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Paedophilia, Sexual Desire and Perversity

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ABSTRACT *In our society adults who are guilty of having sex with prepubescent children often have a paedophile disposition. This paper first criticises the justifications that are given by paedophiles for having sex with children. Part of this criticism is a brief analysis of "sexual desire" and "erotic". Next, the question is raised whether paedophile activities can ever be morally permissible. Using the principles of mutual consent and non-exploitation as touchstone, the question is answered in the negative. Finally, it is examined whether paedophile desires can be regarded as perverse. In order to deal with this issue a moral conception of perversions is proposed.*

Introduction and Formulation of the Problem

Sex with children occurs on a large scale. The motives for having sex with children are rather divergent. For example, some men believe that this form of sex promotes their health eventually, while others hope to avoid the danger of a deadly infection in this way. Again, others have a paedophile disposition. In western societies we almost exclusively have to deal with the latter category (mainly men, who are mostly family-members or acquaintances of the child) [1].

When do we call a person a paedophile? This question concerns the diagnostic criteria. In the chapter on sexual and gender identity disorders of the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) paraphilias are defined as recurrent, intense aphrodisiac fantasies, sexual urges or behaviours which occur over a period of at least 6 months and generally involve (i) non-human objects, (ii) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner or (iii) children or other non-consenting persons (Criterion A). Moreover, the fantasies, sexual urges or behaviours cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning (Criterion B). If these recurrent fantasies, urges and behaviours involve sexual activities with prepubescent children (in general under 14 years of age) the main diagnostic criterion for paedophilia is met.

Some paedophiles are sexually attracted only to children (exclusive type), whereas others are sometimes also attracted to adults (non-exclusive type). Paedophiles can express their sexual urges in different ways. They may limit their activities to undressing the child and looking, exposing themselves, masturbating in

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the presence of the child, or gentle touching and fondling the child. Others perform fellatio or cunnilingus on the child, or penetrate the child's vagina, mouth or anus, sometimes using varying degrees of force to do so (cf. Howitt, 1995).

Paedophile sexual activities, at least some forms of them, are sometimes defended, not only by paedophiles themselves but also by people in authority. For example, quite recently the well-known Dutch minister Hans Visser wrote in a national newspaper that certain forms of paedophile activities should be tolerated (*Trouw*, 29 August 1996). In this paper we shall discuss first the reasons for having sex with children that are presented by paedophiles themselves. We shall reconstruct and criticise these justifications (or excuses—it is not always clear how the reasons should be conceived) with the help of analyses of the concepts "sexual desire" (or "lust") and "erotic". Next, we pose the question whether sex with prepubescent children can ever be (morally) permissible. We shall try to answer this question by testing paedophile sexual activities against the moral principles of mutual consent and non-exploitation. Finally, we shall examine whether or not paedophilia can be regarded as a perversion. After having discussed the psychoanalytic view on perversions, a moral conception is developed and applied to paedophile sexual desires.

Are Justifications for Paedophilia Rationalisations?

According to DSM-IV (APA, 1994, p. 528), perpetrators of sex with prepubescent children often justify or excuse their behaviour as follows: (1) the sexual activities have "educational value" for the child, (2) the child derives "sexual pleasure" from them, or (3) the child was "sexually provocative". Related to the first justification is the assertion that one cherishes deep feelings of friendship for the still innocent child. DSM-IV disavows these justifications or vindications by calling them, without further ado, rationalisations, but is this characterisation adequate? Are the reasons mentioned only brought forward to conceal the person's true and underlying motives? Moreover, even if we cannot explain the behaviour of the paedophile by referring to the reasons given, why could not they be *good* reasons, having some warranting force with regard to the behaviour at issue?

Paedophilia and Children's Sexuality

Answering the question whether his young "friend" sometimes takes the initiative, a paedophile says: "Absolutely. I have been into kids since I was twenty-two, and in every case the kids were the aggressors...My current friend wanted to make love right away, 'have some fun', as he said, but I put it off for three weeks" (Ehman, 1984, p. 444). The fact that this person mixes the reasons mentioned under (2) and (3) is not accidental. Both types of justification or excuse are characterised by the more or less implicit suggestion that children's sexuality is essentially the same as adult sexuality. Children, so the good news seems to be, experience the same sexual pleasures and are driven by the same sexual desires as adults. According to some authors (Brongersma, 1987) it is even shown that young children do have orgasms. It is this suggestive tendency that gives the reasons mentioned under (2) and (3) a

touch of plausibility. The more children's sexuality is presented and conceived as akin to adult sexuality, the greater the warranting force of these reasons seems to be.

However, in our view the sexual life of the prepubescent child is essentially different from the sexual life of the adult person. The main difference can be clarified by analysing the concept of sexual desire (or lust). According to Goldman (1977), sexual desire is the desire for contact with another person's body and for the bodily pleasures that such contact produces. We think, however, that this definition is incomplete. Another necessary condition of "sexual desire" is the striving after satisfaction. It is a desire that is characterised by a state of bodily excitement, particularly of the erogenous zones, which is aimed at orgasmic gratification (Brown, 1987; Spiecker, 1992). This definition of "sexual desire" (or "lust") as the yearning for delightful and gratifying physical contact with another enables us to distinguish between such a desire and other forms of pleasurable bodily contact, such as hugging and comforting children. Moreover, the definition shows that the connection of sexual desire with feelings of affection, love or security is not a necessary but a contingent one. If this connection is present, we can speak of erotic love.

Based on this brief analysis, an answer can be given to the question of in what respect children's sexuality is different from adult sexuality. Because of their hormonal condition, prepubescent children are not yet capable of experiencing sexual desire (or of being lustful). Surely, children can long for sex with an adult because of, for example, feelings of security, attention and acceptation. What is more, they can seek bodily contact with an adult because of the delightful sensations. All these feelings and contacts can be pleasurable, but the point is that these sensations are not the same as those involved in orgasmic gratification. According to Freud, the sensual sucking of children can lead to "a motor reaction like an orgasm" (1961, p. 54). This reaction looks like an orgasm, says Freud, but is really something different. At the same time he causes some confusion by stressing a considerable degree of similarity between the lustful satisfaction of sucklings and adults. In his opinion, if we see a baby that has fallen asleep with red cheeks and a blissful smile after being satisfied by breast-feeding, we cannot help but think that this picture is also indicative for the expression of sexual gratification in later life (Freud, 1961, p. 56). This observation, however, looks very much like a projection on Freud's part.

It is important to note that psychoanalysts often refer to a difference between adult sexuality and *infantile* sexuality. In psychoanalytical terms, infantile sexuality is functioning on a pregenital level. In the first year, feelings of lust and discomfort concentrate on the surroundings of the mouth, in the second year of life on that of the anus, and in the next year on the penis or the clitoris. Not being directed towards an object, this sexuality is auto-erotic of character. Given this difference in the aim of the drive, the young child shows very little of sexuality *in the adult sense*, says the psychoanalyst Hart de Ruyter (1979; cf. Carr, 1987). Indeed, sexual desire (or lust), which is typical of adult sexuality, is not auto-erotic. On the contrary, it is directed towards the body of another person. Even in masturbation the other person's body plays a central role (imagination, pornography, virtual contact with the other person). This orientation, however, is not different from children's sexuality as such but only with infantile sexuality. Think, for example, of sexual games of older

children that can spring from curiosity and inquisitiveness but also from the enjoyment of touching another person's body.

Be that as it may, given the main difference between children's and adult sexuality, the reasons mentioned under (2) and (3) can indeed be regarded as rationalisations. In fact they are a sort of *projection*, because the paedophile assigns his own adult sexual desires and pleasures to the prepubescent child. Moreover, the reasons at issue cannot be assessed as good reasons. At a glance they seem to be plausible, but if we look more deeply, the suggested propositional content of the reasons is simply wrong. The sexual pleasures and possible sexual provocations of prepubescent children cannot be identified with those of adults.

Paedophilia as an Educational Vehicle

What about the first justification or excuse: the presumed educational value of paedophile sexual activities? Are these reasons also rationalisations? If so, do they also lack any warranting force?

We think that an influential example of this type of justification is developed in a long tradition which stresses the importance of the so-called pedagogical eros, in particular with regard to boys or male pupils. In the beginning of this century, for example, a group of German philosophers and educators made a plea for pedagogical eros and, more generally, for erotically charged friendship between men. Referring to Plato's *Symposion*, they advocated a classical ideal of masculine beauty that stands for self-control, chastity and will-power. The educator Gustav Wyneken (1875–1964), founder of the *Freie Schulgemeinde*, aimed for a synthesis of German and Hellenistic ideals. He typified the pedagogical eros as "the erotic bond of a man with a lad or a youngster, and (...) an erotic bond of again this lad or youngster with a man" (Wyneken, 1970; Maasen, 1988). He considered this pedagogical eros as an outstanding medium for transmitting culture.

Now Wyneken would protest against the view that his plea for pedagogical eros can be regarded as a version of the reasons mentioned under (1) (sexual activities have "educational value"). To distinguish a paedophile relationship from the reciprocal erotic bond between a man and a lad, he reserved the German word *Päderastie* for the former relation and used the Greek term *paiderastia* to refer to the latter one. The problem is, however, that he never gave a clear definition of "pedagogical eros". It is sometimes indicated that nowadays this term is hardly found in the vocabulary of educators. This absence is explained from a change in the experience and the perception of the erotic. According to this view, there is a tendency to describe erotic aspects in sexual terms (Maasen, 1988; cf. Bloom, 1993). This explanation suggests that in upbringing and school education something valuable is lost; but an explanation of the meaning of "erotic" and an account of the differences between an erotic and a sexual relationship, are still absent.

In order to fill this gap, we shall present a brief analysis of "erotic". At first sight the erotic has to do with pleasant and exciting sensory perceptions. We become aware of something through the senses: the visual, the olfactory or the tactile sense is stimulated in a pleasant way. The question arises as to whether these sense

perceptions are aroused by particular objects or phenomena. Our perception of a beautiful object, an antique chair or a diamond, for example, will normally not arouse erotic sensations, but if it does, we link these objects with another person (in an "exciting" situation). If the objects at issue evoke erotic associations or images, a human body always takes central place. A piece of music has an erotic influence if it generates images of the movements or the dynamic of a body. The person who is experiencing erotic feelings is befallen or assailed by the fascinating, exciting, and sometimes slightly overwhelming influence of a person's body.

In the erotic, to put it briefly and metaphorically, our body is subjected by the attraction or pull of another body or its images. Because the beauty of the body is often a dominant factor, the erotic is strongly connected with aesthetic experiences. Singer even speaks of the erotic in terms of "a visual feasting" (1994, p. 58). Notwithstanding the aesthetic overtones, erotic experiences are different from pleasures that are purely aesthetic—for example, the enjoyment of the beauty or vitality of the movements of a ballet-dancer or an athlete. The difference is, we think, that feelings of sexual desire, often vague and in the background, are always components of erotic experiences. The reverse, however, is not the case: feelings of lust are not necessarily part of or accompanied by erotic experiences.

If this analysis cuts ice, emphasising the educational value of the pedagogical eros is positively an example of the justification mentioned first. Because the erotic involves sexual desires, practising pedagogical eros will imply some sexual relationship with the child. No *paiderastia* without *Päderastie* [2]. Such a justification, we think, can rightly be regarded as a rationalisation. The pedagogical eros is presented as something sublime and lofty, whereas actually it is a cover for more mundane and less acceptable motives. Moreover, the justification at issue is composed of reasons that lack any warranting force, not only because the view that the pedagogical eros is something very different from a sexual relationship is misleading, but also because the idea that such a relationship is an outstanding medium for transmitting culture is an illusion. The opposite seems to be true. As is well-known, Richard Peters characterised education as initiation in public traditions (cf. Peters, 1966, pp. 46–62). In this context he argued that the aim of the educator is to get the child on the inside of these public activities and forms of awareness. We think that realising this aim, and perhaps even pursuing it, is jeopardised if the educator and the child are engaged in an erotic relationship. Instead of turning the interest of the child *outwards* towards public traditions, in such a relationship the focus of the child is almost exclusively directed at and fixed to the adult person. Or, to put it differently, the attention of the adult person is fixed on the satisfaction of his own desires, whereas in a pedagogical relationship the focus of attention is finally on cultural components.

Is Paedophilia Morally Wrong?

The fact that common justifications for paedophile behaviour are inadequate and actually rationalisations obviously does not imply that such behaviour is morally wrong. How do we, then, have to evaluate paedophile sexual activities from a moral point of view? Are such contacts always morally reprehensible? Or is paedophile sex

under certain conditions perhaps morally permissible? In this section we shall try to answer these questions by testing paedophile sex against two moral principles, the principle of mutual consent and the principle of non-exploitation (cf. Belliotti, 1993a, 1993b). In this context we shall not justify these principles themselves (cf. Steutel & Spiecker, 1997). We simply assume that both principles are based on solid grounds and that activities that do not meet these principles are morally wrong.

The Principle of Mutual Consent

According to the first principle, that of mutual consent, sex is only morally permissible if the parties concerned have consented voluntarily on the basis of adequate information. This principle implies that sexual activities can derail in three ways. First, one party (*P*) can *force* another party (*Q*) to (be subjected to) sexual activities. If, for example, *P* uses physical violence or is threatening *Q*, there is no voluntary consent. Secondly, one party (*P*) can deliberately *deceive* the other party (*Q*). For example, *P* feigns all kinds of feelings to persuade *Q* into certain forms of sex or misleads *Q* as to the nature of the act, as a consequence of which *Q*'s consent is indeed voluntary but is not based on adequate relevant information. Thirdly, in sexual activities persons can be involved who lack the *basic capacities* necessary for informed consent. Here we must think of a person who lacks the mental equipment to see the pros and cons of different options, to weigh them against each other, and to decide on the basis of such deliberations. A clear example is a severely mentally handicapped person, who does not have the capacities for reasoning and choosing.

Is paedophile sex in defiance of the principle of mutual consent? Our answer is: it is certainly possible but not necessarily so. Many paedophile contacts are not characterised by coercion. Some will even maintain that a genuine paedophile will never resort to violence or threat, neither is deliberate deception always involved in paedophile sex. It can be assumed that not all paedophiles wittingly misinform the child to attain their goals, nor do we think that paedophilia is always a form of sex with a person who does not have the basic capacities to make informed decisions. Surely, one can raise the criteria of being able to deliberate and to choose, as a consequence of which each prepubescent child misses the relevant capacities and all forms of paedophile sex become a moral lapse. However, then the problem arises that also many normal adults do not meet these criteria, while we still are not inclined to regard sex with such adults as morally reprehensible. However, if we try to avoid this problem by formulating more moderate criteria, then we have to admit that, in particular, older prepubescent children normally have the relevant capacities. Consequently, only sex with *younger* children is inadmissible. In other words, according to the first principle, not all paedophile sexual activities are morally wrong. This is only the case if the paedophile forces the child, deceives the child, or if the child is too young to have the basic capacities for informed consent.

The Principle of Non-Exploitation

However, our sexual life should also comply with another moral principle, the

so-called principle of non-exploitation. In case of sexual exploitation one party (*P*) abuses another party (*Q*), in such a manner that the sexual interaction is profitable for *P* but at the expense of *Q*, or that the benefit of the interaction for *Q* is disproportionately meagre. The importance of this principle is that moral lapses can be indicated which cannot (sufficiently) be exposed on the basis of the former principle. These lapses relate to the conditions under which the informed consent is accomplished. Even if the first principle is met, sexual interaction can be immoral if the terms of the mutual consent are wrong. First, *P* can misuse the *destitute circumstances* of *Q*. In many of these moral lapses *Q* will be aware of being subjected to exploitation. Because of being in dire straits or of having bleak prospects, *Q* settles for relatively small benefits. Secondly, *P* can take advantage of the *vulnerabilities* of *Q*. Think, for example, of the possibility of underdeveloped bargaining power of *Q*, or of *Q* being troubled by particular wants or needs *P* is aware of. In case of these moral lapses *Q* will often not realise being exploited.

In our view all forms of paedophile sex, including sex with older children, contravene the principle of non-exploitation and thus are morally reprehensible. Some paedophile contacts are clear examples of the former group of moral lapses. Think, for example, of sex with children in third world countries, by which advantage is taken of the miserable circumstances in which these children live. All remaining manifestations of paedophilia can, according to us, be regarded as moral lapses of the latter group: there is always the inherent danger that somehow or other the paedophile takes advantage of the vulnerabilities of the child.

Characteristic of paedophile contacts is (i) that the relation between the paedophile and the child is asymmetrical, which is expressed in particular by the fact that the bargaining powers of the paedophile are much greater than those of the child; (ii) that the prepubescent child is only to a limited extent capable of looking after its own interests; and (iii) that the paedophile by definition has a paedophile disposition and as such is bent on having sex with children. The relation between parents and children is also characterised by (i) and (ii). Condition (iii), however, is not typical of such a relationship. It is precisely this inclination that stimulates the paedophile to behave towards the child in an exploitive way. The typical vulnerabilities of the child, in particular its limited capacities to both negotiate and to promote its own interests, actually make such an exploitation possible.

On the basis of expanding empirical research, Finkelhor (1986) proposes a framework in which four trauma-causing factors in the experience of sexual exploitation are discerned: traumatic sexualisation, stigmatisation, betrayal and powerlessness. In particular the first of these factors shows how paedophile relationships can be at the expense of the child. Traumatic sexualisation refers to a process in which the child's sexuality is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion. It often results in an increased salience of sexual issues, especially in young children, and is often associated with confusion about sexual norms and standards. One common confusion concerns the role of sex in an affectionate relationship. Trading sex for affection may become the child's view of the normal way to give and obtain affection (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 189).

In other words, according to the principle of mutual consent, only certain forms

of sex with children are morally wrong, in particular if violence is used, if the child is deliberately misled, or if young children are involved. However, all forms of paedophile sex that are morally permissible according to this principle, must be disapproved of on the basis of the principle of non-exploitation. Because the paedophile benefits from having sex with children, whereas there is a great chance that the long-term welfare of the child is seriously harmed (e.g. traumatic sexualisation), paedophile sex can be regarded as a form of exploitation. Characteristic of these forms of exploitation is that the paedophile takes advantage of either the dire circumstances of the child or of its specific vulnerabilities [3].

Is Paedophilia a Perversion?

Paedophilia is often considered a major perversity, together with necrophilia, bestiality and sometimes also homosexuality, but is this characterisation tenable? Supposing that we are right in arguing that sex with children is morally reprehensible, is that a good reason for regarding paedophile sexual desires as perverse?

"Perversion" is associated with depravity and unnaturalness, with a degeneration of feelings and passions. Someone is called "perverse" if the person takes pleasure in things that people normally find appalling or horrible. Moreover, these things often relate to sexuality. If an interior does not meet aesthetic criteria (an abominable colour combination) it would be strange to use the word "perverse". Gastronomic practices that are contrary to current conventions (the disgusting habit of eating dog meat) can hardly be considered paradigmatic cases of perversions. To sum up, in ordinary language "perversion" standardly refers to things in the domain of sexuality that are regarded as unnatural or abnormal and that generate spontaneous feelings of disgust and aversion.

Analysing the concept of perversion is one thing; developing a normative conception of perversion is quite a different matter. An influential example of such a conception is defended in the psychoanalytical tradition. We shall briefly discuss this conception, after which we shall try to present our own normative view on perversions.

The Psychoanalytic Conception of Perversions

In classical psychoanalytical theory, a perversion is conceived as a deviation of the "normal" sexual act. This act is characterised as "the coitus with a person of the opposite sex with the aim of achieving an orgasm by genital penetration" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 377). Possible deviations relate to the sexual object (e.g. a partner of the same sex, children, animals or corpses) or the sexual goal (e.g. showing or looking at genitalia (exhibitionism or voyeurism) and inflicting pain or being subjected to pain (sadism or masochism)). Involved in perversions are so-called partial drives, which can be distinguished by their source (e.g. mouth, anus or eye) and their goal (e.g. sucking, controlling or looking). Becoming stuck in such partial drives is a feature of a perversion. As soon as perverse actions function as preparatory contributions to the realisation of the normal sexual act, they cease to

be perversions (Stroeken, 1994). The classical psychoanalyst explained particular perversions from unconscious conflicts, from neuroses, more in particular from the unconscious denial of the sexual difference and the fear of castration. More revisionist psychoanalysts locate the aetiological cause in the early traumatising caring relationship with the mother. The formation of a perversion takes place in the early pre-oedipal stage of the development of the gender identity (Travin & Protter, 1993).

Often the psychoanalytic conception of perversions is conceived as a *non*-moral view. Certainly, it is a normative conception, but the central norm of heterosexual genital intercourse is often not interpreted as a moral principle on the basis of which all kinds of actions and desires can be criticised. According to this non-moral view, the perverse person is seen as a patient who is caught in ritualised and compulsive practices and therefore is not responsible for his deviant desires and behaviour. Take, for example, LeCoultre's (1972) discussion of a case of a paedophile. After ending his explanation with the remark that this paedophile only wants to be good for others, he concludes his psychoanalytic reflections as follows: "There was not a lasting object relation. But if the Dutch morals had been different and had accepted such relationships, then it would have been quite possible that this man would have developed a more lasting relation with a little boy" (1972, p. 76). In these evaluating remarks attention is paid exclusively to the interests of the patient. Within this psychoanalytic framework there is no place for the insight that the "Dutch morals" are perhaps based on moral considerations which also refer to the interests of minors. In trying to avoid moralising in the psychoanalytic setting, the eyes to the possible harmful effects for others are shut.

However, sometimes the psychoanalytic view on perversions is also regarded as a *moral* conception. Then the norm of adult reproductive sexuality is considered to be a moral principle or a moral ideal. All sexual dispositions and activities that are not in line with this central norm are denounced as morally reprehensible or at least as morally dubious. However, the problem with this interpretation is that different kinds of sexual activities are condemned and criticised that are, in our view, not morally wrong at all. For example, homosexuality and masturbation deviate from the norm of reproductive sexuality and thus should be considered morally reprehensible. Like heterosexual contacts, homosexual activities are not morally wrong, in particular if the parties involved do not exploit each other and have given their informed consent.

So if the psychoanalytic conception is regarded as a non-moral view, no perverse desires whatsoever are morally disapproved, even if these desires generate behaviour that is clearly contrary to the principles of mutual consent and non-exploitation. However, if the same conception is considered a moral one, all desires that are called "perverse" are morally reprehensible, including the desires that predispose to behaviour which is fully consistent with both moral principles.

A Moral Conception of Perversions

On the basis of our analysis of "sexual desire" and our moral evaluation of

paedophile sexual activities, we want to propose a conception of perversions in which the problems of the psychoanalytic view are avoided. In our view, a sexual desire can be regarded as perverse if the following criteria are met. First, the desire is directed at behaviour that is contrary to the moral principles of mutual consent and non-exploitation. For example, the perverse person wants to have sex with a non-consenting human being or is yearning for sex that undermines the welfare of the partner. Secondly, the sexual desire is accompanied by the intention of doing someone harm or of affecting someone's dignity. It is, so to speak, not accidental that the sexual desire generates behaviour that is morally wrong. The perverse person really wants to humiliate, exploit or abuse the other person. Thirdly, the sexual desire is aroused, reinforced and intensified by the thought of harming someone or by being aware of injuring someone's dignity. Characteristic of the perverse person is not only the desire to demean, hurt or harm someone but, in particular, the fact that these activities are a dominant source of feelings of sexual lust and a precondition for obtaining sexual gratification.

According to this conception, and contrary to the non-moral interpretation of the psychoanalytic theory, all perverse sexual desires are considered to be immoral. That is why we could call our view a *moral* conception of sexual perversion (cf. Levy, 1980; Scruton, 1986) [4]. However, it is important to note that not all immoral sexual desires are regarded as perverse. If the first two criteria are satisfied, the sexual desire at issue is immoral or at least morally suspect—but not yet necessarily perverse. Only if the person derives sexual pleasure and satisfaction from debasing and harming other human beings through having sex, does the immoral sexual desire become perverse. What makes the sexual desire perverse is the fact that it is intrinsically interwoven with malevolent desires. It is an *erotic form of hate* (Schoenwolf, 1991) [5]. Given this moral conception of perversion, rape in which the perpetrator feels extra lust by overpowering and humiliating another person is a paradigm case.

Does paedophilia involve perverse sexual desires? It is hard to give an univocal and general answer to this question, in particular because there are different forms of paedophilia. Paedophiles are sometimes subdivided into four groups: the fixated, the regressed, the exploitative and the aggressive or sadistic (Travin & Protter, 1993, pp. 65, 111). According to our conception, the last form of paedophilia, that can be characterised as a pre-oedipal form, is a perversity. Perhaps the third form is also a perversity. At least it is not excluded that in these cases abusing, manipulating and exploiting the child stimulate or spark sexual lust. It would be mistaken, however, to consider all forms of paedophilia perversions. Paedophile sex is a form of exploitation because it endangers the long-term welfare of the child. Consequently, paedophilia involves desires towards behaviour that is morally wrong, but only in some forms of paedophilia are these desires perverse.

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NOTES

[1] In The Netherlands, according to Boutelier (1993), one of every seven girls under the age of 16 has been sexually abused by relatives. The number of boys abused by men is 20% of the total number of sexually abused children.

[2] In 1921 Wyneken was sentenced by the court for his sexual relations with some of his pupils.

[3] Defenders of paedophilia often point out that there was a time when sex between adults and children was not under a taboo. Their reference to, for example, certain sexual practices of the Ancient Greeks, however, is not a valid argument. Sexual activities also get their specific meaning from a cultural and societal context. In a society in which slaves, women and children are denied rights and are regarded as property or merchandise, speaking about sexual abuse hardly makes sense.

[4] We think that Scruton's moral conception of perversion is less appropriate. According to this philosopher, in our sexual desire we experience the unity of our animal and personal nature: "I believe that the concept of perversion which explains the sense that perversion is morally contaminated is also that which has the greatest explanatory value: the concept which describes as perverted all deviations from the unity of animal and interpersonal relation" (1986, p. 289).

[5] It is possible to supplement this moral conception of perversions with a *prudential* version. Then we can also speak of perverse desires if sexual lust is derived from *being* humiliated or harmed (masochism).

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