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Pagan *Humanitas* in the Imperial Age.

From Pliny the Younger to Symmachus.

by

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics and Ancient History**

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Declaration

The author states that this thesis is their own work. The author also confirms that this thesis, or any part of it, has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis investigates one of the most polysemic Latin words I know of, *humanitas*, and, subordinately, the adjective from which it derives, *humanus*. While the first chapter briefly retraces the history of *humanitas* from its origins, the thesis as a whole focuses on the uses of these two words in the most important pagan literary texts from the Trajanic (late first century CE) to the Theodosian age (late fourth century CE). My aim is to explore the extent to which the different meanings usually attributed to *humanitas* by dictionaries (roughly ‘human nature’, ‘education and culture’, ‘philanthropy’) are much more nuanced and in ever-evolving relation with one another, and how the use of *humanitas* by some authors often performs clear rhetorical and/or ideological strategies. My thesis is therefore not only a lexicographical study, but pays careful attention to the wider historical and cultural contexts in which *humanitas* was used. In this respect, the study of the evolution of the word provides new and interesting insight into wider issues of authorship, political and social changes, as well as ideological appropriations. More specifically, the use of *humanitas* reveals the ways in which Roman authors considered themes that were at the core of their conception of culture and civilisation, such as the relationship between being learned and behaving morally, the ideas of moral nobility and clemency, the notion that a value concept can distinguish a category of men from another, or even an historical period from another. These themes, which remain central to later periods—from the Middle Ages to the present day—are crucial to understanding how a civilisation constructed itself and changed over time.

Abbreviations

- L&S* C.T. Lewis, C. Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, New York – Oxford 1991.
- LSJ* *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir H.S. Jones [...], Oxford 1996.
- OLD* *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1968.
- PLRE I* A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, Vol. I, A.D. 260-395, Cambridge 1971.
- PLRE II* J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, Vol. II, A.D. 395-527, Cambridge 1980.
- TLL* *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* editus auctoritate et consilio Academiarum quinque Germanicarum Berolinensis, Gottingensis, Lipsiensis, Monacensis, Vindobonensis, voll. I-..., Leipzig 1900... (also available online).

Names and titles of works of ancient authors are abbreviated according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and the *Greek-English Lexicon* by Liddell – Scott – Jones.

Reference Editions

- | | |
|--|--|
| Ammianus, <i>Rerum gestarum libri</i> . | Ammiani Marcellini <i>Rerum Gestarum libri qui supersunt</i> . Ed. W. Seyfarth, Leipzig 1978. |
| Apuleius, <i>Apologia</i> . | Apulei Platonici Madaurensis <i>Opera quae supersunt</i> vol. II fasc. I: <i>Apologia</i> . Rec. R. Helm, Stutgardiae et Lipsiae 1959. |
| Apuleius, <i>De Platone et eius dogmate</i> . | Apulei Platonici Madaurensis <i>Opera quae supersunt</i> vol. III. <i>De philosophia libri</i> . Ed. C. Moreschini, Stutgardiae et Lipsiae 1991. |
| Apuleius, <i>Metamorphoses</i> . | Apulei <i>Metamorphoseon libri XI</i> , rec. [...] M. Zimmerman, Oxonii 2012. |
| Eumenius, <i>Oratio pro instaurandis scholis</i> . | <i>XII Panegyrici Latini</i> , rec. [...] R.A.B. Mynors, Oxonii 1964. |

Fronto, <i>Epistulae</i> .	M. Cornelii Frontonis <i>Epistulae</i> [...] ed. M.P.J. van den Hout, Leipzig 1988.
Gellius, <i>Noctes Atticae</i> .	A. Gellii <i>Noctes Atticae</i> , rec. [...] P.K. Marshall, Oxonii 1968.
Pliny the Younger, <i>Epistulae</i> .	C. Plinii Secundi <i>Epistularum libri decem</i> , rec. [...] R.A.B. Mynors, Oxonii 1966 ² .
Pliny the Younger, <i>Panegyricus</i> .	<i>XII Panegyrici Latini</i> , rec. [...] R.A.B. Mynors, Oxonii 1964.
Suetonius, <i>De vita Caesarum</i> .	C. Svetoni Tranquilli <i>De vita Caesarum libros VIII et De grammaticis et rhetoribus librum</i> rec. [...] R.A. Kaster, Oxonii 2016.
Symmachus, <i>Epistulae</i> .	Symmaque, <i>Lettres</i> , texte établi, traduit et commenté par J.-P. Callu, voll. I-IV, Paris 1972-2002.
Symmachus, <i>Orationes and Relationes</i> .	Symmaque, <i>Discours – Rapports</i> , texte établi, traduit et commenté par J.-P. Callu, Paris 2009.
Tacitus, <i>Agricola and Germania</i> .	Cornelii Taciti <i>Opera minora</i> , rec. [...] M. Winterbottom et R.M. Ogilvie, Oxonii 1975.

The editions of other Latin and Greek texts which I have referred to only rarely are those available in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TGL online), *PHI Latin Texts* (online) and *DigilibLT* (online).

Introduction

Probably because its modern derivatives like humanism, humanities, and humanitarian play an important role in today's society, the debate over Latin *humanitas* is more alive than ever in contemporary scholarship.¹ Most, not to say all, studies follow along the lines traced out by 20th-century scholarship, investigating the origins and the meanings of *humanitas*, usually in authors until the first century CE, Terence, Cicero and Seneca above all. The first issue ultimately divides supporters of the Greek from supporters of the Roman origin of *humanitas*: I shall deal with this aspect in a later section of this thesis, while I postpone the discussion of the role of *humanitas* in single republican and early-imperial authors to Chapter 1.

First, I want to focus on some problems of definition. *Humanitas* is a problematic word, because it does not have a direct equivalent in modern languages and is often a concept onto which scholars project their own understanding of what 'human' and 'educated' might mean. In addition, many studies have been criticised for their 'tired repetitiveness'.² It is also difficult to find firm points of reference in the existing scholarship, both in terms of methodology and concrete results. A strict philological approach, which is epitomised in dictionary entries, has led to the division of *humanitas* into different clusters of meanings. The partition I prefer, and find more convenient despite Balbo's objection of oversimplification,³ can be found in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* entry, and distinguishes three main semantic areas: 1) human nature or character; 2) the quality distinguishing civilised man from savages or beasts, civilisation, culture; 3) humane character, kindness, human feeling.⁴ While it lacks the higher degree of detail found in the *TLL* or *L&S*,⁵ the *OLD* approach has the merit of following in the

¹ Prost (2006), Stroh (2008), Høgel (2015), Vesperini (2015), Sola (2016) are the most recent contributions in this field to take the cue from, or refer to, the importance of modern derivatives of *humanitas*.

² Narducci (1981), 179.

³ Balbo (2012), 67 does not go too much into detail, but stresses that in this partition the semantic complexity of *humanitas* is "dumbed down" as the entry "sticks to generalities".

⁴ For an overview of the other dictionary-styled entries on *humanitas* cf. Balbo (2012), 65-69.

⁵ The *TLL* entry (6.3.3075.5-3083.56) distinguishes between a general and an emphatic meaning of *humanitas*. The general meaning is in turn divided into human nature, human shape, mankind and also includes instances in which *humanitas* is used as a synonym of the adjective *humanus*. The emphatic meaning links *humanitas* to other concepts of value like *prudentia*, *dignitas*, *honestas*, *elegantia*, *comitas*,

footsteps of a native speaker of Latin like Aulus Gellius, who was the first to raise the problem of defining *humanitas* in the second century CE.⁶ On the basis of this or analogous categorisations, many studies have sought to fix the exact meaning of *humanitas* on case-by-case criteria, often focusing on a single author.⁷ Yet as early as 1947, Pohlenz suggested in passing that *humanitas* was to be taken as the sum of those definitions which form points 2 and 3 of the *OLD* entry, and which Gellius, resorting to Greek values, referred to as *παιδεία* and *φιλανθρωπία* respectively.⁸ The potential implications of this statement were long neglected or underestimated, until Stroh reformulated this principle, arguing that the idea of *φιλανθρωπία* originated from that of *παιδεία*: in short, being benevolent towards other fellow human beings is (or can be) a consequence of being learned, and education is ultimately useless unless it contributes to moral improvement.⁹ Unfortunately, Stroh has thus far been as neglected as Pohlenz, and the most recent studies on *humanitas* either cite him in relation to other aspects or, more often, do not cite him at all.¹⁰ Yet, as I will suggest in this thesis, a possible solution to understanding the intricate nature of *humanitas* should take the cue from, and expand on, their intuitions.

Veyne sums up what has induced *humanitas*-scholarship to try to pigeonhole occurrences of this word: “The reader can rest assured that I am as leery as he or she of the word *humanitas*. The term is both vague and laudatory”.¹¹ What has always disturbed scholars, whether or not they declare it, is the same aspect which has always fascinated them, the polysemy of *humanitas*, which easily results in vagueness and ambiguity. As a result, many scholars have felt the need to ‘overcome’ the vagueness of the word by forcing it into rigid meanings, which are themselves ideologically charged. Yet, as I will show, such a strategy leads to results that are inconclusive, for the vagueness of *humanitas* cannot simply be resolved and several Latin authors themselves purposely exploited the

clementia, benignitas, but also *eruditio, doctrina, urbanitas* and, more generally, to the idea of civilisation. *L&S*'s entry is very close to the *TLL*'s.

⁶ On *humanitas* in Gellius cf. below, Chapter 3.2, pp. 118-132.

⁷ Without aiming at (impossible) completeness, I think of works such as Mayer (1951), Lipps (1967), Rieks (1967) or Schadewaldt (1973). Further examples will emerge in the next chapters.

⁸ Pohlenz (1947), 451. Cf. also Snell (1953²), 249-255.

⁹ Stroh (2008).

¹⁰ Elice (2017), 264 only quotes Stroh (2008) with regard to the role of the Scipionic Circle in founding the idea of *humanitas*; Høgel (2015) and Vesperini (2015) seem to ignore him altogether.

¹¹ Veyne (1993), 342.

polysemy of this word. Let me return to the *OLD* entry and imagine putting it under a microscope which can zoom either in or out. When we magnify our subject, which is what scholars usually do, it will be clear that *humanitas* is about being human and possessing the qualities which make human beings worthy of being so called, qualities which can be acquired through education and lead to the (modern) ideas of culture and civilisation. What such an education and culture consist in is likely to depend on historical period and socio-political condition, or else on the subjectivity of any single person, but one might think of literature, the so-called liberal arts in general, religion, law, and possibly many others. Moreover, there is the third aspect of *humanitas*, that which relates to kindness, and which can materialise in hospitality, generosity, clemency, or, more simply, sympathy towards ‘the other’, whether a foreigner, enemy, or a lower-, equal- or higher-ranked person.

Yet we should also zoom out and avoid considering those three main meanings as compartmentalised. What emerges is that this strikingly broad spectrum of meanings originates from one and the same word. My objective is to attempt to understand how and to what extent these meanings relate to one another, and to ask whether it might be more effective to consider that these various meanings can at times be simultaneously present in occurrences of the word *humanitas*. Zooming out is to take distance from the case-by-case perspective and adopt the work-by-work or author-by-author approach. This does not simply mean focusing on single authors only – there would be nothing new in this respect – but rather to understand whether and when there is a logic behind the use of *humanitas* in a given work, and whether such a use responds to a specific purpose, or produces certain effects. This change of tack turns out to be crucial, for it reveals the rhetorical strategies which underpin most authors’ use of this word. More precisely, the main result of this approach is to show that the authors under investigation tend to use the word *humanitas* to unite as well as to differentiate between different categories of people, as might be implicitly suggested by the second *OLD* definition of *humanitas* (‘the quality distinguishing civilised man from savages’), especially if we bear in mind that the Roman upper classes usually regarded themselves as the ‘true men’. It is important to remark straight away that these categories are not fixed, but depend on the situation, the cultural climate, and the specific aims of the writer.

The need to investigate *humanitas* as a nexus of interrelated connotations that relate to important cultural-political discourses seems to me to pertain especially to the main pagan authors of the imperial period, from the Trajanic until the Theodosian age.

As we will see, most of these authors have generally been neglected in scholarship on *humanitas*, mainly because of a long-lasting bias according to which the ‘true’ and authentic Roman *humanitas* ends with Cicero or Pliny the Younger at the latest.¹² Nothing is further from the truth, however, for later authors inevitably had to engage with the previous history of *humanitas* and the ideological, rhetorical and historical connotations the word had acquired. Indeed, by the end of the first century CE the history of *humanitas* had already gone through different stages – from the heyday in the Ciceronian age to a gradual downfall, both in terms of quantity and polysemy of the occurrences, which began under Augustus and (provisionally) ended with Domitian’s death in 96 CE. This pattern of ups and downs continued in the ages which followed, so that a Theodosian author like Symmachus made use of a kind of *humanitas* which carried with it the multi-layered history of its various uses until the late fourth century CE. Concretely, I argue, Symmachus relates very closely to Pliny the Younger, hence the endpoint and starting point of my research respectively. The benefits to this analysis are numerous and span socio-political, judicial, historical and educational fields. In works which have explicit socio-political aims, such as Pliny’s *Panegyricus* and *Letters* or Symmachus’ oeuvre, the use of *humanitas*, especially as it seems to replace another concept of value like *clementia*, is likely to express a willingness to mark discontinuity between past and present political climates. If we then consider that *humanitas* is often understood by Pliny and Symmachus as Ciceronian, and as associated with Republican Rome, the message may even imply that their age is (or should be) more ‘democratic’ than the previous one(s). In different ways, attitudes towards *humanitas* in historians like Tacitus and Ammianus reflect these changes of values. On other occasions, for example Apuleius’ *Apologia* and *Metamorphoses*, and Eumenius’ *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*, *humanitas* was instead perceived as an excellent weapon of persuasion in oratorical contexts, again following in Cicero’s footsteps, especially in his *Pro Archia*. Finally, a learned man like Gellius tried to restore, through the concept of *humanitas*, what he regarded as the best educational system in opposition to the grammarians’ widespread but low-quality teaching.

In the following sections, I shall first deal with the ancient texts which discussed the meanings of *humanitas* and influenced the twentieth-century compartmentalising approach to this concept of value. These texts bring into play the Greek concepts of

¹² Cf. Nybakken (1939), 411: “[A]fter Cicero’s death no vigorous advocate of true *humanitas Romana* appeared”. Ultimately, this same kind of bias can still be found in Høgel (2015), 83 and, more or less explicitly, in most other contemporary studies.

παιδεία and φιλάνθρωπία, whose connotations I will briefly explore. I will then discuss the origins of *humanitas*. Finally, I will outline the structure and methodology of the thesis as a whole.

1. *Humanitas*: definition, ideological components and other issues

The question of the origins of *humanitas* is complicated and long-debated. To begin with, scholars disagree on what is to be seen as the first appearance of this value concept in Latin texts: do we need to stick to the very occurrences of the word *humanitas* or can instances of *humanus* express the same meaning as the noun? Closely related to this is a second question: is *humanitas* a typically Roman ideal or was it imported from Greece? The first question will be answered gradually in the course of this thesis, starting from the sub-section on Terence in Chapter 1, and it will emerge that *humanitas* developed meanings and nuances that only occasionally can be taken on by the adjective *humanus* from which it derived.¹³ As for the second issue, before looking at it in detail, it is necessary to return to the core meanings and nuances conveyed by the word *humanitas*, starting from the ancient debate around it.

The first definition of *humanitas* is provided in the second century CE by Aulus Gellius at *Noctes Atticae* 13.17.1:

Qui verba Latina fecerunt quique his probe usi sunt, "humanitatem" non id esse voluerunt, quod vulgus existimat quodque a Graecis philanthropia dicitur et significat dexteritatem quandam benivolentiamque erga omnis homines promiscam, sed "humanitatem"

¹³ Some previous studies on *humanitas* also deal with the occurrences of *homo*. Needless to say, the distance from *humanitas* would increase further and, at any event, it is difficult to imagine that a word like ‘man’ could usually carry ideological and ethical components. Furthermore, despite the intuitive connection of *humanus* / *humanitas* with *homo* (cf. e.g. Val. Max. 5.1. *praef.*, accepting Badius’ conjecture *homine* instead of *numine*, or Ter. *Heaut.* 77; further examples in Elice 2017, 287) the problem of their relationship is complicated further by the passage from *ō* of *hōmo* to *ū* of *hūmanus*, which glottologists have yet to explain: cf. Ernout – Meillet (2001⁴), 298; it is methodologically unsustainable to claim that we should accept the derivation of *humanus* from *homo* on the grounds that it is attested in ancient sources, as proposed by Walde – Hofmann (1938), 663-664, who then added: “erklärungsbedürftig ist lediglich (!) das *ū*”. But the easiest explanation is that ancient sources – cf. Maltby (1991), s.v. *homo* for a complete list of these sources – produced a case of false etymology. Isidore of Seville (*Orig.* 10.1) inverts the reasoning and makes *homo* derive from *humanitas*, but the glottological problem does not change. I will return to this issue in the sub-chapters on Pliny and Gellius.

appellaverunt id propemodum, quod Graeci paideian vocant, nos eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artis dicimus.

To explain *humanitas*, Gellius brings into play the two Greek concepts of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία. For the sake of clarity, he then gives other possible synonyms of these Greek concepts, defining φιλανθρωπία as *dexteritas* and *benivolentia*, and παιδεία as *eruditio* and *institutio in bonas artis*. He also expresses his own personal opinion on the meaning of the term: according to him, παιδεία is the correct meaning of *humanitas* while φιλανθρωπία is the wrong one. Gellius' preference can be explained in relation with the aims and the specific cultural context of his work, as we will see in detail in the Gellius section of Chapter 3. More importantly, this statement signals that both senses of the word *humanitas* were attested in the literature of the time. Further and most precious confirmation comes from the later grammarian Nonius (IV-V century CE), who nuances Gellius' definition at *De compendiosa doctrina* 1.255 (pp. 73-74 Lindsay):

Humanitatem non solum, uti nunc consuetudine persuasum est, de benivolentia, dexteritate quoque et comitate veteres dicenda putaverunt, quam Graeci φιλανθρωπίαν vocant; sed honestorum studiorum et artium adpetitum, quod nulli animantium generi absque hominibus concessa sit. Varro Rerum humanarum [lib.] I Praxiteles, qui propter artificium egregium nemini est paululum modo humanior<i>.

The example taken from Varro's *Rerum humanarum libri*,¹⁴ the same which we also read at *Noctes Atticae* 13.17.3, confirms that Nonius is closely following Gellius. However, the addition of *comitas* to the Latin equivalents of φιλανθρωπία, the absence of the terms παιδεία, *eruditio*, and *institutio*, and their replacement with *honestorum studiorum et artium adpetitum* guarantees that in this passage at least Nonius is not to be regarded as a pedestrian epitomator of Gellius. This consideration becomes all the more important when we consider that, unlike his predecessor, Nonius does not express a preference for one meaning of the word *humanitas* over the other. As a consequence, it is legitimate to state that Nonius attests even more firmly than Gellius the co-existence of the two meanings of *humanitas*. At the same time, both authors make clear that their considerations are not to be taken as grounded in, or exclusively pertinent to, the historical period in which they were writing. The presence of a fragment by Varro testifies to their belief in an ideally atemporal dimension of the Latin language, especially after its heyday, embodied in the last authors of the republican or in those of the Augustan age. As far as

¹⁴ Varro *Fr.* 1 Mirsch.

vocabulary is concerned, therefore, all later authors should employ the words in the same way and with the same meaning as their unrivaled predecessors. Gellius' criticism of his contemporaries who misused the term *humanitas* is based on this assumption.

Once it is established that φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία are the meanings that Roman men of learning gave to the word *humanitas*, I hope to show that Gellius' and, above all, Nonius' statements stand up to scrutiny, at least partly. For φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία are the two main components of the word *humanitas* that will be the object of discussion and change. However, it is important to emphasise again that there is sometimes, not to say often, a fine line between the two, so much so that the ideas of φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία can even overlap in Latin occurrences of *humanitas*. As I have already hinted, this principle of multi-layering, which is in my view crucial to our understanding of Roman *humanitas*, and consequently, of the Roman worldview, is less well established in scholarship. Stroh is unusual in explaining the process through which φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία are connected to one another:

“Iam uidemus igitur ex aliqua parte quomodo illae duae notiones φιλανθρωπίας et παιδείας ortae interque se commixtae sint. Atque initio humanitas non est illa quidem, si stricte interpretamur, eadem atque φιλανθρωπία, i.e. amor hominum et mansuetudo, sed magis communis natura humana, quam cum homo in altero esse sentit, a crudelitate auocatur, ad mansuetudinem misericordiamque commouetur. Postea per metonymiam quandam nomen humanitatis ipsam uirtutem declarat, quae plerumque mansuetudo aut clementia est, interdum etiam urbanitas et facilitas morum. Sed quia illa urbanitas litteris potissimum augeatur, ipsae quoque litterae vel artes, quibus παιδεία constat, humanitatis nomine dici possunt”.¹⁵

Stroh spotlights well the two lines along which this process develops: from a chronological standpoint, the φιλανθρωπία meaning of *humanitas* precedes the παιδεία meaning; from a logical standpoint, the παιδεία meaning enhances φιλανθρωπία. In other words, if it is true that occurrences of *humanitas* (roughly) standing for φιλανθρωπία predate the first instances of *humanitas* meaning παιδεία, it is also true that, from Cicero onwards at least, education, liberal arts, and literature can be seen as (*the*) prerequisites for gaining access to the ideal of φιλανθρωπία. Specularly, this might also imply that to be a learned man is not necessarily to possess *humanitas*, for learning and education are not to be seen as ends in themselves. Therefore, the equation between possessing *humanitas* and being well-educated is only valid as long as education leads to a morally

¹⁵ Stroh (2008), 551-552.

impeccable behaviour towards other fellow human beings. In the light of all this, it should not be difficult to figure out that instances of *humanitas* in which the philanthropic meaning is predominant can also carry the educational component in the background.

At this point, the recurrent recourse to two different Greek concepts to express just one Roman value will have suggested that *humanitas* has no perfect equivalent in Greek. This in turn may already lead to the conclusion that *humanitas* so conceived was born and found its cultural premises in Rome. Although I ultimately agree on this theory, the solution to this issue is not so straightforward, and requires further analysis. For first, I would like to look briefly at the Greek use of φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία. I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of the occurrences of these two concepts in Greek texts: in the case of φιλανθρωπία we already possess such studies; in the case of παιδεία, although several scholars have dealt with this concept, a thorough investigation of the instances of the word itself is to my knowledge still a *desideratum*, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis. I shall therefore limit myself to a summary whose aim is to provide sufficient background to address the problem of the origins of *humanitas*.

2. Φιλανθρωπία¹⁶

Gellius' and Nonius' conception of φιλανθρωπία as *benivolentia* as well as Festugière's authoritative definition of this term as "a general disposition to benevolence and to act well towards men" ultimately find their roots in the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*: Φιλανθρωπία ἔστι εὐάγωγος ἦθους πρὸς ἀνθρώπου φιλίαν· ἔστι εὐεργετικὴ ἀνθρώπων· χάριτος σχέσις· μνήμη μετ'εὐεργεσίας (412e).¹⁷ As is typical of compilatory works of this kind, abundance of quasi-synonyms serves the purpose of clarifying the word under investigation and its contexts of application. Even beyond this definition, the etymology of the word is clear: it combines the root of the verb φιλέω ('to love') with ἄνθρωπος ('man / human being'), thereby meaning 'benevolence towards men'.¹⁸ But if in the wake of derivatives of φιλανθρωπία in modern languages we are likely to take for granted that such a behaviour or attitude is not only displayed *towards* men but also *by* men, this is not true of the first attested instances of φιλανθρωπία in ancient Greek. As Lorenz probably showed for first, these date back to fifth-century Athens, and are to be found in

¹⁶ In tracing the history of φιλανθρωπία I mainly follow De Romilly (2011²). A rich bibliography on this topic can be found in Sulek (2010), 386.

¹⁷ Festugière (1949), 301.

¹⁸ Cf. Chantraine (1968) s.v. ἄνθρωπος.

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* 11 and 28 (φιλανθρώπου δὲ παύεσθαι τρόπου and τοιαῦτ'ἐπηύρου τοῦ φιλανθρώπου τρόπου), and in Aristophanes' *Peace* 392-394 (ἀλλὰ χάρισ', ὃ φιλανθρωπότητα καὶ μεγαλοδωρότατε δαιμόνων).¹⁹ In both cases gods are said to be φιλόανθρωποι towards humans, and, as De Romilly puts it, "il s'agit donc d'un acte de générosité venu du dehors aider l'espèce humaine; et ceci restera la valeur originelle du terme".²⁰ In fact, as she goes on to explain (45-46), analogous uses of the word can be found in Xenophon and Plato, which also means that this concept acquired a philosophical dimension.²¹ In Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* then, φιλανθρωπία is also acknowledged to be an art which helps the human race, as is the case of agriculture (15.4: Νῦν τοίνυν, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, καὶ τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν ταύτης τῆς τέχνης ἀκούσῃ).²²

At some point – although it is not clear how and when – φιλανθρωπία mainly came to characterise relationships among human beings, thereby losing its divine component. Xenophon and Plato testify to this shift in meaning, which is embodied in the figure of Socrates at *Memorabilia* 1.2.60 and *Euthyphro* 3d. By resorting to a comparison between these two occurrences, Lorenz endeavoured to explain the shift from gods to men as possessors of φιλανθρωπία on the grounds that the Athenian philosopher would be the perfect 'intermediary' between the two categories.²³ More specifically, Lorenz argues that at *Euthyphro* 3d Socrates is playfully pretending to be acting like a god when attributing a divine virtue like φιλανθρωπία to himself: ἐγὼ δὲ φοβοῦμαι μὴ ὑπὸ φιλανθρωπίας δοκῶ αὐτοῖς ὅτιπερ ἔχω ἐκκεχυμένως παντὶ ἀνδρὶ λέγειν, οὐ μόνον ἄνευ μισθοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ προστιθεὶς ἂν ἠδέως εἴ τις μου ἐθέλει ἀκούειν.²⁴ This reading is corroborated by Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 1.2.60, where Socrates is said to be δημοτικός ('friend of the populace') καὶ φιλόανθρωπος for roughly the same reasons as in Plato's *Euthyphro* (which would also suggest that this was a topos among Socrates' pupils). De

¹⁹ Lorenz (1914), 9. More in-depth discussion of these occurrences in Sulek (2010), 387-389. Cf. also Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 273-274, who also has a point in claiming that the idea of φιλανθρωπία can already be found in Homer. Consider for instance *Il. Z* 612-615: Ἄξυλον δ' ἄρ' ἔπεφνε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης / Τευθρανίδην, ὃς ἔναιεν εὐκτιμένη ἐν Ἀρίσβῃ / ἀφνειὸς βίότοιο, φίλος δ' ἦν ἀνθρώποισι. / πάντας γὰρ φιλέεσκεν ὁδῶ ἐπι οἰκία ναίων.

²⁰ De Romilly (2011²), 45.

²¹ Xen. *Mem.* 4.3, Plato *Smp.* 189d and *Lg.* 713d. Cf. also Lorenz (1914), 10-11. On φιλανθρωπία in Plato cf. also Hiltbrunner (1994a), 715 and Sulek (2010), 390-392.

²² Cf. Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 281.

²³ Lorenz (1914), 14.

²⁴ Lorenz (1914), 14.

Romilly endorsed Lorenz's thesis and Sulek has brought new arguments in support of it, claiming that "*philanthrôpia* [...] maintains its close association with divinity in *Euthyphro*, in terms of distinguishing the nature of Socrates's relationship with his *daemon* or divine sign from that of Euthyphro".²⁵ Nevertheless, like Tromp de Ruiter, I am hesitant to embrace Lorenz's interpretation that Socrates' words allude to a comparison between himself and gods.²⁶ First, expressed in these terms, such an allusion would hardly be grasped. Secondly, even if in a couple of previous instances *φιλανθρωπία* pertains to gods, this is not sufficient to conclude that it was conceived as the prerogative of divine entities only. On the other hand, Sulek's argument, however convincing in principle, is too vague. That said, I do not deny the pivotal role of Socrates, who really is the first man said to possess *φιλανθρωπία* in the Greek works which have come down to us, but I would not push the reasoning further.

Regardless of the degree of persuasion of Lorenz's reasoning, from Plato and Xenophon down to the fourth century BCE, *φιλανθρωπία* often refers to a human attitude, or, better, a human virtue which has to be displayed towards other men to concretise itself, especially in Athenian society.²⁷ At the beginning, it maintains its noblest and most exclusive meaning, and also applies to politics. Judges, laws and, *a fortiori*, sovereigns must be guided by *φιλανθρωπία*.²⁸ In this respect, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Isocrates' *Panegyricus* are cases in point.²⁹ As a consequence, it comes as no surprise that we find it at times linked with *ἔλεος* ('clemency').³⁰ For his part, Aristotle sets himself in Xenophon's footsteps, and regards *φιλανθρωπία* as 'an innate characteristic of a person or thing that causes them to be attracted to human beings'.³¹ But *φιλανθρωπία* also becomes one of the values of everyday life which characterise the 'honest man'.³² On the

²⁵ De Romilly (2011²), 46-47; Sulek (2010), 392. Cf. De Romilly (2011²), 47: "on voit par ce rapprochement comment on pouvait user d'une exagération souriante et délibérée pour comparer un acte de générosité à la bonté divine".

²⁶ Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 275.

²⁷ Lorenz (1914), 25 and 29, Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 288-290, De Romilly (2011²), 48. See De Romilly (2011²), 97-112 for more on the idea of *douceur* in Athens.

²⁸ Cf. Lorenz (1914), 15-21. Some references can also be found in De Romilly (2011²), 49 nn. 4,5 and 6, and Sulek (2010), 393. Cf. also Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 284 and Hiltbrunner (1994a), 716.

²⁹ Cf. Lorenz (1914), 15-16 and Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 277-281, and Sulek (2010), 392-393 respectively.

³⁰ Cf. Lorenz (1914), 22 and Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 286.

³¹ Sulek (2010), 394. On *φιλανθρωπία* in Aristotle cf. also Lorenz (1914), 37-39.

³² De Romilly (2011²), 50.

other hand, its diffusion as well as its applicability to different aspects of life also account for the weakening of its meaning in the period which followed, when φιλόανθρωπος said of a speech meant little more than ‘pleasant’,³³ and φιλανθρωπία also came to indicate ‘kindness’, as in Menander, or even ‘hospitality’.³⁴ In the third century BCE then, φιλανθρωπία also stands for private generosity.³⁵ Furthermore, φιλανθρωπία began to be expressed more in words than in deeds, as is the case with Philip II of Macedon in Demosthenes’ *De corona* 231.³⁶ Still later, in inscriptions, in Polybius’ work as well as in the Roman age in general, φιλανθρωπία becomes more and more clichéd, and generally pertains to the diplomatic world.³⁷ As an alternative, it could indicate ‘salary’ or ‘compensation’, or even ‘benefits’.³⁸ Needless to say, this was the main trend, but instances of the word maintaining its original meaning and momentum can also be found beyond the fourth century BCE,³⁹ for example in the already mentioned Menander, in Philo of Alexandria’s *Περὶ φιλανθρωπίας* or in Plutarch’s work.⁴⁰ According to De Romilly, Plutarch even ends up identifying the broader idea of what she calls *douceur* (of which φιλανθρωπία is one crucial component) with the idea of civilisation itself, which is in turn regarded as the prerogative of Greece.⁴¹ Among Christians, φιλανθρωπία is at times considered a quality of Jesus Christ.⁴²

3. Παιδεία

The second meaning of *humanitas* emphasised by Gellius and Nonius brings into play another Greek concept, παιδεία. In linguistic terms, παιδεία is a verbal noun which derives

³³ De Romilly (2011²), 50.

³⁴ Sulek (2010), 394 on Menander, Lorenz (1914), 32 and De Romilly (2011²), 230 on hospitality. On the weakening of the meaning of φιλανθρωπία cf. also Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 291-292.

³⁵ Sulek (2010), 395.

³⁶ Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 291, De Romilly (2011²), 50, Sulek (2010), 393. Cf. also Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 291 on Isocrates 15.133.

³⁷ Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 292-294, Hiltbrunner (1994a), 725 – on Polybius, De Romilly (2011²), 51.

³⁸ Cf. Lorenz (1914), 35, Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 288-289 and Sulek (2010), 395.

³⁹ Sulek (2010), 395.

⁴⁰ On φιλανθρωπία in Menander cf. De Romilly (2011²), 202-203, according to whom in the Greek playwright φιλανθρωπία takes on a meaning very close to Latin *humanitas*; on Philo cf. Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 294-295 and Hiltbrunner (1994a), 723; on Plutarch Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 295-300.

⁴¹ De Romilly (2011²), 305.

⁴² Tromp de Ruiter (1931), 301-302: cf. *Act. Ap.* 27.3, *Ep. Tit.* 3.4, Origenes *Comm. in Johan.* 1.20.121.

from παιδεύω (‘bring up a child’, ‘train and teach’, ‘educate’ according to *LSJ*) and therefore stands for ‘education’, ‘formation’, but also for what education produces, ‘culture’.⁴³ As I have mentioned, a thorough analysis of the instances of this word in ancient Greek literature has to my knowledge not yet been undertaken, and Jaeger’s authoritative statement at the beginning of his masterpiece *Paideia* warns scholars against undertaking it:

“It would seem obvious for us to use the history of the word *paideia* as a clue to the origins of Greek culture. But we cannot do so, since the word does not occur before the fifth century. That is of course merely an accident of transmission. If new sources were discovered, we might well find evidence of its occurrence at an earlier date. But even then we should be none the wiser; for the earliest examples of its use show that at the beginning of the fifth century it still had the narrow meaning of ‘child-rearing’ and practically nothing of its later, higher sense”.⁴⁴

Havelock’s definition of the Homeric works as a ‘tribal encyclopedia’, that is, as a tribal, circular, comprehensive παιδεία, supports this argument.⁴⁵ Because of the numerous descriptions and prescriptions of events and rituals belonging to the everyday life of Homeric society, Havelock, through the lens of Plato, therefore views the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as founding texts not only of Greek culture, but also of Greek education. Yet without the term παιδεία, ‘culture’, being mentioned throughout, these two works would not play any role in a history of the word παιδεία.

Indeed, the first instance of παιδεία is to be found in an elegy by Theognis (2.1305-1310), and Jaeger’s statement above turns out to be even optimistic on closer inspection, for παιδεία simply means ‘boyhood’ on this occasion. However, we encounter the idea of ‘child rearing’ in Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes* (467 BCE) when in his opening speech Eteocles also praises Thebes for accepting the toil of bringing up its children (ll. 17-18: ἦ γὰρ νέους ἔρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδῳ, / ἅπαντα πανδοκοῦσα παιδείας ὄτλον), as well as in Thucydides’ comparison of the different upbringings of Athenians and Spartans (2.39.1: καὶ ἐν ταῖς παιδείαις οἱ μὲν ἐπιπόνῳ ἀσκήσει εὐθὺς νέοι ὄντες τὸ ἀνδρεῖον μετέρχονται, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀνειμένως διαιτώμενοι οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ἐπὶ τοῦς ἰσοπαλεῖς κινδύνους χωροῦμεν.) To be sure, Jaeger was right in claiming that these instances display a ‘weaker’, ‘less

⁴³ Cf. Chantraine (1974) s.v. παῖς.

⁴⁴ Jaeger (1946³), 4.

⁴⁵ Havelock (1963), 66 and *passim*.

noble' meaning of παιδεία, but he probably underestimated the fact that the foundation of Plato's (and others') nobler idea of this word lies in these very first occurrences. Compare Plato's juvenile dialogue *Crito*, in which Socrates has the Laws of Athens ask him several, mainly rhetorical, questions, one of which is: Ἀλλὰ [scil. μέμφη] τοῖς περὶ τὴν τοῦ γενομένου τροφήν τε καὶ παιδείαν ἐν ἧ καὶ σὺ ἐπαιδεύθης; ἢ οὐ καλῶς προσέταττον ἡμῶν οἱ ἐπὶ τούτῳ τεταγμένοι νόμοι, παραγγέλλοντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ σῶ σε ἐν μουσικῇ καὶ γυμναστικῇ παιδεύειν; (50 d). The meaning of this occurrence of παιδεία is ultimately analogous to the Aeschylean and Thucydidean ones, the only difference lying in the addition of τροφή, 'food', which allows Plato to distinguish between 'physical' and 'spiritual' forms of nourishment, τροφή and παιδεία respectively. Yet Plato employed this term at least 135 other times across his work – only the fifth-century CE theologian Theodoretus of Cyrus seems to have used it more often – and in such a way as to expand its original meaning. In the *Republic* for instance, Plato investigates it in detail, seeks to define what its components are, and claims: Τίς οὖν ἡ παιδεία; ἢ χαλεπὸν εὐρεῖν βελτίω τῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ χρόνου ἠύρημένης; ἔστιν δέ που ἢ μὲν ἐπὶ σώμασι γυμναστική, ἢ δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ μουσική (376 e). Παιδεία has therefore come to include both gymnastics and the arts of the Muses – *mens sana in corpore sano*, as Juvenal 10.356 would later paraphrase it. But there is more: to know the arts of the Muses is to possess what we call culture. In other words, Plato bridged the gulf between what Jaeger called the narrow and the higher meanings of this word. Jaeger himself stressed this fundamental role played by Plato, and also added that Plato had been the first to 'theorise' a concept which ends up covering "the artist's act of plastic formation as well as the guiding pattern present to his imagination, the *idea* or *typos*."⁴⁶ Yet Plato was not alone. Along with him, the Sophists, Isocrates and Xenophon established the conception of παιδεία as ideal perfection of mind and body, which mainly resulted from "a genuine intellectual and spiritual culture",⁴⁷ and which was destined to express one of the main features of Hellenism in the centuries which followed.

During one later period and cultural climate in particular, the role of παιδεία was again crucial: this is the so-called Second Sophistic of the second century CE, a cultural movement which also influenced the works and thought of Apuleius, Gellius and Fronto, and is therefore of special relevance to this thesis. One of the main exponents of this

⁴⁶ Jaeger (1946³), xxiii.

⁴⁷ Jaeger (1946³), 286.

movement, Dio Chrysostom, provides a twofold definition of παιδεία in his fourth discourse *On Kingship*. Worried by Diogenes the Cynic's questions, Alexander the Great, the second protagonist of this dialogue, asks the philosopher who imparts the art of kingship. Diogenes replies that only Zeus can teach this art, and the discussion seamlessly shifts to education (29-33). There are two kinds of education (διττή ἐστὶν ἡ παιδεία), says the philosopher: one comes from Heaven, the other is human (ἢ μὲν τις δαιμόνιος, ἢ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνη). Most people believe that the latter is the true education, and that it consists in reading and knowing as much literature as possible (καὶ νομίζουσι τὸν πλείστα γράμματα εἰδότα ... καὶ πλείστοις ἐντυγχάνοντα βιβλίοις, τοῦτον σοφώτατον καὶ μάλιστα πεπαιδευμένον). Yet this kind of education does not prevent people from being disreputable men. By contrast, the second form of education, which is called not only παιδεία, but also ἀνδρεία or μεγαλοφροσύνη, originates from Zeus and makes men noble and brave. Those who possess this second, true and complete παιδεία, concludes the philosopher, can easily acquire the first one. The true παιδεία thus combines cultural and moral components (although the idea of φιλανθρωπία remains distant), but, compared with Stroh's explanation of *humanitas* above, the logic is significantly inverted: the moral qualities can be complemented by literature and culture in general, but it is not a 'humanistic' education which can favour the development of morality.

Nor is παιδεία less important to the thought of the second major exponent of the Second Sophistic, Aelius Aristides. If the term itself already appears 31 times in Dio's oeuvre, it appears, excluding spurious works, as many as 38 times in Aelius Aristides'. I shall return to this figure in the next section. For the moment, I limit myself to anticipating that his particularity lies in the fact that he paired παιδεία with φιλανθρωπία, thereby combining the two main values upon which *humanitas* was based.

4. The origins of *humanitas*

Now that we have reached a better understanding of the meanings and nuances of the two Greek concepts that Gellius and Nonius associated with *humanitas*, we can address the problem of the origins of this value term. All ancient sources agree in acknowledging that *humanitas* was born in Greece, more precisely in Athens. Cicero reiterates this several times, for example in *Ad Quintum fratrem* 1.1.27 and in *Pro Flacco* 62. In congratulating his brother, recently appointed as propraetor of Asia, Cicero both stresses the honour of governing such a prestigious province and gives him some advice on how to carry out his duties:

quod si te sors Afris aut Hispanis aut Gallis praefecisset, immanibus ac barbaris nationibus, tamen esset humanitatis tuae consulere eorum commodis et utilitati salutique servire; cum vero ei generi hominum [scil. Graecorum] praesimus non modo in quo ipsa sit sed etiam a quo ad alios pervenisse putetur humanitas, certe iis eam potissimum tribuere debemus a quibus accepimus. (Ad Q. fr. 1.1.27)

While here Cicero is rather vague in regarding all Greeks as ‘founders’ of *humanitas*, in the oration he pronounced in 59 BCE in defense of Lucius Valerius Flaccus, who was charged *de repetundis*, this merit is restricted to the Athenians: *Adsunt Athenienses, unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, iura, leges ortae atque in omnis terras distributae putantur.*⁴⁸

More than a century and a half later, Pliny the Younger wrote to his friend Maximus a letter which, as scholarship has pointed out, closely echoes *Ad Quintum fratrem* 1.1, not least in its use of *humanitas*.⁴⁹ Like Cicero’s brother, Maximus too was sent to govern the province of Achaia, probably as *corrector* (a special commissioner, appointed from the time of Trajan onward, to supervise the finances of a *libera civitas*):

Cogita te missum in provinciam Achaïam, illam veram et meram Graeciam, in qua primum humanitas litterae, etiam fruges inventae esse creduntur; missum ad ordinandum statum liberarum civitatum, id est ad homines maxime homines, ad liberos maxime liberos, qui ius a natura datum virtute meritis amicitia, foedere denique et religione tenuerunt. (Epist. 8.24.2)

I will deal further with this letter in the Pliny chapter. For the moment, we need to take note of the fact that the agreement of Cicero, Pliny, and also, implicitly, Gellius on the Greek origins of *humanitas* has not been sufficient to persuade much modern scholarship. Why? The answer is rather simple: investigations of *humanitas* reveal that the Greeks did not have any single word which could cover the polysemy of this Latin term. Or, if we wish to push this reasoning one step further, the absence of a noun with all these characteristics would reveal the lack of a single, albeit composed, concept in Greek

⁴⁸ Cf. also Cic. *Cato* 1, *Leg.* 2.36. *Pro Flacco* 62 might in part echo Isocrates’ *Panegyricus* 47-50, where the invention of philosophy and eloquence, and their educative impact, are attributed to the Athenians. In fact: Τοσοῦτον δ’ ἀπολέλοιπεν ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ λέγειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ὥσθ’ οἱ ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασιν, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποίηκεν μηκέτι τοῦ γένους, ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείας τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας. (50)

⁴⁹ Cf. above all Zucker (1928).

mentality and worldview. I ultimately agree with this conclusion, but it is my conviction that the issue deserves further attention.

As I have argued elsewhere, we might approach this problem differently:⁵⁰ because Gellius mentions both παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία, two values which are apparently distant from one another, and because there is abundant evidence that these two ideas co-exist in *humanitas*, to look for pairings of these two words in Greek texts goes some way towards verifying if the Greeks perceived any close relationship between παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία. I sum up here the results of this investigation: if we exclude the literature of the Byzantine age, παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία only appear together three times, once in a fragment of Diodorus Siculus which has come down to us thanks to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De virtutibus et vitiis* (X century CE) and twice in orations by Aelius Aristides (3.382 and 29.33 Lenz – Behr). The occurrence at Diodorus 37.8.2 (= Const. Exc. 2(1), p. 317 = Posidon. *Fr.* 215 Theiler) concerns one of Sempronius Asellio's advisors, who, also thanks to his παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία, played a key role in helping the probable governor of Sicily of 96 BCE to restore the ruined island. Yet this passage involves doubts about authorship and periods of composition, which makes any argument concerning it highly speculative.⁵¹ By contrast, the case of Aelius Aristides might be of special relevance, for he lived and wrote in the second century CE in the Second Sophistic, of which he was perhaps the most important exponent. Chapter 3, which looks at the figures of Gellius and Apuleius in particular, explores the key role played by Latin *humanitas* within that cultural milieu, and it would be tempting to consider Aelius Aristides' simultaneous use of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία as an attempt to translate *humanitas* (back?) into Greek.

Is it possible to explain, if not reconcile, these inconsistencies, that is, the fact that many Latin authors speak of a Greek *humanitas* despite the fact that an exact Greek equivalent of this term does not exist? Let us return to the Latin texts above. Of all the Ciceronian and Plinian passages which explicitly regard *humanitas* as a Greek invention, *Pro Flacco* 62 is perhaps the most useful for understanding what is meant by *humanitas* in this context. In the list of the Greek inventions, *humanitas* takes pride of place, followed by education / learning (*doctrina*), religion (*religio*), agriculture (*fruges*), and

⁵⁰ Cf. Mollea (2018b).

⁵¹ In addition to the problems posed by the fact that we face a case of indirect tradition, Theiler attributed this fragment to the Stoic philosopher Posidonius, but in previous editions of Posidonius Edelstein – Kidd and Jacoby had not. More on this in Mollea (2018b), 150.

laws (*iura, leges*). This is not due to the fact that *humanitas* is more important than the other elements of the series; rather, it is because *humanitas* encompasses all of them. Yet the notion that it is potentially all-encompassing implies a certain degree of ambiguity, an ambiguity which is nevertheless limited by the authors' habit of pairing *humanitas* with more specific, less ambiguous terms.⁵² We will see throughout the course of this thesis that most, not to say all, of the elements that Cicero names at *Pro Flacco* 62 appear elsewhere in conjunction with *humanitas*, in order to help the reader understand case by case the nuances that this word takes on in a particular passage. Accordingly, in this Ciceronian oration the simultaneous presence of so many elements clearly has rhetorical ends – this figure of speech is called *enumeratio* – but more importantly for my project, it indicates that *humanitas* is to be understood in its broadest and highest sense of 'civilisation, human culture', which is the result as well as the sum of education, religion, and so on. This idea of civilisation, Cicero says, was born in Greece, and this has been a widely held belief in Western society since. On the other hand, however, I cannot think of any ancient Greek word which could render this Ciceronian instance (and idea) of *humanitas* as civilisation, while we might easily find Greek words that can translate the other items of the above list.

In the light of this, I would suggest that the problem can be resolved as follows: by claiming that *humanitas* was born in Greece, Cicero and Pliny refer to those elements of Greek, or more precisely, of Athenian origin which, taken together, express the notion of human civilisation. It is telling that the Greeks themselves would not have any single word to express this concept. Evidently, they – and the Athenians in particular – did not feel the need to elaborate such a concept formally: that their society was the acme of human realisation, whether in social, cultural or political terms, was simply a given to them. And also a given must have been the fact that the (combination of the) ideals of παιδεία and φιλάνθρωπία played a crucial role in defining the features of their perfect model of human society. Conversely, by presenting *humanitas* as a Greek invention, it looks as though Latin authors also sought to legitimise and ennoble what was in fact their own great contribution to humankind. Yet when we look at other occurrences of *humanitas* and realise that παιδεία and φιλάνθρωπία are ultimately the main, or simply the most common and the most apparent, components of *humanitas* and that, unlike what

⁵² I will deal with the theoretical problems posed by investigating *humanitas* through the terms with which it is paired in the methodological section of this introduction: cf. below, pp. 21-23.

occurs in Greek culture, they are inevitably connected with one another, the distance between the Roman and Greek mentality increases further. Briefly, it is legitimate to consider the Greeks as the inventors of the elements which constitute the idea of *humanitas*, but the Romans were the first to combine these elements, to regard them as interwoven, and to call the sum of them by just one name.

5. From Trajan to Theodosius, from Pliny to Symmachus

Having sketched out the key issues at stake, I can now turn to the core of this research. Despite the relatively high number of studies on *humanitas* in Pliny the Younger, I have chosen him as the starting point for this thesis because he played a watershed role in the history of this value concept. As I shall show in greater detail in Chapter 1, although the late republican period might be seen as the heyday of *humanitas*, the socio-political climate of the second half of the first century CE ultimately overshadowed it. Despite the decline of its ideological message beginning at the very end of the republican age, under Augustus, the main two blows against *humanitas* came from Seneca: first, he explicitly dissociated *humanitas* from liberal studies (*Epist.* 88.30), thereby rejecting the Ciceronian, republican conception of *humanitas*,⁵³ and secondly, he emphasised – for clear political and ideological reasons – the role of *clementia* as the main imperial virtue in the treatise he addressed to Nero in 55-56 CE. Valerius Maximus had even paired *humanitas* (which he already took as devoid of its educational components) and *clementia* in the same section of his work, but had not specified the main difference between the two: unlike *humanitas*, *clementia* is extremely hierarchical, indicating the merciful attitude that only a higher-ranked person can display towards a subordinate. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that *clementia* also played an important role in the age of Domitian, as emerges for example from Statius' oeuvre.

But when Trajan became emperor after the short reign of Nerva, the dreadful image of Domitian was still far too vivid in people's minds, and the concept of *clementia*, associated both with him and the previous tyrant Nero, was compromised. Therefore, whether or not he was the first to do so, when in 100 CE he delivered his *Panegyricus* on Trajan, Pliny the Younger restored the republican-, Ciceronian-connoted *humanitas* to characterise the 'revolutionary' attitude of the new emperor. Through *humanitas*, Trajan

⁵³ Cf. Rieks (1967), 110-12, who nevertheless considers *humanitas* an important concept in Seneca's thought: more in detail on Seneca's *humanitas* below, pp. 39-43.

emerges as a *primus inter pares* rather than a tyrant, and the polysemy of this single word allows Pliny to compare, more or less explicitly, the numerous qualities of this emperor to the vices of Domitian. This role of *humanitas* in the *Panegyricus* is corroborated by its use in the *Letters*, where Pliny makes all the more clear that this value concept transcends social class distinctions, and is therefore very apt to promote a new climate of mutual respect and collaboration among Roman citizens.

I devote the main part of Chapter 2 to Pliny, and conclude the chapter with two sections on Tacitus and Suetonius respectively. Overall, it is my contention that their historical and biographical works represent a sort of photographic negative of Pliny's texts, for both Tacitus and Suetonius do not associate *humanitas* with any first-century emperor, and imply that *humanitas* does not play any role in first-century society as they portrayed it. In Tacitus' *Annals* and *Histories* there is no occurrence of the word *humanitas* at all, whereas in Suetonius' *Caesars* the only two instances in the *Life of Tiberius* only reveal the emperor's lack of the values *humanitas* represents. Tacitus, however, has two very interesting occurrences of *humanitas* in his 'minor' works, one in the *Agricola* and one in the *Germania*. The *Agricola* instance in particular is usually regarded as evidence for Tacitus' criticism of hypocritical and false uses of Roman *humanitas*, here interpreted as the civilisation which the Romans try to inflict on the world. Yet I seek to show that a close reading of *Agricola* 21 rather reveals Tacitus' extraordinarily broad, and at the same time suspicious, conception of *humanitas*, which has both positive and negative aspects. The second occurrence, at *Germania* 21.3, is somehow complementary to the *Agricola* one, and shows that also the barbarians could have their own idea of civilisation: it is less sophisticated than the Romans', but also less prone to fall into vice.

In Chapter 3 I turn to the Antonine age. Apuleius' conception of *humanitas* looks rather flat, devoid of the polysemy observed in Pliny and Tacitus' *Agricola*. In short, he might be included in the category of those whom Gellius blamed for (mis-)understanding *humanitas* as φιλανθρωπία. Yet his use of the *humanitas* argument in judicial contexts is masterful. In the *Apologia*, he exploits *humanitas*, alongside higher education, to create a bond between the proconsul Maximus, who is also the judge of the trial, his predecessor and himself which separates them from the rude throng and the accusers. But in the mock trial of *Metamorphoses* 3 Apuleius' rhetorical and oratorical skills reach a perhaps higher level of perfection, because *humanitas* even becomes a double-edged sword: the defendant Lucius seeks to employ it in pretty much the same way as Apuleius himself

had done in the *Apologia*, but the accusers resort to the same argument, which, cleverly handled, would probably persuade the judges that they deserve to be treated with *humanitas* more than Lucius. Unfortunately, the fiction of the trial is interrupted and the reader will never know of its outcome.

Unsurprisingly, *humanitas* is conceived in educational terms in Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, the focus of the next section of chapter 3. As well as analysing in depth the well-known passage at 13.17, which, as we have seen, is central to all studies on *humanitas*, I show how Gellius' interest in *humanitas* is not limited to linguistic reasons. Instead, the very cultural programme he proposes throughout his work, and whose guidelines he sets forth in the preface, is based on the restoration of this value concept, which, like Cicero, he regards as closely linked to the liberal arts. In a way, Gellius' use and understanding of *humanitas* also functions to include and exclude: those who intend to follow his teaching will be separated from those who follow the grammarians', the main target of his oeuvre.

The last, brief section of Chapter 3 is devoted to Fronto, who, unlike his pupil Gellius, seems to be wary of the word *humanitas*. The hypothesis I put forward is that his theory of language led him to prefer less polysemic words to express the ideas potentially implied by *humanitas*. In particular, he favoured the Greek φιλοστοργία.

Chapter 4 focuses on the sole work of third-century pagan Latin literature in which *humanitas* plays a key role, Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*. Along the lines sketched out in Cicero's *Pro Archia*, the rhetor Eumenius both exploits the polysemy of this word and exalts the governor's and the emperor's *humanitas* to persuade them to rebuild the famous *scholae Maenianae* of Augustodunum (today's Autun), a place in central Gaul where the values expressed by *humanitas* could perpetuate themselves thanks to the excellence of its teaching.

My investigation of *humanitas* concludes with two fourth-century authors, Ammianus and Symmachus. In the first half of Chapter 5, I show that, unlike Tacitus, one of his models, Ammianus makes ample use of the word *humanitas*, but like him, he does not recognise this value concept as characteristic of the ages he examines, let alone a quality of the emperors who are protagonists of his *Histories*. Sometimes he associates *humanitas* (which he primarily conceives as morally connoted, as benevolence or indulgence) with emperors, but only to show that their *humanitas* is feigned, or that they lack *humanitas* despite having good moral examples to follow. From this perspective, it is telling that the term *humanitas* is never mentioned in relation to Julian the Apostate,

Ammianus' favourite emperor. More generally, Ammianus' use of *humanitas* betrays both his role of soldier and the influence of Greek historiography over his style, which lead him to pay special attention to the moral behaviour of emperors, chieftains, soldiers and enemies, and to emphasise when they are, or are not, humane.

The last part of Chapter 5, whose protagonist is Symmachus, brings us back to the beginning of this thesis. As I shall show, Theodosius I's efforts to appear as a new Trajan are mirrored by Symmachus' role of purveyor of *humanitas*, which very much recalls Pliny's role in the Trajanic age. After a period in the fourth century when *clementia* had again become a mainstream concept, but was also linked to the political crisis prior to Theodosius' ascension to the throne as well as to the dark images of bad emperors, it seems to have been replaced by *humanitas*, thereby reiterating the same pattern observed for the late first century. In Symmachus' oeuvre yet again *humanitas* emerges as linking value within Roman society, especially within the upper classes which help the emperor to govern the empire.

Thus far I have always referred to the noun *humanitas*, completely neglecting the adjective *humanus*. Although each chapter contains minor sections on *humanus*, I will suggest throughout that *humanus* only occasionally takes on the rich, multifaceted meaning of *humanitas*, and usually when it is in comparative or superlative form. This is unsurprising, since *humanus* was originally used and understood as the concrete adjective for *homo* (regardless of the problems of their etymological relationship), whereas *humanitas* is a later coinage which serves to indicate the values which should characterise and realise man *qua* man, as revealed by its abstract ending in *-tas*.

6. Methodology

I have been emphasising that *humanitas* is an ever-evolving cluster of meanings and nuances, which vary according to authors, works, and contexts. It is my contention that any investigation of this multifaceted concept should work outwards, having the occurrences of the term *humanitas* itself as a starting point. Once separated off from its context and studied in isolation, *humanitas* can mean anything and nothing. Most recent studies on *humanitas* agree with this methodological principle; however some, and especially earlier ones, do not.⁵⁴ We can therefore encounter studies on *humanitas* in

⁵⁴ Recent studies working outwards include Prost (2006), Stroh (2008), Oniga (2009), Balbo (2012), Høgel (2015), Vesperini (2015), Elice (2017); others will be mentioned in the next chapters. Büchner (1958), in

authors who did not use, and often could not have used the word *humanitas* in the works which have come down to us. Such is the case, for example, in contributions studying the *humanitas* of some hexametric poets:⁵⁵ the sequence of two long syllables followed by one short and then another long syllable (*hūmānītās*) simply does not fit any hexametric verse. *Humanus* does fit the hexameter, but, as I clarified above, it cannot be seen as an exact equivalent of *humanitas*. Accordingly, it is impossible to understand the connotations authors who did not use the word *humanitas* would have given to this word. I by no means want to disregard these studies altogether: I simply want to say that they cannot play a key role in an analysis of Roman *humanitas*. The first consequence of this is that this thesis deals with prose authors only.

The texts I analyse are also all pagan, and the exclusion of Christian authors from this project calls for some explanation. The fact that we already possess some studies devoted to Lactantius', Ambrose's or other Christians' *humanitas* is not by itself sufficient reason to neglect these figures in a work of this kind.⁵⁶ On the contrary yet, I believe that applying to Christian authors the same methodology used throughout this project would prove important to the history of *humanitas*, and would throw further light on these authors' thought. But it is also the case that doing so requires an expertise in Christian literature and thought which I do not possess. It is true that Cameron observes that pagans and Christians, until the age of Symmachus at least, shared the same classical culture, for "it was the only culture there was".⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Christians were also influenced by sacred, religious texts which derived from a different tradition. The encounter between the two traditions inevitably led to something new, and when it comes to categories of thought or value concepts it is in my view necessary to seek to establish what role the two traditions played in maintaining or transforming them. Without in-depth knowledge of the Christian tradition and literature it would be difficult to understand what lies behind any one occurrence of *humanitas* within a Christian author's work, hence my decision to limit my analysis to non-Christian authors.

part Lipps (1967), cf. e.g. 99-100, and Rieks (1967 – cf. in particular 24), Nussbaum (1971), Girotti (2017), and others work instead inwards, moving from a questionable, pre-conceived idea of *humanitas*.

⁵⁵ Cf. e.g. Büchner (1958) and Nussbaum (1971) on Horace's, Lipps (1967), 70-121 on Lucan's and Persius', or Rieks (1967), 39, 50 and 217 on Ovid's, Manilius' and Statius' *humanitas*.

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g. Sellmair (1948) and Høgel (2015), 85-97.

⁵⁷ Cameron (2011), 398.

Some final comment on translation. In the course of this thesis, I consider a great many Latin texts in their literary, cultural and political contexts, some of which are of considerable length. I have not provided them with English translations, due to the evident problems of conveying the multiple, ever-transforming meanings of *humanitas* without paraphrasing at length, or misleading my readers with inadequate single synonyms. These problems are exacerbated when in many cases *humanitas* is paired with other value concepts or other terms whose meanings are in turn influenced by their being associated with *humanitas*. I give here just one example. In the case of Eumenius' panegyric, discussed in Chapter 4, we encounter the pairing of *humanitas* and *virtus*. Taken alone, *virtus* is no less polysemic than *humanitas*, but the context and the pairing with *humanitas* make clear that *virtus* exalts the emperor's military prowess, while *humanitas* underscores his care for education and culture. The one value concept clarifies the other, and viceversa. Nevertheless, I have sought to make up for the absence of translations by providing detailed contextualisations of the passages as well as close discussions of the other key-words encountered throughout.

In order to understand the meaning of *humanitas* in context, analysing the words with which it is paired or to which it is opposed is often necessary. Yet some clarification is in order, especially because Høgel claims: "Many studies have [...] tried to derive the meaning of *humanitas* by searching for its relationship to other virtues. This is a difficult procedure and threatens to make nothing but a list of partially equivalent positive virtues".⁵⁸ While I agree that the presence of *humanitas* within lists of value concepts is usually of little help in terms of our understanding, this is often not the case when *humanitas* is paired with one single word (or two at most). To simply disregard the cases of pairing would be to ignore one major feature of the Latin language, its propensity to resort to so-called synonymic dittologies: in order to convey a given idea as clearly as possible, two potentially synonymous, or, better, quasi-synonymous terms are paired together. This practice becomes particularly significant and helpful when the meaning of one of the two words, or both, would be ambiguous if taken alone: the passages from Gellius and Nonius quoted above make it clear that this is the case with *humanitas*, and that its ambiguity was already perceived by native Latin speakers.

⁵⁸ Høgel (2015), 39.

Chapter 1.

***Humanitas* from the republican age until the age of Domitian.**

This chapter retraces the history of *humanitas* from its beginnings in first-century republican Rome until the reign of Domitian (81 – 96 CE). As this period is not the focus of my project, I will not investigate all the occurrences of the word in each work and author, but shall limit myself to touching upon the most important episodes of the early history of this value concept. In particular, I will pay attention to those cases which are of greater consequence for the understanding of the use of *humanitas* by the later authors who are at the core of this thesis, from Pliny the Younger to Symmachus.

Although many scholars have associated this value concept with the playwright Terence, whose works date to 166-161 BCE, the word *humanitas* is not attested in Terence or in any authors of this period, but is first used in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (early first century BCE). From this point onwards Cicero's role in the development of the term is crucial, as it is Cicero who invests *humanitas* with the educational connotations which will characterise it for many periods of time, not least in Renaissance humanism. Moreover, Cicero's *Pro Archia* highlights how the Romans themselves exploited the polysemy of *humanitas*. Varro, Caesar, Cornelius Nepos, Vitruvius and Livy demonstrate the extent to which Cicero's understanding of *humanitas* took root. Yet the Tiberian age saw a change of trend, and Valerius Maximus paired *humanitas* with *clementia*, thereby implicitly confining the former to its philanthropic connotations, as if ignoring, or even writing against, Cicero's 'revolution'. The histories of *humanitas* and *clementia* in the years that followed suggest that the two worked in parallel, the former being considered a republican value (which was often rejected), the latter the virtue *par excellence* of the emperor. In particular, this happened in the Neronian age thanks to Seneca: he explicitly rejected the relationship between *humanitas* and the liberal arts, which had been at the core of the republican idea of the *vir bonus*, and showed in the *De Clementia* that the key virtue of the new Neronian age was *clementia*. Nero's cruel behaviour, however, ended up compromising the notion of clemency and the word *clementia* itself, which were thenceforth regarded by many as another aspect of tyranny. Statius seems to have been well-aware of this, and consequently reformulated the traditional notion of *clementia* before attributing it to Domitian. Yet his efforts were in vain, for Domitian turned out to be a second Nero, so that *clementia* was compromised once again. Accordingly, as we

will see in the next chapter, when Trajan became emperor, Pliny the Younger avoided praising his *clementia* and restored the Ciceronian concept of *humanitas* (which not even a Ciceronian author like Quintilian had been able to preserve) to mark the beginning of a new, more ‘democratic’ age.

1.1. The beginnings: Terence and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.

The first occurrence of the word *humanitas* in Latin literature is to be found in the early-first-century BCE rhetorical treatise known as *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Yet much scholarship has regarded the second century playwright Terence as a sort of founder of Latin *humanitas*. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, presumably influenced by the reading of Cicero’s *De re publica* or *De officiis*, many scholars have thought that *humanitas* was born in the so-called Scipionic Circle, of which Terence was one of the main members.⁵⁹ Secondly, Terence has seemed to be the first Latin author to pay significant attention to man and to what is *humanus*. I want to focus my attention on this second point first.

Despite the efforts of some scholars to provide comprehensive investigations of Terence’s alleged *humanitas*,⁶⁰ if a verse such as *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto* (*Heaut.* 77: ‘I am a man, and nothing pertaining to man I deem extraneous to me’) had not been cited often in antiquity and come down to us, Terence would have hardly played any role in discussions on Roman *humanitas*. The reason is plain: as Traina justly put it, referring to this line, “l’umanità vi ha riconosciuto la formula definitiva di ogni umanesimo”.⁶¹ Yet, as Jocelyn argued, this is to overstate the case.⁶² Both the person speaking, a simple and rather negative character like Chremes, and the context, a conversation between two neighbours, make it clear that Terence’s goal was far less ambitious:

⁵⁹ Cf. e.g. Schneidewin (1897), 22, Reitzenstein (1907), Harder (1929), Pfeiffer (1931), Harder (1934), Schadewaldt (1973, 46) or, in more recent times, Høgel (2015), 35-36, Elice (2017), 264 and, more cautiously, Ferrary (2014²), 516. *Contra*, against the influence of the Scipionic Circle on the birth of *humanitas* cf. for example Snell (1953²), 254.

⁶⁰ Cf. Prete (1944) and Comerci (1994). Cf. also, albeit on a smaller scale, Leigh (2004), 313-314.

⁶¹ Traina (1969³), 124.

⁶² Jocelyn (1973). I do not agree with opinions such as Elice’s (2017), 268-269, according to whom Terence’s line is decontextualized in the *Heautontimoroumenos* itself – can we really claim that Terence misplaced this line and should have put it in a nobler context?

{CH.} *numquam tam mane egredior neque tam vesperi
 domum revortor quin te in fundo conspicer
 fodere aut arare aut aliquid ferre denique.
 nullum remitti' tempu' neque te respicis.
 haec non volūptati tibi ēsse sati' certo scio. at
 enī dices “quantum hic operi' fiat paenitet.”
 quod in opere faciundo operae consumis tuae,
 si sumas in illis exercendis, plus agas.*
 {ME.} *Chreme, tantumne ab re tuast oti tibi
 aliena ut cures ea quae nil ad te attinent?*
 {CH.} *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto.
 vel me monere hoc vel percontari puta:
 rectumst ego ūt faciam; non est tē ūt deterream.*

(*Heaut.* 67-79)

Clearly, there are no human, humane or ethical implications here; it is all about curiosity, and not even positive curiosity.⁶³ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that verse 77 could be in tune with, and perfectly embodies, a philanthropic ideal of *humanitas* which authors such as Cicero or Seneca evidently possessed. It is therefore due to their – and, later on, Augustine’s, Ambrose’s and Julianus Pomerius’ – citations of this verse that it gradually began to be regarded as a sort of manifesto of pagan (and then Christian) *humanitas*.

But Cicero also fostered the idea of a Terentian *humanitas* in another way, that is, by promoting the existence of the so-called Scipionic Circle, a sort of cultural Philhellenic society which flourished around the figure of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus in the second century BCE. *Humanitas* would therefore be seen as one of the Greek ideas and habits that the members of the Scipionic Circle sought to introduce to Rome – recall the Ciceronian (and not only) passages about the Greek origin of *humanitas*.⁶⁴ Works such as the *De officiis* or *Laelius de amicitia* are clearly connected with that milieu: the former has its model in the Stoic philosopher Panaetius’ Περὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος, while the latter is even named after another member of that club, the wise man Laelius. But nowhere is the

⁶³ Cf. Leigh (2013), 64-65: “Chremes’ words at v. 77 have taken on a life of their own and are often evoked as an encapsulation of scholarly *humanitas*. [...] Yet in the context of the play as a whole what they betray is precisely his status as a busybody”.

⁶⁴ Cf. above, pp. 14-18.

relationship between the Scipionic Circle and *humanitas* clearer than in Scipio's own speech in *De re publica* 1.28:

Quis vero divitiorem quemquam putet quam eum, cui nihil desit, quod quidem natura desideret, aut potentiolem quam illum, qui omnia, quae expetat, consequatur, aut beatiorem, quam qui sit omni perturbatione animi liberatus, aut firmiore fortuna, quam qui ea possideat, quae secum, ut aiunt, vel e naufragio possit efferre? Quod autem imperium, qui magistratus, quod regnum potest esse praestantius quam despicientem omnia humana et inferiora sapientia ducentem nihil unquam nisi sempiternum et divinum animo volutare? cui persuasum sit appellari ceteros homines, esse solos eos, qui essent politi propriis humanitatis artibus.

Humanitas, which even takes on the 'Ciceronian' meaning of παιδεία here, is central to Scipio's message, and is regarded as a, if not *the*, fundamental quality that a ruler should possess. In sum, because of Cicero's interpretation of *Heaut.* 77 and because of the centrality he accords to *humanitas* within the Scipionic Circle, it becomes evident why so many scholars have maintained that Terence was instrumental in developing the concept of Roman *humanitas*, despite this word never appearing in Terence's work. While most scholarship on Terence is persuasive in showing Terence's attention to the nature of the human and, at times, his loaded use of the adjective *humanus*, it is not the case that he is concerned with *humanitas* as such, and, as I will suggest throughout, there is no complete overlap between *humanus* and *humanitas*.⁶⁵

The starting point for the history of the word *humanitas* is instead the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which also provides breeding ground for future orators' usage of this value concept. As many as three times *humanitas* is paired with *misericordia*, and, most importantly, on one occasion the anonymous author of the treatise even recommends that lawyers defending their clients appeal to these value concepts, and that prosecutors too should respond by emphasising the very same concepts:

Loci communis in his causis: accusatoris contra eum, qui cum peccasse confiteatur, tamen oratione iudices demoretur; defensoris, de humanitate, misericordia: voluntatem in omnibus rebus spectari convenire [...] His [scil. defensoris] locis omnibus ex contrario

⁶⁵ Cf. above, p. 21, and below, pp. 73 and 226.

*utetur is, qui contra dicet, cum amplificacione et enumeratione peccatorum. (Rhet. ad Her. 2.24 and 2.26)*⁶⁶

Unfortunately, we do not possess any one true Roman indictment with its related defensive oration, let alone one centred on *humanitas* and *miser cordia*. Yet this same strategy, in which *humanitas* ultimately acts as a double-edged sword, is to be found in the mock trial which takes place in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 3, as we will see in Chapter 3.⁶⁷

As Høgel points out, the other two instances of *humanitas* within the *Rhetorica*, 4.12 and 4.23, have to do with man's correct conduct in warfare.⁶⁸ More specifically, 4.12 regards those who are guilty of treason as devoid of *humanitas* (*derelictos homines ab humanitate*), while at 4.23 *humanitas* can increase peace (*ut possit ... pacem humanitas augere*).

Overall, *humanitas* emerges from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* as a philanthropic value,⁶⁹ but, at the same time, as a value which can carry with it the notions of inclusion and/vs. exclusion, and which can be rhetorically manipulated. According to Høgel, the possibility that some people might be devoid of *humanitas* allows for two different interpretations: either it means that they ignore the principles of *humanitas*, or that they are even excluded from the human realm.⁷⁰ Yet there is exclusion (or inclusion, if we change standpoint) either way, and one is simply consequence of the other. In the first case, the exclusion is theoretical: the poor, substandard intelligence and/or sensitivity of some people means that they cannot understand the implications of their own existence and of their being human – compare the Socratic idea that those who do evil do so because they lack knowledge of goodness. If we then take this argument to the extreme, these people end up being considered unworthy of the label 'human beings', and are therefore excluded from the notion of human society. And despite the apparent differences, an analogous process takes place in the case of trials: whether the defence or the prosecution appeals to the judges' *humanitas*, the aim is to seek to persuade them that the accused deserve or do not deserve to be considered human beings worthy of this definition, and that they be treated accordingly. Moreover, all this implies that *humanitas* is not seen as

⁶⁶ Cf. also *Rhet. ad Her.* 2.50, where also *clementia* is paired with *humanitas* and *miser cordia*.

⁶⁷ Cf. below, pp. 107-112.

⁶⁸ Høgel (2015), 37-38.

⁶⁹ Cf. Hiltbrunner (1994a), 726.

⁷⁰ Høgel (2015), 39.

an innate quality; or, if it is innate, that it must be preserved accurately because it can (easily?) vanish.

As we will see, all the features which we have encountered in the very first occurrences of the word *humanitas* are destined to have a long-term impact on the history of this word.

1.2. Cicero and the heyday of *humanitas*.

It would be over-simplistic to claim that Cicero's most prominent role in the long history of the word *humanitas* lies in the fact that he employed the term far more often than any other author writing in Latin, that is, as many as 229 times in the works which have come down to us.⁷¹ Granted, this means that this word was of extraordinary importance to his thought and worldview, but it is not sufficient to explain the opposite, that is, why Cicero is important to the study of *humanitas*. The exceptionality of Cicero is that *humanitas* spans all his works, whether they are orations, treatises or letters; or, to put it differently, whether the context is public or private, official or unofficial, and eventually, whether the style is formal or informal. Nor is this a word which characterises only works which date to certain periods of his life: it can be found in the *Pro Quinctio* and *Pro Roscio Amerino*, the first orations he pronounced between 81-80 BCE, as well as in the *Philippicae*, which ultimately brought about his violent death in 43 BCE.⁷² But perhaps most importantly, Cicero was the first to use the word *humanitas* to suggest a vast range of possible meanings and nuances. Accordingly, *humanitas* comes up in the majority of studies on Cicero's thought, and specularly, most studies on *humanitas* deal with, or focus on, Cicero.⁷³ I limit myself here to a brief discussion of a couple of aspects – we will encounter further instances throughout this thesis: first, that through *humanitas* Cicero ultimately gave mankind the modern notion of the humanities; secondly, that he was the first to exploit the polysemy of *humanitas* for clear rhetorical ends.

Cicero lived through an age of major socio-political changes. The destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE had freed Rome from her greatest external enemy, but, paradoxically, had also exposed her to an even greater danger, the greed and corruption

⁷¹ Cf. the list in Mayer (1951), 300-16, cited by Høgel (2015), 43 n. 73.

⁷² Cf. Høgel (2015), 47. On *humanitas* in the *Pro Roscio Amerino* cf. Hiltbrunner (1994a), 727.

⁷³ Most important (and recent) contributions on Cicero's *humanitas* include Hiltbrunner (1994a), 727-730, Stroh (2008), Altman (2009), Gildenhard (2010), 201-217, Altman (2016).

of her upper echelons. As Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* suggests, once the *metus hostilis* which had long bound together Roman society suddenly vanished, personal interests had the upper hand. This fragmentation led to a strong decrease of the overall power of the nobility as well as to internal socio-political instability, but, on the other hand, it facilitated social mobility. In particular, a new category of people, the so-called *homines novi*, came up. Theoretically, these too could belong to the ancient nobility, but were in fact self-made men, and in any case the first of their families to become senators or consuls. Marius, the hero of the Iugurthine war, was one of them, and so was Cicero. Cicero sought to defend Rome and her republican values from internal enemies – his fellow senators above all – until the day of his death: the ideals expressed by his conception of *humanitas* are particularly fitting to epitomise his fight. The social transversality of *humanitas*, for example, accords well with, and is likely to be a prerequisite for, Cicero's theory of the *consensus omnium bonorum* as illustrated in the *Pro Sestio* (56 BCE), that is, the idea that the salvation of the Roman republic must lie in the common agreement of all social classes. Fundamental to this discourse is the notion that *humanitas* has a strong educational component, and can therefore be taught and learnt. In other words, the precondition for being considered *bonus* is no longer represented by nobility by birth, but by a good level of education, which in turn results in correct ethical behaviour. The synthesis of education and ethics ultimately corresponds to Cicero's idea of civilisation, and this too can be called *humanitas*. Those who do not possess or share it, whether they are noblemen, humble people or barbarians, threaten to return Rome to a barbarian, pre-civilised past.⁷⁴

Against this ideological background must be set “one of the most important of Cicero's own discoveries [...]: ‘the humanities’ understood as ‘the distinctive arts of mankind’”.⁷⁵ In *De Republica* 1.28, he writes:

Quod autem imperium, qui magistratus, quod regnum potest esse praestantius quam despicientem omnia humana et inferiora sapientia ducentem nihil umquam nisi sempiternum et divinum animo volutare? cui persuasum sit appellari ceteros homines, esse solos eos, qui essent politi propriis humanitatis artibus.

Cicero's Scipio makes explicit the relationship between *homo* and *humanitas*, but at the same time he also reinforces the idea that the human being is not intrinsically,

⁷⁴ Cf. Gildenhard (2010), 211.

⁷⁵ Altman (2016), 22.

ontologically worthy of being called so: this happens only when common man possesses those arts that are appropriate for him. As well as supporting one methodological premise of my study, that is, the notion that investigating *humanitas* is radically different from investigating *homo*, this passage pushes us to ask what the arts in question are.⁷⁶ To name them, Cicero also coined a very fortunate expression, *artes liberales*, which is first attested in *De inventione* 1.35, and later provided us with a very satisfying definition at *De oratore* 3.127: *has artis, quibus liberales doctrinae atque ingenuae continerentur, geometriam, musicam, litterarum cognitionem et poetarum atque illa, quae de naturis rerum, quae de hominum moribus, quae de rebus publicis dicerentur*. Briefly, this list reproduces by and large Plato's idea of παιδεία as outlined in the Introduction. The term *humanitas*, which is not mentioned in this text, comes up again at *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5.66, where it is regarded as a synonym for *Musae*, the personification of the arts: *quis est omnium, qui modo cum Musis, id est cum humanitate et cum doctrina, habeat aliquod commercium, qui se non hunc mathematicum malit quam illum tyrannum?* The *artes liberales*, or the *Musae*, are therefore the arts which make us human and which impart *humanitas*. Hence, the shift from *humanitas* as abstract noun which indicates the notion of possessing human qualities to synonym for liberal arts is a minor one. Indeed, Cicero coined another quasi-synonymous phrase, in which the term *humanitas* was explicitly present, *studia humanitatis*, whose destiny in Western culture was perhaps even more fortunate than that of *artes liberales* – it is sufficient to recall that the Renaissance humanism is named after this expression.⁷⁷ Cicero employed this rare phrase, which we shall also encounter when dealing with Pliny the Younger and Gellius, only on three occasions, at *Pro Murena* 61, at *Pro Ligario* 12, and at *Pro Archia* 3.⁷⁸ I linger a little over the latter because it also allows me to move on to the second aspect of Cicero's *humanitas* on which I want to focus, his rhetorical exploitation of the polysemy of *humanitas*. Moreover, as we will see in detail later, Cicero's use of the *humanitas* argument in this speech will influence, I argue, Apuleius' rhetorical technique in the *Apologia* and Eumenius' in the *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*.

⁷⁶ On the relationship between *homo* and *humanitas* cf. above, p. 5 n. 13.

⁷⁷ For the state of research on the importance of the expression *studia humanitatis* in the Renaissance cf. Baker (2015), 1-35. Cf. also Reeve (1996), 21-22.

⁷⁸ Hiltbrunner (1994a), 729 rightly adds to the list *Pro Ligario* 12, usually neglected by scholars because other genitives depending on *studia* precede *humanitatis*: *studia generis ac familiae vestrae virtutis, humanitatis, doctrinae, plurimarum artium atque optimarum nota mihi sunt*.

As is well known, the Antiochian poet Aulus Licinius Archias was accused in 62 BCE of usurping Roman citizenship. Cicero, who took on his defence, was well aware of the paucity of evidence he could resort to and thus resolved that he should turn his defence speech into a praise of poetry and of the liberal arts, which, in his opinion, Archias splendidly embodied. The core message is that Rome should pride herself on Archias' willingness to be considered a Roman citizen even in the remote case that he did not meet all citizenship requirements, for such a great poet can only confer prestige onto the city.

Let us look more closely at paragraphs 2-3 of the exordium:

omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent habent quoddam commune vinclum et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur. Sed ne cui vestrum mirum esse videatur, me in quaestione legitima et in iudicio publico, cum res agatur apud praetorem populi Romani, lectissimum virum, et apud severissimos iudices, tanto conventu hominum ac frequentia hoc uti genere dicendi quod non modo a consuetudine iudiciorum verum etiam a forensi sermone abhorreat, quaeso a vobis ut in hac causa mihi detis hanc veniam accommodatam huic reo, vobis, quem ad modum spero, non molestam, ut me pro summo poeta atque eruditissimo homine dicentem hoc concursu hominum litteratissimorum, hac vestra humanitate, hoc denique praetore exercente iudicium, patiamini de studiis humanitatis ac litterarum paulo loqui liberius, et in eius modi persona quae propter otium ac studium minime in iudiciis periculisque tractata est uti prope novo quodam et inusitato genere dicendi.

While I note in passing that the phrase *omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent* is only another way to underscore the close connection between the liberal arts and *humanitas*, my focus is on Cicero's strategy of ideologically binding together the judges, the defendant and himself through the ideal of *humanitas* that they share, thereby also excluding those like Archias' accusers who do not understand its importance. As Nesholm puts it:

“Cicero has drawn the jurors into this exclusive group, defined by Archias and himself. This new flattery serves to make the central point of the speech, namely that they are so well suited to perform their civic and legal function precisely because they have benefited from literary education. The compliment to their cultured sophistication inherently requires

that they recognize Archias' contribution to Rome and therefore include him in their ranks".⁷⁹

I have argued in the Introduction that at *Pro Flacco* 62 laws (*iura*) are to be seen as a hyponym of *humanitas*. Nesholm's argument here provides another point of view from which to look at the relationship between *humanitas* and justice: *humanitas* is a prerequisite for justice. We will see in due course that there are other ways in which these two concepts are connected, especially when we turn to the philanthropic side of *humanitas*, which remains only implicit in the first part of the *Pro Archia*.

As we have seen, the close relationship between *humanitas* and the liberal arts, especially literature, not to say the possible identification of *humanitas* with literature, are undoubtedly Cicero's main contribution to the development of *humanitas*. Implicit in this discourse is the fact that this kind of *humanitas* can only be acquired through education.⁸⁰ From Cicero's time onwards, we need to take into account this potential educational substratum every time we encounter the word *humanitas*: sometimes this will be more evident, sometimes less; at times then it might be utterly absent, but it is telling that Seneca feels the need to specify that his understanding of *humanitas* disregards its relationship with the *artes* altogether, as we shall see in detail in a moment. Conversely, there is no evidence that the educational component of *humanitas* preexisted Cicero's day, and this is another reason why scholars should be cautious about speaking of Terence's or other pre-Ciceronian authors' *humanitas*.

In the Introduction I also quoted a rather long passage by Stroh which explains the logical connection between the two main ideas expressed by *humanitas*, παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία.⁸¹ The *Pro Archia*, it seems to me, is paradigmatic in displaying this relationship. Compare now its end, § 31:

Quae cum ita sint, petimus a vobis, iudices, si qua non modo humana, verum etiam divina in tantis ingeniis commendatio debet esse, ut eum qui vos, qui vestros imperatores, qui populi Romani res gestas semper ornavit, qui etiam his recentibus nostris vestrisque domesticis periculis aeternum se testimonium laudis daturum esse profitetur, estque ex eo

⁷⁹ Nesholm (2010), 481. Cf. also Panoussi (2009), 521 and Høgel (2015), 60. The notion that the protagonists of this trial are bound by their adherence to the ideal of *humanitas* can be found *in nuce* in von Albrecht (1969), 421-422.

⁸⁰ Cf. Panoussi (2009), 521 with regard to the *Pro Archia*.

⁸¹ Cf. above, p. 7.

numero qui semper apud omnes sancti sunt habiti itaque dicti, sic in vestram accipiatis fidem, ut humanitate vestra levatus potius quam acerbitate violatus esse videatur.

Compared with the exordium, it is clear that Cicero plays on the manifold aspects of *humanitas*, especially when re-employing the expression *vestra humanitate* with regard to the judges: at § 3 it exalted their literary education, while here it pleads for mercy, that is, appeals to the judges' benevolent attitude towards the defendant. To put it more simply, the first instance might be translated by and large as παιδεία, whereas φιλανθρωπία is far more appropriate for the second one. After all, the play on words, or the paronomasia, between *humanitate* [...] *levatus* and *acerbitate violatus* only works as long as the meaning of *humanitas* can be opposed to that of *acerbitas* (severity, cruelty). And yet it is no coincidence that Cicero used at the end of his speech the same term he had used at the beginning: the polysemy of *humanitas* allows him to remind the jury that to be learned is to understand their fellow human beings and the situations in which they find themselves. This, at times, turns into being benevolent, at least towards those people like Archias who are worthy of receiving benevolence.

An analogous dialectic between the meanings of *humanitas* can be observed in the letter to Cicero's brother Quintus already discussed in the Introduction.⁸² I quote again the crucial point: *cum vero ei generi hominum [scil. Graecorum] praesimum non modo in quo ipsa sit sed etiam a quo ad alios pervenisse putetur humanitas, certe iis eam potissimum tribuere debemus a quibus accepimus (Ad Q. fr. 1.1.27)*. It also emerges, from the other passages analysed in the Introduction, that when Cicero speaks of the Greeks as purveyors of *humanitas*, he has in mind the idea of culture broadly understood.⁸³ But when he then admonishes Quintus, whose duty it is to rule over the Greeks, that the Romans should treat them with the very *humanitas* they had learnt from Greece, he clearly means something else, namely that the Roman invaders ought to behave humanely and benevolently towards the subjugated Greeks.⁸⁴ Yet again, by exploiting two different aspects of a same word, Cicero is able to maximise rhetorical effectiveness.

To conclude this section, it is worth highlighting that there is no contradiction between the claim that *humanitas* transcends social class distinctions and is therefore

⁸² Cf. above, pp. 14-15. Prost (2006), 40 speaks of a 'bidirectional theory' of *humanitas* with regard to this letter.

⁸³ Cf. above, pp. 16-17.

⁸⁴ I note in passing that Boyancé (1970), 8 observed that Cicero's amplest employ of *humanitas* as φιλανθρωπία is to be found in his collection of letters.

potentially universal, and that it can create bonds from which certain people are excluded. On the contrary, these are the two sides of the same coin: Archias' accusers, despite belonging to Rome's traditional nobility, are unaware of the principles of *humanitas*, and this makes them extremely dangerous for Roman society. Conversely, Archias is not a nobleman, he is not even a Roman by birth, but he does epitomise the idea of *humanitas*, and this is the reason why he would be a better Roman citizen than his accusers.

1.3. Other republican instances.

If the idea of the humanities so conceived can be seen to derive from Ciceronian coinages like *studia humanitatis* and *artes liberales*, the notion of *humanitas* as educationally connoted was apparently widespread in the Caesarian age. Yet the works which have come down to us from this period seem to suggest that none of these authors regarded *humanitas* as an ideal that was crucial to a socio-political project as it was for Cicero.

The copious work of Varro has mostly perished, but *Res Rusticae* 1.17.4 clearly shows that Gellius was right in regarding him, alongside Cicero, as a purveyor of *humanitas-παιδεία*: *qui praesint esse oportere, qui litteris <atque> aliqua sint humanitate imbuti, frugi, aetate maiore quam operarios, quos dixi*. Varro is reporting the opinion of the third-century Greek writer Cassius about the correct hierarchy in estate management. The slaves who work in the estates, claims Cassius, should have men over them who have some education. Two remarks are in order: first, that *humanitas* is to be taken as education here is made all the more clear by the pairing with *litterae*; secondly, Varro was probably translating from Greek, and it is therefore easy to imagine that *humanitas* replaces *παιδεία*.

Something analogous can be found in Cornelius Nepos' *Vita Attici* 4.1, where *humanitas* is paired with *doctrina*. The passage merits quoting at length (especially because of its repercussions on my interpretation of Pliny's Letter 8.24.2 and of Tacitus' *Agricola* 21):⁸⁵

Huc ex Asia Sulla decedens cum venisset, quamdiu ibi fuit, secum habuit Pomponium, captus adolescentis et humanitate et doctrina. sic enim Graece loquebatur, ut Athenis natus videretur; tanta autem suavitas erat sermonis Latini, ut appareret in eo nativum quendam leporem esse, non ascitum. idem poemata pronuntiabat et Graece et Latine sic, ut supra nihil posset addi.

⁸⁵ Cf. below, pp. 61-63 and pp. 77-85 respectively.

Narducci suggests that there is a sort of opposition between *humanitas* and *doctrina*, the former referring to Atticus' innate graceful Latin, the latter to his ability to recite poems both in Greek and Latin.⁸⁶ But I am sceptical. To begin with, *humanitate et doctrina* might be understood as one of those quasi-synonymous pairings in Latin where the second item, *doctrina*, serves to clarify the polysemic *humanitas*.⁸⁷ Furthermore, given its undeniable relation with education and learning (both in general and in this very passage), it seems rash to identify *humanitas* with the notion of innateness. After all, Cornelius also says that Atticus spoke Greek so well that he seemed to be born in Athens, but this can only aim to emphasise his statement. In view of the above, and of the fact that at 3.3 Cornelius had associated both *humanitas* and *doctrina* with the city of Athens,⁸⁸ I would therefore argue that we read the two terms in positive interaction rather than in opposition also at 4.1, where it is stressed that good, actually excellent, knowledge of languages and poetic ability reveal, or are components of, both *humanitas* and *doctrina*.⁸⁹

Similarly we can interpret Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* 1.47, in which Valerius Procillus is regarded as a young man *summa virtute et humanitate*, and immediately afterwards is praised for his knowledge of the Gallic tongue (*propter linguae Gallicae scientiam*) along the same lines. In the light of Cornelius Nepos' and later authors' instances which draw close connections between *humanitas* and proficiency in languages, I am inclined to take Caesar's emphasis on Procillus' excellent Gallic as a clarification of one of the aspects of *humanitas* as he conceives it.

Yet Caesar is usually mentioned in *humanitas*-studies because of another occurrence, that at the beginning of his *De Bello Gallico* (1.1.3):

horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea, quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent, important proximique sunt Germanis, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, quibuscum continenter bellum gerunt.

The reason why the Belgae are regarded as the bravest and strongest Gallic people is because they are the farthest from the *cultus* and *humanitas* of the Roman provinces: this

⁸⁶ Narducci (1981), 178-179.

⁸⁷ Cf. above, pp. 17 and 23.

⁸⁸ *cum in eam se civitatem [scil. Athenas] contulisset, quae antiquitate, humanitate doctrinaque praestaret omnes.*

⁸⁹ Cf. Büchner (1949).

is a strong statement, which might imply an indirect criticism of the Roman idea of civilisation, that is, of *humanitas*, as observed by some scholars.⁹⁰ Yet I would not overstate the case: Caesar might well claim that (Roman) civilisation would make the *Belgae* less brave, but how could he attack expansionism and the related idea of civilising barbarians at the beginning of a work like *De Bello Gallico*, whose main aim throughout is to exalt such concepts? Moreover, I would stress that the most polemical part of the statement concerns traders and the products they sell, which can make men effeminate: this second part, however, is neither directly related to, nor a consequence of, the first half, as the coordinating conjunction *-que (minimeque)* reveals.

1.4. The Augustan age: Vitruvius and Livy.

As I anticipated in the Introduction, a decline of *humanitas* began in the Augustan age. Far fewer occurrences of the word have come down to us from this than from the Ciceronian (or Caesarian) age. Granted, the fact that the large majority of Augustan literature is in verse contributed to this phenomenon; still, figures remain low: three occurrences in as many as 35 books of Livy, four in Vitruvius' *De Architectura* and none in Augustus' *Res Gestae*. We also note a decline in the exploitation of the polysemy of the word, especially in Vitruvius' treatise, in which all four instances evoke the notion of civilisation.⁹¹ Livy is a partial exception, because each instance takes on different nuances.

Of the four Vitruvian occurrences let me quote 2.1.6 and 9 *praef.* 2. The former is one of the best definitions of *humanitas* as the achievement of the higher level of civilisation, the climax of a process which, according to Vitruvius, begins with building construction and continues with other arts and disciplines: *ex fabricationibus aedificiorum gradatim progressi [scil. homines] ad ceteras artes et disciplinas, e fera agrestique vita ad mansuetam perduxerunt humanitatem.* 9 *praef.* 2 instead is another instance which associates *humanitas* with law, like Cicero's *Pro Flacco* 62: *e quibus [scil. gentibus / hominibus] qui a teneris aetatibus doctrinarum abundantia satiantur, optimos habent sapientiae sensus, instituunt civitatibus humanitatis mores, aequa iura, leges, quibus absentibus nulla potest esse civitas incolumis.*

⁹⁰ Cf. recently Høgel (2015), 73. Vesperini (2015) is more cautious, generally speaking of *humanitas* as a vice.

⁹¹ Cf. *Vitr.* 2 *praef.* 5, 2.1.6, 2.8.12, 9 *praef.* 2.

As for Livy, I have discussed his conception of *humanitas* elsewhere: I therefore limit myself to summing up the results.⁹² If we bear in mind the three main meanings of *humanitas* as classified in the *OLD*, all three of them can be found in Livy. The rarest one, that of human nature, relates to the Pleminius affair at 29.9.6: Pleminius, Scipio's legatus at Locri, is beaten by two tribunes, who thereby neglect not only his official role of magistrate, but also his human nature (*sine respectu non maiestatis modo sed etiam humanitatis*). Like Cicero, Livy seems to draw a connection between this broad idea of man, and education as a means to accomplish it. This becomes clear thanks to the dittology *humanitatis doctrinarumque* at 37.54.17, where the Rhodian ambassadors even state before the Roman senate that the Greeks' high, unrivaled level of education should be sufficient reason for them to deserve freedom. Finally, there is also the philanthropic component, as emerges from 37.7, where *humanitas* is paired with *dexteritas*. I will return to this passage in the section on Gellius in Chapter 3, because on that occasion Gellius mentions *dexteritas* as a Latin equivalent of φιλανθρωπία while attacking those who give to *humanitas* the meaning of φιλανθρωπία.⁹³

1.5. Valerius Maximus and the pairing of *humanitas* and *clementia*.

One author from the Tiberian age is of particular importance to the development of my study, Valerius Maximus. Book 5 of his *Facta et dicta memorabilia* opens up by associating *humanitas* with *clementia*:

Liberalitati quas aptiores comites quam humanitatem et clementiam dederim, quoniam idem genus laudis expetunt? quarum prima inopia, proxima occupatione, tertia ancipiti fortuna praestatur, cumque nescias quam maxime probes, eius tamen commendatio praecurrere videtur, cui nomen ex ipso numine⁹⁴ quaesitum est.

As Rieks rightly notices, the philanthropic component of *humanitas*, which was not predominant in Cicero, appears to have become exclusive in Valerius Maximus.⁹⁵ While it is clear that *humanitas* and *clementia* pertain to the same sphere and yearn for the same kind of praise, it is also evident that they are not the same thing: *clementia* assists people in dangerous fortune (*ancipiti fortuna*), *humanitas* on other unclear occasions

⁹² Cf. Mollea – Della Calce (forthcoming).

⁹³ Cf. above, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁴ Manuscripts read *numine*, but Badius' conjecture *homine* might merit some credit.

⁹⁵ Rieks (1967), 69.

(*occupatione*).⁹⁶ Rieks further shows that overall *clementia* emerges as a subcategory of *humanitas*, and this notion becomes crucial once it is made clear in what terms this subcategorisation is to be conceived.⁹⁷ Broadly speaking, *clementia* is not only to be understood as the philanthropic component of *humanitas*, but as a part of this philanthropic component (ultimately, it is a subcategory of a subcategory of *humanitas*): indeed, *clementia* also implies a downward relationship between the one who concedes and the one who benefits from it. In other words, the giver of *clementia* should be ranked more highly or seen in a position of strength. While until the age of emperor Claudius *clementia* remained politically neutral, in the sense that it was not necessarily linked with imperial ideology, things changed with Nero and Seneca's *De Clementia*.⁹⁸

1.6. Seneca: *humanitas*, *clementia* and tyranny.

After a long-lasting tendency to overemphasise the importance of *humanitas* in Seneca's thought, Høgel has rightly tried to put things into perspective.⁹⁹ Yet, I argue, he overstates the case when he claims that Seneca's "overall approach to the concept was to avoid it", and does not pay sufficient attention to *clementia* as a counterpart of *humanitas*.¹⁰⁰ The 27 occurrences of the term *humanitas* (and *inhumanitas*) in Seneca's oeuvre seem too many to justify Høgel's view: he did not shun it, but rather deprived it of a fundamental aspect, its Ciceronian, educational and cultural component. This is made clear in *Ep.* 88.30, where *humanitas*, which is regarded as a positive value as usual, is separated from the *studia liberalia* (the Ciceronian *artes liberales*), which do not have the power to morally improve human beings:

Humanitas vetat superbum esse adversus socios, vetat amarum; verbis, rebus, adfectibus comem se facilemque omnibus praestat; nullum alienum malum putat, bonum autem suum

⁹⁶ The phrase *proxima occupatione [...] praestatur* is nebulous, and has induced scholars to make conjectures: Shackleton Bailey for instance suggested *occasione* (which however obliges to make further changes to the period).

⁹⁷ Rieks (1967), 70-79.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Clem.* 1.11.2: *haec [scil. clementia] est in maxima potestate verissima animi temperantia et humani generis comprehendens*, with Borgo (1985), 27.

⁹⁹ Høgel (2015), 76-83, ignored by Elice (2017). Cf. previously Lipps (1967), 17-69, Rieks (1967), 89-137, Balbo (2012), 69-81 (with further bibliography).

¹⁰⁰ Høgel (2015), 77, on which cf. the reservations expressed in Mollea (2016).

ideo maxime quod alicui bono futurum est amat. Numquid liberalia studia hos mores praecipiant?

The gulf between Cicero, who identifies *humanitas* with the liberal arts, and Seneca, who does not draw any connections between them, could hardly be wider. And yet in explicitly denying the link between *humanitas* and the liberal arts, Seneca establishes a dialectic relationship with Cicero. The main reason of their opposite conception of *humanitas* must lie in the different socio-political contexts in which Cicero and Seneca lived. Unlike the other authors we have so far mentioned – with the sole exception of Julius Caesar – Cicero and Seneca also played a fundamental role in the political life of their days, and their political commitment is very often reflected in their works. As we saw above, Cicero’s understanding of *humanitas* was based on the assumption that this concept, educational and consequently ethical, would foster more democratic participation in politics by creating a new, trans-social, category of *boni*. These, and not the traditional nobility, would save the Roman Republic. Clearly his project failed, and Octavian inaugurated a new political era, the principate. By the time of the *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, which were written when Nero’s tyrannical turn was reaching its acme, this new form of government was mature. It was therefore clear to each and every Roman citizen that all the power was concentrated in one man’s hands. *Humanitas* did remain a moral quality, but its educational component would be socio-politically useless, for no citizen could hope to gain political influence thanks to a higher level of education. Moreover, I suspect that the negative example of Nero influenced Seneca in denying ethical importance to the liberal arts: this emperor was extraordinarily imbued with literature and a writer himself, but this fact did not prevent him from being extraordinarily cruel as well.

Seneca had actually tried to replace the republican *humanitas* with a political virtue which seemed more fitting to the new imperial climate, *clementia*. The choice of this concept was probably suggested by Cicero himself. In the so-called Caesarian orations (*Pro Marcello*, *Pro Ligario*, *Pro rege Deiotaro*), Cicero gave birth, or at least contributed to, the myth of the *clementia Caesaris*. Perceiving the Republic’s tyrannical turn under Julius Caesar, he evidently thought that “the policy of ‘mildness’ was the best solution *sub tyranno*, or at least the less bad”.¹⁰¹ Moreover, by Seneca’s time *clementia* was included among the *virtutes imperatoriae*.¹⁰² Like Cicero’s attempt with *humanitas*,

¹⁰¹ Malaspina (2009), 49.

¹⁰² Malaspina (2009), 62.

Seneca's with *clementia* was also destined to fail, but it is worth noting that the alternation of these two concepts would be central to political rhetoric in the centuries which followed, at least until the late fourth, as we shall see.

Some years before writing the *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, Seneca had sought to influence Nero's policy in many ways, not least by addressing him in the *De clementia*.¹⁰³ According to Lana, Seneca's main aim in this treatise was to provide a theoretical justification for the principate.¹⁰⁴ Malaspina has then expanded on this premise by highlighting three aspects which characterised Seneca's political thought as it emerges from the *De clementia*.¹⁰⁵ First, the emperor is a person whose absolute power is legitimate. He exercises his power by limiting himself spontaneously, and by administering justice with mildness, despite having the right to do so severely and with impunity. Secondly, this mild behaviour derives from only one virtue, the emperor's *clementia*. Even taken alone, this virtue is the distinctive feature of the good monarch, and to possess it is to possess all other virtues, which are regarded as ancillary.¹⁰⁶ The third aspect, which is perhaps the most problematic one, is that the emperor is compared to the Stoic *sapiens*. In other words, there would be a shift from the political to the philosophical and moral dimension. This topic should have been central to Book 2, but it is no coincidence that Seneca left off after writing only a few paragraphs of this book.¹⁰⁷ In particular, the equation between emperor and Stoic sage could have been considered a downgrade by Nero, and in any case Seneca could not find any philosophical support for the prevalence of one imperial virtue over the others.¹⁰⁸

Yet regardless of this theoretical issue, the value Seneca had chosen to epitomise the imperial virtues had well-defined features. First, as I have already mentioned, unlike *humanitas*, *clementia* implies a downward, unilateral relationship between giver and

¹⁰³ On the protreptic function of Seneca's *De clementia* cf. for example Braund (2009), 1, according to whom this is a "complex hybrid between different models: didactic kingship treatise addressed to a new ruler, panegyric oration, and philosophical disquisition on one of the classic virtues of a ruler".

¹⁰⁴ Lana (1955), 213-222. This theory has been endorsed by the majority of Senecan scholars: cf. Malaspina (2009), 36 n. 63 for the relevant bibliography.

¹⁰⁵ Malaspina (2009), 36.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. also Malaspina (2009), 61.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. also Malaspina (2003) for a survey of research on the theoretical problems posed by Seneca's *De clementia*.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Malaspina (2009), 61-63.

recipient.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, to expand on Malaspina’s second point, regardless of the different specific interpretations of *Clem. 2.7.3*, here Seneca claims that *clementia* “has freedom in decision”: as the author himself makes it clear, this statement is to be understood in positive terms, meaning that this value concept should induce the emperor to mitigate judicial verdicts, which might be at times too severe.¹¹⁰ Yet this same claim also implies the notion of arbitrariness in the legal sphere, as well as the idea that *clementia*, and consequently the emperor who possesses it, is above the law.¹¹¹ The continuation of the passage (*ex aequo et bono iudicat*) suggests that Seneca conceived this superiority in moral terms, almost putting *clementia* on the same level as *aequitas*, an ‘enlightened’ version of *iustitia*;¹¹² but an *ex post facto* reading rather shows that Nero exercised his freedom *not* to concede *clementia*, and to do whatever he wanted, regardless of laws. In other words, *clementia* is to be seen as the only check on unlimited power, but when an emperor lacks *clementia*, he is likely to become a tyrant.¹¹³ This was certainly the case with Nero, whose image, as it has come down to us from antiquity, does not at all epitomise the idea of clemency – let alone that of Stoic *sapientia*. On the contrary, the association of Seneca’s *De clementia* with an emperor who lacked *clementia* probably ended up compromising the very idea of *clementia* itself. Neither analogous attempts at educating the monarch and at theoretically justifying the principate, nor such a strong emphasis on the importance of the sole *clementia* as imperial virtue returned after Seneca.¹¹⁴ Under Domitian, Statius represented a unique exception in giving importance to *clementia*, as we shall see in the next section. Seneca’s treatise therefore marked a turning point in the history of this value concept. Briefly, after the reign of Nero and after Seneca’s writings, both *humanitas* and *clementia* appeared to undergo a transformation:

¹⁰⁹ Sen. *Clem. 2.3.1*: *clementia est [...] lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis*.

¹¹⁰ *Clementia liberum arbitrium habet; non sub formula, sed ex aequo et bono iudicat; et absolvere illi licet et, quanti vult, taxare litem. Nihil ex his facit, tamquam iusto minus fecerit, sed tamquam id, quod constituit, iustissimum sit*. Cf. Malaspina (2003), 146 on the different readings of 2.7.3 and Braund (2009), 70 and 419. On the relationship between *humanitas* and *iustitia* cf. below, pp. 60-61, 135, 190 and 195.

¹¹¹ Cf. Borgo (1985), 27.

¹¹² On the relationship between *aequitas* and *iustitia* (and *humanitas*) cf. below, pp. 195-196.

¹¹³ Cf. Syme (1958), 414, although with reference to Julius Caesar: “To acquiesce in the ‘*clementia Caesaris*’ implied a recognition of despotism”.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Malaspina (2009), 74-75.

the former had lost its main Ciceronian and republican component, while the latter become synonymous with tyranny.¹¹⁵

1.7. The Flavian age and a second Nero.

The Flavian age confirms both these trends: there seems to be no place for Ciceronian *humanitas*, and *clementia* will be even more compromised at the end of the reign of Domitian. The role and the nuances of *humanitas* in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and of *clementia* in Statius' *Thebaid* are symptomatic of these two tendencies respectively.

To Quintilian Cicero was the model *par excellence*, both as an orator and writer. His style is clearly Ciceronian, and so is his idea of the orator as *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, a man who combines moral qualities with encyclopaedic knowledge – in a word, a man who possesses what Cicero calls *humanitas*. In the light of this, it is all the more surprising that none of the seven occurrences of *humanitas* in Quintilian's treatise evoke the notions of *doctrina* or liberal arts.¹¹⁶ In the 'library of the orator' in *Institutio oratoria* 10.1, Quintilian attacks Seneca and his style, but also claims that young people seem to read him exclusively (10.1.125: *tum autem solus hic fere in manibus adulescentium fuit*). This is telling, because it explains why Seneca was so influential, and whether or not he was aware of this, Quintilian also appears to have been influenced, at least in his understanding of *humanitas*.

Statius' *Silvae* and *Thebaid* are the other side of the same coin. Statius regarded *clementia* as a crucial virtue, but was also well-aware of the tyrannical connotations it carried, especially after the years of Nero.¹¹⁷ Thus, as Burgess has stressed, he reinvented *clementia* by adding a third part to the traditional dual relationship between the inferior and the superior, that is, another superior.¹¹⁸ This new conceptualisation features an inferior who is no longer the offending part, and a superior who is still the victimising part, but no longer that which shows *clementia*, for this role belongs to the other superior.

¹¹⁵ On clemency in Julio-Claudian Rome cf. Burgess (1972), 341: "It seems probable that during the Julio-Claudian principate there were people at Rome, Stoics and Republicans perhaps, for whom *clementia* was a symbol of the imperial tyranny". Cf. also Dowling (2006), 215.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Balbo (2012), 81-82. Cf. however 12.11.5-6, where the educational aspect does seem to shine through: below, p. 172.

¹¹⁷ More generally, cf. Tuck (2016), 110: "A crucial element of the Flavian "message" lay in the denigration of Nero".

¹¹⁸ Burgess (1972), 345.

Outside the metaphor of the *Thebaid*, the new superior *par excellence*, who is not victimising but only a bestower of *clementia*, must be the emperor, Domitian. In the *Silvae*, this becomes explicit,¹¹⁹ and a passage by Suetonius (*Dom.* 11) gives us further hints as to why *clementia* was ‘officially’ associated with Domitian during his lifetime, and why it was distrusted after his death: *numquam tristiores sententiam sine praefatione clementiae pronuntiavit*. But with Suetonius we have reached the age of Trajan and Hadrian, which I shall investigate in detail in the next chapter.

1.8. Conclusion.

The first two centuries in the long history of *humanitas* were crucial for future uses and perceptions of this term. Clearly Cicero played the fundamental role in making *humanitas* as loaded and multifaceted a value concept as it was in the final years of the Roman Republic. The juxtaposition of the educational and ethical aspect, and the broader idea of civilisation resulting from the simultaneous presence of these two aspects, all potentially encapsulated within one single word, had no precedents in Greek or in Roman thought. Furthermore, Cicero invested *humanitas* with strong political connotations, condensing into this word his message that the survival of the Republican system could only lie in the general consensus of the *boni homines*, that is, those who have assimilated the principles of *humanitas*. Both *humanitas* and this new category of people therefore transcended traditional social-class distinctions, and this would make of *humanitas* a ‘democratic’, ‘republican’ connoted term thenceforth. In this respect, it is no coincidence that Pliny the Younger exalted Trajan’s *humanitas* after the despotic years of Domitian, thereby suggesting that a more democratic age had just begun.

The clear-cut distinction between possessors and non-possessors of *humanitas* could also be exploited in judicial, and, more generally, oratorical contexts, as Cicero did in the *Pro Archia* and other orations. In doing so, he also set himself in the wake of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which had already highlighted the importance of the *humanitas* argument in trials. With the advent of the principate, oratory witnessed a period of decadence, as testified for example by Quintilian and Tacitus. Yet Cicero remained the model of the perfect orator, and it comes as no surprise that later imperial authors like Apuleius and Eumenius followed his example and gave prominence to the *humanitas* argument in oratorical contexts.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Silv.* 3.4.73-77 with Burgess (1972), 345-346. Cf. also Bessone (2011), 23.

During the early imperial age, however, *humanitas* must have been perceived as too republican a value, and the first author after Cicero to openly deal with political theory, Seneca, replaced *humanitas* with *clementia*. Because of its features, among which its implying a downward relationship between bestower and recipient, the latter appeared as far more suitable to the new political climate, when all power was concentrated in one man's hands. In the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* then, Seneca implicitly rejected the validity of Cicero's socio-political project, denying any relationships between *humanitas* and the liberal arts.

Seneca freed *humanitas* of its Ciceronian accretions, and also influenced a Ciceronian author like Quintilian in this respect. Yet the age of Domitian celebrated once again the emperor's *clementia*, but in fact, like Nero, Domitian proved not at all clement. As we are about to see, the dialectic between *humanitas* and *clementia* witnessed a new phase in the Trajanic age, when *humanitas* was restored to its Ciceronian connotations and the term *clementia* was generally avoided. It thus became all the more clear that *clementia* was identified with tyrannical power (Nero and Domitian), and *humanitas* with a more democratic one (the Republican age and Trajan).

Chapter 2.

A new apogee of *humanitas* in the Trajanic age: Pliny the Younger, Tacitus and Suetonius.

After being overshadowed by *clementia* for about half a century, *humanitas* was restored to the popularity it enjoyed in Cicero's time at the beginning of the Trajanic age thanks to Pliny the Younger. Despite all attempts at denigrating, and distancing themselves from, the figure of Nero, the emperors of the Flavian dynasty saw all their efforts vanish because of Domitian, who was long regarded as a second Nero after his death.¹²⁰ Most recent scholarship has expressed doubt as to whether 96 CE can be considered a watershed in Latin literature; as far as the concepts of value are concerned, however, a significant transformation certainly took place.¹²¹ In particular, by the end of Domitian's reign, *clementia*, which had played a key role (albeit in vain) in the ideology of the Neronian age, and which had been reinvented by Statius at the time of the last Flavian emperor, appears to have been looked at with suspicion once again.¹²² In this sense, the arguments put forward by Benferhat, in the wake of Charlesworth and others, are convincing and merit being summarised here.¹²³ As Benferhat points out, there are very few occurrences of *clementia* in the authors of the Trajanic age such as Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, and in the *Panegyricus* in particular the author seems to be wary of Domitian's false clemency. As a consequence, it is unsurprising that the term is employed only once with reference to Trajan (*Pan.* 35.1). Conversely, it appears quite often in Tacitus: once in the *Dialogus de oratoribus*, seven times in the *Historiae* and 27 in the *Annales*. Yet all these instances mainly seem to spotlight the historian's hostility towards what has become the *clementia principis* as opposed to the former *clementia populi Romani*. In other words,

¹²⁰ On the denigration of Nero as a fundamental component of Flavian image-making cf. Tuck (2016); on Domitian as a second Nero cf. Zissos (2016 b).

¹²¹ Cf. König – Whitton (2018), 9: "Whether 96 really did inaugurate a literary revival, then, and how long it lasted, are questions we can hardly answer". In this respect, previous scholarship had been less cautious, and Coleman (1990), 38 for instance claimed that 96 "does not represent a dramatic transformation for Latin literature, although neither was the change negligible". Cf. also Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 200.

¹²² Cf. above, pp. 43-44.

¹²³ Benferhat (2011), 185 n. 212; Charlesworth (1937), 112-113. Cf. also Syme (1958), 414, Burgess (1972), 340-341, Benferhat (2011), 197.

what had once been the virtue of a great people which was able to show mercy towards the conquered enemy came to symbolise the cruelty and arbitrariness of a tyrant.¹²⁴ The same holds true with regard to Suetonius' usage of *clementia*.¹²⁵ As Burgess remarks, "Suetonius laid great emphasis on the *clementia* of the emperors, and by concentrating on pardon not for serious offences but for personal insults and trivialities he presents the emperors, apart from Vespasian, as malevolent tyrants".¹²⁶ Moreover, despite an image of *Clementia* appearing on coins of 99-100 CE, *clementia* is not included among Trajan's official virtues. In sum, by Trajan's day *clementia* "had become too much a despotic quality [...] and it could return again under Hadrian or under later emperors in an altered form as *Clementia Temporum*".¹²⁷

As I argue in what follows, as *clementia* progressively lost its value, *humanitas* took its place and started to embody the meaning *clementia* once had, at least in part. This is first and foremost shown by Pliny, who seems to have understood *humanitas* as Cicero had done, that is, as an ideal which roughly intermingles superior education (the Greek παιδεία) with a benevolent disposition towards humans *qua* humans (the Greek φιλανθρωπία). As I will show in the first section of this chapter, in the *Panegyricus* the term *humanitas* plays an analogous central role to that played by *clementia* in Seneca's *De clementia*, which can be regarded as a forerunner of the Latin panegyrics – Pliny's in particular –, and Statius' *Silvae* and *Thebaid*. And while Nero and Domitian are either characterised by or encouraged to pursue *clementia*, *humanitas* epitomises the values which differentiate Trajan from his predecessor(s). However, unlike *clementia*, *humanitas* is not an exclusive prerogative of the ruler: it is a value that can and should be

¹²⁴ Cf. Benferhat (2011), 201. Cf. also Burgess (1972), 341: "This master of irony and innuendo [*scil.* Tacitus] uses *clementia* to great effect in his characterization of the Julio-Claudian emperors; furthermore, he represents it as a basically imperial prerogative, and it is a short step from here to its use as a propaganda word in anti-imperial sources, a word symbolizing the despotism of the emperors", and Borgo (1985), 48-51.

¹²⁵ It must be borne in mind that scholars such as Wallace-Hadrill (1984) maintain that *clementia* played an important role in Suetonius' *Caesares*. But first, this is not to deny that the number of occurrences of this word is rather low (8 instances of *clementia* and 2 of *clemens*); secondly and crucially, this concept is always used with reference to emperors of the first century CE (Augustus, Tiberius, Nero, Vitellius, Vespasian and Domitian). I will deal with this issue in more detail in the section on Suetonius: cf. below, pp. 88-92.

¹²⁶ Burgess (1972), 341. On *clementia* in Suetonius cf. also Borgo (1985), 44 and 50-52.

¹²⁷ Charlesworth (1937), 113.

possessed by the entire Roman intellectual and political elite that we get to know from Pliny's *Epistulae*. In a way, we could say that *humanitas* is at the core of the cultural, social and political renaissance that Pliny hopes will follow the dark age of Domitian's tyranny.

In the light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that in Tacitus and Suetonius the term is differently nuanced and appears rarely. After all, most of what has survived of their works, that is, Tacitus' *Annales* and *Historiae* and Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum*, deal with the history of the Principate until Domitian, whereas *humanitas* was rather a republican, Ciceronian concept which Pliny (and Trajan?) were trying to reintroduce. Yet because of their rarity the very few occurrences of the word in their oeuvre are worth investigating. Accordingly, the second section of this chapter will be devoted to Tacitus, in whose work the term *humanitas* is found only twice: once in the *Agricola* and once in the *Germania*. As we will see, these two occurrences take on different nuances. Of the two, the instance in the *Agricola* is striking and merits discussion at length, because here *humanitas*, which roughly stands for 'civilisation', becomes closely related to Tacitus' attitude towards Roman imperialism.

As for Suetonius, the topic of the third and last section of this chapter, *humanitas* only appears twice in the *Vita Tiberii*. As is the case with *Agricola* 21, the term itself is positively connotated but the contexts in which *humanitas* is mentioned seem to warn against the possible risks provoked either by the misuse of this concept or, on the contrary, by its total absence.

Brief subsections at the end of the analysis of *humanitas* in each author are devoted to *humanus* and its adverbial derivatives. As will soon be clear, the adjective is very often deprived of the ideological values carried by the noun, so much so that the meanings of *humanitas* and *humanus* rarely overlap.

2.1. Pliny the Younger: refounding Imperial Rome in the name of *humanitas*.

There can be little doubt that in Pliny the Younger's view the idea of *humanitas* was meant to be at the core of the cultural, social and political renaissance that he hoped would follow Domitian's death. Holding a prominent post at Trajan's court and, consequently, in Trajanic society, Pliny did not want to miss the opportunity to try to influence the world in which he lived. This he certainly did in the *Panegyricus* and *Epistulae*, the only works which have come down to us. *Humanitas* is a recurrent word in both these works, and this fact is significant. First, after the tyranny of a man who considered himself a second Jupiter, the *humanitas* of his successor made it clear that times had changed and the emperor was again a man among men. Secondly, to restore such an important Ciceronian, republican concept was to indicate the lines along which the Trajanic 'revolution' could take place, that is, by combining education, knowledge and culture with a benevolent attitude towards one's fellow human beings. To best appreciate how Pliny employed this *humanitas* argument, let us look at his works in greater detail, starting with the *Panegyricus*.

As Innes and others remark, Pliny calls *gratiarum actio* what we usually call *Panegyricus*, that is, the speech he gave in praise of Trajan before the Senate in September 100 CE when he was appointed consul, of which a revised version has come down to us.¹²⁸ Although this is the first imperial panegyric we are aware of, Ciceronian orations such as *Pro Marcello* and *Pro Archia* as well as Seneca's *De clementia* can to some extent be considered its precedents and perhaps models, especially with regard to the custom of listing the virtues which characterise the subject of praise.¹²⁹ Roche has listed and counted the occurrences of the main virtues of Trajan that Pliny mentions in the *Panegyricus*.¹³⁰ Yet his otherwise useful quantitative analysis ends up underestimating the key role that *humanitas* plays in this speech. Compared to *modestia*, *moderatio*, *fides*, *reverentia*, *cura*, *labor*, *liberalitas*, *securitas*, *pudor*, *pietas*, *benignitas* and *maiestas*, which all appear ten times or more, the 7 occurrences of *humanitas* might at first sight suggest that this concept

¹²⁸ Innes (2011), 67. The date is certain, and Pliny himself informs us of his revision of the speech in *Ep.* 3.18.

¹²⁹ Cf. Picone (1978), 133 and n. 68 for further bibliography, Manuwald (2011).

¹³⁰ Roche (2011), 8-9.

plays a secondary role, but nothing is further from the truth.¹³¹ As ever, figures need interpretation.

To begin with, *humanitas* is a key element in perhaps the most important part of this *gratiarum actio*, its opening, when a sort of *captatio benevolentiae* is needed. Following the old precept *Ab Iove principium*, the *Panegyricus* opens up by invoking the gods and stating that Trajan is very similar to any one of them (§ 1.3: *dis simillimus princeps*). Yet, unlike his predecessor Domitian, he behaves and rules like a man among men – and this is his most extraordinary quality (2.4: *et hoc magis excellit atque eminent, quod unum <ille se> ex nobis putat nec minus hominem se quam hominibus praeesse meminit*). The term *humanitas* has not yet been mentioned, but it is sufficiently clear that the theme of Trajan’s humanness, or, more generally, of his human qualities, will be at the core of the speech. This becomes explicit soon, when at 2.7 *humanitas* is strikingly opposed to *divinitas*: *Quid nos ipsi? Divinitatem principis nostri an humanitatem, temperantiam, facilitatem, ut amor et gaudium tulit, celebrare universi solemus?* This juxtaposition, albeit rare, is not new in the literature of Pliny’s day, but Cicero had regarded *divinitas* as superior to *humanitas*, identifying the former with the (high) qualities of the gods, the latter with the (lower) qualities of human beings.¹³² In contrast, not only does this passage seem to put humanness and divinity on the same level, but it implicitly suggests that *humanitas* could even be more important, at least to an emperor.¹³³ As Rees puts it, Trajan’s “simple *humanitas* sets him apart from the arrogance of former emperors and is clearly presented as being of great credit to him. Trajan is not a god, is not called a god and does not want to be treated as a god”.¹³⁴

Pliny also innovatively opposes *temperantia* and *facilitas* to *divinitas*, probably to stress further this novel way of reading the relationship between *humanitas* and *divinitas*. Indeed, Pliny’s originality only consists in creating this polarity – the triad *humanitas*, *temperantia* and *facilitas* echoes Cicero’s *Pro lege Manilia* 36, where *innocentia*, *fides*

¹³¹ On the importance of *humanitas* in Pliny’s *Panegyricus* cf. also Rieks (1967), 244-248 and Braund (2012²), 93 and 98.

¹³² Cf. Cic. *De orat.* 2.86.

¹³³ On this passage cf. also Cova (1978), 108.

¹³⁴ Rees (2001), 163. Indeed, Rees (2001), 163-164 also shows that other places in the *Panegyricus* would equate Trajan to a god, and yet Pliny’s rhetoric manages to hide this aspect.

and *ingenium* complete the list of the qualities that leaders and generals should possess.¹³⁵ Of the two, *facilitas* in particular is paired with *humanitas* quite often in Cicero (*de orat.* 2.362, *off.* 1.90, *fam.* 3.10.10 and 13.24.2) and once in Quintilian (at 11.1.42 in a list of those values which make an orator appeal to the audience), and Hellegouarc’h even regards it as an aspect of *humanitas*.¹³⁶ Yet if we accept his definition, *facilitas* is to be seen as the act of a person of higher rank who strives to understand the situation of a subordinate person and does not show *superbia* towards them. Certainly, as other Plinian passages will show, *humanitas* transcends social distinctions, so that in the passage under investigation *facilitas* may serve the purpose of counterbalancing the situation: if *humanitas* casts Trajan down from Olympus, *facilitas* reminds the audience that the emperor is nonetheless in a higher position. The addition of *temperantia*, which appears rarely in Pliny but is at the heart of Tacitus’ political message according to Benferhat, and which refers to the ability to restrain passions and instincts according to Hellegouarc’h, thus standing for moderation in political contexts, somehow reiterates the superiority of an emperor who is no longer a god, but is still the emperor.¹³⁷

No sooner has Pliny started mentioning these virtues of Trajan than he immediately realises that to talk about virtues is to risk undermining the genuineness of his speech. In fact, previous emperors, not least Domitian, had been praised for their virtues too. They had probably been praised insincerely, but still praised. This leads us to Bartsch’s emphasis on the practice of doublespeak in imperial literature, that is, the custom of praising someone to blame them, of listing their virtues to indicate that they lack these virtues.¹³⁸ To avoid this ambiguity, Pliny feels the need to stress that he is improvising his speech, for he takes it that improvisation is synonymous with sincerity.

¹³⁵ Cf. Benferhat (2011), 293: “Pline choisit trois termes cicéroniens qui désignent des qualités propres aux hommes: la conscience d’appartenir à la communauté humaine, la lutte victorieuse de la raison contre les plaisirs, un contact facile”.

¹³⁶ Hellegouarc’h (1963), 216.

¹³⁷ Benferhat (2011), 291-308; Hellegouarc’h (1963), 259. Cf. Benferhat (2011), 292: “[La *temperantia*] est un mélange du trop peu et du pas assez qui doit servir de règle dans la vie dans toutes ses dimensions, y compris politique”.

¹³⁸ Bartsch (1994). Cf. also Bartsch’s theory of the praise/blame axis: “that is, the tendency for terms of praise and blame to be liable to slippage and thus to mean their opposites or their negative counterparts on one or another evaluative axis separating good qualities from bad” (1994), 170.

(It does not seem to matter to Pliny that in claiming that he was improvising, he was presumably telling one of his biggest lies ever.) Compare 3.1:

Igitur quod temperamentum omnes in illo subito pietatis calore servamus, hoc singuli quoque meditatique teneamus, sciamusque nullum esse neque sincerius neque acceptius genus gratiarum, quam quod illas acclamationes aemulemur, quae fingendi non habent tempus.

There follows (3.4) a long list of virtues that Pliny attributes to Trajan against their opposites:

Non enim periculum est, ne, cum loquar de humanitate, exprobrari sibi superbiam credat, cum de frugalitate, luxuriam, cum de clementia, crudelitatem, cum de liberalitate, avaritiam, cum de benignitate, livorem, cum de continentia, libidinem, cum de labore, inertiam, cum de fortitudine, timorem.

Both in terms of *humanitas* and in the framework of the *Panegyricus* section 3.4 plays a key role. As Bartsch points out, this passage is of crucial importance in that it represents Pliny's official declaration that there is no doublespeak in his panegyric.¹³⁹ After a long time, hidden and public transcripts can again coincide,¹⁴⁰ and no doubt this happens because the emperor deserves to be praised (*nam merenti gratias agere facile est*) and would not have any reasons to take offence and see a reproach for the opposites of the praised virtues.¹⁴¹ Among these virtues, *humanitas*, coming at the very beginning of the list, clearly has a prominent position. Moreover, this word has already been mentioned twice, and we are still at the very beginning of a speech which runs to 95 sections in total. But it is also the case that this passage helps us infer another characteristic of *humanitas*: when it comes to defining it as a virtue, its opposite is not only represented by the obvious *inhumanitas*, but also by *superbia*. Before Pliny, this same polarity can be found in Phaedrus (3.16) and, maybe more explicitly, in Seneca's *Ep.* 88.30: *Humanitas vetat superbum esse adversus socios, vetat amarum*. If we think about the etymologies of these two words, we will realise that the contrast is absolutely logical and, on the other hand,

¹³⁹ Bartsch (1994), 156-157.

¹⁴⁰ Bartsch (1994), 162.

¹⁴¹ Bradley (1991), 3719 does see in this passage a kind of reproach, but not for Trajan's vices, rather for Domitian's: "Trajan thus benefits in the 'Panegyricus' at Domitian's expense because if the present emperor is the epitome of imperial virtues, the last Flavian embodies all the vices that, by their existence, those virtues presupposed".

that in this passage *humanitas* probably takes on a meaning most in keeping with its etymology. Indeed, *superbia* derives from *super* ('above', 'in higher position') and thus refers to that feeling of superiority which leads some people to look down on others – it may be worth mentioning in passing that the gods, whose dwelling is on the highest mountain in the world, Mount Olympus, are often called *Superi* in Latin.¹⁴² In contrast, *humanitas* derives – via *homo* – from *humus* ('earth', 'ground'), to characterise the worldly, earthly nature of the man and what is typical of him.¹⁴³ In a way, the contrast between *superbia* and *humanitas* at 3.4 echoes and completes that between *divinitas* and *humanitas* at 2.7: while here at 3.4 it is clearly ethical, at 2.7, in counterposing divine and human nature, it is ontological. Yet in historical terms the comparison is always the same: while Trajan possesses *humanitas*, Domitian is not only characterised by *divinitas*, but also by *superbia* (*Pan.* 48).¹⁴⁴

In addition to the ontological and ethical points of view, there is a third perspective from which to understand *humanitas*: we might call it the public, 'official' or hierarchical value of *humanitas*, to which we shall return later. This aspect of *humanitas* too can be grasped in the opening sections of the *Panegyricus*. *Pan.* 4.6 reads: *At principi nostro quanta concordia quantusque concentus omnium laudum omnisque gloriae contigit! Ut nihil severitati eius hilaritate, nihil gravitati simplicitate, nihil maiestati humanitate detrahitur!* So the contrast is now between *humanitas* and *maiestas*. Like *divinitas* and *superbia*, *maiestas* too, at least originally, was linked to gods and religion in general, and essentially referred to the superiority of the gods over mortals.¹⁴⁵ Yet ever since the Republican age *maiestas* also evoked superiority in general, whether it was physical, social or political – in this sense, the root of *maior* is the determinant.¹⁴⁶ It usually characterised the Romans – their magistrates and generals in particular – and the superiority of the Romans over all other peoples.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, the charge of *maiestas*

¹⁴² Cf. Ernout-Meillet (2001⁴) s.v. *super*.

¹⁴³ Cf. Meillet (1921), 275 and 279-280 and Walde – Hofmann (1938), s.v. *humanus*. Compare also *Pan.* 24.5: *te ad sidera tollit humus ista communis et confusa principis vestigia*.

¹⁴⁴ On the implicit comparison between Trajan's *humanitas* and Domitian's *divinitas* (and *maiestas*) cf. also Hiltbrunner (1994a), 733, although discussion here is very concise.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 315 n. 6 and 7 for a list of the occurrences, Drexler (1956), 196. More in detail d'Aloja (2011), 16-27.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 314-315 and d'Aloja (2011), 240.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Drexler (1956), 196, Hellegouarc'h (1963), 317-318.

generally referred to violation of the Roman magistrates' authority.¹⁴⁸ In Livy 29.9.6, Pleminius, Scipio's hated legatus of Locris, is said to be beaten by the Locrians *sine respectu non maiestatis modo sed etiam humanitatis*, where we notice the contrast between Pleminius' official role of representative of the *maiestas populi Romani* and, despite all his faults, his nature and rights as a human being (*humanitas*).¹⁴⁹ Applied to the case of Trajan, *maiestas*, which we have seen to be one of the most frequently mentioned values in the *Panegyricus*, thus refers to that superior political power which every emperor possesses¹⁵⁰ – and yet Trajan is such a great emperor that he does not need to worry that his *maiestas* might be diminished by his *humanitas*.

The richness of these first paragraphs of the *Panegyricus* requires some summary here. Despite Roche's data, we have only reached paragraph 4 of the *Panegyricus* and Pliny has already mentioned Trajan's *humanitas* three times, one of which at the very beginning of the long list of the emperor's virtues that we read at 3.4, a paragraph whose centrality has already been shown. In addition, Pliny has so far opposed *humanitas* to three concepts which belong to three different spheres: ontological (*divinitas*), ethical (*superbia*) and political (*maiestas*). Needless to say, this implies that *humanitas* too, thanks to its polysemy, can belong (at the very least) to these three spheres. But it is also worth stressing that, while the first two comparisons are presented by Pliny as antithetical so that the presence of one element excludes the other (so either we have *divinitas* or *humanitas*, either *superbia* or *humanitas*), *humanitas* and *maiestas* seem instead to be allowed to coexist.¹⁵¹ If we wanted to look for a rational explanation, we might perhaps conjecture that this difference is due to the fact that in Pliny's view ontology and ethics are not used to accepting compromise, while politics is all about compromise. Accordingly, the best ruler is he who is able to maintain all his social and political prerogatives without showing haughtiness and making the people feel his superiority; or he who has received supreme power from the gods but does not forget the most important

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Drexler (1956), Hellegouarc'h (1963), 319.

¹⁴⁹ On this Livian occurrence of *humanitas* with reference to Pleminius cf. Mollea – Della Calce (forthcoming), and above, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰ As d'Aloja (2011), 151 and 246-247 remarks, in the imperial age *maiestas* almost becomes a prerogative of the emperor.

¹⁵¹ On the coexistence of *humanitas* and *maiestas* at *Pan.* 4.6 cf. also d'Aloja (2011), 165. On the importance of anthithesis to highlight Trajan's virtues in the *Panegyricus* cf. Braund (2012²), 96 and, above all, Rees (2001).

value of all, *humanitas*; or else, to borrow Pliny's own words, the best ruler is that who can mix *res diversissimas, securitatem olim imperantis et incipientis pudorem* (24.1).

Such a goal can also be achieved through facial expression: *manet imperatori quae prius oris humanitas* (24.2). Interestingly, we find out that *humanitas* can be perceived visually: although we will look at this aspect in more detail when focusing on the *Epistulae*, we will also find this same idea in the last occurrence of *humanitas* in the *Panegyricus* (71.5).¹⁵² For the moment, it is sufficient to stress that in attributing this good balance of imperial and human characteristics to Trajan, we can assume that Pliny was also urging the emperor to continue to behave in this manner.

There is, however, a fourth aspect of *humanitas*, which underlies and facilitates its ethical and political features: Pliny introduces this educational component at 47.3, that is, in the middle of his panegyric, while lauding Trajan's restoration of the liberal arts: *An quisquam studia humanitatis professus non cum omnia tua tum vel in primis laudibus ferat admissionum tuarum facilitatem?* With the phrase *studia humanitatis* Pliny really proves to be Ciceronian.¹⁵³ No one else before him resorted to such an expression, except Cicero. Particularly significant for the history of the term *humanitas* and its success in Renaissance humanism is the instance in his *Pro Archia* 3, but its first appearance is to be found in *Pro Murena* 61 (63 BCE).¹⁵⁴ *Studia humanitatis* evidently refers to culture, liberal studies, education, and therefore evokes the Greek idea of παιδεία.¹⁵⁵ Granted, as a man of letters Pliny has personal interests in the emperor's fostering of the liberal arts, but, as with Cicero, it would be a mistake to assume that the *studia humanitatis* are to be seen as an end in themselves. Rather, they represent a point of departure on which to build a civilised society which is worthy of this name, that is to say, a society which is governed by sound political and ethical principles – and these principles too, as we have seen, can be expressed through the term *humanitas*.

Nor has the polysemy of *humanitas* been fully exploited yet, for in the *Panegyricus* this concept also has a 'social' aspect. Just after praising Trajan's care for intellectuals, Pliny turns to the emperor's behaviour during banquets (which have always

¹⁵² On *Pan.* 71.5 cf. below, pp. 57-58.

¹⁵³ On Pliny's Ciceronianism see Gibson – Morello (2012), 296-297 with further bibliography. According to Méthy (2007), 295: "l'influence de Cicéron sur la pratique littéraire de Pline, reconnue et revendiquée comme telle, n'est plus à démontrer".

¹⁵⁴ For the relevant bibliography cf. above, p. 31 n. 77.

¹⁵⁵ More in detail on the expression *studia humanitatis* above, p. 31.

offered intellectuals occasions to meet and discuss literary issues after all). In this context, Trajan is said always to be very kind to his fellow diners:

Num autem serias tantum partes dierum in oculis nostris coetuque consumis? non remissionibus tuis eadem frequentia eademque illa socialitas interest? non tibi semper in medio cibus semperque mensa communis? non ex convictu nostro mutua voluptas? non provocas reddisque sermones? non ipsum tempus epularum tuarum, cum frugalitas contrahat, extendit humanitas? (Pan. 49.4-5)

Here the emperor's *humanitas* balances out his *frugalitas* (roughly 'sober habits', 'frugality'), thus prolonging the banquet. This implicit comparison further stresses the importance of *humanitas* if we remember that at the beginning of this panegyric Pliny also considered *frugalitas* to be one of the virtues a good ruler should possess.¹⁵⁶ 'Polite manners', 'courtesy', 'kindness' are of course acceptable translations, but – as is often the case when dealing with the term *humanitas* – none of them are very telling about what *humanitas* implies. Also, they may suggest that the emperor was only worried about appearing (rather than being) kind and polite. To some extent this might be true. Yet if we think *humanitas* in terms of φιλανθρωπία, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that Trajan really felt the need to spend time among his friends.¹⁵⁷ In other words, not only do Trajan's fellow diners benefit from his *humanitas*, but the emperor himself benefits from his own *humanitas*. As Braund has persuasively showed in fact, his sociable attitude towards feasting is another aspect of his being a good ruler, who "advertises his *humanitas* by his communality and especially by his commensality" while "[i]solation and inaccessibility [also during banquets] are classic marks of the 'bad' ruler".¹⁵⁸ The (implicit) contrast with Domitian, who was not accessible, is again significant.¹⁵⁹ Fortunately, the times when Statius had the feeling of dining in the presence of Jupiter when at Domitian's table now seem distant.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Pan.* 3.4 above. *Frugalitas* is here opposed to *luxuria*. The comparison between *Pan.* 3.4 and 49.6 seems to confirm that Maguinness (2012²), 269 is right in claiming that *frugalitas* and *humanitas* are not incompatible and thus Pliny is not contradicting himself at 49.6.

¹⁵⁷ On the importance for an emperor of having good friends cf. *Pan.* 85.

¹⁵⁸ Braund (1996), 51 and 45.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Braund (1996), 44: "One of the most striking things about this passage [scil. *Pan.* 49.4-6] is that Pliny articulates his praise of Trajan through contrast with Domitian, unnamed but unmistakable".

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Silv.* 4.2.10-12 and Gibson (2011), 121-122. Cf. also Juvenal's *Satire* 4.

In the wake of this (implied) contrast with Domitian as well as of the opposition between *humanitas* and *superbia* at 3.4, the final occurrence of *humanitas* in the *Panegyricus* reiterates and strengthens the idea that Trajan must also be praised for not looking down on his people, despite having the opportunity to do so. *Pan.* 71.4-6 could not be a more peremptory confirmation of this:

Nam, cui nihil ad augendum fastigium superest, hic uno modo crescere potest, si se ipse summittat securus magnitudinis suae. Neque enim ab ullo periculo fortuna principum longius abest quam humilitatis. Mihi quidem non tam humanitas tua quam intentio eius admirabilis videbatur. Quippe, cum orationi oculos, vocem, manum commodares, ut si alii eadem ista mandasses, omnes comitatus numeros obibas.

Trajan's *humanitas* is not considered as admirable (*admirabilis*) as his anxiety to make it felt. This suggests that for an emperor, as well as for other statesmen, the emphasis is not only on possessing *humanitas*, but also on flaunting it – and this is another good thing about Trajan according to Pliny. Evidently, attention to the emperor's body language (*oculos vocem manum*), which we have already noticed at 24.2, reveals Pliny's interest in, and practice of, oratory and poetry, as we will see the *Epistulae* show in greater detail.¹⁶¹

In this passage *humanitas* has been translated, for example, as 'courtesy',¹⁶² but the sense of the sentence is more probably that Pliny appreciates Trajan's attempt to be seen as a humble man more than his simple lack of haughtiness. The emperor is thus praised not only because he does not show haughtiness, but also because he attempts to reach the common man's level.¹⁶³ In this sense, the fact that here the discussion of *humanitas* comes right after a sentence centred on *humilitas* is of particular interest. Unlike *humanitas*, whose derivation from the root of *humus* is indirect, *humilitas* derives directly from *humus*. Yet despite this etymological relationship, their meanings are at opposite poles: while *humanitas* tends always to be positive, *humilitas* is generally negative, mainly standing for 'insignificance', 'unimportance', 'lowness of rank', 'degradation'.¹⁶⁴ This applies not only to Latin authors in general, but also to Pliny in particular. Of the other two instances of *humilitas*, one refers to the degradation of the

¹⁶¹ Cf. above, p. 55.

¹⁶² Cf. Radice's translation in the Loeb Classical Library.

¹⁶³ Cf. Cova (1978), 108-109, Wallace-Hadrill (1982), 42-43, Braund (2012²), 93.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. the entry on *humilitas* in the *OLD* and *TLL* 6.3.3115.80-3118.20.

senate when heaping excessive praise on the ex-slave Pallas (*Epist.* 8.6.15), the other to those bad emperors who are only able to win over their people's love by displaying humility or submissiveness (*Pan.* 4.5).¹⁶⁵ Therefore, in view of this implicit comparison with *humilitas* at *Pan.* 71.5, it looks as though *humanitas* can also be regarded as the right compromise between the high extremes *superbia* and *divinitas* on the one hand, and the low extreme *humilitas* on the other hand.

To summarise, the general image we get from Pliny's use of *humanitas* in the *Panegyricus* is that of a balanced value which has its roots in education and culture. However, in the wake of Cicero, Pliny does not consider education as an end in itself. The emperor needs to be a learned man, but, whatever the level of learning he can reach, that would be useless if it did not give rise to those ethical and then political sentiments which prevent him from being haughty and considering himself like a god. After all, Domitian was probably more learned than his successor, but he stopped at the first step, without understanding that learning was merely a precondition.¹⁶⁶ When opposing Trajan's *humanitas* to *divinitas* and *superbia*, Pliny was therefore probably alluding to Domitian, and at the same time he was also telling the new emperor that in following *humanitas* he would avoid the main vices of his predecessor. As Braund has suggested, *humanitas* is therefore to be regarded (also) as the common denominator between praise and protreptic.¹⁶⁷

Yet Pliny did not choose *humanitas* out of the blue. Being well aware that, under a good emperor, the Roman intelligentsia would have the chance to reacquire power and contribute to the rebuilding of society, he must have regarded *humanitas* as a possible *trait d'union* between Trajan and his court. After all, the good thing about *humanitas* is that it is not, by definition as it were, a prerogative of any social class in particular, unlike *clementia* for example, which we have seen was instead possessed only by those people who had a superior power. All this, along with further nuances of *humanitas*, emerges well from Pliny's *Epistulae*, to which we now turn.

In the ten books of his *Epistulae*, presumably written between 96 CE (or 97/98) and 113 CE, that is to say mainly if not exclusively under the reign of Trajan, we can count

¹⁶⁵ Also worth noting in the case of *Pan.* 4.5 is the fact that some *codices recentiores* wrongly read *humanitate* instead of *humilitate* (*reverentiam ille terrore, alius amorem humilitate captavit*).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Coleman (1990), 19: "the tyrant Domitian, an author himself, had actively sponsored literary creativity, whereas Trajan, *optimus princeps*, seems to have been the least literary of emperors".

¹⁶⁷ Braund (2012²), 98.

14 instances of the term *humanitas*.¹⁶⁸ Along the established lines of understanding *humanitas* as either φιλανθρωπία or παιδεία, Méthy claims that in most cases the idea of φιλανθρωπία seems to be prominent.¹⁶⁹ Even though the same can hold true to some extent with regard to the *Panegyricus*, we have seen that it would be simplistic to reduce Pliny's use of *humanitas* there just to this idea. By the same token, it would be rash to take that for granted in the *Epistulae*, which on the contrary display further nuances, if not meanings, that the word can take on according to Pliny. For the sake of continuity, let us begin with those letters in which *humanitas*, like in the *Panegyricus*, has to do with the role of the emperor.

If one recalls the 'social' aspect of *humanitas* I mentioned with regard to *Pan.* 49.4-5, where this value urges the emperor to prolong the banquets, *Ep.* 6.31.14 seems to lead to the climax of this aspect.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, here Trajan's *humanitas* even takes the shape of generosity in giving gifts to his guests when they leave: *Summo die abeuntibus nobis (tam diligens in Caesare humanitas) xenia sunt missa*. This letter, which Pliny wrote to an otherwise unknown Cornelianus in 107 CE after Trajan's return from Dacia, seems therefore to confirm both that Pliny had been sincere in praising the emperor's kindness at *Pan.* 49.45 and that Trajan maintained the same kind attitude during banquets throughout the entire course of his reign.¹⁷¹

But it is also towards his soldiers that Trajan seems to be particularly keen on showing his *humanitas*.¹⁷² This is what we learn from *Ep.* 10.106, which is sufficiently short to quote in full:

Rogatus, domine, a P. Accio Aquila, centurione cohortis sextae equestris, ut mitterem tibi libellum per quem indulgentiam pro statu filiae suae implorat, durum putavi negare, cum scirem quantam soleres militum precibus patientiam humanitatemque praestare.

¹⁶⁸ On the chronology of the letters cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 20-41, 62-65 and 529-532, Marchesi (2008), 12 and n. 1, and, above all, Bodel (2015), 42-108, who provides a useful overview of the different chronologies proposed by previous scholars.

¹⁶⁹ Méthy (2007), 250.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Büttler (1970), 117, who already links the occurrence of *humanitas* at *Ep.* 6.31.14 to that of *Pan.* 49.4-5.

¹⁷¹ On the date of this letter as well as on the problem of identifying Cornelianus cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 391.

¹⁷² Cf. Méthy (2007), 269.

Publius Accius Aquila – the *tria nomina* immediately reveal that he was a Roman citizen – had probably married a *peregrina* (foreign woman), which explains why his daughter lacked Roman citizenship. Given that this letter is addressed to the emperor, its flattering tone is to be expected and it reminds us of the tone of the *Panegyricus*. In acknowledging the emperor’s *humanitas* and *patientia*, which are here juxtaposed for the first time in Latin literature, Pliny actually urges him to put such virtues into practice. Indeed *patientia*, presumably to be understood as tolerance, patience on this occasion, is not necessarily a virtue. However, I postpone this discussion to the section on Apuleius’ *Apologia* in Chapter 3, for *patientia* plays a more significant role in that context.¹⁷³ For the time being, it is enough to say that Trajan’s positive response (10.107: *cuius* [scil. *Aquilae*] *precibus motus dedi filiae eius civitatem Romanam*) confirms that he does possess *humanitas* and *patientia*, at least in this situation.

So much for *humanitas* with regard to Trajan. However, as I hinted at before, the success of this value-term in Pliny’s view seems to be due, among other aspects, to its transcending certain distinction of social class, and, in particular, to its being shared by the emperor and the upper classes of Rome. Like the emperor, also the members of his entourage could – and often did – hold posts which involved the direct exercise of political power, especially abroad. *Humanitas* was one of the virtues they had to display.¹⁷⁴ According to Pliny, Calestrius Tiro did so at the time of his proconsulship of Baetica:

*Egregie facis (inquiero enim) et persevera, quod iustitiam tuam provincialibus multa humanitate commendas; cuius praecipua pars est honestissimum quemque complecti, atque ita a minoribus amari, ut simul a principibus diligere. Plerique autem dum verentur ne gratiae potentium nimium impertire videantur, sinisteritatis atque etiam malignitatis famam consequuntur. (Ep. 9.5.1-2)*¹⁷⁵

This passage interestingly establishes a relation between *humanitas*, whose nuances here we have yet to delineate, and *iustitia*. In particular, to claim that justice should be administered with *humanitas* might lead to the conclusion that justice alone is not enough, a strong statement which would call for an explanation. Hellegouarc’h points out that in the *De officiis* Cicero went so far as to regard *iustitia* as the most important virtue, upon

¹⁷³ Cf. below, pp. 102-103.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1982), 42: “In the exercise of power, it was provincial government that especially called on qualities like *comitas*, *facilitas* and *humanitas*”.

¹⁷⁵ This letter probably dates to 107-108 CE: cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 484.

which Roman society as a whole was based.¹⁷⁶ So is Pliny somehow contradicting his beloved Cicero? This does not seem to be the case. To begin with, in a very short letter to Trajan (10.86b), Pliny himself recommends Fabius Valens to the emperor for his *iustitia* and *humanitas*, thus implying that there is no contrast between the two. But also Cicero juxtaposes *iustitia* and *humanitas* when listing the values which best fit the head judge (along with *fides* and *gravitas*) at *Pro Milone* 22. And the same holds true for Seneca (*Dial.* 4.28.2 and 9.10.6), although at *Ben.* 3.7.5 he counterposes the role of the judge (*iudex*), who has to judge according to laws, to that of the referee (*arbiter*), who can instead modify his verdict on the base of his *humanitas* or *misericordia* (*non prout lex aut iustitia suadet, sed prout humanitas aut misericordia inpulit*).¹⁷⁷ Yet not even this passage calls *iustitia* into question, for Seneca claims to prefer a judge over a referee in case of judicial inquiries. The figure of the referee appears however to be comparable to that of a provincial governor like Caestrius Tiro: while *iustitia* must set the guidelines, *humanitas* provides common sense, compassion and mental flexibility, all of which are important, if not fundamental, in the passage from legal theory to practice, that is to say, from the theoretical conception of justice to its application in contexts where different human beings belonging to different social classes are involved. This is the reason why Pliny says that this *humanitas* mainly consists in becoming the friend of every honest man, from those of humble extraction (*minores*) to the nobles (*principes*). As we saw in the *Panegyricus*, *humanitas* often implies steering a path between opposites.

But there is a special circumstance in which *humanitas* really becomes a requisite for a provincial governor, namely when this magistrate is appointed as proconsul of Achaëa. As we saw in the Introduction, Greece was in fact regarded by the Romans as the birthplace of *humanitas*. In this respect, the importance of Pliny's letter to Maximus (*Ep.* 8.24.2) has already been pointed out, but it now merits further examination.¹⁷⁸ Let us recapitulate. A certain Maximus, about whom we do not know so much, is about to

¹⁷⁶ Hellegouarc'h (1963), 266. Cf. Cic. *Off.* 3.28 and 1.20. On the latter passage and its relationship with the idea of *aequitas*, which we shall see Symmachus for one linking to *humanitas*, cf. Mantovani (2017), 51-53 and below, pp. 195-196.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. also the relationship between *clementia* and *iustitia* in Seneca: above, p. 42.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. above, p. 15.

become the annual proconsul of Achaëa. Pliny gives him some advice on how to best carry out his duties.¹⁷⁹ The exhortation begins as follows:

Cogita te missum in provinciam Achaiam, illam veram et meram Graeciam, in qua primum humanitas litterae, etiam fruges inventae esse creduntur; missum ad ordinandum statum liberarum civitatum, id est ad homines maxime homines, ad liberos maxime liberos, qui ius a natura datum virtute meritis amicitia, foedere denique et religione tenuerunt.

To begin with, in the list of the Greek ‘inventions’ *humanitas* comes first – and, as we will see shortly, it probably implies or includes the elements that Pliny mentions later in the paragraph. Given Pliny’s philhellenism, which shines through frequently in his work and very much in this letter, the prominent position of a word which we have seen characterising the *optimus princeps* Trajan cannot pass unnoticed. On the contrary, we might argue that this value is seen as central to the emperor and Roman society for the very reason that it had been the founding value of Greek society, admiration for which Pliny discloses several times.¹⁸⁰

Ciceronian model aside,¹⁸¹ this letter seems to express a meaning of *humanitas* which is very close to that of Tacitus’ *Agricola* 21, to which we will turn in the next section of this chapter. By saying *in qua* [scil. *Graecia*] *primum humanitas litterae, etiam fruges inventae esse creduntur*, Pliny seems to imply that neither literature (*litterae*) nor agriculture (*fruges*) can be considered synonyms of or, in the case of *fruges* at least (*etiam* marks a hiatus between the first two elements and *fruges*), hyponyms of *humanitas*: these three elements appear as distinct.¹⁸² The consequences for our understanding of the term are relevant. Most interpretations of this passage claim that here *humanitas* stands for

¹⁷⁹ On Maximus cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 477. The date of the letter cannot be established with certainty, but Sherwin-White (1966), 477 seems to exclude that it was written before 104-105 CE.

¹⁸⁰ On Pliny’s philhellenism in the *Epistulae* cf. Rees (2014), 109-112 (with further bibliography). By contrast, there is almost total lack of Greekness in the *Panegyricus*, presumably because Pliny tries to distance “his speech from the reputation for debased, hackneyed, extorted, insincere praise he could neatly align with the Greek associations of Flavian rhetoric”: Rees (2014), 122.

¹⁸¹ Cf. above, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸² Following Merrill (1919), 375, Lefèvre (2009), 172 believes that in this passage *litterae* stands for ‘letters of the alphabet’, thus alluding to the myth of Palamedes. In this way, the allusion to the myth of Triptolemos through the alleged invention of agriculture (*fruges*) would be counterbalanced. Of course this interpretation is possible, but on the one hand the third item, *humanitas*, would still lack any clear reference to another myth; on the other, the letters of the alphabet would simply represent the first stage of literature.

‘civilisation’,¹⁸³ but who would not consider the birth of agriculture as a milestone in the process of civilisation? The myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus in Plato’s *Protagoras* (322a) is clear evidence of this:

Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζῴων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἰδρῦεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν· ἔπειτα φωνὴν καὶ ὀνόματα ταχὺ διηρθρώσατο τῇ τέχνῃ, καὶ οἰκῆσεις καὶ ἐσθῆτας καὶ ὑποδέσεις καὶ στρωμνὰς καὶ τὰς ἐκ γῆς τροφὰς ἠύρετο.

Granted, *humanitas* seems at first glance to be conceived as something which is more related to *litterae*, maybe a sort of hypernym, and thus to cultural and educational aspects.¹⁸⁴ Or, to put it another way, it would seem that Pliny’s interpretation of civilisation exclusively rests on educational bases. Yet, as often with *humanitas*, it would probably be simplistic to reach such a conclusion. True, education (*litterae*) is there and can be the precondition, so to speak, but then Pliny lists other elements that may ultimately fall under the label ‘civilisation’. Pride of place goes to *libertas* (*liberarum civitatum, liberos maxime liberos*), which of course took on different nuances in the idealised Athens and in Trajanic Rome, but also law (*ius*), virtue (*virtus*), friendship (*amicitia*), treaties (*foedera*) and religion (*religio*) are mentioned. In other words, we might perhaps say that here *humanitas* is not only the presupposition, but also the theoretical and abstract ideal, whose explanation, but also materialisation, is illustrated by the aforementioned elements, which in the end involve relationships either among men or between men and gods. Since Greece was the first to understand the importance of this multifaceted concept, it follows that it deserves admiration and has the right to be treated accordingly by any man who exercises power there. This is the message that Pliny seems to convey to Maximus, the same message that Cicero had conveyed to his brother Quintus.¹⁸⁵

After all, governors, politicians, public officials and the like must not let power go to their heads, irrespective of the post they hold and where they exercise it. The case of Claudius Pollio makes this clear. *Ep.* 7.31.3 is a letter of recommendation (*commendaticia*) in which Pliny asks his friend Cornutus Tertullus, *curator Aemiliae*

¹⁸³ Cf. Bolisani (1961-62), 63.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Cova (1972), 33 and Cova (1978), 111.

¹⁸⁵ On Cicero’s letter to Quintus cf. above, pp. 14-15 and 34.

when the letter was written, to accept Pollio's friendship.¹⁸⁶ To this end, Pliny praises Pollio for preserving intact his reputation for *humanitas* despite holding various posts: *numquam officiorum varietate continuam laudem humanitatis infregit*.¹⁸⁷

It will not have passed unnoticed that the cases of Calestrius Tiro, Pollio and partly Maximus all remind us of what I have defined earlier as the 'official' aspect of *humanitas*. Like the emperor, his magistrates too need to be humane in exercising their power; and like the emperor, they too can rely on the 'educational' aspect of *humanitas* to enhance their humaneness. At times, this aspect can even emerge in an extraordinary manner, as is the case with Arrius Antoninus, one of the most influential men under Nerva's reign.¹⁸⁸ Pliny seems to appreciate his literary talent even more than his public career and, in particular, he exalts Antoninus' Greek epigrams and iambic mimes:

Quantum ibi humanitatis venustatis, quam dulcia illa quam amantia quam arguta quam recta! Callimachum me vel Heroden, vel si quid his melius, tenere credebam; quorum tamen neuter utrumque aut absolvit aut attigit. Hominemne Romanum tam Graece loqui? Non medius fidius ipsas Athenas tam Atticas dixerim. (Ep. 4.3.4-5)

For the first time in the Latin texts which have come down to us, *humanitas* is paired with *venustas* (charm), and in this context they seem to be two sides of the same coin. Bearing in mind that these two concepts are employed with regard to 'Callimachean' poems, it looks as though the latter points to the outward appearance of these poems, that is, to their beauty, their rhythm or grace, while the former alludes to what facilitates it, that is, the author's education and culture which emerge there.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, what are two – perhaps *the* two – cornerstones of Hellenistic and Callimachean poetics, namely erudition and stylistic sophistication, seem to be mirrored in *humanitas* and *venustas* respectively.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 440. The letter was presumably written after 100 CE.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Cova (1978), 113.

¹⁸⁸ On Arrius Antoninus see Sherwin-White (1966), 267 with further bibliographical references, Méthy (2007), 169-171.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. also Rieks (1967), 238, Büttler (1970), 109, Méthy (2007), 251. *Venustas* is also attributed to the poems of Sentius Augurinus at *Ep.* 4.27.1 and of Vergilius Romanus at 6.21.4. Roller (1998), 286 rightly considers it to be typical of Catullan (and thus Callimachean) poetry.

¹⁹⁰ In *Ep.* 7.9 Pliny himself explains why writing these short, low poems (*lusus*) can be beneficial. Because of the strict norms writing poems requires, this exercise will also improve prose style, which is fundamental to any publicly engaged man. And since short poems do not take up too much time, they can be written during the very few moments of idleness (*otium*) a busy man can have. Cf. Hershkowitz (1995), 169-171,

Moreover (and importantly), like *Ep.* 8.24.2, this letter draws a link between *humanitas* and Greek culture. If, as I have argued, Pliny’s broadest idea of *humanitas* as civilisation in the letter to Maximus rests mainly, though by no means exclusively, on literature and culture (*litterae*), it is thanks to this ‘Greek’ *humanitas* that Antoninus is so learned that he is able to write in Greek better than the most erudite Greek poets (at least according to Pliny). After all, if the Greek idea of civilisation is to be taken as the model *par excellence*, so are its components, first and foremost literature. Compare Hoffer, with reference to Pliny’s thought: “It is no shame for Romans to be imitators of the great cultural tradition of their conquered Greek subjects if they know and use Greek as well as, or better than, the Greeks”.¹⁹¹

This same poetic atmosphere permeates *Ep.* 5.3. Here Pliny writes to the lawyer Titius Aristo about his own poems. In what might be considered as a sort of apology for his poetic activity, Pliny lists several great Roman men of the past who combined public life with literary endeavour. At some point (5.3.9-10), Pliny stresses the importance of public readings, which give the author a chance to benefit from the audience’s judgement: *Multa etiam a multis admonetur, et si non admoneatur, quid quisque sentiat perspicit ex vultu oculis nutu manu murmure silentio; quae satis apertis notis iudicium ab humanitate discernunt*. When applied to arts, *iudicium* is that taste which becomes the faculty of judging the quality of a work or performance, and then the judgement itself.¹⁹² The assumption here is that the audience’s *humanitas* mitigates a judgement that would probably be negative – or at least this is what Pliny’s modesty seems to suggest.¹⁹³ The verb *discerno*, which ‘divides into two parts’ (*in duas partes dividit*) according to Isidore of Seville’s authoritative formulation, leaves little room for doubts in creating this conceptual opposition.¹⁹⁴ *Humanitas* is therefore to be seen as a positive attitude toward

Gamberini (1983), 89 and 99, and Roller (1998), *passim* – 282-283 on *Ep.* 4.3. For a wider discussion of Pliny’s attitude towards poetry cf. Gamberini (1983), 82-121, Roller (1998), Marchesi (2008), 53-96, Janka (2015). Needless to say, Pliny was not the only one to link poetry to oratory, so to speak: further discussion in Fantham (1982), 259-261, Hershkowitz (1995), 171-173, and Cavarzere (2011), *passim*, with rich bibliography.

¹⁹¹ Hoffer (1999), 38. Cf. also Swain (2004), 9.

¹⁹² Cf. *TLL* 7.2.615.76-616.27.

¹⁹³ Cf. Rieks (1967), 229-230.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Isid. *Diff.* 1.151 and *TLL* 5.1.1296.12-1304.47. Cf. also Roller (1998), 294-295 and Méthy (2007), 193-196 and 254.

a fellow poet whose (low-level?) works deserve sympathy rather than criticism.¹⁹⁵ The Greek idea of φιλανθρωπία comes to mind, but it is tempting to say that this is also a consequence of being well-educated, as Pliny's audience for sure was.

The most interesting thing about this passage is, however, represented by that which permits us to distinguish frank judgement from friendly benevolence: in a nutshell, body language. We have already noticed in the *Panegyricus* that *humanitas* can be physically perceived, but never in Latin literature before *Ep.* 5.3.9-10 are all these physical elements and gestures asyndetically listed together: *vultu oculis nutu manu murmure silentio*.

As in the *Panegyricus*, Pliny's attention towards bodily attitudes probably reveals the experience of an orator and statesman who is used to observing reactions of judges and audience during trials or public speeches, as well as to modifying his behaviour accordingly.¹⁹⁶ Analysing this issue in depth is beyond the scope of this project, but a passage where Quintilian stresses the importance of gesture for an orator should be sufficient to make the argument clearer:

Quid autem quisque in dicendo postulet locus paulum differam, ut de gestu prius dicam, qui et ipse uoci consentit et animo cum ea simul paret. Is quantum habeat in oratore momenti satis uel ex eo patet, quod pleraque etiam citra uerba significat. Quippe non manus solum sed nutus etiam declarant nostram uoluntatem, et in mutis pro sermone sunt, et saltatio frequenter sine uoce intellegitur atque adficit, et ex uultu ingressuque perspicitur habitus animorum, et animalium quoque sermone carentium ira, laetitia, adulatio et oculis et quibusdam aliis corporis signis deprenditur. Nec mirum si ista, quae tamen in aliquo posita sunt motu, tantum in animis ualent, cum pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper eiusdem, sic in intimos penetret adfectus ut ipsam uim dicendi nonnumquam superare uideatur. (11.3.65-67)

Speaking of non-spoken language, here Quintilian explicitly connects oratorical gesture to painting (*pictura*) rather than to poetry, whereas in the *Institutio oratoria* 1.11.3 he draws an explicit comparison between orator and comedian (*comoedus*).¹⁹⁷ And, as we

¹⁹⁵ Cf. also Bolisani (1961-62), 62.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Gamberini (1983), 98.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. also the Horatian maxim *ut pictura poesis* (*Ars* 361). On the importance of gesture in Quintilian and in Roman oratory cf. Fantham (1982), Dutsch (2002), Hall (2004), Nocchi (2013), 117-148. However, an important caveat is added by Cavarzere (2011), 222: "Il gesto, per Quintiliano e per la retorica antica, coopera sì alla strutturazione logica e ritmica del discorso, ma ne è quasi parassitario; perché altro non fa

have seen, in *ep.* 7.9 Pliny himself admits that there is a tight relation between poetry and oratory.¹⁹⁸ Going back to the letter to Titius Aristo, the importance that Pliny grants to body language in this case is that, unlike vocal language, it cannot deceive.¹⁹⁹

To sum up, *Ep.* 4.3 and *Ep.* 5.3 show two different ways in which *humanitas* can be connected to poetry: in the first case it stands to characterise the erudition of the author which emerges from the poems, while in the second case it represents the benevolent attitude of the audience towards authors who do not live up to expectations. But both these circumstances refer to social contexts such as literary circles which must have played a key role in the everyday life of high society, offering either a form of entertainment or occasions to talk about politics or any other topic. Moreover, these letters add to the pervasiveness of *humanitas* in Roman society, especially within its upper echelons.

Although he did not belong to the Roman political elite and although poetry was probably not among his main interests, no doubt also the Stoic philosopher Euphrates played a role in enlivening the cultural life of Rome, so much so that Pliny considered him as the living proof of the flourishing of the liberal arts in the empire: *Si quando urbs nostra liberalibus studiis floruit, nunc maxime floret. Multa claraque exempla sunt; sufficeret unum, Euphrates philosophus* (*Ep.* 1.10.1).²⁰⁰ In this letter, addressed to the otherwise unknown Attius Clemens, Pliny also describes his first meeting with Euphrates as follows: *Hunc ego in Syria, cum adulescentulus militarem, penitus et domi inspexi, amarique ab eo laboravi, etsi non erat laborandum. Est enim obvius et expositus plenusque humanitate, quam praecipit* (*Ep.* 1.10.2). To win Euphrates' affection was thus anything but difficult, because he was easy (*obvius*) and frank (*expositus*), but also full of *humanitas*. But how to translate the term – kindness, courtesy, sympathy? *Humanitas* here can easily imply all of these ideas, but, as Rieks suggests, it is difficult to refrain

che tradurre visivamente la segmentazione presente nella catena parlata e che è piuttosto il frutto della *pronuntiatio* vocale, quale era già stata pianificata al momento dell'*inventio*". Quintilian also believes that a comedian can be an excellent teacher for the future orator, especially at the beginning of his training: cf. Nocchi (2013), 135-137.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. above, p. 64 n. 190.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. also Roller (1998), 295. But this cannot be taken as a rule. On the contrary, Quintilian divides gestures into two types: natural ones and imitative ones (*Inst.* 11.3.88-89). He then remarks that gesture should be measured and in tune with the speech, otherwise its artificiality would be perceived (*Inst.* 11.3.89). On this issue cf. Nocchi (2013), 129-133.

²⁰⁰ More on the figure of Euphrates in Sherwin-White (1966), 108-109.

from connecting it to the *liberalia studia* mentioned in the opening of the letter and the more general context, in which Euphrates' most praised talents derive from his superior education.²⁰¹

*Quantum tamen mihi cernere datur, multa in Euphrate sic eminent et elucent, ut mediocriter quoque doctos advertant et adficient. Disputat subtiliter graviter ornate, frequenter etiam Platoniam illam sublimitatem et latitudinem effingit. Sermo est copiosus et varius, dulcis in primis, et qui repugnantes quoque ducat impellat.*²⁰²

Rieks also claims that Euphrates emerges from Pliny's portrait of him as embodying that ideal Panaetian and thus Stoic humanity which shines through Cicero's *De officiis*, while on the contrary Bütler denies the influence of any particular philosophical strand of thought on Pliny's *humanitas*, not least in the case of Euphrates.²⁰³ Irrespective of what position one takes on Pliny's attitude towards philosophy, it would seem quite counterproductive to attribute all the importance Pliny gives to *humanitas* to a sectarian ideal which would hardly meet with wide approval. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that none of his occurrences of *humanitas* have a direct link with Stoicism or other philosophies, let alone in *Ep.* 1.10.2. At any rate, what is particularly relevant in this letter is that it makes it explicit that *humanitas* can be taught (*quam praecipit*). On the one hand, this seems to confirm the interpretation that *humanitas* can have educational implications even when it does not seem to at first sight. On the other hand, the potential to acquire this ideal (rather than being given it at birth) will have been one of the reasons why Pliny relied on it to promote the social and political 'renaissance' after Domitian's death.²⁰⁴

In the case of the senator Voconius Romanus, a well-educated friend of Pliny's, the connection between the notions of φιλοσοφία and education is perhaps tighter.²⁰⁵ In *Ep.* 8.8 Pliny describes the source of the Clitumnus, which embodies the idea of the *locus amoenus*. At the very end of this letter (8.8.7), Pliny remarks that this wonderful place is not only a source of pleasure, but also offers the possibility of learning something:

In summa nihil erit, ex quo non capias voluptatem. Nam studebis quoque: leges multa multorum omnibus columnis omnibus parietibus inscripta, quibus fons ille deusque

²⁰¹ Rieks (1967), 240.

²⁰² *Ep.* 1.10.5. Cf. also Bolisani (1961-62, 63-64).

²⁰³ Rieks (1967), 240, Bütler (1970), 115-116.

²⁰⁴ On Euphrates' *humanitas* cf. also Cova (1978, 112).

²⁰⁵ Pliny himself calls Romanus *doctissimus vir* in *ep.* 3.13.5. On Romanus cf. Sherwin-White (1966, 93).

celebratur. Plura laudabis, non nulla ridebis; quamquam tu vero, quae tua humanitas, nulla ridebis.

Some of these inscriptions must have been funny – because of their content? Because of their bad style? We will never know. But again, as in *Ep.* 5.3 discussed above, people who possess *humanitas* do not make fun of other human beings.²⁰⁶ Nor do they abandon themselves to joy with excess: it is true that they enjoy themselves (*capias voluptatem*) while learning (*studebis*), but their *humanitas* seems to guarantee composure.²⁰⁷ In sum, Romanus ought to visit this place because he could increase his *humanitas-παιδεία* by learning something new, but at the same time his *humanitas-φιλανθρωπία*, which is already the result of his education (i.e. of his *humanitas-παιδεία*), will prevent him from resorting to mockery.²⁰⁸

Ep. 8.22 probably represents the climax of this nuance of *humanitas*. Here Pliny discusses ethical matters with another senator, Rosianus Geminus; in particular, he provides a definition of what constitutes a truly good and faultless man (8.22.2): *Atque ego optimum et emendatissimum existimo, qui ceteris ita ignoscit, tamquam ipse cotidie peccet, ita peccatis abstinet tamquam nemini ignoscat.*²⁰⁹ When it comes to explaining what or who has provoked him to write on such themes, however, Pliny's response reads as follows (8.22.4):

Nuper quidam — sed melius coram; quamquam ne tunc quidem. Vereor enim ne id quod improbo consectari carpere referre huic quod cum maxime praecipimus repugnet. Quisquis ille qualiscumque sileatur, quem insignire exempli nihil, non insignire humanitatis plurimum refert.

The reason why he refrains from telling the name of the man he has in mind is by now evident, at least in terms of Pliny's *humanitas*: like his model Euphrates, he has learnt to attack vices, not individuals.²¹⁰ The viewpoint is clearly that of a (self-appointed) teacher

²⁰⁶ Cf. Bolisani (1961-62), 63.

²⁰⁷ On the relation between pleasure and learning in this letter cf. Lefèvre (2009), 272.

²⁰⁸ On Pliny's *humanitas* in this letter cf. also Rieks (1967), 230-231, Büttler (1970), 115, Lefèvre (2009), 290.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Méthy (2007), 51, Lefèvre (2009), 289. On Geminus cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 402.

²¹⁰ *Ep.* 1.10.7: 'Vitae sanctitas summa; comitas par: insectatur vitia non homines, nec castigat errantes sed emendat.' Cf. also Rieks (1967), 234-235, Büttler (1970), 110. On Euphrates cf. also above.

of ethics who has a specific idea of his duty to provide good moral examples.²¹¹ Whatever goes beyond this aim (*exempli nihil*), is of little use, or even counterproductive. On the contrary, showing respect, pity or sympathy towards every kind of man is an additional teaching, if not the main one, of Pliny's *humanitas*. We have already seen how this aspect of *humanitas* is central to the *Panegyricus* and to those *Epistulae* where there is a clear distinction of ranks between the person who possesses *humanitas*, that is the emperor, and those who benefit from his *humanitas*, namely the court and the Roman people as a whole. Likewise, other instances of *humanitas* in the *Epistulae* show this ideal at work among peers, thereby confirming the notion that there is no need for a downward relationship between the bestower of *humanitas* and its beneficiary: this is certainly the case in *Ep.* 5.3 and probably in *Ep.* 8.22 as well.

But there are also cases in which the person of higher rank showing *humanitas* is not the emperor. For example, *humanitas* can be shown by a lawyer towards a defendant whose case no one else would take on, as happens in *Ep.* 6.29.2 – and this is one of the reasons why the Stoic philosopher Thræsea suggested such cases should be undertaken: *Cur destitutas [scil. causas]? quod in illis maxime et constantia agentis et humanitas cerneretur.*²¹² Despite little context being provided, the juxtaposition of *humanitas* with *constantia* may help us better define this instance of *humanitas*. To begin with, the noun *constantia* appears no fewer than 23 times in Pliny's oeuvre. Sometimes, it refers as in this passage to one of the qualities a good lawyer should possess: *Nam pater ei Erucius Clarus, vir sanctus antiquus disertus atque in agendis causis exercitatus, quas summa fide pari constantia nec verecundia minore defendit.*²¹³ In this last case, the pairing with *fides* (*summa fide pari constantia*), which is common ever since Republican literature, makes it clear that in such contexts Pliny regards *constantia* as the attitude of remaining faithful to one's principles or decisions.²¹⁴ Accordingly, to show both *constantia* and *humanitas* in a trial is to remain faithful to the principle of the right of defence which should be guaranteed to each and every human being, irrespective of their social condition. But also of note here is that the lawyer, like the emperor in the *Panegyricus*,

²¹¹ The style and content of this letter reminds the reader of Seneca's *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, where *exempla* are central.

²¹² Cf. Rieks (1967), 235 and Cova (1978), 113.

²¹³ *Ep.* 2.9.4. Cf. also 5.13.2 and 9.13.19.

²¹⁴ Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 284) on this meaning of *constantia* in the Republican age.

not only needs to possess *humanitas*, but also to display it (*quod...maxime...humanitas cerneretur*).

Similarly, in *Ep.* 5.19.2, Pliny uses the word *humanitas* to characterise his attitude toward his freedman (*libertus*) Zosimus, recently hit by illness: *Quod si essem natura asperior et durior, frangeret me tamen infirmitas liberti mei Zosimi, cui tanto maior humanitas exhibenda est, quanto nunc illa magis eget*. A hint of educational aspect can be found in this context as well, but, surprisingly, on the side of the beneficiary Zosimus, an honest (*probus*), serviceable (*officiosus*) and liberally educated (*litteratus*) man.²¹⁵ From a certain point of view, Zosimus seems to deserve to be treated with *humanitas* because he already shares the ideal of *humanitas*.

But sometimes *humanitas* toward slaves and freedmen can be comforting and bothersome at once. This is what Pliny feels as he writes *Ep.* 8.16.1-3:

Solacia duo nequaquam paria tanto dolori, solacia tamen: unum facilitas manumittendi (videor enim non omnino immaturos perdidisse, quos iam liberos perdididi), alterum quod permitto servis quoque quasi testamenta facere, eaque ut legitima custodio. Mandant rogantque quod visum; pareo ut iussus. Dividunt donant relinquunt, dumtaxat intra domum; nam servis res publica quaedam et quasi civitas domus est. Sed quamquam his solaciis adquiescam, debilitor et frangor eadem illa humanitate, quae me ut hoc ipsum permitterem induxit.

Thus *humanitas* can also appear as a conflicting force. On the one hand, it looks as if Pliny realises that being too benevolent and generous towards slaves could be risky, probably because it would disrupt the balance of power. Nor would such benevolence guarantee his slaves' devotion. In *Ep.* 3.14.5, in informing Acilius that Larcius Macedo has been killed by some slaves of his, Pliny bitterly ponders: *Vides quot periculis quot contumeliis quot ludibriis simus obnoxii; nec est quod quisquam possit esse securus, quia sit remissus et mitis; non enim iudicio domini sed scelere perimuntur*.²¹⁶ But on the other hand, the ethical obligations which bind Pliny to all other human beings as humans seem to be overwhelming. Furthermore, as Pliny reveals in the next paragraph of *Ep.* 8.16, there cannot be room for doubt: *Hominis est enim adfici dolore sentire, resistere tamen et*

²¹⁵ *Ep.* 5.19.3. On *humanitas* in *Ep.* 5.19 cf. also Bolisani (1961-62), 64-65, Lefèvre (2009), 181-182 and 190-192.

²¹⁶ Cf. Lefèvre (2009), 183-186.

*solacia admittere, non solaciis non egere.*²¹⁷ The overall message of this letter can be a little surprising, especially when compared to a Stoic consideration such as the one we read in Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* 2.95:

Potius ergo illa dicantur, turpe esse, viri non esse debilitari dolore, frangi, succumbere. Nam ista vestra [i.e. Epicurean]: 'Si gravis, brevis; si longus, levis' dictata sunt. Virtutis, magnitudinis animi, patientiae, fortitudinis fomentis dolor mitigari solet.

Rather than stressing Pliny's non-Stoic tendency, however, this comparison has the result of revealing the humane as well as the human character of his *humanitas*.²¹⁸ As Trisoglio puts it: "Il suo [i.e. Pliny's] ideale dell'*humanitas* si rivela come permeato di una sensibilità che implica il dolore, ammette il conforto e brama una carezzevole compassione altrui".²¹⁹

In terms of a diachronic evolution of the relationship between masters and slaves, Bolisani is therefore right in stressing the striking contrast between Pliny's *Ep.* 8.16 and a passage by Cato the Elder in which the sickness and death of slaves are regarded as a material loss for their masters – and sick slaves are therefore to be sold:²²⁰

*Pecus consideret. Auctionem uti faciat: vendat oleum, si pretium habeat; vinum, frumentum quod supersit, vendat; boves vetulos, armenta delicula, oves deliculas, lanam, pelles, plostrum vetus, ferramenta vetera, servum senem, servum morbosum, et si quid aliud supersit, vendat. Patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet. (Agr. 2.6-7)*²²¹

It is hard to establish whether this radical change of perspective is due to the increasing success of *humanitas* after Cato's day, or, conversely, if such a theoretical revolution ended up being labelled as *humanitas*.²²² Perhaps this question is futile. What is certain

²¹⁷ On this passage cf. also Rieks (1967), 250, Cova (1978), 94-95, Méthy (2007), 220 and n. 62, and Lefèvre (2009), 187-188.

²¹⁸ On the anti-Stoic character of this letter cf. Lefèvre (2009), 188.

²¹⁹ Trisoglio (1971), 418.

²²⁰ Bolisani (1961-62), 65-66.

²²¹ Cf. also Cic. *Att.* 1.12.4 and Büttler (1970), 112.

²²² Some scholars have observed that, when dealing with slaves, *humanitas* can be complemented by self-interest. For example, Hopkins (1978), 118 has claimed that "the prospect of becoming free kept a slave under control and hard at work, while the exaction of a market price as the cost of liberty enabled the master to buy a younger replacement". On this theme cf. also Bonelli (1994), 142 and n. 4 for further bibliography. Although it does not contain the word *humanitas*, Seneca's letter 47 represents perhaps the best previous

is that in Pliny's view *humanitas* was a multifaceted (political, ethical, ontological, literary) value of Greek inspiration that a good emperor like Trajan and the ruling class of Rome had to possess and show in every aspect of their life, differently nuanced according to circumstances, towards all men without distinction, from nobles to slaves, from Romans to non-Romans (Greeks in particular).²²³ To put it another way, if a renaissance could follow the age of Domitian, Pliny believes it had (also) to be in the spirit of *humanitas*.

Once *humanitas* has been looked into thoroughly, as with the other authors which will follow, the question arises whether the adjective from which *humanitas* derives, i.e. *humanus*, conveys the same message as the noun. At this point, I to some extent anticipate the general conclusion to which I will return at the end of the present research: *humanus* tends to be, but is not always, as multifaceted as *humanitas*, especially in taking on educational nuances, when it appears in its comparative or superlative form. By contrast, in its positive form, *humanus* is mainly an equivalent of *hominis*, the genitive of *homo*, and thus simply stands for 'human' / 'of man'. Let us verify the validity of this statement by commencing with the case of Pliny.

In Pliny's *Panegyricus* and ten books of *Epistulae* there are 22 instances of the adjective in total, the neuter form is never used as a noun and *inhumanus* never appears. Yet Pliny employs both comparatives and superlatives. This is the case, for instance, of *Ep.* 2.3.9. Pliny praises the sophist Isaeus' gift of eloquence and urges his friend Maecilius Nepos to hear him at least once, because ἀφιλόκαλον *inlitteratum iners ac paene etiam turpe est non putare tanti cognitionem qua nulla est iucundior, nulla pulchrior, nulla denique humanior*.²²⁴ As Rieks and Büttler rightly observe, the context leaves little doubt that *humanior* takes on educational nuances.²²⁵ In other words, such experience would feed Nepos' *humanitas*, probably in the way the sources of the Clitumnus can feed Romanus', as we have already seen.²²⁶

example of this 'new' attitude towards slaves. And after all, from its very beginning, it stresses the human character of slaves: '*Servi sunt*'. *Immo homines*.

²²³ In this sense, Bury (1989), 59, Méthy (2007), 25 and Lefèvre (2009), 171, 176 and 294 are right in highlighting the overlap of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία in Pliny's *humanitas*.

²²⁴ On Iseus cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 147-148 and Anderson (1993), 19-20.

²²⁵ Rieks (1967), 227-228, Büttler (1970), 108.

²²⁶ Cf. above, pp. 68-69.

In *Ep.* 4.14.10 then, Pliny maintains that the phrase *habes quod agas* (‘You have something else to do’) is a polite way (*humanum*) to express dislike of his poems: the context and the meaning are almost the same of *humanitas* in *Ep.* 5.3, that is to say that whoever reads or listens to poems by amateurs should be tolerant in case such poems turn out to be of low quality.²²⁷ But *humanum* should also be a *solacium* (‘form of consolation’) for a friend who has lost his daughter, as is the case of *Ep.* 5.16.10, where *φιλανθρωπία* probably takes the shape of sympathy or compassion.²²⁸

One of the two superlatives (*Pan.* 59.3) and the comparative (*Ep.* 8.24.9) again remind us of a previously analysed connotation of *humanitas* in Pliny – the one that relates to the relationship between a ruler and his people, as we saw in particular in the *Panegyricus*.²²⁹ So at *Pan.* 59.3 Trajan is said to have been *iustissimus, humanissimus, patientissimus* during his second consulate, in which we also find the juxtaposition of *iustitia* and *patientia*, which are often linked with *humanitas*.²³⁰ As for the comparative at 8.24.9, this is the letter to Maximus that I have analysed above, in which *humanitas* at the outset stands for (Greek) ‘civilisation’. Towards its close, Pliny urges his friend to behave in his proconsulship of Achaëa no worse than he did in his previous proconsulship in Baetica. As one would expect, the reason for this mainly lies in the Greeks’ cultural and moral superiority, which emerges throughout the course of the entire letter:

Quo magis nitendum est ne in longinqua provincia quam suburbana, ne inter servientes quam liberos, ne sorte quam iudicio missus, ne rudis et incognitus quam exploratus probatusque humanior melior peritior fuisse videaris, cum sit alioqui, ut saepe audisti saepe legisti, multo deformius amittere quam non adsequi laudem.

Lefèvre comments: “Mit ihnen [d.h. παιδεία und φιλανθρωπία] rahmt Plinius den [8,24] Brief, indem er *humanitas* als παιδεία an den Anfang (2), *humanus (humanior)* als φιλόανθρωπος an den Schluß (9) stellt”.²³¹ Although the occurrence of *humanitas* at 8.24.2, as I have shown, is probably more nuanced than how it appears in Lefèvre’s analysis, the passage suggests that, in Pliny’s mind, Maximus ought to be particularly humane for the

²²⁷ Cf. Rieks (1967), 229, Büttler (1970), 115 and above, pp. 65-67.

²²⁸ On this passage cf. also Rieks (1967), 239, Büttler (1970), 114, Cova (1978), 94, Lefèvre (2009), 216.

²²⁹ Cf. above, pp. 53-54 and 56-58 in particular.

²³⁰ Cf. above, p. 60 and below, pp. 101-102 and 158.

²³¹ Lefèvre (2009), 171.

very reason that he is going to govern the homeland of *humanitas*. Once again the parallelism with Cicero's letter to Quintus is striking.²³²

Also of interest is the case of the other superlative, which is again to be found within a letter dealing with poetry and literature. Writing to his friend Arrianus, Pliny states:

Ut in vita sic in studiis pulcherrimum et humanissimum existimo severitatem comitatemque miscere, ne illa in tristitiam, haec in petulantiam excedat. Qua ratione ductus graviora opera lusibus iocisque distinguo. (Ep. 8.21.1-2)

Paired with *pulcherrimum*, *humanissimum* appears to convey a value that is worthy of the highest kind of man – the reader will remember the *homines maxime homines*, that is the Greeks, of *Ep.* 8.24 – to steer a path between opposite activities as well as opposite virtues. In such a context, it is hard to establish to what extent education, culture, philanthropy and the like contribute to defining *humanissimum*. Certainly, as we have already seen, the best men should possess all these values, which can all fall under the (Plinian) label of *humanitas*. Also, as is made clear by the case of *humanitas* in the *Panegyricus*, this value-term has to do with balance and moderation, which Pliny seems to have understood as being a necessity in study as well as in life.²³³ In life in particular, *severitas* and *comitas* are two opposite qualities, and a good balance of both is especially important to the way in which people of higher rank behave towards people of lower rank – an emperor towards his subjects, for instance.²³⁴

But when *humanus* is paired with *figura*, *fragilitas*, *genus*, *natura*, *res*, or *sanguis*, it loses much of its connection with *humanitas*, as we will note with most other authors, and simply refers to humanness.²³⁵

²³² Cf. above, pp. 14-15 and 34.

²³³ Cf. Rieks (1967), 230, Büttler (1970), 107.

²³⁴ Cf. above, pp. 50-58.

²³⁵ *Figura*: *Ep.* 7.27.2; *fragilitas*: *Ep.* 3.7.11, *Pan.* 27.1; *genus*: *Ep.* 10.1.2, *Ep.* 10.17b.2, *Ep.* 10.52.1, *Ep.* 10.102.1, *Pan.* 6.1, *Pan.* 34.5, *Pan.* 57.4, *Pan.* 90.3; *natura*: *Ep.* 7.1.2; *res*: *Pan.* 85.8, *Pan.* 94.1; *sanguen*: *Pan.* 52.7. On this frequent lack of meaningfulness of *humanus* in Pliny cf. also Cova (1978), 108 and Méthy (2007), 26-27 and 249.

2.2. Tacitus: is the absence of *humanitas* a photographic negative?

A very good friend of Pliny's, Tacitus also belonged to the social and political elite of Rome, both in the age of the hated Domitian and in that of the *optimus princeps* Trajan. From a certain viewpoint, he may be considered Pliny's *alter ego*, for he too hoped to contribute to Rome's renaissance under Trajan, but with a significant methodological difference: while Pliny resorted to a 'positive' approach, Tacitus resorted to a 'negative' one. This assertion clearly calls for an explanation. As we have seen, through his *Panegyricus* and *Epistulae*, Pliny was trying to reflect if not propose new cultural and social values – among which *humanitas* – in order to restore Rome's past, to some extent republican, splendour. Conversely, Tacitus' historical work, which reminded people of the nastinesses perpetrated in the first century of the Roman Empire, posits itself as a sort of admonishment to contemporary and future generations, which should not repeat the errors of their predecessors. In this sense, the opening of the *Historiae*, 1.2 in particular, is eloquent, for here Tacitus' tone is dramatic and ominous.²³⁶ For Tacitus' teaching to be effective, however, there must be room for hope, and hope is represented by either the new emperors Nerva and Trajan (1.1) or the very few virtuous figures who lived under bad emperors (1.3). To the latter category, we might add, also belonged Tacitus' father-in-law Agricola, to whom the historian dedicated his monograph *Agricola*, and those who had not been corrupted by Roman imperial society, as is the case with the Germani, whom Tacitus generally praised in the *Germania*.

In these two works, as Syme was among the first to note, we encounter the only two Tacitean occurrences of the term *humanitas*.²³⁷ Such rarity is at least curious,

²³⁶ *Opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saevum. quattuor principes ferro interempti: trina bella civilia, plura externa ac plerumque permixta: prosperae in Oriente, adversae in Occidente res: turbatum Illyricum, Galliae nutantes, perdomita Britannia et statim ommissa: coortae in nos Sarmatarum ac Sueborum gentes, nobilitatus cladibus mutuis Dacus, mota prope etiam Parthorum arma falsi Neronis ludibrio. iam vero Italia novis cladibus vel post longam saeculorum seriem repetitis adflicta. haustae aut obrutae urbes, fecundissima Campaniae ora; et urbs incendiis vastata, consumptis, antiquissimis delubris, ipso Capitolio civium manibus incenso. pollutae caerimoniae, magna adulteria: plenum exilii mare, infecti caedibus scopuli. atrocius in urbe saevitum: nobilitas, opes, omissi gestique honores pro crimine et ob virtutes certissimum exitium. nec minus praemia delatorum invisa quam scelera, cum alii sacerdotia et consulatus ut spolia adepti, procurationes alii et interiorem potentiam, agerent verterent cuncta odio et terrore. corrupti in dominos servi, in patronos liberti; et quibus deerat inimicus per amicos oppressi.*

²³⁷ Syme (1958), 712 and 714.

especially in the light of the pervasive use of this concept in the works which have come down to us of Tacitus' contemporary Pliny. Syme puts it down to the ethical and rhetoric connotations of this word, which is not so far from saying that Tacitus disliked this word because of its Ciceronian flavour.²³⁸ Along with or as an alternative to this argument, other scholars, Bauman for one, have pointed out that *humanitas* is not a prominent concept in Roman historiography: there are no occurrences of the term in Sallust and only three in Livy, as we have seen.²³⁹ On a different tack then, Benferhat believes that the sentiment of human solidarity expressed by (Ciceronian) *humanitas* is simply unknown to Tacitus.²⁴⁰ In my view, all the aforementioned arguments somehow contribute to explaining Tacitus' discomfort in using the term, but it is my contention that there is more at stake, and that Tacitus deliberately avoided the term because of his 'negative' approach. As has been made clear in Chapter 1, the first century CE saw a decline in the use of *humanitas* and of the exploitation of its polysemy, possibly on account of its Ciceronian, that is republican, inflections. Accordingly, the fact that this 'lack' of *humanitas* in first-century history, especially among the emperors, is mirrored in the lack of *humanitas* in the narration of the first-century history seems to be utterly consistent. As a countercheck, we could reiterate what has been said in the introduction to this chapter, that *clementia*, which played an important role in the first century, is recurrent in Tacitus' oeuvre as well – even if we endorse Syme's opinion that Tacitus refers to it only ironically – while, on the contrary, it is very rare in Pliny.²⁴¹ Also consistent with what I have been suggesting so far is that in Tacitus *humanitas*, as well as never appearing in the 'true' historical works, never refers to individuals, but only to peoples: in the *Agricola*, to the Romans as a whole and consequently to the Britons; and in the *Germania*, to the Germani.

Yet despite the rarity of the word *humanitas*, or probably *because of its rarity*, the two instances in Tacitus become all the more interesting. Its use in the *Agricola* in particular, which I shall analyse first, brings into play Tacitus' attitude towards Roman imperialism. But before lingering a while over this occurrence, let me devote a few sentences to describing the *Agricola*, a hybrid work in a genre of its own.

Presumably written in 98 CE, this *vita*, as the author himself calls it (1.4), is at once a biography and a *laudatio funebris* of Tacitus' father-in-law, a history of

²³⁸ Syme (1958), 712.

²³⁹ Bauman (2000), 30 and 36. On *humanitas* in Livy cf. above, p. 38.

²⁴⁰ Benferhat (2011), 97.

²⁴¹ Syme (1958), 414.

Domitian's campaign in Britain and an ethnographic study of the Britons.²⁴² It therefore comes as no surprise that Tacitus' models vary throughout the course of the *Agricola*: the description of Agricola's youth recalls the upbringing of Catiline, Jugurtha or Marius as had been narrated by Sallust; the important speeches of Calgacus and Agricola have the 'Livian' flavour of those of Scipio and Hannibal; Cicero's consolation for the death of Crassus no doubt influenced Tacitus' for the death of his father-in-law.²⁴³ Most importantly perhaps, the variety of genres is reflected in the ambiguities about its political message, which seems to waver between pro-Trajanic propaganda and a manifesto of anti-imperialism. Whitmarsh suggests that these two ideological aspects are both constitutive of the *Agricola*, and in constant dialogue with one another.²⁴⁴ While it exceeds the aims of this study to determine what ideological reasons induced Tacitus to write this work,²⁴⁵ it is worth underscoring that Whitmarsh's reading is very apt to understand and explain the ambiguities surrounding *Agr.* 21 and the occurrence of *humanitas* therein:

Sequens hiems saluberrimis consiliis absumpta. namque ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quieti et otio per voluptates adsuescerent, hortari privatim, adiuuare publice ut templa fora domos extruerent, laudando promptos, castigando segnes: ita honor

²⁴² On the date of the *Agricola* cf. *Ag.* 3.1 and 44.5 with discussion in Forni (1962), 14, Sage (1990), 854-855, Soverini (2004), 6-7. Beck (1998), 72-101 opts for a later publication (late 98 CE – early 99 CE). More recent scholarship tends to deem the problem of the genre of the *Agricola* pointless: cf. Beck (1998), 65, Soverini (2004), 10-11, Birley (2009), 49, Sailor (2012), 37. During the 19th and 20th centuries however, most debate over this work actually focused on this issue: for a synthesis of the various opinions cf. Soverini (2004), 10-11 n. 15. On its peculiarities cf. Syme (1958), 25 and 125, Forni (1962), 13, Liebeschuetz (1966), 126, Ogilvie (1991), 1715-1716, Petersmann (1991), 1787, Beck (1998), 64, Whitmarsh (2006), 307-310, Elisei (2008), 441, Sailor (2012), 38, Hägg (2012), 212, Audano (2015), 250. But cf. also Soverini (2004), 13-14: “Nel complesso, più che a una sorta di commistione programmata di generi, mi limiterei a pensare alla consapevole scelta della forma biografica da parte di uno scrittore che però già sin d'ora manifesta i tratti inequivocabili di una vocazione prettamente storica, caratterizzata dalle esigenze artistico-letterarie, nonché dalle motivazioni e dagli interessi socio-politici [...] che caratterizzano l'impegno storiografico ad alto livello”.

²⁴³ Cf. Ogilvie (1991), 1718-1720 with further bibliography, Birley (2009), 49, Sailor (2012), 37.

²⁴⁴ Whitmarsh (2006).

²⁴⁵ Cf. Ogilvie (1991), 1715: “The ‘*Agricola*’ was Tacitus' first work and in it he was clearly feeling his way, both politically and stylistically. The result is that it is something of an uneven experiment, uneven in style”. Cf. also Hanson (1991), 1743. For a diametrically opposite view cf. Turner (1997), 592: “The *Agricola* [...] emerges as the highly sophisticated work of a mature and capable author”.

et aemulatio pro necessitate erat. iam vero principum filios liberalibus artibus erudire, et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. inde etiam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga; paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta vitiorum, porticus et balinea et conviviorum elegantiam. idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esset. (Agr. 21)

During the second year of his governorship in Britain, Agricola took pains to ‘civilise’ the native population in many ways: he helped them build temples, markets and houses, and also trained the sons of the Briton chieftains in the liberal arts. As a consequence, the Britons gradually began to aspire to Roman customs and comforts – the latter particularly dangerous, as they often result in vices. Then comes the interpretative issue which interests us, for Tacitus closes the paragraph with a sentence in which not only the meaning of the term *humanitas* needs determining, but also a pronoun like *id* – for what does this *idque* refer to? Before addressing this problem in greater detail, let us consider what is at stake in how we interpret this entire passage and the terms *id* and *humanitas* at its close.

Commenting on this passage, Woodman and Kraus rightly remark that this paragraph is “one of the most famous in T(acitus), perhaps in all Latin”.²⁴⁶ This will come as no surprise if one recalls another most celebrated Latin text, the lines of *Aeneid* 6 (851-853) where Anchises reminds the Romans of their main duty: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / hae tibi erunt artes, pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*. Yet statements – or even orders, as is the case with Vergil – of this kind sometimes raised the question as to whether this domination as it was put into practice was ethically legitimate and really beneficial for both ruler and ruled. In the case of *Agr. 21*, while scholars such as Birley speak of this piece in terms of the “classic passage in the surviving literature for state-sponsored Romanisation”, thereby stressing Tacitus’ pro-imperialist orientation, others – Lo Cascio for one – more cautiously limit themselves to claiming that here we meet the fundamental terms of the modern debate over Romanisation.²⁴⁷ Whitmarsh is sceptical: “[I]t is questionable whether we should be thinking in terms of a single target, and (in contingency) a static, pellucid distinction between praise and blame”.²⁴⁸ As is evident, the answer to the question of Tacitus’

²⁴⁶ Woodman – Kraus (2014), 199.

²⁴⁷ Birley (2005), 81 and (2009), 57, Lo Cascio (2007), 75.

²⁴⁸ Whitmarsh (2006), 319.

attitude towards Romanisation in the *Agricola* is tightly linked to the interpretation of the term *humanitas* at the end of paragraph 21. I anticipate that my reading of this passage ends up corroborating Whitmarsh's general interpretation of the *Agricola: humanitas*, which is the term Tacitus employs to sum up all the elements of that paragraph, ultimately plays a neutral role; a positive or negative interpretation depends on the viewpoint from which we look at it, the Romans' or the Britons', because the text allows both.

First, let me try to determine which elements of Tacitus' description are subsumed under the word *humanitas*, or better, under the pronoun *id* (*idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur*). The neuter pronoun *id* with anaphoric reference to nouns of different gender is quite common in Latin.²⁴⁹ At *Agr.* 21, since there is no neuter noun to which *id* could unmistakably refer, it is also clearly used in a collective way, but the extent to which it is collective is more difficult to determine. Unless we arbitrarily establish which components are included and which are left out, we must assume that *id* refers to the whole context, thereby including not only *delenimenta vitiorum* such as *porticus*, *balinea* and *convivia* – as some scholars have thought – but also *artes liberales*, *eloquentia* and *habitus*.²⁵⁰ After all, we have already learnt that *artes liberales* and *eloquentia* are usual aspects of *humanitas*, and there can be little doubt that, alongside *habitus*, these aspects play an even more important role in culturally enslaving a people.

To begin with, if *artes liberales* and *eloquentia* are to be taken as a component of *humanitas* at *Agr.* 21, this implies that Tacitus also regarded this term as bearing educational connotations. In doing this, he distances himself from Seneca, but not so much from Cicero, contrary to current opinions.²⁵¹ As well as explicitly linking *humanitas* to the liberal studies in the *Pro Archia*, Cicero is in fact the first author whose use of the expression *artes liberales* is attested (*Inv.* 1.35), as I have remarked above.²⁵² Within the *Agricola*, the *artes liberales* not only recall Tacitus' father-in-law's upbringing and

²⁴⁹ Cf. *TLL* 7.2.472.12-45.

²⁵⁰ Liebeschuetz's (1966), 137 reading of this passage seems to imply this comprehensive interpretation of *humanitas*, and so does Whitmarsh (2006), 318, who translates *id* as 'Romanization'. *Contra* Haedicke (1975), 76 and Høgel (2015), 73: "The sarcasm at work in this grim image of *humanitas* as nothing but a complacent cover for the surrender to the vices of civilisation now even found in the speech of the locals may be one of the reasons why Tacitus avoided the term altogether when writing of Romans". From the readings by Forni (1962), 175 and Soverini (2004), 204-205 it is difficult to find a clear answer to this issue. Cf. also Jens (1956), 337 and Baldwin (1990).

²⁵¹ Cf. Benferhat (2011), 93-94. On Ciceronian *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 29-35.

²⁵² Cf. above, p. 31.

education at 4.2 (*per omnem honestarum artium cultum pueritiam adolescentiamque transegit*),²⁵³ but are also evoked at 2.2 (*expulsis insuper sapientiae professoribus atque omni bona arte in exilium acta*), and are the same *bonae artes* which had been forced into exile during (presumably) Domitian's reign.²⁵⁴

As for *eloquentia*, the 'quality or practice of fluent, apt, and effective speech' according to the *OLD*, it especially characterises the orators, and is in fact a recurrent word in Cicero's and Quintilian's oeuvre.²⁵⁵ As is well known, in both these authors the good orator, in order to master *eloquentia*, must possess that superior knowledge which only the *artes liberales* can provide. In the *Agricola*, Agricola's father was said to be *studio eloquentiae sapientiaeque notus* (4.1). But it is in the *Dialogus de oratoribus* that the term *eloquentia* becomes crucial for Tacitus. Like the *artes liberales*, *eloquentia* too was living through hard times, as is evident from the opening of the *Dialogus*: *Saepe ex me requiris, Iuste Fabi, cur, cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata vix nomen ipsum oratoris retineat*. Yet despite being at times disregarded at home, the *artes liberales* and *eloquentia* evidently became a key factor in the process of Romanisation abroad. The spread of Latin language must have been central to this process. At Agr. 21 Tacitus considers *eloquentia* synonymous with mastery of the Latin language – *lingua Romana*, which "was the language which had spread with Roman power, and not a particular variety of that language restricted to Rome".²⁵⁶ Cornelius Nepos' *Vita Attici* 4.1, discussed above, provides a close parallel for the association of *humanitas* with mastery of language.²⁵⁷ As modern commentators point out with regard to Britain, the fact that both Latin language and literature were spreading in Tacitus' days is corroborated by Martial 11.13.5 (*dicitur et nostros cantare Britannia versus*) and Juvenal 15.111 (*Gallia caudicos docuit facunda Britannos*).²⁵⁸ Granted, in ancient Rome education was not for everybody: *a fortiori*, it could not be for everybody in the provinces or among recently conquered peoples. Tacitus' clarification that Agricola's "civilizing

²⁵³ D'Agostino (1962), 46.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Forni (1962), 88, D'Agostino (1962), 15. Soverini (2004), 115 speaks of a usually moral value of *bona ars* in Tacitus, but the context does not necessarily support his view.

²⁵⁵ Cf. *TLL* 5.2.408.42-43 (s.v. *eloquentia*): *frequentant imprimis Cic(ero), Quint(ilianus)*.

²⁵⁶ Adams (2003), 195. Cf. also Flobert (1988), 208.

²⁵⁷ Cf. above, pp. 35-36.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Ogilvie – Richmond (1967), 227, Soverini (2004), 203 and Woodman – Kraus (2014), 202.

efforts were aimed at the British chieftains and their sons” (*principum filios*) comes therefore as unsurprising.²⁵⁹

If the *artes liberales* and *eloquentia* undoubtedly played a crucial role, the acme of this process of civilisation, that is Romanisation, is however represented by the Roman dress (*nostrī habitus*) and especially by the *toga*, which more and more Britons began to wear (the *toga* is characterised as *frequens*). Virg. *Aen.* 1.282 and the success of this line in later authors make it clear that being *toga*-clad was synonymous with being Roman: *Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam*.²⁶⁰ In Vout’s words, “to be *togatus* was to be actively involved in the workings of the state, whether a priest, an orator, a magistrate, a client or the emperor himself”.²⁶¹ Yet once the acme has been reached, the onset of decline draws near. In a way, the fact that the *toga* spread all over the empire and was no longer prerogative of the Italian citizens of Rome may have contributed to its loss of social and ideological importance.²⁶² Of course this remains implicit in Tacitus’ *frequens toga*, but right from the following sentence the possible negative aspects of *humanitas* are manifest.

It is true that porticoes (*porticus*), baths (*balinea*) and sumptuous banquets (*conviviorum elegantiam*) are not to be seen as vices in themselves (*vitia*). At *ep.* 90.25 Seneca does not probably look kindly upon porticoes, but it must be borne in mind that such places gave birth to the philosophical school to which he belongs – *porticus* is the Latin for *στοά*. Likewise, banqueting can have beneficial effects: it is probably sufficient to mention the titles of works such as Plato’s *Symposium* or Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophists* (or *Banquet of the learned*) to give an idea of the philosophical and literary themes that can be touched upon while drinking and/or dining, although of course Trimalchio’s dinner party in the *Satyrical* represents the other, that is negative, side to the same coin.²⁶³

Baths can be seen as a means of integration (and also of Romanisation) as well as “a prelude and preparation for [...] the banquet”; however, by the time of Tacitus they

²⁵⁹ Garnsey (1978), 253. Further discussion in Lo Cascio (2007), 83-96.

²⁶⁰ Cf. *Imp. Aug. Fr.* 35 Malcovati, *Mart.* 14.124.1, *Suet. Aug.* 40.5. Cf. Vout (1996), 213-216.

²⁶¹ Vout (1996), 214.

²⁶² On the social decline of the *toga* cf. Vout (1996), 216-218 with further bibliography.

²⁶³ For further bibliography as well as examples of pros and cons of banquets cf. Woodman – Kraus (2014), 205. The clarification ‘drinking and/or dining’ is necessary because the ancient Greek symposium came right after a banquet, but no longer involved eating.

were also regarded as immoral venues.²⁶⁴ Just to give a few examples, Seneca and Demetrius the Cynic disapproved of the luxurious lifestyle they came to symbolise, while Martial and Juvenal imply that mixed baths in particular were often frequented by loose women.²⁶⁵ In a nutshell, even if they are not intrinsically vices, porticoes, baths and banquets certainly represent potential occasions for being immoral.²⁶⁶ In this sense, Woodman and Kraus are right in pointing out that the genitive *vitiorum* “is not definitive or appositional (‘enticing vices’, viz. porticoes etc.) but objective or possessive (‘enticements to vice’)”, though their explanation “perhaps with the implication that *vitia* are not an inevitable consequence of the *delenimenta*” raises some doubts, especially in the light of their premises: “T(acitus) is distinguishing the buildings and banquets (*delenimenta*) from their immoral associations and demoralising effects (*vitiorum*)”.²⁶⁷ In other words, they do not seem to give *delenimenta* a pejorative meaning. Yet Benferhat has shown persuasively that right from its first occurrences in Republican Latin *delenimentum* always takes on some negative nuances, in that it always implies some deceit or intention to deceive.²⁶⁸ Granted, compared to *vitia*, *delenimenta* are ‘less’ negative; they represent a previous step, so to speak. With regard to *Agr.* 21, therefore, the circle seems to square once we take it that *porticus*, *balinea* and *conviviorum elegantiam* are appositions of *delenimenta*, not of *vitiorum*. Thus, if on the one hand porticoes, baths and banquets are only potential occasions for being immoral, on the other hand Tacitus seems to imply that this potentiality is likely to materialise in Britain (in the same way as it had already done at Rome?). After all, these are the risks of ‘civilisation’, as *humanitas* is usually translated at *Agr.* 21, and as Julius Caesar had already denounced at the opening of his *De bello Gallico*.²⁶⁹ In Tacitus’ view, to become Roman is not only to be able to speak perfect Latin or wear the *toga*, but also to be exposed to the blandishments of porticoes, baths and banquets. In other words, civilisation is also a step towards possible corruption of the customs and thus towards decadence – and

²⁶⁴ Yegül (1992), 5. On the social importance of baths cf. Yegül (1992), 4 and 30 and Rimell (2015), 159-162.

²⁶⁵ Cf. *Sen. Ep.* 86.6-13, *Philost. VA* 4.42, *Mart.* 3.51, 11.47, *Juv.* 6.419-433 with Yegül (1992), 40-43 and Rimell (2015), 160-161.

²⁶⁶ Forni (1962), 175, Grimal (1991), 116, Soverini (2004), 204, Woodman – Kraus (2014), 206.

²⁶⁷ Woodman – Kraus (2014), 204.

²⁶⁸ Benferhat (2011), 174-176.

²⁶⁹ On *humanitas* in Caesar cf. above, pp. 36-37.

development is not always positive!²⁷⁰ The same myth of the noble savage that Tacitus fully exploits in the *Germania* also seems to shine through here. In a way, this is a variation upon the common theme of the *laudatio temporis acti*, according to which the (often idealised) past is far better than the present. Among other ancient authors, this topic was central to Tacitus' model Sallust, and returns in Ammianus.²⁷¹ Yet all this is not to say that *humanitas* has a negative connotation in the *Agricola*. As we have seen, none of the elements which constitute Tacitus' idea of *humanitas* are negative by themselves. Rather, we should speak of a broad meaning of the term *humanitas*, which includes neutral, that is neither positive nor negative, aspects of being Roman.²⁷² An exclusively negative sense should be – but is not necessarily – taken on by the term, and consequently, by the whole passage, from the non-Roman perspective of the Britons alone, for they do not realise that *humanitas* implies cultural slavery and is not necessarily synonymous with progress.²⁷³ On this occasion, the *Agricola*'s constant tension between pro- and anti-imperialist attitude, as argued by Whitmarsh, materialises in the different perspective from which to look at *humanitas*, the Romans' or the Britons'.²⁷⁴

According to Tacitus' narration, just one Briton would seem to realise the negative implications of Roman *humanitas*, the chieftain Calgacus. The speech he delivers before his people prior to the Battle of Mons Graupius (*Agr.* 30-32), which is unfortunately too long to be quoted here, would include quite a few allusions to and criticisms of Roman imperialism.²⁷⁵ Accordingly, and in addition to the references I mentioned at the outset of this section, scholars such as Liebescheutz and Sailor have highlighted parallels between Calgacus' oration and *Agr.* 21 in pointing out the drawbacks of the Roman empire in Tacitus' view.²⁷⁶ Rutledge has in turn maintained that both these texts are consistent in revealing the necessity of Roman imperialism, as they both show weaknesses of the Britons: *Agr.* 21 makes it clear that their 'civilisation' actually leads to decadence, while Calgacus embodies too many anachronistic republican values, such as

²⁷⁰ Cf. Rutledge (2000), 85.

²⁷¹ Cf. Chapter 5.1: below, pp. 152-181.

²⁷² Cf. Woolf (1998), 69-70.

²⁷³ On *vocabatur* in this passage, cf. Soverini (2004), 205, with further examples: "il motivo della 'falsa definizione', per cui ad indicare una certa realtà viene impiegato un termine inadeguato e disviante, sembra particolarmente avvertito dalla sensibilità tacitiana". Cf. also Braund D. (1996), 161-165.

²⁷⁴ Whitmarsh (2006).

²⁷⁵ Cf. especially 30.1 and 30.7.

²⁷⁶ Liebescheutz (1966), 136-137, Sailor (2012), 34. Cf. also Whitmarsh (2006), 318-319.

libertas.²⁷⁷ This would mean that the Britons do not have the qualities to rule over their own land, and thus need an external ruler, that is the Roman emperor. Nevertheless, I would again echo Whitmarsh, who argues that one of the main analogies between Calgacus' speech and *Agr. 21* is that they both concern "identification and exposure of catachrestic signification, of *falsa nomina*".²⁷⁸ *auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant* of 30.6 is in dialectic relation with *idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esset* of 21.3. Both passages therefore include two perspectives at the same time, the Romans' and the Britons', and it would be arbitrary to exclude either.

As said before, the second occurrence of *humanitas* in Tacitus is to be found in the *Germania*. Like the *Agricola*, it is a unique work which dates to 98 CE.²⁷⁹ Its title in the manuscripts, *De origine et situ Germanorum*, evokes an ethnographic monograph, but this only applies to the first half of the work (chapters 1-27.1).²⁸⁰ After describing the region and the physical and social features of its inhabitants, in the second half (27.2-46) Tacitus turns in fact to a survey of the peoples of Germania.²⁸¹

Towards the end of the first half of the work, also through praising their hospitality, "Tacitus builds up his portrait of the Germani as the Roman other".²⁸² In this context, he says:

Convictibus et hospitiis non alia gens effusius indulget. quemcumque mortalium arcere tecto nefas habetur; pro fortuna quisque apparatis epulis excipit. cum defecere, qui modo hospes fuerat monstrator hospitii et comes; proximam domum non invitati adeunt. nec interest: pari humanitate accipiuntur. (21.2-3)

Although it is far from having the richness of meaning, but also of ambiguities, of the occurrence of *humanitas* in the *Agricola*, this one ultimately shares with the former the idea of civilisation. In a way, it could also be said to be complementary to the *Agricola* instance, as it shows that the barbarians, whether they are Britons or Germani, do already

²⁷⁷ Rutledge (2000), 85-90.

²⁷⁸ Whitmarsh (2006), 318.

²⁷⁹ At 37.2 Tacitus refers to Trajan's second consulship (first half of 98 CE) and the context suggests that the historian is talking about a contemporary event. Cf. Rives (2012), 46 with further bibliography.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Thomas (2009), 61.

²⁸¹ On the issues concerning the genre and the style of this work cf. Thomas (2009), 61 and *passim*, Rives (2012), 48-53.

²⁸² Rives (2012), 52.

possess an idea of civilisation. Their idea is probably less sophisticated than the Romans', but for this same reason it is further from vice and more easily manageable. The barbarians possess genuine civilisation which does not derive from the liberal arts or their dress, but is more natural, authentically human, at least within the boundaries and by the standards of their own society. Because of such genuineness and purity, here banquets are not seen as enticements to vice – or at least not to the same degree as in the *Agricola* – but as occasions in which *humanitas* towards fellow countrymen can be displayed. In view of all this, it is probably simplistic to reduce *humanitas* to an equivalent of *hospitalitas*, as the *TLL* entry suggests.²⁸³ Here *humanitas* does take the shape of hospitality, but insofar as it is an offshoot of a more wide-ranging value, namely civilisation. In the section on Gellius (and in Ammianus), we will see that and how this connection between *humanitas* and hospitality becomes clearer.

Tacitus' two earliest works thus show a much fuller use of the term *humanitas* in the *Agricola*, and a more restricted one in the *Germania*. In the case of *Agricola*, we could even state that *humanitas* has reached its highest level of meaningfulness in characterising the essence of the Romans: on the one hand, it contains the educational and rhetorical aspects embedded in the most pregnant Ciceronian occurrences of the term; on the other, it goes even beyond Cicero, including some possible less noble features and habits of the Roman people.²⁸⁴ In contrast, the case of *Germania* proves that there can be a 'lower', 'more barbarian' level of *humanitas*, which is far from the Greek ideal of παιδεία, but at the same time is further from its potentially dangerous consequences. Tacitus must have seen how these dangerous consequences had materialised in first-century Roman society, and this may contribute to explaining why in the *Annales* and *Historiae* he avoided using the term *humanitas* in narrating the events from the end of Augustus' reign to Domitian's.

But if Tacitus hardly uses *humanitas* in his works, he does use *humanus*. I agree with Benferhat that he did so because he perceived a significant difference in meaning between the noun and the adjective, a difference which emerges from the comparison between the occurrences of *humanitas* and those of *humanus*.²⁸⁵ A closer look at the 45 instances of *humanus* – including a couple of cases of *inhumanus* – will make this clearer.

²⁸³ Cf. *TLL* 6.3.3082.24-25. Once more a precedent of this nuance of *humanitas* can be found in Cicero: cf. *TLL* 6.3.3082.19-24. For later uses cf. *TLL* 6.3.3082.26-55 and Høgel (2015), 96.

²⁸⁴ On Ciceronian *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 29-35.

²⁸⁵ Benferhat (2011), 90.

In most cases, *humanus* agrees with *adfectus, animus, corpus, cupido, effigies, genus, hostia, ingenium, infirmitas, ius, malignitas, memoria, modus, natura, ops, os, res, sors, species, vox* and thus simply conveys the idea of ‘human’ / ‘of man’, without any ethical, cultural or philanthropic implications.²⁸⁶

In a couple of situations the adjective is used as a noun, in the common comparison/opposition between *humana* and *divina*.²⁸⁷ The same (implicit) polarity can be found at *Ann.* 15.44, although here *humana consilia* may also imply that Nero, in paying attention to his people’s needs while rebuilding Rome after the fire of July 64 CE, was inspired by philanthropic ideals: *Et haec quidem humanis consiliis providebantur. Mox petita dis piacula*. Nevertheless, the distance from the *Agricola* occurrence of *humanitas* remains immense, as it does for the two following instances of *inhumanus* within the *Historiae*.

At 2.70 Vitellius wants to tread the plains of Bedriacum to see the traces of his recent victory. The battlefield is ghastly to behold according to Tacitus’ description, *but nec minus inhumana pars viae quam Cremonenses lauru rosaque constraverant, exstructis altaribus caesisque victimis regium in morem*. At 3.83, Vitellians and Flavian forces, while fighting against each other on the streets of Rome, showed *inhumana securitas* (‘inhuman indifference’).

Inhumanus thus seems to have a richer, that is ethical, meaning than *humanus*, because it really evokes the idea of what is unbecoming to a human being. All the same, what in Tacitus associates *inhumanus* with *humanitas* is rather its rarity than the idea it expresses, and the meaning of the noun and the meaning of the adjective never seem to overlap.

²⁸⁶ *Adfectus*: *Ann.* 11.38; *animus*: *Hist.* 1.15; *corpus*: *Ann.* 2.69, *Ann.* 14.32; *cupido*: *Hist.* 5.13; *effigies*: *Hist.* 2.3; *genus*: *Agr.* 2.2, *Hist.* 1.30, *Hist.* 3.68, *Hist.* 5.25, *Ann.* 3.59, *Ann.* 13.14, *Ann.* 15.44; *hostia*: *Germ.* 9.1; *ingenium*: *Agr.* 42.4, *Hist.* 1.22; *infirmitas*: *Agr.* 3.1, *Dial.* 25.6; *ius*: *Hist.* 2.91, *Ann.* 1.40, *Ann.* 2.14, *Ann.* 3.70, *Ann.* 4.38, *Ann.* 6.26; *malignitas*: *Dial.* 18.3; *memoria*: *Ann.* 11.14; *modus*: *Ann.* 11.21; *natura*: *Dial.* 31.2; *ops*: *Hist.* 4.81, *Ann.* 6.12, *Ann.* 15.44; *os*: *Germ.* 9.3; *res*: *Hist.* 1.3, *Hist.* 3.68, *Hist.* 4.54, *Ann.* 15.47; *sors*: *Ann.* 6.19; *species*: *Hist.* 1.86, *Hist.* 4.83; *vox*: *Hist.* 5.13, *Ann.* 16.25.

²⁸⁷ *Ann.* 1.76 and 13.41.

2.3. Suetonius: *humanitas* as a paradox in the *Vita Tiberii*.

Our investigation into the use of *humanitas* in the Trajanic age ends with Caius Suetonius Tranquillus. This is due to a chronological reason, for Suetonius flourished at the turn of the Trajanic and Hadrianic age. His *De vita duodecim Caesarum*, the largest and most famous extant part of his immense production as well as his only work to contain instances of *humanitas*, was in fact probably written between 119-122 CE, that is, at the beginning of the reign of Hadrian.²⁸⁸ Yet the reason for including Suetonius in the Trajanic age is also that he belonged to the same cultural milieu as Tacitus and Pliny, and was certainly in close contact with the latter.²⁸⁹ Moreover, as far as *humanitas* and concepts of value in general are concerned, it is worth recalling that Wallace-Hadrill draws a sharp parallel between Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, identifying in Pliny's already discussed *Panegyricus* 3.4 the "series of contrasting pairs of virtues and vices which cover very much the same ground as do Suetonius' pairs".²⁹⁰ To recall it briefly, the first pair that Pliny mentions at *Pan.* 3.4 opposes *humanitas* to *superbia*, which Wallace-Hadrill translates and glosses thus: "humanity (equivalent to civility) and pride".²⁹¹ As fascinating as they may be, both the main statement and the parenthesis raise some doubts. To begin with, *humanitas* is extremely rare in Suetonius' extant oeuvre, as the term itself is only used twice in the *Vita Tiberii*;²⁹² nor is *civilitas* more frequent, appearing only at *Aug.* 51.1 and *Claud.* 35.1. Moreover, it is very hazardous to consider *civilitas* as an equivalent of *humanitas*. Not only are these two words never twinned in Latin, despite it being a language which makes ample use of synonymous doublets, but the very opposition of *humanitas* to *superbia* at *Pan.* 3.4 rules out that possibility: for how could pride (*superbia*) be seen as something opposite to civility?

²⁸⁸ John the Lydian (*Mag.* 2.6) informs us that Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* were dedicated to Septicius Clarus as Praetorian prefect, so between 119-122 CE. Most scholars give credit to John the Lydian, but cf. also Townend (1959), Cizek (1977), 13 n. 39, Baldwin (1983), 2, 14 and 47-51, Power (2014b), 76-77. For an overview of Suetonius' lost works cf. Vacher (2003²), xxi-xxiv.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Della Corte (1958), 77-113, Cizek (1977), 7-9, Baldwin (1983), 9-27, Gascou (1984), 735-736. Furthermore, Baldwin (1983), 51 for one even proposes that "some, perhaps all, of the imperial biographies were composed and published by 117": cf. the previous footnote.

²⁹⁰ Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 155. On Pliny, *Pan.* 3.4 cf. above, pp. 52-53.

²⁹¹ Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 155.

²⁹² A third one in *Gram.* 14.2 is in fact within a Ciceronian letter to Atticus.

On the contrary, along the lines I have been drawing in this chapter, especially in the introduction and the section on Tacitus, it is my contention that two arguments at least can be put forward to explain the rarity of *humanitas* in Suetonius' oeuvre. On the one hand, with Tacitus' case in mind, it does not seem rash to conjecture that this is at least partly due to the historical character of Suetonius' work, and to republican and early imperial historians' general avoidance of this term.²⁹³ On the other hand – and this seems to me to be a perhaps stronger point – we should not forget that, like Tacitus' major historical works, Suetonius' *Caesares* also deal with first-century emperors, and I have already reiterated more than once that *humanitas* does not seem to have been central to first-century Roman thought; nor was it among the emperors' most praised values. In light of this, it might seem surprising that the only two instances of *humanitas* in Suetonius are to be found in the *Vita Tiberii*, the biography of an emperor who was by no means a positive model in Suetonius' view.²⁹⁴ However, a closer analysis of these two occurrences will reveal that there is little room for surprise, for in Tiberius' reign there was only a lack, or at best, an appearance, of *humanitas*. Let us turn to the text in question.

Having praised the emperor's patience in the face of abuse and slander as well as his benevolent and 'democratic' behaviour towards the senate in the previous paragraph, at *Tib.* 29 Suetonius adds: *Atque haec eo notabiliora erant, quod ipse in appellandis*

²⁹³ For the lack of *humanitas* in Roman historians cf. above, p. 77. One can object that Suetonius was a biographer rather than a historian. However, despite Plutarch's statement at *Alex.* 1.2 (οὔτε γὰρ ιστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους – 'Nor do I write about history, but about lives'), the line between biography and history was generally blurred in antiquity. And, after all, Jerome himself called Suetonius a historian (*Chron. praef.* p. 6 Helm = p. 288 Roth). Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 8-10, who defines Suetonius a "scholar", Giua (1991), 3735 and n. 8, and 3744-3745 and Power (2014a), 1-2. Other scholars, such as Della Corte (1958), 203-230, Baldwin (1983), 66-100 and Gascou (1984), 343-456, tend on the contrary to distinguish more clearly between history and biography, although the latter recognises the historical value of the *Vitae Caesarum* (xii-xvi, 345, 457-674, 801-803), which is made clear right from the title, *Suétone Historien*.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Cizek (1977), 102-109, 148, Baldwin (1983), 252-253, Newbold (1984), 121-122, Gascou (1984), 696, Gunderson (2014), 141-145. Nevertheless, according to Somville's (2002) arguments, Suetonius' description of Tiberius' life is not entirely negative. So when Cizek (1977), 155 claims that *humanitas* is a, perhaps the, criterion for distinguishing the good from the bad emperors, he is evidently speaking of his own idea of *humanitas*, not Suetonius'. Cf. also Cizek (1977), 195-197. Regarding the difficulties for understanding why some words are rare or are used in some *Vitae* alone, cf. the persuasive Baldwin (1983), 484-485, according to which, in the last analysis, there can be no reason for that, especially with words of little or no consequence.

venerandisque et singulis et universis prope excesserat humanitatis modum. As is often the case with *humanitas*, it is difficult to provide a translation which is utterly satisfying. ‘Courtesy’ clearly makes sense, but of course something is missing. The impression is that once more both the ideas of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία are simultaneously expressed. The former is the precondition, as it were; the latter, which is far more evident, represents the practical manifestation, the kind and benevolent behaviour of a person of higher rank towards people of lower status.²⁹⁵ What can be a little surprising, especially in the light of some negative readings of the *Vita Tiberii*, is that this emperor even exceeded the ‘standard level’ of *humanitas*.²⁹⁶ But this simply means that a positive concept like *humanitas*, if carried to excess, may seem to hide traces of its opposites, *inhumanitas* or *superbia*.

Other passages of this *Vita* may corroborate this interpretation. At *Tib.* 30, for instance, Suetonius ingeniously observes: *Quin etiam speciem libertatis quandam induxit conservatis senatui ac magistratibus et maiestate pristina et potestate.* The overall message could appear to be positive, but the word *species* (semblance) insinuates serious doubts about Tiberius’ true intention.²⁹⁷ From paragraph 41 onwards then, there is no longer need of dissimulation, and at 42 Suetonius makes Tiberius’ degeneration extremely clear:²⁹⁸ *Ceterum secreti licentiam nactus et quasi civitatis oculis remotis, cuncta simul vitia male diu dissimulata tandem profudit.* In *Tib.* 50, in fact, the word

²⁹⁵ On *humanitas* in this passage cf. also Vogt (1975), 150.

²⁹⁶ Cf. e.g. the reading by Gunderson (2014). However, according to other readings, *Tib.* 29 is entirely positive: cf. e.g. Cizek (1977), 96.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Gascou (1984), 720-721. On the contrary, Baldwin (1983), 263 believes that this is “a genuine compliment”; while Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 110 takes a sort of median position: “He [i.e. Suetonius] seems to approve vaguely of the ‘sort of show of *libertas*’ which Tiberius allowed the senate”. On *libertas* in Suetonius cf. Baldwin (1983), 327-333, Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 110-112 and 118. For the juxtaposition of *libertas* and *maiestas* cf. D’Aloja (2011), 67.

²⁹⁸ On paragraph 41 as a turning point in Suetonius’ description of Tiberius cf. Bringmann (1971), 277, Döpp (1972), 451, Vogt (1975), 190, Cizek (1977), 136, Gascou (1984), 681 and 691, Giua (1991), 3736. However, Giua (1991), 3736-3737 herself acknowledges that some negative aspects of Tiberius’ nature can already be perceived in the first half of his biography. Cf. also Gascou (1984), 700-701. The cases of *humanitas* at 29 and of *speciem libertatis* at 30 seem to me to point in this same direction. Cf. also Bradley (1991), 3703 and n. 11, who then remarks: “towards Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and Domitian he [i.e. Suetonius] is unambiguously hostile” (3729). A different position in Bringmann (1971), 285: “Alle negativen Züge des Tiberius sind im letzten Abschnitt gesammelt, im ersten und im zweiten blieb dafür kein Raum”. Cf. also Döpp (1972).

humanitas itself bears its usually positive meaning, but the negative atmosphere is given by the fact that Suetonius is denouncing its lack: *Iuliae uxori tantum afuit ut relegatae, quod minimum est, officii aut humanitatis aliquid impertiret, ut ex constitutione patris uno oppido clausam domo quoque egredi et commercio hominum frui vetuerit*. The twinning of *officium* and *humanitas* has a Ciceronian feel.²⁹⁹ The phrasing at *Pro Flacco* 57 seems to be the closest to Suetonius:³⁰⁰

Nisi forte hae civitates existimari volunt facilius una se epistula Mithridatis moveri impellique potuisse ut amicitiam populi Romani, fidem suam, iura omnia officii humanitatisque violarent, quam ut filium testimonio laederent cuius patrem armis pellendum a suis moenibus censuissent.

In his oratorical, emphatic tone, Cicero's accusation of violating all the laws of obligation and humanity (*iura omnia officii humanitatisque*) summarises and represents the climax of all violations. By contrast, Suetonius' style is far less dignified and cutting, but what he means is pretty much the same: all the laws of obligation and humanity would push Tiberius to have mercy upon his wife, but there is no room for humanity in this emperor's nature. In sum, it may sound a little paradoxical, but despite being the only *Vita* where the word *humanitas* appears, we must agree with Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 160 that "Suetonius' aim is not to explain the political crisis of Tiberius' reign but to compile a dossier of his inhumanity".³⁰¹ (my emphasis)

As for Suetonius' use of *humanus*, there seems to have little connection with *humanitas*. Here is a survey of its occurrences. Julius Caesar 'allowed honours to be bestowed on him which were too great for mortal man' (*sed et ampliora etiam humano fastigio decerni sibi passus est*).³⁰² And his excellent horse is said to have 'feet that are almost human' (*pedibus prope humanis*).³⁰³ Eventually, at his funeral, a herald recited 'the decree of the Senate in which it had voted Caesar all divine and human honours at once' (*senatus consultum, quo omnia simul ei divina atque humana decreverat*).³⁰⁴ In the

²⁹⁹ On *officium* in this passage and in Suetonius in general cf. Vogt (1975), 242.

³⁰⁰ For other simultaneous instances of *officium* and *humanitas* cf. Cic. *Ver.* 2.2.118, *Phil.* 2.9, *Fam.* 3.1.1, 3.9.1, 11.27.8, 11.28.4, 16.4.2, *Att.* 6.1.1.

³⁰¹ Wallace-Hadrill (1984), 160.

³⁰² Suet. *Iul.* 76.1.

³⁰³ Suet. *Iul.* 61.1.

³⁰⁴ Suet. *Iul.* 84.2.

Vita Augusti, the only occurrence of *humanus* has to do with his making Rome safe for the future, ‘so far as human foresight could provide for this’ (*quantum provideri humana ratione potuit*).³⁰⁵ A little paradoxically, the *Vita Tiberii*, the only one to include instances of *humanitas*, has no instances of the adjective *humanus*. In the *Caligula*, the emperor’s clothing is criticised for not following the usage of his country, his fellow-citizens or his sex, or even of an ordinary mortal (*Vestitu calciatuque et cetero habitu neque patrio neque civili, ac ne virili quidem ac denique humano semper usus est*).³⁰⁶ At the opening of the *Vita Claudii*, a barbarian woman who appeared to Drusus is said to be of larger than human size (*species barbarae mulieris humana amplior*)³⁰⁷. When at some point Nero tried to make a woman of the boy Sporus and married him, someone sarcastically said that it would have been well for humanity (*bene agi potuisse cum rebus humanis*) if Domitius, Nero’s father, had done the same.³⁰⁸ At *Galba* 9.2, *humanus* simply combines with *genus*; whereas Vitellius’ ‘disregard for the laws of gods and men’ (*omni divino humanoque iure neglecto*) is proof of (and reason for) his negative portrait.³⁰⁹ In the *Vita Vespasiani* there is only trace of a human hand (*manum humanam*), while Titus will forever be remembered as *amor ac deliciae generis humani* (‘delight and darling of the human race’).³¹⁰ His positive portrait is also confirmed by his religiousness and piety: ‘For curing the plague and diminishing the force of the epidemic there was no aid, human or divine, which he did not employ, searching for every kind of sacrifice and all kinds of medicines’ (*Medendae valitudini leniendisque morbis nullam divinam humanamque opem non adhibuit inquisito omni sacrificiorum remediorumque genere*).³¹¹ As is clear, none of the aforementioned instances of *humanus* have anything to do with the philanthropic meaning *humanitas* takes on in the *Vita Tiberii*.

³⁰⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 28.3.

³⁰⁶ Suet. *Cal.* 52.1. Cf. Cizek (1977), 178.

³⁰⁷ Suet. *Claud.* 1.2.

³⁰⁸ Suet. *Nero* 28.1.

³⁰⁹ Suet. *Vit.* 11.2. Cf. Della Corte (1958), 75: “I Cesari peggiori, Tiberio, Caligola, Nerone, Vitellio, Domiziano, appunto perchè *religionum contemptores*, erano addirittura atei, e meritavano una fine più o meno violenta e crudele a seconda del loro grado di ateismo”. Cf. also Baldwin (1983), 360. On this very passage cf. also Della Corte (1958), 71.

³¹⁰ Suet. *Vesp.* 5.4 and *Tit.* 1.1.

³¹¹ Suet. *Tit.* 8.4.

2.4. Conclusion.

In the Trajanic age *humanitas* was a core concept of value. In terms of polysemy, Pliny's *Panegyricus* offers a striking, almost unrivaled, spectrum of nuances. Throughout the speech *humanitas* is first conceived of as an ontological value to be compared with *divinitas*, then as an ethical one in opposition to *superbia*, and as a political one in association with *maiestas*. The instance of *studia humanitatis* explicitly sets Pliny's *humanitas* in the wake of Cicero's, and also adds the educational dimension. Finally, a reference to Trajan's *humanitas* during banquets brings into play the social aspect of this value concept. The *Epistulae* provide further examples of this multifacetedness of *humanitas*, but, most importantly, reveal both that Pliny also praised this virtue of Trajan in private contexts (cf. *Ep.* 6.31.14), and that, thanks to its peculiarity of transcending social class distinctions, *humanitas* could work at and across all levels of Roman society. As such, *humanitas* was meant to represent a possible and highly positive value to oppose to Rome's decadence under and immediately after Domitian's tyranny, a decadence which was also moral and that might result in the decadence of the arts and literature, as Pliny himself acknowledges.³¹² From a backward perspective, we can ascertain that Pliny's strategy worked, for *humanitas* still played an important role in the Antonine age, and was again crucial three centuries later, when Theodosius I presented himself as a new Trajan. Yet the immediate success of this value concept also depended on Pliny's authoritative voice. In a period that was characterised by the presence of cultural circles which influenced Rome's life at all levels, Pliny's was certainly the most important one.³¹³ *Humanitas* and the other values (*temperamentum* or *moderatio*, *libertas*, and *amor* for instance)³¹⁴ he proclaimed in both his letters and the *Panegyricus* were therefore not only his own, but those embraced – or that Pliny hoped would be embraced – by a large part of the society, presumably by Trajan himself.³¹⁵

Clearly, the effectiveness of Pliny's use of *humanitas* in the Trajanic age was also facilitated by setting it in striking rhetorical contrast with previous times. Of all first-

³¹² Cf. e.g. *Epp.* 2.14, 6.2.5-9, 3.18.9-10 and Trisoglio (1971), 421-422.

³¹³ As Cizek (1989), 26 significantly remarks, Pliny is the only exponent of the age of Trajan whom Jerome cited (*Chron.* CCXXII Olymp., an XII = 109 CE). On Pliny's club cf. Cizek (1989), *passim*.

³¹⁴ On the importance of all these values in addition to *humanitas* cf. Méthy (2007), *passim*. On *temperamentum* in particular, cf. Galimberti Biffino (2003). Broadly speaking, these values (or some of them) can also apply to Suetonius' thought: cf. Cizek (1977), 196 and Gascoy (1984), 722-735.

³¹⁵ Cf. Soverini (1989), 545-548.

century emperors, Suetonius only associated the word *humanitas* with Tiberius, but just to remark that he lacked, and only feigned, this value concept. By the same token, in the *Annales* and *Historiae*, which were both composed late in Trajan's reign and deal with first-century history, Tacitus never employed *humanitas*. In all his oeuvre *humanitas* appears only once in the *Germania* and once in the *Agricola*, which were instead published in 98, when Trajan had just become emperor. Both instances reveal that *humanitas* was still living through hard times. In the *Germania*, Tacitus praises the barbarians' *humanitas*: it materialises into hospitality, is far less sophisticated and nuanced than the Romans', but much more sincere and distant from vices. By contrast, the *Agricola* occurrence displays an incredibly rich conception of Roman *humanitas*, but at the same time warns against the risks it implies, especially for those who are not aware of these risks, like the Britons at the time of Domitian.

Chapter 3.

Trials and educational programmes: the specialisation(s) of *humanitas* in the Antonine age.

‘Plinian’ *humanitas* and its success in the Trajanic age influenced Roman society in the years which followed. In this sense, statements like Dihle’s leave little room for doubt, for according to the German scholar in the second century “administration and jurisdiction became increasingly humane or humanistic: any man who aspired to a military or an administrative office or to any kind of social standing had to prove a considerable degree of general education”.³¹⁶ Dihle, or, better, his translator, seems to use ‘humane’ in the sense of ‘humanistic’, but, as I shall make clear in a moment, we could say with equal plausibility that the second century CE was also humane in philanthropic terms. Thus, since both *παιδεία* and *φιλανθρωπία*, two fundamental components of Pliny’s *humanitas*, played a major role in the culture of this century, it is highly likely that Pliny himself was one of the conveyors, if not the main one, of this message. In the literary field in particular, this is something we can best appreciate in the long run, that is to say in the Antonine age and its authors, for the Hadrianic age, despite being a period of general cultural prosperity, is usually seen as a period of literary decline, particularly in Latin, without prominent authors comparable to the earlier Tacitus and Pliny or the later Gellius and Apuleius.³¹⁷ But before providing an overview of the chapter and of its authors, let me briefly explain what allows us to speak of the second century, and of the Antonine age above all, as a ‘humane’ time.

In the educational sense, two key factors make the second century ‘humane’: the general attention paid to the *artes liberales* and the related rise and success of the so-called Second Sophistic. Let us stick to literary sources. We have already mentioned the *artes liberales* and their relationship to *humanitas* both in the Cicero section in Chapter 1 and when discussing Tacitus’ *Agricola* 21 in Chapter 2, as well as Pliny’s statement *Si quando urbs nostra liberalibus studiis floruit, nunc maxime floret* (*Ep.* 1.10.1, that about Euphrates). However, it is only in Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae* that the liberal arts are at the

³¹⁶ Dihle (2013), 214-215.

³¹⁷ On the decline of Latin literature in the Hadrianic age cf. for example the influential Steinmetz (1982), 1 and more recent bibliography in Heusch (2011), 2 n. 3.

very core of the work as they had been in Varro's nine books *De disciplinis*, so much so that Mercklin rightly observed: "Sein [sc. Gellius'] Ideal war eine Encyclopaedie der freiesten Art nach Form und Umfang".³¹⁸ Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astrology, Music and Medicine were in fact all important to Gellius' educational programme, as we shall see in more detail later.³¹⁹ Nor is Gellius unique from this standpoint, as he probably derived this view from his master Fronto,³²⁰ and his roughly contemporary Apuleius once wrote:

Sapientis viri super mensam celebre dictum est: 'prima', inquit, 'creterra ad sitim pertinet, secunda ad hilaritatem, tertia ad voluptatem, quarta ad insaniam'. verum enimvero Musarum creterra versa vice quanto crebrior quantoque meracior, tanto propior ad animi sanitatem. Prima creterra litteratoris rudimento excitat, secunda grammatici doctrina instr[a]vit, tertia rhetoris eloquentia armat. hactenus a plerisque potatur. ego et alias creterras Athenis bibi: poeticae commotam, geometriae limpidam, musicae dulcem, dialecticae austerulam, iam vero universae philosophiae inexplebilem scilicet et nectaream. (Flor. 20)

Exact correspondence between Varro's *disciplinae*, Gellius' *artes* and the subjects mentioned by Apuleius is not to be expected. After all, what counts is that they all share the same quest for encyclopedic knowledge. Moreover, Athens and Greek culture play a fundamental role in fostering and enhancing such encyclopedic learning. Apuleius' passage makes it immediately clear, although the same message emerges from Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*.³²¹ Nor is this phenomenon limited to these two authors, for Roman society as a whole, and especially its elite, gradually became more and more bicultural and bilingual.³²²

Whether or not they can all be considered representatives of the Second Sophistic in strict terms, it is thanks to figures like Herodes Atticus, Favorinus, Aelius Aristides, Dio of Prusa or Apuleius that this superior bilingual culture established itself as the distinctive feature of the second century CE, especially of the Antonine age. Generally Greek by culture, these men were used to wandering all over the Empire to give public speeches and show off their learning. Superior knowledge, rhetoric, oratory and

³¹⁸ Mercklin (1860), 694. Cf. also Heusch (2011), 334-338.

³¹⁹ Architecture, Varro's ninth *disciplina* seems to be of less interest to Gellius.

³²⁰ Cf. e.g. Heusch (2011), 337-338.

³²¹ Cf. Chapter 3.2: below, pp. 118-132.

³²² Cf. D'Elia (1995), 58-59.

theatricality were their keywords. Quite inevitably, they made contact with Roman people, very often with members of the most prominent Roman families, sometimes even with the royal one. Their appeal must have been irresistible, and their influence over Roman society clearly relevant. One of the personalities mentioned above, Herodes Atticus, who is also one of the most cited in Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, even held the Consulate (143 CE).³²³

In the philanthropic sense, the best evidence in support of the 'humane' character of the second century CE comes from the field of law, where the so-called *humanior interpretatio iuris* reached its acme under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161 CE – 180 CE).³²⁴ This label simply means that laws and penalties generally became more lenient. The fact that the peak of this milder attitude is bound up with the person of the Philosopher-Emperor comes as no surprise, since Stoicism, the philosophy professed by Marcus Aurelius, safeguarded the rights of all human beings *qua* humans. Yet, if the role of Marcus must not be underestimated, lenient laws can also be seen as the arrival point of the cultural 'revolution' which began with Pliny and Trajan, and continued with the Second Sophistic. In other words, and to return to *humanitas*, in the long run *humanitas-φιλανθρωπία* (i.e. *humanior interpretatio iuris*) might also be interpreted as a consequence of *humanitas-παιδεία* (i.e. the central role of learning as a medium to moral excellence after Domitian).

Let me turn now to anticipating which authors on the Latin side reflected and contributed to creating the cultural and social climate I have sketched out – and how their *humanitas* relates to it.

The chapter that follows starts off with Apuleius' revival of the judicial use of *humanitas*, which is not otherwise attested after Cicero and that evokes the aforementioned practice of *humanior interpretatio iuris*. Interestingly, this use of *humanitas* in Apuleius is not limited to the *Apologia*, but also plays a role in the *Metamorphoses*. I then move on to analysing a couple of significant instances of *humanus* in Apuleius' novel, where this adjective characterises some human features that either Lucius preserves after turning into an ass or reacquires during his process of

³²³ Cf. Dihle (2013), 2015: "The general spirit of the period is epitomised by the fact that in 143 AD, the Consulate was held jointly by M. Cornelius Fronto and Herodes Atticus, the two most renowned men of letters from the Latin and the Greek side respectively".

³²⁴ On *humanior interpretatio iuris* and *humanitas* in Roman law under Marcus Aurelius cf. e.g. D'Elia (1995), 41-43, De Pascali (2008), Costabile (2016), 193.

retransformation into a man. The Apuleius section concludes with a focus on the *De Platone et eius dogmate*, the only ‘purely’ philosophical of his works where *humanitas* appears.

The second, longer chapter section is devoted to Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*. By analysing the instances of *humanitas* and by comparing them to some methodological premises that can be found in Gellius’ preface, I seek to show the central role that *humanitas*, ultimately to be taken as encyclopedic learning, played in the educational programme he lays down in his work. Naturally, the famous passage of 13.17, which I have already mentioned several times as it is inevitably at the core of any research into *humanitas*, raises further questions that cannot be summarised here, but are given ample room both in the Gellius section and in other parts of the present work.

Finally, Fronto’s rare use of the term *humanitas* throws further light on Gellius’ exceptional, somehow revolutionary use of this term, at the same time corroborating Gellius’ assertion that his contemporary did not give to *humanitas* the meaning of παιδεία, but favoured instead the meaning of φιλανθρωπία. In doing this, I also advance a speculative hypothesis, based on Fronto’s own comments on the importance of word choice, as to why Fronto probably preferred other, more specific words to the polysemy and consequent ambiguity of *humanitas*.

3.1. *Humanitas* in the courtroom: Apuleius.

Apuleius of Madauros was a very versatile author. His extant works include an oration (*Apologia sive de magia*), a novel (*Metamorphoses sive asinus aureus*), excerpts of epideictic speeches (*Florida*), and philosophical treatises (*De deo Socratis, De Platone et eius dogmate, De mundo*).³²⁵ In particular, two works stand out: the *Apologia*, the only entire judicial oration that has come down to us from imperial Latinity, and the *Metamorphoses*, the only complete work of prose fiction in Latin we possess. These are also the works which best reflect Apuleius' idea of *humanitas* and *humanus*. Two peculiarities will emerge. First, Apuleius mainly seems to link *humanitas* to the legal sphere, and exploits it for rhetorical purposes: this happens not only in the *Apologia*, but in the *Metamorphoses* as well. Secondly, given that the aspiration of Lucius-ass to reacquire his human appearance is at the core of the *Metamorphoses* from Book 4 onwards, the idea of humanness is present time and again throughout the story. However, this idea is exclusively expressed through the use of the adjective *humanus*, while the noun *humanitas* appears only once, and within a detour from the main plot, after Lucius' metamorphosis. But let us focus on the *Apologia* first.

Apuleius delivered the *Apologia* in his own defence about 158-159 CE.³²⁶ The story, as is narrated by Apuleius, is quite simple: at his friend Pontianus' insistence, Apuleius marries Pontianus' mother Pudentilla, a wealthy widow who is significantly older than him. When Pontianus dies, Pudentilla's family, evidently resorting to a pretext, accuses Apuleius of having seduced her by magical means – hence the alternative title *De magia* – in order to inherit her property after her death. We do not know for certain what the outcome of the trial was, but we infer that Apuleius probably demonstrated the inconsistency of the charge against him and was presumably acquitted. It is true that the *Apologia* as we read it is almost certainly a re-elaborated version of the original speech

³²⁵ On his lost (and spurious) works cf. the survey in Gianotti (2004²), 148-150.

³²⁶ The date of the trial is given by the date of Maximus' proconsulate: cf. relevant bibliography in Bradley (1997), 203 n.1. Modern scholarship has called into question the existence of this trial against Apuleius. In other words, some believe that this oration represents not only the literary revision of a true speech, but a literary work *tout court*. For a *status quaestionis* cf. Binternagel (2008), 9-20, with rich bibliography.

he delivered,³²⁷ but it nonetheless shows the absurdity of the accusation, mainly revealing that, according to Pudentilla's will, it was not Apuleius but her sons who stood to inherit her wealth.

As is usually the case with judicial orations, Apuleius' strategy needed to be twofold in order for his defence speech to work: on the one hand, he had to prove that the prosecution had no evidence against him; on the other hand, he sought to create an exclusive bond between the judge, that is the proconsul, and himself. What interests us here is the latter aspect of his strategy. Aware of his superior education, Apuleius mainly relied on it, believing this would be the common denominator between the proconsul Maximus and himself. The fact that Apuleius bombards Maximus, the audience (and today's readers) with citations from and allusions to ancient writers is ultimately due to his desire to display his extensive learning. Needless to say, times had changed and the golden age of Ciceronian oratory was just a memory, but Apuleius' emphasis on the importance of education and culture throughout the *Apologia* reminds us of Cicero's *Pro Archia*.³²⁸ We have already seen in both the introduction and the Pliny section how the educational aspect of *humanitas* was central to this speech, and that Cicero exploited the polysemy of *humanitas* in the final *peroratio*.³²⁹ The reader in search of this same educational and polysemic idea of *humanitas* in Apuleius' *De magia* would probably be disappointed. But in spite of the different nuances that the term takes on, in both orations *humanitas* is one of the qualities praised in the judges. Apuleius makes this clear at *Apol.* 35, when he rejects the accusation of using two marine animals, which he calls *veretilla* and *virginal* (probably to be identified with *balanus* and *pecten* respectively), for the sake

³²⁷ But cf. Gianotti (2004²), 162: "Per quanto ritoccata con intenti letterari che potenziano i *colores* retorici e indulgono alle digressioni a effetto, la stesura a noi giunta dell'*Apologia* non ha perso il carattere di orazione giudiziaria cui è affidato il destino d'un imputato".

³²⁸ More generally, some scholars believe the *Apologia* to have a Ciceronian character: cf. Carbonero (1977), Harrison (2000), 44 and 51, and (2013), 41-42, May (2006), 75 and n. 15 for further bibliography. By contrast, Hijmans (1994) – 1727-1729 and 1762 in particular – Hunink (1997a), (1997b) and (1998) seem to reject the idea that Apuleius is imitating one single model. On Cicero's use of *humanitas* in the *Pro Archia* cf. above, pp. 31-35.

³²⁹ Cf. above, p. 34.

of his erotic pleasure.³³⁰ Finding this accusation ridiculous, he addresses Maximus as follows:

ne tu, Claudi Maxime, nimis patiens vir es et oppido proxima humanitate, qui hasce eorum argumentationes diu hercle perpessus sis; equidem, cum haec ab illis quasi gravia et vincibilia dicerentur, illorum stultitiam ridebam, tuam patientiam mirabar.

Whoever aims at creating an exclusive bond also needs to create a category of those who are excluded from this bond. In the *Apologia*, not only the accusers, but also the inhabitants of Sabratha as a whole constitute this category. True, Apuleius scorns them because of their stupidity and lack of education (*illorum stultitiam ridebam*); nevertheless, he admires (and flatters) Maximus, whose *patientia* and *humanitas* enable him to tolerate their ignorance (*tuam patientiam mirabar*).³³¹ Even more than *humanitas*, *patientia* is the key term of this passage: as well as constituting the climactic point at the close of the sentence, it is evoked by the adjective *patiens* and the verb *perpessus sis*. But like *humanitas*, *patientia* is a value-term which is characterised by variability and ambivalence. Kaster claims: “It [scil. *patientia*] is a term that, more than any other Latin word I know, can be used to express either high praise or grave condemnation”.³³² A survey of its instances reveals that it can correspond to dispositions such as endurance, patience, forbearance, but also passivity and submissiveness.³³³ In other words, *patientia* is not necessarily a virtue. However, as Kaster (2002), 142 goes on to say,

“There was one category of free man in whom *patientia* was regularly praised and upon whom it was unhesitatingly urged, directly or by implication, as a virtue: that was the man whose superior power was beyond question [...] in whom *patientia* was above all the forbearance that stayed his hand and kept him from reaching out to crush his inferiors”.³³⁴

This description perfectly fits our passage: no doubt the proconsul Maximus belongs to that category of powerful men, and no doubt Apuleius praises his *patientia*. But it is also

³³⁰ On these two fishes in the *Apologia* cf. Binternagel (2008), 61-63 and Pellecchi (2012), 156-157, with further bibliography. The terms *virginal* and *veretilla* were probably coined by Apuleius himself: cf. Caracausi (1986-87), 169 and Nicolini (2011), 132 n. 405.

³³¹ Cf. Hunink (1997b), 113 on this passage: “One of the numerous examples of flattery of the judge”.

³³² Kaster (2002), 135.

³³³ Kaster (2002), 135. Cf. also *TLL* 10.1.708.55-10.1.716.27.

³³⁴ Kaster (2002), 142.

the pairing with *humanitas* which leads us to understand *patientia* as forbearance; vice versa, *patientia* helps us better understand the meaning of *humanitas*.

Since Apuleius needs to widen the gap between Maximus and the throng, it would be counter-productive – and even outrageous – to claim that Maximus’ *humanitas* is *proxima oppido* (very, perhaps too, close to the townspeople), if *humanitas* took on educational nuances as in Cicero’s *Pro Archia*. Needless to say, neither a proconsul nor his education can be put on the same level as the throng. Conversely, *proxima oppido* strengthens the philanthropic idea that *humanitas* takes on here. But because of the uniqueness of the expression to which it gives birth, *proxima* was sometimes suspected of being a wrong *lectio*, in spite of both the manuscripts F and φ having this reading. By contrast, in the attempt to defend it, Butler and Owen maintained that this and two other instances of *proximus* in Apuleius’ *Apologia* are not to be seen as superlative, but as positive forms whose meaning would be ‘easy, obvious, convenient’.³³⁵ In support of their thesis they pointed out that a comparative *proximius* can be found in Ulpian *Dig.* 38.8.1.8 and Minucius Felix *Oct.* 19.2. Nowadays it is far easier for scholars to verify that the instances are actually many more, among which we can include Seneca, *Epist.* 108.16 (*abstinentiae proximiozem*) and, when the adjective is substantivised, Prisc. *Gramm.* II 97, 15: *proximus quando pro cognato accipitur, positivi significationem habet ideoque a legis latoribus etiam comparative profertur*.³³⁶ Yet it is my contention that *proxima* is really a superlative at *Apol.* 35. Despite the fact that the overall understanding of the passage does not depend on this issue, it must be noted that the context seems to suggest the presence of a superlative: *nimis patiens* makes in fact clear that Apuleius is talking about a behaviour and an attitude which are extraordinary and excessively tolerant and benevolent because they are undeserved. If in the following phrase *proxima* were taken as a simple, positive adjective, the tone of the sentence would be weakened, and Apuleius’ wonder at Maximus’ patience less comprehensible.

As for the juxtaposition of *patientia* and *humanitas*, we have already encountered it in a very short letter which Pliny sent to Trajan (10.106). In his article on *patientia*, Kaster does not mention *Apol.* 35, but he does mention this letter, where *humanitas* is for the first time placed in close relation with *patientia*.³³⁷ Like Apuleius, Pliny needs to praise his superior addressee to gain his favour. And if *patientia* and *humanitas* enable

³³⁵ Butler – Owen (1914), 24.

³³⁶ Cf. *TLL* 10.2.2040.74-2041.23 for a more detailed list.

³³⁷ Kaster (2002), 143. Cf. above, pp. 59-60.

Maximus to put up with the prosecution's unsubstantiated line of argument (*argumentationes*), these same virtues should lead Trajan to accept his soldiers' pleas (*precibus*). Trajan's positive response (10.107) confirms both the emperor's closeness to his army and the efficacy of the *patientia-humanitas* argument.

But in the *Apologia* there are other ways in which Apuleius exploits the *humanitas* argument to spotlight the boundary which separates Maximus and himself from his rivals and the inhabitants of Sabratha. At *Apol.* 86, while rebuking Pudentilla's son, who is guilty of divulging some of his mother's most private letters, he praises the different behaviour of the Athenians in an analogous situation:

Athenienses quidem propter commune ius humanitatis ex captivis epistulis Philippi Macedonis hostis sui unam epistulam, cum singulae publice legerentur, recitari prohibuerunt, quae erat ad uxorem Olympiadem conscripta.

The same anecdote is recorded by Plutarch, in the *Life of Demetrius* 22:³³⁸

καὶ τὴν Ἀθηναίων οὐκ ἐμμήσαντο [*scil.* οἱ Ῥόδιοι] φιλανθρωπίαν, οἱ Φιλίππου πολεμοῦντος αὐτοῖς γραματοφόρους ἐλόντες, τὰς μὲν ἄλλας ἀνέγνωσαν ἐπιστολάς, μόνην δὲ τὴν Ὀλυμπιάδος οὐκ ἔλυσαν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἦν κατασεσημασμένη πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ἀπέστειλαν.

This story must have been well known in Plutarch's and Apuleius' day, so that to investigate whether the latter draws upon the former, if this were possible, would be of no consequence. Nevertheless it is striking that when the Greek author attributes this Athenian behaviour to their *φιλανθρωπία*, the Latin attributes it to their *ius humanitatis*.³³⁹

This expression, as I mentioned above, had been previously used by Cicero. We have already come across its occurrence at *Pro Flacco* 57, while dealing with Pliny and

³³⁸ On anecdotes in Apuleius' *De magia* cf. Binternagel (2008), 136-167 (148 on this very anecdote).

³³⁹ According to numerous sources (Sen. *Ira* 2.23.4, Plin. *NH* 7.93-94 and Cass. Dio 41.63.5), Julius Caesar made something similar when burning, after refusing to open, the letter-boxes of the dead Pompey: interestingly, Seneca ascribes this behaviour to Caesar's *clementia*, Pliny to his *magnanimitas* and Cassius Dio to his *φιλανθρωπία*. Yet there is a fundamental difference between the two episodes: while the Athenians seem to be willing to respect Philip's privacy, Caesar's decision to burn the letters of his defeated rival is identified with his willingness to deny "himself access to material with which he [...] might otherwise persecute those implicated therein", as Howley (2017), 221 puts it. It is my contention that the uses of *ius humanitatis* in Apuleius and of *clementia* in Seneca mirror this behavioural difference, which instead vanishes in the Greek texts of Plutarch and Cassius Dio.

the twinning of *officium* and *humanitas*, where *ius* appears in its plural form, *iura*.³⁴⁰ Compare *Pro rege Deiotaro* 30: *Esto: concedatur haec quoque acerbitas et odii magnitudo: adeone, ut omnia vitae salutisque communis atque etiam humanitatis iura violentur?* As Gotoff puts it, here “Cicero maintains that Castor fails to adhere to the lowest code of conduct for civilized men”.³⁴¹ The worst thing he does – *atque etiam* makes this clear – is in fact to violate every law of humanity. And to stress further the universality of this concept, Cicero pairs this expression with the adjective *communis*. Although in strict grammatical terms *communis* goes with *salus* (*salutisque*) in this passage, at *Pro Flacco* 24 – the third and last occurrence of *ius humanitatis* in Cicero – it goes with *humanitas*, as in *Apologia* 86 (and as in the *Apologia*, *ius* is singular):

Si quem infimo loco natum, nullo splendore vitae, nulla commendatione famae defenderem, tamen civem a civibus communis humanitatis iure ac misericordia deprecarer, ne ignotis testibus, ne incitatis, ne accusatoris consessoribus, convivis, contubernalibus, ne hominibus levitate Graecis, crudelitate barbaris civem ac supplicem vestrum dederetis, ne periculosam imitationem exempli reliquis in posterum proderetis.

In Apuleius’ *De magia*, the presence of *communis*, in specifying that each and every Athenian possesses the idea(s) expressed by *ius humanitatis*, implies a widening of the gap between the civilised inhabitants of Athens, possibly the ‘inventors’ or ‘founders’ of *humanitas*, and the ‘barbarians’ of Sabratha, none of whom allegedly know *humanitas*.³⁴² In contrast, there is no hint of comparison in the Ciceronian occurrences, but again the adjective undoubtedly strengthens the bond within the civic community. This bond is neither innate in every man nor culturally established, but safeguarded by law (*ius*). In commenting on the passage under investigation, and on the phrase *commune ius humanitatis* in particular, Hunink has observed: “an expression referring to what is commonly called *ius gentium*, a judicial and philosophical concept which had become widespread in Apuleius’ days”.³⁴³ Yet this statement raises some doubts. It is true that, as I have emphasised, such an expression mirrors the people’s mentality, which regarded (milder and more humane) laws as a cornerstone of Roman society, especially in the Antonine age.³⁴⁴ Nor is it due to chance that the phrase only appears in judicial

³⁴⁰ Cf. above, p. 91.

³⁴¹ Gotoff (1993), 251.

³⁴² On the origins of *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 14-18.

³⁴³ Hunink (1997b), 211.

³⁴⁴ Cf. above, p. 97.

contexts.³⁴⁵ Technically speaking, however, Roman law did not include any formal *ius humanitatis*, and Hunink’s reference to Gaius’ *Institutiones* 1.1 only proves the existence of a ‘formal’ *ius gentium* and not the equivalence between *ius gentium* and *ius humanitatis*.³⁴⁶ On the contrary, Gaius says that such a universal right is only called *ius gentium*, without allowing any other definition. Moreover, given the undeniable relationship between Greek φιλανθρωπία and Latin *humanitas*, the comparison of *Apol.* 86 with Plutarch, *Demetr.* 22 rather confirms the philanthropic component which lies behind the expression *ius humanitatis* than this law being shared by all the peoples of the world.

In addition to the Athenians and Maximus – and, implicitly, Apuleius himself – the category of the ‘chosen few’ includes a fourth protagonist, Lollianus Avitus, Maximus’ predecessor as proconsul. After he is merely named at *Apol.* 24, his presence in the *Apologia* becomes more significant from paragraph 94 onwards. Here, Apuleius provides examples that show against the claimants that he has always been in favour of and not against his stepsons. An example he gives is a letter of recommendation he wrote for Pontianus to Lollianus Avitus, ‘seen as a climactic point in the case.’³⁴⁷ Judging from Apuleius’ account, the proconsul must have been very pleased to receive his letter:

[h]is epistulis meis lectis pro sua eximia humanitate gratulatus Pontiano, quod cito [h]errorem suum correxisset, rescripsit mihi per eum quas litteras, di boni, qua doctrina, quo lepore, qua uerborum amoenitate simul et iucunditate, prorsus ut ‘vir bonus dicendi peritus’. scio te, Maxime, libenter eius litteras auditorum.

The error to which Apuleius refers here concerns his stepsons’ misunderstanding: previously convinced that he would take advantage of his position and try to seize

³⁴⁵ Alongside the rarity of this phrase, this is the reason why statements such as “the notion of *humanitatis iura* is commonplace” (Gotoff 1993, 251) do not stand up to scrutiny. Analogously, I would not push the argument so far as to claim with Norden (1912), 59: “Da Apulejus den Ausdruck *commune ius humanitatis* nahezu wie ein Schlagwort gebraucht, dürfen wir annehmen, dass zu seiner Zeit die Idee des Weltbürgerrechtes eine feststehende geworden war”. Cf. below for the second Apuleian occurrence of *commune ius humanitatis* in *Met.* 3.8.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Gaius 1.1: *Omnes populi, qui legibus et moribus reguntur, partim suo proprio, partim communi omnium hominum iure utuntur: Nam quod quisque populus ipse sibi ius constituit, id ipsius proprium est vocaturque ius civile, quasi ius proprium civitatis; quod vero naturalis ratio inter omnes homines constituit, id apud omnes populos peraeque custoditur vocaturque ius gentium, quasi quo iure omnes gentes utuntur. Populus itaque Romanus partim suo proprio, partim communi omnium hominum iure utitur.*

³⁴⁷ Harrison (2000), 83.

Pudentilla's property, they – or at least Pontianus – had by that time realised that this had not been the case. At any rate, what matters here is something else. As Harrison puts it: “It is of course a parallel for Avitus' successor Maximus' support for Apuleius in the case in progress; the panegyric pronounced on Avitus matches the praise of Maximus already frequently expressed in Apuleius' speech.”³⁴⁸ As we have seen, right from the beginning Apuleius displays his knowledge and erudition. On the one hand, this enhances his credibility as interpreter of the texts (letters, for instance) which will be read during the trial.³⁴⁹ On the other – and it is worth stressing this again – “Apuleius seeks to develop a complicity between himself and Maximus”, whose eulogy is mainly based on his philosophical knowledge and literary education, and sets the two of them apart from the throng.³⁵⁰ In the passage under investigation Apuleius is thus simply including Maximus' predecessor in this exclusive relationship. Avitus' learning (*doctrina*) and charm of language (*lepos, verborum amoenitas et iucunditas*) even make a *vir bonus dicendi peritus* of him. Moreover, it should not pass unnoticed that Apuleius is again showing off his own literary knowledge by quoting Cato the Elder's definition of the good orator, which clearly links the superior culture that a good orator ought to possess (*dicendi peritus*) to the moral sphere (*vir bonus*).³⁵¹ In a way, we might say that the idea of *humanitas*, in potentially implying both *παιδεία* and *φιλανθρωπία*, corresponds to this definition. Or, in other words, the idea of *humanitas* perfectly fits the orator. Accordingly, in general terms both *doctrina* and *lepos* could be closely related to *humanitas*.³⁵² But to what extent is this the case in the *Apologia*? While Avitus shows his *humanitas* in the act of congratulating Pontianus, who has understood that Apuleius is not to be seen as an enemy, he displays his *doctrina* and *lepos* in his own reply to Apuleius. For all their connections, these two episodes are distinct. As in the previous instances in the *Apologia*, here again *humanitas* is rather to be seen as having connotations of philanthropy. What is at stake in its use is Avitus' benevolence, not his education. Nevertheless, one may reasonably argue that his education lies behind his *φιλανθρωπία*. Granted, there is no

³⁴⁸ Harrison (2000), 83. Cf. also Hunink (1997b), 232.

³⁴⁹ Noreña (2014), 40-41.

³⁵⁰ Harrison (2000), 46. Cf. also Sandy (1997), 132-133.

³⁵¹ On this definition and other passages in which eloquence is closely linked to morality cf. Picone (1978), 150-151.

³⁵² On *doctrina* and *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 15-16, 31, 36, 38 and below, p. 124. The pair of *humanitas* with *lepos* is typically Ciceronian: cf. *Prov.* 29, *De orat.* 2.270, 2.272, 3.29, *Fam.* 11.27.6.

evidence for this and such an interpretation would come into conflict with Apuleius' use of *humanitas* at *Apol.* 35 (where *humanitas* can hardly take on educational nuances), but the polysemy of *humanitas* does allow for this reading. The cases of Cicero and Pliny the Younger make this clear.³⁵³ Regardless of this issue, it is evident that *humanitas* does play an important role in Apuleius' defence – perhaps not as a means of expressing education and knowledge, but along with (or as a consequence of) education and knowledge, *humanitas* is what brings together the civilised Athenians, the two proconsuls Maximus and Avitus, as well as, we might add, Apuleius himself, and what sets them apart from the common inhabitants of Sabratha and Apuleius' accusers. In other words, the *Apologia* is among the cases in which only an elite group of people can possess *humanitas*, though everybody can benefit from it. If Apuleius was actually acquitted, it was also thanks to his strategy and his careful use of *humanitas*.

While in the *Apologia humanitas* is a weapon of exclusion, in the mock trial which takes place in Hypata during the Risus Festival (*Metamorphoses* 3), it becomes a double-edged sword. The protagonist Lucius, who is charged with voluntary manslaughter, immediately realises that, in the hope of being acquitted, he needs to win over the audience. Thus, he seeks to show that he too is part of the same community as the Hypatans: certainly not as a fellow citizen, but at least as a fellow human being. As Apuleius in the *Apologia*, though with the opposite aim in mind, Lucius also resorts to the *humanitas* argument in his defence speech, which van der Paardt refers to as an '*Apologia parva*'.³⁵⁴ But his weapon backfires, for the witnesses for the prosecution seem to be able to use *humanitas* in a more sophisticated way, thereby reiterating Lucius' exclusion from the community. On the one hand, this mock trial corroborates the potential of the *humanitas* argument in the legal sphere, at least in Apuleius' view; on the other hand, the versatility of *humanitas* shows that this concept can be applied to opposite purposes, that is to create both exclusion and inclusion. Let us take a closer look at the texts.

While returning one night to his host Milo's house, Lucius, yet to be turned into a donkey, sees three robbers at the door. Being drunk, he does not hesitate to pull out his sword and kill the three of them. He then goes to bed. The following morning, when he

³⁵³ Cf. above, Chapter 1.2 (on Cicero) and Chapter 2.1 (on Pliny the Younger).

³⁵⁴ Van der Paardt (1971), 63. Apart from the resemblance of these two speeches, on which cf. also May (2006), 182 and n.1 for further bibliography, Apuleius is believed to allude on several occasions to the *Apologia* in the *Metamorphoses*: cf. Mason (1983), 142-143, Harrison (2000), 9-10 and (2013), 84 and n. 12 for further bibliography.

gets up, the local magistrates are waiting to arrest and try him. Both during his journey to the courtroom and theatre, where the trial is eventually to take place, and during the trial itself, while Lucius is in despair, the crowd is laughing. The reason for this is eventually revealed: Lucius has not killed three men, but three wineskins that had been turned into men through a magic trick. In other words, having been the victim-protagonist of the Risus Festival which takes place every year at Hypata (Thessaly), Lucius has “served as patron of the Hypatans’ community”.³⁵⁵

Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* is generally thought to be based on the lost *Metamorphoses* by the Greek Lucius of Patrae.³⁵⁶ The relationship between the two – and the *Onos*, which is included in the Lucianic corpus – is disputed, but most scholars believe the Risus Festival, or the trial at the very least, to be originally Apuleian.³⁵⁷ A survey of the use of *humanitas* within the trial of Hypata, and of the trial’s interaction with the *Apologia* will also back up this view.

Lucius’ defence begins at 3.4 and the judges’ and people’s *publica humanitas* is immediately invoked as the common value that should grant Lucius the right to defend himself even if the accusation seems to be incontestable:

'Nec ipse ignoro quam sit arduum trinis civium corporibus expositis eum qui caedis arguatur, quamvis vera dicat et de facto confiteatur ultro, tamen tantae multitudini quod sit innocens persuadere. Set si paulisper audientiam publica mihi tribuerit humanitas, facile vos edocebo me discrimen capitis non meo merito sed rationabilis indignationis eventu fortuito tantam criminis invidiam frustra sustinere.

Compared to Apuleius’ *Apologia*, the different use of *humanitas* is immediately striking: while in the trial of Sabratha *humanitas* is seen as a prerogative of some people or social categories but not of its citizens, here *humanitas* is a quality which characterises the

³⁵⁵ Habinek (1990), 54.

³⁵⁶ This has been the main strand of thought since Bürger (1887). An exception is represented by Bianco (1971), who believes that Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* derives directly from the *Onos*.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Perry (1923), 221 and (1925), 253-254, Summers (1970), 511, Walsh (1970), 148, Bianco (1971), 49-63, May (2006), 188 and n. 19 for further bibliography, and a *status quaestionis* with further bibliography in De Trane (2009), 199. More generally on the relationship between Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, Lucius of Patrae’s *Metamorphoses* and the *Onos* cf. Walsh (1970), 145-149, Bianco (1971), Mason (1978), 1-6, Scobie (1978), 43-46, Ciaffi (1983), James (1987), 7-16, Schlam (1992), 18-25, De Trane (2009), 15-22, Harrison (2013), 197-213 – on topographical differences – and 233, Tilg (2014), 1-18 and further bibliography in Harrison (1999), xxx.

inhabitants of Hypata as a whole. This is much highlighted by the adjective *publica*, which also defines *humanitas* in Quint. *Decl.* 254.6 and 12, as already noticed by van der Paardt, and Ps. Quint. *Decl.* 6.3.³⁵⁸ Set at the *exordium* of the oration, this phrase immediately shows that Lucius “has created his speech to the throng”.³⁵⁹ As for the meaning of *humanitas*, *publica* strengthens the idea of a bond that unites all human beings as such, a bond whose features Lucius clarifies later on.

The ‘*Apologia parva*’, delivered by Lucius-protagonist and recounted by Lucius-narrator, is just over when Lucius-narrator reflects upon the results he hoped to have achieved:

Haec profatus, rursum lacrimis obortis porrectisque in preces manibus per publicam misericordiam, per pignorum caritatem maestus tunc hos tunc illos deprecabar. Cumque iam humanitate commotos, misericordia fletuum affectos omnes satis crederem, [...] conspicio prorsus totum populum – risu cachinnabili diffluebant – nec secus illum bonum hospitem parentemque meum Milonem risu maximo dissolutum. (Met. 3.7)

In the light of the previous passage at the outset of his defence speech, it becomes clear that in saying *cumque iam humanitate commotos, misericordia fletuum affectos omnes satis crederem*, Lucius is not only alluding to his bursting into tears and begging the judges and audience after the speech – after all, this would be quite an ingenuous pretension. More significantly, he is alluding to the tone and content of the speech itself, which right from the beginning was connoted by a plea for mercy. In this way, Lucius also reveals the key role he purposely assigned to *humanitas* in his oration. There can be no doubt that this was a stratagem: Frangoulidis clearly shows that the Hypatans are portrayed as a savage, cruel people throughout the *Metamorphoses*.³⁶⁰ Given the evidence against him, as Apuleius in the *Apologia*, so Lucius in the ‘*Apologia parva*’ thought flattery was the best weapon he had at hand.

On a linguistic level, this passage also helps us define Lucius’ understanding of *humanitas*. Its affinity to *miseriordia* is manifest: after characterising it through the adjective *publica* (*per publicam misericordiam*), which instead connoted *humanitas* at

³⁵⁸ Van der Paardt (1971), 51. The reading of the manuscripts is *audientiam publicam*. Gruter’s emendation *publica*, which is thus made to agree with *humanitas*, is convincing. Haupt (1874), 243, Koch (1875), 637 and van der Vliet (1885), 101 defended it without argument. As is clear from the main text, *publica humanitas* also appears elsewhere, while conversely, *audientia publica* never occurs in classical Latin.

³⁵⁹ Finkelpearl (1998), 89.

³⁶⁰ Frangoulidis (2008), 184-185.

3.4, Lucius even goes so far as to consider *humanitas* a synonym of *misericordia*. This is made clear by its use in the “asyndeton bimembre with rhetorical effect” *humanitate commotos, misericordia fletuum affectos*, where *humanitas* is used apparently to avoid the repetition of *misericordia*.³⁶¹ While the pairing of the verb *commoveo* with *misericordia* is in fact extremely common, especially in Ciceronian orations, it is never so tightly linked to *humanitas* before this Apuleian occurrence.³⁶² However, this does not imply that Apuleius (or his narrator Lucius) was the first to perceive a close relation between *humanitas* and *misericordia*. On the contrary, these two terms quite often appear together, mainly in Cicero, Seneca and Quintilian.³⁶³ On occasion, *clementia* is also related to them.³⁶⁴

If on the one hand Lucius invokes *humanitas* as a defence instrument, on the other the widows of two of the three alleged corpses resort to the same argument to obtain vengeance. At 3.8, their theatrical reaction is as follows:

‘Per publicam misericordiam, per commune ius humanitatis,’ aiunt “miseremini indigne caesorum iuvenum, nostraeque viduitati ac solitudini de vindicta solacium date. Certe parvuli huius in primis annis destituti fortunis succurrite, et de latronis huius sanguine legibus vestris et disciplinae publicae litate.’

The opening of this speech echoes both Lucius’ first words (*si paulisper audientiam publica mihi tribuerit humanitas*) and his reference in indirect speech to what he did and said right after delivering his oration (*per publicam misericordiam*). We might pinpoint just one significant difference: the widows prefer *ius humanitatis* over the more banal *humanitas*. As well as suggesting lack of improvisation on the widows’ part, the technicality and rarity of this expression, which we have already noticed at *Apol.* 86, reveal, more than the simple *humanitas*, the superior knowledge and the Latin education

³⁶¹ Van der Paardt (1971), 66.

³⁶² To quote just a few Ciceronian instances of *commoveo* with *misericordia*: *Verr.* II.4.87, *Rab. perd.* 24, *Cluent.* 24, *Mur.* 65, *Deiot.* 40. One occurrence is also to be found in Quintilian 11.3.170.

³⁶³ Cic. *Cat.* 4.11, *Mur.* 6, *Flac.* 24 (where we have seen one of the rare occurrences of *ius humanitatis* appears); Quint. 6.1.22; Sen. *Ben.* 3.7.5, 5.20.5.

³⁶⁴ Cic. *Lig.* 29; *Rhet. Her.* 2.50; Sen. *Ben.* 6.29.1. On *misericordia* (and its relationship with *humanitas* and/or *clementia*) cf. Petré (1934) and Borgo (1985), 29-30, in particular at n. 9. Yet I am sceptical about Borgo’s claim that in Apuleius *misericordia* replaces *humanitas* as synonym of *clementia*: *Met.* 3.7 seems to contradict her.

of the person speaking.³⁶⁵ Or, to push this reasoning a step further, this use of *ius humanitatis* seems to unveil the author who lies behind the characters, Apuleius. Thanks to this expression, the widows not only resort to the same weapons that Lucius used, but they also try to make those weapons more effective. They achieve this through the tear-jerking presence of a child who has been made fatherless, allegedly, by Lucius' crime, and also by means of a more sympathetic vocabulary. In this respect, the pomposity of *per commune ius humanitatis* flatters the jury with their importance, and the adjective *commune* in particular contributes to Habinek's interpretation of the Hypatan festival "as a procedure whereby the community re-establishes its internal harmony and differentiates between its own civic identity and the world beyond its boundaries".³⁶⁶ While at *Apol.* 86 *commune* helps oppose the civilised Athenians to the less civilised inhabitants of Sabratha, here it sets Lucius apart from the inhabitants of Hypata. But given the theatricality of the Risus Festival as a whole, readers are likely to suppose that the scene of the widows and their speech were not improvised. Fortunately for Lucius, the unveiling of the three wineskins brings about the end of the mock trial. The reader will never know whether Lucius would have been acquitted, but might imagine that in addition to the evidence against him, the widows' use of the *humanitas* argument would also have been more successful than his.³⁶⁷ We might add that in the framework of the Risus Festival the technicality of *ius humanitatis*, alongside Lucius' use of *humanitas*, also contributes to what Walsh calls "parody [...] of the procedure and characteristic speech of the law-court".³⁶⁸ Certainly, this is facilitated by Lucius' skill as an orator, but even more by Apuleius'.³⁶⁹ His oratorical experience as well as the same technical, typically Latin use of *humanitas* that we have also noticed in the *Apologia* may support the thesis according to which the Risus Festival, or the mock trial of Hypata at the very least, is originally Apuleian, that is to say that this episode was not present in Lucius of Patrae's *Metamorphoses*. Needless to say, the absence of the trial in the *Onos*, the only other work

³⁶⁵ Cf. above, pp. 103-104.

³⁶⁶ Habinek (1990), 54. On ritual and/or apotropaic interpretations of the mock trial cf. also De Trane (2009), 232-234.

³⁶⁷ After all, as De Trane (2009), 214 rightly remarks, neither his speech nor his pathetic gesticulation after the speech seem to allow Lucius the audience' sympathy: all people continuously laugh at him, but no one feels sorry for him.

³⁶⁸ Walsh (1970), 58. Cf. also Walsh (1970), 155, Finkelppearl (1998), 86-88, De Trane (2009), 211.

³⁶⁹ The importance of Lucius' oratorical skill within the mock trial is well highlighted by James (1987), 88. Cf. also De Trane (2009), 212-213.

based on Lucius' *Metamorphoses* that has come down to us, is the best piece of evidence in favour of this theory.

After Lucius' 'acquittal' at the mock trial, the plot does not offer Apuleius further occasions for displaying his oratorical, legal mastery of the *humanitas* argument. However, *Metamorphoses* 3 somehow marks the true beginning of the story, for only towards the end of this book Lucius turns into an ass. From his metamorphosis onward, at the centre of the novel is a character who "is at great pains to demonstrate the persistence of *sensus humanus* within his bestial form".³⁷⁰ The concept of humankind therefore becomes central, but the word *humanitas* seems to have little in common with this idea, and never appears to express it. Conversely, as Schlam's words suggest, the adjective *humanus* does play a role in this respect. However, since almost every book devoted to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* deals, in a way or another, with the human and animal aspects of Lucius-turned-ass, here the focus will only be on two key cases where *humanus* bears special linguistic relevance.³⁷¹ These occurrences are also crucial in that they respectively mark the beginning and the end of Lucius' asinine life.

At *Met.* 3.26, Lucius-actor has just accidentally turned into an ass when Lucius-narrator reflects on what has happened: *Ego vero, quamquam perfectus asinus et pro Lucio iumentum, sensum tamen retinebam humanum*. The combination of *sensus* with *humanus* is uncommon, especially until Apuleius' day. It appears for the first time in Cicero's last works. At *Orator* 210 Cicero is warning lawyers to make prudent use of rhythmical style (*numerosa oratio*) in forensic speeches, as it might prevent the audience from feeling *humanum sensum*, that is, from being sympathetic. The phrase occurs again in *De divinatione*, this time in its plural form *humanos sensus*. Cicero, both author and protagonist of *De divinatione* Book 2, while contesting Cratippus' theories on divination, also says: '*Quid vero habet auctoritatis furor iste, quem 'divinum' vocatis ut, quae sapiens non videat, ea videat insanus, et is qui humanos sensus amiserit divinos adsecutus sit?*' (2.110). The opposition between *humani* and *divini sensus* alludes to the faculties which distinguish men from gods, first of all intelligence. Two further instances can be found within the Ciceronian corpus of letters, but in neither case is the author Cicero himself. Plancus defines the young Octavian's *sensus* as *moderatissimus* and

³⁷⁰ Schlam (1992), 100.

³⁷¹ Cf. especially Schlam (1992), 99-112.

humanissimus, presumably referring to the mildness of his character;³⁷² while Brutus rhetorically asks: *quid enim tam alienum ab humanis sensibus est quam eum patris habere loco qui ne liberi quidem hominis numero sit?*³⁷³ As for *humanus sensus* with animals, right at the beginning of his *Naturalis Historia* Book 8, Pliny the Elder claims: *Maximum est elephans proximumque humanis sensibus. quippe intellectus illis sermonis patrii et imperiorum obedientia, officiorum quae didicere memoria, amoris et gloriae voluptas,*³⁷⁴ from which we can infer that Pliny is thinking of *sensus* in terms of intelligence. Gellius then, in telling the story of the glorious death of Alexander the Great's horse, records that, after saving Alexander in a battle, Bucephalas *quasi cum sensus humani solacio animam expiravit.*³⁷⁵ However, the nearest passage to *Met.* 3.26 is probably to be found in the later Ampelius' *Liber Memorialis*, which probably dates to the third or fourth century CE. In the second section of this work, devoted to the zodiac signs, he says of the bull that *sensum humanum figura tauri continebat*. In writing his novel, Apuleius will have hardly thought about these parallels, but no doubt the nobility of those animals as well as the contexts in which they appear add to the light tone of Lucius' story when compared to the humility of an ass and the ridiculous episodes in which he is involved.

The second interesting case is instead offered by the combination of *humanus* with *somnus*, which never appears elsewhere in Classical Latin literature – nor is there an equivalent in the *Onos*, as rightly observed by Gianotti.³⁷⁶ Later on in the story, at the beginning of Book 9, Lucius the ass is believed to have been infected with rabies, and his masters want therefore to murder him. Perceiving the danger he is in, Lucius instinctively breaks into their bedroom. This turns out to be a place of safety, because instead of killing him, the masters simply lock the doors behind him. Being alone and having a bed at hand, Lucius can sleep a *somnum humanum* for the first time in a long while (*Met.* 9.2). Without further comments, Schlam points out that this event marks the beginning of Lucius' process of rehumanisation.³⁷⁷ But to a Platonist like Apuleius, sleep (and, consequently, dreams) had a more profound significance linked to divine inspiration and prophetic

³⁷² *Fam.* 10.24.5.

³⁷³ *Ad Brut.* 25.5.

³⁷⁴ *Plin. NH* 8.1.

³⁷⁵ *Gell.* 5.2.4.

³⁷⁶ Gianotti (1986), 38 n. 16.

³⁷⁷ Schlam (1992), 103.

powers.³⁷⁸ An in-depth analysis of this topic would take us too far from our subject. Yet it is worth recalling that, according to Plato's *Republic*, sleep is probably the only thing which can equalise the sage and a despicable person. Or, to put it another way, sleep makes all men alike – just like death, which has always been considered tightly linked to sleep. This happens because in people who are asleep the non-rational part of the soul prevails over the rational.³⁷⁹ This also means that people are more likely to be inspired by divine beings when asleep. But if sleep is close to death, awakening is synonymous with new birth. So, we might say that Lucius' *somnus humanus* is a prelude to his process of rehumanisation, which begins when he awakes from his human sleep and is completed when Isis appears to him in yet another dream later on in the story.

The true, physical retransformation of Lucius the ass into a human being only takes place in *Metamorphoses* 10. What paves the way to this retransformation is Lucius' fear of being killed by wild animals in the arena. As a new form of *spectaculum* for the crowd, the ass is to copulate with a murderess who has been condemned to the beasts in the arena. Lucius the ass fears that the beasts will surely attack him along with the woman, and so he decides to flee. He eventually reaches the shore of Cenchreae, where Isis appears to him in a dream and helps him reacquire his human shape.³⁸⁰ But before all this, Lucius-narrator lingers over the story of the murderess for a while. The reason for her death sentence is that she has killed her husband's sister, believing her to be his mistress. The husband had always concealed that that woman was his sister (she was in fact his illegitimate sister, and he had only recently become aware of her existence). When the maiden was mature enough to get married, her mother – who was not able to provide her with a dowry – had no choice but to reveal the secret to her son and ask for his help, fearing his reaction:

Sed pietatis spectatae iuvenis et matris obsequium et sororis officium religiose dispensat, et, arcanis domus venerabilis silentii custodiae traditis, plebeiam facie tenus praetendens humanitatem, sic necessarium sanguinis sui munus aggreditur ut desolatam vicinam puellam parentumque praesidio viduatam domus suae tutela receptaret, ac mox artissimo multumque sibi dilecto contubernali, largitus de proprio dotem, liberalissime traderet.
(*Met.* 10.23)

³⁷⁸ On Apuleius' Platonism cf. below, pp. 116-117.

³⁷⁹ Cf. *Pl. R.* 571 a-d.

³⁸⁰ On the fundamental meaning of this escape cf. Zimmerman (2000), 25 with further bibliography.

Astonishingly, the man's reaction was positive, and he even pretended to be acting out of *plebeia humanitas*. After Lucius' and the widows' judicial use of the concept, this is the fourth and last occurrence of *humanitas* in the *Metamorphoses*. Presuming that *humanitas* is mainly connoted as φιλανθρωπία, as we have seen to be usual in Apuleius, what does *plebeia* mean? As Zimmerman observes, this is the only occurrence of the adjective *plebeius* in Apuleius' oeuvre, and we might add that never before Apuleius is *humanitas* characterised as *plebeia*.³⁸¹ Two exegetical interpretations have been put forward: the *TLL* entry on *humanitas* explains this expression as *humanitas 'in puellam pauperam'*, that is to say 'towards a poor young woman'.³⁸² Conversely, the more recent entry on *plebeius* (*TLL* 10.1.2375.76-77), following Zimmerman, prefers the sense '*inter plebeios solita*', that is, 'the *humanitas* that ordinary people display toward each other', to borrow Zimmerman's words.³⁸³ On balance, I find the second option to be more persuasive, especially because the first reading would run the risk of being contradictory. It is true that in the *Apologia humanitas* seems to end up being an elitist concept, but certainly not *prima facie*: while the proconsul Maximus is surely supposed to be able to grasp this thanks to his superior education – otherwise Apuleius' strategy would be ineffective right from the beginning – the throng would hardly follow Apuleius' sly arguments. On the contrary, there would be no reason for such a plan of action in this episode of *Metamorphoses* 10, and the presence of the adjective *plebeius* would impede this cunning, somehow implicit use of *humanitas* anyway. Moreover, *plebeius* does not properly mean *pauper*, and, read in this way, the phrase could imply a pejorative categorisation, which does not seem to be apt here. Finally, it should be borne in mind that, generally speaking – and the case of Pliny the Younger in the previous chapter makes this clear – *humanitas* transcends social distinctions, and, unlike *clementia*, is not a prerogative of a person of higher rank towards one of lower. It is no coincidence that in his defence speech during the mock trial of *Metamorphoses* 3, Lucius relied on this very premise when he resorted to the *humanitas* argument and, making appeal to their common nature of equal human beings, sought to make the inhabitants of Hypata sympathetic to his miserable case.

Given that the *Asclepius* is by now universally believed to be post-Apuleian, the term *humanitas* appears in only one more Apuleian work, the *De Platone et eius dogmate*.

³⁸¹ Zimmerman (2000), 301.

³⁸² *TLL* 6.3.3079.64.

³⁸³ Zimmerman (2000), 301.

According to Dal Chiele, the *De Platone* is the most organic testament of Middle Platonism we have in Latin.³⁸⁴ Along a post-Aristotelian tripartite structure, the two books which compose this treatise are devoted to physics and ethics – a third book, devoted to logic, is either unpreserved or was not written by the author despite his original project.³⁸⁵ A third possibility then is that it is represented by the stand-alone Greek treatise Περὶ ἐρμηνείας, whose Apuleian authorship is nevertheless disputed.³⁸⁶ Although *humanitas* does not seem to play a particularly significant role in this philosophical treatise, the two occurrences of the term here enlarge the scope of its application and throw further light on the possible nuances which *humanitas* can take on. Interestingly, we see that *humanitas* can also be employed to translate technical terms of ancient Greek physics. Sections 13-18 of Book 1 broadly focus on anthropology, and the end of section 16 deals in particular with those blood-vessels, *quas ad procreandum e regione cervicum per medullas renum commeare et suscipi inguinum loco certum est et pulsu venarum genitale seminium humanitatis exire*. Neither the Plautine *seminium* nor the simpler *semen* are paired with *humanitas*, *humanus* or *homo* before this instance.³⁸⁷ On the contrary, the phrase ἀνθρώπων/ἀνθρώπινον σπέρμα is quite common in Greek literature and was used by Plato himself (*Lg.* 853 c). Given the nature of the treatise, it is therefore tempting to look to *seminium humanitatis* as a translation of ἀνθρώπινον σπέρμα. If on the one hand this implies for *humanitas* the acceptance of the tag *usu debilitato* put forward by the *TLL* entry (indeed *humanitas* seems to lose its polysemy and simply stand for *humanus*), on the other it gives a satisfactory explanation for the unusual meaning (at least in Apuleius) that the word takes on here.³⁸⁸

After dealing with physics in Book 1, Apuleius takes us back to the field of ethics in *De Platone 2*, so that the second and last occurrence of *humanitas* in this work is much

³⁸⁴ Dal Chiele (2016), 16. A good synthesis of the main features of Middle Platonism can be found in D’Elia (1995), 88-89. For an in-depth analysis cf. instead Dillon (1996) – 306-340 on Apuleius. On Platonism in Apuleius cf. Moreschini (1978) and Fletcher (2014).

³⁸⁵ Cf. *Plat.* 1.4. Recently, Stover (2016) has suggested that the *Summarium librorum Platonis*, which R. Klibansky discovered in an Apuleian manuscript (*Vat. Reg. Lat.* 1572), should be identified with the *De Platone et eius dogmate*’s Book III. Regardless of the issue of the Apuleian authorship of this *Summarium* – its ascription to Apuleius has been challenged for example by Moreschini (2017) and Magnaldi (2017) – it does not contain any instances of *humanitas* and is therefore of no use to this research.

³⁸⁶ Cf. the up-to-date state of research in Dal Chiele (2016), 16 n. 34.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 1059. On Plautine vocabulary in Apuleius cf. Pasetti (2007).

³⁸⁸ Cf. *TLL* 6.3.3077.8-9.

more in tune with Apuleius' other instances of this word. 2.12-14 looks at the ideas of love and friendship, and, at some point, Apuleius recalls Plato's distinction between two kinds of friendship, one originating from pleasure (*voluptas*), the other from necessity (*necessitas*). Seamlessly, the text continues as follows:

Necessitudinum et liberorum amor naturae congruus est, ille alius abhorrens ab humanitatis clementia, qui vulgo amor dicitur, est adpetitus ardens, cuius instinctu per libidinem capti amatores corporum in eo quod viderint totum hominem putant.

Although the two terms are sometimes interrelated, nowhere else in Classical Latin does *clementia* depend on *humanitas*. Yet, the genitive *humanitatis* leaves little room for doubt: this is perhaps the clearest evidence that, at least to Apuleius' mind, *clementia* can by and large be seen as a hyponym of *humanitas*.³⁸⁹ Dowling highlights the importance of *clementia* in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* – where it is incidentally worth noting that the term *clementia* itself never appears – but utterly ignores its presence in the philosophical works.³⁹⁰ Judging from this passage, the impression is that this instance of *clementia* would confirm, and perhaps push a step further, Dowling's suggestion that “in the two centuries following the death of Nero, the definition of *clementia* continues to expand as the quality becomes ever more a part of [...] private ethics”.³⁹¹ Indeed, here *clementia* is even related to *amor* and has nothing to do with the political contexts in which we have usually found it so far. Probably to avoid such a possible ambiguity, Apuleius decided to pair it with *humanitas*.

³⁸⁹ On *clementia* and its relationship with *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 18-20, 24-25, 38-47, 110, and below, pp. 169, 197, 207-209, 223.

³⁹⁰ Dowling (2006), 254-255.

³⁹¹ Dowling (2006), 220. Cf. also Dowling (2006), 228 and *passim*. It is important to stress that Dowling's statement does not come into conflict with what I suggested in the introduction to Chapter 2 (pp. 46-47). On the contrary, this shift of the ideal of *clementia* into the ethical domain can be seen as a consequence of its weakening in the political sphere after Domitian. In other words, *clementia* lost its technical character.

3.2. *Humanitas* at the core of Aulus Gellius' programme in the *Noctes Atticae*.

“Gellius’ intellectual self-fashioning resembles Apuleius’ self-presentation in the *Apology* as a man of *doctrina*, associating himself with the proconsul Claudius Maximus as belonging to the same Roman intellectual aristocracy, in contrast to the ignorant fools who had accused Apuleius”.

In broad terms, no doubt Keulen’s words hit the mark.³⁹² In the case of Apuleius, we have also seen how *humanitas*, which has nothing to do with *doctrina* in his works, contributes to broadening the gap between people allegedly belonging to the same elite and people of lower rank. The same holds true for *humanitas* in Aulus Gellius, but with a striking difference: Gellius regarded *humanitas* as a concept closely related to *doctrina* and *eruditio*.³⁹³ Evidence suggests, however, that the association of *humanitas* with *eruditio* was far from unanimous: Gellius more or less explicitly indicates that those who ignored this ‘true’, ‘original’ meaning of *humanitas* were half-educated (if not ignorant) people. The main targets of Gellius’ polemic, as often in the *Noctes Atticae*, were probably not uneducated men but the allegedly learned grammarians.³⁹⁴ The passage referred to, *N.A.* 13.17, is one I have already mentioned several times and is probably the most frequently cited text in modern discussions of Roman *humanitas*.³⁹⁵ But despite the famous label ‘Humanisme Gellien’ coined by Marache and despite a chapter titled *Humanitas Gelliana* in a book by Beall, a thorough analysis of the various occurrences of *humanitas* in Gellius has not to my knowledge been undertaken.³⁹⁶ As the following section will show,

³⁹² Keulen (2009), 196.

³⁹³ Cf. below, pp. 119, 124, 126-128.

³⁹⁴ Cf. below, pp. 130-131.

³⁹⁵ Without (impossible) pretension of completeness, I list below some contributions dealing with the text in a way or another – the most significant to the purpose of the present work will instead be dealt with more thoroughly in due course: Lorenz (1914), 52, Jaeger (1946), xxiii and n.7, Pohlenz (1947), 451, Prete (1948), 10 and 71, Riposati (1949), 247, Büchner (1961), 640 and n. 21, Maselli (1979), 53 and n. 98, Beall (1988), 74 and 99-101, Hiltbrunner (1994a), 734 (1994b), 103 and n. 1, Bauman (2000), 20, Beall (2004), 217, Santini (2006), 72-74, Keulen (2009), 295, Stroh (2008), 539-540, Balbo (2012), 65, Ferrary (2014²), 512 and n. 26, Høgel (2015), 44.

³⁹⁶ Marache (1952), 251-257, Beall (1988). Cf. also the sub-chapter 5.4 ‘Der Bildungsbegriff der ‚Noctes Atticae‘ : zwischen *honestia eruditio* and *humanitas*’ in Heusch (2011). By ‘Humanisme Gellien’ Marache rather alludes to a philanthropic behaviour which has little, if anything, to do with Gellius’ definition and use of the term *humanitas*.

humanitas is not only the protagonist of this famous ‘article’ – to borrow Stevenson’s fitting definition for Gellian sections of the work³⁹⁷ – of the *Noctes Atticae*, but is in fact a cornerstone of Gellius’ cultural programme. To bridge this gap in scholarship, no other passage can provide a better starting point than *N.A.* 13.17 itself, which I now quote in full:

1. *Qui verba Latina fecerunt quique his probe usi sunt, "humanitatem" non id esse voluerunt, quod vulgus existimat quodque a Graecis philanthropia dicitur et significat dexteritatem quandam benivolentiamque erga omnis homines promiscam, sed "humanitatem" appellaverunt id propemodum, quod Graeci paideian vocant, nos eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artis dicimus. Quas qui sinceriter cupiunt adpetuntque, hi sunt vel maxime humanissimi. Huius enim scientiae cura et disciplina ex universis animantibus uni homini datast idcircoque "humanitas" appellata est.* 2. *Sic igitur eo verbo veteres esse usos et cum primis M. Varronem Marcumque Tullium omnes ferme libri declarant. Quamobrem satis habui unum interim exemplum promere.* 3. *Itaque verba posui Varronis e libro rerum humanarum primo, cuius principium hoc est: "Praxiteles, qui propter artificium egregium nemini est paulum modo humaniori ignotus".* 4. *"Humaniori" inquit non ita, ut vulgo dicitur, facili et tractabili et benivolo, tametsi rudis litterarum sit - hoc enim cum sententia nequaquam convenit -, sed eruditori doctiorique, qui Praxitelem, quid fuerit, et ex libris et ex historia cognoverit.*

As is clear, Gellius’ claims are mainly three. First, *humanitas* should mean παιδεία, that is to say *eruditio institutioque in bonas artes*, but the *vulgus* uses it as synonym of φιλανθρωπία, thereby signifying ‘indiscriminate benevolence towards all other human beings’. Secondly, among animals, only man (*homo*) possesses *humanitas*, hence the etymology of the word. Thirdly, that the ‘true’ meaning of *humanitas* is παιδεία is guaranteed by two *auctoritates*, Cicero and Varro.

It goes without saying that these claims raise many questions, some of which have already been answered in previous chapters. Such is certainly the case with regard to the original meaning of *humanitas*: Gellius evidently opted for παιδεία, but we have abundant evidence that he was wrong. Furthermore, irrespective of the answer to this first question, Gellius’ reference to παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία might seem to imply that *humanitas* has Greek origins. As we have seen in the Introduction, that of the origins of *humanitas* is an open question whose solution probably lies in keeping the comprehensive and polysemic idea of Roman *humanitas* distinct from its singular main components, which did originate

³⁹⁷ Stevenson (2004).

in Ancient Greece. This is somehow linked to the problem of the etymology of *humanitas*, which Gellius makes derive – too simplistically – straight from *homo*. I dealt with this issue too in the Introduction.³⁹⁸

But some problems posed by Gellius' passage need to be dealt with in the light of Gellius' own oeuvre and of the world in which he lived. To begin with, is Gellius consistent in his own use of the term *humanitas*? And is it true that Gellius' contemporaries 'misused' the term? Also, what exactly is meant by the *vulgus*? Finally, does the fact that Gellius gives in support of his claim an example in which the comparative *humanior* rather than the noun *humanitas* or the simple adjective *humanus* is used have any consequences for our understanding of the relation between noun and adjective? In order to answer these remaining questions, starting from that of Gellius' consistency or inconsistency, I will first consider other Gellian cases of *humanitas* and return to the fundamental passage of *Noctes Atticae* 13.17 at the end of this chapter section.

The first occurrence of *humanitas* I want to focus on is at 15.21, a very short 'article' focusing on the striking difference between Jupiter's and Neptune's sons. While Jupiter's sons are said to be models of virtue, wisdom and might (*praestantissimos virtute, prudentia, viribus*), Neptune's sons, because they are born from the sea, are considered very fierce (*ferocissimos*), cruel (*inmanes*) and *alienos ab omni humanitate*.³⁹⁹ On the basis of this passage some modern scholars have accused Gellius of being inconsistent. Thus Holford-Strevens trenchantly states that "the restriction of *humanitas* to learning in 13.17 is not observed" here (and elsewhere), but such a claim probably merits further investigation.⁴⁰⁰ There is no denying that the preceding concepts of ferocity and cruelty do not instinctively evoke 'learning' when they are associated with *humanitas*, but they may well evoke something which is, so to speak, a consequence of learning, namely civilisation.⁴⁰¹ Cyclopes, Cercyon, Sciron and the Laestrygonians, whether or not they can all be considered sons of Poseidon, are in fact characterised not only as fierce figures, but as outcasts, barbarian types which have yet to be reached by human civilisation. This is certainly the case of the most famous Cyclopes, whose insolence and lack of laws – the latter in particular a cornerstone of civilisation and Roman society – are already

³⁹⁸ Cf. above, p. 5 n. 13.

³⁹⁹ On monstrosity as a feature of Neptune's sons cf. Pease (1943).

⁴⁰⁰ Holford-Strevens (2003), 50 n. 24.

⁴⁰¹ On *humanitas* as civilisation cf. above, pp. 30, 37, 62-65, 80-85, and below, pp. 132, 170-174.

emphasised by Homer, while their ignorance and stupidity emerge from Euripides' *Cyclops*.⁴⁰² Along with the Laestrygonians, they are also accused of inhospitality – another clear sign of incivility in the ancient world.⁴⁰³ And the same holds true for Cercyon and Sciron, who according to the legend were both killed by the hero Theseus.⁴⁰⁴ To sum up, this is probably not the clearest piece of evidence for Gellius' lack of consistency, as παιδεία, and thus *humanitas* in Gellius' terms, does evoke the idea of civilisation.⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, it is premature to reject Holford-Strevens' claim altogether.

Holford-Strevens also considers *Noctes Atticae* 16.12.5 as an instance of Gellius' failure to comply with his own definition of *humanitas*, but prudently adds “if this be a paraphrase.”⁴⁰⁶ Let us look first at the context. 16.12 is entirely devoted to discussing some alleged Greek etymologies of Latin words put forward by the grammarian Cloatius Verus.⁴⁰⁷ The first etymologies seem to Gellius to be convincing, but at 16.12.5 he disapproves of the derivation of *faenerator* (usurer) from the verb φαίνεσθαι:

Sed in libro quarto “faenerator” inquit 'appellatus est quasi φαινεράτωρ ἀπὸ τοῦ φαίνεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸ χρηστότερον, quoniam id genus hominum speciem ostendent humanitatis et commodi esse videantur inopibus nummos desiderantibus', idque dixisse ait Hypsicraten quempiam grammaticum, cuius libri sane nobiles sunt super his, quae a Graecis accepta sunt.

That *humanitas* has little to do with learning is evident, and is corroborated by *commodi esse videantur inopibus nummos desiderantibus*. No doubt the idea of φιλάνθρωπία is far more suitable here, even though it is evoked because of its near-absence. As is the case with the already mentioned *speciem libertatis* of Suet. *Tib.* 30 in fact, *species* followed by an abstract noun indicating virtues or ideals reveals that there is only an appearance of

⁴⁰² Hom. *Od.* 9.106: Κυκλώπων δ' ἐς γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίστων, Eur. *Cyc.* 173 (and *passim*): τοιόνδε πῶμα, τὴν Κύκλωπος ἀμαθίαν. Cf. also Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.125: *nunc Satyrum, nunc agrestem Cyclopa movetur* and Sen. *Thy.* 582: *et ferus Cyclops metuit parentem*. On the fundamental importance of laws in Roman culture cf. also above, pp. 17 and 33.

⁴⁰³ Str. 1.2.9: καὶ γὰρ τὸν Αἰόλον δυναστεῦσαι φασὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν Λιπάραν νήσων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν Αἴτην καὶ Λεοντίνην Κύκλωπας καὶ Λαιστρυγόνας ἀξένους τινάς.

⁴⁰⁴ Paus. 1.39.3: εἶναι δὲ ὁ Κερκυὼν λέγεται καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἄδικος ἐς τοὺς ξένους καὶ παλαίειν οὐ βουλομένοις, Mela 2.47: *ibi est Piraeus, Atheniensium portus, Scironia saxa saevo quondam Scironis hospitio etiam nunc infamia*. On Sciron cf. also Hyg. *Fab.* 38.4.

⁴⁰⁵ Swain (2004), 31.

⁴⁰⁶ Holford-Strevens (2003), 50 n. 24.

⁴⁰⁷ More on this etymology in Fögen (2000), 186-187.

that virtue or ideal.⁴⁰⁸ As we have seen in the Suetonius passage, this construction serves to express the notion that there is only the appearance of freedom under Tiberius, while here, in the case of userer there is only an appearance of courtesy and altruism. In the case of userers the situation can be even worse, for they even show off (*ostentent*) their alleged φιλανθρωπία. Gellius' passage is unusual, as no one before had spoken of *humanitas* as a virtue that can be faked for the sake of ostentation (*ostentata humanitas*). Nor was the occurrence of *humanitas* as dependent on *species* very common by that time, despite being attested in Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* 4.32, where the soul of the gifted man is said to be also affected by disorders such as compassion (*miser cordia*), distress (*aegritudo*) and fear (*metus*), which only at first sight have the semblance of humanity (*humanitatis [...] habent primam speciem*). We will however find out that in the late fourth century Ammianus liked and recovered this expression to attack the large-scale simulation of *humanitas* in Roman society.⁴⁰⁹

Returning to Holford-Strevens' gloss, as is clear from Marshall's OCT edition, where '*faenerator ... desiderantibus*' is printed in inverted commas, the suggestion is that we are dealing with a quotation, that is to say with lines not originally written by Gellius. Indeed, since Funaioli, this has been considered a fragment by Hypsicrates (*Fr. 2* Funaioli) and consequently by Cloatius Verus (*Fr. 1* Funaioli), who was quoting Hypsicrates.⁴¹⁰ Unfortunately, the difference between fragment (a text reported word for word from its exemplar) and testimony (a paraphrase of the model), which is crucial in this case, is not easily determined. On the contrary, the difficulty of knowing who the original author of these words is, is even doubled by the transmission from Hypsicrates to Cloatius Verus to Gellius. It is true that it would be enough for our aims to be sure that Gellius was accurately citing Cloatius Verus, but it is impossible to be certain of this. Accordingly, given these problems of authenticity and authorship, we cannot consider this passage as representative of Gellius' understanding of the word *humanitas* – in fact the unusual meaning attributed to *humanitas* here might well be due to the fact that the passage is a quotation.

After the cases of Neptune's sons and of the *faenerator*, another passage where Gellius' consistency may be called into question is *Noctes Atticae* 18.10.8. Gellius recalls a visit to Herodes Atticus' country estate in Cephisia where he happened to fall ill and

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. above, p. 90.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. below, pp. 153, 168-170.

⁴¹⁰ Funaioli (1907), 108 and 468.

have a high fever. In describing Gellius' disease to his friends, the doctor confused vein with artery, causing them to question his expertise. This anecdote gives Gellius a chance for a tirade against those half-educated people who do not possess basic knowledge of the human body. To keep himself separated from this throng, Gellius proudly says:

quantum habui temporis subsicivi, medicinae quoque disciplinae libros attigi, quos arbitrabar esse idoneos ad docendum, et ex his cum alia pleraque ab isto humanitatis usu non aliena, tum de venis quoque et arteriis didicisse videor ad hunc ferme modum...

Once more, parallels with previous authors do not help here, for *humanitatis usus* never appears before Gellius. Instinctively one may think that this expression simply means 'need of human life' or 'human experience', but the presence of *isto* is significant. In this sentence *iste* only makes sense as an anaphoric reference, and, given that a common meaning of *usus* is 'usage', the easiest and perhaps most logical interpretation is that the whole phrase refers to *ad docendum*, thereby signifying 'along with many other things which are not extraneous to such an educational usage'. In any case, whether or not Astarita is right in extending this Gellian expression to all sciences (at least geography, physics and astronomy in addition to medicine), this is not to deny that the context is intrinsically and explicitly didactic.⁴¹¹ The focus of the sentence is on the purpose clause *ad docendum*, and therefore the paideutic meaning of *humanitas* is particularly fitting.⁴¹² (It would also be paradoxical for Gellius to misuse such an important term while blaming those who misuse words.) As well as revealing Gellius' wide cultural interests, this passage also epitomises the main aim of the *Noctes Atticae*, that is, to promote useful, encyclopedic learning among his readers.⁴¹³ I will deal with this point in more detail later on in this chapter section.⁴¹⁴

As paradoxical as it may seem, the clearest piece of evidence for Gellius' 'transgression' of the rule is to be found at 19.14.1, a passage which stresses the

⁴¹¹ Astarita (1993), 170.

⁴¹² This same interpretation seems implicitly to be endorsed by Beall (1988), 100. Cf. also Howley (2013), 11.

⁴¹³ On the role of this passage (and of medicine in general) in Gellius' programme cf. Heusch (2011), 352-356.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. below, pp. 127-128. On encyclopedism in Ancient Greece and Rome cf. König – Woolf (2013) – 54-55 on Gellius.

fundamental role played by Varro, the already mentioned *auctoritas* of 13.17, and Nigidius Figulus in educating humankind.⁴¹⁵ The text reads:

Aetas M. Ciceronis et C. Caesaris praestanti facundia viros paucos habuit, doctrinarum autem multiformium variarumque artium, quibus humanitas erudita est, columina habuit M. Varronem et P. Nigidium.

If one recalls Gellius' definition of *humanitas* as *eruditio*, it is quite obvious that the meaning of the sentence cannot be the tautological 'by which learning / education / civilisation is educated', which would sound even odder in Latin: *quibus eruditio erudita est*. Likewise, it is clear that *humanitas* has nothing to do with the 'faulty' meaning of φιλανθρωπία, but rather stands for 'humankind / human race'. However, although this occurrence of *humanitas* does not conform to Gellius' main statement at 13.17.1, it somehow does conform to the etymology of the noun he himself proposes when adding in the same paragraph *huius enim scientiae cura et disciplina ex universis animantibus uni homini datast idcircoque 'humanitas' appellata est*. Once it has been raised from barbarity to civilisation thanks to education, humankind can at last merit its definition of *humanitas*.

Even though I have yet to investigate perhaps the two most important instances of Gellian *humanitas*, there is enough evidence to answer the question of Gellian consistency in using the term. Despite the objections raised in the previous pages against Holford-Strevens' accusation of inconsistency, I also think it unwise to support the opposite view that Gellius strictly obeyed the rule he himself laid down, as Beall instead proposes.⁴¹⁶ But if "to possess unitary meaning did not imply that word had to mean the same thing on every occasion", as Vessey puts it, then Gellius was consistent.⁴¹⁷

While the passages which I have analysed so far tell us something about Gellius' general consistency in using the term *humanitas* and also help us define his idea of this concept, taken in isolation they cannot help to answer the other questions I posed earlier, let alone show the centrality of *humanitas* to Gellius' educational programme. To this end, the text I shall analyse next, along with *N.A.* 13.17, is far more useful. At 9.3 Gellius

⁴¹⁵ As Baldwin (1975), 76 rightly remarks, Varro and Nigidius Figulus appear together quite often in the *Noctes Atticae*.

⁴¹⁶ Beall (1988), 101: "The notion of *humanitas* in the *Attic Nights* is as rigidly subordinated to the liberal arts as Gellius' definition suggests".

⁴¹⁷ Vessey (1994), 1911.

praises King Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father, for not neglecting the Muses and liberal arts in wartime.⁴¹⁸ As a concrete example of Philip's refinement and wisdom, Gellius transcribes and translates into Latin his letter to Aristotle informing the philosopher of Alexander's birth.⁴¹⁹ According to Philip, this event could not have happened at a better time, for Alexander will still be able to benefit from the philosopher's fundamental teaching.⁴²⁰ But before quoting the letter, he states:

is Philippus, cum in omni fere tempore negotiis belli victoriisque adfectus exercitusque esset, a liberali tamen Musa et a studiis humanitatis numquam afuit, quin lepide comiterque pleraque et faceret et diceret.

If by resuscitating the rare expression *studia humanitatis*, Gellius pays homage to Cicero (and Pliny), he goes even further when creating a near-synonymous doublet through the addition of *liberalis Musa*,⁴²¹ an enigmatic expression that is not attested elsewhere in pre-Gellian literature. The passage suggests that *liberalis Musa* helps to strengthen and clarify further the meaning of *studia humanitatis*, thereby highlighting the importance of the liberal arts, especially to a statesman or, as is the case with Philip of Macedon, to a king.⁴²² This becomes all the more evident if one recalls that at *Praef.* 19 Gellius had banished from the *Noctes Atticae* those

*qui in lectitando, <percontando>, scribendo, commentando numquam voluptates, numquam labores ceperunt, nullas hoc genus vigilias vigilarunt neque ullis inter eiusdem Musae aemulos certationibus disceptationibusque elimati sunt.*⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ On Gellius' admiration for Philip cf. Marache (1952), 199.

⁴¹⁹ On the rigour of Gellius' translation of Philip's Greek letter cf. Gamberale (1969), 100-104 and Heusch (2011), 216 and n. 4. It is true that here the protagonist is Philip rather than Alexander, but nonetheless the exceptional role of Alexander in the *Noctes Atticae* is evident: according to Morgan (2004), 204, he is the only non-Roman hero in Gellius' work.

⁴²⁰ As Beall (1988), 95 remarks, when mentioning Alexander the Great, Gellius is usually interested in his education (cf. also *N.A.* 20.5 and 13.4).

⁴²¹ *Musa* is the reading of a second hand of F (*codex Leouardiensis Prov. Bibl. van Friesland 55, saec. ix*); *mera* of F¹ and *mensa* of the other manuscripts make no sense.

⁴²² Cf. Lindermann (2006), 113: "Die Bildungsbegriffe beschreiben Philipp II. als einen König nach platonischem Vorbild, als Philosophen und Gelehrten". Also the association of *humanitas* and Muses can be found in Cicero. Compare Cic. *Tusc.* 5.66: *Cum Musis, id est cum humanitate et cum doctrina*, on which more above, p. 31.

⁴²³ On this passage cf. also Beall (2004), 220 and n. 50, Keulen (2004), 233-234 and Gunderson (2009), 40-43. Cf. also *N.A. praef.* 13-14, with Gunderson (2009), 34: "Two sorts of readers are conjured: the one

By naming a Muse again, Gellius somehow links this ‘article’ to one of the most programmatic sections of his *Preface*, at the same time implying that Philip and those like him are welcome readers of the *Noctes Atticae*. This leads us to further considerations.

It is striking that the subject of this Gellian passage is a ruler. While there has always been general agreement that Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae* were addressed to a learned elite,⁴²⁴ it has more recently been argued that the emperor too may have been a potential as well as exceptional addressee.⁴²⁵ From this perspective, this passage would acquire further significance, in that it may be read as either indirect praise of the emperor for cultivating and fostering liberal studies or as an exhortation to (continue to) do so. Such an interpretation becomes particularly convincing if we assume, as most scholars do, that the *Noctes Atticae* were published in the last years of Marcus Aurelius’ reign or a little later.⁴²⁶ Indeed, for all the wars and battles his reign witnessed, Marcus Aurelius no doubt also cultivated the liberal arts, above all philosophy. Keulen seems convinced of this interpretation, but we should not rule out the possibility that Gellius might have had another emperor in mind, as “the only emperor named is Hadrian” and Antoninus Pius too respected men of culture.⁴²⁷ Surely it would be odd if he did not have any, since at *Praef.* 12 he had clearly stated his aims in writing this book:

*Accepi quae aut ingenia prompta expeditaque ad honestae eruditionis cupidinem
utiliumque artium contemplationem celeri facilique compendio ducerent aut homines aliis
iam vitae negotiis occupatos a turpi certe agrestique rerum atque verborum imperitia
vindicaret.*

who knows too little and the one who knows too much; the anti-antiquarian and the already-antiquarian”, though he later remarks that by *praef.* 19 it seems that the *commentarii* “are in fact only of interest to the already educated” (2009), 40.

⁴²⁴ Astarita (1993), 34 and 206, Holford-Strevens (2003), 37, Swain (2004), 29 n. 88, Vardi (2004), 169, Morgan (2004), 199, Galimberti Biffino (2007), 930, Johnson (2010), 100-101.

⁴²⁵ Keulen (2009), 194 and *passim*.

⁴²⁶ Cf. Holford-Strevens (1977), 101 and 109: after 177 CE, (2003), 16-21: after 177 CE, but perhaps even a little after Marcus’ death, Keulen (2009), 198 and 235: between 177 and 180 CE. However, other scholars have opted for an earlier date, for example Marache (1952), 331-332: mid 150s, and Astarita (1993), 14: before 161 CE.

⁴²⁷ Keulen (2009), 320, Baldwin (1975), 13. On Antoninus Pius’ positive attitude towards learned men cf. Baldwin (1975), 96-97. D’Elia (1995), 50-52 shows how the Antonine dynasty all fostered culture and the liberal arts, so that II-century Empire could be defined as “enlightened monarchy”.

If the section on Philip's letter is not meant to teach the fundamental importance of education and liberal studies to kings, emperors and statesmen in general, then it is not at all clear why Gellius chose to include this passage in his *Noctes Atticae*. Conversely, if it is meant to teach rulers, Keulen's allusion to a "self-referential dimension" of Philip's letter becomes particularly convincing.⁴²⁸ By describing the relationship between Aristotle and Philip, Gellius would thus implicitly be drawing a comparison between the Greek philosopher and himself, thereby revealing once more those "aspirations to cultural authority expressed through his *Noctes Atticae*." All this takes us back to *N.A.* 13.17 and the kernel of discussion over Gellius' *humanitas*.

Very many scholars have worked on *N.A.* 13.17 in connection with Roman *humanitas*, but, aside from Beall and perhaps Heusch, they do not give sufficient emphasis to the role this text plays in understanding the importance of *humanitas* within Gellius' own oeuvre.⁴²⁹ Whether or not the definition of *humanitas* as *eruditio institutioque in bonas artes* merits consensus (which partly it does) it undoubtedly links this passage to Gellius' *Preface* and the aims he sets forth there. The aforementioned § 12 of the *Preface* is crucial.⁴³⁰ Gellius' selection of material is said to be in keeping with his purpose of leading receptive and prompt minds to desire noble learning (*honestae eruditionis*) as well as to contemplate useful arts (*utiliumque artium*).⁴³¹ *Eruditio* and *utiles* (or *bonae / ingenuae*) *artes*, which Vessey regards as complementary,⁴³² are therefore the common denominator between Gellius' aims in the *Noctes Atticae* and his definition of *humanitas*. Or, in other words, fostering *humanitas* is one, if not *the*, aim of his *Noctes Atticae*. Irrespective of the interpretation of the very word *humanitas* at 18.10.8 which has been proposed above, that passage contributes to defining Gellius' idea of useful learning, adding for example that it includes basic knowledge of medicine.⁴³³ After all, as Beall puts it: "Gellius [...] expresses, perhaps better than most ancient writers, the full range of the *artes ingenuae* and their power to delight, improve, and elevate the mind".⁴³⁴ 15.21, despite its brevity and apparent frivolity, is also important: the idea of

⁴²⁸ Keulen (2009), 320.

⁴²⁹ Beall (1988), 100, Heusch (2011), 373-376.

⁴³⁰ Cf. Heusch (2011), 385.

⁴³¹ Cf. Beall (1988), 100, Henry (1994), 1919.

⁴³² Vessey (1994), 1898. Cf. also Heusch (2011), 372.

⁴³³ On the importance of medicine to Gellius' encyclopedic programme cf. Heusch (2011), 352-356.

⁴³⁴ Beall (2004), 222.

civilisation expressed there shows that Gellian *humanitas* denotes not only “the pursuit of culture”, as Kaster puts it with regard to 13.17, but also culture itself (and its products).⁴³⁵ Likewise, *N.A.* 14.1 suggests some *auctoritates humanitas* should be built upon, especially Varro.⁴³⁶ Cicero, not cited there, is instead cited at 13.17, and his role as fundamental *auctoritas* in the *Noctes Atticae* is beyond dispute.⁴³⁷ And the concept of *auctoritas* as opposed to the concept of *ratio* (instead preferred by the grammarians) is fundamental to Gellius’ educational programme.⁴³⁸ In other words, what counts in choosing the correct words and thus speaking good Latin is the canon of the best authors, above all Cicero and Varro.⁴³⁹ But who can take on the burden of promoting *humanitas*? Apart from the *Preface*, at both 9.3 and 13.17 Gellius seems to propose himself as the perfect candidate who already embodies (t)his ideal of *humanitas*.⁴⁴⁰ As Kaster puts it with regard to 13.17:

“In asserting his learning, against the ‘common run’, Gellius is simultaneously asserting the ethical qualities which his learning presupposes and which lead him to be *doctus*, as the *vulgus* is not. In the process of defining *humanitas*, he is claiming it for himself”.⁴⁴¹

While 9.3 also singles out (part of) the target audience to which *humanitas* should be of importance, that is rulers (and, probably, statesmen in general), 13.17 somehow represents the other side to the same coin, in that it contains explicit allusions to the enemies of *humanitas*, namely to those who are unaware of the concept to the point of

⁴³⁵ Kaster (1986), 6. After all, it is true that Gellius himself claims that *Quas* [scil. (*eruditionem institutionemque in*) *bonas artes*] *qui sinceriter cupiunt adpetuntque, hi sunt vel maxime humanissimi*, but this by no means excludes the very achievement of education and instruction in the liberal arts from being called *humanitas* too.

⁴³⁶ One of the reason for Varro’s success as exemplary model is probably due to its clearness. As Stevenson (2004), 155 puts it: “Gellius seems to feel little need to *explain* Varro; for the most part he simply reproduces relevant extracts”.

⁴³⁷ Cf. mainly Santini (2006), a monograph entirely devoted to Cicero’s role of *auctoritas* in the *Noctes Atticae*. Cf. also Galimberti-Biffino (2007), 937, Keulen (2009), 30 and n. 43.

⁴³⁸ Maselli (1979), 34-35, Holford-Strevens (2003), 178, Lomanto – Garcea (2004), 50, Keulen (2009), 31-32, Gunderson (2009), 59. On *ratio* as the grammarians’ favourite criterion cf. Maselli (1979), 32, who on the other hand maintains that Gellius is not utterly hostile to *ratio* (33).

⁴³⁹ On Gellius’ favourite authors cf. Maselli (1979), 34-35, Astarita (1993), 15-16, Keulen (2009), 30 and n.43.

⁴⁴⁰ On Gellius’ self-candidature at 9.3 cf. above, p. 127.

⁴⁴¹ Kaster (1986), 8.

not knowing the very meaning of the word. These people are the *vulgus* Gellius (and Kaster) speaks of, but what this *vulgus* consists of is disputed. Holford-Strevens maintains that “when Gellius states that the *vulgus* or *multitudo imperitorum* uses [...] *humanitas* ‘learning’ for φιλανθρωπία, [...] he means not that only the lower classes spoke thus, but that the usages are not found in pre-Augustan writers”.⁴⁴² He then adds: “the *vulgus* that reads *amaro* at Verg. *Georg.* 2.247 (1.21. cap.) cannot be the teeming masses; cf. the *vulgus grammaticorum* of 2.21.6, 15.9.3. On the other hand, at 16.7.13 the term does denote the common people”.⁴⁴³ Less cautiously, Kaster says: “we must understand that by *vulgus* Gellius does not mean ‘the mob’, the general population: *humanitas* in any sense was probably not a common item in the vocabulary of the Roman tradesman or Italian peasant. [...] Here as elsewhere, Gellius uses *vulgus* to mean ‘the common run of men’, in the sense of ‘the common run of educated men’ – or, as he says on one occasion, the *vulgus semidoctum*, ‘the common run of half-educated men’”.⁴⁴⁴ Both Holford-Strevens’ and Kaster’s claims can be questioned constructively, because they both resort to *petitiones principii*: the former in saying that Gellius means that “the usages are not found in pre-Augustan writers”, the latter in taking for granted that at 13.17 *vulgus* stands for “the common run of educated men”. In fact, neither brings evidence in favour of his statement. On balance, Kaster’s claim is a little hazardous in this form, but it nevertheless seems to hit the mark. Along the lines drawn throughout this chapter section, a comparison with Gellius’ *Preface* may be decisive. I have already cited *Praef.* 19 in connection with the Muses, which explicitly declares what kind of people are banished from the *Noctes Atticae*.⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, § 20 identifies, in a provocative way, the polemical target of Gellius’ work:⁴⁴⁶

Atque etiam, quo sit quorundam male doctorum hominum scaevitas et invidentia irritator, mutuabor ex Aristophanae choro anapaesta pauca et quam ille homo festivissimus fabulae suae spectandae legem dedit, eandem ego commentariis his legendis dabo, ut ea ne attingat neve adeat profestum et profanum volgus a ludo musico diversum. (There follow Ar. *Ra.* 354-356 and 369-371)

⁴⁴² Holford-Strevens (2003), 174-175.

⁴⁴³ Holford-Strevens (2003), 175 n. 15.

⁴⁴⁴ Kaster (1986), 8.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. above, pp. 125-126.

⁴⁴⁶ On Gellius’ polemical attitude within the *Noctes Atticae* cf. Astarita (1993), 34.

The epithet *male docti* clearly reveals that Gellius is referring to educated, or, better, half-educated men, and the same presumably holds true for the *profestum et profanum volgus*, whose utterly uneducated men would hardly grasp the Horatian echo of *Odes* 3.1.1, let alone understand the Greek lines by Aristophanes.⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, the ‘lower classes’ mentioned by Holford-Strevens would hardly understand Gellius’ entire discussion of *humanitas* at 13.17, and, *a fortiori*, they would hardly appreciate the noble example in support of his claim taken from Varro’s *Antiquitates rerum humanarum*. So, if Gellius’ discussion of *humanitas* at 13.17 can be seen as the discussion of a keyword as well as an aim of his work (*praef.* 12), along the same lines the criticism of those who misuse this term (13.17.1) may be read as one of the several echoes (see the citation from Holford-Strevens above) of *praef.* 20. But there is also a further, external piece of evidence that may be brought in support of Kaster’s claim. Maróti has argued persuasively that on a couple of inscriptions which probably date to Marcus Aurelius’ reign the word *humanitas* stands for *omnia commoda*, that is, ‘all comforts’.⁴⁴⁸ These inscriptions are advertising plaques of baths offering a refreshment to their guests, and such an example of ‘everyday’ use of *humanitas* is hardly meant to evoke or reproduce the philosophic idea of φιλανθρωπία.

At this point, the question naturally arises as to whether Gellius’ educated contemporaries, in the end at least partly to be identified with the grammarians, actually ‘misused’ the term *humanitas*.⁴⁴⁹ The analysis of the instances of *humanitas* in Apuleius and Fronto – cf. the next chapter section on the latter – points towards a positive answer,

⁴⁴⁷ The identification between *male docti homines* and *profestum et profanum volgus* is explicitly stated by Vessey (1994), 1903.

⁴⁴⁸ Maróti (2002-2003). *CIL* XIV, 4015 (IN [HIS] PRAEDIS AURELIAE FAUSTINIANAE BALINEUS LAVAT MORE URBICO ET OMNI HUMANITAS PRAESTATUR) and *AE* 1933, 49 (IN HIS PRAEDIIS COMINIORUM MONTANI ET FELICIANI IUN(IORIS) ET FELICIANI PATRIS EORUM BALNEU(M) ET OMNIS HUMANITAS URBICO MORE PRAEBETUR).

⁴⁴⁹ On the grammarians as polemical target of Gellius’ oeuvre cf. Marache (1952), 210-213, Maselli (1979), 31-32 and 83, who correctly points out that Gellius’ polemical target is the grammarians’ teaching rather than the grammarians themselves, Astarita (1993), 204, Vardi (2001), 50, who lists some grammarians whom Gellius “spares”, Keulen (2009), 2 and 28, Heusch (2011), 378 and 383-384, Howley (2013), 10. It will not be superfluous to highlight that Vardy (2001), 53 adds that, because of their esoteric *Weltanschauung*, “experts in all disciplines are equally bad, and we should probably ascribe the relatively large proportion of grammarians among them to the fact that language and literature are the topics which most interest” Gellius.

and similar results can be inferred from grammatical texts. It is true that there is no trace of the word *humanitas* in the manuals by second-century grammarians such as Velius Longus, Quintus Terentius Scaurus or Flavius Caper. Nevertheless, when this word appears in later grammarians, it is for example seen in connection with *largitas*, which means that it is far closer to φιλανθρωπία than to παιδεία.⁴⁵⁰ Accordingly, even though he is wrong in saying that this constitutes a misuse of the term, Gellius rightly highlights the prevalence of the idea of φιλανθρωπία in the contemporary use of the noun *humanitas*.⁴⁵¹

One question is yet to be answered, that of the relation between the noun *humanitas* and the adjective *humanus*. Kaster remarks that the comparative and superlative forms of *humanus* are used in *N.A.* 13.17, which would imply “that discrimination was the very business of the correct sense of *humanitas*: the distinction between men and beasts, of course, but also the distinction belonging to some men who, by dint of toil and application, were ‘more human’ than others”.⁴⁵² However, we might rephrase this thought or even push it one step further to state that only the comparative and the superlative forms of *humanus* can express the idea embodied in the noun *humanitas* according to Gellius.⁴⁵³ It is sufficient to provide a survey of the Gellian instances of the positive forms of *humanus*. Not unlike the other authors we have analysed, Gellius too seems to use *humanus* to simply mean ‘of man’, in connection with nouns such as *opinio, vita, ius, natura, genitura, res, cupido, affectio, vox, fides, succidia, ingenium, genus, corpus, partus, sensus, vestigium, pudor, condicio, modus, ritus*.⁴⁵⁴ Conversely, the adjective appears to be far more significant in Gellius’ other occurrences of comparatives and superlatives. In addition to *maxime humanissimi* (“a phrase, with its

⁴⁵⁰ On *largitas* cf. *TLL* 7.2.970.14-73.

⁴⁵¹ I have dealt elsewhere with the issue as to whether Gellius is right in equating φιλανθρωπία with the rare *dexteritas*: cf. Mollea – Della Calce (forthcoming). Following Cavazza (1996), 192-194 and Heusch (2011), 394-395, it is my contention that this equation does stand up to scrutiny, *pace* MacGregor (1982), 45 and Kaster (1986), 7.

⁴⁵² Kaster (1986), 9.

⁴⁵³ For now this principle can be proven to be valid for Gellius alone, whereas it would be premature to attribute universal validity to it. Nevertheless, I have already shown in previous chapters that there is often a striking difference in meaning between the noun and the adjective.

⁴⁵⁴ Regarding *res humanae*, Astarita (1993), 204 remarks that in Gellius they include basic knowledge of physiology (cf. *N.A.* 18.10. 8 above), *officia* in general (cf. 2.7.15) and violent death (13.1.2).

double superlative, as extraordinary in Latin as in English”)⁴⁵⁵ and *humaniori* in 13.17 (although this, taken from Varro, would expand the question well beyond Gellius), there is one instance of *humanioris* at 19.12.7, and two other occurrences of superlatives, *humanissima* at 20.1.24 and *humanissimi* in the index written by Gellius himself (*capitula libri quinti decimi*, 21). At 19.12.7 Gellius is reporting a story, originally narrated by Herodes Atticus, of a Thracian who was fed up with his barbarian life and thus decided to migrate to more civilised lands (*in terras cultiores*), encouraged by his desire for a ‘more human’ life (*humanioris vitae cupidine*). That the idea of civilisation is implied in this use of *humanior* is hardly deniable. The same holds true for *humanissimi* in the title of 15.21 (the passage opposing Jupiter’s to Neptune’s sons), which seems to reflect the allusions to civilisation contained in that Gellian article.⁴⁵⁶ On the contrary, at 20.1.24 a law is considered to be *humanissima*, which rather evokes the idea of φιλάνθρωπία. However, two clarifications are in order. First, this instance is in the form of reported speech (by the lawyer Sextus Caecilius), so this use might not be originally Gellian. Secondly and crucially, to claim that only the comparative and the superlative forms of *humanus* can imply the παιδεία-meaning of *humanitas* is radically different from saying that all comparatives and superlatives take on that meaning. In addition, one further, concluding observation can be added: despite disagreeing with *humanitas* having a moral meaning, Gellius’ oeuvre, in so far as it is educational, must also be ethical.⁴⁵⁷ Accordingly, as with Cicero or Pliny the Younger, it is somehow to be expected that the ideas of παιδεία and φιλάνθρωπία become at times closer to one another, or even overlap.⁴⁵⁸ After all, as Vardi puts it: “Gellius’ view of learning and intellectual life preserves some distinctly Roman ideas of the gentleman-scholar in which he seems indebted to Cicero”.⁴⁵⁹ As my discussions have suggested, only the concept of *humanitas* can show how deep this ideological indebtedness really is.

⁴⁵⁵ Kaster (1986), 6.

⁴⁵⁶ The title reads: *Quod a poetis Iovis filii prudentissimi humanissimique, Neptuni autem ferocissimi et inhumanissimi traduntur.*

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Beall (1988), 86-93, Swain (2004), 39, Morgan (2004), 187, Heusch (2011), 375, König – Woolf (2013), 55.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Heusch (2011), 396 n. 243.

⁴⁵⁹ Vardi (2004), 186.

3.3. Fronto: are *eruditio in bonas artes* and φιλοστοργία better than *humanitas*?

To turn to Fronto after Gellius might seem counterintuitive, and not only because the former was surely older. As is well known from the *Noctes Atticae* in fact, Gellius esteemed Fronto and regarded him as an example to follow, even if Fronto was presumably not among Gellius' main, closer teachers.⁴⁶⁰ Thus, both chronology and logic would *prima facie* suggest investigating Fronto's *humanitas* before Gellius'. Yet it is my contention that, in terms of *humanitas*, the distance between the two can only be appreciated once it has become clear how crucial this term was to Gellius' cultural programme. A clarification, which also serves as a methodological reminder, is in order. To claim that Gellius gave more importance and different nuances to the word *humanitas* is not to say that he gave more importance than Fronto to the concepts expressible by the word *humanitas*. It simply means that Gellius perceived the term as having different, that is, educational connotations, and as being more loaded, while Fronto seemed to prefer other expressions to refer to that same idea of παιδεία (and to that of φιλανθρωπία). But before investigating some of these alternative expressions, let us turn to Fronto's instances of *humanitas* first.

Very little of what Fronto probably wrote in Latin has come down to us, but if Marache is right in claiming that the letters best represent his literary theory, such letters are apt to reveal the role that *humanitas* played in his oeuvre.⁴⁶¹ There are only two instances of the term in his epistolary collection, one in a letter addressed to the emperor Lucius Verus, and the other one in a letter to his friend Arrius Antoninus.⁴⁶²

On one day in Spring 161 CE, Lucius Verus and his master Fronto happened to visit Marcus Aurelius in the royal palace, but at different times.⁴⁶³ Consequently, they missed the chance to meet. Modern readers, who tend to suppose they met quite often, do not tend to see this episode as a problem – yet this assumption is mistaken. According to (a probable reconstruction of) the letter that Lucius Verus sent to Fronto on that occasion, they probably met very rarely: *Quin gravissimum stationis nostrae id esse arbitrer, quod*

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. e.g. Heusch (2011), 235.

⁴⁶¹ Marache (1957), 19.

⁴⁶² A third instance of *humanitas* in Fronto's *corpus* is actually to be found in a letter written by Lucius Verus (*Ad Verum Imp.* 1.1.3 = p. 108 van den Hout).

⁴⁶³ On the date of this letter cf. Champlin (1980), 110 and 134.

veniendi ad te adeo rari casus sunt vel desunt (*Ad Verum Imp.* 1.11 = p. 114 van den Hout).⁴⁶⁴ In this very case then, the two had not seen each other for more than four months, as Fronto had spent this time in the countryside, probably in his Aurelian villa (*Ad Verum Imp.* 1.12.3 = p. 116 van den Hout: *Nam ex hortis ego redii Romam ante diem quintum kal. April.*)⁴⁶⁵ This explains why the recently appointed co-ruler was so disappointed that he wrote a letter to Fronto expressing his sadness and frustration. In his response, Fronto sought to justify himself for not having informed Lucius Verus of his visit, but was also pleased by the content of Verus' letter:⁴⁶⁶

Neque tanto opere gauderem, sei, cum ad te venissem, summo cum honore a te appellatus essem, quam nunc gaudeo tanto me iurgio desideratum. Namque tu pro tua persingulari humanitate omnes nostri ordinis viros, ubi praesto adsunt, honorifice adfaris, non omnes magno opere requiris absentes. (*Ad Verum Imp.* 1.12.1 = p. 115 van den Hout)

The framework of a visit to the emperor, a royal as addressee and the use of *humanitas* itself all contribute to remind us of a passage of Pliny's *Panegyric to Trajan* (49.5) upon which I have already touched.⁴⁶⁷ In both cases *humanitas* points to the emperor's affability and courtesy towards his closest friends, and in both cases the tone is quite flattering. No doubt this is something to be expected in a panegyric, but not necessarily in a private letter.⁴⁶⁸ Yet the presence of the *hapax persingulari* makes this flattery all the more evident.

If the first instance of Frontonian *humanitas* is probably not particularly significant in terms of its contribution to Fronto's thought, its meaning and context are at least clear. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the second and last occurrence of *humanitas* in Fronto's letters. In *Ad amic.* 2.8.2 = pp. 197-198 van den Hout, Fronto is recommending a certain Baburiana, probably the victim of a judicial error, to the

⁴⁶⁴ *Casus* is van den Hout's (1988) plausible emendation for *solus*: cf. his apparatus criticus *ad loc.*

⁴⁶⁵ On Fronto's Aurelian villa and its identification with what he calls *horti* cf. Champlin (1980), 22-23.

⁴⁶⁶ On the importance of this exchange of letters for illuminating Fronto's friendship with Lucius Verus cf. Champlin (1980), 110-111.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. above, p. 56. The passage reads: *non ipsum tempus epularum tuarum, cum frugalitas contrahat, extendit humanitas?*

⁴⁶⁸ That Fronto's letters were not meant to be published is almost unanimously agreed: cf. Champlin (1980), 3, Fleury (2006), 30.

influential Arrius Antoninus.⁴⁶⁹ If the common interpretation that can be inferred from the lacunose text is right, Fronto is stressing the reasons why he feels confident of recommending such a person when he says *tuae humanitati congruens videbatur*. There is enough certainty that these words come at the end of a sentence, but unfortunately, if van den Hout's computation is correct, 14 letters and one line cannot be read before that clause (*14 litt(eras) et unus versus legi nequeunt*).⁴⁷⁰ Right before this *lacuna*, there is a reference to Arrius Antoninus' regard for justice (*ita tamen ut ars maxima a<c> potissima sit iustitiae tuae ratio habenda*), but too much is missing in between. However, given the context of a letter of recommendation, it seems reasonable to propose that *humanitas* refers to Arrius Antoninus' philanthropic qualities, which Fronto quite obviously praises.⁴⁷¹

These two passages clearly show that Fronto's use of *humanitas* is far closer to the idea of φιλανθρωπία than to παιδεία. Granted, Gellius would have hardly appreciated these nuances of *humanitas*, but this is not to deny that *eruditio institutioque in bonas artes*, to recall Gellius' definition of *humanitas*, were dear to Fronto's educational programme. One example should be sufficient to prove this. In *Ad M. Caes.* 4.1.2 = pp. 53-54 van den Hout, Fronto writes to his royal pupil: *Nam prius quam tibi aetas institutioni sufficiens adolesceret, iam tu perfectus atque omnibus bonis artibus absolutus: ante pubertatem vir bonus, ante togam virilem dicendi peritus*. No doubt flattery is present in this passage, for Marcus does not even seem to need teachers, since nature has provided him with all necessary talents. But what interests us here is the joint presence of *institutio* and *bonae artes* on the one hand, and of the allusion to Cato's definition of *orator* as *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (which we have already encountered in Apuleius' *Apologia*) on the other hand.⁴⁷² Even more than in Apuleius, Cato's definition and the *bonae artes* link together the ethical and the educational sphere, thus suggesting that Fronto too possessed the most complete idea of *humanitas*, even if he did not call it by this name. At this point, one may ask why he did not name this principle *humanitas*. Unfortunately, unlike Gellius, Fronto is not interested in discussing the different meanings that the term *humanitas* can take on, so that this problem can only be tackled

⁴⁶⁹ On Arrius Antoninus, probably consul in 170 CE, cf. Champlin (1980), 15 and 34, van den Hout (1999), 440 with rich bibliography. On this letter on behalf of Baburiana cf. also Champlin (1980), 70.

⁴⁷⁰ Van den Hout (1988) *ad loc.*

⁴⁷¹ In his commentary to this letter, van den Hout (1999), 455 briefly glosses: "*humanitati*: 'fairness'".

⁴⁷² Cf. above, pp. 105-106.

by resorting to *argumenta ex silentio*, which are bound to be speculative and tenuous. Nevertheless, I would like to propose my own hypothesis, however speculative it might be. As is well known, the study of Latin language was at the very heart of Fronto's interests, and the uncommon expertise he must have gained in this field earned him the appointment as Marcus Aurelius' official teacher of Latin oratory.⁴⁷³ It is therefore no coincidence that one of Fronto's most important theoretical considerations about word choice in Latin language can be found in an early letter to Marcus Aurelius (*Ad M. Caes.* 4.3 = pp. 56-59 van den Hout).⁴⁷⁴ We might note two key elements of this famous text, which is unfortunately too long to be quoted in full here. First, the gifted author ought to look for *insperata atque inopinata verba*, that is, words that a common author would probably not use in the same context.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, these words ought to be extremely clear in meaning so as not to run the risk of being misunderstood.⁴⁷⁶ In Fronto, this criterion leads to a quest for archaisms.⁴⁷⁷ Secondly and consequently, this ability to find the right word at the right time is Fronto's main criterion in listing his canon of the good authors, i.e. those authors who should be taken as models. Given the conditions, it is no surprise that these are in fact old and/or archaizing authors. Fronto mentions the elder Cato, Sallustius, Plautus, Ennius, Coelius, Naevius, Lucretius, Accius, Caecilius, Laberius, Novius, Pomponius, Atta, Sisenna, Lucilius and, the exception which proves the rule, Cicero.⁴⁷⁸ Unfortunately, most of them are only known in fragments; still, the word *humanitas* never appears in works of any of the aforementioned authors. One exception clearly stands out: Cicero. Fronto admires him, calling him *caput atque fons Romanae facundiae*, but also remarks: *verum is mihi videtur a quaerendis scupulosius verbis procul afuisse*. In other words, as Marache states, "Cicéron est le seul qui ne doive pas l'estime de Fronton à la rareté de son vocabulaire."⁴⁷⁹ Judging from the case of *humanitas*, a common Ciceronian word, nothing could be truer. But the problem with *humanitas*, as should by now be evident, is its ambiguity, its lack of univocality, clearly

⁴⁷³ On Fronto's role as teacher of the emperors cf. Champlin (1980), 118-130.

⁴⁷⁴ It is usually dated 139 CE to 145 CE, with larger consense on 139 CE: cf. the *status quaestionis* in van den Hout (1999), 150.

⁴⁷⁵ On the key role of *insperata atque inopinata verba* in Fronto's aesthetic ideals cf. Marache (1952), 145, (1957), 10.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Levi (1994), 291-292.

⁴⁷⁷ Marache (1952), 149. More on archaisms in Fronto in Portalupi (1961), 21-38.

⁴⁷⁸ For an in-depth analysis of this canon cf. Marache (1952), 155-179. Cf. also Steinmetz (1982), 184.

⁴⁷⁹ Marache (1952), 171. Cf. also Marache (1952), 144-145.

in contrast with Fronto's oratorical ideals. The fact then that none of Fronto's praised authors seem to have given any importance to this term can only have contributed to its underappreciation. Of course he would have used this word sometimes, as in the two instances that we have analysed, but surely he did not give to it as much weight as Gellius did.

In the light of this, it is quite surprising to come across studies devoting single chapters to Fronto's *humanitas*, such as that by Portalupi.⁴⁸⁰ What is more, it is not at all clear what the scholar means by the title 'L'*humanitas* di Frontone'. She probably alludes to Fronto's humanity in its broadest, that is to say ambiguous, sense. Among other concepts and human virtues, sincerity, honesty, friendship, and even φιλοστοργία are mentioned, all values which have little to do with Gellius' idea of *humanitas*. But the latter in particular is an extremely rare word in Latin literature, and only appears in Cicero's and Fronto's letters. Probably because of this rarity, much more than *humanitas*, φιλοστοργία seems to raise interest to Fronto, who dwells on its importance in a letter to Lucius Verus. Speaking of his friend Clarus, Fronto says:

Nihil isto homine officiosius est, nihil modestius, nihil verecundius. Liberalis etiam, si quid mihi credis, et in tanta tenuitate, quantum res patitur, largus. Simplicitas, castitas, veritas, fides Romana plane, φιλοστοργία vero nescio an Romana; quippe qui nihil minus in tota mea vita Romae repperi quam hominem sincere φιλόστοργον: ut putem, quia reapse nemo sit Romae φιλόστοργος, ne nomen quidem huic virtuti esse Romanum. (Ad Verum Imp. 1.6.7 = p. 111 van den Hout)

It is no surprise that the high technicality of this Greek word, of which no Latin equivalent exists, fascinates Fronto. As Aubert points out, Fronto himself seeks to give the reader the chance to understand the exact meaning of φιλοστοργία by evoking values which are close to or parts of it.⁴⁸¹ This he does throughout the course of the entire letter, by mentioning values such as *familiaritas, amicitia, caritas, simplicitas, castitas, veritas* and *fides*, none of which, taken alone, can correspond to φιλοστοργία. But it is also the case – and Aubert explicitly acknowledges this fact – that φιλοστοργία is close to φιλανθρωπία (and consequently to *humanitas*), though it represents a more limited, more specific ideal than φιλανθρωπία.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ Portalupi (1961), 123-134.

⁴⁸¹ Aubert (2011).

⁴⁸² Aubert (2011). On φιλοστοργία in Fronto cf. also Lana (1966), 92.

In conclusion, as for all other members of the Antonine elite, education, culture and παιδεία were central to Fronto: we might even claim that “the pursuit of learning was Fronto’s chief and abiding passion, and [that] learning informs every aspect of his life”.⁴⁸³ The only difference between Gellius and Fronto is that Fronto does not name this learning *humanitas*. When he used the term *humanitas*, Fronto took it as referring to the general idea of φιλανθρωπία, although, in line with his linguistic principles, he probably showed more interest in words which were at the same time less ordinary and more specific, such as, in particular, φιλοστοργία.

⁴⁸³ Champlin (1980), 29. Cf. also Champlin (1980), 53.

3.4. Conclusion.

The Antonine age preserved the prestige that *humanitas* had reacquired at the time of Trajan. In general terms, we can underscore two main differences, and at least partly ascribe them to the different genres to which the works of this age belonged. First, Antonine literary works display a less politically engaged use of *humanitas* (or less explicit in the case of Gellius). Secondly, all these authors refrained from exploiting, when not openly opposed, the polysemy of *humanitas*, each one preferring to stick to one main aspect of the word. These changes in the use of *humanitas* contribute to reflecting the socio-cultural novelties of the Antonine as opposed to the Trajanic age. Apuleius' use of *humanitas*, for example, reflects the climate of the Second Sophistic, regardless of the appropriateness of defining Apuleius a sophist. The talent to manipulate the concept to his own advantage, making it evoke now exclusion (*Apologia*, the widows in the *Metamorphoses*) now inclusion (Lucius in the *Metamorphoses*), clearly reveals all his oratorical skills, and even reminds us of the sophists of the first generation, who were able to speak, with equal ability to persuade, both in favour of and against a given topic. But Apuleius also shows that philosophy had by that time reacquired the prestige that it had lost under Domitian, and *humanitas* is even employed to translate a philosophical technical term in the *De Platone et eius dogmate*. More broadly, the revival of culture is perceptible in every section of Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*. In this encyclopedic work, *humanitas*, taken as Greek παιδεία, is even at the heart of an educational programme which aims at combining the purity of the Latin language with the nobler Greek culture.⁴⁸⁴ In doing so, Gellius also denounces the wrong ways of pursuing knowledge, embodied by the increasing category of those grammarians who had nothing to do with eminent figures of the past like Quintilian, and did not even know the true meaning of *humanitas*. Certainly Gellius did not include Varro, one of his models, in this category, despite the latter using the 'wrong' meaning of *humanitas*. This discrepancy is rather to be explained as a consequence of two theories of language which probably shared theoretical premises and aims, but, for all of Varro's influence on Gellius, took shape independently. This autonomy of judgement adds value to Gellius' personality as author, and, by extension, to the richness and variety of the Latin literature of the Antonine age, which is best represented by Apuleius' multifaceted oeuvre.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Heusch (2011), 397.

Chapter 4.

The silent third century and its exception: Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*.

Unfortunately, educational programmes such as Gellius', in which *humanitas* played a central role, would soon face hard times. Commodus' violent death in the late 192 CE marked the end of the Antonine age. There followed a comparatively short period of instability, until Septimius Severus seized power in June 193 CE. Since the formula of the 'adoptive principate' had been put into practice for the last time by Antoninus Pius, Septimius Severus inaugurated a new dynastic age, the Severan age. The assassination of the last member of this dynasty, Alexander Severus, in 235 CE was another turning point in the history of Rome, for it marked the beginning of the so-called 'Crisis of the Third Century' (235 CE – 284 CE). This half-century saw no fewer than 26 claimants to the throne. Given the related climate of general disarray, it is no surprise that "little seems to have been written of any value", especially in the Latin west.⁴⁸⁵ Nor was the situation significantly different during the Severan dynasty, under which only Greek authors like Cassius Dio, Philostratus or Herodian flourished. But when Diocletian stabilised the empire and created the 'tetrarchy', western literature began to recover, albeit gradually. As far as *humanitas* is concerned, there is however one significant case towards the end of the third century, and it is all the more interesting in that it is tightly connected to the cultural restoration which followed the crisis. The work referred to is Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*, a panegyric probably delivered in 298 CE.⁴⁸⁶ This chapter will analyse Eumenius' role as restorer of what is represented as the most complete and authentic, that is Ciceronian, sense of ancient *humanitas* after one of the darkest ages in the history of Rome. Quite surprisingly, this aspect has so far been overlooked in Eumenian scholarship: Seager, in a contribution which is entirely devoted to the virtues in the *Panegyrici latini*, completely neglects the role of *humanitas* in Eumenius' speech;

⁴⁸⁵ Browning (1982), 684.

⁴⁸⁶ Some doubts over the exact date of Eumenius' panegyric have been raised by Nixon – Rodgers (1994), 148, according to whom any date between 297 and 299 CE would be possible. According to Barnes (1996), 541, it was composed after summer 298 CE. An overview of the various hypotheses can be found in Hostein (2012), 49-50. On the figure of Eumenius and his career cf. Hostein (2012), 154-157 and *passim*.

similarly La Bua, in an article whose focus is on the importance of education and culture in Eumenius' speech, hardly mentions the term *humanitas*.⁴⁸⁷

I shall first contextualise this panegyric in both literary and historical terms. Given the brevity of Eumenius' oration and the crucial role that *humanitas* plays in it, my analysis will slightly differ from the previous chapters: instead of simply going through each and every instance of *humanitas*, I shall read the entire speech through the lens of *humanitas*. In doing this, I will show how *humanitas*, in perfect Ciceronian style, oscillates, roughly speaking, between the ideas of φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία, which also seem to overlap at times. Throughout, I will also spotlight how the *humanitas* topic closely links Eumenius to previous authors whose works I have already explored at length, namely Cicero's *Pro Archia*, Pliny's *Panegyricus*, Apuleius' *Apologia* and Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*.

The so-called *Panegyrici latini* are a collection of twelve panegyrics dating, with the exception of Pliny's *Panegyric in praise of Trajan* we have already touched upon, from 289 CE to 389 CE.⁴⁸⁸ Epideictic orations were usually written to thank the emperor(s) for bestowing some kind of honour upon the panegyrist himself or the civic community, or else to celebrate an important event. Either way, they heaped praise on the emperor(s). Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis*, which was actually delivered before an imperial governor, is the exception which proves the rule: praise of the (absent) emperors does emerge at times, but the aim of this oration is not to thank them for something they have already done, but to ask for their help in restoring the famous Maenian schools of Augustodunum (today's Autun, in central Gaul), which were prestigious schools of rhetoric presumably dating back at least to the reign of Tiberius: Tacitus is alluding to them when he describes the rebellion of Sacrovir (21 CE): *Augustodunum caput gentis armatis cohortibus Sacrovir occupaverat <ut> nobilissimam Galliarum subolem, liberalibus studiis ibi operatam, et eo pignore parentes propinquosque eorum adiungeret*.⁴⁸⁹ Unfortunately, Augustodunum was also at the centre of rebellions and wars in the centuries to come, in particular during the years of the Crisis of the third century. Eumenius' own panegyric reveals that the city had been gravely ruined, and so had the Maenian schools. When, by whom and how many times it had been attacked is a matter

⁴⁸⁷ Seager (1983), La Bua (2010).

⁴⁸⁸ On Pliny's *Panegyricus* cf. above, pp. 49-58.

⁴⁸⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.43.1.

of dispute. Some believe that this was due to Tetricus, the last of the Gallic emperors, who besieged the city after its rebellion against the Gallic empire;⁴⁹⁰ others impute the damages to the invasion of the tribe of the Bagaudae.⁴⁹¹ The one possibility does not exclude the other.⁴⁹² In any case, Eumenius makes it clear that Augustodunum was still a building site when he delivered his speech about 298 CE.

Eumenius' panegyric opens in an interesting way: the orator excuses himself for delivering an unconventional speech. The reason for this, he goes on to explain, is that he is only a teacher of rhetoric, utterly unfamiliar with official, real orations. Nevertheless, his devotion to culture overcomes all his fears when the restoration of the Maenian schools is at stake (§1-3). These schools – Eumenius is sure – must be dear to the *principes* as well, for they have always cared about education and culture (3.2: *quibus optimarum artium celebratio grata atque iucunda est*). Nor is the emphasis on the rulers' interest in cultural issues isolated, for Eumenius reiterates it several times throughout the speech, starting from 5.2 (*Cui enim umquam veterum principum tantae fuit curae ut doctrinae atque eloquentiae studia florerent quantae his optimis et indulgentissimis dominis generis humani?*) and 6. In the latter paragraph, Eumenius also becomes self-referential when he recalls that Constantius Chlorus has already appointed a (good) teacher of rhetoric for the Maenian schools: Eumenius himself. To cut a long story short, there can be no doubt that, under these presuppositions, the emperors will also foster the rebuilding of the schools. After all,

Cui igitur est dubium quin divina illa mens Caesaris, quae tanto studio praeceptorem huic conventui iuventutis elegit, etiam locum exercitiis illius dedicatum instaurari atque exornari velit, cum omnes omnium rerum sectatores atque fautores parum se satisfacere voto et conscientiae suae credant, si non ipsarum quas appetunt gloriarum templa constituent? (6, 4)

At this point, given all this emphasis on school, teachers, *doctrina* and *eloquentia*, readers might expect that the first instance of *humanitas* in this oration would remind them of the

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Maguinness (1952), 97-98, who, in the wake of Galletier (1949), 111, believes that it was actually Victorinus to conquer the city, Rodgers (1989), 250-251, Rees (2002), 132-133 with further bibliography, La Bua (2010), 301.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Lassandro (1973) and Lassandro – Micunco (2000), 11 and 20. Against Justus Lipsius' conjecture *Bagaudicae rebellionis* at 4.1 (manuscripts read *Batavicae rebellionis*), which Lassandro accepted, cf. Rodgers (1989), 253-254 and Nixon – Rodgers (1994), 154 n. 12 with further bibliography.

⁴⁹² Cf. Rees (2002), 133.

nuances that the term takes on in Cicero's *Pro Archia*. Yet Eumenius introduces a glorious example of temples which were erected to praise virtues, and *humanitas* is said to be what prompted the Athenians to set up an altar to Mercy: *Inde est quod Atheniensis humanitas aram Misericordiae instituit, quod Romani ducis animi magnitudo templum Virtutis et Honoris* (7.1). Even though we are by now accustomed to hearing of *Atheniensis humanitas*, in this case the expression is hardly to be taken as in the Ciceronian and Plinian instances that we saw in the Introduction, where *humanitas* clearly stands to evoke culture in its broadest sense, or even civilisation.⁴⁹³ Rather, it is closer to the Apuleian occurrence at *Apol.* 86, where the comparison with a Plutarchean passage shows the equation between *ius humanitatis* and φιλανθρωπία.⁴⁹⁴ Here too *humanitas* seems to stand for φιλανθρωπία, and, as with the Apuleian case, this is made clear through a comparison with a Greek text dealing with the same episode. Compare Pausanias 1.17.1:

Ἀθηναίοις δὲ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ ἄλλα ἐστὶν οὐκ ἐς ἅπαντας ἐπίσημα καὶ Ἐλέου βωμός, ᾧ μάλιστα θεῶν ἐς ἀνθρώπινον βίον καὶ μεταβολὰς πραγμάτων ὄντι ὠφελίμω μόνοι τιμὰς Ἑλλήνων νέμουσιν Ἀθηναῖοι. τούτοις δὲ οὐ τὰ ἐς φιλανθρωπίαν μόνον καθέστηκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοῦς εὐσεβοῦσιν ἄλλων πλέον, καὶ γὰρ Αἰδοῦς σφισι βωμός ἐστι καὶ Φήμης καὶ Ὀρμῆς·

Certainly the clause τούτοις δὲ οὐ τὰ ἐς φιλανθρωπίαν μόνον καθέστηκεν parallels Eumenius' *Atheniensis humanitas*. The dedication of the temple to *Misericordia* also contributes to this interpretation of *humanitas*: as we have seen, the pairing of *misericordia* and *humanitas* is common in Latin, and it often leads to the two overlapping.⁴⁹⁵ In a specular manner, φιλανθρωπία and ἔλεος tend to overlap in the text of Pausanias. And yet, for all this evidence, it is undeniable that the Latin text maintains a different flavour from the Greek one, especially for a first-time reader unaware of these parallels: the continual attention to culture in Eumenius' panegyric in one way or another is reflected in the expression *Atheniensis humanitas*, while the Greek φιλανθρωπία is far less polysemic.

After all, not only what precedes, but also the historical example that immediately follows the *ara Misericordiae* spotlights this link between *humanitas* and culture, literature in particular. Fulvius Nobilior is in fact said to have built the Temple of Hercules

⁴⁹³ Cf. above, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. above, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. above, pp. 109-110.

of the Muses (*Aedem Herculis Musarum*), because, among other reasons, “he was led by literature and his friendship for a great poet [i.e. Ennius]” (tr. Nixon – Rodgers). By the same token, the emperor, who is Hercules’ descendant, is said to cultivate the study of literature (*studium litterarum*) and even to consider it as the basis of all the virtues (8.2: *litteras omnium fundamenta esse virtutum*). In sum, this emphasis on the importance of education and culture, which goes hand in hand with the necessity of rebuilding the Maenian schools, permeates the first half of the oration, until the end of § 10.

From § 11 onwards, Eumenius tackles the problem of how to finance this building operation. The solution he proposes is highly philanthropic on his part as well as being a bargain for the empire: Eumenius is in fact willing to use his own salary as a teacher of rhetoric, which amounts to 600,000 sesterces, to support the restoration of the Maenian schools:

Hoc ego salarium, quantum ad honorem pertinet, adoratum accipio et in accepti ratione perscribo; sed expensum referre patriae meae cupio, et ad restitutionem huius operis, quoad usus poposcerit, destinare. Cuius voluntatis meae ratio etsi adserenda non est, tamen sub hac tua humanitate et circumstantium expectatione qua me audiri sentio aliquatenus prosequenda est.

Not only the expectation of the audience (*circumstantium expectatione*), but also the governor’s *humanitas* seem to demand clarification of Eumenius’ offering. To some extent, this is to say that the *humanitas* of the governor is so important that it even determines the second half of Eumenius’ oration. Indeed, the preposition *sub*, never to be found in direct connection with *humanitas* before Eumenius, strengthens the urgency of the matter. Yet to determine the exact meaning of *humanitas* here is not an easy task. Nixon and Rodgers translate it as ‘kindness’, as translators often do when facing the problem of rendering *humanitas* into English.⁴⁹⁶ However, it is my belief that the word *humanitas* is rarely as polysemic as it is here and that the author is deliberately exploiting the ambiguity of the word; for Eumenius refers here to the *humanitas* of his main interlocutor, the governor in whose presence he is delivering his speech. Accordingly, there is little doubt that flattery is to be expected, and the ideas that the word *humanitas* can imply are perfectly suitable to this end. Given the recurring stress on the importance of literature and culture throughout the speech, the undoubtedly learned governor will have seen in the expression *tua humanitate* also an allusion to his superior education. But

⁴⁹⁶ Nixon – Rodgers (1994).

at the same time, Eumenius is appealing to his kindness, generosity, philanthropic disposition towards the city of Augustodunum and the orator himself.⁴⁹⁷

What is more, a few paragraphs later the governor would also learn that the Caesars possess that same *humanitas* which Eumenius has attributed to him. § 15.3 reads:

Qui quod iubere possunt suadere dignantur et, cum vel tacitas eorum ac vultu tenus significatas voluntates summi patris sequatur auctoritas, cuius nutum promissionem confirmantis totius mundi tremor sentit, ipsi tamen ultro imperandi potestatem cohortandi humanitate conciliant.

Eumenius had just read before the governor the letter through which Constantius had urged him to take the post of teacher of oratory of the Maenian schools, and what he stresses is the very fact of having been urged (14.4: *hortamur ut professionem oratoriam repetas*) and not ordered to do so. Once more *humanitas* is central, as it is thanks to this philanthropic value that the emperor preferred exhortation (*cohortandi*) to orders (*imperandi*). Of course we could also conjecture, as with the previous instance of Eumenian *humanitas*, that the emperor's learning lies behind his kind behaviour: still, this must remain a conjecture, for the context does not explicitly allow this interpretation. Yet noteworthy here is the rare if not unique use of a gerund (*cohortandi*) which depends on *humanitas* as well as the link between *humanitas* and exhortation, which will meet with the approval of later authors such as an anonymous panegyrist of Constantine (*Pan. Lat.* 12.14.1: *Studium et humanitas tua hortata est*) and Symmachus (*Ep.* 7.56: *tua nos hortatur humanitas*).⁴⁹⁸ Linguistic arguments aside, we might also note that Eumenius' use of *humanitas* within the panegyric somehow echoes Apuleius' technique in the *Apologia*, which in turn reminds us of Cicero's in the *Pro Archia*. Here as in the Apuleian oration *humanitas* is made to be a if not *the* component which binds together the protagonists of the speech, that is to say the direct addressee (the proconsul Maximus in Apuleius, the governor in Eumenius), personalities tightly connected with the addressees and who play a key role in the speeches (Maximus' predecessor Lollianus Avitus and the emperor Constantius), the Athenians who embody the highest level of civilisation, and, implicitly, the orators themselves. For all the different nuances that the term *humanitas* takes on in these two authors, both Apuleius and Eumenius seem to resort to this concept

⁴⁹⁷ An analogous interpretation of this instance of *humanitas*, although probably expressed in less clear terms, can be found in Hostein (2012), 199.

⁴⁹⁸ On this Symmachian occurrence cf. also below, p. 194.

as an oratorical strategy which can suggest identification within an elitist category of people as opposed to those who are excluded from this elite. But whereas for Apuleius *humanitas* served this purpose along with education and culture rather than as a part of them, Eumenius, setting himself in the wake of Cicero, Pliny the Younger and Aulus Gellius, perceives *humanitas* as closely linked to παιδεία. More than in the instances which I have analysed so far, this becomes all the more clear towards the end of the panegyric, namely at § 19, which is perhaps the most important paragraph of the entire oration:

[1] Sed enim, Vir perfectissime, inter omnia quae virtute principum ac felicitate recreantur, sint licet fortasse alia magnitudine atque utilitate potiora, nihil est tamen admirabilius hac liberalitate quam fovendis honorandisque litterarum studiis impartiant. [2] Quippe, ut initio dixi, nulli umquam antehac principes pari cura belli munia et huiusmodi pacis ornamenta coluerunt. [3] Diversissimus enim ad utramque sectam deflexus est, dispar natura mentium et discrepans in electione iudicium; ipsorum denique utrisque artibus praesidentium numinum dissoni monitus habitusque dissimiles. [4] Quo magis horum nova et incredibilis est virtus et humanitas, qui inter tanta opera bellorum ad haec quoque litterarum exercitia respiciunt atque illum temporum statum quo, ut legimus, Romana res plurimum terra et mari valuit, ita demum integrare putant, si non potentia sed etiam eloquentia Romana revirescat.

As Eumenius himself points out (*ut initio dixi*), his panegyric closes in ring-composition by returning to the importance of the liberal studies that the present emperors have always fostered. In particular, they stand out thanks to their ability to make two opposites coexist: wars on the one hand, literature and culture in general on the other hand. These two opposites, I argue, correspond to two different value-terms, *virtus* and *humanitas*. § 19.4 is a consistent and rather long parallelism in which the first item of each clause refers to the first value mentioned at the head of the sentence (*virtus*), while the second item refers to the second value (*humanitas*). Accordingly, signs of virtue are warlike deeds (*tanta opera bellorum*) and the restoration to a flourishing condition of the Roman power (*potentia...Romana revirescat*); in contrast, literary exercises (*litterarum exercitia*) and the revival of Roman eloquence (*eloquentia Romana revirescat*) are due to the emperors' *humanitas*. After all, that *virtus* can be closely related to warfare is something we learn from the earliest Latin authors such as Ennius (*Ann.* 6.187-189 Skutsch) and Claudius Quadrigarius (*Ann. Fr.* 7 Peter), and it is summarised by the recurrent expression *virtus bellica*.

As for *humanitas*, in claiming that “[Eumenius’] estimate of the value of literary studies is in the spirit of Cicero’s *Pro Archia*”,⁴⁹⁹ Maguinness leads us to extend the comparison to this use of *humanitas* in the panegyric with Cicero’s expression *studia humanitatis* at *Pro Archia* 3, a passage which I have already quoted in the Cicero section in Chapter 1, and quote here again for convenience:⁵⁰⁰

*quaeso a vobis, ut in hac causa mihi detis hanc veniam, accommodatam huic reo, vobis, quem ad modum spero, non molestam, ut me pro summo poëta atque eruditissimo homine dicentem, hoc concursu hominum litteratissimorum, hac vestra humanitate, hoc denique praetore exercente iudicium patiamini de studiis humanitatis ac litterarum paulo loqui liberius.*⁵⁰¹

The connection between *humanitas* and *litterarum exercitia* in Eumenius becomes perhaps more explicit in the light of this Ciceronian passage thanks to the repetition of the very term *humanitas* in a pair with *litterae* (*de studiis humanitatis ac litterarum*). But even more than the *Pro Archia*, another instance of *studia humanitatis*, that found in Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae* 9.3 (analysed in the previous chapter) backs up the educational meaning of *humanitas* in Eumenius’ panegyric 19.4. At 9.3 Gellius praises king Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great’s father, for paying attention to the liberal arts in wartime. Thus, Massimianus’ and Costantius Clorus’ extraordinary (*nova et incredibilis*) ability to honour literature and culture on account of their *humanitas* while succeeding in wars had at least one noble precedent, that of Philip, who, *cum in omni fere tempore negotiis belli victoriisque adfectus exercitusque esset, a liberali tamen Musa et a studiis humanitatis numquam afuit*.

Let us recap. As in Pliny the Younger’s *Panegyricus* in praise of Trajan and Apuleius’ *De apologia*, we find in Eumenius’ *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis* another oratorical example of the use of the *humanitas* argument in the Imperial age. As with the case of Pliny, or even more than there, it is not an exaggeration to state that *humanitas* plays a, if not *the*, key role within Eumenius’ speech. True, the higher number of occurrences in the *Panegyricus* lets us appreciate a wider range of nuances that Pliny gives to *humanitas*. Yet Eumenius displays cases where either the idea of φιλανθρωπία (7.1) or παιδεία (19.4) is clearly prominent, as well as more nuanced instances in which

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. also Rodgers (1989), 249-250, Nixon – Rodgers (1994), 149, La Bua (2010), 309.

⁵⁰⁰ Maguinness (1952), 101.

⁵⁰¹ On this passage cf. also Coşkun (2010), 82 (with further bibliography) and above, p. 32.

both ideas are in play (11.3 and 15.3). In doing this, Eumenius seems to echo Cicero's message and adjust it to his own case: as literary education and culture are futile if they do not enhance the soul and lead humans to better understand their condition as men among men, the emperors and Eumenius himself need to give proof of their superior education by taking care of the people's needs, among which the rebuilding of the Maenian schools takes pride of place. It is in fact thanks to these schools that literature and consequently culture and civilisation, in a word, *humanitas*, can flourish again and perpetuate themselves.

Furthermore, from a political perspective, *humanitas* might be seen as a keyword that signals a return to a Golden Age after a period of crisis: funding the schools will allow the governor to display a virtue that the new emperors have themselves embraced and which signals a return to civilisation after a period of darkness, a return that makes them closer to the Ciceronian age. The political differences between Cicero's age and theirs (republic vs. empire) are interestingly erased, and Cicero's *humanitas*, for all the changes in meanings and connotations it has witnessed, has once again become the ideal to which statesmen aspire.

Chapter 5.

***Humanitas* in the Theodosian age: the reposition of the Trajanic pattern?**

Eumenius' appeal to governors' and emperors' *humanitas*, however isolated it probably was, apparently proved effective and forward-thinking. An investigation of the rhetoric of fourth-century legislation from Constantine onwards shows that most rulers decided to rely on *humanitas* to foster the renewal of the Roman Empire after the crisis of the third century.⁵⁰² Nor was this a novelty, for the legislation of Hadrian and the Antonine emperors had already been inspired by this value.⁵⁰³ Yet the rhetoric of laws is one thing, the people's perception of the emperors is another, and the two do not necessarily run in parallel.⁵⁰⁴ In other words, the presence of the term in numerous laws does not imply that the judges' and emperors' behaviours concretely followed the path of *humanitas*. Laws are projected into the future, but we need to turn to historiography for a backward perspective on, and evaluation of, people and events. Latin fourth-century pagan literature includes only one great historian, Ammianus Marcellinus. His *Res Gestae*, which end with the Roman defeat of Hadrianople in 378 CE, were completed after 395, in the Theodosian age. What has come down to us, which forms the narration of the events from 353 to 378, shows that Ammianus gave much importance to *humanitas* in all its facets. Yet he perceived that period as devoid of *humanitas*, a value which was mostly feigned, especially by emperors. His strategy is opposite to that of Tacitus (and rather reminds us of Suetonius): while the Trajanic historian avoided using the term with reference to periods and emperors which neglected *humanitas*, Ammianus explicitly laments its absence and denounces its simulation. What unites Ammianus and Tacitus, however, are the socio-political contexts in which these two historians wrote, and which explain their special care towards the word *humanitas*. Both the Trajanic and the Theodosian age did not simply promulgate laws (apparently) inspired by *humanitas*, but exalted it as a complex cluster of values which can create a special bond between the emperor and his subjects, and across (and within) different levels of Roman society. The two historians

⁵⁰² Honig (1960), 6-7.

⁵⁰³ Cf. above, p. 97.

⁵⁰⁴ On the propagandistic use in late imperial legislation of concepts like *humanitas* cf. Girotti (2017), 17.

thus exalted ‘in negative’ the *humanitas* of the ages in which they wrote by spotlighting the lack of *humanitas* in previous times. This trend is the reverse of that used by the writers who exalt *humanitas* in the positive: we saw in Chapter 2 that, in the case of Trajan’s Rome, Pliny the Younger was the main supporter and disseminator of this ideal; his counterpart in the Theodosian age was Symmachus.

We learn from various sources that Theodosius explicitly presented himself as a new Trajan, and allegedly went so far as to fabricate proof of his blood relationship with him.⁵⁰⁵ And if Theodosius was the new Trajan, Symmachus was the new Pliny. After devoting the first part of this last chapter to Ammianus’ *humanitas*, I will conclude my research project with Symmachus’ in the second half. As with Pliny, *humanitas* emerges from Symmachus’ correspondence as a binding value within Roman society. Pliny aimed to foster the rebirth of Rome after Domitian’s tyranny, but Symmachus’ goal was just as difficult: he wanted to preserve intact the prestige and power of the traditional senatorial class, which was at that time seriously threatened by multiple factors. The fourth century had been characterised by social mobility, with a great deal of people of humble origins – even barbarians – reaching the highest military and administrative offices. In addition, the success of Christianity would undermine the traditional values on which Roman *nobilitas* had long relied. In this context, the defeat of Hadrianople could have been perceived as the deathblow, marking the end of the Roman empire as well as of its traditional structure and society. Thus, also through the traditional, not to say patriotic, *humanitas*, Symmachus sought to maintain and reinforce the network of relationships which had once made up the backbone of Roman society, the *ordo senatorius*. In this respect, it is telling that Symmachus employs *humanitas* so many times – to our knowledge, only Cicero had used the term more often – but only in letters which date after the battle of Hadrianople and Theodosius’ appearance on the political stage early in 379 CE.⁵⁰⁶ Indeed, the deeper we dive in the Theodosian age, the more frequently

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Claud. 8.18-29, Them. *Or.* 16.202d-205a and 19.229b, Oros. *Hist.* 7.34.1-3. There is also an extensive comparison between Theodosius and Trajan – favourable to the former – in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (48). Although Theodosius is the most often compared to Trajan, “the notion of Trajan as predecessor for new emperors to surpass recurs in various locations”, as Gibson – Rees (2013), 157 remark, mentioning for example the case of Tacitus in the *Historia Augusta* (*Tac.* 8.5).

⁵⁰⁶ Yet “Symmachus’ correspondence extends from 364 till 402”, as Matthews (1975), 7 rightly remarks.

Symmachus uses the term *humanitas*, so much so that his letters seem to confirm Marcone's claim that *humanitas* is a sign of the new (i.e. Theodosian) times.⁵⁰⁷

One clarification needs to be made straight away. Given the common image of Theodosius as the promoter, or even the emblem, of Christianity, one might see a contradiction in presenting the pagan Symmachus' *humanitas*, the unifying value of the senatorial class, as a value which was shared by Theodosius himself. Yet Theodosius' religious policy was not always – and not everywhere – so strict, let alone in the city of Rome, and in any case all his interventions in the religious sphere were motivated by socio-political convenience rather than by theological principles.⁵⁰⁸ In particular, he needed to preserve social stability, especially after Hadrianople. In the Eastern empire, his legislation aimed at smoothing disagreements and conflicts between different Christian sects, neglecting the traditional opposition between pagans and Christians. That in principle he had nothing against pagans is further proved by his appointing several pagan aristocrats to the highest public offices, as is the case, for instance, with Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, who became praetorian prefect of the East. In the western part of the empire, where Symmachus lived, the importance of pagan aristocracy was even greater, especially in Rome, and Theodosius was well aware of this, so much so that Symmachus himself could reach the consulate (391 CE). As Errington puts it, “[t]here is no sign of any religious dimension to Theodosius's political activities there [i.e. in Rome]. His attitude was conciliatory, for he knew well enough that without the support of the Roman aristocrats [most of whom were still pagan] a new government in Italy would have a hard time achieving that traditional political consensus among the ruling classes without which no Italian government could function satisfactorily”.⁵⁰⁹ By functioning as the glue holding Rome's senatorial class together, Symmachus' *humanitas* was therefore perfectly fitting to Theodosius' policy.

⁵⁰⁷ Marcone (1987), 26 – with reference to the Theodosian age: “Segno dei tempi è l'*humanitas* [...], il fondamentale valore dell'età celebrato in ogni tipo di documenti”.

⁵⁰⁸ For a detailed description of Theodosius' (religious) policy cf. Errington (2006), 212-259.

⁵⁰⁹ Errington (2006), 242.

5.1. Absent and feigned *humanitas*: Ammianus' perspective on the decline of the Empire.

Haec ut miles quondam et Graecus, a principatu Caesaris Nervae exorsus ad usque Valentis interitum, pro virium explicavi mensura (Res Gestae 31.16.9)

Ut miles quondam et Graecus: this self-referential phrase, at the very end of Ammianus' work, is key to our understanding of his personality and historiographical method.⁵¹⁰ In judging the content of his work, his viewpoint, style, vocabulary and so forth, we need therefore to bear in mind two points: first, that he was a Greek writing in Latin, and second, that he was (or had been) a career soldier. As a non-native Latin author, he must have looked for a model to imitate, and it comes as no surprise that he mainly found this model in Cicero.⁵¹¹ As a soldier who was at times a direct protagonist of the events he narrates, it is to be expected that he paid much attention to the behaviour and moral values of rulers, high-ranking military officers and powerful men (and women) in general.⁵¹² And, what is more, he had insight into a reality that others would not have been able to see as closely. In addition to the cultural context in which he wrote, these two criteria also account for Ammianus' extensive use of *humanitas*, a word with Ciceronian connotations whose multifacetedness is very apt to portray different aspects of people's nature. In this respect, Ammianus distances himself from two major Roman historiographers in Sallust and Tacitus, who, as we have seen in Chapter 2.2, usually avoided using the word.⁵¹³ After all, despite setting himself in the wake of Tacitus (*a principatu Caesaris Nervae*, where Tacitus' *Historiae* ended), in many respects Ammianus' work reminds us more of previous Greek than Roman historians, and the use of *humanitas* is no exception.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ On the meaning(s) of *ut miles quondam et Graecus* cf. Camus (1967), 23, Sabbah (1978), 532-537 and 597, Barnes (1998), 65 and nn. 1 and 2, 79-80, Kelly (2008), 103 and n. 203. Further bibliography in Rohrbacher (2002), 24.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Camus (1967), 60-68, Sabbah (1978), 72-75, 352 and 596-597, Salemme (1989), 40 and 63.

⁵¹² On the moral character of Ammianus's work cf. Rosen (1982), 117-130, Seager (1986), *passim*, Brandt (1999), 13-14 and *passim*, Wieber-Scariot (1999), 27, Drijvers – Hunt (1999), 4-5.

⁵¹³ Cf. more generally Seager (1986), 36: "Of the moderate virtues prized by Ammianus, most are found much more rarely, if at all, in Tacitus".

⁵¹⁴ The extent to which Ammianus was influenced by Tacitus is debated. Among the scholars who have brought to light the affinities between the two of them or at least Ammianus' willingness to continue Tacitus' work we can name Thompson (1947), 17, Camus (1967), 70-73, Momigliano (1974), 1398, Sabbah (1978), 565 and 596-598, who at the same time also emphasises Ammianus' affinities with Greek authors

Philologists of Wilhelmine Germany already understood – as Barnes rightly brought back to light – the ‘essential Greekness’ of Ammianus’ thought, and this is also mirrored in his use of *humanitas*-φιλανθρωπία as a sovereign virtue (or *Herrschartugend*, to borrow a German term).⁵¹⁵ Aside from Ammianus in fact, φιλανθρωπία *qua* sovereign virtue is accorded far more space in Greek historical thought than its equivalent *humanitas* is accorded in Roman.⁵¹⁶ Although this perspective might seem to have the limitation of equating Ammianus’ conception of *humanitas* with the Greek φιλανθρωπία, thereby oversimplifying the versatility of the Latin word (of which we are by now well aware), we will see in this chapter that Ammianus pays far more attention to this philanthropic aspect of *humanitas*, without however neglecting its educational and cultural components.⁵¹⁷

I will first look into the instances in which Ammianus uses *humanitas* to characterise imperial virtue or links it to emperors. The analysis of these passages will bring into play both the role that Ammianus accorded to the education of emperors and statesmen, and the relationship between *humanitas* and foreigners or barbarians. However, as we will see, several of these cases also reveal that *humanitas* was often feigned; hence, investigation of instances of *simulata humanitas* or *species humanitatis* will be in order. I will then consider the significant role that *humanitas* plays in Ammianus’ two digressions on Rome, and how this value can be related to noble women or astrologers. Finally, I shall provide an overview of Ammianus’ use of the adjective *humanus*.

Let me start with those instances where *humanitas* is associated with emperors. The relationship is quite complex. To begin with, Ammianus never uses the word *humanitas* in relation to Julian the Apostate, *pace* Selem and de Jonge.⁵¹⁸ This is striking,

and mentality (cf. note below), Fornara (1992), Brandt (1999), 19. More hesitant are Matthews (1989), 32, Barnes (1998), 192-193 – with a concise state of research, who yet spotlights some parallels between the two (193-195), and Kelly (2008), 175-177.

⁵¹⁵ Barnes (1998), viii and 67-68. On Ammianus’ ‘Greekness’ cf. also Thompson (1947), 16, Sabbah (1978), 376, 536 and 596. Further bibliography and an overview in Barnes (1998), 69-71.

⁵¹⁶ Brandt (1999), 140-141.

⁵¹⁷ *Pace* Girotti (2017), 21 and *passim*, according to whom for Ammianus the value *humanitas* “non ha nulla a che vedere con la *philantropia* [sic], ma è per lo più connesso alla *paideia*”. More in detail on the structural weakness of Girotti (2017) cf. Mollea (2018a).

⁵¹⁸ Selem (1964), 150, de Jonge (1980), 308.

because Julian emerges as Ammianus' favourite ruler.⁵¹⁹ Of course his exclusion from the category of *humanitas*-gifted rulers is not to be overstated, for neither is he accused of lacking in this virtue, nor, on the other hand, does this mean that *humanitas* is not important to Ammianus. Yet, from a rhetorical point of view, it is significant that the term *humanitas* is only linked to the emperors whose overall portraits emerge as negative from Ammianus' narration.

The first case in point is Julian's (losing) opponent Constantius, whom Ammianus presents as claiming twice that he possesses *humanitas*. The passage (*Res Gestae* 14.10) is quite a long chapter recounting the drawing up of a peace deal between the Romans and the Alemanni. The Alemanni were devastating Gallic lands close to the Roman province, and Constantius therefore decided to move against them. *Res Gestae* recount that, as the Roman army arrived in their territories, the Alemanni begged for pardon and peace. The emperor was well aware of the possible benefits deriving from peace, but also knew it was difficult for him to justify his decision not to fight, especially after forcing the soldiers into exhausting marches. He thus resolved to pass the ball to them, at least apparently: in fact, he addressed them with a persuasive speech in which he clearly revealed his intentions (14.10.11-15). The oration, as it is given by Ammianus, ends thus:

In summa tamquam arbitros vos, quid suadetis, opperior ut princeps tranquillus temperanter adhibere modum allapsa felicitate decernens. Non enim inertiae, sed modestiae humanitatisque, mihi credite, hoc, quod recte consultum est assignabitur.
(14.10.15)

Opting for peace, says Constantius, would be seen as a sign of moderation, intellectual poise and humanity, not of inactivity or passiveness. This message seems to be inspired not only by Constantius' willingness to counter his reputation for cruelty but also by common sense, and yet in what follows (14.10.16) Ammianus does not miss the chance to throw some discredit on the emperor by stating that the army only voted for peace because they mistrusted Constantius' war skills.⁵²⁰ After the Ciceronian model of the *Pro Archia*, which was followed by Lucius' speech in *Metamorphoses* 3 and Eumenius' panegyric, we face here another case where the *humanitas* argument appears within the

⁵¹⁹ On the relationship between *humanitas* and the emperor Julian cf. also below, p. 163.

⁵²⁰ On Constantius' bad reputation during his life cf. Whitby (1999), who at 70 claims: "The evidence for Constantius' harshness was undoubtedly improved after his death, but it was still a reputation that had to be countered during his life since mildness and mercy were important imperial virtues".

peroratio of an oration. This time, however, *humanitas* is paired with *modestia* and opposed to *inertia*. This triangular relation *humanitas-modestia* vs. *inertia* is significant to understanding Ammianus' view of *humanitas*, for it invites us to nuance Brandt's claim that for Ammianus *humanitas* is subordinate to *temperantia*.⁵²¹ Brandt rightly concludes from the general meaning of this passage that *humanitas*, here used in reference to the Romans' mild use of force, can only be gained if the ruler subordinates his own feelings and interests to those of his army and people, and shows some *modestia*.⁵²² This ultimately explains the meaning of its pairing with *modestia*. However, this does not necessarily mean (*pace* Brandt) that *humanitas* must be subordinated to *temperantia*. In fact, a closer look at the passage, and more specifically at the association of *humanitas* with *modestia* seems to contradict this claim.

In discussing 14.10.15, Brandt argues that this relationship between moderation (*Maß*) and humanity (*Menschlichkeit*) appears quite often in Cicero, and in support of his statement he refers to *Manil.* 13, *Mur.* 66, *Phil.* 13.36 and *Cato* 7.⁵²³ However, in three of these Ciceronian passages (*Mur.* 66, *Phil.* 13.36, *Cato* 7) it is the word *moderatio*, rather than *modestia*, that is associated with *humanitas*; in the fourth case (*Manil.* 13) then, *humanitas* is linked to *mansuetudo* and *temperantia*, and *modestia* is once again absent. It is true that at *Tusc.* 3.16 *temperantia*, *moderatio* and *modestia* appear together in one sentence, but this does not mean that they are interchangeable, let alone synonymous. Nor does this allow for the conclusion that one virtue is subordinated to the other. On the contrary, both syntax and content indicate that they are considered to be of equal importance. Accordingly, even if one accepted the equivalence between *moderatio* and *modestia*, there is no reason why *modestia*, and consequently *humanitas*, should be seen as hyponyms of *temperantia*. Compare Cicero's *Manil.* 36, where *humanitas* and *temperantia* are clearly put on the same level, or even *Manil.* 13 mentioned by Brandt himself.⁵²⁴ If we do not restrict our scope to Ciceronian texts, the same holds true for a Ciceronian author like Pliny the Younger, whom we have seen claiming in the

⁵²¹ Brandt (1999), 140. Apart from the quick survey by Seager (1986), 20-22 and the unconvincing Girotti (2017), Brandt's is to my knowledge the only study to allow significant space to Ammianus' use of *humanitas*.

⁵²² Brandt (1999), 140.

⁵²³ Brandt (1999), 140 n. 124.

⁵²⁴ Cic. *Manil.* 36: *Ac primum quanta innocentia debent esse imperatores, quanta deinde in omnibus rebus temperantia, quanta fide, quanta facilitate, quanto ingenio, quanta humanitate!*

Panegyricus: Divinitatem principis nostri, an humanitatem temperantiam facilitatem, ut amor et gaudium tulit, celebrare universi solemus? (2.7)⁵²⁵ If we then recall Seneca's *Letter* 88 discussed above, it will appear clear that he explicitly regarded *temperantia* and *humanitas* as two different values providing different benefits.⁵²⁶ But it is also the very relationship put forward here at 14.10.15 which dissuades us from looking for rigid classifications of value concepts, especially in the case of *humanitas*. It is sufficient to compare the opposition between *inertia* and *humanitas* to yet another Plinian passage already discussed, *Pan.* 3.5, where *humanitas* is opposed to *superbia*, and *inertia* to *labor*. Closer to Ammianus is instead a passage of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, in which we find the same opposition between the negative *inertia* and the positive *modestia*: *quam ille modestiam dicet esse, eam nos inertiam et dissolutam negligentiam esse dicemus* (3.6).⁵²⁷ In sum, neither the context nor previous instances of the concepts of value involved in Amm. 14.10.15 justify Brandt's taxonomy and, specifically, the claim that Ammianus subordinates *humanitas* to *temperantia*. Rather, all these combinations of *humanitas* with other values, and its opposition to faults like *inertia*, confirm the need to investigate each and every occurrence of *humanitas* as an ever-evolving nexus of interrelated connotations that are also influenced by the presence of other words which are ethically connoted.

When we turn to the second passage where Constantius invokes *humanitas* within a speech, we immediately realise that Ammianus established an interesting dialectical relationship between the two occurrences. 21.13.10-15 features the *contio* that the emperor delivered in front of his army before the decisive battle against Julian. To begin with, the external narrator Ammianus recounts that Constantius, caught between two fires, is hesitant as to what course of action to take: should he concentrate all his forces against the 'inner' enemy Julian, or would it be better to send part of the army to monitor the Persians' movements? In the end, he opts for the latter solution, but does so – Ammianus seems to rejoice in making this clear – 'in order not to be blamed for his

⁵²⁵ Cf. above, pp. 50-51.

⁵²⁶ On *humanitas* in Seneca cf. above, pp. 39-43. Sen. *Ep.* 88.29-30: *Temperantia voluptatibus imperat, alias odit atque abigit, alias dispensat et ad sanum modum redigit nec unquam ad illas propter ipsas venit; scit optimum esse modum cupitorum non quantum velis, sed quantum debeas sumere. Humanitas vetat superbum esse adversus socios, vetat amarum; verbis, rebus, adfectibus comem se facilemque omnibus praestat; nullum alienum malum putat, bonum autem suum ideo maxime quod alicui bono futurum est amat.*

⁵²⁷ On *humanitas* in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* cf. above, pp. 27-29.

inactivity'.⁵²⁸ As in the preceding instance at 14.10.15, Ammianus once again alludes to Constantius' unwillingness to show *inertia* towards external enemies. However, while in that case the *inertia* was replaced by the nobler *humanitas*, which fortunately prevented war, at 21.13.10 that same *humanitas* is regarded by the emperor as the error which has too long put off an inevitable war:

'Sollicitus semper, ne quid re levi vel verbo committam inculpatae parum congruens honestati, utque cautus navigandi magister clavos pro fluctuum motibus erigens vel inclinans compellor nunc apud vos, amantissimi viri, confiteri meos errores, quin potius, si dici liceat verum, humanitatem, quam credidi negotiis communibus profuturam'.

Here Constantius realises that what had been his main merit at 14.10.15, that is, his tendency to subordinate his own good to that of others, has turned out to be a double-edged sword in this case. Symptomatic, in this sense, is the fact that *humanitas*, which had been the key element of his *peroratio* at 14.10.15 as well as the last and most important feeling he tried to instill in his soldiers so as to persuade them not to fight, has now become the first element of his *introductio*, the basis, so to speak, on which to build an oration aimed at encouraging the soldiers' minds. Unfortunately for Constantius, his words were not sufficient, for not only did his army lose the battle, but he even lost his life. Accordingly, if on the one hand Kelly is right in giving credit to Constantius for recognising (albeit a little too late, we might add) the validity of the negative *exemplum* of Gallus (cf. 21.13.11 with 15.8.2) and therefore for admitting his previous errors of judgement, on the other hand, paradoxically, Constantius' biggest error turns out to be his having considered *humanitas* as an error.⁵²⁹ So in both these two passages *humanitas* carries the idea of 'restraint', but Ammianus' narration adds irony to these events: in the first case, Constantius' *humanitas* is presented as insincere, but leading to a positive outcome; in the second, it is presented as possibly genuine, but the emperor did not persist in his moderate behaviour, and this led to a negative outcome. Both passages underline the incompatibility between *humanitas* and Constantius.

From this standpoint however, the case of Constantius is not unique within the *Res Gestae*, for one more time Ammianus features a case where *humanitas* is regarded – again wrongly, judging by the historian's tone – as a value leading to a negative result or behaviour. Towards the beginning of book 29, the historian tells of the numerous plots

⁵²⁸ Amm. 21.13.3.

⁵²⁹ Kelly (2008), 287.

against the emperor Valens' life. Despite all being unsuccessful, these plots made the emperor obsessive and indiscriminately cruel:

inexpiabile illud erat, quod regaliter turgidus, pari eodemque iure, nihil inter se distantibus meritis, nocentes innocentesque maligna insectatione volucriter perurgebat, ut dum adhuc dubitaretur de crimine, imperatore non dubitante de poena, damnatos se quidam prius discerent quam suspectos. (29.1.18)

And as if that were not enough,

Adolescebat autem obstinatum eius propositum admovente stimulos avaritia et sua et eorum, qui tunc in regia versabantur, novos hiatus aperientium et, si qua humanitatis fuisset mentio rara, hanc appellantium tarditatem. (29.1.19)

In sum, the emperor's entourage even worsened Valens' own greed and vices in general,⁵³⁰ so much that they went so far as to call *humanitas* 'slowness' – and it is worth noting that in Latin *tarditas* stands for both slowness of movement and slowness of intellect. Like *error* at 21.13.10, *tarditas* makes an unusual pairing when associated with *humanitas*, and, in broader terms, when seen as the dark side of a virtue. Cicero's *tenth Philippic* probably provides the closest parallel: *Itaque illi ipsi si qui sunt qui tarditatem Bruti reprehendant tamen idem moderationem patientiamque mirantur* (10.14). The opposition between *tarditas* on the one hand and *moderatio* and *patientia* on the other hand seems to be posed in less explicit terms than that between *tarditas* and *humanitas*. Yet in the light of the tight relationship between *humanitas* and *moderatio* already observed in Ammianus, and between *humanitas* and *patientia* already noticed several times in other authors, Valens ends up being implicitly compared to Caesar's assassin Brutus. From the standpoint of Ammianus' conception of *humanitas* then, the parallel of *Phil.* 10.14 clearly contributes to spotlighting the Ciceronian influence on Ammianus' language and worldview, and to illustrating the way he uses Ciceronian terminology to present Roman emperors as either bad or good rulers. But to return to 29.1.19: clearly on this occasion Valens did not (and evidently could not because of his courtiers!) display any *humanitas*, but earlier in the *Res Gestae* he had done so, as the next passage shows.

⁵³⁰ Cf. den Boeft – Drijvers – den Hengst – Teitler (2013), 33 for other passages where Ammianus refers or alludes to Valens' greed, or to the vices of courtiers in general. According to Selem (1964), 149, 29.1.19 is one of those passages which reveal Ammianus' concern for (and probably dislike of) the rising category of wealthy courtiers who would threaten the privileges of the traditional aristocracy. More extensively on greed in Ammianus Brandt (1999), 402-412.

Section 12 of book 27 narrates the critical political situation in Armenia after Julian's death and a later peace agreement between the Persian king Shapur and the young emperor Jovian. The passage explains that Shapur ignored the terms of the peace treaty, imprisoned the Armenian king Arsaces, then killed and replaced him with two Armenian defectors called Cylaces and Arrabannes. The two of them however turned coat again and conspired with Arsaces' wife and son against Shapur. In doing so, they obviously looked for the Romans' help. In fact, Arsaces' young son Pap was even housed by Valens:

Arsacis filium Papam suadente matre cum paucis e munimento digressum susceptumque imperator Valens apud Neocaesaream morari praecepit, urbem Polemoniaci Ponti notissimam, liberali victu curandum et cultu. Qua humanitate Cylaces et Arrabannes illecti missis oratoribus ad Valentem auxilium eundemque Papam sibi regem tribui poposcerunt.
(27.12.9)

Evidently, unlike the case of 29.1.19, in this context Valens' *humanitas* could hardly fall under the definition of mercy, for Pap cannot be considered a spared enemy. In fact, Armenian royalty were not Roman enemies at that time, and at any rate Valens did not limit himself to sparing him. No doubt this instance of *humanitas* shares with the previous one the broad idea of φιλανθρωπία, but it is quite differently nuanced. The presence of the phrase *liberali victu curandum et cultu* is highly significant. The twinning of *victus* and *cultus* is very common in Latin literature, particularly in Cicero and Gellius.⁵³¹ The jurist Ulpian explicitly links them when defining *victus*: *Verbo "victus" continentur, quae esui potuique cultuique corporis quaeque ad vivendum homini necessaria sunt. vestem quoque victus habere vicem Labeo ait* (Dig. 50.16.43). But while the emphasis of *victus* is on the most material and individual aspects of human life (food, drink, and even clothes), *cultus* has a broader meaning, which often implies the notions of culture and education.⁵³² On one famous occasion in particular, the same notion is expressed through the association of *cultus* with *humanitas*: *horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt* (Caes. BG 1.1.3).⁵³³ And the same holds true in Ammianus' passage, for Pap was most likely about fifteen years old by the time of his stay at Valens' court, and needed therefore not only room and board

⁵³¹ Ammianus' good knowledge of Gellius' oeuvre has already been spotlighted in modern scholarship: cf. Sabbah (1978), 517-518, Kelly (2008), 192-203.

⁵³² On *cultus* cf. the relevant entry in the *TLL*, especially 4.0.1324.70-80.

⁵³³ On this Caesarian passage cf. above, pp. 36-37, and also below, pp. 178-179.

but also education. In providing him with both, Valens thus displayed more than mere benevolence or kindness, but also awareness of the importance of instruction for young nobles probably destined to rule one day. *Humanitas* is likely to epitomise all these feelings here. As we have seen, such an awareness is most likely to be expected from people who already possess a high level of education, but Ammianus shows us that that is not always the case. From Valens' final obituary, in fact, we learn that he was not well educated (31.14.5: *nec bellicis nec liberalibus studiis eruditus*). In other words, the *humanitas* he displays on this occasion probably originates from his regret for not having benefited from others' *humanitas*. At any rate, this episode, almost unique in Valens' life, seems to be the exception which proves the rule. As well as being rare (cf. *mentio rara* of 29.1.19), Valens' *humanitas* must have been short-lasting, for one paragraph later (27.12.10) Ammianus informs his readers that Pap was then brought back to Armenia by the Roman general Terentius. Nevertheless, someone else later appealed to Valens' *humanitas*.

Book 31, the last one of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, recounts both the events which led to the epochal battle of Hadrianople and the battle itself, where Valens lost his life. The uninterrupted pressure that Goth tribes, often suffering from shortage of food, had long exerted on the north-eastern borders of the Empire was becoming unbearable, and the Romans, in order to avoid bloody conflicts, were often forced to let them in (more or less) peacefully. To this sort of 'welcoming' attitude of the emperor Ammianus refers at 31.4.12:

Per hos dies interea etiam Videricus Greuthungorum rex cum Alatheo et Safrace, quorum arbitrio regebatur, itemque Farnobio propinquans Histri marginibus, ut simili susciperetur humanitate, obsecravit imperatorem legatis propere missis.

Previous examples of Valens' *humanitas*, which we might understand here as humanitarian aid more than simple hospitality, had evidently persuaded the Greuthungs that they could take advantage of the same benefits already granted to other Goth tribes. Yet, as with Constantius, it looks as if there is always some incompatibility between Valens and *humanitas*: the phrase *simili [...] humanitate* makes it clear that right before this episode there had been other occasions on which Valens had displayed a similar attitude, but Ammianus had not employed the word *humanitas*. By contrast, every time Ammianus associates this concept with this emperor, he is quick to underline that Valens' displays of *humanitas* are short-lived and are generally followed by a change of attitude. Showing *humanitas* towards internal enemies is rare and seen as a flaw (29.1.19); when

shown towards a young foreign prince it is short-lasting (27.12.9), and when it comes to the Greuthungs there is no room at all for *humanitas*: *Quibus, ut communi rei conducere videbatur, repudiatis* (31.4.13).⁵³⁴ In sum, the fact that Ammianus attributes the term *humanitas* to Valens no less than three times does not help mitigate the negative image that the historian gives of this emperor throughout the *Res Gestae*, and which culminates in his obituary (31.14.5-8).⁵³⁵ On the contrary, Valens' incoherent and inconsistent use of *humanitas* ends up adding to his negative description.

Yet in general terms, as Sabbah has observed, the figure of Valens emerges as more positive than Ammianus' treatment of his brother and colleague Valentinian.⁵³⁶ This is particularly true in the context of *humanitas*, for Valentinian's fault is aggravated by the fact that he did not follow the path of *humanitas* despite having *exempla* of it – a reasoning that Ammianus could have applied to many other emperors.⁵³⁷ The long passage is worth quoting in full:

Atquin potuit exempla multa contueri maiorum et imitari peregrina atque interna humanitatis et pietatis, quas sapientes consanguineas virtutum esse definiunt bonas. E quibus haec sufficiet poni: Artaxerxes, Persarum ille rex potentissimus, quem Macrochira membri unius longitudo commemoravit, suppliciorum varietates, quas natio semper exercuit cruda, lenitate genuina castigans tiaras ad vicem capitum quibusdam noxiis amputabat et, ne secaret aures more regio pro delictis, ex galeris fila pendentia praecidebat. Quae temperantia morum ita tolerabilem eum fecit et verecundum, ut adnitentibus cunctis multos et mirabiles actus impleret Graecis scriptoribus celebratos.
(30.8.4)

A close reading of this passage confirms that in Ammianus' taxonomy *humanitas* is not subordinated to *temperantia*.⁵³⁸ Ammianus' argument is as follows: first, Valentinian must have known good examples of *humanitas* and *pietas*; secondly, the case of

⁵³⁴ On Valens' utilitarian behaviour (*ut communi rei conducere videbatur*) in this episode cf. also Brandt (1999), 137.

⁵³⁵ Some virtues are attributed to Valens in his obituary (31.14.1-4), and this explains why Brandt (1999), 55-60 maintains that in this case the emperor's *bona* almost compensate for his *vitia* (60). Yet, even admitting this, the same cannot be said of Valens' actions throughout the *Res Gestae*, which are rarely, if ever, praised by Ammianus.

⁵³⁶ Sabbah (1978), 445-449.

⁵³⁷ On the role of *exempla* and anecdotes in Ammianus' oeuvre cf. mainly Wittchow (2001), which mentions the case of 30.8.4 at 56, and Kelly (2008), 256-295.

⁵³⁸ Cf. above, pp. 155-156. *Contra*, Brandt (1999), 140.

Artaxerxes stands out among these examples; thirdly, Artaxerxes' *temperantia* (*morum*) was even celebrated by Greek writers. Here Ammianus clearly equates *temperantia* with the pair *humanitas-pietas*, rather than subordinate *humanitas* to *temperantia*. In the light of what I said above about the relationship between *temperantia* and *humanitas* in other authors (above all, Cicero), Ammianus seems to use *temperantia* and *humanitas* as synonyms. More specifically, the twinning of *humanitas* with *pietas* helps these two polysemic words clarify each other, thereby allowing the reader to understand that *humanitas* carries a connotation of philanthropy. Briefly, there is neither need nor reason to assume that in Ammianus' view *humanitas* is subordinated to *temperantia*. By contrast, my interpretation perfectly fits Brandt's treatment of *pietas* in Ammianus. According to him, in fact, the historian mainly gives *pietas* philanthropic connotations, the same that can also be carried by *humanitas*.⁵³⁹ In this respect, and in regard to the pairing of *pietas* with *humanitas* in particular, 30.8.4 makes all the more clear that Ammianus distances himself from previous authors like Cicero, who had instead connected *pietas* and *humanitas* to refer to two very distinct values.⁵⁴⁰ To discuss *pietas* at length would require another thesis, so I limit myself to a couple of considerations. At *De inventione* 2.66 Cicero broadly defines *pietas* as *quae erga patriam aut parentes aut alios sanguine coniunctos officium conservare moneat* and Hellegouarc'h, quoting Cicero, *Phil.* 14.29, stresses how its meaning is close to *fides*, although the latter generally concerns the legal sphere, while *pietas* rather concerns the religious sphere.⁵⁴¹ When applied to politics then, *pietas* becomes linked to the idea of *patria* and, even more, of patriotism.⁵⁴² What is most remarkable, however, is the fact that, unlike Ammianus' use at 30.8.4 for instance, *pietas* usually implies an upward relationship, from a person of lower rank towards an entity of higher rank, whether it is a person or a god. Conversely, Ammianus' understanding of *pietas* tends to resemble the Christian conception of piety, and it is possible that he was affected by Christian language more in this respect than in that of *humanitas*, where no significant variation in meaning and context is detectable in comparison with previous

⁵³⁹ Brandt (1999), 147.

⁵⁴⁰ For the joint presence of *pietas* and *humanitas* within a sentence cf. e.g. Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.97, 2.4.12, *Planc.* 96, *Off.* 3.41, *Att.* 6.3.8, 11.17.1, Quint. 6 *praef.* 10, Sen. *Dial.* 4.28.2.

⁵⁴¹ Hellegouarc'h (1963), 276.

⁵⁴² Hellegouarc'h (1963), 278. More generally on *pietas* cf. Jannette-Schröder (2012).

pagan authors, as we are seeing. After all, as Kelly puts it: “[Ammianus] is far more at home in the language of Christianity than he appears”.⁵⁴³

But the case of Valentinian at 30.8.4 as well as the last two instances of *humanitas* with regard to Valens open the door to further investigations. First, we have seen that Valens’ concern for Pap’s education can hardly originate from the emperor’s own education. But to what extent is education important to rulers, and can it be called *humanitas* in Ammianus’ oeuvre? Secondly, both 27.12.9 and 31.4.12 bring into play Roman *humanitas* towards barbarians, while 30.8.4 seems to imply that the Persian king Artaxerxes, unlike Valentinian, possessed *humanitas*. So what is this relationship like? And can barbarians also possess and show *humanitas* by Ammianus’ time? Let me start from the first issue.

Camus probably stressed more than others the importance that Ammianus attaches to education and culture, and went so far as to claim that Ammianus’ love for Julian mainly derives from this emperor’s exceptional *Bildung*.⁵⁴⁴ Along the same lines a few years earlier Selem had maintained that Ammianus admired Julian’s *humanitas*.⁵⁴⁵ Given that Ammianus never uses the word *humanitas* in relation to Julian, as I mentioned above, Selem’s point is that Ammianus loved Julian because of his ability to reconcile culture and morality. The combination of these two aspects is of particular relevance, for Blockley rightly stated: “Education, though it is an aid to and perhaps a prerequisite for virtue, does not, in Ammianus’ eyes, automatically confer it”.⁵⁴⁶ The validity of such an assertion, which undoubtedly concerns rulers first, is corroborated by passages such as 27.6.9:

‘Vt enim mihi videri solet mores eius et appetitus licet nondum maturos saepe pensanti, ineunte adolescentia, quoniam humanitate et studiis disciplinarum sollertium expolitus, librabit suffragiis puris merita recte secusve factorum.’

This excerpt is taken from the investiture speech which Valentinian delivered before his troops when he appointed his young son Gratian to the rank of *Augustus*.⁵⁴⁷ That

⁵⁴³ Kelly (2008), 157. Ammianus’ attitude towards Christianity is an open and very debated question. For an overview cf. Neri (1985), 25-70 and Wittchow (2001), 185. Cf. also Barnes (1998), 90-94.

⁵⁴⁴ Camus (1967), 55. On the importance of education for Ammianus in general cf. also Camus (1967), 108-109 and 129.

⁵⁴⁵ Selem (1964), 150. Along the same lines de Jonge (1980), 308: cf. above, p. 153.

⁵⁴⁶ Blockley (1975), 160.

⁵⁴⁷ On imperial speeches in Ammianus cf. de Bonfils (1986), 29-32 – 30-31 on Valentinian’s speech.

humanitas is educationally connoted is made all the more clear by its twinning with *studiis* (*disciplinarum sollertium*), a phrase which basically reproduces the formulaic expression *studia humanitatis*.⁵⁴⁸ What is striking, however, is the fact that the emperor does not only emphasise his son's knowledge, but also regards this knowledge as the precondition for Gratian's future ability to distinguish right from wrong. To answer to the first question posed above: education, as long as it is not an end in itself, is important to rulers, and Ammianus also calls it *humanitas*. The case of the aspiring emperor Theodorus provides another example in this sense. The episode of which he is protagonist is the same we have already touched upon when highlighting Valens' and his courtiers' lack of clemency towards conspirators (or alleged conspirators) at the opening of book 29. As we know, Valens was always obsessed by the idea of suffering conspiracies, and tended to give credit to informers. In the case of Theodorus, a defendant named Fidustus declared that an oracle had outlined the profile of the future emperor, who would be an *optimus princeps*. And when it came to unveiling his name:

Atque cunctantibus, quisnam ea tempestate omnibus vigore animi antistaret, visus est aliis excellere Theodorus secundum inter notarios adeptus iam gradum. Et erat re vera ita ut opinati sunt. Namque antiquitus claro genere in Galliis natus et liberaliter educatus a primis pueritiae rudimentis modestia, prudentia, humanitate, gratia, litteris ornatissimus semper officio locoque, quem retinebat, superior videbatur altis humilibusque iuxta acceptus. Solusque paene omnium erat, cuius linguam non infrenem, sed dispicientem, quae loqueretur, nullius claudebat periculi metus. (29.1.8)

This passage is telling in several respects. To begin with, *humanitas* is placed in the middle of a list of values which includes *modestia* and *prudentia* on the one hand and *gratia* and *litteris* on the other. We have already seen that Ammianus associated *modestia* with *humanitas*, and that it basically stands for restraint.⁵⁴⁹ The case of *prudentia* is a little more complex. More than once Cicero defines it as 'that which allows us to distinguish good from evil'.⁵⁵⁰ And Hellegouarc'h rightly notices that while in the professional sphere *prudentia* refers to the ability, derived from experience and study, to do a job, in politics it evokes practical experience as opposed to theory.⁵⁵¹ He thus concludes, in

⁵⁴⁸ On *studia humanitatis* cf. above, pp. 31, 55, 125.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. above, pp. 154-155.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. *Inv.* 2.160, *Nat. deor.* 3.38, and Hellegouarc'h (1963), 256 n. 10 for further references.

⁵⁵¹ Hellegouarc'h (1963), 257. Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 257 nn. 3 and 5 for references to ancient passages.

Cicero's footsteps, that *prudentia* is a fundamental virtue for any statesman.⁵⁵² *Gratia* is even more polysemic. In the Republican age, it can refer to the esteem, respect and influence of the statesman, but more broadly it is associated with the idea of friendship.⁵⁵³ Since *litteris* is self-explanatory, Brandt's comment – albeit interpreted in a different way from his – seems particularly apt to describe the bridging role of *humanitas* in this context:

“Berücksichtigt man die Wortstellung – *humanitas* steht zwischen *prudentia* und *gratia*, verbindet also sozusagen den dianoethischen Bereich (*prudentia*) mit dem ethischen (*gratia* bei dem Mitmenschen als Resultat charakterlicher Liebenswürdigkeit) – dann wird klar, daß der Ausdruck hier etwas wie geistig-moralische Bildung bezeichnet”.⁵⁵⁴

In other words, we face here one of those cases where the boundary between the παιδεία- and the φιλανθρωπία-meaning of *humanitas* is particularly fluid, so much so that it becomes hard to say which one prevails over the other. In fact, while the proximity of expressions such as *liberaliter educatus*, *prudentia* and *litteris ornatissimus* incline us toward the educational aspect,⁵⁵⁵ the association of *humanitas* with *modestia* and *gratia ornatissimus* as well as the fact that people belonging to both the higher and the lower classes of Roman society liked Theodorus (*altis humilibusque iuxta acceptus*) rather stress its philanthropic connotation.⁵⁵⁶ What is certain, however, is that, in Ammianus' view, a good emperor should possess both cultural and moral qualities, hence his admiration for Theodorus: *visus est aliis excellere Theodorus.... Et erat re vera ita ut opinati sunt*. Hence, also, Ammianus' dislike of Valens, who not only lacked these qualities, but even killed someone who did possess them and could therefore have been a better ruler than himself, Theodorus.

So much for the role of *humanitas*-education with regard to rulers. Let me now turn to the second question posed by 27.12.9, 30.8.4 and 31.4.12, that is to say, the

⁵⁵² Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 257 n. 8 for the Ciceronian passages corroborating this statement. More on *prudentia* in Ammianus in Brandt (1999), 108-119.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963), 204-206.

⁵⁵⁴ Brandt (1999), 134 n. 75.

⁵⁵⁵ For the sake of honesty, it must be stressed that *prudentia* in Ammianus can also be independent of education: cf. 14.6.1 with Brandt (1999), 112.

⁵⁵⁶ In view of this, it is not clear why Brandt (1999), 134 and n. 75 endeavours to prove that at 29.1.8 the idea of *humanitas* as *Bildung* is almost exclusive. In speaking of a “geistig-moralische Bildung” in fact, he inevitably links the idea of education expressed by *Bildung* to the moral aspects (*moralische*) well epitomised by the φιλανθρωπία component of *humanitas*.

relationship between *humanitas* and foreigners in Ammianus' work. The passages just referred to show that Roman *humanitas* can be expected from and accorded to barbarians. The close of Book 18, however, portrays a different situation, for this time Ammianus presents the Persian king Shapur as displaying *humanitas* during the siege of Nisibis:

Inventas tamen alias quoque virgines Christiano ritu cultui divino sacratas custodiri intactas et religioni servire solito more nullo vetante praecepit lenitudinem profecto in tempore simulans, ut omnes, quos antehac diritate crudelitateque terrebat, sponte sua metu remoto venirent exemplis recentibus docti humanitate eum et moribus iam placidis magnitudinem temperasse fortunae. (18.10.4)

From a linguistic perspective, *humanitas* is opposed here to *diritas* (frightfulness) and *crudelitas* (cruelty). *Diritas* appears eleven times in Ammianus, but is generally a rare occurrence in Latin literature. This explains why we have no instance of *humanitas* being paired with that term. In contrast, *crudelitas* is far more common, and also appears elsewhere in opposition to *humanitas*. At *Phil.* 11.8, for instance, Cicero says of Dolabella that *tam fuit immemor humanitatis [...] ut suam insatiabilem crudelitatem exercuerit non solum in vivo, sed etiam in mortuo*. And at *Verr.* 2.5.115, speaking of the downsides of Roman domination over Sicily, the same Cicero employs the opposites of *humanitas* – *inhumanitas* and *crudelitas* – in a synonymous doublet construction: *indigne ferunt [scil. the Sicilians] illam clementiam mansuetudinemque nostri imperi in tantam crudelitatem inhumanitatemque esse conversam*.

Yet the most interesting aspect of *humanitas* in this passage is that, alongside the instance of 30.8.4 discussed above, it brings into play the status of the Persians: worst of the barbarians or forefathers of the Graeco-Roman cultural tradition? Scholarship is divided on this question, and the analysis of these two passages cannot hope to solve the problem once and for all.⁵⁵⁷ All it can do is suggest a new point of view from which to

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. Drijvers (1999), 176: “For the Romans Parthia was an *alter orbis*. This other world represented everything which was not Roman [...] This barbarian is portrayed as the negative embodiment of Graeco-Roman values and ideals, where social life fails to comply with the norms of Graeco-Roman society”, and the opposite opinion of Matthews (1989), 140, who commented upon Julian’s Persian campaign by saying that this “was a journey to the origins of civilisation itself, to a land of ancient culture fully equal in material resources and complexity of social organisation to the Classical Near East of Ammianus’ birth and upbringing. [...] For Ammianus, Mesopotamia was in a sense the natural extension of the Classical world”. It is perhaps worth specifying that Parthia and Persia are often (mis)used as synonyms, as made clear by Drijvers (1999), 177: “One aspect of Rome’s ideology of Parthia is that no distinction is made between

address this issue, the diachronic perspective. The two Persian kings to whom Ammianus attributes *humanitas* belong in fact to two different epochs: to the recent and inglorious past Shapur, a ‘suitable’ rival of Constantius; to the idealised remote past Artaxerxes. This difference is reflected in their opposite level of *humanitas*: while at 18.10.4 Shapur’s *humanitas* is only feigned, as is clear from the phrase *lenitudinem ... simulans*, at 30.8.4 Artaxerxes is even regarded as an *exemplum* of *humanitas*. Regarding the latter, by saying that this Artaxerxes was surnamed ‘long-handed’ (*Macrochir*), Ammianus makes it clear that he is referring to Artaxerxes I, the fifth king of Persia, who reigned from 465 BCE to 424 BCE. Despite the doubts raised by de Romilly, Plutarch records at the very opening of the *Life* of Artaxerxes’ grandson, Artaxerxes II ‘Mindful’, that he was famous in antiquity for his mildness of character and clemency: Ὁ μὲν πρῶτος Ἀρτοξέρξης, τῶν ἐν Πέρσiais βασιλέων πραότητι καὶ μεγαλοψυχία πρωτεύσας, Μακρόχειρ ἐπεκαλεῖτο, τὴν δεξιὰν μείζονα τῆς ἐτέρας ἔχων, Ξέρξου δ’ ἦν υἱός (1.1).⁵⁵⁸ The term φιλανθρωπία does not appear in this passage, but, alongside it and ἐπιείκεια, πραότης is one of the aptest Greek words to denote the idea of mildness (‘douceur’), as de Romilly has shown.⁵⁵⁹ Moreover, in the case of Plutarch, πραότης often appears together with φιλανθρωπία.⁵⁶⁰ Plutarch’s attestation therefore confirms the paradigmatic character of Artaxerxes I’s behaviour, and explains why Ammianus also attributed to a Persian king a value which is usually the prerogative of Romans or, at most, of Greeks. The same does not hold for the almost contemporary Shapur, although his simulated *humanitas* ultimately puts him on the same level as his Roman counterpart(s). In other words, when it comes to *humanitas* Ammianus fixes chronological rather than ethnic boundaries. Here as elsewhere in Ammianus, the so-called practice of the *laudatio temporis acti* shines through, and, aside from very few exceptions, statesmen and rulers, whether they are Roman or not, can hardly equal the (moral) values of their ancestors. In this respect, the two Roman digressions are particularly significant, as we will see shortly.

Both the cases of Shapur and Valens also spotlight Ammianus’ treatment of the dangers in feigning *humanitas*. In this respect, a case in point is 29.6.5: some time during

Medes, Persians, Parthians and other orientals”. As a result, modern scholars often pick the name they prefer, without paying too much attention to the differences, which are particularly relevant in chronological terms.

⁵⁵⁸ De Romilly (2011²), 286 n. 2.

⁵⁵⁹ De Romilly (2011²), 37 and *passim*.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. de Romilly (2011²), 278 and n. 2.

his reign, Valentinian decided to fortify the Danubian borders in the land of the Quadi, who quite expectedly did not appreciate this policy. Works proceeded slowly at first, but things changed when Marcellianus was put in command in that area. In particular, to crush any forms of opposition, Marcellianus traitorously killed the Quadi's king Gabinius, "the only savage who is credited with moderation" in Ammianus' work.⁵⁶¹

Denique Gabinium regem, ne quid novaretur, modeste poscentem, ut assensurus humanitate simulata cum aliis ad convivium corrogavit, quem digredientem post epulas hospitalis officii sanctitate nefarie violata trucidari securum effecit.

Displaying all his contempt for Marcellianus' behaviour, Ammianus openly speaks of *simulata humanitate*, an expression which cannot be found elsewhere in previous Latin literature. Ammianus evidently represents deceit as a vice that is traditionally attributed to foreigners, but that Roman commanders should always avoid. The teaching of Livy's *Ab Urbe condita* is echoed here. Yet the situation is even worse, for not only does Marcellianus resort to deceit, but he even violates a kind of sacred law of the ancient world, that of hospitality.⁵⁶² This latter ideal is clearly linked to *humanitas* in the passage under investigation, but, as usual, the polysemy of *humanitas* transcends the mere meaning of *hospitalitas*. In fact, if we look at the previous paragraph (29.6.4), we find that Marcellianus' nature is characterised by haughtiness through the expression *intempestive turgens*, which evokes the same idea as *superbia*: as we have seen in Seneca and Pliny the Younger, *superbia* can be used, together with the rare *inhumanitas*, to denote the opposite of *humanitas*.⁵⁶³ Accordingly, in simulating *humanitas* Marcellianus is not only displaying his faked sense of hospitality, but he is also endeavouring to hide his arrogant, haughty nature.

The same idea of feigned *humanitas* is expressed through the expression *species humanitatis*, which we have already encountered in Gellius' conceptualisation of *humanitas*.⁵⁶⁴ I remarked on that occasion that this phrase is rare in Latin literature, but Ammianus is the exception to the rule, for two out of seventeen occurrences of *humanitas* in his work are preceded by *species*. The first instance is at 25.8.1. About the first half of Book 25 tells of Julian's last days of life during the Persian campaign, but from 25.5

⁵⁶¹ Seager (1986), 68.

⁵⁶² On hospitality as a cornerstone of (Roman) civilisation cf. above, pp. 85-86 and 121.

⁵⁶³ Cf. above, pp. 52-54.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. above, pp. 121-122.

onwards the new emperor Jovian becomes the unfortunate protagonist of the events. As this war is turning into a nightmare for the Romans, Jovian, fearing that he might be deposed, accepts peace terms that Ammianus regards as dishonourable.⁵⁶⁵ As well as saying *Quibus exitiale aliud accessit et impium* (25.7.12), the historian begins section 25.8 by speaking of *pax specie humanitatis indulta*, thereby echoing the content of the speech (indirectly referred by Ammianus) of the Persian ambassadors at 25.7.6: *Condiciones autem ferebant difficiles et perplexas fingentes humanorum respectu reliquias exercitus redire sinere clementissimum regem, si, quae iubet, impleverit cum primatibus Caesar*. The idea of simulation is expressed by *specie* at 25.8.1 and by *fingentes* at 25.7.6, whereas *humanitatis* recalls *humanorum respectu*. But 25.7.6 also makes a connection between *humanorum respectu* and the idea of clemency (*clementissimum regem*). In this context, the expression *specie humanitatis* is likely to express the same idea of simulated clemency. After all, Ammianus speaks of *pax indulta*, where the participle of *indulgeo* ('to grant as a favour, concede', but also 'to be lenient') implies superiority on the part of those who concede peace, and we know that *clementia* is more apt a noun than *humanitas* to evoke a unilateral, downward relationship between people of higher and people of lower rank or condition. From a more rhetorical standpoint then, although Ammianus concedes that this further case of feigned *humanitas* is not literally associated with Jovian, we once again get the sense that in his view *humanitas*, especially when it is linked to emperors, has too many obscure sides for it to be ascribed to a model emperor like Julian.

The second instance of *species humanitatis* can be found towards the epilogue of the *Res Gestae*, at 31.5.7. We are on the threshold of the battle of Hadrianople, and the Thuringii, driven by hunger and lack of means, and mistreated by the Romans, rebel against Valens. The scenario is as follows: while the Goth kings Alavivus and Fritigernus are banqueting together with some Roman officials at Marcianopolis (Thracia), some barbarians try to enter the city in search of food, but are warded off. A bloody riot ensues, leading the Roman Lupicinus to slaughter the guards who are awaiting Alavivus and Fritigernus. As the news reaches the Goths who are by then besieging the city, the situation risks taking a turn for the worse, but Fritigernus comes up with a cunning idea:

⁵⁶⁵ For the sake of clarity, this is the same peace agreement I have already mentioned when analysing Valens' *humanitas* towards barbarians at 27.12.9.

Vtique erat Fritigernus expediti consilii, veritus, ne teneretur obsidis vice cum ceteris, exclamavit graviore pugnandum exitio, ni ipse ad leniendum vulgus sineretur exire cum sociis, quod arbitratum humanitatis specie ductores suos occisos in tumultum exarsit. Hocque impetrato egressi omnes exceptique cum plausu et gaudiis ascensis equis volarunt moturi incitamenta diversa bellorum.

The connotations of this occurrence of *species humanitatis* are significantly different from the previous case: here the ideas of courtesy and hospitality seem to prevail over the notion of clemency. However, what is interesting about this passage is that it represents another Ammianean instance of feigned or missed *humanitas* in the relationship between Romans and barbarians. This is actually only a potential instance of simulation on the Romans' part: indeed, it rather reveals Fritigernus' than the Romans' predisposition to treachery. Ammianus' narration nowhere suggests that the Romans had invited the Goth kings to the banquet with the intent of ambushing them, nor do we know if an ambush would have actually taken place had Fritigernus not come up with his idea. In any case, there is no denying that, on the surface at least, this passage also highlights the extent to which Ammianus liked to allude to the infidelity of some Roman officials or emperors.

To recap, we have so far seen how Ammianus uses the word *humanitas*, both in its educational and above all philanthropic dimensions, in relation to emperors or other powerful men. We have also noticed that Ammianus often uses it when he describes the relationship between Romans and non-Romans, one of the clearest contexts in which it emerges that *humanitas* can be feigned.

Three no less interesting fields in which *humanitas* appears are yet to be investigated: *humanitas* in the two excursuses on Rome, *humanitas* with regard to women, and *humanitas* and astrologers. To some degree, in all these cases Ammianus continues to articulate the opposition between civilisation and barbarism. Let me procede in order.

Towards the conclusion of his study, Seager claims:

“If any one element deserves to be singled out as fundamental to Ammianus's perception of men and events, it is perhaps the antithesis between civilization and barbarism. [...] Ammianus saw barbarism in all its manifestations, both external and internal, as the ultimate threat to the Roman way of life”.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ Seager (1986), 131. Cf. also Seager (1986, 68).

We might add that Ammianus' use of *humanitas* helps him articulate the notion that the lack of civilisation is key to understanding Roman society, for the numerous cases we have already observed ultimately show that, when they lack *humanitas*, the Romans are on the same – low – level as barbarians. In this respect, despite the completely different socio-cultural context, the parallel with Cicero's understanding and political use of *humanitas* is striking.⁵⁶⁷ Ammianus' two 'Roman digressions', and his use of *humanitas* therein, represent the litmus test: if even Rome is no longer the 'abode of all virtues' (*virtutum omnium domicilium*) and her aristocracy no longer lives up to their duties, then it is unsurprising that the empire as a whole is degenerating. Compare 14.6.21:

Illud autem non dubitatur, quod cum esset aliquando virtutum omnium domicilium Roma ingenuos advenas plerique nobilium ut Homerici bacarum suavitate Lotophagi humanitatis multiformibus officiis retentabant.

When reading a passage like this, it is easy for scholars to claim that Ammianus betrays his rancour towards Rome here, for he would be among the foreigners who were expelled during the famine of 383 or 384 CE mentioned at 14.6.19. Yet this, together with the notion that Ammianus would be treated badly by the citizens of the *Urbs* during his stay there, is pure speculation.⁵⁶⁸ What is certain from this and other passages, however, is that Ammianus believes Rome to have been the guiding light for the entire ancient world as long as virtues were cultivated: *humanitas* must have played a key role among or in addition to these virtues. In this sense, it is hard to tell exactly what Ammianus means by the expression *humanitatis multiformibus officiis*. We saw in the Suetonius section that the twinning of *humanitas* and *officium* is rather common, and in that very passage *iura omnia offici humanitatisque* stands for 'all the laws of obligation and humanity'. Yet here, significantly, *humanitas* is not on the same level as *officia*, but depends on it. An analogous construction can be found in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*:

⁵⁶⁷ On Cicero's political use of *humanitas* cf. above, p. 30.

⁵⁶⁸ On the extent of the autobiographical character of Ammianus' attitude towards Rome cf. the sceptical Kelly (2008), 132-135 and 141, who denies that the historian was among those who had been expelled. Also Momigliano (1974), 1396, while remarking that the two Roman excursuses presume Ammianus' good knowledge of Rome, is hesitant to admit his expulsion from the city. Further support to this theory is brought by Rees (1999), who shows the affinities between Ammianus' Roman digressions and Juvenal's *Satires*. Cf. also Den Hengst (2007), 167-177 and Matacotta (2010), 303-304. By contrast, Thompson (1947), 14, Matthews (1989), 13 and Sogno (2006), 33 are more inclined to admit Ammianus' personal involvement in the events and his expulsion from the City.

Frequentabunt vero eius [scil. oratoris] domum optimi iuvenes more veterum et vere dicendi viam velut ex oraculo petent. Hos ille formabit quasi eloquentiae parens, et ut vetus gubernator litora et portus et quae tempestatum signa, quid secundis flatibus quid adversis ratio poscat docebit, non humanitatis solum communi ductus officio, sed amore quodam operis: nemo enim minui velit id in quo maximus fuit. Quid porro est honestius quam docere quod optime scias? (12.11.5-6)

In Ammianus' passage *humanitas* is probably differently nuanced, because the hospitable aspect largely prevails over the educational one which shines through Quintilian's text. Yet in both these cases the philanthropic component is there, and I would suggest that *officium humanitatis* is comparable to *ius humanitatis*, in that they both evoke the idea that *humanitas* is an obligation towards fellow human beings. In Ammianus, moreover, the Homeric similitude seems to suggest that in Rome's early history *humanitas* used to result in something particularly pleasant and appealing (cf. *bacarum suavitate*), but also multifarious (*multiformibus officiis*). In other words, the versatility of the term *humanitas* would be reflected in the multiple ways it could be performed.

Moreover, as in other passages we have already encountered, within this context of hospitality *humanitas* serves to measure the level of civilisation of a given people, namely the Romans, the only one for which this ideal should be taken for granted.⁵⁶⁹ In addition, given Rome's duty (*officium*) to impose 'civilisation' on the world, it goes without saying that the most appropriate situation in which to display *humanitas* is towards non-Romans, as in this case. Yet Ammianus later laments that this noble Roman custom belongs to the past: *Nunc vero inanes flatus quorundam vile esse, quidquid extra urbis pomerium nascitur, aestimant praeter orbos et caelibes nec credi potest, qua obsequiorum diversitate coluntur homines sine liberis Romae* (14.6.22). The pessimistic message aside, it is also worth noting here that *flatus* recalls the idea of haughtiness traditionally opposed to *humanitas*.⁵⁷⁰

In the second Roman digression (Book 28), Ammianus uses the term *humanitas* to stigmatise the way in which the Roman notion of civilisation is understood by the inhabitants of Rome. Here Ammianus appears to argue – rather polemically – that their understanding of culture is determined by trivial matters such as the baths that they frequent, the kind of water they use or the house in which they live:

⁵⁶⁹ On *humanitas* and civilisation cf. above, pp. 30, 48, 61-65, 80-85.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. also above in this section, p. 169.

Ex his quidam, cum salutari pectoribus oppositis coeperunt, osculanda capita in modum taurorum minacium obliquantes adulatoribus offerunt genua savianda vel manus id illis sufficere ad beate vivendum existimantes et abundare omni cultu humanitatis peregrinum putantes, cuius forte etiam gratia sunt obligati, interrogatum, quibus thermis utatur aut aquis aut ad quam successerit domum. (28.4.10)

In view of this passage, it appears clear that Ammianus' Rome is again (or still?) threatened by the risks of 'Roman civilisation' under the slogan of *humanitas*, as denounced by Tacitus in *Agricola* 21.⁵⁷¹ In particular, the baths – as a breeding ground for corruption and vice – are the common denominator between the two texts.⁵⁷² But we have gone one step further here, because Ammianus implies that baths have now become a diagnostic factor in establishing who possesses or does not possess *humanitas*.⁵⁷³ Or, to put it another way, baths represent an element of inclusion or exclusion within the city of Rome's community, and, by extension, of the very idea of Romanness. Whether you are a Roman or not, Ammianus seems to imply, what counts is that you can talk at length about baths and thermal waters, and Rome's nobility will welcome you into their elitist community. Given the general context of the passage and the expression *cultu humanitatis*, Ammianus is clearly thinking of *humanitas* in the broader terms of civilisation rather than as mere kindness. We have already noticed the same connection between *cultus* and *humanitas* in the case of Valens' attitude towards the Armenian Pap.⁵⁷⁴ While here the link is even closer because of the dependence of the genitive *humanitatis* on *cultus*, it is clear that in both cases *humanitas* takes on a strong educational and cultural component. The passage also hints again at the idea of feigned *humanitas*, implying that foreigners can simulate *humanitas* by simply showing off their knowledge of the refinements of baths. It also implies that the notion of *humanitas* is now founded upon trivial non-values, and reiterates the concept that when they lack or feign *humanitas*, Romans and non-Romans, whether they are barbarians or simple foreigners, are similarly uncultured. As Seager has emphasised, when it comes to possessing or not possessing virtues, there is one major difference between Romans and non-Romans: the Romans

⁵⁷¹ On Tacitus' *Agr.* 21 cf. above, pp. 77-85.

⁵⁷² Cf. Tac. *Agr.* 21: *paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta vitiorum, porticus et balinea et conviviorum elegantiam*. On this passage cf. above, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁷³ A similar idea can be found with reference to Neronian Rome in Seneca's *Epist.* 86, but without the term *humanitas* appearing there: cf. Rimell (2013).

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. above, pp. 159-160.

alone are reprimanded by Ammianus for lacking these values.⁵⁷⁵ This is also the case in Ammianus' use of *humanitas*: the Romans should be culturally, historically, even naturally perhaps, bound up with this ideal. Valentinian's obituary, as we have seen, is a case in point.⁵⁷⁶

Judging from the two excursuses on Rome and from Ammianus' use of *humanitas* within them, Rome therefore emerges as the mirror of an empire in which fundamental values (education, culture, hospitality, clemency, all of which can also fall under the category of *humanitas*) are about to collapse, and this decline in turn explains the political troubles of the Empire. In other words, the decline of *humanitas* is used here to explain why the Roman empire is undergoing a decline which culminates in the defeat of Hadrianople. Some exceptions to this value crisis clearly existed, such as the case of the prefect of the city of Rome Olybrius, another protagonist of the second Roman digression. Thanks to this prefect, the opening of this section bodes well, although the digression soon turns into a list of the vices which affected Rome's nobility and plebs. Ammianus says of him:

Diu multumque a negotiis discussus urbanis adigente cumulo foris gestorum ad ea strictim exsequenda regrediar exorsus ab Olybrii praefectura tranquilla nimis et leni, qui numquam ab humanitatis statu deiectus sollicitus erat et anxius, ne quid usquam factum eius asperum inveniretur aut dictum, calumniarum acerrimus insectator, fisci lucra, unde poterat, circumcidens, iustorum iniustorumque distinctor et arbiter plenus in subiectos admodum temperatus. (28.4.1)

Olybrius' prefecture (369-370 CE) is regarded as extremely tranquil (*ab ... praefectura tranquilla nimis et leni*) for the very reason that he never abandoned the path of *humanitas*. *Humanitas* is conceived here as human benevolence towards others, mainly subordinates. But it is also interesting that in this case *humanitas* is treated as a permanent condition (*statu*) of its possessor, a condition which quite exceptionally was neither affected by the climate of moral decadence nor by Olybrius' own vices. In particular, Olybrius had one major vice – he devoted all his private life to luxury – but this did not have any repercussions on public life (cf. 28.4.3).⁵⁷⁷ Unfortunately for Rome, the same

⁵⁷⁵ Seager (1986), 21 and 68.

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. above, pp. 161-163.

⁵⁷⁷ More generally on the virtues and vices of the prefects of Rome cf. Drexler (1974), 13-18.

cannot be said of his successor Ampelius, whose behaviour and policy induce Ammianus to claim:

Quae probra aliaque his maiora dissimulatione iugi neglecta ita effrenatius exarserunt, ut nec Epimenides ille Cretensis, si fabularum ritu ab inferis excitatus redisset ad nostra, solus purgare sufficeret Romam; tanta plerosque labes insanabilium flagitiorum oppressit.
(28.4.5)

With these biting comments on the moral condition of Roman society, we can conclude our brief survey on *humanitas* in Ammianus' digressions on Rome, and focus our attention on the extant opening of the *Res Gestae*, Book 14.1. More specifically, I would like to explore one of the episodes of what Wieber-Scariot aptly calls the 'Gallus-Constantina-Tragödie', referring to Ammianus' presentation of Constantina as an antiheroine in the narration of a story that recalls classical tragedies.⁵⁷⁸ For Ammianus, the wife of the Caesar Constantius Gallus, Constantina, was the antimodel of the Roman *matrona*, as we see from the very beginning of Book 14, where Ammianus first tells of Gallus' cruelty, and then adds:⁵⁷⁹

Cuius [scil. Galli] acerbitati uxor grave accesserat incentivum germanitate Augusti turgida supra modum, quam Hanniballiano regi fratris filio antehac Constantinus iunxerat pater, Megaera quaedam mortalis, inflammatrix saevientis assidua, humani cruoris avida nihil mitius quam maritus. (14.1.2)

Among the crimes they are accused of, the indiscriminate condemnation of citizens takes pride of place. Under their domination even whistleblowers were superfluous: the Caesar and his wife were not concerned with keeping up appearances, and many people were put to death in total non-compliance with human and divine laws (14.1.4-5). They wanted to be aware of everything happening and went so far as to send out malicious men to collect intelligence in every corner of Antioch (14.1.6). As Ammianus makes it clear, Constantina's role in all this was decisive:

Adolescebat autem obstinatum propositum erga haec et similia multa scrutandi stimulos admovente regina, quae abrupte mariti fortunas trudebat in exitium praeceps, cum eum

⁵⁷⁸ Wieber-Scariot (1999), 76 and *passim*.

⁵⁷⁹ For an in-depth study of Constantina's negative role in the *Res Gestae* cf. Wieber-Scariot (1999), 74-195. On her and his husband's negative portraits in Ammianus cf. also Barnes (1998), 120-121 and 129-132.

potius lenitate feminea ad veritatis humanitatisque viam reducere utilia suadendo deberet.

(14.1.8)

Instead of bringing her husband back to the path of truth and *humanitas* thanks to her presumed womanly mildness, Constantina even encouraged him in his faults. What is interesting about this passage is the unique triangular relationship between *lenitas*, *humanitas* and *veritas*. Despite the potential connections of their meanings, *lenitas* (‘mildness, gentleness, clemency’) and *humanitas* rarely appear together, although they do in Ciceronian texts.⁵⁸⁰ Their relation to *veritas* is less clear, probably because the very meaning of *veritas* in this context is ambiguous: we do not know whether Ammianus uses *veritas* to allude to the fact that Gallus should respect the truthfulness of the events instead of inventing charges and condemning at will, or if he uses *veritas* to evoke the ‘adherence to standards of honesty, uprightness, sincerity’ that should characterise a good ruler.⁵⁸¹ Since *veritas* ought to be a consequence of *lenitas*, the second option is probably preferable, although the context also allows for the first possibility. The noun *veritas* in fact, like *humanitas*, can have multiple meanings, a polysemy which opens up two possible interpretations. Conversely, *humanitas* appears to be less polysemic than in most other situations, and the deciding factor is again the presence of *lenitas*, which clearly involves ethics, that is, a philanthropic feeling, rather than education. More generally, it must be emphasised that Constantina’s portrait throughout the *Res Gestae* and at 14.1.8 in particular is not to be seen as a sign of Ammianus’ misogyny. On the contrary, the historian blames Constantina for her lack of *lenitas*, a virtue that women usually possess (*feminea*), in the same way as he blames those powerful, Roman men who do not possess *humanitas* and other virtues. Moreover, if later on in his oeuvre the laudatory portrait of the only other woman to be described at length, Constantius’ second wife Eusebia, counterbalances the situation, Ammianus had already reminded the reader (while speaking of Constantina) that virtuous empresses had existed and had mitigated the crimes of their husbands: *cum eum potius lenitate feminea ad veritatis humanitatisque viam reducere utilia suadendo deberet, ut in Gordianorum actibus factitasse Maximini truculenti illius imperatoris rettulimus coniugem* (14.1.8).⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. *De orat.* 2.212 (with regard to the tone of orations) and *Fam.* 13.1.4. But cf. above in this section the case of Artaxerses, where *lenitas* can be seen as a sort of halfway point between *humanitas* and *temperantia*.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. *OLD* s.v. *veritas*.

⁵⁸² On the positive role of Eusebia in Ammianus’ *Res Gestae* cf. Wieber-Scariot (1999), 197-284.

Finally, let us look at *humanitas* in regard to astrologers (with, in the background, once again the emperor Valens). The protagonist is actually only one astrologer (*mathematicus*), a certain Heliodorus. What is striking about this figure is the fact that the royal court and Ammianus display opposite attitudes towards him: while Valens and his courtiers love him, Ammianus repeatedly expresses his contempt.⁵⁸³ His main argument is that Heliodorus' official role at court was to predict the future, but in practice this turned into inventing accusations against whomever the emperor disliked. The question is, what benefits did he gain from such a behaviour? Ammianus is clear:

Inter fragores tot ruinarum Heliodorus, tartareus ille malorum omnium cum Palladio fabricator, mathematicus, ut memorat vulgus, colloquiis ex aula regia praepigneratus abstrusis iam funebres aculeos exsertabat omni humanitatis invitamento ad prodenda, quae sciret vel fingeret, laccessitus. Nam et sollicitius cibo mundissimo fovebatur et ad largiendum pelicibus merebat aes collaticium grave. (29.2.6-7)

Omni humanitatis invitamento: all the seductions of *humanitas* which the emperor could offer him induced Heliodorus to play his dirty role. But what does *humanitas* mean in this context? Brandt is rather oblique in this respect, and generally alludes to *Gastfreundlichkeit*, hospitality.⁵⁸⁴ This idea is clearly implied, but the explicit reference to refined food (*cibo mundissimo*) suggests that the interpretation can be pushed a little further. Although the association of *humanitas* and *invitamentum* does not occur elsewhere, a passage in Petronius' *Satyrica* has something close to it:

non recessit tamen miles, sed eadem exhortatione temptavit dare mulierculae cibum, donec ancilla vini [certum ab eo] odore corrupta primum ipsa porrexit ad humanitatem invitantis victam manum, deinde refecta potione et cibo expugnare dominae pertinaciam coepit et "quid proderit" inquit "hoc tibi, si soluta inedia fueris, si te vivam sepelieris, si antequam fata poscant, indemnatum spiritum effuderis?" (Sat. 111.10-11)

The story of the widow of Ephesus is very well-known and does not need recalling in detail. What interests us here is the reaction of the widow's handmaid to the soldier's offer of wine and food: as with the case of Heliodorus, here too there is a tight relation between food, *humanitas* and the idea of seducing through food (*invitantis*).⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ On Ammianus' bad attitude towards Heliodorus cf. e.g. 29.2.9: *Et quoniam longum est, quae cruciarius ille conflavit, hoc unum edisseram, quam praecipiti confidentia patriciatus columina ipsa pulsavit.*

⁵⁸⁴ Brandt (1999), 136 n. 88 and 137.

⁵⁸⁵ On this and the other instances of *humanitas* in Petronius cf. specifically Ebersbach (1993).

Commenting on this instance of *humanitas* at *Satyrica* 111, Høgel says: “This may be a rhetorical manner of expression, the *humanitas* being a sort of metonymy for the meal, but it is a usage that caught on”.⁵⁸⁶ Had the Danish scholar not neglected Ammianus’ view of *humanitas*, we would have thought that he had in mind the very passage of *Res Gestae* 29.2.6.

Before summarising and concluding this section on Ammianus, let us take a look at his use of the adjective *humanus*. Brandt has rightly remarked that Ammianus never employs the noun *humanitas* simply to mean ‘of man’, or to point to human nature or mankind.⁵⁸⁷ He also shows that when Ammianus wishes to express the notion ‘human’, he resorts to a noun followed by the adjective *humanus*, such as *cruor, mens* (six times), *mos, casus* (twice), *visio* (again twice), *modus* (twice), *prospectus, hostia* (twice), *vis, manus* (twice), *ratio, sensus, vultus, necessitas, sanguis* (four times), *res* (twice) and *corpus*. This indicates that, as in the case of other authors, there is no complete overlap between the noun *humanitas* and the adjective *humanus*. In addition, one may notice that the neuter is substantivised four times, and that there are no instances of superlatives. There are however two occurrences of the comparative, and in both cases it accompanies the noun *cultus*, which we have already seen to be at times linked to *humanitas* in Ammianus’ oeuvre.⁵⁸⁸ Of particular interest to our research into the concept of *humanitas* is the instance at 15.11.4:

Horum omnium [scil. Gallorum, Belgarum et Aquitanorum] apud veteres Belgae dicebantur esse fortissimi ea propter, quod ab humaniore cultu longe discreti nec adventiciis effeminati deliciis diu cum transrhenanis certavere Germanis.

That this passage echoes Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* 1.1, analysed above, is beyond question:⁵⁸⁹

Horum omnium [scil. Belgarum, Aquitanorum et Gallorum] fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt, minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent important,

⁵⁸⁶ Høgel (2015), 76.

⁵⁸⁷ Brandt (1999), 134 and n. 74.

⁵⁸⁸ On the relationship between *humanitas* and *cultus* in Ammianus cf. above, p. 159 and 173.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. above, pp. 36-37.

proximique sunt Germanis, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, quibuscum continenter bellum gerunt.

Whether Ammianus directly depends on Caesar or not is of little importance in this context, for an intermediate source would need to be very close to both texts from a terminological point of view.⁵⁹⁰ What counts are the elements these two texts share: they both acknowledge that the Belgae are the most courageous people in Gaul, and they agree on the reasons for this – the Belgae are sufficiently removed from civilisation and, therefore, from the risk of becoming effeminate. Moreover, they are (or used to be) in constant war with the bellicose Germans. Our focus is clearly on the relationship between the expressions *ab humaniore cultu* of Ammianus and *a cultu atque humanitate* of Caesar. First, given that Ammianus elsewhere employs the pair *humanitas-cultus*, his preference for the comparative of *humanus* followed by the noun *cultus* can hardly be regarded as a stylistic choice. Instead, it rather shows that all these expressions sounded almost synonymous to him. Secondly and crucially, Ammianus does not resort to the positive form of *humanus*, but to the comparative: as we have already seen in several authors, it looks as if the comparative (and the superlative) is far more suitable to convey the nuances of the noun *humanitas*, especially when its educational and cultural aspects are at stake.

The second instance of *humanior cultus* in the *Res Gestae* seems to confirm this. Book 24.1 describes Julian's entrance into Assyria and his burning of the city of Anathas. Despite this fact, the emperor showed his clemency towards its citizens, as Ammianus does not forget to remark:

et statim munimento omni incenso Pusaesus eius praefectus, dux Aegypti postea, honore tribunatus affectus est. Reliqui vero cum caritatibus suis et suppellectili humaniore cultu ad Syriacam civitatem Chalcida transmissi sunt. (24.1.8)

Unfortunately, we do not have other Latin sources for establishing comparisons. Nevertheless, some observations are in order. To begin with, it is evident that there is no second term of comparison after the comparative. Technically speaking, *humaniore* is therefore an absolute comparative. But what would its meaning be? To pick an example, the Loeb translation by Rolfe reads: 'they were treated kindly', thereby overcoming all problems. Nor is Selem's Italian translation better: 'ricevettero un trattamento corretto'. In my view, the main problem of both these translations does not lie in the fact that they do not render the comparative, but that they neglect the idea of culture and civilisation,

⁵⁹⁰ Barnes (1998), 98 for one stresses that Ammianus's dependence on Caesar is not necessarily direct.

and, as a consequence, of philanthropy carried by *humaniore*. In other words, what the text means is that the inhabitants of Anathas were treated in respect of the civic norms of their own and of the human community. Thus the main function of the comparative is to bring into play the ideal of *humanitas* rather than to express the intensity of a behaviour or feeling.

One more occurrence of the adjective *humanus* seems worth a look, that at 21.6.4. Speaking of Constantius' third marriage, Ammianus does not miss the opportunity to reiterate his admiration for the emperor's second wife, Eusebia.⁵⁹¹

Eodem tempore Faustinam nomine sortitus est coniugem amissa iam pridem Eusebia, cuius fratres erant Eusebius et Hypatius consulares, corporis morumque pulchritudine pluribus antistante et in culmine tam celso humana, cuius favore iustissimo exemptum periculis declaratumque Caesarem rettulimus Iulianum.

She is described as *humana* despite her lofty condition (*in culmine tam celso*), a contrast that might remind us of Pliny the Younger's portrait of Trajan in the *Panegyricus*.⁵⁹² After all, like *superbia*, *culmen* is also etymologically linked to the idea of a superior position or condition – it is sufficient to remark that the English 'hill' has its same root.⁵⁹³ Accordingly, like Trajan, Eusebia maintained her human and humane attitude even though, thanks to her royal, upper condition, she could have shown haughtiness on several occasions.

To recap. As far as *humanitas* is concerned, Ammianus represents both continuity and break with the tradition preceding him. There is continuity, because in terms of the nuances *humanitas* takes on within his oeuvre he does not ultimately differ from previous authors such as Eumenius, Gellius or Apuleius, and at times we find echoes of Ciceronian, Caesarian and even Petronian uses of the word. Ammianus appears to have assimilated the polysemy that *humanitas* had been enriching from the beginnings of its history in Republican Rome until his day: the Ciceronian educational component is there; the ethical idea of philanthropy, which also materialises in hospitality, is there; the nobler ideal of civilisation resulting from the two previous aspects is there as well. At times then, Ammianus' *humanitas* is even associated with the earthly notion of food.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. above, p. 176.

⁵⁹² Cf. above, pp. 52-54.

⁵⁹³ Cf. Ernout-Meillet (2001⁴) s.v. *collis*.

Yet Ammianus' *humanitas* also implies a break with the tradition, because he is the first historian writing in Latin to make relatively abundant use of this concept. This second aspect might be explained in different ways. To begin with, the socio-political context in which Ammianus wrote seems to have conferred great importance to the concept of *humanitas*, as the next section on Symmachus will reveal in greater detail. Moreover, in the centuries from Tacitus to Ammianus Latin changed significantly in many respects, not least in style, so that by the fourth century CE historians would hardly feel the need to distance themselves from Cicero and from rhetorical style and vocabulary in general. On the contrary, as Sabbah puts it: "Ammien a voulu être le Polybe, le Tacite et le Suétone de son temps, sans renoncer à en être aussi un parfait orateur" – the fact that Cicero was the model *par excellence* of the perfect orator is implicit in this statement.⁵⁹⁴ Moreover, as I emphasised in the introduction to this section, we must bear in mind that Latin was not Ammianus' mother tongue, and, if he had to look for a model to follow, no one more than Cicero better represented Latin prose.

Then come the questions of Ammianus' military profession and of his more or less direct role in the events he narrates. By this I mean to reiterate what scholarship has already shown, at least in broad terms: that is, his tendency to judge events from an ethical standpoint – and we have seen in the very many instances in which *humanitas* also implies philanthropic connotations that in his oeuvre this word almost always takes on ethical nuances. The main objects of his moral judgement are, as one would expect, powerful men and emperors in particular – which explains why *humanitas* is mostly linked to these figures. In Ammianus' work *humanitas* is regarded as a founding value of Roman society, and it must be for this very reason that the historian is very keen on denouncing every distortion or lack of it. Julian aside, almost all the other emperors mentioned by Ammianus distorted *humanitas*, and this fault becomes extremely serious when there is evidence that they were aware of the importance of this value and deliberately did not behave accordingly. This puts them on the same level as barbarians, and, to some degree, contributes to explaining Rome's gradual decadence, which, in Ammianus' narration, reached its nadir with the battle of Hadrianople.

⁵⁹⁴ Sabbah (1978), 598.

5.2. Defending Roman nobility: *humanitas* and networking in the work of Symmachus.

“But Symmachus’ last years must have been troubled by a suffering that he endured as a cross to bear silently, and that never shines through his correspondence. If it is true that his son-in-law Nicomachus Flavianus Jr. had to convert to the Christian faith in order to obtain his political rehabilitation after joining the regime of the usurper Eugenius, then Symmachus must have been tormented until the day of his death by the thought that his descendants would be educated in the new religion, and that his fight proved as futile as his life was useless”.

Dante Maticcotta

As I anticipated in the Introduction, it is fitting to conclude this study on *humanitas* in pagan Latin literature with Quintus Aurelius Symmachus for the following reasons. Maticcotta’s epigraph, cited above, recalls one of these reasons, namely Symmachus’ watershed role during the transition years between paganism and Christianity.⁵⁹⁵ To be sure, the Italian scholar probably overstated the case when presenting Symmachus as a fundamentalist pagan who opposed Christianity, since the tone of the very many letters which he wrote to pagans rather indicates the opposite.⁵⁹⁶ Yet our focus should be on Maticcotta’s emphasis on the idea that future generations would receive a Christian education. Despite showing respect for Christianity and despite having several Christian friends, Symmachus defended Roman traditional education and its value system. This clearly emerges from his struggle with Ambrose over the Altar of Victory (384 CE), which is perhaps the most famous of the last pagan attempts to resist the imposition of Christianity, and explains why he is one of the protagonists of Cameron’s *The Last Pagans of Rome*.⁵⁹⁷ Furthermore, Symmachus very often employed the traditional Roman concept of *humanitas* in his writings, and only Cicero makes more use of the term.

In view of these premises, it is no surprise that Cicero and Pliny the Younger are the classical authors to whom Symmachus is usually compared. Yet modern scholars have not sufficiently explored the links between their conceptions of *humanitas* and that of Symmachus, and have limited themselves to pointing out stylistic affinities, commonality

⁵⁹⁵ Maticcotta (2010), 377.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Cristo (1974), 43-51 and Sogno (2006), 50. Further bibliography in Klein (1971), 161 n. 1.

⁵⁹⁷ Cameron (2011).

of genres as well as vague similarities of thought.⁵⁹⁸ Two exceptions are the studies by Klein and Marcone.⁵⁹⁹ Klein devotes a short section to Symmachus' *Humanität* (67-76), but his study fails to provide an in-depth discussion of the concept, and is founded on a limited number of occurrences of the word. Similarly, Marcone recognises the importance of *humanitas* in the Theodosian age and its recurrent use in Symmachus' writings, but, given the nature of his work – a commentary on Book 4 of the Letters – he cannot investigate its nuances in detail.⁶⁰⁰ Accordingly, a coherent picture of Symmachus' own conceptualisation of the word *humanitas* remains a *desideratum*.

Symmachus uses the word *humanitas* 45 times in his writings, 3 times in the *Orationes*, 5 times in the *Relationes* and 37 times in the *Epistulae*. What is more, he uses this noun in an unprecedented – with the obvious exception of Cicero – variety of contexts.⁶⁰¹ This is not only due to Cicero's influence over his style and thought, but also to Symmachus' habit of using words that could take on a vast range of meanings (and, conversely, to his love for concepts which could be indicated by a variety of quasi-synonymous words).⁶⁰² As we see, the common denominator of all the occurrences of *humanitas* to be found in his work is the cultural and social background that each of these instances presupposes. This is not new, for we have already seen many times that *humanitas* often implies adherence to a set of norms or customs which are shared by a

⁵⁹⁸ Already his contemporaries compared Symmachus to Cicero and/or Pliny, especially on the grounds of his oratorical skills: cf. Macr. *Sat.* 5.1.7, Prud. *Contra Symm.* 1.633-634 with Klein (1971), 68, Cracco Ruggini (1986), 102, Maticotta (2010), 376 and Kelly (2013), 261-262. Moreover, also some modern scholars regard Cicero and Pliny as the epistolographic models of Symmachus: cf. Maticotta (2010), 247 and the relevant bibliography in Kelly (2013), 263 n. 4. By contrast, Kelly (2013), 263-269 spotlights the significant differences between Symmachus' and Pliny's letters, while admitting that there are more analogies between Symmachus' oeuvre and Pliny's *Panegyricus* (269-274). Other scholars stress Cicero's, Pliny's and Symmachus' common view of poetry: cf. Cracco Ruggini (1986), 114 and n. 54. On the similarities, not only of thought, between Symmachus and Cicero cf. Klein (1971), 59-60, 68, 103 and 106, Cameron (2011), 357. On analogies and differences between Symmachus and Pliny cf. Cameron (2011), 360-361 and 415, who concludes: "Tempting as it might seem to suppose that Symmachus saw himself as the Pliny of his age, the truth is that Pliny was more to the taste of Jerome and Ambrose" (416). Yet it is my contention that the present study on Symmachus' *humanitas* will reveal the profundity of the ideological relationship between Symmachus and Pliny.

⁵⁹⁹ Klein (1971) and Marcone (1987).

⁶⁰⁰ Marcone (1987), 26-28.

⁶⁰¹ On Cicero's *humanitas* cf. above, pp. 29-35.

⁶⁰² Cf. Maticotta (2010), 359 and 373-374.

more or less large collectivity as opposed to those who are excluded from it. Just to recall a couple of examples discussed at length in the course of this research, in Apuleius' *De magia*, *humanitas* is used in a judicial context to create an elitist bond between the judge, his predecessor and the accused Apuleius, which sets them apart from the uncultivated inhabitants of Sabratha;⁶⁰³ by contrast, we saw instances where Tacitus and Ammianus used *humanitas* to establish a distinction between Romans and Non-Romans, to paraphrase Veyne's famous article.⁶⁰⁴ What is new in Symmachus, however, is that *humanitas* seems to encapsulate the code of conduct of the senatorial order, without necessarily implying any outward-directed opposition. *Humanitas* is one of the means through which Symmachus aimed to remind his fellow senators of their social habits and duties, in the hope of preserving (or restoring) the features of a social class whose very survival was threatened by the continual changes to the socio-political structure of the Roman empire.⁶⁰⁵ As well as having other secondary aspects, in his view *humanitas* becomes therefore an incitement to write letters, to introduce and/or recommend people – two major means to keep social and political relationships alive;⁶⁰⁶ it is linked to other crucial values like *pietas*, *caritas*, *religio* and *hospitalitas*, and of course to the *παιδεία* which all noble men ought to possess; it has peculiar traits of concreteness, and can obviously be an imperial characteristic too. Probably this social, and consequently political, use of *humanitas* links Symmachus to Pliny the Younger and Cicero more than any other aspect.

I shall start by looking at the role which *humanitas* plays as a stimulus to exchange letters between friends. As will soon become clear, the boundary between this kind of letter, the so-called *salutatoria*, and letters of recommendation (*commendaticiae*), practically the only two categories of Symmachian letters, is sometimes blurred by *humanitas* itself, because this very concept encourages the extension of friendships, whereby friends are recommended to other friends.⁶⁰⁷ I will therefore investigate this

⁶⁰³ Cf. above, pp. 101-107.

⁶⁰⁴ Veyne (1993).

⁶⁰⁵ On the perilous status of the senate in Symmachus' days cf. Poglio (2007), xiii-xxxii and *passim*.

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Sogno (2006), 88: "Letter writing is also a fundamentally political activity", and Roda (1986), 184-188 and 201-202 who rightly observes that letters of recommendation end up benefitting not only the recommendee, but also the recommender. Cf. also Cracco Ruggini (1986), 109.

⁶⁰⁷ On the topics as well as for a classification of Symmachus' letters cf. Callu (2003), 24-25, Sogno (2006), 63. Matacotta (2010), 358 is emblematic: "L'argomento più trattato nelle lettere è costituito, appunto, dalle

bridging role of *humanitas* as well as those *commendaticiae* in which Symmachus leverages the *humanitas* argument to persuade his interlocutors to support his recommendees.⁶⁰⁸ I will then move on to those instances where *humanitas* is regarded as an imperial virtue and, by extension, as a value which characterises an entire age, as emerges from the expressions *humanitas saeculi / temporum*. These occurrences are to be found not only in the *Epistulae*, but also in the *Relationes* and *Orationes*. After focusing on these functional roles of *humanitas*, in the second and shorter part of this sub-chapter I will change tack and investigate some more isolated cases which help us to define better Symmachus' extremely multifaceted conception of *humanitas*.

From as many as five letters *humanitas* explicitly emerges as the main value by virtue of which letters should be written to maintain friendships. The short *Ep.* 7.98 is symptomatic, for it is entirely devoted to this issue:⁶⁰⁹

Iamdudum desiderabam litteras tuas: nunc inmodica animi gratulatione suscepi. Debita igitur reverentia et amore respondens adicio postulatum, ut in reliquum frequentare digneris munus optabile quod sponte tribuisti. Sed in hac postulatione non opus est conmorari. Neque enim petitio mea debet elicere quod tua promittit humanitas. Vale.

In expressing his delight at receiving a letter from Longinianus, who probably occupied the prestigious post of *comes privatarum largitionum* at that time, Symmachus takes the opportunity to urge his friend to send him more frequent letters in future.⁶¹⁰ In an unmistakably adulatory tone, he then closes the letter by adding that his exhortation is superfluous, because Longinianus' *humanitas* will undoubtedly make this happen.

The same applies to *Ep.* 2.88, which is addressed, like all the letters in Book 2, to Symmachus' dear friend and daughter's father-in-law Flavianus the Elder.⁶¹¹ Compared to *Ep.* 7.98, the slight difference is that this letter has some content beyond the mere

letter". Cf. also Matthews (1975), 7: "[I]n the great majority of cases, the letters are nothing but the mere performance of *amicitia*, its pure administration".

⁶⁰⁸ As Roda (1986), 177 observes, the *commendatio* is the most recurrent element in Symmachus' letters.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Matthews (1975), 7: "Symmachus only rarely admits spontaneity to his letters, and he often conveys no information at all".

⁶¹⁰ On Longinianus' career cf. *PLRE II* 686-687.

⁶¹¹ On Flavianus the Elder, his political role as well as on his relationship with Symmachus cf. Matakotta (2010), 226-240. Cf. also below, pp. 191-193, 199.

request of sending along more letters, that is, Symmachus congratulates Flavianus on a new prestigious appointment:⁶¹²

Et honore tui, quo nunc auctus es, et continuo in me amore delector. Volo igitur ut communia pignora curae mihi esse non dubites, quae magis merita tua quam scripta commendant. Supererat, ut adsiduum stili tui munus exposcerem; sed redundantis est operae bona spontanea postulare, ne meus stilus extorquere videatur quod tui animi spondet humanitas. Vale.

The logic of *Epp.* 7.98 and 2.88 is inverted in *Ep.* 3.65, which does not express a hope for the future, but already acknowledges the merits of Ricomeres, apparently a good friend of Symmachus' and one who held several prestigious military posts.⁶¹³ His *humanitas* has always prompted him to write to Symmachus, who in turns feels obliged to pay back *humanitas* in the same way:

Scio praestantem animum tuum salutis meae et reversionis indicia cupide, ut amicitia postulat, opperiri, et ideo expectationi tuae revector in patriam satisfeci, meque agere ex sententia atque esse memorem tuae circa nos humanitatis insinuo; simulque deprecor ut adfectionem quam mihi et praesenti dependere et absenti dignatus es polliceri, litterarum munere, quotiens usus tulerit, non graveris augere. Vale.

Along the same lines Symmachus writes to a certain Eusebius (probably):⁶¹⁴

Conpertum habeo quolibet honorum culmine animum tuum non solere mutari — quidquid enim bene meritis honestatis accedit, id solutum magis videtur esse quam praestitum —, et ideo mirari me ac stupere confiteor cur tanta virtute atque humanitate praeditus iampridem circa me munere litterarum [causis occupationis] abstineas. Quod ego etsi occupatione magis quam voluntate arbitrer accidisse, tamen orare non desino ut censuram tuam nostri memorem frequens sermo declaret. Vale. (Ep. 8.1)

Compared with the previous *Epp.* 7.98, 2.88 and 3.65, *Ep.* 8.1 looks like the other side of the same coin: despite possessing *humanitas* – and also *virtus!* – Eusebius seems to ignore

⁶¹² The date of this letter as well as the nature of the appointment it mentions are uncertain: for more details and bibliography cf. Cecconi (2002), 424-425.

⁶¹³ Cf. *PLRE I* 765-766.

⁶¹⁴ The name of the addressee of this letter is not in the manuscripts. Seeck (1883), CXCI dates the letter to 396 and, following in his footsteps, Callu (2003), 113 n.1 integrates <Eusebio?>, identifying him with *the vir illustris iudex praetorianus* of *Ep.* 6.12.2, possibly the same Eusebius who received *Ep.* 9.55 (cf. *PLRE I* 306-307 – Eusebius 32).

it, abstaining from sending letters to Symmachus, to the latter's surprise (*et ideo mirari me ac stupere confiteor*). Like Longinianus, Eusebius does not avoid Symmachus' exhortation to write more often, although he seems to be excused on account of his noble but time-consuming duties (*honorum culmine ... occupatione magis quam voluntate*).

The identity of Eusebius is unclear, although he was probably someone of a high social class. It is interesting to note, however, that in other instances the association of *virtus* with *humanitas* is made to refer to cultural and military values respectively, *virtus* preserving its original function of indicating the quality *par excellence* of the good soldier or general. This is certainly the case of Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis* we investigated in Chapter 4,⁶¹⁵ and in Symmachus we find another passage where the pairing of *virtus* and *humanitas* concerns a famous general.⁶¹⁶ Accordingly, one might speculate that Eusebius too was renowned for his military prowess, even if we do not have sufficient evidence to prove this. After all, the same expression *virtute et/atque humanitate* is also attested with a broader meaning since Caesar's and Cicero's day: it condenses the qualities of a well-educated, honest and noble man, who knows the social norms which regulate the world in which he lives.⁶¹⁷ Either way, there is little doubt that this occurrence of *humanitas* brings into play cultural aspects which transcend the mere sense of benevolence and rather evoke the idea of παιδεία-based *humanitas*. Further instances of *humanitas* with this meaning will be investigated in the second part of this chapter, but the next example might well fall into the same category.⁶¹⁸

In another similar context, Symmachus uses *humanitas* to excuse his close friend and excellent poet Ausonius at *Ep.* 1.18, especially if Callu is right in linking this letter with Ausonius' role of Praetorian prefect, either of Gaul (377 CE) or of Gaul, Italy and Africa (378-379 CE):⁶¹⁹

Ego etsi continuis litteris honorem tuum celebrare possem, non satis mihi viderer, proquam res postulat, fungi debitum meum: tantum abest ut operam tibi adsiduitatis exproberem. Sed ut hoc meae verecundiae competit, item tuae humanitatis est studium nostrum pari gratia sustinere. Animadvertite quo tendat summa verborum meorum: iamdudum nihil tribuis quod legamus. Totum me, inquires, emancipavit sibi cura praetorii. Verum est: potiris merito

⁶¹⁵ Cf. above, pp. 146-147.

⁶¹⁶ On the second Symmachian occurrence of the expression *virtute et humanitate* cf. below, p. 213.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Caes. *BG* 1.47.4, Cic. *Planc.* 58, *Lig.* 12, *De orat.* 3.1, *Fam.* 14.1.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. below, pp. 211-213.

⁶¹⁹ Callu (2003), 83 n. 1. On this letter and its dating cf. also Salzman (2011), 53-54.

summa iudicia, sed maximas ingenii tui vires fortuna magna non onerat. Proinde etiam his rebus adtende, quae ita occupatis nihil molestiae adferunt, ut ipsas molestias plerumque solentur. Vale.

Given the identity of the recipient, Symmachus might well be referring here not to letters, but to literary works: the practice of sending recently composed literary pieces to good friends for them to read and comment upon was well-established by that time.⁶²⁰ This would explain why Symmachus is referring to Ausonius' *maximas ingenii tui vires*, an expression that would be off if it only referred to letter writing. In this case, *humanitas* would no longer refer to a vague feeling of benevolence, but to the love of literature Symmachus and Ausonius shared. After all, in the wake of his models, which included Cicero and Pliny the Younger, at times Symmachus too seems to attribute educational, literary and cultural nuances to *humanitas*, as we will see in greater detail below.

If we return to *humanitas* as a stimulus to exchange letters, we must acknowledge that in this respect Symmachus cannot be accused of inconsistency. Judging from the short *Ep.* 7.84, he practices what he preaches:

Primam mihi scribendi causam religio fecit, ut amicitia nostra litteris excolatur; secundam suggessit humanitas, ut viro optimo Thalasso familiari meo tua concilietur adfectio. Superest ut et mihi sermonis tui vicissitudo respondeat et commendato ex sententia procedat optatum. Vale. (Ep. 7.84)

The addressee is yet again an important statesman, Messalla Avienus, Praetorian prefect of Italy and Africa in 399-400 and one of the protagonists of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, to whom Symmachus sent a few letters (now in Book 7).⁶²¹ However, this time Symmachus regards *religio* as the first impulse (*primam ... causam*) which induces him to exchange letters with Messalla; *humanitas* comes second (*secundam*). It is interesting that here Symmachus clearly distinguishes the different aims of *religio* and *humanitas*: thanks to the former, he is led to cultivate his friendship with Messalla, whereas the latter invites him to extend the friendship to a third person. This clearly suggests that *humanitas* has also to do with recommendation, but I shall look at this aspect in greater detail later. For the moment, let me dwell a little longer on the relationship between *religio* and *humanitas*, an association / opposition which we have not yet encountered.

⁶²⁰ Cf. the example of Pliny's letters: above, pp. 63-66.

⁶²¹ Cf. *PLRE II* 760-761 – Messalla Avienus 3 and Callu (2003), 164.

As Roda rightly observes, *religio* is one of Symmachus' most employed words to indicate the mutual duties of friendship, especially with regard to the exchange of letters.⁶²² Yet its meaning probably merits closer inspection given the problematic and discussed etymology of *religio*, and that Symmachus himself also used this word with other meanings.⁶²³ In *De natura deorum* 2.71-72, Cicero makes a clear distinction between *religio* and *superstitio*: *superstitiosi* are those who spend their days praying and making sacrifices in order for their sons to outlive them, while *religiosi* refer to those who diligently reconsider and re-read (Latin *re-lego*), as it were, everything related to the cult of the gods.⁶²⁴ It follows that *superstitio* is negative while *religio* is positively connoted, and – more importantly for the purpose of the present study – that Cicero connects *religio* to the verb *relego*. This is quite different from what we see in Lactantius and Servius, who, in the wake of Lucretius, make *religio* derive from *religo* (to bind fast), as though religion were literally that which binds people to god(s).⁶²⁵ In the case of *Ep.* 7.84, both the idea of creating a bond and the notion of continuing to re-read or revise (a relationship) are present in Symmachus, although *religio* is probably used in a broader, less technical context. To be sure, what *religio* confers to friendship is an aura of sacredness, which Symmachus could already find in Cicero's *De inventione* 2.168:

amicitiarum autem ratio, quoniam partim sunt religionibus iunctae, partim non sunt, et quia partim veteres sunt, partim novae, partim ab illorum, partim ab nostro beneficio profectae, partim utiliores, partim minus utiles, ex causarum dignitatibus, ex temporum opportunitatibus, ex officiis, ex religionibus, ex vetustatibus habebitur.

Cicero does not expand on this topic – that is not the aim of a rhetorical treatise like *De inventione* after all – but this passage is sufficient for us to verify that he considered that

⁶²² Roda (1981), 199.

⁶²³ Cf. Ernout – Meillet (2001⁴), s.v. *religio* and Gothóni (1994), both with further bibliography. Gothóni endorses Cicero's etymology. On the meanings which *religio* takes on in Symmachus' oeuvre cf. Maticotta (2010), 374.

⁶²⁴ *Non enim philosophi solum verum etiam maiores nostri superstitionem a religione separaverunt. nam qui totos dies precabantur et immolabant, ut sibi sui liberi superstites essent, superstitiosi sunt appellati, quod nomen patuit postea latius; qui autem omnia quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent, <i> sunt dicti religiosi ex relegendo, < tamquam > elegantes ex eligendo, [tamquam] < ex > diligendo diligentes, ex intellegendo intellegentes; his enim in verbis omnibus inest vis legendi eadem quae in religioso. ita factum est in superstitioso et religioso alterum vitii nomen alterum laudis.*

⁶²⁵ Cf. Lact. *Inst.* 4.28.2, Serv. *Aen.* 8.349, Lucr. 1.931.

there was a tight connection between *amicitia* and *religio*. This idea is backed up by Quintilian, who, in stating that the perfect orator should not be afraid of other people and therefore needs to be accustomed to social life right from his birth, speaks of lifelong friendships in terms of *religiosa quadam necessitudine inbutae* ('imbued with a certain religious bond').⁶²⁶

But what about *humanitas*? At *Saturnalia* 1.8.7, the fifth-century author Macrobius writes: *de iustitia veniunt innocentia, amicitia, concordia, pietas, religio, affectus, humanitas*. He thus unites several concepts, including *religio*, *amicitia* and *humanitas*, and claims that they all derive from justice (*de iustitia veniunt*), surely meaning to say that justice is a general precondition for all these value concepts to exist, and not that it is a sort of hyperonym, let alone a more important value within a ranking. Yet Macrobius was not the first to link *humanitas* and *religio*. If we recall the texts dealing with the 'Athenian' origin of *humanitas*, we will perhaps also remember that *humanitas* was seen as only one of a series of discoveries that the Romans imported from the Greeks. Another one was *religio*.⁶²⁷

Given the emphasis on *humanitas* as a stimulus to write letters in Symmachus' thought and in the light of the above reasoning on *religio*, let me now return to Symmachus' *Ep.* 7.84. The concomitant use of *religio* and *humanitas* has an adulatory purpose: because of its sacred implications which adorn Symmachus' friendship with Messalla, *religio* is superior to *humanitas*. While *religio* confers a sort of divine status to a human relationship, as is the case with *amicitia*, *humanitas* stops at the very human level of recommendations. But the opposition is clearly specious, for neither is there evidence of any ontological superiority of *religio* over *humanitas*, nor does Symmachus regard *humanitas* as an insufficient reason for cultivating friendships.

An analogous case within an analogous context is provided by the opposition between *humanitas* and *caritas*. The close of *Ep.* 9.90, one of the very many letters of Book 9 whose addressee is unknown, reads:

Non invideo poscentibus testimonia vel suffragia tua, sed validior est amicitiae causa quam gratiae. Precarias epistulas postpone legitimis. His frequentius caritas studeat, illas nonnumquam praestet humanitas. Vale.

⁶²⁶ Quint. 1.2.20.

⁶²⁷ Cf. Cic. *Flacc.* 62, Plin. *Ep.* 8.24.2 (above, pp. 14-18).

Caritas should lead one to write letters to friends more often, whereas *humanitas* yet again lies at a lower level, that of letters of recommendation. It is worth noting the appropriateness of linking *caritas* to friendship in this situation. Compare Cicero, *Partitiones Oratoriae* 88:

Amicitiae autem caritate et amore cernuntur; nam cum deorum tum parentum patriaeque cultus eorumque hominum qui aut sapientia aut opibus excellunt ad caritatem referri solet, coniuges autem et liberi et fratres et alii quos usus familiaritasque coniunxit, quamquam etiam caritate ipsa, tamen amore maxime continentur.

As Hellegouarc’h glosses: “Il semble donc que la juxtaposition de *amor* et *caritas* ait pour but de distinguer deux sortes d’affections: l’affection naturelle que l’on éprouve pour des parents ou des amis intimes pour laquelle *amor* constitue le terme adéquat et celle qui s’applique à des êtres qui sont plus éloignés de nous au point de vue des relations naturelles”.⁶²⁸ Accordingly, when one is only a friend and not a relative, as seems to be the case with the addressee of this Symmachian letter, *caritas* is more appropriate than *amor* to define the feeling upon which this relation of friendship is based.

Yet *Ep.* 4.48 and 2.43 testify both to the inadequacy of the opposition between *humanitas* and *religio* / *caritas* and to the flexibility of Symmachus’ use of concepts of value. Symmachus wrote *Ep.* 4.48 to Minervius, the *comes sacrarum largitionum* for the West in 398/399, after 398 CE.⁶²⁹ Its purpose is to support Bassus’ petition in favour of his sister, who reclaims a fleeing slave. The opening reads: *Litteras nonnullis humanitate praestamus: has autem domino et fratri meo Basso qui sororis fortunas tuetur, iusto amore detulimus.* On this occasion Symmachus opposes *iustus amor* instead of the ‘expected’ *caritas* to *humanitas*, but, despite according greater value to the former, regards the latter as a sufficient reason to write letters of recommendation. After all, this is utterly unsurprising in the light of what he says when recommending Flavius Sexio to Flavianus the Elder at *Ep.* 2.43.⁶³⁰

Merita Sexionis qui antehac Calabriam rexit multi in bonam partem loquuntur eaque propter, ut suffragio tuo a me committeretur, orarunt. Est humanitatis et consuetudinis tuae

⁶²⁸ Hellegouarc’h (1963), 148.

⁶²⁹ On Minervius cf. *PLRE I* 603 (Minervius 2).

⁶³⁰ More on Sexio and on the political function of this letter in Cecconi (2002), 291-295. On Sexio cf. also *PLRE I* 838.

aliis quoque placitos amore dignari. Ergo si nihil est quod resistat precantium voluntati, effice, oro te, ut Sexioni apud te prosint et mea verba et vota multorum. Vale.

Not only does the opposition between *humanitas* and *amor* vanish, but Flavianus' usual *humanitas – humanitatis et consuetudinis* is to be taken as an hendiadys – even becomes the premise for his *amor* towards Sexio. On the one hand, this is a symptom of the ductility of both *humanitas* and *amor*, but the presence of *amor* instead of a weaker concept like, for example, *caritas*, probably strengthens Symmachus' request by suggesting that a very close friendship should grow between the two. If, in the wake of Vera, Cecconi is right in supposing that Symmachus' aim is to support Sexio's admission to the senate and, consequently, to expand his control over the senatorial order, then he would have good reasons to resort to such loaded words in this letter.⁶³¹

The 'bridging' role of *humanitas* we have noticed in the last four Symmachian occurrences of *humanitas* is summed up and formulated as a sort of moral law by Symmachus himself in *Ep.* 4.73, sent between 386-387 CE to the then Praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum Eusignius.⁶³²

Facio quod suadet humanitas, ut amicitiae tuae viros bonae frugis adiungam. Horum unus est Felix honorabilis gradu atque exercitatione militiae, cui si quid amoris inpendaris, ad meam gratiam pertinebit. Vale. (Ep. 4.73)

An important caveat needs to be made here: friendships must only be extended to other virtuous men (*bonae frugis*).

In all the five last letters (7.84, 9.90, 4.48, 2.23 and 4.73), we should notice the indirect effect of *humanitas*: it persuades Symmachus to write to a friend, but on behalf or in favour of a third person who is dear to him. More broadly, in the light of what we have seen so far about Symmachus' *humanitas*, we can say that it operates at two levels: at a higher one, as a means to preserve friendship between two people (*Epp.* 1.18, 7.98, and 8.1); at a lower one, as an opportunity – with evident utilitarian purposes – to extend to a third party the existing friendship between sender and addressee (*Epp.* 7.84, 9.90, 4.48, 2.23 and 4.73).⁶³³

This last argument prompts us to turn our attention to the use of *humanitas* within Symmachus' many letters of recommendation. Before doing so, I want to discuss briefly

⁶³¹ Vera (1979), 402-403, Cecconi (2002), 294-295.

⁶³² On the date of this letter and on Eusignius cf. Marcone (1987), 105 and *PLRE I* 309-310 respectively.

⁶³³ On these two levels cf. also Roda (1986), 184.

one last case in which *humanitas* has to do with the exchange of letters between friends. This instance is of particular interest because it might seem to invert, perhaps even contradict, the trend I have sketched so far. The beginning of *Ep.* 5.13, which is addressed to Theodorus, reads:⁶³⁴

Iampridem nihil scribis. Aequum esset huic culpae talionem reponi: sed ego arbitror imitanda non esse quae doleas, et animo persuadeo alias potius intervenisse causas officii differendi quam residem voluntatem. Quamquam vereor ne factum tuum haec ipsa gravet humanitas. Nam qui mihi pro te satisfacio, ostendo nihil me tale meruisse.

Interestingly, the same value which Symmachus regards several times as a major stimulus to write letters to friends can now excuse those who do not do so. But far from being a contradiction or a sign of inconsistency, this is simply a further clue to understanding the versatility of *humanitas*. Indeed, *humanitas* is here conceived as the virtue which urges one to try to understand a friend's problems, without judging them negatively. In other words, from whatever point of view it is considered, *humanitas* remains for Symmachus fundamental within a relation of friendship.

Whereas so far *humanitas* has worked as an incitement to write letters, in the case of letters of recommendation it can also play a more central role. This mainly happens through the shift of the possessor of *humanitas*, from the sender to the addressee – notice that Symmachus speaks very often of *humanitas tua* on these occasions. Instead of being the value which encourages the recommender to present his recommendee's case, it becomes the element that should persuade the recommender's friend to take the recommendee's case to heart and support it. Symmachus enunciates this principle in clear terms at the opening of *Ep.* 2.70, addressed to Flavianus the Elder (*Humanitatis interest commendationem deferre poscentibus*), as well as at the beginning of *Ep.* 7.56, probably addressed to Hadrian (*Tua nos hortatur humanitas opem poscentibus non negare*).⁶³⁵ As one would expect, an immediate consequence is an implicit increase in the level of adulation. Two letters from Book 7 and four letters from Book 5 illustrate this.

Ep. 7.34 to Symmachus' relative Atticus Maximus plays a sort of 'bridging role' with the previous category of letters which extend friendships.⁶³⁶ The logic is simply

⁶³⁴ On Theodorus cf. *PLRE I* 901-902 (Flavius Mallius Theodorus 27) and Rivolta Tiberga (1992), 93-96.

⁶³⁵ On Flavianus the Elder cf. above, pp. 185-186 and 191-192; on Hadrian cf. below, p. 200.

⁶³⁶ On Atticus cf. *PLRE I* 586-587 (Nonius Atticus Maximus 34).

inverted, for friendship – if it can be defined as such – is extended only once a recommendee’s request has been satisfied:

Salutationis honorificentiam praelocutus Gaetulici agentis in rebus exequor postulatum, qui a te iustum favorem per me optat adipisci. Humanitatis tuae est amplecti probabilem voluntatem numerumque eorum qui te iure suspiciunt adiectione novi cultoris augere. Vale.
(*Ep.* 7.34)

The short *Ep.* 5.31 is addressed to Magnillus, who throughout his career held the prestigious posts of Governor of Liguria and *Vicarius Africae*.⁶³⁷ Without providing much detail, it generally recommends an unnamed lady who was on good terms with the apparently esteemed philosopher Asclepiades.⁶³⁸

Propinquam sancti Asclepiadis philosophi absque litteris meis abire par non fuit: nam illius merita poposcerunt ut ad curaturam praeclari viri pertinens tuo patrocínio traderetur. Pro quo non arbitror ambitu longae orationis utendum, cum eam humanitati tuae contemplatio parentis sine cuiusquam petitione commendet. Vale

In another letter, Symmachus pairs *humanitas* with *patrocinium*. Here he recommends the *agens in rebus* Julian to Patruinus, an influential figure of the Palatine administration in the last years of the fourth century thanks to his familiarity with Stilicho:⁶³⁹

Iuliani agentis in rebus modestiam novi, natales probo, doleo fortunam; fatalibus enim malis diu et graviter exhaustus est. Sed credo cum eo omnia in gratiam esse reditura, si tuo patrocínio et humanitate foveatur. Plura non dicam, cum praeclaris moribus tuis familiare sit opis indigos sublevare et huic petitioni meae etiam tuae mentis natura consentiat. Vale.
(*Ep.* 7.107)

Although the lack of context does not allow us to understand fully the meaning of *patrocinium*, we can see here as in the previous *Ep.* 5.31 that the term means protection in general, without implying the technical references to legal defence that it often took on. Symmachus’ other occurrences of this word confirm this.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ Cf. *PLRE I* 533.

⁶³⁸ On Asclepiades cf. *PLRE I* 114 (Asclepiades 4).

⁶³⁹ Cf. Callu (2003), 184.

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 2.63, 2.70, 2.74, 2.76.1, 3.37, 4.38.1, 5.41, 7.42, 9.35, 9.57, *Rel.* 3.3, 28.4. By contrast, when Symmachus wants to specify that *patrocinium* concerns the judicial sphere, either the context is explicit (*Rel.* 19.7, 30.2) or he pairs *patrocinium* with terms like *iustitia* (*Ep.* 2.91.1, 4.28.1).

At a slightly higher level of detail, *Ep.* 5.60, probably written between 396 and 398 CE, informs us that Symmachus is recommending a certain Turasius, apparently victim of an unjust verdict, to the *humanitas* of Florus Paternus, the then *comes sacrarum largitionum* for the West:⁶⁴¹

Omnes qui aditu tuo cupiunt sublevari, non cassam, quantum arbitror, viam capessunt ineundae gratiae, cum me adstipulatore nitantur. Horum unus vir probabilis Turasius familiaris meus qui indictae sibi litis iniuriam fortunae imputat, gratiam vero boni reditus de tuo potissimum sperat auxilio. Tuere igitur aequa poscentem et humanitatis tuae latius extende famam quae incrementis maximis cumulabitur, si Turasio per te secunda successerint. Vale.

It is worth highlighting here the close relationship Symmachus establishes between *humanitas* and *aequitas*: Paternus' fame for *humanitas* will increase because, by supporting someone who is making a fair request (*aequa poscentem*), he is on the right side of the controversy.⁶⁴² Interestingly, this is a variation upon the theme of the relationship between *humanitas* and *iustitia* which we have already discussed when looking into Pliny's *humanitas*.⁶⁴³ To recall it briefly: at *Ep.* 9.5.1 Pliny praises Calestrius Tiro for reconciling *humanitas* and *iustitia* during his administration of Baetica. Likewise, we noticed there that Cicero regarded *humanitas* and *iustitia* as two of the main virtues which best fit the head judge during a trial.⁶⁴⁴ A similar case is illustrated by Ulpian, who claimed that *aequitatem* [...] *ante oculos habere debet iudex*.⁶⁴⁵ Symmachus is once again setting himself in the wake of his two greater 'models'. This is especially true of Cicero, one of the very few authors to link *humanitas* with *aequitas*, as does Symmachus, and not only with *iustitia*. Among the instances of this pairing, at *Verr.* 2.2.86 *humanitas* and

⁶⁴¹ Cf. *PLRE I* 671-672 (Paternus 6).

⁶⁴² Cf. Mantovani (2017), 22: "In tutte le sue applicazioni, dunque, *aequus* è accompagnato da un carico semantico legato dall'idea di uguaglianza, di corrispondenza, di proporzione, di equilibrio".

⁶⁴³ On *aequitas* cf. the up-to-date, well-documented and clear overview by Mantovani (2017). Further bibliography, especially on its use in legal studies, in Mantovani (2017), 19 n. 7. On the relationship between *aequitas* and *iustitia* cf. again Mantovani (2017), 51-53, whose caveat on pp. 38-39 deserves to be quoted: "Il nesso fra *iustitia* (come equivalente della greca *δικαιοσύνη*) e *aequitas* resta peraltro problematico, nel senso che a volte i due termini sembrano usati sinonimicamente o come un'endiadi, altre volte le nozioni vengono considerate affini, ma distinte".

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. above, p. 61. More on the relation between *humanitas*, *iustitia*, judges and tribunals in Symmachus below, pp. 218-219.

⁶⁴⁵ Ulp. 27 *Ad ed.* D. 13.4.4.1.

aequitas characterise the personality of Scipio Aemilianus when dealing with the restoration of Himera's independence.⁶⁴⁶ Or, if we look for a judicial context, at *Flacc.* 78 Cicero uses a letter by his brother Quintus as evidence in the trial, and, in order to corroborate the content of this letter, he speaks of *litteras plenissimas humanitatis et aequitatis*.⁶⁴⁷

The fifth instance is represented by *Ep.* 5.41, which is the longest of the three and is addressed to the higher-ranked figure, Flavius Neoterius, who was Praetorian prefect of the East in 380-381, Praetorian prefect of Italy in 385, and Praetorian prefect of Gaul in 390, before holding the consulship in 390 CE.⁶⁴⁸ The letter, comparatively detailed and probably dated to 382,⁶⁴⁹ recounts the vicissitudes of the advocate Epictetus, who was disbarred by the then consularis of Syria Carterius for slandering his opponent Sabinus.⁶⁵⁰ In order to obtain Epictetus' reinstatement, Symmachus resorted to a twofold strategy. As well as writing to Carterius directly (*Ep.* 9.31), he also wrote to the more influential Neoterius, asking him to uphold Epictetus' case. To make his case stronger, Symmachus invokes *humanitas* to not only excuse him on the grounds of his excessive passion and sympathy with the defendant, but also to show that Epictetus was dear to a great deal of clients, who now needed and missed him:

Nunc illa clientium turba unius fortuito insultat errori; quod ne diu maneat, tua praestabit humanitas. Satis datum est correctioni, nunc ingenium tuum respice. Illud causa meruerit, hoc tribue lenitati. Scio inlustrem virum praefectum praetorio his quoque litteris tuis prompte esse cessurum. (Ep. 5.41.2)

Despite the obvious affinity between *humanitas* and *lenitas* (mildness, clemency), here we find the unusual pairing of these two values. *Lenitas* can be regarded as a value which

⁶⁴⁶ According to Cicero's narration, Scipio Aemilianus thought that, in order to preserve Rome's glory, the then Carthaginian Himera should be given back to the Sicilians after Carthage's defeat.

⁶⁴⁷ On the pairing of *humanitas* and *aequitas* cf. also *Off.* 2.19, *Caes. BC* 3.20.2, and, above all, Vitruvius' *De architectura* 9 *praef.* 2: *e quibus [scil. philosophis] qui a teneris aetatibus doctrinarum abundantia satiantur, optimos habent sapientiae sensus, instituunt civitatibus humanitatis mores, aequa iura, leges, quibus absentibus nulla potest esse civitas incolumis.*

⁶⁴⁸ *PLRE I* 623.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. Callu (2003), 180 n. 2.

⁶⁵⁰ We are informed of the role of Carterius thanks to another letter on the same issue which Symmachus sent to Carterius himself (*Ep.* 9.31).

is quite close to *clementia*, which we have seen to be in turn linked to *humanitas*.⁶⁵¹ Cicero also paired the two in a letter to Memmius, stating that *lenitas* can originate from *humanitas*:

quod si ita est et si iam tua plane nihil interest, velim, si qua offensiuncula facta est animi tui perversitate aliquorum (novi enim gentem illam), des te ad lenitatem vel propter summam <tuam> humanitatem vel etiam honoris mei causa. (Fam. 13.1.4)

In Symmachus' *Ep.* 5.41.2 going from *humanitas* to *lenitas* is not as straightforward as in Cicero, but in the end the relationship between the two holds tight. The impression is that, as in the case of *clementia*, *lenitas* is more specific than *humanitas*, for it is restricted to the category of the subordinates. To put it differently and state again one of the fundamental principles of *humanitas*: while *humanitas* transcends social class distinctions and thus induces, or should induce, all true human beings to respect the 'sacred' bond which ties them together by nature, *lenitas* rather appears as one of its offspring, that which leads a higher-ranked person to show mildness towards one who is junior to them – in this respect its meaning is close to *clementia*.

One last occurrence of this category of *humanitas* merits special attention, for it enlarges the category of the recommendees to include the entire senatorial order, to which Symmachus belonged and which he famously defined as 'the better part of mankind' (*pars melior humani generis*).⁶⁵² *Ep.* 5.65, like *Ep.* 5.60, was probably written to Paternus when he was *comes sacrarum largitionum*. It deals with the problem of the high custom duties imposed on some exotic animals (in this specific instance, bears) which recently appointed quaestors and praetors had to purchase when organising inaugural games. As this 'plague' had afflicted or would afflict all senators one day, Symmachus wrote: *Quaeso igitur ut humanitatem quae inter virtutes tuas prima est, nostri ordinis editoribus dignanter inpertias et ursorum transvectionem cupiditati mancipum subtrahas*. Two points must be stressed. First, in comparison with the use of *humanitas* in the previous Symmachian letters of recommendation, here the social rank of the recommendees cannot be lower than that of the person to whom they are recommended – the only difference

⁶⁵¹ Hellegouarc'h (1963) does not devote an independent section to *lenitas*, but only mentions it twice (261 and 263 n. 10) when discussing *clementia*.

⁶⁵² *Ep.* 1.52. Cf. also *Or.* 6.1 and *Or.* 8.3. As Chastagnol (1986, 73) puts it: "Aussi bien dans ses Lettres et ses Relations que dans ses Discours, Symmaque nous apparaît d'emblée comme le représentant-type du Sénat, le sénateur par excellence".

being in the privileged but fixed-term post held by Paternus. Secondly, by making appeal to Paternus' *humanitas*, and by regarding it as Paternus' most important virtue, on this occasion Symmachus seems to display a conception of *virtus* and *humanitas* that is different from that developed in *Ep.* 8.1 and *Ep.* 2.16.⁶⁵³ Yet it must be borne in mind that the singular *virtus* usually has its own meaning(s), while the plural *virtutes*, especially in classical and later Latin, collectively indicates all possible virtues.⁶⁵⁴

To summarise, in all the cases we have seen so far the *humanitas* of the recommender and the *humanitas* of the person to whom one is recommended are two sides of the same coin. As well as pointing to the flattering character that *humanitas* can take on – an aspect we have encountered in numerous examples throughout this thesis – the latter side of this polarity also testifies to the transitivity and reciprocity of this concept of value, which is in turn linked with its potential universal nature. It is therefore unsurprising to find that *humanitas* can also refer to the recommendation itself, as happens in the short *Ep.* 9.56, in which Felix asks Symmachus to recommend him to a certain Geminianus.⁶⁵⁵

Felix cum et domus tuae cultor esse diceret et humanitatem commendationis meae amicis intervenientibus postularet, desiderio eius familiarem paginam non negavi; qua principe loco fungor apud te salute dicenda, dehinc prosequor receptam petitionem quae supradicto, si nondum tibi cognitus est, praestet clientelae aditum, si iam notus, augmentum. Vale.

The clarification *amicis intervenientibus* ('through the mediation of some common friends') is telling not only because it illustrates once again the relationship between *humanitas* and friendship, but also because it gives us yet another indication of that late-fourth-century network of recommendations in which *humanitas* played a central role. This urges us to broaden the compass of *humanitas* to expressions like *humanitas saeculi* or *humanitas temporum*.

The *humanitas*-topic within Symmachus' letters of recommendation has not been completely covered yet. From three letters in particular (*Epp.* 4.19, 5.39 and 7.49) that of recommendation emerges as a practice which does not find its roots in the *humanitas* of

⁶⁵³ On *Ep.* 2.16 cf. below, p. 213.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. Hellegouarc'h (1963, 245) and, above all, McDonnell (2006, 128-134). On the meanings of virtue cf. also Balmaceda (2017, 14-47).

⁶⁵⁵ Probably Erius Fanius Geminianus, on whom cf. *PLRE I* 389.

the recommender or else of his addressee, but in the spirit of *humanitas* which characterised the time in which Symmachus and his contemporaries lived. This is something we have already touched upon briefly when introducing *humanitas* in the fourth century CE and the recurrent use of the term in the legislation of the time.⁶⁵⁶ But while Ammianus' work induces us to question the veracity of most fourth-century emperors' *humanitas*, Symmachus appears to be sincere in maintaining several times that the late fourth century was indeed a time of *humanitas*.

Ep. 4.19, probably written early in 395 CE, is tightly connected with the destiny of Symmachus' own family. When the usurper Eugenius seized power after Valentinian II's death in 392 CE and tried to re-establish Rome's traditional religion, Flavianus the Elder, whom I have already mentioned a couple of times, was one of Eugenius' main supporters, becoming his Praetorian prefect and also consul *sine collega* (in 394 CE). After Eugenius' defeat in the decisive battle of the Frigidus (5-6 September 394 CE), Theodosius demanded that Flavianus' salary as Praetorian prefect of Eugenius be given back. As Flavianus had committed suicide a few days after the Frigidus, the demand passed on to his son, Flavianus the Younger.⁶⁵⁷ However, as Symmachus says when upholding Flavianus the Younger's case in the letter to Protadius, brother of the then *quaestor sacri palatii* Florentinus, Flavianus the Younger did not have the amount of money requested and thus begged for Theodosius' mercy.⁶⁵⁸ In this context, Symmachus addresses Protadius as follows:

Fac igitur, si quid in te opis est, ut adflictae domui pia temporum parcat humanitas; alioquin integrata per indulgentiam bona vel auctione <...> fenoris detrahentur. Sequetur, ut spes est, paterna benefacta iuvenis Augustus ad quem sicuti successio imperii una cum fratre pervenit, ita bonitatis imitatio. (Ep. 4.19.2)

To avoid the tragic possibility that Flavianus the Younger may turn to a usurer in his desperate search for money, Symmachus invokes the *pia temporum humanitas*, that is to say, he asks for Protadius' help in the same spirit of *humanitas* which Theodosius has restored. It is therefore clear that *humanitas* has increasingly become an abstracted and transcendent concept, and is no longer an exclusively human characteristic. The role of the emperor(s) and of their entourage in disseminating this ideal has caused *humanitas* to

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. above, p. 149.

⁶⁵⁷ On Flavianus the Younger cf. Matacotta (2010), 240-243.

⁶⁵⁸ On Protadius cf. *PLRE I* 751-752 (Protadius 1).

become a value that people could perceive in the air. As we learn from *Ep.* 5.47, Symmachus succeeded in his intention and obtained for his son-in-law a reduction of the sanctions.⁶⁵⁹

An analogous situation is found in *Ep.* 5.39, which probably dates to 390 CE, when, as we saw earlier, the addressee Neoterius was both Praetorian prefect of Gaul and consul.⁶⁶⁰ On this occasion Symmachus recommended a certain Alexander, who had fallen from grace presumably after joining the usurper Maximus' cause.⁶⁶¹ Relying on Neoterius' and, consequently, on Theodosius' forgiveness, Alexander hoped to have his rank of tribune and notary reinstated after Maximus' defeat (388 CE). Symmachus' letter closes thus: *Facile est enim ut sub tam pio governatore rei p. infortunia hominum saeculi vincat humanitas. Vale.* Instead of *humanitas temporum* we find here *humanitas saeculi*, but the meaning is pretty much the same. Indeed, the tie between *humanitas* and the ruling emperor becomes even stronger, for in such contexts the term *saeculum* is used to indicate the reign of a given emperor.⁶⁶² The *saeculum* alluded to is clearly the age of Theodosius, and even if the expression 'pious / faithful pilot' (*pio governatore*) refers to Neoterius, a broader adulation towards Theodosius, as in *Ep.* 4.19, is not missing, and is again conveyed through the use of *humanitas*.

As well as speaking one more time of *humanitas saeculi* with reference to the age of Theodosius in one of his *Relationes*, as we shall see in detail shortly, Symmachus once employs this expression in regard to the reign of Theodosius' son and successor Honorius. This occurs in *Ep.* 7.49, the dating of which is uncertain (perhaps 401-402?), but whose addressee is likely to be the Hadrian mentioned in *Ep.* 6.34, who held more than once the prefecture of Italy and Africa under Honorius.⁶⁶³ Symmachus writes in support of his nephew, probably victim of an injustice that would affect his wealth, and once again he invokes the *humanitas saeculi* as the ideal which should lead Hadrian to approve his

⁶⁵⁹ On the historical context of *Ep.* 4.19 as well as on Flavianus the Younger's difficult economic situation after the battle of the Frigidus cf. Marcone (1987), 59-60. On this specific issue of Flavianus the Younger cf. also below, pp. 201-202.

⁶⁶⁰ On the dating cf. Rivolta Tibergera (1992), 146. On Neoterius cf. above, p. 196.

⁶⁶¹ On this Alexander cf. Rivolta Tibergera (1992), 144.

⁶⁶² For more details on Symmachus' and previous authors' (Pliny above all!) use of *saeculum* to indicate the reign of an emperor cf. Kelly (2013), 284-285.

⁶⁶³ Cf. *PLRE I* 406 (Hadrianus 2). On the dating and addressee of this and other letters from Book 7 (42-59) cf. the state of research in Callu (2003), 179-180. The suggestion that this block of letters is addressed to this Hadrian was first put forward by Bonney (1975).

request: *Negotii autem genus de humanitate saeculi expectat auxilium, cuius qualitas virtutibus tuis precum lectione pandetur*. The relation between *humanitas* and *virtus* which we have already observed many times is here mediated by *auxilium*.⁶⁶⁴ Symmachus' argument goes as follows: the climate of *humanitas* typical of the age morally obliges one to grant help in that situation; the (high) quality of the help given will be the consequence of the (excellent) virtues of Hadrian. To put it more directly, an abstract, conceptual, quasi-transcendent *humanitas* fosters the exercise of virtues.

The *humanitas* which Symmachus praises in, and requests from, his interlocutors, and which he himself sometimes displays when recommending people is thus a general characteristic of one of the imperial periods during which he lived, the Theodosian age.⁶⁶⁵ As I remarked above, this also emerges from the dating of Symmachus' uses of the word *humanitas*. I did not dwell too long on the meaning of the word *humanitas* itself in all these instances, but it should have emerged quite clearly from the contexts that it mainly evokes philanthropic attitudes, usually towards people of lower statuses who are experiencing hard times. The cases of *humanitas temporum* and *humanitas saeculi* then imply that the climate of an age reflects the personality of the ruler. In other words, if the late fourth century is said to be characterised by benevolence and humanity, this is probably because the policy of those who ruled at that time was shaped around those values. In the case of Symmachus we have explicit evidence for this, for also emperors and imperial rescripts are linked to the word *humanitas*.

On one occasion in particular Symmachus reveals that he perceives a very tight connection between the *humanitas* of the *saeculum* and that of the emperor. Or, more precisely, that he regards the two as equivalent. Symmachus deals with the problem of Flavianus the Younger's restitution of his father's 'illegitimate' salary as Praetorian prefect of Eugenius not only in the already investigated *Ep.* 4.19, but also in *Ep.* 4.51. The addressee of this letter, which dates to 395 CE like *Ep.* 4.19, is the *quaestor sacri palatii* Florentinus. In the first half of the letter Symmachus simply explains the issue in detail – and it is not worth dwelling again upon it – but the second part merits attention:

Ergo per te ac tui similes amoliri postulat imminentem ruinam. Nec res inpenetratione difficilis est. Nam quod plerisque sua invidia laborantibus imperialis remisit humanitas, id

⁶⁶⁴ On *humanitas* and *virtus* cf. above, pp. 146, 186-187.

⁶⁶⁵ By the label 'Theodosian age' I also include here the reigns of Theodosius' sons Arcadius and Honorius.

patris nomine postulatum multo aequior venia relaxabit. Proficiet ista concessio etiam temporum gloriae, si quod beneficiis principis deerat, pius successor adiecerit. Vale.

We need to focus on three intertwined aspects: the replacement of *humanitas temporum* of *Ep.* 4.19 with *imperialis humanitas*, the relation between the latter expression and *temporum gloria*, and Honorius' and Stilico's continuation of Theodosius' clement policy.

Compared to *humanitas temporum* or *humanitas saeculi*, *imperialis humanitas* sounds more direct. The emperor's merits and his personal role as purveyor of this ideal are explicitly acknowledged. And even though the pairing of *humanitas* with the adjective *imperialis* is almost unique, it is perhaps unsurprising that, especially in the case of living rulers, *humanitas* is mainly linked with the term *imperator* or its cognates in panegyrics. With regard to the same Theodosius, of particular relevance is what Drepanius says at *Paneg.* 2.20: *humanitas inquam, quae tam clara in imperatore quam rara est*. But, as we know, *humanitas* had also been attributed to other fourth-century emperors like Constantine, Gratian and, much earlier, to Trajan in Pliny's *Panegyricus*, the model for all panegyrics which would follow.⁶⁶⁶

On the other hand the larger notion of period or age remains, and the fact that the acts deriving from the emperor's *humanitas* contribute to the glory of the age (*temporum gloria*) has the result of making explicit the obvious: the ruler determines the political and social climate of his reign, as well as its rhetoric. But the reference to Honorius as continuer of his father's policy adds a deeper message: in the case of very good rulers, like Theodosius, their policies may even determine their successors'. In other words, a *saeculum* does not necessarily end with an emperor's death. Theodosius dies without *humanitas* being his exclusive prerogative. His philanthropic attitude has affected his contemporaries and also his successors, so much so that what had been his former *imperialis humanitas* has now become the *humanitas* of an entire generation, and, more precisely, the *humanitas* which glorifies an entire age (*temporum gloria*).

At this point, although the *Epistulae* have much else to say about Symmachus' *humanitas*, I want to turn to his *Relationes*. As with Pliny the Younger, we are fortunate enough to possess both private and official writings by Symmachus. And as with Pliny the Younger,

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. *Paneg.* 12.14.1, 3.28.2, Aus. *Grat. Act.* 24, and Plin. *Paneg.* 24.2, on which cf. also above, pp. 55 and 57.

the key (and true) social and political role played by the idea of *humanitas* best emerges from its being used consistently in both kinds of writings.

The 49 *Relationes* are reports which Symmachus sent as *praefectus Urbis* to some or all the members of the imperial college between 384 and 385 CE. They deal with different matters related to the city of Rome, and their aim is either to inform the emperors of current affairs or to ask them for advice on particular issues (or both). According to Callu, the *Relationes* cover four areas: the most important one concerns the administration of the City and Symmachus' role of *praefectus Urbis* therein (17); then follow reports on judicial (12) and social (11) matters, while 9 are about politico-religious affairs.⁶⁶⁷

Within some of these *relationes* we encounter instances of both *humanitas* with reference to the emperor and *humanitas* in regard to the *saeculum*. Let me first focus on the latter. *Rel.* 9, a 'social' report in Callu's classification,⁶⁶⁸ is addressed to both Theodosius and Arcadius, and tells of the equestrian statues that the Senate dedicated to the emperor's father, Flavius Theodosius, (officially) to thank Theodosius for some imperial gifts (chariot races and theatrical plays) which he had recently bestowed on Rome, thereby making Rome's inhabitants enthusiastic and bringing the City back to its past splendour.⁶⁶⁹ After this long *captatio benevolentiae*, towards the end of the letter Symmachus does not miss the chance to ask the emperors to have more food sent to Rome – we must bear in mind that in 384 CE Rome was hit by famine.⁶⁷⁰

Fecistis ut Vrbs cana luxuriet in primam reducta laetitiam et ver illud quondam vigentis aetatis. Audeo iam sperare potiora: mittetis etiam regiam classem quae annonariis copiis augeat devotae plebis alimoniam. Hanc vero in Tiberinis ostiis mixtus Populo Senatus excipiet; venerabimur tamquam sacras puppes quae felicia onera Aegyptiae frugis invexerint. Non sunt avara vota quae saeculi excitavit humanitas: de exemplis venit ista fiducia; magna sumendo maiora praesumimus.

The *humanitas saeculi* appears therefore as a sufficient reason for being certain that the people's hopes will be fulfilled. Despite Vera's remarks, there is no denying that the level of flattery is high, but at the same time it is evident that *humanitas* is given a central

⁶⁶⁷ Callu (2009), li-lii.

⁶⁶⁸ Callu (2009), lii n. 5.

⁶⁶⁹ According to Vera (1979), esp. 394-395, the dedication of statues to Theodosius' father was part of a broader political project aimed at strengthening the relationship between Theodosius and the Senate of Rome, i.e. the Western part of the empire.

⁶⁷⁰ On this famine cf. the section on Ammianus (above, p. 171), and below, pp. 215-216.

role.⁶⁷¹ Furthermore, the clarification that such a trust relies on previous examples of the emperor's *humanitas* accounts for the presence of an expression like *humanitas saeculi*, for it is taken for granted that this value has long been characterising the policy of Theodosius by this time.

And not only of Theodosius. We have just seen that his son and successor Honorius too was affected by this philanthropic attitude, and the same holds true for Valentinian II, the then Augustus of the West. And if the case of Honorius testifies to the chronological duration of *humanitas*, its being related to Valentinian II is all the more important in that it shows that *humanitas* was one of the political and cultural values, and thus attitudes, that bound together eastern and western policies of the time. But the case can be put in more detailed terms: if we accept the well-documented and convincing thesis that it was Theodosius' aim to try to manage to have great influence on western emperors, and on Valentinian II in particular,⁶⁷² then the spread of *humanitas* in the West is to be seen as one of the aspects in which Theodosius' policy materialised all over the empire.

One example of Valentinian II's *humanitas* occurs at *Rel.* 41.1, where this value, being the value of an emperor, is even called *sacra*. This 'judicial' report dealing with a case of succession is actually addressed to the entire imperial college, but the context makes it undoubtedly clear that *humanitas* only refers to Valentinian:

Certum atque dilucidum est nihil esse tam familiare legibus quam Vestra decreta, Domini Imperatores Valentiniane, Theodosi et Arcadi inclyti, victores ac triumphatores semper Augusti, sed executorum prava interpretatio, dum supplicantibus favet, plerumque iussa corrumpit. Statuerat receptus in caelum germanus Numinis Vestri, cum Marcianus dudum protector Aggareae bona tamquam vacantia postulasset, ut, si ea hereditas scriptum successorem vel legitimum non haberet, in ius fisci tamquam domino nuda concederet; tunc insinuato per rationalem patrimonii modo opperiretur petitor, quid ei sacra deferret humanitas.

In this passage, Symmachus' reference to Gratian's brother (*germanus Numinis Vestri*) links *humanitas* to Valentinian II. Less idealistic than usual, here the emperor's *humanitas*

⁶⁷¹ Vera (1979), 383: "Certamente, i due motivi, quello dell'onore concesso a Flavio Teodosio e quello della richiesta di aiuti annonari, si saldano senza tracce visibili di sutura sotto l'abile penna di Simmaco. Tuttavia, non è da presumersi una rozza proposizione utilitaristica, in chiave di *do ut des*, nel conferimento delle statue e nella richiesta di approvvigionamenti. Diciamo semplicemente che il clima instauratosi avrebbe facilitato l'accoglimento dei voti del senato".

⁶⁷² Cf. Vera (1979).

is measured in money and nothing else. If we bear in mind the probable etymological relation of *humanitas* with man (*homo*), its rare pairing with the adjective *sacra* (sacred, holy) might seem striking, and even oxymoronic – compare also the opposition between *humanitas* and *divinitas* we saw in Pliny the Younger’s *Panegyricus*.⁶⁷³ Yet in ancient Latin the pairing of *homo* with *sacer* indicated a man “which might be violated without any *nefas*: a man whom anyone might slay with impunity”.⁶⁷⁴ The expression *sacer esto* was in fact a curse, “and the *homo sacer* on whom this curse falls is an outcast, a banned man, tabooed, dangerous”.⁶⁷⁵ By Theodosius’ time, however, *sacer* was already commonly used to designate members of the imperial house: if on the one hand the term was no longer given particular emphasis, on the other hand its association with emperors testified to their implicit divine nature.⁶⁷⁶

Indeed, on one other occasion Symmachus even speaks of the *humanitas* of a sacred rescript (*rescripti sacri*).⁶⁷⁷ The emperor is likely to be once again the addressee of the message, and the context is once again a ‘judicial’ *relatio*, the short 39. This instance of *humanitas* further testifies to the pervasiveness of this word in the socio-political climate of the age, so much so that even a document is said to possess *humanitas* – granted, because the rescript embodies the emperor’s will as well as his benevolent attitude.

One more time Symmachus attributes *humanitas* to Valentinian II, and this occurs again in an official report, *Relatio* 14. This text is of particular interest because it brings into play a very important social category of Symmachus’ day, the guilds. Due to compelling military needs, the emperor had ordered all Roman guilds to hand over to the Treasury an unspecified number of horses. But at the guilds’ insistent request and probably even lockout threat, Symmachus refused to obey the emperor’s order.⁶⁷⁸ The aim of his report to Valentinian is therefore to ask the emperor to withdraw or change his order. To persuade him, Symmachus also resorts to an example featuring Valentinian I,

⁶⁷³ Cf. above, p. 50. On the original meaning of *sacer* and its connection with gods cf. Warde Fowler (1911).

⁶⁷⁴ Warde Fowler (1911), 58, with reference to Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.7.3.

⁶⁷⁵ Warde Fowler (1911), 58. The bibliography on *homo sacer* is vast: cf. above all Agamben (1995).

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. *OLD* s.v. *sacer*, 7 and, above all, Hiltbrunner (1968).

⁶⁷⁷ *Rel.* 39.3: *Vt res monebat, amissum beneficium remedio integravitt supplicationis; sed idem mulierem casus etiam rescripti sacri humanitate fraudavit.*

⁶⁷⁸ More details on this episode in Matacotta (2010), 310-312, according to whom Symmachus’ decision reveals that he feared the Roman people more than the emperor. Cf. also Sogno (2006), 39-40 on this *relatio* as well as on the guilds and their role in Symmachus’ Rome.

Valentinian II's father, as protagonist. According to his account, Valentinian I found himself in an analogous situation, but withdrew an order at the people's protest. *Humanitas* is once again located at a strategic point, at the close of the letter:

Quod si adiciantur insolita, forsitan consueta cessabunt. Quare paternum Clementiae Tuae ingerimus exemplum. Praetuli oraculum quod pius successor imiteris. Oro atque obsecro ne Populum quem triumphantes saepe veneramini ceteris urbibus conferatis. Dabit fortuna melior quidquid castrensis usus efflagitat; humanitatis merito necessitas Vestra sedabitur.
(*Rel.* 14.4)

On this occasion we encounter another new pairing, or better, a new opposition: *humanitas* versus *necessitas*. As usual, *humanitas* appears as the winning force, but in this very case this value ought to be as strong as to prevail even over imperial military obligations and needs. If it indeed prevailed, we do not know, for the outcome of this matter is uncertain. What is certain however is that Symmachus must have regarded *humanitas* as a very powerful and reliable value, and one which could also be effective on Valentinian II.

Aside from one other occurrence at which I shall look later, in the *Relationes* *humanitas* has therefore first and foremost to do with the emperors' behaviours and with the political climate of the time. As Symmachus was prefect of Rome, it is obvious that he primarily addressed his official reports to the Augustus of the West, Valentinian II. But what really matters is that, as in the case of Pliny, in both the *Relationes* and the *Epistulae* there is evidence that *humanitas* was used with political purposes at both official and private level.

One further, yet speculative argument, given the paucity of material to investigate, may be made in favour of the official return of *humanitas* only after Theodosius' accession to power. This is provided by Symmachus' other official writings which have come down to us, the *Orationes*. Symmachus' fame among his contemporaries, and more generally in late antiquity, was mainly due to his oratorical skills.⁶⁷⁹ Unfortunately, very little of his oratorical production is extant, and in all likelihood all the eight preserved orations can be dated before 377 CE.⁶⁸⁰ Of these eight speeches, only three are panegyrics that Symmachus delivered on emperors, and, what is more, they are lacunose. He delivered *Or.* 1 and 2 on Valentinian I, and *Or.* 3 on Gratian. They all date about 369-370 CE.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. above, p. 183 n. 598.

⁶⁸⁰ On the dating of Symmachus' *Orationes* cf. Seeck (1883), ix-x, Cristo (1974), 38-39.

Contrary to the cases of Pliny's *Panegyricus* on Trajan and, albeit on a smaller scale, of Drepanius' on Theodosius, none of them include the noun *humanitas*.⁶⁸¹ But on the other hand, this is consistent with Ammianus' treatment of *humanitas* with regard to the emperors whom we encounter in his historical work, especially in the case of Valentinian I, who despite knowing good examples of *humanitas* never possessed it.⁶⁸² Of course other somewhat similar virtues can be praised in panegyrics, like for example *clementia*, but the impression is that *humanitas* preserved a less standardised meaning – while *clementia* had by that time also become part of the emperor's official titulature.⁶⁸³ Moreover, Sogno's investigation of the virtues of Valentinian I that Symmachus praises in his two surviving orations is revealing, for no moral virtue seems to be applied to this emperor.⁶⁸⁴

To return to *humanitas*, judging from Symmachus' writings, it looks as if before Theodosius *humanitas* was rather the prerogative of the Senate, while only after Theodosius the emperors shared this senatorial value; or better, viceversa. *Or.* 4, which probably dates to 376 CE, is symptomatic: *humanitas* is used twice to refer to the Senate, while *clementia* is attributed to the emperors. Let us look at the relevant passage more closely. This oration is known as *Pro patre*, for Symmachus delivered it to thank both emperors and Senate for appointing his father Avianus Symmachus to the ordinary consulship for 377 CE.⁶⁸⁵ In the first extant paragraph the opposition between the Senate's *humanitas* and the emperors' *clementia* is explicit. The one led the Senate to ask for this appointment, the other persuaded the emperors to grant it:

*<Si quis miratus cur post patris mei gravissimam orationem ego quoque susceperim>
dicendi munus et gratulationis verba protulerim, secum reputet quantos huius beneficii
habeamus auctores –humanitatem vestram qui postulastis, clementiam principum qui
dederunt – desinet profecto mirari non unum pro consulatu gratias agere, quem tam multos
videat detulisse.*

⁶⁸¹ On Pliny's *humanitas* cf. Chapter 2.1 above, pp. 49-75. In Drepanius' panegyric there are three occurrences of *humanitas*, at 20.2 (x2) and 20.5.

⁶⁸² Cf. above, p. 162.

⁶⁸³ On *clementia* in late antiquity cf. also above, pp. 117-118, 170, 198. On its presence in imperial titulature cf. Dowling (2006), 234-235. Cf. also below, pp. 209-211.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Sogno (2006), 15-17. The praised virtues are *patientia* (to be taken as endurance of extreme weather or geographical conditions), *industria*, warfare skills, *providentia*.

⁶⁸⁵ More on this oration in Pabst (1989), 159-163, Sogno (2006), 25, Matacotta (2010), 203.

The problem is the extent to which we can speak of a true opposition between *humanitas* and *clementia* in this passage.⁶⁸⁶ As we have already seen, it is quite common to find these two values together.⁶⁸⁷ But on most occasions they are clearly used to strengthen one and the same idea of benevolence. At other times instead they are on two different levels, *humanitas* representing a universal value that each and every man can show towards a fellow human being, and *clementia* being the prerogative of a higher-ranked person towards an inferior.⁶⁸⁸ This Symmachian occurrence may well belong to this second category: the senators are on the same hierarchical level as Avianus Symmachus, and thus *humanitas* is the right way to call the attitude which they display; by contrast, the emperors are senior to him, and *clementia* sounds more appropriate to emphasise this distance. It looks as though, in contrast to the tendency of the age, *clementia* as used here maintains its weighty connotations as well as its original characteristics of one-sided value, which are further emphasised by its comparison with *humanitas*.⁶⁸⁹ But even more importantly, once again Symmachus' *Weltanschauung* reveals striking analogies with Pliny the Younger's. As we saw towards the beginning of this study, to stress Trajan's distance from his predecessors, and above all Domitian, Pliny preferred to praise his *humanitas* rather than his *clementia*, with the very aim of spotlighting his being a man among men rather than a tyrant.⁶⁹⁰ The same is true of Symmachus: before Theodosius' accession to the throne, *humanitas* could hardly be attributed to emperors, who at best possessed *clementia*. More generally, Symmachus employs the noun *clementia* very rarely (6 times in the *Epistulae* and 3 in the *Orationes*) if we exclude from this calculation the 45 occurrences of *Clementia Vestra / Tua* with which he addresses the imperial college in the *Relationes*, and which, I stress, testify again to the weakening of its meaning. In the end we can say that two equivalences hold: Symmachus corresponds to Pliny, Theodosius corresponds to Trajan. Theoretically, despite the fact that the meanings

⁶⁸⁶ Indeed Kelly (2013), 282 maintains that there is unanimity between senate and emperor at the beginning of this oration.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. especially Chapter 1.5 and Chapter 1.6: above, pp. 38-43.

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. above, pp. 41-47.

⁶⁸⁹ On the general evolution of *clementia* in the imperial period cf. Dowling (2006), 234: "There is compelling evidence that in the imperial period clemency transcends boundaries of class and patronage and is found at all levels of Roman society, even among equals".

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. above, pp. 50-53.

of *humanitas* and *clementia* can overlap, at least partly, in the wake of Pliny Symmachus seems to show that word choice matters, and matters greatly.

Only one exception might seem to stand out, *Ep.* 4.4, which merits attention because of its role in modern Symmachian scholarship. It was addressed in 399 CE to Stilicho, who at that time was probably the most powerful man in the Roman empire, to thank him for Flavianus the Younger's appointment to the urban prefecture. Unlike most Symmachian letters, *Ep.* 4.4 is unfortunately too long to be quoted in full, so I limit myself to reproducing part of § 2:

Maius quiddam est honorem restituere quam dedisse; illud enim fieri fortuna consentit, hoc contra ipsam praestat humanitas. Praemiserat alia exempla clementiae receptus caelo principum parens et Flaviano meo multa casibus detracta reddiderat: reservatus est unus et potissimus bonitatis titulus heredi, quem magnitudinis tuae monitu paternis beneficiis d. n. Honorius adiecit interpretatus scilicet divo principi tempus non animum defuisse. Nunc perfecta sunt a successore consimili interrupta fato clementiae. (Ep. 4.4.2)

Its commentator Marcone, in regarding this letter as crucial to understanding the policy of continuity between Theodosius and his successors, claims: “La ep. 4 è il documento più significativo di questa prospettiva ideologica: a Onorio riconosce il merito di aver seguito gli *exempla clementiae* paterni e di aver sentito il dovere di recare a compimento quanto era stato interrotto dal destino”.⁶⁹¹ Yet here and in previous passages Marcone seems to overestimate the importance of *clementia* as it emerges from Symmachus' oeuvre, probably because he goes too far in establishing a complete overlap between *humanitas* and *clementia*. Indeed, on page 26 he had (more correctly) emphasised the role of *humanitas* as mirror of the Theodosian age. But it is not only the low rate of occurrences of *clementia* that contradicts his thesis, but the very context in which *clementia* appears twice at *Ep.* 4.4.2.⁶⁹² We must bear in mind that Honorius gave back to Flavianus an office which he had already held under the ‘reign’ of the usurper Eugenius in 394 CE.⁶⁹³ But siding with a usurper was a grave fault which usually implied the death penalty. Yet the new appointment clearly proves that Flavianus had been forgiven by Honorius by 399 CE. Hence the need to praise the emperor's *clementia*, because this is

⁶⁹¹ Marcone (1987), 28.

⁶⁹² This, as it seems to me, emerges well from the reading of this letter provided by Matakotta (2010), 242-243.

⁶⁹³ Cf. Marcone (1987), 39.

the most proper way to describe the behaviour of a higher-ranking person who would have the right to condemn someone but prefers to spare him. Indeed, as a way of introducing his praise, Symmachus first underscores the importance of *humanitas* in restoring Flavianus to his role, but then the context requires more technicality, and also more flattery. Accordingly, I find it risky to confer general validity to a principle which Symmachus applies to a particular case, and which does not allow for placing *clementia* on the same level as *humanitas* in his value system.

But to return to *Or.* 4, Symmachus mentions the Senate's *humanitas* once more, this time echoing Cicero rather than Pliny:

An si vos, patres conscripti, tantopere curastis ut optimae voluntatis vobis ratio constaret ut omnium pro uno testimonium concordiam senatus et pios mores candidati adsereret, nonne ius hominum <et> deorum est aliquid laeti negotii praeter ceteros filium sustinere? Quando de benefactis principum dignius, quando apud vos iustius, quando de patre felicius disseremus? Nova sunt quae adgredimur, sed vestra humanitas auctor est inusitata faciendi.

The unusual (*inusitata*) practice Symmachus refers to is his delivery of this very oration to thank Senate and emperors for bestowing an honour not on the person speaking themselves, but on someone else, his father. In regarding the Senate's *humanitas* as the mainspring of his action, he calls to mind Cicero's *Pro Archia*, which I have already mentioned several times in the course of this thesis, as a token of its influence on future uses of the *humanitas* argument in oratorical contexts. And once again our focus should be on *Pro Archia* 3, which I quoted extensively in the section on Eumenius.⁶⁹⁴ But while on previous occasions our interest mainly lay on the expression *studia humanitatis*, now *vestra* (i.e. the judges') *humanitas* is crucial, for this is one of the main reasons why the judges should allow Cicero to resort to an oratorical genre which probably had no precedents (*hoc uti genere dicendi quod non modo a consuetudine iudiciorum verum etiam a forensi sermone abhorreat*). So we are dealing with two oratorical contexts out of character and both facilitated by *humanitas*. Symmachus' instance, however, looks like a variation upon a theme, for it also shows differences from the Ciceronian case. One in particular: while Cicero hopes that the judges will display their *humanitas* – and his tone strategically takes this as a given – Symmachus delivers his oration because the senators have already given proof of theirs towards his father. On a linguistic level then, there is

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. above, p. 147.

little evidence that this Symmachian occurrence of *humanitas* is as educationally nuanced as the Ciceronian ones in the *Pro Archia*.

One last occurrence of *humanitas* in the *Orationes* is to be found in *Or. 7 Pro Synesio*, which, like the *Pro patre*, was presumably delivered before the senate.⁶⁹⁵ According to Sogno, this is one “of the most revealing documents concerning the process of *adlectio*, by which new members of nonsenatorial birth gained access to the senate”.⁶⁹⁶ Moreover, this speech summarises “the ideal prerequisites of a candidate to be admitted into the *amplissimus ordo*”.⁶⁹⁷ In the light of this and of what emerged from the *Pro patre*, it will probably come as no surprise that *humanitas* is one of the virtues at which Synesius, the new senator in question, aims:

Pendet circa illum sollicitae domus pietas, sed ipse de se exigit quidquid omnium sibi humanitas relaxavit. Iam video, Iuliane, causas consultissimae placiditatis tuae: tali filio magis securus es quam remissus. (Or. 7.5)

The first and major part of the chapter primarily focused on the political and utilitarian role played by *humanitas* in Symmachus’ oeuvre and in Roman society during the reigns from Valentinian I to Arcadius and Honorius, with great emphasis being placed on the watershed policy of Theodosius I. In this context, I looked at how *humanitas* contributes to explaining Symmachus’ action and the Theodosian age. With this aim in mind I also took pains to specify the political and administrative posts held by Symmachus’ interlocutors, in order to underscore further the existence of a network of high-ranked people which determined the public life of the age and which was based on certain common values.⁶⁹⁸ I now turn my attention to how Symmachus’ work can help us further understand the myriad nuances that *humanitas* can take on as well as the countless contexts in which we can encounter it. Needless to say, this differentiation has practical purposes, but there is obviously a high level of overlap. The first part itself also testifies to the persistence of the philanthropic connotations of *humanitas* and, to a less degree, of its educational and cultural meaning. By the same token, this second half will deal with

⁶⁹⁵ Sogno (2006), 26.

⁶⁹⁶ Sogno (2006), 26.

⁶⁹⁷ Sogno (2006), 28.

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. Sogno (2006), 88: “The purpose of letter writing is not primarily the communication of information but the formation and preservation of ties of friendships in a world where distances made visits if not impossible then certainly difficult”.

occurrences of *humanitas* which are set in identical or similar social contexts to the previous ones.

Let me start with those instances which provide further confirmation that Symmachus' conception of *humanitas* is comparable to that of Cicero and Pliny the Younger. As we noticed in passing earlier on, Symmachus, like his two models, believes that *humanitas* potentially has educational components, that is to say, that it is, or can be, related to the Greek concept of *παιδεία*. In Symmachus however this does not emerge as clearly as in other authors where we encountered expressions like *studia humanitatis*. At times he seems to have reached a level of assimilation in which the Greek concepts of *παιδεία* and *φιλανθρωπία* are simultaneously present but hardly distinguishable from one another. This might be the case in *Ep.* 1.18 to Ausonius, as we saw earlier, and best emerges in more personal letters addressed to his close friend Flavianus the Elder, another person of letters.⁶⁹⁹ On two occasions Symmachus sends him letters of recommendation in favour of *literati* using *humanitas* as leverage. At first sight, *humanitas* is used in the same way and with the same meaning as in the other letters of recommendation investigated above.⁷⁰⁰ Yet we must bear in mind two points. First, Symmachus was often cryptic in his letters and took much for granted. Secondly, it is not always sufficient to focus our attention on the sender: the identity of the recipient also affects the content of a letter. Before pushing this reasoning further, let us look at the texts:

Pro optimis viris quisquis intervenit, non magis illorum videtur iuvare commodum quam suum commendare iudicium. Quare in eo quod fratris mei Maximi desideria litteris prosequor, non tam illi usui <sum>, quam mihi laudi est. Est enim vita atque eruditione liberalium disciplinarum pariter insignis neque ulli praestantium philosophorum secundus ac propterea tua familiaritate dignissimus. Cuius tibi negotia cum in rem missus absolverit, quaeso ut humanitate, qua clarus es, iustas petitiones ingravato auxilio prosequaris. Vale. (Ep. 2.29)

Vt habitus et crinis indicio est, Serapammon litterarum peritiam pollicetur, cuius si se meminisset exortem, nunquam philosophis congruentem sumpsisset ornatum. Sed de hoc vestra aestimatio sit, qui talium rerum profiterini notionem. Mihi religio fuit non negare verba poscenti. Facies rem morum tuorum, si ope atque humanitate fortunam peregrinantis adiuveris. Vale. (Ep. 2.61)

⁶⁹⁹ On Flavianus' literary works cf. Matacotta (2010), 239-240.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. above, pp. 188-200 in particular.

Both these letters emphasise the erudition and the literary skills that the recommendees possess or are likely to possess one day (*eruditione liberalium disciplinarum ... insignis and litterarum peritiam pollicetur*), thereby implying that this is the common denominator between Flavianus and themselves.⁷⁰¹ Thus, when a man of letters of a certain standing like Flavianus was asked to support their causes on these grounds and was reminded of the *humanitas* for which he was famous (*humanitate, qua clarus es*), it is easy to imagine that he will have taken it as a more or less flattering appeal to his culture rather than to his mere benevolence. Nor is it sensible to think that a man who almost knew Cicero and his oratorical strategies by heart like Symmachus resorted by accident to a multifaceted value like *humanitas* on these two occasions.

One further occurrence where *humanitas* seems to be educationally and culturally connoted can be found in Symmachus' *Epistulae*, and yet again within a letter addressed to Flavianus the Elder. The beginning of *Ep.* 2.16 reads:

Si necdum filii mei Nicasii laudabiles mores et honestum institutum didicisti, accipe pro eo locupletissimum vadimonium, meum Promotum virtute et humanitate conspicuum, cui iamdiu praenobili familiaritate sociatur, et bona optimi iuvenis de illius expende iudicio.

We have already found the twinning of *virtus* and *humanitas* at *Ep.* 8.1, and already on that occasion I suggested that *humanitas* is likely to be related to education. Here three further elements can be added to the argumentation I put forward then. First and foremost, as Cecconi shows well, Promotus must have been a great general:⁷⁰² this fact allows us to link *virtus* to his military skills, and, consequently, *humanitas* to his respect for culture, along the same and more proper lines observed in Eumenius' panegyric.⁷⁰³ Secondly, the addressee is still Flavianus the Elder, which means that it might be an effective strategy to recommend a person for his uncommon culture, this time leaving it implicit that love for culture is what unites the two of them. Thirdly and conversely, it would make little sense in this general context if the stress were on the philanthropic aspect of *humanitas*, for how could this have significant consequences for Flavianus' opinion of him?

Ep. 8.1 and *Ep.* 2.16 thus portray two valiant men, who were probably military leaders and whose skills and values are synthesized in the formula *virtute et humanitate*.

⁷⁰¹ On these letters' attention for liberal arts, philosophy and those who pursue them, as well as for the relationship between *Ep.* 2.29 and *Ep.* 2.61 cf. Cecconi (2002), 235-239 and 349-351.

⁷⁰² Cecconi (2002), 192-193 (with further bibliography).

⁷⁰³ Cf. above, p. 146.

But on other occasions Symmachus connects *humanitas* with more specific virtues or abstract concepts. We have seen for instance that it can be opposed to *caritas* and *religio* when it comes to differentiating between letters of recommendation and intimate letters among friends, or else it can be paired with *aequitas* or *lenitas* when its meaning needs to be clarified further.⁷⁰⁴ At *Ep.* 7.116 instead *humanitas* is what enables one to understand who merits *benignitas* and *misericordia*, and on which occasions. The letter's opening reads: *Scis pro insita tibi humanitate quid parvulis et parentum suffragio destitutis benignitatis ac misericordiae debeatur*. The context is well known, that of inheritance after the death of one's parents. Once again Symmachus asks for the help of an influential person, Patruinus, *comes sacrarum largitionum* for the West from 401 to 408 CE.⁷⁰⁵ Those in need of help are the sons of a certain Severus, probably to identify with Valerius Severus (*PLRE I* 837 – Valerius Severus 29). As for the relation between *humanitas*, *misericordia* and *benignitas*, a distinction is required. We have seen, especially while looking into Apuleius' use of *humanitas*, that the meanings of *humanitas* and *misericordia* can even overlap sometimes. More interesting is the unusual pairing with *benignitas*, which sounds very appropriate in the case in question. As Hellegouarc'h illustrates well, *benignitas* is that virtue which induces people to bestow gifts.⁷⁰⁶ In this respect, it is similar to *beneficentia*, the value by which benefits (*beneficia*) are bestowed. By presenting *humanitas* as the origin of *misericordia* and *benignitas*, Symmachus thus implies that at times it is not enough to have a benevolent and clement attitude (*misericordia*), but concrete acts (*benignitas*) are necessary. This example clearly contributes to make explicit an aspect of concreteness which is often only implicit in the notion of *humanitas*, but that in Symmachus' oeuvre is not unique, as the following examples show.

An analogous situation of inheritance is portrayed in *Rel.* 41, which deals with the problem of the *delatores*, those who denounced (ostensible) vacant goods to the public administration in the hope of seeing these goods bestowed on themselves. Without looking in detail into this *relatio*, I only notice that *humanitas* refers to the *testator*'s generosity (41.3: *nihil de testatore humanitatis exigeret*), although the amount of money in question is very low. Its meaning is therefore very close to the previous occurrence of *humanitas* at *Ep.* 7.116.

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. above, pp. 190-192 and 195-197.

⁷⁰⁵ Cf. *PLRE II* 843-844.

⁷⁰⁶ Hellegouarc'h (1963), 217-218.

Along the same lines is to be set the short *Ep.* 9.65 to Alevius, in all likelihood an addressee of unusual low rank:⁷⁰⁷

Vehiculi rotae cuius debeant esse mensurae linea missa testabitur. Superest ut omne carpentum adfabre et firmis compaginibus explicetur. Si parte pretii ad hoc opus est, quod dandum scripseris iubebo numerari. Humanitas xeniorum tuorum debet esse moderatior: religio enim animis potius quam muneribus aestimatur. Vale.

While I note in passing that we face here another instance of *religio* with reference to the maintenance of friendship,⁷⁰⁸ our focus goes on *humanitas xeniorum tuorum*. If in *Ep.* 7.116 the relationship between *humanitas* and gifts is indirect, in *Ep.* 9.65 it is clearly direct, and it looks as if the gifts themselves become vehicles of this ideal.

The same direct relationship between *humanitas* and gifts is found in *Ep.* 9.82, in which Symmachus thanks the unknown addressee of this letter for sending him fruits from his Marsican orchards. The short message closes with an Homeric echo: *Faciet frequens humanitas tua ut saepe alias in Marsos bona Phaeacum translata celebremus*.⁷⁰⁹

To remain in the domain of concreteness, we learn from Symmachus that *humanitas* can even accelerate an oil delivery. Judging from *Ep.* 9.58, there had long been an office responsible for the supply of African oil in Formia.⁷¹⁰ But at the time when Symmachus sent this letter to the *praefectus annonae* Caecilianus to ask for his intervention, probably between 396 and 397 CE, there must have been some delay in the delivery which might harm Formia's inhabitants:

Intervenire pro iustis debitis non recuso; malitiae est enim repudiare locum gratiae in his <quae postulat aequitas>. Formianis ad egestatis levamen certum ex Africa olei modum decrevit antiquitas. Poscunt a te morem longa aetate servatum cui debet adicere celeritatem praestantis humanitas. Vale.

A much more serious situation is portrayed in *Ep.* 4.74, written in 383 CE and addressed to Eusignius, the then proconsul of Africa.⁷¹¹ This letter testifies to the poor harvest and to the ensuing harsh conditions suffered by the African provinces. Further, it

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Roda (1981), 197.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. above, pp. 188-190.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 7.114-126. For a list of the Homeric echoes in Symmachus cf. Roda (1981), 213 – with further bibliography.

⁷¹⁰ More details and relevant bibliography in Roda (1981), 191-192.

⁷¹¹ On Eusignius cf. also above, p. 192.

envisages a real famine for the following year, the famous famine recounted by Ammianus, which would cause the expulsion of foreigners from Rome.⁷¹² Under the circumstances, Symmachus urges Eusignius to help the provincial peoples by showing all his *humanitas*:

Iure igitur ad aeternorum principum providentiam provincialium sollicitudo confugit. Interea dum maior ab illis salubritas petitur, humanitas tua foveat exhaustos et tamquam particeps doloris alieni persuadeat laborantibus sibi accidisse, quidquid provinciae pertulerunt (Ep. 4.74.2).

Rather than referring to material, concrete help, which is instead expected from the imperial college (*dum maior ab illis salubritas petitur*), here *humanitas* implies and requires emotional involvement on Eusignius' part. Crucial is the innovative relationship between *humanitas* and *dolor* (*alienus*), never to be found in pagan Latin authors before Symmachus. The idea is that the people should feel that their governors share their pains and sorrows. Ever since Tertullian there existed in Latin a more technical term to name this feeling: *compassio* (*cum + patior*), a calque from the Greek συμπάθεια. But a search for *compassio* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* reveals that this word remained the prerogative of Christian authors.⁷¹³ Accordingly, it looks as if this occurrence of *humanitas* was to some extent influenced by Christian thought, but at the same time Symmachus endeavoured to keep this hidden. He did so by avoiding a Christian term and by reinvesting a traditional pagan one like *humanitas* with new nuances.

Once more in Symmachus' writings *humanitas* is explicitly connected with *dolor*. *Ep.* 3.88 is addressed to Rufinus, one of Symmachus' most influential friends. A committed Christian, he was *magister officiorum* of Theodosius from 388 to 392 CE, consul in 392 and Praetorian prefect of the East from 392 to 395.⁷¹⁴ The letter in question concerns the death of a common acquaintance of theirs whose identity remains obscure, a man with whom Symmachus was clearly on bad terms, so much so that he had first thought of not speaking of his death at all – hence Rufinus' reproach.⁷¹⁵ In Symmachus'

⁷¹² Cf. above, pp. 171 and 203.

⁷¹³ *TLL* 3.2022.84-2023.69.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. *PLRE I* 778-781 – Rufinus 18.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. Pellizzari (1998), 241-242 for more details and bibliography on this letter. On Symmachus' attitude in this letter as well as towards other people with whom he was on bad terms cf. Matthews (1986), 174-175.

view, another sort of ‘law of *humanitas*’ recommended such a behaviour:⁷¹⁶ *Scis humanitatis hanc esse rationem, ut parum probatis et ante discordibus ad vicem doloris quem mors incutere solet, reverentiam saltem silentii deferamus* (*Ep.* 3.88.1). While I note in passing that the expression *humanitatis ratio* echoes Cicero,⁷¹⁷ the content merits more attention: contrary to the African provincials in the previous case, this dead man does not deserve his *dolor* to be shared by Symmachus; at most, *humanitas* grants him the deference of silence (*reverentiam ... silentii*). In other words, the comparison between *Ep.* 4.74 and *Ep.* 3.88 shows that *humanitas* calls for sympathy only when the victim is worthy of it, and not always indiscriminately.

The ideas of culture, concreteness and relation with other concepts of value which we have observed in the previous instances of *humanitas* in some ways come together at *Ep.* 6.21, which is addressed to both Symmachus’ daughter and her husband Flavianus the Younger. The young couple was used to spending most of the year in Campania, either at Baiae or in the Phlegraean Fields. When the sons of Symmachus’ friend Entrechius had to prolong their stay in Campania due to bad weather conditions, Symmachus thus asked his son-in-law to take care of them: *Quapropter dum navigatio intractabilis est, in oris Campaniae paulisper haerebunt; sed ne peregrinationis amara sustineant, humanitas vestra praestabit.*⁷¹⁸ The impression is that the broad concept of benevolent attitude becomes more specific, evoking the idea of hospitality that we have already seen to be at times associated with, if not conveyed by, *humanitas*.⁷¹⁹ The major difference between this and the previous instances observed in Petronius, in Tacitus’ *Germania* or in Gellius 15.21 is that educational and cultural implications remain more in the background here.⁷²⁰

In the last few pages I have gathered some Symmachian occurrences of *humanitas* which are barely related to one another, not to say unrelated, and which do not seem to fit well in the categories I drew up in the main part of this chapter. They nonetheless contribute to our understanding of Symmachus’ extremely multifaceted view of *humanitas*, for example by underscoring its concreteness, its cultural components, its malleability (on its own and in relation with other concepts of value).

⁷¹⁶ On a previous Symmachian instance of *humanitas* treated as a kind of law cf. above, p. 192.

⁷¹⁷ Cf. Cic. *Quinct.* 97, *Verr.* 2.2.97, 2.4.120, *Rab. perd.* 2, *Mur.* 66.

⁷¹⁸ On this letter cf. Marcone (1983), 93-94.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. above, pp. 85-88, 121, 168, 177, 180.

⁷²⁰ Cf. above, pp. 85-86, 120-121, 177.

Before turning to Symmachus' use of the adjective *humanus*, I should now like to conclude my overview of *humanitas* by spotlighting a final aspect which further suggests that Symmachus' *humanitas* engages consciously with a long-lasting tradition which seemingly began with Cicero: the use of *humanitas* in judicial contexts. Curiously, in Symmachus this occurs in letters, not in orations. Three letters from Book 7 (*Epp.* 7.81, 7.83 and 7.89), all addressed about 399 CE to the then Praetorian prefect of Italy Messalla, deal with one and the same trial, the protagonist of which is Symmachus' friend Jucundus.⁷²¹ *Ep.* 7.81 provides the introduction to the story: Jucundus has been summoned to Milan to face a trial on unspecified charges concerning private matters. Yet he is ill, and therefore Symmachus asks Messalla to relocate the trial to Rome. His first request must not have been very effective, for Symmachus reiterates it with a more incisive tone in *Ep.* 7.89, which I quote in full:

Iamdudum litteras meas in manus tuas credo perlatas, quibus allegavi, quod iudiciis adprobatum est, amicum meum Iucundum quamquam tui examinis cupidum per valetudinem non posse proficisci. Huius in dies morbus augescit et ideo repeto postulatum ne incidat invidiam contumaciae qui miserationem meretur. Et sane civili causae nihil decerpit humanitas, si ad vicarium vestrum transferatis examen. Nam pariter et laboranti detrahetur iniuria et negotio finis eveniet. Vale.

As far as *humanitas* is concerned, the message may be summed up as follows: *humanitas* does not obstruct justice. This same principle was probably implicit in Pliny the Younger's *Ep.* 9.5.1, where the proconsul of Baetica Calestius Tiro was praised for administering justice with *humanitas* (*iustitiam tuam provincialibus multa humanitate commendas*).⁷²² Here the impression is that *humanitas* is used to avoid the repetition of *miseratio* in the previous sentence, and this sort of equivalence between the two words might be confirmed by a passage from one of the *Declamationes Maiores* ascribed to Quintilian, namely 15.3: *postquam nihil miseratio, nihil proficiebat humanitas, temptavit asperitate discutere*. The subject of the sentence as well as one of the two protagonists of the declamation is a prostitute who has administered a potion to her lover in order to make him fall out of love. The sentence refers to a previous situation, when the woman sought to dissuade the man from courting her with milder means. The rhetorical context as well as the structure of the period itself with the repetition *nihil ... nihil* suggests that the

⁷²¹ On Messalla cf. above, p. 188.

⁷²² Cf. above, pp. 60-61.

second colon (*nihil proficiebat humanitas*) has no other purpose than to emphasise the same meaning of the first (*nihil miseratio*). It follows that both in this declamation and in *Ep.* 7.89 the meaning of *humanitas*, as is often the case, is clarified by the term with which it is associated – *miseratio* on these two occasions. And *miseratio*, as the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* shows well, is both a cognate and a quasi-synonym for *miser cordia*, which we have seen playing a key role alongside *humanitas* in the mock trial of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 3.⁷²³

Unlike *Ep.* 7.81, Symmachus’ second letter to Messalla probably achieved some results and persuaded the Praetorian prefect to accept Symmachus’ request. Yet bureaucratic difficulties must have cropped up, and Symmachus decided to send yet another letter to Messalla, *Ep.* 7.83, in which he revealed his upset over the event. The letter ends thus:

Et certe difficilis impetratio mea esse non debuit, postquam illi divinus adfatus longae peregrinationis gratiam fecit. Cuius rei exsecutionem miror esse difficilem, cum lenitas tua soleat talia etiam sine rescripti auctoritate praestare. Inpensius igitur quaeso ut vicarii foro saepe in his iudiciis agitata causa reddatur, quando hoc et sacrae litterae imperant et iudiciorum non refutat humanitas. Vale.

Regardless of the outcome of the Iucundus affair, which is unknown and at any rate would be of scarce interest to this study, Symmachus’ rhetorical strategy merits some attention. Being placed at the end of the letter, *humanitas* assumes great emphasis, especially because it is here said to be possessed by the courts themselves (*iudiciorum*). Compared to the more common instances in which *humanitas* is praised in, or expected from, some judges, as exemplified by Cicero’s *Pro Archia*, the shift is significant. Symmachus’ statement appears to have objective and universal validity, for *humanitas* is regarded as the value which all tribunals possess. Whether this happened by accident or not, it certainly symbolises, and goes hand in hand with, the policy of *humanitas* applied to laws, which we have seen characterising a major part of the legislation of the fourth century CE.

Symmachus’ use of *humanus* confirms that there is a substantial difference between the multifacetedness of the noun and the relative flatness of the adjective. Exceptionally, he employs the adjective less often (29 times) than the noun (37 times), and in most cases *humanus* is paired with the usual nouns we have already encountered in the previous

⁷²³ Cf. *TLL* 8.0.1112.37-83 on *miseratio*, and above, pp. 104 and 109-110, on *miser cordia* and *humanitas* in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*.

authors simply to mean ‘of man’. Thus, as many as 9 times it goes with *genus*,⁷²⁴ three times with *ingenium*,⁷²⁵ twice with *sensus* (*Ep.* 2.56.1 and *Or.* 1.19), and only once with *caput* (*Ep.* 1.4.3), *vox* (*Ep.* 1.95.2), *ops* (*Ep.* 2.7.3), *oratio* (*Ep.* 3.20.1), *casus* (*Ep.* 4.4.4), *gaudium* (*Ep.* 4.34.2), *fortuna* (*Ep.* 8.40.1), *verbum* (*Ep.* 10.2.4), *sanguis* (*Or.* 4.14), *natura* (*Rel.* 21.1), *cunctatio* (*Rel.* 30.4) and *consilium* (*Rel.* 39.1). Moreover, we find two instances of the substantivised neuter plural *humana* to indicate the ‘human things’.⁷²⁶ There are no occurrences of comparatives and there is only one superlative: *humanissimum* at *Ep.* 5.8.1. The addressee is the same Theodorus we have encountered as the recipient of Symmachus’ *Ep.* 5.13, and the superlative, which is closer to the meaning of the noun *humanitas* as usual, refers to the good practice of writing letters to friends. In particular, it goes with *inceptum* (‘undertaking’) in the sentence: *Gaudeo mihi sermonis tui primitias contigisse et inpendio postulo ut humanissimum inceptum religiosa cura non deserat*. The topic is by now well known, and one in which the role of *humanitas* is crucial, at least to Symmachus.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁴ *Ep.* 1.52.1, 3.74.1, 3.82.1, *Or.* 4.6, 6.1, *Rel.* 3.13, 23.14, 42.5 and 46.1.

⁷²⁵ *Ep.* 4.28.1, 6.1.1, 8.27.1.

⁷²⁶ *Ep.* 1.23.1 and 2.57.1.

⁷²⁷ Cf. above, pp. 185-192.

5.3. Conclusion.

In the context of Theodosius I's effort to save and restore the Roman Empire after Hadrianople, and of his related willingness to appear as a new Trajan, Symmachus' and Ammianus' use of *humanitas* revived the Trajanic pattern embodied by Pliny the Younger on the one hand, and by Tacitus and Suetonius on the other. Like Pliny, Symmachus fostered the spread of *humanitas* as a unifying value within the upper echelons of Roman society; like Tacitus and Suetonius, Ammianus spotlighted the lack of this value during the reigns of previous emperors.

Through his correspondence in particular, Symmachus' willingness to preserve and extend the network of senators emerges clearly. A senator of the noblest birth himself, Symmachus was thereby trying to defend Rome's as well as his own interests. Christians, barbarians as well as the increasing social mobility might represent serious threats to the senatorial class and, by extension, to the traditional structures of the Empire. In this socio-political climate, the concept of *humanitas* becomes much more than an incitement to write letters: as a well-established Roman value, it served to forge, foster and preserve links with other members of the *ordo senatorius*. Invoking a Ciceronian value takes on a strong cultural and political meaning: let us, through our profoundly Roman *humanitas*, remain Romans! Despite his Christian orientation, Theodosius must have understood the importance of this message and of having Rome's pagan aristocracy on his side. In this, as in many other respects, he also influenced the policy of his two sons and successors, Arcadius and Honorius. This explains why it is legitimate to refer to his, and his sons', reign as an age of *humanitas*, as Symmachus himself does more than once.

The importance of *humanitas* not only to Symmachus', but to the Theodosian age's socio-political thinking is confirmed by Ammianus' extraordinary interest in this value concept; or, more precisely, by his stressing that most previous fourth-century emperors, with the sole exception of Julian, had neglected this fundamental value.⁷²⁸ Moreover, Ammianus explicitly attacks the aristocracy of the city of Rome for ignoring the true, traditional aspects of *humanitas* as civilisation. Their frivolity – it is implied – was contributing heavily to the decadence of Rome. Also from this point of view, it comes therefore as unsurprising that Symmachus relied on *humanitas* to try to bring back the senatorial class to the splendour of its glorious past.

⁷²⁸ It goes without saying that this conclusion is based upon Ammianus' extant books and might be differently nuanced if the first thirteen books of his *Historiae* had come down to us.

Conclusion

This thesis provides the first detailed analysis of the instances of *humanitas*, and, more synthetically, of the adjective *humanus*, in the most important Latin pagan authors from the late first until the late fourth century CE. It is now time to draw together its main results.

What I have endeavoured to offer is a contextualised study of *humanitas*, which combines a lexicographical with a historical and cultural investigation of the occurrences of this multifaceted word. This double approach, which takes into account both the meaning of the word in a given text and its general significance in the wider cultural context of the authors using the word, is in my view necessary to identify and explain all the nuances that *humanitas* takes on; or, in other words, to understand its polysemy. As we have seen, scholarship on *humanitas* is vast, although, apart from very few exceptions, the authors of the age under investigation have usually been neglected. More generally, previous analyses of the word *humanitas* – as is the case for most studies on the evolution of ancient keywords – often adopted a compartmentalised approach, by being either strictly lexicographical or eminently cultural. Furthermore, they usually focused on single authors only. In the case of mere lexicographical studies, the main drawback is that we cannot entirely appreciate the role of *humanitas* in explaining an author’s mentality or worldview, or else in revealing the socio-political implications of a literary work. By contrast, cultural studies of *humanitas*, that is, studies which assume that *humanitas* indicates liberal culture and therefore speak of the *humanitas* of a given author to describe his attitude towards the liberal arts, usually lack philological support: their assumption is a *petitio principii*, which imposes on *humanitas* a modern understanding of the word, filtered through the movement we now call ‘Renaissance humanism’. Likewise, this line of approach affects those who take *humanitas* as indicating mild, humanitarian attitudes, and similarly project a modern value onto ancient texts, without providing convincing evidence for doing so. Simply, *humanitas* is usually a multilayered word, with both cultural and humane aspects being simultaneously present in the occurrences of this term, albeit to a different degree case by case. Thus, as we have seen, the combination of a lexicographical and cultural study of the word, which pays attention to the meaning of *humanitas* in the text as well as the wider implications for Roman culture as a whole, is the only approach that reveals the various nuances that the word takes on throughout the ages, and shows that *humanitas* is an original Latin ideal and not a mere equivalent of the

Greek παιδεία or φιλανθρωπία. As I clarified in the Introduction, by combining these two Greek notions the Romans conceptualised – and at the same time ennobled – the overarching ideal of civilisation, which had instead been a given in classical Athens.

The very combination of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία is also key to understanding Cicero's cultural and political message during the Late Republic, for not only did *humanitas* indicate the common man's main way to achieve social and political progress, that is, through education, but also the philanthropic attitudes which the liberal arts alone could provide, and which – Cicero hoped – would enable Roman society to overcome the political crisis it was undergoing. Under these premises, it is unsurprising that *humanitas* should gradually lose its importance with the rise of the Principate. Under emperors like Tiberius, Nero and Domitian, there was little or no room for public participation in politics, and the common man's *humanitas* was progressively replaced with the emperor's *clementia*, the sole virtue which could place a limitation on despotic power. The fate of *humanitas* appeared therefore sealed: such a 'republican' concept would die alongside the Republic, or little later. And yet it is thanks to its very republican connotation that *humanitas* was unexpectedly restored to its Ciceronian meaning during the Trajanic age: to mark the beginning of a more democratic era as well as to epitomise the qualities of the new emperor as opposed to the faults of his predecessor Domitian, no other term seemed more apt than *humanitas*, as emerges from Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus*. In the *Epistulae* then, Pliny shows how this concept could again work as a binding value within Roman society.

In transforming a republican concept into an imperial but at the same time democratic one, Pliny played therefore a crucial role in the history of the word *humanitas*. From that time onwards *humanitas* acquired a rhetorical dimension: it became a keyword that captured both nostalgia for the Ciceronian age and a plea for socio-political mildness to the emperor. Moreover, Pliny's use of *humanitas* with regard to Trajan has also provided a new lens through which to interpret Tacitus' and Suetonius' historical works: by avoiding the association of this value concept with first-century emperors, they implicitly exalted the ruling emperor(s) at the time of their writing, the only one(s) to be worthy of being credited with *humanitas*.⁷²⁹ In the case of Tacitus then, we have seen that he perceived and exploited the ambiguities surrounding this word, especially when interpreted in its broadest meaning of civilisation. When he uses *humanitas* in the very famous *Agr.* 21, a scrupulous reader is hesitant as to whether or not it is to be understood

⁷²⁹ Remember that Suetonius' *Lives* were probably written early in the Hadrianic age: cf. above, p. 88.

as criticism of Roman imperialism: civilisation is per se positive, but from the Britons' perspective it may be synonymous with servitude. The passage remains open to many interpretations precisely because of the ambiguous meaning of *humanitas*, and this in turn confirms that the *Agricola* in general is open to different readings.

Pliny was well aware that, in order to restore *humanitas* to its Ciceronian polysemic meaning of παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία, he had first to recover its educational meaning. He achieved his goal by recovering the rare expression *studia humanitatis*, which explicitly links *humanitas* to the liberal arts. And so did Aulus Gellius in the Antonine age: his *Noctes Atticae* are a hymn to *humanitas* understood as a value combining education and culture. Unsurprisingly, it is in this work that we find the first and most important ancient discussion of the true meaning of *humanitas*. Despite making a clear-cut distinction between a right and a wrong meaning of *humanitas* – παιδεία and φιλανθρωπία respectively – Gellius' work ultimately epitomises both, for it clearly emerges that education and culture cannot be ends in themselves; they must lead to moral improvements. Compared to Pliny's, Gellius' use of *humanitas* is less explicitly political, but it nonetheless aims at educating, if not emperors, the upper echelons of Roman society, men who are likely to play an active part in Roman political life.

The Antonine age also testifies to the continuation of another strand, which runs in parallel with the socio-political strand and derives from Cicero as well: the oratorical-judicial strand. In this context, orators exploit to the highest degree the propensity of *humanitas* to create inclusion or exclusion between different categories of people. This is the case of Apuleius' *Apologia* and *Metamorphoses* 3, where *humanitas* aims either to create a special bond between accused and judges, or to exclude the accused from the civic community. As we have seen, the case of Apuleius is of particular interest: despite the educational nuances of *humanitas* remaining well in the background if not altogether absent, his rhetorical use of *humanitas* clearly recalls Cicero's in the *Pro Archia*, where the educational aspect played instead a crucial role. This means that *humanitas* had acquired a rhetorical dimension and power which also transcended its meaning and nuances.

Late in the third century, Eumenius' *Oratio pro instaurandis scholis* leads to the reconnection of the socio-political and judicial strands: he seeks to persuade the provincial governor that the ideal of *humanitas* binds together the two of them and the ruling emperors; but at the same time his oration is not judicial and *humanitas* is clearly connoted as both a philanthropic and educational value. As in the *Pro Archia*, *humanitas*

may even be regarded as the main lens through which to understand the content of the entire panegyric.

Finally – at least for the chronologic period covered in this thesis – Ammianus and Symmachus reiterate the Trajanic pattern represented by Pliny, Tacitus and Suetonius. Like Pliny, Symmachus exalts the return of *humanitas* as a guiding value within Roman society during the reign of the new emperor Theodosius I. He thereby confirms Pliny’s success in adapting within the political sphere a republican value to suit the imperial climate. In contrast, like Tacitus and Suetonius, Ammianus denounces feigned *humanitas* or lack thereof during the reigns of Theodosius’ predecessors, which in itself confirms how *humanitas* came to be seen as a characteristic of legitimate power and be used as a symbolic word to express sympathy or antipathy towards the rulers. Briefly, Symmachus’ and Ammianus’ uses of *humanitas* reveal the rhetorical imitation by the Theodosian of the Trajanic age, along the lines drawn more explicitly but perhaps less thoroughly in later historical sources, which stress Theodosius’ wish to appear as a new Trajan.

As the thesis has made clear, there is no reason to assume that after Cicero (or Pliny the Younger at the latest) *humanitas* lost both its polysemy – especially as far as its educational aspect is concerned – and socio-political importance, contrary to what many scholars have claimed or simply taken for granted.⁷³⁰ Up until authors like Ammianus or Symmachus at the end of the fourth century, *humanitas* not only preserved its polysemy intact, but was also able to epitomise the socio-political climate of an entire age. Accordingly, the view according to which the broadest, Ciceronian ideal of *humanitas* was of secondary importance between the late first and fourteenth century – when Petrarch discovered Cicero’s *Pro Archia*, which epitomised the birth and diffusion of a new notion of Humanism – is definitely to be abandoned. In addition, by providing for the first time a detailed and contextualised study of *humanitas* in Roman imperial literature, the research conducted in this thesis allows us to clarify the extent to which one can project onto the various ancient uses of *humanitas* the meanings generally associated with the Renaissance period and Modernity: if Petrarch’s *humanitas*, as that which epitomised a new culture that would allow men to be more moral and more civilised by reviving an idealised Antiquity, has little to do with the political and social constructions identified in the present thesis, and if these are likewise a far cry from the humanitarian ideals of our present time, it remains nonetheless that the link between education, ethics

⁷³⁰ Cf. above, p. 4.

and civilisation – between culture and compassion – was universally recognised to be the core of what makes us ‘more human’.

For reasons of length, I cannot prolong this study further, but the results I have achieved induce me to believe that the study of the occurrences (or lack of occurrences) of *humanitas* after the fourth century CE would throw new light on those ages and their authors. Surely, the deeper we dive into the Middle Ages, the more Christian culture affects Latin vocabulary: it would therefore be all the more necessary to include Christian authors in the investigation, but the result would presumably be rewarding.

One last linguistic remark. This thesis has argued that the history of *humanitas* cannot run in parallel with the history of the adjective from which *humanitas* derives, *humanus*. Evidence shows that *humanus* only rarely takes on the multifaceted meaning of *humanitas*, and mainly – indeed exclusively in many authors – when it appears in its comparative or superlative form. The impression is that *humanitas* came to symbolise the qualities of the man par excellence, of he who understands that to be really human is to be learned and, consequently, benevolent towards his fellow human beings: all human beings can be defined as *humani*, but those who have understood and fulfilled their profoundest duties are more human (*humaniores*) than the others and the only ones to possess *humanitas*.

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⁷³¹ Journal abbreviations are those of *L’Année philologique*.

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