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**EGOLOGY INSTEAD OF PSYCHOLOGY:  
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE GODDESS?**

*The article contains a critical analysis of the ancient Greek myth about the goddess Psyche, whose name was given to psychology. The author of the paper demonstrates, that popularity of the given story is determined by the widely spread positive illusions, which are peculiar to human psyche. At the same time, the ideas about the object of psychology, which are based on the ancient myth, are non-adequate from the scientific point of view. They hamper the progress of psychology towards a full-fledged science. The paper proves the necessity and possibility of implementing the term «egoism» as the central notion in the ultimate fundamental theory for modern psychology («egology») and the adjacent sciences, thus building a logical scientific hierarchy «bio-psycho-socio». The arguments under consideration are based on theoretical discourse as well as on experimental results obtained by the author in longitudinal investigations with the help of the ESM techniques. The suggested operation brings multiple benefits for psychology as well as some changes in morality and religion. The author regards that it will help psychology to transform gradually into real scientific discipline and will further scientific progress in general.*

**Keywords:** altruism, mythology, morality, science, positive illusions, psychology, religion, egoism.

**Introduction.** Well-known that the science psychology was given its name in honor of the ancient Greek goddess Psyche. In this article I shall try to clear up the reasonableness and some hidden consequences of such an operation. Does the title «psychology» correctly reflect the object and the essence of truly scientific investigations? It looks like the unsolvable problems of this discipline are somehow «programmed» by its name (like in the case of a new ship). First of all, it is necessary to comprehend the ideas underlying the ancient myth.

**Psyche and psychology: a brief history.** Originally, Psyche was an ordinary girl, though the most beautiful among three sisters. Consequently, Eros, the son of Aphrodite, fell in love with the young girl. Aphrodite did not like this. Therefore, she forced Psyche to undergo a number of very difficult trials. Surprisingly for Aphrodite, the young girl coped with all the tests successfully. Later on, with the help of Zeus, Psyche turned into the immortal goddess. Thus, her love to Eros as well as their family happiness became eternal. Their daughter was given the name of Volupia, which means «pleasure».

In the illustrations to the myth, Psyche was usually depicted with butterfly wings, which underlined her «lightness» associated with the easiness of breathing. Really, there exists an ancient idea according to which, mental power (the soul) can take the form of a breath, of a smoke, of a shadow or a dream. In the «Iliade», the last breath of a dying warrior was called *psyche* [14]. In nature, a flying butterfly «magically» arises from a crawling caterpillar – similar to ordinary girl turning into goddess.

**Why is just Psyche?** The psychology got its name in the XYIIIth century due to Christian Wolf – the German theologian and philosopher. It is well known, that the myth about Psyche is one of the most popular among the readers. Most probably, that occurred due to «happy end» of the story as well as some other pleasant details: the beauty of the main heroine, attention from the «highest powers» towards her, the ability of Psyche to cope with the serious trials and get the rewards: to become a goddess, find the eternal love and family happiness.

All the above-mentioned peculiarities are in chime with the *positive illusions* – partially or fully false positive beliefs, which are natural for a human brain [3]. Thus, a number of social studies demonstrate the widespread effect of the false uniqueness – a person's tendency to overestimate her positive (in fact, strongly desired) traits of character and underestimate the negative ones [1]. Other positive illusions are based on an unrealistic optimism and an individual ability to control the environment. For example, most of the people believe that their own future

will be better than the «statistical» assumptions about it. The placebo effect in psychotherapy and medicine also rests on positive illusions.

Thus, the popularity of the Psyche myth can be explained by its ability to confirm the main positive illusions of humans: the dreams about one's own uniqueness and the belief in a better future. Most of the people cannot live without such ideas, though the latest almost never actualize. Now, let us check to which extent the story of Psyche is connected to the difficulties of academic psychology.

***The irremovable defects of psychology.*** It will not be an exaggeration to say, that psychology appeared on the basis of religion. Thus, the already known Christian Wolf tried to explain psychic phenomena as emanating from God's existence. Consequently, psychology is the only *science* wearing the goddess's name. This fact is unprecedented in the history of science and inadmissible from our point of view. In fact, psychology only *pretends* to be a science.

The mysterious and immaterial, the «winged» soul is still considered to be the object of a scientific exploration. Such a tradition not only reinforces the difficulties of the psychology's integration into the unified system of sciences, but also influences the conduction of investigations and interpretation of the obtained results. The confusion in proper understanding of the central concept of the scientific discipline inevitably gives birth to chimeras in the consequent discourse and conclusions of an explorer. Therefore, one can witness thousands of pseudopsychological theories, which have no contact with the deep lying truth and even with each other. While Christian Wolf, having adopted the irrational postulate (God's existence), unsuccessfully tried to make rational conclusions about the functions of human soul, modern adepts of Psyche begin their experiments without understanding *what* they really explore.

In the scientific hierarchy, the psychology borders with the biology at the «bottom» and with the social sciences – at the «top». The main difficulty in the «bio-psycho» transition lies in the well-known psychophysiological (more broadly, psychophysical) problem, stating the impossibility of a smooth explanation of how consciousness evolved from non-living substance. What concerns «psycho-socio», the scientists cannot define the ratio between the «individual» and the «social» in humans. Consequently, there are endless and useless debates, whether psychological phenomena are centered inside the organism, in the environment, or they are not centered at all [14, p. 25].

In such situation, it becomes clear that all the attempts of construction of the general vertical «axis» for all three groups of sciences will be blocked by the absence of a common basis (and basic terms) for them. In other words, there's no linking category (except offered by the author below), which could be simultaneously relevant for «bio», for «psycho» and for «socio».

Modern psychology still stays under the strong influence of the traditional moral norms, which have also appeared on the religious basis. The mix of science and morality, typical for psychology (as well as for other humanitarian disciplines) leads to intolerable confusion of the established facts (what *is*) and moral judgments (what *has to be*). The pure science in this case turns into ideology, while a scientific worker – into a moralist and propagandist.

Thus, the eternal value of truth loses its priority for the investigator, being replaced by the value of a short-termed good. The oblivion of truth (while its priority should be common for *all* the scientists) leads to numerous conflicts – at least, among the post-Soviet psychologists and their «academic schools». The scale of such confrontation can not be even imagined among the workers in the sphere of natural («non-mythological») disciplines. A few scientists who show real, not godlike human nature and the picture of society, can still be censored and ostracized (Stanley Milgram's case was one of the most famous).

Now, let me put the given regularities into a broader frame.

***Psychology: «utopia» defeats «tragedy».*** In the previous decades, there have formed two main views on the human nature and society: the «tragic» view (TV) and the «utopian» view (UV). According to TV, the invariance of a person's character and behavior is largely defined by her inborn *egoism* – the disposition in one's own favor and the priority of self-interest. While the

UV declares, that a newborn child is a kind of a «blank slate», thus being able to change endlessly for the better and actualize her potential in a splendid future society [11].

Though the tragic view, being supported by a bulk of studies (as well as by numerous lessons of history), is much more accurate, the UV, backed by positive illusions, greatly prevails among the post-Soviet psychologists – at least, in their publications [10, pp. 57–60]. Accordingly, egoism seems to be the most negatively loaded concept, although many representatives of the humanitarian disciplines attend to the interests (egoism) of power. Therefore, to belong to the utopian camp as well as to blame egoism is convenient and beneficial – just from the *egoistic* point of view.

Most vividly, the defects of the utopian approach can be seen in positive psychology, which ignores the indissoluble connection between good and evil, declaring the possibility of finding «pure happiness». Thus, positive psychologists do nothing more than serve people's positive illusions (and earn good money from such service). So, should we be surprised by the fact that the name of the discipline, claiming to be a *science*, is still embodied by the fictitious personage (Psyche), who arranged her private life and even achieved immortality with the help of supernatural powers?

**The solution: egology instead of psychology.** As far as we can see, the ancient Greek myth does not correspond to any truth. Still, if one is eager to find (without fail) a solid basis for psychology in the deep antiquity, he can discover another, a much more adequate view. Thus, in the Judaic tradition, the «soul» was associated not with breathing (this should be studied by pulmonologists, not psychologists), but with the needs and desires of an individual, with an alive person and her entire organism. It is important, such a view was adopted in the Old Testament and later – in the New Testament. Thus, the original Christianity, in distinction from the Ancient Greek paganism, does not separate soul from the body.

Adoption of such a view as «basical» for psychology helps to solve most of the methodological problems of this discipline. Consequently, the term «egoism», associated with the individual wills and desires, should lose most of its negative connotations and become a central concept of a new science – *egology*. Accordingly, the author's dual-system (one of which is the «Egoism» system) and multilevel conception («Person-Oriented Conception of Happiness» – POCH) should become the ultimate theory for a new science – at least, during the transitional period [9].

In our opinion, based on numerous scientific data (spreading from genetics to economics) as well as the results obtained in the longitudinal experiments, egoism, can be considered the *only* primary and the deepest unconscious human motivation [4; 7; 8]. Of course, in most questions we fully agree with the theses of the Psychological Egoism theory [12]. Therefore, we argue, people cannot avoid their own egoism (even fulfilling the utmost altruistic activity), but they are able to make choices in favor of the egoism's «higher» forms connected to individual self-development and self-realization [5].

When all the necessary substitutions are fulfilled, the «egologist» faces several alluring possibilities for solving inveterate problems of psychology. Here are the main three, although, there are many more.

1. Egoism, taken as a person's care about her interests [13], immediately shows the *direction* for further investigation – in distinction from the static and diffuse «soul» or «psyche».

2. Biological roots of egoism, connected to the instinct of self-preservation together with the fundamental needs of the organism, enable the solution of the psychophysiological problem, which was impossible in the frame of the traditional body and soul separation.

3. Egoism has a variety of representations on the level of *social* interactions – in the forms of group egoism, reciprocal altruism and so on. That gives an opportunity to construct the long-awaited and non-contradictory, unified axis «bio-psycho-socio» within the modern scientific hierarchy.

It is pleasant to think, that our science, having taken only one universal concept at its basis, can become even closer to the construction of the ultimate theory than natural disciplines,

which, according to S. Weinberg, will need *several* simple laws [15]. Nevertheless, even under such conditions the variety of psychological (egological) phenomena will not be reduced: egoism has an abundance of manifestations which are represented at different levels of human consciousness (and our theoretical model).

As soon as egoism, taken as a global and universal concept, is denuded from most of its former negative connotations, the «tragic» view on humanity and society should be renamed into the «realistic» one. The new opposition between «realism» and «utopism» in humanitarian sciences (instead of «utopia» versus «tragedy» in Pinker's terminology) seems much more precise.

By the way, we have discovered that the term «individualism», close to egoism, has no separate, independent meanings, which could not be included into the «egoism» notion. Of course, the most widespread positive illusions (see above) are also created and fuelled by the underlying egoism.

The author has elaborated a number of practical applications within a new frame; among them – the Personal Uniqueness Therapy [6]. All the techniques are represented in my latest monograph [10] and plenty of articles published in Russian language.

Still, I feel sometimes perplexed that nobody before has offered all the above-mentioned possibilities. For me, they seem so obvious, natural and proved by a bulk of data from different sciences. None has tried to argue with me or discuss the topic during the previous years, even when I defended my Doctoral dissertation in 2016. Just the *professional egoism* of the psychologists seems to be the most probable explanation for such a silence: «good (for us) is more important than truth for all».

***Egoism, morality and religion.*** From now on, a religious person should not feel guilt for being an egoistic creature, because the old religious idea of original sin surprisingly coincides with the modern scientific theses about the ultimate nature of people's universal egoism. If God endows all the people with egoism, then, egoism can not be considered as absolutely bad. We can also remind the famous phrase said by Martin Luther: «The *saint* notices egoism in his every motive» [2]. This means, first of all, that high morality is associated with realizing of one's own egoism, not with its denial or suppression. A person being aware of her interior egoism, may try to «counterbalance» it with a «good» and «moral» (altruistic) behavior. Thus, egoism may become not an obstacle, but a stimulus for moral self-perfection.

That's why, we do not await any shocks in the sphere of morality, if our suggestions will be implemented. Nevertheless, we suppose that some important positive changes will occur. People will become less hypocritical; it will be almost impossible to manipulate them, since the real (selfish) goals of the manipulator hidden behind his altruistic rhetoric will be easily recognized. And, most important, people will begin to value self-analysis – in order to know their genuine wishes and live their genuine life.

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### **Леонід Левіт**

#### **ЕГОЛОГІЯ ЗАМІСТЬ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ: ЩО НЕ ТАК З БОГИНЕЮ?**

*Стаття містить критичний аналіз давньогрецького міфу про богиню Психею, ім'я якої дане психології. Автор статті демонструє, що популярність цього оповідання визначається широко поширеними позитивними ілюзіями, які властиві людській психіці. Водночас ідеї про об'єкт психології, що базуються на древньому міфі, є недоцільними з наукової точки зору. Вони перешкоджають руху психології до повноцінної науки. У статті обґрунтовується необхідність і можливість застосування терміну «егоїзм» як центрального поняття в основній фундаментальній теорії сучасної психології («егології») і суміжних науках, що вибудовує логічну наукову ієрархію «біо-психо-соціо». Розглянуті аргументи ґрунтуються як на теоретичному дискурсі, так і на експериментальних результатах, отриманих автором в процесі довготривалих досліджень за допомогою методів ESM. Запропонована операція дає багато переваг для психології, а також для деяких змін у моралі та релігії. Автор вважає, що це допоможе психології поступово трансформуватися у справжню наукову дисципліну і сприятиме науковому прогресу в цілому.*

**Ключові слова:** альтруїзм, міфологія, мораль, наука, позитивні ілюзії, психологія, релігія, егоїзм.