Humility, non-judgment and frugality in the Orthodox Christian tradition: Theoretical background for the development of positive psychology interventions

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Abstract

This study explores the conceptual and methodological integration of three fundamental Christian virtues—humility, non-judgment, and frugality—into the framework of positive psychology. While positive psychology has developed evidence-based interventions that cultivate character strengths and promote wellbeing, it often remains disconnected from religious and spiritual traditions that historically shaped corresponding virtues. Drawing on biblical, patristic, and ascetic sources, this work examines how these three virtues are described, practiced, and cultivated within Orthodox Christian spirituality, and proposes their operationalization as psychological constructs that can enrich contemporary wellbeing interventions. A review of the relevant psychological literature shows that humility is comparatively well-studied, with established measurement tools and initial intervention efforts, whereas non-judgment and frugality remain underdeveloped constructs with limited empirical frameworks. Through conceptual analysis, the study identifies cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of each virtue that can be translated into measurable traits and potentially enhanced through structured interventions. The goal is not to secularize or fragment Christian virtues, but to articulate aspects of these qualities that can be meaningfully and ethically incorporated into positive psychology, contributing to a deeper understanding of human flourishing. The proposed framework sets the basis for future empirical research and interdisciplinary dialogue between psychology and Christian theological anthropology.

Keywords: Virtu; humility; non-judgment; frugality

1. Introduction

Positive psychology, a relatively new branch of psychology, is oriented towards the study and enhancement of character strengths and virtues, such as resilience, gratitude, and forgiveness (Efklides& Moraitou, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths are defined as positive, universal traits that are organized around six core virtues, wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), a virtue is defined as a core characteristic valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers, recognized universally, and viewed as a foundation for good character and the cultivation ofwellbeing.

Positive psychology interventions have been developed to cultivate and enhance character strengths, thereby promoting wellbeing in individuals and communities (Vasileiou et al., 2025). Positive psychology interventions consist of structured activities and practices that aim to

identify, cultivate, and apply character strengths in everyday life in order to enhance wellbeing, foster positive emotions, and build resilience (Vasileiou et al., 2025). They are typically short, evidence-based exercises that encourage individuals to focus on what makes life meaningful and fulfilling rather than on deficits or pathology. For example, one exercise, where individuals are asked to write down three positive experiences that happened during the day and reflect on why they occurred. This practice strengthens gratitude, promotes optimism, and has been shown to increase life satisfaction and reduce depressive symptoms.

This turn of psychology towards the study of the positive was deemed necessary as a counterbalance to its predominant focus on pathology, highlighting the importance of fostering the healthy and creative dimensions of human functioning (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Research on positive psychology over the last two decades shows that this "turn toward the positive" has measurable benefits on wellbeing, mental health, relationships for both individuals and groups(Carr et al. 2021).

Although it has made significant progress in identifying and promoting positive psychological traits and/or states, much of it remains rooted in secular or rational theoretical foundations, often disconnected from the religious traditions that historically cultivated corresponding virtues (Davis, Worthington & Schnitker, 2023). The potential contribution of the christian tradition, and especially patristic literature, to the cultivation of virtues such as humility, forbearance, and meekness, remains undervalued or almost absent from the contemporary psychological narrative (Ratchford, Ming & Schnitker, 2023).

As already said, positive psychology distinguishes virtues as fundamental qualities guiding behavior from characterstrengths, which are specific, measurable expressions of these virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Vasileiou et al., 2021). In contrast,christiantheology conceives virtues as integrated, spiritual qualities, such as faith, hope and love, that shape the entire moral and spiritual life. Unlike character strengths, these virtues are not treated as discrete traits to be enhanced simply through interventions, but as holistic dispositions cultivated through prayer, ascetic practice, and moral living. Thus, while both approaches value the cultivation of positive human qualities, positive psychology emphasizes individual traits, whereas Patristic thought stresses the integrated and teleological nature of virtues (Μαντζαρίδης, 2000).

In this context, the present study proposes the operationalization of three fundamental concepts of christian teaching – humility, non-judgment, and frugality – with the aim of creating positive psychology interventions that can potentially boost the enhancement of wellbeing, together with the existing ones. These virtues, although not often the subject of empirical research as religious, are extensively described in ecclesiastical literature as virtues that contribute to inner peace, interpersonal harmony, and existential fulfillment, something that is sometimes recognized by psychological research. An example is the study of Jankowski,et al. (2022) on virtues as mediators of the associations between religious/spiritual commitment and wellbeing. The selection of threevirtues, humility,non-judgmental and frugality, was made based on their importance in the hagiographic and patristic teaching on spiritual life and spiritual transformation. However, to be usable in the scientific field of psychology, it is necessary to translate them into functional, measurable, and applicable forms, a process that is the central goal of this work.

In this way, great care is required when placing christian virtues at the service of positive psychology. According to christian theology, christian virtues outside the context of christian life have no meaning. The character of christian ethics is absolute and eschatological. According to Μαντζαρίδης (2000, p. 125), «the attempt to use christian ethics for the superficial arrangement or normalization of things and situations of this life proves to be essentially fruitless if not comical».

For example, Saint John of Sinai characteristically states that whoever practices voluntary poverty without reason and spiritual basis suffers two injustices: he abstains from the present and is deprived of the future (*Climax*, 16).

A second thing to note: Normally all Christian virtues are connected to each other and intertwined, having love as a common denominator. The virtues are a consequence of the christian life, of the observance of God's commandments, and this observance cannot be selective, that is, the believer can choose which commandments to observe.Thus, «saying the Lord, go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them not to keep some things and not to neglect others, but to observe all that I have commanded you» (Basil of Caesarea,*Asceticon magnum*,preface 2, PatrologiaGraeca, 31, 893B).

Moreover, the teaching of the church on the concept of wellbeing is complex. According to positive psychology, subjective wellbeing refers to the evaluation of one's life, the presence of positive emotions, and the relative absence of negative emotions (Diener, Oishi & Tay, 2018).According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, at creation man is not innate with either pleasure or pain. On the contrary, a desire for joy was implanted, which is connected with the search for God (*To Thalassio*, PatrologiaGraeca, 90, 628AB). The concept of*joyful sorrow*seems to dominate as a balance between positive and negative experiences.

The attempt to synthesize the perspectives of positive psychology and Christian theological thought on virtues can be fruitful for several reasons. On the one hand, positive psychology provides an empirically grounded and operational framework for studying and cultivating human strengths, offering practical interventions that have proven effects on wellbeing and resilience. On the other hand, the Patristic understanding of virtues as holistic and teleological dispositions enriches this framework by emphasizing the existential, relational, and transcendent dimensions of human flourishing. Integrating the two approaches could therefore prevent positive psychology from being reduced to a merely instrumental or individualistic project, grounding it instead in a more comprehensive vision of the good life that includes moral depth, spiritual orientation, and communal responsibility. For the individual, such a synthesis would not only enhance measurable traits but also foster a deeper transformation of character, uniting psychological growth with moral and spiritual maturity (Captari et al. 2023).

2. Humility, Non-Judgment and Frugality in psychological research

2.1. Humility

The study of humility (sometimes referred to as modesty) in the field of psychology is relatively recent, though it has expanded rapidly in recent years—not as much as forgiveness or gratitude, however. There are more than 150 empirical studies and 20 different methods of measuring humility. Among the pioneers of its measurement was Tangney (2000). Three of the most widely used humility scales are: the Honesty–Humility (HH) subscale of the HEXACO-PI (Lee & Ashton, 2004), the Humility–Modesty subscale of the Values in Action Strengths Inventory (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and the Modesty subscale of the Agreeableness scale of the NEO PI-3 (McCrae, Costa, & Martin, 2005).

Most researchers support the idea that humility is a personality trait. However, they disagree about which components constitute its core, and which are merely associated with it (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). Still, humility has been linked with several constructs, most notably with life satisfaction (Krause, 2016). Many researchers tend to accept humility as a trait characterized by: (a) the ability to have an accurate understanding of one's strengths and limitations, and (b) an interpersonal orientation directed toward others rather than oneself (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). Researchers also disagree on how best to measure it.

In psychology, there is now relative consensus regarding the distinction between intellectual and cultural humility. Most researchers agree that each has two dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal. However, the focus is usually placed on the intrapersonal dimension—namely, the degree to which someone has a relatively accurate view of themselves, such as recognition of personal biases and limitations (Van Tongeren, 2019), acknowledgment of mistaken beliefs, and a clear sense of abilities and weaknesses (Haggard et al., 2018).

Few interventions have been designed. Recent research highlights the need to develop humility interventions and evaluate their outcomes. Among the first psychologists to design and implement such interventions were Lavelock et al. (2014). This study tested a 7.5-hour exercise-based intervention to promote humility. Participants in the humility condition showed greater increases in humility, forgiveness, and patience, and reductions in general negativity compared to a control group. Results indicate that the intervention is effective for both religious and non-religious individuals, aligning with Christian and secular understandings of humility.

2.2. Non-Judgment

There are no models in psychology that specifically address the concept of non-judgment, although there are models concerning blame attribution. It is important, however, to distinguish between causality, responsibility, and blame attribution.

Non-judgment is related but not identical to empathy and forgiveness, and it stands in contrast to judgment, slander (a concept from Christian, especially ascetic texts, synonymous with condemnation), and blame. It is also related to, but distinct from, self-blame, which can appear as the psychological construct of self-blame or the Christian concept of self-reproach. In psychology, self-blame following adverse events has been widely studied, sometimes considered adaptive (e.g., Bulman & Wortman, 1977) and other times maladaptive (e.g., Affleck et al., 1985). Similarly, external attribution of causes in distressing situations has been seen as either

protective (Abramson et al., 1978) or linked to higher levels of depression, anxiety, discouragement, and low self-esteem (e.g., Tennen & Affleck, 1990).

Psychoanalytic theories describe displacement or responsibility attribution as ego defense mechanisms (Freud, 1946; Hochreich, 1975). Within these theories, we find Sullivan's (1956) concept of paranoid dynamism, Phillips' (1985) stance against others, and Vaillant's (1979) view of blaming others as an immature defense. These theories share the notion that blaming others for one's failures or difficulties represents an immature (defensive) behavior rooted in developmental fixation and vulnerability.

Social psychologists have studied blame attribution more systematically, both interpersonally and intergroup. Heider's (1958) attribution theory is central here. Explanations include learned helplessness (Abramson et al., 1978), where external attributions in distress protect and regulate self-esteem (provided the attribution is unstable and specific), and excuse-making theory (Snyder&Higgins, 1988), which suggests that shifting attributions for negative outcomes from central (personal) causes to more peripheral (external, diffuse) ones protects self-image and gives a sense of control. Researchers disagree about the adaptiveness of these processes.

Within this framework, blame attribution has been studied in adverse conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is defined as an attempt to assign responsibility, causality, or intent to someone for a mistake, thereby inducing guilt. Research has examined when and whom people blame, particularly during pandemics (Bouguettaya et al., 2022). The Path Model of Blame (Malle et al., 2014) conceptualizes blame as a cognitive and social process requiring justification and unfolding in stages. Responsibility attribution can be individual or, as the model proposes, social—distinguishing between individual and collective responsibility.

Similarly, blame attribution is examined in social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; based on Tajfel&Billic, 1974). Here too, it is both social (ingroup–outgroup dynamics) and cognitive (evaluations of intent, causality, preventability, and guilt).

Researchers such as Schein et al. (2020) suggest reducing blame attribution by focusing on distributing praise widely when success occurs and attributing failure to as few people as possible. Gerber et al. (2021) argue that public health messages framed around collective rather than individual responsibility are more effective, as they build trust and solidarity.

From another perspective, game theory suggests that political leaders strategically attribute blame to opponents as a power tactic (Wagner, 1986).

A review of 25 studies (Tennen & Affleck, 1990) showed that blaming others for stressful events is associated with emotional and physical distress. They proposed a model involving situational factors and personality traits, such as reappraisal ability and attributional style. Optimistic individuals, for example, may be better able to find positive aspects in negative events. One of the most well-known attributional style measures is the Attributional Style Questionnaire (Metalsky et al., 1987; Peterson & Villanova, 1988).

Research (Tong & Teo, 2018) found that priming religious concepts (particularly about God) weakens the link between blame and anger. Cultivating non-judgment may enhance well-being by providing protection and healing, if findings linking external attribution to poor mental health hold (e.g., Tennen & Affleck, 1990). It may also foster well-being through social support and cooperation—resources lost when one blames others. Such social cohesion is vital in crises (Bouguettaya et al., 2022) and may promote better adjustment. Thus, non-judgment could offer coping strategies and resilience under stress.

2.3. Frugality

The concept of frugality is same as material simplicity. Its opposites include greed, materialism, consumerism, and luxury. It is distinct from self-sufficiency and temperance, though these are related and overlapping concepts. Some researchers define frugality as a trait, others as a value or virtue. Today, frugality is of growing interest considering the environmental crisis.

Frugality is broadly defined as satisfaction with, or restriction to, a moderate and sufficient lifestyle (e.g., in clothing, food, housing). It involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions: a cognitive attitude toward life (a sense of meaning), a sense of satisfaction with moderation and avoidance of greed, and daily behavior aligned with these (Haratian et al., 2020).

As formulated by Lastovicka—the leading scholar in this field— et al. (1999), frugality is not deprivation but rather making sacrifices to pursue a higher goal. Much research on frugality comes from consumer and marketing studies.

Studies have explored the links between greed and frugality, for example, as mediators in the relationship between arrogance and envy; greed, arrogance, and envy as predictors of psychosis; and in relation to maladaptive schemas. Predictably, frugality is associated with well-being, while greed is linked to distress (Haratian et al., 2020).

Conclusively, the study of humility, non-judgment, and frugality in psychology is still in a relatively early stage compared to more established virtues like forgiveness or gratitude. Research has made progress in conceptualizing these traits, identifying measurement tools (especially for humility), and beginning to design interventions, but there remain significant gaps, particularly for non-judgment and frugality. Moving forward, psychologists shoulddevelop and validate reliable measurement instruments for non-judgment and frugality, similar to the scales already available for humility.Also psychology should design and test evidence-based interventions that cultivate these traits, assessing both short-term and long-term outcomes on wellbeing, resilience, and social functioning. Finally, psychology should integrate multi-disciplinary perspectives, including moral, philosophical, and spiritual frameworks, to capture the full depth of these qualities.

3. Methodological Approach

The aim of the study is to operationalize three main Christian virtues — humility, non-judgment and frugality — through conceptual analysis and scientific clarification of theological data, in order to make them usable in the context of positive psychology interventions.

The primary sources include the Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments), and their interpretative reception in the Orthodox Tradition, namely texts of the Fathers of the Church, such as Saint John of Sinai, and Saint Isaac the Syrian.

The operationalization concerns the translation of these theological virtues into psychological characteristics attitudes and behaviors that can be studied or strengthened through interventions. The methodology does not aim at empirical confirmation, but at the production of a theoretical framework of concepts that can be studied empirically in the future. The present phase is theoretical and formative: It proposes initial approaches for the integration of the concepts into intervention programs that promote wellbeing.

The selection of hagiographic and patristic sources used for the conceptual analysis and subsequent operationalization of the three virtues is based on the following theological and interpretative criteria:

Doctrine validity: Priority was given to sources that are recognized by the Orthodox Christian tradition as canonical — that is, the biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the writings of the Fathers of the Church. The patristic teaching of these three virtues is so rich and pervasive in the different spiritual currents and eras, which highlights the broader acceptance and foundation of the concepts in Orthodox spirituality.

Practical applicability: Emphasis was placed on patristic references that present not only the theological value of the virtues, but also the behavioral practices through which they are cultivated, and the ontological consequences for the individual and/or the community, something necessary for the connection with positive psychology interventions.

4. Results

4.1. The Three virtues as conceptualized in the Orthodox tradition

As will be shown in detail below, through the Christian texts, the three Christian virtues of humility, non-judgment, and frugality carry a threefold character that highlights their holistic significance. First and foremost, they embody a spiritual dimension, rooted in the individual's relationship with God. Humility expresses openness to divine grace, non-judgment reflects God's mercy and forbearance toward humanity, and frugality is linked to trust in providence and the assurance that divine care provides for true needs (Μαντζαρίδης, 2004).

Second, they possess an existential dimension, shaping one's relationship with the self. Humility nurtures realistic self-awareness and freedom from narcissism, non-judgment heals the inner rigidity of comparison and fosters peace, while frugality strengthens inner sufficiency and psychological resilience (Μαντζαρίδης, 2004).

Third, these virtues unfold a social dimension, influencing the way one relates to others. Humility fosters respect and mutual understanding, non-judgment cultivates empathy and acceptance of diversity, and frugality releases resources and generosity toward those in need. In

this sense, these virtues are not abstract moral imperatives but dynamic attitudes that function simultaneously as spiritual orientations, existential choices, and social practices. They therefore provide a comprehensive framework of life that unites spiritual growth with psychological wellbeing.

4.2. Analysis of specific concepts

4.2.1. What is humility

Humility is sometimes synonymous with modesty (especially in the field of psychology) but not with humiliation (abasement, abjection) inspires the Christian faith. Humility, through the Orthodox theological tradition, is not an external moral virtue nor a vague emotional disposition, but a way of being that expresses the correct positioning of man before God, themselves and their neighbor. Humility is the awareness in Christ of personal poverty and nothingness, which does not lead to feelings of inferiority, but to trust in God's mercy and a disposition to serve all. In the Holy Bible, Christ states: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29), while the Apostle Paul exhorts "Not through conceit, but in humility, esteeming one another better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). It is a comprehensive virtue, like most Christian virtues that are interrelated as a system. Humility in particular is comprehensive, as all Christian virtues are based on humility, because it is inextricably linked to the goal of Christian life, which is love. If this is not the case and there is an autonomy of the virtues, serious dangers arise, such as the illusion of self-sufficiency, cruelty and selfishness (Μαντζαρίδης, 2004).

4.2.2. Cognitive dimension of humility

Humility is presented as a sufficient capacity of the individual, i.e. as a virtue capable of responding to all the difficulties of life, as the wisest attitude of man. It is a golden rule and at the same time a simple recipe against the cognitive complexity and difficulties of life. Thus, Saint Anthony the Great states:

"I saw all the traps of the enemy spread out on the earth. And I groaned and said: Who then can escape from them? And I heard a voice saying: Humility", (Μ. Αντωνίου, PatrologiaGraeca, 65, 77Β, ζ').

It is a virtue essential for man, as without it we cannot change our morals and experiences (Saint Cassian, On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride 19).

Without humility you cannot know yourself, because you judge only what is beyond yourself. The humble, knowing their illness, approaches the other with forgiveness, forgiveness presupposes a certain humility. Humility includes awareness, which is the "correct knowledge of the measures in which we find ourselves" (Saint John, Climax, on humility, 37).

Humility is a realistic approach, as it presupposes God's help, because,

"no man, no matter how great their zeal or desire, can - at least as long as they are still in the body, which is the enemy of the spirit has a will capable of leading them to such a high peak of perfection" (Saint Cassian, On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride 10).

Humility means that man understands that they are created and finite, understands that they cannot be perfect, that they have limits in life. That is, it is a realistic approach to their existence. Humility is, according to St. John, "to know well with your mind your own weakness and illness" (Climax, on humility, 3).

4.3.3. Humility as a factor of resilience

Resilience in psychology is the capacity to adapt successfully in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress, and, resilience is a dynamic process involving positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Troy et al. 2023).

According to Saint John the Sinaite, "the children of pride are anger, gossip, bitterness, anger, hypocrisy, hatred, envy…" (Climax, 22, On Pride, 28). On the contrary, humility contributes to resilience: Humility makes a person not angry, nor does it anger anyone (Ευάγριος, PatrologiaGraeca, 40, 1233B).

"And if something sad happens to a humble person, he immediately takes it upon themself, immediately criticizes themself, that is, that they deserve what happens to them. They do not tolerate criticizing anyone, they do not tolerate blaming someone else for the cause. And thus they overcome it without being disturbed, without being saddened and rests perfectly" (Abba Dorotheos, On Humility, 30, p. 117).

The humble person is self-sufficient, in the sense that they do not feel the need for material things as they forge all the good that comes from themself and devote themself to their struggle (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, ΜΑ΄, 77-78).

Humility as a protective factor in interpersonal relationships

Through the texts of the Fathers, the function of humility in interpersonal relationships is seen. According to Saint John of Sinai, the opposite state of humility, pride, is "the exhaustion of men, the mother of condemnation, the source of anger, the door of hypocrisy, the creator of unmercifulness, the ignorant of sympathy, the bitter judge, the inhuman judge" (Climax, 22, On Pride, 1).

According to Saint Cassian, the fathers in their effort to achieve humility "never became overly proud comparing their own condition with the negligence of their inferiors or of their lukewarm and spiritually weak brothers" (On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride, 15).

Elsewhere, Saint Cassian shows the difference between two situations, on the one hand, bitterness and stubbornness associated with pride, and on the other hand, reconciliation and understanding associated with humility:

“Those who try to hide their own or their brother’s unrest only succeed in increasing it. "[There are], on the contrary, some other brothers who behave – and it would be better if I had not realized how such a thing happens – with intense stubbornness and particular cruelty. These, when they are agitated against their brother, or when their brother has something against them, try to hide the reaction that has disturbed their soul, while they should negotiate with them with humility, possibly giving them the necessary explanations. But they avoid doing this and try to overcome the storm that has struck their soul with other evasions... They think that in this way they will mitigate the bitterness that floods their heart. But this "noble contempt" does nothing other than increase the fire within them. "This turmoil would certainly have died down immediately if they themselves had humbled themselves and expressed their pain and repentance. If they had acted in this way, then they would certainly have healed not only their own wound, but also the pain of their brother. However, by making them indifferent, they maintain and nourish their anguish or, better yet, their pride" (Conversations with the Desert Fathers – Monastic Rules – The Eight Basic Passions, vol. 2, 15).

Abba Dorotheos presents the situation of the proud person and the interpersonal consequences with a brief story. The proud man finds no truth, no meaning anywhere:

“Truly, my brothers, I once saw one who had been in this miserable state: At first, if any brother said something to him about someone (i.e. with admiration), he would spit and say: “Who is this? No one is worthy except Zosimas and his disciples.” Then he began to humiliate them too and say: “No one is worthy except Macarius.” And after a while he began to say: “What is Macarius? Nothing, only Basil and Gregory are worthy.” After a while he began to humiliate them too, saying that only Peter and Paul are worthy. I say to him: Truly, my brother, you will reject them too. Believe me, after a while he began to say that only the Holy Trinity is worthy. Then he became proud even against God himself and lost his mind. That is why we must fight against the first pride, in order to "Let us not end up after a while in perfect pride" (Abba Dorotheos, On Humility, 31, pp. 117-119).

Moreover, according to Saint Cassian, pride is a state that turns against people (Conversations with the Desert Fathers – Monastic Rules – The Eight Basic Passions, vol. 2, 2).

Humility emphasizes cooperation with other people, the need for man to consult and not to trust their own wisdom. This attitude of "discipleship" contributes to better social relations, as on the contrary, the person who completely trusts their will does not tolerate the advice of others:

"If it happens that someone tells him a reason to protect him, he immediately accuses him, curses him, abhors him, tries to overthrow him with arguments..." (Abba Dorotheos, On Why One Should Not Trust One's Wisdom, 61, p. 169). Elsewhere, Abba Dorotheos states: "The first humility is for someone to consider his brother more prudent" (On Humility, 33, p. 119). Saint John shows more clearly the interpersonal dimension of humility: "Most of us call ourselves sinners, perhaps even admit it. But the humble heart is controlled by insult and humiliation on the part of others” (Climax, on humility, 32).

Saint Silouan the Athonite, also based on the Holy Bible (Matt. 18:4; 20:25-28; 23:12) presents the overthrow of the hierarchical pyramid. Authority is replaced by ministry, the

progress and elevation of man in the pyramid that God has ordained is a downward path, as the top of the pyramid, Christ, is located below. There it is Christ who bears the burden of the entire world. The path of man is glorious and brilliant when he humbles himself and serves his brothers (Archim. Sophrony, Saint Silouan the Athonite). First, then, before God, is the "last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Thus, according to Saint Cassian, "let us first show deep and true humility towards our brothers, avoiding, as much as depends on us, to grieve them or offend them even in the slightest way" (Conversations with the Desert Fathers – Monastic Rules – The Eight Basic Passions, On the Spirit of Pride, 32).

More clearly, Saint Cassian presents the behavior of man without humility towards others:

"Being in this proud attitude, the brother has no barrier in his behavior. Thus, with his abrupt and insulting expressions, he constantly embitters others. Despite all these deviations, however, not only does he not apologize for his own mistakes, but he also refuses to forgive others who have offended him. The fact that others apologize to him when they make mistakes towards him, he does not even suspect, that he too must do the same in the corresponding cases. Thus, he does not soften his heart towards them. On the contrary, he becomes enraged and indignant, because his brother has overtaken him and, in a way, surpassed him in the manifestation of repentance and humiliation. This humble request for forgiveness, which usually puts an end to quarrels – which are of course diabolical – becomes an occasion for the already lit fire to rise within him… This kind of pride makes a person raise his voice or maintain a bitter silence. It drives a person to laugh loudly and uncontrollably, it makes our sorrows heavy and absurd, our answers abrupt, our discussions frivolous, our speech hollow and without seriousness. This makes us impatient, merciless, ready to offend others, short-tempered towards those we tolerate, hesitant to obey – unless it is something that is in accordance with our desires – inflexible to the advice of others, weak when we have to mortify our own wills, unyielding to the wills of others, persistent in imposing our will and negative in accepting the views of others. Thus, we end up no longer being able to accept salutary advice and we always have more confidence in our own judgment than in the discernment of our Elders" (Saint Cassian, On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride, 27, 29)

4.3.4. Ways and Techniques of Acquisition

Humility is another virtue that, according to Christian theology, requires the cooperation of man with God for its acquisition, like all virtues. Abba Dorotheus writes about it that "No one can express in words how humility is created in the soul of man, unless he learns it through the experience of his ascetic life. No one can learn it with words" (Abba Dorotheus, On Humility, 34, pp. 123-125). It is therefore a Christ-centered experience, that is, its acquisition is linked to the believer's relationship with Christ, who is also the perfect model of humility (Matt. 11:29).

However, Abba Dorotheos admits that the ancient fathers told us some things to understand what humility is (Abba Dorotheus, On Humility, 37, p.127). Similarly, Saint Cassian (On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride, 15) states:

“Therefore, if we truly want to reach the perfection of virtue, we must obey those spiritual teachers and guides who, instead of engaging in “vain meditations” and fruitless discussions, have experienced this situation and can teach it to us and guide us towards it by the safest path.”

Christian theology emphasizes the ascetic character of virtues, that is, the effort of man in cooperation with God, therefore it considers them acquired. Regarding humility, for example, Saint John of Sinai says that its practice with works and actions constitutes over time a habit for the soul (=man): “For the soul is assimilated to what it deals with and takes on the type and form of those things which it does” (Climax, on humility, 54). Virtues, moreover, are attainable for everyone, not just the saints: "In holy humility there are various degrees...all can manage to ascend to the first degree" (Climax, on humility, 45).

4.3.5. Apology

The ability through habit to ask for forgiveness for our mistakes and omissions is an important means for the practice of humility. In the Christian ascetic order, the word "forgive" (forgive me, bless me) is in intense, continuous and daily use, not only for mistakes and omissions, but also in many other social situations and circumstances. This is because the Christian ascetic must live and move in humility and have the strength and disposition to ask for forgiveness. According to Abba Dorotheos, "more than anything else, we need humility, to be ready for every reason we hear, let us say, forgive me” (Abba Dorotheos, On Humility, 26, p. 111).

Moreover, humility, for Saint John of Sinai, is “preventing quarrels and first dissolving anger” (Climax, on Humility, 3). Moreover, the conquest of this virtue begins with the reduction of anger and rage (Climax, on Humility, 5). In this context, Saint Cassian urges reconciliation with the other with humility, the provision of explanations, not concealment (Conversations with the Desert Fathers – Monastic Rules – The Eight Basic Passions, vol. 2, 15).

According to Saint John of Sinai, the path and occasion for the acquisition of humility is also the straightforwardness of the heart which is by nature opposed to arrogance, while the nerves of humility (but not signs and proofs) are also simple speech (Climax, on humility, 59, 62). Before acquiring humility, man practices the state in which he does not despise sinners nor condemn their sins. Elsewhere, he states that humility “does not rebuke, does not condemn others, does not seek primacy, does not use sophistry…there is no poison of hypocrisy and gossip…whoever has married it is mild, affable, merciful”. Its characteristic is the disappearance of all manifestations of anger, modesty for this success…as well as the constant inclination to learn” (Climax, on humility, 8 et seq.).

When Abba Isaiah was asked what humility was, he said, among other things: “Not to be quarrelsome, to have death before our eyes, not to provoke anyone and not to envy anyone” (Mega Gerontikos, 43). And elsewhere it is stated that humility in practice means not to pay attention to the sins of others” (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, 213)

4.3.6. Modesty

Humility is not simply the absence of pride, but a deep inner attitude born of simplicity and purity of heart. It is inextricably linked with modesty, which is expressed with decency and inner balance, and with modesty, which helps a person to know his limits and to accept the truth with calmness.

Humility, therefore, is born from meekness and simplicity of heart (Saint Cassian, On the Eight Thoughts of Evil, On the Spirit of Pride, 31). According to Saint John of Sinai, the opposite state of humility, pride, is "evidence of barrenness...a brazen display of our labors, internal self-praise, hatred of checks...the exaltation of our own ability...The haughty man desires to rule...He who rejects checks has shown that he has this passion, while he who accepts them has been freed from his bonds...Pride is the loss of wealth and the sweat of the spiritual...Pride means the extreme poverty of a soul that is presented in imagination as rich...Barrenness makes it so that the branches of the trees rise upwards. But when they bend downwards, quickly the fruition". (Climax, 22, On Pride).

4.3.7. Humility and Wellbeing

Wellbeing in psychology is a state in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (Jarden & Roache, 2023).

On the one hand, Christian theology supports the difficulty and toil in the present life, as the Christian life is a passage through the narrow and thorny path (Matt. 7, 13-14). On the other hand, the Christian life is presented as a state in which man experiences his completion and thus finds peace and tranquility. Specifically, through the observance of the commandments and the practice of virtues, the believer finds rest. The concept of joyful sorrow is a balance between positive and negative emotions.

Humility is a virtue that helps the individual in the sense of wellbeing. Abba Dorotheos states that the ultimate humility expressed through trust in the elder, that is, through the institution of monastic submission, results in the individual experiencing life positively: "...my soul was very rested, without any care, to the point of being sad about this matter...For I heard that we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven, passing through many sorrows and I saw that I had no sorrow and I was afraid and in a state of wonder, because I did not know the reason for so much rest" (Abba Dorotheos, On Why One Should Not Trust One's Own Wisdom, 66, p. 179).

For Saint John the Sinaite, all aspects of humility contribute to one and the same joy and fruitfulness (Climax, on humility, 4). Elsewhere it is stated: "I have never gone beyond my limits to rise higher, nor have I ever been troubled, because I was forced to humble myself" (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, 194).

5. Non-judgment

5.1. Definition and distinctions: Non-judgment in the New Testament and in the Fathers

The most basic passage of the Bible regarding the virtue of non-judgment is Matthew, 7, 1-5: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and twith the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but you not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”.

Judgment or condemnation, as understood by the Fathers, is not identical with justified criticism or discrimination, but refers mainly to a passionate attitude towards others. Saint Abba Dorotheos distinguishes between gossip, condemnation and neutralization. Gossip is the dissemination of the errors of the other. Condemnation is the evaluative attribution of characterizations (e.g. "he is a liar"). Both forms come from the hatred and moral superiority. (Abba Dorotheos, VI, on why we should not judge our fellow man, 70, 71, pp. 189-191).

Condemnation, therefore, is not simply an act of speech, but an internal attitude, which presupposes a specific spiritual state and highlights the internal inability to relate respectfully and truthfully to others. According to Saint Pimen, evil begins in the heart and is gradually expressed in appearance, speech and action. Therefore, the issue is not simply to avoid external condemnation or criticality, but to heal internally the disposition that gives rise to it (Γεροντικόν, ΑββάςΠοιμήν, 34).

5.2. Judgment as an expression of internal passions:

Selfishness/narcissism as roots of Judgment

Saint John of Sinai describes condemnation and resentment as soul-destroying forces that erode love, poison the inner world and erode relationships:

"Backbiting is born of hatred and resentment... it absorbs and eliminates the blood of love. It means a subordination of love... the cause of the weight of the heart" (Climax, on backbiting, 1). "Resentment is a worm of the mind, a nail driven into the soul... an alienation of love" (on resentment, 2). "He who maintains enmity accumulates in himself unnecessary annoying burdens" (on resentment, 4).

Criticism, in other words, does not only harm our relationship with others, but also our inner world, creating emotional discomfort, inner weight and isolation.

Elder ΑιμιλιανόςΣιμωνοπετρίτης(2011) attributes to speech an almost existential power: the speech that criticizes, hurts, isolates and kills:

"Every word we say is a murder of the other, and above all of ourselves... we never insult or pity a person... We never emphasize to someone their weakness... Non-judgment is not simply an avoidance of aggression, but an expression of deep freedom from the "ego" (p. 39).

Judgment is born from two basic situations: The sense of superiority or the concealment of our own weakness through projection onto the other. In both cases, the root is selfishness — the egocentric, narcissistic relationship with oneself.

Therefore, the reasons we judge others are: Either I believe that I am better than the other, or that I am clearly problematic too and I do not want to be the only one who has this characteristic. Selfishness makes us exaggerate the mistakes of others and underestimate or hide our own, distorting reality. This functions as a psychological defense mechanism but ultimately leads to alienation and self-deception. Christ's sentence «For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and twith the measure you use it will be measured to you» reveals that what we project onto others ultimately functions as a mirror of our own spiritual state.

5.3. Non-judgment as an internal work of self-awareness and as a prerequisite of forgiveness and subsequent wellbeing

According to Saint John of Sinai, when someone deepens in the knowledge of their own passions, they lose all inclination to judge others. Judgment is a sign of ignorance of our personal wounds and mistakes:

“Those who are strict and meticulous judges of the mistakes of others are defeated by this passion, because they have not yet acquired complete knowledge and memory of their own sins... (Climax, on backbiting, 11).

Self-awareness, as a work of repentance and humility, gives birth to non-judgment as a natural fruit.

The attitude of non-judgment is also deeply connected to love and forgiveness. God does not identify man with his falls. Since Christ did not come to judge the world but to save, thus man is called to see the other with understanding and sympathy. Judgment works in the opposite way to forgiveness: It poisons the relationship, gives rise to envy and makes the other guilty. True understanding presupposes the recognition of pain, toil and struggles of the other.

5.4. Silence, temperance, trust in God’s judgments as practices for cultivating non-judgment: A path to inner peace

The Fathers point out practical attitudes to avoid condemnation, such as silence, self-awareness, and imitation of God's mercy. Abba Cassian tells of an Elder who would fall asleep when condemnation began in conversation, so as not to be contaminated. He himself confessed that he had fallen into the same errors as those he had condemned in others. It is experiential repentance that gives birth to non-judgment, not moralistic rigor.

Silence, when it does not come from fear or indifference but from love and discrimination, is therapeutic.

"If you speak with empathy, having something against him, it is condemnation... But so that evil does not grow, silence is preferable" (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, 40). Temperance in speech is not just a moral duty, but an existential attitude of responsibility.

Non-judgment is connected to inner peace. Whoever does not judge, is not disturbed. “Do not judge anyone and you will always be peaceful” (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, 110). It is about inner liberation from the need for control, comparison and imposition.

The judgment of people belongs to God. When we try to fully interpret the falls of others, we are engaged in an irrelevant task. Saint Anthony heard: “Anthony, take care of yourself. These are God’s judgments and it is not good for you to learn about them” (ΜέγαΓεροντικό, 44). Non-judgment, therefore, presupposes humility towards the mystery of human freedom and the divine providence.

6. Frugality

6.1. Definition

Frugality is when a person is content with few, necessary and essential material things. It is a virtue that requires exercise, as human nature tends towards greed (John Chrys. On Repentance, Hom. III, PatrologiaGraeca, 44, 333-3340). Sometimes it is called poverty (for example, Μπουκά, 2010) in the monastic order. It is closely linked to temperance, which has a broader meaning, since it is not limited to the frugality of material goods.

Frugality, as a spiritual and moral virtue, is not an innate condition but the outcome of a conscious inner journey that requires ascetic effort and self-discipline. Its path begins with the awareness of human dependency on material possessions and the decision to limit one’s desires to what is necessary and essential. This moderation is sustained by temperance, which governs the passionsand redirects attention from external abundance to internal freedom. Through this process, the person gradually attains detachment from material concerns, which cultivates humility, peace, and resilience, reducing anxiety and fostering simplicity of life. The culmination of frugality lies in its social and spiritual dimension, where the renunciation of excess becomes an act of love and solidarity, expressed as sharing and empathy toward others. Thus, frugality’s prerequisites are self-awareness, temperance, humility, and charity, while its trajectory leads from the restraint of desire to the expansion of the heart in freedom and brotherly love (Μαντζαρίδης, 2004).

With the simplicity of the lifestyle imposed by frugality, the person is freed from unnecessary things and realizes his freedom, his resilience, the reduction of anxiety through the avoidance of ostentation and humility, as well as the sacrificial offering to others (social component of frugality).

6.2. The role of frugality in wellbeing

According to the Bible, where a man's treasure is, there his heart will be also, Matt. 6:21. Christ recommends, "Do not worry about tomorrow" (Matt. 6:34). Similarly, there are hundreds of references in the Bible and thousands of references in church literature to frugality.

Saint John the Sinaite considers monastic poverty (ακτημοσύνη) as freedom from cares, carefree life, unhindered travel, alienation from sorrow (Climax, on avarice, 11). Just the waves will not be lacking from the sea, so nor from the avaricious, anger and sorrow (on avarice, 18).

Human needs are not ignored, but man is called to reduce anxiety and concern for them, and thus to focus on more important issues (since he is not absorbed by concerns for material things), such as virtues (John Chrysostom, On Matthew 22, PatrologiaGraeca, 57, 302). According to John Chrysostom (On John, 2, PatrologiaGraeca, 58, 729-730), the soul becomes rich when it despises material things, frugality favors humility and modesty, love and sharing of material goods.

Saint Cassian reports that Abba Macarius said that the monk should behave as if he had many years of life ahead of him and at the same time live each day as if it were the last of his life. Thus, the monk should restrain himself and fast moderately, as if he were to remain alive for a hundred years, and he should curb the passions of his soul, constantly overcoming insults, sorrow, pain and in general all suffering, as if he were to die that very day. This is because the monk must always live with the same severity and austerity of life, so that he does not break down from physical labor and illness and thus desert and perish. In the second case, he strengthens the monk, so that he manages to despise everything pleasant and enjoyable that earthly life offers and not be overwhelmed by sorrows and adversities. But to despise temptations as small and insignificant things, having his attention constantly turned towards that from which, every day and every moment, he expects to receive the call to his departure.

In order to better show the value and role of frugality in wellbeing, both the Holy Bible and the patristic literature emphasize the role of avarice, that is, the desire and connection of man with material things, in his daily life.

According to Saint Cassian, with one fall upon another, the avaricious monk constantly goes from bad to worse and ends up no longer possessing not only a little, but not even a trace, a faint shadow, of the virtues of humility, love and obedience. He resents, blames everything and grumbles about every task he is asked to do. He respects no one, and is like a wild horse running towards the cliff that no one can restrain.

The passion of avarice makes this man stand on hot coals. In the end, he does nothing but work incessantly and feed the fire of his greed. His thirst for wealth becomes more intense and grows, according to the profits he saves. Because, as avarice grows, so does the mania for ownership

Greed is not always associated with the possession of money and material goods, but with the desire to connect with matters. An avaricious can also be someone who has no money at all. Because he is complacent and satisfied only with apparent poverty and does not seek the essence of virtue… because he believes that money is the only solution to every situation and difficulty.

According to Saint Cassian, humility cannot be acquired without poverty. And as long as we do not embrace poverty, we remain incorrigible. For, without poverty, we will not be able to become obedient, nor patient, nor diligent, nor peaceful, nor will we succeed in being perfected in love. In other words, we will not be able to advance in virtues (Abba Cassian, On the eight thoughts of evil, On the spirit of pride, chap. 22, 31)

6.3. The social component of frugality: Temperance in frugality as fraternal empathy

According to Saint Cassian, everything, even the most useful and necessary in life, is of lesser value and importance in the face of the highest good of peace and love. (Saint Cassian, Conversation 1 with ABBA JOSEPH: On brotherly love and friendship, in Abba Cassian. Conversations with the Desert Fathers – Monastic Rules – The Eight Basic Passions. Volume 2, 6). Thrift also aims at giving to others who lack the necessities (John Chrysostom, On Matthew, Sermon ΞΓ΄, PatrologiaGraeca, 58, 605). However, thrift is not an effort with the exclusive purpose of distributing wealth. On the contrary, its social component is governed by the mother of virtues, love. Thus, sometimes we see it expressed as fraternal empathy. For example, we mention the practice of the monks of Egypt, as narrated by Saint Cassian (Chapters 24, 25):

"In Egypt, when We visited the Monasteries and saw that the monks did not hesitate at all to break their daily fast in order to host us…we were amazed by the great cordiality with which I had been received in this region…they did not wait for the appointed time for the meal, but when they had visitors, except on Wednesdays and Fridays…they would break their fast for our sake.

One of the Elders, whom we asked why they broke their daily fasts so easily in their region, answered us: Fasting always accompanies me, but I will not be able to keep you with me forever, as I will soon say goodbye to you so that you can continue on your way. Fasting, however useful and necessary it may be, nevertheless, it is an offering of a gift of free will. The fulfillment of the work of love, however, requires the absolute observance of the commandment.

Thus, in your person I welcome Christ himself and I must rest Him. And, when I lead you down, I will be able to fast without hindrance. I will thus compensate for the concessions that for the love of Christ and because of charity and brotherly love I made, while you were in my cell. For, "is it possible, the friends of the bridegroom who are invited to the wedding, to fast as long as the bridegroom is with them?… but, when they take the bridegroom away from them, then they will fast" (Matt. 9, 15)".

Elsewhere, Saint Cassian mentions the abstinence of an Elder who had eaten six times with guests one day, but had taken so little food that he was still hungry for.

"Another Elder, as he was earnestly begging me during the meal to eat a little more and I was telling him that I could not eat more, said to me: I have already sat at table six times with different brothers who visited me and, urging them to eat, I also ate with each of them and I am still hungry. And you, who are eating now, for the first time, say that you cannot eat more? "(Chapters 24, 25).

7. Discussion

Based on the preceding conceptual and theological analyses of humility, non-judgment, and frugality, the present section discusses how these three Christian virtues can be operationalized within the methodological framework of psychology. While each virtue is deeply rooted in patristic anthropology and embedded in a holistic spiritual context, the examination of their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components enables their translation into psychological constructs that can be studied empirically and potentially cultivated through structured interventions. The goal is not to reduce or secularize the virtues, but to identify elements that meaningfully align with the aims of contemporary positive psychology, namely the enhancement of wellbeing, resilience, and prosocial functioning.

The operationalization proposed here relies on identifying aspects of each virtue that are compatible with psychological assessment and intervention models. In positive psychology, virtues are expressed through measurable character strengths; likewise, elements of humility, non-judgment, and frugality can be articulated as attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors. For humility, operationalizable components include accurate self-assessment, openness to correction, and an orientation toward others (see Table 1). For non-judgment, elements include cognitive restraint from premature causal attributions, emotional regulation in interpersonal evaluations, and behavioral tendencies toward empathy and withholding condemnation (see Table 2). For frugality, operationalization involves cognitive preferences for sufficiency, emotional satisfaction with moderation, and behavioral patterns of simple consumption (see Table 3). These components allow the virtues to be mapped onto existing psychological structures such as emotion regulation, attributional style, self-concept clarity, prosocial orientation, and value-based behavior.

The Tables1, 2, and 3 below summarizes the distilled operational components of the three virtues, bridging theological descriptions with psychological categories. This summary functions as a conceptual bridge rather than a finalized measurement tool, providing a foundation for future empirical work.

Table 1. Prerequisites/path to developing the virtue of humility, psychological definition, measurement/assessment tools, and training/intervention methods

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Methods
Self-knowledge and awareness of one's limitations	Metacognitive awareness of biases, emotions, and limits; realistic self-assessment without excessive self-criticism.	Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS); Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS); VIA Character Strengths – Humility facet.	Reflective journaling; mindfulness-based self-awareness exercises; metacognitive training.
Faith and trust in a higher order of goodness	Sense of coherence, optimism, and existential trust in life's order or meaning (non-religious faith).	Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC-13); Life Orientation Test–Revised (LOT-R); Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ).	Logotherapy exercises; meaning-centered therapy; ACT-based acceptance training.

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Methods
Imitation of moral exemplars	Observational learning and moral modeling; internalization of prosocial norms.	Moral Identity Scale; Social Learning Assessment; Prosocial Tendencies Measure.	Discussions on moral exemplars; perspective-taking tasks; mentoring programs.
Ascetic effort and moral discipline	Self-regulation and self-control through disciplined effort.	Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS); Grit Scale; Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ).	CBT self-regulation training; habit formation; implementation intentions.
Meekness and simplicity of heart	Low dominance, emotional balance, non-defensiveness.	Interpersonal Reactivity Index – Perspective Taking; Agreeableness (NEO-PI-3).	Emotion regulation training; compassion-focused therapy; nonviolent communication (NVC).
Readiness for forgiveness and apology	Dispositional forgiveness and conflict-resolution ability.	Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS); TRIM-18.	Forgiveness interventions; empathy training; structured interpersonal feedback.
Acceptance of correction and learning from others	Openness to feedback, cognitive flexibility, learning orientation.	Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS); Openness (NEO-PI-R); Growth Mindset Scale.	Feedback literacy training; growth mindset interventions; perspective-shifting exercises.
Service and love toward others	Altruism and prosocial motivation.	Prosocialness Scale for Adults; Compassion Scale; IRI – Empathic Concern.	Volunteerism interventions; compassion meditation; service-learning.
Temperance and restraint in speech	Emotional regulation and verbal impulse control.	Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS); MAAS.	MBSR; communication-skills workshops; impulse-control training.
Rejection of pride and self-sufficiency	Low narcissism, reduced egocentrism.	Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI); Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal Scale.	Perspective-taking; gratitude journaling; humility priming.
Inner peace and psychological rest	Emotional stability, low anxiety, internal harmony.	Ryff Psychological Well-Being; FFMQ.	Relaxation techniques; mindfulness; cognitive restructuring.
Union with love and compassion	Integration of empathy, prosocial emotion, and acceptance.	Compassionate Love Scale; Self-Compassion Scale.	Loving-kindness meditation; compassion-focused therapy; empathy

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Methods
			exercises.

Table 2. Prerequisites and path to developing the virtue of non-judgment, psychological definition, measurement/assessment tools, and training/intervention methods

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Strategies
Self-awareness of biases	Awareness of cognitive biases, automatic evaluations, internal critical tendencies.	SRIS; Implicit Association Test (IAT); SCCS.	Mindfulness self-monitoring; journaling; metacognitive training.
Empathy and perspective-taking	Understanding emotions/intentions of others without judgment.	IRI – PT & EC; Empathy Quotient (EQ).	Perspective-taking exercises; role-playing; CFT.
Reduction of narcissistic tendencies	Decrease of ego-centered thinking that fuels judgment.	NPI; Self–Other Overlap; Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal.	Self-compassion training; ACT; reflection on personal limitations.
Forgiveness readiness	Ability to release resentment or blame.	HFS; TRIM-18.	Forgiveness interventions; reflective journaling; guided imagery.
Emotional regulation and tolerance	Managing emotions (anger, envy) that trigger judgment.	DERS; PANAS.	MBSR; CBT emotion regulation; relaxation training.
Humility and cognitive openness	Acceptance of uncertainty and personal limits in judgment.	Altruism Scale; Openness (NEO-PI-R); Growth Mindset.	Cognitive restructuring; growth mindset; humility reflections.
Compassion and altruism	Non-judgment expressed through care for others.	Compassion Scale; Compassionate Love Scale; Prosocialness Scale.	Loving-kindness meditation; compassion exercises; prosocial tasks.
Silence and reflection before responding	Ability to pause before reacting impulsively.	MAAS; ERQ.	Mindful pausing; impulse-control training; "stop–breathe–respond."
Trust in contextual fairness	Acceptance that not all actions can be judged immediately; tolerance of ambiguity.	Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale; General Self-Efficacy; SOC-13.	Acceptance-based interventions; reframing; mindfulness for uncertainty.

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Strategies
Inner peace and reduced rumination	Reduced preoccupation with others' flaws; lower cognitive reactivity.	RRS; FFMQ; Ryff PB Scales.	Mindfulness meditation; stress reduction; cognitive restructuring.

Table 3. Prerequisites and path to developing the virtue of frugality, psychological definition, measurement/assessment tools, and training/intervention methods.

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Strategies
Self-awareness of material desires	Recognition of attachment to possessions; distinguishing needs from wants.	Material Values Scale; Compulsive Buying Scale; Minimalism Questionnaires.	Mindfulness on consumption; journaling; guided awareness.
Temperance / Self-regulation	Ability to moderate impulses related to consumption.	Self-Control Scale; BIS; Delay Discounting Tasks.	Self-regulation training; goal-setting; impulse-control; mindfulness.
Humility / Reduced material pride	Self-worth not tied to possessions; valuing simplicity.	Humility Scale; Rosenberg Self-Esteem; NPI subscales.	Cognitive restructuring; gratitude; values clarification.
Charity / Altruism	Tendency to share resources and help others.	Prosocialness Scale; Compassion Scale; Giving Behavior logs.	Altruistic behavior training; structured giving; prosocial activities.
Resilience / Contentment	Satisfaction with minimalism; low stress from non-attachment.	SWLS; PSS; Resilience Scale.	MBSR; gratitude journaling; cognitive reframing.
Detachment from materialism	Ability to separate identity from possessions.	Materialism Scale; Experiential Avoidance; SCCS.	CBT interventions; minimalism experiments; values-based decisions.
Fraternal empathy / social awareness	Using moderation to support others; communal awareness.	IRI – Empathic Concern; Prosocialness; Social Value Orientation.	Perspective-taking; community service; discussions on fairness.
Mindful consumption	Intentionality in acquiring/using/discarding	Mindful Consumption Scales; Ecological	Consumption-focused

Prerequisite/Path	Psychological Definition	Measurement / Assessment Tools	Training / Intervention Strategies
	goods.	Behavior Scales.	mindfulness; intention-setting; reflective choices.
Simplicity of lifestyle	Preference for simplicity over excess.	Lifestyle Simplicity Scale; Minimalism Measures.	Decluttering tasks; behavioral experiments; lifestyle planning.
Internalized values vs. external pressures	Prioritizing intrinsic values over social pressure for material gain.	Schwartz Value Survey; Intrinsic–Extrinsic Goals; Self-Determination Scale.	Values clarification; intrinsic goal-setting; media literacy training.

7.1. Limitations of the Operationalization

Despite the potential benefits of translating these virtues into psychological constructs, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, Christian virtues are inherently theological and teleological, oriented toward spiritual transformation and communion with God; their reduction to psychological traits risks oversimplification. Second, operationalization may fail to capture the holistic unity of virtues, which in patristic thought are interdependent and cannot be selectively cultivated without reference to the entire spiritual life. Third, cultural variability in the interpretation of these virtues may affect their empirical applicability. Finally, any psychological use of theological concepts must avoid instrumentalizing or distorting their spiritual meaning (Μαντζαρίδης, 2004).

7.2. Directions for Future Research

Future research should examine whether the operationalized components proposed here can be incorporated into evidence-based interventions similar to those already used in positive psychology. Pilot studies could test brief structured practices designed to enhance humility (e.g., self-reflection exercises), non-judgment (e.g., attributional reframing, empathy-enhancing tasks), and frugality (e.g., intentional simplicity challenges). These interventions could be evaluated for effects on wellbeing, interpersonal functioning, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior. Additionally, psychometric development is needed to create valid measurement instruments for non-judgment and frugality, parallel to existing humility scales. Interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, theologians, and moral philosophers will be essential to ensure conceptual accuracy, methodological rigor, and ethical application.

7.3. Conclusions

This work demonstrates that humility, non-judgment, and frugality—three central Christian virtues—can be systematically analyzed and partially operationalized in ways compatible with positive psychology. Although Christian virtues are holistic, relational, and inherently theological, their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral expressions can inform contemporary

psychological models of wellbeing. Humility has already received substantial empirical attention, while non-judgment and frugality represent promising yet undeveloped areas for psychological research. Integrating insights from patristic spirituality with the empirical framework of positive psychology may prevent the latter from becoming overly instrumental or individualistic, grounding it instead in a richer anthropological vision. Such an approach can enhance wellbeing interventions by incorporating dimensions of moral depth, relational responsibility, and existential meaning. Future research should focus on developing validated measures for non-judgment and frugality, designing interventions rooted in both psychological science and theological anthropology, and evaluating their effects on wellbeing, resilience, and interpersonal functioning. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary synthesis highlights the potential for a more comprehensive understanding of human flourishing that unites scientific knowledge with spiritual wisdom.

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