

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

ETHICS OF LOVE AND PEDERASTY:  
FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO TODAY

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Spring 2011

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for baccalaureate degrees  
in Chemistry and Philosophy  
with honors in Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

The topic matter of this paper deals with the ethics of love and pederasty in ancient Greece. It begins with a basic overview of pederasty in ancient Greece, focusing on its history, practices, ethical implications, and role in the Greek education system. It continues with a discussion and analysis of Plato's *Symposium*, which is well-known for its series of speeches on the subject of love (*eros*). The essay continues with a discussion of various ethical controversies surrounding pederasty and ends with an overview of various modern manifestations of pederasty and their comparisons to pedophilia.

It is important to keep in mind that the discussion of pederasty is often complicated by 21<sup>st</sup>-century moral standards, which are undoubtedly different from those in existence during the times of ancient Greek pederasty. It is thus my goal to analyze the unique social, political, educational, and moral facets of pederasty without obfuscation from moral principles of modern society. Also, it is worth mentioning that the term "homosexuality" is used throughout the paper strictly to describe pederastic relations between two men, rather than in the post-Freudian sense in which "homosexuality" refers to a more personal or cultural identity. Historical and cultural analysis of pederasty shows that it is starkly different from pedophilia, to which it is frequently compared, but instead is a unique social, erotic, and didactic practice uniquely integrated into both ancient Greek culture and its education system.

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## Chapter 1: An Overview of Greek Pederasty

Pederasty can be defined as the “socially acknowledged” relationship, either erotic or non-erotic, between an “older” man and adolescent boy outside of his immediate family. The word *pederasty* derives from Greek and loosely translates to “love of children” or “love of boys.”<sup>1</sup> While pederasty has existed in a wide variety of cultures throughout the course of history, the most structured and culturally relevant example occurred in Greece around 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The practice developed as a common aspect of Greek “homosocial” culture, which included athletic and artistic nudity, delayed marriage of aristocrats, symposia, and social seclusion of women.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, other scholars believe it originated from militaristic rituals in Crete, the largest Greek island, serving as part of a pseudo-initiation process.<sup>2</sup> What is particularly unique about this ancient custom is the coexistence of its simultaneous idealization and criticism in ancient literature and philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Greek pederasty, while common at the time, was not immune to philosophical and ethical controversy. Pederasty, because of its innate dependence on an age disparity between the “older” man and boy, is classified as “male age-structured homosexuality,” one of the three subdivisions of homosexuality proposed by anthropologists.<sup>4</sup> Most historic records estimate the typical ages of the relationship’s younger male to be about twelve to seventeen years old, usually involved in a pederastic

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<sup>1</sup> William Armstrong Percy, “Reconsiderations about Greek Homosexualities” in *Same-Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West* (Binghamton: Haworth, 2005), 17.

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Koehl, “The Chieftain Cup and a Minoan Rite of Passage,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1986), 99-110.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 165.

<sup>4</sup> Theo Sandfort, *Lesbian and gay studies: an introductory, interdisciplinary approach*. SAGE, 2000.

relationship before his completion of sexual maturation.<sup>5</sup> While such an age difference may seem shocking by modern standards, Athenian law did not formally recognize age or issues of consent in the societal regulation of sexual behavior, though issues of age and maturity were nonetheless significant in pederastic culture.<sup>6</sup>

Pederasty, besides being seen as a sexual/romantic relationship or bond, has long been understood as a form of educational institution that existed in Ancient Greece. In this sense, the older man, through a sexual or romantic relationship, could simultaneously instill moral and cultural values to the younger.<sup>7</sup> Many ancient Greek philosophical texts indicate that the focus of pederasty was more about the connecting emotional bond between the man and adolescent boy rather than merely the pleasures of sexual intimacy. Accordingly, pederasty, in both sexual and chaste forms, was common in Ancient Greece. In addition, most Greek men engaged in sexual relations with both women and adolescent boys.<sup>8</sup> This dualistic expression of sexuality seems to suggest that females were seen as mere vectors of reproduction, while pederastic relationships involved a different, perhaps more “sacred” or special type of sexual expression. However, it is important to note that ancient Greeks did not distinguish between different types of *eros*, which referred to intense attachment and desire rather than love felt toward family or friends. This indicates that pederastic homosexual love was viewed as normal and acceptable as heterosexual love, and that their similarities in the existence of an active and passive partner outweighed their differences in gender. More about the importance

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<sup>5</sup> Vern L. Bulloch. *Pederasty*, An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Culture.

<sup>6</sup> Figures of Speech: Men and Maidens in Ancient Greece, 139-140.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Freeman, *The Greek Achievement: The Foundation of the Western World*, 2000, 299-300.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 168.

of the active and passive roles in pederastic relationships will be discussed later. Also of interest is the fact that pederastic relations seemed to be more accepted in “upper-class circles” in Ancient Greece. In fact, pederasty was so common and accepted among the upper-echelon community in Ancient Greece that there was “little or no effort to conceal” the presence of pederastic relationships.<sup>9</sup> Also, in Athens, slaves were prohibited from practicing pederasty with freeborn males. These occurrences suggest that the practice of pederasty was closely related to factors related to social class. The association of pederasty with upper-class, intellectual society members separates it from merely a carnal act and quasi-elevates it to a higher, more respected practice.

The word pederasty is formed from the Greek word *paidēraistia*, which is defined as “love of boys.”<sup>10</sup> To describe the two roles involved in a pederastic relationship, the words *erastes* and *eromenos* have been standardly used since the publication of Kenneth Dover’s *Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*. While both terms come from the Greek verb *eran*, to love, *erastes* is used to refer to the older lover (seen as the “active or dominant” partner), while the *eromenos* (the beloved), refers to the younger, or more “passive or subordinate” partner.<sup>11</sup> The *eromenos* is depicted as the “embodiment of idealized youth” in various sources of philosophical and poetic literature. American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, following the lead of expert Kenneth Dover, describes the ideal *eromenos*;

[He is] a beautiful creature without pressing needs of his own. He is aware of his attractiveness, but self-absorbed in his relationship with those who desire him. He will smile sweetly at the admiring lover; he will show appreciation for the other's friendship, advice, and assistance. He will

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<sup>9</sup> Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago and London, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 18.

allow the lover to greet him by touching, affectionately, his genitals and his face, while he looks, himself, demurely at the ground.<sup>12</sup>

Nussbaum describes the *eromenos* as “something like a god,” both in form and function. Though the frequent object of desire, he himself lacks curiosity about the other; he is “not in need of anything beyond himself.”<sup>13</sup> The power of the *eromenos* lies in his youthful presence, both spiritually and physically. Despite his understated power, his role as the passive partner in the pederastic relationship is “of the highest importance,” according to Dover.<sup>14</sup> With his sweet smile to the “admiring lover,” meek disposition, and demure confidence yet fragility, he is an object to be admired, treasured, and loved, and provides the *erastes* someone worthy of all three.

Interestingly enough, the etymology of the word *pederasty* itself has led to several various forms of usage. While traditional definitions of pederasty refer to a sexual relationship between an older and adolescent male, the word has also appeared as a synonym to anal penetrative sexual intercourse. In a nineteenth century sex treatise, the discussion of men having penetrative anal sex with women was referred to them engaging in “pederasty with their wives.”<sup>15</sup> This interpretation of pederasty and its usage to represent the practice of anal sex may suggest a correlation between pederasty and the occurrence of anal sex between the older man and adolescent boy. The sexual practice of anal sex has various ethical implications surrounding its role in pederastic relationships that will be discussed later. Nonetheless, most sexologists disagree with equating pederasty with anal sex; Erwin Haeberle describes the confusion as a “misunderstanding

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<sup>12</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*: (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 188.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Arcade, 1998, 237.

of the original term and ignorance of its historical implications.”<sup>16</sup> In addition, while *erastes* and *eromenos* are used in ancient Greek writings in a predominantly pederastic context, the words have also appeared as referring to the “lover” and “beloved” in heterosexual couples.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that a sexual polarity marked mainly by the contrast between the passive and dominant partner was a concept that existed outside of homosexual pederastic relationships.

The relationship between the *erastes* and *eromenos* played a significant role in both Greek social and educational systems, having its own “social-sexual etiquette” among the upper classes in which pederasty was a commonplace practice.<sup>18</sup> Present in the aristocratic education system, pederasty was seen as a pseudo-mentorship program reserved for free citizens in the upper class. While the function or appropriateness of pederasty is widely debated today, it was nonetheless a natural part of a male’s coming-of-age process in Ancient Greece.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the family of the *eromenos* was usually aware of his pederastic involvement. In Crete, the father of the *eromenos* had to approve of the *erastes* as worthy of the “honor” to pursue a relationship with his son. Socrates claimed that the “ideal” lover concealed nothing from the father of the *eromenos*.<sup>20</sup> The formation of a pederastic relationship was often advantageous to a youth and his family, as his newly-formed bond with an influential older man typically resulted in an expanded social network. Oftentimes, after the *eromenos* had fully matured and married, he would continue to remain on close terms with *erastes* throughout both of their lives.

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<sup>16</sup> Erwin Haeberle, *Critical Dictionary of Sexology*, 312.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 19-20.

<sup>18</sup> Pollini, John. “The Warren Cup: homoerotic love and symposial rhetoric in silver.”

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Iles Johnson. *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*. 2004, 446.

<sup>20</sup> Xenophon, *Symposium*, VIII.11.



While scholars have debated the extent that sexual activity was involved in pederastic relationships, it is likely to have varied greatly according to regional customs and individual preferences. Various Platonic texts are known for being critical of sexual intercourse in pederastic relationships, asserting that carnal desires or actions detract from the true love between man and boy. Plato's *Symposium* even suggests that focusing on the love of another's virtues and abstaining from sexual contact can lead to the abstract love of virtue itself, a theory which will be later explored in more detail. The belief in limiting pederastic relationships to chaste is demonstrated in Plato's *Phaedrus* by the notion that "a lover is the best friend a boy will ever have."<sup>21</sup> This strict emphasis on love instead of sexual interaction gives pederasty an air of purity, almost making it seem like a sacred act. Ancient Greek Historian Plutarch suggested that pederastic bonds were so strong that they were feared by tyrants, as the adolescent's obedience and dedication to his adult partner was stronger than a citizen's obedience to a tyrannical ruler. Aristotle also commended pederasty, noting that Cretan lawmakers encouraged pederasty as a form of population control by promoting sexual desire between men.<sup>22</sup> Contrastingly, modern reactions to the idea of pederasty are marked by starkly antithetical reactions, with pederasty often being compared to or understood merely as a form of ancient pedophilia, and thus a corrupt and immoral practice with no redeeming qualities or intentions.

One fascinating way to analyze ancient pederastic relationships and expressions is through the analysis of artwork from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Various pieces of art have showed scenes of seduction as well as sexual acts. Greek vase painting has also

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<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230a.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*. 2.1272a 22-24.

been a major source for scholars aiming to understand ancient Greek attitudes and customs associated with pederasty. Classics scholar John Beazley classified the vases into three main types, based on their depictions.<sup>23</sup> The first type depicts the *erastes* and the *eromenos* standing and facing one another, the *erastes* reaching with one hand for his beloved's chin and reaching with his other hand to fondle the boy's genitals. The second type shows the *erastes* presenting the *eromenos* with a small gift, often an animal, supporting the notion that the *eromenos* was viewed as someone to be "won over," and consistently pursued by the *erastes*. Animal gifts symbolize the sport of hunting, an aristocratic pastime, and also serve as a metaphor representing the sexual pursuit of the *eromenos*.<sup>24</sup> The last type showed the lovers engaging in intercrural sex, a form of non-penetrative sex where one male partner thrusts between another partner's thighs to create friction for sexual pleasure. Intercrural sex is thought to have been practiced extensively in pederastic relationships, as it was seen as less "demeaning" to the younger, receiving partner than anal intercourse. Both vase paintings and frequent poetic focus on the "appealing thighs" of the *eromenos* indicate that intercrural sex was the preferred form of sexual expression, should a pederastic couple partake in sexual contact.<sup>25</sup> Anal sex is rarely seen in ancient Greek art, and is thought to have been looked down upon or even ridiculed. Seen as dishonorable or shameful to the person penetrated, anal sex was most likely reserved for prostitutes or slaves.<sup>26</sup> Debate continues regarding whether the *eromenos* also took pleasure from any pederastic sexual activity, as vase paintings never show the younger beloved with an erection. Historian K.J. Dover argues that only the

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<sup>23</sup> W. Percy. *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece*, 119.

<sup>24</sup> Judith M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece*, 2001, 70-72.

<sup>25</sup> W. Percy. *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece*, 119.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson and Ryan, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature*, 3.

older *erastes* experiences pleasure, while other historians claim it is a “modern fairy tale that the younger *eromenos* was never aroused.”<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, pederasty appears historically throughout various works of Greek mythology. The myth of Ganymede’s abduction by Zeus can be seen as establishing precedent for the existence of pederastic relationships. In the myth, Theognis explains to a friend that

There is some pleasure in loving a boy, since once in fact even the son of Cronus, king of immortals, fell in love with Ganymede, seized him, carried him off to Olympus, and made him divine, keeping the lovely bloom of boyhood. So, don’t be astonished, Simonides, that I too have been revealed as captivated by love for a handsome boy.<sup>28</sup>

Greek myths give evidence of more than fifty young men who were the lovers of gods. Pederastic relationships are associated with familiar mythological figures such as Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, and Hercules.<sup>29</sup> It is safe to assume that the extensive set of literary examples of pederasty mimic the prevalence of homosexual pederastic relationships that existed in ancient Greek societies.

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<sup>27</sup> Hein van Dolen, *Greek Homosexuality*. <<http://www.livius.org/hom/homosexuality/homosexuality.html>>.

<sup>28</sup> Deborah Kamen, "The Life Cycle in Archaic Greece," in *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Sergent. *Homosexuality in Greek Myth*, Beacon Press, 1986.

## Chapter 2: The Influence of Plato's Symposium

*Symposium* is one of Plato's most well-known and influential works, known as one of the most "artfully dramatic" works of philosophy ever produced.<sup>30</sup> While it cannot be assumed that *Symposium* projects the theories of Plato himself, he nonetheless presents a wide variety of philosophical ideas in this outwardly lighthearted piece of writing. *Symposium* is of particular interest to this thesis because of its series of speeches on the subject of love (*eros*). Accordingly, analysis of *Symposium* will be used to understand the way pederasty functioned as an institution of an adolescent's moral education in ancient Greece. While each of the speeches presented in *Symposium* provides an interesting and unique perspective of *eros*, only those that present the most insight about ancient Greek pederasty will be discussed for the sake of conciseness.

*Symposium* is an account of a banquet associated with the Lenaian Festival in Athens, 416 B.C. While there is no specific evidence to confirm that the banquet actually took place, the speeches presented in *Symposium* shed light on common attitudes and beliefs surrounding love and pederasty in Ancient Greece. The Greek word "symposium" literally translates to "drinking together," though the event usually took the form of a dinner party or feast, with food quickly consumed at the beginning, followed by heavy drinking.<sup>31</sup> Agathon's dinner guests, suffering the effects of the previous night's drinking, decide instead to drink lightly and give a series of speeches in praise of *eros*.

While the Greek word for love, *philia*, refers to feelings of love between friends,

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Nehamas, Paul Woodruff, Introduction to *Symposium*, Hackett Publishing, xi.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

family members, or lovers, *eros* refers particularly to feelings of intense attachment or desire. Scholar Drew Hyland differentiates the two by pointing out that *eros* is always directed at something that it fundamentally lacks. Thus, Hyland concludes that “desire is a possible predicate of *eros*, therefore associating feelings of desire directly with *eros*.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Hyland states that *philia* is “*eros*” modified by an increased degree in rationality.”<sup>33</sup> This analysis mimics the idea that passionate love is often characterized by foolishness or capriciousness (ie. the common phrase “madly in love”), while love toward one’s family or friends could be described as inherently more rational or justifiable. Interestingly enough, *eros* is used both to refer to feelings of passionate love and desire as well as the god who personified those feelings, as Greek lacked the modern capitalization convention to indicate proper names. What is unique about *Symposium* and what may be a surprise to most modern readers is that the love both described and praised in *Symposium* is primarily homosexual. Pausanias and Agathon, in their speeches, are completely unconcerned with heterosexual love and Socrates places it outside his theory of the “ladder of love,” which leads from the love of one “beautiful boy” to the love of Beauty itself.<sup>34</sup> The pervading emphasis on homosexual love in *Symposium* may initially be difficult for a contemporary, predominantly heterosexual society, to understand or relate to. However, it is important to keep in mind that Greek homosexual relations had significant educational and ethical dimensions, as discussed in several of *Symposium*’s speeches. As the first piece of western literature and philosophy to discuss love, *Symposium* gradually leaves behind discussion of love of individuals to progress into the

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<sup>32</sup> D.A. Hyland, “Eros, Epithumia, and Philia in Plato,” *Phronesis*, vol 13, 1968, 33.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Nehamas, Paul Woodruff, Introduction to *Symposium*, Hackett Publishing, xiv.

“real” objects of love, which according to Socrates’ speech, progress from beautiful bodies, beautiful souls, and beauty in laws to finally reach pure Beauty itself.

Phaedrus is the first speaker to present his speech in praise or *eros*. Phaedrus’ speech, as well as others that follow, imply that male-male love is preferable to male-female love, in that male-male love often produced stronger emotional bonds, while male-female relationships were seen as socially necessary merely from a practical standpoint, as male-female copulation is obviously required to reproduce progeny. The various descriptions of the nature of women and their societal roles in ancient Greece, as presented in *Symposium*, have inevitably been criticized by feminists.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Spelman argues that while women may have “weaker” bodies than men, there is “no sign that something is amiss with their souls,” thus arguing against the notion that male-female love is somehow less “noble” than pederastic male-male love.<sup>36</sup> The social isolation of women throughout Ancient Greece may suggest why male-male love seemed to be idealized; many activities which the Greeks valued for their displays of virtue and glory, including athletics, philosophy, and warfare, were exclusively reserved for male participation. Phaedrus details the power of love manifested in a pederastic relationship, stating

All sides agree, then, that Love is one of the most ancient gods. As such, he gives to us the greatest goods. I cannot say what greater good there is for a young boy than a gentle lover, or for a lover than a boy to love.

There is a certain guidance each person needs for his whole life, if he is to love well; and nothing imparts this guidance—not high kinship, not public

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth V. Spelman, “Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views,” *Feminist Studies*, 1982, 110.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

honor, not wealth—nothing imparts this guidance as well as Love.<sup>37</sup>

Phaedrus continues to describe the strength of (pederastic) love by suggesting that an army consisting of lovers would be unmatched, as they would rather die than display cowardice in front of their lovers, striving constantly for higher honor.

Pausanias, the next speaker, does not share Phaedrus' unlimited enthusiasm in *eros*, praising its effects but distinguishing between “vulgar” and “noble” love. Pausanias argues that love, in itself, is neither a good nor a bad thing; if it is done “properly,” it is good, and if not, then it is not good. Vulgar love, according to Pausanias, is solely rooted in a base desire for sexual gratification, and can be directed toward both women and boys. Noble love, which Pausanias exclusively praises, is concerned with the “welfare of the beloved’s soul,” and is exclusively homosexual.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Spelman describes the *Symposium*'s celebration of the soul over the body by noting that “attraction to and appreciation for the beauty of another’s body is but a vulgar fixation unless one can use such appreciation as a stepping stone to understanding Beauty itself.”<sup>39</sup> Throughout his speech, Pausanias refers to this theory of noble love using the term “Heavenly love.” Heavenly love is usually felt for boys of developing maturity who display signs of intelligence and who are deemed to be potential partners for life-long pederastic relationships. One interesting thing to note about Pausanias, which provides some background information which may have influenced his feelings about *eros*, is the fact that he was involved in a relationship with Agathon. Such long-lasting adult relationships, thus extending outside the confines of traditional pederasty, were the

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<sup>37</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 178c.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Introduction to *Symposium*, Hackett Publishing, 1989, xi.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth V. Spelman, “Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views,” *Feminist Studies*, 1982, 112.

exception rather than the rule in Ancient Greece. Dover reflects on their relationship, calling them “perhaps among the successful ones [in love who] are both male in nature.”<sup>40</sup> He also remarks on how Agathon’s “femininity” has been portrayed throughout various ancient texts, further supporting the idea that active and passive roles, roughly associated with the more masculine and feminine partners, respectively, played a fundamental part in pederastic relationships.<sup>41</sup> Pausanias’ involvement in his own homosexual relationship most likely helped formulate his criticism of those who take advantage of “young, foolish boys” or women for the sake of sexual gratification. He states that there should be a “law forbidding affairs with young boys” and that such vulgar lovers have at times, even given love a bad reputation.<sup>42</sup> Pausanias, aiming to dictate his belief that the pederastic love of boys is not always admirable, comments on Heavenly Love while also elucidating the social perceptions of women during Ancient Greece:

That’s why those inspired by [Heavenly love] are attracted to the male: they find pleasure in what is by nature stronger and more intelligent. But, even within the group that is attracted to handsome boys, some are not moved purely by this Heavenly Love; those who are do not fall in love with little boys; they prefer older ones whose cheeks are showing the first traces of a beard—a sign that they have begun to form minds of their own. I am convinced that a man who falls in love with a young man of this age is generally prepared to share everything with the one he loves—he is

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<sup>40</sup> K. J. Dover, “Aristophanes’ Speech in Plato’s Symposium,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 86, 1966, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 181e.



eager, in fact, to spend the rest of his own life with him. He certainly does not aim to deceive him—to take advantage of him while he is still young and inexperienced.<sup>43</sup>

Pausanias' speech is unique in that it presents a viewpoint that contradicts social norms of Ancient Greece, while still placing homosexual relationships entirely above male-female relationships. Pausanias believes that both women and young boys are improper candidates for honorable love, as they both lack the strength, maturity, and intelligence necessary to foster "Heavenly love." Scholar John Benkman stated that Heavenly love is "purely masculine," as both the lover and beloved are male.<sup>44</sup> He argues that the distinction rests on the opposition between body and soul, as ancient Greek love for a woman can be "no more than a bodily desire, whereas only love for a man can be a pure desire of the soul."<sup>45</sup> While Pausanias notes that appropriate love involves making the lover wise, educating him and teaching him virtue, he clearly feels that those truly in search of Heavenly love do not pursue adolescent boys, but instead prefer older boys who are more physically and intellectually mature, and have begun forming opinions of their own. While fundamentally different than Phaedrus' speech, Pausanias' speech nonetheless emphasizes the fundamental importance of education, wisdom, and virtue, rather than merely sexual attraction and satisfaction, in achieving an admirable form of *eros*. Thus, though Pausanias advocates homosexual love not dependent on a significant age disparity, the didactic aspect, fundamental to pederastic love, still remains in his description of Heavenly love.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 181c.

<sup>44</sup> John Brenkman, "The Other and the One: Psychoanalysis, Reading, the Symposium," *Yale French Studies*, 55/56, 407.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

The educational aspects of pederastic institutions become the most evident in the speech of Socrates, the oldest speaker in Plato's *Symposium*. Speculation that the event and speeches described in *Symposium* were merely fictional inventions of Plato himself becomes particularly plausible when taking into account the content of Socrates' speech. The basis of Socrates' speech on *eros* focuses on the views of Diotima, a potentially fictional priestess from Mantinea. Portions of Diotima's theories allude to Aristophanes' views presented in his speech, suggesting that if Diotima actually existed, her views translated to Socrates could not have been composed long before the party in which he presents them. Scholars Nehamas and Woodruff suggest that Socrates' revelation of his inability to completely understand Diotima in reference to "giving birth in beauty...whether in body or in soul" as the object of love may be Plato's way of indicating that the end of Socrates' speech may employ views that are not Socrates' but Plato's own.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Vlastos suggests that expressing the concept that love is the desire for the "birth in [the presence of] beauty" and the idea of the Form of Beauty as the ultimate goal of *eros* may actually be Plato presenting his own ideas through the character of Diotima.<sup>47</sup>

After responding to Agathon's account of *eros*, Socrates continues the discussion of love by relating an account given to him by Diotima. Diotima expresses the view that *eros*, or personified Love, is a great lover of wisdom:

Those who love wisdom fall in between those two extremes (wisdom and ignorance). And Love is one of them, because he is in love with what is beautiful, and wisdom is extremely beautiful. It follows that Love *must* be

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<sup>46</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 206c.

<sup>47</sup> Vlastos, "The Individual as Object of Love in Plato," 21.

a lover of wisdom and, as such, is in between being wise and being ignorant. This, too, comes from his parentage, from a father who is wise and resourceful and a mother who is not wise and lacks resource.<sup>48</sup>

In Diotima's theory, Resource was the father of Love, and Poverty was its mother, explaining its origins as being intermediate between wisdom and ignorance. Similarly, Diotima concludes that Love is neither good nor beautiful because of its desire for good and beautiful things. It is Love's great desire for wisdom that connects it to concepts of pederasty and pederastic relationships in Ancient Greece, which were based on the simultaneous coexistence of expressions of love and the transmission of wisdom from the *erastes* to the *eromenos*. It is in this sense that Plato's *Symposium* begins to make sense of pederasty as a practice integrated with Greek theories of education and the instillation of wisdom into subsequent generations of males, rather than solely an expression of banal sexual desire, which is traditionally associated with concepts of pedophilia.

Diotima's claim that Love functions to "give birth in beauty," either in body or mind alludes to two distinct "birthing" processes. The first one is obviously physical intercourse, in which a sense of immortality is achieved through the reproduction process. Interestingly enough, David Halperin categorizes pederasty as a separate metaphorical birthing process, yielding the "procreation of males by males: after boys have been born, physically, and reared by women, they must be born a second time, culturally, and introduced into the symbolic order of 'masculinity' by men."<sup>49</sup> This explanation demonstrates the cultural significance of pederasty, as the relationship serves as not only

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<sup>48</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 204a.

<sup>49</sup> David Halperin, "Why is Diotima a Woman? Platonic Eros and the Figuration of Gender," *Before Sexuality*, Princeton University Press, 1990, 286.

an educational “awakening,” but also as a pseudo-entrance into manhood. Regardless of which “birthing” process will take place, Diotima argues that upon arrival at a certain age or maturity, all individuals become either pregnant in mind or body. Men pregnant in body will seek women with whom they can reproduce and create a physical manifestation of themselves, or heir to their genetic selves. Diotima recognizes that because of its quest for immortality, sexual desire aimed at reproduction is divine and therefore beautiful. However, she indicates that those men pregnant in mind are interested in producing more “lasting offspring,” also known as virtuous acts.<sup>50</sup> Men pregnant in mind, however, are attracted to a boy’s beautiful and noble soul within his beautiful body. Referring to pederastic relationships, Diotima expresses that the relationship or bond between the *erastes* and *eromenos* creates “more beautiful and more immortal children,” and thus the bond is far stronger than a male-female bond, in that ideas are more immortal than people.<sup>51</sup> Diotima’s views continue the thematic trend confirming that pederastic relationships were highly regarded by both moral and educational standards.

While Diotima explains how the love of a single, beautiful body leads to the love of wisdom itself, she acknowledges that this is not the final step in the “ascent” of love. The final step of the “ladder of love” is Beauty itself, which will be seen as the “reason for all his earlier labors” if the “man who has been thus far guided in matters of Love...has beheld beautiful things in the right order and correctly.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, all forms of love, in this theory, are directed at the very nature of Beauty. However, sexual desire that is properly channeled to avoid mere sexual gratification and instead focus on the love of

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<sup>50</sup>Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Introduction to *Symposium*, Hackett Publishing, 1989, xix.

<sup>51</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 209d.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 210e.

the other's soul thus leads to the "good life." *Eros*, which originally involved the desire to sexually "possess" the physical form of another person, instead turns out to be a desire for wisdom, immortality, and the pursuit of Beauty itself. Thus, only when a lover delves deeper than sexual gratification to pursue the Form of Beauty "will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue...but to true virtue."<sup>53</sup> In this sense, pederasty is not only seen as morally and philosophically superior to reproductive male-female relationships, but is rather seen as a pathway to wisdom, virtue, and subsequently the Form of Beauty itself.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 212a.

## Chapter 3: Ethical Questions and Discussion

The topic of pederasty is particularly fascinating in that its function and ethical implications were debated while it was being widely practiced in ancient Greece. Similarly, modern ethical norms prevent the practice from being completely understood and deemed an ethical practice by modern standards. Some of the principal dilemmas that have traditionally been associated with pederasty include:

1. How is pederasty related to pedophilia?
2. Should pederasty be chaste or erotic?
3. Is pederasty morally and ethically right or wrong?

This section will analyze these questions, beginning with a discussion of pederasty and the common misconception of its association with pedophilia. Discussion will then shift to an evaluation of the preference of chaste pederasty over erotic, as promoted by various ancient Greek philosophers for its educational value. Both questions are closely related to the third question listed, and I ultimately aim to prove that ancient Greek pederasty was an ethically moral practice that is often deemed immoral by modern standards due to its incorrect association with pedophilia.

Many modern interpretations of pederasty may compare the act to pedophilia, the psychiatric disorder characterized by primary or exclusive sexual interest in prepubescent (usually aged 13 years or younger) children. Illegal by law, pedophiles are typically associated with being mentally ill and/or sexually perverse. The fundamental age difference between the *erastes* and *eromenos* are, predictably, what causes an inherent notion to associate the two, but it is clear, especially considering the change in sexual attitudes, practices, and norms over the course of time, that the two are distinctively

different. Pederasty should not be considered a form of pedophilia, but rather a unique romantic, educational, and philosophical practice characteristic of Ancient Greece and its male citizens.

Pedophilia is characterized by sexual abuse, is obviously non-consensual, and is ultimately done in secrecy in order to avoid legal action being taken as well as familial and societal disapproval and outrage. On the other hand, the *eromenos* in Ancient Greece was regarded as an intellectually promising future citizen rather than merely an “inferior object of sexual gratification.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, the *eromenos* was portrayed with respect throughout works of Ancient Greek art. The *eromenos* was also sometimes referred to as a *pais*, or “child.” This term can be understood as a term of endearment, such as something a parent might use in reference to his or her own child, and only indicative of relative age, rather than specifically referring to a “child.”<sup>55</sup> Both sources of art and literature show that the *eromenos* was at least in his teenage years, with modern age estimate ranging from 13 to 20, or possibly even up to 30 years old. Similarly, most historical evidence indicates that an eligible *eromenos* was typically at the age when most aristocratic males began their formal military training, which was usually around age fifteen to seventeen.<sup>56</sup> The *eromenos* was, in fact, often taller than the *erastes*, and typically was of the age of growing his first facial hair, both indicative of his physical maturity.<sup>57</sup> This myriad of evidence clearly indicates that when the *eromenos* entered into

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<sup>54</sup> M. Johnson and Terry Ryan. *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook*, 2005, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Anne L. Klinck, *Sleeping in the Bosom of a Tender Companion: Homoerotic Attachments in Sappho*, 2005, 202.

<sup>56</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Platonic Love and Colorado Law: The Relevance of Ancient Greek Norms to Modern Sexual Controversies,” *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 1996, 309.

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 16.

a pederastic relationship, he was no longer a child, but rather at the beginning of his adulthood. Such evidence should serve to distance the concept of pederasty from pedophilia and the essences of shame and perverse immorality associated with it.

Similarly, it is important to note not only how issues of sexuality have changed over the course of history, but also how age roles have changed dramatically over time. For example, the age-range when boys entered into pederastic relationships was consistent with the age that Greek girls were married to husbands often much older than them. It is widely known that people are getting married later in modern society than they would have in Ancient Greece, thus it is unfair to judge the age of Greek boys in pederastic relationships according to modern standards. As opposed to the frequently clandestine operation of pedophilia, parents of youth in pederastic relationships were often influential in the selection of various potential suitors, helping to ensure the nobility of the love. Connections to a potentially intellectual and influential *erastes* could provide the family with additional power, honor, or simply an expanded social network.<sup>58</sup> Clearly, the youth's romantic involvement with an older male was not an issue of sexual abuse, but rather the expression of a didactic mentorship common of the time, made aware to the youth's family and society.

It has already been addressed that pederasty was considered a noble institution in Ancient Greece. In fact, it was considered the "ideal" form of "age-structured homoeroticism," which had other, inferior manifestations including prostitution and sexual use of slave boys. Free youths who engaged in prostitution were looked down upon and ridiculed, forming a negative reputation that often followed them throughout their lifetimes. The coexistence of both pederasty and forms of sexual abuse in Ancient

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<sup>58</sup> George Lamb. *History of Education in Antiquity*, Wisconsin Press, 1982, 27.



Greece shows that pederasty was distinctly different, morally upright, and respected compared to sexual abuse of boys. If the pederastic relationship were to fail, Cretan law required the boy to declare whether any violence had been done to him or whether the relationship was to his liking. This policy shows the power the youth had in the relationship and clearly shows his role as a consensual member of the relationship, rather than a victim of sexual abuse or misconduct.

Regarding the controversy over chaste versus erotic pederasty, the ancient Greek idealization of chaste love, marked by disdain for sexual intercourse and balancing desire with self-control in pederastic relationships has previously been mentioned. Abstaining from engaging in sexual intercourse is undoubtedly considered noble by Ancient Greek standards, as it represents self-control and the resistance to give in to sexual desire. This sexually restrained form of Greek pederasty is referred to as “Platonic love,” and as T. K. Hubbard states, “attempts to rehabilitate pederastic desire by sublimating it into a higher, spiritual pursuit of Beauty in which the sexual appetite is ultimately transcended.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in the dialogue *Phaedrus*, Socrates describes this sort of relationship as philosophical pederasty, in that it is physically intimate and affectionate but stops short of sexual intercourse. Socrates believes that those who practice pederasty in this fashion gain “bliss and shared understanding,” and claims that “there is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man.”<sup>60</sup> Socrates places sexually expressed pederasty one level below the philosophical form, believing that while the lovers are inspired by the same kind of “divine madness,” their lack of erotic self-control fosters a relationship that is not as strong as the higher kind. On the lowest level,

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Hubbard, “Introduction” to *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: a sourcebook of basic documents in translation*, University of California, 2003, 9.

<sup>60</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d.

Socrates places pederastic relationships composed of individuals who are not truly in love with each other. He regards such relationships as profane and criticizes them as being both shameful and damaging to both the lover and beloved.<sup>61</sup>

Greek criticism of sexually expressed pederasty stems from two main problems: the inevitable feminization of the *eromenos*, or passive partner in sexual intercourse, and the association of “giving” into sexual attraction with a lack of restraint on the part of the older *erastes*. Plato’s *Laws* suggests that sexual intercourse between two men leads to the degradation of masculinity of the *eromenos*, who is exclusively the passive receptive partner during sexual intercourse. To prevent such instances of masculinity degradation, the dialogue’s unnamed speaker in *Laws* advises practicing psychological restraint, which at the time was used to prevent other forms of undesired sexual contact, such as incest. To do so, he suggests that male-male sexual intercourse be associated with uncleanness, unholiness, and shamefulness, in order to “extinguish the flames of pleasure.”<sup>62</sup> Through this association technique, *Laws* asserts that men’s sexual desire for boys will be “enslaved” through a process of “bewitching or “frightening” them into compliance.<sup>63</sup> This suggestion of utilizing psychological techniques reaffirms his intense disdain and discouragement of sexually expressed pederasty. Both its expression of lack of self-control and the idea that male-male sex is essentially “sowing their seed on rocks and stones” combine to make sexual intercourse a shameful expression of love in the otherwise noble institution of pederasty.

Socrates’ love of Alcibiades is considered a well-known example of chaste pederasty, as evidenced by several ancient texts. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, Socrates divulges

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 257b.

<sup>62</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 636d.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 636d.

that he is “in love with two objects—Alcibiades, son of Clinias, and philosophy.”<sup>64</sup> In *Symposium*, Socrates’ self-control is tested, as Socrates spends the night in bed with Alcibiades without satisfying his beloved’s desires, despite the advances of Alcibiades. Despite Alcibiades’ craving to have Socrates as a lover in all aspects, their mutual love nonetheless remains chaste. Aristotle also acknowledges that it is obvious to him and his contemporaries that it is much better to abstain from engaging in sexual activity with a lover, concluding that in such pederastic relationships, the goal is the attainment of reciprocated affection rather than sexual pleasure.<sup>65</sup> In *Lacedaemonian Republic*, Plutarch acknowledges that beautiful boys are sought above all others, but asserts that an *erastes* engaging in sexual intercourse with his *eromenos* would be as shameful as a father doing so with his own son. Plato’s *Laws* also condemns sexual intercourse between two men, believing it to be unvirtuous in that it leads to cowardice in the seduced *eromenos* and intemperance in the *erastes*.<sup>66</sup> The overall consensus of various ancient Greek philosophers seems to be that chaste pederasty was viewed as both ethically and morally superior to sexually expressed pederasty.

It has previously been mentioned that the intensely homosocial environment in which philosophy was practiced in Ancient Greece undoubtedly affected many philosophers’ opinions about male-female love compared to pederastic love. However, not all analysts of ancient Greek pederasty regard pederasty as morally and intellectually elevated over male-female love. In Lucian’s *Erotes*, written nearly 700 years after the height of Greek pederastic relations, the speaker criticizes homosexual love by asserting

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<sup>64</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 481d.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Hubbard. “Homosexuality in Greece and Rome,” University of California Press, 2003, 259.

<sup>66</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 836c-d.

“neither the birds who ride the winds, nor the fishes fated to their wet element, nor the animals on land seek dealing with other males.” This comparison to animals and nature seem to imply that any homosexual relations between males are inherently unnatural and thus abnormal. Besides pointing out that reproduction is necessary to produce subsequent generations of human beings, Lucian attacks philosophers’ claims that it is the soul of the *eromenos* that the *erastes* falls in love with. He questions the intentions and reasoning of the *erastes*, asking

How come your love, so full of wisdom, lunges avidly for the young,  
whose judgment is not yet fully formed, and who know not which road to  
take?<sup>67</sup>

While most opinions discussed thus far have been in praise of both male-male love and pederasty as an educational institution, the controversies surrounding pederasty are apparent though nonetheless understandable.

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<sup>67</sup> Lucian, *Erotes*.

## Chapter 4: Modern Interpretations

It is of great interest to analyze potential manifestations of pederasty in a modern setting to see how attitudes toward pederasty or their practices have changed since the times of ancient Greece. However, it is particularly challenging to find examples of pederasty in modern times, as the word “pedophilia” is automatically associated with any relationship resembling pederasty because of the shared existence of an age disparity between partners. This section aims to compare ancient Greek pederasty with various contemporary erotic practices that have similarities to pederasty to evaluate whether these modern institutions are really pederastic in nature or rather completely separate erotic practices.

On January 13, 2011, the Telegraph published an article regarding issues of sexual behavior displaying pederastic tendencies. However, the title of the article: “Paedophilia ‘culturally accepted in south Afghanistan’” automatically associates the sexual practices described in the article with pedophilia simply because of the age disparity discussed in addition to the fact that pederasty is no longer as common and thus culturally unfamiliar to modern citizens.<sup>68</sup> While I am not condoning the sexual practices described in the article, I merely am using it as evidence to support the claim that cultural insensitivity and unfamiliarity play a factor in the analysis of foreign cultural trends. In this case, when an age disparity is the fundamental defining factor of a relationship, it is almost a contemporary automatic response to regard it as a form of pedophilia. In reality, it is unfair to do so before thorough analysis of the cultural trend. The sexual practices

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<sup>68</sup> Ben Farmer, “Paedophilia ‘culturally accepted in south Afghanistan.’” The Telegraph. 13 Jan 2011.

described in the article show many similarities to ancient Greek pederasty, indicating that the practices described may well be modern manifestations of pederasty. After speculation from British soldiers that homosexual sex was widespread and culturally accepted among the Pashtun ethnic group in southern Afghanistan, American social scientists have been utilized to help troops better understand the local culture. Their findings include pederastic trends previously discussed as being evident in ancient Greece, including the association of social status with the perpetuation of the man-boy relationship. Also, the ethnic group was seen to practice “strict separation of men and women,” which mirrors the ancient Greek homosocial environments that influenced pederastic tendencies.<sup>69</sup> Such isolation of women clearly indicates the lower social role women have in the Pashtun ethnic group, and thus serves to explain the idealization of male-male relationships. Similarly, American social scientists found that in the Pashtun ethnic group, “boys are appreciated for physical beauty and apprenticed to older men for their sexual initiation.”<sup>70</sup> This, too, mirrors, the ancient Greek adoration and pseudo-worship of the physical body of the youth.

Regarding the legality of these sexual practices, a spokesman for the Ministry of Defense noted that “Afghanistan is a sovereign nation with its own law under which the sexual abuse of children is illegal,”<sup>71</sup> indicating the perceived consensual nature of the sexual relationships. Whether the sexual institutions in Afghanistan described in this article are issues of sexual abuse or not, it is clear that the traits of the practice show resemblance to those of ancient Greek forms of pederasty. However, it is unclear to what extent or if these sexual relations function as part of the education system in this region of

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 2

Afghanistan. The answer to this question could either further help classify this modern sexual institution as pederastic or serve as a fundamental difference between this practice and ancient pederasty. Nonetheless, only if the cultural practices involve sexual abuse rather than consensual sexual relations should the form of sexual expression, whether occurring in modern or contemporary times, be considered pedophilia.

Another interesting example of a modern manifestation of pederasty occurring in North America can be seen through the existence of the North American Man/Boy Love Association. Formed in 1978, it aims to “end the extreme oppression of men and boys in mutual consensual relationships” by promoting understanding and support for such relationships and educating the general public on the “benevolent nature of man/boy love.”<sup>72</sup> NAMBLA states on their website that they are strictly against all forms of coercion and abuse but are nonetheless strongly opposed to age-of-consent laws. The controversy surrounding NAMBLA and its function and intentions are immediately obvious. Understandably, much of NAMBLA’s rationale in promoting man/boy love seems rooted in trends associated with pederasty, such as the appreciation of concepts such as nobility, respect, and beauty. NAMBLA describes man/boy love simplistically: “it’s the love of a man for a boy, and of a boy for a man. Enjoyable, consensual, beautiful.”<sup>73</sup> To support their cause, NAMBLA also quotes famous playwright and man/boy love advocate Oscar Wilde, who states

It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the “Love that dare not speak its name,” and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form

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<sup>72</sup> The North American Man-Boy Love Association, 2011. <[www.nambla.org](http://www.nambla.org)>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him.<sup>74</sup>

Wilde's quote mimics much of what has already been addressed regarding pederastic relationships: the coexistence of various contrasting characteristics, including age/youth, wisdom/naiveté, and stoicism/exuberance. In addition, Wilde clearly indicates the didactic and intellectual dimensions of pederasty.

The fundamental problem with NAMBLA that differentiates its mission from staying within traditional pederastic customs is its disagreement with the law. NAMBLA is fundamentally against age-of-consent laws and works to abolish the criminalization of adult sexual contact with minors. However, these very consent laws are aimed at establishing an age that youth are old enough to make their own decisions and thus be able to consent to sexual activity. In contrast, when pederasty was common in ancient Greece, there were no age-of-consent laws restricting sexual consent, and the legal freedom undoubtedly helped foster cultural acceptance of the practice. Contrarily, the modern-day age-of-consent laws are aimed to protect those under the legal age of consent from being sexually abused or mistreated. Accordingly, NAMBLA is often perceived as a front for the criminal sexual exploitation of children and opponents see it as merely a meeting place for pedophiles. NAMBLA, as an organization, only serves to make clear how the ethics of a practice are primarily dependent on their specific cultural relevance. While NAMBLA and its intentions may be considered unethical by modern standards, that does not make ancient Greek pederasty unethical, as the two operated in entirely

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



different historical periods with unique and separate cultural norms.

Wilde has not been the only notable person throughout history to speak in favor or defense of pederastic relations. Andrew Gide, French author and winner of the Nobel prize in literature in 1947, was an open advocate of pederasty, reflecting on his own experiences by saying:

I love boys with a sensual curiosity, a voluptuousness, a foolishness...to destroy the pederasty [within you] is to destroy you as well, your whole nature and personality...I think pederasty is a good thing, that such affection can spring up between man and boy to stir affectionate friendship where in each can find exaltation, protection, and challenge.<sup>75</sup>

Gide's quote reinforces much of what has already been discussed as being associated with pederasty: a sense of purity, innocence, and "sensual curiosity," rather than feelings of abuse or shame, which are traditionally associated with pedophilia. Gide also asserts that both man and boy gain "exaltation, protection, and challenge" from the relationship, indicating that the union between man and boy is both consensual and mutually beneficial.

Issues of pederasty have also appeared in the contemporary media, including in popular British television series *Queer as Folk* and in 2004 play-turned film *The History Boys*. *Queer as Folk* was a unique television series in that ran during modern times (2000-2005) and featured a pederastic relationship, an institution that is generally unfamiliar to the contemporary public. *The History Boys* also featured a pederastic relationship, one that takes place between a teacher and student in the context of a school setting. This pederastic portrayal is perhaps the most reminiscent of ancient Greek

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<sup>75</sup> Naomi Segal, "Andre Gide: Pederasty and Pedagogy," Oxford University Press, 1999.

pederasty because of its portrayal of pederastic love existing as a byproduct of a didactic setting. In this sense, the erotic relationship is integrated into the boy's education and the teacher, who functions as the pseudo-*erastes*, serves as both the intellectual mentor and dominant sexual partner. The appearance of pederastic relationships in modern times shows that the issue of pederasty is not simply an archaic practice that existed only in ancient Greece. Also, it shows that modern pederastic relationships can exist as consensual unions, thus distinguishing them from sexual abuse or pedophilia.

Many would argue that pedophilia and legal issues of sexual consent have been made aware to the public since the onset of the Catholic Church sex abuse scandals, which began receiving widespread public attention since the mid-1980s.<sup>76</sup> In the 2004 John Jay Report, which was based on a study of 10,667 allegations against 4,392 priests accused of engaging in sexual abuse of a minor, determined that around 81% of victims were male.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the study determined that over half of the victims were between the ages of 11 and 14, substantially under the legal age of sexual consent. To justify any sexual activity between an adult and a child between the ages of 11 and 14 would be nonsensical; it is clear that these cases are examples of sexual abuse, although the priest does resemble the adult *erastes* in that both are supposed to be intellectual, respectful, trustworthy, and wise. The sex abuse cases that have deeply troubled the Catholic church are clearly not examples of pederastic relationships; however, it is their prevalence and frequency over the last several decades that have brought issues of pedophilia into the public eye and exacerbated the negative and false associations of ancient Greek pederasty with pedophilia.

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<sup>76</sup> "Timeline—US Church sex scandal." BBC News. 7 September 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Agostino Bono. "John Jay Study Reveals Extent of Abuse Problem." Catholic News Service. <<http://www.americancatholic.org/news/clergysexabuse/johnjaycns.asp>>.

Through careful cultural and historical considerations, it is obvious that pederasty was an educational and social institution practiced by aristocrats in ancient Greece that is strictly different from modern-day examples of child sex abuse or pedophilia. Also, it is apparent through the quotations of historical literary figures such as Oscar Wilde and Andrew Gide that pederastic tendencies and desires existed past the times of ancient Greece. Similarly, media portrayals of pederasty, such as in *Queer as Folk* and *The History Boys* show that pederasty relationships exist in contemporary times and should not be automatically deemed as pedophilic simply because of the existence of an age disparity between the two partners.

## Conclusion

Historical analysis of pederasty and evidence of modern instances of pedophilia, such as the Catholic sex abuse cases, show that the two practices are distinctly different. It is both unfair and culturally ignorant to blindly associate ancient Greek pederasty with modern forms of pedophilia. Pederasty is a unique historical practice worthy of philosophical exploration, in that it was immensely integrated into both Greek social culture and its education system. This is clearly shown through both historical analysis of Greek pederasty in addition to analysis through ancient artwork and pieces of literature, such as Plato's *Symposium*. Pederasty is also of philosophical interest because of the many ethical debates associated with it, such as whether pederasty should be chaste or erotic, and how pederasty compares to male/female love.

Though most widely practiced in ancient Greece, pederasty is still relevant today, as shown by the existence of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). NAMBLA argues, like many ancient philosophers, that consensual man/boy relationships, which show similarities to pederastic relationships described throughout ancient Greek literature, have intrinsic value and beauty. NAMBLA loses credibility, however, by challenging modern-day age-of-consent laws, which aim only to protect youth. Both analysis of ancient historical pederasty and similar modern expressions show that it is the fundamental differences in man and boy that create such intense expressions of love. Whether the contrasting characteristics between man and boy or *erastes* and *eromenos* are age/youth, wisdom/naiveté, or stoicism/exuberance, or even a combination of all three, it is nonetheless polarity that drives the passion.

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Bank Teller, Farmers National Bank—Knox, PA	06/2007-08/2007

## Campus Activities/Service

Ballroom Dance Competition Team	01/2008-Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Competed at various ballroom and Latin dance competitions throughout the East coast</li></ul>	
THON Morale Committee Member	08/2008-05/2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assisted in organizing the largest student-run philanthropic event in the world, THON.</li></ul>	
Springfield THON Member	08/2007-05/2009
Schreyer Honors College Orientation Mentor	08/2008-05/2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mentored and advised new incoming students in the Schreyer Honors College</li></ul>	
University Symphonic Band	01/2008-05/2008

## Honors and Awards

Schreyer Honors College Academic Excellence Scholarship	08/2007-Present
George G. Pond Memorial Scholarship	08/2010-05/2011
John and Elizabeth Holmes Teas Scholarship	08/2008-05/2010
U.S. Marine Corps Scholastic Excellence Award	05/2007
College Board AP Scholar	05/2007
Rotary Club Amy Davis Scholarship Award	05/2007