

Over the course of the Roman Empire many things changed. The greatest changes that occurred happened between the Classical Age of the empire and the Christian Age of the empire. Nearly every aspect of daily life and existence was changed in some way. Most markedly are the changes in Marriage, Sexuality, Community and Philosophy.

Marriage throughout the course of the empire was fluid at best. Most, if not all public officials took part in some form of adultery. Wives were seen as “little creatures” who did very little to help their husbands in the political world. These creatures were free to do whatever they really wanted as long as it did not “interfere with the serious play of male politics.”

Marriage began a slow change. In the age of Antonines the relative neutrality of marriages among the upper-class collapsed. Concordance and harmony in marriage were brought to the forefront. This was a conscious effort to revive the imagined discipline of the archaic Roman past.

Marriage was to be a victory of the *mission civilisatrice*, specifically dealing with the disorderly fringe of the well-born, the womenfolk. The marriage would eventually evolve into public persona. The *eunoia*, the *sumpatheia*, and the *praotes* of the relations of husband and wife echoed the expectations of grave affability and unquestioning lass loyalty. These were seen in the powerful man both lovingly embraced and firmly controlled his city, just as he did his wife.

Changing the parameters of marriage and what it meant to the Romans did not occur in a vacuum. Many things changed because of it, namely sexuality. During the Classical period, the Romans were obsessed with their image, their bodies, and nudity

which all were facets to becoming a successful male. With marriages becoming more of a publically understood union, especially among politicians and successful citizens, some of these things would change little.

Christianity brought a kind of “moral hypochondria” juxtaposition between the elites and their inferiors. Sexual relations in the Classical period was all about pleasure. That pleasure could be had in heterosexual relations or homosexual ones. Before Christianity took a firm hold, the only shame that might be attached to a homosexual act resided solely in the moral contagion that might cause a man of upper class to submit himself either physically or morally inferior of either sex.

Physically this meant adopting a passive position in lovemaking. Morally this meant a collapse of control for either sex. The moral collapse under a female was seen as a greater loss of control than to collapse under the desire for a male. The hierarchy was exaggerated even more when oral sexuality was involved and for a man to perform it on a female partner was the most condemned.

Christianity almost completely reversed these roles. Homosexuality became an unspeakable evil, although it still continued. It appears that the Romans could not completely shake the “women are for breeding, boys are for pleasure” mentality. At the same time husbands were not completely “submitting” to their wives, but the general shake up in sexuality and marriage could never have been or never will be mutually exclusive.

The essence of sexuality today is seen as nudity. But, during the early empire there was a long survival of indifference to nudity in Roman public life. There was no sexual shame before the Christian period. Public baths ensured that nudity among One’s

peers and one's inferiors was an everyday occurrence. How one carried himself in the nude was the mark of status. Simply put, during the Classical Period the man made the man, after the Christian period took hold, the clothes made the man.

The art of philosophy changed little during the slow swapping of ideals, but the aspect of being a philosopher changed greatly. During the Classical Period, philosophers met with like-minded people to discuss perfection ideals and ways of thinking that would lead to a higher plane of being for the individual. The early empire was still very Greek in their studies and actions as philosophers.

The Christians would bring their philosophy to the masses. Jesus Christ preached to multitudes about love and peace, thoroughly upsetting the Roman establishment as well as his own religion's Jewish Leaders. The classical philosopher had reveled in the high moral status that came from preaching to the unconvertible among his peers. The Christian philosophers (preachers) would not rest until the unconvertible were converted.

The role of philosophy and philosophers did not change as much as it grew clandestinely at first, during the first few centuries A.D. "The rapid democratization of the philosophers' upper class counterculture by the leaders of the Christian church is the most profound single revolution of the late classical period."

While the works of the philosophers many have been largely ignored by the average urban notable, they drifted down through Christian preaching and speculation to "form a deep sediment of more notions current among thousands of humble persons."

The great unwashed, as the masses are called, now had a new moral compass. They had accepted Christianity's teaching of self worth, and brotherly love. They had removed themselves from the sordid affairs of the nude and the homosexual. What

impact did this have on the Roman community? Once the Roman citizen had mastered his core of motivational reflection within his own heart, it was time to turn his attention to his community.

With Christianity came a kind of self-awareness. The Classical Period was marked by a morality securely rooted in a sense of social distance. The nobles were equal among their peers and superior to the populace, they held equality in the brotherhood of nobility. What emerged in the second century A.D. was an awareness of the world as “an afflicted nation.”

Their anxious concern for the solidarity of a threatened group (Jews and early Christians) gave birth to a sharp negative sense of the private.

The most private thoughts and actions of an individual, their hidden feelings and motivations remained impenetrable to the group. This was quite the opposite of the Classical Period when everything was out on the open, public forum, public lives, and communal living. By focusing on the group more, these inward hidden feelings were a possible source for tensions that threatened to cause fissures in the ideal solidarity of the religious community.

This would also translate to the community as a whole. The move to a more private life paradoxically led to a negative view on privacy. Many held a high hope that this state of total solidarity and openness to others was the predestined and natural state of social man.

This strange paradigm of maintaining a solid community full of members that are lead individual private lies openly took root during the transition of Rome from Classical to Christian. Members believed that with these changes, the regular members of the

population were equal and no longer inferior to the nobility. At the same time well-born individuals had to clean up their act, if they were to remain on top of the masked hierarchy. The early Christian churches depended on well to do nobles and upper class to help finance churches and communities in which their new philosophic styles could reach the masses.

In order to show that they were “moral” enough to make the transition from Roman nobility to church elder or financier, they had to be more faithful to their wives, and control their sexuality. If they could led their families with stoicism lovingly embrace and powerfully maintain them, they remained the perfect candidate to control the masses. In this case the only thing that really changed for the upper-class was that instead of having the right to be upper class based on wealth, and no concern for those inferior to them, they now had a moral obligation to take care of the poor, infirm, and less fortunate.

The real change came from the everyday Roman citizen. Now those poor, sick and hungry masses that had been ignored or mocked by their despot nobility during the classical period, now had benevolent guardians that protected and provided for them. At least that is what the façade is.

Fact is, most of the main points mentioned here did change, at least outwardly. Nothing ever really ended, things like adultery, sexual expression and pleasure, and all other forms of vice moved underground and became quite a lucrative business. They also maintained a way for the new Christian Roman communal citizen to maintain a bit of control over his private life.