EMBODIED VIRTUE:
A MODEL OF VIRTUOUS CARING
FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION

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Abstract

This chapter outlines a model of virtuous caring for practical theology and Christian formation. The model derives from contemporary moral psychology (Haidt & Joseph, 2007) and virtue science (Keltner, Marsh, & Smith, 2010), and from developmental psychologist Erik Erikson's (1982/1997) virtue assumptions about the formation of generative care. This model places the *motivation and capacity for generative care* (mature love) at the heart of moral-spiritual maturity, and proposes that the "moral likeness" goal of Christian formation is the embodiment of virtues that 'energize' (the issue of motivation) and 'enable' (the issue of capacity) an emergent capacity for generative care (mature love). The chapter describes how six virtues are constitutive and facilitative of generative care: *mindfulness, empathy, trust*, *compassion, gratitude,* and *forgiveness.* Each virtue is conceptualized as a potentially trainable social skill or relational capacity that motivates and enables a person to perceive, desire, feel, and act in a caregiving way. Suggestions are made about how this conception of virtue and specific model of virtuous caring complements and (perhaps) clarifies John Wesley's "habituated virtue" (Maddox, 1998) model of Christian formation, especially the significance of virtues understood as motivational dispositions of moral character, and the importance of practicing each facet of a virtue in order to "embody" (consolidate) the virtue.[1]

Keywords: practical theology; Wesley's affectional moral psychology; generative care virtues of generative care; moral likeness model of spiritual maturity

Introduction

At their best, all religious, philosophical, and ethical traditions are based on the principle of compassion . . . Religion, therefore, is a practical discipline that teaches us to discover *new capacities of mind and heart.*

> -Armstrong, *The Case for God*; *emphasis added*

> This is the religion we long to see established in the world, a religion of love and joy and peace, having its seat in the *heart*, in the inmost soul, *but ever showing itself by its fruits* [*virtues*] continually springing forth, not only in all innocence . . . but likewise in every kind of beneficence [*caring*], in *spreading virtue and happiness* all around it.

> -J. Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*; *emphasis added*

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[1] Portions of this writing excerpted and expanded from a 3-article series appearing in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 22, 2011 entitled *Beyond Meaning: Spiritual Transformation in the Paradigm of Moral Intuitionism*.)

An Interesting, But "Most Perplexing" Observation

In every major world religion, including most interpretive traditions within Christianity, a central teaching is that authentic spirituality results in the formation of virtues – such as *gratitude, empathy, compassion* – where those virtues are conceptualized both as expressions of and as facilitators (motivators) of some moral norm of spiritual transformation, e.g., the "Golden Rule" (e.g., Armstrong, 2009). Readers familiar with the periodicals devoted to theological ethics and psychology of religion and spirituality hardly need reminding that the "return to virtue" (e.g., Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; McCullough & Snyder, 2000) is now firmly entrenched in the discipline. Beyond the seminal contributions of positive psychology's taxonomy of "strengths and virtues" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), many new virtue initiatives have arisen to catalyze basic and applied research on a multitude of virtues, as well as practices to cultivate those virtues (e.g., The New Science of Virtues, scienceofvirtues.org; The Character Project, thecharacterproject.com; The Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues, jubileecentre.ac.uk; The Greater Good Science Center, greater@berkeley.edu).

Nevertheless, despite a vast literature devoted to virtues, spiritual educators and researchers have been slow to develop virtue-focused models of spiritual education and curricula, models that might also provide an empirical framework for programmatic research in the psychology of spiritual transformation and practical theology. With notable exceptions, there have been few spiritual education programs constructed which incorporate multiple virtues and corresponding virtue practices, and that offer a clear rationale for how and why these particular virtues are related to (some) normative *telos* of spiritual transformation (see Graham, Haidt, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008 for a review of moral education programs).

This article outlines one such model, a model of *virtuous caring* that derives from recent developments in moral psychology and virtue science, and from Erikson's virtue assumptions about the development and formation of g*enerative care*, the "highest" and most mature capacity of personality. It addresses two important issues that must be considered in constructing a virtue approach to spiritual transformation: 1) Which virtues, and why? and, 2) How do we practice virtue? This writing also situates this model of virtuous caring in a particular model of Christian spirituality, John Wesley's *affectional moral psychology* and theology of love and virtue (see Maddox, 1998 for an overview).

One issue of particular importance for a virtue approach is the question of which "emotions/virtues" (Emmons & McNamara, 2006, p. 11) act as "motivators of and consequences of spiritual transformation" (Emmons, 2005, p. 247). In an effort to further advance a "multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm" and moral functionalist approach to spiritual transformation as described in previous articles (Leffel, 2011a; 2011b,; 2011c), this article outlines a empirically-informed model of virtuous caring for programmatic research and curriculum development. Specifically, the goal of *Embodied Virtue* is to rationally construct and empirically validate a virtue model of caring that: 1) takes Erikson's conception of *generative care* as the central moral 'marker' of adult spiritual maturity; 2) conceptualizes the virtue construct as a primary "source of moral motivation" (Shulman, 2002) for moral (caring) action; and 3) describes a particular suite of care-related virtues that current psychological research suggests may be constitutive and facilitative of generative care. Further, the six virtues described in this model may also be viewed as a practical translation (interpretation) of the "capacities of

mind and heart" referred to by Armstrong (above epigraph) which diverse religious and spiritual traditions (including Wesley's Methodism) are concerned to develop. Additionally, the model of virtuous caring outlined herein also provided the theoretical framework for empirical research reported elsewhere in a New Science of Virtue project entitled The Good Physician (Leffel et al.; 2015; 2017; 2018; Shepherd et al., 2018; Oakes-Mueller et al., submitted for publication, March 2021).[2]

Wesley's "Affectional" Moral Psychology

Central Features of Wesley's Theology of Love and Virtue

> True religion is right tempers [*virtues*] towards God and man. It is, in two words, *gratitude* [virtue] and *benevolence* [caring]; gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow-creatures. In other words, *it is loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.* This is religion, and this is happiness, *the happiness* [*eudaimonia*] *for which we were made*.
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> -J. Wesley, *Works*, 7, p. 269; *emphases added*

First, consider Wesley's theology of love and virtue, and his model of moral motivation and spiritual formation, a model that some believe is (perhaps unknowingly) being revived and elaborated by scientists in contemporary Intuitionist moral psychology (e.g., Markam, 2007; Leffel, 2010). In an important article entitled, "Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement," Wesleyan historian Randy Maddox (1998) proposes a strategy for reviving the central Wesleyan doctrine of *holiness of heart and life,* a doctrine which he, as others, believes may be vanishing into generic American Evangelicalism. His prescription for the "present malaise in the holiness movement about the importance and possibility of Christian perfection" (p. 35) is a rediscovery of Wesley's *affectional moral psychology*, and a re-envisioning of the Christian disciplines of spiritual formation (sanctification) in light of this moral psychology. Maddox's central argument is that the practical theology with which the holiness movement now functions is failing to provide the full range of Divinely-inspired means of Grace necessary for nurturing true holiness of heart and life. He challenges, and suggests that Wesley himself would challenge, the adequacy of the *decisionistic* moral psychology that is presently dominant in contemporary Christian formation (described below).

As Maddox uses the term, moral psychology refers to "one's fundamental assumptions about the motivational dynamics of the human personality that enables moral choice and action" (p. 5). It addresses questions about how "free" a person really is to choose and act in a loving manner, what hinders one's ability to love, and what processes and practices are important to effectively free persons to respond more lovingly. Noting some of the attempts by holiness writers to dialogue with the discipline of psychology, Maddox (2004) invites those of us engaged in the critical conversation with psychology to help envision a moral psychology consistent with

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[2] The Project on the Good Physician is a national longitudinal study of moral and professional formation of American physicians over the course of medical training. The project was supported by a New Science of Virtues, The Arete Initiative at the University of Chicago, through a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The author was consultant to the project and primary author of publications resulting from the project.

Wesley's affectional anthropology and "therapeutic" soteriology (2004). In order to do so, first, we must have a clear idea of what Wesley believed was the central goal (*telos*) of Christian maturity, and second, a more precise understanding of his model of moral motivation (i.e., factors that make the goal of Christian love more possible to realize).

Wesley's Fundamental Hermeneutic: The Centrality of Love

Joining with much of Christendom, Wesley identified "love" as the central *telos* of adult development and spiritual maturity (e.g., Lodahl, 2003; Runyon, 1998; Wynkoop, 1972). In numerous writings Wesley attempted to make it clear that "the whole of scriptural perfection" as he understood it was nothing greater or less than "pure love filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions" (Wesley cited in Cragg, 1975, p. 401). In one of his most definitive passages, Wesley wrote:

> Divine *love conquering sinful self-centeredness* is the goal of Wesleyan spirituality. The "heaven of heavens is love." There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love you are looking wide of the mark . . . And when you are asking others, "have you received this or that blessing?" if you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them on a false scent . . . *you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that* love described in thirteenth of Corinthians. *You can go no higher than this.* (Wesley, 1872/1978, Vol. 11, p. 430; *emphasis added*

Contemporary Wesleyan theologian Michael Lodahl (2003) summarizes this central Wesleyan hermeneutic this way: For Wesley, both how God created the world and human creatures, and why God created a world such as ours, can be singularly explained with the phrase, "through love in order that love might flourish" (p. 21). The decision and process of "sanctification" (Christian formation) then is the formational and transformational task of "renewal in love" (Lodahl & Maskiewicz, 2014). However, where Wesley may have departed from some interpretive traditions of Christian spirituality, is the role that he assigned to emotion-related virtues ("tempers") in motivating and enabling loving actions.

The Formative Priority of "Tempers" of Heart

Wesley's model of the Christian life has been portrayed as a character *or virtue ethic* where "meaningful moral actions are grounded in nurtured inclinations (character dispositions)" (Maddox, 1994, p. 179). Maddox (1998) notes that in contrast to the more dominant Enlightenment (rationalist) moral psychology prevalent in Wesley's day, and to the rationalist model in our time, the human "will" is *not* regarded as *willpower* or as a "moral muscle" (Baumsister, 2005) that must be exerted in order to enact moral behavior, and overcome obstacles to loving action. Maddox argues that Wesley's ultimate dissatisfaction with the rationalist or "decisionistic" model of spiritual formation (inherited from his own Platonic-Augustinian heritage) is its assumption that *knowledge* of 'the good' and *will-power* to do the good is sufficient to motivate moral action. As Maddox (1998) puts it, Wesley became convinced that "humans are moved to action only as we are experientially affected . . . [Wesley held that] rational persuasion of the rightness of loving others cannot of itself move us to do so; we are ultimately enabled to love others only as we experience love ourselves" (p. 39). Thus, Wesley regarded the primary motivator of moral action as "a set of responsive holistic *affections* that must be engaged [activated in contemporary terms] in order to incite us to action" (Maddox, 1998, p. 40). Wesley's "mature" vision of spirituality [roughly post-Aldersgate] located the

central focus of spiritual transformation on dispositions of heart that Wesley referred to as *affections* and *tempers* (Maddox, 1994, esp. Ch. 6). This emphasis on affections/tempers as moral motivators of loving action is what is referred to as Wesley's *affectional moral psychology* (also see Clapper, 1989).

But Wesley also held a multidimensional model of moral motivation. In Wesley's "holistic anthropology" (Maddox, 1994), God endowed human beings with three basic powers of personality ("faculties" as he referred to them) that make the emergence of an increasingly mature capacity to love a realistic possibility: *understanding* (intellect)*, will* (affections, tempers)*, and liberty* (freedom to stop enacting un-loving desires and actions)*.* Wesley understood these faculties as gifts of God's "prevenient" presence, and from the right state of these faculties he believed "happiness naturally flowed" (Wesley in Hildebrandt & Beckerlegge, 1983, p. 269). Further, he believed that through the right exercise of these faculties, human beings could once again "morally image" God, i.e., reflect the moral character of God in the quality of our love for others (Lodahl, 2003).

For purposes of our discussion, three main ideas or assumptions help clarify the nature and significance of Wesley's understanding of *will* as affections and tempers. First, consistent with eighteenth-century "moral sentimentalism" (Hume, Hutcheson), Wesley used the state-like term *affection* and the trait-like term *temper* as referents for the "motivating dispositions of the person" (Maddox, 1994, p. 69). Stated in Biblical terms, Wesley viewed these dispositions as the moral "heart" of the person, or the hidden "root" system from which moral choices and actions emerge (Clapper, 1990). Maddox (2001) argues that Wesley's mature understanding of "heart religion" is best characterized as a "habituated holistic affections" model that emphasizes the priority of change of affections (motivational "states") into enduring tempers (personality "dispositions") of character. With this emphasis, various scholars have suggested that Wesley's model of Christian formation represents a type of Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics, where tempers are conceptualized as virtues in the Aristotelian sense of the term (Maddox, 2001). However, Maddox also expresses concern that the "classic" Aristotelian conception of virtue misses much of Wesley's emphasis on the *motivational* and *responsive* nature of the tempers, i.e., that tempers both energize and enable moral action as they are activated by moral features of a given situation (2001, p. 16). Thus, Maddox (2004) argues that "to be faithful to Wesley's distinctive emphases" more attention must be given to "the role of affect and emotion in empowering and directing human choices and action" (p. 108). As I will later suggest, the Intuitionist model of moral motivation and conception of virtue directly addresses this concern raised by Maddox, offering a model of virtue that incorporates emotion as one of its defining features.

Second, more precisely, *what is an affection?* Four features of a Wesleyan affection are generally highlighted. First, they are the "motivating inclinations" (Maddox, 1998, p. 40) behind or 'below' loving actions. In other words, we cannot love without the motivational force provided by affections (and tempers). Affections provide our inclinations (impulses) to action; and, we cannot self-generate affections simply 'on command' by force of intellect and will-power simply because we are "commanded" to love. Actions can be commanded, but affections (from the heart) cannot be willed. We can, however, through use of our *liberty*, refuse to enact a loving response that has been initiated by an affection. Second, an affection (even as the name suggests) involves emotion; thus, the motivational power of an affection has to do with how

emotions 'energize' us to action. But, as we will discuss, emotions are not simply feelings (subjective experiences); when activated, they involve multiple physiological changes to the body and mind that motivate us to take action. Third, Maddox (1998) suggests that in their ideal form an affection "integrates the rational and emotional dimensions" (p. 40) of moral action into a "holistic" inclination to act. This means that an affection is not reducible to either feelings (subjective experiences), or to cognition (beliefs, values, thoughts), or to will-power as we typically use the terms today. In other words, an affection has a "holistic" structure to it that involves multiple component parts. Fourth, while affections motivate action, they are not "self-causative" (1998, p. 40), rather they are responsive to various features of the perceived situation. Specifically, they are "awakened and thrive" (p. 40) in relation to other persons and to God, when activated by specific features of given socio-moral situation. For example, Wesley held that it is in response to our experience of God's gracious love for us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that our affection of *love* for God and others is awakened and grows (e.g., Wesley, *Works*, 11, p. 106).

Third, *what is a temper?* Wesley believed that momentary "states" of affection (i.e., emotion-related inclinations to action) need not be transitory, but can be strengthened into enduring motivational dispositions that he referred to as tempers. In Wesley's terminology, a situation-activated inclination to offer a loving response would be called an affection, while an enduring inclination or disposition toward loving responses would be called a temper. This dispositional feature of a temper is why tempers are equated with the term *virtues*. A virtue is a more permanent (habituated, structured) inclination to be motivated to do something. The difference between a temporary motivational "state" (affection) and a more permanent motivational "disposition" (temper) to-be-motivated-to-act is a useful distinction to bear in mind.

What are some of these affections-to-be made-into-tempers? It appears that Wesley did not leave us a consistent "list" of tempers that he believed were central to Christian formation. Perhaps the closest we get to such list is provided in his sermon *On Zeal* (Wesley, Sermon 92) that includes the following "holy tempers" that he believed (quoting Paul) comprised "the mind which was in Christ Jesus*": longsuffering* [translated as something like patience], *gentleness* [kindness, warmth], *meekness* [humility], *fidelity* [integrity], and *temperance* [moderation]. In other places, Wesley took the Biblical term "fruit of the spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23) to signify the tempers that God's restoring presence was intended to effect, singling out the fruits of love, joy, and peace (Wesley cited in Outler, 1984, p. 279).

Yet, while Wesley did not provide a consistent and definitive list of tempers, in various places he offers us clues as to what such a list might look like. First, in *On Zeal* he suggested that "if any other" temper might be considered, it must be one that represents and is expressive of "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." Second, in Wesley's *Commentary* on the Good Samaritan (see Lodahl, 2009), he offers three other clues. First, he suggests that all persons (believer or unbeliever) are endowed with: 1) a "happy instinct" whereby human beings sense a "kindred between man and man," 2) which is part of the "original constitution of our nature;" and that 3) binds us to each other ("God has strongly bound us to each other"). With these clues, it is reasonable to inquire of contemporary moral psychology what "motivating dispositions" fit Wesley's general description of affections/tempers that are believed to: 1) be "innate" to human nature, 2) that "bind us" to each other as "kindred", and 3) that motivate us to moral action. I will suggest that the model of virtuous caring described below provides one such list of

"motivating dispositions" that satisfies Wesley's requirements for a temper (Section IV).

Understanding affections and tempers in this manner, Wesleyan commentators have noted that the dispositional nature of tempers makes them more like "character virtues" than cognitive beliefs (schemas) or subjective feelings (Clapper, 1990; Maddox, 1994). They are more reminiscent of Aristotle's virtues understood as "deliberative deciding states of soul" (Lear, 1988), or "wise emotions" of character (Sherman, 2000). For this reason, Wesleyan authors have suggested that a neo-Aristotelian "habituated virtues" model comes closer to capturing Wesley's vision of sanctification than any version of a rationalist (decisionistic) moral psychology (Maddox, 1998). Likewise, Wesley's emphasis on the goodness of heart, and the happiness that "flows from" it, has led various scholars to characterize Wesley's model of human fulfillment as a *eudaimonist* model of human health and well-being (Clapper, 1989; Maddox, 1994). With these assumptions, Wesley is much closer to contemporary Intuitionist moral psychology and its conception of virtue, than to the presently dominant and more popular *decisionist* model of Christian formation and spiritual transformation which places less emphasis on the intentional formation of (some set) of virtues.

Wesley's Forgotten Insight: Sanctification as "Enlivening" Affections and "Tempering" (Habituating) Virtues

According to Wesley's affectional moral psychology, Christian salvation and sanctification are preeminently concerned with the renewal of a believer's affections and tempers of heart (Wesley's "will"). Thus, it is important to emphasize that in this model, spiritual formation is *not* primarily a change in the contents of *mind* (Wesley's "understanding") or simply right *actions*, although, of course, both of these components remain important. As Maddox (1994) summarizes, Wesley's typical definition of Christian maturity was focused on the inward dimension of change, frequently referring to it as "the renewal of our heart after the image of God who created us" (Wesley, Works, 11, pp. 272-273). For Wesley, this renewal involves both the *enlivening* of our affections in response to one's experience of the being loved by God, as well as by other persons who "image" the quality of God's love (i.e., *social grace*), and then the further *habituation* of these affections into holy tempers (Maddox, 2001). Since Wesley believed that holiness of thought, word, and action would "flow from" such renewed dispositions he identified the essential formative goal of all Christian disciplines as the recovery of holy tempers (especially, what he called "love").

Furthermore, and of critical importance for a practice-based virtue approach, Wesley's mature moral psychology held that God did not typically "infuse" these holy dispositions instantaneously into the believer in the decisional events of justification or sanctification. Rather, God's on-going restoring Grace, operating through various means of Grace – both Instituted and Prudential (e.g., Blevins, 1997) – awakens in believers the "seeds" of such virtues, and these seeds then take shape as we "grow in grace." One of the important questions to be further considered below then is the nature of these "seeds" from which Wesley believed virtues were derived. Here is how Maddox describes the "mature" Wesley's understanding of the cooperant nature of Divine-human interaction:

> [for Wesley] God *does not* typically infuse holy tempers instantaneously. Rather, God's regenerating Grace *awakens* the "seeds" of such virtues. These seeds then strengthen and take shape as we "grow in grace." Given *liberty,* this growth involves responsible cooperation, for we

could instead neglect or stifle God's gracious empowerment. (Maddox, 1998, p. 41); *emphasis added*

This may be one of Wesley's "forgotten insights" about the nature of Christian formation. For this reason, Maddox suggests that the "habituated virtues" model of formation comes closest to capturing Wesley's vision of sanctification. On this view, there are three fundamental processes that are necessarily involved in Christian formation.

Methodological Implications: Wesley's Three-Process Model of Christian Formation

A first process is the formation (or strengthening) of tempers (virtues). Wesley believed that certain transient (state-like) motivating affections could be formed into more enduring dispositions (tempers) to perceive, feel, and act in a loving way toward God and others (e.g., to be grateful). As indicated in the opening epigraph above, he described the central goal of Christian growth in terms of two tempers: 1) love of God expressed in the temper of *gratitude* and, 2) love of others expressed in the temper of *benevolence*. Wesley believed that equipped with right tempers, we would have "the happiness for which we were made" (Wesley cited in Hildebrandt & Beckerlegge, 1983, p. 269).

A second process of spiritual formation involves diminishing the emotional power of affections and tempers that are "contrary" to those found "in the mind of Christ" (i.e., *vices*), so they are no longer rule the personality and (excessively) restrict one's freedom to love. Wesley held that contrary affections could still reemerge even in a believer whose heart was *predominantly* ruled by the temper of love (Maddox, 1998, pp. 43-44). Thus, the on-going source of "inbeing sin" in believers – even after the "new birth" (forgiveness) and initial experience (decision) of sanctification – is the emotional power of affections and tempers to over-rule one's *understanding* and *liberty* (Maddox, 1994, esp. Ch. 6). Therefore, Wesley argued that contrary affections and tempers that inhibit or obstruct love could and should be changed (e.g., entitlement opposed to gratitude; indifference opposed to compassion). One of Wesley's sermons, in particular, was concerned to describe the dilemma of "inbeing sin" as: "any sinful temper, passion, or affection – any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ" (Wesley in Outler, 1984, p. 230). Thus, he believed that the "therapeutic" (healing) dimension of sanctification was centrally concerned to free persons from the power ("plague") of these contrary affections and tempers.

Third, Maddox notes that a third process is implied in Wesley model, the ongoing illumination or discernment of contrary affections/tempers that inhibit or obstruct the operation of the virtues. Speaking of sanctification as this "negative" (Dunning, 1998) or subtractive process, Maddox (1994) suggests it is "a life-long process of healing our sin-disoriented affections" which involves: 1) "a persistent deepening of our own awareness of the deceptive motivations and prejudices in our own life, which itself requires, 2) "some discernment of that which still needs to be healed" (p. 202). In our model of virtuous caring, and in moral psychology more generally, this capacity for self-observation and discernment is referred to as Reflective Awareness (further described below). In some places, Wesley referred to this process of observing and discerning one's motives as "watchfulness" (see Haartman, 2004, Ch. 8).

Maddox (1998) contrasts Wesley's habituated virtues model with the now more prevalent rationalist-decisionistic models found in various evangelical traditions, including the American holiness movement. He outlines several variants of this model, but in synoptic fashion, here are

the essential features of the decisionistic model of Christian development: (1) to increase a believer's *spiritual knowledge* of the "will" of God (call this the discipline of "knowing more"); (2) to admonish and encourage one another to follow the commands (will) of God by *doing loving actions* (the discipline of "doing better"); and, (3) to encourage one another to steadfast *willpower* in the avoidance sinful actions (the discipline of "trying harder"). Related to this third aim is the teaching which Maddox suggests (1998, pp. 26-27) has become the central teaching of sanctification within the holiness movement, namely the continual *decision* to submit one's *will* to God, requesting a baptism of the Holy Spirit (to be attested to in some experiential and immediate sense), in order to eradicate the evil principle within (the "Old Man" or "carnal mind"), and then continual "refreshing" renewals of the Holy Spirit to retain our decisionistic focus to remain in the will of God. Maddox points out that in contrast to Wesley's dynamic-interactive model of God's Prevenient Grace working in responsible participation with the believer for the restoration of one's ruling motivations of heart, this model has the effect of making God's agency and human agency mutually exclusive, and tends to define sanctification as willed conformity to external actions ("obeying"), not fundamentally as transformation of affections and tempers of heart.

Wesley's Affectional Moral Psychology Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

"Translating" Wesley into Contemporary Language

> "Cultivate that happy instinct whereby, in the original constitution of our nature, *God has strongly bound us to each other."*
>
> > -J. Wesley, *New Testament Notes*; *emphasis added*

> Does gratitude, over time, build people's skills for loving? Does it build their skills for expressing love and kindness so that, even outside the context of gratitude, people who have been frequently grateful know how to show their love and compassion?
> > -B. Fredrickson, *Gratitude, Like Other Positive Emotions, Broadens and Builds*, p. 160

A fourth important consideration in the task of constructing a virtue approach to spiritual transformation is that of determining which virtues should be included in a virtue model related to Erikson's concept of generative care, and one that is consistent with Wesley's affectional moral psychology. As reflected in the above quotes, Wesley's affectional moral psychology and virtue science share a common assumption about the relationship between love and virtue, particularly the importance of "cultivating" and practicing virtues in order to facilitate caring action. In this section, I consider a strategy for integrating Intuitionist moral psychology and Wesley's affectional moral psychology, and then describe each of the virtues in a model of virtuous caring. The integrative strategy proposed is, first, to consider Wesley's own understanding of the affections and tempers, and second, to look to contemporary virtue science for virtues that match Wesley's own criteria for tempers (virtues).

"Cultivate That Happy Instinct"

Briefly consider Wesley's own strategy for inclusion of virtues in a virtue model. Wesleyan theologian Michael Lodahl (1999) suggests that Wesley's affectional moral psychology offers a specific direction for developing a religious ethic "grounded not in the particularity of Christian community and tradition but rather in the (potentially) universal human

experience of empathy," or what Lodahl calls "an ethics of empathy" (p. 162). He argues the need for a universal, creation-centered ethics of empathy that builds on Wesley's understanding of the *natural affections*, and on Wesley's reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Wesley's commentary on the Good Samaritan, Lodahl (2009) notes that it was not the Samaritan's adherence to Scriptural principle (deontology), or tradition-shaped identity (narrative), that motivated the 'out-group' Samaritan to be "moved by compassion." Rather, it was the universal human capacity for two of the virtues in the proposed model of virtuous caring: *empathy* and *compassion*. Viewing the Samaritan's actions in terms of these virtues, *empathy* is a "metacognitive" virtue that sensitizes one person to the condition of another (sensing his pain and suffering), and compassion is a "prosocial" virtue that automatically activates a 'felt desire' (intuition) to do something to alleviate the other's suffering. Together these two virtues "motivated and enabled" the Good Samaritan to "take care of" (generative care) the man in need. (Other Synoptic parables and aphorisms can be read similarly in terms of particular virtues that are highlighted in the story). Lodahl (1999) reminds us that Wesley drew on (but qualified) the 18th century moral theorist Francis Hutcheson to explain the universal basis for human goodness. Hutcheson postulated that human beings possess, beyond that of the five senses, a sixth moral sense. Wesley referred to this moral sense as a "fellow-feeling" or a "public sense whereby we are naturally pained at the misery of a fellow creature, and pleased at his deliverance from it" (Wesley in *Works 7*, p. 189). Note that Wesley's understanding of "fellow-feeling" is identical with the Intuitionist moral foundation of *Care/harm*, and related virtue of compassion.

But Lodahl reminds us that Wesley departed from Hutcheson in asserting that this innate moral sense is not *simply* a natural capacity, rather "a branch of that supernatural gift of God which we usually style, preventing [prevenient] grace." Thus, in his *Commentary* on the Good Samaritan, Wesley identifies this natural grace with "the original constitution of our nature" by which "God has strongly bound us to each other." And, then he suggests that we are to "cultivate this happy instinct" whereby God has bound human beings together, implying that all persons have been gifted with the *potentiality* (the "seeds") to develop this moral sense (instinct) to care for each other. From the vantage point of Intuitionist moral psychology, the five "moral foundations" (intuitions) represent a contemporary version of the Wesley's natural affections that he believed was part of the original constitution of our nature. And, as discussed below, of central importance to this model of virtuous caring is the intuition to *Care/harm*. I suggest that the following model of virtuous caring extends the logic of an "ethics of empathy" to create a more comprehensive and empirically informed model of the capacity to care. These virtues are also consistent with and (perhaps) extend the *caritas* conception of Christian love as discussed above.

Recall from our previous discussion of Wesley's tempers, while Wesley did not provide a consistent and definitive list of tempers, in various places he offers us clues as to what such a list might look like. First, in *On Zeal* he suggested that "if any other" temper might be considered, it must be one that represents and is expressive of "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." Second, in Wesley's *Commentary* on the Good Samaritan (see Lodahl, 2009), he offers three other clues. He suggests that all persons (believer or unbeliever) are endowed with: 1) a "happy instinct" whereby human beings sense a "kindred between man and man," 2) which is part of the "original constitution of our nature;" and that 3) binds us to each other ("God has strongly bound us to each other"). With these clues, then, it is reasonable to inquire of contemporary moral

psychology what "motivating dispositions" fit Wesley's general description of tempers. We suggest that our list of virtuous caring provides one such list that satisfies Wesley's requirements for a temper (further considered below).

Updating Wesley with Contemporary Moral Science: What Instinct? Which Seeds?

When one goes to the recent literature in moral psychology with Wesley's understanding of the natural affections in mind, and his discussion of the Good Samaritan, and then asks the question: *Are there innate "instincts" or "seeds" in the brain-mind that are believed to "bind us together" and that motivate caring actions,* one discovers three things. First, a systematic reading of the "prosocial motives and emotions" literature (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010) reveals that four evolutionarily- and neurobiologically-based, motivational "systems" are consistently described: 1) the intuition (motive) to *attach* and provide care for others, i.e., a "caregiving" system (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006); 2) the intuition to *help* related to a "cooperation" system (e.g., Batson & Shaw, 1991; Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010); 3) the intuition to *reciprocity* related to a "mutuality" or fairness system (e.g., McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001); and 4) the intuition to *repair* related to a "reparation" system (McCullough, 2008, esp. Ch. 6). Each of these innate motives (instincts) is considered an independent but inter-related expression of the human capacity to care (specifically, to *attach,* to *help,* to *reciprocate,* to *repair*). In other words, in a caring relationship, each of these skillful interactions contributes to the building of one another's personal strengthens (generative care). Each expression of care is grounded in an innate, neurobiologically-rooted motive that is believed to be part of the "first draft of the moral mind" (Marcus, 2004, p. 12), and as in Erikson's assumptions work, these motives work together to provide the foundations for the superordinate capacity to care. When these implicit motives (instincts) are activated in the events of everyday life and relationships, they are experienced as *intuitions* that motivate different expressions of caring action. Thus, each of these intuitions may be considered implicit motives related to (expressions of) the ethical foundation that MFT refers to as *Care/harm.* While beyond the scope of this article to detail arguments and evidence for each of these motive systems, it is important to note that for each system there is: 1) a hypothesized distal evolutionary "mechanism" related to the system (e.g., reciprocal altruism); 2) documented primate or early childhood precursors of the system; and, 3) an identified neurobiological "profile" or platform that is associated with each system.

Second, just as the Intuitionist model suggests, in the literature on these prosocial motives, there is a corresponding moral emotion(s) or set of emotions that is "linked" with each intuition, and these moral emotions function to intensify (strengthen) the 'felt desire' (intuition) to act. Collating from this literature, here is the general model of how moral emotions correspond to each of these four motives/intuitions: The intuition "to attach" is amplified and facilitated by the moral emotion referred to as *safety/security*; the intuition "to help" is further motivated by *compassion*; the intuition "to reciprocate" is motivated by *gratitude*; and, the intuition "to repair" is motivated by *sorrow/guilt.*

Third, for each intuition and corresponding moral emotion, there is an associated personality disposition or *virtue.* Collating from the existing literature, the following virtues are associated with the above intuitions and moral emotions. The intuition "to attach" and corresponding moral emotion of safety/security becomes part of a general tendency (disposition)

referred to as *trust* (dispositional trust or "secure" attachment); the intuition "to help" and moral emotion of compassion becomes part of the virtue of *compassion* (referred to as dispositional compassion); the intuition "to reciprocate" amplified by gratitude becomes part of the virtue of *gratitude* (dispositional gratitude); and, the intuition "to repair" amplified by *sorrow/guilt* develops into the virtue of *forgiveness* (dispositional forgiveness). Each virtue is further described below.

Following from these literatures, this model of virtuous caring argues that these four motive "systems" (attachment-*trust*, helping-*compassion*, reciprocity-*gratitude*, reparation-*forgiveness)* represent different expressions of the human capacity for caring (*Care/harm*). Each of these "systems" (neural networks) may be conceptualized as a holistic virtue that motivates and enables an expression of caring. Further, there is growing empirical evidence that these virtues are instrumental to an emergent capacity for generative care (see Leffel, 2011c for a preliminary discussion of empirical evidence).

Affections and Tempers in the Language of Virtue Science

Unfortunately, at the present time in Wesleyan thought, *to my knowledge*, there have been few attempts to translate Wesley's affections and tempers into the contemporary language of virtue science. From my reading of Maddox's descriptions of affections and tempers, however, it seems quite clear that Wesley's affections are nearly equivalent to what moral psychology now refer to as *intuitions*, and Wesley's tempers (habituated affections) as *virtues*. In light of Wesley's view of tempers (virtues) as dispositional motivating inclinations" of the heart, and his commentary on the Good Samaritan, we can now address the question: Which virtues prepare and predispose persons to act in loving (benevolent, caring) ways toward others? When we turn to the contemporary virtue science literature in search of equivalents for affections and tempers, what emerges is a "list" intuitions and associated virtues that: 1) are consistent with Wesley's view of the emotional-motivational role of affections and tempers, and 2) are directly linked in empirical research to various indices of prosocial motivation and caring action. In other words, these virtues are directly related to four intuitions (attachment, help, reciprocate, repair) that may be regarded (in Wesley's terms) as natural affections that are part of the "original constitution of our nature," and that have been demonstrated to motivate caring action. In other words, such a list can be regarded as a contemporary "translation" (interpretation) of Wesley's natural affections (intuitions) and associated virtues. *Figure 1* summarizes this model.
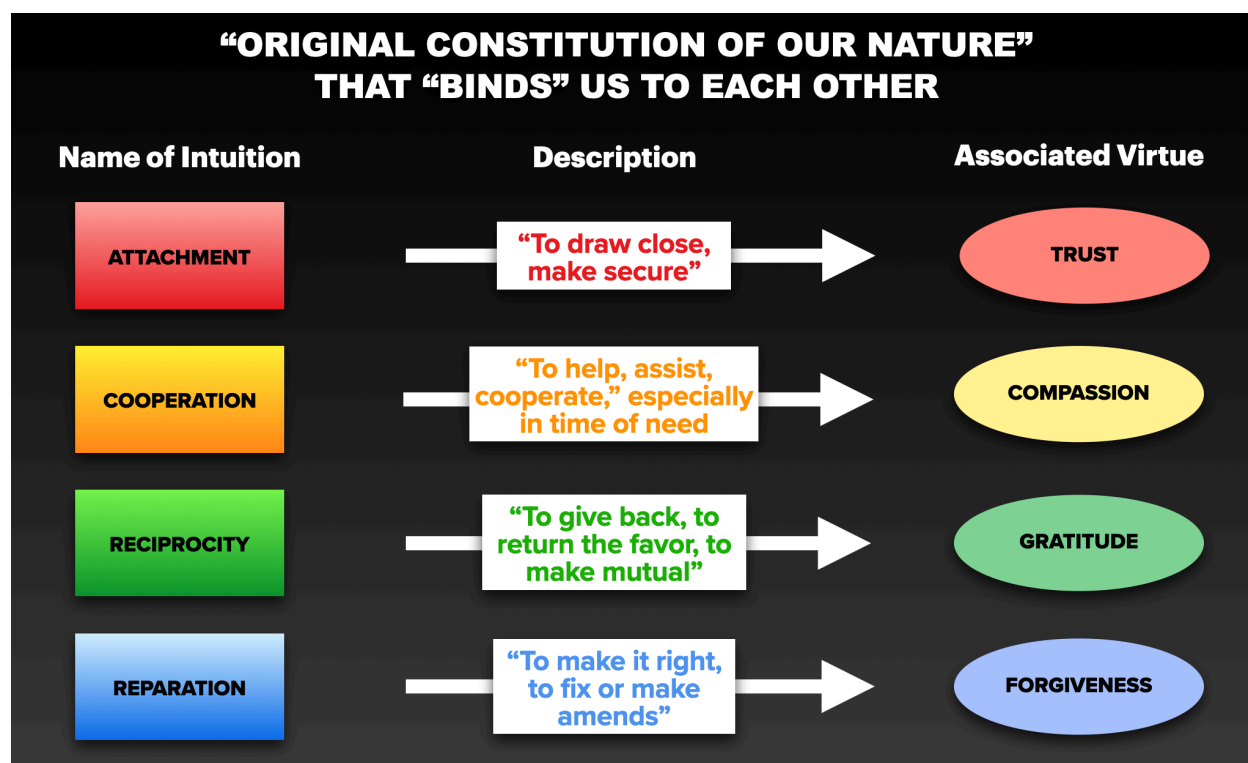
Figure 1. A Contemporary Model of Wesley's Natural Affections and Associated Virtues

Thus, borrowing from contemporary virtue science, we get a more empirically-informed "list" of virtues that are consistent with Wesley's affectional model, but updated in terms of current theory and research in moral psychology. Recent research strongly suggests that these four virtues motivate different expressions of caring interactions (Leffel, Oakes-Mueller, & Sagawa, 2021, in progress). The following section describes six virtues which existing empirical literature suggests are constitutive of and facilitative of the capacity to care: *mindfulness, empathy, trust* ("secure" attachment), *compassion, gratitude,* and *forgiveness*.

Crafted 4 Care

Central Features and Virtues in the Model

At the outset, in describing these virtues, we emphasize that this model is not merely a collation of some of the most popular and well-researched virtues, although they are. Rather, there is an "logic" that explains how these virtues (perhaps more than others) 'hang together' and interact to construct an emergent capacity for generative care. Before describing each virtue, and the role that it plays in facilitating generative care, here is a synopsis of the central features of the model. This model is depicted in *Figure 2*.
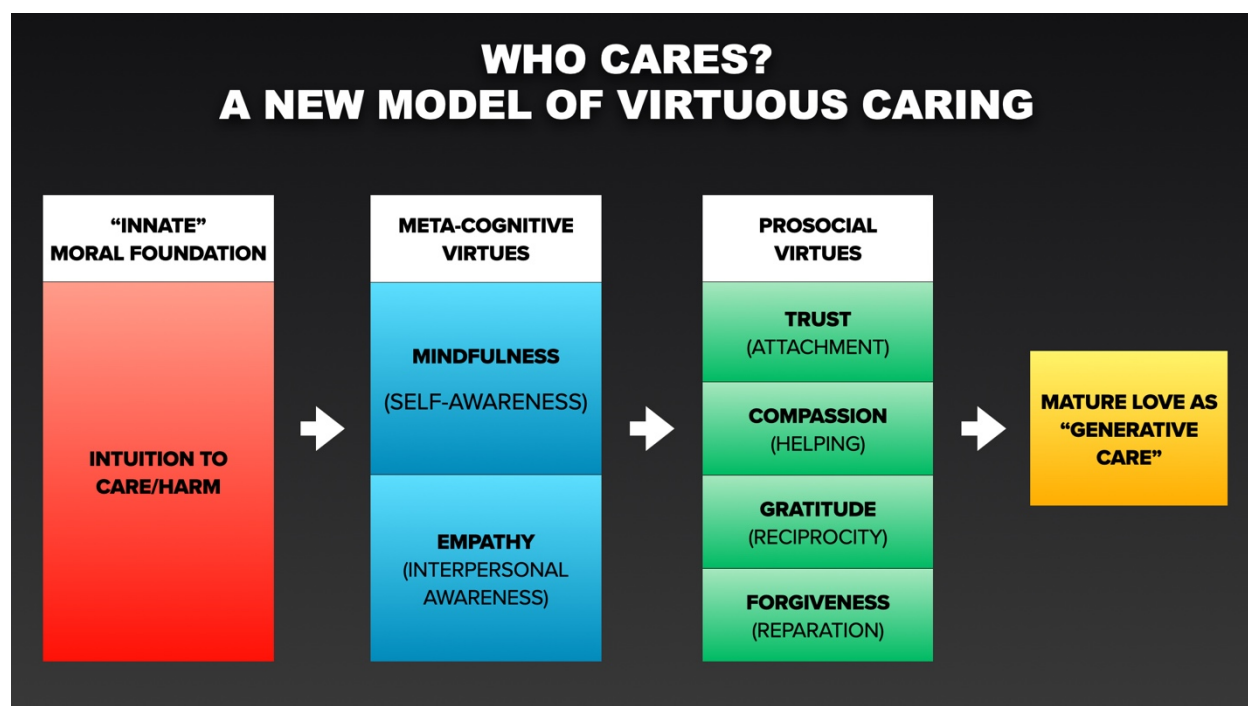
Figure 2. A Contemporary Model of Virtuous Caring

Overview of the Model

 There are seven features of this model to bear in mind as one reads the following descriptions of the model virtues.

 1. *Six Virtues as "Relational Capacities."* There are six virtues (relational capacities) outlined in the model: mindfulness, empathy, trust, compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness.

 2. *Virtues "Enable" the Master Capacity for Generative Care.* Each virtue is conceptualized as an expression of and facilitator of the capacity to care. Consistent with Erikson's virtue assumptions about the formation of generative care, these six virtues independently and additively function to facilitate a higher-order ("emergent") capacity to enact expressions of generative care (i.e., emotional investment in the well-being and personal growth of another).

 3. *Two Types of Virtues.* Following contemporary thinking about the different kinds of virtues as defined in terms of their facet structure (Flanagan), there are two types of virtues in this model. These two types of virtues facilitate different functions in facilitating caring action. Two "metacognitive" (attention-focused) virtues – *mindfulness* and *empathy* – enable persons to engage in Reflective Awareness in their relationships. Four "prosocial" (motivation-focused) virtues – *trust, compassion, gratitude,* and *forgiveness* – "motivate and enable" different expressions of caring.

 4. *The "Facet" Structure of a Virtue.* Consistent with the neo-Aristotelian "facet" definition of a virtue, each type of virtue is defined in terms of the facets that characterize it. Metacognitive virtues focus on the facets of perception and awareness. Prosocial virtues include the facets of perception, intuition, emotion, and action.

5. *The Central Motivational Roles of Care-related Intuitions and Moral Emotions.* Consistent with the Intuitionist model of moral motivation, a first motivational principle suggests that the central motivators of caring action in the motivation-focused (prosocial) virtues are perceptions, care-related intuitions, and their associated moral emotions. Each prosocial virtue can be described in terms of a distinctive set of perceptions that "trigger" (activate) the care-related intuition, and with corresponding moral emotions that "amplify" (strengthen) the intuition. There are four Care-related intuitions at the heart of the four motivation-focused (prosocial) virtues: to *attach* (trust), to *help* (compassion), to *reciprocate* (gratitude), to *repair* (forgiveness).

6. *Meta-Cognitive Virtues and the Role of Reflective Awareness.* A second motivational principle suggests that in order for a person to 'be moved' by an ethical intuition and corresponding moral emotion, one must become aware (to some degree) of the intuition when activated, and the associated moral emotions that amplify the intuitions. In this model, a person's awareness of the intuitions and emotions is referred to as Reflective Awareness. Mindfulness (attention to self) and empathy (attention to other) do the work of Reflective Awareness, and thus are instrumental to optimal caregiving. These meta-cognitive virtues are also referred to as Reflective Skills of Caregiving.

7. *Prosocial Virtues and the Role of Motivated Skills.* A third motivational principle suggests that persons are more likely to act with generative care when four motivation-focused (prosocial) virtues are operative in one's relationships. These four prosocial virtues – *trust, compassion, gratitude,* and *forgiveness* – "embody" different expressions or skills of caring. These prosocial virtues are also referred to as Motivated Skills of Caregiving, because each represents an action or skill that is motivated by other facets of the virtue (perception, intuition, emotion).

Meta-Cognitive Virtues as "Reflective Skills" of Caregiving

Contemporary virtue theory argues that the phenomenological (subjective) awareness of a care-related intuition, and corresponding moral emotion, will motivate a person to respond with a caring action (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). But what this proposition does not explicitly state, but strongly implies, is that a person must become aware in the present moment of one's intuitions and moral emotions. In this model, the capacity for present moment awareness is referred to as *Reflective Awareness.* Reflective awareness is facilitated by two virtues: *mindfulness* and *empathy*. In the language of contemporary virtue science, these two virtues belong to a "class" or type of virtue sometimes referred to as "metacognitive" virtues, because each concerns the person's capacity for attention to self (mindfulness) and self-in-relation-to others (empathy). Before detailing these virtues, since this model suggests that the primary function of the mindfulness and empathy is to provide the necessary capacity for Reflective Awareness, it is important to clarify how this term is understood.

In interpersonal neurobiology (Siegel, 2007) the term "metacognition" refers to the human ability to reflect upon the nature of one's own mental processes, to become aware the flow of thoughts and emotions in one's ongoing stream of consciousness. Reflective Awareness refers to the process of becoming aware of what one is paying attention to, or "awareness of awareness" (p. 13). Beyond this general understanding, however, our conception of Reflective Awareness is closest in meaning to a concept sometimes referred to as "mentalization," a process

described as "an interpersonal approach to mindfulness" (Goodman, 2014). Fonagy et al. (2002) describe mentalization or "reflective functioning" as "the ability to give plausible interpretations of one's own and others' behavior in terms of underlying mental states" (p. 26). In other words, Reflective Awareness is the acquired capacity (ability, skill) to understand the influence of one's own mental state (and behavior following from these states) on the other person as it takes place in the present situation, as well as the influence of the other's states on one's own mental state and behavior. Thus defined, mentalization relates to *mindfulness* in the sense that that both involve: 1) the ability to observe mental phenomena, and 2) the ability to describe or label mental phenomena. Likewise, mentalization relates to *empathy* in the sense that both involve the capacity to: 1) feel with the emotions and intentions of the other, and 2) take the perspective of the other. It is understood that mentalization can become more automatic and implicit through repetitive and deliberative practice, but that in the early stages of acquiring the capacity it is helpful to become aware of how one is reflecting on self-in-relation-to others (e.g., Allen, 2003). In our model, Reflective Awareness – facilitated by the metacognitive virtues of mindfulness and empathy – are critical to the capacity to care because they make one more attentive to Care-related intuitions (to attach, to help, to reciprocate, to repair) that are activated in the situation, and to the moral emotions that amplify innate response tendencies to care. In most other models of moral motivation in moral psychology, something like Reflective Awareness is included in their descriptions, e.g., "moral metacognition" in Narvaez's (2010) model of "mature moral functioning" (p. 173).

1. Mindfulness: Virtue of Attention and Self-Awareness

Consistent with theory and research in interpersonal neurobiology (Siegel, 2007) and affective neuroscience (Johnston & Olson, 2015), *mindfulness* or *mindful awareness* is considered an acquired capacity (disposition) for *intra*-subjective attunement or *self*-awareness. It involves the intentional use of executive forms of attention to notice and become aware of one's own internal states, e.g., bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, goals, and memories. In a metaphor, mindfulness is the meta-cognitive "lens" (Siegel, 2010, esp. Ch. 6) through which we look to observe the contents of our own minds ("flow of information") and hearts ("flow of energy"). In the mindfulness literature there are various (sometimes conflicting) conceptions of mindfulness and the goal of mindfulness practices, thus it is important to clarify how we use this term in our model.

First, Siegel (2010) conceptualizes mindfulness as a "learnable skill" that allows us to see into the internal workings of our own minds, and as "the basic skill that underlies everything we mean when we speak of having social and emotional intelligence" (p. xii). Mindfulness is typically defined as "the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). Second, mindfulness has been conceptualized as both a "state" and as a more enduring (relatively stable) "disposition" of character (Siegel, 2007). Considered as an intermittent state of attention and awareness, mindfulness can vary considerably from one moment to the next, from heightened states of clarity and sensitivity to one's inner experience, to less focused and distracted states like 'spaciness' or rumination (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Studies indicate that while state and dispositional mindfulness are conceptually distinct, they are closely related in the sense that persons high in dispositional mindfulness tend to spend more time in "states" of mindfulness across a designated span of time (e.g., Weinstein, Brown, & Ryan, 2009). Third, considered as a disposition, Siegel (2007) has

suggested that mindful awareness, practiced over time, may become a "way of being" or an attention-focused disposition of a person, not just an intermittent state (pp. 118-121). (Recall again Wesley's concern that state-like affections become transformed into more stable and enduring dispositions called tempers). To regard mindfulness as a virtue is to suggest that: 1) because of inherent capability, discipline, or inclination, individuals may differ in the frequency with which they deploy mindful awareness, 2) that there are individual differences in mindfulness, but 3) that mindfulness is a learnable skill if practiced with appropriate methods.

Fourth, numerous theorists have suggested that the capacity for mindful awareness is a "precondition for morality," and that the development of other virtues depends upon this foundational capacity (e.g., Goodenough & Woodruff, 2001, p. 586). Thus, in this model, while mindfulness is regarded as a virtue in its own right, it is also conceptualized as a precursor to the development of other virtues related to prosocial behavior (e.g., Epstein, 2003). In other words, it is considered an attention-related virtue that facilitates situationally-appropriate forms of caring action, because of the attention and awareness it draws to one's inner states (see Siegel, 2007, Ch. 2 for a review of the neurobiology of mindfulness).

Finally, attentional states of mind that hinder or obstruct mindful awareness may be conceptualized as *vices* since they hinder or limit the operation of the virtue. From the Aristotelian-Thomistic point of view, mindfulness may be seen as the "golden mean" between *distraction* (not enough present-minded attention and awareness) and the other extreme of *rumination* (excessive and misplaced attention and awareness), although the roles that these vice-like states of mind play in obstructing caring action have yet to be sufficiently demonstrated in empirical research.

2. Empathy: Virtue of Attention and Interpersonal Awareness

Empathy is the second of two metacognitive virtues related to Reflective Awareness. Empathy is considered an acquired capacity (disposition) for *inter*-subjective attunement or *interpersonal* awareness. It is a metacognitive process (not a discrete emotion) that occurs in attentive, face-to-face, voice-to-voice, here-and-now interactions. In the virtue science literature, empathy is conceptualized as a set of non-conscious procedural skills (collectively, a *capacity*) that is required to perceive the emotional states, intentions, and the perspectives of others. One useful definition, first offered by Feshbach (1975) several decades ago, is still widely accepted today (e.g., Decety & Jackson, 2004). She describes empathy as "a shared emotional response between an observer and stimulus person" that involves three inter-related skills: 1) the ability to discriminate or accurately read cues regarding the other person's emotional experience (termed *affective cue discrimination*); 2) the ability to experience a range of emotions in order to vicariously share in another's affective experience (*emotional responsiveness*), and 3) the ability to take another person's perspective or viewpoint (*perspective-taking*). Just as mindfulness makes a person more attentive to one's own internal states (intra-personal attunement), so the process of empathy attunes one to the internal states and perspectives of others (inter-personal attunement). In a metaphor, empathy is the metacognitive "portal" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, esp. Ch. 12) that transports us into the *hearts* (emotions, intentions) and *minds* (perspectives) of others.

Note that this definition of empathy differentiates it from compassion, a term sometimes used synonymously, and thus often confused with empathy. As detailed in the discussion of

compassion below, unlike empathy, compassion is a moral emotion that one experiences upon perceiving the plight of another person. Empathy, however, is not a discrete emotion; it is the metacognitive process of tuning-in to the emotional states and thoughts of others (Haidt, 2003b; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). It is the mechanism ("portal") by which we experience the internal worlds of others. Thus, in the process of empathy, the subjective experience one has is nearly the same as the other's subjective state, which is not the case for compassion (Hein & Singer, 2008). Compassion is a feeling that one has *about* the plight of the other (e.g., sadness/sorrow), which is not necessarily what the other is actually feeling (e.g., pain or anger). Thus, while empathy is involved in the elicitation and experience of compassion (and other emotions), they are not the same phenomena (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010).

Second, Feshbach's definition above distinguishes two forms or types of empathy: *emotional empathy* (emotional responsiveness as experiencing the emotions of the other) and *cognitive empathy* (taking the perspective of the other), and these pathways are believed to recruit different neural networks (see Hein & Singer, 2008 for a review of the neurobiology of empathy). In a brief phrase, in the process of emotional empathy one *feels with* what the other feels; in the process of cognitive empathy, one *sees what* the other sees. Although these processes may occur simultaneously, research suggests that emotional empathy (emotional responsiveness) and cognitive empathy (perspective-taking) are different skills; and one may possess one without being particularly skillful at the other (e.g., understanding the views of another, but not feeling with the situation of the other). Both types may be said to "attune" one person to the internal world of the other, but they do so in different ways. Further, empathy itself is not necessarily linked to prosocial motivation (e.g., a felt desire to "help" the other that is characteristic of compassion), whereas there is such a link with compassion (Hein & Singer, 2008). Simply stated, empathy is not an emotion; rather, the process of empathy activates one of the moral emotions (like compassion) in order to elicit prosocial action.

What are the obstructive states of mind (vices) that may hinder or limit empathy? Present research suggests that empathy likely represents the "middle way" between *inattention* (lack of or distracted attention) and *indifference* (insufficient emotional responsiveness).

Prosocial Virtues as "Motivated Skills" of Caregiving

Another assumption of this model is that persons are more likely to act with generative care when a different kind of virtue – referred to as "prosocial" virtues – are activated in socio-moral situations. Four virtues, *trust, compassion, gratitude,* and *forgiveness*, "embody" different expressions or skills of caring. In contemporary virtue science, these virtues are sometimes referred to as "prosocial" (McCullough et al., 2001) or "warmth-based" virtues (Slote, 2001; Worthington & Berry, 2005) because they motivate and enable different kinds of prosocial behavior (actions initiated to benefit the other in some way). They are considered prosocial "motives" because they 'energize' and 'enable' different types of caring interactions with others. For example, compassion motivates and enables "helping" or cooperative behavior.

Recall that following from recent descriptions of virtue in "connectionist" terms, a virtue is a "moral motivational state that prepares a person to *perceive, think, feel,* and *act* in morally appropriate ways in specific situations" (Curren & Ryan, 2020, p. 298). On this view, a prosocial virtue is a moral associative network (neural network) that (optimally) links the facets of *perception, intuition, emotion,* and *action* in an integrated unit that 'energizes' and 'enables' a

moral action. In the Intuitionist model, each of the prosocial virtues can be conceptualized as a variation on this prototypic definition: *A prosocial virtue is an acquired disposition to-be-motivated to enact (the issue of motivation) a social skill (the issue of capacity) that "binds and builds" persons in a caring relationship.* In other words, a prosocial virtue is an action or skill that expresses care that is motivated by the perception, intuition, and moral emotion(s) that is connected to it, not by a declarative proposition that tells the person what they should or ought to do. In any given situation, a situation-specific motivated capacity may go 'on line' to script actions that are expressive of generative care (i.e., that promote emotional investment in the well-being and personal growth of the other).

3. Trust: Virtue of Relational Security and "Attachment"

Trust is the first of four prosocial virtues that motivates and enables a unique expression of care (i.e., "attachment" interactions). Most researchers agree that trust (or "secure" attachment) is a central expression and motivator of caring action, especially in close relationships. For example, in their review of the "attachment perspective on morality," Shaver & Mikulincer (2012) conclude: "attachment security provides an important foundation for optimal caregiving" (p. 260). Recent research on trust draws on Bowlby's (1982) work on attachment theory that conceptualizes an "attachment behavioral system" as an innate psychobiological system that motivates human beings from infancy through adulthood to seek proximity to significant others especially in times of need as a means of obtaining safety and security.

Following Bowlby, recent attachment theory (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006) argues that there is a dynamic interplay between the attachment system and a "caregiving system." Consistent with the Intuitionist model, recent prosocial motivation theory suggests that a neurobiological "caregiving system" provides the somatic platform that makes it functionally possible for persons to care for each other (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2006, pp. 40-46). These authors argue that human beings have inherited a caregiving system that is designed to provide for the safety, nurture, and continued well-being of close others. They suggest: "the caregiving system is focused on another person's welfare, and therefore directs attention to the other's needs, wishes, emotions, and intentions rather than to one's own emotional state." (p. 45). Additionally, these authors suggest that "secure attachment" promotes an inner sense of what Erikson called "generativity" – a sense that one is more than an encapsulated self and is able to contribute importantly to others' welfare. They write: "The sense of generativity includes feeling that one has good qualities and is able to perform good deeds; strong feelings of self-efficacy for being helpful when needed; confidence in one's interpersonal skills; and heightened feelings of love, communion, and connectedness with respect to a relationship partner" (p. 46). They refer to generative care as "a truly altruistic form of compassionate form of love" which others have referred to as *agape* love (p. 46). It is important to note that that various styles of "insecure" (anxious, avoidant) attachment (i.e., assumptions and styles about *how-to-be-close* with another person) may interfere with one's ability to extend care to others. They suggest that: "Activation of the attachment system can interfere with the caregiving system because potential caregivers may feel that obtaining safety and care for themselves is more urgent than providing care and support for others" (p. 260). Thus, "secure" attachment provides a critical foundation for optimal caregiving.

Persons who possess dispositional trust are characterized by a "secure" style of attachment, contrasted with an "insecure" style (avoidant or anxious). Mikulincer & Shaver (2005) define attachment security as a "pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors that results from internalization of a particular history of attachment experiences" (p. 149). One's style of attachment functions as an internal working model for present and future relationships as it is used to make predictions about how relationships are likely to work. Extending Bowlby's (1982) notion of internal working models, *secure* persons are believed to possess positive working models of both self and other; *anxious* persons have a negative model of self and positive view of the other; and *avoidant* persons have negative models of both self and other (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Secure attachment indicates the degree to which persons feel "comfort with closeness" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and have confidence in one's skills and competencies (positive model of self) and expectations that others will behave in a caring manner toward them (positive model of other). Deviations from a secure style are conceptualized along two orthogonal dimensions, attachment anxiety and avoidance. In contrast, anxious persons are believed to possess a negative model of self but positive model of the other, where anxious attachment indicates the degree to which a person worries that others will not be available and responsive in times of need. Avoidant persons are believed to possess negative views of both self and other, thus avoidant attachment indicates the extent to which one distrusts others' goodwill and thus strives to maintain independence and emotional distance from others. Both anxious and avoidant styles are believed to possess internalized representations of others of frustrating or unavailable attachment figures and hence suffer from a continuing sense of attachment insecurity.

When considering the relative absence of trust in terms of insecure attachment styles as *vices* (states of mind) that may inhibit or obstruct the capacity to trust, the current attachment style literature suggests that secure trust represents the "golden mean" between *anxious mistrust* (insecurity that others will be responsive) and *avoidant mistrust* (reluctance to open and share one's self with others).

4. Compassion: Virtue of Perceived Need and "Helping"

Compassion is the second four prosocial virtue that motivates and enables a unique expression of care (i.e., "helping" or cooperative interactions). Most compassion researchers agree that compassion, like trust, is a primary expression and motivator of caring actions. For example, one review of the literature on compassion concludes: "we would expect the experience of compassion to be associated with increased care and concern for the other, reduced focus on one's own needs, and a desire to help the other for his or her own sake" (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 361). Following this review, compassion is here defined as "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help" (p. 351). Consistent with the Intuitionist conception of moral motivation and virtue, compassion refers to the feeling one experiences (moral emotion) when witnessing someone in need or distress (perception), accompanied by a 'felt desire' to assist the other in some way (intuition). This definition of compassion thus distinguishes it from other theoretical accounts of compassion that view it primarily as a transient emotional state (Haidt, 2003b), or as a general benevolent response to others regardless of suffering or blame (e.g., Post, 2002). Second, as indicated in the discussion of empathy, this definition also distinguishes compassion from the term empathy with which it is frequently confused. For example, in some empirical literature, compassion is

referred to as "state empathy" which is then defined as a feeling of "warmth and compassion" toward another person (Batson, 1990; 1991). In other places, the generalized tendency to emotionally connect to others has been referred to as "empathic concern" (Davis, 1983), but is then defined in terms of one's emotional reaction to another's suffering (e.g., Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987). Thus, according to the definition above, both of these terms confound the metacognitive capacity for empathy with the emotion of compassion, which is but one emotion that can be elicited by empathy. Positive emotions too can be elicited in the process of empathy (Telle & Pfister, 2016). Following these distinctions, the terms "state empathy" or "empathic concern" are better classified as constructs related to compassion (see Goetz, Keltner, Simon-Thomas, 2010 for more on these distinctions).

What are vices that obstruct or inhibit compassion? It is likely that compassion represents the "golden mean" between the obstructive extremes of *personal distress* (preoccupation with one's own distress at the other's suffering) and *pity* (looking 'down' or distancing one's self from the other's plight).

5. Gratitude: Virtue of Appreciation and "Reciprocity"

Gratitude is the third of four prosocial virtues that motivates and enables a unique expression of caring (i.e., "reciprocal" or mutual interactions). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines gratitude as "the quality and condition of being thankful; the appreciation of and inclination to return kindness" (p. 1135). It has been proposed that the very concept of generativity "can be seen as an outgrowth of gratitude" (McAdams & Bauer, 2014, p. 95). Consistent with Erikson's assumption about generative care, some research indicates that among the most generative adults, the desire to express gratitude for the benefits they have enjoyed in life, or even life itself, becomes a major theme in their life stories (McAdams, 2001). Like trust and compassion, most gratitude researchers agree that gratitude is a primary expression and motivator of not simply "helping" behavior, but *reciprocal* interactions. Representing this view, Bartlett & DeSteno (2006) conclude: "[g]ratitude functions to nurture social relationships through its encouragement of reciprocal, prosocial behavior between a benefactor and recipient" (p. 319). Beyond the effect of direct reciprocity, recent theory and research documents that gratitude also promotes another form of reciprocal altruism, sometimes called *upstream reciprocity*, which occurs when a person receiving benefits from another person 'pays it forward' to a third party, not only to the immediate benefactor (e.g., Nowak & Roch, 2007). Gratitude also functions in personal relationships to "find-remind-bind" persons in forming and strengthening social bonds and friendship relationships (Algoe, 2012). Algoe's theory suggests that gratitude, first, helps persons recognize the thoughtfulness of others, thus helping one "find" or identify people who are good candidates for quality relationships; to "remind" people of the goodness in their current relationships; and to "bind" partners by making them feel appreciated and encouraging relationship enhancing actions that prolong and enrich their relationship.

Considering gratitude in terms of *vices* that may inhibit or obstruct grateful giving, existing research suggests that gratitude represents the "middle way" between *indebtedness* (feeling more 'debt' than desire to give) and *entitlement* (feeling that one is owed more than one has received).

6. Forgiveness: Virtue of Acceptance and "Reparation"

Forgiveness is the fourth prosocial virtue that motivates and enables a unique expression of caring (i.e., "reparative" interactions). In the prosocial motives and emotions literature, forgiveness is considered another of the prosocial "instincts" (motives) that provides the emotional basis for reciprocal altruism (e.g., McCullough, 2008, esp. Ch. 6). Most forgiveness researchers agree that it is a primary expression and motivator of (not simply) prosocial behavior, but specifically reparative interactions that are necessary following disruptions or conflict in the relationship. For example, one review of the literature on forgiveness concludes that: "social harmony will therefore depend largely on people's ability and willingness to repair the interpersonal damage [that] conflicts cause" (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004, p. 894).

Compared to the other prosocial virtues, there seems to be no universally accepted definition of forgiveness, due in large part to the many types of situations that can involve forgiveness (e.g., distant vs. close others, self-forgiveness, different types of transgressions, etc.). However, one useful definition describes forgiveness as "a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly hurt us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her" (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998, pp. 46-47). It is generally agreed that forgiveness is distinct from reconciliation, a term that implies an attempt to repair or restore a fractured relationship. The former is sometimes called *private forgiveness* or *emotional forgiveness*, and the latter *reconciliation* or *interpersonal forgiveness*. On this view, forgiveness is first and foremost an *intra*-personal event, understood as the process of accepting and letting go of hurtful and vengeful feelings), and is only secondarily an *inter*-personal event that may involve reconciliation as appropriate to the situation. Forgiveness becomes important when one person perceives he/she has been violated or betrayed by another, where *betrayal* is defined as "the perceived violation of an implicit or explicit relationship-relevant norm" (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002, p. 957). Viewed as an intra-psychic phenomenon, one decides to live the process of forgiveness in order to "set yourself free" (Post & Neimark, 2007, p. 74) from the painful and deleterious long-term effects of negative emotions and retaliatory desires and actions. Forgiveness as acceptance, therefore, is an intrapsychic process of getting over one's ill will and negative emotions, and replacing those negative with positives such as wishing the offender well, or hoping for a restored or improved relationship. Forgiveness as reconciliation may not always be possible or advisable, given the character and willingness of the offenders to (e.g., excessive defensiveness and/or self-justification).

There is general agreement that forgiveness is an on-going process that involves the following features: 1) it is both a decision and process, i.e., a decision to enter a process of emotional forgiveness (e.g., Worthington, Sharp, Lerner, & Sharp, 2006); 2) accepting and (gradually) letting go of negative feelings and retaliatory desires toward the transgressor (e.g., Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Lann, 2001); 3) possibly re-establishing a feeling of forgiveness ("goodwill") or warm feelings and benevolent intentions toward the other (e.g., Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004; 4) exercising empathy and promoting a feeling compassion for the transgressor (e.g., McCullough, 2001); and 5) efforts to behave toward the other in a more positive and constructive way, appropriate to the nature of the violation, the offender, and circumstances (e.g., Luskin, 2009).

When considering the vices related to forgiveness, it is likely that forgiveness represents the "middle way" between the states of mind described as *suppressed anger* and *bitterness/revenge*, and some existing empirical research documents how these states of mind hinder the process of forgiveness and obstruct caring in relationships.

How Do We Practice Virtue?

Methodological Implications for Virtue Practices

"The virtues, then, come neither by nature, nor against nature, but nature gives the capacity for   acquiring them, and this is developed by training."

-Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 25

Many are really virtuous who cannot explain what a virtue is . . . But the powers themselves in reality perform their several operations with sufficient constancy and uniformity in persons of   good health whatever their opinions be about them.
-F. Hutcheson (1728), *Illustrations of the Moral Sense*

Four "Ways" to Practice Virtue

A first important practical implication of the contemporary model of moral motivation and "facet" model of virtue is that moral virtuosity is accomplished *not* primarily by adherence to deliberative reasoning guided by an explicit narrative and moral principles, but by the activation and rehearsal of the *perceptions*, *intuitions, moral emotions*, and *social skills* that comprise each virtue. Virtue embodiment then can be conceptualized as the consolidation (neural integration) of the facets that define each virtue. Consolidation entails practicing each facet in the network, just as an accomplished athlete or musician rehearses the various sub-skills that comprise the more complex skill. In the same way that virtuosos in other skill domains practice to "habituate" the complementary components in their craft, it is reasonable to hypothesize that through intentional and systematic rehearsal, over time, the facets of a virtue become linked with each other such that the 'firing' of one facet in the network (e.g., perceptions of 'blessings' in the case of gratitude) activates other facets (e.g., the intuition to 'return the favor' inherent in gratitude). Thus, as the familiar adage states, when "Neurons that fire together wire together," it constructs an embodied disposition (neural circuit) that is ready to respond as a given situation activates it.

This understanding of virtue consolidation then translates into four specific methods for practicing virtue. It suggests that practices could differentially 'target' each of the four facets of a virtue: 1) *tuning-up* one's sensitivity to perceptual features of a situation that "trigger" an intuition, referred to as *tuning-up perceptual sensitivity*; 2) activating or *priming* the care-related *intuition* (attachment, helping, reciprocity, reparation), a process we will refer to as *intuition activation*; 3) amplifying the strength (intensity) of the moral emotion(s) associated with the virtue, referred to as *amplifying motivational intensity*; and 4) *rehearsing* imagined and/or *in vivo* social skills that are expressive of the intuition and moral emotion, referred to as *skill rehearsal*. The validity of this approach to virtue formation is supported by existing research on each virtue. For example, Fredrickson and colleagues (2008) found that practicing a tradition-neutral, mindfulness-based compassion exercise that focused awareness on "warm feelings" toward self

and others increased one's experience of positive emotions which, in turn, produced increases in a wide range of "psychological resources" including prosocial action (e.g., social support received; positive relations with others). (See Leffel, 2011c for further discussion and representative findings for each virtue).

Facet- and Person-specific Virtue Practices

In the virtue practice literature, various "mindfulness awareness practices" (what we will refer to as Virtue MAPs) do not always specify which facet of the virtue that the practice is believed to target. In many cases, however, it is quite easy to identify the facet to which the practice ("intervention") seems to be aimed. For example, the gratitude exercise "counting blessings" seems to target *perceptual sensitivity*, since it asks persons to "broaden" their perceptual field and attend to signs of goodness in others and the world around them. While it certainly may be the case that in counting blessings the person is also activating moral emotions (appreciation, gratitude), this is typically not how the exercise is described. Practicing different facets of the virtue in this manner, thus would aim to "integrate" and consolidate the different brain neural structures and pathways (moral associative network) that comprise the virtue. Additionally, practicing each facet in relation to different targets (persons) could also be a part of a systematic plan to "extend" the range (scope) of the virtue to new and different persons, thus expanding the "circle of care" (Singer, 2011) to a larger sphere of persons, including "difficult" others in one's life.

To illustrate, the multi-stage conception of forgiveness described above has implications for how one practices to strengthen the virtue of forgiveness. It suggests that different mindful awareness practices (MAPs) could be designed to focus on each facet (perception, intuition, emotion, action), and perhaps at different stages in one's forgiveness process. Further, different incidents (episodes) and targets (persons) for forgiveness could be practiced in a systematic plan to strengthen one's motivation and capacity to accept and repair (and perhaps reconcile), and to "extend" one's range (scope) of forgiveness (e.g., familiar other/small offenses; familiar other/problematic offenses; strange or unfamiliar other; perceived "enemy"). In a different writing I describe facet-specific practices for each virtue in the model.

A "Moral Likeness" Model

Contributions to Christian Spirituality

> If you do not see your own beauty, do as the sculptor does with a statue which must become beautiful; he removes one part, scrapes another, makes one area smooth, and cleans the other, until he causes the beautiful face in the statue to appear. Never stop sculpting your own statue; until the *divine splendor of virtue* shines in you.
>
> -Plotinus, *Ennead*, I, 6, 9, pp. 18-26; *emphasis added*

Finally, consider what this model of virtuous caring might contribute to Christian spirituality. Beyond providing a universal list of virtues of "common humanity" grounded in the "original constitution of our nature" that are instrumental to the capacity to care, this model offers two additional contributions to Christian formation.

First, this model of virtuous caring gives specific content to a "moral likeness" model of Christian formation. Consistent with the virtue-vice tradition of Christian spirituality, the moral

likeness model argues that one's "relationship with God" consists *not* in how "close" one feels to God (*subjectivist* model), and/or in how much one possesses "knowledge" about God (*rationalist* model), rather in how the quality of one's love is "like" or resembles the love of God, as manifested in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth (e.g., I John 4: 7-8). Like the Christian spiritualities of, for example, Dante's *Divine Commedia* or St. John of the Cross' *Dark Night of the Soul*, the central *telos* in the moral likeness model is a virtuous character (Wesley: "the mind that was in Christ Jesus") filled with virtue and with (relatively) less vice. This "quest" to embody likeness to God involves travel through the "darkness" (*Dark Night*) and "Inferno" (*Divine Commedia*) of one's vices, and into the light of increased awareness of one's moral *un*-likeness to God, and then 'up the mountain' of "Purgatorio" toward progressively more virtue.

It is important to note that the goal of this journey is not (necessarily) to "feel closer to God" (*subjectivist* model) or to "get to know God" (*rationalist* model), but rather to "become more like God" (*moral likeness* model). Rather, the moral likeness model places the development of moral goodness (similarity or resemblance in virtue) at the center of one's spiritual life. Further, the moral likeness model does not assume (as does much contemporary Christianity) that "feeling closer" or "knowing more" about God makes a person "more like." Rather, it suggests that we must involve ourselves in practices that help us become *more like*, and that these practices are not the same as those that make one 'feel close' and 'know more.' Thus, in a virtue approach to moral likeness, practices that allow us to "put on" (Herdt, 2008) the virtues would be central to Christian formation.

Second, these virtues may be seen as a set of relational capacities that are constitutive of Christian *kenotic* love (Murphy, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2001; Post, Underwood, Schloss, & Hurlbut, 2002). We are told that the word *kenosis* ("self-emptying") first appears in an early Christian hymn (Phil. 2), wherein a stanza in the hymn affirms that Christ, although being in a form of God, emptied himself of the demand for power. A central theme in recent theology-science conversations is that "creation as kenosis" provides a unifying theme for understanding God, the moral *telos* of human life, and even for cosmology (Ellis, 2001). Indeed, for some commentators, the key lesson of kenosis is a claim about *how* God cares for creation, i.e., God's virtues (Ward, 2001). Specifically, Ellis suggests that the concept of a kenotic creator God can be integrated into a cosmological-theological-ethical view that provides an overarching hermeneutic for viewing the moral character of the God (also see Murphy & Ellis, 1996). On this view, kenosis does not speak primarily about God's renunciation of ontological "power" per se, but about a way of exercising that power in "love" (1 John 4:16). Ellis (2001) provides this vision of kenosis:

> A joyous, kind, and loving attitude that is willing to give up selfish desires and to make sacrifices on behalf of others for the common good and the glory of God, doing this in a generous and creative way, avoiding the pitfall of pride, and guided and inspired by the love of God and the gift of Grace (p. 108).

Consistent with this understanding, Polkinghorne (2001) suggests that both the character of the Creator God as generally manifested in the universe, and specifically revealed in the life of Christ (Phil. 2: 5-11; Matt. 5-7), can be described in terms of four characteristics: *self-offering, self-limitation, self-realization,* and *self-sacrifice*. He suggests that these characteristics reflect the "deep nature" of creation and God's activity with respect to it, and may be understood to

describe the "ideal" around which human morality *should* be shaped (his Kantian-like deontological claim). He suggests that through these characteristics of caring, the human moral order becomes more consonant with the nature of reality, and in exercising these capacities persons come to more fully "share in" the Glory and activity of God (2 Peter 1: 3-4). From our vantage point, the proposed model (mindfulness, empathy, trust compassion, gratitude, forgiveness) suggests a virtue model that is consistent with this vision of kenosis. Additionally, it has the advantage of offering a model that can be empirically verified and "practiced" in order to put on the moral likeness of God.

Conclusion

Wesley's Legacy-as-Task

The primary goal of this chapter entailed outlining a virtue model of caring which complements and (perhaps) strengthens Wesley's "habituated virtue" model of Christian formation.   In response to Maddox's (2008) challenge for psychologists and Christian educators to construct a model of Christian formation more consistent with Wesley's affectional moral psychology, this model offers three contributions: 1) a model of virtue informed by contemporary Intuitionist moral psychology (a neo-Aristotelian facet model of virtue; 2) a conception of caring based upon the complementary notions of *caritas love* and *generative* care (emotional investment in the well-being and personal growth of self and other; and, 3) an empirically-informed model of specific virtues that existing research suggests are facilitative of caring (mindfulness, empathy, trust, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness). The eventual goal of this project is a practical model of intentional Christian formation that draws on moral psychology and virtue science in order to outline a *relational and experience-focused model* of virtue formation, and corresponding virtue practices. A central assumption of such an approach, in distinction to the predominate narrative model in contemporary Christian ethics and "meaning system" approach in psychology of spiritual transformation, is that the process of meaning-making and the process of virtue embodiment (as well as vice-diminishment) are not the same things, and likely require different practices. I suggest that the continuing development of a virtue-based model of Christian formation, one that offers specific practices for embodying the virtues, offers an exciting new direction for practical theologies concerned with what it means to renew the "heart" of Christian love, especially as Wesley himself understood it.

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