YOUTH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: 
THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS YEARS?

1. Intro – The problem of youth

- What is youth? The problem of the 'upper limit'.
  (labour, marriage, financial independency, juridic criteria, fixed age?)

- Is youth of all times? Nomos (culture) versus physis (nature).

- In favour of the physis theory:
  M. Westenberg and neuropsychology from Leyden.

  [http://www.libc-leiden.nl or http://brainanddevelopmentlab.nl](http://www.libc-leiden.nl or http://brainanddevelopmentlab.nl)

- In favour of the nomos theory:
  M. Mead: *Coming of Age at Samoa* privacy, sexuality, education.

  Ph. Ariès: *le sentiment de l'enfance* 17th–18th century bourgeois.

  L. Stone: individualism.


  R. Gillis: prolonged schooling and scouting.

- The debate in ancient history: Eyben versus Pleket/ Kleijwegt.

2. Minority-adulthood: Youth, divisions of life course and Roman law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Temperament</th>
<th>Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child (till 20 or 25 y.)</td>
<td>Humid and warm</td>
<td>Sanguine</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (25 to 40 y.)</td>
<td>Dry and warm</td>
<td>Choleric</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult age (till 60 y.)</td>
<td>Humid and cold</td>
<td>Phlegmatic</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age (from 60 y.)</td>
<td>Dry and cold</td>
<td>Melancholic</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Varro apud Censorinum, DN 14, 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–15 y.</td>
<td>puer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–30 y.</td>
<td>adulescens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–45 y.</td>
<td>iuvenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–60 y.</td>
<td>senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 60 y.</td>
<td>senex</td>
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</table>

3. Venus' stage of life, the third period, namely that of the young man, covers eight years by analogy with the number of years of one orbit by Venus. Of course, this phase activates the sperm cells and experiences the explosion of the sex-drive, according to which the soul is pervaded by a sort of rage and lack of self-control, as well as by a longing for sexual activity wherever it may be found. There is also the blindness caused by dominating passion and the inability to acknowledge one’s own restlessness.

(Ptolemy, Tetr. 4, 10)

Practical value?:

How on earth can our ancestors possibly have believed in such a load of rubbish?
(P. Laslett)

Roman law:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boy:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–ca. 7 y.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 7–ca.14 y.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 14–ca. 25 y:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 25 y.:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–12 y.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 12 y.:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In practice: - criminal law.
- uncertainty about ages.

Therefore the following question may be raised: if a lunatic causes damage, is one entitled to compensation according to the lex Aquileia? Pegasus too claims that this is not the case: how is he to blame who does not control his senses? That is completely true. There will be no trial on the basis of the lex Aquileia, just as there is no such trial if
3. Terminology and features

Human life follows a fixed course. Nature has only one single path, which is run but once. Each stage of life has its own character, so that the weakness of the children (infirmitas puerorum), the impetuosity of the young men (ferocitas iuvenum), the seriousness of middle age (gravitas constantis aetatis), and the maturity of old age (maturitas senectutis) are all natural. One has to submit to it at the right time.

(Cicero, De senect.10, 33)

4. Rites de passage

• East: offering of hair
• Graeco-Roman Egypt epikrisis, mallokouria, circumcision.
• West: children laid aside the bulla, donning of the toga praetexta: when?

5. Youth in ancient medicine

It is not possible to restrict those phases of life with a number, as some have done, except approximately. Coming of age happens for some after the completion of their fourteenth year, for others one year later, sometimes even later.

(Galen, De san. tuenda 6, 2; 6, 387–8 Kühn)

Hippocrates claimed the following symptoms of puberty: breasts, sperm and the womb. Two of those symptoms are equal for men and for women, namely sperm and the breasts. The third symptom, the womb, is typical of women. During the transition from childhood to puberty, the production of sperm and the growing of pubic hair begins in boys. Also the testicles start growing. In the same way, the growing of the breasts starts in girls, as well as menstruation and the changing of the voice – the latter mainly in boys.

(Galen, Comm. in Hipp. Hum. 2, 36; 16, 338–9 Kühn)
• Young people as 'speaking patients'.

6. Youth and education

• restless students' life: correspondence by Cicero, papyri and late ancient testimonies (Libanius, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianze, Eunapius).
• Some pictures from Athens: mass arrival at Piraeus, ritual bath and student's baptism. 'National riots', rivalising choroi, friendships between students.
• Unfortunate 'professors': Libanius and Augustine
• Learned girls - matronae doctae?

7. Youth organisations

• East:
  epheby: social middle class, 2–3 years.
  Sports, social skills, culture to a small degree.
• West:
  iuventus: also lower classes (slaves!), also girls, sometimes elder people.
  fighting, hunting, cult, emperor's cult, …
• Not time-consuming, so…. free time !
• Youth organisations as scouting?

8. Youthful behaviour

• dandies, revellers, spendthrifts and vandals?
• youth gangs?
• brothels.
• young Antinoüs.
• generational conflicts: fathers – children (Cicero and son Marcus !!)
  mothers – children (Attia and Octavian)
• mild and severe educators, context of a brute and authoritarian society
9–10. **Youth in public offices: Professional training**

- senators and knights.
- representation vs. office holding.
- councilors or magistrates.
- no city doctors or jurists.

To the Spirits of the Dead. For Caius Julius Sabinianus, physician, who lived seventeen years, ten months and fourteen days. Caius Julius Sabinus and Sollia Fortunata made (this grave) for their most loving son and for themselves.

\((AnÉp (1968) 159 and (1992) 341, second half of the first century AD)\)

Caius Iulius Mygdonius, Parthian by birth, born in freedom, captured at an early age and transferred to Roman soil. I became a Roman citizen thanks to the help of the Fate. I prepared my grave at the age of fifty. I succeeded to grow up from youth to old age. Accept me willingly now, my grave. With you I will be freed from all sorrows.

\((CIL XI 137; CLE 1580)\)

11. **Marriage**

- early marriage pattern.
- the dynamics of marriage. Consent but ....:

If, when his father forces him, the son takes a wife whom he would not marry of his own free will, he has nevertheless contracted marriage, which is not contracted between those who are unwilling. He appears to have preferred this course.

\((Dig.23, 2, 22 (Celsus); transl. J. Evans-Grubbs)\)

If she doesn’t fight against her father’s wishes, she is understood to consent. Moreover, the liberty to dissent from her father’s decision is only allowed to her, if her father chooses a fiancé who is disgraceful or unworthy in his way of life.

\((Dig. 23, 1, 12 (Ulpian); transl. J. Evans-Grubbs)\)

- marriage as the end of youth for boys.
- marriage and girls. A history of submission?

Euenus built this grave for his wife Margaris,
As a tribute to his dear and loving wife.
He married her when she was still a girl, thirteen years of age.
They were married for fifty years.
Then she died at age sixty-three.
All her life, she made her husband happy.

12. Youth and Christianity

- canonical law and age limits.
- ages in monasteries as overturning hierarchy?
- the birth of the sexually frustrated adolescent? Augustine.

I was about fifteen years of age. As my parents could not afford it, I didn’t attend school and lived with my parents. At that time, the weed of sensual desire raged above my head, and there was no hand to pull up the weeds. When my father at the bath house saw that my puberty had begun and that I was covered with the signs of restless youth, he joyfully brought the message to my mother, as he was eager to have grandchildren soon. He was drunk with that sort of drunkenness by which the world forgets its Creator and worships the Creation rather than You. … But in my mother’s heart, You had already placed Your temple and the foundation of Your holy dwelling. My father was still and only very recently a candidate for baptism. My mother panicked in pious fear and emotion. For me, although I was not yet baptised, she feared the twisted roads on which they walk ‘who have turned their backs towards you, not their faces’ (Jeremiah 2: 27).

(Augustine, Conf. 2, 3, 6)

In these years, I had one woman. She wasn’t joined up with me in what one calls a legal marriage. In any case, my restlessly wandering passion, deprived of any reason, had found her for me. One woman, I say, and I was sexually faithful towards her. In this way, I could experience for myself the difference between a wise union of marriage, which is contracted in order to procreate, and an agreement based on pleasure and lust, in which children are born against the couple’s will. But once they are born, one has to love these children anyway.

(Augustine, Conf. 4, 2, 2)

Brown (2000) 502: On the issue of sexuality, we must be careful not to ‘demonize’ Augustine.
13. Conclusion

- the Other in history: stranger or similarity?
- inwards or outwards?/ Institutions or psychology?
- young and restless years: a cliché, but no dead end for further research …

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