

Editorial

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is fitting that this special issue on Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (TPD) is published this year—the 100th anniversary of his birth. TPD has profoundly influenced the field of gifted education,

particularly the social/emotional domain of giftedness. The number of people who attend conference sessions on TPD, such as those organized by the National Association for Gifted Children and Alberta's own SAGE, is one indication of the popularity of Dabrowski's theory. However, TPD elicits strong reactions when people are introduced to it: people love it or hate it. I had a rather negative response to it in my first encounter many years ago. Among other things, its terminology, such as *disintegration*, *overexcitability* and *dynamisms*, put me off. However, after I gave it a second hearing, TPD resolved a dilemma that had dogged me since my days as a doctoral student: how can some people who are highly intelligent and well educated be mean-spirited, intentionally hurtful to others and racist? TPD solved this for me by underscoring a simple truth: superior intellectual ability and academic success are not sufficient for becoming a good person. Other factors are required.

Despite its negative-sounding terminology, TPD is a theory of moral development, not in the sense of moral reasoning, but moral living. Dabrowski provides an explanation of the factors and processes involved in a personal transformation from living a life motivated by self-interest to living one driven by empathy and altruism. In the years since my second encounter with it, Dabrowski's theory has become a regular companion in my counseling of gifted

persons, whether I use it didactically with my clients or as a cognitive map to guide my understanding of their experiences and emotionality.

Regardless of initial reactions to TPD, educators working with gifted students must be aware of Dabrowski's theory. It is an influential force in the literature dealing with social and emotional development of gifted students. Educating all students, including those who are gifted, requires attending to their social and emotional as well as intellectual needs. Understanding TPD will provide some useful insights in this endeavor while facilitating educators' reading of professional literature in this area.

The articles included in this issue serve two functions. First, they provide information regarding the theory. Second, the authors provide suggestions for the application of TPD to teaching gifted students. Those who are familiar with TPD as treated in the literature in gifted education will see signs of a different portrayal of the theory. I call this difference the Canadian perspective on TPD—a suitable characterization because Dabrowski spent many years in Canada.

The articles should be read in order. To provide a context for the other articles, William Tillier's article begins the issue. Although all the authors in this issue are students of TPD, Tillier was among Dabrowski's last cohort of students at the University of Alberta. After Dabrowski's passing in 1980, Tillier took it upon himself to honor Dabrowski by creating a TPD archive in which he maintains a collection of original works by Dabrowski and a record of works by others who publish articles or make conference presentations on TPD.

In addition, he is an active proponent of TPD by managing a very informative website (<http://members.shaw.ca/positivedisintegration/>) and an online discussion group (see website for further information). Because of his unique background, readers may be assured that Tillier's summary of TPD is faithful to its proposal by Dabrowski. In my article, I provide implications for educators of gifted students that take into account some of the complexity of TPD. Three articles written by practising educators of gifted and talented students complete the issue: Linda Finlay focuses on how education of gifted students could be improved by injecting a Dabrowskian perspective into our conceptualization of giftedness; Richard Michelle-Pentelbury discusses elements of TPD in the context of practical classroom situations; and Ann Dodd's article describes a personal account of how overexcitabilities and levels of development can be interpreted for use within classes for gifted students. I believe that the articles in this issue will

provide readers with a unique opportunity to review authors' perceptions on what Dabrowski's theory can offer to educators of gifted students. I hope that this issue will motivate readers to embark on their own investigations of TPD.

I am very interested in readers' reactions to TPD, whether they relate to this special issue and/or their own experiences with the theory. Such submissions, as well as those on other matters relevant to gifted education, would be considered for publication in our journal.

Reviewers for This Issue

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