
COLLOQUIA

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Παιδεία and *humanitas* in Cicero's Instruction

Summary

This text expands on the essence of Cicero's humanistic pedagogy. The article consists of four parts: the introduction focuses on pedagogical connotation of the *humanitas* concept and connection of this term to the Greek φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία found in Cicero, the following two parts are devoted to Cicero's own analysis of the features of *humanitas* as regards the process and result of education and the concluding part emphasises the point that Cicero himself used the word *humanitas* to describe an education-based life practice of an individual. The research was carried out with financial support of The Russian Foundation for Basic Research' grant (project 16-06-00004a).

Key words: paideia, *humanitas*, Cicero, evolution of humanistic ideals

Paul Veyne begins his renowned work *Humanitas: romani e no* with a peculiar address of the reader, calling on him not to be alarmed, since the author is not any less sceptical about the term *humanitas*. From the time it first appeared, this word has been shrouded more with misconception than scepticism. Owing to Marcus Tullius Cicero, there has been formed a wide spectrum of its meanings linked to numerous modern definitions of humanism and humaneness, as he always showed interest in what was understood by *humana* (human deeds, interests, lives and weaknesses) in the context of the whole Rome. His original ideas about *humanitas* being the basis of the Roman Empire, which grew in power partly due to education of its citizens, laid the foundation of the Western pedagogical tradition, and for many centuries to follow was tied to the phrase "humanistic pedagogy".

Cicero happened to live during the epoch known for its controversy, with the fever pitch brought about mainly by annexation of Greek polises to the Roman Empire. Having enjoyed the company of Greek scholars from his youth (Plut. Cic. 3), Cicero as no other understood that such forced integration could not leave the sphere of Roman education unaffected. In his many works he strived to define the context of the establishment of a Roman citizen – a peculiar setting where there were two languages (Greek and Latin), two types of law (coming from Greek and Roman gods) and two conceptions of education and culture (Greek παιδεία and Roman *humanitas*). Renato Oniga (2009) stresses the frequency with which Cicero used the word *humanitas*, 229 times out of the total of 463 times found in the corpus of the Latin classics. Cicero's contribution to the development of this concept is so great that one can speak of Cicero's *humanitas* as being on a par with the general notion of Roman *humanitas*.

In his writings, speeches and personal letters, Cicero highlights its key points and puts *humanitas* in various contexts. His humanistic pedagogy was formed at the time of problematic relations between παιδεία and *humanitas*, which are barely comparable one to another and to the modern notions of upbringing, education and culture. Παιδεία and *humanitas* pertained to a wide spectrum of issues about harmonious integration of the self with the political, economic and intellectual life of the Greek polises and then later on at the dawn of the Roman Empire. The starting point for pedagogical juxtaposition of παιδεία and *humanitas* (c.f. Jaeger 1946; Marrou 1964; Oniga 2009; Domański 2003) was part of the outlines of Aulus Gellius' work, "Attic Nights". He claimed that those who spoke pure Latin knew that the Greek φιλάνθρωπία and παιδεία corresponded to the Latin *humanitas*. In this regard, we have Aulus Gellius' well-known saying reflecting his reasoning that "they gave to *humanitas* about the force of the Greek παιδεία" (Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, 13.17.1, John C. Rolfe's transl.). The modern reader cannot disregard the word "about", which clearly implies their not being identical. In this instance Gellius makes use of the word *propemodum* (nearly) letting his reader know that there was no word in Greek equivalent to *humanitas*, much like there was not a Latin word analogous to παιδεία. Cicero played but last role in making these two words close enough to relate them through the word "about" or "nearly". He was not suggesting an original pedagogical system named *humanitas*, but rather modifying the extant Greek παιδεία, making it understandable and acceptable for the Romans. Being a conservative reformer, Cicero set the tone to the epoch of humanistic pedagogy which was yet to make a name for itself.

Having undertaken the labour of assuaging doubts of his fellow countrymen regarding *humanitas*, Aulus Gellius pointed out that accurate usage of this word is found in the works of Varro and Cicero, both of whom described educated people. Perhaps, Gellius refers to Varro merely for the sake of brevity. By a twist of fate, Varro's *De liberis educandis* has been lost, which makes it impossible to argue about the extent of his contribution to the establishment of humanistic pedagogy, unlike Cicero, whose contribution is undeniable, though he had not written a single work on pedagogy. Defining a truly humane education by the term *humanitas* had become Cicero's pedagogical breakthrough which was repeatedly rediscovered in other epochs, cultures and languages. In his works on different subject matters, speeches and letters, Cicero used *humanitas* in a fairly wide range of meanings, including both connotations stressed in Gellius' outlines. In particular, Cicero put side by side or even combined much earlier notions of *humanitas*, which were linked to the Greek φιλανθρωπία, with a later concept which referred to the Greek παιδεία. His *humanitas* implied education, civilised society, human nature, good manners, kindness and more. In a purely pedagogical sense, his *humanitas* relates to the result of receiving education (some form of educational and social norm on a global scale of Empire) or to the individual educational process (strictly personal path to virtues and integrity).

Cicero's *humanitas* – the result of receiving education

Beginning his work on history of old Greek pedagogy with an address of Aulus Gellius, Werner Jaeger claims that the Greek παιδεία was perceived by a Roman citizen as the ideal and was merely renamed as *humanitas* (Jaeger 1946: XXIII). Oniga, on the contrary, stresses that *humanitas* was slowly 'maturing' throughout the process of transition from Greek to Roman civilisation. In fact, referring to Wolfgang Schadewaldt, he calls *humanitas* another way of prioritising the system of values included in the codex of conduct of a Roman (Oniga 2009).

Much is said about *humanitas* at the beginning of Caesar's "Gallic War", where he regretfully describes the nations that live afar from "the civilization and refinement of [our] Province" (C. Julius Caesar, *Caesar's Gallic War* I.1, McDevitte's transl.). Elected by gods, the Romans saw their own mission in creating a civilisation which would unite the nations and introduce them to such civilised and refined life. However, all but the Greeks fitted in with that strategy, since even the most ambitious Romans had no doubt that this particular

nation was not far from such life. The very Greek word φιλανθρωπία, though characteristic of humanitarianism, clemency and benevolence of Romans-the-victors, was no longer suitable when it came to describing such a peculiar defeated nation as the Greeks.

Having understood that Roman educational mentorship over the Greeks would seem odd to say the least, Cicero slightly modifies the Roman codex of conduct by suggesting not to go as far as being lenient and benevolent to the Greeks, but rather simply remain friendly and respectful. This exact point is stressed by Harold Guite (1962), as he saw the reasons for Cicero's ambiguous assessment of Greek legacy in that he himself was not really devoted, but merely friendly towards Greek culture and education. The Greek φιλανθρωπία appears to have been reflected in Cicero's *humanitas* through the two stem-words, φιλέλλην and φιλέλληνες. The only time Cicero ever used the word φιλέλλην was in his speech in defence of poet Archias: "(...) Greek poetry is read among all nations, Latin is confined to its own natural limits, which are narrow enough" (Cic. Arch. IX.23, Yonge's transl.). It is clear that this remark goes far beyond ascertaining the achievements of Greek culture and education. In this case, φιλέλλην marks the delicate confession of a Roman of his love for Greek culture and education. This word is alluded to by φιλέλληνες in one of the letters to his friend Attic: "Now then, considering how desirous of a good reputation he and I have ever been, and how unusually Philhellenic we are and have the reputation of being, and considering how many there are whose enmity we have incurred for the sake of the Republic, 'call to mind all your valour,' to secure us the praise and affection of all concerned" (Cic. Att. I.15, Shuckburgh's transl.). Constantly correlating the Greek and Roman mentality, Cicero managed to instil in *humanitas* the sense of universality, postulating the achievement of education and civility norms to be the greatest virtue. Cicero's humanistic pedagogy was a powerful force that united people. The power which, as no other, helped the Rome to fulfil its great civilising mission.

The Roman meaning of *humanitas* is undoubtedly much wider and cannot be narrowed down to Cicero's *humanitas*. However, striving to achieve a high educational level for his citizens, Cicero in many respects was "a model as well as a conveyor of models" (Niegorski 2013: 3) which laid the foundation of Roman educational ideology. Though Cicero was not a mentor in the traditional sense and devised fairly contradictory conduct strategies of an educated man, he nevertheless managed to identify reference points for correlating the Greek and Roman pedagogical traditions and evaluating their contribution to the

establishment of the educated-citizen model. Aspiration to combine the experience of courtroom speech formulation with pedagogic speculations was enforced in Cicero's works, and in his later writings more and more often took on the form of instruction. It could be likened to universal dispositions which, in his opinion, were conducive to learning the proper conduct of a philosopher, orator, statesman and private citizen. The intended audience was quite diverse: from senators and state officials to the young people who had just finished school. On the one hand, there are many reasons for such a wide range of the target audience. On the other hand, it explains a great deal in view of Henri-Irénée Marrou's arguments, where he justifies the transformation of παιδεία into *humanitas*. Although παιδεία is derived from παις, it ought to be rendered as a treatment intended for a child to bring him up (Marrou 1964). According to Marrou, Romans were able to recognise that and thus, along with Varro and Cicero, interpreted παιδεία as *humanitas*. In this case, it is about translating not so much the form, but the content, since to Cicero *humanitas* represented the educational and civility norm expected not of a child but of an adult, in order to have him quit being a child.

In his treatise *De officiis*, Cicero considers his efforts in introducing the Romans to Greek heritage as his educational mission: "Therefore, amid all the present most awful calamities I yet flatter myself that I have won this good out of evil – that I may commit to written form matters not at all familiar to our countrymen but still very much worth their knowing" (Cic. Off. II.5, Miller's transl.). Being peculiar to Cicero-philosopher, Cicero-orator and Cicero-politician, such friendly disposition in popularising Greek legacy was most prominent in Cicero-mentor and Cicero-interpreter. Cicero succeeded in doing more than to simply establish *humanitas* as an adequate Latin equivalent of παιδεία, which allowed one to regard a man as a being educated and civilised. In fact, he managed to fill *humanitas* with profound pedagogical sense, reflecting the Roman specificity of social and governmental order, while at the same time preserving the connection to traditional Greek views of a man as a mentor (as well as the one being a mentor for himself) and a mentee.

***Humanitas* of Cicero as a way to virtue**

As was mentioned before, Aulus Gellius pointed out that Cicero's contemporary, Varro, also used *humanitas*. In his *Satire Menippeae*, Varro refers to the

Greek philosopher Cleanthes with a bit of irony: he was so handsome, brave and honest that he could be made a model of a real man (Varro, Sat. Menipp. 245). The figure of such a man, depicted by Varro, sharply contrasts the one portrayed by Cicero, where he is not so much made a perfect example of a man of virtue, but merely strives with all his might to achieve it. In his many works, Cicero argued that a man cannot be forced but taught to attain to virtue. Reproaching the uneducated (*sine humanitate*), Cicero stressed that one ought to make every effort to gain virtue and rightfully take pride in achieving it (Cic. Ver. IV.98).

Cicero's *humanitas* may be ascribed some characteristics given by modern scholars to *παιδεία*: the relentless pursuit of perfection (Anderson 1966), self-establishment through culture (Rogers 2005), etc. In addition to the static view of *humanitas*, Cicero was interested in its dynamic aspect. In other words, he was thinking about why some people see their life as a way to gain virtue, while others do not. For a Roman and a Greek alike, the renown regarding their valour had to rest upon their eminence in virtue, though for them the extent of the meaning of the term was not the same.

Greek educational ideals were linked to virtue through *ἀρετή*, whereas the Roman ones through *virtus*. *Ἀρετή* became *virtus* when it was put alongside with rewards, wealth and spoils of war. For a Roman with plenty of victories behind him, in his battling the lack of education, virtue was earned by means of courage, valour, fortitude and resolution. As opposed to the concept of *ἀρετή*, *virtus* (derived from *vir* – a man) implied rather more than spiritual riches of an educated man. It incorporated not only the traits of a perfectly upright man, but also his actions to back them up. On the one hand, for both a Roman and a Greek, it was equally important to attain to virtue, the characteristic of moral excellence. On the other hand, the virtue of Roman-the-vanquisher and the virtue of Greek-the-vanquished were clearly not one and the same. In Cicero's works the Roman laws which allowed to exercise the victor's right (*rationem victoriae*) were coupled with the laws of the heart which impelled one to either take or refrain from the action by the right of humaneness (*rationem humanitatis*) (Cic. Ver. IV.120–121, Peterson's transl.). As he daily faced the relentless pursuit of money for the sake of money, glory for the sake of glory, eloquence for the sake of eloquence – all that exasperated poignant enough controversy between ideal norm and reality – Cicero, as no other, understood how important it was to find the ways to devise a form of education adequate for human nature.

In his *Letter on Humanism*, Martin Heidegger says that *humanitas* was formed when there emerged a Roman who perfected and dignified *virtus* by assimilating

παιδεία adopted from the Greeks (Heidegger 1977: 244). This process was fairly complex and Cicero strived to simplify it for his contemporaries as much as possible. In view of hardship due to ongoing civil wars, in his works there for the first time appeared an idea that *humanitas* is a principle of self-education. The rationale behind it being the ability to honourably cope with any situation to benefit the state and to endure the times of affliction for the sake of preserving oneself for the future good of other citizens.

Humanistic pedagogy for others and for oneself

For the first time, Cicero utters the word *humanitas* in defence of the Greek poet Archias in 62 BC to demonstrate that ἀρετή and *virtus* are not that much different. Here Cicero tries to make a point about studying humanities, in which his defendant and he himself were involved. In Cicero's opinion, it is obvious that charges against the humanities scholar are unsubstantiated, since Archias was recognised by the Greeks and the Romans alike. Cicero speaks of him as of someone for whom *humanitas* is a life strategy bolstered by education. In 44 BC in his last tractate *De officiis* dedicated to his son Mark, who was being educated in Athens, Cicero keeps insisting on this very meaning of *humanitas*. In this case, it becomes a new kind of παιδεία addressing the moral character of a particular individual. He desires to draw his son's attention to the fact that life is but the practice of *humanitas* based on wisdom, justice, moderation and generosity – the virtues which later on laid the foundation of Western humanistic tradition. To a great extent, it was due to Cicero, that there emerged a humanistic pedagogy intended for everyone who went beyond mere recognition of his human nature and saw education as a way of realising his own humaneness.

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