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The Dedicatory Letter of Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica*, 1517

The first-fruit of Reuchlin's cabalistic studies was the dialogue *On the Wonder-working Word* (1494),¹ which attempts a synthesis of Christian and Jewish mysticism. He followed this up in 1517 with another dialogue entitled *De arte cabalistica* (On the Art of the Cabala), printed by Thomas Anshelm in Hagenau. The book, which introduces a Jew, a Pythagorean philosopher, and a Muslim as speakers, was intended as a justification of cabalistic studies. During the intervening decades, Reuchlin had become proficient in Hebrew and had read a number of cabalistic texts. The book, published at a time when Reuchlin's lawsuit in Rome was still pending, serves as a plea for the preservation of Jewish books and a legitimization of Reuchlin's interests.

Reuchlin dedicated the book to Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici, 1475–1521, Pope Leo X from 1513). The son of the Medici ruler, Lorenzo the Magnificent, Giovanni de' Medici was tutored by the famous humanist Angelo Poliziano and studied Greek under Bernardo Michelozzi. He entered the church and was made a cardinal in 1489 by Innocent VIII, who was a relative by marriage. From 1489–92 he studied at the University of Pisa and obtained a doctorate in canon law. He undertook a number of diplomatic missions for the papal court and travelled widely for pleasure and education. He was an important champion of the arts and of the New Learning, patronizing Michelangelo and Raphael, making the University of Rome an intellectual centre, and increasing the holdings of the Vatican Library. Today, however, he is perhaps better known as the pope who excommunicated Luther.

The following text, the dedicatory letter and conclusion of *De arte cabalistica*, is translated from the facsimile edition published by the Friedrich