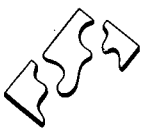
The Metaphor of Adolescence



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Adolescence is certainly not a new topic or a new interest, particularly for the social sciences. In fact, many theorists, including lay as well as professional, have made adolescence a topic for their theorizing and researches. Most theorists represent adolescence as a stage of life within the larger scheme of a life cycle and, more particularly, represent adolescence as the final stage through which a young person passes on his way to adulthood. In this sense, theorists have typically represented adolescence as a transitory stage and as the final stage of preparation for adulthood.

Adolescence as Incompleteness

Erikson, one of the more prolific writers in this field, speaks of adolescence as the final stage of "identity formation" before adulthood. For example, Erikson says:

> As technological advances put more and more time between early school life and the young person's final access to specialized work, the stage of adolescing becomes an even more marked and conscious period and, as it has always been in some cultures in some periods, almost a way of life between childhood and adulthood. Thus in the later school years young people, beset with the physiological revolution of their genital maturation and the uncertainty of the adult roles ahead, seem much concerned with faddish attempts at establishing an adolescent subculture with what looks like a final rather than a transitory or, in fact, initial identity formation. (Erikson, 1968, p. 128)

Here Erikson situates his comments within the socio-economic position of advancing technology. In this sense, "specialized work" is Erikson's way of speaking about one of the results of modern-day technology. But in another way, "specialized work" is Erikson's way of speaking of adulthood. Adulthood, for Erikson, represents entering into work which has been made specialized by advancing technology. Because of this, Erikson is suggesting that more time is required, presumably for technological training, for a young person to enter into "specialized work," i.e., into adulthood. Thus, what is being suggested by Erikson is that the transitoriness of identity formation—adolescence—is being extended in years. That is, a person finding himself in the midst of a modern-day technological society also finds himself spending more of his years (his life) in adolescence.

The concern with technological preparation for "specialized work" combined with the "physiological revolution of their genital maturation" and the "uncertainty of the adult roles ahead" makes adolescence, in Erikson's sense, a turbulent stage of life. In Erikson's view, this turbulence, represented by revolution in the body and the uncertainty of adulthood, generates the need, on the part of adolescence, for certainty and stability. This need is represented by Erikson as an attempt, on the part of adolescence desires to be a life for itself, a life which is self-sufficient and a life that does not rely on the anticipated life of adulthood for its identity. The desire for a self-sufficient life, on the part of adolescence, is seen by Erikson as a desire that is generated by the turbulence brought on by a revolution in the body and the uncertainty of what lies ahead in adulthood.

Erikson, therefore, understands the adolescent's theorizing about his turbulent life as resulting not in the formation of a bona fide and legitimate culture, but rather in the formation of a *sub*culture.

Erikson describes adolescent attempts at establishing a subculture as "faddish." Like any fad, any subculture established by adolescence will disappear. But, unlike fads that disappear because it is in the nature of fads to be replaced by other fads, adolescence disappears because it is the nature of life to reach maturation (adulthood) and this maturation, in Erikson's view, requires an evolutionary stage for identity (mature) formation. In this sense, Erikson is not being critical when he calls adolescent subculture "faddish." Instead, Erikson is saying that adolescent subculture is "faddish" because adolescence, as a stage of life, is just that, a transitory stage on the way to adulthood. Erikson does, however, recognize the fact that adolescence has the desire to see itself not merely as a transitory stage on the way to a mature life, but as a mature life itself. This is why Erikson says that adolescence establishes its subcultures in a way that "looks like a final rather than a transitory or, in fact, initial identity formation." In short, adolescence wants to see itself in the light of finality but can only, according to Erikson, develop a way of life that "looks like" finality. Adolescence cannot be final, it can only act "as if" it were final.

Together with the transitory character of adolescence goes the anticipatory character of adulthood—a life anticipated by adolescence:

> Where, then, are some of the principal contemporary sources of identity strengths? By contemporary I mean a present with an anticipated future, for we must do our best to overcome clinical habits which make us assume that we have done our part if we have clarified the past. I will, therefore, not dwell now on the problems of what the traditional remnants of identity strengths are—economic, religious, or political; regional or national—all of which are in the process of allying themselves with ideological perspectives in which the vision of an anticipated, and in fact of a planned, future of technological progress will take over much of the power of tradition. And if I call such sources "ideological," I am using the word to denote a universal psychological need for a system of ideas that provides a convincing world image. (Erikson, 1968, pp. 30-31)

Here we can begin to see what Erikson meant when he said earlier that part of the turbulence of adolescence was brought on by the uncertainty of adult roles. For Erikson, adolescence is a stage of life that anticipates adulthood. It is a transitory present with an anticipated finality in its future as adulthood. Adolescence is a present that must immobilize and develop its strengths for the necessary entrée into the anticipated future of adulthood. Small wonder that adolescence is marked with turbulence. Revolution in the body, the uncertainty of adult roles and a future whose character is only anticipated will surely lead to a turbulent life.

We can now begin to get a glimpse of the metaphoric character of adolescence. Adolescence can be used as a metaphor to speak of any life that finds itself in the midst of physical revolution, or any life that is conceived of as a stage of development toward some uncertain anticipated future. Adolescence can be used as a metaphor to describe a life that immobilizes and develops its strengths in the form of what Erikson calls "ideologies." "Ideology" is used by Erikson as a way to speak of a "system of ideas." This "system of ideas" provides what Erikson calls a "convincing world image."

If we conceive of Erikson's use of "world image" as a metaphor for wholeness or completeness, we can conceive of adolescence as a metaphor for the lack of wholeness or incompleteness. In fact, adolescence can be used as a metaphor to speak of any life that is developing and anticipating wholeness and completeness. When an adult, for example, displays a sense of incompleteness or a sense of lacking a whole, we can speak of that adult metaphorically as adolescent. On a macro level, there are countries in the world which are referred to as developing countries. These countries, countries who are going through physical revolution and through the uncertainty of what is in store for them and who orient their action according to some "convincing world image" may be spoken of as going through the adolescence of their development.

We can thus see that adolescence is a metaphor—it is a metaphor for the lack of wholeness or for incompleteness. And more than this, adolescence is a metaphor for the desire, on the part of that which lacks a whole and that which is incomplete, to be whole and to be complete. Turbulence rules a life that is governed by the lack of wholeness or incompleteness. When a life is not oriented to, and governed by, a sense of wholeness and completeness, turbulence rules insofar as that life desires wholeness and completeness.

Insofar as adolescence is a metaphor for the lack of wholeness and completeness, any sense of this lack can be metaphorically referred to as adolescence. In this sense, Erikson theorizes in such a way as to organize life into cycles and stages and understands the stage of life called adolescence as lacking a whole and as being incomplete. This is why he can refer to adolescent subcultures as "faddish." This is why he desires, as much as adolescence, to conceive of adolescence as oriented to wholeness and completeness and conceives of this wholeness (for Erikson, adulthood) as something attainable. Furthermore, Erikson calls adolescent subcultures "faddish" because they are acting "as if" they are whole and complete when they are merely transitory. Thus, adolescence can be used metaphorically to refer to a life that acts "as if" it is whole and complete when it really is not.

We can now turn to a discussion of adolescent's desire for wholeness and completeness. We can begin an analysis that will prepare the ground for a more lively relation to adolescence. That is, we can now turn to a discussion of how adolescence can develop a healthy relation to wholeness. We will explore the possibility of adolescence conceiving of itself as living, in some way, an incomplete life but living that life with wholeness and completeness as its orientation. In other words, how can adolescence act in a way that shows its orientation to wholeness rather than acting "as if" it were whole? How can adolescence be conceived of as a metaphor for an incomplete life oriented and governed by wholeness?

The limit of adolescence is that it does lack wholeness. But when adolescence, or Erikson for that matter, thinks of wholeness as adulthood, it can be assumed that wholeness is adulthood. This is a mistake since adulthood seen as wholeness means that adulthood is oriented and governed by itself. There are many adults, for example, who themselves lead an incom-

plete life. We will explore the possibility of adolescence living a lively life oriented to its limit rather than thinking, as Erikson does, of adulthood as wholeness.

It is clear that adolescence, as a transitory stage on the way to the anticipated future of adulthood, is, for Erikson, a stage for preparing the self for adulthood. Preparation is required by adolescence in order to meet the uncertainty of the anticipated future of adulthood. The conditions of physiological revolution and the uncertainty of adulthood suggest that the preparation that characterizes adolescence is a preparation for a relationship between these conditions, or conditions in general, and that to which these conditions refer. This relation presupposes the work of preparing the self as a way to do the work of developing such a relation.

The Paradox of Adolescence

As a way to concretize the notion of adolescence as a metaphor, we will now turn to a discussion of preparation, i.e., adolescence as a stage of preparation for adulthood. In their discussion of "Impacts of Mainstreaming During Career Building Ages" in relation to blind and visually impaired persons, Scholl and Holman say that:

> Adolescence is a transitional stage between the security of the child and the yet unknown world of the adult. Its beginning marks the termination of childhood and its conclusion signals the beginning of adulthood. (Scholl & Holman, 1981, p. 72)

It is clear that Scholl and Holman conceive of adolescence as a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Childhood is described by the authors as a period of security while adulthood, presumably from the vantage point of an adolescent, is described as something yet unknown. For Scholl and Holman, adolescence is both a beginning and an end. It is a beginning insofar as it signals the beginning of adulthood and it is an end insofar as it marks the termination of childhood.

In this sense, adolescence is sheerly transitional insofar as it is temporal and ephemeral. Adolescence is neither the security of childhood nor is it the yet unknown world of adulthood. In fact, according to Scholl and Holman, adolescence seems to lack a sense of reality, a sense of completeness, inasmuch as it merely "marks" or "signals." Thus, adolescence is treated as a sign that signals the human developmental fact that childhood is now over and adulthood is about to begin. As a signal, or as a transitional stage of life, adolescence is urged to see itself not as a life for itself but as a life for something else, namely adulthood. Unlike adulthood, adolescence is urged to see itself not as acting for itself but as acting for a life other than itself, again the life of adulthood. In short, adolescence is urged to see itself as a life that acts in service of another life. In this way, adolescence is like a cocoon. The cocoon is a transitional stage for the butterfly and adolescence is the transitional stage for adulthood. In and of itself the cocoon is not something meaningful insofar as it must constantly anticipate a life other than itself—the yet unknown life of the butterfly. In and of itself adolescence is not meaningful insofar as it must constantly anticipate a life other than itself—the yet unknown life of an adult.

Scholl and Holman tell us that adolescence is the transitional stage that precedes the yet unknown world of adulthood. If this is true, then adoles-

cence, as a transitional stage of life, operates in ignorance. This is to say that adolescence is ignorant of the world (adulthood) into which it is about to enter. Even though Scholl and Holman suggest that adolescence signals the beginning of adulthood, adolescence itself, as that which does the signalling, is ignorant of that which it signals. If adolescence, as a stage of life, is ignorant of the life it precedes, which is to say that if we take Scholl and Holman's description of adolescence seriously, then we can conclude that adolescence is a sort of waiting period, that within the whole of a person's life adolescence is a sort of holding pattern. As a transitional stage, we can conclude that adolescence is not really life insofar as it acts as a transition for life and not as life itself.

Scholl and Holman do not, for instance, speak of childhood as a transitional period of life that precedes adolescence. Instead, they speak of childhood as security. The authors treat adolescence as not requiring a period of transition between it and childhood. It seems as though the move from childhood to adolescence is not as problematic as the move from adolescence to adulthood insofar as a transition period between childhood and adolescence does not seem to be necessary. But surely Scholl and Holman do not mean that the stage of life called adolescence is merely a waiting period. Surely they are not saying that adolescence is the time of life where we merely sit and wait for adulthood to appear. Perhaps the following can help us understand how Scholl and Holman see the nature of adolescence:

> Adolescents can take on new roles and vary them daily. They can change hair styles and boy or girl friends as often as they change clothes. In an adult, this inconsistency would mean instability, but for an adolescent it is all part of the process of "trying on" different social roles to find the one that fits best. These transitional behaviours aid the adolescent in reaching adulthood and ultimately becoming absorbed into society and culture. (Scholl & Holman, 1981, p. 73)

We now get a stronger sense of what Scholl and Holman mean by adolescence. We can now get a sense of why the authors describe adolescence as a "transitional period." Scholl and Holman view adulthood as an absorption into "society and culture." Further, it is clear that the authors' understanding is that this absorption requires a stage of preparation and, therefore, a period of transition is necessary in order to prepare for such an absorption.

Scholl and Holman suggest that adolescence is the period where we try on different social roles until we find one that fits. It is clear that the authors conceive of adulthood as social roles and conceive of adolescence as a sort of "fitting room" for trying on social roles to see if they fit. In other words, adolescence is the fitting room of life and it is a "fitting room" from which we will not emerge until we have a life (role) that fits.

Note that Scholl and Holman do not conceive of adolescence as "really living" insofar as it is merely the "trying on" of life formulated by the authors as "social roles." In this sense, adolescence is not really life insofar as it is a preparation for really living. Adolescence is the fitting room of life; it is not life itself. Adolescence is merely the time we prepare for life in much the same way as we try on clothes in a fitting room to prepare for the event that occasioned the buying of clothes. For example, when a bride is being fitted for her wedding gown, we do not typically say that the fitting is the

wedding itself; instead, we say that the fitting is a stage of preparation for the wedding itself. In a similar way, Scholl and Holman do not see adolescence as a stage in which we wear well fitting roles; instead, they see adolescence as a stage in which we try on social roles until we find the one that fits best.

Another way that Scholl and Holman formulate adolescence as preparation, as not quite living, can be found in their suggestion that the aim of adolescence is to become absorbed into society and culture. We take it that the gloss "society and culture," like the gloss "social roles," is Scholl and Holman's theoretic formulation of adulthood.

Since Scholl and Holman say that adolescence has the ultimate aim of being absorbed into society and culture, they must mean that adolescence is not a stage of our lives where we are absorbed into society and culture. What is difficult to imagine, however, is that as adolescents, if we are not absorbed into society and culture, what is it into which we are absorbed? In other words, if, as adolescents, we are merely "marginal" vis-à-vis the rest of society and culture, where is it that we, as adolescents, exist?[1] If adolescents are not in society, where are they? If adolescents can be described as "marginal," where are the margins of society and culture?

We are born into a society and culture and we live in a society and culture for the entire duration of our lives. In this sense, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine anyone, whether they are a child, adolescent, or an adult, who is not absorbed into society and culture. In fact, to describe adolescence, or any other stage of life, as marginal or as transitional or as preparatory, etc., is a formulation that is provided by society and culture itself. To say that there are stages of life such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc., is a way to conceive of and formulate the idea of society and culture itself. It is society and culture that provides for such formulation in the first place. Therefore, to say that adolescence is a stage of life whose aim it is to ultimately reach an absorption into society and culture, i.e., to say that adolescence is a preparation for absorption into society and culture, is to say that adolescence is preparing for something that it already has.

In a way, Scholl and Holman's formulation of adolescence recommends that adolescence is not essential in and of itself and that it is only essential insofar as it is a preparation, or practice, for a life other than itself, namely adulthood. As sheerly preparation, we can only say that an adolescent is good or not on the basis of how well we think he is conducting his preparation. If, for example, we were asked to make a judgment on how good we think a football team is on the basis of watching their practice sessions, we would have to say that they either looked good or looked bad in practice but we would have to reserve judgment until we see the actual game. The same sort of reasoning would apply to judging the goodness or badness of an adolescent. Within Scholl and Holman's framework, we would have to say that the stage of life called adolescence is analogous to a football team's practice sessions and, therefore, before giving our judgment we would have to wait until the adolescent played his version of the game, namely lived as an adult. In other words, we never make a judgment vis-à-vis the good or bad of anything on the basis of its preparation. Thus, within the frame-

work provided us by Scholl and Holman, the best or worst we can say about any particular adolescent is either that he is preparing well or not preparing well. That is, we cannot say that an adolescent is living well or not living well since the adolescent is merely trying on life; he is trying on social roles; he is not yet absorbed into society and culture. The best we can do, within the framework provided us by Scholl and Holman, is to predict, which is to say that we could only calculate the chances of an adolescent being good or bad insofar as we could calculate whether his practice sessions (adolescence), i.e., his preparation, is going well or going poorly.

Although we recognize the preparatory character of adolescence, we would not want to speak about adolescence as exclusively preparation or as exclusively transitional. Viewed strictly as preparation or as practice, adolescence cannot be something essentially enjoyable. Any football player will know that preparing for the football season is much more difficult, painful, and unenjoyable than the football game itself. Practice sessions are always more tedious, more painful, more boring, more difficult, etc., than are the games. Formulated as preparation, it is no wonder that adolescence is typically conceived of as a painful stage in life, as one animated by turmoil and confusion. In the same way that a practice session must defer its enjoyment until the game itself, the life that we call adolescence, formulated as preparation, must also defer its enjoyment until adulthood.

Football practice sessions, as part and parcel of practice sessions, simulate game conditions. Within the framework of Scholl and Holman, adolescence is a simulation of adulthood. Adolescence is not the "real thing" insofar as it is a preparation for adulthood. This is why we can often say to an adolescent that "when you get out into the real world." This sort of expression rings true when we speak of adolescence as sheerly preparation. When we formulate adolescence as the trying on of social roles or as preparation for reaching ultimate absorption into society and culture, we are really saying that the adolescent is not "really living" and that the life of an adolescent is not real life insofar as it is preparation for real life—preparation for adulthood.

So far, we have suggested that insofar as adolescence is a transitional period that prepares for absorption into society and culture, adolescence is preparing for something that it already has. Put differently, we have reached a point that recommends that adolescence, formulated as preparation, is a paradox; the paradox of adolescence is that it is preparing for something it already has.

One way to conceive of this paradox is that it stands as a critique against the idea of adolescence as preparation. We can treat the paradox as our way to dismiss any claim that adolescence has to preparation. This sort of treatment, however, would not permit us to see how preparation is required as a way to develop a relation between a concrete condition and a notion to which they refer. We must now examine how preparation is deeply needed for such a relation and we will treat the paradox of adolescence as usage for such an examination.

As we have said, if we conceive of adolescence as preparing for something it already has, then we can conceive of the problem as a paradox of

adolescence. for, although adolescence is already a part of life, a part of society and culture, it is that part of life in which we prepare to play our part in society and culture. Thus, we can say that adolescence is preparation for being someone that one already is, i.e., adolescence is preparation for being the social member that one already is.

Adolescence as Self-Consciousness

Scholl and Holman's excess is to conceive of adolescence as a time when one can stroll through a department store and try on anything one chooses and be whatever one wants to be. The excess in this conception lies in the implication that childhood is a kind of nudity—that we are nothing at all as children and that we are not in some sense already members of society and culture. As children, for example, we are boys or girls, blind or sighted, etc., and Scholl and Holman are, thus, right to say that we are secure in being boys or girls, or in being blind or sighted, etc.

As children, we treat being boys or girls, blind or sighted, rich or poor, etc., as securely being one of these distinctions insofar as children are whatever they are in an undeliberated and unproblematic way. In other words, as children we *are* securely, which is to say undeliberatedly and unproblematically, what we are. The security of childhood, then, refers to the idea that we are what we are, we are our distinctions, in a way that is undeliberated and unproblematic.

In adolescence, however, we are invited to treat what we have taken for granted, our distinctions, as a social achievement. What adolescents formerly treated as secure and natural now appears to the adolescent as contrived. The adolescent now sees his distinctions as made and cultivated by men. This is the adolescent's invitation to see the distinction between men and women, rich and poor, blind and sighted, as a distinction that men make and cultivate rather than taking these distinctions for granted and treating them as natural and secure. The adolescent is invited to see the distinctions as cultivated by society.

For the adolescent, society then becomes the actor who is responsible for producing these distinctions and orienting to these distinctions insofar as that actor organizes life around the distinctions that he has produced. Adolescence understands that these distinctions are made and begins to see these distinctions as not merely natural but as oriented insofar as the actor who makes these distinctions orients to some moral order. The distinctions now have a moral character insofar as an actor has produced them and they are no longer treated as accidental or natural. In other words, the adolescent is now invited to examine the moral grounds of the distinctions insofar as the adolescent recognizes that the distinctions are the result of the work of men. In a way, adolescence exposes the accidental and natural character of distinctions as neither accidental nor natural, but rather exposes these distinctions as the result of the work of men and, as such, as having moral grounds.

The recognition by adolescence that distinctions are the results of the work of men, permits adolescence the conception that there is something other than these distinctions. For the adolescent, there are now those who

produce his distinctions. Further, the problem that Scholl and Holman developed—that the adolescent tries on social roles until he finds one that fits—presupposes that the adolescent conceives of himself not only as a distinction, as children do, but also as something other than a distinction, namely a self who, as Scholl and Holman say, tries on social roles. The idea of the self of the adolescent is where preparation becomes interesting and essential.

The self, now in the fitting room, looks at how he appears and how he wants to appear. This orientation to appearance is the self's orientation to how he wants to appear outside the fitting room. The fitting room now becomes a place where the adolescent (self) begins to examine how he appears and, thus, not take how he appears as secure and unproblematic.

For adolescence, the question now becomes, "What am I apart from how I appear? What am I independent of my appearances, my relations to others, etc., so that how I appear and how I work on my appearance could be interesting and essential to the self that I am?" The adolescent's concern is how the work he does on his appearance can benefit what is other than his appearance, namely his self. Thus, the work of adolescence is not merely to arrange appearances so that the adolescent can appear in this way or that, i.e., as a way to manage interaction. The self of adolescence is surely tempted to treat appearances as the management of interaction. But, the work of adolescence begins by understanding the good of appearances insofar as the adolescent can distinguish a self apart from appearances. For example, the fact that there is some one (the self of adolescence) that makes judgments about appearances helps the adolescent to understand that there is something more than appearances. The adolescent evokes the self as that standard (hearer or auditor) which judges whether or not how he appears is the way he wants to appear. Thus, the adolescent distinguishes between his self and his appearances, and the work of adolescence is to examine whether or not the appearances he chooses are good for the self.

Without the self having a sense of its being something apart from its appearances, the idea of the fitting room is nonsensical. A self that does not see itself apart from its appearances is childhood. And children do not see themselves as anything other than appearances. Children are what they appear, they are their appearances. That is, children are either boys or girls, either rich or poor, either blind or sighted, etc., because they appear as such. Children are their appearances and their appearances are them.

If adolescence is formulated as a time of life when appearances are oriented to and deliberated upon, then adolescence is the time of life where a distinction is made between self and appearances. The self of adolescence becomes aware that it is independent from its appearances, independent from interaction, and independent from its relation with others. Adolescence can now choose a relation between its self and its appearances. For example, the self of adolescence can see the management of interaction as superficial and inessential and, thus, develop a cynical relation to appearances. On the other hand, the self of adolescence can see how appearance can influence it and how it can influence appearance.

In sum, then, we began with the paradox of adolescence, i.e., adolescence formulated as preparing for something that it already has. We said that the meaning of childhood was provided by appearances insofar as a child is securely what he appears, which is to say, that a child is his distinction. In adolescence, however, we said that society provides an invitation for adolescence to be decisively what he appears to be, i.e., society invites adolescence to decisively be what he appears. Society conceived of as a strong actor means that society is an oriented actor who invites us to be decisive about our distinctions rather than being securely immersed in these distinctions. Society invites adolescence to be decisive about that which, up until now, has provided for its security. Adolescence is invited to be, for example, decisively blind or sighted, male or female, etc., rather than being securely immersed in these distinctions.

This invitation by society for decisiveness, for distinguishing between self and appearances, makes reference to what Scholl and Holman call the unknown insofar as decisiveness necessitates risk. The necessity for risk references the fact that decisiveness brings with it the risk of influence. The unknown, or the risk and fear of the unknown, is what it is to be decisively that which we appear to be. This is to say that the whatness of appearances is indefinite. This provides for a version of a standard that is constantly open to revision and revolution.

The secure distinctions of childhood are, in adolescence, conceived of as moral insofar as they are understood as the productions and cultivations of men. Society's invitation to be decisive about appearances, which is to say to decisively be appearances, is not a mechanical relation insofar as it is not a matter of, as Scholl and Holman argue, simply trying on social roles until one fits. Instead, this relation is a discourse, i.e., a discourse between self and appearances. Since Language is embodied in the distinctions that men make, the discourse is a conversation and a relation between self and Language. It is a discourse between what Language calls us, our distinctions, and our self. Thus, the problem is one of relating to Language insofar as we must develop a relationship between what Language calls us and self.

Childhood treats what it is named, its distinctions, as naturally what it is. But, in adolescence, the adolescent understands that what he is named is an achievement and cultivation of men, of society, and the strength of adolescence is to accept the invitation by society to examine the moral grounds of a social actor that names him whatever it names him. The adolescent's name is no longer a natural matter. Naming is now a moral matter insofar as the naming is achieved by a social actor and the invitation to adolescence is to examine the moral grounds of that naming.

Thus, we say that adolescence is the beginning of understanding the achieved character of appearance. In childhood, for example, a boy is a boy. In adolescence, however, a boy becomes problematic insofar as being a boy is no longer secure. The excess of adolescence insofar as the adolescent is insecure about being a boy could be referenced by the idea that an adolescent may try to be not just any boy, but, e.g., a macho boy: In other words, the temptation and excess of adolescence is to overwork the idea of achieving, in this case, boyness, by becoming macho.

At this point, the overworking of achievement is exaggeration insofar as the adolescent does not identify with what he is called, i.e., he does not identify with the accident of nature, his name. This means that the adolescent orients to his appearances in a decisive way, e.g., being a boy or a girl, by preparing his appearances to be a boy or a girl. In other words, adolescence orients to appearances by preparing appearances to be what they appear.

In adolescence, the idea of preparation becomes a mediator between the self and how the self appears. The adolescent, therefore, is not, as Scholl and Holman suggest, trying on social roles until he finds one that fits; instead, the adolescent knows his social roles, his distinctions, and knows these distinctions are cultivated and made by men and is, therefore, preparing these distinctions, these appearances, so that he can appear as who he is. This is to say that preparation can be formulated more strongly than merely "getting ready."

The adolescent does not need to shop around for a name such as blind or sighted. The adolescent already has a name and, therefore, preparation does not mean that the adolescent is preparing to receive a name. The paradox of adolescence that we begin with is a paradox only when adolescence is formulated as a preparatory stage and a preparation for something one already has. We can now see, however, that adolescence is preparing for something that it does not have, namely a decisive relation to its name. This is the essential problem of adolescence: the problem of decisively relating to a name.

The name is not the problem because in childhood we are securely what we are named. The problem is rather the mediation between self and name. This is to say that the essential problem of adolescence is the development of a decisive relation between self and name. Without this problem, the self would not exist insofar as there would be no distinction between appearance and self, i.e., self would be formulated as appearance. Adolescence is, then, a way of speaking about an awareness of the difference between self and name. Appearances and names are made by adults and adolescence is the sign of the awareness of something different and independent from what is made by adults, i.e., something that adults do not make, namely the self. This very awareness, the awareness of self as different and separate from name, is not itself something that is made by adults. This is what we mean when we say that the essential problem of adolescence is the development of a decisive relation between the self and what the self is named. Adolescence references the necessity and requirement of the self addressing its relation to its name. This is to say that adolescence references the necessity and requirement for the self to formulate its contribution to its name. The first step is that adolescence understands that its name is the result of the work of humans, i.e., he understands that what he is, his appearances, are cultivated by humans. The realization and awareness that there is a difference between self and appearances, i.e., becoming conscious of this distinction, marks the beginning of self-consciousness. What is given in adolescence, then, is the possibility and potential for self-consciousness.

We began, then, with a character who is a child, who identifies with his name, who is his name. We began with a character who is his appearance. These appearances (names) are unproblematic and before the actor can treat these names he is also given a self, i.e., he becomes conscious of self, he becomes self conscious. So, before any deliberation about names and appearances can take place, there must be an awareness that there is something other than names, namely the self.

The Desire and Pain of Preparation

Names and appearances never give an adequate definition of self. In other words, appearances are never enough, they never exhaust the self. The biographies that adolescents produce, for example, are never enough, they never exhaust the self; the self needs some notion of desire. In other words, the idea of desire references some idea of possibility rather than merely appearance, i.e., the idea of desire opens up the possibility of what we could be. The example of the bride preparing for her wedding references some idea of desire insofar as the bride is thinking about what she could be rather than what she is. The desire to be what we could be rather than what we are is a feature of self and not a feature of appearances. In other words, we do not desire to be blind or sighted, instead, we desire to be a certain kind of blind person or a certain kind of sighted person. The fact that we have names and the fact that names need to be related to decisively by a self, requires preparation. This is to say that the preparation references some idea of beginning to formulate the desires for the self.

In terms of preparing for desire and for what we could be, adolescence is a time to prepare for and orient to the future, a time to prepare for what we could be. In other words, adolescence is a time to see that we have a future and to be decisive about that future. Adolescence is our time to try to be decisive about our future in terms of what our self can desire, i.e., in terms of what we could be. (Adolescence must not be regarded as chronologically determined.)

If adulthood is treated as a metaphor for work, then adolescence can be regarded as preparation for work. A strong sense of adulthood, in other words, is the idea of achieving appearances, the idea of a moral actor, and work references the achieving and embodying of what Language has given.

Adolescence is a name that society gives. This is to say that society, i.e., humanity, cultivates adolescence. This raises the idea of the possibility of exclusion.

Formulating adolescence as a preparation for life, and formulating preparation as tedious and not enjoyable, provides for the possibility of conceiving of adolescence as an exclusion from life and conceiving of exclusion as not enjoyable. In a tradition of philosophy presented by Hannah Arendt and Rene Descartes, there exists an idea of a self conscious ego which is excluded. This is to say that there is a feeling of exclusion in any act of self-consciousness. Descartes, for example, found it necessary to exclude himself from society in order to reflect upon certainty.

Exclusion, as it is represented in this paper so far, is referenced by the example of being excluded from the real responses of others and being in-

cluded only in the practice sessions. The feeling of being excluded from life, from society and culture, the feeling of being excluded from something other than appearances, has been conceived of so far as unenjoyable. The concept of unenjoyability must point toward some idea of suffering the pain of doing something no one else can see, i.e., self-reflection. The problem formulated earlier as preparation insofar as preparation is painful, speaks to the problem of not knowing what to do, i.e., not being sure of the practices that will be preparatory, not knowing what practices reveal readiness for work.

Thus, the idea of solitude animates the pain and unenjoyability of preparing. There is, for example, the solitude that exists in the metaphor of the fitting room. In the fitting room, the adolescent tries things on but does not leave the fitting room until he looks at himself in the mirror and looks at himself in the way he assumes others will look at him. In other words, the actor, in solitude, looks at himself and orients to the orientation of others toward him. This "looking at self" is done in the solitude of the fitting room. Reflection requires solitude.

The metaphor of the fitting room is problematic for a blind person. With reference to solitude, the problem for a blind person is to orient to the metaphor of a fitting room. The fitting room must have mirrors so that a person can see how he appears. This is to say that for an adolescent actor it is difficult for him to understand how he appears to others unless he is immersed in interaction and unless his solitude, his fitting room, is equipped with mirrors. The metaphor of the fitting room with mirrors suggests that the adolescent actor not only has difficulty in seeing others' orientation to him unless he has interaction, but also suggests that the adolescent actor has difficulty seeing how he appears to himself unless he has mirrors. The adolescent actor requires a mirror, a presented reflection of himself, even in his solitude.

Thus, if self judges his appearance by the orientation of others, the self will then require interaction to know how he appears. This actor is not yet comfortable with self-reflection and solitude. Instead of solitude, this actor has loneliness. We can now see how preparation is not merely a set of practices.

If we start with the security of childhood, the security of who we are insofar as we are our appearances, then move to adolescence where we are invited by society, as a moral actor, to see how appearances are cultivated by humanity and are dependent upon humanity's actions, adulthood may be formulated as defensive insofar as adulthood defends what it makes. What a child is, appearances, is an achievement of the work of adulthood and adulthood defends that achievement. In other words, the child is defended by adults. The child does not know that who he is, his appearances, is dependent upon the efforts of humanity, and, therefore, humanity (adulthoods) defends the child. In adolescence, however, the adolescent is aware of the achieved character of who he is, and adulthood invites the adolescent to see this achieved character and to see that this achieved character requires defending. In other words, society invites the adolescent to see that security requires defending. What was previously secure, in childhood, now, in adolescence, requires achievement and defense.

Seen as achieved by a moral order, security requires defense. The problem of adolescence, then, is that society invites adolescence to see that it (society) achieved childhood, i.e., achieved appearances as childhood, and defended those appearances. Society now invites adolescence to re-achieve security and to defend that security and to achieve and defend the security of others.

Adulthood (society) was responsible for achieving and defending the adolescents when they were children and now that responsibility is to be taken up by adolescents in the sense of their requirement to achieve and defend not only themselves, but also others. In the Crito, for example, Socrates chooses to die and, in this sense, to re-achieve and defend the laws that named him insofar as they once secured and defended him.

The defense does not refer to merely producing more security. Instead, it refers to seeing security as problematic and to seeing the problematic character of the distinctions of appearances. This is to say that something must be made of these distinctions.

The blind adolescent, for example, must now be blind in a decisive way. He is not blind only insofar as he is named blind; he is decisively blind. In a way, the adolescent must choose his blindness. This is the risk and responsibility that begins with adolescence. This is the risk and responsibility of making appearances problematic, of making naming problematic, and of being decisively a name.

Names and appearances are no longer merely names and appearances. Mere names and appearances may recommend some version of labelling theory. Labelling theory does not allow a decisive relation to a name. Labelling theory can only name a person blind but does not allow for the possibility for a person to be decisively blind. That is, labelling theory does not allow a blind person to choose his blindness.

Adulthood encourages adolescence to be responsible for its own appearance and to be responsible for the community that names the appearance of adolescence. In short, society invites adolescence to be a responsible member, i.e., to be responsible for the community that provided it with security as a child and defended that security insofar as society named it in terms of its distinctions and appearances.

It is this invitation by society to adolescence that provides for the rebellious character of adolescence. The adolescent can claim that the security and defense of that security, his distinctions and appearances, were made by others and that he will have nothing to do with that security, the appearances, and the defense of that security. The adolescent will rebel against what others have made him. He will take no responsibility for that naming nor will he take responsibility for defending that naming.

What we are saying is that the adolescent realizes that it is the efforts of adults that have made and created the distinctions and appearances such as boy/girl, blind/sighted, etc. Rebelliousness occurs, then, when the adolescent is not prepared to accept the invitation of achieving and defending distinctions formulated as made by others. The rebellious character of the blind adolescent, for example, is displayed in such talk as "sighted world."

Adolescence as a Metaphor

In sum, the typical conception that theorists, both lay and professional, make use of in relation to adolescence is that adolescence is a concrete stage of life. Further, it is a concrete stage of life that is marked and made recognizable by chronological age, by physical changes in the body and by recognizable socio-psycho turbulence. This turbulence is typically conceived of as being brought on by the young person's need to enter into adulthood.

The problem of adolescence, then, is that it is a stage of life that precedes bona fide adult membership in society. That is, adulthood, with its societal responsibilities and obligations, is a stage that adolescence anticipates but does not really know in the sense that such knowledge would provide for a less turbulent anticipation. The problem then becomes one of preparing adolescence for adulthood.

We formulated the problem of adolescence as a problem that metaphorically referred to a life that lacked wholeness or completeness. Thus, the metaphoric character of adolescence is, for us, governed by any need to speak of a life as lacking wholeness or completeness. In this sense, adolescence can, and is, used metaphorically as a reference for lacking wholeness or completeness irrespective of chronological age, revolution in the body and so on, which is to say, irrespective of any formulation of incompleteness. For example, revolution in the body makes reference to completeness or wholeness insofar as "revolution in the body" requires a sense of a body that is mature and complete.

It was not our intention in this paper to argue that an adolescent life must be conceived of as a life that is whole or complete. Instead we, too, use adolescence metaphorically; we use it metaphorically to refer to a life that lacks wholeness or completeness. In this way, adolescence provides us with the occasion to theorize about the possibility and development of a lively relation to the lack of wholeness and incompleteness. In other words, adolescence provided us with the occasion to theorize about a lively relation to conditions. In and of themselves conditions are not whole, but instead make reference to wholeness. We have attempted to analyze adolescence, then, with an eye to conceiving of a more lively relation to the lack of wholeness.

In this sense, we do not, as Erikson seems to, conceive of adulthood as the very wholeness that adolescence is lacking and for which adolescence prepares. Adulthood itself is a condition that only references wholeness but is not itself wholeness. Rather than lamenting wholeness, we have tried to exemplify a lively relation to the limit of lacking wholeness. This would, of course, mean that a life—any life—needs to be conceived of as referencing wholeness. In short, we have replaced a lamentation of wholeness by formulating the lack of wholeness as a limit that can be oriented to in a lively way—in the way that Socrates oriented to his limit of knowing that which he did not know.

Notes

1. This is what Erikson refers to as the establishing of adolescent subcultures.

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