An Inclusive Existential Positive Psychology: A Commentary

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“Is it possible that we may have gotten it wrong when it comes to how to achieve happiness and wellbeing?” The first sentence of the article by Wong (2021) hits home. As a positive psychologist, I have been wondering if positive psychology is the ultimate way to direct us to happiness. Other scientist also questioned the tenet of positive psychology because of its exclusive focus on the positive side of human living. Research already concluded that pursuing happiness can lead to unhappy people (Gruber et al., 2011; Kim & Maglio, 2018). Thus, can dr. Wong answer his own question?

By merging positive psychology and existential psychology, the focus turns away from the exclusively positive side of life and includes the inevitable times of adversity and suffering all people will go through during their lifespan. Although the synthesis between existential and positive psychology is an interesting approach to the ultimate attainment of human mature happiness (Wong & Bowers, 2018), there is a part of Wong's idea of existential positive psychology that bothers me. While he turns away from the exclusively positive in life, he includes an exclusive focus on the Christian religion and God.

To make sure that all people can be included in the research of existential positive psychology, it is important to reframe the focus on the Christian religion that is now part of existential positive psychology to a more general spiritual focus. I do think that all people have some level of spirituality (Jans-Beken, 2021) and this should be included in this new

approach to human thriving. However, it should not matter if people feel connected with a god or multiple gods, with nature, with the cosmos, or any other transcendental idea. A spiritual dimension is about harmony with the universe and seeks answers about the infinite when people face emotional stress, physical or mental illness, or death. By only focusing on the Christian God, many people will feel excluded from this important new approach to human life and suffering.

Dr. Paul T.P. Wong's existential positive psychology, presented in the article, can be the answer to the important question at the beginning of the article. Its target is human thriving and mature happiness despite the suffering and frailty of humankind. When reframing the Christian God into a more general spiritual dimension, existential positive psychology will be inclusive to all people across the world and it will facilitate cross-cultural research into human flourishing in a threatening world.

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