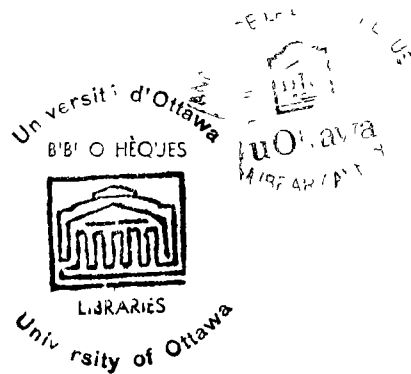


THE ~~PSYCHOLOGY~~ PSYCHOLOGY
OF JOHN CASSIAN

by Hans G. Furth

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of the University of Ottawa through the
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fillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

John Cassian is an early Christian writer, practically a contemporary of the great St. Augustine who lived 354 A.D. - 430 A.D. Cassian spent about twenty years among the monks in the East, particularly in Egypt, where the monks had come to be known as the fathers of the desert. Certain historical events brought him later to Rome and Marseilles where he founded two famous monasteries, one for men and one for women. For the benefit of his contemporaries who at that time began to show an increasing interest in the monastic life, he published between 415 and 430 the two works which form the object of the present study; first, De Institutis Coenobiorum, The Institutes of Cenobites, i.e. monks living in a community; and shortly afterwards Collationes XXIV, Twenty-four Conferences. Both works claim to picture the real life of the monks as Cassian saw it in the Egyptian deserts.

These two works exerted a tremendous influence. This is primarily due to the fact that St. Benedict, the great law-giver of Western monasticism, took incomparably more from Cassian than from any other writer, the bible excepted¹. His express wish, stated in his rule², that

1. M. Olphe-Galliard, "Jean Cassien" in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique, Vol. 2, Col. 268.

2. Regula S. Benedicti, cap. 42.

Cassian's work should be read to the monks after their small evening meal is the reason why eventually the meal itself came to be called after the title of the book. And even today in many European languages, collation has the recognized meaning of a light repast; an indirect proof of the influence of the work under consideration.

Every writer on Cassian acknowledges that the latter's works were read, approved of and quoted as an authority in monastic and moral matters throughout the centuries. Henri Bremond calls him "le père de notre littérature spirituelle"³. E. Pichery, writing on the Conferences, states and proves that they exercised "une influence capitale sur le développement de la spiritualité catholique"⁴. Michel Olphe-Galliard in his scholarly article in the Dictionnaire de Spiritualité has seven columns⁵ describing Cassian's influence.

The Anglican Owen Chadwick in his recent study on Cassian summarizes the latter's influence very well:

3. Henri Bremond in the Preface to Jean Bremond, Les Pères du désert, Paris, Lecoffre, p.L.

4. E. Pichery, "Les Conférences de Cassien" in La Vie Spirituelle, Vol.3, No.16, January 1921, p.290.

5. Op. cit. Col.267-274.

His teaching upon the ascetic life and the road to perfection dominated the origins and affected the spiritual ethos of medieval and modern monasticism. His work has permanently influenced the Christian life and culture of Europe through its effect upon the form and diffusion of the Western ascetic movement⁶.

Not only is his influence unanimously recognized but likewise his exceptional qualities as an observer and writer on human behavior;

Ses qualités personnelles d'observation et d'équilibre l'ont aidé à réunir une somme d'expériences dont la valeur simplement humaine déborde de beaucoup le cadre monastique. Qu'un Alcuin ou un saint François de Sales ait pu proposer à des lecteurs laïcs sa doctrine telle quelle ou à peine remaniée, est bien la preuve que son classicisme repose sur une connaissance profonde de la nature humaine en ce qu'elle a d'universel. Son empirisme même reste encore de nos jours la méthode de plus d'un moraliste profane parmi les plus influents⁷.

The book of Owen Chadwick on Cassian gives, it seems, a fairly complete bibliography of works relating to Cassian⁸ and although the present writer does not claim to have read each one of them it seems to him that no where has the purely psychological contribution of Cassian received the treatment that it deserves.

Many studies dealing with Cassian's spirituality or with some aspects of his ascetic and moral teaching have

6. Owen Chadwick, John Cassian, Cambridge, University Press, 1950, p. 5.

7. M. Olphe-Galliard, Op.cit. Col. 274.

8. Op. cit. p. 204-208.

made implicit use of the monk's psychological observations. However no author has attempted to synthesize Cassian's psychological system, not even Ludwig Wrosl in his study entitled The Psychology of John Cassian⁹. Wrosl limits his investigation to the field of rational or philosophical psychology and avoids enlarging upon a study of Cassian's dynamic psychology, giving as reasons Cassian's inaccurate terminology and the difficulty to disentangle the purely psychological material from its ascetic setting:

Schwer ist es, das psychologische Material seines asketisch-ethischen Gewandes zu entkleiden, und eine zweite Schwierigkeit liegt in der ungenauen Terminologie¹⁰.

Cassian's widespread influence is in large part due to the fact that he is but a mouthpiece of Catholic tradition; "Cassien est un representant authentique de la tradition¹¹". Because of this one would expect to find a study of his work in any analysis of the psychodynamics of this early tradition.

9. Ludwig Wrosl, "Die Psychologie des Johannes Cassians" in Divus Thomas, Fribourg, Series 2, Vol.5, 1918, p.181-213, p.425-436, Vol.7, 1920, p.70-96, Vol.9, 1922, p.269-294, Series 3, Vol.1, 1923, p.385-404, Vol.2, 1924, p.84-91.

10. Op.cit., Series 2, Vol.9, p.269; cf. also Series 3, Vol.2, p.88.

11. M. Olphe-Galliard, Op.cit., Col.274.

Again a review of the literature gave negative results. There exists a lecture by M. Oswald Sumner with the sub-title The Psychology of The Desert Fathers¹². This short study deals with a very limited aspect of human behavior and is mainly a comparison between the methods described in St. John Climacus and Jungian Analytical Psychology.

Because of the importance of John Cassian's works, of the richness of the psychological content of these works and of the lack of studies on Cassian's contribution to psychology, the formulation of the following research hypothesis seems justified;

There exists in the two books of Cassian on monastic life an abundance of sound and valuable psychodynamic material that can be classified, interpreted and organized. This work of synthesis can, at times, be done using the terminology of modern psychology.

In validating the hypothesis the writer made the type of descriptive research mentioned by Whitney; "Surveys and analyses of inclusive points of view, classified and interpreted skillfully¹³".

12. M. Oswald Sumner, St. John Climacus, The Psychology of The Desert Fathers, London, Guild of Pastoral Psychology, 1950, 23p.

13. F. L. Whitney, The Elements of Research, N.Y., Prentice Hall, 1937, p.369.

The research hypothesis just stated calls for certain clarification;

The study has as its object the two books of Cassian without going into a historical or literary or textual criticism. It takes the books as they were read and used by the readers and as they influenced their lives. It cannot be doubted that for this purpose any edition at hand will serve the purpose. The writer has used the edition of H. Hurter in the series of Sanctorum Patrum opuscula selecta, series 2, No. 3, Innsbruck, Wagneriana, 1887, for the Latin text of the Conferences and A. Gazet's edition of 1616 as reprinted in Migne's Patrologia Latina, Vol. 49 for the Institutes. The English text is taken from E. C. S. Gibson's translation in the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 2, Vol. 11, p.201-546, Oxford, Parker, 1894, except for Chapter 6 of the Institutes and Chapters 12 and 22 of the Conferences which Gibson omitted to translate -- a curious testimony to his time; these three chapters deal with the sexual instinct. Quotations from these chapters were translated by the writer. At times the writer has modified Gibson's translations when he felt they were not quite accurate.

The psychological data collected are those that show Cassian's insight into the dynamics of human behavior

in its natural aspect. The supernatural aspect is left aside in this study as not pertaining to its scope; it belongs to those things which are presupposed. By this no theological error is committed according to the axiom that grace makes use of and sanctifies nature without disturbing nature's laws and conditions.

The study had to make a selection among the abundant data found in Cassian and it does not claim to be exhaustive either in its material aspect (the data collected and presented) or in its formal aspect (the presentation from the different possible view points). It does not go into great detail on any one point as its goal is to make a synthesis. It does not adhere to any particular school of dynamic psychology, yet, as it must take a stand, it uses as a modern book of reference Norman Cameron's The Psychology of Behavior Disorders¹⁴, which with its biosocial point of view is fairly representative of the modern trend of psychodynamics. Other modern books of psychology will be quoted to prove, clarify or illustrate as the occasion demands.

The importance of the study of Cassian's psychodynamics lies first of all in its historical value, namely that it shows how many of the facts which seem to have been discovered only during the last fifty years have been

¹⁴. Norman Cameron, The Psychology of Behavior Disorders, A Biosocial Interpretation, Boston, Mifflin, 1947, xxi-622p.

implicitly known and made use of for centuries in the Christian tradition; this in no way belittles the greatness of modern findings but merely places them in a right historical perspective. Besides, this study may be also in itself a contribution to psychodynamics and the study of personality if it helps to bring to light or stress facts or aspects that in these fairly recent fields of psychology have not yet been thoroughly investigated.

The method which the writer used was first analytical, i.e., to collect data, then synthetical i.e., to interpret, classify and unify them.

The synthesis is presented in Chapters II to IV; Chapter II is an analysis of the ideal of the monk which consists in an exclusive and supreme value. This is followed in Chapter III by a study of the essential means, mental control, which itself is conditioned by a certain interior attitude pervading the whole personality. Chapter IV will study this interior set under the aspect of discretion, the virtue that rules and integrates the entire practical life of the monk.

The first chapter will give some preliminary considerations on Cassian's subject and method of study.

Chapter V will collect and classify some data on common adjustive techniques.

Finally a short conclusion will summarize the

findings of the chapters and point out some problems for further research or applications in this field.

Let it be said here once for all that no moral judgement is implied in any comparison between the lives of the monk and the man in the world, the less so as Cassian often speaks merely of an ideal which according to the fathers themselves was reached only by a minority:

Sunt enim nonnulli, quorum etiam, quod est lugubrius, major est multitudo, qui in tempore suo, quem ab adolescentia conceperunt, atque ignavia senescentes/.../15.

For there are some, and unhappily they form the majority, who pass their old age in a lukewarmness which they contracted in youth, and in sloth/.../15.

Thus far go the introductory remarks on Cassian and his influence, review of literature, and the research. Before coming to the synthesis proper, Chapter I will provide the setting for it.

15. Joannes Cassianus, Collatio II, caput 13; John Cassian, 2.Conference, chapter 13 (hereafter abbreviated in the following manner: C.2,13); cf. also Joannes Cassianus, De Institutis Coenobiorum, liber VI, caput 4; John Cassian, The Institutes of Cenobites, 6.book, chapter 4 (hereafter abbreviated in the following manner: I.6,4).

CHAPTER I

CASSIAN'S SUBJECT AND METHOD OF STUDY

The monk whose life Cassian describes in his two works is a Christian who believes in divine revelation as handed down by the Catholic Church. He comes to the desert with the desire to live the Christian life in a perfect manner.

This study accordingly presupposes -- without going into the psychology of these phenomena -- faith in a personal God, adhesion to the Catholic Church as a divinely founded society, the exclusive desire for perfection. The life depicted in the books is of a special kind which cannot be followed by the whole church. Those who come to join the fathers in the desert are convinced of a special call to this vocation¹.

There were those who lived alone in solitude, the anchorites; and those who lived in a community, the cenobites. According to modern Catholic language both types of monks would be called "purely contemplative" in so far as they did no exterior ministry of any kind. Even the monks in community lived not so much together as, for instance, Benedictine monks do today. Perhaps the nearest comparison would be to the

1. Cf. G.3,4.

Carthusian order which combines the solitary and cenobitic life. For a modern reader Cassian describes the life of a solitary, contemplative monk.

1. The Environmental Situation

Solitude is then the main characteristic of the exterior condition of life. What does this solitude in the presence of a personal God, interiorly experienced by faith, imply from a psychological point of view?

First of all this type of life places the monk in an environment in which there is a drastic restriction of exterior stimuli. The well adjusted monk finds himself in the impossibility to care or worry about anything that is not immediately related to the goal of his vocation. A maladjusted monk can however stimulate objects of worry, for the human mind may consciously or unconsciously want to find an object of care or worry and self-produce them in the absence of reasonable or objective stimuli. This first difficulty will be discussed in the following chapters, especially in Chapter V.

Secondly, the solitary monk, delivered to a great extent from the action of a variety of external "presses", must necessarily make great use of the resources of his interior life. This makes him by necessity the introvert

par excellence according to Jung². He has to build up his life from within. A healthy interior is for him of the utmost importance. For he cannot live on the surface only and try to neglect by more or less successful repression the deeper layers of his soul. The slightest insincerity, the faintest degree of self-deception takes on an unwonted magnitude when deepest sincerity and humble insight are the necessary conditions of one's profession. The chapter on the ideal of the monk will go into details on this point of "interiority".

Thirdly, even if alone, the praying monk lives in the presence of a Supreme Person, a person who through faith is experienced as being another person from oneself, yet ever present, all-seeing, almighty. This Supreme Person is said to live in and manifest himself through the conscience;

Etenim residet in conscientia nostra incorruptus quidam ac verus iudex qui nonnumquam super statu puritatis nostrae, cunctis errantibus, solus ipse non fallitur³.

For we have residing in our conscience an uncorrupt and true judge who sometimes, when all are wrong, is the only person not deceived as to the state of our purity³.

2. C.G. Jung, Psychological Types, translated by H.G. Baynes, London, Kegan Paul, 1944, p.471.

3. G.21,22.

The conscience is in the last resort an infallible guide and interpreter of God's voice. Frequently appeal is made to it:

Summa igitur continentiae /.../ ante omnia conscientiae iudicio colligenda est⁴.

The perfection of abstinence is /.../ to be gathered /.../ beyond everything from the judgement of conscience⁴.

The conscience is personified and called, as above, a judge or "that searcher out of inward motives, exploratrix interiorum motuum⁵".

Finally,

uniuscujusque vitii radices in se esse defixas /.../ etiam solitarius deprehendet, quisquis puritatem suam non hominibus ostentare, sed illius conspectui inviolatam studuerit exhibere, quem latere omnia cordis arcana non possunt⁶.

even a solitary can detect /.../ that the roots of each fault are still implanted in him, if he tries not to show his purity to men, but to maintain it inviolate in his sight, from whom no secrets of the heart can be hid⁶.

It is tempting to compare the silent witness of a personal God as experienced within by faith for the solitary monk with the experience of a patient in the therapeutic situation. According to N. Cameron

4. I.5,9.

5. C.19,11.

6. C.19,12.

the patient is protected from the distorting and inhibiting effects of interruption, approval and disapproval on the part of another person. He is exposed to no evaluative appraisal in terms of social convention other than that of his own socially derived self-reactions⁷.

It should be born in mind that from Cameron's bio-social point of view "his own socially derived self-reactions" are nothing else but his own conscience⁸. The monk who listens to the voice of his conscience in the presence of God may be likened to the patient exposed to his own self-reactions in the presence of the doctor. The "exterior protection" as mentioned in the first part of the quotation fits excellently the extensive restriction of the solitary's life-objects.

Whatever truth there is in this comparison there is brought out a fourth point, namely that one's faith and one's conscience is not an altogether private affair but "socially derived". The solitary monk lives a social life in so far as faith, the basis of his whole life, is derived from tradition as handed down by the church "quemadmodum /.../ catholicae totius Orientis interpretarentur ecclesiae"⁹. The monk's faith is shared by the whole "community of saints" and he is

7. Op.cit., p.578.

8. ibid., p.101-102.

9. C.10,3. "how the Catholic Churches throughout the East interpreted /.../"

conscious of belonging to a special group within the church to which he is called by a special vocation¹⁰. He even believes that this special group has its beginning in apostolic times¹¹ -- a point on which modern church history cannot substantiate Cassian¹². The monk who is eligible for the leadership of a monastery must have identified himself thoroughly with the group:

Nullus congregationi fratrum praefuturum eligitur priusquam idem, qui praeficiendus est, quid obtemperaturis oporteat imperari obediendo didicerit¹³.

And so no one is chosen to be set over a congregation of brethren before that he who is to be placed in authority has learned by obedience what he ought to enjoin on those who are to submit to him¹³.

The outside world too looked upon the monastic profession as a homogeneous group which it treats with respect and admiration -- a fact which should encourage beginners¹⁴ and which is abused by the bad type of monks who merely take on the exterior¹⁵ and little else.

Both books of Cassian are pervaded by constant reference to what is commonly "catholice", received, to the

10. C.21,5.

11. C.18,5.

12. M. Olphe-Galliard, Op.cit., Col.222.

13. I.2,3.

14. Cf. C.5,12.

15. Cf. C.18,7 and 8.

living tradition of the monks in which one's individual conscience finds an objective test or criterion as to its true value. Article 2 of Chapter IV will enlarge and give the required references on this point.

To sum up, the solitary life, as depicted by Cassian, is a life restricted in exterior objects, lived in the deeper layers of the soul, directed toward a personal goal and shared socially by identification with the living tradition.

It will be noticed how the exterior conditions of life in the vast solitude of the desert provide a suitable setting for the interior contemplative life of the monk. They invite, stimulate, help and, as it were, "force" the monk to fulfil his vocation. Beginners do well to realize that Cassian speaks of the austerity which

in hac provincia non solum
voluntas set etiam neces-
sitas peregrinationis
extorquet¹⁶,

not only your own will but the
needs also of your pilgrimage
enforce upon you in this
country¹⁶.

and that it requires an altogether outstanding degree of perfection to be able to do without that exterior help.

Of similar recognized help is the habit the monks wear:

sunt quaedam in ipso Aegyptiorum habitu non tantum ad euram corporis quantum ad morum formulam congruentia

there are some things besides in the dress of the Egyptians which concern not the care of the body so much as the

16. C.24,9. (The underlining in this and all other quotations is ours).

quo simplicitatis et innocentiae observantia etiam in ipso vestitus qualitate teneatur¹⁷.

regulation of the character, that the observance of simplicity and innocence may be preserved by the very character of the clothing¹⁷.

That the apparel can be a tremendous stimulus for playing the role that it suggests is known by the fathers:

scil. ut innocentiam et simplicitatem parvulorum jugiter custodire etiam imitatione ipsius velaminis commoveantur¹⁸.

that they be constantly moved to preserve the simplicity and innocence of little children by imitating their actual dress¹⁸.

Both the environment and the habit of the monk may be called an external, environmental facilitation in the attainment of the ideal toward which the monk strives. They constitute "positive immobile presses" in the language of Murray¹⁹.

Before turning to the essential, inner life of the monks the second part of this preliminary chapter will describe the view the monks take upon human behavior in general and some of the methods they employ to observe, study and influence it.

2. Observation of Human Behavior

"Experience" is the key-word of this section. Human behavior is an experience and Cassian never tires of

17. I.1,3.

18. ibid.

19. H.A.Murray et al., Explorations in Personality, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1938, p.121.

stressing and repeating it:

Totum namque in sola
experientia usuque con-
sistit²⁰.

For it depends entirely
upon experience and practice²⁰.

This is the way Cassian speaks at the beginning of his first work, and toward the end of his second work he states more explicitly:

Quaecumque enim non
per doctrinam, sed per ex-
perientiam cognoscuntur,
sicut tradi ab inexperto
nequeunt, ita nec mente con-
cipi vel teneri nisi ab eo,
qui simili studio fuerit
atque institutione fun-
datus²¹.

For whatever is known
not by teaching but by experi-
ence, just as it cannot be
taught by one without experi-
ence, so neither can it be
grasped or taken in by the
mind of one who has not laid
the foundation by a similar
study and training²¹.

This is as much as to say that the very knowledge of behavior requires in the subject an analogous experience of that behavior.

This constant repetition and stress on the necessity of experience proves indirectly the fathers' insight into the dynamic complexity of human behavior.

Numquam enim erit
efficax instituentis auctor-
itas nisi, eam effectu
operis sui cordi affixerit
audientis²².

For the authority of
a teacher will never be strong
unless he fixes it in the
heart of his hearer by the
actual performance of his
duty²².

20. I. Preface.

21. C.21,32; similarly 12,8 and 14,14.

22. C.11,4; similarly I.5,28.

Words and rational understanding alone are inadequate means of reaching the level of experience on which human behavior functions. The teacher must speak from his own experience to enable his hearers to participate vitally in the meaning of his words.

This empathy, "the sympathetic identification of one's feeling with those of another²³", is required for the complete understanding of another's thoughts. Cassian illustrates it by referring to the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures:

Tunc enim sententias Deo inspirante prolatas secundum propositum ac voluntatem ejus comprehendere poterimus, cum eorum a quibus promulgatae sunt statum ac meritum perpendentes, non verbo sed experimento parem induemur affectum²⁴.

For then shall we be able to understand the words, which were uttered by God's inspiration, in accordance with his purpose and wish, when we weigh the position and character of those by whom they were spoken, and are ourselves clothed with the same feelings not in words but by experience²⁴.

Here again stress is laid on the affective side of the personality which is touched not by words but by experience.

Considered solely from the psychological point of view it is not enough for the monk to have a merely intellectual conviction of his entire dependence on God. The only remedy against the deadly rise of complacency and pride in

23. Alexander A. Schneiders, Introductory Psychology, N.Y., Rinehart, 1951, p.433.

24. C.23,2.

his life centered on a continuous striving for perfection, is an "experienced" dependence on the constant help of God.

The monk can never reach perfection

nisi miseratione Dei et ad-
jutorio comprehendi non tam
tradentis institutione, quam
affectu atque virtute et
experimentis propriis eru-
ditus agnoscat²⁵.

unless he acknowledges the
mercy and the help of God in
attaining it, taught not so
much by the instruction of the
teacher as by his feeling of
God's power and his own
experiences²⁵.

In this instance the necessity of a living, personal relationship to God is particularly manifest. What is today called the dogma of divine grace must be learned "by way of experience, experientiae magisterio²⁶". Without this living experience of dependence it is psychologically impossible not to be moved by those feelings of pride that undermine the very foundation of a Christian's perfection.

The insight into the living wholeness of human behavior is paralleled by the fathers' recognition of its individual uniqueness. Rules for human behavior are not absolute but merely what happens in the majority of cases:

Non enim a parte
minima, id est de conside-
ratione paucorum, sed ex his,
quae multorum, imo omnium
subjacent facultati, univer-
salis est regula proponenda²⁷.

For a general rule
must be based not on excep-
tional instances, i.e., on the
experience of a very few, but
on what is within the power of
the many or rather of all²⁷.

25. I.12,13.

26. Q.12,4.

27. Q.19,8.

Cassian stresses the danger of making a rule from exceptional cases. The performance of a few

non statim ad generalem formulam referri potest²⁸. cannot come under a general rule²⁸.

Although the fathers are careful in their observations and constantly refer to tradition, to the "general rule", yet they know that exceptions must be expected.

They also make use of purely exterior facts to infer from them the interior dispositions of a person:

De exterioribus /.../ hominis motu interioris status agnoscitur ²⁹ .	For /.../ you can tell a man's inward condition from his outward gait ²⁹
---	---

Similarly they judge humility toward one's brethren to be a condition and a sign of true interior humility towards God³⁰.

The preferred method by which they guide themselves and others in the spiritual life is akin to what is called today "case study conference". An example of the process is given here:

There is the case of a young monk who was molested by nocturnal emissions whenever he prepared for holy communion. The fathers, united in conference, study one after the other three causes they considered possible, compare it to the

28. C.19,8.

29. I.12,29.

30. I.12,32.

actual facts and finally give the diagnosis of the trouble and prescribe the way of acting which in the present case was entirely successful, viz., to lay aside all anxiety over possible guilt and go freely to receive the holy Eucharist.

In their fight against the disintegrating tendencies-- the psychological aspect of moral vices -- they spared no trouble to reach the true causes and paid great attention to them.

Numquam enim curari languor, nec remedia poterunt malis valetudinibus exhiberi, nisi prius inquisitione sagaci origines earum investiguntur et causae³².

For weakness can never be cured, nor the remedies for bad states of health be disclosed unless first their origin and causes are investigated by a wise scrutiny³².

The fruit of their observations and conferences are brought to light from the particular angle of dynamic psychology in the present study.

First of all the goal, or in psychological language, the "ideal" of the monk will come under consideration.

31. C.22,6.

32. I.12,4 also I.7,13.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEAL: AN EXCLUSIVE AND SUPREME VALUE

From the psychological point of view, what distinguishes the life of the monk as described in Cassian from the ordinary life of an adult in the world? It is the striking simplification, or better simplicity of the life of the monk as compared with the life in the world. This fact is implied in the very name of the monk and brought out again and again in the writings of Cassian.

Consider an ordinary Catholic workman. Certainly he strives consciously to a certain degree after holiness according to the life of grace, but more frequently his striving is merely habitual. Besides this aim in life he has many more immediate ends to reach and hundreds of different means of reaching them. He has to play the role of a husband, father, son, brother, cousin, friend, acquaintance; inferior and superior in the world of work; member of clubs, associations, political parties; he has to take an active part in the manifold roles the society requires for each individual occasion, on a visit, at weddings, when shopping, when travelling, etc.:

Different situations, as William James pointed out, and as sociologists constantly reiterate, may call into play different combinations

and proportions of traits. At home a man may seem domineering, testy and gruff; at work, considerate, tactful, even obsequious¹.

Now the monk, according to Cassian, has but one intrinsic end in view² which he calls purity of heart in the chapter quoted, only to identify it later in the same conference with holiness³ or the love of God⁴. In another place he says, from a slightly different point of view:

Omnis monachi finis cordisque perfectio ad jugem atque indisruptam orationis perseverantiam tendit, et quantum humanae fragilitati conceditur, ad immobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam nititur puritatem⁵.

The aim of every monk and the perfection of his heart tends to continual and unbroken perseverance in prayer, and, as far as it is allowed to human frailty, strives to acquire an immovable tranquillity of mind and a perpetual purity⁵.

And after describing a way of reaching this ideal he speaks of the soul

versiculi hujus paupertate constricta⁶.

that restricts itself to the poverty of this one verse⁶.

Poverty indeed. But an enriching poverty that makes its possessor an "egregius", a distinguished "pauper"⁷.

1. G.W. Allport, Personality, N.Y., Holt, 1937, p.146(8).

2. C.1,4.

3. C.1,5.

4. C.1,7.

5. C.9,2.

6. C.10,11.

7. ibid.

What is it that makes Cassian call his monks poor, and why is this poverty a distinguished and surpassing one?

One can, with Cassian, apply the term of poverty to the monk not so much when considering the goal, but when comparing the means at the disposal of the monk with the means of the ordinary man in the world. Compared to the innumerable and very really different role takings that are part of every individual's life in the world the roles a monk has to play are few and at that difficult to distinguish. Even more, the very means can hardly be distinguished and called different from the intrinsic end.

The end and the means at the disposal of the monk all come down to acts of charity that lead to the perfection of charity, or continuous exercises in the purity of heart, or again prayer leading to a state of prayer:

mens nostra /.../ solam
Domini caritatem velut cen-
trum immobiliter fixum per
universa operum molitionum-
que nostrarum momenta
circumagens⁸,

our mind /.../ working round
the love of the Lord alone as
an immovable fixed centre,
through all the circumstances
of our work and contrivances⁸,

i.e., charity, leading to charity; again, what is it but a state of continual prayer which a mind finally arrives at, for which

quidquid in se receperit,
quidquid tractaverit,

whatever it receives, what-
ever it takes in hand,

quidquid egerit, purissima
ac sincerissima erit
oratio⁹.

whatever it does, will be
perfectly pure and sincere
prayer⁹.

and

omnis ejus conversatio,
omnis voluntatio cordis, una
et jugis efficiatur oratio¹⁰.

the whole life and all the
thoughts of the heart become
one continuous prayer¹⁰.

The continual exercise of purity of heart is described frequently in words like the following:

unum dumtaxat desiderans,
unum sitiens; ad unum omnes
non solum actus suos, verum
etiam cogitationes semper
intendens¹¹.

desiring one thing alone,
thirsting for but one thing,
ever bringing not only his
acts but his thoughts to bear
on one thing alone¹¹.

Indeed, the ideal of this state of utter simplicity produces a state where the monk's very distractions tend, as it were, naturally and spontaneously toward that "unum":

Atque ita fiet, ut
non solum omnis directio ac
meditatio cordis tui, verum
etiam cunctae evagationes
atque discursus cogitationum
tuarum, sint tibi divinae
legis sancta et incessabilis
ruminatio¹².

And so it will come to
pass that not only every
thought and purpose of your
heart, but also all the wander-
ings and roving of your
imagination will become to you
a holy and unceasing pondering
of the divine law¹².

Even more, the psalms' meditation of the day enter into his sleep,

9. C.9,6. Gibson's translation: "the prayer will be perfectly pure and sincere".

10. C.10,7.

11. C.7,6.

12. C.14,13.

denee incessabili ejus ex-
 ercitate formatus, etiam
 per soporem eum decantare
 consuescas¹³.

till having been moulded by
 the constant use of it, you
 grow accustomed to repeat it
 even in your sleep¹³.

This is a simplification, a restriction on the level
 of extensity, indeed. The monk has but one role to play,

ut talis inveniatur in
 nocte qualis in die, talis
 in lecto qualis in oratione,
 talis solus qualis turbis
 hominum circumseptus¹⁴.

so that he be found the same
 during the night as during
 the day, the same on his bed
 as on his knees, the same
 alone as surrounded by a
 throng of people¹⁴.

Now this restriction of means would no doubt be an
 impoverishment, harmful to the full development of the
 personality¹⁵, as might be observed in certain mental ill-
 nesses like hysteria or schizophrenia, if together with the
 gradual restrictions in the extensity of the means there
 would not develop greater integration at the more interior
 and deeper levels of the personality.

The monk's whole life is lived in the recesses of
 his soul.

Totum in animae con-
 sistit recessu¹⁶.

For everything
 depends on the inward frame
 of the mind¹⁶.

It stands to reason that simplicity, although more
 striking as being more easily observable, is rather the

13. C.10,10.

14. C.12,8.

15. Cf. Allport, Personality, p.143,(3) and p.217.

16. C.1,13.

consequence of this interiorization than the other way
round. Because

nihil /.../ nostrum est,
nisi hoc tantum quod corde
possessum¹⁷,

nothing is our own, save this
only which we possess with
our heart¹⁷,

therefore the monks are taught and trained again and again
not to consider so much

proventus operis, sed ope-
rantis affectus¹⁸

the result of the deed, but
the purpose of the doer¹⁸

non processus operis, sed
voluntas operantis¹⁹.

not /.../ the progress of the
work but /.../ the intention
of the worker¹⁹.

Affectus enim
peccati, non ordo consi-
derandus est admissi²⁰.

For the purpose of
the sin, and not the way in
which the fault is committed
must be taken into account²⁰.

Or to put it in a nutshell, the monk must get rid of his
sins

non tam effectus /.../
quam affectus²¹.

not so much results /.../ as
disposition²¹.

On this deeper level there is no room for insincerity
of any kind; there it is not possible to play a role that
does not spring wholly and spontaneously from the source
of the personality, from the inner person.

17. C.3,10.

18. C.6,9.

19. C.17,11.

20. C.16,18.

21. I.7,21.

Cujus hanc virtutem, utrum de vera fide ac profunda cordis simplicitate descenderet, an affectatiua esset, et quodammodo coactiua, atque ad imperantis faciem praesberetur, volens manifestius explorare²².

And as he wanted to make sure whether this virtue came from genuine faith and profound simplicity of heart, or whether it was put on and as it were constrained and only shown in the presence of the bidder.²².

Notice how every word of this wonderful sentence carries with it an extraordinarily deep insight into the motives of human behavior; how the two psychological characteristics of simplicity and interiority are combined in the one expression "profunda cordis simplicitate".

With this thought in mind, whether

semetipsum cunctis inferiorum non superficie pronuntiet labiorum, sed intimo credat affectu²³

he does not only outwardly profess with his lips that he is inferior to all but really believes it in the inmost thoughts of his heart²³

the monk trained himself and others in ways that might seem childish or even unreasonable to others; yet the explanation and psychological condition for their acts is found in this single-minded concern for the depth of the soul.

The passage that precedes the one quoted introduces the story of abbot John who faithfully obeyed the command of his elder to plant and then water every day a dried out and entirely dead branch of wood, good only for the fire. This

22. I.4,24.

23. I.4,39.

he did during a whole year, not questioning the possibility, nor considering the effect of that daily, laborious watering. Most certainly, he could not have done that if his humility and obedience came not "de vera fide ac profunda cordis simplicitate". When asked after a year whether the branch had begun to take roots and sprout, abbot John could but truly answer: "Father, I do not know."

In so far as a child acts more spontaneously because he lacks the ability of controlling effectively the first reactions from within, the state of a monk may well be compared to the state of infancy²⁴.

Spontaneity is the ideal which proves the perfection of the virtues that have filled the mind,

ut illis non jam velut co-
acta et quasi violento im-
perio subjecta famuletur,
sed tamquam naturali bono
delectetur atque pascatur,
et arduam illam atque
angustam viam cum oblecta-
tione conscendat²⁵.

so that it may be obedient to
them, not as it were forced
and subject to fierce sway,
but as if it delighted in its
natural good, and throve upon
it, and mounted by that steep
and narrow way with real
pleasure²⁵.

It is a favorite theme with the monks that virtue is, as it were, the natural possession of man²⁶, that the mind that is not held down by the weight of worldly care flies naturally to the heights of spiritual prayer²⁷.

24. I.2,3.

25. G.14,3.

26. G.5,24.

27. G.9,4.

It would be interesting to develop the theological implication of such a teaching or the kind of moral optimism it is likely to engender, yet the thing important for this study is the stress laid on the interior. The fathers realize implicitly that the real motives of our actions lie deeper than the immediate external facts allow us to infer -- this has been shown above -- and they are not even content with an interior disposition that is in any way forced or disputed by conflicting motives.

Then only is perfection reached when the virtuous acts come straight from the depth of the being, as it were from the very nature. As long as there is still perceptible the faintest kind of conflict the perfect state of chastity has not been reached but only what the fathers call continence²⁸.

Itaque omni custodia cordis nostri sunt latebrae primitus expiandae. Qued enim illi /qui in agone mundiali contendunt/ in corporis puritate cupiunt assequi, nos debemus etiam in arcanis conscientiae possidere²⁹.

Therefore first the innermost recesses of our heart must be cleansed with all diligence. For what those /who fight in the arena/ desire to obtain by bodily purity, we should possess also in the hidden places of the conscience²⁹.

When the "arcana conscientiae" are possessed by virtue then is it truly part of the monk, then will he begin

28. I.6,4, and C.12,11.

29. I.6,9.

universa /.../ absque ullo
labore velut naturaliter
/.../ custodire³⁰,

without any effort and as it
were naturally to observe all
rules³⁰,

because he will be moved, not by fear or desire which implies
some kind of conflict, but

amore ipsius boni et delectatione virtutum³¹.

from love of goodness itself,
and delight in virtue³¹,

When Cassian speaks of purity of heart one may perhaps legitimately substitute purity of motive. The simplicity of the monk's basic life is a direct consequence of this desire for ever greater purification of motives.

In ordinary life our acts are usually the outcome of so many different, partly agreeing, partly conflicting motives, some conscious, others habitual, some direct, some indirect, that it becomes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to recognize and appraise the influence of each on that particular act. Moreover the motives themselves -- whatever they are -- usually lie on a superficial level of the personality so that days, months and years can go by during which the deeper layers are barely touched and merely serve as the habitual source from which all our actions spring. According to the famous words of William James,

30. I.4, 39. Gibson's translation: "without any effort and as it were naturally, to keep up everything".

31. ibid.

Ninety-nine hundredths or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of our activity is purely automatic and habitual, from the rising in the morning to our lying down each night³².

The monk also lives by habit, but by habits that belong to the deeper and interior level of the personality, he lives entirely "in recessu animae"³³. He strives to purify this "recessus, abdita, latebrae, arcana", or whatever else he may call it so that pure acts may spring from it "velut naturaliter".

The more spontaneous, the more natural these acts become, the more they will be influenced by the disposition of the soul within and the less by the immediate imprint of the environment.

Itaque mens viri
justi non debet esse similis
cerae /.../ quae semper
characteri signantium
cedens /.../ nunquam in sua
qualitate persistens, ad
formam eorum, quae imprimun-
tur semper convertatur ac
transeat³⁴.

And so the mind of the
upright man ought not to be
like wax /.../ which always
yields to the shape of what
presses on it /.../; and so it
results that it never retains
its own form but is turned and
twisted about to correspond to
whatever is pressed upon it³⁴.

What a superb picture this is of the state of mind that is driven along by circumstances rather than guided by its own principles!

32. William James, Talks to Teachers, N.Y., Holt, 1899, p. 65-66.

33. C.1,13.

34. C.6,12.

The perfect monk, on the other hand

debet velut quoddam esse
adamantinum signatorium ut
/.../ universa, quae incur-
rerint sibi ad qualitatem sui
status signet atque transfor-
met; ipsa vero insigniri
nullis incursibus possit³⁵.

should rather be like some
stamp of hard steel, that the
mind /.../ may stamp and
imprint on everything which
occurs to it the mark of its
own condition, while upon it-
self nothing that happens can
leave any mark³⁵.

While the first analogy compares the mind to soft wax the other does not put in its place hard stone -- for that would symbolize a mind closed to the impress of reality -- but rather an iron-hard seal which does indeed react, namely by impressing its own form on the environment. This represents a man whose every act bears the imprint of his own whole personality.

From this point of view it becomes obvious that the value -- whether moral or psychological -- of any act derives entirely from the worth of the soul that posits it. Therefore the blame for the evilness of an act cannot be thrown on external circumstances; it must be referred to the soul within. It is in this sense that Cassian teaches:

Numquam enim quis al-
terius vitio lacessitus pec-
care compellitur, si repositam
materiam delictorum in
suo corde non habeat³⁶.

For no one is ever
driven to sin by being pro-
voked through another's fault,
unless he has the fuel of evil
stored up in his own heart³⁶.

35. C.6,12.

36. I.9,6.

This "reposita materies delictorum" seems to be some drive, some tendency within the soul that has not been fully integrated into unification under the supreme value.

There are no "sudden falls"³⁷, they are rather the "manifestatio infirmitatis occultae"³⁸ that has been brought to light through circumstances. For

laedi ab homine quamvis malignante non potero, si ipse impacifico adversum me corde non dimicem³⁹. I cannot be injured by any man however spiteful, if I do not fight against myself with war-like heart³⁹.

"Impacifico corde" is contrary to the goal, purity of heart; it implies conflicting motives that war against each other and thus disturb the perfection and spontaneity of virtues.

Now it must not be thought that even the most ideal and thorough going purification and integration of goal and motives will lead to a state characterized by a poverty of motives both in number and intensity. "Universas orationum species /.../ comprehendit"⁴⁰, to grasp all the different kinds of prayers, is well above human power. Why?

Tot enim sunt, quot in anima una, imo in cunctis animabus, status queunt qualitatesque generari ⁴¹ .	For there are as many of them as there can be conditions and characters produced in one soul or rather in all souls ⁴¹ .
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37.C.6,17.

38.C.18,13. "Manifestation of secret illness".

39.C.18,6.

40.C.9,8.

41.ibid.

The perfect monk's soul is poor in so far as exteriorly conditioned motives and exterior role taking is concerned; those things he has simplified to a healthy minimum. But he has simplified these only so that he may be more free to enrich and purify and integrate his interior dispositions which are his whole concern. These dispositions are innumerable:

Quis vero possit
diversitates et causas ipsas
atque origines compunctionum
quantalibet experientia prae-
ditus sufficienter exponere
quibus inflammata mens atque
succensa ad orationes puras
ac ferventissimas incitatur?⁴²

But who is able, with
whatever experience he may be
endowed, to give a sufficient
account of the varieties and
reasons and grounds of convic-
tion, by which the mind is
inflamed and set on fire and
incited to pure and most fer-
vent prayer?⁴²

The various states of the soul, the feelings, the drives, that are basic to human personality are not cut off or hindered in their development but rather lived out and worked on at the very source from which they spring.

Secundum mensuram nam-
que puritatis inque mens una-
quaque proficit, et qualita-
tum status in quo vel ex
accidentibus inclinatur vel
per suam renovatur industriam,
ipsa quoque momentis singulis
reformatur⁴³.

For according to the
degree of purity to which each
soul attains, and the character
of the state in which it is
sunk owing to what happens to
it, or is by its own efforts
renewing itself, its very
prayers will each moment be
altered⁴³.

The dynamics of human behavior allow no standstill;
"momentis singulis reformatur"⁴⁴.

42. C.9,26.

43. C.9,8.

44. Cf. also C.6,14.

The versicle, quoted at the beginning of the chapter that helps to keep the mind, as it were, restricted in its poverty, "versiculi hujus paupertate constricta", is also the very means that allows it to run through the entire gamut of feelings and affections that belong to human nature.

Recipit enim omnes affectus, quicumque inferri humane possunt nature, et ad omnem statum atque universos incursus proprie satis et competenter aptatur⁴⁵.

For it embraces all the feelings which can be implanted in human nature, and can be fitly and satisfactorily adapted to every condition, and all assaults⁴⁵.

"Omnes affectus, quicumque inferri humane possunt nature", these are riches indeed! And for the sake of these riches the poverty of means is not only willingly endured but hardly attended to by those who have learned by experience to taste those riches within.

Thus the monk is able to reach an integration of his interior life in so far as he has no other essential work but to live his every movement of his heart in the sight of the most excellent purity of God⁴⁶.

Such an ideal is incompatible with life in the world. The manifold aims and cares require an increase of roles and means; and with the ever greater complexity and indirectness of motives it becomes necessary to live habitually on a more superficial level.

45. C. 10,10.

46. I. 10,3.

In the light of these remarks it shows real insight into the psychology of human life when the fathers taught that this kind of perfection can only be achieved by the renouncement of the ways of the world⁴⁷.

Cassian's idea of integration on more interior levels of the personality and its correlation to simplification of means and role taking may be illustrated by the following specific example:

The need for status, the conviction of personal worth, is recognized to be basic and universal⁴⁸. The well adjusted monk will be able to satisfy and integrate this drive completely by considering that he is indeed entirely dependent on God, yet he is an object worthy of God's love and care. A man in the world living habitually on a more exterior level, may make the same considerations, but they will not meet the need for status at its very source and in its totality. He will feel need for a hundred other ways to assert his personality, from being authoritarian in his relation with his inferiors to being fussy about the smallest details like insisting on having this chair in that particular position in his room and getting very annoyed when he finds it moved even only a few inches in any direction. This man meets and

47. I.4.

48. A. A. Schneiders, Introductory Psychology, p.342.

realizes the need for status on a very exterior level where, as it were, it splits up and enters into so many different habits, traits, mannerisms that it becomes exceedingly difficult to satisfy and integrate it entirely.

The ideal of the monk consists therefore in the complete integration under the one supreme and exclusive value; to live the whole life in the sight of God -- this necessarily must take place on the deepest levels of the personality -- this again requires ordinarily a withdrawal from the world -- and finally leads to a spontaneous, child-like simplicity of means and role taking.

After this study of the goal the respective content of the next two chapters will discuss the way to realize the goal and condition it.

CHAPTER III

MENTAL CONTROL; THE ESSENTIAL MEANS

The psychological aspect of the goal or ideal of the monk has been under consideration in the previous chapter. On the question of the way and means of reaching this goal Cassian provides the reader with abundant material full of true psychological observation and rich experience. Two chapters shall be devoted to it.

The present chapter will deal with the essential means to realize the end which according to Cassian seems to be the continuous control of the mind. To the following chapter is left the more practical or active side of life over which reigns, as it were, the virtue of discretion.

There are any number of instances where Cassian voices the complaint of those striving for perfection;

Cum enim capitulum
cujuslibet psalmi mens nos-
tra conceperit, insensibili-
ter eo subtracto, ad alterius
Scripturae textum nesciens
stupensque devolvitur. Cum-
que illud in semetipsa
coeperit volutare, necdum
illo ad integrum ventilato,
aborta alterius testimonii
memoria, meditationem mate-
riae prioris excludit, de
hoc quoque ad alteram subin-
trante alia meditatione
transfertur, et ita animus
semper de psalmo rotatus
ad psalmum /.../ transiliens

For when the mind has
taken in the meaning of a
passage in any psalm, this
insensibly slips away from it,
and ignorantly and thought-
lessly it passes on to a text
of some other Scripture. And
when it has begun to consider
this with itself, while it is
still not thoroughly explored,
the recollection of some other
passage springs up, and shuts
out the consideration of the
former subject. From this too
it is transferred to some
other, by the entrance of some
fresh consideration, and the

/.../ devolutus /.../ delatus /.../ jactatur; /.../ palpator tantummodo spiritualium sensuum ac degustator, non generator nec possessor effectus¹.

soul always turns about from psalm to psalm and jumps /.../ and passes on /.../ and is carried /.../ and wanders about /.../ and so becomes only a toucher or taster of spiritual meanings, not an author and possessor of them¹.

Why is this restlessness, this continual and seemingly uncontrollable changing of thoughts and imagery so harmful to the attainment of the goal? Why is mental control necessary?

The goal is to live continually in the sight of the divine purity. It is therefore the monk's most essential task to have God as a living and personal being within him. God must be the "interior object" of his mind.

Generally speaking, what is this interior object of the mind and what is its meaning?

Whatever be its actual content, it is the object of the real life of a man, that about which he is truly concerned, the thing with which he is actually in contact.

One can imagine the case of a man who lives in the centre of an overcrowded city and who has as sole habitual preoccupation the conservation and care of his health. This man, whose thoughts and dreams are centered uniquely on this one object, will have as little contact with his fellowmen as if he lived in profound solitude. One can take another

1. C.10,13; similarly C.7,3 and C.1,16.

case, in contrast to the previous one, a solitary monk meditating day and night on the love of God, the common Father of all men. He will have more real contact with his fellowmen than many a man in the world. This -- let it be said in parenthesis -- is, from the purely psychological standpoint, a perfectly valid argument to refute those who call the life of a solitary necessarily asocial.

The real attitudes derive from the interior reactions and these in turn are dominated not by the exterior object as such but by what this object means to the subject, i.e. the object as it becomes part of and is integrated within one's interior life.

The distinction between the exterior and interior object is stressed in many places;

Hanc peregrinationem
ac parentum absentiam, quam
mente potius suscipere debu-
istis, carne tantummodo
sustinetis².

This pilgrimage and
absence from your kinsfolk,
which you ought rather to
endure with your heart, you do
endure only with the flesh².

These words are addressed to those who live exteriorly separated from the world. But this is not enough. The separation, to be real and true, must be received, welcomed, nourished within the mind in order to become a real separation.

Moving from the superficial level to the deeper, inner level, means the forming of the interior object.

The harm that the uncontrolled play of thoughts and images does to the monk consists precisely in the fact that it hinders the introception of the exterior object into the depth of the soul.

Yet the fathers recognize that changeability is, as it were, essential to the human mind;

Haec igitur pro conditione naturae numquam potest otiosa consistere, sed necesse est eam /.../ propria mobilitate discurrere et per omnia volitare³.

This then in accordance with its nature can never remain idle, but /.../ it must by its own fickleness wander about and stray over all kinds of things³.

What is it that the uncontrolled mind is occupied with?

Necesse est enim mentem /.../ per singulas horas atque momenta pro incursum varietate mutari, atque ex his, quae extrinsecus accidunt, in illum statum continuo transformari, qui sibi primus occurrat⁴.

For the mind /.../ is sure to rove about from hour to hour and minute to minute in all sorts of wandering thoughts, and from those things which come to it from outside, to be constantly changed into that state which offers itself to it⁴.

This is the picture of a mind that is wholly given to and driven along by the exterior spur of the moment, as it belongs to an extrovert who receives the stimulus of his interior life from the continually changing outer world.

The introverted mind, not so much susceptible to the change of the exterior, is all the more under the impact of

3. Q.7,4.

4. Q.1,5.

"illa quibus ab infantia imbuta est", and "ea quae longo usu ac meditatione concepit⁵".

The mind, the fathers say, "vacare /.../ cunctis cogitationibus non potest"⁶; the thoughts in their turn give rise to and color the feelings and desires of the soul:

Nullatenus enim valet vivacitas mentis absque alicujus desiderii vel timoris, gaudii vel moeroris affectione subsistere⁷.

The living energy of the mind cannot allow it to remain without some feeling, whether of desire or fear or joy or sadness⁷.

Therefore the fathers were not intent on stopping the inborn vivacity of the mind -- which could only have disastrous effects as being contrary to nature -- but they sought to control it:

Mens per vitae presentis incursum, undique ingruentibus tentationum torrentibus, circumacta, vacua quidem cogitationum aestibus esse non poterit; quales vero vel admittere, vel parare sibi debeat, studiis ac diligentiae suae providebit industria⁸.

The mind through the trials of the present life is driven about by the torrents of temptations pouring in upon it from all sides, and cannot be free from the flow of thoughts: but the character of the thoughts which it should either throw off or admit for itself, it will provide by the efforts of its own earnestness and diligence⁸.

5. C.14,13; "what it learned in childhood" and "what it took in by long use and meditation".

6. ibid.; "cannot be emptied of all thoughts".

7. C.12,5.

8. C.1,18.

"Admittere" means here "willingly approve of", "parare" stands for "prepare in advance" and shows that the control is a slow, indirect process rather than a simple act of the will.

The spontaneous rise of thoughts (throughout the rest of the chapter by "thought" is understood any kind of interior object of the mind whether it is strictly speaking on the sensitive or intellectual level) is as such beyond one's immediate control; "ortus earum non omnimodis pendet a nobis"⁹. Yet let the monks "sollicite observare /.../ cogitationum malarum principia", carefully observe the thoughts that are just about to form themselves within,

ne si caput ejus /i.e. diaboli/ per negligentiam penetraverit cor nostrum, reliquum ejus corpus, id est oblectationis assensus illabatur¹⁰.

lest, if through negligence his /i.e. the devil's/ head penetrate our heart, there slips in also the rest of his body, i.e., full consent to the pleasure¹⁰.

The monks were thus warned against letting the thoughts carelessly penetrate the interior.

In a similar spirit the fathers were careful to direct their very first thoughts on awakening to the one goal set before them¹¹ and this for two reasons; first, a mind not fully awake is more likely to be filled with undesirable

9. C.1,17; "their rising up does not entirely depend on ourselves".

10. I. 6,13.

11. C. 21,26.

thoughts, and secondly the beginning of a thought naturally leads to its full admission, and thus the control from the very beginning sets the mind on the right path for the day.

But while this somewhat forced control of thought is more an emergency method for the moment, the real mental control consists according to the fathers in the slow and laborious preparation of what they called "materia memoriae"¹².

How can this expression be fittingly translated? It is not merely an object that can fill the mind here and now, it is a seed that is buried in the soul:

Si itaque haec diligenter excepta, et in recessu mentis condita atque indicta, fuerint taciturnitate signata, postea ut vina quaedam /.../ cum magna sui fragrantia de vase tui pectoris proferentur, et tamquam perennis fons de experientiae venis et irriguis virtutum meatibus redundabunt¹³.

And so if these things have been carefully taken in and stored up in the recesses of the soul and stamped with the seal of silence, afterwards like some sweet scented wine /.../ they will be brought forth from the jar of your heart with great fragrance, and like some perennial fountain will flow abundantly from the veins of experience and irrigating channels of virtue¹³.

This fructifying of the seed, the quasi natural rise of the desired thought, is the primary concern of the fathers who always stress so much the importance of the spontaneity of their acts.

This kind of spontaneity is most obviously and clearly observed in dreams and illusions during sleep which take on

12. g.10,8.

13. g.14,13.

spontaneously different forms according to the past experience of each;

Nam secundum illum usum quem vigilans exercere vel cogitare consueverat, etiam dormiens, unusquisque tentatur¹⁴.

For each one is tempted during sleep according to the habitual ways of his acts and thoughts when awake¹⁴.

Similarly the distractions during prayer have been "prepared" beforehand:

Quidquid enim ante orationis horam anima nostra conceperit, necesse est ut orantibus nobis per ingestionem recordationis occurrat./.../ Ex praecedenti enim statu mens in supplicatione formatur, eorundemque actuum /.../ verborum quoque vel sensuum ante oculos imago praeludens, aut irasci nos secundum praecedentem qualitatem faciet aut tristari, aut concupiscentias causasve praeteritas retractare /.../ aut ad priores faciet volitare discursus¹⁵.

For whatever our mind has been thinking of before the hour of prayer, is sure to occur to us while we are praying through the activity of the memory./.../ For the mind in prayer is formed by its previous condition, and /.../ the images of the same actions and words and thoughts will dance before our eyes and make us either angry, as in our previous condition, or gloomy, and recall our former lust and business /.../ or make us fly back to our previous conversation¹⁵.

The same idea prevails throughout: thoughts dominate the interior attitude, supply the object for the feelings and desires, and spontaneously rise again in the mind unless other, more satisfying objects are presented to it;

14. C.12,7.

15. C.9,3; similarly C.10,14.

Quae cum profunde
alteque conceperit atque
in illis fuerit enutrita,
vel expelli priores sensim
poterunt vel penitus
aboleri¹⁶.

But when these are
thoroughly and entirely con-
ceived and it has been
nourished upon them, then by
degrees the former thoughts can
be expelled and utterly got
rid of¹⁶.

Where does the mind get the required "nourishment"
which will furnish the "occasio spiritalis memoriae"?¹⁷ From
the frequent reading of Holy Scripture.

This reading has two different purposes. First, as
an end in itself, in so far as the Bible is the word of God
and the monk tries to understand its obvious and deeper
meanings; secondly, as a means of controlling the mobility of
the mind for the future and naturally also for the moment:

Dum in legendis ac
parandis lectionibus occu-
patur mentis intentio, ne-
cesse est ut nullis noxi-
arum cogitationum laqueis
captivetur¹⁸.

While the attention of
the mind is taken up in reading
and preparing the lessons it
cannot possibly be taken cap-
tive in any snares of bad
thoughts¹⁸.

For the future, reading will do little, if it does
not serve as a mere starting point for continual meditation
which has as its purpose to let the material sink in, to
become more and more interior and part of the monk's own
spontaneous life:

16. C.14,13.

17. C.1,17.

18. C.14,10.

donec continua meditatio
imbuat mentem tuam et
quasi in similitudinem
sui formet¹⁹.

until continual meditation
fills your heart, and fashions
you so to speak after its
own likeness¹⁹.

How far this introception should go can be seen from
the following quotation;

Eundem namque re-
cipientes cordis affectum,
quo quisque decantatus vel
conscriptus est psalmus,
velut auctores ejus facti,
praecedemus magis intellec-
tum ipsius quam sequemur²⁰;

For if we have expe-
rience of the very state of the
mind in which each psalm was
sung and written we become
like their authors and anti-
cipate the meaning rather than
follow it²⁰;

i. e., Cassian goes on to explain, the monk should strive to
relate the affections expressed in the psalms to his own
experience;

Omnes namque hos
affectus in Psalmis inve-
nimus expressos, ut ea,
quae incurrerint, velut
in speculo purissimo per-
videntes efficacius agnos-
camus, et ita magistris
affectibus eruditi, non ut
audita, sed tamquam per-
specta palpemus, nec tam-
quam memoriae commendata,
sed velut ipsi rerum natu-
rae insita de interna cordis
parturiamus affectu²¹.

For all these feelings
we find expressed in the psalms
so that by seeing whatever
happens as in a very clear
mirror we understand it better,
and so instructed by our
feelings as our teachers we
lay hold of it as something
not merely heard but actually
seen, and, as it were not com-
mitted to memory, but implanted
in the very nature of things,
we are affected from the very
bottom of the heart²¹.

It would be difficult to describe a more thorough-
going introception. The reliving within of the exterior
words and objects fills and possesses the monk's mind until

19. C. 14, 10.

20. C. 10, 11.

21. ibid.

they become part of his very nature.

The monk has thus a rich interior life, a mind

ejusmodi curis ac medita-
tionibus occupata pariter
ac possessa²².

fully occupied and possessed
by such cares and medita-
tions²².

The word "occupata" is significant. It shows again the
fathers' insight that the human mind must be occupied with
something,

mentem quidem non inter-
pellari cogitationibus,
impossibile est²³.

it is impossible for the mind
not to be approached by
thoughts²³.

Now as the goal of this life is found on the interior
level the continual effort of introception provides the
interior with objects that will hold the mind in the desired
direction. Such a mind knows,

ubi suos exercent motus
et in quibus jugiter
occupetur²⁴,

where it may exercise its
motions and have what will
continually occupy it²⁴,

and

quo recurrat cuive prin-
cipaliter inhaereat²⁵.

the point to which it may re-
turn, and on which it may
chiefly fasten²⁵.

Similarly, if we wish to get rid of the desires that
tend to satisfy primarily and excessively the flesh,

22. I.5,14.

23. C.1,17.

24. C.7,4.

25. C.1,5.

spiritalis in earum locis
plantemur /.../ voluptates,
ut his animus noster semper
innexus et habeat quibus
jugiter immoretur²⁶.

let us plant spiritual desires
in their place, so that our
mind, fastened to them at all
times, may have a place where
to rest²⁶.

A mind filled with thoughts and desires of God is then,
under different aspects, both the end and the means to remain
attached to that end.

It is clear that the monk, by such a training of
selectively choosing the desirable object for his mind, will
gradually cease to register consciously exterior objects
that do not play a significant role in his religious life.

The mind of the perfect monk

per indesinentem divinarum
rerum meditationem spiri-
talesque theorias ad illa
quae invisibilia sunt, eo
usque transierit, ut cir-
cumdatam se fragilitate
carnis ac situ corporis,
supernis et incorporeis
intenta, non sentiat; at-
que in hujusmodi rapiatur
excessus, ut non solum
nullas voces auditu reci-
piat corporali, nec intu-
endis praetereuntium homi-
num imaginibus occupetur,
sed ne astantes quidem ar-
borum moles et ingentes ma-
terias objectas oculis
carnis aspiciat²⁷.

by constant meditation on
things divine and spiritual
contemplation so far passed on
to things unseen, that in its
earnest seeking after things
above and things spiritual it
no longer feels that it is
prisoned in this fragile flesh
and bodily form, but is caught
up into such an ecstasy as not
only to hear no words with the
outward ear, or to busy itself
with gazing on the forms of
things present, but not even to
see things close at hand, or
large objects straight before
the very eyes²⁷.

26. Q.12,5.

27. Q.3,7.

N. Cameron would say that this mind, through "progressive reaction-sensitivity²⁸" has lost contact with anything that does not directly pertain to the ideal which fills it so completely and exclusively.

A mind filled with God is also the best defense against the incursion of the demons. As the blessed Antony taught,

nullatenus daemones posse mentem cujusquam vel corpus invadere, nec habere facultatem in eujuslibet animam penitus irruendi, nisi eam primo destituerint omnibus cogitationibus sanctis²⁹.

demons cannot possibly find an entrance into the mind or body of anyone, nor have they the power of overwhelming the soul of anyone, unless they have first deprived it of all holy spiritual meditation²⁹.

But those,

mentem suam ingruentibus, ut libitum est, cogitationibus expandentes, nihil habent propositum quod principaliter teneant, vel quod omnimodis concupiscant³⁰,

who lay open their mind to the entrance of any thought as they please, and have nothing set before them to hold to as the main thing or to desire in every way³⁰,

do not control their thoughts, they are open to the illusions of the demons, neither do they whole-heartedly reach for the end. There is an obvious vicious circle between the end in view and the means to attain it. A monk may be found to fail in reaching the end because of failure in using the means or again he may use wrong means on account of his lack of keeping

28. Op.cit., p.65-69.

29. C.8,19.

30. C.23,6.

the goal before his interior eye.

The monk who controls his mind well is compared to a rope-dancer who will not let his eye stray from the rope before him under penalty of a certain and disastrous fall³¹. Here the loss of the end is stressed. He is likewise compared to a fisherman;

ut ita quis velut piscator egregius victum sibi apostolica arte prospiciens in tranquillissimi cordis sui profundo agmina cogitationum natantia intentus atque immobilis captet; et tamquam de prominenti scopulo curiose profunda prospectans/.../³².

that, like a splendid fisherman looking out for food for himself by the apostolic art, he may eagerly and without moving catch the swarms of thoughts swimming in the calm depth of his heart; and surveying with curious eye the depth as from a high rock/.../³².

Here the monk is seen choosing the right means, catching the thoughts in the depth of his soul which would never even be noticed if this depth were not "most calm".

The fathers also recognize the necessity and the support of a simple exterior occupation for the stable mind:

Sic unusquisque opus exsequitur inunctum, ut psalmum vel scripturam quamlibet memoriter recensendo, /.../ oris pariter et cordis officio meditatione spiritali jugiter occupato³³.

But everyone does the work assigned to him in such a way that, by repeating by heart some psalm or passage of Scripture, /.../ both mouth and heart are incessantly taken up with spiritual meditation³³.

The monks are occupied both exteriorly and interiorly at the same time:

31. C.23,9.

32. C.24,3.

33. G.2,15; also I.3,2.

lubricis motibus cordis et fluctuationi cogitationum instabili, operum pondera, velut quamdam tenacem atque immobilem anchoram praefigentes³⁴.

steadying the slippery motions of the heart and the shifting fluctuations of the thoughts by the weight of labour, like some strong and immovable anchor³⁴.

To be exteriorly occupied is a tremendous help for the control of the mind; this is being recognized today for precisely the same reasons, in occupational therapy.

The monks in Egypt had a saying,

operantem monachum daemone uno pulsari; otiosum vero innumeris spiritibus devastari³⁵,

that a monk who works is attacked by but one devil; but an idler is tormented by countless spirits³⁵,

and they tell of abbot Paul who was so deeply convinced of the usefulness and even necessity of manual work that he fulfilled his daily task of weaving although he had no opportunity to make any use of the product. Yet he continued faithfully, and having stored away the result of an entire year's work, he burned it only to start again working and collecting for no other reason than to help control his mind,--an outstanding example of singlemindedness and simplicity³⁶.

Yet both the work and the locality must be simple and, as it were, monotonous, so as not to become itself a

34. I.2,14.

35. I.10,23.

36. I.10,24.

source of distraction³⁷.

In spite of years of training and habitual effort the monk must be on guard against the native bend of the mind toward distractive thoughts, particularly those concerned with early, deeply ingrained memories. Just as it is relatively simple to conceive a good thought yet difficult to remain habitually occupied with it, --

Utinam simili modo atque eadem facilitate, qua semina spiritalium cogitationum plerumque concipimus, etiam perpetuitatem earum possidere possemus!³⁸

If only we could keep as a lasting possession those spiritual thoughts in the same way and with the same ease with which we generally conceive their germs!³⁸

-- likewise can a short and simple distraction, willingly entertained, destroy the tranquillity of the mind obtained by long effort;

Illam namque quam in cella residens acquisierat animi intentionem, si fuerit relaxata, recuperare rursus non sine labore potuit ac dolore³⁹.

For if he has let it go he cannot without difficulty and pains recover that fixed purpose of mind, which he had gained when he remained in his cell³⁹.

To recuperate the former state of mind is sometimes exceedingly difficult.

What may appear to be hard-heartedness to a superficial observer is merely the application of this psychological fact to the obtaining of the desired goal. In the case of a certain

37. C.24,3.

38. C.9,7.

39. C.6,15.

monk who after the space of fifteen years received a bundle of letters from his home, rather than read or even return them, he chose to burn them considering what a disturbing effect the revival of old ties and associations would have on the tranquillity of his mind⁴⁰.

This then is the supreme advice in the matter of mental control: Keep your mind continually in the direction of the desired end.

*Mentis quoque ipsius instabiles varique discursus assidua Dei memoria refruendandi. Totiesque nobis est ad contemplationem Dei lubrica cordis nostri pervagatio reducenda, quoties subtilis hostis ab hoc intuitu mentem captivare pertentans, recessibus nostri cordis irrepserit*⁴¹.

The slippery wanderings of our heart should be brought back again to the contemplation of God, as often as our crafty enemy, in his endeavour to lead away the mind a captive from this consideration, creeps into the innermost recesses of the heart⁴¹.

Naturally, this requires a continual and strenuous effort on the part of the monk.

*Monachi omnis intentio in unum semper est dirigenda cunctarumque cogitationum ejus ortus ac circumitus in idipsum, id est, ad memoriam Dei strenue revocandi*⁴².

A monk's whole attention should thus be fixed on one point, and the rise and circle of all his thoughts be vigorously restricted to it; viz., to the recollection of God⁴².

To make this effort both possible and more and more smooth and easy the technique of meditation as well as a

40. I. 5, 32.

41. I. 5, 10; similarly C. 23, 9.

42. C. 24, 6.

thoroughgoing introception described above, is principally employed.

Essentially, the methods used are the same as the ones that have been found in modern psychology to influence the various external and internal conditions of learning and concentration. This common ground is remarkable in the setting of a contemplative life; yoga or yoga-like practices, so commonly associated with Eastern mysticism, are singularly absent from the teaching of the fathers. Theirs is a natural method of concentration, a concentration that is not merely the spontaneous or commanded attention of the intellect to a certain object; it implies much more; an active participation of the whole person, an involvement of all that is within him.

Some exterior and interior conditions and facilitations for the attainment of this degree of concentration have thus far been analysed. But there remains still the whole range of the monk's active life and its integration so as to further the ideal and its realization. This concerns the practice of virtues and will be studied in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DISCRETION AND VIRTUES; THE ESSENTIAL INTERIOR SET

Chapter II has studied the psychological implications of the monk's choice of an exclusive and superior value as an only goal or ideal. Mental control, described by Cassian as the essential means of achieving the degree of concentration required to reach the ideal, was analysed from a similar point of view in chapter III. But,

impossibile/.../ scientiam it is impossible to possess
spiritalem sine integrita- spiritual knowledge without
tis castimonia possideri¹, deep purity¹,

i.e., mental control can be exercised by the monk only if there is found in him an integration of certain personality characteristics. These can be considered as a set or series of interior conditions from which springs and in which develops the monk's integrated psychic activity.

The clear vision of the interior eye which is so easily dimmed by the disintegrating forces from within² and which must keep the mind concentrated on the goal, is also essential in discerning the interior traits and their harmonious exercise. To this full vision, turned toward the discernment of means, the fathers gave the name

1. I.C.,18.

2. I.C.,6.

of discretion. They assigned predominance to this among all other virtues. Its role is to regulate the use of the means, to evaluate each means as to its importance and place in the hierarchy of means, and thus to develop insight into the true motives of human action³.

This chapter's synthesis of Cassian's teaching on discretion will show how the early fathers, in choosing it as the safest and most necessary means to reach and remain securely attached to the end⁴, displayed profound psychological insight. They were aware of the need for an extensive knowledge of the motives of one's actions and they saw clearly the difficulties and pitfalls that are to be found by those who want to acquire discretion, i.e., develop insight into the dynamics of human behavior.

As can be expected from their view on human behavior as an experience as described in Chapter 1, the father's discussion of these problems is not a mere list of theoretical considerations and abstract counsels or warnings.

3. Cf. C.1,20.

4. C.2,2.

They make use of concrete examples, of experiences:

Nam et haec et
multo his plura ad instruc-
tionem juniorum solent a
senioribus qui innumeros
diversorum casus ac ruinas
/.../experti sunt, in
Collatione proferri⁵.

For both these matters
and many others besides these
are generally put forward for
the instruction fo the younger
brethren by the elders in their
conferences, as they have had
experience of numberless falls
and the ruin of all sorts of
people⁵.

These life stories would be called case histories by
the modern psychologist or sociologist. A major part of
Cassian's writings is a good illustration of the individual
case study technique. The four chapters⁶ that follow the
author's analysis of the importance of discretion describe
successively the experiences of five monks who failed
miserably in their attempts to reach perfection because,
lacking discretion, they were self deceived. On the basis of
these examples Cassian can conclude:

Quam ob rem in
quantum perniciosum sit
discretionis gratiam non
habere, multorum casus et
experimenta declarant⁷.

Thus the mischances and
trials of many show how dange-
rous it is to be without the
grace of discretion⁷.

By using Cassian's experimental approach -- the case
study technique -- there will be grouped under four headings
some of the errors which may be caused by self-deception, a

5. I.7,13.

6. C.2,5-8.

7. C.2,0.

resultant of the lack of discretion: a) self-deception in relating the means and the end, b) self-deception due to rigidity in the use of means, c) self-deception by failing to give nature its due, d) self-deception in relating means to means.

Afterwards there will be a short note on tradition, the objective criterion of discretion, and on the beginner's openness to his senior whereby he comes into effective contact with that tradition.

1. Insight versus Self-deception

a) End and Means. - It is most remarkable how consistent the fathers are in their desire to teach themselves and others to act on all occasions from the purest possible motive of the love of God and a pure heart: "nihil praeponendum est charitati⁸". Charity, the love of God and our neighbour, is the end. All means take the secondary place:

Omnia namque quamvis utilia ac necessaria videntur spernenda tamen sunt, ut irae perturbatio devitetur⁹.

For all things, however useful and necessary they seem, should yet be disregarded that disturbing anger may be avoided⁹.

8. C.16,7. "nothing should be put before love".

9. ibid.

This "omnia" is taken quite literally. For the sake of the peace and love of a weaker brother

interdum etiam a rebus
necessariis /.../ salubre
sit aliquid relaxari¹⁰.

It is a good thing to relax something even in necessary matters¹⁰.

The basis of this teaching is underlined in three places¹¹, particularly well in the last one. Exterior things, the fathers say, are in themselves neither good nor bad; their value depends entirely on circumstances, on their opportuneness and appropriateness,

ita ut haec eadem, quae nunc opportune gesta bene cedunt, si importuno vel incongruo tempore praesumantur, inutilia inveniuntur et noxia;

so that these very things which at one time, when done at the right moment, turn out well, if they are ventured on at a wrong or unsuitable time, are found to be useless or harmful;

these are called "media", from which are distinguished

quae per se principaliter vel bona vel mala sunt, nec aliquando possunt in contrarium derivari¹²;

those things which are in their own nature good or bad, and which cannot ever be made the opposite¹²;

and these are the interior virtues, all subsumed under the name of charity¹³, or their opposites that conflict against the love of God.

10. C.16,23.

11. C.3,9; 6,3; 21,12.

12. C.21,12.

13. Cf. C.1,6.

Applying this in a wonderful manner they go on to say -- to the astonishment of many an observer and judge both today and then:

Ea igitur quae sequentia sunt, id est, jejunia, vigiliae, anachoresis, meditatio Scripturarum, propter principalem scopon, id est puritatem cordis, quod est caritas, nos convenit exercere, et non propter illa principalem hanc perturbare virtutem¹⁴.

Those things which are of secondary importance, such as fastings, vigils, withdrawal from the world, meditation on Scripture, we ought to practice with a view to our main object, i.e., purity of heart, which is charity, and we ought not on their account to drive away this main virtue¹⁴.

It all seems so obvious and logical. But the motives that direct human behavior do not usually follow the rules of logical syllogism.

Hinc namque est, quod nonnullos mundi hujus maximas facultates/.../contemnent, post haec vidimus pro scalpello, pro graphio, pro acu, pro calamo commoveri¹⁵.

For hence it arises that in the case of some who have despised the greatest possessions of the world,/.../, we have seen them afterwards disturbed and excited over a knife, or pencil, or pin, or pen¹⁵.

They have given away wealth and riches but after that attach themselves with such force to some book,

ut eum ne leviter quidem legi vel contingi ab aliquo patiantur¹⁶.

that they will not allow them to be even slightly moved or touched by any one else¹⁶.

14. C.1,7.

15. C.1,6.

16. ibid.

And with subtle irony the fathers give the cause of such deceptive behavior:

Qui si contem-
plationem cordis mundi
fixam tenerent, numquam
utique pro parvis rebus
admitterent, quod ne pro
magnis ac pretiosis in-
currerent opibus, easdem
penitus abjicere malu-
erunt¹⁷.

Whereas if they kept
their gaze steadily fixed out
of a pure heart they would
certainly never allow such a
thing to happen for trifles,
while in order that they might
not suffer it in the case of
great and precious riches they
chose rather to renounce them
altogether¹⁷.

These people were mistaken in so far as they considered the exterior fact of renouncing their wealth as an end that by itself can make them good monks.

Fasting is one of the means to keep mind and body under control. Yet,

jejunium/.../voluntarii
muneris oblatio,

fast/.../is a free-will
offering,

is done by free choice, as a means to a greater love of God;

opus autem charitatis im-
pleri, exigit praecepti
necessitas¹⁸.

but the exigencies of a com-
mand require the fulfilment
of a work of charity¹⁸.

For this reason,

advenientibus autem fratri-
bus magis humanitatis ac
dilectionis officii debere
virtutem¹⁹

when any of the brethren ar-
rive/.../we ought to show the
virtues of kindness and
charity rather¹⁹

than to adhere to one's rule of fasting.

17. G. 1, 6.

18. I. 5, 24.

19. I. 5, 23.

All exterior rules fall under the same category and the reason why the fathers had to repeat their warnings so often shows how easy it is to become so attached to the means that they are treated as ends in themselves.

Propter has observantias, si forte honesta ac necessaria occupatione praeventi sollemnitatem districtioris nostrae non potuerimus implere, incidamus in tristitiam, vel iram, sive indignationem, ob quae expugnanda illud, quod praetermissum est, fueramus acturi²⁰.

With regard to these observances, if by accident we have been employed in some good and useful occupation and have been unable to carry out our customary discipline, we should not be overcome by vexation or anger, or passion, with the object of overcoming which, we were going to do that which we have omitted²⁰.

A monk who would not take sufficient food to restore his weakened health,²¹ or not receive a visitor generously, or not permit any greater indulgence as a sign of joy on liturgical feasts, would be blamed as inhuman²² and not praised for his show of austerity, since he is not using the means in their proper place, i.e., relative to the goal.

b) Flexibility.- Clearly allied to the danger of forgetting the end through a wrong attachment to the means is the propensity of the human mind to become rigid and inflexible in the pursuit of the means²³. Abbot Plammon

20. C.1,7.

21. I.5,7.

22. C.21,14.

23. Cf. G.W.Allport, Personality, p.146,(9).

who for one or another reason abstained from drinking wine for twenty-five years,

oblatam sibi quodam fratre uvam ac vinum absque haesitatione suscipiens, confestim ea, quae ingesta fuerant, contra consuetudinem degustare, quam ignotae cunctis continentiae maluit propagare virtutem²⁴.

did not hesitate to receive some grapes and wine offered to him by a certain brother, and at once preferred, against his rule, to taste what was brought him rather than to display his abstinence which was secret to everybody²⁴.

He preferred to break his rule rather than cling to it and cause admiration and perhaps offence in his community. He was one of those who

universa iudicio potius ac discretione spiritus, quam rigida animi obstinatione gesserunt /.../ qui alienis infirmitatibus acquirere²⁵.

have treated everything with judgment and discretion of spirit rather than with stiff obstinacy of mind /.../ who give in to the infirmities of others²⁵.

The fathers realize that in many things it is impossible to prescribe one and the same concrete rule for all, and that what is good for one is not necessarily so for another.

Nonnumquam mala ex bonis rebus sumi videmus exempla. Nam si eadem quis agere non eodem affectu atque proposito aut dissimili virtute praesumerit, profecto exinde laqueum deceptionis et mortis incurret, unde aliis aeternae vitae fructus acquiritur²⁶.

Sometimes we see bad precedents taken from good things. For if a man venture to do the same thing as another, but not with the same mind and purpose, or not with equal goodness, he will immediately fall into the snares of deception and death through the very things from which others gain the fruit of eternal life²⁶.

24. C.17,24.

25. C.17,23.

26. C.24,8.

Motive, purpose and capacity have to be taken into consideration:

Nor. enim quia bona est anachoresis, universis eam congruam comprobamus. A multis enim non solum infructuosa, sed etiam perniciose sentitur²⁷.

For we do not assert that because the anchorite's life is good, it is therefore suited for everybody; for by many it is felt to be not only useless, but even injurious²⁷.

This capacity shows not only differences according to different individuals;

Fieri etenim potest, ut quod alterius gentis homini arduum atque impossibile est, hoc aliis insita consuetudo quodammodo vertent in naturam²⁸;

For it may happen that what is difficult or impossible for a man of one nation in the case of others is somehow turned by ingrained habit into nature²⁸;

so that different means have to be taken according to race and locality -- a fact which Cassian personally took into account when he transplanted the austerities of the Egyptian deserts to the rougher climate of the Gallican provinces²⁹.

It is the sign of a healthy mind, then as today, to be flexible and easily moved and persuaded by reason:

Denique nunquam rationabiles ac probatos patres duros aut irrevocabiles in hujusmodi definitionibus fuisse reminiscimur, sed velut ceram calore solis, ita eos ratione mollitos et

Finally we never remember that venerable and approved fathers were hard and unyielding in decisions of this sort, but as wax under the influence of heat, so they were modified by reason, and when sounder counsels

27. C.24,8.

28. ibid.

29. I.Preface, and I.4,11.

intercedente salubriore
consilio melioribus parti-
bus sine haesitatione
cesisse³⁰.

prevailed, did not hesitate
to give in to the better
side³⁰.

But clinging to the use of a given means when it is obviously (i.e., to an impartial, reasonable observer) bringing damage is commonly the beginning of maladjustment and neuroses³¹.

c) Naturalness.- A third point which shows again a healthy psychological insight into human nature is what may be called the "naturalness" which the fathers wanted to see in all behavior. Here too the philosophical basis is remarkable, all the more as it is founded upon an interpretation of Scripture different from the one commonly received.

St. Paul in the fifth chapter, verse 17 of his letter to the Galatians teaches: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit; and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another; so that you do not the things that you would". As an example of the interpretation usually given to this text there is Bishop Macvilly's comment: "By the 'flesh' are meant the disorderly motions /.../ of corrupt nature/.../. The 'spirit' refers to the Holy Ghost, who produces in us holy desires by his grace".³²

31. Cf. H.Cameron, op.cit., p.185.

32. John Macvilly, An Exposition of the Epistles of St. Paul, 3.ed., Dublin, Kelly, 1875, Vol.1, p.387.

Cassian sees in St. Paul's passage four things worthy of notice: 1. The eagerness of the flesh. 2. The eagerness of the spirit. 3. The weak will lying in between, which chooses the line of least resistance, driven along by these two "nimietates". 4. The strong will which controls those two tendencies, directing them to the desired end "so that we do those things we do not / with our weak will / want"³³.

A modern Anglican exponent of Cassian observes in this doctrine "as thoroughgoing a practical dualism as it is possible to conceive within the limits of a still Christian thought", that had "dismal effects upon the psychology of the medieval mind"³⁴. Yet on the contrary, Cassian's explanation seems to be a most remarkable integration in so far as the will is not placed between the "good" spirit and the "bad" flesh, but between both that need each other's support to make one whole perfect human being.

There is no cause then to despise the flesh or material things which are all good in themselves, created by the common loving Father to serve their purpose³⁵. There is nothing wrong with sex in itself³⁶ or the natural pleasure

33. C.4,7-12. See appendix 1 for texts.

34. O.Chadwick, Op.cit., p.30.

35. C.8,6.

36. Cf. C.7,26 the story of the monk who was punished by God for "cursing the very figure of the /female/ sex".

derived from eating,

ciberum naturaliter
jucunda perceptio³⁷,

the partaking of food, which
is naturally agreeable³⁷,

but what is wrong is to go to extremes whether in one or the other direction.

Discretion alone, a prudent insight into human nature, "will keep us uninjured by either extreme³⁸".

"Ab utraque nimietate, by either extreme", because "nimietates aequalitates sunt, extremes meet". Cassian goes on to explain by way of illustration:

Ad unum enim finem
nimietates jejunii et voracitas
pervenit, eodemque
dispendio vigiliarum immoderata
continuatio monachum,
quo somni gravissimi
torpor involvit³⁹.

For excess of fasting
and gluttony come to the same
thing, and an unlimited
continuance of vigils is equally
injurious to a monk as the torpor
of a deep sleep³⁹.

Those who could not be deceived by the snare of excess on one side have fallen by an immoderate negligence of bodily needs on the other side.

Indeed, experience has taught this second snare to be much more dangerous:

et perniciosius continentia
immoderata quam saturitas
remissa supplantat⁴⁰.

excessive abstinence is still
more injurious to us than
careless satiety⁴⁰.

37. C.21,16.

38. C.2,16.

39. ibid.

40. C.2,17.

Why so?

Ab hac namque ad
mensuram distributionis,
intercedente salutari com-
punctione, conscendi potest,
ab illa non potest⁴¹.

For from this latter the
intervention of a healthy com-
punction will raise us to the
right measure of strictness, and
not from the former⁴¹.

The reason for this is not only that through immoderate
negligence the organism might be permanently impaired but also
that it is so easy to fall from one extreme into another, so
that for instance, one day a monk is eating nothing at all,
the next day twice the usual amount.

Sustinebit maximum
detrimentum quisquis inaequa-
litate tenens, nunc ventrem
jejuniorum ariditate con-
stringit, nunc escarum
nimietate distendit⁴².

For a man will suffer the
greatest injury, if having no
fixed rule, at one time he pin-
ches his stomach with meagre
food and fasts, and at another
stuffs it by over-eating
himself⁴².

This kind of fasting is no virtue at all: "melior,
better," and, it may be added, more difficult, is

rationabilis cum moderati-
one quotidiana refectio
quam per intervalla arduum
longumque jejunium⁴³.

reasonable supply of food parta-
men of daily with moderation/.../
than a severe and long fast at
intervals⁴³.

Yet the most important reason why it is so dangerous
not to give to nature what belongs to it, "impartientes naturae
quod suum est⁴⁴", lies not in the direct effect on the organism

41. C.2,17.

42. C.2,22.

43. I.5,9.

44. I.3,8.

but in the hidden motives that urge the monk to let himself be guided by the "nimietas spiritus". This shall be enlarged upon after presenting one or two more examples of the naturalness of the fathers.

The fathers recognize the importance of variety and change and occasional recreation if a monk is to remain healthy in mind and body.

Semper enim aequanimius quaelibet fatigatio sustinetur, et sine fastidio labor impenditur, si interjecta ei vicissitudo quaedam, vel operis immutatio qualiscumque succedat⁴⁵.

For any weariness is always borne with greater equanimity, and labour undertaken without aversion, if some variety is interposed or change of work succeeds⁴⁵.

With this in mind they see to it that on Sundays and other times of liturgical feasts, notably the fifty days after Easter, a somewhat less rigorous discipline is observed, a fact which would help to bear more easily the austerities during the rest of the time⁴⁶.

Saepe accidit non dicam novitiis et infirmis, sed etiam experientissimis atque perfectis, ut nisi mentis eorum directio atque censura quibusdam mollita fuerit vicissitudinum laxamentis, aut in teporem spiritus, aut certe in perniciosam corporis valetudinem collabatur⁴⁷.

It often happens, I say not to novices and weak persons but even to those of the greatest experience and perfection, that unless the strain and tension of their mind is lessened by the relaxation of some changes, they fall either into coldness of spirit, or at any rate into a most dangerous state of bodily health⁴⁷.

45. I.3,11.

46. I.3 and II.21.

47. II.20,20.

The fact that fasting should be broken at the visit of some stranger has this other charming advantage that it is, as it were, a God sent opportunity to relax a little from the usual strain. Such a visit

necessitatem reficiendi corpuseuli cum fructu humanitatis indulget, majore nobis conferens lucra cum jucundissimo corporis laxamento, quam illa sunt, quae per abstinentiae fatigationem fuerant acquirenda⁴⁸.

gives us the opportunity of refreshing the body, together with the advantages of kindness, and at the same time with a most delightful relaxation of the body confers on us greater advantage than those which we should have gained by the weariness which results from abstinence⁴⁸.

The love of the fathers for naturalness and their insight in this regard is also shown by their intense dislike for anything forced, affected and not spontaneous.

There is the divine command to love all without exception. But

affectio paucis admodum /.../ exhibetur, licet etiam ipsa /.../ multam in se differentiam habere videatur⁴⁹.

affection is shown to but a few /.../ though indeed affection seems to have many degrees of difference⁴⁹.

Affection is here termed a spontaneous kind of love which differs from that general love of all men which can be commanded by will.

Tears are good if they flow spontaneously as an expression of one's interior state, but to force them is not

48. C.24,20.

49. C.16,14.

only unnecessary but positively harmful:

Ab his tamen, qui in affectum jam transiere virtutum, nequaquam debet /.../ extorqueri profusio lacrymarum /.../ qui /.../ numquam pertingere ad illam spontanearum lacrymarum poterunt ubertatem⁵⁰.

The flow of tears ought not to be thus forced out by those who have already advanced to the love of virtue, /.../ as it will never attain the rich copiousness of spontaneous tears⁵⁰.

This love for spontaneity, touched upon already frequently in previous chapters, the shying away from anything forced or extraordinary is, among other things, the motive that makes the fathers lay little stress on supernatural exterior powers.

Ideoque a patribus nostris opera ista signorum nequaquam vidimus affectata, quin imo /.../ numquam exercere voluerunt, nisi forte extrema illos et inevitabilis necessitas coarctasset⁵¹.

And so we have never found that these works and signs were affected by our fathers; nay, rather /.../ they would never use them unless perhaps extreme and unavoidable necessity drove them to do so⁵¹.

It is one of Cassian's remarkable achievements that have had lasting influence upon the true monastic tradition that he did not encourage the human curiosity for miracles. Although he must have seen and heard of many, he mentions only very few occasionally and has a whole Conference in the style of the last quotation that interior purity is a much greater miracle than any exterior display of miracles⁵².

50. C.9,30.

51. C.15,2.

52. Cf.C.15,8.

d)Hierarchy of Means.- A fourth group of examples will indicate the insight the fathers had when comparing different means. It will show how they judged the relative gravity of what might be called today behavior disorders and the relative value they attached to matter and material things.

Are sins of the flesh the worst in kind? There can be no doubt about the negative answer from the fathers.

Quodammodo enim cum in ceteris generibus vitiorum et quidem gravioribus magisque noxiis indifferenter soleamus incurrere/.../53

For as we ordinarily fall without much thought into other kinds of sins and those worse and more harmful /.../53

Carnal vices require an exterior object and are therefore more difficult to hide from others and one's own conscience. Spiritual vices like pride or vainglory are completed entirely within. Such a vice is therefore not easy to discover,

multiformem, varium atque subtilem; ita ut quibuslibet perspicacissimis oculis non dicam caveri sed pervideri deprehendique vix possit⁵⁴,

that takes many shapes, and is changeable and subtle, so that it can with difficulty, I will not say be guarded against, but be seen through and discovered even by the keenest eyes⁵⁴,

and is much more subtle in its influence:

quem non potuit per honorem dejicere, humilitate supplantat; quem scientiae et elocutionis ornatu nequivit extollere, gravitate taciturnitatis elidit. Si

If he cannot drag a man down by honour, he overthrows him by humility. If he cannot make him puffed up by the grace of knowledge and eloquence, he pulls him down

53. C.4,15.

54. I.11,1.

jejunet palam, gloria vanitatis pulsatur. Si illud contemnendae gloriae causa contexerit, eodem vitio elationis obtunditur⁵⁵.

by the weight of silence. If a man fasts openly, he is attacked by the pride of vanity. If he conceals it for the sake of despising the glory of it, he is assailed by the pride of vanity⁵⁵.

Is this not a wonderful description of how an exaggerated desire and need for self-approval runs, as it were, after any and all objects on which to fasten itself and hence to take the motive for its reactions?

Et ita fit ut qui adversarii conflictu non potuimus superari, nostri triumphii sublimitate vincamur; seu certe, quod est etiam aliud deceptionis genus, ut excedentes continentiae, vel nostrae possibilitatis modum, perseverantiam nostri cursus infirmitate corporis intercedente perdamus⁵⁶.

And so it results that those of us who could not be vanquished in the conflict with the foe are overcome by the very greatness of our triumph, or else (which is another kind of deception) that, overstraining the limits of that self-restraint which is possible to us, we fail of perseverance in our course on account of bodily weakness⁵⁶.

Here at last is the sequence of what was called above the hidden motives that urge the monk to let himself be guided by the "nimietas spiritus" and the full reason why this kind of self-deception is so dangerous. It is so, precisely because its driving motive is, what the fathers called, a spiritual vice.

55. I.11,4.

56. I.11,6.

A spiritual vice is not only more subtle and more self deceiving, it is above all more directly contrary to the love of God.

Frequenter enim vidimus de frigidis atque carnalibus, id est de secularibus ac paganis ad spiritalem pervenisse fervorem, de tepidis atque animalibus omnino non vidimus⁵⁷.

We have often seen those who were cold and carnal, i.e., worldly men and heathen, attain spiritual warmth; but lukewarm and "natural" men never⁵⁷.

The tepid man rests in the false complacency of his own self-approval for his relative success in repressing the exterior manifestations of carnal vices. He is caught in the partially successful compromise from which he derives some sort of stable satisfaction, but he is spiritually and psychologically as nearly dead as it is possible for a man in this life to be.

The great danger of this kind of self deceiving spiritual vice is stressed in the following quotation:

perniciosiora et a remediis longinquiora sunt vitia quae sub specie virtutum et imagine spiritualium rerum videntur emergere quam illa quae ex aperto pro carnali voluptate gignuntur. Haec enim valut palam expositi ac manifesti languores et arguntur cominus et sanantur; illa vero, dum sub praetextu virtutum

Those faults which seem to show themselves under the guise of virtues and in the form of spirituality are worse and less likely to be cured than those which arise openly and from carnal pleasure. For these latter, like sicknesses which are perfectly plain and visible, are grappled with and cured, while the former, since they are covered under the cloak of virtue, remain uncured

57. C.4,19.

teguntur, incurata per-
durant, et deceptos
quosque periculosius
faciunt ac desperatius
aegrotare⁵⁸.

and cause their victims to
fall into a more dangerous
and deadly state of ill
health⁵⁸.

The use of rationalization is clearly brought out by
the expression "sub specie virtutum videntur emergere".

It is better to fall through adversity than through
prosperity on account of the paralyzing influence of the
latter;

Facilius tamen
quis elidi potest prosperis
quam adversis. Haec
enim interdum etiam invito
retinent atque humiliant,
et compunctione saluberrima
vel minus peccare faciunt
vel emendant; illa vero
mollibus mentem ac perniciosis
extollentia blandimentis,
securus felicitatis suae
proventu ruina majore
prosternunt⁵⁹.

But a man can be more
easily overcome by prosperity
than by misfortunes; for these
sometimes restrain men against
their will and make them humble
and through most salutary
sorrow cause them to sin less,
and make them better. While
prosperity puffs up the mind
with soothing but most pernicious
flatteries and when men
are secure in the prospect of
their happiness dashes them to
the ground with a still greater
destruction⁵⁹.

In this quotation is expressed the idea that exterior
things can be favorable or unfavorable toward a certain
desired form of behavior. Something similar was studied
already in the first chapter in connection with the external
"presses". The same thought underlies the wisdom of
strengthening through material circumstances a will not yet

58. C.6,9.

59. C.4,20.

firmly established. When abbot Apollo speaks of the austerity,

quam vobis in hac provincia
non solum voluntas sed
etiam necessitas peregrina-
tionis extorquet⁶⁰,

which not only your own will
but the needs also of your
pilgrimage enforce upon you in
this country⁶⁰,

he knows that beside the motive of desire for perfection there is also a strong dose of what would be called today "to make a virtue of necessity".

This simple psychological law is recognized also in the familiar precept "to avoid the occasions of sin":

Et ita ut unumquod-
que peccatum possit extin-
gui, causa atque occasio,
per quam vel ob quam ad-
missum est, debet primitus
amputari⁶¹.

And so, in order that
each single sin may be destroyed
the occasion and opportunity by
which or for which it was com-
mitted should be first got rid
of⁶¹.

It is true that in this particular instance Cassian speaks not solely of exterior occasion yet it is obvious that they are included among the "causa atque occasio"; indeed the exterior occasions are first and more easily removed and that is the precise reason why, generally speaking, sins that need an exterior object are more easily overcome than the purely spiritual vices.

Two more examples will show the use of discretion in the evaluation of means.

60. C.24,9.

61. C.20,10. (English edition; C.20,11).

Which is a more serious cause of conflict, material or spiritual things? Without answering the question directly the fathers teach the sovereign importance of a humble mind that knows to accept another's point of view.

Quapropter ad conservandam perpetuam et individuum charitatem nihil prodest primam causam amputasse dissidii,

Wherefore for the preservation of lasting and unbroken love, it is of no use to have removed the first ground of discord,

i. e., the desire for the possession of material things,

nisi etiam secundam, quae sub specie spiritalium sensuum nasci solet, similiter abscindentes, acquisierimus in omnibus humilem sensum et consonas voluntates⁶².

unless too we cut off in like manner the second, which generally arises under the guise of spiritual feelings; and unless we gain in everything humble thoughts and harmonious wills⁶².

The expression "sub specie" always indicates the deceiving character of a motive. A monk may defend what seems to him the truth while his attitude shows that he is chiefly concerned with proving himself right at all costs.

When abbot John, after living for many years in solitude, returned to the life in common of the monastery, he recognized that circumstances would not permit him to live the solitary life in its fulness:

Melius enim est devotum in majoribus professionibus inveniri⁶³.

For it is better to seem earnest with smaller promises than careless in larger ones⁶³.

62. C.16,9.

63. C.19,3.

Here it is seen that the fathers recognize greater and lesser professions or states of life. Yet even professions are only means, and in comparison with the end, of secondary importance. What really matters is the interior state of one's soul, the purity of heart; that is the end -- everything else is means and has to be considered in relation to that end.

This is the same well known principle which has been stressed throughout this section. And it is discretion which helps the monk to apply this principle to actual life; it gives him insight into the means, in their relation to the end, in their relative place within the hierarchy of means and their integrating choice and use.

It was found that in nearly all examples -- and many more could have been produced -- discretion had, as it were, one common enemy; self-deception.

2. The Objective Criterion of Insight

It is recognized today that "sharing the perspectives common to one's own society⁶⁴" is an important condition for being in contact with reality and truth. An opinion that is socially not valid, that cannot be accepted by the common sense of the community, is nearly certain to be the product

⁶⁴. N.Gameron, Op.cit., p.53.

of a mind that, for one reason or another, has need to distort the truth. Unshared, private thinking is, as it were, objectivized when brought before the forum of the common teaching that has been handed down through the accumulated experience of the community.

a) Tradition.- The monk's need to conform to the common rule is what Olphe-Galliard significantly calls "le culte de la tradition"⁶⁵.

Quidquid enim inter famulos Dei praesumitur ab uno vel paucis, nec catholice per omne corpus fraternitatis tenetur, aut superfluum, aut elatum est, et ob id noxium judicandum est, magisque speciem vanitatis quam virtutis ostentans⁶⁶.

For whatever is claimed by one or a few among the servants of God and is not the common property of the whole body of the brethren alike, is either superfluous or vain, and for that reason to be considered harmful and affording an appearance of vanity rather than virtue⁶⁶.

The importance of this rule for the spiritual and psychological health of the individual cannot be overestimated. As the essential life of the monk takes place much more exclusively in the interior than the life of others so much more does the monk need a criterion that will permit him to judge whether or not he is following the path that leads to the goal.

The subtle and self deceiving desires of vainglory find an objective check when the actions they motivate are

65. Op.cit., Col.245-246.

66. I.1,2.

compared to the common rule:

Quidquid etiam in conversatione fratrum minime communis usus recipit, vel exercet, omni studio, ut jactantiae debitum declinemus et ea quae nos possunt inter caeteros notabiles reddere, ac veluti solis facientibus laus apud homines sit conquirenda, vitamus⁶⁷.

And anything which is of very little use or value in the common life of the brethren, we should avoid as leading to boasting; and whatever would render us remarkable amongst the others, and for which credit would be gained among men, as if we were the only people who could do it, this should be shunned by us⁶⁷.

The comparison with a cult is justified in so far as conformity with tradition requires sometimes self-abasement of reason.

Oportet quidem nos auctoritati patrum consuetudinique majorum usque ad nostrum tempus per tantam annorum seriam protelatae etiam non percepta ratione cedere; eamque, ut antiquitus tradita est, jugi observantia ac reverentia custodire⁶⁸.

It is indeed right for us, even when we cannot see the reason, to yield to the authority of the fathers and to a custom of our predecessors that has been continued through so many years down to our own time, and to observe it, as handed down from antiquity, with constant care and reverence⁶⁸.

Yet it must not be thought that such a blind devotion to the common rule is against reason; the common rule is but a most reasonable criterion -- which moreover is used in all the different roles of life:

Neque vos moveat aut ab imitatione retrahat ac divertat, etiamsi vobis ad praesens alicujus rei vel facti ratio vel causa

And do not be troubled and drawn away and diverted from imitating it, even if for the moment the cause or reason of any deed or action is not

67. I.11,19.

68. C.21,12.

non liqueat; quia eos qui bene de cunctis ac simpliciter sentiunt et universa quae a senioribus tradidit gerive perspexerint, fideliter imitari magis quam discutere student, per operis experientiam etiam rerum omnium scientia subsequetur⁶⁹.

clear to you, because if men have good and simple ideas on all things and are anxious faithfully to copy whatever they see taught or done by their elders, instead of discussing it, then the knowledge of all things will follow through experience of the work⁶⁹.

In fact, conformity to tradition helps the individual to arrive by way of experience to a deeper understanding of the truth.

b) Openness.- Conformity to tradition requires then a willingness to submit and an obedience from the heart which "comes from genuine faith and profound simplicity of heart"⁷⁰ and thus it is not surprising when abbot Moses gives as a reply to the question of how to acquire the virtue of discretion; "True discretion is only secured by true humility".⁷¹ There is no true insight without deep humility.

Ad quod ut facile valeant pervenire, consequenter instituuntur nullas penitus cogitationes prurientes in corde perniciosas confusione celare, sed confestim ut exortae fuerint, eas suo patefacere seniori; nec super earum iudicio quidquam suae discretioni committere⁷²

And, that they may easily arrive at this, they are next taught not to conceal by a false shame any itching thoughts in their hearts, but, as soon as ever such arise, to lay them bare to the senior, and, informing a judgment about them, not to trust anything to their own discretion⁷².

69. C.18,3.

70. I.4,24.

71. C.2,10.

72. I.4,9.

There is no true humility without the willingness to submit one's judgement to another and this entire openness to the voice of tradition, as represented by the senior, conditions an objectification indispensable for true insight.

Nullatenus enim decipi poterit quisquis non suo iudicio, sed maiorum vivit exemplo⁷³.

For a man cannot possibly be deceived, who lives not by his own judgment but according to the examples of his elders⁷³.

The very fact that the thoughts are expressed and worded before one's own hearing and one's community leads to a "shared objectification⁷⁴" that brings the individual's thoughts and attitudes into contact with the criterion of true insight, viz., tradition.

Tamdiu enim suggestiones /.../ noxiae dominantur in nobis, quamdiu celantur in corde⁷⁵.

For evil thoughts will hold sway in us just so long as they are hidden in the heart⁷⁵.

And the case is given of a certain beginner -- this kind of schooling applies primarily to them -- who had contracted the habit of stealing some bread and with a kind of compulsion was not able to get rid of this habit until some favorable set of circumstances moved him to confess his fault before his senior. And as soon as he had spoken he found strength to overcome the habit. "Have faith", said the

73. C.2,10.

74. Cf. N.Cameron, Op.cit., p.576 ff.

75. C.2,10.

senior, "my child, without any words of mine, your confession frees you from this slavery⁷⁶".

The analogy with the therapeutic developing of insight is very obvious. When some counsellors today call the individual's insight the goal of the counselling process⁷⁷ they seem to agree with the early monastic tradition that considers among the traits in the entire life of the monk none of such essential importance as the virtue of discretion which gives him insight into the dynamics of his own interior life.

76. C.2,11.

77. C.R.Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1942, Chap.7.

CHAPTER V

THE MALADJUSTED MONK; SOME COMMON ADJUSTIVE TECHNIQUES

This chapter will try, basing itself on Cassian's observations, to give a psychodynamic description of the monk who, for one reason or another, is not living at peace in his vocation. Such a monk finds himself in conflict with the objective situation and with that interior tendency towards perfection which initially brought him to that kind of life. Not arriving at the proper end, and at the satisfaction that is found therein, unsatisfied, he will be in a state of tension. To relieve himself from this tension he will make use of a special kind of behavior that has been labelled by modern psychologists as defense mechanisms or adjustive techniques. N. Cameron defines an adjustive technique as "a habitual method which human beings in our society use in overcoming, avoiding, circumventing, escaping from or ignoring frustration and threat¹".

Although Cassian does not explicitly name or classify these techniques as they have been used by the monks of his time, he certainly has not only observed and described them in his books but often also pointed out their interior mechanisms or dynamics. It would be both an easy and

1. Op.cit., p.141.

interesting task to bring together samples from his books that would fit any classification of contemporary psychology.

Essentially, these techniques are the same ones that are used by people in the world; they are therefore not specifically characteristic of monks and they likewise seem most similar to the ones used today. Whether this is due to the fact that the monk's community at the time of Cassian was not so very different from today's society or that the mental mechanisms are essentially common to human nature is not the concern of the present study. Similarly the question of personal responsibility which is interwoven with Cassian's psychological observations, is left out. Although as a moralist he stresses the moral viewpoint regarding adjustive techniques, he does not always think that this kind of behavior is per se sinful².

A n x i e t y in its most general sense as opposed to being at ease is recognized today by all schools as a characteristic symptom or cause of maladjustment:

Common nervousness is a frequent symptom of anxiety. The nervous individual is irritable and "jumpy". He is given to random motor outlets, from pacing the floor to chewing his fingernails³.

2. Cf. footnote 79 of this chapter.

3. L.F.Shaffer in E.G.Boring et al., Foundations of Psychology, N.Y., Wiley, 1948, p.533.

Cassian's observation 1500 years earlier leaves in comparison nothing to be desired:

sputa de sicca
gutturē contrahuntur, ex-
secrationes etiam sine
ulla interpellatione
phlegmatis provocantur,
digiti ludunt; et ita huc
atque illuc universa mem-
bra corporis commoventur,
ut dum spiritalis agitatur
collatio, totum se vel sca-
tentibus vermibus, vel acu-
tissimis sudibus, credat
insidere⁴.

He spits from a dry
throat, he coughs on purpose
without any need, he drums
with his fingers, and twiddles
them and scribbles like a man
writing; and all his limbs
fidget so that while the spi-
ritual conversation is pro-
ceeding, you would think that
he was sitting on thorns, and
those very sharp ones, or in
the midst of worms⁴.

This is the description of the nervousness of a monk who has lost the sense of humility, the foundation of true insight and progress.

The following quotation relating to a monk overcome by the feeling of tediousness, contains the very word under which such behavior is commonly classified:

Tum praeterea huc
illucque anxius circum-
spectat, et nec fratrem
sibi quempiam adventare
aspirat, saepiusque egre-
ditur cellam ac solem
velut ad occasum tardius
properantem crebrius
intuetur⁵.

Then besides this he
looks about anxiously this way
and that, and sighs that none
of the brethren come to see
him, and often goes in and out
of his cell, and frequently
gazes up at the sun, as if it
was too slow in setting⁵.

His interior restlessness causes the monk to be dis-
satisfied not only with his personal life and his community

4. I.12,27.

5. I.10,2.

but with material objects like the sun that responds to no kind of praise or blame. In the institutes 8, 18 the monk is seen to vent his anger on things like a knife or flint.

Eating or not eating can be a direct result of tension within. Cassian knows of some brethren,

qui cum tristificati fuerint vel irati, ab ipso etiam pertinaciter abstinent cibo, ita ut /.../ illi qui, cum placidi sunt, refectionem cibi usque ad horam sextam vel ut multum nonam negant se posse dif- fere, cum fuerint tristitia vel furore suppleti, jeju- nia etiam biduana non sen- tiant⁶;

who, when they have been vexed or enraged actually abstain persistently from food, so that /.../ those who when they are calm declare that they cannot possibly put off their refreshment to the sixth or at most the ninth hour, when they are filled with vexation and rage do not feel fasts even for two days⁶;

and the reason he gives is most appropriate in the light of modern psychophysiology:

tantanque inediae defec- tionem iracundiae satie- tate sustentent⁷.

and support themselves, when exhausted by such abstinence, by a surfeit of anger⁷.

While the sympathetic nervous system is mobilized in the service of anger, the parasympathetic system cannot make its voice heard with regard to digestion.

On the other hand there are those who feel empty within. And their minds are easily occupied with desires

6. C.16,19.

7. ibid.

for bodily satisfaction:

Mens enim otiosi
nihil aliud cogitare noxat,
quam de escis ac ventre⁸.

For the mind of an
idler cannot think of any-
thing but food and the belly⁸.

It was perhaps in order to avoid this observed fact that "as a remedy" against inner restlessness the elders counselled beginners in a manner that surprises many old and modern moralists:

Sedete in cellulis
vestris, et quantum libi-
tum fuerit manducate atque
bibite et dormite, dummodo
in eis jugiter perduretis⁹.

Stop in your cells,
and eat and drink and sleep as
much as you like, if only you
will stay in them always⁹.

With this advice they intended to make it easier for the suffering monk to bear the stress; in a negative way, by removing the too violent urge for food and sleep, in a positive way, by making him stay in surroundings conducive to the contemplative life of his vocation.

The monk who fulfills his vocation should be free from habitual fear, anxiety or sadness. He begins to observe the customs of his life

absque ullo labore velut
naturaliter¹⁰,

without any effort and as it
were naturally¹⁰,

8. I.10,6.

9. C.7,23.

10. I.4,39.

he stands no longer in fear of punishment, but is motivated
 amore ipsius boni et delectatione virtutum¹¹. from love of goodness itself, and delight in virtue¹¹.

This shows how radically opposed the fathers are to any display of sadness and that a deep joy should be the habitual feeling tone of their lives. Perhaps it is among them that Allport's "sense of humor¹²" is most perfectly practised.

Yet they know that

interdum etiam nullis existentibus causis /.../ tanto repente moerore deprimimur ¹³ .	sometimes without any apparent reason /.../ we are suddenly depressed with so great a gloom /.../ ¹³ .
--	---

Sometimes, they teach, we feel depressed without any observable (Cassian means: culpable) reason, sometimes because of a disappointed culpable desire.

This state of d e p r e s s i o n or dejection of mind,

non orationes eum explere cum solita cordis alacritate permittit, non sacrarum lectionum sinit remediis incubare, tranquillum quoque ac mitem fratribus esse non patitur, et ad cuncta	does not allow him to say his prayers with his usual gladness of heart, nor permit him to rely on the comfort of reading the sacred writings, nor suffer him to be quiet and gentle with the brethren; it makes him impatient and
--	---

11. I.4,39.

12. G.W.Allport, Personality, p.222 ff.

13. I.9,4.

operationum vel religionis
officia impatientem et
asperum reddit¹⁴.

rough in all the duties of
work and devotion¹⁴.

As a remedy they suggest to see to it that the monk's mind is continuously occupied by thoughts that are likely to raise it to a state of joy and happiness; the hope for and the contemplation of the bliss in heaven¹⁵.

The passage quoted relates among other things the increase of tension through contact with society and it lies at hand that the monk, who in any case lives a life of intermittent solitude, will try to escape altogether from this source of tension by withdrawing more and more from the companionship of his brethren. This is the escape technique of simple withdrawal¹⁶ or insulation which is very dangerous because of the fact that it isolates the individual from the social reality and makes him a prey to his own private, subjectively distorted thinking:

Irrationabilis atque inconsideratae distinctionis, imo potius suavitatis indicium est, nequaquam ab hominibus velle frequentari¹⁷.

/The wish/ never to be visited by anybody at all is a sign of unreasonable and inconsiderate strictness, or rather of the greatest lack of fervor¹⁷.

14. I.9,1. Gibson's translation throughout this quotation uses "it" and "its" in the place of "him" and "his".

15. I.9,13.

16. Cf. N.Cameron, Op.cit., p.170.

17. G.24,19. (Own translation).

Those who fear that contact with men would be an obstacle to their virtue are self deceived and their state of mind can be gauged by the anxiety that comes upon them when their solitude is disturbed by some visit:

cum vel paululum a secreti sui solitudine interveniente fratrum visitatione discesserint, notabili mentis angore et evidentibus pusillanimitatis indicibus solent aestuari¹⁸.

and when they have even for a little while broken through their habit of retirement owing to the accident of a visit from some of the brethren, boil over with marked vexation of mind, and show clear signs of timidity¹⁸.

Indeed, contact with others is the school and the test of virtues;

quia non in aliis sed in nobismetipsis offensionum radices causaeque consistent, non deserenda /Deus/ praecipit fratrum consortia /.../ sciens, perfectionem cordis non tam separatione hominum, quam patientiae virtute conquiri¹⁹.

because the roots and causes of our falls are found not in others but in ourselves, /God/ commands that we should not give up intercourse with our brethren, /.../ knowing that perfection of heart is not secured by separating from men so much as by the virtue of patience¹⁹.

This is said especially against those who lay the blame for their impatience not on themselves but on others;

solitudinem nos desiderare conquerimur, tamquam ibi, nullis nos concinantibus, illico virtutem patientiae reperiri²⁰.

we complain that we require solitude, as if we should find the virtue of patience there where nobody provokes us²⁰.

18. C.19,10. Gibson's translation: "signs of annoyance".

19. I.9,7.

20. I.8,16.

For the building up of a true spiritual life,

humana consortia nihil
obsunt; quin imo etiam
plurimum conferunt²¹.

intercourse with our fellows
is no obstacle, or rather it
is of the greatest possible
use²¹.

Contact with others is regarded as so essential that those who lack this by reason of their too solitary life should use their imagination to supply objects from the social life to school themselves in true virtue;

cum irrationum
fomes atque materia ab ho-
minibus non possit exsur-
gere, tamen earundem in-
citamenta debemus de
industria retractare²².

Though the incentive
to irritation and matter for
it cannot arise from men, yet
we ought of set purpose to
meditate on incitements to
it²².

While this last example shows a constructive use of the imagination, in book 11 of his Institutes Cassian gives a splendid case of a maladaptive technique of that same faculty, namely daydreaming or as N. Cameron calls it after Freud *fanta s y i n g*²³. Cassian describes the behavior of a monk, frustrated in his ambition for self-glory, who is found preaching to an imaginary audience and occupies his

21. C.5,4.

22. C.19,16.

23. Op.cit., p.181.

days with dreams of future self-aggrandisement.

Agitur itaque infelix anima tali vanitate velut profundissimo sopore delusa, ut plerumque hujusmodi cogitationum illecta dulcedine, et his oppleta simulacris, ne praesentes quidem actus vel fratres valeat contemplari, dum his quae cogitationum pervagatione vigilans somniavit, delectatur inhaerere quasi veris²⁴.

And so the miserable soul is affected by such vanity -- as if it were deluded by a profound slumber -- that it is often led away by the pleasure of such thoughts, and filled with such imaginations, so that it cannot even look at things present, or the brethren, while it enjoys dwelling upon these things, of which it has waking dreams, as if they were true²⁴.

This man finds so much satisfaction in his day-dreams that he is not far from losing contact with reality altogether. It is the great and difficult task of the monk to integrate his drives or passions in such a way that they do not hinder, but help him to reach more and more the reality of his vocation.

All kinds of passions are within human nature, they velut ingenita videntur in nobis habere principia et quodammodo inviscerata carni²⁵;

seem to have their commencement as it were congenital with us, and /are/ somehow /.../ deeply rooted in our flesh²⁵;

and as proof Cassian shows that their motions can be observed even in babies,

etiam in paryulis atque lactentibus²⁶.

even in little children and infants²⁶.

24. I.11,15.

25. I.7,1.

26. I.7,3.

They are given by God as belonging to nature,

ad usum bene vivendi
aptum, ac necessarium²⁷. for good and necessary pur-
poses of living happily²⁷.

It is not wrong to seek to satisfy them, "consolationem acquirere²⁸", only the wrong use of them, not integrated within the supreme value of the ideal, is condemned.

Integration must take place on the deeper level of the personality,

virtutes non occultatione vitiorum, sed expugnatione pariuntur²⁹. virtues are created not by hiding faults but by driving them out²⁹.

To betake oneself to complete solitude when the passions are not yet integrated within, is dangerous; for,

effectus eorum tantummodo reprimatur, non extinguatur affectus³⁰. their operation is but repressed, while the power of feeling them is not extinguished³⁰.

Following this Cassian gives several instances of what Cameron calls incomplete r e p r e s s i o n³¹ which all go to show the depth of integration required for complete repression, i.e., the firm establishment of the virtue opposed to the misuse of some particular passion. One

27. I.7,4. Gibson's translation: "good and useful".

28. I.10,3.

29. C.18,8.

30. C.19,12.

31. Op.cit., p.178.

sample will suffice:

Item si fratre
vel codicem ad legendum
vel quamlibet aliam ad
utendum speciem postulante,
aut nos illius petitio con-
tristaverit, aut illum
negatio nostra repulerit,
dubium non est nos adhuc
avaritiae seu philagyriae
laqueis compediri³².

Again, if when a
brother asks for our book to
read, or for some other
article to use, his request
annoys us, or a refusal on our
part disgusts him, there can
be no doubt that we are still
entangled in the meshes of
avarice³².

It is of interest to note how an incompletely
repressed passion, robbed of one object, will merely turn to
another:

Nam vitium cupidi-
tatis et avaritiae, quod
erga species pretiosas
exercere non possunt, circa
viliores materias retinen-
tes non abscidisse, sed
commutasse se probant pris-
tinam passionem³³

For the sin of cove-
tousness and avarice of which
they cannot be guilty in the
matter of really valuable
things, they retain with
regard to commoner matters,
and so show that they have
not got rid of their former
greed but only changed its
object³³.

For that very reason withdrawal alone can never be
successful in the task of integrating one's passions:

Occasiones enim
commotionum, ob quas eos
quibus jungimur deserere
festinamus, in conversa-
tione humana deesse non
poterunt, et idcirco tris-
titiæ causas, ob quas a
prioribus separamur, non
evadimus sed mutamus³⁴.

For opportunities for
disturbance, on account of
which we are eager to get away
from those with whom we are
connected, will not be wanting
so long as we are living among
men; and therefore we shall
not escape altogether, but only
change the causes of dejection
on account of which we separa-
ted from our former friends³⁴.

32. C.19,12.

33. C.4,21.

34. I.9,7.

Here again is stressed the essentially social character of even a solitary life.

In this connection Cassian also shows implicitly what today would be called the mechanism of *s u b l i m a - t i o n*. He does so when pointing out how to get rid of carnal desires³⁵, also in the case of the feeling of sadness³⁶, and by a very curious remark as to the nature of anger:

*Haec enim natura est irae ut dilata languescat et pereat, prolata vero magis magisque conflagret*³⁷.

For the nature of anger is such that when it is given room it languishes and perishes, but if put off it burns more and more³⁷.

The force of the anger within should not be put off for another time -- this incomplete repression merely makes it more and more violent -- but used to dilate, to widen the heart, to increase its capacity for love:

*Damus locum irae, quietens commotioni alterius humili atque tranquilla mente succumbimus, et quodammodo dignos nos qualibet injuria profitentes, impatientiae saevientis obsequimur*³⁸.

We give place to wrath as often as we yield with humble and tranquil mind to the passion of another, and bow to the impatience of the passionate, as if we admitted that we deserved any kind of wrong³⁸.

The humble admittance of one's unworthiness is allied to the full acceptance of one's interior state. This in turn

35. C.12,5. Cf. Chapter III, footnote 26.

36. I.9,13. Cf. footnote 15 of this chapter.

37. C.16,27. Gibson's translation: "but if openly exhibited".

38. ibid.

is a prerequisite for healthy adjustment. Yet self-acceptance is not an easy thing.

It is to be expected that those monks who for one reason or another do not follow whole-heartedly and in all simplicity the way of perfection and who in consequence find themselves, objectively speaking, acting from wrong motives, will not admit it to themselves but revert to that kind of defense mechanism which in modern language is called *r a t i o n a l i z a t i o n*. They will "assign to their behavior socially acceptable motives that an impartial analysis would not substantiate³⁹".

The reason for this lies not always in the bad, i.e., culpable will of the individual.

The monks in Cappadocia were taught that reading during meals serves as a means to spiritual exercise, yet, Cassian says,

Reficientibus fratribus sacrae lectiones /.../ non de type Aegyptiorum procesisse, sed de Cappadocum neverimus. Quos nulli dubium est non tam spiritualis exercitationis causa, quam comescendae superfluae, otiosique confabulationis gratia, et maxime contentionum, quae plerunque solent in conviviiis generari, hoc

We have been informed that the plan that, while the brethren are eating, holy lessons should be read /.../ did not originate in the Egyptian system but in the Cappadocian. And there is no doubt that they meant to establish it not so much for the sake of the spiritual exercise as for the sake of putting a stop to unnecessary and idle conversation, which so often arise

39. N.Cameron, *Op.cit.*, p.163.

statuere voluisse, videntes eas aliter apud se non posse cohiberi⁴⁰.

at meals; since they saw that these could not be prevented among them in any other way⁴⁰.

This kind of explanation is harmless, the more so as it has been adopted by the monks of a whole country.

A similarly acceptable kind of rationalization occurs frequently when it is the question of what motives brought the individual to the monastery. The fathers taught that

totum /.../ in fine consistit;

everything /.../ depends upon the end;

that it did not much matter that abbot Moses

metu mortis, quae ei propter homicidii crimen intentabatur, impulsus ad monasterium decurrit; qui ita necessitatem conversionis arripuit, ut eam in voluntatem prompta animi virtute convertens ad perfectionis fastigia summa pervenerit.

was driven to flee to the monastery through fear of death, which was hanging over him because of murder; for he made such use of his compulsory conversion that with ready zeal he turned it into a voluntary one and climbed the topmost heights of perfection.

And again, they quote St. Paul who

initium necessitatis voluntaria devotione consummans,

having begun by compulsion completed it by a free and voluntary devotion, and

ended his life gloriously, full of incomparable virtues⁴¹.

They recognize that it is in man's power to change his motives and that it does no harm to assign to the beginning of an act motives that are truly found only at

40. F.4,17.

41. G.3,5.

some later time.

Much more frequent is the maladaptive kind of rationalization against which the fathers deliver many warnings. They know how difficult it is to recognize the motives of one's behavior:

perspicacissimis oculis
/.../ pervideri /.../ vix
possit⁴².

it can with difficulty /.../
be seen through /.../ even by
the keenest eyes⁴².

Those who grow in holiness can see an ever increasing⁴³ number of impure motives within themselves, while

illi autem qui oculos cordis sui contegunt crasse velamine vitiorum /.../, vix in recessibus pectoris sui etiam illa quae magna sunt et capitalia crimina contemplantur /.../ nec captivitates animae suae possunt purgatis obtutibus intueri⁴⁴.

those who cover the eyes of their heart with a thick veil of their sins /.../ hardly regard in the inmost recesses of their breast even those faults which are great and deadly /.../ and cannot with clear eyes look at the captivities of their soul⁴⁴.

Equally blinded are those who, as it were, boast of crimes they had never committed⁴⁵ and make a show of false humility.

There are those who pretend to be impelled by the fervor of their devotion to say their prayers quickly, yet they are only anxious to refresh their tired body at an

42. I.11,1.

43. I.12,15.

44. C.23,6.

45. C.18,11.

earlier moment. In the same place Cassian speaks of those who remain prostrate on the ground much longer than prescribed for the same pretended and real motive⁴⁶.

Another monk is overcome by the love of money which

justes quosdam et velut rationabiles ei colores, ob quos vel reservare sibi aliquid pecuniae debeat, vel parare describit⁴⁷.

gives him excellent and almost reasonable excuses why he ought to retain some money for himself⁴⁷.

Desiring to leave the monastery he wants to give himself acceptable motives. Therefore

occasiones quibus offendi vel irasci debeat, studiose perquirat, ne leviter motus de coenobii disciplina videatur exire⁴⁸.

of set purpose he looks out for opportunities of being offended and angry, lest he might seem to have gone forth from the discipline of the monastery for a trivial reason⁴⁸.

There are many other ways in which a monk is seen to react to the stress of vexation which to himself may seem good and blameless yet to an impartial observer like Cassian only show the self deceiving and self excusing mechanisms of rationalization in action.

When angry with another person, they dissimulate, withdraw and betake themselves to prayer⁴⁹, or they display a sullen and bitter silence⁵⁰; others are driven to

46. I.2,7.

47. I.7,7.

48. I.7,9.

49. C.16,15.

50. G.16,18; also I.8,10.

immoderate fasting⁵¹, or slavishly following the letter of the gospel, ask to be struck on the other cheek⁵². All these are deceiving themselves. For

si id quod ab unoquoque perficitur, quo animo fiat vel precedat affectu, intime perpendatis cordis examine⁵³,

if you weigh with a careful scrutiny of heart what is done by each man and consider with what mind it is done and from what feelings it proceeds⁵³,

then, says Cassian, you will see that they are not practicing the virtue of patience at all but the very opposite.

There is but one way to overcome this blindness, by humility and sincere submission to the counsel of an elder. But this way is not open to them, as is shown in the observed behavior of monks who are envious of another's good,

quia cum utique non culpa eorum quibus livent, sed prosperitate crucientur, erubescences ipsam prodere veritatem, extrinsecus sibi quasdam superfluas et ineptas causas offensionis inquirunt. Querunt, quia omnimodis falsae sunt, vana curatio est, cum illud mortiferum virus, quod nolunt prodere, lateat in medullis⁵⁴.

because as they are tormented not by their faults but by the prosperity of those of whom they are jealous, they are ashamed to display the real truth and look out for some external unnecessary and trifling causes of offense; and of these, because they are altogether false, vain is the hope of cure while the deadly poison which they will not produce is lurking in their veins⁵⁴.

Being ashamed of their own bad motives of which they are vaguely aware, they repress this awareness within themselves

51. C.16,19.

52. C.16,20.

53. C.16,22.

54. C.18,17.

until they become inaccessible to any counsel and firmly convinced of their own pretended reason.

As nearly every kind of self-deception could be brought under the heading of rationalization, mention could be made in this place of the various motives that lead to a false interpretation of Scripture⁵⁵, to excuses⁵⁶, to obstinate opinions, to delusions, etc., as a means of appearing blameless in one's own eye. Most of those have been described when speaking of discretion, some shall be mentioned again as part of a different defense mechanism.

Closely related to rationalization is the adjustive technique of projection which throws on to others what is found in oneself.

To find the fault of a monk it is but necessary to notice what faults he condemns with harsh severity in others:

*Iisdem vitiis
monachum subiacere certissimum est, quae in alio
inclementi atque inhumana
severitate condemnat*⁵⁷.

And so a monk is quite certain to be subject to the same sins which he condemns in another with merciless and inhuman severity⁵⁷.

Cassian says "certissimum", so projection, for precisely the same reasons, must have been as frequent among the monks in the deserts as it is today among children and adults who

55. Cf. e.g. I.7,16.

56. Cf. e.g. I.10,2.

57. C.11,10. Gibson's translation: "certain to fall into the same sins".

ascribe to others and disclaim for themselves -- either directly or indirectly -- whatever seems blameworthy in their motives or acts.

A fine picture of disowning projection⁵⁸ is given in the proud monk who has to listen to a spiritual conference:

ob suam suggillationem aestimet esse prolatum. Totoque tempore quo spiritalis vitae examinatio ventilatur, suis suspicientibus occupatur, non quid exinde ad profectum suum capere debeat, aucupatur, sed causas cur unumquodque sit dictum, sollicita mente perquirat; vel quid eis possit objicere, tacita intra se cordis volutatione conjectat /.../. Dum enim pro conscientia sua totum contra se suspicatur esse prolatum, vehementiori cordis obstinatione obduratur⁵⁹.

he thinks that it is brought forward for his especial benefit. And all the time that the examination of the spiritual life is proceeding, he is taken up with his own suspicious thoughts, and is not on the watch for something to take home for his good, but is anxiously seeking the reasons why anything is said, or is quietly turning over in his mind, how he can raise objections to it /.../. For while he is conscience stricken and fancies that everything is being aimed at him he hardens himself more stubbornly in the obstinacy of his heart⁵⁹.

He suspects that others, when they are speaking, are aiming their remarks at his defects, as he projects into the meaning of their words the voice of his own conscience; and all the while he is busy finding reasons and answers to this delusional reproach. At the same time he is convinced of the injustice and unjustifiability of the alleged accusations and blames others for their lack of charity and

58. Cf. N.Cameron, Op.cit., p.168.

59. I.12,27.

kindness while he disowns the voice of his own conscience.

Those who readily hurt others by word and deed are the very ones who are most easily hurt;

Notandum etiam illud est, infirmorum naturam esse semper ejusmodi, ut prompti quidem ac faciles sint ad contumelias ingerendas et jurgia consequenda, ipsi vero ne minima quidem injuriae velint suspicione contingi; cumque inferentes proterva convicia inconsiderata superaequitent libertate, ne parva quidem atque levissima sustinere contenti sunt⁶⁰.

We must note too the fact that the nature of the weak is always such that they are quick and ready to offer reproaches and sow the seeds of quarrels, while they themselves cannot bear to be touched by the shadow of the very slightest wrong, and while they are riding roughshod over us and flinging about wanton charges, they are not able to bear even the slightest and most trivial ones themselves⁶⁰.

These people project their own unkindly disposition on others and take even the faintest suspicion of offence as a sufficient objective reason to feel hurt and wronged.

Others who have to be treated kindly and patiently by their brethren feel unable to stand this kindness and get vexed; they can be likened, says Cassian, to sick people who ascribe the cause of their illness to the negligence of their servants⁶¹. These monks behave very much like those who habitually blame circumstances for their angry disposition⁶²; they project their own deficiency on to others and disown it to themselves.

60. C.16,24.

61. C.16,3.

62. I.8,15.

Cassian implicitly touches upon another mechanism when he speaks of monks who cannot find satisfaction in the life they are supposed to lead and have become an easy prey to the danger of seeking some cares or occupations that would "reduce the tension of need and anxiety through the substitution of some other need-satisfaction sequence". This basic adjustive technique is called by N. Cameron *c o m - p e n s a t i o n*⁶³; it is frequently observed by the fathers of the desert who warn novices against the danger of self-deception.

They call it "sollicitudo secularis",

secundum regulam seniorum,
qui quidquid necessitatem
victus quotidiani et inevi-
tabilem usum carnis excedit,
ad secularem definierunt
curam et sollicitudinem
pertinere⁶⁴,

according to the rule of the
elders, who have laid down
that anything which goes
beyond the necessities of
daily food, and the unavoid-
able needs of the flesh,
belongs to worldly care and
anxiety⁶⁴,

and they realize that it is a symptom of a lack of peace and stability in one's profession. To persevere in one's state is most appropriate and healthy.

63. Op.cit., p.159.

64. C.9,5.

Quapropter hoc unicuique utile atque conveniens est, ut secundum quod elegit sive gratiam quam accepit, summo studio ac diligentia ad operis arrepti perfectionem pervenire festinet,

Wherefore it is good and profitable for each one to endeavour with all his might and main to attain perfection in the work that he has begun, according to the line which he has chosen as the grace which he has received,

and leaving aside what does not pertain to one's state,

aliorum quidem laudans admiransque virtutem nequam a sua quam semel elegit professione discedat⁶⁵.

while he praises and admires the virtues of others, not to swerve from his own line which he has once for all chosen⁶⁵.

But those who are weak interiorly, as soon as they hear of some other occupation that strikes their fancy, leave the one at hand and are eager to imitate the person in that new profession;

Solent enim hi, qui necdum sunt in illa quam arripuerunt professione fundati, cum audierint quosdam in diversis studiis ac virtutibus praedicari, ita eorum laude succendi, ut imitari eorum protinus gestiant disciplinam,

For those who are not yet settled in the line which they have taken up are often, when they hear some praised for different interests and virtues, so excited by the praise of them that they try forthwith to imitate their method,

with the obvious result;

in quo irritos necessario impendit conatus humana fragilitas;

in this, human weakness is sure to expend its efforts to no purpose;

the more different occupations they take in hand the greater

65. C.14,5.

is their loss: the monk

magisque ex hac immutatione ac varietate dispendium capiat quam profectum⁶⁶.

will lose more than he will gain from this changing and shifting about⁶⁶.

The fathers insist strongly upon perseverance and are opposed to any kind of change, even when it is colored by the appearance of being virtuous and doing good to our fellow-men. They recognize that those new works are desired not from a pure motive but primarily to seek some kind of substitute satisfaction for the lack of the real satisfaction to be obtained in one's proper vocation.

Deinde honestas idem morbus ac necessarias suggerit salutationes fratribus exhibendas, visitationesque infirmorum, vel eminus, vel longius positorem /.../ magisque operare in his operam impendi, quam infructuose ac sine ullo profectu in cellula residere⁶⁷.

Then the disease suggests that he ought to show courteous and friendly hospitalities to the brethren, and pay visits to the sick, whether near at hand or far off /.../ and that he ought piously to devote his time to these things instead of staying uselessly and with no profit in his cell⁶⁷.

This is the picture of a monk stirred by unrest and in low spirits; no longer able to stand the tension within, he tries to find satisfaction in some other way; he

consolationem impugnationis hujus visitatione fratris consuescat acquirere⁶⁸.

accustoms himself to seek for consolation under these attacks⁶⁸.

66. C.14,6.

67. I.10,2.

68. I.10,3.

"Consolationem acquirere", to find some kind of satisfaction, is basic to human nature. The fathers know this. But they know also that the manner in which the monk in the above quotation seeks satisfaction and deals with his frustration is weak and, in the long run, nothelpful at all. For he is

hoc quod utitur ad prae-
sens remedio, paulo
acrius infirmanda⁶⁹.

only to be afterwards weakened
the more by this remedy which
he seeks for the present⁶⁹.

This "remedium", this defense mechanism, will only make things worse, as it is in conflict with the primary end of the monk's chosen profession and the more he gives way to it the greater and more unbearable will be the consequent conflict and frustration.

Here is caught a glimpse of the difficulty of that life. Whereas in the world there are a hundred different and healthy ways to compensate for some particular frustrating experience, the monk who has but one exclusive and supreme value to reach, one role to play, can hardly make use of this adjustive technique without losing sight of his goal thus making things worse rather than better. The only way out of this tension is to face it squarely and withstand it in the strength of his own interiorly integrated life.

69. I.10,3.

Those who have not reached this degree of integration,

contritionem spiritus non
ferentes, intolerabilem
sibi ipsam silentii sui
aestimant jugitatem⁷⁰,

as they cannot bear sorrow of
spirit they think that the
fact of a continuance of
silence is unendurable⁷⁰,

and are, as it were, oppressed by the multitude of thoughts
and worries that run wild like untamed horses;

Sed cum ad praesens de
suis velut stabulis eva-
gentur, capitur statim
aliquod vel breve ac
triste solatium;

But while they are now roaming
at large from their stalls,
for the moment some short and
sad solace is enjoyed;

-- again there is mention of that temporary and maladaptive
satisfaction, "breve ac triste solatium", sought in distract-
ing work or talk;--

cum vero corpore ad cellam
propriam remeante rursus
quasi ad sedem suam cuncta
cogitationum caterva re-
currerit, graviores excitat
stimulos ipsa inveteratae
licentiae consuetudo⁷¹.

but when, after the body has
returned to its own cell, the
whole troop of thoughts re-
tires again to its proper
home, the habit of chronic
licence gives rise to worse
pangs⁷¹.

The danger that such a weak way of reacting to in-
terior tension becomes habitual is very great;

Frequentius enim
ac durius adversarius at-
tentabit eum quem conserto
praelio praebiturum comi-
nus sibi tergo cognoscit,

For more frequently and
more severely will the enemy
attack one who, when the
battle is joined, will as he
well knows immediately turn

70. C.24,4.

71. C.24,5.

salutemque sibi nec de victoria, nec de conflictu, sed de fuga sperare pervidet⁷².

his back, and whom he sees to look for safety neither in victory nor in fighting but in flight⁷².

Fleeing means defeat, resisting victory.

Unde experimento probatum est accedias impugnationem non declinando fugiendum, sed resistendo superandam⁷³.

Whence it is proved by experience that a fit of weariness should not be evaded by running away from it, but overcome by resisting it⁷³.

The fathers know that the illness of unrest and "worldly care" shows itself also in occupations that are proper to the monk yet performed in a way and a spirit that is contrary to his profession:

Et revera non minus haec, quae parva videntur et minima, quaeque ab his, qui nostrae professionis sunt, cernimus indifferenter admitti, pro qualitate sua aggravant mentem, quam illa majora.

And in reality these things which seem trivial and of no consequence and which we see to be permitted indifferently by those who belong to our calling, none the less by their character affect the soul than those more important things.

As a proof of this statement they cite the case of a monk,

fratris cujusdam hac animi, quam diximus, aegritudine laborantis, utpote qui in extruendis reparandisque superfluis inquietus quotidianis distentionibus desudaret,

of a certain brother who was suffering from this mental disease of which we have spoken, as he was restlessly toiling in his daily occupations in building and repairing what was unnecessary,

who was hammering away fruitlessly to split a very hard stone.

He was driven along, they say, by the instigation of an evil

72. I.10,3.

73. I.10,25.

spirit, which would not allow him to take even the necessary rest:

ita ut iisdem ejus incitamentis infatigabiliter sustentatus tanti laboris non sentiret injuriam.

so that being unweariedly supported by his incitements he did not feel the harm that so great labor was doing him.

They infer that the reason for this deception and overworking lies in the fact that this monk's mind is not

tali fuerit tranquillitate fundata /.../ et illi uni summoque bono tenacissima adhaeserit cordis intentio⁷⁴;

established in such a peaceful condition, /.../ and the purpose of the heart has /not/ been steadily fixed on that which is the only highest good⁷⁴;

thus showing the true cause of his anxiety and at the same time the way to overcome it.

Finally a few words on *a t t e n t i o n - g e t t i n g* behavior which N. Cameron defines as "an habitual mode of reaction which reduces the tensions of need and anxiety by making the reacting individual the focus of other persons' behavior⁷⁵".

Cassian knows of the mechanism so well that he uses it as a proof for the efficiency of God's grace. Who would be able, he reasons, to bear this kind of life with his own, natural strength,

nulla hominum laude suffultus?⁷⁶

supported by no praise of men⁷⁶.

74. C.9,6.

75. Op.cit., p.153.

76. C.13,6. Gibson's translation: "with no praise".

This is as much as to say that even without a special help from God the praise and attention of other people may well supply strength and satisfaction enough to bear this life. But for a solitary this is usually out of the question -- unless by some adjustive technique he is able to produce for himself some other substitute satisfaction.

On this point there is the amusing example of certain brethren who while living in community could easily stand a fast for so long as five days,

nunc autem tanta se fama
etiam ab hora tertia perur-
geri, ut usque nonam vix
queant differre jejunia
quotidiana.

while now they are so over-
come by hunger even by the
third hour, that they can
scarcely keep on their daily
fast to the ninth hour.

To their simple questioning after the cause of this phenomena the pertinent answer is given:

quia nullus hic est jeju-
nii tui testis, qui te suis
laudibus nutriat atque sus-
tentet; ibi autem te digi-
tus hominum et cenodoxiae
refectio saginabat⁷⁷.

Because here there is nobody
to see your fast, and feed
and support you with his
praise of you; but there you
grew fat on the notice of
others and the food of vain-
glory⁷⁷.

The motivation of vainglory supplied there the necessary strength. This is a well known experience, "multorum experimentis saepissime comprobatum⁷⁸".

77. G.5,12.

78. ibid.

Yet the fathers are human and do not condemn this kind of motivation outright, "utiliter ab incipientibus assumitur⁷⁹". It is quite useful for beginners to confirm the yet weak virtues that cannot rest on pure motives alone,

si illo tempore, quo fornicationis spiritu perurgentur, mente conceperint vel sacerdotalis officii dignitatem, vel opinionem cunctorum quo sancti et immaculati esse credantur⁸⁰.

if, when they are troubled by the spirit of fornication, they formed an idea of the dignity of the priesthood, or of reputation among all men, by which they may be thought saints and immaculate⁸⁰.

Naturally, a virtue that needs the support of other people's attention is more the image of it than the virtue itself; Cassian calls patience of this kind

ipsam umbram patientiae quam possidere imaginarie permixti fratribus saltem pro eorum reverentia et nota publica videbatur⁸¹.

the mere shadow of patience which, when we mixed with our brethren, we seemed fancifully to possess, at least out of respect for them and publicity⁸¹.

To the real virtue

nec reverentia humanae praesentiae quicquam adjiciet honestatis, nec minuet solitudo;

neither will regard for the presence of another add anything to its goodness, nor will solitude take anything away from it;

such a virtue stands on its own feet and is not weakened

submotis cupetorum hominum testimoniis⁸².

when all human witnesses are absent⁸².

79. C.5,12.

80. ibid.

81. I.8,18.

82. C.11,8.

A pure form of attention-getting behavior is exemplified in the monk who asks questions during the conference when he knows the answers perfectly well, and does this merely to make a display of his knowledge⁸³. And in several places the beginners are warned to look into the purity of their motives⁸⁴ lest the love of human praise be, if not the principal, yet a very important secondary motive that can only have disastrous effects if once this way of acting becomes habitual.

On this instance there is the forbidding example of a deteriorated type of monk, the "sarabaites", who seem to feast mainly on the satisfaction they get out of their habitual attention-getting behavior. They are in conflict with the true goal of the monk,

qui evangelicam perfectionem simulare potius quam in veritate arripere maluerunt⁸⁵,

and wanted to simulate rather than truly aim at Evangelical perfection⁸⁵,

but they are motivated, "provocati", by the praise commonly given to the religious vocation,

ad publicam tantummodo, id est ad hominum faciem renunciantes⁸⁶.

making their renunciation only as a public profession, i.e. before the face of men⁸⁶.

83. C.14,9.

84. Cf. C.1,22.

85. C.18,7.

86. ibid.

A similar motivation seems to lie behind another type of bad monk. They prefer to live solitarily,

ut ita scilicet a nemine
laccessiti, patientes,
mansueti ac humiles
possint ab hominibus
aestimare⁸⁷.

that as they are provoked by
nobody they may be regarded by
men as patient, gentle and
humble⁸⁷.

These men are manifestly the worst from the viewpoint of their vocation; by insulating themselves, they keep free from any exterior criticism and thus are able to enjoy undisturbed the satisfaction of the renown that is given to this vocation by society.

With this parody of the true monastic life this short survey of defense mechanisms comes to a close.

When one considers the exclusiveness of the ideal, the means and the conditions, it should cause no surprise in such a setting to come across maladaptive or disintegrated patterns of behavior, perhaps even more frequently than in ordinary life, since very few of the common adjustive techniques can be integrated under the supreme ideal. At that, they stand out more clearly in greater contrast to the depth of integration and simplicity of means that characterize the life of the well adjusted monk.

87. C.18,8.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The aim of the research was to make a tentative synthesis of the science of personality and dynamics of human behavior as found implicitly in Cassian.

The first chapter began by analyzing the monk's environmental situation as presented by the author. The monk was found to be conditioned by the specific surrounding, namely solitude, which sets him already externally to lead a life characterized by four points: 1. restricted in exterior objects, 2. receiving its stimuli from within, 3. shared socially by identification with the living tradition, 4. lived in the presence of another person, namely God.

Then Cassian's view on human behavior as an experience affecting the whole personality was pointed out and the conditions of observation were described as being closely allied to the modern case study conference.

Speaking of the monk's ideal in Chapter II it seemed to have the two distinguishing marks of simplicity of means and depth of integration. Simplicity is not the result of an impoverishment of the essential drives of human nature but the consequence and indication of the degree of integration.

The essential means to realize the ideal was called mental control in Chapter III. It consists in continually setting the ideal in front of one's own interior life. This

requires a depth of concentration engaging the whole personality and not merely the intellectual faculties.

In Chapter IV insight, as opposed to self-deception, was found to be regarded as the most essential prerequisite among all the interior conditions from which the entire practical life of the monk springs.

Tradition was thought to be the objective criterion of subjective insight and submission to the guidance of the elder the means that brought the beginner in contact with that criterion.

Chapter V on common adjustive techniques reveals the abundance of Cassian's observations and even more the rare depth of his insight into the hidden causes and mechanisms of human behavior.

These findings seem to confirm the opinion of all those who implicitly or explicitly called Cassian a genius of psychological observation.

Cassian's view on human behavior as an "experience", on human personality as a (potentially) integrated whole, on the correlation between the degree of integration and simplicity of means and role taking, on concentration as an experience of ever greater introception, on social tradition as an objective criterion of subjective insight, are but a few points that have been merely touched in the present

study but that could be fruitfully elaborated for a fuller contribution to psychology.

When one considers that Cassian speaks not from his own but from the fulness of Catholic tradition in which he stands and which he influenced so deeply, the historical significance of the psychology contained in his works becomes evident.

Cassian's teaching and the school he adhered to within the Catholic Church has been found to be Alexandrian¹. This school in turn is known to have been influenced to a great extent by the Greek philosophers². P. Mullahy says about the Greek philosophers that they "possessed a profound knowledge and understanding of the human psyche³". With reference to Aristotle he states that "a careful study of his work will reveal the fundamental of several of our advanced psychoanalytical theories⁴". Perhaps Mullahy and those who would care to study it would say the same about Cassian and the Catholic tradition he represents.

History of psychology is far from giving to this tradition the study and place that it deserves.

1. O. Chadwick, John Cassian, p.36, p.86 et alibi.

2. Cf. Op.cit., p.79-82.

3. Patrick Mullahy, Oedipus, N.Y., Hermitage, 1948, p.335.

4. Op.cit., p.336.

Catholic writers themselves are slow in making the most desirable synthesis between morality or ascetism and modern psychology. It is hoped that the present study may contribute somewhat in that direction.

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An apparently incomplete study in great detail of Cassian's works from the standpoint of philosophical or rational psychology.

APPENDIX 1

TEXT FROM CASSIAN'S Collatio IV

cap.7. Hanc pugnam utiliter nostris quoque membris insertam etiam in Apostolo ita legimus: "Caro concupiscit adversus spiritum, spiritus vero adversus carnem. Haec autem invicem adversantur sibi, ut non quaecumque vultis, illa faciatis".

cap.9. /.../ Secundum divisionem itaque vestram tres hoc loco res ab Apostolo nominari videntur, concupiscentia carnis adversus spiritum et spiritus adversus carnem; quarum adversus se invicem pugna hanc videtur habere causam atque rationem ut ea quae volumus, inquit, facere nequeamus. Quarta igitur superest causa, quam minime vidistis vos, ut illud scilicet quod nolimus, faciamus.

cap.11. /.../ Quae cum utraque desideria, id est carnis et spiritus in uno eodemque sint homine, intestinum quotidie intra nos geritur bellum, dum concupiscentia carnis, quae praecipitanter fertur ad vitia, his, quae ad praesentem requiem pertinent, deliciis gaudet. Quibus e contra concupiscentia spiritus adversata, ita desiderat tota spiritalibus studiis inhaerere, ut

This conflict too we read in the Apostle has for our good been placed in our members; "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit; and the spirit against the flesh. But these two are opposed to each other so that ye should not do what ye would".

According then to this division of yours, it seems that in this passage the Apostle mentions three things, the lust of the flesh against the spirit, and of the spirit against the flesh, the mutual struggle of which against each other appears to have this as its cause and reason; viz., "that," says he, "we should not do what we would". There remains then a fourth case, which you have overlooked; viz., that we should do what we would not.

And since these two, viz., the desires of the flesh and of the spirit coexist in one and the same man, there arises an internal warfare daily carried on within us, while the lust of the flesh which rushes blidly towards sin, revels in those delights which are connected with present ease. And on the other hand the desire of the spirit is opposed to these, and wishes to be entirely absorbed in spiritual efforts,

etiam necessarios carnis
usus optet excludere /.../.

cap.12. Inter has
igitur utrasque concupis-
centias animae voluntas in
meditullio quodam vitupera-
biliore consistens, nec
vitiatorum flagitiis oblecta-
tur, nec virtutum doloribus
acquiescit, sic quaerens a
passionibus temperare car-
nalibus, ut nequaquam velit
dolores necessarios sustine-
re, sine quibus desideria
spiritus nequeunt possideri
/.../ cum requie carnis
spiritualibus exuberare vir-
tutibus /.../. Quae volun-
tas numquam nos ad perfec-
tionem veram faceret per-
venire, sed in tepore
quodam teterrimo colloca-
ret /.../.

Dum haec pugna quotidianis
diebus utiliter exagitur
in nobis, ad illud quartum
quod nolumus salubriter
venire compellimur, ut
puritatem cordis non otio
nec securitate, sed jugi
sudore et contritione
spiritus acquiramus; /.../.

so that it actually wants to
be rid of even the necessary
uses of the flesh /.../.

Between these two
desires then the free will of
the soul stands in an inter-
mediate position somewhat
worthy of blame, and neither
delights in the excesses of
sin, nor acquiesces in the
sorrows of virtue. Seeking to
restrain itself from carnal
passions in such a way as not
nevertheless to be willing to
undergo the requisite suffer-
ing, and /.../ to abound in
spiritual virtues together
with carnal ease /.../. And
this free will would never
lead us to attain true perfec-
tion but would plunge us into
a most miserable condition of
lukewarmness /.../.

And while this struggle goes
on day after day in us to our
profit, we are driven most
beneficially to come to that
fourth stage which we do not
like, so as to gain purity of
heart not by ease and care-
lessness, but by constant
efforts and contrition of
spirit; /.../.

APPENDIX 2

ABSTRACT OF

The Dynamic Psychology of John Cassian¹

John Cassian in his two works De Institutis Coenobiorum and Collationes XXIV committed to posterity a description of the monastic life as he had himself observed it in the East around 380 - 400 A.D. These books have had a deep and lasting influence on the rise of Western monasticism and thereby on Western spirituality and morality in general. Although Cassian's insight into the dynamics of human behavior is generally acclaimed and studies of his spirituality abound, no work seems to exist that deals explicitly with the purely psychological contribution of Cassian or of the tradition he represents. The research hypothesis states that much valuable and sound psychodynamic material can be found in Cassian's works which can be classified and synthesized, using at times modern psychological terminology.

This synthesis is worked out in three chapters. Chapter II analyses the ideal which is a supreme and exclusive value, effecting in the well adjusted monk an integration on the most interior level of the personality. The

1. M.A. Thesis presented by Hans G. Furth, in 1953, to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa, xiii-118 pages.

consequent simplification of his entire life and role taking does not imply an impoverishment of the essential drives of human nature but is shown to be an enrichment in direct relation to the "interiority" of his life. Chapter III discusses the realization of this ideal through mental control and ego-involving concentration. Chapter IV, dealing with the more active life of the monk, speaks of the essential interior set which must be guided by insight to guard it from the self-deceiving tendencies of disintegrated drives. The discernment of the right means that condition the attainment of the goal is found to have an objective criterion in the monk's attachment to tradition.

Chapter V is devoted to the typical maladjusted monk, to his description and dynamic explanation as found in Cassian's books; at the same time some common defense mechanisms are classified according to modern usage. The preliminary first chapter investigates the environmental situation and the fathers' method of observation of human behavior.

These findings seem to confirm the hypothesis stated.

It is suggested that history of psychology should take more account of this kind of sound psychodynamics embedded from the very beginning in Catholic tradition and that a synthesis of scientific psychology and Christian morals should be made.

Finally a few points are singled out that could be fruitfully elaborated as a direct contribution to the present state of the science of personality and psychodynamics.