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The Idealization of Pederasty in Archaic Greek Poetry and Vase-Painting

In 1985, Foucault declared that pederasty was "problematized" in Greek culture: it was (1985.193) "the object of a special — and especially intense — moral preoccupation." Today this concept is widely accepted: even scholars critical of Foucault accept or extend it (Cohen 1991.171-202, Hubbard 1998.49). However, a close analysis of the evidence for pederasty in Archaic Greece — principally lyric/elegiac poetry and vase-painting — suggests that this was not yet true in this period. Foucault claimed that pederasty was (1985.192) "subjected to an interplay of positive and negative appraisals." This is undoubtedly true in Classical Athenian texts. While the Archaic sources also present a variety of views, however, none is negative: each author or genre associates pederasty with the ideals he/it valorizes. Thus, in this paper, I will argue that pederasty was not "problematized" in Archaic Greece; instead, it was universally (if variously) idealized.

As Edmunds (1988) has shown, pederasty in the Theognidea is not problematized in Foucault's sense. The Classical period's concern with the *eromenos*' chastity/moderation is not present in the Theognidea; instead, (1988.82) "the self-concern of the lover is paramount" in this tradition, and "the particular form of his self-concern is the dread of domination by his passion." I will extend Edmunds' analysis of the Theognidea and compare the Theognidea's view with that of Anacreon, the other best-preserved author of pederastic verses. Finally, I will show that Athenian vase-painting offers parallels to their views.

In both the Theognidea and Anacreon, the poet's persona exemplifies the author/tradition's ideals. Thus these poets' self-representation as *erastai* locates pederasty within their systems of ideals. Nonetheless, the two poets/traditions present contrasting visions of pederasty. In the Theognidea, pederasty is a part of the elite male's method of passing on his wisdom and loyalties to his younger associates. Anacreon largely eschews the political and the pedagogical; his relations with boys revolve around purely erotic desire. Indeed, in contrast to the Theognidea, Anacreon assimilates boys to women (fr. 360) — with whom there is no question of pedagogy. This does not, however, mean that pederasty is less idealized for Anacreon. Anacreon valorizes the purely erotic and the Dionysiac, and it is with these things that he connects pederasty. Indeed, when, unlike the Theognidea, Anacreon offers examples of dispraised male sexual behavior (ffr. 388, 424), he makes no connection between these and pederasty.

There are considerable parallels to each of these views in contemporary Athenian vase-painting. Many of the gifts offered by *erastai* to *eromenoi* in vase-painting (hares, lyres, etc.) have pedagogical associations, as do other elements of costume and setting which connect pederastic scenes to athletics and the hunt: thus, like the Theognidea, vase-painting portrays pederasty as pedagogical. Other aspects of this iconography, however, emphasize the erotic/Dionysiac aspects of pederasty; *kalos* inscriptions, for instance, emphasize the importance in it of beauty — and hence desire. Yet as in Anacreon, the presence of the erotic does not detract from pederasty's idealized status: several crucial

elements in vase-painting symbolize the sexual moderation of the lovers, which vase-painting — again like Anacreon — contrasts sharply with dispraised sexual behavior/attitudes, represented in particular in Tyrrhenian *komos* scenes.

Thus while our Archaic sources offer differing views of pederasty, all associate it with the highest ideals in their value system and dissociate it from other sexual behaviors they dispraise. Foucault's "problematization" is not present in the evidence for pederasty in the Archaic period.