

ADOLESCENCE, SUBJECTIVE DISORIENTATION AND VOCATIONAL CHOICES

*Martina Fernández Raone Napolitano**

Abstract

This work presents a critical inquiry into the issues linked with adolescence, subjective disorientation and the vocational choice from the perspective of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis. To this end, first, we examined the difficulties that may arise during adolescence relative to sexual awakening and existence, conditioned by both childhood experiences and the familiar and social Other. Next, we articulated these difficulties with their incidence over the decision to select or continue a given career or a particular employment, decisions tightly linked to a lifestyle. This analysis stemmed from a study conducted at a drug-addiction specialized healthcare center. For many analyzed cases, the prevailing factors were associated with subjective disorientation, the absence of objectives and a general orientation that could organize their lives on the basis of specific interests. This disorientation affected their familiar and social insertion, as well as their insertion in the schooling system and their vocational decisions, all replaced by the value placed on substance abuse. Starting with the description and formalization of the principal characteristics of the notion of adolescence and its relation to the concepts of time, vocation, orientation, and subjective disorientation in the context of the contemporary age, we conduct the case analysis of a 19 years old adolescent that will allow to show in which way a psychoanalytical approach within an institutional environment opens the possibility to uncover and effect on a singular development subject to changes during the therapy. The implemented methodology allows showing findings of special importance linked to disorientation and changes in subjectivity. These changes only occurred after having effectuated a subjective rectification that made the inscription of the symptom in transference possible, which among other issues, brings clarity to the dilemma of continuing studies.

Key words: Adolescence, subjective disorientation, vocational choices, contemporary age, psychoanalysis.

* Doctora en Psicología. Docente e Investigadora de la Facultad de Psicología, UNLP. E-mail: mfernandezraone@psico.unlp.edu.ar

Introduction

This paper proposes a critical reading of adolescence's issues, such as subjective disorientation and vocational choices, from the point of view of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis. With this aim, in first place, we examine the difficulties that might arise during adolescence in relation to sexual awakening and the adolescent own conception of existence. Both topics conditioned by childhood experiences and familiar and social Other. In second place, we seek to articulate these difficulties with their impact on the decision to choose or continue a career or job, choices closely related to lifestyle.

Our starting point to enter these problems has been the research carried out in a health-care center specialized in problematic use of substances (Fernández Raone, 2017). This enabled the study of the adolescent population that attended this site during the period between 2011 and 2015*. We had limited our exploration to patients between 13 and 25 years old and had carried out an analysis that allowed us to establish a distinction into categories emerged in the research process in itself. In a certain number of the analyzed cases, in fact in many of them, we observed the emergency of a particular phenomenon which was highlighted in the interviews, beyond the use of drugs: it was a subjective disorientation, a lack of objective and direction that could have organized their lives. This disorientation affected their familiar, social, schooling, and vocational insertion, replaced by values deposited in and restricted to substance use.

The choice of a career, a personal project, a field of work, are all tasks that have a crucial importance in adolescence. Social discourse and also their personal, singular story require expertises and determinations that teenagers, mostly, cannot acquire. This situation maintains them in a subjective hesitation, the origin of discomfort that afflicts them. Sometimes, discomfort can lead them to resort to different types of addictions, as a way of avoiding the quagmire they face. These crossroads mark elections leading to diverse destinations, that are however not distinctly demarcated (Deltombe, 2010). This moment of transition in which the subject is compelled to choose "condenses a multiplicity of meanings linked to the vicissitudes of subjective constitution" (Emmanuele & Cappelletti, 2001, p.55).

From the description and formalization of the main characteristics of the notion of adolescence and its relation to the concepts of subjective time, vocation, orientation and disorientation, we will perform the analysis of a clinical case. This will show the way in which a psychoanalytic approach, in the context of a health institution, opens the possibility of discover and influence the plot of a singular story which is subject to transformations in the course of the cure. We have chosen the case of Leonardo, 19, whose treatment was conducted over two years. We will try to define the various issues related to the treatment sequence: initial demand, the subjective position

* The results of this research have been formalized in the doctoral thesis *Adolescence, substance use and therapeutic demand* (Fernández Raone, 2017).

towards discomfort and drugs, the disorientation that he expresses in his vocational choices and the modifications and displacements of his subjective position in the course of the interviews.

Theoretical framework and background

The decision to start a career is usually made in the period of adolescence, often based on institutional or family demands. For this reason, we centralized our examination on this concept, which is currently a subject of debate within Psychology, Sociology, and Psychoanalysis. Despite the diverse perspectives of these disciplines, there is a consensus on its definition as a moment of transformations, forced by the abandonment of an infantile position and new demands aroused in the field of sexuality, as well as the problematic inclusion into social and cultural world. Stemming from the theoretical approaches of Freud, psychoanalysis regards puberty, and the symptomatic character of adolescence, as a special conjuncture in which two answers stand out. On one hand, a search for a set of innovative solutions regarding the position towards the opposite sex, *jouissance*, and desire. On the other hand, a reorganization at the level of identifications, particularly the Ego-ideal. Singular answers that will always be conditioned by family and cultural Other, so we must consider the particularities of the social context in which the adolescent is inserted. This acquires a particular and specific significance in the changes arising in contemporary times.

At the same time, we will define the terms of subjective orientation and disorientation of adolescence, and we will articulate them with the changes that the family has undergone, as well as with the demands formulated by social Other.

1. Time, vocation and orientation

As it is already known, the concept of time is a category that refers to a physical quantity (Castells, 1978), to an extension or chronological duration. It is, at the same time, a fundamental symbolic matrix facing subjective constitution (Cattaneo, 2008). It can be included in a logical dimension, as Lacan (1945/2013) remarks, in terms of a dialectic structure, as “a subject’s time to see, understand and conclude”. Thus, Lacan refers to an intersubjective time, which is between await and precipitation, upon which human action is structured (Hurtado Díaz, 2015). This issue presents an interesting frame to address problems related to adolescence, as well as the choice of a future career or occupation and the subjective orientation to perform it. Adolescents often face difficulties facing the urgency of producing a vocational decision linked to social and institutional times. Most often, the act of choosing or starting a career cannot be performed at the time in which the subject should make it effective. In many young people, this act is halted in a state of “eternal deliberation” upon the offers and possible options (Ferrari, 1999) or in an uncertainty that, ultimately, affects the subject’s essence and is linked to the constitution of the Ego-ideal, as we shall see later.

These elucidations lead us to the terms of vocation and orientation, considering the relevance they acquire in the already mentioned issues. Vocation is defined as the “inspiration by which God calls someone to a certain state, especially a religious one. A drive towards any state, profession or career” (Royal Spanish Academy, 1843, p.749). Beyond its linguistic origin, the term refers to “feel as being called to dedicate himself to a particular task [...], inclination or desire born of one’s own subjectivity” (Müller, 1994, p.18). At the same time, it can be defined as the form of a myth (Emmanuele & Cappelletti, 1999, 2001) in which truth acquires a discursive form (Lacan, 1953), it is to say that it can be articulated in terms of the signifier. This mythical character is relevant to us if we understand myth as a story whose truth is unknown, covered by an enigmatic halo. In this regard, vocation may be related to the notion of destiny, in the sense of fate, or determination (Jozami, 2010). Indeed, interesting remarks have been given by Freud (1923/1992a, 1924/1992b, 1927/1979a) who states that subjects that “transfer the guidance of universal events to Providence, God [...] are suspected of feeling these powers [...] as if they were a parental pair -that is, mythologically-and believing themselves as linked to them through libidinal bonds (1924/1992b, p.174).

This apparent dichotomy between determination and uncertainty reminds us of the Oedipus myth, where the tragic fate, devoid of choice, appears prominently. This version of the ancient myth is opposed to what Lacan proposes through the modern hero personified by Hamlet. This character desires and must decide, free, but in turn he is responsible for his desire and his actions. He confronts a “choice to be made in which the problem of existing is posed in terms which are his own: namely the *To be or not to be* which is something which engages him irredeemably in being” (Lacan, 1958-1959/ 2015, p.272). In this sense, the desire and freedom of the subject will be, however, conditioned by (not determined by) the vicissitudes of his or her subjective constitution and by the orientation that has enabled his or her symbolic inscription in its passage through the Oedipus complex and castration, an issue that we will return to presently.

Consequently, at the time of adolescence, a time of choices, it will be fundamental to consider the orientation that makes these elections possible for two reasons. First, because the subjective orientation is conditioned by the unique circumstances of each subject, his or her identificatory references, the ideals that marked his or her existence, which are resignified in adolescence in a dialectic between repetition and encounters. Secondly, due to the difficulties that the young person may find at the moment of making decisions about his future (which are partly delimited by the child’s story), according to the offer he has received from the family and social environment. In this way, we will contemplate the answers that can be provided at this period and the frequent insufficiency that is evidenced against new conditions that, at times, might be unsurmountable for a subject.

2. Adolescence: a time of choices

Freud (1905/1978), referring to adolescence within the theory of psychoanalysis, favored the concept of puberty as a specific moment in the development of infantile sexuality, in which a “metamorphosis” takes place involving significant changes characterized by a disarrangement which modifies the subject’s position as a child. He highlights the two tasks that the youngster must face at this moment: the choice of sexual object and the separation from parental authority. Although certain elections are delimited from childhood, it is necessary to consider that they are actualized during puberty, in a second moment of sexual awakening, and they need to address an object outside the scope of the family. Freud emphasizes the different responses conditioned by the attraction of the child’s sexual components on one hand, and by the models proposed by society, on the other. He thus considers the importance of socio-cultural conditioning at this time of transition, in which the demands and offers that are presented to the youngster acquire a fundamental incidence.

Departing from the remarks made by Freud (1905/1978, 1910/1991a, 1914/1991b, 1930/1979b), the different currents of Psychoanalysis that have addressed the specific problem of adolescence during the twentieth century have positioned themselves in an evolutionary perspective. They regard adolescence in close relation to development, particularly linked to the different phases of the evolution of libido.

Lacan (1957-58/2004) questions this evolutionary criterion and reads development in structural terms. He thus contemplates the relations between the subject of the unconscious and the libidinal dimension, in the course of a temporality that obeys the logic that organizes the relations with the maternal Other, therefore inscribed within a social relation from the beginning. Consequently, he considers that it will be fundamental how the child had undergone the Oedipus complex, and also if the Paternal Metaphor have operated in his subjective structure so that, at the time of puberty, the child can make use of the “titles” promised by the father. This issue is closely connected with the necessary child’s identification with the ideal insignias of the paternal figure, which gives rise to the conformation of the Ego-ideal. In this conformation, the central question is if “the subject is coated with the insignias of the Other” (Miller, 1998, p.96.), from the substitution operated with respect to the desire of the mother and the production of a new value: the phallic significance. In effect, the hierarchy of the signifier of the Name of the Father is prominent in the orientation of the Ego-ideal (Mitre, 2014). We must recall that ending adolescence implies the possibility “to be able to constitute a new Ego-ideal, make a new election with the signifier: a name, a profession, an ideal, a woman” (Stevens, 2001, p.18). In this regard, Lacadée (2007, p.17) adds that the central objective of adolescence is to seek “the place and the formula”, “be authenticated, search for an own name of *jouissance*”.

The importance of the father thus takes a preponderant role in establishing the subject’s symbolic coordinates, in the orientation of his desire and his existence. During puberty, with its tempestuous advance of libido and the questioning of parental figures, the young man or woman must cope with the disorganization that it implies, at

a symbolic, imaginary, and real level. The commotion of his childish world, which must be gradually abandoned, will depend largely on his passage through the Oedipus defiles and castration, and it will condition the pathway that the subject will begin to transit in the time of adolescence.

However, despite the orientation that this knotting implies, the assumption of sex and its difficulties as well as the parental detachment will be problematic tasks that the adolescent will not be able to avoid. To be separated from the child that the subject was, captured in the discourse of the Other, reveals a hole in significance (Lacadée, 2007). Thus, at this point in life there are often symptomatic expressions that evidence a clinic of the Ego-ideal. This question is in line with the prolongation of adolescence, as Miller (2015) and Stevens (2013) point out, while considering the problems of the youngster with regard to the separation from his or her parents and their subjective position of irresponsibility in relation to the demands of today's society. La Sagna (2009) addresses this problem, called "prolonged adolescence" by psychoanalysts of the early twentieth century. He highlights the absence of a rupture of values between generations as one of the factors that influence the adolescents of our time. In this way, he underscores that "Adolescence is prolonged indefinitely ... because nowadays we are cultivating self incompleteness, of its formation, of its identity, of its desire, even of reality [...]. The subject is suspended in a liquid future" (La Sagna, 2009, p.18), alluding to the sense used by Bauman (2006, 2008). According to these considerations, which place the ideal value of incompleteness in today's culture (Bauman, 2006), La Sagna (2009) concludes that adolescence is, socially, increasingly valued. Thus, life in general, should be a prolongation of it and a generalized adolescence. In this context, we ask ourselves what is the milestone that will signalized the exit of adolescence.

3. Adolescence and contemporary age

Authors from various disciplines point out that in contemporary western societies, there is no clearly defined margin for the transition between childhood and adult social responsibilities, leading to a longer period of adolescence (Le Breton, 2014a, 2014b). In contrast, in traditional cultures, parental separation occurred through the initiation rites (Le Breton, 2014a; Unzueta & Zubieta, 2010; Uribe Aramburo, 2011) establishing a severance between the family and society (Ruiz Londoño, 2007). That is why adolescence coincided with a brief period: the time taken by the ceremony that sanctioned the passage.

On the contrary, in our societies, in absence of social bonds or guiding rituals (Mendoza & Rodríguez Costa, 2010), the youngsters are left to walk alone and decide the meaning of their existence, becoming their own "transitioner" at the time of passage from childhood to adulthood (Le Breton, 2014a). In this respect, if we focus in the current context of democratic individualism upon the concepts of orientation and vocation, we can notice that they arise in a different way from that which Freud described in his writings. In the contemporary era, western societies exhibit a frag-

mentation of coordinates or, rather, a multiplication of ideals (Soler, 2000, 2011), and also an absence of symbolic marks at institutional level, that hinder orientation facing the role of adolescents and their position in society (Duschatzky & Corea, 2002). Thus, adolescence is a “passage without buoys” in which, except for of majority age at 18, there are no social scansions that promote a change of status and consequently, a defined membership of adulthood, as proposed by Le Breton (2014a, p.61). We agree with the author when he lists a number of features on the horizon of current institutional decline: the loss of essential symbolic value of clearing the threshold of school diplomas; the succession of love relationships; the disappearance of military service; the transitory character and low remuneration of wage labor, and the abandonment or rejection of religious ceremonies.

On the issue of liberation from parental authority, it is necessary to recognize that this authority has suffered the same erosion as that of the regulatory master signifiers, accompanying the changes that have affected the family (Miller, 2005). Family institution, nevertheless, remains as such; but in a different version that favors its fragility as a support or place from which to detach oneself to start a new path. The modifications in family roles promote horizontal identifications between generations of parents and children (Berenguer, 2006), favoring the disorientated behaviors of young generations, in constant need of symbolic marks, particularly at a time when an encounter with a gap in knowledge is produced (Lacadée, 2007).

At the same time, today we find a questioning in the field of education, of the role of teachers in replacing the paternal function and in orientating the youngsters. The difficulties in consolidating a link of authority between student and teacher contribute to the necessity of using other means to find a way out of this undetermined situation and following anguish. Freud (1914/1991b) considered the relevance of teachers and professors as parents' substitutes, and responsables for the adolescent's exit to the world. Currently, the prestige of faculty and its authority are eroded, turning their speech into something banal and desecrated, placed at the same level as mass media (Lipovetsky, 2007; Müller, 2004).

We observe the rupture or fragility of the social bond (Pujó, 2011) as an expression of an “era of emptiness” where sex is a continuous in the line of overconsumption and in the law of market economy (Cottet, 2008; Lipovetsky, 2000). Adolescents behave, thus, accordingly, following imperatives marked by guidelines similar to those governing sports and business. The emergence of this new economy of *jouissance*, belonging to the structure of capitalist discourse, focuses on the liberation of the objects of consumption and their link with a tyrannical superego that demands ever more *jouissance*. In this hedonistic context, the demand of *jouissance* as a norm imposes its rhythm in a dominant way, and tries to banish unrest and suffering.

In line with these elucidations, filiation no longer appears linked to inclusion in a generational chain, conferred by the family institution and legally recognized (Brousse, 1998; Lacadée, 2011). The symbolic ineffectiveness of the traditional model and its institutions (Duschatzky & Corea, 2002) lays the ground for youngsters, disorien-

ted, to look into their peer group for a sense of belonging and identification (Stevens, 2001, 2013). Sinatra (2014) refers to these issues when he affirms the emergence of new identifications united to the pulverization of the Name of the Father, corresponding to current times. He calls them “liquid” identifications. In contrast, using the word “solid” to the various forms of addictions.

4. The subjective disorientation in adolescence

The moment of separation from the master signifiers that held the subject, implies for the adolescent the hesitation regarding what constituted his or her insertion in the world. Often, this disorientation is a symptomatic expression of the lack, or fragility, of identificatory models (Amadeo de Freda, 2015). We agree with Cosenza (2009, p.47) when he wonders how adolescents cope, in the present context, with “this encounter with the real without being able to count on, in certain cases, the structural relationship of the Name of the Father, with the orientating function of the ego ideal and its role in the humanizing regulation of *jouissance*”. Subjective disorientation can lead to various manifestations such as certain forms of violence (Goldenberg, 2008; Stevens, 2013), substance use (Fernández Raone, 2016; Sosa, 2008; Stevens, 2003), anorexia and bulimia (Lopez, 2014), acute anguish crisis (Quesada, 2010), suicide attempts (Dirección de Salud Mental y Adicciones 2012; Miller, 2015), self-injury (Le Breton, 2011, 2014b), escapes and errancy (Lacadée, 2007; Le Breton, 2014b; Sauvagnat, 2004), and depressions (Deltombe, 2010; Ehrenberg, 1998; Skriabine, 2006) among others. In the context of current hypermodernity (Lipovetsky & Charles, 2006) many young people, instead of achieving to find a meaning for their existence, “a place and a formula” (Lacadée, 2007), find “the abyss or the jungle” (Stevens, 2001), instability, uncertainty, or risk (Müller, 2004).

Thus, the adolescent, disoriented, uses objects of consumption (including drugs), marks on the body (Lopez, 2014; Scaricabarozzi, 2013), gangs (Stevens, 2001, 2013), and new forms of family to replace the lack of ideals. We see in the so-called “pre-game” gatherings, a festive encounter in which young people drink alcohol sometimes to the degree of serious intoxication, an attempt to diminish the anguish that produces, not the law of the castration, but the lack of a discourse that could sustain it (López, 2006).

Consequently, the problem of “not knowing what to do with oneself” (Naveau, 2016, p.140), that appears in adolescence, sometimes attains a deadly importance (Miller, 2015); in other cases, it borders the abyss of depression or melancholy (Deltombe, 2010), or abandonment (Cocooz, 2009). In this juncture, drug addiction and alcoholism illusorily appear as solutions that erase disquiets and anguish manifestations (Fernández Raone, 2016). Freud (1930/1979b, p.78) early remarked the use of toxics and its function as a soothing solution or as a mean of achieving “a quota of earnestly desired independence from the outside world”. Thus, substance use in current adolescents often aggravates the problem of the marginalization they are experiencing, insofar as it is usually accompanied by a reciprocal identification and

commitment to the group that actually values the link to segregation, marginality (Deltombe, 2010; Naparstek, 2006; Stevens, 2001, 2013), and to the idea of “not wanting to know anything” (Deltombe, 2009, p.102).

This work is presented regarding the problems of adolescence and the concomitant subjective disorientation that may emerge in many young people. We hereby present an inquiry into difficulties related to sexual awakening, to existence linked to the family and social Other, in relation to its impact on the choice of continuing studies or entering the labour market.

Methodological considerations

In the following, departing from a case study, we will analyze a patient who attended the specialized hospital where we conducted the research, in which this article is framed.

The implemented methodology will allow us to show findings of special importance related to disorientation and to the changes that occur only after having operated a subjective rectification that allows the inscription of the symptom in transference (Napolitano, 1999). This enables the setting of a framework for interpretation, which among other issues, clarifies the dilemma of the continuation of studies.

The techniques and procedures correspond, in first place, to preliminary interviews and those characteristic of the onset and continuity of treatment. The interviews continued during two years, characterized by the Freudian-Lacanian theoretical approach, which guides this work. In second place, corresponds to the exegesis of texts from different disciplines that have examined the issue, allowing delineating the obtained results.

Results

The presented results have been considered according to the patient’s initial presentation and to the successive modifications that appeared during the treatment, in order to elucidate the possible articulation between the original demand and its transformations, particularly with respect to the incidence of the subjective rectification in the choice of a career. To this end, different aspects to be considered have been distinguished, emanating from the corpus of examined interviews and texts.

1. Leonardo: Fragmentation of the family romance and vocational changes

We will organize this section according to the different topics that emerged from the analysis of the interviews, selected having in mind this work’s objectives.

1.1. Consumption and unanswered questions: the encounter with a gap in knowledge

Leonardo (hereinafter referred to as L.), 19, spontaneously consulted the specialized hospital because of the use and abuse of substances. In the first interview, he

justified his excessive consumption by experiences that he considered of failure: the separation from his girlfriend since his early adolescence, and his difficulties to pass university courses. He added that his father had died from a drug overdose when he was 5 years old.

L. consumed marijuana and alcohol from age 14, which he related to “the time in which one learns to take responsibility”. He recalled that before that time, from 10 years old onwards, questions arose related to sexuality, for which he found no answers. What then appeared was the need to have his father still with him, so he could provide answers and orientation, which reminds us of the proposals put forward by Lacan (1957-58/2004) and Miller (1998) with reference to the role of the father in this moment in life. L. cried for not having his father. Everyone had one and they rebelled against him, “I wanted to have problems with the figure of authority”, he said in the interviews.

Later he would remember that during his childhood he lived without limits, with his mother and supported by his grandparents. For them, he was “a perfect child”, he pleased everyone. Difficulties arose when certain problems related to sex were introduced. Help provided by an uncle didn’t seem to suffice. He needed a father. Moreover, he used to speak with him “like people talk to God”. This period of anguish and silence came to an end when he tried marijuana and alcohol, which allowed him to forget all questions and discomfort.

1.2. Fear of failure and drug as a recourse

L. mentioned the significance of having failed a grade course, which led him to ingest large amounts of alcohol. He raised the issue of an inability to “withstand failure” because of being considered “perfect” his whole life by his friends and family. He wielded this reason for not having spoken of what was happening to him, since transmitting some problem to other person implied “weakness”. He repeatedly pointed out his difficulty in “being able to speak” and “communicate with others” beyond his friends and family circle. “I could never talk about anything, never, about anything”, he insisted at the beginning of the treatment. We agree with what Freud (1930/1979b) pointed out about the role of the toxic: the drug had served L. as a form of fun, recreation, escape, evasion and oblivion, although he now recognized its negative effects. He manifested feeling guilty about drinking, he had “remorse”, and even dreams linked to his relationship with substances made him feel guilty. But on the other hand, since he stopped consuming, he felt insecure, fearful, anguished, he had difficulties taking on such challenges as exams. We should mention that alongside individual psychological interviews, L. began attending the two weekly meetings of the hospital self-help group. Lateral transference favored, throughout the treatment, a strengthening and possible crystallization of a position where the lack of subjective implication denoted a difficulty in questioning and feeling as problematic his symptomatic presentation.

1.3. Changes in subjective position: “consumption is the tree”

For six months L. attended two weekly interviews and self-help reunions. After that period, he mentioned his intention to abandon the treatment, to “get closure for a stage”. He believed that he no longer wanted to “consume anymore” and also that attending the hospital meant to remain linked to a problem that he did not consider a current problem in his life. Two weeks before, he had stopped attending the self-help group. “Consumption is the tree” (referring to the phrase “can’t see the forest for the trees”), he repeated, alluding to the possible role of consumption as an element that impeded him from “seeing” other issues. He also referred to having difficulties of speaking in this space of certain “things” that made him embarrassed. He was referring to an episode which he called “abuse” of which he had not spoken to anyone but his mother. “It seems to be done on purpose, now that I’m saying I will not be coming anymore, I tell you this”, he said smiling.

At this point, a therapeutic intervention was effectuated stating the possibility to continue treatment but without the need to frame and orient it to his discomfort regarding substance use. Finally, L. attended the next interview without mentioning drug use. Now his problems were focused on an inhibition to perform well in exams, on his intention to start recreational activities that never came to fruition, on not being able to concentrate on his studies and, his difficulties in being able to “organize” his academic and working hours. “It’s not for lack of interest or because I failed, it is because I didn’t even try”, he remarked. He later recounted that he had started a film course, and had begun studying at the university. Smiling, he warned: “Let’s see, let’s see, I do not want to anticipate” leaving in suspension this new beginning, where drugs no longer appeared in his complaints. He mentioned: “When I consumed drugs I did not care about things, now I care more and I have more insecurities”. He revealed the possibility to study and organize himself without the substance as a partner and lenitive in his daily actions, plans, and projects that gradually began to emerge.

The interviews continued during the following year, although shorter in duration than initially. Again, and for the first time since he was in treatment, considering that he no longer consumed, he expressed difficulties for an exam at the university. He expressed different reasons why he experienced great “expectations” regarding the result. The “pressure” which he imposed upon himself, the two years of studies he had “lost” since he had only passed a single course, the option of not showing to the exam, the possibility of failure. I intervened pointing out his subjective position facing any decision he took regarding a future evaluation instance. He responded by saying that, after all, it was “his” problem, in an attempt to get involved and take responsibility for what ailed him. He assisted to the next meeting with a cheerful mood: he had taken the exam and passed with an excellent performance. The inhibition to go to the evaluation was gone, at least momentarily, as he no longer “went blank”, as the last time he had taken the exam.

1.4. The identification of parental insignias

Continuing the interviews, he returned to the subject of his father, of whom he knew very little, only from the words of his mother and grandfather. Sometimes he had suicidal fantasies associated with the way his father had died and stated: “Sometimes when I’m not feeling well I think I could give myself an overdose”. He only found pieces of his father, who, he was told, “spoiled him”, “loved him and was a lazy man.” In many circumstances, during his early adolescence, he was told he “carried the surname” referring to his resemblance to his father in the way he acted. He had felt a certain permission to smoke marijuana since he thought “if my father did drugs...” He recalled insisting in asking about his father, but as the family did not respond, he stopped asking. He remarked that he had only his “surname carrying” left. “The paternal surname has weight”, he said, as if he had found a path of negative trait transmission, since his paternal grandfather “was also a disaster”.

1.5. Inhibition, subjective disorientation and (re) vocational choice

L. continued treatment for over a year, although with repeated absences until finally he stopped attending. After six months he returned without previously obtaining an appointment. He was accompanied by his mother and asked for a consultation. He was anxious, complained of feeling very badly; he seemed depressed, with lack of will and general inhibition, and not wanting to do anything. He appeared very disoriented as he had abandoned all the activities he had begun. He argued that he wanted to abandon his university career and start another, about which he had always been “passionate”. He wanted to get back into treatment, but this time there was not in relation to any signifier linked to consumption. He expressed discomfort and at the same time wondered why he had chosen his college studies, and doubted whether he should finally join another branch of studies abandoning the first. I intervened reminding him of his statements from the previous year: his interest in his studies stemming from his connection with politics after long talks with his maternal grandfather. “I did not remember that”, he said, adding that after working in the field of politics for a few months, he was “disenchanted” with it. The fall of the ideal linked to his career choice was linked with a shift to another one. In the second interview after the months of absence, he also said that he was “concerned” about the difficulties to contact his aunt and his paternal grandmother, who lived in the country inhabiting a piece of field to which he was legally entitled. This was the only “inheritance” that his father had left him, “it is the law”, he emphasized, regarding the value of filiation and heritage. Linking law, father, inheritance, choice, and future, L. attended the consultation with different questions than those which had inaugurated his treatment, opening at the horizon the possibility of beginning again his analysis. He was determined to change his career; his choice had been motivated by concerns about the legality of his filiation. Now, he had established other interests and believed he had found a new orientation, a vocation that had always been present, but that he had seemingly forgotten. Later he would recognize that what finally led him

to decide about his new studies was a veiled suggestion from his mother to choose it. He stated: "My mom gave me the confidence, the decisiveness". The reason why he thought it has to be left in another's hands this decision was linked to "guilt" and to the future possibility of "failure".

Conclusions

The analysis of a clinical case like that of L., framed within the selected theoretical orientation, has enabled us to elucidate some issues inherent to the problematics of many young people today. We have especially limited the analysis to the difficulties that the subject encountered regarding his vocational choice, his general disorientation and his drug use, that placed any decision or the emergence of any interrogations under suspension. L. thus shows a response conditioned by the familial and cultural Other, but also by the children's story and the singular place he occupied in his mother view.

L. was a "perfect child", surrounded and protected by the mother's family. The traumatic encounter with sex at 10 years of age, considered "abuse" by him, opened questions about sexuality. As a consequence, questions about his absent and idealized father arose. He knew very little about his father, and this little information came from the mother's words. These words always presented negative traits of L.'s father, with which L. identified himself, seeking a compass for his disorientation.

The use of drugs as an adolescent was a way to forget his problems, his unbearable inhibition, and paralysis that affected both his sexual and vocational choices. He sought, in different manners, the identificatory references that would allow him to find his way. However, he failed and sank into depression, especially when he no longer had alcohol or marijuana that allowed him both to have a quieter sleep and feel closer to his father who had died of an overdose, as previously noted. The maternal ideal of the "perfect child" was questioned when he was confronted with a moment of choices and decisions. This resulted in a sense of fragility that made him afraid to fail, henceforth his fatalism, even his suicidal fantasies.

L. seemed to be drifting, references found in others no longer served him, his division was extreme, and there was no "formula" (Lacadée, 2007) to help him find quick solutions. The offering of assistance from a self-help group he frequented weekly, functioned as lateral transference to the therapeutic device, in this way hindering the possibility of subjective rectification.

In the course of treatment, however, he was able to make a number of decisions that set a new course for him and aroused his interest. The mourning for the absence of his father was not over yet. The search to insert himself into a filiation departing from deadly traits (being an "addict", "a bum", "a disaster") was progressively modified and the path outlined for himself was of a sublimating type. He selected an academic study that he recognized was closely linked with his family origins, but in different way, after the fall of the identifications that kept him attached to the deadly traits of the

signifiers with which he had manufactured a father from his absence, clinging to the familial discourse.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that the present case has allowed us to contribute, from our theoretical framework, with evidence that may help to clarify the issue of election or re-election of a course of studies and its possible orientation.