

## What is the origin and history of existential positive psychology?<sup>1</sup>

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The above collage of influential positive psychologists is from the Positive Psychology Program. My initial joy of being included in such an illustrious group soon gave way to sadness because I felt like the odd man out. For a long time, I felt sad for being a lone voice in the wilderness. But, now, I have come to terms with the reality of being marginalized mainly because I am the product of a different culture. Rudyard Kipling might be right when he wrote: “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” (Wikipedia, 2019). Hopefully, this chapter will shed some light on how to bridge the cultural divide between East and West.

This chapter of my autobiography was the most difficult to write and the last one to be completed. Believe it or not, I am still struggling to push my limits as an 82-year-old man and trying to be better than my previous self. I still want to say something new and worthwhile. This very struggle for improvement and creativity against oppositions, rejections, sicknesses, and old age is both a source of suffering and flourishing for me. All my life experiences and my psychology research have led to the key insight of PP2.0—it is not possible to achieve

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flourishing without going through the painful process of overcoming internal weaknesses and external obstacles.

From a different theoretical background, Fowers et al. (2017) arrived at the same paradoxical truth that suffering is both unavoidable and potentially ennobling: “Seen rightly, suffering is part and parcel of living; essential to humanity, possibly reorienting and possibly even redemptive.” (p. 16). It offers me some consolation that they too have experienced the same resistance—positive psychologists tend to ignore the challenge that “the good life becomes possible through understanding characteristic human weaknesses and cultivating the virtues that help people to live well as frail beings” (p. 22).



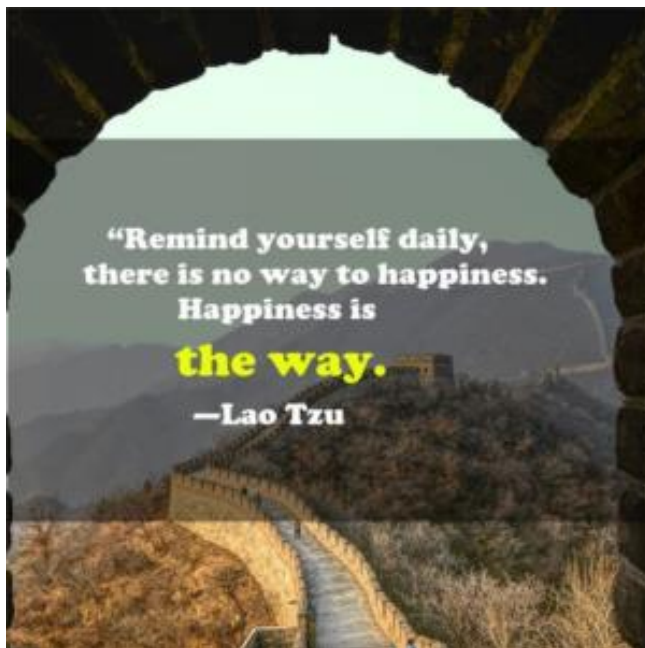
From the perspective of PP2.0, the cornerstone of building a complete science of wellbeing is to understand suffering as inherent in the human condition of limitations, fallibility, desires, and the capacity for evil. This understanding is essential for us to cultivate the virtues of humility and pursue what is good, beautiful, and true, such as gratitude, compassion, and self-transcendence. In the final analysis, only a balanced view of human weaknesses and strengths

allows us to flourish through navigating between our limitations and potentials, obstacles and opportunities.

This chapter is basically a summary of my struggles in discovering and articulating the existential truth: no pain, no gain; no suffering, no flourishing. I had several false starts on this chapter, but none was satisfactory to me.

First, I wanted to provide a detailed account of the tug-of-war between Seligman and myself over empirical questions, beginning with the debate on whether noncontingent punishment would result in learned helplessness or learned resourcefulness (Wong, 2019a), and more recently, to the question of whether personal responsibility qualifies as a virtue, especially during turbulent times (Wong, 2019b).

Second, I was tempted to issue an open letter to Seligman and his top lieutenants challenging them to a debate on theoretical issues, such as whether a dialectical view of life gives a more adequate account than the binary view, and whether suffering is gateway to wellbeing and resilience (Wong, 2019c).



Third, I set out to document all my painful experiences with cyber-mobbing, betrayals, and rejections. Specifically, I wanted to tell my story of how I battled with positive psychology's biases against existential psychology and indigenous Chinese psychology. The majority of positive psychology leaders dismiss me for being "unscientific" or too "pessimistic." Some of them glibly claim that there is no need for Taoist conceptions of happiness, such as the way of water and its emphasis on Yin-Yang dialectical interactions, by asserting that these Taoist concepts have already been covered by Aristotle's eudaimonia and Reeve and colleagues' (2004) dialectical perspective of Self-Determination Theory. However, they never seem to take the necessary time to learn the real differences.

These biases set up almost insurmountable barriers for me in obtaining grants or speaking engagements and getting published. As a case in point, even though I devoted a lot of energy and opened my home for more than a year to nurture the birth of the Canadian Positive Psychology Association (CPPA), I was never invited to speak at the CPPA conferences. My personal experiences clearly support James Coyne's (2013) observation that positive psychology is for rich white people.

But each time, I decided against these approaches because they would not serve any useful purpose. All my past efforts to have some kind of dialogue with the positive psychology leadership have failed, so why beat a dead horse? I understand perfectly why the dominant group with international prestige and hegemony would not want to take up the challenge from a lone Asian in Canada like me.

In the end, I decided to write a humble confession, which has not only been good for my soul, but also, I hope, will be helpful to my readers. I want to explain how my cultural and

personal experiences have shaped my brand of positive psychology (PP2.0) and what might be the reasons behind the difficulty of it taking root in a foreign soil.

### **Cultural Differences in Positive Psychology**

First of all, positive psychology was planted by Seligman in the fertile ground of affluent America in a time of peace and prosperity (Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In contrast, my PP2.0 was rooted in China, a land beset by wars and revolts over the last 100 years. This cultural difference probably accounts for most of my disagreements with Seligman.

Many years ago, I (Wong, 2008) wrote an article entitled, “What is the ancient Chinese secret to resilience and happiness?” in which I had the following observation:

“The hegemony of American psychology will hinder the discovery of universal principles and cultural specifics in positive psychology. Integration between Eastern and Western perspectives of PP would be a good start towards internalizing PP (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

The positive psychology as advocated by Martin Seligman and associates (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2005) is the product of American culture with its ideology of liberal democracy, positive expectations and individualistic values; it is best for a time of peace and prosperity...

Being a Chinese means at least three things: descendants of the Chinese race, bearers of the burdens of Chinese history, and recipients of some fundamental Chinese cultural beliefs stemming from Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. These are the three common elements shared by Chinese people everywhere.”

I can understand why a psychology nurtured by Chinese culture might sound strange to my American friends. That is why I have championed a global positive psychology (Wong & Tweed, 2021) based on the universal principles of human existence and cultural specifics of the good life according to indigenous psychology (Wong, 2019d). These two pillars are the foundation of existential positive psychology or PP2.0 in order to differentiate it from the first wave of American positive psychology. I believe that both positive psychology and mainstream psychology can be broadened and deepened by pursuing the two initiatives of existential principles and indigenous practices.

### **The Origin of PP2.0**

Ever since my childhood in China, I have been obsessed with two questions: (1) Why do bad people prosper and how do we cope with evil? (2) How can we find happiness when life is so hard and unfair? What prompted these questions was my own personal suffering rather than philosophical curiosity.

As a child, I watched with my own eyes how Japanese soldiers and Chinese traitors took our residence in Tianjin at gunpoint. As a teen, I witnessed how Chinese communists seized all our properties in China which my father had earned with all his hard work as an insurance agent and businessman. In my adulthood, I see again and again that “might means right”—and how the rich and powerful enjoy all the advantages, even in a democratic society.

My experience is not unique. Many of my clients have complained about experiencing unfair treatment at their workplaces. They were very upset when incompetent coworkers got promoted because they knew how to flatter the boss, or because they did not play by the rules. In fact, all my clients have been wounded by toxic people and unfortunate events.

A simple message of pursuing happiness did not go well with this clinical population, but the challenge of turning their suffering into achievement and joy did. First of all, I encouraged them to accept with courage the fact that life is full of injustice and bad people and reminded them that there was also much goodness and beauty in this world. But the main thrust of my meaning therapy was to empower them to transform and transcend their suffering by embracing it as the foundation for a better future.

That is why, in the last 50 years, all of my research and clinical practice has been aimed at finding answers to these two questions—how to cope with evil and how to live a good life even when life is hard and unfair.

That is why every cell of my body cried out against the simplistic and Pollyannaish view of American positive psychology as something foreign. From the depth of my soul, I instinctively recoiled from its promise of easy happiness because it was totally contrary to many of my life experiences and beliefs.

Positive psychology has evolved since the early days, but its conceptual framework has remained the same—it is still dominated by positivist epistemology and individualistic materialist values. I have asked myself repeatedly, “Why can’t you just join the parade rather than swim against the tide? Why can’t you do as many other Asian psychologists have done in rallying around Seligman’s positive psychology banner?”

The answer coming back to me is always the same, “Then, you would not be you, and in the end you would regret spending your life pleasing others rather than raising your own authentic voice.” For me, it was not a matter of switching to positive psychology simply because someone said to me, “Don’t be an old grouch! Why don’t you write something positive?” In my

case, my PP2.0 is simply part of my innermost core. With all my respect for Seligman's contributions to psychology, I just cannot identify with his approach.

That is why I have spent many years of lonely struggles in developing a *balanced* interactive model of the good life called PP2.0 (Wong, 2012a). This is the real story of the reluctant origin of PP2.0. Although my approach to positive psychology actually predates Seligman's Presidential launch of American positive psychology in 1989, I called it PP2.0 for want of a better label.

### **All My Friends in Positive Psychology**

In all fairness, American positive psychology is not a homogeneous group. There are some positive psychology leaders in the US who embrace a more nuanced and existential view of life (Wong & Tweed, 2021). First among them was Dr. Christopher Peterson. I am grateful for all his support. He was the only person who routinely came to my defense on the listserv of Friends of Positive Psychology when I was mob-attacked for my discordant views. He used to say that "there was no pope in positive psychology" and did not like the fact that some positive psychology enthusiasts were more "catholic" or "extreme" than Seligman himself.





It was a real honour to have Christopher Peterson speak at the Meaning Conference 2012 in Toronto, just a few months before he died unexpectedly. His keynote address on “Meaning and Positive Psychology” (Peterson & Park, 2014) was later published in *The International Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy* in 2014. It is worth noting that, in his paper, he emphasized the need to include meaning as an outcome measure and that a valid meaning measure should include sources of meaning.

Another prominent positive psychologist included in Wong and Tweed’s (2021) list is Dr. Robert Emmons. Second to Viktor Frankl, Emmons’ writing has had the most influence in the development of PP2.0. I would simply cite the concluding two paragraphs we wrote about him:

“Finally, in agreement with Viktor Frankl (1946/1985), Emmons (2005) believes that direct pursuit of happiness can be counterproductive, because ‘research indicates that happiness is often a by-product of participating in worthwhile projects and activities that do not have as their primary focus the attainment of happiness’ (p. 733).

When we consider the totality of Emmons' research on spirituality and meaning, we would agree that gratitude is not just an instrument to enhance happiness, but an overflow of a heart full of thanksgiving for the blessings of serving something greater than oneself. A great deal is owed to Emmons' research and insights for the development of PP2.0."

I am so grateful that Dr. Emmons has invited me to write a lead article on PP2.0 for *The Journal of Positive Psychology* to explain the theoretical and mythological features of PP2.0. It is my sincere hope that this paper will result in a broader acceptance of PP2.0 as the Asian Yin to complement the American Yang.

Not surprisingly, I have been treated much more warmly in other continents. The Australian Positive Psychology Association invited me to give a keynote speech on Acceptance and Wellbeing (Wong, 2012b). When I was there, Dr. Aaron Jarden also interviewed me for his edited volume on *Positive Psychologists on Positive Psychology* (Jarden et al., 2013) and later invited me to be the review editor for the *International Journal of Wellbeing*.



I would be remiss if I did not mention that, over the years, I have become friends with numerous positive psychologists and coaches in the UK. Notable among them are Tim Lomas

and Itai Ivtzan, who invited me to speak on PP2.0 at the University of East London (Wong & Wong, 2015) and in their symposium on PP2.0 (Wong, 2015a) at the conference in Florida.

Last but not least, Lesley Lyle is also one of my many good friends in positive psychology. She is the Director of Positive Psychology Learning and Founder of the Positive Psychology People.

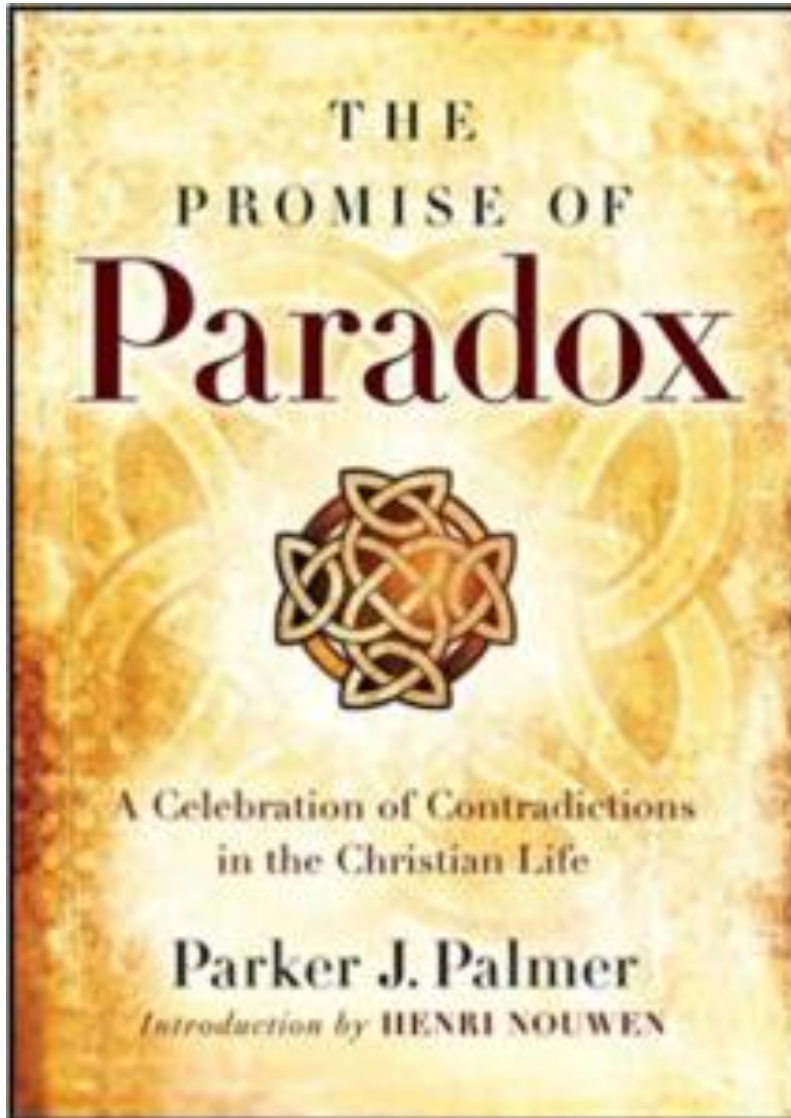
I am pleased to have been involved as an Associate of Positive Psychology Learning.

### **The Paradox of Suffering and the Power of Weakness**



The dialectic practice of Yin-Yang constitutes the core of PP2.0. Thus, our joy grows out of our suffering, and our strength grows out of our weakness. In some life circumstances, Yin is stronger than Yang and Wu-wei (non-action) is more powerful than action. The secret of Tai Chi is to overcome hard power with soft power. Likewise, in real life battles, the soft power of acceptance, endurance, patience, forgiveness, and compassion can overcome the hard power of oppression and brutality. Once we understand this ancient Chinese wisdom and embrace our own shadow, we are able to overcome all our fears and enemies.

Since becoming a Christian, I have learned that Christian spirituality is also based on the promise of paradox (Palmer, 2008), evident in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, as noted in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapters 5 to 7.



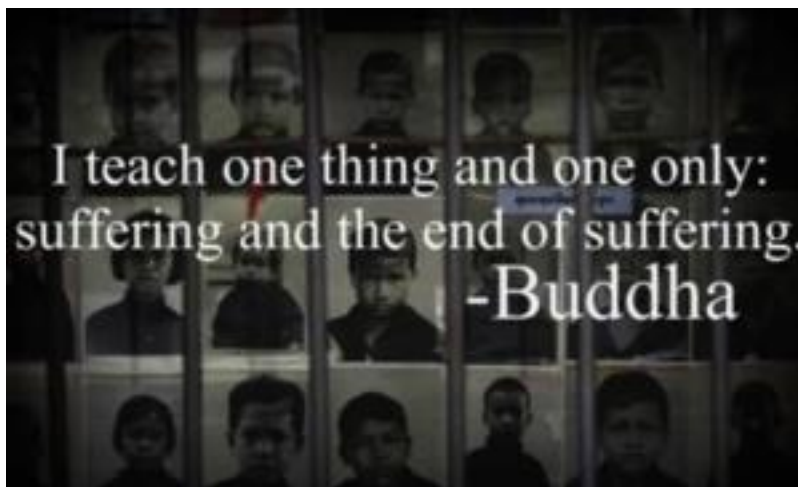
Contrary to all the teachings of positive psychology, Jesus promised that all those who suffer for righteousness' sake will be blessed. Clearly, he was talking about a different kind of happiness with different preconditions—you will feel favoured by God if you suffer persecution because you dare to pursue the narrow path of truth. Your joy comes from the Creator of life and

the source of all blessings; it also comes from within you for remaining true to your core values and mission. This is the origin of my theory of mature happiness (Wong & Bowers, 2018).

The paradox of suffering is also based on the same dialectical principle. All the powerful forces against you will only make you work harder, reach higher, and search deeper to find a way to survive and thrive. This inspired my research on the deep-and-wide hypothesis of creativity and resilience (Wong & Worth, 2017). Most of my creative ideas have come from my darkest moments (Wong, 2019e).

Therefore, from my perspective, it takes sacrifice and suffering to develop character strength and mature happiness. A complete positive psychology needs to explore the complicated relationship between human flourishing and the undeniable reality of trials and tribulations of all mortals.

Let us embrace adversity and express gratitude even in times of unavoidable pain. Let the suffering mindset fortify our mind against the terrors of life and enhance our inner peace and wellbeing. Thus, according to PP2.0, suffering is not something to be avoided but a reality essential to happiness (Wong, 2019c).



Buddhist psychology supports my dialectical view. Although we all seek happiness and try to avoid pain and suffering, Buddhism points out that suffering comes from craving happiness and the avoidance of pain; both of these psychological mechanisms are rooted in primordial ignorance and delusion about life (Chen, 2006). Having a clear vision of this reality allows us not to seek or be attached to transient things for happiness.

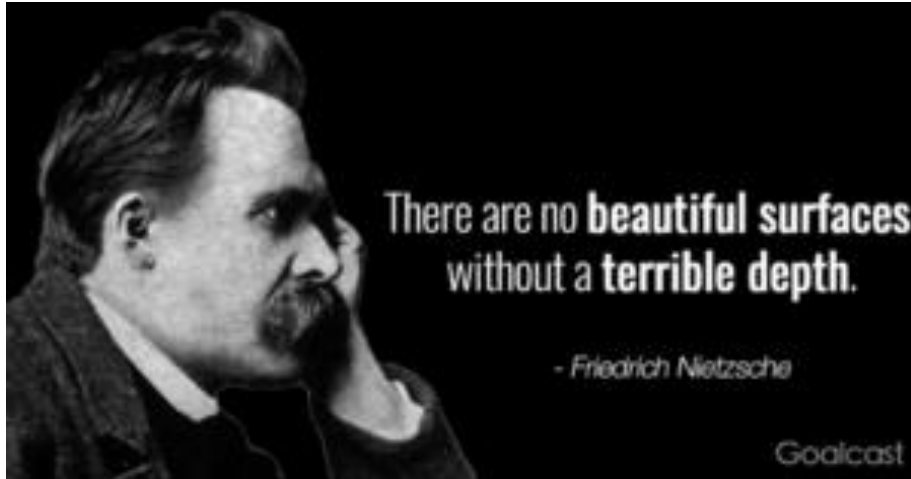
Rick Hanson (2013) has provided evidence that it may be more helpful to experience happiness through some suffering, such as ruminating over hurt feelings or confronting our worries, in order to balance the ancient negativity bias with the new normal of peace, compassion, and happiness. This is very similar to my view of mature happiness through suffering (Wong & Bowers, 2018).

### **The Eventual Triumph of Existential Positive Psychology**

A close ally of indigenous Chinese psychology (Wong, 2015b) is existential psychology, especially the variety with a focus on future-orientation and life affirmation, like Frankl's logotherapy. Hence, I call it existential positive psychology. Existential psychology provides the common ground for integrating East and West because existential principles are universal (Hoffman et al., 2009).

I have every reason to believe that existential positive psychology will eventually prevail over positive psychology during times of existential crises or protracted traumas. Here, I will briefly describe when the existential conceptions of optimism and meaninglessness are most relevant to such situations.

When I was an unemployed high school graduate in Hong Kong, Friedrich Nietzsche was my favourite philosopher. Being burdened with depression and anxiety without much of a future, I was drawn to Nietzsche for an infusion of power and optimism.



For example, his autobiography was strangely entitled *Ecce Homo* (1908/1979), which actually means “Behold the Man,” an expression originally used by Pontius Pilate as he referred to Jesus Christ, the suffering servant, shortly before his crucifixion. In *Ecce Homo*, aside from all its craziness, sadness, and despair, there is clear regard for the sacredness and potentiality of life. Nietzsche preferred meaningful suffering to shallow happiness—a theme that was later developed by Viktor Frankl (1946/1985).

Nietzsche held suffering sacred and believed in the eventual triumph of his work, which did not have a large audience in his lifetime. Even though he had numerous sufferings and sicknesses, he never lamented his hard fate; instead, he embraced his suffering joyfully as something “good for one’s health” and as a “remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life” (Dienstag, 2009, p. 119). There is nothing pessimistic in his affirmation of life in spite of the hardest lot on earth.

Frankl would consider this viewpoint a courageous declaration of tragic optimism—affirming an optimistic outlook in spite of the overwhelmingly hopeless reality in the Nazi death camps. Seligman’s (1999) explanatory-style theory of optimism would not have worked there because it was not possible for the inmates to explain away their horrible fate in terms of



temporary and limited circumstantial causes. Simply asking people to shift the burden of explanation to external factors will not make people suffering from chronic adverse conditions more optimistic.

Suffering is the inherent condition of human existence for Nietzsche and Frankl. It was true in their respective eras and remains true for the 21st century. The sooner the positive psychology community accepts this reality, the broader will be its appeal and effectiveness. In my President's Column in the INPM's *Positive Living Newsletter* (Wong, 2017), I explained why tragic optimism based on existential positive psychology can provide a common ground for American positive psychology and my PP2.0:

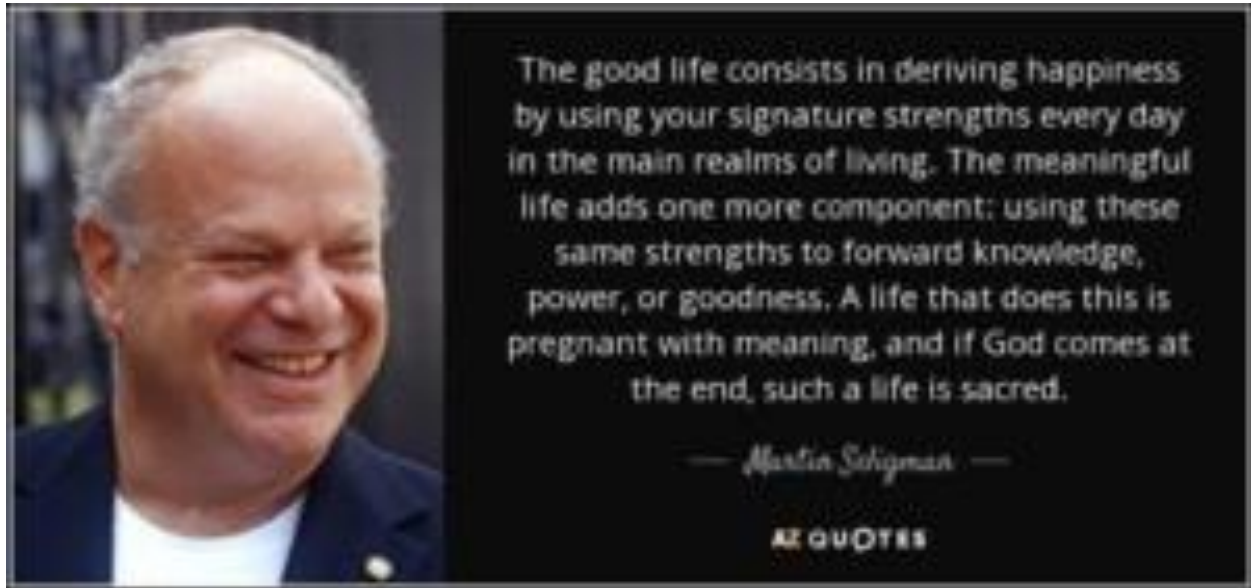
“It is deeply gratifying that, in the past few years, existential positive psychology (Wong 2001, 2009) has gained more recognition from both the positive psychology circle (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, & Worth, 2015; Tran, 2014; Wong, 2011a) and the humanistic-existential community (Batthyány & Russo-Netzer, 2014; Batthyány, Russo-Netzer, & Schulenberg, 2016, Wong, 2017a).

This is probably due to the increasing realization of the need to embrace the dark side of human existence as a necessary component for psychological wellbeing, just as medical science embrace[s] the presence of bacteria, viruses, and toxins as the natural environment for physical health. Research on tragic optimism illustrates that existential perspectives ‘show how positive psychological approaches can speak to both trauma and suffering...and existential issues’ (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2007, p. 12).”

In the area of meaning in life, existential positive psychology also brings a much broader and deeper perspective than positive psychology (Wong, 2012c, 2019c). That is why when I read Seligman's (2011) prescription for a meaningful life, my immediate reaction was, “This can't be



right!” It was obvious to me that there was something missing in Seligman’s idealized vision of the human condition. Such a good life could not exist even for the privileged group because they also are not immune to evil and suffering.



In reality, all people experience suffering from any combination of the following causes (Wong, 2019c):

1. Some people create their own hell by pursuing their unfettered desires and evil schemes to hurt others for their own gain, but then suffer the consequences of their malice.
2. Some people are victims of circumstances, natural disasters and fate, without the necessary resources to cope.
3. Some people suffer from their inner demons and traumatic memories.
4. A small group of people suffer for their willingness to sacrifice themselves and die pursuing the narrow and difficult path of truth, justice, and compassion.
5. All people suffer from existential anxieties about loneliness, meaninglessness, and death.
6. All people suffer from their limitations, frailty, and human foibles.

There is an inner hollowness in every single human being, as illustrated by the sculpture entitled *Melancolie*, created by Albert György in 1949. Beautifully and powerfully, it depicts the grief of losing a loved one and the emptiness one always feels deep down—even in times of happiness. His work speaks of the contradictory nature of ambivalent human emotions and of the dialectic tension between suffering and happiness.



This sculpture reminds me of T.S. Elliot's poem, "The Hollow Men." The characters in this poem are stuffed with all kinds of material things, and their heads are filled with knowledge and ideas, but nothing can fill the empty space in their heart and soul. A sense of existential

loneliness and emptiness is always with us, no matter how much success we have achieved or how many friends we can lean on (Yalom, 1980). We may have confidence in our rationality, creativity, and ability to create wealth and happiness. We may choose to play games of deception, manipulation, and competition to fill our days. But all these activities cannot remove that nagging feeling of inner emptiness.

Firstly, from the perspective of existential positive psychology, we simply need to embrace our feelings of loneliness and emptiness as an inherent human condition and learn to live with the dialectic tension between emptiness and happiness. The ability to hold two opposite thoughts or emotions at the same time increases our flexibility in adapting to the challenges of human existence.

Secondly, we all need to cope with death anxiety and the dread that death will bring an end to all the things we cherish, including all our worldly accomplishments. At some time in life, we all have to wrestle with the challenges of death anxiety and death acceptance (Wong, 2007; Wong & Tomer, 2011). Existential psychologists regard the fear of death as the main trigger for the quest for meaning and life transformation.

Thirdly, we need to understand the spiritual aspect of human nature—“man shall not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). A powerful existential approach is to move from the flat land of a worldly pursuit of happiness and success to the vertical dimension of meaning and spirituality in order to live life at a deeper level (Wong, 2011a).

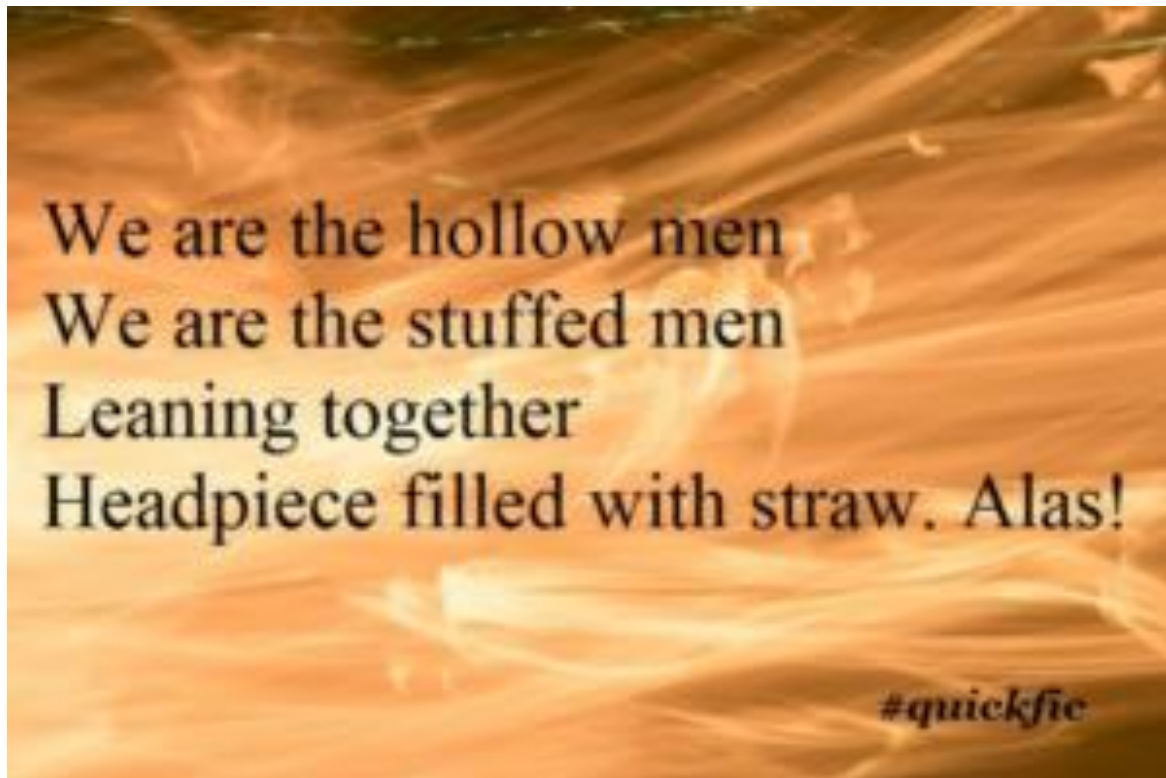
To live life at a deeper level means to live more intentionally, purposefully, courageously, freely, with greater awareness of the true reality of the human condition and greater understanding of our true identity and positive role in the world. When we live with

greater authenticity, we will be more able to connect with others at a deeper and more meaningful level.

When we are more open to the downside of life—its inherent suffering, vice, and impermanence—we discover that life opens more opportunities for us to flourish (Fowers et al., 2017). That is why a meaning-centered therapy emphasizes the need for a reorientation from egotistic desires to selfless transcendence (Dambrun, & Ricard, 2011; Shiah, 2016; Wong, 2016). According to Frankl (1949/1988), “Self-transcendence is the essence of existence. Being human is directed to something other than itself” (p. 50). Finally, we need to be humble enough to recognize the folly of scientism as an ideology. Science is always behind time-tested wisdom and religious faiths that have provided the much-needed consolation and guidance for humanity since antiquity. In addition, empirical science is still very limited in addressing the human condition because of the absence of appropriate scientific tools and the needed ethical restrictions in human research.

Therefore, it seems foolish to throw away the time-tested rich heritage from humanities studies in favour of a young and flawed science-based positive psychology. Ironically, in spite of positive psychology’s blind faith in empirical science, Nick Brown’s (2019) research has questioned the empirical foundation for its claim that positive emotions can increase physical wellbeing.

I have been arguing for years that unless positive psychology takes a dual-systems approach (Wong, 2012a) and takes into account the misery index, including such factors as stress, poverty, discrimination, disadvantaged communities, and pathogens in the environment, the results will never stand up to the more stringent test of objective reality.



### Conclusion



From the perspective of PP2.0, a complete science of wellbeing necessarily involves researching the interactive process of building what is good and healthy (Yang) and transforming

what is bad and painful (Yin). A one-sided approach, whether positive (positive psychology) or negative (clinical psychology), can never result in authentic happiness and sustainable wellbeing. The main proposition of PP2.0 is that we need to fully integrate the suffering and evil inherent in the human condition with our best aspirations for human flourishing. A complete science of human flourishing can only be built by recognizing and including the benefits of the depths of human suffering.

All human history, literature, and religions attest to the fundamental fact that life is full of suffering, just as much medical research attests to the fact that life is full of viruses, bacteria, and toxins. Evil is the virus that has infected every aspect of life. If we ignore its presence and its consequences, it will eventually destroy us as individuals and as a species.

A positive psychology that does not address the reality of evil, pain, and suffering only contributes to our maladaptive illusion and ignorance. That is why PP2.0 focuses on developing psychological wellbeing by acknowledging, integrating, and transcending pain and suffering. I challenge more positive psychology researchers to do research in the new field of Yin-Yang interactions in wellbeing.

I wish and pray that a new day will dawn, when all the oppressed, suffering people will stand up and speak with one voice, “We will not be silenced or marginalized by the rich and powerful anymore. We want to build a society based on compassion, respect, and justice rather than on money and power. We can make this dream our reality, if we have the courage and vision to support each other in this positive revolution.”

I have proudly revealed all my scars as badges of honour in order to empower all the oppressed so that they too can survive and flourish. There are no failures in the pursuit of ideals because each failure becomes a steppingstone to a higher ground. I am a constantly defeated

warrior, but by getting back on my feet each time, I'll have the last laugh. I believe that there is nothing more positive in psychology than to build global wellbeing on the foundation of our triumphs over pervasive and persistent evils and suffering. This defines PP2.0 and is my mission.

Here are some of my random thoughts as I survey the troubled landscape of today's world, from Hong Kong young people's protests to the ongoing military threats against peaceful

Taiwan:

- People suffer and die daily, but life goes on.
- The night may be dark and long, but the sun always rises.
- Shall we cry or dance? Why can't we dance with tears in our eyes?
- Why can't we make life easier for ourselves and others?
- Why can't people with different ideas have a drink together?
- Why can't dictators learn from history that oppression leads to revolt?
- Why can't the strong leave some space for those with less power?
- Let diversity in ideas replace domination and oppression.
- Let's bring some joy to those who suffer.
- Let the desire to reduce suffering be our motivation.
- Let sorrow and mourning be our compassion.
- Let our sacrifice for others be our meaning and happiness.

My entire life is a testimony to the validity of PP2.0, just as Viktor Frankl's experience in Nazi death camps was a testimony to the validity of logotherapy. My autobiography documents how PP2.0 works. Read on and find out why my research and theories provide the scientific basis for PP2.0.

Telling my story of PP2.0 has been a process of catharsis and healing. My sincere hope is that more people in the positive psychology community will be more open to my Asian brand of PP2.0. But I must admit that I still have some misgivings about the label PP2.0; it is a misnomer because it actually predates Seligman's positive psychology and calls for a return to the historical roots of psychology in the works of such luminaries as William James and Abram Maslow (Wong, 2011b). Shall I simply name it the positive psychology of suffering?

I want to end this chapter with my reflections on a life of celebration and gratitude!

- Grateful that I was born in China during wartime and baptised by a fire that steeled my spine in my childhood. I celebrate that I was strong enough to survive all the suffering I encountered and yet could still dream of a better future.
- Grateful for all the sages in ancient China that nourished my soul and taught me how to be content in all circumstances. I celebrate their enduring wisdom through a history of tears and blood.
- Grateful for Pui-Ching Middle School, which taught me that excellence must be wedded with virtue, and planted in me the seeds of the Gospel during my darkest days in Hong Kong.
- Grateful for a scholarship that opened the door to Canada and changed my entire life. How I dream of having a foundation to give back a thousand times!
- Grateful for all the rejections, setbacks, and injustices in a foreign land, which have taught me to say "Yes" to life, no matter how deep the wounds and how dark the night.
- Grateful for my family and friends who love me the way I am. I even feel grateful for those who have betrayed me and caused me great pain because they have taught me how to forgive and love my enemies.



- Grateful for all the people (even children!) who have made this world a wonderful place. I celebrate all the differences, talents, and honest hard work in every walk of life.
- Grateful for my old age. In spite of all my aches and pains, and the lack of help and resources, I still have the energy and clarity of mind to contribute to humanity.
- Grateful for the opportunity of walking on planet earth. Even though I am just a little candle nearly burnt out, let me be spent in lighting up many candles to brighten the world.
- I have run the good race and fought the good fight; I have offered my life as a living sacrifice without expecting anything in return.
- Now, with tears in my eyes, and gratitude in my heart, I can honestly say to God, “Thank you, Lord for this difficult but wonderful life. Thank you for using this little vessel for your glory.”

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