



MYTHS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: DECEPTIVE MANOEUVRES AND PSEUDOSCIENCE

Luis Fernández-Ríos y Manuel Vilariño

Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

La Psicología Positiva (PsP) ha tenido un gran auge en los últimos veinte años. El objetivo del presente trabajo es enumerar una serie de mitos y maniobras argumentales falaces que siembran serias dudas acerca de lo novedoso y original de la PsP. En su discurso destaca lo pseudocientífico y una cierta deshonestidad intelectual. Además, disemina a través de redes sociales, libros y revistas especializadas, un conocimiento, se supone que empíricamente fundamentado, pero que en realidad está plagado de afirmaciones tautológicas, conocimientos superficiales y conclusiones evidentes. Todo el conocimiento generado por la PsP pone de manifiesto lo que aporta el sentido común sensato, y la razonable sabiduría tradicional. En conclusión, para esto, no hace falta la PsP y, además, se convierte, en cierta medida, en académica y socialmente innecesaria, irrelevante y prescindible. El trabajo finaliza con una serie de consideraciones acerca del incierto futuro de la siempre controvertida PsP.

Palabras clave: *Psicología crítica, Crítica de la Psicología Positiva, Maniobras estratégicas en discurso argumentativo, Mitos de la Psicología, Pseudociencia y Psicología*

Positive Psychology (PP) has experienced a huge boom in the last twenty years. The aim of this study is to list a number of myths and fallacious argumentative manoeuvres which sow serious doubts about the novelty and originality of PP. The PP discourse is notably pseudoscientific and has a certain intellectual dishonesty. Additionally, PP extends knowledge through social networks, books and journals. This knowledge is alleged to be empirically evidence-based, but in fact it is sustained upon tautological statements, superficial knowledge and obvious conclusions. All of the knowledge produced by PP reveals what it is provided by common sense and traditional wisdom. In conclusion, PP is not necessary in producing this knowledge and is academically and socially irrelevant and dispensable. This paper concludes with some considerations about the uncertain future of the always controversial PP.

Key Word: *Critical Psychology, Critique of Positive Psychology, Strategic Manoeuvring in Argumentative Discourse, Myths of Psychology, Pseudoscience and Psychology.*

This article is a response to what Professor Vázquez (2013) considers the “enemies” of Positive Psychology (hereinafter PP). The label of “enemy” is completely false. In fact, neither Pérez-Álvarez (2012), nor any of the authors of this paper, are “enemies” of anything. Another very different issue would be if being critical were equivalent to being an “enemy”. In this sense, the authors could indeed be considered “enemies” of PP. It is true that Vázquez is interested in the “good name of Psychology” (p.91). He rightly recognises that “the reader does not deserve to be punished with parasitic discussions” (p. 91). The authors of this paper argue that psychology does not need either the deception of linguistic happiness or the false unfulfilled promises of psychological well-being.

It is imperative to be critical in order to find a perspective that does justice to PP. It must be a fair criticism, made

with intellectual honesty and based on an epistemology of virtue. Thus, PP, as a new academic discipline, seems dispensable, and its discourse, exhausted. Since its theoretical and practical development in the late twentieth century, it has generated unwavering adherence and harsh criticism, wrongly understood at times. Abundant examples of critical bibliography can be found both in English (Binkley, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2009, Frawley, 2015; Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, & Worth, 2016; Kristjánsson, 2013; McDonald & Wearing, 2016) and in Spanish (Cabanas & Huertas, 2014; Fernández-Ríos & Novo, 2012; Pérez-Álvarez, 2013; and Piña, 2014). From its content it is extracted that PP represents a confusing, uncertain and repetitive field of research-action.

This work is based on the theory of deceptive manoeuvres in the reasoning of Eemeren and Groszendorstt (2003/2011), the use of the concept of fallacy by Sternberg, Kaufman, and Grigorenko (2008/2011), and the psychom mythology of Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, and Beyerstein (2009/2010). The concept

Correspondence: Luis Fernández-Ríos. Departamento de Psicología Clínica y Psicobiología. Facultad de Psicología. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. Campus Vida s/n. 15782 Santiago de Compostela. España. E-mail: luis.fernandez@usc.es





of myth that is adopted herein refers to a series of deceitful arguments about the theory and practice of PP. These are based on a mistaken history of PP, a fuzzy theoretical discourse, a dubious interpretation of the empirical data, and a series of deceptive manoeuvres regarding the discourse offered to the public. Thus, the emotional narrative of PP is based on a moving magma of tautological and repetitive statements. With these considerations in mind, our aim is to expose a series of PP myths that bestow it with a dubious scientific and social usefulness. Specifically, we have established two broad categories of myths. In the first, which deals with the historical and epistemological aspects, the originality of PP and its vision of the human being are questioned, and the limitations of its discourse are evident, as well as its lack of empirical foundation. In the second, focused on the myths concerning the need for PP, the discussion centres on the lack of ideological neutrality, its quest to become universally valid, and the false predicament of positive mental health; moreover, it is highlighted that it is dispensable for psychological practice, and in order to achieve happiness and social change. This work concludes by presenting a number of minimum issues to consider a critical future for PP.

HISTORICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL MYTHS ABOUT PP

Myth: PP is philosophically and anthropologically original and recent

People have always had a need for a healthy and hopeful justification for the daily process of living. PP is on the one hand, a recycled version of “light” ideologies about happiness; and, on the other, an eclectic invention of the philosophies and anthropologies of the new age. The new age brings a DIY system of pseudopsychological beliefs and practices, as an alternative to goodness knows what. It focuses on human beings themselves, and with a holistic view of a supposed universal energy. It seems that the traditional lifestyle has become toxic. Apparently it contributes to developing human potential and overall health. What and how it creates is almost irrelevant. PP in the new age plays a psychological role for non-believers and people who are disillusioned with the society in which they have to live. Many positive psychologists have overlooked the history of happiness, many others have refused to critically reflect upon what they do with PP. They have been led astray by the “gurus” of research trends which, in this case, cloud the capacity for reflection and obstruct constructive criticism.

To consider PP as something new is to disregard the history of philosophical and anthropological thought. In

this sense, many PP publications are deeply ahistorical. They provide knowledge in terms of what the researcher thinks they know, but can actually be utterly wrong. The defenders of PP attempt to distort history to justify the establishment of the foundations of a new discipline. They exhibit a presenteeism which recognises, solely and exclusively, the merit and value of the recent publications in the psychology of positivity, and forget the long-term history in philosophy and the anthropology of positive emotions. However, PP represents largely an imitation of what is already known. Therefore, the presenteeist and ethnocentric history of PP is false or, at least, inaccurate. Moreover, it is, on many occasions, the mere depiction of the history of common sense regarding happiness, and how to get it. An example is the theory of “the expansion and construction of positive emotions” by Fredrickson (2013) who postulates, simply, that the positive seeks the positive. To demonstrate that the positive leads to the positive, common sense and popular sayings will suffice.

Myth: PP uses a unified and coherent discourse that transcends the mere narration of positive emotions

The discourse of PP lacks consistency and uniformity, and provides a narrative of positive affect. On the one hand, it is full of *travelling concepts* (Bal, 2002) which, like nomadic concepts, pass from one discourse to another. The conceptual delimitation is distorted, and PP becomes a narrative full of scattered concepts with insecure and constantly changing semantics. In this regard, Ahmed (2010) believes that the word happiness is mobile and promiscuous. Thus, a hazy, uncertain and ambiguous interdisciplinary discourse is constructed that results in the absence of a unified field of action-research.

On the other hand, the texts of PP feed off the simple narratology of positive emotions, that is, a literature of positive psychology. This discourse of positivity creates the ideal social space for the penetration of a story of linguistic happiness. Whether or not this story is based on empirical data, it will always have a favourable audience. It cannot be denied that PP is discursively appealing. As is the narrative of happiness and positive emotions. However, in its discourse and the interpretation made of the results of the research, linguistic uncertainty and semantic games abound.

Consequently, one could argue that if the discursive horizons of positivity are nomadic, PP becomes changing and liquid; and even providing an elegant, friendly and attractive linguistic happiness, its discourse does not shy away from being redundant, circular, and ambiguous. PP exhausts its own language, and is full of platitudes.



Myth: PP constitutes empirically based scientific knowledge

The interpretation of the results of scientific research in general, and PP, in particular, is a hermeneutical process, and socially controlled. In PP, the interpretive hermeneutics of the data are full of ideology, multiple meanings and ambiguities. Thus, despite the enthusiasm that is seen in some sectors about the possibilities offered by the knowledge that emerges from the research in PP, Pérez-Álvarez (2013) rightly considers that the empirically substantiated truths produced by PP constitute “absolute trivialities” and “scientific small change” (p. 219).

A number of ideas are available to reinforce the above consideration. Firstly, an abundant circularity is seen in the interpretation of results, and explanations are offered for almost everything. In addition, on many occasions, attempts are made to explain the obvious. Secondly, there is the “projection of knowledge argument” (Stanovich, 2002/2003, p. 190), according to which supporters of PP project an interpretation of the data favourable to their beliefs. Thirdly, for the explanation of the dubious results, the perspective “on paradoxes” by Hempel (1965/1968) is applied: “*paradoxical cases must be considered confirmatory or positive*” (p.55). Consequently, when there are no clear results from PP investigations, they must be interpreted in its favour. Fourthly, and finally, there is the *truth effect* (Dechêne, Stahl, Hansen & Wänke, 2010), which argues that the repetition of an ambiguous statement or conclusion increases the likelihood that it will be judged as true. In short, too much unfounded speculation, interpretative alchemy and linguistic secrecy is observed. PP is more like a pseudoscience or an existential philosophy of the new age than an empirically-based knowledge.

An added problem to this lack of empirical rigour, is generated by the current mode of disseminating scientific knowledge. The pressure of university policy leads to publish in journals with impact, even when the articles conclude the obvious. The priority is to publish even when there is nothing relevant to say (Fernández-Ríos & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2014). This is a form of what Buéla-Casal (2014) called *pathological publication*, which is a disease in the construction and dissemination of knowledge. As it could not be otherwise, in PP there also abounds a pathological publication of works which include irrelevant and repetitive information.

Myth: The conclusions derived from PP interventions are clear

In addition to those mentioned in the previous myth,

intervention in PP suffers from much ideology and self-fulfilling prophecy, if not bias, in order to demonstrate, that is, put into practice a theory. Greater objectivity and empirical basis is needed. In any case, if the conceptual framework is unclear, the intervention planning also becomes uncertain and therefore the practice ends up leading to the same problems as the theory. As a result, the conceptual fuzziness of the theoretical discourse of PP is manifested in the results of the intervention in the form of ambiguous and dubious conclusions.

Thus, in the published literature, meta-analysis can be found for almost any conclusion previously established in the minds of the researchers. If someone wants to reach conclusions favourable to PP, they will find empirical evidence. If someone seeks the opposite, they will also find it. For example, Chida and Steptoe (2008) conclude that psychological well-being affects the survival of healthy and sick individuals, in spite of the “publication bias” (p.754). Boehm and Kubzansky (2012) claim that psychological well-being is positively associated with health behaviours, and negatively associated with behavioural pathology. Sedlmeier et al. (2012) declare that meditation has positive effects on health, although it is difficult to establish the magnitude of the effect size clearly. Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2012) consider that social well-being correlates with emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is nothing more than “old wine packaged in shiny new containers” (p.22). Bolier et al. (2013) claim that interventions of PP enhance people’s psychological well-being with an effect size ranging from small to moderate. The results are difficult to interpret, also due to “publication bias” (p. 17). Cheney, Schlösser, Nash, and Glover (2014) conclude that interventions from the perspective of PP produce “invisible” internal changes (p. 22). In addition, inadequate control groups and a lack of randomisation of participants “limit the conclusions” (p.23). Finally, Quidbach, Mikolajczak, and Gross (2015) conclude that positive emotions may be favoured through visualising positive events, optimising positive situations, paying attention to the positive aspects of situations, and expressing and sharing positive emotions.

In summary, explanations and conclusions of all kinds are observed. A hodgepodge of interpretive hermeneutics that suggests serious problems in synthesising empirically-based information in PP. This is not because PP has “enemies” but because it generates too many anxieties about the outcome of the intervention.



Myth: PP has a holistic view of the human being in their life context

PP does not provide a comprehensive view of the human being. It has selected a number of strengths, but has forgotten many other important ones. For example, it has overlooked the importance of *nature* or the *ecological niche* and *geographic psychology* (Rentfrow, 2014). This would enable us to speak of a geographical psychology of happiness, which would contemplate the importance of nature or life context as a restorative environment. Furthermore, PP is characterised by an ethnocentric cultural worldview. It forgets or, even worse, marginalises the social, cultural and economic conditions of each cultural tradition. Thus it imposes, sometimes implicitly, a cultural imperialism, which is unfair, perverse and lacking in research ethics.

Myth: Despite psychometric evaluation, PP looks for identified lives; i.e., personal biographies, not statistical lives

The lives identified are individually and personally real, that is, they have a unique biographical narrative. In contrast, we cannot put a face to the statistical lives of average happiness, nor can we put a name, or any of the other attributes of personal biographies. Unfortunately, PP focuses on the latter. It is interested in large numbers of happiness, and comparison between individuals, groups, communities and societies. It is a serious error that PP persists in the impersonal neopythagoreanism quantification of statistical lives and overlooks the biographical history of the people (Cohen, Daniels, & Eyal, 2015; Schelling, 1968). The statistics of large numbers, i.e., *big data*, create categories of individuals and classify people, but do not understand them. In this sense, PP manifests excessive pride in the use of psychometrics, and the quantification of happiness. However, two issues must be considered. Firstly, despite the obsession with the reliability and validity of the instruments, there are multiple problems of everyday existence that are not psychometric issues but practical life situations. Secondly, the overuse of quantitative aspects in the search for an impossible existential objectivity may generate a pathology of quantification.

MYTHS ABOUT THE NEED FOR PP TO ENHANCE HAPPINESS AND PROMOTE SOCIAL CHANGE

Myth: PP is ideologically neutral and favours social change

PP has never been ideologically neutral, nor has it favoured social change. The consumption of information

about positive emotions favours a sentimental and therapeutic culture. Thus, a political ideology of the positive and self-help books is marketed, deceptively, favouring a utopian and impossible struggle for self-realisation. It is the ideology of the consumer society of the positive. An emotional capitalism that establishes disciplines and knowledge to rule lives, emotions, hopes and expectations of well-being. An enormously lucrative business.

Thus, PP does not necessarily favour social change. Rather, it is a tool of the psychological culture of the capitalism of positivity to promote individualism, the prevailing conservative ideology, and the happy entertainment of the upper classes. It defends, following Foucault (2004/2009), a biopolitics of positivity which establishes regimes of truth for a policy of positive health. Therefore a neoliberal discourse about happiness has been constructed, which turns PP into a control instrument of the psychological processes of happiness (Binkley, 2014).

Therefore, PP acts as a discipline of power and politics of truth that promotes a technology that instructs people in what they have to do to be happy. In reality, they end up imposing control and enforcement procedures in order to be happy in a certain way. The society of happiness and well-being indexes aims to provide citizens with pleasant care in a cultural climate that infantilises them, and makes them become dependent and docile. Thus, PP becomes a political weapon of psychological and ideological control, which does not provide liberating or emancipating empirical knowledge.

Myth: A theory and practice of PP that is universally uniform to all cultures is feasible

Culture is an inter-subjective representation of a number of values, ideologies, lifestyles and beliefs that establish a project of being-in-the-world. By simply being born into a culture or socio-material context of existence, the human being necessarily has a worldview. For any person, the world is their mental representation, socially constructed. Consequently, the concepts of happiness, subjective well-being and positive emotion are relative. Each culture sets up a single mode of thought in action and coping strategies that make a universal PP impossible. PP is culturally conditioned. What may be perceived in one cultural system as happiness, in another, may not be. One can even talk in some non-western cultural contexts, of a certain "aversion to happiness", as understood in the cultures of the advanced capitalist countries (Joshano & Weijers, 2014). Therefore, a PP is imposed, that should



adopt a multiplicity of cultural perspectives; which implies a relativistic approach to the theory and practice of PP. It cannot and should not impose cultural imperialism through the supposed science of happiness. A PP that seeks nonexistent universal laws of happiness, becomes a theoretical injustice, a practical impossibility, a betrayal of the epistemology of virtue, and a lack of professional honesty.

Myth: PP postulates a positive mental health that is highly healthy

PP is not always healthy. Moreover, there is a serious risk that its theory and practice result in a factory of psychological distress. On the one hand, positive psychologists do not promote, primarily, lifestyles oriented to *positive mental health*. In fact, they propose the classical model of deficit or vulnerability. It is in their interests that the person experiences an existential dissatisfaction, and problematises their daily subjective well-being. This state of existential anxiety places the person in the optimal conditions to consume the false positivity that is being offered. Therefore, before emphasising the positive, the fundamental issue for PP lies in the dramatising and problematising the negative aspects of the process of living. Thus, it behaves like the other type of psychology to which it attempts to offer an alternative, what is known as *negative psychology* (hereinafter NP); that is, it restores a mindset of creating psychological deficits in people, and establishing new pathologies of reason and social aspects. PP supposedly provides magic solutions to this anthropological, psychological and sociological fatalism. However, positive emotions existed prior to its discourse; the useful aspects of existential adversities and positive emotions have been known about since ancient times.

On the other hand, PP offers false hopes and, perhaps, many times, generates more disillusionment than happiness. The obsession with positive emotions, as well as the tyranny of satisfactory self-realisation, may be transformed into something pathological. When the irrational need to be happy becomes an epidemic, PP creates more social problems than it solves, to the point that one could speak of a pathology caused by PP. One example is the well-being syndrome (Cederström & Spicer, 2015), which materialises in the obsession with feeling good permanently.

Myth: PP is necessary for psychology professionals

For PP it seems that psychologists, before the emergence of the positivity discourse, were historically misinformed,

misguided professionals and sadists who revelled in the problems of human beings. However, psychology has always been positive, as it has always tried to solve problems. Health professionals have constantly focused on helping to alleviate human suffering positively. The quality of life and well-being of people can be enhanced without knowing a thing about PP. For over a century, psychologists have worked on many occasions with great success without the explicit philosophy of PP. The only thing necessary is to know the history of psychology, to have a comprehensive knowledge of human beings and their life context, and to carry out psychology work ethically and appropriately. Over the years, health professionals have not been so heartless that they thought that humans only present problems. In short, PP is not a new paradigm or a new social movement, nor is it a genuine psychological theory. Therefore, it is psychologically dispensable when one has an optimal historical training, an open mind to the past, a comprehensive reading of classical wisdom, and a good dose of common sense.

Myth: PP is essential to enhance social happiness

PP is not intrinsically necessary in order for citizens to be happier. The question of happiness, individual and social, is as old as ideology, literature, religion, social medicine, cultural anthropology and, of course, psychology. In fact, the whole history of political ideologies, religions, philosophical systems, and world views is a product of humanity in order to be individually and collectively happier. It doesn't matter whether we speak of PP, or a political ideology of happiness, pedagogy of happiness, or ethics of happiness. What PP promises has been done historically by other disciplines. The recent problem of happiness is an ideologically constructed social invention (Frawley, 2015).

Moreover, when positivity experts reveal what citizens must do to be happy, all too often they pervert the psychological knowledge about positivity. Positive psychologists seem to have a hidden wisdom or some kind of miraculous elixir, apparently essential for human happiness. However, this way of thinking makes PP a psychological frustration and social disillusionment. Therefore, PP may be irrelevant, if not harmful, to the happiness of individuals, groups and communities.

FUTURE PROSPECTS: BEYOND PP

Considering all of the above, it seems appropriate to question what to do with PP. Although it is highly complex to glimpse into its future, there will certainly continue to



appear new literature on the philosophy, anthropology and sociology of happiness. In fact, it is observed that currently research in many different disciplines has turned towards happiness. The only relevant issue seems to be to talk about happiness, well-being and self-help. If PP focuses on the story of positive emotions, its future is assured, but more should not be expected from a psychological and scientific perspective. For this reason, next we will refer to a number of minor issues on the one hand, in order to try to build a PP that uses and disseminates a precise, clear and useful research-action discourse; and on the other hand, the issues are necessary in order to consider a critical future for PP.

First, it seems appropriate to conceive the future of critical PP based on the search for a solution of compromise which gives up preconceived and unchanging interpretive principles, and adopts a constructive attitude. Without finding a common space of dialogue, a sensible and responsible PP is impossible, and it must not promise what it cannot achieve. Greater integration is required in the discourse of general psychology, and fragmentations between NP and PP should be avoided.

Second, one must take into account the history of concepts or *begriffsgeschichte* (Koselleck, 2004), which implies a historical analysis of the concepts, words and discourse used by PP. In this sense, PP describes and interprets history taking ancient or classical concepts into consideration, as if they maintained the same meaning today. However, each concept used in the discourse of PP (e.g., justice, happiness, etc.) has a multiplicity of meanings that gradually adapt to the changing reality. Consequently, the science of historical semantics helps us to keep in mind the history of the concepts used in the discourse of PP.

Third, it is becoming more complex to identify the specific goal of psychology in general, and PP, in particular. So PP needs to be more precise, less ambiguous, and it must give up trying to cover everything. The possession of the magic potion of happiness cannot be attributed to PP, and it must admit that there is no single truth. Positive psychologists cannot and should not impose, in an imperialist way, a dogmatic and universal truth. There are many truths in psychology, and innumerable truths in PP.

Fourth, it should adopt the "principle of parsimony" (Popper 1935/1985, p.136). Self-evident hypotheses abound and there is too much circularity (*ad exemplum*, subjective well-being correlates with perceived happiness). The aim is to avoid complicating things when

they can be simple. Therefore, the rational use of the theory and practice of PP should be encouraged, and understandable, simple and useful explanations should be sought; and, in turn, it should be attempted to avoid the unnecessary plurality of concepts and conclusions that, not infrequently, are mere platitudes and deceptive manoeuvres in the pseudoscience of happiness. The explanations of PP ooze romantic scientism, i.e., unreachable dreams for a simple scientific explanation of complex phenomena (Brown, Sokal, & Friedman, 2014). Additionally, the excessive specialisation of PP language should be controlled. Actually, it is an experimental pseudo-philosophy of positive emotions. If this specialisation is unchecked, PP will become a body of knowledge, on the one hand, to enter the fraudulent business of self-help; and, on the other, to be confused with a new age philosophy of happiness.

Fifth, there is the matter of learning from what is known. It is necessary to expand the training of future psychologists in the history of the philosophy, anthropology and sociology of happiness. Thus, it could be shown that the texts of the struggle of human beings to be happy, historically speaking, have nothing to do with what is known as PP. From an in-depth reading of the Greek and Roman classics, intellectual humility and psychological relativism are acquired. Furthermore, the field of knowledge should be expanded with divergent readings. Always reading the same things is harmful to the intellectual health of the researcher and practitioner. PP has kept itself to itself too much, and persists in repeating content. Cronbach (1975) was right when he argued that psychologists would be better prepared if they read "more broadly about history, ethnology and the centuries of humanist writings on man and society" (p.125).

Sixth, the knowledge of two exciting fields of research must be incorporated and integrated. On the one hand, that extracted from the study of centenarians (Bishop, Martin, MacDonald, & Poon, 2010; Friedman, 2011; Vaillant, 2011; Whitbourne, 2010). And, on the other hand, consideration of the results of longitudinal work on invulnerability and resilience (Block, 1971; Elder, 1999; Masten, 2014; Werner & Smith, 2001). This would help to promote the development of positive emotions and quality of life.

Seventh, it is essential to consider the person as a whole, as it was done hundreds and hundreds of years ago, (Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2014); to be aware of the social, cultural and economic conditions of each culture; and to adopt a relativistic approach in the theoretical



discourse and professional practice. PP should not make pathologies out of normality, nor should it problematise everyday emotions in the process of living, or engender false hopes that result in higher levels of suffering and disappointment. In this sense, the best that all psychologists, positive and negative or however they want to be called, can do, is to return to the old statement of Hippocrates (1989), about the ultimate goal of all help, in this case psychological, which would be to “help or at least cause no harm” (I, 2nd constitution, 11).

Eighth, PP should attach greater importance to the following three aspects. Firstly, there are the risk factors that produce social pain, such as class struggle, social injustice, and the inequality of social power (Borsook & MacDonald, 2013) and social status (Cheng, Tracy & Anderson, 2014). Secondly, we highlight the sociological and anthropological research on post-material values, democratisation processes, individual capacity for freedom of choice, sense of personal fulfilment, personal flourishing, life satisfaction, empowerment, interpersonal trust, and individual autonomy (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013; Welzel & Inglehart, 2010). And thirdly, we should enhance the role of nature, the natural environment, as restorative resources to build health and quality of life in general, and positive mental health, in particular (Beute & de Kort, 2014; Blatt, 2014; Stokols, Perez Lejano & Hipp, 2013; Van de Vliert, 2013). Therefore, we must move beyond the current situation of PP. There are more strengths than are established by the evaluation of positive mental health.

Finally, in ninth place, one must keep in mind that what PP does could be done by the psychology of the *good life* (Bishop, 2015), *passion* (Vallerand, 2015), *moral personality* (Kristjánsson, 2013), *psychological capital* (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015), *the science of personality* and *the art of well-being* (Little, 2014), or even what has been called *experimental philosophy* (Lombrozo, Knobe & Nichols, 2014) of happiness and well-being. There is nothing in PP that cannot be done by another discipline that is already available (e.g., cultural anthropology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, etc.).

CONCLUSIONS

The supposed theoretical and practical success of PP is relatively disappointing. Its theoretical discourse lacks originality, and the research findings do not have enough empirical foundation. Thus, the affective narratology of PP is a repetitive knowledge, full of common sense and unwritten philosophy from popular proverbs. In addition, PP claims but does not achieve scientific thoroughness,

experimental rigour, and an ethical and ideologically neutral interpretation of the data. PP is not more original, and will not increase its empirical foundation, by publishing more of the same.

It is not clear that PP has been especially useful for academic psychology, and the confused social role of the psychologist. The theory and practice of PP have been tried, but the available evidence yields scientific and psychological results of little success. It is true that it provides an attractive language, one could say, a linguistic happiness, but almost nothing else. Its tenets end up being part of the fragmented psychological knowledge, like those of humanistic, phenomenological and existential psychology.

Possibly, this situation is nothing more than an example of the current disorientation of psychology itself in general. The aim of psychology is changing, liquid, and fluctuating depending on the interests of each historical moment. Psychologists would be mistaken if they let themselves be captivated uncritically by an insubstantial PP, full of tricks to deceive people; i.e., misleading manoeuvres and pseudoscience. PP without constructive criticism becomes a dead psychology, without hope and a producer of theoretical and empirical disenchantment. If this is not fighting for the good name of psychology, the real problem is within the defenders of the orthodoxy of positivity. Unfortunately, it does not seem productive to persist in the debate, when there is no will for consensus or agreement. However, denying the criticism or neglecting it generates the propitious environment for widespread scepticism about the theoretical and practical use of PP, and consequently, it is the best incentive in order to end up considering it unnecessary and dispensable.

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