EMERGENT FLESH

Phusiopoiesis and Ancient Arts of Training

Debra Hawhee

This article examines connections between ancient training of the mind and body to delineate a concept of phusiopoiesis, the production of one's nature. The category of nature (phusis) for the presocratics and sophists operates not as an essential and unchangeable state, but rather as a malleable disposition, one that can be altered through a process of production (poiesis). Such a configuration of phusis in pre-Socratic fragments, Hippocratic treatises, and philosophical discussions of the body, medicine, and training holds implications for ancient training practices, most especially challenging assumptions about the category of natural talent thought to be necessary for success as a rhetor or athlete. This bodily transformation entails at least three dynamics of phusiopoietic training: friendship, masochism, and erotics.

Certain of our ancestors, long before our time . . . invented and bequeathed to us two disciplines![:] physical training for the body, of which gymnastics is a part, and, for the mind, philosophy, which I am going to explain. These are twin arts—parallel and complementary—by which their masters prepare the mind to become more intelligent and the body to become more serviceable, not separating sharply the two kinds of education, but using similar methods of instruction, exercise, and other forms of discipline.

—Isocrates (1982, lines 180-183)

The current fascination with the body—its formations, its transformations, and its history—is only the most recent phase and direct consequence of a long cultivation of the body in the West. A fascination has, in a way, discovered itself.

—Porter (1999, p. 1)

In the 4th century B.C.E., Isocrates gestures to early rumblings of what Porter (1999) calls the “long cultivation of the body in the West” (p. 1). The Athenian sophist-orator articulates one version of this now longstanding fascination with the body by focusing on its status as a site of training. In other words, for Isocrates, not only did the body serve as an important locus of citizen production, but the production of a serviceable body set forth training practices from which other teachers might learn. Indeed, Isocrates’ connection between athletic and rhetorical training points to a whole network of educational practices that derives from the flexible art of sophistry.

At the beginning of Plato’s Protagoras (1990), the title character, the sophist from Abdera, informs Socrates that the art of sophistry has a long and varied history and is often characterized by pretense (proschêma):

© 2001 Sage Publications, Inc.
Sometimes of poetry, as in the case of Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides; sometimes of mystic rites and soothsayings, as did Orpheus, Musaeus and their sects; and sometimes too, I have observed, of athletics, as with Ictus of Tarentum and another still living—as great a sophist as any—Herodicus of Selymbria, originally of Megara; and music was the disguise employed by Agathocles, a great sophist, Pythocleides of Ceos, and many more. (316d-e)

All of the instantiations of technê cited here—poetry, music, athletics, and sports medicine (Herodicus of Selymbria was an early practitioner of medicine for athletes)—deal with a kind of education, a shaping of the body-mind complex. As the character Protagoras puts it a few lines earlier, all these arts hold the promise of self-improvement, or becoming better (belthious esomenous), attained through students’ linking to (suneinai) the sophists who practice them.

The age of the sophist Protagoras (490 to 420 B.C.E.)—better known as the age of Pericles—was a time when the spirit of technê was spreading through Athens. Although training in sophistic arts took many different directions—the production of musical, poetic, athletic, or rhetorical aptitudes—the general direction was a kind of self-stylization, of making oneself better and more capable in some regard. These arts, at first glance, seem to fall under the category articulated so lucidly by Michel Foucault (1988): They are “arts of existence,” or technê tou biou (pp. 44-45). Foucault (1990) uses this phrase to indicate those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria. (pp. 10-11)

Foucault’s description is written almost entirely in the reflexive middle voice whereby men “seek to transform themselves.” In other words, a major requirement for transformation is a “seeking out,” motivated by the desire to cultivate strategies that will produce oneself differently. The seeking is accompanied by a concomitant submitting—active submission is thus a necessary first step for transformation.

But even more than that, values and styles cultivated by such actions work to create capacities, a flexible body of work. Insofar as these training practices produce the capacity for transformation, arts of existence might better be conceived of as arts of becoming. For Protagoras, active submission manifests itself in a choice to join with (suneinai) a particular teacher, as the itinerant sophist encourages youths to “drop their other connections, either with their families or with foreigners, both old and young, and to join one’s own circle, with the promise of improving them by this connection with oneself” (316c-d). Indeed, the impetus for the entire dialogue is young Hippocrates’ “intention to submit” himself to a sophist (312c). In other words, a certain dynamic necessarily precedes the kind of transformation promised by sophistic arts. In what follows, I will elaborate several directions taken by
these programs for transformation, these arts of becoming. Specifically, I will trace out the way in which pedagogical techniques crossed over, as Isocrates suggests, from arts of the body to arts of the mind. Such a crossover seems remarkable in light of contemporary practices in which bodily and intellectual training are sharply separated. But for the Athenians, these arts were integrated, and the points of integration explored here made all the difference for ancient educational practices.

BODIES AND ARTS

A particularly useful elaboration of a technē of daily existence is the 5th century Hippocratic treatise, Regimen. According to the author, it is necessary for a physician who will offer counsel on daily regimen to know the constitution of the human body and the forces within it (I.ii.1-10), as well as “the power [dunamin] possessed by all the food and drinks of our regimen, both the power each of them possessed by nature and the power given them by the constraint of art.” In other words, the physician’s task is to attend to capacities and tendencies—the capacities of particular bodies to be affected by forces of nature and art and their tendencies to be affected in particular ways. Such an approach, however, is highly contingent on the situation at hand, as the Hippocratic author writes: “For it is necessary to know both how one ought to lessen the power of these when they are strong by nature, and when they are weak to add by art strength to them, seizing each opportunity as it occurs” (I.ii.10). The text’s physician is one who tinkers with a variety of forces—corporeal, material, and technical—in an attempt to produce a healthy, regulated body.

But importantly, regulation here does not mean fixity. Rather, the strategies and practices (read: art) outlined in Regimen are based on the assumption that change will happen, as it is targeted toward “those who of necessity live a haphazard life” (III.lxix.1). Thus, in this text, the very concept of regulation is an emergent one; an ideal regimen would enable one to respond to changing circumstances productively. Foucault’s (1990) consideration of Hippocratic texts underscores their emphasis on use for a particular person: “The usefulness of a regimen lay precisely in the possibility it gave individuals to face different situations” (p. 105). The treatise, then, provides a diagram of forces and their potentialities. In other words, the author of Regimen is intensely interested in relations, responses, and effects, and seeks to elaborate a technique of regimen development to accompany and facilitate these dynamics.

CORPOREAL PRODUCTION: FIRE AND WATER

Regimen contains long descriptions of various foods, drinks, and herbs and their effects on the body’s constitution—whether they cool or warm, moisten or dry the body, and whether they “pass” well. These catalogues are followed by a consideration of practices: descriptions of the effects of sleeping (II.lx), vomiting (II.lix), oiling (II.lvii), exercising (II.lxi), and bathing, the latter of which reads as follows:
As to baths, their properties are these. Drinkable water moistens and cools, as it gives moisture to the body. A salt bath warms and dries, as having a natural heat it draws the moisture from the body. Hot baths, when taken fasting, reduce and cool, for they carry the moisture from the body owing to their warmth, while as the flesh is emptied of its moisture the body is cooled. Taken after a meal they warm and moisten, as they expand to a greater bulk the moisture already existing in the body. Cold baths have an opposite effect. To an empty body they give a certain amount of heat; after a meal they take away moisture and fill with their dryness, which is cold. To refrain from baths dries, as the moisture is used up, and so does to refrain from oiling. (II.lvii)

This passage on bathing, in the typical style of *Regimen*, details the bath’s effects in relation to many variables—type and temperature of water, condition of the body, and so forth. In other words, the practice of bathing, like the other practices treated in *Regimen*, cannot be considered separately from its circumstance. Such an approach sets up a very fluid set of practical principles, a compendium of tendencies. Moreover, in this passage, as in the rest of the treatise, the author focuses on the calibration of the body’s temperature and moisture level, referred to respectively throughout the treatise as fire and water, two of the ancient bodily elements.²

As the author describes early in *Regimen*, all animals (humans included) are composed of fire and water, and the two elements work in relation to each other. As the author writes, neither fire nor water can overpower the body, because

the fire, as it advances to the limit of the water, lacks nourishment, and so turns to where it is likely to be nourished; the water, as it advances to the limit of the fire, finds its motion fail, and so stops at this point. When it stops its force ceases, and hereafter is consumed to nourish the fire which assails it. (I.iii.14-19)

*Regimen’s* author thus articulates a prevalent belief in the Hippocratic tradition and other philosophies based on humoral theories: The takeover of one humor or element would mean disease or death (Jones, 1962, p. xlviii). Thus, fire and water must act in a responsive relation: Fire gleans nourishment from water; water, kinetic heat from fire. Both enable the other’s movement, and here the movement is what enables life.

For as they never stay in the same condition, but are always changing to this or to that, from these elements too are separated off things which are necessarily unlike. So of all things nothing perishes, and nothing comes into being that did not exist before. Things change merely by mingling *[summisgomena]* and being separated *[diakrinomena]*. (I.iv.10-14)

Here, mingling comes from the middle verb *summignumi*, which may be translated as to mix together or commingle; join forces or form an alliance, as in armies; have sexual intercourse with; meet, as in communicate; and meet in a close fight, in a hostile sense. All these nuances of *summignumi* become useful when considering the bodily relation between fire and water.
and the production of change described in Regimen. The movement from distinguishability (diakrinomena, from diakrino, to separate, to decompose into elemental parts, to remove or distinguish) to an indistinguishable alliance is the very production of change. Fire and water, insofar as they comprise humans’ bodies and souls, were considered in the Hippocratic tradition to be the very material of transformation: “All things, both human and divine, are in a state of flux upwards and downwards by exchanges” (I.v.1-3). These exchanges or minglings, as the author prefers to call them, take the form of struggle between forces:

Into man enter parts of parts and wholes of wholes, containing a mixture of fire and water, some to take and others to give. Those that take give increase, those that give make diminution. Men saw a log; the one pulls and the other pushes, but herein they do the same thing, and while making less, they make more. Such is the nature [phusis] of man. (I.vi.1-6, trans. Loeb ed.)

Human bodies are thus constituted by a mingling, by an alliance of forces—fire and water the most basic. This axiom emerges most explicitly in an extended description of the struggle between these two elements. According to the Hippocratic text, fire generally cuts paths to nourishment, or water (I.ix.28). From there it blazes new passages to the places most abundant with water:

Therefrom the fire burst forth, since it had no nourishment, and made passages for the breath and to supply and distribute nourishment. The fire shut up in the rest of the body made itself three passages, the moister part of the fire being in those places called the hollow veins. And in the middle of these that which remains of the water becomes compacted and congealed. It is called flesh. (I.ix.34-38, trans. Loeb ed.)

The Hippocratic tradition thus held that flesh—the body itself—emerges from an active, combinatory exchange from alliances and separations. Insofar as it is produced between forces, corporeality is an effect of a type of agón. It is thus the physician’s job to tinker with these agonistic forces to try to produce the most balanced, flexible disposition.

SHAPING BODIES

The agonistic constitution of humans is significant because it provides the basis for theories of regimen development and training. Indeed, immediately following the discussion of fire and water and emergent flesh, the author of Regimen explicitly invokes the paidotribēs, or gymnastic trainer, as a wielder of fire and water:

Craftsmen melt the iron with fire, constraining the fire with breath; they take away the nourishment it has already; when they have made it rare, they beat it and weld it; and with the nourishment of other water it grows strong. Such is the treatment of man by his trainer [paidotribōu]. By fire the nourishment he
has already is taken away, breath constraining him. As he is made rare, he is
struck, rubbed, and purged. On the application of water from elsewhere he
becomes strong. (I.xiii)

The analogy here is quite explicit: The trainee aligns with the iron, which
gets shaped by craftsmen (technēs) or the trainer (paidotribēs). But the way
the analogy unfolds reveals a good deal about the method and use of train-
ing. According to this passage, the first step in shaping iron or athletes is to
rarify the material, to make it thin or porous and less dense (araioiō). In
other words, by attending to body’s elements—fire and water—the crafts-
man or paidotribēs can render the material malleable. After rarification of
the iron, the craftsmen beat (paiousi) and weld (sunelaunousin) it. The verb
paiousi (paiō), translated here as beat, usually means to smite or drive or
dash one thing against the other. The verb sunelaunousin (sunelaunō), on
the other hand, suggests fusion, as it means to drive or hammer together.
Sunelaunō may also be translated as to match in combat or set to fight. The
translation of this verb as weld, although it captures the connecting force of
the Greek, loses a bit of the brute force necessary to produce this kind of
connection.

When the analogy is carried over to the paidotribēs, however, the
writer makes use of a different set of verbs: The athlete is struck (koptetai),
rubbed (tribetai), and purged (kathairetai). The first verb parallels the beat-
ing of the iron but has a slightly different force. Whereas paiousi suggests a
forceful striking, koptō suggests a beating or a stamping, as in the making of
metal into coins. In other words, when stamped in this way, one is shaped for
a particular purpose or use. The verb for rubbed (tribetai) is the same root as
that found in paidotribēs, one who educates or trains children. The move
from rubbing or wearing down of an object to training or educating isn’t too
far at all. To follow the Hippocratic author’s analogy, to produce a particular
shape, one cannot simply strike the iron but must strike it in a particular
way—more than once—to produce the desired shape. The final verb in the
set, kathairetai, is translated as purged, and suggests a kind of cleansing, or
clearing out of the older elements or nourishment, a kind of purification
through purging.

The art of physical training is therefore articulated as a force that,
when placed in relation to the bodily forces of fire and water, actually
reconfigures the body composition, producing corporeal transformation.
Such transformation, as noted earlier, must be accompanied by a desire for
change. As we will see, provocation and seduction help produce the dynam-
ics necessary for effective training.

**PHUSIOPOIIESIS**

At work in these Regimen passages is a notion of phusiopoiesis, cre-
ation of a person’s nature. I take this term from my own translation of
Democritean fragment 33: “Nature and instruction [didachē] are similar; for
instruction shapes [metarumoi] the man, and in shaping, produces his nature [phusiopoiei]." Here, Democritus provides a term for what is described so lucidly in Regimen's analogy between the paidotribês and the iron maker: The body's constitution can be remolded so that it is more suitable for further training. The term used by Democritus (phusiopoiei) thus fuses two critical concepts: physis or nature, and poieô, usually translated to make or do, produce, or create, and often bound tightly with particular technai such as carpentry, medicine, and writing or speaking. Phusiopoiesis holds important implications for the quality and direction of pre-Socratic educational practices. Indeed, phusiopoietic practices depend on dynamics of submission and seduction that manifest themselves in a number of ways. What follows will delineate some of these directions by considering the forces at work in ancient training practices.

A SECOND NATURE

It is well known that ancient philosophers and scientists wrote more about the notion of nature (physis) than almost any other concept. A number of pre-Socratics wrote treatises entitled Peri Phuseô, or On Nature; among them were Xenophon, Heraclitus, Gorgias, and Epicurus. The translation of physis as nature limits the various dimensions of the ancient word, even as it imports contemporary assumptions about the category, as in the word that opposes and helps define culture, or that which is produced. It is important to point out that although the ancient concept of physis carried meanings that would fall on the nature side of the contemporary nature/culture distinction, it also suggests temperament and character, as well as a common connotation of growth (Liddell, 1996, pp. 164-165), and thus implies a kind of capacity for change, the force encapsulated by phusiopoiesis. As William Arthur Heidel (1910, p. 108) points out, Aristotle's approach to physis draws out the implications of pre-Socratic treatises on nature. In the Metaphysics, Aristotle writes,

From what has been said, then, the primary and proper sense of "nature" is the essence of those things which contain in themselves as such a source of motion; for the matter is called "nature" because it is capable of receiving the nature, and the processes of becoming and growing are called "nature" because they are motions derived from it. And nature in this sense is the source of motion in natural objects, which is somehow inherent in them, either potentially (dunamei) or actually. (1310a 13)

In other words, physis is the capacity for and the effect of movement and change, most especially in disposition and temperament dimensions of the word.

The temperament and character dimensions of physis suggest a link to the ancient concepts of ethos (habit), êthos, (disposition, character) and hexis (state, condition, habit of the body). In Rhetoric (1991), Aristotle explains the close relation between habit (ethos) and nature (physis):
Movement into a natural state is thus necessarily pleasurable for the most part, and especially whenever a natural process has recovered its own natural state. And habits are pleasurable; for the habitual has already become, as it were, natural; for habit is something like nature [ŋar tî to ethos tê phusei]. (I.11.1370a.4)

Here, Aristotle suggests that habits become so ingrained in a person that they become almost instinctual responses. Phusis and training become almost indistinguishable. A second nature emerges.

Isocrates (1982) places nature foremost on the list of necessary ingredients for rhetorical training. But he elaborates the category precisely as potentiality and links it so immediately with practice that the two are mutually constitutive. Isocrates's ideal pupil thus comes equipped with a mind which is capable [dunamenên] of finding out and learning the truth and of working hard and remembering what it learns, and also with a voice and a clarity of utterance which are able to captivate the audience, not only by what he says, but by the music of the words, and finally, with an assurance which is not an expression of bravado, but which, tempered by sobriety, so fortifies the spirit that he is no less at ease in addressing all his fellow-citizens than in reflecting to himself. (pp. 189-190)

Isocrates' discussion of natural ability bleeds indistinguishably into a discussion of practice or training, and he concludes that "either one of these factors may produce an able man of affairs, but both of them combined in the same person might produce a man incomparable among others" (p. 191). In other words, for Isocrates, the students must be capable of being transformed—of being fashioned in the same way that the Regimen author portrays with his iron analogy.

Isocrates' reflections on the combination of nature and practice elaborate an observation attributed to Protagoras: "Teaching requires natural endowment and practice [phuseôs kai askêseôs]" (Diels & Kranz, 1985, p. B.3). That phusis is malleable and therefore trainable is one of the main tenets of sophistic thought, and is best illustrated in Plato's Protagoras where Protagoras argues that virtue can be taught. As Werner Jaeger (1967) points out in his three-volume study of ancient paideia, the sophists' conclusion about the flexibility of phusis "is an attempt at a synthesis of the old opposition between aristocratic paideia and rationalism: it abandons the aristocratic idea that character and morality can be inherited by blood, but not acquired" (p. 306). As this study suggests, however, the sophists and Isocrates glean their notion of a malleable phusis from archaic models of education, leaning heavily on poetic, musical, and athletic training—the most aristocratic of endeavors—as models for and necessary partners to rhetorical training; the archaic model serves as the prime example of phusioipoiesis.
In the dialogue Protagoras, the old sophist elaborates a whole network of archaic educational practices, pointing out the subtle ways in which training in verse, music, and athletics prepares the mind-body complex for its role in the polis. According to the character Protagoras, the teacher of letters provides young boys “with works of good poets to read as they sit in class”; the students thus examine the verses closely and learn them by heart. It is in the poems that the youths “meet with many admonitions, many descriptions and praises and eulogies of good men in times past, that the boy in envy may imitate [mimētai] them and yearn to become them [oregētai toioutos genesthai]” (326a). Later we will return to the function of imitation in education, but for now, the crucial phrasing here is oregētai toioutos genesthai, the production of desire to become something else. Oregētai, here translated as to yearn, also holds the sense of to stretch oneself out to or to reach for. The character Protagoras thus suggests that subjection to the works of good poets (namely Homer, Hesiod, and the like) functioned to spark an interest in self-transformation and thus marks the capacity for phusiopoiesis.

Training in music works in a similar fashion, as youth “are taught the works of another set of good poets, the songmakers, while the master accompanies them on the harp.” Moreover, Protagoras continues that the music teachers “insist on the boys’ souls [psychais] familiarizing themselves [oikeiousthai] with the rhythms and scales, that they may gain in gentleness, and by advancing in rhythmic and harmonic grace may be efficient in speech and action; for the whole of man’s life requires the graces of rhythm and harmony” (326b; my translation). Here, the middle participle oikeiousthai, rooted in the familiar term for house or dwelling (oikos), suggests that the rhythms and scales come to inhabit the young psyches; quite literally, moving in. Musical education cultivated a rhythmic way of moving through the world, a style of engagement that spreads out into the whole of life (pas bios). And most important, according to the character Protagoras, “Over and above all this, people send their sons to a trainer, that having improved their bodies they may serve their minds, which are now in fit condition, and that they may not be forced by bodily faults to play the coward in wars and other duties” (326 b-c). Just as training in music provides youth with a sense of rhythmic movement and gentleness, athletic training promises to instill the values of strength and bravery. For our purposes, though, the most important feature of Protagoras’s description emerges in the language of desire production: the way in which reading the work of the great poets causes the young boys to yearn for—to reach themselves out to—a set of training practices. Early education thus cultivates a readiness for more training.
A READINESS

Timing is a critical indicator of the possibility of *phusiopoiesis*. Another Democritean fragment suggests that there are certain times in life when one's *phuis* is more malleable: "There is a sagacity [*xunesis*] of the young, and a non-sagacity of the aged. It is not time [*chronos*] that teaches practical wisdom [*phronein*], but timely training and nature" (Diels & Kranz, 1985, p. 68.B.183). The word for perceptiveness here, *xunesis* (also *sunesis*), has the general meaning of union, but it can also mean a type of intelligence that has to do with quickness of comprehension. *Xunesis* thus suggests a certain attunement, an anticipatory disposition.

It is this faculty, thought by Democritus to be present in youth, that must be tapped at the right time. This fragment thus upends the abiding ancient notion that wisdom is tied to duration of life experiences, as suggested, for example, in the Homeric figure of old, wise Nestor. Such immanent awareness is distinct from knowledge in that it cannot be accumulated over time (*chronos*), but rather developed early on, when one has a certain perceptive quality, a kind of readiness.

This importance of readiness in training inhabits sophistic thought. Isocrates, in an ethical treatise "To Demonicus," echoes the Democritean perspective on a certain quality of mind:

I see that luck is on our side and that the present opportunity shares with us in our struggle [*kairon sunagônisomenon*]; for you have set your heart on education [*paideuein*] and I profess to educate; you are ripe for philosophy [*akmé philosophein*]; and I instruct students of philosophy. (I.3)

The time is right. Demonicus is ready, *akmé*. He is eager for training, and the treatise, sent to Demonicus as a gift and a token of friendship, joins him with Isocrates in his quest for education. The openness of his heart, combined with the acceptance of the gift, confirms his willingness to be taught and to become a friend of Isocrates. *Phusiopoiesis* has begun.

Just as the regimen designer must attend to the immediate circumstances of daily practices, the trainer/teacher remains attuned to the subject's capacity for learning, or the desire to transform. At the same time, a prospective student must open the self to enter into a relation with the teacher.

*Phusiopoiesis* cannot be articulated as programmatic steps for improvement. As we will see, *phusiopoiesis* emerges among a variety of dynamic forces. This emergence happens in the middle voice that troubles a notion of an agent or individual making conscious choices—in other words, it is not simply the student's agency whereby he seeks out training, nor is it only the teacher/trainer's agency whereby he seduces the student to yearn for transformation. The dynamic is more responsive, more mutual, and at times less conscious than such a description suggests. This is to say that *phusiopoiesis* is a dynamic of stylization that emerges between the teacher and student. Here, the opening happens on the level of the self. An opening up of the
self/other distinction facilitates a linking: "You have set your heart on education and I profess to educate; you are ripe for philosophy, and I instruct students of philosophy." An exchange occurs, a mutual questing ignites. Agency thus gets suspended in the phusiopoietic economy. Nevertheless, the direction of that suspension, or the way the desire-seduction opening happens, often varies. That is, simply proclaiming the between as the domain of phusiopoësis does not do much to diagnose the dynamics at work. What follows will examine three distinct yet related phusiopoietic relations crucial for ancient training practices: friendship, masochism, and erotica. A better understanding of the forces at work in these relations will help elaborate the particular ways that training happens in the between.

A PROVOCATION

The pedagogic dimension of friendship invoked by Isocrates should not be taken lightly. The relationship between teacher and student depends on a kind of friendship, a mutual commitment to each other in a quest for improvement. Friendship, in this case, introduces what Deleuze and Guattari (1990) call "a vital relationship to the Other" (p. 4). In this regard, phusiopoësis approximates what has been called allopoësis, production of something other than itself, with another layer of othering: production of something other by the other. This poietic economy entails precisely what Isocrates refers to in his treatise to Demonicus and what Protagoras refers to in the context of early education—an opening of the self out onto the other.

As Jacques Derrida (1997) in his extended meditation on philosophical conceptions of friendship puts it, friendship involves entrusting one's self to the other: "I entrust myself, without measure, to the other. I entrust myself to him more than to myself; he is in me before me and more than me" (p. 195). The Regimen's description of the trainer's relation to the athlete in training most explicitly depicts this kind of concomitant entrusting and shaping from the outside (other). But it is important to note that the outside here—in this case, the paidotribês—is precisely part of the athlete's training ecology. That is, as soon as the athlete opens up to the other (the paidotribês), the distinction between inside and outside becomes less perceptible—"He is in me before me." The fire-water of the body yields to the fire-wielding paidotribês; the submission effects a bond of philia that produces the self anew. The paidotribês, in turn, provokes the trainee by shaping movements in ways that will produce bodily virtue. Thus, athletic and sophistic pedagogy depend on a contractual philia, a tacit agreement to transform.

NO PAIN, NO CHANGE

Recalling the violent language of Regimen, wherein the paidotribês beats, rubs, and purges the athlete, how can phusiopoësis be entirely an instantiation of philia? That is to say, doesn't friendship entail a mutual direction or, at the very least, equal ground? The ancient educative relationship was more than just tough love, but rather a ritual relation with traces of what would, in the 19th century, come to be known as masochism. The
masochistic dynamic helps elaborate the ancient pedagogic dynamic in terms of the contract—the tacit agreement between teacher and student—and pain, a primary mode of training. Gilles Deleuze (1991) details Masoch's art as an aesthetics of pain based on a contractual alliance. The contract is a necessary condition of masochism, as both parties must consent to certain juridical terms. As Deleuze puts it, "The masochistic contract implies not only the necessity of the victim's consent, but his ability to persuade, and his pedagogical and judicial efforts to train his torturer" (p. 75). Implicit in the masochistic contract, then, is more than consensual participation, it is the promise of reciprocity—a training of the torturer.

The active submission of the student, the cultivation of readiness discussed earlier, might be read as the beginnings of a masochistic contract, a consent to—even a demand for—painful subjection. When the teacher is seduced to oblige the student's openness, an alliance is formed. More important, however, the training itself becomes a responsive, reciprocal relation: The athlete and the athlete's body suggest directions for training, and the trainer pushes in these directions while provoking others.

Specifically, the implicit contract with a paidotribês requires the trainer to take on a twofold role—one demonstrative, one corrective—and the latter often takes a punitive form. The paidotribês often appears in artistic depictions of training scenes wearing a long cloak and carrying a long, forked stick. He would only remove the cloak to demonstrate proper movements to the athlete in training, and the stick served as a tool of correction: If an athlete's body was slightly out of position, the paidotribês would use the stick to intervene during practice, forming the body in a particular way. Such intervention was likely not a matter of nudging—indeed, the stick was probably used more as a tool for punishment for inattentiveness or incorrect movements (Gardiner, 1910; Marrou, 1956). In addition to the obvious repetitive practice, pain emerges as a critical element in the educative contract.

As Deleuze (1991) suggests, in the masochistic matrix, pain functions as a facilitator of transformation. This is not to say, however, that pain is pleasure, but rather, pain functions as a prerequisite to gratification—pain is an enabler (p. 71). Importantly, though, for Masoch, pleasure is not the telos of a contract, but rather the masochistic relation inheres in the very suspension of pleasure, and the focus lies precisely on the interim—on the production of the circuitous training relationship described above. In other words, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) put it, the masochistic relationship is not at all about achieving pleasure, but about transmitting forces to produce one in a particular way (with emphasis on produce as verb, not a product). What pain enables in the training matrix, then, is a continual opening up of the athletic subject, the production of a bond between paidotribês and athlete, and hence between the athletic body and the moves and postures it acquires. It is through the very intense and repeated subjection to the paidotribês' cloakless demonstrations and forked stick that the athlete can become athlete. I use this as an act (become athlete) rather than an identity
(become an athlete), precisely because it is the act—the engagement with training practices—that matters.

EROTICS

It is well known that the relation between ancient teacher and student often moved into the realm of eros. Such movement was not merely incidental, nor was it uncommon. In fact, as Michel Foucault (1990) demonstrates, the ancients devoted a good deal of time to defining the domain of erotics between men and boys. Foucault also points out that such relations weren’t confined to educational practice, though they certainly occurred in educative contexts. Still, as Foucault’s (1988) study suggests, erotics between men and boys, with all its conventions, rules of conduct, and its “games of delays and obstacles designed to put off the moment of closure” (p. 197), had its own domain of education. In other words, the domain of male erotics had distinctive stylistics, and these were demonstrated and perpetuated in the relations themselves.

Even as erotics had its own dimension of pedagogy, pedagogy had dimensions of erotics. In some ways, the pleasures of erotics can be seen, like pain in the masochistic contract, as another enabler of training—indeed, the active submission necessary for phusiopoiesis can be seen as a response to seduction. Such seduction may or may not have erotic overtones, but in ancient Athens, it often did. The Greek gymnasium, with its open spaces and nude exercisers, along with its function as a training site and a place of leisure, was itself a space for seduction, as the gymnasium is often invoked in Greek literature and art as the loci for male-male erotics.

But the gymnasia wasn’t just a free-for-all. As Foucault (1990) explains, erotics between men and boys had its own precisely demarcated domain of ethics; to remain within acceptable conventions, Greek men had to take care to enter into sexual relations only with their subordinates, which included women, slaves, and those younger or lesser born than they. Ancient sexual practices thus depended on a kind of asymmetry and operated on what Winkler (1990) refers to as “a calculus of profit” (p. 37) wherein one gives (submits) and the other takes. As a result, as Dover (1989) points out, evidence of same-age men engaging in sexual activity is virtually nonexistent. This asymmetry also manifested itself in the language; men and boys who engaged in erotic activity were not referred to individually as lovers, but rather each had a name that designated—often quite literally—his position in the relationship. The term used for the boy is eromenos, the passive participle of eran, to be in love with or have a passionate desire for, and may therefore be rendered the beloved. The man or senior partner, on the other hand, was referred to more generally as the erastês, the lover, a term that blends with admirer as well. Still, male-to-male erotics was also governed by an ascetic principle of self-control; as Winkler notes, it was considered good for a man to be “stronger than himself, able to manage and control his various appetites” (p. 50). This principle did not, however, dictate total abstention, but rather an attention to specificity, a certain stylization of
erotic practices, as Foucault (1990) puts it, and a concomitant valorization of the relation (p. 245). Here we can see an *agôn* emerging; one struggles with oneself in the context of *eros* as one attends to the appropriateness of erotic relations with a certain person in particular settings. Like so many other practices elaborated in this study, then, the ethics of erotics depended on circumstances, *kairos,* or what Foucault calls a “politics of timeliness.”

As Dover (1989) points out, Xenophon’s version of an appropriate male-male erotic relationship depended on its connections to education. To be sure, in the passage Dover cites from Xenophon’s *Symposium,* Socrates goes on to elaborate the way in which erotic relations function as modes of virtue production:

But the greatest blessing that befalls the man who yearns [ορεγόμενον] to render his favorite a good friend is the necessity of himself making [ποιεσάσθαι] virtue his habitual practice. For one cannot produce goodness in his companion while his own conduct is evil, nor can he himself exhibit shamelessness and incontinence and at the same time render his beloved self-controlled and reverent. (viii.27-28)

This passage suggests two important and related movements. First, Xenophon’s character Socrates labels the proper, more valued erotics as those practices which lead to friendship, *philìa.* In Foucault’s (1990) words, “The love of boys could not be morally honorable unless it comprised the elements that would form the basis of a transformation of this love into a definitive and socially valuable tie, that of *philìa*” (p. 225). Earlier in the speech, Socrates explains that those who seek *philìa* have a greater investment in the partner’s goodness (p. 25). This leads Socrates to the second important character of educative erotics: If the *erastès* wants to make the *eromenos* a friend, he must himself model virtuous behavior even as he expects it of the youth.11 As Dover (1989) points out, such passages suggest a kind of transferability of virtue from *erastès* to *eromenos* (p. 202). Some scholars even speculate that virtue was thought to be transmitted from *erastès* to *eromenos* by way of the semen (Bethe, 1907; Devereux, 1967; Dover, 1989). The erotic relation therefore provided yet another mechanism through which virtue could be inculcated. Again, it is important to emphasize the nonlocatability of agency here; that the inculcation of virtue was thought to occur with ejaculation suggests that if anything receives agency it is the semen, the carrier of virtuosity. My point here is not to ascribe agency to fluid all, but rather to suggest that just as ejaculation—important humoral movement for the Greeks—is an effect of a particular intensity of encounter, so too is the related *phusiopoiesis.*

Although ancient erotics, with its hierarchical requirements, suspends the possibility of friendship, it also seeks to produce the bond of *philìa* through an intensive connection that ultimately became a mode of transformation. Just as pain is not the *telos* of the masochistic dynamic, pleasure is not the goal of the male-male erotic dynamic. Having pain or pleasure as the aim would only reinscribe subjectivity, reascribe agency. Rather, as Jean
Pierre Vernant (1990) puts it in his analysis of ancient *erōs*, “On the physical level, love between two beings consists in their engendering a third, different from each of them, which nonetheless prolongs them... Between two men, *erōs* tries to engender in the soul of the other beautiful discourses, beautiful virtues” (pp. 472-473). The “third” is the something other produced by *phusiopoietic* erotics, especially Platonic-Socratic erotics as detailed in *Phaedrus, Meno, and The Symposium*.

The love of wisdom—*philosophia*—could easily have been called *erōsophia*, as many sought out philosophical training with an intensity of passion understood better as *erōs*. This intensity could help explain why the sophists and their admirers are often referred to in Platonic dialogues as *erastai*. In the *Euthymedus*, for example, Socrates explains how on the end of Dionysodorus’ speech, the audience showed their approval for him and his sophist comrade: “At that point there arose a great deal of laughter and loud applause from the pair’s adorers [erastai], in admiration of their cleverness” (276d). Similarly, Protagoras is linked to *erōs* when Socrates suggests that the group’s coming to him demonstrates (*aphigmenoi*) an intense affinity (*hoti erastai*) for the old sophist (317c-d). In the opening of *Meno*, Socrates explains to the title character that Gorgias should be credited for “making the Thessalians enamored of wisdom [erastas epi sophia]” (70b). The sophists, then, produced a dynamic of *erosphia*, an intensive, zealous seeking out of wisdom, *sophia*. Still, the lines between *erōs* and *philia* were often indistinct, as Winkler, Halperin, and Zeitlin (1990) put it, “Eros, in Greek thinking, shades off into friendship and camaraderie, into that relationship of trust and reciprocity called *philia*” (p. xvi). The virtuous *erastēs* was nothing if not a friend of the future.

*Phusiopoiesis* thus happened in a tangle of dynamics and forces. Desire emerges as an important component yoked to a variety of actions. The student’s desire to transform constitutes a submission to a training process, whereas the teacher’s desire to provoke provides the necessary subjection. Of course, the desires aren’t two at all, but a complex of desire-production that opens onto the future as a way of developing and fulfilling capacities for rhetorical and athletic practice. As I have tried to suggest, these forces of desire tended to follow masochistic and/or erotic trajectories, as pain and *philia* become two critical components of *phusiopoiesis*. Both masochism and erotics effectively disrupt the boundaries of subjectivity by shaping and reshaping, by connecting and forging alliances among bodies, tools, cultural values, ethical principles, and futures. As such, masochism and erotics emerge as *phusiopoietic* modes, arts of becoming that function as *allo* productions in that they produce something other through their very betweeness. In other words, difference emerges through the very connections forged in the masochistic and erotic acts observed in ancient educational dynamics. The flesh itself, along with arts training and practice discussed here, form a dynamic network of production dependent on precise relations, finely tuned movements, habitual engagements, and, most important, a capacity for transformation.
NOTES

1. For a more detailed treatment of rhetoric as technē, see Janet Atwill (1998), where Atwill convincingly situates rhetoric within Aristotle’s category of productive arts.
2. Precisely what the ancient elements were and how they fit into humoral doctrine varies among ancient authors. On ancient elements or elemental traits as opposites, see Lloyd (1964, 1970, pp. 57-61).
3. The Hippocratic author takes care to include the soul as that which, like the body, is composed of these two elements (I.vi.1).
4. For an excellent discussion of nature’s relationship to culture in pre-Socratic thought, see Winkler (1990, p. 22). Heidel (1910) offers an exhaustive treatment of the various dimensions of physis, especially in pre-Socratic thought.
5. For a discussion of archaic lyric as a culturally significant practice, especially in terms of rhetorical sensibilities, see Walker (2000, chap. 5).
6. In Chaosmosis, Felix Guattari (1995) discusses Francisco Varela’s distinction between ‘‘allopoietic’ machines which produce something other than themselves, and ‘autopoietic’ machines which engender and specify their own organisation and limits” in the context of subject production and the machinic assemblages constituted between institutional and technical machines and humans.
7. Although masochism as a syndrome or collection of symptoms didn’t emerge until the 19th century, its terms provide a way to think ancient forms of philia.
8. It is the educative context on which I will focus; for a broader cultural study of ancient erotics, see Foucault (1990), Dover (1989), and Halperin (1990).
9. Several Platonic dialogues suggest that seduction goes on in the gymnasium, as does Aristophanes’ Clouds (Dover, 1968). See also Dover (1989, p. 54).
10. Èrastès is used to denote the privileged position in man-woman and man-boy relations. See Dover (1989, pp. 16-17) for a discussion of these terms. Michel Foucault (1990, p. 196) also offers a useful elaboration of the erastês and the eromenos and their respective roles in the erotic economy.
11. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the dialogue only narrates an ideal; it should not necessarily be taken to describe normative practices. Halperin (1990), arguing this point rather convincingly (and humorously), writes, “It is wrong . . . to imply that Greek men made love to their boys with a copy of Plato’s Phaedrus firmly tucked under one arm for easy consultation” (p. 59).

AUTHOR

Debra Hawhee is an assistant professor of English at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches courses on theories of writing and bodies. Her current work examines cultural and corporeal intersections between athleticism and rhetoric in ancient Greece.

REFERENCES


