

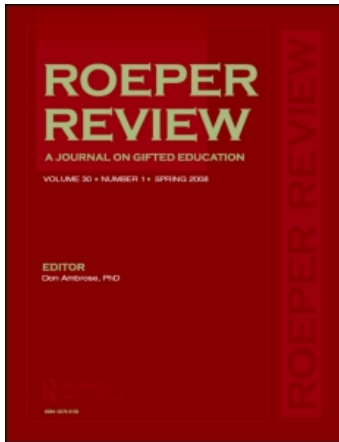
This article was downloaded by: [Canadian Research Knowledge Network]

On: 26 March 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 783016864]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Roeper Review

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t92156624>

Introduction

Cheryl M. Ackerman^a; Vicky Frankfourth Moyle^b

^a Delaware Education Research & Development Center, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, USA ^b Morse 206, Bellingham Technical College, Bellingham, WA, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 April 2009

To cite this Article Ackerman, Cheryl M. and Moyle, Vicky Frankfourth(2009)'Introduction',Roeper Review,31:2,79 — 80

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/02783190902737640

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02783190902737640>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

SPECIAL ISSUE: DABROWSKI'S THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION

Introduction



As professionals engaged in the field of giftedness become familiar with the term *overexcitability*, many discover that understanding this construct might be beneficial to working with gifted individuals. The term comes from the theory of positive disintegration (TPD)—a complex theory of personality development written by Polish psychiatrist Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902–1980) that we believe has much more to offer the field than just overexcitabilities. Since 1979, when Piechowski (1979) and Ogburn-Colangelo (1979) introduced it to the gifted community,



Dabrowski's work has been used as a foundation for research, a guide for effective education, a conceptual instrument for successful counseling, and a meaningful organizational system to help individuals better understand themselves.

Disintegration may seem too negative a concept for gifted studies. But when something new is created, as in a paradigm shift, disequilibrium occurs as part of the dismantling and rebuilding process. This simple point is at the root of Dabrowski's work and can be viewed as a positive thing. Contemplating the articles in this issue, we encourage you to view the theory not as rigid and proscriptive but more like an arrow pointing the way on a dynamic evolutionary process. As you read, we invite you to consider two of Dabrowski's key points: that (a) emotion serves as a determining element in any human activity with inhibitive as well as transformative power, and (b) disintegrative experiences are essential for growth to occur.

In this special issue, nearly a dozen authors contribute to our further understanding of Dabrowski's work. To open the conversation, Michele Kane brings together thoughts from experts in a roundtable interview. Her single question asked them to identify those theoretical concepts that are essential to understand for the gifted community, beyond overexcitabilities. Delving deeper into the theory, Cheryl M. Ackerman provides us with an overview and a taste of its complexity. She tells us that the inspiration for Dabrowski's

model was his intense curiosity about what, exactly, is at work that causes differences in sensitivity, ability to sacrifice, courage, and compassion between human beings. Cheryl details the key elements of the theory and ways in which these elements function together in the process of development.

Anna Mróz's article profiles seven individuals who are clearly not focused on the best possible *social* adaptation and, in their attempts to lead *value*-driven lives, experienced high anxiety. The catalyst transforming this anxiety for all of them was coming in contact with another individual who assuaged their loneliness and isolation by making them feel understood. In fact, Mróz found in her study, that further development never took place without communion—that feeling of resonance, of being deeply connected in thought and emotion, with another.

Michael M. Piechowski provides an exemplar of the highest level of development in his reintroduction of the peace advocate Peace Pilgrim (1908–1981). He chronicles her development in light of Dabrowski's theory and points out that it isn't often that we bring spirituality into the gifted arena. His article invites us to contemplate our own vision of what it might mean to be a "level five" individual and what its "minimum requirements" might entail. However, we suggest that developmental levels in this theory are most powerful when looked at as mutable scaffolding, marked by transitioning experiences, behaviors, and feelings rather than by any achievement gained. Perhaps it isn't important to create a rigid definition of secondary integration so much as to point out a direction, acknowledge a quest, and ask important questions.

Krystyna Laycraft synthesizes chaos theory and TPD to explore personality development among gifted adolescents. Her unique and thought-provoking work provides a new model for the process of development that uses the concepts of bifurcation points and chaotic attractors to describe the developmental process.

After the full-length articles, William Tillier contributes a point-counterpoint in response to Carol Tieso's previous article, *Overexcitabilities: A New Way to Think About Talent?* (2007). As one of Dabrowski's last students, Bill

has devoted himself to the clarification of Dabrowski's original work.

We are also pleased to include two reviews of recent books on Dabrowski's theory. Leslie Forstadt and Josh Shaine review Sal Mendaglio's edited volume, *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration*; and Forstadt also considers the newest book on the theory of positive disintegration, *Living With Intensity*, edited by Susan Daniels and Michael Piechowski.

And you have even more to look forward to! Due to the number of articles accepted for this special issue and publishing space constraints, three of our articles soon will appear in a future issue of the *Roeper Review*. Their contributions to the elucidation and use of the theory are unparalleled: Linda Kreger Silverman's "My Love Affair With Dabrowski's Theory: A Personal Odyssey"; P. Susan Jackson and Vicky Frankfourth Moyle's "With Dabrowski in Mind: Reinstating the Outliers in Support of Full-Spectrum Development"; and Nancy B. Miller, R. Frank Falk, and Yinmei Huang's "Gender Identity and the Overexcitability Profiles of Gifted College Students." These articles will extend your journey into the seminal work of Kazimierz Dabrowski.

We sincerely thank the authors, who have helped us realize our intentions to provide the gifted community with a more complete grasp and deeper appreciation of this important theory. We hope it inspires you to use the theory,

to contemplate new ideas, and to delve deeper into Dabrowski's work.

Cheryl M. Ackerman, PhD
Delaware Education Research & Development Center
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19716
E-mail: cma@udel.edu

Vicky Frankfourth Moyle, MA, LPC, LMHC
Morse 206, Bellingham Technical College
3028 Lindbergh Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225
E-mail: vmoyle@btc.ctc.edu

REFERENCES

- Ogburn-Colangelo, M. K. (1979). Giftedness as multilevel potential: A clinical example. In N. Colangelo & R. T. Zaffrann, (Eds.), *New voices in counseling the gifted* (pp. 165-187). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Piechowski, M. M. (1979). Developmental potential. In N. Colangelo & R. T. Zaffrann (Eds.), *New voices in counseling the gifted* (pp. 25-57). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Tieso, C. L. (2007). Overexcitabilities: A new way to think about talent? *Roeper Review*, 29, 232-240.