POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY:
THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY?

Julio Alfonso Piña López
Programa de Salud Institucional [Program of Institutional Health]. Universidad de Sonora, México

Positive psychology is not a science of psychology, because it lacks a specific subject matter as well as conceptual categories that theoretically represent it. Even more, it is not built on the foundations of a theory that would make it possible to translate scientific knowledge into technological knowledge, applicable to social problems in which the psychological dimension is relevant. We conclude that positive psychology is more than just a "good fashion" or "sympathetic magic"; it is, in essence, an unwarranted and fruitless attempt to give life to a new and very different psychology. In short, it is a conspicuous example of the illogic of logic.
Key words: Positive psychology, Science, Conceptual categories, Technological theory, Psychological dimension.

La psicología positiva no es una ciencia de la psicología, pues carece de un objeto de estudio propio y específico, así como de las categorías conceptuales con que se le represente teóricamente. Por consiguiente, carece de una teoría tecnológica que haga posible traducir el conocimiento científico en conocimiento aplicable a los problemas sociales en los que la dimensión psicológica es pertinente. Se concluye que la psicología positiva es algo más que una "buena moda" o una "magia simpática"; constituye, en esencia, un intento injustificado e infructuoso por dar vida propia a una nueva y distinta psicología; en suma, es un ejemplo conspicuo de la sinrazón de la razón.
Palabras clave: Psicología positiva, Ciencia, Categorías conceptuales, Teoría tecnológica, Dimensión psicológica.

Aspiring to construct and subsequently consolidate psychology as a scientific enterprise requires full compliance with various tasks (Kantor, 1963), for the purposes pursued here we will mention the three most notable ones, namely:

1. The clear and precise definition of the subject matter.
2. Having a coherent body of concepts and categories that represent it.
3. Having a method — procedures and techniques — that contributes to prove the theory, matching what is said theoretically and conceptually with the empirical evidence generated in the form of data.

The definition of the subject matter, both the material and the formal, i.e., what we are interested in and what we intend to do to address it, respectively (Roca, 2013), is only the first step on the long and winding road that we must travel in the process of the construction of psychology as a discipline of knowledge. Let us suppose, for a moment, that we are interested here in the study of *behavior* (material object) for which it would be necessary to specify which aspects or perspective will be adopted for study (formal object): for Ribes (1995) this would be the *contingency relations*, whereas for Roca (2007) it would be the *associative relationships* between the factors involved in a field of psychology.

It is also essential to be clear about what procedures will be used to select the terms and expressions that are considered relevant to conceptually represent the subject matter and all that is presumed to be psychological, e.g., attention, perceiving, feeling, reasoning, imagining, thinking, remembering, among many others (Kantor, 1924/1926, Kantor & Smith, 1975; Ribes, 2009a). Finally, one must know which method to use, in order to interpret in a theoretical sense the data obtained in the practice of research; hence, as suggested by Hanson (1985), data that are interpreted in the form of facts are always conceptual facts.

It is true that, thanks to the current pluralism in the discipline, which is a consequence of the lack of consensus on the definition of the subject matter, today we can find many and varied psychologies, which are distinguished by their categories and concepts and their methods and logical application of knowledge, and are openly divergent and even incommensurable with each other (Ribes, 2000). What is interesting from the current state of affairs in the discipline, is that when one would expect that the collective efforts of psychologists would be aimed at seeking a kind of consensus or unity, as recently suggested by Ardila (2010), on the contrary, we find approaches that are presumed to give birth to "new" and "different" psychologies, which are promptly credited with scientific character; a conspicuous example is what is known as positive psychology (hereinafter PP).

Three questions arise in relation to this: does it make sense in the current circumstances to consider the existence of a scientific

Correspondence: Julio Alfonso Piña López. *Guillermo Prieto No. 18. Colonia Constitución. Hermosillo, Sonora, C.P. 83150. México. E-mail: ja.pina@yahoo.com.mx*

psychological theory regarding the positive? Or, to paraphrase Turbayne (1974), is it that psychologists have become *unwitting victims* of their own metaphors? Moreover, and returning to Ryle (1967), should it be perhaps considered as a simple theoretical curiosity? Based on these brief considerations and questions, in this paper we aim to analyze PP critically. We trust that our arguments, pointing in a diametrically opposite direction to those put forward by Seligman and colleagues (e.g., Park, Peterson & Sun, 2013; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Parks & Steen, 2004; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005), will allow us to demonstrate why it is untenable to justify that PP is a science of psychology and, consequently, why it is also far from realizing its status as an alternative practical proposal; rather, it is a pragmatic and utilitarian proposal that is strongly rooted in a particular ideological conception, that of the culture and psychology in the United States of America.

PP: BRIEF NOTES ON ITS EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

PP, we are assured, emerged as an alternative to negative psychology. While the first focuses its study, among other things, on experience, optimum performance, skills, abilities and strengths of individuals, the second focuses on psychopathology or the deficits individuals present in their daily actions (Fernández-Ríos, 2008). Taking as its antecedent the model of the individual developed in American culture from the late eighteenth century (Cabanas & Sánchez, 2012), PP officially emerged in the decade of the nineties in the last century (Fernández-Ríos & Novo, 2012). Since it is not our intention here to dwell on the philosophical and religious roots underlying PP, we refer the reader to the reviews by authors that have addressed the issue with much greater range and clarity than we could here (see Fernández-Ríos & Comes, 2009; Pérez-Álvarez, 2012; Prieto-Urzúa, 2006).

It is interesting, however, to analyze the arguments that, according to its promoters and advocates, allow the conclusion that PP is a science of psychology. We begin this journey quoting Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood (2006) who questioned what PP was, where it came from and where it was going. In defining PP, Linley et al. proposed to distinguish between two levels of analysis: one *meta*-theoretical (or *meta*-psychological) and the other pragmatic. The first concerned the importance of restoring the balance between research and practice; the second referred to what positive psychologists did in terms of research and intervention[1]. If, in principle, it is

accepted that there are two levels, additionally it would have to be accepted that the first level would subordinate what is done in everyday practice, that is, when it is intended to prevent problems or improve the performance of individuals. The crux of the issue is that, in a strict sense, the *meta*-theoretical (or *meta*-psychological) is not related to a "scientific profile" of psychology (Roca, n.d.), but with an "applied" one, typical of the pragmatist and utilitarian orientations that were institutionalized in the decade of the seventies, last century, in American psychology (Ibáñez, 2007).

In other words, as we are assured, PP is a *scientific discipline* (Fredrickson, 2003; Seligman, 2002), a basic question that should be asked is this: what makes it distinctive as such, i.e., as scientific discipline of knowledge? If, in defense of PP and in response to the arguments put forward by those who Vázquez (2013) sees as his sworn enemies, when he concludes that *he believes that psychologists have a commitment to psychology as a discipline and as a profession* (sic), the least you would expect of PP would be that it complies with the three points stated at the beginning of this article: 1) The definition of the subject matter; 2) Having a body of categories and concepts to represent it, and 3) Having a method to prove the theory.

With regards to the content of the first point, according to Roca (2013), the historical itinerary of the material in psychology has gone from the mind to the behavior, within which we could also include the unconscious, consciousness and interbehavior, to mention the most representative. Therefore, if it is certain that PP is a discipline for the scientific study of all that is grouped under the heading of the positive, what then is the subject matter, which is distinguishable, and not juxtaposed or reducible to others? In other words, does PP study: the positive mind? The positive unconscious? Positive consciousness? Positive behavior? Positive interbehavior? Or failing that, has a different subject matter been postulated and defined in a timely and clear way? If this is the case, what is it? As a matter of elementary logic, without a material subject matter there is nothing to know, much less is it possible to identify and select the properties that define the process of knowing this object (Ribes, 2000).

What is particularly intriguing, if the reader will take the trouble to carefully review the definitions of PP that are summarized in Table 1, is that there is no material subject matter, defined clearly and in a timely way. We would say in principle that Lazarus (2003) was right when he "suspected" that PP did not necessarily mean the same thing for self-proclaimed positive psychologists. Indeed, we have highlighted in bold what could eventually be considered as "material subject

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[1] Although Vazquez (2006) refers to the work of Linley et al. (2006), concluding that for these authors it was not of interest to discuss whether PP sought to assert itself as a new approach to psychology, it is unequivocally a baseless assertion; it serves to mention that these authors conclude, in the abstract of their paper: *These distinctions in how we understand positive psychology are used to shape future ideas for positive psychology (p.3).*

matter" of PP, some of which also eventually have something to do with psychological phenomena, and others will not; here we have: *a*) subjective experience; *b*) optimal experience and functioning; *c*) positive emotions; *d*) positive personality traits; *e*) well-being and satisfaction; *f*) flow or stream of consciousness; *g*) happiness; *h*) aesthetic sensitivity; *i*) altruism, etc. It seems then that PP is interested in everything that can be described as "positive", whether it is part of individual subjective experience, the cognitive world and even the institutional/social; therefore, if it has a positive adjective, everything fits... if you know how to accommodate it.

What is noteworthy in these definitions is not only the

TABLE 1 THE DEFINITIONS OF PP AS A SCIENCE AND THEIR OBJECTS OF KNOWLEDGE	
Author (s)	**"Definitions" and what are their objects of study?**
Gable and Haidt (2005, p 104):	Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the **flourishing** or **positive functioning** of people, groups and institutions.
Park et al. (2013, p 11.):	Positive Psychology is a new approach to psychology that studies **what makes life worth living** [...] This approach studies the **optimal experience**, i.e. people being and giving the best that they can.
Seligman (2002; p. 3):	The field of positive psychology at the subjective level deals with the <u>positive subjective experience</u>: **well-being** and **satisfaction** (past); **flow**, **enjoyment**, **sensual pleasure** and **happiness** (present); and <u>constructive cognitions about the future</u>-**optimism**, **hope** and **faith**. At the individual level, it deals with positive personality traits, the **ability to love** and **vocation**, **courage**, **interpersonal skill**, **aesthetic sensibility**, **perseverance**, **forgiveness**, **originality** [...] At the group level it deals with the <u>civic virtues</u> and the institutions that move individuals to be better citizens: **responsibility, nurturing, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance,** and **work ethic**.
Seligman et al. (2005, p 410.):	Positive psychology is an umbrella term for the study of **positive emotions**, **positive character traits** and **improving institutions**.
Tarragona (2013; p. 115):	Positive psychology scientifically studies the optimal functioning of people and aims to discover and promote the factors that enable individuals and communities to live fully.

paradoxical lack of definition of what is presumed to be the material under study of PP, but that even among the authors that postulate them, the deep contradictions become apparent. For example, when Park et al. (2013) refer to the *optimal experience*, this is not the same as when Seligman (2002) speaks of the *subjective experience*, or when Tarragona (2013) refers to *optimal functioning*. In the case of experience and functioning, both categories, it should be clarified, mean different things and they are not necessarily related to the psychological. For example, the category of **experience**[2] could be characterized, depending on how the authors relate to it, as: a) *acts of…*; b) *awareness of…; c) results of…*. -in the form of behavior- or, d) *effects of….*, among others (Ribes, 1990). Still with this author, it could be said that both knowledge and every event that happens in the world of the "mental" constitute *acts of experience*, just as behavior is *action of experience*, that is, behavior built on ontogeny. The latter characterization, it is important to mention, is closely related to how the term "experience" is defined in ordinary language: *as teaching that comes with use or practice* (Real Academia de la Lengua Española [Royal Academy of the Spanish Language], 1985).

The interesting thing about all of the above, is that in PP **acts of experience** equate with **mental acts**, assuming that the experience of a person, being **individual**, is **subjective**. However, the key issue lies not only in whether a person's experience is really theirs and subjective, but now we are told that the individual lives in two distinct and parallel worlds. On the one hand, there is the private world, where it is supposed that subjective experience happens and the accumulation of past, present and future **content**[3], as proposed by Seligman himself (2002), which breaks down into: "well-being" and "satisfaction (*past*); "stream of consciousness", "enjoyment", "sensual pleasure" and "happiness" (*present*); "cognitive structures" regarding the future, including "optimism", "hope" and "faith" (*future*). On the other, there is the **public** world, which is represented as the "translation" of that content into the form of **acts** or **behavior** which would include living -pardon the redundancy- a pleasant, committed and meaningful life (Seligman, 2002); all such acts or behaviors would manifest in such things as "smiling and laughing", "blowing kisses everywhere", "hugging all and sundry", "expressing our love and compassion to others" , "telling friends that the future is bright and that we believe in the goodness and generosity of the leaders of the world to make it a better place," "being altruistic because

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[2] Bolded words our own emphasis.

[3] A classification of content that is absurd, because if we understand by experience *acts of behavior as results* or *behavior built on ontogeny*, a basic question that should be asked is: how is it that this will be related to both the current and future content? Unless you invoke a kind of distance causality (in the same way that the developmental stages and what happens in the adult lives of individuals are postulated in psychoanalysis), logically there is no possibility of linking this content. Perhaps most important is that, as discussed below, one ends up wondering which of these "contents", it could be argued, are really "psychological".

we give a few coins to the homeless", "letting our consciousness flow (optimal experience) as water flows in a river. "

Instead, **functioning** optimally involves accomplishing, i.e. doing things as *efficiently* as the person has the behavioral resources to do them (competencies); know what to do and why, under what circumstances and opportunities -and with regards to which people. So if it works in those terms, it is because there are external criteria according to which the person does what he or she is expected to do; functioning optimally would shift the focus from the "object" of *subjective experience, private and very much relating to the individual,*[4] to that of *know-how*, which is *public* and defined based on external criteria. First it works by carrying things out, and from there and based on use or practice there is experience, in the sense of *experimenting*. Thus far, the discourse on PP relative to experience and functioning refers to two different things, very far away from each other.

The picture is further complicated when Seligman and colleagues (Duckworth, Steen & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, 2011) claim that PP also includes the study of what people **choose freely** and of the **institutions** that facilitate the development of **positive experience and positive individual traits**. Considering that to his knowledge and belief it is a science of psychology, the obvious question that should be posed now would be: can choosing be considered as a material subject matter? Choosing, in ordinary language, corresponds to a transitive verb meaning *to elect something, to prefer a person or thing for a reason*, as well as *to appoint or elect someone to office or to a role*. As such, choosing presupposes that a person, being in a particular situation, opts for or elects something or someone. And if they choose "freely" they do so "voluntarily", as a "rational" being, each time that common sense "tells" us that free will is a distinctive quality of human beings and their condition of being rational, in the form of *being able to reason correctly* (Ryle, 1967); due to the relevance of this quote, we cite this author at length:

> For a long time, it has been considered as an indisputable axiom that the mind is in an important sense tripartite, i.e., that there are three kinds of mental processes. We are told, often, that the mind or spirit has three parts; thinking, feeling and will. With great solemnity it is stated sometimes that the functions of the mind or soul have three irreducible modes: The cognitive, the emotional and volitional (*conative*) [...] I hope to refute the idea that there is a "faculty" or intangible body that corresponds to what in theory is considered as "will" and therefore that there are processes or operations that correspond to what is

termed "volition" [...] It has been argued that volitions are special acts or mental operations, by which the mind puts its ideas into practice [...] If some academic shamelessly speaks of "volition" or "acts of will", all that will be necessary is to check that he or she fully supports the dogma that the mind is a secondary field of special causes (Ryle, 1967; pp. 57-58).

From this quote it appears that in general, accepting the theory of both worlds, the private and public, and with it, what Ryle came to call the myth of the ghost in the machine, unmistakably we human beings set in motion a number of cognitive, emotional or volitional operations that allow us to adapt or adjust to the requirements of the environment. However, if for Seligman PP deals with the free choice that people make in everyday life, it is absurd that this, the choice, is conceived as the subject matter. Choosing freely or under pressure, thinking about something or someone or feeling something about something or someone, these do not constitute material "objects" of study with distinctive characteristics and with which compliance is given to particular operations that are different from how a person behaves; in short, when a person chooses, he is behaving; when he thinks, he is behaving; when he feels, he is behaving. Hence, choosing, thinking and feeling are behaviors, of different types, but at the end of the day, they are behaviors. One thing that is clear here is that you cannot *re*-invent or *re*-define the material subject matter in the name of science.

Additionally, the reader will note that, curiously, Seligman and his most conspicuous followers not only make the mistake contained in the final part of the previous paragraph, but ultimately any events or occurrences that are described as positive, are conceived as forming part of the psychological. For example, for Seligman (2002) PP should consider:

1. **Positive subjective experience**[5]: well-being, satisfaction, enjoyment, sensual pleasure and happiness.
2. **Constructive cognitions about the future**: optimism, hope and faith.
3. **Positive personality traits**: the capacity for love and vocation, values, interpersonal skills, sensitivity, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, etc.
4. **Civic virtues**.

Park and Peterson (2009) have communicated in a similar direction. They suggest dividing the field of PP into four areas, which include:

1. **Positive subjective experiences**: happiness, fulfillment and flow (or stream of consciousness).
2. **Positive individual traits**: Talent, character, interests and values.

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[4] This subjective experience would advocate, as Kantor (1963) points out, for an experience that would be reduced to sensations, feelings or consciousness, which are only part of the discourse on the psychological.

[5] Bolded words our own emphasis.

3. **Positive interpersonal relationships**: friendship and marriage.

4. **Positive institutions**: family, school and community.

Also, for Fredrickson (2009) there are at least **ten positive emotions**, which include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, amusement, inspiration, awe and love, etc. Even more, for Hervás (2009), along with three main blocks proposed by Seligman (positive emotions, positive traits and positive organizations), other aspects of human beings should also be included, such as **resilience** or human strengths, and positive qualities such as **courage**, **wisdom** and **altruism**.

In short, when PP was defined in Table 1 and what would apparently be its many material objects of study were specified, a basic question we ask now is: what then does PP study? Is it subjective experience? Is it optimal experience or functioning? Maybe it deals with cognitions or emotions? Which ones, we ask now? Is it the same, according to Seligman, to speak of hope as a cognition, for example, and hope as a particular kind of emotion as Fredrickson holds? In other words, are there some hopes that are cognitive and others that are emotional?[6] Is personality a psychological category that is reduced to traits? Are traits processes, states or results? Even more, can you conceive of personality as a conceptual category which, in people's lives can be reduced to "sensitivity", "forgiveness", "originality", "talents", "interests", etc? Does this mean that there are personalities that are sensitive, forgiving, original, talented, interested, valued, etc.? Are institutions or organizations the object of study in psychology? Is it the case that there are institutions and organizations that can be categorized as positive or negative? Should institutions and organizations be conceived as constituents of the conventional world that relate to the social behavior of people, or failing that, the world of psychology?

We see no need to elaborate on something that should be clear to the reader here: none of the concepts used by positive psychologists is or refers to a material subject matter, such as when we speak of the mind, experience, the unconscious, consciousness, behavior or interbehavior, inter alia. Therefore, if PP has failed to comply with the definition of the material subject matter (point 1 on the first page), with regards to point 2, has it complied with the formulation of a coherent body of its own concepts and categories that represent the material under study? Let us expand the discussion a little on the matter, bearing in mind, as surely the reader will recall, the words and phrases highlighted in bold a few pages back that refer to all that is of interest in PP and summarized as: well-being, satisfaction, enjoyment, pleasure (sensual), happiness, optimism, hope, faith,

ability (to love), values, skills, sensitivity, perseverance, forgiveness, (civic) virtues, stream of consciousness, talent, character, interests, friendship, courage, wisdom and altruism.

Another question, also basic, must be posed before proceeding: Of all of these words and phrases from ordinary language, which of them have to do with psychological phenomena? When Ribes (2009a) argues that the practices of ordinary language are the *raw materials* of psychology as a scientific discipline or knowledge, he is referring to the fact that "mental" words or phrases such as paying attention, perceiving, reasoning, remembering, thinking, feeling , etc., are, in essence, the nature phenomenology of the psychological. We will rely again on this author, whom we quote at length due to the relevance of the quotation:

> Psychological terms and expressions are not difficult to identify in ordinary language[...] Feeling, perceiving, imagining, thinking, reasoning, seeing, remembering, being aware, being excited, understanding, inter alia, are part of the inventory of psychological terms as well as expressions that implicitly or explicitly include, in the most diverse ways: *it occurs to me that .., it affected me so much, I feel sad, I cannot decide.., and an almost infinite number of everyday expressions* [...] **However, a careful analysis of ordinary language practices illustrates that psychological or "mental" terms and expressions do not represent references to happenings or entities that occur or exist in a different space from such practices**[7][...] Talking is a way of acting, and ordinary language is always part of an act or episode, in which talking and doing are not distinguishable […] We can say, therefore, that the phenomenology or the "raw material" of the psychological are the practices of ordinary language that include mental or psychological expressions (Ribes, 2010; p. 56).

Later, going back to Steven Toulmin's proposals with regard to the language of the natural history of phenomena and the language of the scientific theory of these phenomena, Ribes informs us that:

> […] The purpose of the language of natural history, as noted by Toulmin, is to identify the regularity of the forms [...] Natural history is directly linked to everyday experience; based on this, recognizing classes of objects or happenings according to their *apparent* regularities [...] Determining the generic sense or meaning of psychological expressions leads to the identification of functional types of expressions in circumstances […] in the analysis of modal, adverbial, relational, and other

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[6] On this subject, we strongly recommend reading the work of Tomasini (2001), regarding the concept of emotions and their misinterpretation.

[7] Bolded words our own emphasis.

types of expressions of accomplishment. **For this reason, the terms included in ordinary language practices, which constitute the natural world of the psychological, cannot be employed as a technical language** (op. cit, p. 57-59).[8]

The last point is crucial in the analysis of the different terms or expressions used in PP, since essentially each and every one finds their raison d'être in practices of ordinary language. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are correctly defined and that the authors have clarity on the logical or analytical categories to which they belong, much less that they can be said to apply to psychological phenomena. We refer to, for example, the set of terms and expressions that are of interest to positive psychologists, how many of them and which ones are related to the psychological? In other words, how many and which ones form part of the inventory mentioned by Ribes (2010)? We will take some examples and review what each one means within the logic of ordinary language, in order to try to answer this question (see Table 2).

As the reader can see from the contents of this table, most of the words or expressions correspond to nouns, which are used to designate *things*, to which a value or a particular meaning is assigned. Therefore, if they are nouns, it is assumed and accepted, tacitly or explicitly, that they have a real existence but independent of daily practices in the form of, say, feeling or doing; it is also assumed and accepted, tacitly or explicitly, that there are special entities or structures within which the various operations occur that are presumed to be "psychological". Even more, if the reader carefully reviews the contents of the second and third columns, he or she will find that many of the words or expressions are duplicated or even triplicated, in the sense that they are not words or expressions that relate to different things; and even when they are defined they are used to mean one thing, when in fact they should mean something very different; let us give some examples here.

Can well-being be said to be a psychological phenomenon? We categorically assure you that it is not, unless we are told that there is a psychology of "comfort" or "comfortable life", which is what the term means in ordinary language. Of course, well-being is a social category in its broadest sense, which refers to the possession of material and financial assets as well as their

enjoyment, e.g., housing, resources for food, clothing, recreation, and leisure, among other things. While accepting without conceding, that reference was being made to the category known as "subjective well-being", how do you differentiate this, for example, from other categories that include satisfaction, pleasure and happiness? When we say that a person has well-being, it is affirmed that they "perceive" or "experience" something about something or someone. In other words, well-being is the result of owning property, eating well, dressing well; going to a movie or a football game every couple of weeks; going out as a couple to have a beer together and some good food every weekend; sharing love, satisfaction and sensual and sexual pleasures with a partner ... Therefore, well-being means many different things including material (goods) and a variety of behaviors that are performed *in situ* and that therefore have nothing to do with subjectivity; as correctly noted by García-Viniegras and González (2000), insomuch that well-being is a term that implies personal experience, talking about subjective experience becomes redundant.

We are assured now that subjective well-being includes, from the hedonic perspective, the affective balance and life satisfaction (Vázquez, Hervás, Rahona & Gomez, 2009), which further complicates things unnecessarily. If for these authors the affective balance is obtained by subtracting the frequency of negative emotions from the frequency of positive emotions[10], we would clarify that the language of affect is not equivalent to the language of emotions. On the subject, Ryle (1967) said (we quote at length):

> I will try to show that at least three or four different things are included under the heading of emotion, which I will call **"motives"**[11] (*"inclinations"*), **"moods"**, **"commotions"** (*"agitations"*), and **"feelings"**. Motivations and moods, including commotions, are not happenings and therefore are not manifested either publicly or privately; they are propensities, and they are neither acts nor statements. However, they are propensities of different types and the differences between them are important. Moreover, feelings are happenings, but the place they must take in a description of human behavior is very different from that attributed by the current theories. Unlike motivations, moods are

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[8] Bolded words our own emphasis.

[10] It is remarkable that the life of people is summarized in elementary addition and subtraction math sums. We find a real excess, since the author of this work having been formed and trained as a psychologist does not see himself going out in the street with a pocket calculator performing these operations to conclude, for example, that Mary the sweet seller at the market today reported fourteen negative and eleven positive emotions, meaning that she has minus three negative emotions (thus, something must be done professionally to amend the latter with the former). It is, without a doubt, an excess that involves reducing psychology and the psychological to absurdity.

[11] Bolded words our own emphasis.

	TABLE 2 TERMS OR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN PP	
Terms or expressions	**Definition in ordinary language**	**Synonyms**
Well-being	Noun: Convenience, comfortable life.	Gift, **satisfaction**[9], convenience, prosperity, fortune, luck, prosperity, comfort, tranquility.
Satisfaction	Noun: Action and effect of satisfying or being satisfied. **Confidence and security of mood**. Fulfillment of desire or pleasure.	Recompense, reward, payment, compensation, repayment, reimbursement, pride, vanity, **pleasure**, contentment, **well-being**, smile, joy.
Enjoyment	From enjoy (Verb): Perceiving or enjoying the products and benefits of something; enjoying well-being.	Enjoying, savoring, **pleasing**, perceiving, having at one's disposal, using, benefiting.
Pleasure (sensual)	Noun: **mood content**; pleasant feeling. Will, consent, approval. Fun, entertainment.	Delight, joy, contentment, satisfaction, **well-being**.
Happiness	Noun: **mood** that delights in the possession of good. Satisfaction, contentment. Happy, luck.	**Satisfaction**, happiness, joy, **pleasure**, prosperity, enjoyment, pleasure, delight, **well-being**, fortune.
Optimism	Noun: Philosophical system that consists of attributing the universe to be as perfect as possible. Propensity to see and judge things in their most favorable aspect.	Enthusiasm, excitement, hope, encouragement, euphoria, faith, cheer, joy, humor.
Hope	Noun: mood in which what we wish for is seen as possible.	Confidence, belief, cheer, hope, security, certainty.
Faith	Noun: The first of the three theological virtues. Trust, good concept we have of a person or thing. Belief given to things by the authority of the person that says them or due to their public good name.	Confidence, acclaim, belief, security, proclamation, testimony, fidelity.
Capacity (to love)	Figurative meaning: Talent or disposition to understand things. Opportunity, place or means to do something.	Competence, disposition, talent, intelligence, power, knowledge, skill, aptitude.
Values	Noun: The value of something; scope of the meaning or importance of something. **Quality of spirit** that moves resolutely to undertake large initiatives and/or to face (face up to) danger without fear.	**Spirit**, bravery, actions, bonds.
Skills	Noun: Ability and disposition to something. All of the things a person does with grace and skill.	Art, aptitude, capacity, competence, technique, master, accomplished.
Sensitivity	Noun: Faculty of feeling, characteristic of animate beings. Natural **propensity** of man to compassion and tenderness.	Perception, intuition, feeling, tenderness, caring, understanding.
Perseverance	Noun: Firmness and consistency in the implementation of aims and resolutions of spirit (mood). Permanent or continuous duration of something.	Constancy, permanence, persistence, determination, tenacity, will power.
Forgiveness	Noun: Retrieval of deserved retribution, of offense that is incurred or any outstanding debt or obligation. Indulgence, the pardoning of sins, etc.	Pardon, recognition, indulgence, absolution, pardoning, mercy, generosity.
Virtues (civic)	Noun: activity or force of circumstance or cause to produce its **effects**. Force or value. Integrity of **mood** and goodness of life. **Habit** or **disposition** of the soul for the actions conform to the moral law.	**Power**, **efficiency**, strength, **courage**, decency, integrity, dignity, kindness, etc.
Flow (of consciousness)	Noun: Action and effect of flowing. Spilling a liquid or organic secretion in abundance. Excessive abundance.	Spillage, secretion, outpouring, discharge, emptying, tide, wave.
Talent	Noun: Set of gifts with which God enriches men. Intellectual feats in which a person shines.	Understanding, intelligence, intellect, genius, capacity, skill, judgment, skillfulness.
Character	Noun: Sign or mark that is printed, painted or sculpted into something. Qualities that morally differentiate a set of people or an entire community. Strength and elevation of spirit (mood), firmness, energy.	Nature, condition, originality, style, **personality**, qualities, **faculties**, **tendencies**, humor, **status**, **capacity**, **propensity**, **inclination**, **aptitude**, **behavior**, etc.
Interests	From *interest* (Noun): Profit, usefulness. **Inclination of mood** toward an object, person or story that attracts or moves one.	Attention, care, dedication, determination, **will**, ambition, desire, **inclination**, **propensity**, **tendency**, vocation, courage, essence, etc.
Friendship	Noun: personal, pure and disinterested affection. Sympathy, favor.	**Affection, inclination**, caring, attachment, appreciation, affinity, **propensity**, etc.
Resilience	Noun: Resistance through which a body faces up to rupture due to a shock or strike.	Empathy, sense of humor, coping, self-efficacy, perseverance, competence.
Bravery	Noun: Effort, encouragement, vigor.	A heroic incident or feat. Courage, spirit, determination, audacity, resolution.
Wisdom	Noun: prudent behavior in life or in business. Profound knowledge of science, literature or the arts.	Knowledge, judgment, astuteness, prudence, sense.
Altruism	Noun: Attitude based on consideration for the welfare of others, even at the expense of oneself.	Generosity, philanthropy.

[9] Bolded words our own emphasis.

like disease and weather, temporary conditions that somehow *agglutinate* happenings, but are not happenings in themselves (p. 74).

If affect in ordinary language amounts to a propensity or inclination to "like" or, more particularly, to "love" or "care" (Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, 1985), all these propensities or inclinations correspond to "moods", in the sense of a *habitual* or *passing mood*, or as *good mood*. Therefore, logic tells us that this "affective balance" is part of a general category of analysis which we call emotions; hence emotions do not belong to the language of affect. This is a logical confusion that becomes a verbal confusion because when Vazquez et al. (2009) in his article refers to positive or negative affect, he does so interchangeably with the language of positive or negative emotions.

Furthermore, if rather than being an emotion, love is, as Tomasini (2001) proposes an emotional disposition –in other words, *a feeling as a source of emotion*, Tomasini, in the same line as Ryle (1967) argues that emotions manifest at certain times, while feelings can be extended indefinitely, intensified or diluted intermittently. Hence there is a significant difference when talking about emotions in a general sense, than when speaking of moods and feelings. Thus, when positive psychologists assert that they study, for example, "pleasure" and "happiness", they confuse these with feelings. Incidentally, Ryle (1967) tells us that the former (pleasure) is sometimes used to identify moods, such as "enjoyment", "joy" and "fun." Ryle adds that pleasure can be used to mean two very different things, namely:

1) In one sense it can be replaced by the verbs "enjoy" and "like". To say that a person has been enjoying studying is not to say he has been studying and at the same time having the simultaneous experience of something that is the effect of studying [...]

2) In another sense, "pleasure" can be replaced by words such as "delight", "transportation", "rapture", "joy" and "glee." These words are names of moods that signify commotion [...] Connected with these moods there are certain feelings that are described as "tremors of pleasure", "palpitations of pleasure", etc. (Ryle, 1967, p 96.).

Thus far, we see that in the approach of positive psychologists, emotions, affect, moods and feelings are used indiscriminately, interchangeably and erroneously. We could continue to analyze many more of these words or expressions and the result would be the same: they are used incorrectly when they are defined as concepts. An illustrative example can be given with the words or expressions "capacity to love" and "skill". What do ability and being skilled mean in PP? Seligman (2002) declares that PP, at the individual level, is interested in positive personal traits (p. 3), including the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensitivity, perseverance, etc. In

principle, this idea of the existence of traits is in the line of continuity that has historically distinguished differential psychology, which is based on the premise that people can be classified depending on their distinctive and outstanding features and how they are broken down into individual dimensions (Roca, n.d.).

If the author of this work looked in the mirror every day and asked himself, "Are you capable of loving your partner?" he wouldn't look into an inner world for the answer, as if looking for the lost soul in the depths of his being. Being capable means nothing more than the fact that a person can do something different or different things in comparison with someone or something in certain circumstances, in the sense that it is *possible*. Being proficient in turn, means to be capable, since being skillful means that one "can" do something. Therefore being skilled functions like being capable, so we are not dealing with two words or expressions that refer to different things. Finally, one is skillful in a domain or when a technique is applied: the ability to interact socially, to solve an anagram, to use a condom correctly, to love a partner, etc. Hence, being capable and being skillful have nothing to do with characteristics, like social stereotypes that are used for classification purposes.

Based on what has been exposed thus far, appealing to change the negative valence for the positive is not sufficient for a kind of decalogue of "good" and "positive" intentions and no less "best wishes," PP is given its status as a science *ipso facto*. A few of PP's advocates (see Vázquez, Hervás & Ho, 2006) support it, when referring to the model of the three ways proposed by Seligman (pleasant, engaged and meaningful life) they claim that the proposal was not based on a theory or on a particular model, but on a simple idea about what research should be done and how to project it into the future. However, it is noteworthy that in the final part of their article, when they mentioned the challenges of PP, they strangely overlooked that it is not possible to understand or explain what is not underpinned by a theory. And if, as they say themselves, PP lacks theory, then what is it? Should we say that perhaps it comes down to a pragmatic and utilitarian psychology? We address this latter issue in the next section, making the reader take note of some real excesses of "positive euphoria" which those who call themselves positive psychologists experience, as well as demonstrating that, years ago, a methodological and technological proposal was postulated in our discipline, in which the emphasis was placed on the "positive" aspects of people's behavior; we refer to the constructive guidance of Israel Goldiamond (Goldiamond, 1974).

PP AND ITS CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

When Seligman and his supporters say that PP is both a *science* and a *practice*, it begs the question: what does the
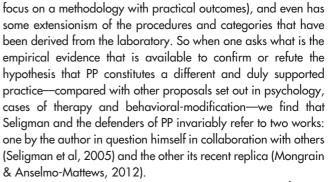
practice of PP mean? In other words, do the different authors mean that, from what is misleadingly called scientific PP, there has derived a technology for behavioral change, in the form of standard procedures? Or rather, is it a pragmatic and utilitarian psychology, that as Sugarman (2007) suggests is rooted in the ideology of North American scientific rationality? Finally, can it all be reduced to knowledge of practice and artistry, lacking in scientific validity?

Putting the cards on the table, to the extent that we discuss practical psychology, this must be conceived as applied psychology, in the sense that the *knowledge that is applied is validated* by the effects or results that are produced in people's behavior. Following Ribes (2009b), his exercise and construction in psychological practice makes sense in different areas –health, education, social life, etc.– which is not the same as saying that the scientific or analytical knowledge gained through research can be transferred to these areas. It must first be understood that the applied knowledge requires *the synthesis of generic properties and circumstances that shape the criteria of effectiveness of a specific object or event* (Ribes, 2009a, p. 8), which means it is necessary to have "bridge" or "interface" type conceptual categories (Ibáñez, 2007) that enable the connection of the basics with the applied, among which personality, motives and competencies stand out (Piña, Fierros, García-Cadena & Ybarra, 2011; Piña, Ybarra, Alcalá & Samaniego, 2010).

The key to the approach of Ribes is that if psychological knowledge comes from three sources: 1) **ordinary language**,[12] 2) **scientific theory and research** on the processes, the evolution (development) and the individuality of behavior (personality) and 3) **social practice** regarding the assessment, observation and modification of behavior, then its application in the different areas requires a special translation process. Because of this, it is now widely asked: how can we develop systematic procedures for behavior assessment and modification, such that a technological body of applicable knowledge is consolidated that is consistent and coherent with the various psychological theories and the relevant conceptual categories: those of behavior, development and personality? It is an effort that involves, as a necessary and sufficient condition, the identification and establishment of a clear and precise relationship between the theoretical bodies and the standardized procedures (Table 3).

But if the so-called PP lacks precisely a (scientific) psychological theory to support it, then it becomes evident that there is a breach of the assumptions proposed by Ribes in the previous paragraph. As such, it appears that PP has been formed as a kind of pragmatic and utilitarian psychotherapy; perhaps a bit like a kind of psychotechnics (which is based on procedures that

focus on a methodology with practical outcomes), and even has some extensionism of the procedures and categories that have been derived from the laboratory. So when one asks what is the empirical evidence that is available to confirm or refute the hypothesis that PP constitutes a different and duly supported practice—compared with other proposals set out in psychology, cases of therapy and behavioral-modification—we find that Seligman and the defenders of PP invariably refer to two works: one by the author in question himself in collaboration with others (Seligman et al, 2005) and the other its recent replica (Mongrain & Anselmo-Mattews, 2012).

A synthesis of both can be read in the work of Pérez-Álvarez (2012), who concluded that:

There seems to be nothing specific, not even in the best exercises of positive psychology, other than what is already positive in talking about positive and pleasant things. The biggest novelty in the exercises of positive psychology does not seem to be anything more than the scientistic packaging and the excitement of novelty matching the scientific seal that PP has. What positive psychotherapy has that is "positive", that every clinician might appreciate, is generic and has a common basis with psychotherapy (pp. 191-192).

Suggesting that people perform exercises (known as the three good things), asking them to develop the ability to "think" about the good in life and make use of their "strengths" (honesty, loyalty, perseverance, creativity, etc.) does not make positive psychotherapy different from other discursive and narrative approaches, much less does it convert it by decree into a technological proposal. Developing one or various skills, as *routines* or repetitive acts ("thinking" and "writing" about what good that has happened in your life recently) is not sufficient to prove that positive psychotherapy uses procedures and techniques to facilitate behavior change, in the same way that it is not the case when, for example, a doctor asks the patient to take his or her medication, walk for 15 minutes a day, modify his or her diet, etc.

This approach in positive psychotherapy is part of the tradition of all of the therapeutic approaches that are grouped into therapies known as *interactive* or *instigation* therapies. The former are distinguished because, since they are based on personal interviews and the role of the verbal behavior of the therapist, it is expected that this behavior will almost automatically "facilitate" behavioral change; the latter are distinguished because now the therapist suggests a number of tasks that the so-called patients should implement in their daily lives.

Hence, we now ask, what procedures and techniques for behavioral change are the references on the basis of which the intervention is justified in positive psychotherapy? Is it the

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[12] Bolded words our own emphasis.

programming of reinforcement effects, such as discrimination training or differential reinforcement? Is it social or material reinforcement or self-reinforcing? The links with repetition or substitution, cases of behavioral substitution, habit formation or the spread of "target" behavior? Maybe it is those that are related to goals and planning, which include action planning, reviewing behavioral goals and behavioral contract?

These and other "packages" of procedures and techniques for behavioral change (see Michie, Richardson, Johnston, Abraham, Francis, Hardeman et al., 2013) exist, and as the authors point out, they have proven their effectiveness to a greater or lesser extent. In other words, they have proven to be socially valid (Carr, Austin, Britton, Kellum & Bailey, 1999), inasmuch as the measurement of the effects produced to the benefit of the individual is based on a rigorous methodology, the analysis of the behavior. This is something that today and for the reasons mentioned throughout this paper, it has not been possible to establish in positive psychotherapy.

This is not, of course, a reckless and baseless assertion. Indeed, none of these procedures or techniques (or others that we have deliberately omitted) are those that have been used in positive psychotherapy to the benefit of PP, but rather a number of new ones such as **savoring**, **gratitude**, and the identification and use of **character strengths**[13] (Park et al., 2013). The authors say that the first deals with *becoming aware of pleasure and deliberately attempting to maintain it* (p. 17); in the second, *participants are asked to note, at the end of each day, the things that went well during the day and what they are grateful for* (p. 17); in the third, *when customers have identified their main character strengths through online questionnaires, they are encouraged to use them in new ways in their daily lives* (p. 17).

A series of questions arises: Is pleasure savored in the same way that a good steak is savored, naturally accompanied by a good Rioja wine? Are appreciation and gratitude, and their frequency and amount, like propellants in rockets that "energize" people to celebrate the positive aspects of life? Does the identification and use of character strengths, classified as virtues,–i.e., gratitude, hope, enthusiasm, curiosity, and love–constitute indicators, instigators, catalysts or regulators of what will then be classified as character strengths? It is particularly intriguing that those authors conclude their speech in defense of PP and its pragmatic and utilitarian extension, positive psychotherapy, with the following, which we cite at length due to its relevance:

> **In conclusion, the evidence in this area is still being accumulated**. However, enough studies have been carried out with results to conclude that the change approaches based on strengths are more than promising. **It is not known in most cases how these**

expanded therapies work in comparison with traditional treatments for clinical problems, or **what the mechanisms involved in the change are** (Park et al, 2013; p.18).

How do they work? Who knows? Also, what mechanisms are involved? Who knows? There is little to add, except that, as Pérez-Álvarez (2012) noted, there is also success with the horoscope and the book *The Secret*. And why not add, we can also suggest other interesting options: tarot, Zen Buddhism and the witches of Catemaco (in the state of Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico). Therefore, it is striking that, in the case of the study published by Vázquez (2013), in the sense of the duly justified questions that several authors have made against PP and positive psychotherapy in Spain (e.g., Cabanas & Sánchez, 2012; Fernández-Ríos & Comes, 2009; Pérez-Álvarez, 2012, 2013), those who have taken up the task of disqualifying them, via the defensive ploy that PP is a science and that positive psychotherapy works; on this note, we cite at length:

> Another issue that deserves some thought is that many of the techniques that are being incorporated and undergoing validation in clinical trials to improve the well-being of the participants come from basic research in psychology. This has not been commonplace in psychological therapies. The classic psychotherapeutic

TABLE 3
POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING STANDARDIZED PROCEDURES IN PSYCHOLOGY (BASED ON RIBES, 2009B)

Possibilities	Types of procedures
As psychotechnics	The procedures "derive from" a methodology with a practical scope (there is no theory to support it). An illustrative example is with psychometrics.
As an extension	The procedures are "extrapolated" from laboratory findings or the use of *observational* methodologies (in natural or controlled scenarios) or *computational* methodologies. It may be based on a theory or a theoretical model restricted to the analysis of a given phenomenon, even though it suffers from a process of fine "translation" from the analytical to the synthetic. Illustrative examples are found in many of the contents of behavioral modification and therapy.
As technological derivation	1. The procedures result from the translation of the analytical (scientific) knowledge, theoretically justified in synthetic knowledge (technology), recognizing the passage from ordinary language to technical language and its return (to being ordinary language). 2. Existing methods in the analysis of behavior are necessarily adapted to the theoretical and conceptual logic that is proposed, which, with the support of its methodological body is used for behavioral change. They include, by way of example, positive reinforcement, differential reinforcement of other behavior, generalization of "target" responses, discrimination learning, feedback, monitoring their own behavior, etc.

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[13] Bolded words our own emphasis.

techniques derived mostly from the clinical area itself. However, research on gratitude, forgiveness, or savoring, are inspired, or even transferred directly from basic experimental research [...] (Vázquez, 2013, p 103.).

Interestingly, if PP is to its knowledge and belief a science, it must provide psychotherapy with the procedures and techniques to be used in areas in which the applicability of psychological knowledge is more relevant, if, and only if, it has the available conceptual categories which, as we said pages back, expressly allow the linking of the basics with the applied. But if PP is not a science, since it lacks its own distinctive subject matter while also lacking the relevant conceptual categories to account for psychological phenomena, as a matter of elementary logic and bordering on common sense, it clearly cannot provide these procedures and techniques for behavior change, in the form of standardized procedures: ergo, as a technology of behavior.

As such, it is understandable why, for the self-named positive psychologists, and in particular, for Park et al. (2013) and Vázquez (2013), positive psychotherapy and its innovative "techniques" of savoring, gratitude and character strengths are part of a kind of catalogue for which, as Vázquez says, there are several things still left unsolved. For example, what dose of intervention is best, what combination of exercises may be more effective, how can they integrate the "positive" "techniques" with some of the existing intervention schemes, primarily. However, it is *deliberately* ignored that there can be no positive psychotherapy of a technological nature without a scientific positive psychology. It is because of this fundamental principle that we affirm that PP has been formed as a kind of pragmatic and utilitarian psychotherapy, as psychotechnics (based on procedures that focus on a methodology with practical outcomes), and as an extension, by extrapolation, of the processes derived from the laboratory. And none of these, of course, meet the criteria of being technology (see Díaz-González, Landa, Rodríguez, Ribes & Sánchez, 1989; Ribes & López, 1985).

But even more, there's something that positive psychologists have overlooked. And it is that exactly 15 years before PP was postulated and talk about positive psychotherapy began, there already existed in applied psychology, specifically within the framework of behavior analysis, a proposal that emphasized behavioral change based on paying special attention to the "positive" aspects of the lives of people; we refer to the constructive orientation of Goldiamond (1974). This author's approach is that the analysis of behavior had traditionally opted for the adoption of the medical model in one of its orientations: the clinical-pathological. In the clinical-pathological orientation, the focus is always a person who has been diagnosed with a problem, which is basically manifested in the form of maladaptive or abnormal behavior which must be *eliminated*,

thereby ensuring a similar procedure to that adopted in medicine: whereas in clinical psychology these behaviors are eliminated, in medicine the causative agent of a disease is eliminated, which may be through surgery (Ribes, 1982). In the opposite direction, the two remaining orientations, the epidemiological and rehabilitation (which would form what Goldiamond came to call *constructive* orientation) do not focus on what to *eliminate*, but rather on identifying the personal conditions and the context that will make it possible to reach certain proficiency in the psychological. That is, it attempts, as a priority, training in the behavioral skills that are necessary and sufficient to enable people to perform efficiently in any interactive situations that demand it; therefore, thinking in terms of health, we would say that this constructive orientation aims to promote the care and maintenance of good health for as long as possible.

As an alternative to the clinical approaches to behavior analysis in general and those in the clinical psychology frame in particular, the constructive orientation of Goldiamond is a conspicuous example of how, why and what for, rather than focusing on the behavior (abnormal, maladapted or anomalous that must be eliminated) of the person himself and the events in which he relates to others, it becomes imperative to prioritize a genuine functional analysis, exploring and exploiting the behavioral potentials in relation to others in the physical-chemical, ecological and/or social environment.

Needless to say, of course, exploring and exploiting the potential behavior presupposes prioritizing the "positive" in the lives of people, and it is even more needless to say that for this purpose a purpose-built positive psychology is required. All that is required is, quite simply, to move the level of analysis of the behavior defined as problematic, abnormal, maladaptive or anomalous –and therefore clinical or negative, in the logic of positive psychotherapists– to that in the form of episodes involving the person due to simple logic, to other significant people, to the environment in its various forms and, by extension, to their interaction. This is precisely the approach that underlies the constructive orientation of Goldiamond (Ribes, 1982) and, in fact, the interbehavioral approaches (Kantor, 1987; Ruben, 1986), including some recent developments that can be found with those known as contextual behavioral science and acceptance and commitment therapy (e.g., Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Wilson, 2012; Vilardaga, Hayes, Levin & Moto, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Psychology is a discipline that today constitutes a project of science. This is due to the application of its varied and distinct subject matter, to which all the concepts that it intends to represent are associated; the relevance and usefulness of these within a psychological theory will depend, ultimately, on

whether one can understand in principle which ones come from ordinary language, as well as in what cases, when and why they can or cannot take the form of technical language (e.g., Arrington, 1990; Deitz, 1990; Ribes, 1990, 2010, Roca, 2001). In other words, not every word or expression from ordinary language can be borrowed to define it later in its technical sense, as if it finds its equivalent *ipso facto* as a concept to account for a psychological process, state or outcome.

We have seen thus far that what is wrongly called PP does not have a subject matter itself, let alone a theoretical body distinguished by the use of appropriate technical language, i.e., a set of concepts, properly articulated, that make it possible to identify and recognize that the psychological occurs in different ways and at different levels of complexity.[14] Hence, it is understandable why PP espouses a primary confusion, which consists of identifying the terms of ordinary language and assuming that their *re*-translation or *re*-defining will turn them by a sort of official decree into technical terms. As a natural consequence, it is also understandable why it makes no difference to refer to emotions or affect, for example, as if they were one and the same thing; the same could be said with regard to emotions and feelings, affect and feelings, and so on. Therefore, all primary confusion favors a subsequent confusion that, in the case of PP, ends up becoming a string of conceptual confusions that are not theoretical.

And the method? In other words, are there procedures and techniques, anchored in the best of the experimental tradition of our discipline that have enabled us to prove what is said "in theory"? That is, to prove conclusively and beyond dispute that the "theory" about the positive finds its correspondence in the language of data, which can be systematically replicated as many times as necessary. In essence, since there is no experimental method, the maximum that it aspires to is to take up the proposals presented years ago by Cronbach (1957), to develop a *correlational* psychology that is justified by the "empirical confirmation" of its assumptions via the classification of a set of "strengths", 24 in total, for which measuring instruments are being designed, some of which are in the process of validation (Hervás, 2009) and many others have already been validated (i.e., Duckworth et al, 2005; Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne & Hurling, 2009). And something that should be clear to those who call themselves declared positive psychologists and even among their adoring fans, is that correlational psychology is not equivalent to scientific psychology. This presupposes not only that a material subject matter has previously been postulated and defined, but also it has identified its formal object, what it is, what is proposed and how to address it experimentally.

When a psychology, such as positive psychology, openly violates the above, it cannot and should not be taken seriously. If in the name of science and practice, because Seligman said so, –that is, by the principle of authority–, we have to throw away the efforts of those who, from their own trench, have pushed for a scientific psychology, we believe this is taking psychology to a vulgarization that makes it not even worth considering. We think also that it is time to pave the way to assumptions, or rather, re-assumptions about the psychology we have at hand today, refining our theories, conceptual categories and the methods that are relevant to its experimental study.

There is no need to waste time "inventing" what are presumed to be "new" and "different" material objects of study; much less claiming a thousand words from ordinary language have their status as part of the psychological, in the form of "technical" language. Neither should time be wasted inventing new "techniques" such as "savoring", disguised as the idea that the design of intervention programs aimed at developing the "valuable" resources of individuals, groups and communities will bring positive effects at the individual, social and even global levels (see Vera, 2006) sooner rather than later; we have no doubt that this is a kind of positive excess and euphoria.

Finally, an issue that could well help us to understand the success of PP, which it undoubtedly has–even though we argue here that it is not for the reasons and arguments made by its promoters and supporters–is due to the fact that it registers and responds to its own ideological conception of Anglo-Saxon culture and psychology, that of the USA. It is a concept of the person, their *limitations*, *abilities* and *responsibility* regarding their endeavors in society (Ribes, 1990), which as noted by Pérez-Álvarez (2013) merely represents the last blossoming of the religious tradition in partnership with the consumerist capitalism so distinctive of the US.

We would like to close this section by quoting Ribes (2009b) extensively, on the subject of what we might say is the future of psychology, when he states that:

> In the case of psychology, for special historical reasons, it lacks consensus on the object of study, which is perhaps the origin not only of the confusion of terms and concepts (as occurs in relation to "mental" expressions of ordinary language) but also of the invasion of the levels of knowledge and the careless use of various types of technical language within the discipline itself and with

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[14] Attending and perceiving, for example, are characterized by Kantor as precurrent; also, thinking, reasoning, speaking, etc. as complex behaviors (Kantor, 1963, 1969). In the same direction, Ribes and López (1985) postulate, in their behavioral theory, five functional levels of increasing complexity, as the levels of hierarchical organization of the organism-environment interactions are identified and analyzed.

regard to other disciplines. I hope the knowledge itinerary described here will encourage the critical reflection of researchers in psychology and, thus, help to take a first step in the demolition of the Tower of Babel that is our discipline (Ribes, 2009a, pp. 18-19).

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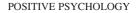
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