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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUPLE AND FAMILY PSYCHOANALYSIS
ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE PSICOANÁLISIS DE PAREJA Y FAMILIA
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE PSYCHANALYSE DE COUPLE ET DE FAMILLE

International Review of Psychoanalysis of Couple and Family

N° 2008/1 - *The violence in the family and the society*

PAEDOPHILE CHILDREN: BOOMERANG VIOLENCE IN THE MIDST OF THE FAMILY

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> « Violence, and its intimated death, have a double meaning: on one hand the horror which drives us away, linked to the attachement inspired by life; on the other a solemn and at the same time terrifying event which fascinates us and brings in a supreme uneasiness. »
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> G. Bataille, *Erotism*

To talk about paedophile children is to show the manner in which these children come to us, pinned by the Law on the threshold of adolescence, for having had sexual activities with children younger than themselves. It is also wondering implicitly about the very nature of the child, « polymorphic pervert », and presenting many questions and hypothesis: are these big children perverts because they remained in infantile positions, or have they gone along a psychic path which led them to these perverted acts? If we put forward the hypothesis that

the child is merely the principal actor of a drama which has been played before, what are the formations and psychical process which, within himself and within the family have left the field clear for this « perverse » possibility? Where does the violence boomerang which explodes in the family after paedophilia has been brought to light come from? How can PFT receive and treat the violence mobilised before and after revealing the facts? A short clinical illustration will help with our thoughts.

Giving up the multiplicity of instinctive addresses, but for which destination?

We know that polymorphic perversion in the first years of life corresponds, in the etymological sense, to the instincts's successive changes of direction. Without developping these well-known notions, let's remind ourselves that during this journey, the strength of the instinct will be quantitatively curbed and qualitatively redirected, which will progressively lead to, at the end of adolescence's changes, the definition of a « libidinal profile» specific to each one of us, carrier of conscious or unconscious traces of the steps that fashionned it.

In young children, sexual activities fit little if any, in a multifocal oral and anal order which is completed by an interest for the genitals and sexual games, be they lonely or shared. All these activities form a springboard for the taking off of psychical life which anchors itself to the developping primordial links.

We can consider that mutual erotic exploration is part of discovering the body, what it does and its resources and that it shows a well placed vital impulse since it implies taking the other into account. The usually understanding attitude of the parents goes nevetherless together with the conviction that it is necessary to curb it somewhat. This gives the parents a triple headache, more or less conscious, when exercising their authority: to help the personal development of the child, keep family harmony, and take into account the demands of social life.

For Freud (1905), the beginning of the latency period is « influenced by the body and fixed by heredity », but it is also the result of the upbringing which builds up « dykes » to stand against the strength of the instinct. The beginning of the latency period following the first

impetuousness means that the parental methods have been successful. A period of relative calm is under way, since the flow of the instincts has been at the same time put into order and redirected, prepared for sublimation, towards study and identifications, for example. Before getting to the second part of his topography, Freud had noticed that the primary instinctive bearings found themselves then without any use or even could generate disgust, but he did not bring forth any strong arguments.

All these constructions allow, in principle, to move away from the first instinctive addresses. This is why persisting shared sexual activities, when the period of latency is on the wane, at the time of the emergence of adolescence, puts into question not only the one who commits the misdemeanour or the criminal perverted actions, but also the position of the parents, whose failings are brought to light and examined.

The situation of young offenders remains up to now looked at under the angle of social morals, with, on top of this, all the care taken by professional people so as to avoid a premature branding of the child. With regards to the psychopathology concerned, we notice few salient features, apart from a better knowledge of the psychological context of adolescence: intensification of desire, by means of physiological change, the concomittant œdipal reactivation, which happens in a double move of confrontation and shunning. Repression of affects is a significant data. The frequency of previous sexual abuse, possibly incestuous, from the parents or in previous generation is classically highlighted. Nevertheless, if the vulnerability of these young people is put forward in litterature, it is to hint at a major issue: that of the potential repetition of the offence.

To begin with, it should be remarked that these paedophile children/adolescents are doing these acts to other children much younger than themselves and on whom they use a natural superiority and coertion, this domination being, more often than not, psychological. The notion of perversion is inevitable, not in the etymological sense any more, but in the psychopathological sense. Some psychoanalytical studies were undertaken about the process, the structure of the subject, (Aulagnier, 2001), and the intersubjectivity which distinguishes it (Eiguer, 1989, 2001a). For the pervert, the object is necessary, the mode of satisfaction which goes with it is rather constant, both having been chosen according to the history of

the subject. Therefore when thinking about child/pubescent paediophilia in terms of a lack of maturity, occasional regression or an already well established entry into perversion, our clinical tools of psychoanalytic family therapist seem to be the best option for helping with these situations where the whole family is subjected to intense hurt. We will try to identify, from where we stand, some of the family parametres which may contribute to this type of problem coming up.

Questions about family functioning

Some studies have been undertaken on sexual offenders's families (Ciavaldini, 2001; Savin, 2001), in cases marked by incest, usually perpetrated by the father. The generational repetition factor has been presented as well as repression of affects which need then to be mobilised (Ciavaldini, 2006).

Even so, for young sexual offenders, it is the issue of parental authority which takes centre stage.

If parental authority is first the father's, who embodies it, it is also the mother's ; whether it comes from the father or the mother, authority is given out by the paternal function at work in both of them. It finds itself, at the same time disembodied and symbolised, in the shape of the super-ego, which in the child on the threshold of adolescence, is still in the process of growing stronger. This agency, the super-ego, will be at work in any conflict of authority to decide of the outcome. It establishes itself more or less deeply in each person and acquires a family outline defined at the same time by successive identifications from one generation to the next and by the intra- family repercussions marked by the authority at work. For the family super-ego, the acknowledgement of common and shared limits is agreed by all.

However, perverse behaviours show as much a lack of personal knowledge of theses limits as their inefficiency for the family. This brings us to the hypothesis of an intra-family conflict on the notion of evil and the family's relation to violence. This conflict takes its origins, of course, in the previous generations, but it also takes shape through the work of the alliance link which will process it differently and may give it new characteristics. Finally, the whole of the family links, in particular the brotherly link will ensure a constant state of alertness. The family super-ego undertakes the organisation of this distribution.

However, it would seem that, in the situations we are looking at, the family super-ego remains ineffective when it comes to structuring proscriptions, compromising thus the operational qualities of censorship.

The time factor and family temporality

If authority is exerted in a transient period which requires time (Carel, 2002), so as to bring about some result in a negotiation which is at the same time internal and intersubjective, correlatively we should notice that establishing internal « dikes » cannot be done instantly. Freud says that it is necessary to see disgust and modesty establish themselves so that they can contain the instinct before it reaches full strength. A race is set between the instinct's flow and the barriers which are put in its way to thwart any eventual perverse prolongation. The family psychical temporality, which find its balance around the rythm of each member, organises itself according to the preponderance of reality's demands put forward by parental authority. There again, the upbringing factor, myths and ideals are at work to define a perception of time adequately shared. Family temporality is punctuated by events which change its outline: birth, people leaving, marriages, death, some of which have a more traumatic impact than others. These internal traumas to which can be added other traumas striking from further back, thwart the establishing of the consciousness of time which has been lived, of its link to past and future and thus jeopardize the accession of the modesty and disgust affects which are involved in lulling sexual instincts.Their deferred effects are familiar to the perverse and acted mode on which instinct's reappearance will express itself.

The distorsion of temporality expresses itself, for example and obviously so, through the age difference in children partners of unlawful sexual activities. It shows a crushing of temporality from the oldest initiating child, bringing straight away the attention on the impact made by previous family or personal traumas.The attention given to family temporality and its development during therapy, as well as its counter-transferent treatment will play a decisive part in the therapeutic process.

Family envelope, intimacy and fences

The failings linked to time which has been lived, are mixed in with the anomalies of the family psychic envelope. We owe this spatial metaphor to D. Anzieu[1] , D. Houzel (1990) and E. Granjon (2005), in particular. In charge of dynamic, screening, filtering and interface functions, it works for the family self. Several processes happen there, away from the outside world for the making, transformation and transmission of shared psychic contents which help build the feeling of belonging (fantasies, representations, myths, family ideals). The psychic envelope is the place « par excellence » for an immersion in intimacy for the family members. Inasmuch as intimacy has its origin in the body sharing mother-child, each subject is in theory able to find it again under a more or less worked out form. As the base of family links and the feeling of belonging, the experience of intimacy is put into question in cases of sexual offences from a child. It is marked by incoherence and regression, made poorer by reducing exchanges with the outside, retracted by the contact with the rigidity of the family envelope which is no more than a shell without give. This shell broadcasts and accentuates the outside world's threats and becomes an echo chamber for the family's internal wounds.

In therapy, mobility, physical closeness and looking for contacts appear multiplied to replace the amputation or the lack of parts which would have been psychically functionning better within intimacy; these manifestations depend on the archaic modalities of transference, they are calls sent to the therapist, and they are at the same time vague and heart-rending, for want of something better. Physical closeness, sensoriality and sexuality are in a contiguity which renders them potential metonymic representatives one to the other. A partitionning in family life is a defensive answer to this, and this spatialises the failure to resort to an intimacy where would be unfolded stronger intersubjective links and whose narcissistic anchorage would be tempered by diverse object investments. Instead of this, feeble abilities to fantasize and dream together appear.

Clinical example

Some information taken from a therapy practiced together with my colleague Alain Lafage will illustrate the previous propositions. We are

talking about a family comprising two parents in their forties, and three boys aged respectively 17, 13 and 8 at the time of the first consultation. This family seems to have all the conditions required for a good insertion in the socal fabric.

The second boy, Corentin[2], had sexual activities with a neighbour, 7 years younger than himself. He has just reached penal coming of age. Without waiting for the court's legal recommendation, the parents take medical advice and quickly take up the offer of PFT given to them.The sentence, which happens almost a year later, will fall like a guillotine blade and revive the violent impact suffered by the family when they discovered the facts. Its severity will take into account the « seriousness » of the offence.

The effectiveness of parental authority appears here rather compromised by some factors which illustrate the links theory. The father is a polite man, with measured manners. He expresses himself easily, in a way very much in keeping with his superior level of education and his profession, one of the main characteristic of which is to exert authority. His wife, who used to work in administration, is looking for a job, having been made redundant by the company she worked for due to closing down.

The play of authority and transgression should have had everything to work properly. But this is not the case. Corentin has always transgressed, including putting himself into danger through his actions: borrowing his father's motorbike or move the family car and leaving it without the handbrake on. His older brother Dorian, who presents himself as exemplary (he wants to become a teacher), has had a very difficult relationship with his father, attacking him and insulting him repeatedly. The violence which permeates the links in this family splashes out onto everybody. Authority is desawoved: even though each person identifies its meaning, it is constantly flouted in deeds, with the unconscious mutual complicity of the parents, as we will see.

Some reshaped aspects of the family history enable us to glimpse the source of the deep imbalance which compromises the exercice of authority. The link of alliance had been built upon the refusal of the young woman of her own father's authority, thought to be excessive (she ran away as an adolescent to get away from it); her meeting with a chivalrous and conquering young man will seal their union. On the

mother's side, men are, if one can say so, professionals of the super-ego whose beliefs and values, even, are in every instance the total opposite of her husband's. Corentin's deeds represent a ground-swell attacking what symbolizes this particular lineage. Paradoxically, Corentin, out of all the family members is the only one who goes to mass with his mother, in the tradition of maternal ancestors. The disaster of the link of alliance seems in keeping with the ambivalence of the mother who couldn't resolutly turn herself away from her father to build her couple and family: she remains totally subjugated by her father's ascendency on her, and faced with him, feels « like a little girl ».

> Thus, the very notion of authority paralyses her and she shows herself incapable of relaying her husband's authority, which is thus invalidated. Inasmuch as the relay in the alliance link doesn't work, the father could lean on his own lineage. But as a matter of fact, no such thing is happening. There is no spontaneous association on the subject of his parents or his siblings and if we try an opening through questionning the possible analogies between father and son, nothing happens. The black-out is almost complete on this lineage apparently without any problems. Without much support in his filiation and alliance links, the father can only uphold his authority through violent gestures, using the whole body (tone of voice, movements). Everything happens as if Corentin had followed this path: the ascendency he has on the little neighbour does away with parental authorisation and finds itself with only a domination aspect where the body takes centre stage.

Bringing the body and sex into play exposes a fault in the family building its **intimacy**. Several clinical elements show the thickness and rigidity of the famiy psychic envelope, and the defensive nature of theses characteristics, notably when faced with the ascendency of the maternal grand-parents. This also shows its fragility. In the midst of the family, a feeling of being jailed, locked in and threatened by the outside has developped itself and is being reinforced by the conflict with the neighbours. This imprisonnement doesn't nevertheless profit the family belonging, the signs of which are more disparaged than claimed. Inside the family circle, each one is isolated and defends the possession of his own territory. The brothers are terribly jealous one of the other and are merciless rivals for their mother's love. Corentin, for example, asks his mother to come into his bedroom when he wants to speak to her without being overheard, safe from prying ears. These

ears are usually those of Valentin, the youngest. Mortified, he tells us that he hides himself to spy on what's happening and try and pick up something of the secret meeting. He rebels against his not being able to participate in the conversation, displacing the fantasy of the primal scene to a level which takes his inadequation from the projection massively at work. He himself seems to want to try to seduce the mother by taking a marked feminine stance. In this closed and partitionned intimacy, the pressure of the instinct of the start of adolescence which troubles Corentin is cramped; it bumps into objects which are too near. The little neighbour is thus a more « reasonable » target.

As we have shown previously, **the temporality** meets some major distortions. There again, everything seems to be in place to help with the implantation of a temporality well in step with social times, but the markers remain flat, inoperative. The meeting, the marriage and successive births, the parents changing their jobs, the various villages they lived in, the schools they went to, the family projects : each of these elements carry a violent aspect and potential traumas which shows up the weakness of the organising markers of temporality.

Conclusion

The story of this family has led us to explore the family territory of a child/adolescent on trial for paedophilia with a small boy. Within the framework of group therapy, we were able to notice a few particularities.We will highlight the notion of a social conflict between the original families of the parents, conflict anchored in the alliance links, strengthened and reinforced by the asymetry of the investments of the respective parental lineage to the detriment of the father's lineage. In the mother's lineage, on the other hand, the grandfather is the focal point, playing the part of the perfect tyrant. These singularities added to an intense oedipian circulation within the family and previous excessive authority towards the mother evoke defensive processes, the failure of which is materialized through unlawful deeds. Multiple displacements have been at work to thwart the temptation of incest (mother/child, between brothers) as well as the temptation of violence. It is therefore outside the family circle, but close by, that the constraint of an older child upon a younger one will take place, with the aim of satifying the instinct if not a game. In the very midst of

family links flow other disorganizing elements, in particular the paradoxical treatment of intimacy and temporal depression.

It is impossible to conclude without highlighting that for a young child, the conflict he has to solve between good and evil as regard to sexual activities which he likes is incomprehensible without outside help. It cannot be resolved if there is no effective parental authority. In situations similar to the one we have seen, the individual super-ego of the already grown child has not been able to strengthen itself because of a lack of family consensus on a super-ego anchored in the precedent generations and ratified within the pact of alliance.

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[1] The functions of the Skin Ego according to D. Anzieu (1989): keeping together, countainer, shield against-excitement, individuality, intersensoriality, upholder of sexual excitement (which enables the differentation of the sexes, libidinal charging up. In 1985, he added: inscription of tactile sensory traces, concept close to the pictogram (Aulagnier, 2001), and an autodestruction function.

[2] The names are obviously fictitious. The information on this case have been changed to protect the people involved, but without changing its import.