

# The Philosophical Foundations of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration Part 3: Friedrich Nietzsche and Dabrowski.

Presented by Bill Tillier at the  
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Positive Maladjustment:  
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**“If you want to be a different fish,  
you have to jump out of the school”**

**Captain Beefheart (Don Van Vliet).**

- The first presentation in this series outlined the major and many influences of Plato's basic ideas on Dabrowski's thinking (2000).
- The second presentation in this series dealt with the major influence that Kierkegaard had on Dabrowski (2002). Dabrowski was also influenced by several other existential thinkers, including; Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Jaspers, Henri Bergson and Miguel de Unamuno.
- This third presentation examines the influence of Nietzsche and follows up on a presentation by Dr. J. G. McGraw on Nietzsche and Dabrowski from the 2002 Congress, held in Fort Lauderdale.

- Dabrowski was influenced by two major philosophical approaches: essentialism and existentialism:
  - The individual has certain innate essences (Plato).
  - The individual has a degree of individual freedom that he or she must exercise to become an authentic individual.
- Dabrowski combined both approaches in what he called the “existentio-essentialist compound”\* but he felt that ultimately, 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).

\*(see Dynamics of Concepts).

- Synopsis: The individual must realize the necessity of choice in actively making their 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.” (Existentialism, 1947)
- Existentialism is not a unified philosophical approach. There are many diverse sources and approaches:
  - Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Husserl, Unamuno, Kafka, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus.

- Division in existentialism between theists and atheists:
  - Man is alone on earth, but with God in Heaven to act as our ultimate judge: (Kierkegaard and Jaspers, Dabrowski).
  - Man is alone on earth – there is no God: (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus).
  - Both approaches emphasize individual choice: in the atheistic, we alone choose, there is no God to judge us.
- 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.

- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900):
  - Born in 1844 in Röcken, Saxony, in what was then Prussia.
  - An excellent student, he began studying classical philology at the University of Bonn.
  - At 24, made professor of philology at the University of Basel.
  - Served as a medical orderly during the Franco-Prussian War. He saw and experienced the traumatic effects of battle.
  - In 1879, he resigned his teaching position due to several grim health issues that plagued him the rest of his life.
  - Began a prolific period of writing but often struggled, printing copies of his books himself and giving them to friends.
  - He and his sister, Elizabeth, had frequent conflicts and reconciliations.

# Friedrich Nietzsche – 2

- Friends with and influenced by Paul Rée, also a German philosopher:
  - Rée combined a pessimistic view of human nature with a theory of morality based on natural selection (Darwin).
- Nietzsche also befriends the intellectual and free spirited, Lou Andreas-Salomé.
- Lou lived with both men in an asexual (?) friendship until Nietzsche's unrequited love (and his sister) forced a break.
  - Lou marries Andreas (their unconsummated marriage lasting 43 years): 14 years later Rée commits suicide, seemingly over her.
  - Lou was later a lover of & 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” Ernest Jones, *The life and work of Sigmund Freud*, II, 1955, p. 344.

- Nietzsche struggled with bouts of illness (including severe migraines and stomach bleeding), depression, suicidal thoughts and relative isolation.
- In 1889 he had a sudden mental breakdown and became psychotic (most think it was due to syphilis of the brain).
- The uncommunicative Nietzsche was cared for by his mother, then by Elisabeth, until his death in 1900.
- Elisabeth also took over the management of his papers.
  - Elisabeth was noted for marrying Bernhard Förster, an anti-Semitic agitator. In 1886 they founded Nueva Germania in the Paraguay jungle, later a hideout for escaped Nazis (including Josef Mengele).
- It is accepted that Elisabeth injected her own ideas and altered or distorted at least some of Nietzsche's works.
- (Nietzsche's works were later used by the Nazis).

- Socrates created a false representation of what is real, making morality a set of external ideas (“objects of dialectic”) and with it, “real” Man degenerated into the “the good Man,” “the wise Man,” etc.
- Plato further 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 held power at some given time – these “herd moralities” of good and evil deny us our individuality of finding our own values and 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” (WP159)\*.
  - “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” (GM35-36).

\*page numbers given

- Ultimately, one finds out that the “truth” and various otherworlds (like Heaven) are literal fabrications, built by Man and reflecting his psychological needs, designed to promote the smooth succession of the status quo and to provide individuals with security.
- Knowledge and truth are provisional and 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” (WP291).
  - “Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies” (Human, all too human179).

- Nietzsche saw no ultimate or deeper meaning or purpose to the world or to human existence – Nietzsche (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” (Human all too human 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.

- 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 on their inherent, individual freedoms and responsibilities and on the here-and-now world, and away from all escapist, pain-relieving, heavenly otherworlds (GS167).
- A Godless world means that we are alone on earth and cannot resort to a deity to guide us or to absolve our sins (responsibilities). We are now free to – and must – create our own, new, moral ideals and we must take absolute responsibility for our own actions – this can only be done by rejecting external, metaphysical or religious ideals.

- Nietzsche uses the terms Apollonian and Dionysus to refer to two principles in Greek culture (see BT).
- Apollonian is the basis for all analytic distinctions and everything that is part of the unique individual is Apollonian as is all structure and form.
- Dionysus is directly opposed to the Apollonian, it is drunkenness and madness and these forces break down the individual's character. Enthusiasm and ecstasy are examples as is music as it appeals to one's instinctive emotions and not to the rational mind.
- Nietzsche believed that a tension between the two forces was necessary to create true tragedy and his life seems to have displayed both factors as well.



# Three Developmental Outcomes

- Nietzsche says that as a species, man is not progressing. Higher types appear but do not last.
- Nietzsche delineated three possible outcomes:
  - The “herd” or “slave” masses made up of “the last man,” content, comfort seeking conformers with no motive to develop: if we don’t aspire to be more, this is where we end up. (Wilber 2006: “70% of the world’s population are [ethnocentric] Nazis.”)
  - Many “higher men:” a type of human who needs to “be more” and who “writes his or her own story.”
  - Nietzsche also describes the ideal human – a few “Superhumans,” a role model to strive for, but that may be too unrealistic for most people to achieve.

- Nietzsche calls the highest mode of being the *übermenschlich*:
  - Common translations: “the Superman” or “overman” or “hyperman”
    - über: from the Latin for super
    - ὑπέρ: Greek for hyper
    - Menschlich: German for Human being.

- Nietzsche outlines a hierarchy of spiritual development in what he calls three “metamorphoses of the spirit” entailing a progression from:
  - The camel (“the average man”) who slavishly bears the load & obeys the “thou shalt” with little protest,
  - to the lion (a “higher man”) who says “no” and violently kills the status quo of “thou shalt,”
  - culminating in the child (Superman), who says an emphatic and “sacred Yes” to life and creates a new reality and a new self – the child applies his or her will in developing and achieving unique values and developing autonomy.

(see TSZ54).

- The camel carries the “weight of the spirit,” kneeling to accept its load, just as we kneel to carry the weight of what we believe are our duties – the “herd morality.” We feel guilt if we don’t maintain the burden.
- In doing our duties, some may come to have doubts. One heavy blow is the discovery that wisdom and knowledge are only apparent. We slowly discover there is no fundamental bedrock supporting “truth” and we realize that we live in a world devoid of eternal standards.
- As the camel finds the solitude of the desert, the truth seeker also must find and deal with solitude.

- In transforming, the camel becomes a lion, as “it wants to capture freedom & be lord in its own desert” (TSZ54).
  - Camel: an unquestioning slave – a beast of burden.
  - But the might of the lion – a beast of prey, willing to say NO and to kill, is required to capture 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 and accept as truth and what we must do (and our corresponding love of compliance to these rules). Capturing freedom creates an opportunity – a “freedom for new creation.”
- The lion has the will to create new realities.

- 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 sense of the "thou shalt" of the herd – he or she has not yet been acculturated (e.g. *The Little Prince*).
- The child ("superman") represents a new beginning of individuality – "the spirit now wills its own will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins its own world" (TSZ55).

- 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” (WP366).
- Rejecting pleasure as a core motivator, Nietzsche suggests that “every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become *more* –” (WP367).
- 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.

- Three steps to become a Superman:
  - 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*.
- One is largely constituted by one's genealogy – Superhumans take control of their genealogies and write their own stories (members of the herd have their life stories written for them).



- 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 and now decides to return to describe 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 where a crowd has gathered to see the circus act of a tight-rope walker and they accept him as part of the circus.

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.”

- “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. . .” (TSZ41-42).
- “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” (TSZ43).
- “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” (TSZ44).

- We must cross the abyss to create ourselves, our ideals and to become Superhuman.
- There are 3 possible outcomes:
  - to not try and simply stay in the herd,
  - to try to cross but fail (and fall into the abyss),
  - or to try to cross and succeed.

- The crowd reject Zarathustra's story and he says to us: "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'" (TSZ297).
- 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" (TSZ49).

- The herd uncritically take their ideals of “good & evil” from the cultural & religious conventions of the day:
  - Nietzsche calls on us to resist the impulse to submit to “slave morality” and to “undertake a critique of the moral evaluations themselves” (WP215).
- Zarathustra says the Superman must overcome his or her acculturated self and apply the will to power to a momentous new creativity – to building a truly autonomous self.
- Supermen 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].

- “Fundamental thought: the new values must first be created – we shall not be *spared* this task!” (WP512).
- The 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!” (TSZ213).
- Summary: The Superman creates a unique new “master morality” reflecting the strength and independence of a self freed from all “old” acculturated, herd values. Now, an individual can review current conventions, reject values, adopt old values that he or she deems as valid, or create new values reflecting his or her unique self and ideals.

- “Eternal recurrence” is the idea that one might be forced to relive every moment of one’s life over & over, with no omissions, however small, happy or painful.  
(Think of the movie *Groundhog Day* but without Bill Murray)
- This idea encourages us to see that our current life is all there is – we must wake up to the “the real world” we actually live in, and live in the present – there is no escape to other (future) lives or to “higher” worlds.
- Nietzsche says only a Superman can face eternal recurrence and embrace this life in its entirety and face the idea that this is all there is, and all there will be, for eternity.



- The Superhuman also gains a new perspective that brings about his or her own redemption – the endlessly recurring pains & 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).

- The Superman uses his or her 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?” (TSZ89).
- This process represents the rebirth of Man and the creation of new, human, life-affirming values in *this* real and finite (temporal) world. These new beliefs lie in our intrinsic will to be more, the ability to transcend and to constantly overcome our old self, and to create new life and works.

- Personality incorporates 3 prototypes with 3 instincts:
  - the beauty creator (artist), [instinct of feeling]
  - the truth seeker (philosopher) [instinct of reason]
  - and 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 Superman.
- The “wisest” person is one who has had a wide vertical [Multilevel] perspective and has experience from the deepest caverns to the mountaintops.
- Finally, Nietzsche says that development never reaches an endpoint, integration is never complete.

- For the rest of his life Zarathustra continues to try to advocate for the Superman.
- Nietzsche is anti-systemic and does 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 and, eventually, the lower stages will have to reappear and be repeated again.

- 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" (TSZ46).
- One must go through seven steps ("devils") on the way to personality development (see TSZ90).
- Overcoming also involves creating a new unity (McGraw: "synergy") of cognition, emotion & volition.
- The Superman becomes free (a "free spirit") and now sees the real world and his or her place in it clearly (& without the distortion of social and religious influence).

- The Superman develops a clear view of his or her “calling” [Personality Ideal] & must now obey this inner voice with the will to power, applying it to self-mastery.
- Often misinterpreted or misapplied, 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 & 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] (WP218).
- One overcomes oneself to become oneself: “*What does your conscience say?* – “You shall become the person you are” (GS219).

- In Nietzsche's view, few achieve what he calls personality (the Superman), most people are not personalities at all, or are just a confused, undisciplined and non-integrated jumble. Nietzsche said only a few are able or willing to "discover and to follow their fate."

- The Superman represents a new, stronger & ultimate morality that easily resists external social controls.
- Creates a small, “higher” ruling class, that humanity should foster: “the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars” (UM111).
- 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” (WP162).
- “The new philosopher can arise only in conjunction with a ruling caste, as its highest spiritualization” (WP512).



- 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" (WP363).
- 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 life (and none of the suffering of the Superman) (see WP363).

- Nietzsche describes a general developmental disintegration – suffering leads to a vertical separation, a rising up, of the “hero” from the herd, 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 company.
  - “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” (WP514).

- The Superman 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” (TSZ44).
  - “You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame: how could you become new, if you had not first become ashes!” (TSZ90).
- “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” (TSZ45).

- Supermen see that 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 the key traits of the Superman.
- “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’” (WP370).
- “The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering, do you not know that only *this* suffering has created all enhancements of man so far?” (BGE154).
- “[T]he path to one’s own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one’s own hell” (GS269).

- “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?” (BGE154).

- “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*” (WP224).
- “We, however, *want to become those we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves” (GS266).

- Illness plays a major role in this transformation, as Nietzsche says, he is “grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its ‘prejudice,’ . . . ” (BGE55).
- Suffering many serious health issues himself, Nietzsche defined health not as the absence of illness, rather, by how one faces and overcomes illness.
- Nietzsche says 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 a philosopher.

- Nietzsche describes 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 (WP428)
    - and also what we may read as overexcitability:



- . . . 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. . . .

- . . . 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” (WP428-429).

- 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*!” (Daybreak19).

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