

Lecture 20. Education in Ancient Rome



Roman school around AD 200

Basic info

- Education outside the household was only foreseen for members of the elite.
- Following the Greek model, wealthy families educated their children in schools from a certain age
- These children usually would have learned before how to read and write with a teacher or magister or under the supervision of a pedagogue that also controlled their conduct.
- Beyond elementary education, children of accommodated families were expected to learn grammar and rhetoric with specialised teachers.
- These fields, along with history, philosophy, geography etc. were aimed to prepare children for the public life and its responsibilities.
- Greek language: essential skill for the education of elite Romans.

Relevant sources on Roman education

- Suetonius, On Grammarians
- Quintilian, The Orator's Education
- Juvenal, *Satires*
- Martial, *Epigrams*
- *Cicero*
- Pliny the Younger, letter

The Education of the elite

- The pedagogue in the imperial court. The curious case of Claudius
- Suetonius, Claudius 2.2:

For a long time – and even after he attained his majority – he was under guardianship and in the charge of a pedagogue. Claudius himself complained in a petition that the man was a barbarian, a part-time muleteer deliberately entrusted with him, to discipline him as savagely as possibly for any reason under the sun.

Pliny the Younger, *Letter 3.3. Letter to Cornelia Hispulla, discussing her son's education*

“Up to the present he has been too young to leave your side, and has teachers at home where there is little or no opportunity for going astray. Now his studies must be carried farther afield, and we must look for a tutor in Latin rhetoric whose school shall combine a strict training along with good manners and, above all, moral standards; for, as our boy happens to be endowed with striking physical beauty among his natural gifts, at this dangerous time of life he needs more than a teacher. A guardian and mentor must be found...(Julius Genitor) is a man of serious character, quite free from faults; indeed a little too blunt and austere for the license of our times...Your son will hear nothing from him but what will benefit him, will learn nothing that would have been better left unknown. Genitor will remind him as often as we do of his obligations to his forbears and great names he must carry on. So with the gods' goodwill you may entrust him to a teacher from whom he will learn the right principles of conduct before he studies eloquence- for without principles this cannot be properly learnt at all.”

Professional teachers. Regulations

- **Digest 27.1.6.1-2, Modestinus, Excuses 2:** “Teachers of grammar, teachers of rhetoric, doctors of the type called general practitioners have immunity from tutelage and curatorship, just as they are exempt from other impositions. The number of rhetors and doctors in each city who have exemption from liturgies amid their selection is limited by law, as is shown by the letter of Antoninus Pius written to the province of Asia, but applicable to the whole empire. This is the main injunction: The smaller cities are able to have five doctors exempt, and three teachers of rhetoric and an equal number of teachers of grammar. The larger cities may have five physicians and four teachers of either type. The greatest cities may have ten doctors and five teachers of rhetoric and an equal number of teachers of grammar. Not even the largest of cities may offer immunity in excess of this number.

Methods of teaching

- **Pseudo-Plutarch, On the Education of Children 8f:**
“In addition, I assert that one should lead children to decent behaviour by encouragement and advice, and certainly not by blows and humiliations. For this seems to be more appropriate to slaves than to the freeborn. As a result they act stupefied and shudder at their tasks, partly from the pain of the blows and partly because of the indignity of it all. But praise and criticism are more useful than any ill-treatment in the case of the free, the former encouraging them towards the honourable, the latter holding them back from what is disgraceful.

Methods of teaching

- **Quintilian, The Education of the Orator 1.3.14-17:** In fact I am in no way in favour of the thrashing of pupils, although that is the established practice and Chrysippus is in favour of it, first because it is ugly and only fitting for a slave and definitely an outrage (this would be accepted if you changed the age of the sufferer). Then there is the fact that, if anyone is so base in spirit that he cannot be corrected by reproof, he will also be hardened to blows like the worst sort of slaves. Next, there will not even be any need for chastisement if a supervisor continuously keeps watch on his studies. Now by the inattention of their pedagogues things are usually turned around so that children are not forced to do what is right, but are punished because they haven't done it.

Educators, Intellectuals and Social Mobility, Pliny, Natural History 35, 58

“There is also the most inferior kind of chalk; which was used by the Ancients for tracing the line of victory in the Circus, and for marking The feet of slaves on sale, that were brought from beyond sea.

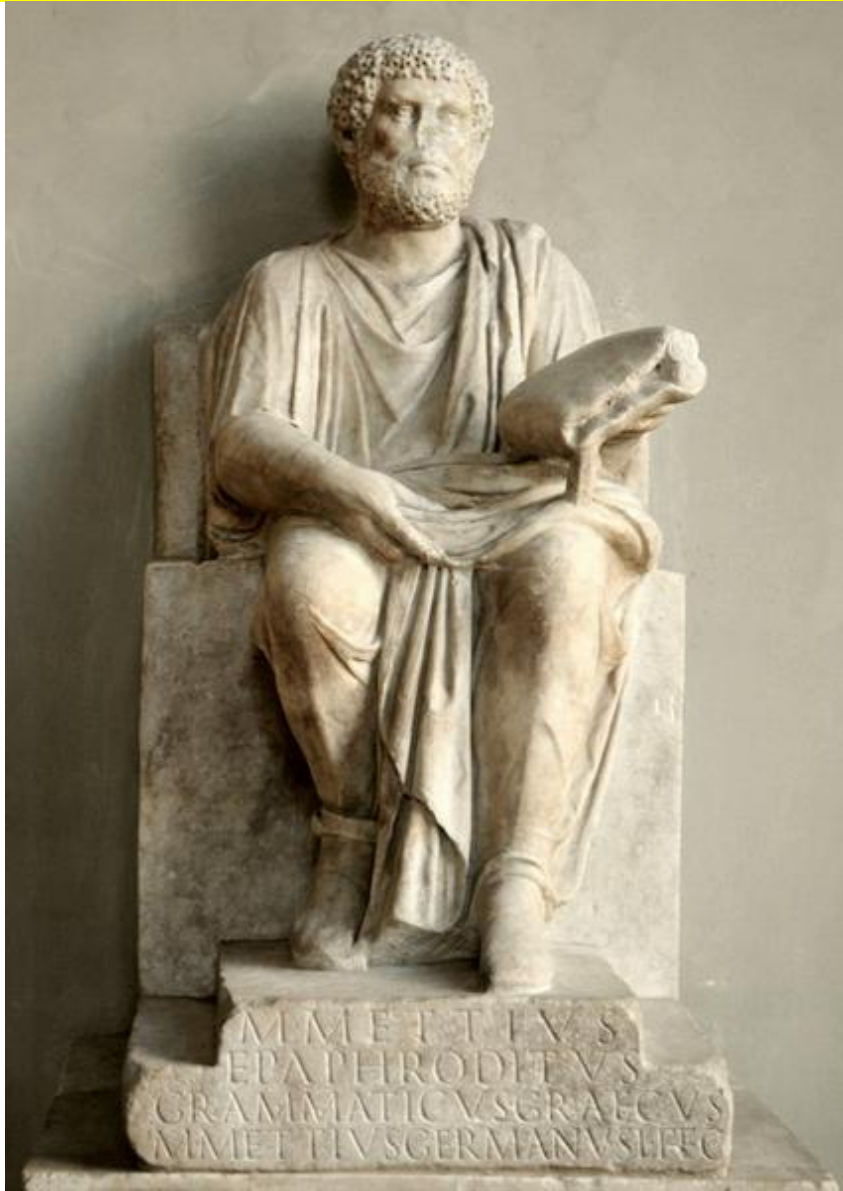
Such, for instance, were Publilius Lochius, the founder of our mimic scenes; his cousin, Manilius Antiochus, the first cultivator of astronomy; and Staberius Eros, our first grammarian; all three of whom our ancestors saw brought over in the same Ship. But why mention these names, recommended as they are by the literary honours which they acquired?

Other instances too, Rome has beheld of persons rising to high positions from the slave market; Chrysogonus, for example, the freedman of Sylla; Amphion, the freedman of Q. Catulus; the man who was the keeper of Lucullus; Demetrius, the freedman of Pompeius, and Auge, the freedwoman of Demetrius, or else of Pompeius himself, as some have supposed;

Social status of teachers. Suetonius, On Grammarians 34

- **Quintus Remmius Palaemon**, from Vicetia, was a houseborn slave of a woman. He first (so it is said) learnt to be a weaver, then, while accompanying his mistress's son to school, learnt to read and write. Later, when he had been freed, he taught at Rome and achieved the top rank among teachers, although he was held in ill repute for every type of vice and Tiberius and later Claudius had publicly stated that there was no one less to be entrusted with the education of boys or young men. But he would win men over by both his memory of details and his fluent speaking style and even used to produce poetry on the spot. In fact he wrote in all sorts of difficult metres. Such was his arrogance that he called Marcus Varro 'the pig', boasted that literary appreciation was born and would die with him, and declared that his name didn't occur in the eclogues by accident, but that Vergil was predicting that one day a Palaemon would be the judge of all poets and poetry... He so indulged his extravagance that he would bath several times a day, and, although he earned 400.000 sesterces annually from his school and almost as much from his private investments, it did not cover his expenses. He took special care of these private investments: he ran workshops that produced garments for sale and paid such attention to his land holdings that it is accepted that a vine planted by his own hand produced grapes 365 days per a year.

Epaphroditus of Chaeronea



M. METTIVS
EPAPHRODITVS
GRAMMATICVS
GRAECVS

M. METTIVS
GERMANVS
L(ibertus) FEC(it)

CIL VI 9454

Status of teachers

- Suda, vs Epaphroditus, e 2004: Epaphroditus: from Chaeroneia, a teacher of grammar. The foster-child of Archias, a teacher of grammar from Alexandria; educated by him, he was purchased by Modestus, the prefect of Egypt. After educating Modestus' son, Petilius, he was held in high regard at Rome from the time of Nero up to that of Nerva [c. AD 54-98]. This was the period of Ptolemy, the son of Hephaestion, and many other famous names in education. He continually bought books and owned more than 30.000, including significant and recondite works. He was tall and dark, like an elephant. He lived in the area called Faenianocoria [Hay-hides] where he owned two houses. He died aged 75 after falling ill with dropsy. He left a fair number of works on grammar."

**Suda lexicon: Byzantine encyclopaedia, 10th century*

Books attributed to Epaphroditus

- A grammatical *Commentary on Homer*, fragments of which survive. Epaphroditus appears to have had an interest in the etymology of place names.
- A commentary on the *Aitia* ("causes") by Callimachus of Cyrene.
- A commentary on the *Shield of Heracles*, which was attributed to the legendary poet Hesiod.
- Two other literary works, called the *Lexeis* ("words" or "literary styles") and the *Peri Stoicheiôn* (on "first principles of language").

Funerary inscriptions dedicated to teachers

- CIL 02 (2. Aufl.) 07, 00336, Corduba (Baetica), AD 171-200: D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Domitius Isquilius(!) / **magister gramm(aticus) / Gr(a)ecus** annor(um) / Cl / h(ic) s(itus) est s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis)
- AE 1897, 0009, Doclea (Dalmatia), AD 151-300: D(is) M(anibus) C(aio) / Gord(io) Maxi/miano **art/is gram(m)atic/ae Graecae peri/tissimo** Q(uintus) Fl(avius) / Helenus ami/co inconpa/rabili(!)
- ILS 7765, Saguntum (Hispania Citerior), AD 151-200: D(is) M(anibus) L(uci) Ael(i) Caer/ialis **magistro / artis gramma/ticae** L(ucius) Ael(ius) Aeli/anus libertus / pat(rono) ben(e) merito / vixit ann(is) LXXXV