
Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration

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ABSTRACT: *The life of Polish psychiatrist and psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski is briefly described as the context for the development of his Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD). The theory is presented along with current research on TPD. The five developmental levels are discussed with illustrating examples from life and literature. Dabrowski's concept of developmental potential is described and the five types of increased psychic excitability (OE's) which are its expression. Finally, implications of TPD are offered for parents, teachers, and counselors of the gifted—and for gifted individuals themselves.*

*Hail to you, psychoneurotics,
For you perceive sensibility
in the insensibility of the world,
uncertainty in its certainty.
For you are often as conscious of others
as of yourself,
For you feel the anxiety of the world,
its limits and its false unlimited assurance....

For your fear of the absurdity of existence.
... For your awkwardness,
for your transcendental realism
and your lack of daily realism...
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 what is unique, original, intuitive and infinite in you.
For the solitude and the oddness of your paths.

Hail to you.*

K. Dabrowski (1970)

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IQ tests give us one means of understanding and describing differences between individuals. But how do we understand and measure the quality of the differences we perceive between Klaus Barbie and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, between Dag Hammarskjöld and Adolf Hitler? Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of emotional development—or Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), as Dabrowski called it to emphasize the role of suffering and inner conflict in advancing development—gives us a framework for understanding these qualitatively different levels of human development.

This article will describe Kazimierz Dabrowski and briefly summarize current research on his theory, TPD. Next, the main elements of TPD will be outlined and the concept of developmental potential (potential for advanced development) will be presented. Finally, TPD's implications for understanding and nurturing giftedness will be discussed.

Kazimierz Dabrowski: His Life

Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980) was a participant-observer of two world wars, the Holocaust, the psychiatric office, and the wards of mental hospitals. He was imprisoned by the Soviets for 18 months after World War II. (Ironically, the Nazis left him alone to care for his patients at a mental hygiene clinic just outside of Warsaw.) Besides being a therapist, he was a mental hospital administrator, a researcher and lecturer, a poet, musician, and philosopher. From what he witnessed and experienced during a most terrible time in western history, he fashioned a vision of meaning about persons—a vision revealing a rich intelligence, a creative and courageous spirit. He did not confine himself to describing and studying persons who are average or “normal.” His view was broad enough to explain the emotional impoverishment of the psychopath, the intensity of anxiety and despair that the self-aware can experience, the bravery of the martyr, and the tranquil selflessness of the saint.

A Polish clinician and theorist, Dabrowski held an M.D. in psychiatry and a Ph.D. in psychology. His formulation of TPD was based on personal experience, clinical practice as a psychotherapist, and the study of gifted, creative, and eminent individuals. The Theory of Positive Disintegration, he wrote, “grew out of events experienced in my adolescence and youth” (Dabrowski, in Piechowski, 1975, p. 233). He learned about death early in life. When he was six, his 3-year-old sister died of meningitis. As a teenager, he observed a battle during World War I:

*When the exchange of artillery fire ended, fighting went on with cold steel.
When the battle was over, I saw several hundred young soldiers lying
dead, their lives cut in a cruel and senseless manner. (Dabrowski, in
Piechowski, 1975, p. 233)*

Questions of death, suffering, the meaning of human existence, and the destiny of humanity arose for him not only because of the “suffering, death, and

injustice inflicted upon persons very close to me” but also because of the “suffering, imprisonment and death of great numbers of people” (Dabrowski, in Piechowski, 1975, p. 233). He witnessed “masses of Jewish people herded toward ghettos. On the way, the weak, invalid, and sick were ruthlessly killed” (p. 233). Hitler’s death camps for Europe’s Jews were built on Polish soil. Of this period Dabrowski wrote, “...Many times, I myself and my close family and friends have been in immediate danger of death” (p. 234). He observed:

The juxtaposition of inhuman forces and inhuman humans with those who were sensitive, capable of sacrifice, courageous, gave a vivid panorama of a scale of values....Superficiality, vulgarity, absence of inner conflict, quick forgetting of grave experiences, became something repugnant to me. I searched for people and attitudes of a different kind, those that were authentically ideal, saturated with immutable values, those who represented “what ought to be” against “what is.” (Dabrowski, in Piechowski, 1975, p. 234)

Dabrowski found great creative and developmental richness in clients who consulted him for psychoneurotic symptoms and even among those who manifested psychotic disorders. He saw in these persons’ lack of adjustment to their social reality a sensitivity to reality of a higher order. His clinical practice revealed a link between psychoneurotic and creative processes. Detailed biographical study of mankind’s geniuses and saints added further to his observation that psychoneurosis and even borderline psychosis frequently seemed to combine with high-level moral and creative functioning and advanced emotional development (Dabrowski, 1964, 1967; Dabrowski, Kawczak, & Piechowski, 1970; Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977).

Research on TPD

Dabrowski first published articles on his ideas in 1937 and 1938. The invasion of Poland in 1939 eliminated the possibility of research or publication until after the war. In 1948 an article on positive disintegration appeared. Because of difficult post-war conditions in Poland, a book-length formulation of the theory was not permitted to be published until 1964. During the 1960s and 1970s Dabrowski lectured and taught in various North American universities. In 1969, when Dabrowski was simultaneously on the faculty of the University of Alberta and the University of Laval, in Quebec, a grant from the Canadian Council made possible the first empirical study of the theory (Piechowski, 1975, p. 267).

Although TPD draws the interest of an international group of therapists and scholars, it began to receive attention from American researchers in the late 1970s, especially after chapters on aspects of the theory appeared in *New Voices in Counseling the Gifted* (Colangelo & Zaffran, 1979). Several methodological studies have been conducted to develop, refine, and analyze two essay questionnaire instruments as tools for study of the theory: The Definition Response

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Instrument (DRI) and the Overexcitability Questionnaire (OEQ). Piechowski developed the Overexcitability Questionnaire to assess the strength of the overexcitabilities (OEs). It was later refined by Lysy and Piechowski (1983). (These constructs are explained later in this article.)

Gage, Morse, and Piechowski (1981) developed the Definition Response Instrument (DRI), a research tool for assessing levels; they used a multi-trait, multi-method technique to establish the construct validity of the concept of levels. Miller and Silverman (1987) reported on a content analysis rating system created, tested, and recommended for analyzing responses to the DRI. Brennan (1987) has utilized an intensive case study approach, and Piechowski (1978) and Piechowski & Tyska (1982) have conducted biographical analyses to identify individual growth and potential as defined by the theory.

Those doing research on gifted children and adults have become interested in the theory because TPD goes far beyond the IQ, which has been the traditional identification measure of giftedness. TPD offers a paradigm for assessing, understanding, and nurturing the personality variables associated with high ability and advanced development (Piechowski, 1986). Most research during the last decade has looked at the theory's conception of developmental potential (Gallagher, 1985; Lysy & Piechowski, 1983; Piechowski, 1979, 1986; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984; Piechowski & Cunningham, 1985; Piechowski, Silverman, & Falk, 1985; Robert & Piechowski, 1981; Schiever, 1985; Silverman, 1983; Silverman & Ellsworth, 1981).

The Theory of Positive Disintegration

Clinical practice convinced Dabrowski that the Freudians were mistaken in attributing adult neurosis to childhood events. He was no better satisfied with the behaviorist view of human nature. He did not think results gained by experimentation with animals transposed to the complexity and subtlety of human psychology. Nor did he find a fit with Adlerian theorists. They did not take into account "the developmental potential of the inner psychic milieu" (Piechowski, 1975, p. 235).

Dabrowski's TPD, unlike most other empirically derived psychologies of persons, does not interest itself in discovering a hypothetical "norm" or average of human behavior. Dabrowski was interested in describing human personality as it actually expressed itself, especially in eminent persons and in the developmental process from "what is" to "what ought to be." He observed what he called a *multilevelness* in human behavioral phenomena. Love, for example, at one level might mean the selfish use of another as an object to gratify one's needs or desires. Love, at another level, might mean selflessly giving one's life so another can live. Fear, to cite another example, can be primitive and immobilizing, the result of stimuli in the external environment. Or fear can be "existential," the result of reflecting on one's mortality or the meaning of one's existence. Existential fear results from inner sensitivity and suffering, not external stimuli as such.

Dabrowski observed that these disparate behavioral manifestations of a phenomenon (such as love or fear) did not seem to occur in the same individual. He began to see behaviors as ranking from egocentric, at one end of a continuum, to altruistic, at the other end – from nonreflective with no apparent inner life, to intensely self aware; from a developmental (seemingly not capable of psychological growth) to highly developed with maturely evolved psychological structures.

Piagetian developmental theorists have emphasized cognitive development, with little attention to the role of emotions in development. Dabrowski's TPD stresses the affective aspect of development. It attempts to explain, not just describe, developmental transformations as a sequence of five levels. Each level constitutes a distinct personality structure or behavioral organization. The emotional forces that distinguish the levels are called *dynamisms* to indicate their dynamic potency to promote development. Developmental potential is the underlying principle that provides continuity between the levels. Each level represents an advancement over the previous level. Transformation is from simple to complex, from the most automatic to the most voluntary (Piechowski, 1975).

Dabrowski observed that the most gifted and creative individuals with whom he worked seemed to exhibit higher levels of empathy, sensitivity, moral responsibility, self-reflection, and autonomy of thought than the general population. During times of crisis, these same individuals exhibited so-called neurotic symptoms – intense inner conflict, feelings of inferiority toward their own ideals, feelings of inadequacy, shame and guilt, and existential anxiety and despair. Dabrowski suggested that such individuals were “positively maladjusted.” They had evolved beyond the societal norm and experienced great pain in the awareness of their differences from the norm. Because of the suffering and distress that accompanied growth or developmental transformation, Dabrowski called it *positive disintegration* – a process whereby simpler and less mature psychological structures composing the personality break down in order for more complex and advanced structures to arise.

Dabrowski not only observed that the inner conflict generated by the disintegration process was necessary for attaining higher levels of human functioning, but he also concluded that most persons do not attain these higher levels. Most persons are egocentric and unprincipled, or they are crowd followers, lacking an integrated set of inner values. As noted above, Dabrowski postulated five qualitatively different levels of human development, each with a distinguishable personality organization.

Level I: Primary Integration

At 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 a Level I characteristic. With nothing within to inhibit personal ambition, Level I individuals often attain power in society by ruthless means.

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An example might be an arms dealer such as General Secord, who will promote war in both Iran and Nicaragua for the sake of the millions of dollars of profit to be gained. Never is the question of the resulting death and destruction an issue to be considered—personal material gain is primary. There appears to be no anguish over the conflict between greed and the less tangible value of human life. Dabrowski observed that political and social leaders often come from this developmental stratum.

Level II: Unilevel Disintegration

Level II 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 behavior because they have no clear cut set of self-determined internal values. At Level II, which Dabrowski called *Unilevel Disintegration*, inner conflict is horizontal, a competition between equal, competing values.

Anna Karenina, heroine of Tolstoy's novel by that name, is an example of Unilevel Disintegration. Anna is torn between her emotional needs for her lover, Count Vronsky, and her dependence on her dispassionate husband and the conventional morality that insists she stay with him. Anna's conflict is intensified when she becomes pregnant with Vronsky's child and her husband lets her know that she cannot take their son with her when she goes to Vronsky. She cannot give up her lover to be a faithful wife. Nor can she cast her lot solidly with Vronsky when she leaves her husband. She misses her son so intensely that she is drawn back to her former home for secret visits with him.

Anna's inability to resolve the conflicts between her needs and loyalties destroys her happiness with Vronsky and makes her unable to adequately mother their daughter. She finally ends her suffering by impulsively throwing herself in front of a train. Anna is unable to respond to the suffering she experiences in a way that will propel her toward the transformations of multilevel or advanced development. She cannot sort out for herself a hierarchy of values that distinguishes “what is” from “what ought to be.” Her situation is tragically difficult, true, but she seems to lack the inner resources (or developmental potential) for the task.

Level III: Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration

At Level III, *multilevelness* arises. The person develops a hierarchical sense of values. Inner conflict is vertical, a struggle to bring one's behavior up to higher standards. There is a dissatisfaction with what one is, because of a competing sense of what one could and ought to be (personality ideal). This internal struggle between higher and lower can be accompanied by existential despair, anxiety, depression, and feelings of dissatisfaction with the self (inferiority, disquietude, astonishment).

Traditional psychologies often interpret the affect exhibited at Level III as symptomatic of a psychoneurosis that must be "cured" so the individual can lead a "normal" life. Dabrowski (1972) disagreed. He insisted that psychoneurosis is not an illness. If there are symptoms of breakdown, they can be signs of *positive disintegration* in which simpler, more instinctual psychological structures are being replaced by more complex and conscious (voluntary) structures. Personality ideal is arising; personality is evolving in the direction of the ideal.

Whereas, individuals at Level II are content with mainstream values of the family, church, and society, at Level III one senses, *No one else is going to tell me what truth is, what life means. No one can tell me what my life means. Is there a God? Am I here for a purpose? What purpose?* The Level III personality does not idly contemplate these questions as abstract issues. He or she feels them in the soul. Not knowing answers can be anguish. When the soul finds its answers, they compel response from the life. Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) consider Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment* a demonstration of the Level III rift between higher and lower values. Marsh and Colangelo (1983) use Tolstoy himself as an example of Level III development. Dostoyevski and Tolstoy expressed their own multilevel conflicts in their compelling novels.

Marsh and Colangelo (1983) suggest that Leo Tolstoy exemplifies Level III because of the evidences of multilevel disintegration:

Tolstoy's ideal of the simplification of life was a unifying philosophy of his life, but it also led him into constant bickering with himself and his family over the variance between the ideal and their daily lives. His life was fraught with conflict concerning his moral principles and ideals....Tolstoy's dominant characteristic is disintegration, characterized by inner conflict and discontent with his life in relation to his ideals, existential anxieties, and suicidal tendencies. In addition to these conflicts, Tolstoy also evidenced an emerging hierarchy of values, a deepening empathy, awareness of moral responsibility, and self-evaluation. (pp. 219, 223)

Another key to advanced development, as significant as multilevelness, is Dabrowski's concept of the *autonomous factor*. Heredity and environment govern Levels I and II, but for Level III development to be possible, a person must be able to assert self-awareness, self-direction, and self-discipline to overcome genetic propensities, upbringing, and external circumstance. The autonomous factor is a will to grow through inner psychic transformation. A sense of responsibility—not only for one's actions but also for one's development—characterizes advanced development. The autonomous factor is a powerful force propelling development toward higher levels of integrity and authenticity. Level III individuals can envision what they would like to be, but they do not yet hold the means of meeting their own ideals.

Level IV: Organized Multilevel Disintegration

In comparison to Level III, which he called *Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration* (the level of emotional tumult), Dabrowski called Level IV, *Organized Multilevel Disintegration*. Level IV individuals are well on the road to self-actualization. They have found a way to reach their own ideals, and they are effective leaders in society. They show high levels of responsibility, authenticity, reflective judgment, empathy for others, autonomy of thought and action, self-awareness, and other attributes associated with self-actualization.

On the basis of evaluation of extensive biographical material, Piechowski (1986) concluded that Eleanor Roosevelt is an example of at least Level IV development. Eleanor Roosevelt's life is an example of self-actualization (Piechowski & Tyska, 1982). The extent and power of her compassion, and the deliberate effort to follow Christ as her inner ideal, reveal characteristics in her development that go even higher, technically speaking, from Level IV to Level V. From early childhood, Eleanor Roosevelt exerted her will to conquer tears, fatigue, her voice, physical awkwardness, numerous fears, ingrained social and racial prejudice, depressions, loss of love. In all this her life of prayer was hidden, but the work of inner psychic transformation was always there (Piechowski, 1986).

Just as William James described moral action as the effort of will in line of greatest resistance, so did she attack points of emotional resistance in her struggle for self-mastery. That was the principal goal through the first half of her life; later it was the service to her country and the whole world (human rights and peace). (p. 194)

Level V: Secondary Integration

At Level V the struggle for self-mastery has been won. Inner conflicts regarding the self have been resolved through actualization of the personality ideal. Dabrowski called this the level of *Secondary Integration*. Disintegration has been transcended by the integration of one's values and ideals into one's living and being. The life is lived in service to humanity. It is lived according to the highest, most universal principles of loving, compassionate regard for the worth of the human individual.

As an example, think of the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Self-concerns are transcended. British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge (1971) begins his book about her by saying, "Mother Teresa has requested that nothing in the nature of a biography or biographical study of her should be attempted" (p. 15). He goes on to explain:

It is, of course, true that the wholly dedicated like Mother Teresa do not have biographies. Biographically speaking, nothing happens to them. To

live for, and in others...is to eliminate happenings, which are a factor of the ego, and the will....

There is much talk today about discovering an identity, as though it were something to be looked for, like a winning number in a lottery; then, once found hoarded and treasured. Actually, on a sort of Keynesian principle, the more it is spent the richer it becomes. So, with Mother Teresa, in effacing herself, she becomes herself. I never met anyone more memorable. (p. 16)

Of her empathy, her love, her sense of the significance of each individual, Muggeridge writes:

What the poor need, Mother Teresa is fond of saying, even more than food and clothing and shelter...is to be wanted. It is the outcast state their poverty imposes upon them that is the most agonizing...I never experienced so perfect a sense of human equality as with Mother Teresa among her poor. Her love for them, reflecting God's love, makes them equal, as brothers and sisters within a family are equal, however widely they differ in intellectual and other attainments... (pp. 22-23)

Developmental Potential

How do we explain why so many persons do not evolve emotionally beyond Levels I and II? What are the indicators of potential for advanced development? Dabrowski's concept of *developmental potential* gives guidelines for answering these questions. Dabrowski found that five types of "increased psychic excitability" were predictive of developmental potential. He called these *overexcitabilities* (OEs). They are assumed to be part of a person's constitution and to be more or less independent of each other. Piechowski (1979) has provided an in-depth description of the overexcitabilities and suggested how they might be used to identify the gifted. The following synopsis is from Piechowski's elaboration of Dabrowski's OEs.

If more than one of these channels, or all five, have wide apertures, then the abundance and diversity of feeling, thought, imagery, and sensation will inevitably lead to dissonance, conflict and tension, but at the same time it enriches, expands, and intensifies the individual's mental development. At times the inner tensions and conflicts may be overwhelming. Still, the process of development must go on — an arduous passage from a lower to higher level — from external to internal control, from impulse to reflection, from sociability to empathy and compassion, from social norm to the norm of the ideal, from relative to universal values, from competition to service to others, from possessive and security-seeking love to all-embracing love. (p.29)

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The OEs are the building blocks of the levels: The greater their number and intensity, the greater the developmental potential.

Overexcitabilities

Psychomotor overexcitability is expressed as high degrees of energy, activity, and movement. It manifests as love of movement, rapid speech, pursuit of intense physical activity, pressure for action, impulsiveness, and restlessness. *Sensual overexcitability* involves an intensity and craving for pleasure, "a keen sensual aliveness" (Piechowski, 1986, p. 190) to sights, smells, tastes, textures, and sounds. Sensual OE can be expressed in seeking sensual outlets for inner tensions, especially through overeating and varieties of sexual experience.

Intellectual overexcitability includes questioning, questing, analysis, problem solving, theoretical thinking, and the capacity for sustained intellectual effort. It is not synonymous with intelligence, because many intelligent individuals do not derive great pleasure from intellectual pursuits. *Imaginational overexcitability* is vivid imagery, invention, and the capacity for creative imagination. It can be recognized through rich association of images and impressions, animated visualization, use of image and metaphor in verbal expression, predilection for fantasy, and ability to retell dreams in vivid detail.

Manifestations of *emotional overexcitability* include intensity of feeling, inhibition, strong affective memory, concern with death, anxieties, fears, guilt, depression and suicidal moods. Most notable of the emotional OE's are relationship feelings; richly differentiated interpersonal feeling "is the mainstuff of individual development from a lower to a higher level" (Piechowski, 1979, p. 38). Research done to date on the overexcitabilities has demonstrated that emotional OE, usually in combination with heightened intellectual OE, is the most significant of the OE's for indicating strong potential for advanced development (Lysy & Piechowski, 1983).

Implications for the Gifted

Dabrowski's TPD provides a theoretical framework for understanding human development that is sufficiently broad to account for the highly differentiated development of gifted, creative, and talented persons. For those whose emotional intensity can range from anguish to ecstasy, to learn of Dabrowski's idea of positive disintegration can be a homecoming. After hearing a presentation of TPD a teacher said recently, "My 22-year old daughter has been going through a tough time emotionally. Last night after hearing about Dabrowski, I explained the theory to her and the concept of multilevel disintegration. It was a help to her. She said it made her feel there might be some purpose to the turmoil she is undergoing. The thought that it might lead somewhere gave her hope."

Parents and teachers of the gifted can find TPD useful as a framework for understanding and explaining the developmental patterns and challenges that occur for those of high ability.

It helps to find out that someone else studied and made sense of a manner of feeling and acting that is often at odds with the cool norm and expectations of the herd. It helps, for once, to feel legitimate in one's extraordinary reactions. (Piechowski, 1986, p. 191)

To hear that psychoneurosis is not illness can help the intensely sensitive make meaning of their experience of life. A novelist who is a Mensan said, "I experience intense despair over disappointments in relationships. I sometimes have terrible anxiety attacks. I feel at times even my own family must think I'm weird." After hearing of Dabrowski's ideas, he went on to say, "I know I could take pills to lower the anxiety, but I don't. They would also reduce the sensitivity to people, to feelings and to life that makes me able to write my books. It is worth the downside, but it is never easy...."

Ogburn Colangelo (1979) suggests that TPD offers us a unique perspective for counseling gifted individuals, a perspective that leads us "to act as nurturers, not so much of the talent itself, but of the emotional structure from which the talent comes" (p. 186). She includes a tapescript of a session with a gifted counselee in which the counselor perceptively and sensitively supports and reframes the young woman's emotional overexcitability and multilevel dynamisms. (An abridged version of this chapter appears on page 87.)

Silverman (1987a) also offers suggestions for using TPD in counseling the gifted to come to accept and value their emotional intensity, their unique perceptions and maladjustment to "what is." She emphasizes how important it is for the counselor to respect the potential that inner conflict holds for personal growth and emotional development, rather than seeing inner conflict as simply a problem to be resolved.

TPD's concept of developmental potential *vis a vis* the overexcitabilities is of particular relevance to educators and researchers in the fields of gifted education and moral leadership because it provides a basis for identifying, assessing, and nurturing extraordinary developmental gifts. Research findings indicate that giftedness tends to correlate with an elevated OE profile and that a broader range of giftedness can be identified using the OE profile than is identified with traditional IQ measures (Piechowski, 1979; Piechowski, 1986; Piechowski & Colangelo, 1984). Dabrowski observed that political leaders tend to be Level I personalities. How much our world needs more leaders like Eleanor Roosevelt and Mother Teresa, or like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dag Hammarskjold, and Anwar Sadat! TPD gives us a basis for identifying this kind of potential and encouraging it.

If we want moral leaders, we need to nurture the soil wherein leadership grows. That soil is emotional intensity and inner conflict. Only through dealing with emotionally charged issues can individuals learn what they

really believe in and confront those parts of themselves they wish to change. (Silverman, 1987b, p. 2)

And finally, the theory seems to hold particular promise for a nonsexist or gender-fair understanding of advanced potential because it does not emphasize accomplishment and eminence (e.g., number of research articles published, professional or financial status—measures that disadvantage women) at the expense of qualities such as empathy, sensitivity, altruism, and integrity. In the 1955 follow-up of Terman's classic longitudinal study of the gifted (Terman & Oden, 1959), female subjects fared poorly in comparison to their male counterparts. Yet both groups had been equally bright, equally promising when Terman tested them in childhood at the beginning of the study. By 1955, when the group had reached midlife, the contrast between the genders was startling. Male salaries, for example, ranged from \$50,000 to more than \$400,000. By comparison, the 50% of the sample of gifted females who were employed earned from less than \$3,000 to a high of \$24,000 (for a woman physician).

Another of the measures of success employed to compare the groups showed that only 7 of the women—compared to 70 of the men—were listed in *American Men of Science*. Apparently at a loss for how to deal with these disparities, the research team that conducted the 1955 follow-up of the Terman group decided to leave women out of its interpretation of the “success” of the group “because of the lack of a yardstick by which to estimate the success of women” (Kerr, 1985, p. 112). What if Dabrowski had been asked to evaluate the Terman group, by TPD's yardstick of OEs and multilevel dynamisms? The women, one can at least speculate, would have fared much better.

Conclusion

If you are captivated by the pursuit of happiness or the desire to be well adjusted, the goals of advanced development are probably not within your line of vision. The wellspring of human gifts, called *developmental potential* in TPD, is rich and deep. But those who are “gifted” in the Dabrowskian sense are not in for an easy life. Advanced development has to do with recognizing and admiring a universal principle such as justice—and then growing to the point where you *do* justice. You do justice, not only because it is right but more so because you cannot do otherwise. You don't believe one thing but find yourself doing another; you become a just person.

For a final example of this principle of advanced development, think of Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov, a human rights activist. Doing justice by protesting injustice has carried a heavy penalty for Sakharov. Lidia Chukovskaya (1982) wrote to him in Gorky on his 60th birthday where he was in exile:

They have deprived you of your government awards, they have deprived you of scientific and personal contacts. They have taken away everything

that constituted the essence of your life: diaries, reflections about the past and future, scientific projects.... As Leo Tolstoy pointed out, spiritual strength can be suppressed only until "it reaches the highest stage, at which it is more powerful than everything." The spiritual force radiated by you is growing, and cannot be taken away along with your papers.
(p. 3)

Another Russian, Grigorii Pomerants (1982) wrote that he did not believe the human rights movement could yield any political results in Russia. But he went on to say of the activists:

What they are doing is hard to justify in terms of outer expediency. But in their hopeless cause there is something else besides the impossibility of political success: the possibility of remaining a human being—a step toward what Dostoyevsky called a strongly developed personality. Before our eyes arose a kind of all-inclusive Leo Tolstoy, with his "I cannot remain silent." Thus there grew before our eyes Andrei Dmitriyevich Sakharov, losing his position, money, work, and outer freedom. He grew, and he remained each person's equal. No one is oppressed by his worldwide shadow. (p. 47)

In summary, Kazimierz Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration contributes a conceptual framework that gives structure and substance to the idea of advanced development. At times Dabrowski drew from his observations and experiences of humankind's political and social behaviors—including the extremes of facism, genocide, and war. At times he drew from his perceptions of individuals' aesthetic sensitivities or the ethical and existential dilemmas of the inner life. As Dabrowski described it, the evolution of a personality is an autonomous intrapersonal process of sensing and then reaching for and becoming something (someone) larger and truer.

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