



imitation of Homer. Sarnelli's essay is particularly valuable in its careful elucidation of Tasso, not just as a reader of Homer but as a reader of Homer's commentators, including the Byzantine commentator, Eustathius of Thessaloniki (124–25). The next essay by Lovato also explores the influence of Byzantine Homeric commentators, in her case John Tzetzes. Just as Di Santo outlines the remarkable similarities between Trissino and Parry in spite of the gap of four centuries that separates their poetic and scholarly work respectively, "Re-Reading Homer in Paris and Byzantium" underlines how Samxon and Tzetzes—also four centuries apart—have a great deal in common in the ways they approach the Homeric texts: "both the Byzantine scholar and the French jurist have something new to say" (159).

Lastly, Ciccolella's chapter on Homer and the Protestant Reformation, and Silvano's short edition (with facing Italian translation) of an unedited *prolusio* can be read as a valuable, interlinked pair that explores the reception of Homer in Northern European universities: specifically, at Melancthon's Wittenburg and at Vulcianus's Leiden respectively.

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*The Italian Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern Humanities: An Intellectual History, 1400–1800.* Christopher Celenza.

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In this erudite and beautifully written book, Christopher Celenza addresses us directly—"But if there is one big question that I hope this book will impel you to ask, it is this: Why do we study the humanities?" (x). He takes what may seem like well-worn territories to scholars of Renaissance humanism and what may seem like the driest of topics (i.e., philology) to the general public, and brings them alive in new and original ways. Philology was and is about editing texts, but for Renaissance thinkers it was also about bringing the humanities to bear on finding a better way of life. And this is Celenza's goal as well for our own times.

Celenza lucidly explains the thought of Renaissance philologists. First, that of the barbative Lorenzo Valla. An analysis of the *Donation of Constantine* and Valla's writings on the New Testament show how philological arguments having to do with the meanings of particular words in specific texts were passionately argued and connected to important issues concerning religion. Valla influenced Erasmus and later Martin Luther. His writings were among the generative seeds of the Protestant Reformation.

Pointing to the ways in which trust and emotions were closely tied to humanist writing, Celenza treats, among others, the writings of the great humanist Poliziano. He shows how philology developed as the intense endeavor among friends to arrive

at a trustworthy text—that is, one close to what the original author actually wrote. Poliziano, a professor at the University of Florence, lectured on Aristotle in implicit opposition to the hidebound university professors of his day, whose own lectures on Aristotle reflected narrow disciplinary concerns. Abjuring the title *philosopher*, Poliziano taught philosophy in its most enduring sense—as the love of wisdom and the search for a lifestyle that would lead to such wisdom. He and his fellow humanists understood this as a social endeavor, a bringing forth of ideas in conversation, or within an exchange of letters, as part of friendship.

There was a problem in the early decades of the new technology of print—an explosion of information. Poliziano reacted by proposing new ways of dividing and classifying knowledge. He emphasized the careful distinctions that should be made between fables or stories on the one hand, and on the other, history *ad fidem*—that is, history based on an accurate, neutral, explanation of the past. A student of Poliziano, Petrus Crinitus, created reference works without preconceived teleological narratives. Crinitus's work on Latin poets simply related who the poets were and who their contemporaries were. The world of professional scholarship within the context of available libraries was being born.

In a chapter on Descartes, Celenza shows us the ropes that led from Renaissance humanism to later centuries: Descartes's humanist education, his skepticism (how can I know anything?), and then certainty (*cogito ergo sum*). Then a chapter on eighteenth-century philology—the nuts and bolts in the development of the modern discipline. The chapter ends with Jean Hardouin, a brilliant and dedicated philologist whose increasing paranoia (“everything is forged except those few books I deem not forged”) foreshadows “that characteristically contemporary belief that, in the face of all evidence, you can believe whatever you want to believe if it ‘feels right’ to you” (245).

Finally, Celenza provides an extended analysis of D'Alembert, of the French *Encyclopédie*, and of the ways in which Enlightenment thinkers echoed the earlier world of Valla and Poliziano. The same polarities operated: individual work and knowledge viewed as a collective work not tied to institutions; finite versus infinite—we are finite, the discoverable world is infinite; specialization versus comprehensiveness and the need for both, including the need to push specialized research to broader registers to see what it might be missing.

The humanities, Celenza suggests, are for two things: first, for philosophy in its broadest meaning as the love and search for human wisdom, and second, for the advancement of human knowledge. Everyone concerned with the humanities and their decline, whether within the university or outside, should read this book.

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