

## TOWARD A HOLISTIC PSYCHOLOGY OF VALUING

(William J. Hague)

I WAS DELIGHTED to be given this opportunity to respond to Dr. Hague's article on valuing. I found it both moving and thought provoking, a beautiful departure from the dry prose I am frequently asked to review. In contrast to my usual reaction to manuscripts (mild annoyance), Hague's article brought smiles, nods, excitement, reflective moments, a little agitation, occasional bursts of laughter (drawing consternation from the passenger next to me on the plane), and even tears. My response focuses on four issues: (a) further clarification of Dabrowski's theory, (b) Hague's contribution to the theory, (c) some major differences between Dabrowski and Kohlberg's conceptions, and (d) the applicability of either theory to the valuing process in women.

Dr. Hague's treatment of Dabrowski's theory was necessarily sketchy, because of the number of topics addressed and space constraints. Initiates of Dabrowski's theory will find Hague's exposition illuminating, but the terminology alone could pose significant stumbling blocks to comprehension for the uninitiated. Terms such as positive disintegration, dynamisms, overexcitabilities, third factor, unilevel, organized multilevel disintegration, disposing and directing center, and so forth are not accessible in a few pages of text. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of supplementing Hague's description of the theory with a brief, nontechnical context in which to understand Dabrowski's perspective on values.

Dabrowski postulated a hierarchy of five levels of human development, each with a different value orientation. At Level I, there is an absence of reflection, and one is self-serving; at Level II (unilevel), one is dominated by group attitudes, and values are shifting and unstable; at Level III (multilevel), one begins to establish an inner hierarchy of values and to evaluate his or her behavior accordingly; at Level IV, the individual makes a commitment to actualizing those values; and at Level V (secondary integration), one is able to live in complete harmony within this value structure. The model can be perceived as a pyramid, with few cases reaching the pinnacle of human functioning: Level V. Yet, the existence of even one case portends the possibilities inherent in human development.

For the past 8 years, a group has met weekly at the University of Denver to conduct research with Dabrowski's theory. After Dabrowski's death in 1980, the Denver group renamed the theory of positive disintegration "Dabrowski's Theory of Emotional Development," to associate the paradigm with its author and to call attention to its emphasis on the role of emotions in the developmental process. (Recently, this group incorporated under the title, the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development.) We have studied Dabrowski's theory in relation to several other theories, including Kohlberg's and Gilligan's, and have developed methods of assessing Dabrowski's levels and overexcitabilities. Imbedded within Dr. Hague's article is a critical insight that will prove highly useful to us in our empirical investigations of levels of development.

Hague distinguished between individual values at Level III and universal truths at Level IV in Dabrowski's theory. Although he made this sound like a given within the theory itself, this may be his own contribution to the interpretation of the theory. It is a valuable insight philosophically and empirically. One of the philosophical questions raised by followers of Dabrowski is whether the hierarchy of values is *constructed* or *discovered*. If values are individual at Level III and universal at Level IV, the answer to this question would be bound to level of development. At Level III, they would seem to be constructed (when actually they might be "dimly intuited"?), whereas at Level IV they would be discovered. Through content analysis, the distinction between individual and universal values could be used as a means of differentiating subjects at Level III from those at Level IV.

Hague's comparison of Kohlberg's theory and Dabrowski's is pertinent, because the two theories have several common elements. The levels in both theories proceed from egocentric

orientations to more encompassing, complex, humanitarian world views. Both theories assume an invariant sequence of stages, each stage qualitatively different from the previous ones. I believe, however, that Hague neglected to mention two extremely important differences between the two theories.

First, in Kohlberg's theory, as in other stage theories, the higher stages grow out of the lower ones and incorporate the lower ones, so that less evolved conceptual structures are no longer available. In this regard, Dabrowski's theory is unique. Levels develop independent of, and in conflict with, each other. The desire for group approval at Level II does not evolve from the self-centered orientation of Level I. The levels may co-exist in the personality, and as the less evolved structure disintegrates, the more evolved structure gains in strength. This has an important bearing on the interpretation of inconsistencies in behavior.

A second, related difference is that Kohlberg distinguishes between *competence* and *performance* whereas Dabrowski does not. In Kohlberg's theory, it is possible to have high level ethical judgments in response to hypothetical dilemmas and much lower level moral actions in the face of real situations. In Dabrowski's theory, one is judged by one's actions, and consistency or inconsistency between judgment and action is symptomatic of the individual's level of development.

At Level I, people have an egocentric orientation and their actions are consistent with their beliefs. They may appear inconsistent at times to others, because they are capable of deception, but when their true motives are discovered, self-interest is revealed. At Levels II and III, inconsistency prevails. At Level II, individuals have shifting values and ideals, with no central core to guide them. At Level III, they have the ideals but often fail to turn those ideals into actions and then suffer their own moral failures. Levels IV and V are marked by increasing consistency between beliefs and actions. "What ought to be *will be*" is the hallmark of higher development.

Because of the split between one's thoughts and actions in Kohlberg's theory, subjects at Stage 6 (the highest stage) might only reach the middle level of Dabrowski's hierarchy (Schmidt, 1977). Some of the examples Kohlberg gives of Stage 6 development, such as Martin Luther King and Socrates, obviously went beyond the point of thinking about what is right to living a life committed to those ideals. The richness of their lives far exceeds the philosophical principles of Stage 6. Dabrowski's theory enables one to examine the committed life according to a set of specific principles—authenticity, autonomy, compassion, responsibility, integrity, and harmony.

Gilligan, like Dabrowski, speaks more of one's actions than abstractions. Her research participants had to decide whether to abort life within them—no hypothetical dilemma. I was pleased that Hague included Gilligan, albeit tangentially, in his discussion of valuing. But I feel that he skirted the issue of whether there is a feminine framework for moral development that is different from the traditional masculine. I also found his use of "mankind," "man," and the masculine sex rather a jarring contrast to his acknowledgment of an intuitive, more feminine way of knowing. I feel that to be truly holistic, it is necessary to take into account feminine as well as masculine value orientations.

In Kohlberg's theory, based empirically on the study of 84 male adolescents, moral reasoning is judged in terms of progressively sophisticated understandings of rights, rules, and abstract principles of justice applied to hypothetical dilemmas. As Gilligan (1982) noted, women's moral judgments are more often tied to feelings of empathy and compassion, and moral problems arise from conflicting responsibilities, rather than competing rights. Because of their feminine ethic to care, women tend to employ a contextual rather than abstract form of decision making, taking into account the feelings and concerns of everyone involved. When Kohlberg's model is applied to women, women's moral judgments generally seem deficient, typically being rated at Stage 3 ("good boy, good girl") (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969).

The cognitive complexity of contextual decision making is rarely understood. In her description of a moral problem, a woman is likely to consider many variables simultaneously, which husbands and male bosses and psychologists may label "scattered." It is actually a difficult skill for many women to learn how to present only one aspect of a problem at a time to the men with whom they need to communicate. Emotional, intuitive information (the inner feminine) is not easily accessible to many men (Conarton & Silverman, in press); they may feel they are drowning in chaos unless situations are drastically simplified and presented in an "abstract" manner (meaning divorced from feelings, personalities, intuitions, and complex circumstances). Traditionally, the reduction of life to abstract principles has been venerated as a higher order of reasoning, whereas the ability to process complex intuitive, emotional, social, and circumstantial variables has been viewed as inferior. Kohlberg's theory fits this traditional perspective, raising serious question as to its applicability to women.

Within Dabrowski's theory, responsibility, depth of emotional response, compassion, and concern for others are indicators of the highest forms of human functioning. These more feminine aspects of development are applauded, making Dabrowski's theory much more relevant than Kohlberg's to women's development. Several years ago, the Dabrowski research group spent an entire summer examining the implications of Gilligan's work on our rating of participants. Twenty of us analyzed our coding procedures to determine if contextual decision making relegated women to unilevel (Level II) ratings in our system. The raters tentatively concluded that it did not, and we were gratified to find that the majority of multilevel (Level III) participants in Lysy and Piechowski's (1983) study were women.

In a videotaped interview, Dabrowski indicated that sex differences in values are pronounced at the lower levels of development, but not at the higher levels. Gilligan (1982) would concur. She indicated that development for both sexes entails an integration of rights and responsibilities through the discovery of the complementarity of these disparate views. At maturity, both perspectives converge.

Piechowski (1986) provided an excellent summary of the comparison between Dabrowski's and Kohlberg's theories, and reiterates the close proximity in values between Dabrowski's and Gilligan's theories:

For those who wish to compare this theory against the yardstick of Kohlberg's theory, suffice it to say that Dabrowski deals with personality traits, types of personal growth, and motivation for moral action rather than with principles of moral reasoning and justice. Consequently, the reply to the question "why be moral" or "why be good" is to be found in the very emotional power with which moral questions are felt. Like James, Dabrowski stresses the importance of emotions as motivators and like Gilligan, he stresses the centrality of empathy and of a sense of responsibility. "Levels" in the two theories are not directly comparable. Tentatively, one might view Kohlberg's stages 1-4 as encompassed by Dabrowski's Level I, stage 5 by Level II, and stage 6 by Levels III and IV. The much discussed hypothetical stage 7 (Kohlberg, 1981) seems to correspond to Level V which Dabrowski elaborated in significant detail. (p. 193)

Hague concludes his article with a discussion of the prehension of beauty as a synthesis of all of Dabrowski's overexcitabilities: intellectual, emotional, imaginative, sensual, and psychomotor. This profound insight is another contribution of Hague's own intuitive integration. I am tempted to chastise the author for not giving himself more credit for his own interpretations, especially those that enhance the theory. But perhaps that is part of the beauty of Dabrowski's theory—it is so rich in its significance that it invites personal interpretation. It fits well with

experience, spotlights the possibilities for human development, and illumines the pathway for the attainment of higher levels of awareness.

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## EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATION AND RELIGIOSITY

(P.J. Watson, Ralph W. Hood, Jr., and Ronald J. Morris)

IS ADHERENCE TO orthodox religion a good and desirable option that promotes optimal functioning, or is it a bad and destructive option that promotes personal guilt and neurosis? The researchers involved in the present study point out that decades of research have failed to settle this dispute. Indeed, this study does not end the controversy either, but it does involve a difference in methodology that may well help to explain why the controversy has not ended sooner.

Perhaps the single most important contribution to the field of this study is the use of a methodological twist that allowed the researchers to conclude that adherence to orthodox religiosity is not of necessity a negative thing that automatically produces anxiety, depression, and a tendency to ignore or hide from the existential questions of life. The authors reported that if they had failed to employ this twist of considering the specific item content of the measuring instruments used, they would have arrived at different conclusions—conclusions that would have painted a "false and negative picture of orthodox belief commitments." They tell us that the Avoidance of Existential Confrontation (AEC) scale was developed in such a way that if a respondent indicates that "God exists," such a response is scored as indicative of avoidance of existential questions and is therefore negative. Discovery of these "religious" items in the instrument caused them to separate out the religious from the nonreligious items for purposes of analysis, as well as examining the total score, which would have ordinarily been the only factor considered.

The assumption that intrinsic, orthodox individuals are unthoughtful and worse still, unhealthy, is implied in the notion that such persons avoid or fail to confront existential problems. Although it is possible that some orthodox persons may have arrived at their position without careful thought of the basic existential questions of life, a simple score on an instrument like the AEC does not communicate *how* an individual arrived at a present set of beliefs; the score can only shed a bit of light on what those beliefs might be. It may well