

Humanitas in the Late Republican Age: Focusing on Cicero's De oratore

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Abstrak

This essay analyzes some details of the historical context and political meaning of the concept of humanitas. In particular, it discusses how to appreciate Cicero's humanitas in terms of the politics of the late Roman republic. For this, I demonstrate that Cicero used humanitas with two meanings: (a) as a technical term for the liberal arts, and (b) as a civil education program. Based on this, I conclude that Cicero's humanitas program as a civil-education program was designed for uniting the Roman state, integrating the Roman citizen, and thus rescuing the res publica of Rome from its destruction. The quintessence of Cicero's humanitas-program was thus an attempt to revitalize Roman politics. Cicero's humanitas was indeed a kind of weapon with which to fight the absolute rule of a tyrant or dictator, even though it was not efficient or practical in securing the republic or democracy in the modern sense against its immediate invaders. However, it was and is a long-term program, because it is a base camp for democracy and a primary defensive measure against violence