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At the Edge of the Words
Representation of the Social and Economic Fragility of Childhood in Byzantine Hagiographic and Patristic Sources

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ABSTRACT

Representation of the Social and Economic Fragility of Childhood in Byzantine Hagiographic and Patristic Sources

The patristic and hagiographic sources of the IV-VI centuries offer, for the Eastern Empire, information on the condition of children belonging to the most humble strata of the population. The authors' perception of this condition of fragility is not univocal and refers to the cultural and spiritual contexts in which the text was conceived.

Keyword: Childhood - Social vulnerability - Hagiographic sources - Byzantium

Methodological premise

This contribution aims to offer partial results of a survey developed on a sample of sources belonging to contiguous literary genres in order to highlight how childhood's condition, from a social and economic point of view, has been perceived and represented in them. Specifically, the research was conducted on some representative hagiographic, patristic and legislative texts of the IV-VI centuries, mainly relating areas of Egypt, Syria, Constantinople and Cappadocia.

Child protection in legislative sources: some mention

In Late Antiquity and Byzantine times the stages of childhood and adolescence were defined by a technical vocabulary, in use especially in medical sources. Childhood covers a period of time that, generally, lasts up to fourteen years and is divided into four phases related to as many moments of growth: the first phase extends from birth to the first dentition; the second follows, from the first teething to weaning; the third, from three years to the second dentition; and, finally, the fourth, from six or seven years to puberty[1]. In some Byzantine sources we find the quaternary division, albeit with dissimilar intervals, divided in progressive and precisely denoted stages that culminate with biological and sexual maturity: *brephos*, from birth to four years; *paidion*, from four to six years; *boupais*, from ten to eighteen years; *meirakion*, from eighteen to twenty years[2]. The commonly used term for a minor, in prepubescent age (generally, up to fourteen), also present in legislative texts, is *anebos*, which is opposed to *ephebos*, to indicate instead an individual already sexually mature, where, on the other hand, *enelikos* is the one who has reached twenty-five years, the age at which, according to Roman law, and in Byzantium, one became completely adult[3]. Legal threshold of puberty, involving a certain moral autonomy, useful for contracting marriage, was fourteen years, for boys, and twelve, for girls[4]; however, it changed according to the circumstances and each family environment. In the Justinian and post-Justinian age, *pater familias* was allowed, by custom, to set, at his discretion, children leave celibacy. Protection of children, infants or anyhow *aneboi*, especially if in disadvantaged conditions, unable to work or without parental protection, represented a care of the legislator already in classical age and presence of orphans, exposed children, sold and enslaved, or small graves and beggars, arises strongly from legal sources between the Constantinian and Justinian ages[5]. *Novellae,* in particular, reveal Justinian's commitment to the weak and offer a lot of information on living conditions of the population and the causes of decline into poverty. Famines, affecting the empire during the fifth and sixth centuries, contributed to increase mass migrations from countryside to metropolis[6]. Workers, many of whom were poorly or totally unqualified, flowed from countryside to cities[7]. To these people were added subjects not suitable for work – the sick, women, children – whose only source of subsistence was almsgiving[8]. Within the

mass of pilgrims, the text distinguishes, even terminologically, those who, although in poverty, are of healthy physical constitution and, therefore, able to carry out activities necessary for their subsistence; and those who cannot provide for themselves because they are weak by age or illness[9]. Among the healty poor, there are subjects oppressed by strong tax burden[10]; small landowners, victims of famine and subject to the harassment of rulers; slaves on the run.

However those to whom, especially, imperial *philanthropia* was addressed, were poor invalids: the sick, the elderly, women and children, joined to poor families, abandoned, sold or sick. The construction of buildings for hosting this suffering humanity is only one aspect of the solicitude shown by Justinian towards the weak. The material help given by the emperor was expressed, in fact, in a series of laws and provisions issued in order to give a regulatory framework to welfare activities and a legal definition of the functions and competences of those who were promoters, the clergy in the first place. Actions were also taken on the formation and destination for charitable purposes of the funds of churches and pious institutions[11]. Institutions were created managed by the State, the Church or private individuals dedicated to the reception and education of orphans[12] and the bishop was entrusted with the legal responsibility of the assisted[13]. In fact, the legislator took care to protect the social and legal status of children and to cope with the abandonment and alienation of off springs with the promulgation of rules that recalled and reiterated those already existing or intervened with new measures.

Already the first Christian writers (Athenagoras, Justin, Clement of Alexandria) had denounced and condemned childhood abandonment, a cruel practice and potentially causing further crimes, such as incestuous unions, albeit unconscious, between fathers and children exposed and raised by a prosecutor[14].

In the fourth century, emperor Constantine, inspired by new Christian ideals, promulgated norms against abandonment and protecting orphans[15]. In 331 Constantine intervened again on the problem of exposure and modified the legislation of Trajan, according to which legal status of the abandoned child (*threptos*[16]) was linked to that of the parents and left to those who found and raised him the faculty to adopt him as free or, on the contrary, to raise him as a slave[17]. The natural parents lost all rights to the condition of the exposed.

Justinian resumed legislation on abandoned children and brought many revisions. In an edict of 529 he reaffirmed and strengthened the Constantinian norm on the loss of rights of parents on abandoned children by prohibiting them to advance on the find lings a right of property and preventing, to those who welcomed them, to make them slaves[18]. The emperor in fact equates exposure, even in a public place, with murder[19]. He also tried to stem alienation or donation of children by the parents[20]: sale at birth was allowed only for reasons of serious poverty and on condition that the buyer returned the freedom to the child against payment of an adequate fee[21].

In Nov. 14, emperor also orders against the soliciting of small peasants and prohibits the practice of luring. The phenomenon was widespread: poor girls, often still children, left the countryside, where their father had stipulated a contract with the prosecutor and, enticed by promises of shoes and clothes, arrived in Constantinople where they ended up in prostitution[22].

The solidarity that Justinian expressed towards those afflicted by poverty and deprivation is expressed in the classical and Christian forms of the virtue of *philanthropia*. In Nov. 81 (397, 13-25), emperor is concerned to accomplish all that may be of use (*opheleia*) to the Empire that has been given to him by God. In view of the high office he held, he is invested with very specific duties towards his subjects and, under divine protection, takes care of human affairs. In *Novellae* appears, albeit nuanced, the theme of *mimesis tou theou* and *philanthropia* that is divine virtue par excellence. To imitate God means, for Justinian, to govern, keeping one's gaze always turned to Him and His laws. Only the emperor who follows God, administers the state properly and with justice and with love of neighbor. Moreover, already the *Laus Constantini* composed by Eusebius of Caesarea in 336 to celebrate the thirtieth year of the reign of Emperor Constantine, offers a theological representation of earthly power that will become a founding theme of Byzantine political ideology. The concept around which Eusebius' theory revolves is that, precisely, of mimesis, according to which earthly sovereignty descends from Heaven and the sovereign reigns according to such a transcendent specularity, dispensing in a provident way just solicitude towards his subjects[23].

Social and economic fragility of childhood in patristic and hagiographic sources

Love of neighbor and charity represent, in the late ancient and Byzantine Christian tradition, essential virtues even in an ascetic context that promotes *enkrateia.*

The coexistence and complementarity between models of Christian perfection is clearly illustrated by a passage from the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (fourth century)[24]. The work tells of a journey made by a deacon and seven young people from Jerusalem among the communities of the monks of Egypt. Visitors meet holy men who live an angelic life following the teaching of Christ. Among these, Apollo stands out, spiritual leader of a community of five hundred monks on the borders of Hermopolis, in the Thebaid. During a famine, the inhabitants of the countryside - men, women and children - had gone to the community of Apollo in the hope of escaping hunger thanks to an intervention from heaven. In fact, the holy man manages to feed them but only for a day. He therefore ordered to take the three baskets of loaves that would be destined for the monks and to expose them so that each one could refuel. Miraculously, the bread never fails and the baskets are not emptied offering food to everyone until the next harvest. The story that clearly declines the value of the offer, finds ideal confirmation in the criticism that Apollo addresses to those ascetics who

wear iron chains and wear long hair, thus flaunting a perfection that could instead be achieved only with fasting and humble charity.

The narration of the journey also reports the ways and habits of the anchorites of Nitria, champions of asceticism and virtue. Some dedicated themselves to contemplation, while others to active charity, expressed through almsgiving and solicitude for others.

The exhortation to charity occupies an important space in the homiletic production of John Chrysostom. God gave the money to the rich so that the latter would use it for the benefit of the poor and for his own salvation[25]. Riches, if misused, disfigure the soul and inflame the body where the poor, who are not prone to harmful pleasures, are firm in spirit and enjoy good health. In Chrysostom's discourse, the invective against avarice and avaricious, the call to the Christian duty of gift, the emphasis placed on the 'sickness' of the rich are placed in antithesis to the emphasis placed on the needs of the poor and to the apparent paradox of the 'ealth' of the poor. Poor and rich are evoked as civil categories, classics that characterize individuals united by a state of need originated by factors often of context.

The need to provide aid to the poor is a recurring theme in the work of Gregory of Nyssa who identifies in the poor invalid (*ptochos*) an extreme condition of fragility[26] such as to force those affected to not be able to provide for themselves. In fact, while the one who has no means but is endowed with good health can go from door to door to ask for alms, the one who is poor and sick cannot move and lives the humiliating condition of seclusion and dependence. It can theoretically be assumed that, within the list of fragilities, the one deriving from age is included, but Gregory does not mention it explicitly where instead he lingered to describe the physical manifestations of poverty and illness and how these arouse general contempt and repulsion[27].

Children occupy a space of greater visibility in the writings of Basil of Caesarea. In the Homilies on the *Hexameron*[28], Basil compares man to animals and considers the wickedness of certain birds of prey not unlike that of parents who abandon their children either out of necessity or, if wealthy, so as not to disperse the patrimony among too many heirs. It has been noted that, in the Letters, Basil expresses his interest in the harsh condition of orphans, often without means, without paternal guardianship and, therefore, subjected to harassment; or poor children, who follow the fate of misfortune of the fathers[29]. Basil also mentions the charitable activity carried out by some monasteries thanks to the establishment of schools for the education of orphans[30].

The sources of Eastern monasticism of the fifth and sixth centuries document the presence of children in monasteries and villages even if, only rarely, they offer an explicit testimony of institutionalized activities aimed at childhood. A young man could enter a monastic community at the age of ten or eleven[31]. Probably, in the early Byzantine period, even younger children were allowed in monasteries and their presence will then be consolidated in the sixth and seventh centuries[32]. Often they were entrusted

by important figures or had family relationship to some members of the community. Later, growing up, they then chose to stay and embark on an ascetic path under the guidance of a spiritual father. The monastery also opened its doors to children devoted to God after a difficult conception or birth or following an illness they had miraculously survived. Parents also destined their children to the monastic life in the hope of offering them better opportunities for life[33]. Many young people followed their father who had left the family to embrace the ascetic life. The *Apophthegmata Patrum*[34] tell of Zachariah and his father Carion, who came to Scetes to escape a famine that broke out in Egypt[35]. The Scetiote monks, fearful of the temptations that the presence of a young man could arouse in the community, do not welcome Zachariah willingly[36]. To escape the embarrassment, father and son are therefore forced to abandon Scetes and go to the Thebaid from which, however, they move away so as not to give rise to suspicion again. Back in Scetes, Zachariah takes a drastic decision and disfigures his appearance by immersing himself in a Nitro pond.

The young Zachariah shared his humble origins with other monks who, mostly without education[37], had carried out manual work in the world related to the life of the fields or to the activities of the workshop[38]. Macarius, before becoming a monk, grazed cattle[39]; Macarius the Egyptian sold sweets; elsewhere he appears as a camel driver; Paphnutius, the disciple of Macarius, was a guardian of calves during his childhood; John of Lycopolis had carried out the art of the carpenter[40]. The simplicity of many young disciples reflects more generally the often precarious condition in which the children of the villages found themselves, mitigated, at times, by the care[41] and benevolent attention of the Fathers. This is the case of Paisia who, orphaned by both parents, transforms her home into a guesthouse for the monks of Scete. This activity, however, drains her finances and the girl is forced to abandon her and prostitute herself to get a living. Moved to pity, John the Dwarf strives for the redemption of Paisia. Macarius the Egyptian then uses his own discernment to remove children from the fate of slavery to which they had voted a paternal debt no longer extinguishable.

With the exception of brief biographical notations and these and other isolated episodes, in the *Apophthegmata patrum* there is no particular attention to the condition of children, even the most disadvantaged, nor does there be much space for the moral promotion of love for children and rare are the testimonies of the works of charity addressed to them. Philanthropy and assistance activities dedicated to the weakest and children are instead more frequently attested in the hagiographic sources relating to Syriac Christianity and, above all, to Constantinopolitan Christianity.

The *Philotheos Historia*, written by Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393-458) around the middle of the fifth century, is composed of a series of short biographies, ordered according to a diachronic progression and tells the story of Syriac ascetics, men and women who practiced extreme forms of mortification[42]. Among these, James, who spent a hermit's life in the mountains before becoming bishop of Nisibi. Theodoret celebrates him for

his harsh ascetic practices, fasting and mortification, but, no less, for his solicitude for the needy, widows and orphans.

The hagiographic texts relating to the region of Constantinople, in particular, document the welfare activity promoted by holy men with the support of the Church and the imperial government. The Life of Hypatius, hegumen of the *Rouphinianai* monastery, located on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, was composed in the years 447-450, after the death of the protagonist, by the disciple Callinicus[43]. Hypatius (366-446) was originally from Phrygia and belonged to a devout family of good social extraction. His father had given him a literary education. To follow his religious vocation and to escape his father's harshness, Hypatios flees and goes to Thrace. At the time of these facts, the source speaks of him as a child, even though in reality he was already eighteen years old. He is entrusted to a small landowner who puts him to graze sheep. He met Jonah, an ascetic and former soldier, and together with him founded a community. Hypatius asked Jonah, who then became the higumen, to be able to devote himself to the care of the sick. After the monastery is destroyed by the Huns, Hypatius and Jonah move to Constantinople to ask for help for the looted populations. Around 400, the two companions cross the Bosphorus and settle in the *Rouphinianai* monastery. From this moment, Hypatius devoted himself completely to healings – even miraculous ones – and to works of charity. It is said that his love for the poor made him a father to orphans and a husband to widows. The needy who went to the monastery never left empty-handed. The saint gives his care above all to those who were in extreme conditions of necessity and marginalization, so dirty and miserable as to be rejected even by doctors[44].

Concern for the poor - orphans and the sick - also distinguishes the conduct of Zotikos ptochotrophos. A family of texts handed down three versions (*Vitae Zotici*) of the life, works, and martyrdom of the saint. According to these sources, Zotikos was active in Constantinople under the reign of Constantine and the Arian Constantius II and, by the will of the latter, suffered martyrdom[45]. Zotikos is linked to the foundation of two important charitable institutions of the capital: the leprosary in *Elaiones* and, probably, the *Orphanatropheion*, although it is difficult to establish the exact circumstances in which he carried out his work as founder and promoter[46].

According to the version published by Aubineau (BHG 2479)[47], Zotikos was born in Rome, in the time of Constantine, to a family of wealthy, very devout senators. He then received a refined education imparted by the best masters. Already awarded at a young age the office of *maghistrianos*, he followed the emperor to Byzantium to carry out the great project of founding the new Christian capital. Constantine reigned as a good ruler, solicitous towards his subjects and their living conditions. However, he did not show as much mercy to those who would benefit most from imperial solicitude. In fact, taking up a law already in force, he ordered that lepers be driven out of the city or thrown into the sea[48]. With a stratagem, Zotikos tries to prevent the effects of

the unjust norm and, after having redeemed the sick – men, women and children – leads them to a hill called olive trees (*Elaiones)*, located in front of the city, and here organizes makeshift shelters. With the death of Constantine, the Arian Constantius II proves hostile to the activity of Zotikos. Accomplices the slander of the palace and the aversion of the emperor, the holy man finds himself in a bad party and suffers martyrdom. Seized by contrition, Constantius tries to atone by building an hospital named after the martyr, financed by the imperial treasury and endowed with great ancillary properties. With the emperors Justin II and Sophia, St. Zotikos Hospital will receive what is necessary for the subsistence of the sick from the *Orphanatropheion* of Constantinople.

As has been pointed out, Zoticus' exploits fit into the context of urban monasticism linked to the figure of the bishop of Constantinople Macedonius (342-348; 350-360) and to the Aryan circles promoters of a form of asceticism that reconciled continence and fasting with the care of the needy and the commitment devolved to philanthropic activities[49]. This model of holiness is well interpreted by Zoticus and proposed exemplarily in the *Vita*.

Exemplary childhood: projection and/or avoidance of the Gospel message (Mk 10:14: 'sinite parvulos venire ad me'.)

The perception of childhood that emerges from the sources examined, depends on the tension between the models embodied by the protagonist and those to which the narrator, or the witness, really wants to inspire. Very often there is a coincidence between the two instances. Depending on the sources, and therefore on the contexts, different perspectives can therefore emerge in the interpretation of the Gospel message and the fundamental values that define it. In *Apophthegmata Patrum*, as we have seen, the condition of children arouses attitudes that are not always univocal and the child is sometimes perceived as a temptation from which to flee; moreover, in this and other contexts, the exercise of charity is not placed at the centre of a perfect life. As has been pointed out, Simeon the Fool, whose asceticism reaches, in the voluntary renunciation of personal decorum and in the simulation of madness, the highest point, does not seem sensitive to 'social injustices'[50]. Poverty and its manifestations represent, in the hagiographic narration, only a background, not very significant, even spiritually.

What is questioned is, in some cases, the very necessity of procreation. Hypatius emphasizes the diabolical nature of the family institution: 'always the devil advises us to eat, to drink, to wear beautiful clothes, to rejoice in life, to marry and to make children ... Inevitably, when you are married, you desire wealth and, because of wealth, you are led to commit injustices, perjure and are distracted by the things of the world, you do not even go to church...'[51].

Charity, love of neighbor and, in particular, attention to childhood and childhood weakness, therefore, do not always represent the most celebrated virtues. Nevertheless, as

we have seen, hagiographies and homiletic texts identify the poor invalid as the weak subject par excellence and celebrate, consequently, the establishment of structures intended to welcome the poor, the sick and orphans. But even in these contexts, even when there is awareness of it, a specific sensitivity towards the fragility of childhood is not frequent[52]. Part of the Christian tradition instead associated the infantile state with the idea of incompleteness and of 'natural' and congenital guilt[53]. St. Paul indicates in the adult condition a spiritual goal in which human being reaches full awareness and knowledge: 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child. Since I became a man, I stopped things as a child. (I Cor, 11). Hypatius states 'It is of adults to have the senses exercised to know how to distinguish good from evil'[54].

Infantile characters (lack of experience) are often aimed, in the sources examined, to express a morally negative connotation (lack of discernment). Eloquent in this sense is the episode narrated in *Apophthegmata Patrum* of the little disciple who, tempted by the throat, disobeys and secretly eats a fish cooked by the *cellar*. When the *cellar* discovered the little theft, he hits the young monk violently and kills him. But the reaction of the adult to the transgression of the child is stigmatized not as such, but for the fatal consequence, attributable, moreover, to the intervention of the supernatural.

In this sense, the theme of the young – old, a precocious child who does not present the salient features of childhood because he has reached an higher maturity, that's recurs frequently at the hagiographic sources[55].

However, the perception of the childhood is not always burdened by these doubts. In fact, Pachomius considered it useful and possible that children initiated into monastic life, thanks to the early practice of obedience, would reach that degree of wisdom indispensable for the acquisition of spiritual perfection[56]. The purity of the children is also celebrated in the figure of the hegumen Heliodoros, quoted by Theodoret of Cirrus, who had embraced the monastic life at the age of three, shining in innocence, inexperience and simplicity. In this latter case, it is an exceptional personality.

But, often, exemplary childhood is, first of all, that of the saint[57]. Years of childhood and adolescence are narrated in hagiographies through a series of topoi well known to scholars of the genre. Successive and ascending passages link a miraculous precocity - a negation of the naturally infantile trait -, to adulthood, marked by escape from the world and withdrawal to a monastery or loneliness; by an ascetic, and extremely severe practice; by the death of the world, and sometimes, voluntary madness[58]; or, alternatively, by the commitment spent on works of charity or in the foundation of monasteries[59].

With the exception of such exemplary childhoods, the child condition often carries with it a stigmata of vulnerability and spiritual incompleteness. Often children behave in an inappropriate and cruel way[60], tolerated or forgiven by a holy man in compliance with the Gospel message ('sinite pargulos') but, above all, because of an ascetic rigorous practice.

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2. Prinzing G. ref 1. p. 17. The source to which the scholar refers is a poem by Photius.
3. Herrin J, Kazhdan A, Cutler A, Childood. In: Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium prepared at Dumbarton Oaks. New York, Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press; 1991. pp. 420-421.
4. Dig. 28.1.5.
5. The deepening of this aspect is beyond the scope of the present work, but it is nevertheless appropriate to emphasize that the forms through which childhood fragility was manifested could depend both on social and economic reasons (the lack of a father or a family network; the poverty of the family of origin) and on personal data (an age too immature to allow the subject to carry out a job and to provide in some way for his own subsistence). Patlagean E, L'enfant et son avenir dans la famille byzantine. In: Patlagean E, Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance. London: Variorum Reprints; 1981. cap. X; Barcellona R, Corpi senza nome. L'infanzia nella Tarda Antichità. Itinerari di ricerca. In: Capomacchia AMG, Zocca E (eds), Il corpo del bambino tra realtà e metafora nelle culture antiche. SMSR 2017;19 Suppl.:137-146; Puliatti S, Lo statuto legale dell'infanzia nel diritto tardoantico e bizantino. In: L'infanzia nell'alto Medioevo. Atti delle settimane di studio, Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo; 2021. pp. 351-378.
6. In the territory of Edessa (on the occasion of the famine of 499 -502), after a climatically unfavorable spring, the peasants leave the land to migrate to the north and west.
7. J Nov. 80 of 539 refers to the huge rush of people to the capital: the phenomenon worries the legislator who tries to control it thanks to the creation of a special office. See also: J. Nov. 99, anno 539.
8. Patlagean E, Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, IV - VII siècles. Paris, La Haye: Mouton; 1977. p. 179.
9. Patlagean E, ref. 8. p. 30 ss
10. In order to alleviate the state of poverty of the *penetes*, the emperor favored their occupation in the building sites that had to carry out large projects such as the construction of dams, palaces, baths, churches, hospitals. But, in part, it was precisely these ambitious works that contributed to tightening the tax system, despite the tax amnesties and other measures conceived, in particular, to protect small landowners stripped of their assets by usurers (J. Nov. 32. 1. 240. 12-14, anno 535; J. Nov. 147. pr., I. 718.16 - 719.17).
11. It was provided, for example, that the Church of the Resurrection, in Jerusalem, could sell its goods to finance assistance works (J. Nov. 51, anno 536).
12. A comprehensive study of the genesis and evolution of childcare institutions in the Byzantine Empire is offered by Miller TS, The Orphans of Byzantium. Child Welfare in the Christian Empire. Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press; 2003. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, acts of charity towards orphans, individual and collective, are considered the greatest examples of virtue (Deut. 10:183, Ps. 68 - 5). The

welfare program in Byzantium was promoted by the imperial government, the Church, the monastic movement and private individuals. Worthy of note in this sense is the foundation by Saint Zotikos of the Orphanatropheion of Constantinople, then managed by the episcopal chair and the central government. Until the threshold of the fourteenth century, the institute represented the pre-eminent center of the actions implemented for the protection of children in the Eastern Empire. Under Justinian there were also orphanages intended for the weaning and care of newborns, thanks, probably, to the recruitment of nurses remunerated for this purpose, and placed under the authority of the bishop, in the provinces, and the supervision of the Patriarch, in the capital. See Miller and J. Nov. 7; J. Nov. 43, a. 536; J. Nov. 120, a. 544.

13. J. Nov. 120.6.
14. Parents exposed their children for lack of means or when they had deformities at birth. Often, in the absence of the father figure, it was the mother who abandoned them.
15. Constantine, in 315, disposed a financial aid, coming from the revenues of the state and the res privata, adressed to parents who could not support the economic weight of the breeding of offspring. The law aims to prevent the killing of offspring, probably meaning by this expression, abandonment and exposure. See Miller TS, ref. 12. pp. 148-151; Code Theod. II. 27. 1, anno 315. As Miller points out, it is not known whether the Constantinian program, initially conceived only for Italy and the provinces of Africa, was also extended to the eastern part of the Empire. It was certainly too onerous and difficult to achieve to be long lasting and to be riconfirmed by the following emperors.
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19. J. Nov. 153, a. 541.
20. Codex Just. 4. 43.1, a. 294.
21. Codex Just. 4. 43.2, a. 329.
22. J.Nov., 14, 'De lenonibus', a. 535. Cfr. Malal., *Chronogr*. pp. 440-441; Proc., *Hist. Aug*., XVII, 5.
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26. Gregorii Nysseni De pauperibus amandis I. In: Van Heck A (ed.), Patrologia graeca cursus completus. col. 454 ss.; Gregorii Nysseni De pauperibus amandis orationes duo. Leiden: Brill; 1964.
27. Gregorii Nysseni De pauperibus amandis II. In: Patrologia graeca cursus completus. XLVI. col. 471.
28. Basilii Caesarensis Homeliae IX in Haexameron, VIII. In: Patrologia graeca cursus completus. XXIX. col. 178 ss. See also: Trisoglio F (ed.), Basilio di Cesarea. Omelie sull'Esamerone VIII 6. Firenze-Milano: Giunti/Bompiani; 2017. pp. 318 ss.
29. Horn BC, Children in Fourth Century Greek Epistolography: Cappadocian Perspectives from the Pens of Gregory Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea. In: Horn BC, Phenix RR, Children in Late Ancient Christianity. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2009. pp. 103 ss.
30. Miller TS, Ref.12. pp. 114-120, 127-128.
31. Rhalles GA, Potles M, Súntagma tôn theiôn kaì ierôn kanónon. Athenai: 1966. c. 40. 2-398; Greenfeld R, Children in Byzantine Monasteries. Innocent Hearts or Vessels in the Harbour of the Devil? In: Papaconstantinou A, Talbot AM (eds), Becoming Byzantine. Children and Childhood in Byzantium. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks; 2009. p. 258. The presence as well the age of the new disciples or children riceived in the monasteries is not always easy to determine given the scarce and not univocal documentation offered by the sources.
32. Schroeder C, Children and Egyptian Monasticism. In: Papacostantinou A, Talbot AM, Ref. 31. p. 319.
33. Greenfield R, Ref. 31. p. 266.
34. Apophthegmata Patrum, Serie alphabetica. In: Patrologia graeca cursus completus. LXV. coll. 72-440; Mortari L (ed. introduction and translation), Vita e detti dei Padri del deserto. Roma: Città Nuova; 1996; Regnault L, Les Sentences des Pères du désert. Collection alphabétique. Sablé-sur-Sarthe: Solesmes; 1981.
35. Apophthegmata Patrum, Serie alphabetica. Ref. 34. 288. 2.
36. In the edifying tales, the theme of homosexual temptation recurs very often and, consequently, the exhortation not to approach children nor to welcome them into a monastic community. Informed by his own experience, Carion affirms: 'A man who lives with a child if he is not solid, falls; in any case, it does not make progress.' In the same way John the Dwarf expresses himself: 'He who gets up and chats with a boy has already fornicated with him'. See Greenfeld R, Ref. 31. p. 257, 260. Isaac of the Cells and Macarius identify precisely in this temptation the cause of the abandonment of Scete by many monks.
37. Some, however, were of high social extraction and had received a literary education. Hilarion, as a young man, was sent by his parents to Alexandria to complete his studies. These students were given a severe task, as can be seen from the metaphor of John Chrysostom (Homeliae ad populum Antiochenum, VI. In: Patrologia graeca cursus completus. XLIX, coll. 81 ss.) which establishes a comparison between the useful terror exercised on children by the preceptor, such as to move them to tears, and the authority exercised firmly by those officials who, like the preceptors, they have the task, with the harshness, of exercising a just power in defense of the weakest and of imposing rules on human life.
38. The poorest people carried out low-skilled activities, in which the use of physical strength and some primary skills employed in the production, often occasional, of unrefined goods,

of common consumption (simple artifacts, drinks or little processed foods) was required. See: Patlagean E. ref. 8. p. 168.

39. Palladio. Historia Lausiaca. Bartelink GJM (critical edition and notes), Barchiesi M (translation), Milano: Fondazione G. Valla; 1998. 17. p. 71.
40. Palladio, Ref. 39. 35. 1. p. 169.
41. In the Apophthegmata Patrum, as in other hagiographic sources, children and young people are recipients of the miraculous cures dispensed by holy men. The figure of the young, epileptic or possessed person who has an evangelical resonance often recurs (Matthew 17:14-18; Mark 9:14-27, Luke 9:37-43). The saint who heals crippled, blind, who performs exorcisms, who resurrects the dead, follows the christomimetic model to which many examples of this literary genre are marked. See: Holman SR, Sick children and Healing Saints: Medical Treatment of the Child in Cristian Antiquity. In: Horn CB, Phenix RR (eds), Ref. 26. pp 143 ss.
42. Canivet P, Leroy Molinghen A, Théodoret de Cyr, Histoires des moines de Syrie. Paris: Sources Chrétiennes; 1977. Gallico A, Storia dei monaci siri. Roma: Città Nuova editrice; 1995.
43. Festugière AJ (translation), Callinicus, Vie d'Hypatios. In: Les moines d'Orient. II. Les moines de la Région de Constantinople. Paris; Les Éditions du Cerf; 1961; Bartelink GJM (ed.), Vie d'Hypatios. Paris: Sources Chrétiennes; 1971. P. 177. Kosiński R, A few remarks on the author of Vita Hypatii. Electrum 2004:8:143-151.
44. Festugière AJ, ref. 44. XXXI. 54.
45. All versions probably date back to the eleventh century. On Zoticus see: Miller T, The Legend of Saint Zotikos According to Constantine Akropolites. Analecta Bollandiana 1994:112:339-345; Aubineau M (ed.), Zoticos de Constantinople: nourricier des pauvres et serviteur des lépreuxp. Analecta Bollandiana 1975:73:67-108. It is not certain that the story of martyrdom is reliable, since no other sources, except the three hagiographies, mention it.
46. In fact, no Vita explicitly attributes to Zotikos the foundation of the Orphantropheion as much as the leper colony of Elaiones. Aubineau's version (XII, 42), however, refers to an administrative link between the leprosary and the Orphanatropheion expressed by the provision of Justin II for which the administration of the orphanage had to pay funds to the leper colony necessary for the maintenance costs of the sick. The first testimony that binds Zotikos to the Orphanatropheion is a law of 472 issued by Emperor Leo I in which the saint is alluded to as the founder of the institution. See Miller T, Ref. 12. pp. 52 ss.
47. Aubineau M, Ref. 45.
48. Like other elements contained in the Vitae, even the one that refers to the imperial measures against lepers is not reflected in the sources and is, therefore, to be considered fictitious.
49. On Zotikos connection to the two philanthropic institutions, as well as on the devotional forms practiced by Arian circles in Constantinople and on the relations between Arianism and the ecclesiastical hierarchies in the period after the Council of Nicaea, see Miller T, Ref. 12. pp. 53 ss.
50. Rydén L (Introduzione), Testi e studi Bizantino - Neoellenici. In: Cesaretti P (ed.) Leonzio di Neapoli. Niceforo prete di s. Sofia. Vita dei Saloi Simeone e Andrea. Roma: Bolis edizioni; 2014. p. 37.
51. Capizzi C (ed.), Callinico-Vita di Ipazio. Roma: Citta Nuova; 1982. p. 39.
52. Barcellona R, La retorica dell' *infanzia abbandonata* nel cristianesimo antico tra polemica e parenesi. Ilu- Revista de Ciencias de los Religiones 2013:24: 59-76.

53. On Augustinian pessimism about the infantile state and the relationship of the human being with original sin, see: Barcellona R, ref 53. p. 71-73; Holman R, Ref. 42. p. 145.
54. Festugière AJ, Ref. 44. XLVIII. 76
55. Macarius the Egyptian, for example, 'was esteemed for such discernment that he was called the puer - senex. For this reason he progressed rapidly: at the age of forty he received the grace to heal from evil spirits and to make predictions' (Palladio. Historia Lausiaca. Ref. 39. p. 71). See: Caseau B. Childhood in Byzantine Saints' Lives. In: Papaconstantinou A, Talbot AM (eds), Becoming Byzantine. Children and Childhood in Byzantium. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks. Harvard University Press; 2009. pp.152-153.
56. The Greek Life of Pachomius was composed fifty years after his death. Pachomius (322-348) played a fundamental role in the history of Egyptian spiritual movements and was, with Basil of Caesarea, one of the founders of Eastern cenobitism and a great monastic legislator. See: Festugière AJ (ed., translator.), Les Moines d'Orient IV/2. La première Vie grecque de Saint Pachôme. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf; 1965. XLIX.
57. In this sense, reference is made to the 'exemplary childhoods' of the Syriac stylite saints described in the life of Saint Simeon the Elder (fifth century) (Festugière AJ, Vie et conduite du bienhereux Symeon le Stylyte. In: Id. Antioche païenne te chrétienne. Libanius, Chrysostome et les moines se Syrie. Paris; 1959. pp. 493-506); In the Life of Saint Symeon The Younger (VI secolo), written perhaps under the reign of Emperor Phocas (602-610) (De Ven V (ed.), La Vie ancienne de s. Syméon Stylite le Jeune 521-592. I. Bruxelles. Société des Bollandistes; 1962; Deroche V, Quelques interrogations à propos de la Vie de Syméon Stylite le Jeune. Eranos 1996:94:74-75); and in the short versions of the same (Caseau B, Fayant MChr, Le renouveau du culte des Stylites syriens au X et XI siècles. La vie abrégée de Symeon Stylite le Jeune (BHG 1691 c). Travaux et Mémoires. 21. 2. Paris: 2017; pp. 701 ss.; Caseau B, Messis C, La vie abrégée de Symeon le Jeune par Jean Petrinos (BHG 1691) et le milieu de sa production. In: Mélanges Bernard Flusin, Binggeli A, Déroche V, Travaux et mémoires. 23. 1. Paris; 2019; pp. 95-110). Also: Leonzio di Neapoli. Niceforo prete di s. Sofia. Vita dei Saloi Simeone e Andrea. Ref. 50.
58. Leonzio di Neapoli . Niceforo prete di s. Sofia. Vita dei Saloi Simeone e Andrea. Ref. 50.
59. Schwartz E (ed.) Kyrillos von Skythopolis. As Cyril of Scythopolis narrates in the lives of Euthymius and Saba Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs;1939.
60. The children who throw stones at Symeon the crazy volunteer. See: Leonzio di Neapoli. Niceforo prete di s. Sofia. Vita dei Saloi Simeone e Andrea. Ref. 50. 146R. p. 105. On the theme of the anthropological and social exclusion of childhood in ancient and late antique world, see: Zocca E, Infanzia e santità. Dall'esclusione all'inclusione. In: Capomacchia AMG, Zocca E (eds), Liminalità infantili. Strategie di inclusione ed esclusione nelle culture antiche. Henoch 2019:41(1):85-91; Sardella T, Definire un'identità antropologica liminale (Aug. *De peccatorum meritis*). In: Capomacchia AMG, Zocca E (eds), Liminalità infantili. Strategie di inclusione ed esclusione nelle culture antiche. Henoch 2019:41(1):92-98.