

# An Introduction to Kazimierz Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration.

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- Dąbrowski's work has never been easy to overview because there are many interrelated aspects.
- I have used extensive quotes from Dąbrowski to illustrate his ideas – sometimes he described one concept a number of different ways.
- Dąbrowski's thinking was quite original and his conclusions sometimes challenge the status quo.
- Dąbrowski's thinking was also shaped by diverse influences, I review some of the most important in detail, revealing a number of foundational planks.
- The real introduction to Dąbrowski remains reading his original works and seeing his ideas emerge.

- 1. Introduction.

- A Polish psychologist and psychiatrist.
- Deeply affected by his life experience, first as a child eyewitness to the aftermath of horrific battles in WW I.
- Pursued a very comprehensive and diverse education.
- He saw that people display wide variations in how they experience and feel life – some seem to feel more.
- Experienced strong overexcitability as a youth.
- Again, deeply affected by WW II – he later fell under communist control and his activities were curtailed.
- Much work was completed from 1965 to 1980.
- For a biography, see Tillier (2008).

- The differentiation of developmental levels is common in theories of philosophy, biology & psychology:
  - Many theories present various hierarchies detailing developmental levels.
  - A wide variety of descriptions and explanations of development have been proposed.
  - Most approaches suggest all people have the potential to advance, but most people fail to achieve their full potential for various reasons.
- Dąbrowski said he could not find a developmental theory that explained his observations of both the lowest behaviors and highest achievements of people.
- His purpose was to write a “general theory of development” accounting for the wide range of levels seen, explaining the factors & processes he observed to be associated with advanced development.

- Dąbrowski wrote a broad, interrelated and subtle theory to account for human differences:
  - He integrated many diverse streams of thought, from philosophy, from literature, from psychology, from neurophysiology and from psychiatry.
  - Dąbrowski's English works represent a sample of his overall publications (~ 2X as many in Polish).
  - As material is translated, more detail will emerge.
- There is an intuitive element in comprehending what Dąbrowski said; as some have said, it's a theory best understood by its application in one's life, some, approaching it academically, "just don't seem to get it."



# Combination of Old and New Approaches.

- Dąbrowski assembles old ideas in a unique way:
  - Subsumes a traditional Piagetian (cognitive) approach within an emotion based paradigm.
  - Places emotion in a unique controlling role.
- Dąbrowski adds several new and unique concepts:
  - Multilevelness (ML)
  - Developmental potential (DP) (including overexcitability (OE)).
  - Positive Disintegration – In some cases, crises & “pathology” act as triggers for development (positive & necessary for advanced growth but not sufficient).

- The theory combines two different philosophical traditions: elements of the essentialism of Plato with the emphasis on individual choice in existentialism (he called this the “existentio-essentialist compound”).
- It’s not enough for an individual’s essence to unfold, it must be consciously evaluated and developed – the lower aspects inhibited, the higher embraced – this ability is what differentiates humans from animals.
- Dąbrowski was deeply concerned with the unique traits and personality of each individual. He asks us to develop & differentiate ourselves & to understand, appreciate & accept the differences of others.

- Traditional developmental theories usually are cumulative and additive – higher levels are constructed on the foundation of lower levels, components of lower levels remain and are added to.
- Here, higher levels represent a new view of reality and emerge from lower levels which are disengaged from, disintegrated, transcended or transformed.
- There are metaphysical aspects to Dąbrowski's approach. The self, in particular, the inner psychic milieu and third factor emerge from lower features but then take on a developmental course of their own, transcending their biological and social origins.

- Dąbrowski presented a complex view of development.
- Some aspects follow a traditional ontological course, for example, cognitive development.
- Other aspects, in particular, emotion, follow a non-ontological path, their development depends on other factors like the developmental instinct.
- Dąbrowski equated these non-ontological elements to an evolutionary approach – these aspects are not predictable on the basis of ontology (our normal developmental pathway) they are predicated on other factors or emerge as evolution proceeds.
- Higher levels reflect higher, newer evolutionary levels, achieved through processes of positive disintegration.

- Values and moral behavior are central – what the individual perceives “ought to be” versus “what is.”
- Our emotions are the ultimate guide to our value making and behaviour, not our intelligence.
- Values are individual but not relative – there are core objective (universal) values that authentic humans will independently discover and embrace as they build their own unique value systems and personalities.
- Education must not indoctrinate: ideally, it must prepare the child to appreciate the role of their emotions in building & guiding values & to be an autonomous thinker.

- The highest levels in traditional theories are based on cognition (e.g. Platonic Model, Piagetian model).
  - Traditional goal: to have reason control passion (Plato) – this goal and context has predominated.
- Dąbrowski: Emotions are a critical aspect of advanced development and of the higher levels:
  - Dąbrowski differentiated higher & lower emotions.
  - Subsumed cognitive models under his approach (cognitive models are not discarded).
  - Dąbrowski's observation: In “higher,” authentic people, “higher” emotions guide individual values, define our sense of who we are and direct cognition.

- Emotion anchors and guides the creation of autonomous and authentic human values.
- Based on how we feel, we can develop a sense of what is higher / what ought to be, over “what is:”
  - We move away from what feels bad / wrong / lower.
  - We move toward what feels good / right / higher.
- Once we become conscious of our higher emotions, we can use them as a rudder to direct cognition to strive for what “ought to be” – for “higher possibilities:”
  - Intelligence becomes an instrument of our sense of our ideal personality, again based upon our emotional sense of who we ought to strive to be.

- The titles of Dąbrowski's six major English books reflect the major themes of his approach:
  - “Positive disintegration” (1964).
  - “Personality shaping through positive disintegration” (1967).
  - “Mental growth through positive disintegration” (1970).
  - “Psychoneurosis is not an illness” (1972).
  - “Dynamics of Concepts” (1973).
  - “Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions” (1996).



- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.

- While still in high school, Dąbrowski passed his first and second year university examinations.
- Dąbrowski completed a Masters of philosophy and contemplated a career in music, but his best friend committed suicide, changing the direction of his life.
- Dąbrowski entered medicine taking courses from eminent Polish psychiatrist, Jan Mazurkiewicz, a student of J. H. Jackson. In 1928 he took courses from Édouard Claparède and Jean Piaget, writing a thesis on suicide in 1929.
- He completed a doctorate degree in psychology writing a thesis on self-mutilation.

- Studied psychoanalysis in Vienna under fellow Pole Wilhelm Stekel (and attended lectures by Freud).
- In Paris he practiced psychiatry under Pierre Janet.
- Dąbrowski told me he learned German to read Freud and Spanish to read Cervantes. Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno became an important influence (and later, centres studying TPD were established in Spain and Lima Peru, his books were translated into Spanish and he lectured in Spanish).
- In 1933 Dąbrowski spent a year at Harvard and in Boston. Dąbrowski never referenced William James but may have been shown his work: James (1899) proposed overexcitability in parallel Dabrowski.

- In the 1930s, organized mental health services and clinics in Poland. Began to write prolifically, the outline of TPD can be seen in his first English work in 1937.
- During the war, Dąbrowski was imprisoned numerous times by the Gestapo but managed to avoid incarceration in the concentration camp system.
- In the late 1940s Dąbrowski began to resume his work on mental health and again visited Harvard.
- In 1950 Dąbrowski was imprisoned by the communist government for 18 months and his activities were monitored, sometimes closely, for the rest of his life.
- In 1964 Dąbrowski worked with Jason Aronson in New York, leading to the first Little Brown book.

- Dąbrowski met Andrew Kawczak in Montréal in 1964.
- In 1965 Dąbrowski became affiliated with the University of Alberta, moving his family to Edmonton.
- He was also affiliated with Université Laval (Laval University), Quebec City and lectured in Lima Peru.
- In 1966, Dąbrowski met Abraham Maslow and the two became friends and correspondents.
- For the rest of his life, Dąbrowski worked tirelessly to write about and promote TPD. Splitting his time between Alberta, Québec and Poland, Dąbrowski never seemed to stop. Several of his Edmonton students became co-authors, including Dexter Amend, Michael M. Piechowski and Marlene Rankel.

- In 1975 at the age of 73, Dąbrowski purchased an estate in Poland with plans to develop a new center.
- In 1976 I became one of Dąbrowski's last students and he asked me to keep his theory alive and I received his unpublished papers.
- In 1979 Dąbrowski had a serious heart attack in Edmonton and died in Warsaw, November 26, 1980.
- He was buried beside his friend, Piotr Radlo, in the forest near his old Institute at Zagórze, Poland.
- I became a psychologist, created the TPD webpage [www.positivedisintegration.com/](http://www.positivedisintegration.com/) & archived his work.
- Piechowski went on to apply Dąbrowski's ideas to gifted education, creating a broad new audience.

- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- Philosophy.

- Dąbrowski was influenced by two major philosophical approaches: essentialism and existentialism:
  - The individual has certain innate essences (Plato).
  - The individual has some freedom through the choices that he or she makes to become an authentic individual.
- Dąbrowski (1973) combined both approaches in what he called the “existentio-essentialist compound” but he felt that ultimately, essentialism was more important than existentialism:
  - “Essence is more important than existence for the birth of a truly human being.”
  - “There is no true human existence without genuine essence.” (Existential thoughts and aphorisms, page 11).



- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- Plato.

# The Philosophical Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration Part 1: The Allegory of Plato's Cave.

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The Labyrinth: Safe Journey and Homecoming:  
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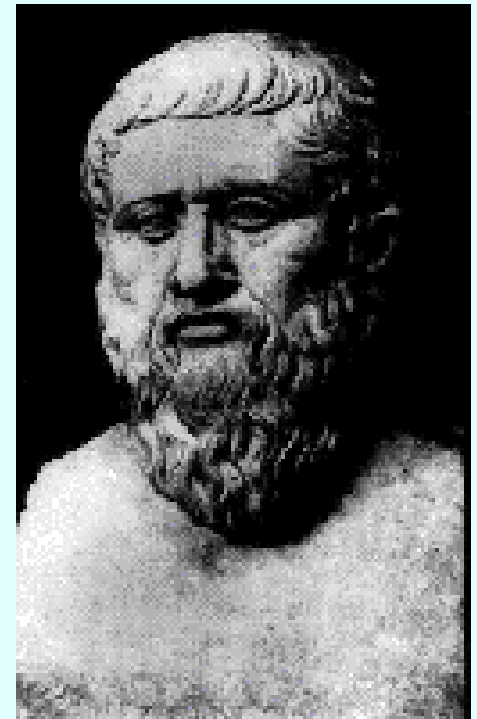
- Plato represents essentialism:
  - An approach to philosophy that emphasizes essence.
  - There are universal essences, for example, that represent absolute truths, these are true everywhere and in every time.
  - There are individual essences “within us” that determine who we will be as individuals.
  - Each of us must uncover or discover these essences.
  - These essences are both our potentials and our limitations.

- Plato: the absolute and eternal Forms represent essences. Forms are beyond our day-to-day world.
- Things, and people, have essences, for Plato, represented by their metaphysical Forms.
- [In contrast, Aristotle said essence is contained within everyday matter. The essence of a frog resides within a tadpole and while its Form may change (tadpole to frog), its "frog essence" remains. Things, and people, have enduring essences, for Aristotle, contained within their matter.]
- Dąbrowski: echoes Aristotle, a person's essence is contained in their genes.

- Socrates had a tremendous influence on his student, Plato.
- Socrates believed that everyone holds moral truth and knowledge within; however, most people are unaware of it.
- Reasoning, not perception, will reveal this deep & timeless Knowledge.
- Knowledge is of critical importance: we must KNOW before we ACT.
- By asking someone questions in a dialogue, the person answering can be drawn to discover this truth for him or herself.

- Complacent acceptance of traditional or external views is the status quo but is unsatisfactory.
- We must be conscious of something and be able to explain it for it to have any meaning; “the unexamined life is not worth living.”
- People seek to be happy and thus naturally seek virtue, people are not inherently evil, only ignorant of the Good.
- What are absolute beauty and justice, apart from beautiful objects and good deeds? What are beauty and justice in all places and at all times?
- Theory is a critical necessity; we must aspire toward ideals of theory.

- Plato: "Mankind will not get rid of its evils until either the class of those who philosophize in truth and rectitude reach political power or those most powerful in cities, under some divine dispensation, really get to philosophizing."
- Plato was born to an aristocratic family in Athens and lived from 428 - 354BC.
- Always interested in politics, Plato became a student of Socrates.
- Information from this period is often questionable.



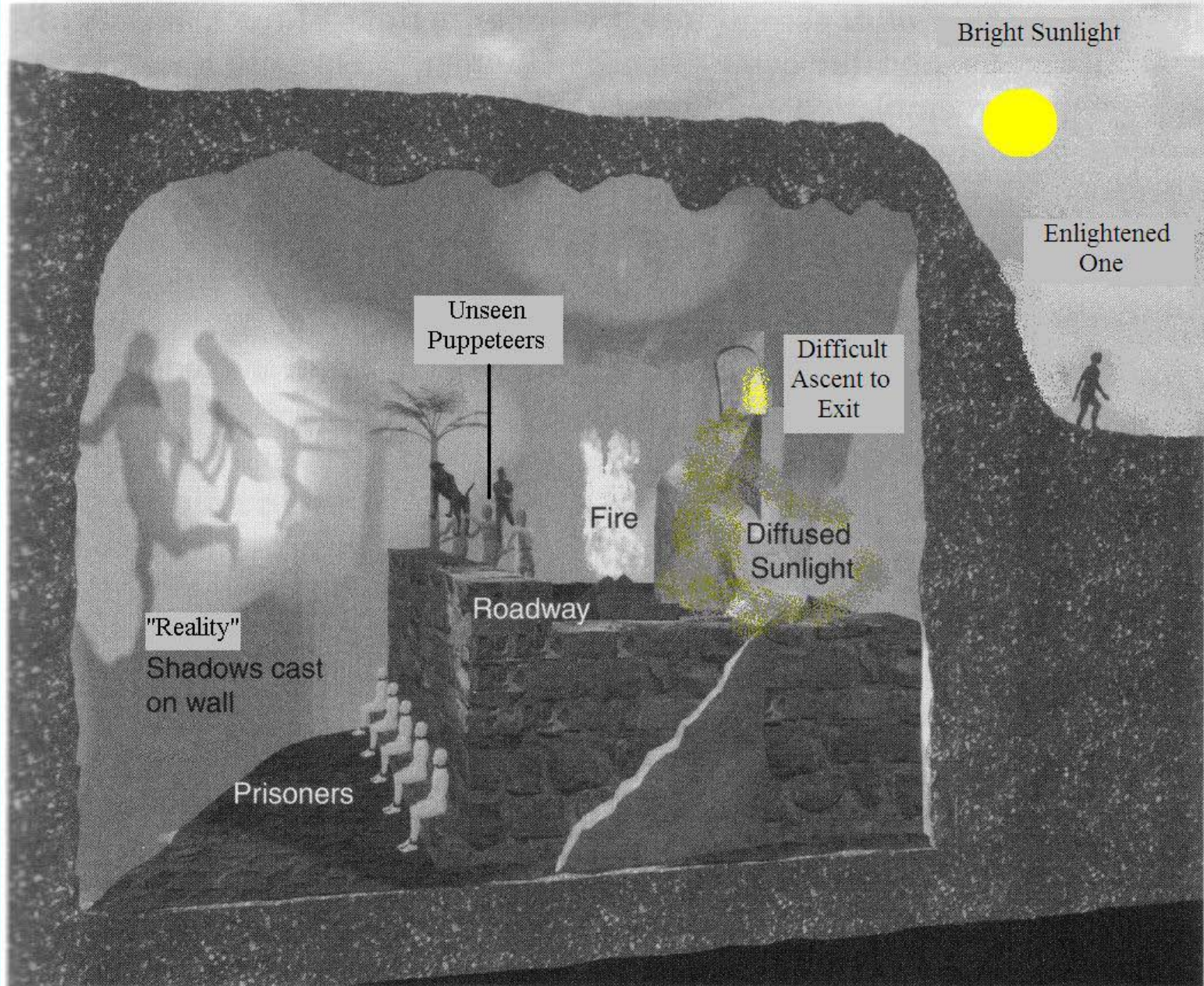
- When Socrates was purged, Plato became disillusioned with politics and came to see that “mankind's fate was hopeless unless there was a deep change in men's education, and especially in the education of those intending to become statesmen”
- Plato founded the Academy, a prototype of the Modern University. Based on mathematics and with a wide focus, the Academy lasted 900 years.
- Academy's first major student (for 20 years) was Aristotle:
  - Aristotle later rejected Plato's basic view of reality.
- Plato was concerned about social and individual justice: to get out of life what is deserved, not less, not more.



- Plato's cave is described in a dialogue presented in chapter VII of his major work, *The Republic*.
- The cave is the best known of Plato's dialogues and is open to many different presentations and interpretations.
- The cave is an allegory given to simplify Plato's complex mathematical explanation of the levels of reality:
  - Plato's cave appears after a complex and subtle discussion of "The Divided Line," a geometric description of the levels of reality and their corresponding degrees of knowledge.
    - Although an accomplished mathematician, Plato's geometric description of the divided line doesn't quite "work" mathematically: it is assumed he intentionally designed it this way - but why?

- Basic division: visible / invisible, then subdivided into a series of higher and lower levels based on how we grasp things, and what these things are.
- As an analogy of the divided line, the cave is blunter; not an exact rendering of the levels.
- The cave has a blunt and clear political message: our leaders systematically deceive us and are often not fit to govern – they need to either “see the light” or be replaced.
- Basic premise: Because of how we live, “true” Reality is not obvious to most of us. However, we mistake what we see & hear for Reality & Truth.

# PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE



- **The Cave:** A large cave with a long, steep path up to the exit.
  - The cave represents the visible world we live in.
- **The Prisoners:** A large group of “prisoners” are sitting in rows (as in a modern movie theater). Chained into their seats, they cannot turn around to see the whole cave.
  - The “prisoners” represent the average person:
    - [Glaucou] You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.
    - [Socrates] Like ourselves . . .
  - They watch life unfold on the cave wall in front of them.
  - They accept what they see as the Truth, as Reality.

# The major elements of Plato's cave – 3. 37

- **The “roadway” and the puppets:** A short wall, often called the roadway, is situated behind the prisoners.
  - In the common presentation, puppets act out a play on the top of this short wall. A fire behind them casts their shadows onto to the wall in front of the prisoners.
  - The puppets and their masters pulling the strings are beyond the prisoner's view.
  - [In the original: “men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals” create the shadows / action that the prisoners see on the wall.]

# The major elements of Plato's cave – 4. 38

- **The fire:** Adding to the artifice, behind the wall is a campfire, the artificial light-source of the shadow show.
- **The exit:** There is an pathway leading up and out of the cave. Plato describes it as “a steep and rugged ascent.”
  - Glimmers of diffuse sunlight seep into the cave.
  - The exit represents “the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world.”
- **Summary:** Prisoners sit in a cave watching images cast on the wall in front of them. They accept these views as reality and they are unable to grasp their overall situation: that the cave and images are a ruse, a mere puppet show orchestrated for them by unseen puppeteers (educators and politicians) illuminated by an artificial light and intended to feed them a biased and artificial view of Reality.

- At some point, a prisoner is “set free” and is “forced” to see the situation inside the cave, causing him to “suffer sharp pains.”
- Initially, one does not want to give up the security of his or her familiar reality; the person has to be dragged past the fire (by someone already enlightened) and up, out of the cave. The path up to the surface is a difficult and painful struggle.
- When individual steps into the sunshine, his or her eyes slowly accommodate to the light and his or her fundamental view of the world – of reality, is transformed. One comes to see a deeper, genuine, authentic reality: a reality marked by reason.
- The enlightened individual then returns to the cave to try to free other prisoners and makes a painful readjustment back into the darkness. However, to the other prisoners, the person now seems mad – stumbling around and describing a strange new Reality. They reject the person, often to the point of killing him or her.

- The cave is also an allegory of the life and death of Socrates.
  - Socrates had been a respected soldier and one of Plato's "prisoners."
  - When he discovered "the truth," he tried to help others to discover it as well.
  - Socrates called himself "a midwife of the truth."
  - In a political "realignment," Socrates was accused of "provocative and corruptive" teachings and given the choice of exile or death – he chose death (by suicide).
  - The allegory also resonates with the story of Christ.



- Plato's cave is also an allegory of the human condition:
  - Each of us is a prisoner, perceiving "reality" through our own imperfect eyes.
  - Most of us accept this distorted illusion of reality without any question or reflection.
  - With great effort, some people can break free of ignorance and illusion.
  - Because the path is very difficult and dangerous, it is not for everyone:
    - Plato: not everyone wants to, or has it in them, to be free and to literally "see the light."
    - Dąbrowski: One's basic essential (genetic) character is critical to being able to break free.
  - It is difficult to get others to examine their secure sense of the world and conformity.

- The theory of Forms is a critical part of Plato's philosophy.
- The mathematician, Pythagoras influenced Plato:
  - The Pythagorean theorem (the square of the hypotenuse . . .) does not describe one triangle or another, it describes all possible right angle triangles that could hypothetically be drawn. Plato: the theorem describes an absolute truth, a knowledge, about an unseen, ideal triangle of no particular size, that exists "out there."
  - Triangles that people draw are mere images, impressions, opinions, representations, etc.. They are relative to each person: each rendering only approximates the ideal Form.
  - To discover the ideal Form (and to find Truth and Justice), we must approach / judge these objects with the mind – with reason, this is where real knowledge is found; it is not found through the senses or through the emotions.

- In the Natural world, there are hierarchies of Forms.
- Each Form fits within a hierarchy of other Forms and we need to appreciate each one in its larger context.
- Understanding one Form makes it easier to grasp others and, eventually, the whole hierarchy comes into view.
- Example hierarchy of ideal Forms:
  - The Cosmos as a whole. (highest)
  - Cities and societies
  - Individuals
  - Objects (lowest)

- An example - Michelangelo's sculpture of David:
  - There is a Form that represents the ideal physique of Man.
  - The Form exists somewhere "out there," apart from us.
  - Forms are available to anyone with a sufficiently developed sense of reasoning. Michelangelo discovered David's Form through a process of deep reasoning, not through his senses and perceptions.
  - Michelangelo relied on his mental image ("mind's eye") of this Form - he did not use an actual person as a model.
  - Reason can grasp the Forms as the eyes can see objects.
  - Michelangelo tries to represent, to reflect, this ideal Form through David.

- David succeeds to the extent that Michelangelo is in touch with this ideal Form (perfection), and can represent this in the stone.
- Because Michelangelo was such a gifted artist, David is a closer likeness to the ideal Form than we are familiar with in our day-to-day lives, thus it has great impact on us.
- If Michelangelo had used a human model (even a “perfect” one) and relied on his perceptions to sculpt him or her, he would have been misled, creating an imperfect representation.
- In summary, because David resonates so with viewers, we can see that Michelangelo has succeeded in closely capturing and representing the ideal Form of Man.

- Ideal Forms are invisible to the normal senses / perception.
- The Forms represent a deep, absolute beauty and truth that we are normally not aware of, or in touch with.
- If a soul is “awake” it sees both “ordinary reality” (the shadow show of the cave) as well as the “real” Forms behind it.
- The closer we each come to Forms, the closer we come to the overall, natural Form (order and harmony) of the cosmos.
- Philosophy is about the study of Forms.
- Leaders need to be in touch with Forms. Plato's ideal governor is therefore a philosopher king.
- The enlightened have a compelling responsibility to return to the cave to help guide and govern those still unaware and to try to enlighten others.

- The highest Form is The Good.
- Plato believes that Good has power (energy) just as the sun has the power to warm our skin when exposed to it.
  - The Good is the source of beauty, right, reason and truth.
  - The Good is the parent of light.
  - Good sheds “light” on the other lesser Forms we “see” and allows us to make sense of them.
  - Ideals are arrived at through ideas: The Good guides us in this quest.

- Dialogue and discovery:
  - Through dialogue, we ought to help each other to discover and sort out (“to order”) the Forms and ideals (and moral truth) of the cosmos.
  - Dialogue helps point people in the right direction; the rest is up to the person. It takes strong character to break free and not everyone can: not everyone is strong enough.
  - In some special cases, a person can use Eros (love) to break free.
  - “[Plato] is giving us the truth as he sees it; but it is a truth that each of us must rediscover for ourselves before we can properly be said to possess it” (Annas, 3, 1981).



- Forms:
  - Eternal, absolute, changeless, nonmaterial, essence, archetypes.
  - The essence or deep structure of an object or idea.
- Thinking/Knowledge:
  - Scientist / mathematician – uses abstraction and symbolization.
  - New, greater reliance on the intellectual process over the senses.

-- The “**Divided Line**” *a loose continuum between levels* --

- Beliefs:
  - More certainty than opinion but still not absolute because features are relative to the context of the person or situation.
  - For example, objects have different weights on different planets.
- Opinions:
  - Imagining an object, conjecture, guessing, illusions, etc.
  - Object seen with the eyes: a poor imitation of its ideal Form.
  - We wrongly accept the appearance of a thing as the thing itself.
  - Usually, we only interact with people’s shadows – their opinions.

## Objects “out there”:

- Highest Forms:  
(GOOD, beauty, justice)  
(highest reality: “best  
representations”)
- Mathematical Forms

## States of Mind (Soul):

- Intelligence or Knowledge  
Reason, Dialectic / Dialogue  
(Discover moral truth via debate)
- Thinking, understanding

Intelligible world. World of Forms. Realm of knowledge. Being.

**--- The “Divided Line” a loose continuum between levels ---**

Visible world. World of Appearances. Realm of opinion. Becoming.

- Particular visible things
- Images, shadows  
(lowest reality:  
most inaccurate  
copies of reality)

- Perception and belief
- Imagining and conjecture  
(lowest type of cognition)

- |                                 |  |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| - Form of the Good<br>(The Sun) |  | - Intelligence/Reason<br>(Dialectic) |
| - The world outside.            |  | - Intelligence / Understanding       |

Above - Outside the cave.

----- **“The sunlight”** *a sharp line of distinction* -----

Below - Inside the cave.

- |                        |  |                         |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| - Puppets, the fire.   |  | - Perception of objects |
| - Shadows on the wall. |  | - Images/”Opinions”     |

- Level 1). Rational soul (Reason):
  - Perfection. This soul is located in the head.
  - The only immortal soul (this soul & its associated knowledge is reincarnated).
  - Characteristic of the elite guardians, the governing class.
  - This soul arises from the discovery of the Forms.
- Level 2). Spirited Soul (Courage):
  - Located in the chest, individuals still driven by glory and fame, but can also feel shame and guilt.
    - Example: Soldiers.

- Level 3). Desiring Soul (Appetites):
  - Located in the stomach and below.
  - “Irrational” desires for food, sex (as in animals), power, money, fame, etc.
  - Human appetites are dominated by ego and self-interest.
  - Prominent in the productive masses (therefore, they are unfit to govern).

- Plato describes a winged chariot pulled by two horses.
- One horse is white; the spirited soul, it is upright and easily follows commands because it knows of virtue and honor.
- The other, dark horse, is desires. It is lumbering and hard to control, even with a whip; at any moment it may rear up.
- The charioteer is the rational soul. His task is to control and direct the horses.
  - This creates the traditional image in psychology of a homunculus. In this context, a “little rational man” inside our heads that controls and directs our behaviour.

- Human souls have a natural tendency (represented by wings on the chariot) to try to move up to the realm of the Forms, but they are often dragged down by their desires.
- Those who attain the “beatific vision” want to continue on their journey to the “upper world where they desire to dwell,” and keep ascending to maximize their personal growth. However, these people must now be compelled to return to the cave. It is “not proper” to let them be happy and be above the rest. Rather, they must be called upon to descend back to the cave to bring their new vision to the others there. We create the ideal state only when everyone is free of their illusions – then we can all start again to move up another level.
- Plato on rulers: “The state in which the rulers are reluctant to govern is always the best.”

- There are two types of people, each with very different cognitive realities:
  - Conforming, everyday people (“prisoners”) essentially fooled by their perceptions of reality. The soul is asleep.
  - Ascenders to the intelligible level who now see a different, higher realm of reality. The soul is awake.
- Those in the cave face practical, lower moral concerns (steal the bread?). Ascenders face higher, theoretical and contemplative concerns (What does life mean?).
- Not everyone is able to ascend, so many must have reason imposed: therefore, slavery is tolerated if reason prevails.
- High status is given to ascenders (governors & philosophers); however, responsibilities are also assigned.



- Plato: Identification with reason makes us human:
  - If reason is able to succeed, then rationality, justice, order and harmony prevail and we are human and happy.
  - Reason may succeed by our discovery of Forms (higher reality) or it may be imposed on us by others; either route is valid as long as reason ultimately prevails.
- If reason/rationality fail, the lower animal in us prevails, this must be avoided at all costs (even at the cost of Human slavery).

- Justice results when an individual identifies with his or her rational soul.
  - Reason and rationality (however achieved) leads to justice.
  - The benefits of achieving justice ought to be obvious to the individual; people go wrong primarily out of ignorance: people are asleep. Second cause: they know better but their appetites (desiring soul) are too strong for them to control.
- Anticipated Dąbrowski's contextual approach to diagnosis:
  - If we meet someone whose eyes (both the literal and mind's eye) are “bewildered” (are adjusting), we need to ask, “Is it because they have just come up into the bright light, or because they have just returned down into the dark of the cave?”

- Individual autonomy, by definition, is severely limited or irrelevant. The ideal person is dedicated to a social ideal.
- While a lack of self-knowledge is part of the problem, insight doesn't wake up a “prisoner.” One needs to discover the “external” Forms, an impersonal “outer” knowledge.
- The intellectual study of abstract ideas (mathematics) is the method of discovery – not through a process of self-growth.
- The struggles and conflicts linked to ascending center around our difficulty in letting go of conformity and security, our reliance on perception and in the challenge of understanding and attaining truth, not on inner psychic conflicts per se.
- There is no intrinsic, personal sense of reward or fulfillment in ascendance. “Reality-actualization” not self-actualization.

- The “normal” reality we commonly experience and perceive through our senses is an illusion – merely a poor copy of Reality.
  - Our “usual” perceptions create distortions and thus they cannot be trusted.
- “Reality” can only be appreciated through reasoning.
  - Through reason, some people are able to “wake up” to Reality and to “see” what is real and important in life.
  - Not everyone has the “character” to be able to “wake up.”
- Objective moral truths are a part of Reality that people must discover.

- People who ascend have a responsibility to try to share their “new” insight – this is part of their social ideal:
  - Through a careful dialectic conversational process, we must try to lead others to discover and appreciate life more accurately for themselves.
- Society ought to be governed by people who “get it”:
  - However, by saying it is legitimate for enlightened governors to impose reason on the people, Plato ironically ended up advocating a very totalitarian state.
- Wrongdoers are not evil, simply ignorant or they are overcome by strong desire.
- Reality, the natural order of the cosmos, is fundamentally good.

- Plato's Form of the individual: similar to the personality ideal?
- Parallels between Plato's ascender and Dąbrowski's Level V?
- Plato disdains emotion:
  - Plato typifies the traditional approaches that Dąbrowski objects to so strongly, they are lopsided toward cognition and ignore or disdain emotion.
- Plato also disdains imagination:
  - For Plato, imagination seems to reflect a meaningless copy – a distorted illusion of objects; therefore it is a low feature.
  - Dąbrowski: imagination of higher possibilities is a key element in development.
- Plato and Dąbrowski differ on the role of intrapsychic conflicts.
- Both see development as more than simply self-actualization.

- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- Kierkegaard.

# The Philosophical Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration Part 2: Existentialism, Kierkegaard and Dąbrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at

*Positive Disintegration: The Theory of the future.  
100th Dąbrowski anniversary program on the man,  
the theory, the application and the future.*

The Fifth International Conference on the Theory of Positive  
Disintegration, November 7-10, 2002, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

(revised August, 2005).



- Synopsis: The individual must realize the necessity of choice in actively making their life, this creates anxiety and conflict, features inherent in human experience that cannot be eliminated.
- Existentialism emphasizes existence over essence:
  - Sartre: “What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself.” (Existentialism, 1947)
- Existentialism is presented in many diverse sources and approaches (red are Dąbrowskian influences):
  - Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Husserl, Unamuno, Kafka, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus.

- Division in existentialism between theists and atheists:
  - Man is alone on earth, but with God in Heaven to act as our ultimate judge: (Kierkegaard and Jaspers, Dąbrowski).
  - Man is alone on earth – there is no God: (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus).
  - Both approaches emphasize individual choice: in the atheistic, we alone choose, there is no God to judge us.
- There is no timeless or absolute truth or reality and therefore life is largely meaningless. We create what truth or meaning (values) we have, as we participate in the experience of life: “life is what you make it.”
- Seeking refuge in social norms or religion is generally seen to stymie self development and autonomy.

- We each have a responsibility and freedom to choose our actions and, in turn, our actions define who we are.
- Each choice is eternal: a mistake lasts forever, but everyday we have new choices to make and therefore, new chances to redeem ourselves.
- Our choices are individual, however, because we are human, our individual choices also reflect on all mankind.
- Personality is an important theme of many existential authors:
  - Kierkegaard: (*The Sickness Unto Death*) Depicts man's personality in terms of: 1) The relation of the body to the soul. 2) The relation of the body and soul to God.
  - Nietzsche's *overman* concept reflects his understanding of man's personality and the possibilities of self-transcendence.

- The self is not predetermined, the choices we make (or don't make) determine and define our selves and our lives:
  - One must create an autonomous self from one's self-chosen actions.
  - Sartre: "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." (*L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, 1946).
  - Our power to choose creates a sense of freedom.
  - All choices contain both positive and negative aspects:
    - Negative:
      - Life is often mysterious and often seems meaningless and absurd.
      - Many things in life defy rational explanation.

- Realizing our freedom and these negative aspects creates strong anxiety and sometimes hopelessness.
- Positive:
  - The freedom to choose is a tremendous gift (if used).
  - One's personal beliefs (and /or) faith are important positive aspects in decision making.
- Authenticity is making decisions and accepting responsibility for their consequences (Sartre).
- Dąbrowski was heavily influenced by the works of Kierkegaard. The remainder of this presentation will therefore focus on Kierkegaard's life and works.

- Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855):
  - Born, Copenhagen, Denmark.
  - Only lived 42 years but wrote 25 books.
  - Studied philosophy and theology at Copenhagen University.
  - Latin and German were the languages of the day, Søren defended his thesis in Latin.
  - Wrote important critiques of Hegel and of the German romantics. Early figure in the development of modernism. Considered a Christian writer for his works on the modern relevance of biblical figures. Saw himself as a romantic poet. Works were obscure shortly after his death.
  - Kierkegaard's ideas were resurrected by M. Heidegger (who was criticized for being a Nazi) and by K. Jaspers.

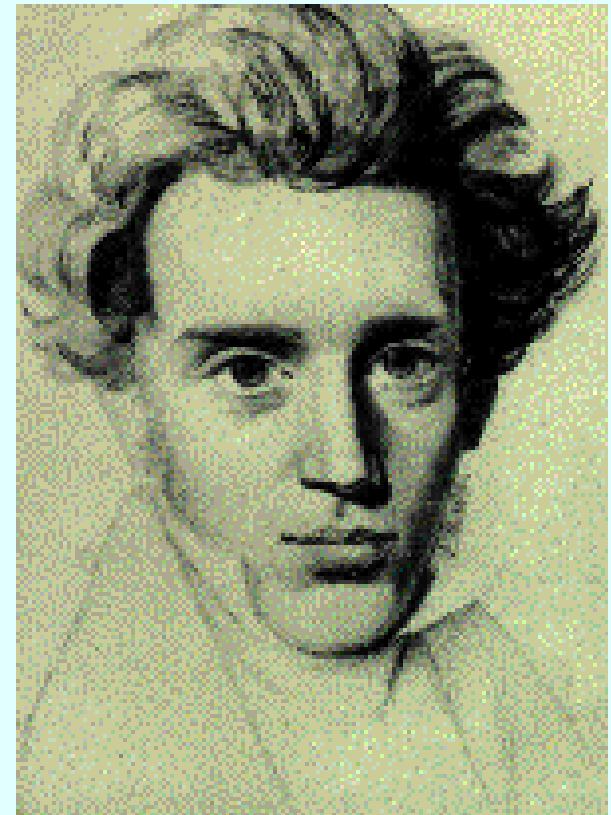
- Called the "father of existentialism," his ideas came to have a major impact on many writers.
- Kierkegaard's writings center around relations to his mother, his father, and his fiancée, Regina Olsen.
- Basic themes: criticized the dogma of Christianity, advanced a new view of the self, focused on the importance of making individual decisions.
- Kierkegaard was deeply affected by his family background:
  - Søren's father, Michael, rose from poverty to become a prominent citizen but felt lifelong guilt because, as a youth, he had cursed God.
  - Michael was married but his wife became ill and died. During this illness, the family had a nurse / maid and Michael had an affair with her.

- They later married, having seven children. Søren was the youngest. Michael felt his children were all cursed to die before 34 (the age of Christ at the crucifixion). This was prophetic as only Søren and another brother lived past 34.
- Michael saw Søren's potential and his upbringing of Søren was very harsh, especially in terms of religion. Søren later said "Humanly speaking, it was a crazy upbringing."
- Søren felt that his chances of having a normal life had been sacrificed by his father's religious preoccupations.
- After his father died, Søren was at loose ends. He was 21 when he met 14 year old Regina Olsen. He turned their story into his famous book, "Diary of a Seducer."



- Søren befriended Regina's family and alienated her from her boyfriend. When she turned 17, he proposed marriage.
- Without warning he broke off the engagement, later saying that "God had vetoed the marriage."
- Søren fled to Berlin to study Hegel. Frederic Engels was a classmate.
- Søren was obsessed over the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. He wrote "Fear and Trembling" in response:
  - In this book, he suggests that he had acted badly with Regina so that she would blame him and not blame God for their problems. He said that if he "had faith" he would have married her. He was love-sick the rest of his life.

- Søren befriended a newspaper publisher. Later, they had a falling out and the publisher used the paper to make a laughing stock of Søren.
- Søren felt that the Church had become complacent and began to harshly criticize it. Towards the end of his life, he often printed heretical pamphlets and handed them out to people on the street.
- Søren died, basically alienated and without friends, in 1855.



- Kierkegaard's central preoccupations:
  - How to become a good Christian (as he conceptualized this).
  - How to become an individual, (he requested his tombstone simply read "That Individual").
  - At the time, in Denmark, these tasks were "more difficult for the well-educated, since prevailing educational and cultural institutions tended to produce stereotyped members of 'the crowd' rather than to allow individuals to discover their own unique identities."
    - From: (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>).

- Kierkegaard felt that society and the church played a strong role in leading people away from individual awareness and existence.
- Kierkegaard rejected scientific logic and knowledge as the means of human redemption (Hegel's position).
- He emphasized the gap between the individual and God to show us that human beings are totally dependant on God's grace for their salvation.

- Kierkegaard used Socratic irony, complicated parables and paradoxes to tell stories:
  - His dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony with constant reference to Socrates*, showed how Socrates used irony to facilitate the development of subjectivity in his students.
  - Following Socrates, Kierkegaard said people know too much and this is an obstacle to their redemption. He wanted to tear apart this “phony” knowledge and show people they actually know little. (Socrates: “I am wiser, as although I know nothing, I know that I do not know.”)
  - When one realizes that one doesn't know, this creates freedom, however, with this freedom comes the responsibility (and anxiety) of decision making.

- This method rejects the knowledge and answers provided by external “authorities” (like Society or the Church), instead encouraging the individual to seek his or her own answers.
- He placed responsibility on the reader and did not see himself as an authority. Calling his approach “indirect discourse” he wrote in a way designed to force the reader to answer core existential, ethical and religious questions.
- Palmer (1996) says Kierkegaard’s writing has an “Escher-like quality” to it: he talks a lot about concepts but ultimately, rejects concepts and brings us back to Human experience:
  - Example: the title The Concept of Dread.
    - Kierkegaard paradoxically refers to dread as a concept, yet, it is perhaps the ultimate experience and we can only know it through our own experience of it.

- Humans define themselves and try to understand the world by converting their experiences into concepts, however, ultimately, concepts are useless and we must return to our own human experiences to understand life.



- Kierkegaard thought about existence and what it means:
  - He endorsed Plato's logic and Plato's theory of Forms: However, Kierkegaard saw that existence is always concrete, never abstract and therefore existence cannot be thought of as an absolute Platonic Form:
    - Existence cannot be conceptualized and analyzed the way a mathematical concept can be.
  - Existence is thus a leftover "residue" that is simply "there:"
    - Kierkegaard: Existence is a "surd" (speechless: words can not explain it, it is lacking in sense, irrational).
    - Life is absurd: idea promoted by Kafka, Camus & Sartre.
- Basic Paradox: Existence is at our very core as a person; existence is just a meaningless and absurd "leftover" in life.



- Conclusions:
  - Existence cannot be thought about or studied as a concept or as an abstraction.
  - Existence fundamentally does not make logical sense:
    - Thus, Plato's ultra-logical approach won't work here.
  - Existence must be known by being lived (experienced).
  - Doing and thinking strike a paradoxical balance in each person's existence:
    - Existing is primarily a form of doing (living) not a form of thinking.
    - However, thinking also plays a crucial role in decision making and in living.

- There is a basic paradox between acting and thinking:
  - We can not know life by merely thinking but we cannot live (act) without thinking:
    - Our choice of action is based on the initial and ongoing choices we make about our basic subjective beliefs.
    - There is a reciprocity: we think, believe, choose, and act. Our actions subsequently influence our future beliefs, choices & acts.
- Kierkegaard felt that the average person was prevented from “real action” by their reliance on social roles and the Church for their “crowd beliefs:”
  - “a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent [showing no remorse] and irresponsible.” (The Point of View).

- In choosing, one constructs oneself and one's future world, but there is great uncertainty associated with these choices:
  - “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards” (Diaries, IV, A 164).
- “Sensitive souls” will never be sure that their chosen values are the right ones, therefore they will always be full of “anguish and dread” over the many choices they have had to make in life.
- Choosing is a two-edged sword: on one side is the dread and anxiety associated with choosing, on the other side is the exhilaration of the freedom in being able to “choose oneself.”

- There is objective truth that rests on abstractions and external criteria. This can be thought about, tested and analyzed (Plato's Forms: science, mathematics, etc.). The focus is on what the truth is: these are common truths (the speed of light is 299,792.458 km/sec.). These sorts of objective truths can often be determined (measured) with certainty and accuracy, but they don't mean very much to one's existence.
- Subjective truth concerns individual values and existence. It cannot be abstracted and is not focused on what is true, rather, on how we come to know truth and how we act on it in our lives. These are individual truths: my truth is mine alone, each person has their own truth of life.
- Ultimately, all truth (and existence) is subjectivity.

- Subjective truth cannot be communicated to other people directly, it is made up of deep individual insights and choices about one's life.
- Subjective truth is the most important type because if one changes one's beliefs, one becomes a different person and will make different choices and do different things. The individual is their subjective truth, their values.
- We are finite beings and our critical truths are subjective, however, God is infinite, therefore we can never really know God using subjective approaches.

- When an individual realizes the real nature of existence, he or she comes to see their life in relation to their death.
- The recognition of our subjective death helps us to order our priorities and to discover life. Kierkegaard says, it is a tragedy to discover death too late: the man who woke up one day and discovered he was dead. A person must discover death in time to allow him or her to truly live life.
- Paradox: Subjective truth is a means to discover death and also to activate life.
- Because subjective thought brings up the issue of nothingness, the “surdity” of existence, it is negative thought.
- Our doubts, insecurities and depressions accentuate this negativity.

- Consciousness reflects the negative element of subjectivity.
- Consciousness “confronts the actual with what is possible,” and thus, consciousness is uncertainty, It contains a real sense of terror. Once we become conscious of a door, we wonder what is behind it, creating anxieties and doubts.
- Freud called this “the psychopathology of everyday life.” Hidden within consciousness is doubt, a type of madness saved only by our beliefs (that it really is safe behind the door).
- Belief, and our active choosing, are positive aspects that cancel out the negative aspects.
- Belief sustains the world but must rest on individual, subjective insights and truths.

- These realizations yield insights about the nature of belief:
  - Belief is the interface between consciousness and the world.
  - Belief is salvation from the meaninglessness of existence.
  - However, if overextended, belief can also become a type of madness.
- Initially, belief is naïve: the child believes in Santa Claus.
- Eventually, naïve belief is confronted and we must choose:
  - 1). To flee into self-deception and continue in naiveté.
  - 2). To realize that the normal states of consciousness are complex and miraculous and similar to religious states. These normal, everyday states are made up of both beliefs and doubts, but not certainties: the certainty and security of Santa Claus (the “group world view”) evaporates.



- To recognize everyday states with their doubts and to choose to confront these insecurities with our internal beliefs and faith is to make the authentic choice.
- These authentic choices solidify our beliefs and eventually lead to the discovery of God.
- Ultimately, a person demonstrates belief by repeatedly renewing the “passionate subjective relationship to an object which can never be known, but only believed in. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd.” (from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>).

- Being able to choose creates individual freedom.
- Kierkegaard: “Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.”
- Dread is the resulting fear of this freedom.
- Standing on the edge of the cliff, we fear *falling* over but we also dread the realization that we could *jump* over. We dread what we *may* do. We also dread that all that is holding us back from jumping is our own individual choice not to do so.
- “Dread is the desire for what one fears and the fear of what one desires” (Palmer, 1996, p. 61).
- When one thinks about the future, one realizes that one has to choose to create a life and that one’s life will be determined by the choices made.

- Sartre: “I await my future. Anguish is the fear of not finding myself there.” (quoted in Palmer, 1996, p. 62).
- The realization that one may choose creates a tremendous sense of responsibility and to accept this responsibility is to be authentic.
- For Kierkegaard, to reject making the choice is to be inauthentic, what Sartre calls acting in bad faith – to choose not to choose:
  - However, as Kierkegaard first noted, not choosing is also a choice: hence Sartre’s famous saying: “We are condemned to be free.”

- “The individual is subject to an enormous burden of responsibility, for upon their existential choices hangs their eternal salvation or damnation. Anxiety or dread (*Angest*) is the presentiment of this terrible responsibility when the individual stands at the threshold of momentous existential choice. . . .
  - It is essential that faith be constantly renewed by means of repeated avowals of faith. . . . .
  - This repetition of faith is the way the self relates itself to itself and to the power which constitutes it, that is, the repetition of faith *is* the self.”
  - From: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>

- True selfhood is choosing (willing) the self that one truly is and despair is not being able to achieve this goal:
  - Kierkegaard called it “The Sickness unto Death.”
- “The self is a series of possibilities; every decision made redefines the individual. . . . The knowledge that "I" define the "self" results in "the dizziness of freedom" and "fear and trembling." It is a great responsibility to create a person, yet that is exactly what each human does -- creates a self. This self is independent from all other knowledge and "truths" defined by other individuals.”

(From: <http://www.tameri.com/csw/exist/kierk.html>)

- Kierkegaard outlined two important relationships:
  - Between one's physical self (body) and one's soul.
  - Between self & others and ultimately between self and God.
- Kierkegaard went on to describe two types of selfhood:
  - An initial self defined by a relationship to finite reality, to humanity or to other specific persons.
  - A self defined by a relationship to God.
- “Most people are subjective toward themselves and objective toward all others, frightfully objective sometimes – but the task is precisely to be objective toward oneself and subjective toward all others” (Works of love).
- Normality hides the true realization of being. Kierkegaard says that after being pushed to the edge of the cliff, one comes to see “ordinary life” from a new and clearer perspective.

- Kierkegaard describes a hierarchy of three stages or spheres of selfhood that an individual may choose, each characterized by its own unique view of the world.
- 1). The aesthetical sphere (the lowest type of selfhood):
  - Aesthetic: sensuality and hedonism, prototype: Don Juan.
  - The most basic type: if a person does not “choose” one of the other 2 higher types, he or she ends up here by default.
  - Kierkegaard said this is actually a form of alienation from the self:
    - The “couch potato.”
    - The business man: defines the good life as profit and good deals.
    - Kierkegaard called these people “Aristocrats.”

- Aestheticism is a form of hedonism, the self is governed by external contingencies and sensuousness: Freud's Pleasure Principle.
- These people are not fully human as they are governed by the same forces that govern animals. (Kierkegaard wonders why it takes nine months for them to gestate, there is so little substance to them).
- Society makes people lose individual freedoms and choice.
- Society sets externally defined parameters and the person has to play their role as it is set down.
- The self is fractured into a series of socially defined roles layered one on top of each another.
- We come to see that Aestheticism is simply another perverse form of socially defined role to be played out.



- The Aesthetic has no true self and can only develop one by consciously choosing.
- This choice entails Kierkegaard's famous "Either / or:"
  - The point where a person wills to be his or her true self and realizes that this choice will be the end of his or her old self.
  - For the first time, the individual judges himself, rejects his or her old, hedonistic self and begins to build a new self.
  - The person must choose to utilize their will to hold themselves up to an ethical code (or choose not to do so).
  - Making this choice marks the transition into Kierkegaard's second sphere, the ethical sphere.

- 2). Ethical Sphere: to discover individual moral responsibilities:
  - Once the ethical choice has been made, the individual has to make good on two imperatives:
    - A commitment to self perfection based upon his or her ideals.
    - A commitment to other human beings.
  - One takes a “leap” to the new ethical self, rejecting the old aesthetic self and the now incompatible old roles that went with it (roles now incompatible with the new self).
  - Personality crystallizes around this new self-judgment and choice.

- The initial choice one makes is decisive for personality because, now, all future choices will become subsequent occasions of self-judgment:
  - Future choices will be moral: a morality within the context of the given system of thought initially selected:
    - e. g., Christian or Communist.
    - Kierkegaard was not concerned with *what* moral code was chosen, only that an individual choice was made:
      - It is not up to people to judge each other's moral choices, this is God's ultimate role.
  - All future decisions will be based on the personality the individual has selected and not on situational, social roles.

- 3). The religious sphere: suffering, faith and self-understanding:
  - Kierkegaard was preoccupied with the Biblical story of Abraham:
    - Abraham was promised a son by God. Finally, when Abraham was 99, and his wife was 90, a son, Isaac was born. Later, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham complied and as he was about to thrust the knife, God stopped him and restored his happy life.
  - Kierkegaard was horrified by Abraham's absolute resolve to obey God and it inspired in Kierkegaard "fear and trembling," also the title of one of his major books.
  - Kierkegaard had to discover where Abraham found the strength to raise the knife, for Kierkegaard, this seemed to be the key to understanding the whole human condition.

- Abraham's act is a complex paradox: an act of resignation in that he chooses to obey God and give up Isaac and at the same time, an act of faith in that he believes in God's wisdom and that the ending will turn out to be happy (and that he will someday, somehow get Isaac back):
  - Kierkegaard felt that Abraham must have been insane:
    - He had already resigned (to give Isaac up), and at the same time, he believed he would still keep Isaac. No one can understand Abraham's state of mind or motives, to others, he must have seemed insane.

- Observers will see Abraham as insane and will not understand his inner dynamics or motivations.
- However, God will surely understand his state of mind:
  - This is characteristic of individual faith, one cannot make one's faith intelligible to anyone else.
  - Only God can make sense of an individual's faith and judge if it is Saintly or demonical in character.
  - All of the choices one makes (and hence the personality one constructs during one's life) are factored into this final, ultimate judgment by God.
  - Kierkegaard said the Christian ideal (not the lax Church doctrine) is exacting because the totality of a person's existence and the choices he or she has made in life are the basis upon which they will be judged by God.

- Kierkegaard initially found Abraham incomprehensible but eventually, he comes to respect and advocate for Abraham's “divine madness” (using Plato’s term).
- Kierkegaard concludes that by virtue of his “insanity,” Abraham has become the Father of Faith: what Kierkegaard called a “Knight of Faith.”
- Many “Knights of Faith” walk among us undetected:
  - The outward behavior of the “Knight of Faith” is the same as everyone else's.
  - They have lost their connection with external, finite worldly things but by their infinite resignation, however, they have been restored to live life in a new way by their faith.

- Kierkegaard sees that Abraham also made a second leap:
  - Recall that the first life-changing leap was from the (lower) aesthetic self to the (higher) ethical self.
  - The second leap involves stepping away from humankind itself; stepping away from finite reality into an unknown and infinite abyss.
  - Abraham made this leap of faith. He risked losing his son but in being able to overcome his dread and by having faith in God, he came to regain everything in a new way.
- God cannot be known intellectually, we must make a leap of faith into an unknown abyss to know him: making this ultimate leap again changes how we see life, changes our basic beliefs and ultimately, it changes who we are.



- There is an implied hierarchy of duties in life:
  - One's duty to choose to be an individual is higher than to one's social duties.
  - One's duty to obey God's commands is higher than to individual duties:
    - Kierkegaard said he had to choose his duty to God over his fiancé, Regina.
    - He gave up Regina as Abraham gave up Isaac, but with the faith that she would somehow be restored to him as Isaac was to Abraham.
- For Kierkegaard, ethics are not relativistic, values are known to the individual through the self-revelation of God (this is the theistic, metaphysical approach to existentialism and values).

- We are the authors of our lives and we each have the responsibility and duty to consciously write our scripts through the choices we make. With this freedom to choose comes anxiety and even dread. We must come to see life in the face of the anxiety of the abyss and still choose to will our ideal self. To make this choice is to be authentic. The values we choose determine our personalities and in turn determine our acts. Ultimately, our choices and acts are the sum of our lives to be judged by God.

- Dąbrowski was clear that Plato and his approach to essence was a fundamental foundation of the TPD:
  - But, Plato's essence is more than simply genetics, it is a complex mixture of inborn genetics and emergent character.
- For Dąbrowski, essence sets parameters on individual growth.
- Dąbrowski then “added” Kierkegaard and existentialism:
  - The individual must do more than simply allow their character (essence) to unfold – he or she must actively participate in living by seeing (and later seeking) vertical choices in life and by choosing higher choices over lower ones. In this way, a person creates an emergent personality, based upon a unique & autonomous hierarchy of values & a personality ideal. This is the core of human authenticity.

- Dąbrowski described his theory as presenting a “phenomenological hermeneutic” approach.
- Phenomenology is the idea that each person has a unique perception of, and experience of, life and of the world. We need to be familiar with, and articulate about our own experience.
- Hermeneutics represents the idea that people must discuss and dialogue with each other (the dialectic of Socrates) to arrive at a shared interpretation of the subject being discussed.
- In phenomenological hermeneutics, we share our individual experiences of life with others in dialogues. Eventually we can achieve an overall, shared understanding of Reality.

- Secondary Integration
  - Inner psychic milieu / Personality ideal
    - Third Factor
- Kierkegaard / Existentialism / Authentic, volitional choices
  - Vertical conflicts / Multilevelness
  - Psychoneuroses / Positive disintegration
  - Developmental potential (including OE)
    - Primary Integration
      - First and Second Factors
- Plato - Essence lays the foundation of one's personality.

- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- Nietzsche.

# The Philosophical Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration Part 3: Friedrich Nietzsche and Dąbrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at the  
Seventh International Congress of the  
Institute for Positive Disintegration in Human Development  
August 3-5, 2006, Calgary, Alberta.

Positive Maladjustment:  
Theoretical, Educational and Therapeutic Perspectives.

- This presentation examines the influence of Nietzsche on Dąbrowski and follows up on a presentation by Dr. J. G. McGraw on Nietzsche and Dąbrowski from the 2002 Congress, held in Fort Lauderdale.



- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900):
  - Born in 1844 in Röcken, Saxony, in what was then Prussia.
  - An excellent student, he began studying classical philology at the University of Bonn.
  - At 24, made professor of philology at the University of Basel.
  - Served as a medical orderly during the Franco-Prussian War. He saw and experienced the traumatic effects of battle.
  - In 1879, he resigned his teaching position due to several grim health issues that plagued him the rest of his life.
  - Began a prolific period of writing but often struggled, printing copies of his books himself and giving them to friends.
  - He and his sister, Elizabeth, had frequent conflicts and reconciliations.

- Friends with and influenced by Paul Rée, also a German philosopher:
  - Rée combined a pessimistic view of human nature with a theory of morality based on natural selection (Darwin).
- Nietzsche also befriends the intellectual and free spirited, Lou Andreas-Salomé.
- Lou lived with both men in an asexual (?) friendship until Nietzsche's unrequited love (and his sister) forced a break.
  - Lou marries Andreas (their unconsummated marriage lasting 43 years): 14 years later Rée commits suicide, seemingly over her.
  - Lou was later a lover of & influence on German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. She became a psychoanalyst, joined Freud's inner circle, and was an important influence on Freud, including introducing Freud to Nietzsche's ideas.



- “Freud several times said of Nietzsche that he had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was likely to live” Ernest Jones, *The life and work of Sigmund Freud*, II, 1955, p. 344.

- Nietzsche struggled with bouts of illness (including severe migraines and stomach bleeding), depression, suicidal thoughts and relative isolation.
- In 1889 he had a sudden mental breakdown and became psychotic (most think it was due to syphilis of the brain).
- The uncommunicative Nietzsche was cared for by his mother, then by sister Elisabeth, until his death in 1900.
  - Elisabeth was noted for marrying Bernhard Förster, an anti-Semitic agitator. In 1886 they founded Nueva Germania in the Paraguay jungle, later a hideout for escaped Nazis (including Josef Mengele).
- After his death, Elisabeth took over the management of his papers. It is accepted that Elisabeth injected her own ideas and altered or distorted at least some of Nietzsche's works.
- (Nietzsche's works were later used by the Nazis).

- Socrates created a false representation of what is real, making morality a set of external ideas (“objects of dialectic”) and with it, “real” Man degenerated into the “the good Man,” “the wise Man,” etc.
- Plato further made these ideas mere abstract inventions – metaphysical ideals (Plato’s Forms) held out for us to try to emulate.
- Nietzsche: All schemes of morality (like Christianity) are just dogmas developed by some given group who held power at some given time – these “herd moralities” of good and evil deny us our individuality of finding our own values and selves.

- Nietzsche laments that the world has degenerated to the lowest common denominator of the herd:
  - “The instinct of the herd considers the middle and the mean as the highest and most valuable: the place where the majority finds itself” (WP159)\*.
  - “Let us stick to the facts: the people have won —or ‘the slaves,’ or ‘the mob,’ or ‘the herd,’ or whatever you like to call them — if this has happened through the Jews, very well! in that case no people had a more world-historic mission. ‘The masters’ have been disposed of; the morality of the common man has won” (GM35-36).

\*page numbers given

- Ultimately, one finds out that the “truth” and various otherworlds (like Heaven) are literal fabrications, built by Man and reflecting his psychological needs, designed to promote the smooth succession of the status quo and to provide individuals with security.
- Knowledge and truth are provisional and change over time and with the ruling class:
  - Example: today’s scientific beliefs may be shown to be false tomorrow.
  - “there are many kinds of ‘truths,’ and consequently there is no truth” (WP291).
  - “Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies” (Human, all too human179).

- Nietzsche saw no ultimate or deeper meaning or purpose to the world or to human existence – Nietzsche (and Sartre) saw God as a human invention designed to comfort us and to repel our loneliness:
  - “There is not enough love and goodness in the world for us to be permitted to give any of it away to imaginary beings” (Human all too human 69).
- Social morality suspends us from the need to review our own individual value assumptions or to develop autonomous morality. Religion suspends us from our need to develop our individual selves. Our comforts and security and company are provided by this man-made system of ideas, thus removing the stimuli needed for real, individual development.



- Nietzsche famously proclaimed “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.” This, “the greatest event of our time,” is an attempt to refocus people’s attention on their inherent, individual freedoms and responsibilities and on the here-and-now world, and away from all escapist, pain-relieving, heavenly otherworlds (GS167).
- A Godless world means that we are alone on earth and cannot resort to a deity to guide us or to absolve our sins (responsibilities). We are now free to – and must – create our own, new, moral ideals and we must take absolute responsibility for our own actions – this can only be done by rejecting external, metaphysical or religious ideals.

- Nietzsche uses the terms Apollonian and Dionysus to refer to two principles in Greek culture (see BT).
- Apollonian is the basis for all analytic distinctions and everything that is part of the unique individual is Apollonian as is all structure and form.
- Dionysus is directly opposed to the Apollonian, it is drunkenness and madness and these forces break down the individual's character. Enthusiasm and ecstasy are examples as is music as it appeals to one's instinctive emotions and not to the rational mind.
- Nietzsche believed that a tension between the two forces was necessary to create true tragedy and his life seems to have displayed both factors as well.

- Nietzsche says that as a species, man is not progressing. Higher types appear but do not last.
- Nietzsche delineated three possible outcomes:
  - The “herd” or “slave” masses made up of “the last man,” content, comfort seeking conformers with no motive to develop: if we don’t aspire to be more, this is where we end up. (Wilber 2006: “70% of the world’s population are [ethnocentric] Nazis.”)
  - Many “higher men:” a type of human who needs to “be more” and who “writes his or her own story.”
  - Nietzsche also describes the ideal human – a few “Superhumans,” a role model to strive for, but that may be too unrealistic for most people to achieve.

- Nietzsche calls the highest mode of being the *übermenschlich*:
  - Common translations: “the Superman” or “overman” or “hyperman”
    - über: from the Latin for super
    - ὑπέρ: Greek for hyper
    - Menschlich: German for Human being.

- Nietzsche outlines a hierarchy of spiritual development in what he calls three “metamorphoses of the spirit” entailing a progression from:
  - The camel (“the average man”) who slavishly bears the load & obeys the “thou shalt” with little protest,
  - to the lion (a “higher man”) who says “no” and violently kills the status quo of “thou shalt,”
  - culminating in the child (Superman), who says an emphatic and “sacred Yes” to life and creates a new reality and a new self – the child applies his or her will in developing and achieving unique values and developing autonomy.

(see TSZ54).

- The camel carries the “weight of the spirit,” kneeling to accept its load, just as we kneel to carry the weight of what we believe are our duties – the “herd morality.” We feel guilt if we don’t maintain the burden.
- In doing our duties, some may come to have doubts. One heavy blow is the discovery that wisdom and knowledge are only apparent. We slowly discover there is no fundamental bedrock supporting “truth” and we realize that we live in a world devoid of eternal standards.
- As the camel finds the solitude of the desert, the truth seeker also must find and deal with solitude.

- In transforming, the camel becomes a lion, as “it wants to capture freedom & be lord in its own desert” (TSZ54).
  - Camel: an unquestioning slave – a beast of burden.
  - But the might of the lion – a beast of prey, willing to say NO and to kill, is required to capture freedom.
- “To seize the right to new values” the lion must steal freedom from the love of commandments by killing a dragon – the “thou shalt” – the idea that others tell us what we must believe and accept as truth and what we must do (and our corresponding love of compliance to these rules). Capturing freedom creates an opportunity – a “freedom for new creation.”
- The lion has the will to create new realities.

- Having destroyed the thou shalt dragon, the lion realizes he or she is not able to create new values: the lion now must become a child.
- A child's perspective is needed to create new values. The child is innocence, with no guilt, and with no sense of the "thou shalt" of the herd – he or she has not yet been acculturated (e.g. *The Little Prince*).
- The child ("superman") represents a new beginning of individuality – "the spirit now wills its own will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins its own world" (TSZ55).



- The will to power is an ever-dominant feature of life and the basic drive of humanity. “The will to power is the primitive form of affect and all other affects are only developments of it” (WP366).
- Rejecting pleasure as a core motivator, Nietzsche suggests that “every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become *more* –” (WP367).
- Nietzsche casts the will to power as a proactive force – the will to *act* in life (not to merely react *to* life).
- The will to power is not power over others, but the feelings of “creative energy and control” over oneself that are necessary to achieve self-creation, self-direction and to express individual creativity.

- Three steps to become a Superman:
  - Use one's *will to power* to reject and rebel against old ideals and moral codes;
  - Use one's *will to power* to overcome nihilism and to re-evaluate old ideals or to create new ones;
  - Through a continual process of *self-overcoming*.
- One is largely constituted by one's genealogy – Superhumans take control of their genealogies and write their own stories (members of the herd have their life stories written for them).

- Nietzsche appropriates the name of Persian religious leader Zarathustra as one of his main characters.
- In Nietzsche's version, Zarathustra has spent from age 30 to 40, alone on a mountaintop quest and now decides to return to describe spiritual and individual development in a new, Godless, reality.
- On his descent, someone comments Zarathustra has changed, he has become a child – an awakened one.
- Zarathustra goes to the first village he sees where a crowd has gathered to see the circus act of a tight-rope walker and they accept him as part of the circus.

Zarathustra speaks to the crowd:

- “*I teach you the Superman.* Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?”
- “All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?”

“What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment.”

- “You have made your way from the worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape. . .” (TSZ41-42).
- “Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous going across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying still” (TSZ43).
- “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in man is that he is a *going-across* and a *down-going*. I love those who do not know how to live except their lives be a down-going, for they are those who are going across” (TSZ44).

- We must cross the abyss to create ourselves, our ideals and to become Superhuman.
- There are 3 possible outcomes:
  - to not try and simply stay in the herd,
  - to try to cross but fail (and fall into the abyss),
  - or to try to cross and succeed.

- The crowd reject Zarathustra's story and he says to us: "You Higher Men, learn this from me: In the market-place no one believes in Higher Men. And if you want to speak there, very well, do so! But the mob blink and say: 'We are all equal'" (TSZ297).
  
- Zarathustra laments his reception: "I want to teach men the meaning of their existence: which is the Superman, the lightning from the dark cloud man. But I am still distant from them, and my meaning does not speak to their minds. To men, I am still a cross between a fool and a corpse" (TSZ49).

- The herd uncritically take their ideals of “good & evil” from the cultural & religious conventions of the day:
  - Nietzsche calls on us to resist the impulse to submit to “slave morality” and to “undertake a critique of the moral evaluations themselves” (WP215).
- Zarathustra says the Superman must overcome his or her acculturated self and apply the will to power to a momentous new creativity – to building a truly autonomous self.
- Supermen move beyond “good and evil” through a deep reflection on their own basic instincts, emotions, character traits, and senses: they go on to develop their own individual values for living [Personality Ideal].



- “Fundamental thought: the new values must first be created – we shall not be *spared* this task!” (WP512).
- The new values, and the process of value creation are not prescriptive: “This – is now *my* way, – where is yours?’ Thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For *the* way – does not exist!” (TSZ213).
- Summary: The Superman creates a unique new “master morality” reflecting the strength and independence of a self freed from all “old” acculturated, herd values. Now, an individual can review current conventions, reject values, adopt old values that he or she deems as valid, or create new values reflecting his or her unique self and ideals.

- “Eternal recurrence” is the idea that one might be forced to relive every moment of one’s life over & over, with no omissions, however small, happy or painful.  
(Think of the movie *Groundhog Day* but without Bill Murray)
  - This idea encourages us to see that our current life is all there is – we must wake up to the “the real world” we actually live in, and live in the present – there is no escape to other (future) lives or to “higher” worlds.
- Nietzsche says only a Superman can face eternal recurrence and embrace this life in its entirety and face the idea that this is all there is, and all there will be, for eternity.

- The Superhuman also gains a new perspective that brings about his or her own redemption – the endlessly recurring pains & mistakes of life do not provoke endless suffering, they are now seen and accepted as necessary steps in one's development, each a step on the path leading to the present.
  - Every second of life is now seen as a valued moment, worthy of being repeated over and over, in and of itself, and is not merely a step toward some promise of a better world to come in the future (for example, Heaven).

- The Superman uses his or her will to power to develop a new perspective, a new reality and a new self.
- The Superman becomes his or her own judge: “Can you furnish yourself your own good and evil and hang up your own will above yourself as a law? Can you be judge of yourself and avenger of your law?” (TSZ89).
- This process represents the rebirth of Man and the creation of new, human, life-affirming values in *this* real and finite (temporal) world. These new beliefs lie in our intrinsic will to be more, the ability to transcend and to constantly overcome our old self, and to create new life and works.

- Personality incorporates 3 prototypes with 3 instincts:
  - the beauty creator (artist), [instinct of feeling]
  - the truth seeker (philosopher) [instinct of reason]
  - and the “goodness liver” (the Saint) [instinct of will – goodness and love]
- The union of these 3 represents the ultimate model of human beings – the exemplar of the Superman.
- The “wisest” person is one who has had a wide vertical [Multilevel] perspective and has experience from the deepest caverns to the mountaintops.
- Finally, Nietzsche says that development never reaches an endpoint, integration is never complete.

- For the rest of his life Zarathustra continues to try to advocate for the Superman.
- Nietzsche is anti-systemic and does not present his ideas in a coherent, systematic way, thus there are many ambiguities and some contradictions in his writing. As well, Zarathustra has grave doubts and his ideas change as he has experiences with people and as he ages.
- One major issue is that Zarathustra comes to see life as a endless cycle that repeats itself, thus even if a higher level of man is achieved, it will only be a phase in the cycle and, eventually, the lower stages will be have to reappear and be repeated again.

- For Nietzsche, personality must be self-created, largely by overcoming, mastering and transforming one's inner "chaos" into order:
  - "I tell you: one must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: you still have chaos in you" (TSZ46).
- One must go through seven steps ("devils") on the way to personality development (see TSZ90).
- Overcoming also involves creating a new unity (McGraw: "synergy") of cognition, emotion & volition.
- The Superman becomes free (a "free spirit") and now sees the real world and his or her place in it clearly (& without the distortion of social and religious influence).

- The Superman develops a clear view of his or her “calling” [Personality Ideal] & must now obey this inner voice with the will to power, applying it to self-mastery.
- Often misinterpreted or misapplied, the will to power is applied in controlling and transforming one’s self:
  - Step 1. social morality [2nd Factor] is used to gain power over nature & the “wild animal [1st Factor].”  
Step 2: “one can employ this power in the further free development of oneself: will to power as self-elevation and strengthening” [3rd Factor] (WP218).
- One overcomes oneself to become oneself: “*What does your conscience say?* – “You shall become the person you are” (GS219).



- In Nietzsche's view, few achieve what he calls personality (the Superman), most people are not personalities at all, or are just a confused, undisciplined and non-integrated jumble. Nietzsche said only a few are able or willing to "discover and to follow their fate." (McGraw)

- The Superman represents a new, stronger & ultimate morality that easily resists external social controls.
- Creates a small, “higher” ruling class, that humanity should foster: “the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars” (UM111).
- Nietzsche: “My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not an individualistic morality” The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd – but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the ‘beasts of prey,’ etc” (WP162).
- “The new philosopher can arise only in conjunction with a ruling caste, as its highest spiritualization” (WP512).

- Nietzsche relates an individual's potential to develop to the richness and intricacy of his or her emotion, cognition and volition (the will to power).
- The more potential a person has, the more internally complex he or she is: "The higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity . . . so its disintegration is also incomparably more likely" (WP363).
- Lower forms of life and people representing the herd type are simpler and thus, the lowest types are "virtually indestructible," showing few noticeable effects of life (and none of the suffering of the Superman) (see WP363).

- Nietzsche describes a general developmental disintegration – suffering leads to a vertical separation, a rising up, of the “hero” from the herd, leads to “nobility” and ultimately, to individual personality – to attaining one’s ideal self.
- This separation finds one alone, away from the security of the masses and without God for company.
  - “The higher philosophical man, who has solitude not because he wishes to be alone but because he is something that finds no equals: what dangers and new sufferings have been reserved for him” (WP514).

- The Superman is alone and few can tolerate this ultimate sense of solitariness, most must have the security and company of the herd (and of God).
- “I love him, who lives for knowledge and who wants knowledge that one day the Superman may live. And thus he wills his own downfall” (TSZ44).
  - “You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame: how could you become new, if you had not first become ashes!” (TSZ90).
- “I love him whose soul is deep even in its ability to be wounded, and whom even a little thing can destroy: thus he is glad to go over the bridge” (TSZ45).

- Supermen see that in their suffering and destruction is new life: the seed must die for the plant to grow.
- The capacity to experience and overcome suffering and solitariness are the key traits of the Superman.
- “Suffering and dissatisfaction of our basic drives are a positive feature as these feelings create an ‘agitation of the feeling of life,’ and act as a ‘great stimulus to life’” (WP370).
- “The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering, do you not know that only *this* suffering has created all enhancements of man so far?” (BGE154).
- “[T]he path to one’s own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one’s own hell” (GS269).

- “That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength, its shudders face to face with great ruin, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, persevering, interpreting, and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness — was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?” (BGE154).

- “Thereupon I advanced further down the road of disintegration – where I found new sources of strength for individuals. We have to be destroyers! – I perceived that the state of disintegration, in which individual natures can perfect themselves as never before – is an image and isolated example of existence in general. To the paralyzing sense of general disintegration and incompleteness I opposed the *eternal recurrence*” (WP224).
- “We, however, *want to become those we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves” (GS266).



- Illness plays a major role in this transformation, as Nietzsche says, he is “grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its ‘prejudice,’ . . . ” (BGE55).
- Suffering many serious health issues himself, Nietzsche defined health not as the absence of illness, rather, by how one faces and overcomes illness.
- Nietzsche says he used his “will to health” to transform his illness into autonomy – it gave him the courage to be himself. In a practical sense, it also forced him to change his lifestyle and these changes facilitated a lifestyle more suited to his personality and to the life of a philosopher.

- Nietzsche describes a sort of neurosis afflicting the artist: “It is exceptional states that condition the artist – all of them profoundly related to and interlaced with morbid phenomena – so it seems impossible to be an artist and not to be sick” . . . .
- . . . . “Physiological states that are in the artist as it were molded into a ‘personality’ and, that characterize men in general to some degree:
  - 1. *Intoxication*: the feeling of enhanced power; the inner need to make of things a reflex of one’s own fullness and perfection (WP428)
    - and also what we may read as overexcitability:

- . . . 2. the *extreme sharpness* of certain senses, so they understand a quite different sign language – and create one – the condition that seems to be a part of many nervous disorders –; extreme mobility that turns into an extreme urge to communicate; the desire to speak on the part of everything that knows how to make signs –; a need to get rid of oneself, as it were, through signs and gestures; ability to speak of oneself through a hundred speech media – an *explosive* condition. . . .

- . . . One must first think of this condition as a compulsion and urge to get rid of the exuberance of inner tension through muscular activity and movements of all kinds; then as an involuntary coordination between this movement and the inner processes (images, thoughts, desires) – as a kind of automatism of the whole muscular system impelled by strong stimuli from within–; inability to prevent reaction; the system of inhibitions suspended, as it were” (WP428-429).

- Nietzsche: “Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom has always first been accounted a *bad man*: but when, as did happen, the law could not afterwards be reinstated and this fact was accepted, the predicate gradually changed; - history treats almost exclusively of these *bad men* who subsequently became *good men*!” (Daybreak19).

- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- John Hughlings Jackson.

- John Hughlings Jackson (1835-1911), described how the nervous system is hierarchically organized in a series of major levels. Jackson was instrumental in Dąbrowski's conceptualization of the levels of neural organization and of the corresponding levels of neuro and psychological function.
- Jackson also focused on evolution and dissolution in the nervous system. He saw higher levels as more complex combinations and arrangements of existing (lower) features thus representing new steps in the brain's evolution.

- Higher levels exert control over lower levels. Jackson said dissolution occurs when the inhibiting influence of higher levels is somehow removed and the more automatic, less reflective functions of the lower centers are released.
- I have quoted Jackson as this passage highlights many aspects of development important to Dąbrowski:



- “Evolution is a passage from the most to the least organised; that is to say, from the lowest, well organised, centres up to the highest, least organised, centres...from centres comparatively well organised at birth...to those...which are continually organising through life...Evolution is a passage from the most simple to the most complex...a passage from the most automatic to the most voluntary...the highest centres...are the least organised, the most complex, and the most voluntary...Dissolution...is a process of undevelopment... from the least organised, from the most complex and most voluntary, towards the most organised, most simple, and most automatic” (Taylor, 1932, Vol. 2, p. 46).  
[Reference: Taylor, J. (Ed.). (1932). Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson (2 Vols.). London: Hodder and Stoughton.]

- For Jackson, the brain's organization poses a problem: the higher, newer features are less stable and more vulnerable. Disorders of the higher levels (like psychoneurosis) disinhibit the lower levels and are the first step toward total dissolution of psychic functions ('mental involution'). Progression of psychoneurotic **dynamisms** leads to serious mental illness.
- **Dynamisms**: "Biological or mental force controlling behavior and its development. Instincts, drives, and intellectual processes combined with emotions are dynamisms" (294, 1972).

- For Dąbrowski, the initial fluid organization of the highest levels represents an opportunity for further, self-directed reorganization and development: Dąbrowski opposed Jackson's view, saying, "if anything, psychoneuroses prevent the development of mental breakdown (220-221, 1972).
- For Dąbrowski, development was evolution: "evolution - a development which proceeds from lower to higher levels of organization. Positive disintegration is the type of process through which individual human, evolution occurs" (295, 1972).

- 2. Foundations of Dąbrowski's Theory.
  - -- Marie Jahoda.

- Jahoda (1958) summarized existing approaches and delineated six main features of positive mental health:
  - 1. Several proposals suggested that the attitude of the individual toward him or herself is important (*self perception*).
  - 2. Another set of criteria referred to the individual's degree of *growth, development or self-actualization* and was concerned with what a person did rather than how he or she perceived the self.
  - .

- 3. A measure of *integration* of psychological functions, including several of the criteria listed in points one and two above.
- 4. “*Autonomy* singles out the individual's degree of independence from social influences as most revealing of the state of his mental health” (Jahoda, 1958, p. 23).
- 5. Some measure of the adequacy of an individual's *perception of reality*.
- 6. Some consideration of the ability to take life in stride and to master it (*environmental mastery*).

- Following Jahoda (1958), Dąbrowski said that mental health should not be defined simply by the presence or absence of symptoms, rather, definitions of mental health must be concerned with conceptualizations of men and women as they ideally ought to be and by the potential of the individual to achieve desirable, developmental qualities.
- Dąbrowski (1972, p. 298) defined mental health as: “Development towards higher levels of mental functions, towards the discovery and realization of higher cognitive, moral, social, and aesthetic values and their organization into a hierarchy in accordance with one’s own authentic personality ideal.”

- The influence of Jahoda's six main points can be felt in Dąbrowski's thinking, especially in terms of the goal of advanced development:
  - an autonomous, consciously derived hierarchy of values, marking the creation of an idealized vision of self – the unique personality of the individual, encapsulated in his or her personality ideal.
- Dąbrowski believed that the moral guideline that one ought to follow must be of one's own creation, to paraphrase Frederick Nietzsche; each of us must create our own values and personality and thus walk our own path in life.



- Dąbrowski's observations of people and accepting Jahoda's fourth point, led him to an unusual conclusion – that individual personality is not universally, or even commonly, achieved. The average “well socialized” person lacks a unique individual personality and therefore cannot be considered mentally healthy – the “state of primary integration is a state contrary to mental health” (1964b, p. 121).
- **Mental Illness:** “(1) either a strongly integrated, primitive, psychopathic structure [Level I], or (2) a negative, non-developmental disintegration [psychosis]” (173, 1970).
  - “The absence or deficiency of processes which effect development” (173, 1970).

- 3. Multilevelness: Levels of reality.

- Levels are a philosophical foundation of the theory:
  - Level based analysis has a long philosophical history.
- Reality and our perception of reality can be differentiated into a hierarchy of levels.
- The reality that each person perceives reflects their given level of development.
- Psychological functions go through both quantitative and qualitative changes in the course of development.
- These changes allow people to differentiate higher, more developed levels from lower, earlier, less developed levels.
- Differentiation of these lower and higher levels constitutes a multilevel view -- this is fundamental to Dąbrowski's conception of mental health and of development.

- Multilevelness:
  - Definition: “Division of functions into different levels, for instance, the spinal, subcortical, and cortical levels in the nervous system. Individual perception of many levels of external and internal reality appears at a certain stage of development, here called multilevel disintegration” (298, 1972).
  - Multilevel perception is based on more than just sensory inputs, it includes all of the psychological functions available to humans, including thinking, feeling, imagination, instincts, empathy, intuition, etc.

- Multilevelness:
  - The process of “hierarchization” creates a multilevel contrast between the lower and higher in life and expands our range of human experience, creating a new, critical type of conflict: vertical conflicts between higher and lower choices.
  - “It appears obvious that the ability to understand and to successfully apply the concept of multilevelness depends upon the development of personality of the individual” (x, 1973).

- Levels of Function - Definition:
  - “The qualitative and quantitative differences which appear in mental functions as a result of developmental changes.  
. . .
  - Lower levels of functions are characterized by automatism, impulsiveness, stereotypy, egocentrism, lack or low degree of consciousness. . . .
  - Higher levels of functions show distinct consciousness, inner psychic transformation, autonomusness, creativity” (297, 1972).
- Part of Dąbrowski’s view of authentic humans:
  - “The reality of mental functions in man is dynamic, developmental and multilevel” (122, 1970).

- The “average” view of life is horizontal – unilevel:  
(Ken Wilber: “flatlanders”, Bertalanffy and Yablonsky: “robopaths”)
  - “Robots” blindly follow social roles & values.
  - “Animal model:” stimulus-response reactions.
  - Equal alternatives create “illusions of choice.”
  - Conflicts between different but equivalent choices.
  - No vertical component to allow for higher growth.
- Development is linked to a “new,” vertical, ML view:
  - Spurred by DP, begin to see higher possibilities in comparison to lower realities and lower alternatives.
  - Vertical view creates a hierarchical model of life, of values and of behavior – allows us to choose.

- In advanced development, our growing sense of the “higher possibilities” in life gives us personal goals to strive for: our own unique personality ideal.
- As a ML view develops, it causes vertical conflicts – once the higher alternative is seen, acting on the lower creates guilt, unhappiness, feelings of inferiority:
  - Vertical conflicts become a vital, internal driving force of individual (personality) change.
  - We must demote our lower impulses, reflexes & reactions based on selfishness and socialization. We must promote our own carefully considered, individually based responses arising from our own values and our vision of how things ought to be.



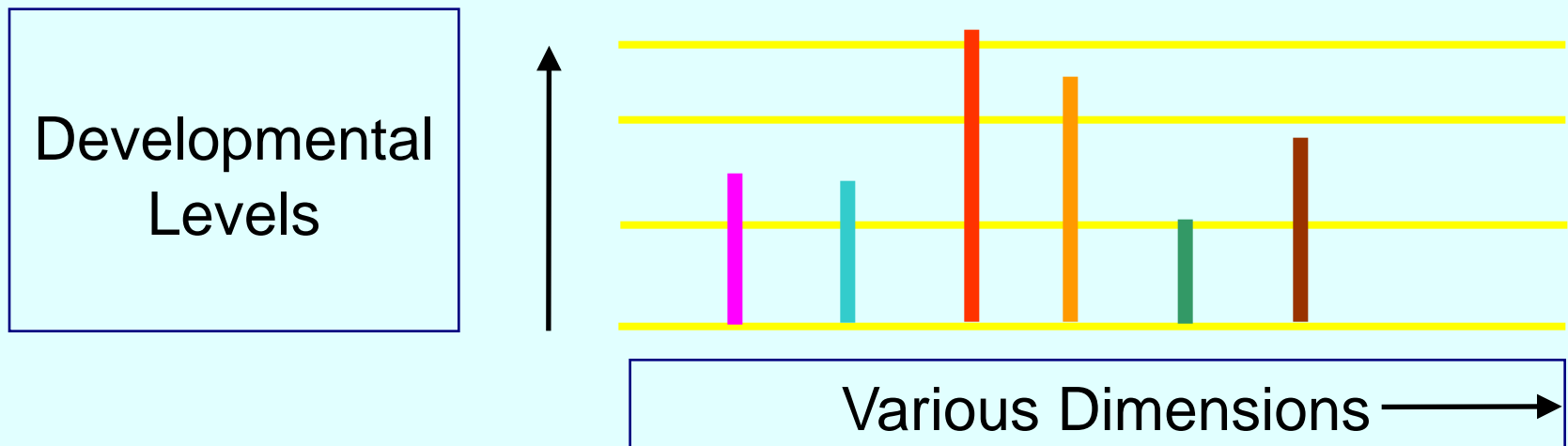
- The **level** of development is not uniform across all **dimensions** within a person. People are often on different levels on different dimensions:
  - Commonly, a person may be at a high level cognitively & on a low level emotionally (& morally), sadly, this seems to be our social status quo.
  - Dąbrowski called this one-sided development.
- What dimensions should we consider in our analysis?
  - Complicates our idea of levels & their assessment.
  - Current testing focuses on one or two dimensions (almost always cognitively based).
  - Dąbrowski: we need a richer, broader approach to measure human development & potentials.

- “Type of development limited to one talent or ability, or to a narrow range of abilities and mental functions” (300, 1972).
  - “Grave affective retardation is usually associated with above average intelligence subordinated to primitive drives” (30, 1970).

- In summary, development is usually not uniform across dimensions within an individual. People are often at different levels of development on different dimensions. Describing a person’s overall developmental level often becomes very difficult when several dimensions are taken into consideration.

- Dąbrowski uses a powerful type of analysis combining two approaches:
  - Multilevel approach (ML).
  - Multidimensional approach (MD).
    - Behavior involves an interaction of dimension and level.
    - MD & ML must be used together to examine/evaluate behavior.
- Ken Wilber uses a similar approach – popular in the USA, called the “all quadrant approach.”

- We need to look at the level of each dimension:
  - This complicates both our theoretical conceptualizations and our assessment of developmental levels.



- 4. Developmental Potential.

- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- General Prerequisites.

- Developmental instinct:
  - Definition: “The whole process of transformation of primitive drives and impulsive functions into more reflective and refined functions occurs under the influence of evolutionary dynamisms which we call the developmental instinct” (1973, 22).
  - “The developmental instinct acts against the automatic, limited, and primitive functional patterns of the biological cycle of life” (1970, 28).
  - “Source of all mental developmental forces” (1972, 293).
  - The theory “conceives man as a being destined to undergo developmental transformations” (1970, 121).

- Aspects of development as a process:
  - “By higher level of psychic development we mean a behavior which is more complex, more conscious and having greater freedom of choice, hence greater opportunity for self-determination” (1972, 70).
  - “The individual with a rich developmental potential rebels against the common determining factors in his external environment” (1970, p. 32).
  - “The developmental process in which occur ‘collisions’ with the environment and with oneself begins as a consequence of the interplay of three factors: developmental potential, . . . an influence of the social milieu, and autonomous (self-determining) factors” (1972, 77).



- This last quote is important as Dąbrowski differentiates three major factors of development, one, developmental potential, two, the social milieu and three, autonomous (self-determining) factors (Dąbrowski's third factor).
- Here, Dąbrowski presents the third factor as an independent force of development, not simply as a component of developmental potential as he defines it elsewhere. This creates some confusion over the role of the third factor, this confusion perhaps mirrors the changes in the nature and role of the third factor as development proceeds.

- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- Advanced Development is Rare.

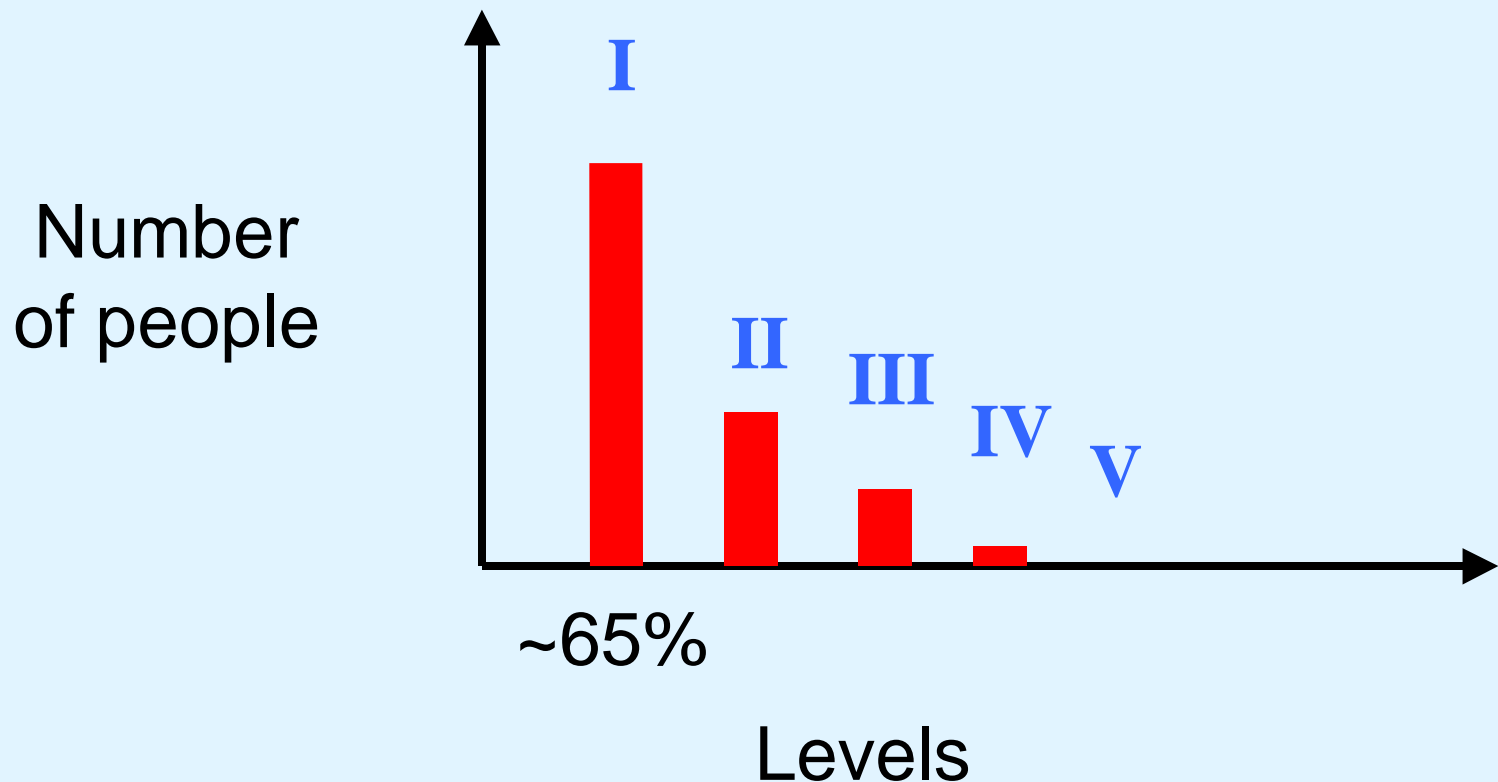
# Advanced Development is Uncommon – 1. 187

- People dominated by their lower instincts appear to have little potential to develop or to change.
- People dominated by external factors (socialization) occasionally present potential to develop but social forces and peer pressure are strong and vigorously resist change.
- A few people appear to have strong autonomous potential to develop (can't be held back). Often go on to become exemplars of advanced development.
- Dąbrowski found common traits in exemplars that he described as Developmental Potential (DP).

- The sequence of transformations “occur only if the developmental forces are sufficiently strong and not impeded by unfavorable external circumstances. This is, however, rarely the case. The number of people who complete the full course of development and attain the level of secondary integration is limited. A vast majority of people either do not break down their primitive integration at all, or after a relatively short period of disintegration, usually experienced at the time of adolescence and early youth, end in a reintegration at the former level or in partial integration of some of the functions at slightly higher levels, without a transformation of the whole mental structure“ (4, 1970).

- “A fairly high degree of primary integration is present in the average person; a very high degree of primary integration is present in the psychopath. The more cohesive the structure of primary integration, the less the possibility of development; the greater the strength of autonomic functioning, stereotypy, and habitual activity, the lower the level of mental health” (121, 1964).
- Note: Dąbrowski’s usage of the term “psychopath” is out of context with today’s common usage. It reflects an early, European connotation of the term: an individual with strong ‘constitutional factors’ (usually psychological traits) that act to inhibit ideal or potential development, contrast with sociopath, a person having social factors that inhibit development.

- Dąbrowski's ideas concur with most other models of advanced human development in proposing that very few people actually reach the highest levels:



- Dąbrowski described various possible outcomes of crises:
  - simple resolution - a return of the former equilibrium (reintegration on the same level);
  - suicidal tendencies;
  - chronic (negative) disintegration (mental illness);
  - slight growth (partial integration at slightly higher levels);
  - advanced development: integration on the highest levels.

- Maturation is prolonged, talking to a young client, Dąbrowski said:
  - [People with strong developmental “endowment”] “must have much more time for a deep, creative development and that is why you will be growing for a long time. This is a very common phenomenon among creative people. Simply, they have such a great developmental potential, ‘they have the stuff to develop’ and that is why it takes them longer to give it full expression” (272, 1972).
- Developmental exemplars describe and validate higher levels.
  - Dąbrowski was optimistic that exemplars of the highest levels are role models who represent the next level in Man’s psychological evolution.



- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- Developmental Potential.

# Developmental Potential (DP): Overview. 194

- Several complex and interrelated components of DP:
  - The three factors of development.
  - Dynamisms like subject-object in oneself, self-awareness & identification with one's development.
  - Psychoneuroses and positive disintegration.
  - Emergent, internal features of the self [Hierarchy of aims & Hierarchy of values, Inner Psychic Milieu, Personality Ideal, etc.].
  - The developmental instinct, creative instinct, and the instinct for self-perfection.
- “The relations and interactions between the different components of the developmental potential give shape to individual development and control the appearance of psychoneuroses on different levels of development” (1972 p. 78).

- Definition: “The constitutional endowment which determines the character and the extent of mental growth possible for a given individual” (1972, p. 293).
- DP can be positive, promoting development, negative and inhibiting development, or neutral.
- “Innate developmental potentials may be more general or more specific, more positive or more negative” (1970, p. 33).
- DP varies between individuals: Most have too little DP to spur advanced growth; a few have strong DP & achieve the highest levels.
- If DP is strong it will overcome environmental factors.
- Environment is critical if DP is neutral or weak.

- To assess DP, Dąbrowski considered 3 main aspects:
  - Special talents & abilities (e.g. IQ, athletic ability).
  - Overexcitability (OE).
  - “Third Factor” (a strong internal drive to express one’s unique self – factor of autonomous choice).
- “The developmental potential can be assessed on the basis of the following components: psychic overexcitability (q.v.), special abilities and talents, and autonomous factors (notably the Third factor)” (1972, p. 293).

- Cognition is a key component of higher levels in traditional approaches:
  - Cognition and reason overcome or control emotion.
- TPD reframes & revises traditional roles of mental excitement, emotion & pathology in development:
  - Excess excitability, strong emotion and pathology all traditionally have a negative bias in psychology and psychiatry.
  - “Excess” excitability has often been seen as tantamount to epilepsy and is often linked to learning disabilities and delinquency.
  - “Excess” emotion has often been equated with hysteria.
  - “Pathology” traditionally indicates a weakness or defect to be repaired.

- DP will influence how a person experiences their environment and determine their unique developmental course.
- DP, especially OE, works hand in hand with psychoneuroses to change our perception of reality & predispose development.
- Understanding people with strong DP will foster their growth.
- People must ‘overcome’ the first and second factors to develop.
- Development is defined by a movement towards self-determination and autonomy - the third factor.
- Adjustment to ‘what is’ is often a developmental. Initially, maladjustment will result from conflicts with the social environment. A shift to ‘what ought to be,’ leads to a new type of positive adjustment and harmony.
- Emotion becomes a vital moral compass linked to imagination to guide intelligence toward higher, more authentic behavior.

- Summary:
  - Developmental potential may be:
    - positive or negative
    - general or specific
    - strong or weak
    - expressed or not expressed
  - The most misunderstood aspect of DP is overexcitability:
    - Overexcitability is a trait that is usually not appreciated by others or by society.
    - Overexcitability is often suppressed or hidden by the individual feeling it.
    - OE needs to be understood within the overall context of DP.

- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- Overexcitability.



- The roots of the idea of overexcitabilities and their importance might first appear in William James:
  - “Wherever a process of life communicates an eagerness to him who lives it, there the life becomes genuinely significant. Sometimes the eagerness is more knit up with the motor activities, sometimes with the perceptions, sometimes with the imagination, sometimes with reflective thought. But, wherever it is found, there is the zest, the tingle, the excitement of reality; and there is 'importance' in the only real and positive sense in which importance ever anywhere can be” James, W. (1899, p. 9-10). *On Some of Life's Ideals*. New York: Henry Holt.

- Definition: “Higher than average responsiveness to stimuli, manifested either by psychomotor, sensual, emotional (affective), imaginal, or intellectual excitability or the combination thereof” (1972, 303).
- A physiological property of the nervous system: “Each form of overexcitability points to a higher than average sensitivity of its receptors” (1972, 7).
- Dąbrowski emphasized two aspects: a higher than average *sensitivity* of the nerves (receptors) and a higher than average *responsiveness* to stimuli:

- “The prefix over attached to ‘excitability’ serves to indicate that the reactions of excitation are over and above average in intensity, duration and frequency” (1996, 7).
- Affects how a person sees reality: “One who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner” (1972, 7).
- Dąbrowski called OE “a tragic gift” as both the highs and lows of life are intensified.

- “Because the sensitivity [excitability] is related to all essential groups of receptors of stimuli of the internal and external worlds it widens and enhances the field of consciousness” (1972, 66).
- “Individuals with enhanced emotional, imaginal and intellectual excitability channel it into forms most appropriate for them” (1972, 66).
- Critical three types: “Emotional (affective), imaginal and intellectual overexcitability are the richer forms. If they appear together they give rich possibilities of development and creativity” (1972, 7).

- Dąbrowski linked overexcitability with disintegration:
  1. “[First] Hyperexcitability also provokes inner conflicts as well as the means by which these conflicts can be overcome” (1970, 38).
  2. Second, hyperexcitability precipitates psychoneurotic processes, and
  3. Third, conflicts and psychoneurotic processes become the dominant factor in accelerated development”

- Overexcitability helps to differentiate higher from lower experiences and facilitate a multilevel view:
  - “The reality of the external and of the inner world is conceived in all its multiple aspects. High overexcitability contributes to establishing multilevelness . . .” (1996, 74).
- Individuals will usually display a characteristic response type – one of the five forms will be dominant, and one will channel one’s OE accordingly: “For instance, a person with prevailing emotional overexcitability will always consider the emotional tone and emotional implications of intellectual questions” (1996, 7).

- “It is mainly mental hyperexcitability through which the search for something new, something different, more complex and more authentic can be accomplished” (15, 1973).
- Piechowski developed the overexcitability questionnaire (OEQ) (Lysy, & Piechowski, 1983). Piechowski (1979, 1991) subsequently introduced Dąbrowski’s concept of overexcitability to the field of gifted education and over the past 25 years, many research projects and papers have addressed the topic (see Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006).

- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- Three Factors of Development.



- Three factors influence behavior and development:
  - First Factor – expression of genetic instincts:
    - Most basic: primal biological & survival instincts.
      - Primitive, reflexive reactions and instincts.
      - Seen expressed in ego: Focus on self-satisfaction, to feel good, regardless of the cost to others.
      - Today, we could generalize to material success.
  - Dąbrowski perceived that genetic factors laid the foundation of both the lower instincts and of the features of developmental potential, including the foundation of emergent factors that will eventually eclipse their genetic roots.

- First Factor – “hereditary, innate constitutional elements” (33, 1970).
  - “May be more general or more specific, more positive or more negative” (33, 1970).
  - “General excitability, nuclei of the inner psychic milieu, general interests and aptitudes are examples of general and positive potentials. Specific forms of hyperexcitability such as emotional, imaginal or sensual hyperexcitability, as well as specific interests or aptitudes, such as musical, choreographic or mathematical aptitudes, constitute specific and positive potentials” (33-34, 1970).

- Second Factor – external influence: environment and socialization (includes existing education).
  - Incorporate & follow social values, rules & roles.
  - Moral authority & criteria for good behavior are derived from external (social) values.
  - Most people live life under the day-to-day influence of this factor – “good boy,” “good girl.”
  - Dąbrowski rejected unreflective conformity and saw people who function primarily under social influence as “mentally unhealthy.”

- Second Factor - “the social environment”:
  - Socialization - external social roles and mores.
  - Most people are socialized and conform without thinking deeply about life - without comparing how things are with how things could be or ought to be.
  - The first and second factors interact:
    - “If the developmental potential is distinctly positive or negative, the influence of the environment is less important. If the developmental potential does not exhibit any distinct quality, the influence of the environment is important and it may go in either direction. If the developmental potential is weak or difficult to specify, the influence of the environment may prove decisive, positively or negatively” (34, 1970).

- The third factor arises from both genetic and social roots but later becomes autonomous:
  - Third factor becomes an emergent force, eventually expressing our sense of who we ought to be and controlling the direction of our development – transcends its genetic roots.
- As third factor develops, it compels us to make choices that express our authentic self – “more me” and to reject aspects that are “less me.”
- More than just “will” – the third factor is the totality of our autonomous features and forces.

- Third Factor: “the autonomous factor of development.”
  - “The dynamism of conscious choice (valuation) by which one affirms or rejects certain qualities in oneself and in one’s environment” (306, 1972).
  - “A dynamism of conscious choice by which one sets apart both in oneself and in one’s environment those elements which are positive, and therefore considered higher, from those which are negative, and therefore considered lower. By this process a person denies and rejects inferior demands of the internal as well as of the external milieu, and accepts, affirms and selects positive elements in either milieu” (38-39, 1996).

- 4. Developmental Potential.
  - -- The Third Factor.

- Definition: “The third factor is independent from and selective with regard to heredity (the first factor), and environment (the second factor). Its selective role consists in accepting and fostering or rejecting and restraining qualities, interests and desires, which one finds either in one’s hereditary endowment or in one’s social environment. Thus the third factor being a dynamism of conscious choice is a dynamism of valuation. . . . Cont.



. . . Cont.

The third factor has a fundamental role in education-of-oneself, and in autopsychotherapy. Its presence and operation is essential in the development toward autonomy and authenticity. It arises and grows as a resultant of both positive hereditary endowment (especially the ability for inner psychic transformation) and positive environmental influences” (178-179, 1970).

- “The principal periods during which the third agent appears distinctly are the ages of puberty and maturation” (56, 1964).
- “During the period of puberty, young people become aware of the sense of life and discover a need to develop personal goals and to find the tools for realizing them. The emergence of these problems and the philosophizing on them, with the participation of an intense emotional component, are characteristic features of a strong instinct of development and of the individual’s rise to a higher evolutionary level” (56, 1964).

- Dąbrowski said the common route of maturation leads to a “premature” integration of mental structures based on “the desire to gain a position, to become distinguished, to possess property, and to establish a family” - “the more the integration of the mental structure grows, the more the influence of the third agent weakens” (57, 1964).
- “The third agent persists -- indeed, it only develops -- in individuals who manifest an increased mental excitability and have at least mild forms of psychoneuroses” (57, 1964).

- In ideal, advanced development, the maturational period is ‘protracted’ and “is clearly accompanied by a strong instinct of development, great creative capacities, a tendency to reach for perfection, and the appearance and development of self-consciousness, self-affirmation, and self-education” (57, 1964).

- “All such autonomous factors, taken together, form the strongest group of causal dynamisms in the development of man. They denote the transition from that which is primitive, instinctive, automatic to that which is deliberate, creative and conscious, from that which is primitively integrated to that which manifests multilevel disintegration . . . from that which ‘is’ to that which ‘ought to be’ . . . The autonomous factors form the strongest dynamisms of transition from emotions of a low level to emotions of a high level” (35, 1970).

- Dąbrowski saw his approach creates a dilemma:
  - Where do autonomous forces come from?
  - “It is not easy to strictly define the origin of the third factor, because, in the last [traditional] analysis, it must stem either from the hereditary endowment or from the environment” (78, 1973).
  - “We can only suppose that the autonomous factors derive from hereditary developmental potential and from positive environmental conditions; they are shaped by influences from both. However, the autonomous forces do not derive exclusively from hereditary and environment, but are also determined by the conscious development of the individual himself” (34, 1970).

- As the third factor strengthens and overall development is achieved, the forces of development become autonomous:
- “The appearance and growth of the third agent is to some degree dependent on the inherited abilities and on environmental experiences, but as it develops it achieves an independence from these factors and through conscious differentiation and self-definition takes its own position in determining the course of development of personality” (54, 1964).
- “According to the [TPD], the third factor arises in the course of an increasingly conscious, self-determined, autonomous and authentic development” (78, 1973).

- “The genesis of the third factor should be associated with the very development with which it is combined in the self-consciousness of the individual in the process of becoming more myself”; i.e., it is combined with the vertical differentiation of mental functions (78, 1973).
- “The third factor is a dynamism active at the stage of organized multilevel disintegration. Its activity is autonomous in relation to the first factor (hereditary) and the second (environment)” (80, 1973).
- “This approach is close to some of the ideas of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who maintained that more can be found in the effects than in the causes” (78, 1973).



- 5. Adjustment.

# Adjustment – 1.

- Dąbrowski outlined four types of adjustment:
  - 1). **Negative maladjustment** – antisocial, selfish ego dominates behavior that flaunts social mores:
    - Expression of primitive first factor: criminals, unscrupulous CEOs (see themselves above law).
  - 2). **Negative adjustment** – ordinary socialization:
    - “Robotic” & uncritical acceptance of what is.
    - Adjustment to prevailing social norms & values.
    - Expression of second factor – we are social conformers: antisocial & primitive impulses are repressed so we will “fit in” (so is our autonomy).
    - Adjustment to a “sick” society is to also be sick.

- 3). **Positive maladjustment** – rejection of what is, in favor of what ought to be – where we see PN:
  - Initial expression of third factor (autonomy).
  - Pits one against social norms and mores – often confused as “ordinary” antisocial maladjustment.
  - May be seen in gifted students (but mislabeled).
- 4). **Positive adjustment** – adjustment to inner sense of what ought to be & to consciously chosen values (behavior reflects highest possible values):
  - Full expression of third factor / personality ideal.
  - Seen at Level V – secondary integration.
  - Ideal society: everyone is at this level.

- Negative maladjustment: Expression of First Factor.
  - - antisocial, asocial, selfish, egocentric, egotistical
- Negative adjustment: Expression of Second Factor.
  - - adjustment to what is, conformity to conventional social mores.
  - Our status quo: society is currently “primitive and confused” (118, 1970).
  - “The individual who is always adjusted is one who does not develop himself” (58, 1970).

- Positive maladjustment: Initial expression of Third Factor (autonomy).
  - - rejection of 'what is,' in favor of what 'ought to be.'
- Positive adjustment: Full expression of the Third Factor.
  - - adjustment to what ought to be:
  - - behavior according to an authentic inner sense of what ought to be and consciously chosen values (highest behavior possible).
  - .

- 6. The Role of Emotion in Development.

- The theory distinguishes various levels of development of emotional and instinctive functions. The level of these functions defines one's values and one's general level of development. Dąbrowski called these “levels of emotional development analogous to the levels of intellectual development.”
- Dąbrowski (1996) could not understand why psychology had so embraced the study of cognitive development and so eschewed the study of emotional development – the systematic study of the levels of emotion and development that Dąbrowski observed and described.

- For Dąbrowski, “a general theory of human development is not possible if it does not include emotional factors” (p. 6, 1996).
- In offering his general theory of development, Dąbrowski included traditional cognitive development and added a new role for emotional factors, where “emotional factors are not considered merely as unruly subordinates of reason but can acquire the dominant role of shapers of development ” (p. 6, 1996).



- Traditional theories of development rest on ontogeny – the idea that development automatically unfolds according to some pre-programmed biological sequence of events.
- Dąbrowski's observations of emotion lead him to conclude that emotion does not conform to ontogenesis, rather, it is determined and emerges as a function of other conditions.
- A key implication is that emotional function may not parallel cognitive – as cognitive development follows ontogenesis, and may achieve high development, emotional function may or may not follow, depending upon other factors.

- Dąbrowski felt that making multilevelness the central concept of his approach was the key to being able to describe and understand the development of different aspects of human behavior and how they interact.
- Looking at unitary aspects like symptoms or behaviors, e.g., aggression, yields little data.
- To understand requires examining such behavior from a multilevel viewpoint – as Dąbrowski illustrated, there is less difference between love and hate at level I than there is between love at the lowest level and love at the highest level. Only when we see this can we understand development.

- “To each level of mental development, there is a corresponding level of value experience. Mental development of man and the development of a hierarchy of values are, in fact, two names for the same process. One cannot separate the two” (98, 1970).
- “Above a certain level of development there is more universal agreement in valuation, i. e. highly developed (eminent) people tend to share the same values” (93, 1970). Values converge in higher development.

- As an individual develops, he or she moves up through the levels, experiencing new views of reality, new challenges and values and new interpretations of external and internal reality.
- Development involves the experience of multilevelness and this discovery triggers the emergence and creation of one's personality ideal – the core from which all development will flow.
- The appreciation and experience of emotions in multilevelness gives us a new barometer to help measure our behavior and to guide us in the formation of values that reflect both our essence and our emerging sense of who we ought to be.

- Development up through these levels can be reliably observed using a multilevel approach.
- Emotional overexcitability is a key component of development because it brings us into contact and awareness with higher-level emotions.
- Spurred on by acute emotional awareness, multilevelness brings into focus contrast between higher and lower phenomena both in the external and internal milieus and this in turn, triggers the vertical conflicts Dąbrowski felt were so important in development, breaking our attachment to lower levels and creating the possibility for higher-level behavior.

- Emotions & values eventually merge and play a predominant role in development:
  - “‘Psychoneurotic experiences’ by disturbing the lower levels of values help gradually to enter higher levels of values, i.e., the level of higher emotions. These emotions becoming conscious and ever more strongly experienced begin to direct our behaviour and bring it to a higher level. In this way higher emotions play a dynamic role in our development and give meaning to our life. As new and higher values the higher emotions slowly begin to shape our ‘new harmony’ after the collapse of the primitive harmony of lower level”(3, 1972).

- As the preceding quote illustrates, we do not so much develop emotionally – we develop as individuals as we consciously rise up to meet the new standards *we feel*/based upon our emerging awareness and experience of higher levels of emotion.
- As we continue to allow ourselves to be guided by our experience of higher-level emotions, emotions and values merge – we come to value what we feel is right and we feel right about what we value.
- The hierarchy of values becomes a hierarchy of emotions contributing to and becoming part of advanced development.

- 7. Disintegration.



- Disintegration:
  - Definition: “Loosening, disorganization, or dissolution of mental structures and functions” (293, 1972).
  - “The term disintegration is used to refer to a broad range of processes, from emotional disharmony to the complete fragmentation of the personality structure, all of which are usually regarded as negative” (5, 1964).
- Dąbrowski described various types of disintegration:
  - Unilevel / Multilevel.
  - Negative / positive.
  - Spontaneous / organized.
  - Partial / global.

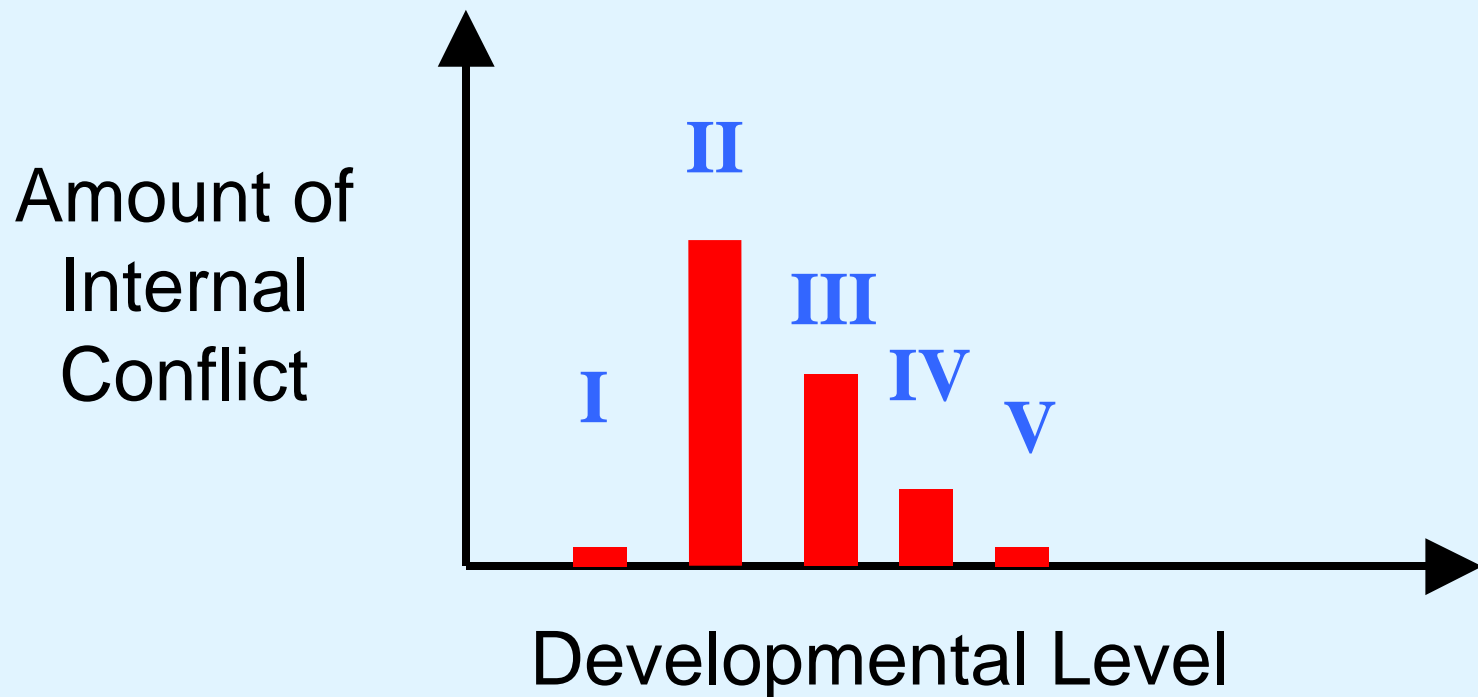
- 7. Disintegration.
  - -- The Role of Crises.

- “Every authentic creative process consists of ‘loosening’, ‘splitting’ or ‘smashing’ the former reality. Every mental conflict is associated with disruption and pain; every step forward in the direction of authentic existence is combined with shocks, sorrows, suffering and distress” (14, 1973).
- “The chances of developmental crises and their positive or negative outcomes depend on the character of the developmental potential, on the character of social influence, and on the activity (if present) of the third factor. . . . One also has to keep in mind that a developmental solution to a crisis means not a reintegration but an integration at a higher level of functioning” (245, 1972).

- “Crises are periods of increased insight into oneself, creativity, and personality development” (18, 1964).
- “Crises, in our view, are brought about through thousands of different internal and external conflicts, resulting from collisions of the developing personality with negative elements of the inner and external milieus” (245, 1972).
- “Experiences of shock, stress and trauma, may accelerate development in individuals with innate potential for positive development” (20, 1970).
- “Inner conflicts often lead to emotional, philosophical and existential crises” (196, 1972).

- “We are human inasmuch as we experience disharmony and dissatisfaction, inherent in the process of disintegration” (122, 1970).
- “Prolonged states of unilevel disintegration (level II) end either in a reintegration at the former primitive level or in suicidal tendencies, or in a psychosis” (135, 1970).
- For Dąbrowski, inner conflict is **BOTH** a cause and an effect:
  - It is the result of the process of positive disintegration and the operation of the dynamisms of development.
  - It is a cause of positive disintegration and subsequent development - conflict acts as a motivation to redefine, refine and integrate one’s actions with one’s “new” values.

- Dąbrowski believed that *dis-ease* is necessary as a motivation to change the status quo. The amount of inner conflict is linked to the degree of change - maximum at Level II and in the borderline region between Level II and III:



- 7. Disintegration.
  - -- Positive Disintegration

- Positive:
  - Definition: “By positive we imply here changes that lead from a lower to a higher (i.e. broader, more controlled and more conscious) level of mental functioning” (1, 1972).
- Positive Disintegration:
  - Definition: “Positive or developmental disintegration effects a weakening and dissolution of lower level structures and functions, gradual generation and growth of higher levels of mental functions and culminates in personality integration” (165, 1970).
  - “The term positive disintegration will be applied in general to the process of transition from lower to higher, broader and richer levels of mental functions. This transition requires a restructuring of mental functions” (18, 1970).



- Definition: “loosening, disorganization or dissolution of mental structures and functions” (1970, p. 164).
- “Positive when it enriches life, enlarges the horizon, and brings forth creativity, it is negative when it either has no developmental effects or causes involution” (1964, p. 10).
- Recovery from crisis can lead to a return to the former level and former equilibrium or to a more healthy integration & new equilibrium on a higher level.
- If the person has strong developmental potential, even severe crises can be positive and lead to growth.

- 7. Disintegration.
  - -- Psychoneuroses.

- Definition: “those processes, syndromes and functions which express inner and external conflicts, and positive maladjustment of an individual in the process of accelerated development” (151, 1973).
- Dąbrowski saw a positive role for psychoneuroses in advanced development:
  - “Connected with the tension arising from strong developmental conflicts” (149, 1973).
  - “contain(s) elements of man’s authentic humanization” (152, 1973).
  - Dąbrowski’s approach is almost unique: at odds with the traditional views of Freud, Maslow, and most others.

- Neuroses are traditionally seen as a coping mechanism: symptoms protect the person from crisis, maintains stability - not associated with growth.
- Dąbrowski: psychoneuroses act as an immunization, not a defense.
  - The person is immunized from negative disintegration by psychoneuroses: psychoneuroses “are the protection against serious mental disorders - against psychoses” (162, 1973).
- Dąbrowski said don't try to “help” psychoneurotics, rather, learn from them, appreciate their uniqueness, their creativity, their values, their sensitivity:
  - See Dąbrowski's poem, “Be Greeted Psychoneurotics”.

- Disintegration creates the *possibility* of advanced growth:
  - Strong OE gives everyday experience an intense and unsettling quality: one is “jolted” into seeing “more.”
  - One becomes aware of a continuum of higher versus lower aspects of both inner and outer reality.
  - This developing sense of multilevelness creates ‘vertical’ conflicts and a new, vertical sense of direction.
  - Developmental instincts and one’s emotions draw one toward higher choices: a hierarchical perspective is formed.
  - Our lower instinctual and socially based values and habits are called into conscious review and often disintegrate.

- “Hierarchization” continues: guided by emotion and one’s imagination of higher possibilities, one develops an autonomous, consciously chosen hierarchy of values.
- These inner values reflect a person’s own unique personality ideal: their own sense of who they ought to be.
- One’s behavior comes to reflect these higher, inner values.
- At higher levels of development, core values converge among people.
- These higher values tend to be unselfish and other centered: they are based on a deeper, authentic understanding and empathy for others.
- Full development entails a long, slow and painful process.

- 8. The Levels.

- Level I - Primitive or primary **Integration**:
- Three levels describe increasing degrees and types of disintegration:
  - Level II - Unilevel Disintegration.
  - Level III - Spontaneous **Multilevel** Disintegration.
  - Level IV - Organized **Multilevel** Disintegration.
- Level V - Secondary **Integration**:



- Dąbrowski believed that the majority (about 65%) of people live life at Level I – **Primary Integration**:
  - A very stable, integrated, horizontally based level.
  - Behavior often automatic, reflexive, rote, unthinking.
  - Instinct (first factor) and social forces (second factor) dominate and influence behavior.
  - A difficult level to break free of: integration creates a strong sense of belonging and security (“security of the herd”).
  - Inner harmony: the only conflicts are external, inner sense of “always being right,” of selfish entitlement, don’t worry about the other guy’s problems.

- Integration:
  - “Consists in an organization of instinctive, emotional and intellectual functions into a coordinated structure” (296, 1972).
- Primitive Integration (primary integration, Level I):
  - Definition: “An integration of all mental functions into a cohesive structure controlled by primitive drives” (302, 1972).
  - “Individuals with some degree of primitive integration comprise the majority of society” (4, 1964).
  - “Among normal primitively integrated people, different degrees of cohesion of psychic structure can be distinguished” (66, 1964).
  - “Psychopathy represents a primitive structure of impulses, integrated at a low level” (73, 1964).

- 3 levels describe varying degrees of disintegration:
  - Level II - **Unilevel Disintegration**: Horizontal conflicts create ambiguity and ambivalence. Very stressful, chaotic period, maximum dis - ease:
    - High risk of falling back or falling apart.
    - Dąbrowski described this as a transitional level.
- Paradigm shift: first multilevel, vertical aspects appear.
  - Level III - **Spontaneous ML Disint.**: Multilevel, vertical conflicts arise spontaneously, creates disint.
  - Level IV - **Organized ML Disint.**: We now see and actively seek out vertical conflicts, we play a volitional role in “directing” crises & development.

- Transition to a ML perspective is the “Greatest step.” Dąbrowski said that the shift from the unilevel to the vertical perception of life is the key to development.
  - Once one truly sees and appreciates the vertical, there is no turning back to a unilevel existence.
  - Dąbrowski compared this with Plato’s cave: once a person breaks free and sees the sunlight, they can no longer be happy living in the darkness.
  - The shift takes tremendous energy & places major demands on the person: they may feel alienated and be overwhelmed with depression and despair.

- Level V - **Secondary Integration**:
  - A ML description of the Human personality ideal.
  - Integration based on individual hierarchy of values.
  - Third factor promotes autonomous, volitional, unselfish – “good person” – as this is what is right.
  - Exemplars describe and show us this highest level.
  - Inner harmony: we are satisfied that our values & behavior now reflect our “true” self as we feel it ought to be – no *internal* conflict.
  - May still have *external* conflict – strong sense of social justice often motivates social action & reform.
  - Rarely seen (but the future trend in evolution [?]).

- Secondary Integration:
  - Definition: “the integration of all mental functions into a harmonious structure controlled by higher emotions such as the dynamism of personality ideal, autonomy and authenticity” (304, 1972).

- Personality:
  - Definition: “a self-conscious, self-chosen, empirically elaborated, autonomous, authentic, self-confirmed and self-educating unity of basic mental, individual and common qualities” (111, 1973).
  - “Personality is the force which integrates mental functions on a high level” (108, 1973).
  - “We could associate personality with the concept of a complete human individual who, in regard to the scope and levels of his functions, represents a coherent and harmonious structure of a high degree of insight into himself, into his aims and aspirations (self-awareness) (108, 1973).
  - “The first quality of personality -- that is to say, self-awareness -- is relatively clear and does not need much comment” (109, 1973).

- Personality:
  - Dąbrowski's definition of personality is linked to advanced development and to multilevelness: personality is achieved through a series of value choices, coalescing only at higher levels of development and multilevelness.
  - “The essence of this choice consists in distinguishing what is ‘higher’ and ‘lower’, what is ‘less myself’ and ‘more myself’, what is closer to and what is more distant from personality, what is changeable and what is lasting . . . It is a conscious and self-determined choice . . . At a certain level of choice the individual becomes aware of what is his own ‘essence’; that is to say, what are his aims and aspirations, his attitudes, his relations with other people” (109, 1973).
  - “The ‘essence’ of an individual is formed by the central qualities of his personality” (109, 1973).



- Personality:
  - “The quality of being self-chosen involves the process of development, the repeated acts of choosing one’s personality many times until the moment of the final choice” (109, 1973).
  - “Those qualities which were chosen at the time of the ‘birth of personality’ and later, authentically developed as central and most important, do not undergo qualitative changes. They will grow quantitatively and may be supplemented by new qualities” (109, 1973).
    - The individual becomes fully aware of those qualities that make him or her uniquely himself or herself. Once this core of unique qualities is chosen, they do not change, but, as the quote above shows, they will grow and be added to.

- Personality Ideal:
  - Definition: “An individual standard against which one evaluates one’s actual personality structure” (175, 1970).
  - In higher development, two ideals are governed by one instinct: “It is necessary to reach the level of the formation and growth of the instinct of self-perfection to approach one’s own individual and social ideal” (108, 1973).
  - In the personality ideal, there is a tendency to adjust to ‘what ought to be’ versus ‘what is.’ This is evidence of the multilevel, hierarchical view of life in action.

- **Autonomy:**
  - “Autonomy is the state of the gradual acquisition of independence from the lower levels of internal and external reality” (89, 1973).
  - “Autonomy is the expression of the developmental process from lower to higher levels, from that which ‘is’ to that which ‘ought to be’” . . . . The result of its activity is a consciousness of being independent in thinking, experiencing and behaving” (89, 1973).
- **Authenticity:**
  - Definition: “A human individual is authentic, if he has developed an autonomous attitude toward himself, his environment and his ideal of personality; if he has achieved a high level of synthetic inner psychic transformation, consciousness, self-consciousness, empathy, hierarchization and a strong feeling of his essentialist existence” (94, 1973).

- A key part of advanced development.
  - Definition: “the totality of mental dynamisms in a distinct or hierarchical setup” (116, 1973).
  - “A complex of mental dynamisms characteristic for a given individual” (62, 1970).
  - “At a primitive stage of mental development or in psychopathy, the IPM does not exist. It arises and is noticeable only at the stage of unilevel disintegration, when a certain sensitiveness appears” (114, 1973).
  - Dąbrowski described the operation of the IPM at several subsequent levels of development.
  - A number of developmental dynamisms are associated with the IPM, for example, the third factor, subject-object in oneself, self-awareness, self-control, empathy, autonomy, authenticity and autopsychotherapy to name a few.

- Inner psychic milieu:
  - “These dynamisms show distinct integrative force and strong interconnections. All of them, including the disposing and directing center, are gradually identified with personality and approach its ideal, which is the supplier of mental energy on the highest accessible level” (115, 1973).
  - The IPM and its dynamisms are critical for development. “Positive, accelerated development depends entirely on the presence of this type of inner psychic milieu” (63, 1970).
  - In secondary integration, the dynamisms of the Inner Psychic Milieu come under the influence of one’s personality ideal. “They stop acting individually; the whole personality acts as an entity” (100, 1973).

- 9. Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.

# Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.

- We have already seen the importance of Jahoda's positive mental health approach in Dąbrowski.
- Jahoda's approach generally had minimal impact in psychology.
- The recent advent of positive psychology provides a general framework that readily accommodates Dąbrowski's theory.
- Reciprocally, Dąbrowski's theory makes strong contributions to a positive psychology.

# What is Positive Psychology?

- Positive psychology: “the scientific study of optimal human functioning” and they continued: “at the pragmatic level, it is about understanding the *wellsprings, processes and mechanisms* that lead to desirable *outcomes*” (Linley, et al., 2006, p. 8).
- Haidt (2003): many of the positive, morally related emotions have received very little attention in psychology, for example, awe, gratitude, admiration and what he calls elevation.
- Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi (2000) noted that many human factors protect against illness and they called for a new science of human strength – a psychology that can understand and nurture these factors in youth.



# Haidt's (2006) Formula.

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$$H = S + C + V$$

H = your general happiness level

S = your happiness set point

C = your life conditions

V = your voluntary activities

# Key Resources: Positive Psychology.

- Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth and ancient wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.
- Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Positive psychology in practice*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Linley, P. A., Joseph, S., Harrington, S., Wood, A. M. (2006). Positive psychology: Past, present, and (possible) future. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(1), 3-16.  
doi:10.1080/17439760500372796
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csíkszentmihályi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5
- Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (Eds.). (2002). *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- 9. Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.
  - -- Growth Following Adversity Versus Positive Disintegration

# Growth Following Adversity.

- “the experience of growth or positive change following trauma and adversity is not a qualitatively different experience that is distinctly different from normal human development, but rather is a natural, albeit infrequent, life span developmental event.”
- “The growth literature promises a paradigm shift in our ways of thinking about trauma.”
- We are interested in both positive & negative sides of human experience, and how they relate to each other.

# Growth Following Adversity.

- “growth following adversity is about psychological well-being and changes in assumptions about the self and the world.”
- “we cannot fully understand growth without taking into account the distress that precedes it, and we cannot fully understand recovery from posttraumatic stress without taking into account the possibility of growth.”
- This and preceding slide from: Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (2008). Reflections on theory and practice in trauma, recovery, and growth: a paradigm shift for the field of dramatic stress. In S. Joseph, & P. A. Linley, (Eds.). *Trauma, recovery and growth: Positive psychological perspectives on posttraumatic stress* (pp. 339-356). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

# The Source of Crisis.

- Growth following adversity deals primarily with externally generated crises for example, natural disasters, accidents, relationship breakups, etc..
- Positive disintegration is focused upon crises that are primarily internally generated, usually when an individual experiences strong internal conflicts over disparities in their behavior – specifically between higher and lower elements.
- The parallels between posttraumatic growth and positive disintegration are striking and may involve many of the same underlying factors, for example, developmental potential.

## Further Possibilities.

- The application of Dabrowski's multilevel and multidimensional approach may be particularly powerful in helping understand posttraumatic growth.
- It remains to be seen what overlap may exist in the research insights in the literature on posttraumatic growth and on the theory of positive disintegration.
- It would be interesting to examine any correlation between the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory and the OEQII.

# Post-traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI).

- The development of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, an instrument for assessing positive outcomes reported by persons who have experienced traumatic events, is described. This 21-item scale includes factors of New Possibilities, Relating to Others, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and Appreciation of Life. Women tend to report more benefits than do men, and persons who have experienced traumatic events report more positive change than do persons who have not experienced extraordinary events.
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9*(3), 455–471. doi:10.1002/jts.2490090305



# Post-traumatic Growth Inventory.

- Categories are:
  - New Possibilities
  - Relating to Others
  - Personal Strength
  - Spiritual Change
  - Appreciation of Life
- The American Psychological Association has this inventory on their website at:
  - <http://locator.apa.org/ptgi/>

# Key Resources: Growth Following Adversity.

- Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (2006). Growth following adversity: Theoretical perspectives and implications for clinical practice. *Clinical Psychology Review, 26*(8), 1041–1053. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2005.12.006
- Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Trauma, recovery and growth: Positive psychological perspectives on posttraumatic stress*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (2004). Positive change following trauma and adversity: A review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 17*(1), 11–21. doi: 10.1023/B:JOTS.0000014671.27856.7e
- Tedeschi, R. G. & Calhoun, L. G. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence, *Psychological Inquiry, 15*(1), 1 – 18. doi: 10.1207/s15327965pli1501\_01

- 10. Dąbrowski and Maslow.

# Introduction of the Concept of Multilevel Actualization.

Presented by Bill Tillier at the  
Eighth International Congress of the  
Institute for Positive Disintegration  
in Human Development  
August 7 - 9, 2008 Canmore, Alberta, Canada  
Dąbrowski and Gifted Education:  
Beyond Overexcitabilities.

- Maslow's mother was very domineering, controlling and cruel – he felt “no mother-love.”
- An extremely isolated, unhappy child, describing himself as a “freak with two heads,” a view echoed by his father: “the ugliest kid you've ever seen.”
- He could not see how he had “not become psychotic.”
- Fell in love with and married his first cousin Bertha.
- Set out to understand human relations, at first as a strict Watsonian.
- He was fascinated by and attracted to dominant women all his life.

- Maslow worked in Harry Harlow's monkey lab and co-authored several papers on primate behavior.
- Conclusion: Dominance determines sexual behavior.
- He then studied dominance (self-esteem), motivation and sexual behavior by interviewing college women.
- Details of orgasm led him to "peak experiences."
- Using normal subjects became an important model.
- Maslow (1942) "human sexuality is almost exactly like primate sexuality:" dominant males & submissive females were equivalent in both species: an idea later reflected in his continuum view of instincts in animals & humans.

- Maslow saw himself as an expert on sex and felt he could improve society by improving peoples' sex lives.
- Male dominance / female submission are innate, “natural” instincts, needed for satisfying relations as defined by the female's ability to orgasm (Maslow,'42).
- Maslow used observations from primates to “instruct husbands in dominance” to yield orgasm in the wives.
- His views were very primitive:
  - As they are submissive, being raped is less psychologically damaging to women; they are more able let themselves ‘relax and enjoy it’ than men are (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 351).
  - Most “acquired” lesbians are highly dominant: but “when a suitable [i.e. more dominant] man came along, the homosexuality was dropped at once” (Maslow, 1942).

- Kurt Goldstein: the tendency toward **self-actualization** acts from within, overcoming disturbances arising from the clash with the world, not out of anxiety but out of the joy of conquest (1938).
- If the organisms' needs are met, its innate biological/psychological potentials can be actualized. If injured, this drive will seek to reorganize and restore balance.
- Already looking at security/motivation, Maslow (1943) quickly applied Goldstein's idea, now interviewing normal subjects about their development.
- Maslow did not find enough sufficiently developed subjects and turned to biographical studies to create the list of factors he felt indicated self-actualization.



- Maslow equated dominance to self-esteem, emotional security, & self-confidence: later reflected in his needs hierarchy & management theory (Cullen & Gotell, 2002).
- To see one's "natural superiority" is an important precondition of self-actualization: this created a gender bias in SA – men having "natural" dominance.
- SA contradicts women's innate submissiveness, creating social problems: few men can "tolerate and finally enjoy self-actualizing women" (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 87).
- He researched and wrote on business: companies should help men achieve their natural potential to be leaders; women lack the instincts to be managers.

- Healthy individuals accept their own nature “without chagrin or complaint or, for that matter, even without thinking about the matter very much.” He went on: “the self-actualized person . . . see[s] human nature as it *is* and not as they would prefer it to be” (Maslow, 1970, pp. 155-156).
- Maslow described these individuals as more objective, less emotional, less anxious and less likely to allow hopes, dreams, fears, or psychological defenses to distort their observations of reality.

- Maslow described various levels of potential within a person and said that all of these potentials must be actualized, the lowest along with the highest.
- “The first and most obvious level of acceptance is at the so-called animal level. Those self-actualizing people tend to be good animals, hearty in their appetites and enjoying themselves without regret or shame or apology” (Maslow, 1970, p. 156).
- Self-actualizing individuals “display the clearest “animal naturalness,” welcoming these lower levels without question, accepting “the work of nature rather than to argue with her for not having constructed things to a different pattern” (Maslow, 1970, p. 156).

- Our instinctoid biology underlies a single continuum of both our lowest and highest traits – “the ‘higher’ life” “is the same *kind* or *quality* of thing” as the lower life – the animal life (Maslow 1971/1976, pp. 313 – 314).
- Animal and human exist on a single continuum.
- NO qualitative differentiation between animal instincts and the highest values – metaneeds of humans.
- Human nature *should* be compared with animals, but not with lower animals like “wolves, tigers, pigs, vultures, or snakes,” instead with “better” “milder” animals like “the deer or elephant or dog or chimpanzee” (Maslow, 1970, p. 83).

- Maslow (1970) rejected the notion that we ought to try to achieve more; potential must be actualized as it exists – we must go from where we are to “what we can be” and no further.
- Aspiring to hopes or ideals creates anxiety and neuroses which stand in the way of acceptance and happiness.
- Maslow advocated avoiding guilt; failures to achieve one’s ideals become a major source of guilt.

- Maslow and Dąbrowski met in 1966 and corresponded until Maslow died in 1970.
- Over Dąbrowski's protests, Piechowski equated self-actualization as synonymous with Level IV and V.
- Maslow's initial position was that Dąbrowski had made a significant contribution but that it could be conceptually subsumed under his (Maslow's) model.
- Dąbrowski argued that his theory went far beyond Maslow's with a number of important qualitative differences and therefore must be kept separate.
- In correspondence just before his death, Maslow wrote to Dąbrowski acknowledging the superiority of Dąbrowski's approach.

- No sense of multilevelness present in Maslow.
- Must be a qualitative break between animals/humans.
- To develop personality is to control our lower instincts.
- *Overcoming* our animal nature differentiates humans.
- One must transcend “is” and work toward “ought.”
- Reject self *as is* – must use multilevelness to consciously differentiate lower aspects to inhibit or transcended from higher aspects to retain & expand.
- Higher aspects chosen reflect one’s personality ideal & will be “more like oneself” (personality shaping).
- Dąbrowski: if SA is equated with TPD or its levels, his approach would be misunderstood and lessened.

- Previous efforts to simply equate self-actualizing / actualization with Dąbrowski have been confusing and very misleading as the underlying rationale and assumptions of the two theories are quite different.
- In order to advance from this impasse, I am introducing the new, neo-Dąbrowskian and neo-Maslowian concept of **multilevel actualization (MA)**.
- Multilevel actualization bifurcates the continuum between animal and human traits, making it clear that lower level features qualitatively differ from higher ones, thus reflecting the differences Dąbrowski described between unilevel and multilevel experience.



- Before authentic actualizing can begin, a multilevel differentiation of instincts, traits, characteristics and emotions must take place.
- One must carefully review one's character and imagine one's, aims, goals & personality ideal.
- Lower aspects must be identified and inhibited to allow the independent actualization of higher features.
- The differentiated personality ideal subsequently becomes crucial in directing the process of actualizing and moving toward deliberate personality shaping, eventually resulting in the actualization of the qualities and characteristics of an authentic, unique individual.

# Reality: “As Is” Versus “What Ought To Be.” 298

- In Maslow, self-actualization involves a superior perception of reality, a clearer and more undistorted view of things *as they really are*.
- In multilevel actualization, one’s dreams and ideals represent the images of a higher reality – a potential reality, a reality of *what is possible* – this becomes one’s quest; to actualize and create one’s new reality.
- Actualizing reality as it exists versus establishing ideals and goals to strive for is a fundamental difference between Maslow and Dąbrowski.

- Dąbrowski: disparities between one's imagined reality and ideals versus one's actual reality creates strong vertical (multilevel) conflicts.
- These multilevel conflicts are a fundamental part of the developmental process acting through anxiety, depression, psychoneuroses & positive disintegration.
- In Maslow, conflicts, anxiety, crises and neuroses are “diseases of cognition” – blockages to development.
  - “What is psychopathological? Anything that disturbs or frustrates or twists the course of self-actualization” (Maslow, 1970, p. 270)

- The features of self-actualization put forth by Goldstein and Maslow must be reviewed and re-conceptualized using a multilevel approach.
- An integration of SA and multilevelness would lead to an important new paradigm of development and a new list of features, some old, some new.
- Research using this more comprehensive approach to development would provide important new insights.

- In summary, multilevel actualization involves a two-step process:
  - 1). A multilevel differentiation involving a careful review of the essence of one's character to identify the elements to be included versus those to be discarded in creating one's personality ideal.
  - 2). Actualization of this personality ideal involves:
    - Amplification and realization of the higher elements one considers more like oneself.
    - Active inhibition, repression and transformation of lower elements that are less like oneself.

- Without incorporating a multilevel reality, self-review, vertical differentiation and self-shaping, self-actualizing as a developmental concept is limited to unilevelness.
- Reflecting Lincoln's first inaugural address in 1861, a multilevel approach to actualization will help free the better angels of our nature from the bonds of our animal ancestry leading yet another step closer toward the realization of authentic human nature.

End.

- 11. Dąbrowski and Piechowski.

# Conceptual Differences Between Piechowski and Dąbrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at the  
19th Annual Society for the Advancement of Gifted  
Education (SAGE) Conference  
November 7th & 8th, 2008  
University of Calgary  
Calgary, Alberta



- In 1967, Piechowski was a microbiologist with the Department of biology at the University of Alberta when he met Dąbrowski, becoming a student, a research assistant and subsequently a co-author.
- In 1970, Piechowski returned to Wisconsin to pursue a doctorate in counseling.
- After meeting Nick Colangelo he became active in disseminating some of Dąbrowski's ideas, in particular, the idea of overexcitability in the gifted field.
- Piechowski's interpretation differs from Dąbrowski's original on several important points but in his presentations he does not make this clear, creating misimpressions about what Dąbrowski originally said.

- Dąbrowski called his work **the theory of positive disintegration** to highlight the disintegrative process he felt was necessary for personality development.
- Piechowski has primarily portrayed “**Dąbrowski’s theory of levels of emotional development**” as a theory describing and measuring emotional development.
- Culminating their collaborative work on a book, in final editing while Dąbrowski was in Poland, Piechowski submitted revised titles to the publisher to emphasize emotional development and inserted a section on self-actualization (Dąbrowski, 1977 [vol. 1]; Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977 [vol. 2]).

- **Dąbrowski's original titles:**
  - *Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions Part 1: Theory and description of levels of behavior.*
  - *Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions Part 2: Types and Levels of Development.*
- **Piechowski's revised titles as published:**
  - *Theory of levels of emotional development Volume 1 - Multilevelness and positive disintegration.*
  - *Theory of levels of emotional development Volume 2 - From primary integration to self - actualization.*
- Dąbrowski rejected the books and insisted the original manuscripts be republished (accomplished in 1996).
- Dąbrowski: TPD goes beyond emotional development & he asked that Piechowski's titles not be used.

- Piechowski's usage has created ongoing confusion in the gifted literature, for example, Sisk (2008, p. 26) refers to the theory using both titles: "Dąbrowski's . . . Theory of Positive Disintegration, also known as the Theory of Emotional Development."
- In recent lectures, Piechowski has referred to "Dąbrowski's theory of emotional development through positive disintegration."
- It is important to emphasize that in Dąbrowski's theory, it is not emotion that develops, it is personality.
  - While emotion plays an important role in advanced development, the theory does not describe emotional development per se.

## Re-titling Shifted and Narrowed the Focus.<sup>309</sup>

- Piechowski's dissemination created a substantially different focus of Dąbrowski's theory in the gifted field.
- Dąbrowski's foci on personality development & the critical developmental roles of positive disintegration and psychoneuroses were lost with Piechowski's narrowed focus and sole emphasis on overexcitability.
- Dąbrowski's work has subsequently been portrayed in the gifted literature as a theory of emotional development, a theory of giftedness and creativity and a theory of moral development in gifted individuals.

- In Fort Lauderdale, in 2002, Piechowski said that because Level I and II are not associated with development *per se*, these levels are “totally irrelevant” and should be dropped from the theory. See Piechowski (2009b), Tillier (2009a, 2009c).
  - Little significant inner life exists at Levels I (primary integration) and II (unilevel disintegration), inner psychic life only begins at Level III with multilevel processes (Piechowski, 2008, p. 43).
  - Development begins at Level III with the inner psychic milieu and its creative and transforming dynamisms and with multilevel disintegration (Piechowski, 2008, p. 43).

- The removal of level I and II represents a major conceptual departure from Dąbrowski's theory—without level I/II, it would no longer be Dąbrowski's theory.
- Dąbrowski explicitly designed a theory that would account for both the lowest and highest behaviors seen and proposed mechanisms by which development can occur, moving from lower levels higher.
- I have encouraged Piechowski to formulate his own theory but for some reason he is reluctant to do so.

- Dąbrowski: lacking strong developmental potential, the “so called normal person” (about 65% of the population) is limited to Level I, primary integration, or to the borderline of Level I – II.
- Piechowski: The whole concept of primary integration should be reconsidered – “as it is neither primary nor a personality structure but the outcome of the way society is” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 76).



- The whole premise of Dąbrowski's theory is that, as observed, development must be differentiated into levels – lower, unilevel development is primary in relationship to advanced, higher multilevel development – what Dąbrowski called secondary integration.
- If level I is *not* considered primary in relation to advanced development, what *does* it represent?

- Dąbrowski named Level II to reflect its basic feature – *unilevel disintegration*, characterized by brief and often intense crises between equivalent alternatives.
- Dąbrowski stressed the intense, transitional nature of the level: “Prolongation of unilevel disintegration often leads to reintegration on a lower level, to suicidal tendencies, or to psychosis” (7, 1964).
- Unless one falls back to Level I or further progresses into Level III, one chronically at Level II risks finding oneself in “a trap of a rapidly growing mental tension” – a drama “without exit” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 135).
- Level II – “perhaps they present twenty percent of all people” (quoted in Rankel, 2008).

# Differences Interpreting Factors and Levels. 315

- Dąbrowski described 3 factors influencing behavior:
  - First factor: heredity – genetic instincts
  - Second factor: environment – external mores/socialization
  - Third factor: autonomy – conscious choice & valuation
- Dąbrowski:
  - Level I = first & (primarily) second factor,
  - Levels III+ = the third factor.
- Piechowski:
  - Level I = first factor, Level II = second factor, Levels III+ = the third factor.
  - “[At level II] the self derives its definition from fulfilling the expectations of others, family, or society (‘second factor’)” (Piechowski, 2003, p. 289).

- Piechowski: “Level II is not always characterized by disintegration, because it carries the possibility of partial integration, or adaptive integration, that follows the conventions and dictates of society and one’s immediate environment” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 69).
- Based upon Piechowski’s interpretation, in the gifted literature, Level II has been described as a level of socialization (encompassing the average person) and the goal of Level II has been described as socialization (Silverman, 1993, p. 14).
- This interpretation of level II is at odds with Dąbrowski’s original description of the level.

- Dąbrowski defined developmental potential as “The constitutional endowment which determines the character and the extent of mental growth possible for a given individual”(1972, p. 293).
- “Although Dąbrowski viewed primary integration as a rigid [genetic] personality structure, it makes more sense to see it as the outcome of socialization. *If people are operating at Level I it is because this is the condition of the world, not because their psyche is constituted that way*” (italics in original) (Piechowski, 2003, p. 289).
  - Here, growth is limited by socialization, not genetic developmental potential as Dąbrowski described it.

- Piechowski now outlines two approaches to development and to developmental potential:
- 1). Following Dąbrowski's approach, Piechowski equated personal growth with climbing a mountain saying that "not everyone has the strength, endurance, and determination to go far; few manage to reach the summit" (2008, p. 64).

- 2). Piechowski reviewed examples of “unilevel development” occurring at level II and concluded these cases represent significant growth:
  - “This raises the question as to whether it is possible to facilitate a transition to multilevel emotional growth if a person’s developmental potential is limited” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).
  - “The above examples show that not all material has to be generated from the framework of Dąbrowski’s theory” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).
- Summary: Piechowski outlines 2 growth processes; one reflecting Dąbrowski, governed by DP, and another path “not generated from” Dąbrowski’s theory.

- “And is it possible to imagine a harmonious society without a multilevel majority? I feel it is possible – to imagine” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).
- This raises several questions: What is Piechowski’s philosophical approach to development? If the goal of social development is *not* a multilevel majority, what is it? And what then is the goal of individual development if not multilevelness? What role do developmental exemplars play in his approach? Finally, if developmental potential does not control development, then what does determine one’s potential for growth?
- Piechowski’s position represents a substantially different and new approach to development.



- The crux of individual development is multilevelness.
- Multilevel exemplars:
  - - herald the next step in human evolution.
  - - serve as role models of what is possible.
  - - challenge one to take active control of one's development and strive for ideals & growth.
- Today, society is based upon unilevel principles and reflects self-centered and self-serving motives.
- An ideal society is based on multilevel principles and ideals, reflects other-centered motives and would be comprised of a majority of multilevel individuals.

- From material Piechowski added to the 1977 books:
  - “We shall try to demonstrate that Maslow’s concept of SA fits the structure of Level IV and that, consequently, the traits of SA logically follow from that structure” (Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977, pp. 158-159).
  - “Self-actualization, as a psychological norm suggested by Maslow, now finds support in the framework of the theory of positive disintegration as an attribute of the Level IV structure” (Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977, pp. 218-219).
- “The correspondence between Saint Exupéry’s material and SA and between the terms of SA and the terms of positive disintegration shows that the structure of level IV underlies all of the characteristics of SA” (Piechowski, 1978, p. 229).

- “In level IV, we have an explicit and detailed developmental structure which accounts for the pervasiveness and the cohesion of the traits of SA” (Piechowski, 1978, p. 230).
- “The fit between Level IV as the structural skeleton and self-actualization as the flesh of rich description with which to cover the bones is too good not to be true” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 58).
- Thus, from 1977 to 2008, Piechowski has consistently linked SA with Level IV, however . . .

- Piechowski also linked SA with Level V.
- Piechowski's subtitle for Vol. 2 of the 1977 books, "From primary integration to self-actualization," implied that SA is the endpoint of development – level V in Dąbrowski's theory.
- In 1991, Piechowski explained: "Maslow's self-actualizing person fits Level IV; the self-actualized person – the enlightened one – fits Level V." "The early stages of self-actualization" . . . "correspond to Level III growth processes" (p. 20).

- Beginnings of multilevelness present in Maslow.
- Maslow's unbroken continuum between animals and humans is incompatible with Dąbrowski's views.
- To develop personality is to control lower instincts: *overcoming* our animal nature differentiates humans.
- One must transcend "is" and work toward "ought" by rejecting the self *as is* – must use multilevelness to consciously differentiate lower aspects to inhibit or transcend from higher aspects to retain & expand (personality shaping to achieve personality ideal).

- Dąbrowski said that equating SA with his theory would diminish his approach.
- Maslow conceived psychoneurotic symptoms “in negative terms as being marginal to normal development” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 248).
- The two basically agreed on developmental potential.
- Dąbrowski’s theory, in particular, the third factor, the inner psychic milieu, the hierarchy of values, the personality ideal and the roles played by psychoneuroses, positive disintegration and overexcitability in development goes far beyond the ideas encapsulated in Maslow’s approach to self-actualization.

- Piechowski has introduced a number of conceptual interpretations that have influenced the literature.
- Confusion was created as these differences were not noted & Dąbrowski's original work was not described.
- Awareness of these issues is critical for those who want to understand & apply Dąbrowski's approach.
- Piechowski has recently advocated "rethinking Dąbrowski's theory" and removing levels I and II.
- Rather than "rethinking Dąbrowski's theory," both Piechowski and the gifted community would be better served if he developed and promoted his own theory that could then be compared to Dąbrowski's original.

- 12. Applications of the Theory.



- 12. Applications of the Theory.
  - -- General Applications of the Theory.

- Dąbrowski outlined 9 applications (116-129, 1970):
  - Psychology (a new approach based on the TPD).
  - Psychiatry / Psychotherapy (insight and autopsychotherapy).
  - Education (focus more on the balanced, integrated development of the personality, not just cognitive aspects).
  - Philosophy of Man & Ethics (need ML/developmental view).
  - Philosophy of Science & Humanities (need to incorporate vertical views).
  - History (apply TPD to better understand history and historical events).
  - Sociology (development of societies mirrors individual growth?).
  - Politics (move from 'is of practice' to 'ought of long term goals').
  - Pastoral Guidance (understand deep, universal religious truths).

- “The generation of a genuine autonomous, moral awareness in an individual and its gradual growth towards higher levels of emotional maturity and responsibility is the paramount question in psychiatry” (118, 1970).
- Symptoms are only meaningful in the context of the individual’s overall potential for development.
- Dąbrowski said the key principle is to see if a psychoneurotic process is part of a unilevel or multilevel disintegration and to adapt our therapeutic techniques accordingly.
- Largely based on education and self-education.
- Goal: To support the individual to conduct their own therapy and to shape their development autonomously.

- Uses a unique “descriptive-interpretative diagnosis:”
  - “The aim of diagnosis is to grasp all the positive factors, to introduce the patient to them and to make him a co-author of his diagnosis” (252, 1972).
  - “The multidimensional, detailed and synthetic diagnosis comprises essentially half of psychotherapy . . . For most patients the discovery of their originality, creativity, symptoms of accelerated development and even talents, and the program of development of such functions, very often gives them a clear sense of life” (253, 1972).
- “Medical treatment and psychotherapeutic efforts will be replaced by counselling which would consist mainly in the clarification of the developmental nature of nervous tension and symptoms of disintegration” (119, 1970).

- Social levels can be examined in a developmental context:
  - Today, we can see how people who succeed in the ‘dog-eat-dog’ society are rewarded and how sensitive people are treated: this “indicates that the society itself is primitive and confused” (118, 1970).
  - Alienation from such a society would be an example of positive maladjustment: an indication of healthy individual development.

- Social development may mirror individual development:
  - “The growth of societies may be subject to laws of disintegration comparable to those evident in the process of positive disintegration in individuals. It may be possible to describe and distinguish primitively integrated, monolithic and stagnant societies from those which undergo process of differentiation and developmental conflicts“ (126, 1970).
  - “The distinction of levels of mental functions seems to be the foundation of any long-range political program of development and social progress” (128, 1970).

- 12. Applications of the Theory.
  - -- Applications in Education.

- Education traditionally is based on cognitive models:
  - Very old tradition – Socrates, Plato & Aristotle:
    - Example; Plato saw emotion as disruptive & confusing to learning (emotion impairs cognition).
      - Cognition: reflects “mind” & higher “noble” goals.
      - Emotion: reflects body & lower impulses/desires.
  - View cemented by early I.Q. tests & Piaget’s work.
  - Focus on: cognition, memory and rote performance.
  - (Psychology & psychiatry also have cognitive bias).
- Minor exceptions in education have been seen:
  - Waldorf schools based upon Rudolf Steiner’s work.
  - Montessori Method (Maria Montessori).



- Education creates intelligent “robots:”
  - History shows “Intelligence” alone is not sufficient to ensure healthy decision making and behavior.
- Dąbrowski: Education tends to “train” not educate. Creates a society of conformers & “social achievers” that follow group based mores, not individuals with minds (personalities) of their own.
  - Education is wrongly used to promote political and social values and goals, for example to promote consumerism and material wealth.
  - Today, individual achievement is valued over individual character.

- Self-awareness; Global, empathetic & durable attitudes; Personal hierarchy of values & ideals.
- Goal: the creation of unique individuals, capable of autonomous thought & self analysis based on an integration of feelings about issues & person’s thoughts about issues (not a rote recital of “the facts” or of prevailing social mores).
- Teach people how to critically evaluate issues & foster individual autonomy – help individuals to develop autonomous values & unique personality.
- Establishes a new hierarchy where emotion “directs” cognition, intelligence serves higher values.

Source : Dąbrowski, K. (nd). On Authentic Education. Unpublished manuscript.

- Education must strive to nourish the whole individual including both cognitive and emotional aspects.
  - Emotional aspects can have a dramatic impact on learning style, learning potential and performance.
  - The students potential must be seen in the context of their *overall personality*; within the classroom, family and society. Their performance and behavior must be viewed and evaluated in this context as well.

- Dąbrowski advocated “humanistic education, that is, true human education and not mere training as the methods of an animal trainer might be described.”
- Emphasizes that children are unique:
  - Two avenues to achieve education:
    - 1). General education designed to enhance common traits that all kids share,
    - 2). Specialized education focused on the unique traits of each child.
- “Authentic education is designed to encourage the child to transgress mediocre statistical qualities and to develop his own hierarchy of values and aims which he is then taught to realize.”

- Students need to be individually supported and nurtured on both emotional and cognitive dimensions.
- When a Dąbrowskian diagnosis supports a positive interpretation, “symptoms” should be accepted:
  - OE should be tolerated: Dąbrowski – “We must forgive each other our psychological type.”
  - Crises should be expected and framed in a developmental context when appropriate.
- The rich tradition of ML and other OE individuals can be emphasized to reduce feelings of alienation.

- 12. Applications of the Theory.
  - -- Applications in Gifted Education.

- “It does not seem that authentic creativity of a high level is possible without the activity of neurotic and psychoneurotic dynamisms” (41, 1973).
- “Generally, it may safely be taken that the lower is the level of function represented by a given psychoneurosis, the fewer creative elements are involved” (198, 1972).
- “Lack of creative tendencies goes together with lack of inner conflicts, lack of positive adjustment” (198, 1972).
- “Greater creative tendencies are exhibited in psychoneurosis of a higher level” (198, 1972).

- Today's application to the gifted field is largely based upon a study Dąbrowski conducted with children:
  - Reported in Dąbrowski (1967) and again in (1972).
  - Examined 80 children: 30 intellectually gifted and 50 from “drama, ballet and plastic art schools” (251, 1967).
- Found ‘every child’ showed ‘hyperexcitability,’ various psychoneurotic symptoms and frequent conflicts with the environment.
- “The development of personality with gifted children and young people usually passes through the process of positive disintegration” (261, 1967).
  - This hypothesis has not yet been tested.



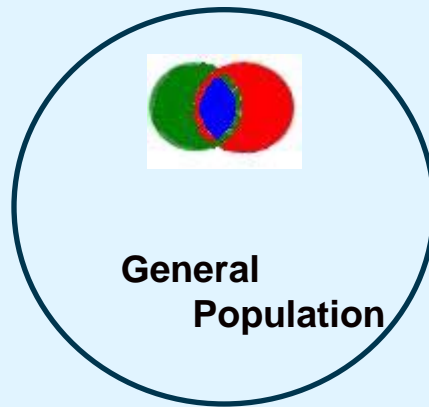
- In the manuscript, *On Authentic Education*, Dąbrowski said:
  - “The nervous and psychoneurotic individual is present in an overwhelming percentage of highly gifted children and youths, artists, writers, etc. [The] tendency to reach beyond the statistical norm and mediocre development presents the privilege and drama of psychoneurotic people.”
- Conclusion: “The development of personality with gifted children and young people usually passes through the process of positive disintegration” (1967, p. 261).
  - This hypothesis has not yet been tested.

- Hypothesis: as a group, students identified as gifted will tend to display stronger DP (& OE), increased levels of psychoneuroses, and will be predisposed to experience positive disintegration:
  - Many students will display “symptoms” that may reflect higher potentials:
    - May display unusual sensitivity, frequent crises, anxieties, depression, perfectionism, etc.
    - May express strong positive maladjustment:
      - Strong sense they are different, don't fit in.
      - Have conflicts with social (unilevel) morality.
      - Feel alienated from others, from their peers.

- Dąbrowski tried to develop diverse tests of DP.
- Piechowski went on to develop his own OEQ test of OE (not a test of full DP):
  - (Lysy, K. Z., & Piechowski M. M. (1983). Personal Growth: An empirical study using Jungian and Dąbrowskian measures. Genetic Psych Monographs, 108, 267-320.)
- Ackerman found problems with the OEQ:
  - Ackerman, C. (1997). A secondary analysis of research using the Overexcitability Questionnaire. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.)
- A revised test, the OEQ-II, has now been developed:
  - Falk, R. F., Lind, S., Miller, N. B., Piechowski, M. M., & Silverman, L. K. (1999). The Overexcitability Questionnaire-Two (OEQII): Manual, Scoring System, and Questionnaire. (Available from the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, 1452 Marion St., Denver, CO 80218).
- Research/development continues on this front.

- Hypothesis: individuals displaying high DP & those identified as gifted will constitute two overlapping subgroups found within the larger population:

**Identified as gifted, but little DP is seen (24%).**



**Not identified as gifted but DP is seen (35%).**

**Overlap: those identified as gifted & show DP.**

- Ackerman (1997): identified three groups as shown above.
  - Concludes the 35% with higher DP *must* be gifted but have been missed by conventional gifted testing.
- Dąbrowski: we *can* have DP & not be “gifted” although he suggested that above average intelligence was a necessary but not sufficient condition for advanced development.

- Mendaglio and Tillier (2006) present a review of the literature.
- Michael Pyryt reviewed the research findings concluding that:
  - Gifted individuals are more likely than those not identified as gifted to show signs of intellectual OE, but based upon the research strategies and testing done to date, the gifted do not consistently demonstrate “the big three,” intellectual, imaginal and emotional OE (Pyryt, 2008).
  - Pyryt (2008) concluded, “it appears that gifted and average ability individuals have similar amounts of emotional overexcitability. This finding would suggest that many gifted individuals have limited developmental potential in the Dąbrowskian sense and are more likely to behave egocentrically rather than altruistically” (p. 177).

- The metaanalysis of the last 20 years of research calls for the reappraisal of the conclusion that as a group, the gifted disproportionately display overexcitability compared to non-gifted groups.
- Current research measures OE but not DP.
- Can OE act as a marker for giftedness?
- Do the gifted disproportionately demonstrate other signs of developmental potential, for example, the third factor?
- This question remains unresearched.

- The hypothesis that the gifted will also display higher levels of positive disintegration remains untested.
- Research suggests that gifted students do not display higher anxiety, depression or suicide (Neihart 1999):
  - If it is true that gifted have higher OE as a group, why don't they appear to have more PN and go through PD as Dąbrowski's theory would predict?

- 13. Current and Future Issues.



- Dąbrowski's original materials were initially scarce and most have learned about his work through secondary sources (see next slide).
- There has been controversy over how some have interpreted Dąbrowski's concepts & some confusion over what he said vs. the views of others.
- For some reason, it is not uncommon to see very poor scholarship in the presentation of Dąbrowski's ideas, for example, see Ruf (2009), Tieso (2007) and Tillier (2008b).
- There continues to be vigorous interest and discussion of Dąbrowski's concepts, for example, see Frank, Curties & Finlay (2009) and Various Authors (2009).

- The Dąbrowski website contains a full bibliography of original and secondary materials, many references contain links to PDF copies of the articles.
- <http://www.positivedisintegration.com/>
- A DVD containing all of Dabrowski's original English materials, as well as most of the conference proceedings and many of the articles related to Dabrowski is available through the website.

- Are five OE enough?
  - Some have suggested adding more types of OE.
  - Hague suggests considering spiritual OE.
- How can we help people to achieve their full DP?
- How can we do better at understanding those in crises?
- How do we understand: DP / OE / Bipolar Disorders / ADHD?
- The theory is fluid, open to further research and development.

- How can we best balance future theory building and refinement with operationalization (validation, testing, assessment, etc.).
- How can we best disseminate the theory?
  - The theory has many subtleties and ambiguities and is open to different interpretations and understandings.
  - Each interpreter seems to have a unique emphasis.
- The hypothesis that gifted students will experience positive disintegration still needs to be explored and tested.
- Emerging concepts in neurophysiology including the application of chaotic attractors and network views of neuronal function may lead to a reinterpretation of Jackson's multilevel view of neurology.

- 14. Synopsis.

- “Dąbrowski refers to his view of personality development as the Theory of Positive Disintegration” (xiii, 1964).
- “Personality is the aim and the result of development through positive disintegration” (181, 1972).
- Basic assumption: “There exist empirically verifiable differences between levels of all mental functions comparable to the difference between levels of intelligence” (2, 1970).
- “Mental development is assumed to consist of a transition from lower ranks of the scale towards higher ranks” (2, 1970).
- “In the course of evolution from higher animals to man, and from the normal man to the universally and highly developed man, we observe processes of disintegration of lower functions and an integration of higher functions” (62, 1972).

- “The functions involved in this evolutionary process are all the emotional, instinctive and intellectual functions” (62, 1972).
- There are “two qualitatively different types of mental life: the heteronomous, determined by biological or environmental factors, and the autonomous, self-conscious, self-determined, and self-controlled” (11, 1970).
- In another quote:
  - “Mental life at its first, more primitive stage, is determined by and subordinated to biological forces and influences of the social environment” . . . In development, “a new quality arises. Things cease to remain under exclusive control of biological and social determinants. Self-conscious, autonomous choice between alternatives becomes real” (12, 1970).

- Development requires “the stimulation of higher functions and the inhibition of lower functions. This involves many kinds of sensitivity and excitability, numerous inner conflicts, [and the] emergence of multilevel inner forces, which can be called dynamisms of the inner psychic milieu” (62, 1972).
- “The engagement of the higher mental functions in the transformation of the lower ones” causes various types of nervous and mental disturbances (62, 1972).
- Psychoneurosis “represents a ‘hierarchy of higher functions,’ which means a hierarchy in which mental dynamisms predominate over nervous reactions. Psychoneurosis is a more psychical or more mental form of functional disorder, while neurosis is a more nervous or somatopsychic form” (41, 1972).



- “The symptomatological levels have to be taken into account beginning with the somatopsychic as the lowest, then psychosomatic, distinctly psychic, and finally the most conscious as the most complex and the highest” (57, 1972).
- Depending upon several factors, “we have in psychoneuroses either a dominance of psychical processes [higher] or of the processes involving the autonomic nervous system [lower, neurosis]” (63, 1972).
- As symptoms become ‘higher’ they are linked to volition - “these disturbances come gradually under control in the general development of the human species and concretely in individual development” (62-63, 1972).
- “The higher the functions in psychoneurosis, the more one uncovers elements of personality development in the subject” (197, 1972).

- Conscious internal conflicts . . . [create] conscious restructuring of different levels of the psyche . . . the restructuring of different levels occurs through inner psychic transformation (paraphrased from 67 - 68, 1972).
- “In normal individuals every manifestation of development is, to a greater or lessor degree, related to disintegration” (20, 1970).
- Development “takes a great deal of tension, inner conflict and struggle, anxiety, and even despair” (3, 1970).
- “Psychoneuroses are observed in people possessing special talents, sensitivity, and creative capacities; they are common among outstanding people” (2, 1972).

- “Psychoneuroses -- especially those of a higher level -- provide an opportunity to ‘take one’s life into one’s own hands.’ They are expressive of a drive for psychic autonomy, especially moral autonomy, through transformation of a more or less primitively integrated structure” (4, 1972).
- “‘Psychoneurotic experiences’ by disturbing the lower levels of values help gradually to enter higher levels of values, i.e. the level of higher emotions” (3, 1972). This is the crux of the process of development.
- “Psychoneurotics, rather than being treated as ill, should be considered as individuals most prone to a positive and even accelerated psychic development” (4, 1972).

- “In the higher psychoneuroses we have ‘seeing’ of new things, answers to the meaning of life, a search for the ‘new and other,’ separation into levels . . .” (199, 1972).
- “The general basic condition for the genesis and development of neuroses and psychoneuroses is - in our opinion - an increased psychic excitability” (46, 1972).
- “No genuine mental conflicts, that is to say, conflicts involving self-consciousness and authenticity, can be solved by any means other than the individual’s conscious effort and inner growth” (119, 1970).
- “Mental Health consists of the functioning of processes which effect development towards higher levels of mental function” (173, 1970).

- Dąbrowski outlined five levels:
  - 1). An initial level characterized by an integrated, unitary structure.
  - 2). Three levels displaying degrees of partial disintegrations and disintegrations of psychological structures.
  - 3). A final level characterized by a secondary integration.

- Initial Integration:
  - Level I: Primitive or primary integration.
    - “This stage is exempt from disintegration and its characteristic feature is that behavior is controlled chiefly by constitutional factors” (111, 1972).
    - “No awareness of ‘we’ but only a strongly developed sense of ‘me’” (74, 1964).
  - At the first integration there is essentially no development:
    - “The first stage, called primitive or primary integration, is characterized by mental structures and functions of a low level; they are automatic and impulsive, determined by primitive, innate drives” (21, 1970).

- Disintegration:
  - Three levels describe a progressive series of disintegrations of lower functions.
    - Level II: Unilevel disintegration.
    - Level III: Spontaneous multilevel disintegration.
    - Level IV: Organized multilevel disintegration.

- Level II: Unilevel disintegration.
  - The initial disintegration is unilevel, horizontal and linear:
    - “Begins with loosening of the rigid structure of [Level I]” (21, 1970).
    - “Internal conflicts exist but are usually externalized. They lack a direction, they occur as if on one plane only (hence called unilevel)” (111, 1970). Characterized by ambivalences and ambitendencies.



- Advanced disintegration is linked to a multilevel view:
  - “As soon as the process of hierarchization becomes more pronounced, the differences between that which is closer to ‘more myself’ and that which is more distant (‘less myself’), between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’, becomes clearly distinguishable” (22, 1970).
  - Creates “a struggle for mental control between the ‘lower’ and the ‘higher’ within oneself. This is a multilevel conflict which carries the potential for a direction and further development” (112, 1970).
  - “We call it multilevel because there is an observable hierarchy of mental functions” (39, 1972).

- Secondary integration:
  - Level V: “A new structural form with a new hierarchy of aims” (20, 1964).
    - “Consists of a new organization and harmonization of personality” (22, 1970).
    - Secondary integration is also a developmental process: “besides the new concepts and terms resulting from the process of disintegration, there are concepts and terms associated with and derived from the processes of secondary integration” (xv, 1973).
    - “Growing knowledge of reality may generate the need to reunite various threads of thought in a secondary integration of concepts at a higher level which expresses new insights” (viii, 1973).

- **Summary:** “Human and social reality appears to be submitted to the law of positive disintegration. If progress is to be achieved, if new and valuable forms of life are to be developed, lower levels of mental functions have to be shaken and destroyed, and a sequence of processes of positive disintegration and secondary integrations are necessary. Consequently, human development has to involve suffering, conflicts, inner struggle” (16, 1970).

- 15. Conclusion.



- Here, then, is a great mystery. For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has -- yes or no?-- eaten a rose... Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: is it yes or no? Has the sheep eaten the flower? And you will see how everything changes... And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance!

- From: The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry New York:

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