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I only knew Dabrowski as an old man and I could sense his own fear of death and the unknown that would soon be upon him. That feeling moved me closer to him and farther from his ideas.

Today, that's where I stand—fortunate to have been steeped in such a humanistic approach to human individuality but glad to have been able to leave it behind. What's left is a treasured memory of Dabrowski, a man face to face with the ultimate and trembling, and my life reflected therein.

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## Kazimierz Dabrowski

### William Hague, Ph.D.

Perhaps I should begin with the blue mimeographed papers because that's how it began for me. Positive Disintegration was presented to our graduate class in the mid-sixties on page after page of paper, badly typed, badly mimeographed in blue and written in English that more often than not left off the articles from words, that stumbled and recouped itself and somehow flowed on to gradually unravel a theory that was a man's life. The seminars were discussions of the papers given out the previous week and our role was clearly that of a disciple, asking questions of the "master", seeking clarification, sometimes challenging, always probing into what this man who gave out the papers had to say about them. We learned to understand that an expression that sounded like "bicycle idea" meant "basic idea". Some left shaking their heads; those who stayed did in turn learn to think the "basic ideas" of Positive Disintegration as presented on the blue mimeographed paper.

If I have begun to talk about a man in terms of papers and words and mutilated English, it is not to miss the presence of the person but to put figure against ground, to show that, despite all the problems of communication, the man came through, shone through and, in the end it was Kazimierz Dabrowski and his beloved theory that grabbed you with its depth and scope and towering possibilities for explaining what development and psychology and life itself are all about.

Always it was the man Dr. Dabrowski (strange how we all called him *Dr.* Dabrowski) who was the quiet flame that burned (like the candle in the "Java Shoppe Interview") giving warmth and light to a theory that could otherwise have been lost in its own depth and complexity

and power. It was the gentle mannered man with his European graciousness who somehow conveyed greatness without overpowering, who bowed in authentic respect when meeting you and charmed the ladies with his "madame" and "mademoiselle".

He lived what he taught—authenticity. If you asked him how he felt, he would not just give you the usual, platitudinous answer, "Fine". He would reply, typically, "I am feeling somewhat depressed—but hopeful!"

Through the years there were discussions (sometimes at his home with well-remembered Polish suppers) and workshops and numerous invitations to be guest lecturer which he never refused. There were countless meetings of interested people on cold winter nights to form societies for the authentic development of man. There were dreams of counselling offices, schools and institutes that would bring the theory to the people. Too often the great theory foundered on practical things like where would the money come from, or picayune things like what kind of letterhead should we have. Kazimierz Dabrowski would have been a failure as a business executive and still worse as a salesman. He had none of the marketing mentality that often accompanies psychologists who have little to say but a great deal to sell. He had much to give but was not a salesman, and perhaps he attracted like people and so the offices and societies and organizations never really got going.

What would happen though, and it was like a minor miracle every time, is that someone would knock at your office door and say "I've been attending Dr. Dabrowski's seminar; I hear you are interested in the theory; will you work with me?" And some time later an idea, a paper, or even a thesis would come out of it and the man had come through again.

Someone who had had a nervous breakdown would tell you. "When I was 'sick' I thought maybe some good might come out of it all, but I put the thought aside as my own foolish idea. Then I heard what Dr. Dabrowski had to say and I was able to believe in myself and have hope."

It was this enigmatic cross—of great ideas that I know have changed people's lives, and the inability to "market" himself and his ideas—that was, I think the basic tragedy of Dabrowski's life. He had difficulty in being accepted by the powerful yet was loved (almost adored) by his students and his beloved neurotics whom he "greeted" and gave new honor and hope.

I know little of the personal sorrows of the man's life; he was unwilling to talk of them. But I do know of the sensitivity and the pride that was his. The last time I saw Kazimierz Dabrowski was in the intensive care unit of the University Hospital. A young student was reading to him from Dostoevsky as he lay in the bleak public ward hooked up to tubes and monitors. My visit surprised him. He wept at the "shame" of being seen by a colleague in such a condition. Those last few moments together told me much about the man, his pride, his immense sensitivity. They told me something about Positive Disintegration too. We had come far since the blue mimeographed papers fifteen years before.

Kazimierz Dabrowski was a man who focused within himself the broad vision of the scholar and the single-mindedness of a man with a consuming sense of purpose, the abstractness of a theoretician, and the practical concerns of one who had experienced life deeply, the realist's anxiety with what is and the idealist's yearning for what ought to be.

If human lives are "occasions" as Whitehead says, then this life was an occasion of great significance, and if occasions perish but their value persists in the nature of God, then this life's value, rich as it was, persists not just in books written or papers handed out or in theoretical ideas but as a challenge to continue to add value through the lives of those of us who have been fortunate enough to touch on the life that was Kazimierz Dabrowski.

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