

ложительным аспектам «патологических» симптомов.

DABROWSKI, KAZIMIERZ: "La Teoria de la Desintegración Positiva"

La desintegración de la personalidad (angustia y ansiedad), seguida de una integración secundaria más intensa, puede considerarse positiva. Esta *desintegración positiva* ocurre en los períodos de crisis relativo al desenvolvimiento, cuando se sufre de fuerte tensión externa, en muchos casos de psiconeurosis y, a veces, hasta en casos de psicosis. Este criterio hace destacar los aspectos positivos de los síntomas "patológicos."

DABROWSKI, KAZIMIERZ: "Teoria Pozytywnego Rozkładu"

Kiedy po rozkładzie osobowości (moralne cierpienie i zaniepokojenie) następuje drugorzędne scalanie na wyższym poziomie, to może być przyjęte jako pozytywne. Taki pozytywny rozkład znajduje miejsce w okresach rozwojowych kryzysów, podczas poważnych zewnętrznych naciskach w wielu psycho-neurozach i czasami nawet w psychozach. To podejście podkreśla pozytywne aspekty patologicznych symptomów.

DABROWSKI, KAZIMIERZ: "Die Theorie der positiven Disintegration"

Falls einer Persönlichkeits-Disintegration (Bedrängnis und Angstzustand) eine sekundäre Disintegration auf einer höheren Ebene folgt, dann ist sie als positiv zu betrachten. Solch eine *positive Disintegration* tritt bei Entwicklungskrisen, bei schwerer äusserer Belastung, in vielen Psychoneurosen sowie manchmal sogar bei Psychosen auf. Diese Auffassung hebt die positiven Aspekte der "pathologischen" Symptome hervor.

DABROWSKI, KAZIMIERZ: "La Théorie de la Désintégration Positive"

Lorsque la désintégration de la personnalité (angoisse et inquiétude) est suivie par une intégration secondaire sur un plan supérieur, nous pouvons la considérer comme étant positive. Cette forme de *désintégration positive* s'observe dans les périodes de crises évolutives, dans les états traumatiques par stress externe aigu, dans maintes psychonévroses, et parfois même dans les psychoses. Ce concept fait valoir les aspects positifs des symptômes "pathologiques."

## DISCUSSIONS

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Dabrowski refers to his view of personality development as the *theory of positive disintegration*. He defines disintegration as disharmony within the individual and in his adaptation to the

external environment. Anxiety, psychoneurosis, and psychosis are symptoms of disintegration. In general, disintegration refers to involution, psychopathology, and retrogression to a lower level of psychic functioning. Integration is the opposite: evolution, psychic health, and adequate adaptation, both within the self and to the environment. Dabrowski regards personality as primarily developing

through dissatisfaction with, and fragmentation of, the existing psychic structure—a period of disintegration—and finally a secondary integration at a higher level. He regards symptoms of anxiety, psychoneurosis, and even some symptoms of psychosis as the signs of the disintegration stage of this evolution and therefore not always pathological.

### Historical Background of the Theory

The roots of this view of personality, which give prominence to the positive aspects of psychiatric symptoms, may be traced to the concepts of the evolutionary development of the central nervous system of Hughlings Jackson, the English neurologist, to the concept of growth of the Polish psychiatrist, Mazurkiewicz, and to the work in child development by Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist.

Hughlings Jackson's concepts of evolutionary development, hierarchical levels, and dissolution of the central nervous system, largely neglected in psychiatry in the United States, have not suffered this fate in Europe. In recent years Henry Ey in France, Von Monakow in Switzerland, and Jan Mazurkiewicz in Poland have extended Jackson's concepts of evolution and dissolution into psychiatry. Henry Ey has applied them to the psychology of normal individuals. (For example, sleep and reverie are viewed as forms of normal dissolution.) Von Monakow has utilized Jackson's theories in his contributions but also has introduced many additional concepts: *klisis* (movement toward objects), *ekklisis* (movement away from objects), and *syneidesis* (biological synthetic power in humans and animals). Von Monakow has emphasized the interpretation of psychiatric symptoms from the point of view of changes over time.

Mankiewicz, who died in 1948 in Warsaw, was the outstanding Polish psychiatrist in the field of Pavlovian psychiatry and was also a neo-Jacksonist. He emphasized the qualitative changes in the development of the nervous system and the significance of emotions as directing forces. Mazurkiewicz emphasized that besides strictly mechanical determination of the activity of the nervous system there are the so-called *own* forces found in lower animal organisms but more noticeably in humans. He called these forces *own* because he regarded them as not limited to proportionate responses to excitation—as more than simple reflexes to a stimulus.

Jean Piaget, Director of the Institute of Science of Education (Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute) in Geneva, has studied the development of reasoning and speech in children. His concern has been primarily with developmental psychology and with the influence of social environment on this development. He considers development a gradual unfolding of abilities in the child.

Dabrowski extends Hughlings Jackson's theory of evolutionary development of the central nervous system to the psychological development of the personality. Like Mazurkiewicz, he places emphasis on self-determination and he incorporates Piaget's views of the progressive unfolding of abilities. He stresses, however, the positive function of conflict, anxiety, and psychopathological symptoms.

### Western Approaches to Conflict

In the West the most broadly accepted theoretical model of intrapsychic conflict and symptom formation is that of psychoanalysis. Early in its development, psychoanalysts regarded frustration as neg-

ative and they encouraged extreme permissiveness in child rearing. But it was soon recognized that experience with conflict was an essential part of growth; either extreme conflict or complete absence of conflict led to psychological difficulties.

Psychoanalysis emphasizes the disequilibrium among id, ego, and superego, which may lead to symptom formation, to new or strengthened defenses, or to growth. It tends to see reality largely as a screen on which one projects inner conflicts. Two American psychoanalysts, Erich Lindemann and Erik Erikson, have particularly concerned themselves with the social and psychological aspects of development.

#### Positive Functions of Psychoses

That anxiety, even psychoneurosis, may have a positive function in personality development is not inconsistent with current attitudes in Western psychiatry, but that psychoses—the persecutory delusions of a paranoid, the hallucinations and withdrawal of a schizophrenic, and the wild hyperactivity of a manic—may play a positive role in an individual's maturation falls strangely on our ears. We tend to view psychosis as a *failure* of defense, the surrender of attempts at adaptation. Yet French and Kasonin some years ago and Bateson recently have suggested that psychoses may have a positive function.

Thomas French and Jacob Kasonin in an article published in 1941 present the hypothesis that a schizophrenic episode "may be a transitional episode in the process of emancipation from an old method of adjustment and 'learning' a new one," and that the patient may achieve on recovery "a better social adjustment than had been possible before

the illness."<sup>1</sup> More recently, Gregory Bateson in a brief introduction to a patient's story of his psychosis suggests that schizophrenia is a "vast and painful initiation rite conducted by the self," and that it has a definite course to run leading to the birth of a new identity.<sup>2</sup> Both of these papers are congruent with Dabrowski's emphasis on the positive function of acute psychoses.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration is interesting—even exciting. The ubiquity of psychological symptoms has always confounded a simple descriptive psychopathological approach to mental illness. Dabrowski's theory gives these symptoms a role in normal personality development that is consistent with their broad distribution as shown by epidemiological studies and as felt by those aware of the problems of themselves and of those around them. But intellectual excitement is not the best criterion of meaningfulness. What is the scientific status of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration? Is this a fundamental contribution to psychiatric theory? Do his concepts form a more adequate model for personality development than those of other theories?

The answers to these questions depend on more thorough definitions of his concepts than are available in this essay. The concepts of third factor, disposing and directing center, and unilevel and multilevel disintegration are not precisely defined clinically; their exact meaning is vague.

<sup>1</sup> T. French and J. Kasonin, "A Psychodynamic Study of the Recovery of Two Schizophrenic Cases," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 10 (1941), 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> G. Bateson (ed.), *Percival's Narrative: A Patient's Account of His Psychosis 1830-1832* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1961).

For example, Dabrowski initially defines the disposing and directing center as a "set of dynamics determining the course of the individual." Does he mean by this the goals for which the individual is striving? Or the mechanisms he uses to handle his problems and achieve his ends? He adds, "It can be at lower, primitive levels of development, or at higher levels of moral and social evolution." Now it seems that this concept represents the individual's values. This view is strengthened by his description of the disposing and directing center as moving the individual in the direction of his personality ideal. But who is to rate one set of values as morally and socially higher than another? When we turn to his clinical use of the concept a broader meaning emerges. In the case of Ella, Dabrowski says, "There is the gradual formation of the disposing and directing center hindered by the child's ambition but supported by her determination to handle new situations despite anxiety, her strong feelings of obligation and her ambition," and "successful handling of the crisis will . . . strengthen her disposing and directing center . . ." Here the concept clearly means more than values; it seems to include all functions of coping with reality. In the case of Jan he writes, "In the course of psychotherapy there was the growth of a new disposing and directing center developed from a decrease of his inhibitions, increased awareness of his own ability, and increased confidence from what he had learned from examining his developmental history." A Western psychiatrist would be likely to describe this as an increase in strength of the ego. But if "disposing and directing center" refers to the perception and adaptation to reality, what can be meant by its being at "higher" or "lower" levels?

There is, of course, considerable variation among personality theories of the degree of precision and clarity of concepts. These problems are not unique in the work presented here. And, too, something more than meaningfully defined concepts is necessary to achieve scientific status. It must show broader explanatory power than alternate theoretical methods. As described above, the phenomena conceptualized by Dabrowski can be stated in other theoretical terms. Moreover, a theory of personality is functional. It is relevant to a broad range of problems: treating emotionally disturbed patients, planning educational programs, and raising children. The clinical usefulness of Dabrowski's ideas is only hinted at in this essay. Of course, like man, no theory is born an adult ready to meet all challenges. But if the theory of positive disintegration is to develop through adolescence to maturity, progressive clarification of its terms, of the breadth of its explanatory power, and of its practical implications must be achieved.

The strength of the theory of positive disintegration is in its emphasis on "psychopathology" in normal personality development. Its weakness is in the looseness in definition of its concepts. Its growth and development depend on further clarification, particularly concerning its relation to specific clinical data.

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In a previously published review of Dr. Dabrowski's book *Positive Disintegration*,<sup>1</sup> I have already expressed deep appreciation of and basic agreement with his general point of view, and have ven-

<sup>1</sup> O. H. Mowrer, "Symptoms of Development," *Contemporary Psychology*, 10 (1965), 538-540.