Positive Psychology 2.0 as "Height Psychology": Toward a Multidimensional View

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Paul's Contributions

This paper is a development of the idea of PP 2.0 in a dialogue with Paul Wong. It claims to add to the discussion a seemingly neglected dimension of agency (deliberateness), that takes a very important place in cultural-historical tradition in psychology, launched by Lev Vygotsky in the 1930s that adds one more pillar to the ones listed by Wong.

We begin with the essence of positivity. What was wrong with PP 1.0 so that PP 2.0 was needed?

Introduction: Whither Positive Psychology?

The stream of thought and research currently labeled positive psychology (PP) seems to become less and less uniform and more and more difficult to define. "PP is in flux. Given the dynamic changes in the field, PP today is already very different from what was originally proposed by Seligman" (Wong, 2011).

PP is an agenda rather than an approach, a problem field covering a broad spectrum of diverse approaches; it is the subject matter rather than methodology that unites them. Its initial mail message was necessarily some antithesis as regards the previous psychology, namely, that the laws and regularities of the good life are very important but cannot be deduced from the laws and regularities that account for the bad or ordinary life. Correspondingly, the subject matter of PP is "how to go from plus two to plus seven in your life, not just how to go from minus five to minus three" (Seligman, 2002, p. xi). If we begin with problems and deficits, what we learn cannot be transferred to strengths and positive affects. According to Seligman (2011), "Once in a while I would help a patient get rid of all his anger and anxiety and sadness. I thought I would then get a happy patient. But I never did. I got an empty patient" (p. 54). The psychological dynamics in the "plus" area are different from those in the "minus" area. Thus, PP created a new agenda for psychology at large.

Like humanistic psychology that after a decade of triumph in 1960s transformed its own environment so much that it had to revise much of its goals and tenets, positive psychology experienced similar challenging success through 2000s and by the end of the decade arrived to the similar necessity of critical self-reflection. This self-reflection highlighted the direction of further development of positive psychology from emotional states and evaluations to the more in-depth structures predictive of maintaining a positive emotional background even under threats and adversities (Sheldon, Kashdan, & Steger, 2010).

The second decade of the history of Positive Psychology started with a number of attempts to conceptualize it through the use of specifying labels like humanistic positive psychology (Schneider, 2011), existential positive psychology (Wong, 2009, 2010a, 2010b), second wave positive psychology (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, & Worth, 2015; Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016), or meta-positive-psychology (Huta, 2017). All these labels reflect the striving to bring together the highlights of humanistic, existential, and positive psychology, considering positive

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psychology in its original form (PP 1.0) helpful but insufficient. It is supposed that positive psychology with its highlights of conditions of well-being and the life worth living is to be complemented by the highlights of humanistic psychology (HP) with the emphasis on the inherently creative and developing human nature, and those of existential psychology (EP) stressing the role of human freedom, agency, and effort.

The most elaborated of these attempts seems to be Paul Wong's idea of positive psychology 2.0 (PP 2.0) as an integrative framework (Wong, 2009, 2011) articulated as a "part of the ongoing evolution of PP, a mindset, a movement and a big tent for all positive-oriented psychologists, rather than a distinct subdiscipline." He called for a more balanced, dialectical view regarding the relationships between the positive and the negative (see also Leontiev, 2008). Among the four pillars of PP 2.0 Wong listed virtue, meaning, resilience, and well-being, giving a detailed justification of this statement.

The Three Faces of the Positive

Positive psychology means the psychology of good things. The key issue is a philosophical one: What is good for us human beings? What are the criteria of the good? When we speak of positive psychology, in what sense is it positive? Besides, everyone engaged in empirical studies in the field knows that all good things covary, and the key problem of inferences is one of discriminant validity. In other ways, the same things are at the same time pleasant, meaningful, helpful, healthy, etc., and the problem is to differentiate what these labels denote.

Socrates taught that what can be called "good" depends on one's purpose. A good sword, a good horse, and a good jar are different things and possess different attributes (Xenophon, 2013, 3.8). Aristotle, in succession, stressed individual differences: What is good depends on whom you ask: "With regard to what happiness is people differ and the majority do not give the same account as the wise" (Aristotle, 2006, 1095a).

Several different answers to this question are to be considered, some of them being more evident than others.

The first answer is apparently the most self-evident one: *The positive is what feels positive and brings positive emotions like happiness*. This answer was implied by PP 1.0 with its predominant emphasis on emotions. The positive is identified with the pleasant or the attractive. In this view, emotions are strictly ordered along the positive vs. negative dimension, especially the basic, evolutionarily oldest ones; this dichotomy seems to become less strict along with evolutionary development. This definition is both fundamental and insufficient. All emotions refer to here-and-now, rough, subjective evaluation. "Subjective" suggests interindividual variance, despite many commonalities. "Rough" means that emotional evaluations make a not-too differentiated scale, and the same emotional evaluation may be given to objects differing in subtler and more sophisticated ways. "Here-and-now" means that the evaluation refers to the present moment, even though more distant consequences may go contrary to the immediate feeling. John Locke (1690/1999) noted over three centuries ago that we often make bad choices which we regret later because we focus on the immediate, teasing benefits and are unable to anticipate distant consequences (often negative ones) of what is immediately attractive.

The second answer is this: *The positive is what makes sense in the lifespan, social, and transcendental contexts*. Essentially, it is some comprehensive context that makes sense of anything, including our life at large. Meaning is the bridge that connects our actions to broader contexts, "a divine knot holding things together" (de Saint-Exupery, 1979, p. 55). In this case, a

meaningful life is connected to something greater and receives energy from this connection. It possesses awareness and perspective and is directed by goals and driven by the insight of possibilities ("Being-motivation"; see Maslow, 1968). It is distinctively human and authentic and follows an "individualistic" path of development (Maddi, 1971). A meaningless life, on the contrary, is fragmented and disconnected to something else. Awareness and perspective are lacking; it is pushed by external causes and driven by deficits. It is subhuman (i.e., not much of human potential is involved), alienated, and follows a "conformist path" (Maddi, 1971; see Leontiev, 2006a).

The third answer puts forward still another criterion: *The positive is what provides improvement and progression toward a better state of affairs*. This idea follows from the existentialist view. According to an anonymous aphorism:

The point is not whether the glass is half full or half empty, the point is that it is refillable! We do not merely evaluate the glass as it is; we treat is as a possibility of doing something in line with our wishes.

William James (1896), the fore-runner of 20th century existentialism, introduced the melioristic understanding of positive functioning. Meliorism transcends the optimism vs. pessimism dichotomy; it treats the future as undetermined and containing various possibilities that are a challenge for our conscious action. It is through our action that the world can be saved. "This life is worth living, we can say, *since it is what we make it, from the moral point of view*" (James, 1896, p. 61).

This view has been developed in the middle of the 20th century not only in existentialism, but also in the cultural-historical activity theory paradigm in psychology (Lev Vygotsky, Alexey Leontiev; see Leontiev D., 2002) and in the systems-cybernetic models of self-regulation and self-organization (Nikolai Bernstein, Norbert Wiener, W. Ross Ashby, Gregory Bateson a.o.; see Leontiev D., 2012). This is the most dynamic view of what is good and what is bad: Good is what allows one to refill the glass, to move from a worse to a better state of affairs.

To sum up, we call positive things and events that correspond to one (or more) of the following three complementary criteria. Good is what (1) feels good and arouses positive emotions; (2) connects our actions to superordinate contexts (makes sense); and (3) predicts improvements in the future. All three criteria often converge but may sometimes diverge. For example, drug addiction provides positive emotion at the expense of the other two criteria. Positive emotion in general provides the oldest, simplest, and least specific criterion of what is good. The two other criteria relate to the highest human potentials and resources of self-reflexive consciousness.
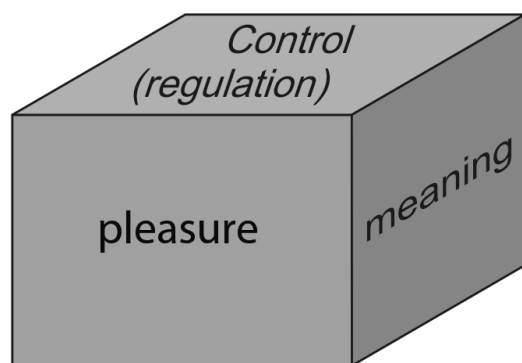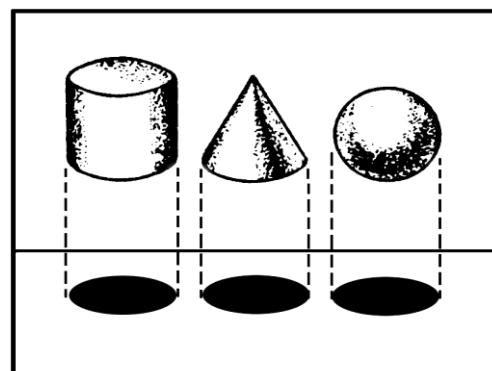
Figure 1. Three dimensions of the positive.

Figure 2. Stereometric metaphors of the "dimensional ontology" (Frankl, 1979, p. 25).

The three criteria are connected with each other as three dimensions, such as in a cube (Figure 1). This figure shows how we can combine the three dimensions of pleasure, control, and meaning. The three faces are relatively independent of each other, though they covary, like all good things. If we reduce all criteria to just one face (i.e., subjective well-being), we lose the whole dimension. As the illustration from Frankl's (1979) book highlights (Figure 2), in this case we confuse complicated 3D bodies with their 2D projections and cannot distinguish three different bodies by their projections only; their differences lie in a higher dimension.

The difference between PP 1.0 and PP 2.0, to afford some simplification, seems to be in the number of dimensions taken into consideration. We therefore must move from 2D to 3D space, from PP 1.0 to PP 2.0, which embraces PP as one of its aspects but considers more dimensions.

To Be or To Have?

The first attempt to make sense of positivity beyond pleasure and satisfaction was Aristotle's concept of happiness (eudaimonia) as "an activity (energeia) of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue" (Aristotle, 2006, 1102a). Eudaimonia refers to one's personal merits, and treating happiness as the outcome of personal merits became the dominant view in Ancient philosophy. Moreover, the disputes over eudaimonic vs. hedonic views on happiness have taken the central place in positive psychology since the 1980s; we cannot dwell on them here. Examples of personal merits approaches to the essence of the positive are the theory of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989) and the directory of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The pie model (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005) states that stable personality traits (both merits and demerits) account for about 50% of variance in subjective well-being. Indeed, being happy or unhappy are feelings, but more than just feeling; they can also make an identity, or even a way of living (Lyubomirsky, 2001).

However, this view has its limitations. The emphasis on personal merits suggests that a person is viewed as a creature equal to oneself, defined by intelligible determinants and hence predictable and controllable, like all other creatures. Hence, a person can be labeled as happy or unhappy on the positive-negative continuum. For human beings, this explanation works but does not suffice. It considers the stable aspects of the person but fails to embrace the self-transcendent

aspect—our optional capacity of not being equal to ourselves. This can also be phrased in terms of Fromm's (1976) dichotomy of "having vs. being": merits are something we have, and a good life can be an implication or implementation of these merits. While this works statistically, it is not necessarily the case, and the good life can occur independent of these merits; either merits do not help one to be happy (like in the biblical Job's case) or the lack of merits does not impede being happy. Indeed, is our well-being something we have or something we are, being well-being human beings?

Human nature suggests that, unlike other creatures, we need not (though may optionally) be equal to ourselves, simply reproducing inborn or learned routines. Humans have no definite pre-established nature, but by their nature are able to transcend any givens. The core of human nature is our transcendence capacity (Fromm, 1964; Giorgi, 1992). This capacity is based on our choice and intentional activity rather than on traits and states. Love is an emotional state, something that happens to us, but productive loving is an active capacity of relating to one's fellow, something we do rather than have (Fromm, 1956). Optimism is a trait (Carver, Sheier, & Segerstrom, 2010), but it can also be a self-regulated style of explaining events in our life (Seligman, 1990). Happiness is an emotional state, and satisfaction with life can be measured as a trait (Diener, 1984), but they may be also a way of acting we optionally choose (Lyubomirsky, 2001). If what we have accounts for about 50% of the variance in subjective well-being, what we are, or what we intentionally choose, accounts for about 40% (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Acknowledging both predetermined and transcendent aspects of human nature, we can see the difference between PP 1.0 and PP 2.0 in terms of their emphasis on the one or the other. PP 1.0 deals mostly with "psychological mechanisms," stable structures of personality that function on their own and predict sustainable happiness, optimism, and love, whereas PP 2.0 is probably best defined in terms of moving toward self-determined optimism, love, happiness, etc., in terms of the fulfillment of one's own existential project (Galati & Sotgiu, 2004).

Fromm's (1976) dichotomy—to have or to be—sets the relationship between these two types of psychological bases of positivity in a most sharpened form: to be or not to be, to be or to have, that is an option. By *non-being* we mean non-aliveness, being totally driven by organismic and environmental forces ("tapes"; see Bugental, 1991), like any natural object. Many humans like being determined because this relieves them of responsibility (Fromm, 1941). In contrast, *being* suggests developing optional self-determined forms of relating to the world, transcending the object status and taking a detached attitude toward one's states and traits (Frankl, 1969).

Involuntary vs. Self-Controlled Processes and Systems in Human Self-Regulation

The transition from a flat emotion-based positivity to a multicriterial positivity that considers not only actual experiences but also comprehensive life contexts (meaning) and controllable outcomes (control, or regulation) brings us to the domain that has been labeled "height psychology."

The term "height psychology" was coined independently by two great thinkers: Viktor Frankl in his papers of the late 1930s (Frankl, 1938) and Lev Vygotsky in his manuscripts of the early 1930s, published only in the 1980s (see Vygotsky, 1931/1983, 1984). Both wrote that what was badly needed was height psychology, as opposed to both surface (i.e., behavioristic) psychology and depth psychology. Both moved from different starting points but arrived at essentially the same ideas.

Frankl (1987) identified height psychology with his existential analysis and focus on the spiritual dimension: "It is true, rather than being a substitute for depth psychology, height

psychology is only a supplement (to be sure, a necessary one); but it does focus on specifically human phenomena" (p. 266). Frankl (1969) saw the roots of human freedom and self-mastery in two fundamental psychological capacities—self-transcendence and self-detachment—which allow one to take an attitude to everything that might determine us, including heredity, environment, or our drives, thus acquiring a substantial degree of freedom from them.

Vygotsky (1984) viewed this problem through the prism of his cultural-historical psychology of higher mental functions and deliberate actions. Both him and Frankl viewed the human person in terms of multilevel organization, where lower levels are fully causally determined by uncontrollable physiological and psychological mechanisms, while by virtue of higher levels one may master one's own behavior. Vygotsky emphasized the emerging and developing capacities of communication and self-reflection: "If we look at the significance of self-reflection for mental life at large, we shall see a profound difference between a nonreflective, naïve personality structure, on the one side, and a reflective one, on the other" (p. 238).

The idea of a multilevel psychological structure of human self-regulation has been recently reincarnated in dual-system psychological models, which distinguish two types of regulatory systems controlling human conduct and cognitive processing, one of them being unconscious and automatic and the other deliberate and controlled (e.g., "hot" and "cool" systems in Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; "reflexive" and "reflective" systems in Carver, Johnson, & Joormann, 2008; "fast" and "slow" systems in Kahneman, 2011). Essentially, all of them are versions of what Vygotsky offered in the early 1930s in terms of the distinction between higher and lower mental functions (Vygotsky, 1931/1983). Lower functions are common for all animals, which act due to inherent uncontrollable mechanisms. Higher functions develop over the course of our cultural development and are the capacity to relate to our capacities and take control over them. Probably the most radical phrasing of this distinction is James Bugental's (1991) distinction between acting "on tape" or "alive." On one hand, acting "on tape" means reproducing the response patterns elaborated in the course of one's past experience and recorded in mental structures; on the other hand, being "alive" means the capacity of changing one's action at any moment independent of the pre-existing patterns that shape much of our conduct, but which can be overcome and denied.

In his recently published notebooks of the early 1930s, Vygotsky offered further explanations of his approach rooted in the philosophical issue of self-liberation posed by Spinoza:

> In essence, in his Ethics, Spinoza was all the time trying to solve one problem. This single problem was the following: How is the higher possible in man, when we assume that man does not disturb the laws of nature, thereby, as it were, creating a kingdom within a kingdom, but himself forms part of nature [and is] necessarily subordinated to its laws. How is the higher in man really possible? This was the central question of his whole theory. (Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018, p. 222)

Vygotsky did not give an answer but, having planned the concluding chapter of a new book about Spinoza (only the first part of this book was written and published posthumously), entitled "Height psychology: Ecce homo," he commented:

> NB! But this higher is not given from the very beginning. It must be achieved with difficulty. It is a path through steep summits. It is as difficult as it is rare. Not all reach the end. If people would be born free. Obviously, they are not born both powerful and <illegible>. It is what they become. Ergo, the task to prove how the higher is possible in

man requires the motion from lower to higher, it requires development. (ibid., p. 224)

Deliberation and the Development of Autonomy

The higher levels of organization in humans are thus deliberate and self-controlled ones, and as such they cannot proceed authomatically, but rather requires some effort and energy supply. It was prominent French psychologist Pierre Janet (1929) who still earlier than Vygotsky defined personality in terms of self-regulation and, more specifically, inner work. According to Janet, personality is the result of formative societal influences on the individual; gradually the individual becomes an active agent giving shape to oneself through some inner work, "the labor of personality." This inner work requires an effort, and the feeling of effort is viewed by Janet as the marker of our freedom. Effort is an indicator of the originator of the action. We feel free when we make an effort that produces action. Janet described the development of personality using the term "evolution," which suggests progression from simple to more complicated forms, from restricted to varied capacities, and from dependence to autonomy. Personality thus evolves toward integration, awareness, acceptance of responsibility, and self-government.

The development of agentic capacities and psychological mechanisms of self-determination , besides the maturation of the biological (including neurophysiological) bases of all activity and socialization, that is the internalization of accumulated collective experience stored in objectified cultural forms. It refers to the development of the personal in personality, of emerging agentic and self-regulatory capacities based on the option of taking a detached self-reflective attitude to oneself. The vector of personality development is directed toward increasing psychological complexity and flexibility that makes for a choice of appropriate behavioral elements or creating new ones rather than being rigidly tied to some of them (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). This third type of developmental process, facilitated by the cultural environment but resulting in self-organization transcending adjustment to this environment, can be labeled as cultivation. The essence of personality cultivation is defined as "ordering of psychic energy at the individual level, the level of broader community and social institutions, and the level of environment at large, creating temporal order from a potential randomness" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 13).

Humans widely vary in this capacity of self-governance or mastery over their own lives. The basic level of its development suggests acquiring the capacity of controlling one's impulses and following non-biological urges; further development suggests the developmental transition from being determined to self-determination, from the competition of biological and social drivers to (optionally) the prevailing role of the self-determined person investing one's efforts into one's own development. This way leads from self-actualization (the actualizing tendency is not specific for humans alone; see Goldstein, 1939), self-esteem, and self-realization, which are important for every human being, to more complex and less universal mechanisms of self-transcendence, self-reflection, self-investment (Kelly, 1970), and finally self-assembly (Jung, 1934/1954; Mamardashvili, 1997). A mature human being becomes the agent of one's own development in line with the autonomous goals above and beyond universal biological mechanisms and social institutes supporting this development and giving it a direction. The transition from reactive biological patterns of adjustment through socialization and internalization of normative social guidelines for development and further to the awareness of one's uniqueness, development of the inner world and emerging personal autonomy is most comprehensively described in Jane Loevinger's theory of ego development (Loevinger, 1976; see also Leontiev, 2006b).

Conclusion

The focus of this article was the claim that the central issue of the emerging PP 2.0 is the person's developing capacity of taking control over one's own development and well-being and investing oneself in these processes. This is what height psychology—in both Frankl's and Vygotsky's interpretations—is about. Personality development and maturation proceeds not totally by itself (though spontaneous growth processes take an important place in our development); it acquires a new quality when a developing person becomes able to take an active and conscious attitude to one's own life, a mature personal life position (Leontiev, 1993). If we take an active and conscious position toward ourselves, we can then learn the ways we can relate to our emotions, needs, genes, environment, values, choices, and fate, to be advanced users of ourselves. The key moderator of the processes of positive development toward psychological maturity seems to be the investment of goal-directed efforts to one's own development ("the labor of personality" in Janet, 1929; "self-cultivation" in Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). This psychological maturation does not make us happier, but our happiness is becoming more self-determined, less contingent on uncontrollable obstacles and the benevolence of other people. This is the humane way to a life worth living!

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