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EMOTION AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY PARADIGM PART 1. PROSPECTS AND PRESCRIPTIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

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Advances in several areas of psychological science in the last 20 years suggest that the time may be right to take up anew the challenge of constructing an integrative psychology-theology framework for studying the *affective basis of spiritual transformation* (Emmons, 2005). The objective of this three-article series is to outline a theology-driven metapsychology for one approach; a *moral motive analysis* of the role of emotion in spiritual transformation. Toward that end, these articles outline 1) a *framework* for conceptualizing a "Good Life" story (Murphy's MacIntyrean framework), 2) a *paradigm* for integrating conceptions of moral development and spiritual transformation (relational spirituality paradigm), 3) a theological *tradition* for clarifying the importance of multiple processes of change (apophatic tradition), and finally 4) an *approach* to modeling the affective basis of transformation (moral motive analysis). Collectively these articles attempt to delineate an interdisciplinary paradigm that is consistent with the sensibilities of Aristotelean virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1984), contemporary moral motive theory (Emmons & McCullough, 2004), and the apophatic tradition of personality change (Jones, 2002). The purpose of the present article is, first, to summarize Murphy's MacIntyrean framework (Dueck & Lee, 2005) as a heuristic for theory-construction to be used in subsequent articles. Second, it discusses five trends in current psychological theory that highlight the need for of a new approach to emotion and transformation. Prospects and prescriptions for future theory and research are suggested throughout the article.

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> It is a mistake to think of psychoanalysis and Prozac as different means to the same end. The point of psychoanalysis is to help us develop a clearer, yet more flexible and creative, sense of what our ends might be. "How shall we live?" is, for Socrates, the fundamental question of human existence–and the attempt to answer that question is, for him, what makes human life worthwhile. And it is Plato and Shakespeare, Proust, Nietzsche, and most recently, Freud, who complicated the issue by insisting that there are deep currents of meaning, often cross-currents, running through the human soul which can at best be glimpsed through a glass darkly. This if anything, is the Western tradition: not a specific set of values, but a belief that the human soul is too deep for there to be any easy answer to the question of how to live.
>
> –Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded*

The relevance of metapsychology for theory and research in psychotherapy and spiritual transformation cannot be overstated. Advances in several areas of psychological science in the last 20 years suggest that the time may be right to take up anew the challenge of constructing an "integrative" psychology-theology framework for studying the affective *basis of spiritual transformation* (Emmons, 2005). In recent psychotherapeutic and spiritual formation literatures we are witnessing increased interest in relational and emotion-focused approaches to personality change (Bucci, 1997; Fosha, 2000), and their application to spiritual transformation (Fredrickson, 2002; Hall, 2004; Shults & Sandage, 2006). This interest, in turn, derives in large part from four contemporary developments in the interdisciplinary study of personality and emotion: 1) the burgeoning literature on the psychology of positive emotions (Snyder & Lopez, 2007), championed in large part by Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, 2) the return of virtue conceptions of moral development (Worthington & Berry, 2005), promoted by the positive psychology movement

(Seligman & Csikszentmihayli, 2000), 3) new conceptualizations of the "moral emotions" (affects) as motivators of prosocial action (Emmons & McCullough, 2004), facilitated by a "turn" in moral psychology away from Kohlbergian cognitive rationalism and toward "social intuitionist" accounts (Haidt, 2001), and 4) the proliferation of more "psycho-dynamically informed" (Westen, 1998) models of personality, featuring new integrations of social-cognitive and relational models of affective change (Fosha, 2000; Horowitz, 1991; Westen, 2002).

In light of these developments, the general purpose of this three-article series is to outline a rationale and theoretical trajectory for a more psychodynamically informed *moral motive model of spiritual transformation*, one that eventually offers clear and specific suggestions for therapeutic and practical theology methods. As background for such a model, the goal of these articles is a metapsychology ("story") of the role of emotion processes "both as mediators of and consequences of" spiritual transformation (Emmons, 2005, p. 247). The objective is a moral motive analysis that models how a person expands the moral affective capacities (e.g., gratitude, empathy) of personality that make up one's *implicit* and *procedural* capacity for prosocial motivation and mature relationality. For example, how does one expand the motive and capacity for compassion? To this end, these articles collectively present a *framework* for narrating a "Good Life" story (Murphy's MacIntyrean framework), a paradigm for integrating conceptions of implicit morality and spiritual transformation (relational spirituality paradigm), a theological *tradition* for clarifying the multiple principles of personality change (additive and subtractive principles), and finally an *approach* to modeling the motivational locus of spiritual transformation in light of relational and apophatic assumptions (moral motive analysis). Thus, these articles follow the recommended "multilevel interdisciplinary" strategy (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003) and attempt to delineate an approach to emotion and spiritual transformation that is consistent with the sensibilities of Aristotelean virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1984), contemporary moral motive theory (Emmons & McCullough, 2004), and the apophatic tradition of personality change (Jones, 2002). The goal is a more psychodynamically informed framework for emotion theory and research in the relational spirituality paradigm (Benner, 1988; Hall, 2004; Jones, 1996; Shults & Sandage, 2006).

"WHAT KIND OF STORY ARE WE IN?"

How one eventually views the role of emotion in spiritual transformation will depend, of course, on the nature of the metapsychological assumptions which one endorses. While Christians of all theological persuasions regard the Judeo-Christian narrative revealed in the Holy Scriptures as *the* "story of God" (Tilley, 1985) various tellings of the history of Christian thought seem to make it clear that we are all not living in the same "version" of the story (Benner, 1988; Foster, 1998). Nor are therapists and Christian educators, even of the *same* theological persuasion, operating within the same "narrative envelope" (Browning, 1991) with respect to their assumptions about and methods of change. At the beginning of their quest in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, a book that five separate reader opinion polls rated the most influential book of the 20th century, Sam asks Frodo the question: "*What kind of story are we in?*" He asks, not only because he is uncertain about the outcome, but also because he realizes, hobbit though he is, that not all stories are good stories. Perhaps Sam knows, with the late and much beloved psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1985), that: "The end is always in the beginning." With this therapeutic maxim Bettelheim sought to teach his supervisees and clients that "the assumptions, attitudes, and expectations with which we approach a therapeutic encounter or life situation define how that encounter or situation will evolve" (Frattoroli, 2001, p. 105).

At story's *end* I will join others in encouraging an "affirmative postmodern" approach to psychotherapy and spiritual formation (Sandage & Hill, 2001), but one that explicitly embraces a more *dynamic* understanding of virtue-construction and vice-diminishment. In distinction from some recent positive virtue theory, in this article I will argue that emotion and transformation in the *apophatic* telling of the story is quite different, and may call for different practices, than in the *kataphatic* version (Holmes, 1981). Mine will be a recommendation for a (relative) shifting of the "injunctions" of personality change and spiritual transformation toward an old "new" apophatic view, while envisioning such an approach within the context of the relational spirituality paradigm (Benner, 1988; Jones, 1996; Hall, 2004; Shults & Sandage, 2006). Following Thomas Kuhn (1962) in his classic work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, when I use the term injunctions I will simply mean practices or methods suggested by a paradigm that take the general form: "Do *this* in order to achieve *that*" (Wilbur, 1998). It is the 'this' (the methods of change) and the 'that' (the goal of change) that I want to discuss in this article series.

Overview of Present Article and Article Series

The purpose of the present article is to discuss the need for and significance of a "complex anthropology" (Pope, 2002) of moral-spiritual development in light of recent trends in contemporary therapeutic theory and practical theology particularly changes to the theoretical landscape of contemporary moral psychology (Lapsley, 1996) and psychotherapy (Held, 1995). A first objective is to delineate *why* the construction of a new framework for studying the affective basis of spiritual transformation may be an important and timely thing to do. Second, this article summarizes philosopher Nancey Murphy's (Dueck & Lee, 2005) proposed conceptual framework for integrating Christian doctrine with theory and research in psychology. Following the lead of virtue philosopher Alistair MacIntyre (1984), Murphy has suggested that psychologists need to more clearly formulate mini-systematic theologies organized around the psycho-theological dimensions of moral telos, problem, and praxis, i.e., theology-driven accounts of the purpose, dilemma, and process of moral-psychological development and flourishing. A secondary objective of this article is to outline the Murphy's MacIntyrean framework in the hope of making it more visible and accessible to the integration community.

The purpose of Part 2 is take the next step by summarizing a *paradigm* for integrating conceptions of implicit moral personality and spiritual transformation (relational spirituality paradigm), and then a theological tradition from which to view three principles of personality change (the apophatic tradition). That article summarizes seven basic tenets or assumptions of the recently outlined (Hall, 2004), and now expanding (Shults & Sandage, 2006) relational spirituality paradigm. To my mind, the relational spirituality paradigm provides an important theoretical advance in how we model the relationship between personality structure (particularly affective processes) and spiritual transformation, and with this a useful way to conceptualize the continuity between naturalistic and spiritual conceptions of change. In that article, I also propose a further contribution to the relational spirituality paradigm by re-considering the *subtractive* principle of change emphasized in the apophatic "way" (Jones, 2002). In recent integration literature there is renewed interest in the apophatic tradition of Christian thought (Coe, 2000; Mangis & Watson, 2001; Shults & Sandage, 2006; Watson, 2000) and the potential contributions it has to make to an understanding of "transformational change" (Brown & Miller, 2005). I employ Murphy's framework to model an apophatic vision of a Good Life story–moral purpose (*telos of love and likeness*), moral problem (*dilemma of idealization and attachment*), and moral praxis (*process of subtraction and mourning*).

Following from these considerations, Part 3 then offers a *moral motive analysis* (not yet a working model) of spiritual transformation that derives from recent developments in the study of "moral emotions" (Haidt, 2003) and moral motive theory (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larsen, 2001; Shulman, 2002). A central assumption of this approach, in distinction from some positive virtue models, is that virtue-acquisition and vice-diminishment are not the same processes, and likely require different practices. In brief, the proposed approach suggests that the moral "heart" of character may be meaningfully conceptualized as an associative network of moral emotions (Haidt, 2003) or "other-regarding virtues" (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). These virtues, here reconceptualized as *moral affective capacities* (e.g., empathy, compassion, gratitude), collectively form the implicit and procedural moral motive associative network that enables prosocial action (love). By this view, spiritual transformation whether facilitated in religious, therapeutic, or natural helping settings, is centrally about the "amplification" (Tomkins, 1970) of these moral affective capacities such that the likelihood of 'converting' moral thought-action tendencies into caring behavior is enhanced.

Applying the Murphy-MacIntyrean framework, and within the tenets of relational and apophatic spirituality, Part 3 outlines three conceptual domains that describe the telos, problem, and process of this moral quest. Domain 1 outlines a vision of moral purpose and therapeutic telos (*emerging love and the capable character*); Domain 2 describes the moral problem and therapeutic dilemma (*duplicitous heart and the diminished capacity to love*); and Domain 3 describes an apophatic approach to moral process and therapeutic praxis (*implicit relational transformation*).

But, forgive me; I seem to be getting ahead of the story. Allow me to re-trace the steps of my journey to a place of theoretical departure.

Story and the "Good Life" in Contemporary Psychology

Recent research in personality and social psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2001) has joined virtue ethics and moral psychology (Flanagan, 2002; Lear, 2000; MacIntrye, 1984; Porpora, 2001) in the attempt to understand and define those goods that constitute and promote "the Good life." As a variety of reviews indicate, in the age-old debate over what constitutes a good life, two qualities seen to have stood the test of time (Bauer & McAdams, 2004; King, 2001; Lent, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 1998). The first is happiness or subjective well-being; and a second is maturity (including virtue) or psychological well-being. A first tradition is the *hedonic* (roughly, pleasure-based) approach, which focuses on happiness and positive emotions and defines subjective well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance. A second tradition is the *eudaimonic* (growth or maturity-based) approach, which focuses on meaning making, moral reasoning, self-realization, and virtue-acquisition, defining psychological well-being in terms of maturity (complexity) of ego development. Particularly in this latter tradition, it is sometimes suggested that identity is the "spiritual problem of our time" (Langham, 1982, p. 352). Since the issues of personal identity and the Good life are intertwined, a growing number of thinkers and researchers believe that the best way to unify one's sense of life meaning and purpose is the construction of a personal narrative or "life story" (McAdams, Josselson, Lieblich, 2006). This approach suggests that mature-ing adults continue to bestow unity and purpose to life by weaving the events and details of their lives into a more or less coherent story that integrates them into society in a productive and purposeful way, providing them with a meaningful past and hopeful future. In constructing identity through life story, among other important elements of story grammar, a central process is situating one's self in some moral stance—a perspective on the good—from which the individual can judge the quality of his or her own life and the lives of others. McAdams (1996) refers to this feature of story grammar as the *ideological setting* of one's life story. Ideological setting includes the person's religious, political, and ethical beliefs and values, including how those values and beliefs came to be. Recently, philosopher Nancey Murphy (Dueck & Lee, 2005) has suggested a helpful framework for conceptualizing certain facets of ideological setting. I briefly summarize this framework here for two reasons; it introduces a different approach to virtue than is presently dominant in positive psychology, and in future articles I employ this framework as a heuristic device for organizing concepts related to telos, problem, and process.

MURPHY'S MACINTYREAN META-NARRATIVE FOR CRAFTING A GOOD LIFE STORY

Following the lead of virtue philosopher Alistair MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue* (1984), Murphy (Dueck & Lee, 2005) suggests that psychologists might benefit by formulating mini-systematic theologies of the Christian "quest" more formally organized around the descriptive dimensions of moral telos, problem, and process. In recent years, the quest motif has likewise been used to depict the underlying ethical vision of Aristotelean virtue ethics (Lear, 2003; MacIntyre, 1984, 1999) and the therapeutic process (Frattoroli, 2001). Murphy reminds us that MacIntyre begins his analysis with a lament that contemporary moral theory has fallen into a grave state of disorder, having severed from theology (and other philosophical traditions) the whole concept of the purpose of human life. Murphy expands this dilemma to the social sciences, suggesting that while beginning with the goal of studying how persons and societies can be morally improved, when the call came for a "value-free" science, the social sciences become confused about their own status. Murphy (Dueck & Lee, 2005), therefore, poses the following question to psychologists: "If the secular academy has indeed turned away from a theological account of the *telos* of human life, is it not necessarily the case that secular psychologists will have confused ideas about what they are supposed to be doing?" (p. 56).

MacIntyre On What Makes a Good Life Story "Good"

MacIntyre (1984) notes that not all stories are *good* stories and eventually what makes a narrative good, irrespective of specific metaphysical content, is the satisfactory fulfillment of several criteria. First, he suggests that the "unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest" (p. 219), and that the first requirement of a quest is a clear conception of its final *telos*. A good quest requires a vision of *telos* that draws its conception "precisely from those questions which led us to attempt to transcend our limited conception of the virtues which is available in and through practices" (p. 219). That is, a conception of 'the good' allows us to order certain practices (disciplines) around the central end of developing greater virtue than we now possess. Second, MacIntyre suggests that such a quest "is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge" (p. 219). Virtue-enhancing both draws us into the quest, and the quest itself demands further development in order to meet the challenges required to continue the quest. Thus, "the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand more and what else the good life for man is" (p. 219). Third, a good story is one that specifies particular practices that enable acquisition of the virtues necessary and appropriate to the quest, and *as envisioned within some specific social tradition.* This requires that persons identify with some tradition (if even by default) from which they derive their conception of virtue and virtue practices. In brief, MacIntrye's reformulated conception of Aristotelean virtue ethics states that virtues are to be "understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to over come the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good" (p. 219). Thus, he suggests that no human quality should be considered a virtue if it does not satisfy three requirements: 1) Virtues are "qualities necessary to achieve the goods [which are] internal to practices"; 2) Virtues are qualities that contribute "to the good of a whole life"; and, 3) Virtues are related to the pursuit of a good human being as "elaborated and possessed within an ongoing social tradition" (pp. 273-275).

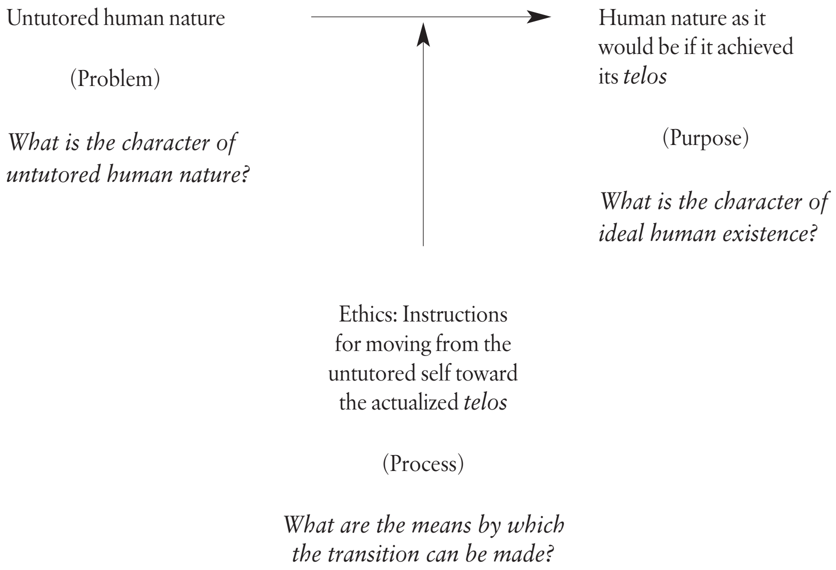
Murphy follows MacIntyre in suggesting that psychological questions about human flourishing, development, deviance, and healing are grounded in some metaphysical concept of the ultimate purpose of human life. Such concepts, MacIntyre points out, are usually provided by religious traditions or in some cases by a philosophical tradition, an *ethos* of some kind. Thus, while ethics is needed to answer boundary questions that arise from the human sciences, ethics also raises a more central question—the purpose of human life—that can only be answered by theology or some substitute for theology. Murphy's central argument, and charge to the integration community, is that since psychological theories of human nature necessarily incorporate assumptions about the nature of ultimate reality, Christian theology is properly a source for concepts of human flourishing and should inform the core of any Christian research program. And, since there is no single Christian account of the good life, she suggests that each tradition is not only entitled but obligated to spell out its theological value-laden account of psychological health, development, and change. As the interest of Murphy and her colleagues was application of the Murphy-MacIntyrean framework to a "radical reformation perspective," in subsequent articles I situate the Good Life story within two different theological cultures, the *apophatic* tradition (Part 2) and the tradition of *orthokardia* (Part 3).

Murphy's Depiction of MacIntyre's Conception of a Good Story

Figure 1 shows Murphy's (Dueck & Lee, 2005, p. 55), sketch of MacIntyre's criteria and organizing framework. Briefly summarizing, it includes three descriptive dimensions for narrating the parameters of a good quest: moral telos, problem, and process. MacIntyre suggests that the original conception of ethics in the virtue tradition was practical instruction that would serve as a guide for development from the original condition of humans toward their ideal state. In such a conception there is nothing mysterious about the status of the moral "ought." Writes Murphy: "If you want to achieve your *telos*, your true purpose, your final goals, then (as wisdom and experience have shown) you ought to do *x*" (p. 55).

In line with her MacIntyrean account of psychology, Murphy suggests that a theology-driven paradigm and related research program in psychology will need to summarize the tradition's assumptions on three issues and related doctrinal areas: 1) the *problematic* of "untutored" human nature (doctrines of Fall and Sin); 2) the *telos* of human development (Creation, Anthropology, Eschatology); and 3) the *process* of assisting individuals and groups in moving toward the stated goal (Salvation and Practical theology). In translating a tradition's ethos into the core of a research program, Murphy suggests "doctrine makes a difference" (p. 30). She notes, for example, there is a real and substantial distinction between Augustinian and Irenaean accounts of Creation and Fall (Hick, 1978), and that this will necessarily be reflected in psychological models of human nature. (Specifically, while Augustine attributed to creatures a predispostion to rebel against God and their state of original perfection, Irenaeus saw humans as originally immature and

Figure 1. **Murphy's Depiction of MacIntyre's Conception of Ethics**


Untutored human nature
(Problem)
What is the character of untutored human nature?
Human nature as it would be if it achieved its *telos*
(Purpose)
What is the character of ideal human existence?
Ethics: Instructions for moving from the untutored self toward the actualized *telos*
(Process)
What are the means by which the transition can be made?

Source: I. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 2d ed.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 1-2.

in need of growing up through an assertion of their God-bestowed freedom.)

In light of certain trends in contemporary psychological theory (discussed below), I believe Murphy's challenge to the Christian psychological community has special significance. I suggest that before we can move theory and research in emotion and spiritual transformation "down the trail" in any meaningful and substantive way, we should first consider some of the promises and perils at work in the ideological setting of recent theory and research. In the following discussion I highlight five reasons for re-thinking the affective basis of spiritual transformation; four of these are treated in the immediate section and a fifth in the final section.

PROMISES AND PERILS IN THE STORY OF *SIMPLE* SPIRITUALITY AND *POSITIVE* PSYCHOLOGY

By various accounts we are living in: 1) a resurgence of interest "spirituality and mental health" (Religion, Spirituality, and Health, 2003), 2) the new "positive psychology" of human flourishing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), 3) the return of "virtue" conceptions of psychological maturity (Worthington & Berry, 2005) and psychotherapy (Nicholas, 1994), and 4) within at least some sectors of practical theology, an increased concern about a possible misalignment of ***end*** (goal) and ***means*** (methods) of spiritual formation (Maddox, 1998). With these trends come several present-*ing* problems, or at least issues of significant debate, which have implications for how we think about the telos, problem, and process of therapy and spiritual development.

Simple Spirituality

Consider first the renewed interest in "spiritual" approaches to mental health. Rubin (2004) has suggested that self-consciously or not, and regardless of theoretical persuasion, therapists likely endorse one of three general conceptions of the Good life, either: 1) a secular and "flatland" view (Abbott, 1984) characterized by materialistic priorities; 2) a romanticized and 'selfless spiritual' view; or 3) some version of a nuanced philosophical-spiritual integration, what the philosopher Karl Jaspers called "philosophic faith" (Chessick, 1983). A number of commentators have observed that most popular spiritual views have a tendency to be rather simple and naïve in their conceptions of spiritual maturity (Porpora, 2001; Rubin, 2004; Symington, 1994). Such naïve accounts fall prey to what Pope (2002) refers to "simple" versus "complex" anthropologies (p. 175). Rubin illustrates popular simple spiritual thinking in this manner. He suggests that while spirituality is not monolithic in Western culture, the following features seem to characterize the spiritual aspirations of a great many people (religious or non-religious): 1) the attempt to discover and embody a 'true' or 'authentic' (singular) self; 2) an idealization of selflessness at the expense of the capacity for proper self-assertion; 3) the belief in some pure (spiritual) state of human existence that is more or less permanently beyond ego; 4) a hunger for as many sense-based experiences with a transcendent order (God) as possible; and 5) the belief that we are mostly transparent to ourselves, i.e., that we are conscious of the motives that move us. Noticeably absent from this list—as MacIntyre has commended—is the notion of a spiritual life centered on the active cultivation of a virtuous character, and training in the disciplines required for the acquisition of moral excellences (arête) and diminishment of vice.

If Rubin's analysis is at least partially on target, in such a climate of simple spirituality, coupled with other deconstructionist therapeutic trends (Held, 1995; Prilleltensky, 1997), there runs the danger of reducing complex anthropological issues to simple theoretic and "solution-focused" practices. Even a cursory review of the recommended spiritual and positive psychology solutions proposed within the APA Special Issue (2003), reveals (I believe) a tendency toward simple spiritual consciousness. For example, the proposed "techniques" for "using religion as a therapeutic strategy" runs the gamut from prayer during a session, spiritual journaling, forgiveness protocols, using Biblical texts to reinforce healthy mental and emotional habits, and working to change punitive God images (p. 40). But with increased interest in the application of spiritual interventions to all manner of presenting symptoms, various writers warn that there is reason to be wary of simple "value-added" techniques (Pearsall, 2003, p. 88). Succinctly, to label an intervention 'spiritual' simply because it has something to do with God does not make it therapeutically more efficacious. Such an assumption depends on one's underlying moral psychology, i.e., how one views the ultimate telos, problematic, and praxis of psychological development and flourishing. It depends on one's theology of Divine-human interaction or "psychology of Grace" (Meissner, 1987).

Not intending here to disparage any gains that clients may have experienced in use of any of these methods, my point is that the assumptions of one's moral psychology are not always carefully considered or explicitly articulated—either in systems of spiritual formation or psychotherapy. To focus the issue a bit more, are we primarily working to educate a *sacred mind*, on the assumption that a change in the explicit and declarative contents of mind will effect change in the nature and intensity of one's motives and emotions? Or, are we primarily aiming to transform the nonconscious structure and directionality of one's *heart*, i.e., motivational dispositions and relational capacities, on the assumption that motives and relational patterns are often implicit and procedural (see Westen, 2002 for a review of the declarative-procedural distinction applied to psychotherapy). While recent theory and research in cognitive neuroscience reminds us we should not be too hasty to demarcate the cognitive and emotional facets of mind (Siegel, 1999), and I will not be suggesting otherwise, there is strong reason to question the sufficiency of certain *decisionist* (rationalist) methods of psychotherapy (and practical theology) to change the affective-motivational (implicit and procedural) level of personality functioning (Lyddon, 1989).[1] As discussed in future articles, this is also the gist of the on-going apophatic critique of the more contemporary and dominant kataphatic approach to Christian formation (Clendenin, 1994; Rohr, 2000).

Further, on what empirical basis are we to assume that implicit and procedural memory system of a person with a history of abuse, for example, can be "undone" *simply* through the method of practicing positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004), or "transcended" through some method of mindfulness training (Baer, 2003)? In contrast, consider an alternative interpretation of the empirical literature on this issue (Westen, 1985, p. 85):

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[1] Recent attempts have been made to analyze different "root metaphors" and principles of personality change that undergird the varieties of moral psychology found in psychotherapy (Lyddon, 1989; 1990) and Christian spirituality (Maddox, 1998). Three models of moral psychology are discernible: *rationalist* or *decisionist, constructivist*, and *transformist*. The approach I propose in Part 3 derives from this transformist tradition (Brown & Miller, 2005). In brief, this approach seeks to develop virtuous character, but less by the addition of virtue to the personality than by the subtraction of vice (Table 1 and discussion below).

> A significant problem with most cognitive [re: decisionist or *kataphatic*] approaches to psychotherapy is the assumption that if one simply helps a patient build a new web of consciously accessible associations, the old ones will go away. We do not, unfortunately, know under what circumstances the building of new schemas will halt processing of information through old ones, but we do know that as a general rule this assumption is invalid.

Westen (1985) quickly points out that this is not simply "another standard psycho-dynamic attack on therapies that get at the 'symptoms' as opposed to 'causes'" (p. 85), rather a legitimate scientific question about the nature and functioning of mind. Thus, the ambivalence of some in the Christian therapeutic community to the turn toward spirituality is the seeming naïve elevation (at times idealization) of certain tradition-specific interpretations of spiritual practices (ones usually rationalistic or kataphatic in nature), and the reduction of other methods to the merely 'psychological' or worse aspiritual. (This, then, will become one of the sub-plots in my particular telling of the story. See Table 1 for a brief review of the distinction between the kataphatic and apophatic approaches re-considered as principles of personality change.) Methods in this later category are typically more emotion- and relationally oriented, and are more apophatic in nature, e.g., ones that seek to activate and process negative as well as positive emotions (further discussed in Parts 2 and 3). Such approaches are not typically represented in main line positive methods (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).[2]

Negativity in Positive Psychology

While few would doubt that positive psychology does indeed study much of what is good and virtuous in human nature, a number of writers have called attention to several limiting trends within the movement, what Held (2004) has referred to as the "negative side of positive psychology." Ironically, some positive psychologists have become, negative and pessimistic about the role that negative emotions can play in personality change and flourishing. Held (2004) suggests that one of the dominant messages of the movement seems to be: "Positivity is good (for you), negativity is bad (for you)" (p. 21). Thus, in positive psychology's exuberance to re-introduce the positive back into mental health, there has been a tendency to over-emphasize simplistic (reductive) and one-sided solutions to the problem of feeling bad. The predominant approach to most "happiness-enhancing interventions" (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005) follows a cognitive "rationalist" strategy (Shweder & Haidt, 1993): to increase subjective-well being through the decisionist enhancement of positive feelings and positive thinking. Defining well-being in terms of pleasure (good) versus pain (bad), the "hedonic psychology" (Kahneman, Deiner, & Schwartz, 1999) upon which much (not all) positive psychology is grounded takes as its goal the maximizing of happiness and the alleviation of various forms of pain and suffering. This emphasis readily links it with behavioral theories that focus on desensitization as the central mechanism of change (e.g., Wolpe's model of reciprocal inhibition), positive emotion theory (Fredrickson, 2001), and cognitive theories concerned with optimistic explanatory styles (Peterson, 2000). From this perspective, one of the main solutions to the dilemma of negative feelings is to "undo" negative emotions by replacing them with positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004). Similarly, the primary solution to pessimistic thinking is a cognitive method that challenges "explicit" automatic and unrealistic negative thoughts (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology now advocates a host of decisionist intervention strategies that purport to accomplish these simple ends, including various mindfulness methods (Baer, 2003), positive emotion-focused techniques (McCraty & Childre, 2004), and other cognitive and attentional control strategies to reduce unpleasant thoughts and emotions (Schwartz & Begley, 2002). And, while strong arguments can be made for their limited effectiveness, problems arise with their unquestioned adoption into a "new" and purportedly more spiritual therapeutic armamentarium, especially when a therapist works within a simple and eclectic 'bag of tools' therapeutic model ("let's try this now").

An alternative message, one more peripheral to mainstream of positive psychology, is that championed by Larsen and colleagues (2003) who suggest it is the "coactivation" of negative emotions and positive emotions, and memories for negative events, that may be instrumental (perhaps necessary) for happiness and positive growth. Painful memories and negative thoughts, in this view, are critical for positive change because they keep negative life experiences in memory long enough to organize and integrate them, allowing persons to "transcend traumatic experiences" and "transform adversity to

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[2] Notably, in the subject index of the recent textbook on positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2007), there is no mention of the term *vice*, nor in the text a discussion of approaches to the diminishment of negative qualities of character (except negative or "ruminative" thinking through positive thinking strategies).

TABLE 1

Synopsis of the Kataphatic and Apophatic "Ways" of Christian Spirituality Considered As Principles of Personality Change

In his brief review of the *History of Christian Spirituality*, Urban Holmes (1981) notes that in each age, as within various Christian traditions, the ways of relating to and experiencing God can be thematized by certain key images or attitudes. He proposes that two dimensions describe differing styles of the "shape and flow of our relationship to God" (p. 4). The first dimension (kataphatic-apophatic) describes techniques of spiritual growth; the second describes the primary effects of these techniques on the spiritual life (speculative-affective). Holmes uses these two continuua to make comparisons between spiritual masters and various traditions within the Christian church, and to describe the objectives of their spiritual practices.

Here, I review only the kataphatic-apophatic distinction, suggesting that they also represent two different principles of personality change, *additive* and *subtractive* principles respectively. Viewed in this manner, the kataphatic-apophatic distinction raises the question of which principle of change is represented by a method of change, whether an emphasis on "imaginal" and behavioral (kataphatic) methods, or predominately "emptying" (apophatic) methods.

Kataphatic Approach as "Additive" Principle of Change

Kataphatic practices are based on active use of the imagination. A person identifies positive (usually) Biblical images, and uses these images as tools for conscious reflection and decision making, e.g., good shepherd, abba Father, obedient servant, etc. Kataphatic methods assume that reflection on these images and concepts builds (reinforces) a sacred mind and consciousness, and through mind and willpower virtuous behavior results.

In psychological terms, this principle assumes that explicit and declarative images function as ideals that guide one's behavior toward Christian goals, and shape one's subjective experience of God. To the extent that reflection upon these images reinforces or adds something to the existing personality, this approach adheres to the *additive* principle of change. It assumes that virtue-acquisition proceeds on the basis of constructions (additions) to one's personality, and vices diminish as virtues are constructed.

Apophatic Approach as "Subtractive" Principle of Personality Change

Apophatic practices attempt to empty one's mind of existing images ("via negativa") in order to discover what *God is not*. Such emptying is not a negation of the partial truthfulness of various images of Divine-human relationality, rather an affirmation that God is not merely, for example, a heavenly Father. The apophatic approach assumes that one must *subtract* existing images of the Divine, self, and other, in order to grow toward greater likeness with and participation in the life of God, i.e., an increased capacity for mature love.

In psychological terms, the apophatic approach is based upon the assumption that unchallenged images of self-in-relation-to-others (including God) can reinforce erroneous (sometimes hurtful) relational experiences with significant others, and arrest further growth toward maturity. Thus, it emphasizes that certain implicit structures (nonconscious or unconscious) must be subtracted from the personality. It assumes that the expression of virtue cannot proceed without diminishment (subtraction) of vice, and that addition of virtue and subtraction of vice are not the same things and may require different methods.

advantage" (p. 213).[3] Similarly, Ryff & Singer (2003) state the case for the importance of negativity (as well as positivity) in this manner:

> We underscore the need to move beyond false dichotomies that separate positive and negative features of the human condition. [We argue for an appreciation of] inevitable dialectics between positive and negative aspects of living . . . Human well-being is fundamentally about the joining of these two realms. (pp. 271-272)

And, further:

> Positive psychology will fulfill its promise not by simply marking what makes people feel good, hopeful, and contented, but by tracking deeper and more complex processes … We propose that these challenges of "engaged living" are the essence of what it means to be well. (pp. 281-282)

Thus, a more balanced approach, yet one remaining positive in its general orientation, would be one that incorporates methods which target both positive and negative emotions, on the assumption that there is much more to virtue-construction (and vice-diminishment) than undoing and positive thinking.

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[3] Even this explanation does not come close to some psychodynamic accounts of the *meaningfulness* of certain negative affect states, i.e., emotions themselves are often memory "enactments" of significant relational experiences, not to be undone, but illuminated and worked through. By this view, some unpleasant feelings are an essential mechanism of the healing process, e.g., control-mastery theory (Weiss & Sampson, 1986).

Ambiguity of Virtue

A third set of issues accompanies the "return to virtue" in psychological theory, research, and practice (Sandage & Hill, 2001). As various writers have noted (Lapsley, 1996), both for reasons philosophical and empirical, virtue-based approaches to moral psychology and psychotherapy remained marginalized for many years. For one, the notion of moral character was out of step with the sort of Kantian moral rationality that Kohlberg had built into his understanding of principled moral reasoning. In recent years, however, there is increasing recognition that personological factors must somehow be integrated into moral psychological theories (Flanagan, 1991). This renewed interest has been made possible in large part because of the shift in ethics away from Kantian themes toward a reconsideration of the classical interest in virtues, a version of which is the Aristotelean approach (Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*) championed by MacIntyre (1984, 1999). As a consequence of these developments, there is now active speculation concerning just how the issues of character and virtue might be reintroduced in a more adequate way in this post-Kohlbegian era in moral psychology. Most writers have suggested that almost certainly a more personologic moral psychology must make room for constructs related to underlying structures of personality and to emotional and motivational processes (Hogan, 1973). For example, in Hogan's socioanalytic theory moral character is a kind of personality structure that encompasses various *motives* for right moral choice and action. Similarly, Blasi's (1984) self model emphasizes the moral qualities of responsibility, integrity, integration as they are grounded in and enabled by an "agentic self" capable of generating such virtues. Consistent with this trend, advocates of positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) have likewise suggested that psychology should be about the task of investigating two important aspects of the Good Life: "human strengths and civic virtues" (p. 2). Subsequently, there exists a burgeoning literature in psychology that endeavors to understand the "human strengths" that constitute and enable a flourishing life (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). As various writers have noted, the virtue construct has become a central heuristic adopted to integrate various areas of theory and practice, including "naturalistic" and "spiritual" models of development (Kass & Lennox, 2005). Virtue approaches to counseling and psychotherapy have also increased in recent years, with applications in both individual (Doherty, 1995) and systemic (Walsh, 1998) therapies.

Despite the promises that the virtue approach may yet bring, several unresolved and open issues are raised: 1) the definitional issue of *what* a virtue actually is, and 2) the issue of *how* virtues are acquired.[4] First, unlike Aristotle's conception of the nature of a virtue (and as understood by MacIntyre above), some contemporary conceptions tend to treat virtues as unitary trait-like, genetically determined dispositions that are relatively immutable (Diener & Larson, 1984; Watson, 2000). And, unlike classical virtue theory that highlighted the unity of the virtues, and emphasized the continuous cultivation of virtue, recent formulations generally view them as independent of each other, each virtue with its own independent literature. Aristotle regarded virtues as holistic ways of perceiving, feeling, and being motivated, sometimes characterized as "wise emotions" that enable right action (Sherman, 2000). He argued that it was necessary to cultivate these enduring states of character in order to achieve the ultimate end of man, happiness defined not just as subjective well-being, but as *eudaimonia* or "blessedness." In turn, a "vice" or negative virtue, what Lear (2000) has cleverly referred to as a *neurtue*, is a nonconscious way of feeling-perceiving events such that one remains relatively unresponsive to the 'given' of a present life situation, and inflexibly repeats (re-enacts) a negative aspect of one's past (e.g., mistrust).

Unfortunately, a major implication of the contemporary genetic/personality disposition view of virtue is its tendency to breed pessimism about the possibility that *relational virtues* (e.g., empathy, agreeableness) can be increased or augmented through appropriate interventions (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999 for a review in the context of religious conversion). Recently, Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005) tackled this problem in their "sustainable happiness" model of subjective well-being. In this literature, when Big Five variables known to influence one's happiness "set point" (extraversion and neuroticism) are considered alone, without considering the impact that intentional activities can make on happiness levels, one grows understandably pessimistic about the possibility of significant change. I suggest that perhaps we may have an analogous situation with respect to virtues related to psychological well-being (agreeableness, compassion, empathy). For example, when aspects of narcissism (lack of empathy) are considered as trait-like entities, not as content-process structures that can be re-formed, even as they have been malformed, it is indeed easy to become pessimistic about the possibility of mature-ing one's "capacity to love" (Fromm, 1956). An alternative view, one more consistent with the Aristotlean-MacIntyrean account of virtue development and change, is that virtues develop and change in a proper "intersubjective" relational context (Shults & Sandage, 2003; Stern, 2004), and when persons engage in "intentional activities" (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) that expand (amplify) certain capacities for mature personal relatedness. Perhaps recent literature on the impact of gratitude and kindness interventions for enhancing happiness provides a guide for future research concerned with the relationship of moral affects to relational virtue acquisition (Emmons & McCullough, 2004; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Unfortunately, to date most outcome measures in these studies continue to focus on variables related primarily to subjective well-being (happiness, physical health), rather than indices of psychological well-being (virtue-acquisition). This is an area of research and intervention that (I believe) holds great promise, and positive research has much to contribute in this regard.

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[4] In a future article I hope to address a third issue of virtue ambiguity, the question of *which* virtues and *why*. Specifically, in *Who Cares?: Relational Generativity and the Moral Emotions*, I expand a recently proposed virtue model of caring capacity (Leffel, 2006) wherein virtues are conceptualized as moral affective capacities that facilitate the implicit and procedural capacity to invest in the growth of other persons (e.g., empathy, gratitude).

A second related issue focuses even more directly on the nature of the change mechanisms by which virtues are acquired. While all personality "growth" (Bauer & McAdams, 2004)[5] involves some form of intentional activity (Brandstadter, 1999), it sometimes goes unnoticed that various models of change emphasize different types of intentional activity. Positive psychology generally prescribes a *decisionist* (cognitive rationalist) strategy of change (Lyubomirsky et. al., 2005), while dynamic, emotion-focused approaches advocate *constructivist* (additive) and *transformist* (subtractive) strategies of change (Fosha, 2000). For example, in some "transformational" models (Brown & Miller, 2005), it is the disclosure and integration (not undoing or inhibition) of negative emotions that is understood to be a central mechanism of personality change (Pennebaker, 1997). Thus, on a balanced reading of these literatures, I suggest that transformist methods and strategies of intervention may be particularly important for effecting changes to the affective *implicit* and *procedural* structures of personality, a topic for future articles.

Thus, a third prescription for future research would be a more affect-oriented model of personality change which derives from the Aristotelean approach, contrasted with the Stoic or Platonic approaches more characteristic of positive approaches. Such an approach would hold that virtue-acquisition involves more than undoing and positive thinking (decisionist methods), and prioritize that virtues are primarily acquired through 1) interactive experiences with and internalization of other persons, and 2) intentional working-through of vices (afflictive emotions) that diminish one's capacity to express virtue. Following Aristotle, it would commend that virtues are acquired just as we cultivate a taste and love of the arts (Lear, 1988). Through exposure to relational skills (empathy) first enacted by others, and then by personal participation in these crafts, one acquires basic procedural 'how to' knowledge of the capacities, and through practice they become increasingly implicit and "automatic" (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999), available later as re-sources for intrinsic goal pursuits (Sheldon & Elliott, 1999).

Credibility Gap "Between" Mind and Heart

Finally, it is of more than passing interest to note that analogous dilemmas can be observed in recent discussions of practical theology (Borg, 1987; Maddox, 1998; McNamara, 1991; Needleman, 1980; Rohr, 2000; Willard, 2002). Briefly, various observers of contemporary Christianity (both within and outside the community of faith) have become alarmed with what they perceive to be a critical deficiency in much present day practical theology. Their charge is that the *end* and *means* of practical theology are not always very well aligned (Maddox, 1998; Symington, 1994). To various observers, there exists a logical and methodological "gap" in (some) Christian anthropologies that locate the sin problem in the heart (affective and motivational dynamics), but then advocate practical methods of Christian formation that essentially target cognitive (declarative) and behavioral, not affective and conative processes.

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[5] These authors distinguish personality "growth" from personality "development" and I will follow their convention here. Personality *growth* is a subset of personality development and refers to a person's "intentional" (Brandstadter, 1999) strivings for happiness and maturity through the selection and implementation of "growth goals" that are self-selected and meaningful to the person. Personality *development* is the more inclusive term and refers to intentional growth, as well as other aspects of well-being and maturity, e.g., the development of intrinsic goal strivings (Emmons, 1999).

Thus, there has arisen a legitimate question as to whether the presently dominant Enlightenment-based, decisionist Christian formation paradigm (Maddox, 1998) is adequate to effect the kind of transformation in the moral heart of character that Jesus himself seemed to have envisioned—a "pure heart" that precedes and supercedes the (merely) good mind and good works of the Scribes and Pharisees (Needleman, 1980). As Borg (1987) states the dilemma: "The mind can believe 'correct doctrines' and leave the heart unaffected; a person can follow the practices and observances commanded by conventional wisdom and leave the self at its deepest level untransformed" (p. 109). Psychotherapists and Christian educators of various persuasions have observed how an imbalance in praxis between head (predominately kataphatic practices) and heart (apophatic practices) contributes to the confusion of persons who complain that they *know*, and even *want* to do the right things, but do not know how to remove the persistent internal obstacles that obstruct their 'will' to do so (the Pauline dilemma, Rms. 6:19-20). A number of commentators have suggested that this "credibility gap" (Maddox, 1998; McNamara, 1991; Wynkoop, 1972) has become a source of much disillusionment in the Christian community.

DOES SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION CHANGE PERSONALITY?

A fifth and (for some of us) the most sobering reason for re-thinking the affective basis of spiritual transformation derives from the literature concerned with personality change and spiritual transformation. In Murphy's analysis (Dueck & Lee, 2005, esp. Ch. 3) she reminds us that MacIntyre's account of the present state of moral theory after virtue began with what he termed a "disquieting suggestion," namely that what present moral theory may possess is only "fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived" (pp. 1-2). I would like to suggest that recent theory and research in the area of spiritual transformation presents its own disquieting suggestion: *Present evidence indicates that religious conversion and spiritual transformation may not effect a significant change in the basic "core traits" that make up "what the person is like"* (Paloutzian, 2005, p. 332).[6] Other social-psychological research likewise has questioned religion's potential to motivate spontaneous prosocial behavior (Batson et al., 1989). While it is not my intention here to review the twists and turns in this literature (see Saroglou, 2006 for a recent review), in this final section I briefly discuss why such a conclusion calls for a clearer theoretical and methodological examination and (perhaps) redirection of theory and research in order to help shed additional light on this critical question.

Another Disquieting Suggestion?

One of the most comprehensive reviews of the literature to date on religious conversion and spiritual transformation related to personality change was organized around the core question: "Does religious conversion cause personality change?" (Paloutzian et al., 1999). Viewing the overlapping concepts of religious conversion and spiritual transformation as distinct but "functionally equivalent" for purposes of their review (Paloutzian, 2005, p. 333), these researchers concluded that some facets of personality seem to change following religious conversion, while others do not. First, they suggest that data presently do not support the idea that a religious conversion results in changes to the "whole" person. Specifically, there is little evidence that "core personality traits" such as those described in the Five-factor model change across time whether a person converts from no religion to some religion or from one religion to another. In the personality literature, these variables are sometimes referred to as Level 1 "dispositional traits" (McAdams, 1994). Inasmuch that three of these dispositional core traits (Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness) directly relate to affective processes, this alone should get our attention. Second, consistent with other research on these variables (Costa & McCrae, 1994), Paloutzian and colleagues suggest that these core traits seem to remain relatively stable throughout adulthood. What does seem to change following religious conversion, however, is not the particular traits (e.g., from less to more agreeable), but the particular form that expression of the traits will take, i.e., ways consistent with that particular religion.

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[6] I am certainly *not* suggesting that our dilemma is similar to the metaphysically "scattered" and theologically disconnected disarray in moral theory as described by MacIntyre (1984). Rather, from certain theological vantage points, the affectional-motivational component of spiritual transformation may not be well reflected in present models and research. I am mindful that the expressed purpose of the review by Paloutzian and colleagues was, of course, to redress this condition by suggesting an integrative model that seems to best fit the present data.

Third, this review suggests that the personality facets that do seem to change are the midlevel (Level 2 "personal concerns") and global-level aspects of personality (Level 3 "life narrative") (McAdams, 1994). For example, midlevel personality changes include the facets of *personal strivings* ("to minister to other people in order to bring them into this family of faith"); *goal pursuits* ("to do my job well as evidence of faith"), and *personal values* and *attitudes* ("I want to be a good Christian"). Global level personality changes include the facets of *self-definition* and *identity* ("before I was a Christian, now I am a Jew"), *life purpose* ("to fulfill God's mission"), and a revised *life story* or *narrative* that highlights how an important turning point has had positive consequences for one's story ("I see now that God used my bad childhood to make me a stronger person").

In a later comment on this review, Paloutzian (2005) concludes that since it appears that it is a person's "meaning" constructs that are most likely to change, not one's core (affective) traits, these data seem to suggest that religious conversion and spiritual transformation is fundamentally about changes in meaning, that "the thing that undergoes transformation in a religious conversion is the person's meaning system" (p. 333). Subsequently, he suggests that "meaning-system" analyses and models (Paloutzian, 2005; Park, 2005; Silberman, 2005) presently describe the processes of spiritual transformation best.

I would suggest that, viewed from some Judeo-Christian vantage points, this provisional conclusion does not come as Good News. This is so, principally, because certain Judeo-Christian moral teachings would seem to suggest that the "righteousness" that is to "exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees" (those with a highly elaborated religious meaning system) involves a progressive transformation of the interior "heart" of the person (Matt. 5:8), such that one's emotions and motives increasingly become more caring and compassionate (e.g., likely one of the points of the story of the Good Samaritan). One of the personality dimensions in the Five-factor model (*agreeableness*) closely mirrors the moral emotion (virtue) of compassion (several of the NEO subscales). This review presents us with the question of why this core trait does not undergo substantial change over the course of spiritual transformation. Likewise, in terms of negative qualities (vices), since the Five-factor trait of *neuroticism* loads heavily on nearly everything undesirable in personality and relationships (McAdams, 2001), would we not expect *some* kind of relative change due to spiritual practices, perhaps even over and beyond mean-level stability shifts in the adult years (Costa & McRae, 1994). How do we account for these conclusions?

As previously suggested, one explanation might be that meaning-system methods of spiritual change (typically, kataphatic practices) may not adequately target affective and motivational processes. For example, different outcomes are likely expected when one reads Scripture to "get to know" God (kataphatic approach), rather than as a "mirror" (Coe, 2000) into the more obscure motives of one heart (apophatic approach). A second explanation is that we have not yet adequately assessed real time changes that do indeed occur, but that are perhaps better reflected in outcome variables other than the Five-factors. Or, third, it could be argued that a central reason the extant data appear to best fit a meaning system explanatory model is that investigators have not yet adequately modeled some of the more important processes of affect transformation in intervention studies of change. Thus, I do not regard Paloutzian and colleagues conclusion "disquieting" because I doubt the scholarship or veracity of their findings. Nor do I think it can be reasonably disputed that spiritual transformation does indeed involve significant shifts in one's "declarative" meaning system constructs. Rather, this conclusion may be disquieting to some because (as Paloutzian acknowledges) it is as "good as far as it goes" (2005, p. 332) in answering the question, given the present state of modeling and measuring these particular constructs and "levels" of personality.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS: BUILDING A MORAL MODEL THAT MOVES US

This article reviewed five trends in contemporary psychotherapeutic and spiritual development theory, suggesting they offered both promise and peril for contemporary psychotherapists and Christian educators: 1) the return of "spirituality' to mental health (the peril of simple and reductionist spirituality); 2) the "negativity" of positive psychology (the peril of excluding negative emotions as a significant aspect of personality change); 3) the return of "virtue" conceptions of maturity (the peril of ambiguous conceptions of virtue); 4) the "gap between" mind and heart (the peril of misaligning therapeutic end and means), and 5) the relative exclusion of the affective and motivational level of personality in present meaning–system analyses of spiritual transformation (the peril of ignoring the "implicit" moral). The objective of these discussions was to consider why the construction of a new framework for emotion and spiritual transformation is likely an important and timely thing to do. In light of these trends, I offered four prospective prescriptions for capitalizing on the promise while attempting to avoid the potential peril. These included: (a) In lieu of a simple spirituality, construct "complex" anthropologies (Pope, 2002) of moral goodness and change organized around Murphy's MacIntyrean dimensions of telos, problem, and process; (b) maintain an appreciation for the role of negative emotions as well as positive in facilitating transformation of the moral-spiritual structures (virtues) of personality; (c) favor Aristotelean virtue models which emphasize the unity and interrelations among relational virtues, and the social processes that facilitate acquisition of those virtues; and (d) focus on affective-motivational processes of change rather than cognitive rationalist processes.

A fifth suggestion is to work toward the construction of *moral motive analyses* of spiritual formation which focus on the implicit and procedural "level" of personality and motivational variables that move us to prosocial action. Toward that end, in future articles I attempt to model a moral motive analysis of emotion and spiritual transformation that gives methodological priority to the affective-motivational (implicit) "story" of personality. As I envision future developments, moral motive analyses (perhaps of various theoretical persuasions) would proceed on the basis of five guiding assumptions that meaning-system analyses do not *necessarily* make. Out the outset, however, it must be stressed that a moral motive analysis is not 'anti-meaning' or reasoning. Both visions recognize that *a* primary function of religion is to provide a meaning-level reference points that define a person's "ultimate concerns" (Emmons, 1999), and that spiritual transformation necessarily involves significant shifts in meaning structures. The two types of analyses contrast, however, in their differential emphases on what level of meaning should take theoretical and methodological priority in spiritual transformation (explicit/declarative vs. implicit/procedural).

I suggest that future moral motive analyses might proceed on the basis of the following assumptions. 1) While they would affirm that meaning-level constructs shape and give direction for the objects of one's love (the issue of direction), they would argue that these constructs alone do not insure the quality of one's implicit and procedural motive and capacity to love (the issue of capacity). 2) Emotions and motives, as lower-level constructs, would be viewed as the implicit moral "heart" of character, a region of personality likely both functionally and neuroanatomically distinct from explicit and declarative meaning-system constructs (Siegel, 1999; Westen, 2002). 3) They would assume that the central *moral* task of spiritual transformation is the development and expansion of the capacity to love, whether this love is expressed in relation to other human beings or to a Sacred Other, and that the implicit level of change takes methodological priority in psychotherapy and spiritual formation, for at least some persons and at certain times in one's "developmental spirituality" (Coe, 2000). 4) Accordingly, moral motive spiritual transformation methods would centrally focus on the expansion (development) and transformation (healing) of the psychological capacity to love, not making the assumption that all persons possess the capacity to do so. While moral motive analyses would view both kataphatic (primarily upper-level meaning) methods and apophatic (lower-level meaning) methods as important, they would give greater priority to practices of implicit affective-motivational change. 5) Moral motive models would likely stress that both positive and negative emotions are important in spiritual transformation, as they act as motives (amplifiers) or as obstructions to the motive and capacity to love (Emmons & McCullough, 2004).

In my view, such analyses would complement (not contradict, as in a competitive model tests) various meaning-system analyses that give greater priority to global- and mid-level processes of spiritual transformation. Hopefully, in time, a comprehensive model might emerge that integrates various levels of spiritual transformation, and one accompanied by corresponding practices. This kind of "multilevel interdisciplinary" approach (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003) would take seriously Murphy's suggestion that doctrine can and *should* make a great deal of difference in the types of models which psychologists construct to study the affective basis of spiritual transformation, a topic to which we will return in the next article.

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