



New Trends  
in Psychology

## The Adolescent

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**Abstract:** Adolescence can mark both frustration and rebellion against norms and rules, as well as a tacit and disguised clinging to the so comforting affectivity of puberty. Erik Erikson also believes that adolescence represents the central crisis of all human development. Overcoming this crisis can have both a positive effect, by forming a strong self-identity, and a negative effect by increasing the confusion related to one's own identity, the inability to make decisions, especially those related to the vocational part. The individual is preparing to start life as an adult and that is why he feels the need to look for an identity, i.e. those elements that define him, make him unique, differentiate him from others. The behavior of teenagers is very malleable and due to this aspect, they can be easily prone to external influences. Adolescence is a period marked by impulsivity, a predisposition for taking risks, teenagers often ignoring the consequences of their own actions. They make hic et nunc decisions, based in this case on emotion. Being a transitional stage, adolescence is characterized by conflict in thoughts, decisions, between the child who begins to metamorphose, and the adult who is waiting to become.

**Keywords:** adolescence; attachment; duality; crisis; originality; frustration; ontogenetic development

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## 1. Introduction

The article proposes an exhaustive analysis of all the valences of adolescence, observed through the lens of an individual who embodies in the present novel a multitude of roles - that of narrator, spectator, but also protagonist.

The architecture of adolescence is shaped by F. M. Dostoevsky in a manner apparently devoid of logic and structure but which, at the same time, includes, brick by brick, all the psychological distinctions specific to this age stage: immeasurable pride and arrogance, fearlessness, mistrust, confusion, principledness taken to extremes, but also an acute need for affection, acceptance, indulgence and guidance, tenderness and understanding. These are especially specific to the adolescent who does not possess a psychological baggage prepared by a childhood spent in the bosom of a family, under the protective wing of some progenitors to form and guide him for what life can reserve for a future young adult in training. All these traits are put on the wallpaper through introspection, monologue and bursts of dialogue, as the teenager faces the first important choices of his life.

The novel "The Adolescent", buildingungsroman, or "formation novel" as it was also called, thus presents us, through the breath of a teenage narrator, the Russian bourgeois society of the 19th century, in all its "splendour", a society often petty, in which the nobility, although imbued with the innovative ideas and European spirituality of the time, still tries to keep its standards and benefits so dear.

## 2. Content

The narrator, the main character of this thorough plea with and about adolescence, is a 19-year-old young man, Arkady Makarovich Dolgoruki, who, once he has completed gymnasium (high school) in Moscow, decides, driven by contradictory feelings, on the one hand by an ardent love towards an otherwise absent father figure in his life and on the other hand by a consuming hatred and desire for revenge for all the years of suffering of his own childhood in all its stages, to go to St. Petersburg, in the bosom of a family not yet fully defined in his troubled teenage mind.

The narrative incoherence that we often find ourselves with throughout this account, unequivocally denotes a permanent upheaval that characterizes the protagonist, who ends up going through multiple and varied physical and emotional states in his maturation process.

The illegitimate son of a depraved landlord, Andrei Petrovich Versilov, and Sofia Andreevna, a servant on his estate, “caught” in turn in a marriage of convenience with a much older character, Makar Ivanov Dolgoruki, young Arkady is removed from his mother since infancy. One could even say that the rigors of Russian bourgeois society had sealed his destiny even before he was born. His trajectory is thus traced, with fine and detailed lines, by “characters responsible” for preserving appearances, for the precise location of each piece of the puzzle embodied by each “respectable” Russian bourgeois family - even if later, as can be seen on during the novel, this apparently well-defined family architecture will collapse under secrets, intrigues, in short, under the ephemeral and often procrastinating nature of the characters described. An important figure, in this sense of maintaining appearances, is the landlady Tatiana Pavlovna Prutkova, a figurehead for many of the novel’s characters, moreover the only link between Arkady and his family throughout his childhood. Although her financial sources are not very clearly identified, Tatiana Pavlovna often appears as a central figure in the education and training of all Versilov’s sons, both legitimate and obviously illegitimate.

The contradictory feelings that moved Arkady Makarovich, from Moscow to Saint Petersburg, brought him in front of various characters, many of them just figures and characters created in the imagination and “dreams” of the young man, his childhood lonely not allowing him to physically know his entire family and its social circle.

It could be said that the entire existence of the teenager Arkady Makarovich can be characterized by a single concept - lack. For this was endlessly manifested on all levels of his life - the lack of love and protective love that only a mother can provide, the firmness and authority of a father to defend him, guide him, teach him but also scold him, the warmth of a home and a family to instill in him a sense of belonging, in short the absence in his life of these determining factors which, through their action and major influence in a child’s life, lay the foundations for a healthy, confident teenager with a strong self-esteem self. The lack of these main pillars from early childhood was also perpetuated in late adolescence, being the expression of an **insecure, mainly avoidant attachment**.

Dostoevsky outlines a human nature tormented since its beginnings that inoculated in the adolescent troubled between reality and ideal a multitude of feelings and experiences, rather confused than loaded with morality, integrity and value. The lack of the mother’s presence in his life determined a distorted perception of the feminine side.

At the same time, although avid for maternal love and protection, Arkady often shows contempt for his mother, as if trying to remind her, at every step, of the **abandonment** he suffered. This contempt manifested itself in the first instance at the time of her visit to Touchard, the place where he was practically “forgotten” by his family with the knowledge that his presence there would represent an “advantage” for his future in society. He rejects his mother throughout the entire visit, being, though inwardly full of emotion and longing for love, unable to show his true feelings towards her. The pride and hatred felt at the idea of his own abandonment prevents him from receiving her manifestations of affection, giving him instead a haughty and arrogant attitude.

Towards his biological father, he also exhibits pendulous feelings, sometimes adoring him and at other times strongly rejecting him. The protagonist of our novel “longs” permanently for his love and acceptance by the only man who could ever change the course of his existence. It constantly collects information about the trajectory of his entire life in order to “revenge” him and “align” his own image with what society could perceive of his behavior. But, as in the case of his mother, but much more highlighted, for Arkady, his father, even if “the only man who did not make me jump”, is considered the one “guilty” of all the sufferings and shortcomings of his childhood.

And yet, although often shunned by Versilov and perhaps “ridiculed” for our teenager’s naivety and immaturity, his suffering is relieved during Versilov’s long-awaited “confession”, which finally gives him confidence, the love and respect that Arkady thought he would never have from his father.

Located in the middle of the Russian bourgeois society, troubled by the ideals of his childhood that he refuses to renounce for a long time, the novel’s protagonist manifests different psychological traits and experiences, more or less significant, each depending on the situation he is faced with.

Thus, he proves an **immeasurable ambition**, wanting to show others, but especially those in the family, that he can achieve something by his own power, saying on different occasions “I will prove to you what you don’t even dream of”. Constantly demonstrates **pride and arrogance** in various situations. His very name, Dolgoruki, which creates confusion on numerous occasions, brings him frustration as he feels obliged to clear up the coincidence of the name each time - again the hatred of the nobility that removed him from its ranks, denying him the opportunity to develop with his father.

Like any teenager, Arkadi aspires to a higher social position, an assurance of life both personally and socially. This **aspiration** is foreshadowed for the young man in the making, on various levels, arising, most of the time, from the spontaneity of the moment: either he longs for the fulfillment of a great idea (he dreams of becoming the next Rothschild), or he sees his future secured after marrying Katerina Nikolaievna.

Although he longed for a new life, in which morality would be placed in the place of honor, he allowed himself to be dragged by Lambert into the “mud”, thus proving that he is a naive, fiery, insecure, easily manipulated character. He also shows **innocence and naivety** when he trusts in the “warm” reception of Lambert, one of the “executioners” of his childhood or when, following Versilov’s “confession”, he can imagine that his feelings can change overnight.

Like any child who “longs” for family unity and who imagines that the only way to achieve it is through the “togetherness” of the two progenitors, he dreams that Versilov will marry his mother, giving her her rightful place, him getting -and thus legitimacy and belonging to one’s own family.

He shows **impulsiveness**, acting without thinking about the consequences, without a plan, as for example when, after his illness, he sneaked out of the house and asked himself “Where to?” I didn’t realize it, it was an instinctive start, which filled me with fear but also with joy”. This contradiction of moods and feelings is also evident in the **instability** he shows in following his own idea: the injured and abandoned child arrived at St. Petersburg with the desire to take revenge is often permeated by the desire to move away, to stay away from “suffering”, “secrets” and intrigues.

**He is a keen observer of human nature**, often risking slipping down the slope of his own shortcomings. He tends to see in others what he lacks, often showing **empathy and compassion** for suffering, betrayal or mockery (Arkady loved his sister, Liza, but hid his true feelings - “We lied and pretended”; he observed facial expression to “guess” her suffering but shows empathy when she realizes that “We are both dishonored”, “We are both laughed at, and I am the one who must take the first step towards her. My heart suddenly softened in front of her”).

Arkadi Makarovici’s action and interaction with the other characters, but also his moments of introspection, are marked and determined even by an incriminating document, the **“letter”**. *The “famous” document appears repeatedly throughout the narrative, producing in Arkady both “uplifting” moods and a permanent uproar, its*

*content potentially harming his loved ones.* Overwhelmed by the importance given to him when he was appointed the “guardian” of that letter, Arkady tends to use it either as a tool of punishment and implicitly revenge on all those he considers responsible for the unhappiness of his life, or as a currency to save them, through which to demonstrate the dignity and nobility of his soul tried by so much suffering.

The influence of this document on Arkady’s entire existence penetrates even into his unconscious when, during his convalescence, he “dreams” that it could have been stolen from him and used for the petty purposes from which he kept trying to stay away. The dream he has, which turns out to be a copy of reality in the future, appeals to Freud’s psychoanalysis in a psychological context.

The self-control he shows in keeping this letter is all the more relevant because for him it represents a step forward in his evolution, a step towards forgiveness and reconciliation, towards a certain reconciliation with his tormented past. Although he tries to keep it as something sacred, he loses it once again falling prey to the **naivety** so characteristic of this age, placing himself once again in the position of victim of the petty adult society.

The adolescence of our young “orphan” is not bypassed by the nets of vices and passions so specific to this age. **Alcohol, gambling, but also love “test” him in turn, his “answers” being** this time a mirror of the deficiencies from childhood that are reflected later in adolescence. He gives himself up to gambling without really understanding the consequences of such a vice on his future; He “dares” to fall in love, even if it is an unknown feeling for him that he considers “unworthy” and fails to appreciate the consequences that excessive alcohol can have on his own personal integrity. Although perhaps specifically adolescent, **terrible and unconscious behaviors**, Arkadi often feels in their manifestation, the lack of a genuine, parental advice that could have “saved” him in time from all this.

*“Yes, I’m a poor teenager and alone sometimes I don’t know what’s right and what’s wrong. If you had shown me at least a hint of the road then, I would have realized it and immediately set off on the right path.”*

Throughout the trajectory of his actions, he shows an avid thirst to be guided and listened to, to find a place in the lives of those whom, even if under the “umbrella” of resentment and a desire for revenge from which they only reap suffering and the rebellion of a child who was not loved and accepted, loves them and is ready to accept them with all their flaws and “mess”.

It is Makar Ivanovich Dolgoruki, the legitimate father of Arkady Makarovich Dolgoruki, who, towards the end of the action, manages to bring some peace and harmony to the tormented soul of our teenager. With this, Arkady will have a brief but significant interaction in the last days of the old pilgrim's life. His wisdom, the love with which he surrounds him, the calmness with which he listens and guides him are essential for the young man who is still unable to settle down and choose his path in life. Arkady "hangs on" to his teachings, to that "joy of the heart" that he causes, feeling how the old man, whom until recently he considered "stupid" and whom he refused to accept, can guide him in his process of reconciliation with oneself and the outside world

The finesse in observation is also manifested in the evaluation of society as a whole and not only, of the characters that compose it. The episodes of clarity in thinking, analysis of human nature and the society in which he lives can also be considered a consequence of his childhood experiences in which abuse, both physical and verbal, alternated with moments of banishment and loneliness, pushed him towards judgments mature, often inappropriate for a child, and later, for a teenager.

### 3. Conclusion

Protagonist of a permanent inner conflict, Arkady Makarovich Dolgoruki narrates his own evolution of his ontogenetic development process, without discounting any feeling, incident or behavior. He thus presents his life, in his own and genuine way from the perspective of his permanent indecision, his desire to take revenge but also to love and be loved. In the midst of the tumult created by the Russian bourgeoisie, with its own intrigues and pettiness, he still tries to carve out a dignified path, an integral philosophy of life without forgetting who he is and what he has been through.

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