

Philosophical Aspects of Homosexuality in Ancient Greek

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Abstract

The current opinion on how Greeks lived and considered love is the following: love is seen as a sensual desire, a desire of possession. What we understand today by love (feeling plus passion) did not interest the Greeks. The Greek love is the love as impulse, as desire, as need of reunification, so that any erotic act is the sign of an imperfection. The lover sees in the loved one just an existence of a higher degree. Only to love something inferior is a pathologic sign, and when love is like this, the inferior cannot get the best part of the love. Therefore, more valuable is to be loved than to love. Since the Greek feels the love as a necessity, he does not make anymore the distinction between love as such and the other needs of human nature. Maybe love is the most intense need, it can as well be the deepest or the noblest, but in the end, it remains what it is – a need, and it differs from the others not by nature but by degree and harmony. I used the last term for the following reason: because needs are of a sensitive nature (bodily), love seeks to satisfy itself in harmonious bodies, and the Greek is not ashamed of the natural part (bodily) of love. As much chastity the natural love generates as the need of drinking, eating (it is true that, of and among creatures man is the only one who drinks without being thirsty and eats without being hungry. The same is with the need or use of eros.)

Keywords: ethics, homosexuality, pederasty, philosophy, eros, education.

The Problem of Greek Love

The essence of Greek love is given by the aspiration towards possession and the possession is reunification (re-possession). Then everything is allowed since it is natural, and what is natural goes beyond the frame of family. Thus, Greek love lives completely outside marriage and family. The wife has other duties: she procreates, she is mother and housewife; she cannot be a mistress, neither a courtesan, this is not her role.¹ For an Athenian woman, for instance, a reason of

¹ Adriano Tilgher, *Viața și nemurirea în viziunea greacă* (Life and Immortality in Greek Vision), Univers Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 78.

pride was the fact that nobody knew anything about her in the citadel, and Menander (fragment 546) says that “an honest woman must remain at home; the street is for miserable women”. The premise is: “the Greeks have loved, with strength and elevation, but they did not love Love; and the Christian world and the modern one never loved anything more than Love itself.”²

The Greek is conservative: in the public sphere the man is moving; in the domestic one, the woman (as compensation: in the public sphere there is nothing that belongs to the man directly, in the domestic one the woman owns everything in what the administration is regarded, both the keys to the pantry and to the cellar are for the woman the sign of authority, even if the man may exert some sort of extra control. Teofrast, in *Characters*, 18, shows how the man, distrustful, before bedtime, asks the wife if she had closed the chest, if she had put the seal, if she had locked the gate). Women did not travel and the Greeks did not prepare themselves to receive women as guests. However, even for the Greeks, a house without a woman was an empty house. In the bedroom there was the matrimonial bed. It belonged to the man as husband and it was intended to the woman as wife; the sexual liberty of man was total; the sexual liberty of woman was limited exclusively to her man and only when he thought it was right. All women had to get married and their moment of perfection is virginity – *parthenos*. The father enjoys the daughter not because she belongs to him, but because he can give her in to someone else: “the more wanted she is, the more desired for marriage and, thus, he will loose her even more secure and faster. For women, the moment of maximum ambiguity is at the same time that of maximum accomplishment, to be more precise the moment when she becomes wife,”³ wife by excellence (Pandora, Penelope), abandoned wife (Hera).⁴ Pandora is the first woman (she brings on the world death, but also life), Hera is the last woman (sterile marriage is the sign of

² *Ibidem*, pp. 80-81.

³ James Redfield, “Man and Domestic Life,” in Jean-Pierre Vernant (coord.), *Omul grec* (Greek Man), Poliroom Publishing House, Iași, 2001, p. 164. For example, the woman “was not required anything else but to spin, to weave and to insure the perpetuation of family. For physical pleasure, the Athenian preferred the company of prostitutes at home (*the pallaces*); if he wanted to combine the charm of discussion with bodily pleasure, he would have to go to privileged prostitutes, famous for their intelligence, as Aspasia was, Pericle’s sweetheart. The wife, on the other hand, would not dare committing not even the smallest infidelity [...]. The Greeks despised so much the woman, that they could not even imagine that she could become the object of a passion: any man who would humiliate himself by passionately loving a woman would become «unmanly», drawing disdain on him [...]. The lack of any dialogue between sexes facilitated the development of prostitution, of male homosexuality and of female homosexuality”, Mathilde Niel, *Drama eliberării femeii* (The Drama of the Liberation of Woman), Politică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1974, p. 34.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 165-171.

eternal reign, but of course, only in Olympus). In the space under the moon, however, things do not take place exactly in the same manner. For them not to happen in contrary, there is the need of an intermediary; the intermediary is not a man, but a woman – Aphrodite. She is *paraitios* (“participant”) at the marriage she makes with the earth. She is, somehow, accomplice at this marriage, she encourages it and transforms a whole story into only a half one: the man enjoys the public space and thus appears a dichotomy. From it he can only come out mediated, but the mediation is not in him. Whether the Greek likes it or not, the mediation is in the woman. When he does not like it, the mediation is to be found in some sort of substitute which must respect a rule: temporal difference and sexual homology. It is in fact about a “rite of transition”.⁵ The exigency of the substitute is an ontological commandment, because to love yourself by yourself means, in reality, to cease existing.

Paideia vs. Paiderasteia

I shall refer next to what it can be called, shortly, the cultural (and ethical) situation of homosexuality.⁶

It is an illusion to think that ancient Greek, and first of all Athens, was a paradise of the pederasts. It is not less true that homosexuality is certified in many cultures, so that the existence of sexual relations between men (or women) is to be considered as an anthropological fact. Hence the institutional forms that homosexuality takes, namely that the membership in a social group (or having a determined social status) may imply homosexuality. Only three examples, from a significant series:

- in ancient China female homosexuality was encouraged (it is reached the point where the family is forbidden to have more than one child);
- in the case of samurais, the *Bushido* code saw a rule in homosexuality;

⁵ Arnold Van Gennep, *Riturile de trecere* (Rites of Passage), Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1996, pp. 147-165.

⁶ Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Istoria educației în antichitate* (The History of Education in Antiquity), vol. I, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 59. Julius Evola, in *Metafizica sexului* (The Metaphysics of Sex), Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, wrote: “Homosexuality is a phenomenon which, considering its spreading, cannot be ignored by a sex doctrine. Goethe could write that «it is as old as mankind, for which it can be said that it is part of nature, being however against nature», p. 111. And another thing: “The word «uranism» used by some for homosexuality comes from the Platonic distinction between an Urania Aphrodite and a Pandea Aphrodite; the first one would be the goddess of a noble and not bodily love, not oriented towards procreation, like the one whose object is the woman. It seems that pederasty, *Paidon eros*, might have had at its origin this character.” *Ibidem*, p. 112.

- at Thebes, the Sacred Guard defeated by Philip at Chaeronea (338) was formed exclusively of homosexual couples (the so-called “sacred band” founded by Epaminondas).⁷

It is not something that it should not be mentioned the fact that pederasty was so much institutionalized in ancient Greek that Pericles was considered an original since he distinguished himself by the fact that he loved only women, and according to Xenophon, pederasty was part of education: the one who loves is connected with the one he loves the way in which the student is connected with his master, i.e.:

- the loved one is a teenager who has just reached puberty, the age of first beard;
- the one who loves is an adult, usually not older than 40 years.

Xenophon (in *Constitution of Sparta*, 2, 12) confesses that he feels forced to speak about pederasty because “it is important in education”.

Old Greece was not a paradise for the inverted ones. Plato himself says that the reaction regarding pederasty was different in Greek communities (*Symposium*, 182b-d/183e, and in the fragment it is stated that in Ionia and in all barbarous places this is seen as something shameful. Only in such places philosophy is removed as well; it came to something like that because of the wickedness of legislators – 132c-d). The essential problem is not the study of the technique of inversion or the proportion of homosexuality at Greeks. This can be handled by psychoanalysis or moral theology. The problem is beyond *libido*, it belongs to love as such, to the conception of love of the ancient Greek and which oscillates between *philia* and *eros*.

The premise from which I start is the following: homosexuality differs essentially from pederasty and the Greek language reproves the inversion. The latter one is designated as “dishonor”, “outraged”, “unworthy action”, “impurity”, “infamous conduct”, “ignoble custom” (it is to say that the disdain is a manifest not so much for the one who conducts the act, but for who bears it).⁸ Law itself is

⁷ Jacques Corraze, *L'Homosexualité*, PUF, Paris, 1982, pp. 18-23. The author confuses here two things. The first: the one who organized “the sacred band” was Pelopidas, not Epaminondas. Pelopidas was a friend and inseparable collaborator of Epaminondas. The second: the appropriate phrase instead of “homosexual couple” is that of “pair of lovers”.

⁸ Henri-Irénée Marrou, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 376. It must be taken into consideration the passive role played by an adult man. The terms by means of which the “passivity” is expressed are *malakia* or *malthakia* and mean “emasculating”, “limpness”, Andrei Cornea, *Platon. Filozofie și cenzură* (Plato. Philosophy and Censorship), Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 81. Passive homosexuality falls into satire. In conclusion: “For the Athenian from the V century, the fact of having pederastic relations has nothing unnatural; on the contrary, the abnormality is on the side of those who, women, and especially men, agree to let themselves penetrated in the anus. The

harsh on homosexuality. Xenophon tells us that homosexuality was, apparently, accepted only in Elida (*Constitution of Sparta*, 2, 12), and where it manifested itself somehow free, it was, however, sanctioned the violation of the ephebe (Strabon, *Geography*, X, 483; Xenophon, *op. cit.*, 2, 13 and the *Symposium* of Xenophon, VIII, 35). At the limit, however, pederasty is the classical form of homosexuality in Hellenic tradition, and moreover for Herodotus and Lucian of Samosata it was even one of the Hellenism criteria, a criterion by virtue of which the civilized man was distinguished from the barbarian. What is sure, says Marrou, is that “Greek homosexuality is of military type” and “the friendship between men seems a constant of warlike societies, in which a male environment tends to shut in itself.”⁹ The Greek citadel is the model of the “club for men” and in the club a *sui-generis* chivalry is practiced. Based on this chivalry I distinguish pederasty from homosexuality. However, pederasty (and not pedophilia, because the age of the *eromenos* was between 15 and 18 years old, and the *eromenos* was exclusively of male gender), as form of homosexuality, was intentionally sublimed and responded to chivalry, it, not homosexuality. Force, courage, fidelity are not domestic virtues or homosexual ones, and this is about the pederast moral, not about the pederasty seen as rite of passage.¹⁰ The fighting spirit, the “agonistic” spirit, are not domestic. Their purpose is glory and glory requires to the one who loves to be noticed in the lover’s eyes, and to him to be worthy of the love that it is given to him. The desire is symmetrical and the ancient tradition connects the practice of pederasty with boldness, courage, virility (not homosexuality as well which is first a deviation, especially moral). The feeling slides imperceptibly from the military area into the political one and the lovers, not just a few times, rose defending their loved ones. Jealousy of this type overthrows tyrannical regimes. It is the case of Aristogeiton – the one who loves and Harmodius, the lover. For

scorn hits, thus, both the teenagers who, by the sake of anal passivity, give up *diamerismós*, the normal behavior in the homophile relations, as well as the adults who, by neglecting their active role, become effeminate. Only the latter ones could become part of the modern category of homosexuality, which no longer means fugitive homosexuality, corresponding to the practices of education, but the stable inversion, centered on passivity and sodomy,” *Ibidem*, p. 147. The idea is the following: if the adulterous woman sins following her nature, “the one who abuses his own body acts against nature [...]. (Then) male homosexuality among adults is defined, in Greece, as being a custom contrary to nature. To engage to sodomy is equal with a double negation of the quality of man: it means to have the behavior of a man who is not free (and not of a woman), but also to violate ethical rules of asymmetric homophile love, that who transforms teenagers in worthy citizens,” *Ibidem*, pp. 149-150. In *Laws* (836b; 841d), Plato condemns homosexuality only because he understands by it sexual relations between grown men; he does not condemn the relationships between adolescents and adults.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

¹⁰ Henri-Irénée Marrou, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63, 378-380.

Harmodius which falls in love with the tyrant Hipparchos. Suffering from love, Aristogeiton decides that the only way to keep his lover is to overthrow the tyranny. Plato quotes this example and allows to be understood that a strong connection unites pederasty to the feeling of honor.¹¹

Socrates, for instance, knew well to distinguish eros from the simple sexual desire; moreover, the eros is opposed to this desire, so that pederasty does not take into consideration abnormal sexual relations. It is rather about a form of sensibility, “a misogynist ideal of total virility” in which “the eros however takes part in *arête*.¹² How? The *erastes* (the active partner, the one who loves), since he is admired, draws to himself the *eromenos* (the young partner, the loved one), being for him precisely a model of admiration, therefore we have on the one hand the shaping, on the other hand the growing up, and it is to be seen that the paideitic aspect acts especially on the *eromenos*. And this from an age difference that gives birth to a report of inequality from which *eromenos* will take advantage. *Paideia* is realized in *paiderasteia*, and it was weird for a Greek to see this thing as bizarre. What is attraction exercised by *erastes*, becomes desire in *eromenos* although, if necessary, the desire is distributed doubly:

- *erastes* wants to seduce, to awake in *eromenos* a feeling of admiration and, in order to preserve the relationship, he himself is caught in the paideitic aspect;

- *eromenos* wants to be worthy of the attention that the hero (*erastes*) grants him with and is convinced that he will acquire, in time, at his turn, the status of hero. His intention is not just preserving such relationship, but the shift of roles in what he is concerned: the *eromenos* wants to become *erastes*.

The family does not provide such frame and the father is first of all a citizen (politician), only then head of family. The *erastes* is a model, guide, initiator and responsible for the evolution of the *eromenos*; the latter one is to prove himself worthy of the love of *erastes*. This means that the licit form of homosexuality was pederasty (a temporary relation between *erastes* – the mature man, and *eromenos* – the teenager/*paidika*, relationship in which the educational character was predominantly), while the illicit form of pederasty was homosexuality (if the paideitic/educational aspect was extended beyond the period of adolescence, pederasty was turned into homosexuality, i.e. the relationship was no longer between an adult and a youth, but between adults, even if one was younger than the other). For things to be clear, at least in Athens, the legislation regarding homosexuality stipulated:

¹¹ Plato, *Symposium*, 182b-e.

¹² Henri-Irénée Marrou, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

- teenagers (*eromenos*) were protected against the abuses that might have been committed on them during school;
- male prostitution was despised (*malakia*);
- the violation of such provisions entailed the loss of some citizenship rights.

In conclusion: “single homosexual love was, in general, considered by Greeks as fulfillment of the other people’s desires [...]. This must be accepted without prejudice regarding their natural or perverse character, if we want to understand the signification of Greek Eros.”¹³ What does this mean? It means that the love the Greeks speak about is male love and its true meaning is to be found in what Socrates says that he had learned from Diotima: *orthos paiderasteia*.

Pederastic Symmetry – Sappho

Any imbalance brings forth a counter-balance. Symmetry must be kept on the line of measure. Men’s club sees itself in competition with a club of women, the frenzy of male eros is found in the frenzy of female eros and this symmetry is transmitted from eros to education, and not even in a forced manner. Damned women built their own club on the island Lesbos. A few centuries later, in his *Geography*, Strabon tells us that he found out things about an island inhabited only by women and which he located in the mouth of Loire. When women needed to be together, they were crossing on the continent and did not delay more than that. Sappho wants exactly the same thing as the corresponding male institution: an ideal of beauty whose aspiration to be wisdom. “Greek spirit needed this woman in order to make the final step in the new intimate universe of purely subjective emotion,”¹⁴ and, at Plato’s (and not only) stimulus, Sappho is worshipped as a tenth Muse. Sappho is not particularly interested in the woman as mother, sweetheart and wife. The traditional posture of the woman does not interest Sappho excessively. The period that the poet develops is the one contained between the period of childhood spent under the mother’s authority and that of marriage. As a whole, for the rule of symmetry to be respected, this period

¹³ Yvon Brès, *Psihologia lui Platon* (Plato’s Psychology), Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 251.

¹⁴ Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, vol. I, Teora Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 113. See also Henri-Iréne Marrou, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72. Certain verses composed by Sappho urge us not to restrict only to men the fiduciary and mutual connection established by the asymmetric relation of love between adults and adolescents. Thus, as in the case of men, the relationship of *philia* between an adult woman and a teenager is established inside a group of *hetaïrai*; as for men, this relationship animated by Eros is doubled by the pedagogical function by virtue of which the biographer of the poetess could identify the status of *mathétriai*, of students, of some of the young receivers of her poems.

superposes itself to that of *eromenos*. The woman enters in the Sapphic circle as teenager and receives the consecration of beauty to which she serves by dancing, singing and playing under the protection of the unmarried woman whose life is dedicated to the Muses. The *Symposion* (and which is a friendly meeting, although interested, of men and during which it is drinking, singing etc.), with its refined environment doubled by the intellectual tradition, is the place where the constraint does not express; it is understandable that “confessions of love often come out boldly to light in the intimate circle of friends.”¹⁵ In this context appears, as a counterweight, Sappho. In her circle, of an adolescent femininity, the bridal and love songs bring the young woman in a unique position. Unique because she is a woman, not because the educational function of poetry would be contested by anyone. One can notice even an abandonment of the erotic in poetry in order to put instead of it the private life (case in which the poet becomes some sort of philosopher of existence), and in the Aeolian lyric poetry of Sappho private life is seen as the individual intimate life more than the phrase “private life” could say it. One is less interested in the sensual aspect of the Sapphic erotic; what interests is that, “for a woman, the experience of love is the center of existence and only she can receive it with the fullness of her complete nature.”¹⁶ The man is a foreigner to this world. He may be a candidate, but he is not welcomed with love. That is why the intimate space of man, in the Sapphic circle, ends in the threshold. When Sappho imagines the man next to his sweetheart happy as a god, she does not take into consideration the couple man-woman; the couple is formed of Sappho and the memory of someone who abandoned her, a disciple, a student.

The education from “the house of Muses’ disciples” is artistic and physic. She cannot escape (nor has she proposed this as aim!) from the passion between the master and the disciple, and lesbianism is not, as pederasty will sometimes be in Plato a metaphysical aspiration; it is another physical passion, an excruciating one when marriage or betrayal separate the disciple from the master. Sapphic passion is not exactly one of spirit and often Sappho describes the physical symptoms of love, the physical effects of desire doubled by the sighs of the jealous woman (fragments 2, 74, 96, 97-98, 114, 116, 123. Fragment 2, for example, was composed with the occasion of a wedding. A student dear to Sappho decides to leave the group in order to get married. A wedding song – epithalamium – is to be

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 114. Sappho, by means of a mess of her own imagination and senses, convinces herself that each sex must focus on itself. She was not beautiful (as Laïs was). She was small, brunette, with bright eyes, not tall, blonde, languishing, as we usually imagine her. Horatius claims that she was hermaphrodite, Dionysius that she was a lesbian.

found in fragment 116, and fragment 196 is written, also, at the moment of the separation between Sappho and a disciple. I quote from this fragment: “Thoughts of death are here. / She left me weeping her sore [...] / And to me she said: / Pain torments me a lot, / Sappho, I swear, it is not my will to leave, / and the words call the answer: / Go with joy! To oblivion / Do not abandon me! How dear you were to me / You know. But I wouldn’t say it again [...] / Remember them all / Sweet moments spent together. / How many garlands of violets / Of roses and of garden sage / Have you not made sitting next to me and / How many wreathing of delicate / Flowers haven’t you created in garlands, / The fragile neck to calling arching? / Full of flavor, the drink, / Dripped from the core of the flower, / Clear, I shall let glide on your long tress of hair”. This fragment is a wedding song which is entirely different from a poem written with the occasion of a wedding when the disciple definitely leaves Sappho. We have something like that in fragment 2: “It seems exactly as with gods / The one who is right in front of you / And from close sips your sweet whispers / bending the head / And your charming smile admires. / Badly then my heart in my chest hurts [...] / As soon as I see you my voice melts / And it extinguishes / And in my mouth the tongue remains broken. / Ferocious fire goes under my skin / I cannot see with my eyes no longer and hard / My hearing howls / I am full of sweat and a tremble / Embraces me; more yellow I have my face / Than the dry blade, / As if I were dead [...].” And more: “Eros shakes my soul as the wind / That kneels on the mountain the oaks” – fragment 125). Sappho did not establish a new way of loving: “as doctors trained the believers of this god (Asclepius) in the art of healing, Sappho tried, helped by the goddess, to teach the young girls from Mytilene an art of living – the art of being a woman.”¹⁷ And in this art, Sappho has nothing to hide. Homer is the *Poet*; Sappho is the *Poetess* says Galen, and Plutarch called “mixture of fire” what this woman sang. If she was denied the natural right of being loved in difference, Sappho decides to be loved in similarity, not in identity. That is why I said that she did not establish a new way of loving for Greeks. Sappho’s language is the language of passion and it covers a short and very well determined period of time: the distance between the native home and marriage, distance that becomes an ideal universe of transition. Shortly: “the great moments of Sapphic lyric are those when the poetess tries to conquer the still inexperienced heart of a young girl, when she separates from a friend who must leave the group to return home or to follow her man who asked her in

¹⁷ André Bonnard, *Civilizația greacă* (Greek Civilization), Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1967, p. 102. Therefore, who does not answer to a confessed love, commits an unfair act regarding the erotic attachment validated by a contract that the adolescent signed when she entered the Sapphic circle.

marriage, or when she longingly thinks of a friend pulled away from her, who was walking on dusk somewhere, far, in the garden sunk in silence, calling in vain the name of her lost Sappho.”¹⁸

Conclusions

In general, for the old Greek, love and sexuality are incompatible just as, in courtly love, it is reached the situation of maintaining that love and marriage are incompatible. In the case of courtly love (or of chivalry against marriage), the central term is that of “loyalty” and it is opposed, alike, to marriage and to “the fulfillment of love” (not to “fulfilled love”, which is valid also in the Platonic erotic and in the chivalrous one). Loyalty is identical with the passion the disciple shows to the master unconditionally. The problem is if they have chosen each other freely, since they have indeed sinned, without question, but they cannot repent because they are not guilty. Passion overcomes desire, philosophy overcomes rhetoric and Platonistic homoerotic is the same as a perfect “marriage” but unconsummated, because precisely in this is the perfection of such marriage. But not to consume the marriage is an insult for the citadel and an obstacle for the couple! But for love obstacles are exactly its way of being, because the Greeks did not love in vain. They loved passionately and deeper than this, they loved ascetically. The Platonistic erotic is an ascetic erotic, a caste one. The same the chivalry and romantic one. Maybe its hidden mechanism sees the elementary desire growing if the pleasure is delayed. In Sparta, Lycurgus recommended to the young ones prolonged abstinence, hence the following fact: chastity is the natural obstacle against instinct. Only in this case the purpose was a vital one: love shall always remain new, the children shall be strong. The erotic of Platonistic type suspends the relationship instinct-purpose (changing desire in act); the desire is transferred to an aspiration that is no longer defined, has no vital purpose, it is even opposed to such purpose. The eros is unquenchable longing, divine madness, enthusiasm (“the mad ones after Christ”, in another plan). The eros, if it is desire, is like this only in the form of absolute desire, form in which one cannot desire that or the other one because thus you would be subject to relative, to the accident. However, in the absolute, you are under the condition of fatality, so that the supreme desire is the negation of desire, not its privation. Negation is absence; privation is an incomplete form of presence. In the relation that is established between absence and presence it is reached the fact that the lacking desire is not also absent. Denis de Rougemont says that this dialectic of Eros is “*the endless*

¹⁸ Werner Jaeger, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

exceeding, the rising of man to his God. And this path is *without return!*¹⁹ Absolute desire fuels the relative desires in order to sacrifice them. And the erotic desire is desire only in and under the condition of the fellow man, the one close by, so that no one could love in absolute and remain in the same time how he was.

Later on, the troubadours and the Cathars will praise the virtues of chastity (for instance, when the Cathars received the baptism specific for their sect – the baptism of spirit, because they reject the baptism of water, they promised, among many others, to restrain from any contact with their woman *if they were married*; if not, no!). Cathars even called marriage “lawful dissoluteness” (*jurata fornicatio*).²⁰ The cult of love is not in marriage, is outside it and in chastity. Loyalty of this type is unmotivated; when you justify it, you mask it, you kill it. Marie de Champagne, daughter of the learned Eleanor of Aquitaine (together they have been some kind of Sappho for the men in XII century and among the first ones who felt they could train men) “mentioned unequivocally the difference between the conjugal union and the union of lovers: «Lovers understand each other perfectly and without the thought of reward. Husbands must, *out of duty*, to be subject to one another and not to refuse each other anything».”²¹ Love-passion is asceticism, education, spiritual exercise (with the indication that in courtly love the terms of the relationship are opposed, not alike, are man and woman), and in this exercise is to be found what Gaston Paris called in 1883 *fine amor*. This is an “erotic of ruling the desire”, “even when the lover is lying naked next to his lady”, which makes the difference between “close love” and “far away love”; they are both based on “self-control and ruling the desire.”²²

¹⁹ Denis de Rougemont, *Iubirea și Occidentalul* (Love and West), Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 56.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 80, 87-88. In the XII century chastity was imposed by the laws of court; in the XIX century is imposed by the bourgeois tradition. It is degradation, in fact, embodied in the shift from fatal Eros to vital Eros. On the other hand, the poets of XII century “adopt as theme pederasty, (and) it is often hard to establish whether we deal with the imitation of some literary models (*imitatio*), or with personal feelings”, E.R. Curtius, *Literatura Europeană și Evul Mediu Latin* (European Literature and Latin Middle Age), Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1970, p. 138.

²¹ Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase* (A History of Religious Ideas), vol. III, Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, note 48, p. 102.

²² Danielle Régnier-Bohler, art. “Courtly love,” in Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt (coord.), *Dicționar tematic al Evului Mediu Occidental* (Thematic Dictionary of Western Middle Age), Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2000, pp. 29-30.

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