

## A GUIDE TO DISTINGUISHING DABROWSKIAN LEVELS

From Lysy, 1979: "Personal Growth of Counselors and Noncounselors: A Jungian and Dabrowskian Approach." Ph.D. thesis, U. of Illinois at U-C.

### Level I

1. Do not really care what others think of them; some mention situations involving financial or job security as exceptions.
2. Mentioned struggles to get oneself to work steadily or to refrain from overindulgence, or strong doubts about the motivation of others.
3. Feel unworthy when rejected by schools of their choice, when snubbed for not dressing stylishly, or when another person pointed out flaws (not specified in the response). They are frustrated by their own academic shortcomings.
4. Mention regret, revulsion and anger at having sacrificed themselves or allowed themselves to be exploited for something worthless. On being shown up as academically inadequate, one man said he was angry at himself for not having remedied his deficiency sooner. One woman was angry at herself for being too human and considerate, not brutal, aggressive, and cruel enough in a certain (unspecified) situation.
5. After a divorce, one level I subject tried for the first time to stand back and look at himself objectively to decide on a set of life goals. Others spoke of self-analysis in terms of academic ability or career objectives. One said he had tried to be objective about himself in order to determine whether he had recently made the right decisions (situations not specified); he was not sure he had, but felt "you have to learn to live with it." This is a nice example of what Dabrowski would call a lack of positive maladjustment, with the environment or with oneself as one currently is. Other subjects said either that they tried to avoid self-examination or that they were incapable of it.
6. Several said that they were not ideal and did not try to be different than they were, that no one is ideal. Some felt that having lots of money would make for an ideal life; one subject added the ability to learn languages easily. Another added fun, fast cars, and beautiful women; in order to be able to obtain these, he wanted to be charming, witty, glib, outgoing, dashing, and debonair. A woman also wanted to be witty, as well as more aggressive, less sensitive, and able to lose her heart as easily as her head. Another subject thought it would be ideal to be a leader with the ability to control others. Another listed the following ideal qualities, in this order: efficiency, intelligence, strength of character, tactfulness, friendliness, loyalty, responsibility, courage, patience, good looks, sense of humor.

## Level II

1. Level II subjects said they were strongly affected by the evaluations of others, but did not mention comparing themselves to others in terms of values of their own; nor did they give any evidence of having self-development goals. They mentioned external, material criteria of evaluation and such psychological areas as intelligence, competence, and ways of conducting themselves in relation to others.
2. Described conflicts over sex roles or sexual-love feelings for more than one person, worry about their own motives, fears that they might prove to lack some psychological quality (such as a capacity for sustained intimacy) which they found desirable, fears of death, violence, and sexual abuse, disturbance over the unequal distribution of wealth in society. One subject mentioned an inability to decide between two established religions, stressing the cultural elements of each; another said, "I feel like I 'ought' to believe in God," but added that she usually thinks about the matter on Sundays.
3. Like Level I's, they also described feelings of academic inadequacy but never mentioned this area alone; they also felt unworthy when another pointed out flaws, but these were more strongly psychological and described in more detail than was the case with the level I's. In addition, various Level ii subjects felt inadewuate professionally, financially, intellectually, artistically, and socially. Some felt unable to express their feelings in words or to live up to others' expectations. One man felt unworthy of his wife because he was unable to control his temper with her and felt she deserved better in return for the sacrifices she had made for him. Several feared they would prove unworthy of others' love, confidence, or praise.
4. Some were frustrated with themselves for their lack of life-management skills, such as the ability to organize or to set medium-range goals (such as finding a job) and pursue them systematically. Some were angry at their own lack of assertiveness (i.e. turning down unwanted dates or applying for admission to a preferred program of study) or frustrated at their inability to decide between alternative courses of action, both seen as equally desirable. One subject was angry at herself for speaking without thinking or being happy when a friend was unhappy. Another felt regret at having invaded a friend's privacy by unannounced visits; she enjoyed being visited this way, the friend evidently did not, "but I kept trying."
5. Some subjects reflected on their sexuality; the fact that others found them sexually attractive; the problem of accepting their sexuality as it was rather than feeling obliged to embody a social stereotype; what they really wanted from heterosexual relationships. One subject showed clearly the ambivalence and ambitendency: she alternated between feeling she had nothing in life and no achievements to show for a lifetime of effort, and feeling that things were not so bad since she was healthy, worked in a congenial environment, and did in fact consistently succeed at difficult tasks. Another woman reflected on her tendency to criticize others and on her pleasure in helping them in small concrete ways. Evidence of

disharmony with the self was shown by a subject who worried about psychosomatic symptoms; another was concerned that others often took him to be displaying emotions he himself was unaware of feeling. Some questioned whether they had anything special to offer as members of their professions. One realized after the death of a parent that she would have to take control of herself; temporarily, she doubted her own strength and will to go on. Another subject listed a series of positive qualities she had found in reflecting on herself, aided by others' perceptions of her. She said she found it impossible to be objective on her own, since her changing moods caused her to take opposing views of herself.

6. Many subjects whose responses were rated at Level II also showed a tendency simply to list attributes. However, their ideals did not include material things but focused on psychological qualities, including, for one subject, "the ability to reject the material side of life" and to rise above adversity. Several longed for self-confidence and the ability to accept life and themselves. Job satisfaction and physical fitness were mentioned by a few, as were honesty, empathy, self-expressiveness, openness, genuineness, and sensitivity. One woman wanted to find a midpoint between her present extremes of dependence and independence and being "able to sit at home frequently without being bored" versus having to go out all the time. Another subject felt it would be ideal not to want revenge even for an intentional harm, to be able to change behavior that turned out to be harmful to oneself or morally wrong, to be able to communicate even with uncongenial people, to be able to make people happy through laughter ("I believe this is the greatest gift one can give his fellowman").

### Level III

1. They seem to be most strongly affected by others' views of them as psychological beings. They compared themselves to others in terms of their own standards for themselves, their own value hierarchies. They described programs of self-change. One woman was amazed to discover that a friend had, on first meeting, thought her cold and aloof; she now made continual efforts to overcome her "unnecessary timidity" by coaxing herself into greeting people and talking to them.
2. The religious and spiritual struggles described by subjects giving Level III responses were transdoctrinal, seeming sharper and more all-pervasive. There was a definite multilevel component to their conflicts over differing behavioral tendencies, the desired behavior being seen as higher and more worthy than the tendencies they struggled against. They described a desire to contribute to the welfare of mankind, either politically or scientifically, and their anxiety about not actively pursuing this goal or their doubts as to whether they were capable of it.
3. The greater complexity and internalization of Level II as compared to Level I responses was carried a step further in the case of Level III's. They felt inadequate because of a lack of direction in life or of genuine career commitment, or because of behavior that was inauthentic in terms of their deeper selves. They described failures of empathy and of self-discipline, failure to live up to their own potential, to develop their own talents, or to behave in accordance with "a higher morality."
4. They were angry at themselves for taking the easy, lower way of passive enjoyment rather than the path of intellectual and aesthetic accomplishment, which was seen as higher and more difficult. Inauthentic behavior, lying or in some way not being true to oneself, was mentioned several times; allowing personal relationships to lapse through fear of intimacy was seen as a betrayal of the self and others. Anger at the self was also aroused by failure to behave sensitively and rationally, or to accept others as they are rather than trying to manipulate them into behaving in a certain way. One subject felt regret, embarrassment, and shame at having allowed defensive anger to get the best of him.
5. In general, they show more autonomy in their self-examination. One subject said he was gradually detaching from an earlier tendency to measure himself in terms of social norms inappropriate to him. He was trying to strike a happy medium, he said, between excessive harshness in judging himself by a standard of absolute perfection and being too prone to excuse himself "for my lapses in living in accordance with my ideals." He became reconciled to being "torn with self-doubts" and doubts about the merit of his work through reading biographies of eminent people; since they had similar feelings and still produced something worthwhile, he might yet be capable of the same.

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6. The Level III responses, in some cases, included some of the ideals named by II's (honesty, spontaneity, independence, sensitivity, receptiveness, the respect of others and self-respect) or even I's (sense of humor), but also included joyousness, flexibility, humility, diligence, determination, social-mindedness, clarity, vision, insight, and spiritual depth and composure. These subjects wanted to be an example and a good influence on others, to be consistently supportive of an caring of others, especially members of their immediate families. It was very important for them to contribute to the life of the community through creative intellectual or service work.

DRI Responses in an Overview

Level I responses seem to show a more primitive, insular type of personality, concerned mainly with material matters and the external, easily visible aspects of psychological traits and situations.

Level II responses are more detailed, showing a more complex - if sometimes confused - and more intense inner life; relationships with others seem more important and more highly differentiated.

Level III responses show an awareness of something higher and better in their authors, a sense of growing toward it through attempts to inhibit their own behaviors incompatible with the ideal. They choose, although not consistently, to be true to their deepest and best selves. They want to be creative, contributing members of the human community.