

*900 Conclusions*

**Giovanni Pico della Mirandola**

(1463–1494)



A working English edition by

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## Preface

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) was an Italian Renaissance philosopher and humanist best known for the 900 Conclusions, a set of nine hundred theses prepared for public debate in Rome in 1486. Written while Pico was still in his early twenties, the work gathered material from Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, and Christian sources and set them into direct argument with one another. Its ambition was remarkable not only for its scale, but for its method: Pico was not merely collecting authorities, but testing whether truths drawn from many traditions could be defended together in a single disputation. That effort quickly became controversial. Church authorities examined the theses, condemned several of them, and stopped the debate before it could take place. Pico spent the remaining years of his life defending himself and living under the weight of that controversy. He died in 1494 at the age of thirty one, leaving behind one of the most ambitious and disputed intellectual undertakings of the Renaissance. What follows is a working English edition of the text, prepared to make a difficult and often dense work more readable while preserving as much of its structure, force, and character as possible.

This edition was built in stages rather than produced in a single pass. The first stage was to extract the Latin text on its own, page by page, before any translation, summary, or commentary was introduced. English followed only after the source had been fixed in place. That separation was central to the process from the beginning. It kept transcription from slipping into interpretation and made it possible to return to the Latin repeatedly while the English was still being shaped.

From there, the translation was developed through repeated review and correction. Individual conclusions were revisited for wording, numbering, structure, and philosophical force, especially in places where an English line could read smoothly while drifting away from the original claim. Later passes focused on consistency across the document as a whole: section titles, ordering, formatting, and the balance between direct rendering and readable prose. Short section reviews were added afterward, not to replace the theses, but to help orient the reader within each group of conclusions and to clarify the movement of the thought where needed.

This edition was developed in active conversation with ChatGPT across multiple sessions. Within that process, ChatGPT was used to support the extraction first, English second workflow, to help draft and revise translations, to test wording against philosophical nuance, to assist in identifying inconsistencies in numbering and format, and to help shape the editorial material surrounding the text, including introductions, reviews, prompts for comparison, and front matter. The actual making of this edition, including transcription judgment, translation choices, comparison work, structural review, formatting decisions, and final editorial presentation, was carried out by vxvLemonKingvxv, Dustyn Erb.

The following resources were used throughout the project as reference points and textual aids:

Internet Archive scan of the 1486 printing

<https://archive.org/details/pico-1486-900-conclusiones/page/n61/mode/2up>

Brown University Library project

<https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/pico/allSubSection.php?myID=sub10101&expand=>

**And of the nine hundred theses appended: in dialectics, morals, physics, mathematics, metaphysics, theology, magic, and Kabbalah**

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drawn from the doctrines of the **Chaldeans, Arabs, Hebrews, Greeks, Egyptians, and Latins**

**Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Count of Concord**, will publicly dispute these in **Rome**, having cultivated every language.

But the most celebrated **Parisian** gymnasium seeks the truth of doctrine and the nature of things, which the foremost philosophers everywhere investigate. Yet at present there remain certain matters to be disputed, as regards doctrines and as regards the parts of philosophy, which are still left unsettled.

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### **Conclusions according to Albertus — 16**

1. Intelligible species are not necessary, and to posit them is not consonant with good **Peripatetics**.
2. If all individual human beings were destroyed, it would still be true that man is an animal.
3. This belongs to the fourth mode of speaking per se: "man is man."
4. In every point of matter, through the potential habit of inchoation, there are the essences of all natural forms, coeternal with matter according to the philosophers, concreated according to the faith.
5. Form is not varied in intensification and remission according to essence, but according to being.
6. The soul separated from the body understands through species co-created with it from the beginning of its existence, which, while it is in the body, it either never or only rarely uses.
7. Sound is carried in real being as far as the origin of the auditory nerve.
8. Light has in the medium only intentional being.
9. The organ of hearing is a nerve extended into the cavity of the ear.
10. The proper and per se object of the common sense is magnitude, as **Avicenna** rightly said.
11. It is established that the species by which we are said to remember is entirely lost and abolished.
12. The vegetative soul is not introduced before the sensitive, nor the sensitive before the rational, but the whole is introduced at once.
13. Although sense concurs passively in the reception of a species, it nevertheless concurs actively in judging the sensible.
14. A mobile body is the subject of natural science.
15. The consideration of body insofar as it is body pertains to the metaphysician.
16. The respective potency of matter adds above matter not a thing, but a conceptual account.

## Section Review

**Albertus Magnus** (c. 1200–1280) was a German Dominican philosopher, one of the biggest medieval readers of Aristotle, and a major influence on later scholastic thought. Pico cites him here for positions from the Aristotelian commentary tradition, especially on nature, soul, matter, and knowledge.

Albertus treats reality as structured. Things have real natures, and change does not erase them. That is why “man is an animal” stays true even if every human died. The point is not that this or that human survives, but about what man is by nature. The same idea shows up in the lines about matter and form. Matter is not full of tiny finished forms hiding inside it, but it is not empty either. It is already ordered toward natural forms and able to receive them. Potency is matter understood as able to become. When a form becomes stronger or weaker, its essence does not change. Only the way it exists or shows up changes.

Albert treats the soul and the senses as active powers. Sense takes in what is there and then judges it. The whole soul is present at once, memory can lose what it once held, and the soul apart from the body understands in its own way. The lines about sound and light push the same idea from another angle: different things are present in different ways. Sound moves through the medium in real being, while light is present there intentionally. The point about common sense and magnitude explains what the inner sense first gathers from the outer senses. The ending then draws the line between the sciences: natural science studies body as moving and changing, while metaphysics studies body in a deeper and more universal way.

**This section presents structured reality: things keep their natures, matter receives form, the soul judges what it receives, and different sciences study the world in different ways.**

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## Conclusions according to Thomas — 45

1. If the **Holy Spirit** did not proceed from the **Son**, He would not be distinguished from the **Son**.
2. The temporal procession of the **Holy Spirit** is considered according to the gifts of grace that make one pleasing.
3. The contingent existence of things which are, will be, or have been was therefore infallibly known to **God** from eternity, because it was set before His eternity as present.
4. The contingency to either outcome of future events known by **God** is compatible with the infallibility of divine knowledge.
5. Whatever contingent thing **God** knew would be, He necessarily knew it would be.
6. From divine goodness can be taken the reason for the predestination of some and the reprobation of others; and the divine will alone is the reason why He reprobes some and chooses others for glory.
7. Although **God's** consequent will is always fulfilled, it does not impose necessity on things in general.
8. One who has grace cannot, even by the absolute power of **God**, not be accepted by **God** for eternal life; nor can one who does not have grace be accepted.

9. An act elicited by a soul formed by charity merits eternal glory de condigno.
10. The three divine persons could simultaneously supposit one nature.
11. The moral and cardinal virtues will remain in the state of glory after the resurrection.
12. **Beatitude** is essentially in an act of the intellect.

**Corollary:** Neither enjoyment nor any act of the will is essentially **beatitude**.

13. The sacraments of the **New Law** are causes of grace, not only as that without which not, but as that by which.
14. The true body of **Christ** is in heaven locally, on the altar sacramentally.
15. The impassibility of bodies after the resurrection will arise from the complete dominion of the soul over the body.
16. **Christ** in the final judgment will judge not only in His human nature, but also as to His human nature.
17. Although it can be defended in some way that a creature could create, it is more reasonable to believe that the power of creating cannot be communicated to a creature.
18. **Aevum** exists subjectively in the more blessed angel.
19. There cannot be sin in the will unless there is a defect in reason.
20. By the power of **God** the same body cannot be in different places at the same time.
21. There is no multiplication of angels under the same species.
22. **God** is not seen through a species, but He Himself is applied to the intellect through His essence as an intelligible species.
23. **Unity** adds over being nothing except the privation of division.
24. A subject and its proper property are really distinct.
25. Form is generated per accidens.
26. Designated matter is the principle of individuation.
27. The same quality remains numerically the same from the beginning of alteration to the end.
28. All liberty essentially resides in reason.
29. In substantial generation there is a resolution down to **prime matter**.
30. **Being** signifies immediately ten concepts so united that they are not of one thing, but ordered to one.
31. **Essence** and **existence** are really distinct in every created thing.
32. Contradictories can be verified of the same thing, which is in no way actually distinct outside the soul.
33. Matter signifies no positive entitative act.
34. No moral virtue except justice is subjectively in the will.
35. The proposition "Man is risible" is not in the second mode of speaking per se.
36. Two accidents differing only in number cannot exist in the same subject.
37. Heavy and light things are moved by no other mover except either by that which generates them or by that which removes an impediment.
38. Heavy things are moved rather through themselves than by themselves.

39. The phantasm is a secondary and instrumental agent in the production of an intelligible species.
40. The difficulty of understanding can arise both from the intellect itself and from the intelligible itself.
41. The powers of the soul are really distinct from the soul.
42. Quiddities in the particular are not considered by the metaphysician.
43. It implies a contradiction for matter to exist without form.
44. The idea of **prime matter** must not be posited in **God**.
45. Ideas of genera must not be posited.

## Section Review

**Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274) is presented here as giving a highly ordered account of God, grace, Christ, soul, and being. The first group of conclusions concerns **Trinitarian theology, divine knowledge, and predestination**. The **Holy Spirit** must proceed from the **Son** in order to be really distinguished from Him, and His temporal procession is considered in the gifts of grace. At the same time, **God** knows contingent things infallibly from eternity without destroying their contingency: future events remain able to fall either way in themselves even though they are eternally present to divine knowledge. This is why **God's consequent will** is always fulfilled without imposing necessity on things in general. Thomas also takes predestination and reprobation with full seriousness: divine goodness provides the reason for the ordering of some to glory, while the divine will itself is the reason why some are chosen and others reprobated.

A second block concerns **grace, merit, beatitude, Christ, and the last things**. One who has grace is accepted for eternal life, while one without grace is not; an act elicited by a soul formed by charity merits glory **de condigno**. The **sacraments of the New Law** do not merely signify grace, but truly cause it. **Beatitude** lies essentially in an act of the **intellect**, not in enjoyment or any act of the will, because the highest human perfection is the intellect's union with the highest truth. **Christ's** body is in heaven **locally** and on the altar **sacramentally**, so the same body is not in two places in the same bodily mode. After the resurrection, impassibility will come from the soul's complete dominion over the body, and even the **moral and cardinal virtues** will remain in glory. Thomas also holds that **Christ** will judge not only in His human nature, but with respect to it. He also allows, more as a defensible possibility than as the likelier position, that one could argue for a creature's creating, though he judges it more reasonable to deny that the power of creation can be communicated.

A third block concerns **angelology, reason, and cognition**. **Aevum** belongs subjectively to the more blessed angel, and angels do not multiply within the same species. There cannot be sin in the **will** unless there is already a defect in **reason**, because liberty resides essentially in reason. **God** is not seen through a created species; rather, He is made present to the intellect through His own essence as intelligible species. The **phantasm** serves as a secondary and instrumental agent in the production of intelligible species, and difficulty in understanding can arise either from the side of the intellect or from the intelligible itself. The **powers of the soul** are really distinct from the soul, and the metaphysician does not consider quiddities as they exist in the particular.

The final block concerns **being, unity, matter, individuation, and change**. **Unity** adds to being only the privation of division. A subject and its proper property are really distinct. **Designated matter** is the principle of individuation, and in substantial generation there is a resolution down to **prime matter**, though matter itself signifies no positive entitative act and cannot exist without form. In created things, **essence** and **existence** are really distinct. **Being** signifies ten concepts ordered to one, not one concept said in exactly the same way of all. Form is generated only **per accidens**, the same quality can remain numerically one through

alteration, and two accidents differing only numerically cannot exist in the same subject. Even the motion of **heavy** and **light** things is analyzed with care: they are moved either by that which generated them or by the removal of an impediment, so that they move more through themselves than by themselves. Finally, Thomas refuses to posit **prime matter** or **genera** as ideas in **God**, preserving divine simplicity against unnecessary metaphysical multiplication. The same precision appears in smaller logical and moral claims: contradictories can be verified of the same thing where no actual distinction exists outside the soul, and among the moral virtues only justice is subjectively in the will.

**This section presents Thomas as a thinker of rigorous order: the divine persons are distinguished without confusion, God knows contingents without forcing them, grace truly causes and merits glory, beatitude is essentially intellectual, angels and souls have determinate structures, and created being is built from real distinctions of essence, existence, matter, form, and individuation.**

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## Conclusions according to Franciscus — 8

1. Therefore this is false: “Essence generates,” because essence is ultimately abstracted and “generates” is predicated of it formally.
2. Essence can be seen without persons, and one person without another.
3. The will can fail to enjoy an object that is presented as enjoyable.
4. **Being** is said of **God** denominatively.
5. Quiddities have from eternity their formal being from themselves, not from something extrinsic.
6. No definition is adequate to the defined thing.
7. A plurality of formalities is compatible with real identity.
8. **Being** is not of the quiddity of **God**, but is said of **God** in the second mode of speaking.

## Section Review

**Franciscus de Meyronnes** (c. 1285–1328+) is presented here as a thinker of hard distinctions between **essence**, **person**, **will**, **definition**, and **being**. He begins by denying that **essence** generates. Generation belongs to a **person**, not to essence taken in ultimate abstraction. That is why essence can be considered without the persons, and one person without another: what something is and who acts are not simply the same. The same refusal of collapse appears in the will. The will is not trapped by the good merely because the good is presented as enjoyable. It can still fail to enjoy what is set before it.

The second group of conclusions turns to **quiddity**, **definition**, and **formal distinction**. Quiddities have from eternity their **formal being** from themselves, not from something extrinsic, meaning that what makes a thing to be the kind of thing it is belongs to its own formal content rather than being added from outside. For that same reason, no **definition** is ever fully adequate to the thing defined: a thing always exceeds the conceptual boundary by which we try to state it. This is also why a **plurality of formalities** is compatible with **real identity**. One and the same real thing can contain more than one formal aspect without becoming many separate things.

These claims come to their sharpest point in the lines about **God**. **Being** is said of **God** only **denominatively**, and is not of the quiddity of God, but is said of Him in the **second mode of speaking**. The point is not that we cannot truly say that God is, but that “being” does not enter into God as one more formal constituent inside the divine essence. So Franciscus is pressing a very strict line: we must speak truly of God, but without turning God into a thing composed out of essence plus an added note of being.

**This section presents Franciscus as a philosopher of non-collapse: essence is not person, the will is not necessitated by the presented good, quiddity exceeds any single definition, one real thing can contain multiple formalities, and even the word “being” must be said of God without being treated as part of His quiddity.**

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## Conclusions according to John Scotus — 22

1. **Charity** is not a habit distinct from the habit of grace by which the **Holy Spirit** indwells the soul.
2. The idea of a stone is nothing other than the stone produced by the divine intellect in intelligible being, which is a being secundum quid existing in the divine mind as the known in the knower.
3. Whoever says that the persons in divine things are distinguished by absolute properties will not contradict **Catholic** truth.
4. In **Christ** there were two **esse**.
5. **Praxis** is an operation of a power other than the intellect, naturally apt to be elicited in conformity with right reason so that it may be right.
6. Each individual is an individual through its own individual difference, which is called **haecceity**.
7. **Being** is said univocally of **God** and creature in quid.
8. **Being** is not predicated quidditatively of its properties and ultimate differences.
9. In **Christ** there was no acquired knowledge.
10. The virtues are to be placed in the higher appetite.
11. Grace is subjectively in the will, not in the essence of the soul.
12. The body of **Christ** was of itself impassible.
13. By the absolute power of **God** it is possible for original sin to be removed without the infusion of grace.
14. After the passion of **Christ** the ceremonial laws of the **Old Law** could be observed without sin.
15. By these precise words (“This is my body”), without the preceding words (“on the night before he suffered”), it cannot be consecrated.
16. The relation of a creature to **God** is really the same as its foundation, but formally and ex natura rei distinct.
17. Every other relation is really distinct from its foundation.
18. Something can move itself from virtual act to formal act.

19. The act of understanding, as something caused, is caused by the object and the intellect as two partial agents.
20. The act of understanding is caused in a more noble mode by the intellect than by the object, provided the object is not a beatific object.
21. Substance is not known through its proper species.
22. A habit produces an act as a partial efficient cause.

## Section Review

**John Duns Scotus** (1263–1308) is presented here as a thinker of precision without collapse, especially in grace, Christology, being, relation, and cognition. He begins by refusing to multiply realities without need. **Charity** is not a habit distinct from the habit of grace by which the **Holy Spirit** indwells the soul, and grace itself is placed subjectively in the **will**, not in the essence of the soul. In the same spirit, the **idea** of a stone is not some separate object floating beside God, but the stone as produced by the divine intellect in intelligible being, existing in the divine mind as the known in the knower. Scotus also allows that the divine persons may be distinguished by **absolute properties** without contradicting Catholic truth, showing again that distinction need not always mean division into separately existing things.

The Christological and moral conclusions follow the same pattern. In **Christ** there are two **esse**, so His divine and human being are not collapsed into one mode of existence; yet the body of Christ is also said to have been **of itself impassible**, and in Christ there was **no acquired knowledge**. **Praxis** belongs to a power other than intellect, but it must be elicited in conformity with right reason in order to be right, and the virtues are placed in the **higher appetite**. Scotus also makes several sharp sacramental and legal claims: by the absolute power of **God**, original sin could be removed without the infusion of grace; after Christ's passion, the ceremonial laws of the **Old Law** could still be observed without sin; and the precise words "**This is my body**" are not sufficient for consecration without the larger sacramental form. These are all cases in which Scotus distinguishes carefully between what is necessary, what is fitting, and what belongs to a determinate form of operation.

Scotus's most famous metaphysical claims then appear in concentrated form. Each individual is an individual through its own **haecceity**, its irreducible "thisness." **Being** is said **univocally** of **God** and creature in quid, not because God and creatures are one kind of thing, but because the term does not change its whole sense across that divide. At the same time, being is not predicated quidditatively of its properties or ultimate differences. The same care governs relation: the relation of a creature to **God** is really the same as its foundation, yet formally and **ex natura rei** distinct, whereas every other relation is really distinct from its foundation. Scotus is therefore not erasing difference, but sorting different kinds of distinction with unusual strictness.

The final group concerns motion, cognition, and habit. Something can move itself from **virtual act** to **formal act**, which lets Scotus preserve real self-actualization without collapsing into sheer spontaneity. The act of understanding is caused by both the **object** and the **intellect** as two partial agents, though the intellect causes it in a more noble way unless the object is beatific. **Substance** is not known through its proper species, and a **habit** produces an act not merely by accompaniment, but as a **partial efficient cause**. So even knowledge is neither imposed wholly from outside nor manufactured wholly from within. Scotus keeps both sides in play while refusing to let either absorb the other.

**This section presents Scotus as a philosopher of exact distinction: grace and charity are not multiplied beyond need, Christ's modes of being are not collapsed, each individual has its own thisness, being is**

said univocally without flattening God and creature, relations differ by different kinds of distinction, and acts of knowing arise from both object and intellect without reducing one to the other.

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## Conclusions according to Henry of Ghent — 13

1. There is a light higher than the light of faith, in which theologians see the truths of theological knowledge.
2. **Paternity** is the principle of generation in the **Father**.
3. Processions in divine things are distinguished with respect to intellect and will.
4. This proposition is not to be conceded: “The essence is the **Father** of the **Son**.”
5. **Demons** and sinful souls suffer from fire insofar as it is hot, with an affliction of the same nature as that by which bodies are afflicted.
6. The operations of angels are measured by discrete time.
7. **Angels** understand through a connatural habit of knowledge.
8. The irascible and concupiscible powers are distinguished in the higher appetite just as in the lower.
9. To have a quidditative and definable reality is common to fictions and non-fictions alike.
10. **Friendship** is a virtue.
11. The **ratitudo** of any created thing is formally a relation.
12. For there to be a real mutual relation, it is required that the foundation, by its nature, be ordered to another as to its own perfection.
13. A relation is not really distinct from its foundation.

## Section Review

**Henry of Ghent** (c. 1217–1293) is presented here as a thinker of higher illumination, careful Trinitarian distinction, and real relation. He begins by saying that theology does not rest on the **light of faith** alone. There is a higher light in which theologians see theological truth. He also draws a sharp line between what the divine **essence** is and who the divine **persons** are. **Paternity** is the principle of generation in the **Father**, which is why one must not say that “the essence is the Father of the Son.” The divine essence is common, but “Father” names the person who generates. In the same way, the divine processions are distinguished with respect to **intellect** and **will**, so the processions are not merely two labels laid over one undifferentiated act.

Henry then treats spiritual and moral life as internally structured. **Demons** and sinful souls suffer from fire insofar as it is hot, with a truly painful affliction and not a merely symbolic one. **Angels** understand through a connatural habit of knowledge, and their operations are measured by **discrete time**, not by one unbroken bodily flow. He also says that the **higher appetite** has distinct **irascible** and **concupiscible** powers just as the lower appetite does, so even the inner life of desire and resistance has articulated structure at more than

one level. The same concern for inward order appears in the moral line that **friendship** is a virtue: rightly ordered affection belongs intrinsically to the good life, not merely as ornament but as part of virtue itself.

The last group of conclusions turns to **intelligibility** and **relation**. Henry says that to have a **quidditative and definable reality** is common to **fictions** and **non-fictions** alike, meaning that even what is not real outside the mind can still have a determinate intelligible content and so be defined and discussed. He then argues that the **ratitudo** of a created thing — its settled reality as something established and intelligible — is formally a **relation**. That is why, for there to be a real mutual relation, the foundation must already be ordered by its own nature to another as to its perfection. Relation is therefore not a second thing stuck onto a creature from the outside. It belongs to the creature insofar as it is already ordered toward another. For that same reason, a relation is not really distinct from its foundation: the relation is the thing itself understood under its real order toward another.

**This section presents Henry as a philosopher of illuminated order: theology sees by a higher light, divine persons are distinguished without dividing essence, spiritual life has articulated powers of knowing and suffering, and created things are intelligible and real through relations that belong to their very foundation.**

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## Conclusions according to Giles of Rome — 11

1. The power of generating in divine things is neither the divine essence taken precisely and absolutely, nor a relation or property, nor something constituted from both, nor one of these with the inclusion of the other; but it is the essence with a relative mode.
2. **Theology** is neither practical nor speculative, but affective.
3. **God**, under the aspect of glorifier, is the subject of theology.
4. The **Father** and the **Son** can be called not only two who breathe forth, but also two spirators.
5. **Angels** were not created in grace.
6. Therefore an angel is obstinate and impenitent because special divine impulses have been withdrawn from him.
7. A higher angel illuminates a lower not because he presents to him a luminous object, nor because he particularizes and divides for him what is united in itself, but because he strengthens and fortifies the intellect of the lower.
8. The sense of taste, insofar as it is taste, perceives not only what is sapid, but also what is moist.
9. Heat, even if separated, could generate fire.
10. For one science not to be subordinated to another, it is sufficient that it makes a reduction to principles known per se within its own genus of abstraction.
11. Given a vacuum, if something moves in it, it will move in an instant.

## Section Review

**Giles of Rome** (c. 1243–1316) is presented here as a thinker of ordered powers, especially in divine generation, theology, angelic illumination, and natural operation. He begins with a very careful claim about **generation in God**. The power of generating is not simply the divine essence taken absolutely, nor merely a relation or property, nor some composite of the two. It is the divine essence under a **relative mode**. That is why the **Father** and the **Son** can be called not only two who breathe forth, but two **spirators**. The same concern for mode governs his account of theology. **Theology** is neither properly practical nor speculative, but **affective**: its subject is **God under the aspect of glorifier**, and its aim is not only to know God, nor only to direct action, but to order the soul toward Him as the source of blessedness and glory.

The angelic conclusions follow the same logic of ordered power. **Angels** were not created already in grace, and a fallen angel remains obstinate because the special divine impulses by which it might be turned back are no longer given. A higher angel illuminates a lower not by handing down a ready-made luminous object, nor by dividing for it what is united above, but by **strengthening and fortifying the lower intellect itself**. Illumination therefore works by empowering the knower, not by merely transferring content. The remaining conclusions continue this focus on how powers act according to their own proper mode. **Taste**, precisely as taste, perceives not only what is sapid but also what is moist. **Heat**, even if separated, would still be generative of fire. A science counts as non-subordinate when it can reduce its claims to principles known **per se** within its own genus of abstraction. And if there were a **vacuum**, motion in it would occur in an instant. These are not stray remarks. They keep pressing the same point: each power, whether divine, angelic, sensible, natural, or scientific, must be understood according to the precise way it exercises its own act.

**This section presents Giles as a philosopher of ordered mode: divine generation belongs to essence under a relative mode, theology is affective because it orders the soul toward God as glorifier, angelic illumination strengthens intellect rather than merely handing down objects, and each natural or scientific power acts according to its own proper form.**

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## Conclusions according to Averroes — 41

1. Prophecy in dreams is possible through the illumination of the agent intellect over our soul.
2. There is one intellective soul in all human beings.
3. The ultimate happiness of man is when the agent intellect is continued to the possible intellect as form — a continuation which certain other Latins whom I have read, and especially **John of Ghent**, have understood perversely and erroneously; and he not only in this, but in nearly all philosophical questions, has altogether corrupted and depraved the doctrine of **Averroes**.
4. It is possible, while maintaining the unity of the intellect, that my soul remain so particularly mine that it is not common to all others, even after death.
5. Every abstract depends on the first abstract in a threefold genus of causes: formal, final, and efficient.
6. It is impossible for the same species to be generated both by propagation and by putrefaction.

7. **God** moves the first movable not only as an end, but as a true efficient cause and proper mover.
8. Every mover of the heaven is the soul of its sphere, making itself with it more substantially one than the soul of an ox is with its matter.  
**Corollary:** The soul of the heaven gives to its sphere a noble and perfect being before it gives motion.
9. The heaven is a simple body, not composed of matter and form.
10. There are three modes of per se useful for demonstration: the first, the second, and the fourth.
11. In every demonstration, except demonstration simply speaking, circularity can occur.
12. Heavy and light things move themselves per accidens by moving the medium per se.
13. The heaven is not the same in genus, but differs in species, as **Avicenna** held.
14. No science proves its subject to exist, nor the principal part of its subject.
15. Universals exist on the side of the thing only in potency, but in act through the operation of the soul.
16. Indeterminate dimensions are coeternal with matter and precede in it every substantial form.
17. Every intelligence except the first understands only the first.
18. There is no way to prove simply that the abstract exists except through the eternity of motion.
19. Whatever is in a genus is corruptible.
20. The subject of metaphysics is being insofar as it is being.
21. Definitions of natural substances do not include matter except consequentially.
22. The demonstration in Book VII of the *Physics* that whatever is moved is moved by another is a demonstration from a sign and in no way from a cause.
23. No active power that is purely neutral and indifferent to acting or not acting can determine itself of itself to one action rather than another.
24. One of the relatives is most suitably defined through the other.
25. **Aristotle's** example in Book II of the *Metaphysics* concerning the bat and the sun does not signify impossibility but difficulty; otherwise nature would have acted in vain.
26. A necessary proposition, as distinguished by **Aristotle** in the *Prior Analytics*, is one that proceeds from necessary terms.
27. For the disposition of a necessary term, it is required that the term be per se one.
28. When **Aristotle** says that from a necessary major and an invented minor a necessary conclusion follows, this must be understood of a minor that is per se invented but per accidens necessary.
29. Under the equator there cannot be natural habitation for living beings.
30. In the heaven there is a natural right side, and this does not change even though the parts of the sphere move.
31. Whoever posits the soul as a complexional form denies the efficient cause.
32. **Metaphysical unity** signifies the privation of divisibility, not in act, but in aptitude.
33. **Metaphysical unity** is the foundation of arithmetic unity.
34. Number is found precisely in abstract things just as in material things.

35. The essence of each thing and its existence are really the same.
36. Quiddity and essence are distinguished in everything except the first.
37. Substance is prior to accident not only by nature but also in time.
38. The physicist considers matter as matter.
39. The essence of every intelligence is substantially relative.
40. Granted per impossibile that there were matter not subject to corruption, if heaven were composed of such matter and form, it would still not be eternal.
41. The end does not cause finally according to its conceived being, but according to its real being.

## Section Review

**Averroes** (1126–1198) is presented here as a thinker of rigorous intellectual and cosmic order. The first group of conclusions concerns **intellect, prophecy, and human happiness**. Prophecy in dreams is possible through the illumination of the **agent intellect** over the soul, and the highest human happiness lies in the continuation of the **agent intellect** to the **possible intellect** as form. This is why Averroes can maintain both the provocative claim that there is one intellective soul in all human beings and the equally important claim that my soul can still remain particularly mine, even after death. The same structure appears in his account of universals: on the side of the thing they exist only in potency, but they become actual as universals through the operation of the soul. Every lower abstract depends on the first abstract in a threefold order of causes, and every intelligence below the first understands only the first.

A second block concerns the **heavens, motion, and the natural world**. **God** moves the first movable not only as an end but as a true efficient cause and proper mover. Each sphere is moved by its own soul, and that soul is more substantially one with its heaven than an animal soul is with its body; indeed it gives the sphere a noble being before it gives motion. Heaven is therefore a **simple body**, not composed of matter and form, and it is not the same in genus as lower bodies. Even seemingly lower physical claims fit this same concern for precise causality: heavy and light things move themselves only **per accidens** by moving the medium **per se**; the heaven has a natural right side that does not change with rotation; and to explain soul as a merely complexional form is to deny efficient causality altogether. Averroes also preserves strong claims about matter, holding that **indeterminate dimensions** are coeternal with matter and precede every substantial form.

A third block concerns **demonstration, necessity, and the order of the sciences**. Averroes sharply limits what science can do: no science proves that its subject exists, nor even the principal part of its subject. Metaphysics studies **being insofar as it is being**, while the physicist considers matter precisely as matter. He distinguishes the valid modes of **per se** useful for demonstration, allows circularity in every demonstration except the strictest demonstration simply speaking, and insists that necessity in a proposition comes from the necessity of its terms. He also reinterprets several Aristotelian examples with care: the proof in *Physics* VII that whatever is moved is moved by another is only a demonstration from a sign, not from a cause; Aristotle's example of the bat and the sun signifies difficulty, not impossibility; and a necessary conclusion from a necessary major and an "invented" minor works only when the minor is invented **per se** but necessary **per accidens**. These are not side issues for him. They show how exact one must be in logic before claiming real science.

The final block concerns **being, unity, essence, and final causality**. **Metaphysical unity** is the privation of divisibility not in act but in aptitude, and it is the foundation of **arithmetic unity**; number therefore belongs

to abstract things no less than to material ones. **Substance** is prior to accident not only by nature but in time. Definitions of natural substances do not include matter except consequentially. Averroes also makes one of his boldest metaphysical claims here: in each thing, **essence and existence are really the same**, although quiddity and essence are still distinguished in everything except the first. Finally, he insists that the **end** does not cause finally merely as conceived, but according to its real being. That line gathers the whole section well: reality is ordered not by loose concepts, but by actual causal structure.

**This section presents Averroes as a philosopher of strict order: intellect rises toward a shared higher light, the heavens are alive and causally structured, science is sharply limited and methodically exact, and being, unity, substance, and final cause are treated as real features of the world rather than as verbal conveniences.**

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## Conclusions according to Avicenna — 12

1. Besides categorical and hypothetical syllogisms, there exists a genus of compositive syllogisms.
2. Although in no categorical syllogism, whether in act or in potency, can a conclusion be drawn from two negatives, this can nevertheless occur in a compositive syllogism, namely that a conclusion is drawn from two negative premises.
3. In the heavens there is matter of the same nature as that of lower things.
4. An intelligible notion cannot exist in the soul without actual understanding.
5. It is possible for a human being to be generated from putrefaction.
6. The essence of a thing includes its proper matter and form.
7. First substance is prior to any substance having an aptitude for a transitive operation, whatever that operation may be, whether of formal, material, efficient, or final causality.
8. From one simple thing at the limit of simplicity, only one proceeds.
9. Odor, according to real being and not intentional being, is multiplied all the way to the sense.
10. The proposition stating that a sensible object placed outside the sense does not produce sensation is not true except accidentally.
11. The organ of smell consists of the mammillary structures located in the anterior part of the brain.
12. A possible particular affirmative does not always convert into a possible affirmative, nor does a necessary particular affirmative convert into a necessary affirmative, as **Aristotle** believed.

## Section Review

**Avicenna** (980–1037) is presented here as a thinker of structured intelligibility in logic, nature, and sensation. He begins by widening logic beyond the usual forms. Besides **categorical** and **hypothetical** syllogisms, he posits a third genus, the **compositive syllogism**, and in that setting even two negative premises can yield a conclusion. He also rejects some of Aristotle's rules for the conversion of modal

propositions, arguing that what holds for necessity or possibility in one form does not always convert as Aristotle thought. So the opening of the section is not just technical variation. It presents Avicenna as willing to revise standard logical schemes where they do not fit the structure of valid inference.

He then treats the natural world as a continuous and ordered whole. The **heavens** have matter of the same nature as lower things, a human being can arise from **putrefaction**, and the **essence** of a thing includes its proper **matter and form**. At the same time, Avicenna preserves a strong hierarchy of causality: **first substance** is prior to any substance ordered toward transitive operation, whether formal, material, efficient, or final, and from what is maximally simple only **one** proceeds immediately. The point is that reality is not a flat field of beings, but a structured order in which simplicity, priority, and causality determine what can come forth from what.

The final group concerns thought and sensation. An intelligible notion cannot exist in the soul without **actual understanding**, so intelligibility is not a dormant object stored in the mind apart from act. On the sensory side, **odor** reaches the sense in **real being**, not merely intentional being, and the organ of smell has a definite bodily seat in the anterior part of the brain. Avicenna also says that the claim that an external sensible does not produce sensation is false except **accidentally**: the sensible outside the sense is naturally apt to affect it, even if circumstances can prevent the effect. Thought and sensation alike therefore depend on real conditions and real transmission, not on empty abstractions.

**This section presents Avicenna as a philosopher of ordered intelligibility: logic has more valid forms than the usual scheme admits, nature is structured by priority and simplicity, essence includes matter and form, and both understanding and sensation depend on real acts and real causal transmission.**

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## Conclusions according to Al-Farabi — 11

1. The first thing necessary in demonstration is not what **Aristotle** defined in the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*, but that which is more universal than the subject, yet is not predicated of the genus of the subject.
2. The definition of genus given by **Porphyry** is bad; rather, genus is that which is more universal of two universal terms.
3. The highest good of man is perfection through the speculative sciences.
4. When **Aristotle** says that every doctrine and every discipline comes from preexisting cognition, doctrine and discipline are to be understood as definitive and argumentative cognition.
5. The intention of being said of every, according to **Aristotle**, is this: that the predicate is said of the subject, and of everything that is the subject actually or potentially, by possibility of contingency and not of necessity.
6. Whoever believes the intention of being said of every to be other than that which the preceding conclusion stated cannot defend **Aristotle** against **Theophrastus**, namely, that from a necessary major and an invented minor a necessary conclusion follows.
7. The possible, as defined by **Aristotle**, is common to the possible and the invented, as opposed to what is necessary.

8. An accident cannot be understood, even when abstracted, without its subject.
9. Species exist in a middle state; they are in a middle mode of being between spiritual and material being.
10. Every species, in its spiritual being, is formally cognition.
11. The actual cognition of the common sense apprehending a phantasm as a sensible is a dream.

## Section Review

**Al-Farabi** (c. 872–950) is presented here as a thinker of ordered knowing, especially in logic, demonstration, and the graded being of species. He begins by tightening the structure of **demonstration**. What is first necessary for demonstration is not simply what **Aristotle** described in the usual way, but what is more universal than the subject without being predicated of the genus of that subject. In the same spirit, he rejects **Porphyry's** definition of genus and redefines genus as the more universal of two universal terms. When **Aristotle** says that every doctrine and discipline proceeds from preexisting cognition, Al-Farabi understands this as **definitive** and **argumentative** cognition. He also carefully defines what it means for something to be **said of every** and what it means to be **possible**, because without those clarifications Aristotle cannot be properly defended against **Theophrastus** on the question of how necessity in conclusions works. The opening of the section is therefore not a loose set of logical remarks, but a tightly connected attempt to secure the conditions of real science.

The second half of the section turns from logic to the structure of knowing itself. The **highest good of man** is perfection through the **speculative sciences**, so intellectual completion is the true human end. But this perfection depends on the way things are present to the mind. An **accident** cannot be understood, even in abstraction, without its **subject**, because its intelligibility remains tied to what it inheres in. **Species** occupy a middle mode of being between the **spiritual** and the **material**, and in that spiritual mode every species is already **formally cognition**. That is why the final line about **dream** matters: a dream is the actual cognition of the **common sense** when it takes a **phantasm** as though it were a sensible present thing. So the section ends by showing that logic, cognition, species, and dream all belong to one graded account of how the mind comes to know.

**This section presents Al-Farabi as a philosopher of ordered cognition: demonstration requires exact logical starting points, genus and possibility must be defined with precision, the highest human good lies in speculative perfection, and species, accidents, and dreams all reveal a graded structure in the way things become knowable.**

## Conclusions according to Isaac of Narbonne — 4

1. It is not necessary to posit an agent intellect.
2. The **first intention** is the quiddity of a thing shining objectively in the intellect.
3. **Motion** is a common sensible knowable by the external sense without the action of another faculty.

4. Celestial bodies give to lower things nothing formally except heat.

## Section Review

**Isaac of Narbonne** is presented here as a thinker of stripped-down cognition and reduced celestial causality. He denies that a separate **agent intellect** must be posited in order to explain knowledge. The **first intention** is the quiddity of a thing itself, shining objectively in the intellect as what the mind first grasps. **Motion** is also directly knowable by the external sense as a common sensible, without needing some further inner faculty to tell us that a thing is moving. In the same spirit, celestial influence is narrowed rather than multiplied: heavenly bodies give lower things nothing formally except **heat**.

**This section presents a minimal theory of knowing and influence: the intellect first meets the thing's own quiddity, motion is sensed directly, and the formal causal gift of the heavens to lower things is reduced to heat.**

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## Conclusions according to Abumaronis of Babylon — 4

1. **God** has no concern for anything in the world that is actually corruptible.
2. The agent intellect is nothing other than **God**.
3. The heavens heat lower things by their light falling upon them.
4. The acts of the intellect are called true or false intrinsically, whereas things understood are called true or false extrinsically.

## Section Review

**Abumaronis of Babylon** is presented here as a thinker of upward dependence in God, intellect, celestial action, and truth. He says that **God** has no concern for things insofar as they are **actually corruptible**, meaning not that God is absent from the world altogether, but that corruptibility as such does not belong to the divine mode of regard. In the same upward direction, the **agent intellect** is not some lower separate principle, but nothing other than **God** Himself. The heavens also act on lower things through their **light**, and by that light they communicate **heat** below. So the section places both understanding and natural influence under higher causes rather than leaving them at the level of corruptible things.

The final conclusion turns to **truth**. Acts of the intellect are called **true** or **false** intrinsically, because truth and falsity belong first to judging and understanding themselves. Things understood are called true or false only **extrinsically**, that is, by relation to an intellect that knows or judges them. Truth therefore belongs first to the act of thought and only secondarily to the object as known.

**This section presents Abumaronis as a thinker of upward dependence: God stands above corruptibility as such, intellect is traced back to God, heavenly light acts on lower things, and truth belongs first to acts of understanding rather than to things considered on their own.**

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### Conclusions according to Moses the Egyptian — 3

1. The demonstration in Book VIII of the *Physics* used by **Aristotle** to prove the first mover proves something particular first.
2. Metaphysics is not one single science.
3. The simplicity and complete immateriality of the first cannot be proven by efficient causality of motion, but only by final causality alone.

### Section Review

**Moses ben Maimon** (1135–1204) was a Jewish philosopher and theologian. Pico cites him here for positions on the first mover and the scope of metaphysics.

Moses says Aristotle's argument in *Physics* VIII does not prove everything about the first mover at once. It proves something more limited first. He also says you cannot prove that the first principle is completely simple and completely immaterial just by looking at motion as an efficient cause, as one thing producing another.

That fuller conclusion has to be reached through final causality instead, by thinking of the first as ultimate end rather than only as mover. He also says metaphysics is not one single science in a narrow sense, but reaches across more than one line of inquiry.

**This section presents limited proof: Aristotle's motion argument does not prove everything at once, the first is known more fully as final cause than as efficient cause, and metaphysics extends beyond one single narrow science.**

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### Conclusions according to Marcus of Toledo — 5

1. Relation signifies no thing outside the mind.
2. The representative species of things are by reduction in the category in which the represented things are.

3. Common sensibles multiply their proper species in the senses, distinct from the species of proper sensibles.
4. The sense of touch is not a single sense.
5. No specialist in a particular art can inquire whether a thing exists.

## Section Review

**Marcus Toletanus** (fl. 1193–1216) is presented here as a thinker of careful distinctions in relation, representation, sensation, and the limits of specialized inquiry. He denies that **relation** signifies any thing outside the mind, so relation does not add a new extra entity to the world, but expresses how one thing is understood in reference to another. In the same spirit, the representative species of things are reduced to the same category as the things they represent, so representation follows the represented thing rather than forming a separate ontological class of its own.

He also gives sensation a more articulated structure than it first appears to have. **Common sensibles** generate their own proper species in the senses, distinct from the species of proper sensibles, and the sense of **touch** is not one single undivided sense. The final conclusion extends the same concern for proper boundaries into method: no specialist within a particular art can determine whether a thing **exists** as such, because that question belongs to a more universal level of inquiry than any single narrow discipline can claim.

**This section presents Marcus as a thinker of careful sorting: relation adds no extra thing outside the mind, representation follows the category of the thing represented, sensation is internally more complex than it seems, and questions of existence outrun the authority of any one specialized art.**

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## Conclusions according to Avempace the Arab — 2

1. In the heavens there is matter of another ratio than that of lower things.
2. Light and color do not differ essentially.

## Section Review

**Avempace the Arab** (1085–1138), also known as **Ibn Bajja**, is presented here as making two sharp distinctions about the heavens and sensible qualities. He says that the matter of the **heavens** is of a different ratio from that of lower things, so the celestial world is not made of the same kind of matter as the world below. He also says that **light** and **color** do not differ essentially, so color is not a wholly different kind of reality from light, but belongs with it at the level of essence.

**This section presents difference in kind: heavenly matter is not the same as lower matter, and light and color are not essentially different things.**

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## Conclusions from the Greek Peripatetics

Theophrastus, Ammonius, Simplicius, Alexander, and Themistius

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### Conclusions according to Theophrastus — 4

1. If the heaven were inanimate, it would be more ignoble than any animated body — which it is impious to assert in philosophy.
2. Quiddity is form alone.
3. The agent intellect relates to the production of intelligibles in the possible intellect as the form of an art relates to the production of forms in the matter of art.
4. **God** moves the heaven as an end.

### Section Review

**Theophrastus** (c. 371–287 BC) was a Greek philosopher and Aristotle’s successor in the Peripatetic school. Pico cites him here for positions on the heaven, quiddity, intellect, and motion.

Theophrastus says the heaven must be alive. If it were not, it would be lower than any living body, and that would make the highest body worse than the lower ones. He also says quiddity is form alone, meaning what a thing truly is is found in its form, not in matter as part of its defining core.

The line about intellect uses an art analogy. The agent intellect stands to intelligibles in the possible intellect the way the form of an art stands to the forms produced in matter. In other words, the agent intellect makes intelligibility actual the way an art gives shape to what gets made. God moves the heaven as an end, so the heaven is moved by orientation toward the highest good, not by God pushing it like one body pushing another.

**This section presents living order: heaven must be alive, quiddity is form, intellect makes intelligibility actual, and God moves the highest things as final cause.**

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## Conclusions according to Ammonius — 3

1. The definition of the soul given by **Aristotle**, when understood of the rational soul, of which it is principally given, must be taken causally, not formally.
2. The rational soul is not immediately united to the organic body.
3. When **Aristotle** says that first principles must always remain, He means nothing other than that they are found in every change.

### Section Review

**Ammonius Hermiae** (440–520) was a late antique Greek commentator on Aristotle. Pico cites him here for positions on the soul, its union with the body, and what remains through change.

Ammonius says Aristotle's definition of the soul must be handled carefully when it is applied to the rational soul. It should be taken causally, not formally. In other words, the definition tells us what the soul does in relation to the body, not the full essence of what the rational soul is in itself. That is why he also says the rational soul is not immediately united to the organic body. Its union with the body is not completely direct.

He also says first principles remain through every change. Change does not wipe everything away. Something basic has to remain present for change to be change at all.

**This section presents mediated structure: the rational soul is not defined formally, its union to body is not immediate, and first principles remain through every change.**

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## Conclusions according to Simplicius — 9

1. To know its own act is not common to every external sense, but is proper to human senses.
2. **Aristotle** in *On the Soul* treats only of the rational part.
3. When the soul returns perfectly into itself, the agent intellect is liberated from the possible intellect.
4. The same rational part, insofar as it goes out of itself, is called the possible intellect; but insofar as it is such that it can perfect itself as possible, it is called the agent intellect.
5. The same rational part, insofar as it goes and proceeds outside itself, is perfected by species which are in it; but insofar as it remains in itself, it is called intellect in habit.
6. From the preceding conclusions it can be understood why the agent intellect is sometimes compared to art, sometimes to a habit, and sometimes to light.
7. A passion from a sensible occurs in the organ alone; sensation is received in the soul alone.

8. Just as light does not make colors but makes preexisting potentially visible colors actually visible, so the agent intellect does not produce intelligible species, but makes those species that preexisted as potentially intelligible actually intelligible.
9. When **Aristotle** says that we do not remember after death because the passive intellect is corrupted, by “passive intellect” He means the possible intellect.

## Section Review

**Simplicius of Cilicia** (480–560) was a late antique Greek commentator in the Neoplatonic tradition. Pico cites him here for positions on sense, intellect, and how knowledge becomes actual.

Simplicius reads **Aristotle's** *On the Soul* as dealing with the rational part. He treats intellect as one rational power named in different ways according to what it is doing. When it turns outward toward things, it is called the possible intellect. When it makes that potential knowledge actual, it is called the agent intellect. When it remains within itself, it is called intellect in habit. That is why the agent intellect can be compared to art, habit, and light. It does not create forms for thought out of nothing. It makes what was only potentially intelligible become actually intelligible, just as light makes potentially visible colors actually visible. When the soul returns fully into itself, the agent intellect is said to be freed from the possible intellect.

He also separates what happens in the organ from what happens in the soul. A bodily affection from a sensible thing happens in the organ, but sensation itself is received in the soul. Human external senses can also know their own acts in a way not common to every external sense. When **Aristotle** says memory does not remain after death because the passive intellect is corrupted, Simplicius takes “passive intellect” to mean the possible intellect.

**This section presents actualization and distinction: *On the Soul* is read through the rational part, intellect is one power under different names, the agent intellect makes potential knowledge actual, and sensation is divided between organ and soul.**

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## Conclusions according to Alexander of Aphrodisias — 8

1. The rational soul is immortal.
2. To each heaven there belongs, besides the soul that moves it as an efficient cause, a proper intelligence that moves it as an end, entirely distinct in substance from that soul.
3. According to **Aristotle**, no definition, not even a natural one, includes matter as such.
4. **God** understands neither evils nor privations.
5. The number of separate things in Book XII of the *Metaphysics* is a number of intelligences, which are ends of motion, not movers.
6. When **Aristotle** says in the ninth book of the *Metaphysics* that separate and divine things are either wholly known by us or wholly unknown, this must be understood of the knowledge belonging to those who have already reached the highest actualization of intellect.

7. The highest intellect understands itself first, and other things second; the lowest intellect understands other things first and itself second.
8. The metaphysician argues demonstratively, the dialectician in a probable way, though both dispute about all things.

## Section Review

**Alexander of Aphrodisias** (c. 150–215) was a Greek commentator on Aristotle. Pico cites him here for positions on the soul, the heavens, intellect, definition, and metaphysical method.

Alexander keeps the order of the world sharply layered. The rational soul is immortal. Each heaven has both a soul and an intelligence, but they do not do the same job. The soul moves the heaven as an efficient cause, while the intelligence moves it as an end. That is why Alexander says the separate things in Book XII of the *Metaphysics* are intelligences that stand as ends of motion, not movers pushing things along. He also says **God** understands neither evils nor privations. The highest intellect knows itself first and other things second, while the lowest intellect knows other things first and itself second.

He also keeps thought and method sharply ordered. A definition does not include matter as such, because definition tells what a thing is, not the material it happens to be in. Separate and divine things are either wholly known or wholly unknown, and Alexander means this of those who have reached the highest act of intellect. And although both the metaphysician and the dialectician can argue about all things, they do not argue in the same way. The metaphysician demonstrates. The dialectician argues from what is probable.

**This section presents ranked knowing: the rational soul is immortal, the heavens are ordered by soul and intelligence in different ways, separate things are known according to the level of intellect, and metaphysics demonstrates where dialectic argues probably.**

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## Conclusions according to Themistius — 5

1. There are many possible intellects that are illuminated, and many participated agent intellects that both illuminate and are illuminated; but the agent intellect that illuminates purely is one.
2. The agent intellect that only illuminates is believed by **Themistius** to be that which is called "**Metatron**" in the **Kabbalah**.
3. The science of the soul stands between natural and divine sciences.
4. Besides the two kinds of demonstration posited by **Aristotle**, a third must be posited: when one property is demonstrated through a coextensive property.
5. A proposition is *per se* when either the subject defines the predicate, or the predicate defines the subject, or both are defined through the same third term.

## Section Review

**Themistius** (c. 317–388) was a late antique Greek philosopher and commentator on Aristotle. Pico cites him here for positions on intellect, the science of the soul, and demonstration.

Themistius says intellect works in levels. Many minds can receive intellectual light. Many participated agent intellects can both receive that light and pass it on. But above them all is one agent intellect that only gives light and never receives it. That is why it stands apart from the rest. It is not just one more mind among many, but the highest source of illumination in the whole chain. Pico then links this purely illuminating intellect to what **Kabbalah** calls **Metatron**.

He also places the science of the soul between natural and divine sciences. It stands in the middle because the soul is not just a bodily thing, but it is not treated as simply divine either. The last two conclusions tighten logic. Besides Aristotle's two usual kinds of demonstration, Themistius adds a third: one feature can be proved through another feature that always belongs to the same thing. A proposition is *per se* when subject and predicate belong together by what the thing is, not by accident.

**This section presents mediated intellect: many minds receive light, one agent intellect illuminates purely, the science of the soul stands between nature and divinity, and demonstration can proceed through coextensive properties as well as direct definition.**

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## Conclusions from the doctrine of the philosophers called Platonists

**Plotinus, Porphyry of Tyre, Iamblichus the Chaldean, Proclus of Lycia, and Adelard the Arab**

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### Conclusions according to Plotinus — 15

1. The first intelligible is not outside the first intellect.
2. The soul does not wholly descend when it descends.
3. All life is immortal.
4. A sinful soul, after death, lives the life of a brute in either a terrestrial or an aerial body.
5. The irrational soul is an image of the rational soul, dependent on it as light depends on the sun.
6. Being, life, and intellect coincide.
7. The highest happiness is when our particular intellect is fully conjoined to the first intellect.
8. Civil virtues are not to be called virtues simply.

9. Assimilation to the divine is not achieved through virtues, even in a purified soul, except dispositively.
10. In reason there are likenesses and species of things; in intellect there are the things themselves as true realities.
11. It belongs to perfected virtue to cut off even the first motions.
12. It is improper to say that the intellect inspects or contemplates ideas.
13. Things necessary to an animal may be called necessary, but they are not good.
14. Just as accidental happiness requires attention, so substantial happiness is not diminished by lack of attention, but is even strengthened by it.
15. A man who has attained happiness is not hindered from it by frenzy or lethargy.

## Section Review

**Plotinus** (c. 205–270) was a Greek philosopher and the central figure of Neoplatonism. Pico cites him here for positions on intellect, soul, virtue, and happiness.

Plotinus places intellect and soul on different levels without tearing them apart. The first intelligible is not outside the first intellect, because at the highest level knowing and what is known are not split in two. Being, life, and intellect coincide there. The soul also does not wholly descend when it descends. Some part remains above. That is why **Plotinus** can say all life is immortal. The irrational soul depends on the rational soul the way light depends on the sun, and reason holds likenesses of things while intellect holds the things themselves in their truest reality. That is also why Plotinus thinks it is wrong to say intellect inspects ideas as though they were outside it.

Plotinus also ranks virtue and happiness more sharply than ordinary moral thinking does. Civil virtues are not virtues in the fullest sense. Even purified virtue does not itself make a soul divine. It prepares the soul for that likeness. Perfected virtue even cuts off the first motions. The highest happiness comes when our particular intellect is fully joined to the first intellect. That happiness does not depend on constant attention, and it is not destroyed by frenzy or lethargy, because true happiness belongs to the soul at its highest level, not to passing bodily conditions. Things needed for animal life may be necessary, but they are not therefore good. And a sinful soul can fall after death into brutish life, because the soul survives and carries the shape of its disorder with it.

**This section presents ascending life: intellect and intelligible are not split apart, the soul never wholly falls, true virtue prepares the soul for the divine, and highest happiness is union with the first intellect.**

## Conclusions according to Adelard the Arab — 8

1. The agent intellect is that part of the soul which remains above and does not fall.

2. The soul contains within itself the species of things and is stirred only by external things.
3. Species exist actually and substantially in the part of the soul that does not descend, and are received anew from outside and accidentally in the part that does descend.
4. Most of the things that become known in dreams arise through purification of the soul, demonic influence, or spiritual revelation.
5. What **Thabet the Chaldean** writes about sleeping upon the liver in the interpretation of dreams is correctly understood when harmonized with **Plato's *Timaeus***.
6. As **Abdala** said, to see dreams is a power of imagination, but to understand them is the power of the intellect; therefore, one who sees them for the most part does not understand them.
7. The soul is the source of motion and the governor of matter.
8. Transmigration of souls was affirmed by all the sages of the **Indians, Persians, Egyptians, and Chaldeans**.

## Section Review

**Adelard of Bath** (1080–1152) was an English philosopher and early interpreter of Arabic scientific learning. Pico cites him here for positions on intellect, dreams, the soul, and motion.

Adelard says the highest part of the soul does not descend. That undescended part is the agent intellect. The soul already holds the species of things within itself, but external things stir it into activity. That is why species are present in two ways: fully and actually in the part of the soul that remains above, and newly received from outside in the part that descends. The soul is also the source of motion and the governor of matter, so it does not just ride along with the body but rules and moves it.

The section also treats dreams as mixed and layered. Many things known in dreams come from purification of the soul, demonic influence, or spiritual revelation. Dream imagery and dream understanding are not the same power. As Abdala says, imagination sees the dream, but intellect understands it, so the one who sees a dream usually does not understand it. The line about sleeping on the liver is included because Adelard thinks even strange dream practices can be interpreted correctly if they are fitted into a larger philosophical account. The last line widens the scope further: transmigration is presented as an old teaching held across several ancient peoples.

**This section presents a soul in two levels: one part remains above, one part descends into contact with the world, dreams can come from several sources, and understanding belongs more to intellect than to imagination.**

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## Conclusions according to Porphyry — 12

1. By “father,” according to **Plato**, we must understand a cause that produces the whole from itself; by “maker,” one that takes matter from another.

2. The world's maker is a supermundane soul.
3. The exemplar is nothing other than the intellect of the crafting soul.
4. Every soul participating in the **Vulcanic** intellect is sown in the moon.
5. From the preceding conclusion I infer why all **Germans** are of strong physique and fair complexion.
6. From the same conclusion I infer why all **Germans** are especially reverent toward the **Apostolic See**.
7. **Apollo** is the solar intellect; **Aesculapius** the lunar.
8. From the preceding conclusion I infer why the moon in the ascendant gives health to one born.
9. There are two kinds of evil demons: some are souls and substantial demons, others are material forces and accidental demons.
10. The two kinds of demons mentioned in the preceding conclusion we believe to be nothing other than the same as the "law of the members" and the "powers of darkness" spoken of by **Paul**, although I do not believe them to agree concerning the quiddity and substance of these powers.
11. **Plato** in the beginning of the *Timaeus* treats only of extremes, that is, of what truly is and is in no way generated, and of what is truly generated and in no way truly is; of intermediates **He** says nothing.
12. **God** is everywhere because **He** is in no place; intellect is everywhere because it is nowhere; soul is everywhere because it is nowhere. But **God** is everywhere and nowhere with respect to all things after **Him**; intellect is in **God** and is everywhere and nowhere with respect to those after it; the soul is in intellect and in **God**, and is everywhere and nowhere with respect to body.

## Section Review

**Porphyry of Tyre** (c. 234–305) is presented here as a thinker of mediated causation, cosmic hierarchy, and non-bodily presence. He begins by distinguishing two kinds of causes in Platonic language: a **father** produces the whole from itself, while a **maker** fashions something using matter already given. That is why the **maker of the world** is said to be a **supermundane soul**, and why the **exemplar** according to which it makes is nothing other than the **intellect of that crafting soul**. The world is therefore not produced immediately by the highest principle in the crudest way, but through a mediating soul whose intellect contains the pattern of what is made.

From there, Porphyry connects earthly life to heavenly powers. Souls participating in the **Vulcanic intellect** are said to be sown in the **moon**, and Pico then draws from this not only claims about bodily complexion and temperament, but even the striking inference about the **Germans** and their disposition. Whether or not those ethnographic applications convince, the underlying point is clear: celestial-intellectual powers shape lower embodied life in definite ways. The same pattern appears when **Apollo** is identified with the **solar intellect** and **Aesculapius** with the **lunar**, and from this Pico infers the moon's relation to health when it is ascendant. The heavens are not inert background, but active bearers of intelligible influence.

Porphyry also distinguishes two kinds of evil. Some evil demons are **substantial**, that is, real spiritual beings or souls; others are **accidental**, more like harmful material forces. Pico compares these to **Paul's** "law of the members" and "powers of darkness," while carefully refusing to identify them as exactly the same in substance. He also says that the opening of the *Timaeus* speaks only of the two **extremes** — what truly is and is in no way generated, and what is generated and in no way truly is — leaving the intermediate levels unspoken. That omission matters because Porphyry's own system depends on those mediating levels between the highest intelligible and the lowest generated order.

The last conclusion gathers the whole section into a doctrine of presence. **God** is everywhere because He is in no place; **intellect** is everywhere because it is nowhere; and **soul** is everywhere because it is nowhere in the bodily sense. The higher a reality is, the less it is confined by location. But these are not identical modes of transcendence: **God** is beyond all that comes after Him, **intellect** is in God and beyond what follows it, and **soul** is in intellect and in God while remaining present to body without being enclosed by it. So Porphyry's universe is one in which the higher produces, orders, and pervades the lower without ever being trapped inside the lower's mode of being.

**This section presents Porphyry as a philosopher of mediation: the world is fashioned by a supermundane soul according to intellectual pattern, heavenly powers shape embodied life, evil appears in both spiritual and force-like forms, and God, intellect, and soul are present everywhere precisely because they are not contained in place as bodies are.**

## Conclusions according to Iamblichus — 9

1. The speculative intellect is separate both in reality and in mode; the practical is separate in reality but conjoined according to mode; the rational soul is conjoined in reality but separate in mode; the irrational is conjoined both in reality and in mode.
2. The maker of the sensible world is seventh in the intellectual hierarchy.
3. Corporeal nature exists in the intellect immovably, in the soul as first self-moving, in the animal as self-moving by participation, in the heaven as ordered from another, and below the moon as disordered and movable from another.
4. The elements are found twice in the eight celestial bodies in a celestial mode, which one will discover if one proceeds through them in reverse order in that double enumeration.
5. Above this world, which the theologians call (העולם התחתון) [Lower World], there is another which they call (העולם האמצעי) [Middle World], and above this another which they call (העולם העליון) [Upper World].
6. When the soul is excellently assimilated to intellect, there comes to be in its vehicle perfectly circular motion.
7. The stars, in themselves, are not harmful.
8. One who understands the final cause of floods and fires will call them (טהרות), that is, purifications, rather than corruptions.
9. When **Plato** says the soul is placed in the middle of the world, this must be understood of the unparticipated soul, which is said to be in the middle because it is equally present to all and free from every particular relation.

## Section Review

**Iamblichus of Chalcis** (c. 245–325) is presented here as a thinker of descending hierarchy, in which the same reality appears in different modes as it moves downward from intellect to soul and into the visible world. He begins by distinguishing the **speculative intellect**, the **practical intellect**, the **rational soul**, and the **irrational** according to how separate or conjoined they are in reality and in mode. The speculative

intellect is most fully separate; the practical intellect remains separate in reality but already turns outward in mode; the rational soul is bound to lower reality while still retaining a kind of separateness; and the irrational is conjoined in both respects. The same graded logic governs the rest of the section. **Corporeal nature** exists in intellect as an unmoving intelligible pattern, in soul as the first source of self-motion, in the animal as self-motion by participation, in heaven as motion ordered from another, and below the moon as disordered motion from another. The maker of the sensible world therefore stands only at the **seventh rank** of the intellectual hierarchy: this world is not produced immediately from the highest principle, but through many mediating levels, which is why the sensible order is mixed with motion, multiplicity, and disorder.

That same hierarchy explains the section's cosmology. There is not only this world, but also a **lower, middle, and upper** world, and even the **elements** are present in the heavenly bodies in a doubled and celestial way, more ordered than they are below. The stars are not harmful in themselves, because higher realities do not injure by their own nature. In the same spirit, **floods** and **fires**, when understood by their final cause, are better called **purifications** than corruptions: they cleanse, reorder, or remove rather than merely destroy. When the soul is excellently assimilated to intellect, even its **vehicle** takes on perfectly **circular motion**, because circularity is the image of a more complete and self-contained life. And when **Plato** says the soul is in the middle of the world, Iamblichus does not mean a physical center, but the **unparticipated soul**, which is called middle because it is equally present to all things while remaining free from any one particular relation.

**This section presents Iamblichus as a philosopher of graded order: reality descends from the most separate intellect through soul into the visible world, the cosmos is layered into higher and lower worlds, higher things are purifying rather than harmful, and the soul stands in the middle not by place but by its equal presence to all.**

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## Conclusions According to Proclus — 55

1. What is in intelligibles as **limit and infinity** exists in intellectuals as **male and female**, in supermundane things as **identity and difference, similarity and dissimilarity**, and in the soul as the **circulation of the same and the other**.
2. Gods that are **containing and perfecting** are exempt from **Saturnian laws**; Saturnian gods from **Jovian laws**; every soul living intellectually from **fatal laws**; yet **all obey the law of Adrasteia**.
3. The name "**God**" belongs simply and absolutely to the **God** of gods; simply but not absolutely to supersubstantial beings according to essence; to intellectual beings according to participation; to divine souls according to contact and conjunction; to demons according to likeness; and to human souls according to likeness.
4. The containing property belongs to the **middle order of the second trinity**, which in the *Phaedrus* is said to be carried around in the heavens.
5. In intelligibles there is no number but **multitude**; and the cause of number is paternal and maternal, but in intellectuals there is number according to essence and multitude by communication.
6. What is called **otherness** in the *Parmenides* is the same as what is called the **supercelestial place** in the *Phaedrus*.

7. Through unity, plurality, whole, parts, finite, and infinite, we must understand in the *Parmenides* the order of the **intelligible-intellectual trinity** according to its threefold division.
8. What in the *Phaedrus* is called the **back of heaven** is in the *Parmenides* the **one**; what is there the **depth of heaven** is here the **whole**; what is there the **axis of heaven** is here the **limit**.
9. **Plato** expresses the third order of the second trinity through three terms: the **extreme**, the **perfect**, and the **figured**.
10. The intellectual gods have:
  - unities from the **first one**
  - substances from the **intelligibles**
  - perfect, containing, and generative lives of divine things from the intelligible and intellectual orders
  - intellectual property from **themselves**
11. Just as intelligible gods produce all things **uniformly**, so intelligible-intellectual gods produce **trinally**, and intellectual gods **according to the hebdomad**.
12. Between the extreme paternal gods, **Saturn and Jupiter**, **Rhea** necessarily mediates through the property of **fecund life**.
13. The second trinity of the intellectual hebdomad is the **trinity of the Curetes**, whom theology calls the **immaculate gods**.
14. The proper function of the **Curetes** is to render the work of the paternal trinity immaculate:
  - the **abiding** of the first
  - the **procession** of the second
  - the **illumination** of the third
15. Through the tragic dismemberments of the gods, theologians signify the **seventh distinguishing unity of the intellectual hebdomad**.
16. That which is called **Rhea** as coexisting with **Saturn** in its highest aspect, when it produces **Jupiter** and, with **Jupiter**, the total and partial orders of the gods, is called **Ceres**.
17. Although, as theology teaches, the divine hierarchies are distinct, it must nevertheless be understood that **all things are in all things in their own mode**.
18. Just as the **paternal property** exists only in intelligibles, so the productive or making power exists only in the gods; in some it is both paternal and productive, in intelligible exemplars it is productive, and in others it is paternal in an operative mode.
19. Whatever operations belong either to the gods or to nature are twofold: **immanent** and **transitive**; by immanent operations each thing contains itself and the reasons within it, but by transitive operations it turns itself toward outward things.
20. After the **intellectual hebdomad**, the supermundane gods are to be ordered immediately, exempt from the parts of the universe, not ordered toward this world, but embracing it everywhere according to cause.
21. It is proper to the supermundane gods to **assimilate and transmit** to beings that share sympathy and mutual communion which they possess through likeness to one another.
22. Although the assimilative power of the ruling gods mentioned in the preceding conclusion is proper to them, it is nevertheless appropriated to the **middle order of the trinity**, in its first order immediately conjoined in substance to the intellectual gods, and in its third mixed with secondary genera.

23. The **Jupiter** spoken of in the *Gorgias* is not that universal producer who is third among the intellectual gods, but the **highest and first among the ducal gods**.
24. In the **ducal trinity**:
  - **Jupiter** is substantificative
  - **Neptune** is vivificative
  - **Pluto** is conversive
25. There is a **fourfold structure (fabrica)**:
  - the first adorns universals of universals from the whole
  - the second adorns the whole but in a particular way
  - the third adorns things divided according to universality
  - the fourth weaves particular parts into universals
26. **Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto**, dividing the kingdom of **Saturn**, do not receive that kingdom from **Saturn** except through the mediation of **Jupiter** as the creator.
27. Under the first of the ducal trinity there is substantial being; every noble soul not subject to generation belongs to the first mobile of fire, to the highest region of air above the earth, and especially to the eastern part.
28. Under the **second of the ducal trinity** there is **life and generation**. Every soul that comes under generation belongs to the wandering sphere, to water and the lowest part of the air, to subterranean regions, and to the middle part of the earth around the center.
29. Under the **third of the same order** there is the division of particular things: the **conversion of souls**, the **purification of souls**, the sphere of active and passive principles, and the earth with what lies around **Tartarus** and toward the western region.
30. If the **second trinity of the supermundane gods** is taken as a whole, it is called **Proserpina**; yet its unity is named in its parts:
  - among the Greeks: first **Diana**, second **Persephone**, third **Minerva**
  - among the barbarians: first **Hecate**, second **soul**, third **power**
31. According to the preceding conclusion, from the mind of **Proclus** one of the sayings of **Zoroaster** can be explained as it is read among the Greeks, although among the **Chaldeans** it is read and interpreted differently.
32. The **third trinity of the supermundane gods** is called **Apollo**, and to it is appropriated the **conversive power**.
33. Alongside the trinity of **Proserpina** there accompanies a custodial and conserving trinity.
34. The **twelve gods** spoken of in the *Phaedrus* are intermediate between the supermundane and the mundane gods, as the bond between them.
35. The gods mentioned in the *Phaedrus* are divided into **four trinities**:
  - the **opificative**
  - the **custoditive**
  - the **vital**
  - the **conversive**
36. There are four hosts of the younger gods:
  - the first dwells from the highest heaven to the beginning of the air
  - the second from there to the middle of the air

- the third from there to the earth
37. To each of these corresponds proportionally a fourfold host of angels, demons, and souls.
  38. In that which lives essentially there first appears a quaternity: of being, of the ental, and of the unial.
  39. The **Maker (Opifex)**, looking to the quaternity, fabricates in that which lives essentially the four principal parts of the world.
  40. Insofar as the **Maker** looks to the exemplar of the one form in that which lives essentially, **He** produces the **first part of the body of the world**.
  41. Insofar as the **Maker (Opifex)** sees in the form of the one the unity of essential being, **He** produces the **mundane gods** of that part; insofar as **He** considers the being of that same essential unity, **He** produces **angels**; insofar as **He** sees the unity of unified being, **He** produces **demons**; and insofar as **He** considers the being of unified being, **He** produces **animals** there.
  42. The **Maker** produces the other parts proportionally according to the exemplars of their forms, as was said of the first; nor is it necessary to explain further, since anyone who understands can derive the way of analogy for himself.
  43. Toward the **wise, beautiful, and good Lord** we ascend by:
    - **intellect**
    - **love**
    - **faith**
  44. Just as faith understood as mere belief is below knowledge, so **true faith** is supersubstantially above knowledge and intellect, immediately joining us to **God**.
  45. Just as not every body participates in soul, but only the perfected one, so not every soul participates in intellect, but only the perfected; yet all participate in the **one**.
  46. According to the order of causality and the elevation of nature, these exceed one another in order: **Soul → Intellect → Life → Being → One**
  47. Every **middle order** remains stably in what precedes it and establishes what follows within itself.
  48. Just as the **first trinity after the One** is all things intelligibly, in a measured and bounded way, so the **second trinity** is all things vitally, truly, and infinitely; the third is all things according to a mixed property and beautifully.
  49. The **first trinity** remains; the **second** remains and proceeds; the **third**, after procession, reverts.
  50. **Aevum** is above the essentially living being in the **second and middle trinity**.
  51. Just as intelligible things are the causes of universal orders, so intellectual things are the causes of divisions: supermundane things differ according to common genera, and mundane things differ according to species and individuals.
  52. By the **supercelestial place** we understand that in the second trinity there is more that is **intelligible** than intellectual; by the **subcelestial concavity**, that there is more **intellectual** than intelligible; and by the **heaven**, that which participates equally in both principles.
  53. Whatever is affirmed in the *Phaedrus* about the **supercelestial place** is not said of it as simply first, but insofar as it has higher genera above it in which it participates; and whatever is said negatively is said insofar as it stands analogically to the **first good**, which is the absolute head of all things and not determined to this or that order.
  54. **Ambrosia** is analogous to the **limit**, and **nectar** to the **infinite**.

55. Just as the **perfect intellect** is to be sought from intelligible things, so the **upward-leading power** is from intellectual things; the operation that is absolute and separated from matter is from supermundane realities; the winged life is from the mundane; the expression of divine things is from the world; and the true fulfillment of what comes from divine inspiration comes from the angelic choirs, and from good demons.

## Section Review

**Proclus** (412–485) was a late antique Neoplatonic philosopher known for building the most elaborate metaphysical system in the Platonic tradition. Pico cites him here for positions on divine orders, cosmic production, symbolic theology, and the soul's ascent. Proclus is describing one ordered universe that unfolds downward from the highest principle through many intermediate levels and then rises back upward toward its source. That is why the section keeps moving through intelligibles, intellectual gods, supermundane and mundane powers, souls, demons, angels, and the visible world. The same patterns reappear at different levels, but in different modes. Higher realities remain more unified and causally powerful, while lower ones become more divided, mixed, and specific. The section is about how all levels of reality fit together in one chain of procession and return, not just about what each divine name means by itself.

Proclus then explains the basic laws by which this hierarchy works. What exists among intelligibles as **limit and infinity** appears lower down under other paired forms, so the same pattern keeps returning as reality descends. That is why he can say that **all things are in all things in their own mode**: lower levels are not cut off from higher ones, but each receives what is above in a way proper to itself. He also says that every order works through **remaining, procession, and return**. A thing first abides in its cause, then comes forth from it, and then turns back toward it. The same logic appears in his distinction between **immanent** and **transitive** activity. Higher things first contain their power within themselves, and then communicate it outward. Causation is therefore not crude pushing from one thing to another, but the orderly unfolding of what is already present more perfectly above into what appears more divided below.

Proclus also reads **Plato's** dialogues as one connected teaching. That is why he keeps matching terms from the *Parmenides*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Timaeus*. He thinks the same realities are being described under different images and at different levels. So when he says that what the *Parmenides* calls **otherness** is what the *Phaedrus* calls the **supercelestial place**, or that the **back of heaven, depth, and axis** correspond to the **one**, the **whole**, and the **limit**, he is treating Plato's language as a symbolic map. The dialogues speak in different voices, but Proclus thinks they all belong to one divine science. That is why mythic names and philosophical terms can be read together rather than kept apart.

Proclus then turns to the divine orders themselves. Here the mythic names are not loose decoration. They mark ranks and jobs within the hierarchy. The name **God** belongs most fully to the highest God, but it can also be said in lesser ways of other divine and near-divine beings according to participation, contact, or likeness. From there the section moves through intelligible, intelligible-intellectual, intellectual, supermundane, and mundane orders. The higher the order, the more unified and universal it is. The lower the order, the more articulated and specialized it becomes. That is why names like **Saturn, Rhea, Jupiter, Apollo, Proserpina**, and the **Curetes** matter. They name positions inside the order of reality and the kind of work done there. Some powers contain, some perfect, some produce, some guard, some give being, some give life, and some turn lower things back toward their source. That is why Proclus pays such close attention to inner structures like the **intellectual hebdomad**, the **Curetes** as immaculate gods, the mediating role of **Rhea**, and the fourfold ways divine making descends into the world: even within the hierarchy, order itself is internally ordered. So even in mythic language, the section is mapping divine functions.

Proclus then explains how the world is produced from higher models. The **Maker** does not shape the cosmos by blind force or by inventing forms from nothing. He looks upward to a higher living pattern and produces the world as its image. That is why the section speaks of a **quaternity** appearing first in what lives essentially, and of the Maker looking to that higher structure in order to fashion the four principal parts of the world. The same logic explains why different orders of beings come forth in different ways. Gods, angels, demons, and animals are not all made on one flat level. They arise according to different ways of sharing in higher unity, being, and form. The visible cosmos is an ordered copy of a higher reality, produced through several levels of patterned making rather than by one simple act.

Proclus then shows how these higher orders govern the visible cosmos through many middle ranks. The **supermundane gods** stand above the world and embrace it according to cause, not as parts inside it. Below them come more articulated ruling orders, including the **ducal trinity**, where **Jupiter** gives being, **Neptune** gives life, and **Pluto** turns things back through division, purification, and return. That is why the same divine names can appear at different levels: they name functions and offices, not just isolated figures. The hierarchy then becomes cosmic and geographic. Different kinds of souls, powers, and regions belong under different divine rules. That is why even fire, air, water, earth, East, West, and the regions near **Tartarus** reflect different kinds of causal order: different regions symbolize different divine functions. The same pattern continues with the younger gods and the corresponding hosts of angels, demons, and souls. The world is not reached by divine power in one step. It is governed through a long chain of intermediaries, each receiving from above and handing on to what is below.

Proclus ends by turning the whole hierarchy into a path of return. We ascend toward the highest Lord by **intellect, love, and faith**. Here faith does not mean mere belief. Ordinary belief stands below knowledge, but **true faith** stands above knowledge and intellect because it joins the soul more directly to **God**. Not every body shares in soul, and not every soul shares in intellect, except in a perfected way, while all things still share in the **one**. The upward order is therefore **Soul → Intellect → Life → Being → One**. The soul rises by retracing the order through which reality first came down. Even the final symbolic terms belong to this same structure. **Aevum** names a higher kind of enduring life beyond ordinary change. The last images then describe how different levels of reality stand in different relations to intelligibility and divine life. The **supercelestial place**, the **subcelestial concavity**, and **heaven** describe different balances of the intelligible and the intellectual. **Ambrosia** and **nectar** again express the paired pattern of **limit** and **infinity**. Each level of reality gives its own power for ascent, so that the soul is led upward not by escaping the hierarchy, but by receiving help from every level within it. The final point is that no single mode of ascent exhausts the return: intelligibles perfect intellect, intellectuals give upward-leading power, supermundane realities separate from matter, mundane realities wing the soul, and angelic and daemonic orders mediate inspired fulfillment below.

**This section presents a universe of procession and return: the same divine patterns unfold through many levels of reality, the world is shaped by higher models through ordered intermediaries, and the soul rises back upward toward the One through intellect, love, and faith.**

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## Conclusions According to the Mathematics of Pythagoras — 14

1. **The One, otherness, and that which is** are the causes of numbers: the **One** of unities, **otherness** of generative principles, and **that which is** of substances.

2. In participated numbers there are some that are **species of numbers**, and others that are **unions of species**.
3. Where point-like unity falls into the otherness of duality, there first is the triangle.
4. Whoever knows the order of **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12** will grasp exactly the distribution of providence.
5. Through the **One**, the **Three**, and the **Seven**, we recognize in **Pallas** the unifying power of distinction, the causative power of the intellect, and the beatifying power of the intellect.
6. The three proportions — **arithmetic**, **geometric**, and **harmonic** — signify to us the three daughters of **Themis**, symbols of judgment, justice, and peace.
7. Through the secret of the straight, reflected, and refracted ray in the science of perspective, we are instructed concerning the threefold nature: intellectual, animal, and corporeal.
8. The relation of **reason to desire** has the proportion **diapason**.
9. The **irascible power** to desire has the proportion of the **diapente**.
10. The relation of **reason to anger** has the proportion of **diatessaron**.
11. The judgment of **sense in music** is not to be employed, but only that of the intellect.
12. In numbering forms we ought not to exceed **forty**.
13. Every planar equilateral number symbolizes the soul.
14. Every lineal number symbolizes the gods.

## Section Review

**Pythagoras of Samos** (c. 570–495 BC) was a Greek philosopher associated with the view that number lies at the root of order. Pico uses Pythagorean mathematics here as a symbolic way of reading reality. Numbers, proportions, and figures are treated not as inventions laid over things from outside, but as signs of how reality is structured from within.

That is why the section begins with **the One**, **otherness**, and **that which is** as causes of number. The **One** gives unity, **otherness** gives multiplicity and generation, and **that which is** gives stable substance. Some numbers are basic species, while others are compounds of species. The line about point-like unity falling into the otherness of duality and first becoming the triangle means that once unity enters plurality in a stable way, the first complete figure appears. The sequence **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12** is treated the same way: as a number order that reveals the structure of providence.

From there, mathematics becomes symbolic theology. Through the **One**, the **Three**, and the **Seven**, Pico reads in **Pallas** three powers of intellect: unifying, causative, and beatifying. The three mathematical proportions, **arithmetic**, **geometric**, and **harmonic**, become symbols of the three daughters of **Themis** and so of judgment, justice, and peace. Even optics is drawn into the same pattern, with the straight, reflected, and refracted ray signifying intellectual, animal, and bodily nature.

The same symbolic logic governs music. The relations of **reason**, **desire**, and **anger** are expressed through musical intervals, so the soul itself is read as a harmony. That is why Pico says music must be judged by intellect rather than by sense alone. The ending narrows the symbolism further: forms should not be numbered beyond **forty**, **planar equilateral numbers** symbolize the soul, and **lineal numbers** symbolize the gods.

This section presents mathematics as symbolic order: number, proportion, and figure reveal the structure of providence, the soul, and divine reality.

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## Conclusions According to the Opinion of the Chaldean Theologians — 6

1. The **principal order of separate things** is not the first, as the **Egyptians** suppose; rather **above it there is a fontal order, unially super-exalted**.
2. **Fate** is not the necessity of a first seminal power; rather it is an intellectually participated relation of rational living beings, descending from higher things and unavoidable from lower things.
3. The **substantial qualities of visible things** do not arise from a particular separated power, as the **Egyptians** believe; rather they result from the first receptacle of the fountain of lights, dependently through an animate splendor.
4. **Partial souls are not illuminated immediately**, as the **Egyptians** say; rather they are illuminated **through mediating total souls, which are daemonic, by intellectual splendor**.
5. The **coordination of intelligible things** is not contained within the coordination of intellects, as **Amosis the Egyptian** claimed; rather it exists **above every intellectual hierarchy, in the abyss of the first unity**, and is **hidden under the obscurity of the first darkness in an inparticipable mode**.
6. Whatever is **above the moon is pure light**, and that light is the substance of the mundane spheres. Very close. The content is strong, but those three phrases I flagged still make it slightly less clean than it could be. I would change them.

### Section Review

The **Chaldean theologians** are presented here as placing the first source of reality even higher than some rival traditions do, especially the **Egyptians**. Pico uses them for positions on the highest divine orders, fate, light, soul, and the structure of the cosmos. The whole section argues that what some people treat as first is not really first, because what seems first is still derived from something higher.

That is why the section begins by denying that the principal order of separate beings is the highest order. Above it stands a **fontal** order, meaning a source from which lower orders flow. It is called **unially super-exalted** because it stands closer to pure unity than to multiplicity. The same correction appears again in the line about intelligible things. Their order is not contained within the order of intellects. It stands above every intellectual hierarchy, in the abyss of first unity, beyond participation and beyond direct grasp. The language of **first darkness** does not mean evil here. It means highest hiddenness: the first source is too elevated to be clearly seen by lower powers.

The same pattern governs fate and illumination. **Fate** is not some first seed-like necessity rising from below. It is a lower law descending from higher realities and binding rational lives at the lower level. So fate is not the highest cause. It is already a lower expression of a higher order. The same is true of illumination. **Partial souls**, meaning individual souls, are not lit directly by the highest source. They are illuminated through **total**

**souls**, higher mediating souls described here as **daemonic**, meaning intermediary spiritual powers. Light descends through ranks rather than being given all at once.

That same descending order explains the visible world. The substantial qualities of visible things do not come from one separate power assigned just to them. They flow from the first receptacle of the fountain of lights through an animate splendor, meaning through a living mediation of light. So even visible qualities are traced back to higher light through intermediaries. The last line extends that luminous picture to the heavens: whatever is above the moon is pure light, and that light is the substance of the heavenly spheres. The heavens are not just bright. Their very being is made of light.

**This section presents a hierarchy of hidden source and mediated descent: the highest order stands above intellect itself, fate is a lower binding law derived from higher things, souls are illuminated through spiritual intermediaries, and the visible cosmos ultimately depends on descending orders of light.**

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## Conclusions According to the Ancient Doctrine of Mercury Trismegistus — 10

1. Wherever there is **life**, there is **soul**; and wherever there is **soul**, there is **mind**.
2. Every bodily motion, and every mover is incorporeal.
3. The **soul** is in the body, the **mind** in the soul, and in the mind is the **Word**; and **God** is the **Father** of these.
4. **God** is around all things and through all things; **mind** around the soul; **soul** around the air; and **air** around matter.
5. Nothing in the world is **without life**.
6. Nothing in the universe is capable of death or corruption.

**Corollary:** Everywhere life, everywhere providence, everywhere immortality.

7. By six ways **God** announces future things to man: through dreams, portents, birds, entrails, spirit, and the **Sibyl**.
8. The true is that which is not disturbed, not determined, not colored, not figured, not shaken, naked, clear, comprehensible by itself, unchangeable, good, and utterly incorporeal.
9. There are ten avengers within each person: ignorance, sorrow, inconstancy, desire, injustice, luxury, deception, envy, fraud, anger, rashness, and malice. [more than ten are listed in the text]
10. The ten avengers mentioned in the previous conclusion, according to **Mercury**, a deep contemplator will see to correspond badly to the denary coordination in **Kabbalah** and to its governors, concerning whom I placed nothing in the Kabbalistic conclusions, because it is a secret.

## Section Review

**Mercury Trismegistus** teaches a universe that is alive through and through. Pico draws on the ancient Hermetic picture of reality as a chain of life descending from **God** through **mind, soul**, and the world. Nothing is wholly dead, because everything exists within a living order.

That is why the section begins by linking **life, soul**, and **mind**. Where there is life, there is soul; where there is soul, there is mind. The same order appears again when Pico says the **soul** is in the body, the **mind** in the soul, the **Word** in the mind, and **God** as Father over all. It appears in a cosmic form as well: **God** is around all things and through all things, **mind** around the soul, **soul** around the air, and **air** around matter. Reality is arranged as nested levels, with the higher containing and surrounding the lower.

This is why bodily motion is said to come from an incorporeal mover. Body does not explain itself. Motion ultimately comes from life and soul, not from matter alone. The same principle governs the whole cosmos. Nothing in the world is without life, and nothing in the universe is capable of death or corruption in the deepest sense. The point is not that visible things never change, but that reality as a whole remains pervaded by life, providence, and immortality.

Corollary : everywhere life, everywhere providence, everywhere immortality.

The section then turns to knowledge and revelation. **God** can announce future things in many ways: through dreams, portents, birds, entrails, spirit, and the **Sibyl**. The point is that the world is full of channels through which higher realities can be disclosed. The definition of the true fits the same outlook. Truth is described as what is undisturbed, uncolored, unfigured, unshaken, clear, comprehensible by itself, and incorporeal. In other words, the truest reality is what is least mixed with bodily change, material disturbance, and lower determination.

The final two conclusions turn inward. The “avengers” within a person are vices and disorders that punish the soul from within: ignorance, sorrow, desire, injustice, deception, anger, and the rest. The text calls them ten, though more than ten are actually listed, which suggests either compression or textual looseness in the source. The last line says these inner disorders mirror, in a corrupted way, a Kabbalistic denary order and its governors. The point is that moral disorder also has structure, just as higher reality does, though here Pico refuses to explain the comparison openly because he treats it as secret.

**This section presents a living universe: higher realities contain lower ones, motion and life come from incorporeal principles, truth belongs to what is most stable and immaterial, and even inner vice reflects a hidden order within the soul.**

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## Conclusions According to the Secret Doctrine of the Hebrew Kabbalists — 47

1. Just as a **man and lower priest** sacrifices to **God** the souls of irrational animals, so **Michael, the higher priest**, sacrifices the souls of rational beings.
2. There are nine hierarchies of angels, whose names are: **Cherubim, Seraphim, Hasmalim, Haiot, Aralim, Tarsisim, Ophanim, Tephshraim, Isim**.
3. Although the **ineffable name** is a property of **mercy (clemency)**, it must not be denied that it also contains the property of **judgment**.
4. The **sin of Adam** was the **cutting off (truncation) of the kingdom** from the other plants.

5. With the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in which the first man sinned, **God** created the world.
6. The **great north (aquilo)** is the universal source of all souls, just as other “days” are sources of some souls but not all.
7. When **Solomon** says in his prayer in the *Book of Kings*, “Hear, O heaven,” by **heaven** we must understand the **green line (linea viridis)** which circles the universe.
8. Souls descend **from the third light to the fourth day**, and from there to the fifth; and from there, going out, they enter into the night of the body.
9. By the **six days of Genesis** we must understand the **six extremities of the building**, proceeding from **Bresith**, just as cedars proceed from **Lebanon**.
10. It is more correct to say that **Paradise is the whole structure** rather than the tenth; and in its midst is placed the **great Adam**, who is **Tipheret**.
11. It is said that from **Eden** a river flows which is divided into four heads, signifying that from the **second enumeration** proceeds the **third**, which is divided into the fourth, fifth, sixth, and tenth.
12. It will be true that **all things depend on fate**, if by fate we understand the **highest fate**.
13. Whoever knows in **Kabbalah** the **mystery of the gates of intelligence** will know the mystery of the great **Jubilee**.
14. Whoever knows the **southern property in the right-hand coordination** will know why the entire journey of **Abraham** is always toward the **south**.
15. Unless the name **Abraham** had been completed by the addition of the letter (ה) [**He**], **Abraham** would not have generated.
16. All who were before **Moses** prophesied through the unicorn hind (*cerva unicornis*).
17. Wherever Scripture speaks of the **love of male and female**, it mystically signifies the **union of Tipheret with Chieneseth Israel**, or **Beth with Tipheret**.
18. Whoever is joined with **Tipheret at midnight**, **all generation will prosper for him**.
19. The **same letters** belong to the name of the **cacodemon (prince of this world)** and to the name of **God**, the **Triagrammaton**; and whoever knows how to **order their transposition** can derive one from the other.
20. When the **light of the non-luminous mirror** becomes like that of the **luminous mirror**, **night will be as day**, as **David** says.
21. Whoever knows the property that is the **secret of darkness** will know why **evil demons harm more at night than by day**.
22. Although there are many coordinations of chariots, with respect to the **mystery of the phylacteries** there are **two chariots** to be ordered:
  - from the **second, third, fourth, and fifth** is made one chariot, corresponding to the **four phylacteries worn by Vau**
  - from the **sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth** is made the second chariot, corresponding to the **phylacteries worn by the final He**
23. Above the **property of penitence**, the word “**said**” is not to be used.
24. When **Job** says, “**He** makes peace in his heights,” he understands **water as southern** and **fire as northern**, and their governors, **of which nothing further is to be said**.

25. **Bresith** means “in the beginning **He** created,” as if one were to say “in wisdom **He** created.”
26. What the **Chaldean** said, “**with the eternal**,” refers to the **thirty-two paths of wisdom**.
27. Just as the **gathering of waters** is called the **just**, so the **sea**, toward which all rivers flow, is **divinity**.
28. By the **bird created on the fifth day**, we must understand **worldly angels** who appear to humans, not those that appear only in spirit.
29. The **four-letter name of God**, expressed through the letters **Mem, Şade, Pe, and Şade**, is to be **appropriated to the kingdom of David**.
30. No **angel having six wings** is ever transformed.
31. **Circumcision** is given for liberation from **impure forces** that move about us.
32. Therefore **circumcision is performed on the eighth day**, because it is higher than the universal bride.
33. There are **no letters in the whole Law** whose forms, combinations, separations, distortions, directions, defects, excesses, diminutions, augmentations, crownings, closures, openings, and order do not manifest the **secrets of the ten numerations**.
34. Whoever understands why it is said that **Moses** hid his face, and that **Hezekiah** turned his face to the wall, will know what the disposition and habit of the one who prays ought to be.
35. No **spiritual thing descending below** operates **without a garment (indumentum)**.
36. The **sin of Sodom** was the **cutting off of the final plant**.
37. By the **secret of early-morning prayer**, we must understand nothing other than the **property of piety**.
38. Just as **fear is externally inferior to love**, so **internally it is superior to love**.
39. From the preceding conclusion we understand why in *Genesis* **Abraham** is praised for fear, though we know he did all things from love through the property of piety.
40. Whenever we are ignorant of the **property from which an influx proceeds** regarding what we ask, we must **have recourse to the lord of the nose (dominus naris)**.
41. Every **good soul** is a **new soul coming from the East**.
42. Therefore **Joseph** was buried with his bones only and not with his body, because his bones were the virtues and powers of the superior tree called **Sadich**, flowing into the higher earth.
43. Therefore **no one knows the tomb of Moses**, because he was **exalted in the higher Jubilee**, and **beyond the Jubilee he cast down his roots**.
44. When the soul has grasped all that it can grasp and is joined to a **higher soul**, it will **cast off its earthly garment**, be **uprooted from its place**, and be **united with divinity**.
45. The **wise of Israel**, after the cessation of prophecy, prophesied by the spirit, through the daughter of the voice.
46. The **king of the earth is not punished on earth** unless the **heavenly host is first humbled in heaven**.
47. Through the word “**Amen**”, the order is expressed by which the influxes of the numerations proceed.

## Section Review

This part of the **Kabbalistic** section turns from broad sacred architecture to the way that architecture is carried in **creation, letters, ritual, prayer, kingship, and the soul's return**. The main idea is that none of these things stands alone. **Bresith** is read not just as "in the beginning," but as creation **in wisdom**, and the phrase "with the eternal" is tied to the **thirty-two paths of wisdom**, so creation is understood as flowing through an ordered network of divine channels rather than beginning in a mere moment of time. The same symbolic reading governs the **gathering of waters**, the **sea**, and the **bird of the fifth day**: the gathered waters signify the just, the sea signifies divinity as the final receiving fullness, and the bird signifies **worldly angels** who appear to human beings. Even sacred rule is read through names, since a four-letter divine name is appropriated to the **kingdom of David**, and the six-winged angel marks a stable order that does not pass into another state.

The next group of conclusions shows that **rites and letters are active parts of the divine order**, not mere reminders. The same seriousness is given to the letters of the Law: their shapes, combinations, defects, augmentations, closures, openings, and crowns all manifest the **ten numerations**. That means **Scripture itself** is part of the sacred structure, not just a report about it. The line about **Moses** hiding his face and **Hezekiah** turning to the wall extends that logic to prayer, teaching that even the posture and inward habit of the one who prays must match the divine order being sought. And when the text says that no spiritual thing descends below without a **garment**, it means that higher powers must take on some lower vehicle, form, or mode in order to act in this world. Within that same ritual logic, **circumcision** is given for liberation from impure surrounding forces, and its placement on the **eighth day** marks it as belonging to a higher order than the ordinary cycle below.

The section then treats **sin, piety, fear, and love** as structural placements within that same order. The **sin of Sodom**, like the sin of Adam earlier, is described as a **cutting off**, meaning a rupture within the living planting rather than just a private moral failure. Early-morning prayer is identified with the **property of piety**, so devotion is a matter of right spiritual alignment. The lines on **fear** and **love** are especially striking. Outwardly, fear seems lower than love; inwardly, it is said to be higher, because reverent fear preserves a deeper rootedness before the divine. That is why **Abraham** can be praised for fear even though he acts from love through piety. The strange instruction to seek the **lord of the nose** when the source of an influx is unknown seems to mean that when a spiritual motion is hard to identify, one must turn to the governing power associated with breath, scent, or discernment. The exact image remains obscure, but the direction is clear: spiritual origin must be rightly discerned, not guessed at.

The final conclusions turn toward **souls, prophecy, judgment, and exaltation**. Every good soul is called a **new soul from the East**, linking goodness with source, light, and renewal. **Joseph's bones** are read not as mere remains but as abiding virtues and powers of the superior tree, flowing into the higher earth. **Moses's hidden tomb** means that he rose beyond ordinary localization, exalted in the **higher Jubilee** and rooted beyond it. When the soul has grasped all it can and joins itself to a **higher soul**, it casts off its earthly garment and is united with divinity. Prophecy, even after its older form ceased, continues in a lesser but real mode through spirit and the **daughter of the voice**. Earthly judgment is also shown to depend on higher order first: the king of the earth is not punished below until the heavenly host is first humbled above. And the last word, **Amen**, expresses the very order by which the influxes of the numerations proceed, so even assent becomes a sign of sacred structure.

**This section presents a sacred order in which creation, letters, rites, prayer, fear, prophecy, kingship, and the soul's return all follow the same law of influx and alignment: higher powers descend through**

**fitting forms, lower acts matter because they carry higher structure, and the soul rises by being rightly ordered within that divine pattern.**

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I now present **five hundred conclusions according to my own opinion**, which are distinguished by a **tenfold division** into:

- **Physical**
- **Theological**
- **Platonic**
- **Mathematical**
- **Paradoxical**
- **Chaldean**
- **Orphic**
- **Magical**
- **Kabbalistic**

In all of these, I have asserted **nothing either definitively or even probabilistically**, except what either seems **probable to me** or what the **Holy Roman Church** declares.

The **Supreme Pontiff Innocent VIII**, to whose judgment all must submit, has established that those who **do not submit their intellect to his judgment** are **not to be considered sound in understanding**.

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## Conclusions Paradoxical — 17

**According to my own opinion, reconciling doctrines first of Aristotle and Plato, then of other doctors who seem most to disagree**

1. There is **no natural or divine question** in which **Aristotle and Plato do not agree in sense and reality**, even if they seem to differ in words.
2. Those who say that **innascibility** is a positive property constituting the **Father** in an incommunicable hypostatic being **do not disagree at all with the holy doctor**, though they appear to differ in words.
3. On the positing of the **sixth notion, inspirability, Thomists and Scotists should not disagree**, if they properly understand the foundations of their own doctors.
4. On the **subject of theology, Thomas, Scotus, and Giles fundamentally and radically agree**, although in branches and verbal expression each seems greatly to differ from the others.

5. On the question **whether there is one being in Christ or several**, I say that **Scotus and Thomas do not disagree**.
6. On the **distinction from the nature of the thing (distinctio ex natura rei)**, Thomists and Scotists **should not disagree**, if they understand their doctors fundamentally.
7. On the **distinction of attributes**, **Thomas and Scotus do not disagree**.
8. In this precise question, stripped of its appendices, **whether an angel can desire divine equality simply**, **Thomas and Scotus do not disagree at all**.
9. In the matter of **whether what is first known is more or less universal**, **Thomas and Scotus agree**, though they are thought to disagree most; on this I set down three conclusions from both their views.
10. Concerning a thing **conceived nominally**, the first concept we have is the **most universal concept**.
11. Concerning a thing **conceived definitively**, the first concept we have is likewise the **most universal concept**.
12. In the **most distinct cognition**, what is known last are the **most universal predicates**.
13. The opinion of the **Commentator (Averroes) on indeterminate dimensions** does not conflict with the principles and foundations of the doctrine of **St. Thomas**.
14. On the matter of the **object of the intellect**, **Thomas and Scotus do not disagree as is commonly thought**, but rather agree.
15. On the question of **contingency to either alternative** in matters of **chance and fortune**, **Averroes and Avicenna** do not disagree in reality or fundamentally, though on the surface and in words they seem opposed.
16. On whether a **composite body is received by the physicist from the metaphysician**, **Averroes and Avicenna cannot fundamentally disagree**, even if they differ in wording.
17. On the manner in which angels are in a place, **Thomas and Scotus** do not differ.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico is no longer mainly listing doctrines. He is arguing that many disputes are larger in appearance than in reality. Thinkers often seem to disagree because they use different terms, begin from different angles, or frame the same issue differently. That is why he opens with the largest claim first: **Aristotle and Plato do not truly disagree in sense and reality on any natural or divine question**, even if they appear to differ in words. The rest of the section applies that same method to later schools. Pico's point is that real contradiction is rarer than it looks once doctrines are reduced to their principles.

That reconciliatory method is then applied across the main controversies. **Thomas, Scotus, and Giles** are said not to differ fundamentally on questions such as **innascibility, inspirability, the subject of theology, the being of Christ, the distinction from the nature of the thing, the distinction of attributes**, and even whether an **angel can desire divine equality simply**. The same strategy governs the paradox about what is first known: with respect to a thing conceived **nominally or definitively**, the mind first grasps the most universal concept, while in the most distinct cognition the most universal predicates are known last. Pico then extends the same claim beyond the Latin schools, saying that **Averroes and Avicenna** do not truly disagree on **chance and fortune** or on the relation of the **physicist** to the **metaphysician**, and that the

**Commentator's** view of **indeterminate dimensions** does not conflict with **St. Thomas**. So the section as a whole is a program of intellectual reconciliation: thinkers who appear most opposed often agree in structure and reality once verbal differences are stripped away.

**This section presents philosophical reconciliation: apparent disputes often dissolve when questions are reduced to their foundations, and thinkers who seem opposed in wording may agree in sense, structure, and reality.**

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## Philosophical Conclusions According to My Own Opinion — 80

**Although these differ from the common philosophy, they do not depart much from the common method of philosophizing**

1. From a **species existing in the external sense**, a **universal species may be immediately abstracted**.
2. A **second intention** is a **being of reason**, having itself by way of a qualitative form, proceeding from the operation of the intellect **consequentially, not efficiently**.
3. Neither the **first intention** nor the **second intention** exists **subjectively anywhere**.
4. In bodies one arrives at something which **locates corporeally yet is not itself located** — and this is the outermost sphere; likewise in intelligibles one arrives at something which **locates intelligibly yet is in no way located**, and this is **God**.  
**Corollary:** One must not ask how the outermost sphere is located, but must absolutely concede that **it is not located**.
5. The **singular is not understood by the intellect**, neither according to truth nor even according to the opinion of **Aristotle**, the **Commentator**, and **Thomas**.
6. Although the intellect does not understand **singularly**, nevertheless it is through the intellect that the **singular is perfectly known**.
7. Every thing whatsoever, **established in the purity of its being**, is at once **intelligent, intellect, and understood**.
8. From the preceding it follows why **matter is the principle of unknowability**, and the **agent intellect the principle of knowability**.
9. An **immanent action** is that which is not subjectively in that which is denominated as passive by it, and by this it is distinguished from a **transitive action**.
10. Every other mode besides that given in the preceding conclusion is **insufficient to distinguish immanent from transitive action**.
11. When **Averroes** says there is no other means of proving the **abstract** except the **eternity of motion**, he does not mean any abstract thing whatsoever, but that which is **abstracted from body at the highest degree of abstraction**.

12. **Corporeal being** does not belong to a thing from any **substantial form** or from a degree of substantial form.
13. The **six transcendentals** posited by the common doctrine were **devised by later Latins**; neither the Greek **Peripatetics** nor **Aristotle** knew them.
14. According to **Aristotle**, it is necessary that the **first cause moves necessarily**.
15. It is **impossible and wholly irrational**, according to **Aristotle**, that all things happen of necessity with respect to every cause, however that necessity is taken.
16. The **treatise of suppositiones** does **not belong to logic**.
17. The **world could not have been from God from eternity** by true efficient causality, which is a **reduction from potency to act**.
18. Yet the world **could be produced — and in fact was, according to Aristotle and the Commentator — eternally from God**, by an efficiency that is a natural flux and a consequential effect.
19. Whoever denies that the **heavens are animated**, such that their mover is not their form, not only contradicts **Aristotle** but **destroys the foundations of philosophy**.
20. In the acts of our intellect there is **no succession due to sensitive powers**, as the moderns think, but because the intellect itself is rational by its nature.
21. Newly acquired knowledge arises from prior knowledge as from a terminus a quo, and as from a partial efficient cause, a formal cause, a directive cause, and a material dispositive cause.
22. A **habit is practical** when it is formally **regulative of some operation** of the one who has the habit.
23. A **habit has both practical and speculative being** from the object as related to the subject in which it exists; but the **intellect is called practical or speculative from the end which the one possessing the habit proposes to himself**.
24. A **practical habit** is distinguished from a **speculative habit by its ends**.
25. **Praxis** is an operation that is **not formally cognition**; it can be right or not right, and is **capable of being rectified by habit** as by a partial effective cause of rectification by which the practitioner is habituated.
26. The **practical and the speculative** are **accidental differences of habit**.
27. The **theology of the wayfarer (viator)**, as such, must be said to be **simply practical**.
28. Medicine is wholly practical, as we assert to be true and consonant with the teaching of **Averroes**.
29. **Logic is practical**.
30. The **common sense (sensus communis)** is **not distinct** from sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.
31. We assert, as true — and as the opinion of the **Commentator** and **Albert** — that intelligible species are not given as abstracted from phantasms.
32. In every question demonstrable by science, one must **pre-know what the subject is and what the attribute (passion) is**, not merely **what the name signifies**, as commentators think, but **what the thing is**.
33. A **regress from cause to effect is possible without the negation** imagined by **Burley**.
34. Those who posit **minimal natural units in qualities** are not thereby forced to deny that **alteration occurs successively in time**.

35. It is necessary, according to **Averroes**, that the **form of the genus is really other than the form of the species**, and the opposite does not stand with the principles of his doctrine.
36. The demonstration in **Aristotle's** *Physics* VII that **whatever is moved is moved by another** does not prove what **Thomas, Scotus, Giles**, whom **John of Jandun** follows, **Gratiadeus, Burley**, and others whom I have read intend; but only this, as the **Commentator** very well said, though misunderstood by all the Latin expositors: that in every motion the **mover is other than the moved**, either in nature or in subject (*suppositum*).
37. The same demonstration in *Physics* VII proves clearly that the **heaven is not moved by itself**, given the principles of **Averroes**, which are indeed true and most firm.
38. The **order of the books of natural philosophy according to Aristotle** is this:
- the *Physics*
  - *On the Heavens and the World (De Caelo et Mundo)*
  - *On Generation and Corruption*
  - the *Meteorology*
  - *On Minerals*
  - *On Plants*
  - *On the Generation of Animals*
  - *On the Parts of Animals*
  - *On the Progression of Animals*
  - *On the Soul*
  - and then the books called the *Parva Naturalia*

**Corollary:** Those who call the *De Anima* the sixth book of the *Naturalia* **wholly depart from Aristotle's intention.**

39. Every explanation that preserves **Aristotle's** claim that **eastern winds are hotter than western**, except the explanation from the **animation of the heavens**, is **frivolous and null**.
40. Neither **Aristotle** nor the commentators have given **sufficient reasons for the saltiness of the sea**; nor, even granting Mosaic truth, can any more sufficient cause be assigned than the **causality of universal providence**, which also produced the uncovering of the earth.
41. No part of the **heaven differs from another as luminous and as non-luminous**, but only as **more and less luminous**.
42. The mode given by **Aristotle** for how **lower things are heated by higher** appears in no way to be correct.
43. These two stand together — and I believe both are true: that the **argument of Averroes** in the last book of the first part of the *Physics* against **Avicenna** concludes rightly, and that, at the same time, the arguments of **Avicenna** for proving the **first principle** are also good and effective.
44. If **Thomas** says that **intelligences are in a genus according to Aristotle**, he will contradict **Aristotle no less than himself**.
45. If the **unity of a genus** is not only on the side of the one conceiving, the intellect, but also on the side of the thing conceived, then whatever are in the same **logical genus** must also be in the same **physical genus**.
46. **Science is really relative**, and the knowable is related to it only accidentally.

47. Holding the common doctrine that something is formally predicated of **God**, I state two proximate conclusions, of which this is the first: that **God** alone is substance in such a way that **He** is in no way non-substance.
48. Second: **God** is not in a genus, because **He** is substance substantially.
49. To posit a difference between things like **snubness and whiteness**, or similar accidents, by saying that one is **separable** and the other **inseparable** from a subject, is **fictitious**.
50. The difference that appears among the aforesaid **accidents** arises solely from the will in the imposition of names.
51. It is necessary, according to **Averroes**, that **substance belongs to the intrinsic quiddity of accident**, and this opinion is most consonant with **Aristotle and philosophy**.
52. In the definition of **natural substances**, **matter ought not to be posited**, which is the opinion of **Averroes and Albert**.
53. If **Thomas** says that in **intelligences there are accidents according to Aristotle**, he contradicts **not only Aristotle but himself**.
54. These propositions are to be conceded as wholly true: that prime matter comes to be an ass, an ox, and the like.
55. In a **material composite** there are not two distinct entities precisely, but **one entity**.
56. Sound is not caused by the motion of air intercepted between two striking bodies, as **Aristotle** and his commentators hold, but by the contact of such bodies, from which, according to the kind of contact and the bodies involved, this or that sound is produced.
57. The arguments which the **Peripatetics** bring to prove that in **essentially ordered causes there is no infinite regress** do not necessarily prove the falsity of the opposing position.
58. The **sensitive power of the common sense** does not differ in subject, that is, in reality, from the powers of the **external senses** as stated earlier, nor from the powers of the internal senses — the imaginative, cogitative, and memorative powers — and this we assert as both **true** and in accord with **Aristotle and Plato**.
59. All the **qualities of the elements** are symbols of different species.
60. If a fourth figure of syllogisms is to be posited, it should be that proposed by **Galen**, not that which **Franciscus of Meyronnes** and **Petrus Mantuanus** have childishly fabricated; yet it is better to posit none.
61. It belongs to the **metaphysician** to treat of matter insofar as things are made from it per se, but to the **physicist**, insofar as things come to be from it accidentally, according to **Aristotle**.
62. An **exclusive term** added to one relative does **not exclude its correlative**.
63. One should not concede that a **part in a quantitative whole** is in any way **actually distinct in any way from its whole**.
64. The opinion attributed to **Avicenna** — that the one which is convertible with being is the principle of number, and thus that each thing is one by an **intention added to its essence** — is **not necessarily true**, but it is **probable and defended by me**.
65. Although the **intellective power in us** is an **accident**, in **angels** it is a **substance**.
66. **Formality** is an actuality naturally suited of itself to **perfect the possible intellect**.

67. If a **mixture** is produced from the concurrence of elements, then however one posits the elements as remaining, the mixture arises **from the elements**, as from matter disposed by a **spiritual heat**, with a vapor rising from them.
68. In all things **below God**, the **same matter** is the same according to essence, but **different according to being**.
69. The **quiddities of physical natures** can be conceived by an **adequate and proper concept without accidents**, whether considered by the **metaphysician or the physicist**.
70. An **organic body**, which is the matter of the soul and is placed in its definition by **Aristotle**, is a body and organic through a form essentially distinct from the soul which perfects it.
71. According to all philosophers, it must be said that **God necessarily acts whatever He acts**.
72. Whoever doubts that from the **intelligible and intellect** there is made something more truly and substantially one than from **matter and material form** is not a philosopher.
73. Holding the opinion of the **Commentator (Averroes)** on the intellective soul, it seems reasonable to maintain that the **intellective soul is the subject of no accidents**; this I defend as true, though I do not determine whether he himself held it.
74. With **Thomas**, I say that our beatitude consists in the reflex act of the intellect.
75. The definition of **celestial nature** includes both parts copulatively, that is, with “and,” not disjunctively, with “or.”
76. Just as every philosopher must say that the **sensitive powers are in the heart**, so every physician must say that they are **in the brain**.
77. What is said by the common school of all the Latin philosophers about the **first operation of the intellect** is an **error**, because there is **no other operation of the rational part** besides those two which they themselves call the second and third, namely composition and discursive reasoning.
78. Accidents must in no way be called beings, but rather “of a being.”
79. The **six principles** are **absolute forms**.
80. If there is any first and non-arbitrary language, many conjectures show that it is **Hebrew**.

## Section Review

In these conclusions, Pico is no longer reconciling other schools. He is laying down positions he takes as his own, even when they depart from common teaching. The section is wide-ranging, but its center is clear. Pico thinks later philosophy has burdened itself with too many added distinctions, multiplied faculties, and verbal devices, and that a stronger philosophy must cut back through that excess to first principles. That is why he ranges across **intellect, logic, nature, motion, matter, science, and God**. He is trying to restate the structure of philosophy in a leaner and more exact way.

That program governs the whole section. In questions of **intellect and logic**, he rethinks abstraction, intentions, the first operation of the intellect, immanent and transitive action, and the difference between practical and speculative habits. In doing so, he argues that many standard distinctions are looser or more inflated than they should be, which is why he can say such striking things as that **logic is practical** and that the theology of the wayfarer is simply practical. In questions of **nature and motion**, he defends the animation of the heavens, revises common readings of Aristotle’s physical demonstrations, and attacks familiar

explanations of sound, heat, mixture, and the natural world. In **metaphysics**, he takes equally hard lines on matter, substance, accident, genus, and God, denying several common scholastic ways of speaking and insisting on a tighter account of being. Throughout the section, **Averroes** is a major ally. Pico treats him as a key for recovering Aristotle from weak or confused Latin readings, especially on the heavens, the intellect, causality, matter, and the eternity question. The result is not a random set of provocations, but a philosophical platform: fewer fictive distinctions, stricter causes, stronger metaphysical lines, and a more disciplined account of intellect, nature, and being.

**This section presents Pico's own philosophical severity: later additions are cut away, causes are stated more exactly, and intellect, nature, being, and God are reordered through a harder and more unified discipline.**

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## Paradoxical Conclusions — 71

### According to my own opinion, introducing new doctrines in philosophy

1. Just as the **being of properties** is preceded by **quidditative being**, so **quidditative being** is preceded by **unial being**.
2. We cannot say that anything is predicated of a thing taken most precisely, by predication properly so called.
3. Whoever attains a thing in its **definition** attains it in **otherness**.
4. Only he who attains a thing in the **precision of its union** attains the thing **as it is in itself**.
5. The more eminent a mode of cognition is, the more it becomes **imperfect and useless** to a **disproportionate intellect**.
6. Just as knowledge acquired by **demonstration** is, for humans in this common state, the **most perfect**, so **absolutely among all cognitions it is the most imperfect**.
7. Just as **God** is simply cognition of the whole of being, so the **intellect** is the definition of the whole of being, and the **soul** the science of the whole of being.
8. If **theology** is taught theologically, it will be about **that which is unially one** as its first subject, and about whatever is according to its **unial being** as secondary.
9. True **metaphysics**, taught metaphysically, is about whatever is a **true form** as first subject, and about whatever is according to its **formal being** as secondary, in its mode of proceeding, setting aside demonstration.
10. Just as in a creature the inference does not hold: **"it is a being, therefore it exists"**; so in **God** it does not hold: **"it is, therefore it is a being."**
11. The same thing in a creature is called **being** according to its **actuality**, and **essence** according to its **determination**.
12. Just as an **angel** is necessarily composed of **essence and being**, so the soul is necessarily composed of substance and accidental determination.

13. **Contradictories** are compatible in the **intellectual nature**.
14. Although the preceding is true, it is more proper to say that contradictories are not in the intellectual nature, rather than that they are compatible.
15. **Contradictories coincide** in the **unial nature**.
16. **Aristotle** rightly established as a first principle that of any thing **one of the contradictories is predicated, and not both at once**.
17. In the **intellect** there is **this and that**, but not **this apart from that**.
18. Therefore in the **soul** there appears the incompatibility of contradictories, because it is a **primary quantity that places part outside part**.
19. Each thing in the **intellectual nature** has from its intelligible unity both that it unites all things to itself, and that it preserves its own pure and unmixed property.
20. The **selfhood (ipseity)** of each thing is most itself when **all things are in it in such a way that all things in it are itself**.
21. From these conclusions one can understand what the **homoeomeria of Anaxagoras** is, which the intellect, as craftsman, distinguishes.
22. No one should be surprised that **Anaxagoras** called intellect "**unmixed**," since in the intellectual nature the greatest mixture coincides with the greatest simplicity.
23. Just as **substantial forms** in the **second world** exist according to the mode of accidents, so **accidental forms** in the **first world** exist in the mode of **substances**.

**Corollary:** Just as in the **first world** there is not "white" but **whiteness**, so in the **second world** there is not "fire" but **fiery**.

24. It must not be said that in the **intellect** the ideas of fire, air, and water are **three distinct ideas**, but rather that they are a **ternary**.
25. Unless we destroy the **intellectual nature**, we cannot understand ideas as numbered except through the intimation of the idea of number through the others themselves, just as each is understood through all the others.
26. From the preceding conclusions it can be understood what the **formal number** is, which **Pythagoras** said to be the **principle of all things**.
27. Five **first categories** must be posited: **One, Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation (to another)**.
28. The diversity of beings is more rightly reduced to these **five** than to the **ten** proposed by **Archytas** and later **Aristotle**, or to the **five of Plotinus**, or the **four of the Stoics**.
29. The nature of the category of **one** is an absolute precision from everything extraneous.
30. The nature of the category of **substance** is the united perfection of a substance unparticipated.
31. The nature of the category of quantity is the extraposition of part to part.
32. The nature of the category of **quality** is the truth of denomination through inherent participation in the subject.
33. The nature of the category of **relation** is a certain imaginative being.
34. There is no **formal predicate unparticipated** which cannot be predicated in some way of an intelligence.

35. Just as it is truly said of the **intellect alone** that it is **fire, water, motion, and rest**, so it is truly said of the **soul alone** that it is cooled, heated, is at rest, and is moved.
36. Just as the **intellect of God multiplies unity**, so the **soul** multiplies and extends the multiplicity belonging to intellect.
37. The **first intelligible** coincides with the **first intellect**, and the **first knowable** with the **first knower**.
38. In **souls of a lower order**, reason operates according to the mode of sense; in **souls of a higher order**, sense operates according to the mode of reason.
39. That remarkable saying of the “barbarian,” companion of **nymphs and demons**, about **184 worlds in triangular form** with three angular unities and one at the center, is rightly understood if from **intelligible unity** we derive an **intellectual, animal, and seminal trinity**, and from these compute the parts of the world according to the first spherical number.
40. That the soul can, by a **purgative way**, without further study or investigation, through slight and easy comparison and attention to intelligibles already possessed, acquire a **perfect knowledge of all knowables**, must be granted not only by **Platonists**, but also by certain **Peripatetics**, especially those less strictly following **Averroes**.
41. Just as the common sense stands to the cognition of accidental qualities and material quantity, so reason stands to the cognition of substantial qualities and formal quantity, preserving the proportion that the former acts sensibly and the latter acts rationally.
42. The infinity of **God**, exceeding the intellectual order, can be proven only through the way of mystical theology, and every other way is ineffective.
43. The act by which the **angelic and rational nature** is made perfectly happy is **neither an act of intellect nor of will**, but a union of unity: that which is in the soul with alterity united to that which is without alterity.
44. **Aristotle**, in the *Metaphysics*, treats of **God** only in the **last chapter of Book XII**, beginning “Considerandum est etiam utrum universum habeat bonum.”
45. The **order of the books of the Metaphysics**, as arranged after the natural works by **Aristotle**, cannot be correct according to any process, whether compositive or resolute.
46. Given any **practicable object**, the operation that acts upon it is nobler than the one that merely **contemplates it**, all else being equal.
47. The text of **Aristotle** stating that **every soul is immortal** can be preserved better than that stating that every soul is mortal.
48. Besides the kinds of demonstration, namely *propter quid* and *simpliciter*, posited by **Aristotle** and the **Commentator**, there is a fourth kind of demonstration, which may be called a demonstration from convertibility, stronger than all the others.
49. It is more improper to say that **God** is intellect or intelligent than to say that the **rational soul is an angel**.
50. Matter alone suffices for that on account of which **Aristotle** and other philosophers posited privation among natural principles.

**Corollary:** Privation is not to be posited among natural principles.

51. Three are the principles of natural things: **matter, motion, and form**.

52. The same science is of **God, man, and prime matter**; and whoever has knowledge of one will have it of the others, preserving the proportion of extreme to extreme, of the middle to the extremes, and of the extremes to the middle.
53. Whoever denies **prime matter** neither contradicts sense nor denies natural reasoning.
54. To prove **prime matter**, one is made more certain by the way of numbers or by the way of **Catholic philosophy** than by any physical argument in which sense has a role.
55. Whoever has deeply and radically grasped the **order of the Hebrew language**, and knows how to preserve it proportionally in the sciences, will have the rule and measure for discovering anything knowable perfectly.
56. Besides the distinction of **thing and reason**, a third distinction must be posited, which I call the **distinction of inadequacy**.
57. The species of enmity, which are multiplied from the wolf to the sheep in the estimative power, are not species of any accident, but species of substance.
58. **Formality** is the **adequate object of the intellect**.
59. Wherever there is a nature composed of many natures actually remaining in it, there is always one that is more noble as substance, and the others as accidents.
60. The soul understands nothing except itself actually and distinctly.
61. The whole substance of the rational soul is the intellectual part.
62. The soul always understands **itself**, and in understanding itself, it in some way understands all beings.
63. Although in the soul there is actually an intellectual nature by which it agrees with an angel, and a rational nature by which it differs from it, nevertheless there is nothing intrinsic in it by which it can understand something distinct from itself without its proper species.
64. The **intellectual nature** in the rational soul differs from the pure intellectual nature precisely as a part differs from a whole.
65. Because the animal intellect differs from the purely intellectual intellect as a middle part, and not merely as a part, it is thereby more assimilated to the totality of intellect.
66. The soul can, through extrinsic information, come to this: that it understands **all things indivisibly through its own substantial form**.
67. To every **series of souls** there corresponds **one pure intellect**.
68. All **celestial souls** are **one in the first intellect**.
69. It is reasonable, according to philosophy, that **every series of living beings is beatified in its own proper intellect** — though this is said not assertively but as probable.
70. Given that there were three who said that all things are one — **Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Melissus** — whoever carefully examines their statements will see that **Xenophanes' One** is that which is simply one, **Parmenides' One** is not absolutely one, as commonly thought, but a being that is one, and **Melissus' One** is a one having an extreme correspondence with **Xenophanes' One**.
71. **Empedocles**, by **strife and friendship**, understood in the soul nothing other than the **powers leading upward and downward** in it; these I judge to correspond proportionally, in the science of **sephiroth**, to **eternity and beauty**.

## Section Review

In these conclusions, Pico is building a philosophical system of his own. He begins from the claim that ordinary metaphysical language does not reach what is deepest in things. The *being of properties* presupposes *quidditative being*, and quidditative being itself presupposes *unial being*. That is why a thing grasped in its *definition* is still grasped in *otherness*, while only a thing grasped in the *precision of its union* is grasped as it is in itself. The same order governs knowledge. For us, *demonstration* is the highest mode available in our present state, yet absolutely speaking it is low, because higher knowledge belongs less to discursive proof than to unified intellectual vision. From there Pico redraws the sciences themselves: *theology*, taught theologically, is about what is *unially one*, while true *metaphysics* is about *true form* and *formal being*.

This higher order changes how Pico treats **being, essence, intellect, soul, and contradiction**. In creatures, a thing is called **being** according to actuality and **essence** according to determination, so the two are not mere duplicates. Even spiritual creatures remain internally articulated: an **angel** is composed of **essence and being**, and the soul of substance and accidental determination. Pico then relocates contradiction by level. **Aristotle** is still right that one contradictory is predicated of a thing and not both at once, but that applies at the divided level. In the **intellectual nature**, opposites do not stand apart as they do below, and in the **unial nature** they coincide more deeply still. The **intellect** can hold **this and that**, but not **this apart from that**. Separation appears in the **soul**, because soul introduces a lower mode in which part is placed outside part. So contradiction belongs to divided reality, not to the highest unity.

From there the section unfolds unity into **form, number, category, and world-order**. Pico uses **Anaxagoras** to say that things are present together in intellect before they are distinguished out, which is why intellect can be called **unmixed** even though it contains all things in a higher way. In the **first world**, accidental forms exist in the mode of substances; in the **second world**, substantial forms exist in the mode of accidents. Ideas in intellect are therefore not numbered like separate items lying next to one another, but held together as formal unities such as a **ternary**. On that basis **formal number** becomes intelligible, the kind of number **Pythagoras** could treat as the principle of things. Pico then replaces the usual map of being with **five first categories: One, Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation**. Each is defined from a deeper metaphysical character rather than from ordinary logical convenience.

The same severity governs Pico's account of **nature, science, and method**. The soul can, by a **purgative way**, arrive at a perfect knowledge of knowables not by endless accumulation but by purification and right attention to intelligibles already possessed. **Reason** stands to substantial qualities and formal quantity as **common sense** stands to accidental qualities and material quantity. Yet even reason fails before the **infinity of God**, which can be proven only through **mystical theology**. Pico also reorders philosophy itself, adding a fourth and strongest kind of demonstration, a demonstration from **convertibility**. In natural philosophy he reduces the principles to **matter, motion, and form**, denying that **privation** must be posited as a real principle. He even says one may deny **prime matter** without contradicting sense, and that if one wishes to prove it, one is made more certain by **number** or **Catholic philosophy** than by physical argument tied to sense.

The last movement turns inward to the **rational soul** and then upward through the orders of intellect. The soul understands nothing **actually and distinctly** except itself, yet in understanding itself it understands all beings in some way. That is because the soul contains an **intellectual nature** by which it agrees with an angel, and a **rational nature** by which it differs from one. Through extrinsic information, however, the soul can come to understand all things indivisibly through its own substantial form. Pico then extends this beyond the individual. To every **series of souls** there corresponds **one pure intellect**, and all **celestial souls** are one

in the **first intellect**. This lets him reinterpret older philosophers from within the same hierarchy. **Xenophanes' One, Parmenides' One, and Melissus' One** do not mean the same thing, but point to different levels of unity. **Empedocles' strife and friendship** become upward and downward powers in the soul, which Pico then aligns proportionally with the science of the **sephirot**. So the section ends by gathering Greek philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, and mystical ascent into one graded structure of unity, division, and return.

**This section presents Pico's most ambitious constructive metaphysics: reality rises from divided being through soul and intellect toward unial unity, ordinary predication and demonstration belong to lower levels, nature and science must be rebuilt from stricter formal and causal principles, and the soul reaches perfection only by ascent into the higher intellectual and unial order.**

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## Conclusions in Theology — 31

**According to my own opinion, quite different from the common manner of speaking of theologians**

1. Whoever says that an **accident cannot exist unless it inheres** can still uphold the **sacrament of the Eucharist**, even while holding that the **substance of bread does not remain**, as the common view holds.
2. If the common doctrine of **supposition with respect to any creature** is maintained, I say that, **without the conversion of bread into the body of Christ, and without the annihilation of breadness**, it can come about that the body of **Christ** is on the altar according to the truth of the sacrament of the **Eucharist**. This is said **with respect to what is possible**, not to what actually is.
3. We hold, in accordance with theological truth, that the **ideal and formal reasons of things** are effectively from **God** and are first found formally in the first created intellect.

**Corollary:** Where things are **ideally**, they are **not formally**; where they are **formally**, they are **not ideally**.

4. If we posit that **God** knows creatures as a secondary object of **His** intuition, as is commonly said, then I say that the **Father** produces the **Word** prior to knowing creatures.
5. **Attributal perfections** do not signify **distinct rationes** that are in recto and principally definable or describable, either in **God** or in themselves when taken quidditatively.
6. The intuition of divine cognition is not formally terminated in creatures as **primary or secondary objects**, as the common school of theologians says, but in itself alone; and, intuiting nothing other than itself, neither primarily nor secondarily, it knows all things **unitively and eminently**, and more than equivalently.

**Corollary:** There is no multiplicity of intelligibles in **God**, nor do creatures, as understood, enter into number with the divine essence as understood. There is only one utterly simple intelligible.

7. The **three transcendentals** in which the image consists do not express **distinct rationes** that are in recto and principally definable or describable.

8. **Christ** did not truly descend into hell as to real presence, as **Thomas** and the common view hold, but **only as to effect**.
9. Although this seems **probable** to me, it should not be asserted stubbornly that the **soul of Christ** could have descended into hell by some other mode unknown to us.
10. The words of consecration, "this is my body," etc., are taken **materially, not significantly**.
11. If we grant the common view that **God** is attained by an act of intellect, I state two following conclusions, of which this is the first: that those who see the **Word**, by the act by which they attain the divine essence, do not attain creatures except eminently and equivalently to formal cognition. This equivalence belongs not to the act but to the object.
12. The blessed have a **twofold knowledge of creatures** formally attaining them:
  - one is illative from that by which they attain the **Word**
  - one according to which they contemplate the creature in the created thing
13. I do not assent to the common opinion of theologians who say that **God** can supposit any nature whatever, but I do concede this of **rational nature**.
14. Neither the **cross of Christ** nor any image is to be worshipped with **latria**, even in the way proposed by **Thomas**.
15. If **Adam** had not sinned, **God** would have been **incarnate**, but **not crucified**.
16. In the same **light** in which **John** saw the *Apocalypse*, he **did not understand the Apocalypse**.
17. The first sin of the angel was a sin of omission; the second, of lust; the third, of pride.
18. I say this probabilistically, and unless the common manner of speaking of theologians were against it, I would assert it firmly. Still, I assert it to be probable in itself: just as no one judges something to be so **precisely because he wills to judge it so**, so no one believes something to be true **precisely because he wills to believe it true**.

**Corollary:** It is not in the free power of man to believe an article of faith to be true when he wishes, or to believe it false when he wishes.

19. Unless there were sayings of the saints which, in the plain sense of their wording, seem to say the opposite, I would firmly assert this and the following conclusion. Nevertheless, I assert that they are probable and can reasonably be defended. The first is that mortal sin, in itself, is a finite evil.
20. The second is that to mortal sin of finite duration there is not due a punishment infinite in duration, but only a finite one.
21. Not every **divine will of good pleasure (voluntas beneplaciti)** is **efficacious**.
22. The saying of the Apostle, "**God wills all men to be saved**," is to be understood positively of the antecedent will of good pleasure.
23. The **antecedent will of God** can be described thus: it is that by which **God** gives someone the natural or antecedent means by which he can attain something, is ready to cooperate with him if he wills, and manifests nothing contrary to him by precept or counsel, permitting him freely to will to act toward the attainment of his salvation.
24. Holding the common view of theologians that **beatitude** is in the intellect or in the will, I state two conclusions, of which the first is this: that the intellect would not attain **beatitude** unless there were an act of will, which in this respect is more powerful than the very act of intellect.

25. The second conclusion is this: although the act of intellect formally attains the essence of the object of beatifying act, nevertheless that its act concerning that object is an act of **beatitude**, it has formally from the act of the will.
26. The **persons in the divine nature** are distinguished **numerically**.
27. The **personalities in the divine nature** are **primarily diverse**.
28. Theologically speaking, I say that in **aevum** there is **no formally intrinsic continuative succession**, but there is **terminative succession**. According to philosophers, however, I would speak otherwise.
29. It is **more reasonable to believe that Origen is saved** than to believe that he is damned.

## Section Review

In these theological conclusions, Pico pushes against the common school while claiming to preserve theological truth. He repeatedly distinguishes what doctrine strictly requires from the ordinary explanatory language theologians have built around it. That is why he is willing to challenge standard accounts of the **Eucharist**, **divine knowledge**, the **ideas of things**, the **image of God**, and even the way creatures are present to divine cognition. He says one may uphold the truth of the **Eucharist** without tying it to the usual account of accidents and inherence, and even treats the common explanation of transubstantiation as an explanation, not as the whole truth of the sacrament. In the same way, he says the ideal reasons of things are effectively from **God** but first formal in the **first created intellect**, and that God knows creatures not as a plurality of separate intelligibles beside the divine essence, but by knowing **Himself** unitively and eminently. This is why he also resists multiplying distinct definable rationes for the divine attributes and for the transcendentals in which the image consists.

The next group of theses rethinks **Christ**, **images**, **incarnation**, and **vision**. Pico denies that **Christ** descended into hell by real presence in the ordinary Thomist sense, though he cautiously leaves open some other unknown mode. He says the words of consecration are taken **materially**, not **significatively**, which shows how deep his reworking of sacramental language goes. He also says that those who see the **Word** do not formally know creatures by that same act, except eminently, unless there is a second formal cognition of creatures. In devotion he is equally severe: neither the **cross of Christ** nor any image should be worshipped with **latria**. He also denies that **God** can supposit just any nature whatever, while allowing this of **rational nature**. And when he says that **if Adam had not sinned, God would still have been incarnate, though not crucified**, he makes the **Incarnation** larger than a mere remedy for sin. Even his line on **John and the Apocalypse** serves the same distinction: to receive a divine light is not yet the same as to understand what is shown in it.

The sharpest conclusions concern **faith**, **sin**, **punishment**, **the divine will**, and **beatitude**. Pico says belief is not under the will in a crude voluntary sense: no one believes something true merely because he decides to believe it true. He also redescribes the angel's fall as moving from **omission** to **lust** and finally to **pride**. He also says **mortal sin**, considered in itself, is a **finite evil**, and that a sin of finite duration is not due a punishment infinite in duration, but a finite one. He marks this as probable, but the challenge is deliberate. The same severity appears in his treatment of **God's will**. Not every will of good pleasure is efficacious, and the saying that **God wills all men to be saved** must be taken positively of the antecedent divine will, by which God gives means, is ready to cooperate, and places no contrary obstacle before salvation. On **beatitude**, Pico says that even if one grants the common dispute over whether it lies in intellect or will, the act of intellect would not be beatifying without an act of will, and what makes the intellect's act be formally beatitude comes from the will. He then sharpens distinction again in the **Trinity**, saying the divine persons

are distinguished **numerically** and the personalities are **primarily diverse**. On **aevum**, he says there is no intrinsic continuative succession, only terminative succession. And the last line, that it is more reasonable to think **Origen** saved than damned, fits the whole section: where theology does not force a harsher conclusion, Pico refuses to let habit speak as necessity.

**This section presents Pico's theological severity: he cuts back common scholastic formulas, rethinks the Eucharist and divine knowledge without surrendering doctrine, treats faith and beatitude more sharply, takes divine willing seriously, and refuses to let inherited habits of speech decide questions of punishment, images, or salvation.**

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## Conclusions According to My Own Opinion — Number 62

In the doctrine of **Plato**, a few things are brought forward here, because the **first paradoxical conclusion** takes upon itself the whole doctrine of **Plato** to be discussed.

1. Through the triple numbers which **Plato** sets down in the *Timaeus*, in the triangle signifying the soul, we are instructed how far we must proceed in numbering forms according to the nature of that which is the first forming form. Through the double numbers set down there, we are instructed that, given two extreme terms, the means must be coordinated according to the nature of that which is the middle in the universe.
2. When it is asked by **Plato** whether the world was made according to a **generated exemplar** or an **ungenerated** one, nothing else is asked except whether it was made according to **animal reasons** or according to **intellectual Ideas**.
3. Whoever knows the mode of **illumination of higher things over middle things** will understand that the same thing is signified by the **Platonists** through the **gathering of souls on Mount Ida**, and by the **Hebrews** through the **gathering of souls on Mount Sinai in the hearing of the Law**.
4. Whoever knows that the notion of **cause** presupposes the notion of the **perfect** will understand, according to **Platonic** doctrine, why **Pherecides** said that **Jupiter** did not fashion the world before he was transformed into **love**.
5. **Empedocles**, by the **intelligible sphere contained in Venus**, understands nothing other than the **archetypal world**, contained by the order of the **first providence remaining within itself**.
6. Therefore **love** is said by **Orpheus** to be **without eyes**, because it is **above the intellect**.
7. When **Plato** says in the *Timaeus* that the **soul is placed in the middle of the world**, whatever other **Platonists** may say, **I understand the middle to be the Moon**.
8. Within the boundary of **finite being**, those five of **Plato** are rightly placed as **transcendentals: Being, Same, Other, Rest, and Motion**.
9. Speaking in the **Platonic** way about the soul, I say that the **soul lives**:
  - with **Saturn** a contemplative life
  - with **Jupiter** a political and practical life
  - with **Mars** an irascible and ambitious life

- with **Venus** a concupiscible and pleasurable life
  - with **Mercury** a vegetative life with dull sensation
10. From the preceding conclusion it is understood what the **sleep-inducing rod of Mercury** is.
  11. The **first seven-year period** of human life is under **Mercury**; the second under **Venus**; the third under **Mars**; the fourth under **Jupiter**; the fifth under **Saturn**; and the remaining periods follow according to whichever predominates in the preceding ones.
  12. The **Sun** and **Moon** cooperate with these lives as **universal causes**, and by appropriation:
    - the **Moon**: to **Mercury** and **Saturn**
    - the **Sun**: to **Venus** and **Mars**
    - both jointly: to **Jupiter**
  13. If we follow the theology of **Syrianus**, it is reasonable that the **priests of the ecclesiastical hierarchy** are proportioned in the **celestial hierarchy** by **anagogical powers**.
  14. When we hear **Plato** calling **Pallas** and **Love** philosophical gods, we should understand it thus:
    - **Love** is philosopher by reason of the **way**
    - **Pallas** by reason of the **end**
  15. Through the ratio of **extremes and the middle**, we can understand that the **grades of the universe** can fittingly be divided into five: **super-being, true being, not-true being, not-true non-being, and true non-being**.
  16. By “the such,” “the true such,” and “the always such” in **Platonic** doctrine, we must understand the properties of the **intellect**, the **soul**, and the **first bodies**.
  17. If we follow the doctrine of **Syrianus**, it is fitting, after the unity of **total intellection** which is divided threefold into **substantial, potential, and operative**, to posit a **trinity of intellection**: namely the **partial**, the **participated**, and the **imaginative**.
  18. Whatever the other **Platonists** may say about the distinction of the parts of the rational soul, I assert that, if we divide the rational part (**λόγος**) into imagination (**φαντασία**) and discursive reason (**λόγος**), the same part, insofar as it is joined to phantasy, is said to be **φανταστικόν**; insofar as to intellect, **νοερόν**; and insofar as to itself, **λογιστικόν**.
  19. It is possible that the **rational part of our soul**, which according to the **Peripatetics** I call the **possible intellect**, may reach this: that it **discourses and operates without conjunction to phantasms**.
  20. **Beauty** is found more perfectly and truly in **intelligible things** than in **sensible things**.
  21. When **Plato** says that **love** is born from the union of **Penia** and **Poros**, in the garden of **Jupiter**, at the birth of **Venus**, with the gods reclining, he understands nothing other than that in the mind of an angel **love**, that is, the **desire of beauty**, is first born when the **splendor of the Ideas** shines in it, though imperfectly.
  22. The **love** of which **Plato** speaks in the *Symposium* **cannot in any way be in God**.
  23. By the **two Venuses** of which **Plato** speaks in the *Symposium*, we must understand nothing other than a twofold **beauty**: the **sensible** and the **intelligible**.
  24. The **love** of which **Plotinus** speaks is not the **celestial love** of which **Plato** speaks in the *Symposium*, but is its **true and proximate image**.

25. The apparent contradiction in the sayings of **Orpheus** and **Agathon**—of whom one says that **love** is the most ancient of all the gods, the other that it is the youngest of all—will be perfectly resolved if we consider the **twofold being of the gods, intelligible and natural**.
26. **Beauty** is:
- in **God**: causally
  - in the **total intellect**: truly, essentially, totally
  - in the **particular intellect**: truly, partially, essentially
  - in the **rational soul**: truly, participatively
  - in the **visible accidents of heaven**: imaginatively, essentially, totally
  - in **subcelestial visible qualities**: imaginatively, partially, essentially
  - in **quantities**: imaginatively, participatively
27. When **Plato** says that **everything that is made is made by a cause**, this must be referred **per se to per se**, and **per accidens to per accidens**.
28. When **Plato** says in the *Timaeus* that the **soul is composed from indivisible and divisible substance**, by the **indivisible substance** he signifies the **intellective part of the soul**, and by the **divisible**, the **rational part of the soul**.
29. It is not to be believed in **Plato's** doctrine that the soul understands anything by **inspection of the Ideas** unless it has reached that state which is the **highest grade of contemplative perfection**.

**Corollary:** Those err who believe, according to **Plato**, that what we **daily know and understand** we know in **the light of the Ideas**.

30. The mode of knowing through **Ideas** is that of which **Plato** says in the *Timaeus* that **few men participate in it, but all gods do**.
31. To interpret in the fable of the *Critias* the five births as the **five forms of the body** is altogether inappropriate.
32. By the **other life** in the *Epinomis* we must understand the **connection of a part with its whole**, and I believe this is the same as what among the **Kabbalists** is called the **world to come**.
33. How it is true that in the *Epinomis* **arithmetic** among all speculative sciences most contributes to **happiness** can be understood from our conclusions concerning **mathematics**.
34. By the **heaven** in the *Epinomis*, which **Plato** says is for us the cause of all goods, we must understand not the **Idea of heaven**, but **heaven itself**, which is a **celestial animal**.
35. By the **kingdom of necessity** in **Plato's** *Symposium*, we must understand nothing other than the superabundance of one nature over another, and of the **infinite** over the **limit**.
36. By **Plato's** demonstration in the *Phaedrus* of the **immortality of the soul**, immortality is proved:
- not of **our souls**, as **Proclus, Hermias, and Syrianus** think
  - nor of **every soul**, as **Plotinus and Numenius** think
  - nor of the **world-soul alone**, as **Posidonius** thinks
  - but of **every celestial soul**
37. **Time** exists essentially in **incorporeal things**, and participatively in **corporeal things**.
38. Where **time** has **essential being**, it exists **entirely outside the soul**.
39. **Time** has from the soul its **participated being**: from the **first soul** by way of effective causality, but from the **last** by way of objective consequence.

40. The motion of the **first heaven**, and universally every motion, whether local or of alteration, is measured by **time** secondarily and per accidens.
41. Although the **intellectual nature** understands all things **simultaneously**, this is not through a **virtual and unitive containment**, but through a **mutual penetration of forms** and an **inseparable concatenation of the whole of participated being**, that is, **formal being**.
42. By **Plato's** demonstration in the *Phaedrus* of the **immortality of the soul**, the **eternity of the world** is more firmly demonstrated than by any argument of **Aristotle** in *Physics* VIII.
43. Just as a **man** is seen and heard by another **man** through the motion of sense **outward**, so a **demon** is seen and heard by a **man** and by another **demon** through the motion of sense **inward**.
44. Why a **man cannot but be seen**, if present to one rightly disposed in the power of sight, but a **demon** is seen only when it wills to be seen, can be understood from the mode by which each is seen.
45. The **sense of nature** which **Al-Kindi, Roger Bacon, William of Paris**, and others, and especially the **magi**, posit, is nothing other than the **sense of the vehicle** which the **Platonists** posit.
46. When **Plato** says that **no one sins except unwillingly**, nothing else is understood than that which **Thomas** holds: namely, that there cannot be sin in the **will** unless there is a **defect in reason**.
47. **Providence** is:
- in **God**: statively
  - in **intelligence**: ordinatively
  - in the **soul**: executively
  - in **heaven**: denuntiatively
  - in the **whole universe**: terminatively
48. Not only from what **Plato** says in the *Epinomis* and *Philebus*, where he expressly places **happiness in contemplation**, but also from what he says in the *Phaedrus* about **erotic madness**, it is clear that according to **Plato happiness is not in the act of love**, since frenzy is not happiness, but an **impulse and frenzy stirring, urging, and driving toward happiness**.
49. From the very name by which the gods name **love**, it is clear to one who considers carefully that **happiness is not in the act of love**.
50. That proposition in the *Phaedrus* that **every soul has care of the whole of what is inanimate** must be understood simply of **every soul that is truly a soul**.
51. From that statement of **Plato** in the *Phaedrus*, that **unless the human soul had seen what truly is, it would not have come into this animal**, if rightly understood, it follows that the opinion of **Plotinus** positing the **transmigration of souls into brute animals** is **not according to Plato's mind**.
52. From the **speech of Socrates in the Phaedrus addressed to Pan**, the **complete opinion of Plato concerning happiness** is obtained.
53. The opinion of **Cratylus** about names is to be understood thus: not that such names **are** such, but that they **ought to be such if they are correct**.
54. Therefore **Socrates** says in the *Cratylus* that he **"dreams" about Ideas**, because **we do not use Ideas in this state**, but rather their **nearest or secondary images**.
55. By the **one** in the *Sophist*, understand **the one in otherness**.
56. That saying in the *Sophist*, **"he who does not say one says nothing,"** is the same as what **Aristotle** says: **he who does not understand one understands nothing**.

57. That statement of **Plato** in the *Sophist* concerning **images (simulacra)**, said to be fabricated by a **demonic contrivance**, although it can be explained in many ways, is fittingly understood thus: that such things, as holding a **middle grade in being**, are **proportioned to the demonic order**.
58. That **hunt of Socrates** spoken of in the *Protagoras* can fittingly be divided into **six grades**:
- being of **extrinsic matter**
  - **particular immaterial being**
  - **universal being**
  - **rational being**
  - **particular intellectual being**
  - **total intellectual being**

and in the seventh, as in a sabbath, one must cease from the hunt.

59. What is said in the *Euthydemus*, that **happiness consists not in habit but in act**, is to be understood of a **reflex act**.
60. From what is said in the *Laches*, that **there is not one science of past things, another of present, and another of future**, this can be understood in the **Peripatetic** manner: that **there is no science except of universals**.
61. That statement of **Plato** in the *Gorgias*, "**if an orator knows just things, he is just**," can be upheld absolutely, not merely relative to man, if we understand that **one is predicated of another not formally but inferentially**.
62. Although the reasoning of **Plato** in the *Phaedo*, by way of **contraries**, does not conclude absolutely, nevertheless, as set forth by **Cebes**, it does conclude something ad hominem.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico is not simply repeating Plato. He is reconstructing the whole **Platonic doctrine** as one ordered system. The opening conclusions treat the numbers of the *Timaeus* as more than mathematics. They are a map of how forms are ordered, how middles are coordinated between extremes, and how the world reflects higher patterns. That is why the question of whether the cosmos was made according to a **generated or ungenerated exemplar** becomes, for Pico, a question of whether it was made according to **animal reasons**, that is, formative patterns belonging to the level of soul and life, or according to **intellectual Ideas**, which belong to a higher and purely intelligible order. The same logic governs illumination: what the **Platonists** signify through the gathering of souls on **Mount Ida**, and the **Hebrews** through the gathering on **Mount Sinai**, is one and the same structure of higher things enlightening middle things through a sacred point of mediation. Even **Pherecides'** claim that **Jupiter** fashioned the world only after becoming **love** means that causality presupposes a prior perfection, so that the world is produced only when the productive principle is already turned toward the good in a completed and unitive way.

From there, Pico turns to **love, beauty**, and the inner structure of the soul. **Empedocles'** intelligible sphere in **Venus** becomes the **archetypal world** within the first providence, that is, the highest providential order as it remains within itself before unfolding into lower levels, and **Orpheus** can therefore call love blind because it stands above intellect rather than beneath it: it is not blind from deficiency, but from excess, because it belongs to a more unitive level than discursive knowing. When Plato places the soul in the middle of the world, Pico takes that middle to be the **Moon**, treating it as the mediating point between higher and lower regions, and he then maps the soul's different lives across the planets: contemplative with **Saturn**, political

with **Jupiter**, ambitious with **Mars**, pleasurable with **Venus**, and vegetative with **Mercury**. The stages of human life and the roles of the **Sun** and **Moon** are then read through the same planetary anthropology, with the planets serving as symbolic rulers of distinct modes of life. Within finite being, Pico also places five **Platonic transcendentals** — **Being, Same, Other, Rest, Motion** — and from the ratio of extremes and middle he derives five grades of the universe: **super-being, true being, not-true being, not-true non-being,** and **true non-being**, meaning progressively lower modes of reality and privation as one moves away from the highest fullness of being. In the same spirit, **Love** and **Pallas** are philosophical gods in different ways: **Love** by reason of the **way**, as the power that moves the soul upward toward wisdom, and **Pallas** by reason of the **end**, as the attained wisdom toward which that ascent tends.

A large middle cluster concerns **intellect, soul**, and the graded forms of cognition. Following **Syrianus**, Pico mirrors the **ecclesiastical hierarchy** in the **celestial hierarchy**, and after the threefold division of total intellection into **substantial, potential, and operative**, he adds a second trinity of **partial, participated, and imaginative** intellection, meaning intellection as possessed in itself, as shared in by lower beings, and as descending to the level of image and representation. He also divides the rational part of the soul according to its relation upward, downward, and to itself: joined to phantasy it is **φανταστικόν**, that is, imaginative; joined to intellect it is **νοερόν**, that is, intellective; and considered in itself it is **λογιστικόν**, that is, discursive or reasoning. This is why he can say that the possible intellect may reach the point of discursing without phantasms, meaning without dependence on sensory images. Beauty belongs more perfectly to **intelligible things** than to sensible things, and the love born from **Penia** and **Poros** in the *Symposium* is, for Pico, the desire of beauty first arising in an angelic mind when the splendor of the **Ideas** shines in it imperfectly. That is also why the love of the *Symposium* cannot be in **God**, why the **two Venuses** are twofold beauty — **sensible** and **intelligible** — and why **Plotinus'** love is not Plato's heavenly love itself but its nearest image. The disagreement over whether love is oldest or youngest among the gods is then resolved by distinguishing the **intelligible** and **natural** being of the gods.

Pico next redraws Plato's cosmology and epistemology with unusual precision. Beauty is distributed through the whole hierarchy: causally in **God**, truly in intellect, participatively in rational soul, imaginatively in heaven and in subcelestial qualities, and even more remotely in quantity. When Plato says everything made is made by a cause, Pico reads that **per se to per se** and **per accidens to per accidens**, meaning that proper causality belongs properly to what is made in itself, while accidental causality belongs only to what is made accidentally. When the *Timaeus* says the soul is composed from indivisible and divisible substance, he reads this as the union of the **intellective** part of soul, which is closer to indivisible unity, and the **rational** part, which is turned toward division and discourse. He rejects the belief that we daily know things in the direct light of the **Ideas**, insisting that such knowledge belongs only to the highest contemplative perfection, the sort in which few humans and all gods participate. This is why the five births in the *Critias* should not be read as five bodily forms, why the "other life" in the *Epinomis* can be taken as a part's connection to its whole and linked to the Kabbalistic **world to come**, that is, a state in which the part is restored to a higher totality, why **arithmetic** can be said to contribute most to happiness, and why the heaven named in the *Epinomis* as cause of gods is not the Idea of heaven but heaven itself as a **celestial animal**. Even the **kingdom of necessity** in the *Symposium* is read as the dominance of one nature over another and of the **infinite** over the **limit**, meaning the condition in which ordered proportion gives way to excess and compulsion.

Pico argues that Plato's proof in the *Phaedrus* establishes not the immortality of every soul, nor only our souls, nor only the world-soul, but **every celestial soul**. From there he develops a strong doctrine of **time**: it exists essentially in incorporeals and only participatively in corporeals; where it exists essentially, it exists wholly outside the soul, not as a subjective measure but as a real order of duration; and motion is measured by time only secondarily and per accidens. He even says Plato's proof of the soul's immortality proves the **eternity of the world** more firmly than Aristotle's argument in *Physics* VIII. He also gives a doctrine of inward perception, where demons are seen through the motion of sense **inward**, and identifies the **sense of nature** of the magi with the Platonic **sense of the vehicle**, that is, the perceptive power belonging to the

soul's subtler body or spiritual vehicle. When Plato says no one sins willingly, Pico aligns him with **Thomas**: sin cannot be in the will without a defect in reason. **Providence** is then distributed across levels — **statively** in God, as fixed in perfect rest; **ordinatively** in intelligence, as ordering; **executively** in soul, as carrying order into action; **denuntiatively** in heaven, as announcing or signaling that order; and **terminatively** in the universe, as reaching its outward completion. Happiness, however, is not the act of love. From the *Epinomis*, *Philebus*, the *Phaedrus*, and the prayer to **Pan**, Pico argues that Plato places happiness in **contemplation**, while erotic frenzy is only the impulse driving toward it. The closing reinterpretations follow the same method: names in the *Cratylus* are not naturally right as they stand, but ought to be right if correct; in this life we use not the Ideas themselves but their secondary images; the one in the *Sophist* is **the one in otherness**, that is, unity as it appears within multiplicity rather than absolute unity; images or simulacra belong to a demonic middle grade of being; Socrates' hunt in the *Protagoras* passes through six grades of being before its sabbath; happiness in the *Euthydemus* lies in **act**, understood as a **reflex act**; the *Laches* supports the view that science is of universals; the *Gorgias* can be saved if predication is taken **inferentially rather than formally**, meaning that knowledge of justice proves the orator just by consequence rather than by direct identity; and the *Phaedo* argument from contraries concludes at least **ad hominem** in the form given by **Cebes**.

**This section presents Pico's Platonic synthesis: mathematics, exemplar theory, illumination, beauty, planetary psychology, contemplation, time, providence, demonic mediation, and the interpretation of Plato's dialogues are all gathered into one graded hierarchy running from intelligible unity down through soul and heaven to the sensible world, and back upward again toward contemplative happiness.**

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## Conclusions According to My Own Opinion — Number 10

**In the doctrine of Abucaten (Avicenna), called the author of the *Book of Causes***

1. When **Abucaten (Avicenna)** says that the **soul is above time**, this is to be understood of the **soul absolutely according to substance**, abstracting from every operation that belongs to it insofar as it is a soul.
2. When **Abucaten** says that **every noble soul has three operations — divine, intellectual, and animal** — this is to be understood as follows: the first it has **by an image of proportionality**, the second **by the formality of participation**, the third **by the property of essentiality**.
3. When **Abucaten** says that **every primary cause influences more**, by “more” understand the **eminence of the mode of causing** and the **intimacy of what is produced in the thing**.
4. Although **Abucaten** says that the **being which is first created is above intelligence**, do not therefore believe that it is **distinct from intelligence according to hypostasis**.
5. When **Abucaten** says that the **first cause is above every account**, this is true not so much for the first reason he gives, namely that it has no cause before it, but for what he secondarily implies: that **every intelligible precedes unially**.
6. What **Abucaten** says, that **intelligence is a substance that is not divided**, is most true because of the **indiscrete interpenetration of intelligibles within it**.

7. From the preceding conclusion it can be understood how the statement of **Abucaten** is to be taken: that **every intelligence is full of forms**.
8. From the last proposition of **Abucaten** we can understand what he intends by that **division made by Plato at the beginning of the treatise of the *Timaeus***, and we can know that **the soul is not comprehended under it except by way of an extreme combination**.
9. From the **antepenultimate proposition of Abucaten**, it can be gathered that **to incline more toward sense than toward intellect does not belong to the soul insofar as it is soul, but insofar as it is fallen**.
10. When **Abucaten** says that **intelligence, insofar as it is divine, rules things**, this must be understood of a **statutive governance**, not an **ordinative one**, which belongs to it insofar as it is intelligence.

## Section Review

In this short section, Pico is not borrowing **Abucaten (Avicenna)** as an authority to repeat word for word. He is clarifying how Avicenna's statements should be understood so they fit into a stricter metaphysical hierarchy. The opening claims concern the **soul**. When Avicenna says the soul is **above time**, Pico limits that to the soul considered absolutely in its **substance**, not in every operation it performs as soul. Likewise, when Avicenna says every noble soul has three operations — **divine, intellectual, and animal** — Pico distributes them by level: the divine by a likeness of proportionality, the intellectual by participation, and the animal by essential property. The point is that the soul is not one flat thing. It stands across several levels, and its operations have to be ranked accordingly.

The next group concerns **causality** and **intelligence**. When Avicenna says the **primary cause influences more**, Pico says "more" means not merely more in amount, but more in the **eminence of its way of causing** and in the **intimacy** with which what is caused is present in the thing. In the same way, when Avicenna says the first created being is **above intelligence**, Pico warns that this should not be taken to mean a separate hypostasis above intelligence. And when Avicenna says the **first cause is above every account**, Pico says the deepest reason is not merely that it has no prior cause, but that what is intelligible is itself preceded by what is **unial**, that is, by a mode of reality more unified than ordinary intelligibility. This is why intelligence can be called an undivided substance and yet be said to be **full of forms**: the forms are not scattered pieces inside it, but interpenetrate one another without discrete division.

The final claims draw out the consequences for **Plato**, the **soul**, and **governance**. Pico says Avicenna's last proposition helps explain the division made by **Plato** at the start of the *Timaeus*, and shows that the **soul** falls under that division only at an extreme boundary or combination. He also says that the soul's tendency to lean more toward **sense** than toward **intellect** does not belong to it simply as soul, but only insofar as it is **fallen**. That is an important move: descent toward sense is not the soul's pure definition, but a condition of decline. Finally, when Avicenna says **intelligence, insofar as it is divine, rules things**, Pico distinguishes two modes of rule: a **statutive** governance, which belongs to it as divine, and an **ordinative** governance, which belongs to it as intelligence. So the section as a whole is about careful discrimination of levels: soul, cause, intelligence, and divine rule all have to be understood according to mode, not taken in a blunt or undifferentiated way.

**This section presents Pico's reading of Avicenna as a doctrine of ranked modes: the soul stands above time in substance but not in every operation, causes differ by the intimacy and eminence of their causality, intelligence is undivided yet full of forms, and decline toward sense belongs to the soul only as fallen, not as soul in its pure nature.**

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## Conclusions on Mathematics — Number 85

### According to my own opinion

1. Mathematics is not a true science.
2. If happiness consists in **speculative perfection**, mathematics **does not contribute to happiness**.
3. Mathematical sciences are **not for their own sake**, but are to be sought as a **way to other sciences**.
4. Just as the **subjects of mathematics**, if taken absolutely, **do not perfect the intellect**, so, if they are taken as **images of higher things**, they **immediately lead us by the hand to the speculation of intelligibles**.
5. Just as **Aristotle's** saying about the ancients, that they erred in physical contemplation because they treated physical things mathematically, would be true if they had taken mathematics materially and not formally, so it is most true that moderns who dispute mathematically about natural things destroy the foundations of natural philosophy.
6. Nothing is more harmful to the theologian than frequent and constant exercise in **Euclid's mathematics**.
7. Just as **medicine** moves the **spirits** principally insofar as they govern the body, so **music** moves the **spirits** insofar as they serve the soul.
8. **Medicine heals the soul through the body**, but **music the body through the soul**.
9. Through arithmetic, not **material** but **formal**, there is the best way to natural prophecy.
10. **Joachim**, in his prophecies, proceeded by **no other way than through formal numbers**.
11. Through numbers there is a way to the investigation and understanding of every knowable; for the verification of this conclusion I promise below, in the **seventy-four questions**, to respond by way of numbers.

### Questions to which he promises to respond through numbers

12. Whether **God** exists.
13. Whether **He** is **infinite**.
14. Whether **He** is the **cause of all things**.
15. Whether **He** is **most simple**.
16. Whether **He** is **intelligent**.
17. **How God understands**.
18. Whether there is given a **nature superior to the intellectual nature**.

19. Whether the quidditative being of a thing is the most intimate being that the thing has.
20. What can be predicated of humanity in its most precise abstraction, and what cannot.
21. **How the elements are in heaven.**
22. What mode ought to be followed in the investigation of each knowable thing.
23. Whether **above the nature of corporeal things** there is given a **rational incorporeal nature**.
24. Whether **above the rational nature** there is given an **intellectual nature**.
25. Whether there is a middle nature between the rational and the intellectual nature.
26. Whether there is a middle nature between the intellectual nature and **God**.
27. Whether contradictories are compatible in some nature.
28. Whether contradictories coincide in some nature.
29. What number of years is naturally due to the life of a good man.
30. What number of years is naturally due to the life of a bad man.
31. How many are the **principal grades of the natures of the universe**.
32. Whether corporeal nature, as such, is active or rather passive.
33. **What "body" signifies.**
34. Whether there are in matter **indeterminate dimensions**.
35. Whether it is **better that God cause things than not cause them**.
36. Whether the creation of things *ad extra* proceeds necessarily from the divine essence hypostatized in three persons.
37. Whether something necessarily mediates between cause and caused.
38. Whether the multitude of knowables is rightly reduced to the number of the ten predicaments.
39. What is the difference between the **mode of understanding of angels** and that of **rational souls**.
40. What is the difference between the **mode of understanding of God** and of **angels**.
41. Whether the **angelic nature is in some way all things**.
42. Whether the **rational nature is in some way all things**.
43. Whether there can be **many gods**.
44. Whether there is **an infinite in nature**.
45. How the infinity attributed to **God** by theologians differs from that which philosophers say is impossible to exist.
46. Whether **God is all things in all things**.
47. How the **being of creatures differs from the being of God**.
48. What pertains to the consideration of the theologian.
49. When the consummation of the world will be.
50. What and of what kind the state of things will be at the consummation of the world.

51. Which opinion is truer concerning the **Trinity** — that of **Arius, Sabellius, Eunomius**, or the **Catholic faith**.
52. Whether sensible forms are in an angel intelligibly.
53. Whether in an angel there is anything other than **the one who understands, the act of understanding, and the understood**.
54. Whether these in an angel are distinguished really or by reason.
55. Whether the nature of mover and moved is the same in physical motion.
56. Whether there is something that is pure potency according to its nature, which philosophers call **prime matter**.
57. Whether **prime matter** depends on **God** mediately or immediately, and how.
58. Whether everything that is **below God is composed of act and potency**.
59. Whether matter is of the same **ratio** in all things.
60. Whether any created thing can be free from imperfection.
61. Which natures are apt to be made happy.
62. Whether happiness consists in the intellect or in the will.
63. Whether quantity is visible *per se* or only participatively.
64. Whether the **intellectual nature is always united to God**.
65. Whether in the **intellectual nature there is more imperfection than perfection**.
66. To which nature true mobility properly belongs.
67. Whether it belongs to the soul to have a mode of knowledge **by way of numbers**.
68. What is the **first mode of predicating per se**.
69. What is the **second mode of predication per se**.
70. Whether a **definition is discovered through demonstration**.
71. Why there is **science only of the inherence of a property in a subject**.
72. Whether the **rational soul is material**.
73. Whether it is incorruptible.
74. Whether it understands universally.
75. Whether, just as there is a sensible world, there is also an intelligible world.
76. Whether there are more or fewer separate species than material ones.
77. Why in the work of the second day it is not said, "And **God** saw that it was good."
78. Why **man is called the sixth numeration**.
79. Why it is said that **God completed all things in six days**.
80. What it signifies that **God rested on the seventh day**.
81. Whether the **irascible** is distinct from the **concupiscible**.
82. What the distinction is among the cognitive powers of the soul.

83. Why **humans naturally desire victory**.
84. Why it is natural for humans to know through reason joined to **phantasia**.
85. Whether in the heavens all things are inscribed and signified for anyone who knows how to read them.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico sharply lowers the status of mathematics when it is taken in the ordinary way. Mathematics is **not a true science**, does **not perfect the intellect**, and, if happiness lies in speculative perfection, does **not contribute to happiness**. It is not to be sought for its own sake, but as a road to other sciences. That claim sounds hostile until Pico introduces the distinction that governs the whole section: mathematics can be taken either **materially** or **formally**. Taken materially, as the treatment of quantity and magnitude in themselves, it easily misleads. That is why he says frequent exercise in **Euclid's mathematics** is harmful to the theologian, and why those who dispute mathematically about natural things destroy the foundations of natural philosophy. Taken formally, however, mathematics becomes something very different: an image of higher things and a guide to intelligible structure.

That distinction explains the rest of the section. Mathematical subjects, taken absolutely, do not perfect the intellect, but taken as **images of higher things** they lead the mind directly toward intelligibles. So Pico is not rejecting mathematics altogether. He is rejecting a lower use of it and defending a higher one. This is why he can say that through **formal arithmetic**, meaning number understood as intelligible proportion rather than bare counting, there is the best road to **natural prophecy**, that is, to foreknowledge drawn from the formal structure of nature rather than from miracle alone, and that **Joachim** proceeded in prophecy by no other way than through formal numbers. It is also why he draws the striking parallel between **medicine** and **music**: medicine heals the soul through the body, while music heals the body through the soul. Both are examples of how number and proportion can work spiritually when they are treated not as dead quantity but as forms governing life, motion, and harmony.

The center of the section is the claim that through numbers there is a way to the investigation and understanding of **every knowable thing**. The long sequence of questions that follows is not a digression but a proof of scope. Pico is claiming that number, rightly understood, provides a universal investigative method. That is why the questions range across **God's existence, infinity, simplicity, and intelligence**, the structure of **being, act and potency, contradiction, matter, predication, and categories**, the difference between **angels and rational souls**, the nature of **happiness**, the **Trinity**, the **consummation of the world**, the **rational soul**, the **intelligible world**, the distinction of the soul's powers, and even the meaning of the **six days of creation** and the signs written in the **heavens**. Mathematics here is being presented not as one science among others, but as a formal key that can open all the sciences when used in the right way.

So the section does not say that arithmetic homework or Euclidean proof can simply solve theology. It says that **formal number**, proportion, and intelligible structure give a way of reading reality at every level. Material mathematics remains subordinate and often harmful when overextended. Formal mathematics becomes symbolic, metaphysical, prophetic, and universal in reach. The final question about whether all things are inscribed in the heavens for one who knows how to read them is almost a summary of the whole section: the world is formally legible, and number is one of the deepest ways of learning how to read it, as if the heavens themselves bear intelligible signatures for a trained reader.

**This section presents Pico's doctrine of mathematics as a subordinate but universal instrument: taken materially, mathematics misleads and does not perfect the soul, but taken formally, as the science of**

**intelligible proportion and higher images, it becomes a path to prophecy, metaphysics, theology, and the investigation of every knowable thing.**

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## Conclusions — Number 15

**According to my own opinion on the intelligence of the sayings of Zoroaster and their Chaldean interpreters**

1. What the **Chaldean** interpreters say about the **ladder from Tartarus to the first fire** signifies nothing other than the **series of the natures of the universe**, extending from the non-grade of matter to that which is above every grade of gradation.
2. There I say that the interpreters understand by **mysterial virtues** nothing other than **natural magic**.
3. What the interpreters say about the second saying of **Zoroaster** concerning the double air, water, and earth signifies nothing other than that each element, insofar as it can be divided into pure and impure, has rational and irrational inhabitants; but what is pure has only rational inhabitants.
4. There likewise, by the roots of the earth, they can understand nothing other than vegetative life, in accordance with **Empedocles**, who posits transmigration also into plants.
5. From that saying of **Zoroaster**, “the earth laments even to its children,” following the exposition of **Ozia the Chaldean**, we have the truth of original sin expressly.
6. What the **Chaldean** interpreters say concerning the **eleventh aphorism** about the double intoxication of **Bacchus** and **Silenus** is perfectly understood through what the **Kabbalists** say about the double wine.
7. What the interpreters say concerning the **fourteenth aphorism** is perfectly understood through what the **Kabbalists** say about the death of the kiss.
8. The magi, in the **seventeenth aphorism**, understand by the **threefold garment** of linen, cloth, and skins nothing other than the **threefold habitation of the soul**: celestial, spiritual, and terrestrial.
9. From the preceding conclusion you will be able to understand something about the **garments of skins of Adam** and about the **skins that were in the Tabernacle**.
10. By the dog, **Zoroaster** understands nothing other than the irrational part of the soul and its proportional counterparts. One who diligently considers all the sayings of the interpreters will see that this is so, for they too, like **Zoroaster**, speak enigmatically.
11. That saying of **Zoroaster**, “do not go out when the Lictor (**המִשְׁחִית**) passes,” is perfectly understood through that passage of *Exodus* in which the **Israelites** were forbidden to leave their houses during the passing of the angel striking the firstborn of the **Egyptians**.
12. By the **Siren** in **Zoroaster**, understand nothing other than the **rational part of the soul**.
13. By the **boy** in the interpreters, understand nothing other than the **intellect**.

14. By that saying of **Zoroaster**, “you shall still sacrifice for three days and no further,” it appeared to me, through the arithmetic of a higher **merkabah**, that in that saying the coming of **Christ** is expressly foretold by those days reckoned.
15. What is to be understood by **goats** in **Zoroaster** will be known to one who has read in the book **Bair** what affinity **goats** and **lambs** have with **spirits**.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico treats the sayings of **Zoroaster** and their **Chaldean interpreters** as a symbolic code rather than as literal mythology. They are taken as encrypted statements about the **structure of the universe**, the **powers of the soul**, and the hidden links between pagan wisdom, **Kabbalah**, and **Scripture**. That is why the ladder from **Tartarus** to the **first fire** becomes the full scale of being, from the lowest limit of matter up to what stands above every graded nature. In the same spirit, what the interpreters call **mysterical virtues** Pico simply identifies with **natural magic**, meaning the hidden powers and sympathies at work within nature itself.

This symbolic method then governs the rest of the section. The “double” **air**, **water**, and **earth** mean that each element can be considered in a **pure** and an **impure** form, and that the world of the elements is inhabited at different levels, with rational beings in the pure regions and lower beings mixed into the impure. The **roots of the earth** are read as **vegetative life**, which lets Pico link Zoroaster with **Empedocles** and the broader doctrine that life descends through several grades. The same kind of decoding is applied to the soul. The **dog** signifies the **irrational part** of the soul, the **Siren** the **rational part**, and the **boy** the **intellect**. The three garments of **linen**, **cloth**, and **skins** become the soul’s threefold habitation, **celestial**, **spiritual**, and **terrestrial**, and that in turn sheds light on **Adam’s garments of skins** and the skins of the **Tabernacle**. So the section keeps translating outward symbols into inward psychology and metaphysical structure.

At the same time, Pico insists that this Zoroastrian symbolism converges with **biblical** and **Kabbalistic** truth. The earth lamenting “even to its children” is taken as an explicit witness to **original sin**. The double intoxication of **Bacchus** and **Silenus** is explained through the Kabbalistic doctrine of the **double wine**, and the fourteenth aphorism through the Kabbalistic **death of the kiss**. The warning not to go out when the **Lictor** passes is read through the **Passover** in *Exodus*, when the Israelites were told not to leave their houses during the passing of the destroying angel. And the saying about sacrificing for **three days and no further** is, for Pico, not merely ritual language but an arithmetical prophecy of the coming of **Christ**, read through a higher **merkabah**. Even the final mention of **goats** is tied to the **Bahir**, where goats and lambs stand in a symbolic relation to **spirits**. So the whole section aims to show that Zoroaster, rightly interpreted, speaks the same hidden language as Kabbalah and biblical revelation.

**This section presents Pico’s Zoroastrian synthesis: the Chaldean sayings are read as symbolic statements about the hierarchy of being, the layered life of the soul, the occult powers of nature, and the convergence of pagan wisdom with Kabbalistic and Christian truth, culminating in an explicit prophetic reading of Christ.**

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## Magical Conclusions — Number 26

### According to my own opinion

1. All **magic in use among moderns**, which the **Church** rightly condemns, has **no firmness, no foundation, and no truth**, because it depends on the **hand of the enemies of the first truth**, the powers of darkness, which cast the darkness of falsehood over poorly disposed intellects.
2. **Natural magic** is lawful and not prohibited; and concerning the universal theoretical foundations of this science, I set down the following conclusions according to my own opinion.
3. **Magic** is the practical part of natural science.
4. From this conclusion, and from **Paradoxical Conclusion 47**, it follows that **magic is the most noble part of natural science**.
5. There is no virtue in heaven or on earth, whether seminal or separate, which the magus cannot actualize and unite.
6. Whatever **marvelous work** is done, whether magical, **Kabbalistic**, or of any other kind, is to be referred principally to **God**, glorious and blessed, from whose grace the supercelestial waters of marvelous powers rain down liberally each day upon contemplative men of good will.
7. The works of **Christ** could not have been done either by way of **magic** or by way of **Kabbalah**.
8. The miracles of **Christ** are a most certain argument of **His divinity**, not from the thing done, but from the mode of its doing.
9. There is no science which more certainly proves the divinity of **Christ** than **magic** and **Kabbalah**.
10. What the magus does by art, nature did naturally in making man.
11. The marvels of magical art are nothing other than the **union and actualization** of those things which are present in nature seminally and separately.
12. The form of the whole of magical virtue is from the **human soul standing and not fallen**.
13. To perform magic is nothing other than to **marry the world**.
14. If there is any nature immediately proximate to us which is **rational**, whether simply or at least to a high degree, it possesses magic in the highest degree, and through participation in it can be **more perfect in humans**.
15. No magical operation can be of any efficacy unless it has annexed to it the **work of Kabbalah**, either explicitly or implicitly.
16. That nature which is the **horizon of eternal time** is nearest to the magus, yet below him.
17. To that nature which is the **horizon of time and eternity**, magic properly belongs, and from it must be sought by due modes known to the wise.
18. That nature which is the **horizon of temporal eternity** is nearest to the magus, yet above him, and to it properly belongs **Kabbalah**.
19. Therefore **voices and words** have efficacy in magical works, because that in which nature first exercises magic is the **voice of God** itself.

20. Every **voice** has power in magic insofar as it is **formed by the voice of God**.
21. **Non-signifying voices** can do more in magic than signifying ones; the reason for this conclusion can be understood from the preceding conclusion.
22. No **names**, insofar as they are significant and taken individually and in themselves, can have power in magical operation unless they are **Hebrew** or **closely derived from it**.
23. Every number except the ternary and the denary is material in magic; these are formal; and in magical arithmetic are the **numbers of numbers**.
24. From the principles of a more hidden philosophy it must be confessed that **characters and figures** can do more in magical operations than **any material quality**.
25. Just as **characters** belong properly to magical work, so **numbers** belong properly to the work of **Kabbalah**, standing as a middle between the two and being appropriable toward either extreme through the use of **letters**.
26. Just as by the influx of the **first agent**, when it is special and immediate, something is effected which is not attained through the mediation of causes, so through the work of **Kabbalah**, when it is pure and immediate, something is effected which no magic can attain.

## Section Review

In these conclusions, Pico sharply distinguishes **false modern magic** from what he calls **true natural magic**. The first is condemned because it depends on the powers of darkness and has no real foundation in truth. The second is lawful because it belongs not to demonic commerce but to the right understanding of nature. That is why he can define **magic** as the **practical part of natural science**, and even the **most noble part** of it: not because it escapes nature, but because it brings nature's hidden powers into act. The magus does not create new natures. He draws together and actualizes what is already present in the world, whether **seminally**, that is, present as hidden seeds and formative principles, or **separately**, that is, existing more distinctly in higher or detached powers. In that sense, what art does magically, nature had already done more perfectly in the making of things, above all in the making of **man**.

From there, Pico gives his central definition: magical marvels are nothing other than the **union and actualization** of powers already planted in reality. That is why he can say that the magus can unite every virtue in heaven and earth, and that to perform magic is nothing other than to **marry the world**. The phrase means that the magus joins together levels of reality that are already ordered toward one another but usually remain scattered. The deepest source of magical power, however, is not matter, nor stars alone, but the **human soul standing and not fallen**. Magic works best where the soul stands upright in its proper place, because human nature is itself a point of meeting between different orders of being. Pico then speaks of natures that stand at the **horizons** between **time** and **eternity**, because magic belongs especially to those middle zones where higher and lower orders meet and can be joined.

Pico then tightens the relation between **magic**, **Kabbalah**, and **Christ**. Every marvelous work, whether magical or Kabbalistic, is to be referred chiefly to **God**, from whom all marvelous power descends. But the works of **Christ** could not have been done by either magic or Kabbalah. Their uniqueness lies not simply in what was done, but in the **mode** of doing it, and this makes Christ's miracles a certain proof of **His divinity**. At the same time, Pico says that no sciences prove Christ's divinity more certainly than **magic** and **Kabbalah**. The point is that the highest understanding of created powers makes it even clearer where the divine exceeds them absolutely. He also says that no magical operation is effective without some annexed work of **Kabbalah**, whether openly or implicitly, while pure and immediate **Kabbalah** can accomplish what magic alone never

can. So the two are related, but not equal: magic works within the powers and correspondences of nature, while Kabbalah reaches higher by touching a more immediate divine order.

The last group of conclusions explains why **voice, word, name, number, and character** matter so much in these arts. Voices have power because the first place where nature itself exercises magic is the **voice of God**. Every voice has efficacy insofar as it is formed by that first voice, and this is why even **non-signifying sounds** can sometimes do more than signifying ones: their power does not depend first on conceptual meaning, but on deeper formal likeness and resonance. In the same spirit, names taken merely as meaningful words do not have power in magical operation unless they are **Hebrew** or closely derived from it, because Hebrew stands closest to the primal linguistic structure of reality. Pico then says that in magic all numbers except the **ternary** and the **denary** are material, while those two are formal and are the “numbers of numbers,” meaning that they function not merely as counted quantities but as governing patterns of order and completion within magical arithmetic. He adds that **characters and figures** can do more in magical operations than any material quality, since form and sign reach deeper than brute physical disposition. Finally, **characters** belong especially to magic, while **numbers** belong especially to **Kabbalah**, though numbers can stand between both through the use of **letters**. The section therefore ends by showing that true magic is not crude manipulation of matter, but the skilled handling of the formal, vocal, numerical, and symbolic structures through which the world is bound together.

**This section presents Pico’s doctrine of lawful magic: false magic belongs to darkness, but true natural magic is the highest practical part of natural science, joining the hidden virtues of the world through a rightly ordered soul, while Kabbalah rises still higher through more immediate contact with divine power.**

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## Conclusions — Number 31

**According to my own opinion, concerning the mode of understanding the hymns of Orpheus according to magic, that is, the secret wisdom of divine and natural things first discovered by me in them**

1. Just as it is not permitted to explain publicly the **secret magic** which we have first drawn out from the hymns of **Orpheus**, so it will be useful to have indicated it by a certain hint, as will be done in the following conclusions, under certain aphoristic heads, for the purpose of stirring the minds of contemplatives.
2. Nothing is more effective in **natural magic** than the hymns of **Orpheus**, if proper music, the intention of the soul, and the other circumstances known to the wise are applied.
3. The names of the gods which **Orpheus** sings are not the names of deceiving demons, from whom evil and not good proceeds, but the names of natural and divine powers, distributed through the world by the **true God** for the greatest use of man, if he knows how to use them.
4. Just as the **hymns of David** serve wonderfully for the work of **Kabbalah**, so the **hymns of Orpheus** serve the work of **true, lawful, and natural magic**.
5. The number of the hymns of **Orpheus** is as great as the number with which the **threefold God** created the age, numbered under the form of the **Pythagorean quaternary**.

6. Of whatever **natural or divine powers**, there is the same **analogy of property**, the same **name**, the same **hymn**, and the same **work**, with proportion preserved. Whoever attempts to expound this will see the **correspondence**.
7. Whoever does not know how perfectly to **intellectualize sensible properties** through the way of **secret analogy** will understand nothing sound from the hymns of **Orpheus**.
8. Whoever deeply and intellectually understands the division of the **Venereal unity** into the **trinity of the Graces**, and of the **fatal unity** into the **trinity of the Fates**, and of the **Saturnian unity** into the **trinity of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto**, will see the proper method of proceeding in **Orphic theology**.
9. The **Curetes in Orpheus** are the same as the **Powers in Dionysius**.
10. Whoever attempts the work of the preceding conclusion should apply the work of **Kabbalah** according to what is appropriated to the **Fear of Isaac**.
11. In vain will one approach **Palaemon** and **Leucothea** who has not drawn **Nereus**; nor will he draw **Nereus** who has not worked upon the **primary animal trinity**.
12. Through the **number eight** of the maritime hymns, the **property of corporeal nature** is designated for us.
13. **Typhon in Orpheus** is the same as **Zamael in Kabbalah**.
14. If someone operates intellectually in the work of the preceding conclusion, he will **bind the north through the south**; but if he operates mundanely through the whole, **judgment will operate upon him**.
15. **Night in Orpheus** is the same as **En Soph in Kabbalah**.
16. From the preceding conclusion one can explain more correctly than **Proclus** explains what is meant by that statement of the theologian introducing the **maker of the world as consulting Night** about the work of the world.
17. From these same points it can be understood why in the *Symposium*, according to **Diotima**, **Poros** is called the son of counsel, and why **Jesus** in sacred scripture is called the **angel of great counsel**.
18. The **watery soul**, as it generates lower things, contemplates higher things and establishes itself within itself; it is sung by **Orpheus** in the **threefold hymn of the Sea, Neptune, and Ocean**.
19. Nothing will have firmness in the work for one who has not drawn **Vesta**.
20. Through the septenary of the hymns attributed to the **paternal mind** — **Protogonos, Pallas, Saturn, Venus, Rhea, Law, and Bacchus** — an intelligent and profound contemplator can conjecture something concerning the consummation of the age.
21. The work of the preceding hymns is nothing without the work of **Kabbalah**, whose proper function is to put into practice every **formal quantity**, both **continuous and discrete**.
22. Whoever has not divided **heroes** into two kinds, **native and adventitious**, will often err.
23. Whoever approaches **Apollo** will mediate the work through **Bacchus Triethericus** and complete it through the **ineffable name**.
24. No one will be made drunk by any **Bacchus** who has not first been joined to his **Muse**.
25. Through the quaternary of the hymns attributed to the **first mundane form**, the **formable nature** is designated to us.
26. Whoever has perfectly **returned into the soul** will have made his form equal to the **first form**.

27. Whoever attempts the work of the preceding conclusion will approach **Jupiter** as the **third**, as **living**, not as **life-giving**.
28. In vain does one approach **Nature** and **Proteus** who has not drawn **Pan**.
29. Just as after **universal animation** there is **particular animation**, so after **universal providence** there is **particular providence**.
30. From the preceding conclusion it can be known why **Ovid**, in the curse against *Ibis*, after invoking the deity who rules **earth and water**, invokes **Earth** and **Neptune**.
31. Whoever carefully notes what is said by **Aristotle** in the exposition of the definition of the soul will see why **Orpheus** attributes vigilance to **Pallas** and **Venus**.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico treats the hymns of **Orpheus** as a coded manual of **lawful natural magic**, not as mere poetry or pagan fable. Their power lies not only in what they say, but in their use: with the right **music**, the right **intention of soul**, and the other due conditions, nothing is more effective in natural magic. The gods named by Orpheus are therefore not deceiving demons, but **natural and divine powers** distributed through the world by the **true God** for human use. This is why Pico draws the strong parallel that just as the **hymns of David** serve the work of **Kabbalah**, the **hymns of Orpheus** serve the work of **true, lawful, and natural magic**. Even the number of the hymns matters, since it reflects the measure by which the **threefold God** created the age under the form of the **Pythagorean quaternary**. At the heart of the whole section is the rule that where there is the same **analogy of property**, there is the same **name, hymn, and work**. So Orphic theology works by **secret analogy**: one must know how to intellectualize sensible properties and read them upward into their hidden correspondences.

That analogical method is what lets Pico explain how Orphic unities unfold into ordered triads. The **Venerial unity** becomes the **three Graces**, the **fatal unity** the **three Fates**, and the **Saturnian unity** the trinity of **Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto**. Once that structure is seen, the proper way of proceeding in **Orphic theology** becomes visible. Pico also aligns Orphic figures with other sacred systems: the **Curetes** are the same as the **Powers of Dionysius**; **Typhon** is the same as **Zamael** in **Kabbalah**; **Night** is the same as **En Soph**; and from that same line of thought one can understand why **Poros** is called the son of counsel and why **Jesus** is called the **angel of great counsel**. But Pico insists that such work is incomplete without **Kabbalah**. One must apply it according to what belongs to the **Fear of Isaac**, that is, according to the mode of holy rigor and judgment appropriate to the operation, and he later says openly that the paternal hymns are nothing without Kabbalah, whose proper role is to put every **formal quantity**, continuous and discrete, into practice.

The section also lays out a strict order of magical approach. One cannot reach **Palaemon** and **Leucothea** without first drawing **Nereus**, nor draw **Nereus** without first working upon the **primary animal trinity**. The **eight** maritime hymns signify the property of **corporeal nature**, while the threefold hymn of **Sea, Neptune, and Ocean** sings the **watery soul**, which generates lower things, contemplates higher things, and establishes itself within itself. Nothing in the work will have firmness without **Vesta**, because Vesta marks the stable center or hearth without which the rest of the operation disperses. The **septenary** of hymns attributed to the **paternal mind** allows conjecture about the **consummation of the age**, while the **quaternary** of hymns attributed to the **first mundane form** designates **formable nature**. No one will approach **Apollo** rightly except through **Bacchus Triethericus** and completion through the **ineffable name**, and no one will be made drunk by any **Bacchus** without first being joined to his **Muse**. Likewise, one approaches **Nature** and **Proteus**

only through **Pan**. These are not arbitrary mythic sequences. They show that powers must be reached through due mediations, in proper order.

The final conclusions turn inward and upward. Whoever has perfectly **returned into the soul** makes his form equal to the **first form**, and whoever attempts that work approaches **Jupiter** as the **third**, as **living**, not as **life-giving**. The point is that the operator does not approach Jupiter as the highest source of life itself, but as a mediated living principle within the ordered divine triad. Pico also distinguishes **heroes** into **native** and **adventitious** kinds, warns that there is **particular animation** after **universal animation** just as there is **particular providence** after **universal providence**, and uses that to explain why **Ovid** invokes a universal deity of **earth and water** before invoking **Earth** and **Neptune** separately. Finally, he says that anyone who reads **Aristotle** carefully on the definition of the soul will understand why **Orpheus** attributes vigilance to **Pallas** and **Venus**: these powers stand in relation to the soul's awakened and watchful operations. So the whole section presents Orpheus as a disciplined sacred science of correspondences: names, numbers, hymns, triads, mediations, and powers all belong to one hidden order, and **Kabbalah** is the higher discipline that completes and secures the work.

**This section presents Pico's Orphic synthesis: the hymns of Orpheus are a coded practice of lawful natural magic, governed by analogy among names, numbers, hymns, and powers, ordered through strict mediations and triads, and completed by Kabbalah as the higher discipline that turns symbolic correspondences into effective sacred work.**

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## Kabbalistic Conclusions — Number 71

**According to my own opinion, from the very foundations of the wisdom of the Hebrews, most strongly confirming the Christian religion**

1. Whatever other **Kabbalists** may say, I would divide, in the first division, the **science of Kabbalah** into the **science of the Sephiroth** and the **science of the Shemot**, as into the **practical** and the **speculative**.
2. Whatever other **Kabbalists** may say, I would divide the **speculative part of Kabbalah** into a **fourfold division**, corresponding to the fourfold division of philosophy which I am accustomed to set forth.
  - The first is a science which I call that of the **alphabetary revolution**, corresponding to that part of philosophy which I call **catholic philosophy**.
  - The second, third, and fourth parts are the **threefold Merchiava**, corresponding to the three parts of particular philosophy: **of divine, of intermediate, and of sensible natures**.
3. The science which is the **practical part of Kabbalah** actualizes the whole of **formal metaphysics** and **lower theology**.
4. **Ensoph** is not to be counted among the other enumerations, because it is the **abstract and incommunicable unity** of those enumerations, not a unity coordinated with them.
5. Every **Hebrew Kabbalist**, according to the principles and sayings of the science of **Kabbalah**, is compelled inevitably to concede concerning the **Trinity**, and each divine person — **Father, Son, and**

**Holy Spirit** — precisely that which the **Catholic faith** affirms, without addition, diminution, or variation.

**Corollary:** Not only those who deny the **Trinity**, but also those who posit it otherwise than the **Catholic Church**, such as **Arians, Sabellians**, and the like, can be manifestly refuted if the principles of **Kabbalah** are admitted.

6. The three great quaternary names of **God**, which are in the secrets of the **Kabbalists**, are to be attributed by a marvelous appropriation to the three persons of the **Trinity**: so that the name (**אהיה**) is of the **Father**; the name (**יהיה**) is of the **Son**; and the name (**אדני**) is of the **Holy Spirit**, as can be understood by one who is deeply learned in the science of **Kabbalah**.
7. No **Hebrew Kabbalist** can deny that the name of **Jesus**, if we interpret it according to the mode and principles of **Kabbalah**, signifies precisely this and nothing else: **the Son of God, and the wisdom of the Father, united to human nature in the unity of suppositum through the third person of the divinity, which is the most ardent fire of love**.
8. From the preceding conclusion it can be understood why **Paul** said that there was given to **Jesus** a **name above every name**, and why it is said that **every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth — which is also most **Kabbalistic** and can be understood by one who is profound in **Kabbalah**.
9. If there is any human conjecture concerning the **last times**, we can investigate through the most secret way of **Kabbalah** that the **consummation of the age** will occur **five hundred fourteen years and twenty-five days** from now.
10. That which among the **Kabbalists** is called (**אין סוף**) is without doubt that which is named by:
  - **Orpheus** as *Pallas*
  - by **Zoroaster** as the *paternal mind*
  - by **Mercury** as the *Son of God*
  - by **Pythagoras** as *wisdom*
  - and by **Parmenides** as the *intelligible sphere*
11. The mode by which **rational souls are sacrificed to God through the archangel**, which the **Kabbalists** do not explicitly express, is nothing other than the **separation of the soul from the body** — not of the body from the soul except accidentally — as happens in the **death of the kiss**, of which it is written: *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints*.
12. No one can operate through **pure Kabbalah** who is not **rationaly intellectual**.
13. He who operates in **Kabbalah** without admixture of anything foreign, if he persists long in the work, will die; and if he errs in the work or approaches it unpurified, he will be **devoured by Azazel** according to the property of judgment.
14. Through the letter (**ש**), that is, **Shin**, which mediates in the name of **Jesus**, it is signified to us **Kabbalistically** that the world then rested perfectly, as in its perfection, when **Iod** was joined with **Vau**; which was accomplished in **Christ**, who was true **Son of God** and man.
15. Through the name **Iod he vahu he**, (**יהיה**), which is the **ineffable name**, and which the **Kabbalists** say will be the name of the **Messiah**, it is clearly understood that **He** will be **God, the Son of God, made man through the Holy Spirit**, and that after **Him**, for the perfection of the human race, the **Paraclete** will descend upon men.
16. From the mystery of the three letters in the word (**שבת**) we can interpret **Kabbalistically** that the world then **“keeps Sabbath”** when the **Son of God becomes man**, and that the **final Sabbath** will be when human beings are **regenerated in the Son of God**.

17. Whoever knows what the **most pure wine among the Kabbalists** is will understand why **David** said, *"I shall be inebriated with the abundance of your house,"* and what intoxication the ancient poet **Museus** called **happiness**, and what the many **Bacchuses in Orpheus** signify.
18. Whoever joins **astrology with Kabbalah** will see that it is more fitting to **"keep Sabbath" and rest** after **Christ** on the **Lord's Day** than on the **Sabbath**.
19. If we interpret **Kabbalistically** that saying of the Prophet, *"They sold the just one for silver,"* it signifies nothing other than that **God as redeemer was sold for silver**.
20. If the **Kabbalists** attend to their interpretation of the word (**אז**), they will be greatly illuminated concerning the **mystery of the Trinity**.
21. Whoever joins the saying of the **Kabbalists**, who say that the numeration called the **just one** and the **redeemer**, with the word (**יה**), and with the **Talmudists** who say that **Isaac** went as (**יה**), bearing **his cross**, will see that what was prefigured in **Isaac** was fulfilled in **Christ**, who was true **God**, sold for silver.
22. From the sayings of the **Kabbalists** concerning the **redness of Esau**, and that statement in *Bresit Rhaba* that *Esau was red* and that *the red one will avenge him*, and from the saying *"Why is your garment red?"*, it is clearly shown that **Christ** — as our doctors interpret the same text — is the one who will bring **vengeance upon impure powers**.
23. From that saying of **Jeremiah**, *"He has torn His Word,"* according to the exposition of the **Kabbalists**, we are to understand that **God**, holy and blessed, tore **His Word** for sinners.
24. From the **Kabbalists'** response to the question why, in the *Book of Numbers*, the passage of the **death of Miriam** is joined to that of the **red heifer**, and from their exposition of that passage where **Moses**, after the sin of the calf, said *"Blot me out,"* and from what is said in the *Zohar* on the text *"by his wound we are healed,"* the **Hebrews** are necessarily refuted who say that it was not fitting that the **death of Christ should satisfy for the sin of the human race**.
25. Every **Kabbalist** must concede that the **Messiah** would liberate them from **diabolical captivity**, not merely from temporal bondage.
26. Every **Kabbalist** must concede, from the sayings of the doctors of this science, that **original sin is expiated at the coming of the Messiah**.
27. From the principles of the **Kabbalists** it is clearly inferred that, through the **advent of the Messiah**, the **necessity of circumcision is removed**.
28. By the expression (**בראשית**), which is placed twice in that text *"In the beginning God created heaven and earth,"* I believe that **Moses** signifies the creation of the **intellectual nature** and the **animal nature**, which in the natural order preceded the creation of heaven and earth.
29. What is said by the **Kabbalists** that a **green line encircles the universe** is most fittingly referred to the conclusion we have last drawn, according to the mind of **Porphyry**.
30. The **Kabbalists** must necessarily concede, according to their own principles, that the **true Messiah to come** is such that **He is truly God and the Son of God**.
31. When you hear **Kabbalists** attribute formlessness to **Thesua**, understand formlessness not as privation, but as prior to form by way of conceptual antecedence.
32. If we join the double **Aleph (א)** in the text *"The scepter shall not depart..."* with the double **Aleph** in the text *"God possessed me from the beginning,"* and with the double **Aleph** in the text *"the earth was void,"* we will understand, by the way of **Kabbalah**, that **Jacob** there speaks of the true **Messiah**, who was **Jesus of Nazareth**.

33. Through the word (**איש**), written with **Aleph–Yod–Shin**, and signifying “man,” which is attributed to **God** when it is said “*the Lord is a man of war*,” we are most perfectly instructed, by way of **Kabbalah**, concerning the **mystery of the Trinity**.
34. Through the name (**יהוה**), that is, **He**, written with three letters — **He, Vau, and Aleph** — a name most properly and most fittingly attributed to **God**, not only according to the **Kabbalists**, who frequently say this explicitly, but also according to the theology of **Dionysius the Areopagite**, the **mystery of the Trinity** together with the possibility of the **Incarnation** is declared to us by the way of **Kabbalah**.
35. If **God** is understood in **Himself** as **infinite**, as **one**, and as **in Himself**, then we understand nothing as proceeding from **Him**; rather, we understand a **separation from things**, and a complete **withdrawal into Himself**, enclosed in the most remote recess of **His divinity** — as if **hidden in the abyss of His own darkness**, and in no way manifested in the diffusion and outpouring of **His goodness and fountain-like splendor**.
36. From the preceding conclusion it can be understood why it is said among the **Kabbalists** that **God clothed Himself in ten garments when He created the world**.
37. Whoever understands, in the **right-hand coordination**, the subordination of **piety to wisdom**, will perfectly understand, by way of **Kabbalah**, how **Abraham**, in his day, **by a straight line saw the day of Christ and rejoiced**.
38. The effects that followed after the **death of Christ** ought to convince every **Kabbalist** that **Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah**.
39. From this conclusion, and from the thirtieth set forth above, it follows that every **Kabbalist** must concede that, when **Jesus** was asked who **He** was, **He** most rightly responded, saying: “**I am the principle who speaks to you**.”
40. **Kabbalists** are inevitably forced to concede that the **true Messiah will purify men through water**.
41. It can be known in **Kabbalah**, through the mystery of the **closed Mem (מ)**, why **Christ**, after **Himself**, sent the **Paraclete**.
42. It is known from the foundations of **Kabbalah** how rightly **Jesus** said: “**Before Abraham was born, I am**.”
43. Through the mystery of the two letters (**י**) and (**ה**) it is known how the **Messiah**, as **God**, was the principle of **Himself** as man.
44. It is known from **Kabbalah**, through the mystery of the **northern part**, why **God will judge the world by fire**.
45. It is known most clearly in **Kabbalah** why the **Son of God came with the water of baptism**, and the **Holy Spirit with fire**.
46. From the **eclipse of the sun** that occurred at the death of **Christ**, it can be known, according to the foundations of **Kabbalah**, that then the **Son of God** and the true **Messiah** suffered.
47. Whoever knows the property of the **North (Aquilo)** in **Kabbalah** will understand why **Satan** promised **Christ** the kingdoms of the world if, falling down, **He** would adore him.
48. Whatever other **Kabbalists** may say, I assert that the **ten spheres correspond to the ten numerations** as follows:
  - beginning from the lower structure:
    - **Jupiter** to the fourth,

- **Mars** to the fifth,
  - **Sun** to the sixth,
  - **Saturn** to the seventh,
  - **Venus** to the eighth,
  - **Mercury** to the ninth,
  - **Moon** to the tenth;
- and above this structure:
    - the **firmament** to the third,
    - the **primum mobile** to the second,
    - the **empyrean heaven** to the tenth.
49. Whoever understands the **correspondence of the Ten Commandments** to these numerations, through the union of **astrological truth** with **theological truth**, will see, according to our preceding conclusion, that:
- the **first commandment** corresponds to the first numeration,
  - the **second** to the second,
  - the **third** to the third,
  - the **fourth** to the seventh,
  - the **fifth** to the fourth,
  - the **sixth** to the fifth,
  - the **seventh** to the ninth,
  - the **eighth** to the eighth,
  - the **ninth** to the sixth,
  - the **tenth** to the tenth.
50. When the **Kabbalists** say that **sons are to be sought from the seventh and eighth**, understand this in the **lower Merkabah**: from one it is sought that it give, from the other that it not hinder. What gives and what restrains can be understood from the preceding conclusions by one skilled in **astrology and Kabbalah**.
51. Just as the **moon** was full in **Solomon**, so the **sun** was full in the true **Messiah**, who was **Jesus**; and from the correspondence to its **diminution in Zedekiah**, one may conjecture further, if he is profound in **Kabbalah**.
52. From the preceding conclusion it can be understood why the evangelist **Matthew**, in those **fourteen generations before Christ**, omitted certain generations.
53. Since to become light is nothing other than to participate in light, that **Kabbalists'** exposition is very fitting: that in the expression "**let there be light**" we understand a **luminous mirror**, and in the expression "**light was made**" a **non-luminous mirror**.
54. What the **Kabbalists** say, that we shall be beatified in the **luminous mirror** reserved for the saints in the future age, is precisely the same, according to their principles, as what we say: that the saints are beatified **in the Son**.
55. What the **Kabbalists** say, that the **stored light** shines sevenfold more than the **light left behind**, agrees wonderfully with **Pythagorean arithmetic**.
56. Whoever knows how to resolve the **quaternary into the denary** will have, if skilled in **Kabbalah**, a method of deducing from the **ineffable name** the **name of seventy-two letters**.

57. From the preceding conclusion, one skilled in **formal arithmetic** can understand that to operate through the **scemamphoras [Shem ha-Mephorash] (שם המפורש)** is proper to **rational nature**.
58. It would be more correct to explain that **Becadmin**, as the **Chaldean gloss** has it on the word **Bresit**, refers to **sapiential Ideas** rather than to the **thirty-two paths**, as other **Kabbalists** say; though both interpretations are correct in **Kabbalah**.
59. Whoever deeply considers the fourfold state of things — first **union and stable abiding**, second **procession**, third **return**, fourth **beatific reunion** — will see the letter **Beth** operating what is first with the first, what is middle with the middle, and what is last with the last.
60. From the preceding conclusion, the contemplative person can understand why the **law of God** begins with the letter **Beth**, of which it is written that it is **immaculate**, that it was **with Him composing all things**, that it **converts souls**, and that it **gives fruit in its time**.
61. From the same conclusion it can be known that the **Son**, who is the **wisdom of the Father**, is the one **who unites all things in the Father**, and **through whom all things were made**, and **by whom all things are converted**, and **in whom all things ultimately keep Sabbath**.
62. Whoever deeply considers the **number of the nine beatitudes** mentioned in the *Gospel of Matthew* will see that they correspond wonderfully to the **nine numerations below the first**, which is the **inaccessible abyss of divinity**.
63. Just as **Aristotle** concealed a more divine philosophy — veiled by the ancients under fables and parables — under the appearance of philosophical speculation and obscured it with brevity of words, so also **Rabbi Moses the Egyptian**, in the book called by the Latins the *Guide of the Perplexed [Dux Neutrorum]*, while through the superficial bark of words he seems to walk with philosophers, in truth embraces the mysteries of **Kabbalah** through hidden understandings of deeper meanings.
64. In the text “**Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,**” it is more correct to understand a **collection from lower to higher and from higher to lower**, rather than only from lower to higher twice.
65. It is more correct that **Amen** signifies **Tipheret and Kingdom**, as is shown by the way of number, rather than signifying **Kingdom alone**, as some maintain.
66. I adapt our soul to the **ten sephirot** as follows:
- through **unity** with the first,
  - through **intellect** with the second,
  - through **reason** with the third,
  - through the **higher concupiscible power** with the fourth,
  - through the **higher irascible power** with the fifth,
  - through **free will** with the sixth,
  - and through all these, insofar as it turns upward, with the seventh;
  - insofar as it turns downward, with the eighth;
  - as mixed from both, rather through indifference or alternating adhesion than simultaneous containment, with the ninth;
  - and through the **power by which it inhabits its first dwelling**, with the tenth.
67. From the saying of the **Kabbalists** that the **heavens are made of fire and water**, both the **theological truth about the sephirot** and the **philosophical truth** are revealed to us: that the **elements exist in heaven only according to their active power**.

68. Whoever knows what the **denary** is in **formable arithmetic**, and understands the nature of the **first spherical number**, will know something which I have not yet found in any **Kabbalist**: namely, that it is the foundation of the great secret of the **Jubilee** in **Kabbalah**.
69. From the foundation of the preceding conclusion it can likewise be known the secret of the **fifty gates of understanding**, and of the **thousandth generation**, and of the **kingdom of all ages**.
70. Through the method of reading the **Law without points**, and the method of writing divine things, the **unial containment of divine realities within an indeterminate scope** is shown to us.
71. From what the **Kabbalists** say about **Egypt**, and as experience confirms, we must believe that the **land of Egypt** stands in analogy and under the subordination of the **property of power**.
72. Just as **true astrology** teaches us to read in the **Book of God**, so **Kabbalah** teaches us to read in the **Book of the Law**.

## Section Review

In this section, Pico presents **Kabbalah** as a complete science whose own principles, rightly followed, confirm the truth of **Christian doctrine**. He first divides it into the **science of the Sephiroth** and the **science of the Shemot**, treating these as the **speculative** and **practical** sides of Kabbalah. He then subdivides the speculative side into the science of **alphabetary revolution** and the **threefold Merkabah**, corresponding to the major divisions of philosophy, while the practical side is said to actualize the whole of **formal metaphysics** and **lower theology**. Kabbalah is therefore presented not as scattered mystical lore, but as a disciplined science with its own internal architecture. At its summit stands **Ensoph**, which is not one numeration among the others, but the absolute and incommunicable unity above them. From that foundation Pico makes his strongest claim: any true Kabbalist, if consistent, must concede exactly what the **Catholic faith** teaches about the **Trinity**, and must confess the three divine persons through the hidden logic of the divine names. He then goes further, identifying **Ensoph** with what other traditions named as **Pallas**, the **paternal mind**, the **Son of God**, **wisdom**, or the **intelligible sphere**, so that the highest Kabbalistic principle is treated as the same reality dimly sought under other sacred names.

From there, Pico argues that Kabbalah also confirms the whole **Christian doctrine of Christ**. The name of **Jesus**, interpreted Kabbalistically, is said to signify precisely that the **Son of God**, the **wisdom of the Father**, is united to human nature in one suppositum through the fire of divine love. Kabbalah therefore explains why the name of Jesus is above every name, why the Messiah must be **true God and the Son of God**, and why sayings like **“Before Abraham was, I am”** and **“I am the principle who speaks to you”** are exactly right. The same logic extends into salvation history: the Messiah frees not merely from political bondage, but from **diabolical captivity**; **original sin** is expiated at his coming; the **necessity of circumcision** therefore falls away; the Messiah purifies with **water**; and the death of **Christ** truly satisfies for the sins of the human race. Pico reads **Isaac**, **Esau**, **Jeremiah's torn Word**, the **red heifer**, and many other scriptural figures as Kabbalistic anticipations of Christ's redeeming work. He also keeps the more dangerous operative side of the tradition in view: the **death of the kiss** is read as the soul's sacrificial separation from the body, pure Kabbalah is said to be dangerous to the unpurified and even deadly to one who persists in it too long, and one who errs in it may be devoured by **Azazel** under judgment. Kabbalah is thus treated not merely as compatible with Christianity, but as a hidden witness to the whole Christian economy and as a real, perilous sacred science.

A third major block concerns the way Kabbalah reads **creation, language, and divine manifestation**. Pico says that when God is understood in Himself as infinite and withdrawn into the abyss of His own darkness,

nothing is seen as proceeding outward; this explains why the Kabbalists say God **clothed Himself in ten garments** in creating the world. He also reads **Breshit** as signaling primordial creation beyond the merely visible cosmos, explains that **Thesua** should be understood not as privation but as conceptual priority to form, and links the **green line** around the universe to a hidden cosmological order. Letters and names then become direct vehicles of doctrine: the inserted **Shin** in the name of Jesus, the three letters of **Shabbat**, the doubled **Alephs**, the word **ish**, the divine name **hu**, and the **closed Mem** all become ways of expressing the **Trinity**, the **Incarnation**, the union of God and man in Christ, the sending of the **Paraclete**, and the final **Sabbath** of regeneration. Language here is not symbolic decoration. Letters themselves are treated as structural bearers of revelation. Even the Kabbalistic language of **pure wine**, sacred intoxication, and Sabbath-rest is redirected toward Christian fulfillment, so that the deepest joy, true rest, and the shift from **Sabbath** to the **Lord's Day** all point to Christ.

The section also makes Kabbalah into a full **cosmological and arithmetical science**. Pico maps the **ten numerations** onto the **spheres**, aligns the **Ten Commandments** with those same numerations through the union of astrology and theology, and adapts the **human soul** to the sephirotic order. He uses the imagery of the **luminous** and **non-luminous mirrors** to explain creation and beatitude, says the saints are beatified **in the Son**, and links the stored light to **Pythagorean arithmetic**. From there he moves into operative name-theology: whoever can resolve the **quaternary into the denary** can derive the **name of seventy-two letters** from the ineffable name, and operation through the **Shem ha-Mephorash** belongs properly to rational nature. The section then gathers all of this into a final Christian order of creation and redemption. The letter **Beth** expresses the structure of abiding, procession, return, and reunion; the **Son**, as the wisdom of the Father, is the one through whom all things are made, converted, and brought to Sabbath; the **nine beatitudes** correspond to the nine lower numerations; **Amen** signifies **Tipheret and Kingdom**; and even the **Jubilee**, the **fifty gates**, the **thousandth generation**, the unpointed **Law**, and the land of **Egypt** are folded into one Kabbalistic-Christian system. Pico even says that **Rabbi Moses the Egyptian**, though he seems outwardly philosophical in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, inwardly carries the mysteries of **Kabbalah** beneath that philosophical surface. The section ends with the largest contrast of all: just as **true astrology** teaches one to read in the **Book of God**, so **Kabbalah** teaches one to read in the **Book of the Law**.

**This section presents Pico's strongest Kabbalistic claim: the wisdom of the Hebrews is a total science of names, numbers, creation, soul, law, and history, and when read from its own foundations it compels the Christian truth about the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Messiah, redemption, and the final restoration of all things.**

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*The End.*

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## Publication Notice

These **Conclusions** were not disputed until after the **Epiphany**. Meanwhile they were publicly circulated in all the **schools of Italy**,

and if any philosopher or theologian — even from the furthest regions — wished to attend, they were promised **travel expenses from Rome**.

The disputation was to be held at public expense under the authority of the **Apostolic See**.