

Religion

Plato and reliance on books:

Plato, *Phaedrus* 275: So it is in this case; you (the Egyptian god Theuth), who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your offspring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources. What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality: they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. And because they are filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom they will be a burden to society.... Then it shows great folly ... to suppose that one can transmit or acquire clear and certain knowledge of an art through the medium of writing, or that written words can do more than remind the reader of what he already knows on any given subject.

Elementary education

Education aimed at *arete* (excellence); cf. Plato, *Protagoras* (325c-326c); also:

Aristotle, *Politics* 8.1337b23-33, 1338a13-23: There are more or less four traditional subjects of education, reading and writing, PE, music, and sometimes drawing makes a fourth. Reading and writing, and drawing are of practical use, physical education is directed to toughness. There can be more than one opinion about music. At the present day it is mostly a source of personal enjoyment. But those who originally included it in the system of education did so because, as I am always saying, nature aims at a healthy use of leisure as well as a sound approach to work....

So our forbears introduced music into education not as a necessity (it is nothing of the sort) nor for its practical utility (as reading and writing are of practical utility to business, household management, study, and a variety of political activities, or drawing is perhaps of practical utility in the finer appreciation of the work of craftsmen), nor with a view to building up physical health and strength, as with PE (since we can see that these are not the result of music). The remaining possibility is that it is directed to our leisure activities, and this was evidently the object of its introduction – a leisure activity fit for free men.

Elementary education 2

Tutor (*paidagogos*); at school children read and learn the poems of good poets, learn to play the lyre and are taught lyric poetry; physical trainer (*paidotribes*).
Aristophanes suggests no small scale:

Aristophanes, *Clouds* 961-65: I'll tell you the state of education in the past when modesty was honoured, and I flourished speaking right. First rule: that children should be seen and not heard. Second: in the streets they should walk in order to music-lesson, all from one district together, lightly dressed, the snow no matter.

Cf. Herodotus 6.27.2: Again, in the capital city of the island (Chios), at about the same time, a little before the battle, the roof of a school fell in on some children who were learning their letters, and of a hundred and twenty children only one escaped.

Elementary education 3

Suitable subject-matter:

Plato, *Republic* 2.377: These are of two kinds, true stories and fiction. Our education must use both, and start with fiction.... And the first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are taking shape and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark.... Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest. We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to their children and so mould their minds and characters rather than their bodies. The greater part of the stories current today we shall have to reject.... We can take some of the major legends as typical.... The stories in Homer and Hesiod and the poets. For it is the poets who have always made up stories to tell to men.... (The worst fault of stories is) misrepresenting gods and heroes, like a portrait painter who fails to catch a likeness.

Elementary education 4

Reading and writing were taught by the *grammatistes*; probably a fair degree of literacy, but:

Cratinus in *The Suda*: Good God! I don't know how to read or write. But I can put it into words; I've a good memory.

Cf. the story of Aristides' ostracism:

Plutarch, *Aristides* 7: The story goes that on this occasion, while the votes were being written down, an illiterate and uncouth rustic handed his piece of earthenware to Aristides and asked him to write the name Aristides on it. The latter was astonished and asked the man what harm Aristides had ever done him. 'None whatever,' was the reply, 'I do not even know the fellow, but I am sick of hearing him called The Just everywhere!' When he heard this, Aristides said nothing, but wrote his name on the *ostrakon* and handed it back.

Elementary education 5

Evidence of school scenes on vases, which reflect the curriculum; didactic, epic and lyric poetry, but Homer dominated:

Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.5: 'Niceratus,' he said, 'it's your turn. Tell us what kind of knowledge you take most pride in'.

He answered, 'My father was concerned to make a good man of me, and made me learn off the whole of Homer. Even today I could repeat by heart all the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*'.

Xen. *Symp.* 4.6-8: Niceratus at this point remarked: 'You might like to hear the value of my company. I hardly need say that Homer with his reputation for supreme wisdom has written about almost every human activity. So any of you wanting to master domestic economy, or political leadership, or military strategy, or to rival Achilles, Ajax, Nestor or Odysseus should come to me. I have all the answers'.

'Really?' said Antisthenes. 'Do you mean that you've mastered kingship just because you know that Homer praised Agamemnon as "a noble king and mighty warrior"?'

'Of course,' he replied. 'I also know that in a racing-chariot you must scrape the turning post and lean lightly to the left within the well-built car, whipping the horse on the right with a shout, and loosing his reins.

I've another piece of knowledge besides, which you can try out for yourselves on the spot. There's a phrase of Homer: An onion too gives flavour to the drink. If someone will fetch an onion, you can receive the benefit of this advice here and now. You'll enjoy your drink more'.

'Fellows,' said Charmides. 'Niceratus wants to go home smelling of onions, so that his wife can be quite sure that no one would even have dreamed of kissing him'.

Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 7: Once, when he was past his boyhood, he went to a schoolmaster and asked him for a volume of Homer. When the teacher said that he had none of Homer's works, Alcibiades struck him with his fist and went off. Another teacher said that he had a copy of Homer which he had corrected himself. 'What,' Alcibiades exclaimed, 'are you teaching boys to read when you know how to edit Homer? Why aren't you teaching young men?'

Technical education

Technical education essentially an apprentice system. The range of *technai* (artists, doctors, bankers, craftsmen) was taught under various arrangements: e.g. the sophists took fees, also Pamphilos (no less than 6000 dr., cf. Pliny, *NH* 35.76); but two bankers trained a slave, Pasion, who in turn trained Phormion (Dem. 36, 45, 52).

Cf. the pottery industry, and the training of girls (and boys) for entertainment.

Higher education

Sophists and Socrates, schools of Plato and Isocrates

Rise of the sophists, who taught the art of rhetoric, both at Athens (Socrates and Antiphon) and elsewhere (Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Cos, Hippias of Elis), cf. Plato's dialogues: Protagoras is surrounded in Callias' house by foreign pupils and Athenians, who pay him a fee (10,000 dr.)

Embassies, lectures, international games, fees charged (not by Socrates) but sophists could be overheard, e.g. Socrates and Hippias

The rich aimed to be effective in the assembly and lawcourts (though they employed speech-writers, *logographoi*). Hence rhetoric a key element of the curriculum; but also astronomy, geometry, natural science, geography, grammar, metrics, methods of argument and mnemonics (Hippias).

The sophists contrasted *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (convention) (Antiphon). Plato aimed at higher maths (leading to political theory and practice) and philosophical debate (eristic). Isocrates concerned with more practical politics.

Education of women

Athenian girls were taught to read and write, but most of the more highly educated women we hear of were non-citizens like Aspasia (a Milesian) or belong to the Hellenistic period (e.g. Hipparchia, wife of Crates the Cynic; cf. Diog. Laert. 6.96-98). Xenophon (*Oik.* 3.11-15) attributed lack of education to women being married very young age, but Plato thought a woman's learning capacity is less than a man's:

Plato, *Republic* 5.455: When you say a man has a natural ability for a subject, don't you mean that he learns it easily and can pick it up himself after a little instruction; whereas a man who has no natural ability learns with difficulty, and can't remember what he's learnt even after long instruction and practice? And if he has natural ability aren't his mind and body well co-ordinated, otherwise not? Aren't these the sort of criteria by which you distinguish natural ability?.... Then is there anything men do at which they aren't far better in all these respects than women? We need not waste time over exceptions like weaving and cooking, at which women are thought to be experts, and get badly laughed at if men do them better.... There is therefore no function in society which is peculiar to woman as woman or man as man; natural abilities are similarly distributed in each sex, and it is natural for women to share all occupations with men, though in all women will be the weaker partners.

But both Plato and Aristotle wanted women to be educated as being 'half of the free population' (*Laws* 805a; *Ar. Pol.* 1.1206b):

Plato, *Laws* 7.805a: (Girls should be trained in the same way as boys.) I maintain that if these results can be achieved, the state of affairs in our corner of Greece, where men and women do *not* have a common purpose and do *not* throw all their energies into the same activities, is absolutely stupid. Almost every state, under present conditions, is only half a state, and develops only half its potentialities, whereas with the same cost and effort, it could double its achievement.