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**PSYCHICAL WELL-BEING AND THE FAMILY
RELATION SYSTEM
(DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS, EVOLUTION)**

INTRODUCTION

The family is a form of a primal relationship between a woman and a man, their ancestors and descendants as well as their own or adopted children. Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902–1980) was born in a family from the Polish Eastern Borderlands which settled in Poland, in Milejów in the Lubelski Voivodship. His father, Antoni, was the administrator of a land estate in Klarów. His mother was born in what today is Ukraine, close to where the family of Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), the American psychologist and philosopher, lived.

Kazimierz Dąbrowski had an older brother who died in an epidemic. Before World War II his younger brother, Stefan, was the assistant of Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958) in Poznań. After the war he got married to Irena Gumowska who was well versed when it comes to medicinal plants, a specialist in natural medicine and who worked with Julian Aleksandrowicz. They had a son and lived on the outskirts of Warsaw.

After studying in Geneva and Poznań, he got married with a woman older than him who died before World War II. His next relationship was with Eugenia Muzyka from Ukraine with whom he had two daughters who now live in Canada (Anna and Joanna). As far as I know, one of the daughters (Joanna) is a prison psychologist and has a son. His brother Stefan also had a son so there is some protection for the furthering of the protection of K. Dąbrowski's spiritual and scientific legacy¹.

¹ K. Dąbrowski was first taught at home and later in a male gymnasium in Lublin. As a volunteer during his gymnasium time he spent two years at the Catholic University of Lublin. Later he passed the examination to be admitted to medicine at the University of Warsaw and philosophy (psychology) at the University of Poznań.

His medical and psychological studies were broadened by clinical internships in France and Austria which were centres of exclusive psychiatric and psychoanalytical knowledge. That is why he participated in an internship at the Active Psychoanalysis Institute headed by Wilhelm Stekl which supplied Z. Freud with the initial descriptions of clinical cases of the child disorders he analysed.

It is worth to point out that K. Dąbrowski attended the lectures of Karl Buhler (1879–1963) in Vienna and it is not impossible that his idea of the crisis in psychology linked first in his doctorates with the concept of dissociation was with time replaced with the ideas of development and disintegration in his own theory². It seems that the concept of development, rooted in the evolutionary and neo-evolutionary theories of his time, was closer to him. At this point it should also be pointed out that the concept of crisis was also used by Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994).

1) THE ERIK H. ERIKSON CRISIS MODEL OF FAMILY RELATIONS

Lech Witkowski, a modern philosopher, points out that the family goes outside the patterns of rigid rationality and instead is subject to the dramatic dynamic of the process of freedom and choice, responsibility and resistance. Philosophy is interested in the paradoxes, the experiences of the rationality and irrationality of parental and child behaviours. It is not subject to simple patterns, one-sided truths and generalization. It requires caution and warnings which are insufficient or too repressive³.

When he won the National Culture Foundation scholarship programme he started his studies at the University of Geneva (court medicine) which is finished with a doctorate with professor F. Naville (1927). Studies at the J.-J. Rousseu Institute (psychology) were finished with a diploma from psychology under Eduard Claparède and Jean Piaget. He achieved a doctorate from psychology in Poznań under professor S. Blachowski (1934). The doctorate from medicine was related to the issues of the psychopathology of suicides and the one from psychology with the psychological problems of self-torment.

² K. Bühler, *Die Krise der Psychologie*, Jena 1927.

³ See L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu i kompetencje rodzicielskie w obliczu doświadczeń rekonstrukcyjnych. Punkt widzenia filozoficzny*, [in:] *Ibidem*, Humanistyka stosowana. Wirtuozeria, pasja, inicjacje. Profesje społeczne *versus* ekologia kultury, Kraków 2018, p. 709.

L. Witkowski points out that being a parent is not a profession apart from the case of the foster parent. Being in a family is type of a special pedagogical stress, skilful engagement and reflective distancing. There is no one scenario for each parent and all children. And this requires special patience, resistance to the possibility of rejection so that the fate of the child could be inscribed in the fate of the parent and the other way round. This requires special training of clashing with unbeatable obstacles and barriers for good intentions, sometimes without a chance of foreseeing them nor weakening them. And also getting results opposite to those intended. And this requires an effort so that the child can see the parents, at least for some time, as representations of their authorities⁴.

The inspirations of L. Witkowski extend to the theory of Erik H. Erikson, a peer of K. Dąbrowski.

As it is known, after Stekl left Freud, psychoanalysis was took up by his daughter, Anna Freud. At the same time Charlotte Bühler (see Małachowski) (1893–1974)⁵ in Vienna was interested in child psychology and she introduced the idea of the “cycle of life” to the theory of professional development.

When Erik H. Erikson, who was analyzed by Anna Freud (1895-1982), left for the USA he took up child psychoanalysis, maybe under the influence of his analyst. But he performed it in a different manner than A. Freud who was a keeper of her father’s orthodoxy. It can be said the he created a competitive model for this analysis. Similarly like Wilhelm Stekel in the past. E. H. Erikson presented the crisis theory of personality development and distinguished 8 crises in the human life cycle⁶.

Erik H. Erikson placed the problem of family relationship development on the 6th stage of the cycle from the 9th to the 30th year of life. In the genital

⁴ See L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu i kompetencje rodzicielskie w obliczu doświadczeń rekonstrukcyjnych. Punkt widzenia filozoficzny*, [in:] Ibidem, *Humanistyka stosowana. Wirtuozeria, pasja, inicjacje. Profesje społeczne versus ekologia kultury*, Kraków 2018, p. 710.

⁵ Ch. Bühler, „*Bieg życia ludzkiego*” *Jena 1933* (*Bieg życia ludzkiego*, transl. E. Cichy i J. Jarosz, Warsaw 1999).

⁶ E. H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, New York 1959; see L. Witkowski, *Verus. O dwoistości strukturalnej faz rozwoju w ekologii cyklu życia psychodynamicznego modelu Erika H. Eriksona*, Cracow 2015.

stage (1). In the phase when closeness, physical bonding are experienced and a special mental link is created. Social references and responsibilities are formed and they require sacrifices and compromises. You need to learn to lose and fine oneself in someone else. A real relationship requires love which presumes an ability to commit which alleviates antagonisms. There is also a need for the readiness to raise children together.

Marriage failures lead to the development of isolationist strategies and increase of destructive moods which endanger the relationship. Isolationism and elitism are inadequate means of securing personal value. The only justified gesture to oneself and the other person in the family relationship is live which creates a new type of own and family identity.

As is claimed by L. Witkowski, parents must learn to communicate “from the bottom up”, from the basics, from an uncomfortable position, even easier to negate. “The bottom position means a need to suspend their own demands, modify their own expectations or hopes, it means a long duration of operations and a need to be patient when they fail. The philosophy of a life bond and nurtured closeness become necessary”⁷.

L. Witkowski points out that “too rarely are cognitive perspectives of psychoanalysis used for the recognition of repressions, ambivalences due to unconscious dispositions reflecting upon competences and their limitations. It is especially necessary to reconstruct with such support the existential deficits of the parents, including for example aggression lined with fear, pressure to manifest strength due to excessive inhibitions, resentments in retaliatory actions. They instrumentalize all the other participants of the situation, including the child”⁸.

In this system theories of personality development the author get closer to the analysis of the crises, individualization and disintegration that were also described by Jung, Erikson and Dąbrowski.

⁷ L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu i kompetencje rodzicielskie w obliczu doświadczeń rekonstrukcyjnych. Punkt widzenia filozoficzny*, [in:] Ibidem, Humanistyka stosowana. Wirtuozeria, pasja, inicjacje. Profesje społeczne *versus* ekologia kultury. Kraków 2018, p. 711.

⁸ L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu i kompetencje rodzicielskie w obliczu doświadczeń rekonstrukcyjnych. Punkt widzenia filozoficzny*, [in:] Ibidem, Humanistyka stosowana. Wirtuozeria, pasja, inicjacje. Profesje społeczne *versus* ekologia kultury. Cracow 2018, p. 713.

2) THE K. DĄBROWSKI'S NEOREVOLUTIONARY MODEL OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

K. Dąbrowski's line of thought regarding the topic of the family starts from the considerations related to the biological foundations of human life and its sensory functions which find their conclusion in the system of human behaviour steered by the human mind. K. Dąbrowski calls this biological foundations the "urges", according to the semantics of neorevolutionism, which was then prevalent in medicine, pedagogy and psychology.

Z. Freud's () psychoanalysis was important for young K. Dąbrowski and it assumed that "urges" are at the base of all human relations, this included "sexual urge" which develops separately, is realized spontaneously as well as is repressed and sublimed. With time Freud modified his attitude towards urges – he wrote that "The theory of urges is, so to say, our mythology"⁹. Urges are "mythical beings" as they have been called earlier by Carl G. Jung (1875-1961), Freud's colleague who created his own school of human development analysis¹⁰.

K. Dąbrowski himself had quite an original contact with psychoanalysis, as he took part in a trainee analysis for couple of months in the Active Analysis Institute headed by Wilhelm Stekel (1868–1940), one of the attendees of the "Wednesday Seminars" held in Freud's house¹¹. With time Stekel parted from his orthodoxy and took up his own practice in Vienna where he conducted healing rituals, shortened from a couple of years to four months. Erik H. Erikson further developed the psychoanalytical approach to the family.

According to K. Dąbrowski in the first phase of child growth the sexual development happens through different forms of fixations. In the next phase the child's sexual urge is linked with the bodies of the parents. In psychoanalysis psychosomatic fixation was most usually identified with masturbation. In the reports of the Psychological Hygiene Institute in Warsaw, which were created by K. Dąbrowski in the 1930s we can find a column labelled "masturbation/onanism" which was one of the indicator

⁹ Z. Freud, *Wykłady ze wstępu do psychoanalizy. Nowy cykl*, Transl. P. Dybel, Warszawa 1995.

¹⁰ C.G. Jung, *Das Unbewusste normalen und kranken Seelenleben*, Zurich 1926.

¹¹ W. Stekel, *Nervöse Angstzustände und ihre Behandlung*, Berlin und Wien 1921.

of a child's mental health and sickness controlling its development in the school stages of life¹².

Discontinuation of masturbation and transferring the urge to persons other than the parents, to peers of the same or opposite sex, is a higher form of sexual urge development. If this does not happen sexual development changes into sexual narcissism or in a form of fetishism, so an obsessive love for things, words, thoughts, feelings, acts which we know as compulsions.

3) NEOREVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

The choice of a spouse not only requires getting to know one's own behavioural drivers but also requires broadened cognition which includes the constructing and functioning of a family system, which means people interested in each other. The analysis of familial behaviours requires not only the knowledge of personal traits but also unconscious requires. It also requires a knowledge of other behavioural drivers which sometimes decide about the happiness of a marriage. They are different from a formal (legal) relationship – for example friendship, school, profession, neighbourhood or family.

Wilhelm Stekel pointed out that observing parents, their sexual behaviours, has great impact on the development of a child's personality. This also includes behaviours and sexual experiences caused by them and by siblings during care or play. An important role is also played by sexual impressions provoked by incautious or perverse babysitters and older friends. They appear in different bodily "games", like the doctor, mother and father, when "bodily inspection" happens. And this as early as 2 to 6 years old.

Stekel pointed out the autosexual (child) and homosexual (adolescent) interests appear earlier than heterosexual ones but they disappear quickly if they are not kept alive too long by the parents, siblings or educators.

¹² See K. Benzefówna, Z. Ptaszyńska, *Działalność Poradni dla Dzieci i Młodzieży Instytutu Higieny Psychiczej. Zestawienie badań za rok 1937 i analiza materiału*, „Biuletyn Instytutu Higieny Psychiczej. Poświęcony Higienie psychiczej, Psychiatrii dziecięcej i Pedagogice leczniczej. Wychodzi cztery razy rocznie” 1938, Year I, Nr 2, p. 24–38.

Parents competing for the attentions of a child (like: who do you love more, mummy or daddy?) plays an important role in the development of future sexual relationships. And the stimulation of the Oedipus/Electra complex which is a semantic mask for paedophilia.

In order to keep a healthy model of sexual relations in marital or family relationships, adults “should not” act according to the non-differentiated primitive, sexual urge. Weaker or stronger sexual needs “should not” decide about the accidental conception of a baby. This is because it is not only a biological or psychological but also an existential, personal and social event.

K. Dąbrowski assumed as a doctor, an expert in psychopathology and psychiatry that the parental behaviours of adults should be accompanied by care, reflection and responsibility not only for themselves but also for the baby to be born. However, as we know, the behavioural norms set forth by experts are not the same as those of regular people who do not experience those states, do not recognize them in themselves nor their children.

K. Dąbrowski often pointed to the domination of the emotional development in the shaping of a healthy, non-pathological, caring personality. He differed in this from his teacher, Jean Piaget from the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Switzerland, who focused on the intellectual development of a child, and he thought that emotional development allows for a unification of individual differences. Thanks to the development of emotional empathy it is possible to stay flexible, subtle and inquisitive which is key for the appearance of essential moral requirements towards others and especially towards oneself.

Therefore, individual cooperation with each member of the family becomes possible. And this allows for the organization and development of an informal “school” or marital and family life. Getting to know oneself and the family group are the rule here. It is important to be interested in the psychological processes of each family member, their inner richness and uniqueness.

4) THE FAMILY AS A SYSTEMIC SET OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

A family is a combination of interpersonal relations not only on a sexual level but also on the level of me-you relations and inner subject-object relations. In this relation the subject is sometimes the subject and sometimes the object. Thanks to this it is possible to take on an objective attitude towards

oneself and subjective towards the other. Their experience allows one to keep the balance between excitement and inhibition of primal urges. Thank to this the one-way influence of the objective perspective is limited and makes it easier to keep the balances between me and not-me (you, we, us, they).

The analysis of one's advantages and disadvantages, the good and bad consequences of one's action, multilateral and multiple experiencing of them is a requirement for the building of higher levels of family harmony. Being more critical of oneself than of the spouse and children allows one to keep the emotional and existential balance in the family.

Sometimes the dysfunction of a family is rooted in harmful and wrong family habits based on the age old primacy of men over women. While the only healthy primacy is the feeling of responsibility, serving other family member and not being sure of one's rationale. It is about being constantly ready to transgress what comes out of flawed, old habits and customs of the family and its external environment. In family relations one cannot react with irritation but with reflection on the situation and a reshaping of the first, primitive reaction to processed and sublimated reactions. Such an attitude underlines the importance of sensitivity as opposed to irritability and the significance of inner psychological change.

As it has been emphasized by K. Dąbrowski, the attitude of parents towards children should be based on the differentiation of various levels of personality development and types of behaviour as this strengthens the spirit of goodness and justice. The family order requires a constant readiness to transgress simple typological reaction which hurt our one-sided habits and customs as well as the one-sidedness of our psychological type.

Parents should cooperate with their children's friends, with teachers, educators and neighbours. They must learn to delve into their emotional and intellectual hardships as well as their interests and ambitions. Mutual understanding, mutual help and avoiding unnecessary conflicts is possible in an environment of "family democracy" in cooperation with a broader group.

5) THE K. DĄBROWSKI MULTILEVEL, EVOLUTIONARY MODEL OF FAMILY RELATIONS

K. Dąbrowski created his own five-level model of the development of family relations based on a multilevel model of personality development. On the first level he identified unconscious behaviours and reactions of the

regressive, pathological and criminal type. Those are treated as harmful. On the second level he identified the statistically most common behaviours, based on ambivalences, which are in general treated as “healthy”, “typical” and “normal”. On the third stage he identified behaviours based on the feeling of discontent with oneself, shape and guilt. On the fourth level there are behaviours based on self-affirmation so on relations of love, friendship and empathy. Finally, on the fifth level, Dąbrowski distinguished behaviours models based on a global integration of development in which the individual integrates their interests, talents and gifts with the choice of the most important values and relationships in life.

This is how the specific patterns of integration and disintegration as well as reintegration look in the process of positive disintegration in the model of K. Dąbrowski:

Family (level I – primary integration) – Key characteristics:

- 1) On this level birth and death are treated by the family as biological accidents or “God’s will”. This is decided by the attitude of defending the biological system of survival and a comfortable life of one’s family.
- 2) Now the most important thing is the fulfilment of the tensions of sexual instinct which takes the first place. A “productive” power of aggression is the pattern of action which safeguards the primitive, biological goals of the “head of the family”.
- 3) Responsibility for the partner and caring for the family are limited. There is no need to develop together with the partner. Emotional and sexual exclusivity are rare here.
- 4) Children are treated by biological liking. They are “instrumentally” involved in responsibilities and work.
- 5) Rewards and penalties are the dominant way of up-bringing. This is linked with cruelty towards not only the children but also oneself. Rigidity, no subtlety, many external conflicts and lack of internal conflict are dominant.

Family (level II – one level disintegration) – Key characteristics:

- 1) On this level something begins to “break” in the family relations, the rigour is lessened, the patterns are loosened, the family integrity drops.

- 2) The psychology of family behaviours is based on ambivalences and ambivalent tendencies which lead to a division into what is male and female, fatherly and motherly, hard and soft.
- 3) A dysfunctional or compensatory change of parental roles happens, the mother takes the role of the father or the other way round, or a separation.
- 4) A transfer of parental roles to substitutes happens – to grandparents, aunts, uncles or third parties. Or a creation of a broadened, substitute, temporary family.
- 5) The “psychological sensitivity” between spouses and towards the children is incidental and short-lived. However, the requirements for the children become less sharp, deficit or excessive.

Family (level III – multilevel spontaneous disintegration) –

Key characteristics:

- 1) On this level the family relations are driven not only by external but also internal conflicts. A large role is played by discontent with oneself, feelings of shame and guilt. The pathology of the family is corrected by positive maladjustment and the creative instincts of family members.
- 2) A lesser role is played by external authorities and reluctance or resentment towards one of the family members. Children are not only a biological or work force and the egocentrism of the family is changed to alterocentrism, orientation towards others and extra familial relations. Individual and familial characteristics become equally important.
- 3) The weaknesses of the family as seen a different parts of family life, the most troublesome and talented members become a problem for the attention of the family.
- 4) Members of the family become indispensable to each other, the years lived together and common efforts take on a familial importance. Family conflicts happen but they are understood. The school of family life is a common value. Egocentrism, arbitrariness, authoritativeness are exchanged with a feeling of family communion.
- 5) The “school of family life” or “marital life” becomes stronger. The family treats sadness and happiness as common feelings. Family relations, its psychological traits and co-responsibility become the most important. Relationships with other family groups become authentic.

Family (level IV – multilevel systematised disintegration) –

Key characteristics:

- 1) On this level the biological “I” of individual family members changes into the familial “I”, based on balances and positively integrated family relations. Caring for other family members is dominant. It is now more important than caring for yourself. The ability to make sacrifices for other family members increases.
- 2) Family relations based on love, friendships and empathy become stronger. A third factor is active – the active process of affirmation and negation towards some of one’s traits and the influences of the environment.
- 4) The “subject-object” dynamism in itself activates caution towards familial and extra-familial relationships. A strong readiness for positive parental changes appears.
- 5) Self-awareness of the family is based on the families’ self-education and auto-psychotherapy which sublimate internal and external relations.

Family (level V – secondary integration) – Key characteristics:

- 1) On this level of family relationship the “family personality” is strengthened which acquires its essential traits, a permanence of existential and axiological references.
- 2) The nature of love and responsibility changes as they transgress the biological attitude towards the partner and become metabiological. The attitude towards ageing changes.
- 3) Physical and psychological weaknesses of the partners and other family members are accepted.
Empathy and responsibility for the closest and further relationships includes familial and extra familial behaviours.
- 4) Emotional, intellectual and urge functions work in a sublimated form. Own experiences, pain, meditation and years lived together sublimate the familial and extra familial relations.
- 5) A respects for the inevitable existential events (death, sickness, despair) develops. The primarily foreign “I” and “you” become the sublimated and transcendental element of the familial “I” and “you” relation through a process of disintegration. A transcendental “we” appears.

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion to his short article about the family from the posthumously published “Moralność w polityce” (Warszawa 1991, Rodzina, p. 20–22) book, K. Dąbrowski mentions the theory of H. Jackson who presented a theory of human development as a road from what is primitive to higher complication, from automatism to reflectiveness. From strong organization on a lower level to more complicated and weaker organization on a higher level.

He points out that one of the important family abilities is to operate the emotional memory of family situations in which there was a need to take a stand towards their children. Adolescence is the most difficult time of a child’s life. As much as possible of perceptiveness, tact and goodness are needed towards the child.

Focusing on identification with the situation of children through emotional memory is a saving grace for the children. It makes it easier for them to understand their hardships during adolescents and difficult family time and this is necessary for the correct shaping of the family. This is also what differentiates it from a broken, hurtful and misdeveloped family.

Every family has its crises, they are cyclical and are linked to the development of the personalities of its members, which was clearly pointed out by the peer of K. Dąbrowski, Erik Homburger Erikson, a psychoanalyst interested in crises in human life cycles. However, a crisis does not end family development but opens it to events of fate, which needs to be tamed, and compels us to dealing with disintegration through the whole life.

K. Dąbrowski’s theory of family relation development is based on the idealisation of these relations based on the Christian model of love, especially on the theory of saint Augustine who absolutizes the meaning of love, weakening the concept of freedom which is why it can sometimes be seen as justification for repressive interpretations realised for the “good” of humanity.

However, as is pointed out by Lech Witkowski, who promoted Eriksons’ theory of crises in the life cycle, it is not proper for the parent as authority to act in a top-down relation, nor in a sense of having power, nor achieving submissiveness as part of affirmation or respecting the right to dominate from a position of superiority and power. When this happens the child typically rescinds obedience and refuses to listen.

It is also not appropriate to act “from the back”, as a backup or support absolving from independent thinking. When this behaviour of the parent is seen as infallible, it blocks the child’s own inquiries. The parent authority “from the front”, prospective is also often needless for the child who has a need to explore reality on its own. Especially when the parent blocks different space of the child’s explorations which then become damaged or get marginalized.¹³

The saint Augustine saying, “Love and do what you will”, seems to be correct. But it works only for love which involves the experience of mutual rights and responsibilities. Also when it comes to rebellion, resistance and freedom as part of what build the individual and family sense of each day.

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¹³ See L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu i kompetencje rodzicielskie w obliczu doświadczeń rekonstrukcyjnych. Punkt widzenia filozoficzny*, [in:] Ibidem, *Humanistyka stosowana. Wirtuozeria, pasja, inicjacje. Profesje społeczne versus ekologia kultury*, Kraków 2018, p. 710.

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SUMMARY

Considerations by Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902–1980) of an existential psychiatrist include examining the biological, psychological and sociological basis of individual behavior of each person. Marriage psychology requires knowledge not only about personality development, but also about the development of drives, temperament and character as a basis for the subsequent assessment of interpersonal relationships. To meet the task of being a father or mother, you need the ability to cross – resistance and conflict, inhibitions and parental injuries. Being a parent is a training of the transition from egocentrism to an alterocentric attitude, friendly and kind towards oneself, own children, friends and strangers.

Coming to the world of a child requires strength, patience, respect and love of parents towards oneself and towards their own children, or “parental talent”. Parents have a decisive influence on the child’s development which observes and copies their positive and negative behaviors. This influence should not block the developmental potential of the child. It should enable the child’s relationship to develop within his own family and contacts with strangers, peers and adults.

Key words: family, relationships, crisis, development, emotions, child, adult, parent.