

Welcome

The Seventh International Congress of the Institute for
Positive Disintegration in Human Development
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Positive Maladjustment:
Theoretical,
Educational and
Therapeutic Perspectives.

Positive Maladjustment

“If you want to be a different fish,
you have to jump out of the school”

Captain Beefheart (Don Van Vliet).

Positive Maladjustment – Defined

- ❑ *POSITIVE MALADJUSTMENT: A conflict with and rejection of those standards and attitudes of one's social environment which are incompatible with one's growing awareness of a higher scale of values which is developing as an internal imperative. (Dab. 1972, p. 302)*

A Conscious Process of Choice

- ❑ *... – positive maladjustment – expresses a conscious and selective rejection, a lack of adjustment to certain external or internal dynamisms, and an adjustment to the accepted hierarchy of aims, to that which “ought to be”. (Dab. 1973, p. 65)*

A Vital Part of Positive Disintegration

- ❑ *We seem to be unable to fully develop and achieve cultural growth without inner conflicts and maladjustment to ourselves and to our surroundings -- none of which are phenomena of an integrative nature. (Dab. 1973, p. 42)*

Characterizes Development

- ❑ *Positive maladjustment characterizes all forms of creative and positive development and characterizes also most of the psychoneurotic dynamisms which we consider to be positive and creative. (Dab. 1970, p. 39)*

The Most Critical Indicator

- ❑ *Of all the dynamisms of the first phase of positive disintegration, positive maladjustment is the most important indicator of a potential for accelerated development. (Dab. EDI #12A, p. 8)*

The Source of Positive Maladjustment

- ❑ *What is the source of the phenomenon of positive maladjustment? It arises from psychic hyperexcitability, particularly emotional, imaginational, and intellectual, from the nuclei of the inner psychic milieu, and from the instincts of creativity and self-perfection. (Dab. 1970, p. 39)*

Basic for the Development of Mental Health

- ❑ *In this process of development through multilevel positive disintegration, the human being develops positive maladjustment to “what is” and an adjustment to “what ought to be”. This positive maladjustment is basic for the development of mental health. (Dab. 1970, p. 60)*

From “What is” to “What Ought to be”

- ❑ *The very concept of mental development and of the transition to higher levels involves maladjustment to some elements of reality, of “what is,” and the disposition to adjust to the patterns implied by the new hierarchy of values, that is the adjustment to “what ought to be.” (Dab. 1970, p. 144)*
- ❑ *From this standpoint mental development requires positive maladjustment toward “what is” in the name of “what ought to be”. (Dab. 1973, pp. 14-15)*

As a Dynamism of Development

- ❑ *The dynamism of positive maladjustment acts through the loosening or breakdown of lower levels of homeostasis to allow its integration at a higher level. It effects a change of values. This change comes about through positive disintegration of values that have become too stiff and too narrow. Before this change, and on a lower level, automatic psychic adaptation of those values was a rule. Now it is not possible any more. (Dab. EDI #12A, p. 8)*

As a Drive Toward Authenticity

- ❑ *Positive maladjustment is the attitude of rejection of the primitive requirements of a social group. It expresses the need for adaption to a higher hierarchy of values, to the ideal, to that which “ought to be”; thus, it expresses the drive toward positive development, self-perfection, and realization of the attitudes of autonomy and authenticity. (Dab. 1973, pp. 66-67)*

Positive Maladjustment and Homeostasis

- ❑ *The conception of multilevelness of reality allows for the distinction of various forms of integration or homeostasis. It may be primitive, determined by biological and social forces or autonomous, achieved in the process of positive disintegration; that is to say, associated with and resulting from nervous and psychoneurotic tension, from inner conflicts and positive maladjustment through which the primitive homeostasis is destroyed. (Dab. 1973, p. 15)*

Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration

- ❑ *The phase of spontaneous multilevel disintegration . . . consists in the hierarchization of values and in the operation of such dynamisms as astonishment with oneself, dissatisfaction with oneself, disquietude with oneself, maladjustment to oneself and to the environment. At this stage of his development, the individual is under constant pressure to “transcend” the rigidity of a unilevel structure and to activate creative dynamisms. (Dab. 1973, p. 44)*

Applications of Positive Maladjustment

- ❑ *Positive maladjustment is one of the clearest and indispensable concepts in the realm of theoretical and practical sciences concerned with mental development -- in particular, developmental and educational psychology, psychopathology, psychology of creativity, pedagogics, human relations, self-education and autopsychotherapy, and even ethics. (Dab. 1973, p. 67)*

The Broader Context of Positive Maladjustment in Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration.

Dabrowski Defined Four Types of Adjustment.

- ❑ **NEGATIVE MALADJUSTMENT:** What we traditionally think of as anti-social or criminal behaviour

(Level I)

- ❑ **NEGATIVE ADJUSTMENT.** *Nondevelopmental adjustment. Unqualified conformity to a hierarchy of values prevailing in a person's social environment.* (Dab. 1972, p. 299)

(Level I)

- ❑ **POSITIVE MALADJUSTMENT.**
(Part of the process of positive disintegration)

- ❑ **POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT,** *or developmental adjustment. Conformity to higher levels of a hierarchy of values, self-discovered and consciously followed.* (Dab. 1972, p. 301)

(Level IV-V)

Adjustment

- ❑ *The theory of positive disintegration introduces the concepts of negative adjustment and positive maladjustment next to the contemporary concepts and definitions of conformity, order, adjustment and maladjustment.* (Dab. 1973, p. 65)

The Criteria of Adjustment

- ❑ *... hierarchies of values constitute the foundations for creating the hierarchy of aims; that is to say, a hierarchy of standards of conduct for development in individuals and in groups. Consequently, they, at the same time, constitute the criteria of adjustment and maladjustment in the developmental sense of the term.* (Dab. 1973, p. 66)

The “Crisis” of Adjustment

- ❑ *Thus, we notice the growing developmental complexity and the “crisis” of the process and of the concept of adjustment. We deal with the differentiation of adjustment to “what is” and adjustment to “what ought to be” which implies maladjustment to “what is”. This is the concept of positive maladjustment.* (Dab. 1973, p. xi)

Adjustment as a Multilevel Phenomenon

- ❑ *We find various kinds and stages of development and adjustment, starting from total, indiscriminate adjustment to all, even the most primitive patterns prevalent in social environment, to a refined psychological need for adjustment to a higher hierarchy of values and one’s ideal of personality. The idea of adjustment has its*

various forms and content depending on the developmental level of the individual.
(Dab. 1973, p. xi)

Maladjustment as a Multilevel Phenomenon

- Dabrowski continues:
The same is true of maladjustment, starting from pathological, psychopathic, even criminal violation of social standards to those forms of maladjustment which are observable in all mentally developing individuals and imply rejection of and conflict with the primitive levels and increasing harmonization with the higher levels of reality. (Dab. 1973, p. xi)

Negative Adjustment

- *... means the forms of adjustment (or conformity) which are nondevelopmental; which mainly rely on automatic adjustment; which are dictated by the most urgent, basic, normal or pathological needs without expressing reflexive attitudes and developmental selectiveness; and which are useless for positive development.* (Dab. 1973, p. 65)

Negative Adjustment

- *Adjustment, in the negative sense, is the nondevelopmental adjustment which is automatic, subservient to primitive drives and aiming at an adaptation to primitive requirements of a social group in order to protect one's interests.* (Dab. 1973, p. 66)

Positive versus Negative Adjustment

- *[Positive] Adjustment which is a symptom of mental health is, largely speaking, adjustment to what ought to be and not to what is. As no culture is perfect and incapable of further growth, and as development results from lack of adjustment rather than from an all-too-perfect adjustment, the idea of simple, unqualified social [Negative] adjustment as a symptom, or even criterion, of mental health is due to a fundamental error.* (Dab. 1970, p. 11)

**Summary of Terms:
Dabrowski defined
two types of maladjustment
and two types of adjustment.**

Negative Maladjustment – Defined

- ❑ *NEGATIVE MALADJUSTMENT. Rejection of social norms and accepted patterns of behavior because of the controlling power of primitive drives and nondevelopmental or pathologically deformed structures and functions. In the extreme case it takes the form of psychosis, psychopathy, or criminal activity. (Dab. 1972, p. 299)*

Positive Maladjustment – Defined

- ❑ *POSITIVE MALADJUSTMENT: A conflict with and rejection of those standards and attitudes of one's social environment which are incompatible with one's growing awareness of a higher scale of values which is developing as an internal imperative. (Dab. 1972, p. 302)*

Negative Adjustment – Defined

- ❑ *NEGATIVE ADJUSTMENT. Nondevelopmental adjustment. Unqualified conformity to a hierarchy of values prevailing in a person's social environment. The values are accepted without an independent critical evaluation. It is an acceptance of an external system of values without autonomous choice. An adjustment to “what is”. (Dab. 1972, p. 299)*

Positive Adjustment – Defined

- ❑ *POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT, or developmental adjustment. Conformity to higher levels of a hierarchy of values self-discovered and consciously followed. It is an acceptance of values after critical examination and an autonomous choice. It is an adjustment to “what ought to be”. Such hierarchy of values is controlled by (or developed from) the personality ideal. (Dab. 1972, p. 301)*

A Quote to Open the Congress

*Adjustment to that which ought to be, and maladjustment to so-called everyday reality.
How strongly and with what determination
one has to follow the path of positive maladjustment.*

(Existential Thoughts, p. 27)

Welcome