

Biography of Kazimierz Dąbrowski

(New version by Tadeusz Kobierzycki, originally published anonymously in Wikipedia)



Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1 September 1902, Klarowo - 26 November 1980, Anin)

Kazimierz Dąbrowski – a psychiatrist, neurologist, clinical psychologist, pedagogue and psychotherapist, philosopher, founder of the Positive Disintegration Theory. Author of numerous scientific and academic papers in the field of clinical psychology, mental hygiene, psychiatry and pedagogy.

His works were also published under the pseudonym *Paweł Cienin/Paul Cienin*.

As a pioneer of the mental hygiene movement in Poland he created the Institute of Mental Hygiene, which he directed in the years 1935-1949. He also was the founder and president of the Polish Society of Mental Hygiene.

His theory has been discussed at a number of conferences:

- (1) 26-30.08.1970 - Laval University, Department of Psychology, Quebec (Canada)
- (2) 27-31.12.1972 - Loyola College, Montreal (Canada);
- (3) 7-11.11.1980 - University of Miami, School of Medicine, Miami Florida (USA);
- (4) 19.7.1987 - Polish Society of Mental Hygiene, Warsaw, Jabłonna (Poland);
- (5) 7-10.11.2002 - Fort Lauderdale, Florida (USA);
- (6) 24-26.6.2004 - Institute For Positive Disintegration in Human Development, Calgary, Alberta (Canada);
- (7) 3-6.8.2006 - Institute For Positive Disintegration in Human Development, Calgary, Alberta (Canada);

There were also other conferences:

- 26-27.11.1982 - The Kazimierz Dąbrowski Memorial Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton (Canada);
- 6-10.06.1990 – The First Ashland Workshop: Kazmierz Dąbrowski's Paradigm of Emotional Development, Ashland, Ohio (USA);
- 26-30.06.1991 – The Second Annual Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and its Implications for Giftedness, ASHLAND, Ohio (USA);
- 24-28.06.1992 – The Third Annual Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and its Implications for Giftednes, Ashland, Ohio (USA);
- 25-27.06.1993 – The Fourth Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and its Implications for Giftednes, Williams Bay WI (USA);
- 8-14 08.1993 - A Gifted and Talented Education, Toronto, Canada (session sur Dąbrowski);
- 9-11.06.1994 – The Fifth National Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional

- Development and its Implications for Giftedness, Keystone, Colorado (USA);
- 14-18.06.1995 - The Sixth Annual Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and its Implications for Giftedness, Counseling & Empirical Study, Madison WI (USA);
- 6-8.06.1997 - The Seventh National Workshop on Dąbrowski's Theory of Emotional Development and its Implications for Giftedness, Madison WI (USA).

There were also biennial conferences, e.g.:

- 22-26.06.1996 - The Second Biennial Conference on Dąbrowski's Theory Of Positive Disintegration: Perspectives on the Self. Banff, Alberta (Kanada);
- 10-12.07 1998 - The Third Biennial Conference on Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration, Kendall College, Evanston (Kanada);
- 6-9.07.2000, The Labyrinth: Safe Journey and Homecoming: The Fourth Biennial Advanced Symposium on Dąbrowski's Theory, Mount Tremblant, Quebec (Kanada).

Some aspects of the Theory of Positive Disintegration were presented in PhD theses by several authors: Czesław Kozłowski TJ (the theology of spirituality), Tadeusz Kobierzycki (the philosophy of man and personality), Zofia Pańniewska - Kuć (clinical psychology).

Biography

He was born on 1 September 1902 in Klarów near Lublin and died on 26 November 1980 in the Cardiology Clinic in Anin near Warsaw. He was buried in Zagórze, in the forest near the Neuropsychiatry Sanatorium for Children, beside the grave of Dr. Piotr Radło. It was a place destined for a symbolical cemetery for the employees of the Institute of Mental Hygiene and the Sanatorium of Zagórze who died during the II World War.

He received elementary education at home in his family estate in Klarów near Lublin, later he studied at the Stefan Batory Private School for Boys (the so-called "Lublin School", 1916-1921). Simultaneously, as a voluntary, he began studying at the University of Lublin (since 1928 known as KUL, The Catholic University of Lublin), where he had contact with prominent scientists, such as, e.g. Jacek Woroniecki. After graduating from secondary school, he studied medicine at the University of Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and at the University of Geneva. Simultaneously, he studied psychology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and subsequently at the J.J. Rousseau Institute, under the guidance of J. Claparede and Jean Piaget.

The first ideas of the Positive Disintegration Theory can be found as early as in the Dąbrowski's PhD thesis entitled "Les conditions psychologique du suicide" (Geneva 1929), in which the author uses the term of psychic disintegration, and also in the dissertation "The Psychological Bases of Self-Affliction ("Self-Mutilation") (Warsaw 1934). These ideas were developed in the papers on mental hygiene, a field which connected results of many specific sciences concerning man.

Kazimierz Dąbrowski was a man who attempted to discover the mystery of existence and human development in various ways. He studied Polish philology, philosophy, psychology, medicine as well as theology. He specialized in psychiatry, psychopathology, psychoanalysis, neurology, neuropsychiatry and mental hygiene. During his studies at the Lublin School, one of his teachers was Roman Ingarden, and at the University of Lublin, Fr. J. Woroniecki. At the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, K. Dąbrowski's teachers were, among others, S.

Błachowski, F. Znaniecki and Cz. Znamierowski (1924-1926). During his medical studies at the University of Warsaw (1926-1927) Dąbrowski had contact with one of the most prominent neurologists and psychiatrists, J. Mazurkiewicz. At the University of Geneva his teachers were also P. Bovet, F. Naville and M. Roch.

He defended two PhD theses in medicine (Geneva) and psychology (Poznań). In 1929 Dąbrowski defended his thesis in medicine at the University of Geneva in the field of forensic pathology under the supervision of F. Naville, who afterwards became one of the independent experts investigating the Katyń Massacre. Later, he started his postgraduate studies in the field of psychology, psychopathology of the child and moral education. At the J. J. Rousseau Institute he met J. Piaget, who was, in the beginning, an assistant and afterwards E. Claparede's successor of. After returning to his home country, he defended his PhD thesis at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań under the supervision of S. Błachowski (1931). Afterwards, he started a short training analysis in the Institute of Active Psychoanalysis in Vienna under the guidance of Wilhelm Stekel, postgraduate studies in the field of neurology under the guidance of O. Mahrburg, developmental psychology studies under the guidance of K. Buehler and Ch. Buehler and internal-neurological studies under the guidance of W. Schesinger (1932-1934).

The Next stage is his stay in Harvard (1934), at the School of Public Health and a clinical traineeship at a psychiatric hospital in Boston under the guidance of Macfie Campbell and W. Healy as well as a traineeship at the John Hopkins University Clinic under the guidance of Adolf Mayer. In the same year he participates in a traineeship at the Neuropsychiatric Clinic for Children under the guidance of G. Hoyer and in the Institute of Mental Prophylaxis and Applied Psychology under the guidance of J. M. Lahy and P. Janet. Finally, he habitates in the field of Child Psychopathology under the supervision of J. Claparede and works with him as a privatdozent.

He habitated in the field of child psychiatry at the University of Wrocław in 1948 but it could not be officially approved till the political changes of 1956. Before 1939, Dąbrowski was the director of the Institute of Mental Hygiene, which was co-financed, among others, by the Rockefeller Foundation. During the German occupation he worked in Zagórze near Warsaw, where he ran a sanatorium for children and where many children from the Warsaw Ghetto were kept hidden. In the same place a secret School of Mental Hygiene and Child Psychiatry was founded, which later was transformed into the College of Mental Hygiene in Warsaw. Many renowned doctors, psychologists, pedagogues and clergymen worked there. The High School of Mental Hygiene in Warsaw was closed down in peak Stalinism and has never come to life again. Some initiatives in the field of mental hygiene were undertaken by the Polish Mental Hygiene Society.

An interesting episode are Dąbrowski's theological studies at the University of Warsaw (1937-1938). His studies were interrupted after the University's authorities realized who their student was and asked him to give classes in mental hygiene.

After the II World War he carried out a six-month period research studies in the USA (1948-1949) in the field of neuropsychiatry, mental hygiene and child psychiatry at the University of New York, Illinois, Harvard University and a two month stay at the Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques in the H. Roussel Hospital and attended L. Michaux's lectures at the Child Psychiatry Clinic. In the 50's Dąbrowski was not able to participate in

the scientific life to the same extent. He worked as a doctor in the sanatorium for children with tuberculosis in Rabka and as a psychiatrist in various hospitals. He was not allowed to come back to Warsaw earlier than after the sociopolitical changes of 1956. He went back to Zagórze near Warsaw, to the place in which he had spent the period of occupation, working as a doctor and giving lectures in mental hygiene to future staff.

Kazimierz Dąbrowski was involved mainly in the development of the concept of mental hygiene, based on the results of scientific investigations of specific sciences interpreted from an interdisciplinary perspective. These ideas were expected to come to reality in the National Institute of Mental Hygiene, in the College of Mental Hygiene and in the Polish Society of Mental Hygiene. These institutions were closed down in the 50's and have never come back to life. The ideas that were developed in them are occasionally presented in the West as new.

An impulse to take more interest in the Theory of Positive Disintegration by Polish specialists in the Humanities, was the fact that Dąbrowski's name was found on a list of the most famous psychologists and psychiatrists in the history of science published in the December issue of the "Psychology Today" magazine in 1967.

He was included on the list mainly for the formulation of the Theory of Positive Disintegration and particularly for demonstrating the positive aspects of mental disorders as developmental mechanisms. What was recognized as revolutionary was indicating that the positive developmental dynamisms can crystallize in the structure of some psychoses.

Dąbrowski's stand is more radical than the views of R. Laing or T. Szasz. Abraham Maslow offered Dąbrowski an honorary professorship at the University of Cincinnati. Dąbrowski had to refuse due to family reasons.

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