ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE ENCULTURATIVE FUNCTION OF TOYS AND GAMES IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the enculturative function of children's toys and games in ancient Greece and Rome. Children's play has been shown to affect their development on many different levels including cognitive, behavioral, and psychological. Play is also one method through which cultures work to enculturate children. Enculturation is the process by which cultural values and behaviors are transmitted from adults to children. In chapter 1, I review the historical background of study of enculturation. In chapter 2, I discuss the evidence for ancient Greek and Roman children's toys and games. In chapter 3, I examine the contribution toys and games made to the enculturation of children in ancient Greece and Rome. I conclude that, while children's entertainment was not the only method of enculturation used in ancient Greece and Rome, it was one important part of the network of cultural institutions focused on this process.

THE ENCULTURATIVE FUNCTION OF TOYS AND GAMES IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

by

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INTRODUCTION

Children's toys and games can be found in every culture throughout time. There are toys and games which are found in multiple cultures, yet, at the same time, they can be very culturally specific. The ubiquity of these entertainments suggests that they made some sort of contribution to society on a cross-cultural level, but the cultural specificity suggests that the contribution was not restricted to the physical development of children. What, then, was the function of children's games and toys? There are several theories concerning the purpose of play, and one of these theories concerns a process known as enculturation. Enculturation is defined as "the process by which the cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation."[1] According to this theory, most cultural institutions such as religion, schooling, and entertainment have some level of enculturative function. What, then, was the enculturative function of toys and games, specifically within the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome?

In this thesis, I examine the enculturative nature of toys and games of Greece and Rome. In chapter 1, I review the history of theories of play that have led to the modern conception of play as affecting several different aspects of childhood development. From these theories, I choose to focus on the use of toys, games, and general play in the process of enculturation. Although he used the term education instead of enculturation, the definition of enculturation used above was first developed by anthropologist Meyer

[1] Meyer Fortes, "Social and Psychological aspects of education in Taleland," *Africa*, Supplement to vol. 11, no. 4 (1938), reprinted in John Middleton, ed., *From Child to Adult: Studies in the Anthropology of Education* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1970), 15.

Fortes. Fortes was the first scholar to understand that children were not blindly imitating adults, but that they were consciously interacting with the dominant culture and that they were experimenting and testing the boundaries of that culture.[2] Johannes Wilbert divided enculturation into three separate but interdependent processes: skill training, socialization, and moral education. He also developed a model by which the various processes of enculturation can be studied on multiple levels and at multiple life stages.[3] In his master's thesis, Michael Heine investigated the enculturative function of toys among the Tlingit Indians. Although he did not specifically state Wilbert's model to be the basis of his approach, Heine focused on four areas of Tlingit culture that corresponded heavily to Wilbert's three processes.[4] These separate but similar approaches lend credence to the model as a valid method for studying enculturation. This is the model I will use to investigate the function of toys and games in the transmission of culture in Greece and Rome in chapter 3.

In chapter 2, I will discuss the evidence of Greek and Roman toys and games. There are two main sources for information on children's entertainment in the ancient world: objects found in the archaeological record and literary sources. Unfortunately, other sources of information, such as epigraphy, shed little to no light on the ways in which children entertained themselves. The majority of the archaeological objects used as evidence in this chapter come from Jenifer Neils and John Oakley's exhibition catalog,

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[2] Ibid., 58.

[3] Johannes Wilbert, ed., *Enculturation in Latin America: An Anthology* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1976), 22-23.

[4] Michael K. Heine, "The Enculturative Function of Play Behaviour and Games Among the Tlingit Indians of Southeast Alaska" (MA thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1984), iii.

Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past.[5] This collection of objects from ancient Greece serves as the basis of my evidence for both Greek and Roman cultures. This cross-cultural approach is possible, however, because of the high levels of cultural continuity between the Greeks and the Romans. Even though many of these are all technically Greek examples, they were present in Rome as well. Not all the evidence presented is Greek, however, because there are a few Roman sarcophagi which give us information on children's toys. Just as the Greek toys can be extrapolated forward into the Roman era, the toys shown on these sarcophagi existed for the Greeks as well.

Before turning to the literary sources, it is important to note that the majority of the archaeological evidence for children's life in general, and especially for their toys and games, comes from burials and burial art and architecture. We must be cautious when interpreting artifacts such as these because it can be difficult to determine what was a religious offering and what was a toy. For instance, when miniature female figurines are found in the graves of children, they are often identified as dolls and therefore as toys. John and Elizabeth Newson, however, suggest that since most of these figurines are of adult women, some with children in their arms, it is possible that they serve a more protective function for the afterlife.[6] Depictions of children with dolls found on grave steles seem to contradict this view, but it is a viable alternative.

Similarly, much of our information comes from depictions of children playing on vases. John Oakley says that these "scenes of happy, playing children must have given

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[5] Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley, *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

[6] John and Elizabeth Newson. *Toys and Playthings: In Development and Remediation* (New York Pantheon Books, 1979), 88.

the parents who buried them a feeling that their children had had happy lives and despite their deaths remained happy."[7] If the purpose of these scenes was to present an idyllic view on life to comfort those who lived on, can we trust that the information provided is accurate? G. van Hoorn, one of the earliest scholars to study childhood in the ancient world, reassures us that, while by no means as candid as photographs, these scenes are accurate portrayals of childhood.[8] Indeed, they would have to hold at least a passing resemblance to reality if they were actually to provide any level of comfort to grieving parents. Therefore, although we must always be cautious when interpreting artistic representations and artifacts found in burials, they are a viable source for information about the past.

As helpful as archaeological information is, it is all the more trustworthy when it is substantiated by other sources, such as literary accounts. There are several important literary sources that discuss the toys and games of children in the ancient world. The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle both discuss children's play. They do not provide a detailed list of children's toys and games; instead, they focus on the benefit of play for the character and proficiency of children and how it can be used to prepare them for adulthood. The Roman writer Martial composed several epigrams on the topic of children's toys. In these short pieces, he gives very detailed information on both the use and the construction of certain toys, especially the many different types of balls. Pollux, who wrote in Greece during the Roman Empire, composed a dictionary of Greek terms and includes a large section on children's games. Although this work has never been

[7] John H. Oakley, "Death and the Child" in *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past*, ed. Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 191.

[8] Ibid., 3.

translated in full, several passages are cited in modern works. These literary sources provide us with names, definitions, and rules for games and toys that archaeological evidence alone cannot provide. It is only through the combination of these two important sets of sources that a full picture of ancient Greek and Roman toys and games begins to emerge.

As stated above, in chapter 3, I will analyze the evidence discussed in chapter 2 using Wilbert's model for studying enculturation. Through this analysis, I identify several instances where games, toys, and other forms of children's entertainment are used to enculturate children into Greek and Roman culture. Play is used to teach children specific skills, behaviors, and values which they will need to function within the boundaries of the dominant culture. With the background information provided by the enculturation process, children are able to make the transition between childhood and adulthood successfully.

CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY OF SOCIALIZATION AND ENCULTURATION

The History of Enculturation Theories and the Study of Play

By studying play through the lens of enculturation, I am taking a decidedly functionalist approach. In general, the functionalists see play as an "imitative or preparatory activity and, therefore, functional as an enculturative mechanism."[9] Although the functionalist approach has undergone several theoretical changes between its origin and its use today, the underlying idea that play fulfills a function within a culture remains the same.

The first scholar to formulate a functionalist approach to play was Karl Groos. In *The Play of Animals* (1892) and *The Play of Man* (1901), Groos developed his "practice" theory. The theory states that all young animals and humans possess instincts for skills they will need as adults. The purpose of play is to strengthen and practice these instinctual skills. According to Groos, examples of play that practices such skills include young lions play fighting and human children playing house.[10] Although the practice theory was an important beginning to understanding play as a process of enculturation, there are several problems with it. The theory only focuses on certain types of play and

[9] Helen B. Schwartzman, *Transformations: The Anthropology of Children's Play* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1978), 100.

[10] James Johnson, James Christie, and Thomas Yawkey, *Play and Early Childhood Development* (Glenview and London: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1987), 5.

excludes others. It is also based on turn-of-the-century theories of evolution and instinct that have long since been disproved, including the idea that children instinctually know what specific skill set will be necessary in their adult life.[11]

Building on Groos's practice theory, several other functionalist approaches to play were developed. In *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932), George Herbert Mead asserted that play is used to develop social roles, and that competitive games are useful in developing relationships with others. According to Mead, the overall value of play is that children develop the ability to see life from other people's point of view.[12] This skill, which is not instinctual, will help the children for social, business, and personal interactions with others when they become adults. Bronislaw Malinowski also took a functionalist approach to play. In his 1944 study of the Trobriand Islanders, Malinowski stated that the children's imitation of adult roles was preparation for the economic and subsistence skills that would be necessary as adults.[13]

The major connection between these early theories is the assertion that children's play is preparation for adult life. Underneath this obvious tie, however, lies another connection which is more questionable. Each of these three theories sees play as a predominantly imitative activity in which children perform the actions of adults with little consideration or understanding of the behavior they are reproducing.[14] This underlying idea was a point of contention for some functionalists whose theories began to diverge from these earlier works.

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[11] Ibid., 6.

[12] Schwartzman, 100.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 101.

One of the first theorists to disagree with the idea that children were mindlessly reproducing the actions of their parents was Meyer Fortes. In his 1938 article "Social and Psychological aspects of education in Taleland," Fortes argued that "In his play the child rehearses his interests, skills, and obligations, and makes experiments in social living without having to pay the penalty for mistakes."[15] In other words, children are preparing for later life, but they are doing it in an experimental fashion while safe from the repercussions that could occur if they entered the adult world without this preparation. Fortes was also one of the earliest scholars to expand upon the theory of play merely being preparation for skills necessary in later life and to include social and cultural preparation as well. Although he did not use the term, he offered an early definition of enculturation when he said that "education in the widest sense is the process by which the cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation."[16] If we exchange the term enculturation for the word education, we have a perfectly acceptable modern definition of the process of enculturation. Fortes also argued that, while work had previously focused on exactly *what* was being transmitted to the younger generations, scholars needed to study *how* it was being transmitted. He identified schooling and play as two processes through which children acquire the rules, activities, and behaviors of adults in their culture.[17]

In *Chaga Childhood* (1940), Otto Raum also argued against the idea that children's play was merely replication of adult behavior. Raum showed that when

[15] Fortes, 58.

[16] Ibid., 15.

[17] Ibid., 15-16.

imitating adults, children often caricature and mock actions and attitudes that they perceive to be unintelligible or absurd. This mockery is about as far from slavish imitation as possible. Raum also identified at least three different types of play: sensory and motor exercise, representative play (often called imitative play), and competitive play. Identifying different types of play, each with its own purposes and effects, allowed Raum to open the door to new interpretations of play and its effects on the lives of children.[18]

In two related articles from the late 1950s and early 1960s, John Roberts and his associates focused on a different type of play from most other functionalists. Roberts argued that competitive games, unlike other forms of play, are not culturally universal, and, therefore, can tell us more about specific values and goals of individual cultures.[19] Roberts identified three basic categories of games: physical skill games, strategy games, and games of chance. He stated that the relationships between games and culture are very complex and individualized, but certain similarities can be identified.[20] The specific connections between games and culture that are reported in these articles are unimportant, but Roberts and his associates determined that, just as games testing physical skill can be seen as models for hunting or combat, "most games are models of various cultural activities."[21] Through these studies of the work of games in the

[18] Schwartzman, 104-5.

[19] John M. Roberts and Brian Sutton-Smith, "Child Training and Game Involvement," *Ethnology* 1, no. 2 (1962): 167.

[20] John M. Roberts, Malcom J. Arth, and Robert R. Bush, "Games in Culture," *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 4 (1959): 597-98.

[21] Ibid., 599.

enculturative process, Roberts further divided modern functionalist studies from the early theories that relied solely on imitation play.

Functionalism is not the only feasible approach to the study of play. Other schools of thought were formulating their own approaches at the same time as the early functionalists, and their work has had an effect on modern studies of enculturation through play. One of these other schools of thought is described by Linda Schwartzman as the Configurist School of Culture and Personality Research. This approach was concerned with play and the transmission of cultural values, but focused more strongly on the effect of the transmission on individuals than on the process itself.[22]

Margaret Mead was one of the earliest theorists interested in the effects of culture on the individual. Throughout her studies of children, Mead used play as a vehicle to study the effects of the cultural process, but she did not study play itself as a component of that process. So while she did occasionally describe play as part of socialization, she did not focus on how exactly it is used to develop social skills.[23] The biggest contribution Margaret Mead made to the functionalist study of enculturation was her demand for the need for clear and concise definitions of the terms socialization and enculturation. These two terms are often used interchangeably and, therefore, imprecisely. Mead defined socialization as abstract statements about learning that apply to multiple cultures on a universal level, and she defines enculturation as the study of the culturally specific details of that process.[24] These definitions are not how enculturation

[22] Schwartzman, 136.

[23] Ibid., 137, 141.

[24] Margaret Mead, "Papers in Honor of Melville J. Herskovits: Socialization and Enculturation," *Current Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (1963): 185

and socialization are conceptualized today, but they are examples of early attempts to differentiate between two very similar processes.

Sigmund Freud also studied play as an attempt to understand the ways in which culture affects the personalities of children. Freud's basic argument was that play allows children to reclaim negative situations which have caused them trauma. He saw play as a move from the passive role to the active role of the person with the power. This switch of roles allows children control of the situation and helps them to "master the demands of reality."[25] In this way, the main theme of the Freudian study of play is catharsis. Children are purging their fears and other negative emotions by taking control of the events that have traumatized them.[26] The emphasis of play as a means of gaining of control over reality is also prevalent in the work of Erik Erikson, who followed this Freudian approach.[27]

In her article "Models of Children's Play" (1971), Lili Peller built from Freud's work while also adding functionalist components. Peller argued that children do not imitate by instinct but instead make conscious decisions about the people and behaviors they re-enact. Many different factors can influence whom a child chooses to emulate, and children often take up the role of someone they admire, love, or respect. Peller stated that a child pretends to be an adult he admires because he is impatiently awaiting his own adulthood and the power and prestige he believes will accompany that role.[28] This aspect

[25] Johnson, 7.

[26] Schwartzman, 145.

[27] Ibid., 148.

[28] Lili E. Peller, "Models of Children's Play," in *Child's Play*, ed. R. E. Herron and Brian Sutton-Smith (New York and London: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1971), 110.

of Peller's theory is very much in line with functionalist principles, since children are consciously imitating the behaviors of adults they respect in preparation for their own adult lives. When she pointed out the tendency in children to prefer dominant roles to submissive ones, however, Peller was following Freud's approach. This preference is linked to a wish for control over reality that children usually do not feel they have. Occasionally, children will take on submissive roles. Peller believed that children do this in order to act in ways that are beneath their usual dignity, under the understanding that it is all pretend and does not count in real life.[29]

These two different models of play reflect two different desires. Sometimes children desire to be as grown-up as possible. This is when children take on the roles of adults whom they wish to emulate because of their perceived power or freedom. Peller saw this type of play as early attempts of self-identification, which follows the functionalist approach. At other times, children take on submissive or immature roles. Peller saw this choice as being guided by a desire to emphasize the difference between such roles and the child's reality. She imagined the child may be thinking: "If I make believe these things, they will not cling to me in real life."[30] This model of play does not follow a functionalist approach, and is more suited to Freudian interpretations of play. Through her study of the different impulses behind children's play, Peller showed that play is a very complex institution that affects multiple aspects of childhood development.

Later studies of play began to investigate the subject from multiple avenues. In *Transformations: The Anthropology of Children's Play* (1978), Helen Schwartzman

[29] Ibid., 113-14.

[30] Ibid., 125.

presented the history of the study of play through different approaches. She divided the study of play into approaches focused on enculturation, the effect of culture on the individual, language development, and cognitive development.[31] These are just a few of the many different lenses through which play should be studied to gain a thorough understanding of the effects it has on childhood development. Any one approach is sufficient to answer certain questions, but it is through comprehensive works such as Schwartzman's that a more complete view of play as a tool for development can be formed.

In *Meaning, Dialogue, and Enculturation: Phenomenological Philosophy of Education* (1985), John Scudder and Algis Mickunas showed how enculturation not only introduces cultural values to children, but also helps to form culturally complete individuals. According to Scudder and Mickunas, children first imitate the movements, sounds, and attitudes of adults in a mechanical fashion with little thought or understanding. As they get older and develop cognitively, they begin to understand the purpose and intent of the behavior they are imitating. Eventually, this understanding transforms itself into a thorough grasp of the rules and values needed to be culturally competent. The last stage of this process is when children and young adults take these meanings and use them to guide their own behavior rather than just imitating the actions of others. In this way, play helps children to "appropriate the implements, social relationships, and systems of meaning of their community."[32]

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[31] Schwartzman, Chapters 6-9.

[32] John R. Scudder and Algis Mickunas, *Meaning, Dialogue, and Enculturation: Phenomenological Philosophy of Education* (Washington D.C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1985), 55-56.

For Scudder and Mickunas, enculturation was the process that transforms children's behavior from instinctual reactions into purposeful actions guided by a deep understanding of the implicit values of their culture. Like George Herbert Mead, they believed the ultimate expression of this transformation is when children show an ability to see outside themselves and to understand the reasoning and perception of other people. The connection of the understanding of other people's point of view with the process of enculturation may have to do with the role of others in the transmission of cultural values. Children's parents, older siblings, and peers are largely the agents of enculturation, because it is their behavior the child is imitating.[33] By demonstrating an understanding of their point of view, the child is also showing an understanding of the values and rules they are teaching. Scudder and Mickunas show that enculturation is a long and complex process that results in the creation of children who are armed with the cultural tools to survive in their community.

In *Play and Early Childhood Development* (1987), James Johnson, James Christie, and Thomas Yawkey studied the effects of play from different perspectives. They moved beyond Schwartzman's list of approaches by arguing that play affects, among other things, emotional development, IQ, problem solving skills, creativity, language development, and social development. They also cautioned that, while most play has effects on all these areas, not all play contributes to development. Some play can only be seen as time-filling amusement.[34] From the list of developmental skills cited above, the development of social skills is mostly a component of enculturation. Although

[33] Ibid., 66.

[34] Johnson, 13-18.

it must be acknowledged that, as Margaret Mead argued, socialization and enculturation are separate processes, they are related to one another. Johnson, Christie, and Yawkey asserted that play helps to socialize children by teaching them to work together, take turns, and share. Like George Herbert Mead and John Scudder and Algis Mickunas, they also believed that an important effect of play is learning to understand different perspectives, but, unlike their predecessors, these authors placed this skill under the process of socialization, not enculturation, helping to further the distinction between the two processes.[35]

Johnson, Christie, and Yawkey also argued that children do not imitate every behavior they see. Unlike Peller's two models of play, however, they saw four related steps to why a child would choose to imitate certain behaviors. First, there must be something in the adult role or behavior that catches the child's attention. This may be the perceived power that Freud and Peller argued for, or it may be something completely unrelated, such as the costume that a firefighter or policeman wears. Secondly, the child must have the cognitive ability to understand the behavior. This step differs from Scudder and Mickunas's theory that comprehension comes after the behavior has been imitated multiple times. The third requirement for a child to imitate an adult is that he can physically reproduce the behavior. This does not mean that a child pretending to be a firefighter must be able to use a real fire hose properly, but that he must be physically advanced enough to mimic the motions of using a hose to put out a flame. The last requirement is that there is some reinforcement which encourages the child to imitate the behavior. This could be an internal reinforcement such as the pleasure or catharsis the

[35] Ibid., 3, 17.

child feels, or external reinforcement such as attention and praise from adults who hold power over the child.[36] Whether or not every child unconsciously runs through this list of requirements before every imitation of an adult behavior, this theory shows how complex and reflective the decision to imitate is.

One problem that is consistent throughout most of the theories discussed above is the assumption that enculturation is a one-way process. Although some scholars grant children agency through their decisions of who and what to imitate, very few allow for changes to the dominant culture due to these choices. In her article "Enculturation – A Reconstruction" (1970), Nobuo Simahara argued that actions, such as deciding which models of behavior to imitate, are part of a reflective process in which the child chooses which parts of the dominant culture he wishes to acquire. Over time, if enough children choose not to acquire certain aspects of the culture, those traits will be weeded out of the culture. In this way, the process of enculturation is both a transmission of traditional values and a transmutation of cultural norms.[37]

In his article "Prosiospect and the Acquisition of Culture" (1991), Harry Wolcott took the argument even further by saying that "every human acquires only one particular version covering some aspects of a limited number of cultural systems."[38] From this point of view, not only do children actively choose which aspects of their culture they wish to adopt, but they also are only presented with a cross-section of the culture to begin with. The idea of each person acquiring a particular, individualized version of a culture

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[36] Ibid., 92.

[37] Nobuo Shimahara, "Enculturation – A Reconstruction," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 2 (1970): 148.

[38] Harry F. Wolcott, "Prosiospect and the Acquisition of Culture," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1991): 265.

is called "prosiospect." Although it may be an exaggeration to argue that no two people will adopt the same cultural values, it is important to heed the warnings put forth by Simahara and Wolcott. It is necessary to understand that enculturation is not the transmission of a concrete, unchangeable, set of absolutes, but rather that of a group of cultural preferences and norms that can be accepted by the individual to varying degrees.

In their chapter "The Need to Look at Play in Diverse Cultural Settings" (1994), Jaipaul Roopnarine and James Johnson argued that children are influenced by their immediate environment, which is itself determined by "larger forces that include societal norms, class, caste, and gender ideologies, geography, climate characteristics, and a culture's history."[39] As most theories of enculturation would agree, these determining forces have a great deal of impact on children's play. Roopnarine and Johnson also acknowledged the influence of the individual child, as emphasized by Simahara. The child's influence on play is thought to be determined by the growth of other developmental skills such as cognitive or language abilities. For Roopnarine and Johnson, play was viewed as both a cause and effect of culture, as "an important context or vehicle for cultural learning/transmission, as well as an indicator and reflection of child development."[40]

Over time, theories concerning the enculturative function of play have been transformed from the idea that play was a process through which children practiced skills they instinctually knew they would need in later life into the idea that play is both a vehicle for cultural transmission as well as an avenue for cultural change. There have

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[39].Jaipaul Roopnarine and James Johnson, "The Need to Look at Play in Diverse Cultural Settings," in *Children's Play in Diverse Cultures*, ed. Jaipaul Roopnarine, James Johnson, and Frank Hooper (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 4.

[40] Ibid., 5.

been many different approaches to the study of play and its contribution to the development of children on multiple physical, mental, and cultural levels, and each of these approaches helps scholars to learn new effects of this complex process. Ultimately, the approach taken in this thesis is a functionalist approach concerned with understanding how play in ancient Greece and Rome worked to enculturate children and prepare them for adult life within their society. This approach relies most heavily on the theories of Meyer Fortes, but it has also been influenced, on some level, by all of the theories discussed above.

A Research Model for Studying Enculturation

In the introduction to *Enculturation in Latin America: An Anthology* (1976), editor Johannes Wilbert did more than discuss the process of enculturation; he also developed a model for studying it. As pointed out above, Wilbert asserted that enculturation is a combination of three separate processes: skill training, socialization, and moral education. He defined skill training as training in the physical and mental skills necessary to take up adult roles. Moral education was defined as training in correct behavior and teaching right from wrong as determined by the individual's culture. Socialization, seen here as one component of enculturation instead of its own field of study, was defined by Wilbert as the "transmission of knowledge required by the individual to become integrated into his society by adapting to his fellow persons and by acquiring his position through achieving status and role."[41] It is only through the combination of these three processes that a child becomes enculturated. Furthermore, these three processes take place over three stages of life: infancy, childhood, and

[41] Wilbert, 22.

adulthood. Each life stage offers different focuses and different teachings. The last component of Wilbert's model is that in each life stage, the three processes can be studied at different levels: environment, society, and culture.[42] Environment refers to the specific socio-cultural environment of the child: his home, school, and playground. Society refers to the social matrices and subcultures the child is a part of. Lastly, culture refers to the overarching culture which includes several societies. Enculturation takes place at all three of these levels. Ultimately, Wilbert's model helps scholars to investigate how the three processes which make up enculturation are learned on the three different levels during each of the three life stages.[43]

In his master's thesis "The Enculturative Function of Play Behaviour and Games Among the Tlingit Indians of Southeast Alaska" (1984), Michael Heine studied how play works to enculturate children into mainstream culture. Heine followed Fortes's definition of enculturation as described above, and he found that, as children grew in age and cognitive ability, play was increasingly affected by rules and structures related to the dominant culture.[44] Heine described his method as analysis of four specific areas. These areas included:

> the functional significance of play behaviour and games for the transmission of skills relevant for the subsistence quest; for the integration of the individual into society; for personality trait formation; and for the transmission of moral norms and knowledge of clan history.[45]

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[42] Ibid., 22-23.

[43] Ibid., 23.

[44] Heine, 82.

[45] Ibid., iii.

Later in his study, Heine asserted that personality trait formation can be taken to be part of the process of socialization because it is representative of the effect of culture on the individual.[46] If Heine's second and third areas of investigation are combined under the heading of the effects of socialization, Heine's study actually analyzed the three main processes described in Wilbert's model: skill training, socialization, and moral education. This is further validation of Wilbert's model as an effective tool for studying enculturation and its various underlying processes. This is the model that I will follow when investigating the enculturative effects of play in ancient Greece and Rome in chapter 3.

Ancient Theories Concerning Play

Ancient philosophers had their own theories concerning methods of enculturation, and the benefits of play. Although they did not have a word for enculturation, they did understand the need to prepare children to function within the rules and norms of their society. It is helpful to understand how philosophers felt about children and their preparation for adulthood in order better to understand the cultural influences being exerted on Greek and Roman children. These theories did not contribute to modern theories on enculturation and play, however, so they have been confined to a separate discussion.

According to the ancient philosophers, one of the most important aspects of a man was his character. Character was such an important trait that it was one of the qualities parents tried to effect early in life. It was thought that children were especially malleable, and the best time to influence a person's character was during their early childhood. One

[46] Ibid., 122.

way to influence them was through storytelling. It was commonly assumed that nurses would tell their young charges stories, and philosophers such as Plato and Plutarch urged them not to resort to trivial matters, but to tell stories replete with moral lessons [47] Another path by which Plato encouraged parents to influence their children was through encouraging games that built character and intellect, while also strengthening the child's morals and ethics.[48] Plato also urged that the games of children should have fixed rules. He believed this would instill a sense of tradition in the children, saying: "when the programme of games is prescribed and secures that the same children always play the same games and delight in the same toys in the same way and under the same conditions, it allows the real and serious laws also to remain undisturbed," but if children are allowed to alter their games and toys they will have no respect for the permanence of laws as adults.[49] These are just a few of the opinions the ancient philosophers held concerning the use of amusements and play to shape children's character at an early age.

The most helpful use of play, as seen by Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, was in preparing children for adult careers. Plato argues that, in order for an adult to be accomplished at his job, he must have practiced and prepared for it during his childhood, in both school and play. Thus, "the man who is to make a good builder must play at building toy houses, and to make a good farmer he must play at tilling land; and those

[47] Plutarch *Moralia* 3.e-f, trans. Frank Cole Babbit, vol 1 (London and New York: William Heinemann LTD, 1927), 15-17.

[48] Plato *Laws* 7.793e, trans. R.G. Bury, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 21. For more on Plato and Aristotle's thoughts on children and play see Lesley Beaumont, "Child's Play in Classical Athens," *History Today* 44, no. 8 (1994): 30-1. See also Mark Golden, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 54.

[49] Ibid. 7.797a-b, trans. Bury, 2: 31-33.

who are rearing them must provide each child with toy tolls modeled on real ones."[50] Aristotle agreed with Plato on this aspect of children's education, saying that games and toys "should prepare the way for their later pursuits; hence most children's games should be imitations of the serious occupations of later life."[51]

These statements show an interest in the use of play to teach children the necessary skills for adult roles. When combined with the understanding that play could also be used to impart moral lessons to children, these views show that the ancient philosophers held at least a rudimentary understanding of the processes involved in enculturation. The next step to understanding how, exactly, play worked to accomplish this function, is to examine the nature of children's toys and games in ancient Greece and Rome.

[50] Plato *Laws* 1.643c, trans. R.G. Bury, vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 63.

[51] Aristotle *Politics* 7.1336a, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 629.

CHAPTER 2

TOYS AND GAMES IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

In this chapter, I will examine the evidence for children's toys and games in ancient Greece and Rome. The majority of the evidence for ancient toys is archaeological. The objects themselves sometimes remain in the archeological record, and, when they do not, pottery showing children at play can provide evidence of toys that do not otherwise remain. The majority of the evidence for ancient games, however, is literary. Writers rarely focused on the ways in which children entertained themselves, but occasional references provide the names and rules of popular games. While not all of these toys and games had an enculturative function, they are all important for understanding the lives of children in ancient Greece and Rome.

Ancient Toys

Children in the ancient world had many toys from which to choose. As one might expect, toys were often homemade, often made by the children themselves. In Aristophanes's play the *Clouds*, Strepsiades says of his son: "for when he was a little chap, so high, he used to build small baby-houses, boats, go-carts of leather, darling little frogs carved from pomegranates, you can't think how nicely!"[52] Still, not all toys were homemade, and at another point in the play Strepsiades reminds his son "How I to humour you, a coaxing baby, with the first obol which my judgeship fetched me bought

[52] Aristophanes *Clouds* 878-81, trans. Benjamin Bickley Rogers, *Aristophanes*, vol. 1 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1924), 345.

you a go-cart at the great Diasia."[53] Whether homemade or bought at a market, it seems that toys were synonymous with childhood in both Greece and Rome. Scenes depicting children on Greek vases almost always show then engaged in play with a toy. Toys became so thoroughly entwined in childhood, that a common initiation rite into adulthood was the dedication of these toys to a god or goddess. Girls dedicated their toys, especially dolls, at marriage while boys dedicated theirs at puberty. Clay animals, knucklebones, and balls are just a few of the common offerings made to gods such as Artemis and Hermes on these occasions.[54]

One of the first toys a child would have had was the rattle. Ancient Greek and Roman rattles came in all shapes, sizes and materials. The only rattles that survive in the archaeological record are made of terracotta, but there would also have been examples made of wood, bone, or even bronze. Most commonly, ancient rattles took the form of an animal.[55] Sizes of rattles varied a great deal, and some were large enough to suggest they were held by adults seeking to entertain the baby rather than by the baby himself. Likewise, some rattles would simply have been too fragile to have been handled by infants.[56] Aristotle approved of the rattle as a toy for babies saying that "one must think Archytas's rattle a good invention, which people give to children in order that while occupied with this they may not break any of the furniture; for young things cannot keep

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[53] Ibid. 862-64, trans. Rogers, 1: 345.

[54] Golden, *Children*, 54. See also Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128.

[55] Neils and Oakley, 265. For examples, see Cat. (catalog) 69 in Oakley, 177 and see figure 17 in *Birds of the Athenian Agora* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1985), 9. For rattles not shaped like animals, see Munich 2462 in *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, Germany 6, plate 90 no. 2b, http://www.cvaonline.org/cva/projectpages/Germany.htm, and catalog number 41 in Neils and Oakley, 240.

[56] John and Elizabeth Newson, *Toys and Playthings in Development and Remediation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 45.

still."[57] Here, Aristotle touched on the true function of the rattle as a toy for infants who cannot otherwise entertain themselves. Often used as a distraction, rattles provided babies with enough visual and auditory stimulation to keep them content and out of harm's way.

Another toy that ancient children had early in their lives was the toy roller or cart, which was mostly depicted as being used by young boys, although its function was not gender specific enough to rule out common use by girls. Rollers consist of a long pole connected to one or two wheels, and they could be turned into a cart with the addition of either a platform or a box above the wheels. These rollers or carts could be pushed or pulled and were often depicted as being used by toddlers. It is possible that the toy was first used as a steadying device to help children learn to walk, and then, as the child grew older, the same toy turned into a cart or wagon. Adults and children are both shown using the carts to transport other children, vases, and toys.[58] Scenes such as this one are quite common on vases depicting the everyday activities of children.

The two-wheeled roller toy is not the only example of a device used to help children walk. A young Roman boy's sarcophagus, dating to the second century CE, depicts multiple scenes from the child's life.[59] In one of these scenes, the young boy is pushing a wheeled walking-frame, which seems to have been designed specifically to help unsteady toddlers learn how to walk. The bottom of the frame appears to be two wheels attached by a bar. Another bar is attached to the rear wheel and raised vertically

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[57] Aristotle *Politics* 8.1340b, trans. Rackham, 661.

[58] Anita E. Klein, *Child Life in Greek Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 13-14. See also Cat. (catalog) 115, Fig 13, and Cat. (catalog) 122, in Oakley, 162, 173, and 181, Catalog numbers 15 and 92 in Neils and Oakley, 215, 280, and Fig. 5 in Richard Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria: Athenian Iconography and Ritual* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

[59] Rawson, 131.

to make a handle. It is possible that the walker has four wheels to provide added stability, but the sarcophagus only shows two. There were other carts that were designed to be pulled exclusively by animals. These carts often closely resembled miniature chariots. One such toy is depicted on the sarcophagus of M. Cornelius Statius that dates to the late-second century CE.[60] The boy is shown on a chariot clutching a sword and is being pulled by what appears to be a ram. It is doubtful that miniature chariots such as this would have been commonplace in either Greece or Rome, but their presence on vases and sarcophagi indicates that some elite children must have had access to them.

Dolls were one of the most popular toys in Greece and Rome. One of the relatively few examples of gender-specific toys, dolls were almost always depicted as the playthings of young girls. This is perhaps unsurprising, especially since the dolls most often took the form of adult women and were closely associated with marriage. Dolls were often found in the tombs of young girls and were made from, among other materials, wood, ebony, bone, and ivory, although most of the dolls that survive today are made of terracotta.[61] Dolls were specifically connected to a young girl's childhood. As mentioned above, girls were supposed to give up their dolls on the night before their marriages, symbolically renouncing their childhood. They dedicated their dolls and the dolls' belongings to goddesses such as Artemis and Aphrodite, or, for Roman girls, to their specific household gods.[62]

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[60] Jeannine Diddle Uzzi, *Children in the Visual Arts of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 172-73.

[61] Rawson, 128.

[62] Newson, 89.

One of the most commonly found doll types is the dancer-doll. Beginning around the late fifth century BCE, these dolls were articulated with moveable arms and legs, and they had Classical hairstyles. Although some similar dolls had painted clothing, these dancer dolls were nude, which suggests that clothing was provided by the children. Another identifying mark of this type of doll is that it usually holds *krotala*, a type of castanet. The *krotala* indicate that these dolls were supposed to represent dancers, and the attachment of the leg at the knee, as well as a hole located in the head through which string could be inserted, suggest that the dolls themselves could be made to dance.[63]

The dancer-type was by no means the only type of doll found in ancient Greece and Rome. Other doll types ranged from simple rag dolls to complex mechanical ones. The gravestone of the Greek girl Melisto shows an example of a different type of doll.[64] Dating to about 340 BCE, the gravestone shows a young girl holding the doll in her left hand, while her right hand holds out a bird for her pet dog to sniff. The doll's sculpted face indicates it was either carved from stone or made from terracotta like the doll above, but it shows no signs of jointed appendages. Jointed arms and legs would have added both complexity and fragility to dolls, and it is quite likely that more simple dolls like the one shown here would have been more common. On the other end of the complexity spectrum, Anita Klein describes one doll that was found with a small kneading trough. The doll had movable joints at the arms and hips and quite possibly mimicked the kneading of dough. The mechanical nature of this doll, when compared to the simple

[63] Neils and Oakley, 267.

[64] catalog number 124 in Neils and Oakley, 307.

nature of the doll on the gravestone, indicates that Greek and Roman dolls came in all shapes, sizes, and levels of complexity.[65]

Tops were a widely used toy in both Greece and Rome. Known as *strobilos*, *strombus*, *rombus*, or *bembix*, these toys were made from various materials including bronze, wood, and terracotta. There were two kinds of tops that were both popular in Greece and Rome. The first kind had a wooden stem and was called a twirling top because that is how it was moved. The second type was slightly more popular and is called the whipping top. This type of top had no stem and was kept in motion by striking it with a whip.[66] The earliest known tops date to the late eighth century BCE, and some have been found as votive offerings, though whether their offerings are connected to the rituals in which boys and girls gave up their toys is unknown.

The hoop and stick was a popular toy among both young men and boys. Shown on countless Greek vases as a common plaything of young boys, it counted among the Romans as an equally valuable tool in honing the skills of young men.[67] Once they had mastered the skills to steer and turn the hoop as it hurtled down a hill, which required great agility, young boys also learned how to throw objects through the hoop while it was in motion, or even to jump through it themselves. Discussing hoops in Rome, Martial remarked: "why do noisy rings wander round the wide circle? So that the crowd in their path may yield to the tinkling hoops."[68] He is describing the common Roman practice of

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[65] Klein, 17. See also Cat. (catalog) 68 in Oakley, 169.

[66] Neils and Oakley, 270.

[67] For examples, see Fig. 12 in Lesley A. Beaumont, "The Changing Face of Childhood" in *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past*, ed. Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 76, and catalog number 76 in Neils and Oakley, 269.

attaching jingly noisemakers to hoops to warn pedestrians to look out as the young men ran though the streets, a precaution that had to be taken due to the extreme popularity of the toy. [69]

Knucklebones, also known as *astragaloi* to the Greeks and *tali* to the Romans, were also extremely popular in the ancient world. Both boys and girls are shown playing with knucklebones, and it is unlikely that gender restrictions or preferences were placed on the toy.[70] Each knucklebone has four long sides one of which was flat, one irregular, one concave, and one convex. When used as dice, each of these sides held a point value of one, six, three, and four respectively.[71] As the name suggests, knucklebones were most commonly made from the knucklebone of sheep, but metal and stone examples have also been found.[72]

Knucklebones were most commonly used in groups of five to play a game where the goal was to toss and catch them with the same hand. Pollux described the game *pentelithoi* by saying that:

> the knucklebones are thrown up into the air, and an attempt is made to catch them on the back of the hand. If you are only partially successful, you have to pick up the knucklebones that have fallen on the ground without letting fall those already on the hand.[73]

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[68] Martial 14.169, trans. D.R. Shackleton Baily, *Epigrams*, vol. 3 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 293.

[69] Steve Craig, *Sports and Games of the Ancients* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 105.

[70] For examples on vases, see catalog numbers 86 and 114b in Neils and Oakley, 278, 300.

[71] Waldo E Sweet, *Sport and Recreation in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook with Translations* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 108. For examples see catalog numbers 88-90 in Neils and Oakley, 279.

[72] Klein, 18.

[73] Pollux 9.126 quoted in Beaumont, "Child's Play," 33.

Martial writes about *tali* in several of his epigrams. He describes a game in which they are used as dice saying that "When none of the bones you throw stands with the same face as another, you will say that I have given you a big present."[74] This indicates that the highest score of the game was earned by throwing all different values rather than having the knucklebones all land with the highest value.

Nuts, or *nuces*, were a Roman toy very similar to knucklebones and were often used in similar wagering games. Martial often talks of Roman children's fondness for nuts, although he does indicate that they can be seen as the beginning of a dangerous gambling habit. Martial reminds readers that even a seemingly innocent pastime can have unwelcome consequences, writing that "nuts seem a small stake, one not ruinous; and yet that stake has often cost boys their buttocks."[75] In one epigram he draws the connection between playing with nuts as a child and serious gambling as an adult even more distinctly when he writes: "now the schoolboy sadly leaves his nuts, recalled by the clamorous master, and the boozy gambler, betrayed by an all too alluring dice box and just hauled out of a secret tavern, is pleading with the aedile."[76]

Catullus illustrates the connection between nuts and childhood, but he does not discuss the moral pitfalls of the gambling involved. Instead, Catullus focuses on the practice of grooms giving away their nuts to others at their wedding. In a poem about a young man's marriage, Catullus writes:

> Let not the merry Fescennine jesting be silent long, let the favorite boy give away nuts to the slaves, when he hears how his lord has left his love. Give nuts to the

[74] Martial 14.14 trans. Baily, 3: 233.

[75] Ibid. 14.18, trans. Baily, 3: 235. See also Mark Petrini, *The Child and the Hero: Coming of Age in Catullus and Vergil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 20.

[76] Martial 5.84.1-5, trans. D.R. Shackleton Baily, *Epigrams*, vol. 1 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 425.

> slaves, favourite: your time is past: you have played with nuts long enough: you must now be the servant of Talassius. Give nuts, beloved slave. To-day and yesterday you disdained the country wives: now the barber shaves your cheeks. Wretched, ah! wretched lover, throw the nuts![77]

This passing on of toys is symbolic of the movement from childhood to adulthood that occurs at marriage. Several indicators in this passage are used to show that the boy has reached the end of his childhood. The boy has reached the age where he can grow a beard, and therefore his older [male] lover has turned away. At this stage in his life, the only appropriate behavior is to give away his toys, in this case the nuts, and settle down in marriage. Much like the ceremonial offerings of toys at puberty and marriage, the giving away of nuts to other children symbolizes the act of growing up. The giving up of nuts is so symbolic of the transition from childhood to adulthood that the phrase *nuces relinquere* was a common figure of speech meaning to put away childish things.[78]

Another category of toys that seems to have been very popular in ancient Greece and Rome is that of miniature animals. Although these figurines were usually of everyday animals such as cows, goats, and pigs, there are occasional examples of more exotic animals such as lions and dolphins.[79] Interestingly, there have not been any examples found of miniature mythological creatures such as minotaurs or centaurs. Horses were by far one of the most popular animal types, and some were even set on wheels so they could be moved about. The earliest known Greek example of a miniature animal believed to be made for the express purpose of being a toy, rather than as an

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[77] Catullus 61.122-136, trans. F.W. Cornish, *Catullus Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1962), 77.

[78] *The Bantam New College Latin & English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), s.v. "nux nucis *f*."

[79] Klein, 10, plate IXa.

offering of some kind, was a horse from the eighth century BCE found in Athens.[80] There is a hole in each foot through which modern conservators have inserted a dowel with wheels. This is most likely a correct reconstruction, but wood does not survive well in Greece's climate so we cannot know for sure. The body of the horse has been painted to show physical features, man-made accoutrements, and simple decorations, which include zigzags, hatches, stars, and a bridle. This type of decoration is very common in Greek art from the Geometric period, of which this is an example, and it would be unwise to draw any correlations between these decorations and possible decorations of live horses during this period. The horse's long legs are extremely fragile, which calls into question the identification of this object as a toy, because frequent use would undoubtedly cause the legs to break. Many horse figurines are found in children's graves, and the fragility of the item may suggest that it was simply a grave gift, and not an everyday toy. The wheels, however, would stabilize the object as well as provide for easy movement by young children. This increased mobility makes it very likely that the identification of the roller horse as a toy is correct. Even if this particular example was only made to be placed in the child's grave, it seems likely that there were versions intended for everyday use. Miniature animals such as this one remained part of the ancient catalog of toys well into the Roman Empire, and the dry sands of Egypt have preserved examples of wooden animal figurines.[81]

[80] Catalog number 70 in Neils and Oakley, 266.

[81] Ibid.

One of the most widely used toys in the ancient world was the ball. Used by children of all ages and both genders, the ball was a very versatile object.[82] There were many different types of balls in ancient Greece and Rome, and the Romans had at least five different names that supposedly correspond to different types. These names are *pila*, *follis*, *paganica*, *trigonalis*, and *harpastum*.[83] Martial describes three of these ball types by saying: "this *paganica* that swells with yielding feathers is not so soft as the follis and not so hard as the handball."[84] The handball in this sentence is the *harpastum*, which is the smallest of these balls, and is filled with hair. The *paganica*, then, is a medium-sized ball, and is filled with feathers. The largest of the balls is the *follis*, which is filled with air.[85] Galen, a Roman physician in the second century CE, describes one type of ball as the inflated bladder of an ox or a pig. Children would try to improve the overall shape of the bladder by warming it in the ashes of a fire and rubbing it until it was round. Bladders make a good base for a ball because they are light and hold shape, but they will also burst easily. It is possible that the children encased the bladder in leather to protect it. Leather panels were used in fashioning the shell of smaller balls. These panels may have been different colors to create attractive patterns that smaller children would find amusing.[86]

Although most commonly described as a toy of boys and men, the ball was a toy for girls as well. In the Odyssey, the princess Nausicaa is playing ball when she and her

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[82] Klein, 18.

[83] H. A. Harris, *Sport in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 79.

[84] Martial 14.45, trans. Baily, 3: 245.

[85] E. Norman Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 230.

[86] Harris, 79.

companions wake a sleeping Odysseus: "So then the princess tossed the ball to one of her maidens; the maiden indeed she missed, but cast it into a deep eddy, and thereat they cried aloud, and goodly Odysseus awoke, and sat up."[87] Gravestones also show both boys and girls holding toy balls, although it is sometimes difficult to be certain of the identification of round objects as balls rather than fruit.[88]

Ancient Games

One of the most popular children's games in any society is playing pretend. Several Greek and Roman writers describe children mimicking adult roles in their play. It was apparently quite common to see children playing as kings, judges, soldiers, or senators. Plutarch writes about a birthday party attended by Cato the younger where the boys, both older boys as well as young ones, pretended as if they were taking part in a law trial. Plutarch describes their play as mimicking "actions at law, accusations, and the conducting of the condemned persons to prison."[89] Rufinus of Aquileia describes an episode in the life of Bishop Alexander in which the bishop saw "some boys on the seashore playing a game in which, as they often do, they were mimicking a bishop and the things customarily done in church."[90] These boys even went so far as to perform mock baptisms. The main culprit of these mock religious rights was a young Athanasius

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[87] Homer *Odyssey* 6.115-118, trans. A.T. Murray, vol. 1 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1919), 215. See Petrini, 5.

[88] For gravestones showing children with balls, see catalog number 126 in Neils and Oakley, 308, and plate 10, no. 19, and plate 23, no. 50, in Christoph W. Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram: Greek Memorials from the Archaic and Classical Period* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1970).

[89] Plutarch *Cato the Younger* 2.5, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. 8 (London and New York: William Heinemann, 1914), 241.

[90] Rufinus of Aquileia *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.15 quoted in Philip R. Amidon, *The "Church History" of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26.

who would grow up to become bishop of Alexandria. Although both the story about Cato the younger and the story about Athanasius may be literary devices used to discuss the childhood of a famous figures, they indicate an acceptance in antiquity that young boys would play at the roles they would grow into as adults. Whether these instances are historical facts or not, the concept of this early preparation for and reflection of adulthood through play was strong enough to, at the very least, become a literary trope. This indicates that at least some children mimicked adult roles in play. Other games played by young Christian children in the Late Roman Empire include Monks and Demons, a culturally specific variant on the common good-guy versus bad-guy type game.[91]

The types of physical games that were played by children in Greece and Rome can be divided into groups according to the function of the game. In his discussion of the games played in ancient Egypt, Wolfgang Decker used function to sort the games into categories. He uses categories such as games that tested balance and dexterity, and those that prepared players for fighting.[92] Examples of these categories include games that tested strength, games that built endurance, and games that developed agility and precision. These are the main categories that I will use in this section.

Games that included elements that tested strength were very common in the ancient world, but games in which strength was the main function were rarer. Among the most popular games focused on strength were *dielkystinda*, *helkystinda*, and *ephelkystinda*. All three games were versions of tug-of-war. *Helkystinda* and

[91] Thomas Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 150-51. See also John Evans, *War, Women and Children in Ancient Rome* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 167.

[92] Wolfgang Decker, *Sports and Games of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Allen Guttmann (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 117.

ephelkystinda seem to have been ordinary versions of tug-of-war that included a rope. One of the purposes of this game in preparing children for society was to begin their training for war. Both the teamwork and the strength necessary to win the game would have been good skills to have on the battlefield.[93] *Dielkystinda*, however, was slightly more interesting as, according to Pollux, it had no rope. It is possible that the teams held hands when pulling, which would have increased the difficulty, since handgrips are more difficult to sustain than a grip on a rope.[94]

Several games that were meant to build endurance through running were played by Greek and Roman children. One such game, *ostrakinda*, was a chasing game involving two teams. According to Pollux, each team was named either night or day. One side of a potsherd was covered in pitch and then tossed into the air. If the dark side landed up, the night team chased the day team, if it landed face down, the day team chased night.[95] Another popular game was *myinda*. In this game the child who was "it" covered his eyes and tried to catch the other players. If he caught another player, that person became "it." *Drapetinda* is essentially the same game, but the name means runaway slave. Each of the players pretended to be an escaping slave while the person who was "it" tried to catch him.[96] Another similar game was called the "Brazen Fly." As

[93] Golden, *Children*, 55.

[94] Pollux 9.112 quoted in Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969), 236.

[95] Pollux 9.111 cited in Neils and Oakley, 264.

[96] Golden, *Children*, 55.

Pollux described the game, the person who was "it" covered his eyes with a bandage and the others struck at him with papyrus-husk whips until he caught one of them.[97]

Many of the games played by the ancient Greeks and Romans can be classified as agility games. These included simple games such as juggling balls or balancing a stick on the end of the finger or the palm of the hand, but they could also be more complex.[98] One game in which agility played a major role was *schœnophilinda*. Pollux said that players would crouch in a circle facing inwards while the "it" player would walk on the outside of the circle and try to drop a bit of rope behind one of the seated players unnoticed. If he succeeded, the seated player was then chased around the circle, if the "it" player was found out while dropping the rope, he was chased.[99] *Schœnophilinda* not only required the agility to leap from a seated position and enter into a chase but also required the players to pay keen attention so that they could identify when the rope was dropped. *Khelikhelōnē* is a similar game, but the roles were reversed. The person who was "it" was called the "tortoise" and sat in the middle while the other players moved in a circle around him asking questions as he tried to reach out and grab them from a seated position. The mental component of asking and answering questions provided distraction for both the tortoise and the other players, making the game even more difficult.[100] *Chytrinda* was another agility-based game in which the person who was the *chytra* or "pot" sat in the middle while the others circled around him. He tried to catch their feet

[97] Pollux 9.123 cited in Opie, 119.

[98] Neils and Oakley, 264.

[99] Pollux 9.115 cited in Opie, 206.

[100] Golden, *Children*, 74.

while they tried to poke and hit him as a distraction.[101] Both the seated player and those circling him need to remain agile, the seated player in hopes of catching one of the others, and the others in hopes of getting close enough to poke him without letting their feet get caught.

Pollux described several ball games that could be classified as agility-based games. First there was *Phaininda*, which "got its name either from its inventor, Phainindos, or from the word for feinting, since the player fakes a throw to one player, but actually throws to another, and thus deceives the player who expected the ball."[102] This game was similar to *harpaston*, which involved snatching the ball away from the person with possession, although *phaininda* used a softer ball than *harpaston*.[103] *Aporrhaxis* was another ball game that helped to sharpen the player's agility. This game "has the form of bouncing the ball vigourously on the ground, and dribbling it again and again with the hand. The number of bounces is counted."[104] This would have been more difficult than it sounds given the uneven nature of balls during this period as well as the lack of rubber to increase the bounciness of the ball. Another game, *Ourania*, "is played with one player bending backward and throwing the ball up into the sky. The others compete in snatching the ball before it falls back to the ground."[105] All of these games required a great amount of agility and grace.

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[101] Opie, 122.

[102] Pollux 9.105 quoted in Miller, 120.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Pollux 9.106 quoted in Miller, 120.

[105] Pollux 9.107 quoted in Miller, 119-20.

In addition to being used for wagering, as discussed above, nuts were often used to play games requiring agility and precision. In one such game, three nuts were placed together and the goal was to throw a fourth nut on top of the pile without separating them. Another game involved rolling a nut down a slope while aiming to hit a nut placed at the bottom. In another nut game, a triangle was drawn in the dirt with parallel lines running through it, and the goal was to toss the nut past as many of the lines as possible while keeping it inside the triangle.[106]

Some ball games also required precision. *Passé-boule* was a precision game in which a piece of wood with a hole in it was set perpendicular to the ground and the player tried to throw a ball through the hole.[107] Illustrations of the game show one player trying to throw the ball through the target, the other stands behind it and attempts to catch the ball. It is unknown whether catching the ball was also part of the game, or if it simply made it quicker for the next child to take his turn.[108] Another precision ballgame was commonly known as *ephedrismos*. In this game, a large stone, called the *dioros*, was placed some distance away from the base line on which players would stand as they tried to hit the stone with a ball or pebbles. The winner would then climb on the loser's back and cover his eyes as he tried to carry the winner to the *dioros*.[109] Illustrations of this game usually show the piggy-back portion. The player being carried positions his knee

[106] Wiedemann, 152.

[107] Neils and Oakley, 264.

[108] For examples of both girls and boys playing passé-boule, see catalog number 71 in Neils and Oakley, 271 and Beaumont, "Child's Play," 35.

[109] Sarah E. Hunt, *Games and Sports the World Around* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1964), 149.

across the back of the other player so it can be grasped by the carrier's opposite arm.[110] *Ephedrimos* and *passé-boule* are just two examples of games which required precision.

There were two ball games that combined too many functional categories to be sorted into just one. According to Pollux, the first of these games was known as *episkyros*, although it was also called *ephebike* or "commonball." This game required two teams of equal numbers, and the 'field' consisted of three parallel lines spaced an equal distance apart. The teams began by standing on the two outside lines while a ball was placed on the inside line, known as the *skyros*. When the game started both teams rushed for the ball, and the first team to reach it had possession. The ball was tossed back and forth between the teams, and the goal was to push the opposing team backwards over their starting line.[111] It is very likely that the ball was light in weight to render this feat more difficult. *Episkyros* was not intended for serious competition, but it was considered valuable for increasing teamwork and for general fitness.[112] This game combined the skills of agility, precision, and endurance, all in equal measure.

Another game that focused on a combination of skills was the game depicted in a relief from Athens which dates to about 500 BCE.[113] The relief shows a group of six boys playing a game that involves a small ball and curved sticks. At first glance, the relief seems to depict two teams of three or possibly more, but further study reveals that the two boys in the center are the only two actively engaged in the game. This may indicate that this is a two-player game and the other boys are part of an observing crowd,

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[110] For an example, see catalog number 83 in Neils and Oakley, 275.

[111] Pollux 9.104 quoted in Miller, 120.

[112] Craig, 101.

[113] See Beaumont, "Child's Play," 35.

or it could simply show a moment in the game where two players grapple for control of the ball to pass to their teammates.[114] Unfortunately, this relief is the only evidence of this game that has been found. The game's name, rules, and requirements are all unknown.

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive list of all the toys that ancient Greeks and Roman children had, nor is it a complete accounting of all the games that they played. Because of the spontaneous nature of children's games, as well as the general lack of interest in these games shown by adults, it is difficult to create a complete list of the games played by modern-day children, much less those played over two-thousand-years ago. In this chapter, I have discussed the toys most commonly found in the archaeological record, as well as a selection of toys and games depicted on vases and sarcophagi. As for the rules and regulations of games, the few accounts of authors such as Martial and Pollux give us what little information we have. Although not a comprehensive list, these examples are some of the most popular toys and games with which children entertained themselves throughout hundreds of years of Greek and Roman culture.

While the general form of these toys and games may seem similar to many modern-day entertainments, the details are never-the-less culturally specific. Dolls were given hairstyles that reflected the fashions of the period, miniature figurines were made to show common everyday animals, and children mimicked the behavior of adults in public positions. Reflections of the dominant culture such as these can be seen in many of the

[114] Gardiner, 237.

toys and games described in this chapter. What remains to be seen, however, is just what roles these entertainments played in the processes of enculturation.

CHAPTER 3

ENCULTURATION IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

The ancient Greeks and Romans took the enculturation of their young very seriously. Both groups placed high value on tradition and on the maintenance and expansion of their cultures. An important part of this maintenance was the careful education of children in the behaviors and values of their ancestors. In both Greece and Rome, public commendation of powerful elites and a heavy emphasis on heroes of the past led children to want to emulate their cultural leaders.[115] In fact, one likely reason for the public praise of citizens who contributed to the betterment of the community would have been to create a desire for similar accolades in the next generation. As Linda Fabrizio phrased it, "ancient custom virtually ordered its young to learn from their elders by watching and listening," and adults recognized their responsibility to provide good models of behavior.[116] Marc Kleijwegt argues that the lack of a youth subculture and youth revolt indicates that this desire to be like the adults was the result of their dominant position in society as well as their power and control. Whether this was actually the impetus behind the behavior or not, it seems clear that children wanted to be like the adults, and the adults encouraged this desire.[117]

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[115] Linda Fabrizio, "Children at Pompeii" (MA thesis. University of Maryland, 1975), 23-24.

[116] Ibid., 21.

[117] Marc Kleijwegt, *Ancient Youth: The Ambiguity of Youth and the Absence of Adolescence in Greco Roman Society* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1991), 68-69.

It may seem odd that such a heavy emphasis was placed on integrating children into the dominant culture as quickly as possible, but when the realities of life in the ancient world are taken into consideration, it is less so. By the beginning of the Roman Empire, a girl could marry at twelve-years old, and a boy could marry at fourteen. Although these ages are probably exceptionally young and do not truly reflect day-to-day practices, they were the minimum ages. Commonly, a woman had her first child by the time she was about twenty years old.[118] This was necessary because, with the high infant mortality rate, women needed to give birth several times to increase the odds of the family's survival through a male heir. In Greek society, young elites could be given at least nominal political responsibility at around sixteen- or seventeen-years of age. Real power could be earned between the ages of twenty-five and thirty.[119] The possibility of political power being in the hands of these relatively young men required the focus of enculturative practices during early childhood. Therefore, "the purpose of ancient education [on all levels] was to present children as early as possible as adult intellectuals."[120] Elite children needed to grow up as quickly as possible and take up their positions in adult society. This was even truer for children from poor families. In families where every non-working mouth was a considerable burden to feed, children had to begin to help out around the house and in the family business as soon as they were

[118] Barry Baldwin, "Young and Old in Imperial Rome," *The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Greece and Rome* ed., Stephen Bertman (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, 1976), 227.

[119] Kleijwegt, 72.

[120] Ibid., 132.

physically capable.[121] In both Greece and Rome, enculturation at a young age was important no matter to which class the child belonged.

Johannes Wilbert's Model

Before discussing the enculturative function of toys and games, it may be helpful to review Johannes Wilbert's model for studying enculturation. Wilbert's model is based on the idea that enculturation is achieved through the interaction of three specific processes. The processes are skill training, socialization, and moral education. Skill training refers to gaining the specific skills needed to perform certain adult tasks. Socialization refers to the introduction of accepted behaviors and social skills needed for personal interaction on an adult level. Moral education refers to the teaching of right and wrong based on the values of the dominant culture. Enculturation occurs during three different life stages, infancy, childhood, and adulthood, and can be studied on three different levels: environment, society, and culture.[122] The three processes seem to be present in the act of enculturation cross-culturally. In his study of the enculturative function of toys among the Tlingit Indians of Alaska, Michael Heine investigated areas of native culture that correspond quite closely to Wilbert's processes.[123] Although the information transmitted through the processes of enculturation varies with the dominant culture, the processes through which children are introduced to their culture seem to differ very little.

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[121] Ibid., 51.

[122] Wilbert, 22.

[123] Heine, iii.

My examination of the enculturative function of toys and games will take a tightly focused approach rather than trying to investigate all aspects of this model. First, the life stage which I will examine will predominantly be that of childhood. Although some of the information and analysis may apply to infants as well as children, the emphasis will be on children who are old enough to entertain themselves through the use of these toys and games. The examination will also focus on the function of enculturation on a cultural level rather than an environment- or society-based approach. The use of games and toys from both Greece and Rome makes this necessary because, while they had similar cultures, there were differences on the societal level. The effect of some of these differences on enculturation will be examined, but most of the analysis will be done on the broader cultural level. All three processes of enculturation will be examined, however, because children's toys and games were involved in each.

The processes of enculturation are parsed out over several different cultural realms that work in conjunction with one another. No one cultural institution fully covers all three processes. Children's entertainments such as games and toys do have some effect on all three processes of enculturation, but that effect is not equal across the board. The majority of toys and games are focused on skill training and socialization, although they also have a role in moral education. Likewise, other cultural institutions, such as ancient schooling, may play a larger part in moral education than in socialization or skill training. It is only through the interaction of multiple methods that an individual is ever truly enculturated. A thorough investigation of these alternate methods of enculturation does not belong in this thesis, but a short discussion of one such example will help to

demonstrate the location of the enculturative function of toys and games within the broader network of these interacting and overlapping processes.

Alternative Avenues of Enculturation

Schooling in ancient Greece and Rome was a complicated process. In Greece, primary education usually took place for one or two years between the ages of seven and fourteen. Secondary education took place when the child was between fourteen and eighteen years of age and included philosophical and rhetorical education as well as intensive physical training at the gymnasium. Once a young man turned eighteen he became an *ephebe* and served two years of military training and service.[124] These are the general guidelines of elite education in Greece, but there was not a fixed correlation between age and level of study as there is in modern education. For the ancient Greeks, ability and skill were more important than age, and certain subjects were taught to multiple ages at once.[125] These stages of education only applied to young boys in ancient Greece. While elite girls did perhaps receive an education, the exact nature of that education is unknown. The enculturative function of schooling in Greece went beyond learning the skills of reading, writing, and public speaking. The increased contact between young students and older elites, especially during the time spent in the gymnasium, helped young men to establish important connections with the powerful and wealthy of their society.[126]

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[124] Kleijwegt, 89, 91.

[125] Ibid., 90.

[126] Ibid., 88.

Education in ancient Rome was slightly different from that in Greece. The traditional education system of the early Republic was based at home. When a child turned seven his father began instructing him on physical, moral, and intellectual matters. At seventeen, an elite boy might have spent a year being tutored by an orator, but then he was considered a fully educated adult.[127] After about 200 BCE, the Romans became heavily influenced by Greek culture. Their education system reflected this change. Early education was still informal and took place in the home. These educative experiences were shaped by the child's nurse and parents.[128] The rhetorician and teacher Quintilian was quite adamant about the effect adults had on the children in their care. He argued that the earliest impressions made on a child will last the longest, and, therefore, children's nurses and caretakers will have the greatest impact on them. Quintilian urged parents to make sure they "surround the child with educated, upright people so he will get only the best impressions."[129] Although this may seem self-evident, it was thought to be particularly important due to the level of influence caretakers would have on the children.

Once children started more formal schooling, their first lessons were in reading and writing. The sayings and stories used to teach these skills also taught manners and good behavior.[130] Quintilian urged that any lines set for children to practice their writing "should not express thoughts of no significance, but convey some sound moral lesson."[131]

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[127] Emiel Eyben, *Restless Youth in Ancient Rome*, trans. Ratrick Daly (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 128.

[128] Rawson, 157.

[129] Quintilian, I.1.8, trans. H.E. Butler, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 1 (London and New York: William Heinemann, 1921), 23.

[130] Fabrizio, 22, 24.

[131] Quintilian, I.1.35, trans. Butler, 1: 37.

In this way, children's education prepared them for adult life through both skill training and moral education. Likewise, the stories that school children copied for writing exercises would have helped with socialization by teaching the children about key aspects of their culture such as government, law courts, business, and more. The undeniable focus of this early education, however, was on giving the child a good moral foundation. Quintilian emphasized the necessity of this strong moral background by saying: "I hold that no one can be a true orator unless he is also a good man."[132] Although he is speaking specifically about orators, this attitude was directed towards all occupations. If a man had questionable morals, he was not accepted as a capable adult.

When a child was between eleven and fifteen years of age, he began his secondary education in language and poetry under the tutelage of a *grammaticus*. After he turned fifteen, the child entered the final stage of his education. This stage involved the study of theory and public speaking under a *rhetor*.[133] These two levels of education focused more on specific oratory skills than general moral lessons, but, as shown by Quintilian above, there was still a great deal of emphasis maintaining an upright character.

Although there were some variations between the two cultures, the core beliefs and values that were taught to children were very similar. In both Greece and Rome, most early teaching predominantly focused on "principles of duty and obedience, of respect and unselfishness."[134] In other words, the early education in Greece and Rome was concerned with matters of socialization and moral education. Then, as the children

[132] Ibid. 1.2.3, trans. Butler, 1: 41.

[133] Eyben, 129.

[134] Fabrizio, 70.

grew in age and cognitive ability, they would learn about more specific rules and patterns of behavior in adult society. The further that a young man advanced in his education, the more he was taught skills such as eloquent public speaking and the proper formation of an argument. Since most of the boys who received this advanced education were elites, these would have been valuable skills for their adult lives as statesmen and politicians.

The Enculturative Function of Toys and Games

Several ancient Greek and Roman games and toys can be seen to have had direct value for training children in the physical skills necessary for adult life. Whether preparing children for adult occupations, athletics, or military service these games and toys laid a foundation for later more specialized training. For the most part, it was children's games rather than their toys that were used for this process of enculturation. While toys focus more on entertaining children, the physical and imaginative demands of games were more helpful for skill training.

Imitation of adults is primarily a form of play focused on skill training. Through mimicking the behavior of their parents and other adults, children were preparing to take on these roles themselves. In the two examples of children playing pretend that were discussed in chapter 2, the children imitated legal proceedings and religious rites. These were two examples of public, everyday adult roles that would have appealed to children. By attending church, and through observation when visiting a town, as well as through formal schooling, both sets of behavior would have been familiar to many Greek and Roman children. These adult roles, which were performed in public and in front of audiences, were exactly the sorts of behavior that children often imitated. In addition to the more general imitation of behavior observed in everyday life, children often imitated

specific occupations with the help of miniaturized tools. This can be seen in Plato's urging that a child who was to become a builder should build toy houses, while one who was to become a farmer should practice tilling the land with a toy plow.[135]

Whether children were pretending to fill adult roles they observed during daily life or practicing for what would most likely become their future occupation, the imitation of adults helped to prepare children for their own adulthood. Although their mimicking was often influenced more by their imaginations than by a thorough understanding of the rules governing the adults' actions, it was considered to be one step in the learning of those physical skills necessary to perform these roles as adults. Thus, Plato encourages this type of play so that "by means of their games, we should endeavor to turn the tastes and desires of the children in the direction of that object which forms their ultimate goal."[136] Although no one expected such imitative play to prepare and fully train children for adult jobs, it was thought that playing pretend would not only introduce the children to these roles, but also help to build the foundational skills necessary to begin more formal training.

Miniature chariots are an example of a toy that was used to teach children skills they would need as adults. These chariots were designed to look and work exactly like full scale models. Although carts were probably used more than chariots for day to day transportation, the skills necessary for steering an animal and making him pull a chariot are the same as those needed for driving a cart. Not only did these miniature chariots allow children to pretend to be adults, they also helped them learn the skills required for driving a cart.

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[135] Plato *Laws* I.643c, trans. Bury, 1: 63.

[136] Ibid. 1.643c, trans. Bury, 1: 63-65.

Miniature animal figurines also served to teach skills. For the most part, animal figurines in Greece and Rome were representations of common farm animals that the children would see and interact with on a daily basis. These toys would allow children the chance to pretend to be farmers. Through play, children could mimic the everyday activities involved in keeping animals and running a farm, which they could have observed from their parents. The identification of this role of animal figurines is strengthened by the lack of representations of mythical beasts. If the toys were merely meant to entertain children then we might expect illustrations of the creatures that filled ancient stories. Surely these would capture the imaginations of children more easily than chickens and pigs. Instead, we find representation of animals that filled everyday life. Even representations of more exotic animals are rare, and it seems likely that ancient animal figurines were intended to allow children the opportunity to play at farming, which may have become their future career.

In Classical Greece, the festival at Olympia, and other similar athletic festivals, were open to non-professional citizens. The Olympic Games held competitions in, among other sports, chariot racing, combat sports, and foot races.[137] Many of the games played by children in Greece would have been good preparation for these games. Games such as *ostrakinda* and Brazen Fly would require almost non-stop running and that level of endurance would have been helpful in footraces. Likewise, the hand-eye coordination and agility which are learned from playing games such as *chytrinda* and *passé-boule* would have helped athletes in combat sports such as boxing and wrestling. In general, a healthy and active childhood in which a child spent much of his time playing physically demanding games would have been a good background for any citizen who wished to

[137] Harris, 20.

compete in one of these festivals. As the boys grew older they would practice sports such as horse racing, boxing, and wrestling with more focus, but many of the childhood games would have provided excellent groundwork.

Although the military was increasingly professionalized from the Hellenistic period on, games helped children in Archaic and Classical Greece develop a foundation for future military training. At a very basic level, the attitude of movement and exercise which was nurtured by a childhood spent playing physically active games and a young adulthood spent in the gymnasium would have young men entering military service in peak physical condition. But the advantages of children's games and toys for learning military skills went beyond a general appreciation for fitness. Endurance games such as *ostrakinda* and *myinda* would help young men learn to pace themselves, a skill needed for long battles and even longer marches. The addition of striking the seeker with papyrus-husk whips made Brazen Fly even more appropriate for teaching military skills. With this extra component to the game, the player who was seeking the others not only had to use skills other than sight to locate his opponents, but also had to endure pain and concentrate while under fire. The tug of war games such as *dielkystinda*, *helkystinda*, and *ephelkystinda* would help build strength needed for battle in full armor. The hoop and stick were a set of toys that helped to develop muscle control, coordination, and agility, all of which are necessary when fighting with a sword and shield. The agility required in *khelikhelōnē* and *chytrinda* would help boys learn to be quick off the mark, as well as feints and other strategies, which would help children learn the basics of tactics. Games such as *episkyros*, and possibly the hockey game depicted in figure 15, would have helped young men learn how to work as a team. With battle tactics such as those

employed by the phalanx, knowing how to work as a unit to become an impenetrable line was extremely important. These were just a few ways in which the common childhood games popular in Greece would have helped prepare young boys for military service. Most of these examples focused on general or basic skills rather than on specific training in use of weapons and tactics, but, as with playing pretend, they lay the groundwork for further learning on a more professional level.

There were some examples of children combining play with more serious military training in Rome. Ovid described the play of young boys in early spring by saying: "now there is sport with horses, now there is play with light arms, with the ball or the swift circling hoop."[138] The inclusion of drilling and sparring with weapons among these other, less militarily directed forms of play highlights the connections between play and training. Practicing military skills through play could be as simple as mock sword fights between two boys using sticks or as complex as imitation battles with multiple players. Either way, this drilling would have served young boys well in their preparation for military service. The military advantages of one of the other forms of play mentioned by Ovid, games involving horses, can be seen when discussing the so-called Troy game. The Troy Game was not actually a game, but rather a display of military skills by young elite Roman boys. In this mock military ride, the boys showed off their superior horsemanship skills.[139] Although it was not a game, the Troy Game was lighthearted entertainment and a chance for young boys to show off their skills.

[138] Ovid *Tristia* 3.12.19-20, trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler, *Ovid* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1924), 147-49.

[139] Gardiner, 127.

One last section of children's games that can be connected with military training is known as combat sports. Three main sports were described as combat sports in ancient Greece. These were boxing, wrestling, and pankration, which was a no-holds-barred type of wrestling.[140] These sports could be dangerous, and the most dangerous of them, the pankration, was probably not practiced by children. Although younger boys would most likely have been restricted to wrestling and boxing to limit the danger they were in, combat sports such as these were still thought to be directly connected to the preparation of young men for military service. In his work *Anacharsis*, Lucian told the story of a conversation between Solon and Anacharsis about athletics. In this conversation, Solon says that athletics are the things "in which we train our youths, thinking them to be good guardians for our city and that we will live in freedom through them, conquering our enemies if they should attack." [141] This cannot be taken as direct evidence of accepted practice in Archaic Greece, or of Solon's personal opinion, since Lucian was writing several hundred years after Solon's life. What this passage does, however, is give a clear picture of what motivations the Romans assigned to the Greeks' love of these sports.

Girls also played the same games and with the same toys as boys. As adults, however, they stayed in the home and focused on bearing children, weaving, and other household duties. Athletics and the military, therefore, could not have been the adult roles for which girls were being enculturated. One possible way in which games of agility and precision could have worked to enculturate young girls is by increasing their adeptness at spinning and weaving. These two skills were vital for the adult woman, so

[140] Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 7.

[141] Lucian *Anacharsis* 30 quoted in Poliakoff, 96.

any game which increased agility would have been useful. This interpretation is strengthened by vase depictions of grown women practicing juggling or balancing a stick on their finger.[142] On a more basic level, games which required girls to run about would have kept them healthy and physically fit so that they would have made attractive sexual partners and marry quickly. These games would have also prepared women for their most physically demanding job, childbirth. Even though boys and girls were playing the same games, they were being enculturated in different ways.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which ancient games and toys worked to train children in the physical skills they will need for adulthood. A great deal of this training was actually laying the groundwork for more serious preparations, but that made it no less valuable as an enculturative tool. These general skills made it possible for specialized training to begin at a young age, which was vital if the child was to make a successful transition into adulthood, because of the early age of indoctrination into the dominant culture. Without this early preparation, youths would be ill equipped to take up adult roles at such a young age.

There were also toys and games that helped to introduce Greek and Roman children to social rules and behaviors of their cultures. For socialization, both toys and games seem to have been equally helpful learning aids. This early introduction to the dominant culture helped children begin to understand how to interact with others on an adult level. In general, the playing of games and use of toys teaches many social skills necessary for adult life. Games teach children about teamwork, how to be a good winner or a good loser, and how to understand other people's perspectives when dealing with conflict. Playing with toys can teach children about sharing, taking turns, and the value

[142] See catalog numbers 80 and 81 in Neils and Oakley, 272-3.

of personal possessions. Skills such as these are critical for success in adult relationships such as family, business, or friendship.

Playing pretend is a very effective method for socialization, perhaps even more so than it is for skill training. While the exact details of an adult role may be blurred due to inaccurate observation or overactive imagination, the impact of mimicking an adult social situation cannot be lessened in the same way. When pretending to take part in a mock court trial, or even playing house, children are confined within the boundaries of the social rules. The negotiations of class, rank, and power with which adults would be faced in these situations in real life are still present in play. The difference is, as Meyer Fortes said, that children at play are free to experiment within these boundaries without the fear of major reprisal should they make a mistake.[143] This experimentation allows children the freedom to work out for themselves why the accepted social norms are generally preferred. Taking on the role of another, for instance a magistrate, bishop, soldier, allows children to understand the point of view of others better. It helps them to place their own desires and thoughts in perspective and to think outside of their own everyday experiences. Playing pretend offers children multiple methods of better understanding the social norms of their culture, both in ancient Greece and Rome, and in the modern day.

Drapetinda is one specific game with socialization aspects. This game, which is roughly translated as "runaway slave," pitted the escaped slaves against the master who was trying to retrieve them. Both Greece and Rome were societies based on slave labor. The idea of slavery was accepted by the dominant culture, and it was a part of the everyday lives of children. Games such as *drapetinda* taught children about the accepted

[143] Fortes, 58.

hierarchy of social relationships in their culture. Since most elite children's caretakers were slaves, the exact power dynamics between free and slave might have been confusing if not for clues built into games such as this. Both cultures had a strict power hierarchy among free men as well. Games reflected this hierarchy subtly through the hierarchy of players. The games have rules that are set by tradition and passed on from older children to younger ones.[144] This automatically placed the older children in a position of power over the younger players and was a direct reflection of the larger cultural hierarchy between young and old, rich and poor, experienced and novice.

Dolls are an extremely important toy for the socialization of young girls. As discussed in chapter 2, ancient dolls came in all sizes and levels of complexity. Some dolls were thought to depict the perfect adult woman with her intricate hair and detailed but modest dress. These dolls may have been representative of an ideal goal to which young girls were supposed to aspire. Other dolls, such as Klein's mechanical doll, showed women performing some of their daily tasks. These dolls would perform tasks that the girl's mother and servants performed on a daily basis and thus would serve as an early introduction to adult responsibilities. Some dolls were referred to as *nymphoi*, which means brides. Again these dolls depicted young women at the height of life and beauty.[145] They emphasize the most important role for a woman in Greek and Roman society, that of marriage. These were only three of the many different types of dolls found in the ancient world, but they indicate the usefulness of this toy in the socialization of young girls. The dolls served as a first introduction to the adult roles, behavior, and

[144] Harris, 76.

[145] Mark Golden, "Childhood in Ancient Greece" in *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past*, ed. Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 14.

dress they would be expected to assume when they came of age. The dedication of dolls and other toys on the eve of marriage also emphasizes the connection between dolls and socialization. At this point the girls were being accepted into adult society and needed no more training. Once the girls fully entered the dominant culture, they could leave their training aids behind.

Another instance of socialization from toys and games is more general than the previous examples, but no less important. The competitive nature of games in the ancient world had direct correlations with the competitive nature of the adult world. Ancient Greek and Roman political life was extremely competitive, and the elite young boys who had the most time to play games and sports would someday enter this world. Competition was even more important in Greece, where city-states competed with each other for power and pride both on the battlefield and in athletic games. While children's games were played primarily for fun and entertainment, there were always clearly defined winners and losers, and winning had a great deal of pride attached to it. Winning was so important a status marker that the Romans often referred to the winner of a game as *rex*, or king, even though they hated kings.[146] For a child, the prestige of winning a game was analogous to that of an adult lawyer winning a trial or a politician winning enough votes for his proposition. Thus, games gave children a taste for competition, for the glory of winning and the shame of losing, which would be transferred into adult life.

Toys and games aided the process of socialization in many ways. Whether introducing children to the concepts of class and society, the thrill of competition, or the perspective of others, these entertainments prepared children for adulthood within a complex society. As Fortes argued, the introduction to social life through the toys and

[146] Wiedemann, 150.

games allowed children to gain a deeper understanding of their culture without suffering consequences for any blunders they make along the way. The stakes were not as high as they are for adults fully immersed into the society.

The last process of enculturation is the moral education of children. Toys and games were used less for this process than the other two, but children's entertainment was still somewhat helpful. The majority of moral education came from other culture areas such as religion and schooling, but toys and games did teach right from wrong, honor, and good sportsmanship. These were all components of a complete moral education.

Storytelling, although not technically a game or toy, was one form of children's entertainment that could be used to give children a moral education. Plutarch, in his discussion of the impressionable nature of children's minds and bodies, urged that no opportunity to improve the moral character of children should be wasted. He said that he agreed with Plato when he "advises nurses, even in telling stories to children, not to choose at random, lest haply their minds be filled at the outset with foolishness and corruption."[147] Instead, nurses were to tell stories that promoted upstanding morals and heroic accomplishments. These stories would be the child's first introduction to the values held dear by the dominant culture, and it was hoped that they would influence his behavior for the better.

As stated above, Plato discussed another part of children's play which has moral implications. He argued that children should not be allowed to change the rules of games to suit their whims because this would lead to an attitude of disrespect for tradition, and

[147] Plutarch *Moralia* 3.f, trans. Babbit, 1: 17.

the desire to change laws without proper consideration or reason.[148] If this impulse for ignoring tradition and casually changing rules and laws could be curbed in children, it would not affect the work of adults. If it could not, however, it could cause the downfall of the dominant culture through the weakening of its legal system.

These two examples demonstrate the process of moral education through toys and games. Although there are fewer ways by which children's entertainment seems to have been utilized in this aspect of enculturation, they were no less important than the ways in which entertainment aids skill training or socialization. Toys and games worked together as one possible method for the transmission of cultural information from adults to children. Combined with other methods of enculturation, such as religion, schooling, or instruction from family members, these forms of entertainment provided children with enough background information to make the transition into adulthood smoothly and successfully.

[148] Plato *Laws* 7.797a-b, trans. Bury, 2: 31-33.

CONCLUSION

James Johnson argues that not all types of play contribute to development.[149] It seems more accurate to say that not all types of play contribute to all types of development. For instance, the rattle is a very important toy for stimulating the visual and auditory development in infants, but it has no enculturative value. Likewise, dolls are often used in the enculturative process of socialization, as well as in developing problem solving and language skills, but they do very little to increase motor skills. These examples illustrate the complexity of childhood development, and the many ways in which toys and games contribute to the various skill sets. Each area of development is equally important for helping children grow into fully functioning adults, and the more ways in which play can stimulate this progress, the better.

Even though every Greek and Roman toy or game did not aid in the process of enculturation, several did. Some games and toys helped prepare children for adulthood by giving them foundational skills they would need for specialized training when they were older. These skills included those necessary for military service, athletics, and even everyday life. The games which young boys in ancient Greece and Rome played were all physically intense and focused towards developing skills such as agility, endurance, and muscle control. These skills also helped for those interested in competing in the athletic festivals popular in Greece. Although specialized training did not take place until the boys were in their teens, games were used to lay the groundwork for this later training.

[149] Johnson, 18.

Through playing pretend, children also developed necessary skills for adult occupations. This play was limited to behaviors and actions observed by the children in their daily lives, but, as Fortes argued, it was a chance for them to grapple with the cultural realities they would have to face as adults without the fear of harsh repercussions.

Other toys and games helped with children's social development. Dolls were particularly important in the socialization of young girls. Although the ancients did not seem to have baby dolls which we normally think of as encouraging young girls to accept their roles as mothers, they did have dolls that depicted the ideal woman. These dolls showed young women at the age of marriage and thus emphasized the importance of marriage for women in ancient society. One of the most helpful social skills games and toys could teach to children in the ancient world was how to view situations from other peoples' perspectives. This is a valuable skill in any culture. By pretending to be magistrates, judges, or bishops, children not only learned adult occupations, they also learned to think outside their own immediate needs and look at the larger picture of society. Through the use of toys and games such as these, children were introduced to the social world in which they would have to function as adults.

The last process of enculturation is moral education. Children's entertainments are less effective in this area, but there are some ways in which they make a contribution. It was thought that the minds of children were malleable and that it was important to shape their character at a young age. To do this, nurses used storytelling to impart moral advice to their young charges. Another area where play was thought to have an impact on a child's character was in teaching respect for tradition. Plato thought that if children were allowed to change the rules of games as they wished then they would not appreciate

tradition and would grow up to change laws with the same sense of whimsy. Thus, the process of older children teaching younger children the rules of specific games helped to reinforce respect for tradition in all ages. These are just a few examples of the ways in which toys and games were used to enculturate children in ancient Greece and Rome. Children's entertainment was by no means the only method of enculturation utilized in the ancient world, but it did have a significant impact.

Children's play worked in concert with other cultural institutions such as religion, schooling, and family networks to enculturate children fully. In chapter 3, examples of some ways in which schooling worked to further the transmission of specific skills, proper behavior, and accepted moral values were discussed. Much like entertainment, there were many ways in which schooling worked to teach children about their culture. Any one of these institutions could stand on its own as a perfectly good approach to enculturation, but when they are viewed as a whole the process appears complete. Still, it is important to remember that, as Harry Wolcott said, no child is ever fully indoctrinated into a set culture.[150] Children pick and choose which aspects of the dominant culture they wish to abide by, and these choices will subtly affect the dominant culture in the next generation. Still, culture and society could not exist past one generation if there were not processes in place for the transmission of the accepted values and behaviors from adults to their children. Children's toys and games are a very effective method of ensuring enculturation.

[150] Wolcott, 265.

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