

The Philosophical Foundations of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration Part 2: Existentialism, Kierkegaard and Dabrowski.

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- Dabrowski was influenced by two major philosophical approaches: essentialism and existentialism:
 - The individual has certain innate essences (Plato).
 - The individual has a degree of individual freedom that he or she must exercise to become an authentic individual.
- Dabrowski felt that ultimately, **essentialism** was more important than **existentialism**:
 - "Essence is more important than existence for the birth of a truly human being."
 - "There is no true human existence without genuine essence."
 - (both quotes from: Existential thoughts and aphorisms, page 11).

- Synopsis: The individual must realize the necessity of choice in actively making their life, this creates anxiety and conflict, features inherent in human experience that cannot be eliminated.
- Existentialism emphasizes existence rather than essence:
 - Sartre: "What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself." (Existentialism, 1947)
- Existentialism is not a unified philosophical approach. There are many diverse sources and approaches:
 - Hegel, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Husserl, Unamuno, Kafka, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus.

- Major division in existentialism between theists and atheists:
 - Man is alone on earth, but with God in Heaven: (Kierkegaard and Jaspers).
 - Man is alone on earth, and there is no God: (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus).
 - Both approaches emphasize individual choice: in the theistic, we must choose, then God honors our choices.
- There is no timeless or absolute truth or reality and therefore life is largely meaningless. We create whatever truth or meaning (values) we have, as we participate in the experience of life: “life is what you make it.”

- We each have a responsibility and freedom to choose our actions and, in turn, our actions define who we are.
- Each choice is eternal: a mistake lasts forever, but everyday we have new choices to make and therefore, new chances to redeem ourselves.
- Our choices are individual, however, because we are human, our individual choices also reflect on all mankind.
- Personality is an important theme of many existential authors:
 - Kierkegaard: (The Sickness Unto Death) Depicts man's personality in terms of: 1) The relation of the body to the soul. 2) The relation of the body and soul to God.
 - Nietzsche's *overman* concept reflects his understanding of man's personality and the possibilities of self-transcendence.

- The self is not predetermined, the choices we make (or don't make) determine and define our selves and our lives:
 - One must create an autonomous self from one's self-chosen actions.
 - Sartre: "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." (L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, 1946).
 - Our power to choose creates a sense of freedom.
 - All choices contain both positive and negative aspects:
 - Negative:
 - Life is often mysterious and often seems meaningless and absurd.
 - Many things in life defy rational explanation.

- Realizing our freedom and these negative aspects creates strong anxiety and sometimes hopelessness.
- Positive:
 - The freedom to choose is a tremendous gift (if used).
 - One's personal beliefs (and /or) faith are important positive aspects in decision making.
- Authenticity is making decisions and accepting responsibility for their consequences (Sartre).
- Dabrowski was heavily influenced by the works of Kierkegaard. The remainder of this presentation will therefore focus on Kierkegaard's life and works.

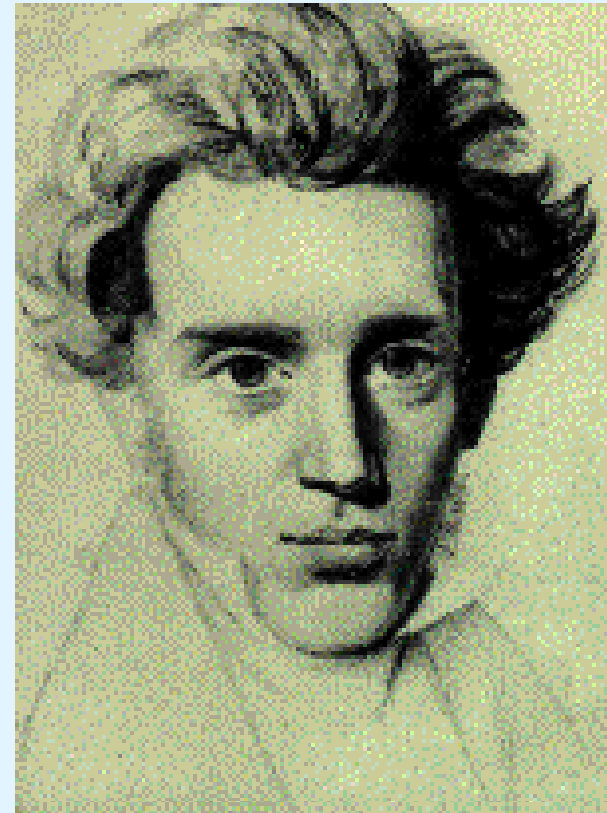
- Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855):
 - Born, Copenhagen, Denmark.
 - Only lived 42 years but wrote 25 books.
 - Studied philosophy and theology at Copenhagen University.
 - Latin and German were the languages of the day, Søren defended his thesis in Latin.
 - Wrote important critiques of Hegel and of the German romantics. Early figure in the development of modernism. Considered a Christian writer for his works on the modern relevance of biblical figures. Saw himself as a romantic poet. Works were obscure shortly after his death.
 - Kierkegaard's ideas were resurrected by M. Heidegger (who was criticized for being a Nazi) and by K. Jaspers.

- Called the "father of existentialism," his ideas came to have a major impact on many writers.
- Kierkegaard's writings center around relations to his mother, his father, and his fiancée, Regina Olsen.
- Basic themes: criticized the dogma of Christianity, advanced a new view of the self, focused on the importance of making individual decisions.
- Kierkegaard was deeply affected by his family background:
 - Søren's father, Michael, rose from poverty to become a prominent citizen but felt lifelong guilt because, as a youth, he had cursed God.
 - Michael was married but his wife became ill and died. During this illness, the family had a nurse / maid and Michael had an affair with her.

- They later married, having seven children. Søren was the youngest. Michael felt his children were all cursed to die before 34 (the age of Christ at the crucifixion). This was prophetic as only Søren and another brother lived past 34.
- Michael saw Søren's potential and his upbringing of Søren was very harsh, especially in terms of religion. Søren later said "Humanly speaking, it was a crazy upbringing."
- Søren felt that his chances of having a normal life had been sacrificed by his father's religious preoccupations.
- After his father died, Søren was at loose ends. He was 21 when he met 14 year old Regina Olsen. He turned their story into his famous book, "Diary of a Seducer."

- Søren befriended Regina's family and alienated her from her boyfriend. When she turned 17, he proposed marriage.
- Without warning he broke off the engagement, later saying that "God had vetoed the marriage."
- Søren fled to Berlin to study Hegel. Frederic Engels was a classmate.
- Søren was obsessed over the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. He wrote "Fear and Trembling" in response:
 - In this book, he suggests that he had acted badly with Regina so that she would blame him and not blame God for their problems. He said that if he "had faith" he would have married her. He was love-sick the rest of his life.

- Søren befriended a newspaper publisher. Later, they had a falling out and the publisher used the paper to make a laughing stock of Søren.
- Søren felt that the Church had become complacent and began to harshly criticize it. Towards the end of his life, he often printed heretical pamphlets and handed them out to people on the street.
- Søren died, basically alienated and without friends, in 1855.



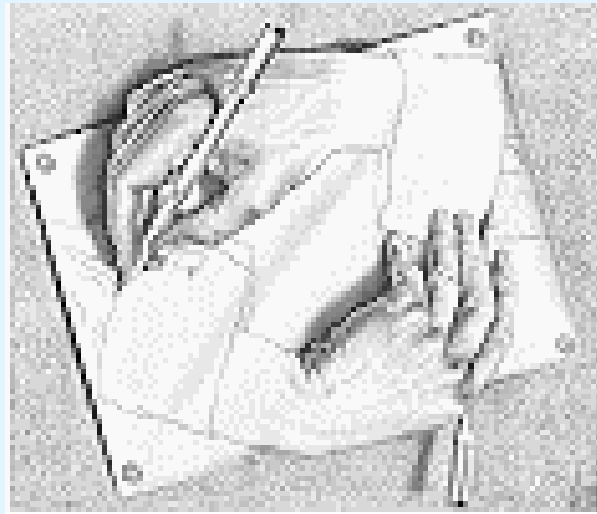
- Kierkegaard's central preoccupations:
 - How to become a good Christian (as he conceptualized this).
 - How to become an individual, (he requested his tombstone simply read "That Individual").
 - At the time, in Denmark, these tasks were "more difficult for the well-educated, since prevailing educational and cultural institutions tended to produce stereotyped members of 'the crowd' rather than to allow individuals to discover their own unique identities."
 - From: (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>).

- Kierkegaard felt that society and the church played a strong role in leading people away from individual awareness and existence.
- Kierkegaard rejected scientific logic and knowledge as the means of human redemption (Hegel's position).
- He emphasized the gap between the individual and God to show us that human beings are totally dependant on God's grace for their salvation.

- Kierkegaard used Socratic irony, complicated parables and paradoxes to tell stories:
 - His dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony with constant reference to Socrates*, showed how Socrates used irony to facilitate the development of subjectivity in his students.
 - Following Socrates, Kierkegaard said people know too much and this is an obstacle to their redemption. He wanted to tear apart this “phony” knowledge and show people they actually know little. (Socrates: “I am wiser, as although I know nothing, I know that I do not know.”)
 - When one realizes that one doesn't know, this creates freedom, however, with this freedom comes the responsibility (and anxiety) of decision making.

- This method rejects the knowledge and answers provided by external “authorities” (like Society or the Church), instead encouraging the individual to seek his or her own answers.
- He placed responsibility on the reader and did not see himself as an authority. Calling his approach “indirect discourse” he wrote in a way designed to force the reader to answer core existential, ethical and religious questions.
- Palmer (1996) says Kierkegaard’s writing has an “Escher-like quality” to it: he talks a lot about concepts but ultimately, rejects concepts and brings us back to Human experience:
 - Example: the title The Concept of Dread.
 - Kierkegaard paradoxically refers to dread as a concept, yet, it is perhaps the ultimate experience and we can only know it through our own experience of it.

- Humans define themselves and try to understand the world by converting their experiences into concepts, however, ultimately, concepts are useless and we must return to our own human experiences to understand life.



- Kierkegaard thought about existence and what it means:
 - He endorsed Plato's logic and Plato's theory of Forms: However, Kierkegaard saw that existence is always concrete, never abstract and therefore existence cannot be thought of as an absolute Platonic Form:
 - Existence cannot be conceptualized and analyzed the way a mathematical concept can be.
 - Existence is thus a leftover "residue" that is simply "there:"
 - Kierkegaard: Existence is a "surd" (speechless: words can not explain it, it is lacking in sense, irrational).
 - Life is absurd: idea promoted by Kafka, Camus & Sartre.
- Basic Paradox: Existence is at our very core as a person; existence is just a meaningless and absurd "leftover" in life.

- Conclusions:
 - Existence cannot be thought about or studied as a concept or as an abstraction.
 - Existence fundamentally does not make logical sense:
 - Thus, Plato's ultra-logical approach won't work here.
 - Existence must be known by being lived (experienced).
 - Doing and thinking strike a paradoxical balance in each person's existence:
 - Existing is primarily a form of doing (living) not a form of thinking.
 - However, thinking also plays a crucial role in decision making and in living.

- There is a basic paradox between acting and thinking:
 - We can not know life by merely thinking but we cannot live (act) without thinking:
 - Our choice of action is based on the initial and ongoing choices we make about our basic subjective beliefs.
 - There is a reciprocity: we think, believe, choose, and act. Our actions subsequently influence our future beliefs, choices & acts.
- Kierkegaard felt that the average person was prevented from “real action” by their reliance on social roles and the Church for their “crowd beliefs:”
 - “a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent [showing no remorse] and irresponsible.” (The Point of View).

- In choosing, one constructs oneself and one's future world, but there is great uncertainty associated with these choices:
 - “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards” (Diaries, IV, A 164).
- “Sensitive souls” will never be sure that their chosen values are the right ones, therefore they will always be full of “anguish and dread” over the many choices they have had to make in life.
- Choosing is a two-edged sword: on one side is the dread and anxiety associated with choosing, on the other side is the exhilaration of the freedom in being able to “choose oneself.”

- There is objective truth that rests on abstractions and external criteria. This can be thought about, tested and analyzed (Plato's Forms: science, mathematics, etc.). The focus is on what the truth is: these are common truths (the speed of light is 299,792.458 km/sec.). These sorts of objective truths can often be determined (measured) with certainty and accuracy, but they don't mean very much to one's existence.
- Subjective truth concerns individual values and existence. It cannot be abstracted and is not focused on what is true, rather, on how we come to know truth and how we act on it in our lives. These are individual truths: my truth is mine alone, each person has their own truth of life.
- Ultimately, all truth (and existence) is subjectivity.

- Subjective truth cannot be communicated to other people directly, it is made up of deep individual insights and choices about one's life.
- Subjective truth is the most important type because if one changes one's beliefs, one becomes a different person and will make different choices and do different things. The individual is their subjective truth, their values.
- We are finite beings and our critical truths are subjective, however, God is infinite, therefore we can never really know God using subjective approaches.

- When an individual realizes the real nature of existence, he or she comes to see their life in relation to their death.
- The recognition of our subjective death helps us to order our priorities and to discover life. Kierkegaard says, it is a tragedy to discover death too late: the man who woke up one day and discovered he was dead. A person must discover death in time to allow him or her to truly live life.
- Paradox: Subjective truth is a means to discover death and also to activate life.
- Because subjective thought brings up the issue of nothingness, the “surdity” of existence, it is negative thought.
- Our doubts, insecurities and depressions accentuate this negativity.

- Consciousness reflects the negative element of subjectivity.
- Consciousness “confronts the actual with what is possible,” and thus, consciousness is uncertainty, It contains a real sense of terror. Once we become conscious of a door, we wonder what is behind it, creating anxieties and doubts.
- Freud called this “the psychopathology of everyday life.” Hidden within consciousness is doubt, a type of madness saved only by our beliefs (that it really is safe behind the door).
- Belief, and our active choosing, are positive aspects that cancel out the negative aspects.
- Belief sustains the world but must rest on individual, subjective insights and truths.

- These realizations yield insights about the nature of belief:
 - Belief is the interface between consciousness and the world.
 - Belief is salvation from the meaninglessness of existence.
 - However, if overextended, belief can also become a type of madness.
- Initially, belief is naïve: the child believes in Santa Claus.
- Eventually, naïve belief is confronted and we must choose:
 - 1). To flee into self-deception and continue in naiveté.
 - 2). To realize that the normal states of consciousness are complex and miraculous and similar to religious states. These normal, everyday states are made up of both beliefs and doubts, but not certainties: the certainty and security of Santa Claus (the “group world view”) evaporates.

- To recognize everyday states with their doubts and to choose to confront these insecurities with our internal beliefs and faith is to make the authentic choice.
- These authentic choices solidify our beliefs and eventually lead to the discovery of God.
- Ultimately, a person demonstrates belief by repeatedly renewing the “passionate subjective relationship to an object which can never be known, but only believed in. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd.” (from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>).

- Being able to choose creates individual freedom.
- Kierkegaard: "Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom."
- Dread is the resulting fear of this freedom.
- Standing on the edge of the cliff, we fear *falling* over but we also dread the realization that we could *jump* over. We dread what we *may* do. We also dread that all that is holding us back from jumping is our own individual choice not to do so.
- "Dread is the desire for what one fears and the fear of what one desires" (Palmer, 1996, p. 61).
- When one thinks about the future, one realizes that one has to choose to create a life and that one's life will be determined by the choices made.

- Sartre: “I await my future. Anguish is the fear of not finding myself there.” (quoted in Palmer, 1996, p. 62).
- The realization that one may choose creates a tremendous sense of responsibility and to accept this responsibility is to be authentic.
- For Kierkegaard, to reject making the choice is to be inauthentic, what Sartre calls acting in bad faith – to choose not to choose:
 - However, as Kierkegaard first noted, not choosing is also a choice: hence Sartre’s famous saying: “We are condemned to be free.”

- “The individual is subject to an enormous burden of responsibility, for upon their existential choices hangs their eternal salvation or damnation. Anxiety or dread (*Angest*) is the presentiment of this terrible responsibility when the individual stands at the threshold of momentous existential choice.
 - It is essential that faith be constantly renewed by means of repeated avowals of faith.
 - This repetition of faith is the way the self relates itself to itself and to the power which constitutes it, that is, the repetition of faith *is* the self.”
 - From: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>

- True selfhood is choosing (willing) the self that one truly is and despair is not being able to achieve this goal:
 - Kierkegaard called it “The Sickness unto Death.”
- “The self is a series of possibilities; every decision made redefines the individual. . . . The knowledge that "I" define the "self" results in "the dizziness of freedom" and "fear and trembling." It is a great responsibility to create a person, yet that is exactly what each human does -- creates a self. This self is independent from all other knowledge and "truths" defined by other individuals.”
(From: <http://www.tameri.com/csw/exist/kierk.html>)

- Kierkegaard outlined two important relationships:
 - Between one's physical self (body) and one's soul.
 - Between self & others and ultimately between self and God.
- Kierkegaard went on to describe two types of selfhood:
 - An initial self defined by a relationship to finite reality, to humanity or to other specific persons.
 - A self defined by a relationship to God.
- “Most people are subjective toward themselves and objective toward all others, frightfully objective sometimes – but the task is precisely to be objective toward oneself and subjective toward all others” (Works of love).
- Normality hides the true realization of being. Kierkegaard says that after being pushed to the edge of the cliff, one comes to see “ordinary life” from a new and clearer perspective.

- Kierkegaard describes a hierarchy of three stages or spheres of selfhood that an individual may choose, each characterized by its own unique view of the world.
- 1). The aesthetical sphere (the lowest type of selfhood):
 - Aesthetic: sensuality and hedonism, prototype: Don Juan.
 - The most basic type: if a person does not “choose” one of the other 2 higher types, he or she ends up here by default.
 - Kierkegaard said this is actually a form of alienation from the self:
 - The “couch potato.”
 - The business man: defines the good life as profit and good deals.
 - Kierkegaard called these people “Aristocrats.”

- Aestheticism is a form of hedonism, the self is governed by external contingencies and sensuousness: Freud's Pleasure Principle.
- These people are not fully human as they are governed by the same forces that govern animals. (Kierkegaard wonders why it takes nine months for them to gestate, there is so little substance to them).
- Society makes people lose individual freedoms and choice.
- Society sets externally defined parameters and the person has to play their role as it is set down.
- The self is fractured into a series of socially defined roles layered one on top of each another.
- We come to see that Aestheticism is simply another perverse form of socially defined role to be played out.

- The Aesthetic has no true self and can only develop one by consciously choosing.
- This choice entails Kierkegaard's famous "Either / or:"
 - The point where a person wills to be his or her true self and realizes that this choice will be the end of his or her old self.
 - For the first time, the individual judges himself, rejects his or her old, hedonistic self and begins to build a new self.
 - The person must choose to utilize their will to hold themselves up to an ethical code (or choose not to do so).
 - Making this choice marks the transition into Kierkegaard's second sphere, the ethical sphere.

- 2). Ethical Sphere: to discover individual moral responsibilities:
 - Once the ethical choice has been made, the individual has to make good on two imperatives:
 - A commitment to self perfection based upon his or her ideals.
 - A commitment to other human beings.
 - One takes a “leap” to the new ethical self, rejecting the old aesthetic self and the now incompatible old roles that went with it (roles now incompatible with the new self).
 - Personality crystallizes around this new self-judgment and choice.

- The initial choice one makes is decisive for personality because, now, all future choices will become subsequent occasions of self-judgment:
 - Future choices will be moral: a morality within the context of the given system of thought initially selected:
 - e. g., Christian or Communist.
 - Kierkegaard was not concerned with *what* moral code was chosen, only that an individual choice was made:
 - It is not up to people to judge each other's moral choices, this is God's ultimate role.
 - All future decisions will be based on the personality the individual has selected and not on situational, social roles.

- 3). The religious sphere: suffering, faith and self-understanding:
 - Kierkegaard was preoccupied with the Biblical story of Abraham:
 - Abraham was promised a son by God. Finally, when Abraham was 99, and his wife was 90, a son, Isaac was born. Later, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham complied and as he was about to thrust the knife, God stopped him and restored his happy life.
 - Kierkegaard was horrified by Abraham's absolute resolve to obey God and it inspired in Kierkegaard "fear and trembling," also the title of one of his major books.
 - Kierkegaard had to discover where Abraham found the strength to raise the knife, for Kierkegaard, this seemed to be the key to understanding the whole human condition.

- Abraham's act is a complex paradox: an act of resignation in that he chooses to obey God and give up Isaac and at the same time, an act of faith in that he believes in God's wisdom and that the ending will turn out to be happy (and that he will someday, somehow get Isaac back):
 - Kierkegaard felt that Abraham must have been insane:
 - He had already resigned (to give Isaac up), and at the same time, he believed he would still keep Isaac. No one can understand Abraham's state of mind or motives, to others, he must have seemed insane.

- Observers will see Abraham as insane and will not understand his inner dynamics or motivations.
- However, God will surely understand his state of mind:
 - This is characteristic of individual faith, one cannot make one's faith intelligible to anyone else.
 - Only God can make sense of an individual's faith and judge if it is Saintly or demonical in character.
 - All of the choices one makes (and hence the personality one constructs during one's life) are factored into this final, ultimate judgment by God.
 - Kierkegaard said the Christian ideal (not the lax Church doctrine) is exacting because the totality of a person's existence and the choices he or she has made in life are the basis upon which they will be judged by God.

- Kierkegaard initially found Abraham incomprehensible but eventually, he comes to respect and advocate for Abraham's "divine madness" (using Plato's term).
- Kierkegaard concludes that by virtue of his "insanity," Abraham has become the Father of Faith: what Kierkegaard called a "Knight of Faith."
- Many "Knights of Faith" walk among us undetected:
 - The outward behavior of the "Knight of Faith" is the same as everyone else's.
 - They have lost their connection with external, finite worldly things but by their infinite resignation, however, they have been restored to live life in a new way by their faith.

- Kierkegaard sees that Abraham also made a second leap:
 - Recall that the first life-changing leap was from the (lower) aesthetic self to the (higher) ethical self.
 - The second leap involves stepping away from humankind itself; stepping away from finite reality into an unknown and infinite abyss.
 - Abraham made this leap of faith. He risked losing his son but in being able to overcome his dread and by having faith in God, he came to regain everything in a new way.
- God cannot be known intellectually, we must make a leap of faith into an unknown abyss to know him: making this ultimate leap again changes how we see life, changes our basic beliefs and ultimately, it changes who we are.

- There is an implied hierarchy of duties in life:
 - One's duty to choose to be an individual is higher than to one's social duties.
 - One's duty to obey God's commands is higher than to individual duties:
 - Kierkegaard said he had to choose his duty to God over his fiancé, Regina.
 - He gave up Regina as Abraham gave up Isaac, but with the faith that she would somehow be restored to him as Isaac was to Abraham.
- For Kierkegaard, ethics are not relativistic, values are known to the individual through the self-revelation of God (this is the theistic, metaphysical approach to existentialism and values).

- We are the authors of our lives and we each have the responsibility and duty to consciously write our scripts through the choices we make. With this freedom to choose comes anxiety and even dread. We must come to see life in the face of the anxiety of the abyss and still choose to will our ideal self. To make this choice is to be authentic. The values we choose determine our personalities and in turn determine our acts. Ultimately, our choices and acts are the sum of our lives to be judged by God.

- Dabrowski was clear that Plato and his approach to essence was a fundamental foundation of the TPD:
 - But, Plato's essence is more than simply genetics, it is a complex mixture of inborn genetics and emergent character.
- For Dabrowski, essence sets parameters on individual growth.
- Dabrowski then “added” Kierkegaard and existentialism:
 - The individual must do more than simply allow their character (essence) to unfold – he or she must actively participate in living by seeing (and later seeking) vertical choices in life and by choosing higher choices over lower ones. In this way, a person creates an emergent personality, based upon a unique & autonomous hierarchy of values & a personality ideal. This is the core of human authenticity.

- Dabrowski described his theory as presenting a “phenomenological hermeneutic” approach.
- Phenomenology is the idea that each person has a unique perception of, and experience of, life and of the world. We need to be familiar with, and articulate about our own experience.
- Hermeneutics represents the idea that people must discuss and dialogue with each other (the dialectic of Socrates) to arrive at a shared interpretation of the subject being discussed.
- In phenomenological hermeneutics, we share our individual experiences of life with others in dialogues. Eventually we can achieve an overall, shared understanding of Reality.

- Secondary Integration
 - Inner psychic milieu / Personality ideal
 - Third Factor
- Kierkegaard / Existentialism / Authentic, volitional choices
 - Vertical conflicts / Multilevelness
 - Psychoneuroses / Positive disintegration
 - Developmental potential (including OE)
 - Primary Integration
 - First and Second Factors
- Plato - Essence lays the foundation of one's personality.

- Websites:
 - <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>
 - Books:
 - Kaufmann, W. (1965, 1975). Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre. New York: Meridan Books.
 - Palmer, D. D. (1996). Kierkegaard for beginners. New York: Writers and Readers Publishing.
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- The End