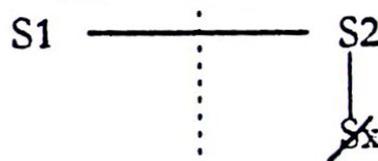


# DRIVE AND TRANSFERENCE IN ADOLESCENCE

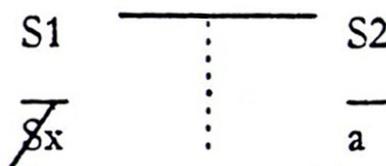
Carlo Vigano

## Topicality of adolescence

How is it that today adolescence has become an increasingly debated issue, when neither Freud nor Lacan ever used the term? The influence of puberty on human development is no different nowadays from what there was then for Freud to see. What has changed is the social fabric in which the transition from childhood to adolescence takes place. This must lead us to the hypothesis that the social environment influences the economy of the drives of the subject. To be more specific, and following Lacan: the drive is structurally articulated like discourse, as indeed mastery of *jouissance* occurs through the signifier and therefore entails the Other, and not some pure “natural” instinct. Lacan elaborates the formula in his Seminar XI (p. 189), after having debunked the Freudian drive, and thus provides a reading that paves the way to the discourse of the Master:



In the lower part you have the fading of the subject \$ and the production of an X which is not, as Jones thought when speaking of aphanisis, a loss of desire, but a loss of the object, which thus becomes the cause of desire. The graph does not yet ascribe the respective positions of (a) and \$. The idea which I submit to you is to consider the “crisis of adolescence” as the trauma caused by a new *jouissance* (puberty) which has yet to be subjectivized and positivized as a *plus-de-jouir* into a social tie.



In relation to this, one may observe that the word “adolescence”, coming from the Latin “crescere” (to grow up), is of little help to mark out a specific period or a stage. This period is characterized by a reorganization of subjective topology, in relation to the function of fantasy. Puberty enforces a real of the body which provokes a split from the imaginary identifications of childhood and enforces a new status for repression. Repression is no longer linked to the parental signifiers, but to the parental object, it is elaborated through the symbolic identifications of the subject.

In order to develop these hypotheses, we should first ask why the crisis of adolescence has become a public issue. Adolescence is a social term: men always feel the need to put a name on things and to brand them, so that facts of nature may

find a place in science and facts of life may find a place in culture, although in a less univocal fashion than those entering the field of science or history. Indeed, the word *puer*, as used by the Romans, did not refer to an age of life but to a social status, namely that of the slave. Then, Christian culture applied the word to a specific age, the age of innocence of those immune to the sin of sexuality.

The status of a subject in relation to others in a given period of history is determined by those very social terms. Witness today, for example, how the terms for a woman are subject to change (in Japan, a law has abolished the use of the word “woman”, as meaning both lady and slave, in favour of the word indicating the feminine gender).

This has to do with the fact that what makes an individual out of a human being is not natural evolution only: a man is not a man because he has the physical attributes of one but because he is recognised as one. The fact of naming is not intended to put some order into the process of evolution but into human relations themselves, so as to let everyone know where he stands and what is the role he is to play on the social stage. In that respect, adolescence refers to a new social role. It is a word that enables the subject to be represented in the field of the Other, whenever he finds some difficulty in perceiving himself as an adult. Now, the psychoanalyst knows that the locus of the Other is not Civilisation only, but is also related to the unconscious: “the discourse of the unconscious is the discourse of the Other”.

In a period of history characterised by swift changes, the emphasis is placed on the one signifier that indicates a transition, which hints at a crisis, and an absence of the values of the signifiers which previously ruled this transitional period. Adolescence is the signifier of this fact, that the problems we face with today’s youth are different from those faced by our own parents. But is it enough to put a name on the thing, and is orthopaedic linguistics the sole remedy to youth’s discontent? To give an example, ‘I am a drug addict’ is in no way an identification allowing a subjective mastery of *jouissance* in the assumption of desire. It is, instead, a declaration glued to imaginary identifications (of the infantile kind), with the single added value of a social recognition of the sanitary kind.

Transition to manhood must be re-invented. Indeed, language does not consist only in naming, it re-organises nature and, as such, also the development of human beings. We must find a new course, a new process that may bring to an end this transition, so that  $\$$  may occupy the position of truth. We have observed that where there is only an adult/child dualism, the second is excluded from society and that it is for the pater familias to accept this. Such an acceptance may occur in a society where the father is also the agent of a socialising discourse, as stigmatised in the popular expression *padre-padrone* (the father and undisputed boss).

In order to further the growth to manhood, should culture be necessarily connected to a paternal function? And how can this come to be in a culture whose ethical tenets are upheld by the laws of the market? Culture provides social identifications, of the order of the imaginary, so that one identifies with a signifying feature picked from that person put in the position of Ego Ideal. The features are taken from the group leader and actualised in the rites of passage. In ancient societies there were many rites of passage: those were stable societies, in which the group provided both ideals and roles. This prevented the crisis of the adolescent, or better, it prevented adolescence from being the byword for the age of crisis and, instead, allowed this age to be the period in which a subject identified as adolescent would dedicate himself to character

building, that is, would lend stability and consistency to the structure of his own drives. The subject goes for a second walk in the field of the Other.

Indeed, true identification for a subject can not stop with the adoption of the ideal features of the group, as that would amount to mere imitation. Instead, such a signifying feature must be negated and the subject must learn to do without it. There is no reciprocity and no recognition possible between the subject and the Other who provides signifiers (institutions). In order to be recognised by the Other, the subject must ascribe a negative sign to that signifier to which he is identified (imaginarily) and ask to be loved for what he is, him and no-one else, that is, for something which is not a signifier. This something Lacan called *ex-sistence* and he linked it to *jouissance*.

Granted the relation of the subject with the Other as the structural basis of transference, which it is the task of the analyst to stimulate and single out, we may say that there is a proximity between adolescence and psychoanalysis. In both cases there is a demand and a passage to discourse. Development at the stage of puberty offers to the young an opportunity to stop taking from the parents the object of *jouissance* and to start finding it in his own body, in his own sexuality as it comes of age, and this explains why the demand for love is no longer addressed to the parents. The sad demand now looks to other adolescents and the young person is thus able to *ex-sist* through his own body.

One parenthesis about the word *jouissance*: it indicates the silent, but steady, quality of the drive that goes beyond the pleasure principle. It should be ascribed to a kind of surplus-labour of the signifier in the signifying process, as speech produces a remainder beyond communication, linked to the act of speech itself, which some, with rash optimism, call meta-communication. In fact, it is the re-activation of the primal loss (the birth trauma), which the adolescent has to rewrite as a surplus-*jouissance* through his demand.

Being a top model does not bring the young woman an inch closer to being recognised and loved. In order to obtain this, the subject will first have to accept being lacking, and carrying in his/her own body something that does not find a symbolic definition. Thus, only through the acceptance of this lack will the subject enter in relation with the Other. It is the new form of the demand for love which is no longer addressed to the parents.

Let us see how Freud dealt with these new forms of demand. The success of his science and the subsequent weakening, as it were, of the rite, led Freud to a thorough review of the identification process, with the risk of being open to charges of tampering with the rites and the teachings of the elders. Before Freud, education and imitation were considered as one and the same. The development of the subject was meant to be homogeneous and continuous, ruled by culture. Freud, instead, singled out two fault lines. The first one in early infancy is repression, from which the organisation of infantile sexuality derives. The trauma of jealousy forces the child to develop a prohibition of the maternal body, which translates into a substitution of drive for instinct, leading to a type of *jouissance* that will condition the rest of his life. Here too, social identifications (Oedipus) contribute to stability, despite the fault line.

In point of fact, Freud had discovered this first fault by noticing that with puberty, such identifications must be jettisoned and rebuilt because of the advent of a second fault that might put at risk the fact of being accepted, as an adult body, in a given society.

This second fault line, puberty, is faced up to by resorting to fantasy, which drives out and takes the place of the Oedipus complex.

Today, the problem, which has reached a magnitude Freud could not foresee, is that the ready-made and ritual answers to such fault lines are becoming ever less adequate. Neither for the child, who does not hesitate to answer back: Why don't you believe in God? Why do you betray mummy?, etc., nor for the adolescent, because ideal identifications are too fragmented and tied to smaller groups to help build up his social responsibility.

### **The two phases of sexuality**

What remains invariable is the way society tries to solve the problems of the individual, resorting to the same nostrum: join the group. The invitation to share the imaginary consistency of the family nucleus and of society, and of common values, stands in sharp contrast with their very inconsistency (meaning *ex-sist* as *jouissance*). This inconsistency was, in fact, meant to vanish, by means of the rite of initiation that introduced the subject to the symbolic function. The rite is initiatory because it shakes off the subject from values.

Not only. The articulation of the imaginary and the symbolic is different in the two moments in which the fault lines occur. The awakening of human sexuality as a two phased process was fundamental for Freud, and Lacan explained to us the structural motivations for this: the imaginary anticipation, in specularity, should never be perceived as the first phase of a natural process of development, as this anticipation is always subject to what is to come, to the after-effect, meaning it is contingent on the symbolic grasp of the real. When the fault occurs, when the solidarity between symbolic and imaginary breaks down, then the knot (RSI) reveals itself as Borromean. Basically, things stand like this: psychoanalysis has discovered that the two fault lines were not symmetrical and that, as a result, they required different approaches. In childhood, the answer to the problems elicited by the emergence of sexuality comes from the unconscious, from the formations of the unconscious. In adolescence, the answer of the Other is "that's your problem". In order to understand how this takes place, let us first see the answer of the unconscious in childhood.

The child finds in the mother not only the satisfaction of his needs, but everything that we shall call maternal attentiveness, or maternal love. This extra attentiveness is counterbalanced by an obligation, the obligation to enter into the mother tongue (which Lacan called "lalangue", alluding also to the specific lallation, as different from language and speech). It is this aspect of obligation proper to a certain kind of satisfaction linked to the maternal Other, that says "no" and that withholds, which takes the child into the symbolic dimension and the world of representation. Language generates a split: it gives the child an identity and at the same time it stages a first encounter with sexuality, with the desire of the mother, ineffable as such and standing beyond need.

The desire of the mother is first of all a mystery, prohibited, and the trauma of a *jouissance* extraneous to the world of the child: the attentive mother seems to say: I am always with you through my love, but you will not have me because I am also somewhere else. The trauma is not the physical absence of the mother, but jealousy, as the child feels deprived of an inaccessible object (embodied in the Augustinian scene of the younger brother sucking the breast). In reaction to this shattering and death-like experience, the intervention of the Name-of-the-Father provides a name to

this death-like thing as long as it remains sheer lack in the discourse of the mother. The paternal metaphor intervenes to represent it as Desire of the other. By means of the Name-of-the-Father, the child learns how to represent desire, starts playing at hiding and finding, begins to invent stories. Playing enables him to represent himself: One day, he too will be a father, or one day there will be a father who will give her too a son. (\$x).

The child born within the symbolic is introduced by the father to the function of the signifier, which is to represent the subject for the Other. It is the phallic function, which is anticipated by the functioning of the drive. If the mother did not promote the Phallus as signifier of her own desire and were to desire the child himself, the latter would persist in the delusion of filling the lack in the mother and would be unable to represent himself symbolically in playing. The outcome would be psychosis. In the Oedipus complex, the child comes to renounce being the imaginary phallus for the mother, and as a reward he is granted the symbolic Phallus, which leads to an adult sexuality.

Infantile sexuality bears no relation to the use of the genitals, which are the preserve of adults, but is an unconscious process ruled by Oedipus. The child can experience *jouissance* by playing with any part of his parents' body (extended also to the relatives), as long as it is only symbolically phallic, sexed. The sexual value of infantile satisfactions must remain repressed out of reality and, consequently, satisfaction obtained with one's own genitals (infantile masturbation) is prohibited. When infantile games and fantasies are put aside, the child devotes himself to learning (latency period). Any coincidence which he might construe in sexual (phallic) terms provokes an onrush of anxiety. The greater the family consensus over the ingenuity of the child, the more he can dedicate himself to intellectual pursuits and ditch the fantasies that had helped him elaborate the oedipal situation and answer the question where am I from? (from the symbolic).

Puberty brings out into circulation an extra *jouissance*, as the adolescent discovers in his own body some enigmatic reality, and a satisfaction which is no longer attainable by means of the love demand that had developed out of the repression of the sexual value of the parental objects. The adjustment between drive and love obtained in childhood was in fact based on the convergence on the parental object under the protection of the unconscious. Now, the new object - the proper body - with its quantitative force; becomes the agent of a new kind of repression whereby it is the parental object itself which is repressed. Suddenly, the sheer physical dimension of the parents, as well as the house and the relatives, arouse aversion and a desire to run away. Only the failure of this new kind of repression may trigger an aggressive and self-destructive type of confrontation.

In anorexia, for instance, in order to retain the maternal object the adolescent resorts to the operation by which he denies being reducible to a feeding organism, and rejects food in order to get something different from the mother, the secret (which had obviously not been evoked clearly enough). For that reason, the anorexic can not accept that his body should become a phallic equivalent for any body else, and should take on the secondary sexual features and, at times, also the primary features (amenorrhoea). Violent behaviour may express the impossibility of achieving this new repression. Over-attachment to the father or the mother takes on, the aspect of ambivalence and of destructiveness, leading to acting out and even attempted suicides.

Once again, the subject finds himself unprepared to face sexuality. Which course shall he adopt in order to face this new fault line and what can he turn to in order to reach sexual satisfaction through the love demand, once the maternal Other has told him "that's your problem"? The adolescent will look back and fish for the early childhood fantasies he had found so much contentment in. Not that he will go back to child-playing. Indeed, memory deforms the early games of the child, since it eroticises the infantile period, as Freud observed.

It is not an easy transition and for the obsessive, for instance, what may be eroticised is not an infantile fantasy but a scene from early childhood. For example, a child peeing while in his mother's arms or, in some other case, the mother washing the child besmirched by the sudden leak of a petrol pump. Scenes that represent a precocious encounter with a passive *jouissance* and which are now, in the new situation created by adolescence, fished out to express the love demand. When repression prevents the use of such representations in demand, in the company of friends, the outcome stands as an enigma, taking the form of the obsessive symptom, masturbation or compulsive washing.

Instead, when two adolescents meet, they really do meet and therefore, from a Lacanian viewpoint, they mess up: each one meets the real of his own fantasy. The result goes beyond mere misunderstanding and is more serious and grave, because these fantasies have no relation whatsoever to adult sexuality. Being connected to genitality, they stop short of taking the subject into a totalising dimension, into a sexual identity that would enter into contact with another sexual identity. All fantasy objects, even the genital fantasy, remain the expression of partial drives, Oedipal in nature, with which the child had reacted to the first contact with sexual reality. At this point, the task for the adolescent is to fend for himself and reset his demand of love, turning to an object which the fantasy will never make fit for sexual intercourse.

If he has the courage to insist with his love demand, he may use his fantasy to uphold his own desire. Otherwise, if he does not become the dupe of the fantasy, he may break away from the necessity of bringing the fantasy back into the realm of castration, and start drifting into something, such as, for example, drug addiction. Such an outcome is often caused by imponderable factors, like chance encounters, in which destiny does not have the same quality of predestination as it does in the case of the obsessive symptom. I remember a young girl of 16, fully disappointed by her father since early childhood, who addressed her demand for love to her Italian teacher and who tried relentlessly to have an affair with him. The boys of her age did not appeal to her. She had tried drugs, as if to grow up faster, and she had also mooted the pros and cons of having a homosexual experience. When the teacher sent her to me, she devoted all her attention to him, knowing all too well the teacher's weak points on which she could play to further her courtship. She did not have an analysis, but she learned enough about the ambiguity of her demand (designed not to be subjectivised).

### **Utilising fantasy**

Today, no less than yesterday, the path through adolescence is a true and proper initiation: the subject must be initiated to the utilisation of fantasy. What does that mean? Is it once more a matter of renunciation and compensation? Certainly not on the Oedipal scene. Quite the contrary, the initiation is successful only when that scene is destroyed. Identifying to the ideal signifier of the group is not enough for the subject to be admitted and accepted by the other adolescents. He must, instead,

enter in relation with the desire of the Other, although there is no father any more to tell him what his name is. Such would be the illusion of a sexual education. The only thing the adolescent can go by, to understand what the other desires, is to take in his demand. The other wants me to love him for what he is, but expects that I become the object of his fantasy, and treats me accordingly.

That is why Oedipus is useless. In the case of the 16 year-old girl, it is clear that the wish to be the phallus that would enliven the life of her drab and grey teacher did not stem from her own Oedipal fantasies. The intuition of the fantasy of a dull, repressed teacher still living with his mother, provided her with an imaginary role. It is, of course, still possible for the adolescent, like anyone else, to have a fixation on some object ensnared in Oedipal fantasies. This is the course offered by the neurotic symptom, and it requires such a fantasy as the consumerist society does not encourage it. A new pathology without neurotic symptoms, though not deprived of fantasy, calls into being the concept of borderline.

We must, therefore, go back to the initiation rites, which consist in providing an imaginary covering to the symbolic phallus, which is what rules inter-personal relations. I mentioned at the beginning that only when such rites are shared by society and its culture as a whole can they open a fruitful dialectic between demand and desire. Through the rite, culture favours transition. For that very reason, what causes a conflict between two cultures is a difference on the level of fantasy and, specifically, in the object of *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of what slips out of symbolic mediation. Whole peoples fight and destroy each other over different culinary habits, and people eating spaghetti look suspiciously at those eating potatoes. Nowadays, however, in a growing part of the world, consumption of goods is no longer ruled by cultural habits or by the dictates of the state or religion. Consumption patterns, instead, tend to unify under the pressure of the laws of the market. We must bear this in mind whenever we want to solve the problems of the adolescent, as it is very likely we are dealing with someone whom the rites of consumerist society have not initiated to the utilisation of fantasy. What is the relation of the psychoanalyst with that society?

If society expects psychoanalysis to unburden us from the weight of the real, on what success or failure should we evaluate our task, when neither take the form of symptoms? If we were to limit ourselves to offering a new rite, psychoanalysis itself would become a 'forgotten symptom' (cf. Lacan, *La terza*).

In the last years of his teaching, Lacan dedicated himself to developing a general theory of the symptom: the ex-sistence of phallic *jouissance* found, thanks to the borromean knot, an equivalent with meaning and with Other *jouissance* (the Other of the body and not of the signifier). There are, therefore new levels of ex-sistence to fuel the "individual rite of the neurotic" and, as such, to bring the borderline case, when not psychotic, back into neurosis.

Going back to adolescents: fantasy is used by them to mask the failed encounter with the boy or the girl, as it turns this encounter into a kind of variation on infantile make-believe. The fantasy becomes the organiser of the new sexual identifications, and of both masculine ostentation and feminine masquerade. Consequently, even when the variations are played by four hands, love, hinging on fantasy, remains basically narcissistic. We must add that this utilisation of the fantasy requires some kind of social consensus, so that the more families and schools are pegged to laws that only tend to lower the cost of objects, the more the young will be able to find it only in

holiday resorts and at parties. This explains the illusory tendency to look for a locus for the fantasy beyond the pale of law, for which drug addiction stands as the paradigm. In repetition, the failed encounter may be elaborated into a successful one, in the sense that the only success of the encounter is the near-miss, leading up to an apprenticeship of desire. Flaubert, in L'Éducation Sentimentale, provides a rather browned-off version of such apprenticeship, which leads up to a symptomatic dead-end in the case of Emma Bovary.

What is not to be found in the novel is what the boy and the girl must learn in fending for themselves and at their own risk, namely, that sexuality as such is not ruled by sense and by the encounter with “the other half of the apple”, but that it is itself what may lend sense to life. Lacan says that sexuality “rends a hole in the real”, the first fault line caused by sexuality is dealt with by pedagogy and morals, the second can only be resolved through responsibility and ethical decision.

When a young person asks for help, he does not do it because he diagnoses himself as sick. His call does not stem from a subjective symptom, and what is wrong in his life is no symptom that at some point becomes unbearable. The adolescent will never come to us saying “I can't stand any more my fainting, my phobias or my failures in love relations”. As an adolescent, he is not represented by something that goes wrong and that repeats itself, and so, as we have seen, he may only come and tell us “I am an –adolescent”, of which he may jolly well be bored stiff. Such a discontent stands on the limits of the analysable, and that could be the Lacanian definition of the borderline, provided it is not understood as the limit between two subjective structures, but as the virtual border on the way out from the Oedipus complex. And it is virtual because it may be drawn only after the crossing: it is a matter that queries the destiny of the Names-of-the-Father in our civilisation. One must view the problem from a standpoint that precedes the demand for love, the standpoint of the “supply that arouses demand”, which implies the presence of the analyst. Such supply has, therefore, no relation to what culture and society display. The issue may be narrowed down to what happens in the group, which as I mentioned before, may become the locus of the unconscious. Psychodramas, for instance, can provide such a locus, if a first vertical level of transference is induced by the discourse of the analyst, whenever he turns the sitting into the locus of the subject supposed to say. Then, as P. Lemoine explained, a lateral transference on the fantasy object of the other with whom the subject acts his drama may induce an answer of the Other that startles and questions the subject. From fantasy to symptom?

So as not to make the symptom a kind of program, one should view the discourse of the analyst as standing on the same side as the discourse of drugs. Drug-addiction is no symptom, instead it tends to organise itself as a discourse, let us say, of the narcotic. Such discourse is speechless and its origins go as far down as ancient Pharmakon and its efficient cause, which brings us back to magic. Like the discourse of the analyst. Pharmacopoeia has to do with answers: the subject abandons the safe haven of identifications to go into the field of the Other, convinced to find there what the Other does not have. A love upheld by Pharmakon, instead of the agalma of transference. The latter, however, does not drive out preoccupations but gives rise to them, as being the cause of desire. The substitution of agalma for Pharmakon may occur, provided one does not interpret a desire which has not been subjectivised yet. This is what Socrates does in answer to the eulogy of Alcibiades: The treasure you have eulogised, it is Agaton who takes it. Thus uttering a name that becomes the name of Alcibiades' symptom. Without lying open to interpretation directly, the name may pass for a sexual partner. It is an example of love, not initiation. In neurosis, the

symptom takes the place of the sexual partner, in adolescence the partner takes the place of the symptom. This special partner could be a friend or a contemporary who looks as if they might have found the object which makes the Other desiring.

In the end, adolescence is a topical issue in psychoanalysis and it is a metaphor for it. As a critical moment for the subject it is the time of separation and of the building of fantasies. Fantasy is here the opposite of those moods which the Master unifies under the name of depression.