

# Educational Narratives as a Pedagogical Paradigm: the Epics of Homer

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*This paper aims to analyze Homer's epics as educational narratives, to identify how integral yet many-faceted is the "Big Story" ("Iliad" and "Odyssey") and the background formed for the pedagogical paradigm of the Antique Age. In particular, the philosophic, religious, ethical, poetic, physical, and aesthetic aspects of the epics are discussed, and views on learning, teaching and a learner are focused on. The aim of the paper is to compare the paradigm, emerging from Homer's epics, to our modern day understanding of teaching, learning, and a learner, underpinned in particular by S. Sterling's (2011) view on the mechanical and ecological paradigm in education. We bring into discussion also the notion of sustainability as a moral precept and education for sustainability, which is widely discussed nowadays, as many authors point out the crisis of values in our societies and educational systems.*

**Key words:** *Homer's epics, educational paradigm, learning, teaching, values, education for sustainability*

## Introduction

D.W. Orr (1994, p. 5) states that the kind of education we need today means recognizing that the crisis of global ecology is first and foremost a crisis of values, ideas, perspectives, and knowledge, which makes it a crisis **of** education and not **in** education. Deriving from that understanding, we aim to look at the past what are the lessons to be learned from our ancestors, Ancient Greeks in particular.

Antique mythology is rich in knowledge. The epics of Homer are probably the best known and also one of the best examples to illustrate this theme. The Iliad and the Odyssey have reached us in the written form, while many others have partially disappeared in the mists of time. The subject

matter of the epics is so all-representative and educational that in its entirety life is covered. All questions and everyday issues for contemporary Greeks are discussed here. These narratives are simple and clear enough to be understood, yet mysterious enough to encourage further studies. They were heard constantly, they were memorized and repeated.

In the 6th century BC, Peisistratos, the ruler of Athens, formed a special committee to write down Homer's poems "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey", already well-known and popular among people. These were to be performed in ceremonies, particularly to honour the goddess Athena. Wandering minstrels had sung them earlier for hundreds of years throughout Greece. Contemporary Greeks consid-

ered the two poems not only as well-loved sagas but also as a concentrate of Greek culture and wisdom. They constituted the basic education for all Greeks. With reason, Plato called Homer “the teacher of all Greece”.

Long before Peisistratos, the works of Homer had been the basis of oral education, they were memorised, his heroes had been the Greeks’ idols for centuries. They are the oldest documented proof of Greek upbringing and education.

Mythical Homer is believed to have lived in the 8th century BC, but his “Iliad” and “Odyssey” are a compilation of legends collected over a long period of time. They represent the values, world vision and the ethics of ancient Greeks (Rühfel, 1984, p. 39). Nowadays, facing the challenges of social injustice and environmental degradation, we have to look back to the values that support dignity and balance not only within ourselves but in our societies as well. This is a matter for education and educationalists; therefore, we aim to learn from the lessons of the past, in particular of the Ancient Antique.

Looking at Homer’s texts, we must remember that Homer was a poet, not a historian. Fantasy plays a large part in his epics – he joins together the exploits of ancient heroes, the deeds of gods (interfering in earthly life), animals with the ability to speak, and other miracles (Geiss, 1981, p. 164). In spite of this fact, Homer’s works were the foundation stone of classical Greek education traditions (Bock, 1965, p. 23). Investigating the present approaches to schooling, when we look at, e.g., Sterling’s (2001–2011) framework for the holistic / ecological view on education, we see that the spiritual and creative aspects

of a learner are also regarded as part of a person’s development, so understanding “speaking animals” brings us closer to the ecological views of the past and present.

In the present paper, we are not aiming to distinguish the emergence of different educational paradigms during human history, but we seek similarities with the views on education that have been discussed during recent decades, namely in the context of challenges our modern societies face. Many authors and world leaders point out that the biggest challenge of the 21st century is sustainable development and hence education for sustainability (Babiuk, Falkenberg, 2010). Education for Sustainability as a priority has been manifested, e.g., in the UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014). The general goal of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development includes integrating the values of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. For example, Cortese (2003, p. 16) states that we need serious changes in our thinking and values when we aim at the reconciliation of ecological balance, social justice, and the well-being of all species on the Earth (Moore, 2005, referring to Fien, 2002). Moreover, Ospina (2000) points out that sustainability is a moral precept rather than a scientific concept.

When discussing sustainability as a matter of values and responsibility, we come to the question what kind of educational systems are necessary to focus on schooling in a broader sense (Raus, 2013, p. 452); therefore, remembering the knowledge and values of the past generations are necessary to build our sustainable futures.

## Methods

In the study of history, there are principles and scientific methods from which there is derived the paradigm of scientific knowledge, i.e. a model for presenting a problem and finding solutions. These principles include the theory of civilisation, first presented by the German scientist G. Rökkert, which acknowledges the parallel cultural coexistence of geographic, ethnographic, social-financial, and cultural parts. Con-

temporary supporters of this theory are of the opinion that the man stands at the centre of civilisation and that the study of history must be conducted at that level, using human measures.

Contemporary history uses also structure-functional analysis theories which take a combination of the accepted norms as a basis of the structure forcing people to fulfil the social system's functional requirements.

*Table 1. Comparison of mechanistic and ecological educational paradigms: core values and views of teaching, learning, and a learner (Stephen Sterling, 2001–2011)*

<i>Core values</i>	
Preparation for economic life	Participation in all dimensions of the sustainability transition (social, economic, environmental)
Selection or exclusion	Inclusion and valuing of all people
Formal education	Learning throughout life
Knowing as an instrumental value	Being / becoming (intrinsic / instrumental values)
Competition	Co-operation, collaboration
Socialization, integrating to fit	Autonomy-in-relation
Effective learning	Transformative learning
Standardization	Diversity with coherence
Accountability	Responsibility
Specialization	Integrative understanding
Faith in “the system”	Faith in people
Modernity	Ecological sustainability

<i>Learning and pedagogy</i>	
<i>View of teaching and learning</i>	
Transmission	Transformation
Product-oriented	Process, development, action-oriented
Emphasis on teaching	Integrative view: teachers also learners, learners also teachers
Functional competence	Functional, critical and creative competencies valued
<i>View of learner</i>	
As a cognitive being	As a whole person with a full range of needs and capacities
Deficiency model	Existing knowledge, beliefs and feelings valued
Learners largely undifferentiated	Differentiated needs recognized
Valuing intellect	Intellect, intuition and capability valued
Logical and linguistic intelligence	Multiple intelligences
Teachers as technicians	Teachers as reflective practitioners and change agents
Learners as individuals	Groups, organisations, and communities also learn

Yet again, in the study of the history of culture, theories of structuralists (K. Levi-Strauss, M. Foucault) are used, which emphasise word-symbol structures as a base.

Brockmeier and Harre consider narratives to be the most general category of linguistic output. According to them, this theory should be used primarily as a number of instructions and norms in communications, regulations giving meaning to experiences, scientific opinion formation and procedures for apology or self-justification, etc. Although the narrative appears to be a specific linguistic and cognitive art, it should be seen as condensed rules encompassing all that is harmonious and well-functioning in a culture (Brockmeier, Harre, 2000, p. 378).

Here, the two Big Stories have been analysed according to mentality history, taking into account the know-how of structure-functional experience. Attempts are made to present general educational norms typical of the period – these shaped the model of man in antiquity...

We also follow the framework proposed by Stephen Sterling, comparing the mechanistic and the ecological / holistic paradigms in education. According to Sterling, the ecological paradigm in education prevails when we discuss the sustainable functioning of our societies and educational systems. Probably the table below best summarizes Sterling's comparison of the existing mechanistic, sometimes also referred to as instrumental, views on education and a new – ecological – paradigm. He shows the difference in the core values, views towards learning, teaching, and the learner of these two, somewhat conflicting, paradigms. He brings into attention that ecological views on education

do not regard preparation for economic life as a primary target for schooling, but a more holistic approach is necessary. A balanced view on a whole person development, education as a value by itself, self-actualization as a natural, biological need of a “good” person (Maslow, 1971) is being focused on. What are the parallels we can draw here from Homer is the question to be discussed further.

### **The Philosophical and Religious Aspect**

Greek philosophy and religion fashioned the world vision of its populace to be somewhat different from other cultures (Egypt, Sumeria, India, China). This was caused mainly by conditions of nature – comparatively stunted mountainous land, much sunlight, and the influence of the sea. The sea causes Greeks to be active merchants, the stunted earth teaches them to be satisfied with meagre food (moderation is the main feature of the ethics of the period), the sun provides energy for life and the opportunity to live “in the open”, to see details clearly.

An important keyword for social interactions was polis – all was exposed and visible, everyone knew everyone else, and everyone had an opinion about everything and everybody. Social life was agonal (competitive), where people constantly competed with each other; this caused stress in conflicting situations (sport, rhetoric, beauty, theatre, song, and many other fields). Yet one could get a rematch, find and choose an activity one excelled in, but most importantly it taught ethics (fair play, honest umpiring, good loser). Slavery provided free time and opportunity to educate themselves for free citizens. Male

orientation shaped a militaristic community which idolized men as heroes and citizens of high ethical values. Democracy, unknown in previous regimes, was born in Greece.

Homer's poetry mirrors the Greek perception of death and the after-life. This differs from other Big Stories. Here also gods are at work, but death is more distant than in other narratives – it is hidden in mist. Dead souls exist as misty shadows in the underworld on Elysian fields. It seems as though the description of the underworld was left unfinished. The Greeks are interested in life here-and-now. They want to enjoy the sun, beauty, and harmony. A Greek hero was supposed to die with a smile on his lips. Those who have angered the gods must endure pain, but heroes and ordinary folk are left to float as spirits. Homer describes Hades in detail (when Odysseus goes there) and thus shapes Greek life philosophy.

### **Homer's Typical Greek**

Homer describes the typical Greek, both male and female. A Greek is clever, shrewd, wise, forward-looking. A merchant is prone to cheat and to never forget his profit margin. Odysseus is such a typical Greek. His maternal grandfather (Anticleia's father) was Autolykos, son of Hermes, a renowned thief, who received from his father (a god) the amazing powers of shrewdness and the ability to handle any situation. He was able to make every stolen object invisible and to make promises so cleverly that he did not need to fulfil them and yet not actually break them. Odysseus inherited his shrewdness from him.

When reading "The Odyssey", we find numerous examples how Odysseus (clev-

er, resourceful, yet careful, considering all options) escapes all, even the most hopeless, situations. He forces even the goddess Athena to admire his cleverness. At the same time Odysseus is inquisitive, ignoring all risks. He always wants to explore everything totally and is the last to jump on the fleeing ship, to the consternation of his friends.

Later, after Greece is conquered, the Greeks remain clever in finding the opponents' weaknesses and using these for their own purpose. They are sofists, ritors, literate, critical and philosophic. Later, under Roman rule, they become scorned *graeculi* – clowns, opportunists, jokers and tricksters, who use their resourcefulness to live off others. The Greeks knew how to adapt and not take life too seriously. Herodotos writes of the Greeks: from ancient times Hellenes differed from barbarians by their cleverness and lack of stupid credulousness. The Hellenes' imagination was always controlled by wisdom, their feelings by reason, lusts by considered thought. They never considered only one viewpoint, for every situation they had many reactions. Thus, their work had a specific character and speciality (Guiraud, 1995, p. 14).

Despite legends and traditions playing an important role in life, the Hellenes' freedom was not appreciably restricted. Free thought, flights of fantasy, and the subconscious sincerity of feeling allowed the Hellenes to ignore anything hindering their natural development. Their human traits were not influenced by anything artificial. These traits were apparent in all their attitudes and creative works. The researcher of Ancient Greece, P. Guiraud, quotes the French historian Ernest Renan (1823–1892) who considers cheerfulness

and a carefree attitude as characteristics of the Hellenes: the Greeks, like children, lived life so merrily that they never entertained notions to curse their gods or to consider nature as unfair towards humans (Guiraud, 1995, p.15). He also speaks of Greek eternal youth and cheerfulness, the traits always present in the Hellenes.

In addition to heroes who were most important in this militaristic society, Homer also vividly describes the artisans (the beauty and perfection of their work), peasants, and urban dwellers. He comments on everyone's behaviour: Odysseus' nursemaid, his swineherd, Penelope's housekeeper and other servants are "loyal", a shirt is of "fine cotton", a bed is "nicely shaped", arms "glitter" and by their very appearance frighten the enemy.

In Greek society, women were controlled by men and had to live in the background. A woman was always dependent on either her father, husband, brother or son. In this society, which was really a "men's club", a woman had only two options: a virtuous wife or a courtesan. In either case she was subservient to men. As a wife, she was enclosed in a *gynekeion*, and her main function was to bear healthy children, raise them according to the moral code, and to manage her household.

As a courtesan, she was educated to the standard of men, but was compelled to entertain them using her charm and grace, her dancing, music, singing and poetry-reading abilities, and to treat everyone in a dignified manner both verbally and in writing.

A good housewife was industrious. She set a good example to her servants by her conduct and work, particularly handicrafts (Yalom, 1997, p. 19). For Homer, Penelope (the wife of Odysseus) is the model of

a diligent, wise, industrious and faithful wife. She runs the household during her husband's absence, may not evict suitors, but seeks ways of thwarting them (weaving cloth in the daytime and unravelling it in the night, so that it will never be completed). She is modest, dignified, and patient. Her son, Telemachos, feels it his duty to supervise and criticise his mother. In his father's absence or after his death, the son is the protector and manager of his mother.

Andromache is another perfect Greek woman. The scene of her leave-taking from her husband, Hector, is one of the most moving in the "Iliad" (VI, 440–500).

However, the seemingly downtrodden Greek woman had sufficient opportunities to fulfil her ambitions. Firstly, she was the undisputed mistress of her house. All slaves and members of her household deferred to her, she supervised all their work and activities (Setälä, 1990, p. 72). Her home was her castle. However, since she seldom left the house, all gossiping and carping were conducted in the house, to the denouncement by her husband.

### **A Model of a Perfect Hero**

Homer created a perfect man / hero, a soldier and aristocrat. Throughout the history of Ancient Greece, heroism is of utmost importance. The most colourful examples are King Leonid the head of 300 Spartans, and Themistokles, the hero of the battle of Salamis and the builder of the Athenian fleet. Heroism surpasses all, conflicts with rulers or even treason (Themistokles joined the Persians, being offended by the indifference of the Athenians (Sapronov, 1997, p. 237)).

It was yet again Homer who described the birth of chivalry. The rulers of Ancient

Greece were kings, who were served by soldiers. These were old men, revered for their age and experience. Then, there was a group of young men, the king's bodyguards, who lived in the court, were the king's companions and ate at his table. Such conditions taught a soldier loyalty, camaraderie, courage, and honour – all greatly influencing Greek education and morality. This old social-political structure had many analogues in Western Medieval times, especially in the Karoling period. The young men received property for serving to their master. The heroes of Homer are no longer brutal soldiers but (to a degree) nobility – knights. They live their life at court, surround their leader, serve at banquetting tables, fill pitchers (often described by Homer). All this service is carried out with pride and self-confidence following definite customs and rituals, in contrast to the work of ordinary servants. Only leadership, religious rites, war or sport are suitable for such heroes. Sometimes they manage their own households (Ossovskaja, 1986, p. 40).

Homer's heroes were also fully aware of nature and lived according to its rules. By then, heredity (parentage) had become and important, Homer stresses this continually. The genealogy of many heroes is presented. Nobility is endowed by birth and cannot be taken away even following bad conduct. Physical beauty is also part of nobility. Paris is forgiven his cowardice and boastfulness because he is extraordinarily handsome.

Homer's heroes are especially aware of the beauty and proportions of the human body. A man's appearance must radiate strength, he must be an athlete and be victorious in all battles. This requires skill and

training, for which free time is needed. An athletic body is thus the mark of a chieftain or aristocrat.

Homer's hero is notable for his pleasing speech and manners. He avoids attention, overlooks teasing, but is always on guard for his honour: the biggest insult is a charge of cowardice. His main aim was to achieve fame: fathers reminded their sons of that fact. Achilles prefers great fame in youth, followed by early death, to a long life in dishonour.

The Greeks feared to seem weak to others. Voluntary self-abasement is the biggest demoralisation a Greek can imagine; e.g., Priamos goes to Achilles to beg for the return of his son's corpse. Achilles cannot refuse in the face of such self-abasement.

A hero had to be conspicuous for his charity. The duty of a household was to always give valuable gifts to visitors; similarly, a warlord had to be generous in dividing booty among his warriors.

The normal environment of a hero is war, conquest, and violence towards weaker parties, entailing continual struggle to ascertain who is better or stronger. This teaches respect for an opponent in a duel. Before a duel, the opponent is praised (to achieve higher honour when he is defeated), then he is mocked and threatened to frighten him. But all contests must be fair, no backstabbing or flight by night is allowable.

A pause is always made during a battle to collect and bury the fallen of both sides. To leave the vanquished dead to birds and animals is most abhorred – the dead cannot then enter Valhalla (Antigone's theme).

The ancient Greeks greatly resented ingratitude. Diomedes (in "Iliad") derides Paris who stole the wife of his host,

Menelaos: “Cowardly seducer!” etc. (XI, 385).

In Homer’s time, the rules of waging war were: have mercy on the submissive who begs for mercy; treat ambassadors with respect; abide by the rules of armistice; let the dead be buried and do not belittle the fallen enemy.

Thus, Homer’s hero was a noble warrior, but this could not be achieved by birth alone. He had to be educated and taught the rich culture of the era. This is the start of arete the moral perfection (Myers, 1960, p. 87).

### **The Importance of Education**

The legends of Homer’s heroes contain many stories of the education of young men and also of their teachers. A good example is a wise kentauro Chiron included in many legends. He raised many heroes including Achilles and Jason. The Greeks portrayed Chiron teaching Achilles in literature and sculpture. Many subjects were taught – firstly sports suitable for an aristocrat (hunting, javelin throwing, swimming), but also courtly arts (playing the lyre, communication, knowledge of legends and their presentation). Achilles reportedly even had studied surgery and pharmacology, the wounded Eurypylos says to Patroklos (XI, 828).

Students had to be good-mannered – etiquette had already been formulated. Students were observed and compared to one another. Attitude, speech, intonation, dignity, and respectfulness were all important.

Phoenix was another well-known teacher portrayed in “The Iliad”. He declared: “I made you what you are!” He was to follow Achilles even when they left

Troy to advise him on all matters. Teachers were experienced white-haired heroes whose words were heard respectfully when war plans were drawn up; they arbitrated in disputes between young heroes and pacified the impetuous.

### **Physical Training**

For the Greeks, physical culture, inseparable from spiritual, became a vital part of civilisation. One of the oldest forms of contest was wrestling. Homer describes it in “The Iliad” (XXIII, 725, 730). It was forbidden to cause pain, but the Greeks trained strangling techniques and blows using knees and head. Greek training had already been “scientifically” analysed – various stresses and the work of muscle groups were explored. Extreme situations were tested.

Wrestling was part of the pentathlon (sprinting, jumps with weights, javelin, discus, and wrestling (Willets, 1957, p. 25). Wrestling was the last (to show speed and skill in the opening stages). Umpires decided the victor. Victory was not declared if one section of the contest was badly performed – the Hellenes believed that the aesthetics of a competition were more significant than a mere mechanical counting of points.

When a boy entered the gymnasion, his parents no longer checked his conduct, but specialists took it over. Such education was in the interests of the state. The main stress was on military training – this taught obedience and responsibility. Exercises began with simple plays and contests, becoming progressively more complicated. Besides the pedotribes, in the palestra there were several helpers who kept order, checked on good behaviour and the diets

of the young men, oiled the bodies of contestants. There was a strict discipline in the palestras – a special focus was put on the ability to conduct oneself in a dignified manner in public.

Gymnastics was a vital form of sport practised everywhere – it surpassed even tribal, ritual, and military boundaries. One form of gymnastics was *orchestrica* (derivation of the word “orchestra”) i.e. the art of movement with sound and rhythm. This was expressed in various games, dances, acrobatics and pantomime – the beginnings of theatre. War dances, sword and javelin play, and acrobatics are still important in the training of actors in many theatres worldwide.

A second form of gymnastics was *palaestrica* – exercises carried out in the palestras (training halls or open places). This was the basis of both military training and sport, the latter becoming more renowned.

The Greeks can be considered the founders of modern sport. A long sporting life was applauded. Olympic Games were held every five years (on the first full moon after the summer equinox), but in the interval many other games took place, e.g., the Pythia, Nemea or Isthmos games. A *periodonicus*, who had won all games over a specific time-frame, was held in special regard. Military service was compulsory for Hellenes up to age 60, and the oldest fought alongside the youngest. There were only two age categories in sport: youths up to 18 years and adults. In some cases, fathers and sons fought in the same contests as adults – Greek men did not marry at an early age but usually in their thirties.

In general, Greek sport was very close to warfare. The preparedness for war in Greece was due to *orchestrica* and *palaestrica*. This did not entail high achieve-

ments in single fields but a complex series of extensive and continuous exercise regimes in all fields. “Athlete” and “warrior” were very similar concepts in Greece; both were important but did not quite overlap (Diesner, 1985, p. 13).

Individuals who had not consistently exercised or trained were still able to act effectively in extreme conditions due to their high level of spiritual and corporal training earlier. A story is told of a Greek sponge-diver (during the Greco-Persian wars) who with his daughter swam in a stormy night to the Persian fleet. The two cut the anchor chains of several ships to have them founder on the rocks. Then they swam to the Greek fleet and informed them of the number of enemy ships and their position. They had swum more than 15 km, in a stormy sea, mostly under water so that they would not be noticed.

There was the training of *hemerodromes* who were messengers transmitting oral instructions to where they were needed. They travelled on foot (running), later on horseback, transversing over 50 km a day running and 100–120 km riding, on occasions reaching 200 km, and this in mountainous regions. A *hemerodrome* travelled without weapons, so as to move more speedily, but also to emphasize his peaceful mission. Such a messenger was not to be stopped by anyone; that would have been not only a crime but also a violation of sacred trust. A messenger could die of fatigue or from wounds only after delivering his message (as at the battle of Marathon). Often, a messenger also collected and transmitted extra information; he fulfilled the role of a spy.

As already mentioned, the Greeks trained men to be good citizens. The aim of physical training was to raise not only

good athletes but also disciplined, strong-willed warriors to protect the homeland.

Every Greek aspired to a good physical condition from early childhood to old age. The agonal society provided opportunities to show oneself in battle, various contests, ritual ceremonies, and in public training halls. Winning entailed high regard and honours from society – it was every youngster's dream.

Achilles was prepared to stay on the battle field alone (XI, 407).

Man's physical development, contests and successes were closely related to ethics. A Greek hero had to reach moral perfection through physical development. His teachers were the example of his forebears and many sacred rites. Sport was more than just physical training – it meant the achievement of perfection, surpassing others in strength and speed – and victory. A Greek had been blessed by the gods and now had a responsibility to act accordingly. For instance, before Olympic Games sportsmen had to swear an oath that they were of Greek parentage, had not been convicted of any moral misdemeanour, and had trained for at least ten months. A first-timer in the Olympics had to have instruction for 30 days beforehand in Olympia. Any sort of trickery in the contests was forbidden (McIntosh, 1987, p. 19).

On the one hand, sport was meant to produce a strong and reliable warrior, where going to battle was a matter of life or death. On the other hand, all contests were games meant to produce humans of great morality. A contest had to be fair. Even today we recognise the notion of a fair play. A loser had to acknowledge that his opponent had won and was his superior. Umpires had to be impartial. Spectators were many, all judged the competi-

tion. The victor had always to be the best (*История боевых искусств*, 1996, p. 28)

The honours bestowed on the victor were huge. In an agonal society, this was the main stimulus. The victor was triumphantly received at home, he was released of all duties, held the place of honour at all ceremonies, was given monetary rewards. The vanquished was laughed at, mocked, and ridiculed. Any contestant had also to consider this latter scenario in case he lost. However, the main factor in contests was producing both, in contestants and spectators, the feeling that a holy ritual was under way. War-loving Greeks were not permitted to use weapons at that time. As soon as a trumpet sound had declared the Games open, *ekeheria* (holy peace) was to be observed. Tests of stamina had to be conducted safely. Since such games were numerous and occurred often, Greek warriors developed a sense of fair combat on the battlefield, of treating the vanquished nobly and respectfully.

### **The Importance of Rhetoric**

Greek poetry, especially the reading of Homer's epics, constituted a large part of teaching and education. How and why? How to interpret them? A student's task was not only to learn these texts by heart and to be able to recite them at religious ceremonies and even funerals, but also to get a deeper understanding of ethical concepts (Rakov, 1998, p. 15). Moralistic texts presented no problem for either teacher or student, but those which showed both good and evil had to be examined so that the student could choose the proper path in life.

Thus, not only the literary worth of a text was considered, but (from an educa-

tional viewpoint) also its theme and the deeds of the heroes. Reading the authors of antiquity guided the student to ethical perfection so as to serve his country. Philosophers continually remind their contemporaries of the importance of moral teaching and discipline.

Every Greek needed to debate; this was learned and rehearsed; good speakers were highly regarded. The art of rhetoric was needed in court: Greek court procedures had no place for prosecution or defence lawyers. Everyone had to defend himself, had to explain clearly his case to the judges. Public appearances at various rituals where speeches had to be made to honour gods and heroes were another compulsory duty for the Greeks. There were large audiences who compared the debaters or speech-makers. Army commanders had to learn how to inspire their troops with fiery rhetoric. The effectiveness of an army depended greatly on the commander. Isocrates wrote that moral and ethical criteria were defined by rhetoric, justice was contraposed to non-justice, even shame (История мировой культуры 1998: 24).

### **The Teaching of the Sense of Beauty**

Both “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey” contain emotional descriptions of beauty and harmony. These are of nature (particularly sea-scapes), of castles, of objects, e.g., “The Iliad” XI, 628–635.

Gods live in splendid conditions, yet their life mirrors that of mortals; e.g., a Greek noblewoman is presented in XIV, 169–186 or XIV, 214–217.

Beauty to a Greek is harmony. It is a matching of sounds, a correct construction of a speech, correct proportions of the body, wearing of clothes with dignity,

gestures, fine workmanship of jewellery, interior design or the proportions of the columns in a temple.

Good taste is the speciality of flourishing classical Greece, both for rich or poor. Nothing archeologists have unearthed for the era is ugly. Painted utensils, terracotta statuettes, oil lamps, metal objects, any products may have been made on the periphery and not be of the highest quality, yet all are in good taste. Similarly, classical Greek architecture is all in good taste, all temples, palestras, theatres and public buildings display perfect harmony.

This era also condemned vulgar exhibitions of drunkenness, gluttony, extremes of clothing or jewellery. Harmony was stressed everywhere, it was admired and lauded, its achievement was an aim in itself for a militaristic society.

### **“Greek Love” as an Educational Narrative**

From the beginning of Greek civilization, a young nobleman was taught by an older man. These civilizations have been an example to Europe in many fields and for a long time. This also applies to education, although the methods of Athens and Sparta (and the differences between them) are mostly explored. The ideas of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Democritus were the forerunners of later vogues and methods of education. They spoke of a subject avoided by educators of today – yet then it was self-evident. Moreover, it was a great force for the heightening of moral standards. We are speaking of love between men or “Greek love”. According to our standards, this is a deviation from normal sexuality, belonging to the fields of psychologists and psychiatrists. Greece has

sometimes been called a “paradise for perverts”, but the Greek vocabulary and laws of many states show that homosexuality was frowned upon even there. Thus, the subject is complicated and controversial. Firstly, one must distinguish between different moral standards in differing places at different times.

To understand the concept and place of love in Greece, the word is expressed as four notions:

*amor* – emotional, romantic, often platonic love when the beloved is worshipped from afar and when the lover himself is exalted and made noble;

*eros* – erotic love;

*filia* – love between father and son, extended also to teacher and student.

*agape* – love of one’s neighbor (taken over by Christianity).

All these aspects of love are more or less accepted worldwide.

Ancient Greece celebrated love between men, more specifically between an adult man and a young man. Thus, “*filia*” was prevalent. Usually, the beloved was a youth of 15–19 years. It may be assumed that such relationships could have sometimes led to unnatural sexuality. Yet these complex feelings influenced civilisation as a whole and led to a high moral code. Affection between men was a notable trait for their behaviour, indicating a true Hellene as opposed to a barbarian – it was the basis of nobility for the civilised mankind.

This phenomenon was mainly military in nature. Warriors showed camaraderie, solidarity, and friendship. Greece and Sparta retained their ancient petrified military methods – found also elsewhere – but Doric states gave them, if not the main, then more official recognition. Homosexual practices

arose in the military where physical development was utmost and where men were apart from women. A military environment not only stressed manly traits such as strength, skill, and speed, but also lauded loyalty, nobility, and pride. Manly pride was particularly cultivated, and there was a tendency to undervalue a man’s love towards a woman, this being considered a sign of weakness.

Homer’s works mirror such educational forms. The best examples are the heroes Achilles and Patroklos. Achilles addresses his beloved Patroklos as “my most beloved companion” (XI, 608). Both adore each other, both crave the attention and approval of their friend, both will tell each other the truth to their face. Homer vividly describes Achilles’ grief when his friend is killed (XVIII, 98..., XVIII 80..., XXIII, 223).

The soul of Patroklos begs Achilles: Put our bones together to lie in the same grave (XXIII, 83).

These customs are the heralds of chivalry, showing love between men to be first and foremost camaraderie in war. Socrates and his cohorts considered an army of paired friends the most terrible and most invincible. The pairs inspired in one another heroism, self-sacrifice – they supported one another. A warrior who had lost his partner in a battle was ruthless in his revenge.

In ancient times, love between two men was considered positive and educational. Such a relationship did not stress sexuality, even though it sometimes did exist. “Greek love” was foremost a young man’s aim to become an adult in every sense – his friend’s support was necessary and welcomed. It was a matter of honour. The

aim was to be non-feminine, to become a perfect man. Such an outlook produced the appropriate methods of education. Socrates called romantic love and sexual lust opposites. The aim was to achieve perfection, to reach the ideal state, the ability to control oneself, to find an equilibrium, to deny oneself if necessary.

The difference in age between the two lovers produced an unbalanced relationship, not unlike that between the oldest and youngest brothers in a family. The admiration of the younger partner would have ennobled the older. A man stimulated by the youngster's love became his teacher, felt a desire to impart his knowledge. The older man realised his fatherly instincts through his spiritual guidance. According to Freud, this is a wish to immortalise oneself through another. The Greeks raised this wish to an educational level. The aim of love was to create beauty and perfection.

The education of a young man by an older one was a substitute for a father's role – a father often lived away from his family. A father's role was minimal in the raising of his children. Thus, an older partner was needed to teach, raise, be a role-model. The young man respected, admired, obeyed and imitated – which made him grow to be a man.

Such pairings were not hidden but were openly demonstrated in everyday life, at meetings and ceremonies. The older partner took his young friend to suitable functions and ceremonies, had to observe him in the gymnaseion, helped him to gradually enter social life. The teacher openly praised his pupil and the pupil his teacher. To the Greeks, this was not only a normal, standard practice, but also the best way to raise an aristocrat. It was a way of life.

The bond between two men was thus stronger than that between parent and child. There were no schools as we understand them. When schools did start, they did not educate in the fashion of today – rather, they gave technical instruction. The teacher in such a school was scorned for he worked for pay. The ancients looked down on teachers who made teaching a business and offered their knowledge to anyone who could pay – and the most they could offer was technical know-how, demonstrating by an example.

A true teacher was his pupil's best friend who knew and loved him. The pupil, in turn, trusted and admired his teacher unconditionally. Throughout the history of Greece, the bond between the teacher and the pupil was that of a pair – and education entailed love of old for young, the striving of raising the young to perfection in adulthood.

Education did not lead to a profession, Greek aristocrats did not need it. The nobility did not need to make their sons technically proficient nor train them to make a living. Education for Greeks was something much higher, it dealt with morality and character-building, thus being very personal. The basis for this was a sophisticated society – fond of pleasure and sport, honest, fair and proud. A young man learnt this with his older friend as a guide.

Not everyone was considered suitable to achieve such high spiritual values. Knowledge was reserved for those who deserved it. The public opinion valued culture and its esoteric nature. Plato considered personal verbal teaching to be much superior to impersonal written texts. Antique philosophy was not to consist only of knowledge, it had to be the proper way of

life. Ethics and morality were the important criteria (Dover, 1978, p. 9).

It is obvious that sometimes the love between the teacher and the pupil became degraded to a low carnal level. Knowing the weakness of human nature, this is understandable.

The Greeks were thus able to transmit knowledge, traditions, and experiences through intimate friendship to a high ethical level. The teacher remained his pupil's lifelong close friend and was responsible for him. For both partners this meant self-control, a constant striving toward improvement. Education equalled firstly to generosity, honour, fairness and only secondly to skills and knowledge. Classical Athens did condemn homosexuality as shown in Plutarch's biography of Pericles: Sophocles, when travelling with Pericles on board the ship, saw a handsome boy and praised his beauty. Pericles replied: "Sophocles, a strategist must not only have clean hands, but also clean eyes".

## Conclusions

It is possible to grasp the "understandable whole picture" when studying Homer's epic poetry through its philosophic depth, verbal expressiveness, the descriptions of human deeds and detailed observations. This was the deeply meaningful, continual teaching, education by Greece's pedagogical paradigm which resonates in its rituals, customs, day-to-day life and behaviour of its citizens.

Lessons we can learn from Homer can be embedded in today's educational paradigm, especially when we compare the modern, somewhat instrumental and mechanistic, views on education to more holistic ones (Sterling, 2011). When the mechanistic view on education stresses the preparation for work-life, standardization and effectiveness, we can see that Greek education evolves around a more holistic approach to human development in which dignity, morale, balanced (a healthy mind in a healthy body) development are focused on. Personal growth, self-actualization mean paying attention to the mind, soul, and body. The notions of beauty and love are central in the education of ancient Greeks. Harmony, which also includes living in harmony with nature and following the laws of nature, is a goal of personal development. Following the principles of ecology and nature are also central in Sterling's presentation of the ecological paradigm in education, which forms the framework of education for sustainability. The value-based education by itself is a virtue. The process of discovering and engaging a learner's full potential also for the common good and a balanced development of human societies is maybe one of the lessons we can learn from Homer. Spirituality, emotions, dignity, empathy, love towards all beings, looking into our deeper, ecological and natural selves – these notions may serve as a key to our future schooling aimed at more sustainable societies.

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## UGDOMASIS NARATYVAS KAIP PEDAGOGINĖ PARADIGMA: HOMERO EPAI

**Maria Tilk**

S a n t r a u k a

Antikinio pasaulio mitai žinomi visame pasaulyje. Po Vakarų Romos imperijos žlugimo šie antikios autorių užrašyti epiniai pasakojimai išlikę viduramžių vienuolynų rankraštyuose, Renesanso metu įgavę „antrąjį kvėpavimą“ pasiekė mūsų dienas. Šiuose mituose, atsiradusiuose, kai ugdant ypač svarbus buvo įtikinamas žodis, užkoduoti pamokymai, skirti visiems žmonėms nepriklausomai nuo socialinio sluoksnio, turtinės padėties,

amžiaus ir lyties, apimantys visus gyvenimo aspektus.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – Homero eų analizė iš ugdomojo naratyvo priedų. Siekiama parodyti, kokia holistinė, o sykiu ir daugiabriaunė buvo Iliados ir Odisejos istorija ir kaip ši istorija atsiskleidžia ugdant konkrečios epochos visuomenę ir konkrečią asmenybę. Išsamiau analizuojami filosofiniai, religiniai, etiniai, poetiniai, estetiniai ir fiziniai pedagoginių naratyvų aspektai.

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