

Monika Frazer-Imregh: *Itáliai humanisták*¹

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Monika Frazer-Imregh's volume, *Itáliai humanisták* [*Italian Humanists*], explores the intellectual richness and complexity of the humanist movement that emerged in 15th-century Italy. The work not only examines in detail the lives of three prominent thinkers – Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Angelo Poliziano – but also provides a broader overview of the humanist milieu of the era, introducing such significant figures as Girolamo Donato, Niccolò Leonceno, Gioviano Pontano, as well as female intellectuals such as Cassandra Fedele. The book was published by the Károli Gáspár Reformed University and L'Harmattan Publishing House in 2025, and is a summary of the author's studies on Italian humanists published over almost twenty years. During this time, several translations, studies, and monographs by Monika Frazer-Imregh on the topics of Renaissance philosophy and Christian Neoplatonism were published, for example, the translation of Ficino's *Commentary on the Symposium* and *Three Books on Life*,² the translation of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Heptaplus*,³ which has recently been republished under a more common title,⁴ and the bilingual edition of Poliziano's *Letters I–IV*.⁵

¹Budapest: Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem – L'Harmattan, 2025, 344 pp.

²Marsilio Ficino: *A szerelemről*, ford. Imregh Monika, Budapest: Arcticus, 2001; második, átdolgozott kiadás: Budapest: Polaris, 2024; M. Ficino: *Három könyv az életről*, ford. Frazer-Imregh M., Budapest: Helikon–Szenzár, 2023.

³Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: *Heptaplus. A teremtés hat napjának hétszeres értelmezése*, ford. Imregh M., Budapest: Arcticus, 2001.

⁴Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: *A végső boldogság hét lépcsőfoka. Bevezetés a keresztény kabbalába*, ford. Frazer-Imregh M., Budapest: Hittel Kiadó, 2025.

⁵Angelo Poliziano: *Levelek, I–IV*, ford. Imregh M., Budapest: KRE–L'Harmattan, 2024.

The outstanding merit of the volume is that it treats humanism not merely as a historical curiosity, but presents it as a living intellectual heritage, which still raises important questions today regarding intellectual existence, the transmission of knowledge, and the nature of intellectual independence. The structure of the book is clearly articulated: the first part outlines the philosophical and cultural background of the era, paying special attention to the Renaissance reception of Plotinus and the presentation of the social and existential situation of the humanists. Humanists often depended on patrons, held public office or church positions, and, in addition to their philosophical and philological work, maintained an active correspondence. These letters were not just personal exchanges of messages, but also consciously edited literary and philosophical works that served to demonstrate the authors' literacy and for the purpose of later publication. The book also presents in detail the history of the influence of Plotinus' (204/5–270 AD) collection of treatises entitled *Enneads* in 15th-century Italy, which was characterized by a renewed interest in Greek philosophy following the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1437–1439) and the fall of Byzantium. Prominent figures of the period – such as Pletho and Bessarion – supported their theological arguments with Platonic philosophy, and numerous patrons, including King Matthias, sought to acquire the manuscripts.

In the second part of the volume, the oeuvre of the three main characters – Ficino, Pico and Poliziano – is analyzed in detail. Ficino's *Commentary on the Symposium* is a Neoplatonic teaching placed not only in a philosophical, but also in a theological and mystical framework, in which love (eros) appears as a means of the ascension of the human soul, leading it to the divine worlds. In his major work *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*, Ficino discusses the eternal nature and divine origin of the soul, following Plato, and fitting it into a Christian framework. He believes that the soul is of divine origin, immortal, and destined to return to the One. Pico della Mirandola's best-known undertaking was the compilation of the famous *900 Theses*, in which he attempted to incorporate almost all the world's important intellectual traditions (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Scholasticism, Arabic philosophy, Jewish Kabbalah, natural magic) into a unified system in order to demonstrate that all true philosophical systems point to the same ultimate truth. He intended to debate these theses in Rome in 1486, but the Pope declared some of the theses heretical and forbade the disputation, and the printed copies of the theses were destroyed. Pico was forced to flee from Rome. Nevertheless, the introductory speech to the *900 Theses* (*Oratio de hominis dignitate*) became an iconic text of Renaissance philosophy, emphasizing the exceptional place of

man, his free will, and his ability to self-determination. According to Pico, man himself decides whether to sink to a lower level or ascend to a divine level, and this idea served as the basis for the Renaissance ideal of man. For example, Pico read Benivieni's poem *Canzona d'amore* as a divine longing, a striving towards the One, according to a Neoplatonic interpretation of love.

Angelo Poliziano is known primarily for his philological and literary work, but his significant correspondence also contributed to building a network of humanist knowledge. At a young age, he became involved with the Medici court, where he became a tutor to the children of Lorenzo il Magnifico and a friend of the great diplomat and poet. He became one of the most significant philologists and poets of his time, and through his letters he established an extensive network of contacts with the most famous figures of Italian humanists, including Pico della Mirandola, among his close friends.

The volume's interdisciplinary approach – combining philology, philosophy, and literary history – opens new perspectives in Renaissance research. The author uses primary sources read in classical languages, often using her own translations, and provides a rich philological, philosophical, and historical context. Of particular interest is the detailed examination of Ficino's hermetic-astrological thinking, which has so far been rarely explored in Hungarian literature. The book presents in parallel the intertwining of philosophical thought, correspondence, art collecting, education, and patronage, highlighting how Renaissance written communication often functioned as an aesthetic and world-view statement.

Monika Frazer-Imregh maintains a critical but dialogical relationship with international literature: she is well acquainted with the work of, for example, Kristeller, Garin, or D. P. Walker, but at the same time, in her own readings, she offers new aspects that are also relevant to the Hungarian audience, for example, on the understanding of correspondence as a philosophical medium or the hermetic reception of Plotinus. The significance of the volume is twofold: it explores the intellectual foundations of Renaissance humanism, while at the same time providing an insight into the philosophical and scientific background of the era, with particular regard to the Renaissance reinterpretation of Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and magical-theurgic-astrological traditions.

This book is the first Hungarian-language summary that not only discusses the entire work of three prominent humanists in detail, but also maps the philosophical and cultural network surrounding them. Through its translation and commentary of the original texts, it provides direct source knowledge, thus distinguishing it from Hungarian Renaissance research not only for its thematic

richness and scientific soundness, but also for the rare balance that is achieved between philological precision, philosophical depth, and literary sophistication. The author offers convincing, scientifically sound answers to these questions in her own reading, contributing not only to a deeper understanding of individual thinkers, but also to a reinterpretation of the philosophical nature of Renaissance humanism in general.