

## **The Infinite Thirst of Man and the Passions**

Now the infinite thirst of the passions in themselves is explained in this way: The human being has a spiritual basis and therefore a tendency toward the infinite which also is manifested in the passions; but in these passions the tendency is turned from the authentic infinite which is of a spiritual order, toward the world, which only gives an illusion of the in-finite. Man, without being himself infinite, not only is fit, but is also thirsty for the infinite and precisely for this reason is also capable of, and longs for, God, the true and only infinite (*homo capax divini*—man capable of the divine). He has a capacity and is thirsty for the infinite not in the sense that he is in a state to win it, to absorb it in his nature— because then human nature itself would become infinite—but in the sense that he can and must be nourished spiritually from the infinite, and infinitely. He seeks and is able to live in a continual communication with it, in a sharing with it. But man didn't want to be satisfied with this sharing in the infinite; he wanted to become himself the center of the infinite, or he believed that he is such a center; he let himself be tricked by his nature's thirst for the infinite.

This always unsatisfied infinite thirst is due both to the passion in itself, as well as to the object with which it seeks satisfaction. The objects which the passions look for can't satisfy them because objects are finite and as such don't correspond to the unlimited thirst of the passions. Or as St. Maximus puts it, the passionate person finds himself in a continuous preoccupation with nothing; he tries to appease his infinite thirst with the nothingness of his passions, and the objects which he is gobbling up become nothing, by their very nature. In fact, a passion by its very nature searches for objects, and it seeks them only because they can be completely under the control of the ego, and at its mercy. But objects by nature are finite, both as sources of satisfaction and in regard to duration; they pass easily into nonexistence, by consumption. Even when the passion is focused on a human person in order to be satisfied, it likewise reduces him or her to an object, or sees and uses only the objective side; the unfathomable depths hidden in the subjective side escape him.