

The Psychodynamics of Gratitude: An Opportunity for Theological-Psychological Convergence

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Abstract

The author discusses psychological dynamics entailed in the experience of gratitude, arguing that they constitute a region of significant overlap—and an opportunity for meaningful dialogue—between those who nurture individuals towards spiritual growth (priests and other spiritual guides), and those who work with clients in secular therapeutic settings. The importance of gratitude in Orthodox spiritual life is attested to in Patristic and ascetical writings and is evidenced by the regularity of the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist. From the perspective of the Church’s understanding of *theosis* as the telos of human development, pastoral ministry encourages gratitude, as a means of healing and the expression of its fulfillment. Priests and other spiritual guides, however, do not always recognize the intrapsychic difficulties many people encounter in attempting to be grateful. Gratitude entails a person’s understanding and acknowledgment of the fact that they are not self-sufficient. One can safely acknowledge this only if one can trust in the fundamental goodness of the environment in which they exist. Orthodox theology offers assurance of this goodness on a cosmic scale. Individuals may still struggle, though, to realize this goodness on a personal level, due to the particular traumas and deficits entailed in their own developmental histories. As such, gratitude, as both a spiritual and therapeutic goal, represents a crossroads at which pastoral guidance and secular therapy intersect. Therapists, operating in a secular context, can understand their work as leading a client towards a disposition that possesses spiritual value. Conversely, priests and spiritual guides might come to appreciate the positive contribution of psychology, in helping us understand how individuals can be helped through impediments that restrict their ability to experience gratitude.

I. A Client Says Thank You

I recently had an experience with a client that I think many therapists will recognize as being one of significance with regard to indications of therapeutic progress. “Charlene,” with whom I’ve worked for five years, was describing her ever-present feeling of loss and loneliness. She has made notable progress in the time I’ve seen her, some of which is represented in her enrollment in a graduate level program to become, herself, a healer in the field of medicine. She has often described her grandparents’ role in providing safety and nurture, throughout years in which her own mother, with her own developmental disabilities, was not able to provide—nor her father, who was raised in a family with abuse and neglect. Her grandparents are no longer living. Charlene shared with me how sad he feels that, despite the advances she’s making in her life, there’s no one there to say, “You’re doing a good job. I’m proud of you.” Checking in briefly with my own subjective reaction to these words, quickly running through my mental matrix of what was happening therapeutically in that moment, and trying to identify what might be therapeutically advantageous, I opted for the somewhat risky (though, I felt, justified) move of self-disclosure. “Well,” I said, “I can’t stand in for your family. But I find myself wanting to say, ‘I see what you’re doing. And I think you’re doing a good job.’” Her response, “Thanks,” came with a high level of congruence, unaccompanied by attempts to minimize the importance

of my positive and heartfelt feedback. She could have physically recoiled, however so-subtly, thus indicating I had come up against her internal protection system; she could have recoiled but didn't. Her reply of "thanks," was not followed by any discernible behaviors, on her part, to guard the vulnerable self she had revealed in her sharing of loss, sadness, and need. That word, "thanks," followed by a second of silence, then her continued sharing about how she was reaching for her goals, was momentous.

What is it that makes this expression of gratitude significant? Because gratitude, as is known to those who spend hours with clients in their gradual and sometimes dramatic disclosures of trauma and loss, is an achievement that entails a considerable consolidation in a person's sense of self—enough so that they can risk expressing appreciation to an *other*, whose work with them they are daring to acknowledge as valuable, and without which they may not have been able to reach their current potential.

II. Gratitude in Orthodox Theological Tradition

The importance of a client's gratitude towards her or his therapist, though, may not be exhausted merely by consideration of the psychological development it signifies. For a therapist whose anthropology is informed by Orthodox theology, the emergence of gratitude can be seen through a spiritual as well as a psychological lens. In his 1983 Thanksgiving homily, Fr Alexander Schmemmann said, "Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy."¹ This concisely summarizes a central characteristic—perhaps *the* central characteristic—of Orthodox worship: that is, its eucharistic focus, evident in, amongst other things, the ubiquity of Eucharistic liturgical celebrations throughout the year. In addition, the importance of gratitude is emphasized in writings from Christianity's earliest days, which, themselves, merely continue an inheritance from Israel's worship of God in the Old Testament. While all the requirements of the Old Testament sacrificial system might be seen as acts of returning to God from the bounty He has provided to us, there were also sacrifices specifically designated as thanksgiving offerings (Lev 7.11–15), offered voluntarily, apparently, by individuals to express their gratitude for God's provision in particular areas of their lives. These might have served a role similar to that of a *molieben* or *paraklesis*, which can be requested by individuals for the same reason.

Amongst admonitions to thanks-giving in the New Testament, 1 Thess 5.18 (*Authorized Version*) is especially direct. St. Paul urges, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." St. Gregory the Wonderworker, in his 3rd-century *Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen*, says: "Ingratitude appears to me to be a dire evil; a dire evil indeed, yea, the direst of evils. For when one has received some benefit, his failing to attempt to make any return by at least the oral expression of thanks, where aught else is beyond his power, marks him out either as an utterly irrational person or as one devoid of the sense of obligations

¹ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Thank You, O Lord!: Final Words." < <https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr-alexander-schmemmann/thank-you-o-lord> >, October 29, 2022.

conferred or as a man without any memory.”² He further says, “We ought to venture and attempt everything, so as to offer thanksgivings, if not adequate, at least such as we have it in our power to exhibit, as in due return.”

Bouyer, in his 1968 *Eucharist*, persuasively argues that the Christian eucharistic liturgy is heir to the Jewish *berakoth*, a series of prayers and praises that culminated in a shared meal and included, just as the Christian liturgy does, an *anamnesis* or recounting of God’s works on Israel’s behalf.³ The understanding of the meaning of the liturgy by modern Orthodox Christians is frequently informed by Fr. Schmemmann’s emphasis on the priestly function as intrinsic to human existence. He asserts that the label *homo adorans*,⁴ the human who worships, discloses a truth more central to what makes humanity unique than does the term *homo sapiens*. Fr. Schmemmann’s exegesis of the Genesis narrative in which Adam and Eve first fell from grace is a frequent underpinning for homilies and other occasions of spiritual guidance in the parish setting, helping people understand fasting and liturgical celebration as integral to the recovery of this lost priestly dimension. The central feature of Adam and Eve’s failure, Schmemmann says, is that they forfeited their priestly estate, by failing to understand food as the primary element of our communion with God, given by Him for our sustenance—with our fitting response to being thanksgiving.⁵ The Eucharistic meal, then, like the meal associated with the Jewish *berakoth*, has cosmic significance, restoring creation’s original intention, which can be realized only through the free return of that created world by the only creatures who are the recipients of its bounty and, simultaneously, capable of affirming the source and origin from which it comes—that is, the human person.

Our understanding of the significance of this priestly function, its forfeiture, and its recovery through the Incarnation of Christ, can be further complemented by St. Maximus’s understanding of the human being as an image of a church. Describing how the human being is the vehicle for uniting creation to God, he says:

Man is a mystical church. Through his body as he illumines the practical life of his soul through the energies of the commandments in accordance with the moral philosophy; through the sanctuary of his soul he brings to God, through "natural" contemplation and reason, the sensible *logoi* as purely detached in the spirit from matter; and through the altar of his spirit, he invokes the silence full of hymns of praise.⁶

² St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. “Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen,” Argument III, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 6:23.

³ Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, Charles Underhill Quinn, trans. (London: University of Notre Dame, 1968), 59.

⁴ Alexander Schmemmann. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2000), 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16–18.

⁶ *Mystagogia*, PG 91:672BC, as cited in L. Thunberg, L. *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985), 123.

This passage, in defining the role of human beings, uses language corresponding to the procession of gifts, which, in the ancient Church, were brought by the faithful, handed to the clergy, and then were brought into sanctuary and placed upon the altar.⁷ Maximus's image conveys the centrality of Eucharist, of thanksgiving, to the human vocation.

III. The Difficulties of a Purely Spiritual Approach

And, yet, while Orthodox services, prayers, and spiritual traditions provide form and content that supports a grateful disposition, these do not always guarantee that an individual who practices them can easily transcend personal developmental factors that can make gratitude a formidable challenge. A disposition of gratitude, whether it be towards God or other people, depends upon a number of developmental precedents that, for many, are elusive. For example, gratitude entails the recognition of an *other*, in relation to whom one is a beneficiary. In the case of small favors, such recognition is not likely to challenge one's sense of self. However, when the benefit received begins to pertain to one's fundamental worth, and even to one's very existence and being, the acknowledgment of dependence upon an *other* can tax an individual at the core of their identity. We might imagine, at this point, that the common distinction between theology and psychology collapses—because, for a person to grow towards gratitude as it is understood theologically, requires that intrapsychic psychological impediments, including those at the object-relations level, be addressed.

In other words, taking gratitude seriously as an important element of spiritual growth, priests, pastors, and other spiritual guides eventually encounter dynamics that psychology has made one of its special focuses. At this point, priestly and pastoral guides have a choice to make. They may wish to assert the sufficiency of the Church's anthropological and ascetical understanding of healing, and believe, rightly or not, not only that the Church possesses medicine adequate to this task, but that they are sagacious and skilled enough to administer it effectively. This is a tall order, as any priest who has encountered deep-seated psychological issues among parishioners can attest. Another option is for priestly and spiritual guides to recognize the potential benefits of the psychological perspective. In ideal situations, this may include referral of parishioners to a psychiatrist, psychologist, or mental health therapist. Here, hopefully, the parishioner can encounter an environment in which, as a part of growth in awareness of their own attachment dynamics and working towards ways of connecting that include greater openness and reciprocity, and a capacity for vulnerability and trust, their access to an experience of genuine gratitude can be significantly increased.

IV. Psychology's Potential Contribution

The priest or spiritual guide can be assured that modern psychology, also, from its own vantage point and experience with patients, values gratitude as an important element in wellbeing. For instance, Portocarrero, Gonzalez, and Ekema-Agbaw, in a 2020 meta-analytic

⁷ Robert Cabié, *The Eucharist, vol. II, The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, Aimé Georges Martimort, ed. Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 78–80.

review of 158 research manuscripts, screened for relevance to the question of correlation between dispositional gratitude and well-being, describe their findings as suggesting that “the grateful disposition is more strongly related to positive compared to negative aspects of well-being, which implies grateful individuals (compared to less grateful individuals) present higher levels of subjective and psychological well-being . . . compared to their levels of psychological maladjustment (such as depression, anxiety, or stress).”⁸ Kumar, et al., examined the effects of a grateful disposition on various correlates of resilience during conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In their study including 201 undergraduate students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, between ages 19 and 45, a disposition of gratitude going into the pandemic significantly correlated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, and with reports of positive rather than negative effects of the pandemic in areas including “*strengthened interpersonal connections, more time, and academic ease or improvement.*”⁹

Steven-John Harris highlights this overlap of spiritual and psychological concerns in a way relevant to this overlap in theology and psychology’s positive valuation of gratitude, in his discussion of the phenomenon of spiritual hunger, for which Christ presents himself as the ultimate satisfaction—the Bread of Life. “A prerequisite for reparation and the experiencing of one’s true hunger,” Harris says, “is the renunciation of omnipotence. This renunciation involves awareness of and turning away from omnipotent magical thinking as well as compulsive thoughts and actions that attempt to control the object or the ‘*Other.*’”¹⁰ If we follow Harris’s thought, we begin with the consideration of a central spiritual theme—what is implied in receiving Christ as the Bread of Life—yet end up in the domain where psychotherapeutic work contributes its insight and expertise. Harris continues, “Turning away from these difficult defensive patterns, according to Winnicott, opens up the possibility of ‘potential space,’ a level of creativity between Creator and created.”¹¹

It is common in therapeutic work for the therapist her- or himself to become the other, upon which a client projects the pattern of the prior relationships in which they came to understand who and what they are. Thus, the therapist finds themselves in the crosshairs of the expectations, hopes, frustrations, and fears that comprise the client’s schema for connection with an *other*. The field of transference and countertransference becomes rich with dynamics of attachment for both client and therapist—although the therapist is the one charged with being conscious of these dynamics, enough to facilitate the client’s development. Jeremy Holmes describes various patterns that can appear in the field of transference. With patients whose

⁸ Florencio F. Portocarrero, Katerina Gonzalez, and Michael Ekema-Agbaw, “A Meta-Analytic Review of the Relationship between Dispositional Gratitude and Well-being,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 164 (Oct., 2020): 33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110101>. <<https://hanlib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/meta-analytic-review-relationship-between/docview/2426000054/se-2>>. Ellipses mine.

⁹ Shaina A. Kumar, et al., “Does Gratitude Promote Resilience during a Pandemic? An Examination of Mental Health and Positivity at the Onset of Covid-19,” *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-being* (July 2022): 3476. doi: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00554-x>>. <<https://hanlib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/does-gratitude-promote-resilience-during-pandemic/docview/2691089110/se-2>>.

¹⁰ Steven-John M. Harris. *God, Psychology, and Faith in Dialogue*, Nancy J. Brown, ed. (CA: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, 2018), 55.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

attachment is avoidant, Holmes says, “the therapist may feel she and the patient are warily circling one another; the sessions may seem vacuous and difficult to recall afterward when writing notes. The patient may provoke the therapist to be rejecting, or assume a pseudo-intimacy that does not correspond with the therapist’s experience.”¹² With ambivalent-attachment patients, Holmes says, “the therapist may feel stifled, or crowded out, or coerced into helping the patient rather than listening to him or her, overwhelmed by the patient’s distress, and invaded by a sense of helplessness.”¹³ Disorganized attachment, often associated with the appearance of borderline personality disorder, manifests in “difficulties with both autonomy and intimacy.”¹⁴ Thus, “instability of attachment or oscillations between dependency and detachment are typical.” Such patients may seem to crave chaos, experiencing stability as the occasion for “unbearable feelings of depression or emptiness.” The therapist is in the position of needing to assess (even moment by moment), “whether the primary problem is with intimacy, in which case empathy is the main need, or autonomy, which is fostered best when aggression is acknowledged and firmly contained.”

The attachment dynamics that emerge and are worked with in therapy have their origins in the client’s earliest relational experiences, beginning with their primary caregiver, usually associated with the mother. Melanie Klein said, “Throughout my work, I have attributed fundamental importance to the infant’s first object relation—the relation to the mother’s breast and to the mother—and have drawn the conclusion that if this primal object, which is introjected, takes root in the ego with relative security, the basis for a satisfactory development is laid.”¹⁵ In other words, those earliest relational experiences determine the template that will be the basis for relational experiences thereafter. Early developmental trauma, which can include instances of deprivation and neglect on one hand, or of aggressive intrusion on the other, can make subsequent relationship formation problematic. Typically, the earlier such traumas occur, the more likely they are to affect, not only the behaviors that enable a person to form fulfilling relationships, but, more essentially, the person’s very sense of self, which is the basis for apprehension of the other as other.

V. Discussion

The foregoing prepares us to appreciate, not only how gratitude might serve as a common denominator for therapeutic and pastoral understandings of wellness, but how it suggests the potential for therapy and pastoral ministry to work together, in a complementary way, in the process of healing.

¹² Jeremy Holmes. *Attachment, Intimacy, Autonomy: Using Attachment Theory in Adult Psychotherapy*. (Northvale, New Jersey, 1996): 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁵ Melanie M. Klein, “Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946–1963,” M. Masud R. Khan, ed., in *The International Psycho-Analytical Library*. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1975), 178.

As simple as the idea of gratitude is, we can reflect on the complex co-incidence of factors entailed in it: 1) a sense of self-sufficiency to acknowledge the reality of another as having being distinct from oneself; 2) acknowledgment that the other possesses something of benefit to them, the giving of which might enhance their own experience (in other words, acknowledgment that one is not so self-sufficient that they cannot benefit from what the other might give to them); 3) trust that the other is kindly-disposed towards them, and desires to give to them, with the intention of helping and not hurting them. The collapse of any of these conditions impairs a person's capacity to conceptualize, receive, or express gratitude for an act of giving.

Impairment in a person's belief (conscious or unconscious) that they could possibly be the recipient of another's benevolent giving invites two avenues of investigation and therapeutic work. A client's presenting concern might include their report of the failure of others to lovingly provide them with what they need. In this case, the obstacle to reception is projected upon others. "Other people don't love me." "Why is the universe so unfair to me?" One manifestation of this is a client's experience of envy when they encounter the possibility of another possessing something they deem desirable. Klein describes envy as "the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable—the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it."¹⁶ This impulse is due to the fact that the person does not possess a developmental template, formed in those first instances of the infant-caregiver dyad, that suggests the possibility that a desired thing might be willingly granted to them. Instead, the desired thing, possessed by the other, merely highlights the sense of deprivation in oneself at not having a self-sufficient supply of it. What might be an opportunity for appreciation, relationship, and sharing—perhaps even leading to reception and gratitude—instead becomes marked by hatred for the other and a desire that the thing they possess be spoiled.

Alternatively, a client might attribute their barrier to receiving the desired thing to a flaw in themselves. In that they were not afforded an environment in which their primary self-needs were adequately met, they lack an internalized sense of their value, and cannot imagine possessing value in the eyes of another. "What's wrong with me?" is the client's cry. Their ailment is shame. Klein describes how this might manifest in a client as greed, "an impetuous and insatiable craving, exceeding what the subject needs and what the object is able and willing to give. At the unconscious level, greed aims primarily at completely scooping out, sucking dry, and devouring the breast...its aim is destructive introjection."¹⁷ A therapist, in the cross-hairs of transference related to these primary relational deficits, may find her- or himself fluctuating erratically between a variety of roles, including that of trying to supply maternal nurture and validation to a client, to then being criticized harshly for a relatively minor misstep in reflection or response. A therapist learns how to have her or his own "seatbelt" on, in the midst of such therapy. We can imagine, and sometimes see, an unwitting priest or spiritual guide trying to navigate this same terrain, sometimes compelling them (even if they had been reluctant before) to consider making a psychological referral.

None of this is to say that resources for working with these dynamics are lacking within the parish setting, though. The Orthodox spiritual perspective addresses, at their roots,

¹⁶ Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," 181.

¹⁷ Ibid.

developmental deficits that can manifest in one's conviction that universe is fundamentally malevolent, or that one is inherently flawed and unlovable. This is because the Orthodox perspective affirms and evidences God's love towards us, and, simultaneously, our inherent, inviolable value—being made in the image of God, and partakers of the divine nature through the assumption of our humanity by the incarnate Word of God. There is no lack here of anything necessary to establish us in a Eucharistic orientation towards God. Our ability to experience this, however, entails no more bypassing our lived human reality than did the divine Incarnation itself. Our capacity, in our human nature, to partake of the divine, includes healing of our human nature, which entails, in appropriate measure, the employment of human means.

These human means, in the case of helping one heal from developmental trauma that impedes a capacity for gratitude, include contact with people who are able to bear the chaos of the problematic attachment schema as they are projected onto them, whether that be in the setting of friendship, therapy, or the priest-parishioner relationship. In the therapeutic setting, the therapist must tolerate many moments in which their caring advances are received by the client, not with reciprocity and gratitude, but with greed or envy, and must be able to resist the allure of identifying with the images of the idealized, wished-for parent the client projects onto them—as good as those projections might feel, especially in light of the therapist's pain and self-doubt that may have been activated by the more-critical projections. The therapist must be willing to be pushed beyond the range in which the relationship with their client feels good—or, in some cases, even feels possible—and then be willing to return again to caring interaction the moment the client appears ready to try to repair the relationship they have just sabotaged. By letting her- or himself be sacrificed in this way, and then recovered, again and again, by the client, the therapist assists the client in establishing a stable inner object—that internalized image of the other with whom they are relating—and thus establish, increasingly, a stable self, which is the basis for that relating.

Winnicott describes these destructive forces of the client's transference as the client's "attempt to place the analyst outside the area of omnipotent control, that is, out in the world."¹⁸ Prior to this externalization, the therapist exists to the client primarily as a function of the projection of their own inner world. Winnicott describes this shift in development as a transition from object relations to object usage. Of this, he says, "From now on the subject says: 'Hullo object! 'I destroyed you.' 'I love you.' 'You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you.' 'While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) fantasy.' Here fantasy begins for the individual."¹⁹ "The positive changes that come about in this area can be profound," Winnicott says, but "they do not depend on interpretative work. They depend on the analyst's survival of the attacks." Only following that, Winnicott says, can the client "now *use* the object that has survived."

In relation to the emergence of a capacity for gratitude, the development Winnicott describes begins to satisfy the conditions mentioned earlier that are necessary for its appearance. The person, the client, the parishioner, is developing a capacity to acknowledge an *other*, and to

¹⁸ D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*. (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1971): 91.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

understand oneself in relation to that other. Moreover, the person begins to trust that the other's existence is benevolent in the sense that this other's existence does not obliterate, but sustains, their own, even in the face of their attacks on that other, that have the specific intention of trying to destroy it. Winnicott uses the term "love"²⁰ to describe something essential about this new relationship—corresponding with this new self. "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4.19, NIV), can perhaps be heard, in light of this, with a greater appreciation of its psychological dynamics.

Clients sometimes initially present in a condition in which they are unable, or extremely unlikely, to express gratitude. As has been said, this can be the consequence of developmental trauma that conspires against the appearance of conditions necessary for its appearance. Though lacking the nuance in the understanding of these dynamics demonstrated by later object-relations and attachment theorists, Klein nonetheless identifies what lies at their core, and what consequences they have for the client: "It is clear that deprivation, unsatisfactory feeding, and unfavourable circumstances intensify envy," she says, "because they disturb full gratification, and a vicious circle is created."²¹ "Greed, envy, and persecutory anxiety, which are bound up with each other, inevitably increase each other,"²² she says. The inability to experience and express gratitude is one unfortunate correlate of this circle.

Conversely, though, therapy can be a setting in which the conditions necessary for gratitude can be nurtured. The therapist, surviving the attacks that are intended by the client, unconsciously, to destroy their capacity as a relational other, affords the client the opportunity to discover the stable and persistent reality of their own selfhood. With the emergence of the other and the self, there emerges, simultaneously, the possibility of love—and, with that, the possibility for gratitude. "One major derivative of the capacity for love," says Klein, "is the feeling of gratitude."²³ Gratitude, in turn, reinforces the client's—or parishioner's—relationship to the good object, thus contributing to further growth in love. Klein continues, "Gratitude is essential in building up the relation to the good object and underlies also the appreciation of goodness in others and in oneself." Thus, the vicious circle is replaced with a virtuous one, in which "enjoyment and the gratitude to which it gives rise . . . mitigate destructive impulses, envy, and greed."²⁴

VI. Conclusion

To conclude, this survey of the role accorded to gratitude in both the Orthodox spiritual perspective and modern psychology indicates that efforts to promote a capacity for gratitude might serve as a common focal point for priests and spiritual guides, on the one hand, and psychologists and therapists, on the other, who work with people who are, simultaneously,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," 187 footnote.

²² Ibid., 187.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," 187. Ellipses mine.

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Orthodox Christians and patients in mental health care. Becoming aware of this overlap, priests and spiritual guides might be more understanding of the barriers some parishioners encounter when faced with the admonition to be grateful, and more willing to consider referrals when those barriers persist. Mental health providers might be ennobled and inspired by the understanding that, in helping clients towards a capacity for gratitude, they are working towards a goal that is considered spiritually important by—amongst other spiritual traditions—the ancient Orthodox Faith. One benefit of describing gratitude as a shared focal point is that it does not necessitate that theology and psychology adopt identical ontologies or methods of healing in order to collaborate with each other—yet, at the same time, it affirms genuine compatibility in the directions in which their work aims, and holds open the possibility that these sciences, theology and psychology, might converge, each from its own particular angle and vantage-point, on the same ultimate realities.