

Fr. Perozich comments —

From my priestly experience, among the most confessed sins is anger. The confessor helps the penitent to distinguish between the **emotion** of anger and the **sin** of ire or wrath which meets out vengeance to the perceived offender.

Ire often is expressed in insults and words to get back at another. It can extend to physical violence beyond that.

The heart needs to be conformed into the heart of Jesus who suffered so much from anger and ire of others, yet remained meek while seeking healing for the hearts of men who hated Him.

Matthew 15:18-20 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. These are what defile a person.

Daniel Gallagher shows the multiple mixed emotions of anger, sadness, hope, grief. Anger hopes for a punishment for a perceived offense.

“When we are angry, we rightly expect just punishment, but we inordinately determine the kind of punishment we deem just.”

“anger consists precisely in the confluence of the sadness of having been wronged and the hope of vengeance.”

“if we remove the sadness from anger, all that’s left is joy: i.e., joy in the certainty that vengeance has been or will be achieved.”

“if we act upon raw anger, then, as Aquinas teaches, the punishment we hope for will be unjust.”

“how to remedy it. He privileges the virtues of meekness, forbearance, and reasonableness.”

Jesus illustrates this throughout the gospels.

I add also that there is a demonic influence to turn reasonable anger into unreasonable ire and punishment, wherein the demon keeps an offense in the forefront of the person’s mind to take away peace and fill the soul with anger and wrath., which I believe is why some folk fly off the handle at the simplest remark and cannot let it go.

Satan himself is the demon of wrath. Therefore a deep relationship with Jesus is necessary to conquer anger, ire, wrath.

Demons:

Lucifer: Pride
Beelzebub: Envy
Satan: Wrath
Abaddon: Sloth
Mammon: Greed
Belphegor: Gluttony
Asmodeus: Lust

Anger is normal. How it is handled requires a relationship with Jesus to mitigate our neighbors' evils.

Aquinas on Anger in a Time of Political Violence

Daniel B. Gallagher

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Surrounded by a culture of mounting political violence, we all must feel at least a modicum of anger. We wouldn't be human if we didn't.

Utah Governor Spencer Cox is to be commended for admitting it on Friday: "Over the last 48 hours, I have been as angry as I have ever been. . .and as anger pushed me to the brink, it was actually Charlie (Kirk)'s words that pulled me back. . . .Charlie said, 'When people stop talking, that's when you get violence.'"

Without knowing it, the late Mr. Kirk recapitulated the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, which, to put it prosaically, is, "it's not whether you feel anger, it's what you do with it."

Anger was by far the most complex "passion of the soul" or "emotion" (*passio animae*) for Aquinas. Thomas teaches that **anger entails both sadness and hope, that its**

object is a mixture of good and evil, and that it involves both the irascible and the concupiscible appetites.

We can't get into those technicalities now, but suffice it to say that, for Aquinas, anger has a particularly important relation to reason. **Anger is reasonable in that it expects or "hopes" for a just punishment for a wrong (spes puniendi).**

The problem is that anger hopes for this punishment imperfectly since, left to itself, it goes off the rails in determining the kind of punishment that should be meted out. Anger listens to reason telling it that an injury has been done, but anger does not "hear reason perfectly" (non perfecte audit) (Summa Theologiae, q. 158, a. 1) and therefore entails an impediment to the correct use of reason.

The use of reason in the case of **anger (ira)**, albeit imperfect, allows Thomas to **distinguish it from hateful rage (odium)**. Governor Cox relied on a similar distinction in addressing young people after the murder of Mr. Kirk: "You are inheriting a country where politics feels like rage. It feels like rage is the only option. But through those (i.e., Mr. Kirk's) words, we have a reminder that we can choose a different path."

For Aquinas, choosing that different path means recognizing anger as reasonable, but also **acknowledging that anger involves the imperfect use of reason. When we are angry, we rightly expect just punishment, but we inordinately determine the kind of punishment we deem just.**

Another unique thing about anger is that it is the one passion without a direct contrary (cf. ST I-II, q. 23, a. 3), both in the sense that it has no more or less of a specific counter passion, and in the sense that it has no contrariety between good and evil. **"Anger," Aquinas says, "is caused by a difficult evil already latent within it."** Plainly put, anger is, *prima facie*, justified in a way the other passions are not.

Even though anger does not have a contrary per se, Aquinas thinks that the **contrary emotions of hope (spes) and sadness (tristitia) are essentially involved in anger.**

Hope is involved insofar as an angry person hopes to be vindicated, and sadness is involved insofar as that person grieves an injustice suffered. We can better deal with our anger when we realize that it is a mixture of these two passions.

Aquinas thinks that **anger consists precisely in the confluence of the sadness of having been wronged and the hope of vengeance.** If we have no hope of vengeance, we experience only sadness. And **if we remove the sadness from anger, all that's left is joy: i.e., joy in the certainty that vengeance has been or will be achieved.**

So, in the face of an evil such as the political assassination of Mr. Kirk, we can either resign ourselves, in which case the passion we undergo is simply sadness (tristitia), or we can try to overcome or vindicate the evil. But **if we act upon raw anger, then, as Aquinas teaches, the punishment we hope for will be unjust.**

I know the reasoning is heavy here, but again, the takeaway is that **we are justified when we feel anger precisely because some injustice has been suffered and that injustice calls for vindication.**

If the “different path” advocated by Governor Cox is anything akin to what Aquinas teaches, it must carry us through to the end, so to speak. It must extend to the very means by which we vindicate the evil suffered. Such a different path also enhances Kirk’s argument that the best thing we can do to avoid violence is to continue talking.

Finally, Aquinas’ painstaking analysis of anger is not without suggestions on **how to remedy it. He privileges the virtues of meekness, forbearance, and reasonableness.** These are the same virtues that can help restore the atmosphere

of mutual respect essential for the kind of civil discourse that could have prevented the slaying of Charlie Kirk and the string of political assassinations – successful and unsuccessful – distressing our nation.

At the same time, if we read Aquinas carefully, we see that meekness and forbearance are quintessentially Christian virtues, because they are only perfected in perfect charity.

Christ's teaching to be meek like him (cf. Matt. 11:29) and Sirach's teaching that nothing makes us more accepted by men than meekness (cf. Sirach 3:19) would make it seem that meekness and forbearance are the greatest of virtues. But Aquinas teaches that they make us acceptable to God and men only "in so far as they concur with **charity, the greatest of virtues, towards the same effect, namely the mitigation of our neighbor's evils.**" (ST II-II, q. 157, a. 4)

As hard as it is, we, as Christians, would be hard-pressed to find a better response to the violence surrounding us. We, as citizens, would be hard-pressed to find a better motive to accept Kirk's admonition to keep on talking.