

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

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## Religion, Spirituality and Human Flourishing

### Introduction

The Metanexus Institute seeks research projects that scientifically explore the link between religion and spirituality and the virtues and human strengths that reflect humanity's highest aspirations and noble qualities including, but not limited to: creativity, purpose, perseverance, gratitude, prayer, awe and wonder, personal responsibility, love, honesty, joy, humility, and generosity. This document provides a review and analysis of recent successes in the field, with an emphasis on current limitations, key problems to be overcome and suggested areas of focus for future research. A selected, annotated bibliography of key studies is included. One of the primary criteria in the evaluation of proposals is methodological innovation. New and generative methodological approaches that advance the science of spirituality are encouraged. The overall objective of the research initiative is to take research on the human spirit to new levels of scientific sophistication and significance. In addition to basic research, ground-breaking, transdisciplinary approaches for suggesting practical strategies for maximizing human flourishing are encouraged.

### Background

After a period of relative dormancy, the psychology of religion and spirituality has recently re-emerged as a full-force, leading-edge research area that has contributed new knowledge, data, and professional activity to the rest of psychology (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). This is apparent upon examination of the recent trends in the publication of textbooks, journal articles, presentations at professional meetings, teaching courses in the psychology of religion, the establishment of new journals, books on clinical and health issues, and the development of psychology of religion research that interfaces the theory and topics of the mainstream discipline. During the past 25 years psychology of religion material has appeared with increasing frequency in high-end journals. It has emerged as a strong research enterprise whose topics interface almost all areas of psychology, whose scholars produce an impressive body of research, whose research will further develop internationally and cross-culturally, and whose importance is only going to increase. An increasing amount of research is being done with novel, creative methods, both quantitative and qualitative, but more of it is needed. Other new and innovative methods must be developed and exploited.

An increasingly vigorous area of research is human virtue. The study of virtue, at the nexus of the psychology of religion, personality psychology, moral philosophy, and the psychology of emotion, is making a comeback in psychology (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). Partly responsible for this resurgence is the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) which has sought to systematically classify human strengths and virtues into a comprehensive taxonomy (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Concepts such as forgiveness, love, hope, humility, gratitude, self-control, and wisdom appear as highly prized human dispositions in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thought and are affirmed universal principles in world philosophies and ethical systems. Basic research as well as interventions to cultivate these virtues is well underway. Yet there is much hard work that lies ahead. In the next section of this paper several promising areas are identified that could be the focus of efforts to open new horizons in the study of religion, spirituality, and human flourishing. These areas help to frame a consideration of where the field is, and where it should be going.

## Priority Content Areas

### **1. Neuroscience**

There is now a recognized role for brain imaging in the study of human religious and spiritual phenomena. The capacity for spiritual experiences of awe, gratitude, love, hope and other areas of foci within this initiative are inseparably connected to the architecture of the mind-brain. With rapid advances in the development of techniques to measure brain activity, neuroscience approaches to the human spirit are receiving increasing attention. The hemodynamics of blood and oxygen flow or glucose metabolism in the brain as revealed by Positron Emission Tomography (PET) or functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) suggests that spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer involve increased activity in frontal brain structures, as well as those other brain areas that form a system to regulate and focus attention. There is also evidence that prayer involves increased activity in brain regions known to be involved in the production of language (Newberg, Pourdehnad, Alavi, & D'Aquili, 2003). Much of the existing work is based upon the study of either extreme religious states or highly developed prodigies. Further work needs to be done in the study of more common, normal, everyday religious experiences, states, and behaviors. A number of interesting and empirically tractable questions can be envisioned. For example, what brain regions are activated or deactivated by the religious experiences of awe, gratitude, praise, and worship? Is there a unique pattern of activation for these or for particular forms of prayer? What are the appropriate tasks to activate the mental and emotional processes associated with these spiritual states of consciousness? How are individual differences in spiritual strengths related to brain function?

While the potential of brain imaging research to elucidate neural mechanisms underlying religious and spiritual phenomena is tremendous, the pitfalls are equally significant. As the more humble neuroscientists readily admit, brain imaging is not the "Holy Grail" because the brain image itself as revealed by imaging techniques has little bearing on the psychological or spiritual significance of the image (Cacioppo et. al., 2003). Therefore, careful analytic frameworks must guide the design and interpretation of research in this area. One must have clearly articulated hypotheses concerning which components of spiritual experience might be responsible for which variations in brain activation. Development and advances in the neuroscience of the spirit will likely emerge from a transdisciplinary perspective in which cognitive neuroscientists team up with theologians, social scientists, and scholars and scientists in allied fields.

### **2. Developmental Science: Childhood and Adolescence**

A recent commentary on spiritual development concluded "the pursuit of things spiritual or religious represents a hidden and unclaimed core dimension of human development...It is time for psychology to claim and honor spiritual development as a core developmental process that deserves equal standing in the pantheon of universal developmental processes" (Benson, 2004, p. 50). The field of spiritual development is rapidly gaining legitimacy and attracting the interest of scholars from multiple disciplines and diverse contexts (Benson, Roehlkepartain, King, & Wagener, 2005; King & Boyatzis, 2004). A rich body of scientific scholarship already exists, but Metanexus envisions that this research initiative will help to shape and build the future of this field.

A developmental approach would assess antecedents, social correlates and consequences of spiritual strengths and virtues. There is a rich history of developmental research on prosocial behavior, altruism, empathy and perspective taking, but not from an explicitly religious perspective (Boyatzis, 2005). What is the developmental trajectory, say, of gratitude, humility or a sense of purpose? When do such qualities first appear? What would constitute valid, age-appropriate measures of these and related virtues? What are the socialization and induction mechanisms that parents employ to cultivate these behaviors in children? What parenting processes (e.g. communication, conflict resolution) or styles are associated with gratitude, humility, and a sense of purpose? To what degree are these virtues individually or jointly predictive of positive outcomes such as school success, overall well-being, service, resiliency, health behaviors, and less risk taking?

### **3. Developmental Science: Adulthood and Aging**

Developmental studies need not be limited to childhood and adolescence. There is a need for basic research on spirituality, religion and flourishing across the life span, from young adulthood through old age (McFadden, 1999). Thanks to recent efforts, the field of religious gerontology is becoming well-developed, particularly in the area of spirituality, religion, and mental and physical well-being. The major thrust of this work has been to examine the association between religious involvement and mental health including depression and dementia. This work is vital, but it should not preclude the study of strengths and virtues and the roles that these play in understudied outcomes in religious gerontology, including positive emotions, activity level, resilience, healthy aging, and a deceleration of the aging process. Research incorporating religious contexts and institutions is highly desirable. For example, how might religious professionals and others who work with elderly people and their families (administrators, social workers, counselors, nurses, physicians, and recreation and rehabilitative therapists) within the context of religious institutions utilize information gleaned from basic research on spirituality and religion to maximize flourishing in later life?

### **4. Measurement**

Measurement is fundamental to scientific progress. The value of any subsequent research hinges on the ability to accurately measure relevant constructs. Major advances in scientific disciplines are typically preceded by major breakthroughs in measurement methods. Measurement has proven to be a challenge in the area of spirituality and, therefore, instrument development remains a high priority for the future. A careful investment in the development of assessment tools and statistical techniques would serve to catalyze high-level scientific advances. New and innovative measurement methods (i.e. going beyond self-report inventories) are especially needed.

Because human strengths are invariably entangled with culture, biology, and consciousness, there are a multiplicity of avenues by which these states may be studied. Thus, a full range of investigative strategies are needed. Studies that measure multiple, interacting variables through either correlational or experimental methodological designs are especially desirable. The virtues and human strengths of creativity, purpose, perseverance, gratitude, prayer, awe and wonder, personal responsibility, love, honesty, joy, humility, and generosity are necessarily interdependent. Most prior research has examined these in isolation from each other, obfuscating the mutually-dependent and interactive nature of various aspects of spiritual functioning.

## 5. Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology has demonstrated the strength of culture in influencing the perceptions, construals, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of its members (Lehman, Chiu, and Schaller, 2004). Therefore, it is desirable that research draw from multiple cultures and religious traditions. There are cultural variations in what aspects of spirituality are valued. Yet there are also psychological universals—invariant patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are unaffected by cultural context. In this vein, it is important for future research to develop a deeper understanding of the complex connections between cross-cultural differences in spiritual processes and universals in these. Concepts such as purpose, wisdom, creativity, awe and transcendence are filtered through culture. To what degree do these different aspects of the human spirit contribute to human flourishing across cultures? The tension between the search for human universals and the discovery of differences between people from distinct cultures cannot be ignored if research on the human spirit is to make significant forward strides. For further views on the interaction between culture and religion, interested readers are referred to the cutting-edge empirical research and theoretical articles in the *Journal of Cognition and Culture*.

## 6. Mental Health and Illness

Both basic as well as what National Institutes of Health calls “translational” research on issues related to religion, spirituality, and human flourishing are encouraged are needed. The term translational refers to the task of translating or applying basic discoveries to problems in the realms of mental and physical health or education. The federal government and many private foundations are committed to identifying and reducing mental and physical illness and enhancing education. Therefore, it is desirable that proposals have potential to leverage assets from these other sources.

In this context, a vital research question is which strengths and virtues, either singly or in combination, confer resilience to psychiatric illnesses? Resilience refers to individual differences in susceptibility. The possession of certain strengths and virtues may be a key factor in why some people do not develop depression or anxiety disorders or recover faster from these. A recent study found that social religiosity and thankfulness were associated with reduced risk for both internalizing (e.g. depression) and externalizing (e.g. antisocial personality) disorders (Kendler et. al., 2003). What are the mechanisms by which these and other characteristics reduce the incidence and severity of disorders?

## 7. Intervention Studies

Closely related to issues in mental health and illness is the need for research on interventions that are designed to cultivate human strengths and virtues. Within the positive psychology movement, several interventions designed to increase happiness and well-being have been developed. Rigorous tests of these using large scale, random assignment placebo controlled studies are a priority. What evidence-based interventions are most effective with which populations, and why? Studies are needed with children, adolescents, young adults, elders, and persons with psychological or physical disabilities. What interventions might foster a deep sense of meaning and purpose, joy, humility, perseverance, generosity, and personal responsibility? Mind-stretching work is required to identify the most appropriate outcomes and their rigorous measurement in these interventions, and to disseminate these in the widest possible way.

## **8. Religious and Spiritual Contexts**

As Metanexus seeks research projects that scientifically explore the link between religion and spirituality and the virtues and human strengths that reflect humanity's highest aspirations and noble qualities, research that explicitly incorporates spiritual and religious variables and processes is especially welcome. For example, research on understanding what spirituality looks like in different contexts—in different religious traditions and nonreligious traditions would be helpful. As another example, consider emotion. In what ways do sacred or spiritual emotions such as gratitude, awe, hope, joy and reverence differ from natural variations of these emotions? They vary widely across cultures and are highly sensitive to disciplined formation; they are strongly associated with sets of beliefs about the nature of the universe and human nature and are often a response to verbal communication. They are associated with ritual and in many traditions (Roberts, in press). Religion provides context and direction for emotion and the influence of religious systems on emotional experience and expression is considerable. In what ways do religious traditions, as cultural and linguistic systems, form and evoke sacred emotions, and through what means? The study of positive emotions is a major trend in contemporary affective science (Fredrickson, 2001), and future research should consider the many ways in which the psychology of religion can contribute to a growing understanding of positive emotions and the functions of positive emotions in people's lives.

## **9. Methodological and Data Analytic Strategies**

What research approaches are most likely to advance knowledge? Inasmuch as spirituality is a dynamic process, ever-more sophisticated approaches to data analysis are needed. Latent growth curve modeling has been applied to understand individual differences in the course of spirituality over time (e.g., Brennan & Mroczek, 2002), and hierarchical linear modeling techniques, which allow within-subject analysis, to examine relationships between daily spiritual experience and daily pain (Keefe et al., 2001). Longitudinal, cohort-sequential designs to study change are an appropriate research strategy when one wishes to examine developmental changes in religious and spiritual behavior. Intra-individual variability can be studied using latent growth curve models that incorporate dynamic elements. Researchers are encouraged to avail themselves of the latest cutting-edge techniques. It is hoped that a focus on these will better equip researchers to understand the dynamics of spirituality and human flourishing.

Many important advances have been made in research methodologies, and the incorporation of these newer methodologies into the broadening areas of inquiry will lead to a much richer psychology of religion and spirituality in the future. Innovative research must employ innovative methodologies, and researchers are encouraged to continue to take varied and diverse approaches to for exploring religious and spiritual processes related to human flourishing. Methods culled from experimental research on the cognitive bases of religion approach are promising (Barrett, 2004) as are measurement methods that go beyond direct, conscious self-reports, such as implicit attitude measures (Fazio and Olson, 2003). At the same time, ethnomethodological and phenomenological oriented methods should not be ignored. Different methods compliment one another and their incorporation is likely to be an important key to advancing the field.

### 10. The Need for a Multi-Level Interdisciplinary Paradigm

If we have learned anything, it is that a single, sectarian approach is incapable of yielding comprehensive knowledge of phenomena as complex and multi-faceted as spirituality. A *multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm* (MIP) is required to anchor the study of spirituality and human flourishing strongly in the biological sciences and in the social and clinical sciences. Allied fields contributing to the MIP include evolutionary biology, neuroscience, anthropology, cognitive science, theology, and philosophy as a generalized cross-disciplinary approach to critiquing and sharpening the assumptions of science. This paradigm recognizes the value of data at multiple levels of analysis, while making non-reductive assumptions concerning the value of spiritual and religious phenomena. Non-reductive implies that spiritual or religious phenomena cannot be accounted for solely in terms of existing psychological, social, or biological constructs and processes. Appropriated wisely, the MIP will yield new and scientific ways to talk about the human spirit (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003).

Behind the MIP is the assumption that information from various disciplines and levels of analysis has something to contribute to our understanding of religious and spiritual phenomena and that ultimately, this information can be integrated into a larger, coherent whole. For a science of the human spirit to flourish, a critical mass of ideas and knowledge must be developed that can serve as the springboard that will stimulate research that either extends one topic or supports cross-topic collaboration (Paloutzian, 2005). In its most visionary form, the MIP would foster integrative lines of research, theory, and practice in pursuit of the ultimate goal of understanding human flourishing. Research within each level of analysis is of course still critical, yet integrative research should be a priority for the future, as the MIP is not a passing trend.

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## Annotated Bibliography

Cacioppo, J.T., Berntson, G.G., Lorig, T.S., Norris, C.J., Rickett, E., & Husbaum, H. (2003). Just because you're imaging the brain doesn't mean you can stop using your head: A primer and set of first principles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 650-661.

[neuroscience]

Required reading for anyone planning on conducting brain imaging- research on spirituality. Four simple principles are provided (well, not so simple) that serve as guidelines for thinking about the neural bases of psychological processes, including religious and spiritual phenomena. The authors conclude that (a) complex aspects of the mind and behavior will benefit from yet a broader collaboration of neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, and social scientists, and (b) social psychologists bring important theoretical, methodological, and statistical expertise to this interdisciplinary enterprise.

Damon, W., Menon, J., & Bronk, K.C. (2003). The development of purpose in adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science, 7*, 119-128.

[purpose]

This article offers a new operational definition of purpose that distinguishes it from meaning in life in an internalistic sense, and it reviews the existing psychological studies pertinent to the development of purpose during youth. The article identifies a number of urgent questions concerning how--and whether--young people today are acquiring positive purposes to dedicate themselves to and, if so, what the nature of today's youth purposes might be. Purpose as a motivator of good deeds and galvanizer of character growth is stressed.

Danner, D., Snowdon, D.A., & Friesen, W.V. (2001). Positive emotions in early life and longevity: Findings from the nun study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 804-813.

[sacred emotions; love; gratitude]

This is one of the most important of the last 5 years. Handwritten autobiographies from 180 Catholic nuns, composed when participants were a mean age of 22 years, were scored for emotional content and related to survival during ages 75 to 95. A strong inverse association was found between positive emotional content in these writings and risk of mortality in late life ( $p < .001$ ). As the quartile ranking of positive emotion in early life increased, there was a stepwise decrease in risk of mortality resulting in a 2.5-fold difference between the lowest and highest quartiles. Positive emotional content in early-life autobiographies was strongly associated with longevity 6 decades later.

Ebstyne King, Pamela, & Furrow, J.L. (2004). Religion as a resource for positive youth development: religion, social capital, and moral outcomes. *Developmental Psychology*, 40, 703-713.

[development; love; intervention]

An important article on religion and positive youth development in the top developmental journal. Drawing on social capital theory, the authors test a conceptual model exploring socially embedded religious influences on moral outcomes. A three-dimensional model of social capital demonstrated how social interaction, trust, and shared vision enable social ties associated with religiousness to influence moral behavior. Structural equation modeling was used with data gathered from 735 urban youths to test a proposed model of the effects of religiousness on moral outcomes. Results suggested that religiously active youths report higher levels of social capital resources and that the influence of adolescent religiousness on moral outcomes was mediated through social capital resources. Suggestions for further research on religion as a catalyst for positive development and in faith-based youth development organizations are considered.

Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377-389.

[gratitude; intervention]

An important intervention study using a random assignment controlled experimental design. Participants in three studies were asked to complete weekly or daily reports of either gratitude, hassles, or meaningful events/social comparisons. Dependent variables included mood, physical symptomatology and health behaviors, and prosocial behaviors. The gratitude condition led to significant, positive emotional (positive mood), physical (more exercise, better sleep), and interpersonal (more helpful, compassionate) outcomes relative to the comparison conditions. These studies provided strong support for the positive potential of a grateful outlook on life. Researchers provided a number of different comparison conditions and dependent measures, and results generalized beyond college students to adults coping with neuromuscular disease. These studies made good use of experimental designs to test the causal relationship between a grateful outlook and well-being.

Exline, J.J., & Geyer, A.L. (2004). Perceptions of humility: A preliminary study. *Self and Identity*, 3, 95-114.

[humility]

A rare example of solid empirical research on humility. Perceptions of humility as strength or weakness were examined. Contrary to common dictionary definitions of humility, which often emphasize its association with self-abasement, participants reported consistently positive views of humility. When recalling situations in which they felt humble, they typically reported success experiences associated with positive emotion. Participants clearly associated humility with good psychological adjustment, although they were less decisive about whether humility was associated with confidence or leadership. Although participants viewed humility as a strength across all social roles sampled, humility was viewed most favorably as a quality of religious seekers, less favorably as a quality of close others or subordinates, and least favorably as a quality of leaders or entertainers. Positive views of humility were associated with high self-esteem and religiousness. Less favorable views of humility were associated with narcissism--particularly its exploiting/entitled dimension. Humility has proven to be a difficult concept to empirically measure and this step represents a significant stride in the right direction.

Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2003). Approaching *awe*, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 17, 297-324.

[awe]

The authors, leaders in the field of Positive Psychology, present a prototype approach to awe. They suggest that two appraisals are central and are present in all clear cases of awe: perceived vastness, and a need for accommodation, defined as an inability to assimilate an experience into current mental structures. Five additional appraisals account for variation in the hedonic tone of awe experiences: threat, beauty, exceptional ability, virtue, and the supernatural. This perspective is derived from a review of what has been written about awe in religion, philosophy, sociology, and psychology, and then this perspective is applied to

an analysis of awe and related states such as admiration, elevation, and the epiphanic experience.

Laird, S.P., Snyder, C.R., Rapoff, M.A., & Green, S. (2004). Measuring private prayer: Development, validation, and clinical application of the multidimensional prayer inventory. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 14, 251-272

[prayer]

A theoretically derived, empirically validated multidimensional inventory of prayer is described. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of prayer are measured, including occurrence, weekly frequency, daily frequency, duration, type (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, reception), and level of faith in the effects of prayer. Results revealed the posited 5 distinct types of prayer, along with acceptable internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant utility. Furthermore, several aspects of prayer were related to healthy adjustment for patients with arthritis. An important study for understanding links between faith, spiritual practices, and subjective mental and physical health.

Mahoney, A., Pargament, K.I., et. al. (1999). Marriage and the spiritual realm: The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13, 321-338.

[sacred emotions]

Presents a novel and promising approach for measuring spirituality in the context of marriage. Ninety-seven couples completed questionnaires about their involvement in joint religious activities and their perceptions regarding the sanctification of marriage, including perceived sacred qualities of marriage and beliefs about the manifestation of God in marriage. In contrast to individual religiousness and religious homogamy (distal religious constructs), these proximal religious variables directly reflect an integration of religion and marriage, and they were associated with greater global marital adjustment, more perceived benefits from marriage, less marital conflict, more verbal collaboration, and less use of verbal aggression and stalemate to discuss disagreements for both wives and husbands. The proximal measures also added substantial unique variance to specific aspects of marital functioning after controlling demographic factors and distal religious variables in hierarchical regression analyses.

Post, S.G. (2005). Altruism, happiness, and health: It's good to be good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, in press.

[love]

Post is a leader in the field of biomedical ethics and the study of compassionate love. In this article he presents a summary and assessment of existing research data on altruism and its relationship to mental and physical health. It suggests several complimentary

interpretive frameworks, including evolutionary biology, physiological models, and positive psychology. Potential public health implications of this research are discussed, as well as directions for future studies. The article concludes, with some caveats, that a strong correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health and longevity of people who are emotionally and behaviorally compassionate, so long as they are not overwhelmed by helping tasks.

Sethi, S., & Seligman, E.P. (1993). Optimism and fundamentalism. *Psychological Science*, 4, 256-259.

[hope/optimism]

Two interesting studies examined links between optimism and faiths differing along a conservative-to-liberal continuum. In Study 1, the explanatory style of 623 18-65 yr old members of 9 religious groups (representing conservative/fundamentalist, moderate, and liberal viewpoints) was measured by questionnaire. Blind content analysis of tape-recorded sermons and liturgy provided data for Study 2. Conservatives were significantly more optimistic in questionnaire responses than were persons from moderate religions, who in turn were more optimistic than liberals. The liturgy and sermons showed the parallel pattern of optimism. Results suggest that the greater optimism of conservative individuals may be accounted for by the greater hope and daily influence fundamentalism engenders, along with the greater optimism of the religious services they hear.

Tarakeshwar, N., Stanton, J., & Pargament, K.I. (2003). Religion: An overlooked dimension in cross-cultural psychology. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 377-394.

[culture]

The authors' case is that religion should be fully integrated into cross-cultural research for four reasons: (a) religion, by itself, occupies a substantial role in people's lives across different cultures; (b) religion has been found to be a strong predictor of important life domains among individuals all over the world; (c) religion has a strong influence on cross-cultural dimensions; and (d) culture also influences and shapes religious beliefs and practices. The authors present a five-dimensional framework of religion and provide recommendations on ways it can be integrated within cross-cultural research. An important source for those considering research on spirituality and human flourishing from a cultural perspective.

Urry, H.L. et. al (2004). Making a life worth living: Neural correlates of well-being. *Psychological Science*, 15, 367-372.

[neuroscience; purpose]

An important contribution in the field of "neuropositivepsychology." Despite the vast literature that has implicated asymmetric activation of the prefrontal cortex in approach-withdrawal motivation and emotion, no published reports have directly explored the

neural correlates of well-being. Eighty-four adults (ages 57-60) completed self-report measures of eudaimonic (purpose) well-being, hedonic (happiness) well-being, and positive affect prior to resting EEG. As hypothesized, greater left than right superior frontal activation was associated with higher levels of both forms of well-being. Hemisphere-specific analyses documented the importance of goal-directed approach tendencies beyond those captured by approach-related positive affect for eudaimonic but not for hedonic well-being. Appropriately engaging sources of appetitive motivation, characteristic of higher left than right baseline levels of prefrontal activation, may encourage the experience of well-being. Implications for understanding how neural circuitry associated with well-being affects downstream health are discussed.

Walker, L.J. (2004). Progress and prospects in the psychology of moral development. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 50, 546-557.

[development]

This is a commentary on the psychology of moral development by a leading developmental psychologist. It is a critical analysis of important theoretical trends and empirical advances marking past progress and also discusses some future prospects for the field. His primary concern is that contemporary moral psychology suffers from a conceptual skew that is evidenced by a theoretical and empirical focus on moral cognition as applied to interpersonal problems and the consequent inattention to moral personality and other intrapsychic aspects of the domain. The author emphasizes that such accounts should entail a realistic depiction of moral maturity, meaningfully incorporate character traits and virtues, identify early childhood precursors, and address the significance of religion and spirituality in moral functioning.