186 Anger (*Ira*)

According to Augustine, *Contra Faustum*,[[1]](#endnote-1) anger is the disturbance of the agitated soul. And anger (*ira*) is said as if *irra* from *ir* which is fire because it inflames and burns the soul. Wherefore it is noted that Gregory, *Moralia* book 5,[[2]](#endnote-2) that anger is double. One which impatience excites, the other which is zeal for justice forms what is not a sin, but a note of perfection.

¶ For in this way each can be angered himself, according to that of Psal. [4:5]: “Be angry, and sin not.” “Be angry,” he says, “at vices and not at men. What,” says Gregory,[[3]](#endnote-3) “is man repenting unless man being angry at himself for his sins,” Eccle. 7[:4]: “Anger is better than laughter.” This anger Christ had when he threw out the traders from the temple. This anger had Phinees when he struck down the Madianite, Num. 25[:8]. Because Heli the priest did not have this anger when he excited the divine offense against himself, 1 Kings 4[:18]. Also, Moses had this anger although he was the mildest of men when he vindicated the injury to God in their idolatries, when he also broke the stone tablets, Exod. 32[:19]. To this anger also sometimes another anger is well annexed which is actual impatience being born through fragility out of the movement of poison, which if he is without appetite to vindicate only the pain, it is also not a sin. If, however it has been vindicated let there not be an appetite to correct your neighbor nor that divine justice be exalted, but that wickedness of the will be satiated, that is sin.

¶ Again,[[4]](#endnote-4) from an injury inflicted three things are usually born: rancor in feeling, the sign of rancor in communication, and action of injuries corresponding to the one injured. The first of this is held to forgive something, even not asked for, Matt. 18[:35]: “So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not.”

Second of these is held to forgive something to whomever truly seeks forgiveness and willingly make amends according to his possibility and capability. In this way Christ forgave whomever truly ruled and wishing to make satisfaction, according to that of Luke 17[:4]: “If he be converted unto you, saying, I repent; forgive him.”

Third of these actions of injuries are not held to forgive anger for the necessity of salvation unless he wanted to be perfect, where Athanasius says,[[5]](#endnote-5) if you do not forgive an injury, do not make a prayer for yourself because you will incur something in addition.

¶ Again, one ought not to become angry against a blind man, if he should touch one, rather let him be angered instead on that one not protecting himself from the blind man.

¶ The angry one is said to be blind according to that of the Psal. [30:10]: “My eye is troubled with wrath.” Therefore, honor is for the man if he does not vindicate himself, from which the wrong doer is healthy and blind.

Again, Seneca in the book *De ira* says,[[6]](#endnote-6) you think you are vindicated on one that could be hard because the greatest kind of vindicating is to ignore it.

Again, on account of a supply of evils which bring anger, the philosophers particularly fight against anger saying that in many things anger is worse than the other vices. For avarice draws something through which others can be bettered, but anger puts to flight its company from itself, and lust enjoys its company by desire, but anger tortures its company and others by pain.

¶ Again, envy does not want to be unhappy, but anger forces itself to be unhappy. Therefore anger is evil on account of which Christ prohibited only angry to offer a gift at the altar on account of which only alms displease when it is said in Matt. [5.23-24]: “If you offer your gift, and you remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your offering, and go first to be reconciled to your brother.”

¶ Concerning the evil of anger Gregory says in *Moralia,* book 5,[[7]](#endnote-7) through anger wisdom was destroyed by God so that what or in what order it was to be done was unknown. Wherefore the poet:[[8]](#endnote-8) Anger impedes the mind so that it cannot know the truth. Nor are the clear rays of the sun perceived when they are taken away by the moving clouds, nor does the fountain stirred up reflect the image of the one looking into it which it does when tranquil. In particular prelates ought to avoid this passion of anger who judge this in the deeds of others, according to that of Job 36[:18]: “Let not anger overcome you to oppress any man,” where Gregory says in *Moralia,* book 26,[[9]](#endnote-9) In the correction of vices anger ought to be suppressed from the mind not be in control, because if the corrector is overcome by anger first he should correct him himself than to correct others.

¶ Therefore during anger the prelate should cease from correcting, because when anger possesses the mind he does not think justly when he acts cruelly, Causa 11, quest. 3, c. *Illa praepositorum*,[[10]](#endnote-10) this execution of a capital sentence sometimes is deferred up to the thirtieth day, as is evident in the deed of Theodosius minor who out of anger had some innocent soldiers killed at Thessalonica, Causa 11, quest. 3, c. *Cum apud.[[11]](#endnote-11)*

Again, the fisherman stirs up the water so that the fish do not see the net. And the raven[[12]](#endnote-12) first seeks the eye of every animal, so the devil first tries to excite through anger that afterward he may more easily cast them down headlong, Psal. [57:9]: “Fire has fallen on them,” namely anger, “and they shall not see the sun” of justice. Wherefore Gregory says on that of Prov. 15[:18]:[[13]](#endnote-13) “A passionate man stirs up strife.” The door of all vices is irascibility by which excluded rest is given to the virtues, by which opening every outrage is armed. Wherefore just as the spiny grove is avoided lest they rip, so one ought to avoid the gathering of the irascible, James 1[:20]: “For the anger of man works not the justice of God.”

¶ Some have said that anger is useful as a whetstone and spur of virtues as if sharpening virtue, but rather the wise man says that wrath is useful to no one, unless perhaps in the way that drunkenness makes a man audacious and thus madness helps strength, and fear of death makes man more audacious, but beyond doubt anger, drunkenness, madness, and fear are detestable incitements not helps to virtues because virtue in no way needs vice.

However, it is to be noted here that anger of man is triple. The first is useful which happens by zeal for justice against fault, just as bitter medicine is useful because it purges, Eccle. 7[:4]: “Anger is better than laughter.” And Exod. 32[:19], Moses was angered seeing bull calf.

The second is tolerable when three things concur. Which is delay in action, James 1[:19]: “Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to anger.” And Prov. 18[:14]: “The spirit that is easily angered, who can bear?” The second when there is brevity in length, Eph. 4[:26]: “Let not the sun go down upon your anger.” Third when there is moderation in intensity so that one is not stirred up. Therefore, Psal. [4:5]: “Be angry, and sin not.” Job 36[:18]: “Let not anger overcome” your middle nature.

And this is first, because anger destroys the good things belonging to oneself. For anger is one that wounds nature, just as the moth gnaws clothing, Eccli. 30[:26]: “Anger shortens a man's days.” And Prov. 25[:20]: “As a moth does to a garment, and a worm to the wood: so, the sadness of a man consumes the heart.”

Second, because it is a destroyer of fortune as a broken vase loses its liquid, a tempest the food stuffs, Eccli. 21[:5]: “Injuries and wrongs will waste riches.” The lawyers know this very well.

Third, it is the blinder of intelligence, just as the crow first pecks out the eye of animals, Prov. 21[:24]: “The proud and the arrogant is called ignorant, who in anger works his pride.” Anger impedes the soul, etc.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Second, anger destroys the good things belonging to God, because anger is a killer of grace, Job 5[:2]: “Anger indeed kills the foolish.” For anger is a neglector of justice, James 1[:20]: “The anger of man works not the justice of God.” It is also an impeder of glory, just as the division of the fruits of the branch from life, Eccli. 1[:28]: “The wrath of his high spirits is his ruin.”

Third, it destroys the goods belonging to our neighbor which are three: the correction of fault, the love of nature, and the compassion of misery. But anger is a liar in correction which under the hope of justice inflicts vengeance, Eccli. 19[:28]: “There is a lying rebuke in the anger of an injurious man.” Therefore, the king of the bees[[15]](#endnote-15) does not have a stinger and if it had it would not be used.

Second, it is audacious murmuring as Ethiopian skin does not grow white, Prov. 27[:4]: “Anger has no mercy.” On account of the evils which come from anger the philosophers and other wise men detest it. Wherefore Valerius Maximus[[16]](#endnote-16) reports about Archytas Tarentinus because after a long time he had studied under Pythagoras and returning home he saw his agrarian matters neglected and uncultivated. It is reported he said to his overseer, “Now I would summon punishment on you, except I am angered, but I prefer to dismiss you unpunished than on account of anger to punish you more severely in justice.” Wherefore Tully in the first book of *De officiis,[[17]](#endnote-17)* one must take care that the punishing is not from anger, lest the fault be greater in punishing than the penalty for being impatient. On account of these things a certain philosopher perceiving the emperor Theodosius was too much provoked for discerning severity taught him when angered to begin with the twenty-four letters of the alphabet and recount them out of order and in order.

Again, Seneca on the book *De ira*,[[18]](#endnote-18) the law sees the angry one, but the angry one does not see the law.

Again, Seneca in the book *De fortuitis casibus*,[[19]](#endnote-19) men may speak evil of you, he advises. He says, If they make this judgment, they but labor in a distemper.

¶ Again,[[20]](#endnote-20) anger is compared to many things. And first that bubbling pot which casts out its insides, Prov. 15[:2]: “The heart of fools bubbles out folly.”

Anger[[21]](#endnote-21) is compared to the residue of wine which emits fire when it is touched by water, thus many appear mellow until they are touched by an abusive word, Job 28[:2]: “Stone melted with heat is turned into brass.”

Again, in a sound of indignation.

Again,[[22]](#endnote-22) anger is damnable because it takes man from himself, Prov. 19[:19]: “He that is impatient, shall suffer damage.”

Again, anger makes one to judge the evils of his neighbor. The example of the straight stick that appears crooked in water.

Again, it is foolish to sow in an unseasonable time, so the angry man reproaches in an unseasonable time, Eccli. 20[:22]: “A parable coming out of a fool's mouth shall be rejected.”

Again, among all living beings, man is soft of body in a sign that he ought to be gentle.

Again, animals of the same kind abide together peacefully. Who therefore cannot live peacefully with his brother, it is a sign that he is worse than a demon, because I read that demons inhabit the same body together, Mark 16[:9]. The figure for this is 3 kings 6[:7]: “Neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house when it was in building.” It is a sign that man is the spiritual temple of the Lord, 1 Cor. 3[:16]. He ought to be without the disorder of contempt, because it is said in 3 Kings 19[:11-12]: “the Lord is not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a whistling of a gentle air.”

¶ Again, the prudent man does pass through a road given to fighting. And Gen. 45[:24] Joseph said to his brothers returning from Egypt, “Be not angry in the way,” but we are all brothers returning to heaven.

Again, Gregory as above,[[23]](#endnote-23) for the heart that is inflamed with the stings of its own anger beats quick, the body trembles, the tongue stammers, the countenance is unrecognizable, the eyes grow fierce, and he recognizes no one. And because the tongue speaks sense he does not know. I ask therefore in what way such a man as this differs from one who is delirious who is not conscious of his own actions, Eccli. 6[:2]: “Extol not yourself in the thoughts of your soul like a bull.

¶ Certainly according to the Philosopher, *De animalibus* 13,[[24]](#endnote-24) a bull is a beast of great and indiscrete anger. It attacks terribly with its horns and snorts greatly and bellows. Therefore, it is said in Prov. 22[:24]: “Be not a friend to an angry man.” For he does not temper himself with human reason, it will be necessary that he live only as a beast.

Again, we read that anger is double, divine and human. But in God anger is not said to be a feeling of nature stirred up, but an effect of judgment. But in man it can be said to be both. Wherefore also in man anger is distinguished triply, because a second kind is laudable. Third vituperative, etc., as said above.

¶ Therefore Christ says in Matt. 5[:22]: “Whosoever,” without cause, “is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment.” Where Chrysostom says,[[25]](#endnote-25) therefore whoever with cause is angry with his brother will not be guilty for just anger is the mother of discipline. Wherefore Chrysostom says, *Homilia* 12,[[26]](#endnote-26) There is anger of the soul and there is anger of the flesh, but that is not a sin without the consent of the soul, nor is ascent of the soul a sin if it is from this cause.

1. Augustine, cf. *Contra Faustum* 22.21 (PL 42:412): Ira alia ex impatientia, alia ex zelo. Prima oculum excaecat, altera ita turbat, ut ad clarius videndum disponat.---Sed inter haec solerter sciendum est quod alia est ira, quam impatientia excitat, alia quam zelus format. Illa ex vitio, haec ex virtute generatur. Si enim nulla ira ex virtute surgeret, divinae animadversionis impetum Phinees per gladium non placasset. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Moralia* 5.45. 82. (PL 75:726): Ira alia ex impatientia, alia ex zelo. Prima oculum excaecat, altera ita turbat, ut ad clarius videndum disponat.---Sed inter haec solerter sciendum est quod alia est ira, quam impatientia excitat, alia quam zelus format. Illa ex vitio, haec ex virtute generatur. Si enim nulla ira ex virtute surgeret, divinae animadversionis impetum Phinees per gladium non placasset.

Cf. *Fasciculus morum* 2.1 (p. 116): Circa primum est sciendum secundum Gregorium libro 5 *Moralium* quod aliquando dicitur ira per zelum et aliquando per vicium. Prima est quando animus turbatur propter malum, iuxta illud Psalmi: “Irascimini et nolite peccare.” Set ira per peccatum, de qua hic intenditur, est secundum Augustinum “voluntas irrefrenata semper ulciscendi et numquam miserendi,” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregorius, cf. Augustine, *Sermones ad populum* 113.2.2 (PL 649): Quid est enim homo poenitens, nisi homo irascens sibi? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis* 3.17 (8:137a): Nota distinctionem quia ex injuria solent oriri tria primum est affectu; secundum est rancoris signum in effectu; tertium est actio contra injurianlem. Primum tenetur quis statim remittere, etiamsi non rogetur; secundum tenetur remittere veniam veraciter petenti, id est parato emendare secundum facultatem suam; tertium non tenetur remittere. Si vero volueris scire utrum ille cui facta est injuria debeat amicitiam quærere sciendum quod duplex est debitum primum est necessitatis sine quo non est salus secunbonis dum est perfectionis. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Athanasius, *Vita Beati Antonii* 36 (PL 73:154-155): Sed cum jam lucesceret, et obsessus, impetu in Antonium facto, vehementer eum impulisset, irasci coeperunt qui eum adduxerant, cur seni fecisset injuriam. Quibus Antonius ait: Nolite alienam culpam juveni misero ascribere: furor iste obsidentis est, non obsessi. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Seneca, *De Ira* 1.3.6 (LCL 214:114-115): Irasci dicit incitari, impingi; irasci quidem non magis sciunt quam ignoscere.

Their being aroused and spurred to action he calls their “wrath”; but they know no more how to be wroth than to pardon. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Gregory, *Moralia* 5.45.78 (PL 75:724): Per iram sapientia perditur, ut quid quove ordine agendum sit omnino nesciatur,. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Dionysius Cato, *Dicta Catonis*, 2.4 (LCL 434:604-605): Impedit ira animum, ne possit cernere verum.

“Anger so clouds the mind that it cannot perceive the truth.”

Cf. *Fasciculus morum* 2.2 (p. 118): Dicitur autem metrice sic:

Impedit ira animum ne possit cernere verum, etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Gregory, *Moralia* 26.43.78 (PL 76:394): In facienda correctione, subesse debet ira, non praeesse.---Omnis per quem necesse est aliena vitia corrigi semetipsum prius debet solerter intueri, ne dum aliorum culpas ulciscitur, ipse ulciscendi furore superetur. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Decretum, Causa 11, quaestio 3, c. 67: Illa prepositorum sollicitudo utilis est, illa est cautela laudabilis, in qua totum ratio agit, et furor sibi nichil uendicat. Restringenda sub ratione potestas est, nec quid agendum prius, quam concitata ad tranquillitatem mens redeat. Nam conmotionis tempore iustum putat omne quod fecerit. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Decretum, Causa 11, quaestio 3, c. 69: Cum apud Tessalonicam, seditione exorta, quidam ex militaribus uir inpetu fuisset populi furentis exstinctus, Theodosius, repentini nuncii atrocitate succensus, ad ludos Circenses inuitari populum, ei que ex inprouiso circumfundi milites, atque obtruncare passim, ut quisque occurrisset, gladio iubet, et uindictam dare non crimini, sed furori. Ob hoc cum a sacerdotibus Italiæ redargueretur, agnouit delictum, culpam que cum lacrimis professus, publicam penitenciam in conspectu totius ecclesiæ exegit, et in hoc sibi tempus ascriptum absque regali fastigio patienter inpleuit. Quibus omnibus illud quoque mirabiliter adiecit; leges sanxit in posterum, ut sententiæ principium super animaduersione prolatæ in diem tricesimum ab executoribus differrentur, quo locus misericordiæ, uel, si res tulisset, penitenciæ non periret. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. The Bestiary, trans. and ed. T. H. White (NY: Capricorn Books, 1960), p. 142: This [raven] bird goes for the eye first when eating corpses.

Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 5.2 (8:296b): Ipse enim est corvus infernalis, qui cum cadavera invenit, primum oculum invadit. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Gregory, *Moralia* 5.45.78(75:724): Per iram concordia rumpitur, sicut scriptum est: Vir animosus parit rixas. Et vir iracundus effodit peccata (Prov. XV, 18). Iracundus quippe peccata effodit, quia etiam malos, quos incaute ad discordiam provocat, pejores facit. Per iram lux veritatis amittitur, sicut scriptum est: Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram (Ephes. IV, 26); quia cum menti iracundia confusionis tenebras incutit, huic Deus radium suae cognitionis abscondit. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. Dionysius Cato, *Dicta Catonis*, 2.4 (LCL 434:604-605): Impedit ira animum, ne possit cernere verum.

“Anger so clouds the mind that it cannot perceive the truth.” [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum,* 12.4 (1505, p. 226a): Nam et si habeat aculeum eo tamen non vtitur ad vindicandum.

trans. Steele, p. 122: For though their king have a sting yet he useth it not in wreck. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, 4.1.ext. 1 (LCL 492:352): Tarentinus Archytas, dum se Pythagorae praeceptis Metaponti penitus inmergit, magno labore longoque tempore solidum opus doctrinae conplexus, postquam in patriam revertit ac rura sua revisere coepit, animadvertit neglegentia vilici corrupta et perdita intuensque male meritum 'sumpsissem' inquit 'a te supplicium, nisi tibi iratus essem': maluit enim inpunitum dimittere quam propter iram iusto gravius punire.

Archytas of Tarentum plunged deep into the precepts of Pythagoras at Metapontum and after much labour and a long time embraced a solid structure of learning. On returning to his country he proceeded to revisit his rural property and found it gone to wrack and ruin through the negligence of the bailiff. Looking at the delinquent, he said: “I should chastise you if I were not angry with you.” For he preferred to let the man go unpunished rather than punish him to excess because of his anger. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.89 (LCL 30:90-91): Cavendum est etiam ne maior poena quam culpa sit et ne isdem de causis alii plectantur, alii ne appellentur quidem. prohibenda autem maxime est ira puniendo; numquam enim iratus qui accedet ad poenam mediocritatem illam tenebit, quae est inter nimium et parum, quae placet Peripateticis et recte placet, modo ne laudarent iracundiam et dicerent utiliter a natura datam. Illa vero omnibus in rebus repudianda est optandumque, ut ii, qui praesunt rei publicae, legum similes sint, quae ad puniendum non iracundia, sed aequitate ducuntur.

We should take care also that the punishment shall not be out of proportion to the offence, and that some shall not be chastised for the same fault for which others are not even called to account. In administering punishment it is above all necessary to allow no trace of anger. For if anyone proceeds in a passion to inflict punishment, he will never observe that happy mean which lies between excess and defect. This doctrine of the mean is approved by the Peripatetics—and wisely approved, if only they did not speak in praise of anger and tell us that it is a gift bestowed on us by Nature for a good purpose. But, in reality, anger is in every circumstance to be eradicated; and it is to be desired that they who administer the government should be like the laws, which are led to inflict punishment not by wrath but by justice. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Seneca, *De Ira* 1.16.6 (LCL 214:148): Quid? Tibi lex videtur irasci iis quos non novit, quos non vidit, quos non futuros sperat?

What! Think you the law is angry with men it does not know, whom it has never seen, who it hopes will never be?  [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Seneca, cf. Martin of Braga, *Libellus de moribus* 2.3 (PL 72:29-30): Male opinentur de te homines, sed mali. Malis displicere, est laudari. Male de te loquuntur homines, bene autem loqui nesciunt; non quod merearis, sed quod solent ipsi. Homines de te mala loquuntur? Si merito, non quod loquuntur molestum est, sed quod non mentiuntur. Si immerito? Innocentia mea nunc maxime gaudeo; apparet enim illos vera objecturos, si possent. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.5 (8:254b): Secundo iracundus est similis ollæ bullienti sicut enim olla bulliendo emittit aquam ct omnia alia sic iracundus ebulliendo per iram emittit stultitiam et verba inordinata juxta ilcooperantur lud. *Os fatuorum ebullit stultitiam*. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.5 (8:254b): Quinto iracundus similis est calculo emittenti ignem Nam sicut calculus percussus malleo emittit scintillam sic iracundus tactus verbo ostendit impatientiam suam Et sicut calculus non emittit ignem nisi tangatur aliquo duro sic multi reputantur patientes qui tamen exardescunt in iram tacti aliquo verbo contumelioso Dicitur enim quod *lapisc aloreso lutus in aes convertitur.* [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.5 (8:255a): Quarto aufert homini seipsum sicut vulgo di citur quod homo turbatus vel iratus non est in Satis autem damnificatur qui seipsum De tali damno dicitur*: Qui impatiens est,* *sustinebit damnum* scilicet sui ipsius. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Gregory, *Moralia* 5. 45.79 (PL 75:724): Nam irae suae stimulis accensum cor palpitat, corpus tremit, lingua se praepedit, facies ignescit, exasperantur oculi, et nequaquam recognoscuntur noti. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 6.21 575a20 (Barnes 1:902): Young bulls by reason of their vigor are enabled to mount the same cow severalo times in one day, and a good many cows besides. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum*, homilia 11 cap. 5.22 (PG 56:690): Ergo qui cum causa iracitur, non erit reus. Nam si ira non fuerit, nec doctgrina proficit, nec judicia stgant, nec crimina compescuntur. Justa ergo ira mater est disciplinae. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum*, homilia 11 cap. 5.22 (PG 56:690): Puto autem quod non de iracundia carnis loquitur Christus, sed de spiritu. Nec ad carnem loquitur, sed ad animam, sicut et in sequentibus ostendemus. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)