COMPARING ANCIENT HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

OF

IMPERIAL GERMANY AND THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

A thesis submitted
to Kent State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

by

Hans-Henning Bunge

December 2007
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. iv

Chapter
   Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

   I. Humanistic education in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic .......... 10

   II. Comparisons of ancient Greek and Roman history books ............................ 24

   Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 54

BIBLOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................... 64
LIST OF TABLES

Table I – Curricula of German Secondary Schools in 1901.................................17
Table II – Imperial Period..................................................................................25
Table III – Weimar Republic.............................................................................38
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors Dr. Steigmann-Gall, Associate Professor of History, Dr. Baranowski, Professor of History and Dr. Harp, Professor of History for their help, guidance and patience. Their continuous support enabled me to bring this thesis to a successful conclusion.

I would like to specially thank my fellow student Ms. Monika Flaschka for proofreading my scripts with admirable patience.

My wife, Ms. Gisela Bunge, has been very supportive and tolerated my seclusion while I was working on my thesis for wish I would very much like to thank
Comparing Ancient History Textbooks

of

Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic

INTRODUCTION

Hannibal’s tactics at Cannae were exemplary for overcoming a much larger force. The same plan allowed Germany to repeat his victory at Sedan and Tannenberg against a similarly superior foe. The glorious victories of Hannibal and of Germany in 1914 failed to lead to a positive outcome of each war because time favored his enemies as it did ours.¹

By associating contemporary events with Antiquity this quote in a textbook of ancient Greek and Roman history illustrates how strongly the Bildungsbürgertum identified with these ancient cultures and the continuing influence of the humanistic education. Humanistic education, introduced by Prussia’s Minister of Education Wilhelm von Humboldt back in 1809-10, perpetuated Greek and Roman ideals, and sought to teach students civic duties, social concern, independent thinking and model the political development of these ancient societies. The students’ intense exposure to these teachings was meant to have a strong formative influence on the Bildungsbürgertum to a degree that they identified with these cultures, as will be discuss later. Even though secondary education was limited to about 10% of the German population, those graduates provided Germany’s industrial and political leaders.² It was therefore important, when teaching

¹August Uhl and Hans Ruider, Deutsches Werden Geschichtsunterricht .Altertum und Germanische Zeit (Bamberg: C.C. Buchners Verlag, 1929), (Book IX), 39, 72.
these students the cultural values of these ancient societies, that their interpretations should coincide with the political concepts of the monarchy and later the republic.

To establish how the depiction of ancient Greek and Roman history is influenced by the political constellation of the Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic, I will evaluate five history books used in secondary schools of each period to determine how much they emphasized democracy and use ancient social values to support ideals of the monarchy and later the republic. In addition I will review how much the different authors compared past historical events to more recent ones, how they evaluated the influence of socioeconomic developments on historical events, and how they met the educational policy of the two periods. My larger goal is to seek how these textbooks appropriated ancient history for the presentist purposes of the age in which they were written: how they served not only as political and cultural symptoms of their age, but perhaps even causes of political and cultural transformation in the German youth who read them.

**Historiography**

In one of the earlier treatments of the subject, Eduard Spranger discusses Wilhelm von Humboldt’s humanistic educational reform, and argued that Humboldt wanted to advance the pupil’s intellect to the limits of their abilities.\(^3\) Humboldt deemed the historical experience of ancient Greece to be a guide for the present because, in his estimation, they exceeded other nations in their humanity and reached the highest level of attainable cultural development. When Humboldt reformed Germany’s secondary education, the author argues, the curriculum strongly exposed students to Athens’ social,

---

\(^3\) Eduard Spranger, *Wilhelm von Humboldt und die Reform des Bildungswesens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1965).
cultural and ethical values. As authoritative as Spranger’s book was, it fails to consider the ways in which Ancient history also taught students civic duty; he also does not consider any negative aspects of Greece’s and Rome’s development.

More recently, Fritz Ringer, in his *Toward a Social History of Knowledge*, describes Bildung as a cognitive disposition beyond education. The prerequisite for Bildung was a humanistic education at a Gymnasium, which 80% of Germany’s secondary students attended around 1900. Humanistic education was associated with an in-depth familiarity with the arts, literature and history; it was a status symbol, entitled to social privileges, and served as a means for upward mobility for the middle class. As the need by industry for science-oriented knowledge became more urgent, Bildung as a concept gradually lost its social importance, and along with it humanistic education, the author argues. Ringer portrays German university graduates as political naïve but fails to allude to the Bürgertum’s increasing political and civic activity during the turn of the century.

James Albisetti, in his monograph from the 1980s, reviews the development of the secondary school system in Imperial Germany. He discusses the implication of school reform for the lower classes and the importance of humanistic education. He argues Germany and other Western European nations were in a period of social and cultural transition in the early twentieth century and the reform of the secondary schools reflected these changes. The school reform was mainly concerned with the preservation of the humanistic curriculum in Gymnasia, i.e. the teaching of ancient Greek history, literature,

---

ethical values and language, because they were considered to represent “the best that had been thought and known”.

As Albisetti points out, in response to social changes, the Ministry of Education gradually established more science- and modern language-oriented secondary schools and provided better access to secondary education for the lower middle classes. Albisetti argues that in Germany the educational level determined the hierarchical structure of the Bourgeoisie more so than in France and England. He points out that higher education meant for the Bürger approaching the social status of the aristocracy. However, he fails to discuss the role of general knowledge (Allgemeinbildung) in the German educational system, in which the idolized spirit of the ancient Greek and Roman cultures played a major role. He unconvincingly argues that the idolized social structure of these ancient cultures filled the vacancy in Western Europe of nationhood and national identity before they adopted these concepts. He claims that, as Germans became more patriotic and developed a national identity, popular demand for the teaching of German and national history in secondary schools intensified. He makes no attempt to consider whether the familiarity with the civic-mindedness of the Athenians influenced the Bürgertum’s changing social values and civic engagement.

A contemporary of Albisetti, Mary Jo Maynes concerns herself with the comparative education and the literacy rates of the lower classes at the fin-de-siècle in Germany, France and England, and describes the similarity of their educational systems. She argues the main purpose of schooling was to reshape the character of the masses by teaching discipline and nationalism to the children of the poor, and to have them accept

---

6 Ibid., 10.
their position within a relatively fixed social hierarchy. Their education was of secondary importance, she contends. The revolutionary upheavals of the Nineteenth Century caused Western European governments to realize they needed to better control the masses. Schools were the perfect instrument to achieve this goal – an argument Maynes insufficiently demonstrates. The various school reforms in these countries provided the lower middle classes with the opportunity to improve their social status, but did not benefit the lower class, as she points out. All three countries valued humanistic education, she claims; but she fails to discuss its influence on establishing social values.

My own rethinking of this topic is in many ways informed by Stephen Cabot’s older comparative work, in which he argues that the reading of the classical masterpieces in Gymnasia outlined the connection between the cultural values of the classics with Germany’s own civilization, and helped students to better understand human cooperation and society. Of course, not all aspects of this argument can be supported. It holds true when looking at Athens’ democracy but becomes questionable when considering the failure of Greece’s city-states to integrate, and the conquests and loss of independence they suffered as a result.

Numerous books, which do not primarily explore secondary education, nonetheless discuss the restructuring of secondary education in Imperial Germany, and the role the Kaiser played in particular. Christa Berg, in her two volumes of Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte (Vol. IV, from 1870-1918, and vol. V, 1918-1945), provides a most comprehensive review of the German school system, but makes only

---

8 Stephen Cabot, Secondary education in Germany, France and Denmark (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930).
cursory remarks about the teaching of ancient Greek history and no comment whether Athens’ history served to teach pupils social values.\(^9\) Vol. IV (1870-1918) describes Germany’s social environment and the domineering role of its military. The declining importance of humanistic education is discussed, but without mentioning that it still remained the preferred form of education during the monarchy. The author argues that schools advocated nationalism and militarism, but derided socialism.

In vol. V (1918-1945) Berg argues that Weimar schools failed to teach democratic ideology and self-reliance to its citizens. Only immediately after the revolution did the educational system attempt to support Germany’s democratization, she contends, and that in later years these efforts declined. The author describes the various political tendencies of the Weimar Republic, and the ambivalence of the population as to which was the most desirable form of government. The role humanistic education and specifically ancient history played in teaching students the responsibilities and duties of the Bürger towards the state are not explored.

Horst Schallenberger compares the interpretation of Germany’s history in schoolbooks of Imperial Germany to those of the Weimar Republic.\(^{10}\) He argues history books in the Wilhelminian period were more uniform than in the Weimar Republic, that they taught admiration of Germany’s heroes and underpinned Prussia’s conservative social values, the monarchy and religion. The history books of the republic, by contrast, were torn between propagating the past or a more democratic interpretation of history. The Weimar Republic, he argues, attempted to comprehend history from its own

---


perspective. Its presentation should therefore not be perceived as a continuation of what the monarchy tried to convey or as a precursor to *Nationalsozialismus*. However, the author does not include ancient history texts in his evaluation, nor the large role humanistic education played in these two periods.

In her highly-regarded recent monograph, Susanne L. Marchand describes how in the nineteenth century Hellenic culture became part of a German national consciousness.\(^{11}\) She argues Neohumansim was mainly concerned with teaching appreciation of beauty, self-refinement and ancient languages. Germany’s youth had eventual difficulty accepting “the classical cultural hegemony” particularly in the aftermath of the First World War and she claims humanists became more oriented toward the present than the past as a result.\(^{12}\) However, she states that *Gymnasia* retained their prestige in spite of declining enrolment.\(^{13}\) Marchand describes humanistic education as a tool for familiarizing students with Greece’s artistic achievements and for stimulating intellectual pursuits. Finding little or no treatment in her book, however, are what were arguably equally important parts of Greece’s culture, such as its social programs, socioeconomic development and the education its people to become responsible citizens … all fundaments of a humanistic education.

None of these works, it should be pointed out, explicitly compare the teaching of ancient Greek and Roman history in the textbooks of Imperial Germany with those of the Weimar Republic. I will specifically try to establish the role ancient history played as part

---


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 118, 241.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 265.
of humanistic education and how a changing social and political environment in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic influenced humanistic concepts.

Method

My primary source bases in this study are the history books on ancient Greek and Roman history for the upper level of Germany’s secondary education. I will review ten books in total, each issued for a different school district; five were used in Imperial Germany and five were revised versions used in the Weimar Republic. The Ministry of Education in Berlin was in charge of supervising Germany’s schools and all textbooks required its approval. It can be assumed that issues opposing the prevailing policies of the government of either period were avoided by the authors or censored.

My investigation will be covered in two chapters. The first chapter will describe the role humanistic education played for the Bürgertum and how it was instrumental in creating their perception of the world (Weltbild). I will demonstrate that for the German Bildungsbürgertum humanistic education was not only a teaching concept, but represented an ideology, and served to form students into well-rounded human beings by training their intellect, and teaching them ethical values and appreciation of the arts. Ancient Greek and Roman culture with their democratic institutions, enlightenment, accomplishments in the arts and advanced intellectual concepts were a perfect teaching tool to accomplish such educational goals. I will further examine the impact the school reform had on altering the humanistic education and the reasons for such changes.

In the second chapter I will review ancient Greek and Roman history books issued for the Obersekunda, the upper level of Germany’s secondary education in Imperial
Germany and the Weimar Republic. I will evaluate the different authors’ interpretation of the social and political developments in antiquity and the degree to which they mirror the educational concept and ideology of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic.
CHAPTER I

Humanistic education in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic

What role did humanistic ideology play as part of Germany’s educational concept? By evaluating ministerial decrees and the results of the school conference, I will attempt to establish the impact Imperial Germany’s growing industrialization had on the curriculum of its secondary education. I will further attempt to determine the effect the school reforms had on social mobility and civic involvement of the middle class at the fin-de-siècle by looking at their political activities. Finally, by consulting the pertinent legislation, I will explore the kinds of changes the Weimar Republic instituted regarding the secondary school curriculum and the emphasize it placed on teaching democratic principals. I will also investigate the role humanistic education may have retained in the republic.

Humanistic education

Wilhelm von Humboldt’s introduction of humanism during his brief tenure at the Prussian Ministry of the Interior revolutionized the German educational system. He believed education should advance “man” to a higher cultural state, and not be limited by a conscious intent to create citizens. It should serve to advance pupils’ general knowledge, and in the process form his character. Humboldt believed that when developing the student’s character, the border between “art” and “reality” disappeared, because truth and beauty have the same metaphysical foundation. Pupils were to be
educated with the help of psychology and history, whereby the empirical reality of history is of less importance than the fundamental ideals for which it stands. In this conception ancient history served to teach students ethical values and form their perception of the world (Weltbild). Humboldt considered ancient Greek and Roman history an outstanding example of humanistic aesthetic values because he felt their cultural, social and political development with their drive towards democracy had exceeded those of other nations. The study of their history, and learning their languages became the foundation of humanistic education, with emphasis on the exploration of their ethical and aesthetic values. Humboldt rejected the teaching of encyclopedic knowledge; instead he wanted to develop the human being as a whole, for which he perceived an idealized ancient history as a perfect educational tool.\(^\text{14}\) Influenced by the Swiss pedagogue and educational reformer Johann H. Pestalozzi (1746–1827),\(^\text{15}\) Humboldt wanted students to develop in accordance with their abilities, and become free independent citizens able to think for themselves by acquiring a wide range of knowledge (Allgemeinbildung), rather than a limited professionally oriented training.\(^\text{16}\) Humanistic education was intended to develop the student’s mental abilities, his character, ethical and humanitarian values, and morals. It also stressed individual responsibility and self-fulfillment.

In the nineteenth century, the humanistic approach became the norm for educating the upper classes not only for Germany, but for England and France as well, and was

\(^{14}\) Spranger, Reform des Bildungswesens, 58-68.
\(^{15}\) Lorenz Grasberger, Erziehung und Unterricht im klassischen Altertum (Würzburg: Druck und Verlag der Stahl’schen Buch- und Kunsthandlung, 1875), 60-90.
\(^{16}\) Spranger, Reform des Bildungswesens, 44-47.
believed responsible for creating an intellectual elite.\textsuperscript{17} As the school reformer Friedrich J. Niethammer put it: “being educated meant identifying with ancient Greek culture.”\textsuperscript{18} Germany’s \textit{Bildungsbürgertum} was enamored with this holistic and humanistic approach to education, and their educational preference was little influenced, according to the historian Eduard Spranger, by recent historical findings that did not always support their idealistic view of ancient Greece.\textsuperscript{19}

Humanistic education had a lasting and formative influence on the cognitive development of the \textit{Bildungsbürgertum} and its \textit{Weltanschauung} (worldview), and contributed to its appreciation of the arts. Ancient Greek and Roman history, besides acquainting students with their aesthetical values, also familiarized them with their social development and democratic principals. Striving for democracy was perceived as an integral part of the social development of Greece. Educators hoped that exposure to and understanding of these ancient cultures would create valuable upstanding citizens, who would implicitly identify with their nation and its progressive values.\textsuperscript{20}

The humanistic goal of awakening inner grace eventually came into conflict with the educational needs of Germany’s growing industrial economy. As a result, two more mathematics and science oriented secondary institutions were established: the \textit{Realgymnasium}, which taught Latin but not Greek, and the \textit{Oberrealschule}, which instructed students only in modern languages. In \textit{Gymnasia} the instruction of mathematics and science were also increased to meet the changing demands of an

\textsuperscript{17} Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, Brian Simon et al., \textit{The rise of the modern educational system: structural changes and social reproduction 1870-1920} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 35, 45.
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.gottwein.de/Eth/Human01.htm#Deutschland); Internet; accessed July 22. 2005.
\textsuperscript{19} Albisetti, \textit{Secondary school reform in Imperial Germany}, 110.
\textsuperscript{20} Spranger, \textit{Reform des Bildungswesens}, 44-47.
increasingly industrial society in these schools as well. This shift away from the Gymnasia to Realschulen meant a de-emphasizing of humanistic education, but not its abandonment. In an effort to continue the humanistic concept, all secondary schools dedicated the same amount of time to teaching ancient history, using the same history texts (see Table I). Students’ familiarity with ancient cultures was underpinned in Gymnasia by reading literature in Greek and Latin and in Realgymnasia in Latin only.

To enhance the education of the lower middle class, a secondary education of six years, instead of nine, was introduced at the school reform of 1880. Completion of these six years of secondary education was called the Einjährige because it reduced conscription in the army from three years to one. It entitled graduates to become officers in the reserve but did not qualify them to attend universities. The Einjährige was designed to meet the demand for midlevel positions in the expanding economy. Pupils wishing to attend universities or qualify for higher administrative positions needed to continue their secondary education for another three years to graduate with the Abitur. Ancient Greek and Roman history was first taught during the six years leading to the Einjährige. The same history course was repeated in more depth for pupils aiming to graduate with an Abitur. Secondary students of both levels were thus familiar with the socio-political and democratic development of Athens and Rome.

School Reform of 1890

For the Bildungsbürgertum, humanistic education was a deeply rooted ideology to which it adhered tenaciously. However, the degree to which education at the Gymnasium

21 Müller, *The rise of modern educational system*, 35, 45.
23 Müller, *The rise of the modern educational system*, 18.
was out of tune with modernity becomes apparent when comparing the time spent
devoted to ancient cultures through the instruction in Greek and Latin to the teaching of
German. For 1882, over nine years of secondary education Gymnasia taught 128 credit
hours of ancient languages, but only 24 for German. Students were thus familiar with the
accomplishment of ancient Greek and Rome, but often, it was felt, lacked adequate
writing skills in their own German language.\footnote{Albisetti, \textit{Secondary School reform}, 141.}

Politicians, teachers and industrialists petitioned the government to devote more
time to teaching science, mathematics and modern languages in \textit{Gymnasia}, but with little
success. Government officials, having graduated from the \textit{Gymnasium}, identified with
traditional humanistic education and were reluctant to alter the curriculum. It took the
authority of the Kaiser to initiate changes, which he proposed in his opening speech at the
school conference of 1890.\footnote{Ibid.,162,166.} He argued that humanistic education was not a practical
preparation for life because students were better prepared to write essays in Latin than in
German. He contended that \textit{Gymnasia} should primarily teach students national history
and the German language to raise German nationals with an awareness of their country’s
present standing in the world. Educators should not just convey theoretical knowledge,

In accordance with the Kaiser’s wishes, the Prussian Minister of Education
partially modified the curricula of \textit{Gymnasia}. He also introduced new educational
requirements, which specified whether the \textit{Einjährige} or \textit{Abitur} was needed for positions
in government and industry. Graduates with six years secondary education, \textit{Einjährige},
now could gain employment as civil servants, or positions in mining, architecture and forestry. By the *fin-de-siècle*, graduates with an *Abitur* from all secondary schools, not just *Gymnasia*, were qualified to attend universities; women were now permitted to study medicine; and technical universities could bestow doctoral degrees.\(^{27}\) For positions in administration and industry, the required educational level became well defined, underpinning a rigid educational hierarchy. By making more administrative positions available to *Einjährige* graduates, school reform reduced early dropout rates of students of the lower middle classes in particular. It also increased social mobility because the middle class, who had sent their children mainly to *Realschulen*, was now able to attain academic degrees.\(^{28}\) As Hans-Ulrich Wehler points out, secondary schools were no longer restricted to members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, but were increasingly accessible to the middle class and the lower middle class.\(^{29}\)

For all the changes brought about by school reform, it did not significantly diminish the importance of teaching the history and culture of ancient Greece in *Gymnasia*. Instead, by increasing the access to secondary education, a larger portion of the lower classes now became familiar with the values of ancient Greece and Rome as well as with the duties and responsibilities of the citizens within these historic republics. By the turn of the century about ten percent of Germany’s youth attended secondary schools.\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 312.  
\(^{29}\) Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 1849-1914*, 1204.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 1201-4.
Curricula of Secondary Schools in Imperial Germany

While the Gymnasia remained the preferred form of secondary education, with its emphasis on ancient languages, the Realgymnasium and the Oberrealschulen concentrated more on science, mathematics and modern languages. The government strictly specified the type of courses to be taught for all schools, their frequency, and the topics to be covered in each course. Explicit teaching instructions stressed objectivity.  

As can be seen from the Table I, Greek and Latin remained the main subjects in the Gymnasion, while in the Realgymnasium only Latin was being taught. By contrast, German and history were now taught about the same amount of hours.

---

31 Lehrpläne und Lehraufgaben für die Höheren Schulen (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses,1901), 45-47.
Table I:

Curricula of German Secondary Schools in 1901

Weekly hours in the last year before graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjekt</th>
<th>Gymnasium</th>
<th>Realgymnasium</th>
<th>Oberrealschulen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Einjährige</td>
<td>Einjährige</td>
<td>Einjährige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abitur</td>
<td>Abitur</td>
<td>Abitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a correlation between the larger percentage of the population having attained a secondary education and the Germans’ growing interest in public affairs as well as their demand for more democratic institutions. As the historian Margaret Anderson points out, the growing number of professionals and academics increasingly influenced...
public opinion. One example of their growing political engagement was their support of the secret ballot in the Reichstag. A protected ballot had already been demanded in 1860 but failed to gain the support by the National Liberals and Conservatives. The number of delegates favoring such a law increased in the late 1880s partially to prevent a possible Staatsstreich by the government aiming to revoke the Reichstag franchise in response to growing social unrest. The Centrum, Left Liberals and SPD favored a secret ballot, and, with the support of the growing segment of the population with a secondary education, were responsible for the passage of the 1903 law. The educational reform by enlarging the middle class contributed to its greater political influence, and better education to its assertiveness. As James Retallack and Geoff Eley argue, the dominant culture of this period was “bourgeois,” and was an expression of this self-confidence.

Humanistic education, with its elaborate discussions of democratic principals and emphasis of citizens’ obligation towards the state, contributed to this growing spirit of civic responsibility and the desire for more democratic institutions. For example all Athenians at the time of Pericles were expected to partake in governing or administrating Athens. To include the poor they were compensated for their service. As Hans-Ulrich Wehler points out the familiarity with ancient the republics and the teaching of social responsibility had influenced many leading of Germany’s Liberals and Democrats. The historian Ralph Dahrendorf argues that German society did not participate in modernity

34 Ibid., 249-260.
37 Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1849-1914, 405.
because its citizens failed to assume political responsibility.\footnote{38} For graduates of elementary schools, where pupils were given little civic instruction, this might be correct. However, Germans with a secondary education did participate in civic activities, due to their exposure to the principals of democracy, and the concepts of individuality and civic responsibility.

In Germany this increase of civic activities did not translate into revolutionary activity, because the nation’s improving living standard at the \textit{fin-de-siècle} provided little cause for a radical change. The general population had no intention of provoking a revolt, but instead tried to implement a more democratic system through gradual changes, such as the introduction of a secret ballot.\footnote{39} Humanistic education familiarized students with different forms of governments including democracy, but also pointed to the advantages of a strong leader such as Pericles, whose rule H. Stich describes in his history book of 1905 as monarchical in an otherwise democratic system.\footnote{40}

Ancient history thus informed students about the aspects of the different types of governments, but much was left to the emphasis of the textbooks to lead the students in a desired direction. Neubauer for example praises the strong and autonomous leadership of the Roman aristocracy to which he attributes Rome’s success.\footnote{41} Secondary teachers of Imperial Germany are in general portrayed as deeply monarchical, partially because their pay and social status had been elevated to the upper ranks of government employees. In their teaching they thus supported the \textit{Kaiserreich} out of conviction, but also because the

\footnote{38}{Ralf Dahrendorf, \textit{Society and Democracy in Germany} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co, Inc., 1965), 63.}
\footnote{39}{David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, \textit{The Peculiarities of German History}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 21.}
\footnote{40}{H. Stich, \textit{Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die oberen Klassen der Gymnasien. Part I, Das Altertum} (Bamberg: C.C. Buchners Verlag Rudolf Koch, 1905), (Book I). 73.}
\footnote{41}{Friedrich Neubauer, \textit{Lehrbuch der Geschichte für höhere Lehranstalten} (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1902), (Book III), 59.}
monarchy did not tolerate dissidents. All reviewed texts of Imperial Germany reflect this loyalty toward the monarchy by advocating the advantages of a state headed by a single leader.

Secondary Education During the Weimar Republic

Following the overthrow of the monarchy, the Constitution of the Weimar Republic was instituted in July of 1919 under the auspices of the strongest party, the Social Democrats (SPD). Regarding education, the Constitution included the following paraphrased and abbreviated laws:

- **Article # 143:** The Reich will regulate the education of teachers.
- **Article # 144:** The school system is under the supervision of the State.
- **Article # 145:** Every child has to attend an elementary school for eight years and continue schooling to the age of eighteen. The attendance of elementary schools and educational material is free.
- **Article # 146:** The State will pay secondary school tuition for qualified students who are lacking financial means.
- **Article # 148:** All schools shall teach students:
  - Morals,
  - Civic virtues and attitudes,
  - Personal and professional excellence, and work ethics
  - The spirit of German culture.
  - The importance of the peaceful coexistence of nations.

The topics shall be presented in a manner as not to offend students with a different opinion [called: tolerance clause].

All students are to receive a copy of the constitution when graduating.

---

44 “Beim Unterricht in öffentlichen Schulen ist Bedacht zu nehmen, daß die Empfindungen Andersdenkender nicht verletzt werden.” This “tolerance clause” as it became known, had been introduced during the constitutional debate, by the German Nationals with strong support by the Center Party, whose initially concern was religious tolerance. The representative Koch, DDP, who later became Reichsinnenminister, expanded its meaning to tolerate the coexistence of monarchical and democratic attitudes particularly in schools. This was much applauded by the German Nationals, who declared: “We expect also in a democratic Germany that the feelings of monarchist will be tolerated in schools as in general.”
Social Democratic proposals to teach the constitution in all schools and convey its spirit to students was rejected.⁴⁵ A strong faction in the constitutional assembly considered democracy as one possible form of government, but not necessarily the best one, as evident from the Tolerance Clause.⁴⁶ The Constitution was to provide the basis for Germany’s democracy, but at the same time was to avoid too strong a break with the Imperial period.⁴⁷ Therefore students were to receive an education of a general civic nature, but a specific type of government, such as a democracy, should not explicitly be favored.⁴⁸

Education was to strengthen Germany’s Volksgemeinschaft by paying special attention to teaching the German language, history and literature and to highlight cultural continuities from the Imperial period to the Weimar Republic. Humboldt’s educational concepts continued as a basis for the secondary schools system. As during the monarchy, schools provided general knowledge with emphasis on “Germanness,” its culture and the contribution of the individual to the nation by drawing parallels of Greek and Roman historical events to Germany’s past. Uhl and Ruider for example compare alliances with neighboring states Themistocles entered to Bismarck’s political strategy or the victories of Hannibal to Germany’s triumphs on the battlefield.⁴⁹

The curriculum of the secondary schools remained basically the same. The Social Democrats had advocated teaching students more about democracy and equality than eventually became part of the curriculum.⁵⁰ In spite of such setbacks in their school

---

⁴⁶ A similar attitude can be found among ancient Greek intellectuals; even after a very successful democratic period under Pericles’ leadership Socrates’ students, for example, did not favor a democracy. Becker, *Die Bildung der Nation*, 151.
⁴⁷ Ibid., 240.
⁴⁹ Uhl, *Deutsches Werden Geschichtsunterricht Altertum und Germanische Zeit* (Book IX), 54, 72.
policy, they were determined to change the way certain subjects were being presented. In particular, history was to be taught in an impartial manner, and other nations were to be credited for their achievements. During the monarchy, other countries had been derided in order to create a feeling of German superiority. To ensure the implementation of their policies, the Social Democrat Konrad Haenisch, Prussia’s Minister for School Affairs at the beginning of the Republic, issued the following decree:

1. Courses in history and other disciplines are not to be used to create hate of other nations, but are to provide factual, cultural-historical information. Biased teachings about WWI and its causes are to be avoided.
2. All books glorifying war are to be removed from the school library.

Haenisch prohibited the use of history books of the Imperial period in the following year and promised to issue revised versions after the school conference in 1920. Educators felt highly insulted by what they perceived as an attack against their professionalism. They were convinced that their manner of teaching had been objective, and that they had done their duty by teaching nationalism.\(^{51}\)

A school conference was held in 1919 to implement national educational guidelines in accordance with the Weimar Constitution. These guidelines were kept general in nature and did not specify how educators should compose the contents of courses.\(^{52}\) The new republic lacked experienced people to fill civil service (Beamte) positions. All Beamte of the monarchy, including teachers, were therefore confirmed in their positions, but were required to take an oath to uphold the laws of the Weimar Republic. The next generation of teachers was not available; having been discharged

---


\(^{52}\) Ibid., 9.
from the military only two years earlier they did not have time to complete their necessary university education by 1920.

In the Weimar Republic, secondary teachers had lost some of their social status; now worthless war bonds, together with inflation, had robbed them of their savings. But teachers had also gained civil rights they had lacked under the Kaiser. In Imperial Germany educators, for example, risked dismissal if they joined a political organization or criticized the government. Their longing for the financial and social statutes they had enjoyed during the monarchy should therefore not automatically be equated with opposition to the Weimar Republic.

Secondary education reflected the dichotomy between those who accepted the republic whole-heartedly, such as members of the SPD, and those who were ambiguous about the new system. Bernhard Kumsteller in his history book advocates monarchical rule by citing Socrates’ and Aristotle’s preference of a single ruler. E. Neustadt and G. Röhm in contrast praise the republic (freier Volksstaat) as the highest political achievement. Textbooks no longer glorified the Imperial era, but neither did they familiarize students with the constitution, and the tolerance clause prevented educators from advocating the republic as the preferred form of government. The educational system of the Weimar Republic thereby lacked a systematic approach to familiarize its students with democratic principals. In this context, ancient history remained the main source for pupils to learn about democracy, as it had been in Imperial Germany.

---

CHAPTER II

Comparisons of ancient Greek and Roman history books.

In the following chapter I will review ten history books that taught Germany’s secondary students ancient Greek and Rome history. Five of these books were issued in Imperial Germany and five during the Weimar Republic. How much did the interpretation of the politics of ancient history serve to promote Germany’s prevailing ideological concepts like the monarchy and later democracy? To what degree did these textbooks describe the interconnectedness of socioeconomic and historic developments? Did authors draw parallels to more recent European historical events? When answering these questions, I will compare the interpretation of history in the textbooks of Imperial Germany to those of the Weimar Republic.

The history books under analysis were issued between 1887 and 1910 of the Imperial period and between 1922 and 1930 of the Weimar Republic. To establish if their historical interpretation differed over time I will review these books in chronological sequence. I did not attempt to establish if the historical interpretation was specific to the region for which these books were issued. The reason is that the Reich’s Ministry of Education in Berlin reserved for itself final oversight for the content of all textbooks, and in addition such a small sample size would not allow distinguishing between the individual authors historical interpretation and the regional influence.
Ancient Greek and Roman history books: Imperial Germany

The following history books were evaluated:

Table II:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year issued</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pütz</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Düsseldorf</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dürr et al.</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Württemberg</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neubauer</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Halle</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stich</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Bayern</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenz</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Bayern</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pütz argued Solon, an aristocrat, had been commissioned to rewrite the constitution because of the Athenian peasants’ repeated revolts against their exploitation by the aristocracy. This constitution reduced the privileges of the aristocracy, eliminated enslavement through debt and established a timocracy, which based voting rights on wealth and not on aristocratic birthrights. It represented an early step toward the Athenians’ Volksherrschaft (empowerment of the people) that would give all citizens equal access to public offices, which they achieved under Pericles’ leadership (461-429 BC). The author made no explicit attempt to compare the similarity between Athens’ timocracy and the three-class voting system of Prussia, which in both cases allowed the
aristocracy to retain their dominance.\textsuperscript{56} Pütz thereby avoids making students aware that in Athens, tiered voting rights advanced democracy, while in Germany it served to curtail the political influence of the lower classes. Pütz hardly discuss the influence of Athens’ socio-political activities on its development or the advantages of a democracy. He fails, for example, to comment on how revolutionary Solon’s legislation was by establishing equality before the law, abandoning slavery as a consequence of debt, and fostering civic awareness and duty.\textsuperscript{57} The author reviews Athens’ philosophers only briefly. In particular he mentions responsibility of the individual toward society as taught by Plato, in compliance with the educational goals of the monarchy to create dutiful citizens.

In his analysis of ancient Rome, Pütz writes that the lower classes’ revolt against their exploitation by the patricians gained them some rights, but not access to the Senate. The latter governed the country and was composed of Rome’s nobility. The author contends that plebeians were allowed to form a state within a state, with their own institutions and judicial system, but were denied access to the Senate. Here again he avoids pointing to the resemblance to Germany’s political landscape and the limited political rights of its lower class in particular. He claims Rome’s ruling elite, the senators, became very wealthy by perpetually waging war, while the plebeians remained impoverished. The author describes the economical discrepancy between the upper and the lower classes as the cause for rebellion, but comments only briefly on the lower classes’ struggle for equality. In 1887, when this book was published, the anti-socialist law of 1878-1890 was still in effect.\textsuperscript{58} The law gave evidence for the political oppression

\textsuperscript{57} Pütz, \textit{Grundrisse der Geographie und Geschichte}, (Book II), 106.
\textsuperscript{58} Roger Fletcher, ed. \textit{Bernstein to Brandt} (London: Edward Arnold, 1987),17.
of the lower classes and their struggle to gain parliamentary representation. Pütz’ text fails to reflect on this class conflict, he also does not highlight the Athenians’ democratic achievements, or the striving of Roman plebeians’ for access to higher offices.

J. Dürr et al. 59

Dürr et al. are more concerned with social issues and equality than Pütz, and argues Athens’ tyrannies were the first to recognize the state’s responsibility for the material well being of the people; they therefore advanced agriculture, trade and industry.60 By contrast to Pütz, Dürr et al. explicitly leads students to make comparisons with the social concerns of Imperial Germany and its social legislation that ensured for example improved working conditions, required Sunday rest and regulated child and female labor.61 Germany’s concern for the welfare of its people was rather singular for its time, and might have been inspired by its humanistic education and the teaching of Athenian philanthropy; as the school reformer Friedrich J. Niethammer pointed out, the Bildungsbürgertum identified with ancient Greek culture.62 It idolized the ancient Greek spirit and its social values and considered them to be “the best that had been thought and known.”63 By comparison, the English worker lacked such legal protection, because his predicament was considered self-inflicted in accordance with the concept of Social Darwinism.64 The tyrannies influence on expanding the economy could be considered

60 In ancient Greece a tyrannies was an autocratic ruler who had sized power illegally; the term had no ethical connotation.
61 Fletcher, ed. Bernstein to Brandt,19.
62 http://www.gottwein.de/Eth/Human01.htm#Deutschland); Internet; accessed July 22. 2005.
63 Albisetti, Secondary School reform,10.
64 Dahrendorf. Society and Democracy in Germany,37.
comparable to the controlling hand of the German state in developing its industry and
economy, while in other capitalistic countries private enterprise was more common.65

The limited political and economic orientation of humanistic education is
reflected in Dürr’s et al. failure to discuss the similarities of the social and economic
policies of Imperial Germany with those of Athens. The authors contend Solon’s
constitution, with its stipulation of equality before the law, was the precursor to Athens’
democracy, which Cleisthenes’ constitution (508-7 BC) advanced further.66 By
comparison, similar comments are lacking in Pütz’s text.

Dürr et al. contend that the advent of enlightenment in Greece created an
uncertainty as to what was reality and allowed sophists to make spurious truth believable
through dialectics. They added that the sophists advocated the right of the strongest, no
binding legal norm and subjectivism with unrestricted rights of the individual, which
would have been in contrast it to the stability of welfarist form of Imperial government.67
In support of the humanistic concept they claimed Athenians intellectuals enjoyed
gaining knowledge for its own sake. As with Pütz, these authors reviewed the Greek
philosophers only very briefly.

Regarding Rome, the authors argue that the lower class, after having gained some
rights, were content under the leadership of the Senate for one century, even though they
were prohibited from joining their ranks. Dürr et al. make little mention of the lower class
aspiration for equality or democracy. With the SPD demanding more rights these authors
as well avoid addressing such a political sensitive issue. To the contrary, they highlight

65 Ibid., 42. 
66 Cleisthenes empowered the people to govern their districts thereby robbing the aristocrats of their
traditional powerbase. He also increased the rights of all Athenians and promoted civil duty and awareness.
67 Book V, 114.
the Roman plebeians satisfaction with the existing class structure as long as the Senate’s leadership concurred with their own aspirations. Such a characterization indirectly illustrated the Bürgertum’s contentment within the Kaiserreich, as both shared similar political goals, as David Blackbourn, and Geoff Eley claimed.  

When comparing book II by Pütz published in 1887 and book V by Dürr et al. of 1895, the latter discussed more the social responsibility of the state toward its citizens. None of the authors commented on how revolutionary Solon’s legislation was by giving the people right to make their voice heard and by abandoning slavery through debt. They also failed to discuss the Athenian government’s effort to educate its citizens in civic awareness and duty in order to advance their democratization. Following Solon’s departure, in 565 BC, Pisistratos through a coup assumed power in Athens. He considered the lower class and peasantry the backbone of the state, which neither book mentioned. Possibly because such a concept stood in strong contrast to Germany’s antisocialist legislation of 1878-1890 and the suspicions the Bürgertum frequently had in those years toward the lower classes. The authors of both books avoided portraying Athens’ democratization as an outstanding achievement. It certainly would have reflected the more active political role the Bürgertum was assuming and their growing democratic awareness in what was however only a “semi-constitutional monarchy.”

In Rome the lower classes were much less inclined to demand a democracy than in Athens, making it easy for the authors to avoid the subject. Instead, they concentrated in both books on the lower classes’ contentment with the leadership of the Senate and

---

68 Blackbourn, Peculiarities, 146.  
69 Book II, 106  
70 Fletcher, Bernstein to Brandt, 17.  
71 Blackbourn, Peculiarities, 21.
being satisfied with their limited political rights. By failing to highlight Athens’ and
Rome’s democratic developments the authors would have avoided conflict with Imperial
Germany’s official statist ideology.

Friedrich Neubauer 72

Neubauer, when reviewing Solons’ and Cleisthenes’ constitutions, mentions only
briefly the liberties they provided. He neglects to comment how revolutionary Athens’
progression toward democracy was, claiming instead its main purpose was to break the
power of the aristocracy. Neubauer also fails to bring to the forefront the concern of
Athens’ rulers for the wellbeing of the lower classes. However, he is the only author of
the Imperial period among those I analyzed to argue that Athens could not be called a
pure democracy because it kept 150,000 slaves, denied their allied states political
freedom and equality, and prevented non-Athenians of becoming citizens. German
Students reading Neubauer would have been more inclined to ponder what a true
democracy was, and implicitly to draw comparisons to Germany’s form of government.
Indeed, Athens limited its democratic rights to a small portion of its population – and the
same held true for Imperial Germany, where the lower classes and the Bürgertum were
disproportionately excluded from the political establishment. The interests of the
monarchy coincided more with the Bürgertum than with the lower classes, while the
SPD, even after the anti-socialist law was revoked in 1890, continued to be perceived as
an the enemy of the state and its members were frequently subjected to police

The proletariat, for example, needed police permission to marry; unmarried couples were not allowed to cohabitate; and police monitored their leisure activities.\(^3\)

This and the other authors never compared Athens’ democracy directly to Imperial Germany’s form of government, and were far from arguing that it was a “halb-absolutistischer Scheinkonstitutionalsmus” (semi-absolutist pseudoconstitutionalism), as the historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler has called it.\(^4\) Neubauer supported the monarchy by teaching that without a strong leader the sovereignty of the people would pursue an inconsequential and disoriented policy. In addition he drew attention to the importance of patriotism, the necessity of citizens to support the ideology of the state and make sacrifices for the love for their country. These statements were congruent with the decrees William II issued in 1872 to emphasize patriotism and self-sacrifice in history lessons, which by 1914 had contributed in no small part to the “Spirit of August.”\(^5\)

Regarding Athens, Neubauer claimed that the wars in the fourth century BC had impoverished large parts of Greece’s once prosperous population and concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. He claimed that Plato, after having witnessed Athens’ destructive governments dominated by selfish and self-centered leaders, proposed a “socialistic”, harmonious ideal-state with a cast (ständische) structure. He pointed out that the strong discrepancies between rich and poor in Athens’ later years facilitated the emergence of “socialistic” ideas by Plato’s and other philosophers.\(^6\) This is one of the few instances where an author of the Imperial period comments on the cause for a

---

\(^7\) Book III, 58.
socialistic concept. In general the authors avoided establishing a connection between the lower classes’ impoverishment and social injustice and the popularity of the SPD. Neubauer claimed with the deterioration of the state, morality, patriotism and the ideals of the Greek aristocracy such as democracy disappear.\textsuperscript{78} It might strike the specialist as surprising that he attributes democratic ideals to Athens’ aristocracy, which repeatedly had tried to usurp power and abolish Athenian democracy.\textsuperscript{79}

When reviewing Rome’s history Neubauer highlighted the advantage of strong leadership. Recognizing that the revolt of the plebeians was responsible for Rome becoming legally a republic, he nonetheless maintained that in reality it remained an aristocracy. The patrician Senate continued ruling Rome and was responsible for its success, he argued; an attempt in 133 BC by the tribune Tiberius Gracchus to empower the people failed.\textsuperscript{80} The author underpinned the advantages of an aristocratic leadership at a time when in Germany the nobility occupied 70-80% of the highest-ranking civil servant positions.\textsuperscript{81} Neubauer paid little attention to the role of socio-economic factors in these historical developments. He supported the monarchy by accentuating the advantages of Rome’s strong patrician leadership, and by failing to stress Athens’ revolutionary progression towards a republic. In the same vein he complied with the decree of William II by focusing on self-sacrifice and patriotism in Antiquity. In spite of his support of the Kaiserreich, egalitarian principals appear to be less of a taboo than in the books published before the turn of the century.

\textsuperscript{78} Neubauer, (Book III), 59. 
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Die Staatsgesinnung, das Ideal der griechischen Aristokarie wie Demokratie, Sitte und Sittlichkeit schwinden dahin}. 
\textsuperscript{80} Tribunes were elected representatives of the plebs, the lower class. 
H. Stich\textsuperscript{82}

Stich states that the Athenian’s civic-mindedness was instrumental for Athens to reach the pinnacle of its development under the supreme leadership of Pericles. He argued Athens was only a \textit{Volksherrschaft} (government by the people) in name, that in actuality Pericles ruled as a monarch. Interestingly, Stich’s portrayal of Athens mirrors how the \textit{Bürjertum} and the Kaiser wanted to be perceived – as civic minded and a supreme leader, respectively. William II in Germany’s “monarchical (\textit{königliche}) monocracy” claimed to be a ruler by divine rights with his will being the supreme law \textit{(Regis voluntas suprema rex)} and his wishes regarded as commands \textit{(Sic volo, sic jubeo)}\textsuperscript{83}. By advocating the necessity of a strong leader and the need for civic duty, Stich, like Neubauer, supported the monarchy and confirmed the values of the middle classes, in line with the stated goal of secondary education to prevent social change.\textsuperscript{84} Ancient history also illustrated the benefits of nationalism and patriotism in accordance with the decree of William II.\textsuperscript{85}

According to Stich, the \textit{tyrranos} Pisistratos considered the peasants the backbone of the state and their support essential for Athens to strive as a democracy. By pointing to the importance of the lower classes the author promotes the democratic concept more than other history texts published before the turn of the century. This can be seen as a reflection of the increasing strength of the SPD, which was gradually gaining more political rights. It also illustrates Germany’s growing awareness of democratic principals.

\textsuperscript{82} Stich. \textit{Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die oberen Klassen der Gymnasien} (Book I), 55-62.
as exemplified by the press’s ability to prevent legislation the Kaiser strongly advocated, legislation that would have limited political activity. (Stich limited the review of the Greek philosophers to only few sentences.  

Regarding Rome, Stich argues that patricians continued to rule even after it nominally became a democracy. He provides no details about the duality of its political system or the restricted political rights of the lower class. He contends the masses were able to gain power through rebellion, but appears hesitant to describe their limited success of establishing an egalitarian society comparable to Athens. As indicated earlier for textbooks to highlight the power struggle of Rome’s lower class would not have been in the interest of the monarchy, as this would uncomfortably have resembled Germany’s own contemporary political challenge.  

Stich paid only marginal attention to socio-economic influences on historical events or the democratic development of ancient Rome and Greece.

Karl Lorenz

Since the first of these history texts had been published, Germany’s middle classes had become more politically assertive, and the sociological dimension began to receive greater attention in the interpretation of historical events. Lorenz’s portrayal of ancient Greek and Roman history reflected these developments. He interpreted history as being based on cause and effect more than had previous authors, which might explain

---

86 Book I , 80-81, 102.
why his book was reissued in the Weimar Republic, in 1922, with only minor alteration of the text.\footnote{For this reason I will review his books only once.} Karl Lorenz, Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die Oberstufe höherer Lehranstalten (München: Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1922), 48-51.

In contrast to the other authors, Lorenz blames Athenian social upheavals on the introduction of a monetary system. He argues that money, by replacing barter, allowed Athens’ economy to expand through foreign trade, which destabilized its social structure. Merchants had become rich demanding political representation while peasants rebelled an encroaching enslavement brought about by cheap imported grain, which had robbed them of their income and forced them into debt. Lorenz contends Solon’s timocratic constitution pacified the peasants by canceling their debt, but not the merchants, who were denied access to leading government positions. The economic tiers of the timocracy were based on land holding and not on wealth, and thus confirmed the landed aristocracy as the political leadership.

For the author authors analyzed so far, social interaction among the different classes plays a much smaller role. They depict the Athenians as having an almost innate ability to advance towards democracy, in addition to having an intrinsic appreciation of the arts and an interest in intellectual achievements. Lorenz by contrast portrays Solon as an aristocrat who tried to solidify the power of his own class by excluding rich commoners from powerful positions while pacifying the lower classes.

Lorenz pays tribute to the benefits Solon’s constitution provided for the lower class. But he also dwells, more than the other authors, on the maneuvers of the aristocracy to retain their dominance. He acknowledges that Athens’ democratic constitution was a remarkable achievement, but suggests materialistic motives and not
idealism was responsible for its introduction. He perceives an expanding economy as responsible for a change in the class structure, and for an increased assertiveness of the underprivileged as a spur to Athens becoming a republic.

Lorenz’s different approach to interpreting ancient history would have made his text provocative during the monarchy. He implicitly guided students, more than the other authors, to draw parallels to Imperial Germany’s political and economical landscape, where the aristocracy was gradually losing their political influence by 1910. The Kaiser, for example, in 1908 abandoned his intention of restricting the Reichstag franchise, fearing the reaction of the people.  

And while the aristocracy had occupied about 80% of the higher administrative positions in 1891, by 1910 a large number of commoners had assumed their places. However, Lorenz also accentuates the shortcomings of Athenian democracy and its dependency on strong leadership by pointing to Athens’s internal struggle in the post-Pericles period. The author, as with many intellectuals of Imperial Germany, appeared not have opposed the monarchy as such, but did criticize its shortcomings.  

While adding a new perspective to Athens’ political development among the authors explored here, Lorenz provides only rudimentary information about the Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates.

Regarding Rome, only Lorenz considers the anthropological aspect in his review of its history. He argues the patrician families were the decedents of the initial conquerors of Rome that had subdued what now were the plebeians. For this reason, he contends, intermarriage between these two groups was prohibited, with the plebeians only gaining

---

90 Anderson, Practicing Democracy, 424.
equal rights when their military services became essential. His text would have led students to consider the similarities to Imperial Germany, where the proletariat also gained more rights as the demand for their labor and military service grew.⁹³

Lorenz describes how Rome’s democracy had been restricted to the city of Rome, while its Empire lacked representation. He argues that eventually the vastness of the Empire made it necessary to centralize power in one person and replace democracy with a dictatorship. Here again Lorenz describes history as a logical sequence more than the previous authors. He is also, rather remarkably, the only author to comment on the role of women in Antiquity, reflecting the increasing emancipation of women in German society, who, for instance, were now admitted to universities for the first time.⁹⁴ In ancient Rome, he contends, women were more respected and had more rights than in Athens, where they were excluded from public life.

These five history books, issued between 1887 and 1910, widely and rather closely mirrored the changing political landscape of Imperial Germany. Social legislation received more attention before the fin de siècle than later, which might be reflecting the strong impact this revolutionary legislation had when it was introduced. The development of democracy in Greece and Rome was getting increasing attention as time progressed, but without being brought to the forefront. The authors of the early textbooks (1887 & 1895) draw little attention to Greece’s advancement toward an egalitarian society, while Neubauer (1902) and Stich (1905) describe in more detail the revolt of the masses to gain more rights. Lorenz (1910) went one step further arguing egalitarian societies in

⁹³ Fletcher, Bernstein to Brandt, 71.
⁹⁴ Book V, 169.
Antiquity were the result of political necessity. All books advocate the advantages of a monarchy and emphasize the importance of patriotism and civic duty of the Athenians and Romans. These texts all supported the monarchical form of government with a single leader and Germany’s existing social values, but avoided detailed discussions of adverse issues such as the advantage of a republic. Lorenz alluded more than others to the socio-economic influence on the historical development of Athens and Rome thereby inducing students to draw parallels to present political constellation, but without undermine the general concept of a monarchy.

Ancient Greece and Rome: Weimar Republic

The following history books have been evaluated:

Table III:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year issued</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lorenz</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Bayern</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neustadt &amp; Röhm</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groebe</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Preußen</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uhl &amp; Ruider</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Bayern</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumsteller</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Düsseldorf</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A review of history texts written during the Weimar Republic shows that they generally supported the republic and mirrored the changing political environment. They also illustrated the growing sociological influence in the interpretation of history, which
was particularly evident in the books of Lorenz. As discussed earlier, the Weimar constitution introduced new educational goals, and to help ensure that these goals were implemented, new history texts were issued. Taken as a whole, these books emphasized Germany’s historical continuity without deriding the monarchy. In examining the books from the Weimar period, I seek to establish if these criteria were met, if socioeconomics were better recognized in the interpretation of history, if they propounded democratic principals and established a connection between the historical events in Antiquity and the more recent past. I will also compare the historical interpretation in the history texts of the Imperial and Weimar periods.

Groebe

Like Lorenz, Groebe states that poor economic conditions caused the Athenian peasants to demand more rights and the redistribution of the land, but without vying for a change of the existing social order, i.e. the abolition of private property or slavery. Groebe is the only author to provide a reading list of books dealing with ancient Greek culture, democracy and the development of socialism and communism in Antiquity and contemporary age. In the Imperial period the history books did not encourage a discussion of the latter two subjects.

Cleisthenes established in Athens an egalitarian society by shifting the power from the aristocrats to the peasantry, which Groebe references and explicitly compares to the French Revolution. As part of Athenian democratization, the districts the nobility had traditionally controlled were newly partitioned, rather like the rearrangement of

---

96 Book VI, 39-44.
France’s provinces into départements following its revolution – a comparison he makes explicitly. The nobility also lost their power base the Areopagus, an institution the author argues was hated as much as the Prussian Herrenhaus or the British Upper House. He pointed out that Athens’ nobility retained their social standing, assuredly leading students to compare them to Germany’s Junker and nobility, whose political power but not social standing was being diminished in Weimar.\textsuperscript{97} Groebe, as with the authors in the pre-war books, elaborated on the government’s concern with the welfare of the lower classes.

Groebe considers the Athenians’ evolving individualism and striving for knowledge as part of its cultural maturation and a necessary aspect of democracy because it enables citizens to make informed judgments. He highlights the importance of their participation in public life even if it leads at times to the implementation of bad policies.\textsuperscript{98} He thereby underpins for students the desirability of individualism and independent thinking and outlines their civic responsibility in line with goals of the humanistic education. The reviewed texts of Imperial Germany failed to comply with the humanistic ideology by not associating individualism and Allgemeinbildung with the Athenian cultural maturation or civic duty. The reviewed bibliography is conflicting about the teaching of independent thinking and individualism in the Weimar Republic. Helmut Becker and Gerhard Kluchert contended students were mainly taught how to benefit the state and society and less to become independent in their thinking.\textsuperscript{99} In contrast, the historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler and others claimed the Bildungsbürgertum was strongly

\textsuperscript{97} George P. Gooch. Germany (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), 359. 
\textsuperscript{98} Beherrscht von der Allmacht der Menschen führte zur Allgemeinbildung der Bürger als Teil der Demokratie, um ihnen das Rüstzeug für eine Tätigkeit im öffentlichen Leben zu geben. Selbst wenn dadurch die schlechtere Sache manchmal zum Siege verholfen wird. Book VI, 55.
\textsuperscript{99} Becker, Die Bildung der Nation, 240.
individualistic and independent thinking was insisted upon, a concept Groebe appeared to have perpetuated.\textsuperscript{100}

To wage war and to expand their economy, Athens relied increasingly on the lower classes, which felt enabled to demand more rights and participation in public affairs. Groebe claimed Prussia and later Germany experienced a similar development after the wars of liberation (\textit{Befreiungskriege}), the war of 1870-1, and the recent World War.\textsuperscript{101} He thereby argued for Germany’s gradually democratic development and at the same time established a historical continuation in congruence with the educational goals of the Weimar constitution.

Regarding Athens, Groebe claimed that enlightenment freed the Athenians from traditional patterns of behavior and thinking, and taught them to make rational decisions and become responsible for their action. Euripides, he points out, reflected this social change in his plays by portraying man’s freedom, his self-reliance and being responsible to only himself. Groebe argues the Sophists expanded this concept by stating knowledge, morality or religion have no absolute truth, man therefore has to evaluate each situation rationally and become free from traditional thinking patterns because through reason man can do everything.

With both examples Groebe again advocates independent thinking and self-reliance. In support of democracy, Groebe cited the Sophist belief in equality, which they considered man’s natural right (\textit{Naturrecht}), and included the abolition of slavery and aristocratic privilege. In line with humanistic concepts he discusses how Socrates reminded his fellow man to apply his intellect and not grow tired in the acquisition of


\textsuperscript{101} Book VI, 50.
knowledge.\(^{102}\) Groebe demonstrates to students the prerequisites for a just and moral society by reviewing Plato’s philosophy. Plato considered being just the highest virtue that can only be practiced within a social framework, and saw the function of a government to provide a stable environment for citizens to fulfill their moral obligations.

Groebe portrays Romans as having a strong democratic spirit. He points out its democracy was not comparable to Athens’ because not the assembly of the people made final decisions, but the Senate and high-ranking civil servants. Rome emerged as a world power under the Senate’s competent leadership until their greed and corruption in later years caused Romans to abandon their ideals and become a plutocracy. Groebe appears to be drawing parallels to role Germany’s aristocracy played, which also was instrumental in helping the state to excel, but by Weimar had arguably contributed to its recent downfall. In his depiction of ancient history Groebe considers the consequence of war, social and economic events, unlike the authors of the monarchy with the exception of Lorenz. He also made comparisons to recent European historical developments and uses terms such as “two front war,” and socialism that were lacking in the narrative of the previous authors. His historical writing supported the democratic concept, of which he considered *Allgemeinbildung*, independent thinking and self-reliance an integral part.

Neustadt and Röhm\(^{103}\)

Neustadt and Röhm, whose book was published the same year as Goebe’s, argue the idea of the state being ruled by the people had finally become reality with the introduction of Cleisthenes’ constitution; now all Athenians enjoyed equal political and civic rights.

\(^{102}\) Book VI, 54-6.

\(^{103}\) Neustadt, *Geschichte des Altertums*, (Book VII).
They depict democracy as the highest political achievement, thereby supporting Germany’s nascent democratic transformation. The authors provide little information about Athens’ socio-economical development; instead they describe the influence of the Hellenistic culture on contemporary intellectual concepts, social values, legal system and political structures.\textsuperscript{104}

In Athens, they contend, \textit{Bildung} ranked highest and its culture became synonymous with humanity. Their historical interpretation is little influenced by the sociological perception common to Lorenz and Groebe. They strongly advocate Athenian democratic achievement, and the humanistic ideal of \textit{Bildung} as a desirable educational goal. The educational policy of the Republic required drawing parallels between historical development of the past and the present, which the authors only sparingly establish. The main difference in the portrayal of Athens’ history to the textbooks of the monarchy is that they teach democracy to be the preferred form of government.

Through Plato’s writings the authors instruct students in the moral and ethical obligation of the state and of the individual towards society. They argue that Plato considered the individual’s willing assimilation into a just society to be a virtue, and saw the function of the state not only to benefit the individual, but also to provide a moral environment by combining ethics with politics. Neustadt and Röhm make an implicit case for communism by arguing that in his \textit{politeia}, Plato described an ideal state as being one without rich or poor, in which natural ability determined social ranking, while he defined democracy as the rule by the mob. The authors claim socialism reflects Plato’s demand for the state to fulfill a moral and ethical obligation.\textsuperscript{105} They suggest a

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{105} Book VII, 32-37
connection between the ideology of Antiquity and the contemporary age by depicting Plato’s philosophy is a fundamental part of western culture, with his religious thoughts becoming the foundation of Christian dogmatism, and influencing St. Augustine in the fourth century AD and Kant in more recent years.

The authors argue that in *Ethics* Aristotle considered a strong middle class the main supporter of the state whose members were in general the most effective legislators. Neustadt and Röhm argue that Aristotle favored a blend of a democracy and oligarchy, while political extremes such as tyrannies are the likely consequence of the excessive accumulation of wealth by a few, in combination with a large poor population.\textsuperscript{106} The authors do not comment that the Weimar Republic, as with most democracies, can be seen as a blend of a democracy and oligarchy, because national policies are strongly influenced by powerful interest groups representing the wealth of a nation. At the time the book was issued in 1927 Germany prospered and complete social polarization only began in the aftermath of Black Friday in October 1929. The authors’ trend of favoring an all-uniting brotherly union resembling communism surfaced again with their discussion of the philosopher Zenon (334-262), who interestingly is not mentioned in any of the other books. According to his philosophy all of mankind is god’s children and brothers, and their separation by nationalities, sexes, classes or slavery contradicts this natural unity. As a citizen of the world each rational individual has to feel responsible towards his fellow man and the society he lives in.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106} Book VII. 56.  
\textsuperscript{107} Book VII. 58.
Regarding Rome, Neustadt and Röhm describe the shortcomings of Roman democracy by arguing that plebeians were prevented from occupying high-ranking government positions by not remunerating officeholders; Rome therefore never became a true democracy comparable to Athens. Instead, they argue, high-ranking civil servants and the Senate were recruited from a few aristocratic families, whose consistent policies were responsible for Rome’s greatness. In the final years of the Roman Republic the Senate became incompetent and was mainly concerned with accumulating wealth, which the authors argue led to Rome’s conversion into a dictatorship.

Similarly to Groebe, Neustadt and Röhm led students to make comparisons to the accomplishments of the Prussian and German monarchy and the eventual failure of its leadership that caused its demise. The two authors list the historical events of Rome’s development but very sparingly discuss its socio-economic aspects and how they shaped these events, as Lorenz and Groebe had done. The reader gets the impression these authors continued to idealize and teach humanistic concepts prevalent during the monarchy. Their textbook failed to establish historical parallels between ancient and more recent history, as the educational guidelines of the Weimar Republic required. The authors’ presentation of ancient history differs only from the Imperial period by their praise of democratic principals possibly within a humanity uniting ideal state; otherwise it is an example of the traditional humanistic education.

Uhl and Ruider

Uhl and Ruider argue, as did Lorenz in book IV and X, that expanding capitalism made it more economical for ancient Athens to import grain than to grow it locally,

which deprived peasants of their income, caused their enslavement and triggered their revolt. Their uprising caused Solon to introduce a constitution that liberated the peasants, which the authors explicitly compared to the liberation of German farmers in the nineteenth century. Solon’s constitution established equality before the law for all citizens and social programs to support the less affluent. Because of such revolutionary legislation Uhl and Ruider portray Solon as the biggest social reformer of Antiquity. By highlighting Athens’ social concerns they pointed students to Germany’s similarly exceptional welfare legislation, which was started during the monarchy and became part of the constitution of the Weimar Republic. 109

Themistocles, following Solon, elevated the status of the lower classes, which the authors compare to the introduction of more liberties in Prussia following the Napoleonic era. They argue that Themistocles, like Bismarck, established pacts with its neighboring states to support each other in case of attacks by Persia. These authors also discuss the economic importance of the mutual currency and measuring system Athens had introduced to its trading partners. Athens, after defeating Persia in 490 and 479 BC, made great cultural and economical strides, which Uhl and Ruider compare explicitly to similar developments in Germany after the victories of Prussia and Imperial Germany. They highlight the advantages of a republic, describe Athens’ democracy in detail, and state Persia’s defeat by Greece meant victory of democracy and freedom over despotism and suppression.

Germany’s “present type of government”, the authors contend, is not comparable to Athenian democracy, because only citizens, a minority in Athens, benefited from its

---

democratic institutions, while non-residents, allies and slaves did not.\textsuperscript{110} The authors contend that during Athens’ declining years, a poorly educated proletariat ran the state, for which it lacked the necessary skills.\textsuperscript{111} By referring to a proletariat ill equipped to head the government, the authors appear to allude to a similar constellation in the Weimar Republic’s first government. The SPD, nominally representing the proletariat, was then heading the government; but, as Margaret Anderson suggests, while it had flourished under the Reichstag’s constitutional dualism, it lost its strength once in power because it lacked qualified, experienced people.\textsuperscript{112}

Athenians pursued knowledge and truth for its own sake; in Germany, the authors stress, humanistic education was guiding students in the same direction. It appears Uhl and Ruider were reluctant to abandon the humanistic educational ideals of the previous century: in an argument he made almost sixty years ago, the historian Friedrich Meinecke contended that secondary education was trying to preserve the social values of the middle class.\textsuperscript{113} As a representative of the \textit{Bildungsbürger}, he similarly wanted to save as much of the cultural heritage and traditions of the monarchy in “the new world,” but nonetheless recognized concessions needed to be made to the new democratic realities.\textsuperscript{114} In contrast to the previous author, Uhl and Ruider attribute historical events to the interplay of various socioeconomic developments. They frequently also refer to Europe’s more recent history, thereby illustrating their view that similar events trigger comparable historical sequences.

\textsuperscript{110} Book IX, 52-4.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{112} Anderson. \textit{Practicing Democracy}, 436.
\textsuperscript{113} Samuel, Education and Society in Modern, 45-6.
\textsuperscript{114} Meinecke. \textit{Erlebtes, 1862-1919}, 334.
Regarding Athenian philosophers, Uhl and Ruider discuss Socrates and his teaching that the leaders of the state should not separate the necessary from the just, in the process maintaining the importance of educating contemporary German students in the significance of electing the right politicians. The authors discuss Plato’s utopian state but place less emphasis on its socialistic aspect than Neustadt and Röhm. They are the only authors to describe Plato’s second version of a state in which law takes precedence over rule by an elite group, a concept applicable to some extent to Germany’s monarchy but definitely more so to the republic. They point to the advantages of a Kaiserrreich when discussing Aristotle’s philosophy, which considered a monarchy a sensible form of government because it provided a domineering will, while in a democracy a collective will is missing. This concurred with their previous statement that the proletariat is ill equipped to run the country.\textsuperscript{115} The authors describe how Aristotle’s writing has guided western thinking for the last two thousand years, including the attitude towards women and slavery, stating the philosopher accepted their subordination because he felt unable to alter such an established tradition.\textsuperscript{116} Uhl and Ruider are one of the few authors to address the subordination of women in Antiquity and in western societies.

The authors made frequent comparisons of Rome’s history to similar developments in Europe. For example, Uhl and Ruider explicitly state that voting rights tiered according to income had also been part of the constitutions of Prussia and most European countries. They claim Rome’s strength lay in the excellent and systematic training of its senators and leading civil servants, and that the same concept was adopted later by the papal curia. They also find an analogy between the growing power of the

\textsuperscript{115} Book IX, 52-4.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 90-91.
plebeians of Rome and of the trade guilds in Germany’s medieval cities, a development they describe as common in history – but without referring to the political assertion of Germany’s lower class in more recent years. The authors compare Germany’s military victories to those of Hannibal’s in an attempt to make students proud of their fatherland in spite of the lost war and the treaty of Versailles, perceived as dishonorable. Uhl and Ruider state Hannibal’s battle of Cannae, his military strategy and victory over a much larger force, was comparable to Germany’s victories over a stronger enemy at Sedan and more so at Tannenberg.\footnote{Through Hannibal’s superior strategy Ancient Rome suffered in 216 BC one of its most catastrophic defeats in spite of their much larger force.} Only by exhausting the enemy were the Romans able to reverse Hannibal’s initial success, arguing the same had held true for Germany following its glorious victories in 1914. They depict Count Alfred von Schlieffen as the creator of Germany’s strategy in World War I, and compare him explicitly to Hannibal because he praised the latter’s plan for defeating an overwhelming enemy force as exemplary.

Hannibal’s defeat permitted Rome to become the leading economic power, which caused the replacement of its old leaders by a new upper class. The authors explicitly compare the characteristics and role of Rome’s new elite to the Prussian \textit{Junker}, because in their prime they were both willing to fight and die for their country, served in the army before becoming civil servants, and vehemently defended their class privileges. The authors further argue that Rome’s aristocracy eventually deteriorated morally and intellectually; and when the Roman general and dictator (81 BC) Sulla tried to restore their status he failed, as did Metternich in his attempt of a restoration. They leave unspoken the many parallels students could have discerned at that point in Weimar history regarding the Prussian aristocracy.
Uhl and Ruider, more than any other authors investigated here, interweave Rome’s history with similar events of Europe’s more recent past. In addition they highlight the interrelation of social, economical and political events providing the student with an understanding of causality in history. They also make a special effort to meet educational directives by emphasizing the historical continuity between the monarchy and the Weimar Republic. This is particularly apparent when glorifying German victories on the battlefield under Bismarck and in World War I. In addition of promoting humanism, which was in general declining after the war, the authors repeatedly make a case for the benefits of a democratic concept but in the form of a constitutional monarchy.\textsuperscript{118} They underpin the importance of Athens’ social concerns and describe in detail its development toward a republic, pitting it against the disadvantages of Persian despotism.

Kumsteller\textsuperscript{119}

Kumsteller dedicates little space to Athens’ socio-economic developments and only briefly mentions that the \textit{tyrannos} protected the lower class against exploitation by the nobility. He argues Athenians under the monarchical leadership of Pericles had finally established equality and freedom of expression, “with no interference by the police.”\textsuperscript{120} But Kumsteller also argues that following Pericles, an often “screaming and yelling assembly” made frequently irrational and disastrous decisions.\textsuperscript{121} In addition, Kumsteller contends, demagogues influenced the people to advance their own cause to

\textsuperscript{118} Marchand. \textit{Down from Olympus: archaeology and philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970}, 265.
\textsuperscript{119} Kumsteller, \textit{Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend}, (Book VIII).
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 35.
the detriment of the state. Soon the democratic spirit and the concern for the common welfare were replaced by the desire to gain power and wealth, causing the impoverishment of a large part of the population. Through these events, the author claims, concepts of economic equality surfaced and were the early stages of socialism and communism. Kumsteller advocates equality and democracy but at the same time illustrates to students the advantages of a single leader.

Regarding Athenian philosophers, Kumsteller underpins democratic principals and social equality by highlighting the Sophists’ teaching that everybody is entitled to equal rights, equal wealth and education. His preference for a constitutional monarchy is apparent when quoting Socrates’ claim that a wise ruler cannot be replaced by ten thousand that lack deeper understanding. Likewise he cites the advantages Aristotle ascribed to a monarchy. Aristotle in *Politics* proposed the division of power within a government into executive, legislative and judicial branches, which, the author claims, remained influential into the 18th century. He fails to mention, however, that the separation of power was an integral part of the constitutions of the Weimar Republic and the United States of America. Kumsteller is the only author to discuss the continuous influence of the Greek historian Thucydides’ objective approach to history. He describes how Thucydides observed the recurrence of historical patterns under similar circumstances. The authors of the Weimar Republic made repeated use of this concept by comparing ancient Europe to modern Europe, while the books of the monarchy avoided such comparisons possibly to prevent associations with democratic development in the antique.

---

122 Ibid., 31-36.
123 Ibid., 37.
Regarding Rome, Kumsteller argues that the lifestyle of patrician families set an example for bravery and commitment for the people. He states patricians had to serve as officers in the army, which taught them discipline, obedience and conformity. Only then could they become Senators and civil servants. Those deviating from the norm or innovating were weeded out. Which explains, Kumsteller contends, the lack of outstanding generals or statesmen. The author idealizes the selfless commitment of the patricians to the Roman state and compares it to qualities of the aristocracy of Prussia and Imperial Germany. He argues the Junker had much in common with patricians: they both had to serve in the army before entering public service and were equally disciplined, dedicated, obedient and patriotic. These same Roman traits gain much attention across the books explored in this study, and were evidently deeply ingrained among the authors of Germany’s history texts, not just in the Kaiserreich, but perhaps more surprisingly in the Weimar period as well.

Historians used to claim the educational system of the Weimar Republic mirrored in some cases the ideals of a counter-revolutionary movement; Kumsteller’s text would seem to serve as an example of this tendency.\(^{124}\) Kumsteller did not oppose the democratic concept as such, but advocated the rule of a single leader and of patriotic and dedicated nobility.

Democracy and equality were praised as a great accomplishment by all the Weimar-era authors explored here. They also discuss the shortcomings of the nobility in antiquity and the harm they did to the state, indirectly associating them with the recent performance of Germany’s aristocracy. The majority of these history books compare

historical events of Antiquity to recent European history, and most support such
comparison with socioeconomics. Even though most authors advocated the political
concept of the Weimar Republic, they also expressed nostalgia towards the *Kaiserreich*.
This nostalgia mirrored a common attitude of the *Bürgertum* in the post-World War I era.
It illustrates they had not opposed the institution of the monarchy with its hierarchical
social structure and that their increasing assertiveness had mainly been aimed at
maintaining and gaining political rights. Of the Weimar period Kumsteller was the only
author reviewed to clearly promote the advantages of a constitutional monarchy. He also
glorified the accomplishment and virtues of Prussia’s aristocracy when they were in their
prime placing them on par with Rome’s patrician families.
CONCLUSION

The History books of Imperial Germany

Texts exploring ancient Greek and Roman history for Germany’s secondary education issued between 1887 and 1910 reflect the changing political landscape of the monarchy, and mirror the Bürgertum’s increasing assertiveness and growing democratic attitude. In the earlier texts, issued in 1887 and 1895, Pütz and Dürr did not portray Solon’s constitution as revolutionary or comment that for the first time, all Athenians were equal before the law. Dürr did state Solon’s constitution was the first step towards Athenian democracy and discussed its concern with the wellbeing of the lower class. In 1902, Neubauer in his textbook briefly mentioned the liberties the constitution of Solon and Cleisthenes provided, but without elaborating on Athens’ advancing democracy. Instead they claimed these legal changes mainly served to break the power of the aristocracy. Stich, in 1905, went one step further by attributing Athenian cultural achievements to the civic-mindedness of its citizens. Finally, in 1910, Lorenz described Solon’s constitution as revolutionary by being the first step in establishing Athens’ democracy and by considering the wellbeing of its citizen. He was also the only author to attribute its enactment to socioeconomic developments. We can see something of a progression from one author to the next, with a discernable tendency of increasingly highlighting those liberal and civic aspects of Athens.

All authors advocated the advantages of a state run by one leader, a monarch. Neubauer argued a head of state is required to give the country direction, whereas Stich claimed Athens was a democracy in name only, and that in reality Pericles ruled it as
monarch. Lorenz described Athens’ democratization in more detail claiming Athenians’ assertiveness and demands for equal rights increased as they became more prosperous. But in the same context, he focused on what he perceived as the shortcomings of a state ruled by the people instead of a single leader. The welfare of the lower classes was a major concern in ancient Greece; such a depiction would have underpinned the benevolent attitude of Germany’s monarchy with its social legislation. Surprisingly, this topic received some attention in the early books, but very little in the later ones. Athens’ development towards a democracy was increasingly acknowledged with progressing years – in tandem with the growing political assertiveness of the Bürgertum.

In the Roman Republic, the lower classes, the plebeians, played a more pronounced role than in Athens. In spite of being a republic, the aristocratic Senate firmly ruled Rome, and plebeians were denied access to leading positions, even while they had representation. The dual political and social structure of Rome, as portrayed in these texts, would have struck the more astute German pupil of the day as similar to Imperial Germany, where the SPD, the representative of organized labor, was also excluded from political participation. In 1887 when the first of the history books explored here was issued, the anti-socialist laws were still in effect. But even after their repeal, the state’s challenges to the lower classes were not over. Rome’s and Imperial Germany’s comparable social structures made the discussion of the lower classes and their power struggle in Antiquity a sensitive subject, and might explain their limited coverage.

The authors of particularly the earlier Kaiserreich books commented very little on the struggle of the lower classes for equality. Instead they described the plebeians’ satisfaction with the able leadership of the Senate in an indirect support of Germany’s
monarchy. Neubauer (in 1902) mentioned that the revolt of the plebeians was responsible for Rome legally becoming a republic. In reality, he argued, a few aristocratic families stocked the Senate, who ruled the country exclusively and whose capable leadership made Rome a dominant power. Three years later, Stich described in more detail the mass struggle for more rights, and the limited political power they gained. Five years after Stich, Lorenz discussed the power struggle of the lower classes more extensively, arguing the demand for their military service forced the state to give them access to all public offices. As mentioned, only Lorenz based the restructuring of Rome’s society on socioeconomic developments, a practice that would later become common in the history books of the Weimar Republic. But in contrast to the authors of the Weimar Republic, Lorenz failed to compare the history of the past to Europe’s more recent events, even when his book was reissued in the Weimar Republic.

Kaiserreich authors used Rome’s and Imperial Germany’s similar social structure and military culture to underpin the advantages of a monarchy by repeatedly describing the effectiveness of the Roman aristocracy and contentment of the plebeians under their capable leadership. In addition, the Romans militaristic orientation, their sense of duty, discipline and patriotism coincided with values the Bürgertum aspired to and served in these texts to reinforce such ideals in secondary students.

The History Books of the Weimar Republic

In accordance with the Minister of Education Konrad Haenisch’s decree of 1920, all history books were to be newly issued in the Weimar Republic. The new books were to avoid all biased historical interpretations, and establish continuity between Germany’s
past and present in order to add legitimacy to the still unstable republic. The decree lacked an explicit statement to promote democratic principals; like the Tolerance Clause of the new constitution, no political system was to be given explicit preference. Lorenz’s history book, issued in 1922, was the first to be reissued; the new edition was a slightly abbreviated version of the book he had written in 1910 with an otherwise identical text. The last book, by Kumsteller, was issued in 1930 – too early to have had its analyses influenced by the economic hardship Germany suffered in the aftermath of the stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression.

Lorenz, as mentioned, was the only author of the monarchy to consider the impact of socioeconomic developments on historical events, while all authors of the Weimar Republic, except for Neustadt, interpreted history in this manner. By comparing socioeconomic developments of ancient Greece and Rome to those of Europe’s recent past, authors of the republic established similarities in their historical developments, and implicitly showed favor to materialist and functionalist interpretations of history, moving away from an emphasis on ruling elites and great men. More emphasis is placed on poor economic conditions triggering revolts in both Antiquity and recent history, revolts, which were depicted as advancing democracy in both periods. The lower classes similarly are portrayed as having gained more rights in Antiquity when their military service became essential and during periods of prosperity.

All authors, with the exception of Kumsteller, supported Germany’s new republic by praising Athenian democracy as the preferred form of government and highlighting civic duties and responsibilities as an intricate part of it. Kumsteller advocated democracy but in monarchical setting. By contrast, Neustadt and Röhm called democracy and
equality the highest political achievements. Others argued the defeat of Persia meant victory of freedom over bondage and “Asian despotism”, and quoted Pericles, who believed democracy was responsible for Athenian greatness.

Athenian social concerns and the support of the poor also gained repeated attention in these books reflecting a similar attitude in Germany. Solon, because of his concern for the welfare of the poor, was praised as the biggest social reformer in antiquity, besides lauding his revolutionary constitution. Kumsteller argued that Athens introduced social programs when the poor realized that economic equality could not be equated with political freedom and equality. This realization, he claimed, initiated socialistic and communistic ideas. Socialism and communism had gained prominence in Europe and their ideology could no longer be denied as during the monarchy, which is apparent from the frequently mentioning of their doctrine in these history books. Groebe even provided a reading list of books dealing with socialism and communism in antiquity and the present. In this regard it is surprising that the rebellion of the Roman slaves is only mentioned in one brief sentence by two authors of each period and without any additional comments, and the Spartacus uprising is not referred to at all. Most authors, it appears, used Athens’ democracy as a template to teach students the duties and responsibilities of citizens and government in a democracy. These history books continued to promote independent thinking, humanism and idealized Bildung for its own sake as desirable educational goal, but also considered Allgemeinbildung essential for a democracy.

Greece’s philosophers were reviewed at more length in Weimar books than in the history books of the monarchy and their different philosophical concepts were used to
highlight equality and democracy. In this vein they elaborated on man’s natural right (
_Naturrecht_) to equality, the abolition of slavery and aristocratic privileges as taught by the Sophists; and discussed the importance of the peasants and _Bür
gertum_, as the backbone of the republic. They taught that the state’s main function is to benefit the individual and that they should not separate the necessary from the just. They underpinned the government’s ethical and moral obligation to provide an environment in which their subjects can function properly. The individual in turn has moral obligation and responsibility towards the state and is expected to willingly assimilate to such a society. The philosophical concepts also served to teach students of Germany’s young republic the different aspects of democracy and the reciprocal obligations and responsibilities between the government and its citizens.

Some authors do not appear to be totally committed to the republic, and elaborated more than others on Socrates’ and Plato’s preferences of a single leader versus the rule by the masses. The socialistic government structure also gets more attention in these books than during the monarchy. In the history books of the republic more attention was paid to the demands of the plebeians and the limited rights they gained. They also stated that Rome never became a democracy but remained an aristocracy. The authors of the Weimar Republic, similar to those of Imperial Germany, drew parallels between the political and social structure of Rome and Germany, and compared the virtues of Rome’s patricians directly or indirectly to those of the _Junker_. In both countries aristocratic families filled leading government positions, and patricians, similarly to the _Junker_, first served as officers in the army to learn conformity and obedience before entering politics, as the authors claimed. The authors perceived the Roman patricians and the German
aristocracy to be equally patriotic, disciplined and willing to sacrifice their own desires in the interest of their country, thereby setting an example for the plebeians.

The authors did not fail to describe how eventually the Senate became corrupt, and attempts to restore their power were in vain because their morals and intellectual capabilities had deteriorated too much. Roman history is thus used to glorify the past achievements of Germany’s aristocracy, their virtues and success in leading the state; but the authors also refer to its demise. These historical parallels were even extended to associating Hannibal’s famous victories with those of Germany.

In compliance with the humanistic concept the authors claimed Hellenism helped the Romans to broaden their perspective from thinking provincially to thinking globally, enabling them to become a world power. All Weimar authors depicted democracy as a desirable institution, albeit in the form of a monarchy in the case of Kumstetter. The uniform praise of patriotism, self-discipline, high moral standards and military obedience in the history books of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic both, served to entice secondary students to emulate such cultural traits. The history books of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic both mirror the political landscape of their time. In the Imperial period the advantages of a single leader are underpinned while democracy is downplayed. As the Bürgertum of the monarchy became more assertive by defending and expanding their political rights, Athens’ democratic achievements gained more attention. In the republic the support of such single leadership appeared as nostalgic longing for the more structured political system of the past however within a democratic frame. This argument is supported by the authors claiming that the Roman and German aristocracy through their selfless dedication helped the respective country to excel. The different
historical interpretations of all textbooks I evaluated were found to depend on the author and not on the district for which they were issued.

Humanistic education

Humanistic education was to form the character of secondary students by familiarizing them with the values of ancient Greek and Roman culture, which its proponents considered to represent “the best that had been thought and known”. Humboldt believed the fundamental ideals of these cultures would be conveyed best by teaching an idealized version of ancient history. In the textbooks of the Imperial period, this approach of teaching ancient history was clearly apparent. These authors, with the exception of Lorenz, did not cite socioeconomic developments and thereby avoided assigning causality to historical events. It permitted them to idealize Antiquity and make implicit comparisons to the Kaiserreich. This approach of teaching history became eventually questionable; as historical research advanced, history was viewed more realistically and the humanistic ideology gradually lost prominence.

Lorenz in his textbook of 1910 reflected this more causal approach to history. He demystified the ancient Greek and Roman cultures by basing their history on socioeconomic developments and not on innate and exceptional giftedness of its people. His new approach was synonymous with the more rational Weltanschauung of the Bürgertum whose idealized interpretation of Antiquity was loosing its luster as education exposed them increasingly to science. Lorenz’s texts thus formed the link between the humanistic education in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. The majority of

---

125 Ibid., 10.
126 Albisetti, Secondary school reform in Imperial Germany, 110.
secondary students in Imperial Germany still read Greek philosophers and Roman literature in the original language, which accounted for their sparing review in the textbooks of that period. This might be the reason why only Dürr et al. mentioned the importance of *Allgemeinbildung*, which represented a dominant aspect of the humanistic education and was part of the *Bildungsbürgertum’s* ideology. For the humanistic student *Allgemeinbildung* was assured because it was largely seen synonymous with exposure to ancient cultures and values through their authors. In the Weimar Republic *Schöngeistigkeit*, the ideology of humanistic education, continued to be marginalized, partly through the influence of modernity and also because the carnage of World War I had greatly devalued the ideals of Antiquity. Students increasingly preferred to attend *Realschulen*, where ancient languages were taught only sparingly, and humanistic education was mostly limited to the teaching of ancient history.

Most of the post-war texts supported the nascent Republic by describing socioeconomic developments such as social upheaval that helped in establishing democracies in ancient Greece and Rome. Groebe et al. taught students responsibilities in a democracy by highlighting the importance Athenians attributed to civic duties, and together with Neustadt argued *Allgemeinbildung*, independent thinking and self-reliance were prerequisites for making informed decision as citizens of a democracy. These highly valued concepts of Antiquity had not only remained fundamental to the humanistic education but were transposed from *Schöngeistigkeit* to a necessity within a democracy. The now more detailed discussions of the emergence of socialism in ancient Greece and the importance of a just social structure illustrated the more realistic approach to history.

---

127 Book VII and Book VI
of the humanistic education.128 In the Imperial period humanistic education had been accused of being *Weltfremd* (unworldly); this was remedied to a degree in the Weimar period by the discussion of historical causality, socioeconomic influence and the comparison of ancient to contemporary history. Humanistic education had valued the student’s familiarity with Greek philosophers and their influence on Western culture and political concepts. To compensate for ancient philosophers declining exposure in ancient languages their review now became part of lessons in ancient history.

The humanistic education’s selective interpretation of ancient history underpins and mirrors the contemporary political ideology in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. These textbooks reflect not only the change from a monarchy to a republic but also the waning of the humanistic ideology as it made room for more science oriented education.

---

128 Book IX
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources


Secondary sources


Gooch, George P. *Germany.* New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons. 1925.


Maynes, Mary Jo. *Schooling in Western Europe.*


Müller, Detlef K., Fritz Ringer, Brian Simon et al., *The rise of the modern educational system: structural changes and social reproduction 1870-1920.*


Sagarra, Eda. *A social history of Germany 1648-1914.*


Schneider, Gerhard. „Der Geschichtsunterricht in der Ära Wilhelms II,“ in *Gesellschaft Staat und Geschichte.*
    ed. Klaus Bergmann, and Gerhard Schneider.

Spranger, Eduard. *Wilhelm von Humboldt und die Reform des Bildungswesens.*


    ________. *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*

http://www.gottwein.de/Eth/Human01.htm#Deutschland); Internet; accessed July 22, 2005.