

Person-Oriented Conception of Happiness and Some Personality Theories: Comparative Analysis

SAGE Open
January-March 2014: 1–7
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DOI: 10.1177/2158244013518926
sgo.sagepub.com


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Abstract

Person-oriented conception of happiness (POCH) worked out by the author of the article is based on the ideas of systemic approach. The model also serves as valuable personality theory integrating essential elements of the conceptions of Z. Freud, C. Jung, A. Maslow, C. Rogers, and some other scientists. We show how to solve some problems of modern psychology within POCH, and outline perspectives of further investigations. For the first time in world psychology, such concepts as “Egoism” and “Personal Uniqueness” are represented as multilevel systems. Their productive interaction at the higher levels helps a person achieve full-fledged, happy life.

Keywords

happiness, eudaimonia, self, systemic approach, egoism, personal uniqueness, self-realization

Z. Freud and C. Jung: Together and Apart

Every psychologist knows the story of Z. Freud–C. Jung partnership which later grew into severe rivalry. As a result there appeared two different personality theories. In its classical form, psychoanalysis underlines the primary unconscious drives (Id) that have biological origin and possess much common features between the humans and other living creatures (Freud, 1991). Jungian theory meanwhile lays special emphasis on the concept of Self as the unconscious center of man’s psyche and his “inner treasure.” The process of individuation which is usually undertaken in the second part of person’s life helps Ego to get in touch with Self and achieve self-realization (Jung, 2009).

The concept of Ego, the center of person’s conscious life exists in both theories but has different origin. In Freud’s conception, “human” and “rational” Ego is developing from “animal” Id, while in Jung’s model Ego separates from Self which is rather an “ideal,” the best part of an individual.

The ideas of individuation and self-realization were productively utilized in humanistic theories of A. Maslow (2002, 2009) and C. Rogers (2001) with its stress on the importance of personal potential and self-actualization. R. Assagioli’s (2008) psychosynthesis model dealing with a person’s “inner center” has certain common features with that of Jung. Meanwhile, the psychoanalytic theory has also given birth to several Ego-conceptions as well as to Transactional Analysis (Berne, 2008) where the positions of “Child,” “Adult,” and “Parent” partially correspond to Freudian Id, Ego, and Superego.

Our contemplation on the above-mentioned theories has gradually brought us to the conclusion about the possibility of their integration into one big systemic paradigm, where the former “rivals” could become “brothers in arms” again (a good *humanistic* gesture, is it not?). Our model was first designed to synthesize eudaimonic and hedonistic traditions in happiness studies (Levit, 2009b; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2011d), but later we have uncovered much broader possibilities of person-oriented conception of happiness (POCH) within the psychology of personality. It sounds rather strange but our comprehension of POCH and its theoretical power is still continuing. So we share some preliminary results of our work that deal with *theoretical* aspects of POCH model. Our original directivity toward the psychology of happiness will help a reader to understand the necessity of the next chapter, which explains one important basis of POCH construction.

Happiness, Self-Actualization, and Egoism

The introduction of our model needs some preliminary explanation pertaining to the mutual correspondence of the terms *egoism*, *happiness*, and *self-actualization*.

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First of all it should be mentioned that “The majority view . . . among biologists and psychologists, is that we are, at heart, purely egoistic . . .” (Batson et al., 2001, p. 486). According to R. Dawkins, egoism is “inscribed” into our genes, as it provides strategies for survival and fitness of an individual (Dawkins, 1993). So egoism is not just a “psychological trait,” but has deeper roots being a strong biological power. The concept of universal egoism is represented in the following reviews (Mansbridge, 1990; Wallach & Wallach, 1983).

Throughout the human history person’s pleasure and happiness were associated with egoism in its more or less rational forms (Rational egoism theory, 1996). Even Aristotle (1997) considered that a virtuous man should first love and respect oneself. The ideas of Epicure, which gained strong popularity in the times of the Renaissance, emphasized the role of individual pleasures and enjoyment. Lorenzo Valla’s medieval treatise “About Delight” was a fine example of hedonism and egoism unification and consolidation (Rudzite, 2006).

According to M. Stirner, pleasure was always the subject of severe rivalry. That’s why egoism was also needed to get round other competitors and be the first (Stirner, 2001). Egoism was also compared with the snake’s skin, which was necessary for a person’s *protection* from external disturbances on his way to self-realization: “The absence of egoism does not allow a person to resist external pressure (primarily the egoism of other people), which hampers the development of her inner potential” (Ilyin, 1994, p. 305).

The concept of *rational* egoism (REG) as the principal means for individual achievements was proclaimed by the French philosophers of the Enlightenment as well as the English Utilitarians. It was affirmed for example that if an egoistic person strived for his own goals and did not violate other people’s rights, he would be useful for them as well.

In A. Rand’s writings, an individual should attain happiness with his or her own abilities (Rand, 2011). There are two principal components in this process—the person’s mind and designation. Rand underlines the virtue of selfishness as the main means of self-realization. The person actualizes potentials through the productive activity, and the latter is attributed to the sphere of her “own” interests by REG.

According to modern theories of ethical egoism, every man has predominant obligation toward himself and happiness. His reason helps make the right choice on a journey to his own achievements. As J. Robinson in his essay “Egoism” puts it, “According to your sympathy, you will take pleasure in your own happiness or in the happiness of other people; but it is always your happiness you seek” (Robinson, 2005, p. 1).

People, who score high in egoism, are usually more successful and optimistic (Muzdybaev, 2000), while the feelings of optimism and being successful are in their turn associated with happiness. The correlation between egoism and optimism clearly shows the protective power of the former on a person’s productive activity. And vice versa: an *unhappy*

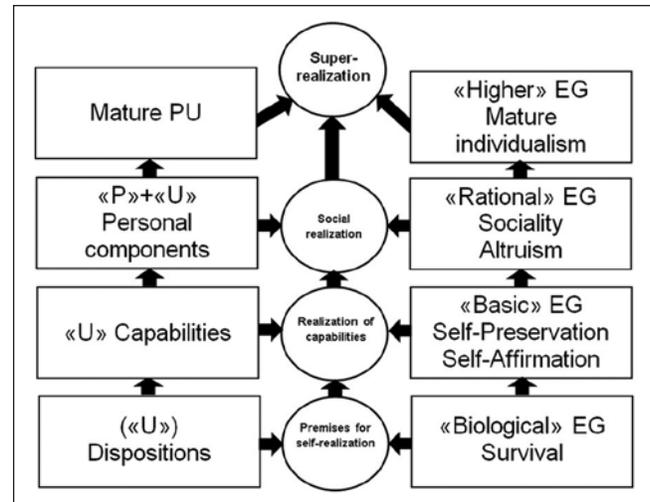


Figure 1. POCH.

Note. POCH = person-oriented conception of happiness; PU = Personal Uniqueness; EG = Egoism; P = personal components; U = Uniqueness.

personality is usually described as lacking any egoism and optimism (Dzhidaryan, 2000). But we confess that an overall attitude toward the “egoism” and “individualism” concepts in Soviet and post-Soviet science was and still remains quite negative, moralizing, and one-sided—withstanding numerous explorations in Western philosophy and psychology, as well as the above-mentioned results. The author still cannot publish a single article dealing with the theme of egoism in Belarusian journals.

We argue, that personal egoism cannot and should not be avoided but people can select between different forms of egoism—“materialistic” and more “rational” one, which helps correlate individual interests with those of other people as well as to get higher human pleasures (Levit, 2009b). Moreover, the driving motivational force of the “higher” egoism (see Figure 1), its intellectual functions as well as the protective power may and should have beneficial application in a person’s self-actualization. The very term *self-actualization* implicates the activity directed at oneself. Therefore, it seemed reasonable for us to apply the concept of egoism as a multilevel system in consequent discourse and modeling.

POCH: Introduction and Explanation

In the years 2006 to 2012, the author elaborated a synthesizing conception, which is based on the ideas of systemic approach and combines biological, psychological, social, and spiritual (the highest) level of individual life and activity. The results of our 6-year work on the problem are summarized in six monographs (Levit, 2009a; 2010; 2011a; 2011d; 2012a; 2013a) and articles (2012b, 2012c, 2012e; 2012f; Levit, Radchikova, 2012a; 2012b; 2013b; 2013c).

Our POCH belongs to eudaimonic group of theories, which deal with person’s realization of his or her own potential. It represents the interaction of two systems—“Personal

Uniqueness” (PU) and “Egoism” (EG). The original design of the new theory was based on the necessity to discriminate the concepts belonging to substantial issues of self-realization (e.g., the Ancient Greek concept of daimon, the Jungian Self, the Inner Self of C. Rogers, the inner potential) and its more dynamic functional forces (the Maslowian self-actualization, Freud’s sublimation, etc.).

Moving bottom-up, let us briefly describe the main components of POCH. Each system consists of four levels. Both systems develop from one level to the higher one, thus changing the interaction of horizontally corresponding levels.

First let us briefly describe the Personal Uniqueness axis (the left one). PU is somewhat analogous to daimon in its classical meaning or personal potential in humanistic comprehension. Personal Uniqueness represents synthesis of individual gifts and potentials (“U”) with the personal components (“P”) that facilitate its application in “appropriate” activity (assurance, persistence, etc.).

At its first biological level it is represented by the letter “U” (Uniqueness), which implicates a kind of natural gift, the inherited disposition of individual. At the next, second level which is usually associated with person’s youth, the disposition gradually changes into abilities and begin to actualize. At that very period, a young man usually has some difficulties due to the shortage of his personal maturity and responsibility. The situation is being corrected at the third stage, when the person acquires motivational components of self-regulation (“P”) which help overcome the obstacles *inside* specific activity and persistently move toward the attainment of personal goals. At the final fourth stage (if it comes), we can see the mature Personal Uniqueness. Its realization provides all the eudaimonic effects, which will be discussed later.

Now let us describe the “Egoism” (EG) system. The biological (“body”) level of our model (EG-1) is represented by the concept of Health, which we understand primarily as the absence of essential body problems in the course of psychological self-realization. The necessity of its inclusion is determined by the importance of biological, genetic premises of man’s egoism.

As for the concept of Basic Egoism (EG-2), the inborn property which is common to humans and other living creatures, we place it at Level 2. EG-2 is responsible for self-protection and survival of species, for satisfying two basic instincts—food and sex—that bring to a man fundamental pleasures.

Moving further up along L2, EG-2 gradually transforms into REG, that includes intellectual, regulatory, and (if necessary) reflexive components. Until being reoriented toward PU actualization REG is responsible for higher human pleasures and activity at the social level.

Finally, the fourth level is associated with higher forms of egoism (individualism), when a person, having surmounted the three previous stages, makes the deliberate decision to

devote her life to unique self-realization. Here, we can see the overcoming of the lower, Basic Egoism with its pleasure principle and the serious reorientation of REG on the third level. While REG organizes the social environment for an individual, his Higher Egoism of Level 4 creates the best conditions for the PU actualization.

Thus, we argue that cohesive interaction of EG-4 and PU-4 brings self-realization and complete human life. “Egoism” system at its higher levels is the best partner for “Personal Uniqueness” system as it accomplishes protective, intellectual, and motivating functions in the process of her actualization, being on the outside of the PU activity.

Introducing our new conception, we take into account that positive psychology will hardly feel itself very convenient (at least at first) with such negatively loaded term as *egoism*. So let us remind that REG radically distinguishes from EG and even overcomes it in the process of self-actualization. Can inborn egoism’s negotiation and submission be called truly egoistic? Not likely.

At present, we cannot give an exhaustive explanation of how EG-3 reorients into EG-4 (from “higher” pleasures to PU actualization). Still, some analogies can be mentioned. Esoteric literature gives examples, when a person transcends the borders of everyday life after spiritual crisis. According to Maslow (2009), a man moves to self-actualization when his basic and higher needs are satisfied—usually in the second half of his life. The same regularity is mentioned in Jung’s (2009) writings. For Kierkegaard (2007) despair was the main means of transition to Self-choice; for us—the PU reinforcing signals, “heard” by EG.

Just in that area there appear motivation premises of eudaimonic life. The “Egoism” system comes in contact with the mature “Personal Uniqueness” system, the result of which is a new substance, which we call “Super-realization.” Maslowian peak experience, the flow states of M. Csikszentmihalyi, Jungian individuation, contemporary and ancient theories of eudaimonia as well as some forms of person’s unusual spiritual experience take place in it. The function of “Higher” Egoism still consists in its protective and motivation properties, which help an individual strive for peak level and transcend his limits.

POCH: Comparative Analysis

And now let us turn to the psychology of personality. The comparison of our model with some famous theories of the 20th century (the conceptions of Z. Freud, E. Berne, C. Jung, A. Maslow, C. Rogers, and R. Assagioli, partially G. Allport and E. Erikson) uncovered integrative character of POCH. Our model combines the energy of the Freudian unconscious drives (EG-2), intellectual capabilities of an Adult in the transactional analysis (Berne, 2008), self-actualization and self-fulfillment tendencies in the humanistic approaches of A. Maslow (2002, 2009) and C. Rogers (2001), inner “center” (somewhat analogous to PU) and the movement toward

it in R. Assagioli's (2008) psychosynthesis theory, principles of individuation and movement toward Self in the Jungian (2009) conception. One can also see the proximity of EG-4 to G. Allport's proprium in the function of "positive, creative, developing source of human nature" (Allport, 1998), while PU successful actualization—to Eriksonian feeling of identity (Erikson, 2006).

A closer look at the second and third levels of our conception makes evident its partial isomorphism to the Freudian theory of personality. Indeed, EG-2 can be treated as a certain counterpart of Id with its primary drives and the reigning pleasure principle (Freud, 1991). REG development from EG-2 is analogous to that of Ego from Id. However, in the Freud's personality theory, there is no notion concerning "personal potentials" of a man. Psychoanalysis interprets any creative activity as a result of sublimation defensive mechanism (Freud, 1991), while the attempts at explaining person's inborn talent are not even undertaken.

That is why the use of PU concept and its meaningful fulfillment by individual brings our model closer to humanistic and existentially oriented theories. It is interesting to point out that the very eudaimonic orientation on a person's self-realization does make it possible to keep his EG-2 (Id in the psychoanalytic understanding) under control. EG-3 in this case acts as a mediator between inner and outer world, thus reducing their mutual antagonism.

There is one important distinction between POCH and the Jungian theory of personality. According to Jung, the deeply hidden Self (PU in our framework) gives birth to conscious Ego (the concept is a bit similar to REG in POCH) which separates from his "mother." In the process of person's living his Ego gets far from Self at the same time preserving the initial bond with it (Samuels, Shorter, & Plaut, 2009). Thus, Jungian Ego is *homogeneous* to Self. In this case, the process of individuation implies the reverse movement of Ego to Self as well as strengthening of the latter. We think, as far as Ego is Self's "scion" it must not be very difficult for him to go this back way. But if the process of individuation is so homogeneous and "natural," then why does it occur so rarely among people?

The structure of POCH, possessing *heteronomy* between PU and REG at Level 2 (first of all due to their different parentage) can better explain the empirical facts. REG originates from "animal" EG (like Freudian Ego develops from Id), but not from "ideal" PU. Still Personal Uniqueness does exist as higher possibility, as a "golden figurine" inside a man (Norton, 1976), but its disclosure demands reorientation and subsequent hard work from REG; first of all—turning away from pleasure seeking toward PU actualization.

That is why POCH, admitting the existence of the "ideal" PU, is not as pessimistic about human nature as the psychoanalytic theory. At the same time, our model does not predict an easy and natural way toward PU actualization that may seem possible from Jungian writings—mainly because of the radical distinction in origin between Egoism and Personal

Uniqueness. Therefore, an actualization of our "inner treasure" is not predetermined; it becomes rather hypothetical, a question of conscious choice and hard work for a person who hears the reinforcing call of her PU and feels her own vocation.

Consequently, POCH occupies the intermediate position between the two psychological "monsters"—the theories of Z. Freud and C. Jung. Most likely, we have found the lacking link that can symbolically connect the former two rivals again.

A person with a strong and developed EG-4 can overcome dangers of the environment in the process of PU realization. Within such an approach, we also get the opportunity to deal successfully with one important problem in humanistic psychology. A. Maslow and C. Rogers explained small percentage (less than one) of self-actualizing people due to unfriendly conditions of the environment (Maslow, 2009; Rogers, 2001). At the same time both of them believed that every person had her inborn potential.

POCH application based on PU–EG dualism enables us to outline some ways of solving this problem. For example, a person with a strongly developed sense of Personal Uniqueness (and even giftedness or talent) not always possesses a proper mechanism (REG and Higher EG) of its realization in the outer world, thus becoming non-actualized talent. Or an individual may hold neither REG nor PU, but can have strong EG and move further toward unlimited satisfying of his materialistic needs and getting new hedonic pleasures.

Furthermore, if we investigate Carl Rogers' process of psychotherapy within the framework of POCH, we can give alternative explanation to its beneficial effects. Therapist's efforts at the initial stages of work with a client, connected with the unconditional understanding and acceptance of the latter, can be interpreted as the Higher EG activity, the function of which the therapist fulfills by himself. Such efforts help gradually strengthen the client's PU at the first stage of its development. If the therapy is effective, there comes the time for the second stage—PU entering the external world—first, into the space of interaction between the therapist and the client. Such space is broadening by degrees, while the client's PU is getting more and more solid.

In modern theories, the PU–EG connection easily incorporates most of the components concerning eudaimonic living and self-fulfillment: autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2006; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999); competence (Ryan and Deci), and mastery (Ryff and Singer); life purpose (Ryff and Singer) and self-concordant goals (Sheldon and Elliot); and personal growth and self-acceptance (Ryff and Singer). Every personal trait, mentioned above, can be included either into EG system (e.g., autonomy, life purpose, self-acceptance, etc.) or into PU system. If a trait is demonstrated inside the person's specific activity, it should be related with PU; if outside—with EG.

“Relatedness” (Ryan and Deci) and “positive relatedness” (Ryff and Singer), the rest eudaimonic components, belong to social Level 3 within POCH framework.

It goes without saying that POCH does not contradict to Waterman’s conception of eudaimonic activity (Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008) with only one addition: in our opinion, the concepts of “personal expressiveness” (PE) and “self-realization” can hardly give the full coverage of eudaimonic way of living. That is why they are supplemented with the terms *engagement*, *self-development*, and *self-improvement* of a person in our Experience Sampling Methods (ESM) research (Levit, 2011d; Levit, Radchikova, 2012a). Of course, we do not intend to encroach on the above-mentioned theories, which have proved their validity; we simply show some concomitant opportunities the new systemic paradigm offers.

Furthermore, we would also like to dwell on a very important theme, which we want to discuss with the help of POCH ideas—the flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). We understand the flow as unimpeded PU actualization (almost without EG system) in appropriate activity. That is why one can fully concentrate on the process and use his psychic energy in the most harmonious pattern.

In explanatory purposes let us add “some POCH” into the flow and describe the dynamics. When a person is inside the flow without anything hampering his PU, he acts in the most effective way. Imagine that after some time there appears a minor irritator that can to some extent distract the actor’s attention. For example, some strangers appear near the rock during the climber’s training. They watch his performance and loudly talk about it. To keep his activity at the proper level and under control, the climber’s REG comes into play. Most probably, the sense of flow will diminish to some extent. The noisier are the visitors, the bigger REG is, and the smaller the flow is. If the audience begins to behave aggressively (like throwing stones at the climber) his flow and PU disappear, while intelligent EG-3 is replaced by more brutal EG-2.

What is more, the protective function that the “EG” system implements toward the “PU” system during its actualization in the outer world helps to withstand the “hostile-world scenario” (Shmotkin, 2005).

Within the present theoretical article, we can cover only a small part of the problems we are interested in. So let us show the possible solution of only one puzzle that exists in modern psychology—“the egoist’s dilemma,” which deals with a balance between personal egoism and social good (Myers, 2009). The problem in general is reduced to the following: There is a village and a common meadow nearby. The peasants have cows that feed on the meadow. For his own benefit, each peasant wishes to have as many cows as possible, but in this case all the grass on the meadow will be eaten soon and the cows will starve to death.

With the help of POCH, this problem can be easily solved. If every peasant knows his PU (that is unique for each person) then only few of them (if any) may wish to deal with cows, because the majority will prefer to actualize themselves in

other, more suitable activities. And the peasants, whose PU lies in the sphere of agriculture, will easily figure out the optimal herd (Levit, 2011d). That is it—the modern solution of “the egoist’s dilemma” by means of the Higher Egoism! Not only for peasants, but for their cows as well.

The use of our model can be highly productive in the upbringing of gifted children. We help *uncover* their Personal Uniqueness, while we can *form* the Higher Egoism components for their future life and activity (Bratchenko & Mironova, 1997). In this case, the contradiction between conditional (for EG formation) and unconditional (for PU uncovering) positive approaches is resolved.

Conclusion

In the sphere of fundamental psychology, POCH has integrative character toward some personality theories of the 20th century and at the same time can serve as the possible systemic prototype for the future theoretical and experimental investigations. POCH in our opinion is a fine example of the integrative approach, the intermarriage of different perspectives around the concepts of self-actualization and complete human life.

The given article is confined purely to the theoretical aspects of our paradigm. Therefore, let us briefly enumerate the practical techniques applied in our daily work, which can be in full represented in our next papers:

- “ELU” Inquiry, the modification of “ZULUREG” Inquiry designed to diagnose POCH components and their relationship (Levit, 2011c; 2012e).
- Eudaimonic Training (the author’s workshop) which gives the opportunity to explore one’s Personal Uniqueness and move toward individual self-actualization (Levit, 2011d).
- Experience Sampling Methods techniques that are used to estimate the main components of happiness between the testees who have achieved the highest scores on the PU scale of ZULUREG and ELU Inquiries (Levit, 2012c; Levit, Radchikova, 2012b).
- A new kind of psychotherapy (Personal Uniqueness Therapy) based on person’s knowing his own Personal Uniqueness—his “inner treasure” that is always with him (Levit, 2012d; 2013c).

In our opinion, the represented conception uncovers new horizons of learning the highest manifestations of individual in the context of full-fledged life.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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