

Empathy as a Prime Psychotherapeutic Concept:

Reflections on a principal ingredient in counseling

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Introduction

*“A homeless man begging for food.
Everyone that passes is openly rude.
He hangs his head and starts to cry.
He doesn’t know why he bothers to try.
You think you have troubles and have paid your dues.
Take a minute and walk in his shoes.”*

Max Grim

Empathy is a significant aspect of human emotion that strongly influences the behavior of individuals as well as the functioning of society. As such, empathy is a crucial tool for psychotherapy.¹ At the same time, it is just as important for interpersonal communication, mandating as it does a keen eye and ear. It is not accidental that the psalmist decries the lack of empathy in humans, who “have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but, they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear” (Psalm 135: 16-17). In regards to psychotherapy, a critical question is, how can therapists understand clients? And what impact does this understanding have upon the quality of psychotherapy and the

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1. On the importance of empathy for psychotherapy, see ARTHUR C. BOHART and LESLIE S. GREENBERG, “Empathy and Psychotherapy: An Introductory Overview,” in *Empathy Reconsidered: New Directions in Psychotherapy*, Arthur C. Bohart and Leslie S. Greenberg, eds. (Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association, 1997), pp. 3-31. This important volume that includes the cited paper is a collective indication of the re-appreciation of empathy and relatedness as a therapeutic prerequisite for psychotherapy and the discipline of psychology in general (psychodynamic, experiential, client-centered, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, feminist, etc).

persons involved? Empathy is a very specific stance that, as we shall see below, distinguishes itself from the goals of acceptance, agreement, and consensus. The roots of empathy lie, first and foremost, in one's willingness to understand the other² and bring oneself into the other's shoes. More than that, it is a sign of fundamental care for the other(s), expressed through a multitude of ways, which are often non-verbal. We remember Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's pertinent line from *The Little Prince*, "...eyes are blind. You have to look with the heart."³ At the same time, empathy rests on self-knowledge, and *makes us more human*,⁴ in our relating to God, nature, and fellow human beings.

Empathy is therefore a fundamental human attribute; lacking empathy, or being denied it, are instances of a serious flaw in one's life as well as in pastoral care. Literally speaking, the absence of empathy in any account of anthropology amounts to a de-humanization of personhood, i.e. to a state of mind currently exhibited by computers (in their present form).

Understanding Empathy

"Each person is an island unto himself... he can only build bridges to other islands if he is first of all willing to be himself."

Carl Rogers⁵

The term ἐμπάθεια is an ancient and modern Greek word meaning a state of strong passion,⁶ negative passion in almost all cases. The feelings involved

2. This "other" which to be understood should not be seen in static but in dynamic terms, as a subject in continuous development and growth. This is something that is usually overlooked but must be taken into account. See FRANK SUMMERS, "The Transcendent Experience of the Other: Futurity in Empathy," *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 32, No. 4, (2012): 236–245.

3. *The Little Prince*, Wordsworth Edition Limited, 1995, p. 93

4. To be human means, among other things, to possess the quality of altruism. For a study examining the relation between empathy and altruism, see DEREK J. BURKS, LORRAINE K. YOULL, and JAYSON P. DURTSCHI, "The Empathy-Altruism Association and its Relevance to Health Care Professions," *Social Behavior and Personality*, 40 (3), (2012): 395-400. Also, DEREK J. BURKS & AMY M. KOBUS, "The Legacy of Altruism in Health Care: The Promotion of Empathy, Prosociality and Humanism," *Medical Education* 46 (2012): 317–325.

5. *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 21.

6. Δ. ΔΗΜΗΤΡΑΚΟΥ, *Μέγα Λεξικόν Ὁλης τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, Vol. 5, 1964, p. 2470.

may be prejudice, anger, spite, resentfulness, hatred. The modern English term “empathy,” on the other hand, is the Greek word *ἑμπαθεία* but paradoxically it has been given a wholly different content:

*The ability to identify with an experience another person’s experiences. This is accomplished by (as much as possible) suspending one’s own frame of reference in order to enter a perceptual and emotional world of the other. Empathy is vital in the counseling situation.*⁷

However, empathy⁸ (ἑνσυναίσθησις) is not so easy to define⁹— for one thing, because there appear to exist almost as many definitions as the authors who have grappled with the subject.¹⁰

According to Chuck Borsellino, empathy is “a deep, subjective understanding of another’s inner struggles and feelings,”¹¹ a state of being reminiscent of

7. D. E. MASSEY, “Empathy,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Rodney Hunter, General Editor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 354.

8. For a review of the current literature on empathy, see SUSAN B. GIBBONS, “Understanding Empathy as a Complex Construct: A Review of the Literature,” *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 39 (2011): 243–252. See also LESLIE S. GREENBERG AND ROBERT ELLIOTT, “Varieties of Empathic Responding,” in *Empathy Reconsidered: New Directions in Psychotherapy*, Arthur C. Bohart and Leslie S. Greenberg, eds. (Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association, 1997), pp. 167-186.

9. This explains the plethora of definitions of empathy that have been offered. See MORRIS EAGLE and DAVID L. WOLITZKY, “Empathy: A Psychoanalytic Perspective,” in *Empathy Reconsidered: New Directions in Psychotherapy*, Arthur C. Bohart and Leslie S. Greenberg, eds. (Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association, 1997), pp. 217-244.

10. For a history of the discovery and rediscovery of empathy in psychotherapy, see STEFANO BOLOGNINI’s excellent monograph, *Psychoanalytic Empathy*, trans. by Malcolm Garfield, editorial consultant Anthony Molino (Free Association Books, 2004) pp. 36-53.

As T. J. RUNKEL, indicates (“Empathy,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*, edited by David G. Benner, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985, p. 358): «*The contemporary usage of this term grows out of a heritage rich with varied meanings. The Greek concept of empathein, “animation of the inanimate,” can be traced to Aristotle. The German [term] einfühlung referred to an aesthetic response to a work of art until the beginning of the twentieth century, when Lipps and Wundt applied the term to a basic psychological process. This usage was translated by Titchener with the English word empathy meaning “feeling into.”*».

11. CHUCK BORSELLINO, “Group therapy” in Marvin G. Gilbert & Raymond T. Brock (eds.), *Holy Spirit & Counseling, vol. II Principles & Practice* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), p. 188.

the Heideggerian term *mitsein* ('being with'). Empathy "is the accepting, confirming, and understanding human echo evoked by the self. It is an essential psychological nurturant without which human life as we cherish it cannot be sustained."¹² In effect, empathic understanding "means entering into the [other] person's inner world of meanings and deep feelings¹³ through listening with caring awareness."¹⁴ Etymologically, the term comes from ἐν (in) and πάθος (pathos), "passion" or "suffering? (from which sympathy comes),¹⁵ suggesting the human capacity¹⁶ for sensing and translating another person's feelings into one's own. The opposite term, *alexithymia*,¹⁷ is a neologism comprised of the Greek words λέξις (lexis) and θυμός (thymos), with the addition of an alpha-primitive, meaning a state of mind without words for emotions. Clearly, *alexithymia*

12. HOWARD CLINEBELL, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing & Growth*, Completely Revised and Enlarged (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 77.

13. For an interesting review of "role reversal," as a psychodramatic technique in which two individuals take the role of one another in an interpersonal situation and actually behave as if one is the other, see DANI YANIV, "Dynamics of Creativity and Empathy in Role Reversal: Contributions From Neuroscience," *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2012): 70–77.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 417.

15. For a clear distinction between empathy and sympathy, see ROBERT L. KATZ, *Empathy: Its Nature and Uses* (The Macmillan Company, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 8–11; also, RITA W. MENESES & MICHAEL LARKIN, "Edith Stein and the Contemporary Psychological Study of Empathy," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 43 (2012): 158–162.

16. The so-called "functionalists" in the philosophy of mind (e.g. Daniel Dennett, Paul and Patricia Churchland) as well as behaviorist psychologists (e.g. B. F. Skinner), have so emphasized the external (stimulus response) behavior of consciousness in their effort to explain the human mind, that they ruled out the inner life (pejoratively called "mentalism") of conscious beings, especially humans, as an irrelevant distraction from a total theory of the mind. In this materialist perspective, empathy is discounted as irrelevant to the attainment of interpersonal and interspecies knowledge. On opposite ends from this anti-Cartesian perspective stands the philosopher Thomas Nagel, who among others has challenged the metaphysical imperialism of functionalism, insisting as he does that we should care to at least be aware that all organisms have conscious mental states, even if we are intrinsically hindered from grasping them. In effect, then, Nagel advocates a standpoint of philosophical empathy that recognizes the existence of non-human inner mental and emotional life. See his famous paper, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Oct., 1974): 435–450.

17. G. J. TAYLOR, and R. M. BAGBY & J. D. A. PARKER, *Disorders of Affect Regulation: Alexithymia in Medical and Psychiatric Illness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 28–31.

corresponds to a severe form of emotional insulation, which is the exact opposite of empathy, pointing to a disorder.

In more detail, empathy means being able “*to stand within the other’s shoes and imagine what it is like for him or her... Empathy involves some boundary flexibility, such that one stands with the other but is still able to maintain a sense of oneself as different from the other.*”¹⁸ As Carl Rogers, known for his “*Person-centered*” therapeutic approach, defines it

*The state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the “as if” condition. Thus it means to sense the hurt or the pleasure of another as he senses it and to perceive the causes thereof as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is as if I were hurt or pleased and so forth. If this “as if” quality is lost, then the state is one of identification.*¹⁹

Likewise, Rogers speaks of empathic understanding as well as of an empathic way of being, to denote that empathy is not a cerebral process but a holistic attitude involving the whole person,²⁰ that “*being empathic is a complex, demanding, and strong –yet also a subtle and gentle– way of being.*”²¹ Recently, the empathic stance has been described along the following lines:

It is important for psychotherapists to make efforts to understand their clients, and to demonstrate this understanding through re-

18. CARRIE DOEHRING, *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care & Counseling*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), pp. 100-101. For a plethora of all and new psychological definitions of empathy, see CARL R. ROGERS’ classic work *A Way of Being*, with a New Introduction by Irvin Yalom (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), pp. 140-146; also, RALPH L. UNDERWOOD, *Empathy and Confrontation in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 58-61.

19. ROGERS, pp. 140-141.

20. For a deeper understanding of the empathic experience that acknowledges the latter’s emotional and holistic character beyond its limitation to a mere intellectual exercise, i.e. as a *lived experience*, see the recent important paper of RITA W. MENESES & MICHAEL LARKIN, “Edith Stein and the Contemporary Psychological Study of Empathy,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 43 (2012): 151-184.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

*sponses that address the perceived needs of the client. The empathic therapist's primary task is to understand experiences rather than words. Empathic therapists do not parrot clients' words back or reflect only the content of those words; instead, they understand overall goals as well as moment-to-moment experiences.*²²

History of Empathy

The discovery of and the emphasis on utilization of empathy in psychotherapy was not an individual accomplishment but the result of a collective affair. Empathy came to prominence as a useful psychological concept by such well known figures as Sigmund Freud, Theodor Reik, and Harry Stack Sullivan. Helen Deutsch and Sándor Ferenczi are also among the pioneers who turned attention to empathy in psychoanalysis.

Freud did considerable work on empathy, although his actual attitude was ambivalent, as he was very uncertain and cautious about feelings and their place in therapy.²³ Sometimes he used the term *counter-transference* to encompass empathic feelings and the dangers associated with them. One of the ideals valued by Freud was the neutrality of observation, which demanded the control of feelings and especially of counter transference, i.e. of the process through which patients displace onto their analysts feelings derived from the sexual feelings and fantasies of their childhood.

Generally speaking, it seems that Freud tended to encourage the observation of certain elements of the inner life of the analyst: memories, connections, images, words. In any case, he gave pride of place to representational elements over emotional ones, as if being surprised by the former were methodologically profitable, and by the latter, dangerous.

*Freud had wished to 'master' counter-transference.*²⁴

22. ROBERT ELLIOTT, ARTHUR C. BOHART, JEANNE C. WATSON, LESLIE S. GREENBERG, "Empathy," *Psychotherapy*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (2011): 43-49, p. 47.

23. G. W. PIGMAN, "Freud and the History of Empathy," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* vol. 76 (1995): 237-254, p. 252; cited from Bolognini, p. 33.

24. BOLOGNINI, p. 35.

This is understandable, given Freud's hard-lined positivism, which had little use for non-quantifiable entities such as feelings, not to mention the dangers of counter-transference. Small wonder, then, that he did not make much of empathy. This was left for some of his followers to do, chief among whom were the aforementioned Deutsch, Ferenczi, and Sullivan. Deutsch, in particular, made some considerable contribution to the ways empathy affects psychotherapy by focusing on the inner world and the sentiments of the analyst. Building upon Deutsch's insights, Sándor Ferenczi made his own original contribution by turning his attention to the benefits of having the therapist actively participate in the therapeutic process. This may seem normal now, but back then analysts were expected to keep their distance from patients in the same manner that physicians administer drugs without getting personally involved in the treatment. Even as early as 1918 Ferenczi, as Bolognini relays, considered the analyst's empathy to be fundamental. In his own words: "*Without a sensibility of this kind [the analyst] could not understand the patient's psychic conflicts*".²⁵

However, it was up to Carl Rogers to make empathy a major therapeutic concept. One would expect no less from the founder of client-centered (or person-centered) psychotherapy. In fact he was quite outspoken about this. As he pointed out in delineating his agenda,

*Over the years, however, the research evidence has kept piling up, and it points strongly to the conclusion that a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly the most potent factor in bringing about change and learning. And so I believe it is time for me to forget the caricatures and misrepresentations of the past and take a fresh look of empathy.*²⁶

Speaking from his long experience, Rogers never missed an opportunity to extol the benefits of empathy both in therapy and as regards social life in general. Indeed, for him empathy is a *sine qua non* element for a happy, balanced and fulfilling life. As such, therefore, it has a key place in psychotherapy. In his own account of empathy's merits, based upon years of practice,

First, empathy dissolves alienation... [moreover] Carl Jung has said that schizophrenics cease to be schizophrenic when they meet oth-

25. BOLOGNINI, p. 38.

26. ROGERS, p. 139.

er persons by whom they feel understood... a low level of empathy is related to a slight worsening in adjustment and pathology... A second consequence of empathic understanding is that the recipient feels valued, cared for, accepted as the person that he or she is... Perhaps another way of putting some of what I have been saying is that a finely tuned understanding by another individual gives the recipient a sense of personhood, of identity. [R. D.]Laing has said that "the sense of identity requires the existence of another by whom one is known. We can say that when persons find themselves sensitively and accurately understood, they develop a set of growth-promoting of therapeutic attitudes toward themselves."²⁷

Further key figures in this line of increasing empathy appreciation include Christine Olden, who argues that *"the sensibility of one person towards another can only be called empathy when it is not at the service of narcissistic needs, but of mature object relations, which entails awareness of separation and absence of confusion;"*²⁸ Roy Schafer, who speaks of *"generative empathy,"* which may be defined as *"the inner experience of sharing in and comprehending the momentary psychological state of another person... based on an interplay of introjective and projective mechanisms that is subtle and relatively free from conflict and occurs at the conscious and preconscious levels;"*²⁹ Ralph Greenson, who sees empathy as emotional knowledge, the sharing and experience of the feelings of another, a sharing that is *"temporary, and concerns the quality of the feelings, their degree and their quantity;"*³⁰ and Heinz Kohut, *"who has written about the curative role of empathy as involving principally understanding and, from the client's point of view, the experience of being understood,"*³¹ and who *"links self-disorders and fragmentation of the self with an absence of empathic relationships."*³² The concept and uses of empathy continue to develop,³³ and their positive influence in human well-being is continually appreciated.

27. Ibid, pp. 151-159.

28. BOLOGNINI, p. 42.

29. BOLOGNINI, p. 44.

30. BOLOGNINI, p. 46.

31. CHRIS R. SCHLAUCH, *Faithful Companionship: How Pastoral Counseling Heals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 148.

32. DOEHRING, p. 122.

33. As the concept develops, so does the criticism of it. It is true that *"research confirms*

The Theological Connection

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

St. Paul³⁴

How is Christian theology related to the psychological term of empathy?³⁵ And what, if anything, can it contribute to a proper understanding of empathy and its application in psychotherapy? Do pastoral leaders and psychologists have anything to learn from the theological appropriation of empathy?³⁶

If we take our clues from the principle of complementarity,³⁷ we would not be remiss in assuming that pastoral psychology can be informed not only by psychology and psychiatry, but also by some of the basic tenets of doctrinal theolo-

therapist empathy is correlated with client self-exploration and improvement of disturbed clients. However, empathy research raises some doubts. First, research has not supported the belief that empathy facilitates outcomes with normal clients facing developmental concerns. Second, measures such as Truax’s Accurate Empathy Scale have been found to have questionable validity and reliability. Third, the sufficiency of empathy, positive regard, and genuineness for client improvement has not been consistently demonstrated.” (Runkel, p. 359).

34. 1 Cor. 9: 22.

35. For an analysis of empathy’s correlation to psychoanalysis, see ARCH. ATHANASIOS PARAVANTSOS, «Ὁψεις τοῦ Ὁμοουσίου στη Σύγχρονη Ψυχανάλυση», *Θεολογία* Vol. 81, No. 2 (April-June 2010): 239-259, particularly pp. 246-251.

36. For a general commentary on religion as a source of cultivating empathy, see TANYA LUHRMANN, “God as the Ground of Empathy,” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 16, Issue 1, (Feb 2000): 19-20. Also, SAM A. HARDY, LAWRENCE J. WALKER, DAVID D. RACKHAM and JOSEPH A. OLSEN, “Religiosity and Adolescent Empathy and Aggression: The Mediating Role of Moral Identity,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* Vol. 4, No. 3, (2012): 237–248.

37. The philosophical idea that meaningful bridges can be built across the disciplines, which can be complemented by one another, is known as the principle of complementarity. The concept emerged from Danish physicist Niels Bohr’s work in physics, particularly his discovery that certain natural phenomena have a dual and ostensibly contradictory but in actual fact complementary identity and behavior (such as light, which manifests itself either as waves or in the form of particles). Bohr tried to extend this discovery to other disciplines and areas of life, e.g. in psychology and the philosophy of mind, as regards the mind-body problem. For more on this, see NATHAN BRODY and PAUL OPPENHEIM, “Application of Bohr’s Principle of Complementarity to the Mind-Body Problem,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Feb. 27, 1969): 97-113.

gy. Interestingly, Christian theology is uniquely privileged to contribute to a deepening of an understanding of empathy. This is because the heart of Christian faith i.e. the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God is the premier act of empathetic self-emptying and love. In His enfleshment, Jesus Christ steps into the total situation of the human race by assuming the latter's very nature in its entirety-not symbolically or metaphorically but in the most literal sense. By becoming man, the Son of God exits His divine situation and shares the human predicament from within. His Incarnation far exceeds anything that can be humanly accomplished in terms of an empathic openness to the other. As pastoral theologian Thomas C. Oden indicates, in an aptly -titled section "*God's own empathic understanding*,"

*The incarnation was viewed as the overarching pattern of the willingness of God to enter fully into our human situation of alienation and suffering. God's self-giving incarnate love calls for energetic human response, for entering the situation of suffering of the neighbor to redeem, show mercy, heal and transform, so as to manifest Christ's love amid the world.*³⁸

"Unlike much religious wisdom," Oden further remarks elsewhere, "*Christianity speaks boldly of God's own active participation in our suffering, God's empathic intention to be with us as fully as possible as humans, even unto death.*"³⁹ Moreover, this empathic move to a situation foreign to the Son of God occurs "*without confusion and without division*" (ἀσυγχύτως καὶ ἀδιαιρέτως),⁴⁰ according to the Chalcedonian formulation. This is precisely in line with the recently designated need for the therapist to maintain his separateness from the client, even if empathy is exercised. *?Concurrent to this [empathic] standing within the other's shoes is one's awareness of one's separateness.*"⁴¹

38. THOMAS C. ODEN, *Pastoral Counsel* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 12. Cf. also the following section "Radical openness to one's experiencing process," in *ibid*, pp. 14-18.

39. THOMAS C. ODEN, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1983), p. 251.

40. For a creative theological use of these adjectives, see JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS, "'Created' and 'Uncreated': The Existential Significance of Chalcedonian Christology," in *Communion & Otherness*, edited by Paul McPartlan, Foreword by Archbishop Rowan Williams (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006), pp. 250-269.

41. DOEHRING, p. 100.

This is important, because psychotherapeutic deontology maintains that neither the therapist nor the client must be absorbed within one another. Either form of absorption would be disastrous; boundaries must be precisely maintained, hard as it is to achieve. It must be kept in mind as well, that there are power dynamics involved in psychotherapy, and in view of that reality proper balances and boundaries must be preserved. For as pastoral psychologist Joseph Allen observes,

the pastor learns to share the experience, i.e., 'co-suffers,' yet remains distinctively himself as 'other.' Thus, although participating, he never negates his own identity. This paradigm is learned in the meaning of God's incarnation in Christ; God 'healed' us by becoming man (vere homo), but because He also remained God (vere Deus).⁴²

Nevertheless, the therapist is still expected to move outside his/her confines and meet the client on his or her own terms, in a self-emptying manner. Such a move is difficult to make and may pose serious challenges to therapists, because it implies an abandonment of their egos, certainties and above all the ego defenses. From this point of view, empathy may well seem pathetic, an act of weakness. But in truth, empathy should not be seen as foreign to our nature – after all, if it is intrinsic to God it must be inbred in us as well, since we are made in the image and likeness of God.⁴³ Moreover, there is dignity and strength in such

42. JOSEPH J. ALLEN, "God's Concern and Man's Response in Healing," in *Orthodox Synthesis: The Unity of Theological Thought*, Joseph J. Allen, ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), p. 228.

43. In his recent monograph, *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), Frans de Waal maintains that empathy is not foreign to human nature but deeply wired into it, contrary to the suggestion of Darwinism, which sees natural environments, and human societies, as battlefields. Cambridge psychiatrist Simon Baron-Cohen concurs, suggesting as he does a genetic factor involved in the development of empathy; see his *Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp. 85-99.

Earlier, MARK H. DAVIS (*Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach*, Madison, Wis.: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 25-27) challenged Richard Dawkins' thesis, as it was put forward in *The Selfish Gene*, that "the 'true' evolutionary battle for survival is taking place at the genetic level rather than at the level of individual organisms," to the effect that such human traits are genetically wired and undertaken by genes not by individual organisms. Instead, Davis argues

self-renunciation, if only because a sincere meeting with the other is a source of enrichment, on many levels: it makes us aware of different perspectives and points of view, not just intellectually⁴⁴ but emotionally as well.

In addition, the exercise of empathy prevents us from becoming blindly slaves to ourselves and our wishes. As Carrie Doehring perceptively points out, “*Moments of empathy allow us to look beyond our own horizons and see our own experience and others’ experience in new ways that empower us.*”⁴⁵ Again, this point has been theologically anticipated in Chalcedonian Christology, which affirms the Lord’s kenotic descent on earth. Paradoxically, the more one forfeits every claim to power the stronger and richer one becomes, contrary to conventional thought. Christ is the primary example of this truth, for his humiliation and death on the cross led to His exaltation by the Father. As it turned out, “*this self-emptying is a self-fulfillment: kenosis is plerosis. God is never so strong as when he is most weak.*”⁴⁶ The same is true for human beings who practice empathy, including of course therapists and clergymen, who are called to be *empathic listeners*.⁴⁷

Of course, the benefits of this exercise of empathy apply to both sides in the process of counseling, which is one of healing. The counselor strives to enter the client’s world, so as to understand his or her situation from within. In this venture, there is a meeting of minds and hearts where the counselor acts as a healer, by invading this foreign terrain. Again, the similarity with Christ is evident: it is believed that the God-man assumed human nature in its entirety in order

that, however it manifests itself, empathy as an innate fixed action cannot be explained in humans, who are far more complex and flexible in their behavior.

For an analysis of the neurological basis of empathy, see LIAN T. RAMESON, SYLVIA A. MORELLI, and MATTHEW D. LIEBERMAN, “The Neural Correlates of Empathy: Experience, Automaticity, and Prosocial Behavior” *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 24:1, (2011): 235–245.

44. Here again, the already cited paper of RITA W. MENESES & MICHAEL LARKIN, “Edith Stein and the Contemporary Psychological Study of Empathy,” is particularly relevant.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

46. BISHOP KALLISTOS WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), p. 82.

47. This brings attention to the communal character of Christian ministry. Again as Oden indicates, “*The priest speaks a human, all too human, word to God, prays empathically with and representative for the here and now community amid all its confusions and self-assertiveness, humbly beseeching divine hearing and interceding for the visible community*” (*Pastoral Theology*, p. 87).

to restore it to health. “*The unassumed is unhealed*,” wrote St. Gregory the Theologian⁴⁸. But here we must tread with caution. The counselor is not Christ and the analogy breaks down at some point. Still, there is a useful insight to be drawn from Christ’s ministry and more precisely His personhood. In His own being, the Lord assumed everything except sin. Likewise, the counselor’s empathy must not extend to the point of full identification⁴⁹ that would include sharing the client’s neurosis and skewed manner of perceiving reality. The counselor is always several steps ahead of the client and must lift the latter up, instead of allowing himself or herself to be drawn down. St. Isaac the Syrian’s injunction is very apposite here: we must be careful, “*not to make the sailor Captain, the*

48. ST GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, *Letter 101, to Cledonius*, A 32, ed. Paul Gallay (Sources chrétiennes 208: Paris, 1974), p. 50, tr. Hardy and Richardson, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, p. 218.

49. This recommended distance between therapist and client hints at another danger, the much broader issue of whether persons and objects of value should be looked on from a distance, for safety reasons (since upon closer look, their “rough” sides may cause disappointment, frustration or insecurity to the observers). This is explicitly suggested by Argyris Chronis’ poem “*Ισκιος*” (from the collected poems *Τύποι ήλων*, Egnatia Publications, 1978):

“Ποτέ σου μὴν κοιτᾶς ἀπὸ κοντὰ (ὄ, τι κοντὰ σου θέλεις)

Τίποτα μὴν κοιτᾶς ἀπὸ κοντὰ

Κι ἡ πιδ γερῆ ἀλήθεια ἔχει ρωγμὲς ψευτιᾶς

Κι ἡ πιδ λαμπρῆ σοφία ἔχει σκιᾶς βλακειᾶς

Τὰ νύχια τοῦ περιστεριοῦ εἶναι ἀρπακτικὰ

Ὁ ὑπερος τοῦ ρόδου εἶναι μιὰ κάμπια

Μεῖνε καλύτερα στὸ πέταγμα

Μεῖνε στὸ χρώμα καὶ στὴν κίνηση

Μεῖνε στὴ γενικὴ ἀρμονία

Πότε σου μὴν κοιτᾶς ἀπὸ κοντὰ

Ὅ,τι κοντὰ σου θέλεις νὰ κρατήσεις

Ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ πιδ ἀγαπημένο πρόσωπο

Τὸ πιδ ὠραῖο ἔχει πόρους

Μπορεῖ νὰ σοῦ φανεῖ τοπίο σεληνιακὸ

Μπορεῖ νὰ ἀπομακρυνθεῖ πολὺ ἀν πλησιάσεις.”

Wilhelm Worringer, in his classic study *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, with an introduction by Hilton Kramer (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), argues that artistic abstraction emerged as an expression of man’s insecurity in historical times of anxiety and uncertainty, as opposed to representational art which reflects a sense of being more at home in the world. Thus the poet’s caution to preserve his distance from valued reality is a condensed caveat of Worringer’s conclusion that physical proximity and representation in art is avoided in periods of stress.

sick person doctor, and mistake the man who is given to passions for an impassionate one, or find ourselves in the open seas as opposite to a safe port, and thus lead ourselves to a shipwreck."⁵⁰

The illusion of empathy and the gap between therapist and client

"I see empathy as an event rather than a method and I do not view homo tragicus as a necessary identification for the analyst to adopt systematically."

Stefano Bolognini⁵¹

An interesting conclusion obtained from research in the history and literature of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in general is the lack of appreciation for empathy and its limited application.⁵² Another one concerns the false empathy⁵³ that is applied during psychotherapy, by those therapists who do, in fact, appreciate empathy and are keen to apply it but end up ruining it in the process. How does that happen? This mainly occurs by falsifying empathy, in the following manner: often therapists

infer others' perspectives by starting from their own point of view and then making a series of adjustments to account for likely dif-

50. JOHN OF CLIMACUS, *On Obedience* (Περί Ὑπακοῆς), PG 88, 660.

51. *Psychoanalytic Empathy*, p. 136.

52. DONALD GRANT and EDWIN HARARI, "Empathy in Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 31 (2011): 3–16. As the authors indicate: "Our first, and perhaps most fundamental, conclusion is that, although the word empathy is rarely used in psychoanalysis, outside of Self Psychology, empathy is necessary for a psychoanalytic process to be generated. We only have to remind ourselves of Freud's (1921) definition of empathy ("the mechanism by means of which we are enabled to take up any attitude at all towards another mental life," (p. 110, in *Group psychology and the analysis of the Ego*. Standard Edition, London: Hogarth Press, 1955) to grasp how fundamental its various forms are to psychoanalysis. In view of this, it is curious that Freud, himself, and most other psychoanalysts have not tried to study empathy except indirectly under various assumed names. This omission is almost worth a study in itself." (p. 13).

53. As S.A. MITCHELL indicates in *Influence and Autonomy in Psychoanalysis* (Hillsdale: Analytic Press, 1993, p. 52), "There is an enormous difference between false empathy, facile and postured and authentic empathy, struggled toward through miscues, misunderstanding, and deeply personal work on the part of both analyst and patient."

*ferences between the two. However, these adjustments require time, resources, and motivation, which are often in short supply. As a consequence, the adjustment process often stops short of where it should, and people's estimates of others' perspectives end up looking too much like their own.*⁵⁴

Starting from one's point of view as a psychotherapist often does, results in the projection of the therapist's mindset, ideas, values, expectations, principles as well as prejudices upon the client: "...observers often use their own imagined experiences in the target's situation as a heuristic for gauging their empathic reactions to the target, such that they will be more empathic if they can easily imagine themselves in that situation and less empathic if they cannot."⁵⁵ In that event, no real contact is made between therapist and client (or between priest and layman), since the person in charge does not explore the client's inner world and situation. The two remain strangers, even after numerous sessions and so no help can be given. In the case of clerics, religious ideology often gets in the way on top of the priest's ego, thereby obstructing substantial contact: the confessor priest does not even attempt to know his spiritual children and only prescribes recipes instead. This is an understandable attitude, given the natural human unwillingness to explore unknown and foreign territory, which is tiresome and full of risks. As Stefano Bolognini insists

the analyst must be receptive: it is better to let oneself ultimately to have been misled, following the patient's productions, than prematurely to refuse them as false.

*The capacity to suspend judgment, to the very limit of credulity, is what makes empathy with the patient possible, and will eventually lead to an understanding of the underlying movements.*⁵⁶

As Bolognini's analysis progresses, this point becomes more explicitly laid out:

54. JOHN R. CHAMBERS and MARK H. DAVIS, "The Role of the Self in Perspective-Taking and Empathy: Ease of Self-Simulation as a Heuristic for Inferring Empathic Feelings," *Social Cognition*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2012): 153–180, p. 154.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

56. BOLOGNINI, *Psychoanalytic Empathy*, p. 47.

One might say that gnosis without [the] element of pathos is useless to the analyst, who would perhaps remain in a dimension of affective isolation or perhaps of schizoid splitting, if forced to disregard the latter. An analyst functioning in this way would undoubtedly be on the wrong track for the achievement of analytic understanding. The analyst who expects to work in a purely observing, protected manner, having absolutely no identification contact with the patient is living in the fool's paradise.⁵⁷

Here we remember Franz Kafka's well known statement from *A Country Doctor* that "It's easy to write prescriptions, but difficult to come to an understanding with people."⁵⁸ Psychotherapists are only human, and they are not immune from the shortcomings and deficiencies of the average man, even after the best of training. Although they may score highly on quantitative knowledge, they may well come short of applying that amount of knowledge in their practice, if they can't establish good, sufficient rapport with clients. Psychological balances are notoriously difficult to maintain, in spite having been trained and hard. Nowhere is this more evident than in the practice of psychotherapy. Therapists may be deeply versed in empathy, but still be clueless or almost clueless as to how to apply it. Hence, Ralph Greenson correctly remarks that it is necessary for the analyst to develop empathy toward clients, so as to be able to assess the client's ego strength at any given moment and know when to intervene.⁵⁹ Empathy is not an exotic quality, unique to a select group of people; it can be taught.⁶⁰ Moreover, strengthening one's ability for empathy is a life-long procedure, a never ending one, and is always reliant on self-examination.⁶¹

Needless to say, listening is one of the most vital ingredients of any psychotherapeutic process. However, not just any kind of listening, but empathic

57. Ibid, p. 136.

58. LEO HAMALIAN, ed., *Franz Kafka: A Collection of Criticism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

59. RALPH R. GREENSON, *Η τεχνική της ψυχανάλυσης: θεωρία και πράξη*, Kostas Zervos, trans., Dimitris Anastasopoulos, ed. (Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2002), p. 399.

60. IRVIN D. YALOM, *Τὸ δῶρο τῆς ψυχοθεραπείας: ἀνοιχτὴ ἐπιστολὴ σὲ μιὰ γενιὰ ψυχοθεραπευτῶν καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς τους*, Εὐαγγελία Ἀνδριτσάνου and Γιάννης Ζέρβας, trans. (Athens: Agra Publications, 2004), p. 50.

61. GREENSON, p. 528.

listening is of essence.⁶² “*The primary condition of a caring relationship,*” notes Thomas Oden, “*is the capacity for accurate, empathic listening, when one enters into the emotive sphere of reference of another, willing to participate attentively to what is here and now occurring inwardly.*”⁶³ Being willing to listen to the other implies the willingness to suppress one’s impulse to talk, to be heard all the time. This is hardly an easy habit to break, as was already known to the early and desert Fathers, who recommended silence and listening as a propaedeutic virtue:

A brother asked Abba Poemen, “How should I behave in the place where I live?” The old man said, ‘have the mentality of an exile in the place where you live, do not desire to be listened to, and you will have peace.’ (Poemen, Sayings of the Desert Fathers, p. 163).

*The Desert Fathers often use hyperbole to state their counsel sharply and at times even humorously. The desire not to be listened to requires a bit of savoring to grasp. In our ordinary human condition we are prone to want to speak loud and often, and listen seldom or halfheartedly. The way to prune that bad habit, says Poemen, is by reinforcing its opposite, the desire to be unheard. ... [still, as Oden further stipulates], while there is a time to listen, there is also a time not to listen. Whether to listen, or how deeply to listen, is itself a moral and prudential judgment.*⁶⁴

Therefore discernment is absolutely required, both in terms of listening and as regards the overall exercise of empathy. Sometimes the therapist’s failure to establish empathy “*without confusion and without division,*” i.e., when empathy is applied carelessly and indiscriminately, can lead to disastrous results, as in the following case.

62. Even empathic listening, however, does not in itself guarantee sufficient inter-subjective communication. More is needed for true empathy to occur. Carrie Doehring explains: “*Sometimes we try to teach empathy by describing active listening and emphasizing communication skills. These strategies may not bring about empathic moments. Empathic moments come about when we have experienced profound relatedness in which our experiences resonate with the experiences of others in ways that allow us to see and feel the depths of these experiences without being overwhelmed.*” (*Taking Care*, pp. 102-103).

63. ODEN, *Pastoral Counsel*, p. 8.

64. *Ibid*, p. 10.

A case of empathy gone wrong: The crossing of boundaries

It is quite curious how certain news events make a lasting impression on both the individual and the collective mind. Perhaps, this is because they bring to light known but unspoken and unpalatable truths that we care not to consider, let alone admit. Or because such stories shock us by throwing in the scary and the extraordinary in the ordinary flow of life. One such event, of interest to psychology and psychotherapy, is the murder of the celibate priest, A. E., by his mistress, K. G., a housewife and mother of an 18 year-old man, in the summer of 1997. A lot has been written and said about this tragic affair, but what interests us here is the nature of the initial relationship, which had begun as a spiritual one, when K., an otherwise not particularly religious person, sought out a priest to confess to.

Something certainly went very awry between the priest and his confessant, as they quickly became lovers and the woman grew totally attached to him, to the point of seeing A. as “God,” the sole purpose in her life. At some point in their fiery relationship, the priest apparently lost interest and sought to discard K, who would not let go. Devastated at the prospect of losing him, she finally sought to kill him, in broad daylight, unable as she was to accept the fact that he had rejected her.

From the perspective of counseling, apart from the specifics of K’s psychological state, the first thing to be said is that as a priest and confessor, A. had trespassed every deontological boundary and had taken advantage of his confessant, sexually as well as financially, always according to K’s apology. In his ministry, Fr. A. showed considerable empathy, but not of the kind that helps clients or confessants to gain and maintain the required autonomy and independence from pastors or therapists. It is arguable whether there had been a false kind of empathy on A’s part or a total lack of it (which amounts to the same thing). What is certain, is that an impermissible intimacy grew out of a relationship that demanded both empathy and self-restraint. To be sure, as has already been stated in this paper, being “*with another ...means that for the time being, you lay aside your own views and values, in order to enter another’s world without prejudice. In some sense, it means that you lay aside your self.*”⁶⁵ Nonetheless, and

65. ROGERS, p. 143.

this is just as important for maintaining balance as is the existence of empathy in the first place, “*this can only be done by persons who are secure enough in themselves that they know they will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and that they can comfortably return to their own world when they wish.*”⁶⁶

As it appears, both partners became absorbed in one another. If this is disastrous for the client or confessant, it is inappropriate on the side of the counselor, who must retain his/her independence and sobriety in spite of the amount of empathy involved in his/her ministry.⁶⁷ A counselor is expected to be ahead of the client, mentally, scholarly as well as emotionally, which is why not just anyone may become involved in this ministry. It is an intrinsic part of the counselor’s intellectual formation to be aware of the need for boundaries, to be cognizant of when to set them and to respect them throughout therapy. Counselors and confessors are in a state of superiority versus their clients or spiritual children, and it should be obvious that with such power and authority there must come a sense of responsibility.

66. Ibid.

67. As pastoral psychologist IOANNIS KORNARAKIS aptly indicates in *Ποιμαντική: Μετά Στοιχείων Ποιμαντικής Ψυχολογίας* (Βοήθημα διὰ τοὺς Ἱεροσπουδαστὰς Μέσων καὶ Ἀνώτερων Ἱερατικῶν Σχολῶν, Γενικὴ Διεύθυνσις Ἐκκλ. Παιδείας, Athens, 1972, p. 120), inspired by *Phil. 2:7*, *2 Cor. 11:29* and *1 Cor. 9:20-22*, pastors ought to relate to their spiritual charges, spiritually as well as emotionally, in accord with the Incarnation, God’s premier way of relating to His creatures; but such emotional attachment, Kornarakis adds, is intertwined with major perils, that emerge when the attachment occurs indefinitely and indiscriminately, without an upholding of emotional autonomy and independence by the pastor. In other words, pastors must shield themselves in advance from the infiltration of undue influences from the side of those seeking assistance and support. In his own words, “Ἄλλὰ ἐνῶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ψυχικῆς ταπίσεως τοῦ ποιμένος μετὰ τοῦ ποιμαινομένου ἀποτελεῖ θεμελιώδη ἀνάγκην τοῦ ἔργου τούτου, πρακτικῶς εἶναι συνδεδεμένη μετὰ μεγάλων καὶ ἐπικινδύνων δυσχερειῶν. Διότι ὁ ποιμὴν δὲν δύναται ἀπεριορίστως νὰ πραγματοποιῆ τὴν ταύτισιν αὐτήν. Ὅφείλει συγχρόνως νὰ διατηρῇ τὴν ψυχικὴν καὶ πνευματικὴν αὐτοτέλειαν καὶ ἀνεξαρτησίαν τῆς προσωπικότητος αὐτοῦ. Δηλαδή ὀφείλει οὗτος νὰ ταυτίζεται ψυχικῶς μετὰ τοῦ ποιμαινομένου, τὰ προβλήματα αὐτοῦ νὰ βιώνῃ ὡς προσωπικά του προβλήματα, συγχρόνως ὁμως νὰ διατηρῇ ἐαυτὸν μακρὰν τῶν ἀμέσων ἐπιδράσεων τοῦ ποιμαινομένου ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ. Ἐκ τῆς συγκεκριμένης ποιμαντικῆς πράξεως πληροφοροῦμεθα, ὅτι ὁσάκις ὁ ποιμὴν ἔδωκεν ἐαυτὸν ἀθρομήτως καὶ ἄνευ ἐπιφυλάξεων εἰς τὸν πιστόν, παρεσύρθη εἰς συμπεριφορὰν ἢ σχέσεις, αἱ ὁποῖαι ἐδυσκόλευσαν τὸ ἐν γένει ποιμαντικὸν ἔργον αὐτοῦ. Πρέπει λοιπὸν ὁ ποιμὴν νὰ προσφέρῃ τὴν ψυχὴν του εἰς τὸν ποιμαινόμενον, ἀλλὰ νὰ μὴ δέχεται τὰς ἀρνητικὰς ἐπιδράσεις αὐτοῦ. Νὰ μὲν πάντοτε ἀνεπηρέαστος καὶ ἐλεύθερος κυρίως ἀπὸ τὰς συναισθηματικὰς καὶ φιλικὰς ἐκδηλώσεις, αἱ ὁποῖαι ἐπηρέαζον αὐτὸν δεσμευῶς”.

A.'s case is reminiscent of the famous incident of erotic entanglement between Carl Jung, founder of analytic psychology, and Sabina Spielrein, a female patient of his and later a child psychologist in her own right. The story is dramatized in *A Dangerous Method*, a 2011 film directed by David Cronenberg. Much like the aforementioned K. (*mutatis mutandis*), Sabina came to Jung's clinic in Zurich for help, specifically because of problems related to hysteria. Like K., Sabina was a vulnerable woman, who sought help from an expert, only to end up being Jung's lover. Both men involved in these incidents (a priest and a physician, respectively) broke their vows and exercised the wrong kind of empathy in their treatment of their female charges—instead of acting as healers, they become lovers, against the set deontology. Sigmund Freud, incidentally, covered up the affair, and even exploited his knowledge of it to bully Jung into not straying from "Freudian Orthodoxy." Further, like A., who exploited K. financially, Jung appropriated material and ideas from Sabina's doctoral thesis. Thus, there was sexual as well as other forms of exploitation involved in these parallel stories. In both cases, empathy broke down, and was replaced by emotional maltreatment, including abandonment at the end.

Here, we would be remiss in closing our paper, moreover, without citing a positive counter-example to the aforementioned cases of empathy gone wrong. We would do well to remember that empathy, in the proper sense, is a deeply Christian attitude, fleshed out in acts of kindness, charity, and forgiveness that seek no reward. One such instance is the act of supreme forgiveness by St. Dionysius of Zante, Bishop of Aegina (1546-1624), to his brother's murderer.

The details of St. Dionysius' life are not very relevant and so need not be rehearsed here. The affair which concerns us here is Dionysius' superb pastoral ability and ministry, which resulted in the conversion of a murderer. It will be remembered that the long-standing enmity between the saint's family and a rival one led one member of the latter to murder Dionysius' brother. Fleeing the scene of the murder, the criminal sought refuge in the monastery where Abbot was Dionysius himself. The saint hid the murderer, offering him protection from the authorities and the avenging family of the deceased man. While counseling the fugitive, St. Dionysius realized that he was actually offering refuge to his own brother's murderer! Upon discovering this, not only did he not turn the man in but in fact helped him flee from arrest and, possibly, from being murdered in retaliation. St. Dionysius embraced the man who entrusted his life to him, swept aside the bitterness of having his brother killed, and placed himself

in the murderer's shoes: what would I want somebody else to do for me, had I been the murderer? This is a stunning form of empathy, rare as well as painful, and extremely hard to enact. But for all its incredibly harsh demands, this kind of empathy was successfully attained by St. Dionysius, who crossed common human boundaries in a life-affirming manner, as opposed to the previous examples of self-serving empathy.

The story St. Dionysius brings to mind Joseph Conrad's short story *The Secret Sharer* published in 1909. The Saint hides the criminal from the authorities without judging him, although he knows he is the killer of his brother. His act entails considerable risk as well, since murderous criminals in general, are not to be trusted and no one can guarantee the sincerity of their repentance. The exercise of empathy need not be naïve or blindly trusting, but genuine empathy still always carries a long risk of getting into the other's shoes.

Conclusion

“Rejoice with those rejoice and weep with those who weep.”

St. Paul⁶⁸

The significance of empathy for psychotherapy may have only been somewhat recently understood and appreciated, yet it is now acclaimed to such an extent that without a proper understanding and utilization of it, psychotherapy is simply inconceivable. Beyond psychotherapy, empathy is now perceived as a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human —any complete picture of anthropology must take it fully into account. But here we are mainly concerned with the role and function of empathy in treatment. The consensus of the pioneers in psychoanalysis and other forms of psychological treatment has been that empathy must be acknowledged as the vital asset for both therapists and pastors. *“If a counselee feels that the counselor empathically and truly understands him or her, the counselee is more likely to trust a counselor with deeper feelings and enter the therapeutic process more deeply and productively.”*⁶⁹

68. Rom. 12:15.

69. D. E. MASEY, “Empathy”, *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, p. 354.

An interesting paradox of this age is the documented deficit in interpersonal communication, strangely occurring in the middle of a spectacular technological progress, which facilitate communications across the globe. Ironically, at no other time in human history have people been so sealed off from one another, despite being surrounded by a multitude of social media. These media, well known, as notoriously ambiguous when it comes to empathic awareness, have a way of concealing mood, sentiment, feeling, subtle nuances and ulterior intentions. If such ambiguity creates enormous problems in everyday social life, it is absolutely disastrous in psychotherapy. Therapists must establish a deep, empathic rapport with clients, which means placing themselves in the latter's shoes as much as possible. Ideally, of course, they should maintain their distinctiveness and independence from the clients' situation and personal circumstances, since the identification of therapist with client ruins therapy as much as the lack of empathy does. A careful and delicate balance between empathy and non-identification must be maintained, and this is one of the major challenges facing the therapist.

In this paper, we have argued that the Chalcedonian Christological model uniting the two natures of Christ "without division and without confusion" offers us a balanced model of psychotherapeutic empathy, both sensitive as well as open to the other, yet immune to counter-transference and identification between therapist and client. At a time when theoretical models and ideologies have proven bankrupt and are still collapsing all around us, one after another, Christian pastoral theology possesses a realistic blueprint, based on Christology, for bringing balance in therapy. Philosophically, this is undoubtedly the age of the end of ideologies but as regards psychology, the discovery and application of empathy has been one of the most important theoretical landmarks in the discipline. Marking the proper boundaries of empathy is the next step forward in therapy. The increasing proliferation of the relevant scholarly literature is a witness to that.