

## LIFE DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY

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The science of psychology is horizontally associated with biology, which enables it to elucidate psychological phenomena, and with social sciences exploring a wide range of human behaviour and interpersonal relations. The author tries to justify other dimensions of psychology in the vertical direction. The first is philosophy, as logical and noetic transcendency of psychology, supporting and looking for the meaning of human life. On the opposite side, there is the domain of art representing, within the Crocean hierarchy, the roots of saying yes to life. The closeness of introspection and poetry but also of clinical psychological evaluation and a literary critical study means real enrichment of the psychological science.

Psychology integrates in this approach the efforts of humankind to date, sees human beings within a broader context and much more beautiful proportions, focusing primarily on the way individuals fulfil their earthly life time.

Psychology as a science relies on biology, explaining partly the origin of the mind and helping to cure some of its pathologies and, on the other hand, it relies on social sciences which investigate human behaviour (Bunge, Ardila, 1987). Scientific psychology has passed from the mentalistic and behavioural stage to the explanatory bio-psycho-social stage, from idealistic and positivist philosophical principles to materialism.

This is just the very beginning of understanding humans. In system understanding, the human mind contains something more than what is in its components. The emergent principle speaks about it and we meet this specific feature of the mind in critical thinking, emotionally flavoured fear of death or in search for the meaning of life. These are processes that cannot be reduced to biology or sociology, with which psychology orientated towards natural history is not able to cope. If psychology wants to remain the science of life, not mentioning that it is simultaneously a profession and the means of self-knowledge or self-promotion of humankind, further auxiliary dimensions open up, namely towards philosophy and the arts.

Philosophy helps to maintain the compatibility of psychology with other sciences (metascientific view) through logic and ensures the clear structure of the science itself. Moreover, it faces epistemological and ontological principles of the

threat of mystical tendencies, remaining in its real, material basis. Philosophy is the source of stimuli and the inevitable school of correct thought. It us teaches to think matters through to the highest relations, finds for humans cosmic contexts and interpersonal understanding.

Art is on the opposite side of knowledge. It brings conceptions of details: where science explains, art illustrates. It is a creative human activity, an instrument of communication and mutual understanding, it helps us to live and to survive. The literary word, music, or artistic presentation are the deepest insight into the spiritual life of humans, they represent a knowing component and irreplaceable incentives for further, professional investigation. In the place, where the matter reached self-awareness, as in the human mind, science cannot stop in front of any part of its existence. Clinical experiences point to the need for philosophical understanding of artistically supported admiration of humans and science has to either refute or accept it.

### **Introspection and poetry**

Science, the subject matter of which is capable of self-inspection, is science sui generis. Introspection is not a scientific method, because it is not provable in its findings, measurable in quantity and repeatable in quality. And yet some experiences are not accessible and knowable in any other way. On the basis of introspection we can create hypotheses and they can partly be verified on the basis of introspective data of several people. Introspection is still of crucial importance to the clinical approach in psychology.

Poetry is a masterly verbalized introspection. It brings a complex of fantastic elements and elements perceived in reality, conveys report on humans, which is equally important as the EEG record. Poetry is not and never will be science, it lacks its strict observance of the logical order; it is an opinion on and the picture of the world, very subjective, which is of eminent interest of psychology, simultaneously also strongly interpersonal, interconnecting people. Poetry is the child's speech of the world (F. Halas); a biopsychologist would say that it is the expression of the young brain, because after the age of thirty, the strength of poetry is mostly weakening and fading away.

Poetry encourages introspection, leads us to a discovery of our own emotions and ideas, the existence of which we have not sensed within ourselves. Since human activities create the structure of the brain, poetry creates conditions for interpersonal understanding.

Poetry as a specific outlook on life, re-creating the world and creating the spiritual depth of humans, is a valuable support of psychology, which is interested not only in human feelings and lifestyle, but also in consciousness itself. The formal encounter of psychology and poetry is just an unavoidable consequence of their social background. Strict rejection of poetry would be for psychology a step backwards, towards a laboratory simplified picture of humans.

### **The scientific level of psychology**

An objection may be raised that communication between philosophy and art lowers the scientific level of psychology as it occasionally happened in humanistic psychology. The concept of scientific level is identical with the ability to achieve correct knowledge, but also with the width, the maximum completeness of knowledge. Whatever the definition of psychology may be, its primary interest is the understanding of humans in their abilities and performances, their experiences and self-creation. None of human activities can be omitted, even a slightest thrill of one's mind cannot seem to us as not worthy of professional interest.

The creation of science has four typical stages (Coward- Royce, 1981): pre-scientific (speculative), empirical (elucidating observation), experimental (more mature methods of knowledge), and theoretical (mathematical rationalization). Physics has passed through all four stages, psychology is struggling somewhere between the second and the third stages, but experiment in psychology has to face hindrances, mainly in narrowing the outlook and in simplifying. A human being can never be defined by a number. Crick (1997) cites The International Dictionary of Psychology (Sutherland, 1989) where psychology is defined as a systematic study of human and animal behaviour and mind, a discipline with small coherence so far. It is divided into a number of branches, some of which, if from the point of view of common sense explain at least something, it is too little. Others submit sufficiently rigorous scientific theories. Almost all branches are interconnected through the faith in the value of experiment regardless of its significance or reliability of results. We can understand this description as a disdainful comparison of psychology with other sciences or as an appreciative awareness of its immense problems. Also as a warning against irresponsible simplification.

Appreciating all scientific experiments known so far in the field of perception, memory or attention, we consider personality to be a complex system: it requires the widest empirical data for knowing it as well as an ability to conjecture their relations with the awareness of not only the existing state but also with the fantasy of the potential changes. It will never concern just the fact of what a person is, but also what he or she might be (existential validity). Since the essence of the human being consists in his or her difference from other people (interindividual differences, unrepeatability of a unique individual) and in his or her perpetual change (intraindividual differences, development), psychology can never fully catch it by static, numerical expression. It is thus also more scientific to approach the sensed truth than to describe the half truth precisely. The stage of development of the human mind determines the breadth of the outlook of scientific psychology.

Is it possible to conduct puristic scientific research in psychology without taking the risk of stripping individuals of their philosophical contemplation, of ignoring their artistic view of the world? Quite the opposite, it is especially necessary to study people with these most beautiful attributes of their abilities. Philosophy and

art are reality based on brain activity. It is similar to love, the investigation of which was refused by behavioural psychology and today this emotional reaction is, although still not experimentally studied, a serious interest of scientific psychology. Philosophy and art are real attempts at understanding the world and the status of people within it. They have to be investigated psychologically and may be a source of new stimuli for scientific psychology. In contrast to parapsychology, they do not contradict any epistemological or ontological principle and are therefore an asset, not a limit to scientific knowledge.

In psychology as a profession and in psychology as an instrument for self-knowledge and the betterment of humankind these two fields of mental activities are primary.

### **Integrated science**

Psychology has become an integrated science during the past hundred years, relying on knowledge from biology and embracing social aspects. Every scientist has – whether he or she realizes it or not – some philosophy as a basis. For scientific psychology it is the materialistic worldview, conviction that nothing originates from nothing and nothing can dissolve into nothing, a conviction that there are random connections but no miracles.

Emergent materialism (Bunge, 1987) recognizes the connection between mental phenomena and the brain and, simultaneously, the specific features of the mental which can be investigated by both psychological and neurophysiological methods. It does not admit psychophysical dualism (as e.g. psychoanalysis).

The issue of monism or dualism in the relationship of body and mind is of vital importance to the position of any experiment in psychology and affects each explanation of the data obtained. Intelligible philosophy that does not contradict the empirically proved findings is for psychology equally important as for any other science.

It is not surprising that psychology as the science about the most complicated system in the universe relies on biology and the social sciences. Both disciplines frame an individual in his or her genetic equipment; it appears, however, that not completely in his or her mental creation. We can look for other professional supports of psychology; let us mention literary criticism, which is not deemed a true science by many people because it allegedly does not have a precise methodology of work. Yet, it is one of the liveliest and most attractive disciplines with enchanting brilliance of the spirit among its best representatives and with the ability to find new aspects of the work of the reviewed authors.

A psychologist is not competent to do anything else either, he should try to understand “the architects of their fortunes”. Similarly a good literary critic knows the biography of the author in whom is he or she interested in detail, he or she is able to place the author in the historical period of the author’s life, and, moreover, knows

every line of the author's life work in order to be able to give a creative account of this complex, discover connections and help others to understand the author. Thus, A. Matuška leads us through Štúr's period and introduces K. Čapek to us, or F. Peroutka directs our attention in an original way to the fact that in the poems of Otakar Březina, there is no other concrete being except mother, only depopulated cosmic spaces. Or G.B. Shaw speaks about Wagner's music in a way that enriches our view on and our attitude to it.

Literary criticism can serve as an example of the struggles for better understanding of another individual and his or her work based on detailed knowledge of the subject matter and maybe on a subjective but bold and ingenious action.

Integrated science is, in the case of psychology, a comprehensive and sufficiently deep insight into an individual's way of using his or her particular time, how he or she tries to fulfil it with performance, experiences or how he or she accepts unexpected suffering (V. Frankl, 1992). It would be naive to pretend an autonomy of psychological science and not to hear the voices of other people with equally authentic experiences.

Integrated science is a boundless interest in human affairs, a duty to see and hear everything that a human being does.

### **The context of life**

To know a human being means to see him or her with all his or her fame and misery, a complex of functions that affect one another, all stimulating contacts with both close and distant surroundings. To know the person in his social environment and cosmic status, which extends his consciousness to infinity and suppresses his or her self-confidence to the lowest level. Bugental (1966), a humanist psychologist said that a human being is an aggregate and anything we take out from this aggregate, is less than a human being. This is the basic premise of psychological diagnostics without which we might technically describe particular functions of humans but we cannot know them. Similarly, Adler's individual psychology derives its essence from the concept of in-dividere, that means indivisibility. It is understood not only in terms of indivisibility of an individual as a system, but also as his or her inseparability from the milieu in which he or she lives. Simply, we cannot know a person without knowing his or her life situation.

The point of view of the wholeness of a human being also has its time dimension. In anamnesis we become familiar with the history of the individual, but we also need the values, for which he or she struggles, aims pursued, future outlooks. In this sense a human being is not only a victim of his experiences to date, but also the instrument of his destiny and implementer of his ideas. In clinical practice, it is a demand for a dynamic look at an individual, not a static picture which loses topicality very rapidly.

The unity of universality and uniqueness also belong here. We get to know not only what people have in common but also how they are unrepeatable. Kluckhohn, Murray, and Schneider (1953 – according to Allport, 1961) report that everyone resembles in a way all other people, has some things in common with everybody, but resembles exclusively himself in other things, being unrepeatable and unique. Real diagnostics has to cover all these three aspects of an individual, because if it remained merely within general knowledge, it would say nothing, but the uniqueness, of a person cannot be defined without comparison with his universality.

There is another standpoint worth noting, namely the relation between subject and object, when, through becoming familiar with another person, we get to know ourselves, the object of our knowledge becoming subject and vice versa, or they complete and intensify one another. It is probably not possible to penetrate into the essence of another person without maximum involvement and without participation of ideas and emotions.

The demand to look at an individual within the context of his or her life is a stimulus to re-definition of psychology as a science not as a natural science atomizing people, not as observation and measurement of behaviour, but as the science about humanity as a suprasystem of individual subsystems, which itself is part of higher systems within its cosmic existence. Psychology is, at least in its professional form, much more a science about the way a person fulfils his life time, about his ability or inability to live a pleasant life, than an experimental discipline of exact numbers.

Finally, the context of life also embraces a person's ability to take a view over his passing existence, his ability of transcendence, ability to think, that is to philosophize. Moreover, to take a poetic look, to feel joy and express it in words, a picture, a tone or a movement. All this is an inevitable value of the human being, trembling for his ephemeral existence, the essence of which has not been penetrated as yet.

### **The fading away of emotions**

From the medical point of view, cancer and AIDS are the plagues of the twentieth century and medical science hurrying to find protection against these diseases. Psychology sees a threat to humans particularly in the fading away of emotions which leads not only to an increase in criminality and aggression, but also to the loss of life joy, dissatisfaction and an existential vacuum.

The most important task of education will apparently be to attach people to life, so that they will be interested in it and enjoy it. There is nothing more depressing than to see an adolescent who does not want anything, does not long for anything, wants to be left alone and maximally to remain stoned.

Emotional education is in the limelight. It is as if the former and still justified emphasis on common sense has been replaced by faith in the emotions, and neither

of the systems could be torn away from the aggregate of the personality. Basic philosophical questions are decisive. What is this world we live in like? The answer leads us to a worldview. What would be the best way to live? This is the problem of lifestyle. And ultimately, who am I, who are we, the people? By completing this question, we approach the self-concept. The introduction of emotional education into families and schools cannot be just technical, without previous answering of the question of the meaning of life. Rationality and emotionality are intertwined so that their separation is always artificial. Desire for consumption whether in the material or emotional sense, is not the best indicator of future prospects. Since satisfaction and so-called happiness are always only secondary phenomena, self-renunciation, surpassing oneself and industry appear to be prerequisites for fulfilment in life. Homeostasis was a big mistake, humans need change and constant restlessness, looking for the meaning that is constantly escaping.

Art might probably be one of the ways towards deeper emotionality, but definitely not a simple and automatic way. First of all, not every art, only such which causes thrills and enriches one's interior. (How many vague terms which will have to be justified and specified by science). On the other hand, not everyone is receptive enough, even to the most magnificent art. People need sensory preparation, contacts with art since early childhood, motivation to self-education and self-improvement.

Life dimensions of psychology determine the needs of the current individual, who in natural science has outstripped by far the modest achievements of human disciplines. It is astonishing how slow and reluctant is the interest of psychology in affection, life joy or unselfish self-sacrifice, which finally are not only the precondition of life, but also its glorification.

Psychology as a profession cannot do without either philosophy (often stoic) or art, when in sorrow or in a period of the apparent failure of all life hopes. But this need also has to be reflected by theoretical science. Nothing concerning humans is or should be alien to psychology. Psychology has to adapt to life and to take it for its starting point, not to prescribe or dictate to it.

The size of human beings consists not only in their ability to know but also in a happy humility, awareness of fallibility and the need for endless struggles for better understanding. Reason is according to Weizsäcker (1993) perception of the aggregate. But this beautiful aggregate also embraces a remarkable part of the emotions. We all sense already that we cannot avoid this region in any way.

### **Something higher**

Life can pass by at various levels. At the purely biological, being at pains to solve everyday problems, in efforts to achieve success in one's career, to help others and to cultivate oneself. The essence of development is differentiation, structuring, steering towards higher values and better forms. The history of the Earth and

the life of humans have something in common, they undergo development, the Earth from the mist up to its beautiful unique green garments, the individual from powerlessness to self-help and self-awareness. It is the inner pressure and challenge to change, which we call life. Without efforts to be better tomorrow than yesterday, our existence loses its justification and attractiveness. The search for something higher is a sufficient reason for being.

Psychology is too tightly associated with this process of development to be able to afford to ignore any of its part. Poets, writers, playwrights, painters, and musicians perceive life beauties very sensitively and psychology, the science about human life, about the way the limited time is fulfilled, can only benefit from their approach. It cannot avoid the efforts of philosophers to find interconnections between the knowledge acquired and to look at life from the all-embracing perspective. It cannot then happen that many others understand humans better than psychologists themselves.

Numerous reasons can be raised to separate psychology from philosophy and art; we tried to offer counter-arguments and now we submit the last of them. Looking at humans through the prism of philosophical critical thought and within the artistic approach and perception humans are more beautiful, worthy of more love and admiration. And this is the prerequisite for understanding.

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