TOWARD A HOLISTIC PSYCHOLOGY OF VALUING

(William J. Hague)

I was delighted to be given this opportunity to respond to Dr. Hague's article on valuing. I found it both moving and thought provoking, a beautiful departure from the dry prose I am frequently asked to review. In contrast to my usual reaction to manuscript (mod annoyance), Hague's article brought smiles, nods, excitement, reflective moments, a little angst, occasional bursts of laughter (drawing consternation from the passenger next to me on the plane), and even tears. My response focuses on four issues: (a) further clarification of Dabrowiak's theory, (b) Hague's contribution to the theory, (c) some major differences between Dabrowiak and Kohlberg's conceptions, and (d) the applicability of either theory to the valuing process in women.

Dr. Hague's treatment of Dabrowiak's theory was necessarily sketchy, because of the number of topics addressed and space constraints. Initiates of Dabrowiak's theory will find Hague's exposition illuminating, but the terminology alone could pose significant stumbling blocks to comprehension for the uninitiated. Terms such as positive disintegration, dynamisms, and overvalences, third factor, unilevel, organized multilevel disintegration, disposing and directing center, and so forth are not accessible in a few pages of text. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of supplementing Hague's description of the theory with a brief, nontechnical context in which to understand Dabrowiak's perspective on valuing.

Dabrowiak postulated a hierarchy of five levels of human development, each with a different value orientation. At Level I, there is an absence of reflection, and one is self-serving; at Level II (unilevel), one is dominated by group attitudes, and values are shifting and unstable; at Level III (multilevel), one begins to establish an inner hierarchy of values and to evaluate his or her behavior accordingly; at Level IV, the individual makes a commitment to actualizing those values; and at Level V (secondary integration), one is able to live in complete harmony within that value structure. The model can be perceived as a pyramid, with few cases reaching the pinnacle of human functioning: Level V. Yet, the existence of even one case portends the possibilities inherent in human development.

For the past 5 years, a group has met weekly at the University of Denver to conduct research with Dabrowiak's theory. After Dabrowiak's death in 1980, the Denver group renamed the theory of positive disintegration "Dabrowiak's Theory of Emotional Development," to associate the paradigm with its author and to call attention to its emphasis on the role of emotions in the developmental process. (Recently, this group incorporated under the title, the Denver Group for the Study of Advanced Development.) We have studied Dabrowiak's theory in relation to several other theories, including Kohlberg's and Gilligan's, and have developed methods of assessing Dabrowiak's levels and overvalences. Imbedded within Dr. Hague's article is a critical insight that will prove highly useful to us in our empirical investigations of levels of development.

Hagae distinguished between individual values at Level III and universal truths at Level IV in Dabrowiak's theory. Although he made this sound like a given within the theory itself, this may be his own contribution to the interpretation of the theory. It is a valuable insight philosophically and empirically. One of the philosophical questions raised by followers of Dabrowiak is whether or not these levels are absolute or discoverable. If values are individual at Level III and universal at Level IV, the answer to this question would be bound to level of development. At Level III, they would seem to be constructed (when actually they might be "dimly intuited"), whereas at Level IV they would be discovered. Through content analysis, the distinction between individual and universal values could be used as a means of differentiating subjects at Level III from those at Level IV.

Hagae's comparison of Kohlberg's theory and Dabrowiak's is pertinent, because the two theories have several common elements. The levels in both theories proceed from egocentric orientations to more encompassing, complex, humanist world views. Both theories assume an invariant sequence of stages, each stage qualitatively different from the previous ones. I believe, however, that Hagae neglected to mention two extremely important differences between the two theories.

First, in Kohlberg's theory, as in other stage theories, the higher stages grow out of the lower ones and incorporate the lower ones, so that less evolved conceptual structures are no longer available. In this regard, Dabrowiak's theory is unique. Levels develop independent of, and in conflict with, each other. The desire for group approval at Level II does not evolve from the self-centered orientation of Level I. The levels may coexist in the personality, and as the less evolved structure disintegrates, the more evolved structure gains in strength. This has an important bearing on the interpretation of inconsistencies in behavior.

A second, related difference is that Kohlberg distinguishes between empirical and performance whereas Dabrowiak does not. In Kohlberg's theory, it is possible to have high ethical judgments in response to hypothetical dilemmas and much lower moral actions in the face of real situations. In Dabrowiak's theory, one is judged by one's actions, and consistency or inconsistency between judgment and action is symptomatic of the individual's level of development.

At Level I, people have an egocentric orientation and their actions are consistent with their beliefs. They may appear inconsistent at times to others, because they are capable of deception, but their true motives are discovered, self-interest is revealed. At Level II, individuals are inconsistent, and Level III inconsistency prevails. At Level IV, individuals have shifting values and ideals, with no central core to guide them. At Level III, they have the ideals but often fail to turn those ideals into actions and then suffer their own moral failures. Levels IV and V are marked by increasing consistency between beliefs and actions. "What ought to be will be" is the hallmark of higher development.

Because of the split between one's thoughts and actions in Kohlberg's theory, subjects at Stage 4 (the highest stage) might only reach the middle level of Dabrowiak's hierarchy, (Hagae, 1977). Some of the examples Kohlberg gives of Stage 6 development, such as Martin Luther King and Socrates, obviously went beyond the point of thinking about what is right to living a life committed to those ideals. The richness of their lives far exceeds the philosophico-legal principles of Stage 6. Dabrowiak's theory enables one to examine the committed life according to a set of specific principles—authenticity, autonomy, compassion, responsibility, integrity, and harmony.

Gilligan, like Dabrowiak, speaks more of one's actions as abstractions. Her research points to the need to determine whether to act; to act within them—no hypothetical dilemma. I was pleased that Hagae included Gilligan, albeit tangentially, in his discussion of valuing. But I feel that he skirted the issue of whether there is a feminine framework for moral development that is different from the traditional masculine. I also found the use of "man," "man," and the masculine sex rather a jarring contrast to his acknowledgment of an intuitive, more feminine way of knowing. I feel that to be truly holistic, it is necessary to take account feminine as well as masculine value orientations.

In Kohlberg's theory, based empirically on the study of 84 male adolescents, moral reasoning is judged in terms of progressively sophisticated understandings of rights, rules, and abstract principles of justice applied to hypothetical dilemmas. As Gilligan (1982) notes, whereas Kohlberg's moral judgements are more often tied to feelings of empathy and expression, "duty" is tied to duty to "man," and the masculine sex relatively a jarring contrast to his acknowledgment of an intuitive, more feminine way of knowing. I feel that to be truly holistic, it is necessary to take account feminine as well as masculine value orientations.

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experience, spotlights the possibilities for human development, and illuminates the pathway for the attainment of higher levels of awareness.

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References


EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATION AND RELIGIOSITY

(P.J. Watson, Ralph W. Hood, Jr., and Ronald J. Morris)

Is adherence to orthodox religion a good and desirable option that promotes optimal functioning, or is it a bad and destructive option that promotes personal guilt and neurosis? The researchers involved in the present study point out that decades of research have failed to resolve this dispute. Indeed, this study does not end the controversy either, but it does involve a difference in methodology that may well help to explain why the controversy has not ended sooner.

Perhaps the single most important contribution to the field of this study is the use of a method that allowed the researchers to conclude that adherence to orthodox religion is not of necessity a negative thing that automatically produces anxiety, depression, and a tendency to ignore or hide from the existential questions of life. The authors reported that if they had failed to employ this twist of considering the specific item content of the measuring instruments used, they would have arrived at different conclusions—conclusions that would have painted a "false and negative picture of orthodox belief commitments." They tell us that the Avoidance of Existential Confrontation (AEC) scale was developed in such a way that if a respondent indicates that "God exists," such a response is scored as indicative of avoidance of existential questions and is therefore negative. Discovery of these "religious" items in the instrument caused them to separate out the religious from the nonreligious items for purposes of analysis, as well as examining the total score, which would have ordinarily been the only factor considered.

The assumption that intrinsic, orthodox individuals are unthoughtful and worse still, unhealthy, is implied in the notion that such persons avoid or fail to confront existential problems. Although it is possible that some orthodox persons may have arrived at their position without careful thought of the basic existential questions of life, a simple score on an instrument like the AEC does not communicate how an individual arrived at a present set of beliefs; the score can only shed a bit of light on what those beliefs might be. It may well