

Heart-Centered Therapies and the Christian Spiritual Path

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Abstract: Healing and growth by means of Heart-Centered therapies taught through The Wellness Institute can assist growth on the Christian spiritual path. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship will be beneficial for therapists who work with Christians or others committed to a spiritual path. The goals of the Wellness therapies and the goals of Christian spirituality, while not identical, are harmonious and complementary. An examination of psychological and spiritual development is seen as crucial for understanding the relationship of these therapy modes to Christianity. The understanding of Christianity, for both client and therapist, is significantly influenced by their developmental level. Jim Marion's work on Christian spiritual development (which uses Ken Wilber's categories) will be related to the developmental model used in Wellness. The work of Paul Tillich and Thomas Keating will be used to shed some light on the Christian tradition.

Introduction

Healing and growth by means of Heart-Centered Hypnotherapy and the other modes of therapy taught through The Wellness Institute can be a significant aid in growth on the Christian spiritual path. The particulars of Heart-Centered therapies have been well-delineated by Diane Zimmeroff and David Hartman in previous articles in this Journal (Zimmeroff & Hartman, 1998-2002). They have also elucidated a model of personal transformation which correlates developmental stages, the seven major chakras, and spiritual and ego expression (Zimmeroff & Hartman, 2001). Our discussion will make brief note of their work, assuming that the reader of this Journal has a fair degree of familiarity with the theories and practices of these therapy modes. This body of work will sometimes hereafter be referred to as the Wellness system or therapies modes.

The definition of what constitutes the Christian spiritual path is more challenging. Christianity as a religion has a vast number of adherents and a long history of disagreement within the ranks of Christians about theology and practice. We will not attempt to sort out these differences. Instead we will present a developmental model of Christian spirituality which will,

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among other things, suggest why such differences may have arisen in the first place.

On the surface there may appear to be conflicts between some assumptions underlying the Wellness therapy modes and certain beliefs in Christianity. These conflicts exist principally when Christianity is understood through the lens of the thinking characteristic of people on earlier developmental levels (the majority of people); the conflicts reduce when the relationship is viewed from the perspective of later developmental levels. Adequate understanding of the models taught at The Wellness Institute also require a higher developmental level. Unfortunately, the number of people at these later developmental levels is a small percentage of the population.

Not only do the apparent conflicts between the underpinnings of Heart-Centered therapy and Christianity reduce as development progresses, so do the apparent conflicts within the Christian community itself regarding matters of historically divisive issues. The model of the Christian spiritual path presented will, therefore, be a developmental model which identifies that the partial views typical on the lower levels are transcended and included in the larger view of the higher levels. The larger the view, the higher the level of the development, the less the conflict. It is notable that the consciousness characteristic of the highest levels of development move toward transcendence of not only the differences within Christianity, but also the differences between Christianity and other religions as well.

One significant example of a difference that is transcended in the process of development would be the exclusivity claims made by some Christians. Specifically, this is the claim or de facto attitude by some Christians that their way of thinking is the only right way, that adoption of their understanding of Christ is necessary for all people, lest those who fail to do so be condemned by God to a fiery hell after their death. The stance of the transpersonal therapist, which would be open to a variety of religious expression, is somewhat ironically in conflict with the narrow exclusivity claim. Higher level development on the part of the Christian will move him or her beyond the narrowness of that claim.

Most people who have written about Christianity did not consider the significance of human development. The influence of developmental models on the understanding of Christianity is not widely known because most people live their whole lives on earlier developmental levels, including most of those who write and teach about Christianity. Because the thought of those on later developmental levels is often unintelligible to

those on earlier levels, it is difficult or impossible to communicate such thought. Even the idea of a large range of development can be resisted by those on earlier levels, partly because the limitations of some of the earlier levels include the tendency to see as absolute truth that which is only relative truth. This, in turn, can lead to intolerance of the perspectives of others, including religious perspectives which would move toward growth or express higher stages of growth.

Societies themselves have developmental levels that correspond to that of individuals; societies in history have not developed very far in terms of what is possible, although there has been gradual advance (Wilber, 2000). People tend to be pulled by social dynamics toward the average level, to advance if they are still on earlier levels, but to face the loneliness of not being understood if they are ahead of their contemporaries. Further developed persons also can run the risk of being the objects of violence if they are sufficiently public or adamant in advancing the perspectives of their higher consciousness among those who cannot yet share that level of consciousness. Among the dynamics that led to the crucifixion of Jesus were his statements such as “The Father and I are one,” (John 10:30) and “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods?’” (John 10:34). Such statements are increasingly intelligible to those moving through the higher levels of consciousness development, but were misunderstood by the religious authorities of his day, who were not as advanced. He was regarded as a heretic by these authorities, and judged from the perspectives of their level of consciousness, they were right. This has been the risk of public exposure of higher levels of consciousness down through the ages; still today, in many places, there is risk in being misunderstood as a heretic or apostate.

Persons with higher levels of consciousness are able to perceive directly the essential unity of God, humans and all creation. But the language which attempts to point toward that unity sounds paradoxical or nonsensical to those on earlier levels. Some degree of experience of mystical union, even if transitory, seems to be necessary for such statements to be intelligible to one.

Another common mistake made by some, both inside and outside the Christian tradition, is that the expression of faith by Christians on the earlier developmental levels is the full flower of the faith. Since it is not the full flower, even well-placed criticisms of these lower-level expressions may unwittingly assume their critique of the lower level expressions of faith are a critique of Christianity in its highest expression.

This is unfortunate misinformation and can needlessly lead people to dismiss Christianity. Sigmund Freud's critique of religion was flawed in this way (Freud, 1928). It is clear there are people in our culture today whose rejection of the church is based either on this misunderstanding or on painful experiences with Christians whose lower developmental level(s) express themselves in narrow and/or hypocritical behavior.

There are a few Christian traditions and writers that have noted development, but such material was rarely mainstream and was incomplete in the range of development covered. This is unfortunate because a better understanding of development is an aid in moving forward in such development. Only more recently has human development been more completely and carefully mapped. Ken Wilber (2000) in particular has pulled together the developmental theories from both psychology and the major religious traditions to construct a more complete model. His view is that modern and contemporary psychology have done a much better job of mapping the earlier developmental levels than had been done previously. Integrating this psychological work with the mapping of the later developmental levels, which had been done by some authors in the classic spiritual traditions, yields a complete map of human consciousness and spiritual development. Both the psychological and religious/spiritual models of growth have been fragmentary, in that they did not cover the entire range of development - psychology ignoring the higher levels and the spiritual writers the lower levels. Jim Marion has made specific application of Wilber's model to the Christian spiritual path in his book *Putting On the Mind of Christ* (2000). This signal work will continue to be a tremendous service to Christians and others.

A further confusion in many people's thinking about spirituality has been called by Ken Wilber (1983) the pre/trans fallacy. This arises from the failure to distinguish *prerational* thought and experience from *transrational* thought and experience. An understanding of development is a helpful prerequisite to making this distinction. This distinction is important for the therapist and client in the interpretation of transpersonal experiences, which can occur at virtually any developmental level and thus be interpreted through the lens of that level. The levels both prior and subsequent to the rational are non-rational. Since the majority in our culture are on the rational level or below, and since there is the tendency to resist the idea of further levels by the people on these earlier levels, those at the rational level tend to see the more advanced levels as regression to pre-rational levels, with which they have experience, rather than advance to

transrational, with which they have little or no experience. Sometimes this confusion is observable in the misinterpretation of Christian transpersonal religious experience as mere regression. Another example is in the popular culture of the New Age movement where the frequent inability to distinguish regressive magical thinking from transrational experiences is a source of much confusion.

*Some Correlations of the Two Developmental Models
of Healing and Growth*

We will sketch the Christian spiritual path using Marion's model, then interweave its relationship to the Wellness system in this section. Again, the presupposition is some significant degree of familiarity with the Wellness processes and models.

The core of Jesus' teaching concerns what he called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. These two phrases are basically synonymous. The goal of the Christian is, therefore, to participate fully in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is, in psychological terms, higher consciousness. Marion writes:

For the Christian, the follower of Jesus, the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven (higher consciousness) is Jesus Christ himself (John 14:6). More specifically, it is "to allow God to transform us inwardly by the complete renewing of our minds" (Rom. 2:2), so that, with St. Paul, we can honestly say, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). This "putting on of the mind which was in Christ Jesus (Philip. 2:5), that is, the Christ consciousness, is the goal of the Christian spiritual path" (2000, p. xiii).

Marion accurately states that the spiritual teaching of Jesus and the saints has not often been understood sufficiently because to understand it deeply requires levels of consciousness beyond that which most human beings achieve. It is, however, possible to understand that such levels exist and even to get experiential as well as intellectual glimpses of these levels prior to attaining them.

The progress through the lower levels to the higher can be facilitated by transpersonal therapy such as Heart-Centered Hypnotherapy and the other Wellness therapy modes. Unhealed trauma that occurred during an earlier level slows or even stops advancement through the next levels. When old wounds tie up a significant amount of energy, this energy is then not available when and where it is needed for further growth. Healing these earlier wounds releases that energy and sets a person free for advancement.

Classic Christian contemplative prayer also moves one through the healing of old wounds. One of the classic terms for part of this healing in the Christian tradition is the purgative phase of the contemplative journey (Keating, 1992). But this prayer seems to do the healing at a slower pace, and sometimes with less specificity as to the source of the trauma, than does deep transpersonal therapy. Whether the lack of specificity is an advantage or not is debatable.

Unhealed trauma results in behavior that is harmful to the individual and/or the people around him or her. The Christian term for such behavior is sin. The term sin has been so misused over the years it may no longer be useable in common parlance without clarifying one's definition each time one uses the word. Among other misuses, this term has sometimes become a club with which to beat people with guilt and shame. Better and more accurate usage would identify sin not primarily as the shameful breaking of rules, but as the breaking of healthy relationship. For a person on certain lower levels of development, the rules are central to being. For a person on a higher level of development, unity with God and others is what is central. The way Jesus uses the term sin is to point to that which destroys or impedes this unity, not the breaking of rules. One of the chief criticisms of Jesus by the Pharisees (religious leaders of his day) was precisely his focus on unitive relationship rather than fussing over the details of religious rules and regulations. Although this seems plain in scripture, this distinction is elusive to those on earlier developmental levels (the majority) and has led to the distortion of this potentially useful term.

Notice that although beliefs are entailed in being a follower of Jesus, the principle goal of the Christian spiritual path is not simply accepting certain beliefs, but rather the attainment of the higher consciousness that Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven. Marion identifies this top level of human consciousness as the nondual level of consciousness. Jesus and the saints, who attained the nondual level of consciousness, would not have used the term. Nor would they have had the knowledge of development that has come with the modern developmental psychologists.

Key to understanding the developmental scheme of Wilber and Marion is the fact that the subsequent developmental level does not negate the prior one, but rather transcends and includes it and all prior levels. In the chakra system of development used by Wellness, a somewhat similar transcending and including is assumed. In the Wellness system the opening of the seven chakras correlates to movement through developmental levels. But, although there is a developmental progression of chakra opening, once

the opening of the lower chakras has occurred, the opening of the higher chakras does not guarantee the complete openness of the lower. In Wilber's developmental scheme, the work on the earlier levels must be largely complete before moving on to the higher, but it is not understood that absolutely all issues on a certain level must be resolved prior to moving on. Unresolved issues do call for resolution, which may occur at a later time. This resolution is facilitated by good therapy. Unresolved issues may draw so much energy from persons that they may not be able to advance to higher levels until these issues are dealt with and brought to better completion.

Jack Kornfield (2000) makes the point that the attainment of enlightenment in the Buddhist tradition does not mean that the mundane problems of life vanish. I would identify Buddhist enlightenment with the Kingdom of Heaven, i.e., nondual consciousness. They are similar levels of consciousness arrived at by means of different cultural and religious paths. Note the following four parallels. Wilber and Marion point to the potential of unresolved issues occurring at stages along the way of development. The Wellness chakra system allows for the possibility or even likelihood of issues relating primarily to a lower chakra occurring even though the other chakras' issues are more clear. Kornfield (2000) points to the need for even those who have high levels of consciousness to also be attentive to the "laundry" - the mundane and the complex of interpersonal issues that can still remain unresolved. Regular self-examination in the context of confession and the reception of forgiveness is a regular part of the spiritual practice of many Christians.

The fact that Wellness uses seven levels to correspond to the chakras and Marion uses nine does not substantially change the fundamental notion of human development that is common to both. There are other schemes of development, which use different numbers of stages. There are other systems which correlate the energy movement in the chakras with healing and human development, which might differ with regard to some details. The essential point is that people's consciousness and other aspects of human beings develop and that moving through integral development (within the context of one's own religious symbols and culture) defines the spiritual path.

The following are the names of the nine levels of consciousness used by Marion who adopts the system of Wilber. The rough estimate of the percentage of the human population at each of the following levels are based on the work of Don Beck as cited by Ken Wilber (2000). Beck's

system of development is called Spiral Dynamics. In it there is a stage which seems to fit between what is below termed the magical and mythic stages. The percentage of the population that Beck identifies at this in-between stage has, for simplicity's sake, been evenly split between the magical and mythic stages and added to the percentages of these two stages. This move will not significantly affect the points made in the subsequent discussion that refer to the distribution of the population across the levels. The key point is that at this time most adults have not advanced to the level of psychic consciousness or beyond; most remain at earlier levels. The levels in order are as follows:

- Archaic Consciousness (characteristic of infants); 0.1% of the population.
- Magical Consciousness (characteristic of children); 15% of the population.
- Mythic Consciousness (characteristic of the pre-adolescent); 45% of the population.
- Rational Consciousness; 30% of the population
- Vision-Logic Consciousness; 10% of the population
- Psychic Consciousness; 1% of the population
- Subtle Consciousness; 0.1% of the population
- Causal Consciousness (Christ Consciousness); less than 0.1% of the population
- Nondual Consciousness; much less than 0.1% of the population

The first seven (Archaic through Subtle) are the levels of a human personality. The last two (Causal and Nondual) are the levels of a human as realized divinity. Here are Marion's descriptions of each along with some comments. The model of Personal Transformation which correlates developmental stages, the seven major chakras, and spiritual and ego expression will be briefly noted as to where it seems to correlate with this system. It is crucial to notice that differing aspects of the human being develop at differing rates. Some aspects are more related than others and thus tend to grow at similar rates. Other aspects are more independent of one another. Because they are describing related but not identical aspects of development, there is an imperfect lining up of the correlates of the Wellness system and Marion's descriptions of the consciousness levels of the Christian spiritual path. Still the connections are significant, helpful and worth noting.

Archaic Consciousness (characteristic of infants)

The archaic consciousness of infants develops through two essential spiritual passages: first, the infant's differentiation of its own body from that of the mother; and second, the later differentiation of the infant's emotions from those of the mother. Critical spiritual principles can be drawn from these two passages, principles that will apply throughout the spiritual path. For example, each level of consciousness will be less egocentric than the last, and each new level will find the mind of the person freer and freer of the limitations of matter. There is a parallel between the consciousness of the infant and the consciousness of early "Stone Age" peoples (Marion, 2000, p. 33).

Magical Consciousness (children)

Magical consciousness is the level of consciousness of the young child ages 2 to 7. The magical thinking typical of this level includes the "polytheistic" world of gods, demons, fairies, and other creatures that inhabit the young child's inner world. A child at this age is often unable to distinguish between the contents of its mind and those of the external world. The child's consciousness is still egocentric and believes the outside world revolves around the self. Magical consciousness was the general level of consciousness in the polytheistic, animistic, tribally-organized ancient world (Marion, 2000, p. 37).

Mythic Consciousness (pre-adolescent)

Mythic consciousness is the level of consciousness of the child from about age 7 to adolescence; it is the first of the mental levels. It is the consciousness of the child's emerging mind or ego. The child at this level believes that the "God in the Sky," much like its parents, can work every sort of miracle to meet the child's needs. It is a conformist, law-and-order level in which everything in the child's parochial world is seen as the "true" and the "best." The child learns to define itself by conventional rules and roles and sees its self-worth in following these "laws" and in behaving properly. Until recently, the mythic level of consciousness has been the dominant level of consciousness in all the world's "universal" religions, including Christianity (Marion, 2000, p. 41).

There are a number of Christian groups which function at the mythic level. This is not surprising, given the distribution of the population across the levels. Sometimes a person will function at a level or two beyond the mythic in their everyday life, but regress to the mythic when it comes to

matters of religion. Marion writes, “for the adult Christian whose consciousness has not progressed beyond the mythic level of consciousness, it is important to convert the whole world to the one true Christian religion (and to make sure that governments enact laws that agree with what the believer has been taught are “Christian” morals) because, in the end, this is the only real way the mythic believer can safely secure his or her own righteousness” (Marion, 2000, p. 44). This has political implications in the world, for example, in the recent terrorist attack on the World Trade Center buildings. Many foreign mythic-level Muslims see the United States as evil and therefore have no sense of this attack being wrong or immoral. In the same way the response of mythic-level Christians and others in the United States to the terrorism often fails to see beyond the surface conflict, and thus moves toward violent so-called solutions that ultimately solve nothing. The black and white views of people on mythic levels (whether in the United States or elsewhere) can often lead to tragedy when applied to complicated problems. The better solution would be the movement of larger numbers of people in both religions (in all religions) to higher levels of consciousness.

Because mythic consciousness level was (and is) so prevalent, Marion writes: “So Christianity, despite what Jesus and his disciples said and wrote, was soon reduced to the level of mythic consciousness and, for the most part, has stayed that way, at least at the popular level, for most of these last two thousand years” (2000, p. 47).

Most people’s experience of the Christian church is mythic. Either the particular congregation’s center of gravity (average level) is developmentally mythic or the individuals experiencing it receive their experience through the lens of their own mythic developmental level or both. Therefore, when and if the person develops beyond the mythic, they can reject the church without recognizing that there are higher expressions of Christianity beyond that which they may have experienced or perceived.

Rational Consciousness

Rational consciousness, the second of the mental levels, is the dominant consciousness of the present age and is the level of consciousness more or less attained by the average adult in contemporary society. In today’s world, the passage from mythic into rational consciousness is the primary spiritual task of adolescence. Teenagers encounter severe difficulty when their Christian denominations do not understand this passage and sometimes attempt to keep adolescents at the

mythic level of understanding. There are a number of ways to assist young people to navigate this spiritual passage; for example, by teaching them a scientific meditation technique and the rules for prayer (Marion, 2000, p. 49).

There are a significant number of Christian groups which function at the rational or vision-logic consciousness levels. Again this is a function of the population distribution across the developmental levels and the tendency of the like-minded to group together.

Vision-Logic Consciousness

Vision-logic consciousness is the highest of the three mental levels of consciousness. It is the consciousness of many great artists, writers, international financiers, scientists, and philosophers. Vision-logic's primary characteristics are the identification of the self with the abstract mind, and the ability to think from many different perspectives. Vision-logic consciousness is global in its interest in, and concern for, other persons. It is capable of grappling with global problems beyond the ability of any one nation or society to solve. Vision-logic consciousness, however, can also have its downside in the form of considerable inner anguish. More and more the leadership in many fields is moving to this level of consciousness. This social movement, however, is seen as threatening and is being opposed by many Christians (fundamentalists of every denomination) whose awareness remains at the mythic level (Marion, 2000, p. 63).

The movement to the psychic level is where the transpersonal becomes normative experience rather than occasional glimpse. Note that the population distribution drops dramatically for this level to about 1%. This is perhaps part of why transpersonal psychology has not become mainstream; the level of consciousness which seems to be required may be available at this point to only a small percentage of the population, only some of whom are psychologists. The various factors which comprise the resistance to belief, as noted by Arthur Hastings (2002), are also key in this regard. Some of the factors Hastings notes are: the fear of being in error, rejection from the scientific community, the perceived need to be rational, avoidance of wishful thinking, the resistance to qualitative method in science in addition to the quantitative, avoidance of dissonance, and other often emotional aspects of the inertia of the existing paradigm. The concerns which comprise the resistance to belief, although more directly the concerns of the rational or vision-logic levels of consciousness, are not

absent from the higher levels. It is crucial to note that the lower levels of consciousness (and often their concerns) are transcended and included in the subsequent levels. In a similar way, the small percentage of population distribution at this level and the resistance to belief are part of why the mystical tradition remains the minority report in the various religious traditions.

Psychic Consciousness

At the psychic level of consciousness we no longer identify the self with the rational mind. Instead, we identify the self with the inner witness that observes body, emotions, and mind. This inner witness is the permanent self, the part of self beyond space-time. The permanent self has senses such as clairaudience and clairvoyance, that roughly parallel the physical senses, and which are referenced in the New Testament. Persons with psychic consciousness may make use of abilities, such as healing by the laying on of hands, prophecy, and speaking in tongues (Marion, 2000, p. 69).

The transition from the psychic level has been traditionally called *the dark night of the senses*. The term was coined by St. John of the Cross four hundred years ago and points to the awareness of the energies of infused contemplation. These energies are what the Hindus term Kundalini. This can often be a time of disturbance and pain, especially if there is significant resistance to what is happening.

Subtle Consciousness

The subtle level is the last level at which our self will be identified with our human personality. At the subtle level, our consciousness becomes capable of receiving direct communications from the causal level, the level of the soul. We gain immediate contact with our guardian angel (the angel of the true self), our own spiritual master, and Jesus himself. All three of these serve as messengers (angels) of the true self and guide us toward our final individuation as a human being (Marion, 2000, p. 105).

The transition to the causal level has traditionally been called *the dark night of the soul*. This phrase has gained popular usage to refer to any time of depression or difficulty. But the term has a specific usage in the Christian contemplative tradition that identifies specific characteristics of experience which would only be possible at this point in development.

Causal Consciousness (Christ Consciousness)

Christ Consciousness is the Christian term for causal consciousness. At this level the Christian is identified with his or her true Christ Self, which is seen as in a spiritual union with God the Creator. At this level one can truthfully say, "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me," as St. Paul said. The person with Christ Consciousness sees all other human beings as the Christ and treats them accordingly. This is the level of true Christian love, which is spiritual love identical to what the Buddhist masters call true compassion. The person with Christ Consciousness is free from neurotic projections and emotional addictions, and is able to live solely in the present, curiously detached from everyday struggles and anxieties. One is able to commune silently with God, now seen as the Great Void or Mother Creator within, from which all creation and creativity arises (Marion, 2000, p. 183).

Causal Consciousness is the level at which the crown chakra opens dramatically to a much more complete functioning (Marion, 2000, p. 184).

Nondual Consciousness

The Kingdom of Heaven, as seen and preached by Jesus, is a nondual consciousness which sees no separation between God and humans, or between humans and ourselves. To put on the mind of Christ, therefore, is to experience this nondual consciousness (awareness) for ourselves. And, once we do put on the mind of Christ, we, like Jesus, will see the Kingdom of Heaven all around us here and now. We see ourselves and everyone else, no matter who they are, as divine. And we will be living in the Kingdom of Heaven right here on Earth (Marion, 2000, p. 11).

Marion's description of the Christian spiritual path is not what you will find in a typical Sunday sermon or the typical religious book that you might purchase at a Christian bookstore. Most sermons and books are written by and for people on the developmental levels with the largest numbers. This is the largest market. They are at where they are at. But Marion's work is accurate. He understands both the Bible and the Christian tradition very well. His application of Wilber's work is sound.

The following is a correlation in terms of approximate ages of the developmental systems used by Zimberoff and Hartman (2001), from The Wellness Institute, and that of Ken Wilber as used by Jim Marion (2000).

The first level in Marion's system is that of archaic consciousness. This typically occurs in infancy, in the age range from 0-2. In the Wellness

system this age range is distributed in three levels across three chakras as follows. First is the root charka - bonding stage. The base need at this level is survival; the spiritual expression is life force. This level occurs from conception to 6 months. Next the sexual charka - exploratory stage, the base need at this level is nurture; the spiritual expression is passion and this stage occurs from six to eighteen months. Then the solar plexus charka - separation stage. The base need is security and the spiritual expression is spiritual power. This third chakra stage is listed as typically occurring in the age range of 18-36 months or 1 1/2 to 3 years. So this age range overlaps with the next level (the second) in Marion's system. It is significant for therapy that so much occurs in terms of development at a very early age. The healing needed because of trauma occurring at these early stages can be done with Heart-Centered therapies which can access these early stages.

The second level in Marion's system is that of magical consciousness. This typically occurs in the age range from 2-7 years. In Zimberoff and Hartman's system, this age range mostly coincides with the level of the 3-7 year stage correlating with the heart charka - socialization stage. The base issue at this stage is belonging and the spiritual expression is spiritual power.

The third level of consciousness in Marion's system is that of mythic consciousness, which is typically the level from age seven to adolescence. This lines up in terms of age with the Wellness stage correlating with the throat charka - latency stage. The base issue here is esteem and the spiritual expression is creative expression.

The fourth level in Marion's system is that of rational consciousness which occurs as a person moves through adolescence toward adulthood. Marion's view is that this is the dominant level of consciousness attained in our society in terms of power (2003). Each level up, the individual gains in power. At the rational level there are a fair number of people. These are not as strong, on average, as those on higher levels, but because of the larger numbers of people on this level, Marion characterizes it as dominant. Wilber's citation of Beck would suggest that the previous level, that of mythic, is more common, but because they average much less power Marion does not see this as the dominant level (2003). In the Wellness system the age range of 12-18 correlates with the third eye charka - adolescence stage. The base issue is identity and the spiritual expression is clarity of vision.

The next three levels in Marion's system do not have as much correlation with the Wellness system as the previous levels. In the Wellness system, the next level is adulthood and correlates with the opening of the crown chakra. In Marion's system, the crown chakra opens at the eighth of the nine stages. The fifth, sixth and seventh stages in Marion's system, vision-logic, psychic and subtle, subdivide the movement toward the opening of the crown chakra. Perhaps the difference is the greater Wellness focus on therapeutic issues and the focus of Marion on stages of consciousness. These foci are related but not identical, and thus the aspects of development on which they focus differ.

The eighth level in Marion's system is causal consciousness or Christ consciousness, which Marion states is the level at which the crown chakra opens (Marion, 2000, p. 184). Marion does not intend to imply that the crown chakra had been closed prior to Christ consciousness, since all the chakras have to be open to some degree for us to live in space-time, but it is at this point that it opens dramatically and definitively (2003). In the Wellness model, the base needs at this stage are meaning and self-actualization and the spiritual expression is enlightenment.

The ninth level in Marion's system is nondual consciousness. This may correlate with the opening of energy flow in chakra(s) located in the subtle body above and outside the physical body.

To review, there are significant correlations between the two systems of development. They are tracking related, but not identical aspects of human development, which account for the divergences. Notable is the Wellness greater attention to the early stages of life, which are so significant in therapy, and the greater delineation by Marion of the upper stages, which reflects his interest in the spiritual potentials of human beings.

One further thing to note about these or any other developmental schemes: although there seems to be a neat, orderly progression of levels, in real life the experience is often anything but neat and orderly. There is a progression, but it may not follow exactly the scheme as laid out. Thomas Keating contends, further, that the better one knows the scheme, the less likely the progression is to be orderly (Keating, 1992). Part of the journey is to step into the fearful unknown, so if the expected next step is too well known, there is likely to be a surprise deviation from the expected. A challenge for the therapist is to assess the level of a client in order to best help him or her continue to develop (assuming, of course, that such is part of the goal of the therapy).

The Goals of Heart-Centered Therapies Related to the Kingdom of Heaven

The goals and underlying assumptions of Transformational Healing through Heart-Centered therapies are given by Zimberoff and Hartman as follows:

... the purpose of transformational healing: (1) acceptance of oneself, i.e., unconditional positive regard for the integrated totality of one's many aspects; (2) the "death of the ego", i.e., transcendence of a narrow definition of our self as separate from the rest of creation and the creator; and (3) preparation for a conscious and enlightened physical death through self-actualized full participation in life (Zimberoff & Hartman, 1998, p. 3).

As has been noted, the goal of the Christian spiritual path, the Kingdom of God, is best understood as the highest level of consciousness, which is at hand in the here and now, more than a state of being after physical death. The Kingdom of God is the nondual consciousness, union with all. The path to the kingdom is an integral path. It includes all dimensions of human life - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

There are inherent difficulties in speaking of transrational stages using terms bound by the limits of rationality. The highest level of contemplative prayer, as are all transpersonal levels, is by nature, impossible to adequately describe. Inevitably paradox arises in the attempt. Yet some things can be said as long as this limitation is kept in mind. We will use several modern writers' interpretations of the transrational, which has been described by mystics, saints and sages of all traditions down through the centuries. We will focus most specifically on the Christian tradition.

What follows are some brief comments on the three goals of Wellness and how these fit with Christianity. The connections outlined will be somewhat expanded in the section that follows it.

- (1) *Acceptance of self* - this relates to Jesus' teaching concerning love of God and neighbor - we receive God's love and thus are able to love God and neighbor. There can be no receiving of God's love at the deepest level unless and until we accept our true self. Our true self is in union with God in Christ. Love of God and neighbor in many ways is virtually equal to self-actualized participation in all of life, if one accepts the Christian definition of what all of life is.
- (2) *Death of the ego* - this relates clearly to what Christians have termed death of the "old self" (Romans 6:6) or the death of the "old Adam/human" (Romans 5:12-6:23). This death, which occurs within

each human being is a necessary part of the Christian spiritual path. Martin Luther said the difficulty and fear concerning physical death was nothing compared to the death of the old self.

- (3) A. *Conscious death* - this is an idea which is not explicit in Christian scripture. But the possibility of conscious death depends upon the development of the higher transpersonal states - putting on the Mind of Christ.
- B. *by means of self-actualized full participation in life* - Christianity in its best expressions affirms creation. In the creation story recorded in Genesis there is the repeated phrase “and God said that it was good,” as each aspect of the world is created. A further affirmation of participation in life is clear in that Christ became incarnate, taking human form. Faithful Christian teaching in various ways encourages this full participation in life.

We will look now at the idea of conscious death, which has both parallels and some divergence with the Christian tradition. Then we will look at acceptance of self and death of the ego, both of which have significant parallels in Christianity.

To die a conscious death is to be at the apex of preparation for whatever comes next. For many traditions, this means movement toward reincarnation. Reincarnation has not been a major part of Christian teaching, although it is not necessarily excluded by the Bible. There is no definite roadmap of the afterlife in the Christian scriptures, although there are some symbols and stories. Because of this lack of specificity, some important Christian theologians, notably Origen, have taught reincarnation. This teaching has been the minority report and would be repudiated by the majority of Christian theologians. So this difference concerning reincarnation would constitute a divergence between typical traditional Christian thought and the ideas around the concept of conscious death, as far as what to expect in the dying experience.

In those traditions which teach reincarnation, the basic teaching regarding conscious death is that if one has developed a sufficient level of enlightenment, one's choices upon death increase, as far as one's next incarnation (Wilber, 2001). The higher the development, the greater the choice. There are a variety of traditions around this, such as the bardo realms (between death and rebirth) being the same as the subtle realms. These subtle realms are those to which we can gain permanent access through sufficient development. For example, if a person has consistent

control over their dreams - lucid or conscious dreaming - then when they die and go to this realm there is some measure of control as to rebirth. If you have permanent access to formless states, the tradition is that you have the option of not coming back at all.

The convergence of the goal of the Christian spiritual path and that of the goal of a conscious death is around the movement toward higher consciousness. Both goals move toward this state of being. For one to have a conscious death, one must be far along the path toward what Jesus taught as the kingdom of heaven. This brings us to the examination of some aspects of acceptance of the self and ego death.

In his article *A Spirituality that Transforms*, Wilber (1997) discusses the distinction between what he calls translation and transformation in personal growth. In his use of the terms translation is the integration at a given developmental level. Transformation is the move to a higher level. Upon arrival at the higher level, initially it may be somewhat chaotic for the person. There is need to do the work of translation, that is, integrating at the new level. Only after a person is settled at that level is the next transformation likely. Wilber critiques translation that masquerades as transformation, a common mistake.

What Zimberoff and Hartman term acceptance of self seems to relate to the translative functions. The goal of the death of the ego is more focused on the transformative. Both are necessary if one is to move toward higher consciousness. Part of the value of the Wellness healing work is impetus for transformation. The possibilities of peak experiences of transpersonal states in breathwork and hypnotherapy are real. Experiences of these temporary states can motivate one to move into the difficult experiences of transformation so that the fleeting states can become permanent stages.

In Christian terms, acceptance of the self and the death of the ego are included in the broadest use of the word love. One way to summarize the integral path of Christian spirituality is to love God and all people. This deepest expression of this type of love is possible only for those participating in a full way in the kingdom of heaven. A summary of the Christian path in terms of this love was given by Jesus as follows.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37-40; see also Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28).

The phrase “the law and the prophets” means all of what God has revealed in scripture and through God’s messengers. In other words, it is the whole of the path of the follower of God.

The path of loving God is a path toward union with God. Jesus was conscious of his fundamental unity with God. Speaking of this unity outraged many of his critics because it was misunderstood by them. Jesus taught that we are to follow him toward unity with God and neighbor, or, put another way, in love of God and neighbor. This second part of Jesus’ summary involves loving the neighbor as yourself. Note that this does not mean love them as if they were yourself, but loving them because they are, in fact, one with you. The nondual consciousness is the direct perception of this union and has effects in all dimensions of a person’s life in this world.

St. Paul describes the nondual consciousness as follows:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

The Christian path toward the Kingdom, toward the nondual consciousness, toward putting on the mind of Christ, involves death. It involves ego death at each stage of development, as one’s identity and consciousness shift in the move to the next level. It involves the acceptance of self at the new level, as well as the integration from this level of the earlier stages, all aspects of one’s self. Each step toward growth leads to more effectiveness in the ability to serve God and neighbor. Loving service of the neighbor means serving all humans and all creation.

The classic use of the terms contemplation or contemplative prayer do not so much point to a method as a state of being. To be in contemplation or to do contemplative prayer is to be in a state of union with God, or at least a state that is significantly down the path toward that goal. One of the great teachers of Christian spirituality in our time is Fr. Thomas Keating. Keating writes: “During the first sixteen centuries of the Church’s history, contemplative prayer was the acknowledged goal of Christian spirituality for clergy and laity alike” (Keating, 1992, p. 1). His, and others’, work of teaching Centering Prayer as a way to enter into contemplation makes a significant contribution to the Church, which often lacks clarity as to the goal Christ gave as the end of Christian spirituality. Centering prayer is a contemporary form of contemplative prayer.

Apatheia, a term used by contemplative Christians, describes a characteristic of those who have undergone significant growth. This characteristic is the experiencing of emotion without being controlled by it. The growth involved to arrive at this state includes much movement through acceptance of self and ego death. Paul Lawson (2001) cites Peter Steinke, Edwin Friedman and others who have done significant work in the application of natural systems theory to Christian congregations. In addition to summarizing this work and sketching the basic method of Centering Prayer, Lawson's contribution is to identify Centering Prayer as a viable means of lowering reactivity in pastors, lay leaders and congregations. Rooted in the ancient prayer traditions of the Christian Church, Centering Prayer leads toward the healthy condition that Clement of Alexandria called apatheia, which is emotional freedom - a calming of the automatic, unconsciously driven passions which define reactivity and lead to problems. Apatheia is one of the fruits of Centering Prayer that can be brought into daily life and ministry. Lawson writes of his own experience in teaching Centering Prayer in a conflicted congregation and notes the following results: an increase by the leadership of mutuality or reciprocity, improved self-differentiation, better objectivity, and increased openness in the congregational system. "A key in both Centering Prayer and natural systems theory is that the individual is responsible for him or herself" (Lawson, 2001, p. 103). There are significant parallels between apatheia and the concept of nonattachment discussed by Zimberoff and Hartman (2002).

The Christian mystics often were mistakenly accused of heresy when they tried to speak of their experience of union with God. Jesus got in trouble with the religious leaders of his day around that same issue, as well as for other issues. The theologian Paul Tillich's concept of God as the "ground of being" and much of his other work is helpful in charting a way of speaking that is not heretical and also articulates what can be said within the limits of academic language.

Rather than speaking in language that implies God is a being within creation, he instead speaks of God as the "ground of being." To speak as if God were within creation would imply that God was subject to the polarities of it. He writes:

The God who is *a* being is transcended by the God who is Being itself, the ground and abyss of every being. And the God who is *a* person is transcended by the God who is the Personal-Itself, the ground and abyss of every person (Tillich, 1955, p. 82-3).

How then do we deal with the personal language of scripture with regard to God? Tillich goes on:

...being and person are not contradictory concepts. Being includes personal being; it does not deny it. The ground of being is the ground of personal being, not its negation. The ontological question of being creates not a conflict but a necessary basis for any theoretical dealing with the biblical concept of the personal God. ...Religiously speaking, this means that our encounter with the God who is a person includes the encounter with the God who is the ground of everything personal and as such not a person. Religious experience, particularly as expressed in the great religions, exhibits a deep feeling for the tension between the personal and the nonpersonal element in the encounter between God and man. The Old as well as the New Testament has the astonishing power to speak of the presence of the divine in such a way that the I-thou character of the relation never darkens the transpersonal power and mystery of the divine, and vice versa. Examples of this can be found in the seemingly simple words of Jesus about the hairs on our head, all of which are counted, and the birds, which do not fall without the will of God. These words imply that no single event among the infinite number of events that happen in every infinitely small moment of time happens without the participation of God. If anything transcends primitive personalism, it is such a saying (Tillich, 1955, p. 83-4).

The difficulty of speaking of the spiritual realm without paradox is illustrated by Tillich's close of his book:

Faith comprises both itself and the doubt of itself. The Christ is Jesus and the negation of Jesus. Biblical religion is the negation and the affirmation of ontology. To live serenely and courageously in these tensions and to discover finally their ultimate unity in the depths of our own souls and in the depth of the divine life is the task and the dignity of human thought (Tillich, 1955, p. 85).

Tillich's theological work is useful in bridging the worlds of academic theology, spirituality, Christian living and transpersonal psychology. This bridge has practical implications and is not merely ivory tower speculation. His description of God as the ground of being is most intelligible to those on higher developmental levels, for whom this is not merely a concept but a direct perception. That the personal is transcended and included in Being itself is a perspective that can enable one to step back from the drama of life sufficiently to gain a higher perspective and potential for healing. The tension between the personal and non-personal in God parallels the tension between the personal and non-personal in humans as we grow.

Concluding Comments

It has been shown how healing and growth along the Christian spiritual path are facilitated by the therapy modes taught through The Wellness

Institute. The parallels in the goals of each result in significant complementarity. Healing of old wounds is a necessary part of growth, which then also involves acceptance of the self and the death of the ego.

The practical application of the developmental insights of the writers examined consists in the ability of therapists to recognize the developmental level, psychologically and spiritually, of their clients and themselves. The connections to the Christian tradition are essential, since that faith tradition affects the lives of the majority of clients and therapists in our culture. Because of the influence of Christianity in both healthy and unhealthy expressions is so powerful, a more accurate perception and use of the deeper potentials of the Christian spiritual path can be potent means for healing and growth. The path that Christ has walked ahead of humanity, in order to lead us to the kingdom of heaven, can include the means of healing and growth of the transpersonal therapies of The Wellness Institute.

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