

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN MENTAL HEALTH :  
Kazimierz Dabrowski's Integral Model of Social Psychohygiene  
with Special Reference to Multilevel Concept of Value\*.

Leszek Korporowicz,  
Institute of Sociology  
Warsaw University

Both in its intention and realization the Theory of "Positive Disintegration" forms a compact whole of assumptions, statements and methods that have an interdisciplinary character. However, the term interdisciplinary is not sufficient here. A reference to the different disciplines of science does not necessarily mean the deepening of analyses that are done in this way, but may only mean the "broadening" of the variables that are taken into account. The whole of an analysis may still represent the same level and retain the same reduction coefficients in every field. An interdisciplinary approach need not ensure a deeper insight into the nature of human reality, although it may multiply terminologies and change outdated techniques of description. Cognitive conceptions of mind and culture, that are popular nowadays, show the subject of their interest from different points of analyses, displaying some biological psychic or social kinds of determinants, but their use does not change the fact that these analyses are still at the same reduction level and construct the same levels of reflection.

The Theory of Positive Disintegration must be defined differently, and the term integrity expresses the character of this theory more clearly. Dabrowski does not "add" perspectives and "multiply" variables

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Psycho-hygiene (mental health) of social ties : from the automatism of structures to the autotelism of ideas.

A dynamic and negotiable perspective on the study of man, mainly as a drama of his growth, is connected with the standpoint that all phenomena, all spheres of psychic processes as well as many fields of social reality, have different levels of existence and functioning. Multi-levelness of values and reality result from the objective "movement" of man in existence. It is both an objective and subjective fact, it is the truth that constitutes and is constituted by man and without it we cannot speak about humanity at all, regardless of the various cultural forms of its manifestation.

An interesting example illustrating the multi-levelness in the field of mental hygiene is the description of a conflict between an individual or a social group when the conflict takes place in the conditions of a developed "internal psychic environment" which proves the presence and interrelation of individual and supra-individual dimensions of the analysed reality. It is also a characteristic feature of the conflict from the "high" level of values :

"It is the conflict with imponderables, "principles" moral affairs. Emotional, personal components - unlike the conflict of an individual who is prone to rather one-level development - give way to those components that have more objective and dynamic influence on essential affective functions; "essential", public, less egocentric, usually overthought and consciously overworked. These conflicts are known from Greek tragedies, e.g. Sophocles' "Antigone" and Euripides' "Electra"<sup>1</sup>.

We can also include here conflicts of people struggling for their ideas, moral values. A low-level conflict would be a struggle for immediate, impulsive aspects of activity.

in order to get something similar (comparable?) to multivariant coefficient analysis. All this leads to many serious, both essential and methodological, consequences.

1. It is impossible to characterize any chosen aspect of the theory without referring to its other aspects.
2. The way this conception formulates a given kind of occurrence must refer to one of the basic and objective features of reality, this is to its changeable and dynamic character, which in another way can be seen a process.
3. Because of the "process" nature of reality, factors taken into account by the theory cannot have functions that are specified once and for all and treated as constant so that they can be bracketed and omitted during a further analysis.
4. That is why the Theory of Positive Disintegration adopts a negotiable and dialogical character resulting from the necessity of a constant reinterpretation of factors which change their functions, and must be taken in analysis as also changeable in order and hierarchy. In such a way Dabrowski forms a multilevel model of reality, values and personality.
5. An important feature of the integral character of the whole Theory of Positive Disintegration is reference to the teleological dimension of human activities, particularly in the process of their development. This means that not only analysis and explanation, but also the description of human behaviour is impossible if we set aside the internal vision of sense which we grant/recognize in the subjects. It reveals also an inadequate meaning of the term "human behaviour", which in the case of man can be useful only to describe the superficial form of his activities. In the light of Dabrowski's conceptions we have to ask not only what "pushes" and "elicits" these activities, but also, and in many cases first of all, by what factors these activities are inspired and "pulled". Apart from the question "why?" it is necessary to ask "towards what?". In that sense man as an integral being, a human being in society and culture, is at the same time a creation in respective and prospective terms, possibilities.
6. The features mentioned above imply a specific methodology which, like the whole Theory of Positive Disintegration, could be called an integral methodology since almost all its basic foundations refer both to the whole phenomena taken into account and to the particular part of them chosen for study. Likewise, the analysis of social reality keeps all features of the method. From this point of view the method of social psycho-hygiene (mental health?) is worth studying more closely since it usually seems to be neglected in the whole analysis of the Theory of Positive Distinction, social and cultural reality.

of an individual and group into a perspective, prospective one: a chance of responsibility of choices which are more integrated with authentic elements. In such a way a healthy society creates conditions for the activity of people who are particularly capable of prospection and perceiving what cannot be perceived by everybody, "seeing" and experiencing a hierarchy of values. There are circumstances which actively encourage people who have greater excitability of imagination, emotion and intellect, who are capable of accelerated growth of personality. The participation of these people in the collective life and their influence on the realized task depends on a level of the development of a group or a country, and not only on its organizational and supervisory functions but more than that.

Similar multi-levelness of the psychosocial reality according to the Theory of Positive Disintegration can be shown in abilities to formulate judgements and opinions, in transforming the instinct of self-preservation from egocentrism and unreflective adaptation to life and work conditions into the conscious creation of personal and cultural identity, to awareness of core values, in the continuity of their own history of development. It is also, and even first of all, the ability to create individual and cultural ideas intentionally; this ability is strongly connected with the competence of perceiving the reality of values. The integrity of social psycho-hygiene (mental health) is in this context reflected in the conviction that people who cannot perceive this reality and "start" dynamisms that are based on it and realized intrapsychic changes are also unable to modernize them in the supra-individual sphere.

It means, as a matter of fact, "a flattering" of human mental environment and inertness of estimating attitudes. It leads, as a

A multi-level approach to the social conflict makes it possible to deal with the axiology of a conflict, a problem that is seldom analysed in social science, although it could be very useful in analysing all these factors that make the conflict creative or destructive. In the context of social psycho-hygiene it depends on what is the dominant element of the group integration in the multi-level sense. If anonymous, formal factors are the dominant element and social relations are regulated in the instrumental manner, by instructions and commands, the compactness of the group is kept "externally" to some extent. The group behaviour is controlled by structural automatisms that have a low degree of elasticity and are exposed all the time to different forms of alienations, arbitrariness and detachment from a real, "internal" social dynamisms. These mechanisms allow limited independence of particular social subjects. Under these circumstances the problem of coordination becomes extremely "energy-absorbent". Any conflict inside such an integrated group can cause (its) negative disintegration, put controlling mechanisms out of order, and make group members motivations chaotic, since their social personality is controlled from the outside. Dabrowski writes :

"Compactness of a higher kind, an aspiration for a secondary, more overworked group integration can be found in the lives of many organizations which allow their members considerable independence, weakness of formal ties and advantage of moral and intellectual ones. Their conscious clashes develop higher forms of compactness. This kind of compactness is not formally normalized, but more and more realized and produced through the inner work of the group, among other things by means of creative conflicts. If these conflicts are respected, recognized and solved by the majority of individuals and groups, the element of fret and pressure diminish and are eliminated from the organization in the end."<sup>2</sup>

In such a way a higher kind of compactness among a group, based on the consciously negotiated values, for example, in multicultural societies, is reached. There becomes a chance to change an improvised model of activity

dilemma leads not only to theoretical reduction but also to moral nihilism and a warped development of personality. It is, in fact, the negation and blockade of many dynamisms and forces that are indispensable to full development. These dynamisms or forces overcome "the automatic", rigid schemata of activity both in an individual dimension and a group one. In the perspective of social psycho-hygiene (mental health), a "healthy" society creates the need for adjustment and orientation not in the direction "what is" but "what should be".

It is a vision that could be start a number of sociological conceptions concerning social and cultural development. These conceptions should not lose, from the field of vision, the development of the individual and to replace the problem of a man's autonomy with a dissertation (divagation) on structures autonomy. Such a reflection, however, would have to make greater progress than has been so far made on the way to the differentiation among the notions of development, progress and growth that are often used interchangeably. Moreover, such a reflection would have to extract their very different aspects. According to Dabrowski social psycho-hygiene gives in that respect multiple possibilities and could be a serious supplement to the studies having been led up till now.

#### Socialization through personality development

In one of his texts Dabrowski asks the question : "Would it be possible to present the fundamental criteria of the mental health of a group sketchily at least? I think generally one can answer this question positively. As far as a constant and coherent group is concerned, a group capacity to develop in the direction of realization higher and higher group purposes would be called the health of a group."<sup>3</sup>

consequence, to a negative kind of adaptability, which is non-selective routine, without any grounds in abilities to choose the inner truth as well as to choose any way of action consciously.

That is why social psycho-hygiene (mental health) tries to go beyond "the mechanical" theory of socialization, which deprives human activities of their intentionalism and formaltes them as an action without the experience of sense. The outlook of multi-level human phenomena and values together with the outlook of levels of an individual mental growth creates new possibilities on how to treat the socialization process not only in the categories of "horizontal synchronization", i.e. in consideration of functional requirements of social parts in the structure of group behaviour and the required stability but also in the categories of "vertical synchronization" which is oriented teleologically and axio-creatively.

A "healthy" society, therefore, must strive not only for efficient adaptability methods but also for positive forms of nonadaptability / maladjustment / of their members, which at the same time means adaptability / adjustment / to higher hierarchy of value, to created ideals and realities connected with them.

Whatever we would like to say about the shape of "heathy" society, according to Dabrowski it will be a society that does not destroy but strengthens and makes essential the inner resources of the individual psychic environment as is the ground to feel the social ideas of a group. A holistic view of man and society depends on the abolition and demonstration of inadequacy of a development dilemma "towards himself" or "towards other people". Any unilateral dmination of any part of this

perspective linking social psycho-hygiene problems together with the theory and sociology of culture as its essential, theoretical context.

The undoubted (undoubtful) statement of the relativity of psychological phenomena cannot be neglected in investigations. However, a model which stresses relativity would be unable to render and inspect the whole scope of "a value space" function that is present during both individual and group activities. Its process nature form cannot be mistaken with confusion and its dynamic form for immutability / homeostasis / mechanisms. It would mean bringing sociology and other humanities to a halt by putting them on the level of a description only. Moreover, it often produces nothing or under the guise of scientific objectivism would make substantial misunderstandings. Here appears the question of whether so called "indication procedures" are the only instrument for the adequate study of human reality since they are able to explain the teleological dynamism of sense creation, as well as go beyond the social canons of their interpretation.

At the same time scientific description is not able to elucidate the dynamism resulting from the process of hierarchical ordering of valuations. They are very essential not only from the viewpoint of socialization but also in the process of culturalization which in a special way is directed towards perception and transformation of value. The Theory of Positive Disintegration can be inspirational for the compact, multilevel analysis of culture both in wide and narrow way of its understanding. Moreover, one can clearly perceive the personal-creative dynamism of culture. This interpretation is essential in the case of reflecting on social types of cultural competence,<sup>4</sup> so important from the view of the real and potential dynamism of personality development. In

It is obvious that here arises a question what these "higher group purposes" mean. On the basis of the Theory of Positive Disintegration the above question does not remain without a reply, but quite the reverse is suggested plainly. First of all, there is a postulate that any consideration of group purpose cannot be separated from individual purposes. What is more, all purposes should try to deny everything automatic and routine, unconverted and non-creating conditions for this conversion besides, one should pay attention to the way that Dabrowski constructs the methodology how to define these purposes.

First of all, he criticizes the position of sociological relativism that is often absolutised as well as the axiological relativism connected with it. He seeks objective determinants for the development of emotional, impulsive, intellectual functions and indirectly of social ones. This part of the theory, which seems to be one of the most controversial for many people can, in the context of social mental health and other humanities, be of great heuristic value in that it contributes to the explanation and arrangement of many varied analyses which are often non-reflectively mixed. In such cases external classification and incorrect formalities replace real investigation and instead of searching for and chiefly discovering perspectives that can often provide mutual inspiration, these external classifications and formalities make the perspectives rigid and absolute. What is more, they often cause false and invalid interpretation.

In this respect it is simply a notorious error to make a mistake to confuse between the essence and dynamism of experiences. At the same time one cannot tackle the problem concerning conceivable, mutual connections between those facts, which could expose an interesting, investigative

## Quotations :

1. Dabrowski, K. Higiena psychiczna, Warszawa 1962, p.361.
2. Dabrowski, K. Higiena psychiczna, op. cit., p.362
3. Dabrowski, K. Higiena psychiczna, op. cit., p.350/.
4. Korporowicz, L. Cultural Competence as a Research Problem. "The Polish Sociological Bulletin", 1982, no. 1-4.
5. Dabrowski, K. Uspolecznienie autentyczne i pozorne a zdrowie psychiczne czlowieka, "Zdrowie Psychiczne", 1974, no. 3/4, p.25.

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this way the analysis of society, mental life and culture is united and shows, on the one hand, the social situation of personality, and on the other hand the personal dimension of society and culture.

This integral character of social mental health that I propose to call shortly sociohygiene, is expressed most synthetically the indissolubility of what Dabrowski defines as the "individual essence" and the "social essence" of man, through which both the theory of personality and the theory of socialization are constructed. Dabrowski writes :

On the highest level, socialization results from the achieved personality that we could acknowledge as self-informed, self-chosen, self-confirmed and self-being educated with the unity of fundamental mental features as well as realizing the individual and social ideal. There are two groups of characteristic features of this definite ideal; it means both individual and social "essence". The first essence expresses individual, authentic interests and individual, primary friendships and love relationships, conscious identification with oneself and one's own development history. The second essence, shared, common or social, expresses deep empathy and responsibility, authenticity and a high level of consciousness. And just as the second essence would determine the individual's socialization because it is conscious and reflective. The empathetic attitude means responsibility, an authentic relation to a human being ..."<sup>4</sup>

So one of these essences is impossible without the other. One cannot be responsible for others if one is not responsible for oneself. The essences are two parts of the same whole, which is both individual and social. It is one of the fundamental mental health conclusions of Dabrowski's theory that there cannot be "pro-social" attitudes without rich, developed internal psychic personal environment within a person. There cannot exist a developed group identity, or mature corporate feelings without mature, that is elaborate, self-chosen identity of an individual. The option of other conclusions is then also open in the full sense of the word.