

ON PAEDOPHILIA



COSIMO SCHINAIA

TRANSLATED BY ANTONELLA SANSONE

ROUTLEDGE


ON PAEDOPHILIA



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Cosimo Schinaia

Translated by Antonella Sansone

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Originally published as *Pedofilia Pedofilie* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001)
English translation first published in 2010 by Karnac Books Ltd.

Published 2018 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 9781855755895 (pbk)

Typeset by Vikatan Publishing Solutions (P) Ltd., Chennai, India

To Manuela, Jacopo and Lorenzo

Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

John 8: 32

Healthy mental growth seems to depend on truth as the living organism depends on food. If it is lacking or deficient the personality deteriorates.

W.R. Bion, *Transformations*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Antonella Mancini for her valuable suggestions on the history of childhood in the Middle Ages, Uliano Lucas for helping me in the search for photographic texts, Giovanna Terminiello Rotondi for her passionate discussions on artists, and Aristo Ciruzzi for his cinematographic advice.

I wish to acknowledge gratefully those who accurately read the original text of *Pedofilia Pedofilie* before it went to press: Anna Berardi, Stefano Bolognini, Franco De Masi, Marie Antoinette Ferroni, Costantino Gilardi, Gianni Guasto, and Alberto Lampignano. Special thanks to Francesco Barale for his beautiful preface to the Italian edition.

I should like to thank Luiz Meyer for his encouragement, and Carlos Fishman and Paola Franciosi for their active interest in the publication of this book in English.

I am especially grateful also to translator and author Antonella Sansone and editor Anna Nilsen for the patience, sagacity, competence and generosity with which they helped me achieve the project of publication of the English edition.



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FOREWORD

Donald Campbell

Introduction

The report of a paedophilic act may arouse at a conscious level profound pity for the victim, and disgust and violent retaliatory wishes towards the often demonised perpetrator. At a deeper, perhaps preconscious level, there may be a pang of guilt about the failure to protect the sexually vulnerable and immature child from the sexually mature adult. At an even deeper, unconscious level, there may be a hint of primal terror in response to the breach of a timeless foundation of society, namely the maintenance of the sexual boundary between the generations. The paedophilic act is difficult to think about because it disturbs our normal orientation to reality. It is not uncommon for us to defend against these strong, disturbing feelings and fantasies at a conscious, preconscious, and unconscious level by projection, denial and repression. Even psychoanalysts, with our special interest in the unconscious, have written relatively little about paedophilia. Cosimo Schinaia's book *On Paedophilia* is an exception. It is an impressive, scholarly, and much needed addition to psychoanalytic literature on this neglected subject.

In his Introduction, Cosimo Schinaia responds to the meagre psychoanalytic bibliography on paedophilia by asking: “Why have psychoanalysts not been interested in the issue of paedophilia, and specifically in the psychopathology of the paedophile?” He not only proceeds to address that question, but through the eleven chapters of his book *Dr. Schinaia* and his five colleagues Paolo F. Peloso, Luisella Peretti, Franca Pezzoni, Clara Pitto and Giuseppina Tabò proceed to deepen and broaden our knowledge of the psychopathology of the paedophile.

One source of the resistance to the study and understanding of paedophilia lies in the nature of the paedophilic act itself. The disturbing impact of the paedophilic act undermines our orientation to reality, and hence to thinking and writing about paedophilia. Psychoanalysts view resistance as a primary source of understanding. In response to Dr. Schinaia’s initial question, I will focus on a particular type of paedophilic act, namely one that projects the paedophile’s own infantile trauma into its child victim. For over 30 years I worked at the Portman Clinic, a National Health Service outpatient facility in London, where we assessed and treated those patients who were violent or delinquent, or who suffered from a perversion. During that time I treated paedophiles in individual psychoanalytic psychotherapy, usually on a once a week basis. I found that the exploration of the disturbing impact of the act of child abuse on my patients and on me in the countertransference led to progress in their treatment and deepened my understanding of paedophilia.

Paedophilia is distinguished from other perversions by virtue of the fact that the paedophile fundamentally attacks generational difference. Generational difference along with gender distinction, which it predates, are the bedrock of reality (Chassequet-Smirgel, 1985, pp. 1–12). I have found from my experience of treating different types of perversions that paedophilia often underpins other perversions. Early self-object differentiation, before the recognition and enforcement of an incest barrier, leads to a sense of a nurturing Breast and a protecting Other as having qualities and capacities that the infant does not possess. Acute or cumulative trauma may arise when parental intrusion or deprivation inflicts physical or psychological pain. It is not uncommon for the victim to reconstitute itself by identification with the perpetrator of the trauma, and then by inflicting pain on dependent and more vulnerable objects. When

the aggression behind that identification is erotised, that is, when the aggression is converted into sadism, the foundations are laid for a paedophilic sexual orientation. However, the adult perpetrator's shame about being abused as a child (Campbell, 2008), or their guilt about sexually abusing children, often leads to repression, denial and dissociation.

Child abuse and doubt

While grooming his or her child victim the paedophile fosters the impression that they are the child's best friend or special companion. The child victim's expectation is radically contradicted in the sexual climax of the seduction. Reality was not what it appeared to be. When a child is sexually abused, this contradiction of expectation amounts to a global betrayal.

The first moment of doubt during seduction occurs when the child realises that the adult or parent it trusts will not keep it safe. It is a moment when the hope of parental love and trust, that they can be depended upon to ensure security and safety, is shattered. When generational and sexual barriers are breached and the child's physical integrity is violated by a paedophilic act, Oedipal relationships are turned upside down. The mind of the seducer becomes incomprehensible and the original, expectable object is destroyed. The victim is left without a trusting orientation to the mind of the other within which to find a representation of itself. This first betrayal shatters the "known" reflecting object; one of the building blocks upon which internal representations are built.

The mind of the other that inflicted pain is viewed as split between loving and hating parts, and the victim is left in a state of confusion and doubt. If the victim becomes a paedophile and seeks analytic treatment, he or she will project these contradictory parts into the transference, in such a way that the analyst will, in turn, feel confused and in doubt about what he hears. This affects the analyst's capacity to think about the patient and trust the veracity of what the patient says.

The second betrayal of trust occurs *after* the child was abused. If the parents ignore, minimise, or deny the physical and psychic reality of the child's abuse, the child feels that its parent has betrayed its trust that the parent will represent reality, and

this reinforces the child's sense of utter aloneness and fear that it cannot be found by another's imagination or belief. Regardless of who abuses the child, the child feels that its trust in the parent has been betrayed. At a fundamental level, the child blames its parent for not protecting its body from pain and its mind from doubt and confusion. Lack of trust breeds more doubt. The child's experience of being abused shatters its trust in its parents to represent reality, and to provide meaning for experience. In order for trust to be re-established parents must "be able to represent to the child a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what they are doing" (Erikson, 1977, p. 24). When the parents, or another caring adult, fail to provide meaning for the abuse, motivation to conceptualise an abusive experience by the victim is undermined and replaced by reliance upon action to resolve traumatic experiences.

The experience of being abused fundamentally challenges one's reliance upon internal perception of experience and sense of self. The victim must choose between what he or she "knows" as reality and a contradictory and false reality represented by those who minimise or deny reality. It is a choice between reality and psychosis based on a denial of reality. It is not uncommon for those who have been abused to preserve their orientation to reality outside their abusive experiences by disavowing abusive experiences and identifying with the aggressor. The self that was abused has to be denied and replaced by a false self that was not betrayed and abused. This process is similar to that in the hysterics described by Brenman (1985), who "change identities in order to destroy the intuitive knowledge of what is real and true" (p. 427). While I have focused on the interpersonal consequences of abuse in terms of the breakdown in trust, and the intrapsychic consequences in terms of the disturbance of the victim's orientation to reality and dissociated mental states, I now want to turn to another consequence of abuse that is less frequently written about, namely physical pain.

Child abuse, pain and the splitting of the ego

There are, of course, different types of childhood abuse. For instance, the child's visual exposure to parental intercourse may trigger an overwhelming sexual excitement and anxiety, but the child's body

has not been directly involved in the seduction. However, abuse which painfully transgresses the child's sexual body barrier is of a different order because it alters the child's relationship to its body. As Blass and Simon (1994) remind us: "Seduction, the actual physical act of assault, reminds us that there is 'a body'; that over and beyond the construction of our mind, there is actuality. There is a history of experience registered in us in interaction with, but also beyond, our creative fantasies regarding it" (p. 692).

If, while walking barefoot in the dark, we step on an upturned drawing pin, we may feel the pin, but it is our body which is hurting us. The drawing pin causes our pain, but it is our body that is the source of pain (Scarry, 1993). For the person in pain there is nothing so vibrantly certain as their pain. However, in spite of the sufferer's certainty, the observer can never know the victim's pain. Pain cannot be objectively denied or confirmed (Scarry, 1993, p. 4). The sufferer is to some extent alone with their pain: they are dependent upon another's belief that they are *in* pain, and the other's willingness or capacity to *imagine* the nature of their pain.

Pain "to the individual experiencing it is overwhelmingly present, more emphatically real than any other human experience, and yet is almost invisible to anyone else, unfelt, and unknown" (*ibid.*, p. 51). Because the other can never know the victim's pain, there is always an element of doubt in the mind of the listener. Pain cannot be denied or confirmed (*ibid.*, p. 4). The victim may have the fantasy that he can overcome the other's doubt about the victim's pain by projecting pain via an action on the other. The original victim, now the perpetrator, may believe that the doubting other, now the victim, is experiencing the perpetrator's pain. This is, of course, a fallacy. The unknowability of another's pain means there is an inevitable isolation that leaves the sufferer alone and the observer in doubt. The experience of being doubted or disbelieved contributes to a network of expectations that what the victim/perpetrator says will not be believed by internal or external objects.

Pain also destroys language. Severe pain reduces us to pre-symbolic screams, cries and groans. Language, which enables us to communicate self experience to others, is replaced by sounds which predate speech. Although pain is history and may, more than any other experience, inform behaviour and procedural memory, pain also overwhelms the victim's attempts to conceptualise pain.

The core of the representational process, the capacity to represent bodily states, is undermined by our response to pain. We may mobilise splitting mechanisms to defend against pain. "When there is physical pain, a high degree of narcissistic cathexis of the painful place occurs", observes Freud (1926). He goes on: "This cathexis continues to increase and tends, as it were, to empty the ego" (p. 171). The narcissistic cathexis of pain occurs at the expense of the development of a cohesive sense of self and investment in the environment. When this process is excessive it creates a split between a hyper-catheted body on the one hand, and an "empty ego" and objects on the other hand. When pain during abuse is defended against by creating splits between the mind and body, the process of conceptualising sexually traumatic experience is undermined. This process is similar to that experienced by hysterics. The paedophile I just referred to said it was "not forgetting, just not there to forget".

Pain is often experienced as destroying a trustworthy, taken-for-granted, physically, sexually and narcissistically gratifying body and leaving us frightened, helpless and confused with an unpredictable, attacking, alien body. After a painful abuse, failure to mourn the loss of a secure internal representation of the body and physical damage consolidates the splitting which is first engendered by pain. As a result of this splitting process, we may also react to the pain by disavowing our body and viewing it as "not me" or "against me" (Scarry, 1993). In this way pain further undermines attempts to conceptualise experience. In order to avoid the remembrance of pain in abuse, the victim is likely to repress memories of seduction. A paedophile told me about his experience of being abused by saying: "I know something happened, but I don't know what happened." In his case, the splitting that resulted from this internal disavowal was reinforced by the perpetrator's disavowal of his pain.

A paedophile's narcissistic cathexis of his body is intensified by his anxiety about its vulnerability to pain. Paedophiles cathect objects (boys and young adolescents) insofar as they provide relief from anxiety. In order for an abused paedophile to feel safe and powerful, they are likely to sexualise the rage about their pain and sadistically seduce children. In this way, the original trauma is reversed by doing to a child what had been done to them.

Ferenczi observed splitting of the ego as a consequence of childhood rape when he maintained that "it seems likely that a *psychotic*

splitting off of a part of the personality occurs under the influence of shock" (1930, p. 121). Freud himself never stopped considering the impact that actual seduction had on psychic development. In one of his last papers, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence" (1940b), Freud also identified splitting of the ego that occurs as a defence against the trauma of sexual abuse. Today the link between childhood sexual abuse and dissociative states is well documented (Davies & Frawley, 1994; Mollon, 1998).

A paedophile, who was my analytic patient, described his abusive behaviour as the terror and manic triumph of an omnipotent infant. "No one can stop my abuse. The abuse is out of control. I'm a baby." Ferenczi (1933) observed that in an effort to defend themselves against hurtful and dangerous adults, sexually abused children can develop instantaneously the emotional and intellectual maturity of an adult, which he referred to as *traumatic progression of a precocious maturity*. He linked this phenomenon to the typical dream of the wise baby in which a newly-born child talks wisely to the adults. "The fear of the uninhibited, almost mad adult changes the child, so to speak, into a psychiatrist and, in order to become one and to defend himself against dangers coming from people without self-control, he must know how to identify himself completely with them" (Ferenczi, 1933, p. 229). The wise baby, paradoxically, can't be a normal baby because it doesn't know what it thinks. And, without an alternative to the mad abusing adult to relate to, the wise baby becomes the object it fears—a paedophile.

In an analytic session with a paedophile the analyst is subject to the same projections as the child victim. The experience and understanding of those projections is a valuable source of information about the nature and function of the paedophilic act for that paedophile patient. Cosimo Schinaia's book is another indispensable resource. As Dr. Schinaia shows, only a multidisciplinary approach can begin to address the complexity of paedophilia. The historical, sociological, mythical and psychoanalytical approach represented in *On Paedophilia* casts a welcome light into the darkness of paedophilia.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

When the devil strokes you, he wants your soul.

—Old Italian saying

In his erudite and flattering introduction to the Italian first edition of *Pedofilia Pedofilie*, Francesco Barale called it a treatise on paedophilia. Although I understand the reasons that led him to express himself in these terms (such as the attempt to fill a real scientific void on such an incandescent subject and the extent of the topics covered), I find it difficult to agree with this definition. On the contrary, I conceived *Pedofilia Pedofilie* as a proposed research route, a *work in progress*, a colourful text in motion, which is thus characterised by features that are far from the plainness and systematisation typical of a treatise, which can in some ways be a dangerous Procrustean bed tending to pigeon-hole unique and specific phenomena by levelling them off and flattening them.

An urgent need for deeper study of some of the topics touched on in the book has manifested itself in the different venues in which it has been presented and discussed. These topics include the psychopathological differences between paedophilia and incest, the

characteristics that distinguish and differentiate female paedophilia from male paedophilia, as well as the differences existing between the paedophilic relationship of a boy child and an adolescent and that of a boy child and a girl child; and would certainly deserve to be sounded out. In relation to these topics, I refer the reader to future in-depth studies.

I have taken the opportunity to make the bibliographic studies more complete, and to give more depth to some concepts and reflections, having realised that since *Pedofilia Pedofilie* came out, interest has been growing in the social phenomenon called paedophilia as well as in the pathology of paedophilic behaviours. At the 2004 IPA congress in New Orleans a panel was created on the topic "Paedophilia: its Metapsychology and Place in Contemporary Culture", with contributions from Carlos Fishman, Luiz Meyer and Cosimo Schinaia. At the 2005 IPA congress in Rio de Janeiro, one of the leading introductory papers, given by Luiz Meyer, dealt with the topic "Trauma and Paedophilia", and the panel "Traumatic Violence and Sexualisation in Paedophilia" was created, with contributions from Franco De Masi, Alain Gibeault, Luiz Meyer and Cosimo Schinaia. In 2004 the volume *The Mind of the Paedophile: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* was published, edited by Charles W. Socarides and Loretta R. Loeb. Lastly, in 2007 an article by Franco De Masi, "The Paedophile and his Inner World: Theoretical and Clinical Considerations on the Analysis of a Patient" was published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

Unfortunately when the first Italian edition came out, it was followed by sensationalist news items which demonstrated the confusion that still surrounds the phenomenon of paedophilia. This is why it appears to be even more necessary to face up to it with scientific attention and relational sensitivity, without being overwhelmed by easy emotional rejections, but also without assuming excessively and cynically detached attitudes.

In this new foreword I shall mainly dwell on three aspects which need more study in depth, although they have already been tackled.

The fear of paedophilia

In September 2001 the French Minister with responsibility for family affairs released a survey according to which paedophilia was the main

source of concern for French people. This book consistently deepens the communicative dynamics by which even through the mass media the paedophile has become the plague-spreader or the werewolf of our days. The witch-hunt and the media's emphasis have led to a projective directing of the spotlight onto the phenomenon of paedophilia, allowing the denial of underlying micro-phenomena such as a lack of attention to and any sense of responsibility for children, a certain cultural "infantolatry" (idolatry of children), and non-acceptance of the passage of time and consequently of generational differences. Nevertheless, I believe that it might be useful to linger over some ethological aspects generating the fear of paedophilia, which necessarily come to swing with the defensive aspects already described.

Some eminent palaeontologists, such as Stephen J. Gould and Richard Leakey, have pointed out that the human being shows some evident neoteny, in other words, some morphologically functional features typical of youth which are still present in adulthood. For instance, due to the hypertrophy of its cranial volume and having to contend with a precise anatomical limitation—the diameter of the birth canal—our species undertakes premature birth. It follows that a human newborn's cranial volume is about 20% of its adult size, while in anthropomorphic primates such as chimpanzees and gorillas, it is 50%. With regard to human beings, we can talk about deferred encephalic development (Boncinelli, 2000).

In any case, whether we believe in the hypothesis of neoteny or consider it a theory far from being well grounded, it is certainly true that individuals of our species are more immature at birth and thus need a more articulated repertoire of parental care than other anthropomorphic species. Moreover, human individuals develop over a longer period of time, and consequently their period of socialisation is significantly longer. This would explain adults' tendency (desire) to care for the child, while we see in the child the disjunction between the possibility of desire and the impossibility of satisfying it. According to this hypothesis the human being would be virtuous in parental care, but this would have the inevitable consequence of being particularly sensitive to immature forms of such care, in other words vulnerable (passionate) to the baby's charm. (Marchesini, 2001, 2002).

Paedophilia would represent the perverse transformation of the parental competence to care for babies, so that according to

these theories the feeling of repulsion for the paedophile and his behaviours would not simply be a cultural and moral attitude, but a kind of species-specific reflex designed to protect and preserve the human species. The “naturalness” of the anti-paedophile attitude and consequently the intrinsic “unnaturalness” of paedophile behaviours can make us understand—though certainly not justify—most analysts’ tendency to refuse to treat paedophiles and the consequent rationalisation of such resistance.

Violence on television and violent attitudes

A study published in *Science* (Johnson et al., 2002) contradicts the cliché that violence on television has a significant influence only on children. The study highlights the negative effect on young adults as well. In addition, this research has built up the hypothesis that it is television that makes young people more likely to be aggressive, rather than aggressive young people being more likely to prefer watching violent television programmes. Citati (2002) wrote that television kills children’s fast-developing analogical imagination, their whirling logical abstraction potential, the sense of fun, paradox, absurd, senselessness, the gift of looking from other worlds and of belonging to other worlds. Johnson and his colleagues from Columbia University and the Psychiatric Institute of New York State went beyond Citati’s subjective comments and followed 707 children from adolescence to adulthood. They found that adolescents who were used to spending a hour or more a day in front of the TV screen in *prime time* at around the age of twenty more easily gave way to aggressive acts against other people (Johnson et al., 2002). The link between time spent watching TV and violent behaviour remains significant when considered in relation to other factors that encourage either behaviour, such as previous aggressive behaviour, low family income, poor parental care, and presence of psychiatric disturbance. The most common aggressive behaviour among boys was physical violence, while robbery and threats emerged among girls. Only 5.7% of young people who had watched television for less than an hour a day committed violent acts in the following years, as against 28.8% of those who had watched it for more than three hours a day.

Anderson and Bushman (2002) from Iowa Polytechnic, commenting on the findings of Johnson and his colleagues, make the point

that people do not seem to fully perceive the danger represented by violence on television. They state that the link between television violence and young people's violence can be equated to the link between smoking and cancer: the correlation between cigarettes and cancer is still questioned now, a long time after the scientific community proved it beyond any reasonable doubt.

Another piece of research carried out at the University of Michigan (Huesmann et al., 2003) and published in *Developmental Psychology*, the journal of the American Psychological Association, re-tested 329 twenty-year-old boys and girls who had already been tested in 1977 between the ages of six and ten. The findings of the study of children showed that the fact of watching violent programmes on television, their identification with same-gender aggressive characters and their perception that violence on television is real are all factors linked to aggressive acts committed by adults, for both boys and girls. This correlation is independent of the initial level of aggressiveness, intellectual capacities, the family's social status—measured on the basis of the parents' education and occupation—and the parents' aggressiveness. In addition, this piece of research highlighted that if parents watch the programmes with their children and comment on them, this seems to reduce the effects of television violence on the child, probably because it reduces the child's identification with the person who commits the violent act.

These remarks strongly support the hypothesis repeatedly put forward in my book, but I think it is worth expanding the field of observations further. I would like to underline a specific risk that (in the same way as with violence) the media is also inducing a perverse scenario, though this simultaneously has a personal and individual origin related to the particular way an individual dramatises and maniacally "repairs" an original trauma.

At the launch of the book *Pedofilia Pedofilie* in Padua, Milella commented:

An external image, a "landscape" proposed on an iconic level, or generally representative, may sometimes perform an organisational function towards drives of undifferentiated sexualisation ... As far as the boundary of sexualisation is concerned—as chaotic as the underlying personality and disorganised in islands of psychic aggregation—the large series of images shown by the

media, especially pornographic ones, widely disseminated by means of the Internet with a clear intention to attract, can play the role of a catalyst of a pseudo-integrative internal erotised scenario. The possible resulting attempt to compel the external reality to conform to the internal scenario can give rise to the perverse ritual, acting at the same time as a kind of dam retaining the extensive loss of reality itself, as would be the case in a psychotic lack of balance. In other words, the external reality could provide disorganised drives seeking a representative aggregation with specific representative tools. [Milella, 2001]

Milella's arguments seem to me quite convincing, and I believe that they must be applied to all those forms of television violence that may encourage emulative attitudes and behaviours, in which mere imitation cannot be enough to explain the intense identification process often present. However, these arguments have to be made dialectical, in other words accepted in their fluctuating relationship with an opposite phenomenon. Watching DVDs containing scenes of paedophilic sex could stem violence and keep possible switchovers to action at bay, through a voyeuristically passive use of virtual sex, which would saturate instinctual demands, thus weakening them. As often happens, we are dealing with complex phenomena which can only be understood by acknowledging the co-presence of opposite mechanisms that are in a fluctuating relationship with one another.

On paedophilic priests

After years of official concealment of the phenomenon of paedophilia within the Catholic Church (despite several criminal charges and some convictions, as may be learned from historical documents and news items), nowadays we can witness the opposite phenomenon, that of demonisation, with what amounts to journalistic scandalmongering, as is clear from the way reports on American paedophile priests have appeared in the press. The book *Predatory Priests, Silenced Victims: The Sexual Abuse Crisis and the Catholic Church*, a collection of ground-breaking articles edited by Mary Gail Frawley-O'Dea and Virginia Goldner (2007), explores the abuse situation in all its troubling complexity, as the contributors take into

account the experiences, respectively, of the victim/survivor, the abuser/perpetrator, and the bystander (whether family member, professional/clergy, or the community at large).

In a letter to Catholic priests all over the world, Pope John Paul II stigmatised the offence of paedophilia with angry words, in reply to pressing accusations which could have undermined the ecclesiastical institution, especially in the United States. But he did not propose any reflection on the possible reasons for such a phenomenon, nor did he show any attempt to understand its specificity within religious institutions as against other educational and sporting institutions in which adults and children come into contact. The current Pope Benedict XVI seems to follow the same line as the previous Pope, despite his very hard opinion on paedophilic priests.

There are murmurs around the Catholic world that priests' celibacy must be by choice and not by necessity, as this rule is imposed by the Church only on its Latin component and not on the Eastern one. According to the New Testament there is no relation of compulsion between sacerdotal ministry and celibacy. Priests' celibacy would foster secrecy of sexual satisfaction and therefore (even if indirectly) the spread of paedophilic attitudes and behaviours.

Actually, a link has been highlighted between increased sexual liberty in adult relationships and reduced paedophilic behaviours, even though such a tendency cannot be read unequivocally, as the phenomenon of paedophilia also has to do with the consumerist degradation that has lately affected sexual liberty. However, I believe that the presence of paedophilic behaviours of various kinds in part of the clergy has its own peculiarity and must be related to the vicarious specific parental role played by priests and to a tendency to absolutism intrinsic to the Catholic religion itself.

Henry de Montherlant's play *La Ville dont le Prince est un Enfant* was first published in 1951. The theme of "special friendships" in religious boarding schools had already been dealt with, sometimes with complacency, sometimes with irony or, in contrast, with moralising fury. Montherlant chose to write the story of two adolescent boys aged sixteen and fourteen who fall in love with each other, and intertwined it with a priest's passionate attentions to the younger boy, putting him in competition with the older adolescent, and the intervention of the Father Superior, who on his own authority interrupts the impossible triangular relationship. The title of the play

comes from Ecclesiastes 10:16: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning". This verse on the one hand expresses a devaluation of the child's emotional world and revival of a dissolution intrinsic to human nature, and a contrasting overvaluation of adult rational control, as we shall find in the thinking of many Catholic theologians; on the other hand, the verse vehemently indicates the risk of "infantolatry", which means idolatry of the child in a world in which the adult is an eternal child.

When childcare is perversely transformed into passionate idolisation in the name of purity of attentions and absoluteness of the educational intent, the risk of moving into the paedophilic act is high. A priest and teacher says to the adolescent Sevrain: "When I thought of you I told myself that I understood you as if you were my son, or rather, judging from my experience of the father-son relationship, no doubt even better than if you were my son" (Montherlant, 1951, p. 29). Real fathers and their role are underestimated in the name of an educational capacity that is narcissistically idealised, as one can infer from the following line: "But God has created men more sensitive than fathers, so that they can look after children who are not theirs, who are not loved properly, and you must have come across one of these men" (*ibid*).

Kochansky and Cohen connect priestly narcissism to the self-selection of men who were drawn to the priesthood to neutralise feelings of inadequacy, impotence and inferiority through a social role that allowed them to feel superior, special, admired and powerful. They hypothesise in the histories of these men an "inordinately intense, not infrequently eroticised, maternal attachment combined with painful paternal deprivations involving emotional rejection through a father's distancing and/or devaluation of his son ... this pattern of relationship between a boy and his parents often results in narcissistic vulnerabilities and defences involving unrealistic self-representations and an instability of self-esteem, with underlying feelings of inferiority, defect, and shame, and longings to achieve and maintain a sense of specialness and superiority" (2007, p. 54). The family universe and its earthly finiteness are contrasted with an educational passion having an aspect of absoluteness that distinguishes it from other teacher-pupil relationships, which also contain the risk of a sexual relationship.

There is space neither for fathers nor for mothers. There is no space for a third who can make the idealised educational relationship triangular: "It is better that you don't talk about these affairs to your mother. Parents and boarding school are very different worlds and we have no interest in mixing them up" (Montherlant, 1951, p. 44). At most, the world of paedophilic relationships can unfold in parallel to that of everyday life, but it cannot be undermined in its total purity by the family's social life.

This is the task, arduous but fascinating, which we set ourselves when we set up a working group on paedophilia. The group was composed of six members, including psychoanalytically orientated psychiatrists and psychologists, and was co-ordinated by me. We met fortnightly for a few years. Some of us followed in their private consulting room, through a psychoanalytical treatment, patients who had had paedophilic experiences; some treated institutionalised paedophiles (by which I mean they followed patients with paedophilic behaviours in the consulting rooms of the Mental Health Department); others made assessments in court and had the opportunity to follow in jail paedophiles who had been charged.

The paedophilic ideology is built through the match of infantile passion, uncontrolled and unlimited, with the authority represented by adult age and nourished by experiential competence, with which the other boy cannot compete as it is chronologically inaccessible to him. We are talking about a child's heart in an adult body and mind having all the prerogatives of power. This is exactly the way paedophiles tend to describe themselves even when they strongly emphasise their love of the child, and underestimate—and even deny—any evidence of a power gap.

The priest's morbid attraction for the boy, clearly expressed in his words: "I enjoy following your eyes, seeing if they will stop on mine. And they never look at me. Never at me" (*ibid.*, p. 33), is interrupted by the Father Superior's authoritarian intervention, but the deep reasons are not analysed or understood. Even this latter authoritarian and repressive decision is taken within the concentration-camp universe of the boarding school, deprived of any communication with the outside world. Galimberti (2001) comments: "The reserve walls are those of the institution which must not be profaned, as well as those of the individual's interiority, of the refusal to see clearly among one's own sexual fantasies, impulses and disconnected

tendencies, at the same time being compelled to offer others, and perhaps oneself, an acceptable self-image."

We would be better advised to debate more openly on these topics, on the risk of seduction intrinsic in the educational attitude and in continuous contact with children and adolescents, including the special case of the religious world (Catholic in particular), and to avoid games of concealment and demonisation, as they are obstacles to understanding. More attention to the emotional education of teachers, to the identification and acknowledgement of one's own and thus of others' feelings, and to knowledge of the differences between children's and adults' sexuality, could represent a first opportunity to counteract that relational ignorance on which didactic relationships often feed and which can nourish that surrogate of emotions and affects which characterises paedophilic perverse relationships.

INTRODUCTION

There is never sun without shade, and it is necessary to know the night.

—Albert Camus

In the analytical index of Freud's works the term "paedophilia" never appears. Nor does it in the works of Melanie Klein, Winnicott or Bion. Moreover, a study I have carried out on the fifteen most popular English psychoanalytical journals reveals that very few articles have been written on this subject—and most of them are dated.¹ I shall quote the entry "Paedophilia" from Rycroft's *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, which already reveals the absence of psychoanalytical studies on this subject:

Lit., love of children, but in practice reserved for the tendency to commit sexual offences against them. No psychoanalytical studies of paedophilia exist, but the sociological evidence suggests (a) that it is only rarely associated with violence towards the victim, (b) that it is not a perversion in the sense of being

the subject's *preferred* form of sexual behaviour, and (c) that the 'victim' is not infrequently a willing one. [1968, p. 110]

French psychoanalysts have provided a greater number of studies of paedophilia: in 1993 the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* published an entire issue on the subject, and in 1996 Claude Balier wrote the book *Psychanalyse des comportements Sexuels Violents*. Psychoanalytically orientated pieces of writing appeared in a monographic issue on paedophilia of *L'Evolution Psychiatrique* in 1998. In Italy Franco De Masi stands out for delving deeper into the subject of paedophilia and investigating the paedophile's internal world. However, basically the phenomenon of paedophilia has suddenly erupted in the scientific community, finding experts more or less unprepared (Camarca & Parsi, 2000).

In view of such a poor bibliography, the first question to ask ourselves is the following: why have psychoanalysts not been interested in the issue of paedophilia, and specifically in the psychopathology of the paedophile? I don't believe the fact that the paedophile tends not to seek analysis could be a satisfactory answer for two main reasons. First of all, many know about the presence of paedophilic experiences or paedophilic fantasies in analysed patients (Freud and Ferenczi already made extensive mention of them). Secondly, psychoanalysis has often had a lot to say about pathologies and social behaviours not immediately analysable on the couch (I am thinking, for example, of the abundance of bio-ethical elaborations).

Furthermore, if psychoanalysis explains phenomena in terms of fantasies, it should be interested, as Balier (1996) says, in what happens in the psychic reality when fantasies become concrete, when a father rapes his daughter or when the sexual spell goes as far as murder. The lack of interest, though not entirely proportional with the importance and the social significance of the phenomenon, also does not correspond to the sociological finding that increasing numbers of psychoanalysts, especially those from recent generations, who work within public psychiatric institutions are concerned with pathologies that they could hardly face in the analytical room.

I feel that the ethical and cultural aspects which play a major role in the relationship with the paedophile patient may significantly impact on someone's decision to keep themselves away from this kind of disturbance, although the DNA of psychoanalysis has never

contained conformism or moralism. Nevertheless, Freud (1928) made mainly ethical comments on the criminality of Dostoevsky, whom he also reproached, among other things, for having had paedophilic experiences.

Freudian attitudes to child sexual abuse and more generally the psychoanalytical view of it have been extensively criticised. Alice Miller (1988) explicitly and polemically talked about repression and denial of the phenomenon of abuse by psychoanalysts, who are even unable to voice the child abuse to which they have been subjected.

Bowlby wrote: "Freud's famous about-turn of 1897 regarding the aetiology of hysteria had led to the view that anyone who places emphasis on what a child's *real experiences* may have been, and perhaps still are being, was regarded as pitifully naïve" (1988, p. 43). It was assumed almost by definition that whoever was interested in the external world was not interested in the internal world, which he even sought to escape.

Contrasting views also emerge in the current psychoanalytical debate. In most recent theorisations (Spence, 1982; Shafer, 1983) we can see a further decrease of interest in the real trauma present in the patient's history, in favour of the reconstruction of existential narratives that are perceived as more useful. Eagle writes (1992, pp. 29 ff.): "Whatever the relationship between this narrative and the person's real history (beyond the fact that it may or may not be possible to access it), and most importantly, whatever the relationship between this narrative and the actual real internal world of emotions, desires, memories etc., this narrative represents a very narrow pragmatic point of view." Although these remarks are ungenerous towards narratology, the foundation on which the theory of the bipersonal field rests, and which has made it possible to use new observational views of the psychoanalytic event, no doubt we see the pre-eminence of relational transformations. These transformations should then modify the relationship with the external reality, in some sense putting the patient's real history aside.

By contrast, in his last writings Rosenfeld (1987), radically modifying Klein's previous approaches, acknowledged the value of reality and the role of a good anamnesis in an analysis that cannot have the *hic et nunc* (here and now) as the only point of reference. Therefore, he began to attentively analyse the patient's relationships with his or her own past as well as his or her present environment to try

to understand the role played by the analyst in the transference, and to avoid misunderstandings which might induce an overwhelming negative countertransference and mix up the sane parts and the insane parts.

While an essential lack of attention to the paedophile's world is a matter of record, we have to acknowledge that cognitive and therapeutic interest in the abused child has gradually increased with the increasing attention to children's rights, to safeguarding their development from trauma, and to the increasingly frequent emergence of real sexual trauma from their history. This recalls Freud's early intuitions. Citing *Coitus in Childhood* by Dr. Stekel in Vienna, Freud was the first to remind us that children are exposed to sexual offences far more often than we might expect, due to the poor precautions taken by parents (Freud, 1896b, p. 207). In his first writings, he shows a preventive-didactic concern and warns parents and paediatricians to look after children better in order to prevent situations which could increase the chances of sexual abuse. It is only later on, as we shall come to see, that the trauma was increasingly considered an artefact, a subsequent construction of the imagination, and a real aetiological-explicative myth. However, in Freud's early thinking the trauma plays an important role, which the latest findings about child abuse seem to validate.

The same denial, splitting and repression mechanisms that adults, parents and experts themselves use seem to be reflected in the history of psychoanalysis: "In their ordinary life adults do not show an irreducible denial mechanism, but tiring and painful swings which, through partial admission and minimisation, lead to acknowledging the abuse; we can observe the same phenomenon in psychoanalysis and in Freud's thinking in particular" (Vassalli, 1994, p. 8).

Therefore, if we ignore savagely exaggerated criticism, such as that of Masson and Miller, it is possible to note in psychoanalysis, since Freud's early thinking, a tendency to swing from the internal reality pole to the external reality pole. A similar swinging is also present in the current debate about the meaning which should be given to the trauma. Echoes of this debate appeared online in the discussion organised in 2000 by the Italian Psychoanalytical Society on the role played by the child's trauma in the genesis of mental disturbances.