

BOOK REVIEW

Kharlamenkova N.E. Psychology of Personality: from Theory to Scientific Evidence. M.: Publishing House “Institute of Psychology RAS”, 2023

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Abstract: The monograph by N. E. Kharlamenkova is devoted to the extremely important and intensively discussed problem of constructing a theoretical ground for research in personality psychology. Despite the fact that the author analyzes the problems of personality psychology, the book touches upon the general scientific problem of the relationship between theory and experiment, as well as the construction of new knowledge. The necessity of the interconnection of the principles of psychology into a unified system is substantiated. The author convincingly points to the possibility of using a case study to establish patterns, i.e., to integrate the ideographic merits into the nomothetic framework. The monograph widely covers the results of the latest research and it can serve as a guide in the difficult modern situation of studying the psychology of personality.

Keywords: Psychology of Personality, Theory of Personality, Scientific Evidence, Nomothetic Approach, Case Study Methods, Principles of Psychology

N.E. Kharlamenkova's book is a monograph in the strictest definition of it: the book analyzes in detail the problem, which is important for the psychological community, and which is urgent and extensively debated, i.e., the development of a theoretical basis for personality psychology research, as well as the modern concepts and approaches to its solution, formulates and substantiates new options for overcoming difficulties and puts forward hypotheses. Methodological issues of the organization of psychological research and, in a broader sense, current and developing general scientific methodological ideas about scientific cognition are also included in the scope of discussion. This wide range of the book's content is reflected in its title: though it analyzes the problems of personality psychology, it extends into the general

scientific context of the relationship between theory and empiricism as well as the construction of new knowledge.

The considerable section of the book is dedicated to the analysis and comparison of both innovative and fundamental classic approaches to the formation of personality psychology. N.E. Kharlamenkova has succeeded in highlighting the significant achievements that constitute the common heritage of this field of psychology, without evaluating them as acceptable or indisputable, and avoided their eclectic mixing.

The book focuses on the methodological, theoretical, and empirical achievements of the psychologists of the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences; the book also covers the history of the group's formation, and its genealogy that goes back to the

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scientific ideas of S.L. Rubinstein. This section of the monograph has its own value and is addressed not only to psychologists that are interested in personality research.

The section of the book, which is equally important and of prospective value, provides a detailed analysis of the most recent, ongoing research conducted by members of the Laboratory of Personality Psychology (including dissertations and postgraduate theses). The results of the current findings of hypotheses are described and analyzed, as well as possible directions for the research development and the use of the theoretical and experimental models developed by the authors of this paradigmatic society.

The methodological foundations of personality psychology and psychological science are discussed in several chapters. The author analyzed the relationship between idiography and nomothetics, based on the "case study" approach to research. Although this type of research does not cover all the generic features of the idiographic approach, the author's discussion strongly indicates that it is possible to use a case study ("idiography" theory) to establish regularities, i.e., to integrate this method into the nomothetic framework. According to N.E. Kharlamenkova, the case study methods discussed in the book's chapter "are based on the principle of result interpretation, and thus provide a standardized procedure for data processing, analysis, and explanation, which allows the comparison of one case with another" (Kharlamenkova, 2023, p. 116). Indeed, such an understanding, explicitly crossing the boundaries of the "single case", eliminates the basic idiographic requirement to consider the object or phenomenon under study as "unique", "irreproducible". It should be noted that in this very promising (!!!) understanding, a case study corresponds to the demand to plan the research of case studies (as stated, for example, in the "American Psychological Association (APA) Rules of Publication"), yet the very idea of case study standard planning is fundamentally

contrary to the fundamentals of ideography. Natalya Evgenievna concludes: "... the method of analyzing a single case can become a necessary tool at the stage of preparing a future study built according to the *hypothetico-deductive principle*" (reviewer's italics) (ib., p. 120). It is a radical and precise solution that overcomes the inductivistic innateness of idiography, which seems, from the general trend of the author's statements, to be aimed at expanding the rules of application of the hypothetico-deductive-reconstructive method in psychology, as well as in other disciplines.

The author refers throughout the text (and chapters) to the problems of justification of psychological knowledge. There is one of the directions of this discussion - consideration of the content and application of explanatory principles. The author considers each of the basic principles of the methodology of psychological science and justifies the necessity of interrelation of these principles into a single system: "It is promising to identify a whole system of theoretical tasks, determined by the methodology of research, and to explore the relations between individual methodological principles..." (ib., p. 334).

When analyzing the use of principles, the author also refers to the possibilities of deviation from following them, which is hardly ever encountered in methodological literature. Therefore, Natalia Evgenievna says that "the negative assessment of the determinism principle is based on a particular case of its understanding" (ib., p. 44). Indeed, in that remark there is an indication of a widespread, but unnoticed, manifestation of misunderstanding of the role of principles in scientific research: they are formulated, understood, and used in a reduced form, deprived of the main property of principles - universality. And this applies not only to the principle of determination.

Special attention in the book is paid to general scientific problems of the relation between theoretical and empirical

knowledge. The reviewer finds it highly advantageous to address the problems of the range through the consideration of the knowledge justification based on the fundamental developments made by E. P. Nikitin. The author approaches the discussion of nomological bases of explanation by discussing idiographic attempts to single out the unique in an individual, by searching for possibilities of “balancing” idiography and nomothetics, and further by approving the idea mentioned earlier in the review about the radical transformation of the study of a single case, idiographic in origin, into a variant of nomothetic research, which prepares the work in progress for its introduction into the mainstream of the hypothetico-deductive method. The problem of theoretical cognition objects' existence provability - constructs, objects of research - is also analyzed in connection with the procedures of knowledge justification. The issue of the ontological status of theoretical constructs, which all fields of psychology are in urgent need of solving, is of general scientific importance. From the reviewer's point of view, to solve this problem, it is necessary to use (and develop) the concepts of justification introduced by E.P. Nikitin, and the author of the book adheres to this alternative.

The most important for personality psychology is the conclusion that “the weakest element in the chain of relations between methodology - theory - empirical research - practice is theory” (ib., p. 332). This finding has both diagnostic and prognostic value, orienting researchers not to abstract theoretical developments, but

to the construction and coordination of all components of the research process, as it is fixed in the title and content of the book: through the substantiation of initial statements to the theoretical-empirical construction of new knowledge.

It should be noted that the book must be read by psychologists specializing not only in personality psychology or general psychology, but also in other fields of psychology. In terms of representation of the latest research results, in terms of its wide scope of material, in terms of substantial analysis of the methodological foundations of research (the reference list contains 585 references), the monograph can serve as a guide in the complex modern cognitive situation.

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Reference:

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