

## Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration

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## “State of the Art” Moral Development:

### Moral Development in the Post-Kohlbergian Age

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**ABSTRACT:** Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive developmentalism seems too restrictive to contain some of the directions in which Kohlberg himself appears to have been heading—particularly in the areas of emotional and higher level development. Dabrowski's theory of emotional development (*Theory of Positive Disintegration*) is proposed as potentially encompassing these new directions and enriching them.

Recently, an enthusiastic salesman was trying to convince me of the merits of an especially expensive piece of stereo equipment. He promised that the purchase of this particular item not only would yield immediate gratification but also would lead to an eternal bliss that could, in turn, be passed on, in the form of a fairly small electronic box, to my children and my children's children. This particular box was, it seems, the culmination of all humankind's quest for musical perfection. It was the best. It would never be superseded. It was perfection. It was, he proclaimed triumphantly, “state of the art.”

As I walked home empty-handed, I reflected on that worn phrase *state of the art*, recalling the steel-needed gramophone my friends boasted of when I was a kid, and those “modern” discs that are such a great advancement over the collection of worn cylinders my older friends still cherish. I thought of what followed: the “78s,” the “45s,” the “33 1/3s,” each in its turn “state of the art” but today all put to shame by the compact disc that shimmered in pristine perfection in the salesman's showroom.

My thoughts did not delve to deeper, more profound levels of existential angst about the elusiveness of lasting happiness or the transience of life. But my thoughts did go to psychology and our penchant in our enthusiasm to proclaim the current as perfect, the latest as ultimate. Psychologists are tempted to set up the newest theory as pillars of Hercules and to proclaim with the ancient Romans: “Ne plus ultra.”

One theory that has recently occupied such a “ne plus ultra” position has been the moral development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg constructed a theory of moral development based on Piaget's cognitive

developmentalism and presented it at a time when the need for such a theory was great. America was in an age of moral transition. Disillusioned with traditional character education approaches and put off by the teaching of specific virtues as both difficult and dangerous in a democracy, yet wary of the vagaries and subjectivism of progressive education, politicians and educators sought a middle course that in some way could "make people good" while at the same time preserving the individual's freedom in making moral decisions.

Kohlberg's approach, emphasizing the form more than the content of moral decision making, offered an answer. It seemed to meet the need to explain neatly how people develop morally, and to measure this moral development rather precisely, attaching to it a numerical stage. It promised a way of undertaking moral education, especially in the public schools, in a manner that would not run against anyone's particular moral convictions. Kohlberg's theory seemed ideal—state of the art, in fact!

Readers may have noticed the past tense in speaking of Kohlberg's cognitive developmentalism. This is appropriate. Kohlberg died in 1987. But neither the death of Kohlberg nor the rumored death of his theory leads to putting his theory in the past tense as much as the reality that the many years we have had to study the theory have opened our perceptions of its inadequacies. I will not dwell on critiquing the theory and harping on inadequacies; this has been done thoroughly in other places, particularly in Modgil and Modgil's (1986) definitive volume. In this essay I would like to choose some of the directions Kohlberg was taking toward the end of his life and pick up and pursue some of the clues that he left in later years of where his theory might go in the future. Many of these clues were dropped as a startle reaction to the prodding of his critics.

Nowhere did Kohlberg indicate that he saw his theory as the ultimate; this was more the vision, born out of need for solutions to moral education problems, of those who desperately jumped on what came to be called, "The Kohlberg bandwagon." In a word, if Kohlberg's theory was "state of the art," suitable for its time, but inevitably to be superseded, (like the stereo equipment), our task here is to help build a new state of the art theory of development, mindful, alas, of its inevitable transitoriness, too. Keeping in mind the delimitation that we are looking primarily at where moral development theory might go in a post-Kohlbergian age, we will begin with a brief overview of Kohlberg's theory.

### Kohlberg's Theory

First, Kohlberg's is a theory not of general, but of moral development, in particular. It fits, as already mentioned, in the category of cognitive developmentalism, championed by Piaget, and concerns itself with the structures more than the content of moral reasoning. Thus, cognitive developmentalism was an apt theory for getting away from touchy moral issues such as naming specific virtues, instead concentrating on classifying morality according to the stage of moral reasoning an individual used.

Most developmental theorists have an inclination to divide the process of development into stages. In this way, they are something like grandmothers who explain a child's temper tantrums in terms of, "He's just going through a stage. It will pass." Whether grandmothers learned stages from psychologists or psychologists learned them from grandmothers doesn't matter. They are both explaining away certain behaviors in terms of a temporary step in the process of developing.

Stages are ways of categorizing behaviors in a developmental sequence of steps that mark the ascendance of the human from "lower," primitive levels to "higher," more complex and yet more articulated levels. Of course, there aren't any such levels or stages in the child herself. The stages are categories we impose to help us understand the slow, unfolding process. The very fact that we see them as levels, like ascending steps of stairs, and call the higher, later steps "better" is a reflection of the value we place on that which comes later in development because it is more complex and richer.

Kohlberg was no exception to the developmentalists' desire to impose stages on development. He "found" (because he was looking for them) six stages of moral development, ascending from "lowest" to "highest." Kohlberg found that the six stages constituted three "levels," with two stages in each of the three levels.

It is probably easiest to see the logic of the stages by understanding the sequence of levels that he developed from Piaget. It is probably best, too, to start with the middle level, moving down to the lowest level first and then skipping up to the highest, or third, level. In this way the order of his three levels—pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional—unfolds. Conventionality occupies the mid, pivotal level between the other two. People at the conventional level solve moral problems by looking for the way one should behave to keep society running smoothly. This is a kind of conformity in the interests of the common good.

Preceding this level, and evident in younger children and those who have not passed beyond it, is the lower level of pre-conventional thinking, based on fear of getting caught or else a kind of marketing mentality epitomized by the arrangement, "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine." At the other end of the scale, higher than the conventional level, is the post-conventional level characterized not by making deals, or merely by the practicality of making society run more smoothly, but by an ethic of principle, internalized, universal and impartial, centering on the one virtue, justice.

Kohlberg's schema of levels is a hierarchy of higher and higher levels of justice reasoning, leading from the child-like, egocentric concern for "fairness" on the child's own terms to a heteronomous guidance by the wishes of others, and ultimately to autonomous self-direction by self-chosen principles of justice.

With three levels and two stages in each level, Kohlberg's schema has, theoretically at least, six stages of moral development. Theory fell prey to practice when, in his research, Kohlberg failed to find anyone occupying the sixth stage

of moral reasoning, and, while hanging on to it as a theoretically logical stage, he, for all practical purposes, deleted it from his scoring manuals.

Interestingly, more than 15 years ago (before he deleted stage 6) Kohlberg postulated a "Stage 7," which he said at the time was not really a stage at all but, rather, a metaphor meant to take away from Stage 6 the excessive demands placed on it to answer the ultimate questions of morality such as: Why be moral at all? Why live a life of justice in a world that seems basically unjust? Confusion reigns when one stops to consider that Stage 7 (which was not really a stage but a metaphor) has endured longer than Stage 6, which (though it was a logical, ultimate stage) has somewhat faded from the picture.

### **A Critique of Kohlberg's Theory**

What happened was that Kohlberg had discovered that transcendental questions of life's meaning could not be handled purely rationally as he supposed lesser moral questions could. He had come to the same realization that wise men and religious mystics had experienced and taught for centuries. Gradually, with the demise of Stage 6, and under the influence of theologians such as Fowler, the philosophy of Jurgen Habermas, and his own life experience, Kohlberg elevated Stage 7 to the top of his hierarchy as a supra-rational, transcendent, religious, sometimes mystical address of the ultimate questions of life in which subject-object dualities were overcome in a oneness that transcended reason alone. Stage 7 was declared a "soft" stage (probably because it wasn't rational enough for a cognitive framework) and wasn't subject to the scientific rigor that the lower levels were (Kohlberg, 1984).

Kohlberg's ambivalence over the higher levels of moral development is both confusing and fascinating. To the end of his life, he was most unclear about the higher, advanced levels of development but, interestingly, dropped the most hints about where his theory might go in reference to advanced development. Because we are here most interested in moral "giftedness," it is our challenge to discover and develop these clues, building into a new age of understanding the higher levels of moral development.

Like new models of stereo equipment, each new theory of development is "better" than the last for two reasons:

1. The new theory corrects some error in the old theory.
2. The new theory fills in some deficiency in the old theory.

In the case of Kohlberg's theory, I think these two themes are intertwined, for I see the new directions in moral development correcting some of Kohlberg's errors and at the same time building toward a broader, holistic understanding of the person.

Kohlberg was, in the beginning, hampered by his emphasis on reasoning and abstraction to the almost total exclusion of emotion and concreteness. He chose to test and measure morality not in terms of actual behavior but instead in

terms of how well a person could rationally explain his reasons for a moral choice. He did this by giving individuals hypothetical moral dilemmas to solve.

The most famous of these is the dilemma in which a man called Heinz is faced with the moral dilemma of stealing a drug to save his wife's life. This dilemma sets up the opportunities for conflict between a woman's right to life and another person's right to private property. The actual solution was not as important as the reasons the person gave for his solutions. The more non-personal and universal the reasons, the "better" they were because they got closer to objective principles of justice reasoning and away from subjective, experiential, emotional, relational explanations. The more abstract, rational, and universal the principles an individual enunciated, the higher his level of moral reasoning.

### **In a Different Voice**

Astute readers may be reacting to the non-inclusive language of the above paragraphs. The masculine pronoun is used throughout. This is intentional, for in Kohlberg's initial research male subjects were used throughout. Kohlberg did his foundational research entirely with boys, and, because it was longitudinal, he continued to be limited in this research for many years by masculine parameters.

An interesting and important consequence came out of this male bias. Females who took his famous dilemma tests found themselves being scored generally lower than males for their lack of abstract, principled moral reasoning. Women seemed to be limited by a conventional ethic that was entangled in human relationships and not expressed in cognitive principles. Men may have merely raised an eyebrow and said it was inevitable, but women (particularly Kohlberg's former student, Carol Gilligan) refused to accept the inevitable and declared that the defect was not in the women but, rather, in the test, and ultimately in the foundations of the theory itself.

Gilligan's objections came out in a well founded theory of her own. She asked women to give their reasons for solutions to concrete moral dilemmas more immediate than Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas. Gilligan researched her ideas using current, real issues, especially those surrounding the problems of abortion. She published her findings and her philosophy in 1982 in a book aptly entitled *In a Different Voice*. The title was apt for she found that some people, generally women, think and speak of morality in ways not encompassed by Kohlberg's cognitivist, principled ethic.

Kohlberg's approach, the *ethic of principle*, was differentiated from what came to be called the *ethic of care and responsibility*. They stand in sharp but complementary contrast. The ethic of principle tends to be exclusive: "You have a moral problem? We can solve this problem with a moral principle, but it will cost someone; too bad that somebody may have to be left out if the principle is to be upheld." The ethic of care and responsibility tries, on the other hand, to be inclusive: "We have a problem. Is there some way to work it out to minimize the hurt and so that no one is excluded?"

The two ethics, according to Gilligan, are not in opposition to each other; they are complementary. Researchers find that most of us are capable of thinking about morality both ways, but males tend to prefer the ethic of principle, while females are more inclined toward a caring relationship. In our society, however, women get little support for the ethic of care and responsibility.

One important caution should be added here: It would be overly simplistic to say that the justice orientation and the caring orientation cut neatly apart down male-female lines—the principled approach being exclusively male, while caring is the province of only females. True, Kohlberg found abstract reasoning flourishing among higher-level males, and Gilligan reacted by studying typical female thinking in terms of relationships. But Gilligan (1982) and, to a lesser extent, Nel Noddings (1984) do not oversimplify by finding men incapable of caring or women incapable of reasoning abstractly. It is a matter of preference.

Gilligan makes it eminently clear that the two orientations are complementary. Kohlberg, as we shall see, comes closer to this view in later writings. The point is that the convergence of these ideas is in the conviction that the better, higher-level, more advanced person is comfortable with and capable of both. But we are getting a little ahead of ourselves; back now to the evolution of this convergence.

In response to this most fundamental of objections to his theory, Kohlberg, in a somewhat earlier writing (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 57), while rejecting Gilligan's contention that there are two independent moralities—one of rules and justice and one of responsibility and care—did allow that, under certain circumstances, judgments of moral responsibility may be made without making judgments of principle or of justice. He even admitted that, in reviewing the findings of some of his earlier research, he discovered a type of person more oriented to fairness than to rules or pragmatics. He called these persons a "B type" (rather a cold label that most women would not want to accept). According to Kohlberg and Candee (1984) this person is:

*Someone who intuitively or in his or her "heart" or "conscience" perceives the central values and obligations of the dilemma articulated rationally by Stage 5 and uses these intuitions to generate a judgment of responsibility or necessity in the dilemma. (p. 63)*

This concession of Kohlberg, using words like "heart" and "intuition," certainly enables a much broader view than his original cognitive developmental position allowed him. It is much more holistic. It is certainly more inclusive. In one of his last writings, the concluding chapter to Modgil and Modgil's (1986) monumental volume, he presents an even broader position, gained under the influence of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, who helped him extend the structural approach to include non-justice-defined aspects of relationships as proposed by the care orientation.

"In this way," Kohlberg (1986, p. 541) says, "the Habermas project suggests an integration of our justice stages and levels of care suggested by Gilligan and

her colleagues." These are remarkable words coming from a remarkable man who showed a real awareness that his initial theory, "state of the art" as it might have been, was not beyond correction, modification, and further perfecting.

### Summary of Kohlberg's Position

We have seen two main areas in Kohlberg's theory in which he more than hinted at the possibility of moving on to new levels of understanding moral psychology:

1. *The higher, emotional, religious, transcendent levels of moral thinking that go beyond mere rationality.* What Kohlberg described as Stage 7 takes the post-conventional person beyond the merely rational into the experiential, the mystical, the religious, where the whole self, especially feelings, are active in finding a will to meaning and a will to live and be moral.
2. *The emotional, intuitive, relational aspects of caring that complement his initial, narrowly cognitive, approach to justice attained through "higher" abstract levels of reasoning.*

Clearly, if Kohlberg's ideas are to progress, they must do so in a theoretical framework that takes into account emotional as well as cognitive development. They must have a basis in an amply holistic theory of human development taken broadly. This theory must be comprehensive, holistic, and able to give emotion a central place in development. Such a theory, I am proposing, is found in Dabrowski's theory of emotional development, which he called Positive Disintegration.

### Positive Disintegration Theory

Dabrowski's theory speaks to the themes we have reviewed, and is, at least potentially, comprehensive of the dynamics we have outlined for advanced development. Previous publications (Hague, 1976, 1986) have attempted overviews of Positive Disintegration theory, pointing out its implications for moral education.

Positive Disintegration theory as a general theory of development presents a broader picture than the relatively narrow parameters of moral development theory as such. I am proposing it as a substitute for the cognitive developmentalism Kohlberg used initially but seemed to be outgrowing. If we are to be holistic, we need a holistic theory, emphasizing neither one "part" of the human person nor one subdivision of the study of human development.

This is no claim that Dabrowski's theory has all the answers— simply that it has more potential. Unlike the way my stereo salesman touted his little black box as the acme of completion, Dabrowski's theory never postulates that "whole"

is the equivalent of "complete." Pivotal to understanding this – and thus avoiding the "state of the art error" – is the core, unique contribution of Dabrowski's theory – the concept of multilevelness.

### Multilevelness

Dabrowski proposed a theory that includes levels of development, as most developmental theories do, but he goes beyond mere "stage theory." Most theories of development propose, as we have seen, a set of stages or levels that a person is said to go through progressively in the process of development. The Theory of Positive Disintegration is no exception to this general rule. But Dabrowski proposes something novel and rich: Not only are there levels in the process of development, but there are corresponding levels in thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and actions. By indicating that the actions we perform, the attitudes we have, and the words we use to describe them have many levels, Dabrowski has enriched our understanding of the human person.

In our daily conversation we throw around words like "love," "happiness," "sadness," as though they mean the same thing to everyone – as if they were monolithic concepts with only one pervasive meaning. Dabrowski has pointed out that not only are there many meanings but also that these meanings spread across many levels from "lower" to "higher." There are many levels of meanings.

The word "love," for example, has vast differences of quality. Consider the contrast between the love of an old couple married faithfully for 50 years and the "love" that one "makes" for 10 minutes with someone picked up on the street. These are extremes that are obvious, but in between are various degrees or levels of fidelity, empathy, care, responsibility, respect, and sensitivity that distinguish the levels of loving if we reflect on them. Dabrowski invites us to reflect on them and gives us a structural framework and a set of values that organize multilevelness.

With the phrase "values that organize multilevelness," we have hit upon the keystone concept uniting a general theory of development such as Dabrowski's with moral development. Values are our guides to what is worthwhile. Values work quietly, often unconsciously, putting our lives in a particular order. Values are like chefs in an expensive restaurant – rarely seen out front, but behind the scenes making everything come out right. But the "rightness" of the order that values dictate depends, in large part, on the degree to which they are consciously reflected and deliberately chosen, using truly objective criteria. We can easily go on operating on a set of values without being aware of what they are.

True to his own theory, Dabrowski makes his values clear. For example, in his Theory of Positive Disintegration, empathy, autonomy, self-direction, and reflection are highly valued. The automatic, the unreflected, the egocentric, the self-absorbed are held in a low place. This has implications for the specific instrumental values we live by, but, more important, for the terminal values we set up as goals in life. It has implications, too, not only for the specific moral values

that dictate our concrete moral decisions, but also for the broader moral values that pervade our idea of what a good human being should be and so on. Far from being "value-free," as many recent theories have purported to be, Dabrowski's theory is, on the contrary, value-laden. The values are up front, to be "bought" or not. For Dabrowski (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) there are levels of "love," "joy," "sadness," and a myriad of other attitudes and emotions including, of course, "morality." These are built upon explicit, open, conscious value judgments.

### Emotional Development

Perhaps only second in importance and novelty to Dabrowski's concept of multilevelness is his daring to look at emotional development. This is "daring" in contrast to so many other developmental theories that have concentrated on the cognitive partially for cognition's obvious educational implications and partially because it is a more acceptable psychological concept and easier to measure for scientists of a behavioral persuasion. Kohlberg, the cognitive developmentalist, as we have seen, is no exception. Dabrowski, on the other hand, dared to form a theory centered on emotional development working in equi-potential collaboration with cognition – because of his conviction that the emotions play a central role in human life and any holistic theory must not exclude their role, no matter how difficult to handle psychologically.

Dabrowski flew in the face of psychological convention and dared to address development as emotional development. The scope of his theory cried out for this emotional intensity; Dabrowski had to speak of emotions because he was recounting the agony of growth. I have chosen the word "agony" deliberately. Not only does it have the connotation of "agony/ecstasy," but its roots date back to the Greek "agonia," which means not merely the passive suffering of affliction but the emotional intensity of struggle as well.

The striving of the Olympic athlete to win the race was called an "agonia," with all its connotations of straining and sweating in the effort. Such, in the Dabrowskian framework, is the inner struggle of human development, particularly at its higher levels, where the intense feeling of the disparity between "what is" and "what ought to be" lures the person on. The struggle to become is intensely emotional. It cannot be otherwise.

### Thought and Action

We have seen that two major themes of positive disintegration theory make it a prime candidate for a holistic theory upon which to build new dimensions of moral development theory:

1. The novel concept of multilevelness, yielding the possibility of more subtle understanding of concepts and an open, conscious value system.

2. A justified emphasis on emotional development, filling a major lacuna in developmental theory.

Before going on to look at how, specifically, Positive Disintegration theory might contribute to understanding moral development, a third point must be made (flowing from the holistic theme): Any theory of moral development based on Dabrowski's ideas will not suffer the major limitation of Kohlberg's theory—a very tenuous relationship between what a person says about morals and what he or she does morally.

Dabrowski continuously distinguishes a "hierarchy of values" and a "hierarchy of aims." Everyone has a hierarchy of values, whether explicit or implicit. But it is in the hierarchy of aims, what one intends to do and how one carries it out in practice, that morality is found. Morality is a very practical art, not merely a theoretical science. Despite its broad comprehensiveness and esoteric terminology, Dabrowski's theory is a very practical one: "By their fruits you shall know them."

## Dynamisms

Because Dabrowski broke new ground, novel concepts emerged and he coined new words (not always most attuned to the Anglo-Saxon ear) to express them. One such word is *dynamisms*, the intra-psychic shaping forces of development. They are like the turbines in a powerplant, generating the electricity of development. We should look at some of these dynamisms for what they may add to our understanding of the higher levels of moral development. Most powerful among these dynamisms, especially at the higher levels of development, are the *Third Factor*, *Inner Psychic Transformation*, and *Personality Ideal*.

To the attention psychology has traditionally paid to the interplay of the two factors of heredity and environment, Dabrowski adds the *Third Factor*, independent from and selective of the two traditional factors. It is the power within the individual to encourage or to reject and restrain qualities, interests, and desires found in one's heredity and environment. Centered as it is on conscious choice, it is a dynamism central to valuation and, consequently, to moral choice making.

*Inner Psychic Transformation*, on the other hand, is not so much directed to transcending heredity and environment. It is a power within the individual to transcend and transform either external stimuli or one's own psychological type. Again, the value-laden theme of transformation to something "better" appears.

*Personality Ideal* is another value dynamism, setting up standards against which one evaluates one's personality structure. Adjusting to the ideal of personality is a form of adjustment to what ought to be—a kind of personal moral imperative founded not on social conformity but, rather, on authentic, autonomous development shaped by informed and reflective choice.

## Objectivity

A fourth dynamism deserves special mention as relevant to moral decision making. Always, with moral problems, there is the question of objectivity: Is my moral choice objectively right, or does it flow from some utterly subjective whim, fantasy, or inclination, making it merely satisfactory to me for this moment? This question is especially relevant when one chooses to found a system of morality on largely emotive foundations, for we have, within our society, centuries of tradition that says only intellect, freed from emotion, will lead us to objectivity. "Emotions are suspect; they will lead you astray; cool intellect must prevail," the tradition says.

This is where Dabrowski's concept of multilevelness comes into play beautifully. It says, "Of course, but there are levels of emotions. Some, the lower-level, unreflected ones can easily lead you astray. But you can't consequently condemn *all* emotions. There are higher-level emotions that are reflective, authentic, empathic, the result of education, life experience, and disintegration, that are positive." They lead to that fineness of feeling that pierces to the core of objectivity because it is authentic subjectivity.

One hears echoes here of Kohlberg's discoveries toward the end of his life—that "heart," "conscience," "feeling," and "intuition" can lead to higher-level moral judgments. What Dabrowski, who appreciated this earlier, does is to put flesh on the realization by describing this type of person as one who has reached higher levels of emotional development.

The dynamism that is most relevant here to the question of objectivity is the dynamism Dabrowski (somewhat awkwardly) called "Subject-Object in Oneself." Let me explain. Most of us are specialists in subjectivity. We began life with a very egocentric, subjective point of view. "Objects" came along early in life to challenge this total subjectivity and, paradoxically, to enrich it. For our whole lifetime we have seen "things" from our own subjective point of view. We are specialists, too, in our own subjective impressions of ourselves. The task of development over the life span is to move from the utter subjectivity of the neonate to the perspective of the higher-level person who sees self in relationship to objects—these "objects" in some cases being other people.

With the dynamism Subject-Object in Oneself, Dabrowski is calling for an ability among higher-level persons to reflect upon themselves as objects—to "distanciate" (a word developmental psychologists have coined to describe this phenomenon) from themselves and see themselves "objectively." At the same time, this dynamism includes the potential to see others not as objects but as subjects—to experience in some way their subjectivity.

This is what I see happening with people who have reached what Kohlberg called Stage 7. One transcends one's own subjective state to take a broader view not only of the world but of one's own place in the world as well. Dimensions expand. Perspective emerges as one more clearly perceives figure against ground.

## State Of The Art Moral Development

This is why Kohlberg saw Stage 7 as a religious, sometimes mystical experience in which the beauty of the whole emerges and proportions come more clearly and the perspective-giving function of religion is in charge. This is why Dabrowski saw his higher integrated persons as those who had in a very special way joined the human race in a oneness that allowed them to declare authentically, "Mankind, my kind!"

Moral objectivity has long been the quest of philosophers and, more recently, psychologists. It was Kohlberg's goal when he set up justice as the one virtue and established principled thinking as the ultimate level of objective moral reasoning. But he saw beyond it, saw that the transcendent delved into questions that mere intellect could not touch, saw that there was a beauty and harmony in nature that intuitively we could grasp, and in this way attain an authentic subjectivity that would yield objective moral principles. Kohlberg's foundation in cognitive developmentalism did not give him the ambience to see the working out of this wider vision. Nor does the ethic of care and responsibility as proposed by Gilligan yet have a philosophy and a psychological theory behind it that is broad enough to support the new spans of understanding that must be built. Instead, it must be a more comprehensive theory (like Dabrowski's) that will take into account that which needs to be accounted for. This theory, like Kohlberg's and Gilligan's, will perhaps some day be "state of the art," but ready, in turn, to pass away when surpassed by that which understands the human condition more fully and feels for moral beauty more strongly and more surely.

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# Hand In Hand

## An Interview with Annemarie and George Roeper

Constance Shannon

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**ABSTRACT:** *Example has consistently served as a powerful teacher through aeons of time. There have always been individuals who have set examples that guide us to higher levels of human and moral development. In this conversation with George and Annemarie Roeper, founders of the Roeper City and Country School, we encounter two such individuals who devote their lives to creating a vision that blends the concepts of growth of the unique individual with the interdependent global community. The Roeper's offer a living example of Maslow's Gemeinschaftsgefühl, which expresses the ideal of fellowship and community feeling. The history and development of the school, the Roeper's philosophy of life, and their philosophy of education for self-actualization are discussed in this interview.*

*Man at his best, like water,  
Serves as he goes along.*

*Lao Tzu  
The Way of Life*

Whether having tea with Eleanor Roosevelt, advising and consulting with the creators of *Sesame Street*, speaking at conferences, playing with their grandchildren, or watching the sunset across the San Francisco Bay, the vision of Annemarie and George Roeper remains in constant clarity and is ever present in their lives. Their vision is to create a world community that respects the growth and uniqueness of each member and fosters interdependence. This is the philosophy upon which they built their unique learning community at the Roeper City and Country School. It is also the philosophy that permeates their daily lives and inspires many with whom they come in contact.

In 1938, George and Annemarie, along with Annemarie's family, fled Germany to escape Nazi persecution because of their educational beliefs and Annemarie's Jewish heritage. Distressed by the turmoil and hatred they left behind in their homeland, the Roeper's determined to create an environment in which a powerful few would never again be able to impose their will upon an unchallenging majority. They chose the way of education to achieve this goal; in this, they followed the tradition and philosophy of Max and Gertrude Bondy,