SOME REFLECTIONS ON ANCIENT GREEK ATTITUDES TO CHILDREN AS REVEALED IN SELECTED LITERATURE OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA

by

DIANA de BROMHEAD

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SUPERVISOR: DR J.C. LAMPRECHT

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the ancient Greeks' attitudes to children during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The investigation is limited to literary sources in selected pre-Christian texts. Problems which might bias interpretation have been noted. Parent-child relationships, as revealed in literary examples of parental love and concern, are of particular interest.

Hazards affecting survival in early childhood, and factors which influenced attitudes regarding the fetus, abortion, exposure and infanticide are considered. Legal, political and socio-economic factors are amongst motivating forces.

Childhood experiences such as education, sport, pederasty, step-families, slaves and slavery, preparation for marriage, and deprivation due to war and environmental factors are also examined.

Ancient attitudes to children are compared with modern attitudes to children in similar situations prevailing in Western culture in the 21st century.

The findings reveal that basic human behaviour has changed little over the millennia; however, factors influencing attitudes have undergone some change as society evolved.

Key words:
Ancient Greeks
Attitudes
Childhood
Children
Deprivation
Exposure
Growing-up
Infanticide
Life and death
Love and affection
Parents
Slaves and slavery
Survival

DECLARATION

I, Diana de Bromhead, (ID No. 4704170076080 – Student No. 3025-353-5) declare that

SOME REFLECTIONS ON ANCIENT GREEK ATTITUDES TO CHILDREN AS REVEALED IN SELECTED LITERATURE OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed _____
(Mrs D de Bromhead)

(February) May 2010

To my Parents

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The original title for this dissertation was "Ancient Greco-Roman Attitudes to Child Abuse in the Pre-Christian Era".
Due to the paucity of ancient Greek primary sources on children *per se* the study was to also include ancient Rome.

However, the Departmental Higher Degrees Committee recommended narrowing the scope to either Greek or Roman literature and society, and further advised that the word "abuse" carries serious legal connotations and implications. Likewise post-modern terms such as homosexuality and lesbianism (intended for chapter sub-sections) should be used with caution.

In view of this shift in direction the title was changed to "Some Reflections on Ancient Greek Attitudes to Children as revealed in Selected Literature of the pre-Christian Era", with the focus mainly on parental attitudes to children.

The *polis* was "the dominant form of social and political organization in classical Greece"[1]. The focus of citizens of a *polis* was on the well-being of that state, and people were valued for their usefulness in attaining all aspects of the city-state's survival and security. The *poleis'* status declined when Alexander III the Great (356-323 BC)[2] expanded Greek territory. The concept of 'humanism' grew and people, including children, were then seen as individuals.

The choice of era was motivated by the desire to try to establish prevailing attitudes towards children prior to the influence of Christian principles. The encounter between Jesus and the children, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew (19: 14-15) and Mark (10: 14-16), leaves no doubt as to their status:

> "Let the children come to me, […]
> And so He embraced them,
> laid his hands upon them and blessed them." (Mark : Knox Trans. 2nd ed. 1956)

Children are not to be turned away, they have every right to be there too.

Under Constantine the Great (AD 306-337) Christianity became a protected religion, and "under Theodosius (AD 379-395) it became the official religion of the [Roman] empire"[3]. The Christian Emperor, Justinian, (6th century AD) compiled the *Digest of Roman Law*, which then provided the foundations for legal systems in most Romance-speaking countries[4]. Thus much of western Law is influenced by Christian precepts. However, the roots can be traced to an earlier period. Whilst Greek is not a Romance language, colonization spread Greek ideas and civilization "from the eastern shores of Spain to the very edge of the central Asian steppes"[5] - this migration of people had "the most profound cultural and political effects on the whole of the Mediterranean world". Greece fell under the eastern half of the Holy Roman Empire, or the Byzantine Empire, and must have influenced the basic foundations of Law. Susan Wiltshire[6] states that the "great contribution of Greek law to the West was political philosophy" and that "Athenian genius endures in such practices as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and trial by jury" and the right of appeal.

The current trend is towards the secular state, with "politically correct" countries banning any form of religious education in government schools, including prayer at Assembly. Britain went so far as to try to stop the singing of Christmas Carols and display of Nativity scenes. In years to come it will be interesting to observe whether and how this move to the secular affects the attitudes, values and ethics of people in those countries.

Never a day passes without the mass media reporting yet another heinous crime against (women and) children. Indeed, these crimes are so frequent and the incidence so widespread that we are in danger of becoming desensitized to the horrific suffering which occurs globally in most if not all cultures, and appears to be on the increase. This leads to the question: What kind of creature is modern man? Is he no better than his ancient Greco-Roman counterpart, who at first glance could be labelled violent, cruel, heartless, licentious …? Lacking any form of statistics for the pre-Christian era, it is impossible to judge whether, in proportion to population numbers, 21st century society perpetrates such crimes to a greater or lesser extent than the Ancients.

But here we encounter an obstacle: although the European / Western model of civilization can be traced, via the Renaissance and ancient Rome, to its roots in ancient Greece, it has evolved over the millennia. Behaviour or practices which modern Western society now categorizes as crimes or abuse / abusive may not have been so regarded by the Ancients,

and to apply modern standards to them is to judge and condemn. As Michael Crawford[7] warns:

" … one must always be careful not to impose modern categories or preconceptions on a very alien world. This caution is particularly important where our suggested explanation involves the attribution of motives; the thought structure of the ancients was very different from our own."

Is there anything to be learnt from expressions such as "history repeats itself", "to learn from one's mistakes" and "with hindsight", which all point to the past? According to Richard Saller[8] the "value of historical knowledge is that it gives us a sense of perspective to understand and assess our own condition and values". Whilst many today question the relevance of history, over the years scholars have stressed its importance. Amongst these, Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), in his Introduction to The civilization of the Renaissance in Italy[9] refers to "a civilization which is the mother of our own, and whose influence is still at work among us". Gilbert Highet[10] maintains that "[I]n civilization as in human life, the present is the child of the past" and that "classical culture is an essential and active part of our civilization", and Lorna Hardwick[11] echoes these sentiments, claiming that "classical culture will continue to be a significant strand in cultural history".

Hardwick[12] gives a very brief outline of the "Reception Theories" of Jauss, Iser and Gadamer, whose work appeared in the 1960s – 1970s, also explaining a fourth approach: "the concept of 'critical distance' which uses the distance in time, place and culture that exists between ancient and modern versions of a text in order to enable the reader / spectator to move outside the limits of his or her own society and cultural horizons and thus to see these more clearly and more critically." Further, in giving the seven key assumptions which frame her discussion, she states that "… Reception of classical material is an index of cultural continuity and change and therefore has a value beyond its role in classical studies."

In view of the foregoing, it is hoped that this excursion into the past is justified.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIMS

There is a bewildering wealth of scholarship on almost every aspect of ancient Greek civilization, one exception being children. It is hoped that the current study of selected ancient texts of the pre-Christian era (5th – 1st centuries BC) may reveal relevant aspects

of ancient Greek attitudes to children, what factors came into play, e.g. legal rights, moral / ethical and religious issues, and how the Ancients responded to behaviour which caused harm to children. In particular, the focus will be on parent-child relationships. Current issues of child abuse indicate a widespread escalation of this scourge on modern society, and prompt the query whether our (supposedly) Christian-based attitudes and values are very different to those of the Ancients prior to the influence of Christianity. To answer this question, comparisons will be drawn between ancient and modern situations, as stated in the Abstract.

LIMITATIONS ON RESEARCH

1. The period under investigation is limited to the Classical (480-323 BC) and Hellenistic (323-31BC) eras, rather than to a single period.

2. The investigation will focus mainly on the Greek elite classes in Athens, since much of the information available relates to that city state.

3. Due to restrictions on length of a dissertation of limited scope, evidence is limited to literary sources (i.e. other possible sources such as archaeological finds like toys, Vase-paintings, stelai, inscriptions, mosaics, etc. will not be considered, as other researchers have already examined them). "Selected literature" implies a limited selection of primary texts rather than extensive. Choice of specific texts was motivated by subject matter – children, their place in society, how they were treated …

4. Sources quoted will be taken as authentic and not subject to verification. The question whether an author's original intention and / or meaning of the text have been lost in trans-mission and translation falls outside the scope of this study.

DEFINITIONS

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary[13] defines **child** (pl. **children**) as :

"a young human being below the age of full physical development; a son or daughter of any age; the descendants of a family or people. – Derivatives: **childhood**."

Italian is a little more specific, using *bambino/a* for a child from birth to about 6 years old, and *fanciullo/a* for the period 6 – 13 years old. Likewise, childhood is *infanzia* from birth to 12 years old, or *fanciullezza* from 6 – 13 years old.[14]

In French, *enfant* denotes child, with *bambin, -ine* used for a young child aged about 2 – 4 years, and *enfance* covering the period from birth to adolescence.[15]

Thus we see that even in modern Europe there are variations in the definition of 'child' and 'childhood'.

The ancient Greeks used several terms to distinguish the stages of a child's development, more particularly for boys. Marc Kleijwegt[16] (p.XI) points out that adolescence, as we understand it, is a modern (post Industrial Revolution) phenomenon, and that ancient society tended to "expect[ing] children and adolescents to behave as adults" (p.XII) (albeit "an adult with defects"!) (p.XIV). He distinguishes modern adolescents from pre-industrial youth, who often "performed adult tasks from an early age onwards" (p.XIII) whilst being considered as inferiors by adults (p.XIII). Further, he explains that it was not common practice for the ancients to judge children on their own merits (p.XIV). Kleijwegt sets the age limits of twelve and twenty for adolescence, therefore childhood must be from birth to twelve years.

Mark Golden[17] takes a close look at the "vocabulary of childhood and its stages", referring to an extensive list by Aristophanes of Byzantium and the seven stages of life (each a span of 7 years) as derived from Hippocrates. Golden settles for the meaning of 'children' as in '*paides'*: "boys before their admission to their deme at the age of seventeen or eighteen, girls before their marriage".
This definition will be applied to this study, though it may also be necessary to take the meaning of 'child' as 'offspring' in some circumstances.

'Attitude' may be understood variously as: affections / feelings / ethos / morals / outlook on life, and many other nuances.[18] For the purposes of this study, 'attitude' will be taken as the way in which the ancient Greeks regarded children and their value to, and place in, society, and consequently, how they treated children in various circumstances. Ada Cohen[19] points out that these attitudes "have implications for the entire life course".

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms[20] defines 'myths' as "fictional stories containing deeper truths, expressing collective attitudes to fundamental matters of life, death, divinity, and existence (sometimes deemed to be 'universal')," their original mode of existence being via oral transmission. Ancient Greek epics are mainly based on variations of such myths, and in the absence of hard evidence give some clue as to "collective attitudes …" prevailing at that time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sources of evidence are primary ancient Greek texts in English translation. The authors selected include Homer for mythological stories, Plato and Aristotle for a political, legal and ethical viewpoint, playwrights such as Euripides for social comment, Herodotus and Thucydides for a historical background, and Plutarch for information on the laws of Solon and Pericles.

An analytical, objective and empathic approach will be taken when studying the selected ancient texts, as well as critical discourse analysis. In particular, the interpretation and /or explanation of these texts will focus on attitudes revealed as well as clues as to what influences motivated particular attitudes towards ancient Greek children and matters concerning them. Conclusions will be drawn from what is apparent in the texts (directly or indirectly) and what determined those attitudes, also taking into account the role of genre determinants, for example Tragedy reflects social comment whilst Historiography is more factual. Parallels will be drawn between literary fiction and ancient and modern realities.

Referencing

Several translations of ancient texts were consulted, ranging from the late 19th century (Plato's *Symposium*: Jowett 1875 – Rouse 1950; Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*: Marchant 1891 - Warner 1954; Aristotle's *The Nichomachean Ethics*: Ross 1925 – Irwin 1985) to the early 21st century (Hesiod's *Theogony* – Most 2006).

Referencing of primary texts – for the sake of consistency and clarity, all references will be given in Arabic numerals even though the original translation may use Roman numerals. Thus, for example, a reference to Aristotle's *Politics* (Book VII. xvi, §15. 1335b)[21] will be given as (Book 7.16, 1335b15).

Herodotus' *The Histories* (trans. de Sélincourt) and Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Warner) were both published by Penguin Books in 1954, and again in 1972 with the addition of an Introduction to both works, resulting in a change to page numbering. References to these two works will be given as 1954 for the first edition, and 1972 to denote the later edition.

To avoid confusion where references include lines, these will be denoted as 'line/s' and the page number preceded by 'p.' – for example: "in *Iliad* Book 22 (p.558, lines 588-593) …"

Research Parameters

At the outset it is acknowledged that there is a dearth of primary sources which refer directly to children *per se* and therefore it will be necessary to consider literary texts from a broad spectrum of genres such as Biography, Drama, Epic Poetry, Ethics, Historiography, and fields such as Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Politics and Religion.

Further, it is understood that writers have their own agendas – historians such as Herodotus[22] and Thucydides[23] state their intentions in recording events, and playwrights aim for dramatic effect and pathos – therefore information gleaned from such sources will be considered as "social commentary" and not necessarily as "hard evidence". As Emilio Gabba[24] cautions: "one must investigate the readership or audience for which it was intended, the aims of the author and the means used to convey his thought and organise his text".

Inherited "reception" will inevitably influence ideas. However, every effort will be made to present facts impartially, and to avoid imposing postmodern western views on an ancient society.

Sources analyzed and accompanying problems

What information can be extracted with reference to the Ancients' attitudes to children? Primary ancient Greek texts in English translation will be studied bearing this question in mind, paying particular attention to prevailing influences. By drawing comparisons between ancient and modern attitudes, this research will show whether the motivation of attitudes has changed over the millennia, and give a historical perspective to current motives and values.

Although Homer lived considerably earlier (8th century BC) than the Classical period, his profound impact on ancient (and modern) Greek thought and education dictates inclusion of his poems. Allowing for the process of "Reception" one can be confident that he influenced the attitudes of those living in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Plato, for example, quotes Homer in *The Republic*, Book 3 (388e-391b) and Book 4 (440c-441e). Indeed, C.A. Trypanis[24] claims that Homer has been taught in Greek schools without interruption since the

6th century BC, and boasts that "this surely constitutes the longest and perhaps most illustrious educational tradition in all the Western world".

The tragedians Aeschylus (525/4-456 BC), Sophocles (ca.496-406 BC) and Euripides (ca.485-406 BC) all lived during the period under investigation, but with varying background influences: Aeschylus had military experience (battle of Marathon 490), Sophocles came from a wealthy family and had a public career, whilst Euripides appears to have been an intellectual recluse[25]. It is reasonable to expect that these varied backgrounds would impact on their outlook on life and their accompanying social commentary.

Primary texts that include children in the plot, and also make reference to issues such as slavery, exposure, *et cetera*, have been selected. Sifakis[26] makes an interesting observation on the typecasting of children in tragedy, pointing out that they are all "in a state of great misfortune, which has struck their parents and thus involves them directly. They are often in great danger and may lose their lives […] helpless persons of very young and tender age" clinging to their mother like a "chick taking refuge under the wings of its mother".

Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is concerned with child-sacrifice, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* highlights the issue of exposure, whilst Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Trojan Women* both include scenes depicting parental love and concern. Alcestis, dying, worries about the children she must leave behind, whilst Andromache and Hecuba grieve for their son / grandson. Again, in Homer's *Iliad*, Andromache laments that her son will be taken as a slave, and Hephaestus refers to his mother wanting to hide him because he was a cripple.

Granted such examples of behaviour by fictitious or mythical characters may only reflect an element of reality, and cannot be taken as proof, but it is generally accepted that authors use their work as an opportunity for social commentary. As Moses Hadas[27] points out: "Instead of representing men as they should be, as Sophocles is reported to have said, Euripides (485-406 BC) represented men as they are." Likewise, Emilio Gabba[28] comments that Euripides' tragedies "closely reflect human reality … social changes and the shifts in public opinion".

The Greek philosophers, Plato (*c*.429-347 BC) and his student Aristotle (384-322 BC) are

regarded as amongst the greatest thinkers of all time in the Western world, their theories having had a profound influence on political and ethical thought. Plato's dialogues reveal the influences of other philosophers such as the Pythagoreans and Socrates, whilst Aristotle's works "cover every branch of philosophy and science known in his day".[29] Their concepts of the ideal state include all aspects of raising children, commencing with the marriage of prospective parents through to education and sport and moral influences on children. These topics (discussed mainly in Plato's *Laws* and *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*) are of particular interest for the purposes of this study.

Secondary texts have been selected for possible background information covering a broad spectrum of issues relating to children in ancient Greece, from abortion and education to slavery and child-brides. Amongst these, Mark Golden's Children and childhood in classical Athens (1990) is of particular interest (including a chapter on children in the household and in the community and their interaction with the extended family and strangers). Golden's work serves as a point of reference for this research, which looks at similar issues - the focus, however, is on parental love and concern, and on determining what shaped the attitudes of the Ancients to children. Bibliographies were scrutinized for additional leads.[30]

Each and every field of research into the sources of historical evidence has its own set of particular difficulties. Archaeology, for example, "lends itself to misunderstanding",[31] and every stage of the excavation and interpretation process is subject to "human error", not least in chronology.

When reading ancient texts it is important to be acutely aware of the possible pitfalls characteristic of the various literary genres, in addition to the cautions of Crawford and Gabba mentioned above.

Thus, with Historiography, apart from the personal 'agenda' of each individual historian, one must add other factors such as plagiarism, invention and outright lies. These and many other 'sins' were outlined by B. Perrin in 1897, in his excellent address "The Ethics and Amenities of Greek Historiography".[32] But he also explains that "Greek historiography was rooted and grounded in poetry and mythography" and "was almost wholly oral". Other factors included encomium and self-praise, fictitious narrative and the practice of using set speeches as "literary embellishment" (not to deceive but to enliven). In addition, ancient historians were

often at variance in their facts. Gabba[33] also points to other problems, such as the possibility of palaeographical mistakes in the course of copying ancient texts in the Middle Ages, and earlier.

(Of course, the same caution applies to modern history, which is recorded on a daily basis by the mass media, and is readily accessible in archives. In any conflict, one needs to study reports from both sides to get a balanced view; then there is misinformation and disinformation - particularly in politics. The popular press is prone to sensationalism, gossip, and fabrication - a recent case being a reporter charged with inventing a story about an African child – the child did not exist.)

Another factor to consider is safety, or caution. Frederick Ahl, in his paper "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome",[34] highlights the "profound contrast" between ancient and modern audiences, the difference in perspectives resulting in "a radical misunderstanding of ancient authors". This applies particularly to writers who, for their own safety, extensively used rhetorical "figured" speech. Amongst these, he suggests, Homer is "the most frequently cited exemplar of figured speech". Ahl cites Aristotle's explanation as to why the "oblique speaker" is feared:

> Not those among our victims, enemies, or adversaries who say everything *forthrightly*, but those who are gentle, ironic, up to everything. Since you cannot see when they are close, you can never see when they are far away. (*Rhetoric* 1382B)

The subject of Ethics is a veritable minefield, not least in "linguistic and cultural differences"[35] which become apparent in translation. Countless studies have been undertaken on the great ancient philosophers, with "controversy amongst scholars". Perhaps the most important fact to remember is that pre-Platonic Greece had a radically different value system, "lacking in the notions of will, of duty, and of obligation".[36] The heroic code was based on character and a "virtuous disposition",[37] with the focus on courage, honour and "virtuous intention", qualities required by Homeric society and its warriors for survival. The concept of individual personal responsibility, important to Western philosophy, was not emphasized in their view of merit and responsibility.[38] They further distinguished between 'mistake' and 'moral error'. (For example, Patroclus' ghost refers to the death of

Amphidamas' son, claiming: "I was a fool – I never meant to kill him – quarrelling over a dice game.").[39]

Evolving via the city-state or *polis*, ethical concepts developed as man developed, reflecting the needs of society.[40] Adkins refers to the "muddle-headedness of ordinary values" and the "unsurpassed confusion of standards" which existed, including at Athens.

(In centuries to come, future generations may well look back at 20th-21st century man and wonder at his "muddle-headedness" and "confusion" in matters of ethics, such as test-tube babies, cloning, euthanasia, organ trafficking, global warming and other environmental issues ...)

These are just a few of the many obstacles and pitfalls which await the researcher.

Literary Review

Due to the paucity of child-specific primary texts, and therefore use of the same limited sources, one often finds the same passages quoted again and again by various authors of secondary texts, although with a different slant depending on the researcher's purpose. Whilst most writers draw the same conclusions (for example, the written evidence that abortion and exposure were practiced is undeniable), not all look for influences or motivation of attitudes. Many writers (such as Bowra, Fantham *et al.*, Garnsey, Golden, Hubbard, Pomeroy and Walker, to name but a few) use other resources such as archaeological finds, ceramic-ware, and inscriptions on stelai, for additional evidence. Thus of the many books and articles consulted, a large number cover the same ground with similar outcomes. In many instances, only a fraction of the text (ranging from a few lines to a few pages) was specifically relevant to this investigation.

The Family in Classical Greece (1968) by W.K. Lacey was previewed in *The American Journal of Philology*, July 1970, giving a detailed summary of the material. The book is a study of the Greek *oikos* and its place in society from all aspects: sociological, political, religious, economic and legal, moving from Homeric society to democratic Athens, with the processes involved and the ensuing changes in status. The role of children is essential to an *oikos*, since its future survival depends on them, and this is of particular interest for the purposes of this study on ancient Greek attitudes.

The abandonment of unwanted babies is the subject of John Boswell's work, The Kindness of Strangers (1988). Reviewed in the Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society in 2004,[41] this 'influential' book challenges the previously widespread held view that exposure was an important means of population control in pre-modern societies, "thereby implying that abandonment was tantamount to infanticide". Boswell traces the history of child abandonment in Western Europe from late antiquity to the Renaissance – unfortunately, since his point of departure is imperial Rome, he does not provide direct evidence for ancient Greece. However, he does discuss (pp 80-86) the possible influence of early Greek literature known to 'educated' Romans, such as Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics* (in which he objects to Plato's family communism), and "in which abandonment occurred as a moral issue".

Mark Golden's book, Children and Childhood in Classical Athens (1990), was highly acclaimed by reviewers,[42] all of whom agree on Golden's contribution to the social history of the family in ancient Athens, even though his "main obstacle is a lack of evidence". Golden's in-depth study covers most aspects of childhood, not only within the household but also in the community, including interaction with the extended family members and outsiders, and participation or attendance at public events. Plato, Aristotle and Euripides are amongst the ancient authors consulted, and reveal attitudes and feelings in addition to factual information. However, Golden comments (p.4) that "the Greeks of the classical period were generally not nostalgic for childhood" and that it was "a privilege of the gods … to pass through childhood quickly", which implies that in ancient times childhood was perhaps not considered the idyllic state which modern man is inclined to attribute to it. This book is certainly a major resource for anyone looking into ancient family history and the socialization of Athenian children.

Marc Kleijwegt's book Ancient Youth : The ambiguity of youth and the absence of adolescence in Greco-Roman society (1991) was reviewed in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences,* July 1996.[43] He first summarizes anthropological theories concerning adolescence in primitive societies such as Polynesia – the reviewer comments that one "is never certain if the author is comparing the modern and ancient world" and refers to other ambiguities, suggesting that Chapter One should have been made an appendix. However, Kleijwegt does give interesting insight into the differences between ancient youth and modern "Teens" (a post-industrial concept), setting age limits of twelve and twenty years

old for this period. He also points out that ancient society tended to expect adult behaviour from children, and looks at both Greek and Roman youth and education.
Peter Garnsey's book Food and Society in Classical Antiquity (1999) was reviewed in *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, January 2001, and in *The Historian*, December 2002. It is described as a compact manual on food, which builds on Garnsey's "earlier work on Greco-Roman systems of food production, distribution and patterns of eating in times of relative plenty and of want". Chapters in this volume cover diet, food and economy, food crisis and malnutrition, forbidden foods, and food and the family. Topics such as the centrality of cereals, the divide between rich and poor, urban and rural distribution, famine and shortage, disease and effects on growth, are discussed. Interesting aspects emerge, such as the attitudes to food requirements prevailing in a patriarchal society. Food is not only essential for survival: a poor diet can lead to physical abnormalities (which could mean rejection of a newborn infant), and in times of food crisis women and young children were at high risk; but there are also social, cultural and religious aspects which could affect attitudes. Thus Garnsey's book was an important source of information for this study.

"The Ethics and Amenities of Greek Historiography" by B. Perrin (1897), is an excellent source on the 'sins' of ancient historians with regard to 'facts'. Perrin traces the long practice ("so long as to have become a literary tradition") of critical depreciation of a predecessor – historians accused each other outright of plagiarism, *klepticism*, falsehood, invention, claims of *autopsy*; their "lack of agreement" and "acrimonious correction of each other" all added to the ethical shortcomings.

A book edited by Baird and Rosenbaum contains twelve essays on the abortion debate, a subject also dealt with by Gorman who looks at Christian, Jewish and pagan attitudes in the Greco-Roman world, whilst Riddle investigates contraception in antiquity. Cameron looks at regulations and attitudes regarding exposure of infants by the Ancients. Homosexuality in classical Athens is dealt with by Cohen, Golden and Toohey, Hindley, Hubbard and Karras. Aspects of slavery are considered by Golden and Starr, who cautions on misinterpretation and erroneous views which "warp our understanding of ancient slavery"; Wood investigates class relations in Greek and Roman antiquity, whilst Garnsey tackles non-slave labour. Education appears in a wide variety of studies ranging from ethics to drama and the role of women; Clarke covers higher education in the ancient world. Source books such as those edited by Fantham *et al.* (written and visual primary sources presented within their historical

and cultural context in chronological order show the "development of ancient societies and the changing social conditions … of women"), Kraemer (on women's religious life), Lefkowitz and Fant (a collection of some 270 documents in translation regarding women in ancient Greece and Rome, grouped by topic and chronologically) and Pomeroy's historical studies on women, are invaluable for information on a wide range of subjects, including references to childhood (for example, an entry in Lefkowitz & Fant[44] gives a surviving fragment of Erinna's *Distaff* which refers to playing by the sea, and "dolls in our bedrooms"), and serve as a good starting point for further investigation.

Format

Each chapter will be treated as a complete unit, with a summary of attitudes and reactions to the issues as derived from the texts. All literature consulted will be listed in the full Bibliography.

Chapter 1 will take a brief look at the historical context and environmental influences that may have shaped certain attitudes, with particular reference to Creation and the value of children. A few literary texts which illustrate parental love and concern will be discussed.

Chapter 2 will look at Life (of children in particular) and various threats to survival, such as abortion, exposure, infanticide and sacrifice. Some texts which may reveal attitudes to death by these methods will be considered.

Chapter 3 will examine various aspects of growing-up and experiences that may be encountered, such as education and sport, child labour, pederasty and rape, and marriage. Selected texts describing such experiences will be examined.

The Conclusion will review the information gleaned from primary texts and summarize what these reveal concerning ancient attitudes to children, drawing comparisons with attitudes currently prevailing in the Western world.

CHAPTER 1 – Historical and cultural context

This chapter briefly looks at historical and environmental circumstances such as warfare, famine and disease, which impacted directly on the population, as well as early thoughts on the creation of the universe and life itself, which could have had a bearing on the formation of certain attitudes towards children. The focus is on parental love and concern, and how this was displayed by the Ancients.

Historical Context

The Greek 'Classical' period extends from the end of the Persian Wars to the death of Alexander the Great, that is approximately 480 – 323 BC. The period enjoyed relative peace and prosperity, which allowed great advances in intellectual and cultural endeavour, especially in the fields of literature (tragedy, comedy, historiography), philosophical inquiry (by men such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), and the visual arts. This pioneering activity was centred in Athens.[45]

Apart from these cultural advances, note must be taken of significant events which had a direct impact on politics and society, and the reactions and attitudes of the populace. A brief chronological look at the highlights of the period reveals that wars and skirmishes were an ongoing factor.

Conflict with Persia:
480 Acropolis destroyed by Persians
479 Battles of Plataea and Mycale – Persia defeated

Rise of Athenian Empire:
478-477 Formation of Delian League
462.461 Pericles: democratic reforms in Athens
459 Athens wins Megara from Sparta – increase in rivalry
458 Athens defeats Corinth
457 Athens conquers Boeotia
451 Citizenship Law of Pericles
c.448 Athenian Empire fully established
447 Athenian defeat at Coronea begins the decline of the Empire
445 The Thirty Years Peace declared between Athens and Sparta

Peloponnesian War:
429 Death of Pericles (Plague at Athens)
431.404 Athens suffers a number of defeats in battle
405 Athenian fleet destroyed at Aegospotami, Thrace
404 Athens surrenders to Sparta

Supremacy of Sparta:
404.371 Sparta fights other Greek states and Persia
371 Defeated at Leuctra by former ally, Thebes
362 Battle of Mantinea – end of Spartan influence in Greece

Rise of Macedonian Empire:
359 Philip II takes Macedonian throne – expands his realm
338 Philip defeats Athens and its allies at Chaeronea
336 Philip assassinated – succeeded by son, Alexander
335.330 Alexander extends Macedonian rule: razes Thebes; expedition against Persia; victorious in battles of River Granicus, Issus and Gaugamela: Persian power crushed; moves further into Asia.
323 Alexander dies in Babylon (successors carve-up his Empire).[46]

How was the civilian population affected? In his account of the Pentecontaetia (the 'Fifty-Year Period') 479-435 BC, Thucydides[47] relates how the Athenians, "as soon as their land was free from foreign occupation, began to bring back their children and wives and what property they had left from the places where they had hidden them away. They also started on the rebuilding of their city …" Similarly, at the outbreak of war in 431 BC when the Peloponnesian invasion was expected, we learn that[48] "The Athenians took the advice he [Pericles] gave them and brought in from the country their wives and children and all their household goods, taking down even the wood-work on the houses themselves. Their sheep and cattle they sent across to Euboea and the islands off the coast. But the move was a difficult experience for them, since most of them had been always used to living in the country." Clearly children were valued if they had to be hidden and protected from the enemy.

Children featured in the settlement agreement between the Spartans and Argives (Battle of Mantinea 418-7 BC)[49]. The terms included:
"The Argives shall give back to the Orchomenians their children […]
If the Spartans have any children in their power, they shall give them back each to his own city." These accounts give some idea of the dislocation of people caused by war, and especially of children who were named specifically in the terms of settlement.

During the Spartan invasion of Attica which began in 431 BC, for example, the Athenians relied on naval supremacy to "maintain food supplies to the city of Athens" whilst the Spartans "returned each spring to wreak havoc on the countryside"[50]. Their permanent fort at Decelea enabled them to observe Athens and to "prevent cultivation of fields even near the

long walls" causing the city to become "completely dependent on imported foodstuffs". In 429 BC there was a plague epidemic which "broke out behind the overcrowded long walls of Athens" where presumably the farming community had taken shelter and swelled the city's numbers. Deprivation, hunger and disease followed, with a loss of manpower and resources.

Herodotus[51] tells that when the Persians took the Ionian towns on the mainland, their commanders' threats were carried out: "the best-looking boys were chosen for castration and made into eunuchs; the handsomest girls were dragged from their homes and sent to Darius' court". In addition to acquiring slave labour, abducting children was apparently considered an effective means of inflicting harm on an enemy, which indicates that children were valued by the family (albeit only for their future contribution in terms of work and procreation).

The Hellenistic period followed, from 323 - 31 BC, which saw the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and complete Roman domination of the Mediterranean world. The focus shifted from Athens to other cultural centres, such as Pergamum and Alexandria. Magnificent new cities were created, with palaces and public buildings. There were developments in philosophy and the arts (sculpture, wall painting and mosaics), and advances in scientific fields such as astronomy, mathematics and geography[52].

The natural environment was the dominant force on the lives of the Ancients, with geography, climate and resources having a direct influence on the development of society[53]. The self-sufficient *polis* (pl. *poleis*) or city-state became the main feature of settlement during this era[54]. "Warfare was endemic to the Greek states", they were "not only defensive, but also aggressive and acquisitive"; (failure could mean loss of territory, famine). The inhospitable landscape, scarcity of cultivable land and isolated nature of each *polis* "prescribed a certain limit on the number of citizens". The economy was based on agriculture, with the land "being owned and worked by the citizens for themselves and their families", and children experienced or endured the same conditions as adults. With population growth the land could not support the additional mouths to feed, and this led to Greek colonization[55].

The possible influences of warfare and environment on attitudes to children will be considered in Chapter 2.

Attitudes to Creation / Life

In Hesiod's (c.700 BC)[56] succession poem, *Theogony* (simultaneously a theogony and a cosmogony), various members of the pantheon are associated with particular characteristics. Totally lacking any scientific information, this was a philosophical attempt to explain the creation of the known world and certain phenomena, as well as all living species, and why things are as they are.

The first generation beings are Chaos (abyss, confusion), Tartarus (deepest region of the underworld), Eros (love, desire), and Gaia (earth – primordial element) who is a mother-goddess. This attribute of "mother" / "fertility" is echoed in the Homeric hymn *To Earth, Mother of All* [57]:

1 I shall sing of well-formed Earth, mother of all
2 and oldest of all, who nourishes all things living on land. …
5 O mighty one, you are the source of fair children and goodly fruit,
6 and on you it depends to give life to, or take it away from,
7 mortal men. …
13 Their sons glory in youthful glee
14 and their daughters with cheerful hearts in flower-dances
15 play and frisk over soft flowers of the field. …

Lines 5 and 6 are of particular note, as the poet declares that a supreme being ('mighty one') is the source of 'fair children' and has the power to both 'give life' and 'take it' – that is, has power over Life and Death, implying that mortal man does not have the right to take life. This hymn in praise of mother Earth also carries a sense of respect for Creation and things greater than mortal man, and acknowledges children and nourishment amongst her many gifts to man – gifts received with gratitude.
Lines 13 to 15 paint a picture of an idyllic, carefree childhood – perhaps the poet's heartfelt wish that all children should enjoy an age of innocence.

These concepts may not have been widely held at the time, indeed they may have been unique to the poet, but a seed was sown. Whilst these poems are considerably earlier than the Classical period, the ideas expressed may have had some influence (Ovid's poem *The Metamorphoses* echoes Hesiod's *Theogony*) on the philosophers who sought to establish ethical thought.
The philosopher Empedocles (*c*.492-432 BC) insisted "that it is a universal law *(nomimon),* valid for everyone not to kill living things *(to empsukhon)*"[58] – presumably applying this to both humans and animals. (Philosophers held conflicting ideas in regard to animals and

rational beings - the Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans denying justice to animals, whilst Porphyry and Theophrastus were in favour, and Pythagoras' belief in incarnation led to a respect for all forms of life[59].)

In his chapter on 'Anarchy and contracts between rational beings', Richard Sorabji[60] looks at the Stoic and Epicurean denial of justice to animals on the grounds that it is not possible to enter into a contract with them since they lack reason. This argument leads to "the difficulty of how justice is to be extended to children who cannot make contracts". Sorabji states that if a father did not recognize a child as his own, Athenian law allowed him to kill his own child within the first nine days of life[61].

Hermarchus (3rd century BC) deemed expediency and the process of *oikeiôsis* (Porphyry *Abstinence* 1.7.1) as reasons "for the introduction of laws against homicide". Sorabji comments that we should not be shocked at the Ancients' lack of protection for children since "[T]he US Supreme Court recognized children as persons under the Bill of Rights only in 1967"[62].

Literary examples of parental love and concern

It is a widely documented fact that, in nature, most creatures instinctively protect and nurture their young – mammals especially so, and of these 'man' is the superior being, endowed with rationality and soul.

Aristotle (384-322 BC), in considering 'Friendship' (The Nichomachean Ethics 8.1), observes thus:

> "It seems to be implanted by nature in the feelings of the parent for the offspring, and the offspring for the parent, not only in men but also in birds, and the greater number of animals, and in members of the same species towards each other; most of all amongst men; wherefore we praise those who love mankind."

Further, in 8.8, he says:

> "But friendship seems to consist in loving, more than in being loved. This is seen in the case of mothers, who delight in loving; for some mothers give their children to others to be reared, and continue to love them, since they know them, but do not seek their love in return, if both

> are not possible. Enough for them if they see their children prospering;
> they love even though the children, on account of ignorance, render
> none of those services which are seemly towards a mother."[63]

Aristotle, then, is confirming this instinctive need to protect offspring, even to the extent that some mothers must allow others to rear their children to give them a better chance of survival and prosperity.

On the other hand, in his *Politics* 1335b19[64] Aristotle states: "let the law be to nourish nothing that is defective" (translated by Barker[65] as: "There should certainly be a law to prevent the rearing of deformed children").

Aristotle represents historical reality, whilst Homer uses myth (defined earlier) to weave stories about the immortals and their interaction with man. Homer's epics were used for educational purposes, and many of the fictitious situations encountered by his mythical characters have a parallel in reality – for example, rejection of deformed or disabled people, kidnapping and rape, have been known throughout the millennia.

Herodotus[66] gives an example of rejection: "Amphion, a member of this clan, had a lame daughter, Labda, whom none of the Bacchiadae was willing to marry, so she was taken by Eetion, the son of Echecrates …" (she later bore a perfectly healthy son, Cypselus).

There are several stories about Hephaestus, the powerful Olympian god who was master of the element of fire, including various explanations for his physical deformity – he was lame. Two versions appear in the *Iliad* [67]: according to one, Zeus and Hera were quarrelling, Hephaestus took his mother's side and Zeus then grasped him by the foot and threw him down from Olympus; in the other, Hephaestus was born lame and being ashamed his mother threw him down from Olympus[68].

In the first version, (*Iliad*, Book I, lines 684-716 : 97) Hephaestus tries to comfort "his loving mother" (line 689) and refers to her as "dear as you are" (line 707), passes a cup to "his loving mother's hands" (line 705) and says he "would be shattered" (line 709) if Zeus beats her. From this we get the impression of a loving relationship between mother and son. Hephaestus goes on to remind Hera of a previous occasion:

710 “It’s hard to fight the Olympian strength for strength.
You remember the last time I rushed to your defense?
He seized my foot, he hurled me off the tremendous threshold
and all day long I dropped, I was dead weight and then,
when the sun went down, down I plunged on Lemnos,
little breath left in me. But the mortals there
soon nursed a fallen immortal back to life.”

This account gives the impression of a father who cannot control his anger and, in modern parlance, takes it out on the child. Alas, a character-type still all too frequently found in society today, and the oft-repeated scene of a child trying to help protect his / her mother, and suffering physical harm as a result.

In the second version (*Iliad*, Book 18, lines 459-473 : 480), Hephaestus explains:

461 “ ….. Thetis saved my life
when the mortal pain came on me after my great fall,
thanks to my mother’s will, that brazen bitch,
she wanted to hide me – because I was a cripple.
What shattering anguish I’d have suffered then
if Thetis had not taken me to her breast, Eurynome too, …..

472 And no one knew. Not a single god or mortal,
only Thetis and Eurynome knew – they saved me.”

Hephaestus refers to his mother in very uncomplimentary terms and accuses her of throwing him out of Olympus because she was ashamed of him as he was crippled – this would suggest that he was born with his disability rather than being injured as a result of his fall. Hera’s motive could have been shame. One other possibility, unlikely perhaps, is that Hera wanted to spare her son a future being taunted and spurned by the other gods (a sad but true fact that disabled people are often discriminated against by unthinking able-bodied people) and so threw him out, expecting him to die as a result.

The contradictions of the two accounts are not of concern here – only the attitudes of the parents to their offspring. In neither case is there any mention of the parents trying to

discover what had happened to him. Hephaestus is obviously grateful to the goddesses Thetis and Eurynome for showing compassion, despite his disablilty, who cared for him for nine years – an example of adults showing concern for another's child.

Later, in Book 21, lines 369-409 : 530-1, Hera and Hephaestus work together, with the god of fire taking on the river god, Xanthus. In this account, Hera's appeal indicates a good relationship with her son, regardless of his deformity.

376 " … quickly cried to the god of fire, her own dear son,
"To arms, my child – god of the crooked legs!"

The detailed description of the magnificent shield fashioned by Hephaestus for Achilles (*Iliad*, Book 18 : 486-487) includes a vineyard scene:

662 "girls and boys, their hearts leaping in innocence,
bearing away the sweet ripe fruit in wicker baskets.
And there among them a young boy plucked at his lyre,"

and a dancing circle:

693 "Here young boys and girls, ….. danced and danced …..
698 the girls were crowned with a bloom of fresh garlands,"

- scenes which suggest a carefree childhood and youth, and very similar to the description given in the Homeric hymn *To Earth, Mother of All* (lines 13-15). This recurring image is perhaps an indication of an awareness that, ideally, children should be allowed to enjoy an innocent childhood.

Homer gives us a touching cameo in Book 6 of the *Iliad* [69], where Hector takes leave of Andromache and Astyanax as he sets off to battle and his duel with Ajax. He reaches for his son, but the child is terrified by his armour:

562 "… And his loving father laughed,
his mother laughed as well, and glorious Hector,
quickly lifting the helmet from his head,
set it down on the ground, fiery in the sunlight,
and raising his son he kissed him, tossed him in his arms,
lifting a prayer to Zeus and the other deathless gods: […]

So Hector prayed
and placed his son in the arms of his loving wife."

So the warrior, "man-killing Hector", shows his love for his son and prays for his future. Hector, his own future uncertain, probably experienced mixed feelings of joy and sorrow common to parents – joy because children are gifts, sorrow because one cannot always protect them from life's sorrows and pain, (such a future lay ahead for Astyanax),

Later, in Book 22 (p.558, lines 588-593), Andromache describes a secure home scene:

588 "And years ago, propped on his father's knee,
he would only eat the marrow, the richest cuts of lamb,
and when sleep came on him and he had quit his play,
cradled warm in his nurse's arms he'd drowse off,
snug in a soft bed, his heart brimmed with joy."

Astyanax's parents show genuine delight in their son, and provide a safe and happy environment for him – theirs is a close-knit family.

Another happy family home scene is given in Book 6 of the *Odyssey* [70].
On waking, the Princess, Nausicaa, goes down to find her parents, King Alcinous and Queen Arete, "her beloved father and mother" (line 56), she greets her father, "Daddy dear" (line 61); her father understands her shyness (lines 70-80): "he saw through it all," and answered quickly:

"I won't deny you the mules,
my darling girl … I won't deny you anything."

An indulgent father, but the household includes five sons, all requiring fresh linen, and Nausicaa points out:

"Look at my duties – that all rests on me." (line 72)

so it appears that she had earned her reward.
Likewise, her mother approves the outing and

" … packed a hamper – treats of all kinds,
favourite things to refresh her daughter's spirits – "

and also gave her "a golden flask of suppling olive oil … to smooth on after bathing." (lines 86-89). Countless modern-day families must have likewise experienced parents helping their children prepare for outings such as an excursion, school camp, or picnic –

as well as playing "taxi" or having older offspring ask if they may borrow the family car! Homer's descriptions of family life help to establish the family as the fundamental nucleus of human society.

The *Homeric hymn to Demeter* tells the story of Kore-Persephone's abduction by her uncle, Hades, with the complicity of her father, Zeus[71], and the reaction of her goddess mother, Demeter. The bond of mother and daughter is at the heart of this well-known tale[72]. The fact that Kore's violent abduction was actually planned by Zeus, and her subsequent rape by Hades (deceived by her own father, violated by her uncle) – kinsmen from whom one might reasonably expect protection – makes the incident all the more shocking. But, as Bruce Lincoln[73] points out:

"we must confront a basic fact of Greek kinship ideology. For the Greeks, there was a profound difference between mother and father, the former being biological parent only – she who gave birth – and the latter being social parent – he who gave and continues to give his children their place in the world."[74]

Patriarchal society dominated the ancient world, and still features in many areas today.

Initially, Zeus' behaviour seems incomprehensible (unless one remembers that the immortals live by a very different code to man's), a father should protect, yet assuming that he has his daughter's best interests at heart, he may well believe that his brother will care for and protect his niece. Thus, what Zeus considered good for his daughter differs greatly from Demeter's views[75]. As a mother, Demeter was no doubt distressed by Kore's inevitable rape, whilst Zeus may have regarded this as Hades taking her in marriage, even though Kore had protested loudly at her abduction.

Thucydides[76] gives an account of an arranged marriage: During the Thracian invasion of Macedonia 429/8 BC led by Sitalces, his most important commander, Seuthes, was "secretly won over by Perdiccas, who had promised him his daughter [Stratonice] in marriage and a large sum of money as well." There are several references to arranged marriages recorded throughout the text. In Western culture arranged marriages were not uncommon even in the early 20th century, and continue to be the norm in certain other cultures.

When Demeter learns of Kore's abduction she is devastated, "a sharp pain gripped her heart"

(line 40), she "rushed like a bird over the nourishing land and sea, searching;" (lines 43-44), and:

47 "For nine days then all over the earth mighty Deo
roamed about with bright torches in her hands,
and in her sorrow never tasted ambrosia"

- a distraught parent leaving no stone unturned, looking everywhere "with bright torches", asking everyone for information.

(Modern parents have local and international police forces to investigate cases of missing children and kidnapping, and the mass media to spread the word around the globe – sadly often also without result, as seen recently with the McCann family in Britain, which case dominated TV and Press headlines globally for several weeks[77].)

Eventually Demeter learns that her brothers were responsible for Kore's abduction, and "a pain more awful and savage reached [her] soul." (line 90), she "kept on wasting with longing for her deep-girded daughter" (line 304), such was her grief that she brought famine on the world, and "would have destroyed the whole race of mortal men" (line 310) and "deprived the Olympians of the glorious honour of gifts and sacrifices" (line 312). Finally, Zeus (perhaps not wishing to miss out on 'gifts and sacrifices'!) is obliged to send Hermes to Hades and bring Kore-Persephone to see her mother so that Demeter "may desist from anger and dreadful wrath against the gods." (lines 350-1). Mother and daughter are re-united, but still Demeter suspects trickery (rightly so), and it takes Rhea to persuade her to return to Olympus with Persephone. There is no doubt that Kore is Demeter's treasure whom she loves dearly, and her anger at being deceived by her brothers (more than a case of sibling squabbles) is totally understandable, as is the extent of her grief. (Of course, it is possible that Demeter's anger and revenge are prompted by pique at being bested by her brothers.)

Euripides' *Alcestis*[78] is the story of a woman who agrees – in order to save her husband's life – to die in his place. The plot is totally unreal, and the situation improbable. Speaking on the theme of Love-Eros in Plato's *Symposium*, Phaedrus refers to Alcestis as "a monument to all Helas" for being "willing to lay down her life on behalf of her husband"[79], for daring to die for love, thus earning from the gods "the privilege of returning to earth"[80]. No mention is made of Alcestis' children, whom she loved dearly and suffered great anguish in parting from them. Yet Phaedrus refers to Admetus' parents, neither of whom was willing to die for

their son - perhaps this omission indicates that grown offspring were more important than mere children.

As Alcestis prepares for death, her main pre-occupation is the future of her young children (ages not specified) – she prays for them at Hestia's altar:

> "as my last entreaty I ask you to care for my orphaned children:
> marry my son to a loving wife and give my daughter a noble husband."[81]

As death draws near, her grief-stricken husband, Admetus, says:

> "A journey to make your loved ones weep, especially the children and me,
> who feel this as their common grief."[82]

thus showing awareness of the children's suffering too. There follows a moving scene in which Alcestis gives Admetus instructions regarding the children – that he must not re-marry and inflict a step-mother on them – and takes tender leave of her children, entrusting them to Admetus: "receive the children from my hand"[83]. Though very young, "your little one", the boy Eumelos realizes the extent of this family disaster:

> "And since you have gone, Mother, the house is utterly destroyed."

- a testimony to the close family unit which is no longer[84].

For the Athenian audience to fully appreciate the pathos of this last scene, there must be an element of reality with which they can identify – it may be safe, therefore, to assume that the concept or ideal of the close-knit family unit fell within the sphere of their experience, and that the concern shown by both Alcestis and Admetus for their children was not unusual.

The "wicked stepmother" is a character who frequently appears in modern pantomime, and may be found in tales such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. Clearly this character-type was not to be trusted in ancient Greece either, described by Alcestis thus:

> "Keep them as lords of my house and do not marry again, putting over them
> a stepmother, who will be less noble than I and out of envy will lay a hostile
> hand to your children and mine. No, do not do it, I beg you. For a stepmother
> comes in as a foe to the former children, no kinder to them than a viper. And
> though a son has in his father a bulwark of defense, how will you, my daughter,
> grow to an honoured womanhood? What sort of stepmother will you get? May
> she not cast some disgraceful slur on your reputation and in the prime of your youth
> destroy your chances of marriage!"[85]

This is no comedic caricature – for Alcestis a stepmother is a very real threat to her children. It is possible that step-families were a common feature in ancient society, given that life expectancy was not great (men : war, women : childbirth) and therefore not unusual for a man or woman to have more than one spouse. In addition, since a woman had to spend her entire life under the protection of a *kyrios*[86], widows were obliged to re-marry to ensure their safety and well-being, or return to their father's or other male relative's house (unless they had a son who was old enough to act as guardian). Her presence, and that of her own children accompanying her, would obviously impact on any existing children in the household, introducing not only a step-mother but also step-siblings. Golden[87] takes an in-depth look at the nuclear family and personal relations within the household, including the influence of grandparents, adopted and evacuated children, and slaves. Such influences varied from grandmothers spoiling their grandchildren, children "raised together […] form[ing] lasting bonds", and house slaves undermining a father's authority.

Euripides' 'pacifist' tragedy *Trojan Women*[88] is the harrowing tale of events immediately after the fall of Troy, as women and children wait to hear what is to become of them. The scene is described by the Chorus (281):

> "At the gates a multitude of children cling to their mothers' skirts,
> weeping and wailing. A young girl cries: "Mother, ah me! The
> Achaeans are taking me away from you, …over the sea …"

Their anguish is palpable – there is little hope of ever being reunited with their loved ones.

Euripides' characters make a number of social statements – from Poseidon we learn that after ten years the Achaeans "yearn to see their wives and children" (257-8) which suggests strong feelings (a longing for) and a need for family. Poseidon also comments on the futility of war: "The mortal is mad who sacks cities […] his own doom is only delayed." (259).
Hecuba grieves for the loss of her husband, King Priam, and offspring Hector and Polyxena, and worries about Cassandra: "Ah! do not bring frenzied, fey Cassandra out here, for the Argives to insult. Spare me grief on grief." (261) – a mother wanting to protect her daughter who is "not quite right in the head" (266). Hecuba's plea reveals that many do not share her sensitivity for a person who is mentally impaired. But Cassandra is led off and Andromache comments: "Alas! A second Ajax, I suppose, another ravisher, awaits your daughter. And you have other sorrows." (271) – a comment on the inevitable rape by Cassandra's new master. Andromache believes that they will all be taken into slavery: "Away we are led like

stolen cattle, I and my son. Nobility enslaved!" (271). Then, Hecuba dares hope that Troy may one day be restored, and turns to Andromache: "and you will bring up this grandson of mine to be a mighty aid to Troy;" (273). But it is not to be.

The experienced war-veteran, Talthybius, who has "made many trips to Troy as messenger from the Greek army" (262), showed compassion for Hecuba when he told her that her daughter Polyxena "rests well" and "is in the hands of fate; her troubles are over." (263). Now he is back with a dreadful message for Andromache, so terrible he can hardly tell her, and his words clearly reveal his feelings on the matter:
"do not hate me. It is not of my choice that I bring you word …"
"They have decided that the boy here … How can I speak the word?"
"I don't know how to break the sorrowful news gently."
"They are going to kill your child. Now you know the extent of your sorrow."
"He (Odysseus) advised them not to allow the son of a heroic father to grow up - " (273) - this last line refers to the policy of destroying children who may later seek revenge[89]. Talthybius' references to the collective 'they' implies that the majority approves the destruction of Andromache's child, a decision which distresses him greatly.

Talthybius is a remarkable human – in an age when men lived by the "heroic code", he displays far greater courage in showing compassion and kindness to the enemy. Acutely aware that Andromache has lost absolutely everything, he urges her to retain her dignity: "Bear the agony of sorrow gallantly." ('agony' indicating the depth of her grief) (273), and advises her to avoid provoking the army or they may not allow her to bury her son. He is sickened by his orders and addresses Astyanax kindly: "Come, child. Leave your poor mother's loving embraces." and goes on to express his revulsion: "You want another sort of herald for jobs like this, one who is merciless, one whose heart has more taste for brutality than mine has." (275). Talthybius thus reveals that there are those who are merciless and brutal and who would not be troubled by destroying a child, at least not under conditions of war. Again, he shows his feelings when he tells Hecuba of Andromache's departure, admitting that "she brought tears aplenty to my eyes". Later, he shows respect for the dead, even though an enemy's child, and makes a humanitarian gesture when he washes the corpse before handing it over to Hecuba for burial: "There is one labor I have spared you. When I came across the streams of Scamander here I took the body and washed out the wounds."

He then sets off to dig a grave, saying to Hecuba: "You and I, sharing the work together, will save time …" – time is pressing, there is only one ship left and they must set sail. Finally, as Hecuba is led away to the ship he addresses her as "old Hecuba, unhappiest of women" (285), and with deep understanding comments: "Poor thing, your sorrows are driving you frantic." (286).

Euripides highlights the bonds between mother-child and grandmother-grandchild with the moving laments of Andromache and Hecuba, as they reminisce on what Astyanax has meant to them in their lives, both helpless now to save him. Andromache recalls poignantly:

> "My dearest child, my special care, you will leave your hapless mother, […]
> O young thing, your mother's lovely armful! How sweet the fragrance of your body!
> So it was in vain that this breast suckled you, as you lay in your baby clothes.
> In vain I labored, in vain I wore myself out with toil.
> Greet your mother, now, it is your last chance.
> Embrace her that gave you birth. Wrap your arms around me, right around me.
> Press your lips to mine." (274).

and Hecuba:

> "O my child, son of my poor son, we are robbed of you, unjustly robbed, your mother and I."

As Hecuba holds her grandson's corpse she mourns him (and the royal future he should have had), referring to his curls "on which your mother lavished her care and her kisses", his "arms so sweet", and:

> "O dear mouth, you are gone, with all your pretty prattle. […]
> Ah me! All my kisses, all my care, all our nights asleep together, all have been wasted. What will be the verse inscribed on your tomb? "Within this grave a little child is laid, slain by the Greeks because they were afraid." An inscription to make Greece blush." (283).

This last comment is clearly an indictment.

Sophocles' Oedipus[90] refers to his two girls as "poor unfortunates", and "my loved ones", and begs Creon to have pity on them and look after them; he weeps as he envisages their bleak future. Creon's comment, "I knew your joy in them of old", is testimony of Oedipus' love for his daughters. Oedipus refers to the girls' "tender age" and addresses them before parting: "To you, my children, I would have given much counsel if your minds were

mature;" a comment which Sifakis[91] takes to imply that they are "very young" – too young to understand their father's advice. In a society where girls are not valued as much as boys, this father is tender-hearted and moved to tears by their prospects.
Perhaps Oedipus is exceptionally sensitive and caring because of his own painful childhood experiences, such as being exposed, having a sword over his head all the time, having had to flee, and wishes otherwise for his daughters.

Also in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*[92] there is an example of love for an adopted child, as revealed in the exchange between Oedipus and the Messenger:
Oedipus: "Why then did he call me his son?"
Messenger: "Know that he had received you as a gift from my hands long ago."
Oedipus: "And yet he loved me so dearly, when I came from another's hand?"
Messenger: "Yes, his former childlessness won him to do so."
The Messenger also explains that he had freed Oedipus' ankles, which were pinned together – the scars of which remained:
Oedipus: "Aye, it was a dread brand of shame that I took from my cradle."
(This last comment highlights the cruelty of exposure.)
Childlessness had social implications for the *oikos*, as it would die out without descendants.

Euripides, in *Medea,*[93] has a scene which highlights childlessness. Aegeus, King of Athens, stops at Corinth on his return from the ancient oracle of Phoebus. He tells Medea that he is still childless and so had gone to enquire of Phoebus "how [I] might get children". Medea wishes him well: "Well, good luck to you, and may you win your heart's desire." Aegeus' 'heart's desire' clearly being his longing for a child.

Another example of parental concern is shown by Hippias, who was trapped on the Acropolis during the civil war which broke out in 510 BC[94]:

> "When his children, whom he was sending secretly into safety abroad,
> fell into the hands of his enemies, he capitulated and undertook to leave
> Attica within five days, on condition that they were given back."[95]

Thus Hippias valued his children more than success in war.

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* [96], Clytemnestra tells Agamemnon that their son, Orestes,

"is in the special care of our ally, Strophius of Phocis, who warned me of double mischief." However, entrusting a child to a so-called trusted ally had an element of risk, as Hecuba discovered when she learnt that her son Polydorus, sent to King Polymestor of Thrace for safety, had been murdered[97].

Sending children away from a war-zone is common practice – during World War II thousands of children in Britain were sent out of the cities to comparative safety in the countryside.

Herodotus[98] recounts a discussion between Croesus and his visitor, Solon. Croesus asked: "who is the happiest man you have ever seen?" and was surprised to receive the reply: "An Athenian called Tellus." Croesus asked Solon to explain his choice, to which he replied: "There are two good reasons […], first, his city was prosperous, and he had fine sons, and lived to see children born to each of them, and all these children surviving: secondly …" Solon thus gives greater value to family and children than other possessions and wealth. Plutarch (AD 46 – 120)[99] however, points out that there have been various attempts to prove this story to be an invention.

Conclusion

The immortal and mortal characters discussed above are mainly mythical, and from an earlier era than the 'Classical', but the far-reaching effects of mythology, often in narrative poem form, on later generations has long been established. As Susan Wiltshire[100] comments: "Homer was the *biblos*, the secular "book", that provided a common frame of reference for diverse peoples and communities without requiring conformity".

The literary texts examined in this chapter reveal the following facts about ancient Greek society and the thoughts and attitudes prevailing:

- belief that an Almighty Being / supreme being had created the universe and man, and had authority over Life and Death;
- awareness of the basic natural instinct in the animal world (including humans) to protect and nurture offspring;
- awareness of the deep bond between parent and child, perhaps more especially between mother and child;
- sensitivity for children requiring special care;

- sensitivity for bereaved parents;
- awareness that children also suffer grief;
- respect for the dead, even an enemy's child;
- negative attitudes to physical shortcomings, deformity;
- appreciation of the role and value of the family unit in and to society;
- superstition (belief in dreams and omens) led to fear of children who might later seek revenge.

It is impossible to gauge how widespread such ideas were, but the aim here was to establish what attitudes existed and influenced ancient society. True, the literary fictitious characters do not represent reality, but in many cases there is a modern parallel, as seen with kidnapping and the picnic (Nausicaa), for example, and soldiers psychologically disturbed by front-line experiences involving the helpless civilian population.

Love and concern may be shown even when the only way to protect one's children is to allow them to perish rather than suffer, and especially at the hands of others.

Thus as man moved from a tribal or clan society to that of the *polis* he also discovered the world around him and tried to understand his place within it, and in the process the seeds of "humanism" were sown[101].

CHAPTER 2 – Life and Death

This chapter examines factors that have an impact on the lives of children and have a direct bearing on their survival. Attitudes to the fetus, and practices such as abortion, exposure and infanticide are of major concern and determine life and death. Food shortages, displacement and emigration are some other factors influencing survival.

War and environmental issues

It is not difficult to imagine the considerable effects of war on the civilian population. Modern technology beams front-line visuals from around the globe right into our homes: cities being bombed, fighting in the streets, and thousands of people fleeing their homes with whatever belongings they can carry. The very basic needs for survival are food, water, shelter and clothing – warfare disrupts the supply of all these essentials. The displaced population seek shelter elsewhere, straining facilities, the lack of sanitation and safe drinking water invariably resulting in outbreak of diseases.

Likewise, images of environmental disasters, be they flood, drought, wind or fire, show the catastrophic results of these events, adding loss of vital food crops and livestock to the list of woes. Pictures of starving skeletal adults and pot-bellied children drive home the reality of human suffering and misery, with children being the most vulnerable, and the world responds with rescue and relief missions.

So in ancient Greece, war and environmental issues had a profound effect on the lives of the citizens of a *polis* (but they did not have the hope of help from organizations such as the UN or WHO). It is reasonable to suppose that those trapped in a city under siege, facing disease and starvation, or suffering loss of crops following some environmental disaster, would think seriously about what the future held for their children.

Thucydides (c.455-400 BC) gives a very detailed account of the plague which hit Athens during the second year of the Peloponnesian War, its perceived origins and the symptoms at each stage of the disease (which he himself contracted but survived). The effects were devastating and he says: “Words indeed fail one when one tries to give a general picture of this disease; and as for the sufferings of individuals, they seemed almost beyond the capacity

of human nature to endure." He says that there was no "recognized method of treatment", that the disease was indiscriminate and people were "dying like sheep" (obviously, children included) but "[T]he most terrible thing of all was the despair into which people fell … adopt[ing] an attitude of utter hopelessness". In addition, "Athens owed to the plague the beginnings of a state of unprecedented lawlessness" – death seemed inevitable and people "venture[d] on acts of self-indulgence."[102] To make matters worse, country people moved into the city where there "were no houses for them, and, living as they did during the hot season in badly ventilated huts, they died like flies".

Given this description of the far-reaching effects of the plague, it is easy to imagine the fate of many children – those who endured and survived the disease could well have suffered neglect as despairing adults resorted to reckless indulgence. Also, children who were left orphaned must have felt pain and sorrow at losing loved ones.

Plutarch's (AD 46-120) account[103] of the plague adds that Pericles' personal enemies tried to convince the Athenians that Pericles was responsible for their misery, since "instead of being in the pure open air of the country, as they were accustomed," he had "compelled" them "to crowd inside the walls," without employment, and "penned up like cattle to infect each other". Pericles died in the plague epidemic which hit Athens in 429 BC[104].

Albert Camus[105] depicts similar reactions in *The Plague*. "[A] mood of reckless extravagance" set in, many Oranians abandoned religion and once they "realized their instant peril, they gave their thoughts to pleasure". Camus describes "the excesses of the living", shortages of food and supplies, speedy burials, a "collective destiny" and shared emotions: "Strongest of these emotions was the sense of exile and of deprivation, with all the cross-currents of revolt and fear set up by these."
Over the millennia, then, it would seem that attitudes have changed little.

Thucydides gives an account of the surrender of the besieged Potidaeans, who were starving: they were to leave the town with their wives and children, the men taking one garment apiece, the women two, and a fixed sum of money for their journey; thus they left Potidaea and found shelter in Chaldice or wherever they could[106]. Another siege was that of Plataea during the third year of the war. The Spartans brought in siege engines, and also constructed a palisade around the city and a mound, meanwhile the Plataeans (whose "wives and children

together with the older men and all others who were unfit for military service" had already been sent to Athens for safety) built a wall opposite the mound, using skins and hides to protect the woodwork from fire-arrows. When the siege began there were 400 men, 80 Athenians and 110 women to cook for the garrison. The Spartans, wishing to avoid the expense of a long siege, then started a huge fire, hoping to burn down the city, but heavy rain saved the Plataeans.

These ancient terms of engagement seem almost civilized when compared to modern warfare and the use of 'weapons of mass destruction' intended to inflict maximum casualties on the civilian population. The Ancients' measures to protect civilians would indicate that life was valued, and children recognized as future generations.

In Book 18 of *The Iliad*,[107] Hephaestus forges a siege scene on the shield of Achilles, which Homer describes thus:

> "But the people were not surrendering, not at all.
> They armed for a raid, hoping to break the siege –
> loving wives and innocent children standing guard
> on the ramparts, flanked by elders bent with age
> as men marched out to war."

One can easily imagine these citizens taking to hurling missiles on any war party attempting to scale their ramparts. Indeed, on 30th April 1943, Kaity Argyropoulo, in her address to the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, described a similar scene when relating the story of the women of Epirus at the Pindus. These women supported their menfolk fighting up in the mountains – they hauled up food and ammunition day after day, and finally the fascists were taken by surprise:

> "Suddenly cut off from rear and front, they tried in vain to escape. They rushed for the neck of the gorge, turned right and left for an exit; from all sides Greek guns responded, Greek bayonets threatened, and Greek rocks bowled over by the hands of women and children crushed the enemy."

(her address was an appeal for relief funds for children suffering as a result of World War II).

Thucydides[108] recounts a similar incident at the outbreak of war in 431 BC – the Thebans managed to enter Plataea, a town in Boeotia. The Plataeans attacked the Thebans at night, "and all the while there was a tremendous uproar from the men who were attacking them,

and shouting and yelling from the women and slaves on the roofs, who hurled down stones and tiles; at the same time it had been raining hard all night."

Population growth puts food supplies under pressure. According to Peter Garnsey,[109] fourth-century BC peasants in Attica and Argos responded "by introducing more intensive methods of production on their properties". Garnsey points out that in times of food crises, in both urban and rural areas, women and young children were at high-risk, with age and gender, rather than social class, being the common factors. A predominantly cereal-based diet would not have met the needs of growing children and "pregnant and lactating women". A lack of vitamins and minerals at critical stages of development could result in stunted growth, mental health problems, deficiency diseases and susceptibility to infectious diseases.

Garnsey looks at the under-five population in the Graeco-Roman world and the dangers of early life for all social classes. He cites Aristotle: "Most are carried off before the seventh day, and that is why they give the child its name then from the belief that it has now a better chance of survival". Ignorance was largely to blame for "child-rearing methods which undermined the health and survival prospects" of children. The benefits of colostrum were unknown, wet-nurses were common, swaddling could lead to bone deformity, weaning dangerously early or late and then onto nutritionally inadequate foods – these were just a few of the hazards to healthy survival. Garnsey makes "a crucial point": that "parents were unaware of the consequences of their actions".

Garnsey also investigates food allocation within the family, which may be determined by needs, status and power. In the patriarchal Graeco-Roman society, women's "needs are defined by men" and "reflect the higher status and superior power of men". The "most productive members", men and older boys, would receive the larger share, whilst "females would be given a less generous share of the family food resources".

Ancient attitudes to the fetus

As discussed above, the benefits of good nutrition for pregnant women were not generally appreciated, thus putting the development of the fetus at risk. The exception was Sparta, where they recognised that young women needed to be healthy to bear strong children[110]. However, Aristotle, in his *Politics* (Book 4.16, 1335b11) believes that "pregnant women

must take care of their bodies" and not "follow a meager diet"[111]. Aristotle thus recognizes the importance of healthy offspring for the propagation of the human race.

Plato believed that the fetus is a living being, but the needs of the state must "take precedence over the life and rights of the unborn"[112]. According to Michael Gorman, Aristotle believed that "life is present in a fetus when distinct organs have been formed" (timing differing for males and females), and in his *Politics*[113] (7.16, 1335b15) he distinguishes between "lawful and unlawful" abortion, depending on "whether or not the fetus was alive".

Modern abortion laws stipulate a time-period within which an abortion may be legally performed. The World Abortion Laws 2009 Fact Sheet, dated 20th October 2009, released by the Center for Reproductive Rights, New York, "illustrates the varying degrees to which countries worldwide permit access to abortion", as well as the gestational limits (ranging from 8 – 24 weeks), the most usual period for "quickening" being 12 weeks[114].

The Stoics believed that life began when the newborn infant took its first breath, the fetus being part of the mother[115].

The Orphics, followers of the Thracian poet Orpheus, believed in a divine origin for the soul. Orphic literature flourished in the Hellenistic period, and the cult which had first emerged in the 6th century BC enjoyed a revival in the 1st century BC[116]. The Orphics "were the first Greeks to be concerned with the unborn's fate"[117] and their beliefs "led to a condemnation of abortion, exposure and infanticide".

John Riddle[118] reiterates that "by and large" the fetus was not protected by ancient law – "Greek, Roman or Hebrew". However, there was some recognition of the rights of the father: "the crime of abortion was not the killing of a fetus or embryo but the depriving the father of his right to an heir."

Abortion

Abortion is a hotly debated subject in Western society, with *pro-Life* and *pro-Choice* groups adamantly opposed to the other side's views[119].

Despite the lack of medical knowledge and facilities, and high risk, abortion was not at all uncommon in ancient Greece (more so among the wealthy), with motives being as varied as they are today. According to Michael Gorman, it was "a subject of Greek legal, medical, philosophical and religious concern", but due to very limited written evidence it is difficult to have "a precise understanding of Greek opinion". Gorman suggests that since the exposure of newborns went unpunished, "it is highly unlikely that abortion of the unborn was punished". He cites the Oath of Hippocrates (460-357 BC), in which physicians promise "to help the sick … never with a view to injury and wrong-doing," neither to "administer a poison", nor "give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion." Gorman explains that "an abortive pessary was seen as a poison and rejected as an attack not so much on the fetus as on the woman".

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, 149d[120], Socrates makes the following reference to midwives and abortion: "Moreover, with the drugs and incantations they administer, midwives can either bring on the pains of travail or allay them at their will, make a difficult labor easy, and at an early stage cause miscarriage if they so decide."

But Plato (427-347 BC) in his *Republic*, and Aristotle (384-322 BC) in his *Politics*[121], both "held a utilitarian view of the individual" as "existing for the state." Further, "[A]ll rights – even the right to life – were subordinate to the welfare of the state". Over-population was a major concern to the *poleis*, with their limited agricultural land, as poverty and hunger would follow. Thus Plato and Aristotle conceived of an ideal state where population growth was controlled by certain limits stipulated by the state (for example, Plato proposed child-bearing years be limited from twenty years of age until forty), and commanded abortion when these limitations were exceeded. (There is a modern parallel in the Chinese Republic's 'one child' policy.) Whilst Stoics gave precedence to "the welfare of the family and state", they were opposed to abortion[122].

Referring to incestuous relationships, Plato (*Republic* Book 5. 460e-461e)[123] states that offspring thus conceived must not be brought to light, "but if they [the parents] are unable to prevent a birth to dispose of it on the understanding that we cannot rear such an offspring."

Exposure

In his *Politics* (Book 7.14. 1-4, 4-7)[124], Aristotle proposed that the state stipulate regulations to ensure the "quality of children," – "the finest human material"[125] and proposed: "Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared" (*Politics* 7.16)[126] thus calling for abandonment to death, i.e. exposure, since "useless" children would be a burden on the family and / or state. Riddle[127] cites an undated (probably Hellenistic) Theban law against exposure:

> "No Theban man should be allowed to expose a child … But if the father of the child should be extremely poverty stricken, the law orders that he immediately after the child's birth (be it male or female) carry it to the magistrate together with its swaddling clothes, and they shall sell the child received to the person giving a low price for it … that he should bring up the child in good faith … and receive his service as payment for the upbringing."

This certainly allows for a more humanitarian approach than exposure.

Garrison and Elm[128] suggest that the practice of exposure "may have developed because it freed the household from bloodguilt" and was therefore preferable to infanticide. They further suggest that parents may have "truly believed that they were placing their exposed infants in the care of the gods", which would also relieve them of guilt.

Tradition has it that children deemed too weak to become soldiers were abandoned by the Spartans in a mountain copse between Sparta and Kalamata[129].

In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*[130], superstition and "fear of evil prophecies" led Laius and Jocasta to give up their infant son for exposure, as he was destined to slay his father. The improbable plot is full of "[I]ntrigue and suspense"[131], until Oedipus discovers the truth about his parentage. Sophocles thus highlights the practice of exposure [which involved pinning the child's ankles together and suspending it by the feet from a tree branch] and the effects on a child who survived. It is also not impossible that a child who was rescued and survived might later, even as an adult, unknowingly return to his / her natal family through adoption or marriage.

John Boswell[132], in a footnote, refers to a case reported in the *New York Sun*, 11th February 1986, regarding a Portuguese woman who unwittingly married her own son, whom she had abandoned. Boswell adds that "[A] few weeks' perusal of several tabloids will unfailingly turn up a case or two of this sort" which "derive their interest from the singularity of the event". He concludes that "[O]ral accounts of such phenomena are also common, and perhaps more reliable."

In his paper on "The Exposure of Children and Greek Ethics", A. Cameron[133] maintains that "[I]t is essential for an unbiased treatment of the topic to recognise at the outset, firstly, that exposure is a method of limiting the family, and that family limitation springs from causes [such as economic pressure] which have proved irresistible". For primitive peoples ("of modern as well as ancient times") exposure is the simplest method. Cameron points out that since the theme of disposing of dangerous children features in myths, this "implies the practice of exposure at the time when the myths originated".

(Not so very long ago, it was not unknown for a Zulu mother to allow her newborn infant to starve; when at Death's door, she would take it to the doctor – being beyond help, the infant would die because "White man's medicine" was no good, but the doctor would have to issue a Death certificate thus legitimatizing the death.[134])

According to Cameron,[135] a "reluctance to marry and to rear children" may account for the "general decline" in population numbers during the Hellenistic period, "but there is little direct proof of exposure as a cause". As for classical Greece, "the evidence direct and indirect becomes increasingly scant", with evidence for Athens being found in Plato and Aristotle. Plato's proposal (*Republic* 5. 459B-460E)[136] that citizens must limit their families "as a means of maintaining the purity of the population"[137] seems to have a parallel in Hitler's Aryan race?

In the story of Cyrus, as told by Herodotus,[138] Harpagus insists: "Never will I take a hand in so brutal a murder. There are many reasons why I will not do it – he is related to me by blood, […]"
Cameron[139] suggests that parents who resort to exposure are "nevertheless unwilling to stain their hands with kindred blood". He goes on to trace the subject of exposure and infanticide, developing from "certain pagan eschatological ideas" through philosophers and religious

belief, such as the Stoics and Orphics, to Christian attitudes, which "show the close relationship between early Christian thought and Greek ethics". Huby[140] also draws a link to Christian thinking, but points out that "[T]he Greeks are the only philosophical moralists commonly studied by the Western world who were not influenced by Christianity, for the compelling reason that all their major ethical systems were developed long before the birth of Christ".

Infanticide

This section should perhaps be titled homicide, since it also covers the deaths of children older than infants.

There are a number of gruesome tales regarding the murder of children. Astyanax was a victim of war, hurled from the ramparts[141]. Lynda McNeil[142] refers to Thyestes and Tereus, whose murdered children were cooked and served up to them[143] – a crime more vile than their actual murder, but obviously meant to be the ultimate triumph over an enemy.

As noted earlier, one reason for killing a child was fear that s/he may grow up and wreak revenge on the enemy. Another was the fear that a son may usurp his father's throne. Herodotus, in *The Histories*[144], gives one such account in relating Astyages' succession to the throne[145]. Astyages had a dream about his pregnant daughter Mandane, and consulted the Magi for an interpretation. They told him it meant that his grandson, Cyrus, would usurp his throne, and therefore he determined "to make away with" Mandane's child. Astyages called his trusted kinsman and steward, Harpagus, and gave him instructions: "My safety depends on you. […] Get hold of Mandane's child – take it home and kill it. Then bury it how you please."

Harpagus wept and could not bring himself to carry out the order, and handed the infant over to a herdsman, Mitradates, to expose. He in turn did not want to expose the child and told his wife: "I am sorry to say our masters in town are in trouble. I would give much not to have heard or seen what I saw there today. Why, in Harpagus' house there was nothing but sobs and tears – a most extraordinary thing." A scene which suggests that they were against killing / exposing the child, and Harpagus later explains that he wanted to "avoid the guilt of killing with my own hands your daughter's child – your own grandchild"[146].

Herodotus tells another story[147] about a prophecy that the son of Aetion and Labda would one day overthrow the Bacchiads and become master of Corinth. The Bacchiads sent men to Petra to kill the baby, however Labda overheard them arguing about the murder and so hid her son in a 'cypsel' or corn-bin. Having searched the house without finding the baby they decided to return home and declare that they had done as they had been bid. The child was called Cypselus in remembrance of his escape from danger.

Mark Golden[148] refers to a report given by both Herodotus and Thucydides, on the "deaths of school-children as an example of a crushing calamity". Thucydides refers to the Thracian slaughter of the children of Mycalessus as the "most horrible disaster which ever struck the city". According to Thucydides[149] the "Thracians burst into Mycalessus, sacked the houses and temples, and butchered the inhabitants, sparing neither the young nor the old, but methodically killing everyone they met, women and children alike, and even the farm animals and every living thing they saw. […] Among other things, they broke into a boys' school, the largest in the place, into which the children had just entered, and killed every one of them."

Herodotus[150] recounts two events: "acts of God to forewarn the people of Chios" of impending disaster. In the first case, the "Chians sent a choir of a hundred young men to Delphi; ninety-eight of them caught the plague and died." The second happened in the capital city of the island: "the roof of a school fell in on some children who were learning their letters, and of a hundred and twenty children only one escaped."

The deaths of children in large numbers, whether in war or peace, always evokes strong public emotion – in recent times there have been cases of school buildings collapsing and School-bus disasters, where few if any have survived, and an outcry has followed to establish culpability.

In Euripides' *Medea*, Jason mourns for his children[151] with terms of endearment:

> "My dear, dear children!
> Alas! my grief! I long to kiss their dear mouths.
> For god's sake, let me touch my children's soft skin.
> Would that I had never begotten them, to live to see them slain at your hands."

Like Andromache and Hecuba, Jason refers to physical features - dear mouths, soft skin – which highlights the vulnerability of young children. Jason is depicted as a tender protective father who openly shows his emotions as he grieves for his children.

After a psychological battle with herself, Medea[152] has taken the ultimate revenge on Jason as punishment for his desertion, but in so doing has also lost her "darling children". Her mind in a turmoil, she expresses varying sentiments, such as: "No man shall take them away from me." and "Tell me, what has life to offer them. They have no father, no home, no refuge from danger." countered by "I cannot bear being laughed at by my enemies." and "Nobody shall despise *me* or think me weak or passive." The chorus leader urges: "… but since I also would support the laws of mankind, I entreat you not to do this deed." and points out that to destroy her own children will make her "the unhappiest woman in the world". The leader clearly believes that it is unnatural for a mother to kill her own children, but Medea's sense of having been wronged is overwhelming, she had loved her boys dearly but now she can only think of revenge.

Sacrifice

The Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History[153] states that "[T]here is no evidence for human sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world." However, it may be of interest to briefly examine one literary example.

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*[154], the Chorus gives a graphic account of Iphigenia's death.[155] Agamemnon chooses to "slay [his] child, the jewel of [his] home" rather than "fail [his] fleet and lose [his] soldiery". He has a choice but he submits to superstition and the interpretation of omens. Clytemnestra condemns this outrageous act in an address to the Chorus[156]:

> "… You do not join in laying that reproach against him who lies here, against him who, caring no more than for the death of a beast, though his fleecy herds had sheep enough, sacrificed his own child, the darling born of my pains, to charm the winds of Thrace. Is it not he whom you should banish from Argive soil for his foul crime?"

She goes on to justify the murder of Agamemnon as revenge for his sacrificing their daughter, Iphigenia[157]:

> "And did he not then himself do a crafty crime against his house? Nay, for the thing he did to the blossom born of me and him, my long-wept Iphigenia, justice

> is done upon him! Let him not boast in Hades, for he has paid, as he sinned, with death."

Clytemnestra makes it quite clear that she considers Agamemnon to have committed the most awful crime, killing his own child, and indicates her feelings for her first-born offspring with words such as "the darling" and "the blossom". Her condemnation is all the greater since the loss of life was for a foolish belief that this would "charm the winds". Aeschylus uses this scene to convey a comment on the foolishness of belief in superstitions and the futility of believing in omens and dreams.

Emotion

Natural, purely human emotions are instinctive or intuitive feelings and responses such as love for one's children, sorrow, compassion, feeling protective, fearing for the safety of loved ones. 'Emotion' also denotes a strong feeling about something – a reaction to circumstances which might arouse a response such as anger, jealousy, joy or sadness. As illustrated below, Jason and Hippolytus are both very expressive regarding their feelings towards the method of human procreation – as is Medea; Pericles plays on the emotions of the Athenians in his funeral oration, and the destitute must suppress their feelings of grief in order to survive.

Euripides' two characters, Jason (*Medea*) and Hippolytus (*Hippolytus*)[158] both express the wish that children could be created independently of women[159]. Jason says:

> "There ought to have been some other way for men to beget their children, dispensing with the assistance of women. Then there would be no trouble in the world."[160]

whilst Hippolytus exclaims:

> "Zeus! … If you wished to propagate the human race you should have arranged it without women."

Of course, their misogynistic attitude is directed at women, but they reveal a reluctant acceptance that the procreation of children is an absolute imperative, since they are the means of the *oikos* surviving in the future.

Medea's oft-quoted line: "I had rather fight three battles than bear one child."[161] gives one woman's perspective – considering the primitive conditions under which women had

to give birth, she may not have been alone in this attitude.

Susan Walker,[162] citing Schaps, refers to the ancient Greek home as "a nursery for the children who would care for their parents in their old age, and who would (in their own right, if they were male) inherit [both] the family property".

Mark Golden[163] suggests that, from a practical point, "children would be a prudent investment in order to provide security in societies which knew no pension plans," therefore "the more parents need children, the more they will mourn their loss". However, he points out that Finley and others "have argued that affection and love were not to be expected in pre-industrial populations". Citing Stone, Golden explains this point: "to preserve their mental stability, parents were obliged to limit the degree of their psychological involvement with their infant children", often resulting in neglect. Golden draws a modern parallel, referring to a 1985 study which shows that "severe social and economic constraints may force mothers in the Brazilian slums to let some of their children die without feeling *very much* grief in *most* cases". Thus "extreme poverty" will drive parents to desperate behaviour.

Herodotus' account[164] of Persian habits includes the fact that boys under five live with the women and never see their fathers, "the object being to spare the father distress if the child should die in the early stages of its upbringing". Herodotus comments that, in his view, "this is a sound practice", thus revealing that a father's grief would be hard to bear. No comment is made on whether a father would grieve over the loss of a daughter. A mother's grief is not taken into consideration – this may be a genuine oversight, or an indication of misogynisitic views prevailing at the time, and typical of a patriarchal society. It does not mean that mothers did not grieve – indeed, many fictional women, such as Hecuba and Andromache, are depicted mourning the loss of a child.

Marilyn Katz[165] refers to Pericles' funeral oration (Thucydides, Book 2.4), in which he affects "a display of consolation to the bereaved parents by reminding them of their capacity to bear new children to replace their lost sons". She points out that Athens did take responsibility for the welfare of the "parents and children of its dead heroes", as stated by the orator of the *Menexenus*: "[the city] stands in place of a father to them while they remain children", i.e. to orphaned children (Plato 249a)[166]. Pericles' speech was obviously meant to

encourage bereaved parents to carry on with life, but it seems rather heartless in respect of "their lost sons".

Thucydides gives a description of the state funeral rites and full account of Pericles' speech[167] in which he also shows understanding of loss: "One does not feel sad at not having some good thing which is outside one's experience: real grief is felt at the loss of something which one is used to".

Conclusion

Many parents did love and protect their children in spite of difficult circumstances, such as being under siege.

Attitudes to life and death, and the various means of disposing of unwanted children, seem to vary amongst the *poleis*, with some views differing widely. For example, Sparta approved of exposure whilst Thebes legislated against it, and Aristotle suggested that early miscarriage was preferable, "before sense and life have begun in the embryo"[168].

Warfare and economic factors such as the security of food supply had a bearing on the attitudes of the Ancients. In times of food shortages preference was given to men and older boys, as they would need strength to defend their *oikos* and *polis*.

The philosophers also had differing opinions, with Plato and Aristotle proposing limitation of population growth for the greater good of the community, whilst the Orphics were concerned with the protection of the unborn and newborn infant.

Genuine ignorance of medical and dietary matters played a role in shaping attitudes towards the fetus and ante-natal care affecting both mother and child, and the necessary nutrition for growing children. The Hippocratic Oath remains the basis for the ethics of modern medicine.

Superstitious fears and revenge on one's enemies were amongst the reasons given to justify the killing of innocent children. In the case of revenge killings, this practice indicates the high value placed on children and the ultimate triumph over an enemy.

CHAPTER 3 – Growing-up

This chapter considers some legal aspects concerning children, and examines childhood experiences such as education, religion, sport, pederasty, slavery and labour, marriage, and their affect on young people.

Legal status of children

The *oikos*, or family, was the smallest unit of the *polis*, or city-state, which comprised groups such as the clan, the phratry, the tribe and the deme, membership of which was secured through the *oikos*[169]. The *oikos* had to support its family members and preserve its ancestral lands for future generations, also performing cult rituals in honour of its deceased members. An *oikos* that could not support itself, or that was childless, was considered as not fully an *oikos.*

Legitimate heirs to inherit family property were of paramount importance to Athenian citizens, and newborn infants had to be accepted into the *oikos* by the *kyrios*, who had seven days within which to decide. Once accepted, the child's family marked the event with ceremonies of a religious nature, the *amphidromia* after five or seven days, and the *dekate* ten days after birth. Socrates, in Plato's *Theaetetus*,[170] (159e), refers to "the ceremony of carrying him around the hearth." These rituals involved an offering to the gods, and women purified themselves (birth was regarded as a defilement)[171].

Hadas[172] points out that in Athens "children of an alien mother did not enjoy the protection of citizenship" and that Jason's explanation was probably sincere[173]. He hoped that by marrying the princess of Corinth he would ensure his children's future by giving them royal half-brothers. (Jason does not seem to consider the possibility that his children might be ill-treated by his new wife and future offspring, unlike Medea who says: "Not that I wish to leave them in a hostile land for my enemies to insult".)

Paul Cartledge's article on Spartan wives[174] mentions a Spartan law "designed to stimulate the production of (male) children (*teknopoiia*)". Thus "the father of three sons was exempted from military service, the father of four from all state burdens". Cartledge points out that an unfortunate result of this law was that, due to "equal patrimonial inheritance by sons", many sons were unable to contribute the stipulated

quantity of produce, due to poverty, and so could not fulfil their Spartan citizenship requirements. In addition, after *c*.500 BC, "all Spartan men were obliged by law to marry".

Herodotus[175] refers to "certain definite legal matters [which] are left to [the] sole decision" of the Spartan kings: "first, if a girl inherits her father's estate and has not been betrothed by him to anybody, the kings decide who has the right to marry her; […],
thirdly, anyone who wishes to adopt a child must do it in the king's presence."
That these matters were dealt with by the king indicates that, in Sparta at least, the legal protection of minors was taken seriously.

According to Pericles' citizenship law of 451-450 BC, the Athenian democracy restricted citizenship to men whose parents were both Athenian citizens. Earlier, Solon was archon for 594/3 BC and his political reforms and law code became the basis of classical Athenian law[176] – which included steps to ensure legitimate heirs. In contrast, Plato's *Republic*, which outlines the ideal state run by guardians, is based on a shared community and prompted the question: "… but how will they recognise each others' fathers and daughters and other relations you spoke of just now?" – a matter for concern since the *oikos* was the basis of ancient Greek society and demanded legitimate heirs[177].

In *Nine Greek Lives*, Plutarch[178] gives an overview of Solon's Law reforms: "he repealed all the Draconian laws", except those relating to homicide. He took measures to relieve the poor, reformed the constitution, thus giving "the masses a share in the other processes of government", introduced wills and stipulated rules concerning marriage, (he abolished dowries), his object being that "man and wife should live together for love, affection and the procreation of children", an attitude reflected in the Christian ideal of marriage. He also "exempted illegitimate sons from the obligation of supporting their fathers" since they "made them ashamed of having been born", thus showing an awareness of the stigma of illegitimacy.

From Plutarch[179] we learn that due to the inequalities between rich and poor in Athens "the common people were weighed down with the debts they owed to a few rich men." Consequently, "[M]any parents were even forced to sell their children (for there was no law to prevent this)."

David Cohen,[180] in his discussion of the law of *hubris*, points out that "it is significant that the law, unlike other statutes prohibiting violence, specifically mentions children". Opening hours for schools and gymnasia were regulated by rules designed to protect children[181]. These included the time of day when a free boy should go to school, and when to leave; teachers and athletic trainers were forbidden to open schools before sunrise and had to shut them before sunset; *paidagogoi* were to oversee the boys; in addition, the chorus producer (*choregus*) should be over forty years of age and at the age of greatest self-control[182]. These measures indicate a sense of responsibility for the safety and protection of children.

Education and sport

'To educate' is defined as: "give intellectual, moral and social instruction to; train or give information on a particular subject"[183].

Italian and French definitions elaborate further:

- to supply indispensable fundamental principles for a good education (istruire - *fornire dei principi fondamentali indispensabili per una buona educazione*;[184]
- to implement suitable means to assure the formation (moulding) and development of a human being (éducation - *mise en œuvre des moyens propres à assurer la formation et le développement d'un être humain*[185].

In *Laws* 1, 643c, Plato's Athenian[186] gives the following definition : "So we may say, in fact, the sum and substance of education is the right training which effectually leads the soul of the child at play on to the love of the calling in which he will have to be perfect, after its kind, when he is a man." In *Laws* 7.[187] Plato states that education should be compulsory for everyone, "on the ground that the child is even more the property of the state than of his parents", also that "my law will apply in all respects to girls as much as to boys; the girls must be trained exactly like the boys."

Similarly, Aristotle, in *Politics* 8,[188] declares that education should be systematic, universal, and publicly organized, "and not on private lines, in the way in which at present each man superintends the education of his own children, teaching them privately, […] we ought not to think that any of the citizens belongs to himself, but that all belong to the state" echoing Plato's sentiments. However, their proposals for compulsory education provided by the state does not stem from an interest in the child, but rather in the needs of the state.

Thus 'education' may be seen as the process by which young people are trained and

prepared to take their place in the adult world. It is obvious that education should be relevant to the needs of society at any given time, and over the centuries systems and syllabi have evolved, often through trial and error, sometimes controversial, always trying to adapt and keep abreast with developments such as industrialization and the technological age. Modern school curricula are now fixed by Ministries of Education or external examining Boards[189].

In antiquity, the study of rhetoric was a main feature of education, with the aim of producing effective public speakers[190]. At Athens, both boys and girls attended three schools (for gymnastics, for music and poetry, and for the three Rs). Senior education offered training in Law, Medicine and Rhetoric, at schools such as Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum and Isocrates' school.

Sparta was an exception – there they had a formalized system where both boys and girls lived in state-run barracks from the age of 7. The emphasis was on physical training with the aim of producing an effective military elite. For *ephebes*, this training included a whipping contest of endurance[191] and food-stealing[192].
Paul Cartledge[193] points out that according to Xenophon and Plutarch, the physical exercises included in the Spartan girls' education were "designed to serve exclusively eugenic ends, that is, to produce strong mothers of healthy infants". Pausanias[194] records that young Spartan girls (virgins) participated in footraces, according to age groups, which were held every fourth year at the Heraean festival at Olympia.

Marc Kleijwegt[195] points out that in classical Athens "education was a privileged commodity" for those who could afford to pay for it, since it was not provided by the state. Evidence suggests "the absence of compulsory school-attendance", but education at home was popular in ancient society, particularly in aristocratic circles. Citing H.W. Pleket, he explains that the "Athenian aristocracy believed that education was a private affair", whilst the children of small farmers and artisans "were initiated in working activities at an early age" as they provided cheap labour, and at the same time, traditionally, fathers trained their sons to practice their trade, thus school attendance would have caused the family financial problems.

Primary education covered the ages 7-14, for boys and girls, but it is generally believed that children attended lessons for a year or two at most within this period[196]. Kleijwegt concludes that the school system in both the Classical and Hellenistic-Roman periods was deficient, and suggests that the lack of state-funded education "is an indication for the relative lack of interest in the specific ages of childhood and adolescence", and that the "purpose of ancient education was to present children as early as possible as adult intellectuals" thus bringing honour to the family. Education, then, is seen in terms of the needs of the family and state and appears not to consider the individual needs of the child.

Greek festivals were religious in nature, and included processions to shrines to worship the deity and perform specific rituals. Dramatic performances and sporting events held during festivals were ultimately in honour of the gods (in the case of 'Tragedy' specifically for Dionysus). Large amphitheatres, stadia and hippodromes were established around the country and thousands of spectators attended. Young people participated in these processions, dramatic productions (as chorus members) and sporting contests (not least, the Olympic Games) which included some categories for young people. Winners were held in great esteem: epinician odes were written and statues erected in their honour[197] – and naturally their families experienced 'reflected glory'. Attendance and / or participation brought youngsters into the community and was regarded as preparation for adult life.

In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (lines 641-47)[198] a girl describes her participation at festivals:

> "Once I was seven I became an arrêphoros.
> Then at ten I became a grain grinder for the goddess.
> After that, wearing a saffron robe, I was a bear at Brauron.
> And as a lovely young girl I once served as a basket bearer,
> wearing a string of figs."

The girl seems to have happy memories of these events and is proud of her participation.

Sporting events were religious in origin, being held to honour a deity; for example, the Olympics honoured Zeus, whilst the Heraean games were in honour of Hera[199].

By Classical times there were 18 Olympic contests, including horse races. Equestrian events included various categories of chariot racing and riding, and were fiercely contested; however, only the wealthy could afford to maintain and train horses[200].

In *Clouds,* Aristophanes portrays a father, Strepsiades, whose son, Pheidippides, has expensive sporting tastes. Strepsiades[201] laments his mounting debts, especially stable bills, and the fact that his "fine son […] rides, drives, even dreams horses". Obviously this is an indulgent father for later he admits that:
"I humored you, I know, when you were six and lisping.
With the first jury-money I received, I bought you
A little cart at Zeus' festival."
And he goes on to boast to Socrates that his son is "naturally quick".
"When he was a toddler
He used to build mud-houses, scoop out ships, make carts out of leather …"
Strepsiades has clearly encouraged his son's equestrian interest from an early age, and his indulgence and boasting reveal his pride in his son.

Physical well-being and athletic physique were admired by the Ancients (no less today, judging by the number of people frequenting gyms and other sporting facilities) Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (6.3.9)[202] tells of Hysmon of Elis who "was attacked by a flux in his muscles" when a boy. To overcome this ailment Hysmon trained hard for the pentathlon in order that "he might be a healthy man free from disease". Another extract (6.10.1) tells of Glaucus, son of Demylus. Having seen his farmer son fix a ploughshare "using his hand as a hammer", Demylus took him to box at Olympia. The inexperienced Glaucus was wounded, but "his father called out to him, 'Son, the plough touch.' So he dealt his opponent a more violent blow which … brought him the victory." This incident shows parental encouragement – a scene repeated thousands of times throughout the centuries and today, as parents support and encourage their offspring at all sorts of sporting events.[203]

Wayne Ingalls[204] states that training for choral performance was an important part of education for both boys and girls, and that in the *Laws* Plato prescribes choral training. This was an activity which "was more than simply preparation for performance:
it was a way of educating young people and making them ready to assume their adult responsibilities in the community", it formed character and taught appropriate behaviour. The purpose and aims of their education, therefore, were akin to our modern definition of "to educate". Homer's epics were used for educational purposes and were included in the repertoire recited by a chorus.

Xenophon's oft-quoted dialogue (*Oeconomicus* 7-10)[205] between Socrates and Ischomachos reveals some interesting points on the education of girls, bearing in mind that they were destined to be married, and at quite a young age. Ischomachos tells Socrates that his wife "is quite able by herself to manage the things within the house." Socrates then asks him whether he educated his wife or whether "she already knew how to manage the things that are appropriate to her." Ischomachos replies: "How, Socrates, could she have known anything when I took her, since she came to me when she was not yet fifteen, and had lived previously under diligent supervision […] she came knowing only how to take the wool and make clothes […] For as to matters of the stomach, Socrates, she came to me very finely educated; and to me, at any rate, that seems to be an education of the greatest importance both for a man and a woman." (Their conversation continues in the same vein for some length.) Ischomachos' last comment on "matters of the stomach" could imply that his wife was a good cook, however, he was a wealthy man and surely had slaves to cook for him, at least prior to his marriage. Pomeroy[206] translates the sentence as:
"And besides, she had been very well trained to control her appetites, Socrates,' he said, 'and I think that sort of training is most important for man and woman alike.'" - i.e. not to be a glutton and deplete the family's food resources. The Ancients' perception of a good wife was someone who could cook and spin, keep the household stores in order and supervise labour in spinning and other domestic work,

Kitto [207] makes the point that because a girl did not go to school it does not follow that she is illiterate, since it is possible to learn to read at home.[208] Moreover, in a society where books were comparatively rare, the ability to read was less important: "conversation, debate, the theatre, much more than the written word, were the real sources of education". Boys were sent to school "to be trained for manhood – in morals, manners and physique", which included recitation, singing and gymnastics.

Aristotle made the following observation in his *Politics* (1.5 11-12, 1260b)[209]:

> "This means that both children and women must be educated with an eye to the constitution – at least if it is true that it makes a difference to the soundness of a state that its children should be sound, and its women too. And it must make a difference; for women make up half the adult free population, and from children come those who will participate in the constitution."

Aristotle, then, recognizes the importance of future generations for maintaining a sound state.

On a lighter note, the Greek mime poet, Herodas (3rd century BC) in his poem *Mother to Schoolmaster* depicts a reluctant schoolboy whose character still rings true today! Metrotime complains:

> " … His slighted writing-tablet,
> which every month I take such care to wax,
> is left to lie forgotten against the wall
> under his bed … unless he scowls in rage
> as though it were his death and scrapes it bare
> instead of writing on it; but his satchel
> always holds knucklebones far glossier
> than even the oilflask which we use each day.
> […] Just look now at the grime upon his clothes!
> he got like that from wandering in the woods. …[210]

Similarly, in *As You Like It* [211] Shakespeare gives this description:

> "And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school."

A familiar character throughout time – countless parents have complained about boys (and girls) not doing their homework, messing-up their clothes, even playing truant.

Pederasty

In Plato's *Symposium*,[212] Pausanias' eulogy (180E-184D) on "Eros" raises the subject of pederasty, which he explains thus:

> "For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. […] (181) But the love of young boys should be forbidden by law, because their future is uncertain; they may turn out good or bad, either in body or soul"[213].

Pausanias, who is pro-pederasty, goes on to give a brief outline of the customs in other countries, several of which deem pederasty to be dishonourable, adding that "loves of youths share the evil repute of philosophy and gymnastics, because they are inimical to tyranny", and noting the role of parents who "forbid their sons to talk with their lovers, and place them under a tutor's care" (182). This leads on to a discussion on whether and

when such practices are honourable or dishonourable. Pausanias' main concern, however, was not so much about values, but about impressing his dinner companions with his skilful arguments.

In Plato's *Laws* 8,[214] Clinias, Megillus and the Athenian discuss laws to regulate and control "sexual gratifications" and achieve the "conquests of their lusts", the corruption of so-called free love, and ensure there is "no sterile and unnatural intercourse with males. Failing this, we may suppress such relations with males utterly". The Athenian[215] proposed establishing a law "restricting procreative intercourse to its natural function by abstention from congress with our own sex, with its deliberate murder of the race and its wasting of the seed of life on a stony and rocky soil […]" – however, the establishment and acceptance of such a law posed problems since "things have come to such a pass today that no such result is thought possible".

In *The Nichomachean Ethics,* Book 7.4-6,[216] Aristotle compares incontinent and licentious men with continent and temperate men, and goes on to explain morbid or perverse pleasures. "Now corresponding to each of these types of unnatural pleasures we can observe abnormal states of character. I mean those that we call brutish …" He says that some "morbid states are the result of habit, like […] male homosexuality; because although these come naturally to some people, others acquire them from habit, e.g. those who have been victimized since childhood". He adds that it is possible to be mastered by abnormal "desires for excessive and unnecessary pleasures. Another version reads: "paederasty; for these arise in some by nature and in others, as in those who have been victims of lust from childhood, from habit"[217]. Aristotle thus indicates his disapproval of certain behaviour which he considers harmful to children. Aristotle also disapproves of bad language, indecent stories and pictures, as being harmful to children[218].

Mark Golden[219] states that "[I]t was the Athenian elite who institutionalized homosexuality and formed and followed its conventions". In Plato's dialogues "homosexuality is idealized for its contribution to the process of education". Golden briefly outlines the stages of transition from child to adult citizen[220]:

1) the child (*pais*) is a member of a subordinate group – children and slaves;
2) the young Athenian, not necessarily a minor, is still a *pais*, subordinate in a homosexual relationship with a free man / citizen;

3) the young Athenian is older – now takes the active dominant role in homosexual activity between citizens;
4) the young adult marries, but he may continue homosexual activities with other full Athenian citizens.

Thus the transition from *eromenos* to *erastes* is marked by divisions according to status and age. Golden points out that Athenian citizens could not accept payment for sexual favours as this was prostitution, the penalty for which was loss of citizen rights[221].

Herodotus[222] reports that the Persians were ever ready to adopt foreign ways – "a notable instance is pederasty, which they learned from the Greeks".

Thomas Hubbard[223] briefly outlines the variances within ancient homosexuality (not restricted to man-boy pairs), mainly depicted in vase paintings, and concludes: "Antiquity, like our own society, had its share of sexual dissidents and nonconformists."

Slaves, slavery and child labour

The *Iliad* [224] opens with Apollo's priest, Chryses, offering a ransom for his daughter, Chryseis, who has been taken as war trophy by Agamemnon.
But the wrathful king threatens Chryses, saying (lines 33-36):

> "The girl – I won't give up the girl. Long before that,
> old age will overtake her in *my* house, in Argos,
> far from her fatherland, slaving back and forth
> at the loom, forced to share my bed!"

Thus in a few lines we get a glimpse of the future which lies ahead for the young girl.

Homer's Andromache[225] outlines the bleak future for a young child captured and taken into slavery:

> "… Think, even if he escapes
> the wrenching horrors of war against the Argives,
> pain and labor will plague him all his days to come.
> Strangers will mark his lands off, stealing his estates.
> The day that orphans a youngster cuts him off from friends.
> And he hangs his head low, humiliated in every way …
> his cheeks stained with tears, and pressed by hunger"

Similarly, in Book 24[226] Andromache grieves:

> "And you my child, will follow me
> to labor, somewhere, at harsh degrading work,
> slaving under some heartless master's eye – that,
> or some Achaean marauder will seize you by the arm
> and hurl you headlong from the ramparts – horrible death –
> enraged at *you* because Hector once cut down his brother,"

Arthur Adkins[227] explains: "Andromache laments that her son Astyanax will fall into slavery and be forced to perform actions, *erga*, which are *aeikea*: menial tasks such as the *agathos*, in virtue of his social position, need never perform."

Euripides describes slavery as "That thing of evil, by its nature evil,"[228].
In Euripides' *Trojan Women,*[229] Hecuba exclaims:

> "Alas! Alas! Whose wretched slave shall I be? […]
> to become a children's nurse –
> I who in Troy was paid the honours of a queen!"

Golden[230] comments: "At least one fictional nurse […] expresses real resentment that she must raise the children of her captors." Hecuba's resentment, however, is driven by the indignity of slavery and the fact that the children belong to her 'captors' – she clearly loved her own children and doted on her young grandson, Astyanax. Presumably other slaves shared these sentiments, which leads one to wonder how kindly they treated their young charges.

On the other hand, Ischomachos,[231] in describing to his new wife her duties in his household, advised her:
"However, one of your proper concerns, perhaps, may seem to you rather thankless: you will certainly have to be concerned about nursing any of the slaves who becomes ill." Perhaps one can assume that this care would extend also to the children of household slaves.

The Nurse and Tutor in Euripides' *Medea* [232] are elderly. He addresses her as "Ancient household chattel of my mistress" and she replies with "Aged escort of Jason's children",

going on to state that "when their master's affairs go ill, good slaves find not only their misfortune but also their heart's grief". (It is interesting to note that Aristotle, in discussing the "justice of a master" also uses the term chattel, 'a man's chattel', meaning slave, in his *Ethics* 5.6[233] and 'children and chattels' – this would appear to place children and slaves on the same social level. Cohen[234] comments that, in ancient Greek culture, the conflation of "child" and "slave" is suggested by the use of *pais* for both.)

Clearly any upset in a household will impact on the servants – in this particular case there is the prospect that they may accompany Medea and the children into exile. From this scene we also learn that the two boys have been enjoying "their playtime" under the Tutor's supervision, and the Nurse warns him to keep a close watch on them, away from their mother. The Nurse thus shows genuine concern for the children's safety.

Slaves accompanied children on trips outside the house, such as going to school and back, or to religious rites Golden,[235]. However, according to Aeschines (citing Solon's Laws) slaves were forbidden from entering gymnasia or *palaestrae*, and more explicitly they were prohibited "from using free boys as sexual partners at all". Plutarch[236] also cites this law of Solon's.

Straying further afield to Hellenistic Egypt, Sarah Pomeroy[237] comments on Praxinoa, who "kept her clothing in a locked chest" (presumably because she did not trust her only slave, employed to do housework and baby-sitting), yet "did not hesitate to leave her baby in the care of her slave with whom she was not totally satisfied." This implies that Praxinoa valued her clothing more than her baby, or perhaps she was simply a little careless with regard to her child – as are some modern parents: for example, those who do not use child safety-seats in cars.

Pomeroy[238] draws attention to the role of wet-nurses and baby-nurses in the home, referring to Alexandria, where both slaves and free women, working under contract, took these positions. She mentions Cosmia, who works for a family with four sons aged between five and fifteen years old, and Sponnesis, contracted as a wet-nurse for a baby-boy for three years (longer than usual), who was to live in the baby's home in Tebtunis. Clearly slaves and nurses such as these women would have had an impact on the children in their care, and it is not unreasonable to assume that there could have been a bond between them.

In the *Odyssey*,[239] Odysseus' old nurse Eurycleia still served in his household, and he enlisted her help when he returned home. Homer describes her with terms such as: "good old woman", "the old nurse", "his fond old nurse", "devoted nurse", and tells us that she "was about to lift a cry of triumph" but Odysseus warned her: "Rejoice in your heart, old woman – peace!"[240].

Pomeroy[241] also mentions foundlings. In Hellenistic Egypt, such children were often given to a nurse or wet-nurse, who was contracted to raise the child in her own home, and "be brought up to be a slave". Foundlings have continued to be abandoned throughout the ages – perhaps one of the more notorious cases is that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who in his *Confessions* boasted that he had deposited a total of five children in a foundling home[242]. But there are worse scenarios, even now in the 21st century. Despite special Homes and steps to ensure anonymity, infants are discovered dumped in garbage bins or other rubbish receptacles and are lucky if anyone finds them in time to have some chance of survival. Their stories usually make Press headlines.

Chester Starr[243] warns that the differences between ancient and modern economic structures are "many and deep". He cautions against misinterpreting "the pattern of ancient slavery" which was unlike modern slavery, and suggests that erroneous views (based largely on "nineteenth-century humanitarianism or twentieth-century Marxist totalitarianism") tend "to warp our understanding of ancient slavery". Starr maintains that ancient Greek economics were not based on slave labour, and cites evidence that slaves and freemen worked alongside. He gives as an example the building accounts of the Erechtheum for the years 409-408 BC, in which payments of wages to 16 slaves, 35 metics and 20 citizens are listed. In addition, one must distinguish between slaves and peasants who were legally serfs. Starr states that although ancient law codes allowed a master to beat a slave, the slave did have some human rights, "even against his master", and also had the possibility of manumission. The offspring of married slaves were a "source[s] of fresh slaves". Golden[244] states that there is no evidence to suggest that slave children served as playmates to citizen children in classical Athens; evidence is also lacking with regards to what age slave children were put into service.

(Perhaps the most dreadful fate which could befall a slave child was to be put into a silver mining gang. The small size of skeletons found at the Laurium mines are telling evidence

of child labour[245] and an apparent total lack of feeling for the children and their welfare.)

In *Le travail libre en Grece ancienne,*[246] Yvon Garlan makes a brief reference to children, pointing out that, unless apprenticed to a third party, they were most often under the charge of their fathers. Garlan continues: "Dès leur plus jeune âge, ils devaient également participer aux travaux de maison," (p.9), thus providing 'free' labour in societies without slaves. It was noted earlier, under 'Education', that children's labour was often required by their families for economic reasons. Down the centuries, children have helped with domestic work and also in the family business, according to age and capability. Since industrialization and the advent of the technological age, as well as supermarkets and hypermarkets which have all but killed-off small concerns like the little corner shop or family grocer, the use of this 'free' source of labour is not as widespread as previously.

In ancient Greece, wealth determined the number of slaves (if any at all) that a family could afford to employ. This criterion has continued down the centuries to modern times with regard to domestic workers. Industrialization has seen growing numbers of women seeking work in factories. Improved Labour Laws, minimum wages and economic factors such as inflation have resulted in fewer homes having the benefit of nannies and maids, resulting in families having to do all their own domestic work. In Western culture, it is accepted practice to enlist the help of one's children with chores around the home, but this is generally regarded as an essential part of training in basic life-skills and part of growing-up, rather than as a source of 'free' labour.

Marriage

According to the Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History[247]: "Marriages in Greece were 'arranged': the girl had no say in the choice and was betrothed to her prospective husband by her father or nearest male relative *(kurios)* any time after the age of five." The entry continues with an account of the procedures followed when the marriage eventually takes place – the bride aged about 15 and the husband aged around 30 – the "prime concern was the continuity of the family". In his *Politics,* Aristotle[248] proposes that women should marry at about the age of 18 and men at 37, as he believes that "young mothers have harder labours and die more often in childbirth" and that "the union of young parents is bad for the procreation of issue" (that is, a high risk of imperfections). Aristotle thus shows concern for

the high mortality rate of young mothers, often resulting in the loss of both mother and child, which obviously impacts on the continuity of healthy generations.

Medea[249] declares: "we women are the unhappiest of species. […] and there is another fearful hazard: whether we shall get a good man or a bad." She goes on to highlight the difficulties of a wife adjusting to her new husband's home: "Then, landed among strange habits and regulations unheard of in her own home, a woman needs second sight to know how best to handle her bedmate."

In contrast, in Book 6 of the *Odyssey*, [250] Nausicaa is described as: "too shy to touch on her hopes for marriage, young warm hopes," and later, referring to Odysseus, she wishes: "Ah, if only a man like *that* were called my husband,"[251] but she is still very young and full of dreams, unlike the embittered Medea. Nowadays girls are free to make their own choice of 'partner', but Medea's 'fearful hazard': 'a good man or a bad', remains as relevant today as it was in antiquity, judging by the increasing number of cases of wife battering and other abuse reported in the media; the difference being, of course, that divorce is comparatively easy and less of a stigma than it was even a hundred years' ago.

Since girls were married at a young age, little more than children, the pain of leaving home was very real[252]. Procne, in Sophocles' *Tereus*[253] describes the shock of this transition after her carefree childhood:

> "Now outside [my father's house] I am nothing. Yet I have often
> observed woman's nature in this regard,
> how we are nothing. When we are young in our father's house,
> I think we live the sweetest life of all humankind;
> for ignorance always brings children up delightfully.
> But when we have reached maturity and can understand,
> we are thrust out and sold
> away from the gods of our fathers and our parents,
> some to foreigners, some to barbarians,
> some to joyless houses, some full of reproach.
> And finally, once a single night has united us,
> we have to praise our lot and pretend that all is well."[254]

Wayne Ingalls[255] also comments on the pain of separation, referring to abduction myths "associated with the worship of Artemis and with rites marking the transition of girls to adulthood". He explains that "notions of rape and abduction speak to the emotions that the girl and her family feel about her departure from home [from her *oikos*] to take up residence in her husband's household", and her family's sense of loss. Despite the trauma involved, the practice of very early marriage continued. Further, Ingalls refers to the myth of Hippodameia – one of its lessons for the girls in the chorus who sang it was "the futility of any opposition to marriage" – it was a necessity.

This 'necessity' for girls to marry continued through the centuries and has been the subject of many literary texts. An outstanding example of this is given by Jane Austen (1775-1817) in *Pride and Prejudice*, (first published in 1813) – Mrs Bennet is the mother of five girls, and we learn in Chapter 1 that "The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news."[256] As with the elite of Athens, Austen's book reflects life as it was for a small section of society. Throughout history women and girls of the lower classes have worked in various spheres: as maids, nurses, seamstresses, nannies, and so on. It was only in the 20th century, with the emancipation of women and the introduction of Laws on gender equality, that girls could look forward to making their own career and lifestyle choices.

Euripides also highlights the love of home with words he puts into the mouths of the chorus of captive Greek women and Iphigenia in *Iphigenia in Tauris* – their longing is unmistakable:

1094 "Sister, I too beside the sea complain,
A bird that hath no wing,
Oh for a kind Greek market-place again,
For Artemis that healeth woman's pain;
Here I stand hungering,
Give me the little hill above the sea,
The palm of Delos fringed delicately,"

and:

1137 "Ah me, … […]
O'er the house that was mine of old:
Or watch where the glade below
With a marriage dance doth glow,

> And a child will glide from her mother's side
> Out, out where the dancers flow:
> As I did long ago."[257]

Finally, for those who survive all the perils of growing-up, Plato advocates that they should honour their parents[258]:

> "Next in order come honours to living parents. Those to whom one owes the first and greatest of debts, one ought as a sacred duty to repay with the most exalted honours, and to consider that all that one has and holds belongs to those who gave him birth and nurture, so that he is bound to make his all minister to their service to the utmost of his capacity, including his substance, and powers of body and mind, and thereby repay the debt of cares and pains which they have bestowed on him – an expenditure made of old for him in youth, and which, moreover, the son repays to the old when age has brought them to need."[259]

Conclusion

Children were protected to a limited extent by law, but one must remember that a formal legal system was still evolving, with reforms being made by the likes of Lycurgus, Draco, Solon, and Pericles. Laws for the protection of children have been an ongoing process throughout the centuries.

Although the state did not provide schools, children received a form of education which was considered relevant preparation for adulthood, that is, marriage for girls, and participation in the life of the *polis* for young men.

Pederasty had its proponents and opponents, with the likes of Solon and Pausanias in favour, as a means of "educating" or transition from boy to man, and Aristotle against it as a practice which corrupted the young in abnormal or unnatural behaviour. Sexual corruption and abuse of children remains a matter of major concern today.

Almost all children would have had some interaction with slaves, and many had caring nurses. Slaves were the lowest stratum of society and slavery was a dreaded fate for the elite.

Since girls were usually married-off at a very young age the experience was often very traumatic for them and their family; the same was not true for males who married considerably later.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to try to discover, through ancient literary texts, what attitudes prevailed towards children in Greece during the pre-Christian era, more particularly, in Classical and Hellenistic Athens. Furthermore, a comparison of these attitudes was to be drawn with current attitudes towards children in the Western world.

Taking heed of the many cautions regarding the various obstacles and pitfalls awaiting the unwary researcher, one hardly dared set forth! But an understanding of the Ancient's value system and an awareness of the many influences (some unexpected, such as kinship ideology) which might affect attitudes, is essential for an unbiased interpretation of the texts.

Primary sources for this study were selected from ancient texts in translation, and were chosen specifically because they mentioned children. However, possibly due to staging constraints in the theatres of antiquity, and the number of actors restricted to three men,[260] children did not play a predominant role in drama, although they certainly did lend pathos to tragedy. Passages from a variety of genres present families that enjoy a close bond between parent and child, a bond still very evident in modern society, regardless of the widespread breakdown of the family unit. Thus the ancient Greek attitude of treasuring or valuing children has endured over the millennia.

Secondary texts were likewise selected because they either referred to children or discussed subjects, such as Philosophy, that applied to both adults and children. In addition to primary literary sources, many of these authors derived information from visual sources such as stelai, sepulchral epigrams, and various artefacts, especially vase paintings. Whilst scenes on ceramic-ware depicting children[261] are delightful and informative, they are essentially factual, even allowing for artistic imagination. It takes the spoken or written word to convey 'attitude'.

Much of the material examined portrays mythical and fictitious characters in improbable situations, but, as explained in the Introduction, myths or fictional stories express 'collective attitudes to fundamental matters' of existence. Thus a mythical situation such as kidnapping, or a picnic, finds a parallel in modern reality: the act of kidnapping, or picnicking, is the same, regardless of whether the protagonists are imaginary or real flesh-and-blood humans.

Talthybius'[262] humane gesture in washing the corpse of an enemy child is surely the forerunner of "love thy neighbour" (Matthew, 22 : 39) / "Love your enemies" (Matthew, 5 : 44).

Chapter 1 examined the historical context of the period under investigation, with the concept of 'humanism' slowly evolving from tribal society and the city-state. Several literary examples of parental love and concern were studied and in most cases revealed not only a basic natural instinct for one's offspring but also genuine affection.

In Chapter 2 it was shown that ongoing warfare and environmental issues (especially those affecting food supply) prescribed limits on population growth. Thus parents starving in a besieged *polis*, facing capture and slavery, may well have decided that abortion, exposure or even infanticide, would be preferable to the bleak future they envisaged for their young. Limited resources, both in times of peace and war, dictated population control, but before we condemn the Ancients as heartless in their methods, we must appreciate that they did not have the benefit of 21st century medical science, and there was no question of freely available condoms and the Pill. Within their limited knowledge, those were the means available to them, and the only way they could conceive of avoiding depletion of resources and mass starvation. We cannot know if such actions were taken with a sense of regret, but as Golden[263] explained, to remain sane the Ancients could not allow themselves the luxury of grieving for these offspring. Modern man can hardly afford to be complacent, for even with his knowledge and facilities, there are millions starving around the globe.

Chapter 3 considered the experiences of children as they were growing-up. These included schooling, participation in sport, choral performances and religious festivals. Within the sphere of the home children could have encountered slaves (Nurses and Tutors), an extended family with step-parents and step-siblings, and children sent for safety from war zones. War-time experiences included deprivation, hunger and disease, dislocation, possible capture and slavery – all threats to the child's physical well-being. Even if the child survived the actual fighting around his / her home area, the future would have been uncertain since many city-states were destroyed by the attacking party, the population would have fled for their lives, and if lucky enough to escape would have had to find new homes, sometimes in the overseas colonies. Girls had the added trauma of marriage at a very young age.

Aristotle[264] declares that "parents love their children as being part of themselves, and children their parents as having themselves originated from them. […], parents love their children as soon as these are born, but children love their parents only after time has elapsed." He continues at some length on the various forms of friendship between relations. Aristotle concludes: "And children seem to be a bond of union (which is the reason why childless people part more easily); for children are a good common to both and what is common holds them together"[265].

An extended study of ancient texts will certainly reveal more portraits of loving parent-child interaction. Those selected here reveal that many fathers and mothers loved and cared for their children, and were concerned for their safety and future security. Hector's gesture, kissing his baby son and tossing him in his arms,[266] is one that is surely repeated daily by thousands of fathers.

Fortunately, Medea's unnatural action is not one frequently repeated, but nevertheless domestic violence is on the increase, and in recent years there have been a number of cases where a parent, usually a father, has turned a gun on the entire family before taking his / her life too. These actions are often triggered by some major upset within the family, such as depression, job loss, or divorce, which leads to despair; sociologists may debate how society has failed such people

Domestic violence of any kind (be it against women, children or the elderly) is a source of shame – for the sake of appearances family members will close ranks and maintain silence, hoping their secret will not be discovered. This has been the case throughout time, documented by various writers, but it is only recently that people have been encouraged to break the silence and expose the perpetrators. Those brave enough to do so often suffer the consequences and instead of receiving support are rejected by their family, as Sibilla Aleramo experienced after the publication of her book *Una Donna* in 1906.

Although children were generally regarded as deficient adults, artefacts such as toys,[267] and vase-paintings showing children at play, indicate that children were allowed some childhood, but there was definitely no awareness of the child's developmental needs as catered for now with modern pre-school and early-learning programmes.

Considering the laborious methods of producing the written word in antiquity, and thus a scarcity of books in circulation, it is not surprising that literacy was not widespread. With the advent of the printing press in Europe in 1454 [268] literacy increased. Today there is an overwhelming selection of material in print, some relatively inexpensive, and readily accessible, and yet in the 21st century there are large numbers of illiterate people, both adults and children. One should be careful, therefore, not to be too hasty in judging the Ancients on this matter. As stated previously, education has to be relevant to the needs of a particular society at that particular period.

Pride in one's child's achievements remains little changed, especially in the realm of sport.

The legal status of children may have been inadequately covered by the Ancients, but there was certainly an awareness, limited perhaps, that children required protection, and as the legal system evolved and improved, so too did legislation concerning children, although they had no rights in the same sense that modern children are protected by the Children's Charter. (The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20th November 1989 – exactly twenty years' ago. The need for such a Treaty stands as ample proof that modern society still has a long way to go with regard to 'attitudes' towards children.[269])

Modern Western law stipulates the minimum period of education, minimum age at which a child may start employment, and youngest age at which a young person may marry, as well as other rules for the protection of minors. Even so, in the 21st century the incidence of child abuse is escalating, notably so in matters of a sexual nature, with child pornography a major (illegal) industry. Anyone shocked by the practice of pederasty by the Ancients would do well to remember that modern society also has a 'sick' element.

As we have seen, the Ancients had a very different value system, which evolved from the 'heroic code', through the *polis'* policy of the good of the community as a whole, to recognition of the individual and their value as a person as the influence of 'humanism' developed. Although crimes such as murder, adultery, rape, theft, were, and are still, considered wrong, the Ancients allowed for 'mistake' and 'error', whilst modern society requires individual personal responsibility and 'accountability'. In recent times, war criminals have been tracked down and brought to trial for atrocities carried out during

World War II, as well as in smaller war arenas such as Bosnia (genocide of course included children). Other behaviour has also been exposed and condemned, such as the appalling conditions discovered in some children's homes and orphanages – a notorious case in Ireland made headlines only last year. And in November 2009 Australia apologized to the 7,000 survivors still alive in Australia, who were amongst the 150,000 child-migrants shipped out from Britain ("to ease pressure on post-World War II Britain's social services"), and ended up in institutions were they were often neglected and abused.[270]

The ancient Greeks were pioneers in every field of human endeavour, laying the foundations for many disciplines which we have since refined – there is no doubt of our indebtedness, a fact acknowledged as far back as AD 1150 by the medieval scholar, Bernard Silvester of Chartres. This period of discovery, especially in philosophy, as they tried to understand their world, together with the gradual move from tribal society to urban settlement and the concepts of "humanism", accounts for their different attitudes to life. But they should be judged with leniency since they were learning and establishing principles on which subsequent generations have built. The sheer needs of survival dictated some attitudes, whilst genuine ignorance accounted for some of their harmful child-rearing practices.

On reflection, the selected texts reveal a belief in a 'creator' with authority over life and death, an awareness of the natural instinct to protect and nurture offspring, appreciation of the deep bond between parent and child and the value of the family unit, a horror of killing innocent children and a dread of slavery. Thousands of parents in antiquity loved, cared for and protected their children.

What kind of creature is modern man, and is he no better than his Greco-Roman counterpart, who at first glance could be labelled violent, cruel, heartless, licentious …? In certain respects, he is not very different from man in antiquity. As we have seen, many ordinary people went about their lives doing the best they could. Yes, <u>some</u> people displayed characteristics such as cruelty and violence, amongst other traits, but one cannot condemn them all of such attitudes. Now, as then (and throughout the centuries) <u>some</u> people display such characteristics, and they are the ones whose exploits make media headlines.
The main difference is that the Ancients have the excuse that they were learning and discovering codes of behaviour – whilst 21st century man has the benefit of 'wisdom'

evolved and accumulated over the millennia, and yet in many ways very little has changed. What excuse can he offer?

Maybe, after all, the best summary is given in the closing line of a well-known prayer: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be" …

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ENDNOTES

[1] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History. 1995 : 507
[2] *op.cit.*1995 : 23
[3] Evans, 1991 : 49-50
[4] Rodgers, 2005 : 6
[5] Evans, 1992 : 17
[6] 1992 : 11, 154, 185
[7] 1983 : xi
[8] 2001 : 1
[9] [1878] 2002 : 3
[10] 1976 : 2-3
[11] 2003 : 113
[12] 2003 : 7-10
[13] 10th ed. 2002 : 245
[14] Zingarelli, 1994 : 129, 370, 487
[15] Le Nouveau Petit Robert. (1967) 1995 : 189, 760
[16] 1991
[17] 1990 : 4,12-15
[18] Roget, 1982 : Head 451: p.251-252; Head 485: p.274-275; Head 512: p.295; Head 688: p.417-418; Head 817: p.498.
[19] 2007:3
[20] 2004 : 163-164
[21] Trans. Barker 1958 : 327
[22] Herodotus (484-c.425 BC) – clearly states his purpose for recording the Persian Wars:

> "These are the researches of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope that by preserving from decay the memory of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful deeds of the Greeks and the Barbarians from being lost and forgotten, and to put on record the grounds for the quarrel between them" (Herodotus, Book 1.1)

[23] Thucydides (c.455-400 BC) – justifies his work thus:

> "Thucydides, the Athenian wrote the history of the war waged by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another. He began the task at the very start of the war in the belief that it would be great and notable above all the wars that had gone before," (Thucydides, Book 1, 1-2)

> "But as far as the facts of the war are concerned, I considered it my duty to give them, […] For I write my history, not as a composition which will win momentary applause, but as a possession for all time." (Thucydides, Book 1.22)

[24] 1983 : 75
[25] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 10, 599, 254
[26] 1979 : 68
[27] 1982 : 8
[28] 1983 : 53
[29] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 70-71, 502
[30] **Existing Recent and Current Research**

A search of NEXUS for existing recent and current research (within the last 10 years) on ancient Greek attitudes to children from 480 to 31 BC produced negative results.
Likewise, a search of an Index to Classical Dissertations and Theses in Progress or Recently Completed in North America and Great Britain also drew a blank.
L'Année Philologique produced 23 related titles, (the majority of which referred to childhood in ancient Rome) – of these, only five were written after 2000, and out of these five only two referred to ancient Greece:
- Duff, T. 2003. Plutarch on the childhood of Alkibiades (Alk.2-3) PCPhS 2003 49 : 89-117.
- Hanson, A.E. 2003. Your mother nursed you with bile : anger in babies and small children. YCIS 2003 32 : 185-207.

A subsequent extended search of NEXUS for current and completed research projects provided the following information:
1) Author: Tzitzi, E. – University of Johannesburg : MA Dissertation (current)

Title: Development of intelligence and creative expression in pre-school children through the teaching of modern Greek child literature.

2) Author: Schunke, C. – University of Pretoria : MA Dissertation (current)
Title: Die kind en die familie in die antieke wêreld : 'n vergelykende studie tussen Plutarchus en Paulus = The child and the family in the ancient world : a comparative study between Plutarch and Paul.

[31] Snodgrass, A. "Archaeology" in Crawford, Sources for Ancient History, 1983 : 137-149
[32] *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol.18, No.3, 1897 : 255-274)
[33] in Crawford, 1983 : 1
[34] *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 105, No.2, 1984 : 174-208
[35] Rowe, 1976 : 13-15
[36] Lloyd-Jones, 2003 : 49-72
[37] Lawrence, 2005 : 18-19
[38] Adkins, (1960) 1975 : 53
[39] *Iliad* Book 23, lines 105-106 in Fagles, 1990 : 562
[40] Adkins, (1960) 1975 : 266-348
[41] available at http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G2-3402800013.html, accessed 07/05/2010.
[42] *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* – 1992, Classical Philology – 1993, available at www.jstor.org, accessed 23/01/2010, and American Historical Review, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, New York Review of Books available at www.amazon.com, accessed 23/01/2010.
[43] available at http://www.3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/63655/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0, accessed 09/05/2010.
[44] 1992 : 5-6
[45] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History, 1995 : 151-152
[46] Bowra, 1965 : 178; Evans, 1992.
[47] trans.Warner, 1972 : 87-88
[48] *op.cit.* 133
[49] *op.cit.* 396, Book.5.77
[50] Evans, 1992 : 64-67
[51] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 398
[52] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 302-30
[53] Jeskins, 1998 : *Cover*
[54] 1998: 22-24, 43, 69.
[55] *cf.* White, 1973 : 9-11, 26-33
[56] trans. Most, 2006 : 2-85
[57] trans. Athanassakis, 2004: No. 30, p.60
[58] Sorabji, 1993 : 157
[59] *op.cit.* 156
[60] 1993 : 156-168
[61] Bowra, (1965) 1968 : 80
[62] Sorabji, 1993 : 163-164
[63] Oakeley, 1925 : 182-3, 185; Aristotle, trans. Irwin, 1985 : 208, 222-223
[64] trans. Simpson, 1997 : 148
[65] 1958 : 327
[66] trans.de Sélincourt, 1972 : 374
[67] Homer. trans. Fagles, 1990
[68] Dictionary of Classical Mythology [1951] 2004 : 191-2
[69] trans. Fagles, 1990 : 211, lines 556-576
[70] trans. Fagles, 1996 : 170-171
[71] Dictionary of Classical Mythology [1951] 2004 : 359
[72] Lincoln, 1979 : 223
[73] 1979 : 226-227
[74] Sarah Pomeroy (1975 : 65) states that this kinship ideology is understandable, since "the mammalian ovum was unknown; hence a woman's contribution to a baby was not fully understood". She cites Apollo's explanation (in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*) regarding the fetus:

"I shall explain this – and speak quite bluntly, so note.

She who is called the mother is not her offspring's
Parent, but nurse to the newly sown embryo.
The male – who mounts – begets. The female, a stranger,
Guards a stranger's child if no god bring it harm."

See also: Aeschylus' *Eumenides* in Hadas, M. (ed.) 1982. Greek Drama. New York: Bantam Books: pp. 70-71

[75] Lincoln, 1979 : 226
[76] trans. Warner, 1972 : 191
[77] News24.com, 9 September 2007
[78] trans. Kovacs, 1994
[79] *cf.* McAuslan & Walcot, 1996 : 70-72; Lyons, 2003 : 125-126
[80] Jowett, 1875. 179A
[81] trans. Kovacs, 1994 : 177 – Greek lines ± 155-169 : 176
[82] *op.cit.* p.187, Greek lines 264-265 : 186
[83] *op.cit.*197
[84]*op.cit.* 201, Greek lines 395-415 : 200
[85] *op.cit.* p.191, Greek lines 300-319 : 190
[86] Gould, 1980 : 43
[87] 1990 : Ch 4-6, pp 139, 144, 149.
[88] trans, Hadas, M. and McLean, J., 1982: 256-287
[89] Sifakis, 1979 : 67-80
[90] Hadas, 1982 : 147-148
[91] 1979 : 67
[92] Hadas, 1982 : 137
[93] Hadas, 1982 : 204-205
[94] cited in Evans, 1992 : 34
[95] Herodotus. trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 363
[96] Hadas, 1982 : 33
[97] Golden, 1990 : 144
[98] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 51
[99] trans. Scott-Kilvert, 1960 : 69
[100] 1992 : 185
[101] White, 1973 : 26-33, 78
[102] trans. Warner, 1954 : 123-127; trans. Marchant, [1891] 1966 : 243, 47-54
[103]trans. Scott-Kilvert, 1960 : 201
[104]Evans, 1992 : 65
[105]1960 : 101-102, 138-144
[106] trans. Warner, 1954 : 138, 140-143
[107] Homer, trans. Fagles, 1990: lines 597-601, p.484
[108] trans.Warner, 1972 : 126
[109]1999 : 27, 39-53, 101-107
[110] Cartledge, 1981 : 92
[111] trans. Simpson, 1997 : 148
[112]Gorman, 1982 : 21
[113] trans. Barker, 1958 : 327
[114] Available from: http://reproductiverights.org/en/document/world-abortion-laws-2009-fact-sheet [Accessed: 26 November 2009].
[115] Gorman, 1982 : 23
[116]Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 453-454
[117] Gorman, 1982 : 23-24
[118] 1992 : 62-63
[119] Gorman, 1982 : 13-21
[120] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 854
[121] Gorman, 1982 : 21-23
[122] Gorman, 1982 : 23
[123] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 700-701
[124] trans. Rackham, 1932 : 619-621

[125] Gorman, 1982 : 22-23
[126] trans. Barker, 1958 : 327
[127] 1992 : 62
[128] 2004. Ancient Greece and Rome in Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society
[129] Bowra, 1968 : 63 *photo*
[130] Hadas, 1982 : 141
[131] Hadas, 1982 : 111, 137
[132] 1988 : 10-11
[133] 1932 : 105-108, 113
[134] *{Source – personal encounter: 1976}*
[135] 1932 : 105
[136] trans. Rouse, 2008 : 301
[137] Cameron, 1932 : 108
[138] trans. de Selincourt, 1972 : 86
[139] 1932 : 107-111
[140] 1967 : 2
[141] Hadas, 1982 : 282
[142] 2005 : 15-16
[143]Grimal, 1951 : 366, 454
[144] trans. de Sélincourt, 1954
[145] *op.cit.* p.85
[146] *op.cit.* p.90
[147]trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 374-375; trans. Rawlinson, G. in Pym, D. 1924 : 130-131
[148] 1988 : 152-153; 1990 : 89
[149] trans. Warner, 1972 : 495-496
[150] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 397
[151] Hadas, 1982 : 220
[152] Hadas, 1982 : 217, 207-208
[153] 1995 : 564
[154] Hadas, 1982 : 20
[155] There is some debate, however, on this matter. Cf. *Odyssey*11.1.409f; Hesiod's *Ehoeae*; article in American Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 102, p. 353-358.
[156] *op.cit.* p.45
[157] *op.cit.* p.47
[158] Hadas, 1982 : 188-221; 222-255
[159] Katz, 1992a : 87
[160] Hadas, 1982 : 202, 238
[161] Hadas, 1982 : 195
[162] 1983 : 82
[163] 1988 : 153-134, 160
[164] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 98
[165] 1992a : 82, 87
[166] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 198
[167] trans. Warner, 1954 : 115-123
[168] *Politics*, trans. Simpson, 1997 : 327
[169] Lacey, 1968 : 16
[170] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 866
[171]Golden, 1990 : 23-24
[172] 1982 : 188
[173] Euripides. *Medea* in Hadas, 1982 : 201-202, 207
[174] 1981 : 89
[175] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 407
[176] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 479; 598
[177] trans. Rouse, 2008 : 302; Book 5, 460E-462B
[178] trans. Scott-Kilvert, 1960 : 43-76
[179]trans. Scott-Kilvert, 1960 : 54
[180] 1991 : 184-194
[181] Golden, 1990 : 60; Hindley, 1991 : 179
[182]Hubbard, 2003 : 131-133

[183] Concise Oxford English Dictionary 2002 : 455
[184] Zingarelli, 1994 : 514
[185] Robert, 1995 : 719
[186] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 1243
[187] *op.cit.* 1376
[188] trans. Rackham, 1932 : 635-637
[189]Clarke, 1971 : 21
[190] Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History 1995 : 224-225
[191]Kennell, 1995 : 152-155
[192] *op.cit.* 23-24
[193] 1981 : 84-105
[194] 5.16.2; in Fantham *et al.*, 1994 : 59
[195] 1991 : pXV, 77-79
[196] *op.cit.* 89, 123, 131-132
[197] Golden, 1990 : 71
[198] in Fantham *et al.*, 1994 : 84; Golden, 1990 : 46; trans. Lindsay, J. in Hadas, 1962 : 309
[199]*cf.* Kraemer, 2004 : 40
[200] *Perseus Project* 2006
[201] Hadas, 1962 : 103, 124-125
[202] *Perseus Project* 2006
[203] Source: *The Perseus Project* – The Olympics. Available online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Olympics/>visited 03/09/2006.
[204] 2000 : 1-20
[205] in Lefkowitz and Fant, 1992 : 100-104; Pym, D. 1924 : 251-255; trans. Pomeroy, S.B. 1994 : 137-141, 1-17
[206] 1994 : 139
[207] in Golden and Toohey 2003 : 44-56
[208] *cf.* Pomeroy, 1991 : 17-18, 36-38
[209] trans. Rackham, 1932 : 67; in Fantham *et al.*, 1994 : 124
[210] trans. Jack Lindsay – 1929, in Grant, M. 1976 : 338-340
[211](1599) Act 2, Sc. 7, lines 143-145; 1975 : 239
[212] trans. Jowett, 1875
[213] *cf.* Seltman, 1955 : 122-123
[214] ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 1404-1406
[215] 1404, 839a
[216] trans. Thomson, 1959 : 236-237, 238-240
[217]Aristotle, trans. Ross, 1980 : 171
[218] *Politics* 1336b, trans. Rackham, 1932 : 627-631
[219] 1984 : 320
[220] 318-319
[221] *op.cit.* 317
[222] trans. de Sélincourt, 1972 : 97
[223]2004 : 11-12
[224] Homer. trans. Fagles, 1990 : 77-78
[225] *Iliad* Book 22 – trans. Fagles, 1990 : 557, lines 572-587
[226] p.612, lines 862-870
[227](1960) 1975 : 42
[228] Bowra, 1968 : 95.
[229] Hadas, 1982 : 261
[230] 1990 : 156
[231] *Oeconomicus* 7.35-37 in Fantham *et al.*, 1994 : 103; trans. Pomeroy, 1994 : 147, VII, 37
[232] Hadas, 1982 : 191
[233] trans. Ross, 1980 : 123
[234] 2007 : 4
[235] 1984 : 310, 317-318
[236] trans. Scott-Kilvert, 1960 : 43-44
[237] 1984 : 161
[238]1984 : 161-162
[239] trans. Fagles, 1996. Book 22, lines 416-529

[240] *op.cit* lines 433-436
[241] *op.cit.*162
[242]Boswell, 1988 : 3
[243] 1958 : 17-32
[244] 1990 : 146
[245] Murray, 1988 : 218
[246] in Garnsey, 1980 : 6-22
[247] 1995 : 397
[248] trans. Barker, 1958 : 326; Book 7.16, 1335a6-9
[249] Hadas, 1982 : 195
[250] trans. Fagles, 1996 : 170, lines 73-74
[251] p.176, line 270
[252] Golden, 1990 : 49; Fantham *et al.*, 1994 : 27
[253] cited in Fantham *et al.* 1994 : 70
[254] Also, trans. Bowra, C.M. – 1938, in Grant, M. 1976 : 130
[255] 2000 : 1-20
[256] Penguin Classics, 1972 : 53
[257] in Oakeley, 1925 : 30-31; trans. Scott-Kilvert, I. 1955 in Grant, M. 1976 : 152-154; Euripides trans. Potter, R. 1906 : 363-365
[258] Oakeley, 1925 : 132; *Laws* 4, 717b
[259] also: ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1961 : 1308
[260] Hadas, 1982 : 2
[261] [for example: swinging (Golden 1990 : 34 Fig.5), feeding chickens (p.36 Fig.7), with pets (p.75 Fig.12) and baby siblings (p.126 Fig.16)]
[262] Euripides. *Trojan Women* in Hadas, 1982 : 282
[263] 1988 : 154
[264] *Nichomachean Ethics* 8.12, trans. Ross, 1980 : 212-213
[265] *op.cit.*214
[266] Homer. *Iliad,* Book 6
[267] Bowra, 1968 : 80
[268] Pears Cyclopædia 1971 : L95
[269] *Source*: Convention on the Rights of the Child – updated 26 August 2008. Available at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> accessed 23/11/2009.
[270]Associated Press – 16 November 2009