

Evagrius on Pride

Not being willing to depend upon or accept things from others (*Foundations* 4), while attributing any successes to themselves and their own efforts and not to God (see *Eulogios* 31.33; *Vices*, prol.; *8 Thoughts* 8.5,12; *Praktikos* 14,33; *Monks* 61-62), representing oneself alone as the giver of good things (*Eulogios* 24.25; 31.33; *Vices*, prol.).

- On original pride (first pride/corrupt self-love) as the origin of evil patterns of thought which originate in the mind through the use of concepts, see *Reflections* 44, 49; *Exh.* 1.6). In *Vices* 9, pride is similarly represented as a fundamental stance of insolent opposition to God.

In his quest for esteem, 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 (see *Eulogios* 3.3; 24.25): "The soul of a proud person mounts a great height, and casts him down from there into the abyss" (*8 Thoughts* 8.3).

- 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; *Thoughts* 23), showing that it lacks the strength and self-sufficiency it claims to have apart from God. Cf. *8 Thoughts* 8.4: "the person who has withdrawn from God quickly falls."

When the proud mind fails to gain the esteem of others, it is overwhelmed by sadness (*Mn.* 61). Sadness gives rise to another form of pride which is much less obvious and is at first much harder to discern, but is also a sin and causes us to deteriorate away from God by increasing irrationality and destructiveness.

- When a person is unhappy with themselves and their position in life, their speech becomes very dark and has an underlying, partly concealed bitterness. They speak rather easily and quickly of their dissatisfaction with others and the failings of others (*Praktikos* 14), which they expect the hearer to immediately see and acknowledge. The hearer is thus expected to support and join in with the speaker in putting the other person(s) down and justifying the speaker's vision of how things are or ought to be (*must* be). So, under the form of seeking redress for wrongs or slights unjustly suffered, the speaker is able to use the hearer to expand the speaker's human base of support. By this means, the speaker can create negative horizontal social pressure to get his or her way, hoping eventually to arrive at a position that is more appropriate to him or her and where he or she will be better appreciated.
- Persons who are unhappy and are not able to gain the things they desire will work these issues out, not within themselves, but in their social relationships. In doing this, they feel quite confident that they understand their situation and that their claims are just, but do not see that they are using other people for a personal end and that dismissal of others often later leads on to attacks upon and the destruction of others.

- The ultimate destruction of others is pride's most characteristic effect. When our personal concerns cause us to grow cold to the love of others and we are quick to accuse others and press our claims against them, it becomes easier to attack or diminish others. As time goes on, we become complacent about destroying God's creatures or even derive some satisfaction from this.

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" (*Eulogios* 3.4)

- 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" and an acknowledgement of God (*Vices* 9; *8 Thoughts* 8.12; *Praktikos* prol.2; 33).
- Intense prayer, bearing dishonor with humility (*Eulogios* 3.4), remembering one's sins with humility and compunction (*Eulogios* 14.14; *Praktikos* 57) and refusal to say or do anything that attracts esteem or defends one's own position can help to weaken pride (*Thoughts* 14).