PART I

WHITE MAGIC, BLACK MAGIC
I would like to discuss the theory of magic in the one-hundred-year period after Giovanni Pico’s Apologia for his Conclusiones, which was to have been discussed in 1486. This period concludes with Giambattista Della Porta’s publication of the definitive edition of his twenty books Magia naturalis (but I could just as well continue my analysis further into the seventeenth century, or begin as far back as the Age of Scholasticism).

We usually associate two historical facts with this period (late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries): the scientific revolution and the philosophical debate on the possibility of natural magic. I would like to look at how these two developments relate to each other, keeping in mind that there may be other factors deserving of our attention. I will consider Italian authors, including Ficino, Pico, Zorzi, Cardano, Bruno, Della Porta, as well as Paulus Ricius, and his brother, the astrologer Augustinus.