

When Classicists Need to Speak Up

Antiquity and Present Day Pedophilia – Pederasty¹

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that one should not necessarily make sharp distinctions between the constructionist and the essentialist view concerning the question of boy love in Antiquity. It is possible to combine both approaches to come to a better understanding of both the past and the present. The author reveals how the practice of pederasty highlights vital ancient concepts about children, which should always be borne in mind when one compares with modern society. This, however, does not mean that antiquity can be used to make a straightforward plea for the acceptance of what we commonly call pedophile relationships. On the other hand, ancient historians should not be restrained from calling attention to ambiguities or inconsistencies in present-day understandings of childhood and children's sexuality. As such, the study of ancient sexuality forces us to consider whether it is possible to think in another way than we think and to perceive in another way than we are used to perceive.

Key Words: ancient sexuality, pederasty, pedophilia, homosexuality, childhood, youth, age of consent, slavery

1. Introduction

At times, classical scholarship brings embarrassment to its students. Classicists and ancient historians might face discomfiture when dealing with such images as the Attic red-figure plate (fifth century BCE) from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.² The vase shows a youth, holding a shopping bag as a love gift, drawing close to an adult man who reaches out to fondle him. The British Museum in London is the proud owner of a small silver cup, the Warren Cup (30 BCE – 30 CE), featuring

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explicit images. On one side, we see a bearded man engaged in sexual activity with a youth. A boy opens a door and is an (accidental?) witness to the scene. The scene on the other side of the cup shows a man making love to a boy. The lock of hair suggests that the latter is a slave.

Classical scholars tend to restrict any discussion on these images and related themes to their classrooms. In sharp contrast with the sometimes blatant commentaries by journalists, politicians, social workers, pedagogues and psychologists, these scholars shy from the media or the public debate on moral and social issues concerning children, youth and sexuality. Their silence is easily understandable, as the study of ancient sexuality might raise a painful question, which is not easily solved:

[in a chapter on homosexuality and pederasty]: “Either, I think, we must conclude that Athenian adult males were quite oblivious to the harm that they were doing to the psyches of the young [...], or that, in fact, in a society where such practices were accepted, no significant harm was done.”³

Indeed, such a question can be approached in two different ways. Constructionists might point to ideas, customs and social practices being constructions. Their positing the changeableness of cultural norms provocatively questions both the present and the past.⁴ To essentialists, the unchangeable nature of the human species matters. As psychologists and doctors have repeatedly demonstrated the harmfulness of pederastic relations, this would imply that the practice is evidence of rampant child sexual abuse: the history of Western civilization as a nightmare from which children have just recently begun to awake!⁵

In this paper, I will demonstrate that one should not necessarily make sharp distinctions between the constructionist and the essentialist view. It is indeed possible to combine both approaches to come to a better understanding of both the past and the present. As an historian of Roman childhood and youth, I will reveal how the practice of pederasty highlights vital ancient concepts about children, which should always be borne in mind when tempting to compare with modern society.⁶ I will also make the point that Antiquity cannot unambiguously be used to make a straightforward plea for the acceptance of what we commonly call pedophile relationships.⁷ On the other hand, this should not restrain ancient historians from calling attention to ambiguities or inconsistencies in present-day understandings of childhood: they have at least something to say in the current debate, and their failure or unwillingness to do so is, in my view, deplorable.

2. Pedophilia and pederasty as modern constructs

Originally, pedophilia is a psychiatric term with a quite specific meaning that does not necessarily correspond with the way we use the word in everyday speech. According to the World Health Organisation, sixteen- and seventeen-year-old adolescents qualify as pedophiles if they have a strong and persistent sexual preference for prepubescent children at least five years younger than them. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), pedophilia is a form of paraphilia in which a person either has acted on intense sexual urges towards children, or experiences recurrent sexual urges towards and phantasies about children that cause distress or interpersonal difficulty.⁸ Pederasty, on the other hand, is not a psychiatric term. It usually refers to the ancient Greek institution of love of boys. Anthropologists consider it an example of male age-structured homosexuality: it appears as typical of a passing stage in which the adolescent is the beloved of an older male-mentor.⁹ The relationship comes to an end when the young man reaches a certain developmental threshold. As such, it is attested in many cultures throughout the world, and needs to be distinguished sharply from pedophilia.¹⁰

These subtle distinctions are not made in the present-day legal discourse, which is very much concerned with the issue of age of consent. In law enforcement, the term 'pedophile' is used for those convicted of sexual abuse of a minor, including both prepubescent children and pubescent or even post-pubescent adolescents under the age of consent. To put things sharply, in modern society a difference of some days may make the difference between penal sexual acts and a legally permitted relationship. However, in the legal systems of various countries, even those of Europe, there is no agreement whatsoever about this exact age of consent. Thus, while in some countries a sexual encounter between a twenty-year-old adult and a fifteen-year-old adolescent may be punishable by law, other jurisdictions may regard it as legitimate. These laws also take into account whether the adolescents involved are dependent on the adults.¹¹

Yet, there is also the popular discourse on pedophilia, which connects it to child-molesting, ultimate vice and evil. Thus, "the monster and the wise man", referred to in the title of Vattuone's book¹², are the odious figure of the modern pedophile and the great Athenian legislator Solon. Both loved boys, but no one in antiquity ever considered the wise man Solon to be a monster. While the word pedophilia was initially a psychiatric term to denote shy and mentally not full-grown adults who merely succeeded in making contact with small children, the term developed into a label for an amalgam of persons, ranging from those favouring deeply affective relationships with adolescents to pederasts and child-molesters; even the Belgian serial-killer Marc Dutroux was branded as a pedophile, though he might rather be called

a sexual pervert or psychopath, whose tastes involved both young women and (pre) pubescent girls. Indeed, modern western society has singled out and branded pedophiles as monsters, but it has done so in a rather unnuanced way, not taking into account the various distinctions and the different terms sketched out above. In a way, one can state that child abuse only became a prime issue in the second half of the twentieth century. The ever increasing numbers of instances and the growing awareness of the problem in the public opinion may very well be partly connected with the medical attention which got an immediate stimulus by American pediatricians in 1961–62.¹³

3. The ancient construct of sexuality

Obviously, precise medical or legal definitions of pederasty and pedophilia did not exist in Antiquity. But it is equally untrue that pedophilia or pederasty was a ‘commonplace’ in ancient society. In Antiquity, people distinguished between different kinds of sexual intergenerational relationships: some of them were tolerated, others were not. In order to get an understanding of these concepts, we first have to sketch an outline of ancient concepts of sexuality. Moreover, we have to understand which intergenerational relationships were problematised by the ancients, and on what grounds.

There has been wide agreement among classical scholars to consider Greco-Roman pagan sexuality as a whole, stretching roughly from the Athenian classical era in the fifth century BCE to the fall of Roman pagan civilization and the rise of Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries CE.¹⁴ And there is one source that might reveal attitudes towards sexuality which were held by a majority of the population, throughout many centuries. In his *Oneirocriticon* (second century CE) Artemidorus of Daldis interprets the dreams of ‘ordinary people’ from all over the Mediterranean. One can easily imagine his exegesis fitting in the interpretative system of his time and the dreams being registered quite accurately as they were told by his customers. As such, they are a record of social attitudes widely shared and understood, at least in the Antonine period, but almost certainly containing strata of attitudes and thoughts in previous centuries.¹⁵ In the chapters on erotic dreams, Artemidorus discerns between three sorts of dreams (*On.* 1, 78-80). Dreams about sexual acts according to nature include dreams about penetrating a social inferior (wife, prostitutes, market-women, male or female slaves, another man’s wife), being penetrated by others (slaves, brother or enemy), and masturbating or being masturbated. Sexual acts contrary to convention include all sorts of incestuous relationships and oral-genital sex. Contrary to nature are necrophilia, sex with gods, bestiality, auto-pen-

etration or auto-fellation and sexual acts among women. The overall image which emerges from the *Oneirocriticon* is that ancient sexuality was basically perceived as a social phenomenon. Sexual acts were rather acts of domination (as such, it is considered 'according to nature' to dream about penetrating a social inferior – though the contrary, dreaming about being penetrated, is still according to nature but foretelling social damage). No single Greek or Roman would label a person as 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' (it did not make a difference, for example, whether the social inferior was a male or a female slave). What people did in bed was by no means psychologically tagged as a proof of a lifelong disposition. Hence sexuality is often mentioned as a peripheral fact, connected to dietics, eating, drinking and corporal needs. Androcentric, penetrative, phallic and macho are terms which aptly describe ancient attitudes towards sexuality. This has of course to do with the fact that most of our sources are exclusively male. Recently, scholars have questioned this androcentric approach and stress on buggery and penetration. Some studies have rightly pointed to female biological attraction and charm as a historical fact, to the passive experiencing of sex and to the ideal of harmony and sexual enjoyment in marriage.¹⁶ In his lavish and most vivid book, James Davidson even asks us to forget everything we thought to know about Greek sexuality and to start afresh. He questions the widely accepted views on asymmetry, dominance and age difference in ancient homosexual relations, which were not seldom emotionally satisfying and gratifying for both partners involved.¹⁷

Of course, ancient non-Christian sexuality should not be considered as a monolithic bloc. One of the main differences between classical Greek and Roman attitudes concerns the issue of pederasty. The Athenians accepted the fact that a freeborn and aristocratic youth was sexually involved with an adult male, on the condition that the younger man took on the passive role and never indulged in the sexual pleasures of the relationship. It was believed that, thanks to this relationship, the youngster could learn a great deal of social skills which would enable him to become a full-grown male aristocratic leader.¹⁸ Romans, however, radically excluded the possibility of sexual submission of freeborn boys in possession of Roman citizenship. They disregarded sexual relationships with free boys as a typical Greek way of life, and only accepted pederastic affairs when slave boys or non-citizens were involved. „Love whoever you want, as long as you abstain from married women, widows, virgins, youth and freeborn boys” (Plautus, *Curculio* 37–38). This resulted in severe legislation stressing the importance of the sexual purity of those endowed with Roman citizenship, though it remains an open question whether these laws were actually put into practice, and whether ordinary people bothered about the actual legal status (citizen or foreigner) of their sexual partner. It is telling that Artemidorus, in the midst of the Roman era, does not even mention citizenship; neither do we hear of

a 'sexual revolution' when after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* all free citizens of the Roman Empire were granted citizenship.¹⁹

Can we come to a closer understanding of ancient pederasty? What type of boys were liked by ancient pederasts? Using ample evidence, Vattuone has shown that the ideal boy was virtuous and manly, not the effeminate type. Indeed, the image of the pale, soft and weak boy is a Victorian fantasy, nurtured by authors such as Oscar Wilde and supported by the Freudian interpretation that Greek men resorted to young boys because women were not available at symposia. The ideal boy had his own youthful and manly ethos. He was capable of taking initiative in the game of love. His charm was marked by modesty in the eyes and by being cool. In the ancients' view, boy love was thus an autonomous alternative, sometimes a surplus, to what we would call heterosexual love. Women make a fool of themselves when trying to imitate this boyish charm – such imitations “are in fact the worst of all” (*Anthologia Palatina* 12, 7). In his discussion on age, Vattuone states that there was no legitimized age of consent; the 'ideal' age span was roughly between ages twelve and eighteen; and somewhat fluid rules and a subtle game of equilibrium marked out the so-called *kairos*, the ideal moment for enjoying boyish charms.²⁰

Pederasty thus never was merely a matter of initiation or ritual. Greek and Roman writers undoubtedly acknowledged the erotic aspect of boy love: gazing at and being gazed at, attraction and rejection, pleasure and frustration or disappointment. These passions also emerge in 'aristocratic practitioners' of pederasty such as the poet Theognis, whereas nobles were traditionally eager to emphasize the pedagogical aspect of boy love, denying both young men's responsiveness to adults' love and the erotic satisfaction experienced by the beloved boy, and stressing the pedagogical aspect of such relations. Indeed, ancient Greeks and Romans realized that the 'pedagogical argument' was often an excuse, a cover-up for indulging in the sexual pleasure of an intergenerational relationship (as such, the story about the sexually predatory teacher Eumolpus in Petronius, *Satyrica* 140-141 should be read as a mockery of Platonic pedagogy). In their efforts to condemn ancient pederasty, modern scholars are much too eager to stress this ambiguity in ancient pederastic relations – indeed ancient writers themselves were pretty much aware of the danger and did not hesitate to treat the problem in an ironic way. The same goes for the strong repudiation of boy love in ancient comedies (see the famous example in Aristophanes, *Nubes* 889-1104), philosophy and Hellenistic novels (especially Achilles Tatius' novel). It is not that these writers disapproved of boy love *per se*. What they were condemning are the excesses and debaucheries.²¹ Occasional asides tell us that pederasty did actually occur as well in the lower strata of society. Plato has aptly summarized the problem: when indulging too much in pederasty, the beloved boy

runs the risk of becoming a sexual passive – the most despicable figure in a society ruled by male and self-restrained aristocratic leaders.²²

Quite a few texts seem to refute the idea that ‘just pederastic Eros’ was substantially and mainly marked by the distinction active/passive and the absence of erotic response on the part of the beloved boy.²³ The existence of ‘good and just Eros’ is stated in Aeschines’ famous plea *Contra Timarchum* 136-137. This passage needs to be read in connection with texts that seemingly are opposed to pederasty. However, such texts rather refer to loss of control, debauchery and sexual abuse, not to pederasty *per se*. For example, a law attributed to Solon holds out the prospect of severe punishment for those who abuse children, but also for offenders against women or slaves (Aeschines, *Contra Tim.* 15-16). The main concern in some Aristotelian fragments as well as in the pseudo-Aristotelean *Problemata* (4, 26) is habituation to sexual submission, causing children to become effeminate sexual passives in adult life. Vattuone also goes into the much debated question about the meaning of *παρὰ φύσιν* (“opposed to nature”) in Platonic and Aristotelian works. He clearly shows that *παρὰ φύσιν* refers to every sexual act which does not imply procreation; there is no connection whatsoever with the modern meaning of sexual perversion or deviancy.²⁴ Indeed, Vattuone cites an ample collection of boys indulging in being chased after or courted, choosing their partners among rivals, and taking the initiative in the game of making a pass at someone. Most provocative is his interpretation of an epigram in the *Anthologia Palatina* (12, 211). A master seduces a child slave: “we’ll play together, we’ll talk to each other as equals”. In Vattuone’s view, this poem points to the fact that intergenerational relationships between men and boys did indeed imply social promotion of the beloved boy. At least, the possibility of their choosing and being on a par with the lover was admitted. It is not significant, according to Vattuone, stressing the fact that there was also an *eros volgare*, that masters in antiquity did abuse their young slaves without any regard for consent or mutual respect. People in antiquity were aware of that possibility, as much as we are. What is important, is what this epigram wants his readers to believe: that there is a good possibility of partners being on an equal footing in a pederastic relation. Indeed, it is not that important what the sources do actually tell us – what they would like to express is what matters. Even the well-known ‘pedagogical Eros’, the Platonic idealization of boy love, might be understood in the context of mutual consent and gratifying friendship. *Philia* seems to be a crucial concept in pederastic relationships. It implies mutual consent and gratifying friendship. When Plato tried to elevate boy love to a higher level, the *eros paidikos* which denounces ‘vulgar’ eros that implies plain bodily pleasure, he always presupposes mutual joy and reciprocal passion – thus the boy’s affective response is present even in the sublimated form of pederasty.²⁵ The twelfth book of the *Anthologia Palatina*, a collection of pederastic epigrams of which

Strato of Sardis, a Greek poet of Nero's days, is one of the main authors, might be read as a story of beloved boys in pederastic relations.²⁶ In some way or another, the poets of the *Anthologia Palatina* must refer to a reality which could be recognized as such by their audience. Moreover, the epigrams exhibit links with a wide range of literary genres, ranging from the sixth century BCE poet Theognis to the Pergamene boy in Petronius' novel in the first century CE. In the *Anthologia*, we read about love encounters and bursts of desire in crowded streets full of children (where it is difficult to discern a slave boy from a freeborn; *AP.* 12, 254). A young boy selling garlands doesn't say no to sexual advances of a passer-by, but whispers to go away, in case his father would find out (*AP.* 12, 8). Reciprocity in kissing is acknowledged (*AP.* 12, 251), as well as the opposite, the boy frigidly taking the kisses with his mouth closed, remaining cool and distant (*AP.* 12, 208 & 209). Mutual consent and willing boys are also revealed on Greek vases (where penetration is certainly not the only way to obtain sexual gratification) or in pseudo-Lucian's *Amores* 53. Greek boys, not being secluded as Greek women were, enjoyed considerable sexual liberty. Hence, epigrams on mutual sexual play between boys (*AP.* 12, 13 & 187) – even the advice to go into sexual relations with other peer youngsters (*AP.* 12, 228 – also depicted on vases).

In conclusion, one may state that from the ancient point of view love for boys was never considered as bad or morally wrong as such. What was problematic, was the way people dealt with it: the observance of social rules and the care not to exceed certain conventions (the Athenian stress on not over-indulging in the passive sexual pleasure, the Roman prohibition on taking young well-to-do Roman citizen boys), not to be driven by irrational passion or lust. If observed in the right way, the relationship between an adult and a boy based on mutual consent could enhance the latter's social skills and development. As such, beauty, exclusivity, free choice and reciprocal sexual pleasure could be regarded as important even in relations with young slaves.²⁷ Needless to say, this is all about an ideal, and the essentialist standpoint urges us to have a look at the actual reality behind these descriptions.

4. The essentialist's view: why should we refer to the past?

People in antiquity were not 'just like us'. They had other institutions, other laws, different conditions of life, dissimilar philosophical and religious concepts, and so on. Not a single historian would be prepared to simply transfer these from one period to another. But does this imply total incompatibility with the past? Should we consider people from the past as 'utter strangers'? And is any statement on ancient people's experiencing of sex and sexuality *a priori* bound to prove unreliable?

The question is intrinsically connected with the issue of human rights and their applicability to other non-western civilisations and other periods of time. The mere fact that people from all periods of history and from different cultures are all human suffices to conclude that we have *something* in common. This *something* may have a philosophical or a sociobiological basis. Irrespective of the boundaries of time and culture, all people have basic needs, are able to recognise fellow humans, respond to impulses from others and from their environment, like to be respected as persons, and are able to think, hope and aspire. Aristotle's claim that the traveller will observe a certain affinity and friendship between all people he meets surely also applies to time travellers. This very same 'open' essentialism, with its emphasis on basic human functions and human functional capabilities, a 'reasonable realism' avoiding the rocks of extreme ethical relativism and dogmatic prejudice, was vigorously defended by the leading American philosopher Martha Nussbaum in a 1992 key article in the journal *Political Theory*, which can be considered as the fruit of her work for the United Nations. Such a stance implies freedom from prejudice and openness towards people from the past and of a different cultures. At the same time, it permits anthropological, but by extension also historical scholars to reveal personal involvement. Complete moral detachment leads to ethical subjectivism and an anything-goes mentality. And that is a price few historians would be prepared to pay.²⁸

As it happens, Nussbaum has also settled the vital question on making an appeal to history in her discussion on the relevance of ancient Greek norms to modern sexual controversies. She did so when asked to testify as an expert witness in the Evans versus Romer case, heard in a Colorado district court in October 1993, when plaintiffs attempted to invalidate an amendment prohibiting the granting of protected status on the basis of sexual orientation.²⁹ Nussbaum has stated that the difference between ancient and modern culture is actually very telling. It reveals "the fact that a society may tolerate and even encourage sexual acts between members of the same sex without regarding sex as the most morally salient feature about the act, and without problematizing same-sex desire itself in a special way". Furthermore, one should not push the discontinuity to total noncomparability, since Greek authors do refer "to people who had such preferences, indicating as they do so that they are referring to a widely accepted fact about human life". Other scholars have claimed that Greek high evaluation of same-sex unions is intrinsically interwoven with misogyny. Nussbaum, on the contrary, points to the great support that feminism has received from same-sex relations, and to the fact that "desire to enforce traditional gender boundaries has been a major source of resistance to the goals of both feminists and lesbian and gay people, in closely connected ways". She convincingly argues for an "open and freeing" history, which helps to free our thought from what it silently thinks, and to enable it to think differently. The study of Greek homosexuality reveals that same-

sex relationships do not result in the erosion of the social fabric or downfall of civilization, as some conservatives claim nowadays. Indeed, we see that in the Greco-Roman world, the very same charges of shameful and destructiveness to the social fabric were actually brought forward against Christians. Finally, Greek texts show repeatedly “that the passionate love of two people of the same sex may serve many valuable social goals apart from procreation”.³⁰

“To allow these stories and these people inside oneself is not only to gain an education in empathy, but to exemplify some of the very characteristics of receptivity and sympathetic imagination that homophobia seeks to cordon off and to avoid.”³¹

Nussbaum assumed age sixteen to nineteen for the beloved boys in Greek homosexual relationships.³² They were thus post-pubescent adolescents, as in many European states nowadays relationships between adults and youths from sixteen up are legal as long as the latter are not dependent on the adults. Against this background, one could claim that there was not that big a difference between antiquity and the present. However, present-day research has shown that the age category involved was rather from ages twelve to twenty, and by consequence also implies instances which we would nowadays consider child abuse. It is an intriguing question whether Nussbaum would hold to the same arguments, if she were to assume the latter age category, a categorization with which the present-day mainstream gay rights establishment has also been uncomfortable.

5. Daily practice in Antiquity: occurrence and ages of pederasty-pedophilia

Some ancient historians have claimed that boy love was actually never that widespread in Antiquity. In order to make their point, they resort to strange arguments. I will not go into the remarkable strategy of smearing scholars who enter into the debate with an open-minded attitude towards homosexuality and/or boy love.³³ Some claim that Athenian pederasty was merely an elite-pastime for a happy few wealthy aristocrats with lots of money and plenty of time. Literary texts, however, and Athenian vase paintings have shown beyond doubt that boy love was a widespread fact of life, as does the ramified institution of Athenian prostitution, in which boys and girls, men and women played their part and were subject to official taxes.³⁴ Others have posited that the frequent occurrence of pederasty in Roman poetry is merely an instance of literary imitation of Hellenistic models. This claim has been

irrefutably rejected for boy love as well as for other references to luxurious behaviour in Roman poetry.³⁵ Conservatives have resorted to the 'rural argument'. Homosexuality, so they say, most often occurs in urban settings. Since the majority of the population in antiquity lived in the countryside, we are entitled to believe that they were farmers of 'good common sense', and thus straight heterosexuals.³⁶ While there may be some truth in the distinction between the rural and urban sexual ethos³⁷, the argument as a whole seems strange. Historians simply have to resign themselves to the fact that the rural inhabitants, almost 80 % of the entire population in Antiquity, are virtually absent in the surviving source material. If we do posit the rarity of pederasty in antiquity only because we presume that it was rare in the countryside, then we must be prepared to remain reticent about many other aspects of ancient life, which should equally be considered as typical urban phenomena. On the contrary, I believe that there is ample evidence for the frequency of pederastic practice in Antiquity. Firstly, no scholar has doubted the fact that young slaves were sexually abused in many slaveholder societies – slaves were omnipresent in rich households and made up a considerable part of the population (estimates go from 20 to 30 %, though the percentage was lower in specific regions). Pederasty is not only a theme frequently referred to in poetry and political invective; it is often mentioned in aside remarks in very diverse literary sources. Both Greeks and Romans considered it as 'normal' that a man/husband could enjoy sexual pleasures with both wives and boys. Iconographical material points to the same direction. And from a present-day point of view, the practice of marrying young, in some cases even (pre)pubescent, upper-class girls can be placed under the heading of pedophilia.³⁸ It is indeed remarkable that most of the evidence on the issue focuses on the problem of men-boy relationships, while girls were and could undoubtedly be used for sexual purposes too. Most probably, girls were considered maturing faster than boys, with Roman laws indicating twelve as the earliest age for marriage.³⁹ But the obvious reason for girls being less mentioned is the male-oriented focus of the ancient sources, which does not take away the fact that in actual life girls were used for sexual purpose as were boys.

This brings us to the question of ages. In fact, when talking about male to male sexual relations, ancient writers seldom, if ever, mention exact ages. Contrary to what has been claimed recently by Davidson, there was nothing such as an age of consent in Athens. Davidson refers to age terminology, unfortunately notoriously vague in Greek (*μειράκιον* by no means usually refers to age eighteen-nineteen) as well as to one passage in Plato (*Symp.* 181 c-e), stating that there *should* be a law against falling in love with boys. In my view, the latter passages constitutes rather an argument for the frequent occurrence of the practice, besides there is no indication of age eighteen in this text. Neither does the Beroia law which applies to a specific regulation in a Macedonian gymnasium of the second century BCE warrant any claim

for a widespread ‘sexual’ protection of people under eighteen in the Greek world. The passage only forbids the intermingling of *νεανίσκοι* with boys.⁴⁰ Throughout Antiquity, authors expressed their preference for smooth and soft bodies, destitute of pubescent hair. Occasional references point to very young ages: age ten in Artemidorus’ Dreambook, twelve years of age in some epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*. Pseudo-Lucian mentions relationships with boys aged twenty, of which he disapproves however.⁴¹ While it is true that the great puberty shift usually happened later in antiquity than nowadays, this does not exclude that boys might have got their first pubic hair in their mid teens or earlier. It is precisely this first blossom of youth which is considered attractive by ancient writers. Moreover, dozens of ancient medical texts situate the coming of age around age fourteen.⁴² In Roman times, the end of sexual availability was not seldom connected to the *depositio barbae*, the offering of the first full-grown beard, which was celebrated in the early twenties. In short, there is good reason to suppose that pederastic relationships were experienced with youngsters in the broad age category of twelve to roughly twenty, not just with late teenagers as some scholars have believed.⁴³

6. Ancient concepts of children

Now what does this reveal about the way people in antiquity dealt with and thought about children?

Firstly, the absence of the concept of a precise age of consent. To ancient writers, it was ‘the right moment’ (the Greek *καιρός*) that mattered. At a certain moment, by his gesture, his way of being and his physical appearance, a boy displayed his readiness to enter into a sexual relationship. The relationship was supposed to come to an end with the full growth of pubic hair, again a fact which occurs at various ages, depending on the biological growth of an individual. We find here, in fact, the same attitude towards chronological age which we encounter in various other aspects of life in Antiquity. Greek *rites de passages* for entering adulthood as well as the Roman ceremony of the donning of the adult toga or the offering of the first beard, the *depositio barbae*, basically occurred when a young man was biologically ready for it: a fixed age for becoming an adult was only imposed in Late Antiquity. Ancient schools did not have the practice of classes, nor of settled ages to move to another stage. No concept of child labor existed, simply because there was no minimum age for entering into labor. Though Greeks and Romans did conceptualize a periodization of human life into distinct and successive phases, age by itself, while not altogether negligible, was never such a decisive criterium as it is nowadays.⁴⁴ There are some traces in Roman legislation which point to a certain concept of informed consent.

According to the *senatus consultum Silanianum* all slaves of the *familia* of a murdered master were executed, even if they were absent when the crime was committed. An exception for innocent children was granted, unless they gave proof of the capability of deception (*capacitas doli*), had cooperated in the crime or were found guilty of culpable neglect (like the young slave who slept with his master and did not rouse the family when the murder was committed).⁴⁵ Roman law distinguished between *infantes* and those young people who were near to puberty (*pubertati proximi*) and thus already responsible for their deeds.⁴⁶ None of these regulations, however, refers to informed consent in sexual relationships.

Secondly, the period of approximately twelve to eighteen/twenty years of age for pederastic relationships is revealing. To both Greeks and Romans, a boy aged twelve was still a child, while a young man aged twenty certainly was not. In other words, the ancients did not share our distinction between the asexual, innocent, or at least sexually shut-out child and the sexually active young adult.⁴⁷ Instead, they accepted and coped with the existence of the sexually provoking, eroticizing and experienced boyish body, an acceptance which may be traced throughout the history of western art.⁴⁸ The absence of this distinction in antiquity is connected to the fact that the world of children and adults was far more integrated than is the case in our society, even by architecture, with no separated children's bed rooms.

Thirdly, ancient thinking was far removed from psychologization and tended to view sexuality basically as a social matter. Why should a young Athenian aristocratic be treated with care and why should he at least keep the appearance of some sexual restraint? Why was a Roman citizen boy protected by his medal of childhood, the *bullae*, while his age-peer slave, freed slave or even freeborn citizen of lower status was subject to sexual advances? The answer is purely based on social grounds: a future aristocratic leader should not be degraded by sexual submission in earlier stages of life.

Finally, slavery has to be considered as a crucial factor in understanding sexual practice in Antiquity. Indeed, the phenomenon of ancient pederasty is strongly linked and interwoven with the institution of slavery. Slaves were subject to "an unrestricted availability in sexual relations" to quote just one specialist on ancient slavery.⁴⁹ According to Williams, a catalogue of known cases of sexual use of male and female slaves by their masters would be a massive enterprise. These facts are paralleled by research in more recent slave holder societies, as in Jamaica. Since Freud, psychiatrists discern between 'true and sustained' pedophilia, and pedophile feelings that can arise suddenly and occasionally in many persons.⁵⁰ It seems plausible to assume that, instead of being repressed, such feelings could find an outlet in general available young slaves, male and female.

7. Present day concepts of children and sexuality

So, how did things change so drastically that present day western concepts seem to be radically opposed to the ancient sexual practice? By the very nature of their scholarship, few classicists have ventured to question or analyse contemporary concepts by comparing them with ancient history. In his provocative article in *Rivista Storica dell' Antichità* in 1999 as well as in his important book *Il mostro e il sapiente. Studi sull' erotica greca*, published in 2004, the Italian scholar Vattuone has chastised western society which, by not being capable of coping with vital issues such as authority, intergenerational friendship and responsibility, has to be held responsible for creating the image of the monstrous pedophile. To him, the pedophile as a perverted monster is an invention of the twentieth century. In “Eros senza volto”, the last chapter of his book, Vattuone frankly searches for changes in modern western society of the last decades of the twentieth century, which have caused the dramatic shift in our thinking about erotic affectivity on the part of adults towards children.⁵¹ First of all, feminism is to blame: in their efforts to defend women's rights, feminists have denounced every sort of relationship in which they saw an inequality between partners. Antipaternalistic thinking brought about disapproval of unions in which a senior partner teaches the art of love and social skills to his junior fellow. The sexual revolution claimed the right for every age-class to their own sexual experiment: no adult involvement was desirable in youthful sexual experiences. Vattuone denounces the americanised western society with its obsessions about corporal integrity and prolonged childhood, a society which patronizes children and youngsters and denies their rights to their own decisions for a long period of time. Psychoanalysis is to blame, as well as Puritan Protestant thinking and concepts of symmetry in economics and human relationships. As for the pedophile becoming an odd outsider, Vattuone mentions the increasing loneliness in modern society, as well as the excrecence of pornography, the more easily accessible by the internet. It should be clear that in no way does Vattuone want to defend today's child molesters. We should not return to pedophilia simply because it happened in the past. Above all, this would be inopportune because a social dimension for intergenerational sexual relationships is lacking nowadays.⁵² However, there is no need to interpret ancient sexual custom in an anachronistic way: hence, the practice of boy love did not necessarily imply psychological trauma for people from the past, neither is it essential for historians to search for an aetiology for a practice and a complex of feelings which have existed throughout the whole of human history.

I believe that Vattuone's theses are courageous and find it deplorable that his book has not been included more in the present-day discussion. However, both the article and the book are pervaded by an aversion towards feminism and emancipa-

tion theories. For this reason, the subject of slavery is remarkably neglected in the discussion of pederasty. The author widely excludes the aspects of power, force and emotional dependency in sexual intergenerational relationships. While it is true that power and force are very ambiguous things and that even in a master-slave relation power can be negotiable, it needs to be stressed that the use of young slaves for sexual purposes from the point of view of human rights *is* abuse. In her review, Cantarella has asked “if media attention to the battle against pedophilia [...] cannot be explained more readily (if not in large part) by the fact that only recently have these types of crimes, in the past perpetrated in the silence of the home or against those without the capacity to defend themselves within the home, been publicly revealed and prosecuted?”⁵³ Though constructionists might argue that the very introduction by pediatricians and psychologists of such issues as abuse and child molestation have actually increased our sensitivity and therefore enlarged the numbers of the statistics, Cantarella’s remark remains at least partly true. There is certainly something to say for deMause’s essentialist standpoint that only in the twentieth century, did we come to look at children from a more empathic point of view.

8. Conclusion: Classics as an emancipatory and liberating subject

More than one media event might give classicists and ancient historians the opportunity to comment upon. Back in 2004, the American movie “The Woodsman” created quite a stir. The picture gave an insight into the emotional life of a convicted pedophile who tried to find his way back into society. While the movie propagated pedophile relations in no way whatsoever, many spectators did not feel at ease with the psychological openness and honesty of some scenes. In the spring of 2006, the Flemish media scene was shocked by the revelation that a 28-year-old TV host of the children’s channel Ketnet was caught for downloading child pornography from the internet. The TV-anchor had formerly openly confessed to his homosexual disposition. His lawyer tried to defend him by making the case that he was merely watching sexually enticing pictures of young men – he wasn’t and couldn’t be aware that some of the exhibited naked boys were only sixteen years of age, the legal age for being shown in pornographical publications being eighteen. A recent BBC documentary by Louis Theroux, entitled “A Place for Pedophiles”, features patients and therapists in the Californian Coalinga Mental Hospital for sexual delinquents. One of the patients, a former sports trainer, has some paintings of half-nude young gymnast males on the wall of his room. The paintings arouse concern and suspicion, till it turns out that the adolescent with the boyish face who featured as a model actually was ... over eighteen! And very recently, Australian public opinion was shocked by the pictures

of art photographer Bill Henson, featuring six-year-old Olympia in poses that some people labelled as erotic. They claimed that young Olympia could never have given informed consent and blamed her mother who had given her permission. However, when the case became a media event, Olympia, by then age eleven, confirmed she had approved of the photographs and never thought there was anything bad or oppressive in them.⁵⁴

Confronted with such media events, classicists and ancient historians have to be bold enough to speak up. In any case, they should not yield to any other 'specialist', eager to display his or her knowledge in front of millions of TV-watchers or readers of popular magazines. At least, they should point to the relativity of the predominating concept of chronological age of consent (as if one could see from a nude boy's body whether he is actually sixteen or eighteen years old), they should explain how people in antiquity admitted the fact of being attracted to teenagers (instead of simply repressing this feeling, they tried to cope with the difficulties which were involved in it), they should say that even in relationships which are not 'equal', power and consent can be negotiable. In no way, however, would this imply a defence of pedophilia: the materialistic and consumer-driven ideas about sex propagated on the internet, the victims of child molesting and the degrading condition of being held captive and deprived of human dignity have to be fully acknowledged. Obviously, both the social and the psychological framework of childhood have changed fundamentally, so that a simple transfer from ancient attitudes to the present would be impossible. Once again, this should not restrain historians from calling attention to ambiguity or inconsistency of present-day understandings of childhood.

According to a well-known story, the philosopher Plato completely failed when he tried to implement his ideal state in Syracuse. It is not my intention to fall into the same trap. I would not endorse proposals on the abolishing of age-of-consent laws, which would then be replaced by judging each specific case on the consent and actual development of the individual youngster involved. Not only would this be utopian in the present-day political climate, it would also be dangerous, as ages do act as a rather safe rule of thumb and a protection to a possible tragedy of childhood lost.

It is Vattuone's merit to have elucidated both modern inconsistency and the many-sided nuanced ancient discourse on boy love. It is to Nussbaum's credit to have tackled the issue with regard for basic human values and human rights. Both scholars have realized the program of social history as it has been so eloquently put forward by Michel Foucault:

"In life, sooner or later, one inevitably has to face the question whether it is possible to think in another way than one thinks and to perceive in another way than one is used to perceive."⁵⁵

Postscriptum:

This article was first published as *When Classicists Need to Speak Up: Antiquity and Present Day Pedophilia* as the result of a collaboration with Macedonian colleagues, who organised a wonderful *Euroclassica conference* in 2009.⁵⁶ Since then, research on this sensitive topic has not been resting. Two monographs are now quintessential: Kyle Harper's *From Shame to Sin. The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* and Lauren Caldwell's *Roman Girlhood and the Fashioning of Femininity*.⁵⁷ Both books agree with the theses I expressed on the role of Christianity and the subject of young girls and sexual intercourse. For the latter subject, there now is Isabella Piro's book *Spose bambine*.⁵⁸ New handbooks on sexuality in the ancient world have separate chapters on the issue of pederasty/pedophilia.⁵⁹ In the edited volume *Sex in Antiquity*, Amy Richlin explores the distressing possibility of the eroticising of young children, often in connection with the institution of slavery.⁶⁰ The same book contains a contribution by Gwendolyn Leick, pointing to instances of early teenage sex in literature from the Early Near East⁶¹ and by Andrew Lear, who stresses that pederasty was only problematized from the times of Classical Athens on.⁶² For the subject of early Christianity and sexual abuse of children Lorne Zelyck has interpreted the divine retribution against any disciple who 'scandalizes' children as a reference to sexual abuse and/or exposure.⁶³ For the Byzantine period, the article by John Lascaratos and Effie Poulakou–Rebelatou on *Child Sexual Abuse: Historical cases in the Byzantine empire (324–1453 A.D.)* is largely anecdotal, though it contains valuable source material.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, my own research has further developed.⁶⁵ Also, some recent works have critically looked at the ambivalent ways contemporary western culture deals with children and sexuality.⁶⁶

Endnotes

- 1 This subject has proved to be embarrassing to more than one scholar in the field. For their openness of mind, their advice and corrections, and their willingness to discuss the matter with me, I am particularly grateful to my colleagues Toon Van Houdt (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), Beert Verstraete (Acadia University, Canada) and Mark Golden (University of Winnipeg, Canada). At a wonderful Dark Sides of Childhood II conference at Villa Lante, Institutum Finlandiae, Rome, the Finnish research group and students under the direction of Katariina Mustakallio (University of Tampere, Finland) were an inspiring audience.
- 2 Ashmolean AN G. 276.
- 3 John Dillon, *Salt and Olives. Morality and Custom in Ancient Greece*, Edinburgh 2004, 126.
- 4 Timothy M. Shaw, *Sex and Sexual Renunciation*, in: Philip F. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World*, vol. 1, London/New York. 2000, 406. "[...] the Past is defamiliarized, the present is demystified [...]"

Paul Veyne provoked the readers of the French cultural journal *Communications* with his statement that present-day intolerance towards homosexuality is in fact stranger than Roman acceptance of homosexual practice. See Paul Veyne, *L'homosexualité à Rome*, in: *Communications* vol. 35 (1982), 27–28. “[...] on en conclura que l' étonnant n'est pas qu'une société connaisse l'homophilie, mais qu'elle l'ignore: ce qui mérite explication n'est pas la tolérance romaine, mais l'intolérance des modernes [...]” James Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love. A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, London 2007, 135–166. Davidson offers a vivid account of ‘political’ controversies between Paul Veyne and Michel Foucault and the gay movement of their age.

- 5 The view of the psychohistorian Lloyd deMause, repeatedly expressed, e.g. in: Lolyd deMause, *The History of Childhood*, New York 1974, and Lloyd deMause, *The Emotional Life of Nations*, New York 2002. See also www.psychohistory.com (01.12.2017). On deMause's essentialism, see Ian Hacking, *Kind-Making: the Case of Child Abuse*, in: Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge/London 1999, 125–162.
- 6 Some of the ideas, which are elaborated in this article, can also be found in my Dutch book, see Christian Laes, *Kinderen bij de Romeinen. Zes eeuwen dagelijks leven*, Leuven 2006. An English version of which is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press (*Outsiders within. Children in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2011). For an easily accessible English review and summary, see Beert C. Verstraete rev. Christian Laes, *Kinderen bij de Romeinen. Zes eeuwen dagelijks leven*, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* August 28, 2006, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2006/2006-08-28.html> (01.12.2017).
- 7 Explicit or somewhat concealed apologetics for homoerotic boy love have existed ever since the late eighteenth century. In German classical philology fostering the emergence of the German Gay Movement, see Wayne R. Dynes, *Light in Hellas. How German Classical Philology Engendered Gay Scholarship*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 49, issue 3–4 (2005), 341–356. In the belletristic circles of Shelley and the Uranian poets, see John Lauritsen, *Hellenism and Homoeroticism in Shelley and his Circle*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 49, issue 3–4 (2005), 357–376; Donald H. Mader, *The Uranians and their Use of Greece*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 49, issue 3–4 (2005), 377–420. In the voyages au sud of sophisticated European gentlemen see Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of Mediterranean. Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*, London/New York 1993; Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love. Homophobia in 19th Century England*, Berkeley 1985; Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, Harvard 2004. In Victorian classical scholarship, see Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Oxford 1994, as well as in gay print culture in the second half of the twentieth century, see Amy Richlin, *Eros Underground: Greece and Rome in Gay Print Culture 1953–1965*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 49, issue 3–4 (2005), 421–461. A remarkable belletristic collection by an author called Eglinton (probably a pseudonym concealing two writers, one of whom had been personally entangled in judicial troubles in a case of pedophilia), see Riccardo Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente. Studi sull' erotica greca*, Bologna 2004, 31, took up the defence of boy love using a considerable anthology of pederastic fragments from Greek poetry.
- 8 See Kurt Freund, *Assessment of Pedophilia*, in Mark Cook/Kevin Howells (eds.), *Adult Sexual Interest in Children*, London 1981, 139–179; for useful overviews see Stefan Bogaerts et al., *De verleiding uit onvermogen*, Leuven 2003.
- 9 For anthropological cases of boy love, see Gisela Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg, *The Pedophile Impulse*, in: Joseph Geraci (ed.), *Dares to Speak. Historical and Contemporary Aspects on Boy-Love*, Norfolk 1997, 64–83; Gilbert Herdt, *Interview*, in: Joseph Geraci (ed.), *Dares to Speak. Historical and Contemporary Aspects on Boy-Love*. Norfolk 1997, 11–34, (many examples from Polynesia) [Note of the editor: The interview with Herdt was first published in *Paidika. The Journal of Pedophilia*, vol. 3, nr. 2 (1994), which is no longer available; *Paidika* was openly destined to advocate Pedophilia as a normal and legitimate form of human sexuality. See introduction to this volume.]; Clellan S. Ford/Frank A. Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*, Philadelphia 1951 who continued the studies on sexuality in the United States by Alfred Kinsey/Wardell Pomeroy/Martin Clyde, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia 1948; Alfred Kinsey/Wardell Pomeroy/Martin Clyde, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Philadelphia 1953. Harald Patzer, *Die griechische Knabenliebe*, Wiesbaden 1982, 21–26 offers a discussion about the use of the theories of Ford, Beach and Kinsey for Antiquity. In *Islamic society: Stephen O. Murray, The Will not to Know. Accommodations to Homosexuality in Islamic Societies*, in: Stephen Murray/Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities*, New York 1997,

- 14–53. Medieval poetry: John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, Chicago/London 1980. For the nineteenth century, see footnote 11. For twentieth century non-western societies, see the very nuanced account by Heather Montgomery, *Child Sexual Abuse. An Anthropological Perspective*, in: George Rousseau (ed.), *Children and Sexuality. From the Greeks to the Great War*, Hampshire/New York 2007, 319–347.
- 10 Both the Wikipedia entries on Pedophilia and Pederasty are excellent, and may provide the layman reader with all the necessary definitions, comparisons and bibliography. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedophilia>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pederasty> (01.12.2017)).
- 11 Ashley M. Ames/David A. Houston, *Legal, Social, and Biological Definitions of Pedophilia*, in: *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 19, issue 4 (1990), 333–342. Helmut Graupner, *Sexual Consent: the Criminal Law in Europe and Overseas*, in: *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 5, issue 29 (2000), 415–461. See Rousseau, *Children and Sexuality*, 12, on the issue of age on consent in nineteenth century Britain and regulations passed by the Parliament.
- 12 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*.
- 13 Hacking, *Kind-Making: the Case of Child Abuse*, 1999, 136–138; Ingrid Lohmann/Christine Mayer, *Lessons from the History of Education for a “Century of the Child at Risk”*, in: *Paedagogica Historica* vol. 45, issue 1–2 (2009), 1–17.
- 14 On the changing Christian attitude towards pedophilia, see Cornelia B. Horn/John W. Martens, “Let the Little Children Come to Me”. *Childhood and Children in Early Christianity*, Washington D.C. 2009, 225–232.
- 15 The *Oneirocriticon* has been interpreted as such by Michel Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs. Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 2. Paris 1984; Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi. Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 3. Paris 1984, 16–50; John Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: the Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, New York 1990, 17–44; Eva Cantarella, *Selon la nature, l'usage et la loi. La bisexualité dans le monde antique*, Paris 1991, 296–298; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Platonic Love and Colorado Love: the Relevance of Ancient Greek Norms to Modern Sexual Controversies*, in: *Virginia Law Review*, vol. 80 (1994), 1515–1651, 1549.
- 16 See Amy Richlin, *Not Before Homosexuality: the Materiality of the ‘Cinaedus’ and the Roman Law against Love between Men*, in: *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 3 (1993), 523–573; Amy Richlin, *Towards a History of Body History*, in: Mark Golden/Peter Toohey (eds.), *Inventing ancient culture: historicism, periodization, and the ancient world*, London 1997, 25–32; Shaw, *Sex and Sexual Renunciation*, 404–406; Susanne Dixon, *Sex and the Married Woman in Ancient Rome*, in: David Balch/Carolyn Osiek (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, Grand Rapids 2003, 111–129; Debra Hamel, *Trying Neaira: the True Story of a Courtesan’s Scandalous Life in Ancient Greece*, New Haven/London 2003.
- 17 James Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*.
- 18 Recently, Andrew Lear/Eva Cantarella, *Images of Pederasty. Boys were their Gods*, London/New York 2008, have analyzed the images of pederasty on Athenian vases. Their book amply demonstrates that both texts and visual imagery tell much the same story about pederasty. It included and brought together pedagogy and eroticism and was an important part of the idealized vision of the life of elite Greek males. The authors also focus on the *eromenos* (192): this youngster “is not represented as a victim or a person who passively submits”; his “dignity is emphasized not only in the literature but also in vase iconography, and he participates actively in the exchange which is at the foundation of the erotic relationship.” See also Craig A. Williams, rev. Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, *Images of Pederasty. Boys were their Gods*, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 27 (April 2009) <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2009/2009-04-65.html> (01.12.2017).
- 19 See Laes, *Kinderen bij de Romeinen*, 217–220 on this problem, which has not been touched upon by scholars of ancient sexuality.
- 20 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 43–82.
- 21 In the same way, the Clinton-Lewinsky affair could cause future historians of sexuality to believe that twentieth-century people strongly disapproved of oral sex, while in reality the grotesque situation of a president having this kind of sex in the Oval Office was ridiculized!
- 22 Plato, *Smp.* 184 a-c. The words *pathicus* and *cinaedus* derive from the Greek, but are mainly attested in Latin. See Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente* 2004, 127–154 on the erotic aspects of boy love.

- 23 James Davidson, *Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality*, in: *Past & Present*, vol. 170 (2001), 3–51; Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 155–196.
- 24 Nussbaum, *Platonic Love and Colorado Love*, 1528–1529, makes the same point.
- 25 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 197–223. For sublime Eros, see mainly Plato, *Smp.* 191 e – 192 a; *Phdr.* 255 e – 256 c; *Ly.* 206 c; 222 b 1. Hence, the often cited passage in Xenophon's *Symposium* (8, 21) which points to boys who insensibly and passively submit to pederastic relations, only denounces those relations in which *philia* is actually absent.
- 26 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente* 225–258. Vattuone is well aware of the difficulties of his choice. Philologists have been keen to emphasize the literary game behind these epigrams, pointing to various allusions and the Hellenistic preference for competing with and exceeding literary predecessors. They usually deny a possible socio-historical reality in the poems.
- 27 Lex Hermans, *Bewust van andere lusten. Homoseksualiteit in het Romeinse keizerrijk*, Amsterdam 1995.
- 28 On ethical universalism, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Human Functioning and Social Justice in Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism*, in: *Political Theory* vol. 20, issue 2 (1992), 202–246. See further, Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1155 a 16–23. For an application to the history of Roman childhood, see Laes, *Kindereen bij de Romeinen*, 278–280.
- 29 Little does it matter for the sake of the present argument that both Nussbaum and her opponents may have been wrong in appealing to ancient authors, mainly to Plato, in order to make their case. On this hotly debated issue, see Gerard V. Bradley, *In the Case of Martha Nussbaum*, in: *First Things* vol. 44 (1994), 1–19; Randall B. Clark, *Platonic Love in a Colorado Courtroom: Martha Nussbaum*, John Finnis, and *Plato's Laws in Evans v. Romer*, in: *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* Vol. 12, issue 1 (2000), 1–38.
- 30 Nussbaum, *Platonic Love and Colorado Love*, 1603 (first two citations), 1605 (lesbians and gays), 1598 (open and freeing history), 1598–1599 (against Christians), 1600 (passionate love).
- 31 *Ibid.*, 1597
- 32 *Ibid.*, 1551
- 33 For witty remarks, see Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Cambridge, MA 1978, 1–4. See also Riccardo Vattuone, *Paidikà: considerazioni inattuali su un libro recente*, in: *Rivista Storica dell' Antichità*, vol. 29 (1999), 283–307, 296, on such smearing by Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros. The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality*, Boulder 1997, 206. Especially the American scholar Vern Bullough has been subject to such imputations, see Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 16. Also Rousseau (ed.), *Children and Sexuality*, 3 has dealt with the subject of raising suspicion towards academics dealing with the issue.
- 34 Harvey A. Shapiro, *Courtship Scenes in Attic Vase-Painting*, in: *American Journal of Archaeology* vol. 85, issue 2 (1981), 133–143 (aristocratic institution), but see David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*, New York/London 1990, 90–94.
- 35 Jasper Griffin, *Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury*, in: *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 66 (1976), 87–104.
- 36 Thornton, *Eros*, 196 and 246.
- 37 The same observation is made by the gay historian John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, Chicago/London 1980, 32–38 and 152–153.
- 38 See Laes, *Kindereen bij de Romeinen*, 220–232 for a survey of the evidence for the wide occurrence of pederasty/pedophilia in the Roman Empire. On ages of marriage, the study by Walter Scheidel, *Roman Funerary Commemoration and the Age of First Marriage*, in: *Classical Philology*, vol. 102, issue 4 (2007), 389–402, is authoritative.
- 39 *Dig.* 23, 1, 9 and 23, 2, 4 (age twelve as minimum for marriage); *Dig.* 25, 7, 1, 4 (same minimum for a concubine).
- 40 James Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, 70–71. For criticism of Davidson very much on the same lines, see Kirk Ormand, *Response: Ormand on Davidson on Verstraete on Davidson, The Greeks and Greek Love. A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 15. Nov. 2009, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2009/2009-11-15.html> (01.12.2017) and Beert C. Verstraete, *rev. James Davidson, The Greeks and Greek Love. A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2009.09.61, <http://bmcr.bryn->

- mawr.edu/2009/2009-09-61.html (01.12.2017). For a remarkable instance of ad hominem speculations on the motives of scholars not removing adolescents from the sphere of acceptable objects of adult Greek male eros, see the outraged response by James Davidson, Response: Davidson on Verstraete on Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love. A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, in: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 3. Nov. 2009, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2009/2009-11-03.html> (01.12.2017).
- 41 Artemidorus, *On.* 1, 78; AP 12, 4 & 12, 205; ps.-Lucian, *Am.* 26.
 - 42 Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, 80–81 on the later great puberty shift. On age fourteen, see Emiel Eyben, *Antiquity's Views on Puberty*, in: *Latomus*, vol. 31 (1972), 677–697; Christian Laes/Johan Strubbe, *Jeugd in het Romeinse rijk. Jonge jaren, wilde haren?*, Leuven 2008, 65–72. Also Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 18, n. 22 posits the age category twelve to twenty. Rousseau (ed.), *Children and Sexuality*, 3 on the puberty shift in the twentieth century and its implications for the issue of children and sexuality.
 - 43 Laes, *Kinderen bij de Romeinen*, 235–241.
 - 44 *Ibid.*, 254–255. Tim G. Parkin, *Old age in the Roman world*, 2003, 173–189 makes the same observations for the subject of old age.
 - 45 *Dig.* 29, 5, 1, 32 (Ulpian); *Dig.* 29, 5, 14 (Maecianus).
 - 46 Gaius, *Inst.* 3, 208 (in the case of theft). See Laes/Strubbe, *Jeugd in het Romeinse rijk*, 41–42.
 - 47 Montgomery, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 327 “the ideal of a sexually innocent childhood is key to contemporary constructions of childhood.”
 - 48 Germanine Greer, *The Boy*, London 2003.
 - 49 Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, New York 1980, 95 offers many references.
 - 50 See Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, New York 1999, 31; Laes, *Kinderen bij de Romeinen*, 232–233 and Niall McKeown, *Had they no Shame? Martial, Statius and Roman Sexual Attitudes towards Slave Children*, in: Sally Crawford/Gillian Shepherd (eds.), *Children, Childhood and Society*, Oxford 2007, 57–62, for slavery as an explanatory factor for ancient pederasty. See Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery. An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, London 1967, 42 for Jamaica.
 - 51 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 259–291. Rousseau, (ed.), *Children and Sexuality*, 24–25 comes to very much the same conclusions, without referring to Vattuone.
 - 52 Vattuone, *Il mostro e il sapiente*, 279: “La caricatura del mostro ‘pedofillo’ non implica affatto che non si debba difendersi dalle sue gesta, ma neppure che si sorvoli sulle contraddizioni che lo hanno generato. L’immagine negativa della società che nutre il ‘child molester’ non presuppone che il passato sia un paradiso da sognare o, peggio, da riproporre.”
 - 53 Eva Cantarella, *Rev. R. Vattuone, Il mostro e il sapiente. Studi sull' erotica greca* (Bologna, 2004), in: *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 127, issue 3 (2006), 461–464, 465.
 - 54 A simple search on the internet yields lots of information on the instances cited here. Somewhat more difficult to find is the case of the Flemish TV-anchor, on which see www.nieuwsblad.be/Article/Detail.aspx?ArticleID=GMPSPDM87 (01.12.2017).
 - 55 Michel Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, 14.
 - 56 Christian Laes, *When Classicists Need to Speak Up: Antiquity and Present Day Pedophilia*, in: Valerij Sofronievski (ed.), *Aeternitas Antiquitatis. Proceedings of the Symposium Held in Skopje, August 28 as Part of the 2009 Annual Conference of Euroclassica*. Skopje 2010, 30–59.
 - 57 Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin. The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, MA/London 2013; Lauren Caldwell, *Roman Girlhood and the Fashioning of Femininity*, Cambridge 2015.
 - 58 Isabella Piro, *Spose bambine. Risalenza, diffusione e rilevanza giuridica del fenomeno in età romana. Dalle origini all'epoca classica*, Milan 2013.
 - 59 Thomas K. Hubbard (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, Malden/Oxford 2014; Mark Masterson/Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz/James Robson (eds.), *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, London/New York 2015.
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