

## CHILDREN IN PLUTARCH\*

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"Your [dead] Timoxena has been deprived of little, for what she knew was little, and her pleasure was in little things"  
(*Cons. ad ux.* 9, 611F)

### I. INTRODUCTION<sup>(1)</sup>

In his *Consolatio ad uxorem* Plutarch speaks about the many children he reared "in partnership with his wife, all of them brought up at home under their own care"<sup>(2)</sup>. After four sons the "longed-for daughter" was born and was named after his wife Timoxena. The girl was not granted a long life, dying at the age of two; two of her brothers, the eldest (Socharus?) and Charon, also died prematurely. Only Autrobulus and Plutarchus filius attained adulthood.

Plutarch, then, knew what children were. The present paper will probe for the child's physiological, psychological, and mental development as it appears in this author, as well as how the child experienced

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The translations quoted are from the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>(1)</sup> General studies on Greek and Roman childhood: M. GOLDEN, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Ancient Society and History), Baltimore-London 1990; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *Être enfant à Rome* (Realia), Paris 1984. The whole of the human life span in Greece is treated by R. GARLAND, *The Greek Way of Life: from Conception to Old Age*, London 1990 (childhood: pp. 17-162). Old age in Plutarch is discussed by S. BYL, *Plutarque et la vieillesse*, *LEC* 45 (1977), pp. 107-123; childhood plays a large part in C. PEILING, *Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography*, in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, Oxford 1990, pp. 213-244.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* 2, 608C. Cf. 8, 610E; 5, 609D; and K. ZIEGLER, *Plutarchos von Chaeroneia*, in *RE* XXI 1 (1951), col. 648.

the world around it, but not for the pedagogical system that could be reconstructed on the basis of his writings<sup>(3)</sup> nor for Plutarch's attitude toward the child (respect, love, neglect...), an extremely important facet to which I hope to devote a separate article at a later date.

This paper is based both on the *Moralia* (mainly theoretical statements) and on the *Vitae* (above all practical situations). Our author is a source not only for his own age, but also for earlier times. This will be pointed out frequently in the following pages, but often we have to do with assumptions that were fairly standard among the educated upper class throughout Greek as well as Roman history.

Patently apocryphal works have not been consulted, with the exception of the treatise "On the education of children" (*De liberis educandis*); for it cannot be proved beyond doubt that the work is not by Plutarch, and it was in any event written by a contemporary (perhaps a pupil) who shared the same mentality<sup>(4)</sup>.

Though the treatise *De liberis educandis* may be spurious, Plutarch was indeed interested in the problem of education. Certain works (*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* and *De recta ratione audiendi*) are surely genuine and we can only regret that some pedagogical tractates have been irremediably lost: "Woman, too, must be educated", "How scholars have to use exercises", "The education of Achilles", "On preparing for philosophy"<sup>(5)</sup>. Highly regrettable, of course, but, as noted above, the present paper does not aim at a reconstruction of Plutarch's pedagogical system.

## 2. CHILDHOOD AS A PHASE OF HUMAN LIFE<sup>(6)</sup>

The common term for child is, of course, *παῖς*. This time of life can be rather systematically divided into a number of phases. In "The E at

<sup>(3)</sup> This has already been dealt with by others. Cf. K.-M. WESTERMAN, *The Educational Theory of Plutarch*, London 1922; L. MÜLLER, *Die Pädagogik Plutarchs und ihre Quellen nach den echten Schriften der "Moralia"*, diss. München 1926; D. FAURE, *L'éducation selon Plutarque d'après les "Oeuvres morales"* (Travaux et Mémoires de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines d'Aix en Provence, 13), Aix-en-Provence 1960.

<sup>(4)</sup> Cf. the discussion in J. SIRENELLI, *CUF-M* I, pp. 24ff. See already H.-I. MARROU, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*, Paris 1965<sup>(6)</sup>, p. 536.

<sup>(5)</sup> Cf. K. ZIEGLER, *art. cit.* (n. 2), col. 805, who subsequently deals at length with the surviving pedagogical works.

<sup>(6)</sup> For the ages of man, cf. F. BOLL, *Die Lebensalter: Ein Beitrag zur antiken Ethologie und Geschichte der Zahlen*, *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 31 (1913), pp. 89-145;

Delphi" Plutarch holds that there is no reason to fear death, because we "have already died so many deaths":

The process of generation, which, ever bringing change, produces from the seed (*σπέρμα*) an embryo (*ἔμβρυον*), then a babe (*βρέφος*), then a child (*παῖς*), and in due course a boy (*μαριάκιον*), a young man (*νεανίσκος*), a mature man (*ἀνήρ*), an elderly man (*πρεσβύτερος*), an old man (*γέρων*)<sup>(7)</sup>;

and a little further we read, by way of comment on Heraclitus:

the man in his prime (*ἀχιμάζων*) passes away when the old man (*γέρων*) comes into existence, the young man (*νεός*) passes away into the man in his prime (*ἀχιμάζων*), the child (*παῖς*) into the young man, and the baby (*νήπιος*) into the child<sup>(8)</sup>.

This gives the sequence *νήπιος, παῖς, νέος, ἀχιμάζων, γέρων*.

In de sevenfold as well as in the fivefold scheme the years of childhood are divided into infancy (*βρέφος, νήπιος*) and childhood (*παῖς*) proper. For Plutarch the boundary between the two phases will probably have been the commonly accepted age of 7<sup>(9)</sup>. The years of childhood of course last until the beginning of youth, physiologically until puberty (according to the hebdomad doctrine at age 14)<sup>(10)</sup>, socially a little later: in the Roman world until the assumption of the *toga virilis* (age 15-16)<sup>(11)</sup>, in the Greek world until age 18<sup>(12)</sup>. From that moment the child

G. HÖHN, *Die Einteilungsarten der Lebens- und Weltalter bei Griechen und Römern* (Gymn. Progr.), Lohr 1911-1912, passim (who 'borrows' extensively from his mentor Boll!) (esp. Greek antiquity); E. EYBEN, *Die Einteilung des menschlichen Lebens im römischen Altertum*, *RhM* N.S. 116 (1973), pp. 150-190 (esp. Roman antiquity). For the vocabulary of childhood and its stages, cf. M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 12 ff.; J.-P. NERAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 45ff.

<sup>(7)</sup> *De E* 18, 392C. For the transition from one age to the next as a kind of death, see E. EYBEN, *Roman Notes on the Course of Life*, *AncSoc* 4 (1973), pp. 225-227. Others emphasize that the transition was gradual, virtually unnoticed (*ibid.*, p. 227).

<sup>(8)</sup> *De E* 18, 392D. Cf. F. BOLL, *art. cit.* (n. 6), pp. 116-117 and n. 1.

<sup>(9)</sup> Thus already Solon, fr. 27 IEG. Cf. F. BOLL, *art. cit.* (n. 6), p. 114.

<sup>(10)</sup> Cf. E. EYBEN, *Geschlechtsreife und Ehe im griechisch-römischen Altertum und im frühen Christentum*, in *Geschlechtsreife und Legitimation zur Zeugung*, ed. E. W. Müller (Veröffentlichungen des "Instituts für historische Anthropologie", Freiburg-München 1985, pp. 403ff; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 167-168.

<sup>(11)</sup> Cf. E. EYBEN, *Geschlechtsreife*, pp. 412ff. The male toga (τὸ ἀνδρῆϊον ἱμάτιον) is mentioned by Plutarch in *De aud.* 1, 37DE (cf. p. 93 and n. 80); *Brut.* 14.3.

<sup>(12)</sup> Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 42.1. Cf. M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 25-38. Cf. *Lib. ed.* 7, 5A: εἰς ἀνδρας ἐγγραφευτές; *Dem.* 6.1: ἐν ἡλικίᾳ γενόμενος.

has become, to a certain extent, ἀνήρ, νέος (a word that can include the childhood years), νεανίσκος, and — more specifically — μεράκιον, terms which are all interchangeable.

More complicated is the subdivision we find in *Amatorius* 9, 754D:

The nurse rules the infant (βρέφος), the teacher the boy (παῖς), the gymnasiarch the youth (ἐφηβος), his admirer (ἐραστής) the young man (μεράκιον) who, when he comes to age (γενόμενος ἐν ἡλικίᾳ) is ruled by the law.

The ephebe here is apparently a youth of 14<sup>(13)</sup>; one is a *meirakion* until taken up in the adult world, i.e. until the age of 18<sup>(14)</sup>. It is presumably indeed the case that this age-term is normally reserved for youths of that age, who clearly display a different psychology than e.g. the παῖς, so that they normally fall outside the scope of the present inquiry. There is also a considerable difference between infant and child, but the usage of these (and other) ages of man by the ancients is so vague that it is difficult to discuss these ages separately.

### 3. PHYSIOLOGY

#### 3.1. Conception and heredity

It is a pity for the present study that the *Placita philosophorum* are not by Plutarch but by his contemporary Aetius. Otherwise we could deal in detail here with the then prevailing opinions on unborn life, sperm, twins and triplets; on gender-determining factors, the foetus at 7 months, the question why children are born disabled, the problem whether or not the embryo is a living being, how it feeds itself, why it looks like its parents, grandparents...<sup>(15)</sup>, all problems that occupied man and science at that time.

<sup>(13)</sup> In classical Greece the ephibia lasted two years (from 18 to 20). With the lessening of the military character the duration was reduced to one year and the age lowered, in Egypt (and apparently in Plutarch as well), to 14. Cf. H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 170-173. The sequence ἐφηβος, μεράκιον, ἀνήρ is also found in Menander, fr. 867 (ἐφηβός, μεράκιον, ἀνήρ, γέρον); Aristophanes of Byzantium fr. 27-66.

<sup>(14)</sup> Hippocrates, quoted by Philo, *Op. mundi* 36.105, places the μεράκιον ἡλικία between 14 and 21. Μεράκιον immediately follows upon παῖς in e.g. *Lib. ed.* 16, 12A; *Alc.* 1-3 (παῖς, μεράκιον, ἀνήρ). Μεράκιον can also refer to an older age, but it then carries a negative connotation (e.g. *Alex.* 30.2).

<sup>(15)</sup> Aetius, *Plac. phil.* 5.6.

Plutarch himself provides little information on these matters. Yet he does not fail us completely. As R. Garland writes: "to Plutarch we are indebted one of the most moving definitions of conception in all Greek literature":

Nature unites us through the commingling of our bodies, in order that, by taking and blending together a portion derived from each member of a pair, the offspring which she produces may be common to both, so that neither can define or distinguish his own or the other's part therein<sup>(16)</sup>.

As for Aristotle<sup>(17)</sup>, heat is for our author generative,

for through the agency of heat the generative fluid has a good flow and the spirit tension and a lousy power. However, the seed of men who drink much wine is not at all strong and efficient for procreation; on the contrary, it is worthless and cold in action<sup>(18)</sup>.

Similarly the semen of libidinous people is generally unfruitful and sterile<sup>(19)</sup>. But people who are fleshy and heavy are also for the most part childless

because they use up their nourishment on their bodies and do not create from it surplus (περίττωμα) for seed<sup>(20)</sup>.

On the subject of semen: like so many of the ancients Plutarch — or at least his interlocutor Florus — believed that the female too produced semen<sup>(21)</sup>. However, as a result of her cold nature,

<sup>(16)</sup> *Con. praec.* 21, 140EF. Cf. R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 34. In this connection Plutarch makes a comparison with the mixture of water and wine, an image we also find in *Amatorius* 7, 752E; 24, 769F and adopted from Antipater of Tarsus (Stobaeus, *Flor.* 67.25).

<sup>(17)</sup> Aristotle, *Gen. an.* II 3, 736b34-45.

<sup>(18)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3.5, 652D. Cf. *ibid.* 3.6.2, 654A (wine unsettles the body from its base): "the seed does not flow easily at this time, repletion blocking it, but with effort it is extracted in a clotted mass".

<sup>(19)</sup> *Lyc.* 19.1.

<sup>(20)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 2.6, 641A. Thus good digestion leaves no residue for seed. Cf. *Quaest. nat.* 30, 919C (fat animals and plants with a luxuriant growth are less able to procreate, because the seed is a residue of the nourishment that goes to build the body). Further: *Quaest. conv.* 2.3, 637B, 637D; 8.4, 724E, and already Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 1.19, 726b9-10. On sperm as a περίττωμα, cf. E. LESKY, *Die Zeugungs- und Vererbungslehren der Antike und ihre Nachwirkungen*, Wiesbaden 1951, pp. 123, 129ff.; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 30 ff.

<sup>(21)</sup> E. LESKY, *op. cit.*, index s.v. "weibliches Sperma".

woman's seed has never had an active part at all in generation but merely offers matter and nourishment to the seed from the male<sup>(25)</sup>.

Plutarch dwells at some length on the principle of heredity<sup>(26)</sup>, both physical and mental. Children of small parents will themselves remain small<sup>(27)</sup>, a child begotten by a drunken father will often be fond of wine and even a drunkard itself<sup>(28)</sup>, children whose parents are arrogant will be "full of exultation and pride"<sup>(29)</sup>.

Physical illnesses too can be hereditary. Not always do human beings reveal their innate nature at birth<sup>(30)</sup>. They give no impression of being ill, but are merely predisposed to the same illness as their father or mother. Therefore

it is necessary and not ridiculous when we prescribe exercise and diet and medicine to the children of epileptics, of melancholiacs, and of sufferers from the gout, not because they have the disease, but to keep them from getting it; for the body born of a vitiated body deserves not punishment, but medical treatment and preventive care<sup>(31)</sup>.

"Children are born as their parents", states Plutarch<sup>(32)</sup>. However, a child can be virtuous even when the issue of a wicked father, just as a healthy child may come from a sick parent. The moral penalty attached to the family is remitted, and the child becomes, as it were, adopted out

<sup>(25)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3-4, 651C. Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 58, 374F: "some think the seed of woman is not a power or origin, but only material and nurture of generation".

<sup>(26)</sup> General studies are P.M.M. GEURTS, *De erfelijkheid in de oudere Griekse wetenschap*, Nijmegen-Utrecht 1941, and E. LESKY, *op. cit.* (n. 20), who did not involve Plutarch in their researches. See also R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 33-35.

<sup>(27)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 2, 1D: The Spartans feared that the union of king Archidamus with a small wife would produce "kinglets instead of kings".

<sup>(28)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 3, 1D. Therefore Diogenes, observing an emotional and cracked young (*μεπαλιον ἐκστατικόν*), said "Young man (*νεώνωκε*), your father must have been drunk when he begot you" (*ibid.*).

<sup>(29)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 2, 1C.

<sup>(30)</sup> *De sera num.*, 20, 562B.

<sup>(31)</sup> *De sera num.* 19, 561EF. A few lines before Plutarch says that such a person must abstain from "relishes, pastry, drink and women", continually consult a physician, subject himself to strict exercise...: "Is this not indeed the advice we press upon the children of a sickly father and mother — to take care of themselves and use precaution and not be negligent, but expel from the start the incipient disease inherent in their constitution, catching it in time when it is still readily dislodged and has as yet but a precarious hold?" (*De sera num.* 19, 561DE).

<sup>(32)</sup> *Quomodo adul.* 22, 63E (cf. Hesiod, *Erga* 235); cf. *Lyc.* 19-9.

of vice<sup>(30)</sup>. But the transfer of a physical (or moral) trait may skip one or more generations. As the warts, birthmarks, and moles of the fathers disappear in their own offspring they reappear later in the grandchildren. Well-known was the case of a Greek woman who bore a black child and so discovered that she was fourth in descent from a negro...<sup>(31)</sup>. Our author offers yet another 'fall' instance, and believes that the same holds true for psychic characteristics:

the first generations often conceal and submerge traits and passions of the soul, while later and in the persons of others the family nature breaks out and restores the inherited bent for vice or virtue<sup>(32)</sup>.

### 3.2. *Embryonal development and birth*<sup>(33)</sup>

Not much is said by Plutarch about the infant while it is still in the womb. Still, our author writes rather extensively on the nourishment of the embryo. The amount of blood exceeds the use for it. The excess causes menstruation, which cleanses the body and renders the womb "fertile ground for ploughing, as it were, and sowing". But when the womb receives the seed, and the foetus has taken root, Nature stops menstruation and uses the blood for the nourishment and 'irrigation' of the embryo. Having been carried for the number of months proper to its growth<sup>(34)</sup>, it requires other nourishment and blood changes to milk. The breasts provide a store of food "that is comfortable for the infant's mouth and pleasant for it to touch and to grasp"<sup>(35)</sup>.

Thus Plutarch, for whom the production and administering of milk is proof of Nature's foresight and care. In his third "Table talk" Plutarch speaks of the influence of the moon on birth and the earliest years of life.

<sup>(30)</sup> *De sera num.* 21, 562F.

<sup>(31)</sup> *De sera num.* 21, 563A. The story of the negro woman is also found in Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 7-6, 586a2-4; *Gen. an.* 1.18, 722a8-11.

<sup>(32)</sup> *De sera num.* 21, 563B.

<sup>(33)</sup> Cf. P. DIEFGEN, *Die Frauenheilkunde der Alten Welt* (Handbuch der Gynäkologie, 12.1), München 1937, pp. 242ff.; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 66ff.; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 41ff.

<sup>(34)</sup> The period of gestation varied from seven to eleven months. Nine months was seen as normal, but the ancients thought it much better to be born at seven than at eight months. Cf. R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 43-44.

<sup>(35)</sup> *De am. prol.* 3, 495D-496A. For the mother's milk, cf. P. DIEFGEN, *Die Frauenheilkunde der Alten Welt*, München 1937, index s.v. "Milch".

Contrary to the sun the moon would exude warm rays that diminish the body's humidity and set the fluids in motion. Thus nurses are exceedingly careful to avoid exposing young children (*νηπίαια*) to the moon, for, "being full of moisture like green wood, they are thrown into spasms and convulsions"<sup>(36)</sup>. On the other hand, the full moon is also said to facilitate childbirth because it diminishes the pains by releasing moisture. According to Plutarch, this is the reason why Artemis, who is none other than the moon, is called 'Locheia' (midwife) and 'Eileithyia' (birth goddess)<sup>(37)</sup>. The latter view more than likely fits in with the widespread conviction that birth and the first years enjoyed the protection of the lunar goddess Selene<sup>(38)</sup>.

Delivery<sup>(39)</sup> itself was a painful and risky affair which frequently cost the mother and/or child their life<sup>(40)</sup>. Plutarch is very clear on the burden of childbirth in his "On affection for offspring" where, in reply to Epicurus<sup>(41)</sup>, he attempts to show that parents' love of their children is unselfish. One would expect parents in the primitive past to have been "hostile and malicious toward their children" since great dangers and sufferings threatened them at childbirth.

<sup>(36)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3.10.3, 658EF.

<sup>(37)</sup> *Ibid.* 3.10.3, 658F-659A. Cf. fragment 188. As the protectress of nativity Eileithyia is also mentioned, together with Locheia, in *Amatorius* 15, 758A (cf. n. 46). For these and other birth deities, cf. R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 66-68, 308-310 (Greece); E. EYBEN, *Sozialgeschichte des Kindes im römischen Altertum*, in *Zur Sozialgeschichte der Kindheit*, ed. J. Marini & A. Nitschke (Veröffentlichungen des "Instituts für historische Anthropologie"), Freiburg-München 1986, pp. 317-363, esp. 32-4ff. (Rome).

<sup>(38)</sup> Cf. Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Tetr.* 1.10, with the remarks of F. BOLL, *art. cit.* (n. 6), p. 121.  
<sup>(39)</sup> Cf. E. SAMTER, *Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod: Beiträge zur vergleichenden Volkskunde*, Leipzig-Berlin 1911, passim; P. DIEPGEN, *op. cit.* (n. 33), pp. 164ff.; F. KUDLIEN - G. BINDER, *Geburt*, in *RAC* 9 (1976), col. 36-471; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 70ff.; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 59 ff.

<sup>(40)</sup> Thus the mothers of Pompey (*Pomp.* 53.4) and Darius (*Alex.* 30.2). In his life of Cicero Plutarch considers it worthy of mention that the orator was born "without travail or pain on the part of his mother" (*Cic.* 2.1). As an effect of the physical training (running, wrestling, throwing the discus and javelin...) given to Spartan girls Plutarch mentions "that the fruit of their wombs might have vigorous root in vigorous bodies and come to better maturity, and that they themselves might come with vigour to the fulness of their times and easily with the pangs of childhood" (*Lyc.* 14.2).

<sup>(41)</sup> Cf. *De am. prol.* 2, 495A: "according to Epicurus it is for pay that a father loves his son, a mother her child, children their parents". In his *riposte* Plutarch refers to the animal world: "Dogs do not love their pups, nor horses their colts, nor birds their nestlings, for pay, but gratuitously and naturally" (*ibid.* 2, 495AB).

As when a sharp pang pierces a mother in labour,  
 A pang which the Eileithyiae of child-bed send,  
 The daughters of Hera, who bring the bitter pangs.

As women would have it, Plutarch continues, these words come not from Homer himself, but from a 'Homerid'<sup>(42)</sup> after child-birth or while she was in the throes of it and had the pain of travail, alike bitter and sharp, actually present in her trails<sup>(43)</sup>.

In conclusion it may be mentioned here that Plutarch, to illustrate the power of the number five, refers to the fact that there is no record that a woman ever had more than five children at one birth<sup>(44)</sup>. Twins, of course, were a much more frequent occurrence, and in a somewhat simplistic manner Ps.-Plutarch argues that nature has foreseen this:

for she has fashioned women's breasts double, so that, if there be twins, they may have a double source of nutrition<sup>(45)</sup>.

### 3.3. *The newborn babe*

Not everyone will find a newborn baby beautiful and Plutarch offers a vivid portrait of such a being:

For there is nothing so imperfect, so helpless, so naked, so shapeless, so foul, as man observed at birth, to whom alone, one might almost say, Nature has given not even a clean passage to the light; but, defiled with blood and covered with filth and resembling more one just slain than one just born, he is an object for none to touch or lift up or kiss or embrace except for someone who loves with a natural affection<sup>(46)</sup>.

<sup>(42)</sup> As noted by W.C. HELMBOLD (*JCL-M* VI, p. 349 n. e), the word is used not of women, but of a class of male bards. But Plutarch chooses to treat the word as a feminine noun, anticipating Samuel Butler's "Authoress of the *Odyssey*" (1967).

<sup>(43)</sup> *De am. prol.* 4, 496C-496D. Plutarch quotes Homer, *Il.* XI 269-271.

<sup>(44)</sup> *De def. or.* 36, 429F. Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 2, 264B and already Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 7.4-384b33-34 (concerning quintuplets): "Moreover, a certain woman brought forth twenty children in four accouchements, for she bore them five at a time, and most of them grew up". Cf. Aulus Gellius X 2.1-2.

<sup>(45)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 5, 3D.

<sup>(46)</sup> *De am. prol.* 2, 496B. Similar words concerning delivery in his "Dialogue of love": "For example, there is the service connected with parturition which, with its accompaniment of blood and travail is no lovely thing, yet enjoys the divine supervision of Eileithyia and Locheia. It might, in fact, be better not to be born at all than to be born defective for lack of a good guardian and protector" (*Amat.* 15, 758A).

Undoubtedly the high infant mortality rate was partly responsible for the Roman practice of not naming children immediately after birth. This was done on the  *dies Iustricus*  or  *nominalia* , for boys the 9th day after birth, for girls the 8th<sup>(47)</sup>. The precedence of women is explained, according to Plutarch, by the fact that the female grows up and attains maturity and perfection before the male does<sup>(48)</sup>. As for the days, the Romans took those that follow the seventh,

for the seventh day is dangerous for newly born children in various ways and in the matter of the umbilical cord; for in most cases this comes away on the seventh day; but until it comes off, the child is more like a plant than an animal<sup>(49)</sup>.

The newborn child is physically weak and helpless. In Antiquity it was swaddled immediately after birth<sup>(50)</sup>. Plutarch sketches a moving picture of the tough elder Cato who was virtually always present when his wife bathed and wrapped the baby<sup>(51)</sup>. Normally babies were bathed in water, but Spartan women used to wash their newborn in wine, thus testing their constitution:

For it is said that epileptic and sickly infants are thrown into convulsions by the strong wine and lose their senses, while the healthy ones are rather tempered by it, like steel, and given a firm habit of body<sup>(52)</sup>.

Swaddling was generally seen as a necessity, for, as Ps.-Plutarch writes, it is necessary, immediately after birth, to begin to mould the limbs of the children's bodies in order that these may grow straight and without deformity<sup>(53)</sup>.

(47) Cf. E. SAMTER, *Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer*, Berlin 1901, p. 62; J. MARQUARDT, *Das Privatleben der Römer*, Leipzig 1886 [= Darmstadt 1964], I, pp. 83ff.; L. & P. BRIND'AMOUR, *Le 'dies Iustricus', les oiseaux de l'aurore et l'amplichronie*, *Latomus* 34 (1975), pp. 17-38; D.P. HARMON, *The Family Festivals of Rome*, in *ANRW* II 16.2 (1978), p. 1596; E. EYBEN, *art. cit.* (n. 37) p. 325.

(48) Cf. *Quaest. conu.* 3.4, 651C (concerning puberty, quoted in n. 66).

(49) *Quaest. Rom.* 102, 288C. Our author mentions still other solutions which have to do with numerical symbolism.

(50) See R. ETIENNE, *La conscience médicale antique et la vie des enfants*, in *Annales de démographie historique* 1973, pp. 15-61, esp. 33ff.; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 74-75; M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 17-18.

(51) *Cato ma.* 20.2.

(52) *Lyc.* 16.2.

(53) *De lib. educ.* 5, 3E. Cf. *An virt. doc.* 2, 439F: "just as nurses mould its body with their hands...". For swaddling, cf. R. ETIENNE, *art. cit.* (n. 50), pp. 33ff.; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 81-83, 187.

Plutarch does not object to this custom. Yet he speaks approvingly of the Spartan nurses who rear their children without swaddling-bands, and thus leave their limbs free to develop<sup>(54)</sup>. Elsewhere too he states that a child should be free to move as much as possible.

Young babies should not be left unmoved or put down on something immovable, since they thus become weakly. They ought to be kept on the move as much as possible, but if one does set them down on anything, they should be set on moving things and be swayed by them, as in the rocking cradles that some people have devised for children to sleep in<sup>(55)</sup>.

In other words, a plea for rocking chairs, cradles, hobby horses, all well-known in Antiquity<sup>(56)</sup>.

Especially in the first days after birth an infant will sleep and cry a lot<sup>(57)</sup>, a fact Plutarch is of course aware of. He also relates how the wet nurses (*τῖ(β)ραι*) solved the latter problem with the (rather unpedagogical) words: "Stop crying and you shall have it"<sup>(58)</sup>. Newborn children have a fierce look, says fragment 216A. They do not smile for about three weeks, sleeping most of the time. But in their sleep they often smile and relax.

Now how else can this come about, unless the soul then withdraws from the vortex of animal life and its motions depend upon its own previous experiences.

Fragment 217F repeats the same idea and adds that many babies mumble in their sleep, although they are incapable of doing so when awake. According to Plutarch this too is due to a kind of amnesia: the soul of an infant remembers things from the time before it was locked up inside the body.

(54) *Lyc.* 16.3.

(55) *Fra.* 96. The words are a comment on: "Don't seat a boy of twelve days (better not!) / on what may not be moved — it unmans the man — / nor yet a twelve-month old: that's just as bad".

(56) Cf. H. BLÜMNER, *Die römische Privataltertümer* (Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, IV 2.2), München 1911<sup>(2)</sup>, p. 303.

(57) E.g. *Quaest. conu.* 5, 672F: "Nurses (*τῖ(β)ραι*) feeding babes by hand get little pleasure from it at the time; only when the children are fed, put to sleep, and their crying quieted, do the nurses, being left alone, help themselves to the food and drink they want and enjoy them". Cf. *Fra.* 216a; *Quaest. conu.* 5, 672F; *Sept. sap. conu.* 3, 149D.

(58) *De coh. ira* 10, 459A.

The years of childhood and of adolescence are characterized by intense corporal growth. In Antiquity that will have been no different than now. Rather peculiar is the explanation we read in Plutarch where the latter describes Spartan conditions. Corporal growth is linked to food, but *little* food advances growth because

the vitality ( $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\delta\mu\alpha$ ) is not impeded and hindered by a mass of nourishment which forces into thickness and width, but ascends of its own lightness, and ... the body grows freely and easily<sup>(59)</sup>.

Little food also produces beauty of form:

Just so, we may be sure, women who take physic while they are pregnant, bear children which are lean, it may be, but well-shaped and fine, because the lightness of the parent matter makes it more susceptible to moulding<sup>(60)</sup>.

Even for Plutarch, however, the matter is difficult; therefore he leaves the explanation of this phenomenon to others.

The importance of the  $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\delta\mu\alpha$ <sup>(61)</sup> has already cropped up a couple of times. At least as important for human development are the qualities hot, cold, moist, dry<sup>(62)</sup>. Two of these are attributed by Plutarch to the child (and the youth): heat and moisture. In the third "Table talk" mention is made of children "being full of moisture like green wood" ( $\chi\lambda\omega\phi\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\omega\nu\ \xi\upsilon\lambda\omega\nu$ )<sup>(63)</sup>. Most important of all may well be heat,

for heat is generative, a factor of fertility<sup>(64)</sup>; through the agency of heat the generative fluid has a good flow and the spirit tension and a lusty power<sup>(65)</sup>.

<sup>(59)</sup> *Lyc.* 17.4. Cf. *Apopht. Lac.* 13, 237F and Clemens of Alexandria, *Paed.* II 1.17.3; *Corpus Hermeticum* 10-13 p. 119 Nock-Festugière.

<sup>(60)</sup> *Lyc.* 17.5.

<sup>(61)</sup> Cf. G. VERBEKE, *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma*, Louvain 1945.

<sup>(62)</sup> Cf. G.E.R. LOYD, *The Hot and the Cold, the Dry and the Wet in Greek Philosophy*, *JHS* 84 (1964), pp. 92-106; E. EYBEN, *De jonge Romein volgens de literaire bronnen der periode ca. 200 v. Chr. tot ca. 500 n. Chr.* (AWLSK, 81), Brussel 1977, pp. 42-45 (an application on the human life span).

<sup>(63)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3.10, 658E. Cf. *De lib. educ.* 5, 3E:  $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \upsilon\pi\epsilon\theta\nu\ \eta\ \nu\epsilon\acute{o}\tau\eta\varsigma$ .

<sup>(64)</sup> Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 3.4, 651B and Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 2.3, 736b35-36. According to the Pythagoreans, even numbers are female, odd numbers ("better and more perfect") male and generative. Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 2, 264A; 102, 288C.

<sup>(65)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3.5, 652D. Growing older, on the other hand, is a process of drying out. See R.B. ONIANS, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate*, Cambridge 1951 [= 1988], pp. 212ff.; E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), pp. 42ff.

Heat also influences sexual development. Since women, according to Athrytius, are warmer than men, "girls become lustful at an earlier age than boys and are earlier excited to sexual activity"<sup>(66)</sup>.

It may further be noted here that Plutarch also offers a physiological explanation for the fact that the 'alpha' is the first letter babies utter: the sound is an absolutely simple one requiring no effort of the tongue which remains in its original position<sup>(67)</sup>.

Weakness, both physical and mental, is the main characteristic of the child. That is not to say that a child cannot be persistent, strong-willed, or stubborn. Especially Lacedaemonian children, with their typical Spartan education<sup>(68)</sup>, were famous in this respect. The age group of 12 to 15 year-olds was e.g. expected to steal their food. If one was caught in this endeavour, "he was soundly flogged, as a careless and unskilful thief". Well-known was the story of a boy who had hid a fox under his cloak. He suffered the teeth and claws of the animal "and died rather than have his theft detected". Plutarch does not find the story unlikely, for even in his own time the 'flogging festival' was still celebrated in Sparta at the altar of Artemis Orthia, a kind of contest in which youngsters let themselves be lashed for as long as possible and whereby, as Plutarch himself witnessed, many met their death<sup>(69)</sup>.

Willpower and perseverance were displayed by the young Demosthenes in a wholly different manner. At the death of his father he was a mere seven years old. His appointed guardians shamelessly squandered his inheritance, not even leaving any money to pay teachers. This, as well as his poor health, prevented him from following the usual study

<sup>(66)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 3.4.2, 651B. In Rome, legally speaking, puberty set in in boys at age 14, in girls at age 12. This is confirmed by Plutarch where he writes that the Romans, unlike the Spartans, married off their daughters at an early age, at 12 "and even younger" (*Lyc.* 16.1-3). On the problem of child marriages, cf. E. EYBEN, *art. cit.* (n. 10), pp. 439ff.

<sup>(67)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 9.2, 738B.

<sup>(68)</sup> *Lyc.* 16-18.

<sup>(69)</sup> *Lyc.* 17.3-4; 18.1. Plutarch uses the term  $\epsilon\phi\upsilon\beta\omicron$ , but it is not certain what age (14, 18?) is meant. As other sources (e.g. Cicero, *Thuc.* II 14-34 [eyewitness]; Pausanias III 16.10) speak of children, we probably have to do with youths who are physically but not yet socially mature. This flogging of youths, in origin probably a fertility rite, probably only became a 'spectacle' in Roman antiquity. In late antiquity many still journeyed to Sparta to witness this 'show' (Libanius, *Or.* 1.23; Eunapius, *V.S.* 483; Symesius, *Ep.* 57). For further information, cf. H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 59-60; 517 n. 31.

programme. One day his pedagogue smuggled him into the court, and the rhetorical talent of a certain Callistrates awakened in him the aspiration to become an orator. He abandoned the typical childhood activities and henceforth dreamed solely of becoming a great rhetor. As soon as he reached his majority, i.e. at the age of 18, he took his guardians to court; but it took him still another two or three years to win this delicate case<sup>(70)</sup>.

#### 4. THE MIND AND THE PSYCHE<sup>(71)</sup>

Plutarch offers some information on the origin of the soul. According to the Stoic Chrysippus the foetus in the womb is nourished by nature ( $\varphiύσις$ ) like a plant; at birth the vital heat ( $\piνεύμα$ ) is altered, being chilled and tempered by the air. Thus it becomes an animal ( $ζῷον$ ), and therefore the soul ( $ψύχη$ ) has not inappropriately been named after this process of cooling down ( $ψύξις$ )<sup>(72)</sup>. The embryo itself, then, is not an independently living being, a view not shared by others<sup>(73)</sup>. It should be noted, however, that Plutarch himself does not adhere to the Stoic view; he merely cites it.

Just as the body is weak, so the mind is hardly developed<sup>(74)</sup>. Mental evolution is often linked to the number 7<sup>(75)</sup>. At about the age of 7 the mind receives a first impulse (meaning that a child is then able to speak coherently)<sup>(76)</sup> and it is to this development that Plutarch is undoub-

<sup>(70)</sup> *Dem.* 4-6.

<sup>(71)</sup> Cf. M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 1ff.: "Characteristics of Childhood and Childrent"; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 89-113: "L'intelligence et l'esprit".

<sup>(72)</sup> *De Sto. rep.* 41, 1052E. Cf. *De prim. frig.* 2, 946C: "The Stoics affirm that in the bodies of infant children the breath ( $\piνεύμα$ ) at birth is tempered by cooling and, from being a physical substance, becomes a soul" ( $\text{ἐκ φύσεως ψύχεται, ψυχῆν}$ ).

<sup>(73)</sup> For the divergent views on the origin of the soul, see J.H. WĄSZYŃSKI, *Bezełung* in *RAC* 2 (1954), col. 176-183. To the Stoa abortion cannot be murder as the foetus is not a living being. Cf. E. EYBEN, *Family Planning in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, *AncSoc* 11-12 (1980-1981), p. 38 n. 123 (with bibliography).

<sup>(74)</sup> Cf. *De coh. ita* 9, 458A:  $\piαιδέριον νοῦν οὐκ ἔχοσσι$ . Of course there are also adults who behave in a childish way and are not wiser than toddlers (*De sera num.* 9, 554B). Cf. *Ag.* 26.1; *Alex.* 5.1; *De Pyth. or.* 30, 409C.

<sup>(75)</sup> Bibliography in n. 6.

<sup>(76)</sup> Cf. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* 4.11: when the child is born the main part of the soul is like a blank page destined to receive what one will write on it. ... Reason, it is said, is content with these innate ideas during the first seven years. Cf. Macrobius, *S.* I 6.70:

tedly referring where he writes that the elder Cato took his son under his own charge "as soon as the boy showed signs of understanding"<sup>(77)</sup>. That mental capacity remains weak for some time yet, but attains a higher level at puberty, i.e. at the age of about 14<sup>(78)</sup>. Confirmation hereof can be read in the introduction to "On listening to lectures": Nicander has just assumed the *toga virilis* (for which one had to be at least 14<sup>(79)</sup>) and a period of liberty dawns.

But the passing from childhood to manhood ( $\tauῆν εἰς ἄνδρας ἐκ παιδῶν ἀγώγην$ ) is not a casting off of control, but a recasting of the controlling agent, since instead of some hired person or slave purchased with money they now take as the divine guide of their life reason, whose followers alone may deservedly be considered free<sup>(80)</sup>.

It therefore takes quite a while for the mind to attain its full potential. A variety of traits are linked to the weakness of that young mind.

Children are, as the author of "The Education of Children" writes, particularly malleable:

For youth is impressionable and plastic ( $εὐπλαστον γὰρ καὶ ὑγρόν ἢ νεότης$ ), and while such minds are still tender ( $ἀπαλαί$ ) lessons are infused

*anno septimo solvitur integritas loquendi*. Further references (and bibliography) in E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 28 n. 82; 67 nn. 20-21. At age seven teaching at school normally started. Cf. Quintilian I 1.15 (who himself thinks it should start at an earlier age) and H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 218; 389-390.

<sup>(77)</sup> *Cato ma.* 20.3. That a father was himself responsible for the moral and intellectual education of his child was more common in Rome than in Greece. Cf. H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), p. 390; E. EYBEN, *Les parents romains soucieux de l'instruction scolaire de leurs fils*, in *Antidorum W. Peremans sexagenario ab alumnis oblataum* (Studia Hellenistica, 16), Leuven 1968, pp. 39-60. Still, it should be noted that Plutarch emphasizes his own and his wife's share in the upbringing of his children (*Cons. ad ux.* 2, 608C, quoted p. 79).

<sup>(78)</sup> Thus Ps.-Plutarch (*Plac. phil.* 5.23, 909CD) felt that a human being reached his fulfillment ( $\tauελετώτης$ ) at that age. Just like trees, a man only becomes a complete human being once he begins to produce seed. At the same time one reaches puberty, one also develops the awareness of good and evil ( $\text{ἐννοία καλοῦ καὶ κακοῦ}$ ) and can be trained to recognize the difference. Cf. A. BONHÖFFER, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet*, Stuttgart 1909, pp. 204ff.; F. BOLL, *art. cit.* (n. 6), pp. 114-115 n. 2; E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 28 n. 82; pp. 66-67 with n. 23.

<sup>(79)</sup> Cf. E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 29. It seems somewhat strange to us that Nicander, a Greek, is following a Roman custom.

<sup>(80)</sup> *De aud.* 1, 37DE. The *toga virilis* was also called *toga libera*, but not after liberty (even though a period of freedom then set in), but after the god Liber. Cf. E. EYBEN, *Geschlechtertief* (n. 10), p. 412.



deeply into them; but anything which has become hard is with difficulty softened. For just as seals leave their impression in soft wax, so are lessons impressed upon the minds of children while they are young<sup>(81)</sup>.

A child's mind is still weak, but that does not mean that it could not enjoy, or be influenced by, the tales told by a nanny (to a lesser extent the mother)<sup>(82)</sup> or, somewhat later, the authors read in school<sup>(83)</sup>. The spectacles too exerted a profound influence on small children (*παιδαίματα*). In the amphitheatre they saw criminals often clad in luxurious clothes. They thought those men were happy,

till the moment when before their eyes the criminals are stabbed and scourged and that gay and sumptuous apparel bursts into flame<sup>(84)</sup>.

In general a child will be rather uncritical, naive and gullible. The inability to judge what is good and useful is another obvious consequence of a child's mental weakness. That can result in their acquiring an aversion to what is useful. In his "Advice about keeping well" little children (*παιδαίματα*) abhor and detest a prescribed regimen<sup>(85)</sup>. Two things in particular horrify them, according to Plutarch, viz. that which makes them healthier and that which makes them smarter: "children dread the doctor's doses<sup>(86)</sup> and run from lessons"<sup>(87)</sup>.

<sup>(81)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 5, 3EF. That a child was "soft as wax" is already read in Plato, *Rep.* II, 377AB. Because of this malleability Cato the Elder preferred to buy young slaves, "still capable of being reared and trained like whelps or colts" (*Cato ma.* 21.1).

<sup>(82)</sup> As a child's intellectual faculties are still underdeveloped and it is still impressionable, educators must particularly monitor the moral level of idle gossip (*De lib. educ.* 5, 3F; cf. Plato, *Rep.* II, 377C). Cf. *Non posse* 27, B "[tales] being the doctrine and fabulous argument of mothers and nurses".

<sup>(83)</sup> Plutarch deals at length with this in the treatise "How to Study Poetry". The author addresses in the first instance adolescents (E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* [n. 62], p. 370 n. 9), but what is said is by definition applicable to children — poetry was primarily their study object — who, for that matter, are once mentioned explicitly: "so children, if they be rightly nurtured amid poetry, will in some way or other learn to draw some wholesome and profitable doctrine even from passages that are suspect of what is base and improper" (*De aud. poet.* 12, 32EF). This work shows how prudishly children were raised in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Cf. Quintilian I 8.6-7 (elegiac poets and comedians require a *firmis aetatis robur*).

<sup>(84)</sup> *De sera num.* 9, 554B.

<sup>(85)</sup> *De tuenda* 3, 123B.

<sup>(86)</sup> Cf. Lucretius IV 11ff.

<sup>(87)</sup> *Gryllus* 2, 986D. According to *Amat.* 24, 769E, mathematics disturb children (*παιδαίμα*) as philosophy upsets young men (*τέτοι*), but this ill effect does not last.

In the same context it may be noted that a child does not feign, does not mince its words, speaks plainly. A nice example is found in "Precepts of statecraft". Timesias of Clazomenae was hated by his subjects, but was unaware of this until he met some children who were knocking a cocking-bone out of a hole. Some said it was still in the hole, but the boy who had struck at it said: "I'd like to knock the brains out of Timesias as truly as this has been knocked out of the hole"<sup>(88)</sup>.

A child is also unstable, capricious, a characteristic that in our author's view is also bound up with its weakness. He thus speaks of the sudden assaults of children which have an impetuosity and violence that is precatious and inconstant because of children's weakness<sup>(89)</sup>.

Most of their initiatives therefore come to nought, spontaneous enthusiasm disappears as rapidly as it flared up. A similar thought returns in "On the control of anger", where our author compares foolish adults lacking self-control with

children running races, who, through lack of self-control, fall down ridiculously before they reach the goal toward which they are hastening<sup>(90)</sup>.

Children tend to bite off more than they can chew, are unable to spread their energy.

"Not uncouth delights amuse children<sup>(91)</sup>". Another trait, however, that has to do with the basic ignorance of a child is that it is easily afraid. This is an inevitable consequence of the voyage of discovery through an unknown world and the introduction to so many fascinating new things. Typical, for example, is the child's fear of the dark, of being left alone<sup>(92)</sup>, typical too its terror of masks. One can free children of this fear "by bringing the masks close and putting them in their hands, and turning them about"<sup>(93)</sup>. Make the unknown known and fear vanishes. Not infrequently, however, that dread was played upon to keep children from doing foolish things. The ancients knew a wide variety of evil spirits such as Lamia, a child-stealing nursery bogey; Gello, a demon

<sup>(88)</sup> *Præc. ger.* 15, 812A. Cf. the frank language of the young Cato (p. 111).

<sup>(89)</sup> *De virt. mor.* 7, 447A.

<sup>(90)</sup> *De coh. ira* 10, 458D.

<sup>(91)</sup> *Per.* 11.4. Cf. *Cons. ad ux.* 9, 611F.

<sup>(92)</sup> The highly esteemed Spartan nurses cured the children entrusted to them of this fear (*Lyc.* 16.3).

<sup>(93)</sup> *De exilio* 5, 600E. Fear of masks is also mentioned by Epictetus, *Diss.* II 1.15.

that ate little children; Mormo, who killed children; Empusa, yet another hobgoblin<sup>(94)</sup>. Plutarch tells us about Akko and Alfiro ("the Bogy and the Hobgoblin") "with which women try to keep little children from mischief"<sup>(95)</sup>.

We have spoken of the weakness of the mind and certain traits bound up therewith. Another important characteristic of the child is its simplicity, a trait Plutarch emphasizes, with reference to his just-deceased daughter, in his consoling letter to his wife:

Your Timoxena has been deprived of little, for what she knew was little, and her pleasure was in little things<sup>(96)</sup>.

Equally important are the innocence and purity of the child. As Plutarch writes in the same treatise:

That she (Timoxena) has passed to a state where there is no pain need not be painful for us; for what sorrow can come to us through her, if nothing now can make her grieve?<sup>(97)</sup>

Children command a variety of secret, magical powers, and for that reason play an important role in certain cults<sup>(98)</sup>. That was the case in Greece and Rome — just think of the *amphithaleis* and the *camilli*<sup>(99)</sup> — but also in other cultures, e.g. in the Isis cult:

<sup>(94)</sup> Cf. W.A. BECKER, *Charikles: Bilder altgriechischer Sitte. Zur genaueren Kenntnis des griechischen Privatlebens*, Leipzig 1854<sup>(1)</sup>, pp. 16ff.

<sup>(95)</sup> *De Sto. rep.* 15, 1034B.

<sup>(96)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* 9, 61fE. On love for young children, cf. M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 82ff.; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 335ff.

<sup>(97)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* 9, 61fC. Cf. H. HERTER, *Das unschuldige Kind*, in *JbAC* 4 (1961), col. 146-162.

<sup>(98)</sup> See C. SCHNEIDER, *Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums*, München 1954, I, p. 638: "Der Hellenismus hatte geglaubt, daß das Kind religiös wertvoller sei als der Erwachsene. Kinder preisen die Götter aus schlichtem und reinem Herzen. Kinder lügen und betrügen nicht, sie haben noch keine Gemeinschaft mit dem Schmutz der Hyle und können ebenso tugendhaft oder besser sein als die Erwachsenen. Darum kann man durch sie zu Gott kommen". Cf. A. OEPKE, *Amphithaleis im griechischen und hellenistischen Kult*, *ARW* 31 (1934), pp. 42-56; G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Virginitas puerisque. A Study on the Service of Children in Worship*, MAWA, Afdeling Letterkunde, 2.12 (1939), pp. 443-485; P. LAMBRICHTS, *L'importance de l'enfant dans les religions à mystères*, in *Homages à Waldemar Deonna* (Collection Latomus, 28), Bruxelles 1957, pp. 105-128; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 144-147. Besides the following text of Plutarch may be mentioned: Dio Chrysostom. *Or.* 32 p. 364D Reiseke; Aelian, *N.A.* 11.10 ad fin.; Plato, *Prot.* 325A; Artemidorus, *Somn.* 2.69).

<sup>(99)</sup> Children of whom both parents were still alive and who played the role of a kind of acolyte. Cf. E. SAMTER, *Camillus*, in *RE* III 1 (1897), col. 143ff.; G. VAN DER LEEUW,

The Egyptians think that little children possess the power of prophecy and they try to divine the future from the portents which they find in children's words, especially when children are playing about in holy places and crying out whatever chances to come into their minds<sup>(100)</sup>.

In the fact that a child is so dear to God Plutarch sees an explanation of the law that prohibits the mourning for deceased children<sup>(101)</sup>: "such children have no part in earth or earthly things".

For the laws forbid us to mourn for infants, holding it impiety to mourn for those who have departed to a dispensation and a region too that is better and more divine<sup>(102)</sup>.

"Whom the gods love dies young" (ὅν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν, ἀποθνήσκει νέος), as we read in Menander in a fragment preserved by our author<sup>(103)</sup>.

Though the child may be innocent and pure, it can also, in contrast with what Plutarch says of 'his' Timoxena<sup>(104)</sup>, be quite egocentric and greedy. In his fourth "Table talk" Plutarch quotes Euripides: "the child

*op. cit.*, pp. 443ff. (*camilli*); R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 145-146 (*amphithaleis*). The *camilli* are mentioned in *Num.* 7.5.

<sup>(100)</sup> *De Is. et. Os.* 14, 356E. Vgl. *Dio* 2.2 (many did not believe in predictions, seeing in them the work of "fools, foolish women, and small children").

<sup>(101)</sup> Cf. *Num.* 12.2: "Numa himself also regulated the periods of mourning according to ages. Over a child of less than three years there was to be no mourning at all; over one older than that, the mourning was not to last more months than it had lived years, up to ten; and no age was to be mourned longer than that, but ten months was the period set for the longest mourning". In fact then, at least in later times, there was a period of mourning. This we learn from the example of Plutarch's wife, who — unlike other women who lamented openly — wore no mourning clothes (*Cons. ad ux.*), also from funeral inscriptions (R. GALLETIER, *Étude sur la poésie funéraire romaine d'après les inscriptions*, Paris 1922, pp. 131ff.). On premature deaths, cf. S. REINACH, *Ἀποροὶ βραχίσθωντων*, *ARW* 9 (1906), pp. 312-322; J. H. WASZINK, *Mors immatura*, *VChr* 3 (1949), pp. 107-112; P. BOYANÉ, *Funus acerbum*, *REA* 54 (1952), pp. 275-289; J. TER VRUGT-LENTZ, *Mors immatura*, diss. Groningen 1960; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 373ff.

<sup>(102)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* Cf. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 34, 119F-120AB (Apollonius died ἀωρος, "in the most blooming period of his years" [ἐπὶ τῆς εὐανθεστάτης ἡλικίας]; as ancient poets and philosophers say, for him and his age mates "there is a place set apart in which their souls pass their existence").

<sup>(103)</sup> Menander [CAF III p. 36] in *Cons. ad Apoll.* 34, 119E. Similar texts in E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 66 with n. 16. Further: Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* I 45, 109; Seneca, *Marc.* 23.1 (the road to heaven is easiest for children). See also *Cons. ad Apoll.* 17, 111B: "Excellentia is not to be ascribed to length of time, but to worth and timely fitness".

<sup>(104)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* 9, 61fE. Cf. p. 79.

is ἀπληροστος, gluttonous, insatiable<sup>(105)</sup>. The child's 'greedy' disposition appears in more than one passage. In "On tranquillity of mind" we read that little children (μικρὰ παιδάφια), when someone takes away one of their many toys, throw away all the rest and cry and howl<sup>(106)</sup>. Another instance of greediness is found in the tract "On talkativeness", where babblers are compared with children who, having a piece of ice, "are neither able to hold on to it, nor willing to let go of it"<sup>(107)</sup>.

In connection with the last example it may be remarked that such behaviour is also largely determined by an innate curiosity, a property an infant shares with all young creatures that still have to discover the world around them. Everything they want to touch, feel, hold, taste, in short experience. In his "On the Control of Anger" Plutarch offers the classic example of the father helping his toddler who is "trying to cut something in two or to make a notch in it with a knife"<sup>(108)</sup>. Especially the things that differ from the already familiar (ice, fire, a rainbow ...) intrigue and fascinate the child. A nice instance of possessiveness combined with curiosity is found in the "Dialogue of love" where Plutarch compares the feelings of lovers "with the eagerness of children to catch the rainbow in their hands, attracted by its mere appearance"<sup>(109)</sup>.

The unusual, then, does not necessarily deter, on the contrary, it may well attract. In "The Oracles at Delphi" this characteristic of the infant psyche is clarified with a similar example:

It is a fact that children take more delight and satisfaction in seeing rainbows, haloes, and comets than in seeing moon and sun<sup>(110)</sup>.

Children, then, are intrigued more by striking, exceptional phenomena than by things they see every day and which have so lost their conspicuous nature. In the fifth "Table talk" we find yet another illustration hereof: a small child (παιδίον μικρόν) prefers a little dog or cow made of dough to a loaf of bread, a silver animal or cup to a shapeless lump of silver<sup>(111)</sup>. The simple, everyday things do not attract them, they are

<sup>(105)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 661F.

<sup>(106)</sup> *De tranquill. an.* 8, 469D.

<sup>(107)</sup> *De garr.* 12, 508C.

<sup>(108)</sup> *De coh. ira* 10, 459A.

<sup>(109)</sup> *Amat.* 20, 766A.

<sup>(110)</sup> *De Pyth. or.* 30, 409C.

<sup>(111)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 5.1, 673E.

drawn by what elicits their admiration or amazement, rouses their curiosity and stimulates their imagination. Plutarch draws from this passage an important conclusion:

Children like stories better that involve riddles, and games that offer some complication or difficulty<sup>(112)</sup>.

The intellectual faculties of a child may still be weak, but they nonetheless like to experiment with them.

To conclude this section the following. Though little children may be weak or sometimes paralyzed by fear, the slightly older ones want to assert themselves, act tough. Plutarch emphasizes this in the case of Alcibiades. Pressed hard while wrestling he bit his opponent, who cried out: "you bite like a woman", to which Alcibiades replied: "No, like a lion!" The same Alcibiades was playing knuckle-bones one day with some other children in a narrow street when a heavily laden wagon came along. At first Alcibiades asked the driver to halt, but the man did not listen and drove his team forward. His fellows scattered out of the way, but Alcibiades threw himself flat on his face in front of the vehicle and bade the driver to proceed if he dared<sup>(113)</sup>.

## 5. BEHAVIOUR

### 5.1. *Play and sport*

A child's considerable corporal and mental mobility finds an outlet in play<sup>(114)</sup>, the activity that is so typical of this age. Although Plutarch

<sup>(112)</sup> *Quaest. conv.* 673F.

<sup>(113)</sup> *Alc.* 2.2-3.

<sup>(114)</sup> For more information on all kinds of games, familiar and less familiar, reference may be made here to e.g. L. GRASBERGER, *Erziehung und Unterricht im klassischen Altertum*, Würzburg 1881, I, pp. iff.; A. HUG, *Spieler*, in *RE* IIIA 2 (1929), col. 1762-1774, 1774-1778; and, more recently, F. BECK, *Album of Greek Education: The Greeks at School and at Play*, Sydney 1975, pp. 47ff. (illustrations), M. MANSON, *Le droit de jouer pour les enfants grecs et romains*, in *L'Enfant, I. Antiquité, Afrique, Asie* (Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin pour l'Histoire comparative des Institutions, 35), Bruxelles 1975, pp. 117-150; J. VATERLEIN, *Roma ludens. Kinder und Erwachsene beim Spiel im antiken Rom* (Heuremata: Studien zu Literatur, Sprachen und Kultur der Antike, 5), Amsterdam 1976; J.-P. NÉRAUDAU, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 289ff.; M. GOLDEN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 53ff.; R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1),

offers hardly any details on the various games, we still learn something from him.

One of the "Greek Questions", the "Children's Tomb", has much to do with children at play. Arriving on Euboia, which was occupied by the Aeolians, Cothus — to whom it had been prophesied that he would have great success if he bought the land — encountered little children ( $\piαιδάρια$ ) playing on the seashore. He joined in their game, and in kindly spirit showed them many playthings from foreign lands. Of course the children were desirous of having them for their own, but Cothus refused to give them unless he received some earth from them. They gave some to Cothus, but the Aeolians made away of the children "under stress of anger and grief"<sup>(115)</sup>.

Even in Plutarch's time babies had such eternal toys as teddy bears, dolls, etc. In his life of Paulus Aemilius Plutarch describes how the little Tertua, shedding hot tears on the death of her little pet dog Perseus, embraces and kisses her father, who had tenderly taken his daughter into his arms<sup>(116)</sup>. In the "Consolation to his wife" Plutarch tells us how his little Timoxena asked her nurse to offer her breast to other infants and even to "the inanimate objects and playthings she took pleasure

pp. 124-127. Väterlein's title (*Kinder und Erwachsenen beim Spiel*) already suggests that adults, and even older people, engaged in games and sports and that these activities were not age-bound. Play is not exclusively age-bound, not yesterday, nor today; just think of fathers and model trains! The homo ludens is of all ages, but the manner of playing differs according to whether one is younger or older, and certain games (e.g. rattles, knucklebones) were (almost) exclusively reserved for children. See e.g. Horace, S. II 3.247ff.: "Building toy houses, hardressing mice to a wee cart, playing odd and even, riding a long stick — if these things delighted a bearded man, lunacy would plague him". *Nuces retinque* (Persius 1.10 with *scholion ad loc.*) was synonymous for the end of the childhood years, at which moment in Greece one's toys were offered to the gods (*Anthologia Palatina* VI 309; cf. A. BORK, *Der junge Grieche. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Jugendpsychologie* (Lebendige Antike), Zürich 1961, pp. 18ff.; R. MEISTER, *Die spartanischen Altersklassen vom Standpunkt der Entwicklungspsychologie betrachtet* [SAWW, 241:5], Graz-Wien-Köln 1963, pp. 1ff.). Ball games served to amuse all ages (cf. Galenus, *De pila*), but the nature and in particularly the way the game was played undoubtedly differed according to the ages of the players involved. Cf. *An seni* 18, 793B: old men revive the body's heat by swinging, walking, light ball-playing and conversation.

<sup>(115)</sup> *Quaest. Graec.* 22, 296DE.

<sup>(116)</sup> *Aem.* 10.3-4. For Aemilius Paulus, victor of king Perseus in 168, it was of course a good omen. Cf. Cicero, *Div.* I 46.103.

in"<sup>(117)</sup>. A true-to-life portrayal of a child's psyche indeed! Although of course Plutarch is idealizing here too in no small measure: what to a child is just a game he sees as an expression of magnanimity and generosity. My child, beautiful child.

Knucklebones was very popular<sup>(118)</sup>. In the ninth "Table talk" mention is made of boys playing odd and even with knucklebones, "as philosophers do with words"<sup>(119)</sup>, and elsewhere we read that Magas sent Philemon dice and a ball "as to a senseless child"<sup>(120)</sup>. The ball ( $\sigmaφαιρα$ ) is elsewhere too, with the rattle ( $\piλαταγγή$ ), a favourite plaything of the very small "who cannot keep still"<sup>(121)</sup>.

Another aspect of play finds expression in the urge of some children to dress up. They want to look like their parents, imitate the world of the adults. This phenomenon is nicely portrayed in the treatise "Praecepts of statecraft": it arouses our laughter to see little children trying playfully to bind their father's shoes to their feet or fit crowns upon their heads<sup>(122)</sup>. Children like to emulate the adult world and accordingly role games are highly popular<sup>(123)</sup>. In his life of Cato Minor Plutarch describes the celebration of the birthday of one of Cato's young friends. The children were invited to dinner and diverted themselves in a separate part of the house, older and younger together,

"their play being actions at law, accusations, and the conducting of the condemned persons to prison"<sup>(124)</sup>.

<sup>(117)</sup> *Cons. ad ux.* 2, 608D. As C. SCHNEIDER, *op. cit.* (n. 98), I, p. 652, comments: "Plutarchus ist nicht nur Pädagoge und Kinderpsychologe in der Theorie, sondern läßt in sein eigenes kinderreiches Haus die intimsten und lebensfrischsten Einblicke tun".

<sup>(118)</sup> E.g. J. VÄTERLEIN, *op. cit.* (n. 114), p. 111-125 (illustrations). Children and knucklebones are also linked in *Lys.* 8.4; *Alc.* 2.2-3; *Praec. ger.* 15, 812A.

<sup>(119)</sup> *Quaest. conu.* 9.12, 741C.

<sup>(120)</sup> *Quaest. conu.* 9.13, 741C; *De coh. ira* 8, 458A.

<sup>(121)</sup> *Quaest. conu.* 7.10.1, 714E. On ball games, cf. H.A. HARRIS, *Sport in Greece and Rome* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life), London 1972 [= Ithaca (NY) 1976], p. 74ff. (with an explanation why the ancients did not play soccer).

<sup>(122)</sup> *Praec. ger.* 17, 814A.

<sup>(123)</sup> According to Plato, *Leg.* I 12, 643BD children should imitate adults in their activities; their games should already prepare them for the profession they later intend to practice. The future builder should construct toy houses, the future carpenter should tinker a lot, etc. Cf. *Leg.* VIII, 819BC and A. STEIN, *Platons Charakteristik der menschlichen Altersstufen*, diss. Bonn 1966, pp. 32-33.

<sup>(124)</sup> *Cato mi.* 2.2.

Perhaps the young Themistocles may also be mentioned here. The usual recreation of children did not attract him, and already as a young boy "he would be found composing and rehearsing to himself mock speeches in accusation or defence of some boy or other"<sup>(126)</sup>. Apparently such amusement was not unusual.

Amusing to say the least is a story told by Plutarch in his life of the Spartan king Agesilaus "who was excessively fond of his children", even joining in the play of the very smallest. One day, he bestrode a stick and was playing horse with them at home. When seen by one of his friends, he entreated him not to tell anyone "until he himself should be a father of children"<sup>(126)</sup>.

Children could also 'excel' in all manner of teasing. A passage from "The cleverness of animals" may be considered to describe a kind of game: little boys (*παιδάριοι*) throw at frogs for fun<sup>(127)</sup>. Not only playfulness, but also a child's latent sadism will have played a role here. Elsewhere a boy throws a stone at a dog, misses, and hits his stepmother, eliciting the comment: "That was not so bad either!"<sup>(128)</sup>. Teasing is of course not confined to animals. The young Demosthenes was thus given the nickname Battalus by his peers in mockery of his scrawny and sickly physique; the meaning is not clear, but obviously it will not have been adulatory<sup>(129)</sup>.

Animals also played an important role in the life of child. This is apparent from, among others, the treatise "On brotherly love". Who as a child disagrees with one's brother about the care of animals and their fights, as, for instance, those of quails or cocks, they then continue to differ about the contests of boys in the palaestra, of dogs on the hunt and of horses at the races...<sup>(130)</sup>. Yet other animals held a great attraction for children, even though they were not exactly lap dogs. Thus our

<sup>(126)</sup> *Them.* 2.1. Cf. R. GARLAND, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 141-142: "at a very early age Themistocles already had his sights set wholly upon the adult world and had no time for child-oriented pursuits".

<sup>(126)</sup> *Ag.* 25.5.

<sup>(127)</sup> *De soll. an.* 7, 965B.

<sup>(128)</sup> *De tranq. an.* 39, 477A.

<sup>(129)</sup> *Dem.* 4.3-4. Some explanations are given by Plutarch himself: the name of an effeminate flute-player, a voluprious poet, privy parts. Another nickname was Argas (*ibid.* 4.5).

<sup>(130)</sup> *De frat. am.* 17, 487E.

author describes how in Rome an elephant was pestered by small children (*παιδάριοι*) "who pricked its proboscis with their writing styluses". The elephant grabbed a child and feigned, to the dismay of the onlookers, to hurl it in the air, but then softly put it down again, "thinking it sufficient punishment for one so young to have been frightened"<sup>(131)</sup>. Already in Antiquity the dolphin was regarded as a real children's friend. Plutarch tells a story that would have taken place on Iasus. A dolphin swam and played with a lad, let him touch it, let him sit on its back, carried him with pleasure wherever he wanted. In a storm the boy died. The dolphin took the body and threw both it and itself together on the land and would not leave until it too had died<sup>(132)</sup>.

Children not only amused themselves with all manner of games, they also practiced sports. The gymnasium (more than before a 'cultural centre) and the palaestra (wrestling school) are mentioned more than once<sup>(133)</sup>, but we do not hear much about physical exercises from our author who was concerned more with the development of the mind than that of the body. In "On the Education of Children" (Ps.) Plutarch dryly remarks:

It is not proper to overlook the exercise of the body ... for the sake of gracefulness of body but also with an eye to strength; for sturdiness of body in childhood is the foundation of a hale old age.

To which he adds the warning:

But the amount of bodily exercise should be so limited as not to be a drain on the children and make them too tired to study; for according to Plato, sleep and weariness are the enemies of learning<sup>(134)</sup>.

It is clear that in Plutarch's time athletics, as a result of increasing professionalism, no longer played the central role in education it had in

<sup>(131)</sup> *De soll. an.* 12, 968E.

<sup>(132)</sup> *Gryllus* 36, 984E-F. The same story in Aelian, *N.A.* 6.15; Pliny the Elder, IX 25ff.

<sup>(133)</sup> Gymnasium: *De sera num.* 19, 561DE; *Amat.* 9, 754D; *De tuenda 130B* (usefulness of breathing exercises for athletes); 133D; palaestra: *De frat. am.* 17, 487E; *Pract. ger.* 32, 823E. An *παδοτε/βητις* is mentioned in *De lib. educ.* 11, 8C, a *γυμνασάριος* in *Amat.* 9, 754D. Cf. D. FAURE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), I, pp. 35ff.

<sup>(134)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 11, 8CD. Plutarch refers to Plato, *Rep.* VII, 537B. In *Quaest. conv.* 3.4, 651D, we read that young men devoted to sports are least fleshy. That will cause no surprise, but Plutarch offers a typical explanation: as women, they are cold and "female corpses burn more efficiently because of fat, which seems to be the coldest constituent of the body".

Plato's day, when gymnastics served to develop the body, music the soul<sup>(135)</sup>. Quite anachronistically our author holds that the exercises in the gymnasium (javelin-throwing, archery, hunting...) were a preparation for military action<sup>(136)</sup>.

### 5.2. *Friends and educators*

The child grew up in the company of its parents, brothers and sisters. To the young Cato the Younger his brother Caepio (actually his half-brother) was his best friend; no matter how often he was asked, as a little boy (παιδιόφιλον μιλιχρόν), whom he loved the most, he would always reply "my brother"<sup>(137)</sup>. Also important for the socialization of the child were the young slaves with which it grew up. This is made quite clear by a passage in the life of Cato Maior. The mother of Cato's son breast-fed the child herself, which at the time was probably not unusual<sup>(138)</sup>, but went even further as

she often gave suck also to the infants of her slaves, that so they might come to cherish a brotherly affection for her son<sup>(139)</sup>.

Ps.-Plutarch says that the younger slaves should be selected with great care, as they are to be "the servants and companions of young masters". They first and foremost must be sound in character, Greeks as well, and distinct by their pure speech<sup>(140)</sup>.

At least as important were of course the child's actual friends. We have already seen how children played together amicably. Sometimes,

<sup>(135)</sup> Cf. H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 104ff., 201ff., and, esp. for Plutarch, D. FAURE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), I, pp. 35-36, II, pp. 23-24. Professionalism in sports has been relativized by H. W. PLEKKE in several studies, e.g. *Zur Soziologie des antiken Sports*, *MNIR* 36 (1974), pp. 57-87. For the Romans exercises in the gymnasium were wholly inappropriate as military training. Cf. E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), pp. 137-138, 144. For the decline of music in education, cf. H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 37-39, II, pp. 24-27.

<sup>(136)</sup> *De lib. educ.* II, 8D. Cf. J. SERENELLI, *CUF-M* I, p. 18, who speaks of Roman influence. However, it is not correct to say that in the days of Plutarch military training was the basis of education and that a stay in the army was part of Roman education. <sup>(137)</sup> *Cato mi.* 3-5. The two brothers became alienated from the time Caepio started to use perfume (*ibid.* 3-5).

<sup>(138)</sup> It later became common practice to entrust this task to nurses. Ps.-Plutarchus (*De lib. educ.* 5, 3CF) and Favorinus (in Aulus Gellius XII 1) protest against it.

<sup>(139)</sup> *Cato ma.* 20.3.

<sup>(140)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 6, 3F-4A. Virtually the same requirements are set for a nurse (*ibid.* 5, 3DE; cf. Quintilian, I 1.4).

however, things would take a less peaceful turn. It is not surprising that even at this level high politics could play a part. In his life of Brutus Plutarch relates a fight at school: when still a boy Cassius felt a great hostility and bitterness towards the tyrants. He visited the same school as Faustus, the son of Sylla, who bragged about his father's absolute power and therefore received a thrashing from the young Cassius<sup>(141)</sup>.

Of major importance were the nurse and the educator<sup>(142)</sup>. As said above, tuition proper began at the age of seven and the youth underwent schooling, under the watchful eye of the educator, until his 14th or 15th year<sup>(143)</sup>. This caused some problems. The author of "The Education of Children" mentions as 'typical' shortcomings "heedlessness towards their attendants, or deceiving and refusing to mind their teachers", but these faults of children "are trivial and altogether corrigible"<sup>(144)</sup>, surely when compared with those of adolescents (μεριόζωια).

Innocent or not, many teachers did not have an easy time with their pupils. A difficult, or at any rate stubborn, pupil was certainly Alcibiades. He even succeeded in changing the school programme. The lyre befitted a free citizen, but he refused to play the flute, "holding it to be an ignoble and illiberal thing". Thus, "half in jest and half in earnest", Alcibiades freed himself from this discipline and the flute was dropped entirely from the programme<sup>(145)</sup>.

<sup>(141)</sup> *Brut.* 9.1-2.

<sup>(142)</sup> "For these are the first to receive the child when it has weaned and, just as nurses mould its body with their hands, so tutors by the habits they inculcate train the child's character to take a first step, as it were, on the path of virtue" (*An virt. doc.* 2, 439F). A few passages shed some light on the behaviour and tasks of these teachers; thus e.g. *Quomodo aduul.* 28, 69C; *Quaest. conu.* 5, 672F; *De lib. educ.* 5, 3DE; *De vit. pud.* 2, 529C; *De coh. ira* 10, 459A (on the nurse); *An virt. doc.* 2, 439F-440A; *Quaest. Plat.* 9-2, 1008F; *De lib. educ.* 7, 4AB (on the tutor). For the special significance Plutarch attaches to the pedagogue, cf. J. J. HARTMAN, *De avonazon des heidendoms: het leven en de werken van de wijze van Chaeronea*, Leiden 1912<sup>(2)</sup>, pp. 110ff.

<sup>(143)</sup> This was customary in Greece, whereas in Rome many preferred private teaching. Cf. Quint. I 2.1ff. and H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), p. 390.

<sup>(144)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 12, 16B. This mischief contrasts sharply with the often 'monstrous' iniquities of youth: "unlimited gluttony, theft of parents' money, gambling, revels, drink-bouts, love affairs with young girls and corruption of married women" (*ibid.*).

<sup>(145)</sup> *Alc.* 2.5-6. Cf. 7.1: Just out of his childhood years (τῆν παιδικῶν ἡλικίαν παραλάσσων) Alcibiades gave a teacher a blow because he did not have a book on Homer.

5.3. *Lovers*

Children also associated with adults, and it is in this context that some attention should be devoted to pederasty<sup>(146)</sup>, the relationship between the lover (ἐραστής), a somewhat older man who was expected to take the active role, and a boy (ἐραυόμενος) between 12 and 17<sup>(147)</sup> for whom, both in Greece as in Rome, the passive role was reserved<sup>(148)</sup>.

Plutarch provides historically significant information on this subject, e.g. on a law of Solon prohibiting intercourse between slaves and free youths; on pederasty in Sparta where this kind of love was integrated in education and so accepted "that even the maidens found lovers in good and noble women"; on the 'sacred band' of the Thebans made up of lovers and loved<sup>(149)</sup>. All are basic texts dealt with at length in any book on homosexuality and on which we cannot dwell in the present paper. A few remarks will have to suffice here.

It is well known that the Romans took a wholly different view of this phenomenon than the Greeks. Plutarch states very clearly that that was still the case in his time.

For the Romans used to be very suspicious of rubbing down with oil, and even *to-day* believe that nothing has been so much to blame for the enslavement and effeminacy of the Greeks as their gymnasias and wrestling-schools, which engender much listless idleness and waste of time in their cities, as well as pederasty and the ruin of the bodies of the young men<sup>(150)</sup>.

<sup>(146)</sup> General studies: H.-I. MARROU, *op. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 61-73, 517-521; K.J. DOVER, *Greek Homosexuality*, London 1978; H. PATZER, *Die griechische Knabenliebe* (Sitzungsberichte der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der J.W. Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, 19.1), Wiesbaden 1982; F. BUFFIERE, *Eros adolescent. La pédérastie dans la Grèce antique* (Collection d'études antiques), Paris 1980.

<sup>(147)</sup> E.g. Straton in *A.P.* XII 4. The age of 12 is explicitly mentioned in *Lyc.* 16.6 (concerning Sparta). Undoubtedly Plutarch means the years 12-18 when he writes "at an age when the human flower has the greatest charm, as the boy merges into the man" (ἡλικίῳ ἔτι ἀνδρῶς ἐκ παιδῶν) (*Ag.* 34-7). Cf. *Amat.* 15, 757E: μετὰ τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἐν ὄψασι. Often the first downy hair alienated the lovers. Cf. *Amat.* 24, 770C and E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 475 n. 19.

<sup>(148)</sup> On that passive role Plutarch writes in *Amat.* 23, 768E: "That is why we class those who enjoy the passive part as belonging to the lowest depth of vice and allow them not the least degree of confidence or respect or friendship". Of course this refers to those who are expected to take the active part.

<sup>(149)</sup> *Sol.* 1.3 (cf. *Amat.* 4, 750B); *Lyc.* 17.1, 18.4.

<sup>(150)</sup> *Quaest. Rom.* 40, 274D. Cf. E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 144.

Needless to say, this aversion 'in principle' did not mean that homosexuality did not exist in Rome<sup>(151)</sup>, nor that this kind of love was prohibited in all circumstances. A Roman citizen only had to take care that he was the active partner and did not defile Roman blood by having intercourse with another free citizen<sup>(152)</sup>.

When Plutarch is describing Greek conditions in the past pederasty regularly crops up<sup>(153)</sup>, usually without any moral judgement being pronounced. Most detailed is his account of the amorous affairs of the young rake Alcibiades<sup>(154)</sup>. Because of his beauty he had success with many, but "he was harsh, and stubborn, even insolent with them". Only in Socrates did he find his true lover, "the only one he feared and revered".

By despising himself, admiring his friend, loving that friend's kindly solicitude and revering his excellence; ... and whenever Socrates found him filled with vanity and wantonness, he was reduced to shape by the Master's discourse, and rendered humble and cautious.

In brief:

His love with Socrates had for him that bore strong testimony to the boy's native excellence and good parts.

Plutarch emphasizes the Platonic nature of this relationship. And in the case of the Spartans too he holds that such contacts in their society had nothing shameful and testified of great modesty, high ambition and an ardent desire for excellence<sup>(155)</sup>.

Even in Greece, however, not everybody gave himself over to homosexual love. In one of his "Parallel lives" we read of the Spartan king Agesilaus who tried to suppress his feelings for the beautiful boy Mega-

<sup>(151)</sup> E.g. *Mar.* 2; *Cato mi.* 2; *Aem.* 26; *Sert.* 26; *Ant.* 84; *Titus* 18-19. Cf. n. 101 and F. LE CORSU, *Plutarque et les femmes dans les "Vies parallèles"* (Confluents, 7), Paris 1981, pp. 173-176; E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), pp. 475ff.

<sup>(152)</sup> This ethic is pithily expressed in Plautus, *Cure.* 36-37: "Provided you keep away from married women, widows, virgins, young innocents, and children of respectable families, love anyone you want" (transl. P. Nixon). Decent women, for their part, could not, as Plutarch says, "either receive or bestow a passionate love without impropriety" (*Amat.* 6, 752C).

<sup>(153)</sup> *Arist.* 2; *Them.* 3; *Cleom.* 37; *Alex.* 47, 22, 67; *Sol.* 1.2-3; *Ages.* 2.1, 11, 20.5, 25.1, 40.5. Cf. F. LE CORSU, *op. cit.* (n. 151), pp. 167-173.

<sup>(154)</sup> *Alc.* 4-7, esp. 4.5, 6.1, 4.4, 4.1.

<sup>(155)</sup> *Lyc.* 17, 18.4; *Ages.* 20.

bates and refused to be kissed by this boy, however much he desired it<sup>(166)</sup>. But the reverse was also possible. For Demetrius of Macedon any free woman or boy was fair game. He was completely smitten by the young boy (παῖς ἄνθρωπος) Democles, who dazzled by his beauty. The lad resisted all advances, gifts, intimidations, fled from gymnasia and palaestras. And when Demetrius finally found him alone, he threw himself into boiling water and died, "suffering a fate that was unworthy of him, but showing a spirit that was worthy of his country and of his beauty"<sup>(167)</sup>.

In the Greek world homosexuality's standing had plunged sharply after Plato's time. Plutarch clearly accepts it as an historical fact, but what was his personal position concerning this kind of love? The texts cited already cursorily reveal that view, but more important are two other passages, one from "The Education of Children" (of Plutarch himself), the other from the "Dialogue of love"<sup>(168)</sup>.

In "The Education of Children" the question is asked

whether boys' admirers are to be permitted to associate with them [the pupils] and pass their time with them, or whether, on the contrary, they should be kept away and driven off from association with the youth.

The author is particularly annoyed with the question, only barely dares to formulate it. So many fathers are uncompromising, think the society of admirers "an intolerable outrage to their sons", but on the other hand there are so many highly prominent Greeks (Socrates, Plato, ...) who approved of this kind of love and showed their pupils the way to an honest life. The author concludes:

We ought indeed to drive away those whose desire is the more outward beauty, but to admit without reserve those who are lovers of the soul<sup>(169)</sup>.

He therefore refuses to make a real choice. But it seems obvious that his pedagogical advice was rather difficult to apply in practice.

The fact that the author of "The Education of Children" brings up the topic of pederasty, but does not radically reject the practice, is seen

<sup>(166)</sup> *Agas.* 11.2ff. Yet as a boy Agesilaus himself was the beloved of Lysander (*ibid.* 2.1).  
<sup>(167)</sup> *Demetr.* 24.2-3. Other youths also killed their admirers. Cf. *Cim.* 1.2ff. (a Greek adolescent kills a Roman magistrate); *Mar.* 14.3-5 (a nephew of Marius killed by the young soldier Trebonius).

<sup>(168)</sup> See also *Comp. Ar. et Men.*, where Plutarch praises Menander for not incorporating homosexual scenes in his plays.

<sup>(169)</sup> *De lib. educ.* 15. 11f.

by some as an important argument against the authenticity of this treatise. Upon closer investigation, however, we are, as J. Sirelli writes, not dealing here with a personal opinion, for just about everything has been taken from Plato: "Tout est donc livresque dans ce développement, rien n'est tiré de la réalité contemporaine"<sup>(166)</sup>. That may be so, but it is equally true that the passage in question is not really contradicted by the way our author describes this kind of love in the *Vitae*, nor by his "Dialogue of love".

As to content this latter treatise is undoubtedly one of Plutarch's most important and most 'revolutionary' writings<sup>(167)</sup>. Ismenodora, an energetic widow of about thirty, is genuinely in love with the adolescent<sup>(168)</sup> Bacchon, who is surrounded by lovers and therefore abducted by her because she wants to marry him (10, 754E). Proponents and opponents of homosexual love all have their say. For the proponent Protophenes an excessively passionate relationship with a *man or a woman* does not deserve the name of love.

Love it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul and through friendship brings it to a state of virtue (4, 750D),

a goal that in his view is not achieved through heterosexual love, which pursues only pleasure. Protophenes is interrupted by Daphniaios who draws a distinction between natural and unnatural love (5, 751C). To him boys only oblige their partners under the threat of force, they are victims of rape (5, 751D), for, despite the claims of Protophenes,

boy-love denies pleasure; that is because it is ashamed and afraid. It needs a fair pretext for approaching the young and beautiful, so it pretends friendship and virtue. ... But when night comes and all is quiet ... (5, 752A).

The discussion continues, and at a certain moment Plutarch' father utters the words that provide the key for the understanding of the dialogue:

<sup>(166)</sup> Cf. J. SIRELLI, *CUF-M* 1, pp. 22-23, 152.

<sup>(167)</sup> Love in this work is discussed by e.g. L. DUGAS, *L'amitié antique d'après les moeurs populaires et les théories des philosophes*, Paris 1894 [= New York 1976], pp. 142-150; R. FLACELIÈRE, *L'amour en Grèce*, Paris 1971, pp. 185 ff.; *La pédérastie dans la Grèce antique*, *REG* 93 (1980), pp. 21-31; E. BUFFIÈRE, *op. cit.* (n. 146), pp. 533ff.; F. LE CORNU, *op. cit.* (n. 151), pp. 167-176. For the literary qualities, cf. R. FLACELIÈRE, *art. cit.*, pp. 32ff.

<sup>(168)</sup> In *Amat.* 2, 749E he is called epebe. In the Loeb edition (1969), p. 311 n. a, it is wrongly deduced from this that that Bacchon was 18-20 years old. Cf. for that matter *Amat.* 7, 752F: "a stripling who has not yet discarded his school uniform, who still needs a tutor". Elsewhere too Bacchon is called μαθητήριον (2, 749D; 10, 754E), or νεωτέριος (7, 752E; 9, 754C), νέος (9, 754D), ἀωρεός ἀνήρ (8, 758A).



For is it really the case that visual shapes emanating from boys can, but the same from women cannot, enter into the body of the lover where [...] they produce seed? And those beautiful and sacred passions which we call recollections of the divine [...] by which the soul is made winged — why should they not spring from maidens and women, as well as from boys and striplings (ἀπὸ παίδων καὶ ἀπὸ νεανίσκων) (21, 766E).

There follows a glorification of conjugal love, Ismenodora and Bacchon marry, but Plutarch does not come to an explicit condemnation of all kinds of pederasty. Unlike Plato, for whom ἔρως was a demon, Plutarch considered Eros a powerful deity; but for the rest he does not really betray Plato's thought. He does not condemn the pedagogical love, but sees the same (again unlike Plato) also realized in heterosexual love, traditionally the domain of Aphrodite, physical love<sup>(165)</sup>.

#### 6. *Precocious children*

A child is expected to be playful, unpredictable, naive, impulsive... Not all children correspond to this image. There are also those who are not children, who already at a very early age behave more like an adult<sup>(164)</sup>. Such a person, at least in Plutarch's presentation, was Alexander.

While he was still a boy his self-restraint showed itself in the fact that, although he was impetuous and violent in other matters, the pleasures of the body had little hold upon him, and he indulged in them with great moderation, while his ambition kept his spirit serious and lofty in advance of his years<sup>(165)</sup>.

For Roman antiquity mention may be made of Fabius Maximus. Already as a child he had the surname *Ovicula* (Lambkin, *cuniculator*) due to

the calmness and silence of his demeanour, the great caution with which he indulged in childish pleasures (τῶν παιδικῶν ἡδονῶν), the slowless and difficulty with which he learned his lessons, and his contented submissive-ness in dealing with his comrades.

<sup>(165)</sup> Cf. R. FLACELIÈRE, *art. cit.*, pp. 27-31, reacting against R. Hirzel. Elsewhere too, love of youths and women is placed on the same line (e.g. *Virt. mor.* 10, 408D).

<sup>(164)</sup> The *pueri senes*, known particularly from (late) Roman Antiquity and especially early Christianity. Cf. esp. C. GNILKA, *Aetas spiritualis. Die Überwindung der natürlichen Altersstufen als Ideal frühchristlichen Lebens* (Theophañcia: Beiträge zur Religions und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums, 24), Bonn 1972.

<sup>(165)</sup> *Alex.* 4-4-5.

Only few then surmised that such an apathetic person would grow into a great politician, that his so-called lack of energy was only a lack of passion, his caution prudence<sup>(166)</sup>.

The young Cicero too was a real prodigy. As soon as he was of an age to take lessons, his natural talent shone out clear and he won name and fame among his comrades, so that their fathers used to visit the schools "to see the child with their own eyes and observe the quickness and intelligence in his studies for which he was extolled", though the ruder among them were angry at their sons when they saw them walking with Cicero in their midst as a mark of honour (ἐπὶ τιμῆ)<sup>(167)</sup>. Already in those early days he showed himself to be fond of learning everything and interested in all kinds of knowledge, but felt especially (προθυμότερον) attracted to poetry; a poem "Pontius Glaucus", composed in tetrameters, was still extant in Plutarch's day<sup>(168)</sup>.

Cato the younger in his youth is described by Plutarch as a true *puer senex*:

We are told that from his very childhood (ἐπιβύς ἐκ παιδίου) Cato displayed, in speech, in countenance, and in his childish sports, a nature that was inflexible, imperturbable, and altogether steadfast.

He excelled "by a vigour beyond his years". It was difficult to make him laugh, and he was not easily moved to anger<sup>(169)</sup>. By way of illustration Plutarch relates a few incidents. Thus his contact with his teacher Sarpedon. The child was obedient to him and did everything that was enjoined upon him, although "in each case he demanded the reason and wanted to know the why and wherefore"<sup>(170)</sup>. When he was fourteen he regularly visited with his tutor the house of Sulla, where the most atrocious scenes took place. He asked his teacher why this man was not killed. "Because he is more feared than hated", Sarpedon replied. The highly indignant Cato thereupon asked for a sword "to save his country from slavery"<sup>(171)</sup>. His

<sup>(166)</sup> *Fab.* 1.3.

<sup>(167)</sup> *Cic.* 2.2.

<sup>(168)</sup> *Cic.* 2.3. For Cicero's 'calling' to be a poet and for his youthful poetry, cf. E. EYBEN, *Jonge Romein* (n. 62), p. 384. As a youth he was a precursor of Catullus and the poetae novi, detested by him as an adult.

<sup>(169)</sup> *Cato mi.* 1.2.

<sup>(170)</sup> *Cato mi.* 1.5.

<sup>(171)</sup> *Cato mi.* 3.2-4.

fearlessness is also revealed in another, earlier episode. A certain Silo asked the young (age 4!) Cato to put in a good word with his uncle to obtain the citizenship for the allies. When the boy, unlike his half brother, is unwilling and rather ostentatiously shows it, Silo feigns to throw him out the window, swinging him to and fro outside the frame. Cato, however, did not flinch, and Silo finally put him back down with the words: "What luck for Italy that he is still a child"<sup>(172)</sup>.

In his immediate surroundings too Cato would tolerate no injustice. We have already mentioned the role-game he played with his friends. On that occasion one rather good-looking boy was convicted and locked in a small room by an older lad. The young Cato immediately understood what was happening and freed the victim<sup>(173)</sup>.

## EPAMEINONDAS AND THE SOCRATIC PARADIGM IN THE *DE GENIO SOCRATIS*

Aristoula GEORGIADOU

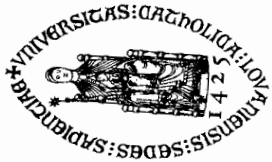
The *De genio Socratis* (Περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους δαιμονίου) represents, unlike any other work by Plutarch, the meeting point and amalgamation of his varied skills as historian, philosopher, storyteller and dramatist. The report of the Spartan seizure of the Kadmeia in 382 BC, briefly sketched by a Theban sympathiser, the Athenian Archedamus, is followed by a lengthy account of the events that led to the liberation of Thebes from Spartan domination in 379 BC; the account is given in a dialogue form by Caphisias, Epameinondas' brother.

Athens and Thebes are the two geographical poles of Theban activities: Athens, a city currently sympathetic to the Theban cause, is the refuge and point of departure of the Theban exiles<sup>(1)</sup>, and at the same time the place where Caphisias updates his Athenian audience on the recent Theban exploits; Thebes, on the other hand, is the actual theater of the operations organised secretly by the Theban exiles during their

(1) Plutarch explains the Athenian aid to the Theban exiles partly as a gesture exemplifying their traditional and natural instinct of humanity (ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπις καὶ σύμφυτον εἶναι τὸ φιλάσθρον), and partly as a return for the Theban aid to Thrasylbulus in 403 BC against the Thirty tyrants (*Pel.* 6.5; *Lys.* 27.6-7). The Athenians are not represented, however, by Plutarch as permanent and unconditional supporters of the Theban cause. Shortly after the liberation of the Kadmeia the Athenians — Plutarch mentions — not only renounced their alliance with the Thebans, fearing apparently the increase of their power, but also prosecuted those in their city who favored the Boeotian cause (*Pel.* 14.1); the reference to the prosecution of the Theban sympathisers in Athens (τῶν βοιωταζόντων, *Pel.* 14.1) echoes Archedamus' fear of being accused as pro-Boeotian by his Athenian compatriots (βοιωτιάξεν, *De gen. Socr.* 575D); consequently, Archedamus' concern for being labelled as pro-Boeotian may actually point to the timing of Caphisias' account to his Athenian audience, i.e. soon after the liberation of Thebes (*Pel.* 14).

(172) *Cato mi.* 2.1. The same story in Val. Max. III 1.2. The little Cato was then four years old.

(173) *Cato mi.* 2.5-6. Cf. p. 100.



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