

tradition of Carmelite mysticism, represented in the most outstanding way by St. John of the Cross.

To deny the truth that the development of the human being comes through suffering, inner conflicts, spiritual nights, and that they are indispensable for this process, results in narrowing and reducing the nature of humanity. Dąbrowski is opposed to such an attitude towards the human being, and St. John of the Cross presents a vision of Heaven opened for the human nature. According to Dąbrowski, the development of an individual has multilevel character (Dabrowski 1971, p. 21; Dominiak 1983, p. 14). In this way, he is opposed to advocates of narrow empiricism tinged with some positivist ideas. Freedom of the human being becomes distorted and deprived of its natural right to learn the truth and virtue.

St. John of the Cross – and, to a great extent, Kazimierz Dąbrowski – should be given all the credit for discovering the value of disintegration and spiritual nights in our spiritual, mystical and psychological life [1]. An important truth is revealed to us: there is no other way to reach God (identity perfection) but to destroy an "old" man inside us. Therefore, an individual cannot be satisfied with a minimum, the least expected value, which would be reduced to a simple biological or social factor (cf. Socha 2000, p. 21). The emotional and aspirational aspects should regain their superior meaning once again. It should happen -may be- contrary to numerous philosophical and humanistic theories and trends which present a static vision of the human being. Such a vision strongly featured almost a ludicrous glorification of needs and desires. The human being is treated there as an individual who only seeks to satisfy his needs which come as determinants of his existence. According to such a model, we do not have any optimal and fascinating identity and personality, any point of quality or quantity achievement. These are our needs and desires that define the rhythm of our life. If we do not satisfy them, we face frustration which is always assessed negatively. Dabrowski debunks that axiom and refers to the saints, who could overcome the principle of pleasure with the means of meditation and





contemplation (Dąbrowski 1989, p. 100).

So, this is neither an instinct nor a need, nor the principle of pleasure that serves as a signpost and defines our course of action. The frustration, sadness and failure come as an extremely helpful, significant and even indispensable aspect of developmental function, the ability to transform oneself (Dąbrowski 1986, p. 138). St. John of the Cross does not hesitate to say: "Wait in bareness and emptiness and your goodness will certainly find you" (Ascent of Mount Carmel III,3,6) (St. John). The terms he uses are onerous but necessary: such as emptiness (vacio), bareness (desnudez), deprivation (privacion), the fight of contradictions (contrarios contra contrarios) (Living Flame of Love 1, 22-23, Dark Night, II, 5-6). These terms contain hidden developmental potential and Dąbrowski does not comment on its origin. But Christianity defines it as grace. This hidden energy that brings meaningful, crushing severity causes that:

"New tendencies, new aims, new values exceeding a regular life cycle of a human being become so attractive for an individual that one cannot see any sense in continuing the previous course of action. So, an individual has to leave the present level and aim at a new, higher one." (Dąbrowski 1971, p. 38)

The human being discovers a new, difficult way to follow that goes beyond the principle of pleasure and one-level reality. "In this way some life cycles reverse, an individual goes beyond these cycles, beyond the 'lower reality' and enters the 'higher reality'." St. John of the Cross and Dąbrowski want to convince us that entering spiritual life is absolutely necessary if we think about reaching the harmony of body and soul, the lower and the higher. It is impossible to enjoy the peace of mind, to find fulfilment if we do not follow a developmental hierarchy. Therefore, we cannot describe an individual horizontally, we must do it in a dynamic, developmental and multilevel way. It allows us to point at some strong features of Dąbrowski's doctrine, which truly make him an outstanding writer who perceives a human being in terms of development, dynamics, multilevelness.

We can get great benefit from understanding the human identity on the basis of both: positive disintegration theory and mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross. We obtain the possibility of auto-verification that enables us to recognize and verify the level of perfection. When we hear someone saying: "we love each other" or "love and do whatever you want", then it is possible to place such a statement on all the levels of development. We can hear this from someone who has stopped at the first developmental level, but also from a person who has reached or has already left the third developmental level, where the health dynamism is defined by hierarchization. The ability to hierarchize can be called the conscience. Starting from the third level, we can talk about a significant progress in the development of identity. The intelligence and will become free from domination of needs and drives. "We observe the excess of so called >>one-levelled, narrow realism<< that serves primitive urges, and is often accompanied by the cynical attitude" (Dabrowski 1979) on the lowest (the first and the second) levels. The third level is the point where an individual starts to build his self-esteem. There appear new trends in thought and action, going from perceiving that is based on "primitive urges" to reasoning based on "identity". So, "love has various names". On the lowest level, it is the love of desire, the love of one's own self, even if this fact is not fully realized by an individual (Zurek 1997, p. 219-227).

Here we can trace an important similarity of St. John of the Cross and Kazimierz Dąbrowski. Namely, the identity on the lowest level means a sensual, animal human being driven by "primitive urges". Although St. John of the Cross provides neither a description nor a spiritual analysis of these lowest levels, he gave us a short characteristics of a sensual human being (AMC III, 19) on the first level: this individual "has dull mind and dimmed judgement so that he cannot recognize the truth and is not able to judge matters as they really are." Consequently, this individual's "free will grow to a larger extent as far as earthly things are concerned. Nevertheless, the fact that he enjoys and adores such earthly matters, does not

worry him and he does not pay any attention to it ... This individual is subject to great deal of imperfections, nonsense, whims and empty pleasures... The mind and judgement of those who are on the second level, are as dull and as dimmed as of those who are on the first level, still being unable to recognize the truth and virtue. However, they are also submitted to great weakness, coldness and negligence of thought and action. The third level is taken by those, who "are not at all interested in their salvation, but show great interest and skills in the worldy matters. They are plunged into the matters of this world, its wealth and interests". The fourth and the lowest level is taken by the individuals who "forget about God completely". "Instead of giving their hearts to God, they put their hearts into money as if there was no other god except for it". This comes as a sad, depressing picture of negative disintegration.

Dąbrowski clearly defines such personalities. He compares them to "the efficiency of psychopaths" that serves "primitive urges or even murder". But efficiency in one field or aspect of life will never be able to replace development. In other words, people who are on the lowest levels, characterised by St. John, are described by Dąbrowski as those who have no idea about the hierarchy of values, those, who are aggressive, treacherous, those, who never hesitate to act in their own interest... (Dąbrowski 1985, p. 51). These individuals have also their own "word technique" – they talk about love, they express their affection but their understanding of these feelings is totally different.

If there is "downward psychopathology" there must be "upward psychopathology". That is why both authors stress the necessity of purification of one's sensuality. Both Dąbrowski and St. John of the Cross use a similar classification of the developmental stages. The theory of positive disintegration – up to its third level – is dominated by restraining and suppressing the low drives. The whole process is dominated by preventing and restricting the primitive urges or instincts. Starting from the fourth level, which is "ruled by ego", when an individual is able to construct a relationship "you and me", the developmental stimulation prevails. Up to the third level, the predominating processes are these of suppressing, rejecting and overcoming any difficulties that restrain the development. The prevailing role on the fourth level is taken by reaching for the values. This divergence is very clear when we compare it to the generally accepted division of the theology of ascetic and mystical spirituality. The way of the beginners, who need purification (St. John of the Cross defines the notion of "an active night of the soul") involves curbing desires and restraining passions, acts of will and mind achieved by mortification and rejection of any kind of obstacles. The way of the advanced individuals' enlightenment (St. John of the Cross defines the term of "a passive night of the soul") involves the activities of granted contemplation. The way of the perfect ones, who enter the complete union with God, can be defined as the highest level of perfection.

Purification is the time when we avoid sins, restrain passions, curb and reject anything that prevents us from growing in love. It happens very often that an individual must learn one's own inner poverty. When this effort is completed through mortifying, restraining passions and curbing desires, the time of gaining love begins, accompanied by the inner transformation. There appear permanent abilities to do good things. The higher feelings such as fidelity, generosity, courage, become more apparent and grow stronger. At the highest level we can find all such virtues of heroic intensity. This traditional division involving three ways of inner life comes as a strictly methodological division. It makes it easier for us to follow the winding paths of the spirit. In fact, these ways and periods overlap and merge with each other. It sometimes happens that an individual reaches the higher stage, passing over the lower levels.

Dąbrowski also claims that the dynamisms related to particular levels can, in fact, merge. Therefore, his theory is close to the Christian personalism, and definitely far from all the sciences that omit the question of personal axiology, or try to analyse this problem with the use of standard - for example, biological or social – methods. The experimental character involves intellectual, emotional, empirical and normative

experience. (cf. Dąbrowski 1986, 107-110) We can talk about multilevelness of empirical knowledge, about multilevelness of whatever can be discovered by our personal involvement and engagement. The dynamics of development in which the human being is involved, is proportional to one's engagement into it, to the profoundness of the questions asked, to the will that allows to reject the lower and accept the higher, and, finally, it is proportional to the extent to which we can renounce ourselves, and reject anything that does not let us follow this way. Dąbrowski claims that the most significant modification in psychology consists in accepting a new basis, which is telling the difference between the lower and the higher. It relates with an important normative factor of development.

Namely, it is opening and knowing a human being only in the aspects of emotional engagement. It is opposed to numerous opinions, that we should refrain from evaluative statements and that each statement in psychology may be formulated in a mechanistic language. Dąbrowski attempts to build a bridge between the empirical and the normative.

It is true, that there are differences between individual ways of experiencing. However, at the same time it is sure, that the values are not created by the human being – they are rather "read" by him. The higher values are not just simple extensions of the lower ones and cannot be brought down just to biological, social or emotional needs (cf. Dąbrowski 1971, p. 138). The experience allows us to discover various areas of reality which exists independent from subjective acts of an individual, regardless of his cognitive capability, ability to receive impulses of aesthetic, moral, social or mystical character. Obviously, there are people who are not able to approach the reality in a complete, total way, and they draw false conclusions about the structure of this reality. However, it does not mean that "invisible" aspects of the reality do not exist or are of imaginary character.

Therefore, Dąbrowski is opposed to any cognitive reduction and any attempts to bring things down to one surface. (cf. Dąbrowski 1970, p. 160) This attitude comes as a very specific approach towards cognition of the reality, named by Dąbrowski as multilevelled empirism, predicated upon experience. Dąbrowski revaluates the meaning of empirism. He emphasizes the difference which appears while we experience the reality, when empirical knowledge does not reduce this reality to a stream of logical data, but also becomes empirical knowledge of the inner aspect of the subject, able to discover and "touch" the reality. (cf. Górnicki)

All this goes in conformity with the ideas presented by St. John of the Cross, who emphasizes the significance of volitional and experiential aspect in our pursuit of God. His mystical experience seeks some integrated - physical, psychological and spiritual - contact with God, which is a very personal, intimate relationship of love and trust (subject-object-the nature of the relationship). (cf. Krapiec 1978, p. 329; Becattini 1984, p. 395) This experience is extremely dynamic, expansive and transformational. It is not afraid to suffer, to struggle against psychological shocks and to plunge into spiritual nights that come as a condition for reaching the union. Such experience is unpredictable and cannot be brought down to a scheme. It is impossible to look for straight paths and simple, conventional routes. The experience of the great Carmelite Mystic can seem apparently passive, but in fact, numerous and extremely intensive psychological processes of enormous emotional potential run inside the human being. Extensive "discharges" take place and God's energy clashes with human will to resist. J Mouroux defines mystical experience as an individual contact of a human being with God that realizes through an act or a state integrating this human being in mind, when he can recognize himself and God, and praises God willingly in active obedience. The aim is always the same – a mystical bond. Therefore, any attempts to reduce experience only to empirism, subjectivism or idealism deprived of individual love are far away from the real mystical and Christian experience. Any attempts to limit experience with the frames of a philosophical system would mean losing transcendence and mystery of God.

Mystical experience should be considered as mystical life rather than some supernatural phenomena. Its understanding is opposed to idealism and narrow empirism because there is no place for individuals to meet in love. An aspect which is indispensable and proportional to mystical experience is faith. We can observe how Dąbrowski expresses this principle and the need of faith (through meditation and contemplation) when he tries to redefine the notion of empirism. Dąbrowski suggests that:

"Fearless in terror, passions and temptations, the human being should go along the path of faith. This faith is steep and dangerous, but leads straight to the target. The faith must be quiet and humble, ready to sacrifice and struggle. The silence, awe and trembling – that is how the faith is manifested." (Dabrowski 1984, p. 33)

So, Dąbrowski's philosophical thought is not of typical empirical character, in its narrow meaning. It is not of moralizing character either. It exceeds those limitations and goes toward psychological or even theological directions.

A significant element of St. John's of the Cross mystical experience is meeting the divine and the human in the human being's adoration and love. At the same time, such experience comes as the Way of the Cross, trials and tribulations (compare Luke 14,27). The mystic touches the nature of God in faith and through faith, he catches it directly and completely in one act of supernatural faith. This union is dark, invisible, but still - confident and complete. The mind is not able to reach such a union - only the faith hidden inside the mind can achieve it. "The mind touches the nature of God" through faith. (Dabrowski 1984, p. 57-58; Johnston, p. 78). The mystic consciously experiences the presence of God inside and outside. He becomes available and open to divine grace through contemplation manifested in faith, hope and love. This mystery is realized in the greatest depths of the human soul, inhabited by the Holy Trinity. The mystery of love is transformed in actio outside, serving the Church. So, mystical experience comes as a complete development of the divine grace acting inside the human being, who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit's inspiration that leads to 'cognitio Dei experimentalis'. Its principal features are: relating experience with consciousness [2], experiencing God's presence with all inner senses, ultimate submitting oneself to God, being possessed by Him. This is a habitual state, often related to painful experience of God. This state is periodically revised with God's visits that are usually sudden and unexpected (visitas), touches (toques), wounds (llagas) of the soul, as the mystic will receive all those in excess in his future life. Dabrowski defines these processes as "projections into the future", "creative projections in a new, unknown reality", "projections into the new".

In St. John's of the Cross mystical experience we can observe a domination of chiaroscuro: the general-the particular, the definite-the vague, the central-the peripheral, the significant-the unimportant, the archetypal-the derivative, the empirical-the theoretical, the interpretive-the non-interpretive, the functional-the non-functional, the temporal-the eternal that goes beyond time.

Surely, the experimental character of Dąbrowski's theory of positive disintegration is not a set of vivid analysis, observations and investigations gathered to form a general system. It should be considered as an attempt to join two poles. The first pole is open and able to be "opposite", while the second one exceeds any notions and natural systems. This is one of many links and sources of thoughts common for Dąbrowski and St. John of the Cross. Although we must admit that the original relation of both cannot be easily explained, Dąbrowski is well acquainted with poetry of the Carmelite Mystic and of St. Teresa of Avila, and many times refers to the notion of "the dark night of the soul". (Dąbrowski 1984, p. 31-32, 224) Moreover, he also refers to St. Paul terminology: "an old human being" and "a new human being". "It also conforms to St. Paul's suggestion. St. Paul can see a fundamental transformation within himself, namely, the death of an old individual and birth of a new, different individual. We can see it – at the lower level, obviously, and in a small scale – as a reflection of Christ's Transfiguration." (Dąbrowski 1985, p. 221-261). Now the observer can think about Dąbrowski's unique theory. This theory is original,

absorbing and extremely interesting. Nevertheless, there is no genius in the world who would not use the achievements of his predecessors. So, the thoughts of St. John of the Cross and general idea of Christian spirituality are structurally present in Dąbrowski's writing.

The third, decisive, constant and dominant element (multilevelness, empirical and normative interference) which shapes the theory of positive disintegration is the teleological (intentional or purpose) factor. We look for answers about the sense of disintegration phenomena: why do they seem to be indispensable for the development? Here the human being faces the dilemma: does this drama make any sense at all? The standard of positive disintegration is our mental health. St. John of the Cross claims that the health of our souls is God himself and that is why the human being is "on diet and fasting". The meaning exists, however, it is not always possible to explain and to grasp it completely and clearly, at least, at the beginning. As it has been mentioned, the entirety is revealed together with the development and engagement into this development, through discovering and grasping particular, partial meanings. However, it can happen that the disintegration, as well as the dark night, will fall on a barren ground and will not have their happy ending (compare DN, I, 14,5). It happens when the fragmentary value becomes the most important and principal for an individual. Happy ending means to achieve integration at its highest level and to achieve the ideal of personality. This ideal is very clear when we consider it from the mystical point of view. It is union in love with God in Holy Trinity. Bearing this dignified task in mind, the human being sticks to this aim which becomes his anchor or - even better - his sail. A sail that is properly trimmed can move the boat forward effectively. If a sailor does not know how to set his sails properly, the journey becomes longer and more dangerous. The symbol of a sail trimmed properly upwind illustrates the dynamics of developmental aim much better than a static image of an anchor. The awareness of the aim allows operating effectively with the sails, however it does not mean that the aim itself is clearly visible. At the beginning, it is only a twinkling star on the distant horizon. The guide is the light of faith which comes as an amazing means leading us to the aim. The awareness of the aim grows when we reject lower values, leaving subsequent hierarchies behind, as quickly as possible.

The developmental ideal remains unrevealed for a human being on the first level. This person might not be able to point at one's aim or ideal at all. Such an individual does not understand the ideal of any other people and considers other people's aims only when they come as obstacles for this individual. This person represents onesided and automatic attitude to the ideal and identifies himself with the model of power, wealth, violence or vice. On the second level, a "passing" ideal might appear. However, it comes as moments or flashes of recognition and the ideal itself is understood as imitating or following some current trends. It is the third level when the imitation transforms into genuine recognition of the ideal. It happens when an individual is able to see multilevelled and hierarchized reality, when he can deal with the division: the lower and the higher. The ideal crystallizes and objectifies and its realization becomes almost a necessity, an inner need. The fourth level comes as the intensification of developmental strength toward the ideal. This process becomes the most important in the individual's life and actions. On this level, it is a constant dominant feature of the individual's existence. The personality ideal and the social ideal are not subject to any hesitations or moods. On the fifth level, the main principle is the struggle to reach complete identification with the ideal. All the dynamics and strength of an individual are directed towards this aim (cf. Dabrowski 1996, p. 93-94). The mental health is the ability to the most appropriate development towards "the higher hierarchy of aims, up to the personality ideal." (cf. Cekiera 1983, p. 5-16). The rejection of aims based on hierarchy means a distortion of the development and its deformation. St. John of the Cross aims at reaching the unlimited and infinite – God. We can assume that also Dabrowski, however silently, takes up a comparable aim, talking about an individual ideal.

The attitude to the human being's development based on aims lets us understand

that the required effect of the positive disintegration is the human mature personality. All the attempts to reach it, or outgrowing oneself's ego do not mean losing anything. It is the way to self-fulfilment as an individual. It is not an ordinary adaptation and an adjustment to the strict social standards but "a kind of transformation", a modification on the spiritual level, with the reference to almost infinite values.

Therefore, Dąbrowski provides a very specific definition of mental health. According to this definition, our mental health is a dynamic process, not just a miserable state of helplessness. His crucial concept is based on the hierarchy of values, which actually comes as the construction of a value system, where our choices of the lower range are submitted to the values of the higher range. The process of such a hierarchy construction is assumed to be creative and full of failures. That is why Dąbrowski considered any kind of neurosis as a natural way of constructing such a hierarchy, not a disease or mental disorder (e.g. depression, anxiety and manic states). (Dąbrowski 1980)

He claimed that a disease is a state of excluding an individual from the developmental process (psychopathy). Mental health cannot be understood as the complete state of physical, psychological and social well-being, or as the absence of diseases or disabilities. In the development, there is no state of such stabilisation and general well-being. So, mental health cannot be defined as the lack of mental disorders, integrated structures and functions, the state of psychological balance, the ability to productive actions, harmonic coexistence with the environment or adaptation to changing life conditions. Moreover, mental health cannot be defined as the state of physical, mental or social well-being, the absence of diseases or disabilities. Thus, what actually is our mental health? Dabrowski defines it as the ability to psychological development of multilevel and multi-surface character, leading to the most important, ultimate social and individual ideal. (cf. Dabrowski 1989, p. 3-23) This way of understanding our mental health assumes depriving diseases of their pathological character. A disease will be attributed with anything connected with one level, one surface, one direction, whereas aspects connected with many levels, many surfaces, many directions will be attributed to the notion of health. Our health is the whole system of functions which grow and develop as the most important necessity to find the highest moral standards. Because of the same reason, talking about our spiritual and mental health, St. John of the Cross states that the health of the human soul is God's love. Those who do not have this love, do not have complete health and are ill (Spiritual Canticle, 11,11).

The spiritual development continues to go step by step, to move from one place to another, until we reach the last, ultimate level of love. These particular steps and places are not constant or permanent. They are meaningful and valuable only if they serve and help us to reach next stages. They only lead us to the last, ultimate and the most important stage of experience and love of God; when God and a human being will be able to exist in a free, simple and complete way. It means that God, gradually and proportionally to the individual's strength and possibilities, elevates this human being to

Himself, purifies and improves him in numerous ways, lifting the human soul from one level to another one, from one surface to another one, until it reaches the most inner stage. When we reach a new, higher level or step, a new crisis, new stage of the purifying dark night is inevitable. In fact, the dark night initiates the spiritual development. With the power of this experience, God heals numerous human weaknesses to give the human being his health. Suffering is unavoidable here and it is relative to how serious the disease appears to be (DN II,16,9).

The dark night of the soul together with positive suffering are related to the theory of positive disintegration. They both aim at one target: to persuade and prepare the human being to accept the true and complete form of the soul, which comes as the union in love and achievement of personal ideal. In spite of violent psychological and physical suffering, this phenomenon can have – and in numerous cases it does – the positive meaning. Gradually, step by step, once majestically, once awkwardly and

clumsily, the human being comes to the understanding that the time of trials, time of identity confusion do have significant values, such as growing friendship with God, readiness to sacrifice and to act for His praise and glory. The mystic realises he should not worry about the fact that his way of perceiving God has changed, and that he cannot feel His sweetness. Now God wants to wed the human soul through faith and in faith. "The clearer and more perfect the soul becomes in the living faith, the more and more love it receives from God." It is difficult to describe synthetically the variety and diversification of merging drama, suffering and sacrifice tormenting and purifying the human being in this state.

Notes

- [1] The main danger that distorts the development or causes its regression is the notion of "self-realization" and its tendencies to the balance, the full harmony of feelings. The model of the development free from conflicts, the simple harmony between oneself and others, or excessive, controlling perfectionism are the cause of keeping the development on the low level.
- [2] The pure functional psychology, without conscience, without experience of the most inner levels of an individual becomes biology, engineering or manipulation.

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