

Was ist Bildung in der Vormoderne?

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Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort	V
Abkürzungsverzeichnis	XIII

A. Grundlegende Perspektiven

PETER GEMEINHARDT	
Bildung in der Vormoderne – zwischen Norm und Praxis	3
CHRISTOPH AUFFARTH	
Henri-Irénée Marrous <i>Geschichte der Erziehung im klassischen Altertum.</i> Der Klassiker kontrastiert mit Werner Jaegers <i>Paideia</i>	39
BERND SCHRÖDER	
Der moderne Bildungsbegriff und seine geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen ..	67

B. Exemplarische Einblicke

JOHANNES BERGEMANN	
Bilder, Bildung und Religion in der griechisch-römischen Antike. Eine Skizze	91
BJÖRN CHRISTIAN EWALD	
Culture's Visual Culture: The Iconography of Education, Intellectual and Literary Pursuits in Roman Art	109
IRENE SALVO	
Education as Acquisition of Knowledge in the Ancient Greek World. Some Remarks on its Agents and Features	167

PETER SCHOLZ	
Mit Augen und Ohren lernen. Die <i>vita honesta</i> der republikanischen Senatsaristokratie und die Rolle intellektueller Bildung in Erziehung und politischer Praxis in Rom	185
MATTHIAS BECKER	
Zwischen Gelehrsamkeit und Angleichung an Gott. Bildung in der spätantiken Philosophie	205
CHARLOTTE HEMPEL	
Bildung und Wissenswirtschaft im Judentum zur Zeit des Zweiten Tempels	229
ROLAND DEINES	
Bildung im hellenistischen Judentum	245
GERHARD LANGER	
Zur rabbinischen Begrifflichkeit des Lernens am Beispiel des Talmudabschnittes <i>Qidduschin</i> 49ab	269
SAMUEL VOLLENWEIDER	
Bildungsfreunde oder Bildungsverächter? Überlegungen zum Stellenwert der Bildung im frühen Christentum	283
HARTMUT LEPPIN	
Intellektuelle Autorität unter frühen Christen. Auch zur Frage der Hellenisierung des Christentums	305
JAN R. STENGER	
Transformationen des Bildungsbegriffs im griechischen und lateinischen Christentum der Spätantike	331
CAROLINE T. SCHROEDER	
New Trends in the History of Education in Late Antique Egypt	353
ANGELIKA NEUWIRTH	
Die religiöse Bildung der prophetischen Urgemeinde im Wandel: Von christlicher zu jüdischer Hermeneutik	369

UTE PIETRUSCHKA

„Lesen, was nötig ist“. Bildungsideale im christlich-arabischen Kontext 393

SEBASTIAN GÜNTHER

„Wissen ist besser als materieller Besitz“.

Grundsätze und Grenzen der Bildung im Klassischen Islam 411

HEDWIG RÖCKELEIN

Selbsterkenntnis als Weg zur Gotteserkenntnis – Gotteserkenntnis
als Weg zur Selbsterkenntnis. Über Erziehungs- und Bildungsdiskurse

religiöser Eliten des Hochmittelalters 427

C. Abschließende Bemerkungen

PETER GEMEINHARDT

Potenziale von Bildung – damals und heute 447

Autorinnen und Autoren 483

Register 489

1. Vormoderne Personen und Werke 489

2. Antike und mittelalterliche Orte 499

3. Moderne Autorinnen und Autoren 501

Education as Acquisition of Knowledge in the Ancient Greek World

Some Remarks on its Agents and Features

IRENE SALVO*

1. Introduction (with a methodological note)

Considering the tradition and legacy of ancient Greek culture, addressing the topic of ‘Bildung’ in the ancient Greek world may appear like a Sisyphean task: it would result in an endless search for data across a fragmented geographical space and over constantly changing times, looking also for its reception in later periods as well as for various possible historical interpretations. The scope of this chapter is less ambitious and more limited. Firstly, given the complex semantics of the German term ‘Bildung’, it is essential to specify in what sense I am using it in what follows. Here it will serve as a starting point to reflect on processes leading to the acquisition of knowledge and elements of culture, in particular those processes that took place through the interaction between teachers and pupils. Consequently, this chapter intends to provide the readers of this interdisciplinary volume with an introduction to the specifics of Greek pedagogical strategies, showing some of their social dynamics.

A methodological point immediately emerges and needs to be addressed, albeit briefly. Can we discuss the topic of Greek education assuming that uniformity and homogeneity characterized it? This question has a long historiographical history, and it presumes the question about the unity of ancient Greek culture more in general, with its tensions between epichoric traditions and panhellenism.¹ In one of the most influential studies on ancient education, Henri-Irénée Marrou stressed

* This chapter derives from my work on religious education and gender in Classical Athens at the Collaborative Research Centre 1136 “Education and Religion”, funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), subproject C 01 “Aufgeklärte Männer – abergläubische Frauen? Religion, Bildung und Geschlechterstereotypen im klassischen Athen,” under the direction of Tanja Scheer. I would like to warmly thank the audience of the conference in Göttingen, in particular Peter Scholz for his valuable feedback.

¹ Cf. the discussion about the unity of Greek law, see Finley 1975, Gagarin 2005. A similar debate concerns Greek religion, cf. Polinskaya 2013, 489–494. On what unites the Greeks and the concept of ‘hellenicity’, see Hall 2002.

that “the ancient Mediterranean world knew only one classical education, only one coherent and clearly defined educational system.”² This consistency derives from his equivalence between education and civilization:

Education is a collective technique which a society employs to instruct its youth in the values and accomplishment of the civilization within which it exists. [...] A civilization must achieve its true form before it can create the education in which it is reflected.³

Marrou presents an evolutionistic view of antiquity inscribed in Jaeger’s idea of the classical world as a spiritual model for western societies, a position that has been positively as well as critically received.⁴ This picture prompts a further question: is Greek education a mirror of Greek civilization? Our sources do not always provide sufficient material to find an answer, and they are most revealing for the practices and customs in Athens and Sparta, notoriously put in opposition, the first being the exaltation of artistic expression and philosophical acumen, while the second city is renowned for its strict and severe training. On the imbalance towards two cities and the existence of other undocumented (or less well documented) communities, Mark Griffith has noted that, notwithstanding the broad variety of geographical locations, there was among Greek cities “a fair degree of uniformity in the types of institutions that they contained”, and therefore it is reasonable to consider “an Archaic Greek ‘educational system,’ or set of systems, even as we take care to specify when we can their divergent, even competing, characters.”⁵ It is particularly important to stress that the glue of the various poleis has been identified in mythology and the narration of the interactions between humans and gods in poetic form – in one word, Homer. Walter Burkert underlined how

the spiritual unity of the Greeks was founded and upheld by poetry. [...] To be a Greek was to be educated, and the foundation of all education was Homer.⁶

The idea of education as an ethnically defining characteristic may be counterbalanced by two observations. Firstly, if the education imparted by Homer was a unifying factor across space and time in Greek culture, it could also, however, blur the boundaries between Greeks and non-Greeks. Strabo emphasised how the Trojan myths, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey* could resonate with non-Greek communities, and that βαρβαρόφωνοι people like the Carians were willing to learn Greek language and follow Greek lifestyle.⁷ Literary knowledge, memory, and παιδεία seem

² Marrou 1956, xiii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ On Marrou and Jaeger, see Demont 2004, 110 f. and the contribution of Christoph Auffarth to the present volume (pp. 39–65). On Marrou’s legacy see Pailler/Payen 2004.

⁵ Griffith 2001, 25.

⁶ Burkert 1985, 119. Cf. Scholz 2000, 115–118, with a reference to Diodorus 1,2,5, on how, from the second century BC, philosophical and rhetorical education united the ‘true’ Greeks, providing to a learned citizen (πεπαιδευμένος) a distinctive cultural identity. On a homogeneous Greek education after Alexander, see König 2009, 399, with previous bibliography.

⁷ Strabo, *Geographica* 14,2,28.

to have taken a central role in connecting Greeks and ‘barbarians’.⁸ Instead of categorising the human race on the base of ethnicity, the geographer preferred to distinguish between those who were governed by justice, erudite knowledge, and reason (τὸ νόμιμον καὶ τὸ παιδείας καὶ λόγων οἰκεῖον), and those who followed their contraries.⁹ Education could have been, then, a universal and transcultural element that went beyond the margins of Greek ethnic identity. Secondly, keeping in mind the unifying and panhellenic traits, it is equally essential to put into the foreground the variety of social and cultural expressions of the Greek-speaking and independent cities. Using in our analysis the expression ‘Greek educational system’ might imply the risk of flattening different realities into one category,¹⁰ since not only peculiarities emerge across the space of Mediterranean, but also changes occur along the centuries. New political circumstances influenced the conceptualization of education as well.

In this chapter, it will be impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of ancient Greek educational practices.¹¹ Therefore, I will focus on highlighting some of the main issues, lines of inquiry, and characteristics of Greek education, concerning, in particular, its agents and features in the Classical and early Hellenistic period. I will first offer an overview of the vocabulary of education and knowledge, while in the second part I will present some of the occasions and modalities of teaching and learning, stressing some aspects such as the mobility of ideas and social inequalities.

2. Insights from the Greek lexicon on concepts of education and its agents

As briefly mentioned above, ‘Bildung’ has a complex semantic field, and it is one among the most difficult German words to translate into other languages. Since every translation is an interpretation,¹² an expedient to elude the semantic discrepancies between modern languages is to turn to the ancient Greek vocabulary of education, erudite culture, and knowledge. The key term of this lexical analysis

⁸ Dandrow 2017, 115.

⁹ Strabo, *Geographica* 1,4,9.

¹⁰ On the problems of using modern terminology for describing ancient education, cf. also König 2009, 392: “ancient education is both a close ancestor and at the same time a very unfamiliar counterpart to our own – although that has not stopped modern scholarship from imposing the language of modern educational institutions on their ancient equivalents, in ways which sometimes mean that their distance from us is lost to view.” On the discrepancies between ancient and modern teaching and learning practices, see Too 2000, 94: “Antiquity gives us the means to dislodge pedagogy from narrow accountabilities by recognizing that its temporal context is not one easily confined to the present space of the pedagogical scenario.”

¹¹ For more detailed studies, see recent volumes on education in antiquity, with important essays on the Greek world: Grubbs and Parkin 2013; Bloomer 2015a.

¹² Cf. Eco 2014.

is παιδεία, whose meaning and influence is well-known beyond the circle of classicists and ancient historians. It has been crucial particularly for philosophers and historians of pedagogy,¹³ and it has been juxtaposed to ‘Bildung’.¹⁴ Notwithstanding its notoriety, it is worth recalling that its semantic sphere comprehends on one side anything that can be learned – particularly knowledge, art, and science, and on the other side the rearing of a child, its training, learning activities, and education. Additionally, it can mean ‘youth, childhood’. Plato defines παιδεία as “the process of attracting or guiding children towards correct reason, as defined by law, and ratified – as genuinely correct by the experience of those who are most advanced in age and moral qualities.”¹⁵ Education is a process of guiding the children, led by the most senior members of the society together with those that are most capable and fitting to the task (ἐπιεικής), towards what is not crooked, right, and true. From the early Imperial period, ἀγωγή is associated with the Spartan way of educating children,¹⁶ which involved a tougher training. Another term that can denote education, and more precisely ‘nurture, upbringing’, is τροφή, used especially in poetry.¹⁷

Numerous terms express the various semantic nuances included in knowledge and being knowledgeable. The Greek lexicon denotes with τέχνη a practical and skilled art, while σοφία is a more speculative wisdom and intelligence.¹⁸ The practical aspects of τέχνη may not suffice in the case of poetry, for which specialized skills need to be complemented with divine inspiration. As emphasised in Plato, only poetry produced in an altered state of consciousness can gain educational force and transgenerational persistence:

A third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations. But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art, meets with no success, and the poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madmen.¹⁹

¹³ See Tanasenau-Döbler/Döbler 2012, 3, n. 11, with further bibliographical references.

¹⁴ Heidegger ³2004, 215 f., reinterpreting the Platonic myth of the cave, identifies παιδεία with *Bildung* and ἀπαιδευσία with *Bildungslosigkeit*.

¹⁵ Plato, *Leges* 2,659d: παιδεία μὲν ἐστὶ ἢ παίδων ὀλκή τε καὶ ἀγωγή πρὸς τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου λόγον ὀρθὸν εἰρημένον, καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικεστάτοις καὶ πρεσβυτάτοις δι’ ἐμπειρίαν συνδεδογμένον ὡς ὄντως ὀρθός ἐστιν. Trans. Schofield/Griffith 2016, 77.

¹⁶ See Patterson 2013, 375.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Euripides, *Hecuba* 599, on the resilience of a noble man suffering misfortunes: ἄρ’ οἱ τεκόντες διαφέρουσιν ἢ τροφαί; “Is it bloodline or education that makes the difference?”

¹⁸ Cf. the intellectual function needed to approach true knowledge in Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1139b: ἔστω δὴ οἷς ἀληθεύει ἢ ψυχὴ τῷ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι, πέντε τὸν ἀριθμὸν: ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶ τέχνη ἐπιστήμη φρόνησις σοφία νοῦς. “Let it be assumed that there are five qualities through which the mind achieves truth in affirmation or denial, namely Art or technical skill, Scientific Knowledge, Prudence, Wisdom, and Intelligence.”

¹⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 245a: τρίτη δὲ ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκοχή τε καὶ μανία, λαβοῦσα ἀπαλήν

Between the empirical and abstract realm of thought stands the term *ἐπιστήμη*, which means ‘being acquainted with something, understanding it’, and therefore denotes ‘knowledge, science’, opposed to *δόξα*, ‘subjective opinion’.²⁰ On a super-human level, the wisdom of the gods was made available to mortals through divination, a system of knowledge organised in oracles, prophets, and seers.²¹ Already in the Homeric poems, divination is considered a kind of absolute knowledge, as we read in the first book of the *Iliad*:

Among them arose Calchas son of Thestor, far the best of bird-diviners, who knew the things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by his own prophetic powers which Phoebus Apollo had bestowed upon him.²²

A deeper understanding of Greek conceptualization of knowledge can be achieved exploring the vocabulary of ignorance. Formed prefixing the privative alpha, it was mostly defined as a lack of education, learning, and knowledge, with terms such as *ἀπαιδευσία* (lack of education), *ἄμαθια* (ignorance, lack of culture), and *ἄγνοσία* (ignorance), terms that can also mean ‘stupidity’. This lexical connection between knowledge, ignorance, and intelligence may find reinforcement in the fact that one of the verbs of learning, *μανθάνω* (to learn),²³ has a semantic proximity with the verb ‘to understand’, as for example in the compound *καταμανθάνω*, which means ‘to observe well, understand, acquire knowledge of, examine closely’.²⁴ In Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, ignorance is represented as the equivalent of stupidity, of not being bestowed with intelligence, as emerges from what Pluto says to Aeschylus at the end of the comedy: “Well then, farewell, Aeschylus, go and save our city with noble sentiments, and educate the dunces. There’s plenty of them.”²⁵ The Athenians who need to be educated and instructed by the revived poet are those who do not understand, who are silly.

Poets were crucial figures in the acquisition of knowledge, in particular concerning morality and the gods. Their wisdom was transmitted to the young generation by the *γραμματιστής*, the teacher of letters. Two other key professionals

καὶ ἄβατον ψυχῆν, ἐγείρουσα καὶ ἐκβακεύουσα κατὰ τε ὄδας καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ποιήσιν, μυρία τῶν παλαιῶν ἔργα κοσμοῦσα τοὺς ἐπιγιγνομένους παιδεύει: ὃς δ’ ἂν ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἱκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελεὶς αὐτὸς τε καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἢ τοῦ σωφρονούντος ἠφανίσθη. See Schaefer 1930, 140–141; Hall 1963.

²⁰ Plato, *Respublica* 477b.

²¹ On Greek divination and knowledge, see Manetti 1993, 14–18; Flower 2008.

²² Homer, *Ilias* 1,68–72: τοῖσι δ’ ἀνέστη/Κάλχας Θεστορίδης οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ’ ἄριστος,/ ὃς ἦδη τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα./καὶ νήεσσ’ ἠγήσατ’ Ἀχαιῶν Ἴλιον εἰσω/ἦν διὰ μαντοσύνην, τὴν οἱ πόρε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.

²³ The noun *μάθημα*, ‘what can be learned, lesson’ has the same etymological root, and from it mathematics derives (cf. Plato, *Leges* 817e: the three mathematical sciences are arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy).

²⁴ Cf. Chantraine 2009 s.v. *μανθάνω*.

²⁵ Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1500–1504: ἄγε δὴ χαίρων Αἰσχύλε χώρει./καὶ σῶζε πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν/γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς καὶ παιδεύσον/τοὺς ἀνοήτους: πολλοὶ δ’ εἰσὶν. Trans. Dillon.

were entrusted with the task of educating the youth:²⁶ the παιδοτρίβης, the physical trainer, and the κιθαριστής, the music teacher.²⁷ Teachers were differentiated on the basis of their expertise, and parents decided which lessons their children had to take. Well-off pupils were accompanied from home to their lessons and back by a παιδαγωγός, a slave of the house. Teachers should have the luck not to have vengeful and physically strong students, so to avoid the fate of Linus, killed by Heracles, because the student was not good in playing the lyre and was not making progress. Diodorus Siculus narrates that Heracles was sluggish, lazy in understanding the lesson (δέξασθαι τὴν μάθησιν), and, when the teacher beat him with rods – corporal punishment was usual in antiquity,²⁸ he overreacted in anger and killed Linus with the same lyre that was supposed to be a learning tool.²⁹ An equally caricatural teacher-student scene is offered by a graffito from Cyrene in modern Libya. The graffito reads: “Question: who was the father of Priam’s children?”³⁰ It has been suggested that this might be a parody of teacher’s questions in a scholastic setting, perhaps by the hand of a playful pupil.³¹ Although the graffito, engraved on a stone wall with a hand resembling the writing on papyri,³² is probably dated to the Imperial period, it testifies to assessment methods on literary subjects, like Homer and mythology more in general, that could have been used in earlier periods as well.

At the level of state organization, specific magistrates oversaw the educational systems. Without intending to give a complete list of the different local designations, it is worth mentioning a few examples. At Sparta, the παιδονόμος (supervisor of education) was responsible for the students’ curriculum as well as for hiring and coordinating the teachers.³³ At Athens, ten σωφρονισταί (literally: ‘those who control wisdom and chastity’) superintended the youth in the gymnasia.³⁴ In

²⁶ On professionalization, see Burke 2016, 29–31.

²⁷ Cf. Brunschwig/Lloyd 2003, 161: in classical Athens, only elementary musical skills were taught, while in Imperial Ionia children were instructed in music theory as well.

²⁸ On corporal punishment, see Bloomer 2015b.

²⁹ Diodorus 3,67,2.

³⁰ SEC 35,192: ζήτημα: τῶν Πριάμου παίδων τίς πατήρ;

³¹ Kaster 1984.

³² BE 1964, 573.

³³ See Xenophon, *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* 2,2: ὁ δὲ Λυκούργος, ἀντὶ μὲν τοῦ ἰδία ἕκαστον παιδαγωγούς δούλους ἐφίστάναι, ἄνδρα ἐπέστησε κρατεῖν αὐτῶν ἐξ ὧν περ αἱ μέγιστα ἀρχαὶ καθίστανται, ὃς δὴ καὶ παιδονόμος καλεῖται, τοῦτον δὲ κύριον ἐποίησε καὶ ἀθροίζειν τοὺς παῖδας καὶ ἐπισκοποῦντα, εἴ τις ῥαδιουργοίη, ἰσχυρῶς κολάζειν. ἔδωκε δ’ αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν ἡβόντων μαστιγοφόρους, ὅπως τιμωροῖεν ὅποτε δέοι, ὥστε πολλὴν μὲν αἰδῶ, πολλὴν δὲ πειθῶ ἐκεῖ συμπαραίνειν. “Lycurgus, on the contrary, instead of leaving each father to appoint a slave to act as tutor, gave the duty of controlling the boys to a member of the class from which the highest offices are filled, in fact to the ‘Warden’ as he is called. He gave this person authority to gather the boys together, to take charge of them and to punish them severely in case of misconduct. He also assigned to him a staff of youths provided with whips to chastise them when necessary; and the result is that modesty and obedience are inseparable companions at Sparta.” See also Ducat 2006, 159; Harris 1989, 246.

³⁴ IG II² 1156 = Rhodes/Osborne 2007, 89.

the Hellenistic period, the office of the γυμνασίαρχος (gymnasiarch) was widespread across Greek cities, and the supervision of the gymnasium was entrusted to a high-rank person.³⁵ As is well-known, the gymnasium was a venue with athletic facilities that stood at the core of Greek educational paths for boys and young men.³⁶ As every Greek city had temples and sanctuaries, gymnasia similarly characterised the Greek urban landscape, although archaeological remains dated before the fourth century BC are rare. The gymnasium was the centre of the *ephebeia*, a civic institution devoted to the military training of the youth, attested in Athens since from the end of the fourth century BC and widespread across the Greek world, especially during the Hellenistic and Imperial period. Maintaining a schooling function, its characteristics could vary, and it gradually changed scope over time, with intellectual, literary, and moral education gaining more importance.³⁷ A magistrate in charge of the *epheboi* was the κοσμητής, as in Athens. Among the teachers for the *epheboi*, there were highly specialised figures such as the ὄπλομάχος, instructor on the use of arms, or the καταπαλαφότης, who taught how to use the catapult, and the ἀκοντιστής, instructor of the javelin.³⁸ From the Hellenistic period onwards, a generous donation by a wealthy citizen could have funded the salary of these teachers, guaranteeing in this way an education to students from poorer backgrounds as well, as it is shown by a document from Teos, in Asia Minor, dated to the end of the third century/beginning of the second century BC.³⁹ Of this crucial piece of evidence, I would like to stress a few points in particular: firstly, teachers seem to have been hired for a period that went from a minimum of two months to one year;⁴⁰ secondly, there were civic authorities (οἱ καθιστάμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν μαθημάτων) who managed the funds donated, for the specific educational purposes, to the city's treasury from a private citizen, Polythros;⁴¹ finally, a more significant number of free citizens from various economic backgrounds could have received a certain degree of primary education,⁴² and both boys and girls were educated.⁴³ Another example of broader education in the Hellenistic period comes from Miletos, where the teachers honoured Hermes, the Muses, and Apollo Mousegetes (Leader of the Muses) with sacred festivals and vo-

³⁵ Marrou 1956, 110–111.

³⁶ On the gymnasium, see Kennel 1995; Kah/Scholz 2004, with further bibliography; Scholz 2017.

³⁷ On the *ephebeia*, see, among others, Chankowski 2010; Kennel 2015, with previous bibliography.

³⁸ These figures emerge in inscriptions in honour of the *epheboi* and their teachers, as, e.g., IG II² 665.

³⁹ SIG³ 578 = McCabe/Plunkett 1985, 41. On a more comprehensive primary education, see Harris 1989, 130.

⁴⁰ SIG³ 578,27: ὁ δὲ ὄπλομάχος διδάξε<ι> χρόνον οὐκ ἐλάσσονα μηνῶν δύο.

⁴¹ SIG³ 578,67.

⁴² SIG³ 578,3–4: πάντες οἱ ἐλεύθεροι παῖδες πα[ιδε]ύονται.

⁴³ SIG³ 578,8–10: γραμματοδιδασκ[ά]λους τρεῖς οἵτινες διδάξουσιν τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰς παρθένους.

tive offerings of frankincense.⁴⁴ The agents who were responsible for teaching and transmitting information and notions, from grammar and military techniques to the devotion to the gods, can be imagined as creators and artisans of knowledge.⁴⁵

We could continue exploring the agents in control of education and knowledge, analysing the contribution of family members⁴⁶ or of the *erastes*, the lover of older age in a homoerotic relationship. However, for reason of space and trying to give a broader overview, the following paragraph will focus on the places and contexts of learning in order to show where and how knowledge could be acquired.

3. The interplay of knowledge with cultural and social identities

The gymnasium brings us to the question of where educational activities took place. A central space was precisely the gymnasium. This was a building complex that included a *παλαίστρα*, the wrestling school, as well as baths, libraries, and lecture halls, where both athletic and literary education were instructed.⁴⁷ It is more difficult to pinpoint other places with a specific educational function. Thucydides mentions the existence in Mycalessus (Beotia) of a *διδασκαλείον παιδων* (teaching-place for children), a school whose pupils were massacred by the Thracians during the Peloponnesian war.⁴⁸ Information on schools in the pre-Hellenistic era is scanty,⁴⁹ but this building seems to have been allocated to the primary education of large groups of students. For a higher level of education, young men took advantage of the symposium, a convivial occasion where literary expertise and moral values were showed off and socialized.⁵⁰ Furthermore, theatres and sanctuaries hosted musical, theatrical, and athletic competitions, which celebrated at the same time excellent human abilities and divine glory. Even from this brief sketch, it emerges how counterproductive is to identify a list of places devoted to educational activities and the transmission of culture. It seems more fruitful to apply to education and knowledge transfer the concept of ‘free spaces’ elaborated by historians Sarah Evans and Harry Boyte. Evans and Boyte identify as free spaces those public spaces where participants can learn democratic values, civic virtues, and cooperative skills.⁵¹ Expanding this theoretical framework, we can further

⁴⁴ Miletos, *SIG*³ 577 = McCabe 1984, 42, 201/199BC.

⁴⁵ Stealing and rearranging the title “les artisans du savoir” of a section of Jacob 2011.

⁴⁶ On family members as religious educators, see Munkholt Christensen/Salvo 2018.

⁴⁷ See Kyle 1987; Kennell 2015, 173.

⁴⁸ Thucydides 7,29,5: *καὶ ἐπιπεσόντες διδασκαλείῳ παιδῶν, ὅπερ μέγιστον ἦν αὐτόθι καὶ ἄρτι ἔτυχον οἱ παῖδες ἐσεληλυθότες, κατέκοψαν πάντας*. “They attacked a boys’ school, the largest that there was in the place, into which the children had just gone, and massacred them all.”

⁴⁹ Cribiore 2015, 150.

⁵⁰ Griffith 2015, 46.

⁵¹ Evans/Boyte 1992². Vlassopoulos 2007 has first brought this concept into the scholarly

note that the agents moving in these ‘free spaces’, and belonging to the same social group, are governed by the *habitus*, defined by Pierre Bourdieu as norms, knowledge, and skills embedded and internalized to a degree of unaware possession, or, in other words, “a *lex insita*, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing.”⁵² This theory is especially relevant in the case of Greek religious education: the participation of boys and girls to ceremonies and festivals was the most immediate way for socializing rituals and procedures for encountering the divine. Information on religious matters was acquired at an early age, and, therefore, it could be digested and internalized, creating a first foundation on which more advanced knowledge could be later attained.

In order to deepen one’s cultural profile, an effective strategy was to travel to a city with a rich offer of cultural and intellectual events, like Athens, where the leading philosophical schools were located. The establishment of the major Greek philosophical schools made the city of Athens an attractive center of learning from the fourth century BC onwards.⁵³ This movement of people, however, should not be interpreted as univocally directed from the peripheries to a centre. If above we have underlined the concept of ‘free spaces’ within a single city, between two or more cities the most convincing model seems to be that of the ‘network’.⁵⁴ Economic and cultural ties connected Mediterranean cities from the Black Sea to Marseille. This network allowed the exchange of information, knowledge, gods, and cults. The question of how knowledge was transmitted can find an answer in the observation that notions travel with people. A variety of itinerant experts, especially doctors, healers, and purifiers, are attested.⁵⁵

An honorific inscription from Hellenistic Samos testifies to the case of a teacher of *humanae litterae* who was traveling and working away from his motherland.⁵⁶

discourse on the ancient Greek world. This idea has been applied to ancient Athens also by Livingstone 2016, 46.

⁵² Bourdieu 1977, 81. Cf. Burke 2016, 38.

⁵³ See Dana 2007, 925–932, on Isocrates and his client coming from the kingdom of Bosphorus. See also Haake 2015.

⁵⁴ On Greek networks, see among others, Malkin 2011. On networks and the transfer of culture see Dana/Savalli-Lestradé 2019.

⁵⁵ Cf. Burkert 1992, 42; Scholz 2004; Haake 2007. See also Massar 2007, 793 f. Massar underlines that during a siege or a war the expertise and knowledge of doctors were in high demand. In his treatise on polyorctica, written at the end of the third century BC, Philo from Byzance specifies that “it is necessary that within (the city) there are the most excellent doctors, experienced in (healing) wounds and extracting darts, and equipped with the appropriate drugs and instruments. (...) Many times this guarantees the safety of the city” (Philo of Byzantium, *Polyorctica* 96,15–26 = C 72–73: δεῖ δὲ καὶ ἰατροὺς χαριεστάτους ἔνδον εἶναι ἐμπειροὺς τραυμάτων καὶ βελῶν ἐξαιρέσεως, ἔχοντας φάρμακα καὶ ὄργανα τὰ προσήκοντα, καὶ τὴν πόλιν χορηγεῖν κηρωτὴν καὶ μέλι καὶ ἐπιδέσμοις καὶ σπληνία, ἵνα μὴ παραπολλύονται οἱ στρατιῶται τραυματῖαι γενόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ταχὺ ὑγιαζόμενοι χρήσιμοι γίνονται ἐν ταῖς ὕστερον γινόμεναις συμβολαῖς προθύμως κινδυνεύοντες διὰ τὰς γενομένας θεραπείας αὐτοῖς καὶ χορηγίας· πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ταῦτα τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ σωτηρία γίνεται).

⁵⁶ IG XII 6,1,128, Samos, 200 BC. On this inscription, see Scholz 2004; Haake 2007, 185–90; Dana 2014.

The city honoured the philosopher Demetrios of Herakleia, who taught privately and in public, and remarkably offered free lessons to those who could not afford to pay the fees.⁵⁷ The decree insists on the παιδεία of the honorand (l. 6, 14: διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ παιδείας; l. 19: [τῆς] καθ' αὐτὸν παιδείας). The term παιδεία serves to praise the high level of culture of Epikrates, as well as to highlight his willingness to make his philosophical knowledge available to others.⁵⁸ The verb σχολάζειν recurs twice: in line 23 (σχολάζων) it means “to deliver a course, a series of lessons,”⁵⁹ while its translation in line 17 (τῶν συσχολαζόντων) is less straightforward. It has been translated as indicating “colleagues in study,” those belonging to “a close-knit group of students” who followed the philosopher, probably in his travels.⁶⁰ Another interpretation sees in this group more generally those who intended “to attend a course (together with other interested listeners).”⁶¹ The two interpretations are perhaps closer than it looks. The larger sense of “attending a lesson together” seems preferable, because the text contrasts lessons held in a private setting, and possibly in a small group or one-to-one, with lessons held in a civic building, like the gymnasium, for a greater number of participants. Against the idea of a close-knit group is the τοῖς ἀπαντῶσι (‘all those who’) that precedes the verb συσχολάζειν: the lessons could be attended by anyone willing to join, and the idea of openness and its voluntary character are restated for the public lessons, to which lack of wealth was not an impediment, although other factors of inequality, such as gender, ethnicity, and slavery, might have restricted the admission to his teachings. However, it is plausible to imagine that those who were instructed in private were able to create a bond with the teacher or a friendlier relationship, and they might even have thought to follow him in his next destination. In my reading of the lines 16–20 of the Greek text, Epicrates, then, benefited the community teaching “privately those who wanted to devote their time to study together with

⁵⁷ IG XII 6,1,128,11–23: [ἐπειδὴ Ἐπικ]ράτης Δημητρίου Ἡρακλε[ώτης περ]ιπατητικὸς πλείονα χρόνον [παρεπιθε]δήμηκεν ἡμῶν ἐν τεῖ πόλει [καὶ διὰ] τῆς αὐτοῦ παιδείας πολλὰ [τοῦς] νέους εὐεργέτηκεν χαρίζεσ[θαι βο]υλόμενος καὶ ἰδία τοῖς ἀπαντῶ[σι τ]ῶν συσχολαζόντων ἑαυτῶι καὶ [κοιν]ῆι τῶι δήμωι μεταδιδοὺς ἀφθόνως [τῆς] καθ' αὐτὸν παιδείας τοῖς βουλομέ[νοι]ς μετέχειν τῶμ πολιτῶν τοῖς τε [μῆ] δυναμένοις τῶν δ[η]μοτῶν τελεῖν [τὸν] ἐκκειμένον ὑφ' αὐτοῦ μισθὸν προῖκα [σχο]λάζων. “Epicrates, son of Demetrios, of Heraclea, a Peripatetic, has for a long time stayed in our city and through his intellectual education in many respects he has much benefited the young men; for, he wanted to help in private life all colleagues in study who came to him, and in public all people. He gave them both generous access to his (philosophical) education by teaching every citizen who wanted to join, and even those fellows who were not able to pay the fee fixed by him, free of charge.” Trans. Scholz 2004, 332–333. Cf. the translation of Dana 2014, 129 n. 53: “désirant se rendre utile aussi bien à titre privé à tous ceux qui ont étudié avec lui qu’à titre public envers le peuple, dispensant avec générosité son enseignement à ceux des citoyens qui voulaient y prendre part et enseignant gratuite-ment à ceux qui ne pouvaient pas acquitter l’indemnité qu’il avait fixée.”

⁵⁸ Dana 2014, 130.

⁵⁹ Dana 2014, 130.

⁶⁰ Scholz 2004, 333–334.

⁶¹ Dana 2014, 130 f.

him, and collectively offering with magnanimity to the civic body the possibility for all those interested to access his erudite knowledge.” This decree finely testifies to the existence of different ways of transmitting παιδεία, and shows how society valued the sharing of culture and decided to display this behaviour as a good practice.⁶²

If an expert was travelling where he was needed, the movement of ideas could also be inverted: someone looking for acquiring expertise was travelling to the place of a great master, with Athens being one of the favourite intellectual destinations. A young person could travel to the city of a famous personality, living there for learning purposes.⁶³ This *peregrinatio academica* could consist of study trips for short or long stays.⁶⁴ From the second century BC onwards, foreigners were admitted into the Athenian ephebic training, as demonstrated by the category ξείνοι (foreigners) in the ephebic catalogues.⁶⁵ An analysis of how the criteria for including or excluding a category of people from educational resources changed over the centuries, with a broader access to free education from the Hellenistic period onwards, would be indeed worth pursuing in a lengthier study. In this occasion, I will limit myself to stressing that, alongside gender and ethnicity, class and social status significantly impacted the distribution of ancient education. The Attic orator Demosthenes, in his famous speech *On the Crown*, presents evidence for unequal paths, when he compares his upbringing with that of his opponent, Aeschines:

In my boyhood, Aeschines, I had the advantage of attending respectable schools: and my means were sufficient for one who was not to be driven by poverty into disreputable occupations. [...] But do you – you who are so proud and so contemptuous of others – compare your fortune with mine. In your childhood you were reared in abject poverty. You helped your father in the drudgery of a grammar-school, grinding the ink, sponging the benches, and sweeping the school-room, holding the position of a menial, not of a free-born boy.⁶⁶

Athenian children from different backgrounds did not have the same educational opportunities, especially regarding literary, rhetorical, and musical education. However, we should not assume that poor and slave children were entirely uneducated. Understanding education in its most extensive sense of ‘knowing something, possessing expert skills’, the picture becomes more wide-ranging. Since slaves had to be useful, to be able to do something useful, they should have known

⁶² For the honours and honorific statues bestowed to learned figures in the early Imperial period, see Chaniotis 2016.

⁶³ Massar 2007, 798.

⁶⁴ Cf. Burke 2016, 48 on students moving across several Universities in the Middle Ages.

⁶⁵ Dana 2014, 123; Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 461–475.479–488.

⁶⁶ Demosthenes 18.257–258: ἔμοι μὲν τοίνυν ὑπῆρξεν, Αἰσχίνῃ, παιδί μὲν ὄντι φοιτᾶν εἰς τὰ προσήκοντα διδασκαλεῖα, καὶ ἔχειν ὅσα χρή τὸν μηδὲν αἰσχροὺν ποιήσοντα δι’ ἔνδειαν, [...] σὺ δ’ ὁ σεμνὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ διαπτύων τοὺς ἄλλους σκοπεῖ πρὸς ταύτην ποῖα τινὶ κέχρησαι τύχη, δι’ ἣν πᾶσι μὲν ὦν μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς ἐνδείας ἐτράφης, ἅμα τῷ πατρὶ πρὸς τῷ διδασκαλεῖῳ προσεδρεύων, τὸ μέλαν τρίβων καὶ τὰ βάρηρα σπογγίζων καὶ τὸ παιδαγωγεῖον κορῶν, οἰκέτου τάξιν, οὐκ ἐλευθέρου παιδὸς ἔχων. See also Wrenhaven 2012, 158 n. 101. Cf. Isaeus 9,28; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8,3,37–39.

how to do it.⁶⁷ Therefore, slaves could be trained, for example, in housekeeping, agriculture, secretary tasks, financial administration, the performance of cults and sacrificial procedures. Furthermore, craftsmen, especially vase painters, possessed probably a basic level of literacy.⁶⁸ If poor and slave children could not be illiterate, they were in any case treated differently from free children, as it is demonstrated by this Hellenistic law regulating the duties of a *gymnasiarch*:

The *gymnasiarch* will be responsible for punishing the undisciplined boys and the *paidagogoi*, if they are not free citizens, with lashes, and if they are free, to impose a fine on them.⁶⁹

Looking at inequality from another perspective, it is essential to remember that slave teachers and mentors taught the rich and educated élite, since being a school-teacher was considered a humble profession.⁷⁰ In both, Greek and Roman households, slaves were caring of the upbringing of children and their moral education as pedagogics and nurses. A grave relief for a “useful nurse” reveals that the profession of educator could be embedded in a personal name, *Paideusis*.⁷¹

The sources and questions taken into consideration in this paragraph have disclosed how processes of education interplayed with the political structure as well as with issues of mobility, ethnicity, and class. Moreover, chronological transformations altered how the community accessed and consumed knowledge, with the social panorama of education and learning of culture changing considerably from the Hellenistic period onwards.

4. Closing thoughts

Trying to identify which were the contents of ancient Greek education, the realms of knowledge, and what it was deemed worth knowing, an answer could be that the core ingredients of youth education were physical activities (*γυμναστική*), music (*μουσική*), and letters (*γράμματα*).⁷² However, teaching and learning processes could range from musical, choreutic, literary, and rhetorical expertise, to technical, military, scientific, and medical knowledge and to the possession of wisdom in ethics and religion. A sharp division in disciplines and sectors is probably anachronistic for ancient Greek culture, and we might recall that the ideal of the Renaissance Man, or *Universalgelehrter*, or *Polymath*, the intellectual who

⁶⁷ Wrenhaven 2015.

⁶⁸ See Immerwahr 2007.

⁶⁹ *SEG* 27,261.B22, Beroia (Macedonia), before 167 BC: κύριος δὲ ἔστω ὁ γυμνασίαρχος καὶ τῶν νῦν [π]αίδων τοὺς ἀτακτοῦντας μαστιγῶν καὶ τῶν παιδαγωγῶν, νῦν ὅσοι ἂν μὴ ἐλεύθεροι ᾦσιν, τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους ζημιῶν (trans. Arnaoutoglou 1998).

⁷⁰ See Wrenhaven 2015, 469–471, on slave as educators.

⁷¹ Athens, National Museum 978, IV BC: Παίδευσις τίτθη χρηστή {ς}. See Schulze 1998; Wrenhaven 2012, 32.

⁷² Cf. Plato, *Respublica*, 403c.

was expert in philosophy as well as medicine and astronomy, was in vogue until Late Antiquity,⁷³ although this was famously criticized by Heraclitus, according to whom “much learning does not teach understanding, otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus.”⁷⁴ Notwithstanding Heraclitus’ scepticism, the fact of being a man with παιδεία, ‘Bildung’, was often praised as a virtue of the deceased in funerary epigrams, as in this Thessalian epitaph dated to the late fourth century BC: “For his παιδεία and his virtue Kallikleas was not inferior to any other mortal, but wasting away he is departed, Kallikleas of Respectable Life.”⁷⁵ Education, however, was not just a feather in somebody’s cap, a proud achievement to show off together with the best qualities of a person. Knowledge and culture were greatly functionalized in pragmatic terms. For example, the acquisition of rhetorical skills was a requirement for being successful in politics; or, a rigorous knowledge of gods and rituals was the *conditio sine qua non* for communicating with the divine and, therefore, having a blessed life. Additionally, in Greek mentality, the learning process could be loaded with a heavy burden. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the chorus sings the moral of the πάθει μάθος: παθήματα, sufferings, are μαθήματα,⁷⁶ lessons to be learned. Deep understanding comes only from being overwhelmed with suffering.⁷⁷ This tragic ethic can be inscribed in the framework here outlined together with the Greek lexicon of education, its agents and spaces, its interconnected mobility, and its inequalities: the overall picture indicates that learning processes were central to the formation of civic, moral, and religious identities in ancient Greek societies.

The longstanding influence of Greek culture induces to reflect upon our systems of education and knowledge. We have noted how in antiquity information travelled and was shared in ‘free spaces’. Today, the ‘free spaces’ for sharing knowledge are immensely multiplied, and, in the digital age, we are immersed in a diffuse network of socialization of culture. However, at the same time a relentless flow of information, the raw material of learning,⁷⁸ flood us – without producing real knowledge and ending with even less culture. As John Burnet wrote already in 1923, “the recent enormous growth of potential knowledge has been accompanied by a corresponding growth of actual ignorance.”⁷⁹ Historians of knowledge and education should not miss the opportunity to fruitfully contribute to the con-

⁷³ Szabat 2015, 261–262.

⁷⁴ Heraclitus, fr. 40: πολυμαθὴν νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει· Ἡσιόδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην αὐτίς τε Ξενοφάνεα καὶ Ἐκαταῖον. Cf. Lloyd 1987, 60–61.

⁷⁵ SEG 35,558, ca. 300 BC, Thessalia (Perrhaibia): παιδείας, ἀρετῆς Καλλικλέας οὐθ’ ἐνὸς ἄλλου/ὕστερισας θνητῶν [ο]ίχῃ ἀποφθίμενος/Καλλικλέας Εὐβίότου. Cf. also 59,593; BE 2010, 361.

⁷⁶ Cf. Fraenkel 1950 on Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 176–178. See Herodotus 1,207: τὰ παθήματα μαθήματα.

⁷⁷ See on this verse Crotty 2001, 55; Sommerstein 2010.

⁷⁸ Burke 2016, 6 applies Lévi-Strauss’ concepts of ‘raw’ and ‘cooked’ respectively to ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’.

⁷⁹ Burnet 1923, 8.

temporary debate on the value of informed knowledge *versus* void information, finding fresh inspirations from antiquity on how education can shape individual and collective socio-cultural identities.

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