

A WISDOM WAY OF BEING TO TRANSFORM THE HEART OF HUMANITY

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to articulate a wisdom way of being to transform the heart of contemporary humanity. It is argued that this wisdom way may be realized through heart based meditation practices, which transform consciousness and behaviour, virtues and values. Discussion is focussed on contemporary, scientific, HeartMath and related studies with special reference to their potential future impact on international peace and stability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The central theme of this study is that wisdom philosophy and related heart based meditation contain vast resources for overcoming seemingly insurmountable international challenges and problems currently faced by planet earth. This theme will be ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically informed, framed and advanced by integral theory (Wilber, 2000), positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and the HeartMath system (Childre, & Martin, 1999). Contemporary science, perennial philosophy and wisdom traditions, concur in recognition of holistic interconnectedness. Wilber's (2000, 2016) integral theory postulates a spectrum or holograph of consciousness/energy/matter, appearing wholly and/or partly, through continuous waves of emanation and evolution, in individual, collective, interior and exterior, dimensions and depths. The wisdom model stresses coherent, fluid, movement along this energetic continuum, with consciousness in all dimensions and depths, regardless of outward form. Divine consciousness is typically extolled (Bourgeault, 2003). For many scientists, observed differences are essentially quantitative, illusory, and perceptual or reflect measuring instruments that have not yet reached adequate levels of calibration or sophistication.

This approach of this study is philosophical in its original Greek "love" and "wisdom" meanings. More pointedly, it is about meaningful patterns that swirl, ebb and flow in the deeper currents of both perennial and mainstream philosophy. These deeper metaphorical currents include those esoteric riptides, which flush out surface waves in various religious traditions to reveal the hidden truths of their transcendent unity. Wisdom traditions converge on the vital role of the universal, human heart as organ of spiritual, social and psychological perception (Bourgeault, 2016), whose holographic intelligence intuitively discerns perennial virtues and values to light the way. These virtues and values are the contemporary province of positive psychology, which, from a wisdom perspective, may be defined as a scientific paradigm for finding the best way. In addition to its scientific

approach, positive psychology is replete with those everyday practical wisdoms that are found in positive thinking, feeling and acting, as well as everyday values and virtues such as balance, harmony, purpose in life, practice, resilience and skill.

The central purpose of this study is to articulate a perennial philosophical, heartfelt, wisdom way of being to enliven and transform the heart of contemporary humanity. It is argued that this wisdom way of being may be realized through meditation practices, which transform consciousness and behaviour, virtues and values. This is ultimately a matter of transforming the world into a village where everything remains to be learned, of integrating scientific disciplines and improving integrity, quality and quantity of investigations and interventions to promote global health and well-being. The method will consist of a brief overview of meditation practices, with special focus on heart based meditation practices, followed by description and evaluation of HeartMath and related studies undertaken to promote psychophysiological, social and global coherence and health.

2. WISDOM TRADITIONS MEDITATION PRACTICES

Most wisdom traditions advocate some form of meditation and/or contemplation for transforming consciousness in all its manifest forms, subtle energetic variety and ever increasing complexity (Wilber, 2000; 2006, 2016). For example, in Buddhism, meditative practice is an end in itself with the journey to enlightenment viewed as a noble pursuit. An established body of scientific, evidence based, well-controlled research has established many benefits of various types of meditation and/or contemplation. (Alexander, 2005). Meditation methods have been practised in Africa, India, China and elsewhere for centuries. The writing of eminent yogis, rishis, monks and sages has provided a wealth of ideographic data testifying to the efficacy of meditation interventions (Iyengar, 2005; Mutwa, 2003; Reid, 1998). In Patanjali's yoga sutras, *pranayama* constitutes the fourth limb of yoga, which provides a base for advanced

meditation practices such as withdrawal of external sense awareness (*pratyahara*), control of attention and intention (*dharana*), sustained concentration and witnessing awareness (*dhyana*), and absorption into unity consciousness (*samadhi*) (Iyengar, 2005).

Vedic Psychology (Alexander, 2005), Integral theory (Aurobindo, 2011; Wilber, 2000) and Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 2012) refer to gross and subtle realms of consciousness, associated with everyday experiences of waking and dreaming. There is broad agreement as to final, causal and non-dual levels, although terminology may vary. Assagioli (2012) refers to this process as the Spiritual Self that merges into the Universal Self. Christianity and Islam have a specific historical, geographical and cultural context, grounded in the ancestral and theistic, spiritual and religious traditions of Africa and the middle-east. The Christian Trinity embraces dimensional aspects of many spiritual traditions through recognition of a timeless, space less, ever present God, as personally revealed through Jesus Christ, in his ultimate sacrifice, as well as an everyday practical form of Holy Spirit guide as intimate Presence of the abstract other. The essential message of Christianity is one of Love, a message also found in many other wisdom traditions. For example, Christian practical wisdom emphasizes the graces and/or values of will, faith, hope and love, as well as virtues such as prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance (Burgeault 2016).

Meditation's great general value lies in facilitating such ongoing wisdom of everyday practical value. Everyday practical wisdom examples include: (a) Francis Bacon's advice of reading for fullness, conference for readiness and writing for exactness, (b) advice to speakers to "be brilliant, be brief and be seated" when presenting an argument, (c) recognition that slow deep thinking is as valuable as speed thinking, (d) valuing duality as well as non-duality, "either or", "both and", as well as three centred ways as in Gurdjieff's emphasis on head, heart, loins and more, as well as quaternaries etc., (e) valuing De Bono's approach to thinking in practical, lateral and other ways, e.g., considering all factors, first important priorities, others point of view, consequences and sequel, aims goals and objectives etc., (f) deeper wisdom ways of balance, harmony, alignment, coherence, appreciation, gratitude, peace, goodness, truth, beauty, excellence, love, justice, meaning, freedom, trust, will, loyalty, joy, spectrum, and integral approaches (Edwards, 1994).

Meditation may be practised in an infinite of ways as in Buddhist zazen, Islamic salaam, Christian Centering prayer, Sufi whirling, Taoist chi-gung and tai chi. For rishis, monks, nuns and other sages, life may be continuous meditation and action arising therefrom. Some methods combine various ways. For example, **SHISO** refers to an African meditation method developed around the concept *Shiso*, an ancient *isiZulu* respectful term for a human being, which became an acronym for a particular healing method, standing for spirit (*umoya*), heart (*inhlizyo*), image (*umcabango*), soul (*umphefumulo*) and oneness (*ubunye*). The method combines

invocation of spirit in a slow chanting dance, heart focussed breathing; subtle energy imaging; soul contemplation; consciousness expansion, interconnectedness and healing. The effectiveness of this method when presented alone, or as part of expanded integral life practice workshops, has been extensively documented. When compared to control groups, the workshops were associated with significant and meaningful improvements in integral, quantitative and qualitative dimensions of health and spirituality. Its effectiveness lead to further development of heart focussed meditation and coherence research as well as collaboration with the Institute of HeartMath (Edwards, 2015).

Prayer of the heart involves heart focussed, continuous repetition of a phrase, or name of a Deity (Louchakova, 2007). Descriptions of the prayer typically convey intimate feelings, subtle messages, and contemplation fruits of higher guidance intuited by the discerning intellect, which demanded implementation, for example, in action, writing, healing and teaching. Theophanis the Monk (Louchakova, 2007, p. 95) described the experiential process in the Prayer of the Heart in the following verse:

*... The first step is that of purest prayer.
From this there comes warmth of heart.
And then a strange, a holy energy.
Then tears wrung from the heart, God-given.
Then peace from thoughts of every kind.
From this arises purging of the intellect.
And next the vision of heavenly mysteries.
Unheard of light is born from this ineffably.
And thence, beyond all telling, the hearts illumination.
Last comes - a step that has no limit
Though compassed in a single line –
Perfection that is endless...*

Writing on Centering prayer, a contemporary offshoot of prayer of the heart, Bourgeault (2016, p. 5) describes the tripartite physical, emotional and spiritual organ of the human heart. In her view this integral heart ultimately functions as "homing magnetic center" for a vital neurological shift in the mechanics of perception from the brain based, ordinary, binary modes of dualistic consciousness to that nondual, holographic, resonant heart capacity whereby one senses a single unified field, and is enabled to "see from wholeness."

The great major wisdom traditions, including ancestor reverence, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam (Aurobindo 2011; Mutwa 2003; Wilber 2016) have espoused heart love for millennia. However any significant global effect has not been forthcoming for many reasons, including endemic human destructiveness, violence, selfishness, greed, and power motivations, as reflected in the continual disputes between the traditions themselves, as well as the stark reality that most people are simply struggling to survive, eat, work and satisfy human deficiency needs, let alone those belongingness, love and higher Being needs described by Maslow (1972). Thus it is eminently understandable that, although wisdom traditions typically advocate love, most people in most world spheres

are not fully ready for love, however ideal a metasystem, for transforming humanity. Fortunately the wisdom way has many paths, including care and respect, with proper practice of the latter probably the most realistic contemporary alternative. Improved care innovations in coherent, heartfelt behavior are much needed in these alternative paths.

1. 3. THE HEARTMATH SYSTEM

The HeartMath Institute was created in 1991 in Boulder Creek, California, by Doc Childre and a small group of professionals, to develop heart focused intelligence, health and wellbeing (Childre, & Martin, 1999). The HeartMath system is now global in application. It is based on an extensive body of scientific, evidence based research, which has furthered understanding of the heart's intrinsic nervous system and extensive electromagnetic, biophysical, hormonal, and neurochemical connections. A positive psychological and practical, energetic approach underlies the techniques (Edwards, 2015). Emphasis is on awareness of energy depletion, renewal and resilience in preparing for challenges, as well as shifting and resetting feelings after challenges, through sustained, regular HeartMath practice. Coherence is a key orientation concept, in its various connotations, logical argumentation, systemically related parts, biophysical and electromagnetic phase relationships, including psychophysiological coherence, which occurs during positive emotional states when heart, breath, blood pressure and other physiological rhythms become synchronized. It is characterized by a heart rhythm pattern of elevated amplitude in low frequency heart rate variability of around 0.1 Hz, indicating harmony between sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions of the autonomic nervous system, and experienced as a state of relaxed focus, or focussed relaxation (McCraty, et.al. 2009). Although previous research has established that positive emotions are independently associated with psychophysiological coherence, heart focussed breathing at a 10 second cardio-respiratory rhythm remains a practical, first step in most tools. This conscious slowing of breath facilitates respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), a dynamic, naturally occurring, physiological mechanism, whereby heart rate increases during inhalation and decreases during exhalation, which in turn facilitates identification and cultivation of a particular positive emotion (McCraty & Zayas, 2014).

In addition to improving individual psychophysiological coherence, a central vision and mission is of scientific research to facilitate social and global coherence, health and wellbeing (Childre, et al., 2016). A bioenergetics communication system has been found in highly coherent group contexts. Social coherence studies have provided evidence that people trained in achieving high states of heart coherence can facilitate coherence in other people (McCraty, 2017). Technology is currently being developed and tested for assessment, accurate measurement and facilitation of social coherence, as well as synchronized activity amongst group members that typically only occurs in high functioning and effective teamwork context. Contemporary integral, scientific views resonate with the phenomenological insights

of ancient sages. In 2008, the Global Coherence Initiative (GCI) was launched to promote global health and well-being through heart-focused care. In pursuit of this mission a global network of ultrasensitive magnetic field detectors have been installed strategically around the planet to provide data on relationships involving physical, animal, human, planetary and cosmic ecologies, for example correlations between the magnetic fields of heart and planet earth, aligned with electroencephalographic bandwidths and Shuman resonances. At present five sites are operational. Conceptual and practical implications of this initiative with special reference to global healing can be found on the websites: www.Heartmath.org and www.glcoherence.org. Although abovementioned heart based practices such as Prayer of the Heart have existed for millennia, it could be argued that never before have these been as scientifically grounded, nor have such potential to measure subtle energetic effects and offer ultimate solutions for the long term future of humanity, planet and cosmos, as is the case with HeartMath praxis and the GCI.

4. POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

Various experimental and control group type South African HeartMath workshops on physiological and social coherence, health and spirituality using integrated, quantitative and qualitative methods in pre- and post-test, outcome evaluative designs, have indicated significant and meaningful effects. For example, in one study on the democratically chosen positive emotional workshop theme of peace (Edwards, 2014), participants' described experiences of relaxation, calmness, openness, oneness with self, inner world and nature, harmonious connection between body, heart and mind, forgiveness, stability, control, purpose, concentration, love, happy imagery and transcendence. The workshop was evaluated as practically useful for personal growth, meditation, emotional control, stress relief, sense of coherence, general health and spirituality, and of great therapeutic value within a multidisciplinary team context.

HeartMath research on intuition has indicated the involvement of the heart, brain, and nervous systems connection to a field of information beyond normal conscious awareness. Evidence suggests such non-local intuition is processed in the same way that information obtained through familiar sensory systems is processed, with the heart receiving intuitive information before the brain and that information is facilitated by coherence (Childre, et al., 2016). In an independent study, using HeartMath, emWave technology to monitor heart rate variability in five Benedictine nuns, who each practised five types of prayer, Stanley (2009) found the following percentage levels of high physiological coherence associated with each prayer type: supplication 15%, devotion 16%, intercessory 25%, gratefulness 64% and contemplative prayer 86% respectively. The positive associations between coherence level and prayer depth seemingly indicate another instance of heart rhythm involvement, coherence facilitation, and non-local intuition. In addition to the HeartMath website, google website: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=frIB6zgAAA&hl=en>, google scholar lists 327 independent studies

conducted by researchers not employed by or attached to the HeartMath Institute, which provide consistent evidence for the natural, human and social scientific value, validity and effectiveness of the HeartMath system, tools and techniques. Converging scientific evidence continually indicates vast, energetic, interconnectivity at human, planetary and solar systemic levels. Recent ecological studies are worth mentioning. One heart rate variability (HRV) study over a longitudinal 31-day period in a group of participants in separate locations found significant correlations with changes in solar and geomagnetic activity as well as time-varying magnetic fields associated with geomagnetic field-line and Schumann resonances (McCraty et al., 2017). Findings supported other studies indicating a broad range of physiological, psychological, and behavioural changes associated with changes or disturbances in geomagnetic activity and solar activity. Findings again indicated that energetic environmental phenomena impact psychophysical processes that can affect people in different ways depending on their sensitivity, health status and capacity for self-regulation (Alabdulgader, et al., 2018). Another similar study has important social coherence implications. Timofejeva, et al., (2017) found synchronization between slow HRV wave rhythms and changes in local magnetic field data, with the degree of synchronization being associated with the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Integrating spirituality, philosophy and physics, Lehman and Persinger (2015) reported that transformations of Teilhard de Chardin's concepts of spiritual energy, noosphere and the evolutionary expansion of consciousness beyond the planet could be quantitatively supported by converging current cosmology, quantum biology, human cerebral parameters and fundamental universal energies. For example, there are sufficient, coherent, physical, electromagnetic and temporal similarities between the Schumann Resonances of the earth-ionospheric cavity and the cerebrums of the human population to allow the conditions that could create the noosphere. Alternations in magnetic moment by changes in velocity of the simplest unit, the electron-proton pairing, through superimposing the magnetic field strength associated cognition upon the background intergalactic magnetic field, could qualify for the physical foundation required for convergence at an Omega Point. Lehman and Persinger (2015) predict that new computer-based technologies that expose the human population to homogeneous energetic patterns and produce cognitive states consistent with unifying the noosphere could be sufficient to produce physical changes to support de Chardin's hypotheses.

Probably associated with more immediate need as well as human default mode network of reacting to stress with negative emotions, more studies seem to have focussed on illness prevention than health promotion. Following a meta-analytical study of results from thousands of researchers over nearly a century of increasingly sophisticated experiments, Radin (1997) concluded that the evidence for the existence of psi phenomena was incontrovertible. Although various international studies have indicated that collective meditation, prayer and contemplation focused on positive outcomes may have measurable beneficial effects (Orme-Johnson 2000), these studies seem too few in number and

significant statistical effects are small. For example, Radin, Schlitz and Baur (2015) conclude that the implications of divine healing intention for basic science epistemology and ontology and for pragmatic efforts to improve health and healing are vast, deep, and perennially intriguing. It is understandable that natural scientifically orientated studies have remained cautious in interpretation and implementation of findings as mechanisms associated with non-local effects of psi remain hidden. It may also be that alternative integral, scientific methods and more sophisticated techniques for the measurement of subtle energy still have to be developed. However, in view of their health promotion potential, it seems an ethical imperative that such studies, methods and related interventions should be continuously and rigorously pursued.

In addition to pursuit of scientific programmes and interventions for promoting global health and wellbeing, promotion of everyday wisdom ways need even more vigorous encouragement, especially facilitating the collaboration of human, social, health, education, religious, wisdom and other life promoting organizations, such as the United Nations, World Health Organization, Parliament of Religions etc. The HeartMath system provide excellent examples of practical tools. For example, everyday "power tools" of the heart include care, appreciation, non-judgement and forgiveness. Scientifically researched, practical meditation tools such as heart focussed breathing at a ten second rhythm, quick coherence technique, heart lock in, which is very similar to heart prayer, and coherent communication are readily available on the HeartMath website. Where the internet and smartphones are not available for all people, faith, family, friends and/or local sages will help. If not, scientific studies indicate, and committed praxis extolls, simply listening carefully to our personal, universal heart, for provision of everyday paths as well as an integral, ultimate wisdom way.

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