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From Unspeakable Vice to Gender Studies. Research on Greek *Paiderastía* in the 20th Century[1]

"Towards the end of the term they touched upon a yet more delicate subject. They attended the Dean's translation class, and when one of the men was forging quietly ahead Mr Cornwallis observed in a flat toneless voice: 'Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks.'"[2]

Edward M. Forster's Mr Cornwallis is not a fictional character inasmuch that he can easily be found among many experts on and researchers of Greek culture, and probably not only in the times of *Maurice*. The novel was written in 1913 and even thirty-five years later the eminent historian of Antiquity, Henri-Irénée Marrou, noted in his still seminal and classic work on education: "Some have tried to represent ancient Greece as a perverts' paradise, but this is going too far [...]. Others have tried to deceive themselves into making a case for pure pederasty, as opposed to carnal inversion; but this contradicts the most unequivocal evidence."[3]

Let us state outright that the evidence is rather ambiguous and not so "unequivocal" at all. In the 5th century BC, Pindar wrote in his *Encomium for Theoxenus of Tenedos* that "any man who catches with his glance / The bright rays flashing from Theoxenus's eyes" and "is not tossed on the waves of desire," must surely have a "black heart of adamant or iron / Forged in a cold flame." Loving women, he wrote, meant being a slave to their "boldness," but he himself melted "like the wax of holy bees stung by the sun's heat" whenever he looked "upon the fresh-limbed youth of boys."[4] According to the ancients, the poet died in the arms of his lover. Not many years later, Xenophon claimed that Lycurgus in Sparta forbade pederastic love, and Plato in *Laws* argued that there should be no place for it in the ideal state. In the 2nd century BC, Sextus Empiricus wrote that *arrenomixia* (intercourse between males) is a disgrace among the Greeks, but is considered normal among the Persians[5] and the Germans.[6]

[1] This paper was first published in *Przegląd Historyczny* (2007, no. 98/3, pp. 315–28). For the purposes of its publication in this issue of the *Journal*, it has been amended and supplemented [editor's note].

[2] Edward M. Forster, *Maurice* (London, 1971), Chapter 7, [s.p.].

[3] Henri-Irénée Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, translated by George Lamb (Madison, 1956), p. 26.

[4] Pindar, Fr. 123, translated by Thomas K. Hubbard, "Pindar, Theoxenus, and the Homoerotic Eye," *Arethusa*, vol. 35 no. 2 (2002), pp. 255–56.

[5] *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes* 1.152.

[6] *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes* 3.199.

During the same era, the author of *Amores*, a dialogue transmitted as part of the corpus of Lucian's works and often attributed to him, believed that the two greatest inventions of human civilization were philosophy and *paiderastía* (παιδεραστία) – both, of course, achievements of the Greeks.

Even greater disparities are evident in modern interpretations. Marrou, for example, believed that *paiderastía* only existed in the educational context, while John Boswell writes about gays and gay literature[7] throughout antiquity, including in Classical Athens. A Polish article, published before the war in a popularizing but serious periodical, amounts to something of a curio.[8] The author, Kazimierz Jarecki, begins by discussing an important and paradigmatic study by Wilhelm Kroll, titled *Knabenliebe*, from which stems the somewhat awkward title of the Polish paper, *On Boyish Love*.[9] With a certain sense of embarrassment, excusing himself for taking up such a "controversial and risqué topic," he argues that an "inclination for same-sex affection [...] is an innate trait" and should not be treated as a "degeneration of the sex drive," which means that "what was once considered a disgrace of the ancient world, the Greek vice [...] presents itself to us today as a genuine expression of human nature, speaking out in an honest and direct way."[10] A grammar-school teacher, Kazimierz Jarecki[11] differs from E.M. Forster's Mr Cornwallis insofar that he defends the Greeks from the accusation of "vice." It is a rather peculiar defence because he argues, citing the Spartan society for example, that "physical intercourse was considered a disgrace." The love of women, he writes, satisfied the Greek's carnal desires, whereas the love of boys transported its adherents into realms of true, noble, and pure feelings. However, he admits ruefully that "boyish love soon degenerated into an abomination," calls contemporary cases of such behaviour "anomalies and deviations that are condemned by the law, prosecuted by the court, and stigmatized by the public," and finally regrets the "disappearance of a culture that knew how to enwrap the concern for the development and wellbeing of the male youth, natural in every society, in a charm of delight and to beautify it with the flowers of love and poetry."[12]

Based on this disarmingly naïve and curiously self-contradictory text, one could probably deduce a lot about the author's inner life. But as far his analysis of the phenomenon of Greek *paiderastía* is concerned, his views were, in some respect at least, surprisingly sober and reasonable, for he considered it as belonging to the domain of eroticism, and even sexual life, even if he envisaged (or only pretended to for the reader's sake) that for the noble Greeks it was eroticism without "physical intercourse." Wilhelm Kroll, whom he cited, was more

[7] John Boswell, *Chrześcijaństwo, tolerancja społeczna i homoseksualność. Geje i lesbijki w Europie Zachodniej od początku ery chrześcijańskiej do XIV wieku*, translated by Jerzy Krzyszpień (Krakow, 2006), pp. 51–92; original edition: *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980).

[8] Kazimierz Jarecki, "O miłości chłopięcej," *Kwartalnik Klasyczny*, vol. 5 (1931), pp. 401–5.

[9] Wilhelm Kroll, "Knabenliebe," in *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (RE), vol. 11 (Stuttgart et al., 1922), col. 897–906.

[10] Jarecki, op. cit.

[11] Kazimierz Wiktor Jarecki (1878–1939) was a Lviv-based Romance philologist and commentator. After studying at the University of Lviv and the Sorbonne in Paris, he taught at Lviv grammar schools (1902–35) as well as lecturing in Old French philology at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv.

[12] Jarecki, op. cit.

realistic, as was the author of another important contemporaneous paper that would long co-define the research paradigm in the field, Erich Bethe.[13]

The title of Bethe's study – *Die dorische Knabenliebe* (1907) – indicated a reference to a work already classic then and today still highly regarded, namely Karl Otfried Müller's *Die Dorier*, where an extensive paragraph was devoted to this people's alleged practice of *Knabenliebe* among warriors.[14] Highlighting the importance of Friedrich F. Welcker's paper on Sappho, Bethe stressed that it was Müller who introduced the topic of Greek pederasty into science; he bemoaned the fact there was still a tendency to pass moral judgements on the phenomenon, but asserted that attempts to "justify" it were even worse from a scholarly viewpoint than its condemnation as an "unspeakable vice." Nonetheless, Bethe deserves credit for being the first to formulate so pointedly the scholarly postulate that Greek culture requires research *sine ira et studio*, based on a detailed analysis of all available sources to achieve a full understanding of its specificity. After Müller, Bethe accepted as an axiom that the Dorians were the first among the Greeks to practice *Knabenliebe*,[15] and that it was an important, state-regulated social institution, characteristic for soldierly life, that gradually spread under their influence throughout the Hellenic world during the so called Greek Dark Ages (roughly from 1100 to 750 BC). Its main purpose would be to consolidate chivalric virtues and ideals passed on to youths by their adult lovers. But proving this was difficult, and for an obvious reason: the only certain and relatively detailed material does originate from Doric Crete, but from a late source (Ephorus quoted by Strabo); regarding Sparta, the evidence is conflicting. Already Müller realized this, and after him, Bethe and others. It was pointed out, however, that pederastic love was supposedly completely unknown to Homer (both of his epics were generally believed to have originated in Ionia), but was present in Sparta, and as early as during the times of the legendary Lycurgus, before it found its full expression in the work of Theognis, a poet from Doric Megara. However, numerous mentions in Archaic lyric poetry from various parts of Greece – as in Anacreon – as well as other evidence of homosexual love in the world of the Greek *poleis* of the Archaic period, complicated the issue.

Bethe had to assume, then – without, alas, explaining when, how, and why – that the Doric model had been adopted by other Greeks. Arguing that *paiderastía* was unknown not only in Ionia but also in mainland Greece, he cited as evidence the Theban myth, according to which Laius, the father of Oedipus, was cursed for seducing Chrysippus, the son of Pelops. Regardless of the circumstance that Laius' transgression consisted not so much in the seduction itself as in the use of violence, the myth can be interpreted in exactly the opposite way than Bethe did: precisely as proof of the archaic nature of homosexual practices in Boeotia.[16] Moreover – as was in fact customary at the time – Bethe treated the source material rather arbitrarily, dismissing certain data as confirmation of late phenomena or ignoring them altogether.

[13] Erich Bethe, "Die dorische Knabenliebe. Ihre Ethik und ihre Idee," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* N.F., vol. 62 (1907), pp. 438–75. Reprinted in Andreas Karsten Siems, ed., *Sexualität und Erotik in der Antike* (Darmstadt, 1988), pp. 17–57. [Subsequent quotes retranslated into English by Marcin Wawrzyńczak from Polish translations by Author based on the latter edition].

[14] Karl Otfried Müller, *Dorier*, vol. 2 (2nd edition, Breslau, 1844), pp. 285–93 (1st edition: id., *Geschichten hellenischer Stamme*, vols. 2–3, *Die Dorier*, Breslau, 1824).

[15] Bethe, op. cit., p. 20.

[16] Bernard Sergent, *L'homosexualité dans la mythologie grecque* (Paris, 1984), pp. 84–90; English edition: *Homosexuality in Greek Myth,* translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Boston, 1986).

And so, for example, he failed to take into account the Theban Iolaiea,[17] a festival held in honour of the divine hero Heracles, combined with a major athletic contest (agon). Iolaus was believed to have been Heracles' lover, and his grave (mentioned by Pausanias 9.23.1) was a place that male couples worshipped and where they made vows,[18] perhaps on the occasion of that festival. In any case, being connected with the cult of Heracles, it was considered to be an ancient and originally Boeotian custom, and its antiquity may be additionally confirmed by the cult of Eros in the Boeotian Thespiae (Pausanias 9.27.1–3), which also involved an athletic contest (Pausanias 9.31.3). Pausanias writes so about the Thespian cult: "Of the gods the Thespians have from the beginning honoured Love [Eros] most, and they have a very ancient image of him, an unwrought stone. Who established among the Thespians the custom of worshipping Love more than any other god I do not know."[19] There is no reason whatsoever to suspect late influences here or inspirations with "Doric chivalry."

Similarly, it seems far-fetched to conclude on the basis of Homer's works that homosexual love was unknown in the Ionian world of the epic era. The *argumentum ex silentio* is famously weak, especially as far as literary sources are concerned. Homer (or rather the author of the two epics) wrote about a particular topic and had no opportunity to mention homosexual love. In fact, the view that already for his readers, and not only for Greeks of the later period, it was evident – regardless of the author's intentions – that Achilles' friendship with Patrocles is of a clearly erotic nature, similarly perhaps as Telemachus' relationship with Peisistratus, the son of Nestor, has been gaining some currency in recent years. In Homer, this would be an indirect confirmation of a phenomenon well known to the poet and his audience, though not mentioned directly because there was no narrative reason for that.[20] Let us state outright that neither of these relationships could have been interpreted along these lines in Bethe's times, for they had nothing to do with *Knabenliebe*, i.e., an adult man's pedagogical love for a young boy. Both Homeric couples comprise men of roughly the same age, and precisely this fact – that a romantic relationship between grown-up males was not only possible in the Greek world but actually valued no less than *paiderastía* – was ignored for a very long time. In the 1980s, an eminent researcher, Jan Bremmer, wrote that "socially approved homosexuality in Greece was virtually restricted to pederasty – an affair between adults and boys – and was not an affair between two adult males."[21] This assertion can be traced directly back to the works of Bethe and Kroll.

As was already mentioned, the proposed model of the Doric pederasty of warriors is complicated by Spartan relationships. Sparta was a military state par excellence, its entire organization geared towards maintaining a combat-ready army. To this purpose was also subordinated the education of male youths, where homosexual relationships played a significant role: "When the boys reached this age [probably twelve], they were favoured with

[17] Martin P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der attischen* (Leipzig, 1906), pp. 446–47.

[18] Plutarch, Erotikos 17 (*Moralia* 761d).

[19] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.27.1, translated by William Henry Samuel Jones and Henry A. Ormerod (Cambridge, MA–London, 1918).

[20] Eva Cantarella, *Selon la nature, l'usage et la loi. La bisexualité dans le monde antique* (Paris, 1991), pp. 23–28. First published in Italian in 1988.

[21] Jan Bremmer, "An Enigmatic Indo-European Rite: Paederasty," *Arethusa*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1980), p. 279.

the society of lovers from among the reputable young men."[22] For Bethe, this sentence was nearly proof of a military and educational nature of pederasty in Doric societies. Xenophon, however, offers a somewhat different picture, asserting that the love for a boy had to be utterly devoid of physical elements and that the law introduced by Lycurgus guarded the purity of such relationships. This precisely was supposed to have been the specificity of Sparta, where homosexual love in its sensual aspect (*aphrodísia*) was not present at all: "[Lycurgus] caused lovers to abstain from boys no less than parents abstain from sexual intercourse with their children and brothers and sisters with each other. I am not surprised, however, that people refuse to believe this. For in many states the laws are not opposed to the indulgence of these appetites."[23] The last sentence clearly means that *paiderastía* could not have been a Doric invention if precisely in Sparta it was sternly forbidden from Lycurgus' times.

Bethe believed, therefore, that the Doric *Knabenliebe* underwent an evolution. It was not only an established and accepted social institution, but simply a common practice, fully inclusive of the sensual element, during the conquest era and the domination of "knighthood," i.e., roughly until the end of the Archaic period, and then (no later than in Xenophon's time, i.e., in the 4th century BC) it was made part of the educational system, but now without the carnal aspect. Bethe noted unfavourable opinions about physical love with boys, opinions that emerge precisely at the time and reach their apex with the moralists of the Roman Empire era (Plato, as we know, forbade it in the ideal state planned in *Laws*). He also deserves credit for demonstrating the phenomenon's differentiation in time (and in various Greek societies), which led him to conclude that the attitude to *paiderastía* varied – and so probably did its functions.

While largely following in his predecessor's footsteps, Wilhelm Kroll was the first to point out that as a cultural and social institution *Knabenliebe* was not limited to ancient Greece, but was also known to the ancient Celts and Scythians. In a sense, Kroll was almost a precursor of comparative studies, postulating that the phenomenon be studied and judged "only on the basis of the collected material."[24] He limited himself, however, to an analysis of Greek sources, reiterating the argument about the primacy of the Dorians and the military-educational nature of Doric pederasty, although he stressed the phenomenon's different nature in Athens; finally, he outlined the whole complexity of the issue, briefly discussing also the matter of homosexual prostitution.

The belief, mentioned above and still persisting here and there, that what was present or rather culturally accepted and meaningful in Greece was only *paiderastía*, i.e., a relationship not of equal partners but rather one based on an age difference, where an older *erastes* took care of a younger *eromenos*, dates back precisely to Bethe and Kroll. Based on an analysis of Spartan relationships and a certain epigram by Strato, a Greek poet from the 2nd century AD,[25] it is often believed that the sufficient age for an *eromenos* was between 12 and 18. The age of the *erastai* presents a more complex issue. In his biography of Lycurgus, Plutarch mentions "youths," and to be more specific, "seniors" (*presbiteroi*) of the *paicles* they loved. This tallied

[22] Plutarch, "The Life of Lycurgus," 17.1, in id., *Plutarch's Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA–London, 1914).

[23] Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*, 2.13–14, translated by Edgar Cardew Marchant, Glen Warren Bowersock (Cambridge, MA–London, 1925).

[24] German original: "Nur im Rahmen des gesamten Materiales" – Kroll, op. cit., col. 897.

[25] *Anthologia Graeca* 12.4.

perfectly with Bethe's thesis: older boys have relationships with younger ones, teaching them various skills and proper behaviour. Athenian material, however, suggests quite different conclusions. Plato's *Symposium* or *Phaedrus* are a different matter, but two very important and, let us add, fiery court speeches that illuminated what was customary in Athens at the time. The first of those is Aeschines' famous speech against Timarchus whom he accuses of prostituting himself in his youth and therefore subject to *atimia* (partial forfeiture of civic rights), disqualifying him from speaking in the assembly, which he did. Presenting his case, Aeschines is aware that he has found himself in a difficult situation because he could be taken for an enemy of *paiderastía*; he actually says he expects such a charge from the defence which may wish to portray him as an uncouth man. This is a very important testimony of the commonplaceness and acceptance of homoerotic relationships. Aeschines speaks before an assembly of at least five hundred citizens,[26] declaring: "Now as for me, I neither find fault with love that is honourable, nor do I say that those who surpass in beauty are prostitutes. I do not deny that I myself have been a lover and am a lover to this day, nor do I deny that the jealousies and quarrels that commonly arise from the practice have happened in my case."[27] For the judges (and then for the readers of the published speech) it is obvious that a cultured person has numerous affairs with pretty boys. There is no mention here of the educational aspect of *paiderastía*, and Aeschines, who was 45 at the time, admits that he is still a lover; needless to say, he was married and had children. Another orator (unknown by name, delivering a speech written for him by Lisias) defends himself against a fellow Athenian, Simon, who accuses him of battery and injury; the two men vied for the favours of the same boy. Among other things, he says: "while [...] you consider my attitude towards the boy too senseless for a man of my age, I ask you not to think the worse of me for that, since you know that all mankind are liable to desire, but that he may be the best and most temperate who is able to bear its misfortunes in the most orderly spirit."[28] Both cases – of Aeschines and Lysias' client – are evidence of the widely accepted, well-known, and common phenomenon of an adult man loving a young boy. Such a man is usually a married citizen, a head of a family who romances with boys and considers his passions an understandable and normal thing. His behaviour does not fit with Bethe's paradigm also because there is neither an educational aspect here, nor that of caring for an *eromenos*, nor, obviously, a military one. These are quite simply, to use the Greek term, *aphrodísia*, the matters (or works) of Aphrodite, which are a natural part of any person's (or rather man's) life.

This precise aspect of Greek, or perhaps Athenian, culture was for a very long time passed off, or coyly ignored, in scholarly research. As recently as 1980 Jan Bremmer could write that Greek pederasty was analyzed in two aspects only: that of the "militaristic way of Greek life" and "as a rite of initiation."[29] This latter context (pederasty in rites of initiation) came into focus surely as a result of anthropological and ethnological studies. Kroll too must have been aware of it because already in his time, and before the publication of his paper, a classic study was brought out by Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, which continues to be cited to

[26] In political matters, the tribunals included five hundred, one thousand, or one thousand five hundred jurors, selected by lot from six thousand heliasts.

[27] Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.136, translated by Charles Darwin Adams (Cambridge, MA–London, 1919).

[28] Lysias, *Against Simon*, 3.4, translated by Walter Rangeley Maitland Lamb (Cambridge, MA–London, 1930).

[29] Bremmer, op. cit., see n. 20.

this day.[30] The following years (from 1928) saw the publication of Margaret Mead's studies which seem to have inspired the researchers of classical antiquity as well.[31] Scholarly interest in the problematics of initiation rites came also as a reaction to Kenneth Dover's excellent and still seminal book, first published in 1978.[32]

It needs to be remembered that Dover wrote at a time when historical and anthropological studies of human sexuality were entering a new phase, bringing about a new quality. Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* was a groundbreaking work in this field. The first edition of the first volume of the French original came out in 1976, and the second volume, devoted to Greek antiquity, in 1984 – after Dover's book, but before its slightly revised re-edition.[33] After Foucault, it became clear that human sexuality (just like the need to ingest food) is as much a biological as a cultural fact, and that every society not only sets its own standards and defines its own customs in this respect, but also – or first of all perhaps – constructs the very notion of sexuality, qualifying certain activities as sexual or not and deciding which are natural and which supposedly not. Thus, sexuality became a subject of research not only for sexologists or even for cultural anthropologists, but for historians. The very notion of sexuality lost its universal dimension, became a historical concept, meaningful only in societies that deliberately distinguish this sphere of human life as something special and apply a particular kind of discourse to it.

Yet it is a well-known fact that the Greek language has no equivalent of the Latin *sexus*. There is simply no Greek word that would refer exclusively to the gender of people or animals in the biological sense, as does the Latin term, in itself relatively late and rare. The *locus classicus* in this case is a passage in Cicero (*De inventione* 1.35): "hominum genus et in sexu consideratur virile an muliebre." Latin, therefore, applies the term *sexus*, denoting strictly the anatomical sex, to both the *genus virile* and the *genus muliebre*. A Greek, on the other hand, could only speak of the *genos andron* ('the male genus') and the *genos gynaikon* ('the female genus').

Using the terms "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" in the context of eroticism in Greece and other cultures is still another matter. Coined in the second half of the 19th century, these Greco-Latin neologisms are hardly applicable to Greek customs or to initiation practices recorded by ethnologists. There is a view that "homosexuality" is a special cultural construct, characteristic for modern European societies that only in the 19th century came to consider amorous relationships between persons of the same sex as something extraordinary, fundamentally different from other sexual activities. Its proponents argue that in European culture before the 19th century, as in many traditional societies, homosexuality was not regarded as a distinct phenomenon at all; rather, homosexual practices were more or less accepted or condemned just like other forms of forbidden sensuality, considered depraved or debauched (adultery, pre- and extramarital affairs and so on).[34] Consequently, Dover's

[30] See Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Naturvölker* (Munich, 1911).

[31] *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928); *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930); *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935).

[32] See Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA., 1978).

[33] See Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge* (1978); *The Use of Pleasure* (1985); *The Care of the Self* (1986); *Confessions of the Flesh* (2021).

[34] David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York–London, 1990), pp. 39–53.

book was criticized for wrongly applying the term "homosexuality" to Greek relationships. In keeping with the old paradigm created by Bethe and Kroll, it was still stressed that the Greek *paiderastía* differed from homosexuality as such because it never provided for intercourse between equal partners, but always discerned an active older man (the *erastes*, 'lover') and a passive younger boy (*eromenos*, 'loved one'). According to cultural norms, the *eromenos* is meant only to accept the courtship of an older lover and permit physical contact, showing "gratitude" or "favour" (*icharis*). Dover, however – who did not question the traditional approach insofar that he himself considered Greek homosexuality solely in the aspect of a relationship between a man and a boy – defended his position,[35] which he had in fact set forth earlier, before the publication of *Greek Homosexuality*.[36] He stressed that the Greeks classified all sensual matters as *aphrodísia*, implying Aphrodite's influence in regards to love with boys as much as with girls (meaning that, according to modern terms, it was the "sexual sphere"), but at the same time were well aware that a boy lover is of the same sex, making "homosexuality" a valid term. Yet the question of the *eromenos*'s sex is not so simple at all, something that became a subject of reflection only much later. The first reaction was a shift of interest towards *Knabenliebe* and its nature of an initiation rite, as evidenced by Harald Patzer's study[37] and, several years later, a fascinating book by the French ancient historian and comparative mythologist, disciple of Georges Dumezil, Bernard Sergent, who two years earlier published a detailed analysis of homoerotic themes in Greek mythology.[38]

The German author firmly rejected the use of the term "homosexuality" in the Greek context, considered *paiderastía* as a special kind of social initiation that played an important role in aristocratic culture, and pointed out that it was, at the beginning at least, socially determined and restricted to the aristocracy. Needless to say, there was no mention in his book of either Aeschines and Timarchus (whose case Dover began his argument with) or Lisias' client and his rival Simon. He disagreed with Bethe and Kroll over the purportedly Doric and militaristic nature of the Greek practices while emphasizing, in accordance with Marrou, the educational aspect of pederastic relationships. He also stressed that *paiderastía* never led to permanent homosexuality, rather, the opposite was the case: a married lover prepared his loved one for the social role of a husband and father.

What was characteristic for the French scholar was a renewed interest in the origins of the phenomenon, which Müller and Bethe sought to locate in the distant past of warlike Doric tribes. Their view was unacceptable already for Patzer, if only because the idea of the migration of the Dorians was increasingly disputed, meaning that they could have hardly introduced new customs, especially that, unlike in the past, their specificity or disputed distinction from the other Hellenic groups was now downplayed.

As in Patzer's book, however, so in Sergent's study one can discern the influence of Dover, or rather a desire to polemicize with him. Dover deliberately refrained from asking the question about the origins of the phenomenon, believing it was an unanswerable one, and was unwilling to discuss the ethnological material; instead of the initiation-rite aspect, he was

[35] See review by Kenneth J. Dover, "Harald Patzer. Die griechische Knabenliebe," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 104 (1984), pp. 239–40.

[36] Id., "Classical Greek Altitudes to Sexual Behaviour," *Arethusa*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1973), pp. 59–73; reprinted in *Sexualität und Erotik*..., op. cit., pp. 264–81.

[37] See Harald Patzer, *Die griechische Knabenliebe* (Wiesbaden, 1982).

[38] See Sergent, *L'homosexualité dans*..., op. cit.; id., *L'homosexualité initiatique dans l'Europe ancienne* (Paris, 1986).

interested in the place of the homosexual love for boys, amply confirmed in the sources, in the specific Greek culture of the Archaic and Classical periods. Focusing on the moral norms and exemplary behaviour connected with *paiderastía*, he stressed that we are dealing with transmissions concerning the conduct of the citizens of the polis and with norms that relate to the citizens (Solon supposedly forbade the practice of *paiderastía* among slaves), combining the educational aspect of a man's love for a boy with the civic duty of concern for the polis that his young lover is to become a citizen of. This, he argued, explained the condemnation of prostitution, selfish love, and infidelity on the part of the *eromenos*, as well as the requirement for the latter to be modest and passive in his amorous dealings: the relationship with an older lover was meant to be a school, as it were, of civic education, the *eromenos* being expected to demonstrate that he would be a loyal and faithful citizen. Dover was largely responsible for entrenching the notion that the only accepted and virtually only present model of homosexual relationships was that of an older man and a younger boy, never of same-age peers.

The latter corresponded also with a view centred around homosexuality as a rite of social initiation. Ephorus' account (Strabo 9.4.20–21) of Cretan customs, which Sergent made one of the key pillars of his argumentation, serves as a conclusive argument about such practices and rituals. Indeed, Cretan customs can be interpreted in terms of the initiation scenario. Before concluding his education and gaining the status of a full-fledged member of the male community, i.e., before being admitted to the inner circle called the *andreion* and comprising only full-fledged citizens, a young boy that was educated, like in Sparta, in a peer unit (*agela*), had to spend two months with an older lover (and already a member of the *andreion*) at his country estate. The latter, known as *philetor*, organized a ritual, pre-announced abduction of the boy. The abduction and subsequent isolation clearly constitute the marginalization phase, which is known from rites of passage, as is the ending of the two-month isolation period: the *philetor* ceremonially led the boy (now entitled to the epithet *kleinos*, 'famous') back to the city, presented him with the customary gifts of an ox, a suit of armour, and a cup, and after the ox was sacrificed, the boy was admitted, as an adult man now, to the *andreion* of the lover, with whom he never had sexual relations again. This strange Cretan custom raises many questions. Its origins were sought as far back as Minoan Crete,[39] but Ephorus' emphasis that it was limited to the aristocracy casts into doubt its interpretation as an initiation rite. Nor was it so that all members of the aristocracy were subject to such practices. Ephorus stresses that it was only the finest boys, and the adjective *kleinos* suggests that the term was applied to a select group. It is difficult to determine how widespread or popular the custom was, and it was certainly not a necessary condition of being admitted to an *andreion*. Nor is it clear whether Ephorus' account applies to all of Crete or to select poleis only. Sergent, of course, cited other source materials too, which he argued confirm the practice of ritual homosexuality in rites of social initiation. First of all, he mentioned the well-known collection of inscriptions from Thera. These are graffiti scratched on a low wall surrounding a *temenos* of Apollon. They are laconic and rather obscene in their wording, stating, quite simply, that an intercourse took place here between two male partners, one of whom may have been younger than the other. Based on this, it is easy to conclude that the place was a site of sexual acts conducted under the protection of Apollon as an initiation deity, where an older lover had ritual sex with a

[39] Robert B. Koehl, "The Chieftain Cup and a Minoan Rite of Passage," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 106 (1986), pp. 99–110.

younger initiate. This, however, was convincingly disproved in the early 2000s.[40] Similarly, it is impossible to unambiguously interpret the Spartan material from this point of view; while there is no doubt that Sparta's educational institutions (like the Athenian ephebeia) involved rites of initiation, it is a different matter altogether whether *paiderastía* was a regular, necessary, universal, and significant element of education or merely, as elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, a custom from the realm of *aphrodísia*. Perhaps there was nothing special in the Spartan *paiderastía*, nor did it have to occupy a central place in the education system.[41] Besides stating the obvious presence of such practices, sources do not offer a clearly defined answer here. Yet Sergent did not limit himself to Greek material. He collected all possible testimonies of socially accepted homosexual relationships from different areas and periods (Celts, Germans, Thracians, Persians, Albanians) in order to prove that the initiation of young boys by entrusting one to the care of an older man, a grown-up warrior, who for a specific period of time and on specific terms became the initiate's lover or performed a ritual sexual act with him that concluded the period of the boy's adolescence, was a common practice among the Indo-European peoples. Consequently, he presented pederasty as an obligatory period in a man's life, who first, as a boy, surrendered to an adult partner, to then, as a grown-up, become an active lover himself. It was easy to point out weaknesses in Sergent's argumentation, which did not distinguish between the fundamentally different customs of the Cretans and Greeks, ignored chronological complexities, and failed to explain when precisely initiatory pederasty was supposed to have been common among the Indo-Europeans or why it was practiced by some peoples and not by others (characteristically, he found evidence of such customs among neither the Romans, nor the Slavs). The significance of Sergent's book lies elsewhere, and the conclusions that can be drawn from it remain independent of its author's intentions. Firstly, he demonstrated, to a far greater degree than his predecessors, that homosexuality is (or was) a common, accepted, appreciated, and meaningful part of many cultures, and that *paiderastía* is not a Greek invention (let us remember that this had already been pointed out, if in a slightly different way and different context, by Wilhelm Kroll). Secondly, he traced a very clear connection between homosexuality and social status, showing that the lovers' role depended strictly on their position in society. In this respect, Dover may have been the pioneer, but he limited his study to Athenian citizens of the 5th and 4th centuries BC.

Meanwhile, gender studies not restricted to the problematics of homosexual love had provided new impulses for research. Here the milestone was John J. Winkler's book.[42] It was he who pointed out that all analyses of Greek sexuality (i.e., of all forms of *aphrodísia*) must have their point of departure in the constatation that the Greeks viewed such matters in terms of *gender*, not *sexus*. The Greeks connected specific roles with gender; embodying these roles was the basis of femininity and masculinity. A man was someone who embodied the model of a citizen (a boy did not, of course, though he was eventually expected to). The opposite of this model was *kinaidos*, a hard-to-translate term that could be rendered as "sissy," "effeminate,"

[40] Andrzej S. Chankowski, "OIPHEIN : Remarques sur les inscriptions rupestres de Thera et sur la théorie de la pédérastie initiatique en Grèce ancienne," in Tomasz Derda, Jakub Urbanik, Marek Węcowski, eds, *Energesias Charin. Studies Presented to Benedetto Bravo and Ewa Wipszycka by Their Disciples* (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 3–35.

[41] Besides the paper by Bremmer (see n. 21), see also Paul Cartledge, "The Politics of Spartan Pederasty," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, vol. 27 (1981), pp. 17–36; expanded version reprinted in *Sexualität und Erotik...*, op. cit., pp. 385–415.

[42] See John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York–London, 1990).

or "unmanly." Paradoxically, considered as such was a citizen who showed excessive interest in women and attached too much significance to *aphrodísia*. It is worth adding at this point that the Greeks found a literary prototype of such a "sissy," his behaviour contradicting the model of a manly and brave warrior, in Paris, whose love affair had caused so many misfortunes. As far as the matters of Aphrodite are concerned, a man should always behave in a manner considerate of his dignity and position (*time*), whether he has relationships with boys or with women. He is to be a strong partner, dominant and not succumbing to passions or weaknesses, although one deriving pleasure from physical intercourse. In this framing, *paiderastía* became an expression of a citizen's rights and proof of his masculinity.

Even before Winkler's book (which, however, was largely a collection of previously published studies, the earliest dating back to 1981), an important work by Eva C. Keuls, based primarily on the analysis of iconographic sources, came out, winning high acclaim.[43] Keuls argued convincingly that having sex with subjugated persons was a confirmation of the Athenian citizen's position. He thus reaffirmed his supreme status and emphasized the subjugation of women and of boys who gained civic rights as a result of having been recognized as citizens by adult men. This was the eponymous "reign of the phallus": the man's sexual agility determined his rights and the subordination of those who were inferior to or weaker than him in this respect.

But during the same time a new view began to emerge, influenced neither by Foucault nor by gender studies and devoted instead to a close and often revealing reading of the sources which were not limited only to Athenian or Spartan material. In 1988, the already mentioned work by Eva Cantarella was published, bringing attention to two little noticed phenomena.[44] Firstly, that one should speak of bisexuality rather than homosexuality because it was standard that a man had erotic relationships with the representatives of both sexes. Secondly, that in Greek as well as in Roman society such behaviour was considered as normal and natural. What could be frowned upon was exclusive homosexuality as well as exclusive heterosexuality. It can be noted that for Aristotle it was completely obvious that adolescent boys are interested in both sexes.[45] By the way, Cantarella challenged also the view of the exclusivity of *paiderastía*, i.e., an older man's love for a boy, arguing that the friendship of Telemachus and Peisistratos, who were of the same age, bore the characteristics of a homosexual relationship.[46]

A certain testimony, long-known, was somewhat problematic precisely in this respect. This refers to the well-known myth narrated by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. Speaking about the halves of the former male, he asserts that such halves search for each other all their life, and having found each other, "they are quite contented to live together unwedded all their days" (192b). The point is not only that "halves" suggest an equal age, but perhaps even more that Aristophanes clearly means long-lasting, partnership-based homosexual relationships that replace marriage. Perhaps that is how the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was sometimes interpreted.

[43] See Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of Phallus. Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York, 1985) (2nd edition: 1993).

[44] See n. 18.

[45] Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 581 b 11–18.

[46] See ibid. and n. 18.

Whether Homer himself saw the pair in terms of an erotic relationship is a different matter. As lovers they were probably depicted for the first time by Aeschylus in the lost tragedy *Myrmidons*, a famous fragment of which is quoted by Plutarch (*Moralia*, 751c). Already the ancients disagreed over who of them was the *eromenos* and who the *erastes*. Aeschyllus depicted Achilles as the lover, something that Phaedros violently denies in *Symposium*. The problem is that Achilles was the younger one and so should have been the passive, loved but not loving partner; on the other hand, as someone of higher social status he was the dominant partner and should have been the active lover of someone lower on the social ladder and subordinate to him. It seems that for Homer's readers in the 5th century and even in Plutarch's times they were simply same-age peers, and it is not impossible that the author of *Iliad* and his audience thought so too.

Even more worrying is the Athenian example of the couple regarded as perfect lovers, heroes worshipped in the polis, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who became known as the liberators of Athens after they assassinated the tyrant Hypparchus in 514 BC. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that they were roughly of the same age and both were probably already married.[47]

The picture of Greek *paiderastía* shaped by literary sources has also been modified by the study of vase iconography. Vase scenes often depict partners of the same age, something that Dover was already aware of, although he did not consider the whole iconographic material. However it appears that in scenes showing partners of a different age very often the younger one plays the active role, as in a red-figure Attic vase (kylix) from the late 6th century in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles,[48] or an equally well-known vase from the early 5th century in the Louvre in Paris[49] (**figs. 9–10**). Even more striking are depictions of boys in a state of arousal (erect penis) or of sex, including anal sex, between two adult (bearded) partners.[50] There are also scenes where both partners (or more numerous participants in what is obviously a sex party) are of the same, youthful age. In one scene of anal sex shown on a black-figure vase, it is the older partner who receives the penetration.[51] Although it is the only such depiction in vase painting, it needs to be remembered that, like every vase painting, it is an example of a larger phenomenon rather than just the fancy of a particular client. The vase

[47] Włodzimierz Lengauer, "Eros, polis, obywatel," *Konteksty. Polska sztuka ludowa. Antropologia kultury, etnografia, sztuka*, vol. 58, no. 1–2 (2004), p. 159.

[48] J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Getty Villa, Malibu, Pacific Palisades), no. 85.AE.25 (attributed to the "Carpenter Painter"); see Joseph R. Laurin, *Homosexuality in Ancient Athens* (Victoria, 2005), p. 113, fig. 5; *The J. Paul Getty Museum Handbook of the Antiquities Collection*, revised edition (Los Angeles, 2010), p. 65; Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 2nd edition (Malden, MA, 2014), p. 113, fig. 3.7; Wolfgang Filser, *Die Elite Athens auf der attischen Luxuskeramik* (Berlin–Munich–Boston, 2017), p. 333, fig. 187a–b; R. Osborne, *The Transformation of Athens. Painted Pottery and the Creation of Classical Greece* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 80–81, figs. 3.20-3.22, panel 9.

[49] Louvre G 278 ("Athènes, Peintre de Briséis"); see Zeev Gourarier, Isabelle Marquette, Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds, *Amour. Une histoire des manières d'aimer*, exh. cat., Lens, Musée du Louvre-Lens, 26 September 2018 – 21 January 2019 (Lens, 2018), p. 146, cat. no. 29.

[50] Charles A.M. Hupperts, "Greek Love: Homosexuality or Paederasty? Greek Love in Black Figure Vase-Painting," in Jette Christiansen and Torben Melander, eds, *Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Ancient Greek and Related Pottery: Copenhagen, August 31–September 4, 1987* (Copenhagen, 1988), pp. 255–68.

[51] Martin Kilmer, "Painters and Pederasts. Ancient Art, Sexuality and Ancient History," in Mark Golden and Peter Toohey, eds, *Inventing Ancient Culture. Historicism, Periodisation and the Ancient World* (London, 1997), pp. 44–45, 48.

was known to the owner's entire social circle and the commission had to be consistent with its dominant tastes; also the painter himself had to be familiar with such depictions.

A renewed analysis of many other known facts also leads to the conclusion that the difference of age – and therefore of role – in a homosexual relationship was not necessarily a rule. The famous Sacred Band of Thebes, composed of couples of lovers, attests after all, to such relationships between adult warriors; even if any of the partners was younger than the other, he still must have been at least twenty-one, the minimum age for a hoplite. Their relationships cannot, therefore, be interpreted in terms of educational or initiatory pederasty. In fact, there is considerable further material about lovers in the military, men apparently of the same age and equal in every respect.[52]

Thus, at the end of the 20th century, the paradigm from the times of Bethe and Kroll, even if modified under the influence of Foucault and gender studies, was challenged. Instead, the view has gained currency that homoerotic aspects of Greek culture and customs were not limited to educational *paiderastía*. Rather, the Greeks accepted all carnal relationships, whether homo- or heterosexual, in social life, making no qualitative difference between them. A man was considered decent or not (female homosexuality, like many other aspects of the sexual life of Greek women, remains heavily underresearched due to an almost utter lack of sources)[53] solely on the basis of how he behaved towards his partner, be it a woman (wife, hetaira, or concubine), a boy, or another man. Considered as decent were such behaviours that complied with the moral standards required of a citizen of polis. There was no special morality for sexual matters, the sphere of *aphrodísia* being governed by the same rules as the whole of social life. It is another matter that as far as research on Greek customs is concerned, the last word has certainly not been said yet, and understanding the Greeks' attitude to homosexuality would perhaps require answering the question, posed by John Boswell, of why some societies make unfair distinctions based on race, religion, or sexual preference. That it is only some, is now beyond dispute.

Translated by Marcin Wawrzyńczak

[52] Daniel Ogden, "Homosexuality and Warfare in Ancient Greece," in Allan B. Lloyd, ed., *Battle in Antiquity* (London, 1996), pp. 107–68.

[53] Bernardette J. Brooten's *Love Between Women. Early Christian Respones to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago, 1996) remains the seminal work in studies of ancient and early-Christian lesbian love.