

# **ПОЗИТИВНАЯ ПСИХОЛОГИЯ: ИСТОРИЯ ДВОЙНОГО ОТРИЦАНИЯ И ИХ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЙ**

**И. Е. Гарбер**

**Национальный исследовательский Саратовский государственный университет,  
Саратов, Россия**

Рассмотрены предпосылки возникновения позитивной психологии как независимой дисциплины. Показано, что позитивная психология возникла в результате двойного отрицания: негативной, патологической психологии и гуманистической психологии. Описаны три тенденции развития позитивной психологии: тенденции усиления роли административного ресурса в становлении новой дисциплины; потребности ученых в видимости и тесном сотрудничестве с обществом и государством; серьезных внутренних изменений первооткрывателей

новых направлений, прежде чем они сформулировали их. В целом, позитивная психология представлена как успешный современный бизнес-проект.

Ключевые слова: позитивная психология, история, счастье, лестница Кантрила, гуманистическая психология, анти-DSM, добродетель.

## **POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: A HISTORY OF DOUBLE NEGATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

**I. Garber**

**National Research Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia**

The prerequisites for the design of positive psychology as an independent discipline are considered. It's shown, that positive psychology arose as a result of two negations: of negative, pathological psychology and humanistic psychology. Three tendencies of development of positive psychology are described: the tendency of strengthening the role of an administrative resource in the formation of a new discipline; need of scientist for visibility and close cooperation with society and the authorities; serious internal changes before pioneers of new directions formulated them. In general, positive psychology is represented as a successful business project to date.

Keywords: positive psychology, history, happiness, Cantril's ladder, humanistic psychology, Anti-DSM, virtue.

Positive psychology is distinguished by extreme ambitiousness. Indeed, if there is a positive psychology, then everything else is negative or pathological psychology? It is difficult to imagine positive physicists, chemists or biologists opposing negative/pathological colleagues. The history of psychology, however, reinforces this version, since earlier relations between particular directions were based on the complete rejection of the ideas of predecessors. For example, such are transitions from W. Wundt (1832–1920) – consciousness (German – *Bewusstsein*) to S. Freud (1856–1939) – unconsciousness (German – *Bewusstlosigkeit*), J. Watson (1878–1958) – behavior, or to M. Wertheimer (1880–1943), K. Koffka (1886–1941), and W. Köhler (1887–1967) – Gestalt psychology.

Positive psychology may be characterized by a transition from the general psychological categorical system described by M.G. Yaroshevsky ('image' – Gestalt psychology and structuralism, 'action' – behaviorism and functionalism, 'motivation' – psychoanalysis) to preferably socio-psychological terminology, from predominantly German-speaking terminology to purely English-speaking. The key concepts of the new discipline are well-being, happiness, and mindfulness.

The statistical regularities found by positive psychologists corresponded to comforting everyday ideas of the inhabitants of the consumer society: 'money cannot buy happiness', 'the rich also cry' etc. These facts contributed to a large extent to popularizing (or discrediting?) of their ideas in the mass media.

On March 20, the UN celebrates the International Day of Happiness and, from 2012, publishes the World Happiness Report, based, in particular, on the H. Cantril's (Cantril, 1906-1969) ladder question which he proposed in 1965: "Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?" (Helliwell, Huang, Wang, 2017).

There is no doubt that positive psychology is a product of the western, mostly English-speaking culture, its attention to human rights, in particular, its main constructions may be explained by the influence of such documents as the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. Motives related to the Eastern religion, spiritual practices, in particular, with Buddhism and Confucianism appeared in the process of development, refinement and improvement of the basic concepts, with the inclusion of oriental researchers into positive psychology.

The main prerequisite for the design of positive psychology as an independent discipline was dissatisfaction with the traditional, pessimistic approach to study of human beings (as is often described) and with cruel methods of their research (that, at least in Russian, is often hushed up or, on

the contrary, continuity between ‘negative’ and positive psychology is declared). At a certain point, harmonious development of psychology became impossible without appeal to positive emotions, positive experiences, and positive relationships.

When positive psychology basically formed as an independent scientific discipline, its predecessors and sources, primarily philosophical and religious, were revealed. For example, the ancient Greeks gave many examples of achieving happiness: self-knowledge (Socrates), the search for deep meanings (Plato), rational activity throughout life (Aristotle), enjoyment by simple pleasures (Epicureans), objectivity and reasonableness (Stoics).

However, without any doubt, the greatest theoretical contribution was made by representatives of humanistic psychology. A. Maslow (1905-1970), C. Rogers (1902-1987), V. Frankl (Frankl, 1905-1997), and E. Fromm (1900-1980) made a deep revision of the foundations of scientific psychology in positive direction.

Peers Maslow – Rogers – Frankl – Fromm came too early with their innovative ideas. They did not support them with empirical research, and the society turned out to be unprepared to accept them in full. Practical implementation of many humanistic ideas began later, and it’s associated with the names of other scientists. Surprisingly, the latter completely abandoned their ideas, and this was the second negation of predecessors.

A positive approach to psychology should include a review of traditional research methods also. If you’ll look at them from the outside, with a fresh look, they’ll seem unjustifiably manipulative and, at times, cruel to people and animals. Perhaps a positive approach to psychological methods will also be realized within the framework of positive psychology in the future.

The first organizational successes of positive psychology, of course, are connected with the name of M. Seligman (1942-). In the social sciences and humanities it is customary to associate the personality of the scientist, his biography, the spirit of time (Zeitgeist), the social order, the historical, economic and cultural situation with the formation and development or oblivion of various theories.

In order to assess the role of M. Seligman in the organizational development of positive psychology, it’s reasonable to consider the comparative analysis of the four organizers of influential psychological directions: S. Freud, J. Watson, A. Maslow and M. Seligman, representatives of four generations of psychologists who lived and worked in successive intervals.

It is possible to trace the tendency of strengthening the role of an administrative resource in the formation of a new discipline. If S. Freud himself created the necessary organizational structures of the international psychoanalytic movement and placed his ‘key people’ in key positions, then J. Watson’s ‘Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it’ at Columbia University in 1913 quickly led him to be elected President of the American Psychological Association in 1915. The high post, of course, helped him in the advancement of his ideas in the United States, initially met resistance from venerable colleagues. Only an unexpected removal from the academic sphere due to a public scandal in 1920 prevented him from realizing his plans in full.

A. Maslow, like Freud, himself created organizational structures of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. He presented a comprehensive program of positive psychology in ‘Motivation and Personality’ (1954). Alas, the election as President of the American Psychological Association was belated. A severe heart attack, rescheduled in 1967, narrowed his capabilities. Moreover, earlier, in 1963, Maslow refused the post of President of the Association of Humanistic Psychology for reasons of principle. He believed that the organization should develop an intellectual movement without a leader.

Martin Seligman was a man who came to the right place at the right time. Starting a clinical career in the ‘negative’, ‘pathological’ psychology of studying depression, he made himself a reputation as a world class scientist by the theory of learned helplessness. Note that in 2002, Seligman spoke in San Diego with a three-hour message on how to help American soldiers resist torture based on it.

In his inauguration speech as President of the American Psychological Association, Seligman formulated the main directions for the development of positive psychology. What seldom happens, he was unconditionally supported by a number of venerable world-class scientists such as M. Csikszentmihályi (1934-) and E. Diner (1946-, the nickname Dr. Happiness).

To consolidate the success, M. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihlyi relied on young people by writing 50 letters to influential American psychologists with a request to recommend a former student who had not yet reached the age of 40 to participate in the project. 45 scientists sent their publications, 18 of them were selected for participation in thematic symposia. They formed a new generation of leaders of positive psychology (Leontiev, 2012).

The second trend is a radical change in the behavior of scientists. According to T. Kuhn, one of the strictest, though unwritten, rules of scientific life is the prohibition of recourse to the heads of states or to the broad masses of the people on science (Kuhn, 1962). The evolution of this rule was as follows. Beginning with a categorical ban, cooperation only in extreme situations, when it comes to life and death, the fate of the world, scientists have come to the need for close cooperation with society and the authorities.

As a result, modern scientific communities seek representation in the UN and UNESCO, cooperation with them. They are lobbying the appointment of government posts to their members who are proud of the status of the presidential adviser more than scientific and administrative status among colleagues; publish popular science books and are concerned about 'visibility' in the mass media no less than with professional achievements (Anderson, 2008). Sometimes, this leads to public scandals (Hoffman, Carter, Lopez et al., 2015), but in general it seems inevitable in the face of uncompromising competition for limited resources and corresponds to *Zeitgeist*, the consumer society.

Thirdly, with the exception of J. Watson, who at a relatively young age chose the main field of application of his efforts, the other pioneers of new directions went through serious internal changes before they formulated them.

In addition to academic and applied research, it's reasonable to note the activity of positive psychologists in the field of education. A separate article is required to enumerate master's and doctoral programs, certification systems for positive psychology, as well as for the description of positive psychotherapy (M. Seligman was inspired by the work of A. Beck (1921-, a colleague at the University of Pennsylvania, in the field of cognitive-behavioral therapy). And, finally, behind all activity of positive psychologists there is an excellent financing. Dozens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, are invested in the development of positive psychology. Will pay off the investment or not, will show the near future.

Before considering specific creative achievements of positive psychology, I'll formulate some limitations on What it studies and How. The main feature of positive psychology, in my opinion, is that it studies modern man, in particular, a resident of an overpopulated metropolis with its traffic jams and gas contamination, impersonality and loneliness in the crowd.

As noted above, the leaders of the positive movement deliberately refused succession with outstanding predecessors: W. James (1842-1910), A. Maslow, K. Rogers, V. Frankl, claiming that they used methods that don't correspond to the currently accepted requirements, norms and standards of scientific research. Positive psychologists declare adherence to traditional empirical methods (representative samples, psychometric validity and reliability, statistical reliability, evidence-based approach). The transition from 'negative', manipulative and often cruel research methods to humane, positive is not on their agenda. On the contrary, one can state the rejection of romantic, sublime ideas of self-actualization, self-improvement, personal growth, reconstruction of the unjust world on the basis of harmonization of interpersonal relations (J. Moreno, 1889-1974) in favor of a realistic, mundane, pragmatic search for inner resources in order to feel happy here and now.

One of the successful methods of strengthening the positions of positive psychology was the involvement of scientists who are not 'pure' positive psychologists but are possessing undisputed authority: the Nobel laureate D. Kahneman (1934-), the living classicist A. Bandura (1925-), an influential R. Sternberg (1949-) and others.

For a historically short period, positive psychologists succeeded in developing theories that required the elaboration of a fundamentally new conceptual-categorical apparatus. One of the main tools of the 'negative', 'pathological' science is the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' (DSM), developed and published by the American Psychiatric Association since 1952 (the current version of DSM-5 was published in 2013).

Until recently, the only (and conceding to it) alternative was the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD), developed and published by the World Health Organization (in 2018 it is expected to adopt 11 Version of the classification, ICD-11). The fifth chapter of ICD-10 is devoted to mental and behavioral disorders. Such Manuals and Classifications are usually developed by numerous teams of authors for several years, after which they are publicly discussed, criticized and supplemented by colleagues, and then formally approved by the relevant organizations.

In 2004, *Anti-DSM* was published by two authors (Peterson, Seligman, 2004): K. Peterson (1950-2012) and M. Seligman under the title ‘Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification’ (CSV) of 800 pages - the first attempt to present the humanistic ideals of virtue in an empirical, strictly scientific manner. Just as DSM is used to assess and alleviate mental disorders, CSV is the theoretical basis for developing practical applications of positive psychology.

In the traditions of social and humanitarian literature, the virtues presented in the book go back to the theological virtues of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas: 1) wisdom and knowledge; 2) courage; 3) humanity; 4) fairness; 5) moderation; 6) transcendence. The authors do not believe that among the six virtues there is a hierarchy, that some of them are more fundamental than others. Even if, as a result of empirical research, the entire list of virtues and character forces would be revised, it is difficult to overestimate CSV's theoretical contribution to the development of positive psychology, and in particular the contribution of the first author, C. Peterson, the scientific director of the VIA Institute on Character.

In positive psychology, three types of objects are studied: positive emotions, positive individual traits and positive institutions. In the spirit of the times, the neuroscience, cognitive and evolutionary approaches, eastern spiritual and meditative techniques are attracted. Studies are conducted on a broad front, affecting age and gender, genetics and health, personal finance and education, family relations and social relations, spirituality and culture, happiness and prosperity, work and coaching, and much more. Unfortunately, the size of the paper does not allow me to dwell on them and on positive psychotherapy in more details.

The key personalities of positive psychology are presented in alphabetical order:

A. Antonovsky (1923–1994; main publications: *Health, Stress and Coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979; *Unraveling The Mystery of Health. How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987);

E. Diener (1946-; main publications: *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2008; *Well-being and Public Policy*. Oxford University Press, 2009; *International Differences in Well-Being*. Oxford University Press, 2010);

N. Peseschkian (1933-2010; main publications: *Positive Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice of a New Method*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1987; *If You Want Something You Never Had, Then Do Something You Never Did*. Sterling Publishers Pvt., 2006);

C. Peterson (1950-2012; main publications: *The VIA classification of strengths*. Cincinnati: Values in Action Institute, 2002; *Character Strengths and Virtues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004);

M. Seligman (1942-; main publications: *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. NY: Knopf, 1991; *What You Can Change and What You Can't: The Complete Guide to Successful Self-Improvement*. New York: Knopf, 1993; *The Optimistic Child: Proven Program to Safeguard Children from Depression & Build Lifelong Resilience*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996; *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: Free Press, 2002; *Character Strengths and Virtues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Free Press, 2011);

M. Csikszentmihalyi (1934-; main publications: *The Systems Model of Creativity: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014; *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014;

Applications of Flow in Human Development and Education: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).

In general, positive psychology is a successful business project to date.

### **References**

Anderson N. Toward a strategic plan for APA // Monitor on Psychology. 2008. Vol.39. №.6. P.9.

Helliwell J.F., Huang H., Wang S. The Social Foundations of World Happiness. Chapter 2: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/sdsn-whr2017/HR17-Ch2\\_lr.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sdsn-whr2017/HR17-Ch2_lr.pdf)

Hoffman D.H., Carter D.J., Lopez C.R.V. et al. Report to the Special Committee of the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association. Independent Review Relating to APA Ethics Guidelines, National Security Interrogations, and Torture: <https://www.apa.org/independent-review/APA-FINAL-Report-7.2.15.pdf>

Kuhn T.S. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Peterson C., Seligman M.E.P. Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. New York: Oxford University Press/Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004.

Леонтьев Д.А. Позитивная психология – повестка дня нового столетия // Психология. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. 2012. Т.9. №4. С.36-58.