

Evagrius on Lust and Fornication

Picturing of attractive, youthful bodies and the promise of pleasure without commitment or consequence (*Eul* 13.12).

What one assents to in the mind (giving in to the flattery and pleasing softness of pleasures, which encourage relaxation and unformed assent: *Eul*. 21.22) will in time be acted out bodily (*Eul*. 18.19)

- Typical features of this temptation:
 - Hold on to this temptation and savor the pleasure of it in your mind (*Eul*. 21.23)—what could be wrong with just thinking about something? After all you are not acting on it, so nothing is happening and nobody is getting hurt.
 - You do not have the strength within you to resist, so it is just a matter of time before you give in (so why hold out?) (*Eul*. 21.22)

What is not seen during temptation is the way that all of this depletes real love, substituting

- private, self-focused activities focused on hidden access to satisfaction with
- three-dimensional relationships focused outwardly on the happiness and well-being of the other person

This latter kind of love (which comes from God) produces humility, overthrowing the pride of the false self (*Eul*. 22.23), and produces a single-minded focus on God, which is chastity (*Vic*. 2).

- Humility and chastity represent an abandonment of the desire to establish power and superiority by dominating and using others (*Exh*. 1.6)

Dreams are an indicator of what is going beneath the ground of one's waking, conscious life (*Th*. 29), so can be useful in spiritual direction.

Cure

Since lust has a bodily component, this must be addressed in part with discipline of the body.

- More particularly, since negligent and disordered approaches to food and the pleasures of food (gluttony) often precede negligent and disordered approaches to the body and bodily pleasure, one needs to look in a holistic way at what is going on.
- Restoring moderation/cutting back on food and drink may take some of the force away from disordered bodily desires, which makes the force of temptation less intense and less likely to quickly overwhelm the mind.
- The thoughts need to be redirected away from fixation on the immediacy of pleasure to regret for one's sinfulness (which moves one to repentance). This stirs up a desire to return to God, which in time replaces the hunger for pleasant foods with a hunger for prayer (*Eul*. 18.19).