

Moral Psychology

Session 7b
Theophan -- Spiritual Warfare

Positive Spiritual Task

- Main task of remembering God's presence in all daily events.
- Why is this difficult?
- Mystical metaphor of God as lover.

Spiritual Warfare

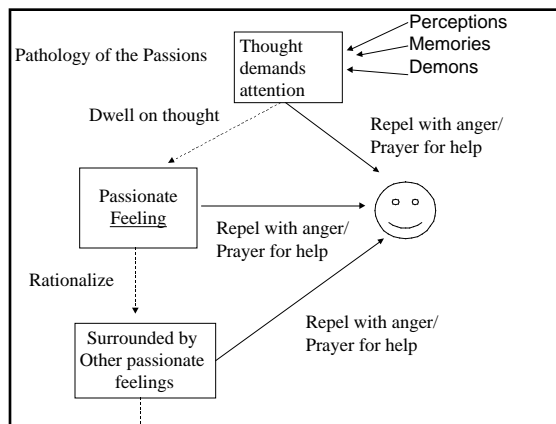
- As a name for experience
 - People who do self-examination, inner work find they encounter difficulties
 - Some of it feels like (makes sense on the model of) dealing with a hostile (external?) force
- As theological theory
 - Idea that temptation sometimes involves both an internal (psychological) component and malicious agency (demons).

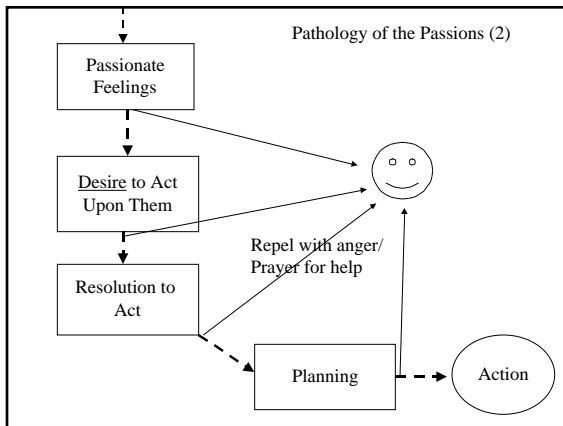
Basic Model of Warfare

- Tempting thoughts (ones that can lead us astray) arrive from whatever source:
 - Things we perceive
 - Memories and other inner causes
 - Demons
- Parts of us respond to them
- Must be resisted when they arise
- Possible other measures
 - Avoiding the triggers
 - Active work against the parts of us that respond to them.

Stages of the Passions

- An object demands our attention, seems to call for a passionate response (provocation)
- You allow your attention to dwell on the thing, and the response forms within you (passionate feeling)
- Other passionate feelings -- e.g., rationalizations--surround it
- A passionate desire to respond forms
- Inner resolution to act
- Planning of how to carry it out
- Action





Key Ideas in Spiritual Warfare

- There are stages to temptation
- Easier to combat temptation at the earlier stages, because it is less a part of you
- Requires VIGILANCE -- I.e., attentiveness to catching “provocations” and passionate thoughts before they progress. (Compare Stoics!)
- Requires right techniques for combatting passions

Techniques of Warfare

- Precondition of Vigilance
- Repelling passionate thoughts/feelings/desires with anger (thumos!)
- Prayer for help. (Basic prayer is “help me”!)
- “Active warfare” -- I.e., making yourself do the opposite of your principal passion

Therapeutic Questions

- Is it always better to repel provocations with *thumos*?
- Alternative of using them--or our passionate response to them--as clues to where inner work is needed.
- Not clear there is a cut and dried answer--requires discernment of the situation. (Role of spiritual director, *starets*.)