

NHH09. A Closer Look at Sacred Cows

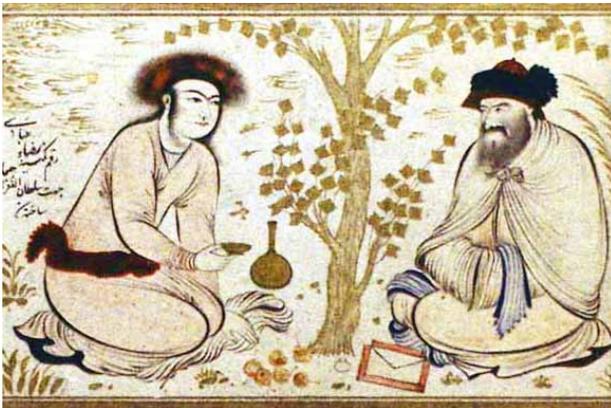
Pedophilia and Pederasty

WC 1553

Most of us react badly to what is quite obviously “pedophilia” by our standards among the Aranda and the Sambia in particular and possibly also some of the other cultures in this course. I think it is important then, that at this stage, we take some time to examine our own attitudes to inter-generational sex, to define exactly what we mean by such terms and hopefully, clear the air from some of the witch-hunt mentality which surrounds adult-child sexuality.

The problem for us is, of course, that this is a taboo subject in our society and can only be discussed in negative terms. Not long after the Gay Rights Movement started in the States, an organization called North American Man-Boy Love Association —commonly known as NAMBLA — was formed and publicly advocated loving sexual relations between men and boys should be “liberated”. No other organization has been so violently opposed by the Gay Rights Movement as NAMBLA because, as

homosexuals the world over all knew, the public, at least in those days, confused homosexuality and pedophilia and condemned us all for “abusing” children.



A beardless youth serves a bearded man.

In the discourse of the day, pedophilia was seen as an abuse of the power invested in adults, the more loathsome because it was commonly believed that it turned boys into homosexuals.

But what do we mean by “pedophilia”? In strict sexological terms, **pedophilia** is sexual relations between pre-pubertal boys and adult men. Alternatively and often also incorrectly termed “pedophilia” in modern media accounts of trials, there is **pederasty**, which is sexual relations between post-pubertal youths and adult men. This latter, pederasty, is arguably the most frequent form of institutionalized homosexuality

practiced throughout the world and throughout history. We will be looking at pederasty when, for example, we consider Ancient Greece and Rome and discuss the dilemma the Emperor Hardian encountered when his beloved Antinöus started to grow a beard....



A coin issued by Hadrian after the death of Antinöus in 130 AD, minted in Alexandria 136-137 AD — a “diobol” showing “Lotus-crowned draped bust of Antinous” and on the obverse, “Antinous dressed as a psychopomp of the underworld riding a horse”¹.

In a review of bias and inconsistencies in modern sex text-books, Bruce Rind² pointed to some of the anomalies of the times, particularly in the land-mark text by Masters and Johnson³:

Sharp moral distinctions emerged between man-man sex and man-boy sex in our society in the 1970s. Prior to this time, both forms were reviled and viewed as pathological and criminal. Following gay liberation and the women's movement, however, man-man sex became more tolerated while the urgency to condemn and suppress man-boy sex increased. Consistent with this new view, Masters et al., in an early edition of their human sexuality textbook, endorsed man-man sex (i.e., homosexuality) but reproved man-boy sex (i.e., pedophilia). In this sense, their writings simply reflected the liberal academic thinking of the day. What was problematic in their treatment, however, was that they concurrently used historical and cross-cultural examples of predominately man-boy sex to provide

¹ http://hobbyblog.blogspot.com/2004_02_01_archive.html

² Bruce Rind: *Biased Use of Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives on Male Homosexuality in Human Sexuality Textbooks* - <http://www.sextherapy.co.uk/>

³ Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny, “Human Sexuality,” 1985

perspective on Western man-man sex but not on Western man-boy sex.

Elsewhere, Rind says in a

..... lengthy discussion entitled "Is There a Positive Side to Pedophilia?" Masters et al. critiqued an interview study conducted by Sandfort (1983) on a sample of 25 Dutch boys aged 10 to 16 involved in ongoing sexual relationships with men. Sandfort reported that the boys experienced their relationships, including the sexual aspects, predominantly in positive terms, that evidence of exploitation or misuse was absent, and that the boys tended to see the pedophile as a teacher, as someone they could talk to easily and with whom they could discuss their problems.

Rind added that the authors had inaccurately attacked the Sandfort study on the grounds it was methodologically flawed and by asserting that:

"the boys were so intimidated by their pedophile that they were afraid to say anything against him" (p. 451). They discounted Sandfort's conclusion that the relationships were positive, arguing that man-boy relationships are "inherently abusive and exploitive" and are always negative. They asserted that they were opposed to these relationships no matter how beneficial either party claimed them to be.

Incidentally, it was about that time when some advocates for pedophilia were agitating to have it removed from the APA psychodiagnostic list, as had been successfully achieved for "homosexuality", that one powerful psychiatrist was quoted as saying "Of course it is pathological — it's immoral, isn't it!"

Rind's study also surveyed 18 sex text books published in the US between 1987 and 1997 and found similar biases in that they dismissed pedophilia as pathological and damaging while using pederastic, if not necessarily pedophilic (but certainly "under age") societies in favour of the argument that adult homosexuality was acceptable.

Rind's article is of course a full-frontal challenge to the received wisdom in Western society. I have no reason to believe that he is attempting in any way to promote man-boy sex or is associated with NAMBLA! His interest appears to be purely scholarly and, I might add, timely, because

we seem to becoming more and more obsessed with pedophilia and, if Rind's findings are true, then our blanket condemnation of what we see as pathological could well be damaging to boys and youths for whom sexual experience with an older male was a willing and good personal experience. To explain this, let's first look at the way Rind classifies homosexual experiences: he says that scholarly reviews of cross-cultural male homosexuality have shown it generally appears in three forms⁴:

- **Transgenerational** homosexuality involves sexual relations between boys or youths and significantly older males (i.e., older adolescents or adults)..... It is noteworthy that these scholarly reviews draw no moral distinctions between man-boy and man-man sex. Man-boy sex is presented as a form of homosexuality that often serves useful social functions rather than being classified as a form of pedophilia, socially and individually destructive in nature and hence intolerable..... The reviews further indicate that, outside Western culture, boyhood sexual involvements with other males, both peers and elders, are well within the range of normal experience. Adam concluded from the cross-cultural data that there is "a special propensity for homosexual relations among unmarried male youths" (p. 20). Finally, the data indicate that transgenerational homosexuality (i.e., man-boy sex) has been the most common form of same-sex relationship in which adult males cross-culturally and historically have been involved (Herdt, 1995).
- **Transgenderal** homosexuality refers to sexual relations between a masculine male and a cross-gendered male who takes on a nonmasculine gender role and acts as the passive partner.
- **Egalitarian** homosexuality consists of sexual relations between males who do not change gender roles and who are similar in age and social status. These relations typically occur between two boys or two youths, usually do not exclude heterosexual relations or marriage, and have no implication for gender identity or social identity based on sexual orientation.

⁴ The following are quotations but sometimes the text has been re-arranged somewhat. The emphasis is mine. Rind cites Adam, 1985; Carrier, 1980; Ford & Beach, 1951; Greenberg, 1988; Gregersen, 1983; Herdt, 1991a, 1991b; Murray, 1992; Trumbach, 1977, 1989; Williams, 1992.

- ***The "gay" pattern in the modern West*** These reviews have concluded that [this], which involves egalitarian relations between men whose sexual interests and behaviors are generally restricted to other adult men, has rarely appeared as a pattern in other times and places. Gregersen (1983) concluded that the Western homosexual pattern "is quite exceptional from a cross-cultural point of view and seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon" (p. 297). Herdt (1987) noted that the "Gay Movement is a totally new social phenomenon" (p. 204). Adam (1985) concluded that the current structure of the gay world shows a radical break with cross-cultural forms and merits its own analysis.



Modern Western expectation is for egalitarian gay relationships but it should be noted that intergenerational relationships are common and often sought after on gay "chat" sites on the Web.⁵

Rind makes a further and important point on the subject of under-age sex: what he says has serious implications for the way in which we, as a society, deal with and if necessary counsel people we consider to be the "victims" of under-age sex. He argues that since 1970, the feminist dialectic has convinced scientists and other experts that under-age sex is automatically traumatic and has presumed that it is the same for boys as it is for girls.

In a review of 59 studies based on college samples, Rind et al. found that boys' sexual experiences with significantly older individuals, many of whom were males, were 37% positive, 29% neutral, and 33% negative. Girls' sexual experiences with older persons, on the other hand, were predominately negative (72%), and only occasionally positive (11%) or neutral (18%). Moreover, male students, who as boys were willing partners in these relations, were psychologically as well adjusted as male students who had no such experiences. On the other hand, male students who were unwilling in these relations or female students with these experiences regardless of level of willingness were somewhat less well adjusted than controls. The other two reviews, one of which focused on nationally representative samples (Rind & Tromovitch, 1997), reported comparable reactions, psychological correlates, and sex differences.

⁵ http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gay_Couple_togetherness_in_bed_02.jpg

The findings from these recent reviews imply that willing man-boy sex accompanied by positive reactions may be better informed by the ancient Greek model than by models based on the female experience (e.g., rape and incest models). For unwilling man-boy sex with negative reactions, on the other hand, the latter models may be more appropriate, in which case the cross-cultural and historical perspectives seem much less informative. In short, the data on psychological correlates of and reactions to man-boy sex suggest that the cross-cultural and historical data have value for providing informative perspective on a nontrivial proportion of such cases.
