

ing in Poland. He said that if I could do anything with the play at all he would be very grateful and I should consider it my own property. The title of the play he translated as "No Help To Be Had Anywhere". Dabrowski said it had an existential theme and the play could not be produced in Poland because of its treatment of personality. In general the play dealt with the failure of one 'neurotic' individual to counteract brutal treatment of a child. The neurotic hero offends persons invested with power and suffers greatly in consequence, finally being institutionalised as a psychotic. The plot sounded a bit like the one developed in the movie "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest", except that it employed a chorus. As in the traditional Greek theatre, the chorus was there to interpret the unfolding of tragedy to the audience.

Early in 1979 Dabrowski was assured of an appointment with the Faculte St. Jean and was continued as a consultant to the Provincial Hospital at Ponoka, making it possible for him to take up residence in Canada once again. Our relationship blossomed anew and intensified. However, tragedy was soon to occur. In December of 1979 he suffered a serious coronary and was placed in intensive care for many weeks. I visited him almost daily and as he began to recover he became eager to leave the hospital at once. He was obviously not fit but this did not deter him from seeking my assistance. One day, while I was visiting him in intensive care an intern came in making a routine visit. Dr. Dabrowski pointedly introduced me as a 'Dr.' Nelson. He mentioned that he was consulting with me about his condition and said he believed that Dr. Nelson was of the opinion that he should be back at work as soon as possible and that Dr. Nelson would perhaps be prepared to see that the patient did not exert himself unduly while in convalescence at home!

Eventually, of course, he did recover sufficiently to be released from the hospital and resumed regular work but it was apparent that his energies were now seriously limited. I saw him last in April, 1980, when we agreed that he should not go the conference scheduled in Miami for late November if he could not manage a direct flight. He did not go and the persons at the conference sent him a telegram of congratulations on the success of the symposium and told him of the provisions being made to publish the proceedings. Shortly after I returned to Edmonton and before I had the opportunity to send him my paper, we received word

that he had died.

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The report of the symposium on Dabrowski's work is now published under the title *Proceedings of the III International Conference on the Theory of Positive Disintegration*. The book is a commemorative issue dedicated to Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski, Ph.D., M.D. (1902-1980). It is about 600 pages in length and includes the papers given at the conference, plus a list of Dabrowski's publications and a summary of his major accomplishments. It can be obtained from Dr. N. Duda, Henderson Mental Health Center, 330 S.W. 27 Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 33312, U.S.A. The cost is \$20.00 (U.S.).

Reflections on a Friend & Guru – Kazimierz Dabrowski

Robert Reece

Mr. Reece is a filmmaker for Filmwest Associates Ltd., the motion picture company that, several years ago, prepared a film on Dr. Dabrowski in action.

Officially, he was "Dr. Dabrowski". I never had the nerve to call him "Kazimierz"; I was worried this would sound too intimate. This perhaps was indicative of Dabrowski's general impression on the world. He was a gentleman of the Old World, formal, yet he was a person who touched deeply those who came near. I was one who crept as close to him as possible. He seemed to be the source of something and if I hung out long enough, perhaps elusive secrets of life would spill over onto me. My persistence didn't bring Enlightenment but it did bring me as close to a disciple-guru relationship as I could have then imagined.

In Africa in 1968, deep in the funk of a romance gone foul, I borrowed from a friend's library, a skinny, grave-looking little volume called *Positive Disintegration*. Although the details are not clear now, I do remember that Dabrowski's message worked in a way that calmed my fear of the agony I was experiencing. The sadness and tears were not initially dispelled but they became more accepted. With the fear gone, the nervous energy in my body began to move! It took expression in poetry, drawing, movie-making, and single engine flying. Tears of sadness became tears of amazement; I have never known such moments of creation.

Four years later, back home in Edmonton, I learned that Dabrowski regularly wintered at the University of Alberta. There was no doubt that I had to meet this great man, the alchemist who could turn misery to joy. Over the next five years a friendship grew between us. I was a filmmaker and I began to assemble a film which would reveal Dabrowski in his clinical practice. There was a general interest in knowing exactly what Dr. Dabrowski did with his patients. It became even mysterious. Clients couldn't recall anything traditionally therapeutic about his sessions. Indeed, the film shows Dabrowski being a friend to those who needed him, a therapist who created a space for his clients to express their most subtle artistic qualities.

I saw him as a master of psychotherapy, but not in the ordinary sense. His job, it seemed, was to return each client back into him/herself. Each found his own "cure" simply by understanding that there is no problem.

Dabrowski called his therapy "auto-psychotherapy". To accept his model of mental growth meant to accept the fact that your neuroses can be signposts on the way to maturity, not detour markers. *Psychoneurosis Is Not an Illness*, the title of a Dabrowski text, puts his message in a nutshell. And I for one bought the message totally; I became a believer in my own craziness, and an ambassador of Dabrowski and Positive Disintegration.

As I spent more time with the Master and learned to relax with him, I began to see him as a human being, no longer just an author of great academic discourses. I could see that he was also a nervous type, often rubbing his fingers to the point of bleeding, and that he had anxieties about death and the unknown. In other words, he was one of us. I saw Dabrowski as a man who knew as much as a person would know about mental growth, yet I saw him as a man in anguish. Dabrowski could not allow himself the luxury of a holiday from his theories. He was perhaps too knowledgeable for his own good, a man imprisoned by his theory, unable to bear the fear of being totally unidentified.

Looking back, I feel that Dabrowski wanted to be a saviour, although I know he would feverishly deny it. But I know, for me he was a saviour, although he again would deny it. And in my opinion, he himself needed a saviour although the very notion would have made him ill at ease and I'm sure that if I insisted he didn't need a saviour, he would have been honest enough to deny that too.

I only knew Dabrowski as an old man and I could sense his own fear of death and the unknown that would soon be upon him. That feeling moved me closer to him and farther from his ideas.

Today, that's where I stand—fortunate to have been steeped in such a humanistic approach to human individuality but glad to have been able to leave it behind. What's left is a treasured memory of Dabrowski, a man face to face with the ultimate and trembling, and my life reflected therein.

Kazimierz Dabrowski

William Hague, Ph.D.

Perhaps I should begin with the blue mimeographed papers because that's how it began for me. Positive Disintegration was presented to our graduate class in the mid-sixties on page after page of paper, badly typed, badly mimeographed in blue and written in English that more often than not left off the articles from words, that stumbled and recouped itself and somehow flowed on to gradually unravel a theory that was a man's life. The seminars were discussions of the papers given out the previous week and our role was clearly that of a disciple, asking questions of the "master", seeking clarification, sometimes challenging, always probing into what this man who gave out the papers had to say about them. We learned to understand that an expression that sounded like "bicycle idea" meant "basic idea". Some left shaking their heads; those who stayed did in turn learn to think the "basic ideas" of Positive Disintegration as presented on the blue mimeographed paper.

If I have begun to talk about a man in terms of papers and words and mutilated English, it is not to miss the presence of the person but to put figure against ground, to show that, despite all the problems of communication, the man came through, shone through and, in the end it was Kazimierz Dabrowski and his beloved theory that grabbed you with its depth and scope and towering possibilities for explaining what development and psychology and life itself are all about.

Always it was the man Dr. Dabrowski (strange how we all called him *Dr. Dabrowski*) who was the quiet flame that burned (like the candle in the "Java Shoppe Interview") giving warmth and light to a theory that could otherwise have been lost in its own depth and complexity

and power. It was the gentle mannered man with his European graciousness who somehow conveyed greatness without overpowering, who bowed in authentic respect when meeting you and charmed the ladies with his "madame" and "mademoiselle".

He lived what he taught—authenticity. If you asked him how he felt, he would not just give you the usual, platitudinous answer, "Fine". He would reply, typically, "I am feeling somewhat depressed—but hopeful!"

Through the years there were discussions (sometimes at his home with well-remembered Polish suppers) and workshops and numerous invitations to be guest lecturer which he never refused. There were countless meetings of interested people on cold winter nights to form societies for the authentic development of man. There were dreams of counselling offices, schools and institutes that would bring the theory to the people. Too often the great theory foundered on practical things like where would the money come from, or picayune things like what kind of letterhead should we have. Kazimierz Dabrowski would have been a failure as a business executive and still worse as a salesman. He had none of the marketing mentality that often accompanies psychologists who have little to say but a great deal to sell. He had much to give but was not a salesman, and perhaps he attracted like people and so the offices and societies and organizations never really got going.

What would happen though, and it was like a minor miracle every time, is that someone would knock at your office door and say "I've been attending Dr. Dabrowski's seminar; I hear you are interested in the theory; will you work with me?" And some time later an idea, a paper, or even a thesis would come out of it and the man had come through again.

Someone who had had a nervous breakdown would tell you. "When I was 'sick' I thought maybe some good might come out of it all, but I put the thought aside as my own foolish idea. Then I heard what Dr. Dabrowski had to say and I was able to believe in myself and have hope."

It was this enigmatic cross—of great ideas that I know have changed people's lives, and the inability to "market" himself and his ideas—that was, I think the basic tragedy of Dabrowski's life. He had difficulty in being accepted by the powerful yet was loved (almost adored) by his students and his beloved neurotics whom he "greeted" and gave new honor and hope.

I know little of the personal sorrows of the man's life; he was unwilling to talk of them. But I do know of the sensitivity and the pride that was his. The last time I saw Kazimierz Dabrowski was in the intensive care unit of the University Hospital. A young student was reading to him from Dostoevsky as he lay in the bleak public ward hooked up to tubes and monitors. My visit surprised him. He wept at the "shame" of being seen by a colleague in such a condition. Those last few moments together told me much about the man, his pride, his immense sensitivity. They told me something about Positive Disintegration too. We had come far since the blue mimeographed papers fifteen years before.

Kazimierz Dabrowski was a man who focused within himself the broad vision of the scholar and the single-mindedness of a man with a consuming sense of purpose, the abstractness of a theoretician, and the practical concerns of one who had experienced life deeply, the realist's anxiety with what is and the idealist's yearning for what ought to be.

If human lives are "occasions" as Whitehead says, then this life was an occasion of great significance, and if occasions perish but their value persists in the nature of God, then this life's value, rich as it was, persists not just in books written or papers handed out or in theoretical ideas but as a challenge to continue to add value through the lives of those of us who have been fortunate enough to touch on the life that was Kazimierz Dabrowski.
