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PHILIP ROUSSEAU

concern the ascetic (work and prayer) but also to the areas of personality that become engaged in the activity we gain a much stronger impression of the single purpose, of the complete identification of the individual, body and soul, in every aspect of ascetic endeavour.¹

Cassian's descriptions of prayer, especially in the *Conferences*, do much to draw these threads together. When he discusses prayer in the context of a relation between interior and exterior, he presents it very rarely as an inward-looking process. The closeness to God that prayer effects is not interpreted as a withdrawal, either from bodily experience or from the companionship of men: it is more an ascent of the spirit. Even in what appear to be ecstatic passages, this is made clear: 'Ita mens quoque nostra si accedentibus vitiis curisque mundanis adgravata non fuerit noxiae libidinis umore corrupta, velut naturali puritatis suae beneficio sublevata levissimo spiritualis meditationis adflatu sublimabitur ad superna'.² Moreover, the whole process of schooling in prayer is not only intensely energetic, but also dependent on immense and protracted labour. Cassian is most insistent on the active quality of the human mind: 'Haec igitur pro condicione naturae numquam potest otiosa consistere, sed necesse est eam . . . propria mobilitate discurrere et per omnia volitare, donec longo exercitio usuque adsuefacta diuturno, quo vos in cassum dicitis laborare, experiatur et discat quas memoriae suae materias debeat praeparare, erga quas circumagat indefessos volatus et inmorandi robur adquirat, et ita praevaleat adversas inimici suggestiones quibus distrahebatur extrudere atque in illo quem desiderat statu et qualitate durare'.³ Cassian repeats an earlier assertion, that men have the power to control this movement of the mind: 'quamobrem sicut in illis est instigationis copia, ita in nobis virtus respuendi sive adquiescendi libertas est adtributa'.⁴

This emphasis on discipline is made with reference to every aspect of the ascetic life, every activity, every stage of development. Contemplation itself has a clear function in the vigorous bid of the ascetic for sanctity and perfection: it is defined at first as a careful fixing of the attention upon what Cassian calls the 'scopos' of the monastic life. His explanation of 'scopos' has at first sight an interior quality: 'finis quidem nostrae professionis ut diximus regnum dei seu regnum caelorum est, destinatio vero, id est scopos, puritas cordis, sine qua ad illum finem impossibile est quempiam pervenire'.⁵ Yet 'regnum dei', and even 'regnum caelorum', have an equally interior ring about them, recalling the familiar emphasis of Christ, 'regnum dei intra vos est'. This Cassian does in a later sentence: 'intra vos vero nihil aliud esse potest quam scientia aut ignoratio veritatis et vel vitiorum amicitia vel virtutum, per quae aut diabolo aut Christo

¹ See Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano*, 29.

² *Con.*, ix. 4.

³ *Con.*, vii. 4.

⁴ *Con.*, vii. 8, recalling *Con.*, i. 17. For the link with Evagrius, see Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano*, 94.

⁵ *Con.*, i. 4.



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concern the poetic (work and prayer), but also to the state of personality that becomes engaged in the activity we gain a much stronger impression of the single purpose of the complete identification of the individual body and mind in every aspect of poetic activity.

Cassirer's description of prayer, especially in the *Language of Man*, is to draw these things together. When he discusses prayer in the context of a relation between interior and exterior, he presents it very rarely as an inward-looking process. The element to God that prayer offers is not depicted as a withdrawal, either from worldly experience or from the community of man; it is more an aspect of the spiritual bond in which spirit to become present, this is made clear. In many passages Cassirer's identification with everyday mental activities and their activities in human nature contrasts with naturalistic positions and scientific reductionism. Spirituality is not understood as an isolated activity, but rather, the whole process of schooling in prayer is not only internally directed, but also dependent on human and practical labor. Cassirer is most insistent on the active quality of the human mind. He writes that conditions of prayer, language, social relations, and prayer are all interconnected. People maintain themselves or preserve themselves, does prayer, as a religious activity, determine the way in which they relate to the world? Cassirer is clear that prayer is not merely a private activity, but that it is an activity that is directed towards the world. He writes that prayer is not merely a private activity, but that it is an activity that is directed towards the world. He writes that prayer is not merely a private activity, but that it is an activity that is directed towards the world.

The emphasis on direction is made with reference to every aspect of the poetic life, every activity, every stage of development. Consequently, the poet's activity is not limited to the sphere of the sacred for eternity and perfection; it is defined as first as a creative activity in the temporal world, and then as a creative activity in the eternal world. The explanation of what Cassirer calls the "poetic" of the monistic life. The explanation of "poetic" is not only an aesthetic quality; this quality is not only aesthetic, but also a religious quality. The poet's activity is not only aesthetic, but also a religious quality. The poet's activity is not only aesthetic, but also a religious quality. The poet's activity is not only aesthetic, but also a religious quality.

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