

The background of the entire cover is a dense, repeating pattern of watercolor-style leaves. The leaves are in various colors including shades of blue, green, brown, purple, and pink, and are arranged in a way that creates a lush, textured effect.

Positive Psychology IN PRACTICE

PROMOTING HUMAN FLOURISHING IN WORK,
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY
STEPHEN JOSEPH

Praise for *Positive Psychology in Practice*, Second Edition

"When the first edition of *Positive Psychology in Practice* arrived in 2004, it was an early and authoritative reference for an emerging science and its application. Now, a decade later, we are graced with a second edition. Here, you will find updated chapters and all new content. This book provides a deep dive into current trends in research and practice for anyone interested in positive psychology."

—Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener, author of *The Upside of Your Dark Side* and *The Courage Quotient* and Professor at Portland State University

"One of psychology's best books just got better. Experts, evidence, applications—exactly what you need to make positive psychology work in practice, and work well. A definite resource addition to my own library and practice."

—George Burns, Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the Cairnmillar Institute in Australia and author of *101 Healing Stories* and *Happiness, Healing, Enhancement*

"For each of the past 10 years, I have assigned *Positive Psychology in Practice* as required reading for my course on positive interventions in the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program at the University of Pennsylvania. I am delighted to see this second edition, which expands the content in exciting new directions and brings the chapters up to date. My students and I are grateful to Stephen Joseph and the many chapter authors for this valuable contribution to the field."

—James O. Pawelski, Director of Education and Senior Scholar, Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania

"This book is a critical companion for anyone who works for the betterment of others, be they an educator, a consultant, a coach, a health professional of some kind, or an applied researcher. Stephen Joseph set out to assemble a volume of wide-ranging appeal and he has delivered precisely that. It expands wonderfully on the first edition, capturing much of what has transpired in the field over the past decade. My first edition copy will finally get a well-deserved rest!"

—Dr. Gordon Spence, Program Director, Master of Business Coaching, Sydney Business School, University of Wollongong, Australia

"This is an excellent book that provides an up-to-date, accessible, and comprehensive overview of the best positive psychology interventions that are currently available. It reflects a deep understanding of positive psychology, as it not only gives an accurate account of the field's growing complexities but also addresses the movement's roots within the history of psychology."

—Carmelo Vázquez, Complutense University,
Madrid, Spain, and President of the
International Positive Psychology Association

"*Positive Psychology in Practice, 2e* is a milestone in the annals of texts detailing the intricacies of positive psychological inquiry. Its stress on the social implications of positive psychology, for example, makes it not only relevant to public policy but also to the kind of society, and indeed world, we wish to foster. Furthermore, its coverage of humanistic and existential perspectives on positive psychological practice will be greatly welcomed in those areas of our profession that have been skeptical of conventional positive psychological emphases on the 'good life' with relatively less emphasis on the 'full' or 'vital' life. These existential and humanistic dimensions add notably to our deepening knowledge of such areas as resilience, posttraumatic growth, and qualitative/subjective experiences of what it means to flourish. In short, I highly recommend *Positive Psychology in Practice, 2e* as a rigorous and humanizing exploration of the vital life."

—Kirk Schneider, PhD, adjunct faculty member at Saybrook University
and Teachers College, Columbia University,
and author of *Existential-Humanistic Therapy*,
The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology, and *The Polarized Mind*

Positive Psychology in Practice

Promoting Human Flourishing
in Work, Health, Education,
and Everyday Life

Second Edition

Edited by

Stephen Joseph

WILEY

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*In memory of Christopher Peterson (1950–2012),
who reminded us that “Other People Matter”*

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Preface

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY HAS captured the interest and imagination of scholars and led to a new vision for what psychology has to offer as both an academic and a professional discipline. This has promoted a growing interest among practitioners about real-world applications.

The first edition of this book provided a comprehensive resource to which practitioners and academics with applied interests could turn. Ten years on from the first edition, positive psychology has matured, developed a solid evidence base, and is now better equipped to put its vision into practice. This new expanded edition builds on the previous edition. Like the first edition, it focuses on the actual and potential interventions and applications that have been developed from research within positive psychology. It provides a compendium of scientific evidence that supports the application of positive psychology, proposes new theoretical frameworks that will guide the advance of positive psychology research, and engages with applied psychologists and other practitioners and policy specialists in showing how positive psychology can contribute to health, happiness, and human flourishing.

The importance of this book is that it shows us how to move from the theoretical to put the vision into practice. In addition to considerations of how positive psychology can help individuals, this edition considers in more depth the application of positive psychology to institutions and policy. It raises questions about the sort of society we want to live in and it does not shy from the realities of life and its inevitable hardships and misfortunes. It is a vision for individuals, communities, and societies to function at their most optimal.

This volume is a necessary addition to any positive psychology collection, containing as it does the most up-to-date and cutting-edge scholarly work from leading experts. Throughout the book, there is information, guidance, and suggestions that practitioners can take away and put into practice. The authors review the state of research on each topic, discuss how it has been applied in practice, and consider new ideas for how and where it might be applied and what future research should be undertaken, always keeping in mind that the intended audience is professional psychologists who will be most interested in how to use the research findings in their professional practice.

In this edition, I say goodbye to Alex Linley, who coedited the first edition but whose commitments prevented him from being part of this edition. My best wishes to Alex in his new endeavors. I also say goodbye to some authors who were unable to contribute this time, and particularly with sadness note the death of Chris Peterson, one of the founders of positive psychology. His contributions to positive psychology were immense: He developed the character strengths and virtues perspective at the heart of positive psychology and emphasized the importance of human relationships with his phrase “other people matter.” His influence can be seen throughout the chapters of this book.

I also welcome new authors. When I began selecting new chapters for this edition, I wanted it to remain fresh and challenging and provide the best of positive psychology. This edition contains new chapters from scholars and practitioners at the cutting edge of the most vibrant areas of positive psychology today, such as eudaimonia, assessment and policy, and in areas of application such as coaching, occupational psychology, and self-help. At the same time, I also wanted to surprise readers with the unexpected and include applications of positive psychology to novel areas such as social work, social planning, rehabilitation, and recovery, and I wanted to make greater space for consideration of how positive psychology addresses the dark side of life, its historical and philosophical roots, and dialogue with humanistic psychology.

As with the previous edition, in establishing the aims of the volume, I was faced with the daunting task of providing state-of-the-art research evidence that underpinned practical recommendations for professional psychologists while at the same time defining the parameters for future academic research. The result is a volume that bridges the theory, research, and applications of positive psychology. The book draws on cutting-edge scientific research that is leading the development of positive psychology. Contributors are all experts in their fields who have been selected on the basis of their empirical, theoretical, and applied contributions to psychological knowledge. They have been invited to review the state-of-the-art empirical evidence with regard to the application of positive psychology and to discuss their own experiences of using positive psychology in their practice. Further, the contributors were invited to consider what new research is required to enable professional psychologists to use positive psychology within applied work.

Positive psychology has its origins in the United States, but its popularity has spread internationally to capture the interest of psychologists elsewhere; for this reason, authors are drawn not only from the United States but also from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The main aim of this second edition is to provide an overview of the current state of the art in applied positive psychology and to look to its future development. At the beginning of the positive psychology movement, a critical question was how positive psychology could be applied in real-world settings. The 2004 edition of this volume was the first to specialize in the applications of positive psychology. It was a landmark that helped to create the subsequent interest in the field and its applications. It is my hope that this second edition will similarly serve as a landmark work to stimulate future developments in research and theory, and that it will fuel continued interest in applied positive psychology. Specifically, my hope is that this edition will reach out not only to those who already identify as positive psychologists, but also to a new and wider audience of scholars and practitioners yet to discover how the ideas and research of positive psychology may transform their ways of working.

As such, the subtitle, *Promoting Human Flourishing in Work, Health, Education, and Everyday Life*, was chosen to make explicit the relevance of this volume to the wider professional audience of leaders, health-care professionals, and educators. I wanted the title to prompt new readers who are less familiar with positive psychology to understand that positive psychology is not a happiology urging us to smile in the face of adversity and to ignore the real problems that confront us all. It is a serious scholarly pursuit to understand the causes and consequences of optimal functioning and their application to real-world issues. Positive psychology can help us manage and succeed in the workplace, deliver better and more compassionate health care, and provide effective and engaging education in ways that optimize achievement, well-being, and the development of community.

Other professionals who are not psychologists will find much that can inform their practice within the domains of business, management, counseling, psychotherapy, economics, the criminal justice system, medical settings, social work, and social and public policy. Positive psychology is not only concerned with one-to-one interventions but is also relevant for individuals, groups, organizations, and societies. This book is an invitation to become part of the future of positive psychology and to help put it into practice.

Chapters are arranged thematically, beginning with an excursion into the history and philosophy of positive psychology, moving through applications in work, health, education, and everyday life, and finally, the directions for the future of positive psychology. But readers will find that there are consistent themes throughout the volume that cut across disciplinary divides; where this is apparent, I have made cross-cutting references to help readers see how the chapters interrelate. I trust that readers will explore the book in ways that best suit them, whether it is moving through it chapter to chapter or jumping from topic to topic as their interest motivates them. Readers new to positive psychology may find my introduction chapter provides a useful summary and map of the book, and they may proceed from there in whichever way they prefer. In this edition, I have also asked all authors to conclude their chapters with a short list of summary points so that readers can see at a glance the practical implications.

This book stands for me as an assertion of the human capacity for growth. It is my hope that academics, practitioners, and students find the learning and wisdom in this book to be of value.

STEPHEN JOSEPH
April, 2014

Acknowledgments

EDITING THIS BOOK has been a pleasure, in no small part due to my editor Rachel Livsey at John Wiley & Sons and her enthusiasm for the second edition; editorial assistant Amanda Orenstein and senior editorial assistant Melinda Noack for their help and guidance throughout; and the staff at Cape Cod Compositors for making the production process run so smoothly. Thanks also to Kate Hefferon for her advice and to George Burns and Robert Biswas-Diener for their helpful suggestions at the outset. Most of all my thanks to the authors themselves for taking the time to share their expertise and experience and be part of this volume. Finally, my thanks to Barry Joseph and Rosemary McCluskey for their support.

CHAPTER 1

Applied Positive Psychology 10 Years On

STEPHEN JOSEPH

THE FIRST EDITION of this handbook was published in 2004. The title of the introduction chapter was “Applied Positive Psychology: A New Perspective for Professional Practice.” In that chapter, the authors argued for the need for applied positive psychology. It had only been a few years since positive psychology had first come to widespread attention following Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000) special issue of the *American Psychologist*. Positive psychology was still a fledgling discipline and scholars were beginning to coalesce around this exciting new idea. Applications of positive psychology were in their infancy.

A decade later, positive psychology is no longer new. The ideas of positive psychology have now firmly taken root within professional psychological practice. In the intervening years, there have been applications in the contexts of work, health, organizations, counseling, and coaching, as well as in professional disciplines outside psychology such as sociology, social work, education, and public policy. There seems little need 10 years on to argue the case for positive psychology. The notion that psychology had focused too much on the alleviation of problems with scant attention to what goes right in life is no longer controversial. It is now widely accepted that it is of equal value to attend to what makes life worth living as it is to what goes wrong, and it is important to look for ways to help people lead lives in which they are happier, have a sense of meaning and purpose, and come closer to fulfilling their potential. These are the aims of positive psychology, which broadly expressed can be said to be “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104).

Since 2004, research output in positive psychology has continued apace, not only in the dedicated journals of positive psychology, well-being, and happiness, but also in the wider literature. Research with a positive psychology emphasis is now regularly published in the journals of social, personality, and clinical psychology, as well as in the flagship journals of the leading professional associations. Many new books have appeared in the intervening years, including major scholarly volumes (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; David, Boniwell, & Conley-Ayers, 2012; Lopez & Snyder, 2011), an encyclopedia (Lopez, 2009), and introductory level

textbooks (e.g., Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; Peterson, 2006), which demonstrate the breadth of the topic and its appeal.

It is beyond doubt that positive psychology deserves to be a major force in contemporary psychology. Across the globe, there are now dedicated courses in positive psychology as part of the undergraduate curriculum and postgraduate-level courses specializing in positive psychology, and since 2004 a new generation of scholars with doctorates in positive psychology has emerged. Many more scholars and practitioners now identify themselves with positive psychology.

Positive psychology provides a common identity for all scholars and practitioners interested in human flourishing and well-being. Some may identify themselves primarily as positive psychologists, particularly those who have graduated from the new courses over the past decade or gained doctorates in positive psychology topics. For others, positive psychology may be a secondary identity because they view themselves first and foremost as clinical, counseling, developmental, educational, forensic, health, management, occupational, personality, or social psychologists. They may be academics or practitioners, but all share the same concern in what makes for a good life, but in a way that now encompasses the idea that we ought to be interested not only in the alleviation of problems but also the promotion of optimal functioning. For some, positive psychology has been a new way of thinking altogether. For others, it has provided a way to understand and give voice to what it was they always aspired to achieve.

Positive psychology has also attracted interest from the general public eager to find out what the science can contribute to their lives. In the bookstores, positive psychology is well-represented by a number of books written for the general public (e.g., Froh & Bono, 2014; Joseph, 2011; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2011). Unlike many of the traditional areas of psychology, positive psychology has clear and direct applications to everyday life. As human beings, we are motivated to fulfil our potential, function at optimal levels, and achieve a pleasurable and meaningful life. Positive psychology is concerned with how best to support these aspirations in us in ways that are both good for us and those around us.

THE CONTENT OF THIS VOLUME

Any volume such as this inevitably reflects the interests and biases of its editor. I have endeavored to provide coverage of the range of activity in positive psychology and to maintain the book's cutting-edge appeal. I was also interested in strengthening the historical, theoretical, and philosophical perspectives. There is a famous quote from Kurt Lewin: "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169). To me this quote sums up the essential ingredient of good practice. No matter what one's practice specialty, whether it is in coaching, counseling, clinical, or health psychology, the most important thing is to understand how what you do relates to and emerges from theory. There is much that is directly practical in this volume, but it is also a book that is rich in ideas. In this respect, one of the key developments over the past 10 years has been the shift in emphasis from hedonistic well-being to eudaimonic well-being.

The importance of this development of interest in eudaimonia is twofold. First, it has widened the scope of positive psychology so that it is no longer as concerned with happiness in the traditional sense of joy and pleasure but also with the existential concerns of meaning and purpose. This has given positive psychology greater depth and provided a counterbalance to those critics who saw it as little more than happiology. Second, it has allowed positive psychology to build bridges

toward humanistic psychology. Initially, positive psychology distanced itself from humanistic psychology. But as positive psychologists have shifted toward a greater appreciation of the eudaimonic perspective, it has become clearer that there is much to be valued in the earlier writings of the humanistic psychologists. As will be clear in this volume, the two disciplines have come closer together, and many of the ideas in humanistic psychology have now become part of the scope of positive psychology. Positive psychologists did not invent the study of well-being. It is now acknowledged that the pioneers of humanistic psychology, such as Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1963), also offered perspectives that were positive psychologies. It is useful to see the links between disciplines and for their forces to combine in creating a better understanding of what makes for a good life. Positive psychology must recognize that its topics of interest date back to humanistic psychology and even beyond to the origins of psychology itself. This has led to deeper philosophical considerations and a more thoughtful and sophisticated approach to what it means to promote human flourishing.

In Part I (Historical and Philosophical Foundations), Hilde Nafstad (Chapter 2) deals with a number of antecedent developments in the history of psychology and science that have informed the development and epistemology of today's positive psychology. Specifically, Nafstad discusses the Aristotelian philosophical position that has attracted increasing attention over the past decade. It is important to understand that practice is always rooted philosophically. Despite a contentious early relationship, the past 10 years have seen much rapprochement between positive psychology and humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology has long recognized the importance of one's philosophical position. As such, a new chapter from Brent Robbins (Chapter 3) is included that continues this theme of understanding our history, the Aristotelian tradition, and further builds bridges between humanistic and positive psychology. Roger Bretherton deepens this line of enquiry even further in Chapter 4 with an exploration of how positive psychology can learn from existential thinking with its focus on the person's inherent strengths and capacities. Finally, concluding this section is another new chapter by Shifra Sagy, Monica Eriksson, and Orna Braun-Lewensohn (Chapter 5) on Antonovsky's concept of salutogenesis. Most positive psychologists will have heard the term *salutogenesis*, but this is a concept that deserves to be more widely understood than it is, particularly the profound notion that entropy is the natural state of being human.

In Part II (Values and Choices in Pursuit of the Good Life), Tim Kasser (Chapter 6) examines the question of our pursuit of "the good life or the goods life"—that is, psychological satisfaction or material success and its implications for personal and social well-being. Lilach Sagiv, Sonia Roccas, and Shani Oppenheim-Weller (Chapter 7) consider three value pathways to fulfillment, looking specifically at the roles of healthy values, valued goal attainment, and the congruence between our own values and the values supported by our environment. Barry Schwartz (Chapter 8) addresses the paradox of choice, that is, how it can be that more choice is actually bad for us, and suggests ways in which we can act to counter this maladaptive influence. This theme is reflected by Kirk Warren Brown and Richard Ryan (Chapter 9) who discuss developments in self-determination theory and how adopting an attitude of mindfulness can facilitate autonomous thought and behavior that serves to foster more fully informed decisions and intrinsic values and goals with attendant positive psychological outcomes. As already mentioned, one of the key developments in the past 10 years has been the increased attention to Aristotelian philosophy and rapprochement with humanistic psychology. Veronika Huta (Chapter 10) concludes this section

with a new discussion of eudaimonic and hedonic pursuits. Huta shows how these ideas are now being taken forward conceptually and empirically, and how specific activities and practices can bring more eudaimonia and hedonia into a person's life.

In Part III (Practices for Health and Well-Being), Kristin Layous, Kennon Sheldon, and Sonja Lyubomirsky (Chapter 11) discuss strategies for achieving sustained gains in happiness and well-being, noting that intentional activities may hold the key to this elusive pursuit. The role of physical activity in promoting both physical and psychological health is discussed by Guy Faulkner, Kate Hefferon, and Nanette Mutrie (Chapter 12), who show that relatively simple and available physical activity strategies can convey substantial benefits for well-being. Ilona Boniwell and Philip Zimbardo (Chapter 13) explore how the way in which we relate to the temporal aspects of our lives influences our choices, intentions, and behaviors, and discuss what we can do to try to achieve a more optimal balanced time perspective. The lesson is that if we choose to, we can do things to facilitate our well-being. Concluding this section are two new chapters by Acacia Parks (Chapter 14) on self-help and Margarita Tarragona (Chapter 15) on life coaching, showing how the ideas of positive psychology can be put into practice in everyday life.

In Part IV (Methods and Processes of Teaching and Learning), Amy Fineburg and Andrew Monk (Chapter 16) show the value of introducing positive psychology to students and the different ways this can be achieved. Alina Reznitskaya and Ian Wilkinson (Chapter 17) build on their chapter in the previous volume with an overview of the dialogical approach to education. Recognizing that education is one of the most important and flourishing areas of application, a new chapter from Chieko Kibe and Ilona Boniwell (Chapter 18) discusses positive education in primary and secondary schools. Finally, concluding this section, Reed Larson and Nickki Dawes (Chapter 19) describe their work in documenting what practices in adult leaders are effective in youth development programs and facilitating motivation of young people.

Part V (Positive Psychology at Work) opens with a new chapter by Sarah Lewis (Chapter 20) on the relationship between organizational psychology and positive psychology. Heather Clarke, Kara Arnold, and Catherine Connelly (Chapter 21) show how transformational leadership can positively affect all levels of an organization, from its employees and culture through to its leaders themselves. The culture and functions of positive and creative organizations are discussed by Jane Henry (Chapter 22), who describes how positive working practices can be fostered from the top down. Carol Kauffman, Stephen Joseph, and Anne Scoular (Chapter 23) review executive coaching through the lens of positive psychology and note the many possibilities for further research in this area.

In Part VI (Health, Clinical, Counseling, and Rehabilitation), John Salsman and Judith Moskowitz (Chapter 24) elaborate on the integration of positive psychology and health psychology, showing how health psychologists have often worked in ways typical of positive psychological practice. James Maddux and Shane Lopez (Chapter 25) critique the dominance of the *DSM* diagnostic system within clinical psychology and provide recommendations for the development and practice of a positive clinical psychology. In a new chapter, Andreas Vossler, Edith Steffen, and Stephen Joseph (Chapter 26) continue this theme within the domain of counseling, showing how counseling psychology can benefit from the theorizing and applications of positive psychology. Finally, concluding this section with another new chapter, Claudio Peter, Szilvia Geyh, Dawn Ehde, Rachel Müller, and Mark Jensen (Chapter 27) consider rehabilitation psychology from the positive psychology perspective.

In Part VII (Contexts of Clinical Practice), Chiara Ruini and Giovanni Fava (Chapter 28) update their review of well-being therapy, a psychotherapeutic approach that aims to facilitate sustainable increases in psychological well-being that go beyond the more traditional focus on just the treatment of presenting psychopathology. Jeana Magyar-Moe and Shane Lopez (Chapter 29) examine the role of hope as an agent of positive change and focus on how hope might be facilitated within the consulting room and beyond. Dealing with the aftermath of trauma and adversity from a positive, growth-oriented perspective is the focus of Richard Tedeschi, Lawrence Calhoun, and Jessica Groleau's chapter (Chapter 30) on posttraumatic growth. Concluding this section is a new chapter by Tayyab Rashid (Chapter 31) on strength-based assessment. Importantly, Rashid opens up discussion on how we can understand distress and dysfunction as the opposite or absence of the positive.

In Part VIII (Inner Resources and Positive Development Across the Life Span), David Caruso, Peter Salovey, Marc Brackett, and John Mayer (Chapter 32) update their review of their work on emotional intelligence and its role in relationships, working environments, education, human resources, and executive coaching. Giacomo Bono, Mikki Krakauer, and Jeffrey Froh (Chapter 33) survey the role of gratitude in practice, demonstrating how it is a character strength reliably related to positive psychological outcomes and good lives in both adults and young people. Ute Kunzmann and Stefanie Thomas (Chapter 34) describe their work on the emotional-motivational side of wisdom. Concluding this section, George Vaillant (Chapter 35) moves the focus toward the end of life with his analysis of what constitutes and facilitates positive aging—factors that are pertinent and applicable throughout the life span.

In Part IX (Building Community Through Integration and Regeneration), Antonella Delle Fave, Andrea Fianco, and Raffaella Sartori (Chapter 36) look at the role of optimal experiences in adjusting to and living with disability and the role of caregivers, demonstrating that to be disabled in no way represents the end of opportunities for optimal living. Clare-Ann Fortune, Tony Ward, and Ruth Mann (Chapter 37) address positive treatment approaches with sex offenders, conveying how interventions that respect them as individuals lead to improved treatment compliance and lower recidivism. Frank Fincham (Chapter 38) explores the role of forgiveness at group and community levels, offering a range of ways in which forgiveness can be facilitated to promote group and community healing and integration. Two new chapters end this section on how positive psychology is relevant to professional practices in the community; the first by Rachel Dekel and Orit Taubman-Ben-Ari (Chapter 39) on social work, and the second by Sandra Resnick and Meaghan Leddy (Chapter 40) on the recovery movement.

In Part X (Public Policy and Systems for Resilience and Social Planning), David Myers (Chapter 41) explores the tension between individualism and community in facilitating good human connections and the attendant implications for public policy. Ruut Veenhoven (Chapter 42) outlines and debunks the objections to the greatest happiness principle, showing that greater happiness for people is a legitimate and achievable public policy aim. In a new chapter, Neil Thin (Chapter 43) discusses social planning. Finally, Tuppert Yates, Fanita Tyrell, and Ann Masten (Chapter 44) explore the role of resilience theory in the practice of positive psychology and the need for a systems-based approach.

Finally, in Part XI (Signposts for the Practice of Positive Psychology), two new chapters introduce signposts for the future. Kate Hefferon (Chapter 45) discusses the need for positive psychology to pay much greater attention to the fact of our

embodiment as human beings. Brian Pauwels (Chapter 46) discusses what is meant by the term *positive* in positive psychology and its relation with the negative. Finally, Stephen Joseph (Chapter 47) concludes the volume by reviewing some of the key issues and implications facing applied positive psychology.

The sections of the book organize the chapters in a coherent way and provide structure, but there are also consistent themes throughout the book that cut across the sections and contexts of application. Practitioners of all persuasions will find riches in the sections on values and choices and on lifestyle practices.

This volume promises to be a valuable resource in the further development and evolution of applied positive psychology and in bringing it to the attention of new scholars and practitioners. In doing so, it is my hope that we will move closer to the vision that one day all psychologists will embrace the idea of positive psychology. Finally, it has been my great pleasure to work with these authors in the development of this volume, and I hope you will enjoy reading it and will learn as much as I have learned in its preparation.

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PART I

HISTORICAL AND
PHILOSOPHICAL
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 2

Historical, Philosophical, and Epistemological Perspectives

HILDE EILEEN NAFSTAD

THE PURPOSE OF RESEARCH, the renowned experimental social psychologist McGuire (2004) argued in one of his influential articles on epistemology, is to discover “which are the crucial perspectives,” not whether one hypothesis or theory is true or false, as “all hypotheses and theories are true, as all are false, *depending on the perspective* from which they are viewed” (p. 173; italics added). For a long time, mainstream psychology has neglected and down-prioritized discussions of paradigms—paradigms that stake out perspectives and development of theories within the different fields of research and practice. Neither has mainstream psychology been spending much effort on the important issue of how and to what extent the a priori assumptions and values in psychological research and theory are interwoven with prevailing and predominant values and ideologies in the culture and society at large. Condor (1997) critically maintained that contemporary psychology in fact too often considered its positions as “indisputable universally true facts” (p. 136). Not to discuss horizons and perspectives is a detrimental state, in particular in our time when scientific psychological knowledge for many people in various cultures constitutes a considerable part of their meaning structure of what it implies to be a human being (Miller, 1999; Nafstad, 2002, 2005; Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2005). Critical reflection over psychology’s a priori assumptions, positions, values, norms, and perspectives should constitute a highly prioritized area within research. Slife and Williams (1997) expressed the necessity or value of such analyses: “The essence of the discussion would be a careful clarification of the issues involved, along with an evaluation of outcomes and consequences, pragmatic as well as rational and moral” (p. 121).

Positive psychology started as a protest against some of the predominant taken-for-granted assumptions in mainstream psychology. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) critically maintained that contemporary psychology gives priority to a conception of human beings that to too great a degree is based on pathology, faults, and dysfunctions—that is, a medically oriented psychology. Other horizons than those that focus on lacks, dysfunctions, and crises have been given little possibility to direct and form contemporary (clinical) research and practice. The ideology of illness

is thus a priori given priority within today's psychology. Positive psychology's aim is to be an important corrective, and it demands of predominant mainstream psychology not to continue to marginalize or exclude, but bring in again and revitalize the positive aspects of human nature: *Positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and civic virtues* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Rather than taking the medically oriented model as given, the human being should, as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) maintain, be conceptualized and understood as a being with inherent potentials for developing positive character traits or virtues.

Seligman (2002a) formulated what became the basic assumptions of positive psychology:

- That there is a human "nature."
- That action proceeds from character.
- That character comes in two forms, both equally fundamental—bad character and good virtuous (*angelic*) character. (p. 125)

Seligman (2002a), moreover, asserted the following about the current status of these assumptions in mainstream psychology:

Because all of these assumptions have almost disappeared from the psychology of the 20th century, the story of their rise and fall is the backdrop for my renewing the notion of good character as a core assumption of positive psychology. (p. 125)

Positive psychology thus aimed at renewing the perspective of the human being. Seligman (2002a) also argued positive psychology's perspective by claiming that "Any science that does not use character as a basic idea (or at least explain character and choice away successfully) will never be accepted as a useful account of human behavior" (p. 128).

Formally launched in the millennium issue of *American Psychologist* (edited by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) the movement of positive psychology offered and encouraged necessary discussions and analyses of assumptions and perspectives taken for granted within mainstream psychology. As Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (2011) a decade later in retrospect formulated this protest against assumptions, there were discussions of what "should be done to redress the imbalance between negative and positive perspectives in psychology" (p. 5). However, these discussions were most probably not undertaken only as a potential enrichment for psychology in general. To develop positive psychology as a scientific field, it was a mandatory task to systematically discover which are the crucial perspectives for positive psychology, that is, which are the perspectives and theories that cannot be neglected or dismissed in shaping and forming this new field of psychology.

In our chapter in the original edition of *Positive Psychology in Practice* (Jørgensen & Nafstad, 2004), we reflected on historical, philosophical, and epistemological roots of this new movement. In the present chapter, I draw upon this analysis because the major historical roots for positive psychology are evidently still the same. However, for almost 15 years now, positive psychology has moved on and constitutes a vital, active, powerful, and influential field of research within psychology. Therefore, this chapter also considers aspects of positive psychology in this new phase, often contrasting positive and mainstream psychology to more clearly illuminate the foundations, horizons, and values of positive psychology.

THE AGENDA OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Multiple paradigms and multiple theories within each of the paradigms give positive psychology an array of horizons and assumptions from which to protest. At the Akumal 1 meeting in January 1999, a manifesto for positive psychology was formulated. Here it was stated that “Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal functioning. It aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive” (Sheldon, Fredrickson, Rathumnde, Csikszentmihalyi, & Haidt, 1999, p. 1). The manifesto, moreover, stated that positive psychology “must consider optimal functioning at multiple levels, including biological, experiential, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global” (Sheldon et al., 1999, p. 1).

The first *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Seligman, 2002b) gives a more comprehensive definition:

We have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future-mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much of the task of prevention in this new century will be *to create a science of human strength* whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people. (p. 5; italics added)

Furthermore, Seligman (2002b) underlines, “We now need to call for massive research on human strength and virtue” (p. 5). And he concludes, “We need to do the appropriate longitudinal studies and experiments to understand how these strengths grow (or are stunted; Vaillant, 2000). We need to develop and test interventions to build these strengths” (Seligman, 2002b, p. 5). That positive psychology was launched as a protest against some of the predominant taken-for-granted assumptions in mainstream psychology is clearly reflected in the introductory sentence in Seligman’s (2002b) article, where he points out:

Psychology after World War II became a clinical psychology largely devoted to healing. It concentrated on repairing damage using a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive attention to pathology neglected the idea of a fulfilled individual and a thriving community, and it neglected the possibility that building strength is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of therapy. (p. 3)

Maddux (2002) corroborated this corrective protest when he pointed out that mainstream psychology was not aware of how “powerful sociocultural, political, professional, and economic forces built the illness ideology and the *DSM* and continue to sustain them” (p. 15; see also Maddux & Lopez, Chapter 25, this volume). With this approach and research agenda of optimal functioning and human strengths and virtues, positive psychology placed itself clearly within an Aristotelian approach to human development (Jørgensen & Nafstad, 2004). To understand the science and movement of positive psychology, therefore, I will also start this time by looking through Aristotle’s model of human nature and development. As Waterman (2013a) concludes on the basis of his analysis of positive psychology’s and humanistic psychology’s respective philosophical foundations, Aristotle is the philosopher “most consistently cited in the writings of positive psychologists” (p. 126; see also Robbins, Chapter 3, this volume).

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ARISTOTELIAN FOUNDATION

The most fundamental assumption about human nature and functioning from the Aristotelian perspective is the teleological idea that human life and human well-being consist in nature-fulfillment and the human being as inwardly driven by a dynamic of ever more optimal functioning. Within the Aristotelian model, with its four causal factors (*causa materialis*, *causa formalis*, *causa efficiens*, and *causa finalis*), *growth* or *change* becomes the fundamental dimension of the object or phenomenon. The human being is thus understood as a being constantly driven forward by a dynamic principle toward what is better or more perfect. In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (trans. 2000) clarifies his optimal functioning or perfectionism concept: “Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and decision, seems to seek some good; that is why some people were right to describe the good as what everything seeks” (Morgan, 2001, p. 195). Thus the Aristotelian frame of understanding represents a perspective of a core human nature in which change toward something good, better, or more perfect comprises the fundamental aspect. The good is what everything strives toward. The individual is hence a being who will introduce positive goals and values and strive to realize and reach them. The Aristotelian model then takes into account teleological goals: the individual as a being that lives a life in which thoughts and ideas about future positive goals—not only present and past—also influence the direction of actions here and now.

The Aristotelian model introduces a distinction between the individual’s *possibilities* or *potentials* on the one hand, and the individual’s *factual* characteristics or *realization* of these potentials on the other hand. In fact, Aristotle’s entire metaphysics and psychology are elaborated “from a developmental perspective in which the concepts of potentiality and actuality are fundamental” (Bernstein, 1986, p. 2). The individual is, moreover, according to Aristotle, a being who is characterized by experiencing joy when exercising his or her inherent or acquired abilities and is striving toward realizing them in ways that are experienced as better, more complex, or more perfect. As the philosopher Rawls (1976) states about this strongly positive motivational dynamic principle of human beings that Aristotle formulated, “The Aristotelian Principle runs as follows: other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater the complexity” (p. 426). The Aristotelian model then holds that we will be happy when fulfilling our destiny as good humans and it is the *process* of exercising itself that is central to the experience of enjoyment. Furthermore, Aristotle’s idea is that one should habituate people to realization of their positive virtues in more perfect or complex ways, with the purpose that moral goodness becomes almost instinctive.

Positive psychology is clearly inspired by the Aristotelian model of human nature: To grow, improve, and function optimally is for positive psychology a fundamental or core concept. Positive psychology also strongly draws on the concept of exercise and practice. As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) adopt and reformulate this Aristotelian view on joy and exercise:

Enjoyment, on the other hand, refers to the good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis—when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were—in an athletic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation. Enjoyment, rather than pleasure, is what leads to personal growth and long-term happiness. (p. 12)