In 1486 Pico returned to Florence from his theological studies in Paris. Here he had a new and original plan: to organize an international council in Rome and to invite to it the best philosophers and theologians, to discuss and dispute nine hundred theological and philosophical theses which he collected from many sources. These theses included much material which was new to Western Europe, taken from Neoplatonic sources such as Plotinus and Proclus, and from the Jewish Kabbalah. Pico published his theses in Rome in 1486. He was then suspected of heresy by some theologians, who persuaded the pope to appoint a commission, composed of theologians and experts on Roman and Canon Law, to examine these theses. Of the nine hundred theses, the commission found thirteen heretical or of dubious orthodoxy. Pico’s Apologia, which he published in 1487 was his answer to the condemnation of these thirteen theses.

In this chapter I intend to deal with Pico’s humanist theology in the context of the theological crisis of his time, as expressed mainly in his Apologia. I shall focus both on Pico’s critical reaction to his condemned theses and on his solution to the crisis. The discussion will be divided into three phases. The first will deal with the general background to the theological crisis. The second will be an analysis of Pico’s Apologia—his response to and attack on the papal commission and on the contemporary scholastic theology, including his solution to the problem of fides and opinio. The third will explore the philosophical background to some of the essential terms in the Apologia. I shall try to demonstrate here that Pico uses terms and ideas which are associated with the ancient skeptical tradition and are derived from Cicero’s Academica and Augustine’s Contra Academicos.1

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1 Pico’s place in the skeptical tradition (both Academic and Pyrrhonian) of the fifteenth century still needs to be explored through a detailed study of all his works in regard to ancient skeptical terms, arguments, and modes of thought, as well as
If there is still a necessity in the context of his humanist theology to show Pico’s connection to humanism, this chapter will show Pico’s Academic and skeptical debt to Cicero and Augustine, and his use of this philosophical-rhetorical tradition in his counter-attack on the scholastic theologians and on the papal commission. Pico’s *Apologia* is an embodiment both of his humanist side, i.e., the use of ancient sources, and of the theological side, i.e., his deep acquaintance with both patristic (Greek and Latin) and scholastic theology.

Pico’s unique place among this remarkable group of individuals called ‘humanists’ has been known to modern scholars at least since the works of Garin. Pico is often represented in the secondary literature comparisons with his fellow-humanists (especially Ficino and Poliziano), and taking into consideration the Florentine intellectual context of the late fifteenth century as a whole. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, which offers a limited presentation of the way in which Pico used ancient Academic skeptical terms in his argumentation against the papal commission and the scholastic theology of his time, thus exploring a theological crisis and constituting a humanist theology. For Pico’s use of Sextus Empiricus in his composition against astrology see Gian Mario Cao, ‘The Prehistory of Modern Scepticism: Sextus Empiricus in Fifteenth-Century Italy’, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* LXIV (2001), pp. 229–279; especially 259–260; for a more general discussion on Sextus’ transmission see Luciano Floridi, *Sextus Empiricus—The Transmission and Recovery of Pyrrhonism* (Oxford 2002); for Pico’s use of skeptical notions in his philosophical ideas and writings, but from a completely different point of view, see De Pace, *Le scepsi*…; especially pp. 111–159. It seems that for De Pace there is Pico scepticus, which replaces the Pico platonicus, aristotelicus, or averroeticus, already discussed in modern scholarship. In this chapter I shall offer a different point of view on this issue. See also the remarks of Garin in the next note. For the use of skeptical arguments in theology in another context see John F. D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism…* pp. 169–188.

2 See the citations from Garin regarding the relations between Pico and the humanist movement, and between scholastic and humanist culture, in his ‘Le interpretazioni del pensiero di Giovanni Pico’, in *L’Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…* vol. 1, pp. 3–33, cited in the introduction, n. 32. See also Copenhaver’s critical discussion on some historiographical attitudes towards Pico, especially in regard to nature, magic, and Cabala, before and after Garin, on pp. 25–30. See also Paul Oskar Kristeller, ‘Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources’, in *L’Opera e il pensiero…* vol. 1, pp. 35–133. For a recent study on Pico see Louis