BEYOND PSYCHONEUROSIS AND ABOVE DETERMINISM

(The positive aspects of psychoneurosis and the role of the autonomous forces in man prepared under the guidance of K. Babrowski, the originator of the theory of Positive Disintegration.)

G.W. de Grace
Universite Laval, Quebec, Canada

"Hail to you, psychoneurotics, for you perceive sensibility in the insensibility of the world, uncertainty in its certainty. For you are often conscious of all. For you feel the anxiety of the world, its limits and its false unlimited assurance. For your obsessive need to wash your hands from the dirt of the world, for your fear of the absurdity of existence. For your subtlety which prevents you from telling others what you see in them. For your awkwardness, for your transcendental realism and your lack of daily realism, for your exclusiveness and your fear of losing your great friends, for your creativity and your ecstasy, for your maladjustment to what is and your adjustment to what ought to be, for your immense possibilities not yet actualized. For the late appreciation of your true worth and grandeur. For you have been treated instead of treating others, because your celestial might has been crushed by earthly brutality. For what is unique, original, intuitive and infinite in you. For the solitude and the oddness of your paths. Hail to you!"

(author's translation)

Individuality and Personality

Various expressions that denote man as a unit are used in common language, literature, philosophy, psychology and sociology. These conceptions tend somewhat to obscure the problem of personality. In the theory of the Positive Disintegration, a marked distinction is made between individuality and personality. Individuality refers to both positive and negative traits present in man while personality is a name given to a man fully developed, both with respect to the scope and level of the most essential positive human qualities. Thus personality which is the endpoint of psychic growth has only positive constituents. Individuality is not necessarily involved in various general problems, but if a man possesses personality he embraces with his intellect, sensitivity and activity all the truly essential problems of mankind. The man possessing only individuality may not have the capacity for deeper insight into his own self and consequently may lack the conscious urge for shaping and improving himself, but for the man with personality the work upon himself, upon his psychic traits is a major preoccupation. While the man with individuality is moved by egoistic aims, the one with personality enhances his qualities in order to offer them to better society and the world in which he lives.

The problems of the relation between essence and existence in man is given a new interpretation in the theory; it is implied that it is existence which belongs to the primary givens of human life. Although essence does not precede psychic development, it is attainable as a self-chosen, self-determined, gradually shaped structure of psychic qualities.

The theory of Positive Disintegration, opposing the view held in scholastic philosophy, holds that a superior man is not the one with the most efficient intellectual functioning but rather the one with differentiated and refined emotions.
Integration and Disintegration

Contrarily to the traditional use of the term disintegration which implies abnormality, emotional disturbance, and mental illness, the present theory finds that some disintegration processes are positive for the development and mental growth of man. These types of disintegration are: internal conflicts, maladjustments, inhibitions and also stages of anxiety and depression. These symptoms of disintegration are observable at puberty, menopause, during critical experiences, inner conflicts, suffering, intense joy etc. These symptoms reveal a positive, essential and psychic transformation. The originator of the theory does not see any possibility of positive and accelerated development without the processes of mental disintegration.

He differentiates between positive and negative disintegration "according to the effects of the re-integration which follows the state of personality disintegration. The reintegration is classified as positive when the individual is freer and more creative than before, and when his actions make the lives of his fellowmen as well as his own happier and more intense than before the state of disintegration. The reintegration is classified as negative when it results in limiting the scope and degree of meaningful inter-human relationships and objective productivity, in an impoverishment of emotional and intellectual functioning, and in a fearful avoidance of risk because of a continuous anxious concern over one's survival".

Human development, according to the theory of Positive Disintegration, includes five stages or levels: primary integration, unilevel disintegration, spontaneous multilevel disintegration, organized multilevel disintegration and secondary integration.

The stage of primitive integration is characterized by mental structures and functions of a low level which are automatic and impulsive, determined by biological needs. There is no control or transformation of basic biological needs. There is no inner psychic conflict. At this stage of development disintegration of this primitive structure is possible only if there are nuclei of psychoneurotic traits, or sensitivity which are acted upon by very strong positive influences of a highly developed environment.

Positive disintegration is of two types: unilevel disintegration and multilevel disintegration.

Unilevel disintegration consists of disintegration processes on a single structural and emotional level. The unilevel disintegration involves a fragmentation of the primitive structure, a loosening of the influence of impulses. This loosening takes place when there are conflicts between instinctive tendencies of the same level but having different objects impossible to satisfy at the same time. Such conflicts constitute the initial stage of the process of positive disintegration. The first symptoms of disintegration are: increased sensitivity to internal stimuli, vague feelings of disquietude, ambidendencies, various forms of disharmony and the gradual appearance of an embryo of hierarchization to the external stimuli and to one's own mental structure. But this hierarchization is still quite shaky. There is a continuous vacillation between pros and cons, no clear distinction between up or down.

Multilevel disintegration can be spontaneous (early phase of development) or controlled (advanced phase of development).

The spontaneous multilevel disintegration consists in a clearer differentiation between what is and what ought to be. The individual selects the values that express better his deepest experiences and feelings, he may consider some expressions of a given function as higher or better than the others. The feelings that accompany the conflicts are: astonishment with oneself, disquietude with oneself, dissatisfaction with oneself, feeling of shame and guilt, feeling of inferiority towards oneself. At this stage of spontaneous multilevel disintegration, which is the crucial period of positive developmental transformations, we can observe the formation of critical awareness of oneself and other people, awareness of one's essence as it arises from one's existence.

Then, the individual begins taking a more active part in the process of his development. This is the next stage, the organized multilevel disintegration characterized by more tranquility, systematization and conscious transformation of oneself. The dynamisms which appear are: subject-object in oneself, the third factor, self-awareness and self-control, identification and empathy, education of oneself and autopsychotherapy.

The secondary integration is the last stage. It consists in a new organization and harmonization of personality. The dynamisms at this stage are: autonomy and authentication, disposing and directing center on a high level, refined empathy, activation of the personality ideal. There appears a growing need to transcend the sensory, verifiable reality towards the empirical reality which can be attained through intuition, contemplation, and ecstasy rather than through the senses. The Autonomous Forces in Man

Some contemporary theories advance that man's development is a function of his biological given and social conditioning. The theory of Positive Disintegration recognizes, for its part, two kinds of psychic development: one taking place in conformity to the universal laws of development of the human species and to the biological cycle of life, and another, which takes an accelerated form and transends the cycle of biological transformations and even social conditioning.

The first passes through the stages of childhood, aging and culminates in death. It is characterized by gradual psychobiological integration of functions, growing biological perfection, activities typical for universal phases of development such as accomplishment of psychosomatic and intellectual skills specific to man, adjustment to external environment, engagement in commonly practical, sexual, professional and social pursuits. The second form of psychic development consists of the transcendence of those activities, in some degree of maladjustment to universal phases of development. It is characterized by mental hyperexcitability, that is to say, nervousness, frequent disintegration of functions, psychoneurosis, social maladjustment and accelerated process of psychic transformation.

In the first kind of development we usually observe an average level of intellectual functioning and some degree of emotional underdevelopment. In the other kind of development we usually observe above average abilities, emotional richness and depth as well as an inclination to psychoneurosis. The individuals who manifest the second kind of development are from early age difficult, frequently maladjusted, talented, experiencing serious developmental crises. They show a tendency towards psychic hyperexcitability, towards a dissolution of lower levels in the drive for higher levels. They thus exhibit disturbances and disharmony in their internal and external environment. In this group we can find bright children, creative and outstanding personalities, men of genius i.e., those who contribute new values.

One can already observe in a child one and a half to two years old certain fairly well differentiated potentials of development. These are expressed through various forms of psychic hyperexcitability such as sensual, psychomotor, emotional,
imaginative or intellectual hyperexcitability. The coexistence in the development of the child of different forms of hyperexcitability or of opposite traits, such as introversion and extroversion, enables him to transform his basic psychological type i.e., it permits the elaboration of a much more complex, multidimensional and rich typology. This process of elaboration is expressed by gradual elimination of automatic rigid, instinctive caricatures and replacing them with dynamisms which are more creative, more individual, more supratypological. The individual with a rich developmental potential rebels against the common determining factors in his external environment. He rebels against all that is imposed on him against his will, against the necessity of subordination to the laws of biology and society. There arises a disposition towards conscious choice and self-determination which is labeled the third developmental factor (besides heredity and environment) in the theory of Positive Disintegration. What is the source of these autonomous forces? It can only be supposed that they derive from hereditary developmental potential and from positive environmental conditions. However, the autonomous forces do not derive exclusively from heredity and environment but are also determined by the conscious development of the individual himself. They grow and are partially expressed through the development of astonishment with respect to oneself and the external environment, dissatisfaction with oneself, discontent, feelings of inferiority towards oneself and feelings of shame and guilt. They are further expressed as the dynamisms of subject-object in oneself, self-awareness and self-control, autonomy, empathy and the elaboration of a hierarchy of values and the activation of one's ideal of personality.

Psychoneuroses as mental health

Psychoneuroses manifest itself in such syndromes as anxiety, depression, obsessions, etc. The individual with an adequate potential for psychic development gets used to these states and after having considered them undesirable begins to detect and appreciate the variety of rich and deep life experiences that they permit, the enhancement they give to his creative capacities, and how they favor his positive psychic transformation.

Mental health includes adjustment and maladjustment, in the sense of maladjustment to what actually is and adjustment to what should be, breaking away with a lower structure of psychic being and functioning to attain a higher one necessitates disintegration. Mental health does not mean the absence of nervousness and psychoneuroses, but this presence; nor does it mean the lack of inner conflict, but conscious experiencing of them; not easy adjustment to the changing conditions of reality, but conscious and selective maladjustment to lower levels of reality and conscious adjustment to higher levels of reality.

In contrast, a too strong adjustment to external environment and to oneself, a too strong integration on a low level, a too strong organization of thinking in the service of one's egocentric dynamisms, a too strong cohesiveness and instinctiveness indicates the lack of mental health.

Disintegration is also positively correlated with creativity. Indeed, individuals of a high overall level of abilities who are capable of approaching the level of genius show during their whole lives or in some periods of their development until the proximity of secondary integration, mental disturbances of psychoneurotic or even psychotic nature.

What holds for the individual seems also to hold for society. Social progress seems to be submitted to the law of positive disintegration. For new and more valuable forms of social living to be reached, lower forms have to be shaken and with the consequences of positive disintegration. As a consequence, human and social development has to involve suffering, conflicts, etc. Positive maladjustment or maladjustment to what should be changed for the great benefit of humanity, rebellion may be as positive for cultural progress as the respect of law.

New Perspectives

As can be seen, many aspects of the theory of Positive Disintegration bring to the fore previously neglected elements of man's inner reality and as a consequence forces the revision and transformation of concepts within various fields of science namely, psychology, psychiatry, education, philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, political science and theology.

In the fields of education and personality growth, the present theory proposes a deeper and better understanding of the role and interaction among the hereditary, environmental and autonomous factors of development.

In the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry, it stresses the positive role of certain forms of psychic maladjustments and even asserts that positive and accelerated psychic development is impossible without the collaboration of the dynamisms of positive disintegration.

It has been recognized as an inspiring source for the anti-psychiatry movement in Europe, especially prominent in England and to a lesser extent in France, as well as a significant agent in the promotion of a new humanistic and holistic approach to man and mankind in North America.

This new humanistic psychology current differs from most of the former ones in at least three ways. First, it relies on more systematic observations; it is expressed in more easily verifiable concepts; it also wants to incorporate in its theory of man the givens of other affiliated sciences for a deeper, more complete multidimensional approach to the human individual in society.

Some have gone even as far as to call the theory of Positive Disintegration "Psychology's revolution of hope" and "the boom and bloom of psychology". These titles come from the following two premises. However, some disillusion and dissatisfaction towards psychology have been expressed in recent years both from the inside and outside of the discipline. When this takes place, it is often a sign that a science might be falling in some respects to its essential role, in this case a comprehensive understanding of human nature and growth as well as the elaboration of methods and the proposal or conditions to promote this development. Contemporary psychology might not have been enough preoccupied with understanding aside from knowing. It is only hoped that the theory of Positive Disintegration, along with the other new humanistic theories, will contribute to re-orient the evolution of psychological science towards the rigorous study of these truly fundamental human qualities for the freeing of positive personal potential within the individual so that he may in turn create a better world, a world of authenticity, freedom, peace and love, a world where man would be more than "a naked ape" and "the future a positive shock".

NOTES

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN FREEDOM

Russell N. Cassel
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The dearest and most cherished of all human experiences is the opportunity to elect one’s own alternative courses for future action from among a rich range of choices extending from conformity to its antithesis. It goes without saying that what constitutes freedom for one person may really be slavery for another person, or even for the same person at another stage of development. However, in spite of the rather unique aspect of freedom, there are certain common attributes characteristically present when freedom abounds, and through an understanding of those conditions we are able to promote it more effectively in others and enjoy it more fully ourselves.

Three separate and independently organized dimensions or factors are associated with human freedom, and each of these will be treated in order: (1) human freedom hierarchy, (2) human needs and freedom, and (3) characteristic attributes of a free person.

**Human Freedom Hierarchy**

Typically man has maintained that slavery represents "obeying the will of another", and, to be sure, that represents slavery, but because of the critical interdependence of men this condition alone may often become a real paradox. For if the man imprisoned "behind iron bars" is told that he now may elect his own personal choices for action, with no real choices available to him, he remains a slave. In the same sense, then, where man has choices or alternative courses of action open to him, but remains ignorant of either their presence or how to negotiate such choices, he is not truly free. Thus, freedom is not an "all" or "none" condition, but rather it exists in degrees for man that begins with certain requisite conditions necessary for freedom, through a series of interdependent attributes, to where man obtains full and complete space for freedom of action or movement, and with some reasonable ability to use that space unhindered or uninhibited either by self or others.

I. **POSITIVE AFFECT** - personal satisfaction and the full and accepted belief that one is free is a basic requisite.

II. **NEGATIVE AFFECT** - men and mice alike prize that which they have worked, fought and suffered for to give positive affect value.

III. **GOAL SETTING** - election future course of action means living and reliving an experience and avoiding of hazards.

IV. **DECISION COMPETENCY** - competence and confidence in the election of choices alone give real promise to persons involved.

V. **EGO INVOLVEMENT** - there is no substitute for personal involvement in which an individual truly finds his "thing".

VI. **GOAL PROGRESS** - each new day there must be some realized progress in a direction of goal attainment or wish fulfillment.

VII. **SELF-ACTUALIZATION** - the principal and ultimate goal of freedom is becoming that which one believes is best for self.

VIII. **SPACE FOR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT** - richness and abundance of choices with full knowledge of how to exploit them.