

Extract from S.A. [Steve] Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems* (Tempe, Ariz.: MRTS, 1998). See <http://www.safarmer.com/pico>.

## Chart of Pico's Historical Theses

Pico's first 400 theses,<sup>1</sup> which have a quasi-historical structure, take us from the warring Latin scholastics to the (mostly) harmonious ancients; Pico's agreement with traditions increases as we move backwards through the text in time (downwards through this chart). To reconstruct Pico's views in this part of the text, all topically related theses must be collated with the last 500 theses given "according to his own opinion." The historical structure of this part of the text, as shown in chapter 1, mirrors the emanational principles of Pico's correlative cosmology, or so-called *philosophia nova*.

"Nations" or Sects ( <i>gentes</i> )	"Heresiarchs" or Sect Leaders	Section # <sup>2</sup>	# of theses
<b>The Latins</b> Sect leaders include the official theologians of the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. The language of this section is abstract and philosophical, and the section is filled with conflicting theses, reflecting Pico's model of history.	Albert the Great	1.	16
	Thomas Aquinas	2.	45
	Francis of Meyronnes	3.	8
	John [Duns] Scotus	4.	22
	Henry of Ghent	5.	13
	Giles of Rome	6.	11
<b>115 Total</b>			
<b>The Arabs</b> Wars still rage among the sect leaders, but the Arabs also deal increasingly with "higher" matters, including proofs of the existence of God and celestial issues beyond the understanding of the Latin scholastics.	Averroes	7.	41
	Avicenna	8.	12
	al-Farabi	9.	11
	"Isaac of Narbonne"	10.	4
	Abumaron (Avenzoar)	11.	4
	Moses of Egypt (Maimonides)	12.	3
	"Mohammed of Toledo"	13.	5
	Avempace	14.	2
<b>82 from the Arabs, 197<sup>3</sup> Total</b>			

<sup>1</sup> 402 after some hasty last-minute revisions.

<sup>2</sup> Assigned by the present editor but implied in the *editio princeps*.

<sup>3</sup> Probably originally 199 or 200, implying that two or three earlier theses were dropped at some point from the Latins and Arabs.

<b>"Nations" or Sects (gentes)</b>	<b>"Heresiarchs" or Sect Leaders</b>	<b>Section #</b>	<b># of theses</b>
<b>The Greek Peripatetics</b> The correlative structure of the cosmos becomes clearer as we move into the second half of the historical part of the text, and the wars between sect leaders lessen in intensity.	Theophrastus Ammonius Simplicius Alexander of Aphrodisias Themistius	15. 16. 17. 18. 19.	4 3 9 8 5
			29 from the Greek Peripatetics, 226 Total

<b>The Platonists</b> From this point on only a few "civil wars" are evident among later Neo-Platonists; Pico's language becomes increasingly symbolic (and obscure) as we approach the ancient wisemen.	Plotinus "Adeland the Arab" Porphyry Iamblichus Proclus	20. 21. 22. 23. 24.	15 8 12 9 55
			99 from the Platonists, 325 Total

<b>"Nations" or Sects (gentes)</b> No sect leaders are identified among the most ancient "nations," which are largely in agreement.			
<b>Pythagorean mathematics</b>		25.	14
<b>Chaldean theologians</b>		26.	6
<b>Mercury Trismegistus the Egyptian</b>		27.	10
<b>Hebrew Cabalist wisemen</b> Pico announces his rediscovery of the secret wisdom revealed orally to Moses on the mountain. The section ends with mystical speculation on the word <i>Amen</i> .		28.	47
			77 from the ancient sages, 402 Total

## Chart of Theses according to His Own Opinion

The 500 theses<sup>1</sup> in this part of the text were originally divided into ten sections; an eleventh was added while the book was in press to replace theses removed for doctrinal reasons (see the introductory note to theses 6>1–10).

Abbreviated Title and Section Description	Notes	Section # <sup>2</sup>	# of theses
<b>Paradoxical reconciliative conclusions.</b> The first thesis in this set promises to reconcile all of Plato and Aristotle; the rest aim to reconcile various Arabs and Latins on isolated issues, but not <i>in toto</i> .	The first thesis has numerological significance	1>	17
<b>Philosophical conclusions dissenting from the common philosophy.</b> Resolves numerous standard scholastic conflicts.		2>	80
<b>Paradoxical conclusions introducing new doctrines in philosophy.</b> Introduces Pico's <i>philosophia nova</i> , capable of resolving "every proposed question on natural or divine things." The correlative structures here are typical of syncretic systems worldwide.	The first thesis of this section = 500, a symbol for Pico of mystical return	3>	71 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Theological conclusions opposed to the common mode of speaking of theologians.</b> Fiercely attacks St. Thomas; contains most of the theses attacked by the papal commission.		4>	29 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 498 after some hasty revisions.

<sup>2</sup> Assigned by present editor but implied in the *editio princeps*.

<sup>3</sup> One thesis was removed shortly before or while the work was in press.

<sup>4</sup> Two theses were apparently removed while the work was in press.

Abbreviated Title and Section Description	Notes	Section #	# of theses
<b>Conclusions on the doctrine of Plato.</b> Contains only 62 theses, we are told, since Pico's first reconciliative thesis "takes it upon itself to discuss the entire doctrine of Plato." This section contains many covert attacks on Marsilio Ficino.	The first thesis in this section = 600	5>	62
<b>Conclusions on the <i>Book of Causes</i>.</b> Inserted while in press to replace other theses apparently withdrawn for doctrinal reasons.		6>	10
<b>Conclusions on mathematics (numerology).</b> One of three or four of Pico's methods leading to a grasp of "everything knowable."	Does thesis 700 have numerological significance?	7> 7a>	11 74
<b>Conclusions on Zoroaster and his Chaldean commentators.</b> Supposedly based on Chaldean texts.		8>	15
<b>Conclusions on magic.</b> This section precedes Ficino's magical writings by several years and is sharply distinguished from them.		9>	26
<b>Conclusions on understanding the Orphic Hymns according to magic.</b> Much of the magic here is exegetical and prophetic in nature.	Does thesis 800 have numerological significance?	10>	31
<b>Cabalistic conclusions confirming the Christian religion.</b> The Jews are converted "with their own weapons" and mankind is prepared for its final eschatological reunion with Christ.	Thesis 900 has numerological significance	11>	72 <sup>5</sup>
498 Subtotal, 900 Total			

<sup>5</sup> This section apparently originally contained seventy-one theses.