Some Remarks on Adolescence with Particular Reference to Winnicott and Lacan

Alain Vanier, M.D., Ph.D. ...

Utilizing observations on adolescence—notably those of Winnicott, as well as the work of Lacan and a clinical case—the author advances several propositions concerning the unique relationship between adolescents and time. The consequences of this relationship are then framed as a paternally metaphor.

Introduction

The word adolescence rarely appears in Freud's work, and was almost never used in his day in the same way that we use it today. Instead, the term Freud used, especially in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905), was puberty, one that stresses the physical aspects of this period of development.

Etymologically, adolescence comes from the Latin adolescere, which means "to grow up to maturity." An adolescent is someone who is growing into adulthood; thus, the very meaning of the word inscribes the adolescent in time. Up until the seventeenth century, the word adult meant very much what adolescent means for us today. But more recently, of course, a shift has occurred, and there is now a discrete time period assigned to adolescence. Since psychoanalysis has no ready definition of what an adult is, it may be more consistent for us to say that adolescence is not so much a prelude to adulthood as the necessary sequel to infancy after the latency phase.1

How should we view this return to infancy, or the return from infancy, with its reactivation of oedipal impulses? How can we speak of a return while avoiding any suggestion of a reversibility of time? The answer lies in the realization that this “return” is not the return of the same thing. Entry into the latency period (which corresponds to the decline of the oedipal complex and its apparent desexualization) occurs against a backdrop of childhood impotence—an impotence based on organic factors, but one that promises later fulfillment. There is, of course, the presence of the father's symbolic prohibition, but there is also an organic impotence of the sexual organ with respect to the jouissance2 child may seek. What corollary significance should be given to the reality of the body and the sexual drive at adolescence?

1 Lacan (1953-1954) proposed alternative factors to the idea of a unification of partial drives in adolescence. He noted that “the child's admirable way of speaking … does not commit it to anything” (p. 255), unlike the speech of an adult. Children lack something that would allow them to take responsibility for what they say and accept the consequences in terms of interlocution. Lacan (1967) defined the modern era as a generalized childhood, which he linked to the present-day increase in segregation—that is, the status of the child in respect to jouissance. (See footnote 2 below.)

2 Jouissance is a term introduced by Lacan (1960) to designate the satisfaction procured in the use of a desired object. The problem is that this type of satisfaction, which must be thought of as complete, supposes an object that is fundamentally forbidden. All other objects that attract desire are so many substitutes for the first one, and can only be partially satisfying; thus, a distinction must be made between satisfaction and jouissance. Moreover, jouissance seems to contradict the pleasure principle, since it apparently corresponds more to an increase in excitation than a return to the lowest level possible. Although strictly speaking, the term is not found in Freudian theory, Freud often referred to such a concept, and in several Freudian terms we can find something approximating the idea of jouissance as it was later developed by Lacan. There is a jouissance linked to sexuality, but Freud also linked jouissance to pain, correlating it with an increase in psychic excitation. Moreover, when Freud posited the idea of a death drive, he suggested a link between jouissance and death, a mythic experience of satisfaction in which Eros is always coupled with Thanatos. Lacan later distinguished between several types of jouissance. There is, on the one hand, what Lacan called phallic jouissance, accessible to the subject due to castration. However, Lacan also posited a jouissance outside language, which he called the "jouissance of the Other" (1972-1973). Such jouissance, he wrote, “thrives only on infinity” (1972-1973, p. 94), as opposed to sexual jouissance, which is finite. (See also Vanier 1998a, p. 46; 1998b, pp. 65, 77, 88.)
Adolescence and Time

Although the adolescent experiences a return to an earlier phase that might appear to be a kind of time warp, because of the reality of the body, he or she is faced with a number of irreversible consequences. The threshold of adolescence, namely puberty, and its termination—the “crisis of adolescence”—both mark the irreversibility of time. And since young boys and girls are then forced to position themselves in terms of gender, adolescence also functions as the culmination of the process of sexual identity, begun in infancy.

Clinical Vignette: Pierre

I once treated a very young psychotic child, Pierre, over a long period. His parents had consulted me because he constantly courted danger and had had a number of accidents. At the time, Françoise Dolto was my supervisor, and she ended her supervision of this patient with these words: “You've cured Pierre of his psychosis, so we don't need to talk about him any more.”

At the time, the meaning of her words was enigmatic (although apparently she made similar remarks fairly often). What did she mean by “cured,” since the boy had just entered a special institution, and the analysis would in fact continue for a long period after her comment? True, Pierre's behavior had changed considerably: he no longer sought physical danger, and he was neither delusional nor incoherent in his speech. The institution that had admitted him later discharged him, claiming that he did not belong there since he was not psychotic, but rather “predelinquent.” While it was true that he still had a propensity for acting out, what happened later showed that he was not really on the road to delinquency.

When Pierre reached puberty, he experienced major anxiety attacks and returned to see me. He told me that he was terrified—and indeed, I could read the terror in his eyes—by the idea that he was going to grow pubic hair. It was very hard for him even to leave his home, and he had developed a considerable number of ritualistic behaviors. He slept fitfully and spent hours in the bathroom, meticulously examining his body, on the lookout for the first dreaded hair.

Winnicott's View of Adolescence

Adolescence is time. It is often said that this period constitutes a difficult moment in life, and that teenagers “just have to get through it.” Winnicott (1961) did not disagree in his well-known essay on adolescence; the problem, he believed, is that in adolescence, “each individual is engaged in a living experience and a problem of existing,” for which the only remedy is “the passage of time” (p. 79).

Winnicott's text began with the remark that the adolescent boy or girl does not really want to be understood. This is a good thing for analysts to remember when dealing with adolescents, since here, more than elsewhere, sympathetic understanding can be counterproductive. We should not seek to “understand” the parents, the school, or other aspects of the adolescent's immediate environment. Nor should we try to show understanding for the adolescent's self, since the patient is not looking for this.

However familiar one might be with Winnicott's essay, rereading it is rewarding. It is interesting to note, for example, that Winnicott did not privilege the sexual or genital aspect of pubertal changes. From the very beginning, he invited the reader to understand the word libido as a complex term.

While acknowledging that the adolescent has the physical capacity to possess the sexual object, since he or she is no longer faced with the impotence of the past, Winnicott noted that the adolescent also has the physical power to destroy. Thus, emphasis is placed not so much on incestuous desire as on the imaginary figure of the depriving father. The adolescent's predicament revolves around the status and function of prohibition, and this becomes the starting point for the relationship to the object. The issue is not so much that of “killing the father” as of accepting the fact that the father is dead, and that it is the adolescent's self, not the imaginary father, with whom the adolescent must come to terms. However, in order to succeed in doing so, certain conditions must be satisfied.

“How shall the adolescent boy or girl deal with the new power to destroy and even to kill, a power which did not complicate feelings of hatred at the toddler age?” (Winnicott 1961, p. 80). In a later text, Winnicott (1971) revisited the issue: “In the total unconscious fantasy belonging to growth at puberty and in adolescence, there is the death of someone” (p. 145). Winnicott advised parents that the best they can do during this turbulent period is to try to survive without relinquishing what is important.

The death drive is thus seen to be especially manifest in adolescence. Sex, in Winnicott's opinion, is possible before adolescents are ready for it, and he argued that their sexual behavior actually serves the
purpose of getting rid of sexuality. On the other hand, Winnicott observed that adolescents are deeply involved with their environment. The violent games in which children engage, particularly those privileging death and the survival of the fittest, sometimes surprise or worry parents, and their prevalence is often attributed to cultural influences (television, for example). Participation in such games usually ends with adolescence, however, or, if such is not the case, the fantasies are acted out.

Adolescence is primarily a social phenomenon—that is, a phenomenon of discourse.3 Indeed, adolescence exists in all modern societies.

Moreover, our clinical experience shows that the adolescent breakdown can occur very late, and that it sometimes plays itself out in an analytic setting.

While viewing adolescence as a return to infancy, one can also see it as a moment at which the primal illusion is revived. The idealism often observed in adolescents is a way of keeping at bay the disappointment that is the inevitable counterpart of this illusion. Such disillusionment is linked to a modification of the status of both the ideal and the body—an ideal that keeps the group together and makes it a “body.”

If adolescence is above all a social phenomenon, Winnicott is right to consider the mutual relationship between adolescents and social changes. In 1961, when he published “Adolescence: Struggling through the Doldrums,” Winnicott believed that the development of the atom bomb had altered the whole climate of adolescence.4 To him, the atom bomb's existence meant that “we know that we can no longer solve a social problem by organizing for a new war” (1961, p. 83). Before the bomb, adolescence had found a “social” solution for its problem. (Winnicott spoke of a social solution because adolescence is a problem that directly affects the social bond and cohesion of the group.) However, with the bomb, things had changed radically:

Here comes the effect of the atomic bomb. If it no longer makes sense to deal with our difficult adolescents by preparing them to fight for their King and Country, then that is another reason why we are thrown back on the problem that there is this adolescence, a thing in itself. So now we have got to “dig” adolescence. [1961, p. 83]

In many ways, it is society's and the group's failure to deal with adolescence that reveals the face of adolescence to us.

Winnicott went on to say that the difficulty experienced by the male child or adolescent in his imaginary life is linked not so much to potency, but rather to the confrontation with another male and the admiration of a girl who, looking on, admires the victor. Here we should note the importance that Winnicott (1961) ascribed to the gaze. Approaching the issue from another angle, Dolto (1968) saw the adolescent problem as “a particular form of the conflict between heterosexual genital drives and genital drives which have remained homosexual” (p. 241).

Adolescence should be interpreted, of course, entirely along the lines of the oedipal dilemma. It also represents, however, a return to primal elements and to the issue of illusion mentioned above. Dolto (1968) believed that with the “birth pains of puberty,” the individual “returns to the level of structuration before the oedipal crisis” (p. 239). One might appropriately apply the expression the preoedipal triangle (paraphrasing Lacan [1956-1957]) to this time of life.

Clinical Vignette: Bastien

I would like to provide another clinical vignette in the context of Winnicott's (1961) belief that in psychoanalysis, we need time (see also Lacan 1970). As analysts, we become acutely aware of the time factor whenever we attempt to give an account of one of our analyses and to describe how the treatment ran its course. We soon realize that it is impossible to provide a full description, for the simple reason that we cannot give an account of the “time” of the treatment. In the following vignette, I limit my comments to a few clinical elements in order to highlight what I believe to be two essential phases in adolescent analyses.

The patient, whom I will call Bastien, was fifteen when he came to see me. “He's been in adolescence for two years,” was the first thing his mother told me during our interview. “In the beginning, it went fairly well. Then things took a turn for the worse.” Two events had occurred at practically the same time: his
father had left the family home, separating from his wife, and Bastien's grandfather—to whom the boy was very attached—had died. Bastien thus felt abandoned by his fathers. He had earlier been a “good boy,” as he himself put it, an above-average student who liked classical music, but he had radically changed his lifestyle.

Analysis had been tried twice before. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that it is quite probable that those attempts failed due to the inability of Bastien's parents to occupy the position that was being challenged. (It should be noted in passing that the father's activities brought him into frequent contact with adolescents.) The parents described their worry over Bastien's failure to apply himself at school, and noted that he had started to play hooky, writing his own excuse notes and faking the signatures. He had become very aggressive with his mother, and even more so with his father, whom he hardly wanted to see at all.

Bastien told me in our first interview that shortly after his father left home, he had become friends with another student with whom he had a “hate relationship,” as he put it. The other boy “won all the time,” and hung around with people from outside the school—questionable characters. The boy was a “batard”; he did not “respect other people. He isn't tolerant.” But at least he wasn't “racist,” because he was of Algerian descent. Bastien told me that he did not know why, but he had begun to act like the other boy, skipping classes and keeping company with delinquent types not from their school. He had even started “shaking down” younger kids, and had finally run into trouble with the police. He had also changed his dress habits, had started listening to rap, and had covered the walls of the neighborhood with graffiti.

Bastien told me later on in the treatment that he used his body as a sign of his own delinquency, since he had experienced the departure of his father as a delinquent act. I will not insist on the provocative nature of his actions through which he sought to encounter the law as something real. The result was that Bastien kept not only his mother and father, but also the local police, very busy.

As mentioned above, I wish to use this clinical account to highlight two phases of the analysis. In the beginning, it was a treatment marked entirely by actions, as is often the case with adolescents. The acting out bore witness to fluctuating ideal egos which became extremely mobile almost immediately. There was very little reminiscing during the sessions. All this reminds us of what Winnicott (1991) wrote of certain patients who are not integrated in time, and who are incapable of relating now with next (p. 78). Bastien, for example, had no plans and had stopped going to school. In such a case, the analyst is not a point of reference, nor can he or she embody the father figure. Indeed, I caution any analyst against trying to occupy what may appear to be a faltering position, since the latter constitutes, in many respects, the very nature of adolescence.

Shortly after beginning analysis, Bastien tried unsuccessfully to be admitted back into his high school. He then asked to take correspondence classes. His parents, however, were worried about his being left alone all day. I pointed out to them that Bastien was already alone anyway, since he no longer went to school, and encouraged them to let him choose the direction he wanted to take. As it turned out, Bastien enrolled in and kept up with a very demanding correspondence program.

He was living with his mother at this point. Little by little, he built up in his imagination the idea that he was the leader of a small gang of three or four members, whose main territory was the street. Bastien lived in a relatively quiet part of Paris. His fantasy transposed the whole mythology of the inner cities. (Actually, in France, the “inner cities” are the suburbs.) He organized a defense of the staircase in his building, marked out perimeters of his territory, and invented attendant legends. He recounted with great enthusiasm the history of his demesne and the high deeds of heroism that had been performed to protect it. In short, he stood watch over the carefully mapped-out maternal body, the motherland which his father had deserted.

Such behavior can be likened to what Winnicott (1961) wrote about the usual fate of adolescent boys when they are drafted to defend the national territory, the fatherland, a solution that helps channel the impossible death drive linked to that time of life, just as the narcissistic question is linked to signifiers and symbolization.

Bastien's territory was marked with signs and graffiti, as if he wanted to inscribe something on the body of the area he had mapped out. Signs also appeared on Bastien's body at this point in treatment, as he experimented with a wide range of clothing and hair styles. In societies different from our own, rites of passage always involve marking the body with initiatory signs; perhaps in adolescence more than
at any other time of life, we are given notice that we have a body, since this is when it undergoes so many transformations and becomes singularly alien. Indeed, we can say that in adolescence, our body often possesses us.

Gradually, Bastien abandoned the idea of defending his imaginary territory. Instead, he became attached to a real country that he claimed as his own, but which in fact was his mother's country of origin. Bastien had never been there, but he recalled some phrases of the language his mother and her father spoke with each other. He remembered meeting his maternal grandparents on a few occasions, although at first he said little about these meetings. However, he began to feel great nostalgia for his grandfather, talking about him more and more. Finally, Bastien decided to learn his grandfather's native language. He chose it as an optional course in his correspondence program, and was soon able to read newspapers from the “homeland.” He went to visit his maternal uncle, who lived in Paris, and came back elated. He spoke about his mother's country in glowing terms—a marvelous place, he said, devoid of all conflict. His behavior began to improve, along with his grades. It was at around this time that Bastien began to talk about his parents' divorce, and to wonder openly about what it might have meant for him; then, little by little, he lost interest in this topic.

He often talked of the need for rules that would assign each person a place in society—an attitude prevalent among inner-city gang members. His opinions became somewhat reactionary, and he often claimed to be scandalized by certain deviant types of behavior. His call for law and order alternated with radical protests against society. He dreamed of an ideal country. He expressed his passion for his mother's country by becoming an avid supporter of its national soccer team, although in the past, soccer had never interested him.

Bastien was going too fast, and his body got in his way and disturbed him. He bumped into things and felt awkward. In the end, however, his good grades and his interest in a neighborhood girl—a former classmate whom he ran into by chance—coincided with a felicitous turning point in his life.

**Acting Out**

As mentioned earlier, Bastien's analysis—although he was very much involved in it—was marked by more than a few instances of acting out. Can we really speak of it, therefore, as an analysis? As we have seen, with adolescents, some degree of acting out in the initial phase of treatment seems inevitable, and I think that analysts should be tolerant and recognize that such acting out may reflect major inner changes. There is, of course, a risk involved in such an attitude, but it outweighs the disadvantages of becoming identified with a repressive authority, or of trying to put the patient's problems into some kind of new framework. However, advocating a tolerant attitude on the part of the analyst does not mean that he or she should condone acts of delinquency.

The first part of Bastien's treatment provided him with a forum in which he could talk about what had been acted out. Caught in the currents of an overpowering, imaginary flood, he had found a haven where he could feel that he really existed, a feeling reinforced by the analyst's ability to listen. Winnicott (1961) argued that adolescence is a problem of existing; and we should remember that existing in adolescence calls to mind the themes of separation and exile, upon which individuality is ultimately based.

Acting out reveals an aspect of the treatment of adolescents that is ubiquitous, albeit in various forms: what we might call the paradox of adolescence, namely, that the only real remedy for psychic pain is "the passage of time" (Winnicott 1961, p. 79). This, of course, is the last thing adolescents want to hear, since they are looking for an immediate cure. However, even when adolescents consider themselves to be in an emergency situation, they are not necessarily in a rush. This is why I believe that, despite their complaints about how long an analysis takes, getting adolescents to accept the fact that time will be needed, and that this cannot be otherwise, is an important part of the treatment.

The inherent contradiction between the emergency situation and the need for time to pass is sometimes the cause of what Winnicott called adolescent "doldrums" (1961, p. 79). Doldrums is actually the name given to an oceanic region near the equator, where the weather is characterized by dead calms and baffling light winds, through which ships can make very little headway. For people on board, every minute seems like an eternity. The analogous unhappy listlessness of adolescence, caused by the disharmony and disjointedness of time, is another very important factor to keep in mind when treating adolescents.

Following on Winnicott, Rassial (1990) addressed the importance of time in adolescence. In terms of the real, Rassial saw adolescence as a kind of “precipitation” (pp. 204-205), noting that adolescents are not
in control of changes occurring in their bodies. On an imaginary level, however, they may view life as something that is not going fast enough. Finally, on a symbolic level, Rassial argued that the period of adolescence is ordered by repetition, reproduction, and invention. There is a repetition of a primal scene, but the repetition is not a real one, and thus the adolescent is forced to merely repeat the repetition. Rassial also noted that the adolescent phase of life is the one in which reproduction becomes possible, and reproduction often appears to be an alternative to repetition. This is partly why some adolescents rush into parenthood.

**Influence of the Rhythm of Speech**

Our relationships to time, speed, and motion are often taken for granted. In order to listen to someone, for example, we have to adjust ourselves to the speaker's flow of words and speed of delivery. Sometimes we get annoyed at a person who talks too fast or too slowly, because we know that this can make us lose the gist of what is being said.

**Language and Autism**

But how do we actually adjust to the time and rhythm of speech? In *Une Âme Prisonnière [A Captive Soul] (1994)*, Birger Sellin used a computer-assisted method of communication to quote text he had written while a young man suffering from autism. The results of this technique have been hotly contested: could an autistic patient really have authored the text? However, for us, this is not the issue. Whether the writings came from Sellin or from an assistant, their relevance lies in what such a clinical relationship reveals about the differences between speech and writing, since Sellin is reported to have begun to write before he could speak.

Following is a sample of the (unedited) text:

*It's absurd to think that autistic people are less intelligent than other extraordinary mutes we cannot speak because our internal agitation is extraordinary, even annoying the agitation is undescrivable and must remain without appropriate expression because outside-men haven't experienced it and weren't able to give it a name I call it the-depths-of-the-power-of-agitation. I hardly ever have moments without this agitation. [p. 164, trans. J. Monahan]*

Writing in the same way, Sellin, like other autists, later described words as coming at him as fast as a bullet train. Most of us probably have an innate capacity to isolate and delimit the voice, much as we do when we look at a precise point in space and isolate it from the surrounding area. But how do we manage to select relevant auditory elements? How do we enter into the tempo of sentences and adjust ourselves to what the Other is saying? Are we already inside the rhythm of the Other's speech, or do we adjust to it from the outside?

These questions can be partially answered by noting that the ability to differentiate requires both a degree of inhibition and a paraexcitatory function, which allows us to record on a temporal level certain incoming stimuli while discarding others. In some cases, this capacity to screen and register can be missing, or in other instances, an apparently ordinary object becomes the center of attention. The result is a short-circuiting of instinctual drives.

Some autists and psychotics who have decompensated later in life are capable of astonishing intellectual performances, and demonstrate a singular openness to signifiers and language. I remember one young psychotic patient who was fascinated by Brittany and everything related to it. He could recite from memory the arrival and departure times for trains in the region over an entire year, including rail connections from one town to another.

**Other Viewpoints on Adolescence and Time**

Adolescents in trouble, like Pierre and Bastien, are inscribed in time, a time that begins with the signifier. If, as Hegel (1807) wrote, the concept is time (p. 305), then the signifier is what produces and deploys time, which is the real refuse of what occurred in the beginning and which later unfolds on the level of imaginary lived experience.

Psychologists have observed that the idea of infinity—the passage of time against the backdrop of eternity—is inconceivable to a child. Only in adolescence does infinity become something imaginable; and this is why adolescents seek an inviolable truth. What is special about truth—for otherwise it could not be a truth—is that it is eternal. Faced with the apparent failure of what once seemed certain, the adolescent has to return to the initial period of symbolization, which introduced him or her to time. This is why adolescents have trouble dealing with time and why they act with such impulsive haste. Freymann (1992)
stressed this point in discussing anorexia, an affliction that affects girls mainly during adolescence, and observed a relationship to primal symbolization.

The disconnectedness that adolescents experience between eternity and time is due to the function of the signifier. This disconnectedness leads to a reexamination and reinvention of time, because adolescents need to reinscribe themselves and to position themselves anew as subjects. In order to subjectivize time once again, the adolescent boy or girl must find a position that satisfies both the demands of the species and the particularities of genealogy. If, as Winnicott suggested, the remedy for this troubled period is indeed the passage of time, then the best thing psychoanalysis can do for the adolescent is to allow time to go by.

Freud posited that the relationship to time is first experienced as a rhythm that later recurs in the alternating absence and presence of the mother, inscribed in language, as evident in the well-known Fort-Da description (Freud 1920, pp. 14-17). The same rhythmic pattern of time permeates the paternal metaphor, the structure that Lacan (1966) uncovered in the oedipal complex (p. 557). The paternal metaphor consists of the substitution of a signifier, the Name-of-the-Father, for the signifiers of the desire of the mother, which are linked to the desire to be the maternal phallus (which is missing and thus causes the mother, in turn, to be desirous). This constitutes the first phase of the oedipal complex. The paternal metaphor is prerequisite to all later forms of metaphorization. It manifests itself as something that emerges in the desire of the mother. Non-deployment of the paternal metaphor corresponds to psychosis.

The Name-of-the-Father replaces what was first symbolized by the absence of the mother. Thus, primal repression involves a signifier attached to the other as a body, as jouissance. Afterwards, the phallus performs its task of separation, and the repression of other instinctual representatives is correlative to this. The result is to make phallic signification (or sexual signification) preeminent, since it is linked to castration, thus introducing the law and symbolic order. Desire in the individual is maintained by being carried over onto any object other than the mother (Vanier 1998b).

However, the implementation of this structure has a primal function. The Name-of-the-Father is a signifier that can be represented by the Freudian myth of totem and taboo, in which history begins with the death of the father and his totemization—that is, the reduction of the father to a signifier. In this way, we can paraphrase St. Augustin (397-401) by saying that time is a function of the father. Nevertheless, in both the Fort-Da episode and in the paternal metaphor, yet another dimension is involved, that of jouissance. In adolescence, all the terms of this structure are redeployed. Bastien's history, for example, can be read as an attempt to circumscribe or contain maternal jouissance.

Winnicott's remark about a confrontation with the look-alike under the gaze of an adolescent girl leads us to believe that it is only with adolescence that the subject begins to see himself or herself. This suggests the termination of an instinctual cut, the completion (or possibility) of a sublimation needed for a symbolic qualification of the gaze, or the voice—the completion of a signifying definition that was only half-formulated when the child entered the latency period.

In his observations concerning Freud's description of Little Hans, Lacan (1985) stressed that a boy's first erections represent for the child a kind of breaking and entering of the reality of jouissance. Could not the same be said for what happens to the body at puberty? The jouissance that breaks into the reality of the body must be restructured by the adolescent in his or her own image and attached to a signifier.

As we know, most childhood phobias first appear at around the age of two or three years. These phobias probably correspond to the initial period of the oedipal complex, and involve a loss or a renunciation of jouissance—that is, castration. Other phobias may occur at around the age of nine, and may be viewed as linked to the imagined death of the parents—in other words, once again to a loss or letting go. I tend to think that early and late cases of phobia are not radically different. Obviously, both periods can be linked to Freud's initial theory concerning traumas and the ensuing transformation of this theory into two periods separated by a latency phase. The second period, later elaborated by Freud, is of course puberty.

All this causes us to believe that there is a revival, or a “replay,” of the paternal metaphor during adolescence. There seems, therefore, to be an initial anticipatory phase, and then a second retroactive one, in which Freud (1905) observed a decisive moment: “the irruption of an intense mental erotic impulse (Liebesregung)” (p. 235), leading to the testing of the authorized limit of jouissance.

Love, as Lacan (1953-1954) observed, is not only imaginary, not only Verliebtheit, but it is also symbolic and requires that the individual
take a gendered position with respect to the other sex. Maintaining such a position also means “entering oneself among fellows” (Lacan 1974, p. 11). This is made possible when, in adolescence, the concept of castration takes on new significance, and the real body image is correspondingly revised. This leads to the necessity of a discursive reinscription, for which—this time around—the individual will be responsible.

With the adolescent patient, just as in any other treatment, the analyst becomes the embodiment of the fixed point of a repetition, which always returns to the same place (Perrier 1968). The analyst is thus situated in the Real. 5 The analyst consists of the depository of the deadly aspect of repetition, and at the same time, the place where transference can be deployed. Thus, the analyst’s function is not just that of repetition, but also of invention. This point of certitude—the eternal truth that the adolescent needs in order to renew him-or herself—reminds us that as an adult, each of us is a person with one idea or discovery that we reexamine and develop for the rest of our lives. This idea or discovery often dates back to adolescence.

5 The Real is a term introduced by Lacan (1953-1954) to denote one of the three essential registers of analysis, along with the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The Real is not “reality,” the latter being a consequence of the Symbolic and controlled by fantasy. The Real is rather a category produced by the symbolic that corresponds to what the Symbolic excludes when it comes into play. Although Lacan (1966) located the Real in psychosis and in hallucinatory phenomena—“what has not come to light in the Symbolic will appear in the Real” (p. 583)—he approached this concept in a more precise manner when he reexamined Freudian sexuality and the relationship between the sexes based on fantasy. Because of the noninscription of the differences between the sexes in the unconscious, and the position of fantasy in relation to the status of the phallus for both sexes, Lacan (unpublished) later stated that there is no sexual relationship. This represented a reformulation of the Freudian position regarding the difference between the sexes and the way in which the child is introduced to the issue of sexuality by the parental couple—which is what constitutes the Real for the subject. This nonrelationship is a consequence of language and speech. Due to its position in relation to the Symbolic, the Real is that which is unnameable. As Lacan (1970) once wrote, “The Real is the impossible” (p. 74). (See also Vanier 1998b.)

Conclusion
By providing a point in the Other that the adolescent can rely on, analysis allows a young boy or girl to go beyond the traditional dilemma of adolescence—that is, the protest against an established order that ultimately ends in the establishment of yet another order, or the abandonment of worthy dreams resulting in total conformism. Here we might do well to think of analysis as a place where a conflict can be resolved in the subject’s own terms. With a fixed point in the Other—a point that remains an enigma, but at the same time allows the adolescent to form a conviction—the analytic setting enables the individual to find sustenance in something after the crisis has unfolded. The term adolescent crisis is indeed reminiscent of the krisis of Hippocratic medicine, during which the doctor waits for the passage of time to provide the remedy and to decide the fate of the patient, who is balanced between life and death.

In a setting such as analysis, the adolescent may even be able to give language a little help—the kind of help that adolescents love to supply, since it is they who invent the new idioms that reshape and redirect the language in which we live.

References

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