

The Merit of the Theory of Positive Disintegration

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) and its application to the lives of notable figures such as Moses, Adolf Hitler, and Martin Luther King Jr. The paper discusses the stages of TPD and explores how these individuals experienced internal turmoil and personal growth. It is found that TPD can explain their transformative journeys, highlighting the potential positive or negative impact of individuals who undergo this process. The paper concludes that TPD has merit in understanding the complexities of human development and the potential for significant societal change.

Keywords: TPD, overexcitabilities, racial segregation, mental disorders.

Subject: Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Theory of Positive Disintegration (henceforth, TPD) was first introduced in 1964 by Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dąbrowski, and it was subsequently reinforced and modified by other researchers. TPD comprises five stages of personality development and the individual's progression through stages are instigated by over excitabilities (Kehr, 2004). Overexcitabilities include imaginal, psychomotor, sensual, intellectual and emotional over excitabilities (Mendaglio, 2008). It is noted that although overexcitabilities are discovered to be prevalent in the gifted, it is not constrained to an individual's intelligence and is observed in the average population. The first level of TPD is primary integration. It can be primarily defined as blissful ignorance and is associated with psychopathic behaviour. The second is unilevel disintegration. It is where mild inner conflict and the unconscious awareness of the morally grey areas of life. The third is multilevel disintegration. It is when recognition and striving towards a personality ideal occurs, amidst dire psychological turmoil. The fourth is directed multilevel disintegration. It is marked by authenticity, being mentally composed and being at one with one's values. The fifth is secondary integration. In which individuals 'can act according to self-developed values all the time, and under all circumstances and those values are turned toward the greater good rather than self-serving goals' (Marie-Lise, 2019).

Methodology: Secondary Qualitative Research

The methodology employed in this paper is a secondary qualitative analysis. The study utilizes existing literature, historical records, and scholarly works to analyse and interpret the experiences and characteristics of Martin Luther King Jr., Moses, and Adolf Hitler within the framework of the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD).

The choice of secondary qualitative analysis is justified by the nature of the research objective, which involves examining the lives of these historical figures and their potential alignment with the stages of TPD. Utilizing existing sources allows for an in-depth exploration of their experiences, overexcitabilities, and personal development without requiring direct interaction or data collection from the individuals themselves. This methodology also enables the integration of various perspectives and insights from multiple researchers, historians, and psychologists who have extensively studied and analysed the lives of these figures. By critically evaluating and synthesizing relevant literature, this approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and contributes to the discourse surrounding TPD and its implications for personal growth and societal impact.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section examines three notable figures—Martin Luther King Jr., Moses, and Adolf Hitler—in the context of the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD). Each case study explores the presence of overexcitabilities and the progression through the stages of TPD, shedding light on the individuals' personal growth, achievements, and

impact on society. The section delves into the emotional overexcitabilities observed in Martin Luther King Jr., the intellectual and emotional overexcitabilities displayed by Moses, and the mental disorders and imaginal overexcitabilities associated with Adolf Hitler. The discussion also highlights the leadership traits exhibited by these individuals and emphasizes the potential positive or negative outcomes that can arise from their development within the TPD framework.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black civil rights activist who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his significant role in combating racial injustice. He delivered notable speeches, most notably his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. King exhibited symptoms of emotional overexcitabilities, which are characterized by a remarkable capacity for deep relationships and strong emotional attachments to people, places, and things (Dabrowski, 1977). At the age of 12, he attempted suicide as he struggled to cope with his grandmother's death, highlighting his profound emotional connections (Pike, 2022). As he matured, King confronted racial segregation, including unfair bus rules and job opportunities, leading him to initiate movements to address these injustices. It is important to note that King came from a family with a comfortable socioeconomic status (Garrow, 2004), distinguishing him from many others who experienced racial discrimination. This reinforces the notion that reaching level five of TPD is an exceptional achievement limited to a select few individuals.

Moses

Moses is a biblical figure who led the Israelite slaves out of Egypt, escaping the oppression of the pharaoh. He exhibited intellectual overexcitabilities, characterized by a high level of curiosity, deep concentration, sustained intellectual effort, and a wide variety of interests (Bainbridge, 2020). This is evident in Acts 7:22, where it is recorded that Moses was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians and demonstrated remarkable abilities in both words and deeds over a span of 40 years. Moses underwent spontaneous and drastic identity shifts, transitioning from an Egyptian prince to a refugee in the wilderness. He also experienced traumatic events, such as killing an Egyptian after witnessing the suffering of the Israelites in slavery. His intense reactions to their plight indicate emotional excitability. Additionally, there is a recurring pattern of leadership traits, including charisma, in these case studies. This may stem from their strong desire to share their firmly held ideas with the masses. Despite initially lacking expertise in public speaking, as mentioned in Exodus 4:10, Moses went on to fulfill God's will, displaying spiritual motivation while disregarding the potential judgment from the Egyptians. This provides substantial evidence that Moses went through level five of TPD. Not only did he experience intellectual growth, but he also developed courage, signifying personality development.

Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party and triggered World War II in Europe by invading Poland on September 1, 1939. In early adulthood, he experienced multiple traumatic events and exhibited suicidal tendencies (Kershaw, 2008). Psychiatrists have postulated that he had mental disorders, including post-traumatic disorder and bipolar disorder, which are indicative of levels 2 and 3 of TPD. Hitler demonstrated grandiose ideation and expressed his fascist beliefs and disdain for modernism through his art (Spotts, 2003). These are symptoms of imaginal overexcitabilities, characterized by detailed visualization and a rich play of imagination (Dabrowski, 1977).

It is evident that he reached level 5 of TPD as he displayed a lack of self-preservation and was not motivated by monetary gain. Despite his deeply prejudiced antisemitic views and the inhumane methods he employed, his primary motivation was the pursuit of national glory for Germany. Historical records show Hitler's prominent role in the movement to overthrow the Weimar Republic, and his unwavering dedication even led to imprisonment. He ultimately committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide capsule and shooting himself in the head in 1945, during the Soviet storming of Berlin (History.com). This case study illustrates that the "positive" impact of TPD can refer to the magnitude of an individual's life accomplishments and their ability to remain true to their ideals, regardless of whether they benefit humanity.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the presented evidence that individuals such as Moses, Adolf Hitler, and Martin Luther King Jr. underwent the process of positive disintegration within the framework of the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD). These figures accomplished remarkable feats that few others have achieved, leaving a lasting impact on humanity. Their journeys involved stages of internal turmoil, which led to personal growth and transformation. This recognition challenges the initial perception of mental illnesses as mere hindrances, as they can also serve as catalysts for profound change. TPD encompasses both the potential for good and evil, and those who successfully navigate its trials have the capacity for spiritual and intellectual development, ultimately influencing societal reform for better or worse.

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