

Critique and Bibliography

Review on Robert Emmons' book "Psychology of noble aspirations: motivation and spirituality of person".

In 2004 the publishing house "Smysl" (Sense) issued a book of R. Emmons "Psychology of noble aspirations: motivation and spirituality of person".

The book is devoted to the search of the psychological basis of human health and sensation of happiness. In other words, the author attempts to find the answers to the question: What makes the person happy and successful?

R. Emmons earnestly demonstrates that, three main known in psychology motivational systems: achievements, affiliation-affinity, and power are not enough for the description and comprehension of mechanisms of human well-being.

In this connection, he suggests his own approach to the person analysis, which he calls cognitive-motivational. In the author's opinion, the developed approach allows to study the subjective well-being of person empirically.

On the whole, the book is dedicated to the substantiation of spirituality and religiosity in the person psychology, to correlation of this area of human activity with the targeted motivation and subjective well-being.

The suggested and analyzed in the monograph approach, can be the next breakthrough in the human motivation study, as the author convincingly demonstrates that, the model, which is offered by him, can give an opportunity to study empirically those undercover corners of human heart and human spirit, which the academic psychology only starts to touch.

At the heart of his approach R. Emmons puts analysis of human aims, which serve as a core of human psychological organization. What are the aims, what do they tell us about the human personality, how are they conceptually presented in the personal psychology?

The author writes that, "It is the man nature to make for aims. The targeted structure includes the aim parameters, their property and organization; the targeted processes consist in supposition, planning, purposing the aim and reconsideration of purposes; and, at last, the targeted content implies a categorization of purposes, according to taxonomy".

Thus, it is possible to categorize these purposes as units of motivation, but it is dynamic units, the organization of which has a natural hierarchy.

The man behaviour is organized around purposing an aim. Crucial moment in the developed model of mental targeted organization is that, in

author's opinion, although the purposes are realizable, there is no necessity for the purpose to be present in consciousness, while the man pursues it.

This conception seems to be rather heuristic, as it gives a new impulse for research on the unconscious tendencies and motives in the person behaviour.

Generalized purposes the author defines as private aspirations, which can be thought of as quality of top level of abstractness, integrating a number of purposes. In this sense, aspiration is similar to motivational disposition concept.

However, decisive difference is ideographical nature of personal aspiration, as there are no two different men, whose aspiration configuration would coincide exactly.

The personal aspiration is a generalized construct, unifying phenotypically the different purposes or actions around into general quality or subject. The very aspirations serve as motivation organizing principles that give conformity and consistency to everyday strive for purposes.

The personal aspirations mirror the choice, the people make, devoting their lives to achieving one and avoiding the other object.

Personal aspirations make the significant source of sense, as the life of man is based on what he attempts to achieve.

The author showed that, the personal purposes are the valid index of how people structure their lives and live it.

Studying personal aspirations of man during ten years, R. Emmons has arrayed the matrixes of instrumental aspirations and has provided them with the psychometric characteristics, showing that, in the generalized form the aspirations meet three basic needs: safety and control need, need for a social belonging, and need for self-appraisal and competence.

The book contains a large quantity of the appendixes, in which the methods and ways of targeted, cognitive-motivational study of person, developed by the author, are given.

However, elaboration of the targeted approach to the person motivation study is just a construct, which is suggested by the author for studying more significant parameters of human life.

In the author's point of view, till now psychology has been of indifferent abilities to study such significant indexes of quality of human life as happiness and subjective well-being.

In Emmons' point of view, the subjective well-being relates to both, general steady affective condition of the emotional well-being and to cognitive condition of satisfaction of life and comprehension of life; and the study of personal purposes has shown that, availability of man significant personal

purposes and successes in their achievement are closely connected with his subjective well-being.

A set of interesting empirical data on relations between the personal purposes, resources of man, his subjective well-being and feeling of happiness, obtained by the author are described in details in the reviewed work.

In particular, he demonstrates that, such resources as money, appearance, health, and intelligence should be concerned with the well-being only to a certain extent, when they promote a realization of personal aspirations of man.

Emmons writes: “The obtained data allow us to doubt that “American dream” of glory, success, and image is a desired state of affairs, which is necessary to aim at”.

Studying the personal aspirations, spontaneously expressed by the subjects, R. Emmons has found out that men state their purposes at the different levels of generalization, and that let him to describe men as having high and low level aspirations. Thus, the men, having high-level aspirations aim to be someone, and the men, expressing predominantly low-level purposes, aim to find an occupation.

Using the developed targeted construct, the author goes to analysis of higher spiritual aspirations of man. He even introduces the term “psychology of higher aspirations”, as an attempt to analyze scientifically the spirituality in the context of motivation and personality.

R. Emmons considers that, purely groundless people were prejudiced for a long time against religion, showing disparagement and even hostility towards it.

He writes: “Allport would not be surprised if he found out that there is no record of a number of his works, devoted to the central role of religious feeling in the structure of person, in the book, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of his textbook”.

One cannot but agree with the author’s point of view that it is impossible to ignore the fact that spiritual or religious purposes, views and practices take a central place in the life of a great number of the people and exert a strong influence on the cognitive processes, motivation and behaviour, but even being ignored by the theory and researches on person, spirituality cannot vanish.

Probably, for the first time after publishing in Russian the known book of W. James, the readers can acquaint themselves with the analysis of religious aspirations and religious experience in psychological science.

Under the targeted cognitive-motivational model of person, suggested by him, R. Emmons studies the aspirations related to the transcendental areas of experience, especially those, which consider God or any conception of the Divine.

In his views, Emmons proceeds from the assumption that, as the faith is integral regarding the person, it should touch upon every level of person, including the aspects, which are reflected in the recurring targeted aspirations.

However, the author determines the spirituality rather widely, encompassing the aspects of search of sense, integrity, unity, transcendence and summit of human capabilities. He considers spirituality to be a sort of intellect, a component of the theory of intellect.

It is possible that, the spiritual intellect is one of such concepts, which can stimulate the progress in understanding the effect of “functional” spirituality in human life.

In this connection, Emmons separates the concepts of religion and spirituality: religion is more broad concept, than spirituality, as religion involves something greater, than search for sacral.

R. Emmons is a creator of human spiritual aspirations classification. He also describes the fundamental functions, which spirituality fulfills in life, demonstrating that the personal spirituality is an effective mechanism, through which can be achieved the targeted integration that serves as a criterion of psychologically healthy person.

At the same time, having concentrating on the religious spirituality study, the author repeatedly denotes that, there are also other, not religious, humanistic variants of spirituality, which imbue human aspirations.

At that, the author has essentially advanced in the comprehension of spirituality, which reflects the irreligious aspirations, as well.

Describing the irreligious variants of spirituality in his book, Emmons pays considerable attention to so-called “pragmatic spirituality”, related to creation, which gains spiritual value for those, who do not share the conventional religious philosophy. To irreligious variants he refers love and spontaneous concern for the next generations, anxiety about the nature and own finiteness, belief in fundamental decency and dignity of human life, and care for the happiness of others.

Emmons has given an original point of view on the creation functions and what he calls a pragmatic spirituality. The latter, Emmons ties together with capability to solve the fundamental drama of German classical philosophy in the search for a ratio between tribal and personal nature of man, as he assumes that, it can resolve dilemma between individualistic aspiration and more broad and deep social attitude, conciliating the need for

independence and the need for affinity: creation implies a creative synthesis, confluence of affinity and power.

The general sense of the author's reasoning comes to the following: religion and spirituality can ensure a unified philosophy of life and serve as an integrating and stabilizing force in the face of constant pressure of the society and culture on the fragmentation of individual, especially in the post-modern cultures.

And still, all ideas, described by the author and the obtained empirical data mean only an approach to the main purpose of the book, which is search for the answer to the question; What does it mean to have good life?

Naturally, it is impossible to answer the put question without understanding the meaning of life.

According to the author's conception to lead a good life means something greater, than simply be happy. He makes two models of personal well-being, concerned with the content of personal purposes: one is based on hedonistic purposes, and other on the meaning, connected with the significance of life.

Thus, it is emphasized that, the comprehension of life cannot guarantee a high level of positive emotional happiness, but the absence of meaning and aim betokens misfortune.

According to R. Emmons, meaning, happiness and wisdom is a large triple, creating subjective life well-being. When man directs his life towards the spiritual results achievement, he can experience the life as worthwhile and sensible.

On the whole, the concept of spirituality, developed by the author and grounded on intellect, signifies a considerable advance in religion psychology and is of great importance for future theoretical and empirical elaborations.

The reviewed monograph is a doubtless contribution to the personal psychology, developing the idea of person spirituality, promotional to scientific understanding of psychological regularities, ways and mechanisms of what in fact makes a man to be a Person.