Introduction

Italian Renaissance humanism entered its heyday in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. By then it had become a fixture in courts and chanceries all over the peninsula, had gained a sturdy foothold in universities, and had seeped into the consciousness of political and economic elites. Furthermore, Italian humanists could boast of a remarkable array of achievements, having hunted down an impressive number of wholly or partially lost ancient texts, reintroduced Greek to the Latin West, reformed Latin style and orthography to accord with classicizing tastes, and broadly instituted their brand of education in the classics. Finally, they were still relatively impervious to the twin challenges of the vernacular at home and cultural competition from across the Alps, both of which would eventually undermine their hegemony. It was a time of triumph – and of reflection. Having ascended to the apex of culture, Italian humanists turned around to take a view of the path they had trodden. They ruminated on their own education and development, recorded the deeds of the forerunners, founders, and great exponents of the humanist movement, took stock of the goals by which they had been guided, and honored the ideals that had nourished them on their way.

One such piece of humanist self-reflection is provided by Leonardo Bruni, the chancellor of Florence and the undisputed *princeps* of the city's intellectual life, who in old age committed to his *Memoirs* (ca. 1440) an account of his youthful studies, vividly recalling his fateful decision to abandon law and learn Greek with the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras. Not only would he thus "come face to face with Homer, Plato and Demosthenes . . . and converse with them and become steeped in their marvellous teaching," but he would also win "useful knowledge" and "abundant pleasure" as well as "enhanced repute," since "for seven centuries now no one in Italy has cultivated the literature of Greece and yet we recognize that all learning comes from

there."[1] Bruni then goes on to describe his cohort of fellow students. He singles out the Florentine patricians Roberto de' Rossi and Palla Strozzi as two who had made the most progress, notes that some students, such as Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, were of advanced age, and remarks that the logician Pier Paolo Vergerio, although "an ornament of the schools of Padua, was drawn by the reputation of Chrysoloras to come to Florence to study under him there."[2] In a few, short paragraphs Bruni offers precious testimony about a formative moment in the evolution of humanism: the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras and the enduring instauration of Greek studies in Italy. This passage holds many further insights for the historian: that Greek was pursued by rich and humble, young and old alike; that the opportunity afforded by Chrysoloras attracted to the city non-Florentines of established reputation in different fields; and that the young Bruni claimed to have been lured away from the assured income of a legal career by an idealistic longing to commune with the ancients.

Bruni's *Memoirs* are also a valuable source for the way humanists viewed humanism and their involvement in it, giving voice to the passionate zeal for an (initially) unremunerative labor of love, to the regard for revered teachers, to the perceived importance of certain cities, and so on. In another sense, however, a source like the *Memoirs* is wholly unremarkable: it is far from unique. Even a cursory reading of humanist letters, literary prefaces and dedications, ceremonial speeches and poetry, biographies and works of history reveals that their authors enjoyed few things as much as commenting on the content, nature, and what they (usually) considered to be the success of humanism. There were also more formal sources for thinking about humanism, such as necrologies, funeral orations and anthologies, verse compilations in praise of great poets, and dialogues discussing the contributions of leading *literati*.[3] Ultimately, exhaustive accounts and

[1] Leonardo Bruni, *Memoirs* [*De temporibus suis*], ed. and tr. James Hankins with D.J.W. Bradley, in Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and tr. James Hankins, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 2001–2007), vol. III, pp. 320–321 (par. 25): "Homerum et Platonem et Demosthenem . . . intueri atque una colloqui ac eorum mirabili disciplina imbui . . . Septingentis iam annis nemo per Italiam graecas litteras tenuit, et tamen doctrinas omnes ab illis esse confitemur. Quanta igitur vel ad cognitionem utilitas vel ad famam accessio vel ad voluptatem cumulatio tibi ex linguae huius cognitione proveniet?" (tr. Bradley).

[2] Bruni, *Memoirs*, pp. 322–323 (par. 26): "cum Patavii studio floreret, secutus Chrysolorae famam, sese Florentiam contulerat ad eum audiendum."

[3] The following examples are meant only to be indicative, not exhaustive. Necrology: Mauro de Nichilo, *I* viri illustres *del cod. Vat. lat. 3920* (Rome, 1997). Funeral oration: Poggio Bracciolini, *Oratio funebris in obitu Leonardi Arretini*, in Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII, recensente Laurentio Mehus (1741)*, ed. James Hankins, 2 vols. (Rome, 2007), vol. I, pp. cxv–cxxvi. Funeral anthology: for the anthology dedicated to the humanist patron Cosimo de' Medici, see Alison

histories of humanism were even written.[4] Literary self-reflection seems to have been as automatic as it was unceasing in the humanist community.

This book is concerned with that self-reflection and the self-conception of Italian Renaissance humanists embodied therein. By self-conception is intended specifically what humanists thought they were doing *qua* humanists, what they thought the goals of their movement were, what cultural significance it had for them, and how they viewed their common history. The broad aim of this study is to reconsider the nature of humanism without recourse to theoretical or philosophical categories, especially those extraneous to the time period or not identified as relevant by the historical actors themselves. On the contrary, the point is to take humanists on their own terms and thereby to restore as much as possible of the spirit of their movement to the body that has been so thoroughly dissected on the historian's examination table. This approach is motivated by a desire to give humanists, for the first time in a modern historical monograph, the chance to explain themselves, and thereby to contribute to the necessary project of redefining our understanding of Italian Renaissance humanism.

I say necessary because no broad study has yet been undertaken into what humanists thought humanism was. And yet it is a commonplace of historical method that any object of inquiry must first be understood on its own terms before it can be understood on ours.[5] Without concern for this fundamental insight, since World War II scholars have cast humanists as republican ideologues, educational and moral reformers, philosophers and legislators of social norms, devotees of a stylistic ideal, lovers of eloquence,

Brown, "The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 24 (1961), pp. 186–221. Verse compilation: *Lacrimae amicorum* in memory of Celso Mellini, on which see Stefano Benedetti, *Ex perfecta antiquorum eloquentia: oratoria e poesia a Roma nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome, 2010), pp. 133–160; Francesco Arsilli, *De poetis urbanis,* in *Coryciana*, ed. Jozef Ijsewijn (Rome, 1997), pp. 341–559, on which see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Francesco Arsilli e i '*poeti urbani*,'" in Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli (ed.), *L'umana compagnia: studi in onore di Gennaro Savarese* (Rome, 1999), pp. 27–35. Dialogues: Lapo da Castiglionchio's *De curiae commodis*, in Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's* De curiae commodis (Ann Arbor, 1999); Angelo Camillo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria*, ed. Norbert Witten (Munich, 2002). Another formal source was laudatory poems in praise of a given city's great humanists, e.g., Virgilio Zavarise's poem commemorating the humanists of Verona, in G. Banterle, "Il carme di Virgilio Zavarise *cum enumeratione poetarum oratorumque veronensium*," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia di Agricoltura, Scienze, e Lettere di Verona*, s. VI, 26 (1974–1975), pp. 121–170. For further types of sources and examples, see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Presenze eterodosse in cataloghi di letterati della prima metà del Cinquecento," in Vincenzo De Caprio and Concetta Ranieri (eds.), *Presenze eterodosse nel viterbese tra Quattro e Cinquecento: Atti del convegno internazionale, Viterbo, 2–3 dicembre 1996* (Rome, 2000), pp. 105–121.

[4] See the sources reviewed below, pp. 15–20.

[5] Cf., e.g., Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), pp. 3–53, at 28–30.

and a professional movement of *novi homines* attached to the disciplines that comprised the *studia humanitatis*.[6] Most of these views are indebted at least as much to modern concerns as they are to contemporary sources. On the other hand, under the spell of Paul Oskar Kristeller's powerful and influential – and ostensibly non-ideological – interpretation, humanism has gradually lost any convincing *raison d'être* beyond the universal motivations of careerism and financial gain. The upshot is a Lilliputian view in which the comprehensibility of humanism decreases the more closely the magnifying glass is applied to its features; and much as happened to Gulliver when perched upon a Brobdingnagian bosom, microscopic familiarity has bred contempt.[7]

Paying attention to what humanists thought was important about what they were doing can correct our perspective in two indispensable ways. First, it pushes essential characteristics of humanism to the fore, that is, those traits and activities that humanists themselves discerned as central to their identity, those by which they recognized each other and which served to distinguish them as humanists in the eyes of others.[8] Second, it connects those characteristics to cultural aspirations and ideals that make humanism comprehensible as a widespread movement, a movement, furthermore, in which many individuals took pride in taking part or with which they expressly sought to identify themselves. The first insight will help us to understand better what humanism was, the second for what purpose it existed. And with this information we can then retrieve not only the magnificent sense of importance humanists enjoyed about themselves, but also the gigantic significance humanism had in its own day

[6] Syntheses of past interpretations of humanism and scholarly currents can be found in: Angelo Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006); Riccardo Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali – critica moderna* (Milan, 2001), esp. Part III: "L'Umanesimo e il Rinascimento nella storiografia moderna" (pp. 209–336); William Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance* (Malden, Mass., 2011), ch. 4: "Humanism: Renovation or Innovation? Transmission or Reception?" (pp. 98–125); Paul F. Grendler, "The Italian Renaissance in the Past Seventy Years: Humanism, Social History, and Early Modern in Anglo-American and Italian Scholarship," in Allen J. Grieco, Michael Rocke, and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 3–23; and, for scholarship since the year 2000, Mark Jurdjevic, "Hedgehogs and Foxes: The Present and Future of Italian Renaissance Intellectual History," *Past and Present*, 195:1 (2007), pp. 241–268.

[7] See Kenneth Gouwens, "Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the 'Cognitive Turn,'" *The American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), pp. 55–82, at 57: "an entire generation of social historians has practically written humanism out of its narrative of the Renaissance." Cf. Eckhard Keßler, "Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn," in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 181–197, at 181–183.

[8] Cf. Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004), p. 119.

and in subsequent history. If Quattrocento humanists were first and foremost rhetoricians, if they were determined to revive classical Latin in their time, if they cherished the beauty of eloquence – petty concerns from the modern standpoint, esoteric if not elitist and thus considered of little importance for broad cultural trends – we must wonder why the humanist program captivated contemporaries and generations, indeed centuries, to come and managed enduringly to transform European culture. As this study argues, it is because language was insolubly linked for humanists with broader cultural conditions and ideals, and in a way that is inverse to our understanding of the mechanisms of civilization. Whereas we tend to view cultural excellence as the product of social stability, economic prosperity, political power, and military might, the humanists believed it to be the premise to these latter conditions. The remedy for Italy's social, political, and military ills, they reasoned, was cultural refinement. And there was no greater refinement than linguistic refinement. As they saw it, reviving the glory of ancient Latin language and literature was the path to reviving the strength, the excellence, the greatness of Roman antiquity. From this perspective, humanism emerges as an elixir, a strategy for renewing civilization via the literature that stood as the greatest testament to the possibility of civilization itself.

* * *

The sources for humanist self-conception have barely been tapped for their invaluable evidence, and they have been largely ignored in recent work.[9] They received the most sustained attention in the nineteenth century. Georg Voigt drew substantially from the humanists' claims about their own movement, especially as found in letters and literary dedications, in his magnum opus, whose title plainly states his understanding of humanism:

[9] A related question, that of the humanist conception of the Renaissance, received a great deal of attention in the 1930s and 1940s, and some of those studies inevitably drew on a smattering of the sources alluded to above. See, e.g., Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), esp. ch. 1: "The Early Humanist Tradition in Italy," who provides ample bibliography of previous studies in nn. 2 and 3 on p. 2; Franco Simone, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli umanisti," *La Rinascita*, 2 (1939), pp. 838–871 and 3 (1940), pp. 163–186; Herbert Weisinger, "Who Began the Revival of Learning? The Renaissance Point of View," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 30 (1945), pp. 625–638; Weisinger, "Renaissance Theories of the Revival of the Fine Arts," *Italica*, 20:4 (1943), pp. 163–170; and Weisinger, "The Self-Awareness of the Renaissance as a Criterion of the Renaissance," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 29 (1944), pp. 561–567. These studies, especially those of Ferguson and Weisinger, as well as the earlier approach of Konrad Burdach (see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, p. 2, n. 3), would later be criticized in Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni: Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, new ed. (Rome, 2007), ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini."

Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus (*The Revival of Classical Antiquity, or The First Century of Humanism*, 1859/1893).[10] Attention to humanists' explicit claims is also manifest in the canonical interpretation of humanism bequeathed from the nineteenth century, Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).[11] Burckhardt was heavily influenced by the biography of the humanist Leon Battista Alberti, subsequently considered by scholars a deceptive autobiography, which celebrated the perfection of the ideal individual. Although only one of many sources and pieces of evidence that underlie *Civilization*, it was instrumental for Burckhardt's conception of humanism as a distinctly modern culture of individualistic liberation from the intellectual and spiritual straitjacket of the Middle Ages.[12]

Historiographical currents in the twentieth century took decidedly less interest in humanist accounts of humanism. These played no perceptible role in the major challenges to Burckhardt's vision, which came in the 1950s first at the hands of two German scholars, both émigrés who found their permanent homes in American academic institutions: Hans Baron and Paul Oskar Kristeller. Baron formulated his theory of civic humanism by focusing his attention on Florence at the turn of the fifteenth century, which at that time found itself menaced by the expansion of Milanese tyranny.[13] Baron's close reading of polemics and other texts of that period convinced him that the renascent passion ignited by Petrarch for classical literature

[10] Georg Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1893). Although first published in 1859, the third edition of 1893 is the definitive version in German; there is also an important Italian translation with an introduction by Eugenio Garin and many additions to the notes: *Il Risorgimento dell'antichità classica, ovvero il primo secolo d'Umanesimo*, tr. D. Valbusa, facsimile reprint ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1968). On the much neglected Voigt see Paul F. Grendler, "Georg Voigt: Historian of Humanism," in Christopher S. Celenza and Kenneth Gouwens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 295–325.

[11] First published Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel, 1860). A standard English translation is *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.G.C. Middlermore (New York, 2002). For a resume of Burckhardt's view of humanism and of the major scholarly reactions to it, see Robert Black, "Humanism," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VII: *c. 1415–c. 1500*, ed. C.T. Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 243–277, at 243–252.

[12] Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), pp. 14–18. Grafton also notes that Burckhardt drew his inspiration for *Civilization* from Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Vite*, and that he carefully studied Vasari's *Vite* and Giovio's *Elogia* in his "search for the ideal type of the Renaissance man" (p. 17). Important considerations on Burckhardt's use of the Alberti (auto)biography are also found in Karl A.E. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen. Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 189–228; Enenkel argues that the Alberti *vita* is not an autobiography but rather a biography by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger.

[13] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, 1955).

and eloquent Latin had become fused with the intellectual defense of the republican commune against the growing trend towards signory in Italy. Although long influential, Baron's idealistic view has now been reduced to a more grounded interpretation both of Renaissance republicanism and of humanism's relationship to it;[14] nonetheless the concept of *umanesimo civile* still holds sway in Italian scholarship.[15] Kristeller, on the other hand, based his interpretation not so much on a thorough reading of a selection of texts as on his magisterial view of the whole corpus of humanist literature. He concluded that Italian humanism was a rhetorical and literary movement, steeped in the (especially Latin) classical tradition, that took shape in a professional class of notaries, teachers, secretaries, and diplomats. In his view, humanism lacked any coherent civic ideology, was generally devoid of sophisticated philosophical content, and was basically equivalent to the *studia humanitatis*, the cycle of disciplines comprised of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.[16] Contemporaneously with

[14] James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:2 (1995), pp. 309–338; Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000); Kay Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten: Über humanistische Leitbilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2000) [an earlier English version is "Hans Baron's Humanism," *Storia della storiografia*, 34 (1998), pp. 51–99]; the *AHR Forum* devoted to Baron in *The American Historical Review*, 101:1 (1996), pp. 107–144 (contributions by Ronald G. Witt, "Introduction: Hans Baron's Humanism," pp. 107–109; Witt, "The Crisis after Forty Years," pp. 110–118; John M. Najemy, "Baron's Machiavelli and Renaissance Republicanism," pp. 119–129; Craig Kallendorf, "The Historical Petrarch," pp. 130–141; and Werner Gundersheimer, "Hans Baron's Renaissance Humanism: A Comment," pp. 142–144); Riccardo Fubini, "Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron," *Journal of Modern History*, 64:3 (1992), pp. 541–574, esp. 569–574; Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Significance of 'Civic Humanism' in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance," in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), vol. I, pp. 141–174. For the outright rejection of Baron's thesis, see Robert Black's review of Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism,* in *The English Historical Review*, 116:467 (2001), pp. 715–716.

[15] Especially through the writings of Eugenio Garin. See, e.g., his *L'umanesimo italiano: filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 1952/1993) [originally published as *Der italienische Humanismus* (Bern, 1947)], esp. ch. 2: "La vita civile," pp. 47–93. In his "Nota bibliografica," Garin writes, "Fra le opere d'insieme, che hanno riprospettato con originalità di indagini e di materiali i problemi di cui si tocca in questo libro, sono da porsi in promo luogo le opere di H. Baron" (p. 257). And in his "Avvertenza all'edizione 1994," Garin writes, "Può darsi che talora certe ipotesi ci prendessero la mano. Ma c'era non poco di vero in molte tesi sull'umanesimo civile che fra gli anni Trenta a Quaranta cominciarono ad affacciarsi, e non solo nei primi saggi di Hans Baron e miei, ma in testi di Chabod e di Nino Valeri" (p. xvii), adding in a related note, "Lo stesso Baron ebbe a ricordare come già nel '41 io sottolineassi l'interesse delle sue idee e come certe nostre linee di recerca si fossero incontrate molto presto" (n. 10).

[16] A good synthesis of Kristeller's view can be found in his *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York, 1979). It is also represented richly and manifoldly in his collection *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1956–1996). On Kristeller's view of humanism, see John Monfasani, "Toward the Genesis of the Kristeller Thesis of Renaissance Humanism: Four Bibliographical Notes," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53:4 (2000), pp. 1156–1173; see also

Kristeller, the Italian scholar Eugenio Garin developed a contrary view of humanism, one very much descended from Burckhardt.[17] The two parted ways at their respective conceptions of philosophy, which Kristeller understood as a rigorous, systematic investigation of truth within a restricted range of topics. Garin, on the other hand, had a broader understanding of what constituted philosophy. He concentrated his work especially on the close reading of literary texts, drawing out of them their authors' philosophies of life and general worldviews.[18] Thus he considered humanism to be a fundamentally philosophical movement, and one generative of important new conceptions of man, of religion, and of social relations – a movement of thought with certain common themes, analogous to the Enlightenment. Garin also identified humanism with the general intellectual culture of the Renaissance period as a whole, tending to broaden the concept precisely where Kristeller narrowed it.[19]

the recent publication of essays on Kristeller and the influence of his thought, John Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on his Life and Scholarship* (New York, 2006).

[17] Garin articulated his position many times in diverse studies. Representative texts are his *L'umanesimo italiano* and *Medioevo e rinascimento: studi e ricerche* (Rome, 1954/2005). On Garin, see Michele Ciliberto, *Eugenio Garin. Un intelletuale nel Novecento* (Rome, 2011); Ciliberto, "Una meditazione sulla condizione umana. Eugenio Garin interprete del Rinascimento," *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 63:4 (2008), pp. 653–692; Olivia Catanorchi and Valentina Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo, Atti del convegno, Firenze, 6–8 marzo 2009* (Rome, 2011); Claudio Cesa, "Momenti della formazione di uno storico della filosofia (1929–1947)," in Felicita Audisio and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Il percorso storiografico di un maestro del Novecento* (Florence, 2003), pp. 15–34; Massimiliano Capati, *Cantimori, Contini, Garin: crisi di una cultura idealistica* (Bologna, 1997); Franco Cambi (ed.), *Tra scienza e storia: percorsi del neostoricismo italiano: Eugenio Garin, Paolo Rossi, Sergio Moravio* (Milan, 1992); Black, "Humanism," pp. 245–246.

[18] Garin explained the difference between the two over philosophy in the autobiographical essay attached to the new edition of his *La filosofia come sapere storico: con un saggio autobiografico* (Rome, 1990), pp. 146–147; this public statement substantially reproduces what he says in a personal letter to Kristeller of September 25, 1953 (see James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," cited below, who demonstrates the connection between the two writings). See also Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, ch. 2: "Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Twentieth Century: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," pp. 16–57; James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller: Existentialism, Neo-Kantianism, and the Post-War Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism," in Catanorchi and Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, pp. 481–505; Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 591–615, at 604–615 [originally published in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Proceedings of a conference held at the Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 265–289]; and Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 573–590 [originally published in *Comparative Criticism*, 23 (2001), pp. 3–19].

[19] An example is his *Rinascite e rivoluzioni*, ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini," where the thought of fifteenth-century humanists like Bruni and Valla is joined with the revolutionary stance of Cola di Rienzo, on the one hand, and early Enlightenment figures, on the other. Kristeller articulated this major difference between his approach and Garin's in a letter to Garin dated September 21, 1953 (Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Fondo Garin): "Quando concludi dalla mia asserzione che gli umanisti italiani non furono filosofi (e penso al Poggio, al Guarino, a Pio II, al

The result has tended to be a broad and unsatisfying split between Italian and Anglo-American scholarship.[20] The former, following Garin and concentrating on what seem to be representative writings, such as histories, educational treatises, or works of political or moral philosophy, conceives of humanism as an essentially ideological phenomenon growing out of a reaction against medieval culture.[21] The latter, taking its cue from Kristeller, emphasizes continuity with the Middle Ages and has tried to penetrate to the deeper meaning of humanism by way of the activities and especially the professional interests of its participants.[22] This interpretive bifurcation is especially evident in related fields of Renaissance scholarship, such as political, economic, social, or art history, where the focus is not on humanism itself but in which some understanding of humanism is nevertheless deemed necessary for the topic under discussion. In such cases, Italian scholars are generally content to rely on Garin, Anglophones to fall back on Kristeller. And no wonder, as both their interpretations are eminently useful, broadly inclusive, and pliable enough to admit of all kinds of research within their explanatory boundaries.

And yet, despite their clear advantages over the paradigms of Burckhardt and Baron, neither of these interpretations can claim to be definitive. The strength of Garin's understanding is that it places humanism within an intelligible intellectual and cultural context in European history; its weakness is that it has great difficulty identifying the various aspects that make up a humanist profile. It is strong on *why*, weak on *what*. The opposite is the case for Kristeller, who developed his view largely in reaction to other schools of thought he saw as too preoccupied with the coming of modernity

Filelfo ecc., ma non al Ficino o al Pico) che io rifiuto qualsiasi significato filosofico al Rinascimento, non fai altro che identificare umanesimo e rinascimento, cioè mi attribuisci quell'uso di parole che tu veramente segui nel tuo volume sull'umanesimo."

[20] Although certain currents of scholarship are attempting to bridge the divide. See, e.g., James Hankins, "Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue," *Italian Culture*, 32:2 (2014), pp. 98–109; Hankins, "Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic," *Political Theory*, 38 (2010), pp. 452–482; Christopher S. Celenza, "The Platonic Revival," in James Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 72–96; Celenza, "Lorenzo Valla and the Traditions and Transmissions of Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66 (2005), pp. 483–506; Celenza, "Petrarch, Latin, and Italian Renaissance Latinity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35 (2005), pp. 509–536. The present study is also undertaken in this conciliatory spirit.

[21] An important recent example is Luca D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita e coscienza antibarbara. Appunti sulla visione storica del Rinascimento nei secoli XV e XVI," in Renzo Ragghianti and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Rinascimento mito e concetto* (Pisa, 2005), pp. 1–37.

[22] Evidence of Kristeller's ascendance is the canonization of his view in the *New Cambridge Medieval History*: Black, "Humanism," as well as in the three-volume synthesis of humanism edited by Albert Rabil, Jr., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988).

and with reigning ideological controversies – Burckhardt with liberalism, Baron with republicanism and the civic applicability of *Bildung*, and Garin with modern science, the Enlightenment, and the Gramscian notion of organic philosophers – rather than with the phenomenon itself.[23] To be sure, Kristeller's view of humanism was also shaped by ideological battles of the twentieth century.[24] But where others (like Baron and Garin) cleaved to one side or another, Kristeller tried to purge humanism of all ideological overtones according to the model of scientific research (*Wissenschaft*).[25] Wanting to describe humanism in the least tendentious and most value-free way possible, he reduced it to the barest facts he could. The result is an interpretation surely sound in its component parts but that lacks a convincing rationale. Kristeller can reliably tell us about many of humanism's salient characteristics, but he cannot tell us about one of the most, if not *the* most, important: for what purpose did humanism come about, i.e., what did humanists strive for?[26] What sense does a professional movement guided by the revived *studia humanitatis* make in the larger context of European history? Why did anyone want to be a humanist, especially in its earlier stages when it held no widespread social or economic advantage? At stake is the *telos*, the final cause, of humanism.[27]

An attempt has been made to answer this question by focusing on humanists in their role as educators.[28] Heavily influenced by his reading of humanist educational treatises, Paul Grendler described humanism as an educational ethos dedicated to instilling virtue in students by way of reading the great literary works of the ancients.[29] Grendler was responding in part

[23] On Burckhardt, see Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago, 2000), Part III: "Jacob Burckhardt," pp. 201–346; on Baron, see Fubini, "Renaissance Historian"; Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten*; and Schiller, "Made 'fit for America': The Renaissance Historian Hans Baron in London Exile 1936–38," in Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, and Peter Schumann (eds.), *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 345–359; on Garin, see Ciliberto, "Una meditazione"; Cesa, "Momenti della formazione"; and Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller."

[24] See Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters," esp. pp. 581–586.

[25] See Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," pp. 611–612.

[26] Kristeller's evident lack of interest in the causes of humanism has been pointed out by Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 3–4.

[27] This issue has been insightfully addressed, though not from within the Kristellerian paradigm, by Francisco Rico, *El sueño del humanismo: (De Petrarca a Erasmo)* (Madrid, 1993); and D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita."

[28] The classic study of humanist education, to which all subsequent scholarship has added or responded, is Eugenio Garin, *L'educazione in Europa (1400–1600). Problemi e programmi* (Bari, 1957).

[29] Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989). On humanist educational ideals, see *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and tr. Craig Kallendorf