

## **Evagrius :**

- **Life and Introduction to the Foundations of Ascetic Practice**
- **The Eight Evil Reasonings and How to Respond to Temptation**

### Life:

- Evagrius was born c. 345 in Ibora in Helenopontus, the son of a rural bishop.
- He was ordained a lector (reader) by Basil of Caesarea and a deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus and accompanied the latter to Constantinople where Gregory became the orthodox bishop in 380. After Gregory's resignation in 381, Evagrius continued to serve under Gregory's successor Nectarius.
- Though regarded as an eloquent speaker and a successful debater, Evagrius found himself inwardly weakening and felt himself drawn to a married woman of the aristocratic class (cf. Sinkewicz, p. 76).
- To break this attachment, he left Constantinople for Jerusalem in 382 and was hospitably received by Melania the Elder and stayed at Rufinus' monastery (a monastery associated with the educated ascetic elite).
- Evagrius fell ill for six months with a fever doctors were unable to cure. Melania, a very discerning woman, suspected a spiritual cause for Evagrius' illness, Evagrius disclosed to her his past struggles, and she encouraged him to promise to take up the ascetic/monastic life, whereupon he recovered.
- Evagrius left for Egypt, arriving in 383 and after living for two years in Nitria, he moved to Kellia to have greater solitude and where he was able to benefit from the teaching of a respected spiritual guide, Makarios of Egypt.
- Evagrius was forced briefly to flee to Palestine sometime between 391-394 to avoid being ordained bishop of Thmuis, then returned to returned to Kellia, where he died c. 399.

### Significance for Later Christian Spirituality

Created a systematic account of the emerging ascetical beliefs about

- prayer,
- the psychology of temptation (i.e. what temptation is and how it acts upon one's senses, mind, imagination and desires to move one toward sin) and
- the practice of spiritual warfare (i.e. how can we resist temptation and train ourselves to be less enticed by the attractions of sin, so that our minds and desires are ultimately refocused upon God).

This is a somewhat different approach from modern Protestantism (whether evangelical or liberal), which tends to

- lump all sins together under one general rubric without much introspection or discrimination of distinct underlying patterns.
  - ♣ This is probably a product of reducing the confession of sins to a liturgical, silent public act and also

- ♣ reflects a lack of traditions or structures concerning private confession and spiritual direction.
- fixate on sexual sins that imperil the nuclear family, while being less willing to address the sins that receive silent approval within our economy/society (pride [self-assertion] and gluttony [increasing consumption]).

### Introduction to the Foundations of Ascetic Practice in Evagrius' *Praktikos*

- The goal of human life is unceasing prayer (1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
  - It is impossible to arrive at this without addressing the problem of distraction in prayer.
    - *Pathē* (passions)=the mind's being affected by images, thoughts and proposals for action which disturb, disorder and unbalance it, tempting one to sinful actions while distracting/diverting the mind and heart from God
- Due to the effects of sin, various aspects of our mind are disordered.
  - Having lived less carefully than we ought, our minds are flooded by a variety of powerful images which are
    - received through the senses,
    - stored in the memory and
    - brought back before the mind at various times through the influence of various natural and supernatural factors.
  - These images can exert a powerful influence upon the mind, stirring up and increasing desire for some particular object or definite pattern of action.
  - These images can also induce anxiety and fear (e.g. fear of imminent loss or harm), which disturb and seem to overwhelm the soul, knocking one off balance, so that one is inclined toward
    - the hasty or desperate choice of inappropriate things or
    - the feeling that one must act upon questionable motives, either to get/keep something one thinks one needs or to avoid some loss or harm
- All of this is hardly conducive to the health of the soul or the soul's continuous communion with God.
  - Note the interesting discussion in *Praktikos* 20ff. on how to manage and moderate the passions which the demons use to distract us from prayer--what are the underlying principles thought to be important in this connection?
    - Using the opposition of incompatible thoughts to one's benefit (58) and use of *thumos* (passionate response to circumstances, which can manifest itself as patient endurance and persistence in the face of opposition or in the form of irritability/anger) to combat shameful thoughts and worldly desires motivated by a bodily pleasure that aims at selfish gratification (24,42; cf. 86,89).
    - Psalm-singing as spiritual medicine which calms anger and places virtue again before the mind (15,71); cf. 79 on prayer as necessary for healing, asceticism alone insufficient)

- One's inner life must be restored to health, balance and soundness before one can progress in prayer and more nearly arrive at undivided devotion to God (which is what God properly merits and deserves).

### Purification from the Passions Is Necessary to Engage in Contemplative Prayer and Union with God

- The memory of sensible objects can be a benefit in ordinary life but the images that are retained can be a significant distraction in prayer; furthermore, certain images can tempt one to sin and are best avoided or suppressed.
- The mind must cease to trade in images (esp. memories of events that evoke anxiety, fear and desire for control=rational self-management apart from God) [65-66; cf. 70]--or at least purify and transform such images--if it is in an undivided, undistracted way to seek out God and implore God to reveal himself (humbly receiving supernatural, contemplative knowledge of God as a gift).
  - ἀπάθεια (apatheia="passionlessness"=the disordered and disturbing passions are resolved into a state of abiding calm, peace and purity of heart ["the health of the soul"]).
    - Does not= indifference, nor is it incompatible with higher love toward God and other human beings [84,57].
      - The struggle to attain apatheia tempers even one's unconscious life, including one's dreams and involuntary responses; see *Praktikos* 55-56, 64,67)
      - There is a nice summary of the Evagrian view of apatheia in a thirteenth-century Byzantine dictionary, the Ps.-Zonaras lexicon (s.v.), which defines apatheia as "a condition of the rational soul consisting of gentleness and moderation," whose fruit is the love of God, in which the mind (illuminated by the Holy Spirit) goes out from created things to know and love God, no longer being distracted by passionate movements contrary to nature.
  - When the distracting power of the passions is broken, one is able to look to God and to rest in ἡσυχία (hēsychia="quietness, recollection, solitude in contemplative silence apart from the world" which looks toward that leisurely repose of the eternal Sabbath, where we may know and rest in God in a perfect, undivided manner, basking in the uncreated light of the Holy Trinity). See *Praktikos* 57.
    - *Purity of Heart (John Cassian's Transformation of Evagrius' Apatheia)*
      - For John Cassian, who adapted Evagrius' thought and brought it to the Latin West, the goal (*telos*) of the Christian life is to arrive at communion with God ("the kingdom of God") through pure prayer.

- To get to this intermediate goal (*skopos*), one must attain “purity of heart” (*puritas cordis*), without which one cannot arrive at pure prayer/the kingdom of God.
- The concept of “purity of heart” thus allows Cassian to recognize Evagrius’ idea that we must attain *apatheia* and overcome distractions in prayer and to give this a more biblical flavor.

In addressing our problems, we may need to pass through several logically distinct stages:

(1) Anachorēsis (Withdrawal to Greater Solitude):

- a. The first task is to *limit the flow of new potentially destructive sensory stimuli into the mind*.
  - i. At the very least, what that means is this:
    - When tempted, don’t remain where you are (instead flee/move on) and don’t look at or reason about the source of temptation (thinking “I can handle it. I have the strength to deal with this”)—it will give the temptation greater force and you will ultimately give way.
    - It is better to flee/avoid the circumstance in which the temptation is seen to occur and this also helps to refocus the mind, which weakens the power and fascination of temptation.
  - ii. The easiest and most consistent way to systematically limit the flow of potentially destructive sensory stimuli into the mind is to gain a certain distance from fallen life in the world, living in greater solitude so that the effects of one’s past life may begin to be reversed.
    - If one cannot gain sufficient solitude in one’s own place of origin, one should move to an environment where greater solitude is possible.
      - a. This is the origin of the idea of *xeniteia*, i.e. voluntary exile from one’s place of origin to pursue healing of the soul and spiritual growth; this may also require a willingness to distance oneself from one’s family of origin, one’s accumulated possessions, and one’s ties to worldly society including all desires for worldly honor and success.)

(2) Praktikē: As solitude affords time for greater self-examination and new perspectives, one discovers just how much one’s life has been driven by mistaken beliefs and values and corrupt, self-serving motives.

- a. The mind is seen in its present state to be an idol factory,
  - i. driven by powerful images and
  - ii. erring in its judgments about how matters actually stand and what really matters.
- b. The mind, in its negligence, has also developed a certain pleasure in habitually seeking the wrong things, or perhaps it has grown accustomed to the habitual experience of pleasure as an end in itself.

- i. The pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure may not only become a habit, but can even transcend our rational control over our choices so that such pleasures become compulsive or even invade our dreams.
- ii. It is therefore helpful to look at the content of thoughts that are recurrent (even intrusive and unwanted) and at images and themes that recur in one's dreams.

The *adoption of a certain pattern of life and training* is therefore necessary if we are to begin to war against our vices and seek out the opposing virtues. Essential to this process is

- the “manifestation of thoughts” to one’s spiritual father, so as to arrive at a correct assessment of one’s current state and predominant weaknesses and
- begin to practice appropriate basic countermeasures against the principal bodily passions:
  - fasting to stave off gluttony and lust,
  - manual labor and psalmody (singing psalms) to drive off the weariness and despair associated with *akedia*,
  - being silent, keeping oneself and one’s way of life out of public view, and meditating upon death and final judgment to avoid vainglory and the mistake of attributing one’s advance to oneself rather than the grace of God (which is a function of God-denying pride).

At this stage of the spiritual life, the principal passions one must contend with (such as lust and anger) are those linked with the lower parts of the soul (which are more nearly associated with the body and share in the liabilities that attach to the body after the Fall).

- The first of these lower parts of the soul is the concupiscible (=desirous; shared with animals), in which,
  - with the introduction of sensory stimuli (or, better, mental representations of sensible objects),
  - bodily desire is directed toward another body for the goal of obtaining pleasure rather than any virtue (=lust and thoughts of fornication, more or less).

The concupiscible part of the soul must be weakened by fasting and limiting one’s intake of fluids; as this part of the soul loses its force and becomes amenable to discipline, it is no longer aroused by the images that formerly stimulated it and it becomes capable of a purer love for Christ’s sheep and a benevolence toward them (see *Thoughts* 17).

- The second of these is the irascible or (=that which is quick to rise up in response; the impulsively reactive, also shared with animals). Its movements follow after the motions of the concupiscible part and interact with the latter in certain important ways. Evagrius’ teaching about the irascible part is complex, but the essential point is that
  - that force that impulsively overwhelms reason
    - can be weakened and then
    - disciplined to provide impulsive force against the powers of evil that tempt one, strengthening one’s resolve.

### Dealing with These Sins of Disordered Bodily Desire

In Evagrius' view, vices rooted predominantly in corrupted and distorted bodily desires (e.g. lust and anger) needed to be addressed before there could be further progress in the healing of the soul.

- The reason is this: The corruption of the soul's power to desire sensible things leads to an obsession or compulsion to obtain pleasure from bodies.
  - This is a compulsive desire for immediate pleasure that
    - treats pleasure as the only goal to be sought and
    - results in an obsession with sexual images.
  - This disorders the soul while increasing the force of its inward activity in ways that cause a downward spiral that results in compulsive behavior and eventually the person's life crashes or collapses.
  - Evagrius believes that this problem needs to be dealt with at the outset of the Christian life by
    - trying to limit one's exposure to sensory stimuli,
    - fasting to weaken the power of the body's disordered drives, and
    - praying Scripture (particularly the psalms) to direct the mind's attention
      - away from its compulsive focus on bodies
      - to the God who can provide help and strength against temptation.
- The corruption of the soul's reactive power leads to
  - excessive irritability,
  - the mind's attention becoming focused on images of imminent violence and
  - a quickness to take offence and, out of resentment and anger, to respond with retaliation.
    - Fasting allows the forces of the body to be sufficiently weakened that one can respond to unjust treatment with patient silence rather than retaliation.
    - With the help of grace, this allows one to arrive at a gentleness of spirit and an ability at appropriate times to show charity toward one's enemies (which also helps to break the power that irritability, anger and the desire to retaliate have over the soul).
    - Resentment, however, can have its place in the soul that is proceeding back toward wholeness.
      - Just as Christ's anger had its place in driving the moneychangers out of the temple, we also can counter thoughts of fornication or other impure thoughts with resentment, using the motive power of the soul to repudiate and actively push away thoughts before they fascinate us and we begin to dwell on them and find ourselves bound to them through implicit (unformed) assent.

### Sins of Thought/Interpretation

Just as lust and anger can be conceived as arising predominantly from bodily desires, there are some of the eight basic patterns of evil thought that are more obviously driven not just by bodily desire, but also by interpretive thought (=memory of sensible objects+interpretation of situation and subsequent commitment of the powers of mind and soul).

Thus, some of the eight basic evil patterns of thought initially make greater use of sensory stimuli but are ultimately interpretative commitments.

- For example, (demonic) sadness
  - presupposes a prior stimulation of the part of the soul that is irascible (quick to respond) (e.g. anger which moves one to desire/seek retaliation) which hoped to achieve the thing it desired, but was frustrated and did not achieve what was desired and
  - the mind subsequently gives a negative and despairing interpretation of the situation (“It is/will always be this way. I will never get ahead/get what others have. It’s hopeless and I should just quit”)

In other cases, the pattern of temptation starts with an interpretation (assumption) of what benefits can be obtained (and harms avoided) by possessing external goods and what harms will arise from not having them.

- Gluttony would be one example.
  - One believes that one will be gratified by indulging in food and drink to the point of satiety and beyond.
    - That, according to one’s interpretation of one’s situation, is where happiness and security lie. (Compare eating disorders and alcoholism today.)
    - Gluttony leads on to dullness of mind and an uncritical obsession with bodily impulses, making one an easy target for lust and thoughts of fornication (a downward spiral where the force of the lower parts of the soul is further increased).
- *Akēdia* (weariness and listlessness leading to despair) would be another example.
  - Here there are
    - interpretations of one’s situation given (“it is hopeless to continue”) which are joined with
    - an inner weariness that arises from the fact that the soul
      - is in disorder and
      - has worn itself down through its frenzied yet unfocused and imbalanced movements, e.g. worrying, losing oneself in activity, aversion which makes one unable to look at or see certain things.

Temptations of different kinds can also arise from different sources, some of which are external to the person, some which are internal to the person.

- For example, external causes provoke avarice and anger, while dejection and *akēdia* originate internally apart from direct external causes.

### How to Deal with Sins of Thought/Interpretation

Evagrius recommends different ways of responding to temptations that are predominantly rooted in thought (i.e. distorted interpretative judgments). Two general strategies can be observed.

- The doctrine of attention: The human mind can only focus in upon one mental representation at a time. Thus, to use an example from contemporary philosopher Harry Frankfurt, it is probably impossible to simultaneously focus upon

- preparing oneself to give a speech at a black-tie dinner and
- preparing oneself for a sexual encounter.

One might be able to oscillate the mind back and forth between these two different tasks, but one could not simultaneously do both together. Thus, one can try to refocus the mind by attending to a different thought in a particularly intense way. If one is severely tempted and on the verge of falling into sin, any counter-thought will do. If, for example, one is tempted to give in to lust, one can inflame one's soul with anger at one's boss. Granted that anger has problems of its own and in time is equally likely to exceed rational control, it does have an astonishing degree of motive force and can concentrate and focus the soul in a unique way. So in an extreme situation, I may actually be able to get some traction by directing the propensity of the soul away from lust toward anger. (Ideally, it would be better if I could use the soul's reactive response to direct resentment and anger toward the temptation of lust and the demons that propose it.)

- Countering the temptation with an opposing thought, particularly an appropriate text of Scripture (cf. Lk. 3:12), in order to combat the evil thought and drive it away. Considered the best solution only for the advanced, who have proceeded to the life of knowledge and contemplation; for people at the introductory level, it is better to suppress the evil thought by cutting it off and refusing to dwell upon it or engage with it or, if necessary, refocusing one's attention by introducing a different thought to divert (see above).

### **Evagrius on the Eight Evil Thoughts: A Brief Survey**

There are a number of vice-lists in the New Testament.

- See Burton S. Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932), who cites Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:6-7; Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-5; 6:14-17; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:5,8,12-14; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 3:2-3; 6:4-5,11; 2 Tim. 3:2-4; Titus 1:7-8; 3:1-2; James 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Rev. 21:8; 22:15.

The vices in these lists can be sorted into rough groupings of terms that are synonymous or overlap, with the most prominent terms being in each group being used to stand for the group.

- Following Evagrius, the Greek church recognized eight basic patterns of sinful thought, which were later reorganized and reduced to the seven deadly sins in the Western [Latin-speaking] church.)

### Evagrius' Account of the Eight Evil Reasonings (λογισμοί)

- If one examines the principal temptations that one encounters, one will find that they take eight basic forms.
- Reflecting upon these basic forms of temptation is helpful because when one is tempted, this classification can help one
  - better to understand one's situation,
  - name the temptation for what it is, and
  - defeat it. (See *Praktikos* 43,50,54.)



- Assumes that the human soul is
  - not just a closed system that can be explained solely in terms of its own internal dynamics, but is
  - profoundly influence by external forces, which operate in certain definite ways and must be properly understood if one is to avoid consenting to sinful thoughts [75] and spiritually progress.
  
- Presupposes the ascetic practice of self-examination and manifestation of thoughts to a spiritual director for the purpose of receiving spiritual direction
  - See *Thoughts* 9 on the analysis/examination of how temptations enter and dominate the soul
  - *Thoughts* 2: “demonic thoughts introduce into the soul mental representations of sensible objects; impressed by these, the mind carries about within itself the forms of those objects”
    - No impure thought arises in us without a sensible object.
  - See *Thoughts* 19 on moral responsibility
    - See *Vices* 1.2 on “nourishing the thoughts with words”
  - *Diakrisis* (Grk.)/*Discretio* (Lat.) =Discernment, i.e. a clear spiritual insight into
    - a person’s thoughts and actions,
    - the demonic activity underlying the temptation, and
    - insight into what needs to be done to resolve the issue.
      - This allows the disciple to rely on the spiritual father’s judgment even when the latter prescribes the relaxing or invigoration of one’s ascetic regimen.
      - *Gradual Correction Adapted to the Peculiar Situation of the Individual*
        - E.g., there can be no uniform regulations for fasting; the spiritual director should take account of the person’s age, physical health, spiritual state, etc.

### The Eight Evil Reasonings Described

The demons (externally) influence human beings (internally) through the following eight reasonings or fundamental patterns of thought. (The lists of the vices given by Evagrius vary, but the following is the systematization of the eight evil reasonings which became standard in the Greek church.)

- Initial 3 root thoughts which lead on to the other 5:
  - gluttony,
  - avarice and
  - vainglory

### **Gluttony**

- γαστριμαργία (*gastrimargia*; "**gluttony**" =a desire for food which exceeds the boundaries of what is proper, appropriate or natural--references here to the eating of the apple in Eden and to Paul's comment, "Their god is the stomach"=one is enslaved by

the desire for food and the excessive value one places upon it and the excessive concern one has with it);

- Rooted in the imagining (picturing) of foods and the pleasure associated with them
  - →Concern/anxiety for the body and for a variety with foods, together with a fear of abstinence and its assumed/alleged negative consequences for one's health and well-being
  - →Eating to the point of satiation and beyond it
    - weakens the body→always wanting more to be satisfied→passionate impulses that exceed reason
    - darkens/thickens/pollutes the intellect→passionate thoughts in the intellect do not allow it to be moved in a rational manner and seek the Word of God→under the influence of passionate thoughts the mind is deprived of the light that surrounds the mind at the time of prayer and thus one cannot pray as one ought
      - Cf. *8 Thoughts* 17: “A solid mirror does not produce a clear image of the form that falls upon it; when the intellect is blunted by satiety, it does not receive the knowledge of God, “ i.e. cannot arrive at peace or attain contemplation
  - →A certain miserliness in sharing with others/extending hospitality/sharing foods with others
- Cure: abstinence and other disciplines of the practical life that contribute to the chastisement of thoughts (especially the renunciation of rest to engage in vigils in prayer)→when thoughts are wiped out→ peace/impassibility/practical contemplation, so that the mind's natural state is no longer disturbed/distracted/ moved by passion and is once again receptive of spiritual knowledge and capable of reflecting the divine light→ pure prayer and knowledge of Christ our Savior
  - Danger: Sometimes in responding gluttony one is tempted to pursue an immoderate abstinence (i.e. abstaining from bread, oil or water), then falls and becomes discouraged, so may fail to obtain even a moderate abstinence.

## Fornication

- πορνεία (*porneia*; lit. "fornication"=any form of extra-marital sexuality; this is further clarified as meaning the desire for extra-marital sexuality ["**lust**"], rather than the act itself -thus this can exist even where has only committed oneself to desiring what is wrong, even if one has not yet had the opportunity to act upon it; compare Jesus' teaching on adultery)
  - 2 types—that of the body and that of the spirit
- The form/representation of a body leads the soul to consent (“bow down to”) a lustful thought (=interior adultery)
- Heart is consequently bound to a habit of pleasures, so that one no longer has the strength to restrain the force of this nature, acting as though one is under a law
  - Cf. *Vices* 2: an “unnatural activity” which binds one to a certain kind of adultery→sets thoughts in motion continually, imagining the pleasure, defiling the mind (since holding an image before the mind [fantasy] will destroy the habit of chastity).
  - →God is seen as unjust

- → habit of pleasure causes fantasies to disturb sleep
- → sadness when thwarted and unable to experience licentious pleasure
- Rooted in/originates from gluttony (excess of food and water)
- Cure:
  - Limit encounters with the opposite sex (since memories of recent events have a particular vivacity/liveliness) and prefer solitude –See *8 Thoughts* 2.2,6,8?
  - Abstinence from food weakens the desire for fornication so that hunger for prayer may dominate instead→impassibility as the way to arrive at love and knowledge
  - Remembrance of death and judgment
  - Drive away with the Cross and tears while praying
  - Bring resentment to bear against the spirit of fornication (heat of the irascible part directed against this demon/thought and destroys its mental representation)
  - If hard pressed, allow thoughts of opposed virtue (chastity), or if necessary the opposing vice (vainglory) to divert the mind. But one should not trifle with the idea of evoking the opposing vice (using bad thoughts to drive out other pleasurable thoughts), even if one thinks they have arrived at *apatheia* (and therefore can have an image from memory arise without passion).
    - Danger: One can think one has beat fornication (impure thoughts are merely hidden from one's inner self) and one admires one's achievement→vainglory→makes one more susceptible to forms that distract from prayer

## Avarice

- φιλαργυρία (*philarguria*; literally, "love of money")
- A continuing drive for greater wealth, greater profits and the accumulation of possessions (insatiable=one cannot get enough and always wants more) and one works hard to achieve these
- One carries the memory of one's possessions around with one and is bound with the fetters of one's worries (a form of idolatry in which one is captive to many cares and weighed down by many concerns)→One is entangled in the idea that servitude to material possessions brings freedom.
- May be concealed under the appearance of hospitality and generosity (or at least by thoughts of oneself as being such a person and engaging in such actions), though this generosity may be extended to those who favor oneself and one's plans, while being withheld from those who don't.
- Result:
  - One fears being unable
    - to be self-sufficient in the future and
    - to guarantee that one will be able to avoid hardships.
      - This desire is a sign of pride.
  - One is unable to bear the thought of death and is miserable at the thought of leaving behind present things.

- Being unable to take one's eyes away from material things, one is stung with sadness and pained in his thoughts as one contemplates being separated from these things and the pleasures one associates with them.
  - More generally, any thoughts of being deprived of these things or being unable to obtain them fills one with sadness.
- Cure:
  - Restrained by almsgiving → freedom from possessions → evangelical freedom from cares, which makes it possible for one to be free of distractions in prayer (lays a foundation for the establishing of *apatheia*) and to arrive at swift movement toward God.
  - Devotion to prayer and the reading of Scripture makes possible a hope in God, which limits one's excessive concern for bodily things
    - One will then be able to bear the thought of death and can then rise above other temptations that are suggested to one.
  - When tempted, the mind should be transferred to another mental representation, e.g. if I am clinging to the thought of God and am succumbing to avarice (having sinned in mind, I am about to sin in act), I can transfer my mind to the thought of one who has pained me. The mind cannot do this (i.e. attend to image assoc. with anger) while still clinging to the thought of gold.

## Anger

- θυμός (*thumos*; "**anger**"--an irascibility, irritability or impatience that leads to a darkening of the mind and an obscuring of one's reason; when not restrained, it can overwhelm one's reason and drive one to hasty and excessive action. It can particularly manifest itself in the form of (a) a remembrance of wrongs received that leads one to desire vengeance or (b) an **envy** that craves the setting right of a perceived wrong or injustice that one feels one has suffered.) (see p. 18).
- Indulging in thoughts of anger involves picturing the object of resentment and anger.
  - After one has responded to a person with a rebuttal or rebuke peaceably delivered and the other person has left our presence, one's thoughts of them and how they should be treated take on a more angry, resentful, aggressive, impudent tone.
  - When one is in the grip of self-righteous anger and resentment, withdrawing into solitude is viewed as good but actually separates one and prevents forgiveness and reconciliation.
  - Once the irascible part is roused, it is hard to restrain.
- Anger takes a toll on the body (bloodshot eyes, fear and disturbances [e.g. nightmares] at night, imagining oneself or one's loved one's being attacked [frightful scenes and apparitions], depriving one of peace and often accompanied by wasting and pallor of the body)
- Anger darkens the soul and will remain a problem during the time of prayer (one remains irritated and troubled and the image of the person who provoked/injured one readily reappears before the mind and is hard to dispel).
  - As long as angry images (associated with suspicion, hatred or the harboring of resentment) are entertained during prayer, one cannot pray to God purely, nor can one gain a sweet longing for better things and receive knowledge of the Savior.

- Insofar as there is in anger and irascibility that longs for revenge, the frustration of one's desires/plans for revenge leads to (demonic) sadness (inopportune grief) and then to the weariness, inner exhaustion and despair associated with *akēdia*.
- Anger thus prepares the ground for *akēdia*, which further contributes to the darkening of the soul.
- Cure:
  - Avoid/limit fresh stimulation of the irascible part (e.g. avoiding lawsuits or holding before the eyes the image of the person who has hurt one)
  - Psalmody moderates the extreme, irrational, self-focused movements of the soul.
  - Oppose angry thoughts with patience, charity and gentleness (esp. when these are manifested through beneficence and works of charity and mercy toward the offender)
    - Asking forgiveness of the one who provoked one or caused the irritation breaks the power of anger and can dispel the mental representations associated with the desire for revenge.
      - If the brother departs without reconciliation, one will experience no release from anger and this will remain an ongoing problem during the time of prayer.
  - Anger can then be redirected toward the enemy, not one's fellow human beings (who ought instead to be objects of our charity, whatever their present state)

### **(Demonic) Sadness**

- λύπη ἄκαιρος (*lupē akairos*; "**inopportune grief**", grieving--just as non-Christians do--because one does not have the honor or the money or the pleasant life one wishes one had).
  - Since
    - the number of things one could want is virtually unlimited but
    - what one can actually obtain or achieve in this life is limited,
this leaves one in a position of continually grieving over what one does not have and cannot get. This is a grief which, by its very nature, is without limits or the possibility of resolution) (cf. homesickness on p. 17-18 and *Praktikos* 22).

One must distinguish between

- a godly sadness which
  - leads to repentance, compunction and tears
  - can contemplate death and judgment without turning away because of hope in God
  - is compatible with and leads to peace and stability of soul
- demonic sadness (inopportune grief) in which the soul is dejected and knows no pleasure, dwelling upon
  - a frustrated desire to acquire a certain pleasure or
  - the loss of a certain pleasure associated with some earthly object toward which we are particularly inclined (even the esteem of other human beings would count as an earthly object here)

- Thus deals with thoughts but presupposes a stimulation of the concupiscible or irascible part (the “matter” for the vice of sadness)
- Once frustrated, leads to a hatred of rejection of pleasure(s)
- Thoughts of this type stand opposed to the hopes one had; the things in which one took pleasure (or expected to take pleasure) are no more.
- The image of one’s suffering or one’s failure is brought before the mind during the time of prayer→crushes prayer by images of oneself or one’s loved one’s suffering the loss of earthly things and worldly benefits

All impure thoughts bind the mind either by concupiscibility, irascibility, or sadness.

#### Demonic sadness

- can follow
  - after avarice due to inordinate obsession with one’s possessions
  - after anger when one fails to secure retribution or retribution
- can accompany or lead on to *akēdia* (this is especially true when anger has failed to achieve its goal of retribution)

#### Cure:

- Prayer is effective against sadness and discouragement, turning our attention from ourselves (our frustration with what we have failed to achieve) to hope in God.
  - Giving thanks, even in misfortune, is a form of prayer that is especially effective in combating (demonic) sadness.
  - Tears shed before God can overcome (demonic) sadness
- Offering hospitality is also effective, turning our attention from ourselves and our needs (our concern with our losses) to others and their needs.

Thoughts of sadness/dishonor can be used to overcome vainglory

#### **Akedia**

- ἀκηδία (*akēdia*; no exact word available for this in English).
  - It refers to a despair, discouragement or loss of hope, often but not always accompanied by sadness or grieving, which drains one's energy and weakens one's resolve, making being alone seem unbearable and prayer and even faith in God seem impossible.
  - It is a consequence of wrongly ordered desires and itself increases the force of disordered desires and reasonings within the weakened soul.
  - It is conventionally translated "**sloth**," although this largely misses the meaning of the Greek word, which is more about debilitating spiritual weariness than about laziness. (see *Praktikos* 27-29).
- Diverts our attention to thoughts of other people and places that seem pleasant, leading to a regret that makes one unstable and unproductive and disperses one’s energy and one’s efforts.
  - Involves a desire/longing for what is not
    - One thinks with longing of one’s former life and one’s close relations
    - One may experience distraction from regular thoughts of hunger and in awaiting the next meal
- Hatred of one’s current place and work/trade; sense that time passes too slowly

- Rooted in anger/irascibility over what is present → One may take offence more readily at other's conduct
- Dissatisfied with the work one has, one wants a trade which is easier and more productive
- Desire to leave one's place (cell) and divert oneself with a multitude of other people; these exertions exhaust the soul so that drowsiness and intermittent sleep follow.
  - Instead of finding benefit in solitude, one is overcome by a sense of the oppressiveness of solitude and the monotony of one's work (see *8 Thoughts* 6.14-15).
  - One is overcome by a sense of the longness of life and the burdens of the ascetic life and its practice
    - Can make psalmody at morning prayer seem burdensome; overcome by lassitude one will not say the words of the prayer
    - Attacks with particular severity from the fourth hour (i.e. 10 am) to the eighth hour (i.e. 2 pm), hence called "the noonday demon"
- Loosens the tension of the soul, relaxing it so that it does not resist temptations nobly → what can normally be resisted becomes an inordinate and unbearable temptation
- Makes one torpid and captive to lower thoughts and thus blind to contemplation so that one cannot gain strength from contemplation of the light of the Holy Trinity
- *Akēdia* is rooted in and closely associated with the bodily drives (which are also possessed by animals) but also depends upon reasonings and rational thoughts which are peculiar to humans
  - Thoughts of anger (e.g. depicting oneself fighting with someone, with a consequent rousing of the irascible part) can lead on to *akēdia*.
  - Thoughts of fornication (with a consequent rousing of the concupiscible part) may prepare the ground for *akēdia* by relaxing the soul and overcoming its vigilance.
  - This contrasts with sadness, vainglory and pride, (which are rooted only or principally in thoughts)
    - Sadness often accompanies *akēdia*.
- Cure:
  - Persevering in one's labors (receiving a perseverance that comes from heaven)
    - persevering in one's ascetic efforts, e.g.
      - by directing one's thoughts, on rising from bed, immediately upward to heavenly matters ("thoughts of light") to stimulate vigilance and watchfulness
      - by reading the Psalms in a low rhythmic voice
      - by continuing to meditate upon the Cross and death and judgment until one is moved to tears in compunction and contrition (just as *akēdia* drives away tears, so also tears drive away *akēdia*)
    - persevering in manual labor
    - executing all tasks with great attention
    - setting oneself a measure of work and not letting up until the work is completed
  - Thanksgiving in prayer leads in time to receiving consolation from God and having a joy in the Lord which dissolves *akēdia* and leads to peace.

## Vainglory

- κενοδοξία (*kenodoxia*; "**vainglory**"=desire for and taking pleasure or delight in receiving praise or enjoying a good reputation or the respect of others.
  - Since it involves self-aggrandizement, it is closely associated with pride and, somewhat less directly, with love of money insofar as money can provide those things that will make one seem respectable and worthy of being esteemed or favorably regarded.
    - A root and cause of secondary sins like conceit and slander.) (see pp. 19-20)

### Desire to have/display what will make one esteemed in the eyes of other human beings

- Delighting in popularity and esteem (hoping to gain a reputation for being good, virtuous, industrious, wise, experienced, etc.)
- Delight in fine clothes
- Desire for privilege→obsequiousness
- Making a public show of one's wealth and virtuous works/efforts (see *Pr.* 13 for examples), often in a way that excites the opposition of others
  - Desire to possess riches in order to make donations to the poor
- Often involves a fantasizing about social encounters in which one's goodness is revealed or recognized.

Can follow *akedia*, strengthening in opposition to God the soul that through *akēdia* has grown slack.

Leads on to and is closely associated with pride.

May also lead on to fornication.

Grows alongside the virtues while eradicating their power and annihilating their reward (since one has already been rewarded by human esteem)

Hard to get rid of, since whatever one might do might lead to vainglory.

## Pride

- ὑπερηφανία (*hyperēphania*; sometimes translated "**pride**", but what it really refers to is an arrogance that disdains all others, God included.
  - It is therefore more nearly a consequence of pride rather than being identical with pride, although the two are always closely related; think, for example, of the first sin in which pride leads to arrogant disdain of God's command or of the Pharisee's pride--his inflated conception of himself and his merits--which leads to his arrogant disdain for the tax-collector) (see p. 20 with the discussion of the connections between certain of the eight reasonings there).

Not being willing to depend upon or accept things from others, but desires and labors to obtain worldly honor, while attributing any successes to themselves and their own efforts and not to God (see *Eulogios* 31.33; *8 Thoughts* 8.5,12; *Praktikos* 14,33; on original pride as the origin of evil patterns of thought which originate in thought, see *Reflections* 44, 49; *Exh.* 1.6).

Such a person

- exalts himself (presumption, arrogance and boasting),
- wishes no one to be honored above him,



- is ungrateful for what he or she has received,
- cannot confess one's faults and weaknesses, and
- cannot bear contempt or being denied.

Like vainglory, is possible (and even more dangerous) as one advances in the Christian life. When the mind is disordered by pride, it lacks stability and may oscillate between better states and fear, anxiety and cowardice (*8 Thoughts* 8.10).

When the proud mind fails to gain the esteem of others, it is overwhelmed by sadness (*Mn.* 61)

#### Cure:

- Humility (bearing dishonor and contempt with humility; having compunction that leads to humility; having love that leads to humility, since “[l]ove has nothing of its own apart from God [*Eulogios* 21.23]): “If you measure yourself by the lowest measure, you will not compare your measure to another. The person who discloses the weakness of his soul by his lamentations will not hold a high opinion of the ascetic labors he undertakes for himself, nor will he give his attention to the thoughts of others; rather such a person must find assurance in a different way.” (*Eulogios* 3.4)
  - Humility must be accompanied by “the abandonment of lust for power and superiority”
- Intense prayer and refusal to say or do anything that attracts esteem can help to weaken pride.

### **The Transmission of Eight Evil Reasonings to the Latin West and Their Transformation into the Seven Deadly Sins**

This Greek list was taken over and adapted by Latin writers in the West (particularly John Cassian) to create the list of the **seven deadly sins** (the root sins which are fatal to spiritual progress) which one finds in Gregory the Great (540-604) and later Latin writers:

Some changes from the Greek list:

- "Inopportune grief" (= #5 in the Greek list) is dropped from the list.
- "Vainglory" (= #7 in the Greek list) is treated as a species of "pride" (#8 in the Greek list) and is therefore no longer listed as a separate category.
- "Envy" is spun off as a separate category distinguishable from anger (= #4 in the Greek list).
- "Love of money" (= #3 in the Greek list) is broadened into "covetousness."

The final Latin list of the "seven deadly sins" is therefore as follows:

- (1) pride (*superbia* "arrogance" = #8 in the Greek list. From Augustine onward, this is seen as the preeminent sin, which gives rise to all other sins and nurtures them, while being the chief obstacle to repentance and dependence upon God and thus the enemy of saving faith);
- (2) covetousness (= #3 in the Greek list, but appropriately broadened beyond just money or riches);
- (3) lust (= #2 in the Greek list, but expresses more clearly that one is focused upon inordinate or illicit sexual desire);

- (4) anger (= #4 in the Greek list, but more narrowly focused on anger and irascibility--envy is spun off as a separate entry=[6] below);
- (5) gluttony (= #1 in the Greek list);
- (6) envy (an addition to the list, separated from the anger to which, in any case, it is often practically joined);
- (7) sloth (= #6 in the Greek list).