

**Philosophy of essence
(Developmental philosophy based on
the theory of positive disintegration).
By K. Dąbrowski.**

**A different emphasis of Dąbrowski's
introduction to the theory of positive
disintegration.**

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Overview of key takeaways.

- Psychoneuroses are given a major role in creating developmental processes (not simply in creating disintegration).
 - Psychoneuroses build the inner psychic milieu, create subject-object, introduce hierarchization, internal multilevel conflicts, and develop a multilevel and multidimensional attitude toward reality.
- Psychoneuroses & overexcitability have equal weight.
- Developmental forces: interests and abilities, a hierarchical inner psychic milieu, and overexcitability – allow secondary integration after disintegration.

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More key takeaways.

- Psychic excitability/nervousness creates increased sensitivity toward the multilevelness of reality.
- Third factor and its sub-dynamisms, moral crises, subject-object, self-awareness, and self-education are key aspects of development.
- Subject-object creates self-knowledge, prioritizes values, and frees us from lower instinct and ego.
- The birth of personality: when self-education, self-defining and self-cognizing processes rise.
- The numbers in brackets refer to the slide numbers of the supportive quotations appearing in part two.

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- [18] Integrated people operate smoothly and successfully in life: no problem getting jobs, marriage partners, friends, and responsible positions.
- But, this sociality is superficial. They display intense egoism and narrow – often brutal self-interest serving unilevel values and primitive instincts.
- [19] Integrated individuals suffer less but cause others to suffer more. They are only interested in themselves.
- Those who undergo disintegration are nervous people with increased psychic excitabilities, usually gifted or outstandingly gifted.

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- They are sensitive to others, they are brave and generous, and ready for self-sacrifice.
- [20] Sensitive, empathetic, and creative people have intense inner conflicts, even suicidal tendencies, and often suffer crises and breakdowns. This shows the role of disintegrative symptoms.
- States of disequilibrium, nervousness, neurosis, and psychoneuroses are the primary forms of positive or accelerated development.
- [21] Shocks and stress in those with developmental potential will accelerate development.

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- Development involves protective forces that guide individuals through disequilibrium and protect them from complete dissolutions.
- [22] Developmental and protective forces constitute the inner psychic milieu and allow the person to reshape themselves to a higher state of harmony – secondary integration.
- Developmental potential is the sum of positive and negative elements that constitute the first factor of development.
- [23] The main nuclei of developmental potential are found in interests and abilities, a hierarchical inner psychic milieu & different forms of increased excitability.

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- [25] Psychic excitability/nervousness is increased sensitivity toward the multilevelness of reality. It is our excessively stronger than normal reactivity to external and internal stimuli.
- Excitability creates long-lasting reactions and strong engrams [memory traces] that quickly undergo ecphory [retrieving a memory by a cue.]
- The reactions and subsequent energy are specific and reflect the particular structure and functions of the excitability.
- [26] The combination of the different types of excitability, especially at high levels, marks great psychic richness.

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- [30] Nervousness/psychic excitability and psychoneuroses represent potentials to discover new realities, discover the inner psychic milieu, and highlight the importance of internal stimuli.
- They are the basis of “developmental jumps.”
- The dynamisms of psychoneurosis awaken and develop a multidimensional and multilevel attitude toward reality.
- [31] Reality consists of levels of subjective, objective, multidimensional, and multilevel elements.
- The higher-level individual has a multilevel experience of reality.

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- The different forms of increased psychic excitability constitute the basis of a multidimensional multilevel grasp of reality.
- The second factor is the social environment.
- [24] The impact of the second factor depends on the strength and character of the first factor. If the first factor is dominantly positive or negative, the second factor will be negligible.
- The third factor contains many sub-dynamisms that develop and act at the third level.
- The third factor is the dynamism of continuous choice in the internal and external environment.

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- [27] Dąbrowski gives examples of the overexcitabilities I include in the handout.
- On a high level, it is inconceivable that high intellectual excitability could exist in isolation from the other [excitabilities of imagination and emotions].
- [28] At the lowest levels, psychoneuroses build the inner psychic milieu and create subject-object.
- Psychoneuroses create a feeling of duality and heterogeneity in the psychic structure.
- [29] On a high level, psychoneuroses introduce hierarchization and internal multilevel conflicts. They contribute to introducing autonomous factors and developing human essence.

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- [32] Psychology would be humanized if it accepted the idea of an inner psychic milieu.
- The inner psychic milieu increases awareness and responsibility toward oneself and the “I” that one ought to be.
- [33] Psychopaths are moral dwarfs with no idea of what ought to be.
- [34] On the fourth level, an individual consciously takes control of their fate and organizes their hierarchy of dynamisms.

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- [35] Personality ideal consists of two essences: common essence reflected in our attitude towards others, empathy, and responsibility.
- Individual essence represents our unique and unrepeatable traits.
- [36] Subject-object makes you aware of your imperfections: this allows you to refashion them by objectively seeing where you must go and subjectively feeling and understanding pain and fear: This allows you to help others.
- [37] Your memory of your developmental struggle allows you to see others as subjects, enabling you to sacrifice your own needs in favor of the needs of others.

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- [38] The drama of the meaning of life does not exist in primitive integration. It requires a hierarchy within oneself and subject-object – the germs of essence.
- [39] These germs represent the nuclei of positive and negative potentials for development and either lead to mental illness and suicide or the development of essence – any other possibilities are difficult to imagine.
- [40] Personality is self-objectified, a term used here for the first time.
- [41] The third factor must act with self-awareness. Self-awareness arises from moral crises and with efforts to transform oneself.

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- One must subordinate oneself to one's uniquely constructed personality ideal and see one's path through retrospection and prospectation. This involves being pitted against oneself.
- [42] Knowledge of oneself always implies subject-object and the division of values into a hierarchy. This frees us from lower instincts and egotism.
- The higher one's development, the more objective is one's self-knowledge and thus the greater capacity to understand others.
- [43] Autonomy involves independence from lower instinctive dynamisms, which become nonessential and negative.

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- [44] To educate oneself requires splitting oneself into subject and object.
- Self-education marks the birth of the personality.
- This presentation has not discussed the core of this book, the philosophical discussion of the TPD.
- Summary: This manuscript reminds us of the breadth and complexity of TPD. It highlights that constructs in the theory work together to create opportunities for development and that a multifactorial, multidimensional, and multilevel approach must be taken to understanding and measuring Dąbrowskian development.

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Part 2: Supportive manuscript material.

- Provenance: This 314-page undated manuscript was obtained by Amanda Harper from the Library and Archives of Canada, MG30, Series B88 and digitalized by W. Tillier.
- Dąbrowski makes the case: "there is no place for authentic philosophizing outside the field of personality development; and that the elaboration of an individual's personality arises simultaneously with the elaboration of 'the philosophical attitude' through one's own development, through the 'human drama' in one's inner psychic milieu and through the process of positive disintegration" (p. 140).

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Integrated [unilevel] people.

- "The, so-called, integrated people stimulate in others feelings of certainty and confidence, gaiety and humor, and are able to make quick decisions. . . . Well integrated people have no problems finding employment, marriage partners, creating a circle of friends and attaining 'responsible' positions. This is, more or less, the general opinion" (p. 2).
- "it becomes apparent that a large majority of integrated individuals are only superficially socially conscious; whereas, in fact, they display strong egoism, narrow, rigid and low-level forms of self-interests and even brutality; that they do not have deep feelings of compassion and responsibility; that they represent more verbalism than authentic content – that is, content serving unilateral values and primitive instincts" (p. 2).

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Integrated versus disintegrated.

- “It may also be observed that integrated individuals suffer less themselves while causing more suffering to others; that they fail to take the interests of others into consideration, while being mainly concerned with their own affairs” (p. 3).
- “Individuals who undergo processes of disintegration, so-called nervous people or those who exhibit increased psychic excitability, are usually gifted or even outstandingly gifted, are sensitive to the wrongs suffered by others, are brave and generous, and ready for conscious self-sacrifice which is subordinated to positive development with their accompanying shyness and subtlety” (p. 3).

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Sensitivity and suffering.

- “people who are universally sensitive, empathetic and creative have strong inner conflicts and frequently even suicidal tendencies, and often suffer states of crisis and psychic breakdown. This suggests that universal abilities and creativity are associated with disintegrative symptoms, with a certain ‘loosening’ of the psychic structure and, generally speaking, with psychic disharmony and disequilibrium” (p. 4).
- “the theory of positive disintegration regards states of psychic disequilibrium, nervousness, neuroses, and psychoneuroses as basic forms of potentially positive or even accelerated development” (p. 5).

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Development recast.

- “in individuals with the innate rudiments of positive developmental potential, the experience of shocks and stress may accelerate the process of development” (p. 6).
- “The capability for mental development in general, and for an accelerated development in particular, includes protective forces that ‘guide’ the individual through periods of psychic disequilibrium, that protect him against dissolutions that cause remissions and complete recoveries, sometimes even in cases bordering on psychosis” (p. 6).

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Positive development potential reshapes.

- “These developmental and protective forces reshape the individual although the individual can be said to reshape himself; they constitute his ‘inner psychic milieu’ and lead, after the process of disintegration, to a higher state of harmony, that is to say, to secondary integration” (p. 6).
- “Developmental potential represents a sum of inherited negative and positive characteristics. (p. 6).
- Developmental potential, positive or negative, constitutes the basic, first factor in the development” (p. 7).

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Developmental potential.

- “the main nuclei of positive development potential are found, above all, in the nuclei of interests and abilities, in the nuclei of a hierarchical inner psychic milieu and in different forms of increased psychic excitability which constitute the basis for a multidimensional, rich and multilevel grasp of reality” (p. 6).
- “The second factor represents the influence of the environment in general, and of the social environment in particular” (p. 7).

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Second and third factor.

- “The role played in development by the second factor depends on the strength and dimensions of the first factor. If the first factor is very strong, be it in a negative or a positive sense, the influence of environment will be small or even insignificant” (p. 7).
- “The third factor is a component of many autonomic factors in development. Its strong ‘sub-dynamisms’ develop and act on the third level of development” (p. 7).
- “The third factor, [which] plays the role of affirmation and negation in relation to certain inherent characteristics and to certain influences in the environment. It is a dynamism of continuous choice in both inner and external milieus” (p. 7).

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Psychic overexcitability.

- “What is increased psychic excitability or so-called nervousness? We could describe it in general terms as the increased sensitivity toward the multilevelness of reality. It is our excessive, stronger than normal, reactivity to external and internal stimuli, in which the reactions are long-lasting and create strong engrams as well as easily undergo ecphory” (p. 8). [ecphory: the retrieval of a memory by a cue.]
- “The reactions and the psychic energy are specific, i.e., the reactions to various stimuli take place in a way elected by the specific structure and functions of increased excitability” (p. 8).

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The hierarchy of overexcitability.

- “The presence of only one type of increased excitability, which seldom takes place, indicates a rather poor psychic sensitivity. The combination of different types of excitability, on the other hand, indicates a marked or great psychic richness, especially if all the forms of excitability are present on a high level” (p. 8).

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Higher intellectual overexcitability is not isolated.

- Dąbrowski presents examples of each OE and emphasizes their multilevel character. I will provide this material in the download (pp. 8-11).
<http://www.positivedisintegration.com/WDT2022.pdf>
- “On a high level, [intellectual excitability] will express creative intellectual richness closely joined in cooperation with the increased excitabilities of imagination and emotions – each action will express its coupling with other functions, i.e., it is inconceivable that increased intellectual excitability on a high level could exist in isolation from the other functions” (p. 11).

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Low level psychoneurosis.

- “even on the lowest levels, psychoneurosis plays an important role in building an inner psychic milieu, in awakening resistance and problems ‘within oneself,’ and hence, in creating the nuclei of the dynamism ‘subject-object’ in oneself. It builds up the feeling of ‘duality’ and ‘strangeness’ resulting in heterogeneity within the psychic structure” (p. 12).

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High level psychoneurosis.

- “Psychoneuroses on a higher level play a much more substantial role in development by introducing elements of hierarchization and internalized multilevel conflicts, by constructing a hierarchical inner psychic milieu with its accompanying dynamisms, by introducing autonomic factors in development, and by developing human essences” (p. 12).

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OE and psychoneurosis work together.

- “nervousness or increased psychic excitability and psychoneuroses . . . constitute the causative factors in the growing importance of internal stimuli, they are the basis for developmental ‘jumps’ and they create conditions under which it is possible to transcend one’s biological life cycle and one’s psychological type. Their dynamisms take part in awakening and developing a multilevel and multidimensional attitude to reality and activate the processes of meditation and contemplation” (pp. 12-13).

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Reality.

- “Usually ‘reality’ refers to the tangible, external world common to all. Rarely, if at all, does the term make reference to levels of subjective and objective reality – i.e., multidimensional and multilevel realities” (p. 247).
- “It is necessary to underline here that the individual who is on a higher level, in terms of the development of distinct functions or groups of functions, possesses a different approach towards reality than other individuals, especially those who are at the lower levels of development. This means that they intuitively perceive, in a different way, the phenomenon of the multilevelness of reality” (p. 248).

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Inner psychic milieu.

- “If we accept in psychology the concept of an inner psychic milieu along with the external milieu or environment, we can hope to accelerate the process of ‘humanization;’ since, the development of an inner psychic milieu results in increased awareness and responsibility toward oneself, a division within oneself into the ‘I’ which is and the ‘I’ which ought to be” (p. 14).

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The growth of the self.

- “. . . The ‘I’ which ought to be seems to be non-existent or atrophied in psychopaths who can be described as moral dwarfs. The growth of the inner psychic milieu is accompanied by the growth of reflection, meditation, independence, courage and often sadness and depression, as well as a decrease in seeking external justifications and the growth and development of inner reasons and convictions” (pp. 14-15).

33

Fourth level.

- “On the fourth level, the individual takes his fate into his own hands in a conscious, brave and systematic way. He organizes the hierarchy of his main dynamisms, stabilizes them on a certain level and feels responsible for them” (pp. 16-17).

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Personality ideal.

- “Personality ideal is constantly verified through the activity of the dynamisms and the presence of the two essences. ‘Common’ essence is represented by the highest level of one’s attitude toward others in empathy, autonomy, authenticity and responsibility. ‘Individual’ essence is represented by unique, exclusive and unrepeatable individual traits (interests, abilities, talents, strong feelings of love and friendship and strong identification with oneself and with one’s history of development)” (p. 17).

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Self-awareness.

- “In order to help others develop toward their ideals, one must first pass through the painful awareness of one’s own imperfections and the experiences aimed at refashioning them. In order to reach this state of self-awareness, one must be able to differentiate what one ‘is’ from what one ‘ought to be.’ To do this, one treats oneself as an object in that one ‘sees’ where one is and where one must go developmentally; and as a subject, in that one feels and understands the pain and the fears, as well as, the necessity of passing through this developmental period” (p. 111).

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Subject-object.

- “Such experiential states occur not only in the inner psychic milieu but also in relation to the social milieu and in identification with others. By having a rich memory of one’s own developmental experiences, one may approach with deeper understanding the experiences of others – and so, treat them as subjects. In so doing, one sacrifices thoughts and needs for oneself, as the needs and interests of the other person assume a dominant role” (p. 111).

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The meaning of life.

- “The drama of the meaning of life emerges through the realization of developmental processes; so that, until we surpass the level of primitive integration, the problem concerning the meaning of life fails to exist. This notion and the ideas associated with it appear through the discovery of a hierarchy in oneself and ‘subject-object’ in oneself – both representing the germs of essence.

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The meaning of life: A bifurcation.

- Such germs present the nuclei of both positive and negative potentials for development – i.e., such an awareness could lead to mental illness and suicide, as well as to the development of essence. Any other possibilities arising out of the resolution of antinomies and the great discovery of the meaning of life, are difficult to imagine.” (p. 135).

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Personality.

- “Personality is a self-aware, self-chosen, self-objectified, autonomic, authentic, self-affirmed, and self-educated unity of essential individual and common traits” (p. 142).

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Subordination in development.

- “‘Third factor’ cannot act without the awakening of self-awareness, which arises in connection with moral crises and with efforts to transform oneself (birth of personality)” (p. 148).
- From p. 149: “on the way to secondary integration, man subordinates himself to his personality ideal; and through retrospection and prospection perceives the path of his life more clearly than before. This awareness of one’s development leads to the feeling of being pitted against oneself.

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Subject-object frees us.

- “Knowledge of oneself always implies the division of oneself into subject and object, the ability to place the values in oneself into hierarchical or nonhierarchical differentiation. Through these processes, one’s understanding of others and the transposing of others’ experiences into one’s own is facilitated; one’s intelligence is freed from dependence on the instincts, putting an end to the narrowness of attitudes of rigidity and egotism in judgment and behavior” (pp. 150-151).
- “The higher one’s level of development the more objective one’s self-knowledge; and correspondingly, the greater one’s capacity to understand others” (p. 151).

42

Autonomy divides us from the lower.

- “Autonomy implies the possession of a very high level of independence from one’s own primitive level of instinctive dynamisms – which, in themselves, are treated as non-essential or negative for the development of personality, of the inner psychic milieu, or of its relations with the external milieu” (p. 152).

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Self-education.

- “To educate oneself, a person should split himself into a subject and an object; he should be the one who educates and is educated (the importance of the third factor can be seen again, here). True self-education starts when the personality comes to life – that is, from the period in which the self-defining and self-cognizing processes become marked” (p. 154).

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