

Interview with Cosimo Schinaia

Could we exactly say when the society start to be pedophobic? I remember when I watch one old movie (horror movie) and there was a figure of "good uncle" who gave the candies to some little girls. There wasn't any atmosphere of pedophilia but we started to think about it in this direction. Why?

I think that the perverse attraction for children, or boys, or girls, has always existed. I remember, when I was a boy, that my parents told me to pay attention to men who could try to touch me in cinemas or in luna parks. Now the social problem is different: paedophilia is not a wholly isolated perverse reaction, as it happened with the old men in the cinemas, but has wide-ranging adherents and sympathisers whose stance is often not clear-cut. The deeply-rooted tendency in the collective erotic imagination (especially in that of the male) to prefer "fresh meat", the young body, is encouraged by modern society, which favours the differentiation of erotic stimuli and of erotic supply (in such a way as to involve pre-adolescence and infancy), viewing it as one way of escaping the anxieties and the problems created by adult heterosexual relationships. We know that certain pre-pubescent girls may exhibit attitudes of vanity, sensuality and seduction. Generally this type of behaviour is stereotypical and without any foundation in reality. Once, when a girl put on her mother's dress and used her shoes and lipstick, the mother closed one eye and the father the two ones. There was a protective environment that gave to this behaviour the meaning of a passage (awkward age): from an imitative femininity to the authentic identification as a woman. Now, when there are a lot of girls who sell their bodies in the city streets and a lot of posters that make propaganda of goods with sensual and seductive naked bodies of girls, boys and children, it is not easy, nor automatic to think that these imitative seductive behaviours are a normal phase of psycho-sexual development of a girl and that we have to recognise and protect it. A wrong answer to this problem is the pedophobic attitude. We can see reduced contact time between working mothers and their children, the frequent abandonment or significant reduction of breastfeeding, and the important loss of the cultural value of forms of physical contact between mother and child, such as kissing the child all over after having washed and powdered him. The fear of accusations of paedophilia, whether these be internal or external, may further reinforce the development of anti-paedophile tendencies by triggering what may properly be called a reaction, whereas such a reaction should be curbed in the name of sane physical contacts which can enhance the development of the child.

Polish sexuologists and lawyers said that during divorces the accusation of pedophilia for ex-husbands are more and more often. What do you think about it? If the men have any chances to prove that

There has been a considerable increase of the number of accusations of infantile sexual abuse which spouses level at each other in divorce cases. Often many of these are unfounded, but they risk seriously compromising the accused parent's relationship with the child. In a divorce action between two married lawyers, the judge asked me to be the expert because the woman accused her husband to touch the vagina and the anus of her little daughter six-months-old. Immediately it was forbidden for the father to see his daughter as a preventive measure. I had many meetings with the couple. The wife was

injured and painful because her husband, after some advantages that he had in his career for the marriage, decided to leave her and had a new relationship with another woman. The woman put into her little daughter the injures and began to believe that, as it happened to her, also the daughter was injured by her father (the prouves were some spots of blood in the diaper) It was possible to transform in few sessions the accuse of paedophilia in a severe, strong action of divorce, when it was possible to see that the man took advantage for the important social role of the family of her wife, but after two years of marriage had a new relationship with a younger woman. He was a bad profiteer, but not a paedophile. I think that the presence of an expert in these situations could reduce strongly the real cases of paedophilia.

What are the most bad consequences od pedofibia for children? You have written on your book that especially men (fathers) avoid contacts with their daughters. How can we work on it as society?

There is an incresing tendence for many fathers to reduce the amount of time they spend in naked contact with their children, especially with her daughters. It is counterproductive to create an atmosphere of suspicion around all those normal and spontaneous emotional outpourings, or around those harmless games alluding to private parts of the body which can be played between adults and children. I remember in a meeting that I had in a school, a male teacher told me that, during a class trip, a little girl mental handicapped had to poop, but he decided not to clean her and change her clothes, and he waited for two hours the arrival of a female teacher, for avoiding the risk to be accused as a paedophile. I think it was cruel to abandon for a long time that disable child with her hexcrements, but the fear to be accused of paedophilia tranformed a good teacher in a bad man. For children the risk of a paedophobe mentality is that adults are seen as the enemy against whom children must protect themselves. Many associations wjch provide help to abused children have reported cases of young children, influenced by information gleaned from television, have invented purely finctional stories of assaults, transforming fantasies of seduction into reality. Often these fantasies are substitutes for the care and attention they have not received from their parents. Virginie Dumont wrote the fairy tale *J'ai peur du monsieur* for the very reason that she wished to highlight the risk of providing too much information. To do so, she makes an eight-year-old child interviewed by a journalist say:

"We should indeed be informed in order to be protected. But at the age of eight and older we are not yet adults. We need to dream, we still need to tell ourselves that adults are good and happy people. Otherwiese, if we know too many things, we will no longer wish to grow up; growing up is too sad then. So be very careful about you say to us, about the scenes we see on television, about what we hear".

So, instead of giving a mobile to a child with the number of police, I think it is better to stay with them, to converse with them, to listen to them. They can grow up well if they trust their parents and generally adults, but we have not to leave them alone and recognise the main passages of their development.

If problem of pedofobie is heavy to discouss in catholic countr as Poland than the other countries? What will be the future of pedofobie?

Now the problem of paedophilia is strongly discussed in Italy, because the church and the priests pedophiles. I had a lot of meetings with priests and catholic people to discuss this

subject. The risks that we have is in cohabitation in catholic seminars and in the traditional priests education. But the risk of paedophobia, as reaction, is hight. A lot of priests, teachers, trainers don't want to be suspected of sexual contacts, then they avoid to have alone authentic, good contacts with children. If we don't have a good sexual education, not only about how sex operates, but recognizing what sexuality means for children, how different is the meaning of sexuality in children and adults, the problem would not be solved.