**In my life there have been 4 instances where I was placed, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in circumstances best described as traumatic. The first occurred in May, 1955, when, at the age of six, i was made acutely aware that life can change from a state of stability to one of terror in the blink of a eye. On that day two pilot-trainer aircraft collided in the sky above my head. One tried to veer away from the town’s streets while the other plummeted out of the sky toward the street in which I lived. In that everyday moment there was a child and friends peacefully playing in their backyard and then there was a bewildering transformation. I stood as a burning aircraft fell, missing me by a matter of yards and exploded across the road. Now i was suddenly aware of three new worldviews – everything changes; there are no safety guarantees and Death is a reality, previously unrealised. At the age of six with no solid psychological reasoning for support, I had to face the psychic aftermath alone.**

**The second came in my late teenage years when I embraced the hippy culture and where I sought vision through chemical means. This culminated in a bad LSD trip where my dose was laced with another substance beyond my means of control. The resultant psychedelic excursion took me first to months dominated by hallucination and a soul struggling to comprehend what we call “normal’ and then to the brink of a perceived eternal madness. I was arrested in Kings Cross after finally melting down in a public place and placed in a drug rehabilitation centre - Langton Clinic in Surry Hills. Here my fall from reality was reinforced by the “otherworldliness” of my fellow patients and the absence of all the traditional structures that we call on for support. Here they treat you with theories, with statistical precedents, with fingers crossed. Upon release I was placed back into a “fragile” world where all was not what it seemed. Here i had to build a protective persona in order to stay and, appear to be, “sane”. This struggle continued for years.**

**The third came in 1995. Sane enough to ride a motorbike, hold down a job and maintain reasonable relationships but not quite sane enough to let go of my mental anxiety. My carefully constructed inner habit. I was on that motorbike when it collided head-on with a car in Bondi Junction. As i lay badly injured i watched my blood, with every beat of my heart, spurt skyward in a miniature red fountain from a mutilated leg. Here i met Death again, but not the visitor from my childhood. Here i had my initiation. If this was Death then it wasn’t a monster that came calling with promises of oblivion. Death held your hand and smiled. I didn’t have the classic NDE (near death experience) with its long tunnel, blinding light and celestial conference, rather I had a glimpse, an insight of a peculiar peace just out of sight. I spent months in hospital as my injuries refused to heal till finally one Saturday morning the ward doctors informed me I was scheduled for amputation. This trauma lifted me from the mundane. Seeking an alternative way I found two doctors with an unapproved medical procedure successfully trialled on sheep but not on humans. They inserted batteries deep within the leg along the fractures in order to induce bone marrow resurgence. After many, many months in hospital I was released early 1996, leg intact. Two valuable lessons. Death is not an enemy and there is always another road. The traditional, the accepted, the robotic, the uninformed is not always the only way.**

**The fourth change, my cancer, is already well documented on this website. The predominate thread through my story is that any calamity or trauma encountered can be seen not as a reason to roll over and face the wall but more as a blessing or a wake-up call or a spiritual evolutionary advance or a personal reinvention. I thank my cancer for the opportunities and possibilities it has presented me with. I know my story isn’t universal. That there many variants. That some see the world differently so I’ll once again state that mine is the road that was presented to me via synchronicity, intuition and divine providence because I sought it. If you are reading this and you are in a dark place unable to see any light and yet you sense that there is an unseen presence waiting to reach out, to help then I assure you that you will prevail. This is the process of “positive disintegration”.**

***“Sometimes in order to say hello you have to say goodbye.”***

**Polish Psychiatrist Kazimierz Dabrowski introduced this theory explaining that there were two levels of psychological development:**

**The first (Primary Integration) sees people locked into a robotic worldview – where people accept society’s values and customs without question and never consider alternative value systems thereby locking themselves into a rigid behavioural regime. This common initial personality integration often hides one’s true personality. At this initial level of integration, there is little internal conflict as one “goes along with the group”. External conflicts often relate to the everyday problems – career frustrations, relationships, cash flow, appearance or social standing. The surrounding culture and values are rarely, if ever, questioned or closely examined.**

**The second (Positive Disintegration) finds that some people rebel against this programming. Dubrowski thought these people suffered from things most saw as unhealthy: depressive tendencies, self dis-satisfaction, inferiority/guilt complexes, anxiety, over-excitability. Dubrowski saw these states as tools not as drawbacks – all valuable in psychological development. To break down the robotic approach crises and disintegrations are needed, usually provided by life experience. These disintegrations are positive if the person can achieve positive and developmental solutions to the situation. People who never experience a crisis don’t advance. Though people have different growth potential the oversensitive tend to go further. Those who feel the extremes more deeply – who display emotional intensity. The artistic, the creative, the intuitive are among those who are open to advancement.**

**"Positive disintegration" is a vital developmental process. In other words you are prompted by your personal disintegration to question traditional customs and values. According to Dubrowski this process is often painful as one dismantles the program that has led and instructed one since childhood. Often a painful nervous, mental or spiritual reinvention is involved. To emerge from this disintegration a new value system must be constructed. One that is yours and not a societal byproduct. A prefabrication. The person must find a cure for himself by reaching a higher state of being then that one experienced before the disintegration. This personal reinvention must be based upon a system of values that are consciously chosen by the person to reflect their own individual sense of "how life ought to be" and their "personality ideal" — the ideal person they feel they "ought to be." Hence the “positive” aspect. Trauma provides vision and inner strength. Psychic Autonomy. When multilevel and autonomous development is achieved the individual has no inner conflict; they are in internal harmony as their actions reflect their deeply felt hierarchy of values. They have transcended the lower, restrictive state of being and ascended a ladder of spiritual opportunity.**

**Dabrowski sees two levels of psychological development –**

* **1) Primary Integration: The lower animal instincts and the forces of peer groups and** [**socialization**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialization) **are inferior to the autonomous self (personality) constructed by the conscious person.**
* **2)**
* **"Unilevel crises" are not developmental as the person can only choose between equal alternatives (go left or go right?).**
* **A new type of perception involves "multilevelness," a vertical view of life that compares lower versus higher alternatives and now allows the individual to choose a higher resolution to a crisis over other available, but lower, alternatives — the developmental solution.**
* **"Positive disintegration" is a vital developmental process.**

**In other words you are prompted by your personal disintegration to question traditional customs and values. According to Dubrowski this process is often painful as one dismantles the program that has led and instucted one since childhood. Often a painful nervous, mental or spiritual reinvention is involved. To emerge from this disintegration a new value system must be constructed. One that is yours and not a societal byproduct. A prefabrication. The person must find a cure for himself by reaching a higher state of being then that one experienced before the disintegration.**

**Hence the “positive” aspect. Trauma provides vision and inner strength. Psychic Autonomy.**

* **Dąbrowski developed the idea of "developmental potential" to describe the forces needed to achieve autonomous personality development.**
* **Developmental potential includes several factors including innate abilities and talents, "overexcitability" and the "third factor."**
* **Overexcitability is a measure of an individual’s level of nervous response. Dąbrowski found that the exemplars he studied all displayed an overly sensitive nervous system, also making them prone to** [**angst**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angst)**, depression and anxiety - psychoneuroses in Dąbrowski's terms, a very positive and developmental feature.**
* **The third factor is a measure of an individual's drive toward autonomy.**
* **Dąbrowski's approach is very interesting philosophically as it is Platonic, reflecting the bias of** [**Plato**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) **toward** [**essence**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essence) **— an individual's essence is a critical determinant of his or her developmental course in life. However, Dąbrowski also added a major** [**existential**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism) **aspect as well, what one depends upon the anxieties felt and on how one resolves the day to day challenges one faces. Essence must be realized through an existential and experiential process of development. The characterization advanced by** [**Kierkegaard**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kierkegaard) **of "Knights of faith" may be compared to Dąbrowski’s autonomous individual.**
* **Reviewed the role of logic and reasoning in development and concludes that intellect alone does not fully help us know what to do in life. Incorporates** [**Jean Piaget**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Piaget)**'s views of development into a broader scheme guided by emotion. Emotion (how one feels about something) is the more accurate guide to life's major decisions.**