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THE THEORY OF EMOTIONS AND CARE ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF KAZIMIERZ DĄBROWSKI'S PSYCHOLOGY

Contents of Article: Emotions and Moral Theories, Dabrowski's Theory and Emotional Development, Empathy, Responsibility, The Function of Intuition, Personal Freedom, Universality of the Personal Ideal, The Theory of Positive Disintegration and Emotional Ethics, Understanding of the Nature of Caring, Concluding Thoughts, Bibliography.

I believe that it was Kazimierz Dąbrowski, (1902-1980), who may have first influenced the trend toward the study of emotions and morality in his multidisciplinary research in human development (Dąbrowski 1962, 1964). It was Dąbrowski who called for "the third revolution in psychology"—following periods dominated by earlier revolutions, first of behaviorism against psychoanalysis, and then of the cognitive functionalism theories (Dąbrowski, 1980, p. 18). Dąbrowski did not mention what was then a new orientation in psychology known as "Humanistic Psychology," especially as it was started by Maslow in the 1960's, apparently because he did not consider it to be a significantly new trend in this discipline.

In this paper I propose to recognize Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration as a precursor, perhaps even a proper originator, of this "third revolution," although there were some scientific studies in psychology before him that tended to go in that direction. This revolution has moved slowly, however, only gradually bringing about a new direction in psychology and more recently in ethical studies. It is still not widely acknowledged as a "radically" new era in thinking. We may speculate that one reason for the slowness of the psychology community to recognize this drastic change in thought may be that much of it has been at least indirectly connected to the beginning of "women's psychology," as it has been initiated by the authors mentioned above. It is also connected to the beginning of "feminine ethics", also referred to as "care ethics" or "relational ethics" beginning with Nel Noddings (1984), as "maternal ethics" by Virginia Held (1987) and Sara Ruddick (1989), and as the "ethics of trust" by Annette Baier (1995). They are among others whose work came a bit later.

EMOTIONS AND MORAL THEORIES

In philosophy, until the last two decades of 20th century, the analysis of the role of emotions in human development has had only a few supporters or precursors. The mainstream attitude toward emotions has been mostly that they are irrational—and therefore limit one's ability to learn. Thus, one's degree of emotional maturity or development has been seen as less important than one's ability to think logically, and, therefore, lower on any scale that proposes to measure one's essential "humanness." With the possible exception of Aristotle and his "virtue theory" of morality ("Nicomachean Ethics"), the first philosopher who credited emotions as having an important role in motivating human beings was David Hume (1751), a Scottish Philosopher of the 1700's. He actually talked about "moral sentiment" as a major source of values and action.

Following Hume, there were other philosophers interested in elaborating on the place of emotions in human development. Nevertheless, although I will not present their various ideas here, in summary I would say that beside the ethical theory of Emanuel Lévinas

(1982/1985), and much later, of Kazimierz Bauman (1991), there is not much among works of others that directly addresses the relevance of emotions to morality.

The first well-known psychological theory with strong philosophical implications that incorporate emotions was put forth by Carol Gilligan (1982). Her book, "In a Different Voice" stressed an important role of gender-specific emotions in human moral development and was preceded by the work of Jean Baker Miller (1976). She is often seen as closely connected also with a slightly earlier theory formulated by Nancy Chodorow in 1978.

The late 1970's and early 1980's were a time when feminine ethics scholars began to emerge, and their influence can be traced as it started to enter the mainstream of new developments in ethics and moral psychology. However, most of the established males who publish in those fields did not — and even today do not — recognize where such influences came from (as the interest in emotions just "happened" naturally those days — the reader may verify that statement by opening any book on ethics from that period. Consciously or not, they continue to find ways to somehow link these new thinking directions mainly to Aristotle (or sometimes to the influence of Eastern thought). They greet with enthusiasm such theories as "virtue ethics," and applaud the soundness of concepts that they see as ancient in their origins, while almost completely ignoring their link to the original thinking that comes from their female colleagues of today.

Thus, today's more "enlightened" male scholars may easily speak of emotions as having a key role in moral development, while at the same time treating thinkers like Carol Gilligan as though they were practically invisible.

However, Kazimierz Dąbrowski seems not to have been mired in such male dominance. His male voice comes to us now from another place, and from a time that pre-dates the women's movement and shifts in our cultural roles and the dynamics that accompanied it. Yet, his thinking seems to be surprisingly aligned with many of today's scholars—including feminine (and feminist) ethicists.

The Theory of Positive Disintegration posits a multidimensional and multilevel structure of personality, and addresses the ways it develops. According to Dąbrowski, positive changes in one's personality structure are most likely to occur in the presence of intense experience, the inner (spiritual) world of the individual as well as in the outer world. (Dąbrowski, 1964, 1979a, p. 12). It also calls for a strong individual will exercised in the course of pursuing one's "ideal" personal development.

He stressed the positive aspects of the "disintegration" of certain traits and behaviour patterns, both some that are inherent in the individual and some that are socially derived (egocentrism, fitting in, following the crowd, etc.). He considered the structure built upon those traits, which he called "primary integration," to be basic and undeveloped. If such disintegration continues, it leads to profound personal growth and eventually to a "second integration." This aspect of Dąbrowski's theory aroused much controversy and was largely unsupported by other psychological researchers.

However, a not-so-different approach can be found in the theories of Abraham Maslow (1962) or O. Hobart Mowrer (1960). The Theory of Positive Disintegration also has its own philosophical affiliations. In his books, Dąbrowski referred especially to Soren Kierkegaard, to Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Eric Fromm, and Karl Jaspers. (The author stressed that in

his several books, i.e., Dabrowski, 1979b, p. 11; 1979c, p. 18). At the time that Dąbrowski was publishing his work, there were no female scholars visible in this convergence of psychology and philosophy. It was not until the very last years of his life that women scholars began to enter the scene and make their views known.

DABROWSKI'S THEORY AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The most significant input from Dabrowski's theory into the new developments in ethics is the recognition of the importance of emotion. Following claims of psychoanalysts, as well as much more recent empirical research in psychology, it is well established that human beings learn and show basic emotional responses toward others at a very early age, before developing extensive cognitive skills that are needed to learn rules and principles. Therefore, it seems only reasonable to say that our emotions play a fundamental role in the origin of morality, which also begins in early childhood. Ideally, emotions have allowed us to develop an ability to care. The ability to care develops and expands from the familiar to the unfamiliar; from being mostly based on our "natural instincts" to being mostly a matter of choice, and from the private sphere to the public sphere. Our "caring" may finally embrace most types of human connections. Instead of innumerable propositions combining ethics of "care" and "justice," a "care perspective" and a "justice perspective," the "feminine principle" and the "masculine principle," I would propose to pursue the ideal of morality in terms of "developed, empathetic care for everyone". Ethical theories based only on abstract principles, prescribed for separate individuals in impersonal relations, are now only history. Their problems were well described in works of many ethicists during at least the past couple of decades, starting—as I have presented—with feminine voices. With time they modified their ethics of care, defining and specifying the notion, including the standards of evaluation and proposing epistemological solutions.

I see many of the elements of this revised version of "feminine ethics" in Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration, which began to develop long before the concept of feminine ethics emerged in the 1980's. When Dabrowski chose to relate his Theory of Positive Disintegration to a philosophical framework, he put it into the category of "essentio-existentialism" (Dabrowski, Kawczak, & Piechowski, 1970). This was in line with the philosophical Existentialism that understands the "human essence" as something to be attained during the life of a person, as opposed to the alternative belief that human essence is inborn, or "natural". Also, Existentialism stresses that such essence may be attained through the experience of pain, suffering, empathy and anxiety, and the attendant "emotions" so important to Dabrowski.

Dabrowski clearly stressed that pure intellect alone cannot form an integrated "personality". [Dabrowski viewed personality as a structure and as the state of personhood, or essence of humanness. He believed it was the main aim and outcome of individual development (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Dabrowski, Kawczak, & Sochanska, 1973)]. In addition to Dabrowski's existential orientation, he had been inspired by Personalism, the philosophical/theological orientation (tradition) that has roots going back to Socrates, St. Augustine, and Max Scheler, as well as more recent thinkers such as Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Lévinas, or Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II). Personalism places persons and personal relations at the centre of theory and practice (Dabrowski et al., 1973).

Dabrowski held that "personality" development is a function of positive disintegration—the breakdown of some of one's established personal attributes and functions, which clears the way for further growth and development. Such change can only take place in the context of

lived experience. Further, he emphasized that the major basis for personality growth is "human emotion integrated with reason". This union of reason and feelings allows us, he thought, "not only to reveal what the world is, but also what it should be" (Dabrowski, 1979, p. 72).

In his book, "Dynamics of Concepts", Dabrowski writes: "It seems to the present writer that hierarchies of values are authentically and emotionally experienced; but in view of the centuries-old supremacy of the concern with cognitive process and abstract reasoning, [and] in view of the tendency to assign a superior role to the intellectual function at the expense of the emotional function, authentic experiences of hierarchy of values have not been considered as evident as the widespread view which places human essence in the sphere of ideal and abstract concepts". (Dabrowski 1973, p. 128)

In Dabrowski's theory, there are five developmental overexcitabilities (I believe "hyperexcitability" to be the better translation of the Polish term "nadwrażliwość" because the prefix "over" suggests a rather negative connotation and that was not obviously Dabrowski's intention [Dabrowski et al., 1970]). Dabrowski believed that one of these potentials, "emotional hyperexcitability," is the most important element in the process of moral development and that a lack of it keeps a person on the level of primary integration, without the possibility of growing through the progressively higher stages of "disintegrations" (Dabrowski 1980, pp. 25-6, 39).

EMPATHY

Further, Dabrowski believed that "identification" and "empathy" are linked, as the two dominant attitudes, or "dynamisms", in the process of personal growth and development. He considered that empathy, on its highest level, is an "active-and-radiating-on-everybody kind of attitude, full of friendship and love for others, honoring their uniqueness and exclusivity, [and having a] readiness to help and sacrifice" (Dabrowski, 1979, p. 27). Thus, identification with other persons, or even with God, while desirable, can be only more or less partial. He points out that global identification with others would be destructive for our own and others' identity (Dabrowski et al., 1970; Dabrowski et al., 1973). In Dabrowski's thinking, higher empathy requires a strong identification with "others". However, in philosophical terms it is a case of the "friendly union" of one unique thinking and experiencing "subject" with another unique "subject." In order to express this highest level of empathy, one must also have a highly developed sense of self-identity.

RESPONSIBILITY

Dabrowski believed that the next most important correlate in the phenomenon of empathy is "active responsibility". Simply talking about responsibility is "verbal [and] parasitic" (Dabrowski et al., 1973, p. 95). Without acting on that responsibility, one is merely engaging in an academic and purely theoretical discussion. Such responsibility may also be shown through one's own example of simply living and displaying an unflinching readiness to help others. Dabrowski also clearly recognized two types of responsibility —one that is formal, based on a conventional and rational "contractual duty", and the second, that is more authentic, "is based on both emotional and intellectual roots" (Dabrowski et al., 1973, p. 96). He says, "Responsibility represents a great force connected with an all-encompassing attitude toward the history of each individual development and an awareness of the localization of this development, its forces and its results" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p. 102).

Dabrowski's emphasis on the action that follows from such a responsible attitude of empathic identification with others is the same as the attitude toward responsibility that is central in feminine ethics. Feminine ethics also emphasizes that being motivated in our moral decisions mainly by the desire to maintain emotional connections is much more valuable and realistic than simply attempting to follow "the letter of law" to fulfil an abstract and rational principle of duty.

Again, Dabrowski reinforced this idea by emphasizing that the higher the moral development evidenced by a person, "the broader will be the moral community recognized as the object of the person's responsibilities". The range of possibilities in that regard can vary from a close circle of friends and family all the way to the whole of humankind, and even, we might say, to the whole of nature and all of creation. Dabrowski maintained that a "person" develops into a "personality" when he/she becomes self-aware, authentic, self-confirmed, and self-educating and achieves a self-chosen integration of individual and social strengths. This "becoming a personality" was seen by Dabrowski as the crowning achievement of human development. It may be achieved, he believed, only through activating the ideal of self-perfection and gaining insight into its nature that is most likely to come during moments of high emotion and in periods of creative inspiration.

THE FUNCTION OF INTUITION

The author of the Theory of Positive Disintegration also analyzed "intuition" as an important aspect of cognitive function present in moral reasoning, which is a very unusual approach in works on the topic of morality. He placed intuition as a factor that comes into play only from the level of moral development at which the core of the individual personality begins to develop. "Inner psychic transformation gradually develops in a person an insight into the highest levels of reality, accessible only to thrusts of intuition" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p.101). He defined intuition as "the capacity for synthesis derived from a small amount of significant information, a capacity to grasp conceptual patterns" (p.151). Intuition may be enhanced through such activities as meditation.

Nel Noddings also paid considerably significant attention to intuition in her theory, and, like Dabrowski, she placed it in the intellectual domain of human functions (Noddings 1984, p. 162). According to her, intuition should be considered a necessary part of "receptivity" in a caring relationship. The intuitive mode of caring, however, is seen by her as not coming into play at a level where ethical considerations are involved. "While not ethical in itself, [intuition] may contribute to ethicality by giving rise to receptive joy, and that joy helps us, sustains us in our quest for ethicality" (Noddings 1984, p.170). Thus, for Noddings, intuition plays a less important role than for Dabrowski; for her, it is complementary to morality, while, for him, it is an integral and highly valued part. One might speculate that the main reason for this is Noddings's conscious avoidance of talking about spiritual aspects of human development in connection with morality. Conversely, many people, including Dabrowski, seem to see intuition as being linked to connection with a Higher Being or with a higher realm of being.

PERSONAL FREEDOM

As a part of his existentialist approach, Dabrowski talked in length about the concept of a person's "free will." Free will is obviously necessary in following one's own journey toward development of personality. He understood it as an ability to transcend "lower" biological forces and social conventionality. Free will must be exercised subjectively in order for a

person to become more autonomous, authentic, and self-directing (Dabrowski et al., 1973). Hence, I believe that Dabrowski understood this concept of free will not as the "absolute freedom" postulated in early Sartrean existentialism (Sartre, 1956), nor as a godly, purely intellectual or spiritual freedom, as glorified often in the theories of the old Kantian tradition. Rather, as in feminine ethics, Dabrowski saw the exercising of personal/inner freedom, or free will, in connection with others, not as a means of seeking separation from them.

UNIVERSALITY OF THE PERSONAL IDEAL

It must be stressed that Dabrowski's "existentialism" also did not share with Sartre the relativism of values. On the contrary, he believed that value judgments can be objective and that a non-arbitrary hierarchy of universal values can be established (Dabrowski et al., 1970). Further, he believed that highly developed people tend to share the same values. He said, "At a higher level what we observe is not the ruling power of the intellect, but rather a conjunction of highly developed emotions with refined intellectual functions" (p. 112). Noddings also stresses that her theory does not support relativism, "because the [ethical] ideal [of self] contains at its heart a component that is universal: Maintenance of the caring relation" (Noddings, 1984, p. 85).

Another important human dynamism in Dabrowski's theory is authenticity (or "authenticism", the term that Dabrowski preferred). To be authentic is to develop an "autonomous attitude" toward oneself and to recognize and value oneself as a unique individual. For the sake of clarity, here are some examples of that dynamism (Dabrowski et al., 1973, p. 93):

- Readiness to sacrifice one's own life for another person (as he knew had happened in the Nazi concentration camps)
- Courage to actively oppose unjust acts
- Ability to refuse undeserved honours
- The courage to present one's own opinion, in spite of possible negative or even dangerous consequences

Dabrowski thought that the pronounced presence of the dynamism of authenticism indicates the highest moral development of a person and that it may be acquired only through hard work, traumatic life experiences, and self-education. He also considered authenticism to be the most fundamental element in the fully developed personality—an ideal that he believed only few completely attain.

THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATIONS AND CARE ETHICS

What do the concepts by feminist ethicists and by Dabrowski have in common? What is the general lesson that can be learned from them?

First, they all stress the importance of emotions in moral understanding and actions, not only as motivation for rational, moral decisions, but also as human characteristics necessary for us to fulfil the requirements of morality. Further, they are feminine ethicists and point to the complexity of human situations that require individualization and particularity in the processes of making moral assessments. They talk about struggling individuals, not merely about abstract ideas, and they value empathy more than strict judgment and cold impartiality. Theoretical ideals may be very important, but they cannot be applied to all real-life human conditions. Additionally, styles of moral decision-making seem to depend to a large extent on one's gender and understanding that aspects of morality doubtlessly lead us at least to better communication with each other. Personal relationships and human connections, in general, are certainly among the most vital areas of our life, and theories that do not consider them are incomplete or simply mistaken.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF CARING

Critics argue that the feminine approach is too limited, too personal, and ultimately too apolitical to be helpful in women's struggle for equality. They believe that the better ethical framework requires accepting responsibility for one's own actions and lifestyles, that such a framework involves virtually everybody, and that it is not concerned exclusively with personal relationships. Additionally, and ironically, feminist critics contend that the field of feminine ethics so far pays too much attention to "others," and not enough to a woman's own best interests and self-respect. The principle of fairness, in addition to caring, is needed in order to provide necessary guidance in dealing with relations with persons outside of the circle of those with whom we share values and familiar characteristics. Feminine "care ethics" by itself may be properly used in one's private domain, but the ethics of justice must also be applied in the public sphere, which requires dealing with the new and unfamiliar, including those people and situations that are outside the realm of one's personal experience.

In my view, this whole problem lies mostly in too narrow an understanding of the concept of "care." The problem may result either from a lack of precision and clarity in the definitions provided by early theorists or from their use of examples taken from the daily life of only some women, and in a discriminatory way. Marriage, divorce, parenting, and abortion, for example, are very important moral issues that certainly need to be analyzed thoroughly from a woman's point of view — "in women's voices" (cf. Gilligan 1982). However, they do not cover all areas of human life and, therefore, should not be treated as a proper representation of all other areas. (That problem has been partially corrected in follow-ups to the first versions of the new feminine approaches to moral development theories, often by the same authors. However, not all critics heard those corrections, or decided to take them under consideration.)

I believe that care should not be identified only with feelings, or only with the private sphere, or with particularity of direct experience. Care ethics is unfairly presented as being in opposition to universal principles, reason, and the public sphere. Thinking in terms of rigid dichotomies is artificial, and may, for example, wrongly perpetuate efforts to maintain a strict line between femininity and masculinity, between body and mind, and between "natural" phenomena and "civilized" principles of justice and fairness. Such dichotomies can slow us, or even prevent us, from making needed changes in values that no longer serve us very well.

"Ethical care" then, should not be considered as an exclusively emotional enterprise, and certainly it does not arise only in particular situations or in relationships with particular persons. Rather, it is a complex attitude of feeling and analyzing (based on assessments of previous experiences), choosing, and acknowledging one's own responsibility towards other persons who have the right to be cared for as much as we do. It must not be limited to the members of the race, religion, gender, etc. with which we are most familiar. I believe that ethical care may be best defined as an attitude or act of empathy displayed and performed by moral agents—persons who are thinking, feeling, and making their own moral decisions regarding other beings and nature in general.

Traditionally, as mentioned above, "care" has been unfortunately connected with our attitudes and behaviour toward family and friends and is, therefore, seen only as an additional element in the ethics of our private lives. Care has been considered as supplementing "much more important" public contacts, which are "ideally" based on principles of fairness and justice shared by "separate" individuals. Considerable effort has

been made by many ethicists, both male and female, to combine those two spheres and to demonstrate their complementarity. However when combining them, "care" often still remains less significant and is often joined with the concept of a "naturalness" in maternal, or even parental, attitudes—attitudes which are obviously valid for only certain people.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although I have concluded that Dabrowski's concepts of empathy, responsibility, and authenticity have much in common with the concept of "care ethics," I do have a problem with Dabrowski's stress on the extreme individuality of his conceptualized "ideal person/personality." From the viewpoint of feminine ethics, connectedness and caring relations are so important that Dabrowski sounds, by comparison, as somehow elitist in stressing uniqueness and personal autonomy so strongly. Perhaps this tendency is simply evidence that even Dabrowski, a pioneer thinker though he was, fell under the influence of the general orientation of his times, which included most theories of ethics up to the 1980's. In general, however, Dabrowski was very critical of the intellectual fads and fashions of his times. He particularly did not follow the trend of placing high value on the formal justification of moral decisions such as could be found in the metaethical theories of logical positivists such as G.E. Moore (1903), A. Ayer (1946), or R.M. Hare (1963). He would agree with Nel Noddings that the detailed analyses involved in such justification do not work. Rather, "moral problems seem to deserve a type of consideration which linguistic analysis cannot provide" (Dabrowski et al., 1970, p. 123).

To sum up, there are important contributions from Dabrowski's theory regarding the view of how human development is best influenced.

The following is my interpretation of a piece of his writing in the original Polish, taken from his book, "Wprowadzenie do higieny psychicznej" ["Introduction to Mental Hygiene"], which was published in 1979. In essence, he said that the understanding of moral forces that are common to all people cannot be taught by any organization—even an international one such as the United Nations or UNESCO—or by any other political organization. Such understanding can be done effectively only by select groups of people, who have attained a higher moral stage of development, which allows them to focus on communion with one another, as opposed to focusing on their differences and conflicts. This is best done through what he termed "positive infection". (Remember, he was also a physician!) Positive infection is spread via "the creative action of a group of friends, who can—and feel they must—practice kindness and harmony, while at the same time maintaining a supportive concern for each person's autonomy and for their mutual and common personal development" (Dabrowski, 1979, p. 281).

This Dabrowski "motto" seems to be in agreement with the feminine approach to morality. Both approaches show a high valuing of experience and practice, similarly they oppose the development of guiding principles for moral decisions and actions that rely mainly on abstract generalizations that are not always seen as grounded in real life. Both represent thinking that runs counter to traditional male-dominated theoretical frameworks.

Thus, Dabrowski certainly deserves recognition for being ahead of his time.

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