

Secret Love: Eros Between Boy and Man

by Wolf Vogel

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They say to you:

"Dealing with children is tiresome to us."

They're right.

They say to you:

"For we must stoop down to their level,

Stoop down, get real low, bend down,

Make ourselves smaller."

They're wrong.

It isn't tiresome to us.

We must, instead, lift ourselves up to their level,

Lift ourselves up, and stretch out, stand on tiptoes,

In order not to offend.

Our Theme is as Old as Our Civilization

Janusz Korczak

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Foreword

This book describes a piece of lived reality which mostly remains hidden. It is predominantly adults who get a chance to talk about it. They are different ages, and hail from various social and occupational strata. But there is one thing they do have in common: As children, they had a sexual relationship with an adult which today -- now that they themselves have grown up and perhaps had children of their own — they look back on with fondness.

What is represented here is by no means a representative sample. For one thing, as a rule these love relationships only lasted for a few years; for another, what are depicted here are, without exception, sexual contacts between boys and men. Not that this was the original plan. I'd placed ads in two German daily newspapers, asking adults to tell me about any such love-relationships they may have had. I wanted to know whether there existed sexual contacts (including over long periods of time) between minors and grown-ups for which the label "abuse" seemed inappropriate. The men who responded to my ads provide the narrative to this book. They wanted to describe their feelings as children at the time from the perspective of the present-day; but they also hoped their testimony would contribute towards a more nuanced way of looking at what -- for many people -- is such a difficult topic.

I have also gathered letters which describe such experiences, and have put together a couple of 'foreign correspondent' reports. In order to avoid wearying the reader, only a portion of the life-reports placed at my disposal (from a collection spanning nearly ten years) will be recited here. Many of the biographies are, of course, quite similar in terms of the erotic components discussed; oftentimes, my conversational partners were surprised by my interest in their earlier relationships.

Some reports are written down in interview form, because my interlocutors felt more comfortable with that. Other conversations were tape-recorded, and their essential contents later summarized. To the extent that I was asked to change certain names, I have done so. In all cases the interview partners have proofread and okayed the texts. There are also mothers who have a chance to talk about their sons' affairs with adults, while at the same time describing their fears. The narratives begin with a father's account of his own childhood, full of curiosity.

A Childhood Filled With Curiosity

For several years now, a lot has been written about sex between adults and children. At the same time, what is striking is that even liberally-minded parents only allow – or at least tolerate – children engaging in sexual activities with similar-age peers. Most adults would react with anxiety at the notion that their child could exchange caresses with a grown-up – even a stranger – below the waist. This topic interests me because I was a child myself, and still retain many recollections of my own childhood. Certain experiences, wants, desires are still very clear in my mind's eye.

I was born into the chaos of World War. Therefore, the first years of my childhood were characterized by privation, a fear of air-raid sirens, emergency shelters, flight, evacuations, and constantly changing carepersons. When I was seven years old, my mother and I moved to a city in southern Germany. Now peace and quiet came into my life; from this time forward, many experiences began to indelibly fix themselves in my memory.

I was enrolled in school, and for the first time, was able to establish lasting Friendships. Because I was a newcomer, other children started becoming interested in me. I spoke a different dialect than they did, and also had different ways of doing things. During the warmer times of the year, clothed only in swimming trunks, we played together in the ruins of houses, left behind in the wake of the war. The older boys were always pulling down us younger boys' shorts, thus leaving us standing there naked. Because no one had asked for my permission to do this, I didn't like it. But being nude didn't bother me so much because in the ruins, no strangers ever saw us. However, sudden attacks were unpleasant for me – for example, when a bigger boy would shove me into the water or force my head under it.

Beginning at about eight years old my childhood was wonderful. Roaming the streets was fascinating and filled with adventure. During my first four years of school, I can't recall spending a lot of time doing

homework. Right after lunch, I'd meet my friends out on the street. We'd clamber around in the ruins, explore with hearts pounding dark, buried basement passageways, admire the older boys at their first attempts at smoking, or climb over strangers' garden fences in order to pluck apples, pears, and quinces. It didn't matter whether or not the fruit tasted good; it was the adventure that counted. For example, the quinces tasted so awful that to this day I still can't stand them.

I often also roamed the streets of my district alone, in search of new and exciting adventures. I specifically recall one guy doing some street pavement work. He must've been about thirty years old. Due to a heat wave, he was stripped down to the waist. Both he and what he was doing fascinated me. For a long time I just stood there, in order to be able to watch him work. As I began to show an interest in him, he smiled at me. I was overjoyed. Had he helped me down into the area where he was working, and then taken my arm and stroked it, I would just about have gone mad with pleasure and pride.

I by no means looked at him as a father-figure, although it is true my own father never returned home from the war. But it is also true that I cannot recall feeling what adults would call an erotic spark. Children do not put such things into words. Children feel with their hearts. When an adult is nice to them, they like him. For children, the only thing that matters is that he doesn't physically hurt them or cause them emotional pain, like, for example, being put down by one's own mother. The road worker never did take me down into that hole. Nevertheless, I went down to that construction site every single day. At some point, there came a time when the worksite got to a point where the man was no longer there. I was sad.

At this age, I was also fascinated by steam-shovel operators. In some ruins the rubble had already been cleared away, and sometimes, actual excavators were put into use. To be sure, I was usually sent away with harsh words, apparently out of fear that I could wind up under either the wreckage or the machines

themselves. Adults are often unaware -- or have forgotten it from their own childhoods — that children are very careful in what they do. There would be a lot more broken arms and legs — or even fatalities — if this were not the case. Most child deaths today are caused by reckless drivers.

Back to the steam-shovel operators. One of them took me into his cabin. I proudly sat on his lap, listening attentively as he told me which lever was responsible for which action, and felt -- due to the operator's hand on my bare stomach -- a blissful tingling, which spread throughout my entire body. Had the man removed my swim trunks and stroked me, I would certainly have closed my eyes and sunk down into his arms. But I remained a virgin, and turned to new adventures.

At age nine I played football ['soccer'] for the first time. We played with a tennis ball diagonally on the street; the cellar entrance served as the goal. Occasionally we had to interrupt the game because of a passing car, but that didn't happen often. I was the youngest and the smallest of the boys. Because of that, I was only allowed to join in when, due to an imbalance of players on each side, I was needed to even things up.

My sports career began in the unpopular position of left wing. It never failed that, due to a hard kick, the cellar window grating would burst open and the ball would disappear down into the dark basement. And I had to go retrieve it, because otherwise I would be kicked off the team, and I didn't want that. So, I let myself down a narrow slit into the darkness and searched among partitioned areas with lumps of coal and potatoes and roughly-hewn shelves with bottled fruits and vegetables for the lost ball. It would never have occurred to us to take anything from the cellar. We just wanted to get the tennis ball back so that we could resume playing. Kicking shots at the entranceway was more important than preserved fruit or sour gherkins.

The biggest boy in our group was a fourteen-year-old. To a nine-year-old, a fourteen-year-old is practically a grown-up. I adored and admired [3] this boy. Although it is true that he played only mediocre football, he harbored a secret: He regularly had to purchase these mysterious parcels from the pharmacy for his mother. They were wrapped in newspapers. At my request, he opened one of the parcels. Inside was a cardboard box, labelled 'Camelia. It had something or other to do with his mother — with women generally. For some reason she needed it. Because at that age I wasn't interested in women, I really didn't much care why she wanted this Camelia. And even in later years, I've never understood why the box was always wrapped in newspaper.

Far more important to me was the boy himself. He already had hair. With a glance up his shorts, I could see it

clearly. At that time, nobody wore underwear. Therefore, from time to time, I'd let myself fall to the ground with my face twisted in pain. He'd bend over me solicitously, in order to get a good look at my injury. I'd look into his open shorts and be quite content to just lay myself down right there.

In one city park, American soldiers were encamped in small, olive-green tents. We visited the soldiers nearly every day. They gave us gifts of canned corned beef and cigarettes. Since I had no use for the cigarettes, I just threw them into the bushes on my way home. But I did bring back the corned beef.

It tasted wonderful. My mother asked where I'd gotten it. A gift I'd received, I told her. Had she inquired further, I would certainly have provided appropriate excuses.

Sometimes we crawled over to the soldiers in their narrow tents. We lay with them arm-in-arm and let them caress us. It was wonderful. The men's hands even went into our swim trunks or shorts. I made no distinction between appropriate or inappropriate; caresses were simply lovely -- it didn't matter where. The soldiers asked us questions in a language we didn't understand. Rather than being bothered by that, it actually amused us. One time, a soldier whom I'd allowed to lie down next to me arm-in-arm, took hold of my hand and guided it to his trousers. My heart pounded with excitement. But because I didn't trust myself to open his trousers, I took my hand away. The soldier laughed.

I had never been warned about strange men. In the post-war years, people had more important things to worry about than so-called sex fiends. I've never warned my own children about strange men either. My two boys have often brought [male] friends over to the house, including for sleepovers. The younger one also has some adult friends. My one condition is that I would like to get to know these adults. There was just one time he obviously wasn't prepared to agree to this; and my son never spoke about him again either. It is possible that my youngest also had sex with these adults he befriended, because he was allowed to stay overnight with them. I never asked him about it; he was always very open. I believe he would've told my wife and myself if he'd been involved in anything against his will. He still maintains friendships with these older males today.

When I was ten years old, I had a bosom buddy; we were inseparable. Whenever we got the chance, we hid ourselves in the bushes, in order to perform careful assessments of individual parts of each other's bodies. The most exciting thing was examining each other's penis and rear end. He'd always postpone studying other parts of the body in favor of the aforementioned two regions. In order to be able to see everything better, we stripped off all our clothes; an old rusty flashlight -- a gift from an American soldier -- provided additional illumination. Although girls would look at us, at this age, we weren't particularly interested in them. What we wanted to know was how to get a hold of other boys. And though I would have gladly engaged in such extensive explorations with other schoolmates as well, I didn't dare, because I was afraid of making my bosom buddy jealous.

It was around this time that I joined a Christian youth group. I'd heard of such get-togethers. The word was that the group leader or chaplain would take one of the boys into his tent with him at night, and they'd do all sorts of things with one another. Much to my sorrow, I was no longer having such experiences. One thing was clear: I had to be a part of such a group. I wanted to participate in the camping trips, wanted to be with an adult in the tent, wanted to do all sorts of things with him. Though I wasn't able to imagine exactly what this meant, the adventure was calling me -- that much was clear.

After two years I left the youth group, completely disillusioned. Nothing -- and I mean absolutely nothing -- had occurred, not with me anyway. Perhaps I wasn't good -- looking enough, or maybe I'd set my expectations too high. Whatever contrary attempts I made, I always had to spend the night with people of the same age as me. Whose nightly games I was already familiar with from my daily street activities. Even the campfire lacked the hoped-for fascination, given that we'd often set small fires in the ruined houses. Therefore, the youth group had nothing dramatically new to offer. I would have to seek out men in my city, not in virgin nature. In the meantime the American soldiers had been withdrawn, never to come again.

There was a tennis court in our neighborhood. At that time, only a few people had the time and the money to play tennis. They were probably young professionals who got together for a set after work. I watched them for hours, until it was time for me to be getting home. To this day, my love for this sport can be traced back to

that.

One day, I was asked whether I might like to serve as ball-boy. I was ecstatic. From that time on, I was able to earn a bit of pocket money for myself at the tennis court. It was my first job. I wouldn't take excuses from anybody. After all, I was almost twelve years old. It was fifty cents an hour, a fortune, because outside of the Sunday visit to the cinema, there was no place for me to spend the money.

Following his set, one of the tennis players invited me into the showers. He was something akin to the groundskeeper, and – as the last one there – had locked all of the clubhouse doors, so that we could be alone. Fortunately it was Saturday afternoon; I still had enough time. It was only a shower, and the water was more luke-warm than hot. I stood naked with him under the shower, [5] and he soaped me up. It was pleasant for me. After drying off, he gave me a kiss on the forehead. I saw him as a close, bigger friend. Unfortunately we only showered together one more time; usually, he had to quickly return home.

As to his age, I can no longer rightly recall. Anyway, for children, the age of an adult -- whoever he might be – is really of no importance. The only thing that matters is how he interacts with children. When I was in the sixth grade, we had a German teacher who was probably quite close to retirement. Although this teacher was unusually strict we – as his pupils – trusted him implicitly. In our judgment, he was strict, but fair. Because he gave us more detentions and other punishments than most teachers, we did make faces at him. Children have a sense of fairness which is often very difficult for adults to understand. Perhaps we felt our German teacher was fair because we always had to serve our detentions during the sixth period, as opposed to in the afternoon. Because of that, our parents never found out about our school pranks.

I retrieved balls at the tennis court for a year. Then my mother found out about it, because one of my classmates squealed on me. She indicated that she was not entirely happy with these activities. She feared that I might neglect my homework; in fact, already in the sixth grade, I was having to deal with a ridiculous amount of it every single day. But it was only when I joined a football club that I quit my job as a ball boy. I felt that the time had come to get involved in athletic activities.

As a twelve-year-old, I did not go to school gladly. In my later years, I've known of only a few twelve-year-olds who happily went to school, my own sons included. For me, the best that can be said is that there was at least occasionally something to enjoy between lesson periods. Equilateral triangles and French vocabulary were tedious enough.

In the breaks between lessons, we searched for treasures in the school's coal cellar. On occasion we'd find stamps from school correspondence, which lay in the cellar to be burned. And we found one particular treasure; namely, our French teacher's written vocabulary test. Without any announcement, like a bolt from the blue, she'd given most of us low marks, and said she was going to send the tests home for our parents to sign as a warning. So, here they waited to be burned, without our parents having seen them; from that time on, we no longer believed a word this teacher said.

We immediately returned to our favorite activity in the school cellar: sex between schoolmates, up until the end-of-term break. At that time, girls were not admitted to our school. Some of my twelve-year-old friends already had pubic hair. It seemed right to me to stay down there, even given the nature of the activities. The others were much more brash, much bolder and more active than I was. I probably would not have been so shy as a child if I'd had more sexual experiences, including with adults.

[6] For a long time, I'd wondered how I've been able to retain so many details from my childhood, going back more than three decades. But then it hit me: these events were bound up with a particular school class, or even more so, with our teachers of the time. I had one teacher for first and second grades, and a different one for the third and fourth. And from the middle school onward, we had new teachers every year. That may be why I'm able to place so many experiences in their exact order.

One time, for his birthday, my bosom buddy received the princely sum of five marks from his aunt. We discussed what we should do with so much money. First we went to the cinema. "Love's Fanfare" was the title, and it was only approved for audiences eighteen years of age or older. But we pulled it off anyway, by outwitting the box-office ticket clerk. We told her we wanted to buy the tickets for our fathers. Later on, we sneaked into the theater under cover of darkness (the "Fox Talking Newsreel" had already started) – evading

the ushers – and sat down in a corner. It was a love story, horribly boring for us boys, and we would've fled the theater after just a few minutes, if we hadn't been acutely aware of the forbidden nature of the film. And so, on the following day, we were able to quite casually ask our classmates: who has actually seen "Love's Fanfare"? Of course, no one had seen the film, and we reported condescendingly that it wasn't bad. Many sex-scenes and so on. My classmates were green with envy.

Nevertheless, one of my classmates was able to come up with something worthwhile: His aunt had a garden plot with a wooden outhouse on it. The fact that there was a three-meter-high wooden fence around the garden was – for twelve-year-old boys – of no importance. The fence could be climbed over easily. Mind you, it wasn't the fruit that was appealing to us – after all, we were no longer children – but rather the wooden hut. It saw my first attempts to acquire a taste for cigarettes. At the time, four cigarettes cost thirty cents. We had money: I still had my tennis court business, and some of the five marks was still there also. Although we didn't like the cigarettes, they did make us feel grown-up. Two years later I saw the error of my ways, and have never smoked since.

My academic performance went downhill as I got older. In my later adult years, I've often thought about what effect an adult friend might've had on my motivation to achieve. With my son, it's my experience that at this age he doesn't study up on mathematical formulas and English vocabulary for himself and his future, much less for his parents. He does it for his adult friends of a given time, God-sent teachers who, in addition to imparting factual knowledge, probably also possessed the right tone.

The football club occupied an important place in my early youth. I had become a good football player, and never had to worry about being relegated to second string. I was even allowed to express a desire as to which positions I would most like to play. At the beginning I contented myself with the less spectacular mid-field; with growing self-confidence, henceforth I played offensive line, scoring the most goals in my team. I felt like the hero of the football field. Who cared about stupid school and silly homework? I also had an excellent relationship with the coach. He was in his mid-thirties, and worked us pretty hard. If I hadn't had so much success on the team, all of those drills would hardly have been worth the effort.

In the wintertime we practiced in a school gymnasium. We could even get a shower there. But my teammates usually hot-footed it right after practice, leaving me to help the coach put the equipment away. One evening, he asked me whether I felt like taking a shower with him. I thought this was a fantastic idea. As we stood naked under the shower, my eyes never left his body. He asked me if I liked what I saw. I answered in the affirmative. "I like you too," he said. I was mighty proud of the fact that, in the meantime, I'd sprouted a couple of pubic hairs, and a few weeks earlier, was able to experience my first proper ejaculation. Anyway, since I hadn't brought along any soap, he soaped me up. I did the same to him. After we dried ourselves off, in the changing room, we had sex for the first time. In my eyes, this was simply the next logical and natural step. At nearly thirteen years of age, I had the right to my own body and my own desires. This first sexual act grew into a real relationship, which we kept secret from the rest of my teammates. I believe also that no one ever noticed anything, because my coach carried on treating me just as he had before. In the following year, I played on a higher youth-level, and got a different coach. I really wasn't sad about the end of this romantic relationship: it marked the end of one particular phase of my life. A teenager's life awaited me – my childhood was finally over. Once again, in school, I was one of the best.

Although the secret boys' games did continue at school – above all in the darkened projection room, where we burrowed in our neighbors' trousers – age thirteen, I was just as fascinated by men. I wanted to see what they looked like naked. I was well-acquainted with my school-friends – they had no new insights to offer me. I wanted to see naked men – wanted to know what I would look like once I myself became a man. At swimming pools, I'd try to peak under the changing cubicle partition when a man was changing next door. I wasn't able to see much. I also feared being discovered. The thought of getting hold of a man in the changing cubicle and being allowed to watch him undress aroused me to the point that I would often lock myself in a cubicle in order to sexually pleasure myself.

In the summer months – occasionally wearing only a pair of gym shorts – I would ride my bicycle through an overgrown, semi-woody park in our city, hoping that a man would notice my skimpy clothing and invite me to a rendezvous. But my bicycle tours did not have the desired results. Men either didn't notice my secret

desires or feared discovery. In my hour of need, I eventually approached an older boy – he might've been 18 or 20 – and lured him into some dense brush under the pretext that I had a terrible tummy ache, and had him massage the lower part of my body until I attained my goal. Even today I can see in my mind's eye the thunderstruck expression on his face, as I suddenly achieved orgasm. He immediately bolted, and I was quite pleased with the result.

At age fourteen, I had a five-month-long sexual relationship with my (male) art teacher; after that, I was mostly interested in girls. My own gender was now quite familiar to me. I had followed my physical development had become intimately acquainted with many of my male classmates, and had seen how a boy becomes a man. Therefore, that chapter of my life had drawn to a close. Now, I got tingly whenever I saw how delicate girl-breasts indicated their presence under clothing, whenever a long-haired girl got close to me. I discovered how quickly a teenage boy could blush, and how words fail you when you want to express so much love and tenderness. Actually, my quick-wittedness never failed me in school or around my mother. But girls were good at something no one else could manage: totally turning my head.

When I think back on these experiences today, I often can't help but smile. By no means do I have the impression that I was somehow exceptional, having experienced so much while others came away empty-handed. Quite the contrary: For a long time, I felt bashful and left behind. I always had the feeling that others were experiencing more than I was. Whether that was actually true, I don't know. Anyway, this no longer plays a role today. Through my own experiences and the accounts of my own children, I have found that the boys of today are scarcely any different from what lads were like back then.

They are certainly confronted with many more details about sexuality. They have sex education in school. They know virtually everything about sexuality. At the time – in theory – we knew almost nothing; we simply tried out a lot of stuff.

I do not believe there is a boilerplate method for how parents should react when they find out that their child is having a relationship with an adult. In many parents' evenings at school, I've seen more helpless parents than resolute ones. Announcing outright bans or warning about sex fiends can be absolutely appropriate in certain cases. But most of the time, in my opinion, what helps is investing trust and confidence in children. When children know and feel that they can tell their parents anything without having to fear a moralistic finger being waived at them, they will share with their parents all that is important to them. Children have an immense need to talk with other people. Experienced parents are also familiar with this: they know how it is when mother is focused on the cooking and father is bent over his desk, and the children run in with the great and small adventures of the day gushing out of their mouths, so that the parents have trouble listening without letting anything get scorched.

Much of what – to adults – seems significant and worth mentioning is – for children – of secondary importance. We should allow children to choose what they would like to confide to us and what they would not. Children too need a few secrets, even from their parents. When they are not accorded this freedom, they themselves create secrets in spheres outside of the family, and actually keep them secret as well. I know this well enough from my own childhood, a childhood full of curiosity and thirst for action, full of longing and desire.

My mother never said: "Child, I have trust and confidence in you." She lived this trust. And I never would have abused this trust. But I did take advantage of this freedom, just like kids today do. Many adults would do well to recall their own childhoods!

Our Theme Is as Old as Our Civilization

Sexual relationships between children and adults have been handed down to us for more than four thousand years. Since the time of the Pharaohs, incestuous associations with young girls were far from rare in Egypt. From the Old Testament we know that Moses prohibited – under threat of punishment – his Jewish countrymen from sexually desiring male offspring: "Thou shalt not lie with boys* as with women [womankind]: for this is an abomination," is in the Third Book of Moses [Leviticus], chapter 18, verse 22. Two chapters later the prohibition is repeated: "If someone lies down with boys* as with women, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death." [Lev. 20:13] These harsh sanctions

make it abundantly clear that such sexual practices must have been quite widespread at the time. Mind you, the prohibition was probably directed more against the homosexual temple and cult prostitution of neighboring peoples, which were not compatible with the Israelite understanding of monotheism. On the other hand, Moses must have realized that offspring are not inevitable. In that situation, only sex between a man and a woman makes sense.

[* Trans. note: The German word the author uses here – apparently quoting a German translation of the bible – is 'Knabe,' which does indeed mean 'boy' or 'lad.' However, most English translations use the word 'man' or 'mankind' here. Which of these would be a better translation from the ancient Hebrew original text is beyond my ken. However, I cannot help thinking that something in-between might be closer to the mark: perhaps '[male] youth' or even 'pubescent boys.']

In the ancient advanced cultures of Greece and Rome, romantic relationships between men and boys were part and parcel of how the educated classes saw themselves. As a rule, less affluent citizens had the brothel, in which boys as well as girls offered their sexual services. Incidentally, girls were – according to Roman law at the time – considered marriageable when they reached age twelve. And the example of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple, sitting and holding forth with the scribes, means nothing other than the fact that boys from this age and up were permitted to go into public buildings and have their say, and thus were regarded as grown-up.

At any rate, things must have been rather depraved in those times. Caesar Augustus had already vainly attempted to decree that all men between 25 and 60 as well as all women between 25 and 50 had to be married; later on, his stepson – Tiberius Caesar – strove to drive men back into the arms of women by taxing rent-boys (the first sin tax in European history!). Naturally, even early Christendom accepted sexuality. The teaching of the twelve apostles, the so-called didacts, demanded: "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not defile boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not practice magic, thou shalt not mix poison, thou shalt not kill a child through abortion or murder the newborn." Obviously, what was forbidden was that which was commonplace at the time.

The Greek author Lucian (120-180 A.D.), who as an itinerant orator also came to Italy, wrote with pointed pen about the annual "floral festival" in Rome, in which ten- to fourteen-year-old (female) dancers learned sexual practices which would earn them a lucrative income later on. Admittedly, most of the excesses of Eros would be reigned in by the spread of Christianity. Paul castigated lewdness generally in his writings. For early Christianity, sexual freedom was pagan deviancy, which had to be fought against. Now, the first Christians were also sexual beings, and not always strong in the struggle against desire. And so, in the year 306 at the Synod of Elvira, it had to be decreed that a Christian burial should be denied to those who has quenched their sinful lust upon boys: "Pederasts are no longer permitted communion on their deathbed." Consequently, even in the event of remorse and repentance, the sinner was denied the possibility of saving his soul. (cited in G. Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg)

Prior to and during the early Middle Ages, so-called penance books dealt with sins contrary to Eros. Even sex with and between minors was a topic therein. The oldest Irish penance book – from the 6th century – prescribes two years' penance for anal intercourse between two boys. The Irish penance book of Commean, which was presumably written around 660, and later influenced French legislation, decreed "seven years penance for sodomy, two years for interfemoral intercourse, one year for bestiality, three times every forty days for onanism {masturbation} (...); in the case of a child up to age fifteen, a one-time penance of 14 days is sufficient." Binchy's Irish penance book from the end of the 8th century was intended to apply to youthful sinners: "Small boys who imitate coitus with one another, atone for 20 days: acolytes who have sexual intercourse with animals, one hundred nights – the same for interfemoral intercourse. A ten-year – old who is defiled by another does seven days penance; however, if he agreed to the act, twenty nights." (All cited in Bleibtreu—Ehrenberg)

The church's penance books were a response to the fact that the esthetic ideal of Christianity initially remained sheer theory in the rural areas, because it was unworldly. People in the family unit lived together in a confined space of just a few square meters; children too were quite familiar with love, sex, and death from early on. The church's condemnation of "lewdness" – which the secular sovereigns were all too happy to

endorse (anyone who wished to go to war needed young people who would grow up to become soldiers) – worked its way up through ever newer examples. Thus, in a handbook for father-confessors from the Middle Ages from the French city of Le Mans, the following is characterized as a serious sin: "when the woman takes the man's member in her mouth, or places it between her breasts, or introduces it into her anus." Of course, according to this ideology, sex with minors was also forbidden. Early on, getting a girl pregnant and marrying her afterwards was still tolerated.

Even in the Middle Ages, the age of marriageability for girls was twelve. Beatrix, wife of Frederick I (Barbarossa), was thirteen years old at the time of her marriage to the Kaiser; Barbarossa was thirty—four. Such child-marriages were not rare in the Middle Ages. The French King Henry IV – who was obliged to take up the famous penitential pilgrimage following humiliation in order to reconcile himself with the Pope – was, at fourteen, betrothed to a girl of the same age: they married a year later. Gertrude, the mother of Henry of Lyon, was not yet fifteen when she bore her son. After 1250, a lad of fourteen could enter into a valid marriage. He didn't even have to ask for his father's permission. Girls only had to be twelve years old to enter into a valid marriage. In the Renaissance, this age-floor shifted upwards somewhat: After 1500, the age of marriageability was set at seventeen for boys and thirteen for girls.

As soon as a prohibition on a particular sexual practice was able to be pushed through a tried-and—tested device could be employed against irksome neighbors: the false accusation. An eloquent example is the disbanding of the Order of the Knights Templar by the French King Philip IV ("the Handsome") in the year 1310. It was surely the largest morals trial in history arousing great consternation throughout Europe. A trial against 20,000 Christian knights – which had never happened before. No less than one of the three great orders of knights – which were meant to provide protection and safe-conduct to Christian crusaders in the Holy Land – stood trial in Paris. {The Templars were rich -- very rich. In France and Portugal they owned mighty castles and great estates. And they were influential – for the French King, simply too powerful. When one wishes to abolish the Order and – above all – confiscate its property, what better than to indict the Knights Templar? Initially they were reproached for allegedly having left the faith. But this alone wasn't sufficient to imprison them. Therefore, they were also accused of unnatural lewdness, for allegedly requiring all novices to kiss the intimate parts of their bodies. (At that time, novices could be as young as seven or eight.) Now, this accusation was made at the very time at – in Middle Europe – the cultivation of a common destiny between knight and squire had reached its zenith. (Boys were fit for battle – and therefore, adults – at age fourteen. Prior to that they were assigned to a knight for training.) Intimate kisses behind cloister walls – this peaked the interest of fourteenth century folk just as much as it does the people of today. Philip therefore disbanded the Order and confiscated its possessions and riches. For reasons of competence, a compliant Pope Clement V signed the dissolution document. On March 12th, 1314, the Order's venerable Grand Master was the very last to ascend the scaffold in front of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

In the fourteenth century, a decision was made (the ramifications of which redound right up to our own era) as to what constituted offenses and sins, and therefore, what was prohibited and what was not. The influential theologian and church policy-maker Jean Gerson (1363-1429), professor at and Chancellor of the University of Paris, devoted a large part of his work to proscribed sexual practices, not to mention his own book, "Self-Abuse": The latter was characterized as "a sin against nature, even more serious than extra-marital intercourse with a woman, or when a woman commits lewdness with a man." Gerson advised all father-confessors to expressly and unceasingly question children and youth regarding sexual sins; many – he bemoans in his book – 'have not dared to confess the reprehensible thing, which they have committed at ten, eleven, or twelve years of age, as they have slept together with their brothers and sisters." (Cited in J. Rossiaud) Added to this were sleeping with parents, aunts and uncles, servants, and visitors.

Actually, it was only female virginity – regardless of age – that was to be particularly respected and protected. The rape of an untouched girl was punishable by death. For example, from the archives, we know how much gruesome work the executioner of old Nuremberg, Meister Franz, had vis-a-vis the dark side of Eros: "In 1578 Hanns Miller, called 'Model,' a Redsmith, 'who raped a girl of thirteen years, having stuffed her mouth with sand, so that she could not cry out,' was put to death by the sword." "in 1612, the young schoolmaster Andres Feuerstein, who had raped 16 schoolgirls from six to eleven years of age under threat of a thrashing, was likewise put to death by the sword." (Cited in M. Hirschfeld)

A record of how much young girls were coveted on the altar of desire has also been handed down to us from the Far East. The German physician Engelbert Kaempfer described the brothels he saw during a visit to Japan in the year 1690: "The poor can help their well-proportioned daughters to get some bread, and [153 due to the good food from outsiders and locals alike (who are quite addicted to sensuality), this institution is happily provided with a good number of such daughters. Still children, girls of certain ages (perhaps ten or twelve) are haggled over for a sum of money – they range from seven to thirteen years of age, big and small – in a house, by a brothel-keeper, entertaining all comers, provided they are men of means."

Back to Germany: The bourgeois age was characterized by the will to reason, to logic, and the control of desire. "Lewdness" – above all, "lewdness contrary to nature" – were theological and legal concepts which were adopted as lashes to the libido. Many authors of that time invested nearly their entire, mission-conscious lives in the literary struggle against vice; for instance, the German penologist Johann Jakob Cella. In his book "Of Lewdness, So Committed Against the Laws of Nature," he names as primary evils masturbation, the violation of boys, and lewdness with animals. The erotic preference for boys was, for Cella, an "especially disgraceful sort of unnatural lecherousness that is detrimental to the state," and there are "many full-grown and elderly lechers of this sort," who would've had their eyes on minors: "The violator of boys needs an object which would simply behave in a passive manner. Therefore, even a quite young, undeveloped, under-age companion would suffice. Indeed, in order to increase the sensual thrill, he usually seeks out the youngest, finest boys as the victims of his infamous lust." (Cited in P. Derks) Is this the take of someone who is filled with jealousy of those who obtain pleasures which he himself is denied? And who, out of envy, overlooks the possibility that the boys in question might be equally inclined toward such thrills?

Cella's View accords with the zeitgeist of that time. Kant also railed against lewdness and masturbation and, strangely enough, let fly his infamously sharp intellectual caprices.

Another great mind of this era mused about eroticism between minors and grown-ups in far less hostile terms: that prince among poets, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe. He had already, in his 'Venetian Epigrams,' made no secret of his desire for boys as well as girls; and then, in his "West-Eastern Divan," he pondered the value of a pederastic relationship: "Neither the immediate inclination to semi-forbidden wine, nor a sensitivity to the beauty of a boy growing toward adolescence, should be missed in the 'divan'; however the latter would – in accordance with our customs – be handled with all purity. A fondness for the transition from childhood to adolescence actually indicates a genuine pedagogical attitude. A child's ardent affection for an old man is by no means a rare, but rather, a rarely acknowledged phenomenon. What comes to mind here is the grandson's attachment to the grandfather, the late-born heir's to the surprised, tender father. It is within these relationships that children's shrewdness actually develops: they are attentive to the dignity, experience, and power of older persons; pure-born souls, moreover, feel the need for an affection based on deep respect; from here on the older person is seized a hold of and held on to (...) Most touching, [16] however, remains the boy's sense of striving ever forward, excited by the great intellect of the older person, feeling within himself an astonishment, which prophecies to him that he could also develop such things within himself."

Given the linguistic style of this text, it might seem to us a bit old-fashioned. But if Goethe was right, it becomes clear that, in every era, the man-boy relationship has had an air of both the unusual as well as the commonplace, in equal measure. This would explain why, from the very beginning, it was easier to find male interview partners for this book; whereas they closely guarded the treasure of their relationships in their younger years, they did divulge them – more or less proudly – in their later years of life.

Admittedly, as with all erotic relationships, even pederastic affairs were characterized coarsely and sensuously on some occasions, yet poetically transfigured on others. An example of the former kind: While in Damascus, as part of his voyage to the Orient, his diary entry on September 10th, 1850: "Moreover, a few days ago, Monsieur Guyot had caught two of his approximately twelve-year-old pupils sodomizing one another at the monastery gate; one of the pair had learned this from a Christian, who had deflowered him for the sum of twenty paras. According to the abbot, pederasty had spread throughout the entire population here. 'A great surplus of men, but no women; they wish to know nothing of women.'"

Singing of the heart's more effusive longing for boys is one of the best-known German folksongs, which, admittedly, is usually censored amongst the common-folk. It concerns the King's forbidden love, and comes

from the great-nephew of a man who has never counted among the literati, and therefore, would have had no occasion to pen fantastical fables, but nevertheless, absolutely is regarded as the epitome of a liar: the Baron von Munchausen (1720-1797). And so, the great-nephew – who was born in Hildesheim in 1874 and only passed away a very old man indeed in 1978 -- wrote out a song which many youth – leaders from his class would still have fervently sung around the campfire, the original of which would have been quite familiar to him (cited in E. Thurmair/D. Ahrens):

On the other side of the valley stood their tents,
In the morning, red evening sky swelled the smoke;
And there was singing amongst the army entire,
With even the stable-boys joining in.

To the jangling of crockery they groomed the horses;
Here the feminine camp-followers sashayed:
And amongst the singing one of the boys spoke:
"Girls, do you know where the King has gone to?"

On this side of the valley stood the young King,
And seized a clump of the moist earth: [17]
It chilled not the heat of his burning brow,
It made not his sick heart sound.

He would be healed only by two, wet boy-cheeks,
And only by a mouth which he's forbidden himself.
Still tighter closed the King his lips,
And looked over into the sunset.

[Trans. note: The last words of the second and fourth lines of each stanza rhyme in the original German. Though an attempt was made to get them to also do this in the English translation, this proved to be unworkable.]

Now, the minnesong's effusive joie de vivre was not well-suited to the time of industrialization, and the lyrics of the King's longing for the adored boy were – at most – taken up by aesthetes. With the reorganization of social structures, sexual behaviors changed as well. "Between the beginning and the middle of the 19th century, sexual relations between children (girls) and adults emerged as a gravely growing moral problem. In the context of widespread (because it was cheap) child labor, and the relatively high adult unemployment rate with which the former was associated, above all in British mills, there evolved among the young girls a kind of in-house prostitution, in order to – directly or indirectly – supplement the meager wages. A whole series of reports came out, according to which many children (girls) were obliged by their own families to make more money in this way." (H. Johannesmeier)

With people's control over their productivity per man-hour worked there also evolved a new form of sexual control. In the late 19th century, the agents of acculturation and power not only felt the urge to make taboo, even outlaw, hitherto tolerated sexual behaviors, but also the peculiar desire to impose Latin terms – in medicine, usually – on sexuality generally. In 1886, the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing moved sexual behavior – which from time immemorial had been part of humanity's everyday lives – into the realm of mental disorders and illnesses. Just as it does today, this fit with the zeitgeist of the time.

Krafft—Ebing introduced the term 'pedophilia erotica' to denote sexual relations between children and adults. Soon, a never-before-needed phenomenon began to establish itself: sexual science. It studied the desires and frustrations of persons as sexual beings, right down to the innermost secrets of the soul, thereby occasionally contributing to a better understanding of persons who wished to break out of the sexual norms in force at any given time; usually, however, this only served to make them even more despised. For example, anyone who erotically desires a child – and even goes so far as to proclaim it – is today met almost exclusively with hostility. Nonetheless, the word "pedophile" -- adapted from Krafft-Ebing's term – remains

in linguistic use today, as does the term "pederasty."

Pederasty denotes a man's erotic affection for a pubertal boy; therefore, usually one between twelve and [18] eighteen years of age. This is the very sexual predilection which Moses and Paul railed against, regarding which, however, the Athenian poet and law-maker Solon (ca. 6&0-500 B.C.E) wrote: "You love the boy in the enchanting flower of his age, craving his thighs and his sweet mouth."

What is termed pedophilia, on the other hand, is a man or a woman's erotic affection for pre-pubertal girls or boys. In literature there are many definitions of pedophilia in the current literature, but the most apt, in my opinion, is the one formulated by the Human Sexuality Working Group: "They (men as well as women) have or aspire to friendly relationships with children which, though by no means necessarily involving sexual contact, nevertheless do not rule it out. They are extraordinarily susceptible to the charm which is emanated by children. Generally speaking, the attraction is to the child's very being, which – in contrast to that of adults – is still free of ideological and moral prejudices, and whose thoughts and actions are aligned with the pleasure principle. Children's refreshingly carefree natures, the fact that they simply don't care about what – in the adult world – are exceedingly important external characteristics, such as financial position, social rank, or physical shortcomings; their capacity for enthusiasm, their liveliness, their fantasies and spontaneity, their combination of adventuresomeness and need of loving care; all of this arouses in the pedophile the desire to let him/herself get 'infected' by this."

Definitions of human sexual behavior should always be taken with a grain of salt, because they emerge either from eras in which sexual diversity is promoted, or ones in which it is restricted. In this book, insofar as possible, sexual relations between persons shall be depicted neutrally, and free of obfuscatory borrowed words. Just how dubious, for example, terms like "heterosexual," "homosexual," and "pedophile" are evinces itself most clearly in actual, lived reality. Sexual contacts often arise out of particular situations, which are not transferable to other situations at earlier or later times.

The following is a brief excerpt from the memoirs of the Munich journalist Peter Schult, covering the first few months following the end of World War II: "I saw upstanding citizens send their daughters to the red-light district, and I myself slept with the 14-year-old daughter of a post office official, who lay in bed in the adjoining room with a 14-year-old who he'd picked up at the railway station. The father knew that I was with his daughter, and the daughter knew that the father was sleeping with the girl. For a long time, I lived with a buddy of mine and his 40-year-old wife, who had a 15-year-old daughter. Every other day we switched partners; one time I'd sleep with the mother and my buddy would sleep with the daughter, and then, vice versa. Since we all slept in the same room, sometimes we even switched in the middle of the night. Another time, for several nights, I slept together in the same bed with a woman and her 14-year-old son. I had intercourse with the mother as well as the son, and they both knew it. And none of them [19] were, for instance, people whom the townsfolk would describe as anti-social, but rather, as upright and ordinary people.

I met 12- and 13-year-old boys and girls who had lived for weeks with an Allied unit – carted along as mascots – and, over the course of time, had climbed into bed with almost every soldier in the unit.

I say all of this not out of moral indignation or self-justification, but simply to demonstrate that I had retained not a trace of bourgeois morality; nor did I retain any of it when – several years following these events – the facade got re-erected and freshly painted."

The fact that sexual contacts between children and adults have been subject to various assessments not only in different eras but also in different cultures has been demonstrated by ethnological research; for example, by the American ethnologist Margaret Mead. More recently, the German ethno-sociologist

Gisela Blcibtreu-Ehrenberg has shown that, among primitive peoples, erotic contacts with minors – including within the family – are neither unusual nor taboo.

In our cultural circle, it has not been easy to deal with the subject of "sex with children" unemotionally. Nevertheless, at any time, parents may be faced with a situation where, one day, their minor child brings an adult to the house, or at least, is smitten with him, and the parents get the feeling that something is in the offing here which they have not yet experienced in this way. Understandably, many parents are – initially – at

a loss to know what to do. Many – if they had their druthers – would prefer to just break off such associations; however, at the same time, they fear that could harm the child. Other parents, though undoubtedly not expressly approving of such contacts, nevertheless intervene only if their child's behavior gives them cause to worry.

In the following reports, parents get a chance to say a few words about our theme. These experiences and opinions were published in the Dutch magazine 'Nieuwe Revu' [New Review] of April 5, 1988. In an appeal, the magazine had asked parents to tell about any adult lovers their children may have had. Two mothers and one father came forward. Their statements are reproduced here in a somewhat abridged form.

"The Parents Are Clueless"

Rene was nine years old the first time he accompanied – along with a group of friends – the youth-trainer of a sports club back to the latter's apartment. His mother Ria:

"My son returned home with a lot to talk about. He and his buddies really liked their new friend. They listened to the radio, played games, and had some [20] lemonade. My son enthusiastically told us about everything he'd taken part in. Following a few of these visits, he mentioned that photos of boys with his friend were hung on the wall. I thought: The man must be a pedophile. Then I reproached myself. At the beginning, I had an entirely too negative mindset. I caught myself using scare tactics, saying things I'd heard previously as precautionary measures to take. Of course, this had probably made my son quite self-conscious.

His friend knew that I was worried about it. I read up on the matter, and discussed this with my son. His friend heard about this as well. He was always asking: 'What does your mother think about this?' And my son would say: 'Feel free to tell her; she already knows it.'

After a while, the three of us got together to talk about it. I told my son's friend that, if my son himself wanted the relationship, I would have no problem with it. I told my son: 'What you do is okay with me, but I don't want you to do anything in order to get something else.' Because his friend did do a lot for him. He was allowed to go everywhere with him. The man – he was about thirty – organized it all. But we thoroughly discussed everything. I said: 'If there is something you do not feel like doing, don't think you're letting him down. This really isn't necessary.' which is probably the reason why nothing unpleasant happened. They are still good friends today.

Having such a friend is probably very nice for children. He can well empathize with children's problems, and help them with their homework. Since he met this friend, my son has made enormous progress in school. It is simply a really good relationship, even without sex. My son is too old now in any case – he's sixteen. His friend is no longer physically attracted to him. But one thing I do know about his friend is that he's good with other children. We speak quite openly about it; of course, he comes to visit us often. The physical contact, the caresses: this is important to him. So, how far does this go? They probably still cuddle. Based on what I've seen of my son's friends, I've noticed that some children do seek this out. They sit right here, next to my husband – they just want to be caressed.

Of course, I've also had my doubts. I could become really nasty, when my son's friend would try again and again to cuddle with one of the children who came over. At that point I said: 'The kid came over to play, but straight away you're thinking about sex.' I told him that he must respect his little friend; that something should only happen if the child wants it to. However, one must understand that such a relationship is by no means possible; and then later on, when it is possible, one will have it all.

This friendship is still a delicate issue for my husband. He accepts it, since my son has consistently declined to have sex. My husband has not been aggressive about this issue. Of course, he could have forbidden the friendship. [21] But that would merely have driven everything underground; I don't know what would've happened then. I do know that my son's friend has had quite a few relationships which the parents knew nothing about. This always astonishes me. I don't understand it. The children call him on the phone, he comes to visit them, they eat and sleep with him, are allowed to do everything with him. But the parents are clueless. It's because nothing is discussed. This makes me anxious. For him, namely. I fear that at some point,

this could lead to problems for him. Now, I understand very well that he can't exactly be open about his predilections. He would risk losing his job and almost all of his social contacts in the home and his neighborhood. It would only take two or three people having a problem with this issue – they could then do a lot of damage. The risks are enormous. There are children whom he only stroked or merely kissed. With only a few of them did things go further.

If he ever did get into any real difficulties, I would support him. Because we talk about many things, I could ease his burden. It's only terrible for the children who do not talk with their parents about it. They are weighed down by an enormous secret. If they have a falling out with their adult friend and stop seeing him, perhaps because they no longer want to have sex – where are they supposed to turn to then? On the other hand, some children are also able to massively exploit pedophiles. That's why he is so vulnerable. This could happen, and it too is not right.

Still, I have never sought to deny my son this friendship. I think he has the right to make his own choices. And after all – what's more beautiful than love?"

"We've Asked Them To Be Careful"

Paula is the mother of three sons. All three had a relationship with an adult man who had already been accepted as a friend of the family. Even now that they are fully grown, a good friendship still exists.

"It ran its course quite naturally," Paula said. "Just like adolescents stop giving their parents a good-night kiss, the caressing disappeared from the relationship." She made a concerted effort to avoid using proper names or recounting too many details. "In this rural area, if these friendships were to become known, it could put us in great danger." Her sons were eight, twelve, and thirteen years old when Paula noted that something was afoot in her house.

"He was our eldest's music teacher, and came to the house once a week. Based, above all, on the behavior of our youngest boy, who was especially willing [20] to cuddle. It was initially just a feeling, but then I simply came out and asked the music teacher. He was quite honest, and said: 'Yes, I am a

pedophile.' And there you are faced with the facts of the matter. We could see how he treated our children, as well as how he'd taken the discovery in stride. We asked him what he felt for our children, so that we could tell them ourselves. We in fact did go over it with the children afterwards, in the presence of this friend. This immense candor has been extremely important.

Later on, he even invited the children to sleepovers. We consented, but of course initially you sit at home thinking: Oh dear – Have we done the right thing? But we were buoyed by the fact that we'd been up front about everything. And by the fact that our children were capable of declining things which they did not want. This is how we'd brought them up, and one just hoped that this would continue. And this seemed to be the case.

Our youngest recounted quite spontaneously what had happened there. Nothing out of the ordinary! He'd asked the older friend to be prudent, not to rush anything. It was also nice for him to be able to talk about it. I still recall what my oldest two boys said regarding a couple of the sleepovers: 'Mommy, I was allowed to sleep in the big bed this time' – 'Oh,' said my husband and I, did you find this nice?' Yes, he thought this was marvelous. I could also well imagine my youngest saying this. He said: 'You know what I really like, Mommy? when he tickles my back.' I said: 'Oh yeah – he does that?' We tried to pose our questions in a playful way. We had already learned from the older friend that our son really liked being tickled; anything more, however, was not allowed. Our children also recounted this quite spontaneously: 'Only, when he got to my pee-pee, that I didn't need, that, I found silly. 'Then we said: 'Ah, he shouldn't do that?' We were always lighthearted about it, because we absolutely did not want it to be laden with great significance.

This is really the greatest mistake you can make. Because children do not know the importance adults attach to sexuality. We construct this. As adults we are stuck in our own thought-world, but this is something entirely different from what happens between pedophiles and children. The hardest part is that one must oblige one's children to keep quiet about such friendships. But this has to be, Pedophiles can be fired from their jobs, apprehended, and even criminally prosecuted. And one must spare such a friend from this. But on

the other hand, one wants to let one's children know: Boys, this is nothing out of the ordinary, you've no need to be ashamed. The taboo. The opposition to it, is difficult for me. This is also why I became a member of the NVSH - Pedophilia Working Group.* I've come to have a great deal of respect for the mentality of the people I've met there. But one also has to risk being honest about oneself. Certainly one has one's [23] doubts, but children are demanding their own rights. When one thinks back on one's own youth, one should not stick his or her head in the sand.

[*Trans. note: The NVSH is the Dutch Union for Sexual Reform.]

I am not apprehensive about abuse. A child's presence is often enough. Then the older friend takes the child into the bed and strokes him or her. What is there to say against that? Parents do this too. Children also crawl into their parents' bed. Then one also cuddles with them. This is part of their upbringing, I feel. In any event, there's already enough fear of touching. It is probably a fear of evoking emotion. Notice that I did not say, 'certainly': Study it! But experience teaches us that this type of life-experience is really surprising.

A pedophile is someone who loves children. He does not wish to frighten or let down the child. Perhaps he does make unintentional mistakes. But child-rearers do too, don't they? From the very beginning of our involvement with this, we've been open and honest. Parents should make it clear to their children that the latter can talk about anything with them, even things the parents don't understand so well. One can also start conversations with pedophiles themselves. And if he does make a mistake, must one suddenly look at him askance?

I know that a whole lot of children provoke things themselves. We've also experienced this at home. It was something along the lines of: How far can I push the parents?

When one does this with someone who's already had to control himself, then, yeah, one time he'll probably go too far. Then, one has to get stuck by the rosebush. Care must be taken to ensure that the child learns to establish a different sort of contact. When openness prevails, one has the parents in one's corner from the very beginning.

"Children Choose Their Own Relationships"

"With these sort of relationships, I worry more about the adults than I do the children. It is always one's environment that finds such relationships problematic," recounts John, fifty years of age. John has raised nine children: one of his own, four official foster children, and four additional children whom the parents successively consented to hand over to him. Four of the children had relationships with adults.

One of these children did not want John to tell anyone the details of his personal experiences. He speaks, therefore, only in general terms as a parent and a child-rearer. John says:

"Children choose their own relationships. I never used the power that I could have exercised; nor did I wish to. I stood by the kids. This also meant that occasionally, I was in conflict with society. Of course, at home, I had the last word. But this happened – at most – a couple of times a year. Children had the first word, and this happened on a daily basis. If the child chose a relationship which I didn't care for, [26] we had a discussion about it. Because, the relationship with your own child is maintained through thick and thin. In the end, as either parents or foster parents, you can't just say 'shove off' when a child steals something, or is nasty or foolish.

Pedophilic relationships have their own value, their own strengths and weaknesses. The fact that the child becomes a little king, well yes, I won't begrudge him that. This has its own worth, which I, as a parent, am not able to offer him. Because, I have other children, a household, and a job to consider. As a group leader at a children's home, I have sometimes dealt with runaways. Their people already know where to find them. And I would find them, occasionally literally in bed with a man. Yes, they lay there quite contented. Because these kids have every reason to seek consolation, I've always held back, thus placing a roadblock to the use of official force. I'd undoubtedly been thinking for some time: If only I too could offer this warmth and attentiveness! I have intervened only when the children were extorting the adults.

What can one do for children? One can point them towards contraceptives, but usually they've long since

learned about them in the schoolyard. Practical decisions – which as an adult one must make – are communicated: consent to stay overnight, arrangements concerning times. One must then also accept an adult visiting one's child, even in his or her own room. One should not just suddenly decide to do some dusting in there. I am more and more concerned about the adult in such relationships – whether the older friend be male or female – than I am the child. The adults are open to blackmail! They are vulnerable and on shaky ground.

I personally have no problems with the sexual aspect. Children climb into bed with their parents, go into the shower with them. If one permits these things, one realizes that they have a healthy interest in the parents' bodies and sexuality. Then I say: Now, this is a good thing. One calmly lets them examine one's body, calmly lets them look at a sexual life as parents. One lets the child into it, shares one's feelings, calmly allows one's arousal to be viewed. Lets them really see what your sexual life is like. The great advantage to that is that later on, you'll hear about what they themselves are experiencing. One the other hand, children also set their own limits. But for the most part, they have no problem sharing things with adults. It is always the outside world that finds it problematic.

Children are searching for themselves. This happens above all in the transitional years – at ten, twelve, fourteen, sixteen – when they put more distance between themselves and their parents. The parents are, at times, just old people in their eyes. At that point, the older friend is everything; for a certain period of time, he represents the ideal. But after about a year, everything returns to normal. It comes to an end – sometimes suddenly, but usually, gradually. At that point, the two have different needs. But a lasting connection comes out of this as well – a good relationship.

Of course, children are not their parents' property. Children run around with a hundred secrets, which is a little idiosyncrasy that they probably even find [25] quite thrilling. There are also secrets just due to the customary balance of power; school, the family. Pedophiles in particular are very vulnerable, quite powerless. They can be reported. In the final analysis, the child is always the powerful one. The child can talk with his or her parents, can simply stay away from the adult. By way of example, parents and teachers have far more power over a child. I myself strive for a power-equilibrium in relationships with children.

Letters

I am thirty years old and love boys. I met my current young friend at a major event, when he accosted me and begged me for some money to buy something to drink. I gave the money, without giving him a second thought. After about five minutes he came back, in order to show me that he'd spent the money.

But still, no further reaction from me. About two hours later, when I'd bored myself with something or other, I remembered the boy and began to look for him. Once I'd found him, we chatted a bit and enjoyed ourselves for the rest of the day. When the event ended, I brought him back to his house. His parents weren't home. Two days later I got a call from from his mother. We arranged to meet, and I introduced myself. His mother seemed to attach great importance to her son's reaction, and to assess our relationship based on the boy's response.

I met up with him – he's eleven years old by the way – often in the period following that. At the beginning we saw each other once or twice a week, more often later on; but there were other times a whole week would go by without seeing each other at all. The relationship grew and strengthened with the freedom which we allowed ourselves. Our friendship is based first and foremost on affection and trust. Actual sex plays a secondary role. There are times in which a whole lot of things are going on; but there are also times when little is happening. Affection, physical contact, taking one another by the arm, and cuddling are, however, almost always wanted on both sides, and are also put into practice, even in public. Of course, I also have the desire to experience physical sexuality with my young friend. But this desire is closely linked to my boy's desires and statements. His parents know about and support the relationship, and see it as being positive for both of us. (Man, 30 years old)

"I met my older friend by chance, at a playground in the park, when he spoke to me. We enjoyed ourselves, goofed around, and arranged to get together the following day. I heard he was into boys from a friend the same age as me who, in turn, had learned about him from another friend. This news didn't frighten me but instead made me curious and horny. I admit to rubbing [26] it almost every day, and therefore, it was very

interesting to meet a man who was interested in what was important to me.

We had our first sexual contact after about three weeks. At that time, we got together two or three times a week. At his house I discovered a book about pedophilia, with photos showing a boy and a man hugging and kissing each other. I showed him the book, and asked him whether he was into that. He wasn't surprised, and said: 'Clearly I am into that, but only when the boy is also into it, and the two want something together.' After that he told me a bit about himself and his feelings. I edged closer and closer to him, until we were laying arm in arm and cuddling. Because I was wearing only cloth trousers, he could see my erection quite clearly. He caressed and stroked my entire body, eventually including my... I would prefer not to say any more – you can imagine the rest. I think it's stupid that these things, when both want them, are punished with the clink. It makes me happy, I like my older friend, and sometimes, I have to endure not being able to walk arm-and-arm with him and kiss him when we're taking a stroll in the park." (Boy, 13 years old)

"Love means a great deal to me. Four years ago, I found a man who I've grown very fond of. My life was entirely different before I met him – much more boring. When I came home from school, I sat around the house, with only my mother around – who was also not in a good mood – and no one else. Evenings, television after dinner, and then to bed – and so it went every day, until I met him. Then a whole other world opened up for me. I knew nothing whatsoever about people or about love, but he's taught me about all of that. When you don't have anyone, you sit in front of the TV every night. I used to do this too, but now, nights are marvelous with him in bed with me, where we tell each other what's been going on, and I think this is wonderful.

Now I truly know what love is. Love is not merely going to bed with someone, getting off, and then it's over and done with. No, love is something entirely different. Most parents go to bed together, get off, and then do it again a week or two later. No, this is not love. When you love someone, surely you want to spend every day with him as well as sleep with him. When I go to bed with him, I find this very good, because I feel completely at ease, and all of my stress goes away.

Although at the very beginning things were pretty difficult with my parents, lucky for me, this is no longer an issue. My older friend now has a really good relationship with my parents, and comes to visit us often. Mom and Dad think it's quite right for me to go see him and have a good time over there. (Boy, 14 years old)

"I'm turning to you today because I can no longer see a way out, and don't know what else I should do. My name is Andreas; I'm 13 years old, and have three siblings. Between the ages of eight and eleven, I was in a group home. For roughly a year now, I've known that I'm gay. Girls don't interest me. My mother knows this. My father must not know, because if he did he'd hit me. My older brother teases me about it, and makes life difficult for me. My mother had to go down to the youth department with me, because my brother was telling horror stories. Now they have to send me to a psychiatrist.

Some time ago I met a man I got along with very well. He would like to help me. He's already been with someone for several years now. Now the youth department is trying to get my mother to file a report against him, which she will probably not do. But I am afraid that I will get blamed if my friend were punished, because, of course, I was the one who sought him out. It's hard with kids my own age because they just laugh at me and say 'gay boy' to me.

Now to my questions: Who can I turn to who will help me with all this? How can I see my friend without putting him in danger? What should I tell my mother and siblings? How should I conduct myself at the youth department? Please write back to my trusted friend's address with your reply."

After his letter was answered:

"I read your letter with great pleasure. Many thanks for that. It is very difficult for me to explain to my parents that I am not sick. Is there any way that you might be able to write a couple of lines to my mother about how such feelings are actually quite natural? It's mostly my older brother who makes things difficult for me. He's 16 years old and a huge liar.

He makes me look bad to my mother by making up stories about where I've supposedly been staying, which really isn't right. Sometimes I think my brother wants to get rid of me, and I'll be sent back to the group

home. I also have a twin brother; he's like the weather – sometimes helping me, but sometimes lying also. I was so delighted with your quick response and, above all, by the fact that you were willing to help me."

Following a further reply:

"I have such welcome news to report to you. My mother now understands completely. Also, my brother is not allowed to say anything against it. I visit my older friend every day. My mother would also have nothing against it if I were attracted to him." (Boy, 13 years old)

"Someone said: 'Sexual intercourse with children — this is not permitted!' My spontaneous response was: 'Pedophiles don't fuck!'

[28] When I had time to reflect on this exchange, what I wished I'd said is that one shouldn't look at it in such narrow terms. Even a child suckling a mother's breast is – at its core – a kind of sexual intercourse with a child. Presumably, everyone knows that the infant is not simply filling its tummy, but at the same time is also experiencing sexual pleasure. The mother is told that nursing is good for the womb, so that it will be able to quickly rejuvenate itself following delivery, or something along these lines. What mothers are not told is that many of them – perhaps only those who are particularly sensitive – will, possibly for the first time in their lives, feel the deepest, most tender sensations throughout their entire bodies, including the womb and every sexual organ. Reflecting on this should at least placate our fears about pedophilia somewhat.

Someone said: 'Well, once they've reached adolescence, sexual maturity, one doesn't find that so bad.' I find 'sexual maturity' to be a very misleading phrase. It's intended to mean 'reproduction age,' or something along those lines. Because, human beings are ready for sexuality from birth onwards. Everyone comes into the world equipped and ready for sexuality and affection. That later on, when the body has become big and strong enough for reproduction – the functions necessary for that falling into place – changes nothing as to the facts of the matter. The whole of the sexual event actually plays out in the brain, where the nerves' messages are processed, and the child's brain is quite sufficient for this.

We must first cleanse our ideas about pedophilia from every association with concepts such as brutality, exploitation, self-interest, and filth before we can begin to glean a few scraps of understanding about it.

Sexual love is still the most beautiful thing in the world, and we should not spoil the joy associated with it by holding onto dirty ideas about particular manifestations of it. Why are we still so inclined to find fault with this most beautiful thing? After all, we all have sexuality to thank for our very lives. We have to assume that our parents – who at that time long ago were not as enlightened as we assume ourselves to be today – pursued our conception with many misgivings and reservations. Perhaps these scruples of our parents have just become second nature to us, as inherited genes so to speak. For generations now, we have been handicapped by heaps of myths and mendacious Victorian moral concepts. They are stuck deep inside our subconscious and prevent a clear recognition of reality.

Surely we must dig far deeper into what it means to be a child in order to truly face all facets of this jewel 'sexuality' sensitively, impartially, and amazedly." (Woman, 52 years old)

"I'm having to write you today quite urgently, because there has been some trouble. Actually, for a pen pal from a neighboring village. His name's Joseph and he's 16 years old. I got a letter from him today, in which he [29] writes that his mother has found my letter to him. So he's not allowed to write me anymore; all of my letters are confiscated by his mother.

But the worst part is that he used to have a boyfriend (over 18 years old). Of course, she immediately put an end to it. But there is still a danger that she will report him – I am, of course, quite beside myself. What should I do now? Please (once this is mailed) respond to me quickly, because I – and above all Joseph – need some help." (Boy, 15 years old)

"For several years now, my ten-year-old son has been inviting his somewhat older friend to stay overnight with us on weekends from time to time. They got to know one another way back in nursery school, and have stuck together through thick and thin ever since, the way it is with boys, in an unshakable bond, occasionally interrupted by the quarrels that go along with that. I am very fond of children, which is also why I was active

in youth work for many years. That's why I also take great pleasure in observing everything my own children are up to.

I am always jealous when I see how my young son and his friend get along with one another. They also have quite a few secrets between each other. You notice this when they hide behind a comic book, turn to one another, and furtively grin, or when you hear them in their backyard tent whispering weightily.

Sometimes it make me really curious. Then I like to creep up closer, in order to eavesdrop. I don't allow myself to contemplate my son opening up the tent and catching his mother in the act, as you prick up your ears in order to spy on him and his friend. I would die of mortification.

So, one time, I also heard them goofing around in the bedroom. But it's only two or three weeks ago that I had a really bad scare. As always, before I go to bed myself, I just look in on the children – out of maternal concern, I mean – to see that they're warmly tucked in and so forth. My husband was already in bed when I went to my son's (and his friend's) room. And what do I see: two stark-naked little boys, their underwear down somewhere by their feet, intimately entwined with each other, arms and legs around one another – thus they lay there sleeping with contended looks on their faces.

I was ambivalent. On the one hand, I had to inwardly laugh, thinking: 'those rascals!' On the other hand, as I already said, I was terribly frightened by this unexpected confrontation. I didn't know what I should do. First I thought: 'You mustn't do that!,' and wanted to wake them up and demonstrably separate them. I thought about laying the boy down somewhere else, and forbidding him from coming to visit us in the future. I considered giving my boy a couple of strong smacks on his naked buttocks. Then, I even thought about subjecting them to a harsh interrogation: 'Which one of you [305] initiated this sexual orgy?' Because, of course, as a mother, you cannot imagine that your own son would've done this. But fortunately I admonished myself, and in any event, decided to postpone the taking of any measures until the following day. I very carefully covered the 'obscene boys' with sheets and blankets, and my son breathed a deep sigh and snuggled even closer against his friend – whose anyway already mischevous expression seemed to take on an even more lascivious aura.

Although my husband called for me to come to bed, I made my excuses and went down to the living room. I poured myself a big glass of sherry and sat down there for a good half-hour in deep thought. I was conflicted, in a way that was not particularly easy to resolve: Should I discuss this with my husband? Of course, I knew what he thought about gays and such. I remember his rage when he found out that an older son of course had gotten a haircut from a barber who was well-known for being gay. My son's defense -- that he was 'the best barber in the area' – was rejected by my husband: 'Better to get a bad haircut than to have the paws of such a disgusting person on your head!' I also considered the parents of my youngest's friend. They would certainly not be able to swallow this, and it could lead to sharp words.

As I slipped into bed with my husband with another sherry, this elicited a deep sigh from him as well. He wrapped his strong arms around me and lovingly drew me to him. In a boisterous gesture in response, I slung my arms and legs around him in exactly the same way my son had been 'shown' how to do. My husband murmured in my ear: 'Delightful, my darling,' and I thought: 'Delightful, yes.' Suddenly I wondered why only we were permitted to have this wonderful feeling, and the two boys in the room next door were not. And there arose within me a feeling of rebellion against a church and a culture which made it impossible for me as a mother and a child – rearer to be tolerant of two splendid friends who, in their natural behavior, did precisely what God and nature have provided them as proof of their love for one another, as the most fundamental and most magnificent form of expression. Consequently, I resolved to keep to myself what I had been confronted with as a secret. In the next few days, when the opportunity arose, I would speak with my son about love and sex, without tipping him off as to the reason for it. However, as of today, I still haven't gotten around to it.

His friend slept here again this past week. In the evening, they again sat together and grinned over their comic books. I did not go to check on them in the evening, even though I was concerned that it could get cold at night." (A Dutch mother in a letter to the NVSH, the Dutch Union for Sexual Reform, published in members newsletter No. 411980.)

Child Sexuality and the Law

Strangely enough, it was children themselves who made it more difficult for me to get the words for this text down on paper. They played outside in front of my window, constantly making an awful racket, thereby often making it impossible for me to work. From time to time, I was so at my wits' end that I felt the urge to face-slap one of these little rowdies.

Most readers will be able to understand my anger, and laugh. But if I would have said something different, the laughing would have given way to an expression of indignation. If, for example, I had written: Children were playing in front of my window, which was really distracting me. Because there was a pretty little girl – or a lovely little boy – out there, whom I felt a desire to call over to me, in order – in the event he or she was up for it – to caress his or her naked body and have a really good time.

If I had written something like that, I would have been branded by public opinion as a disgusting criminal, a sex fiend. Although one can speak freely about inflicting pain on children, the urge to let a child enjoy sexual pleasure is scandalous. What is it about sex? Or about children?

Showing that other people and other times did not find erotic relations with children to be strange or repulsive should be sufficient. The fact that, nowadays, we Europeans would have rendered children coming into contact with sexuality completely taboo is, therefore, neither neutral (i.e., part of human nature) nor self-evident. Among the ancient Greeks, Romans, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Persians, and Arabs, boy-love was an entirely customary practice, a universal pleasure, or even a highly-regarded institution. [F1]

The Siwa in Egypt as well as the Australasian Aranda always considered sexual relations between a man and a boy indispensable to the latter's upbringing. [F2]

The Lepcha of India believed that, though a person may be too old for sex, no one is too young for it. [F3]

In the case of the Muria of Central Egypt, the entire youth population of the village – from about the age of six until marriage – lives in a house of their own, the entryway of which is decorated with male and female figures sporting over-sized genitalia. There, the older boys and girls mold, respectively, the younger girls and boys into experienced sexual partners. A missionary describes the Muria youth as healthy, strong, happy, and kind. [F4]

But we do not welcome the notion that we could learn something from these primitive peoples. Our Western culture has, of course, brought us [32] so wonderfully far, and something like that would just no longer be suitable for us. Our culture is too elevated for such things. To us, a child is just a child.

At the same time, however, we forget that the contemporary character of the child – i.e., its asexual nature, clearly distinct from that of the adult – constitutes a recent phenomenon even within our own Western culture.

Now let's look back a few centuries: Romeo and Juliet, our famous lovers, were children. In earlier eras, children didn't need any sex education – they had almost daily visual instruction in it. In order to calm children down, you stroked their genitals, and adults appeared amused when the little boy got an erection from it. The little ones were also invited to play with the adults' genitalia. [F5]

Around 1600, the Dutch author Karel von Mander wrote about how 12-16 year – old boys, as is well-known, are in the habit of being absolutely possessed by horniness, which is why he advises them to practice sexual intercourse, lest they be plagued by headaches. [F6]

The rich Briton Grace de Saleby only became acquainted with full sexual pleasure in her third marriage; she was eleven years old at the time.

Another Briton, Elisabeth Bradge, didn't get married until age thirteen, and was quite disappointed when her 11-year-old husband did not consummate the marriage straight away. [F7]

The principal of a grammar school in Holland allowed eleven-year-old boys to be publicly whipped because of their visit to a brothel. [F8]

The Ulm city council decided to prohibit persons under nineteen years of age from going to brothels because

the great influx of 12-14 year-olds was annoying the older customers. [F9]

Ulm was stricter than London, where, around 1800, at least 30,000 boys in this age-group were still being apprehended in brothels every year. F10]

In the year 1506, just as Louise von Savoyen was lamenting the fact that, after being married for a year, she still had not gotten pregnant, the 16-year-old Charles de Montpensier, who had already been married to his beloved for some time, had a child on the way. [F11]

At age 15, the son of the French King Francois I married the same-age Catherine de Medici; the chronicle recounts that the King himself would come to the bedroom at night, in order to watch the young people engage in sexual union. One person said of this King that he thought all boys over fourteen who still were not accustomed to sexual intercourse were wet blankets. [F12]

Two centuries later, a similar view was held by a French nobleman, who was unhappy because he'd never caught his 15-year-old son in affairs. The concerned father hired a prostitute in order to furnish the son with the necessary experience. He listened behind the door so that he could learn how things turned out, and when [33] his son proved himself to be a man three times within the space of an hour, the father weeped with joy. [F13]

In the wake of the French revolution, the key principles of the criminal law got an overhaul. Prior to that, the relationship between the spiritual and the secular authorities was so close that everyone took it as a matter of course when the preacher preached the morality and the prince – with the aid of the police and the courts – defended this morality and enforced its observance. The French revolution made a distinction between morality and law. From then on, as far as the temporal authorities were concerned, only that which did harm to the citizen or the society was punishable. For example, although sexual intercourse between unmarried persons might be regarded as immoral and condemned by the church, it was no longer of any import to the judge presiding over criminal matters, so long as the partners consented and no violence was employed. This freedom also applied to young people.

The Netherlands adopted French law during the Napoleonic occupation, remaining in force there until 1886, when the modern criminal code went into effect. Up until 1886, any voluntary sexual intercourse with a boy or girl – no matter how young – was permitted under the law, be it heterosexual or homosexual. But then, with the new criminal code, a so-called protection-age [i.e., age of consent] was introduced (as if sexuality were something evil, from which people needed to be protected!), and set at sixteen years of age. [F14]

It is instructive that the Dutch legislature, in its introduction of an age of protection, never referred to any scandals that might result from this heretofore excessive liberality. The conversation really wasn't about that. The government merely stated that because the surrounding countries recognized such a protection-age, the Netherlands should join them. [F15]

In more recent times, there have been repeated attempts to change the so-called protection-age-limits. In 1970 the Dutch Minister of Justice convened an expert commission which, a year later, undertook a survey of a large number of authorities and organizations with regard to morals legislation.

The responses were quite progressive by European standards: The Catholic Youth Council of the Netherlands proposed lowering the protection-age-limits from 16 to 14, and the rest suggested making an offense prosecutable only upon the filing of a complaint by the parents, and even then, in the case of children 12 and up, only if the child consented to the filing. The Dutch Youth Association also expressed the wish that there be no prosecutions of sexual acts willingly engaged in when the child concerned was between 12 and 16 years of age. Presiding judge Dr. van Houten wrote, in the name of the Evangelical Association for Child Protection, that punishment of sexual contacts must be limited to cases of violence, the threat of violence, deception, abuse of power, and being confronted with hard-core sexuality – in the form of acts or images – against one's will.

[3&] The Public Association for Child Protection declared that, in this offense area, only the abuse of power, harassment, and the infliction of harm should be regarded as punishable. The Society for Medical Sexology and the Dutch Institute for Social-Sexological Research advocated that, irrespective of age, unless the child has been forced to do something against his or her will, there should be no prosecution. Even the Public Law

Professional Association of Lawyers endorsed the complete abolition of the protection-age. F16]

(This contribution comes from Edward Brongersma, J.D., Dutch attorney, parliamentarian and long-time Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Upper House (retd.). I would like to sincerely thank him for allowing this to be reprinted.)

Footnotes

[Trans. note: Non—German titles have been left untranslated.]

F1. Raymond de Becker, "E'erotisme d'en face" (Paris 1964), Joachim Fernau, "Roseh fur Apoll" [Roses for Apollo] (Berlin 1963), Robert Flaceliere, "L amour en Grece" (Paris 1960), Rolf Italiaander "Ueder Krankheit noch Verbrechen" [Neither Illness Nor Crime] (Hamburg 1969), F. Karsch—fiaack' "Das gleichgeschlechtliche]Leben der §aturv2lker' [The Same-Sex Lives of Primitive Peoples Munich 1 11 Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Ostasiaten: Chinesen, Japaner, Koreer" [The same-Sex Lives of Eastern Asiatics: Chinese Japanese Koreans Munich 1906), Hans Licht, "Beitrgge zur antiken Eroiiik" [Contributions on Ancient"Eroticism] (Dresden 1924),'M. Meier g L. de Po ey-Castries, _Histoire de l'amour dens 1 antiquité. (Paris 1930), "Phallos" (Copenhagen 1969),, Gaston Verberg. "Clossarium eroticum" (Stuttgart 1932)"

F2. Walter Cline, "Notes of the People of Siwah and El Garch in the Libyan Desert" (Menasha 1936), Peter von Eeten et al., "Sex met kinderen" Den Haag 1972

F3. Peter van Eeten (ed.), "Sex met kinderen" (Den Haag 1972)

F4. Verrier Elwin "The Muria and Their Ghotul" (Bombay 1947)

F5. Lea Dasber , fiGrootbren2en door kleinhouden also historisch verschijnse1' (Meppe 1976)

F6. Ibid.

F7. Ibid.

F8. Ibid.

F9 Frank Arnau, "Das Ange des Gesetzes" [The Eye of the Law] (bhsseldorf 1962)

F10" Eduard Fuchs, "Illustrierte Sittengeschichte – Ergänzungsband: Die Galante Zeit" [Illustrated History of]Life and Customs -- Supplementary Volume: The Era of Gallantry] (Munich 1911)

F11. Guygggeton, "Histoires d'amour dc 1'histoire de France" Paris 1956)

F12. Ibid.

F13. Fuchs, supra.

F14. Mr. H.J€ Smidt, "Geschiedenis van het wetboek van Strafrecht" (Haarlem 1891)

[35] F15. Edward Brongersma, "De betekenis von 'ontucht' bij fedenmisdrifven met kinderen," in: "De1ikt en Delinkwent" (1978)

F16. Edward Brongersma, "De hervorming von de zedelijkheidswetgeving," in: "socialisme en Democratie," Vol. 35 1978

"He's My Son's Best Friend"

In the following interview, a mother reports on her son's romantic relationship with a man which she has been keenly observing for several years now. The family lives in a city in southern Germany.

Question: Since your son was twelve years old, he's had a romantic relationship with 35-year-old Jean Claude. When did you first become acquainted with your son's lover?

Mother: Right after my son met him. Tobias was playing soccer with some other boys, when he injured himself so severely that he was bleeding. Jean-Claude must've been watching the boys play, and fetched a first-aid kit from his car in order to bandage up Tobias. Then he gave my child a ride back home. Out of

gratefulness I invited the man in for a cup of coffee; we chatted a bit, and as Jean-Claude said goodbye, I of course had no idea that – out of this incident on the soccer field – a real friendship between Jean-Claude and Tobias would develop.

Question: Okay. Then, when did you suspect or discover that the encounter between your son and this stranger wasn't just a one-time thing?

Mother: At first, I neither suspected nor discovered anything about it. It was only several weeks later, when Tobias asked if Jean-Claude could be invited over again, that I became aware that the two of them must have been meeting up since that time. This struck me as a bit odd because, generally speaking, of course it's not every day that your own child brings home an adult stranger.

Question: At that time, did it perhaps also cross your mind that this friendship might also be paving the way to a possible erotic aspect later on?

Mother: At that time, not yet. I myself strive – insofar as possible – to not inhibit my son, and Jean-Claude seemed to me first of all like a man with a soft spot for children. At that point, I hadn't given any thought to eroticism between the two of them.

Question: As things developed, did Tobias tell you more details about Jean-Claude or his get-togethers with him? [36]

Mother: Yes, but not that something sexual played a role. From Tobias' accounts, I got above all the impression that he was happy, that he liked the man. He told me what they'd done together, and probably also that they'd cuddled with each other, and that he felt safe with Jean-Claude. My husband died in a car crash when Tobias was eight years old. Therefore, in some way I could understand how my boy would seek out the customary fatherly affection from a substitute-father.

Question: Has he told you any specifics about what he's experienced in his get-togethers with Jean-Claude, or what the two have talked about? Has he shared these things spontaneously, or only after questions were posed to him?

Mother: Well, it was more along the following lines: when we had a quiet moment, which I had with my boy from time to time, so that we were alone, then Tobias would often start talking about Jean-Claude, how happy he was around him, that he would listen to Tobias, and that Tobias could talk about anything with him. At that time, our familial situation made it necessary for me to work a lot, in order to keep the household going, which undoubtedly meant that sometimes, my child's interests got rather short shrift. Because you don't have an unlimited amount of time to listen. Of course, you dismiss a lot of stuff with "not now – later!"

Question: Were you accustomed to – insofar as time permitted – discussing with your son everything that was on his mind, or was this need to talk with other people something new to you?

Mother: No, I was used to it; Tobias has actually always been that way.

Question: Did your son's accounts also include things which made you suspicious?

Mother: Hmm...yeah. Here, I need to say something about my own experiences growing up. As a twelve year old girl, I was raped by my father. Here one is – especially with an only child – first of all a bit skeptical, when a grown man is so involved with a boy. On the other hand: Because of my own negative experience with my father, I was of course keenly observing everything; but as far as my son's relationship with this man was concerned, there really weren't any alarm bells going off in my head. It's not as if Tobias suddenly fell silent and was no longer talking about what was of concern to him; nor did he show any sort of nervousness or change in personality. Quite the contrary: He developed positively; therefore, no negative changes whatsoever. And that's why I took a wait-and-see approach. But a certain wariness on my part was already there, because I had this notion of power in my head; so, a wait-and-see approach.

Question: What changes did you see in your son?

Mother: First of all, Jean-Claude was the first man Tobias trusted, although of course cautiously at first. He was basically still defensive, because of course he had yet to find his role with regard to this substitute-father. He'd had too little experience with men in general for his feelings to be clear right away. Jean-Claude was the

first man he sensed he could trust, who he came to trust. And yet, instinctively Tobias was so insecure when it came to men that, when he thought he sensed a change in Jean-Claude's feelings, he feared the grown-up would reject him, which would then cause him to withdraw into himself.

In the meantime, I realized that there was some eroticism involved in the relationship. Tobias had spoken to me about it. I had even asked: "Has he compelled you to do anything, or has he said anything, where you had the feeling, you had to do this now, because he gave you a lift or did something else on your behalf?" And then came the unambiguous statement from Tobias: "No. I find this nice, and I also think it's nice when he touches me, and then it's really cozy." At that point I just thought: As long as Tobias is happy, that's fine, and it was obviously good for him. And so I let it go.

And then there came a phase, when Tobias got older, midway through puberty, when he had a bit of internal conflict going on – when he had a period in which he couldn't even stand Jean-Claude touching him, even just on the arm or wherever, non-sexually. And then there came a phase where he withdrew completely, even from me, also with regard to Jean-Claude, until one time, I spoke with Tobias, and asked what was actually going on with him.

Tobias said: "It depresses me, I don't like it at the moment, I don't know why but right now I just don't want to be touched."

I asked him: "Well: have you spoken with Jean-Claude about this?"

Tobias said: "No."

I asked: "Well, why not?"

He said: "I don't know myself, and I also do not want to be without him, and I feared this would hurt him."

And so, my son was afraid not so much of Jean-Claude perhaps pulling away, but rather, of hurting or offending his friend.

Then I said to Tobias: "You know – you've already had such mutual trust between each other for so long, and if you want it to continue, and also that Jean-Claude will continue to have trust in you, then you must also be open with your friend." Then he took heart, spoke with Jean-Claude, and returned very much relieved. In my opinion, this made the relationship even stronger.

Question: So, your son had a real fear of losing his adult friend, but also, of hurting him?

Mother: He was mainly afraid of hurting him. This was his biggest fear.

Question: If, at this point, the adult had broken off the relationship for whatever reason, would your son have been deeply affected by this?

Mother: Oh yes, most certainly. This would more or less have really been the worst thing that could've happened to Tobias.

Question: During the period of the relationship, have you ever had the feeling that your son really was afraid that the adult might end the friendship?

Mother: No, never. Tobias had so much trust in Jean-Claude's sincerity – no, my son wasn't afraid of that. What he feared first of all was hurting Jean-Claude's feelings.

Question: Did he include you in the evolution of the friendship with Jean-Claude?

Mother: Yes, from the very beginning.

Question: Has Jean-Claude ever asked you for advice with regard to the relationship?

Mother: Yes. When he was uncertain as to whether he had treated Tobias properly, whether he had decided correctly in important matters which concerned Tobias, then he actually did come to me and ask for advice.

Question: How is the friendship between your son and the adult man going now?

Mother: Jean-Claude has invited Tobias to spend the weekend with him. They've done a lot together, gone on trips, gone sightseeing, which Tobias is interested in. He's vacationed with him, asking me beforehand if

Tobias would be allowed to come along, and whether the trip fit in with our plans. I've basically asked Tobias what he'd like to do, at which point he usually responds that he wants to go with Jean-Claude. I've given my approval, although I initially had a problem with the fact that he'd rather do something with an outsider than with me.

Question: Were you a little jealous of Jean-Claude?

Mother: Yes, sometimes, because following the death of my husband I was single for several years, and poured everything I had into my child. The fact that a child would then rather do something with someone else when you've just bent over backwards for him – this was of course a bit frustrating. So, first I had to deal with that as a mother. But then I thought: When you realize that your own child has also developed positively within the family, that because of the friendship with this other person even the relationship with mom has changed for the better, then it makes everything easier. There is also the fact that the relationship between Tobias and me has evolved from a purely mother-child relationship into more of a friendly relationship, and this is certainly thanks to Jean-Claude.

Question: As a mother, do you also have a desire to give something back to the adult who has done so much for your child, perhaps by having him over?

Mother: I've often invited Jean-Claude over, not out of a desire to atone for my sins, but rather because, over time, I've also developed friendly feelings towards him. At first it was gratitude, because he'd given my son so much; but later, through conversations, when he brought Tobias back, and because he sympathized with my concerns, I also learned to appreciate him in other ways. He has also shown complete solidarity with me: For example, when Tobias didn't get his way at home, and because of that Tobias then tried to play us off one another, Jean-Claude told Tobias quite clearly: "If your mother's life is made difficult because of something you're doing with me, then when you come over, I'll just make an arrangement with your mother." Jean-Claude has always tried to help me with Tobias' upbringing as well.

Question: Has there been anyone else who has been jealous of the friendship between Tobias and Jean-Claude?

Mother: During the friendship, my partner at the time – now husband – moved in with us. Of course I told him about Tobias' friendship, because I had to give an explanation as to why a strange man came into the house so often. My husband was raised in a very conservative home, and therefore definitely had reservations of his own. However, he said: "If you think and believe that this friendship has a good influence on Tobias, then I have no problem with it." Nevertheless, at the beginning, my husband was wary; he really didn't know how to deal with the relationship. However over the course of time this changed completely, and today, my husband has deep feelings of friendship for Jean-Claude.

Question: Have you been invited to Jean-Claude's home?

Mother: Yes, even more often. That's how I was able to see how he lives, and this helped to reassure me even more. I was able to dispel any notion that Jean-Claude had to scrimp and save for everything he did with Tobias – a thought which I already had due to my own financial situation. But above all, I saw these invitations as evidence of openness. As a mother, you get the feeling that nothing is being held back from you, which is a really good thing in situations like this.

Question: It certainly does a mother's heart good to be able to inconspicuously get a closer look at the outsider-adult's home, in order to see if your son's landed in some den of iniquity, What were your impressions?

Mother: (Laughs). No, in no way did I have any feelings along those lines, because by this point, I'd already spoken with Jean-Claude a great deal; anyway, I never had a sense that he was hiding anything from me. I've always gotten frank answers to frank questions. Because of that, I wasn't worried about some den of iniquity.

Question: How is the friendship between Tobias and Jean-Claude going now?

[40] **Mother:** After my son signaled that he wanted to put some distance between himself and his friend, Jean-Claude said to him: "In that case, only come to me when you feel the need to."

Then things were quiet for a few weeks: that is to say, Tobias didn't go over to see him. But there soon came a desire to again go to his adult friend, because he wanted to be free to make his own decisions. From this time forward, Tobias has had a strong need to deepen the friendship. And when Tobias was prevented from spending the weekend with his friend, he also had a strong need to have Jean-Claude over at our house. From the perspective of hindsight, I believe that the frankness between the two is precisely what strengthened the friendship. Better yet: Tobias made the friendship stronger than ever, like a breath of fresh air so to speak.

Question: Doesn't a pubertal boy's friendship with a man foster dependence?

Mother: No, not at all. Certainly not, when the relationship plays out in a way that both of them had a hand in deciding.

Question: Does the relationship continue to exist or has it ended?

Mother: It continues on, stronger than ever, and I am sure that it will last a lifetime.

Question: How old is your son now?

Mother: Tobias is now nineteen.

Question: Now, let's imagine you'd had a girl instead of a boy. What would you think if a situation were presented to you in which your daughter had – or still has – a similar friendship with an adult, be it a man or a woman?

Mother: I would think it was a good thing, to the extent that such a friendship had positively effected my daughter in the same ways. So long as there was no force or violence involved, so long as the child liked it and was happy about it, it would be irrelevant to me whether she were with a man or a woman, with a 15-year-old or a forty-year-old.

Question: So, is Jean-Claude something along the lines of a close friend of Tobias?

Mother: Yes, in every way. He is Tobias' best friend, although Tobias also maintains friendships with people closer to his own age. But Jean-Claude is the friend in whom he has the most trust and for whom he has the greatest affection.

Question: From time to time, many parents fear that through an erotic friendship with a man, their son could become homosexual. What do you think about that?

Mother: I've never had that fear. After all, even children who do not have relationships with men are homosexual.

Question: So, it wouldn't bother you if one day, your son came to you and said: "Mom, I'm gay"?

Mother: No, not at all. So long as my son is happy, I could accept a gay partner as well.

Question: Do Tobias' female friends know about Tobias' relationship with Jean-Claude?

Mother: Yes. I have personally advised my son – after a certain period of time has gone by – to tell them about it. My thinking was as follows: Of course, if a boy is laying in bed intimately with – and filled with trust for – a girl and the topic of an adult man in the family comes up, he can't deny the nature of the adult's connection to the family.

Question: Does your son tell you about his erotic experiences with girls?

Mother: Well, not in detail. But when, for example, we talk about sexuality in the family, and my husband and I also touch on intimate matters, he also discusses his own encounters, sometimes quite frankly. This even livens things up a bit.

One time, Tobias told me that he also has a strong desire to have sex with a mature woman. I think this desire has a lot to do with the loving and considerate way that Jean-Claude treats him. He may want to also experience this with a woman.

Question: When you look back on the friendship which has existed between Tobias and Jean-Claude up to this point, what positive things have come out of it?

Mother: First, that Tobias has become a lot more self-confident; although he does not overestimate his power, he has learned to assess it correctly; he is much more aware of what is passing many youth of a similar age by. Because of the conversations he's had with Jean-Claude, he can talk not only about relationships, but also about anything and everything under the sun. He is far more conscious of the world around him; he does a lot more thinking than he did before. And he has the self-assuredness and the self-confidence also to decide not to do something.

For example, he dreaded attending a gymnasium.* Although his scholastic performance was good, due to this self-doubt, he missed out on the transition to the gymnasium; in the end, however, he really did want to go, but the teacher ruined his prospects and said that a change of schools was now no longer possible. Through the initiative of Jean-Claude, who went to a great deal of trouble and wrote to every conceivable authority, in the end, we were successful in getting Tobias accepted into a gymnasium. Also, because he has learned to trust in his own ability, his performance has not dropped off. Although he would have done quite well with his studies there, and we parents would have supported this, he nevertheless decided at that point – with the same self-confidence – to pursue a vocational training (apprenticeship) program.

[*Trans. note: In Germany, upon completion of primary school, young people typically branch off into one of two tracks: the 'gymnasium,' which is a secondary school specializing in one of several areas, or, vocational training/apprenticeship. It should also be noted that the latter would not be associated with the same 'stigma' that often accompanies vocational training in the United States; well-paying jobs usually await them upon completion of their apprenticeships.]

Mother: The result of this relationship with Jean-Claude is that Tobias has become a self-confident person, trusts his abilities, shows consideration toward others, and is very sensitive.]

Question: Wouldn't this have been the case even in the absence of a friendship with this man?

Mother: I'm firmly convinced that the answer to that is no. Tobias was far too shaken by the loss of his biological father, at precisely the time he most needed a father. And I, as a mother, have probably tried too hard to be the 'good guy,' and have given him too much free rein. Because of all of this Tobias had fallen through the cracks, and no longer knew whom he felt close to.

Question: What advice would a mother whose son had a years-long intimate relationship with an adult give to other mothers whose children might find a friendship with an adult appealing?

Mother: Never stand in the way of the friendship, establish and strengthen contact with the grown-up person, also on your own part, so you'll be sure this relationship has nothing whatsoever to do with force or violence. Without a doubt, parents should carefully monitor such relationships. When they are certain that no force or violence is involved, they should always support these relationships, including contacts with the adult.

Question: Do you believe that parents will know – perhaps not consciously, but rather, subconsciously – when force or violence play a role?

Mother: Any mother who is concerned about her child will notice. Without exception. Actually, not just physical, but also emotional force or violence.

Question: Is it difficult for you to talk about these things?

Mother: No, not at all. Quite the opposite: I think that, when a mother does not talk about such things, it also hampers her relationships with her own children, who are carrying on such relationships. This can very quickly wreck a relationship – either the mother's connection to the child or vice versa; or, it could break the child, because he or she is constantly straddling two different worlds.

Question: During the relationship between Tobias and Jean-Claude, have you been able to discuss this friendship with other adults as well?

Mother: Yes, certain people. It's no big deal for me to talk about such things, but there are many people you

simply cannot say anything to. You can't discuss it with people who have preconceived ideas about what one should do or allow concerning this, because they are not prepared to be open-minded. But I talk about this just fine with people who are a bit more tolerant.

Question: Do you, from time to time, fear that your not very liberal surroundings could find out about this relationship and have a negative view of it?

Mother: It really doesn't matter to me what other people think.

Question: Because this relationship also had a sexual aspect, it was not entirely without its dangers as far as your son's adult partner was concerned. The law forbids most sexual relationships of this sort. In your opinion, would this prohibition need to be relaxed?

Mother: Yes. In my opinion, first and foremost, the children themselves should be asked, and must be allowed to decide for themselves. When children are happy in such relationships, and they are neither pushed nor forced into anything, then such relationships should be permitted. Because I know how positively my own son has been changed by it, I would never have had any problem denying there was any sexual aspect to it, if doing otherwise would have been dangerous for Jean-Claude.

Question: Based on your experience, are children able to decide whether they like something, or even if it's good?

Mother: Yes, quite well. Children are in a very good position to decide what's best for them. So they're able to do this in other areas: why shouldn't they be able to do it in the sexual sphere?

Question: Is there – in your opinion – a minimum age for sexual relations?

Mother: (hesitating) No – not really.

Question: Does this mean that the adult must use great sensitivity in order to discern and respect the child's will?

Mother: Yes, of course. But above all: This must emerge out of the relationship itself; otherwise, I would, of course, have never tolerated the relationship.

Question: Do children need adults?

Mother: Yes, always.

Question: In all areas? Even in the sexual sphere?

Mother: When children like it and it is good for them – yes.

Question: That means that children should decide?

Mother: Yes, first and foremost, children should decide.

"We Made Love Just Like Everyone Does"

Thomas is nineteen years old, and in his final year at gymnasium. He hopes to pursue a career in electrical engineering or data processing. He's had a steady girlfriend for two years. Therefore, nothing out of the ordinary so far. But, for a period of five years, from eleven to sixteen years of age, he had a sexual relationship with a man some eighteen years older than him. Out of the ordinary?

Thomas: "For me, it actually wasn't anything out of the ordinary. It probably would have been for those around me; but I don't think anyone ever found out about it. Just think how the gossiping would've started if it had been discovered. And then it would probably also have reached my parents or one of my siblings. I suppose I knew it was something that really wasn't allowed. But despite this, I've never regretted it, and I never felt I was in danger either. Certainly not during the later years. I didn't even find what I did sinful. What I experienced and learned in the relationship was really special and quite beautiful. It couldn't have been sinful or wrong. Anyway I was the one who brought it about. I still remember this part very clearly.

I was eleven years old, and it was springtime. I knew that Horst always hung around the edge of the forest with a pair of binoculars. I also knew that in the village, people were saying all sorts of things about Horst; that he was always skinny-dipping in one of the woodland ponds, and even lying about there naked and sunning himself.

One day, I rode my bike down to the forest, and there was Horst. Under the pretext that I was interested in birds and would love to have a chance to look through his binoculars, I struck up a conversation with him. All of a sudden I said to him: 'What a shame you can't see through the trees with a pair of binoculars, because I'm certain that one would be able to see lots of lovebirds in the woods.' Horst didn't skip a beat, recounting what he himself had already seen in the forest. Suddenly we were talking about masturbation. I still remember how I truly trembled with excitement, for this was the decisive moment. Horst asked whether I might have already done this once or twice myself. I answered in the affirmative, at which point he put his hands on my fly and said: 'Let's have a look.' I had achieved what I set out to achieve, and felt within myself a sense of great triumph. Horst just said: 'You can do it to me as well.' with hands shaking I did so, and thus we had sex with one another for the first time."

Q. How, at eleven years of age, had you already come to know about this in such detail?

Thomas: "From my older brother. I was about nine. One night we were horsing around with each other, when all of the sudden he took my hand, placed it on his penis, and said: 'Play with it a little.' I was a bit frightened, because his penis was so large and had so much hair around it. I'd already seen pictures of naked men, but the reality of it was something else entirely. But I found it quite thrilling; it was something with a certain air of mystery about it. My brother said it would be really great to play with it, and started playing with my penis in order to show me. This was the beginning of frequent sex-play with my brother, which went on for about two years. Then my brother started having sex with girls.

I always found it quite nice and exciting. And my brother always played with me for quite a while, to the point where I got an overwhelming sensation and said: 'That's enough.' Later on, I came to understand this signified an 'orgasm.' There still wasn't any semen at the time, but my penis was so stiff that it seemed to explode. I also knew nothing about sperm and such-like. I only found out about that when my brother and I did it in the barn one time during daylight hours. I was quite frightened when my brother ejaculated. He roared with laughter, and explained to me that this was even nicer than what I had experienced. Gradually I came to understand why my brother always took a handkerchief with him when he went to bed. From then on we always did our sex-play in the dark, so that our parents wouldn't find out about it. A short time before my brother started going out with girls, and no longer wanted to do it with me, a bit of liquid also came out of me, and this was indeed even more delightful than what I had experienced up to that point. So, when my brother put an end to the sex-play, I quite deliberately sought out contact with Horst. As a substitute for my brother, actually. Therefore, at eleven years of age, I already knew much more about these things than other boys in my class. They learned things from me, and thought I was quite experienced. They never even asked how I came to know all this."

Q. How did things proceed with you and Horst from there?

Thomas: "We always did it outdoors. Even in wintertime. Sometimes there was snow on the ground; then, Horst would sweep the snow away, take off his coat and lay it on the ground, and we would wrap ourselves up in it. Of course, in the summer, we usually stripped off all our clothes and made love in broad daylight. This was really quite dangerous, because we were not very well concealed. One time, someone did pass by. Horst quickly got on top of me, so it would look as if he were making love to a woman. But of course, that gave us quite a scare. Horst asked whether I wouldn't rather come over to his house. He lived with his mother; but this wasn't a problem. It's crazy, but for various reasons I never did want to do this, and it also never did happen. And Horst didn't press the issue.

We often sat at the edge of the forest, for hours, talking about whatever came to mind. Sometimes, nothing more than that happened; other times, it darn well did. Frequently, Horst got things going by saying: 'Do you feel like doing it?' When I said yes, we looked for a quiet little spot in the forest.

We made love just like everyone does, I believe, until we both climaxed. After a while we would return home. Horst has taught me how to make love in many ways – with the hands, the lips, and the entire body. I enjoyed it very much; and he, no less so. This was something completely different from the sex-play with my brother. I felt safe and secure, so that I was able to completely let go. Horst allowed me to discover where the lovely places on the body are, and what makes them so. It was different every time, and I always discovered something new. Anal sex was the only kind I was never interested in. Therefore, Horst never asked. He was always very caring, and put a lot of thought into how to make it as wonderful as possible for me; most of the time, he also asked me what I myself wanted. He focused on me completely, and because of that, I was always feeling guilty for having given so little in return. But he assured me that he found it especially nice when I was happy.

Sometimes, Horst tried to give me stuff. Sweets, ice cream, or a book or some such, But I never wanted that. I think this would have given me the feeling I was making a profit off him. But he wasn't insistent about it. At that point, he'd hold me tight, kiss me, and whisper in my ear: 'Okay, Tommy; what a dear boy you are.'"

Q. Did anyone know about these contacts?

Thomas: "No, no one; I've never even told my friends about it. After a while, I came to understand how risky this was for Horst, and him getting into trouble because of me or some carelessness on my part was something I wanted to avoid at all costs. My friends and my parents probably knew that I was always hanging around with Horst on the edge of the forest. They probably thought I was really into birds, which I was happy to let them believe.

Horst never talked about me with anyone else either. Perhaps one time: When I was fifteen, another boy from the village was with him. This boy was a few years younger than me. He would not go away, and I had my heart set on cuddling with Horst: but Horst didn't make any moves to get rid of the boy. Then it suddenly hit me: Horst might also love this boy. The idea was a great shock for me.

When the boy finally did leave, I asked Horst about this. He said: 'Oh Thomas, you're jealous! Listen: There's really nothing to it. The boy comes here all the time. I've never told him anything about you. Maybe he would like to start something with me; but I don't want to with him.' I think this is the one and only time that Horst did not tell me the whole truth. In hindsight, this was probably the beginning of the end. I just could not stop thinking about that boy. No, something had obviously changed with Horst. But nevertheless. Anyway, from this moment on, I found myself less interested in Horst, and more interested in girls.

Really, at that point, everything changed pretty quickly. After a couple months, I stopped coming entirely. And it's already been three years now. I avoid Horst, and when I do happen to run into him, I say hello and quickly continue on my way. I actually find this really mean, and therefore, am ashamed of myself. At this point, he's probably heard that I'm going out with a girl now. Of course, it had to come to an end sometime. But I continue to regard him as a great guy. I would never say a word against him. I had sought out contact with him myself; I've learned a lot from him, and he's also given me a great deal. I believe that, in my relationship with Julia, I've drawn a lot on my experiences with Horst. In some small measure, I want to be for Julia what Horst has been for me.

Q. So, it wasn't difficult for you to develop contacts with girls?

Thomas: "No. Look: I've always had a good number of male as well as female friends. I do a lot of things with them. Horst was by no means my only friend. It was a different sort of contact, and I made love to him; with girls, no. At the beginning, I even found making love to a girl difficult. Horst knew me so well, and vice versa of course, that with him, everything went like clockwork. I was awkward with girls at first. It's now quite lovely with Julia."

Q. Does Julia know about your relationship with Horst?

Thomas: "No, no one knows about that. And I haven't told her either. I don't regard this as necessary. Moreover, it could become dangerous for Horst. Anyway, I've already left him in the lurch. I mustn't do anything more to him. I might tell her after a few years have gone by, when our kids are bigger and she begins warning them about strange men with candy.

Q. Later on, would you allow your son to make love to a man?

This question came as something of a surprise for Thomas. He hesitates, and then says: "Of course, I'd probably have to, wouldn't I? I could hardly say no. In any event, I would give my son better sex education, and would certainly never tell him he mustn't accompany strange men. But then, he must also know something about sex, and would also need to be around eleven years old. Above all, I would like to know what sort of man he is. I wouldn't have any problem with a man like Horst. But at that point, I would hope that he would tell me about it, so that we could discuss it together. Because one is also quite lonely with his secrets all those years, although, they too hold thrills of their own.

But the biggest problem would probably be ending the relationship. Of course, in my own case, I just took off; but I do not see how one is supposed to do it otherwise. If you don't break off the relationship, the other party has to do it. Nevertheless, the breakup is still constantly on my mind. I find my own behavior to have been basically mean, and this directed at Horst, who has always been so kind and nice to me. I would be glad to give my own children advice regarding such situations. Only – would they even take it?"

"Youth Sexuality in Tension Between Desire and Dread"

"Any growing boy, however normal and adapted to family and society he may be, can become involved in a pederastic relationship, but that tells us nothing regarding future abnormalities in his sexual development." (Th. Vanggaard) Often, such relationships are fleeting or of brief duration, because a boy is striving not so much for a lasting erotic friendship with a man as he is expressing a frank or furtive interest in the manly physique, the genitalia included. "In this sense, the phallus is, for the boy, a symbol of the fully – developed man's size, strength, independence, courage, cleverness, knowledge, influence over other men, possession of desirable women, and sexual potency, and it also stands for all of the other things which a boy admires in a man and craves for himself. Thus, the phallus is the bearer of a multitude of ideas and feelings which, in many cases have little to do with popular notions of sex." (Th. Vanggaard)

That is why it is not out of the ordinary for normally-developing boys "to select older comrades and adult men as role-models and emulate them. This endeavor is an indispensable factor in boys' development, and helps them in their efforts to acquire the desired qualities of older boys and men by identifying with them. Strong feelings of attachment and love are integral components of these relationships and foster boys' internal development." (Th. Vanggaard)

Many adults' insecurities with regard to this age-related curiosity were taken up by the Kinsey Report: "The anatomy and function of male genitalia interest young boys to a degree which can no longer be correctly assessed by older men who have become heterosexually molded and who are continually on guard against reactions which could be interpreted as homosexual."

In his short story "The Baths," the Danish writer Klaus Rifbjerg describes prepubertal boys' deep fascination with masculine genitalia. Boys are astonished first and foremost by the difference between their own little penis and the large genitals of adults, which drop down so dissimilarly, and seem so thoroughly interesting in all of their particulars. In the short story "Ill-Mannered Jensen," this same author describes the sexual relationship between a band of boys and an adult shopkeeper in a Copenhagen suburb.

A fascination with fully-formed genitalia is certainly not the only reason why a boy might develop an erotic interest in a man. Frequently, sex with a man is a substitute for an aspired to – but not yet attainable – intimate contact with a girl. For boys, sex with a man at least means not having to worry about an unwanted pregnancy. With the beginning of puberty, boys often already harbor pronounced homoerotic desires and interests which, in the course of pubertal development, might die down again and even vanish completely. But there is no such thing as being seduced into becoming a homosexual.

The Dutch jurist and parliamentarian Edward Brongersma has been collecting reports of sexual relationships between boys and men for several decades now, and has published them in various books and compilations.

Three brief examples shall be cited here.

A 15-year-old describes the ploys he uses in order to make contact with adults:

"I knew what I wanted, but I didn't know how to go about getting it. One day, I was at home with my uncle – everyone else was away. I steered the conversation to sex, and then I asked him if he'd do it with me. He didn't want to, and therefore, I said that, if he didn't do it, I would scream as loud as I could. I finally got him to actually do it, and this would not be the only time. We kept on and on at it, for about six months. I didn't fall for people so easily, and I knew that he wanted it. Therefore, he had only been afraid because I was still so young."

With great persistence, a 14-year-old paperboy tried to get in closer contact with a bachelor to whom he delivered the daily newspaper. As soon as they got to know one another a bit better, the boy began cracking jokes about girls that – in his opinion – the man would've had over to his house, and spoke of his own attempts to "chat up" a girl. One day, after they'd already been on friendly terms for quite some time, the boy mentioned that he had an erection. Didn't the man see how the front of his pants were bulging out? The man accepted this obvious invitation, and sex was the result.

Each day, two 15-year-old gymnasium students came for private lessons with a teacher they were on very friendly terms with. They were also sexually intimate with him. They were in the habit of – upon arrival at his home – taking off all their clothes, doing their homework with him, and then laying down on his bed, where the man took turns, one day having intercourse with one while the other watched and masturbated, and then the next day, vice versa.

One day, they arrived quite agitated, recounting how they had encountered "this real gay swine" who made a pass at them. "Now, we really beat the crap out of him; that'll teach him that we ain't no homos!," they said, as they undressed themselves for their daily sex play. With that, they then resorted to the expression that many boys employ: that what they do with adults has nothing to do with homosexuality, which they detest.

As one of the first scientists to study boy-man relationships, the Dutch psychologist Frits Bernard has looked into what negative effects they might have. He came to the conclusion that in those cases in which the sexual relationship came about as a result of mutual desire, there were no detectable disadvantages or harm whatsoever. According to this study, detrimental outcomes resulted – at most – due to the hysterical or rejecting postures of parents, the surroundings, or the justice system:

"Of greater significance here is the attitude of the child's immediate environs. Because of a negative posture, something which was nice for the child [50] can suddenly be turned into a problem, and the relationship finds itself thrust into the legal arena."

On another occasion: "Experience shows that, in reality, no one really gives any thought to the fate of children following 'sex offenses.' Their task is merely to testify accordingly, so that the case can be brought to a close. Their opinions are not welcomed, their needs are in no way met. Often, the child is not taken seriously. The attitude of one's environment, of society, can constitute a real threat to the child here."

Through his activities as an expert witness in criminal proceedings, Bernard has found that "being questioned by the police, however proficiently and congenially it is conducted, can have a traumatizing effect. Intimate things are discussed, which can be extraordinarily unpleasant for the child. The 'betrayal' – because of which the older person gets arrested – causes psychological harm to many children, which effects them throughout their entire lives."

When a child is summoned to a police interrogation because of a sexual relationship with an adult, he probably knows full well that this does not involve an official commendation. He senses very clearly that this is connected with a contact which is strongly condemned by his environment. His natural reaction to this is to be disturbed and anxious; or, he adopts the view of his surroundings, in order to not jeopardize his own social integration, and retrospectively feels ashamed about the sexual contact. Many children and teenagers' fears about their relationship with an adult being discovered have been expressed in statements collected by the Dutch sociologist Theo Sandfort, in the context of an extensive scientific study carried out under the auspices of the University of Utrecht (in the Netherlands):

"Yeah, I am afraid that at some point someone will find out, the neighbors will notice, or something. And then they'll tell the police, etc." (Boy, age 14)

"Yeah, when I think about this – and I'm not supposed to tell anyone – then I already get anxious etc. I think about it, and I would like to talk about it with somebody just once; but if I tell someone, and then he repeats it to someone else – I'm already anxious about this." (Boy, age 13)

Many children also internalize the strong taboo surrounding sexual affection with adults. The child is familiar with the expectations that have been placed around it, and knows that parents are not happy when these expectations are not lived up to. By an early age, he has already incorporated the norms of the adult world so deeply within himself that, oftentimes, he suppresses his own desires, and sees his own spontaneous behavior as 'naughty' or 'fresh' when he goes against the expectations of his parents. Remarks along these lines may also be found in Sandfort's study:

[51] "If my mother says 'that isn't right,' then I have to think the same way." (Boy, age 14)

"Of course, sometimes I do feel I've been bad, yes. That I do this, and no one actually knows about it – my mother, etc." (Boy, age 13)

"I think there are people who do not think this is a good thing etc., but I happily do it anyway. For example my mother, who, if she knew about it, probably would not think it was a good thing, and my father probably wouldn't either, and many others also would not think it was a good thing; but I myself feel quite wonderfully naughty, and do it anyway." (Boy, age 14)

The fact that, in the past, Dutch scientists first and foremost have been willing to tackle research into sexual relationships between minors and adults is not surprising. For one thing, our neighboring country's tolerance towards and interest in diverse manifestations of sexuality has traditionally been greater; this is verified, among other things, by the fact that the "Dutch Society for Sexual Reform" has, at times, numbered more than 200,000 members. For another thing, the presence of sexual child-adult relationships in Germany is subject to a strong suppression-mechanism, which categorically characterizes all such relationships as "abuse."

The first extensive German study of erotic relationships between children and adults was carried out between 1989 and 1991 by Rudiger Lautmann, Professor of Legal Sociology at the University of Bremen. Prior to that, no German sexual scientist had dared to study and describe such (not known to the legal system!) relationships.

On the other hand, the present book takes up the subject for the first time in the form of interviews with and reports from persons who are now adults. At this point, it shall resume with a further depiction: A father tells us something of his own puberty.

"In the Bar I Gave Him a Kiss"

Simon is 33 years old, and lives with his wife and three children in a Hessian city. In a conversation, he spoke frankly of his sexual contacts and relationships during his own puberty.

"I had my first sex with a man when I was twelve years old. At school, we were always whispering amongst each other about how there were men who did it with boys, and boys who did it with men. But at that time, I didn't know it for certain. At one point on the soccer field, this man smiled at me, and immediately I thought: He definitely wants to make it with me. I need to give off the right vibes.

I followed his signal, and we went into the quite dense underbrush he'd suggested. We did it to each other, then he said a soft goodbye and disappeared. At first I was a little disappointed that nothing more had happened, but later on I thought: This was actually really nice. Above all, I thought: So you can finally join in, when the others talk about men and boys.

When I was thirteen, I learned from older boys that you could also earn money from sex. The idea appealed to me. I tried for a long time, until I found a man at the train station, who actually wanted to go home after he'd finished work. He followed my signal, we went into the station's restroom, and afterwards he gave me a little money. It really wasn't much, but I'd earned some money myself for the very first time.

From that point on, I was a regular street-walker, which is to say, I never actually remained at particular places in the city and waited for men; instead, I got them to come right to wherever I happened to be. When I look at photos of myself from that time, I have to say: I was absolutely gorgeous. It's no wonder men chased after me.

With some men, I had real, long-lasting relationships. I'm still friends with two of them today, and we see one another occasionally. I'm usually the one who calls them up and invites them out for a coffee or a beer, just because I feel like chatting with them, or, if I need help. One of them – I'll call him 'Rolf' – had also taken a bunch of photos of me, when I was 14 or 15. A few years later, he presented them to me as a gift. I truly treasure them, because otherwise, I really would no longer know what I looked like at the time, and how I'd physically changed during puberty. I was content with my erotic assets; I was proud of the fact that I was already nearly a man sexually. At that time, I wanted above all to be photographed when I had an erection. In the process, I felt I was truly grown-up. When I look at these pictures today, I can well understand what men were looking for in me.

I don't know if I would've had so many sexual contacts if my family hadn't so badly needed the money at the time. My father lost his job as a long-haul truck driver because of his drinking. Maybe he could've gotten some money from the unemployment office, but he was ashamed to ask for it. He hung around the house all day and got on my mother's nerves; she already had her hands full with the kids. Two of my siblings were still living at home at the time – one older and one younger. [53] My oldest brother was already married and had a home of his own, which was more like a hovel, because, when it rained, the water ran down the walls and into each room. Because of that, my brother and his wife's baby was often sick. The welfare the two got was nowhere near enough. From time to time, I was also able to slip the two of them some money. They knew how I'd earned it, but said nothing.

I believe that my teacher also knew – or at least, suspected – what I was up to in my spare time. Sometimes I skipped classes, when a client only had time available in the morning. But me and my teacher had a great relationship. He often told me: 'Simon, I'm not worried about you. You know how to make your own way.' If he could see me today, a respectable father of three children, who does his job and often even works overtime, so that his children might have a better life – he would surely smile, and find confirmation of his trust in me back then. Also, he never went to the youth office to denounce our familial circumstances at the time.

Nevertheless, one time, we did come to the attention of the youth office. An older female neighbor, whose curiosity had probably been peaked enough to look into our affairs, who wouldn't see me stroll out of the house until 11 am on school days, alerted the youth office. A social worker came to visit, and kept a very close eye on our home. I don't think he liked what he saw: dirty coffee cups still sitting on the table, laundry soaking in the washbasin, the dishes from my mother's birthday party lying in the bathtub, and also the unmade beds. To him, it really seemed like the pits. I presume he suspected there were real orgies taking place in our home. There was really just one thing he did like, and that was me. When I picked up on this, I took him into the children's room on some pretext or other, named my price, and told him that if he wanted to have me, he should come back as a private citizen and not as a social worker. He never did return, and from that time on, the youth office left us in peace.

My parents never met my adult friends and clients. Only several years later, when I was in my mid-to late-twenties and long-married, did I encounter Rolf in a bar while I was with my family. I introduced Rolf to my parents, telling them that he'd been my best client and friend back then. Rolf, who is actually no shrinking violet, became as red as a tomato, and was ashamed. I consoled him by saying that I had no problem with anyone knowing what he had done for me at a difficult time in my life. Because, I had every reason to be thankful to him.

One time, I'd taken him to my oldest brother's 'hovel.' When he entered the house, his jaw literally dropped. Over the single hotplate, my sister-in-law was brewing coffee, and the baby's diapers were soaking in the sink. The home did not have a bed. It rained that day, the water trickling down the walls in thin streaks, and the baby – who had a cold – was crying incessantly. Rolf was so shaken that he turned to the local daily

newspaper to portray the situation. Due to the report in the newspaper, my brother got a new, bigger, dry home, with a bath.

When I was expelled from school (actually, I left on my own account), Rolf helped out with my search for an apprenticeship. He even managed to get me on a television program about unemployed youth, in which I played the part of the poor boy. I got three job offers just during the broadcast itself, one of which I accepted. A girl the same age as me also got a chance to speak during the broadcast; she also lives in the same city.

After the show, Rolf gave us both a ride home; during the trip, I had wild sex with the girl in the back seat of Rolf's car.

My puberty was a truly adventurous time. My other long-standing friend, whom I still get together with frequently (here I'll call him Richard), had a bar. I could always spend the night with him, whenever there was quarreling at the house and I couldn't deal with it. My father was still drinking all the time, and the family never knew what was going to happen next. Of course I did feel bad for my mother, , but I did flee to Richard often, in order to get some peace and quiet. In the meantime, though my somewhat older brother had in fact moved out, my younger brother – who was eleven years old at the time – and I were fighting constantly. Maybe I was playing the part of the substitute father a little bit, since I was the family's primary breadwinner. Of course, this is not something a little brother is simply going to accept on faith, especially because he's not allowed to know exactly how I support the family. I was only able to get along with my younger brother once he reached the age of 15 or so. He'd turned into a lovely little guy, and I wanted him to become Rolf's new friend because, in the meantime, I myself had become too old.

But Rolf said: 'Simon, I think your little brother is very nice; but let him decide whether he would like an adult friend.' This attitude annoyed me a bit, but perhaps it was simply jealousy because, one time, I nearly blew my top when I saw Rolf on the street with another boy, a real conceited little snot who – it was plain to see – attended a gymnasium. Should my Rolf have given his heart to a person like that? Of course, he should reel in my brother instead.

Through me, Richard and Rolf have also become acquainted with one another. To my great surprise, they really were not jealous of each other, and got along marvelously right off the bat. Richard also got a couple of lovely photos from Rolf, in which I'm sprawled out rather erotically. Now and again, when I'm sitting in the bar with Richard nursing a beer, I give Rolf a call and ask if he'd like to join us. A couple of times, he's immediately jumped into his car and come over to the bar.

I no longer have contact with any of the other men from my puberty. Nor do I long to. That part of my life is over. Today, my family is doing much better than it was back then; my father hardly drinks at all since coming out of rehab, the home has been renovated, the children are [55] out of the house, and my parents get a small income from my father's job. In the meantime, my little brother has also snagged an adult friend of his own and has moved in with him. My wife knows Richard and Rolf. She knows they are two of my closest friends. However, she does not know how I became acquainted with them both. For example, when she is with us at the bar, I also do not talk about old times with Rolf. And I also do not lean across the table in front of everybody and give him a big, sloppy kiss, like I did one time when my parents were having a drink with us. My goodness, was Rolf ever embarrassed. And yet, the other patrons at the bar really hadn't taken any notice of it. Still, when my wife is there, I don't do anything along those lines. My friendships with Rolf and Richard are part of my life. I love my wife, but this part of my life belongs to me."

[The next section is omitted in this translation, because it is a virtual word-for-word reproduction of a chapter from a book which I have already translated into English: "Interview with Andre and Peter: Beatings from Parents, Affection from Strangers," by Wolf Vogel, in "Pedophilia Unbound," ed. by Frits Bernard 1997 (pp. 317-328). The only differences Between the two are that in the present (Vogel) book, the introductory part is expanded slightly, and a later portion has been redacted somewhat.]

Sexual Morality Is Anti-Child

The life-examples in this book make clear that many persons who had sexual encounters or relationships with adults in their childhood or youth remain in favor of them when they themselves reach adulthood and have

children of their own.

They have fond memories of the encounters, and are able to recognize – with the benefit of many years distance – that these "secret loves" really have been advantageous to them. However, there are also persons who, under the influence of familial and social moral attitudes, have come to develop uneasy feelings in these relationships, or – as presumably occurs more frequently – concealed the relationship from their environment, due to a fear that it would be judged in a negative light.

In our cultural group, the Christian church has always had a formative influence on social attitudes regarding which sexual forms are allowed to be practiced, and which are not. Notably, at the Roman synod of the year 386, Pope Siricius was already trying to assert that sexual relations rendered persons impure per se: the view that, therefore, the lives of priests should remain sexually chaste stems from this era.

The influence of this hostility to sex can still be felt today. Thus Stefan Pfurtner, renowned professor of moral theology and social ethics, writes that a deep inconsistency is perceptible in questions of human sexuality and their life-culture, adding that: "With some topics, public discussion is so emotionalized, the positions are so entrenched, that a material dialogue is no longer possible. innumerable citizens have to suffer under what have become dubious moral traditions, with all their potential for strife and oppression."

On another occasion: "There is no doubt that social power and control is exercised via morality (as the continued existence of tradition, as doctrine and practice). It is just as indisputable that such exertions of influence can become immoral, and indeed, virtually take the form of moral terrorism." (Pfurtner)

With regard to the sexual behavior of children and youth, and the assessment of this behavior by the family, the school, the church, and the state, it is no wonder that children frequently have to put aside their own wants and needs, in order to comply with moral norms, and not place their social bonds in jeopardy.

The following is an excerpt from the transcript of a police interrogation. A thirteen-year-old was summoned to provide incriminating evidence against an adult staff member of a group home for boys, accused of having had sexual relations with them.

Question (Police Officer): Has Mr. X ever asked you beforehand if you were in the room, and then started to touch you with his hands, and take off your clothes?

Answer (Boy): Yeah, he'd usually ask beforehand. Later on, though, it went without saying, and that was okay by me. He could assume that I was always up for it.

Question: Has Mr. X asked you not to mention anything about the friendship to other students or teaching staff?

Answer: I'd promised Mr. X not to say a word to classmates or anyone else. He'd spoken to me about that, and we swore to each other.

Question: Have you done similar things with any other men?

Answer: No. Mr. X liked me, and told me that two people can also do it together. I'd already done it before just myself, but quietly and secretly, under the covers.

Question: Did this secret make you feel good?

Answer: No, I was always afraid that the whole thing might get out.

Question: Do you think that an instructor is educating a child when he is involved with him in this way?

Answer: No. I think it's filth, not education. I don't want to talk any more.

At this point, the interrogation record concludes. In addition to the details concerning what actually occurred, which he had undoubtedly already ascertained, the examining officer also felt obliged to bring up the moral issue. In the end, this provoked within the boy an inner compulsion to condemn as "filth" events which he had previously depicted as thoroughly positive. The fact that he was disinclined to say anything further following that surely shows the embarrassment and elicited unpleasantness at having to justify an amorous contact for which no justification whatsoever had previously been required.

The American author Germaine Greer describes a case in which a girl belatedly condemns an amorous contact:

"During her childhood, a friend of mine enjoyed the sexual relations she had with her uncle. It was only when she started school that she realized it was anything unusual. What made her feel depressed at that point was not what her uncle had done to her, but rather, the attitude of the teachers and the school psychiatrist. They all assumed that the whole thing had to have been traumatic for her, that she would now be disgusted by it, and needed special help. In order to correspond with their preconceived expectations, she feigned certain symptoms until, eventually, she really did feel guilty because, prior to that, she didn't know she'd done anything wrong. It got to the point where she severely reproached herself for her own innate physical urges."

For some years now, I have been recounting the following episode to my own circle of acquaintances: A married couple had brought their two children – an eleven-year-old girl and a six-year-old boy – along with them on holiday to an FKK [Freikorperkultur, = nudist] camp. There, the father took photographs of his wife and the two kids. The girl was particularly fascinated by the photos, which hinted at her incipient physical maturation. Brimming with pride, she brought a selection of the nicest pictures – showing her with as well as without clothing – along with her to school and showed them to a select group of (female) classmates, as well as her (female) teacher. Upon first laying eyes on the FKK-photos, the teacher's mouth remained wide open in astonishment, as the girl rather amusedly recounted. In the following days, the teacher tried – referring to the photos – to impress upon the girl that the FKK photos really should not have been taken at all, let alone shown to others. Nevertheless, the girl would not allow herself to be swayed by this, telling the teacher, in front of her classmates: "I think I'm beautiful, and I stand by my beauty, and therefore, I will decide who I'll show the photos to." The parent-teacher conference that was then convened by the latter only made the girl dig her heels in deeper; all the same, as time went on, the teacher never did desist in her efforts to give the girl a guilty conscience.

Just how much children have inwardly suffered when they have adopted traditional notions of sexual morality as their own is described by Fritz Leist in his book "Of Hidden Problems Among Priests," from which the following example shall be cited:

"I'd even asked myself often enough in early puberty – but even at the time of first confession – whether I hadn't been rejected by God, and was going to hell, because I'd looked at my sister real close a couple of times. At gymnasium, I played the role of the 'studious youth.' There I read the commentaries on the 6th Commandment over and over again, in order to find out whether I had already committed a mortal sin, or merely a venial sin. A Jesuit Father consoled me by explaining that although it was a good sign in a boy when he regarded everything covered by the 6th Commandment as a mortal sin, there absolutely also would be venial sins here. Another Jesuit Father, however, plunged me into deep anguish when, in spiritual exercises for the 13-year-olds, he depicted hell so vividly that I already saw myself there."

It would be a mistake to dismiss such reports as isolated cases involving young people who were identified with particular religious or social groups, characterized by unusually ascetic sexual moralities. Just how much children and youth are still – even today – instilled with fear and distrust of any and all sexual encounters – even those involving same-age peers – has been demonstrated by the pugnacious feminist Katharina Rutschky:

"Whereas, even now, no one is worried about an absence of desirable sexual-erotic activities among children, checklists are created in which conspicuous, inappropriate, and basically just impertinent and naughty behaviors are lumped together and ticked off." Rutschky also laments the "general lack of respect for children's privacy, which people think they can invade and control whenever they feel like it."

In over half of the conversations that I've been able to have with adults who experienced an erotic relationship as a child, the topic of "photography" came up. Though it was typically mentioned in passing, it was sometimes expressly emphasized that during the relationship, photographs were occasionally taken. There were photos of trips or sightseeing tours taken together, photos of sports competitions at or outside of school, but also photos which documented the children developing into adolescents and adults, clothed and unclothed.

Of course, even the topic of "nude photographs" is subject to extremely negative valuation. Adults usually fail to see that children employ a completely different set of criteria for assessing photographs. Most adults would probably endorse the view that a nude photograph would make one vulnerable, or even, open to blackmail. Children cannot comprehend this view. It is only with the onset of puberty, when the capacity for abstract thought begins, that youth start to become susceptible to the adult fear that a photo depicting one's own nakedness could have negative consequences for the person portrayed.

Children do not have this fear, because they themselves have never been tempted to use nude photos to make others vulnerable or blackmail them. This is adult thinking.

Children happily allow themselves to be photographed, though admittedly not so much in arranged poses, in which they have to remain still for quite a while, because the photographer doesn't understand how to handle a camera. Most children are proud when an adult offers to photograph them. Children themselves are also interested in these images, and make no demands that they be professional- Photographer quality. Children often put up such photos on their bedroom walls; at the same time, it is of no importance whether the children are clothed or unclothed in the pictures, insofar as the environment does not react negatively.

Uninfluenced children and youth frequently also have no objection when photos of them are published in magazines or calendars. Anyone who takes a close look at magazine ads or TV commercials can see the joy and pride on the faces of young models. Young people only become angry – and rightly so! – when the transmission or publication of their photos takes place against their wishes, or without their consent. But in that case, the focus of their scorn is the breach of trust, not the images themselves.

With such photos, which we adults characterize as "nude photos" (and basically do not even know when this definition is justified and when it isn't), children distinguish neither between decent/indecent, nor pornographic/non-pornographic. This – among adults – controversial topic, which fills entire legal volumes, would be regarded by children as extremely [65] silly, if they were actually asked for their opinion. Nonetheless, when they are assessing photos of themselves, children really do judge them based on whether they are good, or not so good. This takes place based on criteria which are just as subjective as the ones which we adults employ. Of course, we are not happy with every photograph of ourselves, either.

From Boy – Love to Friendship Between Men

Bjorn is 32 years old and a tradesmen. Jan is 45 years old and a social worker. Both reside in a large, north German city. Bjorn has been married for seven years; Jan is single. During a stroll, the two recounted how their earlier man-boy relationship evolved into a friendship between men, which also includes eroticism.

When Bjorn was ten years old, Jan – as part of his training – started working at a youth center which Bjorn and his three older brothers had been frequenting for some time. Jan took up this position with the ardor of a newly-minted social worker, his head full of revolutionary ideas. The boys and girls who visited the youth center on a daily basis liked his inventiveness; Jan soon became a grown-up friend to Bjorn and some of his similar-age friends.

The conversations between Bjorn and the social worker soon turned to the subject of sexuality. The boy tried to get a rise out of the adult by asking questions about certain sexual practices, which he'd become acquainted with via stories and forbidden films. But these signals weren't getting through to Jan. So, the boy resorted to more drastic measures. He began to imitate select sexual practices, laughed at Jan's

embarrassment, and frankly recounted which forms of sexual activity he himself had already tried out. Jan restrained himself, neither rebuking him nor egging him on.

A good year later, when Bjorn was 11 ½ years old, Jan came across the boy by the river which runs through the city. They sat down together on the riverbank and started chatting. Bjorn soon brought up the merits of his manliness once again, which he attempted to explain to Jan using a little stick as an example. By way of confirmation, he guided Jan's hand to the part of his body which he was emphasizing so much. At the same time, he said, in a tone of pretend seriousness: "But mine is much bigger than yours." A direct comparison failed to materialize, because Jan pointed out that they might be interrupted by a passerby.

Some weeks later, during the summer recess, Jan was doing some renovation work at the youth center. Bjorn saw the social worker's car parked at the front door, and started knocking loudly in a bid to be allowed in. The adult did in fact let the boy – who had sought seclusion behind the door – in.

When Bjorn saw the adult fiddling with a ruler, he pulled his pants down, and said to Jan: "Now, check how big it is." To his utter astonishment, Jan determined that the boy's bodily development was that of a fourteen-year-old. Through the boy's initiative, sexual contact occurred between the two, in the course of which Bjorn laid down on his stomach, and asked the adult to penetrate him.

Jan, quite scared and distraught, broke off the sex-play. Thrown a bit off-balance, the boy asks the man: "Why don't you want to have me?" Only a few days later would the social worker be in a position to explain that he would be very happy indeed to have him, but that, under no circumstances did he want to hurt him. A year later, the form of sexual contact that Bjorn had asked for finally came to pass. The desire for such encounters stayed with the boy into his adult years.

Bjorn truly fell in love with Jan." It was the first experience of this kind for both of them. Bjorn cannot recall engaging in sexual play of any sort prior to the age of ten; however, he does remember that at the age of 13, he was approached by another adult, who expressed explicit erotic desires. Bjorn, who was extremely incensed at this suggestion, rode his bicycle to Jan's home around noon on a Sunday, in order to describe his complete indignation over this stranger's indecent suggestion. Jan had trouble calming the boy down, who was taking off his clothes even as he was providing his account, and laying himself out on Jan's bed in preparation for intimate contact.

The relationship between the two remained secret, both from the other visitors to the youth center as well as Bjorn's parents. Although the parents did not know the social worker personally, they probably were familiar with his name, since Bjorn often talked about the "new" person in his life.

Bjorn remembers one time when his mother – following one of her son's portrayals of Jan – grumbled, with a hint of jealousy: "All I ever hear about in this house is Jan. If it goes on like this, the best thing for you to do would be to just take your bed and move in with him." Bjorn said that he would have done precisely that straight away, if his mother's words had been meant seriously.

All the same, Bjorn's enthusiasm for him did have its occasional advantages. When he was 13 years old, his teacher complained to his parents regarding some or other typical boyish prank. The very strict father threatened to give his son a good thrashing. In his time of need, Bjorn turned to Jan. The social worker paid the parents a "happenstance" visit. The parents were pleased to finally be able to get personally acquainted with this "hero" their son had been raving about, and put some coffee on. They chatted about the weather and such-like until, finally, Jan rather off-handedly inquired about Bjorn's academic performance. The father flew into a rage, indicating that the next time his son was guilty of some misdeed, he would get a proper thrashing. The social worker patiently tried to calm the parents down, and urged them to avoid attaching too much importance to puberty-related pranks. The father eventually did calm down, and when Bjorn – likewise by "happenstance" – re-entered the home a short time [67] later, the initial anger had almost completely subsided. Although the boy did have to go straight to his room, and was not allowed to remain with the adults, further punishments failed to materialize.

The friendship between Bjorn and Jan remains undiminished. They continue to have sexual contact on a regular basis, which is also experienced by both as pleasurable. These contacts also continued following Bjorn's first sexual experiences with a girl, at the age of fifteen. Bjorn cannot envision ever having sex with any other man. On the other hand, he did not give up these contacts with Jan upon getting married. And he also does not ever want to give up having sex with Jan – 21 years following the first erotic encounter with the social worker.

When Bjorn is asked what is appealing to him about this sexual relationship with a man – i.e., what he gets from Jan that he is unable to have in his marriage – Bjorn points to particular sexual practices which are only possible between men. And he says that he frequently simply has the desire to be able to passively enjoy eroticism in a relaxed way, whereas, with his wife – as per her own wishes – he is happy to play the active role.

Of course, the man-boy relationship between Bjorn and Jan, which eventually transitioned into an erotic friendship between two men, has involved more than just sex, even if it is true that physical desire was the driving force behind the relationship, as both freely acknowledge. Jan helped Bjorn to finish school with pretty good marks, assisted him in his search for an apprenticeship and with the age-typical love-sickness brought about by girlfriends during Bjorn's puberty. Bjorn has not spoken about any marital problems with Jan, should there be any. The social worker has remained a steadfast friend all this time: rescuer in his times of sexual need and helper with career concerns, as Bjorn puts it. Jen is happy to play these roles. He's glad that Bjorn has enjoyed having sex with him, in the past as well as the present. Also, he has never demanded that Bjorn be his partner in other areas of life. Sometimes, the two arrange to get together for intimate contact several times per week; other times, they don't see each other at all in that span. It's a confluence of interests that costs nothing, Jan says.

When Bjorn was asked whether he felt harmed, in terms of his development, by having sex with an adult-at a young age, he laughed spontaneously and at the top of his voice. He could not understand such a question. He sees sex between two people – when it takes place in a responsible way, involving mutual respect – as something completely natural. If he were compelled to go along with the whole notion of 'seduction,' he would insist that the actual 'seducer' was himself. This is basically what he still is today, he affirms, because he calls Jan up when he wants sex, not the other way around. He's not afraid of infectious diseases because he leads an absolutely monogamous life, as he puts it. Just with his wife and, now and again, with Jan. He's neither had, nor wishes to have, any other intimate contacts. And if Jan were to suddenly move to a different city? Bjorn was at something of a loss as to how to respond to this [68] question. "There would be no replacement. Jan is Jan. He's one-of-a-kind."

Neither his wife nor his parents know anything about his relationship with Jan. Why should they, Bjorn asks. Then, isn't his relationship with Jan rather unusual? Bjorn squares up his shoulders at this question: "What's so unusual about it? This sort of thing is common, surely." He'd had – he adds – as a boy the sense that others the same age as him would've had similar experiences.

[As was the case for a previous chapter, the next section is omitted because it is a virtual word-for-word reproduction of a chapter from a book which I have already translated into English: "Interview with Jorg: in "Relationships, One Must Proceed Carefully," by Wolf Vozel, in Pedophilia Unbound, ed. by Frits Bernard, 1997 [?], pp. 306-316.]

"I Wear His Ring as a Part of Him"

Dear Wolf,

You've invited me to say a little about my youth for this book. I'm happy to accept the offer. You know that, as a young person, I started a sexual relationship with a man, which went on for several years. Is what I have to report really that significant? would other people – perhaps parents, or even young people – be interested? I hope so.

Mind you, your offer to anonymize persons and places dumbfounds me. I would prefer not to do this, because I stand by the relationship I had with Werner at the time, would not have missed it for the world, and in no way feel it is something "shameful," which has to be hidden. Frankly, I'll stick with openness, as a *sine qua non* so to speak, because how can you – through your book – achieve anything when, at the same time, you're indirectly rendering it taboo? In order to be able to properly portray the texture of my relationship at the time, I have to properly express things, describe details, put pleasures and pains into words. I do this from the perspective of decades' worth of hindsight.

I got to know my adult friend when I was sixteen years old. My parents had a vacation home in northern Italy, and I stayed with them there during the 1966 summer break. Werner was 51 years old at the time and also had a home nearby which, after many years of working abroad, he'd purchased as a place to retire to. He was a widely-travelled man of the world, who'd lived in South America for quite a while; upon my first encounter with him, he already corresponded to my idea of a cosmopolitan person. He was cultivated, and got along quite well with my parents – my father was a distinguished judge.

Consequently, in one of Werner's visits to my parents' place, I became acquainted with him myself. He invited me out to dinner. Due to my bourgeois-conservative upbringing, I saw in this invitation something unusual, but also, fascinating.

We dined at a stylish restaurant in a small town on Lake Maggiore, and Werner told me about ancient Greece, and Socrates and Plato's "Symposium," about the ideals of classical Greek philosophy, and boy-love. I was enraptured. Never before had an adult treated me as an equal – my father, at least. The world that Werner revealed [75] to me took me far beyond the Greek classes at our school, where Plato was just a lesson topic. This dinner would indelibly implant itself in my memory as a sort of "symposium" which – beyond my admittedly youthful enthusiasm – marked the turning point of my mental and intellectual development.

Following this summer vacation, Werner and I began writing each other. He remained at his home in Italy; I lived with my parents in Bonn, attending a Redemptorist*-run school, and Longing – in the claustrophobic bourgeois-clerical atmosphere of my life in Bonn – for the breadth of Werner's world.

[*Trans. note: 'Redemptorist' refers to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, a Roman Catholic order.]

The following summer, Werner came to stay with us in Bonn. That first morning following his arrival, he came into my bedroom, in order to have a look at me. He probably thought I was still asleep – which is exactly what I pretended to be. His hand sought out my body under the covers. He stroked me, and my heart pounded with excitement. I'd never felt anything like it. It might sound crazy, but, up to this point, I'd had no sexual experiences whatsoever. In this respect, I was completely retarded. I'd never even masturbated; I simply did not know that, with just a bit of movement, one could give sexual pleasure to oneself. Today, I am amazed at so much naïveté; but, being raised in a bourgeois-conservative home, combined with Redemptorist schooling, had left me in a state of sexual ignorance up to the age of sixteen. That morning, Werner bestowed on me the first orgasm of my life. It was an intoxicating feeling, and I certainly would have enjoyed it even more if I hadn't continued to pretend I was asleep.

In the days that followed, he came into my room and repeated his body-play. From this time on, I demonstrated to him that I was awake, and in agreement with his stroking. One morning, when Werner was sitting on my bed, my brother came into the room. He just barely managed to make our morning 'bed chat' look harmless.

I don't think my parents ever found out about what took place in my bedroom back then. Although my mother may have suspected something, she said nothing; my father was pretty indifferent towards me anyway. My parents were already contemplating divorce at the time.

When Werner left, I began to regularly masturbate, which I reveled in. I didn't have any sexual contacts with boys or girls my age, although I was attracted to girls. My surroundings merely promoted sexual abstinence; but not bodily pleasure. In any event, there were no girls at our school. So, I frequently thought about my adventures with Werner. Also, the exchange of letters between Bonn and Italy continued on undiminished. I longed for him, for stimulating conversation with him, for stories from his life, for the art that invited him to settle down in Italy for some peace and quiet.

The more Werner came to visit, the more we wrote each other, the smaller and more cramped my parental home seemed to me. Werner had already mentioned that I could move in with him in Italy if I wanted. His house was big enough for an additional occupant. He even attempted to impress this idea on my parents, with the remark that, of course, their vacation home would only be a couple of kilometers away from his place. But my parents still hesitated. Therefore, I had to content myself with only being able to frequently see and make love to Werner while on holiday.

Two years after the first encounter with Werner, I made one of the most important decisions with regard to my future. I was eighteen years old, and needed to set a course for my life. My parents were on the verge of divorcing, and I had to decide for myself whether to join the army. Werner made an unambiguous offer to take me in.

I simultaneously came to a point where I felt I no longer wished to live in my current surroundings. School had become unbearable, absolutely unbearable. It had so extremely negatively colored my life up to that

point. The scent of freedom – which Werner had introduced me to and which I so infinitely loved – was stronger than my parents' misgivings.

In September of 1968, against my father's wishes, I went to Italy and moved in with Werner. My mother was even able to partly come to terms with this step, since she was divorced, and wanted to settle down into her Italian vacation home for the long-term.

In my new home, Werner opened up a new world to me. He got me admitted to the Europe School in Varese, a school with an international student body, including both girls and boys. I had a sense of being in a completely new world, in which I also found the perspectives and support which my father had not provided. Perhaps Werner, in this phase of his life, was something of an ersatz father for me – in the role of a sympathetic, loving father.

The school was thirty kilometers away from Werner's house. This necessitated giving some thought to the issue of transportation. Werner bought me a used car, and anyone who's eighteen years old can understand the sense of freedom associated with that. I went to a school which opened up my eyes to different countries, new languages, and cultures other than the claustrophobic, religiously-imprinted Bonn of my early youth. And Werner was the one who'd made all of this possible. Not only were there absolutely no problems associated with living with him: He supported me scholastically and musically; he'd done things for me that I could not understand at the time. What motives might a 53-year-old have for tape-recording me and my guitar for hours on end? This is still beyond me. As is the fact that a man of this age would make his first attempt at arranging schooling, establishing contacts in order to cultivate admission possibilities, and more.

But I would like to come back to the question of how the eroticism continued, as did my feelings of love. I did love Werner, in my own way. But slowly, this feeling changed more and more into a form of gratitude, and a sense that, here, I am understood.

But there were also clear differences. The initially trouble-free sexual get-togethers, which took place, furthermore, at the level of mutual masturbation, then became a problem when, eventually, Werner wanted something more. In the meantime, two-and-a-half years had passed since we first became acquainted. Werner's head was in conflict with his heart. In his head, he was very much in line with the Greek ideal: Only the boy is supposed to be happy, and nothing should happen that the boy is not okay with. For him, it was fundamentally a *sine qua non* that his boy was heterosexual. He also saw that I'd become older, and hinted that soon, I might no longer be as sexually attractive to him as I'd once been. But in his heart – not to mention his libido – he strove for more extensive sexual activities, which I had rejected. Not because I'd rejected him. I just wasn't into that.

On occasion, there were affectionate activities in which I remained passive; and although I definitely did not find them to be immensely enjoyable, they weren't burdensome either. What was most agreeable to me was when we organized our swim-parties, or masturbated each other while enjoying a nice bottle of red wine. I had absolutely no problem with this sort of thing. I don't want to attach too much importance to these things, but they did mark a turning point.

Then there came a time when I met this girl at school. Of course, I'd already had contact with girls – on holiday trips, for example. I'd also already had sexual intercourse with a girl once; but this was not what you'd call love. I really did fall in love with this girl from the Europe School. As was inevitable, I also told Werner about Jutta, and asked if I might be able to have her over for the weekend. Jutta had tolerant parents, in whose home we would also have been able to be intimate. But because Jutta was only fifteen years old, I preferred to spend the weekend with her at Werner's house. Werner had no problem with that whatsoever. The room I was staying in was separated from the rest of the house by a set of stairs; this also afforded me options vis-a-vis Werner. And in this room – my room – I had my first sexual experience with a girl whom I loved.

Sexual pleasure with girls soon found itself competing against eroticism with Werner. This brought about a certain cooling of the relationship with my friend, although the contacts did continue. It only became problematic when my desire to go to Jutta grew stronger; this meant that – in order to bridge the distance involved – I would leave on Saturday afternoon, and return on Sunday evening. And of course, after three or four months, this turned into a problem for Werner.

Although I am able to today, at the time, I did not understand what Werner meant when he said: "There's none of you left for me." I probably felt an obligation to attend to Werner's needs; however, because my emotional commitment to Jutta was stronger, they simply were not going to be met. It wasn't so much joy that I felt being with Werner as it was a sense that I owed him my presence, although, of course, my preference would have been to go to Cittiglio in order to see Jutta.

This state of affairs continued for several months. In November 1969, Jutta became pregnant. The doctor diagnosed an ectopic pregnancy, which was terminated in a Catholic hospital no less, because the life of the mother was in danger. This situation was also a turning point for Werner, because he now realized that I was no longer the former boy, but instead, a man. The time had come for me to make a clean break. And although Werner did make the break intellectually, he was still not able to detach himself from me emotionally. Therefore, his and my emotional lives were subject to dramatic fluctuations – but only because Werner kept his problems all bottled up, instead of openly addressing them. Then he was like a wall for days on end; a sad, tear-filled wall. This mostly made me sorrowful, because it brought my sense of gratitude down from the level of voluntariness. This situation escalated to a point where, around 2:30 in the morning, I simply drove away, saying to myself: I can no longer do this, and I am no longer going to do this.

I found a new place, thirty kilometers away, where my mother lived. Werner would visit me from time to time, occasionally asking if we might be able to spend a couple of hours together, which we did. But those sad eyes, which expressed his longing and grief over the separation – this was too much for me. I simply could no longer withstand this emotionally. I told him that, though I would be happy to go out to eat with him, I no longer wanted to be with him sexually. Werner was of the opinion that, in that case, it would be better to break off contact altogether. In the end, this was accomplished definitively. What came to my rescue was the fact that a short time later I left anyway, because I got my high school diploma, and wanted to study in Milan.

A few years later I moved to London, in order to study and make music professionally. All contact with Werner ceased. From my family, I occasionally heard about what he was doing and how things were going for him. He continued to live and paint in Italy. He even exhibited and received awards in Germany.

In the summer of 1977, therefore, at any rate 6 ½ years after Werner and I parted ways, I returned to Italy with an English girlfriend for a long vacation, and spontaneously decided to pay Werner a visit. I took my girlfriend – who knew nothing about the relationship with Werner – along with me. [79] With a feeling of foreboding, I climbed the steps leading to his house. He opened the door, and after his initial shock – it was really akin to a shock, because, after all, he wasn't expecting me – he invited us in.

The atmosphere that evening was tense at first: but after a bottle of wine, we talked about old times. Following that night, we stayed in contact via letters. I was living in London by the way. But when I went to Italy, in order to visit my mother or reunite with college friends, I always looked up Werner as well, and in these visits, things were exactly how I'd wished they had been some seven years previously. I felt how nice it was to talk with Werner, sensing the many things we had in common as well as what he still meant to me.

Werner passed away in 1980, leaving me 15,000 marks in his will. He'd requested that I drop his urn – Werner wanted to be cremated – in the Mediterranean, which I did. I had heard about Warner's death just as I was arriving in Italy on Easter vacation. Warner's sister gave me the news. She'd probably heard that I could be reached at my mother's house.

The news hit me like a ton of bricks. Initially, I thought I must still have a guilty conscience, because, I'd been either unable or unwilling to fulfill many of his wishes. His death came as a shock to me; I hadn't reckoned on him dying so young. His death meant a real loss for me; the loss of a close relationship, which one cannot maintain forever, but nevertheless does not want to do without. A friend was dead; no – more than a friend.

Today, with the benefit of hindsight, of course the question presents itself: What made this more than a friendship? What did this relationship mean to me, for my life? I would like to phrase the answer as follows: Every year since his death, my estimation of how much Werner has given me, how much he contributed to making me what I am today, has grown greater.

Every year, it has become clearer to me what I have to be thankful to him for, how he's shaped me. Every year, my gratitude towards him grows. It is a voluntary gratitude, which no longer has anything to do with my sense of obligation at the time, that I should or even must show gratitude to him.

Maybe the best way I can put it is as follows: Werner was a combination of a friend and a father. What he's bequeathed to me is symbolized by his ring, which I wear on my finger, as a part of him. Werner has also taught me not only that deep relationships between people can exist, but also, that several, equally valid relationships can be maintained simultaneously – an important insight for me. My professional career would certainly have taken a different course without him: mastery of the Italian and English languages is the basis of my occupation. Without him, I would not have played in a professional band, would not have made records/recordings.

But I also frequently have had the thought: Would you, perhaps, have sometimes behaved differently towards him, if you'd had the perspective of the present-day, the wisdom you now possess? However, his life and mine took the courses they did; not otherwise. On the whole, I think that my decisions have been the right ones. If someone were to ask me which person has shaped my life, in terms of overall development, then I would have to say: He was number one. There are other people who have strongly influenced my life, but Werner set the course. Therefore, despite some painful experiences, I have pleasant memories of this relationship, including its erotic moments, even if the separation process did not proceed as I myself would have wished. But with the exception of the last two or three months, I found the eroticism to be pleasurable, not problematic. And of course, the problem of the dissolution of relationships is not limited to those of the man-boy sort. I've had similar separation fears and pains with regard to relationships with women, although, from time to time, sexual desire for a woman will still be there, even when an internal separation has already taken place.

I have been telling Uta, my current wife, about my relationship with Werner since the very first day I met her. After all, at the time I met her, Uta was just eighteen years old, and I was already thirty-two. Consequently, given the age-difference, some problem or another was to be expected here as well. We have been together for eleven-and-a-half years now, have been married for seven years, and have two children, a boy and a girl.

We have often talked about how it would be if, for example, our youngest, Nicolai, were to run into a "Werner." I've been quite outspoken: I would greet such a relationship not with hesitancy, but gratitude. The fears which, as a parent, one would understandably have about it would, first and foremost, be related to the following question: Is he a man like Werner, and how does one know right away if he is a man like Werner? I believe that all you can do is give it a try, placing a lot of trust in the child.

What do you think?

Regards, Martin

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About Wolf Vogel



Foto: Marion Heinrich

Wolf Vogel, born 1942, studied Education, Psychology, and History at university, graduating with a degree in Social Education. He is the author of and a contributor to several books, and has worked as a photojournalist for magazines and newspapers.

Many boys who maintain an intimate friendship with a man say to themselves: 'I sure hope Mommy doesn't find out about it.' When their child does have a grown-up lover, many adults are frightened, and think of abuse, sexual violence, or even threats to their child's health and well-being.

Wolf Vogel was, himself, involved in such a sexual relationship between a minor and a grown-up person, which obviously did not harm that child. In any event, the putative 'victims' of this, after they have become adults themselves and had children of their own, recount, in open-ended and positive ways, their intimacies, adventures, and experiences back then – but also the fear that their secret love with a man could become known, which would destroy them. Even mothers get a chance to talk about and describe their terrors and heart-pounding moments.

Wolf Vogel's collected interviews and reports are vividly authentic, providing insight into a world which had remained secret until now. "Secret Love" is, therefore, a primer for both frightened and intrepid parents, as well as anyone who deals with children.