contrary, students of the Renaissance need to study the various branches of knowledge together and find the interconnectedness between them in the light of thought to uncloak the zeitgeist of the Renaissance. Ficino’s metaphysics has moved inter-disciplines and permeated the most majestic literary and artistic works of the Renaissance.

47 Garin, Astrology in the Renaissance, 68-70.
Ficino’s thoughts determined the artistic and intellectual products of his age, from the love poetry of sixteenth-century French poet, Louise Labé (1524-1566) to the frescoed walls of the Palazzo Schifanoia (1476-1484) in Ferrara.\footnote{For Ficino’s possible influence on French Renaissance poetry see Kenneth Varty, "Louise Labé and Marsilio Ficino," \textit{Modern Language Notes} 71, no. 7 (1956): 508-10 and Jean Festugiére, \textit{La philosophie de l’amour de Marsile Ficin et Son Influence sur la Littérature Française Au XVIe Siècle} (J. Vrin, Paris, 1941). Ficino’s Neoplatonism and translations of Plato had significant impact on a group of French poets in Lyon, \textit{La Pléiade}, among whom were Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay. Ficino was particularly popular among female poets, for his philosophy was based on Plato, who advocated equality among the genders in his utopian society. Scholasticism, however, the philosophy of the earlier Medieval period was based on Aristotlean, who propagated male superiority. For the decoration of Borso d’Este’s Palazzo Schifanoia and its Ficinian influence see Seznec, \textit{Survival of the Pagan Gods}, 73 and Kaske, “The Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 198.} Even though he did not engage in politics and matters of the state, his philosophy unconsciously intertwined with the virtue politics of the period, and his metaphysics, even if indirectly, impacted the spiritual and temporal leaders of Europe.\footnote{For a study on Renaissance virtue politics see James Hanks, “Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue.” \textit{Italian Cult.} 32, no. 2 (2004): 102-103. The fundamentals of Renaissance virtue politics is the demonstration of a good public image, regardless it was genuine or counterfeit. The idea of the good public image stemmed from Neoplatonism: if humans are divine sons of God, it logically followed that they were capable of good, which leaders had to publicly demonstrate. Later however, Ficino’s philosophy shifted towards a balance, and encouraged individuals to embrace both their good and bad qualities. For Ficino’s political influence, see in the \textit{Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, his correspondence with King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary.} Who was Marsilio Ficino? How did his philosophy become so influential that it crossed geographical borders and centuries? Of what did his metaphysics constitute? What and who influenced the development of his thought, and in turn, how did he impact other thinkers and subject areas of the Renaissance? The following chapter answers these questions systematically. After a brief introduction to the philosopher’s life and place in history, the chapter focuses on the main tenets of his philosophy relevant to the study of this thesis: the
immortality of the soul, the idea of the microcosm within the macrocosm, and the necessary balance between the dualistic qualities of human nature.

2.2 Scholarship On Ficino

The backbone to a global understanding of Ficino’s metaphysics is still the works of Kristeller, who has thoroughly examined the life and philosophy of Ficino. His studies, however, are wanting and outdated in many aspects, particularly in strongly advocating Ficino’s scholastic roots.\(^{50}\) Eugenio Garin’s contributions to the development of Renaissance philosophical thought with Ficino’s role in it are similarly valuable but need supplemental information by contemporary scholars.\(^{51}\) Carol Kaske, Melissa Meriam-Bullard, James Hankins and Michael J.B. Allen interpret Ficino from a new perspective, whose arguments help to utilize his philosophy as a reading method for astrological ceiling frescoes.\(^{52}\) Last, but not least, Thomas

\(^{50}\) While it is acceptable that Ficino borrowed elements from scholasticism, such as the hierarchy of being, Kristeller contributed more components in Ficino’s metaphysics to Scholasticism than there were. For a rebuttal and an advocating of a more balanced Neoplatonist perspective, see James G. Snyder, “The Theory of Materia Prima in Marsilio Ficino's Platonic Theology,” Vivarium 46, no. 2 (2008): 192-221.

\(^{51}\) Jean Seznec and Eugenio Garin were instrumental in Renaissance astrology.

\(^{52}\) Kaske’s translation and preface to Ficino’s *De vita* is contributory and her article “The Twelve Gods of the Zodics” is the study that provides the reasoning for Ficino’s newly formed perspective regarding free will and fate. Meriam-Bullard was among the first scholars to recognize the philosophical shift in Ficino’s thinking, and point out his “astral psychology” in a scholarly article (which provides the philosophical basis of my reading of the fresco in question). James Hankins supplements Ficino’s philosophy in the occult, which permeated *De vita*. Michael J.B. Allen’s edited book, *Studies in the Platonism of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico* is a collection of the most contemporary scholarly opinions on Renaissance philosophy, with a particular emphasis on Ficino.
Moore’s psychological interpretation of Ficino’s philosophy supplied crucial particulars in assessing a complete picture of Ficino’s mind.53

2.3 Marsilio Ficino’s Life

The most standard and intact biography of Marsilio Ficino is Arnaldo della Torre’s Storia dell’Accademia Platonica di Firenze. Marsilio Ficino was born on October 19, 1433, in the Tuscan town of Figline, near Florence (Figure 1). His childhood determined the direction of his adult life and career. He learned pragmatism and sciences from his physician father, Diotifeci, and mysticism and supernatural from his mother, Alessandra.54 The duality of the tangibility of his father (Aristotelianism) and the intangibility of his mother (Neoplatonism, Occultism) had followed Ficino through his life, and manifested themselves in his later philosophical equivocations.55 Ficino was a physically weak and sickly boy prone to a

53 While Thomas Moore is not an academic historian or art historian, his book, the Planets Within, which analyzes Ficino’s philosophy as a predecessor to psychology, provided the basis for Meriam-Bullard’s scholarly article and observations regarding Ficino’s shifting development of thought and influences. It is a study of the theory of microcosm within the macrocosm, which lies at the heart of this study. Therefore, his book has been most valuable to my research.

54 Arnaldo della Torre, Storia dell’Accademia Platonica di Firenze, (Firenze: G. Carnesecchi, 1902): 483-484. “La madre di Marsilio, Alessandra di Nannoccio di Lodovico era di Montevarchi, nata nel 1413…essa andò sposa a Diotifeci verso il 1431…Ficino ebbe appunto dalla madre il suoi temperamento nevralgenico, la sua indole proclive al misticismo, la sua natura propensa alle astrazioni di sè, all’estasi… Alessandra e fu in modo speciale amato da Marsilio,” è morta all’84 anno, nel 1498 (un anno prima della morte di Ficino).

55 In Kristeller, “Florentine Platonism and Its Relation with Humanism and Scholasticism,” 205, Kristeller argues that Theologia Platonica borrowed philosophical ideas from Scholasticism (which was based primarily on Aristotle), such as the hierarchy of being and natural order. He also argued that Ficino took many of these ideas directly from Thomas Aquinas. Later, however, by the time we get to the publication of De vita his Aristotelian influence seemed to have disappeared and been replaced by Neoplatonism and Occultism. Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 124-142, demonstrates the “debate” between Aquinas and Ficino. Ficino clearly departed from
melancholic nature, which would also accompany him to adulthood. Presumably, he received an education of Latin grammar and literature, and was trained in Aristotelian physics at the University of Florence. The university, however, did not dictate the intellectual progress of Florence, instead, it fell under the influence of private circles of noble families. Under Cosimo de’ Medici’s rule, Florence became the center of Humanism. Cosimo advocated the dissemination of Platonic philosophy, which was trumped by the era’s dominating Aristotelianism (Figure 2). Plans to establish a Platonic Academy failed, however, after Gemisthus Pletho left Florence. It had only became viable again after the fall of Constantinople

the philosophy of Aquinas regarding the efficiency of astronomical images. In the third book of De vita (chapter 18) he criticized Aquinas, who regarded the idea of astronomical images holding and passing on celestial rays as “demonic.” In De vita Ficino introduced and embraced his new vision of the cosmos, in which astrology and magic played key roles.

Marsilio Ficino, The Book of Life, trans. Charles Boer (Dallas, Tex: Spring Publications, 1988), v. According to sources, during his childhood, Ficino did not have a healthy day, as he suffered from quartan fever. For a physical description of Ficino in his later life, see Kristeller, “The Platonic Academy of Florence,” 150. His physical appearance (small stature) was derived from “a medal and a posthumous monument and from several illuminated manuscripts.”


Garin, Astrology in the Renaissance, 59. Cosimo particularly supported the Platonism of Mistra, which was based on the authority of Zeus, advocated by Pletho. Emperor Julian similarly shared these views.

Ibid, 60. Different interpretations of Plato existed. Pletho represented the “conceptual, mathematical” reading, which was based on rationality and predetermination. In his philosophy “There are cyclical changes, therefore “nothing ever happens which is truly new, and nothing happens which had not already happened, and which will not happen again someday.” In “the eternal universe everything is subject to destiny.” Ficino on the other hand, personified a different perspective. He maintained the freedom of the human souls and expressed it poetically and artistically.
in 1453, when John Argiropolos fled to Florence in 1457, and started lecturing on Plato.\footnote{Ficino, \textit{The Book of Life}, trans. Charles Boer, v.} By this time, Ficino had already studied Greek and written philosophical treatises.\footnote{Kristeller, \textit{The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino}, 17. Ficino’s earliest works date from 1454-1462. He demonstrated traces of Aristotelianism, and Platonism based on the Church Fathers. One of his earliest treatises, the \textit{Institutiones ad Platonicam disciplinem} (1456) has been lost.} He became an evident choice for the position of leading Cosimo’s Academy.\footnote{Ficino, \textit{The Book of Life}, trans. Charles Boer, v-vii. Ficino’s father, Diotifeci, was a doctor to the Medici’s. Diotifeci called Ficino to the Medici court in 1459, on Cosimo’s demand, who was aware of the philosophical talents of the boy. Cosimo granted Diotifeci that his son would be “supported for life if he undertook” the leading of the Academy.} Recent scholars had questioned the extent to which the Platonic Academy of Florence resembled Plato’s Academy.\footnote{James Hankins, \textit{Humanist academies and the “Platonic Academy of Florence.”} In Proceedings of the conference, "From the Roman Academy to the Danish Academy in Rome," ed. H. Ragn Jensen and M. Pade. Analecta Romana Instituti Danici Supplementum (Copenhagen: Odense University Press, Forthcoming). Hankins warns against the poetic style of works like \textit{Storia dell’Accademia Platonica di Firenze}. He also argues about the connotation of the term \textit{academia}, which was used to express several concepts during the Renaissance. Most of the time, it designated Humanist schools, but the coherence of such groups was unknown. Hankins analyzed the Florentine Academy as a \textit{sodalitates literatorum}, or “house academy.”} But it was certain that Cosimo de’ Medici became Ficino’s patron, and to Ficino he was more than just a patron. While Ficino called Diotifeci his physical father, he regarded Cosimo as his “spiritual” father.\footnote{Garin, \textit{Astrology in the Renaissance}, 68. Ficino: “I have had two fathers: Ficino the Medic and Cosimo de Medici. From the one I was born and from the other reborn. The first put me in the care of Galen, the doctor and follower of Plato, the second dedicated me to the divine Plato himself. In fact, both have made medicine my destiny. If Galen is the doctor of the body, then Plato is the doctor of the soul.”} He claimed to have been reborn under Cosimo’s direction, who had assigned Ficino such tasks as the translation of Plato’s works and the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum} by Hermes Trismegistus\footnote{Kristeller, “The Platonic Academy of Florence,” 149. In 1463, Ficino translated the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum}, among translations of works of Plato. He also wrote the Commentary on Plato’s Symposium in 1469 there.} (Figure 3). Cosimo even provided Ficino with a place of tranquility - a villa in
Careggi - to work on his translations and writings (Figure 4). It is uncertain whether the villa had served as a meeting place place of the Academy, where the likes of Angelo Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola, and Pietro Pomponazzi would gather to discuss intellectual matters. Nevertheless, the villa at Careggi was the birthplace of such philosophical masterpieces as the *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (1482) and the *De vita libri tres* (1492) (Figures 5 and 6). Both *Theologia Platonica* and *De vita* are significant to this study, for they contain tenets crucial to analyzing the astrological ceiling fresco at Caprarola in question. The innermost idea to both Ficino’s philosophy and to the present thesis is the immortality of the soul, which was also the subtitle of *Theologia Platonica*. The following paragraphs are going to elaborate on the philosophical concept of the immortality of the soul.

2.4 The Immortality of the Soul and the Hierarchy of Being

The soul’s immortality has long vexed philosophers. Marsilio Ficino approached every metaphysical problem in the light of the *anima* (soul) and dedicated his entire life to decoding the enigma of the human soul. Ficino studied the physical healing of the body, 

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67 Ibid.
69 Kristeller, “The Theory of Immortality in Marsilio Ficino,” 299. Several philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, Plotinus (they influenced Ficino), discussed the immortality of the soul.
70 Ibid, the immortality of the soul was at the center of Ficino’s philosophy.
and he later became a doctor of the soul. In *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (1482), he proved the soul’s immortality with rational arguments, and traced the soul’s journey from its arrival through the Tropic of Cancer to its departure for the divine realm, through the Tropic of Capricorn. Even though he placed the soul in the hierarchical scholastic system of the universe, in his quest for the interconnectedness of the different levels of the hierarchy, his voice echoed Neoplatonic authors.

The human soul, which is an immaterial substance, constitutes the third essence in the five principles of hierarchy (Figure 8). Thus, the soul divides the earthly sphere of body and quality and the divine realm of angels and God. God is the ultimate source of all creatures; his

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73 Kristeller, “Florentine Platonism and Its Relation with Humanism and Scholasticism,” 205-211. Ficino borrowed elements galore from scholasticism, principally the hierarchy of being, to which the *Theologia Platonica* testified. Kristeller explained it was because Humanism in itself did not produce a comprehensive philosophy; therefore, scholasticism had to be absorbed into it. However, “his propositions, formulas and speculative solutions” were inherently Neoplatonic.


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energy is the most divine. Every entity emanates from God “like the rays from the sun.”

God’s spirit is omnipresent and animates every entity within the cosmos, who manifests the divine energy at different levels. In the sphere of Angels (the closest to God) God’s spirit remains an immaterial pure substance. It is only at the level of the body that the divine essence procures a vestiture, and physical creation happens. Creation becomes possible through the perfect divine essence’s imperfect embodiment in the human corpus (body). Humans are inherently divine yet imprisoned in their bodies, which is the very reason they continuously grapple with the dualistic forces of their existence Even though the crudest spirit characterizes the material existence, God bestowed upon humans his divine essence to help them raise from “the depths of Tartarus.” God, like a magnet, ingrained a natural appetite in man to lure his soul back home. The human soul is the median of the five (being the third) principles and connects the earthly realm with the transcendental world. In a perpetuating cycle, the soul secures

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75 Garin, Astrology in the Renaissance, 70. God, is the “head” of all entities.
70 James Hankins, “Marsilio Ficino on Reminiscentia and the transmigration of souls,” Rinascimento, 45 (2005): 4-5. Since the soul is immaterial, it is not subordinated to any place. The accepted Catholic understanding was that God created the soul of human out of nothing at the moment of his embodiment on Earth. Ficino, however, suggested that the soul could have “aetherial and celestial vehicles,” and could exist prior to creation (based on Plato).
77 Ficino, Theologia Platonica, Liber Secundus, Deus est ubique, 120. “Non prohibetur deus ab aliquo penetrale per omnia; infinitae enim puritati virtutique resistit nihil.”
80 Ibid, soul enters the body through “indivisible force,” it resides in the body as an undivided whole. Man is the “vicar of the immortal God.”
81 Moore, The Planets Within, 32.
82 Kristeller, “The Theory of Immortality,” 309. There exists a natural appetite in humans for the divine, which God placed in the human soul, so that it would always strive for reuniting with the Creator.
83 Ficino, Theologia Platonica, Liber Primus, 16. “Quoniam autem ipsum rationalis animae
humans’ apotheosis and unification with God.\textsuperscript{84} The immortality of the soul was also essential to understanding the proper relationship of free will and fate.

2.5 \textit{Saturnian Melancholy and Astral Psychology}

Ficino, like many scholastic thinkers before him, including Thomas Aquinas, argued that the material stars and planets cannot directly impact the immaterial human soul.\textsuperscript{85} The planets evoke the senses of the human body, which can stimulate the soul.\textsuperscript{86} Humans have the volition to resist the impetus of the body and instead identify themselves with their inherently divine and immortal soul.\textsuperscript{87} Mortals easily fall prey to their bodily desires, and their instincts can impede them from following the higher calling of the universe.\textsuperscript{88} A malevolent setting in his birth chart

\begin{quote}
genius, inter gradus huiusmodi medium obtinens, vinculum naturae totius apparat, regit qualitates et corpora, angelo se iungit et deo…”
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{84} Garin, \textit{“Ritratto di Marsilio Ficino,”} 299. “Ed ecco il tema dell'uomo nodo o imeneo del mondo, in cui tutti gli ordini del reale, tutti i gradi dell'essere si sposano, e il mondo inferiore si congiunge con quello superiore, e l'uomo raccogliendo in sé, nella sua visione cosciente si distende nel cosmo, riconduce all'unica fonte i dispersi ruscelli, in una circolarità ritornante in cui si traduce il palpito dell'essere che dal centro della propria unità viene nuovamente a sé.”

\textsuperscript{85} Seznec, \textit{The Survival of the Pagan Gods}, 49. The early Christian authors, such as Lactantius, and the later Church fathers, notably St Augustine, accepted the validity of stellar influence and its importance in interpreting the Bible and the will of God promptly, but they placed limitations on the effect of the stars. Volition can override the influence of the planets. Free will triumphed over fate. The majority of the scholastic thinkers, including Aquinas, followed this model. Ficino also supported the dominance of free will over fate at the beginning of his career.

\textsuperscript{86} Christopolus, \textit{“Marsilio Ficino’s Medical Astrology,”} 393.


\textsuperscript{88} Seznec, \textit{The Survival of the Pagan Gods}, 48. Thomas Aquinas argued the majority of the people could not resist the temptations of their bodily desires, therefore the stars indirectly tempted humans to sin.
haunted Ficino himself.\textsuperscript{89} Ficino was a self-proclaimed Orthodox Christian, but he was also a “speculative theologian.”\textsuperscript{90} He thought it was acceptable to turn to Occultism and Neoplatonism for answers regarding the disturbing effects of Saturn in his life.\textsuperscript{91} Following the advice of his ancient master, Plato, Ficino lived a contemplative life and reevaluated the relationship of free will and fate.\textsuperscript{92} He developed his vision of the microcosm between the publications of his \textit{Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum} (1477) and \textit{De vita coelitus comparanda} (1492).\textsuperscript{93} He argued that the stars lived within the human soul and affected it internally.\textsuperscript{94} Certain limitations on free will must exist, but humans can overcome all obstacles if they use the stars to their advantage.\textsuperscript{95}

Scholars have long argued Ficino’s equivocating stance on stellar influence, which they primarily attributed to the unfortunate setting of Saturn at the time of his birth.\textsuperscript{96} With prospects

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\item \textsuperscript{89} Allen, J.B. Michael, “Marsilio Ficino On Saturn,” 15-16. Ficino was born on 19 October 1433 with his ascendant, Saturn and Mars in Aquarius. Saturn bestowed a melancholic nature on Ficino, which would haunt him during his life.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Hankins, “Transmigration of Souls,” 5-6. Ficino wanted to maintain his orthodox Christian image. At the same time, he was experimental, and aspired to revolutionize the Church from within, partly by reconciling it with antique philosophy.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Kristeller, “The Platonic Academy,” 152. Ficino turned to mysticism, which he deemed to be in accordance with Christian theology.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Meriam Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac,” 696. Ficino did not deny the existence of free will and fate. Instead, he wanted to find the proper relationship between the two, and determine the boundaries of human autonomy.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid, 688-690. In \textit{Disputatio}, Ficino attacked astrology and defended free will. In \textit{De vita}, he argued humans carry a microcosm of the macrocosm in their souls, and that the celestial forces influenced them within. Therefore, the inner planets limited human free will to some extent.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid, 698. Ficino concluded that the stars live in us in his epistles that he wrote to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, Giorgio Antonio Vespucci and Naldo Naldi between 1477-78.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid, 700. Humans can use the forces of the heavens to their advantage by deliberately attracting or avoiding certain celestial influences with the help of talismans and astrological images.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Garin, \textit{Astrology in the Renaissance}, 62-63. Most scholars, including Thorndike, Walker and
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of melancholia in his birth chart, Ficino “could hardly be casual or lukewarm towards astrology.”97 The baleful events of the 1470s and 1480s intensified his gloomy disposition and his conviction that the stars must impede humans from practicing their free will.98 What else could have explained all the adversity that typified the end of the fifteenth-century? In his quest to absolve the contradictions between free will and fate, Ficino turned to the stars for answers.

In the *Theologia Platonica*, Ficino argued that the principal stars of each zodiacal constellation had a soul, that he personified with the twelve Olympian gods.99 If celestial bodies can impact the human body, the star-souls of the constellations can likewise perform a direct influence on the human soul, for they are of the same substance.100 Moreover, because the ancient gods had a “recognized appearance, a sex and character,” they could infuse the human soul with attributes.101 If God’s energy unites the star-souls (Ficino also referred to them as angels, in the sense that they were supernatural) and the human soul, the construction of their beings is identical.102 The human soul not only receives celestial attributes via the rays of the

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98 Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance*, 77. The Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 (Giuliano de’ Medici died), and the imminent Ottoman threat created a gloomy climate in Europe. Arquato predicted the destruction of Europe.
star-souls, it also comprises the sphere of the Angels and God within itself\textsuperscript{103} (Figure 9). Ficino deduced that the human soul carried the entire heavens within, and the qualities the celestial souls radiated at the time of the embodiment constituted the human character.\textsuperscript{104} It would suggest that humans were prisoners of their personalities the stars determined for them at birth. However, Ficino did not advocate the victory of fate over free will; he wanted to reconcile the two. He concluded that even though the inner planets created boundaries to free will, they did not determine fate.\textsuperscript{105} Humans can refine their innate temperament through rigorous introspection.\textsuperscript{106} They need to master their inner planetary forces and identify their daimons, which were the personal stars of every individual (in Greek mythology they were literally guiding spirits).\textsuperscript{107} Proper self-knowledge necessitated the cognizance of one’s daimon. The personal stars showed people the celestial energy to which they were most bound and helped to counterbalance between malevolent and benevolent forces.\textsuperscript{108} Ficino advised his followers to embrace their virtues and vices and to seek the favors of all the stars.\textsuperscript{109} People can become happy and unite with God only

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\item \textsuperscript{103} Burroughs, “Marsilio Ficino, Platonic Theology,” 236. Hermes Trismegistus called humans a “great miracle.” Even though they were bound to their bodies and Quality, people also carried the sphere of Angels within. Human souls could transform into anything, even into God.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Garin, \textit{Astrology in the Renaissance}, 72. The universe confers dispositions on the human soul at the time of its embodiment, which keep asserting their influence from within.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Seznec, \textit{The Survival of the Pagan Gods}, 59. There is an obvious link between the universe and humans, but people are not imprisoned in their characters, they can improve.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Moore, \textit{The Planets Within}, 35. People can only alter the effects of the inner stars if they know them. Thus, continuous introspection is necessary to understand the movements of the stars within.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 55. One’s personal star partially determined the individual character. It was an inherent personal force, which guided and helped humans to make the best of their lives.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Meriam Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac,” 705-706.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Moore, \textit{The Planets Within}, 57. Ficino advocated a balance of the different forces.
\end{itemize}
if they accept the dualistic nature of their existence. They accept the dualistic nature of their existence. Humans’ inner planets, principally their personal stars helped to discover the divine essence in their soul. Hence, to neglect the stars would be to ignore the living God within. Contemplation of the macrocosm and introspection of one’s microcosm were the most important goals of human existence. They provided humans an opportunity to learn about their intrinsic nature and to purify their animas. Free will and destiny were in perfect harmony. In De vita, Ficino proposed methods to encourage contemplation. He primarily advocated the power of imagination. Talismans, stones and astrological images of celestial rays propitious to the patron can maximize the strength of visualization and can evoke the godly essence of the human soul.

The following chapters will introduce patrons’ involvement with astrology and commissions of astrological images and ceiling frescos in the fifteenth and sixteenth-century. Most of the artworks followed strict invenzioni (programs) that humanist letterati (scholars) carefully devised and based on antique sources and often on the Neoplatonist philosophy of Marsilio Ficino. The extent to which patrons were engaged in the devising of their artworks’ programs differed. We will see that Cardinal Farnese was a master in utilizing the heavens to his advantage.

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110 See Ficino’s three modes of life as an illustration of the importance of balance in Meriam Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac,” 704.
111 Christopolus, “Marsilio Ficino’s Medical Astrology,” 390. Ignorance of the stars equals to surrendering to fate. Humans can only practice proper free will if they understand the signs of the stars.
114 Moore, The Planets Within, 43. Ficino advised to” imagine deeply and constantly.” If we imagine things enough times, they become internalized in our soul, which triggers the mind to realize what we imagine.
3.1 The Case of Ludovico Sforza

After a decade of prolonged nuptial negotiations between Ludovico Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan (b. 1452-1508, Duke 1494-1499) and Ercole d’Este, the Duke of Ferrara (b. 1431-1505), Ludovico finally wed Beatrice d’Este on January 18, 1491 116 (Figures 10 and 11). What is less known about the terms and conditions of the marriage, however, is their dependence on astrological predictions and advice. Based on the counsel of Ambrogio Varesi da Rosate, Ludovico Sforza’s court astrologer, the ceremony should have taken place alla domesticha (in a private ceremony), on July 18, 1490, a “fortunate and prosperous day.”117 Ercole d’Este, however, demanded a more public and ostentatious ceremony, and the wedding was delayed.118 Ludovico conceded to the requests of the Duke of Ferrara, with only one condition: that he

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116 Azzolini, The Duke and the Stars, 171-172. Beatrice was the sister of the famous Isabella d’Este (the Marchesa of Mantua by marriage). Ludovico originally asked for her hand, but she was already betrothed to Francesco II Gonzaga of Mantua. Both women were noted for their impeccable taste in fashion and arts, they were the cultural influencers of their age. The marriage contract had been done ten years prior to real negotiations took place.

117 Ibid, 168-169. Varesi grew close to the duke after he allegedly saved his life from a dangerous illness. Documents prove that he was the entrusted physician and astrologer of the court, and “received an annual stipend of a hundred golden ducats.” Varesi was also politically powerful as a member of Milan’s Privy Council. His influence became more powerful over the duke, and eventually, the duke would rely on him for even the smallest questions of his life, such as what clothe to wear.

118 Ibid, 172. Ludovico claimed the reason for his wish to celebrate his marriage to Beatrice in a private ceremony in a more modest manner was his consideration for his nephew, Gian Galeazzo Sforza (then duke) and Isabella (whom Gian Galeazzo recently married). Ludovico stated that he did not want to “outdo” them and thought that a modest ceremony was a way of showing respect to the couple. Rumors spread however, by the Ferrarese ambassador in Milan, Giacomo Trotti, that Ludovico was simply frugal to spend on the wedding.
would wed Beatrice on January 18 of the following year. Varesi deemed the date to have been “blessed” for the consummation of the marriage, precisely, “at the 16th hour.”

Such astrological reliance on everyday life matters, like a wedding, may seem illogical to the contemporary reader. In Renaissance Italy, however, it was habitual to rely on the guidance of the stars in common matters, such as traveling, fashion, weddings; and likewise, in more significant events, such as questions of battle and war, and the curing of sicknesses. Ludovico Sforza was infamous for arranging dynastic marriages based on the predictions of Ambrogio Varesi. He relied on Varesi’s prognostications in planning the nuptials arrangements of his two nieces, Anna Sforza to Alfonso d’Este (their wedding took place at the same time and location as Ludovico’s wedding to Beatrice, orchestrated by none other than Leonardo da Vinci), and Bianca Maria Sforza to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I. Ludovico also utilized the guidance of the stars in his familiar-political stratagem against his nephew, Gian Galeazzo (duke 1476-1494) (Figure 12). Following Varesi’s advice, Ludovico had turned down the marriage to wed Isabella of Aragon, and instead, let his nephew marry her. Varesi was confident that thanks to unpropitious rays, Gian Galeazzo would be unable to produce an heir, which would naturally

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119 Ibid, the wedding was postponed several times due to unknown reasons, until both parties had agreed on the final date. It is possible that Ludovico kept delaying the ceremony because of his astrologer’s continuous counsel, who always deemed another date more favorable for the communion.

120 Ibid, 170-171. Astrology of course strongly intertwined with politics: all of these decisions brought political allies and lands to Ludovico. He was in strong need of the Ferrarese alliance, as the duke’s relationship with Florence and Naples deteriorated. Ludovico gained the imperial investiture through his bond with the Holy Roman Emperor, whose help he also counted on in case of a French attack.
weaken his position as a duke and justify Ludovico’s takeover of Milan later. Ludovico blindly trusted the counsel of his astrologer, to the extent that he would also depend on his advice on questions of war. Many, including the later polymath and astrologer, Girolamo Cardano (b. 1501–1576), attributed the fall of Milan to the French troops in 1499 to Ludovico’s asinine reliance on astrology. Cardano argued that “greedy astrologers,” such as the likes of Varesi, brought rulers to “disastrous ends.” Nevertheless, Ludovico Sforza was not the only ruler who put his faith into astrologers’ prognostications.

3.2 Matthias Corvinus of Hungary

Approximately 620 miles away from Milan the revival of ancient learning and aesthetics took root outside of Italy for the first time in the most unusual location in Europe, in the Kingdom of Hungary, under king Matthias Corvinus (né as Matthias Hunyadi in 1443, reigned from 1458 to 1490) (Figure 13 and 14). The kingdom had long been suffering from Ottoman

121 Ibid, 170. Varesi was in charge of arranging the conditions of the consummation Gian Galeazzo’s marriage. The astrologer ensured Ludovico that his nephew, Gian Galeazzo would be unable to produce an heir (who also happened to have poor health and no experience).
122 Ibid, 169. Cardano’s criticism was towards the kind of astrology Varesi practiced (also censured by Ptolemy), which include interrogations and elections (doubtful credibility, hard to document). Even Varesi was reluctant at times to produce prognostications on bizarre and trivial matters that Ludovico requested, and thought they had no significance or credibility. We could say that it was the patron, Ludovico, who forced his astrologer to justify every act and event by the stars, and it was not Varesi who foul played the duke.
123 The literature on Hungarian Renaissance and the activities of king Matthias Corvinus is developing, but it is still scarce. Most of the studies conducted on Corvinus were written decades ago. For the most comprehensive volume on his art, see Jolán Balogh, A Művészeti Mátyás Király Udvarában, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1966). For more contemporary scholars, see Dániel Pócs and Tiziana del Viscio, “L'affresco di Mattia Corvino a Campo de' Fiori. Quesiti stilistici e iconografici,” Arte Lombarda, Nuova serie, 139, No. 3 (2003): 101-109. The most extensive
attacks and served as one of the major defense forces against the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{124} In the midst of these dangerous times an upstart military family, the Hunyadis, rose to power. The most prominent member of the family, the father of Matthias Corvinus, John Hunyadi (born c. 1407-1456) became the most influential political and military figure in the Kingdom of Hungary at the time.\textsuperscript{125} His successful fights against the Ottomans enabled Hunyadi to acquire lands and wield political influence over the new king, Vladislaus I (1440-1444), and his famous Long Campaign against the Ottoman Empire secured Hunyadi’s renown in Europe.\textsuperscript{126} During the reign of the next king, Ladislaus V (1444-157), Hunyadi became a governor (1446-1453), the first and most important member of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{127} Since the family had recently risen to prominence, contemporary essays are found in Péter Farbaky and Louis A. Waldman, \textit{Italy and Hungary. Humanism and Art in the Early Renaissance} (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011).


\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, 325. Hunyadi János számárazását illetően ellentmondásosak a források (Bonfini egyenesen az ókori római Corvinus nemzetségig vezette vissza, a Hunyadi család címerállata, a corvus, holló alapján. Legvalószínűbb azonban, hogy az erdélyi Vajk fia volt, akinek Zsigmond király Hunyad várát ajándékozta 1409-ben. Mindössze középnemesi családak számítottak, János volt az első, aki vezetői pozícióba emelkedett.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, 326-327. Please note that Vladislaus I (I. Ulászló in Hungarian) was the Hungarian reigning name of Wladyslaw III of Poland (he is universally known by the latter name; the former was only used in Hungarian sources). A “hosszú hadjárat” fontossága és különlegessége abban rejlett, hogy a magyar seregek először nem védekeztek, hanem ök indultak támadásra az ellenség földjére, ráadásul összel és télén, amikor nem háborúznak. A szokatlan és zord körülmények ellenére, Hunyadi sikert sikerre halmozott (elfoglalta Szőfát és Drinápolyt is 1443-ban).

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 329. A magyar nemesek akkor voltak hajlandóak elismerni V. László uralmát, ha hét főkapitány gyakorolja a hatalmat mellette, és ha III. Frigyes lemond a gyámkodásáról. Mivel ez nem történt meg, 1446-ban Hunyadit kormányzóvá nevezték ki. Nagy befolyással bírt, több mint 28 vár, 57 mezőváros, 1000 falu és 4 millió hold föld ura volt. Vagyona meghaladta a királyét.
Hunyadi surrounded himself with astrologers in his court in Transylvania to strengthen and justify his family’s rule. He employed several astrologers, including the renowned Polish astrologer, Martin Król.\(^{128}\) Hunyadi’s son, the young Matthias Corvinus was born and raised in an environment that military success, politics, and reliance on the ancient wisdom of the stars characterized (Figure 15). Naturally, when Matthias was crowned as the king of Hungary merely at the age of 15, he also had to consolidate his power in the kingdom, where numerous baron families were fighting for power and opposed his reign. After defeating the plotting of the barons, including the Hussite John Jiskra, Matthias disposed of his regent (who was his maternal uncle Michael Szilagyi) by sending him to fight against the Ottomans. Corvinus then also turned to astrology to justify his success and right to rule.\(^{129}\) As Darin Hayton noted, “princes used astrology…to locate the basis for their authority in the stars and to confirm the natural, unassailable source for their rule.”\(^{130}\) Matthias used the science of the stars as a means of solidifying his power after the much political turmoil and validating his divine right to rule.

\(^{128}\) Darin Hayton, “Expertise ex Stellis: Comets, Horoscopes, and Politics in Renaissance Hungary,” *Osiris* 25, no. 1 (2010): 29. Hayton refers to a great number of studies that has been conducted on the political activities of Corvinus. Among them the most significant is János Bak, “The Kingship of Matthias Corvinus: A Renaissance State?” in *Matthias Corvinus and the Humanism in Central Europe*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay and József Jankovics (Budapest, 1994), 37–47. As we saw, Italian statesmen willingly employed astrology in the making of political verdicts, which was not any different in Hunyadi’s and later in his son’s, Corvinus’ case either.\(^{129}\) Herber, Moss, Tisza, *Történelem 3*, 332-33. Mátyásh 1458 Január 24-én választották királyá (nagybátyja, Szilágyi Mihály 15 ezer fős fegyveres kísérettel “nyerte el” a nemesek támogatását. Megkoronázni nem tudták fizikailag, mert a magyar korona III. Frigyesnél volt (mely 1463-ban, II. Pius pápa támogatásával a bécsújhelyi megállapodás során került vissza Mátyáshoz). Jan Giskrán kívül a Garaiak, később pedig saját nagybátyja és szervezkedtek Mátyás ellen. Miután megszilárdította hatalmát, adóreformokat vezetett be, és a híres hadsereget, az ún. Fekete Sereget hozta létre Kinizsi Pál vezetésével, hogy biztosítja a rendet mind a bel és a külpolitikában.\(^{130}\) Hayton, “Expertise ex Stellis,” 30.
Corvinus showed a profound interest in astrology from the early years of his reign. He collected astrological writings, machinery, and invited astrologers, including the Polish Martin Bylica to his court in Buda to counsel him on political and private matters\(^{131}\) (Figure 16). Bylica advised Corvinus on questions of battle and war, including the siege of Vienna in 1485 \(^{132}\) (Figure 17). Unlike Sforza, however, Corvinus did not rely on astrology only in politics, but he also voiced his fascination with the stars in his artistic and intellectual activities. Corvinus was well-connected with Florence, Italy, and his political and economic relations to Lorenzo de’ Medici were close.\(^{133}\) In most of the art, architecture, and manuscripts that Corvinus commissioned, his

\(^{131}\) Ibid, 32-36. Bylica was trained in Krakow (in the department that Król established). He taught at the University of Bologna shortly, before moving to Rome, and then in 1465 (with Regiomontanus) to Hungary. He won the favor of Corvinus at a public debated held at the Hungarian diet in Pozsony (Bratislava). Bylica and his former student, Jan Stercze, demonstrated different astrological techniques to rectify the correct geniture, in front of hundreds of nobles and barons. The geniture in question was that of an important nobleman’s son, Renold Rozgon’s. There were two ways to rectify a geniture based on Ptolemy’s *Quadrifactitum* and *Centiloquium*, respectively. The astrologer either had to find the position of the ruling planet at the latest new or full moon, and the ruling planet’s degree in its sign was used as the degree of the patron’s rising sun in the birth chart. This method is called the *animodar*. The second method, considered the more precise technique, called the Trutine of Hermes, looked for the moon’s degree and position at conception, and the ascendant at birth in turn had the same degree and position. Bylica used the second technique, and an astrolabe, which fascinated the king, who declared Bylica as the winner. He received a price of 100 florins and he became Corvinus’ officials court astrologer.

\(^{132}\) Ibid, 44-45. Bylica accompanied the Hungarian king on his Austrian invasion and based his predictions about the auspicious outcome of the siege on two factors: on the one hand, the election chart that he cast for Corvinus earlier promised propitious planets in military matters for the Hungarian king. On the other hand, he reexamined the geniture he cast for Emperor Frederick III, according to which the emperor lacked the support of Fortuna. The previous military failures and the favorable planetary positions in Corvinus’s chart encouraged the king to besiege the city, which he later captured.

\(^{133}\) The was an entire exhibition dedicated to the connection between Matthias Corvinus and Lorenzo de’ Medici, titled *Matthias Corvinus and Florence - Art and Humanism at the Court of the King of Hungary*, in the Museo di San Marco in Florence between October 10, 2013 and January 6, 2014. See the catalog *Mattio Corvino e Firenze. Arte e umanesimo alla corte del re di*
primary exemplar was *Il Magnifico*, who sent architects, sculptors, and artists to the court of Corvinus.\(^{134}\) The Florentine architect, Michelozzo di Bartolomeo (1396-1472), who was the leading architect of the reconstruction of the Palazzo Vecchio, wrote a letter to Corvinus sometime between 1464 and 1466, and offered his services to him\(^{135}\) (Figure 18). Michelozzo never made it to the Kingdom of Hungary - he was extensively preoccupied with the Palazzo Vecchio - but his architectural taste and style were evident in the transformation of the Buda Castle, for the Palazzo Vecchio served as a model for the Buda Castle\(^{136}\) (Figures 19 and 20). The most probable architect who undertook the duty of reconstructing Corvinus’ residence into a Renaissance palace was Chimenti Camicia (woodworker and architect), advised by Francesco Bandini dei Baroncelli of Florence.\(^{137}\) The castle became a center of antique learning, sciences, and art, where the Hungarian king surrounded himself with Italian humanist *letterati*, including

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\(^{135}\) Péter Farbaky and Péter Sárossy, “Chimenti Camicia, a Florentine woodworker-architect, and the early Renaissance reconstruction of the royal palace in Buda during the reign of Matthias Corvinus (ca. 1470-1490),” *Mitteilungen des Konsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 50 no. 3 (2006): 218-219. During Michelozzo’s and Corvinus’ time of contact, the Florentine architect was staying in Dalmatia where he worked on securing coastal fortifications against Ottoman attacks. Their correspondence might have been promoted by the bishop of Ragusa, Timoteo Maffei, who was on friendly terms with Corvinus.

\(^{136}\) Ibid, the reason why the Palazzo Vecchio was a perfect choice as an exemplar to the Palace of Buda was the following: both buildings were originally Gothic constructions. To build a completely new Renaissance residence as the Palazzo Medici, the architects would have needed to start from scratch. Instead, they followed the model of the Florentine City State, that was going through an identical transformation as the Buda Palace.

\(^{137}\) Ibid, 219-220. We learned from Milanesi about Camicia at the end of the nineteenth-century. In the summer of 1479, a contract was made with him of 50 gold ducats a year and lodging for works in Hungary. The contract was made in Florence by Salvatore di Frosino del Galea.
Galeotto Marzio da Narni (Marzio was a humanist and an astrologer, whom Corvinus appointed as the chief librarian of his renowned library, the Bibliotheca Corviniana.)\(^{138}\) His famous collection of books, known today as Corvina volumes, was among the most extensive in Europe and included volumes on classical astrology by the likes of Manilius, Firmicus Maternus, and Ptolemy.\(^{139}\) He also collected the works of contemporary astrologers: Corvinus was on friendly terms with the famous mathematician and astronomer, Regiomontanus (1436-1476), who worked together with Bylica in the service of the king in Buda.\(^{140}\)

Corvinus did not only amass the greatest works on astrology and the most renowned minds around himself, but he was also well versed and skilled in astrology himself: Bylica called him *rex et astrologus*.\(^{141}\) The Hungarian king’s devotion to astrology was most evident, however, in his commission of two astrological ceiling frescos to decorate two rooms of his library. They both depicted important events in the monarch’s life: the first allegedly illustrated the geniture of

\(^{138}\) Hayton, “Expertise et Stellis,” 31, 37. Originally, the bishop of Esztergom, Johannes Vitéz invited Marzio to Hungary. (Esztergom was the center of humanist activities at the time). Marzio relocated to Buda in 1465 after a brief interruption in Italy. He was not only a librarian, but also a skilled astrologer, who had every capacity to assist Corvinus in gathering the most eminent astrological texts.

\(^{139}\) Ibid, 30. Among the works were Manilius’ *Astronomica*, Firmicus Maternus’ *Matheseos*, Hali Abenrudian’s commentary on Ptolemy’s *Quadripartitum*, Albohali’s *De Judicis Nativitatum*, Ptolemy’s *Centiloquium* (Arabic-Latin version), George of Trebizond’s translation of Ptolemy’s *Almagest*.

\(^{140}\) Ibid, 33. Bylica was invited to Rome by Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia (who later, as Pope Alexander VI appointed Alessandro Farnese Senior cardinal - who would become Pope Paul III, grandfather of the Cardinal Alessandro Farnese the Younger, patron of Caprarola, the subject of this study!) That’s where Bylica met Regiomontanus, who was working for Cardinal Bessarion. They left together for Hungary to teach at the newly established Academia Istropolitana in Bratislava, and collaborated on many works and astrological techniques together, such as the *Tabulae Directionum Profectionumque*, an astrological reference tool.

\(^{141}\) Ibid, 31. Corvinus had a profound knowledge in astrology himself that enabled him to judge the works of astrologers. The king not only gathered knowledge, he also possessed them.
the Hungarian king, and the second portrayed the setting of the sky at the time of his coronation.\textsuperscript{142} The two astrological frescos that marked his consequential beginnings enhanced both his interest in astrology and his political agenda to justify his divine right to rule. I must remark, however, that Corvinus had other connections in Florence as well, in addition to artists, architects, and political figures. Francesco Bandini dei Baroncelli, who served as Corvinus‘ chief architect advisor, was an influential Humanist thinker of the age, and a member of Marsilio Ficino’s Neoplatonist circle in Florence.\textsuperscript{143} Baroncelli arrived at Hungary in 1476 in the entourage of Corvinus’ new wife, Queen Beatrice of Aragon.\textsuperscript{144} It is possible then that the Hungarian king connected with Ficino through his advisor. The date of Baroncelli’s arrival to Hungary exactly matches the time when Corvinus and Ficino started exchanging letters extensively, from which we learn that Corvinus’ accounts on the regular Ottoman attacks deeply troubled and desolated Ficino.\textsuperscript{145} It is interesting to note that the Hungarian king might have directly contributed to Ficino’s growing saturnine melancholy, which in turn resulted in the writing of \textit{De vita}, whose astrologically themed third book Ficino dedicated to Corvinus himself.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{142} Jolán Balogh, \textit{Anfänge der Renaissance} in Ungarn (cit. n. 13), 65–7. Source referred to by Hayton in “Expertise et Stellis,” 30.
\textsuperscript{143} Farbaky and Sárossy, “Chimenti Camicia,” 219. Baroncelli was one of the organizers of the Platonic symposium in 1468 and 1473, respectively, together with Ficino and others.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Meriam Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac,” 695. Ficino later gathered his correspondences into books. Book three of his letters cover a period between the summer of 1476 and 1477. He dedicated the preface of the book to Corvinus. Doom and trepidation characterized Ficino’s words, triggered by the frequent Ottoman attacks on the coast of the Adriatic.
\textsuperscript{146} Ficino, \textit{The Book of Life}, trans. Boer, 83-84. Ficino wrote the dedication on July 10, 1489 in Florence (one year before the death of Corvinus) and promised the king a prolonged life. The dedication talks about how the book Ficino wrote would help someone to “draw down the favor
Based on the Neoplatonic teachings of Marsilio Ficino, visual representations of the cosmos on the one hand, help to contemplate and better understand the universe and God, and on the other hand, they are allusions to the “inner planets,” the microcosm of the patron, and therefore, a map to his soul and character. Corvinus’ astrological ceiling frescos hide an additional layer of meaning besides political ambitions. They also communicate the Ficinian convictions about the relationship of the divine cosmos and the human soul. It is possible to interpret Corvinus’ astrological images as spiritual tools, with which the creator of the invenzione commemorated the patron’s soul for perpetuity and hence rendered it immortal. They are visual responses and renditions to Ficino’s *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*, whose main goal was to prove the immortality of the human soul.

Corvinus’ grandiose plans to transform the Kingdom of Hungary into a Renaissance monarchy turned to ashes when he died unexpectedly in 1490. With no apparent heir, he had no legitimate successor to carry on his artistic and intellectual patronage, which would fade into oblivion. His astrological ceilings, along with his attempt to immortalize his soul perished after the Ottomans looted and destroyed the library during the capture of Buda in 1541. His...
books, the Corvina volumes are scattered around the world, and they alone evince the immortality of Corvinus.\(^{150}\) Despite the demolition of his artistic and intellectual legacy, it is evident that Ficino wielded a great influence on Corvinus, and strengthened his ties with the spirit of Florence and Lorenzo de’ Medici. Corvinus’ astrological ceiling frescos also took a unique position in the history of astrological decorations.

Constellations as ceiling decorations were present earlier on the Old Sacristy’s cupola in San Lorenzo, where the most prominent members of the Medici family rested under mythical stars that corresponded to the date of the consecration of the main altar of the church\(^{151}\) (Figure 21). After around 1442, Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) built the Pazzi Chapel in the Basilica di Santa Croce for Andrea Pazzi.\(^{152}\) The ceiling of the chapel likewise had an astrological ceiling fresco (Figure 22). Due to the demolished state of the fresco, it is impossible to determine the specific date the stars of the Pazzi Chapel commemorated, but without doubt, they also corresponded to a specific date.\(^{153}\) Borso d’Este, the Duke of Ferrara commissioned Cosimo Tura

\(^{150}\) Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The European Diffusion of Italian Humanism,” Italica 39, no 1 (1962): 8. The majority of the extant corvina volumes are in the Széchényi National Library in Budapest (34). Several volumes are located in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence (32), in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (38!), in the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria in Modena (15), and in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (9), among others. In the United States, the only libraries that have corvina volumes are the Houghton Library at Harvard University (1), the Beinecke Library at Yale University (2), as well as the Morgan Library & Museum (2) and the New York Public Library (1).

\(^{151}\) Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 76. The setting of the sky of the cupola corresponded to a particular time over a specific geographical location, which was Florence, July 9, 1422.


to decorate the walls of the Salone dei Mesi (1469-1470) in the Palazzo Schifanoia with the months of the year and personifications of the Olympian gods as constellations of the zodiac (Figure 23). Scholarship has proven that Marsilio Ficino’s Neoplatonist philosophy directly influenced Tura’s allegorical representation of the cycle of the months, and that the d’Este court astrologer, Pellegrino Prisciani invented the program of the room. Nevertheless, neither the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo and the Pazzi Chapel’s constellations, nor the allegories of the Palazzo Schifanoia alluded their patrons’ personal life, fate and soul. Corvinus’ astrological ceiling frescos were among the first to attest to the patron’s geniture and microcosm on a grand level. After the publication of Ficino’s De vita in 1492, grand astrological ceiling frescos proliferated in Italy and would become a trend in sixteenth-century Italian princely and cardinal courts.

155 Kaske, “Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 198. Kaske argued that the decoration of the Sala dei Mesi was among the first cycles to put on a “Ficinian and Manilian dress.”
156 Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 74-76. The fresco of the Palazzo Schifanoia was a prominent example of artwork that depicted the “children of planets,” a popular theme in Renaissance art and astrology. The cupola of the Old Sacristy was among the first to portray a sky that corresponded to a particular time and location on Earth, but it had nothing to do with the patrons’ lives either.
157 Quinlan-McGrath, *Influences*, 161. See the author’s chapter on The Great Astrological Vaults of the Italian Renaissance. The most notable examples include the astrological vault of Agostino Chigi at the Villa Farnesina, the astrological vault of the Sala dei Pontefici in the Vatican, and the astrological ceiling fresco of the Sala della Cosmografia (or Sala del Mappamondo) in Caprarola.
3.3 Federico II Gonzaga’s Astrological Ceiling Frescoes

Other noble families were more fortunate in their artistic and astrological endeavors than the raven king of Hungary or *Il Moro*. The astrological frescoes of the walls and ceilings of their palazzos are still emitting their spirits for eternity, and they were more prudent in their reliance on court astrologers. Among the most significant example is the Gonzaga family of Mantua. Isabella d’Este (1474-1539), the niece of Borso d’Este, was noted as one of the most erudite women of the Renaissance, patron of the arts and major political figure (Figure 24). Her son, Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (1500-1544) (Figure 25) commissioned the most renowned artists of his age to build and decorate palaces for him. Raphael’s pupil and successor, Giulio Romano designed the Palazzo del Te in the Mannerist style (Figure 26). The palace is most recognized for the series of erotic and mythological frescos decorating its walls.

Nevertheless, Federico II also made considerable contributions to astrology inspired art in sixteenth-century Italy. There is a room in the Palazzo del Te, which Renaissance scholarship has overlooked in the past. Sixteen cosmographically inspired medallions decorate the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti under the twelve signs of the zodiac (Figure 27). According to Ernst Gombrich,

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158 In the Hungarian language, Matthias Corvinus has been commonly referred to as the raven king, which name he inherited from his family’s crest, that depicted a raven. His adopted name as well, Corvinus comes from the Latin *corvus*, raven.
161 For the different decorations of the palace, see Frederick Hart, "Gonzaga Symbols in the Palazzo Del Te,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, no. 3/4 (1950): 151-88.
162 Ernst Gombrich, “The Sala dei Venti in the Palazzo del Te,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, no. 3/4 (1950): 189. The chief authority on the room was Frederick Hart,
it is most probable that the medallions were associated with the astrological doctrines of the extra-zodiacal constellations that ascended together with the twelve zodiacal signs. The doctrine originates from the fifth book of Manilius’ (approx. 1st century AD) *Astronomica*, which discussed in detail what extra-zodiacal constellations ascended and descended together with each zodiacal constellations at a specific angle. The Renaissance reader became aware of the *Astronomica* primarily by the *Matheos Libri VII* of Firmicus Maternus. Maternus was a late antique astrologer in the age of Constantine, and enjoyed popularity through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. While the *Astronomica* was more poetic and variegated in mythological citations, the *Matheos* provided a well-detailed catalog of the stars with interpretations. The devisor of the *invenzione* of the room most likely used the two sources

American art historian, whose wrote his dissertation on Giulio Romano and the Palazzo del Te. In the center of the ceiling is the Gonzaga badge of Mount Olympus, but here, it did not signify the home of the gods, but it represented the heavens itself. The sixteen medallions are placed around this center. Other scholars, including Kristen Lippincott referred to them as *tondi*. Quinlan-McGrath, “The Astrological Vault of the Villa Farnesina,” 96. Quinlan-McGrath, similarly to Gombrich, analyzed the ceiling of the Sala di Galatea of Chigi in the Villa Farnesina on the same grounds (Manilius’ *Astronomica*) as Gombrich examined the ceiling fresco of the Sala dei Venti. Quinlan-McGrath explains in detail the extra-zodiacal constellations that rise simultaneously at the time of a zodiacal sign, and they are called *paranatellonta*. At the time of each zodiacal sign in one’s birth chart, there were additional rising and descending constellations present, that accompanied the sign at a particular position and angle. Different combinations resulted in various attributes.


Kaske, “Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 198. Nobody cited the *Astronomica* in antiquity, Firmicus Maternus was the first to plagiarize the fifth book of Manilius for the last book of *Matheos*.


Lippincott, “The Astrological Decoration of the Sala dei Venti,” 216. Lippincott deemed that the decoration of the room might be closed to the nature of Manilius’ style.
interchangeably.\textsuperscript{168} Each of the extra-zodiacal constellations rising at a given sign in a specific position describes human characteristics and possible fates under that given setting.\textsuperscript{169} On the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti, the following constellations were used: the Ship, Orion, Auriga (in the fourth, tenth and fifteenth degrees of Aries, respectively), the Pleiades (sixth degrees of Taurus), Hare (seventh degrees of Gemini), the Asses (first degree of Cancer), Canicula, the dog-star (fifth degrees of Leo), the Wreath (fifth degrees of Virgo), the Arrow (eight degrees of Libra), the Era and the Centaur (first and twelfth degrees of Scorpio), the Arcturus (fifth degrees of Sagittarius), the Snakeholder (first degree of Capricorn), the Eagle (twelfth degrees of Aquarius), the Whale (last degrees of Pisces), and the Dolphin (eight degrees of Capricorn).\textsuperscript{170}

The majority of these settings entail various possibilities of human destinies, and certainly, every medallion illustrates the most favorable outcome listed in the ancient sources. For instance, those who were born when Eagle ascended in the twelfth degrees of Aquarius will either “make their living through robbing and killing,” or “will be courageous soldiers whose virtue and leadership allays the fear of war…”\textsuperscript{171} Certainly, the ceiling portrays the latter option: the medallion

\textsuperscript{168} Gombrich, “The Sala dei Venti,” 189. Gombrich argued it was most possible that the program of the ceiling followed the more detailed interpretations of Maternus and referred back to the poetic style of Manilius in its representation of the constellations. Firmicus, unlike Manilius, provided the exact position of each star-group within the thirty degrees of a given sign.

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid, 190. Firmicus also added the possible effects of the rays produced in the different settings might have on humans. Manilius omitted these in his \textit{Astronomica}.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, 190-194. Gombrich meticulously identified all of the paranatellonta of the different medallion, and cited the most probably literary source, either Firmicus or Manilius. The author examined the effects the different settings might have on the individual, and noted that in every case, the most favorable outcome was used. Gombrich did not however, link any of these descriptions to the life of the patron, Federico II.

\textsuperscript{171} Quote from Firmicus Maternus, \textit{Matheseos} (VIII, 17, 5.) referred to by Gombrich in “The Sala dei Venti,” 193.
illustrates a “victorious general surrounded by trophies.” Several medallions concern love, including Wreath in Virgo. Individuals born under the influence of Wreath in the fifth degrees of Virgo, it reads, “will be engaged in various voluptuous pleasures, intent on the study of womanly arts…” A destiny filled with love and sybaritic pleasures was not far from Federico. Other medallions suggest individuals engaged in hunting, such as the Arrow in the eight degrees of Libra. It reads, “Whoever is born when this constellation rises will be hurler of arrows who transfixes the birds in their flights…” Hunting was a popular past time for the Renaissance nobility, in which Federico might have also actively engaged. Could the decoration of the ceiling serve as a mirror to the personality and fate of the Duke of Mantua? As Lippincott notes, there is no indication that the portrayal of the Olympian gods was intended to demonstrate the planets, and the illustration could only be a geniture if the moon and the planets were present. Given their absence, the ceiling could not possibly depict the birth horoscope of Federico. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the decoration was an allusion to the horoscope of the patron. Lucas Guaricus, who was also possibly the devisor of the room’s program, cast Federico’s

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172 Ibid, 194.
174 Deanne Shemek, "Aretino's "Marescalco": Marriage Woes and the Duke of Mantua," *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 3 (2002): 373. Federico II had a long and public affair with a married woman, Isabella Boschetti (his mother, Isabella d’Este disapproved of the affair). Federico II commissioned Giulio Romano to build the Palazzo del Te for his mistress, where they would spend time together. It is only fitting to refer to his love life on the walls of the palazzo where he retreated to with his mistress.
175 Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 419. Reference 14. Hunting was a favorite pastime of the nobility and was “peacetime” equivalent of war.
horoscope.\textsuperscript{177} Lippincott notes that according to the original birth chart, Federico’s ascendant would fall on 22 degrees 16 minutes Taurus.\textsuperscript{178} According to astrologer Lorenzo di Giovanni Bonincontri, who was the first to publish a commentary on Manilius’ \textit{Astronomica} in 1484, the rising extra-zodiacal constellation at that given position would be Pleiades.\textsuperscript{179} Taurus in Pleiades would bestow an extremely unfavorable personality upon anyone. Consequently, Guaricus recast Federico’s horoscope to find a more favorable ascendant in 4 degrees 25 minutes in Gemini, in conjunction with the Sun.\textsuperscript{180} Lippincott contends that the program of the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti intentionally avoided any allusions to Pleiades, except for the one medallion noted by Gombrich, which is reminiscent of the original horoscope. It depicts the fate of a heroic dying gladiator, and therefore, provided an alternative fate of a valorous nature to those born under this unfortunate setting.\textsuperscript{181} If the avoidance of Taurus in Pleiades was such a personal issue to the

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\textsuperscript{177} Ibid, 222. Lippincott argues that the fact that Guaricus rectified a new natal chart for Federico II to pull him out of the bad influence of Taurus under Pleiades, and the same avoidance of same setting on the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti suggest that the devisor of its program was the same as his court astrologer, therefore, Guaricus.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, 220. Federico II’s natal chart was published in Lucas Guaricus’ \textit{Tractatus Astrologicus}.\textsuperscript{179} Kaske, “Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 197. Bonincontri published a third printed edition of \textit{Astronomica} in in Rome in 1484, accompanied by the first commentary. For the description of humans born in Taurus under Pleaides, see Lippincott, “The Astrological Decoration of the Sala dei Venti,” 220. It reads “transvestism, devotion to luxury, lust and passion for emotional display…the added conjunction between the ascendant and Saturn would have made him [Federico II] a most disgraceful character.”
\textsuperscript{180} Lippincott, “The Astrological Decoration of the Sala dei Venti,” 220.
\textsuperscript{181} Gombrich, “The Sala dei Venti,” 190-191 quoted Firmicus, \textit{Matheseos} (VIII, 7, 5), which reads: “If the horoscope was in the parting of the hoofs of Taurus (in fissione ungulae Tauri) and an equal amount of malignant an beneficent rays are cast on this spot they will produce a painter, but one whom this pursuit will ennoble through fame and honors. If, however, only malignant rays are menacingly directed at this spot, without the presence of benevolent stars, famous gladiators will be born, but those, who after many prizes and countless victories will die amidst great applause and favor of the spectators.” It seems like Federico II chose to display a heroic death during a fight as an alternate fate.
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patron, which his recast birth chart evinces, it is, therefore, credible that the entire ceiling
decoration served as insinuations to Federico’s horoscope. The medallions described certain
human qualities and fates found originally in Manilus’ *Astronomica*. Manilius was relatively
unknown in the Renaissance, until Poggio Bracciolini had discovered his works in 1417.182
Bonincontri, in addition to having been the first scholar to write a commentary on *Astronomica*
(Lippincott thinks that his commentary alone served as the main source for the Sala dei Venti’s
invenzione), he also extensively lectured on Manilius between 1475 and 1477.183 Among his
most important audiences were none other than Marsilio Ficino and Paolo del Pozzo Toscanelli
(1397-1482).184 Both scholars received Bonincontri’s discourses on Manilius well. In fact, Ficino
became engaged with Manilius to an extent that he was “among the first to make an imaginative
use” of the Augustean poet.185 Ficino based his theory, discussed in detail in the previous
chapter, about the star souls of the twelve planets influencing the human soul directly, on
Manilius. Manilius provided a literary support to Ficino’s Platonic ideal about the microcosm
and made the Florentine thinker’s philosophy more practical and “astrology poetically pious.”186

182 Kaske, “Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 197. The rediscovered manuscript remained in Florence
until at least the mid 1470’s.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid, another friend of Ficino, Pellegrino Agli had also transcribed a copy of the *Astronomica*
in Ferrara earlier in the beginning of the 1460s. Prior to Bonincontri’s edition, Regiomontanus
published the first edition of the *Astronomica* in Nuremberg (1472), and there was an additional
edition printed in Bologna in 1474.
185 Ibid, 199. Kaske argues that Ficino used Manilius for both his *Commentary on the Symposium*
in 1468 (based on Agli’s manuscript) and later in the *Theologia Platonica* (after Bonincontri’s
lectures).
186 Ibid, 200. Ficino referred ot both Bonincontri and Manilius as *poeta astronomusque.*
The two of them shared the belief that the heavens were alive and lived within humans.\(^{187}\) This information further reiterates the assumption that the medallions were in fact references to Federico’s personality, and to his inner planets. On an earlier zodiacal ceiling fresco, in the Camera della Zodiaco, in the Castello di San Giorgio in Mantua, Lucas Guaricus used the original geniture of Federico in the decoration’s plan, exposing his faulty character publicly\(^{188}\) (Figures 28 and 29). On the one hand, the public acknowledgement of Federico’s flawed character on the ceiling of the Camera della Zodiaco, and then his personality improvement on the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti was in accordance with the age’s virtue politics, which encouraged the nobility to live a virtuous life (or to be perceived virtuous) for a good public image.\(^{189}\) On the other hand, while public introspection and confession of one’s faulty character helped to maintain a good public image, Federico’s character advancing also responded to the spiritual needs of the age advocated by Marsilio Ficino.\(^{190}\) Ficino advised to practice

\(\text{\textsuperscript{187}}\) Quote from Astronomica, II. 60-66; 115-29 found in Kaske, “Twelve Gods of the Zodiac,” 200. “The heavens must be alive because without their gracious aid we could not understand them so well as we obviously do.”
\(\text{\textsuperscript{188}}\) For an analysis of an astrological ceiling fresco alluding to Federico II’s original natal chart (created earlier than the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti), see Kristen Lippincott, and Rodolfo Signorini, “The Camera della Zodiaco of Federico II Gonzaga,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 54, (1991): 244-247. In the center of the ceiling is a portrait of the patron depicted as Hercules. Despite of the allusion to his original birth chart, the message of the ceiling was Federico II’s divine right to rule.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{189}}\) Hankins, “Machiavelli, Civic Humanism,” 102-103.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{190}}\) Anthony Grafton, “Girolamo Cardano and the Tradition of Classical Astrology The Rothschild Lecture 1995,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 142, no. 3 (1998): 350-354. Girolamo Cardano’s public self-analysis confirmed the political desire for a moral life. Cardano publicly analyzed his vices and virtues in the horoscope he cast for himself to demonstrate to the public that anyone could improve their flawed characters, even the nobles. Cardano omitted unwanted information and added false qualities. Even though his intention was primarily political, his goal also served noble purposes. He wanted to support astrology as a moral discipline and as a means of self-reflection and progression.
introspection with the help of astronomical images to elevate the soul to higher levels. The medallions of the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti helped Federico to pursue a harmonious management of his planetary forces. They reminded the patron daily of both the good and the bad qualities the stars impose on him, and therefore, to choose wisely in every situation to better his character and find the appropriate balance between the dualistic qualities.

3.4 Summary of Chapter

The chapter strove to introduce the reader to notable examples in the Renaissance where astrology played a crucial role in the life of the patron. The Sforza family, particularly Ludovico Sforza, was notorious for relying on the prognostications of court astrologers. The Duke of Milan made important decisions based on the guidance of the stars, including the arrangement of dynastic marriages. Matthias Corvinus of Hungary likewise depended on astrology in questions of war and justifying his divine right to rule. Furthermore, the Hungarian king also collected manuscripts on ancient philosophy, sciences, and astrology in his renowned library, the Biblioteca Corviniana. Sources reveal that Corvinus corresponded with Marsilio Ficino regularly and that the philosopher had a profound influence on the collection of his library and art projects. Corvinus commissioned one of the earliest astrological ceiling frescoes of the Renaissance, which alluded to his inner planets. After the publication of Ficino’s *De vita* in 1492, which was a handbook of astrology and a guide to the proper management of one’s planetary forces, the number of astrological ceiling frescoes multiplied. One of the most illustrious examples is the

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191 Moore, *The Planets Within*, 54. Astronomical images stimulate the soul. Proper introspection and self-knowledge are the first steps to the divine.
astrological ceiling fresco of Federico II Gonzaga in the Sala dei Venti in the Palazzo del Te at Mantua. Sources suggest that the medallions of the ceiling of the Sala dei Venti also had Ficinian influence. The program of the room was based on ancient sources, notably on Manilius’ *Astronomica*, which also served as the foundation to Ficino’s astral psychology. The next chapters focus on the life of one of the most important Italian families of sixteenth-century Rome, the Farnese family, with a distinct attention to Pope Paul III and his grandson, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese.
CHAPTER 4: THE FARNESI FAMILY

4.1 Family Origins

In the previous chapter, we saw the use of astrology of different patrons in their artistic and intellectual commissions in the fifteenth-century. It became evident, that even though these astrological projects did indeed communicate political aspirations, they also had a more philosophical meaning hidden under the various layers. The majority of these patrons were connected to Marsilio Ficino, either directly or indirectly. In this chapter, I establish the connection of a later sixteenth-century astrological ceiling fresco to the philosophy of the Neoplatonist philosopher. The decoration of the Sala del Mappamondo (The Room of Maps), or also called the Sala della Cosmografia, was completed from 1573 to 1575 in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola. The patron was Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, grandson of Pope Paul III. The Farnese family’s history goes back nearly a century, but they became significant only during the Farnese papacy. They were influential patrons of the arts, received a Humanist education, and were well versed in antiquity and philosophy, and most importantly, they were advocates of astrology. The chapter examines information relevant and significant to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s project in Caprarola, including the youth of his grandfather, (then Alessandro Farnese the Elder) in the Florentine court and his connection to Ficino; important family events and historical moments; the Cardinal’s precipitous career in the Church during and after the papacy of Paul III; as well as his project in Caprarola, and the most recent scholarly interpretations of the astrological ceiling of the Sala del Mappamondo. All of this information, in addition to Ficino’s philosophy, will play a crucial role in providing my interpretation of the fresco in the following chapter.
Upon entering the Room of Farnese Deeds in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, magnanimous figures dressed in ancient Roman garments bedazzle the spectator under the medieval coat-of-arms of the Farnese family with sixteen fleurs-de-lis.\textsuperscript{192} One of the mural panels depicts Pietro Farnese, \textit{gonfalonere} (captain of the papal armies) to Paschal II, triumphing over the enemies of the Church valorously in the year of salvation 1100.\textsuperscript{193} According to the Augustinian historian and antiquarian, Onofrio Panvinio (1529-1568), who was also the Farnese chronicler, and librarian to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese; Pietro Farnese, after his victory, founded the city of Ortobello in the place of the ancient city of Cosa (Figure 30). There is only one problem with the chivalric portrayal of Pietro Farnese: it is simply unfounded.\textsuperscript{194} Panvinio completely made up the story in order to elevate the status of the Farnese and link the family to the ancients. Panvinio would not have been the first Farnese author to fabricate spurious historical events for the Farnese family and their origins. Annio da Viterbo, (born as Giovanni Nanni, 1432-1502) claimed in his Annexe I of \textit{De Viris Illustris} that the Farnese originated from Cappadocia and were direct descendants of none other than the Egyptian god, Osiris. Later, they were one of the founding families of the twelve Etruscan cities.\textsuperscript{195} Why did family history writers record evidently exaggerated and counterfeit claims?

\textsuperscript{192} Loren W. Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds” \textit{The Art Bulletin} 60, no. 3 (1978): 494-496. The decoration was created from 1562 to 1563 by Taddeo Zuccaro and his workshop. The number of lilies used on the papal arms was doubled to allude to the fleur-de-lis of the Farnese family’s coat-of-arms.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid, 499.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 501. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was the abbot of Tre Fontane, which was located in the city of Ortobello, and therefore, he was the nominal lord of the city. To justify his presence, Panvinio fabricated a connection to Ortobello in the past.
\textsuperscript{195} Helge Gamrath, \textit{Farnese Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy} (Rome: L’ERMA di Bretschneider, 2007), 26.
As we have seen, regardless of time and geographical location, it was a common practice for noble, particularly upstart families, to create a foundation for their prominence. Corvinus’ chronicler, Bonfini traced the roots of the Hunyadi back to the ancient Roman family of Corvus to justify their ancient noble blood, and therefore, their importance and right to rule. In the case of the Farnese family, however, it was about more than their rightful dominion. By the time Annio da Viterbo and later Panvinio created the Farnese origin stories, and Taddeo Zuccaro painted the idealized family history on the walls of the Room of Farnese Deeds, the Farnese family had an established ecclesiastical power. The scenes of the room did not only mean to elevate the family’s temporal political power, but more importantly, they also served as tools to emphasize their spiritual right to rule. The motifs and movements of the counter-maniera mural decorations, and the Roman attire, both suggest classical antiquity; as do the proto-baroque antique allegories of the vault. The Christian Commonwealth was a continuum of the Roman Empire, which needs the balance of the temporal and spiritual power for protection. Taddeo Zuccaro painted the Farnese family as defenders of this ideology, and Panvinio associated their deeds with the Romans in order to validate their divine right to rule.

What were the truthful origins of the Farnese family? Where did they come from and how did they gain power? The first member of the family to come out of obscurity was Ranuccio

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196 Herber, Moss, Tisza, Történelem 3, 325.
197 Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty,” 499-501. The allegory of Rome was painted under Fame, based on a Roman coin, dressed in Roman attire, seated on the seven hills of Rome surrounded by Romulus and Remus, with a terrestrial globe in her hands. The same sartorial trend characterized the rest of the frescoes: instead of contemporary clothing, all figures wore Roman dresses, and based on Roman reliefs, such as Trajan's Victory over the Dacians on the Arch of Constantine.
198 Ibid.
Farnese (1390-1450), who served as *condottiero* (military contractor) to Popes Martin V (pope from 1417 to 1431) and Eugene IV (pope from 1431 to 1447)\(^{199}\) (Figure 31). Thanks to his services, he received some minor land in the Lazio (Roman territories) and acquired a reasonable wealth, which enabled him to marry off his son, Pier Luigi to a noble family, the Caetani.\(^{200}\)

Until Pier Luigi’s children with Giovanna Caetani, including Alessandro and Giulia, the family’s primary occupation was agriculture and the military.\(^{201}\) It was Alessandro, who made a major breakthrough, and instead advanced a career within the Church via his education.

### 4.2 Alessandro Farnese the Elder, Later Pope Paul III

Alessandro Farnese the Elder (b. 1468-1549) was the oldest son of Pier Luigi Farnese and Giovanna Caetani\(^{202}\) (Figure 32). He arrived in Rome at an early age, where he received his elementary classical education at the Academia under Pomponio Leto. Later, at the end of the 1480s, the young Alessandro moved to Florence to study and live in the entourage of Lorenzo de’ Medici.\(^{203}\) He made various connections in Florence. Alessandro became a fellow-student and friend of *Il Magnifico*’s son, Giovanni de’ Medici (b. 1475-1521), later Pope Leo X (pope from 1513 to 1521).\(^{204}\) Florence had a distinguished network of Humanist *letterati* (scholars) and

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\(^{199}\) Gamrath, *Farnese Pomp*, 23. The frescoes of the room of Farnese Deeds in Caprarola depict him as a papal *gonfaloniere*, and some sources, including Robertson’s *Il Gran Cardinale* credit Ranuccio with the title of such. However, these claims were completely unfounded.

\(^{200}\) Ibid, Ranuccio received the city of Viterbo. It was however, far from Rome; so, his influence remained little and local. He erected a family mausoleum at Lake Bolsena. From his will in 1450 we learn that he had assets in the Florentine bank worth 11,000 florins.

\(^{201}\) Ibid.


\(^{203}\) Rebecchini, “Pope Paul III Farnese,”162.

\(^{204}\) Gamrath, *Farnese Pomp*, 24.
was the center of Neoplatonist learning. Therefore, Alessandro had every opportunity to become acquainted with several significant scholars of the age. He met the poet Gregorio Spolettino, philologists and writers Demetrio Calcondila, Monlada, Sulpizio Verulano (Verulano became Alessandro’s teacher), and philosophers Angelo Poliziano and Marsilio Ficino

After finishing his studies in Florence, he left for Rome in 1489 to advance his career within the Curia. Alessandro received a letter of recommendation from none other than Lorenzo de’ Medici, according to which he was a fine man well versed in antiquity (Figure 34). It was only later, however, after the election of Rodrigo Borgia as Alexander VI in 1492, (Cardinal Borgia was previously the Vice-Chancellor to Pope Innocent VIII), that Alessandro “rose meteorically through the ecclesiastical hierarchy” (Figure 35). Rumors said that Alessandro’s precipitous success was due to his sister, Giulia’s alleged relationship with Pope Alexander VI, but whatever the truth was, it is a fact that Alexander VI made Alessandro Farnese cardinal in 1493 at the age of 25 (he was ordained priest only in 1519). The young Farnese continued to do well in the Curia. Within the next decade, he received several bishoprics, including Corneto and Montefiascone in 1501; and he became papal legate to Viterbo and Le Marche in 1501 and 1502, respectively. After the Borgia pope, thanks to his shrewd political skills, Alessandro managed to maintain a good relationship with all of the upcoming popes, including Pope Julius II (pope

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205 Ibid.
206 Ibid, 27. Alessandro Farnese (The Elder) sought a secretary position within the Curia under Pope Innocent VIII, but he did not get the appointment.
207 Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale, 8.
208 Ibid, 9.
209 Gamrath, Farnese Pomp, 27. In 1492, a year before his cardinal appointment, he was already treasurer to Alexander VI.
from 1503 to 1513, Figure 36), who legitimized two of his children from Silvia Ruffini; and his childhood friend, Leo X, who legitimized Alessandro’s two other children.\textsuperscript{210} Alessandro’s election in the conclave of 1534 was secured by the Romans’ fury with the Medici popes (after Leo X, Figure 37, the pope was Clement VII, the legitimized son of Giuliano de’ Medici, Figure 38), and their desire for a Roman pontiff.\textsuperscript{211} The College of Cardinals elected Alessandro Farnese to the pontificate on October 13, 1534, under the name Pope Paul III.\textsuperscript{212} The influence of the Humanists, particularly that of Ficino, re-emerged during the Farnese papacy. The Neoplatonist impact and the revival of antiquity manifested on his artistic, architectural and intellectual patronage, on which I am going elaborate in the following paragraph.

Both the Roman populace and aristocracy felt that the Medici popes disregarded their interests.\textsuperscript{213} Consequently, they had long desired for a Roman pope who would be loyal to the citizens of Rome and prioritize their concerns.\textsuperscript{214} The Romans deemed the Farnese pope would

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid, 30. Under Julius II, Cardinal Farnese received the bishoprics of Eustachio and Parma. Julius II legitimized Constanza and Pier Luigi, while Leo X later legitimized Paolo and Ranuccio.

\textsuperscript{211} Rebecchini, “Pope Paul III Farnese,” 154. Clement VII died on September 25, 1534. After his death, celebrations took place on the streets of Rome, and riots broke out against anyone who was favored by the Medici pope (including the Strozzi, bankers to Clement VII). The Romans’ hatred for Clement VII was strong to an extent that they even vandalized his temporary sepulcher in St. Peter’s.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid, 157. Alessandro Farnese was elected in the quickest conclave in history; it lasted only three days, from October 11 to 14, 1534. He was favored because of his Roman origins, age (he was sixty-six, if he were to die soon, the rest of the cardinals stood a firm chance to become pope after), and his initial neutral political position between the imperial and the French forces.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid, 150-151. The Medici pope primarily favored Florentines and appointed foreign members to the Curia, and also put heavy taxes on the Roman populace.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, 155-156. We learn of the Romans’ expectations from a pope from the speech of Flaminio Tomarozzo on October 6, 1534. They wished to be the primary audience of the future pontiff.
be the one to restore Rome to its former glory, give the city back its people, and appoint Roman born nobles to important positions. Paul III intended to fulfill the demands of the Romans, even if he did so only with insubstantial economic promises and nominating Roman barons to sinecure positions.\textsuperscript{215} It was, however, by all means, his intention to revive the spirits of classical Rome, which Paul III did so with magnificent public and private art, architectural and urban commissions and restoration projects.\textsuperscript{216}

Paul III’s most significant urban contributions to the magnificence of Rome was the city’s fortification by Michelangelo and Antonio da Sangallo, and the improvement of Rome’s infrastructure, including the straightening of the Via del Corso (Figure 39) and the building of the Via del Babuino.\textsuperscript{217} While Paul III’s urban projects were inspired by his della Rovere predecessors (Sixtus IV and Julius II), his architectural and art projects were mainly influenced by the Medici popes.\textsuperscript{218} The primary architectural projects included the continued progress on the Church of Saint Peter, and the building of his private family residence, the Palazzo Farnese in Rome\textsuperscript{219} (Figure 40).

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 158, 162. He promised to abolish the heavy taxes of the Medici popes, but he actually never did. In fact, he imposed more taxes on the populace to finance his extravagant art and architectural projects. Paul III was also cautious about giving too much power to Roman barons. During his papacy, there were eighty-two cardinals in the College of Cardinals, and only two of them were from important Roman families. He also ensured to create conflict among them to diminish their power, and secretly advance his family’s interests.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 161. Pope Paul III appointed Latino Giovenale Manetti as the first \textit{commissario alla antichità} to protect and preserve ancient sites.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid, 168-170. The Via del Corso led directly to the Campidoglio redesigned by Michelangelo. The Via del Babuino multiplied the possible entry accesses to the city from the Piazza del Popolo.

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid, 171.

\textsuperscript{219} Gamrath, \textit{Farnese Pomp}, 44-45. The chief architect of the Palazzo Farnese was Sangallo, who started working as early as 1517.
Posterity remembers Paul III the most for his restoration of old and the execution of new audience halls. The Sala Paolina in Castel Sant’Angelo was redesigned and decorated by Perino del Vega (1501-1547) with his assistants from 1545 to 1548\textsuperscript{220} (Figure 41). The decoration is rich in ancient references, including eleven scenes from the life of Alexander the Great (reference to the pope’s Christian name, Alessandro); and Emperor Hadrian, the original builder of the Castle Sant’Angelo. The room is an attestation to the pope’s temporal and spiritual power decorated by imperial and ecclesiastical symbols, including Plato’s cardinal virtues (Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude and Justice), as well as the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope and Charity).\textsuperscript{221}

Paul III also commissioned the reconstruction of the grandest papal audience halls ever, the Sala Regia. It is situated between the Sistine Chapel and the Pauline Chapel (the latter also commissioned by Paul III, decorated by the likes of Michelangelo, Sangallo, and the Zuccari brothers).\textsuperscript{222} The decorations of the Sala Regia were executed by various artists over an extensive period, including Giorgio Vasari, who would call the room “the most beautiful and the richest hall” in the world in his Lives of the Artists.\textsuperscript{223} The hall had both religious and political purposes: processions gathered there for funerals and Holy Days (since the hall was an atrium between two major chapels), cardinals used it as a dormitory during papal conclaves; but it also served as a

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid, 159-162. Hadrian was placed centrally, facing the pope, to emphasize the connection between temporal and spiritual power.
\textsuperscript{223} Partridge, The Art of the Renaissance in Rome, 162.
throne room for receiving ambassadors. Since a great variety of people with different purposes and ranks frequented the hall on a daily basis, Paul III used its decoration to promote not only the Church and Rome but also the Farnese family. It was probably one of his most propagandistic projects, which emphasized his divine papal power. Even though the majority of the frescos, including the *Massacre of Cologny and the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew’s Day, 24 August 1572* by Giorgio Vasari (Figure 42), had been executed long after Paul III’s death, the the designs of Vault Stucchi by Antonio da Sangallo have immortalized the arms of Paul III and the Farnese fleurs-de-lis for posterity.

The fresco decorations of the Sala dei Fasti Farnese in the Palazzo Farnese from 1552 to 1555, were painted by Francesco Salviati, and it was probably by far the grandest glorification of the Farnese family and their contributions to the *respublica christiana* (Christian Commonwealth) and *pax christi* (Peace of Christ), conjoined with the ancient ideals of the *pax augusta* (Roman Peace in the time of Augustus). The main scene of the room, just like the decorations of the Room of Farnese Deeds in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, depicts invented historical events that never took place in reality, including Paul III in the center making peace between Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and Frances I King of France, at Nice in 1538.

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225 For contemporary depictions of defeating heathens and heretics, see Partridge, *The Art of the Renaissance in Rome*, 165, that talks about Vasari’s fresco in detail. For Sangallo’s Vault Stucchi, see Davidson, “The Decoration of the Sala Regia,” 400.
227 Partridge, *The Art of the Renaissance in Rome*, 168-169. In reality Paul III met both monarchs individually, and the meeting depicted on the fresco (also on the Room of Farnese Deeds at Caprarola) never took place.
The fresco, however, regardless of its unfounded historical events, corroborates the Farnese taste for antiquity and classical glory. Every depicted figure wears Roman garments, and the pope is surrounded by allegories: the Allegory of Spiritual Sovereignty and the Allegory of the Power of Keys. In addition, ancient mythological figures, gods, and goddesses enclose the Farnese lilies, including Aeneas, Venus, Mars, Minerva, cupids and cyclops. The message of the fresco is evident: the Farnese papacy was the rightful heir to glory of the ancients, and Paul III guided his people on both a spiritual and temporal level by the wisdom of God and the ancients.

He was also involved with philosophy: Paul III’s librarian, Agostino Steuco (1497-1548), similarly to Ficino, tried to reconcile ancient philosophy with church doctrines in his main work, *De perenni philosophia*. Nevertheless, as for any upstart families of the age, Paul III turned to astrology to justify his divine right to rule. He relied on the knowledge of the stars on a daily basis and sought the counsel of astrologers to find the most auspicious time for a journey, for convening the consistory and having important audiences.

4.3 **Cardinal Alessandro Farnese**

Alessandro Farnese the Younger, son of Pier Luigi Farnese and Girolama Orsini, grandson of Paul III, was born into the Farnese magnificence and opulence on October 7,

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228 Ibid, 168.
229 Ibid, the classically inspired decorations draw on the Farnese’s alleged origins from Anatoly, hence the depiction of Aeneas. The majority of the scenes used Virgil as their source.
1520. The young Alessandro received the excellent Humanist education of the age. He also quickly became engaged in the world of classically inspired art and architecture: the projects of his father and grandfather served as a model to him before he would become a patron of arts in his own right. Until 1543, Alessandro often represented his grandfather at Paul III’s commissions, when the pope was occupied with matters of state. It was only after this date that we see Alessandro undertaking his projects. One of his first commissions was for the Cancellaria, where Alessandro had Giorgio Vasari paint the frescoes of the Sala dei Cento Giorni (Hall of the Hundred Days) in 1546 (Figure 44). The taste of the work, however, does not reflect Alessandro’s individual style just yet; instead, it is a glorification of his family, and the deification of his grandfather, Paul III.

The first work to reveal Alessandro’s personal taste in art is a religious commission, a private chapel in the Cancellaria, decorated by Francesco Salviati in 1548. The frescoes had religious subjects, such as the Adoration of the Shepherd, but their stylistic qualities, including the rich stucco work and refined gildings, are reminiscent of the frescoes later executed at Caprarola. By the time Caprarola was built and decorated, from 1559 to 1575, Alessandro Farnese was already an experienced patron of the arts with a distinguished and impeccable taste

233 Ibid, 19. The young Alessandro facilitated his grandfather’s architectural and fortification projects by mediating Paul III’s wishes to the architect, Sangallo. He particularly played a key role in the Palazzo Farnese and the decorations of the Sala Paolina in Castal Sant’Angelo.
234 Ibid, 60-65.
235 Ibid, 63-64. The majority of the scenes depicts the benevolence and generosity of Paul III, including *Paul III inspecting the rebuilding of St. Peter’s*, and *Paul III distributing benefices* (1546).
236 For an extensive study and the restoration of the chapel, see the study of Rubin, “The Private Chapel of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese,” 82-112.
and an inclination for the classical. Before turning to the Villa Farnese at Caprarola (Figure 45), and the subject of this study, the vault decoration of the Sala del Mappamondo, it is important to expand on the politics of Paul III, and the general political atmosphere that characterized the era, because both determined the destiny and personality of the young Alessandro, to which his frescoes at Caprarola attest.

4.4 Nepotism, Politics, and War

Paul III, in addition to elevating the power of the universal Church, also sought to advance the authority of his parvenu family. Paul III, not unlike his most probable paragon, Alexander VI, practiced nepotism to promote his family’s interests. He appointed his immediate family members to important positions within the Curia. Paul III elevated both of his grandsons, Alessandro Farnese and Guido Ascanio Sforza (the son of his daughter, Constanza) to the cardinalate in 1534 (when Alessandro was merely fourteen years old!) A year after, Paul III bestowed the most prestigious positions upon his grandsons: Alessandro became Vice-Chancellor to the pope, and Guido Ascanio camerlengo (administrator of revenues). His most nepotistic deed, however, was the creation of the Duchy of Parma-Piacenza in 1545, for his son, Pier Luigi, whom Paul III also appointed papal gonfaloniere (among other sinecure positions) in 1537. Paul III did not deny the generous allowances from his other grandson, Ottavio (brother

239 Ibid.
240 Gamrath, Farnese Pomp, 49-54. Previously, Pier Luigi was the Duke of Castro before Pier his appointment as the Duke of Parma-Piacenza. In spite of this event, however, Pier Luigi was
to Alessandro) either, who received the Duchy of Camerino, and was made Prefect in 1547.\textsuperscript{241} The creation of duchies and positions for his family members most certainly triggered strong oppositions in the College of Cardinals. To maintain his power, Paul III needed to ensure he had the support of the most important monarchs of the age: that of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and Francis I, the French king. Paul III married off Ottavio to the illegitimate daughter of Charles V, Margareta, in 1537; and his other grandson, Orazio (also the Duke of Castro from 1547) to the illegitimate daughter of the French king, Diane de Poitiers in 1552.\textsuperscript{242} Paul III had hoped for Charles V’s support in his expanding policies, and the Holy Roman Emperor needed papal support against the Protestants in both a religious and military sense.\textsuperscript{243} His alliances proved to be fickle, however. Pier Luigi, despite being a gifted military commander, was a “monster,” according to contemporary sources; with a reputation only surpassed by Cesare Borgia in sixteenth-century Italy.\textsuperscript{244} In a plot perpetrated by Charles V, Pier Luigi was assassinated on September 10, 1547.\textsuperscript{245} Pier Luigi’s death precipitated a crisis around the

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid, 49.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid, 51. Ottavio’s marriage to Margareta was particularly significant. They had twins, Alessandro and Charles. Charles died at infancy, but Alessandro went on to become one of the most successful military leaders in Europe, later Governor of the Spanish Netherlands.

\textsuperscript{243} Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 422. Cardinal Farnese was the papal legate to his grandfather and leader of the Italian troops in the war against the Schmalkaldic League in 1546. Charles V supported the creation of the Duchy of Parma-Piacenza in exchange for the papal help against the Lutherans.

\textsuperscript{244} Gamrath, \textit{Farnese Pomp}, 60-61. He treated the local feudal families harshly and gave them impossible ultimatums (such as building palaces in merely four months in the city). He also imposed heavy taxes on the locals, and his punishments were merciless. Pier Luigi quickly gained many enemies among the local nobility.

\textsuperscript{245} Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty,” 519-520. Charles V conspired together with Ferrante Gonzaga of Milan.
inheritance of the Duchy of Parma-Piacenza, which, Ottavio naturally claimed as his after his
father’s death. Charles V, however, did not want to allow his son-in-law to acquire Pier Luigi’s
title, and so Ottavio started plotting with the French against Charles V. To end the crisis
around Parma, Paul III took away the title of Duke of Parma and Piacenza from Ottavio, and
reincorporated the Duchy into the Papal States. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s role in the fight
for Parma-Piacenza was significant. Alessandro supported his brother, Ottavio’s claim for the
Duchy, and therefore, put pressure on his grandfather, Paul III, to reinstate Parma-Piacenza to
Ottavio. Paul III was old and fickle, and it is probable that the political plights and the
compulsion from his own family contributed to his rage, which at the end caused his death on
November 10, 1549. At his deathbed, however, Alessandro took advantage of his grandfather’s
confusion and persuaded him to give Parma-Piacenza back to Ottavio. Despite Julius III’s
(Paul III’s successor, pope from 1550 to 1555) initial support of Ottavio’s claim to the Duchy of
Parma-Piacenza, the new pope withdrew Ottavio’s title and a war broke out between the Farnese
family and the new pope backed by the imperial forces of Charles V. The war lasted for two
years (1551-1552) and ended with Farnese success (with French military support).

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246 Gamrath, *Farnese Pomp*, 66. Charles V demanded the Farnese family to provide
documentation that shows Parma-Piacenza were papal fiefs at all, and therefore, the pope’s right
to give away. Ottavio sought the help of the new French king, Henry II.
247 Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty,” 520.
249 Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 12. For the time being, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was
exiled from the Rome and his papal benefices were withdrawn. After the Farnese victory, his
benefices were reinstated and he returned to Rome gloriously.
4.5 Cardinal Farnese: The Head of the Family & Patron of Arts

Henceforth, it was Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (Figure 46), who took care of the family’s political interests and acted as a shrewd and diplomatic representative of his family. His main goal was to secure the Farnese’s allegiance to the new French king, Henry II (b. 1519-1559, married Catherine de’ Medici). Cardinal Alessandro took maximal advantage of the French connections: he was given the bishoprics of Toulouse, Grenoble, and Cahors, for an annual benefice of 30,000 scudi. He even persuaded the next pope, Paul IV, to break the Papal State’s long-standing alliance to the Habsburg and make one with the French. After Cardinal Farnese sensed, however, that he could not exploit the French connections any further, he made secret negotiations with Charles V’s successor, Philip II (b. 1528-1598), leaving Paul IV alone in his allegiance with the French. Such wavering diplomacy characterized Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s opportunistic politics, whom Paul IV rightfully called a “disloyal person, a wretch, a heretic,” for he would often sacrifice the Church interests for Farnese matters. Cardinal Farnese played a key role in the election of every pope that followed his grandfather. He also had ambitions to become pope himself in the Conclaves of 1566, 1572 and 1585, but Spain and the Medicis always impeded his aspirations. Despite his unsuccessful attempts to attain the papacy, Cardinal Farnese obtained new ecclesiastical dignities thanks to his proximity to Pius IV (pope from 1559 to 1565), and he was the richest cardinal in the College of Cardinals. His

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251 Ibid, 70.
253 Ibid, 11. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s revenue took up approximately 10% of the entire papacy’s revenue. On average, he received an annual income of 120,000 scudi (the papacy’s average income was around one million scudi a year). For an average amount of spending of
influence within the Cardinalate and his enormous wealth enabled him to commissions the most opulent art and architectural projects. An avid collector and patron of the arts, he made one of the most important artistic commissions of the sixteenth-century Rome. Cardinal Farnese surrounded himself with the excellent artists and Humanists of his age, including Paolo Giovio, Annibale Caro, and the Zuccari brothers. The most sumptuous project he commissioned was his summer villa at Caprarola, which evidenced both his wealth and Humanist upbringing.

4.6 Interpretations of the Room of Maps at Caprarola

Located some thirty miles north of Rome, the small town of Caprarola is home to one of the most original pieces of art and architecture in Europe. Situated five hundred meters above sea level, it provided a cool haven during the hot Roman summers. The Villa Farnese was originally a pentagonal fortress designed by Sangallo in 1520. Reconstruction started on the building in 1559, based on the plans of Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola (b.1507-1573). The

Cardinal Farnese, see Hurtubise, “La cour du cardinal Alexandre Farnèse,” 39-40. We see that his income went up from 80,000 scudis (1563) to 120,000 scudis a year twenty years later. He spent approximately 15% of his income on art projects.


Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale, 74. Caprarola was situated in the heart of the Farnese territory, near Via Cassia. Based on more recent and precise distance measurements, the villa is most precisely forty miles northwest of Rome, near the Lago di Vico.

George Kish, “The ‘Mural Atlas’ of Caprarola,” Imago Mundi 10 (1953): 51. The temperature was also cooler because of the proximity of the mountains. It was located on the slopes of the Cimini mountains.

Gamrath, Farnese Pomp, 158.

Ibid, 158-159. Vignola was the chief architect of the Farnese family from 1550 until his death in 1573. He worked on Margaret of Austria’s palazzo in Piacenza, the garden palace in Parma,
pentagonal building had a circular cortile (courtyard), and a three-story facade. On the floor of
the piano nobile (the principal floor), we find the main loggia, that is the Sala d’Ercole,
decorated by Taddeo Zuccaro (Figure 47 and 48). From there, the floor is divided into two
symmetrical wings: the east, or the summer apartments, devoted to active life; and the west or
winter apartments, devoted to contemplation. Naturally, the east apartments were public,
whereas the west were more private. The reception room of the west apartments was the Sala
del Mappamondo (The Room of Maps), but it has also been referred to as the Sala della
Cosmografia (Figure 49). It was the last addition to the Villa Farnese, decorated from 1573 to
1575. The cartographical and astronomical decoration of the room provided an excellent space

the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, and most importantly, on the church of Il Gesù in Rome. Vignola
had plans for the Villa Farnese at Caprarola as early as 1555.
259 Loren Partridge, “The Farnese Circular Courtyard at Caprarola: God, Geopolitics, Genealogy,
Farnese at Caprarola, there had been no circular courtyard fully executed in the history of
architecture. It was the first of its kind.
53, No. 4 (Dec. 1971): 467. The room was designed as a belvedere (an open gallery with a fine
view) and served as a space for informal dining. In addition to the hands of Zuccaro, Partridge
aimed to prove that the decoration of the room was also done by Jacopo Bertoja.
261 Kish, “The ‘Mural Atlas’ of Caprarola,” 52. The two wings are separated by a small chamber
in the Cardinal’s library, where the painting of Hermathena, makes the conspicuous distinction
between active and passive life. The painting was a combined allegory of Hermes (symbol of
active life as the god of trades), and Athena (symbol of contemplation, as the goddess of
wisdom).
262 Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty,” 494. Earlier mentioned in the study is the Room of
Farnese Deeds, which was the main audience hall of the east wing.
263 Studies that were made primarily on the murals of the room tend to refer to the chamber more
as “Sala del Mappamondo,” and essays on its ceiling use the name “Sala della Cosmografia”
more. However, Partridge primarily analyzed the ceiling fresco, and still called it Sala del
Mappamondo. Quinlan-McGrath exclusively refers to it as Sala della Cosmografia. This present
study will stick to the name Sala del Mappamondo.
264 Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale, 118.
for contemplation. The south wall depicted a map of the world, as it was known in the 1570’s, while the rest of the walls illustrated maps of each known continent. The celestial realm of ancient gods and heroes briskly diverts the beholder’s gaze from the telluric decorations of the murals to the ceiling (Figure 50). Voluminous figures illustrate the constellations and animate the cosmos of Caprarola. The ceiling depicted the original forty-eight constellations identified by Ptolemy in the Almagest, but the devisor of the ceiling’s invenzione (program), who was most likely the Humanist thinker, Orazio Trigini de’ Marii, chose to incorporate some unusual elements to the cosmos of Caprarola. The inclusion of Jupiter, Phaeton, Argo, and Capella in the four corners of the ceiling, create an individualized view of the ancient Greek cosmos (Figure 51 and 52). Capella, the brightest star of Auriga, appeared on Albrecht Dürer’s planisphere in 1515 and on Mercator’s globe in 1551 (Figures 53 and 54). Diagonally across from it, in the lower left corner of the ceiling, we find Argo. Even though the ship of the Argonauts was one of the forty-eight Ptolemaic star-groups, its illustration was unconventional. According to Hyginus’ Astronomica, Argo sailed from left to right and clouds covered it. The artist of the ceiling, who was purportedly Giovanni de’ Vecchi, painted Argo without cloud covers, sailing

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265 Lippincott, “Two Astrological Ceilings Reconsidered,” 197. The topographical maps are emphasized by portraits of explorers, including America Vespucci, Magellan, Marco Polo, Cristoforo Columbus and Fernando Cortez.

266 For a complete list of additions, see Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 420. The source of the sky map was likely the globe of Franciscus Demongenet (it included two extra non-Ptolemaic constellations found on the ceiling of Caprarola, Boötes and Antinous).

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

269 Ibid.
from right to left and much bigger than usual.\textsuperscript{270} The depiction of the drama between Jupiter and Phaeton had no exemplar on astrological images.\textsuperscript{271} In the upper left corner of the vault, Jupiter sits on his eagle and strikes his thunder in the direction of Phaeton, at the lower right corner of the ceiling. Phaeton falls off his chariot and drowns in the river Eridanus. A year later, Giovanni Antonio Vanosiono da Varese (who was most probably the artist of the murals of the room) painted the fall of Phaeton at the Sala Bolognese it the Vatican but omitted Jupiter\textsuperscript{272} (Figure 55). It raises the question then, what was the planetary god of thunder doing in the sea of fixed stars?\textsuperscript{273} What did his drama with Phaeton represent? Scant explanations exist regarding their tension. Partridge’s hermeneutical analysis of the fresco connects Jupiter and Phaeton with Capella and Argo. It suggests that they were personal allusions to the patron and Christian allegories simultaneously.\textsuperscript{274} Given that the patron was a cardinal of the Counter-Reformation

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\textsuperscript{270} There is no consensus among scholars as to who painted the sky map of the Sala del Mappamondo. Partridge argues it was de’ Vecchi, and that de’ Vecchi, and Giovanni Antonio Vanosiono da Varese executed the mural maps. Lippincott contends in “Two Astrological Ceilings Reconsidered,” 199-201 that de’ Vecchi only painted the vele, and Giovanni Antonio Vanosiono da Varese painted the sky map and the mural maps. Robertson also thinks the artist of the ceiling was Vanosino. Evidence suggests (letters between Fulvio Orsini and Cardinal Farnese) that it was de’ Vecchi. The identity of the artist does not influence the outcome of the present study, however.

\textsuperscript{271} Jacob Hess, “On Some Celestial Maps and Globes of the Sixteenth Century,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 30 (1967): 408. Hess was the first to correctly recognize the dramatic relationship between Jupiter and Phaeton. However, he incorrectly attributed it to a later Farnese tragedy, which scholars rejected.

\textsuperscript{272} Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1064. See footnote no. 33.


\textsuperscript{274} Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 425. The author interpreted Jupiter as God’s supreme power to damn, Phaeton as the disobedience of sinners, Argo as Navicella or the Church, and Capella as a “sign of necessity for good works,” which was an article of faith of the Council of Trent.
Church, it is tenable that the unusual elements of the ceiling symbolized Christian allegories.\textsuperscript{275} The astrophysical reading of the fresco, advocated by both Quinlan-McGrath and Lippincott, links Jupiter and Phaeton to the extra-zodiacal constellations located in the \textit{vele}.\textsuperscript{276} It deduces that Jupiter and Phaeton attest to the patron’s horoscope and that Jupiter represented the patron’s personal power to govern.\textsuperscript{277} Jupiter’s prominent position in the patron’s geniture could justify the presence of the planet on the ceiling\textsuperscript{278} (Figure 56). Despite the different methodologies, both types of readings agreed that Jupiter conveyed power, either papal or personal, with which the present writer concurs. Nevertheless, they fail to capture the invisible spirit of the image, which made the ceiling extraordinary in the series of astrophysical frescoes. That spirit is the soul of the patron himself that the four corner figures, Jupiter, Phaeton, Argo, and Capella echo.

4.7 Summary of Chapter

The chapter illustrated the rising of a parvenu family, the Farnese. It expanded on how they came to power, and how they solidified and maintained that authority. Indisputably, the key member of the Farnese family, who secured their success, was Alessandro Farnese the Elder, later known as Pope Paul III. He ensured the family’s success by appointing his immediate family members to important positions and creating duchies for them. Alessandro Farnese the

\textsuperscript{275} For one of the most significant religious commissions of Cardinal Farnese, that bespoke of Counter-Reformatory concerns, see Rubin, “The Private Chapel of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese,” 82-112.

\textsuperscript{276} Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1067-1087. The author argued that the zodiacal scenes also alluded to the Cardinal’s and his family’s horoscope.

\textsuperscript{277} Ibid, 1061.

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid, 1057-1059. According to Luca Guarico’s calculations, Jupiter was located in the patron’s critical mid-heaven and had a part in making him cardinal.
Younger, later known as Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, was the evident successor of Paul III. He has been honed to power and politics since an early age and primed for the seat of St. Peter since the age of fourteen. Cardinal Farnese inherited his grandfather’s political aspirations, diplomatic skills, and keen mind. He was a deft politician and diplomat, who was not squeamish to get his hands dirty with Machiavellian politics. Cardinal Farnese, however, also assumed his grandfather’s generous and refined patronage of arts, and his intellectual curiosity for the stars and philosophy. Caprarola is indisputably the peak of his career as a patron of the arts, and the astrological ceiling fresco of the Sala del Mappamondo is the most puzzling decoration of the edifice. As we have seen, there have been attempts to interpret the program of the ceiling, but the majority of the readings disregarded the Farnese family’s deep connection and interest in Humanist philosophy in the past. In the following chapter, I am going to argue that the major figures of the ceiling, situated at the corners, represent different levels of the patron’s subconscious, to which Ficino’s astral psychology, earlier discussed in this study, provides the foundation.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Ficinian Interpretation

As one of the wealthiest and most important cardinals, Cardinal Farnese has been attending to matters of the Church, receiving legates, and dealing with the personal affairs of the Farnese family unceasingly. He escapes the temporal atmosphere of the active wing of the piano nobile and retreats to the serene Sala del Mappamondo via the Sala d’Ercole. Time stands still in the Room of Maps, the ever-moving stars of the universe have been stopped for an instant and commemorated for eternity on the ceiling. Despite the room's passive sensation, the Michelangelesque constellations insinuate the course of time and movement. Cardinal Farnese gazes up to the dramatic constellations on the ceiling in the hope of divine providence and spiritual refuge. The star groups of the vault of heavens encourage him to engage in a quiet, yet active mental exercise, a contemplation about the outer cosmos. Whilst lost in the mysteries of the universe and its Creator, the cardinal also discovers a reflection of his divine soul hidden among the stars. The decoration of the Sala del Mappamondo’s ceiling fresco accomplishes a double task. On the one hand, it promotes the contemplation of the cosmos and God, as determined by Ficino. On the other hand, it helps Cardinal Farnese to introspect the secrets of his inner cosmic forces that shape his soul and mind. The fresco decoration of the vault serves as a daily reminder to Cardinal Farnese of the temporal obstacles he has to overcome to find his soul’s divinity and immortality. Phaeton, Argo, Capella, and Jupiter function as major cornerstones in the cardinal’s spiritual progress. The following paragraphs will take the reader on the spiritual journey of Cardinal Farnese, who, after facing his angels and demons, finds the divine particle that God bestowed upon him, and elevates his soul to the divine.
Renaissance frescoes, particularly astrological images, usually followed the same recipe: the court’s prominent Humanist letterati turned to ancient sources, such as Plato, Hyginus, Ptolemy, and Manilius, as well as early Christian sources, including St. Agustin and Boethius, to create an invenzione abundant in references to prisca theologia (ancient theology) and arcana mysteria (hidden mysteries). The two disciplines resulted in what scholarship refers to as Hermetic texts, and their infusion provides the metaphysical and theological basis to the validity of astrology and magic. In fact, some scholars have argued that Ficino’s third book of De vita was more an extensive analysis of Hermes than it was a commentary of Plotinus. The creator of the room’s program, after choosing the most fitting sources, would consult the patron, before the artist would start painting the decoration, upon which the parties agreed. The extent to which the patron would engage in planning the program is, however, most of the time unknown. Lucas Gauricus was possibly the creator of astrological decorations of Federico II Gonzaga’s room. Even though the vault decorations of both the Camera dello Zodiac and the Sala dei Venti indicate a personalized take and allusions to Federico’s horoscope, we have no sources available to indicate how much the patron took part in the program devising. It is most likely that Lucas Gauricus worked out the detailed program, which Federico only had to approve. Cardinal

279 Garin, Astrology in the Renaissance, 65. There Hermetic texts were originally attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, whose existence is questionable. It is most likely that Greek philosophers of the late antique period created the different texts that are referred to as his work. They concern magic, spirituality, science, and the work of the divine. Early Christian philosophers and later medieval thinkers, including Aquinas, and later Ficino, accorded it with Christian theology. In fact, it was Ficino, who translated the Corpus Hermeticum to Latin for the first time. Frances Yates argued that the third book of De vita was an analysis of the ancient text. 280 Frances A. Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964).
Farnese, however, did not leave his fate in the hands of his devisors. Letters indicate, that Cardinal Farnese exchanged with Fulvio Orsini (Italian Humanist, b. 1529-1600) regarding the decoration of the room, that Cardinal Farnese took a firm grasp of his destiny. The letters inform that Cardinal Farnese commissioned a Humanist thinker, Orazio Trigini de’ Marii to devise the program of the ceiling. Furthermore, Farnese’s correspondence with Orsini also reveals that the cardinal supervised works on the astrological ceiling closely, and had to approve of every detail regarding the program and the decoration. Just like Ludovico Sforza delayed his wedding several times to wait for the most favorable celestial rays for the consummation of his marriage, Cardinal Farnese likewise waited patiently for the most propitious celestial influence to embark on his journey. The patron’s conscientious involvement with the decoration of the ceiling testifies to his personal attachment to the project. His active participation implies that Cardinal Farnese had a clear plan about the visual appearance and contextual meaning of the decoration of the ceiling, which his advisors carried out. He received a Humanist education in the court of his grandfather, Pope Paul III. He was also well versed in antiquity and had an erudite theological and philosophical knowledge. Therefore, given his profound interest in astrology combined with Humanist knowledge, it is reasonable to assume that Cardinal Farnese must have been familiar with Marsilio Ficino’s philosophy. As a result,

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281 See Partridge. “The Room of Maps,” 413-418. They corresponded between March 4 and October 15, 1573.
282 Ibid, 413, de’ Marii was a friend of Fulvio Orsini, and erudite in antiquity. In addition to knowledge, he also had practice. It is said he owned a manuscript by Hyginus.
283 Ibid, 416.
284 Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 10-11. The painter, who was most probably de Vechi, was asked to hold off painting and only start when the cardinal gave his permission. Cardinal Farnese did not only seek to base the decorations on “sound doctrine and practice,” he also waited for the most favorable moment to start the work, so that the endeavor would be blessed.
Cardinal Farnese had the \textit{dottrina} to partake in the devising of the ceiling’s program. The constellations do not correspond to a specific time and space, neither to his geniture. But the emphasized celestial bodies at the corners, Phaeton, Argo, Capella, and Jupiter, allude to the inner planets of the cardinal and connect to personal events and symbols in his life. They also follow the central metaphysical principles of Ficino’s philosophy: the importance of introspection, the proper management of one’s vices and virtues, and the immortality of the soul. Ficino’s astral psychology provided an excellent theme of the fresco, that is the microcosm of Cardinal Farnese. If the ceiling decoration illustrates the inner planets of the patron, it is understandable that the decoration had a personal significance for the cardinal and that he participated actively in the creation of its program. A complex representation of the subconscious required self-knowledge and rigorous introspection. First, Cardinal Farnese had to find his \textit{daimon}, which can guide him on his pilgrimage to the divine essence. Second, to unite with God, the patron had to embrace his vices and virtues, and subjugate them to his will. The four pivotal decorations in the corner of the vault represent stations of the patron’s spiritual odyssey.

5.2 Phaeton As the Symbol of Introspection

The journey starts in the lower right corner of the ceiling with Phaeton. Phaeton falling off his chariot has a double meaning. On the one hand, it implies the moment of the embodiment of the human soul and its separation from the divine. Phaeton lost his immortality the moment he dropped from his divine vehicle into the river Eridanus. For the myth of Phaeton see Robin Waterfield, \textit{The Greek Myths} (Metro Books, New York, 2009).
God when they fall on the hierarchical ladder of the universe and descend into a dormant state in their bodies. If humans discover the divine essence God conferred on them, they can wake up from the mortals’ dream and return to God. Humans need to introspect to achieve this goal. On the other hand, Phaeton is a customized representation of Cardinal Farnese’s self-reflection. The primary goal of introspection is to find one’s personal star. To find his daimon, Cardinal Farnese had to “show a willingness to descend to the depths of events.” In other words, the falling of Phaeton symbolizes the cardinal’s submerge into his subconscious where he hoped to discover his personal star. On the ceiling, under Phaeton’s feet, we find Achernar, the brightest star of the constellation Eridanus. In Theologia Platonica, Ficino argued that every constellation had a star soul, which could affect the human soul directly. In Ficino’s astral psychology, these star souls characterized different human attributes that corresponded to the particular nature of the given star. The identification of one’s daimon helped to discover the celestial force to which the individual was most bound. Curiously, Achernar had a jovial

286 My interpretation of Phaeton is an allegoric representation of Plotinus’ emanation theory found in Quinlan-McGrath, Influences, 14.
287 Moore, The Planets Within, 41. The depth of soul was an important motif in cosmic imagery, for the soul events are “not merely two-dimensional,” they have a depth, where the forces of the soul reside.
288 Quinlan-McGrath, “Caprarola’s Sala della Cosmografia,” 1064-1065. Between Phaeton’s feet, where Jupiter’s bolt struck, there is a flash of light that symbolized the brightest star of the River, Achernar.
quality. In Ficino’s metaphysics, like attracts like. Therefore, the patron used Jupiter abundantly in his symbolism to attract jovial qualities into his life. Jupiter, in addition to being the most significant element on the ceiling decoration, also emerged as a decorative element in other contexts of the patron’s life. Paolo Giovio created an *impresa* with Jupiter for Cardinal Farnese in 1546 with the motto *Hoc Uno Jupiter Ultor* (“With This Alone Jupiter Punishes”).

The same *impresa* was used to personify Cardinal Farnese on the decoration of the entrance loggia of the Villa Bagnaia, which belonged to his friend and relative, Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara (Figure 57). Other decorations throughout the Villa Farnese also depicted Jupiter and most often personified the cardinal himself. There are several reasons why Cardinal Farnese wished to become identified with Jupiter. Jovial qualities constituted one of the most beneficial and purest energies of the cosmos. Jupiter also rendered a man, through Leo, most suitable to reign over men and gods, earthly and divine matters. At the time of the decoration of the room, Cardinal Farnese still aspired for the papacy, which the figure of Jupiter communicated excellently.

The ceiling decoration and layout substantiates Cardinal Farnese’s political expectations: the fresco depicts Leo next to Jupiter. But over what did Cardinal Farnese wish to

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291 Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 210-211. Cardinal Farnese used this *impresa* in his war against the Lutherans in Germany in the 1540’s.
292 Quinlan-McGrath, “Sala della Cosmografia,” 1062. Gambara decorated the walls of his villa’s entrance loggia with frescoes referring to his friends, and he associated each of them with their symbols and lands.
294 Ibid, 195. Jupiter represented the art of ruling and was in charge of Leo.
295 Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 161. He sought the papacy in the conclaves of 1566, 1572, 1585, without success. At the time of the creation of the fresco, he was still hoping to become pope.
rule? Was it merely a matter of political and spiritual power? To answer this question, we have to visit Argo and Capella, which represent the patron’s vices and virtues, respectively.

5.3 Argo As the Symbol of Vices

The constellation of Argo was also one of the familiar *imprese* (symbol) of the Farnese.296 It personified the family’s victory over Julius III and the Habsburg in the war for the Duchy of Parma-Piacenza (1551-1552).297 As we have seen earlier, Pope Paul III, before his death (1549), had reincorporated the Duchy of Parma-Piacenza into the Papal States, which his grandsons, Cardinal Farnese and Ottavio refused.298 Cardinal Farnese persuaded his grandfather at his deathbed to return the duchy to Ottavio.299 Cardinal Farnese felt personally responsible for the war and the pressure he put on his grandfather (which might have indirectly contributed to his death).300 On the ceiling, Argo, since it referred to the war, denotes the remorse Cardinal Farnese felt. It symbolizes the patron’s confession. The acknowledgment of his sins enabled Cardinal Farnese to counterbalance his vices with virtues. Diagonally across from Argo, Capella denotes the patron’s reconnection with the divine.

296 Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 418. The motto of the *imprese* was “we shall sail past.”
297 Ibid.
298 Gamrath, *Farnese Pomp*, 67. Camillo Orsini, the papal commander was invested with power over Parma and Piacenza.
300 Ibid.
5.4 Capella As the Symbol of Virtues

Capella, the she-goat Amalthea nursed the infant Jupiter with her milk.\textsuperscript{301} As an act of gratitude, Jupiter placed her among the stars.\textsuperscript{302} Amalthea’s milk betokens the celestial comestible that awakens the divine essence of the soul. To reconnect with his divine essence, Cardinal Farnese nourished his soul with what Ficino called spiritual food, such as art, books, imagination, and acts of benevolence.\textsuperscript{303} The patron could daily contemplate about the divine under the stars of his microcosm. Cardinal Farnese also aided the spiritual development of the residents and visitors of Caprarola. The Villa Farnese was a cultural and intellectual hub of the town, whose majestic frescoes might have encouraged visitors to contemplate, too.\textsuperscript{304} As a selfless benefactor of Caprarola, the patron compensated for the sins he had committed earlier. Capella signified Cardinal Farnese’s virtues and his discovery of the divine essence by an act of benevolence.

5.5 Jupiter As the Symbol of the Immortality of the Soul

The translation of Argo and Capella, that is, the patron’s vices and virtues enable us to analyze the role of the jovial qualities and Jupiter in the upper left corner of the room in their

\textsuperscript{301} For the myth of Amalthea, see Waterfield, \textit{The Greek Myths}, 23. Rhea hid the infant Zeus from his father, Cronus, so he could not swallow him. Zeus grew up on Mount Dicte, and was feed by bees and nursed by the goat milk of Amalthea.

\textsuperscript{302} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{303} Moore, \textit{The Planets Within}, 60. Images, books, and imagination are primary soul foods for they evoke the divine in the mind. In the story, Amalthea personifies the divine source, from which the patron feeds.

\textsuperscript{304} Partridge, “The Room of Maps,” 422. Caprarola was also a pun on Capella (“goat hill”).
entirety (Figure 58). Jupiter, like Phaeton, presents a double meaning, a public and a private one. There is a causal relationship between the two interpretations. On the private level, Jupiter exemplifies the final destination of Cardinal Farnese’s spiritual quest. The patron identified his personal star, Achernar, which was inherently jovial. His daimon helped Cardinal Farnese on his journey to embrace his duality. The patron harnessed the effects of Jupiter to rule over the depravities of the mortal phase (Argo), and the rectitude of the immortal state (Capella). Cardinal Farnese found a healthy balance between his angels and demons. The stability of his state of mind allowed him to uncover his divine essence. The patron discovered God in his soul and was ready to return to the celestial realm. Jupiter, riding on his eagle, denotes the apotheosis of Cardinal Farnese’s soul, and his unification with God.305 While Jupiter portrayed the elevation of the Cardinal Farnese’s soul to the divine, it also alluded to the patron’s pine for the supreme papal power. Cardinal Farnese became a perfect candidate for the seat of St. Peter. His self-conscious was clean, and his soul was one with God. Who could have represented God on Earth better than a man who became God himself?

5.6 Recapitulation of Thesis

Marsilio Ficino’s influence was widespread in time and space. His philosophy impacted religion, literature, and art across the continent.306 The ceiling fresco of Sala del Mappamondo at Caprarola captured the essence of Ficino’s metaphysics and provided a visual manifestation to

305 Lippincott, “The Astrological Ceilings Reconsidered,” 203. The eagle was a favorite symbol of Romans to express the apotheosis of the emperors, including Augustus.
306 Kristeller, “Ficino and the Roman Curia,” 96. The Lateran Council of 1513 declared the immortality of the soul as a doctrine. For how the Neoplatonism of Ficino impacted French
the chief notions of his works, *Theologia Platonica* and *De Vita*. Contemplation was an ethical goal of life; it formed a gate between the mortal and the immortal world. Humans can pass this bridge because they are in possession of an insubstantial and immortal soul, which comes directly from God. People must immerse in the divine regularly to find the godly essence in their souls. Exposition to enlightened texts, art, and imagination all helped to stimulate the human soul for divinity. The astrological ceiling fresco of Caprarola provided a space for contemplation about the divine. Cardinal Farnese could look up to the glory and grandness of the universe and occupy himself with the mysteries of life. Contemplation of the universe and its Creator turns into a natural desire to find the place of the individual in the creation, which leads to personal introspection. Ficino argued that humans carried a copy, a microcosm of the entire universe within their souls. As a result, stars can have a direct influence on the soul from within. The stellar influences of celestial bodies represent attributes that constitute human nature. Despite the boundaries that the inner planets create for humans, they still do not determine fate. The stars shape human character, but people can improve their personality with proper management of their inner planets. To this end, the discovery of one’s personal star comes useful. Cardinal Farnese equalized his vices and virtues with the help of his jovial *daimon*. He controlled his inner planets steadily and discovered God in his soul. Through the divine essence Cardinal Farnese’s soul finished the cyclic journey of life and regrew its wings to fly and live

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Moore, *The Planets Within*, 33. Man has to cultivate his life “as a work of art,” and every intellectual activity is a nourishment of the soul.
among the gods in immortality.\textsuperscript{308} The relationship between Jupiter and Phaeton expressed the single most important notion in Marsilio Ficino’s philosophy, that of the immortality of the soul.

\textsuperscript{308} Hankins, “Transmigration of Souls,” 11. According to Plato, philosophical life was key in regrowing the wings of one’s soul.
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Figure 3: Marsilio Ficino, First Latin edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, 1471, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (The Ritman Library), Amsterdam.
Figure 4: Medici Villa at Careggi.
Figure 5: Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*, 1559 edition.
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Figure 46: Titian, *Portrait of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese*, 1545-46, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.
Figure 48: Federico Zuccaro and Jacopo Bertoja, Sala d’Ercole, Villa Farnese, Caprarola.
Figure 49: Giovanni Antonio Vanosino da Varese, Giovanni de’ Vecchi, Sala del Mappamondo, 1573-75, Villa Farnese, Caprarola.
Figure 50: Giovanni de’ Vecchi, astrological ceiling fresco, Sala del Mappamondo, Villa Farnese, Caprarola.
Figure 51: Giovanni de’ Vecchi, astrological ceiling fresco, detail of Jupiter, Leo, and Argo, Sala del Mappamondo, Villa Farnese, Caprarola.
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Figure 53: Albrecht Durer, planisphere of the northern sky, 1515.
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Figure 57: *Fresco of Villa Farnese at Caprarola*, Villa Lante, Bagnaia.
Figure 58: Michelangelo, detail from the drawing of the *Fall of Phaeton*, British Museum, London. Source: Mary Quinlan-McGrath. “Sala della Cosmografia.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1997): 1054.