

Julius Evola: about the ascetic lifestyle

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The word « ascett » comes from the Greek verb askéo, which means « do ». « Asket », in its original etymological meaning, is simply the one who exercises himself, who goes through a certain discipline. Based on this, one can imagine asceticism, which does not necessarily have a religious or mystical purpose, and even more so does not imply renunciation or renunciation of life. Asceticism can be any discipline aimed at strengthening the internal strength of the individual, creating peace and clarity within ourselves, at maximizing the cleansing of our existence from the parasitic plurality of erroneous reactions, useless unrest, irrational impulses, what Ignatius Loyola called inordinatae affectiones. And it is the designation of the purpose of the main book by the creator of the Jesuit Order that can also relate to asceticism in the generic sense now indicated: « exercises so that a person learns to conquer himself and streamline his life, not allowing to dominate a single rebellious tendency ».

However, one may wonder why we are talking about these things in the newspaper. This is because, due to many circumstances, they can be of actual value. Today, more than ever, this wisdom should be accepted: things and events in themselves mean little, the main thing is — attitude towards them, the meaning that a person ascribes to them. There are cases of — more numerous than you might think, — when the power of things and even what is usually called fate acts like that of a tamer who, although he treasured a new horse, was forced to repeatedly be disappointed, because she did not understand him yet; he diligently performed all parts of the exercises, but always stopped at the last, which with minimal effort, if he understood the language of the tamer, could easily overcome. This happens in life, both individual and collective: we get « » shots from all sides, being ultimately unable to, grab the meaning that would allow us to overcome the experience that would allow us to master it positively.

However, with the foregoing, we perhaps went a little beyond the scope of the area that we are going to deal with. Even the most ordinary everyday life, especially when times are not easy, offers many opportunities for a common « ascetic » discipline, if only a person decided to be active, that is, not reacting how inanimate things react, in which the only reaction to all events is shock. It is enough to pay attention to this in order to understand what an unthinkable and absurd role in the life of every person is played by the immoderate affection — and today, more than ever, it is immoderate affection, movement of the mind, which serve no purpose, which are only to shake the nerves and disturb the inner calm. According to a strange perversion, a Western person considers these useless unrest to be natural and normal, therefore, he does not think about responding to them. Moreover, even at higher levels, from the point of view of worldview, what it extols as « action » is in reality almost always nothing more than promiscuous excitement.

Let's look at a very commonplace case, but in our time « rites » and the like phenomena it occurs more often than ever: a case of impatience. This feeling is as « natural » as vain and irrational. Do we make the tram or train arrive earlier or reduce the number of people waiting for us, becoming impatient and nervous, changing our mood with the help of irritation and all kinds of fantasies? Here is a specific case for the use of asceticism, to overcome oneself, which must be developed into habit. One must be able to make a clear distinction between feelings, the adoption of which can have a real, objective effect, and useless feelings, which are purely and simply irrational disturbances, signs incapable of internal acquisition of the soul, submissive to his nerves. Undoubtedly, if we, firmly deciding, we will not allow us to nourish these irrational movements anymore, then a number of annoying conditions of today's life will completely change its appearance, will cost us as many trials and will pass, not only without poisoning our soul, but rather propitiating her with calm and superior power.

In Germany, the — Kampf um die Höflichkeit — politeness campaign has recently begun, precisely in connection with the many causes of irritation that life causes during the war. In trams, on the railway, in stores you can see cartoons or inscriptions calling for a polite attitude, no matter what. This is a new area of small asceticism, subtle inner overcoming, in which, as you know, the Far Eastern people were already masters, sometimes before the paradox: a smile even with extreme tragedy and higher self-sacrifice. However, this link should not make anyone think that we are calling them to « orientation ». Instead, it is enough to refer to the very origin of the term « politeness », which brings us back to the medieval yards and especially to chivalry; politeness — is the virtue of a knight, a courageous man who also, how he knows how to irresistibly rush at the enemy and injustice, knows how to rule over his own soul, shape his behavior, immediately suppress any disordered and instinctive movement. To be strict towards yourself, to be polite to others — has always been the maximum of the aristocratic spirit, the style of the one who is not « vulgar ». Therefore, an important point here is the understanding that this is not so much concern for others, about « the lower », but « ascetic » need, the need for internal freedom. « Another » may well justify my harsh reaction; but I will not let him provoke her and thereby give me to his mercy — I will « amorous », no matter what. Therefore, one can foresee what power can arise as a result of such a discipline. knows how to rule over one's own soul, shape one's behavior, immediately suppress any disordered and instinctive movement. To be strict towards yourself, to be polite to others — has always been the maximum of the aristocratic spirit, the style of the one who is not « vulgar ». Therefore, an important point here is the understanding that this is not so much concern for others, about « the lower », but « ascetic » need, the need for internal freedom. « Another » may well justify my harsh reaction;

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Avtarkiia: today it is, as you know, a noisy word and, unfortunately, something born not so much of virtue as of necessity. In the ancient world, this was not so. Etymologically, « autarky » means: « have your own principle », and this in ancient, classical ethics was a positive value. Only he is free, — said the ancients, — who has his own principle in himself, and not in others or in something else. Outside of « Wise Men » the concept of self-sufficiency was embodied, thus, in the Divine, as « pure act ». If autarky is different today and, as we have said, is primarily a product of necessity, then the important « ascetic » task will be to convert such « need » to « converter », namely through a change in internal installation. Here we mean the individual sphere, and not the sphere of collectives and states, and, above all, the regime of restrictions and deprivations of wartime. The following principle is very important: the severity of deprivation disappears almost to the extent that it can be perceived as desired, and not as imposed.

You can say: you want to return to the apology of the fox, which says that the grapes to which it cannot reach are not ripe? It depends on the circumstances. The passive enjoyment of animals (and those who have reduced themselves to an animal state) and the active enjoyment of those who remain the master of themselves should be distinguished. But active pleasure has a certain reservation: you enjoy those things in respect of which you have proved to yourself that you can do without them. Then it all comes down to understanding how much effort is enough to consider the restrictions and deprivations that took place in exceptional cases and which, of course, will not last indefinitely, namely as evidence: as an opportunity to show yourself that you can do without them — to confirm, thus, fundamental

freedom. Unless tomorrow — with this additional guarantee — to reiterate itself, and even then to a wider extent.

For some things, — for some artificial designs that have become habits of semi-neurotic creatures — it should be easy. The fact that a modern person suffers, for example, from the lack of coffee or tobacco, that is, things that all of humanity ignored a couple of centuries ago, — is, if you think about it, simply ridiculous. In other cases, the test will be more severe. But the more valuable will be the power that a person has to overcome it. In the previous article, we talked about traditions according to which the experience of war itself can turn into asceticism in the highest and transformative sense, if only there is a certain internal attitude. Although on a much smaller scale, such transformations are possible in the rear. The thing is to internally « mobilize » yourself, abandon the habit of passivity and irrationality. Then then, that for some it will seem boring, deprivation and torment, for others — the best — will serve as an incentive to shake off and get to your feet.