

CAN THE WORD PERVERSION BE USED WHEN TALKING ABOUT ADOLESCENCE?

Alberto Eiguer¹

Maurice Blanchot (1969) used to say that « The unfortunate thing about the answer is the question » and Karl Marx (1867-1894) said « Society only asks questions for which it knows the answer ». I shall leave you to ponder upon the question I have just put before you in the light of these quotations.

When hearing such a title, you must certainly have thought that for me the answer has to be positive. But this is an answer which is not that obvious. The notion of perversion has even been questioned by several psychiatrists since the DSM banished it. This is not necessarily a guarantee of scientific respectability, but the DSM is a manual which is well respected in certain circles, it is an indispensable source of knowledge for psychiatrists who do competitive exams and it is appreciated for its concision and clarity. However, this blacklisting of many tables whose existence cannot be denied creates a problem. In the DSM IV, we have *paraphilia* instead of sexual perversions and moral perversions are scattered amongst personality disorders. I can understand that this style of classification could be inspired by the need to distance oneself from the shame these disorders can cause. But there is no better way to make a clinical situation more acceptable than to listen to it and by going beyond the very notion of the symptom and getting interested in the psychic functioning.

There is a consubstantial link between the two perversions. The perversions will appear as units as soon as we take into account their unconscious structure.

Moral perversion (or perverse behaviour) becomes apparent through manipulative behaviour towards others whom the pervert tries to dominate, use and demean. The pervert is usually rather nice, even if sometimes he appears to be impetuous and arrogant. He uses a specific language full of seduction and cynicism, with the aim to attract others in his net. In the case of a moral predator, we are talking about downright servitude which he tries to keep going for some time.

Sexual perversions stay within the sexual circle through departure from the normal aim and object, but they become particularly pernicious as soon as there is concomitance with moral perversion.

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These are adult's illnesses, but they can also be present in children and adolescents; in this case, they usually disappear when the person reaches twenty or so. Having said that, perverse behaviour can reappear in the link that each adult establishes with their child. As for other clinical tables, the symptoms of perversity in an adolescent are variable.

At the same time, certain aspects of adolescence crisis have been interpreted as a regression to the *infantile polymorphic perverse stage* (S. Freud, 1905) : for example, slackening of the influence of the super-ego, sadism towards parental figures, start of sensuality to the detriment of feelings, idolization of impulsiveness, wiping out of the identifying limits and expansion of the ego, on a background of a violence ready to explode because of the difficulties in linking it to the representations. The driving freedom leads to the idealization of the impulse, and this is translated by a need for excitement through another, leading to a voluptuous crescendo which dies only when the ego is consumed. Partly blurred by the adolescent's difficulty to digest these multiple destabilising tendencies, the thinking has a tendency to splitting and projection.

It might be worth thinking whether this regression shows that it is utopian to think that the orientations acquired during early childhood are permanent. Aren't they done and undone all life long ?

With an adolescent, we find ourselves in front of a impulsive growth which goes together with a slackening of the super- ego's instance. This situation leads us to ponder the following fact : does a psychical instance establish itself forever in the mental apparatus or is it prone to constant modifications ? If we accept the second possibility, we can then assume that the ethical order that the parents show through the way they talk and do things is constantly feeding the child's super-ego. But, the adolescent being able to invoke new ethical positions which hadn't been thought of before, I think that then links to previous generation are shown. In this case, if the forefathers and ancestors haven't behaved in an honest manner, and if the parents have hidden these misdeeds, their image is altered.

Adolescents demand explanations from the parents to know if they have been brave and determined, if they preferred to defend what is fair and noble or if they succumbed to the interest of the ego instead. Adolescents might consider these interests as petty or somewhat mercenary, but in any way, incoherent with what the parents have uphold so far.

In an adolescent, contesting the fatherly order and wishing to be independent from constraints gives rise to a peculiar form of reversal of the generational differences. Even though he shows a certain acknowledgement of the adult as such, the adolescent keeps on wanting to dethrone him through the means of challenges and a denunciation of his failings and ambiguities which goes as far as caricature. The adult/parent is easily called deviant, twisted, pervert. He would look at young people lasciviously and libidinally. The expression « he devours them with his eyes » is very telling about this projection of voraciousness and the wish for mastery, erotic or otherwise, which is what the adolescent fears above all from

the adult and which echoes his feelings of strangeness for his body so recently awoken to sexuality.

There are some strange similarities between the form of the object relationship between the adolescent and the pervert. In this latter, there is a distortion of his autoscopy, of how he sees himself ; in his internal mirror, he sees himself as rather obscure, impenetrable. Why ? Maybe because the pervert has not had the opportunity to see his image in his mother's eyes. Also because his identity hasn't had the possibility to travel through the psyche of the other, in other words it hasn't been captured, processed and transformed by the mother's alpha function, before getting back to him. In the same way, he's never managed to think of himself as another. Thus, he has a strong impulse to look at the other, he is condemned to watch and find out what he's already guessed, which is that the other has a phallus, that nobody shall be castrated. But if this issue has bothered him, it's because he can't see his reflection in the eyes of the other.

The adolescent who is so preoccupied by his identity hurries too to watch what the other thinks of him ; he only finds a type of ignorance. If not, he believes he has fathered his psyche, he lives himself as self-created, as in a denial of the primal scene. He will need time to understand that the best answer on « who he is » is within himself.

To see oneself within oneself as another, or under the gaze of another implies an acceptance of the distance between oneself and the other, and the impossibility for anybody to find an answer on one's own identity elsewhere.

Two prior comments, though : on the one hand, adolescence crisis has been linked to other psychopathological structures : psychosis, borderline state ; on the other hand, the notion of polymorphic perverse stage is heterogeneous in relation to clinical perversion, the difference being that the polymorphic perversion that we are referring to is a movement which is essentially subjective, including affects and representations, when perversion shows itself mainly through behaviour. Furthermore, challenging the father is not the same as wanting to recreate an ethical order where evil would be predominant.

We can then conclude that there are pervert tendencies in adolescents but that they are neither as important nor as crafty as clinical perversion.

To illustrate these various points, I will open a small window into the life of a unique adolescent, W.-A. Mozart.

The many journeys in Europe of the Mozart family, which started when Wolfgang was 6 and finished when he was 21, were apparently motivated by the father's wish to display Wolfgang's exceptional musical talent. But in fact they were rather because he wanted to get away from Salzburg. The father mentions it quite clearly : he finds the inhabitants petty and envious of his son's talent. Abroad, in artistic and aristocratic circles, he will be better appreciated. He thinks that it is impossible for Wolfgang to develop in his native town. But I thought that another motivation seemed interesting, and this one could be linked to the

family history. Nannerl and Wolfgang were the only two children who survived out of seven. The father wanted to put some distance between them and a town where the memory of the fate of his other children was too strong. He wanted to « rescue them ». The children for their part tried to please the parents so that they could be proud of them. They were children who were easy to live with, easy to bring up and very nice with it (Eiguer, 1999).

Mozart wanted to please his parents, but he was not structured as a false-self. I do highlight this difference, because he didn't quash his true self, but on the contrary, he developed and uphold it. He didn't either slide towards arrogant behaviour even though he had been enormously shown off as a child. He was just sure of himself and in any case knew how to find his place amongst others thanks to his niceness and politeness and because he readily admitted his dependence on others.

Some facets of Wolfgang's personality, however show him as carefree, funny, but sometimes slipping towards a humour of somewhat doubtful taste. He saw himself as a German Harlequin : an *Hanswurts* (Massin J. and B., 1958, p. 91). In his letters to his sister, he often uses scatological language, hinting at unloading and the anal orifice. He hopes that his sister's anal orifice works well... Does he want to mock the too strict sphincterian education given at home ? Get closer to Nannerl's intimacy ? Moreover, we know the symbolic meaning given to the anal activity in its function of cleaning the body which risks being intoxicated by its (dead) biological byproducts. Are the ghosts of the dead brothers and sisters haunting the young musician ?

This situation may be of some comfort to many critics who have recognised in Mozart's work a tendency to fight against death. In any case, this explanation could be considered. I must point out that his parents feared death quite strongly and that in this case, Wolfgang could have identified with them and had to calm their anxiety.

With a carefree attitude similar to the one shown in his letters to Nannerl, Mozart is *poking fun* when a well-known person passed away. He writes to his sister, one day before *his fourteenth birthday* : « I don't know of any news ; apart from the fact that the Leipzig poet, M. Gellert, is dead, and that therefore since this event he hasn't written any poems. » (J. et B. Massin, *op. cit.* p. 92.) You can easily recognize the sarcastic tones of an adolescent. Flight towards a maniac position ? We can presume that Wolfgang felt overloaded by his parents delegating to him the task of replacing his dead brothers. It might explain this whimsical attitude towards death. W.-A. Mozart found himself forced to find a synthesis between the family delegation and his own wishes.

His aggressive behaviour towards his father was not negligible. It exploded ten years later when he wanted to marry Constance Weber, the father insisting upon the fact that the family of the intended was vulgar and without much means. This was the time when Wolfgang wrote his opera *Idoménée*, a real turning point in his work : in the scenario, a son shows himself braver than his father who seems incapable to solve the dilemma of choosing

between love for his child and fear of God. The opera demonstrates that love is stronger than anything else.

I find it interesting to link the teenager's mockeries with that of another, *Don Giovanni*, who kills the Knight, and then, when he sees his statue in the graveyard, invites it to dinner. If Don Giovanni is condemned to hell and taken there by the statue, it is not as a seducer, but as one who has violated the law which separates the living from the dead. When he challenges the Knight to move, (like Wolfgang challenging the dead poet to write a poem), he blasphemed the dead person, taunted his impotence and the transformation of living substance into mineral. Twenty years after the death of the poet Gellert, Mozart appears to bring a solution to his teenage tendencies to taunt the dead by sublimating it, giving it an artistic form and response. The best way to honour somebody close who has passed away, would be to pay tribute to the family's spirit through creativity.

This elaboration took twenty years, the time needed to resolve the adolescence crisis for many people.

Three variations of perversion during adolescence

After this first part, I would like to study with you the ways in which clinical perversion can be found in adolescents, with : 1. Perversion as a symptom of defensive working-off. 2. Perversion as a clear structure, organised during adolescence. 3. Perverse links where a paedophile, incestuous, corrupting or over-narcissistic adult takes an adolescent as object.

First variation. Defensive Moves of a perverse nature

Defensive moves appear in cases such as psychosis, borderline state, eating disorders, drug addiction or psychosomatic symptoms.

For the psychotic, denial of a fellow human, of his singularity as a subject, has already happened, when for the pervert, denial is still work to be done. It is for this reason that many psychotics resort to perverse defences when they are getting better, because they understand that the otherness of a person is unavoidable and furthermore that they can't do without people.

To illustrate this aspect, I will talk about Thierry, a psychotic patient who abhors the other patients in the day care hospital he goes to. I'll mention some elements of his speaking manners in which provocation, contempt and hatred are mixed. In sessions, he's always very dynamic during the debates, because he always has « something new to say, unlike the other patients », but he regularly terrifies people with his sarcastic comments, leaving the carers helpless. From the very first session with me, he explains that he looked after his little sister so often that it started a rivalry between him and his parents who were shocked by the way she became « rude towards them ». His goal, says he, is to expose the excesses of « hypocritical » adults and teachers who are « moreover envious of his intelligence ».

We find, in these early sessions of therapy, the expression of two of the traits of perverse defences, challenging authority, managing better than the parent, and induction of behaviour, because, if reality confirms what Thierry says, he makes his sister behave in the way he wants her to, convincing her if need be of the necessity to unsettle the parents.

Once the period of insulting others is over, he does progressively begin to trust me and regularly give me news of his « weekly cruelties », such as tell a patient that he looks like a suicide case or to another that he knows his new girlfriend is lesbian. « He could have found better than that. She will crush him » According to Thierry's definition, he gives them counter-support therapy. Thierry absolutely loves unsettling other youths; furthermore, he never misses an opportunity to highlight any contradiction the nurses, teachers or psychologists may show.

He talks about mathematicians in the same manner; for him, their only aim is to put themselves above the fray and control everything. Many are those who look for perfection, but they are all wrong. « Man can be perfect, but so rarely that it is an impossibility. » To go some way into explaining the reasons for his behaviour, Thierry says that he demonstrates to people that their strength is an illusion. He wants to « corrupt them », says he with a malicious look.

He will confess later that in fact his « hobby », is to make others feel guilty. To see them embarrassed and apologetic gives him great pleasure. And now, he is considering a way to show the « psys » that if they do this work, it is because they feel they are « guilty » of something and through this they want « to be forgiven ». If not, why else are so devoted to their patients ? But in any case, the result isn't exactly terrific. He promises that when his unsettling technique is fully functional, he'll tell me.

We often use his theories and cultural interests to analyse his affects. Of course, I tread very carefully during the sessions. I let myself get caught in his game and talk about subject which interest him. It could be history, literature, comics, cinema, music. The important thing is to play at « rebuilding the world » just like I remember doing with my friends when I was a teenager. Towards the end of the weekly session, I introduce interpretations, and when we choose a subject, I try to go for a symbolically powerful one. Characters from novels do help, for example, Robin Hood taking the law into his own hands to be fair, the distress of a child not loved enough by uncaring parents. He feels happy to be able to show me that he knows stuff, that it can also interest me and that I make some efforts to keep abreast of what a teenager would find interesting.

I use this method after a period where I notice that he shows himself to be extremely touchy when faced with interpretations. This method is suggested to allow patients whose metaphor and symbolisation abilities are insufficient and who can't have conscious fantasies, to « dream with their eyes open », so as to develop daydreaming and to eventually be able to appropriate their own dreams (T. Ogden, 2007). In Thierry's case, things are different : we

are not talking there about a lack of metaphor abilities, but a fear of its primary process, lived as a betrayal of his own unconscious towards his megalomaniac narcissistic ego, something which I point out to him at one point. The game/conversation we have reassures him of his ability to master, which can then « remain whole ».

The mind of my patient doesn't seem too affected by concrete thoughts, but rather colourize by a spirit of intention so as to refute his shortcomings, by defensively feeding his pride and his domineering attitude. We are touching there an area common to perversion and paranoia. Why omniscience ? To believe one knows everything touches on the denial of the want, the dependence, the castration and the object. Normally, to not know is to admit them.

This could explain why psychotic patients use perverse defences; they are thus reassured of the stability and durability of the denial. They think they are protected from the fact that they could be wrong and that they thought that the world and people were a certain way, and that it isn't so. According to Freud (1927), this is the kernel of perversion : the impossibility for perverts to admit that as children they believed that their mother had a phallus, and that it isn't so. It is not any odd denial, but the denial of an absence, of a deficiency.

Thierry sometimes playfully and ironically tells me that I don't know certain things; I answer back with humour: « Thank you for letting me know, without you I would have been none the wiser» or « it was really worthy waking up this morning to come and see you at the day-care hospital ». On a more cautious note, I sometimes say: « What does it bring you to show yourself as the best in everything? »

For a short period, his hallucinatory symptoms come back: he sees people sitting in a circle staring at him in silence. Once he even attacks me, saying I'm using magic to make the pictures on the wall of my consulting room move. I am surprised and have the feeling that maybe he feigns delirium rather than experiences it. Afterwards, I have to analyse my disbelief as linked to the fact that I trust too much in his reality criteria, forgetting that he is very perturbed.

In one of the sessions, two dreams. First dream: he finds himself in a dense and wild garden; he goes onto a path which hasn't been used for a long time. At the end of the path, he takes a pickaxe, digs and finds a treasure chest. He thinks himself happy and lucky.

In his associations, he says that this secret treasure reminds him of his family where a lot of things are hidden, in particular the « appalling » end of a great-uncle who went bankrupt. Everybody seems to have been affected by this; it is still going on.

In the second dream, he is with friends in a fair; they are on the roller-coaster. The fright is intense but they are having fun. When the ride stops, the activity workers (from the day care hospital) or the watchmen (from the fair) read out a sentence: « Now you are all going to be executed because you have aids. » The party is over.

In his associations, he wonders if it was a roller-coaster or a merry-go-round. We have fun and then we die. I tell him that it is the fun which has been condemned. By whom? By himself? Because it had been shared with other youths.

I am surprised by the content of this dream, of the presence of a guilty feeling in this patient who is otherwise so arrogant, and of the evocation of such a merciless super-ego. I wonder in my head if the merry-go-round might not represent manipulation and the roller-coaster might not touch upon sexual desire, homo or heterosexual? Sexual desire which is in any way guilty. Later he says that despite the other day-care hospital patients making him feel wary, « with them, when we're having fun, we forget all of that ».

I remain intrigued by this sentence about aids. It becomes clearer when he tells me that when he was about 9 he was sexually abused as he was staying with people close to his family whose son was four or five years older than him. He stayed overnight. During the night this boy went into his bedroom and abused him. Paralysed, ashamed, Thierry never dared say anything. His feelings are a mixture of enormous humiliation and complete powerlessness. He then swore to himself that never again would he be subjected to such an insult, and conversely, he would inflict it upon others, make them feel his « strength », his « superiority », so that they could live what it's like to feel yourself being under somebody else's mastery without knowing how to react.

« You've got aids », this represents the shameful mark of the sexual attack.

I will be one of the rare privileged person to know about this abuse. I tell him that I recognise how much he must trust me to be able to tell me this. The link he made between his desire for domination and this event touches me a lot, to the point where I abstain making any more comments.

A bit further on, he will tell me somewhat more cautiously: « You know, life, it's like in Corneille, everybody loves the one who doesn't love him/her. » This sentence is full of double meaning; in relation to transference, myself and our work, which are totally involved, hinting that he is afraid I don't like him; in relation to certain people who he lives as them rejecting him, which leads him to reject others in turn. But now, he seems to see them slightly less like enemies.

Second variation. Perversion as a structure which organises itself during adolescence

These structures are built, notably as in sexual addictions, masochism, kleptomania, etc. they are characterized by the desire to break up the primal scene, to reject the parents in their reproductive function. The patient wants to steal the thunder of their pleasure and use it as a standard. That is to say a fetish which will be used to challenge the father.

This brings us to think about the specificity of teenage kleptomania. Jean Cocteau in his book *Les enfants terribles* mentions the case of a brother and a sister who stole useless and unclassifiable objects, who expressed through kleptomania their disillusionment with their

parents, their rage, their rebellion. The teenage tendencies to act first, and towards sadism being not exactly the exception, kleptomania appears here as the overflow of a bunch of impulsive moves : voyeurism, sadism. We are not necessarily talking about the selective choice of a symptom, as in adult kleptomania: these adolescents can find simultaneously or successively other ways to express their angst, with – and this is often the case – addictions and/or dangerous behaviour (A. Eiguier, 2005, 2007).

We can highlight here that the aspect of *oral avidity* of perversions at this age is translated by frenetic consumption, be it of drugs, food, stolen objects, or sexual activity. *Voyeurism* appears also as a hit and miss and rather unsuccessful attempt to appropriate and then integrate a given knowledge. In both cases, it is a matter of desperately wanting to fill a void.

I will bring here your attention to the fact that a lot of violent teenage behaviours have characteristics which remind us of perversion in many ways. An adolescent hits and can even get a knife out just because he (another adolescent), « looked at me funny ». He thought he saw « contempt », hinting that « he's superior ». The main goal of gang theft and rackets is not money, but challenge and demonstration of superiority and they use mythomania. When the latter is present, the pleasure obtained seems to underline the perverse aspect which can, of course, be interwoven with psychopathy, but it brings a different kind of evil to violence, making it maybe even more justifiable for the subject. It reminds us of the « orgasm of the ego ».

Dangerous behaviours are probably the clearest example of this tendency where the challenge to the adult is mixed with the desire to show that we're not the fearful child anymore, but that we are masters of ourselves to the point of being able to play with the limits between life and death. The dangerous deed takes on the characteristics of a supreme test; to win shows audacity, superiority, self-creating. For these teenagers, the one who makes fun of the other is by definition better. The one who is afraid of what others think of him is a « coward, a wuss ». Wise is the one who knows not how to air his thoughts, and especially his doubt or pain. The myth organises heroic identifications, the ones that enhance high deeds. They are active during adolescence to reinforce the feelings of an ego struggling with the most disturbing inner violence. But heroic identification is only a reformulation of the old looking for a model, which preferably looks towards ancestors, because it cannot be found with the fathers, who are so belittled these days.

We can also mention scarification (self-harm). The masochist tendency seems to me indisputable. I became aware of the perverse nature of adolescent's dangerous or self-harming behaviour when I identified the same drifts in adults members of clubs specialising in risky self-harming activities: clubs of group sex without protection, sects where flagellations, cuts and bleeding are practiced. Beyond the evident clinical similarities, and taking into

account the psychopathological diversity in adolescent, it is the myth of self-creation which seems to prevail : « I make myself, I kill myself to get myself reborn. »

In *La famille de l'adolescent : le retour des ancêtres*, (*The adolescent's family: the return of ancestors*) I put into perspective the hypothesis where the adolescent tries to find a place within the family and a space in his genealogy, the one that befalls him in the lineage. This is an age when the trans-generational resurfaces, in a dramatic manner sometimes, when there are issues to be resolved with not well loved, shameful or unknown ancestors.

To act thus, the adolescent has a tendency to deny the other, his otherness, his wishes. He can be terribly efficient, but, fearing that the other should wake up from the sleep being induced in him, and make his presence known, the teenager feels he has to do it all over again.

Third variation. The perverted links where an adult takes an object and the consequences befalling the latter

A paedophile, incestuous, corrupting or narcissistic-pervert takes an adolescent as an object, who then becomes his victim-accomplice. If I include this here, it's partly because my experience has shown me that such an influence leaves marks on the adolescent, who runs the risk of staying within its sphere. He will have difficulties in defining the field of the generational differences. All his bearings seems affected, his images reversed. He can become arrogant and insolent, and when adult have trouble finding the way towards love and pleasure. He feels at the same time devalued and overestimated because he believed in the laudatory speech of an impostor.

Amongst incestuous fathers, we find fathers whose violent, terrorising and authoritarian aspect aims at subjugating the adolescent and make of him/her his sexual object. He is not the same as the incestuous father of infants. The pervert is selective in his choices, if he is paedophile with a preference for adolescents, he does not necessarily like to abuse small children or adults. He may even feel disgust for other types of perversion.

Another form of incest is that of the father who starts up his subjugation by a harassing but efficient seduction although without direct or obvious violence. He'd rather fascinate. His goal is to establish a long term link with a predatory aspect which must be highlighted. He is more of a proselyte than a warrior.

In any case, the adult pervert shows a barely veiled reverence for adolescence, an age which psychically he hasn't left and that he thinks he can perpetuate through being a predator for the adolescent whom he's using like a tool. But he cannot handle this reverence in himself; he reverses it by dominating an « innocent ». Then the initiation gives him the feeling of owning the « moment of crossing from pure to impure », to be the master of these strong moments when the rhythm goes faster. He is the creator of the passage of time, therefore of life.

If he is extremely cruel towards himself in his actions, it is because he aims to annihilate his character and what it represents. In the incestuous relationship parent/child, idolatry makes its way: denial of the time passing, suspension onto one moment where everything seems possible; we imagine that, through the incestuous act, the portrait of Dorian Gray never grows old. The sexual act appears to be like a reciprocal decanting of energies through the pores of their skin which are thus erased.

If he has as well a couple relationships, his /her partner represents the hated adult sexuality. He turns away from him/her. We know that indifference is harder to bear than aggressivity.

Here is a case of incest mother /son in law.

The writer Colette, who had such little maternal tendencies with her own daughter *Bel-Gazou* (Colette, 1916-1953), took exquisite care of the pubescent body of her husband's son before she made him her lover. Colette (1959) writes to Marguerite Moreno: « I rub him down, feed him lots, rub him with sand, brown him in the sun. »

This makes you think about the deep wishes of the adult who commits incest with an adolescent: does he want to recapture the passing time?

It is interesting to remark that a follower devoted to a guru finds himself in a similar situation. As other perverts, the guru aspires to substitute his moral order to that of his victim, to become the Creator, the priest of a new religion where are mixed an absolute tolerance of defiance and others being subjugated to him.

In conclusion

My feeling is then that perversions during adolescence do exist and that their studies would have a considerable impact. We can say there are perversions, but only in certain conditions. They are quite distinct comparing to adult's perversions, «a local smell»: desperate search that the gaze of the other helps to identify, the « who am I » « where am I from » ; to put some order in the soul's disorder ; to direct outside and at the expense of the other, the fluttering of the heart ; to forget a moment that we haven't been made all alone.

This proves that they have a function in relation to the adolescence crisis, even if their economical links end up being frequently in vain. It will be less so if we learn to read their message.

This talk has a question as a title. As a last word, I will remind you of what Woody Allen (2000) once said: « I have questions to all your answers. »

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Summary

"Can the word perversion be used when talking about adolescence ?"

Alberto Eiguer.

The author considers the analysis of this question by pointing out two of the stumbling blocks of the clinician: a) the difficulty of speaking about psychic structure in teenagers given the mobility of their mental functioning; b) the association of certain aspects of the adolescence crisis with a resurgence of the infantile polymorphic perverse phase: slackening of the influence of the super-ego, sadism towards parental figures, start of sensuality to the detriment of feelings, idolisation of impulsiveness, wiping out of the identifying limits and

expansion of the ego, on a background of a violence ready to explode because of the difficulties in linking it to the representations. In step two, he refers to three specific clinical variations.

- Defensive movements of a perverse nature in cases like psychosis, borderline state, eating disorders, drug-addiction or psychosomatic situations.
- Sexual and behavioural perversions which appear at this age, in particular sexual addictions, masochism, kleptomania, etc.
- Perverse links where a paedophile, incestuous, corrupting or pervert-narcissistic adult takes as object a teenager, who becomes his victim-accomplice. An illustration is that of the follower devoted to a guru.

After having illustrated his hypothesis with the study of Mozart's biography and a therapy case, the author concludes by highlighting the current interest of some thoughts on perversion at this age.

Key words

Perversion, adolescence, perverse-polymorphic phase, perverse defences