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978-0-521-84736-0 - Pico della Mirandola: New Essays

Edited by M. V. Dougherty

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[More information](#)

1

Introduction

M. V. Dougherty

Evaluations of the intellectual contributions of the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) are surprisingly varied. Large-scale summations of the merits of his philosophizing bring a diversity of results even from those well versed in Pico's works. In 1934, prior to the great explosion of scholarly studies that occurred during the later part of the twentieth century, Lynn Thorndike would lament that "one cannot but feel that the importance of Pico della Mirandola in the history of thought has often been grossly exaggerated."¹ Three decades later, however, Frances Yates would complete her account of Pico with the conclusion that "the profound significance of Pico della Mirandola in the history of humanity can hardly be overestimated."² The vast disparity between excessively laudatory and sharply opprobrious appraisals from historians of the past century should not detract from the fact that Pico's work has garnered the interest of famous European intellectuals throughout the centuries, eliciting evaluations from thinkers as dissimilar as Desiderius Erasmus,³ Niccolò

¹ Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Experimental Science*, vol. 4, *Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 485. The nadir of assessments of Pico's literary corpus may be the one present in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, where it is alleged that Pico's works "cannot now be read with much interest," in vol. 19, ed. R. S. Pearl and W. H. DePuy (Chicago: Werner Company, 1894), 81. A similar assessment is given by Nesca A. Robb in *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), 61–2: "There are writers who live though their works die, and Pico is one of them. . . . [I]t is Pico himself rather than his work that is still vital."

² Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 116.

³ See Marc Laureys, "The Reception of Giovanni Pico in the Low Countries," in *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte (1494–1994)*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1997), 625–40.

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[More information](#)

Machiavelli,⁴ Johannes Kepler,⁵ Pierre Gassendi,⁶ and Voltaire,⁷ all of whom to some degree bestow praise upon this figure of the Renaissance. Among literary notables, John Donne⁸ and John Milton⁹ were readers of Pico's writings, and perhaps even William Shakespeare can be added among those influenced by his thought.¹⁰ Even Martin Luther would cast a sympathetic glance when noting Pico's difficulties with church authorities,¹¹ and Blaise Pascal left evidence of having read some of Pico's works.¹² Thomas More was the first to introduce Pico to English audiences on a large scale with his early sixteenth-century translations of Pico's letters and religious *opuscula*, and his liberally edited translation of Gianfrancesco Pico's *Vita* of Pico has been regarded by some historians as the first English biography to see print.¹³ The greatest extant adulations of Pico's achievements, however, are from those who knew him best; his contemporaries and early apologists did not appear to have exercised much restraint when crafting honorary epithets and titles while extolling his intellectual virtues.¹⁴

at 629, and A. H. T. Levi, "Erasmus and the Humanist Ideal," *The Heythrop Journal* 19 (1978): 243–55, at 245 and 251.

⁴ See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey Mansfield Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 361.

⁵ See Sheila J. Rabin, "Kepler's Attitude toward Pico and the Anti-Astrology Polemic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997): 750–70.

⁶ See Brian Vickers, "Critical Reactions to the Occult Sciences during the Renaissance" in *The Scientific Enterprise: The Bar-Hillel Colloquium: Studies in History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science*, ed. Edna Ullmann-Margalit (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 4:43–92, at 75.

⁷ For a discussion of Voltaire's assessments of Pico, see Henri de Lubac, *Pico de la Mirandole: Études et discussions* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1974), 13.

⁸ See Patrick Grant, "Donne, Pico, and Holy Sonnet XII," *La Revue de l'Association des Humanistes* 24 (1973): 39–42.

⁹ See Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. "Pico and Milton: A Gloss on *Areopagitica*," *English Language Notes* 9 (1971): 108–10.

¹⁰ See Frank M. Caldiero, "The Source of Hamlet's 'What a Piece of Work is a Man!'" *Notes and Queries* 196 (1951): 421–4.

¹¹ See *Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 1:574, 4:183.

¹² See Blaise Pascal, *Provinciale XVII*, in *Pensées and the Provincial Letters*, trans. W. F. Trotter and Thomas M' Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), 586.

¹³ The best account of Thomas More's engagement with Pico is Anthony S. G. Edwards's introduction to Thomas More, *English Poems, Life of Pico, The Last Things*, vol. 1 of *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ed. Anthony S. G. Edwards, Clarence H. Miller, and Katherine Gardiner Rodgers (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), xxxvii–lix.

¹⁴ For example, Pico's close friend, the poet and scholar Angelo Poliziano, referred to Pico in his letters as the Divine Pico (*sacer Picus*), a phoenix (*phoenix*), a demigod (*heros*), the light of all learning (*lux omnium doctrinarum*), and "than whom no other mortal

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[More information](#)

Without doubt, therefore, Pico has long been recognized as an important figure in Renaissance thought, although some historians have debated whether Pico is best viewed as a representative intellectual from an age replete with intellectuals or as an exceptional figure deserving of particular admiration. No matter which account is favored, it is uncontroversial that Pico was surrounded by and interacted with the leading figures of his age. At times this was a matter of his own choosing, but not always; it can be said, for example, that his fortunes fell with the condemnation by one pope and rose with his rehabilitation by another. The variety of genres representing Pico's works also testifies to his influential cast of friends and acquaintances; his corpus includes a compendious diatribe against astrology, an ambitious metaphysical treatise, literary and biblical commentaries, a speech, a collection of *conclusiones* or theses, and a vast epistolary collection, and each work is intimately associated with a major personality of Pico's day.

Pico's famous *Oratio*, arguably the most anthologized text of Renaissance philosophy, has been touted at times as the key text of Renaissance humanism, yet it was merely intended to serve as the preface to a public disputation in Rome before the Roman pontiff of his *900 Theses* (*Conclusiones*), a wide-ranging compilation of views concerning philosophy, theology, and other disciplines. A quickly penned defense, Pico's *Apologia*, exhibited no contrition and spectacularly failed to persuade Roman authorities of the merits of his theses. His earliest philosophical work, the *Commento*, used the pretext of a commentary on a poem of Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542) as an occasion for a philosophical examination of Neoplatonic metaphysics, and it contained an implicit critique of the views espoused by his friend, the great Florentine Neoplatonist philosopher and translator Marsilio Ficino (1433–99). Pico's brief metaphysical treatise, *On Being and the One* (*De ente et uno*), was dedicated to Angelo Poliziano (1454–94), a poet and scholar of the Medici circle. In this work, Pico discussed the question of the relationship of being and unity in light of the traditional Aristotelian and Platonic views, and he

is more beautiful or more eminent in all branches of learning" (*quo nec pulchrior alter mortalium, nec in omnibus arbitror doctrinis excellentior*). See Angelo Poliziano, *Letters*, ed. and trans. Shane Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1:118–19, 36–7, 134–5, 193. Paolo Cortesi (1465/71–1510) used Pico as a model for his handbook on cardinals – *De cardinalatu* – and praised him with such epithets as “most learned of the Latins” (*doctissimus Latinorum*) and “source of knowledge” (*fons disciplinae*). For texts and a discussion, see John F. D’Amico, “Paolo Cortesi’s Rehabilitation of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 44 (1982): 37–51, at 48.

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[More information](#)

resurrected the ancient thesis that Aristotle and Plato were not opposed on the question of the relation between being and unity. Of Pico's correspondence, the most famous letter came from an exchange with Ermolao Barbaro (1454–93) on the relationship of philosophy and rhetoric. A “reply” to Pico, for a long time attributed to Philip Melancthon, would surface to propel the debate for new generations. Pico's *Heptaplus*, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–92), was a cosmological work that took the form of a sevenfold commentary on the first portion of Genesis. Pico's last works, including short religious pieces and other biblical commentaries, are most often seen in light of the influence of Pico's close friend in his later life, the fiery religious reformer Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), who would ultimately clothe Pico in the habit of the Dominican order and give Pico's funeral oration upon his untimely death. Pico's massive anti-astrological work, the posthumously published *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology* (*Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*), also comes from this later period and has often been championed by some historians as a key work in the struggle of scientific thought over superstition and perhaps even the beginning of the scientific revolution.¹⁵ Counted among Pico's associates, therefore, are some the greatest figures of Italian Renaissance culture, and his involvement with them provided an important catalyst for the shaping of the parts of his philosophical corpus.

In recent times, scholars working with Pico's philosophical writings have depended upon the magisterial editions of several of Pico's works edited by Eugenio Garin in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁶ For those texts left unedited by Garin, scholars have relied largely on modern reprintings of sixteenth-century editions, which themselves were indebted to the 1496 *editio princeps* of Pico's *Opera* edited and published by Pico's nephew and biographer, Gianfrancesco Pico.¹⁷ In the last two decades or so, however,

¹⁵ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 68.

¹⁶ See Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e Scritti vari*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942), and Pico della Mirandola, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, ed. Eugenio Garin, 2 vols. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1946–52). Among his many important studies on Pico, Garin's *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Vita et dottrina* (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1937) is particularly valuable.

¹⁷ The Basel 1572 edition of the *Opera omnia* has been reprinted as Joannes Picus Mirandulanus, *Opera omnia* (Turin: Bottega D'Erasmus, 1971), and the Basel 1557–73 edition has been reprinted as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Olms, Germany: Hildesheim, 1969 [repr., 2005]). Both editions contain Gianfrancesco Pico's detailed biography of Giovanni Pico. Gianfrancesco Pico's 1496 edition did not include Pico's 900 *Theses* or the *Commento*, but they were added in later versions of the *Opera omnia*.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

a significant number of new editions of Pico's works have appeared, at times supplemented with modern translations, and they collectively testify to the growing interest in Pico's work.¹⁸ This increase in editions and translations has been matched by a rise in the amount and quality of scholarly commentary on Pico's literary corpus. The study of this secondary literature on Pico has been greatly enhanced with the recent appearance of substantive bibliographies that reliably catalogue the secondary literature on Pico along with the printed editions and translations of Pico's works,¹⁹ and reference works like these join the other standard tools at the disposal of the contemporary student of Pico.²⁰ Special mention should be made also of significant collaborative projects in Pico studies. Proceedings from conferences marking the fifth centenaries of Pico's birth and death featured essays from prominent historians of the Renaissance period.²¹ Further, in addition to online electronic editions of Pico's *Oratio* and the *900 Theses* with an accompanying collaborative commentary, hosted by Brown University and the University of Bologna, there has appeared a series dedicated to editing and translating the volumes composing Pico's Kabbalistic library collection.²² Additionally,

¹⁸ Of special interest may be the forthcoming bilingual publication of Pico's *Oratio, 900 Theses, Apologia, and Letters* in several volumes of the I Tatti Renaissance Library series from Harvard University Press.

¹⁹ *Pichiana: Bibliografia delle edizioni e degli studi*, ed. Leonardo Quaquarelli and Zita Zanardi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2005). The last portion of this volume (pages 335–410) consists of a bibliography of secondary literature and has been reprinted with the identification of the co-editors. See Leonardo Quaquarelli and M. V. Dougherty, *Bibliografia XIX e XX Secolo* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007). English-speaking readers may also consult an electronic bibliography titled *Pico in English: A Bibliography of the Works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) with a List of Studies and Commentaries* (2003–), found at: <http://www.mvdougherty.com/pico.htm>.

²⁰ An important reference work for students of Pico is Pearl Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1966), which reproduces the inventory of Pico's legendary library and discusses his indebtedness to classical and medieval sources. More recently, a CD-ROM database of Pico's works has been published as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Opere Complete*, ed. Francesco Bausi (Rome: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 2000).

²¹ *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'Umanesimo*, 2 vols. (Florence: Nella Sede dell'Istituto, 1965); *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte (1494–1994)*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 2 vols. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1997).

²² For the *Oratio*, see: http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/pico/. The *900 Theses* can be found at: <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/pico/>. The first volumes of the series titled "The Kabbalistic Library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola" have been published as *The Great Parchment: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, ed. Giulio Busi, Simonetta M. Bondoni, and Saverio Campanini (Turin: Nino Aragno, 2004), and *The Book of Bahir: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, ed. Saverio Campanini (Turin: Nino Aragno, 2005).

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[More information](#)

the appearance of philological studies on Pico,²³ as well as historiographical accounts,²⁴ suggests that the present state of *studi picchiani* is a healthy one and that interest in this Renaissance thinker will continue to grow.

The present collection of essays seeks to assess the philosophical merit of the work of the Count of Mirandola. Pico's legendary erudition and command of a variety of disciplines have made the mastery of his literary corpus a formidable task for any individual. The format chosen for this volume is a joint approach by scholars working in the fields of philosophy and intellectual history. Established authorities in the study of Renaissance philosophy as well as younger scholars were invited to contribute; it is hoped that, for English-speaking readers, the results will serve as a reliable guide to the wide range of the subject matter covered in Pico's literary corpus, including works beyond the well-known and celebrated *Oratio*. Additionally, the volume seeks to acquaint readers with the scholarly landscape of Pico studies over the last century as well as indicate new departure points for appreciating Pico's place in the history of philosophy. To this end, the collection comprises nine chapters, each highlighting an essential element of Pico's extant writings.

In her contribution to this volume, Jill Krayer discusses the famous epistolary confrontation between Pico and Ermolao Barbaro on the age-old question of the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric. Pico's contribution to this debate – a June 3, 1485, letter to Barbaro – has puzzled commentators, because while it contains some sharp arguments championing the superiority of plain scholastic philosophical Latin over embellished rhetorical Latin, the letter is written in a manner that is rhetorically proficient and replete with classical allusions. This apparent contrast between the style and the substance of the letter has led to opposing interpretations of Pico's intentions in penning his contribution to this ancient debate, one that is exacerbated by Pico's use of the rhetorical convention of *prosopopeia* for the larger part of the letter,

²³ Francesco Bausi, *Nec rhetor neque philosophus: Fonti, lingua e stile nelle prime opera latine de Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1484–87)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996). See also *Lexique de la prose latine de la renaissance*, ed. René Hoven et al., 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

²⁴ William G. Craven, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Symbol of his Age: Modern Interpretations of a Renaissance Philosopher* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1981); Brian P. Copenhaver, "Magic and the Dignity of Man: De-Kanting Pico's *Oration*," in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Allen J. Grieco et al. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), 295–320.

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where an imagined scholastic philosopher condemns the superficiality of rhetoric and champions instead the search for and presentation of unadorned truth by philosophers. That Pico would use the conventions of rhetoric to criticize rhetoric may appear as a kind of performative contradiction, since standard rhetorical techniques are employed in an apparent criticism of the discipline. Krayer approaches the Pico-Barbaro debate by locating Pico's retort in the larger context of the views of Latin defended both by Barbaro and the humanist Angelo Poliziano and in the context of other letters penned by Pico. In approaching the letter to Barbaro, Krayer finds an interpretive solution in Pico's *Oratio*, where Pico appealed to the resources of humanism to defend and praise scholastic philosophy and theology. The same approach is present in the letter to Barbaro; Pico joins scholastic substance with the rhetorical humanist style to offer a persuasive account of the value of philosophy and theology.

Paul Richard Blum examines Pico's forays into theology and the subsequent reactions Pico elicited from church officials. Focusing especially on those 13 of the 900 theses that were selected by Pope Innocent VIII's investigating commission as either outright heretical or at least savoring of heresy and examining key elements of Pico's hastily written defense of his orthodoxy, the spirited *Apologia*, Blum proposes several principles that help to explain the seemingly paradoxical interaction between Pico and the church. Noting that the 13 controversial theses give the appearance of being a random collection insofar as they range over a variety of topics – including issues in magic, Christology, worship, and epistemology – Blum offers an interpretation that maintains that the investigating church commission was seeking to uphold a barrier between natural philosophy and theology and that Pico's collection of theses – at least the 13 controversial theses – did not uphold this division between disciplines. Blum examines the notable variety of techniques that Pico uses in the *Apologia* to defend his views, which include his selective use of scholastic writers, his defense of a “hidden linkage” among his theses, an argumentative procedure that alleges the absurdity of a contrary position for the sake of lending plausibility to an original position, the difficulty of identifying true heresies, and, most importantly, Pico's contention that the loose manner of proposing issues for disputation is different in kind from the rigorous manner that attends ordinary academic writing. Ultimately the commission members' failure with regard to the last item signals their failure to appreciate Pico's early attempts to explore the relationship between language and thought, a theme that Pico continues in later writings. In the latter part of his paper, Blum examines this theme

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[More information](#)

in the context of Pico's last works, focusing especially on Pico's biblical commentaries.

Michael Sudduth treats several of Pico's works from the standpoint of contemporary philosophy of religion. While noting that such an approach to Pico's writings may strike some readers as anachronistic, Sudduth argues that many of Pico's explicit concerns overlap with pressing issues within contemporary discussions. The paper explores Pico's rational reflections on religious belief and considers the relation of this activity to Pico's larger philosophical outlook; along these lines Pico is presented as a philosopher of the Christian religion. After examining the *De ente et uno* and the *Heptaplus*, along with some texts from the *Oratio*, for evidence of Pico's manner of demarcating the disciplines of philosophy and theology, Sudduth emphasizes the religious contours of Pico's syncretic approach to various faith traditions, ultimately underscoring the latent medievalism that pervades Pico's outlook. He evaluates Pico's syncretic approach within a taxonomy provided by contemporary discussants of religious pluralism, ultimately concluding that Pico defends a Christosyncretism that does not treat all religious traditions as equal. Rather, Pico's syncretism is one that privileges the specifically Christian revelation of the divine. Although Pico's expressed desire to find truth in all traditions may seem to be congruent with contemporary philosopher of religion John Hick's defense of religious pluralism, Pico's motivations are ultimately those of a religious exclusivist, since Pico's syncretic project privileges Christianity and seeks affirmation of Christian truths in other traditions. Thus, Pico's Christian framework separates his syncretic project from the seemingly similar twentieth-century projects espoused by contemporary philosophers of religion.

In his contribution, Michael J. B. Allen presents Pico as a hermeneut working within the Platonic tradition. Noting Pico's broad Platonic education, Allen examines several works of Pico's for evidence of a methodological commitment to finding allegorical and figurative readings of ancient classical literary texts for the sake of discovering divine mysteries and veiled metaphysical principles. Such a hermeneutic approach presupposes that the ancient poetic texts contain hidden truths that could be analogous to Hebrew and Christian revelation. On this view, an interpreter versed in Christian and Platonic truths is in a uniquely privileged position to unpack the hidden metaphysical truths in the ancient classical texts, and Pico's interpretive exercises in his earliest work, the *Commento*, exhibit his success with such a mode of exegesis. After discussing the

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[More information](#)

complex history of the various versions and editions of the *Commento*, Allen lays out how Pico finds in Plato's account of the Orpheus myth a veiled discussion of the soul's relationship to Platonic ideas or forms and how, elsewhere in the work, Pico treats of the three hypostases of Neoplatonic metaphysics. Allen then turns to a later work, the *Heptaplus*, which is Pico's symbolizing account of the early chapters of Genesis, arguing that the work is "in effect, a triumph of Platonically inspired analysis." Pico considered Moses to be a Platonic philosopher of the highest order, and access to the philosophical principles hidden in the texts of Genesis requires a subtlety and inventiveness of interpretation that presupposes a background in Neoplatonic metaphysics. Allen completes the chapter with some conclusions concerning Pico's interpretation of the "protoplasmic man" of the *Oratio* along Neoplatonic lines. Pico's hermeneutic approach to these texts – the *Commento*, the *Heptaplus*, and the *Oratio* – shows him to be an important speculative philosopher of his age.

In my own chapter, I locate Pico's ambitious plans for the 1487 Roman debate of the *900 Theses* within the trajectory of three medieval academic exercises and argue that such a placement allows one to approach afresh the problem of interpreting the *Oratio*, Pico's planned introductory speech that was to open the debate. A more traditional reading of Pico's Roman plans can help to narrow the competing interpretations that commentators have offered regarding the celebrated account of human nature in the *Oratio*. I argue, first, that rather than representing a late incarnation of a medieval *quaestiones quodlibetales* disputation, where a disputer would be compelled to entertain questions on any topic whatsoever, Pico's publication and promulgation of his theses prior to the debate models a *quaestiones disputatae* debate, where the issues to be debated were set forth and agreed upon in advance. Second, I focus on the fact that Pico's collection of theses largely comprises short texts or summaries of authorities of philosophy, theology, and other disciplines, and for this reason his work can profitably be considered as a late instance of *florilegia* writing or sentence collecting, patterned after such works as ancient philosophical compendia or even Peter Lombard's magisterial *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*. Third, I emphasize Pico's commitment to classical dialectic, understood generally as the method of arguing on the basis of appeals to reputable opinions. When Pico's Roman project is located within these three traditions of the *quaestiones disputatae*, *florilegia* or sentence collecting, and dialectic, Pico's proposal seems less like an exercise in vainglory and more like traditional academic affair. Such an

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[More information](#)

approach mitigates the temptation to view Pico as a twenty-three-year-old prodigy whose proposal to debate before the pope, the College of Cardinals, and scholars is merely an exhibition of hubris on an unprecedented scale. Having placed the debate within these three historical contexts, I review the diverse approaches commentators have taken to Pico's famous account of human nature presented in the *Oratio*. Emphasizing that Pico's *Oratio* is largely a dialectical work, I suggest that it contains a highly original solution to a significant medieval problem concerning the possibility of human deification and conclude that the fact that the *Oratio*'s view of human nature was frequently plagiarized by papal orators and others in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries testifies to its early influence.

In her chapter, Sheila Rabin assesses Pico's views on the topics of magic and astrology, arguing that Pico's treatment of them in the *Conclusions*, *Heptaplus*, and *Disputations* significantly shaped the discipline of Renaissance natural philosophy. Underscoring the point that Pico's acquaintance with magic and astrology was essentially theoretical rather than practical, since Pico was an actual practitioner of neither, Rabin begins by reviewing the status of these disciplines in relation to the Renaissance university tradition. The practice of magic was not an explicit part of the university curriculum but was at times studied by students of medicine and philosophy. Magic divided into demonic magic and natural magic; the former was the often-condemned discipline that appealed to demonic powers, whereas the latter sought out hidden powers of nature and is often indiscernible from what is traditionally regarded as early modern scientific activity. Pico joined in the condemnations of demonic magic, but for him natural magic was a part of natural science. Rabin carefully explores Pico's views on the relationship between natural magic and Kabbalah, examining Pico's explicit claim that magic requires an annexation to Kabbalah to be efficacious.

The discipline of astrology also divided into two kinds, natural astrology, which concerned itself with medical and meteorological predictions, and judicial astrology, which concerned itself with human affairs. Rabin counsels that delimiting the two kinds of astrology can be difficult, since practices such as horoscopes and nativities appear to straddle both sides of the division. Demonstrating that Pico evolved from an initial qualified acceptance of some forms of astrology in the *Conclusions*, Rabin surveys the manifold types of argumentation that Pico employed against both judicial and natural astrology in the *Disputations*. She argues that the