Dąbrowski 201: An Introduction to Kazimierz Dąbrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration.

W. Tillier
Calgary, Alberta.
All sections revised 2018
Version: 18-35

“You must polish your understanding in the light of truth. Truth is not what you want it to be; it is what it is, and you must bend to its power or live a lie. Free your mind from ego and thought. The time for thinking is when you are learning” (Musashi, 1645/2004, p. 40).
1. Dąbrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration
   - 1.1. Introduction and context. ................................................................. Slide: 006
   - 1.2. Who was Kazimierz Dąbrowski? ..................................................... Slide: 023
   - 1.3. Marie Jahoda. ...................................................................................... Slide: 030
   - 1.4. Multilevelness: Levels of reality. ....................................................... Slide: 036
   - 1.5. Developmental Potential. ................................................................. Slide: 055
     - 1.5.1. General Prerequisites. ................................................................. Slide: 055
     - 1.5.2. Advanced Development is Rare. .................................................. Slide: 058
     - 1.5.3. Developmental Potential. ............................................................. Slide: 065
     - 1.5.4. Overexcitability. .......................................................................... Slide: 073
     - 1.5.5. Three Factors of Development. .................................................... Slide: 087
     - 1.5.6. The Third Factor. ......................................................................... Slide: 095
   - 1.6. Key Constructs. .................................................................................. Slide: 105
     - 1.6.1. Psychoneuroses. .......................................................... Slide: 106
     - 1.6.2. Adjustment. ................................................................................. Slide: 111
     - 1.6.3. Dynamisms. ................................................................................. Slide: 116
     - 1.6.4. Personality. ............................................................................... Slide: 122
     - 1.6.5. Instincts. ...................................................................................... Slide: 133
     - 1.6.6. Self-education. ........................................................................... Slide: 137
     - 1.6.7. Autopsychotherapy. ................................................................. Slide: 142
     - 1.6.8. Inner psychic milieu (IPM). ..................................................... Slide: 145
1.7. Emotion and Values in Development. Slide: 148
1.8. Disintegration. Slide: 158
1.9. The Levels. Slide: 169
1.10. Applications of the Theory. Slide: 178
   - 1.10.1. General Applications of the Theory. Slide: 178
   - 1.10.2. Applications in Education. Slide: 186
   - 1.10.3. Applications in Gifted Education. Slide: 193
1.11. Current and Future Issues. Slide: 212
1.12. Conclusion. Slide: 219
2. Tillier’s Hierarchy of Dąbrowski. Slide: 223
3. Dąbrowski and John Hughlings Jackson. Slide: 225
4. Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology. Slide: 231
   - 4.1. Overview Slide: 231
   - 4.2. Growth Following Adversity / Posttraumatic Growth Slide: 235
5. Dąbrowski and Maslow. Slide: 247
6. Dąbrowski and Philosophy. Slide: 275
   - 6.1 Dąbrowski and Kierkegaard. Slide: 279
   - 6.2 Dąbrowski and Nietzsche. Slide: 327
   - 6.3 Dąbrowski and Unamuno. Slide: 378
   - 6.4 Dąbrowski and Plato. Slide: 396
### Dąbrowski 201 – Table of contents – 3.

- **7. Creativity in the Theory of Positive Disintegration.** Slide: 441
- **8. Dąbrowski’s approach to testing: An introduction.** Slide: 466
- **9. Dąbrowski and Piechowski.** Slide: 560
- **10. Misrepresentations of the Theory of Positive Disintegration.** Slide: 641
- **11. Acknowledgments.** Slide: 652
- **Reward for Those Who Persevered**
- **References.** See below
- **[Appendix 1: Schmidt (1977).]** See below
- **[Appendix 2: Authoritarian personality.]** See below
- **[Appendix 3: Moral Disengagement.]** See below
- **[Appendix 4: Nomological Networks.]** See below

### Dąbrowski 201 References
Available at: http://www.positivedisintegration.com/ref.pdf

### Dąbrowski 201 Appendices
Available at: http://www.positivedisintegration.com/app.pdf
1. Dąbrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration
   1.1 Introduction and context.
The Strategy of this Presentation.

- Dąbrowski’s work has never been easy to overview because there are many interrelated constructs.
- Direct quotes from Dąbrowski will illustrate his ideas.
- Used a unique “dynamic” approach: one construct has different descriptions at different developmental levels.
- Dąbrowski’s thinking was quite original and his conclusions often challenge the status quo.
- Dąbrowski’s thinking was shaped by diverse influences, I review some of the most important in detail, revealing a number of foundational planks.
- The real introduction to Dąbrowski remains reading his original works and seeing his ideas emerge.
Dąbrowski’s Theory.

• Dąbrowski wrote a broad, interrelated and nuanced theory to account for human development:
  • He integrated many diverse streams of thought, from philosophy, from psychiatry, from psychology, from neurophysiology and from literature.
  • Dąbrowski’s English works represent a sample of his overall publications (~2X as many in Polish).
  • As material is translated, more detail will emerge.
  • There is an intuitive element in comprehending Dąbrowski; as some have said, “it’s a theory best understood by its application in one’s life,” some who approach it academically, “just don’t seem to get it.”
Several Radical Core Ideas – 1.

- **Positive disintegration**: Psychological growth can only take place if one’s status quo is challenged by crises and one undergoes dis-integration. This disintegration is positive when it leads to development, not simply a re-integration.

- **Personality shaping**: Most people take personality for granted and express “who they are” with little reflection. Personality in TPD is a hard won creation, beginning with a long self-examination leading to an idealization of who one wants to be, followed by shaping of one’s behavior toward gradual achievement of that ideal.

- **Psychoneuroses**: Rejecting traditional views, psychoneuroses are seen as a critical part of growth. Severe depression, self-doubt & anxieties are the crises (dis-ease) that challenge one’s comfortable adjustment and force self-examination.
Several Radical Core Ideas – 2.

• **Levels**: As with intellect (IQ), instinctive and emotional aspects can be described and understood on different levels. Appreciating these levels gives context and perspective to understanding the wide range of behaviour humans express.

• **Developmental potential**: Dąbrowski studied exemplars of development and concluded they show a unique set of factors not seen in non-exemplars. He called these factors development potential (DP). Strong positive DP is a genetically based foundation for advanced psychological development. Not everyone has these genetic potentials.

• **Multilevelness**: Growth is connected to a vertical perception of reality creating comparisons of higher versus lower levels. Those with a “unilevel” view see only horizontal choices and are limited in their ability to achieve growth.
Frustrating Ideas And Language.

- A basic contradiction: How can psychological disintegration be positive?

- Psychology assumes that the development process is universal—we all develop along the same basic path. TPD says advanced development (and personality) is rare and follows a non-traditional path.

- Frustrating to learn TPD because it often uses traditional words (e.g., personality) to describe ideas that are used in a unique way. Also because the ideas are interrelated in a complex network: It takes time to see the “big picture.”

- Many new constructs and terms are introduced.
A nomological network of constructs.*

• Dąbrowski’s work contains many (~20) interrelated, generally unique constructs, generally in hierarchical relationships (* see Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; see Appendix 4).

One example:  
Personality Ideal  
- Autonomy / Authenticity  
- Hierarchy of Values  
- Third Factor  
- Inner Psychic Milieu  
- Multilevelness  
- Hierarchization  
- Positive Disintegration  
- Psychoneurosis  
- Developmental Potential
- The differentiation of developmental levels is common in theories of biology, philosophy and psychology:
  - Many theories present various hierarchies detailing levels.
  - A wide variety of descriptions and explanations of development have been proposed.
  - Most approaches suggest all people have the potential to advance, but most people fail to achieve their full potential for various reasons (e.g. run out of energy).
- Dąbrowski said he could not find a psychological theory that explained his observations of both the lowest behaviors and highest achievements of people.
- His goal: to write a “general theory of development” accounting for the wide range of behaviors seen, and explaining the factors and processes that he believed are associated with advanced development.
Personality Theories

- Psychoanalysis
- Behavioural
- Biological
- Humanistic
- Trait
- Social
- Stage

- Freud
- Jung
- Pavlov
- Eysenck
- Maslow
- Eysenck
- Kelly
- Freud
- Adler
- Watson
- Sheldon
- Rogers
- Leary
- Bandura
- Piaget
- Horney
- Skinner
- Jeff Gray
- Dąbrowski
- Allport
- Mischel
- Erikson
- Cattell
- Kohlberg
- FFM
Combination of Old and New Approaches.

- Dąbrowski assembles old ideas in a unique way:
  - Subsumes a traditional Piagetian (cognitive) approach under an emotion—based umbrella.
  - Places emotion in a unique guiding role.
- Dąbrowski adds several new and unique constructs:
  - Multilevelness (ML)
  - Developmental Potential (DP) [includes overexcitability (OE) and third factor].
  - Positive Disintegration: Initial psychological integrations are governed by lower instincts and by socialization. These lower integrations must break down to allow the creation of new, higher structures.
The theory combines two different philosophical traditions: elements of the essentialism of Plato with the emphasis on individual choice in existentialism (he called this the “existentio-essentialist compound”).

Essence is king, but it’s not enough for one’s essence to unfold, it must be shaped by one’s existential choices: attributes that are consciously evaluated and developed—the lower aspects inhibited, the higher embraced—this differentiates humans from animals.

Dąbrowski was deeply concerned with the unique traits and personality of each individual. He asks us to develop and differentiate ourselves and to understand, appreciate, and accept the differences of others.
What is Development? – 1.

• Dąbrowski presented a “mixed” view of development.

• Traditional views of development are **ontogenetic**: a predictable, sequential, timeline (milestone) pathway. Higher levels unfold *from* the features of lower ones.

• Dąbrowski described both ontogenetic pathways as well as non-ontogenetic aspects of development, depending upon the features and levels involved.

• **Non-ontogenetic** aspects do not arise from, nor are they predictable from, the features of lower levels; they are predicated on “other factors” or emerge anew as evolution proceeds.

• Higher levels reflect a new view of reality. Lower levels disintegrate or are transcended or transformed.
What is Development? – 2.

• “two main qualitatively different stages and types of life: the heteronomous, which is biologically and socially determined, and the autonomous, which is determined by the multilevel dynamisms of the inner psychic milieu” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 5).

• Each type has characteristic developmental processes.

• Higher levels reflect higher, newer evolutionary levels, achieved through processes of positive disintegration.

• There are metaphysical aspects to Dąbrowski. In the self, “the inner psychic milieu” and “third factor” arise from lower level “roots” to become emergent, developmental forces in their own right, transcending their biological and social origins and influences.
An Emotion – Value Based Approach.

• Values and moral behavior are critical—when one comes to see what “ought to be” versus “what is.”

• Our emotions are the ultimate guide to our values, sense of self, and behavior, not our intelligence.

• Values are individual but not relative—there are core objective (universal) values that authentic humans will independently discover and embrace as they build their own unique value systems and personalities.

• Education must not indoctrinate: it should prepare the child for life. A balanced approach is advocated; personality, intellect and emotional factors are all important. The role of emotions in guiding values and to become an autonomous thinker are vital aspects.
The Role of Emotion in Development.

- Emotion anchors and guides the creation of autonomous and authentic human values.
- Our feelings work with imagination to develop a sense of what is higher and what ought to be, over “what is:”
  - We move away from what feels bad / wrong / lower.
  - We move toward what feels good / right / higher.
- If we become conscious of our higher emotions, we can use them as a rudder to direct cognition to strive for what “ought to be”—toward “higher possibilities.”
- Intelligence becomes an instrument serving our sense of personality ideal, based upon our own emotional sense of who we ought to strive to be.
Emotion – A New Appreciation.

- The highest levels in traditional theories are based on cognition (e.g. Platonic model, Piagetian model).
- Traditional goal: to have reason control and direct passion (Plato)—this approach has predominated education and psychology.
- Dąbrowski looked at emotional expression based upon the level of development thereby differentiating higher emotions from lower ones.
- Love at Level I vs. IV is as different as love and hate.
- Dąbrowski’s observation: In “higher,” authentic people, “higher” emotions guide individual values and define our sense of who we are. Intelligence becomes subservient to the direction of emotion.
Dąbrowski’s English Books.

- The titles of Dąbrowski’s six major English books reflect the major themes of his approach:
  - *Personality shaping through positive disintegration* (1967).
  - *Psychoneurosis is not an illness* (1972).
1.2. Who was Kazimierz Dąbrowski?
Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902-1980).

• A Polish psychologist and psychiatrist.
• Deeply affected by his life experience, first as a child eyewitness to the aftermath of horrific battles in WW I.
• Pursued a very comprehensive and diverse education.
• Saw that people display wide variations in how they experience and feel life—some seem to feel more.
• Experienced strong “overexcitability” as a youth.
• Deeply affected again by WW II—imprisoned by the Germans and later imprisoned under the communists and his activities were controlled during the 1950’s.
• Much work was completed from 1965 to 1980.

• For biographies, see http://positivedisintegration.com/
A Precocious Student.

• While still in high school, Dąbrowski passed his first and second year university examinations.
• Dąbrowski did a Masters in philosophy and considered a career in music, but his best friend (a fellow student) committed suicide, changing the direction of his life.
• Dąbrowski entered medicine taking courses from eminent Polish psychiatrist, Jan Mazurkiewicz, a follower of J. H. Jackson. In 1928 he took courses from Édouard Claparède and Jean Piaget, writing a thesis on suicide in 1929.
• He completed a doctorate degree in psychology writing a thesis on self-mutilation.
A Diverse Education Continues.

- Studied psychoanalysis in Vienna under fellow Pole Wilhelm Stekel (attended lectures by Freud).
- In Paris he practiced psychiatry under Pierre Janet.
- Dąbrowski became fluent in German, Spanish and French. Centers studying TPD were established in Spain and Lima, Peru. Some books were translated into Spanish (he lectured in Lima, Peru) and some books were also translated into French.
- In 1933 Dąbrowski spent a year at Harvard and in Boston. Dąbrowski never referenced William James but may have been familiar with his work: James (1899) essentially described “overexcitability” in terms similar to Dąbrowski’s.
A Promising Career.

- In the 1930s, he organized mental health services and clinics in Poland. Began to write prolifically, the outline of TPD can be seen in his first English work in 1937.
- During WWII, he was imprisoned several times by the German police (released for ransom) but avoided incarceration in the concentration camp system.
- In the late 1940s Dąbrowski began to resume his work on mental health and again visited Harvard.
- In 1950 Dąbrowski was imprisoned by the communist government for 18 months and, after release, his activities were closely monitored.
- In 1964 Dąbrowski worked with Jason Aronson in New York, leading to *Positive Disintegration* (Little, Brown).
• Dąbrowski met Andrew Kawczak in Montréal in 1964.
• In 1965, Dąbrowski became affiliated with the University of Alberta, moving his family to Edmonton.
• He was also affiliated with Université Laval (Laval University), Quebec City.
• In 1966, Dąbrowski met Abraham Maslow and the two became friends and correspondents.
• All his life, Dąbrowski worked tirelessly to write about and promote TPD. Splitting his time between Alberta, Québec and Poland, Dąbrowski never seemed to stop.
• Several of his Edmonton colleagues also became co-authors; Dexter Amend, Michael Piechowski & Marlene Rankel.
A Chapter Closes.

- In 1975, at the age of 73, Dąbrowski purchased an estate in Poland with plans to develop a new center.
- In 1976, I became Dąbrowski’s last student in Edmonton and he asked me to keep his theory alive. I later received his unpublished papers.
- In 1979, Dąbrowski had a serious heart attack in Edmonton and died in Warsaw, November 26, 1980.
- He was buried beside his friend, Piotr Radlo, in the forest near his old Institute at Zagórze, Poland.
- I became a psychologist, created the TPD webpage www.positivedisintegration.com and archived his work.
- Dr. Piechowski then applied Dąbrowski’s idea of OE to gifted education, stimulating a broad new audience.
1.3. Marie Jahoda.
Jahoda’s Approach – 1.

• Marie Jahoda was a major influence on Dąbrowski.

• Jahoda (1958, p. 23) delineated six main features of positive mental health:

  1. Indicators of positive mental health should be sought in the attitudes of an individual toward his own self. Positive self-attitudes (*self perception*).

  2. The individual’s style and degree of *growth*, *development*, or *self-actualization* are expressions of mental health. This set of criteria, in contrast to the first, is not concerned with self-perception but with what one does with one’s self over a period of time.
3. Integration: A central synthesizing psychological function, incorporating some of the suggested criteria defined in 1) and 2) above. Integration is the relatedness of all processes and attributes in an individual.

4. Autonomy singles out the individual’s degree of independence from social influences as most revealing of the state of his or her mental health;

5. The adequacy of an individual’s perception of reality.

6. There were suggestions that environmental mastery be regarded as another criterion for mental health.
Following Jahoda (1958), Dąbrowski said that mental health should not be defined simply by the presence or absence of symptoms, rather, definitions of mental health must be concerned with views of individuals as they ought to be and by the potential of the individual to achieve ideal, desirable, developmental qualities.

Dąbrowski defined mental health as: “Development towards higher levels of mental functions, towards the discovery and realization of higher cognitive, moral, social, and aesthetic values and their organization into a hierarchy in accordance with one’s own authentic personality ideal” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 298).
Jahoda’s Approach – 4.

- The influence of Jahoda’s six main points can be felt in Dąbrowski’s thinking, especially in terms of the goal of advanced development [paraphrased]:
  - an autonomous, consciously derived hierarchy of values, marking the creation of an idealized vision of self—the unique personality of the individual, encapsulated by his or her personality ideal.

- Dąbrowski believed that the moral guidelines one ought to follow must be of one’s own creation. To paraphrase Frederick Nietzsche, each of us must create our own values and personality and thus walk our own path in life.
Jahoda’s Approach – 5.

• Dąbrowski’s observations of people and his adoption of Jahoda led him to an unusual conclusion: that individual personality is not universally, or even commonly, achieved. The average “well socialized” person lacks a unique personality and therefore cannot be considered mentally healthy—the “state of primary integration is a state contrary to mental health” (Dąbrowski, 1964b, p. 121).

• “Mental illness consists in the absence or deficiency of processes which effect development:”
  • “1) either a strongly integrated, primitive, psychopathic structure [Level I], or
  • 2) a negative, non-developmental disintegration (psychosis)” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 173).
• 1.4. Multilevelness: Levels of reality.
Levels of Function – 1.

• Definition: “The qualitative and quantitative differences which appear in mental functions as a result of developmental changes. . . .

• Lower levels are characterized by automatism, impulsiveness, stereotypy, egocentrism, lack of, or low degree of consciousness. . . .

• Higher levels show distinct consciousness, inner psychic transformation, autonomousness, creativity” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 297).

• Basic to Dąbrowski’s view of authentic human beings:
  • “The reality of mental functions in man is dynamic, developmental and multilevel” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 122).
Levels of Function – 2.

- Dąbrowski’s view influenced by Mazurkiewicz’s four levels of psychical organization (Kokoszka, 2007, p. 103).
  - 1. Instinctive: first three months.
  - 2. Reflexively Conditioned: until the 3\textsuperscript{rd} year of age.
  - 4. Logical: age 6 on. Frontally linked mechanisms.

- “Accepting the neo-Jacksonian approach, it is postulated that different harmful psychological and biological factors can cause a dissolution to a lower level. However, the opposite possibility is admitted, claiming that some profitable factors may cause an evolution” (Kokoszka, 2007, p. 103).
The Unilevel Versus the Multilevel.

- Two fundamentally different views of reality. The lower, basic perception is horizontal—unilevel. The higher, developmental view is vertical—multilevel.

- Unilevel views of reality encompass only horizontal elements. Only phenomena on the same level are perceived and considered in decision making.

- Most behaviors can be categorized as UL or ML.

- Likewise, motivations and processes of development can reflect either UL or ML character.

- Multilevelness is paramount because it allows us to see and compare the higher versus lower. Over time, the higher will increasingly be chosen.
Unilevelness (UL) and Multilevelness (ML).

The “average” view of life is horizontal—unilevel: (Ken Wilber: “flatlanders,” Bertalanffy and Yablonsky: “robopaths”)

- “Robots” blindly follow social roles and values.
- “Animal model”—stimulus-response reactions.
- Equal alternatives create false “illusion of choice.”
- Conflicts between different but equivalent choices.
- No vertical component to allow for higher growth.

Development is linked to a “new”—vertical—ML view:

- One begins to see higher possibilities in comparison to lower realities and alternatives.
- A vertical, ML view creates a hierarchical model of life, of values and of behavior—allows us to see and choose the higher over the lower.
Perilous Shift From UL to ML – 1.

• Initially ML creates great internal stress because choosing the lower has become habitual. Now, “the possibility” of a different and better choice comes into view. This contrast is upsetting and, at first, is quite spontaneous.

• The transition to multilevelness is the “greatest step” in growth but also the most perilous: As one’s old, status quo unilevel frame of reference crumbles, feelings of chaos, anxiety and dread are common.

• “The dark night of the soul.”
Multilevelness – Overview.

- Levels are a philosophical foundation of the theory:
  - Level based analysis has a long philosophical history.
  - Premise: Reality and our perception of reality can be differentiated into a hierarchy of levels.
- The reality that one perceives reflects one’s given level of development—fairly wide differences are seen.
- Most psychological functions go through quantitative changes. Some advanced features also display qualitative changes as they emerge and develop.
- This allows us to differentiate higher, more developed levels from lower, earlier, less developed levels.
- Differentiation of lower and higher levels is basic to Dąbrowski’s view of mental health and development.
Multilevelness Creates Multiple Meanings.

- Multilevelness means that each psychological feature must be described differently on each level: A given dimension has different meanings, different expressions and different impacts on each level.

- Dąbrowski: the lowest level of love differs from the highest level more than love differs from hate.

- The combination of multiple levels and dimensions creates a comprehensive but complicated analysis that is difficult to operationalize or measure.
Multilevelness – 1.

- Definition: “Division of functions into different levels: for instance, the spinal, subcortical, and cortical levels in the nervous system. Individual perception of many levels of external and internal reality appears at a certain stage of development, here called multilevel disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 298).

- Multilevel perception and description is based on more than just sensory inputs; it includes all of the psychological functions available to humans, including thinking, feeling, imagination, instincts, empathy, intuition, etc.
Multilevelness – 2.

• The dynamic process of “hierarchization” creates a multilevel contrast between the lower and higher in life. It expands our range of human experience, creating a new, critical type of conflict: vertical conflicts between higher and lower alternatives and choices.

• “It appears obvious that the ability to understand and to successfully apply the concept of multilevelness depends upon the development of personality of the individual” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. x).
Multilevelness as a Growth Process.

- In advanced development, our growing sense of the “higher possibilities” encourages a new personal goal: the creation of our own unique personality ideal.

- As a ML view develops, it causes vertical conflicts—once the higher alternative is seen, acting on the lower creates guilt, unhappiness, feelings of inferiority:
  - Vertical conflicts / dissonance become a vital, internal driving force of personality change.

- We must inhibit our lower impulses, reflexes and automatic reactions that reflect instinct, ego and rote socialization. Must promote our own contemplated, individually based responses, arising from our own values and our vision of how things ought to be.
Hierarchization and Multilevelness.

- ML creates a hierarchical view of life, of values and behavior—allows us to see and choose the higher alternatives of “what ought” over lower “what is” ones.

- “Hierarchization” becomes a key process of ML. Contrasts of the lower and higher expand the range of one’s experience and create hierarchies.

- I think I want the lower, but on reflection, I know I must choose the higher—because I feel it is right. Acting on the lower creates vertical conflicts and inner stress.

- One begins to imagine higher possibilities in life.

- The true solution to human problems must involve ascent; moving one not only forward but upward.
Developmental Complexity – 1.

• The level of development is not uniform across all dimensions within a person. People are often on different levels on different dimensions:
  • A person may be at a high level cognitively and on a low level emotionally (and morally); this is common and seems to be the social status quo.
  • Dąbrowski called this one-sided development.

• What dimensions should we include in our analysis?
  • This question complicates the assessment of levels.
  • Current educational testing focuses on only one or two dimensions (almost always cognitively based).
  • Dąbrowski: we need a richer, broader approach to measure human development and potentials.
One-sided development: “Type of development limited to one talent or ability, or to a narrow range of abilities and mental functions” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 300).

“Grave affective retardation is usually associated with above average intelligence subordinated to primitive drives” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 30).

In summary, development is usually not uniform across dimensions within an individual. People are often at different levels of development on different dimensions. Describing a person’s overall level of developmental may become unmanageable when several dimensions are taken into consideration.
In order to overcome one-sided development, Dąbrowski advocated a counterintuitive approach: Strive to achieve balance by focusing more attention on the child’s weaker talents. For example, if a child is a mathematical prodigy, weak in English, then focus on the overall psychological development of the child and, as well, on his or her weakest subject, in this case English.

In a recent study of child prodigies it was found that most parents who see prodigal talent focus upon it at the exclusion of everything else, leading to various psychological issues later in life. (Hulbert, 2018).
Dąbrowski uses a powerful type of analysis combining two approaches:

- **Multilevel approach** (ML).
- **Multidimensional approach** (MD).

Behavior involves an interaction of dimension and level: A behavior will be expressed differently on different levels (obvious comparing UL to ML).

MD and ML must be used together to examine, evaluate, and understand behavior.

ML/MD analysis sees behavior in the context of the developmental level and motivation that spawned it.

Ken Wilber used a similar approach—popular in the USA, called “the all [four] quadrant approach.”
Wilber’s “four quadrant” approach.
Multilevelness and Multidimensionality.

- People are often at different levels of development on different dimensions, e.g., intellect vs. emotion. We need to consider the level for each dimension we choose to look at.

- Each dimension will be expressed differently at each different level of development.
• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
  • 1.5.1. General Prerequisites.
Prerequisites of Development – 1.

- Aspects of development as a process:
  - “By higher level of psychic development we mean a behavior which is more complex, more conscious and having greater freedom of choice, hence greater opportunity for self-determination” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 70).

- “The individual with a rich developmental potential rebels against the common determining factors in his external environment” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 32).
Prerequisites of Development – 2.

• “The developmental process in which occur ‘collisions’ with the environment and with oneself begins as a consequence of the interplay of three factors: developmental potential, . . . an influence of the social milieu, and autonomous (self-determining) factors” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 77).

• Initially, Dąbrowski presents the third factor simply as a component of developmental potential. Later it becomes “a non-ontogenetic, emergent force of development.” This creates some confusion over the role of the third factor. The confusion perhaps mirrors the changes in the nature and role of the third factor as it emerges in development, becoming an independent force as development advances.
• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
  • 1.5.2. Advanced Development is Rare.
In TPD, people dominated by their lower instincts appear to have little potential to develop or to change.

People dominated by socialization usually possess some potential to develop but social conformity and peer pressure are strong forces resisting change.

“a clear majority of people never reach beyond primary integration or after a short period of partial horizontal [unilevel] disintegration reintegrate at the former level. There seems to be 15-20 per cent of people who, at least temporarily, display symptoms of unilevel disintegration” (Kawczak, 1970, pp. 3-4).

Dąbrowski’s often cited estimate was that about 70% of the population are primarily integrated (Piechowsi, 2015, p. 231).

Some people appear to have strong autonomous potential to develop (can’t be held back). Often go on to become exemplars of advanced development.
Growth “occur[s] only if the developmental forces are sufficiently strong and not impeded by unfavorable external circumstances. This is, however, rarely the case. The number of people who complete the full course of development and attain the level of secondary integration is limited. A vast majority of people either do not break down their primitive integration at all, or after a relatively short period of disintegration, usually experienced at the time of adolescence and early youth, end in a reintegration at the former level or in partial integration of some of the functions at slightly higher levels, without a transformation of the whole mental structure” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 4).
Advanced Development is Uncommon – 3.

• “A fairly high degree of primary integration is present in the average person; a very high degree of primary integration is present in the psychopath. The more cohesive the structure of primary integration, the less the possibility of development; the greater the strength of autonomic functioning, stereotypy, and habitual activity, the lower the level of mental health” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p.121).

• The more rigid one’s initial integration, the harder to disintegrate, change and to growth.

• Note: Dąbrowski’s usage of the term “psychopath” is out of date and context with today’s common usage. It reflects an early, European connotation of the term: an individual with strong “constitutional factors” (usually psychological traits) that act to inhibit ideal or potential development (in contrast with the sociopath, one having social factors that inhibit development).
Advanced Development is Uncommon – 4.

- Level III: Psychoneurotics. (Mika, 2015)
- Level II: neurotics, mentally ill.
- Degrees of primary integration in Level I:
  - Borderline between average person and psychoneurotic
  - Average person: social conformity, but with some, albeit limited, developmental potential.
  - Borderline between average person and psychopath: largely maintaining social conformity (CEO bends law, takes advantage wherever possible)
  - Psychopath and psychopath-like individual, often exhibiting antisocial behavior.
Advanced Development is Uncommon – 5.

- Ideal maturation is prolonged: [People with strong developmental “endowment”] “must have much more time for a deep, creative development and that is why you will be growing for a long time. This is a very common phenomenon among creative people. Simply, they have such a great developmental potential, ‘they have the stuff to develop’ and that is why it takes them longer to give it full expression” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 272).

- Dąbrowski studied exemplars of personality development, describing common traits he saw in them that he called Developmental Potential (DP).

- Dąbrowski was optimistic that exemplars of the highest levels are role models who represent the next level in Human psychological evolution.
Where are we Today?

- In all psychological models, for one reason or another, advanced development is considered rare.
- In TPD, advanced development is rarely seen.

![Diagram showing the number of people in each development level.](image)

- Around 65% are in level (I)
- Around 20% are in level (II)
- Less than 10% are in levels (III), (IV), and (V)
• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
• 1.5.3. Developmental Potential.
Developmental Potential (DP): Overview.

- Several complex and interrelated components of DP:
  - The three factors of development.
  - Dynamisms: e.g. subject-object in oneself, self-awareness and identification with development.
  - Psychoneuroses and positive disintegration.
  - Emerging, internal features of the self [Hierarchy of aims, Hierarchy of values, Inner Psychic Milieu, Third Factor, Personality Ideal, etc.].
  - The developmental instinct, the creative instinct, and the instinct for self-perfection.
  - Overexcitability (Five types).
  - Special talents and abilities.
Developmental Potential is Genetic.

• Definition: “The *constitutional* endowment which determines the character and the extent of mental growth possible for a given individual” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 293).

• DP can be positive, promoting development; negative and inhibiting development; or equivocal.

• “The relations and interactions between the different components of the developmental potential give shape to individual development and control the appearance of psychoneuroses on different levels of development” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 78).

• Just as IQ varies in the population, so does DP.

• Most have too little DP to allow for advanced growth.

• A few have strong DP and achieve the highest levels.
To assess DP, Dąbrowski described 3 main aspects:

1. Special talents and abilities (e.g. IQ, athletic ability).
2. Overexcitability (OE).
3. “Third Factor” (a strong internal drive to express one’s unique self—factor of autonomous choice).

“The developmental potential can be assessed on the basis of the following components: psychic overexcitability (q.v.), special abilities and talents, and autonomous factors (notably the Third factor)” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 293).
Traditional Developmental Features.

- In traditional approaches, cognition is the key component of higher levels:
  - Cognition and reason overcome or control emotion.

- TPD reframes and revises traditional roles of mental excitement, emotion and pathology in development.

- Excess excitability, strong emotion, and “pathology” traditionally are seen negatively in mental health.
  - “Excess” excitability has been medicated and is often linked to various pathologies, learning disabilities and delinquency.
  - “Excess” emotion has often been equated with hysteria.
  - “Pathology” traditionally indicates a weakness or defect needing to be treated, ameliorated, palliated, and removed.
Key Features of DP – 1.

- DP influences how one perceives the environment and determines one’s unique developmental course.
- DP, especially OE, works hand-in-hand with positive disintegration and psychoneuroses to change one’s perception of reality, predisposing development.
- Development is defined by movement towards self-determination and autonomy—toward the third factor, toward self-perfection, and the personality ideal.
- Adjustment to “what is” is generally a developmental. Initially, maladjustment results from conflicts with the social environment. A shift to “what ought to be,” leads to a new type of positive adjustment and harmony.
Key Features of DP – 2.

- Developmental potential may be:
  - positive or negative / general or specific / strong or weak / expressed or not expressed.

- The most misunderstood aspect of DP is OE:
  - OE is usually not appreciated by others or by society.
  - OE is often suppressed or hidden by the individual.
  - OE needs to be understood in the context of DP and TPD.
  - OE may be hard to manage or may be overwhelming.
  - OE heightens the joys but also intensifies the lows of life.
  - OE needs to be validated—not seen as an abnormality.

- Many aspects of DP have received negligible attention.

- One must “transform” 1st and 2nd factors to develop.

- One with “a rich DP rebels” against “his external environment” and “the laws of biology” (Dąbrowski, 1970, pp. 32-33).
Key Features of DP – 3.

- “Environmental influences collide with those potentials, strengthen or weaken them, but their outcome always depends on an individual’s hereditary endowment:”
  - “(1) If the developmental potential is distinctly positive or negative, the influence of the environment is less important. (2) If the developmental potential does not exhibit any distinct quality, the influence of the environment is important and it may go in either direction. (3) If the developmental potential is weak or difficult to specify, the influence of the environment may prove decisive, positively or negatively” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 34).

- “in the vast majority of cases, the phenomena of disintegration point to a very great developmental potential” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 39).
• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
  • 1.5.4. Overexcitability.
A passage in William James appears to discuss a construct similar to Dąbrowski’s overexcitabilities:

“Wherever a process of life communicates an eagerness to him who lives it, there the life becomes genuinely significant. Sometimes the eagerness is more knit up with the motor activities, sometimes with the perceptions, sometimes with the imagination, sometimes with reflective thought. But, wherever it is found, there is the zest, the tingle, the excitement of reality; and there is ‘importance’ in the only real and positive sense in which importance ever anywhere can be” (1899, pp. 9-10).
Overexcitability (OE) – 2.

• Definition: “Higher than average responsiveness to stimuli, manifested either by psychomotor, sensual, emotional (affective), imaginational, or intellectual excitability or the combination thereof” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 303).

• A physiological property of the nervous system: “Each form of overexcitability points to a higher than average sensitivity of its receptors” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 7).

• “Psychic hyperexcitability is one of the major developmental potentials, but it also forms a symptom, or a group of general psychoneurotic symptoms” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 40).

• Summary: OE has two key aspects: a higher than average sensitivity of the nerves (receptors) and a higher than average responsiveness to stimuli.
Overexcitability (OE) – 3.

• “The prefix *over* attached to ‘excitability’ serves to indicate that the reactions of excitation are over and above average in intensity, duration and frequency” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 7).

• OE affects how a person sees reality: “One who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 7).

• Dąbrowski called OE “a tragic gift:” (see Jensen, 2008).

• As both the highs and lows of life are intensified.

• Because the world is not yet ready for people who feel at such deep levels.
Overexcitability (OE) – 4.

• “Because the sensitivity [excitability] is related to all essential groups of receptors of stimuli of the internal and external worlds it widens and enhances the field of consciousness” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 66).

• “Individuals with enhanced emotional, imaginational and intellectual excitability channel it into forms most appropriate for them” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 66).

• The “big 3:” “Emotional (affective), imaginational and intellectual overexcitability are the richer forms. If they appear together they give rich possibilities of development and creativity” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 7).
Overexcitability (OE) – 5.

• “A person manifesting an enhanced psychic excitability in general, and an enhanced emotional, intellectual and imaginational excitability in particular, is endowed with a greater power of penetration into both the external and the inner world” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 65).

• “. . . These couplings determine a closely woven activity of different forms of enhanced excitability, especially emotional, imaginational and intellectual; they also determine how to make use of the positive aspects of sensual and psychomotor overexcitability by subordinating them to the other three higher forms of overexcitability” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 66).
Dąbrowski linked overexcitability with disintegration:

[First] “Hyperexcitability also provokes inner conflicts as well as the means by which these conflicts can be overcome” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 38).

Second, hyperexcitability precipitates psychoneurotic processes.

Third, conflicts and psychoneurotic processes become the dominant factors in accelerated development.

“It is mainly mental hyperexcitability through which the search for something new, something different, more complex and more authentic can be accomplished” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 15).
Overexcitability (OE) – 7.

• Overexcitability helps to differentiate higher from lower experiences and facilitates a multilevel view:
  • “The reality of the external and of the inner world is conceived in all its multiple aspects. High overexcitability contributes to establishing multilevelness” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 74).

• Individuals will usually display a characteristic response type—one of the five forms will be dominant, and one will direct one’s OE accordingly: “For instance, a person with prevailing emotional overexcitability will always consider the emotional tone and emotional implications of intellectual questions” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 7).
Overexcitability (OE) – 8.

“Individuals with enhanced emotional, imaginational and intellectual excitability channel it into forms most appropriate for them” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 66).

“Nervous children, who have increased psychomotor, emotional, imaginative, and sensual or mental psychic excitability and who show strength and perseveration of reactions incommensurate to their stimuli, reveal patterns of disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 98).

“Excessive excitability is, among others, a sign that one’s adaptability to the environment is disturbed. These disintegration processes are based on various forms of increased psychic excitability, namely on psychomotor, imaginative, affectional, sensual, and mental hyperexcitability.” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 61).
It is beyond the scope of this introduction fully explore this complex topic.

In the individual neuron, there are both intrinsic levels of excitability and an ongoing modulation of excitability. These levels are controlled by both genetics—different individuals have slightly different genetics—and, as well, by epigenetics—one’s life experience will modify both the architecture and functional expression of one’s neurons and subsequently neuronal excitability.

As neurons operate in microcircuits and as part of larger networks, neuronal control of the balance of excitability and inhibition is a critical factor.
Neuroscience Support for Overexcitability – 2.

- Many systems in the brain require strict homeostatic control (e.g. blood pressure, temperature and respiration). Other systems must be plastic and respond to rapid change (e.g. to remember and learn).

- Genes that control voltage-gated ion channels and calcium transport are consistently found in psychiatric GWAS (Ament et al., 2015). These genes control cellular electrical excitability and calcium homeostasis in neurons (Smoller, 2013). “Alteration in the ability of a single neuron to integrate the inputs and scale its excitability may constitute a fundamental mechanistic contributor to mental disease, alongside with the previously proposed deficits in synaptic communication and network behaviour” (Mäki-Marttunen et al. 2016, p. 1).
The proof of concept for the neurophysiological mechanisms and genetic (and epigenetic) control of neuronal excitability have now been established (e.g., Gulledge & Bravo, 2016; Mäki-Marttunen et al., 2016; Meadows et al., 2016; Rannals et al., 2016; Remme & Wadman, 2012).

Excitability varies between individuals based on both inherited genetics—different individuals have slightly different genetics—and, as well, by epigenetics—one’s life experiences modify the functional expression of genes during one’s lifetime (see Armstrong, 2014).

Experience alters the architecture and functional expression of individual neurons and dynamically modifies levels of brain/network variability, flexibility and connectivity (Zhang et al., 2016).
These changes impact neuronal excitability (e.g., Chen et al., 2016; Meadows et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2016).

Contemporary research generally supports Dąbrowski’s approach to overexcitabilities and presents several plausible explanations to account for a hypothesized continuum of levels of excitability occurring between individuals: excitability varies in the population, with “average” excitability as the norm and “overexcitable” individuals as the exception. The control of excitability largely occurs within the individual neuron—each neuron monitors its own firing and can modify its rate of firing, so as to maintain overall network stability. Neurons show intrinsic levels of excitability and ongoing modulation of excitability.
Neuroscience References:


• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
  • 1.5.5. Three Factors of Development.
Three Factors of Development – 1.

• Three factors influence behavior and development:
  • First Factor—the expression of genetic instincts:
    • Most basic: primal biological survival instincts.
      • Primitive, reflexive instincts and reactions.
      • Today, we could generalize to our “dog-eat-dog” mentality and social obsession on material success.
      • Reflected in egocentrism: Focus on self-satisfaction, feeling good, regardless of costs to others.
    • Dąbrowski said that genetic factors are the foundation of both the lower instincts and of the higher features of developmental potential, including the foundation of emergent factors that will eventually eclipse their genetic roots.
Three Factors of Development – 2.

- First Factor—“hereditary, innate constitutional elements”
  - “May be more general or more specific, more positive or more negative” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 33).
  - “General excitability, nuclei of the inner psychic milieu, general interests and aptitudes are examples of general and positive potentials. Specific forms of hyperexcitability such as emotional,imaginational or sensual hyperexcitability, as well as specific interests or aptitudes, such as musical, choreographic or mathematical aptitudes, constitute specific and positive potentials” (Dąbrowski, 1970, pp. 33-34).
Three Factors of Development – 3.

- Second Factor: “the influences of the external environment, mainly family and social milieu” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 72).

- Through parenting and education, most people incorporate and follow social values, rules and roles.

- Moral authority and criteria for good behavior are derived from external (social) values.

- Most people live life under the day-to-day influence of second factor, for example: Kohlberg’s conventional level of moral reasoning.

- Dąbrowski rejected unreflective conformity and saw people who function primarily under social influence as “mentally unhealthy.”

- Most people become socialized and conform without thinking deeply about life—without comparing how things are versus how things could be or ought to be.

- Developmental potential and the environment:
  - “If the developmental potential is distinctly positive or negative, the influence of the environment is less important. If the developmental potential does not exhibit any distinct quality, the influence of the environment is important and it may go in either direction. If the developmental potential is weak or difficult to specify, the influence of the environment may prove decisive, positively or negatively” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 34).
Dąbrowski discussed Plato’s allegory of the cave as an illustration.

We live in a cave, facing a blank wall. Shadows are projected on the wall by unseen puppeteers (education and politics). We sit passively, mistakenly accepting these shadows as reality. If a person can break free and reach the exit leading out of the cave and up, into the sun, he or she can wake up and start to think independently. For Plato, this person can become a philosopher and discover real knowledge [Truth] through thinking logically, by philosophical reasoning, and by taming emotion.

- The third factor arises from genetic roots but later “emerges” and becomes an autonomous dynamism:
  - Third factor becomes an emergent force, eventually expressing our sense of who we ought to be and controlling the direction of our development—it transcends its genetic roots.
  - As third factor develops, it compels us to make choices that express our authentic self: to choose what is “more me” and to reject what is “less me.”
  - More than just “will” or “will power”—the third factor is the totality of our autonomous features and forces.

- Third Factor: “the autonomous factor of development.”
- “The dynamism of conscious choice (valuation) by which one affirms or rejects certain qualities in oneself and in one’s environment” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 306).
- “A dynamism of conscious choice by which one sets apart both in oneself and in one’s environment those elements which are positive, and therefore considered higher, from those which are negative, and therefore considered lower. By this process a person denies and rejects inferior demands of the internal as well as of the external milieu, and accepts, affirms and selects positive elements in either milieu” (Dąbrowski, 1996, pp. 38-39).
• 1.5. Developmental Potential.
  • 1.5.6. The Third Factor.
The Third Factor – 1.

- Definition: “The third factor is independent from and selective with regard to heredity (the first factor), and environment (the second factor). Its selective role consists in accepting and fostering or rejecting and restraining qualities, interests and desires, which one finds either in one’s hereditary endowment or in one’s social environment. Thus the third factor being a dynamism of conscious choice is a dynamism of valuation.

... Cont.
The third factor has a fundamental role in education-of-one'self, and in autopsychotherapy. Its presence and operation is essential in the development toward autonomy and authenticity. It arises and grows as a resultant of both positive hereditary endowment (especially the ability for inner psychic transformation) and positive environmental influences” (Dąbrowski, 1970, pp. 178-179).
The Third Factor – 3.

• “The principal periods during which the third agent appears distinctly are the ages of puberty and maturation” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 56).

• “During the period of puberty, young people become aware of the sense of life and discover a need to develop personal goals and to find the tools for realizing them. The emergence of these problems and the philosophizing on them, with the participation of an intense emotional component, are characteristic features of a strong instinct of development and of the individual’s rise to a higher evolutionary level” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 56).
The Third Factor – 4.

- Dąbrowski said the usual route of maturation leads to a “premature” integration of mental structures based on “the desire to gain a position, to become distinguished, to possess property, and to establish a family”—“the more the integration of the mental structure grows, the more the influence of the third agent weakens” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 57).

- “The third agent persists—indeed, it only develops—in individuals who manifest an increased mental excitability and have at least mild forms of psychoneuroses” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 57).
In ideal, advanced development, the maturational period is “protracted” and “is clearly accompanied by a strong instinct of development, great creative capacities, a tendency to reach for perfection, and the appearance and development of self-consciousness, self-affirmation, and self-education” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 57).

“Because of the third factor the individual becomes aware of what is essential and lasting and what is inferior, temporary, and accidental both in his own structure and conduct and in his exterior environment. He endeavors to cooperate with those forces on which the third factor places a high value and to eliminate those tendencies and concrete acts which the third factor devalues” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 53).
The Third Factor – 6.

“All such autonomous factors, taken together, form the strongest group of causal dynamisms in the development of man. They denote the transition from that which is primitive, instinctive, automatic to that which is deliberate, creative and conscious, from that which is primitively integrated to that which manifests multilevel disintegration . . . from that which ‘is’ to that which ‘ought to be’ . . . The autonomous factors form the strongest dynamisms of transition from emotions of a low level to emotions of a high level” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 35).
The Third Factor Creates a Dilemma – 1.

Dąbrowski saw his approach creates a dilemma:

1. Where do autonomous forces come from?
2. “It is not easy to strictly define the origin of the third factor, because, in the last [traditional] analysis, it must stem either from the hereditary endowment or from the environment” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 78).
3. “We can only suppose that the autonomous factors derive from hereditary developmental potential and from positive environmental conditions; they are shaped by influences from both. However, the autonomous forces do not derive exclusively from hereditary and environment, but are also determined by the conscious development of the individual himself” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 34).
As the third factor strengthens and overall development is achieved, the forces of development become autonomous:

“The appearance and growth of the third agent is to some degree dependent on the inherited abilities and on environmental experiences, but as it develops it achieves an independence from these factors and through conscious differentiation and self-definition takes its own position in determining the course of development of personality” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 54).

“According to the [TPD], the third factor arises in the course of an increasingly conscious, self-determined, autonomous and authentic development” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 78).
“The genesis of the third factor should be associated with the very development with which it is combined in the self-consciousness of the individual in the process of becoming more myself” i.e., it is combined with the vertical differentiation of mental functions (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 78).

“The third factor is a dynamism active at the stage of organized multilevel disintegration. Its activity is autonomous in relation to the first factor (hereditary) and the second (environment)” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 80).

“This approach is close to some of the ideas of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who maintained that more can be found in the effects than in the causes” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 78).
1.6. Key Constructs.
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.1. Psychoneuroses.
Psychoneurosis – 1.

• Definition: “those processes, syndromes and functions which express inner and external conflicts, and positive maladjustment of an individual in the process of accelerated development” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 151).

• Dąbrowski saw a positive role for psychoneuroses in advanced development:
  • “Connected with the tension arising from strong developmental conflicts” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 149).
  • “contain(s) elements of man’s authentic humanization” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 152).
  • Dąbrowski’s approach is almost unique: at odds with the traditional views of Freud, Maslow, and most others.
Psychoneurosis – 2.

- Psychoneuroses is a challenging construct in TPD, the term or its derivatives appear some 1560 times.

- “The psychoneurotic may have conflicts in relation to his external environment, but usually his conflicts are internal ones. Unlike the psychopath, who inflicts suffering on other people and causes external conflicts, the psychoneurotic himself usually suffers and struggles with conflicts in relation to himself” (Dąbrowski, 1964, pp. 74-75).

- “Psychoneurotic children clearly demonstrate the large field of disintegration and the great variability of its symptoms” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 99).

- The different psychoneuroses form an inter-neurotic hierarchy. (see Dąbrowski, 1972, pp. 109-110).
Psychoneurosis – 3.

• “the numerous forms of neuroses and psychoneuroses constitute indispensable developmental processes, then—extending the thus far accepted meaning of the term psychotherapy and treating it as a method of education and self-education in difficult developmental periods, in conditions of great tensions and conflicts in the external environment and in the internal environment” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 188).

• “according to our theory we don’t deal here with a psychoneurosis as an illness, but rather with the symptoms of the process of positive disintegration in its multilevel phase,” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 195).
Psychoneuroses “are the protection against serious mental disorders—against psychoses” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 162).

“Emotional and psychomotor hyperexcitability and many psychoneuroses are positively correlated with great mental resources, personality development, and creativity” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 19).

Dąbrowski said don’t try to “help” psychoneurotics, rather, learn from them, appreciate their uniqueness, their creativity, their values, their sensitivity:

• See Dąbrowski’s poem, “Be Greeted Psychoneurotics” (Dąbrowski, 1972).
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.2. Adjustment.
Dąbrowski outlined four types of adjustment:

1. Negative maladjustment—antisocial, selfish ego dominates behavior that flaunts social mores:
   - Expression of primitive first factor: criminals, unscrupulous CEOs (see themselves above law).

2. Negative adjustment—“traditional” socialization:
   - “Robotic” and uncritical acceptance of “what is.”
   - Adjustment to prevailing social norms and values.
   - Expression of second factor—we are social conformers: antisocial and primitive impulses are repressed to “fit in” (autonomy also repressed).
   - Adjustment to a “sick” society is to also be sick.
3). Positive maladjustment—rejection of what is, in favor of what ought to be:
   - Creates major crises and often psychoneurosis.
   - Initial expression of third factor (autonomy).
   - Pits one against social norms and mores—often confused as “ordinary” antisocial maladjustment.
   - May be seen in gifted students (but mislabeled).

4). Positive adjustment—adjustment to inner sense of what ought to be: to consciously chosen values:
   - Full expression of third factor / personality ideal.
   - Expression of highest personal values.
   - Seen at Level V—secondary integration.
   - Ideal society: everyone is operating at this level.
Adjustment and the Factors – 1.

- Negative maladjustment: Expression of First Factor.
  - Antisocial, asocial, selfish, egocentric, egotistical

- Negative adjustment: Expression of Second Factor.
  - Adjustment to what is, conformity to conventional social mores.

- The status quo: society is currently “primitive and confused” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 118).

- “The individual who is always adjusted is one who does not develop himself” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 58).
Adjustment and the Factors – 2.

• Positive maladjustment: *Initial* expression of third factor (autonomy).
  • —Rejection of ‘what is,’ in favor of what ‘ought to be.’

• Positive adjustment: Full expression of the third factor.
  • —Full adjustment to what ought to be:
    • —Behavior according to an authentic inner sense of what ought to be and consciously chosen values (highest behavior possible).
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.3. Dynamisms.
Dynamisms in TPD – 1.

• “Biological or mental force controlling behavior and its development. Instincts, drives, and intellectual processes combined with emotions are dynamisms” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 294).

• Linked to emotion—from the Latin “emovere”—move through or out—to motivate movement.

• Psychoanalysis is a psycho\textit{dynamic} approach. It refers to the underlying forces that move matter or mind toward activity or progress.

• Dąbrowski used “dynamism” and “instinct” interchangeably: his descriptions of instincts parallel and supplement the dynamisms.
Dynamisms in TPD – 2.

1. Disintegrative dynamisms: anxiety over oneself, dissatisfaction with oneself, the feelings of shame and guilt, and the feeling of inferiority in relation to oneself.

2. Dynamisms consciously organizing the disintegrative process: the “subject-object in oneself” dynamism, and the third factor dynamism.


“The dynamisms that have their source in the structure of the personality ideal play the fundamental role in the process of disintegration in the development of personality” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 201).
Dynamisms in TPD – 3.

• Dynamisms play a critical role in development and form a major part of the theory.

• Initially act as vague motivators of growth but later, develop and emerge into processes that actively shape and guide development.

• Dąbrowski described a hierarchy of dynamisms, some 20 in total, reflecting the levels of development.

• The ultimate dynamisms are the instinct of life, the creative instinct, developmental instinct, and the instinct of self-perfection.
Dynamisms in TPD – 4 – Examples.

• Unilevel: Ambivalence, Ambitendency, 2nd Factor.

• Spontaneous multilevel dynamisms: Astonishment with oneself and one’s environment, Disquietude with oneself, Dissatisfaction with oneself, Feelings of inferiority toward oneself, Feelings of shame and guilt, Positive maladjustment, and Hierarchization.

• Organized multilevel dynamisms: The third factor, Self-awareness and self-control, Education of oneself, Autopsychotherapy, Inner psychic transformation, Subject-object in oneself, Empathy and identification with oneself and with others, Autonomy, Authentism, Personality Ideal.
• Tillier’s Chart of the Hierarchy of Dynamisms
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.4. Personality.
Personality Ideal – 1.

• Used a positive definition of mental health (Jahoda), characterized by development and uniqueness.

• This was not popular in personality theory. Maslow said aspiring for ideals just creates opportunities for failure and guilt. Gordon Allport said “a normal personality is one whose conduct conforms to an authoritative standard and an abnormal personality is one whose conduct does not do so” (Allport, 1969, p. 1).

• Dąbrowski said mental health should not be defined by the presence or absence of symptoms: definitions must look at people as they *ought to be*, by their potentials; by desirable, developmental qualities, by their ability to become an authentic human being.
Personality Ideal – 2.

• Definition: “An individual standard against which one evaluates one’s actual personality structure. Personality ideal is shaped autonomously and authentically, often in conflict and struggle with the prevalent ideals of society” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 175).

• To adjust to “what ought to be” vs “what is” is a multilevel, hierarchical view of life in action.

• “Unfaithfulness to the ideal of personality” may cause “shock” and inferiority toward oneself.

• The “experiential awareness of one’s personality ideal” is a key characteristic of personality.
Personality Ideal – 3.

• “The processes of self-education, autopsycnotherapy, and inner psychic transformation; the dynamisms of empathy, autonomy, and authenticity; and the disposing and directing center on a high level are structures and functions nearest to the ideal of personality” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 100).

• “The ideal of personality is the model of the development of personality; an intuitive, synthetic goal of the development of a human individual; and an aim of his planned multilevel developmental efforts” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 100).
Definition: “an autonomous attitude toward himself, his environment and his ideal of personality; if he has achieved a high level of synthetic inner psychic transformation, consciousness, self-consciousness, empathy, hierarchization and a strong feeling of his essentialist existence” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 94).

“the expression of the developmental process from lower to higher levels, from that which ‘is’ to that which ‘ought to be’. . . . The result . . . is a consciousness of being independent in thinking, experiencing and behaving” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 89).

“the gradual acquisition of independence from the lower levels of internal and external reality” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 89).
Personality Ideal – 5 – Authenticity.

- Authenticity: “A human individual is authentic, if he has developed an autonomous attitude toward himself, his environment and his ideal of personality; if he has achieved a high level of synthetic inner psychic transformation, consciousness, self-consciousness, empathy, hierarchization and a strong feeling of his essentialist existence” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 94).

- “All tendencies to autonomy, authenticity, and self-determination, to the formation of a hierarchy of values and localization of the disposing and directing center on a higher level, express ‘deviations’ from, or rather a climbing, beyond the biological life cycle of man” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 133).
• Definition: “a self-conscious, self-chosen, empirically elaborated, autonomous, authentic, self-confirmed and self-educating unity of basic mental, individual and common qualities” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 111).

• “We could associate personality with the concept of a complete human individual who, in regard to the scope and levels of his functions, represents a coherent and harmonious structure of a high degree of insight into himself, into his aims and aspirations (self-awareness)” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 108).
“The first quality of personality—that is to say, self-awareness—is relatively clear and does not need much comment” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).

“Those qualities which were chosen at the time of the ‘birth of personality’ and later, authentically developed as central and most important, do not undergo qualitative changes. They will grow quantitatively and may be supplemented by new qualities” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).

“Personality is the force which integrates mental functions on a high level” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 108).
• “The quality of being self-chosen involves the process of development, the repeated acts of choosing one’s personality many times until the moment of the final choice” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).

• “Those qualities which were chosen at the time of the ‘birth of personality'and later, authentically developed as central and most important, do not undergo qualitative changes. They will grow quantitatively and may be supplemented by new qualities” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).

• One becomes fully aware of the qualities that make one uniquely one’s self. Once this inner milieu of qualities is formed, the core does not change (but may be added to). “The ‘essence’ of an individual is formed by the central qualities of his personality” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).
Dąbrowski’s definition links personality to advanced development and to ML: personality is achieved through a series of value choices, coalescing only at higher levels of development and ML.

“The essence of this choice consists in distinguishing what is ‘higher’ and ‘lower,’ what is ‘less myself’ and ‘more myself, what is closer to and what is more distant from personality, what is changeable and what is lasting . . . It is a conscious and self-determined choice . . . At a certain level of choice the individual becomes aware of what is his own ‘essence;’ that is to say, what are his aims and aspirations, his attitudes, his relations with other people” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 109).
An unusual conclusion: individual personality is not universally, or even commonly, achieved. The average “well socialized” person lacks a unique, individual personality and therefore is not mentally healthy—the “state of primary integration is a state contrary to mental health” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 121).

This construct was so radical, I think it was widely misunderstood or rejected by Dąbrowski’s peers.

Maslow: “healthy people [self-actualizers] are so different from average ones, not only in degree but in kind as well, that they generate two very different kinds of psychology” (Maslow, 1954, p. 234).
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.5. Instincts.
Instinct.

• Instinct: A fundamental dynamism (force) in animals and men that has a great intensity, a significant degree of compactness and cohesiveness, its own sphere of activity, and its own direction (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 170).

• “The creative instinct and the instinct of self-perfection are specifically human. . . . such forces as the sexual instinct appear in animals and man, but both are differentiated into levels.” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 11).

• In the instincts, there exist transforming dynamisms, for which the conflictive experiences and participation of gnostic mechanisms are fundamental factors in the development of man (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 51).
Developmental Instinct.

• Developmental instinct: “The whole process of transformation of primitive drives and impulsive functions into more reflective and refined functions occurs under the influence of evolutionary dynamisms which we call the developmental instinct” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 22).

• “The developmental instinct acts against the automatic, limited, and primitive functional patterns of the biological cycle of life” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 28).

• “Source of all mental developmental forces” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 293).

• “Conceives man as a being destined to undergo developmental transformations” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 121).
Hierarchy of Instincts.

- Beginning with primitive instincts for survival and self-preservation; basic to primary integration.

- (1). The developmental instinct is the driving force of all development.

- (2). The instinct of self development begins to guide multilevel growth leading to the more deliberate and volitional expressions of autonomy moved by

- (3) the instinct of creativity.

- (4). At the highest level, the instinct of self-perfection merges with the dynamism of personality ideal to create the final synthesis of personality.
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.6. Self-education.
Self-education – 1.

“Education-of-oneself and autopsychotherapy. The action of the third factor leads to certain characteristic changes. The individual becomes less affected by influences from lower levels, he begins to feel the need to direct his own development: but more, he becomes conscious of being able to direct his own progress towards an integrated personality. Thus the third factor generates the dynamism of education of-oneself” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 75).

“Education-of-oneself requires a significant degree of authenticity and a stronger than ever reference to the personality ideal. It is a dynamism that makes one take his fate in his own hands” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 75).
Self-education – 2.

• Education of oneself; self-education; auto-education.

• “Without the feeling of inferiority toward oneself no process of self-education is possible. For self-education there must be a conscious personality ideal and a desire to ascend to this ideal” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 49).

• Leads to emotional dualism in oneself, an attitude of object-subject: the relationship between what is educated and what educates. (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 49).

• Self-education must have the presence of inferiority feelings in relation to both the internal and the external environment—especially the former. (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 49).
Self-education – 3.

“Self-education is the process of working out the personality in one’s inner self. Self-education begins with positive disintegration and the appearance of the third agent. Self-determination then starts to replace heterodetermination little by little” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 49).

The basic condition is a high level of self-awareness, the ability to recognize the state of one’s internal environment. This contributes to the development of self-control and self-approval—further elements in the process of self-education. Self-education also assumes the presence of a clear and dynamic personality ideal. (see Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 49).
“Self-education is the highest possible process of a psychological and moral character” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 41).

“The process of self-education consists in admitting to consciousness all that may stimulate and educate” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 42).

“The daily routine of self-education consists in the realization of particular educational aims, stemming from one’s personality ideal” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 43).

“The fundamental method for the development of personality is self-education” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 146).
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.7. Autopsychotherapy.
Autopsychotherapy – 1.

- “Autopsychotherapy is the process of education-of-one-self under conditions of increased stress, as in developmental crises, in critical moments of life, in neuroses and psychoneuroses. Autopsychotherapy is an indispensable component of the dynamism education-of-one-self” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 76).

- “The dynamism of autopsychotherapy controls and transforms mental disturbances. The disturbances are then not as debilitating as analogous symptoms at lower stages of development since their more pernicious effects are counteracted at this level by higher protective and developmental dynamisms” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 100).
• Definition: “Autopsychotherapy. Psychotherapy, preventive measures, or changes in living conditions consciously applied to oneself in order to control possible mental disequilibrium.” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 292).

• “It is an off-shoot of education-of-oneself operating at the borderline of Levels III and IV. As development advances through spontaneous to organized multilevel disintegration, the conflicts, disturbances, depressions, and anxieties are handled consciously by the individual himself.” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 40).
• 1.6. Key Constructs.
  • 1.6.8. Inner psychic milieu (IPM).
Inner Psychic Milieu (IPM) – 1.

- Inner psychic milieu (IPM): “the totality of mental dynamisms in a distinct or hierarchical setup” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 116).

- “A complex of mental dynamisms characteristic for a given individual” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 62).

- “At a primitive stage of mental development or in psychopathy, the [IPM] does not exist. It arises and is noticeable only at the stage of unilevel disintegration, when a certain sensitiveness appears” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 114).

- “[the] multilevel inner psychic milieu [which] is the basis for a hierarchization of values, for self-consciousness and self-control” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 137).
“Inner psychic milieu is a dynamic mental structure which appears significantly only at advanced stages of mental development, basically at the time of multilevel disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 24).

Several developmental dynamisms are linked to the IPM:
- the third factor,
- subject-object in oneself,
- self-awareness,
- self-control,
- empathy,
- autonomy,
- authenticity and
- autopsycyotherapy
1.7. Emotion and Values in Development.
The theory distinguishes various levels of development of “emotional and instinctive functions.” The level of these functions reflects one’s values and one’s general level of development. Dąbrowski called these “levels of emotional development analogous to the levels of intellectual development.” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 19).

Dąbrowski (1996) could not accept that psychology had so embraced the study of cognitive development and so eschewed the study of emotional development.

For Dąbrowski, “a general theory of human development is not possible if it does not include emotional factors” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 6).
In constructing his general theory of development, Dąbrowski included traditional cognitive development and added a new role for emotional factors, where “emotional factors are not considered merely as unruly subordinates of reason but can acquire the dominant role of shapers of development” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 6).

Traditional theories of development rest on ontogeny—the idea that development automatically unfolds according to some pre-programmed biological sequence of events: Each subsequent step unfolding on the foundation of, and predicated upon, the features of the previous stage.
Dąbrowski’s observations of emotion lead him to conclude that emotion does not conform to ontogenetic development (ontogenesis), rather, it is determined by, and emerges from, “other” conditions and factors.

A key implication is that emotional development may not match cognitive development—as cognitive growth follows ontogenesis, and may achieve advanced levels, emotional functions may or may not follow.

This lopsided situation was referred to by Dąbrowski as **one-sided development** and created a perilous situation. Cognition is allowed to act as an instrument to first and second factor influences without the benefit of emotional and moral guidance or constraints.
Dąbrowski said that making multilevelness a central tenet of his approach was the key to being able to describe and understand the development of different aspects of human behavior and how they interact.

A ML view of emotions is a critical tool in TPD analysis.

To understand a given behavior, emotion or value requires a multilevel examination: Each psychological function and behaviour will be expressed differently and have different meanings at each level of development. Only when we see this can we understand human behaviours in the context of a developmental and vertical perspective.
Emotion and ML in Development – 2.

• “To each level of mental development, there is a corresponding level of value experience. Mental development of man and the development of a hierarchy of values are, in fact, two names for the same process. One cannot separate the two” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 98).

• “The sense of values provides a standard of measure for behavior and gives inner support or disapproval to one’s own actions” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 44).

• “Above a certain level of development there is more universal agreement in valuation, i.e. highly developed (eminent) people tend to share the same values” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 93).
As an individual develops and moves through the levels, he or she experiences new views of reality, new challenges, develops new values and forms new interpretations of both internal and external reality.

Development must involve the experience of multilevelness, and this discovery triggers the emergence and creation of one’s personality ideal—the core from which all development will then flow.

The appreciation and experience of emotions in multilevelness provides a new yardstick to help measure behavior and to guide a person in the formation of values that reflect both one’s essence and one’s emerging sense of who one ought to be.
• The validity of development through the levels can be reliably observed using a multilevel approach.

• Emotional overexcitability is the central component of development because predisposes contact and awareness of higher-level (multilevel) emotions.

• Accentuated by acute emotional awareness, multilevelness brings into focus the contrast between higher and lower phenomena both in the internal and external milieu, and this in turn triggers the vertical conflicts Dąbrowski felt were so important in development—breaking our attachment to lower levels and creating the possibility for higher-level behavior.
Emotion and Values Merge – 1.

- Emotions and values eventually merge and play a predominant role in development:
  - “‘Psychoneurotic experiences’ by disturbing the lower levels of values help gradually to enter higher levels of values, i.e., the level of higher emotions. These emotions becoming conscious and ever more strongly experienced begin to direct our behaviour and bring it to a higher level. In this way higher emotions play a dynamic role in our development and give meaning to our life. As new and higher values the higher emotions slowly begin to shape our ‘new harmony’ after the collapse of the primitive harmony of lower level” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 3).
Emotion and Values Merge – 2.

• As the preceding quote illustrates, we develop as individuals as we consciously rise up to meet the new standards we feel, based upon our emerging awareness and experience of the higher levels of emotion.

• As we continue to allow ourselves to be guided by our experience of higher-level emotions, emotions and values merge—we come to value what we feel is right and we feel right about what we value.

• The hierarchy of values becomes a hierarchy of emotions contributing to, and becoming part of, advanced development.
• 1.8. Disintegration.
Disintegration.

- Definition: “Loosening, disorganization, or dissolution of mental structures and functions” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 293).

- “The term disintegration is used to refer to a broad range of processes, from emotional disharmony to the complete fragmentation of the personality structure, all of which are usually regarded as negative” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 5).

- Dąbrowski described various types of disintegration:
  - Unilevel / Multilevel.
  - Negative / Positive.
  - Spontaneous / Organized (Directed).
  - Partial / Global.
Role of Crises in Life – 1.

- “Every authentic creative process consists of ‘loosening,’ ‘splitting’ or ‘smashing’ the former reality. Every mental conflict is associated with disruption and pain; every step forward in the direction of authentic existence is combined with shocks, sorrows, suffering and distress” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 14).

- “The chances of developmental crises and their positive or negative outcomes depend on the character of the developmental potential, on the character of social influence, and on the activity (if present) of the third factor. . . . One also has to keep in mind that a developmental solution to a crisis means not a reintegration but an integration at a higher level of functioning” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 245).
Role of Crises in Life – 2.

- “Crises are periods of increased insight into oneself, creativity, and personality development” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 18).
- “Crises, in our view, are brought about through thousands of different internal and external conflicts, resulting from collisions of the developing personality with negative elements of the inner and external milieus” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 245).
- “Experiences of shock, stress and trauma, may accelerate development in individuals with innate potential for positive development” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 20).
- “Inner conflicts often lead to emotional, philosophical and existential crises” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 196).
Role of Crises in Life – 3.

• “We are human inasmuch as we experience disharmony and dissatisfaction, inherent in the process of disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 122).

• “Prolonged states of unilevel disintegration (Level II) end either in a reintegration at the former primitive level or in suicidal tendencies, or in a psychosis” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 135).

• Inner conflict is a cause of positive disintegration and subsequent development—conflict acts as a motive to redefine, refine, and discover one’s “new” values.

• Inner conflict is also the result of the process of positive disintegration and the operation of the dynamisms of development.
Dąbrowski believed that dis-ease is necessary as a motivation to change the status quo. The amount of inner conflict is linked to the degree of change—maximum at Level II and in the borderline region between Level II and III:
Positive Disintegration – 1.

- Definition of positive: “By positive we imply here changes that lead from a lower to a higher (i.e. broader, more controlled and more conscious) level of mental functioning” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 1).

- Definition of Positive Disintegration: “Positive or developmental disintegration effects a weakening and dissolution of lower level structures and functions, gradual generation and growth of higher levels of mental functions and culminates in personality integration” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 165).
“The term positive disintegration will be applied in general to the process of transition from lower to higher, broader and richer levels of mental functions. This transition requires a restructuring of mental functions” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 18).

“Loosening, disorganization or dissolution of mental structures and functions” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 164).

“Positive when it enriches life, enlarges the horizon, and brings forth creativity, it is negative when it either has no developmental effects or causes involution” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 10).
Recovery from a crisis can lead to a reintegration at the former level and equilibrium or to a more healthy integration and new equilibrium on a higher level.

If a person has strong developmental potential, even severe crises can be positive and lead to growth.

“The close correlation between personality development and the process of positive disintegration is clear” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 18).

“In education, the theory emphasizes the importance of developmental crises and of symptoms of positive disintegration. It provides a new view of conduct difficulties, school phobias, dyslexia, and nervousness in children” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 23).
Summary of Disintegration – 1.

- Creates the *possibility/opportunity* of higher growth.
- Strong OE gives everyday experience an intense and unsettling quality: one is “jolted” into seeing “more.”
- One becomes aware of a continuum of higher versus lower aspects of both inner and outer reality.
- Developing multilevelness creates ‘vertical’ conflicts and a new, vertical, upward sense of direction.
- Developmental instincts and one’s emotions naturally and intuitively draw one toward higher choices.
- Our lower instinctual and socially based values and habits are brought into conscious review and disintegrate to be replaced by self-chosen values.
Summary of Disintegration – 2.

- A “hierarchization” of life develops: guided by emotion and one’s ability to *imagine* higher possibilities, a vertical perception and categorization creates an autonomous, consciously chosen hierarchy of values.
- These inner values reflect a person’s own unique personality ideal: his or her own sense of who he or she ought to be.
- One’s behavior slowly comes to reflect these higher, internal values.
- At higher levels of development, individuals form *unique* hierarchies of human values, but these core values converge among people and are *universal*. 
• 1.9. The Levels.
Dąbrowski’s 5 Levels.

- **Level V Secondary Integration**
- **Level IV Organized Multilevel Disintegration**
- **Level III Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration**
- **Level II Unilevel Disintegration**
- **Level I Primary Integration**

**Integration**

- **Multilevel Disintegration**

- **Unilevel Disintegration**

- **Integration**

- **Unilevel**

- **Multilevel**
Dąbrowski believed that the majority (about 65%) of people live life at Level I—Primary Integration:

- A very stable, integrated, horizontally based level.
- Behavior is automatic, reflexive, rote, unthinking.
- Instinct (first factor) and social forces (second factor) influence and determine most behavior.
- A difficult level to break free of because integration creates a strong sense of belonging and security (“security of the herd”).
- Inner harmony: most conflicts are external, inner sense of “always being right,” of selfish entitlement, “don’t worry about the other guy’s problems.”
Dąbrowski’s Level I – 2.

• Integration: “Consists in an organization of instinctive, emotional and intellectual functions into a coordinated structure” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 296).

• Primitive Integration (primary integration, Level I):
  • “An integration of all mental functions into a cohesive structure controlled by primitive drives” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 302).
  • “Individuals with some degree of primitive integration comprise the majority of society” (1964, 4).
  • “Among normal primitively integrated people, different degrees of cohesion of psychic structure can be distinguished” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 66).
  • “Psychopathy represents a primitive structure of impulses, integrated at a low level” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 73).
Dąbrowski’s Levels – II, III and IV.

- 3 levels describe varying degrees of disintegration:
  - Level II—Unilevel Disintegration: Horizontal conflicts create ambiguity and ambivalence. Very stressful, chaotic period, maximum dis-ease:
    - High risk of falling back or falling apart.
    - Dąbrowski described this as a transitional level.
  - Paradigm shift: multilevel, vertical aspects appear.
    - Level III—Spontaneous: Multilevel, vertical conflicts arise spontaneously, create disintegration.
    - Level IV—Organized (Directed): We now see and actively seek out vertical conflicts, we play a volitional role in “directing” crises and our own development.
Paradigm Shift from UL to ML.

- Transition to multilevelness is the “greatest step.” Dąbrowski said that the shift from the unilevel to the multilevel / vertical perception of life is the key to development.
- Once one truly sees and appreciates the vertical, there is no turning back to a unilevel existence.
- Dąbrowski compared this with Plato’s cave: once one breaks free and “sees the [sun]light,” one can no longer be happy returning to live in the darkness.
- The shift takes tremendous energy and places major demands on the person: one may initially feel self-alienated and be overwhelmed with depression and despair.
Secondary Integration – 1.

- Secondary Integration (Level V): “the integration of all mental functions into a harmonious structure controlled by higher emotions such as the dynamism of personality ideal, autonomy and authenticity” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 304).

- “The embryonic organization of secondary integration manifests itself during the entire process of disintegration and takes part in it, preparing the way for the formation of higher structures integrated at a higher level” (Dąbrowski, 1964, pp. 20-21).

- Secondary integration is not the endpoint of mental development (it continues via the personality idea and the instinct for self-perfection).
Secondary Integration – 2.

- Full realization of multilevelness and personality ideal.
- One’s unique hierarchy of values directs behavior.
- Third factor directs autonomous, volitional, unique personality—“a good person”—this is what is right.
- Exemplars describe and show us this highest level.
- Inner harmony: we are satisfied that our values and behaviour now reflect our “true” self as we feel it ought to be—no internal conflict.
- May have more external conflicts—strong sense of social justice motivates social action and reform.
- Rarely seen (but the future trend in evolution?).
Secondary Integration – 3 – The IPM.

• “These inner psychic milieu dynamisms show distinct integrative force and strong interconnections. All of them, including the disposing and directing center, are gradually identified with personality and approach its ideal, which is the supplier of mental energy on the highest accessible level” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 115).

• In secondary integration, the dynamisms of the [IPM] come under the influence of one’s personality ideal. “They stop acting individually; the whole personality acts as an entity” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 100).

• “Not until a person has inwardly understood himself and then sees the course he is to take does his life gain peace and meaning” (Kierkegaard, 2000, p. 10).
• 1.10. Applications of the Theory.
  • 1.10.1. General Applications of the Theory.

- Psychology (a new approach based on the TPD).
- Psychiatry / Psychotherapy (contrast between a developmental and a nondevelopmental psychiatric approach, insight and autopsychotherapy).
- Education: All-around education and development of personality which culminates in at least partial transcendence of the biological cycle of life and in at least a partial change of the psychological type. The first educational precept derivable from the theory of positive disintegration is that one should foster authenticity. (Did not mention gifted education).
- Philosophy of Man and Ethics (ML/developmental view).
- Philosophy of Science and Humanities (need to incorporate vertical views).

- History (apply TPD to better understand history and historical events).
- Sociology (development of cultures and societies mirrors individual growth?).
- Politics (move from ‘is of practice’ to ‘ought of long term goals,’
  The distinction of levels of mental functions seems to be the foundation of any long-range political program of development and social progress.).
- Pastoral Guidance (understand deep, universal religious truths. The hierarchy of developmental levels of positive disintegration may be considered an attempt at empirical scaling of the road toward perfection).
• “The generation of a genuine autonomous, moral awareness in an individual and its gradual growth towards higher levels of emotional maturity and responsibility is the paramount question in psychiatry” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 118).

• Symptoms are only meaningful in the context of the individual’s overall potential for development.

• Key idea: to see if a symptom reflects a unilevel or a multilevel disintegration and to adapt our therapeutic techniques accordingly.

• Therapy is based on auto-psychotherapy and self-education.
• Therapeutic Goal: For the person to conduct auto-psychotherapy and autonomously shape his or her personality and development.

• Uses a unique “descriptive-interpretative diagnosis.”

• “The aim of diagnosis is to grasp all the positive factors, to introduce the patient to them and to make him a co-author of his diagnosis” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 252).

• “The multidimensional, detailed and synthetic diagnosis comprises essentially half of psychotherapy . . . For most patients the discovery of their originality, creativity, symptoms of accelerated development and even talents, and the program of development of such functions, very often gives them a clear sense of life” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 253).
“Medical treatment and psychotherapeutic efforts will be replaced by counselling which would consist mainly in the clarification of the developmental nature of nervous tension and symptoms of disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 119).

Therapy should start with a “multidimensional diagnosis of the developmental potential of a given individual. Only in this way can one help in the development of personality—not by “treatment,” but by explanation and awareness of the inevitable stages of growth” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. vii).

“It is the task of therapy to convince the patient of the developmental potential that is contained in his psychoneurotic processes” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. viii).
Social Implications – 1.

• Social levels can be examined in a developmental and multilevel context:
  • Today, we can see how people who succeed in the “dog-eat-dog” society are rewarded and how sensitive people are treated: this “indicates that the society itself is primitive and confused” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 118).
  • Our society is not receptive to sensitive people or psychoneurotics and this creates a tragic aspect of having DP and OE.
  • Alienation from a sick, low level society is an example of positive maladjustment: an indication of healthy individual development.
The social level may reflect individual development:

“The growth of societies may be subject to laws of disintegration comparable to those evident in the process of positive disintegration in individuals. It may be possible to describe and distinguish primitively integrated, monolithic and stagnant societies from those which undergo process of differentiation and developmental conflicts” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 126).

“The distinction of levels of mental functions seems to be the foundation of any long-range political program of development and social progress” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 128).
1.10. Applications of the Theory.
  1.10.2. Applications in Education.
Cognition Versus Emotion in Education.

• Education is based on cognitive models:
  • Very old tradition—Socrates, Plato and Aristotle:
    • Plato: emotion is disruptive and confusing, impairing learning (cognition must control and supersede emotion).
    • Cognition: reflects “mind” and higher “noble” goals.
    • Emotion: reflects body and lower impulses/desires.
  • View supported by utility of I.Q. tests & Piaget’s work.
  • Focus on: cognition, memory and rote performance.
  • Psychology and psychiatry also have a general cognitive bias.

• Some exceptions have been seen:
  • Waldorf schools based upon Rudolf Steiner’s work.
  • Montessori Method (based on Maria Montessori).
Criticisms of Traditional Education.

- Education creates intelligent “robots:”
- History shows “Intelligence” alone is not sufficient to ensure healthy decision making and behavior.
- Dąbrowski: Education tends to “train” not educate. Creates a society of conformers and “social achievers” who follow group based mores, not individuals with minds (personalities) of their own.
- Education is wrongly used to promote political and social values and goals, for example, to promote consumerism and material wealth.
- Individual achievement is valued over individual character.
- “We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought” (Russell, 2000, p. 356).
Goals of “Dąbrowskian” Education.

- Self-awareness: Personal hierarchy of values / ideals.
- Global, empathetic and durable attitudes.
- Goal: the creation of unique individuals, capable of autonomous thought and self analysis based on an integration of feelings about issues and one’s thoughts about issues (not a rote recital of “the facts” or of prevailing social mores/scripts).
- Teach people how to critically evaluate issues and develop autonomy—help individuals to create autonomous values and a unique personality.
- Establishes a new hierarchy where emotion “directs” cognition; intelligence serves higher values.

Dąbrowski’s Basic Approach.

- Education must strive to nourish the whole individual, balancing cognitive and emotional aspects.
- One’s emotional life can have a dramatic impact on learning style, learning potential and performance.
- A student’s potential must first be seen in the context of his or her overall personality; then within the classroom, family and society. Performance and behavior must also be viewed and evaluated in these contexts.
- “An awareness of the effect of multilevel disintegration on the inner psychic milieu is of basic importance for educators” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 23).
• Dąbrowski advocated “humanistic education, that is, true human education and not mere training as the methods of an animal trainer might be described.”

• Emphasized that children are unique:

• Two avenues to achieve education:
  • 1). General education designed to enhance common traits that all kids share,
  • 2). Specialized education focused on the unique traits of each child.

• “Authentic education is designed to encourage the child to transgress mediocre statistical qualities and to develop his own hierarchy of values and aims which he is then taught to realize.”
Implications for All Students.

- Students need to be individually supported and nurtured on both emotional and cognitive dimensions.
- When a Dąbrowskian diagnosis supports a positive interpretation, “symptoms” should be accepted:
  - OE should be tolerated: Dąbrowski—“We must forgive each other our psychological type.”
  - Crises should be expected and framed in a developmental context when appropriate.
  - Awareness of suicidal potential must be paramount.
  - The rich tradition of ML and other OE individuals can be emphasized to reduce feelings of alienation.
- “A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another” (Mill, 2015, p. 103).
• 1.10. Applications of the Theory.
  • 1.10.3. Applications in Gifted Education.
Today’s application to the gifted field is largely based upon one study Dąbrowski conducted with children:

- Reported in Dąbrowski (1967) and again in (1972), but not identified as an application in (1970).
- Examined 80 children: 30 “intellectually gifted” and 50 from “drama, ballet and plastic art schools” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 251).
- Found “every child” showed “hyperexcitability,” various psychoneurotic symptoms and frequent conflicts with the environment.
- “The development of personality with gifted children and young people usually passes through the process of positive disintegration” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 261).
- This hypothesis has not yet been tested.
In the manuscript, *On Authentic Education*, Dąbrowski said: “The nervous and psychoneurotic individual is present in an overwhelming percentage of highly gifted children and youths, artists, writers, etc. [The] tendency to reach beyond the statistical norm and mediocre development presents the privilege and drama of psychoneurotic people.”

“The extremely sensitive child, in contact with conflict in everyday life (with death and injustice), and the child who deeply experiences feelings of inferiority can develop, in spite of his intellectual gifts, anxiety psychoneurosis: be afraid of darkness, loneliness and aggressiveness in others.”
Dąbrowski’s hypotheses: as a group, students identified as gifted will tend to display stronger DP (and OE), increased levels of psychoneuroses, and will be predisposed to experience positive disintegration:

- Many students should display “symptoms” that may reflect higher potentials:
  - May display unusual sensitivity, frequent crises, anxieties, depression, perfectionism, etc.
  - May express strong positive maladjustment:
    - Strong sense they are different, don’t fit in.
    - Have conflicts with social (unilevel) morality.
    - Feel alienated from others, from their peers.
    - Significant potential for self-harm and suicide.
TPD and the Gifted – 4.

- Dr. Piechowski introduced OE to gifted education (Piechowski, 1979a).

- Dr. Piechowski developed his OEQ test of OE (this is not a test of full DP) (Lysy & Piechowski, 1983).

- Ackerman (1997b) found problems with the OEQ:
  - A revised test, the OEQ-II, has now been developed (Falk, Lind, Miller, Piechowski, & Silverman, 1999).

- OE was popular because parents could easily relate and research aided by having the OEQ and OEQ-II.

- No one objected to the application of TPD to the gifted.

- Over the past 35 years, many research projects and papers have addressed the topic, most in the context of gifted populations (see Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006).
In an influential study, Ackerman (1997a) identified three groups as shown:

**Classified as gifted by school, thus classified as gifted here, but little OE was seen (23.8%).**

**Overlap: classified as gifted by school and study who showed OE.**

**Current study:** 35.1% classified as nongifted by school but classified as gifted here as they showed OE.
Ackerman (1997a, p. 235) concluded the 35% with higher DP are gifted but were not identified by conventional testing: “The results indicated that gifted subjects were differentiated from their nongifted peers based on their higher psychomotor, intellectual, and emotional OE scores. While this was an unexpected finding, it clearly illustrates that scores on the OEQ can differentiate between gifted and nongifted students.”

This report influenced the gifted field and today, many now consider OE and gifted to be synonymous.

Strangely, to my knowledge, the important implications of this study and the three discrete groups have not been further replicated, elaborated or researched.
Dąbrowski described each overexcitability level by level. Each OE has a different nature and expression on each level of development. Thus far, testing efforts have not taken this into account and have collapsed each OE into one dimension.

Example, here are the items measuring emotional OE from the OEQII: (Falk et al, 1999, pp.7-8).

- I feel other people’s feelings
- I worry a lot
- It makes me sad to see a lonely person in a group
- I can be so happy that I want to laugh and cry at the same time
- I have strong feelings of joy, anger, excitement, and despair
- I am deeply concerned about others
- My strong emotions moved me to tears
- I can feel a mixture of different emotions all at once
- I am an unemotional person
- I take everything to heart
Fundamental Measurement Problems – 2.

• These items cannot logically be used to generate level descriptions from test results.

• OE is a discontinuous construct with a non-normal distribution. The OEs are interrelated; these important research issues were ignored by past researchers.

• Most research on OE today is meaningless as it ignores the above features and uses analyses that assume a normal distribution, continuous variance and independence between variables.
• The testing manual clearly indicates this is a research instrument only to be used for group data and should not be used to make judgements about individual students (although it appears this is not being adhered to) (Falk et al, 1999, pp.7-8).

• Finally, because the research instrument does not correspond to the constructs of OE in the theory, the validity of the questionnaires is a major concern.

• For an overview of overexcitability: see Dąbrowski (1972, pp. 6-7; 1996, p. 72), and Mendaglio (2012).
Research Findings – 1.

- Mendaglio & Tillier (2006) reviewed the literature.
- Michael Pyryt (2008) meta-analyzed the research results concluding:
  - 1). Gifted individuals are more likely than those not identified as gifted to show signs of intellectual OE, but based upon the research strategies and testing done to date, the gifted do not consistently demonstrate “the big three,” intellectual, imaginational and emotional OE.
• Pyryt (2008): “it appears that gifted and average ability individuals have similar amounts of emotional overexcitability. This finding would suggest that many gifted individuals have limited developmental potential in the Dąbrowskian sense and are more likely to behave egocentrically rather than altruistically” (p. 177).

• Warne (2011b, p. 688) stated, “It has never been clear what exactly the OEQII measures . . . Further psychometric studies on the instrument should be conducted before the instrument gains widespread acceptance.”
• “Those who use the OEQII or read studies containing data produced by the instrument [should] use caution in interpreting group or individual differences because such score differences are likely partially psychometric in nature and not psychological” (Warne, 2011a, p. 590).

• The OEQII is sound and should “enable the counselors and the teachers to better understand their students’ intelligences” (in contravention of the limitations of the test outlined in the manual as mentioned above). (Al-Onizat, 2013, p. 61).

• The OEQII is difficult to administer and has questionable reliability; further research is needed to develop a more appropriate instrument to measure overexcitabilities (Carman, 2011).
The meta-analysis of the last 20 years of research by Pyryt (2008) calls for the reappraisal of the conclusion that as a group, the gifted disproportionately display overexcitability compared to non-gifted groups.

Many of the problems seen today appear to be the result of poor academic standards and applications.

Results have been inconsistent and have not been able to demonstrate “the big three” OEs (intellectual,imaginational and emotional) in gifted populations.

Piirto said “But people in our field should be careful about assuming that the gifted students are more sensitive than other students. This just hasn’t been proved” (Sansom, Barnes, Carrizales, & Shaughnessy, 2018, p. 97).
Current research focuses on OE but not DP.
Current testing has very questionable validity.
The following questions remain unanswered:
• Does OE act as a valid marker for giftedness?
• Do the gifted disproportionately show other signs of developmental potential, for example, the third factor?
• Do the gifted disproportionately demonstrate psychoneurosis and positive disintegration?
Research Findings – 6 – Questions.

• How do the gifted who display OE differ from those gifted who do not display OE?
• For the 35% of students identified with OE but not classified as gifted: Is their non-gifted classification accurate? If so, what are the educational, counselling, and other implications for them.
• Dąbrowski: we can have DP and not be “gifted” although he suggested that above average intelligence was a necessary but not sufficient condition for advanced development (see Nixon, 2005).
• Most authors say that gifted students do not display higher anxiety, depression or suicide compared to those not identified as gifted (Cross, Cassady, & Miller, 2006; Hyatt & Cross, 2009; Neihart 1999, Neihart, Robinson, Reis, & Moon, 2002).

• “What do we know? Intellectually or academically gifted children who are achieving and participate in special educational program for gifted students are at least as well adjusted and are perhaps better adjusted than their nongifted peers. These children do not seem to be any more at-risk for social or emotional problems” (Neihart, 1999, p. 16).

• Contemporary research does not help clarify the psychological differences (if any) of the gifted and no clear consensus emerges.
Broader Research Questions – 2.

• Cross and Cross (2018, p. 72) concluded:
  • “[First lesson] Students with gifts and talents are in many ways the same as their average peers, and what little research has compared their suicide ideation has found no statistically significant difference. This indicates that research from the general population can inform our explorations. Exceptional abilities, however, alter the lived experience for these students and, quite possibly, the way they think about that experience and the possibility of suicide, itself. Risk factors may differ when they are experienced in the context of exceptional abilities.

• A second lesson represents areas that seemingly are specific to students who are gifted. For example, the descriptions of overexcitabilities in all of the psychological autopsies are believed by many to be unique among students with gifts and talents. Using Dąbrowski’s theory may afford suicidologists hints as to the more vulnerable among gifted students.”
The examination of psychological autopsies by Cross and Cross (2018) of gifted students who committed suicide (just quoted) raises serious concerns.

Given the gravity of the issues around mental health and the gifted, especially self-harm and suicide, the existing literature is disappointing and unhelpful: no clear picture emerges on the issues.
• 1.11. Current and Future Issues.
• This review will not examine the veracity of these claims, simply bring them to the readers’ attention.

• “Openness to experience is the personality domain or factor that appears equivalent to OEs when comparing conceptual descriptions. This factor is also called openness/intellect by several researchers to adequately describe the subfactors that most closely represent it (DeYoung, 2010)” (Vuyk, Kerr, & Krieshok, 2016, p. 64).

• “This study provides initial evidence for the strong association among openness facets and OEs and serves as ground to support the shift from OEs to openness to experience” (Vuyk, Kerr, & Krieshok, 2016, p. 66).
• “Rost et al. (2014) . . . stated that given empirical results, the OE construct was not useful; it did not serve for giftedness identification, and it did not describe behaviors that could not be explained by other sources. Thus it is a redundant construct. Practice should be based on sound science, but science behind OEs is not sound” . . .

• “A conceptual change from OEs to openness to experience would reflect the shift from a static and essentialist conception of giftedness to a talent development perspective” (Vuyk, Kerr, & Krieshok, 2016, p. 68).
“Based on the results, openness to experience and OEs seem to represent largely the same construct” (Vuyk, Krieshok, & Kerr, 2016, p. 198).

“Openness facets and OEs appear to represent the same construct, and thus the giftedness field would benefit from discussing the construct as the personality trait of openness to experience” (Vuyk, Krieshok, & Kerr, 2016, p. 205).

See the section on Dr. Piechowski, below, for issues between his views and Dąbrowski’s.
Future Issues – 1.

- Are five OE enough?
  - Some have suggested adding more types of OE.
  - William Hague suggested considering spiritual OE.
- How can we help people to achieve their full DP?
- How can we better understand those in crises?
- How do we understand: DP / OE / Bipolar Disorders / ADHD?
- What role does the third factor play? Is it related to focus? Motivation? Eventual measures of success?
- The theory is fluid, open to further research and theory building. How can we best balance future theory building and refinement with operationalization (validation, testing, assessment, etc.)?
Future Issues – 2.

- How can we best disseminate the theory?
  - The theory has many subtleties and ambiguities and is open to different interpretations and understandings.
  - Each interpreter seems to have a unique emphasis.
- Clearly, more sophisticated, more sensitive, valid, reliable measurements of OE, DP, and the other constructs of TPD need to be developed.
- The hypotheses that gifted students will show positive disintegration and psychoneurosis still need to be explored and tested.
- Emerging findings in neuroscience should be monitored vis-à-vis support for Dąbrowski’s constructs.
Applications to psychotherapy have not yet been developed and the powerful concepts of autopsychotherapy and self-education lay fallow.

Issues concerning the construct of OE and Aron’s approach to hypersensitivity and Vuyk’s claims regarding openness to experience will need to be explored, compared and contrasted.

Dr. Piechowski’s concerns need to be satisfactorily addressed while still protecting the integrity of TPD. The ideal resolution: Dr. Piechowski publishing his own theory, allowing scholars to properly evaluate the two.

Ideally, future refinements to TPD will be guided by sound observation, logic and substantial and relevant research findings.
1.12. Conclusion.
“Human and social reality appears to be submitted to the law of positive disintegration. If progress is to be achieved, if new and valuable forms of life are to be developed, lower levels of mental functions have to be shaken and destroyed, and a sequence of processes of positive disintegration and secondary integrations are necessary. Consequently, human development has to involve suffering, conflicts, inner struggle” (Dąbrowski, 1970, 16).
He shall be found the truly wise.
’tis Zeus alone who shows the perfect way
Of knowledge: He hath ruled,
Men shall learn wisdom, by affliction schooled.


Here, then, is a great mystery. For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has—yes or no?—eaten a rose . . . Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: is it yes or no? Has the sheep eaten the flower? And you will see how everything changes . . . And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance!

• 2. Tillier’s Summary of the Hierarchy of Dąbrowski.
Tillier’s Summary of the Hierarchy of Dąbrowski.

- **Secondary Integration**: *(Multilevel)*
  - Personality ideal / Inner psychic milieu
  - Third Factor
  - Existentialism / Authentic, volitional choices
  - **Multilevel** (Vertical) conflicts/crises appear
  - Psychoneuroses / Positive disintegration
  - **Unilevel disintegrations** create periods of chaos
  - Strong, positive developmental potentials and dynamisms (genetic essence)

- **Primary Integration**: *(Unilevel)*
  - Second Factor (socialization; good boy, good girl)
  - First Factor (“me first”)

  [ ✓ Key Processes / major influences]
3. Dąbrowski and John Hughlings Jackson.
John Hughlings-Jackson.

- John Hughlings-Jackson (1835-1911).
- Widely seen as the Father of English neurology.
- Specialized in epilepsy.
- Created a conceptual framework for clinical neurophysiology.
- He saw diseases of the nervous system as a process of de-evolution, or dissolution

(see Taylor, 1958; York & Steinberg, 2006)
Hughlings-Jackson described how the nervous system is hierarchically organized in a series of 3 major levels.

Hughlings-Jackson was instrumental in Dąbrowski’s conceptualization of the levels of neural organization and of the corresponding levels of neuro- and psychological function.

Focused on evolution and dissolution in the nervous system. Higher levels are more complex combinations and arrangements of lower features, thus representing new steps in the brain’s evolution.

Higher levels control lower levels. Dissolution occurs when the inhibition of higher levels is somehow removed and the more automatic, less reflective functions of the lower levels are released to act.
• Presented 3 principles of neural evolution:
  • 1). Evolution is the transfer from a very well organized lower level to a higher but poorly organized, more vulnerable and malleable one.
  • 2). Evolution moves from the simplest, lowest centers to the most complex, highest centers.
  • 3). Evolution is a transition from more automatic to more voluntary centers.

• Summary: the highest centers, representing the summit of nervous evolution are the least organized, and most delicate, but the most complex and most voluntary. (see Dąbrowski, 1964, pp. 83-84; Jackson, 1884).
For Hughlings-Jackson, the brain’s organization posed a problem: the higher, newer features are less stable and more vulnerable. Disorders of the higher levels (like psychoneurosis) disinhibit the lower levels and are the first step toward total dissolution of psychic functions (“mental involution”). Thus, progression of psychoneurosis could lead to serious mental illness.

For Dąbrowski, the initial fluid organization of the highest levels represents an opportunity for further, self-directed reorganization and development. Dąbrowski opposed Jackson’s view, saying, “if anything, psychoneuroses prevent the development of mental breakdown” (see Dąbrowski, 1972, 220-221).
For Dąbrowski, development is evolution: “evolution—a development which proceeds from lower to higher levels of organization. Positive disintegration is the type of process though which individual human, evolution occurs” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 295).
4. Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.
   4.1. Overview
Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.

- We have already seen the importance of Jahoda’s positive mental health approach in Dąbrowski.
- Jahoda’s positively based approach generally had minimal impact on psychology.
- Maslow (1954) was the first to coin the term positive psychology (353-363) and in the appendix (364-378).
- The resurrection of positive psychology advanced by Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi (2000) provides a general framework that readily accommodates Dąbrowski’s theory.
- Reciprocally, Dąbrowski’s theory makes strong contributions to a positive psychology.
What is Positive Psychology?

• “Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

• “the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life” (Seligman & Csíkszentmihályi, 2000).

• Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi (2000) noted that many human factors protect against illness and they called for a new science of human strength—a psychology that can understand and nurture these factors in youth.
Key Resources: Positive Psychology.


• 4. Dąbrowski and Positive Psychology.
  • 4.2. Growth Following Adversity / Posttraumatic Growth
Growth Following Adversity.

• “the experience of growth or positive change following trauma and adversity is not a qualitatively different experience that is distinctly different from normal human development, but rather is a natural, albeit infrequent, life span developmental event” (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 341).

• “The growth literature promises a paradigm shift in our ways of thinking about trauma” (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 342).

• “We are interested in both positive and negative sides of human experience, and how they relate to each other” (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 342).
Growth Following Adversity.

- “growth following adversity is about psychological well-being and changes in assumptions about the self and the world” (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 350).

- “we cannot fully understand growth without taking into account the distress that precedes it, and we cannot fully understand recovery from posttraumatic stress without taking into account the possibility of growth” (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 342).
Posttraumatic growth.

- Positive cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and spiritual consequences that one may experience following a traumatic event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

- Growth can occur in five ways: improvement in interpersonal relations, greater personal strength, positive spiritual change, increased appreciation of life, and discovering new possibilities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).

- Posttraumatic growth occurs in a wide range of people, facing a wide variety of traumatic circumstances (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

- The individual has not only survived, but has experienced changes that are viewed as important, and that go beyond what was the previous status quo (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).
Post-traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI).

• Abstract: The development of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, an instrument for assessing positive outcomes reported by persons who have experienced traumatic events, is described. This 21-item scale includes factors of New Possibilities, Relating to Others, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and Appreciation of Life. Women tend to report more benefits than do men, and persons who have experienced traumatic events report more positive change than do persons who have not experienced extraordinary events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).
The Source of Crises.

• Growth following adversity deals primarily with externally generated crises; for example, natural disasters, accidents, relationship breakups, etc..

• Positive disintegration is focused upon crises that are primarily internally generated, usually when an individual experiences strong internal conflicts over disparities between higher and lower elements in their behavior, feelings and values.

• The parallels between posttraumatic growth and positive disintegration are striking. It is interesting to speculate if those who experience posttraumatic growth may display some of the same underlying factors as described in TPD, for example, developmental potential.
At a Dąbrowski congress, a speaker said: “we really like growth but do we really need all this suffering?”

Suffering is integral to what it means to live and develop as a human being; suffering is often “a vital spur to change” and should not be avoided by drugs, delusions or escapist activities (Davies, 2012).

“Suffering provides an opportunity to receive or create something of value” (Gibson, 2015, p. 3).

“When our external and/or internal worlds impede the realisation of our human potentialities . . . ‘emotional suffering’ will signal that all is not well” (Davies, 2012, p. 5).

“Socialisation can lead us to cultivate habits and live in ways that impede the realisation of our higher potentialities. When our realisation is impeded I argue that our suffering is provoked” (Davies, 2012, p. 7).
• “The ‘necessity’ for suffering, which at first glance may seem paradoxical, is deeply embedded in the human soul, and is more common than it appears to the normal mind” (Dąbrowski, 1937, p. 4).

• “One of the highest ideas of humanity, the purifying value of suffering (provided it is correctly interpreted), is continuously alive, for example, in the deepening of the moral culture of man by suffering, in its influence on philosophical creation and on the origin of the educational and moral system” (Dąbrowski, 1937, p. 100).

• “In relation to suffering one does not adopt an exclusively negative attitude, but begins to accept it as something that has meaning, as essential for cultural development, and as a necessary element of one’s psychic enrichment” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 139).
Suffering – 3.

• “human development has to involve suffering, conflicts, inner struggle. Positive maladjustment, challenge and rebellion are as good a part of any culturally growing society as creativity and respect for the law” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 16).

• “Disappointments, suffering, inner conflicts, breakdowns, force one to depart from peaceful adjustment to automatic activities such as daily routine, pursuit of money, pleasures of eating, primitive joys, or superficial, easily resolved conflicts” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 37).

• “Mental health, [is] linked with the sensitivity to suffering, to painful experiences of oneself and others” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 176).
“Existentialist philosophy is an expression of the experiences of pain, suffering, depression, elevation, empathy, and above all, disquietude and anxiety. Here man goes beyond the tranquility of thought, of reasoning by means of abstract ideas. He lives and suffers; he feels and experiences pain, disintegration, distraction and inner conflicts” (Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 139).

“If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life” (Frankl, 1992, p. 76).
Further Possibilities.

- The application of Dąbrowski’s multilevel and multidimensional approach may be particularly powerful in helping understand posttraumatic growth.
- It remains to be seen what overlap may exist in the research insights in the literature on posttraumatic growth and on the theory of positive disintegration.
- It would be interesting to look for correlations between the *Posttraumatic Growth Inventory* and the *OEQII*.
- Deeper, more subtle views of trauma and suffering, along with Dąbrowski’s constructs and contemporary posttraumatic growth create opportunities for further theory building and research. Clinical aspects can be combined with philosophical insights (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Unamuno) to yield a powerful analysis.
Key Resources: Posttraumatic growth.


Presented by Bill Tillier at the Eighth International Congress of the Institute for Positive Disintegration in Human Development
August 7 - 9, 2008 Canmore, Alberta, Canada
Revised 2018
Dąbrowski and Gifted Education: Beyond Overexcitabilities.
Maslow’s Childhood.

- Very isolated, unhappy child, described himself as a “freak with two heads,” a view echoed by his father: “the ugliest kid you’ve ever seen” (Hoffman, 1988, p. 6).
- Maslow could not see how he had not become “psychotic” in his abusive childhood (Hoffman, 1992, p. 70).
- Too shy to date, he married his first cousin Bertha (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2014, p. 548).
- Set out to understand human relations, at first as a Watsonian behaviorist (Schultz, & Schultz, 2012, p. 339).
- He was fascinated by, and attracted to, dominant women all his life but approached them academically.
Maslow’s Controversial Views – 1.

• Quotations do not do justice in representing Maslow. The reader is encouraged to consult his original works.
• A careful reading of Maslow is disappointing because some of his viewpoints seem surprisingly primitive.
• “The average high-dominance woman in our insecure society prefers straightforward, unsentimental, rather violent, animal, pagan, passionate, even sometimes brutal lovemaking . . . In other words she must be dominated, must be forced into subordinate status” (Maslow, 1942, pp. 283-284).
• “the high-dominance woman unconsciously wishes to be raped; the middle-dominance woman to be seduced” (Maslow, 1942, p. 284).
• “being raped (in whatever sense) is less psychologically damaging to women than to men. Women are more able to permit themselves to ‘relax and enjoy it’ than men are” (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 351).
Maslow’s Controversial Views – 2.

- “human sexuality is almost exactly like primate sexuality” Dominant males and submissive females are equivalent in both species: an idea later reflected in his continuum view of instincts in animals and humans (Maslow, 1942, p. 291).

- “I have been wondering how to protect the biologically gifted from the almost inevitable malice of the biologically nongifted. . . . is for the biological superiors (alphas or aggridants) to become a kind of priestly class” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 71).

- “Women, especially ‘advanced’ and educated women in the United States of America, are frequently fighting against their own very deep tendencies to dependency, passivity, and submissiveness (because this unconsciously means to them a giving up of selfhood or person-hood). It is then easy for such a woman to see men as would-be dominators and rapists and to treat them as such, frequently by dominating them” (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 154).

- “In some women, I have also been tempted to think of ‘having a baby’ as fullest self-actualization all by itself, at least for a time. However, I should say that I feel less confident in speaking of self-actualization in women” (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 154).
Maslow’s Controversial Views – 3.

“it might be desirable if we could teach our young men to think of their penises, for instance, as phallic worshipers do, as beautiful and holy objects, as awe inspiring, as mysterious, as big and strong, possibly dangerous and fear inspiring, as miracles which are not understood. If we can teach our young men this, not to mention our young women, then every boy will become the bearer of a holy thing, of a sceptre, of something given to him by nature which no woman can ever have. We supply him thereby with an ultimate and irreducible self-esteem which is his simply by virtue of being a male, a man with a penis and testicles, which should at times awe the woman and the man himself as well. This B-attitude should help him to maintain a sense of the holy or the sacred whenever he has an ejaculation, and should help him to think of his orgasm in the same way that the Tantrists and other religious sects do, i.e., as a unifying experience, a holy experience, a symbol, as a miracle, and as a religious ceremony” (Maslow, 1964/1976, p. 115).
“Any woman who is at all sensitive to the philosophical must occasionally be awed by the great storms of sensuality that she can arouse in her man, and also by her power to allay and quiet these storms. This can be seen as goddess-like power, and therefore may be used as one basis for her profound biological self-esteem as a woman. Something similar can be true for male self-esteem, to the extent that he is able to arouse and to calm sexual storms in his wife” (Maslow, 1964/1976, pp. 115-116).

I provide this quotation to emphasize that biology underlies Maslow’s approach to human psychology, in this example, the biological basis of self-esteem in both men and women.
Maslow’s Primate Research Set His Approach.

- Maslow was assessed with a 195 IQ (Hoffman, 1988, p. 74).
- Under Harry Harlow, Maslow studied primate behavior, forming critical insights into dominance (see Blum, 2002).
- Studied dominance, motivation and sexual behavior by interviewing dominant college women (Hoffman, 1988, p. 77).
- “Dominance is a more potent determiner of, or is more closely related to, sexual behavior than is sexual drive” (Maslow, 1942, p. 292).
- Maslow equated an individual’s “feeling of dominance” with confidence. He first called this “dominance-feeling” but later called it self-esteem: ideas that later influenced his needs hierarchy (Cullen, 1997, p. 363).
- Details of orgasm led him to “peak experiences.”
- Using normal subjects became an important model.
“man has a higher nature which is just as ‘instinctoid’ as his lower nature, and that this higher nature includes the needs for meaningful work, for responsibility, for creativeness, for being fair and just, for doing what is worthwhile and for preferring to do it well” (Maslow 1971/1976, p. 228).

Our instinctoid biology underlies a single continuum of both our lowest and highest traits—“the so-called spiritual or value-life, or ‘higher’ life, is on the same continuum (is the same kind or quality of thing) with the life of the flesh, or of the body, i.e., the animal life, the material life, the ‘lower’ life. That is, the spiritual life is part of our biological life. It is the ‘highest’ part of it, but yet part of it” (Maslow 1971/1976, pp. 313-314).
Maslow’s Animal – Human Continuum – 2.

• “for the mass of mankind, man’s higher nature is inconceivable without a satisfied lower nature as a base. The best way to develop this higher nature is to fulfill and gratify the lower nature first. Furthermore, man’s higher nature rests also on the existence of a good or fairly good environment, present and previous. The implication here is that man’s higher nature, ideals, and aspirations, and abilities rest not upon instinctual renunciation, but rather upon instinctual gratification” (Maslow, 1968, p. 173).

• “Our godlike qualities rest upon and need our animal qualities. Our adulthood should not be only a renunciation of childhood, but an inclusion of its good values and a building upon it. Higher values are hierarchically-integrated with lower values. Ultimately, dichotomizing pathologizes, and pathology dichotomizes” (Maslow, 1968, pp. 174-175).
“I can report empirically that the healthiest persons in our culture are the ones who really have honest peace, contentment, serenity, and happiness. *It is precisely these people who are most (not least) pagan, most (not least) ‘instinctive,’ most (not least) accepting of their animal nature*” (Maslow, 1949, p. 277, italics in original).

“(A) Actualization is not actualization of the self but actualization of the human organism, i.e. of an organism inscribed within an animal-human continuum and is as such part of wider, interdependent link with nature.

(B) As a tendency, actualization is a dynamic process rather than a static entity. As such, it cannot be measured or quantified, nor can it be easily aligned with any overarching metaphysical notion” (Bazzano, 2017, p. 314).
No True Autonomy.

• “It is these needs, ‘instinctoid’ in nature, that we can also think of as built-in values—values not only in the sense that the organism wants and seeks them but also in the sense that they are both good and necessary for the organism” (Maslow, 1966, p. 125).

• Maslow rejected free choice and existentialism. He viewed existentialism as a denial of biological and instinctual influences: “For Sartre and all those whom he has influenced, one’s self becomes an arbitrary choice, a willing by fiat to be something or do something without any guidelines about which is better, which is worse, what’s good and what’s bad” (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 178).
Maslow Applies Goldstein’s Self-Actualization.

- Kurt Goldstein: “We assume only one drive, the drive of self-actualization, but are compelled to concede that under certain conditions the tendency to actualize one potentiality is so strong that the organism is governed by it” (1963, p. 145).

- “The organism has definite potentialities, and because it has them it has the need to actualize or realize them. The fulfillment of these needs represents the self-actualization of the organism. Driven by such needs, we experience ourselves as active personalities and are not passively impelled by drives that are felt to conflict with the personality” (Goldstein, 1963, p. 146).

- The tendency toward self-actualization acts from within, overcoming disturbances arising from the clash with the world, not out of anxiety but out of the joy of conquest (Goldstein, 1938/1975).

- If the organisms’ needs are met, its innate biological/psychological potentials can be actualized. If injured, this drive will seek to reorganize and restore balance.
Maslow Applies Self-Actualization.

- Already looking at security/motivation, Maslow (1943b) quickly applied Goldstein’s idea in his interviews about development.
- Whitehead said Goldstein was “misinterpreted” by Maslow: “emphasis on discovering one’s ‘real self’ or ‘authentic self,’ ultimately ignoring the role played by environment in the organism-environment relationship” (2017, p. 72).
- Maslow could not find enough sufficiently developed subjects, so he used biographical studies (see the list: Krems, Kenrick, & Neel, 2017, p. 1350).
- Maslow (1943c, p. 91) listed five sets of goals, purposes or needs and included in the fifth: “self-actualization, self-fulfilment, self-expression, working out of one’s own fundamental personality, the fulfilment of its potentialities, the use of its capacities, the tendency to be the most that one is capable of being.”
Dominance: The Foundation of SA.

- “His assumption that it was women’s self-esteem that enabled them to dominate others was based on his earlier conclusion that his monkeys’ confidence had enabled them to dominate others.” But the monkeys were isolated in cages except for the brief times they spent in experiments. Maslow assumed this made no difference to their behavior (see Cullen, 1997, p. 368).

- “A belief in the ‘naturalness’ of male dominance and female submission thus underlies Maslow’s needs hierarchy and his larger humanistic project” (Cullen & Gotell, 2002, p. 553).

- To see and accept one’s “natural superiority” is an important precondition of self-actualization: this created a gender bias in SA—men having more “natural” dominance (see Cullen, 1997).

- He also researched and wrote influential works on business: companies should help men achieve their natural potential to be dominant leaders; women lack the natural instincts to be managers (see Maslow, 1965, 2000).
“Our healthy individuals find it possible to accept themselves and their own nature without chagrin or complaint or, for that matter, even without thinking about the matter very much. They can accept their own human nature in the stoic style, with all its shortcomings, with all its discrepancies from the ideal image without feeling real concern. It would convey the wrong impression to say that they are self-satisfied. What we must say rather is that they can take the frailties and sins, weaknesses, and evils of human nature in the same unquestioning spirit with which one accepts the characteristics of nature” . . . “the self-actualized person sees reality more clearly: our subjects see human nature as it is and not as they would prefer it to be” (Maslow, 1970, p 155-156).
Maslow’s Unilevel Approach – 2.

• “The first and most obvious level of acceptance is at the so-called animal level. Those self-actualizing people tend to be good animals, hearty in their appetites and enjoying themselves without regret or shame or apology. They seem to have a uniformly good appetite for food; they seem to sleep well; they seem to enjoy their sexual lives without unnecessary inhibition and so on for all the relatively physiological impulses. They are able to accept themselves not only on these low levels, but at all levels as well; e.g., love, safety, belongingness, honor, self-respect. All of these are accepted without question as worthwhile, simply because these people are inclined to accept the work of nature rather than to argue with her for not having constructed things to a different pattern” (Maslow, 1970, p. 156).

• In Maslow, lower levels are to be accepted and expressed, forming a foundation for higher levels, thus, no vertical conflicts arise between higher and lower aspects (the critical developmental force that forms multilevelness in Dąbrowski).
Maslow’s Unilevel Approach – 3.

• “Most commonly, self-actualizing people see life clearly. They are less emotional and more objective, less likely to allow hopes, fears, or ego defenses to distort their observations. Maslow found that all self-actualizing people are dedicated to a vocation or a cause. Two requirements for growth are commitment to something greater than oneself and success at one’s chosen tasks. Major characteristics of self-actualizing people include creativity, spontaneity, courage, and hard work” (Frager & Fadiman, 2005, p. 342).

• There is no sense of seeking a personality ideal in Maslow. He described various levels of potential within a person and said that all of these potentials should be accepted/actualized, the lowest along with the highest.
Maslow (1971/1976) rejected pursuing ideals: ideals and “oughts” should reflect “actual potentiality which can actually be fulfilled” (p. 105)—“the best way for a person to discover what he ought to do is to find out who and what he is” (p. 108).

“Do you want to find out what you ought to be? Then find out who you are! ‘Become what thou art!’” (p. 108).

Unrealistic ideals create anxiety, neuroses, guilt and prevent our acceptance and happiness: “We may feel totally sinful, or depraved or unworthy. We see our is as extremely far away from our ought” (p. 108).

Maslow: intrinsic guilt “comes from defying one’s own nature and from trying to be what one is not” (p. 327).
Maslow and Dąbrowski – 1.

- Over Dąbrowski’s protests, Dr. Piechowski equated self-actualization with Level IV and V, adding material into the 1977 books as they went to press.
- Maslow’s initial position was that Dąbrowski had made a significant contribution but that it could be conceptually subsumed under his (Maslow’s) model.
- Dąbrowski argued that his theory (with PD, ML, and DP-OE) went beyond Maslow’s. With a number of important qualitative differences, TPD must be kept separate. While some traits may overlap, at the construct level, the theories are not equivalent or compatible.
• Maslow subsequently endorsed Dąbrowski (1970), in a quotation appearing on the back cover of Dąbrowski (1972). “I consider this to be one of the most important contributions to psychological and psychiatric theory in this whole decade. There is little question in my mind that this book will be read for another decade or two, and very widely. It digs very deep and comes up with extremely important conclusions that will certainly change the course of psychological theorizing and the practice of psychotherapy for some time to come.”

• Dąbrowski was asked several times to describe the characteristics of higher-level individuals and refused, saying that if he gave a prescriptive list of traits linked to development, it would impair the individual from seeking and finding his or her own unique essence and authenticity.
Dąbrowski’s Position.

• No sense of multilevelness is present in Maslow.
• Must be a qualitative break between animals/humans, and the lower and higher levels—both are not on a single continuum.
• *Overcoming* our animal nature differentiates humans and signals our human authenticity.
• One must transcend reality “as is” and work toward “ought.”
• One must reject the self *as is*—must use multilevelness to consciously identify and differentiate lower aspects to be inhibited or transcended, from those higher aspects to be retained, expanded or created: form a personality ideal.
• Higher aspects chosen, reflecting one’s personality ideal, will be “more like oneself.”
• Personality ideal is implemented via personality shaping.
• Approach to the role of crises, psychoneurosis is quite different.
• Dąbrowski: if SA is equated with TPD or its levels, his approach would be misunderstood and lessened.
Previous efforts to simply equate self-actualizing / actualization with Dąbrowski have been confusing and misleading as the underlying rationale and assumptions of the two theories are quite different.

In order to advance from this impasse, I am introducing the new, neo-Dąbrowskian and neo-Maslowian construct of multilevel actualization (MA).

Multilevel actualization bifurcates Maslow’s continuum of animal and human traits, making it clear that lower level features qualitatively differ from higher ones, thus reflecting the differences Dąbrowski described between unilevel and multilevel experience.
Before authentic actualizing can begin, a multilevel differentiation of instincts, traits, characteristics and emotions must take place.

One must carefully review one’s character and imagine one’s aims, goals and personality ideal.

Lower aspects must be identified and inhibited; higher features identified to be developed and actualized.

The differentiated self—the personality ideal—subsequently becomes crucial in directing the process of actualizing and moving toward deliberate personality shaping, eventually resulting in the actualization of the qualities and characteristics of an authentic, unique individual.
• In Maslow, self-actualization involves a superior perception of reality, a clearer and more undistorted view of things as they really are.

• In multilevel actualization, one’s dreams and ideals represent the images of a higher reality—a potential reality, a reality of what is possible—this vision becomes one’s quest; guiding actualization to create one’s new reality.

• Actualizing reality as it exists versus establishing ideals and goals to strive for is a fundamental difference between Maslow and Dąbrowski.

• Maslow offered lists of traits associated with self-actualization, Dąbrowski refused, saying the individual must find his or her own unique essence to follow.
Dąbrowski: disparities between one’s imagined reality (ideals of how life could/should be) versus one’s actual reality creates strong vertical (multilevel) conflicts.

These multilevel conflicts are a fundamental part of the developmental process acting through anxiety, depression, psychoneuroses and positive disintegration: a developmental process not seen in Maslow.

In Maslow, conflicts, anxiety, crises and neuroses are “diseases of cognition”—blockages to development.

“What is psychopathological? Anything that disturbs or frustrates or twists the course of self-actualization” (Maslow, 1970, p. 270).
The features of self-actualization put forth by Goldstein and Maslow can be reviewed, revitalized and re-conceptualized using a multilevel approach.


An integration of SA, multilevelness, and personality ideal would lead to an important new approach to, and paradigm of, development.

Research using this more comprehensive approach to development would provide important new insights.
In summary, multilevel actualization involves a two-step process:

1). A multilevel differentiation of one’s self, involving a careful review of the essence of one’s character to identify the elements to be included versus those to be discarded in creating one’s personality ideal.

2). Actualization of this personality ideal involves:
   • Amplification and realization of the higher elements one considers more like oneself.
   • Active inhibition, repression and transformation of lower elements that are less like oneself.
• As a developmental construct, self-actualizing is limited to unilevelness if we do not incorporate a multilevel view, a self-review, vertical differentiation and self-shaping.

• A synthesis creating a new neo-approach is called for to provide the multilevel foundation to an actualization that allows our authentic humanity to rise above our animal heritage and instincts. A future challenge is to refine and further research the nature of multilevel actualization.

• Recalling Lincoln’s first inaugural address in 1861, a multilevel approach to actualization will help free the better angels of our nature from the bonds of our animal ancestry leading another step closer toward the realization of authentic human nature.
• 6. Dąbrowski and Philosophy.
Dąbrowski was influenced by two major philosophical traditions: essentialism and existentialism:

- One has certain innate features that are essential (Plato).
- One expresses freedom through the choices that one makes to become an authentic individual (existentialism).

Dąbrowski (1973) combined both approaches in what he called the “existentio-essentialist compound.”

Ultimately, he concluded essentialism was more important than existentialism:

- “Essence is more important than existence for the birth of a truly human being.”
- “There is no true human existence without genuine essence.”

(Existential thoughts and aphorisms, page 11).
Dąbrowski’s Philosophy – 2.

- Essence is a fundamental foundation of the TPD:
  - But, Plato’s essence is more than simply genetics, it is a complex mixture of inborn genetics and emergent character.
  - Dąbrowski rejected Plato’s description of human essence as it was limited to the development of intellect.
- Essence sets the parameters of individual growth.
- Existential choice then operates within these limits:
  - One must do more than simply allow one’s character (essence) to unfold—one must actively see (and later seek) vertical choices in life and pick higher over lower choices.
  - Within one’s essence, one creates an emergent personality, based upon a unique and autonomous hierarchy of values and personality ideal. This is the core of human authenticity.
Dąbrowski described a “phenomenological hermeneutic” approach.

Phenomenology: each person has a unique perception of, and experience of, life and of the world. We need to become aware of, familiar with, and articulate about, our life experiences.

Hermeneutics: people must discuss and dialogue with each other (the dialectic of Socrates) to arrive at a shared interpretation of the subject being discussed.

In phenomenological hermeneutics, we share our individual experiences of life with others via dialogue. Eventually, we achieve an overall, shared consensus and mutual understanding of Reality.
6.1. Dąbrowski and Kierkegaard.
The Philosophical Foundations of Dąbrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration
Part 2: Existentialism, Kierkegaard and Dąbrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at
Positive Disintegration: The Theory of the future.
100th Dąbrowski anniversary program on the man, the theory, the application and the future.
The Fifth International Conference on the Theory of Positive Disintegration, November 7-10, 2002, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.
(revised 2018).
Existentialism – 1.

- Synopsis: One must realize the necessity of choice in actively making one’s life: this creates anxiety and conflict, features inherent in human experience that cannot be eliminated.

- Existentialism emphasizes existence over essence:
  - Sartre: “What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself” (2007, p. 22).

- Existentialism is presented by many authors and in approaches (red are major Dąbrowskian influences):
• Major division in existentialism between theists and atheists:
  • Man is alone on earth, but with God in Heaven to act as our ultimate judge: (Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Dąbrowski).
  • Man is alone on earth—there is no God, we alone must judge ourselves: (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus).
  • Both approaches emphasize individual choice.
• There is no timeless or absolute truth or reality, and therefore life is largely meaningless. We create what truth or meaning (values) we have, as we participate in the experience of life: “life is what you make it.”
• Seeking refuge in social norms or religion is generally seen to stymie self-development and autonomy.
Existentialism – 3.

- We each have responsibility and freedom to choose our actions; in turn, our actions define who we are.
- Each choice is eternal: a mistake lasts forever in regret, but everyday we have new choices to make and therefore, new chances to redeem ourselves.
- Our choices are individual; however, because we are human, our choices also reflect on all mankind.
- Personality is important to many existential authors:
  - Kierkegaard: *(The Sickness Unto Death)* Depicts man’s personality in terms of: 1) The relation of the body to the soul. 2) The relation of the body and soul to God.
  - Nietzsche’s *overman* construct reflects his understanding of man’s personality and the possibilities of self-transcendence.
Existentialism – 4.

- The self is not predetermined—the choices we make (or don’t make) determine and define us and our lives:
  - Autonomous self is created by one’s self-chosen actions.
  - Sartre: “Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself” (2007, p. 22).
- Our power to choose creates a sense of freedom.
- All choices contain negative aspects:
  - Life is often mysterious and often seems meaningless and absurd.
  - Many things in life defy rational explanation.
  - Realizing our freedom and these negative aspects creates strong anxiety and sometimes hopelessness.
Existentialism – 5.

• All choices contain positive aspects:
  • The freedom to choose is a tremendous gift (if used well).
  • One’s personal beliefs (and/or) faith are important positive aspects in decision making.
  • Authenticity is making decisions and accepting responsibility for their consequences (Sartre).
  • Dąbrowski was heavily influenced by the works of Kierkegaard. The remainder of this presentation will therefore focus on Kierkegaard’s life and works.
Kierkegaard – 1.

- Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855).
- Born, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Only lived 42 years but wrote 25 books.
- Studied philosophy and theology at Copenhagen University.
- Latin and German were the languages of the day, Søren defended his thesis in Latin.
- Wrote important critiques of Hegel and of the German romantics. Early figure in the development of modernism. Considered a Christian writer for his works on the modern relevance of biblical figures. Saw himself as a romantic poet. His works became obscure soon after his death.
- Kierkegaard was resurrected by M. Heidegger and K. Jaspers.
Kierkegaard – 2.

- Called the “father of existentialism,” his ideas came to have a major impact on many writers.
- Kierkegaard’s writings center around relations to his mother, his father, and his fiancée, Regina Olsen.
- Basic themes: criticized the dogma of Christianity, advanced a new view of the self, focused on the importance of making individual decisions.
- Kierkegaard was deeply affected by his family background:
  - Søren’s father, Michael, rose from poverty to become a prominent citizen but felt lifelong guilt because, as a youth, he had cursed God.
  - Michael was married, but his wife became ill and died. During this illness, the family had a nurse with whom Michael had an affair.
They later married, having seven children. Søren was the youngest. Michael felt his children were all cursed to die before 34 (the age of Christ at the crucifixion). This was prophetic as only Søren and another brother lived past 34.

Michael saw Søren’s potential so his upbringing of Søren was very harsh, especially in terms of religion. Søren said “Humanly speaking, it was a crazy upbringing.” These words are very similar to what Maslow said of his childhood.

Søren felt that his chances of having a normal life had been sacrificed by his father’s religious preoccupations.

After his father died, Søren was at loose ends. He was 21 when he met 14 year old Regina Olsen. He turned their story into his famous book, “Diary of a Seducer.”
Kierkegaard – 4.

- Søren befriended Regina’s family and alienated her from her boyfriend. When she turned 17, he proposed.
- Without warning he broke off the engagement, later saying that “God had vetoed the marriage.”
- Søren fled to Berlin to study Hegel. Frederic Engels was a classmate.
- Søren was obsessed over the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. Wrote “Fear and Trembling” in response:
  - Said that he had acted badly with Regina so that she would blame him and not God for their break. Said that if he “had faith” he would have married her. He was love-sick the rest of his life.
Kierkegaard – 5.

- Søren befriended a newspaper publisher. Later, they had a falling out and the publisher used the paper to make a laughing stock of Søren.

- He felt that the Church had become complacent and began to harshly criticize it. Towards the end of his life, he often printed heretical pamphlets and handed them out on the street.

- Søren died, alienated and without friends, in 1855.
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 1.

Kierkegaard’s central preoccupations:

- How to become a good Christian (as he saw this).
- How to become an individual—he requested his tombstone simply read “That Individual.”
- At that time in Denmark, these tasks were “more difficult for the well-educated, since prevailing educational and cultural institutions tended to produce stereotyped members of ‘the crowd’ rather than to allow individuals to discover their own unique identities.”

- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
  http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/.
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 2.

- Kierkegaard felt that society and the church played a strong role in leading people away from individual awareness and existence (he called this leveling).
  
  - Social process suppress individuality: the uniqueness of a person is made non-existent by assigning equal value to all aspects of human life. All of the nuances and subtle complexity of human identity are lost and nothing meaningful in one’s existence can be affirmed.

- Kierkegaard rejected scientific logic and knowledge as the means of human redemption (Hegel’s position).

- He emphasized the gap between the individual and God to show us that human beings are totally dependent on God’s grace for their salvation.
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 3.

- The crowd robs the person of individual responsibility. As Kierkegaard (1962) explained:
  - A crowd—not this crowd or that, the crowd now living or the crowd long deceased, a crowd of humble people or of superior people, of rich or of poor, etc.—a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction. (p. 112)
  - Kierkegaard described two modalities that could lead to the feeling of despair, the first, relinquishing one’s true self through an identification with socialization. . .
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 4.

- Kierkegaard saw the person who feels “the despair of not willing to be oneself,” who is spiritless—who is merely “a talking-machine:”

- “spiritlessness describes a special relationship that an individual has with the world and with the self. In this understanding of the world, the individual experiences the world as already constituted. This also means the individual associates with immediate possibilities and remains unaware of the potential and the possibilities embedded in existence. The individual identifies with existing standards to obtain self-knowledge and primarily evaluates him- or herself through achievement and functionality. Thus, the object of self-knowledge is how the individual lives up to the functional standards offered by various institutions, such as the state, the nation, the workplace, and so on” (Nielsen, 2017, pp. 7-8).
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 5.

- Kierkegaard said society blocks the development of individuality; society provides objects the individual can identify with (e.g. a job) that create security and distraction, thereby protecting the individual from having to face his or her real self, and thus avoiding the experience of true personal despair.

- In Kierkegaard’s second modality, one feels despair that arises from being willing to try to be oneself.

- One despairs because self-discovery is difficult—there is no pre-existing deeper self to discover or bring forth.

- Our choices create a self: “A man possesses his own self as determined by himself, as someone selected by himself” (cited in Dąbrowski, 1967, p. 36).
Kierkegaard’s Approach – 6.

- Kierkegaard said the only true freedom is the heavy responsibility of being able to, and having to, choose oneself—to construct oneself, one’s beliefs and one’s values through the successive decisions that one makes in day-to-day life.

- The day-to-day process of “acting and making decisions” is “guided by [the] individual’s moods, sudden impulses, and loose thoughts” (Nielsen, 2017, p. 10).

- Stokes (2015, p. 15) provided a synopsis: “the Kierkegaardian self is always a created self, a self that finds God as the ultimate ‘criterion’ for its own self-actualization and Christ as its prototype for emulation.”
Kierkegaard’s Method – 1.

- Kierkegaard used Socratic irony, complicated parables and paradoxes to tell stories:
  - His dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony with constant reference to Socrates*, showed how Socrates used irony to facilitate the development of subjectivity in his students.

- Following Socrates, he said people know too much, and this is an obstacle to their redemption. He said tear apart this “phony” knowledge and show people they actually know little. (Socrates: “I am wiser, as although I know nothing, I know that I do not know.”)

- When one realizes that one does not know, this creates freedom; however, with this freedom comes the responsibility (and anxiety) of decision making.
Kierkegaard’s Method – 2.

- Rejected the knowledge and answers provided by external “authorities” (like Society or the Church): the individual must seek his or her own answers.
- Placed responsibility on the reader (did not see himself as an authority). Calling his approach “indirect discourse” his writing forced the reader to answer core existential, ethical and religious questions.
- Kierkegaard’s writing has a circular quality to it: he talks a lot about constructs but ultimately, he rejects constructs and brings us back to Human experience:
  - Example: the title *The Concept of Dread*.
    - Paradoxically refers to dread as a theoretical construct (not an experience)—yet, it is perhaps the ultimate experience.
Humans define themselves and try to understand the world by converting their experiences into constructs; however, ultimately, constructs are useless and we must return to our own human experience to understand life.
Existence is Absurd.

• Thought about existence and what it means.

• He generally endorsed Plato’s logic and FORMS but, he said existence is always concrete, never abstract: Existence cannot be seen as a Platonic FORM:
  • Existence cannot be conceptualized and analyzed like a mathematical construct.

• Existence is a leftover “residue” that is simply “there:”
  • Existence is a “surd” (A voiceless consonant: speechless; words can not explain it; it is lacking in sense; irrational).
  • Life is absurd: idea promoted by Kafka, Camus and Sartre.

• Basic Paradox: Existence is at our very core, but it is just a meaningless and absurd “leftover” in life.
Existence – Synopsis.

• Existence cannot be thought about or studied as a construct or as an abstraction.

• Existence fundamentally does not make logical sense:
  • Thus, Plato’s ultra-logical approach won’t work here.

• Existence must be known by being experienced.

• Doing and thinking strike a paradoxical balance in each person’s existence:
  • Existing is primarily a form of doing (living) not a form of thinking.
  • However, thinking also plays a crucial role in one’s decision making and in living.
Action – 1.

- There is a basic paradox between acting and thinking:
  - We can not know life by merely thinking, but we cannot live (or act) without thinking:
  - Our choice of action is based on the initial and ongoing choices we make reflecting our basic subjective beliefs.
  - We think, believe, choose, and act. Our actions then influence our future beliefs, choices and acts.
In choosing, one constructs oneself and one’s future world, but there is great uncertainty associated with these choices:

- "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards" *(Diaries, IV, A 164).*

- "Sensitive souls" will never be sure that their chosen values are the right ones; therefore they will always be full of "anguish and dread" over the many choices they have had to make in life.

- Choosing is a two-edged sword: on one side is the dread and anxiety associated with choosing; on the other side is the exhilaration of the freedom in being able to "choose oneself."
Objective truth rests on abstractions and external criteria: can be thought about, tested and analyzed (Plato’s FORMS, science, mathematics, etc.). Focus is on what the truth is (common truths) (speed of light is 299,792.458 km/sec). Objective truths can often be measured with certainty and accuracy, but they usually don’t mean very much to one’s existence.

Subjective truth concerns individual values and existence. Not abstract, not focused on what is true; focus on how we come to know truth and how we act on it. These are individual truths—my existence: my truth is mine alone; each person has their own truth.

Ultimately, all truth (and all existence) is subjective.
Subjective truth cannot be communicated to other people directly; it is made up of deep private individual insights and choices about one’s life.

Subjective truth is the most important type because if one changes one’s beliefs, one becomes a different person who will make different choices and do different things. The individual is his or her subjective truth, his or her values.

We are finite beings and our critical truths are subjective; however, as God is infinite, we can never really know God using subjective approaches.
Death Awakens Life.

- When one realizes the real nature of existence, one comes to see life in relation to one’s mortality.
- The recognition of our eventual death helps us to order our priorities and to discover life. It is a tragedy to discover death too late: the man who woke up one day and discovered he was dead. One must discover death in time to allow one to truly live life.
- We find death via subjective truth: this activates life.
- As subjective thought raises the idea of nothingness (the absurdity of existence) it is negative thought.
  - Doubts, insecurities, anxieties and depressions heighten this negativity.
Consciousness.

- Consciousness is the negative element of subjectivity.
- Consciousness “confronts the actual with what could be” and thus, it raises uncertainty and contains / creates a sense of terror. Once we become conscious of a door, we begin to think about could be behind it; this creates anxieties, doubts and fears.
- Consciousness raises doubt, a type of madness saved only by belief (I believe it’s safe behind the door).
- Belief and active choosing are positive aspects, reflecting one’s subjective insights and truths that act to cancel out the negative aspects of thought.
Belief.

These realizations yield insights about belief:

- Belief is the interface between consciousness and the world.
- Belief is salvation from the meaninglessness of existence.
- However, if overextended, belief can also become a type of madness.

Initially, belief is naïve: A child believes in Santa Claus.

Eventually, naïve belief is challenged—we must choose:

1). To flee into self-deception and continue in naivety.

2). To realize that the normal states of consciousness are complex and miraculous and similar to religious states. These normal, everyday states are made up of both beliefs and doubts, but not certainties: the certainty and security of Santa Claus (the “group world view”) evaporates.
Accepting Responsibility.

• To recognize everyday states with their doubts, and to choose to confront these insecurities with our internal beliefs and faith, is to make the authentic choice.

• These authentic choices solidify our beliefs and (for Kierkegaard) eventually lead to the discovery of God.

• Ultimately, a person demonstrates belief by repeatedly renewing the “passionate subjective relationship to an object which can never be known, but only believed in. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd.”

[http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/]

Dread – 1.

- Being able to choose creates individual freedom, but it also creates dread (the fear of this freedom).
- Kierkegaard: “Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.”
- Standing on the edge of the cliff, we fear falling over, but we also dread the realization that we could decide to jump over. We dread what we may do. We dread the only thing holding us back is our own volition: when the option to jump comes into consciousness, the onus is on us to decide not to jump.
- “Anxiety is a desire for what one fears, . . . but what one fears one desires.” (Marino, 1998, p. 321).
Dread arises when one becomes conscious of the future: one realizes that one has to choose and that one’s life is determined by the choices one makes.

Sartre: “I await myself in the future, where I ‘make an appointment with myself on the other side of that hour, of that day, or of that month.’ Anguish is the fear of not finding myself at that appointment, of no longer even wishing to bring myself there.” (1956/1992, p. 36).

The realization that one may choose creates a tremendous sense of responsibility, and to accept this responsibility is to be authentic.

Kierkegaard: to not make a choice is to be inauthentic.

“We are left alone and without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (Sartre, 2007, p. 29).
Despair and the Self.

• “The individual is subject to an enormous burden of responsibility, for upon their existential choices hangs their eternal salvation or damnation. Anxiety or dread (*Angst*) is the presentiment of this terrible responsibility when the individual stands at the threshold of momentous existential choice. . . .

• It is essential that faith be constantly renewed by means of repeated avowals of faith. . . .

• This repetition of faith is the way the self relates itself to itself and to the power which constitutes it, that is, the repetition of faith *is* the self.”

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/
The Self – 1.

• True selfhood is choosing (willing) the self that one truly is. Not being able to achieve this is despair:
  • Kierkegaard called it “The Sickness unto Death.”

• “The self is a series of possibilities; every decision made redefines the individual. . . . The knowledge that “I” define the “self” results in “the dizziness of freedom” and “fear and trembling.” It is a great responsibility to create a person, yet that is exactly what each human does—creates a self. This self is independent from all other knowledge and “truths” defined by other individuals.”

  http://www.tameri.com/csw/exist/kierk.html/
The Self – 2.

- Kierkegaard outlined two important relationships:
  - Between one’s physical self (body) and one’s soul.
  - Between self and others: ultimately between self and God.

- Two types of selfhood: 1). An initial self defined by a relationship to finite reality, to humanity or to other specific persons. 2). A self defined by a relationship to God.

- “Most people are subjective toward themselves and objective toward all others, sometimes horribly objective—ah, the task is precisely to be objective in relation to oneself and subjective in relation to all others” (Kierkegaard, 2014, p. 28).

- Normality hides the true realization of being—after being pushed to the edge of a cliff, one comes to see “ordinary life” from a new and more clear perspective.
Kierkegaard described a hierarchy of 3 stages or “spheres” of selfhood that one may choose, each characterized by its own unique view of the world.

1). The aesthetical sphere (lowest type of selfhood):
- Aesthetic: sensuality and hedonism, prototype: Don Juan.
- The most basic type: if a person does not “choose” one of the other 2 higher types, he or she ends up here by default.
- Kierkegaard said this is actually a form of alienation from the self:
  - The “couch potato.”
  - The business man: defines the good life as profit and good deals.
  - Kierkegaard called these people “Aristocrats.”
Aestheticism is a form of hedonism, the self is governed by external contingencies and sensuousness: Freud’s Pleasure Principle.

These people are not fully human as they are governed by the same forces that govern animals. (Kierkegaard wonders why it takes 9 months for them to gestate—they have so little substance).

Society sets externally defined parameters and the person has to play his or her role as it is set out.

The self is fractured into a series of socially defined roles layered one on top of each another.

In the end, Aestheticism is simply another perverse form of socially defined role to be played out.
The Aesthetic has no true self and can only develop one by consciously choosing.

This choice entails Kierkegaard’s famous “Either/or:”

- The point where one wills to be one’s true self and realizes that this choice will “kill” one’s old self.
- For the first time, the individual judges his or her self, rejects his or her old, hedonistic self, and begins to consciously build a new self.
- One must chose to utilize will to hold one’s self up to an ethical code (or choose not to do so).
- Making this choice marks the transition into Kierkegaard’s second sphere, the ethical sphere.
2). Ethical Sphere—individual moral responsibilities:

- Once the ethical choice has been made, the individual has to make good on two imperatives:
  - A commitment to self-perfection based upon one’s ideals.
  - A commitment to other human beings.
- One takes a “leap” to the new ethical self, rejecting the old aesthetic self and the now incompatible old roles that went with it.
- Personality crystallizes around these new self-judgments and choices.
The initial choice one makes is decisive for one’s personality because, now, all future choices will stem from this self-judgment and its philosophical basis:

- Future choices will now be moral—a morality within the context of the given system of thought selected:
  - e. g., Christian or Communist.
  - Kierkegaard was not concerned with what moral code was chosen, only that an individual choice was made:
    - It is not up to people to judge each other’s moral choices, this is God’s ultimate role.
- All future decisions will be based on the personality the individual has selected and not on situational, social roles.
3). The religious sphere: suffering, faith and self-understanding:

- Kierkegaard was obsessed with Abraham’s story:
  - Abraham was promised a son by God. Finally, when Abraham was 99, and his wife was 90, a son, Isaac was born. Later, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham eventually agreed and, as he was about to thrust the knife, God stopped him and restored his happy life.
  - Kierkegaard was horrified by Abraham’s absolute resolve to obey God and it inspired “fear and trembling” in him (the title of one of his books).
  - He had to discover where Abraham found the strength to raise the knife. It seemed to him this was the key to understanding the human condition.
Abraham’s act is a complex paradox: an act of resignation in that he chooses to obey God and give up Isaac and, at the same time, an act of faith in that he believes in God’s wisdom and that the ending will somehow turn out to be happy (and that he will someday, somehow, get Isaac back):

Kierkegaard felt Abraham must have been insane:

- He had already resigned to give Isaac up, and at the same time, he somehow believed he would still keep Isaac. No one can understand Abraham’s state of mind or motives—to others, he must have seemed insane.
Observers will see Abraham as insane and will not understand his inner dynamics or motivations.

But, God will surely understand his state of mind:

- This is characteristic of individual faith: one cannot make one’s faith intelligible to anyone else.

- Only God can make sense of an individual’s faith and judge if it is Saintly or demonical (or crazy) in character.

- All of the choices one makes (and hence the personality one constructs during one’s life) are factored into this final, ultimate judgment by God.

- Kierkegaard said the Christian ideal (not the lax Church doctrine) is exacting because the totality of a person’s existence and the choices he or she has made in life are the basis upon which they will be judged by God.
• Kierkegaard initially found Abraham beyond comprehension but comes to respect and advocate for Abraham’s “divine madness” (he uses Plato’s term).
• Kierkegaard concludes that by virtue of his “insanity,” Abraham has become the Father of Faith: what Kierkegaard called a “Knight of Faith.”
• Many “Knights of Faith” walk among us undetected:
  • The outward behavior of the “Knight of Faith” is the same as everyone else’s.
  • They have lost their connection with external, finite worldly things. However, they have been restored to live life in a new way by their faith.
Kierkegaard said Abraham also made a second leap:

Abraham’s first life-changing leap was from the (lower) aesthetic self to the (higher) ethical self.

The second leap involves stepping away from humankind itself; stepping away from finite reality into an unknown and infinite abyss.

Abraham made this *leap of faith*. He risked losing his son but, in being able to overcome his dread, and by having faith in God, he came to regain everything in a new way.

God cannot be known intellectually; we must make a leap of faith into an unknown abyss to know him. Making this ultimate leap changes how we see life, changes our basic beliefs, and ultimately changes who we are.
Duties and Ethics.

• There is an implied hierarchy of duties in life:
  • One’s duty to choose to be an individual is higher than to one’s social duties.
  • One’s duty to obey God’s commands is higher than to one’s individual duties:
    • Kierkegaard said he had to choose his duty to God over his fiancé, Regina.
    • He gave up Regina as Abraham gave up Isaac, but with the faith that she would somehow be restored to him as Isaac was to Abraham.
• Ethics are not relativistic: values are known to a person through the revelation of God (this is a theistic, metaphysical approach to existentialism and values).
Summary.

- We are the authors of our lives and we have the responsibility and duty to consciously write our story through the choices we make. With freedom to choose comes anxiety, even dread. We must make 2 leaps:
  - 1). To overcome our lower, hedonistic, socially based self and to choose to become our ideal self. To make this choice is to be authentic. The values we choose determine our personality and in turn, they determine our acts.
  - 2). Leaping into an unknown and infinite abyss allows us to live life in a new way by our faith. Ultimately, our choices and acts are the sum of our lives to be judged by God.
• 6.2. Dąbrowski and Nietzsche.

[This presentation examines the influence of Nietzsche on Dąbrowski and follows from a presentation by Dr. J. G. McGraw on Nietzsche and Dąbrowski from the 2002 Congress, held in Fort Lauderdale.]
The Philosophical Foundations of Dąbrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration
Part 3: Friedrich Nietzsche and Dąbrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at the
Seventh International Congress of the
Institute for Positive Disintegration in Human Development
August 3-5, 2006, Calgary, Alberta.
Revised 2018
Positive Maladjustment: Theoretical, Educational and Therapeutic Perspectives.
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).

Born 1844 in Röcken, Saxony (was then Prussia).

An excellent student, he began studying classical philology at the University of Bonn.

At 24, professor of philology at the University of Basel.

A medical orderly during the Franco-Prussian War. He saw and experienced the traumatic effects of battle.

Resigned his professorship in 1879 due to several grim health issues that plagued him the rest of his life.

Began writing prolifically but often struggled, printing copies of his books himself and giving them to friends.

He and his sister had many fights and reconciliations.
Friedrich Nietzsche – 2.

- Was friends with, and influenced by, fellow German philosopher Paul Rée:
  - Rée combined a pessimistic view of human nature with a theory of morality based on natural selection (Darwin).

- In 1882, Louise (Lou) Salomé was in a relationship with Rée. She met Nietzsche and suggested a ménage à trois. They lived together until Nietzsche’s unrequited love (and his sister) forced a break-up.

- In 1887, Lou married Friedrich Carl Andreas (their unconsummated marriage lasted 43 years).

- 1901: After her rejection, Rée jumps off a cliff.
• Lou was later a lover of, and major influence on, German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

• She became a psychoanalyst, joined Freud’s inner circle, and was an important influence on Freud, including introducing Freud to Nietzsche’s ideas.

• “Freud several times said of Nietzsche that he had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was likely to live” (Jones, 1955, p. 344).

• Nietzsche had many bouts of illness (including severe migraines and stomach bleeding), depression, suicidal thoughts and lived in relative isolation.
In 1889 Nietzsche witnessed a man whipping a horse. Nietzsche threw his arms around the horse’s neck to protect it. He immediately had a psychotic breakdown lasting until his death in 1900 (from neurosyphilis?).

The uncommunicative Nietzsche was cared for by his mother, then his sister, Elisabeth.

Elisabeth married Bernhard Förster, an anti-Semitic. In 1886 they founded Nueva Germania in Paraguay’s jungle. After WWII it was a hideout for escaped Nazis (including Mengele).

Elisabeth controlled and edited Nietzsche’s works; she apparently injected her ideas and altered some of his.

The Nazis misinterpreted and exploited Nietzsche’s works in support of their agenda. This later made Nietzsche unpopular in America.
Nietzsche’s Critique of Dogmatic Morality.

- Socrates created a false representation of what is real, making morality a set of external ideas (“objects of dialectic”). With this, “real” [Man] degenerated into the “the good [Man],” “the wise [Man],” etc.

- Plato then made these ideas mere abstract inventions—metaphysical ideals (Plato’s FORMS) held out for us to try to emulate.

- Nietzsche: All schemes of morality (like Christianity) are just dogmas developed by some given group who hold power at some given time—these “herd moralities” of good and evil deny us the individuality of finding our own values and our own selves.
Nietzsche laments that the world has degenerated to the lowest common denominator of the herd:

- “The instinct of the herd considers the middle and the mean as the highest and most valuable: the place where the majority finds itself” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 159).

- “Let us stick to the facts: the people have won—or ‘the slaves,’ or ‘the mob,’ or ‘the herd,’ or whatever you like to call them—if this has happened through the Jews, very well! in that case no people had a more world-historic mission. ‘The masters’ have been disposed of; the morality of the common man has WON” (Nietzsche, 1989b, pp. 35-36).
Critique of Truth.

- Ultimately, one finds out that the “truth” and various other-worlds (like Heaven) are literal fabrications. They are built by Humans to meet their psychological needs, to promote the smooth succession of the status quo, and to provide individuals with security.

- Knowledge and truth are subjective, and provisional; they change over time and with the ruling class:
  - Example: today’s scientific beliefs may be shown to be false tomorrow.
  - “there are many kinds of ‘truths,’ and consequently there is no truth” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 291).
  - “Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 179).
Critique of Religion.

- Nietzsche saw no ultimate or deeper meaning or purpose to the world or to human existence—He (and Sartre) saw God as a human invention designed to comfort us and to repel our loneliness:
  - “There is not enough love and goodness in the world for us to be permitted to give any of it away to imaginary beings” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 69).

- Social morality suspends us from the need to review our own individual value assumptions or to develop autonomous morality. Religion suspends us from our need to develop our individual selves. Our comforts and security and company are provided by this man-made system of ideas, thus removing the stimuli needed for real, individual development.
“God is Dead.”

- Nietzsche famously proclaimed “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.” This, “the greatest event of our time,” is an attempt to refocus people’s attention from God as a source of absolute moral principles and to see their inherent, individual freedoms and responsibilities. On the here-and-now world, away from all escapist, pain-relieving, heavenly other-worlds (Nietzsche, 1974, 167).

- Without God, we are alone on earth and cannot resort to a deity to guide us or to absolve our sins (or responsibilities). We must take full responsibility for our actions—to do this we must reject all external, metaphysical and religious ideals. We are now free and must create our own, new, moral ideals.
Apollonian and Dionysus.

- Nietzsche used “Apollonian” and “Dionysus” to refer to two central principles in Greek culture (see 1967).
- Apollonian: clarity, calm, harmony, restraint, order, structure and form, the basis for analytic distinctions, and all that is part of the unique individual.
- Dionysus is irrational, frenzy, disorder, wild, ecstatic, intoxication and madness. These forces break down one’s character as they appeal to one’s instinctive emotions and not to one’s rational mind. “I” is a chaotic web of competing wills, each struggling to overcome the other.
- The tension between these forces creates tragedy. Nietzsche’s life also displayed both factors.
Three Developmental Outcomes.

• Nietzsche said that as a species, man is not progressing. Higher exemplars appear but do not last.
• Nietzsche delineated three possible outcomes:
  • The “herd” or “slave” masses, made up of content, comfort seeking “the last man” conformers, with no motive to develop: if we don’t aspire to be more, this is where we all will end up.
  • Many “higher men”: a type of human who needs to “be more” and who “writes his or her own story.”
  • Nietzsche also described the ideal human—a few “Superhumans”—a role model to strive for, but that may be too unrealistic for most people to achieve.
Nietzsche called the highest mode of being the *Übermensch*:

- Common translations: “the Superman” or “overman” or “hypermam”
  - über: from the Latin for super
  - ὑπερ: Greek for hyper
  - Mensch: German for Human being.
Metamorphoses of the Spirit.

• Nietzsche outlined a hierarchy of spiritual development in what he called three “metamorphoses of the spirit” entailing a progression from:

• The **camel** spirit ("the average man") who slavishly bears the load and obeys the “thou shalt” with little protest.

• The **lion** spirit (a “higher man") who says “no” and kills the status quo ("the dragon") of “thou shalt.”

• Culminating in the **child** spirit (Superhuman), who says an emphatic and “sacred Yes” to life and creates a new reality and a new self—with no more rules to obey, the child applies his or her will in developing and achieving unique values and developing autonomy. (see Nietzsche, 1969, p. 54).
THUS SPAKE
ZARATHUSTRA.
The Camel.

- The obedient camel carries the “weight of the spirit,” kneeling to accept its load, just as we carry the weight of our duties: instructions and roles that society requires of us in order to live a “responsible life.” We believe in this “herd morality” and feel guilt if we don’t maintain our social burdens.

- In doing our duties, we may come to have doubts. One heavy blow is the discovery that wisdom and knowledge are only apparent. We slowly discover there is no foundation supporting “the truth” and we realize we live in a world with no eternal standards.

- As the camel finds the solitude of the desert, the truth seeker also must find and deal with solitude.
The Lion.

• The camel becomes a lion: “it wants to capture freedom and be lord in its own desert” (Nietzsche, 1969, 54).

• The camel is an obedient slave: the might of a lion—a beast of prey, willing to say NO and to kill, is needed to confront the dragon to achieve freedom.

• “To seize the right to new values” the lion must steal freedom from the love of commandments by killing a dragon—the “thou shalt”—the idea that others tell us what we must believe / accept as truth, and what we must do (and our corresponding love of these rules).

• Capturing freedom creates an opportunity—a “freedom for new creation.”

• The lion has the will to create new realities.
The Child.

- Having destroyed the “thou shalt dragon,” the lion realizes he or she is not able to create new values: the lion now must become a child.

- A child’s perspective is needed to create new values. The child is innocence, with no guilt, and with no lingering sense of the “thou shalt” of the herd—he or she has not yet been acculturated (e.g. The Little Prince).

- The child ("superhuman") represents a new beginning of individuality—“the spirit now wills its own will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins its own world” Nietzsche, 1969, p. 55).
The Will to Power.

- The will to power is an ever-dominant feature of life and the basic drive of humanity. "The will to power is the primitive form of affect and all other affects are only developments of it" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 366).

- Rejecting pleasure as a core motivator, Nietzsche said that "every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become more" (N. 1968, p. 367).

- Nietzsche casts the will to power as a proactive force—the will to act in life (not to merely react to life).

- The will to power is not power over others, but the feelings of "creative energy and control" over oneself that are necessary to achieve self-creation, self-direction and to express individual creativity.
Steps to Become a Superhuman.

• Three steps to become a Superhuman:
  • Use one’s *will to power* to reject and rebel against old ideals and moral codes;
  • Use one’s *will to power* to overcome nihilism and to re-evaluate old ideals or to create new ones;
  • Through a continual process of *self-overcoming*.
• The average person is largely constituted by his or her genealogy—the herd scripts this history by writing the life story of the average person.
• Superhumans take control of their genealogies and write their own stories.
Zarathustra Details Development.

- Nietzsche appropriates the name of Persian religious leader Zarathustra as one of his main characters.
- In Nietzsche’s version, Zarathustra has spent from age 30 to 40, alone on a mountaintop quest. He decides to descend and to describe his insights on spiritual and individual development in a new, Godless, reality.
- On his descent, someone comments Zarathustra has changed: he has become a child—an awakened one.
- Zarathustra goes to the first village he sees. A crowd has gathered to see the circus act of a tight-rope walker and they think he is part of the circus.
Man Must Overcome Man.

- Zarathustra speaks to the crowd:
  - “I teach you the Superman. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?”
  - “All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?”
  - “What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment.”
Man is a Process Not a Goal.

• “You have made your way from the worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape. . . .” (Nietzsche, 1969, pp. 41-42).

• “Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous going across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying still” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 43).

• “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a down-going. I love those who do not know how to live except their lives be a down-going, for they are those who are going across” (N. 1969, p. 44).
The crowd rejects Zarathustra’s story and he says to the reader: “You Higher Men, learn this from me: In the market-place no one believes in Higher Men. And if you want to speak there, very well, do so! But the mob blink and say: ‘We are all equal’” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 297).

Zarathustra laments his reception: “I want to teach men the meaning of their existence: which is the Superman, the lightning from the dark cloud man. But I am still distant from them, and my meaning does not speak to their minds. To men, I am still a cross between a fool and a corpse” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 49).
The Abyss.

- We must cross the abyss on the rope bridge to create ourselves, our ideals, and to become Superhuman.

- There are 3 possible outcomes:
  - to not try and to simply stay content in the herd,
  - to try to cross the rope but fail (to fall into the abyss),
  - or, to try to cross and succeed.

- Nietzsche said “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into the abyss, the abyss also looks into you” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 54).

- We often become the very thing we try to overcome.
- When you look into the abyss, you must be strong as you may see aspects of the abyss within yourself.
The herd blindly take their ideals of “good and evil” from the cultural and religious conventions of the day:

Nietzsche calls on us to resist the impulse tosubmit to “slave morality” and to “undertake a critique of the moral evaluations [our]selves” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 215).

Zarathustra: the Superhuman must overcome his or her acculturated self and apply the will to power to a huge new creativity—to build a truly autonomous self.

Superhumans move beyond “good and evil” through a deep reflection on their own basic instincts, emotions, character traits, and senses: they go on to develop their own individual values for living [Personality Ideal].
Hierarchy of Autonomous Values.

• “Fundamental thought: the new values must first be created—we shall not be *spared* this task!” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 512).

• New values, and the process of value creation are not prescriptive: “This—is now *my* way,—where is yours?’ Thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For *the* way—does not exist!” (Nietzsche, 1969, p.213).

• Summary: The Superhuman creates a unique new “master morality” reflecting the strength and independence of a self freed from all “old” acculturated, herd values. Now, an individual must review current conventions, reject values, adopt old values that he or she deems valid, and create new values reflecting his or her unique self and ideals.
Eternal Recurrence and the Superhuman.

“Eternal recurrence” is the idea that one might be forced to relive every moment of one’s life over and over, with no omissions, however small, happy or painful.

This idea encourages us to see that our current life is all there is—we must wake up to the “the real world,” that we actually live in the present—there is no escape to other (future) lives or to “higher” worlds.

Nietzsche says only a Superhuman can face eternal recurrence and embrace this life in its entirety and accept the idea that this is all there is, and all there will be, for eternity.
Every Second Counts.

• The Superhuman also gains a new perspective that brings about his or her own redemption—the endlessly recurring pains and mistakes of life do not provoke endless suffering, they are now seen and accepted as necessary steps in one’s development, each a step on the path leading to the present.

• Every second of life is now seen as a valued moment, *worthy* of being repeated over and over, in and of itself, and is not merely a step toward some promise of a better world to come in the future (for example, Heaven), it has become a fundamental piece of who we are today.
The Superhuman uses “will to power” to develop a new perspective, a new reality and a new self.

The Superman becomes his or her own judge: “Can you furnish yourself your own good and evil and hang up your own will above yourself as a law? Can you be judge of yourself and avenger of your law?” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 89).

This process represents the rebirth of the Human and the creation of new, human, life-affirming values in this real and temporally finite world. These new beliefs stem from our intrinsic will to be more, the ability to transcend and to constantly overcome our old self, and to create new life and new works.
Three Prototypes.

- Personality incorporates 3 prototypes with 3 instincts:
  - the beauty creator (artist) [instinct of feeling]
  - the truth seeker (philosopher) [instinct of reason]
  - the “goodness liver” (the Saint) [instinct of will—goodness and love]

- The union of these 3 represents the ultimate model of human beings—the exemplar of the Superhuman.

- The “wisest” person is one who has had a wide vertical [Multilevel] perspective, with experience from the deepest caves to the highest mountaintops.

- Finally, Nietzsche says that development never reaches an endpoint, growth is never complete.
Life as an Endless Cycle.

• For the rest of his life, Zarathustra continues to advocate for the Superhuman.

• Nietzsche did not present his ideas in a coherent, systematic way; thus there are many ambiguities and some contradictions in his writing. As well, Zarathustra has grave doubts, and his ideas change as he has experiences with people and as he ages.

• One major issue is that Zarathustra comes to see life as an endless cycle that repeats itself; thus even if a higher level of man is achieved, it will only be a phase in the cycle. Eventually, the lower stages will have to reappear and be transcended again.
Personality Must be Constructed.

- For Nietzsche, personality must be self-created, largely by overcoming, mastering and transforming one’s inner “chaos” into order:
  - “I tell you: one must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: you still have chaos in you” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 46).

- One must go through seven steps (“devils”) on the way to personality development (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 90).

- Overcoming involves creating a new unity (McGraw: “synergy”) of cognition, emotion and volition.

- The Superhuman becomes a “free spirit” and sees the real world and his or her place in it clearly (without the distortion of social and religious influences).
The Self Must be Transformed.

- The Superhuman develops a clear view of his or her “calling” [Personality Ideal] and must now obey this inner voice, applying it to self-mastery.

- The will to power is applied in controlling and transforming one’s self:
  - Step 1. social morality [2nd Factor] is used to gain power over nature and the “wild animal [1st Factor].”
  - Step 2: “one can employ this power in the further free development of oneself: will to power as self-elevation and strengthening” [3rd Factor] (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 218).

- One overcomes one’s old self to become oneself: “What does your conscience say?—“You shall become the person you are” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 219).
In Nietzsche’s view, few achieve what he calls personality (the Superhuman). Most people are not personalities at all, or are just a confused, undisciplined and non-integrated jumble of wills, roles and duties.

Superhumans create a small, “higher” ruling class, that humanity should foster: “the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars” (Nietzsche, 1997, p. 111).

Nietzsche said only a few are able or willing to discover and to follow themselves.
Need for a Ruling Class.

- Superhumans represent a new, stronger and ultimate morality that easily resists external social controls.

- Nietzsche: “My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not an individualistic morality” The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the ‘beasts of prey,’ etc” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 162).

- “The new philosopher can arise only in conjunction with a ruling caste, as its highest spiritualization” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 512).
Developmental Potential.

• Nietzsche relates an individual’s potential to develop to the richness and intricacy of his or her emotion, cognition and volition (the will to power).

• The more potential a person has, the more internally complex he or she is: “The higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity . . . so its disintegration is also incomparably more likely” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 363).

• Lower forms of life and people representing the herd type are simpler and thus, the lowest types are “virtually indestructible,” showing few noticeable effects of the hardships of life (and none of the suffering of the Superhuman) (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 363).
Suffering Separates the Hero.

• Nietzsche described a general developmental disintegration—suffering leads to a vertical separation of the “hero” from the herd. This “rising up” leads to “nobility” and, ultimately, to individual personality—to attaining one’s ideal self.

• This separation finds one alone, away from the security of the masses and without God for help.

• “To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 481).
Nietzsche on Suffering – 1.

• “The higher philosophical man, who has solitude not because he wishes to be alone but because he is something that finds no equals: what dangers and new sufferings have been reserved for him” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 514).

• “In man creature and creator are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, formgiver, hammer hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day: do you understand this contrast? And that your pity is for the “creature in man,” for what must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burnt, made incandescent, and purified—that which necessarily must and should suffer?” (Nietzsche, 1989a, p. 154).
• “The higher philosophical man, who has solitude not because he wishes to be alone but because he is something that finds no equals: what dangers and new sufferings have been reserved for him” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 514).

• “The discipline of suffering, of great suffering—do you not know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of man so far?” (Nietzsche, 1989a, p. 154).

• “The tree needs storms, doubts, worms, and nastiness to reveal the nature and the strength of the seedling; let it break if it is not strong enough. But a seedling can only be destroyed—not refuted” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 163).
“Examine the lives of the best and most fruitful people and peoples and ask yourselves whether a tree that is supposed to grow to a proud height can dispense with bad weather and storms; whether misfortune and external resistance, some kinds of hatred, jealousy, stubbornness, mistrust, hardness, avarice, and violence do not belong among the favorable conditions without which any great growth even of virtue is scarcely possible. The poison of which weaker natures perish strengthens the strong—nor do they call it poison” (Nietzsche, 1974, pp.91-92).

Our personal and profoundest suffering is incomprehensible and inaccessible to almost everyone; (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 269).
The Superhuman is alone and few can tolerate this ultimate sense of solitariness; most must have the security and company of the herd (and of God).

“I love him, who lives for knowledge and who wants knowledge that one day the Superman may live. And thus he wills his own downfall” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 44).

“You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame: how could you become new, if you had not first become ashes!” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 90).

“I love him whose soul is deep even in its ability to be wounded, and whom even a little thing can destroy: thus he is glad to go over the bridge” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 45).
Suffering Leads to Growth.

- Superhumans see in their suffering and destruction is new life: the seed must die for the plant to grow.
- The capacity to experience and overcome suffering and solitariness are key traits of the Superhuman.
- “Suffering and dissatisfaction of our basic drives are a positive feature as these feelings create an ‘agitation of the feeling of life,’ and act as a ‘great stimulus to life’” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 370).
- “The discipline of suffering, of great suffering, do you not know that only this suffering has created all enhancements of man so far?” (Nietzsche, 1989a, p. 154).
Suffering Challenges Us.

• “[T]he path to one’s own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one’s own hell” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 269).

• “That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength, its shudders face to face with great ruin, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, persevering, interpreting, and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness—was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?” (Nietzsche, 1989a, p. 154).
“Thereupon I advanced further down the road of disintegration—where I found new sources of strength for individuals. We have to be destroyers!—I perceived that the state of disintegration, in which individual natures can perfect themselves as never before—is an image and isolated example of existence in general. To the paralyzing sense of general disintegration and incompleteness I opposed the *eternal recurrence*” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 224).

“We, however, *want to become those we are*—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 266).
Illness played a major role in Nietzsche’s transformation, as he said, he was “grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its ‘prejudice,’ . . .” (Nietzsche, 1998a, p. 55).

Given his serious health issues, Nietzsche defined health not as the absence of illness, rather, by how one faces and overcomes illness.

Nietzsche said he used his “will to health” to transform his illness into autonomy—it gave him the courage to be himself. In a practical sense, it also forced him to change his lifestyle and these changes facilitated a lifestyle more suited to his personality and to the life of an author and philosopher.
The Neurosis of the Artist.

• Nietzsche described a sort of neurosis afflicting the artist: “It is exceptional states that condition the artist—all of them profoundly related to and interlaced with morbid phenomena—so it seems impossible to be an artist and not to be sick” . . .

• . . . “Physiological states that are in the artist as it were molded into a ‘personality’ and, that characterize men in general to some degree:

• 1. *Intoxication*: the feeling of enhanced power; the inner need to make of things a reflex of one’s own fullness and perfection (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 428).

• – and also what we may read as overexcitability:
"Extreme Sharpness."

. . . 2. the extreme sharpness of certain senses, so they understand a quite different sign language—and create one—the condition that seems to be a part of many nervous disorders--; extreme mobility that turns into an extreme urge to communicate; the desire to speak on the part of everything that knows how to make signs--; a need to get rid of oneself, as it were, through signs and gestures; ability to speak of oneself through a hundred speech media—an explosive condition. . . .
The Inner Psychic Milieu Emerges.

... One must first think of this condition as a compulsion and urge to get rid of the exuberance of inner tension through muscular activity and movements of all kinds; then as an involuntary coordination between this movement and the inner processes (images, thoughts, desires)—as a kind of automatism of the whole muscular system impelled by strong stimuli from within—; inability to prevent reaction; the system of inhibitions suspended, as it were” (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 428-429).
Nietzsche: “Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom has always first been accounted a bad man: but when, as did happen, the law could not afterwards be reinstated and this fact was accepted, the predicate gradually changed;—history treats almost exclusively of these bad men who subsequently became good men!” (Nietzsche, 1997a, p. 19).
6.3. Dąbrowski and Unamuno.
The Tragic Sense of Life – 1.

• Dąbrowski was influenced by the existential Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno and his work, *The Tragic Sense of Life*.

• “But just what does the phrase ‘tragic sense of life’ mean? Even to ask that question suggests to some that the inquirer would not understand the response if one could be offered: either you ’see’ the essential human condition or you don’t” (Hughes, 1978, 131).

• “The central, defining characteristic of the tragic sense of life is its insistence on the balance between the striving for rationality on the one hand, and the recognition of the underlying irrationality of existence on the other” (Rubens, 1992, 348).
The Tragic Sense of Life – 2.

- Unamuno saw tragedy as a ‘sense of life’—a mode of experience, a subjective shaping, a way of organizing life. The tragic is in the “meaning with which events are imbued and interpreted” (Rubens, 1992, 348).

- What gives life meaning is the longing to understand “wherefore do we now exist?” and our “thirst of immortality”—a basic desire we all share. To have awareness of these questions, creates a “tragic sense of life” as “consciousness is a disease” (Unamuno, 1921).

- The will struggles with the unresolvable, creating a tragic feeling of life: Faith vs. reason, religion vs. science, affect vs. intellect, rationality vs. irrationality.

- The will must forge an authentic existence and an authentic personality out of suffering and the tragic.
'“Despite its monumental commitment to the search for rational understanding, the hallmark of the tragic sense of life is its recognition that rationality has its limits. Man’s understanding, while indefinitely extendible, is never total in its extent. So while the tragic figure is willing to risk everything in his pursuit of the truth, he must also recognize that his quest will never be completely fulfillable. He must accept the irrationality that underlies existence, and not artificially attempt to reduce that irrationality to something less than it is” (Rubens, 1992, 348).
“What counts as suffering—what makes someone suffer—may well vary enormously from case to case, from individual to individual. But suffering as such is a part of every life, and, as tragedy, it is not just suffering. As tragedy, I will argue, it has meaning” (Solomon, 1999, 115).

[Unamuno says:] “What gives life meaning is a form of rebellion, rebellion against reason, an insistence on believing passionately what we cannot believe rationally. The meaning of life is to be found in passion—romantic passion, religious passion, passion for work and for play, passionate commitments in the face of what reason ‘knows’ to be meaningless” (Solomon, 1999, 116).
• “For my part I do not wish to make peace between my heart and my head, between my faith and my reason I wish rather that there should be war between them!” (Unamuno, 1921, p. 119).

• “Man is said to be a reasoning animal. I do not know why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal. Perhaps that which differentiates him from other animals is feeling rather than reason” (Unamuno, 1921, p. 3).

• “He who suffers lives, and he who lives suffering, even though over the portal of his abode is written ‘Abandon all hope!’ loves and hopes” (Unamuno, 1921, p. 44).

• Unamuno was a careful reader of Kierkegaard.
“Faith and reason need each other so that neither can bask in the certainty of its own realm, so that each can live in vivifying doubt. For Unamuno the bedrock of this struggle is a faith which is like a candle in the wind, dying only to be reborn again, doubting only to believe. The goal of the self-conscious man is to pursue his own dream of being—to be is to want to be—and the aim of education is to keep the dream alive” (Hughes, 1978, 138).

“For science destroys the concept of personality by reducing it to a complex in continual flux from moment to moment—that is to say, it destroys the very foundation of the spiritual and emotional life, which rages itself unyieldingly against reason.” (Unamuno, 1921, 108).
“Unamuno began his philosophy with the insistence that the authentic man, the man of flesh and bone, contained within himself the conflict between the heart and the head. And because this struggle took place in a conflict where one force could never hope to gain victory over the other, existential agony became the tragic situation of man. Tragedy was thus conceived as the condition of human beings caught in a struggle which could never be resolved, in a struggle between values of the heart and reasons of the intellect” (Morgan, 1966, p 48-49).
“Tragedy can also be the arena in which the courage to create emerges, in which reason and feeling find their common battleground. At the foundation of Unamuno’s tragic sense of life is the belief that out of the abyss of tragedy there can arise creativity and joy” (Morgan, 1966, 49).

“My painful duty,” Unamuno once said, “is to irritate people. We must sow in men the seeds of doubt, of distrust, of disquiet, and even of despair” (Barcia & Zeitlin, 1967, 241).

“My aim is to agitate and disturb people. I'm not selling bread; I'm selling yeast” (Unamuno quoted in Tillotson, 2010, 23).
“The satisfied, the happy, do not love; they fall asleep in habit, near neighbour to annihilation. To fall into a habit is to begin to cease to be. Man is the more man, that is, the more divine, the greater his capacity for suffering, or, rather, for anguish” (Unamuno, 1921, 206).

“‘Brother Wolf’ St. Francis of Assisi called the poor wolf who feels a painful hunger for the sheep, and feels, too, perhaps, the pain of having to devour them; and this brotherhood reveals to us the Fatherhood of God, reveals to us that God is a Father and that He exists. And as a Father He shelters our common misery” (Unamuno, 1921, pp 210-211).
• “And as regards its truth, the real truth, that which is independent of ourselves, beyond reach of our logic and of hearts—of this truth who knows aught?” (Unamuno, 1921, 131).

• “What we believe to be the motives of our conduct are usually but the pretexts for it” (Unamuno, 1921, p 261).

• “Man is the more man—that is, the more divine—the greater his capacity for, suffering, or, rather, for anguish” (Unamuno, 1921, p 206).

• “If it is nothingness that awaits us, let us make an injustice of it; let us fight against destiny, even though without hope of victory; let us fight against it quixotically.” (Unamuno, 1921, p 268).
“Suffering is the substance of life and the root of personality, for it is only suffering that makes us persons. And suffering is universal, suffering is that which unites all us living beings together; it is the universal or divine blood that flows through us all. That which we call will, what is it but suffering?” (Unamuno, 1921, 205).

“Miguel de Unamuno was deeply affected by the realization of the existence of tragic antinomies in human life as something essential for growth and yet impossible to resolve. The experience of these antinomies which evoked in him obsessive reactions, depressions and anguish, became a motivation to turn in the direction of transcendence in the hope of resolving them there” (Dąbrowski, 1972, 147).
Playboy: If life is purposeless, do you feel it’s worth living?

Stanley Kubrick: Yes, for those of us who manage somehow to cope with our mortality. The very meaninglessness of life forces man to create his own meaning. Children, of course, begin life with an un tarnished sense of wonder, a capacity to experience total joy at something as simple as the greenness of a leaf; but as they grow older, the awareness of death and decay begins to impinge on their consciousness and subtly erode their *joie de vivre*, their idealism—and their assumption of immortality. As a child matures, he sees death and pain everywhere about him, and begins to lose faith in the ultimate goodness of man. But if he’s reasonably strong—and lucky—he can emerge from this twilight of the soul into a rebirth of life’s *élan.* Cont. . . .
Both because of and in spite of his awareness of the meaninglessness of life, he can forge a fresh sense of purpose and affirmation. He may not recapture the same pure sense of wonder he was born with, but he can shape something far more enduring and sustaining. The most terrifying fact about the universe is not that it is hostile but that it is indifferent; but if we can come to terms with this Indifference and accept the challenges of life within the boundaries of death—however mutable man may be able to make them—our existence as a species can have genuine meaning and fulfillment. However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light (Norden, 1968, 195).
Overexcitabilities intensify the experience of the “normal and expected” crises and tragedies of life, contributing to a tragic sense of existence. These feelings call for explanations and answers that are not forthcoming, making them very difficult to “get over” and resolve. Realizing the “tragic sense” represents an ongoing challenge to one’s status quo integration.

Tragedy-fueled psychoneurosis and existential crisis contribute to positive disintegration. The feeling and realization of tragedy in one’s life helps establish a larger worldview and a deep empathic bond with others. The tragic sense of life ultimately helps to shape one’s personality and define one’s relationship with the world.
"For all consciousness is consciousness of death and of suffering. We personalize the All in order to save ourselves from Nothingness and the only mystery is the mystery of suffering. Suffering is the path of consciousness, and by it living beings arrive at self-consciousness. For to possess consciousness of oneself, to possess personality, is to know oneself and to feel oneself distinct from other beings, and this feeling of distinction is only reached through an act collision, through suffering more or less severe, through the sense of one’s own limits" (Unamuno, 1921, 140).
So then, they will say to me: “What is your religion?” And I will respond: my religion is to look for truth in life and life in truth, even knowing that I may never find them while I am alive” (Unamuno, 1910).
• We all experience tragedy in our lives. We typically cope using social reinforcers and rationalization ("it’s OK, now Grandpa is watching over us from heaven"). People with developmental potential may have intense experiences of tragedy that are not ameliorated by intellectual or rational arguments. In these cases, one may come to realize that tragic experiences are an inescapable, irrational, inexplicable part of life that will never “make sense.” One is left with a choice: a downward spiral into despair or an upward struggle to create meaning. In tragedy we find our beliefs tested, leading to the realization that only in tragedy can we seek life’s deeper meanings, meaning created by our own unique passionate engagements with life itself.
6.4. Dąbrowski and Plato.
The Allegory of Plato’s Cave.

Presented by Bill Tillier at
The Labyrinth: Safe Journey and Homecoming:
The Fourth Biennial Advanced Symposium
on Dąbrowski’s Theory.
July 7-9, 2000, Mount Tremblant, Quebec.
Revised 2018.

Note: when I asked Dąbrowski what I should start reading in order to get background on his theory he told me Plato. Although this presentation was done before Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, it is more general in nature, and therefore I placed it later in this introduction.
Overview of essentialism – 1.

- Plato and Aristotle represent essentialism:
  - Emphasizes essential features (not accidental).
  - There are universal essences, for example, that represent absolute truths, these are true everywhere and in every time.
  - There are individual essences “within us” that determine who we will be as individuals.
  - Each of us must uncover or discover our essences, representing our individual, unique character.
  - These essences are both our potentials and our limitations.
Overview of essentialism – 2.

- Plato: the absolute and eternal FORMS represent essences. FORMS are beyond our day-to-day world.

- Things, and people, have essences, for Plato, represented by their metaphysical FORMS.

- [In contrast, Aristotle said essence is contained within everyday matter. The essence of a frog resides within a tadpole and while its FORM may change (tadpole to frog), its “frog essence” remains. Things, and people, have enduring essences, “what a thing is,” for Aristotle, contained within their physical matter.]

- Dąbrowski: echoes Aristotle, one’s essence is in one’s genetics and other metaphysical factors (3rd factor).
Essentialism contrasted with existentialism.

- Existentialism emphasizes existence over essence:
  - Existence precedes essence.

- Existentialism emerges from: Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre etc..

- There is no timeless or absolute truth or reality and therefore life is largely meaningless. Whatever truth or meaning we experience, we create as we participate in the experience of life.

- We must create our own truths from our experiences. The self is not predetermined, over time, we build our autonomous self from our actions.

- Sartre: We have the responsibility and freedom to choose our actions; to make choices is authenticity.
Basic ideas of Socrates – 1.

• Socrates had a great influence on his student, Plato.
• Socrates said that everyone holds moral truth and knowledge within; however, most are unaware of it.
• Reasoning, not perception, will reveal this deep and timeless Knowledge.
• Knowledge is of critical importance as we must KNOW before we can ACT.
• By asking someone questions in a dialogue, the person answering can be drawn toward discovering this truth for him or herself via independent, reflective, and critical thinking.
Basic ideas of Socrates – 2.

- Complacent acceptance of traditional or external views is the status quo but is unsatisfactory.
- We must be conscious of something and be able to explain it for it to have any meaning; “the unexamined life is not worth living.”
- People naturally seek virtue and happiness; people are not inherently evil, only ignorant of the Good.
- What are absolute beauty and justice, apart from beautiful objects and good deeds? What are beauty and justice in all places and at all times?
- Theory is a critical necessity; we must aspire toward ideals of theory.
Plato: “Mankind will not get rid of its evils until either the class of those who philosophize in truth and rectitude reach political power or those most powerful in cities, under some divine dispensation, really get to philosophizing.”

- Plato was born to an aristocratic family in Athens and lived from 428 - 354BC.
- Always interested in politics, Plato became a student of Socrates.
- Information from this period is often questionable.
Plato – 2.

- When Socrates was purged, Plato became disillusioned with politics and came to see that “mankind’s fate was hopeless unless there was a deep change in men’s education, and especially in the education of those intending to become statesmen.”
- Plato founded the Academy, a prototype of the Modern University. Based on mathematics and with a wide focus, the Academy lasted 900 years.
- The Academy’s first major student was Aristotle:
  - Aristotle later rejected Plato’s basic view of reality.
- Plato: Concerned about social and individual justice: to get out of life what is deserved, not less, not more.
Context of Plato’s Cave – 1.

- Plato’s cave is described in a dialogue presented in chapter VII of his major work, *The Republic*.
- The cave is the best known of Plato’s dialogues and is open to many different interpretations.
- It is an allegory given to simplify Plato’s complex mathematical explanation of the levels of reality:
  - Plato’s cave appears after a complex and subtle discussion of “The Divided Line,” a geometric description of the levels of reality and their corresponding degrees of knowledge.
  - Although an accomplished mathematician, Plato’s geometric description of the divided line does not quite “work” mathematically: it is assumed he intentionally designed it this way—but no one knows why.
Context of Plato’s Cave – 2.

• Basic division: visible / invisible, then subdivided into a series of higher and lower levels based on how we see things [reality], and what these things actually are.

• As an analogy describing the divided line, the cave is blunter; it is not an exact rendering of the levels.

• The cave has a direct and clear political message: our leaders systematically deceive us and are often not fit to govern—they need to either “see the light” or be replaced.

• Basic premise: Because of how we live, “true” Reality is not obvious to most of us. However, we mistake what we see and hear as Reality and Truth.
Antrum Platonicum, British Museum
Plato’s cave allegory.

http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/ti-einai-o-chrusaugiths
The major elements of Plato’s cave – 1.

- A large cave with a steep, difficult path to the exit.
  - Represents the visual world we live in.
- A group of “prisoners” sit in rows (as in a modern movie theater). Chained to their seats, they cannot turn around to see the whole cave in context.
- Prisoners reflect the condition of the average person:
  - [Glaucon] You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.
  - [Socrates] Like ourselves . . .
- They watch life unfold through an orchestrated shadow show projected on the wall in front of them.
- They accept what they see as Truth—as Reality.
The major elements of Plato’s cave – 2.

- A short wall, often called the roadway, is situated behind the prisoners. Puppets act out a play on the top of the wall, casting shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners.
- At the back of the cave (behind the wall) is a fire creating artificial light.
- The puppets and those pulling their strings are beyond the prisoner’s view.
- There is an pathway leading up and out of the cave. Plato describes it as “a steep and rugged ascent.”
- A ray of natural sunlight seeps down into the cave.
- The exit represents “the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world.”
The action – 1.

- At some point, a prisoner is “set free” and is “forced” to see the situation inside the cave, causing him to “suffer sharp pains.”
- “The purpose of education is to drag the prisoner as far out of the cave as possible; not to instil knowledge into his soul, but to turn his whole soul towards the sun, which is the Form of the Good” (Burton, 2010).
- Initially, one does not want to give up the security of familiar reality; the person has to be dragged past the fire (by someone already enlightened) and helped up, out of the cave. The path up to the surface is a difficult and painful struggle and not everyone has the strength needed to make it out.
The action – 2.

• When one initially steps into the sunshine, one is blinded, but as one’s eyes slowly accommodate to the light, one’s fundamental view of the world—of reality—is transformed. One comes to see a deeper, genuine, authentic reality: a reality marked by reason.

• Those who escape and see the “beatific vision of the Good” want to stay in the sunlight and continue ascending, maximizing their individual growth.

• The enlightened one must be compelled to return to the cave to try to free other prisoners as it is “improper” for them alone to be happy and above the rest.
The action – 3.

• Returning to the cave, one must make a painful readjustment back into the darkness. However, to the other prisoners, the person now seems mad—stumbling around and describing a strange new Reality. They reject the enlightened one, often to the point of killing him or her.

• In spite of the consequences, one must try to enlighten others. We create the ideal state only when everyone is free of their illusions—then we can all start again to move up another level.
The allegory and Socrates.

- The cave is also an allegory of the life and death of Socrates.
- Socrates had been a respected soldier and one of Plato’s “prisoners.”
- When he discovered “the truth,” he tried to help others to discover it as well.
- Socrates called himself “a midwife of the truth.”
- In a political “realignment,” Socrates was accused of “provocative and corruptive” teachings and given the choice of exile or death—he chose death (by suicide).
The allegory and the human condition.

The cave is also an allegory of the human condition:
- Each of us is a prisoner, perceiving “reality” though our own imperfect eyes.
- Most of us accept this distorted illusion of reality without any question or deeper reflection.
- With great effort, some people can break free of ignorance and illusion.
- Most can’t negotiate the hard and dangerous path:
  - Plato: not everyone wants to, or has it in them, to be free and to literally “see the light.”
  - One’s basic essential character (genetic / epigenetic) is critical to being able to break free.
- It is difficult to get others to examine their secure sense of the world and conformity.
Plato’s Theory of Forms – 1.

- The theory of FORMS is critical to Plato’s philosophy.
- The mathematician, Pythagoras influenced Plato:
  - The Pythagorean theorem does not describe one triangle or another, it describes all possible right angle triangles that could hypothetically be drawn. Plato: the theorem describes an absolute truth, a knowledge, about an unseen, ideal triangle of no particular size, that exists “out there.”
  - Triangles that people draw are mere images, impressions, opinions, representations, etc.. They are relative to each person: each rendering only approximates the ideal FORM.
  - To discover the ideal FORM (and to find Truth and Justice), we must approach / judge these objects with the mind—with reason, this is where real knowledge is found; it is not found through the senses or through the emotions.
Plato's Theory of Forms – 2.

- In the Natural world, there are hierarchies of FORMS.
- Each FORM fits within a hierarchy of other FORMS and we need to appreciate each in its larger context.
- Understanding one FORM makes it easier to grasp others: eventually, the whole hierarchy is perceived.

Example hierarchy of ideal FORMS:
- The Cosmos as a whole (highest)
- Cities and societies
- Individuals
- Objects (lowest)
Plato’s Theory of Forms – 3.

• For example, Michelangelo’s sculpture of David:
  • A FORM exists for the ideal physique of MAN.
  • The FORM exists somewhere “out there.”
  • FORMS are available to anyone with a sufficiently developed sense of reasoning. Michelangelo discovered the FORM through a process of deep reasoning, not through his senses and perceptions.
  • He relied on his mental image ("mind’s eye") of the FORM—he did not use a human model to pose.
  • Reason grasps FORMS as the eyes see objects.
  • Michelangelo tries to represent, to reflect, this ideal FORM through David.
Plato’s Theory of Forms – 4.

- David succeeds as great art to the extent that Michelangelo is in touch with this ideal FORM (perfection) and can represent this in the stone.
- David is a closer likeness to the ideal FORM than we are familiar with seeing in our day-to-day lives; thus it has great impact on us.
- If Michelangelo had used a human model (even a “perfect” one) and relied on his perceptions, he would have been misled, creating an imperfect work.
- Summary: because David resonates so with viewers, Michelangelo has succeeded in closely capturing and representing the ideal FORM of MAN using just his mind’s eye and his reason (intelligence).
Plato’s Theory of Forms – 5.

- FORMS are invisible to the normal senses/perception.
- FORMS represent a deep, absolute beauty and truth that we are normally not aware of, or in touch with.
- If a soul is “awake” it sees both “ordinary reality” (the shadows in the cave) and the “real” FORMS behind it.
- The closer we can come to FORMS, the closer we come to the overall, natural FORM (order and harmony) of the Cosmos.
- Philosophy is about the study of FORMS.
- Leaders must see FORMS: Plato’s ideal governor is therefore a highly reasoned philosopher king.
- The enlightened have a responsibility to return to the cave to guide and govern those still unenlightened.
Plato’s Theory of Forms – 6.

• The highest FORM is The Good.
• Plato believed that Good has power (energy) just as the sun has the power to warm our skin.
• The Good is the source of beauty, right, reason and truth.
• The Good is the parent of light.
• Good sheds “light” on the other, lessor FORMS we “see” and allows us to make sense of them.
• Ideals are arrived at through ideas: The Good guides us in this quest.
• The Good is the author of being and essence; the Good is beyond being, and the cause of all existence (Burton, 2010).
Through dialogue, we ought to help each other to discover and sort out ("to order") the FORMS and ideals (and the moral truth) of the Cosmos.

Dialogue points people in the right direction; the rest is up to the person. It takes strong character to break free and not everyone can: not everyone is strong enough.

In some special cases, a person can use Eros (love) to break free.

"[Plato] is giving us the truth as he sees it; but it is a truth that each of us must rediscover for ourselves before we can properly be said to possess it" (Annas, 1981, 3).
Hierarchy of Perceptions / Reality – 1.

- **FORMS:**
  - Eternal, absolute, changeless, non-material, essence, archetypes.
  - The essence or deep structure of an object or idea.

- **Thinking / Knowledge:**
  - Scientist / mathematician—uses abstraction and symbolization.
  - New, greater reliance on the intellectual process over the senses.

- - - - The “Divided Line” loose continuum between levels - - -

- **Beliefs:**
  - More certainty than opinion but still not absolute because features are relative to the context of the person or situation.
  - Example: objects have different weights on different planets.

- **Opinions:**
  - Imagining an object, conjecture, guessing, illusions, etc.
  - Object seen with the eyes: a poor imitation of its ideal FORM.
  - We wrongly accept the appearance of a thing as the thing itself.
  - Usually, we only interact with people’s shadows—their opinions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects “out there:”</th>
<th>States of Mind (Soul):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest FORMS:</td>
<td>Intelligence or Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(GOOD, beauty, justice)</td>
<td>Reason, Dialectic / Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(highest reality: “best representations”)</td>
<td>(Discover moral truth via debate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical Forms</td>
<td>Thinking, understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- - - - The “Divided Line” loose continuum between levels - - - -


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particular visible things</th>
<th>Perception and belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Images, shadows</td>
<td>Imagining and conjecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lowest reality:</td>
<td>(lowest type of cognition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most inaccurate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copies of reality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels Illustrated by the Cave.

- FORM of the Good (The Sun)  
- The world outside Outside the cave.
  Above.

—— “The sunlight” a sharp line of distinction ——

Below
Inside the cave.

- Puppets, the fire  
- Shadows on the wall
- Perception of objects  
- Images/“Opinions”
Levels Illustrated by the Cave.

- **Metaphysics**
  - Higher Forms
  - Mathematical Forms

- **Epistemology**
  - Understanding
  - Reason

- **Intelligible**
  - Sensible Particulars

- **Visible**
  - Images

- **Knowledge**
  - Opinion

- **Intelligible**
  - Sensible Particulars

- **Visible**
  - Images

Three Souls, Three Levels – 1.

- Level 1). Rational soul (Reason):
  - Perfection. This soul is located in the head.
  - The only immortal soul: this soul (and its associated knowledge) is reincarnated.
  - Characteristic of the elite guardians, the governing class.
  - This soul arises from the discovery of the FORMS.

- Level 2). Spirited Soul (Courage):
  - Located in the chest, individuals driven by glory and fame, but can also feel shame and guilt.
  - Example: Soldiers.
Three Souls, Three Levels – 2.

• Level 3). Desiring Soul (Appetites):
  • Located in the stomach and below.
  • “Irrational” desires for food, sex (as in animals), power, money, fame, etc.
  • Human appetites are dominated by ego and self-interest.
  • Prominent in the productive masses (therefore, they are unfit to govern).
The Analogy of the Chariot – 1.

- Plato describes a winged chariot pulled by two horses.
- One horse is white: the *spirited soul*. It is upright and easily follows orders as it knows of virtue and honor.
- The other, dark horse, is *desires*. It is lumbering and hard to control, even with a whip; at any moment it may rear up and disobey.
- The charioteer represents the *rational soul*. His or her task is to control and direct the horses.
  - This also reflects the traditional image in psychology of a homunculus: in this context, a “little rational man” inside our heads that controls and directs our behaviour.
The Analogy of the Chariot – 2.

Charioteer: Reason [soul] struggles to keep control, find truth

White horse: Pulls up toward world of Forms and ideals

Black horse: Pulls down toward sense/physical world

mulpix.com/instagram/mythology_god_ancient.html
The Analogy of the Chariot – 3.

- Human souls have a natural tendency (represented by wings on the chariot) to try to move up to the realm of FORMS, but are dragged down by their desires.

- A few people can control their unruly horse enough that their chariot can ascend high enough for them to lift their heads above the rim of heaven and catch a brief glimpse of the universals.

- However, most are not strong enough to ascend so high, and are left to feed their minds on mere opinion.
The Analogy of the Chariot – 4.

• In time, all imperfect souls must fall back to earth, and only those that have glimpsed the universals can take on a human form; human beings are able to recollect universals, so must once have seen them.

• Imperfect souls who have gazed longest upon the universals are incarnated as philosophers, artists, and true lovers. As they are still able to remember the universals, they are completely absorbed in ideas about them and forget all about earthly interests.

• Those unable to ascend (common people) think the ascenders are mad: the truth is they are divinely inspired and in love with goodness and beauty (Burton, 2010).
Summary of Levels of Function.

- Two types of people with different cognitive realities:
  - Conforming, everyday people ("prisoners") essentially fooled by their perceptions of reality. The soul is asleep.
  - Ascenders to the intelligible level now see a different, higher reality (the enlightened philosopher). The soul is awake.
- Those in the cave face practical, moral questions: Steal the bread or not? Ascenders face higher, theoretical and contemplative concerns: What does life mean?
- Plato: Not all have the potential to ascend and lead; those without potential must have reason imposed.
- Ascenders (rulers and philosophers) are given high status but also various responsibilities.
Plato: Identification with reason makes us human:

- If reason is able to succeed, then rationality, justice, order and harmony will prevail. The success of reason makes people human and allows them to be happy.

- Reason may succeed by our discovery of FORMS (higher reality), or it may be imposed on us by others; either route is valid as long as reason ultimately prevails.

- If reason and rationality fail, the lower animal in us will rise to rule; this must be avoided at any cost.

- Plato concluded slavery is justifiable if it is needed to impose reason and control lower desires in those who have insufficient potential to become enlightened.

- Justice results if one identifies with the rational soul.
- Reason and rationality (however achieved) lead to justice.
- The benefits of achieving justice ought to be obvious to the individual; people go wrong primarily out of ignorance: people are asleep. Or, they know better, but their appetites (desiring soul) are too strong for them to control.

- While a lack of self-knowledge is part of the problem, insight alone does not wake up a “prisoner.” One needs to discover the “external” FORMS, an impersonal “outer” knowledge.
- The intellectual study of abstract ideas (mathematics) is the only real method of discovery—it is not a process of self-growth.
• Individual autonomy is severely limited or irrelevant. The ideal person is dedicated to a social ideal.

• The struggles and conflicts linked to ascendance center around our difficulty in letting go of conformity and security, our reliance on our perception, and in the challenge of understanding and attaining truth; not on inner psychic issues or internal conflicts per se.

• There is no intrinsic, personal sense of reward or fulfillment in ascendance: it is “reality-actualization” not self-actualization.
Diogenes the Cynic often strolled through Athens in broad daylight with an ignited lamp. When curious people stopped to ask what he was doing, he would reply, ‘I am just looking for a human being’ (Burton, 2016).
Summary – 1.

• The “normal” reality we commonly experience and perceive though our senses is an illusion—merely a poor copy of Reality.
  • Our “usual” perceptions create distortions and thus they cannot be trusted.
  • “Reality” can only be appreciated through reasoning.
  • Through reason, some people are able to “wake up” to Reality and to “see” what is real and important in life.
  • Not everyone has the “character” to be able to “wake up.”
• Objective moral truths are a part of Reality that people must discover.
People who ascend have a responsibility to share their “new” insight—this is part of the social ideal:

Through a careful dialectic conversational process, we must try to lead others to discover and appreciate life more accurately for themselves.

Society ought to be governed by people who “get it:"

But, by saying it is alright for enlightened governors to impose reason on the people, Plato ironically ended up advocating a very totalitarian state.

Wrongdoers are not evil, rather simply ignorant; or they are overcome by strong desires.

Reality, the natural order of the Cosmos, is fundamentally good.
Discussion points.

• FORM of the individual: similar to personality ideal?
• Parallels between Plato’s ascender and Dąbrowski’s Level V?
• Plato typifies the traditional approaches that Dąbrowski objects to so strongly: they are lopsided toward cognition and ignore or disdain emotion.
• Plato disdains imagination as a meaningless copy—a distorted illusion of objects; therefore a “low” feature.
• Dąbrowski: imagination of higher possibilities is a key element in higher development.
• Plato and Dąbrowski differ on the role of intrapsychic conflicts, but both see development as more than simply actualization of the self.

Presented by Bill Tillier at
The 11th INTERNATIONAL DABROWSKI CONGRESS
“Creativity: Transforming perceptions of Reality.” CANMORE, ALBERTA
JULY 24 – JULY 26, 2014
Revised 2018
I unleashed my creativity...

Then my creativity ran off...
...and hasn't been seen since.

©2009 Junson
Traditional Approaches to Creativity.

• There is no consensus on what creativity is, how to describe it, how to define it, what factors contribute to it, or on the theories or constructs of creativity.

• “what creativity is, and what it is not, hangs as the mythical albatross around the neck of scientific research on creativity.” (Prentky, 2001, p. 97).
Emphasis on Production.

- Traditional approaches focus on the production of some-THING.

- The standard definition has 2 parts: “Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness.”

  - The THING produced must be new—original.

    - The original THING must be effective: it must fit and be appropriate in some domain or context.
A Little More Complex.

Expertise is, in a word, knowledge: technical, procedural, and intellectual.

Creative thinking skills determine how flexibly and imaginatively people approach problems. Do their solutions upend the status quo? Do they persevere through dry spells?

Creativity

Motivation

Not all motivation is created equal. An inner passion to solve the problem at hand leads to solutions far more creative than do external rewards, such as money. This component—called intrinsic motivation—is the one that can be most immediately influenced by the work environment.

No Limits to Complexity.

(from the Internet)
Henri-Louis Bergson.  

- French philosopher and polymath (studied time, space, evolution and biology).
- Nobel Prize in literature 1927 for Creative evolution.
- Mom English, dad Polish; from a prominent family.
- Developed a complex theory of time and consciousness he called duration (Describes our experience of time).
- Anticipated quantum physics.
- Critical of mechanistic views of evolution (Spencer), his model extended Darwin and stressed humans’ “intuitive and creative thinking.”
Bergson’s philosophy is complex but rewards the persistent reader.

• “[F]or a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly”
  (Bergson 1922, p. 8).

Bergson is still topical:
  (Azambuja, Guareschi, & Baum, 2014).
Bergson on Creativity – 1.

- Our understanding of our deeper self and of life is not gained by intelligence or logic (tools used to make more tools and to grasp mechanisms): it must be known by our intuition arising from our experience.

- Bergson rejects creativity based on making THINGS.

- Intelligence produces *things* that may be useful in life: real creativity is a process of continual becoming.

- On the psychological level, Bergson equates creativity with developing one’s unique personality. The following quote is obscure but says it all.
• “... might we not think that the ultimate reason of human life is a creation which, in distinction from that of the artist or man of science, can be pursued at every moment and by all men alike; I mean the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality, by elements which it does not draw from outside, but causes to spring forth from itself?” (Bergson, 1911, pp. 42-3).

• “Every instant we have to choose, and we naturally decide on what is in keeping with the rule. We are hardly conscious of this; there is no effort. A road has been marked out by society; it lies open before us, and we follow it; it would take more initiative to cut across country” (Bergson, 1935, p. 10).
“Every instant we have to choose, and we naturally decide on what is in keeping with the rule. We are hardly conscious of this; there is no effort. A road has been marked out by society; it lies open before us, and we follow it; it would take more initiative to cut across country” (Bergson, 1935, p. 10).
“The beliefs to which we most strongly adhere are those of which we should find it most difficult to give an account . . . In a certain sense we have adopted them without any reason, for what makes them valuable in our eyes is that they match the colour of all our other ideas . . . [our ideas] float on the surface, like dead leaves on the water of a pond: the mind, when it thinks them over and over again, finds them ever the same, as if they were external to it . . . Among these are the ideas which we receive ready made, and which remain in us without ever being properly assimilated” (Bergson, 1913/2001, pp. 135-136).
Ideas that reflect our true selves and insights are only revealed when we dig deeply below the surface into “the deeper strata of the self”—a task that is extremely difficult and seldom attempted (Bergson, 1913/2001, p. 136).

Because the deeper self is seldom experienced, it may be felt deeply when encountered but at first may seem foreign. “An idea which is truly ours fills the whole of our self” and within our deep self, ideas join and blend together. Therefore these deeper ideas are hard to understand, difficult to articulate into words and thus hard to communicate to others. (Bergson, 1913/2001, pp. 135-136).
For Dąbrowski, creativity is deeply connected to the development of one’s personality.

“The higher the level of development the closer is the link between creativity and developmental dynamisms” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 196).

“Creativity expresses non-adaptation within the internal milieu and a transgression of the usual standards of adaptation to the external environment” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 11).

Creative abilities represent “a search for new higher ways of understanding reality and of creating or discovering these new ways” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 196).
“It does not seem that authentic creativity of a high level is possible without the activity of neurotic and psychoneurotic dynamisms” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 41).

“Generally, it may safely be taken that the lower is the level of function represented by a given psychoneurosis, the fewer creative elements are involved” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 198).

“Lack of creative tendencies goes together with lack of inner conflicts, lack of positive adjustment” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 198).

“Greater creative tendencies are exhibited in psychoneurosis of a higher level” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 198).
“Are creative people mentally healthy? . . . They are not healthy according to the standard of the average individual, but they are healthy according to their unique personality norms and insofar as they show personality development: the acquiring and strengthening of new qualities in the realization of movement toward their personality ideal” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 115).
Creativity is a Higher Level Phenomena.

• “The creative instinct belongs to those instincts which arise in ontogenesis and are not common to all members of the human species” (Dąbrowski, 1973, p. 24).

• There is no “true, universal creativity” in unilevel integration. In unilevel disintegration, “creative talent” is limited and often psychopathological.

• “Multilevel creativity is a manifestation of the conjunction of emotional,imaginational and intellectual overexcitability, with emotional being clearly the strongest” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 36).
Creativity and Disintegration Are Linked – 1.

• “Crises are periods of increased insight into oneself, creativity, and personality development” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 18).

![Savage Chickens cartoon](image-url)
Creativity and Disintegration Are Linked – 2.

- “Disintegration is described as positive when it enriches life, enlarges the horizon, and brings forth creativity” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 10).

- “Creative dynamisms are connected with the process of disintegration in general, and with the process of multilevel disintegration in particular” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 69).

- “Psychoneurotics are very likely to be creative. They often show loosening and disruption of the internal milieu and conflict with the external environment” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 115).
Creativity is a Precursor of Self-perfection.

- “Creative dynamisms together with inner psychic transformation, empathy and identification represent dynamisms present in all stages of development of a multilevel inner psychic milieu” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 67).

- “On a high level of development creative instinct becomes an instinct of self-perfection which besides the media of artistic expression begins to stress more and more strongly the concern for inner perfection” (Dąbrowski, 1996, p. 20).
Hierarchy of Higher-level Instincts.

The creative **instinct** is a key part of Developmental Potential.

- **Creative instinct.**
  - **Self-perfection.**
  - **Self development.**
  - **Developmental instinct.**
Hierarchy of Dynamisms (Part).

- Organized Multilevel Dynamisms.
- Subject – Object.
  - Creative Dynamisms.
  - Positive Maladjustment.
  - Spontaneous Multilevel Dynamisms.

Creative dynamisms are a key part of D. P.
Conclusion.

- Dąbrowski: Under the direction of the third factor, the developing creative instinct is transformed into the instinct of self-perfection.

- In summary, Dąbrowski proposed:

  Creativity is the ongoing, incremental, and multilevel process leading to the achievement of one’s unique, ideal personality.
The End.


By Bill Tillier

INTERNATIONAL DABROWSKI CONGRESS 2016
CALGARY, ALBERTA
July 14 to 16, 2016
Revised 2018

Full references:
http://www.positivedisintegration.com/testref.pdf
And so it is with us: we face change, much of it hard, whether we like it or not. But it is in the hard times especially that we grow, that we become transformed.

—Patrick Doyle
Thank you Sandra. 1974-2016.
Thanks to my co-author Sam.

Thanks to my caregivers:
Joey Villanueva,
Rene Castaños,
Ziadia Castaños,
Jemna Cruz,
Irene Sifrer,
Ginny Larson.
Just as TPD is much more than OE, the topic of testing in Dąbrowski is much more than the OEQ(s).

- Part 1: Bare bones overview of Dąbrowski’s tests,
- Part 2: In-depth look at SITUATIONS and FACES.

[this symbol indicates the contents of the slide come directly from the archives]
Why test? Goal is to generate insight into the client.

- Aimed at “triggering emotional contents” in clients.
- “Multi-dimensional, multi-level, descriptive-interpretative diagnosis.”
- “Patient is a co-author of the diagnosis.” (1972, 252)
- “Diagnosis [is] half of psychotherapy.” (1972, 253)
• Used Wechsler [WAIS] to measure IQ.

• Rorschach for personality [rejected MMPI, 16PF etc.]

• Used physical examination, EEG, laboratory tests, X-rays.

• Dąbrowski also created his own battery of tests.
Tests for assessing developmental levels in TPD:

- “Verbal stimuli for triggering of emotional contents.”
- Experiences and goals test.
- [Auto] Biography.
- Dąbrowski Verbal items test.
- Neurophysiological examination/assessment of subject’s behavior during the test. [n=127]
- Rorschach test.
- Selection of situations.
- Selection of faces.
Other Dąbrowski questionnaires:

- Statement Selection Test (3 versions)
- Dąbrowski Inventory Test, 60 Items
- Self-depictions questionnaire, 15 Items
- The Dąbrowski test of multilevelness, 33 items
- “#16 PIP Section 1, 45 items”
- Dąbrowski personal inventory children’s form (60 items)
- Dąbrowski Dynamisms Test 1970 (30 items)
Dąbrowski’s testing experts:

- Lawrence F. Spreng and William L. Lai.
- Trained judges to score verbal stimuli responses.
- Studied inter-judge scoring reliability.
Verbal Stimuli

- Please describe freely in relation to each word listed below your emotional associations and experiences. Use as much space as you feel you need.

Great sadness  Great joy  Death  Uncertainty
Loneliness  Suicide  Immortality
Inhibition  Inner conflict  Ideal
Experiences and goals [test]

• 1. Describe three experiences, or events, in your life which were most significant to you.

• 2. Describe three of your greatest desires.
[Auto] Biography

• Please describe on 6-8 (or more) typewritten pages your personal history from childhood till the present. Concentrate especially on the sad and joyous experiences that you can remember, as well as your thoughts, reflections, dreams and fantasies associated with them. Include your characteristic dreams.
Criteria for scoring biography.

• 1. General levels of psychic development.
• 2. Dynamisms.
• 3. Kinds and levels of psychic overexcitability.
• 4. Pathological syndromes and their levels.
• 5. Levels of tension.
• 6. Transformation in developmental periods of difficulties.
• 7. Talents: unilevel and multidimensional (universal) talents.
Dąbrowski verbal items test (experimental form 3)

1. I find it best to avoid arguments both with others and within myself.
2. In many issues, I can always see many sides.
3. I am the only one who can do anything about my personal problems.
Neurophysiological examination.

(a). Trembling of eyelids, frequency of closing eyes, and the tension accompanying the closing of eyes.
(b). Pupils.
(c). Oculocardiac reflex.
(d). Chvostek’s sign and thyroid.
(e). Palatal and pharyngeal reflexes.
(f). Trembling of the hands.
Used the conventional Rorschach test.

- Goal: to find in the Rorschach, perceptanalytic equivalences of developmental dynamisms and levels, as well as oversensitivity forms and levels, and intra- and inter-psychoneurotic differentiation.

- Dąbrowski’s Rorschach expert: Franciszek Lesniak
Statement Selection Test (3 versions)

On each page of this test you will find 8 statements. First read all 8 statements on the page and then select 2 statements that seem to be closest to your convictions. [Version A (6 pages)]

[Typical Q sort task]
Example Statement Selection items.

- If you have too many qualms, you will be destroyed.

- I do not like to torment myself with soul-searching because it is useless.

- Constant adaptation to everything is opposed to psychological development.
Dąbrowski Inventory Test, 60 Items

- Unpractical people irritate me to no end.
- My life will probably end up being a mess.
- If I witness cruelty to animals, I become very upset.
- Occasionally I daydream about beating up or even killing somebody.
Self-depictions questionnaire, 15 Items

1). Is your approach to daily life a concrete, realistic one?

2). Do you like a logical approach to everyday reality?

3). Do you have strong imagination and fantasy?

4). Have you ever had so-called “mystic experience”? If yes, give an example.
The Dąbrowski test of multilevelness, 33 items

[Circle one]

2. If someone wants to fight with me, I will:
   
   1. a) fight gladly.
   4. b) try to understand why and try to help them understand.
   3. c) walk away.
   2. d) enter into it, but quit after a while.
1. It is best to avoid conflicts with people and also not to create conflicts within oneself.

2. In any issue, I can always see many pros and cons.

3. Nobody except myself can do anything about my inner disequilibrium and personal problems.
Dąbrowski personal inventory children’s form (60 items)
[Yes or No answers]

1. I'd rather do things that are lots of fun than work or go to school.
2. Sometimes I help kids who are being picked on by others, but most of the time I'm afraid of what will happen.
3. I'd rather have one boy – or girl – like me than many.
Dąbrowski Dynamisms Test 1970 (30 items)

1. I lose my temper but it’s usually because someone made me mad.
2. When I'm with a crowd of people who are shouting, I feel like shouting too.
3. I'm really ashamed of some things I have done and I'd like to pretend they never happened.
Part 2

Dąbrowski’s Selection of Situations Test.
Dąbrowski Situations test, form 3: Instructions

• Look at these pictures and mark whether you like the feelings and emotions they express. We find all people like some pictures and dislike others.

• In this test there are no right or wrong answers. Do not be afraid to indicate honestly how you feel.

• Indicate the amount to which you like or dislike each photo by placing an X in the appropriate blank.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Dislike</td>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>Mildly Dislike</td>
<td>Mildly Like</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Strongly Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Dąbrowski’s Selection of FACES test.
Physiognomy: An ancient idea.

- Definition: The assessment of a person’s character or personality from his or her outer appearance, especially the face.

- Aristotle: We can infer character from facial features because the body and the soul are changed together by emotions.
• Typical death mask.
• Typical bust.
Porta Giambattista della. (1586).
• Lavater 1853
Lavater (1775/1853, p. 4)
The God of truth, and all who know me, will bear testimony that, from my whole soul, I despise deceit, as I do all silly claims to superior wisdom, and infallibility, which so many writers, by a thousand artifices, endeavour to make their readers imagine they possess.

>This ought to be this group’s motto.]
Important distinctions:

1). We judge the characteristics of others based on our perceptions of their faces (object),

2). We can infer characteristics about ourselves (subject) based on the reactions faces produce in us.
   - Our approach or avoidance to an image will reveal our character/emotions (Level of Development) vis-à-vis the character (L of D) portrayed in the image.

3). Can gain insight into clients based upon the reactions that images of faces invoke in them.
Modern era of physiognomy begins.
Photography became omnipresent in psychiatry

Darwin, 1872.

Again: emphasis on emotion.
Fig. 14. Head of snarling Dog. From life, by Mr. Wood.
Leopold (Lipot) Szondi (1893–1986)

- Hungarian geneticist/endocrinologist.
- *Schicksalsanalyse* (fate analysis): A depth psychology.
  - “Family unconscious” bridges Freud’s individual unconscious and Jung’s collective unconscious.
- Developed a test based on selecting photos of faces.
- Szondi and his test were very popular in the 1930’s.
1944: Szondi was held in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Ransom paid by “American academics” to Adolf Eichmann freeing him [and other “important academics”].

Settled in Zurich—practiced psychiatry, developed ideas.

Irony: In 1961 Szondi’s test was used in Eichmann’s trial.

Eichmann was hung as a war criminal in 1962.
Basic idea: A subject will pick out photos that reflect his or her dimensions of personality (Zaffaroni and Oliveira, 2013, p. 305).

48 photos: 6 groups of 8 photos of mental patients.

Subject is asked to pick 2 likes and 2 dislikes.
Szondi Test (48 items)

[Typical Q sort task]
Dąbrowski walked through the aftermath of a WW1 battle near his hometown when he was about 12.

He later related that as he walked among the dead, he was struck by the different expressions on their faces. Some were calm and peaceful; others, horrified and frightened.

Dąbrowski later studied Szondi before developing his own test.
One’s facial expression represents an *integrated* emotional response.

Dąbrowski would say the face expresses one’s level of development and one’s dynamisms.
One’s expression reflects one’s developmental level.
Dąbrowski’s selection of faces test.

- Several standard sets of portraits and photographs are given to a subject who is asked to select in each set of 8 pictures the 2 he likes best.

- In each set there are 4 pairs of pictures corresponding to each of the four levels of development. It is assumed that people will select faces with expressions closest to their level of emotional development.
Dąbrowski’s Scoring of the FACES test.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Dislike</td>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>Mildly Dislike</td>
<td>Mildly Like</td>
<td>Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Like</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1)  

2)  

---

ANSWER SHEET

---

514
Transformation in therapy as shown in facial expression.

Session 1
Session 2
Contemporary support for physiognomy:

- “common personality traits—that are distributed normally in the general population—can have a profound influence on the processing of facial expressions” (Fox & Zougkou, 2011, p. 1).
Perlman’s study:

• . . . specific personality traits predispose individuals to seek out and process information that is congruent with those [traits] . . . (Perlman, et al, 2009, p. 1).

• Study looked at neuroticism: “a non-clinical, normally distributed, personality trait” (p. 2).

• Perlman “predicted that individuals high in neuroticism would attend preferentially to the eyes of fearful facial expressions” in photos (p. 2).
• Perlman’s results: “Individuals display different visual scanpaths in response to faces as a function of individual differences in personality. It follows that individuals of various personality types may perceive varying levels of emotional content in presented stimuli” (p. 5).

• “although all participants might be presented with the same image, variation in image exploration could result in differential perception based on the personality of each participant” (p. 5).
Perception of facial emotion is cognitively mediated.

- “healthy adults activate and apply emotion concepts in the moment during emotion perception and these concepts shape representations of faces” (Nook, Lindquist, & Zaki, 2015, p. 576).

- “visual, social, and cultural contexts influence the emotions an individual perceives in a face” (Nook, Lindquist, & Zaki, 2015, p. 576).
Weegee was a famous New York photographer.

Began his career on the crime beat: Photographed many New York murders.
Many different facial reactions in a crowd Illustrate different personalities.
A man had been shot in the street in front of a school and when the bell rang, the students ran out to see the scene. Weegee turned and took this picture of them.
Typical Level I images (by Weegee).

Jane Mansfield
Typical Level I images.
Typical Level I images.

Roman Polanski.
Typical Level II images.

Dąbrowski: the creations of a person also will reflect his or her developmental level.

Don van Vliet, Musician, Artist.
Typical Level II images.

Don van Vliet
Typical Level II images.
Picasso
Later in life, Weegee created typical Level II images.
Typical Level II images.
Typical Level II ambiguity: Dead or alive?

"NO ESCAPE FROM DEATH", AUTOGRAPH OF VAN LEQO, 1946
Typical Level III images.

Existential despair/angst are common: spontaneous disintegration.

Klaus Kinski in Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo*
Typical Level III images.
Typical Level III images.

The Scream
Edvard Munch
Typical Level III images.

The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden (detail).

Early Renaissance artist
Masaccio
Typical Level IV images: Infused with authenticity.

Either with deep humanity or joy.

< Humans of New York
Typical Level IV images.

< Humans of New York
Typical Level IV images.
Typical Level IV images.

Tom Jones
Typical Level IV images.

Jeff Bridges
Typical Level IV images.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Authentic joy.

Keith Richards
Authentic joy.

The so-called “Duchenne smile” is considered an authentic smile.

- *Orbicularis oculi* muscle makes eyes squint.

- *Zygomatic major* muscle pulls up corners of mouth.

There is a fairly large literature on this topic.
Authentic joy.

Steve McQueen

Jeff Bridges
Authentic joy.
Full references:
http://www.positivedisintegration.com/testref.pdf

Originally presented by Bill Tillier at the 19th Annual Society for the Advancement of Gifted Education (SAGE) Conference
November 7th & 8th, 2008
Revised 2018
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta
Dąbrowski and Piechowski – Contents – 1.

- Mission statement........................................................................................................ Slide: 563
- Piechowski Meets Dąbrowski......................................................................................... Slide: 564
- Piechowski and Dąbrowski ............................................................................................ Slide: 565
- Issue 1: Re-titling of the 1977 Volumes.......................................................................... Slide: 568
- Issue 2: Levels I & II:
  - Overview
    - Dąbrowski’s Views. ........................................................................................................ Slide: 572
    - Kawczak’s Views .......................................................................................................... Slide: 575
    - Piechowski’s Views........................................................................................................ Slide: 579
    - Confusion in the Literature. ........................................................................................... Slide: 582
  - Level I: Piechowski’s Early Views. ................................................................................ Slide: 586
  - Level I: Piechowski’s Revised Views. .......................................................................... Slide: 590
  - Level II: Piechowski’s Early Views. ............................................................................. Slide: 604
  - Level II: Piechowski’s Revised Views. ........................................................................ Slide: 606
  - Level II: Dąbrowski’s Views – Summary. ..................................................................... Slide: 613
  - Level II: Summary. ......................................................................................................... Slide: 614
  - Issue 2: Conclusion. ....................................................................................................... Slide: 615
- Issue 3: Development & DP .......................................................................................... Slide: 616
- Issue 4: A Strong Focus on Overexcitability. ................................................................. Slide: 621
- Issue 5: Piechowski Questions Multilevelness. ............................................................... Slide: 624
- Dąbrowski’s View of Multilevelness ................................................................................ Slide: 625
• Issue 6: The Role of Self-actualization. Slide: 626
• Self-actualization and Level IV. Slide: 627
• Piechowski’s Rationale of Dąbrowski. Slide: 631
• “Dąbrowski Just Didn’t Understand.” Slide: 632
• They Never Understood. Slide: 633
• A Pathway Forward? Slide: 634
• Summary Slide: 635
• Misattributions to Piechowski Slide: 639
Mission statement.

Mission statement: In this section, my intention is not to make a case for, or against, Dr. Piechowski’s views of development or of TPD. Dr. Piechowski’s views have evolved over time and continue to evolve. My purpose is to simply delineate these differences in detail and trace their history as they emerged.

Dr. Piechowski and I have had an exchange of emails (2018) facilitated by Christine Wells. He has reviewed this section and I have acknowledged his comments by making the revisions he requested.

Dr. Piechowski says he has “not presented a theory of his own” and will not put forth his own theory. He is “simply updating” TPD and “correcting errors.”
Dr. Piechowski meets Dr. Dąbrowski.

- Dr. Piechowski was with the Dept. of Microbiology (UofA). He “started working with Dąbrowski in the winter of 1967,” becoming a “colleague.” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 41; Piechowski, Ramsahoye, Evans, & Czartoryski, 1970).

- In January 1970, Dr. Piechowski left Edmonton and went to Wisconsin to pursue a doctorate in counseling.

- He met Nick Colangelo and Kay Ogburn as fellow graduate students. Colangelo and Ron Zaffrann edited a book on counseling the gifted in 1979 (Colangelo & Zaffrann, 1979). It contained a chapter by Dr. Piechowski (1979a; see Piechowski, 2008, pp. 75-76).

- Dr. Piechowski became active in disseminating TPD and the construct of overexcitability in the gifted field via workshops and publications (e.g. Piechowski, 1986).
I knew both Dr. Dąbrowski and Dr. Piechowski and heard their comments pertaining to these issues. Dr. Piechowski has at times presented his own unique and different views on some issues.

Example:

“The significance and the originality of the theory of positive disintegration does not lie, as it is often believed in introducing the idea of disintegration as a positive developmental process. Understandably, this aspect of the theory is most important for clinical psychology, psychiatry, and education. Nevertheless, the significance and originality of Dąbrowski’s theory lie in its concepts of developmental structures, developmental potential, and the characteristics by which they can be detected and measured” (Piechowski, 1975b, p. 266). [Dąbrowski “endorsed” this paper by providing a preface.]
• Other examples: “Although Dąbrowski viewed primary integration as a rigid [genetic] personality structure, it makes more sense to see it as the outcome of socialization” (Piechowski, 2003, p. 289).

• Strong, positive developmental potential may not be required for growth: “under optimal conditions, even children with limited developmental potential can grow up to be good citizens with a strong sense of fairness” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 54).

• “Dąbrowski’s theory would lose none of its value were [levels I & II] not included, since the theory is mainly about multilevel development” (Piechowski, 2009, p. 71).
Dr. Piechowski’s views involve basic tenets of TPD:

- **Level I**: Drop primary integration, keep Level I, with new name: “adaptation,” and new focus – individuals exhibiting socially caused “moral disengagement – authoritarian behavior – not a genetically-based personality type – not an integration.”

- **Level II**: New name: “unilevel growth process.” Average person, second factor. “Disintegration may occur. There is still no development in Dąbrowski’s sense but there is movement that may go in the direction of Level III.”

- Developmental potential is not genetic. DP, as described in TPD, may not be needed for “multilevel emotional growth.”

- It is “possible to imagine a harmonious society without a multilevel majority.”

- Self-actualization fits into Level IV.

  - I will focus here on six major theoretical issues.
After leaving Edmonton, Dr. Piechowski continued to work with Dąbrowski: “our close collaboration continued until 1975” (Piechowski, 2008, pp. 45-46).

Culminating their collaborative work on a book, while Dąbrowski was in Poland, “it fell to” Dr. Piechowski to prepare the book for publication. Dr. Piechowski submitted different titles to the publisher and made changes in authorship attributions. In the process of “editing and updating” the text, substantive changes were also made (some 50 pages were added). (Dąbrowski, 1977 [vol. 1]; Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977 [vol. 2]).

To see all of these alterations, follow this link: http://positivedisintegration.com/1977info.pdf

[Dr. Piechowski has reviewed this PDF and confirmed its accuracy.]

- Dr. Dąbrowski’s original manuscript titles:
  - *Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions Part 1: Theory and description of levels of behavior.*
  - *Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions Part 2: Types and Levels of Development.*

- Dr. Piechowski’s revised titles as published in 1977:
  - *Theory of levels of emotional development Volume 1 - Multilevelness and positive disintegration.*
  - *Theory of levels of emotional development Volume 2 - From primary integration to self-actualization.*

- Dr. Dąbrowski rejected the books and insisted the original manuscripts be republished (done in 1996).

- These changes led to what Dr. Piechowski describes as a final “personal split” with Dr. Dąbrowski.
Issue 1: Re-titling Created Confusion – 3.

- Re-titling has *apparently* led to ongoing confusion:

- “Dąbrowski’s theory of emotional development” which he called ‘positive disintegration’” (Silverman, 1983, p. 10).

- Piirto: “Dąbrowski Theory of Positive Disintegration (as it is called in Canada, or of Emotional Development as it is called in the United States)” (http://personal.ashland.edu/jpiirto/twelve.htm)

- “Since Dąbrowski’s death in 1980, his ‘Theory of Positive Disintegration’ often has been referred to as ‘Dąbrowski’s Theory of Emotional Development,’ as he placed greater emphasis on the role of emotions than most other theorists” (Silverman, 1993b, p. 639).

- “Dąbrowski’s . . . Theory of Positive Disintegration, also known as the Theory of Emotional Development” (Sisk, 2008, p. 26).

- In a 2008 lecture, Dr. Piechowski referred to “Dąbrowski’s theory of emotional development through positive disintegration.”
Dr. Dąbrowski called his work **the theory of positive disintegration** to highlight the disintegrative process he felt was necessary for personality development.

Dr. Piechowski says historically he used a “generic name” and portrayed “**Dąbrowski’s theory of emotional development**” as a theory describing and measuring emotional development (see Piechowski, 2014a).

Dr. Piechowski now acknowledges the “proper name” of the theory is the **theory of positive disintegration** [The convention all researchers should use when referring to the theory] (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 12).

In 2017, Dr. Piechowski used: “**Dąbrowski’s theory of positive disintegration, a theory of emotional development**” (Piechowski, 2017, p. 87).
“a fairly high degree of primary integration is found in the average person; a very high degree in the psychopath.” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 121)

“two main qualitatively different stages and types of life: the heteronomous, which is biologically [1st factor] and socially determined [2nd factor], and the autonomous, which is determined by the multilevel dynamisms of the inner psychic milieu [3rd factor]” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 5).

As I understood this from Dr. Dąbrowski, level I is heteronomous, aka unilevel. Level III and above, autonomous (multilevel). Level II is transitional, a brief intense time of unilevel crisis – a test of character from which one normally will either regress or advance.
The first stage, called primary integration, is characterized by mental structures and functions of a low level which are automatic and impulsive, determined by primitive, innate drives. At this stage, intelligence neither controls nor transforms basic drives. It is used in a purely instrumental way, so as to supply the means towards the ends determined by primitive drives. There is no inner conflict” (Dąbrowski, 1970, August 26-30, p. 4).

(This paper was presented at the Laval conference and reflects the 1970 manuscript on Multilevelness of instinctive and emotional functions).
Unilevel disintegration consists of disintegrative processes on a single structural and emotional level. Unilevel disintegration begins with a loosening of the rigid structure of primary integration. Among its first symptoms are increased sensitivity to internal stimuli, vague feelings of disquietude, ambivalences and ambitendencies, various forms of disharmony, and, gradually, the nuclei of hierarchization of both the external stimuli and one’s own mental structure. At the beginning this hierarchization is very weak. There is a continuous vacillation between ‘pros’ and ‘cons,’ no clear direction ‘up’ or ‘down’” (Dąbrowski, 1970, August 26-30, p. 5).
1. The primitively integrated type has a coherent structure of mental functions, subordinated to primitive drives. He uses intelligence exclusively as an instrument in the service of instinctive, impulsive desires. He does not show the capacity to transform stimuli, emotions and drives. There is in him no distinct conscious self. He is entirely determined and controlled by hereditary and environmental factors. Depending on the genetic endowment, innate inclinations and environmental influences, primitively integrated individuals may represent a variety of socially positive or negative types, from good-natured, mild, even ‘motherly’ characters to aggressive, ruthless and calculating psychopaths” (Kawczak, 1970, p. 1).
“2. The horizontally disintegrated individual is characterized by inconsistency and disorganization of mental functions through inner conflicts between drives of a similar developmental level. He shows ambivalences and ambitendendencies, feelings of disquietude and discontent with oneself, however without self-consciousness and the capacity to understand himself. Horizontally disintegrated individuals are confused, unable to take care of their own problems. They are the ones who more than any other group complain about their own helplessness and request psychotherapeutic assistance” (Kawczak, 1970, p. 1).
“Although the statistical data about the distribution of psychological types distinguished in the theory of positive disintegration are not available it seems that a clear majority of people never reach beyond primary integration or after a short period of partial horizontal disintegration reintegrate at the former level. There seems to be 15-20 per cent of people who, at least temporarily, display symptoms of unilevel disintegration. Individuals at the third, fourth and fifth stage of mental development do not seem to constitute a large group. Cases of secondary integration are particularly rare, probably much below 1 per cent of the total population” (Kawczak, 1970, pp. 3-4).
“To sum it up, there is a biological and environmental determinism at the lowest level of mental development. There is a weakening of the deterministic chain in unilevel disintegration and the emergence of what has traditionally been called ‘free will’ in multilevel disintegration” (Kawczak, 1970, p. 5).
Dr. Piechowski: “Individual development may follow the maturational stages of the life cycle without any profound psychological transformation (i.e., without change in the emotional-cognitive structure). In such case there is no development in the sense of reorganization, and this adevelopmental structure has been called primary, or primitive, integration. In such a life history an individual follows the path of environmental adaptation. He learns, works, and fits in, but he does not suffer mental breakdown or experience ecstasy. In contrast, when in a life history mental breakdown or true ecstasy does take place we have a disintegration” (1975b, pp. 247-248). [Dąbrowski “endorsed” this paper by providing a preface.]
“One can think of integration and disintegration as opposite poles of a continuum between maximum of structure and total lack of structure. This gets us only as far as unilevel disintegration, which, in fact, may be temporary and may revert back to primary integration” (Piechowski, 1975b, p. 265). [Dąbrowski “endorsed” this paper by providing a preface.]

In Fort Lauderdale, in 2002, Dr. Piechowski said that because Level I and II are not associated with development *per se*, these levels are “totally irrelevant” to the theory. (See Piechowski, 2009, 2014a, 2017; Mendaglio & Tillier, 2015; Tillier, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).
“Little significant inner life exists at Levels I (primary integration) and II (unilevel disintegration). For Dąbrowski, inner life begins with multilevel processes of introspection, self-examination, and self-evaluation [Level III]” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 43; see also Piechowski, 2014a).

“In regard to Levels I and II what I said was that Dąbrowski’s theory would lose none of its value were these levels not included, since the theory is mainly about multilevel development” (Piechowski, 2009, p. 71).

“The paradox of Dąbrowski’s theory is that as a theory of development it includes two levels in which there is little or no development” (Piechowski, 2017, p. 88).
There has been subsequent confusion on the part of other authors:

In a study of gifted students, Bailey (2011, p. 217) appears to utilize Dr. Dąbrowski’s traditional approach—Level I as socialization, Level II as disintegration. However, it is also confusing because she found 70% of her sample fell into Level II:

“\textit{A number of our respondents are still within the Primary Integration (Level I) stage, which Dr. Piechowski (2003) describes as being marked by primary mental organizations aimed at gratifying biological needs and conforming to social norms.}”
Issue 2: – Slide 12.
Levels I & II: Overview – Confusion in the Literature.

- Bailey (2011, p. 217) continued:
  
  “Level II, the current level for the majority of our sample, is a critical transition phase in Dąbrowski’s theory as it is during this phase that the process of positive disintegration begins. Positive disintegration is the process during which the previously held personality structure must come apart to be replaced by higher level personality structures.” . . . “That 70% of our sample population fell within this critical transition period highlights a critical need for appropriate educational and counseling interventions to support these students through this difficult process.”
Courtney Ackerman (2017) presented the following based on Bailey (2010) that appears to follow Dr. Piechowski’s revised views of the levels:

“Level One – Primary Integration. Primary Integration is the most basic, primitive level of development. This level is driven by the first factor, with the satisfaction of basic needs and desires as the individual’s only concerns. Those at this level (generally young children) have no need for deep or meaningful relationships with others, and disregard empathy, sympathy, or any acknowledgement of the needs and concerns of others (Bailey, 2010).”
Courtney Ackerman (2017) continued:

“Level Two – Unilevel Disintegration. Level two is governed by the second factor and focused on conformity and social comparison. In this level, the individual is concerned with ‘fitting in’ and is easily influenced by their social group. Some individuals at this level will begin to question the values and beliefs imposed upon them by their social group, and will begin the process of discovering their own personal values and beliefs.”
“The undeveloped or developing ‘self’ is integrated. It follows the dictates of drives; it follows social rules as long as it can use them for egocentric purposes. Its ‘ego’ and ‘superego’ may appear very strong. The fragmented self is a disintegrated self whose psychological functioning is unstable” (Piechowski, 1975a, pp. 43-44).

“the integrated self represents the statistically predominant, strong and successful ideal of the world we live in. The unstable balance or fragmentation of Dąbrowski’s level II does tend to produce longing for the firm security of primary integration” (Piechowski, 1975a, p. 46).
“At least two forms of primary integration can be distinguished, an extreme one and a less extreme one. . . . The successful psychopath, the model for the extreme form of the level I person, gets ahead in life through ruthless competition, intent on winning and advancing himself at any cost. . . . The milder form of primary integration applies to ‘normals’ rather than successful psychopaths or near-psychopaths. . . . Such ‘normals’ follow a stereotyped path of development with regard to social advancement. The course of their lives is generally predictable” (Piechowski, 1977, pp. 20-22).

See http://positivedisintegration.com/197718.pdf for the original pages.
“It is true that the time of stress and transition may occasion some reflection, but there is none of the reevaluation of oneself and one’s life in a larger context of human existence that is characteristic of higher levels. The transition period is, then, a period of temporary disintegration followed by return to some form of primary integration. The hold of primary structure is strong and transitions from level I to II are rare and difficult, possible only if there are present some nuclei of instability, some cognitive complexity and some emotional responsiveness . . .
“... The milder form of the level I person appears similar to Loevinger’s Conformist (1-3) because he goes by stereotypes and is still insensitive to individual differences. ... Kohlberg’s good boy-good girl and law-and-order orientations (stages 3 and 4) also represent milder forms of primary integration, for in both theories these individuals follow externally established rules” (Piechowski, 1977, p. 22).

Dr. Piechowski continued: “The characteristics of authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford, 1950) seem to correspond closely to primary integration as well as to the lower stages in Kohlberg’s and Loevinger’s approach (Schmidt, 1977)” (Piechowski, 1977, p. 23).
“Level I: Absence of emotional dynamisms, absence of reflection, absence of self-observation and self-evaluation; absence of inner conflict; orientation toward external standards; self-interest as primary motivation; lack or little feeling for others and lack of insight into others” (Piechowski, 1979b, p. 138).

Here is a typical example of his revised idea of level I:

“Level I: Primary Integration Egocentrism prevails. A person at this level lacks the capacity for empathy and self-examination. When things go wrong, someone else is always to blame; self-responsibility is not encountered here. With nothing within to inhibit personal ambition, individuals at Level I often attain power in society by ruthless means. Dog-eat-dog mentality” (Piechowski, 1997, p. 374).
To my mind, one of the five levels is highly problematic. It is Level I or primary integration. Dąbrowski viewed primary integration as a rigid personality structure. The closest to this idea is the concept of authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950). It began as a study of personality traits found in prejudiced, or ethnocentric individuals. They are non-reflective, egocentric and they identify only with their own group, they lack empathy, insight and self-criticism. Their thinking is stereotyped, they hold black and white conceptions of good and bad, and have a tendency toward physical aggression. They view others as objects and are manipulative and exploitative. They value status, power, and wealth (Schmidt, 1977).” (Piechowski, 2002, p. 178). (on Schmidt, see Appendix 1).
Level I: Dr. Piechowski’s Revised Views.

As Dr. Piechowski continues, he also rejects any genetic basis of personality:

“But the study found that prejudice and ethnocentrism are not built into people but are the result of child rearing that emphasizes obedience to authority, respect for power, and which sanctions aggression against all those who are perceived as a threat. This means that such individuals are made, not born. They are the outcome of particular socialization which fosters antagonism toward anything that is different, unfamiliar and contrary to one’s tradition” (Piechowski, 2002, p. 178).
Dr. Piechowski continued: “A world which stresses competitiveness and justifies any means of gain, creates a climate in which another’s gain is one’s loss. It operates on fears of falling behind and going under. People’s lives are constricted by a climate of uncertainty of one’s survival. If people are operating at Level I it is because this is the condition of the world, not because their psyche is constituted that way. As we know the environment has the power to support or to limit the expression of a person’s developmental potential. (italics in original) (Piechowski, 2002, p. 178).
“Although Dąbrowski viewed primary integration as a rigid [genetic] personality structure, it makes more sense to see it as the outcome of socialization. *If people are operating at Level I it is because this is the condition of the world, not because their psyche is constituted that way*” (italics in original) (Piechowski, 2003, p. 289).

“Level I is not a personality structure, but instead is the result of limited developmental potential of people trying to survive in a ruthlessly competitive and economically uncertain world” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 55).
The whole construct of primary integration should be reconsidered – “as it is neither primary nor a personality structure but the outcome of the way society is” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 76).

“Another example of Dąbrowski’s untested yet often repeated view was that about 70% of the population is confined to Level I. . . . Dąbrowski’s Level I, and the other ones as well, are broad categories with ample room for further distinctions” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 12).

Primary integration ranges “from psychopathic to normal (by which he meant not multilevel)” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 15).

[Mika (2015) presented such distinctions for Level I.]
“By definition, primary integration has a developmental potential so limited that inner transformation, the essence of multilevel development, is out of reach. Consequently, the theory makes it clear that primary integration is not where development can start under any conditions” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 14).

The behavior Dr. Dąbrowski described at Level I “is not a personality structure but the consequence of a culture that increasingly puts distance between people” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 15).

“Primary integration (level I) is not a starting point for development. Its breakdown may lead to unilevel disintegration but no further” (Piechowski, 2014b, p. 37).
Level I: Dr. Piechowski’s Revised Views.

• “The concept of primary integration – originally called primitive integration by Dąbrowski – was not examined until Margaret Schmidt showed in her [masters] thesis that it largely corresponds to the concept of authoritarian personality (Schmidt, 1977). Authoritarian personality results from strict parenting and social pressures that enforce conformity and respect for authority; that is, those who hold power. Therefore, it is not an integration either inherited genetically or arrived at by the individual himself” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 13).

• Is this what Schmidt (1977) really said? Not quite. See appendix 1.
Issue 2: – Slide 27.
Level I: Dr. Piechowski’s Revised Views.

• [See Appendix 2 on authoritarian personality.]
• [Schmidt’s masters thesis is not available on the Internet.]
• “Whatever later looks like primary integration, is a secondary development distorting the emotional development we are designed for through biological evolution. This emotional design is built into the brain to be activated in infancy” (Piechowski, 2002, p. 179).
• “Authoritarian personality results from strict parenting and social pressures that enforce conformity and respect for authority; that is, those who hold power. Therefore, it is not an integration either inherited genetically or arrived at by the individual himself” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 13).
Level I: Dr. Piechowski’s Revised Views.

- Discussing Milgram’s famous obedience experiment:
  - “The high proportion of people who obeyed the authority figure to the end demonstrates that the concept of primary integration does not fit reality. It is the response to the situation, and the person’s assigned role in it, that for a period of time leads to harming others. Does this make people part-time psychopaths, as Dąbrowski would have it?” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 16).
  - See Perry (2012/2013) and Doliński (2017).
  - “review of the relevant research on the Milgram paradigm reveals that the evidence on situational determinants of obedience is less clear than is generally recognized; contrary to the commonly held view, personality measures can predict obedience” (Blass, 1991, p. 398).
“When character is deficient, love and caring are almost always lacking in the formative years of early childhood. What we also know today is that physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children is commonplace . . . . Dąbrowski could not consider any of this because he was developing his theory in the 1950s before the most significant findings about abuse appeared in the literature and before the advances in research on early childhood . . . . We are social from the day we are born, and we fully expect to be cared for and loved. In light of our knowledge of early child development, Dąbrowski’s concept of primary integration has no empirical basis” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 13).

“Abolishing the concept of primary integration does not mean that the concept of Level I should be abolished” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 14).
Level I: Dr. Piechowski’s Revised Views.

- [See Appendix 3 describing moral disengagement.]
- Dr. Piechowski said “moral disengagement” is the role model of Level I and presented Bandura’s eight mechanisms (Piechowski, 2014a, pp. 14-15). (see Bandura, 2016).
- “The [above] mechanisms are the ways in which normal, decent, law-abiding persons may find themselves in situations that temporarily make them do what Dąbrowski saw as psychopathic behavior. Such behavior is deprived of consideration for others. The behavior is not a personality structure but the consequence of a culture that increasingly puts distance between people” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 15, italics added).
Looking at research by Ruf on highly gifted adults, Dr. Piechowski reviewed 5 subjects found to be “self-serving, egocentric people who have little consideration for others.” He said: “Thus, on the one hand, Ruf’s placement of these five cases at Dąbrowski’s Level I appears supported but, on the other hand, the cases show little to meet the criteria of primary integration: desire for material gains, goals of attaining power or fame, ruthlessly competing with others, provoking conflicts with others, and showing evidence of a rigid psychological structure. There is only some evidence of egocentrism, lack of self-reflection, and perhaps lack of expressions of empathy. Consequently, if these cases represent Level I, and they do, they do not fit Dąbrowski’s criteria of primary integration. These cases help us to see that it makes sense to separate the concept of Level I from primary integration, a descriptive but ill-defined term” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 16).
“Dąbrowski’s characterization of primary integration as self-serving, manipulative, and lacking in consideration for others is more negative. The type of behavior that involves harm to others is most often transitory and adopted under conditions of obedience to authority and other mechanisms that bypass one’s conscience. This fits precisely with Dąbrowski’s concept of Level I. Therefore, the concept of primary integration should be abandoned and replaced with Level I” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 17).
“Unilevel disintegration denotes a radical departure from the cohesive undifferentiated structure of primary integration. Externality is still very strong but there are deviations from it; rigidity is replaced by hesitation, doubt, wavering attitudes, and changing likes and dislikes. Emotional relationships with others exist but may have emotional components to excess (e.g., overdependence on others, jealousy). Patterns of thought are often circular, although they may appear sophisticated. Internal conflicts appear but are often more readily resolved by chance or superficial considerations than by internal struggle. When internal conflicts are severe, they lack the crucial possibility of developmental resolution. Behavior is essentially disoriented and conforming to external standards. It follows changing fads, ideologies, and leaders with little evaluation. When behavior is nonconforming, even rebellious, it is still without direction here—it is not based on autonomously developed principles. Because of the general looseness and lack of hierarchical structure at this level of development, it can result in the most severe mental disorders: psychosis, schizophrenia, phobias, psychosomatic disorders, alcoholism, or drug addiction” (Piechowski, 1975b, p. 260). [again, to be fair, Dąbrowski “endorsed” this paper by providing a preface.]
Level II: “There are two ways in which Dąbrowski (1967) applies the term unilevel disintegration. . . . 1). a temporary departure from primary integration, a short-term breakdown of its rigid, tight cohesion; in this sense, unilevel disintegration is equivalent to a period of disequilibrium, often followed by reintegration, the reestablishment of the original primary structure. . . . 2). a formation of personality with built-in imbalances of physiological and psychological systems, autonomic liabilities, polarizations, a structure made up a varied, uneven parts that do not match, do not fit together, and do not work together. Consequently the structure is somewhat loose, comes apart under the impact of stress and emotional tension, and is not equipped with resources for retooling and reconstruction of a more coordinated whole. The schizothymic and the cyclic types are among representative examples of such unevenly constituted forms. . . . It encompasses total mental fragmentation as in psychosis and drug-induced states, a middle range of more stereotyped forms of behavior – inferiority toward others, dependency, need to conform, seeking approval and admiration – and at the other extreme *partially integrated* forms that convey certain degree of stability” (Piechowski, 1977, pp. 23-26).
As far as I can tell, this is the first introduction of Dr. Piechowski’s revised emphasis of Level II: de-emphasizing disintegration, fragmentation, and normalizing the level by focusing on social conformity:

“Level II: Fluctuations between opposite feelings and extremes of mood; changeable and contradictory courses of action; dependence on social opinion (“what will others say”) coupled with feelings of inferiority, sometimes alternating with feelings of superiority. Plenty of feeling but going in all directions, often confused” (Piechowski, 1979b, p. 138 italics added).

[It bears emphasizing that the reader should consult the original materials for a full and fair representation of both Dr. Piechowski and Dr. Dąbrowski]
In de-emphasizing disintegration, Piechowski (2008, p. 75) said: “I feel that Dąbrowski extolled the virtues of inner conflict perhaps too much, as he believed in the ennobling value of suffering but failed to mention that the ennobling is possible only if one accepts the suffering as something to grow through. Acceptance is essential. It is one of the lessons from the lives of Peace Pilgrim, Etty Hillesum, and Ashley. Rather than condemning, accepting one’s inner ‘what is’ as the starting point is a vital step in emotional growth toward realizing “what ought to be” (Piechowski, 2003).”
Piechowski (1997, p. 374) is a good illustration of his revised vision of level II:

“Level II: Unilevel Disintegration Individuals are influenced primarily by their social group and by mainstream values, or they are moral relativists for whom ‘anything goes’ morally speaking. They often exhibit ambivalent feelings and indecisive flip-flop behavior because they have no clear-cut set of self-determined internal values. Inner conflicts are horizontal, a contest between equal, competing values. *A reed shaken in the wind*—Matthew, XI, 7”
Dr. Piechowski is passionate in his views of level II:

"Like Level I, unilevel growth also tends to be looked down upon with multilevel condescension. And it is equally unjustified and offensive. . . . Unilevel development characterizes those in whom a sense of self is undeveloped. Such individuals depend on external authority for a sense of who they are, derived from their function, domestic or other" (Piechowski, 2002, p. 180).

"Over the years I have come to the understanding that many developmental paths are possible and that emotional growth can take place in Level II even though it lacks multilevel character" (Piechowski, 2009, p. 71).

"Partial disintegrations and partial integrations [in Level II] are surely more common than the pathologies" (Piechowski, 2009, pp. 71-71).
“I feel very strongly that emotional growth within the unilevel universe of Level II should not be underestimated but respected and explored further. This raises the question as to whether it is possible to facilitate a transition to multilevel emotional growth if a person’s developmental potential is limited. And is it possible to imagine a harmonious society without a multilevel majority? I feel it is possible—to imagine” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).

“Level II is not always characterized by disintegration, because it carries the possibility of partial integration, or adaptive integration, that follows the conventions and dictates of society and one’s immediate environment” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 69).
In reference to Level II: “I find it misleading to call something a disintegration when it also contains an integration” (Piechowski, 2014a, p. 13).

“Unilevel disintegration (level II) cannot become multilevel unless the multilevel ‘own forces’* are present. A flatland does not become a mountain unless there is a force to push it upward. Only with the emergence of an inner psychic milieu and the transformative dynamisms of level III (such as dissatisfaction with oneself, inferiority toward oneself, dis-identification from what is felt to be lower in oneself), the process may continue to the next level (IV) when persons become more in charge . . .
• ... of their inner growth as an organized multilevel disintegration. Finally, full selfhood is achieved in secondary integration (level V)” (Piechowski, 2014b, p. 37).

• “Dąbrowski named the ‘own forces’ of the psyche the ‘third factor,’ next to the social milieu (second factor), and one’s constitution (first factor), as the shapers of personality development” (Piechowski, 2014b, p. 32).

• Dr. Piechowski now says the average person is at Level II, a level he now calls “unilevel growth process” (email, March 21, 2018).

• “Level II represents unilevel development in which disintegration may occur. There is still no development in Dąbrowski’s sense, but there is movement that may go in the direction of Level III” (email, March 27, 2018).
Dr. Dąbrowski named Level II to reflect its basic feature: unilevel disintegration, characterized by brief, often intense crises between equivalent alternatives.

Dr. Dąbrowski stressed the intense, transitional nature of Level II: “Prolongation of unilevel disintegration often leads to reintegration on a lower level, to suicidal tendencies, or to psychosis” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 7).

Unless one falls back to Level I or progresses on to Level III, one chronically at Level II risks finding oneself in “a trap of a rapidly growing mental tension” – a drama “without exit” (Dąbrowski, 1970, p. 135).

Level II: “perhaps they present twenty percent of all people” (quoted in Rankel, 2008).
Summary: There are now two different constructs describing Level II:

1). Dr. Dąbrowski: Level II is a transitional level, typified by the intense crises of unilevel disintegration.

2). Dr. Piechowski: Level II should be called “unilevel growth process” and include the average person being influenced by 2nd factor. “Disintegration may occur. There is still no development in Dąbrowski’s sense but there is movement that may go in the direction of Level III.”
The removal of primary integration (but retaining Level I as “moral disengagement”) and to view Level II as dominated by second factor and only partly involving disintegration, and changing the names of the levels, represent major theoretical departures from Dr. Dąbrowski’s theory – it is no longer appropriate to refer to it as “Dąbrowski’s theory” with these changes.

The lower levels are critical because Dr. Dąbrowski explicitly described lower and higher levels in order to account for both the lowest and highest behaviors seen in humans. He proposed mechanisms by which development can occur (PD and ML), to move from the lowest levels to the higher. Finally, he proposed prerequisites for this growth – development potential.
Dr. Dąbrowski defined developmental potential as “The constitutional endowment which determines the character and the extent of mental growth possible for a given individual” (Dąbrowski, 1972, p. 293).

Dr. Dąbrowski included: The three factors of development; Dynamisms; Psychoneuroses; Positive disintegration; Developmental instinct; Creative instinct; Instinct for self-perfection; Overexcitability; Special talents and abilities.

Dr. Piechowski presented a narrowed view of DP: “The main part of the paper is a description of five forms of psychic overexcitability – the principal components of the developmental potential” (Piechowski, 1979a, p. 27).

Here he said: “The defining characteristics of DP are five forms of overexcitability and special talents and abilities” (Piechowski, 1979a, p. 28).
Here he gives a different emphasis: “The defining characteristics of DP are forms of overexcitability and developmental dynamisms” (Piechowski, 1975b, p. 250).

“Under optimal conditions, even children with limited developmental potential can grow up to be good citizens with a strong sense of fairness” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 54).

“Speculating about . . . developmental potential, we came up with two terms: conserving and transforming. Potential for conserving growth would allow it to continue through Level II close to Level III, but not any further. Transforming growth, however, would continue” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 74).
Dr. Piechowski now appears to outline two approaches to development and to developmental potential:

1). Following Dąbrowski’s approach: “Personal growth is much like scaling a mountain rather than a sequential unfolding of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Imagining personal growth as ascent of a mountain, with all of the peril, tests of courage, and perseverance, suggests that not everyone has the strength, endurance, and determination to go far; few manage to reach the summit. Also, not everyone is interested in climbing and may prefer to remain in the valley. Some may not even be aware of the mountain. The endowment for how far in scaling the figurative mountain an individual can go constitutes developmental potential. An endowment for multilevel development signifies that a person starts already a significant distance up the slope. A person with limited potential starts in the valley and does not reach far” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 64).
2). Dr. Piechowski reviewed cases of “unilevel development” at Level II, concluding these cases represent significant growth:

- “This raises the question as to whether it is possible to facilitate a transition to multilevel emotional growth if a person’s developmental potential is limited” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).

- “The above examples show that not all material has to be generated from the framework of Dąbrowski’s theory. Research literature can be explored to flesh out some of his concepts in living color.” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).
“Recall the example of Ralph, that showed how optimal families raise children who are responsible, who have a strong sense of fairness and justice, and who care for others even when their DP is short on the critical overexcitabilities, emotional and intellectual. Child development research has indeed established that the optimal conditions for growing up are like those that Ralph’s parents created (Bowlby, 1969; Sroufe, 1995)” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).

Summary: Dr. Piechowski appears to outline two growth processes; one reflecting TPD, governed by DP (ascent of a mountain), and another path (unilevel development) “not generated from” Dąbrowski’s TPD, and apparently much less dependent on DP.
Issue 4: A Strong Focus on Overexcitability.

- Dr. Piechowski’s emphasis was mostly on overexcitability: this contributed to a different and narrower view of TPD in the gifted field. For example, he did not discuss positive disintegration, psychoneuroses or the major constructs of TPD in his 1979 chapter (Piechowski, 1979a).

- Example: Some authors have referred to “Dąbrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities” (Ngara, 2017).

- In his definition of developmental potential, he left out the third factor: “The defining characteristics of DP are five forms of overexcitability and special talents and abilities” (Piechowski, 1979a, p. 28).

- Dr. Piechowski seldom mentions the third factor when he discusses developmental potential.
Dr. Piechowski later offered a rationale for not discussing psychoneuroses or positive disintegration:

“Therapy was seen as something for sick people, it carried a stigma. But gifted children were living under the dark cloud of old myths that they are odd, abnormal, weak or sickly. To try to explain psychoneuroses in that climate would have been disastrous” (Piechowski, 2009, p. 71).

Research on OE has often been conducted without reference to TPD, or to the other components of DP (e.g. third factor, instincts, dynamisms, etc.).

[Please do not get the impression that I think the abysmal state of affairs in TPD research is Dr. Piechowski’s fault – it clearly is not].
Issue 4: A Strong Focus on Overexcitability.

- Ironically, research on OE in the gifted field has now been criticized for the “atheoretical use of OEs that seems to be rampant in the field” (Vuyk, Kerr, & Krieshok, 2016, p. 60) “without connecting them to Dąbrowski’s larger TPD” (Vuyk, Krieshok, & Kerr, 2016, p. 193).

- A study of depersonalization disorder (DPD) used “the overexcitability theoretical model” and the OEQ-II, finding “participants with clinical levels of depersonalization manifested increased emotional overexcitability to internal and external stimuli” (Thomson & Jaque, 2018, p. 155).

- This article did not mention, or refer to, Dr. Dąbrowski or to the theory of positive disintegration.
Initially: “The concept of multilevelness is thus the starting point for the analysis of all forms of behavior and their development. It represents a ‘new system of thought,’ suited to represent developmental approach on the official map of psychology” (Piechowski, 1975b, p.246).

Subsequently: “And is it possible to imagine a harmonious society without a multilevel majority? I feel it is possible – to imagine” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 72).

Questions: What is Dr. Piechowski’s overall approach to development? To multilevelness? So, if you can imagine a harmonious society without multilevelness, then what would a harmonious society be based on? What is the ideal goal of individual development, if not multilevelness?

In my opinion, while Dr. Piechowski could imagine this, Dr. Dąbrowski would not endorse the idea.
Issue 5: Dąbrowski’s View of Multilevelness.

- Ideal individual growth is achieving multilevelness, and seeking autonomy and one’s personality ideal.
- Multilevel exemplars (see Zagzebski, 2011, 2013, 2017):
  - herald the next step in human evolution.
  - serve as role models of what is possible.
  - challenge one to take active control of one’s development and strive for ideals and growth.
- Today, society is based upon primary integration, with self-centered, self-serving unilevel values.
- An ideal society would be based upon a majority of multilevel individuals and on multilevel principles, values and ideals, reflecting other-centered motives.
Issue 6: The Role of Self-actualization.

- From material Piechowski added to the 1977 books:
  - “We shall try to demonstrate that Maslow’s concept of SA fits the structure of Level IV and that, consequently, the traits of SA logically follow from that structure” (Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977, pp. 158-159).
  - “Self-actualization, as a psychological norm suggested by Maslow, now finds support in the framework of the theory of positive disintegration as an attribute of the Level IV structure” (Dąbrowski & Piechowski, 1977, pp. 218-219).
  - “The correspondence between Saint Exupéry’s material and SA and between the terms of SA and the terms of positive disintegration shows that the structure of Level IV underlies all of the characteristics of SA” (Piechowski, 1978, p. 229).
Issue 6: Self-actualization and Level IV.

“In Level IV, we have an explicit and detailed developmental structure which accounts for the pervasiveness and the cohesion of the traits of SA” (Piechowski, 1978, p. 230).


“The morally gifted do not need to fully represent the level of self-actualization demanded by Dąbrowski’s theory, but the strength of their emotional overexcitability and of the developmental dynamisms that move them in the direction of self-actualization, is the guarantee of their higher moral discernment” (Piechowski, 1979a, p. 51, italics in original).
Issue 6: Self-actualization and Level IV.

• “Objections to equating self-actualization with Level IV came not only from Dąbrowski but also from people who read Saint-Exupéry’s biography and found that his relationship with his wife was less than ideal and that he had a mistress. This violated Dąbrowski’s saying that people at a high level of development have deep and loyal relationships” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 57).

• “Perhaps the question to decide is this: Do all self-actualizing people meet the criteria of Dąbrowski’s Level IV? The reverse, all people who meet the criteria of Level IV are self-actualizing, can be safely assumed to be true” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 60).
Issue 6: Self-actualization and Level IV.

• “Piechowski (1978) showed the close correspondence between these two theoretical frameworks – Maslow’s and Dąbrowski’s” (Brennan & Piechowski, 1991, p. 58).

• “This study was carried out on the assumption that Maslow’s self-actualization and Dąbrowski’s Level 4 are different constructs of the same underlying phenomenon” (Brennan & Piechowski, 1991, p. 58).

• “The demonstration that Maslow’s construct of self-actualization and Level 4 in Dąbrowski’s theory have an exact correspondence (Piechowski, 1978) is of particular significance” (Brennan & Piechowski, 1991, p. 61).

• “There has not been, until now, a method of identifying self-actualizing people. Maslow left no case studies, no instruments have been developed from individual cases of bona fide self-actualizers nor tested out on them” (Brennan & Piechowski, 1991, p. 60) [see Shostrom, 1964].
Issue 6: Self-actualization and Level IV.

“The fit between Level IV as the structural skeleton and self-actualization as the flesh of rich description with which to cover the bones is too good not to be true” (Piechowski, 2008, p. 58).

“Self-actualization fits into Level IV (p. 283) . . . At Level IV, we encounter true self-actualizing people (p. 292) . . . The theory has one more level beyond self-actualization because Dąbrowski looked at these extraordinary people first and did not concern himself whether they existed in statistically significant numbers” (Piechowski, 2003, p. 314).
“As Saint-Exupéry was Dąbrowski’s choice, [of an example of a Level IV person] I submitted [a] paper under my name and his. I sent a copy to Dąbrowski but got no response. It took almost two years before I got the galleys. They came without Dąbrowski’s name on them. As it turned out, he wrote to the editor of *Genetic Psychology Monographs* asking that his name be dropped from the paper. To his credit, he did not block the publication, but it was odd that he did not inform me of his decision. So I asked him, and he explained that every paper on his theory should have his name as the first author. However, there was also another reason. He felt strongly that Maslow’s belief that satisfaction of lower needs would more or . . .
Issue 6: “Dąbrowski Just Didn’t Understand.”

... less automatically move people toward self-actualization was fundamentally wrong. He didn’t know that Maslow had changed his position and realized that self-actualization does not necessarily follow satisfaction of all of the needs below (Maslow, 1971). I believe he must not have read Maslow’s description of self-actualizing people nor gotten through my paper (it is rather dense). His conclusion was that his theory and Maslow’s could not be commensurate. He never understood that by providing a theoretical structure for Maslow’s concept of self-actualization, his theory was showing its power. Here were two independently developed conceptions that had a perfect correspondence. How often does this happen?” (Piechowski, 2008, pp. 56-57).
Issue 6: They Never Understood.

• “It is a pity that Dąbrowski never understood that placing self-actualizing people within the structure of his theory, rather than diminish it, showed its power” (Piechowski, 2009, p. 73).

• “Dąbrowski never understood, nor do Mendaglio and Tillier, that Maslow’s work was a confirmation of his construct of Level IV and that this gave evidence of the power of his theory as a framework enabling us to see other findings in relation to each other” (Piechowski, 2015, p. 232).

• Dąbrowski related several issues he had with Maslow to me.* One related to Maslow not qualitatively differentiating animals and humans. As well, he felt that Maslow’s approach to self-actualization was unilevel.  

*See the section on Maslow.
Mendaglio and Tillier (2015, p. 220) suggested two possible resolutions:

(a) Piechowski might differentiate his work from that of the originator of the theory as Jung did [from Freud] and propose his own theory under his own name or, alternatively,

(b) he could take the approach that Robbie Case did in developing a neo-Piagetian theory and integrate his views in a neo-Dąbrowskian, conceptualization, amending TPD to reflect a Piechowskian perspective” [put forth under his own name].

Dr. Piechowski replied (2015).
Dr. Piechowski has made a number of observations of TPD that have influenced the literature.

Initially, confusion arose as his ideas were not clearly differentiated from Dąbrowski’s.

Awareness of these issues is critical for those who want to fully understand and apply Dąbrowski’s TPD.


His second “rethinking” article was Piechowski (2017).
Dr. Piechowski rejected Dr. Dąbrowski’s view of Level II as transitional and dominated by unilevel disintegration:

“The concept of unilevel disintegration, however, cannot be applied wholly to Level II because the majority of lives identified within this level are more or less stable. Even Dąbrowski’s concept of partial integration seems to have limited application because it implies that there is some ‘disintegration’ going on or that the person is chronically on the brink of one. This makes little sense. Instead, we should conclude that the lives of most people follow the stages of lifespan development and that some may be so unreflective that they match Level I and others are somewhat more reflective and match Level II” (Piechowski, 2017, p. 93, italics added).
Summary – 3.

I have included this quote in the summary because it succinctly captures the dilemma: Dr. Piechowski says that some of Dr. Dąbrowski’s constructs “make little sense” and he favors different conclusions.

The quote also illustrates another dilemma: Dr. Piechowski’s occasional contradictions.

Example: He concluded “the lives of most people follow the stages of lifespan development” (Piechowski, 2017, p. 93). Yet in the opening paragraphs of this same paper, Dr. Piechowski rejected a stage approach: “The challenge in understanding the theory lies in the fact that the levels are not successive stages but represent different types of development” (Piechowski, 2017, p. 87).
• In summary, in my opinion, rather than “rethinking Dąbrowski’s theory,” both Dr. Piechowski and the gifted community would be better served if he developed his own constructs and promoted his own theory that could then be compared to Dr. Dąbrowski’s original.

• It is critical that future scholars have available Dr. Dąbrowski’s original constructs as he wrote them, to compare with Dr. Piechowski’s (and others), to design future research to address some of these critical questions – for example, the nature of levels I and II.

• In my opinion, theory building and research based upon the interpretations of others will not advance our understanding of the theory of positive disintegration.
Misattributions to Dr. Piechowski – 1.

• For some reason there has been a lot of confusion when authors refer to the relative contributions of Dr. Dąbrowski and Dr. Piechowski.

• I attribute this confusion to inadequate research rigor on the part of subsequent authors.

• Examples: “Based on the work of Polish psychologist, Dąbrowski, Piechowski (1979, 1986) theorizes that extreme sensitivity or overexcitability indicates potential for high levels of development, particularly for self-actualization and moral vigor. . . . In Piechowski’s theory, there are five levels of personality development from lowest to highest: Level (1) self-centered; Level (2) inner fragmentation and conforming to expectations of others; Level (3) vulnerable autonomy; Level (4) self-actualization, and Level (5) universal compassion and self-sacrifice” (Cohen & Ambrose, 1993, p. 344).
• “The past experiences provided Dąbrowski food for serious thought and certainly enriched fodder for developing his theory which, later, his colleague, Piechowski (2003), adapted to create the continuum of five developmental levels in personality structure: primary integration, unilevel disintegration, multilevel disintegration, directed multilevel disintegration, and secondary integration” (Chia, 2017, p. 651).

• Vuyk (2015, p. 15) said: “Later, Piechowski (1979, 2006), who was a student of Dąbrowski, described five areas of heightened sensitivity or OEs that represented developmental potential and could lead to this advanced development.”

• [Dąbrowski elaborated the overexcitabilities (1972, pp. 6-7)].
Misrepresentations.

- Theory building involves generating hypotheses, testing hypotheses by research, revision of theory and more research.
- Interpretations by others are not an issue if clearly identified as such and differentiated from the original.
- Unfortunately, we often see mistakes or major misunderstandings in reference to Dąbrowski, apparently based on limited or out of context readings or based on inaccurate reading of secondary sources.
- As always, the definitive source is reading and understanding what Dąbrowski wrote himself.
Examples of Misrepresentations – 1.

• Ruf (1999) studied 41 highly gifted adults.
• “The sort of severe emotional turmoil of positive disintegrations was not apparent in Level II people” (Ruf, 1999, p. 65).
• “The very process of positive disintegration, a Level III experience, requires a letting go of old notions” (Ruf, 1999, p. 66).
• “five subjects all appeared to be self-actualized, but the last three gave evidence of approaching Level V” (Ruf, 1999, p. 81).
• “Dąbrowski Level IV/V Three subjects appeared to be comfortably self-actualized, so much so that they were closing in on their ‘personality ideal’” (Ruf, 1999, p. 66).
• “nine of the study subjects, 22%” attained self-actualization (Ruf, 1999, p. 123).
• Ruf (1999) classified her subjects into Dąbrowski’s “emotional levels” but the words unilevel and multilevel do not appear in the thesis – she did not differentiate levels of disintegration.
• These descriptions and findings do not resonate with either Dąbrowski or Maslow.
Examples of Misrepresentations – 2.

- Ruf (1999, p. 24) inaccurately stated: “Piechowski has been the principle translator of Dąbrowski’s work.”
- “Dąbrowski went one step further than either Kohlberg or Maslow in conceptualizing his levels of emotional development; he envisioned an attainment of a personality ideal. In effect, once people are self-actualized, they aspire to define and meet their own personal goals for the kind of people they really ought to and want to be” (Ruf, 1999, p. 26).
- “Level II people tend to function well in society. They understand and generally abide by the rules, stated and unstated. They understand the culture of their society and try to fit in and show pride and pleasure when they do. Positive feedback that they have succeeded to meet or exceed society’s norms is often important and encouraging to Level II people” (Ruf, 1999, p. 60).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 3.


- “According to Dąbrowski’s clinical observations, people with overexcitabilities are neurotically allergic or nervous” (Chang & Kuo, 2013).

- Circuitous referencing: “The concept of ‘overexcitability’ (OE) was first introduced by Dąbrowski (1938; cited in Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984) as a means to understand individual differences in intensity and sensitivity in responses to stimuli (see also Piechowski, 2006)” (He & Wong, 2014).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 4.

- “In Dr. Dąbrowski’s day, overexcitabilities were thought to be the core trait of psychological development. Succeeding researchers further broadened this idea. It can be applied to identify gifted and talented students. It is correlated to IQ, it predicts cognitive abilities, there are correlations between OEs and gender, OEs and age, it predicts creativity or creative personalities, and it predicts psychological adjustment. Although the results of these studies are not identical, the main findings in these dimensions were almost consistent, suggesting that the use of OE patterns has a statistically meaningful correlation with predicting these dimensions” (Chang & Kuo, 2013).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 5.

- “Dąbrowski (Dąbrowski, 1938; Miller, Silvermany [sic], & Falk, 1995; Silverman, 1993) indicated five dimensions of heightened psychological responses presented by gifted and talented students: psychomotor (POEs; pressure for action), sensual (SOEs; sensate pleasures), imaginational (MOEs; active imagination), intellectual (TOEs; intellectual and moral pursuits), and emotional overexcitabilities (EOEs; intense connectedness with others)” (Kuo, et al 2014).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 6.

- “My list of intensities varies only in that I use the term ‘creative intensity’ rather than ‘imaginational.’ This not only better describes the intensity, but also enables a nifty little acronym for the intensities, SPICE, since the intensities are the spice of life” . . .

- “These intensities correspond to the symptoms of ADHD perfectly, except that they identify the whole intensity instead of just focusing on the negative aspects”

- [Dąbrowski called the third element]. . . . “This third element is exactly what I have been describing throughout this book: intensity” (all from Burge, 2012).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 7.

- “These heightened and intense characteristics are known as overexcitabilities and are claimed as universal characteristics of gifted individuals (Webb et al., 2005)” (Alias et al. 2013).

- “According to Daniels and Meckstroth (2009), Dąbrowski had stated that an individual who possesses more than one overexcitability characteristic is a gifted and talented individual” (Alias et al 2013).

- “These overexcitabilities form the foundation of Dąbrowski’s theory of positive disintegration (Dąbrowski, 1964), a theory of self-actualisation which develops to a high level in only certain individuals” (White, 2014).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 8.

• “Dąbrowskian theory notes that although strong psychotic reactions can be potentially negative, resulting in neuroses and existential crises, they are part of the necessary conditions that can lead to positive disintegration, which is the developmental process of moving from lower to higher levels of emotional and moral development (Bouchard, 2004, p. 341)” (Strohm, 2017, p. 19).

• “Having a spirit for (or emotional intensity, restless passion and self-exertion) also expresses a similar phenomenon to that articulated in Dąbrowski’s Theory of ‘Overexcitabilities’ described by Piechowski (2002) as the ‘heart and fire’ of giftedness which ‘rings loud and clear’” (Ngara, 2017, p. 4).
Examples of Misrepresentations – 9.

- I have included this statement here primarily because it appears to be unsupported by any research to date.
- “TPD is best known in the field of gifted education because the gifted exhibit above-average capacities to achieve, and operate at, higher levels of personality disintegration, and reintegration” (Eiserman, Lai, & Rushton, 2017, p. 198).
11. Acknowledgments.

My thanks to James Duncan for his meticulous review of this presentation and his many helpful comments.
Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing direction. You change direction, but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn’t something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn’t get in, and walk through it, step by step. There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverised bones.
That’s the kind of sandstorm you need to imagine. And that’s exactly what I do. I imagine a white funnel stretching vertically up like a thick rope. My eyes are closed tight, hands cupped over my ears, so those fine grains of sand can’t blow inside me. The sandstorm draws steadily closer. I can feel the air pressing on my skin. It really is going to swallow me up. . . . And you really will have to make it through that violent, metaphysical, symbolic storm. No matter how metaphysical or symbolic it might be, make no mistake about it: it will cut through flesh like a thousand razor blades. People will bleed there, and you will bleed too. Hot, red blood. You’ll catch that blood in your hands, your own blood and the blood of others.
And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.