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REUCHLIN'S *DE VERBO MIRIFICO* AND THE MAGIC DEBATE OF THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY*

By Charles Zika

Estimates of Johannes Reuchlin's first major work, the *De Verbo Mirifico*, are few.¹ Among those that exist, the general reaction is one of detached and uncritical admiration. Contrary to these, J. L. Blau in his pioneering survey of the proponents of Christian Kabbalah has described it as 'a pleasant little dialogue, though it proves nothing'.² And Lynn Thorndike has been even more scathing in characterizing the discussion of the three disputants as 'about as difficult to distinguish as would be the barking of the three heads of Cerberus'.³ But the common run of articles and works on German humanism as well as the most important contributions by historians such as Ludwig Geiger, Hans Rupprich and Lewis Spitz, who treat the work within the context of Reuchlin's total intellectual activity and historical significance, present an account of the work without including any critical comment, and merely convey a vague sense of wonder and admiration.

This is a strange state of affairs for the first philosophical work of a scholar universally regarded as one of the key figures of European scholarship and intellectual life at the turn of the sixteenth century. Much of the reason for it can be traced to the dominant position which the nineteenth-century German liberal tradition, embodied in Geiger's work, still holds in Reuchlin studies. The recent accounts of the DVM by Rupprich and Spitz rely very heavily on the account given by Geiger almost a century before.

Geiger and his followers sought to make the content of the work intelligible by placing it within the context of Reuchlin's developing interest in Hebrew and Kabbalah, which finds its most clear and mature statement in Reuchlin's *De Arte Cabalistica* published twenty-three years later in 1517. The DVM is understood therefore as an intensely personal document, an expression of Reuchlin's internal mystical gropings; and at the same time, an attempt to present a systematic account of Jewish Kabbalah, relating it to Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. It is primarily these three tendencies which have served to obscure the real historical immediacy and urgency of the work's contents and have subsequently set the mechanism for a restrictive

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¹ *De Verbo Mirifico* (Basle, Johann Amerbach, 1494). I have used the facsimile reprint (hereafter DVM) contained in *De Verbo Mirifico. 1494. De Arte Cabalistica. 1517*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1964. Among modern authors the most important accounts are found in L. Geiger, *Johann Reuchlin. Sein Leben und seine Werke*, Leipzig 1871, pp. 178–184; L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and*

Experimental Science, iv, New York 1934, pp. 517–24; H. Rupprich, 'Johannes Reuchlin und seine Bedeutung im Europäischen Humanismus', in *Johannes Reuchlin 1455–1522*, ed. M. Krebs, Pforzheim 1955, pp. 16–18; L. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists*, Cambridge 1963, pp. 68–69; F. Secret, *Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance*, Paris 1964, pp. 44–52; M. Brod, *Johannes Reuchlin und sein Kampf*, Stuttgart 1965, pp. 90–118.

² J. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance*, New York 1944, p. 49.

³ *History of Magic*, iv, p. 517.

rather than an expansive characterization of Reuchlin's place within pre-Reformation intellectual and cultural history. As the following analysis attempts to show, it contributes little to an understanding of Reuchlin's intellectual concerns to describe the DVM as the first stage in the development of his Hebraic and Kabbalistic studies. Nor can the work be reduced to the level of a personal statement of a mystical kind, unrelated to Reuchlin's intellectual and social environment. Finally, the intentions of the work cannot be understood as long as it is viewed as an attempt to put forward a particular philosophical or theological system.

I

At the very beginning of the DVM, in his prefatory letter to Johannes Dalberg, Bishop of Worms and Chancellor of the University of Heidelberg, Reuchlin indicates that the task to which his work was dedicated, rather than being an exercise in personal piety, expressed a vital response to some of the contemporary interests and issues which were coming to the fore of intellectual debate in the final decades of the fifteenth century. This opening letter is an important statement of the work's intention and scope, and demands quoting at some length.

Certain diligent explorers of arcane matters . . . whom the recondite powers of words, the abstruse energies of utterances and the divine characters of secret names excite, have been detected in our age (in so far as I judge it correctly) to draw away considerably from the most ancient tracks of the first philosophers and to often err gravely concerning the operations of mysteries, most full of wonderful effects; and especially for this reason, that either because of the fleeting obscurity of figures which have been obliterated, or perverse and faulty alteration by librarians, these symbols of that sacred philosophy and most venerable seals of supernatural powers, have not been able to be read, let alone understood.⁴

Unlike all the others who, tired and frustrated, have fled from the task, Reuchlin, encouraged by his teacher Heynlin de Stein and his friends Sebastian Brant and Johannes Amerbach, has dared

. . . to enter such great darkneses and obscurities of sacred matters, the hiding places of secret words; and, as if from the most hidden inner depths of oracles and most ancient philosophy, explain to our age (so far as history allows) almost all the names which in a former age wise men, endowed with miraculous operations, used in sacred matters—whether these be Pythagorean sacraments of most ancient philosophers, the

⁴ 'Rerum arcanarum curiosi quidam exploratores camararie Dalburgi, antistes Vangionum sacratissime, quos et reconditae verborum vires, et abstrusae vocum energiae, et divini secretorum nominum characteres sollicitant, aetate nostra (quantum videre mihi recte videor) non parum secedere ab antiquissimis principum philosophorum vestigiis deprehenduntur et circa mirabilium

effectuum plenissimas mysteriorum operationes, saepe multumque aberrare; hac potissimum de causa quod vel caduca figurarum obscuritate oblitterata vel depravatione librorum perversa et mendosa, ea sacrae philosophiae symbola, et veneranda supernaturalium virtutum signacula, nedom intelligi, sed nec legi queant' (DVM, sig. a 2^r).

primitive memorials of the Hebrews and Chaldeans, or the devout prayers of Christians. . . .

Accept therefore a disputation concerning the wonder-working word by three philosophers, whom I have presented as contending among themselves (to which a dispute of the sects would have brought them), so as the better to elucidate the occult property of names; and so from these, and from such numerous and great names, the occasion of our finally choosing one supreme, wonder-working and blessed name may the more easily present itself.⁵

The thrust and direction of the work is clear. It is to examine the occult property of names and the secret power of words used by men in ancient times in the performance of sacred rites; to correct erroneous conceptions concerning the marvellous effects of mysteries; and in this way, to choose that name which is supreme and most powerful in the performance of wonders. The three disputants in the work, Sidonius a former Epicurean, Baruchias a Hebrew, and Capnion a Christian bearing Reuchlin's Graecized name, meet in Capnion's native city Pforzheim. They are to discuss, Reuchlin tells us, much about the science of things human and divine, opinion, faith, miracles, the powers of words and figures, arcane operations and the mysteries of seals. This discussion is meant to facilitate an examination of 'those sacred names and consecrated characters of all peoples which are efficacious by means of some excellent philosophy, or by means of noble ceremonies'—from all of which, in the third book, Capnion is to bring forward the one sacred name IHSUH. In this name is located the power and strength of all.⁶ Despite the numerous twists and detours in the discussion, Reuchlin's intention at least is quite clear. The work is to treat of words, their power and the basis of that power; while the more general consideration of Epicureanism or Greek philosophy, Kabbalah or Christian faith is intended to serve the understanding of the power of words and names and their use among peoples in sacred rites and religious ceremonies.

The *verbum mirificum* then, the 'wonder-working word' of the title, is not merely the instrument of internal mystical union between man and God, as is generally assumed, but also the instrument by which man performs external

⁵ ' . . . tantas ausus sum tenebras et tam obfuscata sacratorum, immo secretorum verborum latibula ingredi, et quasi de adytis oraculorum et vetustissimae philosophiae penetrabilibus, exponere nostro saeculo quantum nobis memoria suppetit; universa ferme nomina, quibus superiori aetate sapientes homines et miraculosis operationibus praediti utebantur in sacris, sive pythagorica fuerint et vetustiorum philosophorum sacramenta sive hebraeorum chaldeorumque barbara memoracula, seu christianorum devota supplicia . . . Trium igitur philosophorum de Verbo mirifico disputationem accipe, quos inter se (ut sectarum controversia cogere debuit) altercantes finxi, quo magis elucescat occulta sacrorum nominum proprietas. De

quibus et de tot numero atque tantis, unum tandem supremum quidem mirificum beatificumque nobis eligendi facilius praestetur occasio' (DVM, sig a 2^r).

⁶ 'Hoc modo universarum gentium quae aliqua excellenti polleant philosophia aut non illiberalibus ceremoniis et sacrata nomina et consecrati characteres in quaestionem incidunt . . . usquequid Capnion in libro tertio vix tandem ex omnibus sacris unum Ihsuh nomen colligit, in quod omnium sacrorum virtus sive potestas refertur quod est semper et super omnia benedictum' (DVM, sig. a 2^r—a 2^v). IHSUH is of course derived from the Hebrew form of the name of Jesus. See below n. 92.

miraculous activities in the world. As is stated numerous times throughout the work in what becomes almost a *leitmotif*—by this word man can perform wonderful works beyond human strength, and although constituted in nature, hold dominion over it.⁷ This word is a sign of the divine union in so far as it is the source of man's superhuman activity.

Such a concern with the operative power of words and names immediately places Reuchlin's work within the context of the philosophical discussion and diatribe in the late fifteenth century concerning the powers of magic. The question of *vis verborum*, the possibility and validity of carrying out magical operations by means of words and names, was one of the central issues in that debate.⁸ In his famous *Conclusiones* and *Apologia* of 1486 and 1487, Pico della Mirandola had extended the spiritual and Orphic magic, developed by Ficino and expounded in his later *De Triplici Vita*, with the claims and propensities attributed to Kabbalah for the carrying out of magical operations. Pico states quite pointedly there that any magical art must be allied with Kabbalah if it is to have success.⁹ This espousal of magic brought prompt and violent condemnation both in the form of heresy charges and an Inquisitorial Commission, as well as through a work written by one of the bishops who sat on the commission, Pedro Garsias.¹⁰ The debate, stimulated by Ficino and carried on by Pico and Garsias, did not however end there. Between 1492 and 1494 Lefèvre d'Etaples wrote a work, *De Magia Naturali*, which perhaps because of Pico's fate remained in manuscript form.¹¹ This was followed in the early sixteenth century by the works of Symphorien Champier, Cornelius Agrippa, Ludovico Lazarelli, Gianfrancesco Pico and others, each of whom took up his individual position in defence or condemnation of magic.

Reuchlin's work has not been examined in the context of this debate. Yet it clearly mirrors the concerns which gave rise to the debate about magic at the turn of the sixteenth century, addresses itself to some of the key points at issue between Pico and Garsias, and more generally, reflects the interest of a growing number of contemporary European intellectuals in an occult philosophy. Reuchlin's involvement in these issues was clearly related to his contact with the Italian intellectual environment, and with the Florentine neo-Platonists in particular. The facts of Reuchlin's biography are sufficiently well known to avoid repeating here, but it may be useful briefly to indicate some of the principal lines in the development of Reuchlin's scholarly interests prior to the writing of the DVM in 1494.¹²

⁷ 'quo et deum libenter versari cum hominibus animadvertamus, cuius conversationis eminentissimum esse argumentum potest, quod super vires humanas mirabilium operum ipsimet effectores sumus. Simulque in natura constituti, supra naturam dominamur, et monstra, portenta, miracula divinitatis insignia, nos mortales uno verbo, quod iam pridem vobis explicare ausus sum prodigimus' (DVM, sig. b 4^r. Also cf. sig. b 5^r, c^r, f 5^r, f 7^v, g 4^v).

⁸ Accounts of this debate and the issues involved are to be found in D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to*

Campanella, London 1958; Thorndike, *History of Magic*, iv, chs. lix, lx; F. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London 1964.

⁹ 'Nulla potest esse operatio Magica alicuius efficaciae, nisi annexum habeat opus Cabalae explicitum vel implicitum' (Magical Conclusion No. 15 in *Opera Omnia*, Basle 1557-73, p. 105).

¹⁰ *Determinationes magistrales contra conclusiones Joannis Pici*, Rome 1489.

¹¹ Thorndike, *History of Magic*, iv, p. 513.

¹² The most important secondary source is still Ludwig Geiger's *Johann Reuchlin. Sein Leben und seine Werke* (see n. 1 above).

By 1494 Reuchlin's initial studies were well behind him. He had studied philosophy, grammar and rhetoric in Paris, received his Baccalaureate and Master of Arts in Basel, studied law in Orleans, Poitiers and finally in Tuebingen, where he gained his doctorate in 1484. He had also studied Greek, and as early as 1478 had a Greek grammar published, the *Micropedia*, to assist him in his teaching in Orleans and Poitiers. Three years previously he had published the *Vocabularius Breviloquus*, a Latin lexicon meant to encompass the whole of the Latin language. He had also translated a number of minor works from Greek into Latin, but these were as yet unpublished. Reuchlin's Latin and Greek scholarship then was already recognized by this time, and he was an established member of German scholarly circles. He was also well established within the court of Eberhard im Bart, Count of Wuerttemberg, in Stuttgart. He was engaged by Eberhard as private secretary, counsellor and diplomat, and practised both laws in the capacity of Assessor to the Supreme Court and Proctor for the German Dominicans.

Some time around 1490 Reuchlin's intellectual interests, which were largely identical with those of fellow humanists, took a new direction. He turned to the study of Hebrew. Even though he seems to have begun study with a Jew named Calman as early as 1486, it was not until 1492 when working at the Imperial Court at Linz that he approached these studies more energetically, receiving tuition from the Imperial Physician, Jakob ben Jechiel Loans of Mantua. But judging from the DVM and Reuchlin's later works, the experience of his trip to Italy in 1490 and contact with the new enthusiasm for Jewish Kabbalah as the most ancient manifestation of Christian truth and source of the divine teachings of the ancient philosophers and theologians, must have been crucial for his new-found Hebraic interests. In Florence, he studied Greek with Demetrius Chalcondylas, but more importantly made contact with both Ficino and Giovanni Pico. Little is known of these meetings, except that in 1492 Reuchlin is known to have received copies of Pico's *Heptaplus* and Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* and translation of Plotinus.¹³ From Reuchlin's works it is also known that he was very well acquainted with Pico's *Conclusiones*.¹⁴ On the 1490 trip Reuchlin also travelled to Rome. His contact there with scholars such as Jakob Questenberg—who lived in the palace of his patron Marcus, Cardinal of San Marco, was a *familiaris* of Innocent VIII and later held a position in the papal chancellery—would surely have made him familiar with the attacks against Pico and the debate concerning the possibilities of magic which had been launched by Pedro Garsias (probably with Innocent VIII's approval) less than a year earlier.¹⁵ Such hints from Reuchlin's biography are confirmed, as will be seen, by the internal evidence in the *De Verbo Mirifico*.

¹³ Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel, ed. L. Geiger, Tuebingen 1875, pp. 29–34, nos. xxviii–xxix, xxxi, xxxiii, xxxvii; *Clarorum Virorum Epistulae . . . ad Joannem Reuchlin Phorcensem*, Tuebingen 1514, sig. b 2^r–b 2^v.

¹⁴ See below.

¹⁵ For Reuchlin and Questenberg, see *Briefwechsel*, p. 25. Reuchlin mentions Gar-

sias's work in the account he gives of the Pico affair in his *Gutachten* (Tuebingen 1512, fols. XII^v–XIII^r). Garsias's *Determinationes* were published 10 October 1489. Reuchlin seems to have been in Rome during spring/summer 1490, leaving Rome by 9 August 1490 (Geiger, *Reuchlin*, pp. 32f.).

II

Book One of the DVM largely takes the form of a discussion concerning the limitations and possibilities of philosophy in achieving a real infallible science, that is, a science which treats of supernal and terrestrial reality; and secondly, whether man must make use of divine revelation to achieve this knowledge of eternal and divine realities. The possibility of such a knowledge would presuppose in turn a communication between infinite and finite, and a seemingly unimaginable interest of the divinity in the existence, disposition and activity of men. All three disputants engage in this discussion, firstly Sidonius and Baruchias, and later in the book, Capnion. Sidonius prefaces the book with an introduction which demands some treatment and comment.

Sidonius begins with an account of his own Phoenician background which includes a eulogy on the qualities of the ancient Phoenicians.¹⁶ The Phoenicians were the first to found letters, and they handed these on to the Greeks; they first made use of mathematics to measure the heavens and the earth; they excelled in the arts of nature and war; were always interested in the peoples of other societies; and by their industry and research held a pre-eminent place among nations before the period of the Trojan War. But Sidonius decided to leave his land because of growing barbaric custom, and travelled through Asia and Europe in search of the best orators and philosophers, until he finally reached Pforzheim.

Mention of Pforzheim allows Reuchlin to eulogize on his own native city, linking it to the qualities of the ancient Phoenicians. Swabia, as Sidonius explains, derived its propensity for learning and philosophy from the qualities of its founder Phorcyn, a leader of the Trojan army. Such derivation of origins from the Trojans was fast becoming a common characteristic of historical accounts in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁷ But it is important to note the specific use to which Reuchlin puts the myth, above and beyond a merely general claim for ancient glory. Sidonius had already postulated the primal position which the Phoenicians enjoyed over the Greeks in the origin of letters and sciences. Now Baruchias, after hearing the lengthy account of Sidonius's travels and of his gradual growth to the conviction that the contemplation of natural things is the only true science, concedes that Sidonius's own eloquence has convinced him of his claims for the pre-eminent learning and deeds of the Phoenicians. Then he adds in emphatic tone:

Let those others now realize this, those who would condemn almost the whole East for their ignorance and barbarism, by saying that all Scythians and Sauromati are enemies of *humanitas* and *doctrina*, and that they had invaded that region they now hold with the result that there is no survivor to cultivate the arts.¹⁸

¹⁶ sig. a 2^v-a 3^v.

¹⁷ A. Joly, *Benôit de Sainte-More et le Roman de Troie*, Paris 1870, pp. 541-98; A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen ueber Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Voelker*, iii/i, Stuttgart 1960 (references in index); F. Borchardt, *German Antiquity in Renaissance Myth*, Baltimore and London 1971.

¹⁸ 'Nam ita facile crediderim, quae is de Phoenicibus magna praedicat; isti modo videant, qui iam totum ferme orientem ignorantiae barbariaeque damnent, cum nescio quem Scytham aut quos Sauromatos, aiant humanitatis et doctrinae hostes, eam invasisse regionem atque tenere, ut ne futurus sit superstes qui artes colat' (sig. a 5^v).

Reuchlin is obviously intent upon defending 'the East' from detractors, and making good its claim to the origins of letters and sciences. This immediately gives Sidonius's earlier account of the Phoenicians greater import, and the relationship between Swabian philosophy (and consequently his own) and that of the Phoenicians a far wider significance. In what is a pointed preamble Reuchlin deploys the myth of Trojan origins quite specifically in order to rebut those who dismiss the East for its ignorance (which develops later in the work into a claim for the East's superior wisdom) and to relate his own philosophy to the learning which originated there.

Discussion concerning the possibility of a real science grows naturally out of Sidonius's claim that the contemplation of natural things is the only true science.¹⁹ Law and moral philosophy are merely based on the custom and will of men, he maintains, while other sciences such as metaphysics speak of states and forms which are beyond both nature and our comprehension. This statement elicits an immediate retort from Baruchias, and so the discussion ensues. The discussion is lengthy and repetitive and I need only state some of the broader lines of argumentation.

The aim of the discussion is to show that real infallible knowledge can only originate with the divinity, and that the divinity concerns itself with the activities and requests of men, even to the extent of uniting with them through love. Baruchias first rejects Sidonius's claim for a true science founded upon sensible phenomena. Such a true science is precluded by the flux, fragility and instability which characterize nature, as well as by the imperfections of human understanding—our ignorance of principles, causes and proximate conditions. Yet although things cannot be known naturally, they can, claims Baruchias on the evidence of Socrates and many others, be known divinely. When Socrates for example said that he knew nothing, he seems to have meant that he knew everything by divine gift, which he called the *Daemon*. Likewise with the Israelites in the desert, the seventy elders who were to carry out the magistracy of the state were endowed with the spirit by Moses, upon whom in turn it had been bestowed by God. Baruchias therefore denies a constant, pure and infallible science to men, unless it be had by means of a non-human discipline and divine tradition, which in Hebrew is called *Kabbalah*, in Latin *receptio*.²⁰

Sidonius on the other hand attacks the possibility of a divinely bestowed knowledge, because of the incompatibility which exists between the infinite and the finite, between the divine and the human. He quotes from Lucretius to prove that these two things are incompatible and that no mortal should be so presumptuous as to invoke the help of the gods. This prompts such a violent retort from Baruchias, who calls Lucretius a deceiver and the Epicureans 'filthiest nourishers of crimes', that Capnion finds it necessary to intervene.

Capnion's intention is first to distinguish between a science which relates to sense phenomena and one which relates to supernal truths. One is the science of sensible and natural things, which must necessarily always remain

¹⁹ sig. a 3^v–b 3^r.

²⁰ 'At vero de quibuslibet sensibilibus constantem, puram et infallibilem scientiam homini negavero, nisi non humana disciplina,

sed divina traditione iugiter ab uno, et item ab altero fuerit recepta, quam nos hebraei Cabalam appellamus, id est receptionem' (sig. a 8^v).

opinion; the other the science of the nature of substances, which is immutable, constant, permanent. As the one treats of inferior things through the senses and *ratio*, the other is concerned with superior things, divinely bestowed through the agency of the *mens*. Man is connected to the lower order by the *ratio*, and to supernal intelligences and God by the *mens* infused by faith. God has placed man in the centre of the cosmos; he exists among mortals as god by virtue of faith, among celestial beings as man by virtue of reason, eminent among both through wisdom.²¹

Reuchlin then reveals his total aversion towards Epicureanism with a savage attack through Capnion on the Epicurean conception of an inactive God, untroubled by and oblivious of the requests of mortals. Capnion calls the Epicureans lovers of inertia and sluggishness, more demented than the raving. For, quite contrary to Lucretius' teaching, the divinity regards it as the highest dignity to be supplicated by men, the greatest satisfaction to concede to their prayers. This conjunction between humanity and divinity is well attested through historical examples. Capnion cites Aesculapius, Daphne and Mercury. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tell of nothing but the uniting of gods with men and the transformation of gods not only into men, but also into beasts, metals and stones. Love is the bond by which man is joined to God. Faith breeds it, hope feeds it. Finite man and infinite God can be joined in an ineffable union, so that the one and the same can be considered both human God and divine man. Reuchlin also compares this process to the procession of number. In the same way as number begins with infinite unity, creates finite number both in evenness and unevenness, and gradually penetrates the whole numerical kingdom, so the architect of the universe passes from his infinitude to individual things and men through the medium of the word.

Capnion then gives another argument for this divine-human intercourse, and this he names the most eminent:

... [it is] that we ourselves are producers of marvellous works above human powers, and although at the same time constituted in nature, we hold dominion over it, and work wonders, portents and miracles which are signs of the divinity—by the one name, which I have been eager to explain to you.²²

For the first time in the dialogue Capnion makes mention of the word which works wonders and thereby proves most eminently the human sharing in divine power. The necessary philosophical presuppositions for such extraordinary human activity have now been laid, and Reuchlin proceeds to examine more directly the powers of words, and especially of divine names, and the type of power which they allow man to wield.²³

The tone and direction of the work suddenly changes. Whereas previously

²¹ sig. b 3^v–b 4^r.

²² sig. b 4^r. See above n. 7.

²³ It is important to note that most accounts of the DVM (with the exception of Thorn-dike) neglect Reuchlin's obvious interest in the wonders worked by names. This passage, which totally or partly recurs a number of times throughout the work, is entirely

neglected. Geiger, Rupprich, Spitz, Brod, all paraphrase this section in exactly the same manner: the wonder-working word unites infinite God with finite men. This gives the text a clearly quite different meaning, and succeeds, as I have pointed out, in reducing the wonder-working to the internal mystical realm.

we had a series of long statements of a discursive nature, now Reuchlin approaches the question of the possibility of wielding power through words by means of a series of reactions and counter reactions from the three disputants.²⁴ Their excitement at Capnion's impending revelation is obvious. Sidonius says he has never heard anything more happily, and recalls the power wielded by Medea through words, and by the sorceress in Ovid who dispelled clouds and winds, convulsed the earth and made mountains tremble. Baruchias's reaction is more sceptical. Such powers have been claimed by Hebrews in occult books, but he can find none in the present age who possess them. The Jews and Christians who claim such powers seem to be nothing more than charlatans motivated by avarice, or otherwise witches.

Reuchlin's clear faith and belief in the power of words to achieve wonderful deeds is stressed by Capnion's immediate irritation at Baruchias's scepticism. There may indeed be good reason why the power of wonder-working words has ceased among the Hebrews, interrupts Capnion. But one cannot deny that the philosophers of the gentiles—Thales, Pythagoras, Plato—did possess the power of names. And contrary to the belief of Lactantius and others like him, who maintain that these teachings derived from the Egyptians, Capnion is convinced by the 'Mosaic vestiges' in their works that these philosophers also reached Judea, Syria and the Chaldeans.²⁵ For at the time of Thales, those who sought truth left their home for Egypt and Judea, so as to drink at the source of the streams which they had tasted and become saturated by a more pure divinity. By then (552 B.C.—the age of Thales) the Hebrew scriptures were already being revered by the Babylonians, and had been translated into Chaldean; and the proximity to Egypt allowed a free flow of the ideas of Hebraic wisdom from the Hebrews to the Egyptians. Capnion is not only affirming Reuchlin's belief in the power of words, but is also situating the origins of that power with the ancient Hebrews. He is preparing the ground for a later account which traces the beginning of letters back beyond the Phoenicians to the Hebrews, who then transmitted them to the Chaldeans and the Greeks. The relationship between the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians is also to be subsequently clarified by Baruchias. But the crucial fact at present, as Capnion continues, is that this salubrious power of words has now changed place and remains only with Christians.²⁶

²⁴ sig. b 4^r–b 5^v.

²⁵ The reference to Lactantius is to the *Divine Institutes*, bk. iv, ch. 2, where Lactantius claims that Pythagoras and Plato reached the Egyptians, the Magi and the Persians, but not the Jews. Reuchlin's disagreement is crucial for his articulation of the *prisca theologia*, and especially for the key position he gives Pythagoras in the later *De Arte Cabalistica* as the link between the divinely received wisdom of the Hebrews and the philosophies of the Greeks. There were precedents for this view in the works of Origen, Ambrose and others, but Reuchlin's principal source, at least in his *De Arte Cabalistica* and later minor works, was

Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Egypt was of course often linked with Hebrew doctrine on account of Mosaic influence (see D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology. Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, London 1972, pp. 20, 50). But Reuchlin, as I indicate below, tends consistently to identify Egyptian culture with idolatry and demonic magic. And in the *De Arte Cabalistica* (fol. xxiii^r) Pythagoras only visits Egypt after he has met his Syrian-Jewish teacher, Pherecydes.

²⁶ 'Salubris ista potestas verborum quae vos deseruit, nos elegit, nos comitatur, nobis ad nutum obedire cernitur' (sig. b 5^r).

Capnion's insistence on such a power inherent in words leads the other disputants to plead that he reveal this *vis verborum* which is above the science of all things. Capnion relents and agrees to lead them as master into the 'arcane academy of names', but only if they submit to a number of specific conditions. Sidonius must abandon Epicureanism, and Baruchias the teachers of the Talmud. They must undergo ablutions and recognize only one supreme God. These conditions are intoned by Capnion in a kind of rhyming hymn, and both accede to them willingly.²⁷

Reuchlin is making use of far more than a conventional rhetorical technique to add to the sense of drama and the approaching mystery. He is also stressing that such knowledge as is to be revealed demands certain conditions such as purification to be grasped. The teaching which Reuchlin (through Capnion) is about to impart is one arrived at not through philosophical discourse, but by a process akin to divine revelation. And Sidonius's description of the purification rites of the Brahmins and Gymnosophists at this stage only serves to stress the formal comparison between those mysteries and that which is to be here initiated.²⁸

The direction of Reuchlin's text at this point becomes somewhat scattered and unclear. He has established the philosophical possibility (or even necessity), as well as the historical actuality of the performing of marvellous deeds beyond the scope of man's nature through the power of words by recourse to the divinity; and he has pointed to the ritualistic and essentially religious nature of revealing such a mysterious power. Now there follows a short section where Baruchias again expresses his scepticism concerning such a power, and Sidonius on his part inveighs heavily against 'triflers in the magical art'. Reuchlin is gradually beginning to define the power of words. He does this negatively first, through Sidonius, by dissociating it from 'modern' magical practitioners. For Sidonius claims that when looking through a number of authors who turned out to be triflers in the magical art and in whom he had expected to find certain marvellous skills—such as the operations of Zoroaster, Epimenides, Orpheus and Pythagoras—he found only ignorance hidden behind splendid titles, such as those of Enoch or of Solomon. He then inveighs against the commonly quoted medieval magical authorities Robert (of York?), Roger Bacon, Pietro d'Abano and the *Picatrix*, all of whom had been able to achieve nothing because of their ignorance of Chaldean and Hebrew. For the more the copyists stray from their texts, he concludes, the less the disciples are able to learn, and the less the practitioners of magic can operate.²⁹

²⁷ 'Resipiscentia vestra haec esto. A Thal-
mudim Baruchia, tuque Sidoni ab Epicuro
atque Lucretio receditote. Lavamini, mundi
estote. Unum deum omnium effectorem,
caeteras potestates ministras habetote. Ad
primum vota precesque, ad inferiores hymni
sunto. Quod si forte petitio ad inferiores
processerit, nisi sub modo delegatae a primo
administrationis intentio non esto. Angeli a
nobis ad deum, et inde ad nos volitantes,
reverentia tremorque sunt. Erga illos
secundum notam probationem, iocunda obe-

dientia esto. Sacra quorum observationes ex
me audituri venitis, palam dignis, clam
prophanis sunt' (sig. b 5^v).

²⁸ The account of these ceremonies is taken
from Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,
tr. F. C. Conybeare, i, London 1960, pp. 261,
265–6.

²⁹ 'Nihil igitur horum et Roberthus et
Bacon et Abanus et Picatrix et concilium
magistrorum, vel maxime ob linguarum
ignorantiam ad amussim ut oportet tenere
atque docere; Minus etiam librariorum

Reuchlin is referring to the necessity of Hebrew for magical operations, an idea derived from Pico della Mirandola's *Conclusiones*, and to be developed at further length in the second book. In relation to this notion, it is important to note here that Sidonius does not seem to condemn all types of magical operation in this text. It is the 'modern operators' concealed under the names of Enoch and Solomon, as well as the medieval magical authors, who stand condemned for their ignorance and trickery. The operations of Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras and other ancients are excluded. It needs to be remembered that Pico in his first magical conclusion, also condemned 'all magic which is in use among the moderns', by which he meant the medieval authorities.³⁰ And he also referred to the false magic to be had under the names of Solomon, Adam and Enoch.³¹ This was a wicked magic based on contact with demons, not the *magia naturalis* based upon natural sympathies and affinities. Without making this distinction quite so explicit, Reuchlin does nevertheless also seem to make a similar distinction between medieval magic and that of the *prisci theologi* and *magi*.

Reuchlin brings the first book to a close with the fall of evening. It is important to note that this is not merely a clever dramatic effect by which to terminate the book. Evening, as well as the end of day, denotes the coming of darkness—a time said to be inappropriate for such a divine and priestly business.³² This serves to stress again the nature of the work as religious ritual, rather than as philosophical discourse. And in a passage which bears a striking resemblance to Lazarelli's *Crater Hermetis*, Capnion deems the location inappropriate for arcane ceremonies, such sacred rites and celestial gifts—sacraments more appropriately performed in a withdrawn sanctuary. So next day they are to meet in Capnion's home 'almost in the woods'.³³ The movement which begins here, and is to accelerate steadily in the next book, manus, ab exemplis dupla scribentium, non aberrare, minus discipuli discere, minus operarii potuerunt operari' (sig. c^{r-v}).

³⁰ 'Tota Magia, quae in usu est apud modernos, et quam merito exterminat ecclesia, nullam habet firmitatem, nullum fundamentum, nullam veritatem, quia pendet ex manu hostium veritatis, potestatum harum tenebrarum, quae tenebras falsitatis, male dispositis intellectibus obfundunt' (*Opera Omnia*, p. 105).

³¹ In the *Apologia* (*Opera Omnia*, p. 181). Reuchlin's list of ancient magicians is also very similar to Pico's in the *Apologia* (*Opera Omnia*, pp. 120–1), the exceptions being Reuchlin's inclusion of Orpheus and Epimenides.

³² 'Iam vespera est inquit [Capnion]; et id temporis imminet quo prae nocte confici nequeat tantum tamque divinum negotium, ac plane sacerdotium et sapientibus philosophis ipsaque luce dignissimum' (sig. c^v).

³³ 'Locus item iste tam arcanis ceremoniis incongruens, tam caelesti dono impar, tam sacris ritibus nimium superque prophanus,

atque ideo mutandus esse videtur; inque sacellum (si vestra quoque est sententia) secedendum nobis tam excellentissima sacramenta persuadeant. Igitur rem omnem in crastinum differre multo satius iudicatur, quando in aedem meam suburbanam ac pene luco insitam conveniendi facultas est' (sig. c^v). When the king asks Lazarelli in the *Crater Hermetis* in what manner the *opus* (the magical operation) is done, Lazarelli replies: 'Sed iam O Rex, ad hesperium sol inclinat oceanum, et in eo quod postulas plurimae observandae sunt conditiones... Differamus igitur in aliud tempus, in abditorem et magis solitarium locum, sapientes hebraeorum imitantes' (quoted in Walker, *Magic*, p. 69). These two works also resemble each other in a number of stylistic elements—the trialogue, the revelation, the impatience of the disputants for this revelation, a hymn to God to descend and fill the participants with light (see M. Brini, 'Ludovico Lazarelli. Testi Scelti', in *Testi Umanistici su l'Ermesismo*, ed. E. Garin, Rome 1955, pp. 23–77).

is quite clear. The revelation of the word had demanded a number of conditions such as faith and purification, which Capnion intoned in hymn-like verse. Capnion now dismisses Baruchias and Sidonius with an exhortation once again to faith. Light, seclusion, faith, are also necessary for the revelation of this wonder-working word. Constantly Reuchlin is stressing the need for philosophical discourse to be transformed into religious activity through ceremony and faith, if it is to achieve power over nature.

III

In Book One the possibility of union between man and God has been established, the performance by man of works which surpass nature has been asserted and the claim of 'modern' magical operators to be able to perform such wonders has been rejected. In Book Two Reuchlin again refrains from revealing the name. His intention is rather to define the area of the power of words, their relation to other sciences of wonders such as magic and astrology, and then to survey the use of pre-Christian and especially Hebraic names, in particular the Tetragrammaton, IHUH. This leads to a number of excursions into Kabbalistic and grammatical areas which are clearly meant to clarify the historical, theological or theosophical substructure, by means of and through which the names attain power. Although Baruchias holds the floor for the greater part of the discussion, Reuchlin introduces the other two disputants quite skilfully to highlight crucial points in the discussion.

Sidonius begins the day's proceedings with the request for the word 'by which we, constituted in nature, may perform miracles above nature'—an already accustomed wording.³⁴ Reuchlin uses him as he did the day before, to differentiate the miracles which the word allows men to perform from other marvels experienced in the world. Sidonius brings forward examples of natural marvels (quintuplets, the Phoenix), and mechanical structures made by man in imitation of nature (the flying wooden pigeon made by Archytas). All these he knows already. He also knows well the wonderful machinery of astrologers which foretell events either by the matching of talismans or by the engraving of rings with figures. But the efforts of these astrologers are all in vain, despite their intention of dispensing fortune and misfortune by applying the incomprehensible powers of the heavens to the natures of inferior things. Sidonius excludes from this judgement those concerned with the measurement of stars, an art based on mathematics. But he condemns those who claim for astrology a knowledge of individual events, actions and thoughts. Reuchlin is here making the common distinction between an astrology which explicates natural, although hidden, causes, and one which claims a fatalism contrary to the free human will.

Sidonius turns finally to magic—the third of the science of wonders, as Capnion is to later explain. Once again he distinguishes between a magic based on pacts with evil demons, and a magic performed with 'the quiet help of good demons'. He is interested to know from Capnion the methods by which miracles are performed. For while the employment of evil demons is

³⁴ '... quo nos in natura constituti supra mus' (sig. c 2^r).
naturam, ut aiebas, operari miracula poteri-

obviously ruled out, the use of good demons also seems to be ruled out purely because of physical impossibility. For if one fails to observe every one of the prescriptions exactly, one is in danger of perishing, as did Robert of England and others. But to know all the appropriate prescriptions written by Hermes Trismegistus in 36,525 books, adds Sidonius, is impossible for the human mind. And the gods themselves are innumerable, Hesiod's earthly deities numbering 30,000 alone. It needs, then, only a single mistake to break the harmony, as Iamblichus and Porphyry pointed out, for no one knows how many forces are aroused when the gods descend and are moved.³⁵

This comment by Sidonius says much of Reuchlin's relationship to the sciences of marvels, and to magic in particular. Reuchlin found astrology useless. It was at worst a study based on falsity and trickery, at best a source of contention and confusion. As regards magic, he followed Ficino and Pico by making a distinction between operations dependent upon evil, and those dependent upon good demons. But whereas Ficino in particular seems to have directed at least some of his magical operations to good demons,³⁶ Reuchlin, even though granting the theoretical viability of such a magic, has Sidonius repeat the enormous difficulties and dangers involved in its practice. The wonder-working word will, it is hoped, cut through this unbearable human burden, and supplant the uncertainty and danger of such magic by articulating a divine magic dependent only upon the divinity and his ministers, the angels.

The art of the wonder-working word differs from magic in terms of its object, its effect and its technique. Primarily, as will be made clear later in the work, its superiority rests upon its certainty of success. But the importance of Reuchlin's treatment of astrology and magic prior to his treatment of the wonder-working word points clearly to the origins of Reuchlin's religio-philosophical conceptions. The social need for this word, the hope and excitement it arouses, and therefore ultimately Reuchlin's conception of his own social and intellectual task in the propagation of this word, is depicted in terms of a disillusionment concerning the viability of any traditionally known demonic magic. The *verbum mirificum* is to provide the alternative.

In response to Sidonius's request, Capnion finally speaks. The sun is already rising; he can begin. We are once again in the world of religious ceremony and secret mystery, common both to the sacred mysteries of the *prisci theologi* and to their new enthusiasts in the late fifteenth century—Ficino, Pico, Lazarelli, Diaceto, Agrippa and others. Reuchlin stresses this tradition by having Capnion make a number of statements which are common to this tradition—that faith and silence are necessary for their revelation. The prerequisite of maturity for the revelation of divine secrets is fulfilled—they are both over twenty-five. The esoteric nature of this most sacred function is then further emphasized. The activity in which they are about to engage, Capnion reminds them, is not one for the profane multitude. As doctors of wisdom they are also priests—as though the hands of thousands of bishops

³⁵ sig. c 2^v–c 3^r. The number of Hermetic books is probably related to the number of the days of the year (Thorndike, *History of Magic*, i, 1923, p. 520) and is derived from

Manetho through Iamblichus, *De Mysterioriis*, bk. viii, ch. 1.

³⁶ Namely, in Orphic singing (see Walker, *Magic*, ch. 3).

had been laid upon them.³⁷ Such preparation is necessary, adds Capnion, because the understanding of divine things is dependent upon revelation from above.

With this preparation completed, Capnion reiterates the threefold division of the art of wonders, which Sidonius's discussion had already implied—*physica*, *astrologia* and *magia*; and this latter comprises both theurgy and *goetia*. By dividing magic in this way, Reuchlin is following the distinction made in such authors as Porphyry who distinguishes between the wicked practice of *goetia* (sorcery dependent upon demons), and theurgy, a more praiseworthy art involved with the purging and preparation of the soul to receive spirits.³⁸ In his *Oratio*, Pico (referring to Porphyry) had made a similar distinction between *goetia* and in his case, *magia*. The first is the execrable and monstrous work of demons, the second the perfect and highest wisdom.³⁹ For Reuchlin, these three sciences of physics, astrology and magic are joined and cognate to each other, so that the effective practice of each depends upon the lower. But beyond these three, with which Sidonius and Baruchias remain dissatisfied, Capnion adduces a fourth. This fourth science of wonders is termed *soliloquia*, and by means of it, whatever one asks through prayer, one succeeds in obtaining.⁴⁰ This is the science of the wonder-working word.

Capnion continues the preparation for the revelation of the wonder-working word with a kind of purgative rite. The three disputants are to offer themselves to the divine light, and with closed senses, allow the rain of super-celestial waters to descend on their heads—meanwhile praising and adoring with quiet minds the 'sea of goodness', from which the flood of the most divine river of all wonders, of all marvellous names and sacred words, derives and emanates. Prostrate upon the ground, Capnion begins a hymn, sung sweetly in Ionic metre and with an accentuation appropriate for stirring the mind to sacred things. The hymn celebrates the supreme God, the master of all worlds, and recites his name in Latin, Greek and Hebrew.⁴¹

³⁷ 'Deinde non est prophanæ multitudini sed solis sacerdotibus hæc nostra sacratissima functio prodenda . . . Sacerdotes vero sine controversia nos sumus. Etsi mille nobis Antistitum manus impositæ sunt, dummodo cum religionis cultu divinam sapientiam teneamus' (sig. c 3^r). It is interesting that with Agrippa, the laying on of hands marks the authority of office for one who wishes to act as a *magus* (*De Occulta Philosophia*, III, chs. iii, xxxvi).

³⁸ Thorndike, *History of Magic*, i, pp. 247, 505f.

³⁹ Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus*, ed. P. J. Miller, 1965, p. 26.

⁴⁰ 'In tres partes divisa quarum unaquæque per se specialis et propria facultas sit, videlicet in Physicam, Astrologiam, Magicam, quæ tam Goetiam in se quam theurgiam continet; coniunganturque invicem sintque cognatæ.

. . . Vosipsi vero eas omnes obiicitis propter vanos exitus et post immensa laboriosaque studia frustratos eventus, postulatisque a me denuo ut quartam vobiscum viam ingrediar, quæ soliloquia possumus appellare, ubi quodcumque propositum ad commoda petentium vota succedit' (sig. c 3^{r-v}).

⁴¹ 'Principio igitur humi procidentibus nobis hic hymnus Ionico modulamine et accentu sacris animi concitandi causa debito proferendus est. Rei omnis generatorque opifexque. Superum rex genii lux, hominum spes. Tremor umbris tenebrosi phlegetontis. Amor incredibilis caelicolarum. Pavor invincibilis tartareorum. Celebris religio terrigenarum. Adonai Adonenu Elohenu. Basilaus pantacrator protogenethlos. Deus unus, deus idem, deus alme. Veniens desuper illabere nobis. Hoc hymno de more dicto rursus Capnion coepit' (sig. c 3^v). The 'Ionico' would seem to refer to the *Ionicus*

There is something curiously set about this passage which would suggest that Reuchlin is following a particular rite. The hymn sung in Ionic metre, the particular accentuation, the prostration, even possibly the rising sun, seem to indicate a definite form of ceremony. What immediately comes to mind is the Orphic singing indulged in by Ficino, the hymn singing of Pletho, the hymn found in Lazarelli's *Crater Hermetis* where God is asked to descend and fill the participants with light, or possibly even the rites engaged in by Diacceto which included hymns sung according to a specific mode between the wanton and the religious.⁴² And just as all these are directed at deriving sacred benefit by effecting a subjective transformation of the worshipper, Reuchlin's hymns also aim at predisposing the individual to accept powers from the divinity. The hymn singing of Pletho in particular involved the kind of directions Capnion seems to be following here—the metre of the hymns, the musical modes to which the hymns are to be sung, the days and times of day when they are to be sung, and the specific postures to be adopted during their singing.⁴³ The content of Pletho's hymns is also similar to that of Reuchlin's. God is praised as creator, king, lord and sustainer of all, and the angels are described as the agents by which he rules the world and by which the path to the divinity is indicated, and all are asked to show themselves propitious to men.⁴⁴ The history of Pletho's hymns in the Renaissance however is obscure, and no concrete line of influence can be traced. And though Reuchlin's hymn itself may be unique, the ceremonial described here is clearly suggestive of other rites, and needs to be understood in the context of their Renaissance revival.

Having completed this preparatory ceremony, Reuchlin begins to clarify the operation of the wonder-working word. Capnion affirms firstly that every miracle of man must be ascribed to the glorious God and his blessed name. It is God alone, and neither men nor angels nor demons who perform wonders. He is the operator, his beneficence is the cause and his glory is the end. No miracles are done by man, except in so far as the divinity works through man.⁴⁵

Capnion's statement brings a sharp reaction from Sidonius, who claims that he has obviously spent a sleepless night in vain. For the expectation aroused by Capnion over the wonder-working word has been false. Sidonius

minor, a metrical foot described in Reuchlin's *Vocabularius Breviloquus* as consisting of two short syllables followed by two long. In his preface to the translation of Athanasius's *In Librum Psalmorum* (sig. A iii^v), Reuchlin does actually refer to the Ionic mode, beside the Doric, Phrygian and Lydian. But his description of its use 'in conviviis' does not seem to correspond to the accentuation here, which is meant to stir the mind to sacred things. The Ionic metre would also account for the unusual Hebrew form, 'Adonai Adonenu Elohenu', rather than the more expected 'Adonai Elohenu' from the Jewish confession of faith, the Shema (Deut. vi, 4). (For the observation I am grateful to Dr. D. P. Walker.) However, in the context, 'Adonenu'

clearly refers to Christ, 'Our Lord'.

⁴² For all these hymns, see Walker, *Magic*, pp. 12–24, 32, 60–63. For Pletho, also see *Traité des Loix*, ed. C. Alexandre and A. Pelissier, Paris 1858, pp. 202ff.; M. V. Anastos, 'Pletho's Calendar and Liturgy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, iv, 1948, pp. 252–69. And for Lazarelli, M. Brini, 'Ludovico Lazarelli', p. 56.

⁴³ See *Traité des Loix*, pp. 230ff. One marked difference between Pletho's hymns and this one of Reuchlin's, however, is that Pletho's are composed in dactylic hexameters—the most beautiful of rhythms according to Pletho (*ibid.*, p. 229).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 202ff.

⁴⁵ sig. c 3^v.

had thought that Capnion was to educate them in a doctrine by which the ancients seemed to possess power over nature. It was also to be a doctrine freed from the problems of magicians, the observations of astrologers and the examinations of *physici*, so that they could perform things worthy of admiration and fame, and thereby prove their philosophy to be true. But now Capnion claims that man does *not* in fact perform miracles. This of course, as Baruchias is later to point out, is to misunderstand Capnion and wholly ignore the possibility of agents and the use of metaphor in speech. We can say that men do miracles by the spirit of God, but what we actually mean is that God himself does them through men.

Sidonius's interjection is meant to emphasize the difference between Capnion's *soliloquia* and the other wondrous arts already examined by Sidonius. The primary difference is that miracles have their origin with God alone. Secondly, it serves to express the particular need Reuchlin himself sees for such a revelation of the wonder-working word. The wonder-working word is to make philosophy fruitful in works, and thereby save a crippled and ailing philosophy from shame and derision.

For what help is it to learn marvellous things daily, without ever performing any? Regard for philosophy and the science of all things with respect to us is great among the common people. For they describe it so, as the knowledge of divine and human things. But I ask you good friends, what eminent and manifest apology of our studies shall we give as long as works are lacking? It is not enough that we know letters—which all those less distinguished have also learnt. It brings nothing to be eloquent—nature has conceded that to old women as well. Nor does it help that we publicly declare that we shall entangle or extricate the numerous and confused questions of the schoolmen—whereupon we are commonly regarded as fools and madmen rather than wise men, indeed so much that the name of philosophy will become a scandal in our age. The sacred rites of nations invite us to live religiously, their customs force us to. How very little shall we be distinguished from the unlearned mass unless marvellous works follow our wondrous claim in equal measure?⁴⁶

Reuchlin's text is important here for the light it throws on the need he saw for the revival of magical theory and practice in the Renaissance as a contribution to a new understanding and relevance of philosophy. Both Sidonius and Baruchias have already expressed a deep-felt scepticism about the possibilities of an effective and danger-free magic. Now Sidonius also

⁴⁶ 'Nam quid iuvat mirabilia multa quotidie discere, nulla unquam facere? De nobis opinio in plebe est magna philosophiae ac omnium rerum scientiae. Sic enim illam describunt, esse scilicet divinarum humanarumque rerum noticiam. Sed oro vos amici optimi, quam praestabimus satisfactionem populo insignem atque illustrem studiorum nostrorum, dum eiusmodi opera desunt? Parum est nos litteras nosse, quas et quique abiectiores didicerunt. Nihil extollit disertos esse, quod natura mulierculis concessit. Nihil

etiam quod tot et tam perplexas scholasticorum quaestiones vel intricare vel extricare profitemur. Quapropter nos ipsos potius stultos et insanos quam sapientes vulgo arbitrantur, adeo certe ut in vituperium quasi nomen philosophiae nostro aevo devenerit. Vivere etiam religiose gentilia sacra invitant, et mores cogunt; quare valde minutum erit quo nos ab indocta plebe distamus, nisi admirandam professionem nostram mirifica pariter opera consequantur' (sig. c 4^{r-v}).

expresses his scepticism about the survival of philosophy, unless it is allied with some art or technique which can verify its postulates through actions in the world. The humanist cultural programme is inadequate, while scholastic philosophy brings public derision through its bombast and irrelevance. As historical support for such a claim, Sidonius refers to an incident found in Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, involving Apollonius, one of the *prisci magi*, and Thespion, a prince of the Egyptian Gymnosophists who believed that philosophers could only make themselves credible by performing wondrous deeds which surpass human powers. Thespion had a tree address Apollonius to convince him of his own wisdom and to discredit the powers of the Indian Brahmins.⁴⁷ Sidonius's scepticism, therefore, not only isolates an important motive underlying the revival of Renaissance magic, but by providing an alternative historical model for contemporary philosophy also illuminates Reuchlin's solution for the renewal of philosophy—to make philosophy operative through an alliance with magic. But as we have seen, Reuchlin rejected a solution which revived illicit or dangerous magical practices. To this point in the text, then, we can see the impulse for his search of the wonder-working word as being twofold. Philosophy needs to be made operative through an art of wonders; and such an art must be purified of its demonic aspects by an alliance with religion. In this way, philosophy, magic and religion become more closely interrelated, so that each overlaps with the other and is ultimately influenced and modified by its relationship to the other.

The discussion turns next to the power of Hebrew words and names. Baruchias is asked by Capnion to reveal the Hebrew words and names used in the arcana, since they are considerably similar to those among Christians, and therefore it is more proper to imitate them than those of other nations. Now follows a long discourse concerning the multifarious sacred names in use among the Hebrews—their particular components, their relation to names used by other societies and their use by Christians. Essentially Reuchlin uses this account as an introduction to Capnion's revelation of the supreme word. It is not possible to cover the wealth of detail in this section, particularly the evidence concerning Reuchlin's interest in Jewish mystical (and not always Kabbalistic) thought and his forays into grammar and exegesis. But a general account helps to delineate further the range of sources on which Reuchlin is drawing, and thereby to clarify the relationship of *soliloquia* to the other sciences of marvels, as well as to explicate the very special relationship which exists between the wonder-working word and the Jewish Tetragrammaton.

Baruchias begins by asking that the doors be bolted lest a waiter might hear and sacred things be ridiculed by the profane. Quite deliberately, therefore, he is to speak obscurely. He begins his account of Hebrew names with an explanation of how God performs wonders in the world through the human *mens*. He draws on a combined Hermetic-Biblical source to show how God has shaped two images of himself within the universe, 'with which he makes sport and in which he delights'—the world and man.⁴⁸ In the world

⁴⁷ sig. c 4^v. The episode is found in book v of Philostratus's *Life*.

⁴⁸ 'Sic igitur exuperantissimus omnium deus qui ad sui exemplar, teste Mercurio ter

maximo, duas finxit imagines mundum et hominem quo luderet in orbe terrarum, ut est in parabolis, et delitiis frueretur in filiis hominum' (sig. c 5^r).

the divinity makes play by means of both the sidereal virtues of elements as well as by occult properties. These occult properties are present together with the quality of heat, for instance, in the transformation of food into flesh during digestion, and are also possessed by a piece of coral which is hung around a person's neck. Likewise in man, in whom the divinity delights far more than in the world, the divinity makes play by means of an occult property. Through this property (as well as through the heat of love) God transforms man into himself. And although this property of transformation is secret and hidden, God has given man occult and secret names with which he has allied various pacts. And just as in natural digestion the quality of heat is known but the occult property of 'transcorporation' is not, so in this process of deification, some words are known and some are not. But when men comply with this arrangement God accedes to whatever they ask in prayer.⁴⁹

Reuchlin seems to be relating the power of names both to the efficacy of occult virtues within nature and to the potency of divine pacts or covenants as assurances of God's promises to men. The analogy Capnion draws between digestion (*transcorporatio*) and deification suggests very strongly that this Art of the Name is modelled upon the sacramental words of transubstantiation spoken by the priest during the mass. The Scotist explanation of the efficacy of sacramental formula depends upon a pact or promise made by God to produce effects once certain words are pronounced.⁵⁰ And it is precisely such a divine pact and institution which is intrinsic to the whole of Reuchlin's justification of *soliloquia*. Moreover, Reuchlin's description of deification ('*homo migret in deum et deus habitet in homine*') clearly draws on the Johannine text relating to the Eucharist (Jo. 6, 56).

Capnion has set up a series of links. God is *spiritus*, the word the *spiratio*, man the *spirans*. God is conceived by our minds, and this conception is produced by the word. So God has chosen both the 'insensible seat of the mind' as well as the 'sensible mansion of words'. By means of these words, God makes a covenant with men, and humanity is united with God.

Baruchias moves to the origins of these words and thereby introduces a new theme of considerable importance in Reuchlin's work. All these Hebrew

⁴⁹ 'In mundo ludit mirificis operationibus non sydereā vel elementarum tantum virtute, verumetiam aliquando proprietate occulta. . . . Videamus pariter de homine, qui et Microcosmos a graecis dicitur, eius conversatione plusquam mundi se deus ipse oblectat, quem pro captu quidem humano in se transformare studet . . . non amoris solum calore, verumetiam proprietate occulta in seipsum digerendo transformare, ut et homo migret in deum et deus habitet in homine. At vero sicut ea proprietas qua transmutamur in deum et naturam humanam excedimus, secreta nobis et occulta est; ita iure optimo deus ei occulta et secreta quoque nomina dedit, eisdemque pacta quaedam indidit quibus observatis mox ad eorum debitam prolationem pro voto nostro praesens ipse

accedat. Porro sicut in naturali digestionē virtus caloris est quam cognoscimus, et adhuc virtus transcorporationis recondita quam ignoramus; Ita in hoc divinissimo in deum transitu, verba quaedam sunt quae cognoscimus, et quaedam quae ignoramus' (sig. c 5^{r-v}). The transformation of food into flesh and blood through digestion is also given as an example of occult virtue by Cornelius Agrippa in the *De Occulta Philosophia* (I, ch. x) and in the *De Vanitate* (I, xiii), and the similarity of wording suggests that the source is probably Reuchlin.

⁵⁰ Walker, *Magic*, p. 181. Garsias's *Determinationes* (sig. m viii^r) follows such a principle in differentiating the power of magical words from that of sacramental words.

words are most ancient, claims Baruchias, and are called *barbara* because of their simple unrefined antiquity. Baruchias defines *barbara* as 'Hebrew or closely derived from it'. This is so since Hebrew is simple, pure, incorrupt, holy, brief and constant. By means of it God spoke with men, and men with angels, face to face. These words are more cognate to the divinity than any others, and for this reason Zoroaster, the first theologian, forbade *barbara verba* to be changed.⁵¹

The theme of the *barbari*, and the *barbara verba* in particular, is one treated by a number of those Renaissance philosophers concerned with the *prisca theologia*.⁵² The purpose of the discussion in Reuchlin's work is to establish the fact that the power of divine names resides only in their Hebrew form. To achieve this Baruchias engages in a discourse concerning the origin of all language, and of divine names in particular. His history runs like this: before the Trojan war, there were no letters, except for the books of the Hebrews. Moses handed down grammatical knowledge to the Phoenicians, who, through Cadmus, transmitted it to the Greeks. So 140 years after the Trojan war Homer and Hesiod began writing, and a little before them, Orpheus. Reuchlin's sources for this history are Cicero and Eupolemus. Whereas Sidonius, at the very beginning of the first book, had located the origins of letters with the Phoenicians, Baruchias proceeds beyond them to the Hebrews. Moses's first place in this tradition, he claims, is attested by numerous ancient sources. Moses stands before all others in antiquity of religion, in the marvellous power of arcane operation, and in the discipline of the divinity.⁵³

Then follows an attack on the Greeks. This takes the form of an attack upon the Greek character, Greek 'words', their rhetoric and philosophy. Among the Greeks, asserts Baruchias, one does not find 'words which come down from heaven, divine names made up of syllables through divine approval'. This is because of the Greeks' newly developed art of rhetoric and their peculiar mode of narration.⁵⁴ Reuchlin again quotes Iamblichus:

By nature the Greeks are zealous for new things, and looking always (only) forward, they move like a ship without ballast, having no stability.⁵⁵

The Greeks, moreover, do not conserve what they receive from others. Because of their instability and concern only for what is novel, everything is

⁵¹ 'Barbara vero dicuntur, hebraica vel proxime inde derivata . . . simplex autem sermo, purus, incorruptus, sanctus, brevis, et constans Hebraeorum est; quo deus cum homine, et homines cum angelis locuti perhibentur coram et non per interpretem, facie ad faciem . . . Ideoque barbara divinitati cognatiora sunt. Unde haud ab re Zoroaster primus ethnicorum theologus vetat barbara verba mutari' (sig. c 5^v). This is a common text among the Renaissance philosophers. (See Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, iii, ch. xi; Pico, *Opera Omnia*, p. 175; and for Champier, see D. P. Walker, 'The Prisca Theologia in

France', this *Journal*, XVII, 1954, p. 231, n. 6.)

⁵² Especially by the French enthusiasts (see Walker, 'Prisca Theologia', pp. 96–100).

⁵³ sig. c 6^r.

⁵⁴ 'Frustra enim a graecis verba caelitus demeantia et divino syllabarum contenta suffragio nomina petieris propter noviciam dicendi artem et nuperrimam varietatem loquendi' (*ibid.*).

⁵⁵ 'Graeci namque . . . natura rerum novarum studiosi sunt ac praecipites usquequaque feruntur instar navis saburra carentis nullam habentes stabilitatem' (*ibid.*).

changed and transformed. Consequently, no ancient names given by the gods for secret operations can be found among the Greeks.

Reuchlin is drawing heavily here on Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis*.⁵⁶ However, the idea of the corruption of the operative power of magical words by the Greeks has a long history, and enjoyed wide usage especially among the *prisca theologi*. At the beginning of the *Definitiones Asclepii*, Hermes Trismegistus explains to King Ammon why Egyptian words are not to be translated into Greek.

... so that such great mysteries might not reach the Greeks, and so that the proud and dissolute speech of the Greeks, which lacks energy, might not debilitate the gravity, strength and active pronunciation of names. For the Greeks, O King, have only empty discourse capable of demonstration. And this is the philosophy of the Greeks—the sound of words. We however do not simply use words, but words filled with works.⁵⁷

This passage is very pertinent to Reuchlin's text. As Festugière comments, the distinction is between the demonstrative Greek words without magical efficacy, and the operative power of Egyptian words.⁵⁸ By his attack upon Greek words, Reuchlin is also positing the need for a historical shift back beyond the Greeks to the original names which possess operative power. But his earlier claim for the primal position of Moses and the Hebrews in the development of language and in the transmission of the power of divine names, suggests that a return to the Egyptians as in the Hermes text above would be inadequate. What has till now been merely suggested, Reuchlin makes quite explicit in the argument which follows.

Although Reuchlin often used Hermes Trismegistus as a source for the *prisca theologia*, he was also quite aware of the ambivalent reaction towards him by various Christian Fathers such as Augustine and Lactantius. This stemmed from Hermes's apparent condonement of idolatry in his description of the idols made by the Egyptians, which they animated with demons.⁵⁹ It is precisely this description, as well as support from Plato, which Reuchlin now uses to refute an Egyptian origin for divine names, by proving that divine

⁵⁶ Book vii. (See Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, tr. T. Taylor, London 1895, pp. 284–98.)

⁵⁷ 'Quantum igitur possibile est o rex omnem (ut potes) sermonem serva inconversum, ne ad graecos perveniant talia mysteria; grecorum superba locutio atque dissoluta et veluti calamistrata, debilem faciat gravitatem, validitatem atque activam nominum locutionem. Greci enim o rex verba habent tantum nova, demonstrationum activa. Et haec est grecorum philosophia verborum sonus; Nos autem non verbis utimur, sed vocibus maximis operum.' This is the translation by Lazarelli used in Champier's *De Quadruplici Vita*. My translation makes use of Walker's emendations ('*Prisca Theologia*', p. 231, n. 6. And cf. *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed.

A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, ii, Paris 1945, p. 232.) This text is also found in Champier's commentary on the *Definitiones Asclepii* (see C. Vasoli, 'Tem e Fonti della tradizione ermetica in uno scritto di Symphorien Champier', *Umanesimo e Esoterismo*, ed. E. Castelli, Padua 1960, pp. 251f.). Lazarelli himself in his *Crater Hermetis* adopts the text in this manner: 'Non ego nunc, o Rex, verborum elegantiae, veluti Graeci, sed verborum actibus ut sapientes aegyptii studeo' (quoted in Brini, 'Ludovico Lazarelli', p. 54). This needs to be related to the more general misohellenism of the late fifteenth century.

⁵⁸ *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. Nock and Festugière, ii, p. 232, n. 7.

⁵⁹ See Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 6–12, 37.

names cannot originate from a worship directed to demons. What he had left open in an earlier discussion has now been clarified. Divine names originated with the Jews and not with the Egyptians. Hebrew names are both older and more sacred than all others. And as a kind of side-thrust, Baruchias adds that the Egyptians are also culturally inferior. For at this time they had not as yet discovered characters, but wrote in hieroglyphics. The Hebrews therefore are the true *barbari*.⁶⁰

Reuchlin is aware, however, that miraculous operations have been achieved through ancient names in languages other than Hebrew. There is the evidence in Plato, in Eudoxus, among the Brahmins, the Egyptians and the Druids. So Sidonius interrupts Baruchias at this point to agree with his general account of the basis for the power of names, but he also wishes to broaden their use to the Assyrian and the Greek. Orpheus for instance, 'that follower of the Egyptian Mercurius, high priest of the first priesthood, theologian and seer', certainly used Greek invocations, 'as his hymns prove which exist and are still sung today in Greek'.⁶¹ As Baruchias points out, God seems to have consecrated Orpheus and infused him with his virtue, a virtue analogous to the powers of the Hebrew tongue.

Usually, however, miraculous deeds performed by words in languages other than Hebrew are achieved through pacts with demons, as was the case with the magicians of Pharaoh. But the difference between the words of Hebrews and those of idolators is as that between the signs of God and *goetia*.⁶² Therefore, Baruchias continues, peoples have mixed Hebrew words with their own arcane prayers and secret operations, in order to obtain what they hope for with more certainty—which is clear in Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato. Baruchias continues:

Wherefore what a certain noble philosopher recently proposed at Rome has not seemed unlearned to me: No names in a magical and licit operation have the same power as those in Hebrew or those closely derived from Hebrew, because of all things, these are firstly formed by God. Yes, that in which nature chiefly practises magic, is the voice of God.⁶³

The noble philosopher is Pico della Mirandola, and the reference is to

⁶⁰ sig. c 6^v–c 7^r.

⁶¹ 'Referunt enim Orphea illum aegyptii Mercurii sectatorem, primi sacerdotii antistitem, theologum et vatem, cum esset unus ex argonautis Graecis tamen idem invocationibus usus est, ut hymni sui probant, qui etiam graece hactenus extant atque canuntur' (sig. c 8^r). Reuchlin was clearly acquainted with Ficino's Orphic singing. In the course of his explication of the mystical purpose of psalmody in the preface to his translation of Athanasius's *In Librum Psalmorum*, Reuchlin writes: 'Non enim facile quae dixerim, plus studii ad psallendum carmina et ad omnes modos divinos quibus incredibilis et miranda conversatio cum spiritu et angelis quaeritur, adhibuisse, quam hunc Orphea graece Davidemque hebraice.' And then he quotes

Pico's fourth Orphic conclusion: 'Sicut hymni David operi cabalae mirabiliter deserviunt, ita hymni Orphei, operi verae licitae et naturalis Magiae' (*S. Athanasius in Librum Psalmorum nuper a Ioanne Reuchlin integre translatus*, Tuebingen 1515, sig. A iiiir–v).

⁶² 'qualis est distantia signorum dei a goetia et venifico, tantum interest ut paucis concludam in sacris inter verba hebraeorum, et verba idolatrarum' (sig. c 8^v).

⁶³ 'Quare mihi non indocte visus est Romae nuper quidam nobilis philosophus proposuisse, nulla nomina in Magico licitoque opere acque virtutem habere, sicut hebraica vel inde proxime derivata, eo quod omnium primum haec dei voce formantur. Illud autem in quo potissimum Magicam exercet natura, vox est dei' (*ibid.*).

three of his magical conclusions which he intended to debate in Rome in 1486.⁶⁴ The influence and presence of Pico's work has already been noted at various points in the text. This reference to Pico's work serves to emphasize the indebtedness of Reuchlin to Pico in a very important area. Reuchlin is clearly defending the close relationship which Pico posited between *Magia* and Kabbalah. In his *Conclusiones* Pico had depicted Kabbalah as oriented towards the mysteries and powers of the divinity by the immediacy of its technique, whereas *Magia* only reached the divine power reflected in the celestial bodies.⁶⁵ One part of Kabbalah was the highest part of natural magic.⁶⁶ Baruchias makes no specific mention of Kabbalah here, leaving the subject matter of discussion so generally defined as the power of the Hebrew language in marvellous operations. But there is no doubt, on the other hand, that this discussion of the foundations of the science of *soliloquia* is analogous to Pico's Kabbalistic magic. And once such an identification or analogy is accepted, one is prompted to ask whether Reuchlin's whole concern with the power of words, with the wonder-working word in particular and the science of *soliloquia* in general, are not extensions and a defence of the ideas and themes put forward by Pico, and in that sense, a positive contribution to the contemporary debate concerning the powers and possibilities of magic. The manner in which Reuchlin's text develops at this point suggests that the answer ought probably be in the affirmative.

Baruchias proceeds to show how the powers of the Hebrew language are further attested by the New Testament—a point also made by Pico in his *Apologia*.⁶⁷ Baruchias examines certain words and expressions—*Hosthiana*, *Thabiti kumi*, *Hiphathah*, *Eli eli lamah asabathani*—whose Hebrew form has been maintained, yet gradually corrupted by Christians.⁶⁸ This section is partly an exercise in Hebrew grammar and syntax, but possibly also an attempt to disclaim any comparison between the miracles of Christ and the magical use of names—a question of some importance in the current magic debate.

The discussion over Hebrew words in the New Testament comes to an end with an interruption from the other two disputants. Once again Reuchlin uses such an interruption to change the course of debate. Capnion agrees with Baruchias's claim that the *barbara* are not to be changed, echoing Baruchias's words in a variant form, and quoting texts from Origen and Iamblichus as well. The question remains for Capnion, however, whether all such names and words actually have power conferred on them by God. For although God can obviously confer power on what words he wishes, has he so wished? asks Capnion.

The power of God is clear but not as yet his will which is the sole cause of all things. . . . Wherefore unless you show that God wished this, and

⁶⁴ 'Nulla nomina ut significativa, et in quantum nomina sunt, singula et per se sumpta, in Magico opere virtutem habere possunt, nisi sint Hebraica, vel inde proxime derivata' (No. 22). 'Quaelibet vox virtutem habet in Magia, in quantum Dei voce formatur' (No. 20). 'Ideo voces et verba in Magico opere efficaciam habent, quia illud in

quo primum Magicam exercet natura, vox est dei' (No. 19) (Pico, *Opera Omnia*, p. 105).

⁶⁵ Magical Conclusions 15 and 27 (*Opera Omnia*, pp. 105, 106).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁶⁸ sig. c 8^v–d 2^r.

likewise that (each) word is potent by such and such a virtue, you have achieved nothing.⁶⁹

The categorical nature and finality of Capnion's challenge is marked: either show that the magical power of words have their source with the divinity, or nothing has been achieved!

This blunt statement of the central point at issue in claiming a potency for divine words and names is very significant. For precisely this same challenge had been thrown out a few years earlier to Pico della Mirandola by Pedro Garsias. We have no absolute proof that Reuchlin knew Garsias's *Determinationes magistrales*, although the similarity of his text here and elsewhere to that of Garsias suggests very strongly that he did. Reuchlin was however well-acquainted with Pico's *Conclusiones* and was present in Rome less than a year after the publication of Garsias's work, which had been written on the instructions of Innocent VIII. And Reuchlin's later *Gutachten* testifies to Reuchlin's knowledge of the writing of this work, and of the details of Pico's condemnation and absolution. It is profitable to look briefly at the parallels here between Garsias's text and Reuchlin's.

In 1489 Garsias wrote his *Determinationes magistrales* in order to confute the thirteen condemned conclusions of Pico della Mirandola. The eleventh of these theses concerns itself with magic and Kabbalah. In his attack on these two sciences Garsias rejects the use of words and incantations in magical operations.⁷⁰ These arguments are especially directed towards number 19 to 22 of Pico's magical conclusions, which posit the divinity as the source of this magical power and claim that names in the Hebrew language are the most successful vehicles of that power⁷¹—arguments which Reuchlin, as has been shown, included in his text as 'not unlearned'. In rejecting Pico's central claim that words have power in magical operations since they were formed by God's voice, Garsias brings forward four arguments. First, God does not have the 'instruments' with which to form utterance; second, no proof exists, either from reason or from the authority of Scripture, that God has actually given magical words the power of performing the marvellous works done by magic; third, it is improbable that God would confer such virtue upon words to be used for evil and against their creator, as happens in magical operations; and fourth, to make such a claim would be a defence of the notary art, long condemned by the Church. Garsias concludes that words (and numbers) have no power of themselves in magical operations; and if they do have power, it derives from the wickedness of evil spirits. But despite the absoluteness and finality of Garsias's conclusion, a note of unsureness remains. For he allows the use of the word of God and of sacred Scripture when well-intentioned in prayers and entreaties.⁷² And just as he endeavours to distinguish the use of bells, holy water and blessed candles from the use of astral images by virtue of their divine origin, he also differentiates the words of Scripture and the sign of the

⁶⁹ 'Itaque potestas dei patet, sed nondum voluntas, quae sola rerum causa est. Omnia enim quaecumque voluit deus fecit in coelo et in terra. Quapropter nisi ostenderis deum voluisse hoc, et item alterum verbum tali

atque tali virtute pollere, nihil egeris' (sig. d 2^r).

⁷⁰ *Determinationes*, sig. m v^r–n^r.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, sig. m vi^r.

⁷² *Ibid.*, m viii^r–n^r.

cross from the use of words and signs in magical operations.⁷³ The crucial argument of the four put forward by Garsias therefore remains: did God bestow upon words the power of performing wonders? The following section of Baruchias's discourse is meant to answer this central question.

Baruchias proceeds therefore to show that God spoke with Abraham, Moses and Joshua, and showed them the powers of divine words, which they then used with marvellous effects and handed down to their posterity. The most important of these names given to men was the Tetragrammaton IHUH.

This is the most powerful name, worshipped by those above, obeyed by those below, cherished by earthly nature; which, when imbibed by those who worship consistently, and absorbed by priestly minds, it is said to bestow wonder-working powers on the human faculty.⁷⁴

This name was first known by Seth, and then by the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In what has now become an established rhetorical style in Reuchlin's work, Capnion interrupts to object that God specifically told Moses that he had not revealed his name to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus vi, 3). The question serves to emphasize the unique place which Reuchlin gives to Moses in this tradition. Baruchias agrees to unravel the difficult knot. He answers that whereas the Patriarchs knew the name of God, it was only at the time of the liberation of Israel that God wished to delegate 'his divine and wonder-working power to men in the occult virtue of his name'.⁷⁵ Just as a merchant may know all the names of precious stones, or a gardener the names of all flowers and vegetables, it is nevertheless only a very eminent few who know the occult virtues and powers of those gems and plants. Likewise, the Patriarchs knew of the Tetragrammaton, but God only first revealed the fullness of energy and the wonder-working power of that name to Moses through his pact or treaty with him. To know this Tetragrammaton was to know not only the characters and the word, but also its pronunciation, which is occult and hidden. And it is this pronunciation of the ineffable name which God taught Moses. God, then, is the founder and teacher of this impossible pronunciation.⁷⁶ Reuchlin claims quite categorically that God has spoken his name and has endowed it with marvellous powers. And these powers are dependent upon the occult virtue within the name, which is analogous to the occult virtues within things. Through it God transforms man into himself and allows him to perform whatever he asks in prayer. Man, by making use of the divine Tetragrammaton, is only imitating God's own pronunciation

⁷³ *Ibid.*, sig. m v^r, n^r.

⁷⁴ 'Nomen potentissimum quod colunt superi, observant inferi, osculatur universitatis natura, quod ab assiduis cultoribus imbibitum, et sacerdotiis mentibus inescatum, mirifica dicitur imperia humanae facultati condonare' (sig. d 6^v). The first part of this passage appears to be a reference to Philipians ii, 9-10. The second part may well be another allusion to the Eucharist as a model for the wonder-working word.

⁷⁵ '... benigniter voluit divinam et mirificam potestatem suam delegare hominibus in huius nominis Tetragrammati virtute occulta, quae nulli unquam mortalium prius revelata fuit' (sig. e^v).

⁷⁶ 'Deus autem patrum nostrorum . . . ignotae et innominabili suae naturae proprium nomen imposuit. Idem quoque impossibilis pronunciationis institutor et praeceptor est. Hic docuit Moysen inenarrabile nomen profari' (sig. e 2^v).

which is impossible to be humanly devised. This claim stands directly opposed to that of Garsias, and indicates Reuchlin's importance for the contemporary magic debate. Rather than merely admitting that such power is possible for man if allowed by God, Reuchlin is intent upon demonstrating that this power *has* been endowed by God, and upon explaining how it is available to man.⁷⁷

The rest of the book is devoted to an enumeration of the divine names. The different names are said to refer to different aspects of the divinity—his essence, power, operation—or to man's love of God. The detailed discussion of the forms and origins of these names can only be reproduced here in summary form. Baruchias first discusses *Ehieh*, the 'I am' form derived from Exodus iii, 14, equivalent to the Platonic *To On*. It designates the divine essence, withdrawn and separate from all things, explains Baruchias, drawing upon the definition provided by Pico in his *Conclusiones*.⁷⁸ Another name, considered by many to be above *Ehieh*, he continues, is *Hu*, the Hebrew demonstrative signifying 'he' or 'this' (Greek: *Tauton*; Latin: *Idemipsum*).⁷⁹ For while *Ehieh* is the fundamental cause, the principle and measure, the creator and means, the simplest essence in which all is contained, it is also the endower of all subsistence. *Hu*, on the other hand, found in many verses of the sacred text (Isaiah xlii, 8; xliii, 10, 25), is a negative designation of the superessentially eternal, the unchangeable God who remains within and according to himself, not governing, permitting everything, accepting good and evil, recording nothing.⁸⁰ A third name is *Esh* (*ignis*), the fire in which Moses saw God and the angel, the fire of Ezekiel's divine vision. It was also known to many of the ancients, and is venerated by Christians as a quality of the Holy Spirit. These three names, according to Capnion, are equivalent to the Christian Trinity, and according to Sidonius, are the same as the Orphic and Homeric triads. Baruchias also treats of the Sefirotic names, the Ten *Sefirot* or emanations which are a central tenet of Kabbalah. *Kether*, the Crown, is the inaccessible abyss of the divinity, the infinite power of all things which are and of those which are not. Then follow the nine *vestimenta dei*, by which 'the perpetual fruition of beatitude flows to individuals'.

The name given most attention by Baruchias, as has already been shown, is the Tetragrammaton, which Sidonius in turn claims to be equivalent to the Pythagorean Tetractys, the quaternity reflected in all physical, mathematical, metaphysical and supernal reality. Within his treatment of the Tetragrammaton, Baruchias also considers the *Shem ha-Meforash*,⁸¹ expressing firstly his

⁷⁷ It ought also to be noted that Garsias is very ambiguous concerning the human possibility of knowing occult virtues and employing them to carry out 'wonderful works'. Although he rejects the possibility of this through the powers of man's own nature, he does admit that with the help of God and the angels, to whom such knowledge is proper, man could perform miraculous deeds. But even though God *could* permit this and good spirits *could* carry it out, the knowledge of occult virtues and the performance of wondrous works by magicians is said to be actually carried out through the agency of

evil demons (*Determinationes*, sig. k^r–k iiiir).

⁷⁸ sig. d 3^r. The definition is found in the thirty-fifth Kabbalistic conclusion of the second series.

⁷⁹ sig. d 4^r–v. The name *Hu* is the subject of Pico's thirty-fourth Kabbalistic conclusion of the second series.

⁸⁰ Reuchlin follows the not uncommon Kabbalistic and Jewish exegetical practice of treating the demonstrative 'this' or pronoun 'he' as a substantive.

⁸¹ Literally, the explained or revealed name.

fears lest someone unworthy may hear. This is the name which is revealed and made intelligible to men by being broken down into its components, the syllables and letters. It is an exposition handed down from the ancient Hebrews, he adds, on the basis of which many have believed that they could achieve what nature could not. Baruchias first gives an explanation of it in terms of Plato's argument from the *Cratylus* concerning the relationship between name and essence, and then in a dense, mystical passage (not to be fully explained until the writing of the *De Arte Cabalistica*) he illustrates the process by means of an analogy with Jacob's ladder. He discloses a psalm made up of seventy-two verses, each verse of which includes three letters of the divine name and constitutes one of the seventy-two angels who through their movement up and down these seventy-two rungs of the ladder (the verses) in a kind of continuous dialectical movement, resolve and break down the syllables of the ineffable name.

Each of the components of the Tetragrammaton, that is the four consonants, is then taken by Baruchias, and its mystical significance and connotation is explained.⁸² The *Yod* (I or Y), with the form of a point and the numerical value of 10, expresses the originally undivided unity and principle of extension in all things. It signifies therefore the beginning, communication and end of all things. The *He* (H), with the numerical value of 5, expresses the combination of binary and ternary (the trinity of God and the duality of the world), and so signifies procession rather than essence. The *Vav* (U or V or W), with the numerical equivalent of 6, a total made up of unity, binary and ternary ($1 + 2 + 3$; 2×3), signifies the perfecting element. It is the perfection of the emanation process, the sign of the whole corporeal world which has progressed from the original unity. The second *He* (H), as a 5 halfway between 1 and 10, expresses the human soul as medium between the higher and the lower, and indirectly thereby, the return of all to its beginning.

This section, very dense in its thought and expression, is filled with Kabbalistic, Pythagorean and general neo-Platonic speculation. A closer examination of its mystical structure and ideas lies beyond the scope of this article. However, it is important to note that Reuchlin's conception of the divine name inevitably has its referent in man. Rather than being a purely theosophic speculation, the name's meaning as a source and means of man's ultimate unity with the divinity is continually stressed. This is most clear in the interpretation of the final *He* (H). Reuchlin uses the well-known Asclepius text from Hermes Trismegistus to explain the medial place of man signified by the *He*.

O Asclepius, what a great miracle is man, an animal to be adored and honoured. He passes into the nature of god, by which he becomes a god. He knows the race of demons, in as much as he knows he has his origin with them. He despises the part of human nature in himself; hopes in the divinity of the other part. O, how happier is the temperate nature of man! Related to the gods, joined by divinity, he despises the part which is terrestrial. All else with which he is bound by his celestial disposition he

⁸² sig. c 4^v-e 6^r.

knows, and binds to himself with the bond of charity and looks toward heaven. In this way therefore, he has been placed in the more fortunate place of mediation, so that he loves those things which are below him, and is loved by those above.⁸³

This is the well-known Hermetic text referred to by Pico at the beginning of his *Oratio*, which treats of the dignity of man. It is significant that Reuchlin should here include it *in toto* in the context of an explication of the Tetragrammaton, IHUH. The reason for this, as Baruchias shows, is that the revelation of this name to Moses has endowed man with the possibility of a divine nature, and with the presage of ultimate return to, and unity with, the divine source.⁸⁴ The use of this text indicates quite clearly, then, that the name reveals momentous truths not only about the nature of the divinity, but also about the conditions and hope of humanity. The deification which is the end of man is to be achieved through the wonder-working word.

IV

Book Three finally reveals the wonder-working word IHSUH. This book is possibly the most clear and most easily intelligible of the three. Capnion speaks almost without interruption, covering first the theological substructure of the Word (which includes discussion on such topics as the *Logos*, *substantia*, and the Trinity), moving on then to the transference of the powers possessed by the Tetragrammaton to the Pentagrammaton (IHSUH), and finally treating of the powers and promises contained in and effected through the use of the name IHSUH.

My purpose is to summarize briefly the ground covered by Reuchlin, giving a more detailed account of points which help to clarify the workings and powers of this miraculous name. The Word of God, the *Logos*, is a power set above all nature, Capnion claims, for it is both the *verbum rationale* within the mind of God, and the *ratio verbalis*, the perfect external image of the divinity. It is both completely equal with the Father, yet through the Incarnation reveals the unknown Father to men. The reality and name of the ineffable Father is made known through the incarnate Son. This mystery was foretold in history by a legion of religious thinkers—Orpheus, Euripides, Hermes, Vergil, the Hebrew prophets.

⁸³ 'O Asclepi magnum miraculum est homo animal adorandum et honorandum. Hic enim in naturam dei transit qua ipse fit deus. Hic daemonum genus novit, utpote qui cum iisdem ortum se esse cognoscat. Hic humanae naturae partem in seipso despicit, alterius partis divinitate confisus. O hominis quam est natura temperata foelicius. Hic diis cognata divinitate coniunctus partem sui qua terrenus est despicit. Caetera omnia quibus se necessarium esse caelesti dispositione cognoscit, nexu secum charitatis astringit sicque suspicit caelum. Sic ergo foeliciore loco medietatis est positus, ut quae infra sunt diligit, ipse a superioribus diligitur' (sig. e 6^r).

⁸⁴ The one significant difference between the Hermetic text quoted in the DVM and that found both in Ficino and in the Nock and Festugière edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* may be noted here. Reuchlin: 'Hic enim in naturam dei transit qua ipse fit deus.' Ficino/*CH*: 'Hoc enim in naturam dei transit, quasi ipse sit deus.' Reuchlin's text—a variant not mentioned by Festugière—stresses the potentiality for divinity in man. Agrippa's 1510 version of the *De Occulta Philosophia* seems to follow Reuchlin: 'Hic enim in naturam dei transit, qua ipse fit deus' (ch. 36), although in the 1533 edition the 'fit' is changed to 'sit' (III, ch. xlix).

Capnion continues with a categorization of all the divine names used by Christians.⁸⁵ They can be divided into what we know, however approximately, of the nature of the divinity (which Baruchias had treated the day before); and into those names which refer to the divine dispensation in the world through providence. As regards the Son, one group of names relates to him as a person of the Trinity (and he holds these names in common with the other two persons), and another group refers to him as man. This categorization leads to a long discussion concerning the Trinity and hypostasis.

Reuchlin still needs to show that such names have power to carry out miraculous deeds. Words and letters have no power, Capnion asserts, either alone or in nature, unless joined by the power of a more notable operation. He draws on Aristotle, who states in his *De Anima* that neither sound nor smell can have power over substances, as they are mere accidents. Therefore a more noble force, the omnipotence of God alone, is the creator of miracles.

And we have found that to each wonder-working word God himself has imparted a singular ray of his omnipotence, which is the operative virtue of marvellous effect brought to us by the ministry of angels, just as also by certain figures or arcane preparations, as Scripture attests.⁸⁶

Once again we seem to have a reference to Pedro Garsias. In his *Determinationes magistrales*, Garsias had argued concerning the inability of words themselves to exert power over substances.⁸⁷ For support, he drew upon the same Aristotelean text as Reuchlin. He also denied that words possess power by virtue of imagination or intellect, or from the impression of celestial bodies. He concluded therefore that they must be no more than signs between the *magus* and demon. Reuchlin however supports one further possibility, which Garsias as we have already seen also rejects—namely, that they are formed by the voice of God, that there is scriptural evidence for God's endowment of certain words with power. And he then proceeds to bring forward instances from the Bible—the bronzen serpent, the case of the Oblation of Jealousy (Numbers v, 13–31), and God's pronouncement of his name over Israel. All these have been carried out by the strength of words, the power of signs and the force of actions.⁸⁸

Granted that such actions are performed by names, continues Capnion, we need to know by what name? How is it known? How is it used? The practical thrust of the work is again stressed. Reuchlin now begins to 'open up the arcana'. As the revelation of the Tetragrammaton had been linked to the covenant at the time of Moses, so with the new covenant, foretold by the prophets, the powers and promises of the ineffable Tetragrammaton are to be transferred to the name of the new covenant. And as the Word took on flesh and so revealed the unknown Father, so does the ineffable Tetragram-

⁸⁵ sig. f 5^r–f 7^r.

⁸⁶ 'Mirifico cuique verbo deum ipsum omnipotentiae suae radium singularem indidisse, quae sit virtus operativa mirabilis effectus in nos usque angelorum ministerio perlata, sicut et de figuris quibusdam aut confectionibus arcanis attestante sacro elo-

quio habemus compertum' (sig. f 7^v).

⁸⁷ *Determinationes*, sig. m vi^v–m viii^r.

⁸⁸ 'Tali verborum vi, ea figurarum potentia, huiusmodi confectionum virtute, his sive maledictionum seu benedictionum carminibus et compositis verbis, res ipso miro artificio fabricatur, non a nobis sed per nos' (sig. f 8^r).

maton take on an extra letter, and thereby become the pronounceable Pentagrammaton.

With this assertion Reuchlin's thought passes into an area which one might possibly term 'mystical philology', akin to some Kabbalistic speculation. 'When the Word descended into flesh, then the letters passed into voice.'⁸⁹ As we know from the Old Testament, he continues, God is formless spirit (breath), and so it is appropriate that he be expressed by four vowels.⁹⁰ But with the incarnation of that spirit a consonant (*sin* or *shin* = s) is added, forming the Pentagrammaton IHSUH and making these vowels pronounceable. This *sin* is a many-faceted symbol. It represents the fire which God would bring on earth (the letter 's' when pronounced, i.e. 'es', means 'fire' in Hebrew); it symbolizes the pronunciation of human speech (the consonants 'sn' in Hebrew can be read 'teeth', the means of articulation according to Jerome); it expresses the seventh age of the world in which Jesus becomes head of the Church, and mediator between God and man (*sin* is within the seventh group of three letters of the Hebrew alphabet—*res*, *sin*, *tau*—which when translated, read: *sin* designates the head); finally, by means of a more complicated exegesis, the *sin* represents the oil (*semen*) of the divine lamp, which brings the lamp out of darkness by joining it to fire—a mystical explanation of the revelation of the divinity through the Incarnation.⁹¹ Reuchlin consequently rails against those modern grammarians who have mutilated this name into IHS.

It remains for Reuchlin to show the wondrous workings of that name. Firstly, he refers to its power as a presage of the unity between the divinity and the human *mens*. Returning to the letter symbolism, his description is a brilliant combination of rich mystical imagery.

Therefore the name of the incarnate Son of God, IHSUH, is none other than the name of the Lord, the Tetragrammaton, but for the assumption of one letter, 's'; which with the deity of the first syllable, soaks, immerses and steeps the second syllable, that is, the human nature which has been imbibed by the poured-out oil . . . and (then) precious myrrh flows into us drop by drop; and anointing our mind, if appropriately prepared, it penetrates and soothingly mollifies it. It then fills it with the most gracious liquor of the divinity, so that it receives into itself the splendours of all knowledge (an unction more liquid than the most limpid waters)—just as gleaming water, or a smooth body smeared with oil, can catch the rays.⁹²

⁸⁹ 'Quando verbum descendit in carnem, tunc litterae transierunt in vocem' (sig. g 2^r).

⁹⁰ The letters IHUH are at least semi-vowels and not proper consonants.

⁹¹ sig. g 2^r–g 4^v.

⁹² 'Idem ergo dei filius incarnatus, est ipsum nomen suum ihsuh, quod non est aliud a nomine domini Tetragrammato, nisi unius litterae assumptione, quae secundem syllabam deitate primae syllabae perfundat, mergat et intingat, id est humanam naturam oleo effuso imbibitam, unde et nomen oleum id esse supra ostendimus . . . et stacten pre-

ciosissimam in nos usque guttatim derivat, et mentem nostram si debito modo aptetur, ita ungendo penetrat; et leniendo mollit, et gratissimo divinitatis liquore adeo complet, ut eius unctionem liquidiorum aquis limpidissimis omnium scientiarum splendores in se recipiat sicut aqua nitida, aut tersum aliquod oleo litum corpus ullos queat radios' (sig. g 5^r). Reuchlin does not discuss the Hebrew spelling of the name of Jesus in any detail in the DVM. But as part of a genealogy of Mary found in his later *De Rudimentis Hebraicis* (Pforzheim 1506, fol. 31), meant to serve as an exercise in

The Pentagrammaton is the means by which man achieves all knowledge and shares in the life of the divinity. And in that sharing, wondrous powers are conferred on him, so that he can carry out marvellous deeds. Reuchlin proceeds to catalogue such wonders.⁹³ This name has brought the dead back to life, cured them of sickness and freed them of evil demons (over whom the name has especially great powers, and of which Reuchlin adduces many examples). It has changed rivers to wine, brought food to the hungry, made waters recede at times of earthquake and flood, repulsed pirates, even tamed camels. It protected Paul from snakes on Malta, gave Sylvester and Philip power over dragons. But the most detailed example given is the struggle between the Evangelist John and Cynops, the leader of the Magi, on the island of Patmos. After many miracles performed by Cynops with the aid of evil demons, John finally prevails over the demons by means of the wonder-working word, and shows the superiority of the Art of the Name, IHSUH, over all magic. This story demonstrates quite clearly Reuchlin's belief in the possibilities and power of demonic magic. Consequently Capnion exhorts all that it is vain to flee to the followers of Ariolus,⁹⁴ to the arcane priests of the Magi, to the Egyptian disciplines or to any other superstitious teaching. In this name lies a more certain formula of power, strength, and dominion over nature, a dominion free from the dangers of death and demons.⁹⁵ The word given to men which leads to union with the divinity is the philosopher's stone, which surpasses by far that about which the mistaken alchemists argue.⁹⁶ Reuchlin's Art of the Name, *soliloquia*, is postulated not merely in opposition to magical practices, but as a viable alternative to them. It is to reap their advantages by a similar dominion over nature, yet without fear of destruction or danger.

The wonder-working word, however, must be employed together with the cross. And conversely the cross, prefigured in the Old Testament and employed by the *magi*, remains impotent without the name IHSUH.⁹⁷ There seems to be an attempt once again here to present the Christian magic of

the syllabic pronunciation of Hebrew names, Reuchlin spells it יהשׁוּה and transliterates this as Ihesuh. He refers to this name as the Pentagrammaton of which he wrote in an earlier work. Lefèvre d'Étaples, in his *Quincuplex Psalterium* of 1508, pointed out that the Hebrew spelling of Jesus's name as יהשׁוּה by Reuchlin (and by Pico and Cusanus) was an error for the more correct ישׁוּע (Secret, *Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens*, pp. 136f.).

⁹³ sig. g 5^v–g 7^v. These examples of wonders seem to be derived from a collection of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. The source for the story of John and Cynops for example is the *Apocryphal Acts of John according to Pseudo-Prochorus* (see R. A. Lipsius, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden*, i, Braunschweig 1883, pp. 380–3).

⁹⁴ I am unsure whether Reuchlin is using *Arioli* in the general meaning of magician or prophet, or with respect to some specific sect

or group.

⁹⁵ 'Frustra igitur ad Ariolos et magorum arcanos antistes confugimus; et aegyptias disciplinas, et si quod est aliud superstitionis collegium, cum nos ipsi certiore praesagii formulam teneamus... Haec ars nostra caelo sublimior, tartaro profundior, libera periculis, umbrarum hostis, contemptrix larvarum, simulacrorum perosa, nec thure nec mero indigens, universis manibus lemuri-bus larvis imperitans... fatum et naturam vincens' (sig. g 5^{r-v}).

⁹⁶ '... omnis stupendae operationis et rerum omnium mirandarum doctrinam perfectam audistis. Hic eius artis locus, hoc fundamentum, haec disciplina est, hic lapis philosophorum; Longe quidem eum exuperans de quo Alchimici errantes contendunt' (sig. g 7^r).

⁹⁷ sig. g 7^v–g 8^r.

soliloquia as a continuation and fulfilment not only of the operations of the ancient Jews, but also of those performed by the *prisci magi*.⁹⁸ By complicated Hebrew exegesis, the word of the cross and its secrets are even said by Capnion to have been revealed by God to Moses.

What precisely the secret of the word of the cross is remains unclear. Capnion whispers it into the ears of the two other disputants and swears them to secrecy.

It is not proper to spread these veiled arcana and most secret symbols into the air, but to whisper them into the ear.⁹⁹

Capnion then asks Sidonius to come forward, breathes upon him, and requests his silence with six different imperatives. He does likewise to Baruchias, and both convey their agreement.

Whether this conclusion to the work alludes to some kind of rite is not clear. The emphasis upon secrecy and the necessity of silence for mysteries is of course intrinsic to the whole esoteric tradition. But whether actual rite or not, the passage does serve to recall the ceremonial at the end of the first and at the beginning of the second book, and to emphasize the ritualistic character of the work as a whole. The work begins as philosophical discourse but is gradually transformed into corporate mystery or rite, which reveals the wonder-working word and the secrets associated with it. It is significant that Sidonius and Baruchias do not convey their agreement to Capnion's Christian arguments and reasoning as such, as is sometimes suggested, but to the acceptance of these revealed secrets and to the precept of withholding them from the masses.¹⁰⁰ Capnion's last words stress the powers which have been revealed and released, and now need to be guarded: 'For whatever you request in this manner, it will be done for you.'

V

I have given such a detailed account of the DVM in order to examine the work's principal contentions, as well as the particular mode of investigation from which those contentions arise. What emerges most clearly through this maze of discussion is the central and continual concern with 'operation'—that is, a concern to make the words and philosophies of men and the names of the divinity potent and effective, both within the souls of individuals, and

⁹⁸ In the *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*. Ficino describes the cross as a kind of talisman used by the Egyptians, which was a prophecy of the coming of Christ (Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 72ff.). Pietro Crinito also states in his *De Honestis Disciplinis* (vii, 2) that the Egyptian philosophers and priests considered the cross as an effigy of the hope of future salvation. And in one of the frescoes painted by Pinturicchio in the Appartamento Borgia for Alexander VI in the 1490s, the cross is represented being worshipped by the Egyptian Apis Bull (Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 115–16). The power of the cross and the wonders

achieved through its power are common topics in Christian literature (see for example, Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, iv, 27).

⁹⁹ 'Quae cum deceat arcana scilicet velamenta et secretissima symbola non in auram spargere, sed magis in aurem susurrare' (sig. g 8^r).

¹⁰⁰ Both Spitz (*Religious Renaissance*, p. 69) and Blau (*Christian Cabala*, p. 49) interpret the agreement as acceptance of Capnion's reasoning, while Geiger (*Reuchlin*, p. 184) suggests more correctly that it concerns the secrets of the cross which have been whispered into their ears.

among men moving in the broader sphere of society. Such a concern revolves around the quest for the wonder-working word. The qualities of this word are analogous (even though more perfect) first with those of other divine names, and second with other magical words and incantations.

Contrary to Geiger's claim that Reuchlin wished to know nothing of magic,¹⁰¹ the DVM is vitally interested in it. The DVM recognizes the need which has led men to magic, analyses and rejects the current forms of magical activity, and endeavours to present a viable alternative. In delineating this alternative, it draws heavily on a good deal of the theoretical substructure on which magical practice was based. So while Reuchlin does not maintain, as Lewis Spitz has claimed, that all magic leads to perdition, it is also hardly satisfactory to assert with Thorndike that the DVM is favourable to the occult sciences.¹⁰² I have tried to show that Reuchlin's position is a good deal more ambivalent and fluid than both these views. As D. P. Walker has pointed out, the difficulties of clearly defining the lines between magical and non-magical activity are considerable.¹⁰³ Despite such difficulties, Reuchlin himself at least does not conceive of *soliloquia* as a magical procedure, and is at pains to differentiate it from such procedures. But its powers and effects are defended by recourse to magic by analogy. And although Reuchlin clearly condemns a magic operating with the aid of evil demons, his attitude to one dependent upon good demons is far less certain. It is rather the difficulty of a faultless operation and the spiritual and physical danger of possible contact with an evil instead of a good demon, which militates against their use. It is clear however that the replacement of these pagan good demons by their Christian counterparts, the angelic ministers, and by names divinely instituted and transmitted to man, is meant to overcome such difficulties. Nevertheless, Reuchlin remains particularly reverent towards Orpheus and his hymn-incantations, even though he must have been aware that they were directed towards planetary influences, since he was definitely conscious of their contemporary use. This may have been mitigated by the Ficinian example, as well as by the aim of such hymns to produce a purely subjective effect upon the operator.

Despite Reuchlin's condemnation or reservation concerning such magical practices, he is nevertheless firmly convinced of their reality. The possibilities of demonic magic are often expressed at some length and detail in his work, and not only the reality, but also the efficacy of occult virtues is affirmed. Such a claim differentiates Reuchlin quite clearly from contemporary opponents of magic as Bernard Bassin, Pedro Garsias and Gianfrancesco Pico. I have already indicated the pointed differences between Reuchlin and Garsias on such questions as the voice of God, incantations and the power of divine names. Bernard Bassin too, in his attack on the study and use of magic in 1482, rejected the presence of effective virtue in talismans, images and incantations.¹⁰⁴ And Gianfrancesco Pico likewise denied the power of incantations, and made a violent attack on the *prisci magi*, and especially on Zoroaster, Orpheus and Apollonius of Tyana, whom Reuchlin excluded from his attack

¹⁰¹ Reuchlin, p. 195.

¹⁰² Spitz, *Religious Renaissance*, p. 74; Thorndike, *History of Magic*, iv, p. 524.

¹⁰³ Walker, *Magic*, pp. 75-84.

¹⁰⁴ Thorndike, *History of Magic*, iv, p. 491.

on magical operators.¹⁰⁵ Even though Reuchlin's work takes no clear didactic or apologetical form, it hardly seems possible that he should have casually, and almost coincidentally, touched upon areas which were being discussed so violently in intellectual circles, and had so recently been the cause of ecclesiastical commissions and heresy charges.

The more probable explanation, as I have already stressed, is that Reuchlin's work was written as a contribution to that debate. In broad terms, it defends the position taken by Pico in regard to the powers and use of magic and affirms, in opposition to Garsias, a divine origin and precedent for it. But Reuchlin discards Pico's broader concern for a natural magic and limits this magic to the power of words, relating it specifically therefore to Pico's Kabbalistic magic. Reuchlin moreover is very much concerned to present a completely orthodox system, and is careful to excise or camouflage any elements which might suggest the contrary. The particular significance of Reuchlin's work is that this new magical art of *soliloquia*, just as the older magic of the *prisci theologi* and *magi* is to be seen in wholly religious terms. It is not merely allied with religious thought, but with Kabbalah as mediator is completely relegated to its service.

The essentially religious context of the work also points to the reforms which Reuchlin saw as necessary for a bankrupt philosophy. I have indicated throughout my analysis of the DVM the continual emphasis upon a ritual and ceremony which is basically of a religious nature—the importance of daylight, solitude and especially faith as essential for the success of the discussion, the need for purification, the emphasis upon silence and mode of discourse appropriate to mysteries, the prostration and hymn which constitute the ceremony with which the revelation is initiated, the mention of the laying on of hands and a description of the three day activities as 'a divine and priestly business'.¹⁰⁶ Such an emphasis on ritual expresses the religious dimensions of the philosophical process. Admittedly, Reuchlin's rituals do not strive to revive the ceremonies of the ancients in any great detail, and they cannot be compared to the complexity of the rites to be found in Diaceto, Lazarelli or even Ficino. They are wholly Christian, wholly orthodox, and the ceremonial seems to be made up largely of elements common to Christian ritual. And yet in a general formal sense they manifest the same consciousness of philosophy as religious mystery, and the need to make that mystery conscious through ceremony.

The understanding of philosophy as religious mystery, and the interdependency of magic, religion and philosophy, was derived from the *prisci*

¹⁰⁵ In the *De Rerum Praenotione* (see Walker, *Magic*, pp. 146–51). However it is in this same work (bk. vii, ch. 6) that Gianfrancesco Pico has recourse to Reuchlin's work on the Tetragrammaton to argue against the magic of Alkindi (Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Opera quae extant omnia*, ii, Basle 1601, pp. 431–2).

¹⁰⁶ In this context it is pertinent to refer to the sacerdotal role Reuchlin suggests for himself in the coat of arms which adorns the

title-page of the DVM. The *ara Capnionis* with its glowing coals, cords and bells which allude to the clothing of the Jewish High Priest of Exodus xxviii (see H. Decker-Hauff, 'Bausteine zur Reuchlin Biographie', in *Johannes Reuchlin 1455–1522*, pp. 93–94) seems to point to Reuchlin's conception of the analogy between divine philosopher and high priest, whose role it is to mediate between man and divinity in respect to knowledge and power.

theologi, and upon this the Renaissance philosopher's respect of them is founded. This basic attitude of reverence towards the *prisci theologi* represents another distinctive theme of Reuchlin's work. Not only does he continually make use of, and quote from their writings, but from the very beginning he is concerned to show their prophecy of Christian truth, their familiarity with Hebrew doctrine, and their partial absorption of that doctrine in their religious hymns, invocations and ceremonies. For whereas Reuchlin admits that the *prisca theologia* had stolen its grains of truth from Moses, this, according to him, ought to lead to respect rather than condemnation as it had with Gianfrancesco Pico for instance. Reuchlin's adoption of Iamblichus's attack upon the Greeks expresses most forcefully his conception of the gradual loss of, and the need to recapture, the original *barbara*, with their attendant connotation of a simple, constant immutable search for truth. And as Reuchlin knew from Iamblichus, and possibly also from Hermes, the disregard of tradition by the Greeks, and their continual tendency towards novelty, had allowed sacred words to lose their potency and effect. The aim of the DVM is to recapture the pristine power and energy, and cure what Reuchlin regarded as an ailing philosophy from impotence, shame and derision, by affirming an interrelated understanding of philosophy, magic and religion as found in the *prisca theologia*.

The historical significance of Reuchlin's DVM therefore, lies in its attempt to give the range of occult ideas connected with the *prisca theologia* and *magia* contemporary religious significance. This general intellectual tendency among some philosophers of the late fifteenth century, to harness the occult to the service of religion, has received most attention from Frances Yates.¹⁰⁷ The consolidation of the tendency, she claims, occurred with the ascension of Alexander VI to the papal throne in 1492. Alexander embraced the Egyptian mysteries, astrology and magic, which were all reflected in the Pinturicchio frescoes in the Appartamento Borgia; he was intent upon exploiting this revival by his identification of the Borgia bull with Apis, the Egyptian sun god; and he absolved Pico of the condemnation of Innocent VIII. This served to usher in the proliferation of works involving *Hermetica*, *magia* and Kabbalah, which marked the early sixteenth century. The affair which predated such a development was the Pico-Garsias exchange, and one of the central arguments put forward by Garsias against the validity and viability of magic and Kabbalah, as we have seen, was the cleavage between those arts and religion. At best they were delusion, at worst a pact with the devil or evil demons.

Reuchlin, as has already been noted, travelled to Italy in 1490, and in Florence he met Lorenzo de' Medici, Marsilio Ficino and most importantly, Giovanni Pico. This was only one year after Garsias's attack against Pico had been published. And it was also at the time when Ficino felt himself in considerable danger on account of the attacks made upon his recently published *De Triplici Vita*.¹⁰⁸ In considering Reuchlin's indebtedness to both these sources in his DVM and later works, it is impossible to imagine that Reuchlin was unaware of the dangers of discussing magic within such an

¹⁰⁷ See especially *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 113–116, 141–2.

¹⁰⁸ Walker, *Magic*, p. 52.

environment. But in 1494, a little more than a year after the publication of Alexander's bull absolving Pico, Reuchlin publishes his DVM.¹⁰⁹ Whether the change in papal policy encouraged Reuchlin to publish his work cannot be conclusively proved, but appears most likely. What can on the other hand be definitely asserted is that Reuchlin's work (not only the DVM, but his whole subsequent intellectual orientation) continued and developed Pico's attempt to subordinate the occult sciences to religion through the agency of Kabbalah—a programme which Reuchlin regarded as having been blessed by Alexander's bull.¹¹⁰

The DVM is the first of Reuchlin's writings which places him fairly and squarely within this tradition. It is a defence of Pico's work against the attacks of Garsias, and an important agent in the dissemination of this position north of the Alps. While the importance of Reuchlin for the dissemination of a Christian Kabbalah, largely instigated or at least circulated by Pico, is well attested, his place in the development of magical ideas from Pico to Cornelius Agrippa is either unrecognized or left very much understated.¹¹¹ This is not the place to enter upon an examination of the influence of Reuchlin's work upon Agrippa. In this article I have largely confined my attentions to the connexions between Reuchlin's work and those of Pico. The influence of Reuchlin upon Agrippa is just as important and striking. It suffices to say that it was primarily Reuchlin's statement of the possible fusion of magic with religion which constituted the driving force behind Agrippa's formulation in the *De Occulta Philosophia* of a sacralized magic which would enable other forms of magic to be viewed in correct perspective and ultimately to be purified and restored to their former place of honour.¹¹² Reuchlin, by the systematic articulation of a divinely instituted magic originally derived in cryptic form from Pico, opened the way for the new possibilities taken by men such as Cornelius Agrippa, who brought magic wholly into the sphere of religion through the modification of religious ceremonies and rites, and thereby endeavoured to endow those ceremonies and rites with new energy and power.

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¹⁰⁹ The bull absolving Pico was promulgated on 18 June 1493. The DVM was published on 1 August 1494.

¹¹⁰ Reuchlin interprets the bull as a blessing of Pico's work (*Gutachten*, fol. xiii^r). For the bull and the commission established by Alexander to investigate the charges brought against Pico, see G. di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola e la problematica dottrinale del suo tempo*, Rome 1965, pp. 115–23, 136.

¹¹¹ This is particularly so as regards the influence of the DVM, even though Agrippa held a series of lectures on the DVM at Dôle in 1510.

¹¹² Reuchlin's influence is far more obvious and pronounced in the original 1510 manuscript version of the work than in the edition

published in 1533. The manner in which Reuchlin provided the model for Agrippa's *magus* and *magia* is illustrated in a remarkable passage in Agrippa's *De triplici ratione*, ch. v: 'Magnum certe miraculum est homo christianus, qui in mundo constitutus, supra mundum dominatur, operationesque similes efficit ipsi Creatori mundi, quae opera vulgo miracula appellantur, quorum omnium radix et fundamentum fides est in Iesum Christum' (Henrici Cornelii Agrippae, *Operum Pars posterior*, Lugduni 1600, p. 355). The Hermetic proclamation of man as *magus* is combined with the *leitmotif* of the DVM. Agrippa proclaims a Christian *magus* whose powers depend on Jesus Christ.