

The Logismoiv as Exempla of Evil in Evagrius Ponticus’ Thought: A Comparison With the Stoicism

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Evagrius Ponticus’ thought can be interesting in order to examine the Christian treatment of the *pathe* in relation to the capital sins. In fact, this philosopher devoted himself, among other things, to the encoding of the spiritual exercises necessary to fight with the emotions. But he was, above all, the author of a *Practical Treatise*, in which theorized in detail the deadly sins, inquiring about what Origen, following the Stoics, had called “first movement” and trying to determine the best way to achieve *apatheia*. In particular, Evagrius identified the existence of eight thoughts (*logismoiv*), who attacked the man: the thought of the throat, of fornication, avarice, anxiety, anger, listless depression, vanity or conceit and pride. In Later Christian thinkers these eight thoughts flowed to the seven Sins, encoded after a series of adjustments. The eight *logismoiv* of Evagrius were connected to the *pathe*. But these *logismoiv* were not considered *pathe tout court*, as evidenced by their being called by him “bad *logismoiv*” or *propathe*. The purpose of my paper is to examine the treatment of *pathe* and *capital sins* in Evagrius Ponticus, in order to emphasize how he, distinguishing between *pathe* and *propathe*, wanted to distinguish two kinds of evil.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, Stoic philosophy, passions, pre-passions, pathos

Paper

The definition of the nature of the Passion (*pavqo* in Greek) was at the centre of reflection of the ancient philosophers. In particular, in the context of Christian thought, already starting from the New Testament, the term *pavqo* is charged with two meanings: the neutral of suffering, in reference to the crucifixion of Christ and the witness of the martyrs, and the negative one of “passion” *strictu sensu*, conceived as Sin and therefore as Evil. As regards to this second meaning (which, in line with part of the philosophical previous tradition, identifies the *pavqo* with affections of the Spirit), we have witnessed a condemnation of passions, as Sins linked to the human condition¹.

The compulsion of the body and apathy of the spirit: In this contrasting dualism, we can summarize the *leitmotif* needed as background to the response of the Church Fathers to the problem of Passion as strictly defined. In fact, they refer to the impassibility (*ajpavqeia*) as the contradistinguishing virtue of a “good Christian”, conceived as capacity to accept and sustain the pain, but also as “lack of passions”, both physical and moral, where the latter were intended both as pain of body and as Devil temptations—namely the desires of the flesh.

I dedicate this article to Nicola Carafoli.

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¹ Starting from Saint Paul’s Letters (in particular that of Romans), the passions were negatively connoted, especially when they were identified with the sexual desires against nature (Cf. S. Pauli *Ad Rom.* I 26-27). In fact, he connected the bodily passions to the problem of a dualism flesh/spirit and to a negative conception of flesh, opposite to the positive of the Spirit, to which belonged the virtue of be apathetic/passionless (*ajpavqv*).

Evagrius Ponticus², a fascinating and cryptic figure in the history of fourth-century mystical thought, has used the term “impassibility” (ajpavqeia) with this meaning, to invite the man to the ascetic life³. He said:

A man in chains cannot run. Neither the mind that is enslaved to the passion can see the place of spiritual prayer. In fact, it is dragged and thrown by these thoughts full of passion and cannot stay firm nor quiet⁴.

He explicitly connected the concept of pavqo" to that of Evil, understood as Sin. In his opinion, in fact, Evil does not flow from enviable reality as such—that is as good as its Creator⁵—but by the failure to the passion, which derives from a perverse use of the irrational faculties, induced by some Demon enemy of man. Therefore, he has spent his life to examine the way in which the monk is able to reach the moral perfection and the spiritual knowledge. In particular, trying to determine how to achieve the impassibility (ajpavqeia), he has theorized in a detailed manner the fundamental Sins that can corrupt the man, leading him to vice; and he did so in a process of revising what Origen, developing the Stoic “first movements”, had called “bad thoughts”.

As a matter of fact, it is known that Evagrius has identified the existence of eight demonic thoughts (daimoniwvdei logismoiv"): the thought of gluttony (gastromargiva), the thought of fornication (porneiva), the thought of avarice (filargiva), the thought of distress (luvph), the thought of anger (ojrghv), the thought of listless depression (ajkediva), the thought of the love of human glory (tw'n ajnqrwvwn dovxa), and the thought of pride (uJperhfaniva)⁶: “There are eight general and basic categories of thoughts in which each thought is included. The first is that of gluttony, then impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and last of all, pride”⁷.

² Evagrius Ponticus (345-399), a long undervalued author, fell into relative oblivion following the Second Council of Constantinople, in which his writings were condemned for “origenism”. His condemnation in 553 led to many of his works being suppressed, some being preserved only through being ascribed to someone else (Nilus of Ancyra), or in oriental translations. Its rediscovery fits into the framework of the rebirth of the Patristic Studies, due especially to the Cardinals Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou (cf. H. De Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit: Intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris 1950), and was made possible thanks to the reconstruction of its treatises from the testimonies of the Armenian and Syrian versions, which was realized by Irénée Hausherr and Joseph Muyldermans (cf. I. Hausherr, *Le Traité de l'oraison d'Évagre Le Pontique: Introduction, authenticité, traduction française et commentaire* (RAM 35 and 36), Toulouse 1960; J. Muyldermans, *Evagriana Syriaca: Texte inédits du British Museum et de la Vaticane* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 31), Louvain 1952; Id., *À travers la tradition manuscrite d'Évagre Le Pontique: Essai sur les manuscrits grecs conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 3), Louvain 1932. On Evagrius cf. also C.-A. Fogielman, *Les deux traités à Euloge d'Évagre The Pontique*. Introduction, édition critique, traduction, commentaire et notes. Thèse de doctorat de Patristique Grecque, École Doctorale de l'École Pratique d'Hautes Etudes, Paris 2015.

³ Evagrius, to justify the necessity that the man had to choose the impassibility, reminded that the man could not—at the same time—, look at the world with passion and turn to God with love (cf. also Iohanni Climaci, *Scale Paradises*, 88. In fact, as John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, 306, states: “As the soul is single, it cannot love two opposite objects”). The therapeutic asceticism is thus considered as the only possible remedy to the passions. Cf., also, D. W. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, Washington, 2013, § 2.

⁴ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 7.

⁵ Cf. *Gen.* I 31.

⁶ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6. The sequence of the chain of thoughts follows the Plato's repartition of psychic powers: The rational part (logikovn) is related to pride and vainglory; the irascible part (qumikovn) is related to the anger and sadness and the covetable part (ejpikumetikovn) is related to avarice, lust and throat. Acedia, which normally is placed as the last thought of the irascible part, is something complex, deriving from a “congestion” of all the powers of the soul.

⁷ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6. On Evagrius' sources, see I. Hausherr, “L'origine de la théorie orientale des huit péchés capitaux”, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 30, 1933, pp. 164-1751. The eight evil thoughts are the canter-piece of several of Evagrius's writings. The *Praktikos* (or *Practical Treatise*) gives the classic description or each and offers various suggestions for combating them. The *Antirrhethikos* is a sort of scriptural battle-manual, which groups 487 temptations under the headings of these same eight thoughts. A third treatise, *On the Eight Spirits of Evil*, devotes two paragraphs to describing each of them. Finally, the *Peri logismon* (*Concerning Thoughts or Thoughts*) explores the eight thoughts by focusing and interplay their sequences.

In later Christians, these eight logismoiv became the seven Cardinal Sins, by a series of adjustments⁸.

In line with the thinking of the fourth/fifth century after Christ, the eight logismoiv of Evagrius were not real pavqh, although they had to do with what the previous philosophers had defined as true pavqh⁹. This is confirmed by the fact that they were called, precisely, "thoughts" (logismoiv)¹⁰.

There is a difference between pavqo" and propavqeiai, as between passion (*passio*) and pre-passion (*propassio*) and it is like that: the passion is regarded as a sin (*vitium*), while the pre-passion, although the guilt (*culpa*) of something that is beginning, is not treated as a matter of accusation (*crime*). Anyone who looks at a woman and has its own soul energized (*titillata*) is hit (*percussus*) by pre-passion. But once consented, it transforms a thought (*cogitatio*) in an emotion (*affectus*) [...] it is to pass from pre-passion to real passion. And what is missing is not the desire to sin but the opportunity¹¹.

In Evagrius, we find the same "attitude"; in fact, his opening account of the *Practical Treatise* is the following:

The most generic thoughts, in which every thought is included [are eight]. [...] It is not up to us whether any of these disturb the soul or not. But it is up to us whether they linger or not, or whether they stir up emotions (pavqh) or not¹².

Just a brief reading of some steps of Evagrius to note how he has established a fundamental difference between the pavqh and those that we might call pre-pavqh, namely the temptations (peirasmoiv) which can induce the man to be the victim of real pavqh. In fact, in his opinion, the pavqo" gains access only when man gives assent to the pleasure of thinking: "For a monk, the temptation (peirasmoiv) is a thought that rises through the emotional part (to; paqtikovn) of the soul, darkening the intellect. For a monk, a sin (aJmartiva) is the assent (sugkatavqesi") to prohibited pleasure of thought"¹³.

In this text we can see the influence of Origen, and in particular of those that he had called as "first movements", and that, in general, the philosophical tradition had previously called propavqeiai (Graver, 1999). According to Evagrius, the monk must know how to behave toward these thoughts, to tend toward hJsuciva, i.e. the inner peace (Zorzi, 2012)¹⁴.

It may therefore be interesting to analyze Evagrius' thought, trying to unearth in more detail the way in which he described the origin of passions and the mechanism of their arise from these thoughts (logismoiv). In

⁸ In his theory about the chains of demonic thoughts Evagrius is both a follower and a generator of a tradition: on this topic, cf. J. S. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius Ponticus. The Making of a Gnostic*, Farnham 2009, p. 36. So, Evagrius Ponticus' thought can be interesting in order to examine one particular treatment of the pavqh in relation to the capital Sins. In Dante's hands, it was used to represent the geography of the afterlife, both the *Hell* and the *Purgatory*. The one who brought Evagrius's list to the Latin West was the disciple, John Cassian (ca. 360-435), who cussed its components at length in two works, *the Institutes* and *the Conferences*. On this topic, see W. Harmless and R. R. Fitzgerald, *The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus*, "Theological Studies", 6, 2001, pp. 498-529 and C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, New York 1998.

⁹ Gluttony, fornication, anger *et caetera*.

¹⁰ The term logismoiv has been at the "center" of a long-time lasting Scholars debate. M. Frede (M. Frede & A. A. Long, *Free Will: Origin of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, Berkeley 2011, pp. 60-61) has pointed out the curious use of the term by Evagrius, describing it as "extremely puzzling", as "these impressions have their origin in the non-rational part of the soul or even the body, neither of which can reason". Frede suggests that Evagrius's point might be that the logismoiv persuaded reason and suggests that we might find something like this in Plotinus. On the contrary, according to K. S. MacInnes Gibbons, "Vice and Self-Examination in the Christian Desert: An Intellectual Historical Reading of Evagrius Ponticus", a thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy, University of Toronto, 2011, p. 146, there is a simpler way to explain why Evagrius employs a term normally referring to reasoning in regard to something as unreasoning, as the logismoiv appear to be; rather than taking his lead from the philosophical tradition, he embraces the tradition that sprung from Origen referring to the thoughts the demons provoke in us as logismoiv.

¹¹ S. Ieronymi, *Comentaria in Evangelium Sancti Matthei*, 6, 28, §§ 28-29.

¹² Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6.

¹³ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 10.

¹⁴ In fact, according to Evagrius, the man will be able to achieve this peace only after a hard fight to eradicate the Spirits and the suggestions that overlook in the heart.

doing so, it will try to highlight the presence of Stoics' references, because the lexicon of Evagrius impels us to produce this type of consideration and, in this context, we will try to highlight the similarities and differences between these doctrines.

The Evagrian Theory of the Origin of Passions: The Mechanism of the Devilish Suggestion

Antoine Guillaumont's work, and in particular his discovery of a new Syrian edition of *Kephalaia Gnostica* (Guillaumont, 1961), has permitted to better appreciate the theology of Evagrius and its relationship with Origen, allowing us to define the role of his doctrine in the context of the "origenist dispute" that has characterized the monastic contexts from 396 to 553 a.c.

As it is known, the majority of Evagrius's writings dealing with "practice", that is the conduct of life prescribed for the monk-hermit (Guillaumont, 2004), or "the spiritual method that purifies the passionate part of the soul" (to; paqhtiko;n mevro" th" yuch")¹⁵:

Faith (pivsti") [...] is obtained with the fear of God (fovbo" tou qeou"), and this strengthens with abstinence (ejgkrateia); the latter is inflexible yield by means of perseverance (uJpomohv) and Hope (ejlpiv"), from which was born the ajpavqeia, that has for daughter charity (ajgavph), which is the port of natural science (gnw'si" fusikhv"), which happens theology (qeologiva) and, at the end, the beatitude (makariovth")¹⁶.

This is also the context in which Evagrius inserts the inner examination of how it is possible to fight against demonic enemies which oppose the progress of monk towards God. The "practice" is in fact a fight, a war (povlemo"): The monk must fight (palaivein, ajgwnivzesqai), and combat (mavcesqai) against the Demons, that attempt to ground his project of sanctification¹⁷.

These forces are designated by the term losigmoiv that has the meaning of "bad thoughts" sent by a Devil to distract the monk from prayer¹⁸. In fact, according to Evagrius, the invisible world is populated by many Demons how many Angels¹⁹ interact with the man through the thought (losigmov"), which therefore does not originate in the mind of man but there is introduced from outside by Spiritual Creatures.

Knowledge about the type of these Demons, their *modus operandi* (meqodei'ai)²⁰, and the thoughts that they arouse constitutes the basis of "practice"²¹. It is worth recalling here that Evagrius believed that man would be

¹⁵ Evagr. *Gnostikos*, 2.

¹⁶ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 8.

¹⁷ Evagrius speaks several times about episodes of apparition (cf. Evagr. *Eulogius*, 27) not considered as pure statements under the allegorical point of view. In *Kephalaia Gnostic*, he said: "The bodies of Demons have value and shape, but they escape to our senses". Cf. also, Evagr. *Praktikos*, 5: "The Demons fight openly against the solitaries, but they arm the more careless of the brethren against the coenobites, or those who practice virtue in the company of others. Now thus second form of combat is much lighter than the first, for there is not to be found on earth any men more fierce than the demons, none who support at the same time to their evil deeds".

¹⁸ The understanding of the term losigmov" is crucial for the understanding of Evagrius system. Probably the direct source of Evagrius is Origen, who used this term in a negative sense, contrary to the Greek tradition, in which the term had always taken a globally positive connotation (cf. S. Bettencourt, *Studia Ascetica Origenis*, Studia Anselmiana 16, éd. Pontificium Institutum S. Anselmi/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma-Città del Vaticano 1945). In fact, according to Origen, these thoughts are the weapons of the Demons against the monks.

¹⁹ For this reason, according to Evagrius, the report with the invisible world needs a permanent supervision.

²⁰ The monk must therefore know the behaviour and the psychology of his adversaries: the Demons. The *Praktikos*, which treats of monastic *praxis* and is destined primarily for beginners, instructs on how the spiritual life consists of the battle against a specific chain of passions and the acquisition of a precise succession of virtues.

²¹ As a gnwstikov" Evagrius, was concerned with formulating adequate teaching about the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. He approached his task by assessing the subsequent stage or spiritual ascent culminating in the moral perfection (as the knowledge of natures, the knowledge of God and the final blessedness). Evagrius facilitated the learning process for his students by producing, in

equipped with various types of thoughts: the thoughts which are his own, namely the human thoughts, the angelic thoughts, and those demonic. In fact, he stated: “We have known the difference that exists between the angelic thoughts, our human thoughts and those that are from Demons (tw'n logismw'n tw'n ajggelikw'n kai; tw'n ajnqrwpivnwn kai; tw'n ejk daimovnwn)”²² .

In his opinion, the aim of the ascetic life consists in the knowledge and management of thoughts, and therefore in the fight against Evil, represented by the vices that originate from the action of these Demons²³. That is why his *Practical Treatise* is in a large extent about how to outwit the very clever Demons.

Reading Evagrius's works, to understand in more detailed way the manner by which the Demons act in order to produce the vice into the man, it can be seen that the Demons are clearly distinct from the thoughts that suggest, which differ from each other both depending on the Demon that it has caused, both for their type of action, which varies depending on the circumstances.

In a compendium on Evagrius, whose title is *Un philosophe au désert: Evagre le Pontique*, Antoine Guillaumont (2004, pp. 220-232) has tried to exemplify the *modus operandi* of these Demons, starting with discerning the “material thoughts” from the thoughts of the spiritual order²⁴.

For Evagrius, “material thoughts” are images of objects of desire (such as food, a sensual woman, the birthplace), which may derive from the memories of the subject and that can be produced by Demons from objects present in the environment. They can be also the cause of imagination, of dreams or hallucinations²⁵: “The Demon takes the form of a female face, to dope your soul so that the latter may compromise with him [...] with a thought licentious”²⁶.

Instead, the thoughts of spiritual order (spiritual thoughts) are reasoning that you impose upon the brain and which may suggest a behaviour contrary to the duty: For example, when the monk is attempted against the duty of hospitality, the thought “suggests that the brother is a vagabond: [suggests that] he must eat bread and then he has to go out”²⁷. But the thoughts induced by Demons can also suggest the aptitude towards vicious by means of false arguments or through complex reasoning²⁸, such as the following:

Go [to your family], give your family your presence that allows them to have joy and glory; you left without mercy, you gave them an unbearable pain; many are those who, without having fled their homeland, have obtained the virtues in the bosom of the family²⁹.

a number of his writings, terse and rigorously structured step-by-step manuals on how to progress in the spiritual life, such as the trilogy of *Practicus*, *Gnosticus*, and the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.

²² Cf. Évagre le Pontique, *Sur les pensées*, Édition du texte grec. Introduction, traduction, notes et index par P. Géhin, C. Guillaumont, A. Guillaumont, Paris 1998, n. 8, pp. 177-179.

²³ In fact, he considers that the temptations are due to demonic influences, as evidenced by expressions such as “demon of lust”, “demon of acedia”, “demon of sadness”, which connect the vices of man to the corresponding Daemon. The evagrian conception of the Christian life as a struggle against the Demons derives directly from Origen, which in Peri; jArew'n affirms the reality of the action of the Demons on the soul (cf. L. Perrone, “Chasser les chiens au moment de la prière. The image de l'orant entre les démons led et les anges: d'Origène à Evagre le Pontique”, in Aa. Vv., *Les forces du bien et du mal dans les siècles premiers de l'Église: Actes du colloque de Tours*, Septembre 2008, Paris 2011, pp. 157-186).

²⁴ A significant place in the work of Evagrius is occupied by the analysis of the thoughts suggested by the Demons, as thoughts inspired by the memories, thoughts suggested by objects or people in the surroundings and thoughts having an intellectual nature.

²⁵ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 17.

²⁶ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 17.

²⁷ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 25.

²⁸ Cf. Evagr. *Eulogius*, 1, in which he exemplifies the way in which the Demon of acedia is aimed at the monk: “Go [to your family], give your family your presence that allows them to have joy and glory; you left without mercy, you gave them an unbearable pain; many are those who, without having fled their homeland, have obtained the virtues in the bosom of the family”.

²⁹ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 1.

In addition, the Demons often seem to act together, coordinating their attacks, species within one of the three powers of the soul (e.g., Evagrius explains how the gluttony can promote the thought of fornication³⁰). It is worth recalling that, according to Evagrius, the complexity of the suggested thoughts (and therefore the power of the Demons) increases gradually as the monk proceeds on the way of Perfection³¹, and that there are some oppositions between the vices. In fact, he believed that the more material defects oppose more spiritual vices (for example, the thought of fornication and the thought of the love of human glory are opposite to one another³²). In fact, while the virtues they reinforce mutually, vices have a natural tendency to fighting each other.

Regarding the type of action that these Demons play, it seems that:

All demonic thoughts (daimoniwvdei" logismoiv) introduce into the soul images (nohvmata) of sensory things. The intellect (oJ nou") is stamped by them (tupouvmeno"), and carries around within itself the shapes of those objects. Thus from this it recognises the Demon that has approached³³.

According to Evagrius, the sense of perception that produces desire and emotions does so through mental representation, or nohvmata³⁴, a term which seems to be associated more with images than with more abstract concepts. As Elizabeth Clark has noted in her book *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Clark, 1999, Ch. 2; MacInnes Gibbons, 2011), the idea that these images in our minds arouse the passions is part of what she understands to be Evagrius iconoclastic's imagination³⁵.

In particular, according to Evagrius, Demons are capable of causing those thoughts that "excite the irascible or desiderative part of the soul", causing an "upheaval of the mind"³⁶. The logismoiv, therefore, are the traces left by the sensations, but above all they are the means by which the Demons make war to the solitary (that is the monk).

The concrete manifestation of the Demons, their work and the "levels of temptation" are described explicitly in the *Antirrhethikos* and in the *Practical Treatise*³⁷.

³⁰ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 19.

³¹ In the *Thoughts*, 34, Evagrius presents the complete system of the succession of the vices, and the system of the succession of Demons that become more and more powerful and that attack the monk if he resists the attacks of the Demons less powerful.

³² Evagr. *Eulogius*, 24.

³³ Evagr. *Thoughts*, 2. The full text, translated by Guillaumont (cf. Évagre le Pontique, *Sur les pensées*, Édition du texte grec. Introduction, traduction, note et index par P. Géhin, C. Guillaumont, A. Guillaumont, Paris 1998, n. 2, p. 155) is the following: "Toutes les pensées démoniaques (daimoniwvdei" logismoiv) introduisent dans l'âme des représentations (nohvmata) d'objets sensible: impressionné (tupouvmeno") par elles, l'intellect (oJ nou") porte en lui les formes de ces objets; et alors c'est d'après l'objet lui-même qu'il reconnaît le démon qui s'est approché. Par exemple: si dans mon esprit se forme le visage de quelqu'un qui m'a fait du tort ou m'a déshonoré, ce sera la preuve que la pensée de la rancune m'a visité; ou encore: s'il y a souvenir de richesses ou de gloire, il est évident que c'est d'après l'objet que sera reconnu celui qui nous tourmente; et il en sera de même pour les autres pensées: en partant de l'objet tu découvriras celui qui est présente et fait des suggestions. Je ne veux pas dire que tous les souvenirs de tels objets viennent des démons—car l'intellect lui-même, lorsqu'il est mû par l'homme, a la faculté naturelle de rappeler les images de ce qui existe—, mais seulement ceux qui, parmi les souvenirs, entraînent contre leur nature la partie irascible ou la concupiscible. C'est en effet à la cause du trouble de ces puissances que l'intellect commet en esprit adultère et violence, devenu incapable de recevoir l'image de Dieu qui lui a imposé sa loi; s'il est vrai que cette clarté-là se manifeste à la faculté directrice de l'âme (tw/' hJgemonikw/) à l'heure de la prière avec la suppression de toutes les représentations liées aux objets".

³⁴ We find this term in Aristotle and it is used by later Platonists.

³⁵ Cf. Evagr. *Thoughts*, 17: "The mental representation concerning a brother is said to be seized by wild beasts if it is pastured with hatred within us; similarly, that concerning a woman, if it is nurtured within us with shameful desire; similarly with that concerning silver and gold, if it is harboured with greed; the same is true with mental representation of holy charisms, if they are grazed in the intellect in the company of vainglory".

³⁶ Evagr 40. *Thoughts*, 2.

³⁷ Instead, in the sixth chapter of the *Practical Treatise*, Evagrius describes the passage from bad thoughts to passion. Evagrius says that the passion is generated when a bad thought persists in us. We must therefore hunt as soon as possible the Demon,

Evagrius and the Doctrine of Pre-passions

It has been said so far that Evagrius, explaining the origin of passions, distinguishes the latter from logismoiv, and has also been said that the latter were assimilated to pre-passions. It seems to be useful to continue this analysis by trying to define what they are in a more detailed way.

Now, for Evagrius, at the base of every passion there is the feeling (ai[sqhsi]), that generates a desire (o[rexi]): "Desire precedes every pleasure, and it is feeling which gives birth to desire. For that which is not subject to feeling (ai[sqhsi]) is also free of passion"³⁸.

Therefore, given that, according to Evagrius, sensations are transformed into thoughts that are the traces of material things left by Demons in our mind³⁹, we have that these thoughts—referable to the eight thoughts more times mentioned—are the basis from which originate the passions, through their action on the irascible and desiderative part of the soul.

We can summarize what has just been said by means of the following scheme:

Evagrius: The phases of the onset of passion (pavqo")
Feeling (ai[sqhsi])
↓
Mental representations (nohvmeta)
↓
Thought (logismov") (attributable to 8: the "eight bad thoughts") → Desire (o[rexi]) → Temptations (peirasmoiv)
↓
Passion (pavqo")

For Evagrius, says that it is not up to us whether these thoughts disturb the soul, but it is up to us whether they linger and whether they stir up emotions. This last remark distinguishes bad thoughts from decisively emotions.

Thoughts are in fact perceived as a transient *status*, while the passions are perceived as a bad *habitus* (eJvxi"). In this description, three moments can be detached: the onset of the pulses (unavoidable); the hold them in mind (which depends on us and which is the phase of the fight); and the passion or action kinky, i.e. the consent given to the bad pulse and the implementation of it:

The most generic thoughts, in which every thought is included [...] are eight. It is not up to us whether any of these disturb the soul or not. But it is up to us whether they linger (cronivzein) or not, or whether they stir up emotions (pavqh) or not⁴⁰.

Throughout his treatise, Evagrius will always follow this pattern, describing the three phases of the process of each vice:

Evagrius:
(a) the onset of the pulses (unavoidable); // existence of logismoiv
↓
(b) retain them in mind (which depends on us and is the phase of the Fight);—Assens or not
↓
(c) the action kinky, i.e. the consent given to the pulse bad and the implementation of it (pavqo")

recognizing the thoughts coming from Demons from those coming from the Angels. The latest weapon in the fight against Demons is constituted by the words of Scripture.

³⁸ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 4. Feeling is for Evagrius an "accidental faculty" which has its seat in the yuchv.

³⁹ Evagr. *Skemma*, 15-16.

⁴⁰ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6.

The fact that thoughts are only first movements is further confirmed by Evagrius when he says that the thoughts are only temptations (peirasmoiv). Meanwhile, the distinction of thought from Sin meant that a further transformation was required before Evagrius' thoughts could be turned into the deadly Sins, as they were by Gregory the Great. This is why the Christian Evagrius spent his life trying to refine the techniques to put in conflict the emotional thoughts, to be able to contain them before they could become full judgments—that is, before that, through the assent (sugkatavqesi") they could be transformed into Sin (aJmartiva)⁴¹—:

It is worth to underline one last important thing: According to Evagrius, the consent given at the thought aroused by the Demon is not a complete responsibility of the subject, because the power of Demons is very strong, as well as the effect produced by their action on the man's intellect (nou"):

Since it happens that at the moment of temptation the intellect is disturbed (eipeidh; kata; to;n kairo;n tou' peirasmou' sumbaivnei teqolwmevnon o[nta to;n nou'n) and it not see exactly what happens (mh; ajkriqw'" ijdei'n ta; ginovmena); here is what you have to do [...]: sit and remember what happened to you, [...] observes the details, in order to unmask [the action of Demons]⁴².

The fact that the Demons are the responsible for the onset of logismoiv (and hence of the pre-passions), and the fact that man must fight against them to not fall victim of passions, greatly depauperate the man against them from the point of view of the "efficient cause", but not from the point of view of ethics: Since, according to Evagrius, the passion is what we have to identify with the vice.

Evagrius and Stoic Philosophy

Scholars of Evagrius have repeatedly tried to establish a comparison between the thought of the latter and the Stoic philosophy. For example, Guillaumont has noticed that the Stoicism has supplied to Evagrius cues for his representation of the life of the monk, who must abandon everything in order to venture into a radical exile: xeniteiva, or exile for God⁴³. Even the Evagrian list of vices and virtues opposite is tired from *De virtutibus et vitiis*, which is part of the *Corpus aristotelicum*, but that is certainly the work of an anonymous that has undergone considerable Stoic influences. Even the question of the genesis of the vices follows a Stoic scheme.

In addition, in the *Treaty to Eulogius*, Evagrius says: "Desire (o[rexi") of honour, is imagination (fantasiva), because who has it, think to be a priest; you must make sure that your honour consists in an effort (povno") of the virtues⁴⁴.

In this phrase are mentioned two of the three faculties of the soul cited by Stoicism (Hadot, 2002): fantasiva and o[rexi". In fact, Evagrius uses the Stoic doctrine of perceptions as philosophical support to the analysis of the temptations: Concerning fantasiva, he uses this term as a vehicle of the thoughts of the throat, the lust and greed, that the Demons introduce into the soul through representations of sensitive objects—for the philosopher, as for the Stoics, the senses (and especially the view), depend on the representative faculty of the soul, even if he

⁴¹ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 10: "For a monk, the temptation (peirasmov") is a thought that rises through the emotional part (to; paqhtikovn) of the soul, darkening the intellect. For a monk, a sin (aJmartiva) is the assent (sugkatavqesi") to pleasure prohibited of thought".

⁴² Evagr. *Thoughts*, 9. In *Thoughts*, 16, Evagrius states (trans. Guillaumont, p. 207): "The malin démon invente encore mille autres stratagèmes qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de publier et de confier à l'écriture".

⁴³ As C.-A. Fogielman, *Les Deux traités à Euloge d'Evagre le Pontique*, states (p. 40): "Epictète insistait également sur la nécessité, pour quiconque souhaite embrasser la vie philosophique, de 'quitter frères, patrie, amis, familiers' (kai; dia; tauvthn th;n ajjtivan ajdelfo;n ajpejlipe", patrivda, fivliou", oijkeivou"). Les termes dans lesquels Evagre reprend cette idée sont proches de ceux du Stoïcien: patrivda, gevno", u{parxin ajqlhtikw'" ajpoduovmeno" ('te dépouillant de ta patrie, de ta famille et de tes biens, comme un athlète')".

⁴⁴ Evagr. *Eulogius*, 3.

thinks that the Demons can upset the harmony of the representations that reach the spirit by the senses. As regards the *o[r]exi*": For Evagrius, as for the Stoics, the desire (*o[r]exi*"") is negatively conceived. In fact, for the Stoics desires had to be controlled, while for Christian philosophers desires had to be grubbed, since they originated by means of the action of the Demons.

Moving on the analysis of the real "passions", it is worth recalling that the origins of Evagrius' doctrine of emotions are eclectic and difficult to trace back to define sources and specific authors. However, one can find, once again, some ideas about *ajpavqeia* in Stoic *milieu*⁴⁵. In particular, the background for Evagrius's idea of *ajpavqeia* has a precedent in Clement of Alexandria, who has introduced the doctrinal Stoic Corpus in theological reflection, Christianising it (Nieścior, 1998). The definition of virtue is identical in Stoicism and in Evagrius's doctrine and it coincides with the extinction of the passions (impassibility).

But, whereas, in Stoic terminology, the terms *ajpavqeia* and *eujdaimoniva* and are often synonymous⁴⁶, Evagrius considers the *ajpavqeia* is as simple prerequisite of happiness (*eujdaimoniva*), which consists in prayer: In fact, he considers that the absence of passions is a condition for achieving the beatitude, that is the elevation of the soul towards God through prayer.

Let's focus now our reflection on the previous pages, namely the problem of *logismoiv*, in order to see if it is possible to establish a comparison with the Stoic doctrines.

This theme has been repeatedly analyzed by Scholars, which however have formulated opposing thesis. In particular, it is worthy to mention two between the most interested studies in this regard that support both opinions: that of R. Sorabji (2000), *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, which identifies the Stoic *pre-pavqh* with the *logismoiv* of Evagrius, and the doctoral thesis of K. S. MacInnes Gibbons (2011, p. 145). MacInnes Gibbons, by examining the thought of Evagrius Ponticus, tries several times to establish a comparison between this doctrine and the Stoicism. According to MacInnes Gibbons, it is not possible to identify the Stoic *pre-passions* with the *logismoiv* of Evagrius, and it mentions in this context *Eulogius* 13, where Evagrius considers how it is difficult to know whether a passion has led to *losigmov*", or the *losigmov*" has led to a passion.

Here, it seems useful to investigate fatherly this matter and in order to do this we will start with providing a framework concerning the Stoic theory of passions.

Students of Stoicism have always stressed the degree by which Stoic individual theses are connected to one another, as in the case of Stoic theory of *pavqh* (Brennan, 1998).

According to Galen, the early Stoics—namely, Zeno and Chrysippus—understood the nature of passion in two different ways⁴⁷: as "impulse" (*oJrmhv*) excessive/inordinate, and as "mental error" or "error of judgment".

In particular, a report of the early Stoics tells us that Chrysippus said that the passions were judgments

⁴⁵ On the Stoic background to the Evagrius's doctrine see A. Guillaumont, *Introduction to Practicus*, ed. and translated by A. and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique Traité Pratique ou Le Moine*, SC 170 (Introduction), 170 (text), Paris 1971 (English: Evagrius Ponticus: *Praktikos and De Oratone*, translated by S. Tugwell, Oxford 1987). Cf. also M. Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église*, Paris 1957.

⁴⁶ According to Stoics, if passions (*pavqh*) pervert one's nature, to act according to a passion is to conduct oneself contrary to nature.

⁴⁷ Galenus de Plat. *Hipp. et Plat.* V 1, 4-5.

(krivsei")⁴⁸, while Zeno said passion was the irrational movement of the soul contrary to nature (to; pavqo" [...] hJ a[logo" kai; para; fuvsin yuch" kivnhsi") or excessive/inordinate oJrmhv (h] oJrmh; pleonavzousa)⁴⁹. He nevertheless equated the passions themselves rather with the movements in the soul that follow from opinion or judgment as a matter of temporal sequencing (Kerns, 2013, p. 64)⁵⁰:

Chrysippus attemptate to show that the passions are judgments of the rational part (krivsei" tina;" eij'nai tou' logistikou' ta; pavqh), but Zeno considered tha passions to be, not the judgments themselves (ouj ta;" krivsei" aujtav"), but the supervening contractions, dispersions, risings, and dejections of the soul⁵¹.

In fact, as it is known, Stoics conceived the soul in a very simple way, with a single centre—namely the mind or hegemon (to; hJgemonikovn)—, and they generally recognized four faculties of the commanding part of the soul or rational soul⁵²: impression (fantasiva), impulse (oJrmhv) assent (sugkatavqesi") and reason (lovgo"): "The Stoics say that the commanding faculty (to; hJgemonikovn) is the soul's highest part, which produces impressions, assents, perceptions and impulses. They also called it the reasoning faculty (to; logismovn)"⁵³.

This Stoic monistic and intellectualist account of the soul's impulse, unsurprisingly lead us to notice that he closely correlated the origin of the passions to the judgments of minds, assents, and opinions.

That's why, the Stoics conceived the passion in a negative way, as an error of judgment, and therefore as the result of the wrong use of the faculties that would otherwise act in connection with reason⁵⁴. In fact, as the false judgment, the passion leads to an excessive impulse, which exceeds the dictates of reason, representing the Evil for the man.

Moreover, according to the Stoics, every passion deals with two different judgments. One is that "there is good or bad (benefits or harm)"; the other one is that "is appropriate to react"⁵⁵.

The Stoics thought that there were four generic passions (pavqh): desire (ejpiqumiva), fear (fovbo"), pleasure (hJdonhv), and pain (luvph). They defined them as follows:

Desire is the opinion that some future thing is a good of such a sort, that we should reach out for it. Fear is the opinion that some future thing is an Evil of such a sort that we should avoid it. Pleasure is the opinion that some present thing is a good of such a sort that we should be elated about it. Pain is the opinion that some present thing is an evil of such a sort that we should be downcast about it⁵⁶.

⁴⁸ Galenus de Plat. *Hipp. et Plat.* IV 1 (135) = SVF 1. 461. According to Galen, Crysippus accepts a definition of passion as an irrational motion, and stresses that by "irrational" he means "disobedient to reason" and "putting aside reason" and "in respect of this motion it is customary for us to say of someone that they are forced and borne along irrationally without the judgment of reason".

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius VII 110 = SVF 3. 412. Zeno of Citium says that emotion involves not a mistake of reason, but actual disobedience to one's own reason (cf. also Stobaeus 2. 88. 8 Wachsmuth; Cicero *Off.* 1. 136 = SVF 1. 205).

⁵⁰ So, Stoics, conceived of passion as a type of "impulse" (oJrmhv) or event in the soul that gives rise to intentional action.

⁵¹ Galenus de Plac. *Hipp. et Plat.* V 1, 4-5.

⁵² Arnim, SVF (1903-5), 2.74, 826, 836, 839; Stob., *Anth.* I 49.33.

⁵³ Aët., *Plac.* 390.6-14 = SVF II, 836.

⁵⁴ In particular, according to Zeno, passion is identified with the result of a judgment, for Chrysippus with the judgment itself and, finally, for Posidonius, by force of desiderative and irascible parts of the soul (cf. Gal. *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.* IV, 3, 2-5).

⁵⁵ Distress is the judgment that hangs an Evil and so it is appropriate to have fainted (sinking). Pleasure is the judgment that hangs something good and that it is appropriate to try an expansion. The fear is the judgment looming evil and that it is appropriate to avoid it. The appetite is the judgment that hangs a fine and that it is appropriate to turn to it (reach for it). The two judgments may often be expressed as a single overall rating, but for some purposes we will see that it is important to separate the judgments.

⁵⁶ SVF 3377-420. As T. Brennan, *The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions* cited. states: "Sometimes the emotions are defined solely in terms of opinion (with the impulse implied) and other times in terms of impulse (with the opinion implied): (abbreviated definitions in terms of impulse): desire is the opinion of a good future (or, the expectation of good); fear is the opinion of a future evil (or, the expectation of evil); pleasure is the opinion (or, the fresh opinion) of a present good; pain is the opinion (or, the fresh opinion) of a

To these four basic passions you may be connected all the other passions.

For example, according to Stoics, anger was defined as a species of desire, namely desire for retaliation: "Anger (ojrghv) is the desire to take revenge for the alleged injustice or wrongly received; aggression is the wrath its initial phase (Qumo;" de; ojrgh; ejnarcomevnh); anger is mounting rage (anger) (covlo" de; ojrghv dioidou'sa)"⁵⁷.

The definition of anger that gives us Stobaeus is useful in the context of this study because it clarifies the Stoic theory of passions and, at the same time, allows us to connect to what is discussed above: namely the Evagrian doctrine of pre-passions. Here, it becomes clear that the passion itself consists of judgment and that it is important to distinguish the anger (ojrghv) by what we might call "change that precedes the passion", which is defined here qumov" and that looks like what elsewhere has been called, precisely, "the first movement".

We can continue this analysis deepening the distinction of the onset stages of passion, and then making an analysis of the Stoic doctrine of pre-passions (or propavqeiai), before ending with a comparison with Evagrius.

Propavqeiai in Stoic Doctrine

Though it is known that, according to the Stoics, propavqeiai are defined as involuntary responses, because they belonging to the realm of emotion and yet not counted as emotions, it is not easy to reconstruct their theory. In particular, the reconstruction of the history and conceptual meaning of the propavqeiai's doctrine is difficult because of the scarcity of texts clearly referring to it. But, as it regards the tradition that would connect Evagrius to Stoicism, scholars agree in admitting Origen as *trait d'union* between the two.

Indeed, in the early third century, in the biblical commentaries of Origen, we find the theory of propavqeiai. Origen used this word in order to explain the difficult piece of *Mt 26, 37* which tells of Jesus to Gethsemane⁵⁸. In this context, he noted that the biblical text says that Jesus began to feel sorrow and distress; in his view, the verb "begin" indicating that Jesus would be affected by an initial movement, an involuntary reaction, distinct from the full development of the pavqo", understood as a voluntary arrangement and therefore sinful⁵⁹. This has allowed Origen to admit some involuntary emotional movements and, as such, sinless (Spanneut, 2002), transforming Stoic first movements in "Evil thoughts", namely the logismoiv of Evagrius (Sorabji, 2000, pp. 346-351), which are negatively connoted.

If, therefore, there is a straight-defined tradition that from Stoicism can achieve Evagrius, it remains still unclear the determination of the originality of his doctrines.

It is known that the Stoics taught to get rid of the first movements. In their view, there were two types of first movements, or rather, they provided two descriptions of them: those physical and mental ones. If you shiver, you become pale, or you shed tears, you have to do with physical first movements. Instead, the mental first movements are more difficult to identify. Richard Sorabji (2000), *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, believes that first movements are the "contractions" or "expansions" we feel

present evil (Abbreviated definitions in terms of impulse): Desire is irrational reaching out; fear is irrational avoidance; pleasure is irrational elation; pain is irrational contraction (or, being downcast)".

⁵⁷ Stobaeus *ecl.* II 91, 10 = SVF III, 395. While you cannot avoid that things appear to us in a certain way, you can, however, avoid the reason assent to appearances. Most people automatically give assent to anything appears, but Stoics teaches how to deny/withhold its consent. Appearances do not become a judgment until we give the assent, and, according to Chrysippus, this is the judgment that constitutes the passion.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Commentary on Matthew Latin Series, Commentarii in Matthaemum*, 92.

⁵⁹ The exegete brings in support of this position the text of *Eb 4:15*, in order to affirm that Jesus was sinless. Jesus himself declares in that circumstance (*Mt 26:41*) that "the flesh is weak", that is subject to pavqh, but "the spirit is willing", i.e., is alien to pavqh.

in our chest when we are distressed or pleased and similar movements that we experience. In fact, the first movements are the result from the mere appearance that there is benefit or harm, but do not yet require judgment, and therefore they are not a real passion⁶⁰.

It is not easy to find a description of the first movement in the sources that we have about ancient Stoicism. There is a separate issue as regards to the Roman stoicism. Certainly, Seneca speaks about *primi motus*, Epictetus mentions “rapid and unplanned movements antecedent to the office of intellect and reason”⁶¹, and Cicero, in *Tusculan Disputation*, seems to refer to them, but the fragmentary texts that survive from the earlier generation of Stoic writers do not provide us with any sure reference.

The more specific study about the notion of “pre-emotions” or *propavqeiai* in the Stoic doctrine is an article titled “Philo of Alexandria and the Origins of the Stoic *Propavqeiai*” and written by Margaret Graver (1999). This article aims at demonstrating the relevance to the problem of *propavqeiai* in Stoic studies and to sketch out one possible account of the role played by the *propavqeiai* in early Stoic emotion theory.

Graver, premise that the problem is “open”, given that “some scholars have been willing to follow Karlhans Abel in making *propavqeiai* a component of the original Stoic position, others have treated them as a late innovation, perhaps by Posidonius or even by Seneca”⁶².

In any case, she must admit that it is only in the later Stoics of Roman Imperial times that we find some words clearly linked to the concept described by Evagrius and Origen⁶³. In particular, our most informative account, that is Seneca’s *De Ira*⁶⁴, presents as Stoic doctrine a lengthy discussion about involuntary effect, called *primus motus*⁶⁵, initial response, first prompting or first movement.

According to Seneca, first promptings (or first movements) are effects of impressions alone (*oblatae rerum species*)⁶⁶, without, or prior to the mind endorsement of those impression.

In *De Ira* II, 1. 3 Seneca wrote⁶⁷:

There can be no doubt that anger is aroused by the direct impression of an injury; but the question is whether it follows immediately upon the impression and springs up without assistance from the mind, or whether it is aroused only with the assent of the mind. Our opinion is that it ventures nothing by itself, but acts only with the approval of the mind. For to form the impression of having received an injury and to long to avenge it, and then to couple together the two propositions that one ought not to have been wronged and that one ought to be avenged—this is not a mere impulse of the mind acting without our volition.

II, 2.4: Singing sometimes stirs us, and quickened rhythm, and the well-known blare of the War-god’s trumpets; our minds are perturbed by a shocking picture and by the melancholy sight of punishment even when it is entirely just.

⁶⁰ Within the context of the stoic philosophy real, it seems that *propavqeiai* are relevant for Chrysippian passion theory, and in particular for his question about what exactly does it mean to say that emotions are voluntary.

⁶¹ Epictetus, Fr. 9, reported by Aulus Gellius, *N.A.* 19.1, p. 301.

⁶² Among those who have tentatively endorses Abel’s view are A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1987. The others claims are put forward in E. Holler, *Seneca und die Seelenteilungslehre und Affektpsychologie der Mittelstoa*, Kallmünz 1943 and J. Fillion-Lahille, *Le De ira de Sénèque et la philosophie stoïcienne des passions*, Paris 1984.

⁶³ According to M. Graver, *Philo of Alexandria and the Orgins of the Stoic Propavqeiai* cit., p. 302: “we might be inclined to conclude that Seneca’s language is indeed innovative, and that Greek philosophy has here borrowed from Latin». In any case, as Graver undelines, p. 302: “For the *propavqeiai* are also known to the Jewish commentator Philo of Alexandria, an older contemporary of Seneca, and were udes by him for the purposes of esegesi in his *Questiones et Solutiones in Genesim*”.

⁶⁴ Seneca, *De Ira*, 2, 1-4. He introduces his doctrine by the expression *nobis placet*, which is a regular formula for Senecan stating school doctrine.

⁶⁵ Seneca, *De Ira*, 2, 4.1.

⁶⁶ Seneca, *De ira*, 2, 3.1.

⁶⁷ Cf. L. Anneus Seneca, *Moral Essays*, Vol. I. and by J. W. Basore, London and New York in 1928.

II, 2. 5: In the same way we smile when others smile, [...]. Such sensations, however, are no more anger than that is sorrow which furrows the brow at sight of a mimic shipwreck, [...] but they are all emotions of a mind that would prefer not to be so affected; they are not passions, but the beginnings that are preliminary to passions (*sed omnia ista motus sunt animorum moveri nolentium nec adfectus sed principia proludentia adfectibus*).

II, 3.1: None of these things which move the mind through the agency of chance should be called passions; the mind suffers them [...] rather than causes them. Passion, consequently, does not consist in being moved by the impressions (*adfectus est non ad obltas rerum species moveri*) that are presented to the mind, but in surrendering to these and following up such a chance prompting (*sed permittere se illis at hunc fortuitum motum prosequi*)⁶⁸.

Here, when Seneca speaks about *primi motus*, he uses as *exempla* phenomena (like vertigo, responses to music) which are in no way “preliminary” to emotions but which are standing in lieu of them⁶⁹. The following part of the text seems to help more in order to understand pre-passions, as in it Seneca determines better these first movements and the mechanism that determines their manifestation:

Therefore that primary disturbance of the mind which is excited by the impression of injury is no more anger than the impression of injury is itself anger; the active impulse consequent upon it, which has not only admitted the impression of injury but also approved it, is really anger—the tumult of a mind proceeding to revenge by choice and determination.

4: That you may know, further, how the passions begin, grow, and run riot. I may say that the first prompting is involuntary, a preparation for passion, as it were, and a sort of menace (*est primus motus non voluntarius, quasi praeparatio adfectus est quaedam comminatio*); the next is combined with an act of volition, although not an unruly one, which assumes that it is right for me to avenge myself because I have been injured, or that it is right for the other person to be punished because he has committed a crime; the third prompting is now beyond control, in that it wishes to take vengeance, not if it is right to do so, but whether or no, and has utterly vanquished reason. II. 4. 2: We can no more avoid by the use of reason that first shock which the mind experiences than we can avoid those effects mentioned before which the body experiences—the temptation to yawn when another yawns, and winking when fingers are suddenly pointed toward the eyes. Such impulses cannot be overcome by reason, although perchance practice and constant watchfulness will weaken them. Different is that prompting which is born of the judgement, and is banished by the judgement⁷⁰.

Speaking about the second judgment (that is the judgment of assent) which concerns anger, Seneca does not speak of real assent, but he speaks about will (*voluntas*)⁷¹. Here, *voluntas* means “desire”: not rational desire, which is the meaning of the Stoics *voluntas*, but “desire not fully rational”, which is badly translated as “impulse”, but which might best be translated as “effort”. The desire is seen by Seneca and the Stoics as assent produced by the reason, which is distinguished from other assents by the fact that it regards what is appropriate to do. So *voluntas* and *impetus* (desire) mean “assent to an appearance regarding what is appropriate to do”.

Schematically, we can say that Seneca distinguishes three stages of emotion. First, an appearance of harm (or benefit) could arouse a “first movement” or initial shock in the soul. This is not yet an emotion since it lacks assent. Next follows a second movement of the soul, that is, the mistaken judgment or assent, which in turn leads to a third movement, where the soul is carried away and overturns reason and so is out of control (Sorabji, 2007, pp. 166-170; Sorabji, R. (1998, pp. 153-155).

⁶⁸ Seneca, *De ira*, II, 1.3-3.4.

⁶⁹ Because of this, according to Functional M. Graver, *Philo of Alexandria and the Origins of the Stoic Propavqeiai* cited. p. 302: “It is tempting to think that Seneca’s terminology of “pre-emotions” was not invented to describe the phenomena he cites, but was merely adapted by him from a source which used the term propavqeia”.

⁷⁰ Seneca, *De ira*, II, 3.5-4.4. Cf. also, Seneca, Ep. 11.1-2.

⁷¹ Seneca, *De ira*, II, 4.1.

Seneca: Anger
First movement: Appearance of harm (pre-pavqh or <i>primus motus</i>): the beginnings that are preliminary to passions (<i>principia proluentia adfectibus</i>)
↓
Second movement of the soul: the mistaken judgment or assent (che non pone un blocco ai pre-pavqh).
↓
Third movement: Passion/Anger (the tumult of a mind): It does not consist in being moved by pre-pavqh, but in surrendering to these and following up such a chance prompting (<i>Adfectus est non ad oblatas rerum species moueri, sed permettere se illis et hunc fortuitum motum prosequi</i>) ⁷² .

Also Epictetus seems to have been in agreement with these statements. In fact, in the *Fragment 9*, reported in Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, it is written:

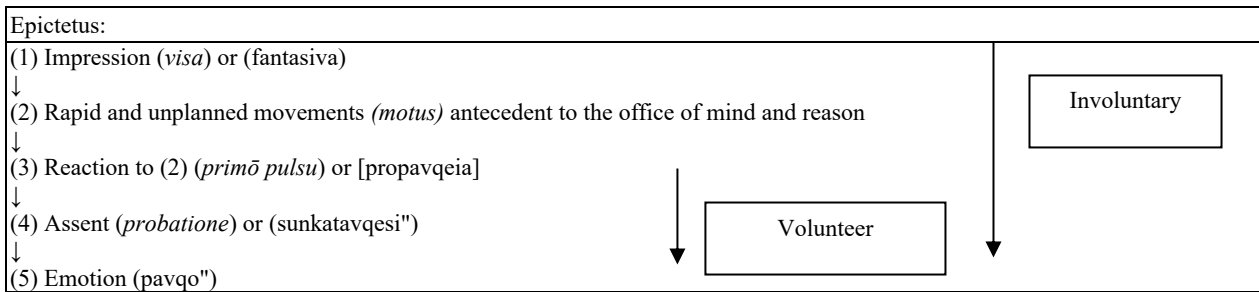
The appearances (*visa*) entertained by the mind, which the Greeks call *fantasivai*, and by which (*quibus*) the human mind is jolted (*pellitur*) right away at the first appearance (*primā specie*) of a thing impinging on the mind, do not belong to the will (*voluntas*), and are not chosen (*arbitrariae*). Rather, they infiltrate themselves by a certain force of their own as things for people to acknowledge (*noscere*). The approvals (*probationes*), however, which the Greeks call *sunkatavqesi*", by which these same appearances are acknowledged, are voluntary (*voluntariae*) and happen by human choice (*arbitratus*). Consequently, when some frightening sound occurs from the sky, or from a ruin falling, or as a sudden announcement of I know not what danger, or whatever else of that kind, the mind even of the wise person has to be moved (*moveri*) and to shrink (*contrahi*) for a little and to grow pale (*palescere*), not through recommending a belief (*opinio*) that there is something bad, but because of certain rapid and unplanned movements (*motus*) antecedent to the office of mind and reason. Soon, however, the wise person denies approval (*non adprobat*) to those same *fantasivai* of that kind, that is to those frightening appearances in his mind; in other words, he does not assent (*sugkatativqetai*) nor lend belief (*prosepidoxazei*), but he rejects them and spits them out. Nor does he see (*videri*) anything in them to be feared (*metuendum*). And they say that this is the difference between the mind of the wise and unwise. The unwise person thinks that things which seem to him dangerous and desperate at the first jolt (*primō pulsu*) of his mind really are like that, and when they have begun as if they were genuinely to be feared, he further gives approval (*adprobare*) by his assent (*adsensio*), and lends belief (*prosepidoxazei*)—for this is the word the Stoics use to discuss that phenomenon. But the wise person, after being moved (*motus*) briefly and slightly in his colour and countenance, does not assent (*sugkatativqetai*), but retains his stance and the vigour of the belief which he has always had about such appearances, that they are not in the least to be feared, but cause terror by putting on a false front with empty alarms. We read in the book I mentioned that the philosopher Epictetus thought and uttered these doctrines of the Stoics. And I thought that they ought to be noted down, so that we should think it not a sign of being unwise or cowardly, if when things happen to arise of the kind I have mentioned, we grow slightly jittery (*sensim pavescere*) and as it were go white, and so that we should think that we are yielding (*cedere*) to natural weakness in that so brief movement, rather than that we are judging (*censere*) those things to be as they appear (*visa*)⁷³.

Epictetus argues that an emotion cannot be said to occur in the virtuous person because, with the intervention of reason, a second mental event fails to take place. To these two events assigns Epictetus the Stoic standard terms “impressions” (*fantasiva*) and “assent” (*sunkatavqesi*), and he locates between impressions and assent a special type of response which is not the emotion itself, but it is a response to some “rapid and unplanned movements (*motus*) antecedent to the office of mind and reason”, which takes the form of *fantasivai* modified and which must be attended to or rejected.

Here's a breakdown:

⁷² Seneca, *De ira*, II, 3.1.

⁷³ Epictetus, Fr. 9, reported in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 19. 1. 15-21. Aulus Gellius insists that Epictetus's writings are “undoubtedly in accordance with those of Zeno and Chrysippus”.



As you note, there are no special differences from the theory of Seneca, at least for what concerns the characterization of pre-passions in relation to the real *pavqh*⁷⁴.

We just have to draw some conclusions by comparing these theories with that of Evagrius already exposed. But, before doing this, it seems appropriate to provide a brief account about the definition of anger in Evagrius, at the end of being able to be facilitated in the work of comparison.

Anger in Evagrius

In the *Practical Treatise* Ch. 40, Evagrius identified anger as “the most fierce passion” with the capacity to “darken the soul”. Evagrius imagined that “Demons [...] are servants of anger and hatred” and warned that they can seek to pervert a virtuous person from praying by “kindling” the person’s anger. His negative feelings toward anger are expressed in his instructions about prayer: “Anger is calculated to cloud the eye of your spirit and destroy your state of prayer”⁷⁵.

In addition, a complete description of the anger is present in Chapter 11 of the same book:

The most fierce passion is anger. In fact it is defined as a boiling and stirring up of wrath against one who has given injury, or is thought to have done so. It constantly irritates the soul and above all at the time of prayer it seizes the mind and flashes the picture of the offensive person before one’s eyes. Then there comes a time when it persists longer, is transformed into indignation, stirs up alarming experiences by night. This is succeeded by a general debility of the body, malnutrition with its attendant pallor, and the illusion of being attacked by poisonous wild beasts. These four last mentioned consequences following upon indignation may be found to accompany many thoughts⁷⁶.

For Evagrius, anger is always unjust⁷⁷, as it is a quick passion generated from thinking (*logismov*) that someone has insulted and ill-treated their loved ones and is manifested by physical phenomena such as the bubbling and the movement of the irascible part of the soul against those who are deemed to have committed abuse. In this description we can find some similarities to Stoic doctrines outlined above. Instead, as regards the problem of the stages preceding the passion, he states:

⁷⁴ Worth at least mentioning the existence of a Stoic doctrine of *eupavqeiai*, connected to this, even if not in a direct way. In Stoic terms, *eupavqeiai* are strictly rational effects occurring only in the sage, while *pavqh* are impulses contrary to reason. This is why the *eupavqeia* of joy is similar to delight in that it is a response to an impression of present goods, but differs from delight in being a fully rational response to the presence of a genuine good for humans, that is, to virtue itself.

⁷⁵ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 40.

⁷⁶ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 11. Cf. *Thoughts*, 16. Here Evagrius states (Trans. Guillaumont, p. 209): “Le démon de la colère imite aussi ce démon-là: il invente, lui aussi, certains parents, amis ou proches maltraités par des scélérats, et il pousse la partie irascible de l’anachorète à dire ou à accomplir quelque méchanceté contre ceux qui lui apparaissent en pensée. Et il est nécessaire d’être attentif à cela et d’arracher rapidement l’intellect à de telles images, de peur que, s’attardant en elles, il ne devienne à l’heure de la prière un tison fumant”.

⁷⁷ In the *Thoughts* (5) Evagrius states: (Trans. Guillaumont, p. 167): “Aussi est-il nécessaire de ne la provoquer sous aucun motif, juste ou injuste, et de ne pas tendre un funeste poignard aux auteurs des suggestions. J’en connais beaucoup qui souvent agissent ainsi et s’enflamment plus qu’il ne faudrait pour des prétextes futiles [...]. Pour ma part, je suis persuadé qu’un tel homme est loin de la prière pure, sachant que l’irascibilité est un fléau pour une telle prière”.

It is not in our power to determinate whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are to stir up our passions⁷⁸.

Finally, in *Scholia in Psalmos*, Evagrius deals with the difference between the real pavqh and the pre-passions: “My heart burned inside me. You can be not angry when you are gripped by the Demon of anger, but it is not possible that you don’t burn”⁷⁹.

Conclusions

At this point, there are all the conditions to make some concluding remarks on the topics covered so far.

For Evagrius, like the Stoics, Evil consists in vice/Sin, and thus in the passion. Only the passion is imputable since it is voluntary, while phenomena that precede assent are placed in a lower level of responsibility—or at zero level of responsibility. Moreover, texts such as those cited previously, taken from Evagrius, Seneca, and Epictetus, seem to confirm an identical point of view as regards the assessment of the responsibility that man has towards passions and pre-passions (and thus about the definition of vice, from the ethical point of view).

Evagrius: “It is not in our power to determinate whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are to stir up our passions”⁸⁰.

Seneca: “Passion, consequently, does not consist in being moved by the impressions (*adfectus est non ad obltas rerum species moveru*) that are presented to the mind, but in surrendering to these and following up such a chance prompting (*sed permittere se illis at hunc fortuitum motum prosequi*)”⁸¹.

Epictetus: “The appearances [...] do not belong to the will (*voluntas*), and are not chosen (*arbitrariae*). [...]. The approvals (*probationes*), however, which the Greeks call sunkatavqesi", [...] are voluntary (*voluntariae*) and happen by human choice (*arbitratus*). [...] And they say that this is the difference between the mind of the wise and unwise. [...] The wise person, after being moved (*motus*) briefly and slightly in his colour and countenance, does not assent, but retains his stance and the vigour of the belief which he has always had about such appearances, that they are not in the least to be feared, but cause terror by putting on a false front with empty alarms”⁸².

But there are differences between the Stoic doctrines and those of Evagrius, which is equally important to emphasize.

First of all, for the Stoics⁸³, passions are Judgements; for Evagrius, however, the psychological content that arouses passions is only imagistic. At the same time, the reference to the need to give the assent to a pleasant thought tends to obscure the Stoic idea according to which the pleasure presupposes the assent⁸⁴. In addition, the knowledge that Evagrius has the causal connection between the thoughts was not present in the Stoics. These have made a simple classification of the main emotions, convinced that all other were somehow tied to the principal. Evagrius, however, shows how the monk can put a bad thought in the fight against another, so that they neutralize each other. But if, for Evagrius, the vices fight each other, then—contrary to the statement by Stoicism—it is no longer the man who by his own will is the only creator of virtue.

⁷⁸ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6.

⁷⁹ Evagr. *Scholia in Psalmos*, 38, 4b.

⁸⁰ Evagr. *Praktikos*, 6.

⁸¹ Seneca, *De ira*, II, 3.4.

⁸² Epictetus, Fr. 9, reported in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 19. 1. 15-21. Aulus Gellius insists that Epictetus’s writings are « undoubtedly in accordant with those of Zeno and Chrysippus ».

⁸³ Excepting possibly Posidonius.

⁸⁴ Cf. R. Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind*, Oxford 2000, c. IV. 23: *From First Movements to the Seven Cardinal Sins*.

As regards the treatment of passions, it must be remembered that the Stoic theory on how to avoid stirring was transformed from Evagrius in a theory on how to avoid the temptation.

But what may be regarded as the most significant difference between the doctrine of logismoiv in Evagrius and the doctrine of Stoic pre-passions is that, Evagrius had recourse to the figures of Demons to justify the occurrence of humans logismoiv. In this manner, he has attributed to something completely alien to man the cause of Evil, denying that the man can be the cause (in the efficient perspective) of the onset of pre-passions. But above all, the personification of the cause of the vice (and thus the personification of the "Evil" connected with human instincts) was a way to talk of human nature maintaining a "optimistic" bottom. Out of a metaphysical dualism and out of any Gnostic temptation, which transposes the Evil in the divinity itself, Evil is considered having a pseudo-existence, as a kind of parasite that is grafted on the goodness of human nature and that perverts it. This is opposed to the Stoic doctrine according to which the passion, and therefore Evil, were rooted inside the *logos*, thus representing a sort of "soul revolting against itself". Believing, as does Evagrius, that human Evil is alien to the original constitution of humanity means believing that everyone can fight for their positive integrity.

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