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THE CONCEPT OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION
IN PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

DR A. KAWCZAK

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION

August 26-30, 1970

Laval University, Quebec.

The philosophy of man has a long tradition in the search for a satisfactory classification of various kinds of human personality. Jung, Kretschmer, Rorschach, and Spranger are perhaps best known as originators of incisive typologies of man.

The theory of positive disintegration offers a completely new approach. It does not try to establish some fundamental differences, fixed in every human individual, but looks at the variety of human types in a dynamic, developmental perspective. It distinguishes five basic psychological types:

1. The primitively integrated type has a coherent structure of mental functions, subordinated to primitive drives. He uses intelligence exclusively as an instrument in the service of instinctive, impulsive desires. He does not show the capacity to transform stimuli, emotions and drives. There is in him no distinct conscious self. He is entirely determined and controlled by hereditary and environmental factors.

Depending on the genetic endowment, innate inclinations and environmental influences primitively integrated individuals may represent a variety of socially positive or negative types, from good-natured, mild, even "motherly" characters to aggressive, ruthless and calculating psychopaths.

2. The horizontally disintegrated individual is characterized by inconsistency and disorganization of mental functions through inner conflicts between drives of a similar developmental level. He shows ambivalencies and ambivalencies, feelings of disquietude and discontent with oneself, however without self-consciousness and the capacity to understand himself. Horizontally disintegrated individuals are confused, unable to take care of their own problems. They are the ones who more than any other group complain about their own helplessness and request psychotherapeutic assistance.

3. The spontaneously vertically disintegrated type is one of the two kinds observable at the stage of multilevel disintegration. In opposition to uni-level or horizontal disintegration multilevel disintegration is taking place in a vertical perspective when there are conflicts between higher and lower levels of instinctive and emotional functions. There is at this stage a growing consciousness of the differentiation of various levels of functions and inner conflicts. Multilevel disintegration starts with the first symptoms of the dynamisms of the third factor, positive maladjustment, inner psychic transformation and the ideal of personality. All these dynamisms assert the individuality and, if they gain in intensity, lay the foundations for the autonomy and authenticity of man.

The spontaneously vertically disintegrated individual shows a relative predominance of spontaneous developmental forces. His awareness of inner conflicts and his understanding of himself and his developmental transformations is not yet strong enough to allow him to take his mental development under conscious control.

4. The self-directed vertically disintegrated type is characterized by a high degree of consciousness and self-consciousness, by intense inner psychic transformation in the direction of an autonomous personality ideal, by growing autonomy and authenticity, by the capability of self-education and autopsychotherapy. This is the type that consciously organizes and shapes his personality working towards a new, fully-rounded mental equilibrium and a form of life which makes full use of his talents and his unique creative potential.

The third, and particularly the fourth type, represent very precious human groups. The members of those groups are the ones who challenge the conformity and mediocrity, who are capable of not only reproductive, but of truly creative work.

5. Secondarily or autonomously integrated type consists of an incorporation of various mental functions into a coordinated structure which shows a dynamic equilibrium that counteracts and overcomes neurotic responses. This structure differs from primary integration by being a result of a complete process of positive disintegration, by a high level of self-consciousness, of understanding of oneself and of other people, by empathic, all-inclusive concern and responsibility for other individuals and human groups, generally, by highly refined mental functions and a high degree of autonomy and authenticity.

This psychological type has its representatives among the great creative individuals, ancient prophets and true leaders of nations. It seems that it can be achieved solely in later stages of life, only on the basis of richness of trying life experiences. Socrates, Lincoln, and John XXIII are striking examples of fully attained secondary integration.

An important aspect of this typology is the rejection of the idea that psychological types are entirely determined by the hereditary endowment and biological constitution. Prof. Dabrowski accepts Rorschach's thesis that the most creative and valuable individuals show the qualities of the so-called ambiequal type which is defined as well balanced in extratensive and introtensive tendencies; it is neither egocentric nor excessively dependent upon others. Furthermore, Prof. Dabrowski points out that in the course of an autonomous mental development there frequently occurs the case of growing awareness of one-sidedness and limitations of one's own innate endowment which gives birth to continuous attempts to acquire other capacities, indispensable for a fully rounded man. In this way, the new classification vindicates the supremacy of the humanistic, self-determining aspects of personality against deterministic, biological viewpoints.

Although the statistical data about the distribution of psychological types distinguished in the theory of positive disintegration are not available

it seems that a clear majority of people never reach beyond primary integration or after a short period of partial horizontal disintegration reintegrate at the formel level. There seems to be 15-20 per cent of people who, at least temporarily, display symptoms of unilevel disintegration. Individuals at the third, fourth and fifth stage of mental development do not seem to constitute a large group. Cases of secondary integration are particularly rare, probably much below 1 per cent of the total population.

The advantages of this typology are evident in the fact that it has a definite vertical orientation. It does not only differentiate and describe, it evaluates and exhibits social and cultural implications of each type. On the one hand, the social and cultural creative potential of nervous and psychoneurotic individuals is pointedly shown. On the other hand, two completely different groups of psychologically integrated, not psychoneurotic people, are distinguished and their social role, beneficial in one case, potentially very harmful in the other, is revealed.

Søren Kierkegaard in his book Either/Or gives an excellent description of two types of life, one of which he calls aesthetic and the other moral. His distinction, to some extent, depicts the contrast between primary and secondary integration, but the issue is blurred and confused by some of his observations and by his peculiar use of the term aesthetic which he associates not only with the enjoyment of art and beauty, but extends it to a hedonistic, sensual type of life. From the standpoint of the theory of positive disintegration there is not and there cannot be a conflict or opposition between aesthetic and moral refinement. There is no "either / or" here. Genuine mental development presupposes human concern and growth in both of the two dimensions of life.

DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Let us turn now to the old question raised in the philosophy of man. Is man determined or free? Are his choices and actions predictable or not?

The answer depends on the stage of mental development. The primitively integrated man is entirely under the control of his inborn drives and environmental conditioning. His actions can be considered predictable on the assumption that we know enough about the mechanisms of determination and about his particular genetic endowment and the history of his life.

The horizontally integrated man is less predictable, although he does not show symptoms of self-overcoming and independence of environmental influences.

What may be called genuine acts of free will is clinically observable only at the time of the appearance of the third factor. There is a stage in multilevel disintegration at which alternative courses of action and alternative directions of further development seem to be open.

Later, in the fourth stage, individuals gradually integrate their choices and decisions in a coherent structure of an autonomously shaped personality. There is at this stage more predictability, less oscillation.

Finally, at the stage of secondary integration, all choices and decisions express a clearly formed mental structure. The secondarily integrated individual always acts in accordance with the way he shaped himself in the course of former phases of his development.

To sum it up, there is a biological and environmental determinism at the lowest level of mental development. There is a weakening of the deterministic chain in unilevel disintegration and the emergence of what has been traditionally called free will in multilevel disintegration. Its specific expressions are the dynamisms of the third factor and other autonomous dynamisms, the work of which is synthesized in the process of inner psychic transformation. The final result of this process is a new form of a consciously organized mental structure in which the will is integrated with and shaped by other highly refined mental functions, particularly by higher emotions.

THE PROBLEM OF ESSENCE IN HUMAN EXISTENCE

The classical doctrine of essential natures of things, and of the human nature in particular, was developed by Plato, Aristotle, and in its Christian form, by St. Thomas Aquinas. This doctrine has largely lost its appeal in our time. The reason seems to be, that modern science discarded the Aristotelian essentialist framework, that it became empirical, inductive, generalizing, setting hypotheses rather than involved in speculations concerning essences of things, definitions, and rationalistic deductions.

The breakdown of the classical doctrine of essentialism was associated with the advent of existentialist philosophy. The existentialist thinkers start with the harrowing experiences of existence, not with its conceptualized expression. They point out that the deepest reality eludes conceptual definitions. Problems of existence can be experienced, but they cannot find a satisfactory clarification or solution in any sort of a philosophical system.

The great significance of existentialist philosophers is that they incisively deal with the experiences of pain, suffering, depression, elevation, empathy, and, above all, disquietude and anxiety. Here man goes beyond the tranquility of thought, of reasoning by means of abstract ideas. He lives and suffers, feels and experiences pain, disintegration, distraction and inner conflicts.

However, for all ^{their} insights, the existential philosophers do not seem to appreciate the fact that the individual human essence can, and sometimes does, emerge from the painful process of positive disintegration and take a definite shape in secondary integration. They do not seem to stress enough that, as Prof. Dabrowski writes in his Dynamics of Concepts:

Existence becomes valuable only, if the antinomy between that which is essential, unchanging, not accidental, and that which is changeable, not essential, accidental, between what is "more myself" and "less myself", between that which man could easily give up, and that which he could not resign at any price, becomes conscious and emotionally experienced. Precisely that which is individual, exclusive, essential,

self-chosen, irrepeatable, that which we refuse to give up, becomes the essence, and only when human existence gains distinct meaning, it becomes complex, differentiated, "human".

Prof. Dabrowski interprets the highest stage of human sevelopment as an existentio - essentialist compound of integrated functions on a high level of mental refinement,

...characterized by a strong mutual correlation without which a human being cannot be thought of as a unique individual, irrepeatable and unchanging in regard to central qualities. (The Dynamics of Concepts, manuscript, page 154)

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MULTILEVELNESS OF INSTINCTIVE
AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONS

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