

# HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN EDUCATION

BY

EDWARD H. REISNER

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS COLLEGE  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

AUTHOR OF "NATIONALISM AND EDUCATION SINCE 1789"

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## PREFACE

THIS book represents a selection of materials which the writer has found useful in his own teaching of the history of education. For some years it has been in large part the subject of class lectures and discussions and has been put in permanent form so as to be more available to students.

The basis of selection throughout has been to take those aspects of the past which are essential both for an understanding of the developing Western tradition and practice of education and for a broad comprehension of many essential educational problems of the present day. This policy of selection has resulted in the elimination of much material which has customarily been included in textbooks in the history of education, and in the placing of relatively greater emphasis upon certain phases of the past which have been either slighted or altogether neglected. An example in point may be taken from the treatment in the book of the development of Christianity. Here an effort has been made to describe primitive Christianity as a religion and to point out how certain intellectual and psychological elements in the course of the first three centuries of our era came to be a constituent part of the Christian dogma and way of life. It is absolutely essential for a true comprehension of many points of active controversy

in current education that we should understand the way in which those intellectual elements and those psychological viewpoints entered into the dominant intellectual and moral rule of Western life — much more important, indeed, than to know the details of the education of catechumens. As a result, considerable space is given to the evolution of Christian belief, while the catechumenal school as such is not stressed, for the reason that it was a relatively insignificant and wholly temporary episode.

A further characteristic of this treatment is the determined effort to see education as one element in the cross-section of life as a whole. The organization of schools and the subject matter of instruction are treated throughout as related to the organization of society and the intellectual needs of given times. For this reason, much more space has been devoted to sociological considerations than has been customary in histories of education, and an attempt has been made to develop in an elementary way the general historical background against which the more specific educational interest must be projected if it is to be understood.

At the end of each chapter is given a selected bibliography which may serve teachers and students for a more extended development of topics which are briefly treated or only hinted at in the text. The function of a text, in the writer's opinion, should be to present major developments and to invite the student to generous reading of scholarly works and of original educational sources. If the student is stimulated through the intrinsic interest and the

vitality of a companion-book to range widely among great authors, more has been accomplished than when a single book presents him in tabloid form with all the facts relating to given topics or periods. It is intended that this book shall be used as a point of departure for further study rather than as a manual containing an exhaustive collection of facts.

The narrative is limited to the story of Western culture and education and begins with the Greeks of the Homeric Age. It concludes with the full recovery of the classical heritage in the sixteenth century and the making over of secondary education upon the model of Greek and Latin schools. With that accomplishment it seems that a comprehensive unit of Western educational history has been completed, since thereafter new intellectual and social forces come into play which tend as they develop to transcend and in many ways even to oppose the ancient tradition. No effort is made in this book to follow the educational developments of sixteenth century Europe to their manifestation in the American colonies. That may properly be left to a prospective volume which will take up the story of Western education where this one leaves off and in which adequate attention may be given to the characteristic social conditions in which American education has had its setting.

The writer is under obligation to the following publishers for permission to quote passages which are properly attributed in the text: the Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University; the Cambridge University Press; the Clarendon Press, Oxford; the Columbia University Press;

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EDWARD H. REISNER

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# HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN EDUCATION

## CHAPTER I

### OUR HOMERIC ANCESTORS AND THEIR CULTURE

**The Hellenic invasion.**—It is generally held among historians that the first appearance of our cultural ancestors upon the soil of Western Europe occurred about 2000 B.C. At that time a group of tribes, admitting kinship and common origin, came down out of the grasslands of central Asia and overran the peninsula which is now comprised within modern Greece and the islands of the Aegean Sea. Some groups even conquered for themselves footholds on the western coast of Asia Minor. They were on a low culture stage, probably the pastoral, in which they were still to be found for the most part when Homer pictures contemporary civilization among the Greeks about the thirteenth or eleventh century B.C. These barbarian invaders found the land which was to become their home occupied by a race possessing a relatively high cultural development as indicated by archeological remains. But the Greeks were evidently so inferior in their culture that they were unable to appropriate or adapt



to their uses the arts and skills of the conquered Aegeans.

**The Greeks in the Age of Homer.** — The earliest historical record of our Greek forbears is found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer. The first of these epic poems deals with a great ethnic warfare between the Greeks and the Trojans, and the second with the journey of Odysseus in his effort to reach his home on the island of Ithaca upon the conclusion of the campaign against Troy. It is probable that there was a great bard named Homer who arranged old materials of myth and legend in the undying epics named above and whose name has always continued to be associated with the works upon which his genius put a lasting stamp. Homer is thought to have lived about the year 1200 or 1000 B.C., and it is further thought that the commonplace incident and the description of persons, places, customs, and occupations to be found in the epics represent contemporary conditions of existence among the Greeks of his day. Thus while the stories about the gods and the heroes were ancient myth and legend, what he had to say about the occupations and the institutions of the Greeks were those which he knew out of his own experience. Consequently, Homer may be regarded as a fairly authentic source for notions of the culture and the education of the Greeks at about 1000 B.C.

**Economic conditions in Homer's time.** — The Homeric Greeks were in a cultural stage intermediate between the pastoral and the agricultural. They lived in villages, cultivated the surrounding fields,

and pastured their flocks and herds in the adjacent mountain uplands. They carried on their business through the exchange of goods, having no money system, and their wealth consisted in the quantity of gold and copper and grain, the number of sheep or cattle, and the number of garments or utensils or slaves which they possessed. The Homeric Greeks were not at home on the sea and feared long journeys on the water. They stayed at home and allowed the Phoenicians, the great traders of antiquity, to bring them the superior wares of Asiatic manufacture. Occupations were little specialized, the carpenter being practically the only artisan mentioned as carrying on a differentiated occupation. Stonemason work was unclassified labor, and every man was herdsman, farmer, craftsman, soldier, as the day's work demanded. Homer's loving description of the shield of Achilles,<sup>1</sup> and his detailed enumeration of the wonders of the palace and estate of King Alcinous<sup>2</sup> indicate that such artistry as was involved in the former and such a combination of luxuries as was to be found in the latter mark both off as greatly out of the ordinary run of Greek experience in Homer's day.

**Political institutions.** — Corresponding to this primitive economic life was an equally simple form of political administration. Several villages in a region acknowledging a common tribal tie united under the headship of a king, who was at once the leader in war, the head priest of the tribe, and the

<sup>1</sup> See *Iliad*, Book XVIII.

<sup>2</sup> See *Odyssey*, Book VII.

presiding officer at the tribal councils. Little removed from the king in the prestige that came from wealth and ancient lineage were the nobles, who constituted with the king the council which determined all questions of tribal policy. The absence of any strong central political power is illustrated in the inability of King Agamemnon to coerce Achilles into taking his place in the time of battle during the siege of Troy even when there was very evident need of his participation. The commoners were present at the council, but they stood on the outside with apparently only the right to accept in silent disapproval or noisy approbation the decisions of their betters. No taxes were levied, for there was no organization of government which required financial support. There was no written law and there were no courts of justice. Theft and assault were private offenses to be met as seemed best by the person wronged, and the punishment for murder was blood revenge exacted by the relatives of the dead man.

**The rule of the mores.** — The standard of personal worth was set by the established ways of the community. The words "*dike*" and "*themis*" expressed those ways of action which had been "pointed out" and "established." The concepts of what was right to do had had their origin in unrecorded antiquity and represented what the funded experience of centuries had established as a set of satisfactory rules of conduct. In their range these unwritten laws of conduct, for which one may substitute the word "mores" as used by present-day

anthropologists, covered every aspect of family life, property rights, and tribal obligations.

**Education in Homeric times.** — Corresponding to the simple social organization of our Hellenic ancestors as described above, the ways and means used to prepare the boys for participation in adult activities were unorganized and informal. There was no alphabet to master and no written language to acquire. There were no lessons in geography, history, or civics. Nevertheless there was a very real system of education for the Homeric youth and a very effective one for its purpose. Through the tales of parents and nurses, through the admonitions of elders, through the public celebrations of his tribe, and through the estimates placed upon the conduct of his fellow-tribesmen in the court of public opinion, the boy was mastering the fundamental conceptions of right and wrong that applied to his own conduct and was developing a set of attitudes that would coerce him against his individual inclinations in favor of the line of conduct favored by the tribe. In play with his fellows he was learning the arts and skills which would make him proficient in the hardy physical activities of chase and war. Through the ordinary processes of imitation and trial and error learning he was preparing himself for the successful performance of the vocational activities which he would be called on to perform in the course of the adult day's work. Through observation and participation, he learned the rites of sacrifice and worship which it would become his duty to perform as head of a family and member of a tribe. Seated at his

father's side at the feasts which were so prominent a feature of Homeric life, the growing youth would hear discussions of tribal policy and unknowingly absorb a knowledge of the unwritten laws which governed his people and constituted the standards of manly civic virtue. Under the same circumstances he would hear the songs of the minstrels and drink in from the pure stream of Homer's verse or the lines of other forgotten but hardly less competent singers the culture of his race. He would learn to kindle at the recital of the mighty deeds of ancient champions. He would become familiar with the characters of the gods and the goddesses and of the heroes, half human, half divine, from whom sprang the tribe of which he was a blood member and all the other tribes "through Hellas and Argos."

Such an education as the Homeric youth received was approved through long centuries as adequate for its purpose, namely, to bring him up to proficiency in the duties of adult life and to loyalty in his relationships as member of the community and the tribe.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING<sup>1</sup>

I. LANG, A., LEAF, W., and MYERS, E., *The Iliad of Homer* (prose translation), Macmillan, London, 1892; BUTCHER, S. H., and LANG, A., *The Odyssey of Homer* (prose translation), Macmillan, London, 1924; PALMER, G. H., *Odyssey* (prose translation) Houghton Mifflin Co.,

<sup>1</sup> The arrangement of the "Suggestions for Further Reading" represents to some extent the author's notion of the desirable order to be followed by the student in his approach to the subject dealt with in

1908. — Nothing will serve so well for reproducing the conditions of Homer's times as a reading of his own works.

2. KELLER, A. G., *Homeric Society*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1902. — This is a systematic account of society in Homer's day.

3. SEYMOUR, T. D., *Life in the Homeric Age*, Macmillan, 1907. — A more detailed study of the Homeric period.

the chapter. Works treating the period or topic in such a way as to provide political, economic, and intellectual background for educational conditions are placed first in order, and of such works the more elementary precede the more extensive and thorough accounts. Works dealing in a systematic way with educational history come next. Special treatments of particular topics, biographies, source materials, and works in foreign languages are placed last, without any effort at arrangement. The characterization following the title of each work, if not the title itself, may serve as a guide to the reader's interest.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF FIVE HUNDRED YEARS, 1000-509 B.C.

**A social and cultural revolution.** — For the purposes of this narrative it does not seem essential to trace out in great detail the sociological and cultural changes that occurred among our Hellenic forbears in the period of five hundred years following the age of Homer. It is very important, however, that we should sense the thoroughgoing revolution in the Greek way of life which took place within that time. At the beginning of the period the Greeks were an exploited culture group dependent on their Asiatic neighbors for the finer art products of every sort; at the end of it they were the greatest traders of the Mediterranean world, carrying their inimitable wares to the lower culture groups which lived on the frontiers of civilization. In 1000 B.C. the Greeks were following the rule of the mores under a hereditary aristocratic form of tribal government; in 509 B.C. the city-state had developed as the universal pattern of political government, and in Athens, at least, the government had been consigned through a written constitution to the control of all the citizens. In 1000 B.C. the only literary form was the epic poem; in 509 B.C. various types of literary expression had been elaborated, philosophy was in

process of rapid development, and the greatest century of intellectual activity in the first twenty-five centuries of our Western tradition was just being ushered in. In 1000 B.C. the Greeks were without a written language and a school; in 509 B.C. they had a formal system of literary education and had consciously organized their educational institutions in the service of the state. These and many other changes no less considerable constitute the subject of more intimate consideration in the present chapter.

**Changes in economic life.** — We have seen the Homeric Greeks unskilled in navigation and afraid of the sea, but this condition did not continue. They became inventive shipwrights, improving the traditional seacraft in size and power and seaworthiness, and adding sails. In their better ships they became competent, if not daring, seamen. The Greeks of Homer's day were dependent upon the older civilizations to the East for their manufactured wares, but they soon ceased to be in the position of industrial inferiority. They borrowed the arts and skills of their neighbors and improved upon them. They became a great industrial people, buying and selling in the commercial marts and carrying their goods to every part of the Mediterranean coast. No longer was the system of barter adequate to their enlarged commercial operations and they began the practice of printing coins for use in exchange. This brought into existence a new kind of wealth, namely, capital wealth, and produced a new class of rich men who depended for their social



position, not upon ancient lineage and landed property, but upon riches recently won in industrial pursuits.

**Social trends of the period.** — From our knowledge of the profound change which has been brought about in Western society by the development of the factory system in the last century and a half, we are prepared to expect fundamental changes in Greek society as the result of the industrial revolution which took place in the period under discussion. The old, easy-going way of life, half pastoral, half agricultural, was gone, and with it had gone the stable social classifications of old tradition and the comparatively equitable sway of the ancient "mores." The rich became richer and the poor became poorer. The rich extended their control over government and social institutions to the disadvantage of their less fortunate fellow-citizens. Many of the latter of the class of freemen drifted into a condition of servitude, while others forsook the homeland and sailed overseas to make new homes for themselves on the frontier of the Greek world. A cityward trend of the population set in as the commercial and industrial life became of increasing importance. There was also taking place a large proportionate increase in the total population of slaves, who were coming very generally to be the "hands" of industrial and commercial enterprise.

The industrial change just described had a profound influence on the Greek attitude toward manual labor. In the primitive Homeric days, there was very general participation in the performance of the