

QUESTION 48

The Effects of Anger

Next we have to consider the effects of anger. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Is anger a cause of pleasure? (2) Is it especially anger that is a cause of fervor or violent heat (*fervor*) in the heart? (3) Does anger especially impede the use of reason? (4) Is anger a cause of speechlessness (*taciturnitas*)?

Article 1

Is anger a cause of pleasure?

It seems that anger is not a cause of pleasure:

Objection 1: Sadness excludes pleasure. But anger is always accompanied by sadness, since, as *Ethics 7* says, “Everyone who does something because of anger does it while he is saddened.” Therefore, anger is not a cause of pleasure.

Objection 2: In *Ethics 4* the Philosopher says, “The act of punishing (*punitio*) quiets the force of anger, bringing about pleasure in the place of sadness.” From this one can infer that it is through the act of punishing that pleasure comes to the one who is angry. But the act of punishing eliminates the anger (*punitio excludit iram*). Therefore, when the pleasure arrives, the anger is gone. Therefore, the anger is not an effect that is conjoined to the pleasure.

Objection 3: No effect impedes its own cause, since it shares its form with its cause (*sit suae causae conformis*). But as *Rhetoric 2* says, pleasure eliminates anger. Therefore, pleasure is not an effect of anger.

But contrary to this: In the same book the Philosopher adduces the proverb that anger “grows much sweeter than honey spreading through the hearts of men.”

I respond: As the Philosopher points out in *Ethics 7*, instances of pleasure—especially sensible and bodily pleasure—are a sort of medicine against sadness, and so the greater the sadness or anxiety for which the pleasure is offered as a remedy, the greater the degree to which the pleasure is perceived. For instance, it is clear that when someone is thirsty, drinking becomes more pleasurable for him.

Now it is clear from what has been said above (q. 47, aa. 1 and 3) that the movement of anger arises from a saddening injury that has been inflicted, and that the remedy for this sadness is applied by exacting retribution (*cui tristitiae remedium adhibetur per vindictam*). And so pleasure follows upon the presence of the retribution; and the greater the sadness was, the greater the pleasure is. Therefore, if the retribution is present *in reality*, then there is a complete pleasure (*perfecta delectatio*) that totally eliminates the sadness and thereby quiets the movement of anger.

However, there are two ways in which the retribution is present to the one who is angry *before* it is present in reality:

In one way, through *hope*. For as was explained above (q. 46, a. 1), no one gets angry unless he hopes for retribution.

In a second way, through *continuous thought* (*secundum continuam cogitationem*). For anyone who has a desire takes pleasure in lingering over the thought of what he desires; this is also why images from dreams are pleasurable. And so when someone who is angry keeps mulling over retribution in his mind (*multum in animo suo cogitet de vindicta*), he takes pleasure from this. Yet this pleasure is not the complete pleasure that eliminates sadness and thereby eliminates anger.

Reply to objection 1: Someone who is angry is not saddened by the same thing that he rejoices over. Rather, he is saddened by the injury that has been inflicted, whereas he takes pleasure in the retribution that he is thinking about and hoping for. Hence, the sadness is related to the anger as its source, while the pleasure is related to it as its effect or terminus.

Reply to objection 2: This objection goes through for the pleasure that is caused by the real presence of retribution, which totally eliminates the anger.

Reply to objection 3: Antecedent pleasures keep sadness from following and, as a result, they impede anger. But pleasure with respect to retribution follows upon anger.

Article 2

Is fervor an effect especially of anger?

It seems that fervor or violent heat (*fervor*) is not an effect especially of anger:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 28, a. 5), fervor pertains to love. But as was also explained above (q. 27, a. 4), love is the source and cause of all the passions. Therefore, since a cause is more powerful than its effect, it does not seem that it is especially anger that is a cause of fervor.

Objection 2: Things that in their own right (*de se*) excite fervor grow stronger by persisting through time (*per temporis assiduitatem magis augentur*); for instance, love grows stronger when it lasts for a long time (*sicut amor diuturnitate conualescit*). But anger becomes weaker through the course of time; for in *Rhetoric 2* the Philosopher says, “Time quiets anger.” Therefore, anger is not properly speaking a cause of fervor.

Objection 3: When fervor is added to fervor, it increases the fervor. But as the Philosopher says in *Rhetoric 2*, “When a greater anger is added to anger, it makes the former anger become gentle.” Therefore, anger is not a cause of fervor.

But contrary to this: Damascene says, “Anger is the fervor of the blood which surrounds the heart and which results from the evaporation of the bile” (*ex evaporatione fellis fiens*).

I respond: As has been explained (q. 44, a. 1), the bodily changes involved in the passions of the soul are proportioned to the appetite’s movement. Now it is clear that every desire, even a natural desire, tends more strongly toward what is contrary to itself if a contrary is present. Hence, we see that heated water freezes more solidly, since the cold acts more strongly, as it were, on what is hot.

Now anger’s appetitive movement is caused by an inflicted injury, which serves as a sort of contrary that is present. And so the appetite tends very forcefully (*potissime tendit*) toward repelling the injury through a desire for retribution, and it is from this desire that the great vehemence and impetuosity (*vehementia et impetuositas*) of anger’s movement follows. And since anger’s movement does not have the mode of a withdrawal (*non est per retractionis*), which is what cold is proportioned to, but instead has the mode of an incursion (*est per modum insecutionis*), which is what heat is proportioned to, the result is that anger’s movement is a cause of a certain fervor in the blood and spirits that surround the heart, which is itself an instrument of the passions of the soul. And from this it follows that because of the great disturbance of the heart that occurs in the case of anger, certain indications become especially apparent in the exterior members of those who get angry. For as Gregory says in *Moralia 5*, “The heart palpitates, inflamed with the stings of its own anger; the body quivers; the tongue stammers; the face becomes fiery; the eyes grow fierce; and an acquaintance becomes hardly recognizable. His mouth forms a sound, but his understanding does not know what he is saying.”

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate 10*, “Love itself is not felt in this way except when some need brings it forth.” And so when, because of an inflicted injury, a man suffers the loss of some excellence that he loves, his love is felt more keenly (*magis sentitur amor*). And so his heart becomes hotter (*ferventius*) in order to remove this obstacle to the thing he loves, with the result that the love’s fervor itself grows because of the anger and is felt more keenly.

However, the fervor that follows upon the heat pertains to love in one way and to anger in another way.

For the fervor of love is accompanied by a sort of sweetness and gentleness, since it is directed at a good thing that is loved. And so it is similar to the heat that belongs to the air and to blood. It is because of this that (a) sanguine individuals are more beloved and that (b) the liver, in which there is a sort of generation of blood, is said to “push one toward love” (*cogit amare iecur*).

By contrast, the fervor of anger is accompanied by a bitterness aimed at destruction (*ad consumendum*), since it tends toward punishing what is contrary to it. Hence, this sort of fervor is like the heat of fire and of yellow bile (*assimilatur calori ignis et cholerae*). This is why Damascene says that anger “proceeds from the evaporation of the bile and is called ‘bilious’” (*fellea nominatur*).

Reply to objection 2: Anything whose cause diminishes over time is necessarily weakened by time. Now it is clear that memory diminishes over time; for things that are very old (*antiqua*) easily slip out of memory. But anger is caused by the memory of an inflicted injury. And so the cause of anger diminishes little by little over time, up to the point of being completely eliminated.

Also, an injury seems greater when it is first perceived, and one’s estimation of it diminishes little by little as one recedes more and more from the present feeling of the injury.

Something similar occurs with love as well, if the cause of love remains solely in the memory. Hence, in *Ethics* 8 the Philosopher says, “If a friend’s absence lasts for a long time, then it seems to make one forgetful of the friendship.”

By contrast, in the friend’s presence the cause of friendship is always increasing over time, and so the friendship grows. And something similar holds for anger, if its cause is continually increased.

Yet the very fact that anger is quickly consumed attests to its vehement fervor. For just as a large fire is quickly extinguished once its matter is consumed, so, too, because of its own vehemence, anger quickly dies out.

Reply to objection 3: Every power that is divided into many parts is diminished. And so when an individual is angry with someone and then gets angry with someone else, by this very fact his anger with respect to the first individual diminishes—and especially if his anger is greater with respect to the second individual. For the injury that excited the anger against the first individual will seem like little or nothing in comparison to the second injury, which is judged to be greater.

Article 3

Does anger impede reason?

It seems that anger does not impede reason:

Objection 1: What involves an act of reason seems not to be an impediment to reason. But as *Ethics* 7 says, “Anger involves an act of reason.” Therefore, anger does not impede reason.

Objection 2: The more reason is impeded, the more its manifestation is diminished. But in *Ethics* 7 the Philosopher says, “An angry man does not hide himself, but is manifest” (*iracundus non est insidiator sed manifestus*). Therefore, anger does not seem to impede the use of reason in the way that, according to *Ethics* 7, concupiscence, which hides itself (*sicut concupiscentia quae est insidiosa*), does impede the use of reason.

Objection 3: Reason’s judgment is rendered more evident when a contrary is present, since contraries shine forth to a greater degree when they are juxtaposed with one another. But this sort of juxtaposition makes anger grow as well; for as the Philosopher says in *Rhetoric* 2, “Men get more angry if there are preexisting contraries—as in the case of someone who has been honored in the past, if he is now being dishonored,” and so on for the others. Therefore, it is in virtue of the same thing that (a) anger grows and that (b) reason’s judgment is assisted. Therefore, it is not the case that anger impedes reason.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 5 Gregory says, “Anger takes away the light of understanding,

since it confuses the mind by agitating it.”

I respond: Even though the mind, or reason, does not use a bodily organ in its own proper act, nonetheless, since it needs various sentient powers for its acts, and since the acts of those powers are impeded when the body is agitated (*corpore perturbato*), bodily disturbances must likewise impede the use of reason, as is clear in the case of those who are inebriated or dreaming.

Now as has been explained (a. 2), what anger especially does is to cause a bodily disturbance around the heart in such a way that this disturbance also flows into the exterior members. Hence, of all the passions anger most manifestly impedes the use of reason—this according to Psalm 30:10 (“My eye is troubled with anger”).

Reply to objection 1: The source of anger (*principium irae*) lies in reason as regards the appetitive movement, which is what is *formal* in anger.

However, the passion of anger prevents reason from perfecting its judgment by not, as it were, listening to reason completely (*perfectum iudicium rationis praeoccupat quasi non perfecte audiens rationem*), and this because of the commotion caused by the rapidly moving heat, which is what is *material* in anger. And on this score, anger impedes reason.

Reply to objection 2: The angry man is said to be “manifest” (*manifestus*) not because it is manifest to him (*manifestum sibi*) what he should do, but because he acts openly (*manifeste operatur*) and without seeking concealment. This happens in part because reason is impeded, with the result that it is unable to discern what should be kept hidden and what should be made manifest, and also unable to devise ways of hiding. But it also happens in part because the heart is expanded, and this has to do with the magnanimity that anger produces. Hence, in *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher says of the magnanimous man that “he is manifest about what he loves and hates, and he speaks and operates openly.”

By contrast, concupiscence is said to be hidden and insidious because, in most cases, the pleasurable things that are desired involve shameful and softness (*habent turpitudinem quandam et mollitiem*), and in such matters a man wants to remain hidden. However, in matters that involve virility and excellence, e.g., exacting retribution, a man seeks to be out in the open (*quaerit homo manifestus esse*).

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained, the movement of anger begins with an act of reason, and so the juxtaposition of the one contrary with the other both aids the judgment of reason and increases anger in the same respect. For when someone has honor or riches and afterwards incurs the loss of one of them, then that loss appears greater, both because of the close proximity of the contraries and because it was unexpected. And so the loss causes greater sadness, in the same way that great goods that come along unexpectedly cause greater pleasure. And as a result of this increase in the sadness that precedes the anger, there is an increase as well in the anger that follows.

Article 4

Does anger cause speechlessness?

It seems that anger does not cause speechlessness (*ira non causet taciturnitatem*):

Objection 1: Speechlessness is opposed to speech. But as anger increases, one arrives at the point of speaking, as is clear from the degrees of anger that our Lord designates in Matthew 5:22 when He says, “Whoever is angry with his brother and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca’ and whoever says to his brother, ‘You fool’.” Therefore, anger is not a cause of speechlessness.

Objection 2: When reason’s watchfulness decreases, it happens that a man erupts into inordinate speech (*prorumpat ad verba inordinata*); hence, Proverbs 25:28 says, “Like a city that is open and not surrounded by walls, so is a man who cannot restrain his spirit in speaking.” But as has been explained

(a. 3), it is anger especially that impedes reason's judgment. Therefore, it is anger especially that makes someone issue forth into inordinate speech.

Objection 3: Matthew 12:34 says, "The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart." But as has been explained (a. 2), it is especially through anger that the heart is agitated. Therefore, anger is especially a cause of speaking. Therefore, it is not a cause of speechlessness.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 5 Gregory says, "Anger that is closed up through silence rages more strongly within the mind."

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 3 and q. 46, a. 4), anger both (a) involves an act of reason and (b) impedes reason. And on both scores, it can cause speechlessness.

On the part of the act of reason, when reason's judgment is vigorous enough that even if it does not restrain the affections from a disordered desire for retribution, it at least restrains the tongue from inordinate speech. Hence, in *Moralia* 5 Gregory says, "Sometimes anger in an agitated mind imposes silence as if by a judgment."

On the part of the impediment to reason, the disturbance of anger, as has been explained (a. 2), reaches all the way to the exterior members, and especially to those members in which the heart's vestiges shine forth more expressively, e.g., in the eyes and in the face and in the tongue. Hence, as was quoted above, "The tongue stammers; the face becomes fiery; the eyes grow fierce." Therefore, the disturbance of anger can be so great that the tongue is altogether prevented from exercising speech. And then what follows is speechlessness.

Reply to objection 1: The increase in anger sometimes reaches the point that reason is prevented from restricting the tongue. But at other times the anger proceeds further, to the point of preventing the movement of the tongue and of the other exterior members.

Reply to objection 2: This makes clear the reply to the second objection.

Reply to objection 3: The heart's agitation can sometimes abound to the point that the heart's inordinate movement prevents the movement of the exterior members. And in such a case it causes speechlessness, immobility in the exterior members, and sometimes even death.

However, if the agitation is not this great, then the mouth's speaking is what follows from the abundance of the heart's agitation.