

# Introduction of the concept of multilevel actualization.

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Dabrowski and Gifted Education:  
Beyond Overexcitabilities.

- Maslow's mother was very domineering, controlling and cruel – he felt “no mother-love.”
- An extremely isolated, unhappy child, describing himself as a “freak with two heads,” a view echoed by his father: “the ugliest kid you've ever seen.”
- He could not see how he had “not become psychotic.”
- Fell in love with and married his first cousin Bertha.
- Set out to understand human relations, at first as a strict Watsonian.
- He was fascinated by and attracted to dominant women all his life.

- Maslow worked in Harry Harlow's monkey lab and co-authored several papers on primate behavior.
- Conclusion: Dominance determines sexual behavior.
- He then studied dominance (self-esteem), motivation and sexual behavior by interviewing college women.
- Details of orgasm led him to "peak experiences."
- Using normal subjects became an important model.
- Maslow (1942) "human sexuality is almost exactly like primate sexuality:" dominant males & submissive females were equivalent in both species: an idea later reflected in his continuum view of instincts in animals & humans.

- Maslow saw himself as an expert on sex and felt he could improve society by improving peoples' sex lives.
- Male dominance / female submission are innate, “natural” instincts, needed for satisfying relations as defined by the female's ability to orgasm (Maslow,'42).
- Maslow used observations from primates to “instruct husbands in dominance” to yield orgasm in the wives.
- His views were very primitive:
  - As they are submissive, being raped is less psychologically damaging to women; they are more able let themselves ‘relax and enjoy it’ than men are (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 351).
  - Most “acquired” lesbians are highly dominant: but “when a suitable [i.e. more dominant] man came along, the homosexuality was dropped at once” (Maslow, 1942).

- Kurt Goldstein: the tendency toward **self-actualization** acts from within, overcoming disturbances arising from the clash with the world, not out of anxiety but out of the joy of conquest (1938).
- If the organisms' needs are met, its innate biological/psychological potentials can be actualized. If injured, this drive will seek to reorganize and restore balance.
- Already looking at security/motivation, Maslow (1943) quickly applied Goldstein's idea, now interviewing normal subjects about their development.
- Maslow did not find enough sufficiently developed subjects and turned to biographical studies to create the list of factors he felt indicated self-actualization.

- Maslow equated dominance to self-esteem, emotional security, & self-confidence: later reflected in his needs hierarchy & management theory (Cullen & Gotell, 2002).
- To see one's "natural superiority" is an important precondition of self-actualization: this created a gender bias in SA – men having "natural" dominance.
- SA contradicts women's innate submissiveness, creating social problems: few men can "tolerate and finally enjoy self-actualizing women" (Maslow, 1971/1976, p. 87).
- He researched and wrote on business: companies should help men achieve their natural potential to be leaders; women lack the instincts to be managers.

- Healthy individuals accept their own nature “without chagrin or complaint or, for that matter, even without thinking about the matter very much.” He went on: “the self-actualized person . . . see[s] human nature as it *is* and not as they would prefer it to be” (Maslow, 1970, pp. 155-156).
- Maslow described these individuals as more objective, less emotional, less anxious and less likely to allow hopes, dreams, fears, or psychological defenses to distort their observations of reality.

- Maslow described various levels of potential within a person and said that all of these potentials must be actualized, the lowest along with the highest.
- “The first and most obvious level of acceptance is at the so-called animal level. Those self-actualizing people tend to be good animals, hearty in their appetites and enjoying themselves without regret or shame or apology” (Maslow, 1970, p. 156).
- Self-actualizing individuals “display the clearest “animal naturalness,” welcoming these lower levels without question, accepting “the work of nature rather than to argue with her for not having constructed things to a different pattern” (Maslow, 1970, p. 156).

- Our instinctoid biology underlies a single continuum of both our lowest and highest traits – “the ‘higher’ life” “is the same *kind* or *quality* of thing” as the lower life – the animal life (Maslow 1971/1976, pp. 313 – 314).
- Animal and human exist on a single continuum.
- NO qualitative differentiation between animal instincts and the highest values – metaneeds of humans.
- Human nature *should* be compared with animals, but not with lower animals like “wolves, tigers, pigs, vultures, or snakes,” instead with “better” “milder” animals like “the deer or elephant or dog or chimpanzee” (Maslow, 1970, p. 83).

- Maslow (1970) rejected the notion that we ought to try to achieve more; potential must be actualized as it exists – we must go from where we are to “what we can be” and no further.
- Aspiring to hopes or ideals creates anxiety and neuroses which stand in the way of acceptance and happiness.
- Maslow advocated avoiding guilt; failures to achieve one’s ideals become a major source of guilt.

- Maslow and Dabrowski met in 1966 and corresponded until Maslow died in 1970.
- Over Dabrowski's protests, Piechowski equated self-actualization as synonymous with Level IV and V.
- Maslow's initial position was that Dabrowski had made a significant contribution but that it could be conceptually subsumed under his (Maslow's) model.
- Dabrowski argued that his theory went far beyond Maslow's with a number of important qualitative differences and therefore must be kept separate.
- In correspondence just before his death, Maslow wrote to Dabrowski acknowledging the superiority of Dabrowski's approach.

- No sense of multilevelness present in Maslow.
- Must be a qualitative break between animals/humans.
- To develop personality is to control our lower instincts.
- *Overcoming* our animal nature differentiates humans.
- One must transcend “is” and work toward “ought.”
- Reject self *as is* – must use multilevelness to consciously differentiate lower aspects to inhibit or transcended from higher aspects to retain & expand.
- Higher aspects chosen reflect one's personality ideal & will be “more like oneself” (personality shaping).
- Dabrowski: if SA is equated with TPD or its levels, his approach would be misunderstood and lessened.

- Previous efforts to simply equate self-actualizing / actualization with Dabrowski have been confusing and very misleading as the underlying rationale and assumptions of the two theories are quite different.
- In order to advance from this impasse, I am introducing the new, neo-Dabrowskian and neo-Maslowian concept of **multilevel actualization (MA)**.
- Multilevel actualization bifurcates the continuum between animal and human traits, making it clear that lower level features qualitatively differ from higher ones, thus reflecting the differences Dabrowski described between unilevel and multilevel experience.

- Before authentic actualizing can begin, a multilevel differentiation of instincts, traits, characteristics and emotions must take place.
- One must carefully review one's character and imagine one's, aims, goals & personality ideal.
- Lower aspects must be identified and inhibited to allow the independent actualization of higher features.
- The differentiated personality ideal subsequently becomes crucial in directing the process of actualizing and moving toward deliberate personality shaping, eventually resulting in the actualization of the qualities and characteristics of an authentic, unique individual.

- In Maslow, self-actualization involves a superior perception of reality, a clearer and more undistorted view of things *as they really are*.
- In multilevel actualization, one’s dreams and ideals represent the images of a higher reality – a potential reality, a reality of *what is possible* – this becomes one’s quest; to actualize and create one’s new reality.
- Actualizing reality as it exists versus establishing ideals and goals to strive for is a fundamental difference between Maslow and Dabrowski.

- Dabrowski: disparities between one's imagined reality and ideals versus one's actual reality creates strong vertical (multilevel) conflicts.
- These multilevel conflicts are a fundamental part of the developmental process acting through anxiety, depression, psychoneuroses & positive disintegration.
- In Maslow, conflicts, anxiety, crises and neuroses are “diseases of cognition” – blockages to development.
  - “What is psychopathological? Anything that disturbs or frustrates or twists the course of self-actualization” (Maslow, 1970, p. 270)

- The features of self-actualization put forth by Goldstein and Maslow must be reviewed and re-conceptualized using a multilevel approach.
- An integration of SA and multilevelness would lead to an important new paradigm of development and a new list of features, some old, some new.
- Research using this more comprehensive approach to development would provide important new insights.

- In summary, multilevel actualization involves a two-step process:
  - 1). A multilevel differentiation involving a careful review of the essence of one's character to identify the elements to be included versus those to be discarded in creating one's personality ideal.
  - 2). Actualization of this personality ideal involves:
    - Amplification and realization of the higher elements one considers more like oneself.
    - Active inhibition, repression and transformation of lower elements that are less like oneself.

- Without incorporating a multilevel reality, self-review, vertical differentiation and self-shaping, self-actualizing as a developmental concept is limited to unilevelness.
- Reflecting Lincoln's first inaugural address in 1861, a multilevel approach to actualization will help free the better angels of our nature from the bonds of our animal ancestry leading yet another step closer toward the realization of authentic human nature.

End.

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