

SPECTERS OF PICO:
A NOTE CONCERNING A RECENT BOOK
ON THE *ORATIO DE DIGNITATE HOMINIS*

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I. *Introduction*

With his most recent book, *Magic and the Dignity of Man*, Brian Copenhaver carries out the bold attempt to tame the vast amount of interpretations on Pico and his *Oratio de hominis dignitate*.¹ The author claims from the very beginning that the mainstream reading of Pico's *Oratio* as a celebration of human dignity appears only in the twentieth century, fostered by Kantian and existentialist concepts of freedom and the autonomy of man.² Copenhaver's book reconstructs in detail « Pico's fame as it has changed over the very long haul » and, step by step, deconstructs the legend that has surrounded the *Oratio* for the last century. It is useful to recall briefly the editorial history of the well-known speech, in order to understand better Copenhaver's remarks concerning the dignity of man.

This text appeared in several printed editions, which testifies to the diffusion of Pico's idea throughout Europe: the *editio princeps* of the *Oratio* was printed in Bologna in 1496; then followed editions printed in Lyon 1496, Venice 1498, Strasbourg 1504, Reggio Emilia 1507, Paris 1517, Venice 1519 and 1557, and Basel 1557 and 1572.³ The original title did not contain any reference to the dignity of

¹ BRIAN COPENHAVER, *Magic and the Dignity of Man: Pico della Mirandola and his 'Oration' in Modern Memory*, Belknap of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA–London 2019.

² The same interpretation has been proposed by Copenhaver in his introduction to GIANFRANCESCO PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oratio*, ed. and transl. BRIAN COPENHAVER, The Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA–London 2022 (The I Tatti Renaissance Library, 93), p. XXXIII–XLIV.

³ Useful remarks on these editions have been provided by MICHAEL PAPIO, « The Oration's Printed Editions », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Oration on the Dignity of Man. A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. FRANCESCO BORGHESI, MICHAEL PAPIO, MASSIMO RIVA, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, p. 44–51; RAPHAEL EBGI, « Nota al testo e bibliografia », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA

man (*Oratio quaedam elegantissima*): such a notion surfaced for the first time in a marginal reference to *hominis dignitas* in the 1498 Venetian edition, and later became the new title of the Strasbourg edition (*Oratio de hominis dignitate*).⁴ Due to these two editions, the *Oratio* was widely identified as a text concerning human dignity. As such it was read in the nineteenth century by Burckhardt and then later by Cassirer, Gentile, Kristeller and Garin, who, inspired by Kant, saw Pico as the forerunner of the modern idea of man as a free creature and *artifex* of his own fortune.⁵ This tradition was harshly challenged in 1981 by William Craven, who tried to refute contemporary readings of Pico's anthropology and turned him into an ascetic anti-humanist. Meanwhile, Henri de Lubac, Giovanni Di Napoli, and Pier Cesare Bori read Pico in the wake of the medieval tradition, and they refuted the idea of a 'dawn' of modernity, even though they allowed the presence of the issue concerning dignity.⁶ A fundamental contribution came from Chaim Wirszubski, who described Pico's cabalistic sources and lexicon – recently discussed also by Giulio Busi and Raphael Ebg.

In this paper the reader will find an overview of the contents of the book (§ II), the exposition of the author's main hermeneutical assumptions (§ III), a historical criticism against these assumptions (§ IV), a discussion about the circulation of the *Oratio* in Italy (§ V), further analysis of its circulation throughout Europe (§ VI), some final remarks about the book's methodology and findings (§ VII), and a conclusion (§ VIII).

II. Exposition of the Contents

The book is made up of three main parts, titled respectively « Dignity », « Stories about Pico » and « Pico's *Oration* ». The first part represents the theoretical core of the book, in which Copenhaver examines the modern concept of *dignitas* from

MIRANDOLA, *La dignità dell'uomo*, ed. RAPHAEL EBGI, transl. FRANCESCO PADOVANI, Einaudi, Turin 2021 (Nuova Universale Einaudi, 28), p. XXXV–XXXVI.

⁴ On the composition of the text and the different draft versions, see FRANCESCO BAUSI, « Introduzione », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Discorso sulla dignità dell'uomo*, ed. FRANCESCO BAUSI, Guanda, Parma 2003 (Biblioteca di Scrittori Italiani), p. x; other useful remarks about Emser's edition, printed in Strasbourg, can be found in Copenhaver's introduction to PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oratio*, p. XXXVI–XXXIX.

⁵ Kant's influence on Kristeller and Garin has already been discussed by JAMES HANKINS, « Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller: Neo-Kantianism, and the Post-War Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism », in OLIVIA CATANORCHI, VALENTINA LEPRI (eds.), *Eugenio Garin: Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 2011 (Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 269), p. 481–505; THOMAS LEINKAUF, « The Structure and the Implications of Giovanni Pico's Famous *Oratio de dignitate hominis*: Is It Really on the 'Dignity of Man'? », *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 110/4 (2018), p. 911–928: 912.

⁶ HENRI DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento. Pico della Mirandola*, Jaka Book, Milan 1977 (Già e non ancora, 24), p. 53, but especially p. 84. See also p. 65–66 on Cassirer, Gentile and Garin and the idea of man as *faber fortunae suae*.

a semantic point of view. After referring the literary narrations concerning Pico's descentance from ancient pagan Gods (p. 9–24), the author begins to explore Kant's concept of dignity, which represented the main interpretative paradigm for twentieth-century readers of Pico's *Oratio* (p. 24–31). Copenhaver extends the analysis to some traditional authors dealing with dignity, such as Giannozzo Manetti (p. 31–34, p. 45–55), Cicero (p. 34–38) and Christian sources, including among others Pope Innocent III (p. 38–45). The last chapter of this part brilliantly discusses recent cases of Pico's influence: the most interesting of them is perhaps that of B.F. Skinner, the famous behaviorist who wholly rejected the idea of human freedom and dignity based on his reinforcement experiments.

The second part – which is the longest and most complex – represents an interesting hermeneutical challenge. It is a section of deconstruction, where the author examines the entire interpretative history of the *Oratio* up to the present day, exploring their genesis and features. The first chapters of the section deal with Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, the work that first exalted Pico's anthropology as a *topos* of Italian Renaissance (p. 71–91). Much of this second part (p. 93–158) concerns Italian twentieth-century interpreters and in this circumstance Copenhaver displays enormous erudition concerning texts and anecdotes of Italian culture: he writes about Papini's idealized Pico, the cabalistic readings by Oreglia and Massetani, and the metaphysical interpretation by Di Giovanni. The core of this section is, of course, the description of Gentile's and Garin's readings of Pico (p. 105–158), as well as the Kantian, idealistic, and existentialist backgrounds of their thought. The sixteenth-century reception of Pico is discussed at p. 159–199, and it includes a comparison with Desiderius Erasmus, a thorough exposition of Gianfrancesco Pico's project to 'sanctify' his uncle, Thomas More's *Life of Pico* dedicated to a nun, and the cabalistic influence on Henry More. Copenhaver also carries out an interesting analysis of Pico's letters, especially those addressed to Ficino. There follows an overview of the modern historians who wrote about Pico, including not only Stanley, Buhle, Brucker, Tennemann, and Tiedemann, but also Voltaire, Thomasius, Tiraboschi, and Bartoli. Useful remarks about Kant, Hamann, and Schiller are provided at p. 241–261, as well as about Hegel, Ritter, Zeller, Sigwart, Windelband, and Tilly. A large section is devoted to the image of Pico in Max Beerbohm's parodic book *Seven Men*, published in 1920 (p. 276–310). The last chapter of this second part discusses the interpretations by Cassirer, Randall, Miller, Walker and Yates, and it ends with the celebrations in Mirandola in 1994 and the debate between Garin and Craven (p. 311–336).

The third part of the volume provides a detailed commentary of the *Oratio*. Copenhaver elaborates upon the text by dividing it into thematic areas, namely the rhetorical *incipit* about human mediety (p. 358–374), the description of angelic orders and the mystical entrance into Paradise (p. 375–404), the

accusations against Pico (p. 404–409), the concordance of philosophers (p. 409–419), magic and Cabala (p. 420–445), and the rhetorical conclusion (p. 446–449). From the beginning of this part, Copenhaver declares his intention to provide a cabalistic reading of the speech – as does Chaim Wirszubski – and he summarizes Pico’s contacts with Hebrew sources and intellectuals like Maimonides, Abulafia and Flavius Mithridates. Finally, the book ends with an *appendix* that provides a translation of the text (p. 459–482), a selection from the *Conclusiones* (p. 483–501) and a useful glossary (p. 502–528).

The book is a clear witness to Copenhaver’s wide erudition, which encompasses bibliographical references from every country and century. Besides the traditional studies on Pico, the author draws also on literary sources, pop documents (such as comic books), and current events: even Silvio Berlusconi is useful to the author to reflect on current interpretations of Pico and his *Oratio* (p. 323). The writing is fluid and raises no obstacle to the comprehension of the arguments – despite some difficulties in the commentary, which however depend on cabalistic technicalities. The reader is easily driven through the narration, which is made by way of concepts, as well as facts, anecdotes, unknown backgrounds and intellectual conflicts. All this would be enough to make the book a reference point for a history of criticism – in this case, criticism concerning Italian humanism. From a theoretical point of view, Brian Copenhaver’s reading provides powerful lenses through which to understand both Pico’s works and the history of the numerous interpretations that have appeared through the centuries. As a whole, this work appears to be complex but well structured, supported by a great amount of historical and textual references and carried out with acumen: upon completing the book, one has a clear picture of the historical readings about the *Oratio*, as well as of its contents. At the same time, however, there remain some – apparently marginal – lingering issues concerning the text which one might expect to encounter in the many pages of Copenhaver’s study. These are issues that – I believe – we must consider if we want to offer an overall judgment of the book.

III. *Exposition of the Author’s Assumptions*

Firstly, the assertions with which Copenhaver opens his volume cannot but stand out: « I claim that the usual stories about Pico and his *Oration* are wrong [...]. The main problem is that Pico never wrote an *Oration* about human dignity » (p. 2); « Most statements about Pico as a champion of dignity have been made since World War I, though the modern idea itself came out of the Enlightenment in works by Kant and Schiller » (p. 5). At p. 94 the author sums up his thought with a list of statements, some of which are meaningful:

My account is different:

- after he died in 1494, Pico's celebrity never faded;
- he continued to be famous
 - for his remarkable life
 - for his opposition to astrology
 - for his invention of Christian Kabbalah,
- but not as the author of an *Oration on the Dignity of Man*;
- The *Oration* attracted little attention before the nineteenth century;
- It was seldom published before the twentieth century;
- The speech does not exalt the dignity of man;
- It promotes ascetic mysticism;
- the notion of dignity usually ascribed to it is post-Kantian and Romantic;
- This anachronistic reading of the *Oration* started late in the Enlightenment;

Copenhaver's interpretation is mostly welcomed by other scholars such as Anthony Grafton, who has summarized the issue by claiming that « the idea that Pico's oration has something to do with human dignity is [...] a modern anachronism »; or Thomas Leinkauf, who states that « it is astonishing enough that the *Oratio* not to mention part A [i.e. God's speech to Adam] doesn't play nearly any role in the reception of Pico in the 16th and 17th century nor Erasmus, nor Morus, nor Colet or others seemed to be really impressed by that chef-d'oeuvre of humanist rhetoric and spirit ».⁷

Copenhaver points to those he believes responsible for such an historical misunderstanding, namely all the twentieth-century commentators who read Pico's *Oratio* as a Renaissance manifesto of anthropocentrism and human dignity: « The prince's celebrity was tied to the speech only after World War I, when Cassirer, Garin, and Gentile amplified a few sentences from Burckhardt to broadcast them as a Gospel According to Pico » (p. 451). This charge says nothing new: Henri de Lubac – curiously ignored by Copenhaver – first drew attention to this hermeneutical problem in 1974 in a chapter entitled « Neither Sartre nor Kafka », but at the same time he admitted to the presence of human dignity in Pico's *Oratio*;⁸ likewise, William Craven (1981) allowed the presence of dignity, even though he contested Garin's interpretation.⁹ Copenhaver, instead,

⁷ ANTHONY GRAFTON, « Thinking Outside the 'Pico Box' », *The New York Review*, 2020/11/05; LEINKAUF, « The Structure and the Implications of Giovanni Pico's Famous *Oratio* », p. 915, fn. 12.

⁸ DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 236–244.

⁹ WILLIAM CRAVEN, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Symbol of His Age: Modern Interpretations of a Renaissance Philosopher*, Droz, Geneva 1981 (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 185), in part. chapter 2 (« Pico's idea on Man »). See also EUGENIO GARIN, « Un nuovo libro su Giovanni Pico della Mirandola », *Belfagor*, 40/3 (1985), p. 343–352; PAOLA ZAMBELLI, *L'apprendista stregone. Astrologia, cabala e arte lulliana in Pico della Mirandola e seguaci*, Marsilio, Venice 1995 (Saggi Marsilio), p. 25–26.

radicalizes Craven's position and seems to reject as a whole both the presence of the topic as well as the entire interpretation – leaving out, for instance, a different remark about the relation between Garin, Gentile, and Burckhardt, proposed by Michele Ciliberto.¹⁰ His position is so radical that Anthony Grafton, in a recent review of the book, applauds the author with verses from the *Magnificat*: Copenhagen is portrayed as the forefront of a 'revisionist movement' which, from the 1980s has been exploring Pico's texts with the aim to « bring down the mighty [scholars] from their seats ».¹¹

IV. Initial Remarks

A few years ago, Vittoria Perrone Compagni brought to light several significant excerpts and references about Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525)¹²: the well-known professor, who was by no means a Platonic,¹³ knew Giovanni Pico's works perfectly well and quoted them both in his classes and his written works. Furthermore, he knew and quoted Pico's *Oratio* mainly with respect to the exaltation of human mediety and dignity. In the first chapter of his *Tractatus de immortalitate animae* (1516), Pomponazzi declared that the human being possesses an amphibolous, indeterminate nature, an intermediate kind of nature between purely mortal and immortal beings; only the human being has received the

¹⁰ See at least MICHELE CILIBERTO, « 1492: Garin, Pico, l'Oratio », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. EUGENIO GARIN, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2012 (Forme, 5), p. v-xix: xi; ID., « Una meditazione sulla condizione umana », *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, 63/4 (2008), p. 653–692: 660–661: « Da questo punto di vista, insieme al libro su Pico [...] è assai notevole il saggio *La 'dignitas hominis' e la letteratura patristica* pubblicato nel 1938, aperto – e va sottolineato – da un significativo riferimento a Burdach (citato poi, con consenso, anche nel corso del saggio, e da un simmetrico distacco dalla lezione di Burckhardt e dello stesso Gentile, pur citati con parole di ammirazione e apprezzamento ».

¹¹ GRAFTON, « Thinking Outside the 'Pico Box' ».

¹² I am referring to VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, « Pomponazzi critico di Giovanni Pico », *Schifanoia*, 46–47 (2014), p. 44–54; see in addition EAD., « Problemi di causalità: Pico sulla magia », in MARCO BERTOZZI (ed.), *Nello specchio del cielo. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola e le 'Disputationes' contro l'astrologia divinatoria*, Mirandola Ferrara, Aprile 2004, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 2008 (Studi picchiani, 12), p. 95–115: while this essay takes up the same topic treated by Copenhagen in his book, there is no mention of it.

¹³ On the Aristotelianism of Pietro Pomponazzi see VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, « Critica e riforma del Cristianesimo nel *De fato* », in PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Il fato, il libero arbitrio e la predestinazione*, a cura di VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, Nino Aragno, Turin 2004 (L'età nuova, 1), p. LVII–XCII. A different opinion, but without any serious reference to the texts, has been carried out by SERGIO LANDUCCI, *I filosofi e Dio*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2005 (Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna, 1181), p. 62–66; FRANCESCO P. RAIMONDI, JOSÈ MANUEL GARCIA VALVERDE, « Monografia Introduttiva », in PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Tutti i trattati peripatetici*, ed. FRANCESCO P. RAIMONDI, JOSÈ MANUEL GARCIA VALVERDE, Bompiani, Milan 2013, p. 9–188: 52.

possibility to assume one nature or the other.¹⁴ At the end of § 14, Pomponazzi employed a hermetical lexicon and alluded to ‘some’ [*quidam*] who said that « the human being is a great miracle, as he is the entire world and he can take on the nature he prefers: he was given the possibility to follow any peculiarity of things he prefers ».¹⁵

The reference to Pico’s *Oratio* seems to be clear; but in case we had doubts about the identity of one of those *quidam*, we only need to read Pomponazzi’s course on *De partibus animalium* (1522): here we find the argument repeated together with an explicit quotation from the *Oratio*, nearly *ad litteram*:

Petri Pomponatii <i>Expositio de partibus animalium</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
<p>Homo autem qui est medius, cui natura et Deus dedit quod respiciat inferiora et superiora et est imaginandum quod Deus et natura dixerit homini:</p> <p>« Homo, ego posui te in medio generabilium et corruptibilium et posui in arbitrio tuo quod possis videre et aspicere eterna et non eterna</p> <p>et posui in arbitrio tuo</p> <p>quod tu possis te transmutare in deum et in bestias ».¹⁶</p>	<p>Medium te mundi posui, ut circumspiceres inde commodius quidquid est in mundo. Nec te celestem neque terrenum, neque mortalem neque immortalem fecimus,</p> <p>ut tui ipsius quasi arbitrarius honorariusque plastes in quam malueris tute formam effingas.</p> <p>Poteris in inferiora quae sunt bruta degenerare; poteris in superiora quae sunt divina ex tui animi sententia regenerari</p>

¹⁴ PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, in ID., *Tutti i trattati peripatetici*, ed. RAIMONDI, GARCIA VALVERDE, p. 928: « Initium autem considerationis nostrae hinc sumendum duxi: hominem scilicet non simplicis, sed multiplicis, non certae, sed ancipitis naturae esse, mediumque inter mortalia et immortalia collocari. [...] Ex quibus tota colligi potest conclusio, non simplicis scilicet naturae esse, cum tres animas, ut fere ita dixerim, includat, vegetativam videlicet, sensitivam et intellectivam, ancipitemque naturam sibi vindicare, cum neque simpliciter mortalis neque simpliciter immortalis existat, verum utramque naturam amplectitur ». The same conclusions in POMPONAZZI, *Il fato, il libero arbitrio e la predestinazione*, p. 404: « Humana enim natura est quoddam universum; cum enim media sit inter aeterna et generabilia et corruptibilia utranque naturam debet continere. Unde debent esse aliqui homines veluti Dii [...] ».

¹⁵ POMPONAZZI, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, p. 1096: « quapropter non immerito homo dictus est microcosmus sive parvus mundus. Grande igitur miraculum quidam dixerunt esse hominem, cum totus mundus sit et in unamquamque naturam vertibilis, cum sibi data est potestas sequi, quamcumque proprietatem rerum maluerit ». The same topic of the ‘great miracle’ is repeated in POMPONAZZI, *Il fato, il libero arbitrio e la predestinazione*, p. 422–423.

¹⁶ PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Expositio super primo et secundo. ‘De partibus animalium’*, ed. STEFANO PERFETTI, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 2004 (Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento. Studi e testi, 45), p. 110; this excerpt was already published by FRANCO GRAIFF, « Aspetti del pensiero di Pietro

This telling quotation is part of a greater *quaestio* within § 5 of the *Expositio*, where Pomponazzi goes on for several pages discussing human nature, quoting, among other things, the same sources Pico had used (starting from an altered excerpt from Psalm 8: *Minuisti paulo minus ab angelis*). Unfortunately, there is no way to discover whether Pomponazzi was quoting from the edition printed in Bologna (1496), from that of Venice (1496) or from that of Strasbourg (1504); nor can we determine under what title he knew the speech. In any case, he definitely knew and quoted the *Oratio* for one specific reason: to his eyes, that text represented the emblem of a certain kind of anthropology which exalted the nature and freedom of the human being; an anthropology, however, of which Pomponazzi could not approve.¹⁷

Further quotations from Pico surface from the various texts stemming from the courses Pomponazzi offered at the university for over two decades. In his *Quaestio de universalibus*, discussed in Padua around 1503, he mentioned Pico's conviction that Aquinas and Scotus agree on the main philosophical cornerstones, adding that he was not at all convinced of this idea.¹⁸ This argument may come from Pico's *Conclusiones paradoxae*, as rightly suggested by Perrone Compagni, but it may also refer to an excerpt of the *Oratio*, where Pico asserts the harmony between Scotus, Aquinas, Averroes and Avicenna.¹⁹ On the other hand, the *Oratio* is undoubtedly the source of some of Pomponazzi's references to Pico contained in the *Expositio duodecimi Metaphysices*, a course delivered in Bologna between 1511 and 1512. In that circumstance, Pomponazzi

Pomponazzi nelle opere e nei corsi del periodo bolognese », *Annali dell'Istituto di filosofia, Università di Firenze, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia*, 1 (1979), p. 69–130: 122, on the basis of the witness of MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Lat. 6537, fol. 39r.

¹⁷ On Pomponazzi's refusal of Pico's theme of human dignity see VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, « Introduzione », in PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, ed. VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 1999 (*Immagini della ragione*, 1), p. XIV; TIZIANA SUAREZ NANI, « Dignità e finitezza dell'uomo: alcune riflessioni sul *De immortalitate animae* di Pietro Pomponazzi », *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, 50/1 (1995), p. 7–30.

¹⁸ PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Expositio super I De anima Aristotelis et Commentatoris*, ed. MASSIMILIANO CHIANESE, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 2018 (*Temi e testi*, 172), p. 113: « Verum est tamen quod comes Picus tenuit quod Thomas ipse a Scoto non sit differens, licet ego hoc non credam ». The excerpt was already published in PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, 2 vol., ed. ANTONINO POPPI, Antenore, Padua 1970 (*Saggi e Testi*, 6), vol. II, p. 142.

¹⁹ PERRONE COMPAGNI, « Pomponazzi critico di Giovanni Pico », p. 45, fn. 7, believes that Pomponazzi referred to Pico's *Conclusiones paradoxae numero XVII secundum propriam opinionem, dicta primum Aristotelis et Platonis, deinde aliorum doctorum conciliantes qui maxime discordare videntur*, 6 (in STEVEN A. FARMER, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486). The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*, with Text, Translation and Commentary, Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, Tempe 1998 [*Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 167], p. 366). See the passage from Pico's *Oratio* in COPENHAVER, *Magic and the Dignity of Man*, p. 475: « I have also added several passages in which I assert that statements by Scotus and Thomas, by Averroes and Avicenna, agree in several places where they are thought to disagree ».

made a fool of Pico, making him say that Avicenna was a Platonic philosopher.²⁰ In addition, Pomponazzi proved to be familiar also with Pico's *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore*, as he borrowed the example of the Talmudists who talk about the creation of the world.²¹ Lastly, other references to Pico in Pomponazzi's works have been signaled by Franco Graiff within the *reportationes* from his course on *Meteors*; however, I was not able to consult the manuscript for the preparation of this paper.²² This large amount of quotations allows us to fix two points in order to outline our problem more clearly: (a) Pomponazzi had a wide knowledge of Pico's works, not only of his *Disputationes*, but also of his *Oratio*, *Conclusiones*, and *Commento*; (b) Pomponazzi knew and quoted the *Oratio* with respect to two topics, namely the concord of philosophy and the exaltation of human nature and freedom.

V. Discussion: the Circulation of the *Oratio* in Italy

Evidence from Pomponazzi's texts unexpectedly opens a breach in an interpretation which, at first glance, would otherwise seem solid and exhaustive. After considering the case of Pomponazzi, one might wonder whether ideas such as human mediety and freedom – perhaps even 'dignity' – could be found also in other authors, who read Pico's text. As a matter of fact, there are intellectuals from the sixteenth century who are not considered or discussed by Copenhaver, although they seem indispensable in order to reconstruct a reliable picture of the early diffusion of the *Oratio*. A suitable starting point might be Pico's immediate context, namely the Platonic Academy of Careggi, i.e. the Florentine school founded by Marsilio Ficino, to which Pico belonged since 1484. It has been widely recognized that Francesco Cattani da Diacceto (1466–1522), Ficino's pupil and successor at the Academia, composed his *De pulchro* (1499) in order to challenge

²⁰ PIETRO POMPONAZZI, *Expositio duodecimi Metaphysices*, ed. VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI (forthcoming), tc. 18: « Et ad Averroem adducendum Aristotelem, dicendum quod Avicenna non fuit aristotelicus, sed platonius, ut bene dicit Pico ».

²¹ POMPONAZZI, *Expositio duodecimi Metaphysices*, tc. 18: « [...] quia balbutiens fuit in principio philosophia ipsa, sicut dicit Calarmuthos, doctor Hebreorum, movens quaestionem quid faceret deus ante creationem mundi: et dicit quod faciebat mundos parvos et rumpebat [...] ». Cf. IOHANNIS PICI *Commento*, I, 7, in EIUSD. *Opera omnia*, Heinrich Peter, Basileae 1557, p. 469–470: « E così concederebbono [i Platonici] essere stati infiniti mondi, perché infinite volte el mondo è stato dalla confusione del caos in ordine ridotto ed infinite volte è in quello ritornato; al che pare concordare la opinione de' talmudisti, e' quali domandavano che faceva Dio ab aeterno e rispondevo che creava mondi e poi gli guastava, quantunque seguendo e' fundamenti de' cabalisti alle loro parole si possa dare e più vero e più conveniente senso ».

²² GRAIFF, « Aspetti del pensiero di Pietro Pomponazzi », p. 74. An edition of Pomponazzi's *Expositio in IV libros Meteororum* is under preparation by Vittoria Perrone Compagni, whom I thank very much for permitting me to see some transcriptions.

some of Pico's main theories about henology.²³ Pico's position is often silently summoned by Cattani, but it is sometimes explicitly mentioned, and in any case it is easy to detect. An interesting case study lies in the third book of *De pulchro*, where Cattani, after treating universal beauty, starts to discuss the human being, « admirabilis factus ». His inquiry begins with the very same quotation that Pico sets at the beginning of his *Oratio*: the hermetic argument from *Asclepius*, followed by a short argument on the assimilation of man to God.²⁴

Another well-known case is represented by Francesco Zorzi (1466–1540), a Franciscan friar inspired by Neoplatonic and cabalistic theories, who deeply knew Pico's texts and freely employed the *Oratio* in his *De harmonia mundi* (1525).²⁵ The presence of Pico can be detected in almost every part of this work, and it concerns topics such human nobility and prominence above the angels (III, iii, 2, p. xxxr–xxxiiᵛ), human mediety (III, iv, 7, p. xlvr–xlviᵛ), the human process of deification (III, vi, 1–2, p. lvv–lviiᵛ) and the human power to connect the entire universe (III, vi, 4, p. lviiiᵛ–v). In particular, one concluding excerpt from the fifth tone seems to be extremely significant, as it repeats almost *verbatim* Pico's words about the Chaldeans:

Francisci Georgii <i>De harmonia mundi</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
Et quia transmutabilis est spiritus hominis in <i>diversas</i> naturas, hinc dixere Chaldei hominem esse <i>dissolutoriae naturae</i> animal,	Idcirco scribit Evantes Persa, ubi Chaldaicam theologiam enarrat, non esse homini <i>suam ullam et nativam imaginem</i> ,

²³ On Cattani's opposition to Pico, see the important monograph by SIMONE FELLINA, *Alla scuola di Marsilio Ficino. Il pensiero filosofico di Francesco Cattani da Diacceto*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2016 (Clavis, 5), p. 35–66; see also LUCA BURZELLI, « 'Unum indivisum'. Il problema dell'uno da Pico a Contarini », in ANNA RODOLFI, GIANLUCA GARELLI (eds.), *Fructibus construere folia. Omaggio a Vittoria Perrone Compagni*, Società Editrice Fiorentina, Florence 2020 (Biblioteca Palazzeschi, 19), p. 161–175: 167–169.

²⁴ FRANCISCI CATANEI DIACETII *De pulchro*, III, 1, ed. SYLVAIN MATTON, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 1986 (Nuova Collezione di Testi Umanistici Inediti o Rari, 18), in part. p. 162: « Quamobrem divine a Mercurio dictum 'Magnum o Asclepi miraculum est homo, animal adorandum atque honorandum'. Hic enim in naturam Dei transit, quasi ipse sit Deus; hic daemonum genus novit, utpote qui cum eisdem se ortum esse cognoscat; hic humana naturae partem in se ipse despicit, alterius partis diuinitate confisus ». The dependence of these passages from Pico's idea of human excellence has been shown in detail by FELLINA, *Alla scuola di Marsilio Ficino*, p. 181–187.

²⁵ On Zorzi's commentaries on Pico's *Conclusiones* see PAOLO EDOARDO FORNACIARI, « L'Apologia di Arcangelo da Borghonovo in difesa delle Conclusiones Cabalisticæ di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola », *Vivens Homo*, 5/2 (1994), p. 575–591; JEAN FRANÇOIS MAILLARD, « Sous l'invocation de Dante et Pic de la Mirandole: les manuscrits inédits de Georges de Venise (Francesco Zorzi) », *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 36/1 (1974), p. 47–61. On Zorzi, more generally, see FRANÇOIS SECRET, « Pico della Mirandola e le origini della Cabbala Cristiana », *Convivium*, 25 (1957), p. 31–47; ID., *Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance*, Dunod, Paris 1964. More recently, see RUGGERO LORENZIN, « Francesco Zorzi Veneto. *De Harmonia Mundi Totius Cantica Tria* (Venezia, 1525). Teorie Musicali E Kabbalah », Ph.D. Diss., University of Padua 2013 (supervisor, prof. ANTONIO LOVATO).

<p><i>nullam habens determinatam imaginem, sed adventitias et extrarias quam plurimas. Nam transmutatur spiritus non solum in naturam superiorem et inferiorem, quae sunt in homine, sed in daemonem, angelum et Deum, ut tetigimus.</i>²⁶</p>	<p><i>extrarias multas et adventitias.</i></p> <p>Hinc illud Chaldeorum «Enosh hu shinnuim vekammah tebhaoth baal haj» idest 'homo variae ac <i>multiformis et desultoriae naturae animal</i>'.</p>
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It is important to underline how Zorzi exposes the exaltation of human nature in an even more radical way than Pico: not only does Zorzi speak about the nobility, divinity and honorability of man, but he also provides a definition of *dignity*:

hinc elementa caeteraque omnia hominem componentia in eo tamquam in capite sublimiori quadam dignitate conspiciuntur. Elementa igitur etsi in omnibus crassioribus rebus comperiuntur consonantia, in homine tamen tanto maiori quanto ipse est meliori vita donatus: est namque – ut diximus – solus ex cunctis animantibus coelestis divinaeque vitae particeps.²⁷

Zorzi defines human dignity with respect his proximity to God: human beings have no dignity *per se*, as autonomous creatures, but rather partake of the nature of the divinity, and thus can approach God.

Furthermore, Copenhaver reserves only a very brief analysis to Giovanni Battista Gelli (1498–1563), a Florentine cobbler with philosophical interests, who attended the Platonic Academia and the Orti Oricellari. In 1549 Gelli published an interesting dialogue entitled *Circe*, where he staged the conversation between Ulysses and his companions when transformed in animals. This dialogue had been studied by Eugenio Garin who pointed out that Gelli took significant excerpts from Pico's *Oratio*, and put them in vernacular. The presence of Pico can be clearly traced in the prologue to Cosimo I de' Medici:

in potestà del'uomo è stato liberamente posto il potersi eleggere quel modo nel quale più gli piace vivere; e questi, come un nuovo Prometeo, trasformarsi in tutto quello che egli vuole, prendendo, a guisa di cameleonte, il colore di tutte quelle cose alle quali egli più si avvicina con l'affetto; e finalmente farsi o terreno o

²⁶ FRANCISCI GEORGII VENETI *De harmonia mundi totius cantica*, III, v, 7, in aedibus Bernardini de Vitalibus Chalchographi, Venetiis, September 1525, p. LIVV. Francesco Bausi asserts that the Chaldaic source of these lines is still unknown, and thus it is likely that Zorzi translated it on the basis of PICO (PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Discorso sulla dignità dell'uomo*, p. 20, fn. 43).

²⁷ FRANCISCI GEORGII VENETI *De harmonia mundi*, I, vi, 4, p. CIIV. On this passage see also MYRIAM JACQUEMIERE, «Le *De Harmonia Mundi* de Francesco Zorzi Veneto (1525) dans sa traduction française par Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie en 1578, une oeuvre initiatique Exemplaire », *Studi Francesi*, 146/2 (2005), p. 240–256: 247.

divino, e a quello stato trapassare che alla elezione del libero voler suo piacerà più.²⁸

Even more significant is the end of the tenth chapter, where Gelli translates Pico's *Oratio* almost *ad literam* and makes Pico's speech his own:

Johannis Baptistae Gelli <i>Circe</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
<p>Tutte l'altre creature <i>hanno avuto una certa legge</i>, per la quale elle non possono conseguire altro fine che quello che è stato ordinato loro da la natura; né possono uscire in modo alcuno di que' termini che ella ha assegnato loro. E l'uomo, <i>per avere questa volontà libera, può acquistarne uno più degno e uno manco degno, come pare a lui</i>: o inchinandosi verso quelle cose che sono inferiori a lui, o rivolgendosi inverso quelle che gli sono superiori. Imperò che se egli <i>si darà tutto al ventre</i>, tenendo sempre la bocca e la faccia fitta nella terra, egli diventerà stupido e simile alle piante; e se <i>egli si immergerà troppo nella delectazione sensitiva, diverrà simile ai bruti</i>.</p> <p>Ma <i>se egli</i> voltando la faccia al cielo, <i>considererà filosofando la bellezza de i cieli</i> e il meraviglioso ordine della natura, egli <i>si muterà di terreno in animale celeste</i>; e se egli, sprezzati tutti gli impedimenti del corpo, attenderà a contemplare le cose divine, si farà quasi uno Iddio.</p> <p><i>Chi sarà addunque che non ammiri di questo uomo</i>, il quale non è solamente più nobile e signore di tutti gli altri animali, ma egli ha questa condizione particolare, avuta dalla natura, che egli può farsi quello che egli vuole?²⁹</p>	<p>Definita caeteris natura intra praescriptas a nobis leges cohercetur.</p> <p>Tu, nullis angustiis cohercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam prefinies. [...]</p> <p>Si quem enim videris deditum ventri, humi serpentem hominem, frutex est, non homo, quem vides; si quem in fantasiae quasi Calipsus vanis praestigiis cecucientem et subscalpenti delinitum illecebra sensibus mancipatum, brutum est, non homo, quem vides.</p> <p>Si recta philosophum ratione omnia discernentem, hunc venereris; caeleste est animal, non terrenum.</p> <p>Si purum contemplatorem corporis nescium, in penetralia mentis relegatum, hic non terrenum, non caeleste animal [...]</p> <p>Ecquis hominem non admiretur?</p>

²⁸ GIOVAN BATISTA GELLI, *Dialoghi*, ed. ROBERTO TISSONI, Laterza, Bari 1967 (Scrittori d'Italia, 240), p. 145. Cf. GARIN, *Un nuovo libro*, p. 349.

²⁹ GELLI, *Dialoghi*, p. 285-286. Cf. EUGENIO GARIN, « Notarelle su Giovanni Pico e G.B. Gelli », *Rinascimento*, Ser. 2, vol. 19 (1979), p. 259-264: 261; DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 226.

In the lines that immediately precede this excerpt, the author provided a new definition of human dignity, which touches upon the concept of freedom. This definition shows that, like Zorzi, Gelli considered Pico's *Oratio* as a description of human excellence and dignity:

ELEFANTE: E che dignità dà a l'uomo questa sua volontà libera?

ULISSE: Una dignità tanto meravigliosa, che que' primi sapienti di Egitto (come io t'ho detto) lo chiamaron solamente per questo 'il gran miracolo della natura'.

Therefore, Pico's text was read and re-used in virtue of its exposition of the essential properties of the human being, an amphibious creature that can assume any nature it wishes. We may question whether this was Pico's own intention, but the fact still remains: fifty years after Pico's death, intellectuals from different philosophical backgrounds knew and quoted the *Oratio* for its idea of human dignity. Unfortunately, Copenhaver's book does not consider (or treats in a cursory way) all these authors. Cattani da Diacceto is never mentioned. Zorzi is quoted three times, but twice in passing (p. 208, p. 266); in the third occasion, there is a brief mention of *De harmonia mundi*, yet without acknowledging the influence of Pico (p. 219). As for Gelli, Copenhaver restricts his analysis of this author to three lines, stating that « Gelli never mentioned Pico in his Homeric animal fable on human misery » (p. 195).³⁰

Another reader of Pico's *Oratio* was Alessandro Farra (d. 1577), who governed the fief of Casalmaggiore, not far from Mirandola, on behalf of the D'Avalos family. Farra had been a pupil of Giulio Camillo Delminio, and he had studied

³⁰ Fundamental contributions to enlighten Gelli's sources have been provided by ARMAND L. DE GAETANO, *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy: the Rebellion Against Latin*, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 1974 (Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum, ser. I, Storia, Letteratura, Paleografia, 119), in part. p. 175. In addition, despite Copenhaver's remark, Gelli himself mentioned Pico among his sources inside his commentary on Dante's *Comedy*: « Scrive il dottissimo Pico ella Mirandola, in una orazione che egli fece nel Senato Romano, aver letto nelle memorie degli Arabi che uno de' loro sapienti il quale era chiamato Adala Saracino, usava dire che non aveva trovato mai in questa scena mondana [...] cosa alcuna la quale fusse più eccellente e più meravigliosa che l'uomo » (quoted by GARIN, « Notarelle su Giovanni Pico e G.B. Gelli », p. 261). One reads, perhaps surprisingly, in Paul J. Miller's review of De Gaetano's monograph that « the most interesting part of this book for a philosopher deals with Gelli's writings on the dignity of man, a characteristic humanist topic. Gelli was influenced by the philosophies of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola on this point » (*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 16/2 [1978], p. 228). Later the same Miller applauded Craven's monograph, who « shows most convincingly [...] that such prestigious modern investigators as Nardi, Garin, Cassirer, Wind and Saitta [sic!] present interpretations of Pico's philosophy devoid of historical value or authenticity » (*Renaissance Quarterly*, 37/2 [1984], p. 233-234). Perhaps Miller did not realize that the influence of Pico's *dignitas hominis* (which he approved for De Gaetano) was exactly the major thesis contested by Craven.

Neoplatonic and Hermetic texts.³¹ In 1564 he published his *Tre discorsi*, one of which, entitled *Della divinità dell'uomo*, might be considered a free translation of Pico's *Oratio*.³² We can observe that the alternation between the concepts of 'dignità' and 'divinità' appeared almost ordinary: the text indeed dealt with the definition of human dignity; and the publisher, Girolamo Bartoli from Pavia, wrote alternatively 'dignità' and 'divinità' in the top header of the edition (as it stands twice at p. Aiiii), as if there were synonymous. Pico's *Oratio* inspired Farra's speech, which adapted several arguments from it in the vernacular. A synoptic table of these arguments is set out below:

Alexandri Farrae <i>Della divinità dell'huomo</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
<p>Dico dunque, c'havendo 'l sommo Architetto questo venerabile tempio della sua Deità con segretissime et inviolabili leggi della sapienza sua dirutto a fine, et quelle parti che immediatamente da esso procedono, sovracelesti, eterne e divine, piene di menti sciolte e di spiriti angelici, e l'ultime vere feci di tutto 'l magistero suo fatte albergo d'animali di ciascuna sorte, hebbe desiderio ch'alcuna creatura fosse la quale il grande artificio mondano veggendo, contemplasse, conoscesse et amasse e finalmente amando possedesse, e dalle produtte cose al fattore rivolgendosi verso di lui tutto d'amore s'accendesse [...].</p> <p>Laonde (come scrivono Mosè legislatore de gli Hebrei, e 'l padre de' filosofi Platone) dopo l'haver finite tutte le cose, deliberò di produr l'huomo, ma vide che nelle sempiterne forme non era esemplare alcuno, alla cui sembianza lo potesse formare [...] anzi, ch'in tutte le parti del mondo non restava luoco dove questo contemplator dell'universo agiatamente sedersi potesse.</p> <p>[...]</p>	<p>Iam summus Pater architectus deus hanc quam videmus mundanam domum, divinitatis templum augustissimum, archanae legibus sapientiae fabrefecerat. Supercaelestem regionem mentibus decorarat; ethereos globos aeternis animis vegetarat; excrementarias et feculentas inferioris mundi partes omnigena animalium turba complebat.</p> <p>Sed, opere consumato, desiderabat artifex esse aliquem qui tanti operis rationem perpenderet, pulchritudinem amaret, magnitudinem admiraretur.</p> <p>Idcirco iam rebus omnibus (ut Moses Timeusque testantur) absolutis, de producendo homine postremo cogitavit. Verum nec erat in archetipis unde novam sobolem effingeret nec in thesauris quod novo filio hereditarium largiretur, nec in subsellis totius orbis, ubi universi contemplator iste sederet.</p>

³¹ On Alessandro Farra see SIMONETTA ADORNI BRACCESI, « Tra ermetismo ed eresia: Luca Contile, Alessandro Farra e la 'filosofia simbolica' », *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 17/2 (2011), p. 545-554: 549.

³² The edition of *I tre discorsi* is discussed by ARMANDO MAGGI, « Il principe neoplatonico secondo i *Tre discorsi* di Alessandro Farra (1564) », *Italianistica. Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 29/3 (2000), p. 381-394.

<p>Così gli disse: «Oh ultima e più cara di tutte l'altre nostre operationi, ecco i' te pongo nel mezo del mondo, a fine che più comodamente intorno intorno riguardando, quel luoco, quell'aspetto e quella natura, quasi Chamaleonte, ti prenda a cui più di tutti gli altri da propri desideri inchinato sarai [...]. Da qui inanzi potrai da te stesso o sommergerti nel fango e nella fece della materia, o con le sostanze eterne alzarti a me, e farti Iddio immortale».</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>O incomprendibile bontà divina, o incomparabile ventura dell'huomo, al qual è concessa facoltà d'haver tutto quello ch'egli desidera et d'essere tutto ciò che vuole.³³</p>	<p>[...] sic est alloquutus: «[...] Medium te mundi posui, ut circumspiceres inde commodius quidquid est in mundo. [...] Poteris in inferiora quae sunt brutadegenerare; poteris in superiora quae sunt divina ex tui animi sententia regenerari».</p> <p>O summam Dei patris liberalitatem, summam et admirandam hominis foelicitatem! Cui datum id habere quod optat, id esse quod velit.</p>
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These are but a few significant excerpts from Farra's *Discorso*. The entirety of the speech could be transcribed to show that it amounts to a vernacular translation of Pico. In this context, however, two aspects should be emphasized. Firstly, it must be observed that the typographic mistake in the top header occurs in concomitance with the lines quoted above: the editor changed the title 'divinità' with 'dignità' in correspondence of Pico's translation – a fact that goes beyond a simple typographical mistake. Secondly, this alternation between dignity and divinity particularly is meaningful when considered from a semantic point of view. Farra often employs the term 'dignità' – perhaps more often than Pico – and he always associates it with the elevation to God: human dignity is not an exaltation of autonomy, but rather the awareness of human ability to come closer to God.³⁴ This clarification is indeed necessary, as it answers one of the most debated points raised by Copenhaver: he rightly contrasts the modern, idealistic myth of human self-sufficiency and self-realization (p. 361); however, it seems very plausible that no reader from the sixteenth century understood Pico's conception of dignity in these terms. I will return to this point again in my closing remarks.

³³ ALESSANDRO FARRA, *Tre dialoghi*, in Pavia, appresso Girolamo Bartoli 1564, passim, p. Aiiii sgg.

³⁴ FARRA, *Tre dialoghi*, p. Bii: «Eccovi dunque affidati la gran dignità dell'huomo, per la quale da natural desiderio spinto sovra tutte l'altre creature alzandosi può finalmente trasformarsi in Dio [...]. Tutte queste cose sono introdotte perché l'huomo, questa sua gran dignità conoscendo, [...] con l'unità sopra si congiunga, ivi si fermi et ivi s'acquisti la deificatione, che dio finalmente lo rende ».

Moreover, one should consider whether Pico's influence can be detected in Girolamo Cardano's *De subtilitate* (1550). Cardano (1501–1576), like Alessandro Farra, was a member of the Accademia degli Affidati in Pavia.³⁵ A section of book XI of *De subtilitate* describes the features of human nature. There are no actual translations from Pico, but all the main concepts of his text are present. The human being was created for four reasons: (i) in order to know the divine things; (ii) in order to connect the mortal and celestial levels of the universe; (iii) in order to rule mortal things; (iv) in order to have a medium intellect between angels and beasts.³⁶ Even Giulio Cesare Vanini mentioned these same arguments in the *secunda exercitatio* of his *Amphiteatrum aeternae providentiae* (1615).³⁷ Miguel Angel Granada and Fabrizio Meroi have already recognized Pico's – and Gelli's – influence in Bruno's *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (1584), which appears to take inspiration from Pico concerning the mediety and the mobility of man through the *scala naturae*: « Onde sempre più e più <gli uomini> per le sollecite et urgenti occupazioni allontanandosi dall'esser bestiale, più altamente s'approssimano a l'esser divino ». ³⁸ Copenhaver's book, however, does not reference the works and ideas of Bruno or Cardano in comparison to Pico's *Oratio*.

Further information about Pico's circulation in the sixteenth century may be gathered through the analysis of some unpublished manuscripts collected in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: MS *Vat.lat.* 3651 contains an *Expositio* about how God created man in his own image, by Giovanni Paolo Peruschi, canonic of the Lateran under Sixtus V; MS *Vat.lat.* 5577 contains a treatise *De homine* by Pietro Colonna (1460–1540), a Franciscan friar interested in Cabala. In addition, one should consider interesting similarities in the works of Cornelio Musso and Gian Battista della Porta.³⁹ Finally, we may consider the diffusion of the *Oratio* 'in the

³⁵ Cf. ADORNI BRACCESI, « Tra ermetismo ed eresia », p. 554.

³⁶ HIERONIMI CARDANI *De subtilitate*, apud Johannem Petreium, Norimbergae 1550, c. IX, p. 250: « Homo vero ipse propter quatuor factus est. Primum, ut divina cognosceret. Secundum ut illis mortalia medius existens connecteret. Tertium ut mortalibus imperaret: necesse enim erat et in hoc genere velut et in coelesti aliquod esset optimum ac nobilissimum quod imperitet caeteris. Hic autem vi, illic vero sponde. Quartum ut omne cogitanti munus impleretur, essetque animal fallax. Nam belvae fallaces esse non poterant ob stultitiam, superi vero ob probitatem. Homo igitur intelligendo divis similis efficitur, pravitate autem bellvis ».

³⁷ JULII CAESARIS VANINI *Amphiteatrum aeternae providentiae*, apud viduam Antonii de Harsy, Lugduni 1615, p. 25.

³⁸ GIORDANO BRUNO, *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, ed. EUGENIO CANONE, Mondadori, Milan 2001² (Biblioteca dell'Utopia, 10), p. 206. A dependence on Pico's *Oratio* and on Gelli's *Circe* as well (that means, indirectly, on Pico himself) is proposed by EUGENIO CANONE, « La profonda note animale dello *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* », *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 8/1 (2002), p. 23–46, in part. p. 34, fn. 47. On the topic of dignity in Bruno see LAURA FEDI, « Dignità », in MICHELE CILIBERTO (ed.), *Giordano Bruno. Parole, concetti, immagini*, 2 vol., Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2014, vol. I, *ad indicem*.

³⁹ GUIDO LAURENTI, « 'Miracolo di natura è esser uomo, miracolo di grazia è esser cristiano': la presenza del *De hominis dignitate* di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nell'oratoria sacra di Cornelio

very long haul' with Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), who recalled Pico's concept of dignity in his *Dissertatio de mente heroica* (1732).⁴⁰

VI. Expansion of the Discussion: the Circulation of the Oratio in Europe

It is neither possible nor necessary here to trace the history of Pico's reception in early modern culture – for this Copenhagen's monumental book is more than enough. However, thus far in the present analysis Italian authors have been privileged, whose knowledge of Pico may have depended on the intensity of local diffusion and on geographical proximity. Outside the Italian context, one might wonder about the impact the *Oratio* had in the rest of Europe. In this respect, Copenhagen states that the importance of dignity did not surface among Pico's readers before the twentieth century. Yet, the absence of sixteenth-century readers of Pico outside of Italy in the monograph might give any reader pause: what of the *Oratio*'s fortune in France, Spain, and the Empire?

A fundamental starting-point might be the *Liber de sapiente*, published in 1509 by Charles de Bovelles (1479–1566).⁴¹ Bovelles was one of the most relevant French philosophers of the early sixteenth century, who studied with Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and was inspired by medieval mysticism (Ramon Lull) and Neoplatonism (Nicholas of Cusa). Cassirer and Garin have widely remarked the importance of Bovelles' *De sapiente*, « die merkwürdigste Schöpfung der Renaissance-Philosophie »⁴², for its similarity to Pico's *Oratio*: part of the book

Musso », *Schifanoia*, 46–47 (2014), p. 159–168; DONATO VERARDI, « L'ambigua presenza di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella *Coelestis physiognomonica* di Giovan Battista della Porta », *Schifanoia*, 46–47 (2014), p. 113–120.

⁴⁰ GIAMBATTISTA VICO, *De Mente Heroica*, in ID., *Il 'De Mente Heroica' e gli scritti latini minori*, ed. GIAN GALEAZZO VISCONTI, Alfredo Guida Editore, Naples 1996, online edition by LEONARDO PICA CIAMARRA, ASSUNTA SANSONE, in « Laboratorio dell'ISPF », V, 2008, 1, <www.ispf.cnr.it/ispf-lab> (accessed 10/03/2022); MASSIMO LOLLINI, « Filosofia ed eroismo tra Socrate e Vico », in ENRICO NUZZO (ed.), *Eroi ed età eroiche attorno a Vico*. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Fisciano, Vatolla, Raito, 24–27 maggio 1999), Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 2004 (Uomini e Dottrine, 42), p. 3–18; 6; ENZO PACI, *Ingens Sylva. Saggio sulla filosofia di G.B. Vico*, Mondadori, Milan 1949 (Il Pensiero Critico, 11), p. 34–57: 46–48, 54; ANTONIO CORSANO, *Giambattista Vico*, Laterza, Bari 1956 (Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna, 511), p. 32.

⁴¹ An overview of the French diffusion can be found in ANNAMARIA CASALE, « Excellence et dignité de l'homme au XVI^e siècle: la vision réformée », Ph.D. Diss., University of Padua 2017/18 (supervisor. prof. ANNA BETTONI). See also DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 221; ANNA LESIUK-CUMMINGS, « 'Indiscretæ opus imaginis'. La debolezza del soggetto nell'*Oratio* di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, nel *De Sapiente* di Charles de Bovelles, nella *Fabula de homine* di Juan Luis Vives e il problema dell'Umanesimo Rinascimentale », *Schifanoia*, 46–47 (2014), p. 21–29.

⁴² ERNST CASSIRER, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Springer Verlag, Berlin 2013, in part. p. 93; CHARLES DE BOVELLES, *Il libro del sapiente*, ed. EUGENIO GARIN, Einaudi, Turin 1987 (Nuova Universale Einaudi, 192).

does in fact bear the signs of Pico's influence, which is particularly evident in § 26, titled *The man mirrors the universe*:

Caroli Bovelli <i>De sapiente</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
<p>Nam, consumatis et perfectis omnibus, postquam actus singuli sua loca sortiti sunt, vidit deus deesse omnium speculatorem et universorum oculum [...].</p> <p>Viditque nullum supremo huic oculo inter cetera superesse locum. Plena quippe actuum erant omnia. Quodlibet suo gradu loco et ordine consisterat. Et ex actibus diversis disparatisque speciebus aut rerum differentiis et mundi luminaribus (que per se intermisceri, confundi, concurrere, et fas et possibile non est) fieri homo haudquaquam poterat.</p> <p>Extra igitur cunctorum differentias et proprietates in opposito omnium loco, in conflage mundi in omnium medio coaluit homo, tamquam publica creatura, que quod relictum erat in natura vacuum potentiis, umbris, speciebus, imaginibus et rationibus, supplevit.⁴³</p>	<p>Sed, opere consumato, desiderabat artifex esse aliquem qui tanti operis rationem perpenderet, pulchritudinem amaret, magnitudinem admiraretur.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Verum nec erat in archetipis unde novam sobolem effingeret nec in thesauris quod novo filio hereditarium largiretur, nec in subsellis totius orbis, ubi universi contemplator iste sederet.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Statuit tandem optimus artifex, ut cui dari nihil proprium poterat commune esset quicquid privatum singulis fuerat.</p> <p>Igitur hominem accepit indiscretæ opus imaginis atque in mundi positum meditullio.</p>

I will not dwell here on Cassirer's evaluation of Bovelles; however, I wish to underline a fact which clearly emerges from the textual comparison: even though the arguments regarding human dignity – as Pico recalled in the *Oratio* – were « triti in scholis », one made by Bovelles seems to be a quotation from the *Oratio*. The French philosopher did not simply quote a patristic topic: he rather mentioned specific points from Pico's text, taken as a manifesto of human exaltation.

Bovelles published his *De sapiente* in 1509 and, through his writing, many other intellectuals came to know and describe the dignity of man on the model (directly or indirectly) of Pico. This milieu of French poets and philosophers crossing two generations has been described by Lionello Sozzi in a well-known essay, « *La dignitas hominis dans la littérature française de la Renaissance* », which,

⁴³ CAROLI BOVILLI, *Liber de sapiente*, in ID., *Que hoc volumine continentur: Liber de intellectu. Liber de sensu. Liber de nichilo. Ars oppositorum, Liber de generatione, Liber de sapiente, Liber de duodecim numeris, Epistole complures*, Ambianis, in edibus Francisci de Hallewin, et emissum ex officina Henrici Stephani, 1510, fol. 133r.

however, is absent from Copenhaver's treatment.⁴⁴ If we follow Sozzi's analysis, we see that after Bovelles, there were many explicit quotations, translations, or reformulations of Pico's dignity in French literature. Barthelemy de Chasseneuz (1480–1541), a jurist from Picardy who studied also in Turin and Pavia, composed a *Catalogus gloriae mundi* (1529)⁴⁵ where he quoted Pico, as it stands in this excerpt of the *prima pars*:

Ut ait Trismegistus, 'Miraculum est homo, ad similitudinem Dei factus' [...] In tantum ut ipse pater architectus Deus omnipotens, omnium creaturarum creator, cunctis rebus creatis, ultimum, divinum hominem creavit ad imaginem et similitudinem suam, ut postquam ipse Deus, *hanc quam mundanam domum videmus, divinitatis templum augustissimum, arcanæ legibus sapientiae fabrefecerat, super coelestem regionem mentibus decoraret, aethereos globos, aeternis animis vegetaret, excrementarias et feculentas mundi partes, omnigena animalibus turba, complerat. Opere consummato, considerabat aliquem esse qui tanti operis rationem perpenderet, pulchritudinem amaret, magnitudinem admiraretur.*

[...] O hominum quanta est natura temperata felicius ac diis cognata divinitate coniunctus, partem sui qua terrenus est despicit.⁴⁶

Chasseneuz did not only repeat Pico's arguments: in another section of the *prima pars* he mentioned the *Oratio* explicitly when writing about human dignity:

Unde ergo merito dicit Hermes Trismegistus quod miraculum est homo, prout ample recitat Pico Mirandula *in sua eleganti oratione, in coetu Romanorum per eum recitata, ubi dicit legisse in monumentis Arabum Abdalam Saracenum interrogatum fuisse, quod in hac mundana scena admirandum spectaret, qui nihil homine admirabilius spectandum respondit.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ LIONELLO SOZZI, « La dignitas hominis dans la littérature française de la Renaissance », in Id., *Humanisme in France*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1970 [now reprinted in Id., *Rome n'est plus Rome. La polémique anti-italienne et autres essais sur la Renaissance suivis de «La dignité de l'homme»*, Classique Garnier, Paris 2002 (Études et essais sur la Renaissance, 41), p. 339–366]. See also LIONELLO SOZZI, « La dignitas hominis chez les auteurs lyonnais du xvi^e siècle », in *L'humanisme lyonnais au xvi^e siècle*, Presses Universitaires, Grenoble 1974, p. 295–338; Id., 'Un désir ardent'. *Études sur la 'dignité de l'homme' à la Renaissance*, Il Segnalibro Editore, Turin 1997. On Sozzi's interest for the topic of *dignitas hominis* see also DARIO CECCHETTI, « La dignitas hominis. Una tematica al centro degli interessi di Lionello Sozzi, studioso del Rinascimento francese », *Studi Francesi*, 60/1 (2016), p. 1–12.

⁴⁵ The derivation from Pico has been already noted by FRANÇOIS SECRET, « Le *Catalogus Gloriae Mundi* de Barthélemy de Chasseneuz et la *Dignitas Hominis* », *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 20/1 (1958), p. 170–176, who however did not mention the long passage we are now analyzing. On Chasseneuz see CASALE, *Excellence et dignité de l'homme*, p. 43–53.

⁴⁶ BARTHOLOMAEI CHASSANAEI *Catalogus gloriae mundi*, Coloniae, apud Samuelem de Tournes 1690, p. 82. Text in italics is a literal quotation of Pico's *Oratio*.

⁴⁷ BARTHOLOMAEI CHASSANAEI *Catalogus gloriae mundi*, p. 83. See also Asclepius, §3: « O hominum quanto est natura temperata felicius ac diis cognata! ».

It is a rather brief quotation, but there was not much Chasseneuz could add: had he quoted explicitly the full passage from Pico, every reader would have noticed that the entire section of the *Catalogus* was but a plagiarism from the *Oratio*. In addition, this excerpt proves that any reference to Abdallah the Saracen (perhaps also in other authors) came directly from Pico's *Oratio*.

Throughout the following years, many other authors from different backgrounds (poets, jurists, navigators) addressed the same topic. The explorer Jean Parmentier (1494–1529) composed a poem entitled *Des meraveilles de ce monde et de la dignité de l'homme*, published in 1530; later, the humanist Pierre Boaistuau (1500–1566) wrote a *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* in 1558; the poet Pierre Ronsard (1524–1585) wrote his poem *L'Excellence de l'esprit de l'Homme* in 1559; the cardinal Pierre de Bèrulle (1575–1629) explicitly mentioned *dignitas* in some treatises; and finally the poet Maurice Scève (1501–1564) quoted the topic in his *Microcosme*, in 1562.⁴⁸ Boaistuau introduced his speech with the image of God creating man in order to contemplate the beauty of the universe, providing several hermetic quotations. Although the references are identical to the ones contained in the *Oratio*, Copenhaver finds a place for the *Bref discorus* to a footnote, in which he states: « As far as I can see, there is no sign of the *Oration* in the *Discours* » (p. 556). This footnote raises the question: why is Boaistuau's text – as well as that of Gelli, Chasseneuz and Parmentier – not discussed in Copenhaver's book? Although Pico's presence within those texts may appear doubtful to the author, they do in any event treat the precise topic he is tracing through the early modern and modern tradition.⁴⁹

Francisco Rico, in his 1978 monograph, asserted that topics concerning human dignity widely circulated in the Realm of Spain during the reign of Charles V.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ SOZZI, « La dignitas hominis dans la littérature française de la Renaissance », p. 58–59. On Boaistuau see CASALE, *Excellence et dignité de l'homme*, p. 55–72. On Maurice Scève see MICHIO PETER HAGIWARA, *French Epic Poetry in the Sixteenth Century. Theory and Practice*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2018 (De Proprietatibus Litterarum. Series Maior, 16), p. 48–84. On Ronsard and Bèrulle see DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 60, p. 131–145.

⁴⁹ The analysis of the French diffusion of the *Oratio* would require a focus on Michel de Montaigne, which however cannot be done here. Nonetheless, I would like to remark that many scholars have underlined how Montaigne could have criticized Pico's idea of human dignity, opposing a new reading of that humanistic concept against it. On this topic see at least CHRISTOPHE BOURIAU, « Dignité humaine et Imagination selon Montaigne », *Camenae*, 8 (2010), p. 1–17; NICOLA PANICHI, « La vendetta di Circe. Montaigne, gli animali e l'ordre de nature' », *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 17/1 (2011), p. 117–128 [reprinted in EAD., *Ecce homo. Studi su Montaigne*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2017 (Bibliotheca, 15), in part. p. 75]; JEAN-LUC MARTINET, *Montaigne et la dignité humaine. Contribution à une histoire du discours de la dignité humaine*, Eurédit, Paris 2007.

⁵⁰ FRANCISCO RICO, *Laudes literarum. Humanismo y dignidad del hombre en la España del Renacimiento*, Homenaje a Julio Caro Baroja, CIS, Barcelona 1978, p. 895–914: 900: « En la España (y en la Europa) del Emperador, los tópicos del expediente de la *dignitatis hominis* aparecen en distintos géneros literarios, en el pùlpito, en el derecho de gentes, en los comentarios a Aristòteles, en los debates theològicos... ». See also ASCENSIÒN RIVAS HERNÀNDEZ, « Humanismo Cristiano en el

This observation can be narrowed down to the fortune of Pico's works, which not simply circulated in Spain, but additionally had a significant impact on the so-called Second Scholastic (Vitoria, Suarez, Mas...).⁵¹ The most interesting case to prove a wide circulation of the *dignitas hominis* is the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), with his *Fabula de homine* (1518). Vives had attended the Sorbonne from 1509 – when Bovelles was publishing *De sapiente* – and later moved to Belgium in 1512: in these contexts he met Pico's works and appropriated many of his ideas.⁵² There are several studies on the relationship between the *Fabula* and the *Oratio*, therefore it will suffice to refer to them⁵³, but not before listing some useful pieces of textual evidence:

Diàlogo de la dignidad del hombre, de Fernàn Pérez de Oliva », *Anuario de Estudios Filológicos*, 34 (2011), p. 173–188: 175.

- ⁵¹ See at least SANTIAGO ORREGO, « The 16th Century School of Salamanca as a Context of Synthesis between the Middle Age and the Renaissance in Theological and Philosophical Matters », in CHARLES BURNETT, JOSÉ MERINHOS, JACQUELINE HAMESSE (eds.), *Continuities and Disruptions between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Brepols, Turnhout 2008 (Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 48), p. 113–138; LUCA BURZELLI, « Giordano Bruno e il pensiero ontologico del Rinascimento. Note a margine di uno studio recente », *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 98 (2019), p. 190–205.
- ⁵² On Pico's fortune in the Netherlands, see MARC LAUREYS, « The Reception of Giovanni Pico in the Low Countries », in GIAN CARLO GARFAGNINI (ed.), *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*. Convegno Internazionale di Studi nel Cinquecentesimo Anniversario della Morte (1494–1994), 2 vol., Leo S. Olschki, Florence 1997 (Studi Pichiani, 5), vol. II, p. 625–640.
- ⁵³ JOSÉ CORTS, « La dignidad humana en Juan Luis Vives », *Archivo de derecho público*, 3 (1950), p. 3–21; MARCIA COLISH, « The Mime of God: Vives of the Nature of Man », *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 23 (1962), p. 3–21; AUGUST BUCK, « Einleitung. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola und seine Über die Würde des Menschen », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Über die Würde des Menschen*, ed. AUGUST BUCK, Felix Meier, Hamburg 1990 (Philosophische Bibliothek, 427), p. VII–XXVII; ID., « Vives' *Fabula de homine* im Kontext der *dignitas hominis*-Literatur der Renaissance », in CHRISTOPH STROSETZKI (ed.), *Juan Luis Vives. Sein Werk und seine Bedeutung für Spanien und Deutschland*, Vervuert, Frankfurt a.M. 1995 (Studia Hispanica, 1), p. 1–8; CHARLES FANTAZZI, « Vives' *Fabula de homine* as a Dramatic Representation of Pico's *Oratio* », *Nieuwsbrief Neolatinistenverband*, 15 (2003), p. 10–19; [reprinted in FRANCISCO JORDI PÉREZ I DURA (ed.), *La Universitat de Valencia i l'Humanisme: Studia Humanitatis e renovació cultural a Europa i al Nou Mon*, Universitat de València, València 2003, p. 79–87]; MANFRED LENTZEN, « Il libero arbitrio e la dignità dell'uomo. A proposito dell'*Oratio de hominis dignitate* di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola e della *Fabula de homine* di Juan Luis Vives », in LUISA SECCHI TARUGI (ed.), *Il concetto di libertà nel Rinascimento*. Atti del XVIII Convegno Internazionale (Chianciano–Pienza 17–20 luglio 2006), Franco Cesati, Florence 2008 (Quaderni della Rassegna, 52), p. 401–411; ERIK DE BOM, « *Homo ipse ludus ac fabula*. Vives's views on the dignity of man as expressed in his *Fabula de homine* », *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 57 (2008), p. 91–114; LUIS FERNANDO HERNÁNDEZ, « *La Fabula de homine* de Juan Luis Vives en la tradición literaria antigua y renacentista », *Vivesiana*, 2 (2017), p. 33–47; JOSEP SOLERVICENS, « *La Fabula de homine* de Juan Luis Vives: dignidad humana, christianismo y retórica », in GUIDO M. CAPPELLI (ed.), *La dignità e la miseria dell'uomo nel pensiero europeo*. Atti del convegno internazionale di Madrid, 20–22 maggio 2004, Salerno, Milan 2006 (Studi e Saggi, 40), p. 239–269; DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 222.

Johannis Vives <i>Fabula</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
- [2] Erit itaque prior libellus, <i>Fabula de homine</i> , id est, <i>de mundana scena</i> , in qua suam unaquaque rerum personam agit, primaeque sunt partes ipsius hominis.	Legi, Patres Colendissimi, in Arabum monumentis, interrogatum Abdalam sarracenum, quid <i>in hac quasi mundana scena</i> admirandum maxime spectaretur, <i>nihil spectari homine mirabilius</i> respondisse.
- [18] Sapientissimi deorum <i>nihil esse homine admirabilius</i> responderunt, quibus et ipse deorum pater nutu assensus est.	
- [30] Detectus totus homo, ostendit immortalibus diis naturam suam illis germanam, quae natura, persona corporeque intacta, animal reddit tam varium, tam desultorium, tam versipellem, polypum et cameleonta, quam in scena viderant. ⁵⁴	Quis hunc nostrum chamaeleonta non admiretur? Aut omnino quis aliud quicquamc admiretur magis? Quem non immerito Asclepius Atheniensis versipellis huius et se ipsam transformantis naturae argumento per Protheum in mysteriis significari dixit.

As these excerpts show, Vives had Pico's *Oratio* under his eyes when writing the *Fabula* and, even though he reinterpreted the text according to his own idea and purpose, he nonetheless often reported Pico's words almost *verbatim*: for example, the response of the sages [2] must have been taken from Pico, since no alternative source has yet been identified.

According to Josep Solervicens, the influence of Pico's *Oratio* can also be found in Calderon's *Gran teatro del mundo*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, one might look to Fernán Pérez de Oliva's *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre*, published posthumously in 1546, to consider yet another witness to Pico's circulation in Spain.⁵⁶ Oliva was rector of the University of Salamanca, and he was among the first who composed philosophical texts in Spanish. His *Diálogo* is a proof of Pico's fame in Spain, and especially of the influence of the *Oratio*, from which Oliva took concepts, hermetic quotations and the division of human beings according to their *modus*

⁵⁴ I am quoting from the edition cured by Luis Fernando Hernández, LUIS VIVES, *Fabula sobre los hombres*, in *Vivesiana*, 3 (2018), p. 9–25. My numbers in brackets follow this edition.

⁵⁵ LOUIS C. PÉREZ, « La relación formal entre la *Fábula del hombre* de Luis Vives y *El gran teatro del mundo* de Calderón », in GENE H. BELL-VILLADA, ANTONIO GIMÉNEZ, GEORGE PISTORIUS (eds.), *From Dante to García Márquez. Studies in Romance Literatures and Linguistics*, Williamston, William College, 1987, p. 76–84; SOLERVICENS, « La *Fabula de homine* de Juan Luis Vives », p. 239.

⁵⁶ On Oliva see PABLO SOL MORA, « El final del *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre* de Fernán Pérez de Oliva », in PATRIZIA BOTTA (ed.), *Rumbos del hispanismo en el umbral del Cincuentenario de la AIH*, 8 vol., Bagatto, Rome 2012, vol. III, p. 75–83; RIVAS HERNÁNDEZ, « Humanismo Cristiano ».

vivendi (plants, animals, angels).⁵⁷ Copenhaver, however, considers the text in a single line: « that Pérez de Oliva read Pico's *Oration* has been suggested but also denied by students of the *Diálogo* » (p. 556, fn. 90). One might object that this assertion is a *petitio principii*: as an interpreter of Pico's reception, perhaps Copenhaver should have (i) discussed the *Diálogo* itself and (ii) ground his position about Pico's alleged influence on Oliva on an explicit textual basis.

There is one final geographical region within which the *Oratio* circulated: namely, the Empire. The humanist Jakob Wimpfeling (1450–1528), a friend of Desiderius Erasmus, edited Pico's *Opera omnia* in 1504, and changed the title of the *Oratio* by adding the reference to *de dignitate hominis*. Before we uncover this intervention as spurious – as it is in fact! – we need to understand why a foreign intellectual, who never had personal contacts with Pico, decided to change the title: what did Wimpfeling think about Pico's circulation that led him to edit the title? Did he understand the impact of Pico's *Oratio* in terms that were similar to Bovelles' and Vives'? Pico's German circulation depends on very well-known names, such as Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486–1535) and Uldreich Zwingli (1484–1531). The German humanist Johannes Reuchlin met Pico during a journey in Florence in 1490 and we know that he was deeply inspired by him. The bond between the two philosophers had been already pointed out by Werner Beierwaltes in a 1997 study⁵⁸, but we can now add some new references from *De verbo mirifico*, that reveal the presence of the *Oratio* and of the *dignitas hominis*:

Posuit igitur hominem in medio universi, cum inferis et superis communem, qui gerat erga superos fidem, erga inferos rationem. Inter mortales ut deus per fidem, inter caelites ut homo per rationem. Inter alterutros excellens per sapientiam, parum a divinitate superatum, humanitate tamen victorem.⁵⁹

In addition, the second book recalls the hermetic apostrophe to human happiness, on the basis of Pico's text.⁶⁰ The treatise *De verbo mirifico* opens a path

⁵⁷ I refer to the partial translation by ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Fernán Pérez de Oliva, 'Dialogue on the Dignity of Man': Selections », in JILL KRAYE (ed.), *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts*, vol. I: *Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, p. 37–44, in part. fn. 11, where the translator sets the reference to Pico.

⁵⁸ WERNER BEIERWALTES, « Reuchlin und Pico della Mirandola », *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, 56 (1994), p. 313–337; see also JOSEPH DAN, « The Kabbalah of Johannes Reuchlin and Its Historical Significance », in Id. (ed.), *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and Their Christian Interpreters*, Harvard College Library, Cambridge (MA) 1997, p. 55–95.

⁵⁹ JOHANNIS REUCHLIN *Liber de verbo mirifico*, Tubingae, ex aedibus Thomae Anshelmi Badensis 1514, p. c.

⁶⁰ JOHANNIS REUCHLIN *Liber de verbo mirifico*, p. [Gvv].

from Reuchlin to Cornelius Agrippa, perhaps the most notorious alchemist and astrologer of his age.

Agrippa was inspired by Reuchlin's texts as well as by Neoplatonic and hermetic doctrines, firstly in Köln and later in his journey to Italy (1511–1518). In addition, thanks to Paola Zambelli and Vittoria Perrone Compagni, the extent to which Agrippa knew Pico's works has already been shown, as well as the ways in which Pico affected his texts, such as *De homine* (1515), *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (1516, published in 1529), *De vanitate scientiarum* (1530) and *De occulta philosophia* (1531).⁶¹ In the preface to Lucian of Samosata's *Piscator* (1517), the German humanist Willibald Pirckheimer offered a list of authors who had put together mathematics, Neoplatonism and cabala: the list included Giovanni and Giovan Francesco Pico, Wimpfeling, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Eck, Spalatin and even Luther.⁶² This fact induced Zambelli to imagine a milieu of intellectuals, connected in part to the Reformation, who shared interests in cabalistic occultism, and were inspired by Pico's texts.⁶³ To furnish support regarding such a milieu, one need simply to open Agrippa's *De homine*, which contains entire sections from Pico's *Heptaplus* concerning the doctrine of the *microcosmus*.⁶⁴

Within the context of the Reformation, the case of Zwingli – the Swiss reformer who may have had the *Oratio* in mind when writing his *Sermonis de providentia anamnema* (1539) – deserves some attention.⁶⁵ A hypothesis

⁶¹ For a general overview of the issue see PAOLA ZAMBELLI, « Cornelio Agrippa, Erasmo e la teologia umanistica », *Rinascimento*, 10 (1970), p. 29–88; VITTORIA PERRONE COMPAGNI, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa. Il 'De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum'*, Polistampa, Florence 2005 (*Hermetica medievalia*, 3), p. 14, p. 41–44; EAD., « Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim », *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2017 (2021²); EAD., « Abracadabra: le parole della magia (Ficino, Pico, Agrippa) », *Rivista di estetica*, 42 (2002), p. 105–130; EAD., « Il *De occulta philosophia* di Cornelio Agrippa. Parole chiave: uomo microcosmo, prisca theologia, cabala, magia », *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 13/2 (2007), p. 429–448. On *Dialogus de homine* see also DARIO GURASHI, *In deifico speculo. Agrippa's humanism*, Brill, Leiden 2021, p. 59–143; ID., « Religione e ideologia nel giovane Agrippa: Appunti sulla vocazione intellettuale », *Mediterranea*, 5 (2020), p. 153–192.

⁶² GARIN, « Un nuovo libro », p. 345–360, remarks that the miscellaneous MS 646 of the Erlangen University Library contains a witness of Pico's *Conclusiones* together with Lucian's *Opuscula* in the translations of More and Erasmus. Concerning Erasmus, see DE LUBAC, *L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 224–225.

⁶³ ZAMBELLI, « Cornelio Agrippa, Erasmo e la teologia umanistica », p. 43. On Desiderius Erasmus see JEAN CLAUDE MARGOLIN, « La notion de dignité humaine selon Erasme de Rotterdam », in JAMES KIRK (ed.), *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England and Scotland, 1400–1643. Essays in honour of James K. Cameron*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 1991, p. 37–56.

⁶⁴ PERRONE COMPAGNI, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, p. 41–42.

⁶⁵ Useful remarks on Pico's influence are provided by ALFRED SCHINDLER, « Zwingli's Randbemerkungen in den Büchern seiner Bibliothek. Ein Zwischenbericht über editorische Probleme », *Zwingliana*, 18 (1989), p. 1–11; ID., « Huldrych Zwingli e Giovanni Pico della Mirandola », in *Dall'Accademia neoplatonica fiorentina alla Riforma. Celebrazioni del V centenario della morte di Lorenzo il Magnifico*. Convegno di studio. Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi 30 ottobre 1992, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 1996 (*Accademia toscana di scienze e lettere 'La Colombaria'*. Studi 150) p. 51–

concerning Pico's influence on Zwingli was proposed 150 years ago by Christoph Sigwart, on the basis of the textual analysis of § 4 of the *Anamnema*:

Ulrici Zuinglii <i>Anamnema</i>	Johannis Pici <i>Oratio</i>
Hominem omnium quae in mundi theatro visuntur maxime mirabilem esse dixit Abdala Sarracenus. Nos autem, si quis interroget, omnium creaturarum rarissimum ed admirandissimum esse respondebimus, ut qui angelicam quoque pulcritudinem admiratione superet [...]. Sic angelus nobilis quidem substantia, purus puta spiritus est. At hominem si iuxta hunc expendas, non coeleste solum, sed etiam terrestre animal, quomodo te non consternabit? Cum in tanto spirituum choro nullum reperias qui terreno visibilique corpore [...] sit amictus; et simul in tanta omnigenum animantium turba nullum invenias cui intellectualis substantia praefecta sit rex ac moderator. ⁶⁶	Legi, Patres Colendissimi, in Arabum monumentis, interrogatum Abdalam sarracenum, quid in hac quasi mundana scena admirandum maxime spectaretur, nihil spectari homine mirabilius respondesse. [...] Ecquis hominem non admiretur? [...] Supercaelestem regionem mentibus decorarat; ethereos globos aeternis animis vegetarat; excrementarias et feculentas inferioris mundi partes omnigena animalium turba completrat.

Copenhaver does recall Zwingli as part of the German reception of the *Oratio*. However, although he mentions the *Anamnema*, he neither quotes any excerpt nor does he expose any of its content. He rather prefers to use the page concerning Zwingli to discuss the controversy between Christoph Sigwart and Edwar Zeller in the nineteenth century (p. 269–279): the former read Pico as a forerunner and inspiration of the Reformation, while the latter disagreed. We can all agree that Sigwart's text was partisan, but this is not the point: to reject Pico's influence on the Reformation *tout court* should not automatically imply the refutation of Pico on Zwingli. One would have expected an analysis of the texts – something that has already been carried out by Alfred Schindler – and not only of their historiographical interpretations.

Copenhaver stresses that our concept of dignity comes from Kant's definition of it (p. 4–5, p. 451). It would have been useful to explore – just as a hypothesis – whether Kant's concept of dignity itself might have, in turn, received influence

65; CARLA CALVETTI, « Presupposti e postulati filosofici nel pensiero di Zwingli », *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 49/1 (1957), p. 25–53.

66 HULDREICH ZWINGLI, *Sermonis de providentia anamnema*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Theologischer Verlag, Zürich, vol. VI, t. III (1983), p. 115–116.

from the Renaissance. Greater attention, indeed, might have been paid to the position of Descartes and Pufendorf on the human passions:

Renati Des Cartes <i>De passionibus</i>	Samuelis Pufendorffii <i>De iure naturae</i>
<p>Art. 152: <i>Propter quam causam nos aestimare possimus</i> [...] Unum duntaxat in nobis observo quod iustam causam nobis possit suppeditare nosmetipsos existimandi, nempe legitimum usum liberi nostri arbitrii et imperium, quod in nostras voluntates exercemus. Nam praeter solas actiones pendentes ex isto arbitrio, nihil est unde possimus cum ratione laudari vel vituperari, illudque nos quodammodo reddit Deo similes, nos nostri dominos faciendo, modo per ignaviam, non amittamus iura quae nobis confert.⁶⁷</p>	<p>Eleganter tradidit Carthesius <i>de passionibus</i> art. 152 segg. [...] dehinc ostendit: iustam causam nos aestimandi unicam promanare ex legitimo usu liberi arbitrii nostri et ex imperio [...]. Inde veram generositatem quae efficit ut homo re vera suum esse, praeter hancce liberam dispositionem suae voluntatis et quod ex solo istius recto aut pravo usu laudari debeat aut vituperari, quodque sentiat in se constans propositum eadem bene utendi.⁶⁸</p>

This path of inquiry may shed light on the transfer of knowledge from Renaissance dignity, as freedom, to Kant's dignity, as 'intrinsic property of value' of a being – a path which has been taken by some scholars, and that I cannot but fleetingly mention.⁶⁹

As the present essay concerns Pico's readers throughout the sixteenth century, the survey will be concluded with Zwingli. However, upon meeting Copenhaver's claims concerning Hegel's view of the Renaissance, it seems worthwhile to include some brief remarks. Copenhaver asserts that « Hegel's small interest in Renaissance philosophy reflected his theory of history, but he did not ignore the period entirely » (p. 265). This seems only partly true. It is true that Hegel (1770–1831) reserved a very small place to the Renaissance; however those references are meaningful from a systematic perspective. Thanks to some letters he addressed to Schelling, we know that from 1800, Hegel decided to focus

⁶⁷ RENATI DES CARTES *Observationes de passionibus animae*, apud Nicolaum Foersterum, Hannover 1707, p. 161–162.

⁶⁸ SAMUELIS PUFENDORFFII *De iure naturae et gentium libri octo*, Londini Scanorum, sumtibus Adami Junghans imprimebat 1672 (book III, chap. 2) p. 275.

⁶⁹ KARI SAASTAMOINEN, « Pufendorf on Natural Equality, Human Dignity, and Self-Esteem », *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71/1 (2010), p. 39–62; YASUSHI KATO, « The Heuristic Use of the Concept of Dignity in Kantian Philosophy », in YASUSHI KATO-GERHARD SCHÖNRICH (eds.), *Kant's Concept of Dignity*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2020 (Kantstudien-Ergänzungshefte, 209), p. 231–260; STEFANO BACIN, « Kant's Idea of Human Dignity: Between Tradition and Originality », *Kant-Studien*, 106 (2005), p. 7–106.

on the human operativity, which is symbolically represented by the cooperation of the hands and the head. As he maintained in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, the realm of Spirit must not be expected lazily; freedom is authentic only when concretely realized through action; and the human being is an enlivening force that moves the action.⁷⁰ According to Hegel's view, Renaissance represented the époque in which this operativity was firstly and fully realized. As Leo Lugarini remarked, « il riconoscimento della dignità dell'uomo, del suo potere di libertà, costituisce la radicale premessa filosofica per una trasformazione storico-politica altrettanto radicale ». ⁷¹ Hegel's main references all come from Renaissance authors who promoted this 'operative' idea of human power, such as Bruno and Cardano. But one excerpt is particularly meaningful, and it comes from young Hegel's diary:

Voluit [Deus] enim non deficere in rerum universi catena membrum aliquod, quod esset inter bestias, qui ferreis instincti vinculis coacti, libertate carentes, bonum an malum eligant, suo nihil consilio faciunt, et inter aethereum illud angelorum genus, qui ab omni malo alieni non nisi recta perficiunt. Relictus est igitur homini medius inter hos locus, cujus plane arbitrio datum utrum bonum an malum eligat.⁷²

Hegel wrote this marvelous passage in Latin when he was in Stuttgart. It was March 1786, he was only 15 years old, and he could have read neither Kant's *Kritik* (1790), nor *Pragmatische Anthropologie* (1798), nor Schiller's *Über Anmut und Würde* (1793). Brucker did not quote anything like this for Pico, nor did Kant in his

⁷⁰ GEORG W. F. HEGEL, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Felix Meiner, Hamburg, vol. IX, part IV (1986), p. 47, ll. 446–450: « Die Menschen sind dazu gekommen, sich frei zu wissen, ihre Freiheit anerkennen zu machen; sie sind dazu gekommen, in ihre Hände zu schauen, daß sie es waren, die für eigene Interessen, für eigenen Zwecke tätig zu sein die Kraft hatten ». See also GEORG W. F. HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, Meiner, Hamburg 1989-, vol. IX, p. 174, ll. 27–30: « Daß aber die Hand das Ansieh der Individualität in Ansehung ihres Schicksals darstellen muß, ist leicht daraus zu sehen, daß sie nächst dem Organ der Sprache am meisten es ist, wodurch der Mensch sich zur Erscheinung und Verwirklichung bringt. Sie ist der beseelte Werkmeister seines Glücks; man kann von ihm sagen, sie ist das, was der Mensch tut, denn an ihr als dem tätigen Organe seines sich selbst vollbringens ist er als beseelender gegenwärtig, und indem er ursprünglich sein eignes Schicksal ist, wird sie also dies Ansieh ausdrücken ». In this respect see MICHELE BISCIONE, « Hegel e il Rinascimento », in FULVIO TESSITORE (ed.), *Incidenza di Hegel*, Morano, Naples 1970, p. 439–451: 442.

⁷¹ LEO LUGARINI, « Hegel a Berna », in TESSITORE (ed.), *Incidenza di Hegel*, p. 29–52: 36. Cf. LUCA BURZELLI, « *Dignitas hominis* and Hegel's Anthropology », in BRADY BOWMAN, MYRIAM GERHARD, JURE ZOVKO, *Hegel-Jahrbuch. Erkenne dich selbst – Anthropologische Perspektiven*. Zweiter Teil, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 2022 (forthcoming), p. 953–960.

⁷² GEORG W.F. HEGEL, *Gesammelte Werke*, Meiner, Hamburg 1989, vol. I, p. 28, ll. 20–25.

Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (1785). Therefore, one wonders where Hegel might have taken this suggestion, so similar as it is to Pico.

VII. Final remarks

After having come to the end of this text – Copenhaver’s book, or perhaps the present note – the patient reader may have lingering concerns about this much-discussed concept of ‘dignity’: was this concept truly a Kantian idea, unduly applied to the Renaissance by twentieth-century readers? Or was it in fact an idea with a distinctive place in the Renaissance, having its own diffusion? I think that, if we want to better understand this issue, we should offer a preliminary distinction: namely, among (i) what Pico believe, (ii) the reception of his oeuvre in his age, and (iii) the ways in which contemporary readers interpret of him (i.e. the history of the critics). These three perspectives create a problematic stratification, yet they need not be confused one with another: when we criticize recent interpretations, we must not extend our conclusions in application to the previous centuries. The present note has placed emphasis on many European authors deemed essential to understanding Pico’s immediate reception: indeed, textual comparison alone could say something about Pico’s circulation, which was clearly linked to the dignity of man – two hundred years before the interpretations of Kant or the existentialists. In the sixteenth century, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was widely known for his *Cabala*, for the *concordia philosophica*, and for the *dignitas hominis*. In 1985 Garin remarked that

una certa interpretazione dell’*Oratio*, della concezione pichiana dell’uomo, e della sua filosofia, lungi dall’essere il frutto degli ‘errori’ dell’idealismo moderno, e della storiografia post-burckhardtiana, risale ai tempi di Pico [...]. Questo non significa che oggi debba essere accolta; significa che non può essere né cancellata, né ignorata.⁷³

Copenhaver’s book shares the methodological structure already present in Craven’s monograph: they both are ‘studies on historiography’ and provide no new global interpretations of Pico – an accomplishment which would have required a more detailed textual analysis.⁷⁴ The volume is focused on the modern and contemporary interpretations and it nearly leaves the Renaissance in the shadow (except for a very few cases). A cursory overview on its contents and the

⁷³ GARIN, « Un nuovo libro », p. 350.

⁷⁴ See, for example, GARIN, « Un nuovo libro », p. 344: « quello che il Craven vuol significare [...] è che egli intende fare opera di storia della storiografia – o, come una volta si diceva da noi, di storia della critica. E questo perché, per una nuova sintesi avrebbe avuto ‘bisogno di un retroterra di edizioni critiche [...]’ ».

thematic index reveals this tendency very clearly. After presenting Pico's family and the Florentine context, the book proceeds as follows:

p. 24-31: Kant's dignity	p. 71-91: Burckhardt
p. 31-34: Manetti's dignity	p. 92-127: Papini, Gentile, Garin, Anagnine.
p. 34-38: Cicero's dignity	p. 128-158: Garin, Sartre.
p. 38-45: Medieval Christian authors	p. 159-199: G.F. Pico, More, Ficino, Giovio, Moore.
p. 45-55: Manetti again	p. 200-275: Modern reception.
p. 55-68: Actuality (Trollope, Skinner...)	p. 276-310: Contemporary literature

Copenhaver begins the exposition with Kant's concept of dignity (p. 24–31) and he points out that this paradigm was unduly applied on Pico by twentieth-century scholars (from Burckhardt to Garin). What about the Renaissance *per se*? Only a few remarks are dedicated to Giovan Francesco Pico, Giovio, or Thomas More inside the space of forty pages: but what about the rest of the European Renaissance? It is safe to assume that none of the Renaissance thinkers treated here above (viz., Pomponazzi, Gelli, Zorzi, Bovelles, Vives, Zwingli) had Kantian or existentialistic paradigms in mind: yet, they all defined and conceived of human dignity through Pico's *Oratio*.

Another interesting point to consider is the argument that, once one proves that twentieth-century interpreters were wrong, then one may also conclude that Pico did not write about human dignity. Burckhardt, Cassirer, and Garin might have been wrong, but what implications then follow for Pico? Copenhaver is right when he says that the twentieth-century idea of *dignitas hominis* derives from Kant and Existentialism, and has no basis within Pico's texts. Yet, we also have to ask whether or not Pico had his own particular concept of *dignitas*. As Charles Trinkhaus pointed out, « the question of 'man' however, was a central patristic, medieval, and Renaissance concern, whether or not Burckhardt featured it as exclusively Renaissance ». ⁷⁵ To contest the twentieth-century idea of *dignitas* means to hit Garin's interpretation – not an uncommon practice, of which Craven was the torchbearer. ⁷⁶ This does not, however, allow a total rejection of the concept of *dignitas* for Pico: perhaps, rather, one must consider dignity in a new way, *iuxta propria principia*. De Lubac and Di Napoli perfectly understood this difference: they were the first who challenged the existentialistic

⁷⁵ CHARLES TRINKHAUS, « Review of *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Symbol of His Age*, by W. Craven », *Speculum*, 59/1 (1984), p. 133–137: 136.

⁷⁶ This was recently remarked by MASSIMO CACCIARI, « Ripensare l'Umanesimo », in RAPHAEL EBGI (ed.), *Umanisti italiani. Pensiero e destino*, Einaudi, Turin 2016 (I Millenni), p. VII–CI: VII–VIII. In this respect, it might be worth mentioning that Copenhaver's book includes a some pages (p. 128–132) on Garin's politics, especially his connection with Fascism.

readings and who warned against misinterpretations of the text, but they never dreamed of contesting the presence of dignity.⁷⁷

Copenhaver often remarks that there is no page of Pico where we can find a celebration of man as a self-subsistent creature without any reference to divine grace; therefore, we cannot speak about dignity of man *as such* but rather about the ‘transcendence’ of the human condition or its annihilation (p. 30–31, p. 118, p. 123, p. 451). One might ask, however, which Renaissance philosopher ever celebrated the autonomy of man *as such*, as self-subsistent.⁷⁸ Lorenzo Valla described human nobility through the metaphor of a meeting between man-God and god-man in Paradise; Cusanus mixed philosophy and mysticism writing about the Paradise-wall; Bruno described God and man as Diana with Acteon.⁷⁹ There is no Renaissance author who spoke about the nobility of man *as such*; they all celebrated dignity as freedom of movement, but this movement always had a clear direction – Garin already remarked on this in his 1938 essay on *dignitas hominis* and patristic tradition.⁸⁰ Pico himself spoke about dignity as freedom directed to God in his *Commento sopra una canzone d’amore*. Writing about the fifth stanza, Pico noted that « l’anima sopra il corpo prostrata, mai in se non dirizza et in se stessa rivolgendosi, e sua thesori non riconosce; ma come dice Asaph, essendo in dignità et honore posta, non si conosce et diventa simile a bruti insipienti ».⁸¹ A few lines later, he wrote about the path of the intellectual soul towards divine fusion: *Binsica*, which means ‘death by kiss’, requires God’s

⁷⁷ DE LUBAC, *L’alba incompiuta del Rinascimento*, p. 51–53. Likewise, LEINKAUF, « The Structure and the Implications of Giovanni Pico’s Famous *Oratio* », p. 925: « So the question mark, that Brian Copenhaver has put at the end of his phrase ‘on the dignity of man’, is to be cancelled and to be substituted by an exclamation mark: ‘on the dignity of man!’ ».

⁷⁸ Cf. TRINKHAUS, « Review of *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* », p. 135.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the end of LORENZO VALLA, *De vero falsoque bono*, III, xxv, 22, in ID., *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, ed. G. RADETTI, Sansoni, Florence 1953, p. 242–243; GIORDANO BRUNO, *Degli eroici furori, parte prima*, IV, in ID., *Opere italiane*, 2 vol., ed. GIOVANNI AQUILECCHIA, Utet, Turin 2002, vol. II, p. 578.

⁸⁰ This has been clearly remarked by EUGENIO GARIN, « La *dignitas hominis* e la letteratura patristica », in ID., *Interpretazioni del Rinascimento*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 2009 (Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 250), vol. I, p. 1–32; as well as ID., *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Vita e dottrina*, Le Monnier, Florence 1937 [reprinted by Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 2011 (Uomini e Dottrine, 5)], p. 206–208. See also FRANCO BACCHELLI, *Giovanni Pico e Pierleone da Spoleto. Tra filosofia dell’amore e tradizione cabalistica*, Leo S. Olschki, Firenze 2001 (Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento. Quaderni di «Rinascimento», 39), p. 58: « è in fondo uno dei tanti modi – sia che questa visione si articoli su una base astrologica oppure religioso-provvidenziale – nel quale si pensa, in questa età, la centralità e la ‘*dignitas et excellentia*’ dell’opera umana per la vita del mondo ». Useful remarks have been provided by CACCIARI, « Ripensare l’Umanesimo », p. LXXI–LXXII; RAPHAEL EBGI, « Introduzione », in GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *La dignità dell’uomo*, p. XX–XXII, in part. fn. 23; LEINKAUF, « The Structure and the Implications of Giovanni Pico’s Famous *Oratio* », p. 924.

⁸¹ JOHANNIS PICI *Commento*, p. 920.

correspondence through grace.⁸² Bruno employed the same cabalistic concept in his *Eroici furori*.

Copenhaver seems surprised that he did not find in Pico what could not possibly have been there: namely, Kant's or Schiller's idea of dignity as 'autonomy from the phenomenon'.⁸³ Such a position sheds lights on the Kantian influences on literature concerning Pico: a perspective that – as Grafton and Hankins have pointed out – in American academia owes its widespread diffusion to Kristeller (and Baron).⁸⁴ Despite his criticisms of Garin's position – which Garin himself deliberately never printed again –, sometimes Copenhaver seems to think of the Renaissance through the same categories. An example of this can be found where he observes that

deification so conceived, the goal promoted by Pico's speech, eliminates humanity – along with any merely human trait like dignity, though dignity was not the prince's concern. [...] His project in the *Oration*, often misunderstood as a proto-romantic individualism that aggrandizes the human self, actually liquidates it (p. 361).

This remark is valid only if we hold the Kantian notion of dignity, but it does not consider the possibility that we can admit one that is not Kantian self-subsistence and is more proper to Pico: as Garin noted in 1937, « è Dio che rende possibile la *copulatio* con Dio [...]. La dignità dell'uomo è la sua divinità ». ⁸⁵

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, Brian Copenhaver's imposing volume offers the opportunity to rethink the scholarship on Pico, in order to understand and control the hermeneutical stratifications that occurred through the centuries. Copenhaver has the merit of stressing the difference between the fifteenth-century Pico and the twentieth-century one, the latter filtered through the lens of post-Kantian and existentialist presuppositions. What the reader might find lacking in his book is what precisely lies in between those two junctures: namely, the line of Pico's

⁸² JOHANNIS PICI *Commento*, p. 917. On this topic see the useful remarks by LEINKAUF, « The Structure and the Implications of Giovanni Pico's Famous *Oratio* », p. 920.

⁸³ Cf. FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, *Über Anmut und Würde*, in ID., *Sämtliche Werke in 4 Bänden*, Cotta, Stuttgart 1883, vol. IV, p. 486. See also SERGIO LANDUCCI, « L'operare umano e la genesi dello spirito in Hegel », *Rivista critica di Storia della filosofia*, 20 (1965), p. 16–50 and 151–181: 48.

⁸⁴ In this respect see HANKINS, « Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller », p. 490. This American circulation has been clearly highlighted by GRAFTON, « Thinking Outside the 'Pico Box' »: « Even Kristeller, a master philologist and historian, presented Pico in partly anachronistic terms in his introduction to the translation of the oration that generations of English-speaking students have read. The conventional wisdom ruled for generations ».

⁸⁵ GARIN, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*, p. 208.

readers during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who were all void of Kantian and existentialist attitudes, yet were all sincerely interested in the topic of human dignity. At p. 4, the author says that James Hankins suggested to him « to take the investigation back to Italy », and thus Copenhaver analyzed Pico's fortune from the *Risorgimento* up to the present. Perhaps Hankins intended to go back to Renaissance-Italy. This volume is an amazing attempt to digest the many modern interpretations of Pico's *Oratio*, in line with what Craven did some decades ago against Garin and Cassirer. All this considered, however, very little Renaissance remains, with the exception of a wide range of cabalistic references within the commentary of the *Oratio*. The present note has shown that Reuchlin, Agrippa, Vives, Bovelles, Pomponazzi, Zwingli, Gelli all knew and quoted Pico concerning dignity.⁸⁶ With these Renaissance philosophers in mind, upon completing Copenhaver's book we might recall that famous *motto*: a specter is haunting Europe – the specter of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

⁸⁶ In this respect, one should partly reconsidered what Copenhaver states in his introduction to PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oratio*, p. XXXIX: « Moreover, no loyal Catholic – had such ideas [of dignity] been available at the time – could have accepted the moral autonomy and self-legislating freedom theorized by Kant, or even religious freedom from the Law as Luther would proclaim it ». As a matter of fact, the crux of the matter is not the loyalty to Catholicism or the influence of Kant: neither Pomponazzi nor Agrippa and the other philosophers were exactly 'loyal' catholic – and Pico himself, with his kabbalistic hybrids, was far from a saint –; neither, they read Kant. However, they all talked about dignity by quoting Pico. Hence, the real point is to understand why and how Pico, just twenty years after his death, was well known for the issue of dignity.