

Study Questions on Ficino: Natural Magic and Cosmic Medicine (Yates 44-61; 62-83)

Hermes Trismegistus and Magic (Yates pp. 44-61)

1. According to Yates, how do Gnosticism and magic go together?
2. What aspects of Plotinian (Neoplatonic) metaphysics make it compatible with the mechanics of sympathetic magic?
3. What is the significance of the decans to sympathetic magic?
4. According to Yates, what were the sources for the *Picatrix*? What is its main subject matter?
5. Describe the order of nature as given in the *Picatrix*.
6. According to Yates, what is the distinction between Ficino's "astral magic" and astrology?

Ficino's Natural Magic (Yates pp. 62-83)

7. What are the key features of Ficino's Neoplatonic metaphysics? What role do the "seminal reasons" play in it?
8. How may the Magus reform material species when they degenerate? What is the similarity that Yates draws between this and the practices mentioned in the *Asclepius*?
9. What is the primary application of Ficino's magic?
10. Why does Ficino stress that celestial images have their power from the world and not from demons? What is the basis of this claim?
11. What is the role of the *spiritus mundi* in Ficino's metaphysics? What does Yates think is the source of this concept?
12. Why does Yates think Ficino stayed away from images of the decans on his talismans, using only planetary images instead?
13. Explain how each of the following adjectives applies to Ficino's magic: medicinal, talismanic, sympathetic, pneumatic, planetary, natural.
14. According to Yates, what are some ways that Ficino's "new elegant" Renaissance magic differs from "that old dirty magic" associated with the Medieval *Picatrix*? How are they similar?

Study Questions on Pico: Supernatural Magic and the Cabala (Yates 84-116)

1. In what sense is *magia naturalis* (natural magic) "spiritual"? In what sense is Cabalist magic "spiritual"?
2. According to Yates, what are some of the similarities between the Hermetic writings and Cabala?
3. According to Yates, in what sense is Pico's magic natural? In what sense does it go beyond the natural magic of Ficino?
4. What does Pico think must be added to natural magic to make it truly effective?
5. What are the ten sephiroth? Why is the Hebrew language of central importance to Cabalism?
6. How can we come to have knowledge of God and Nature according to Cabalism?
7. In what sense can Cabalist magic be called "angelic" magic?
8. According to Yates, how did Pico attempt to unite Christianity with the Jewish Cabala?
9. Pico's Cabalistic magic seeks to go beyond Ficino's natural magic by aiming for angelic powers beyond the natural realm of the stars and planets. How then can Pico avoid the Augustinian Prohibition against demonic magic?
10. How do numbers enter into Pico's magic?
11. In what sense is Pico's magic mystical? How does this make it different from Ficino's magic?
12. In what sense is the correspondence between the sephiroth and the planets the completion of natural magic?
13. Pico's 9th Magical Conclusion is "There is no science that assures us more of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Cabala." What is the significance of this for Yates?
14. What does Yates think is the relation Pico saw between the Hermetica and the Cabala?