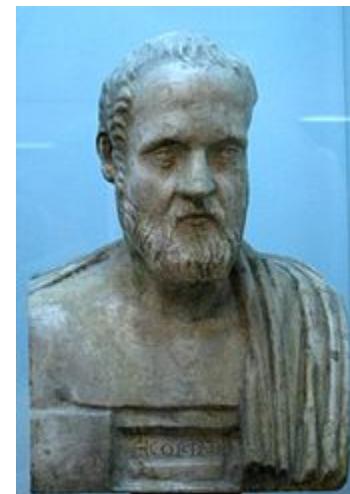


# Paideia

In the culture of ancient Greece and later of the Greco-Roman world at large, the term **paideia** (also spelled **paedeia**) (/pədēə/;<sup>[1]</sup> Greek: παιδεία, *paideía*) referred to the rearing and education of the ideal member of the polis or state. It incorporated both practical, subject-based schooling and a focus upon the socialization of individuals within the aristocratic order of the polis. The practical aspects of this education included subjects subsumed under the modern designation of the liberal arts (rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy are examples), as well as scientific disciplines like arithmetic and medicine. An ideal and successful member of the polis would possess intellectual, moral and physical refinement, so training in gymnastics and wrestling was valued for its effect on the body alongside the moral education which the Greeks believed was imparted by the study of music, poetry, and philosophy. This approach to the rearing of a well-rounded Greek male was common to the Greek-speaking world, with the exception of Sparta where a rigid and militaristic form of education known as the *agoge* was practiced.



Isocrates, shown here in a copy of a bust from Villa Albani in Rome, was one of the foremost thinkers about *paideia*.

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## The idea of *paideia*

The Greeks considered *paideia* to be carried out by the aristocratic class who tended to intellectualize their culture and their ideas. The culture and the youth were "moulded" to the ideal of *kalos kagathos*, "beautiful and good."

Greek *paideia* is the idea of perfection, of excellence. The Greek mentality was "to be always pre-eminent"; Homer records this charge of King Peleus to his son Achilles. This idea is called *arete*. "Arete was the central ideal of all Greek culture."<sup>[2]</sup>

In the *Iliad*, Homer portrays the excellence of the physicality and courage of the Greeks and Trojans. In *The Odyssey*, Homer accentuates the excellence of the mind, or wit, that was also necessary for winning. *Arete* is a concomitant of what it meant to be a hero and a component of warfare that was necessary in order to succeed. It is the ability to "make his hands keep his head against enemies, monsters, and dangers of all kinds, and to come out victorious."<sup>[3]</sup>

This mentality can also be seen in the Greeks' tendency to reproduce and copy only literature that was deemed the "best", in the Olympic games, and in literature, with competitions in poetry, tragedy, and comedy. "Arete" was infused in everything the Greeks did. The mentality of *arete* can be stretched even further to the competing *paideias*.

of the Greek philosophers Isocrates and Plato, who both created highly influential schools in Greece. Although both rejected the current polis education, their rivalry of rhetoric and science for leadership in the realm of education and culture became one that they could not overcome.<sup>[4]</sup> In Antidosis, Isocrates was compelled to defend himself against accusations that education makes people depraved, a charge that Socrates and Plato openly discuss in Republic. In Isocrates introductory speech Against the Sophists, it is clear that he has Plato's 'prospectuses' Gorgias and Protagoras, before him, and is deliberately trying to set up his own ideal of paideia in contrast to theirs.<sup>[4]</sup>

In modern discourse, the German-American classicist Werner Jaeger, in his influential magnum opus Paideia (3 vols. from 1934; see below), uses the concept of paideia to trace the development of Greek thought and education from Homer to Demosthenes. The concept of paideia was also used by Mortimer Adler in his criticism of contemporary Western educational systems, and Lawrence A. Cremin in his histories of American education. Later in 2013, as a theoretical extension to the Contact hypothesis, the application of the concept of Paideia to cultural heritage management was introduced by Dr. Fabio Carbone (<https://peacetourism.org/carbone/>), an Italian Scholar, that suggests cultural awareness of local communities (know yourself) will lead to a more effective intercultural dialogue with others and reduces prejudice and hostility towards tourists."<sup>[5]</sup>

## Isocrates' influence

Isocrates helped in making Athens one of the leaders in Greece through his paideia. Isocrates' goal was to construct a practice of education and politics that gave validity in the democratic deliberative practice while remaining intellectually respectable.<sup>[6]</sup> He wanted to elevate his Athenian audience to the level of philosophia by making them apply, in particular, a principle of intellectual consistency to their lives. The fundamental aspects of his paideia was achievement of consistency on the individual, the civic, and the panhellenic level.<sup>[6]</sup> Isocratean paideia became crucial to the survival of the polis through the identification of rhetorical with political excellence and the elevation of the Isocratean audience to the status of philosophy.

## Sayings and proverbs that defined paideia

- "'Know thyself' and 'Nothing in Excess,' which were on everyone's lips."<sup>[7]</sup> Words inscribed on the temple at Delphi.
- "Hard is the Good."<sup>[8]</sup>

## See also

- Agoge
- Classical education
- Humanitas
- Paideia Institute

## References

1. OED
2. Jaeger, Paideia I.15.
3. Jaeger, Paideia II.56.
4. Jaeger, Werner. "The Conflict of Cultural Ideals in the Age of Plato." Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture. Vol. 3. New York: Oxford UP, n.d. 46–70. Print
5. Fabio Carbone, Luiz Oosterbeek, Carlos Costa. 2013 Paideia approach for heritage management. The tourist enhancement of archaeological heritage on behalf of local communities ([http://www.pasosonline.org/Publicados/11213/PS0213\\_02.pdf](http://www.pasosonline.org/Publicados/11213/PS0213_02.pdf)).

6. Morgan, Kathryn. "The Education of Athens." 125–153
7. Plato, *Protagoras* 343b.
8. Plato, *Republic* 435c.

## Further reading

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- Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vols. I-III, trans. Gilbert Highet, Oxford University Press, 1945.
- Oxford English Dictionary, "Paedeia." Online Draft Version, 2005.

## External links

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- Takis Fotopoulos, "From (mis)-education to Paideia" ([http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol2/vol2\\_no1\\_miseducation\\_paideia\\_takis.htm](http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol2/vol2_no1_miseducation_paideia_takis.htm)), *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, vol 2, no 1, (2005).

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