

QUESTION 37

The Effects of Pain or Sadness

Next we have to consider the effects of pain or sadness (*de effectibus doloris vel tristitiae*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Does pain remove the ability to learn something new? (2) Is the mind's being weighed down (*aggravatio animi*) an effect of sadness or pain? (3) Does sadness or pain weaken every operation? (4) Does sadness harm the body more than the other passions of the soul do?

Article 1

Does pain remove the ability to learn something new?

It seems that pain does not remove the ability to learn something new (*non auferat facultatem addiscendi*):

Objection 1: Isaiah 26:9 says, "When you issue your judgments on the earth, the inhabitants of the world will all learn justice." And further on (26:16): "In the tribulation of murmuring (*in tribulatione murmuris*) your teaching was with them." But pain or sadness follows in the hearts of men from God's judgments and from tribulation. Therefore, pain or sadness does not remove, but instead strengthens, the ability to learn something new.

Objection 2: Isaiah 28:9 says, "Whom shall He teach knowledge to? And whom shall He make to understand what is heard? Those who are weaned from milk, who are drawn away from the breast," i.e., from pleasures. But it is pain and sadness that especially take away pleasure. For as *Ethics 7* explains, sadness impedes all pleasure; and Ecclesiasticus 11:29 says, "The affliction of an hour makes one oblivious to the greatest delights." Therefore, pain does not remove, but instead confers, the ability to learn something new.

Objection 3: As was explained above (q. 35, a. 7), interior sadness surpasses exterior pain. But a man is able to learn something new at the same time that he is sad. Therefore, *a fortiori*, he can learn something new at the same time that he is in bodily pain.

But contrary to this: In *Soliloquia 1* Augustine says, "..... though I was tormented with a very sharp toothache in those days, so that I was able to turn over in my mind only those things that I had already securely learned, and I was altogether prevented from learning anything that required the full attention of my mind."

I respond: Since all the powers of the soul are rooted in the one essence of the soul, it must be the case that when the soul's attention (*intentio animae*) is strongly drawn to the operation of one power, it is drawn back from the operation of another; for a single soul can only have one act of attention (*una intentio*). Because of this, if something draws all the mind's attention, or a large part of it, to itself, then that is incompatible with something else's needing close attention (*magnam attentionem*).

Now it is clear that sensible pain draws the soul's attention to itself to the highest degree, since, as is likewise apparent in the case of natural things, each thing naturally tends with full inclination (*tota intentione*) toward repelling what is contrary to it. Similarly, it is also clear that to learn something new (*addiscendum aliquid de novo*) requires study and effort along with close attention (*cum magna intentione*); this is clear from what Proverbs 2:4-5 says: "If you seek wisdom as if it were money, and dig for her as for a treasure, then you will understand the teaching." And so if the pain is intense, it keeps a man from being able to learn anything new. Moreover, pain can be intensified to such a degree that, at the instant of the pain, a man cannot even think about what he previously knew. However, on this point there is a diversity in accord with the different degrees of love that a man has for learning or thinking. The greater this love is, the more he keeps his mind's attention from being completely turned toward the pain.

Reply to objection 1: A moderate sadness that keeps the mind from wandering can contribute to the undertaking of learning—especially the learning of those things through which a man hopes he can be

freed from the sadness. And it is in this sense that in the “tribulation of murmuring” men are more receptive to God’s teaching (*homines doctrinam Dei magis recipit*).

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as they draw the soul’s attention to themselves, both pleasure and pain impede reason’s inquiry. Hence, *Ethics 7* says, “In the midst of sexual pleasure, it is impossible to have an intellectual understanding of anything.”

Yet pain draws the soul’s attention to itself more than pleasure does. We likewise see in the case of natural things, too, that a natural body’s action is intensified against a contrary; for instance, heated water is acted upon more intensely by the cold, so that it freezes more solidly. Therefore, if the pain or the sadness is moderate, then it can contribute *per accidens* to learning something new insofar as it removes an excess of pleasure. But *per se* it impedes learning, and if it is intensified, it totally removes it.

Reply to objection 3: Exterior pain occurs because of some bodily damage, and so it has a greater corporeal change adjoined to it than does interior pain—even though interior pain is nonetheless greater because of the formal element in pain, which comes from the soul (*secundum illud quod est formale in dolore, quod est ex parte animae*). And so bodily pain is more of an obstacle to contemplation, which requires absolute quiet (*omnimodam quietem*), than is interior pain. And yet even interior pain, if it is intensified to a great degree, draws the mind’s attention in such a way that the man cannot learn anything new. Hence, because of sadness Gregory himself interrupted his commentary on Ezechiel.

Article 2

Is the mind’s being weighed down an effect of sadness?

It seems that the mind’s being weighed down (*aggravatio animi*) is not an effect of sadness:

Objection 1: In 2 Corinthians 7:11 the Apostle says, “Behold, this very fact that you were made sorrowful in accord with God—what great solicitude it works in you, what readiness for defense and indignation” But solicitude and indignation have to do with the mind’s being lifted up, which is the opposite of its being weighed down (*sollicitudo et indignatio ad quandam erectionem animi, quae aggravatione opponitur*). Therefore, the mind’s being weighed down is not an effect of sadness.

Objection 2: Sadness is opposed to pleasure. But being widened is an effect of pleasure (q. 33, a. 1), and it is being constricted—not being weighed down—that is opposed to being widened. Therefore, being weighed down should not be posited as an effect of sadness.

Objection 3: As is clear from what the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 2:7 (“Lest perhaps one who is of this sort should be absorbed by abundant sorrow”), it belongs to sadness to absorb. But what is weighed down is not absorbed; instead, it is pressed down under something heavy, whereas what is absorbed comes to be included within what absorbs it. Therefore, being weighed down should not be posited as an effect of sadness.

But contrary to this: Gregory of Nyssa and Damascene both posit a sadness that weighs one down.

I respond: The effects of the passions of the soul are sometimes named metaphorically because of a likeness to sensible bodies, given that the movements of an animal appetite are similar to the inclinations of a natural appetite. It is in this way that intense heat (*fervor*) is attributed to love, being widened (*dilatatio*) is attributed to pleasure, and being weighed down is attributed to sadness. For a man is said to be weighed down because he is impeded from his proper movement by something heavy.

Now it is clear from what said above (q. 36, a. 1) that sadness has to do with a present evil, and this evil is such that by the very fact that it is opposed to the will’s movement, it weighs down the mind insofar as it keeps it from enjoying what it wants.

Now even if the mind is weighed down to the extent that at present it does not possess what it

wants, still, if the force of the evil that makes one sad is not great enough to take away the hope of escape, then there remains a movement to repel the harmful thing that makes one sad. On the other hand, if the force of the bad thing grows to such an extent that it excludes the hope of escape, then the tormented man's interior movement will be impeded absolutely speaking, so that it is unable to turn this way or that. And sometimes even the exterior movement of the body is impeded, so that the man remains stupefied within himself.

Reply to objection 1: This 'lifting up' of the mind has its source in the sadness that is "in accord with God," and this because of the hope, which is adjoined to it, for the remission of sins.

Reply to objection 2: As regards the appetitive movement, 'being constricted' and 'being weighed down' amount to the same thing. For from the fact that the mind is weighed down, so that it cannot proceed freely to exterior things, it withdraws into itself, as if constricted within itself.

Reply to objection 3: Sadness is said to absorb a man when the power of the evil that makes him sad affects the soul in such a way as to cut off all hope of escape. And so it is likewise in the same way that sadness weighs a man down and absorbs him.

For in the case of what is said metaphorically, certain claims follow which seem to be opposed to one another when they are taken in their proper senses.

Article 3

Does sadness impede every operation?

It seems that sadness does not impede every operation:

Objection 1: Solicitude is caused by sadness, as is clear from the passage adduced above from the Apostle (2 Corinthians 7:11). But solicitude helps one to operate well; hence, in 2 Timothy 2:15 the Apostle says, "Be solicitous to present yourself as a workman without disgrace." Therefore, sadness does not impede an operation, but instead helps one to operate well.

Objection 2: As *Ethics 7* says, in many men sadness is cause of concupiscence. But concupiscence makes for a more intense operation. Therefore, so does sadness.

Objection 3: Just as those who are rejoicing have certain proper operations, so too certain operations belong to those who are sad, e.g., to lament. But each thing is strengthened by what agrees with it. Therefore, there are some operations that are improved, and not impeded, because of sadness.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics 10* the Philosopher says that "pleasure perfects an operation," but that, on the contrary, "sadness impedes it."

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 2), sometimes sadness does not weigh the mind down or absorb it to such an extent that it prevents every interior and exterior movement; instead, certain movements are in some cases caused by sadness itself. So, then, there are two ways in which an operation can be related to sadness:

In one way, as that which the sadness is directed toward (*id de quo est tristitia*). And on this score sadness impedes every operation, since what we do with sadness is such that we never do it as well as what we do with pleasure or without sadness. The reason for this is that the will is the cause of a human operation, and so when it is an operation with respect to which one is saddened, the action has to be weakened.

In the second way, an operation is related to the sadness as to its source and cause. And in this way such an operation has to be strengthened by the sadness, in the sense that the more someone is saddened by a given thing, the harder he tries to expel the sadness—as long as the hope of expelling it remains, since otherwise there would be no movement or operation caused by the sadness.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: This makes clear the replies to the objections.

Article 4

Is it sadness that inflicts the most harm on the body?

It seems that it is not sadness that inflicts the most harm on the body:

Objection 1: Sadness has spiritual *esse* in the soul. But things that have only spiritual *esse* do not cause corporeal change, as is clear in the case of the intentions of the colors which exist in the air and by which bodies are not colored. Therefore, sadness does not do harm to any corporeal thing.

Objection 2: If sadness does harm to some bodily thing, then this happens only insofar as it has some bodily change adjoined to it. But as was explained above (q. 22, aa. 1 and 3), a bodily change is found in every passion of the soul. Therefore, sadness does not harm the body more than the other passions of the soul do.

Objection 3: In *Ethics* 7 the Philosopher says, “Anger and concupiscence drive some men mad,” and this seems to be the greatest harm, since reason is the most excellent thing that exists in a man. In addition, despair (*desperatio*) seems to be more harmful than sadness, since it is a cause of sadness. Therefore, sadness does not harm the body more than other passions of the soul do.

But contrary to this: Proverbs 17:22 says, “A joyful mind makes age flourish, a sorrowful spirit dries up the bones.” And Proverbs 25:20 says, “As a moth harms a garment, and a worm harms wood, so a man’s sadness harms the heart.” And Ecclesiasticus 38:19 says, “Out of sadness death comes speedily.”

I respond: Of all the passions of the soul, it is sadness that most harms the body. The reason for this is that sadness, unlike the other passions of the soul, is opposed to human life because of the very species of its movement and not just because of its measure or quantity. For human life consists in a certain motion (*humana vita consistit in quadam motione*) that is diffused from the heart into the other members of the body, and this motion belongs to human nature in a determinate measure. Therefore, if this motion exceeds the appropriate measure, it will be opposed to human life in the measure of its quantity, but not in the likeness of its species. On the other hand, if the course of the motion is impeded, then that will be opposed to human life in its species.

Now notice that in the case of all the passions of the soul, the bodily change that is the material element in the passions is conformed and proportioned to the appetite’s movement, which is the formal element, in the same way that matter is proportioned to form in all things. Therefore, those passions of the soul that involve a movement of the appetite toward pursuing something—e.g., love, joy, desire, etc.—are not opposed to the vital movement because of their species, but they can be opposed to it because of their quantity. And so they help the nature of the body because of their species, but can harm it because of their excess. By contrast, the passions that involve an appetitive movement with aversion or a sort of retraction are opposed to the vital motion not only because of their quantity but also because of the species of their movement, and so they are harmful absolutely speaking. Among these are fear, despair, and, above all, sadness, which weighs down the mind because of a present evil, the impression of which is stronger than is that of a future evil.

Reply to objection 1: Since the soul by its nature moves the body, the soul’s spiritual movement is naturally a cause of bodily change. Nor is there a similarity to spiritual intentions, since the latter do not have the natural role of moving other bodies that are not apt to be moved by the soul.

Reply to objection 2: The other passions involve bodily changes that are conformed in their species to the vital motion, but, as has been explained above, sadness involves a change that is contrary to the vital motion.

Reply to objection 3: The use of reason is impeded by less weighty causes (*ex leviore causa*) than those that life is corrupted by; for we see many sicknesses that undermine the use of reason and yet do not take away life.

Still, fear and anger do inflict bodily harm by being mixed in with sadness, and this because of the absence of what is desired.

Moreover, sadness itself takes away reason, as is clear in the case of those men who because of pain fall into melancholy or mania.