

Biographical note prepared by Bohdan Gawroński for the book "In Search of Mental Health"

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Biographical note *

(to the 1st edition from 1989, the note was prepared by Bohdan Gawroński - editor's note)

Kazimierz Dąbrowski was born on September 1, 1902 in Klarów in the Lublin region, in an estate administered by his father - Antoni.

He begins his school education at the "Lubelska Szkoła" Junior High School in Ublin. As a student, he exhibits extraordinary abilities and extensive interests. Already then, he undertakes first poetic and dramatic attempts. He becomes the editor of the quarterly of junior high school students 'In the future'. At the same time, he is active in the underground organizations of Polish youth - PET and ZET.

While still in high school (in 1921), he enrolls as a free listener - hiding that he is a high school student - at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Lublin. He also attends lectures on philosophy and psychology. Until the matriculation examination in junior high school in 1923, he passed all the exams covered by the program of the first and second year of studies. After the completion of the baccalaureate, the university authorities include two initial years of study.

From October 1923, he continued his Polish studies at the University of Lublin. In the following year, in April, he leaves Lublin and moves to Poznań, where he is admitted to the second year of philosophy at the University of Poznań. He also studies Polish at the same time. Listens to lectures by eminent Polish scholars, including psychologists - prof. Stefan Błachowski and prof. Stefan Szuman, sociologist - prof. Florian Znaniecki, pedagogue - prof. Bogdan Nawroczyński and philosophers - prof. Czesław Znamierowski and prof. Adam Żółtowski.

In 1926 he graduated philosophy and travels to Warsaw, where he enrolls at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Warsaw. At the same time, he starts working in an orphanage and children who are difficult to educate. During the first years of studies, it remains under the influence of prof. Edward Loth - anatomy and prof. Jan Mazurkiewicz - psychiatrist.

In October 1928, as a result of the competition, he obtained a scholarship from the National Culture Fund to study medicine, psychology and pedagogy at research centers in Switzerland. He leaves and continues his medical studies. His teachers are famous professors: Claparede Édouard, Pierre Bovet and Jean Piaget. He remembers them later in his diary: "The eminent scholars, E. Claparede and Pierre Bovet, possessed a wonderful approach to academic youth."

Especially Claparede always had time for his students. He stopped many times on the street to talk to me. He often took me for a walk and talked for a long time, insightfully and cordially. I will never forget this kind attitude " ¹ .

The crowning of medical studies is a doctoral thesis on the psychological conditions of suicide, written under the guidance of prof. Francois Naville. She defends her in the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University of Geneva in 1929 and it is published in the same year ² .

Then she undertakes post-graduate studies in psychology and pedagogy at the University of Geneva and the Institute of Jean Jacques Rousseau, specializing in child psychology and psychopathology. After graduating in 1931, K. Dąbrowski receives an attractive assistant proposal at the Institute, but he does not accept it and returns to Poland.

In the country he defends his doctoral thesis, which he began writing while studying at the Poznań University under the direction of prof. Stefan Błachowski and receives the title of doctor of philosophy in the field of psychology. This dissertation, devoted to the problem of self-gratification, on the example of an analysis of the biography of Michał Angel, Fiodor Dostoevski, Otto Weininger and his own clinical observations - he announces a few years later ³ .

Kazimierz Dąbrowski uses the experience and knowledge gained abroad during his studies in practice. In 1931, he organized a counseling center for children of nervous, moral and mentally handicapped in Warsaw, Grochów, where he works as a psychotherapist, and a year later - the Department of Pediatric Neuropsychiatry at the Municipal Hospital at ul. Golden. In 1932, he received another scholarship from the National Culture Fund for a two-year research study in Vienna and Paris, which was a recognition of his achievements so far and enabling further scientific development.

He leaves for Vienna and studies in several scientific centers - psychoanalysis with prof. Wilhelm Stekela, neurology with prof. Otto Mahrburg, with prof. Kurtha Buhler psychology, boarding with prof. William Schlesinger. She also works in a hospital at the pediatric neuropsychiatry ward. As a result of eight-month studies, she obtains a diploma of a psychoanalyst who authorizes her to practice psychoanalysis. At the time, he publishes two papers resulting from his research ⁴ .

From Vienna, Kazimierz Dąbrowski goes to Paris. There is a four-month research internship at the Department of Pediatric Neuropsychiatry at prof. Gerard Meyer and the Institute of Prophylactic and Applied Psychology at prof. Jean Lahy. He also listens to lectures by prof. Pierre Jeanet in the field of clinical psychiatry and psychopathology. During this period, he is interested in the issues of neurosis and mental hygiene. He notes in his diary: "My views on the scope and approaches of the multilayered and multilevel psychic hygiene that I began to see as an indispensable science in every department of psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry and authentic education began to clearly crystallize. I realized more and more that the psychopathological approach is not a simple matter,"⁵ .

The period of study in Geneva, Vienna and Paris is crowned by the habilitation in 1934 in the field of child psychopathology at prof. E. Clapared and the Privat-Dozent title.

Thanks to a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation, which was a recognition of scientific achievements, he then goes to a one-year program at the University of Harvard (at the School of Public Health) combined with clinical practice in a psychiatric hospital with prof. Macfie Campbell and prof. William Healy. A stay in the United States ends with an internship at the John Hopkins University, at the clinic of prof. Adolf Mayer, psychiatrist, pioneer of the mental hygiene movement in America.

After returning to the country at the end of 1934, Kazimierz Dąbrowski leads to the establishment of the Polish League of Mental Hygiene in Warsaw, of which he becomes the secretary. He also undertakes lectures on psychology and child psychiatry at the Free Polish University and lectures on propaedeutics of philosophy in several gymnasiums in Warsaw. Using the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation and the favor of the authorities - the Ministry of Social Welfare, it organizes the Institute of Mental Hygiene and covers its leadership. The Institute conducts scientific research, training and propaganda work in the field of mental hygiene and organizes clinical facilities. In 1938, thanks to the Dąbrowski initiative, branches of the Institute were established (in Cieszyn, Gdynia, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Stanisławów and Vilnius). He appoints an inspectorate for the organization of the branch network, whose management is entrusted to dr. Ludwik Goryński. At this time Dąbrowski appears several times to the authorities to appoint a higher school of mental hygiene and specialist postgraduate studies for doctors, but he does not obtain consent. In 1937, he founded the Moral Culture Society, whose task is to work on the moral renewal of the society and support the movement of mental hygiene. After the outbreak of the Second World War and the Nazi authorities occupying the Institute building, Dąbrowski transfers its headquarters and clinical facilities together with patients and personnel to the Society of Friends of the Institute bought before the war for the neurological children - properties in Zagórze near Warsaw. Under conspiratorial conditions, he conducts research and teaching as well as therapeutic and therapeutic activities. Organizes care centers for orphans - war victims. In 1942, he establishes a Psychological Hygiene Study, which is accessed by the underground educational authorities by academic status. Lectures lead there, among others dr. Maria Grzywak-Kaczyńska, prof. Sergiusz Hessen, dr. Piotr Radło, dr. Adam Kunicki, doc. Adam Falkowski.

In the autumn of this year, Kazimierz Dąbrowski is arrested and imprisoned in Warsaw (in Aleja Szucha and Pawiak) and in Krakow (on Montelupich). After several months of investigation, he is released and returns to Zagórze, where he again undertakes scientific and psychotherapeutic work. He cooperates with underground authorities, shelters soldiers of the Home Army, escapees from the Warsaw Ghetto and doctors and priests operating in the underground.

After the war, he returns to Warsaw and resumes the activity of the Institute and the Study, which is transformed into the Higher School of Mental Hygiene, pursuant to the decree of June 1945. Again, he co-creates branches of the Institute and counseling centers. In 1948, 12

branches and 20 clinics are already operating. Active help is provided by doctors and psychologists, including prof. Tadeusz Bilikiewicz in Gdańsk, prof. Janina Hurynowicz in Toruń, prof. Mieczysław Kreutz and prof. Adrian Demianowski in Wrocław, Dr. Władysław Stryjeński in Krakow. The school also flourishes, where - thanks to Dąbrowski's efforts - they lecture Sergiusz Hessen, Marcin Kacprzak, Edward Lipiński, Mieczysław Michałowicz (chairman of the Board of Professors), Bogdan Suchodolski, Stefan Szuman. The four-year studies cover issues in medicine, biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, logic, political economy, social policy, educational and vocational counseling. In the 1949/1950 academic year, over 500 people study here.

In the spring of 1946, he organizes in Zagórz, the Psychological Hygiene Meeting dedicated to the definition of mental hygiene as a science and as a social movement. They participate in it, among others professors: Jerzy Arnold, Stefan Błachowski, Józef Handelsman, Marcin Kacprzak, Mieczysław Kreutz, Mieczysław Michałowicz, Bogdan Suchodolski and Stefan Szuman, and Dr. Leon Uszkiewicz from the Ministry of Health. Summing up the debate, Kazimierz Dąbrowski says: "... mental hygiene has its own scope, does not absorb any of the related sciences, uses its own methods. Mental hygiene deals with disorders on the borderline of illness and health. Faster and more complete development of the individual can not do without imbalances, internal antinomies, disintegration. The role of psychic hygiene is intervention, vigilance, so that the disorder does not take on too much focus,⁶ .

In June 1948, he was habilitated in the field of psychiatry at the University of Wrocław. The promoter of his work is prof. Adrian Demianowski. At that time, he is organizing the Polish Society of Mental Hygiene, which continues the pre-war activity of the Polish League of Mental Hygiene.

At the end of 1948, he received a Ford Foundation scholarship to complete^{seven} research studies in the United States in the field of mental hygiene, neuropsychiatry and pediatric psychiatry. He lives in the universities of New York, Harvard, Illinois. Later he goes to Paris, where he conducts research at the Center National de Recherches Scientifiques and lectures at the Clinic of Child Psychiatry.

In April 1949, the Institute of Mental Hygiene was liquidated, in May 1950 - the Polish Society for Mental Hygiene was dissolved, and Kazimierz Dąbrowski receives a formal transfer to the position of director of a psychiatric hospital in Świecie. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife are arrested, and after eighteen months - dismissed and directed to work as the head of the psychiatric hospital in Kobierzyn. At that time (1952), the authorities closed the Higher School of Mental Hygiene.

In 1956 he was rehabilitated and - by the decision of the Central Qualification Commission for Science Workers - he receives the title of associate professor. He then became the Chair of Psychology at the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. In January 1958, the Polish Academy of Sciences employs him as a professor. He organizes there from scratch the Department of Mental Hygiene and Child Psychiatry. He undertakes research on the psychological hygiene of school youth, especially highly talented youth. He also returns to

social work in the reactivated Polish Society of Mental Hygiene (from 1962 - as the chairman of the Main Board). He is trying - unsuccessfully - to reactivate the Institute and the College of Mental Hygiene.

In 1962, he again receives a scholarship from the Ford Foundation and goes on several months to the USA and France. By virtue of the decision of the State Council, in 1964 he was granted the title of full professor. This year also brings other important events. At the invitation of the Ministry of Health of the province of Quebec, he leaves - having obtained a free holiday at the Polish Academy of Sciences - to Canada. In 1965, he holds the chair of experimental psychology at the University of Alberta and lectures at the University of Laval (Quebec), and - in connection with the honorary professorship granted to him - at the University of Cincinnati (Ohio) and the University of Femina in Lima (Peru). He also works as a psychotherapist and consultant in several psychiatric hospitals. Scientific and clinical activity is an opportunity to check and verify the theory of positive disintegration, which is presented in two basic works: *Positive disintegration and Personality - shaping through positive disintegration* 7. In the preface to the second of them, he writes about the author and his concept of prof. Father Hobart Mowrer: "(...) Professor Kazimierz Dąbrowski is not an ordinary psychiatrist. Although he received medical training, he created the concept of a man with his "existential desire" that goes far beyond physical and biological reality; although he also studied Freudian psychoanalysis and instead of condemning morality and idealism, he gives them first-rate importance. he created the concept of a man with his "existential desire" that goes far beyond the physical and biological reality; although he also studied Freudian psychoanalysis and instead of condemning morality and idealism, he gives them first-rate importance. he created the concept of a man with his "existential desire" that goes far beyond the physical and biological reality; although he also studied Freudian psychoanalysis and instead of condemning morality and idealism, he gives them first-rate importance.

Professor K. Dąbrowski is certainly a pioneer in the field of psychiatry (...) and deserves a deep respect for his originality and courage. But at the same time, in his original concept, there is nothing strange or strange. In fact, it is part of an open and developing perspective in clinical psychology and psychiatry, which can only be described as revolutionary. Although we can say that Harry Stack Sullivan and other neofreudists have paved the way for this direction, we find the most unequivocal and decisive expression of it in the work of K. Dąbrowski and the work of other researchers such as William Glasser, Willard Mainrod, Sidney Jourard and Perry London. There is a visible transition from biology to sociology, from illness to unconsciousness,⁸.

Dąbrowski - granted in 1969 - a three-year Canada Council scholarship allows further academic work. He runs, among others research on the multilevel emotional and impulsive functions. The result is numerous book publications⁹, among them loud - *Psychoneurosis is not an illness*¹⁰ that evoke broad interest in the professor and the theory of positive disintegration. A well-known American psychologist, prof. Abraham H. Maslow after reading *Mental Growth ...*: "I consider this theory one of the most important in psychology and psychiatry of the last ten years. This begs the question of whether this book will be read for the

next ten or twenty years and whether by a large group of people. This book drills deeply and surprises with particularly important conclusions. It will certainly lead to a change in psychological theory and practice in psychotherapy (...) " ¹¹ .

In 1970 at the University of Laval (Quebec), Kazimierz Dąbrowski organizes the International Conference on the Theory of Positive Disintegration, which brings together representatives of the humanities and medical sciences, including scholars of Polish origin, among others prof. Zygmunt A. Piotrowski and prof. Tadeusz Romer, director of the Polish Institute of Science. It is of great importance for the development and popularization of this theory. Dąbrowski lectures and reads in several Canadian universities (Saskatchewan, Sherbrook, Calgary, British Columbia, Winnipeg, Victoria, Montreal, Alberta, Laval, Manitoba) and American (Cincinnati, Harvard, Michigan, Northwestern - Minneapolis, Maryland), and also at the Femina University in Lima (Peru) and at the Meningin Foundation Center and at the Esalen Institute in San Francisco. In December 1972, he organized the Second Conference in Montreal (at Loyola College), whose chairmanship includes prof. Hans Selye.

From 1973, he has been systematically coming to the country and is re-elected as the chairman of the Main Board of the Polish Society of Mental Hygiene. He also repeats several attempts - also unsuccessfully - to reactivate the Institute and the Higher School of Mental Hygiene. On the other hand, he obtains permission to organize a Center of Mental Hygiene for People of Health in Warsaw. The aim of the Center opened in 1977 is - as he writes - to conduct "preventive activities for sensitive people, with inhibited creative talents, and at the same time with increased mental excitability and psychoneurosis, which will help in comprehensive development by subordinating neurotic elements and psychoneurosis for moral and creative values " ¹². He also conducts lectures and lectures in the country. He publishes several books ¹³ that widely popularize his theory.

The theory of positive disintegration proves that crises or disorders can play a developmental role. O. Hobart Mowrer writes about the new approach to disintegration: "disintegration means loosening and breaking down the psychic structure, its dissipation and split. This term applies to many processes (...). Almost as a rule, these processes are treated as negative. Dąbrowski represents a completely different point of view in this respect. It assumes that disintegration is - generally speaking - a positive development process " ¹⁴. "The concept of positive disintegration - stated ZA Piotrowski concerns the basic and the most difficult problem of psychopathology and personality psychology. It creates a theoretical framework covering all states of personality - from psychosis to the development of a creative personality. It is a paradoxical situation that one of the most difficult tasks in psychology and psychiatry is to define a person who is mentally normal and to explain the phases, crises and evolution of the maturation process. It is particularly difficult to understand the states of tension and anxiety in creative people with constructive and lasting achievements.

Concepts of intelligence and disintegration prof. Dąbrowski is a comprehensive proposition allowing for a systematic comparison of various and often incompatible theories of his predecessors. (...) His deep knowledge of the literature on the subject, as well as his respect for intellectual authorities in the field of psychology and psychopathology, do not interfere with

his independent thinking or clearly formulating his ideas. The entire achievements of prof. Dąbrowski reflect his in-depth experience with the mentally ill and, what is equally important, with various mental processes of integration in normal people " ¹⁵ .

In 1979, during his stay in Canada, he suffered a heart attack in the spring of the following year - he returns to Poland. After a period of convalescence, he undertakes research and didactic and popularizing work. Due to his health, however, he can no longer participate in the Third International Conference on the Theory of Positive Disintegration (Miami, November 1980). He dies on November 26, 1980 in Warsaw.

During the professor's lifetime - in recognition of his contribution to the development of science - a special section devoted to Kazimierz Dąbrowski and the theory of positive disintegration was distinguished in the Canadian Archives in Ottawa.

Professor Dąbrowski was a member of many scientific societies, among others Of the French Medical-Psychological Society, Royal Medical Association in London, World Federation of Mental Health, Psychologists Association of Alberta, Corporation des Psychologues (Quebec), Polish Psychiatric Association. To commemorate his memory and to further develop the theory of positive disintegration, his students in Canada established in 1982, at a scientific conference at the University of Edmonton, the organization "Society for Human Development".

Footnotes

* Publisher (PWN-edited edition) would like to thank the wife of the professor, Eugenia Dąbrowska, for sharing the source materials and archives used for the biographical note and bibliography.

¹ A fragment of an unpublished diary of Kazimierz Dąbrowski

² Leg conditions psychologique da suicide. Geneve 1929. Imprimerie du Commerce,

³ Psychological basis of self-gratification (autocutylation). Warsaw 1934, Medical Society of the Future.

⁴ Meaning of age in the clinic and pathology of postoperative parkinsonism. "Polish Neurology" 1933, No. 1; Zur Klinik und Pathologie der senilen Paranoia. "Jahrbucher fur Psychiatrie und Neurologie" 1934, No. 47.

⁵ Fragment of an unpublished diary of Kazimierz Dąbrowski.

⁶ Citation: E. Zakościelna Life and works of prof. Dr. hab. of the medicine / philosophy of Kazimierz Dąbrowski - that is, the passion of development and the hardship of existence. "Mental Health" 1981, No. 2-3, p. 17.

⁷ Positive disintegration. Boston 1964, Little, Brown and Co .; Personality - shaping through positive disintegration. Boston 1967, Little, Brown and Co.

⁸ OH Mowrer Introduction. In: Personality - shaping ..., p. XII.

⁹ Mental growth through positive disintegration. London 1970, Gryf Publications; The dynamics of concepts. London 1972, Gryf Publications; Multilevel of emotional and instinctive functions. Edmonton 1972, University of Alberta; Fragments from the diary of madman. London 1972, Gryf Publications; Existential thoughts and aphorisms. London 1972, Gryf Publications.

¹⁰ Psychoneurosis is not an illness. London 1970, Gryf Publications; edit in Polish: La psychonevrose n'est pas une maladie. Quebec 1972, Les Editions Saint-Yves.

¹¹ A.H. Maslow, in a letter from December 18, 1968 to the publishing house of McGraw-Hill, on the work Mental Growth through Positive Disintegration.

¹² Quote from: P. Doliniak. Prophylactic and psychotherapeutic activity of the Center of Mental Hygiene for Healthy People. "Mental Health" 1983, No. 1, p. 103.

¹³ Two diagnoses. Warsaw 1974, PTHP; Mental health and human values. Warsaw 1974, PTHP; Personality and its shaping through positive integration. Warsaw 1975, PTHP; The existence of existence. Warsaw 1975, Universal Knowledge; Nervousness of children and adolescents. Warsaw 1976, WSiP; Positive disintegration. Warsaw 1979, PIW; Sanity. Warsaw 1979, PWN; Introduction to mental hygiene. Warsaw 1979, WSiP.

¹⁴ O.H. Mowrer Introduction. In: Personality - shaping ..., pp. XIV-XV. 15 Z.A. Piotrowski Kazimierz Dąbrowski's Theory of Mental Development of Man. Philadelphia 1962 (typescript), p. 1,

¹⁵ Z.A. Piotrowski Kazimierz Dąbrowski's Theory of Mental Development of Man. Philadelphia 1962 (typescript), p. 1,

Source: Kazimierz Dąbrowski, In Search of Mental Health, PWN, Warsaw 1989.

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