

## APATHEIA

# THE SPIRITUAL ADDICTION TO THE LOVE OF GOD

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### **Abstract**

There were numerous and various approaches, descriptions and definitions of the spiritual state of apatheia in the philosophical and spiritual tradition of the humanity along the centuries. In this short study I will try to describe only some aspect of the spiritual state of apatheia or dispassion of the soul, from the perspective of some sources of the Semitic and Syrian Christian spirituality, where I have found the metaphorical expressions and elements which are fitting with the thematic of this conference, the problem of addiction. This doesn't mean that I will not refer to the common Greek-Roman philosophical ground or to other definitions from the patristic and philokalic tradition, but I will chose from these sources especially the references in the antecedent continuity with our proposed thematic, describing apatheia in relationship with the grace and love of God understood as loving Person revealed in history, and as the fruit and the producer of love in soul.

*Keywords:* apatheia, addiction, love of God, philosophical, patristic approach

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### **1. Introduction**

Historically apatheia has been the ideal of Gnostic philosophy which has deeply influenced the Christian thinkers and fathers from the first centuries towards its acceptance, but was also sketched in Old Testament as have revealed Philo the Alexandrian and Gregory of Nyssa in theirs' *De Vita Moisi*. Apatheia has been supposed by the original status and the divine commandment given to the original man in Eden, created by God in His image and likeness. The first Christians borrowed this term from stoic Greek and Roman philosophy, where this was designating the general behaviour of the true stoic wise man, unruffled of any passions and trouble of life. Seneca has written describing this state: "What interdict us to live a happy life, to put our soul free and heightened and strengthened in sure ground, without fear, without corruption?" And yet "if must to believe that neither great hate, neither tribulation must affect the soul of the wise, what it is that of not all this affection we are free?" Reaching at apatheia was for stoics also an aim for their ascetic life. In *Manual* of Epictet we are reading this advice: "Begin with small things: be renouncing at your oil? Be pouring down your

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wine? Say yourself: This is the price for buying *apatheia*, at this price *ataraxia*.” [1]

As we can see, for the first stoics *apatheia* has had more the meaning of unruffled, of total lack of trouble in the soul, of liberation of soul from passions, without to describe a special ascetical practice or to say how exactly this happens. *Apatheia* for stoics and Neoplatonic philosophy was embracing principally this negative aspect of the complete lack of all passions from soul. Philo the Alexandrian, who was influenced by stoic philosophy, is stressing this aspect in his commentary at the life of Moses. Moses in his chanting is praising God for He cast in the Red Sea the horses and the knight, which means the four passions and the sinful mind that they were caring. The *apatheia* for Philo is exactly this lack of passions and sinful mind without to put something in their place after they were cast down [1].

In the same way will be understood *apatheia* at Plotin in third century. He put *apatheia* in relationship with the likeness of God which is obtained when the soul is working in total conformity with the *nous*. For this, man must renounce not only “at all violent sentiments, hate, shame desires, pleasure of bodily love, afraid, etc., but even at what is beautiful he must not to be attach” [2].

Even so we cannot deduce from it that for the philosophers, *apatheia* is an inhuman insensibility, but “a state in which the sage has succeeded in freeing himself from exterior influences by being able to dominate them” [3]. A similar conception we find at Theodoret of Cyr [P.G. 83, 952 B], who is following Aristotle. He is regarding the passions as neutral impulses neither good nor bad in themselves, but becoming such according to the use that man makes of them and therefore, for Aristotle the passions are necessary and useful part of human nature, and *apatheia* is understood as a redirection of the passions, not as a total elimination of them [4].

From all this short definitions we will conclude how much different is the Christian *apatheia* from that of pagan philosophy, its principal determinant factors being its close relationship with the grace brought to humanity by Christ, and a complete different horizon toward it is tending, that of resurrection of body and of life eternal. These two factors, as we will see, are changing completely the essence of *apatheia* in Christianity, in sense that it is a result of personal charismatic and communitarian relationship of an individual man with Christ.

## **2. *Apatheia* – the soul’s unity in the love of God**

Influences of the stoic concept of *apatheia* we find at the first Christians writers and apologists who were associating the ideal of saint life of Christians with that of the Gnostic philosophers. At Clement of Alexandria, this model or ideal of the Christian gnostic who in his fulfilment is achieving *apatheia*, has in his deepest essence the Christian *agapis* as the source of all the efforts towards virtues and as a source of complete harmony of the soul with all the creation. Clement is speaking about God not in philosophical terms, but stressing the personalistic aspect, as “the Friend to whom he (the Gnostic) belongs according to Him by the habit of askesis,

being happy in the possession of this good thing, and this is why he (the soul) cannot be unlike the Master in Apatheia [3, p. 274].

In Neoplatonic philosophy, as we have seen, the renouncing of man to all the pleasures of life, and to all the sensible things, even at his own ration, is for obtaining the unifying with the One Good, with the unitary principle of all creation. In Christianity this principle is a Person, exactly Christ, and this is why the Christian apatheia is a way of spiritual love with the most completely Person, Jesus Christ.

We can see that in Clement conception the man himself is able to realize the same state of apatheia as God, and this through the love of God and charity (agapis) in soul which in state of apatheia, without to annul the diverse tendencies of our good soul's desires can transcend and unify them in himself. The apatheia don't exclude the love, the charity, but is the result of love. To those who was saying that the gnostic must have no desire, because on the one hand if the desire is not present, the man is not completed and perfect, and on the other hand if is present the man can't be apathetic, because is tending towards that desire, Clement respond emphasizing the divine character of love as a loving intimacy which establishes gnostic in the unity of faith, without his having any further need of time or space: "...for gnosis achieves exercise, exercise then gives habit or accustoming, and this calming (katastasis) ends in apatheia" [3, p. 274]. Thus apatheia is compatible with the continuous transformation of human behaviour and nature, because if the man has reached at it, he is strengthened in this state being indissolubly unit in gnosis, having through it the understanding of the principal cause and the truth of whole creation in his soul.

At Origen, the doctrine about apatheia is not so developed. He describes the spiritual life as a succession of three stages that the soul must pass through progressively: first, learning virtue (*ethike*), next, adopting a right attitude to natural things (*physike*), then ascending to contemplation of God (*enoptike*). Apatheia is somewhere beginning with the second stage, and is named at Origen mortification of the body which is obtained gradually through "losing of violence of passions at the beginners of Christian life, and through exhausting them at the advanced ones who are fighting in fervour and receive more abundant Holy Spirit. At the perfect ones, the passions are completely extinguished being themselves without any sign of sin in their acts, words or thoughts"; their body is completely indifferent at the appeal of passions because they destroyed in their self the flesh's desires and have become like children, alien for passions of bodily love [P.G., 14, 1102].

It was through influences of writings of Origen and through the presences of Evagrius Ponticus in the desert of Sketis in Egypt that this ideal of apatheia was developed completely and was integrated in the general doctrine of Christian tradition. Without to neglect the high stage of spiritual life, that means the contemplation of Divinity or *thelogia*, the principal goal of Evagrian spirituality is to teach the monk how to obtain in his soul apatheia. Apatheia is for Evagrius the scope of the first stage of spiritual life named at him not *ethike* as in Origen, but *praktike*.

In *Praktikos* Evagrius is pointing out that without this horizon, the askesis and devotional exercises would be only a self-destruction of body. The ascetic efforts of monk are because he is tending through it to reach a state of stillness, of tranquillity

of the soul. For Evagrius, as he resume in the prologue of the *Praktikos*, “apatheia gives birth to love, love is the door of natural knowledge which leads to Theology and final bliss”. The necessity of apatheia is asked by Evagrius because, in his conception without apatheia the soul cannot reach at spiritual love, at agape, which is the ‘true goal of praktike’ [5]. The actual state of the soul is one of weakness and ill because of the original sin, and through the struggle to get virtues in our proper life, which is the content of praktike, we vindicate our soul and through it also our body. A soul subject to passions and sins is diseased and ill, and through apatheia it is reaching at a state of health and spiritual power to work itself more effectively for his redeeming. The state of apatheia is getting in soul after it conquer all his passions and gain instead of them the virtues corresponding to each kind of them. The struggle against the sins and to obtain the virtues is resulting therefore in apatheia and in this struggle the soul is enlightening himself more and more.

Evagrius is distinguishing more stage of apatheia. There is an imperfect apatheia which begin even in time of praktike in some measure and is manifested clearer in time of physike, and is characterized through limpidity of the eye of mind [*Oraison* 27, also 20-26]; and when the *nous* begins to see its own light and remains still and unmoved before the dreams of the night and serene when it beholds things going outside itself [*Praktikos* 64, *Gnostikos* II, 35]. The prayer also in this stage is without distraction and untroubled from the part of world’s things [*Oraison* 63, 65, 67]. In this stage “the soul can now oppose the demons not just by struggling, but by its own ability to understand them and their ways” because he is viewing all the time “the principles of the war with the demons, and easily comprehend their manoeuvres“ [6].

This seeing of the principles or *logoi* of creation at which the soul is reaching, provide him indeed a better understanding of all creation, a harmonization of his spiritual powers with that of the creatural order, in his state of *gnosis* or *theoria*, the soul being able to be his proper physician and also for others, knowing their inner struggle with the demons who are the cause of all disease of soul and body. This is why the apatheia was reclaimed by all the ascetic fathers of the desert as the state of normal health of the soul capable to help and heal himself and others. Further, on the basis of this imperfect apatheia, the soul can advance through this contemplation of *logoi* of creation at more and more stillness in prayer and knowledge, until it will reach a state of *nous* which is the truly natural state of soul. “The soul is made naturally for prayer and the prayer fortifies and purifies the mind for the struggle with the demons” [*Praktikos* 49]. There is a reciprocal causality between prayer and apatheia, the soul, in Evagrius view, reaching effectively at the state of perfect apatheia when he is praying continuously, all the time to God. He says: “The state of prayer is an impassibly habit which snatches up the soul that loves wisdom to the intellectual heights by a most sublime love” [*Oraison* 53, 14]. Thus in the state of pure prayer and perfect apatheia, the soul, the mind is what it contemplates, that means the contemplation of Trinity. He has passed from contemplation of the distinct and multiple things or *logoi* of the world at the contemplation of the Holy Trinity in which all the distinctions are overcome, the mind receiving an essential knowledge and being unified with his known, with

God [*Gnostikos* IV. 77] and thus is fulfilled the original commandment given to the man in Paradise, to be indeed in image and in likeness of God, unified with God in contemplation of the *logoi* of the trees of Paradise and the tree of life.

### **3. Apatheia – the spiritual addiction to the love of God**

It is another patristic source, that of the Spiritual Homilies of Saint Macarius the Egyptian, that is providing another more intuitive and realistic description and understanding of the spiritual state of *apatheia* in Christian tradition, as the relationship of and inhabitation in the soul of the personal love of God – Jesus Christ. In the prologue of his Great Letter, referring to the *apatheia* as to the inhabitation of the passionless Lord in the divine tabernacle of the human body, Pseudo Macarius gives some mystagogical insights into the Semitic and Syrian understanding of *apatheia* in relationship with the Merkhaba throne of the divine glory. He emphasizes the necessity of integrated and reciprocal divine and human presence, so that the perfect man not only to be in God, but also God to be in him (John 15.5), “for it is necessary that a man of God should also live in the divine tabernacle and should place his abode on the holy mountain of the most pure divinity in order that God not only completely surrounds him, but that he be surrounded by God’s glory, which never allows him to be brought under the power of the darkness of passions” [7]. It is the presence of the divine grace or of the uncreated divine energies manifested as the God’s glory - Shekinah, which are making active and efficient the presence of the Lord, transmitting in soul the passionless qualities of the Lord: “For the Saviour inhabits the worthy ones by the grace of sanctification and their state of *apatheia*, so that, as the Lord is passionless, so also those who have received him he would free from passions so as to be no longer agitated and tossed about on all sides by every wind” [7].

This inhabitation of the passionless Lord into the soul permits the understanding of the *apatheia* not only as the soul’s state of becoming ‘dispassionate’, i.e., by destroying the attachments to the inordinate desires called ‘passions’, but rather as the spiritual state of Lord’s mastering and guiding of the soul’s irascible and concupiscible powers, activities and actions. And it is in this regard that Saint Macarius completes the Philonian and platonic understanding of the *apatheia*, replacing the platonic *nous* with the incarnated and pneumatic Lord Jesus Christ as the carrier, rider, guide, driver and leader of the four horses of virtues of the soul’s chariot. In his first spiritual Homily, making an allegorical interpretation of the vision written down by the Prophet Ezekiel (1.4-2.1), Saint Macarius is describing, in fact, the *apatheia* state of the soul realized through the pneumatic presence of the Jesus Christ as the ruler of the soul’s Merkhaba throne and chariot of virtues: “Thus the soul is completely illumined with the unspeakable beauty of the glory of the light of the face of Christ and is perfectly made a participator of the Holy Spirit. It is privileged to be the dwelling-place and the throne of God, all eye, all light, all face, all glory and all spirit, made so by Christ who drives, guides, carries, and supports the soul about and adorns and decorates the soul with his spiritual beauty. For Scripture says, ‘There was the hand of a man

under the Cherubim' and this is why Christ is the one who is carried by the soul and still directs it in the way" [7, p. 38].

Thus, the soul is made a participator of the Holy Spirit and in this quality he is sharing the real state of apatheia, Saint Macarius showing in the next paragraphs of the same Homily the effectiveness of the illuminative work of the Spirit upon the soul as referring to its spiritual health recovery, and comparing Holy Spirit's redemptive work with that of the salt upon the meat: "Just as the eyes are the light of the body and when the eyes are healthy and sound, then the whole body is enlightened, so also on the contrary, if anything should happen to render the eyes darkened, then the whole body is in darkness [...] If indeed the soul takes refuge in God, believes and seeks the salt of life, which is the good and human-loving Spirit, then the heavenly salt comes and kills those ugly worms. The Spirit takes away the awful stench and cleanses the soul by the strength of his salt. Thus the soul *is brought back to health and freed from its wounds* by the true salt in order again to be useful and ordered to serve the Heavenly Lord. That is why even in the Law, God uses this example when he ordered that all sacrifices be salted with salt (Luke 2.2, 13)." [7, p. 39-40]

Saint Macarius' reference to the recovered state of spiritual health through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is described in the classical theological terms of *image and likeness* with God, as an addiction state to the Holy Spirit intermediated by the divine light: "Contrariwise the soul that believes in God and has been freed of the sordidness of sin is lifted through death out of the life of darkness once the soul has accepted the light of the Holy Spirit as its life. By that means it has come to life and *spends its life in the Spirit forever after*, because it *is now held captive by the divine light*. The soul is neither by nature divine nor by nature part of the darkness of wickedness, but is a creature, intellectual, beautiful, unique, and admirable. It is a *beautiful likeness and image of God*. Into that likeness the wickedness of the passions of the dark world entered through the fall." [7, p. 41]

Saint Macarius describes a complex experiential phenomenology of the spiritual addiction and ascetic life grounded in this state of apatheia ruled out by the active presence of Christ as the carrier and driver of the soul's chariot of virtues. The active manifestation of the "lamp of grace" burning intensely in the soul as the real and divine *nous*, make the soul '*as though intoxicated by the love of God*', and also, when this fire of the Holy Spirit is not burning intensely, the soul enjoys yet the hidden presence and spiritual assistance of the grace" [7, p. 81]. This results in a variety of states and degrees of the clarity of mind and purity of thoughts produced by the variation of the grace intensity manifested in the soul's temple, which 'brake through the middle wall' or the catapeteasma of the temple, permitting a deeper and harmonious spiritual knowledge of the material world behind this wall. The sin and the passions are "like a certain dark power that hangs over and forms a screen like a thick column of air, even though the lamp is always burning and giving off light in spite of the veil that threatens the light. Take the man who admits that he is not perfect nor completely free from sin. He says that the middle wall of partition has been broken and knocked down and yet in a certain area it has not completely been broken down nor permanently. There are times when grace burns more brightly,

consoles and refurbishes more completely. Then at other times the grace subsides and is clouded over as grace is dispensed to man's advantage.” [7, p. 82]

We have here a mystagogical understanding of the soul, liberated and initiated in a deeper and deeper level of communion with God through the grace's pedagogy which helps finally the soul to gain a more complete knowledge and mastering of the reality. Thus the soul acquires a higher degree of apatheia through this appropriation and brighter manifestation of the grace, and this is equivalent to a greater degree of attachment or addiction to God through spiritual love, and to a greater detachment and mastering of the world through the clarity of the spirit brought by grace. Saint Macarius exemplifies this spiritual addiction in love to God with the virtue of theology or speaking about God which can't be practiced in the higher and elevated state of divine love: “Let us take the example of a man rich in grace. Always night and day he is on the highest level of perfection. He is free and pure, *always captivated and lifted high up*. Now, if such a man was constantly experiencing those marvellous things and they were always experientially present to him, he would not be able to preach the word or take on any work. He could not bear to listen to or take any interest in any affair, even if there was a need to do so in concern for himself or for tomorrow. He would only *sit in a corner lifted up and intoxicated*. As a result the perfect degree of grace is not given him so that he may be concerned with the care of his brethren and in ministering the word. Nevertheless, ‘the middle wall has been broken through’ (Ephesians 2.14) and death has been conquered.” [7, p. 82]

Saint Macarius continues in the Homily 50, 3, 4, the explanation of this mystical transformation of the inner powers of the soul in synergy with the grace. Using the parallel between the figures and shadows of the Old Testament and the true realities of the New One, Saint Macarius emphasizes the great spiritual power received by the new man restored through the New Covenant, the Cross (Crucifixion) and the coming of Christ. Through this salvation events the world has received “the outpouring and the intoxication of the Spirit”, and the man acquires and, in fact, shares with Christ in prayer, the power which destroys “the walls of evil that obstruct the mind”: “For when you shall raise the hands of your mind and your thoughts toward Heaven and you shall be bent on clinging to the Lord, Satan will be worsened by your thoughts. And, as the walls of Jericho fell by God's power, so also now the walls of evil that obstruct your mind and the cities of Satan and your enemies will be totally destroyed by God's power.” [7, p. 244-245] Thus, it is through prayer that the ascet is liberating himself more and more in the continuous synergy with Christ as the ruler and continuator of the state of apatheia, the thoughts becoming the principal and powerful weapons of the soul against the devils.

It is against the Messalians' agitated mode of prayer that Saint Macarius theorizes the art of prayer in the inner state of soul's peace or tranquillity, but from it we could understand the great importance of the ascetic struggle with the thoughts in preserving and developing the apatheia not only for the individual ascet, but also for the Christian community: “The true foundation of prayer is this: to be very vigilant over thoughts and to pray in much tranquillity and peace in order not to be a source of offense to others. For such a person, if he received God's grace,

will pray to the end in tranquillity and will edify many others much more.” [7, p. 76]

It is through prayer that the ascet actualizes all the time the presence of Christ in his mind and with His help is discerning and mastering the thoughts. In exposing this effort, Saint Macarius is referring to the specific state of *nepsis*, consecrated in the philokalic tradition, in close relationship with the spiritual status of addiction and “intoxication with the love of God” supposed, in his view, in the state of apatheia, because, as George Maloney indicates us, “this word [*nepsis*] in Greek comes from the verb *nēpho*, meaning not to be intoxicated. It refers to a state of being always sober and vigilant.” [7, note 27, p. 186] “A person ought to labour to concentrate on his thoughts. He must cut away all underlying matter that leads to evil thoughts, urging himself toward God. He should not allow his thoughts to control his will, but he needs to collect them whenever they wander off in all directions, discerning natural thoughts from those that are evil.” [7, p. 76] Thus, through the discernment of thoughts, the ascet is attaching or straying himself to the God or to the material world and to the devil, and this till the intensity of some sort of spiritual addiction to God or to the material world, Saint Macarius asking from the ascet, in order to master out this state of addiction, an attitude of “sober intoxication” [7, note 31, p. 187], or vigilant drunkenness with the love of God.

Saint Macarius avers about the danger, for the virtuous man gifted in plenitude with the grace, to fall again – if not observes this sobriety and vigilance – ‘into the very depths of sin’. He narrates the case of a deceived monk and implicitly demands that the ascet bring till the final scope the synergy with the grace through the charity to realize the complete metamorphosis and emigration of the soul into the heavenly realm and world described with the same metaphor of intoxication or addiction to the love of God: “There was a certain wise athlete ... so rich in grace that, as he prayed near me, he would be overwhelmed by compunction, for grace boiled up in him. [...] See how even one who had the gift of healing fell. You see how, before they arrive at the full measure of charity, they fall. For one who has reached charity is *captivated and intoxicated by it. He is immersed in it and held captive in another world*, as if he had no awareness of his own nature.” [7, p. 180-181]

This is why, to fulfil his spiritual metamorphosis the ascet must offer himself in complete obedience to God, accomplishing in a real sense the demand of God to hate his proper soul (Luke 14.26), although in the apatheia state, as it is described by Saint Macarius, the ascet is preserving the human natural soul’s powers of irascibility and desire. Their potentialization or maxim developing and orientation towards God are giving the possibility of full divine-human synergy: “He who subjugates his soul and is irate with the innate passions, is like one who has captured a city from his enemies. Such a person is deemed worthy to possess the good measure of the Spirit and is endowed by divine power with the pure man and transcends his very self. For such a one as this is made a participator of the divine nature (2 Peter 1.4) and made a son of God, receiving the heavenly stamp on his soul.” [7, p. 122]



The confuse attitude of the ascet in this imperative obedience to the grace, that means the refuse to submit himself absolutely to the grace, preserving some sort of attachment to the world or to his proper will and opinion, disqualifies completely the ascet from receiving the great gifts of the new life brought about by the presence of the Holy Spirit, leaving him in the slavery of the ‘materialist intoxication’: “For whatever a person seems to do by himself and whatever diligence he exerts and successful completion he brings about relying solely on his own powers, if he thinks he can effect a perfect work by himself without the help of the Spirit, he is totally in error. [...] Unless a person, who is swayed by passions, approaches God by denying the world, and believes with hope and patience that he will receive something good, yet different from his own nature (namely, what is the power of the Holy Spirit), and unless the Lord *drops down from above upon him divine life*, such a one will never experience true life. He will never recover from the *intoxication of materialism*. The illumination of the Spirit will never shine brightly upon his soul nor will it illumine him with a ‘holy day’. He will never be aroused from the deepest sleep of ignorance in order in this way truly to know God through God's power and the efficacy of grace.” [7, p. 158-159]

Saint Macarius associates to the apatheia a variety of spiritual states experienced by those inhabited, possessed and ruled out by Christ, describing the mystical action of the grace in their heart with the same language and metaphors expressing the spiritual ecstatic state of addiction to and through the love of God: “Those who ... have within themselves Christ, illuminating and bringing them rest, are guided in many and various ways by the Spirit. They are invisibly acted upon in the heart, in the spiritual tranquillity, by grace. [...] They are filled with joy and ineffable happiness. [...] Sometimes, *they are as if they have become intoxicated with a strong drink. They delight in the Spirit, being inebriated, namely, by the intoxication of the divine and spiritual mysteries.* [...] Sometimes they find themselves immersed in weeping and lamenting over the human race and in pouring out prayers on behalf of the whole human race of Adam. They shed tears and are overwhelmed by grief because *they are consumed by the love of the Spirit toward mankind*. At another time, *they are so enflamed by the Spirit with such joy and love* that, if it were possible, they would gather every human being into their very hearts, without distinguishing the bad and good. [...] At other times, in deepest silence and tranquillity, one reposes with no other attitude but one of *spiritual pleasure and ineffable rest* and wellbeing.” [7, p. 144-145]

Although Saint Macarius speaks so radically about this captivity of man by grace to the love of God, he emphasizes that the man preserves his freedom and capability to decide his spiritual orientation: “For such is humanity's nature, that *may be immersed in the depths of evil and be a slave to sin*, yet it can still turn to good. *One who is totally surrendered to the Holy Spirit and intoxicated with heavenly things* is also capable of turning to evil. Similarly, on the other hand, those who are *intoxicated with God*, even if they are full and dominated by the Holy Spirit, still are not bound by any necessity, but they possess free will to choose and do what pleases them in this life.” [7, p. 121-123]

#### 4. Conclusions

From this anthropological overview and description of the apatheia state in some spiritual writers from the early Christian literature, we can deduce both the importance and the outlines of the ascetical effort in acquiring the apatheia state, and the capital importance of grace in managing the soul's relationship of love to God or to the world, which reaches the intensity of some sort of addiction. From this perspective, we can conclude that the man can acquire the dispassionate state of his soul toward the worldly and sinfully passions being helped by the divine grace, which could makes him captive to the divine love, but respecting also his freedom and determinism. From a principia point of view, it is principally the modern individualism and autonomism which impedes the man to acquire his state of spiritual freedom, health and unaddiction to the sinful and destructive passions, because he prefers to keep himself into the powerlessness and incapacity of the narrow limits of the human physis refusing to enter in synergy with the divine grace through prayer and virtuous life.

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