

One of the characteristics of a stable society is that anger-management is not in dispute. When cultures or minitribes collide, the anger-containment (-management) of each breaks down and anger erupts, proportionate to the degree of breakdown; and mutual misunderstandings pour oil on the fire. (EXAMPLE: Anglo-Hispanic friction from the two anger-management styles: Anglo, i.e., Northern European, has violence, physical force, signaling negotiation-failure, as the last step in a multi-stage process; Hispanic moves directly from brooding to violence, physical force, to be followed by negotiation.)...I've done a lot of thinking/writing on violence, physical force and its psychopolitics (=patterns of mind/power relationship, "mind" including both feelings/emotions and reasoning/thinking). This thinksheet is about one component in psychopolitics; and it's prompted by the best book I know of on anger: Carol Tavris, ANGER: THE MISUNDERSTOOD EMOTION (Simon & Schuster/82, \$6.95). My thoughts here are interwoven with hers, go beyond hers into concerns of mine, but in no case disagree with her views' major conclusions.

1. Esp. since Freud, revolutionary rhetoricians have been telling the lethargic, "You're really angry, have been angry all along, but you just haven't known it. Consciousness-raising will surface your buried anger; then you'll want to join the revolution." A metaphor comes to my mind: Petroleum must be drilled for and processed before it can be used as fuel; buried anger is useless as fuel for social change. The theory of buried anger fits the praxis of anger-fuel~~d~~ revolution. (In my personal experience, I've seen this theory/praxis at work in the action of a number of revolutionaries; Saul Alinsky comes to mind.) CT disagrees (198): "Anger as a response to powerlessness is an acquired taste." Revolutionary theory is illegitimately strengthened by the myth that the anger was there all the time, just waiting for the right rhetoric. This pseudo-theory of the innateness of anger against oppression is hard to disbelieve because (1) it's a projection backward from "where the action is" and (2) it's a projection sideways from the troops to the uncommitted. But it won't wash, and it pollutes movements with falsity, with untruth. Psychodynamically, (3) it provides the illusion of integration: anger has been the continuum, first unconscious and then conscious, of the oppressed's inner life....I have a distaste for her argumentation, since I'm made so much use of this theory she's convinced me is false: I have a distaste for all uncomfortable truth till I can acquire a taste for it.

2. An old saying of mine is, "Mind can divide what life cannot." We can say anger, aggression, anguish, rage, arousal--as though these were as separable as a pile of stones. But scores of psycho-studies have shown that the emotions are seldom neatly separable. Arousal is physical, but what's done with it is mental and cultural. Feeling-words are separated mainly for poetic and rhetorical (psychopolitical) effect. So avoid word=thing reification; and esp. metaphor=thing reification, which is the central curse of Freudianism since Freud (who himself was cautious to avoid this semantic error).

3. And another old saying of mine: "The opposite of love is not anger or hate but indifference." In my early teens I built an engine whose governor (to control speed) was two balls on rods at opposite sides of the shaft. (An improvement on the flywheel, which merely tempers the rate of speed-change.) A few days ago it occurred to me that love and anger so serve in a human relationship. Develop the image yourself. A healthy society is sustained by love and improved by anger.

4. Not all anger, of course. This thinksheet (as is CT's great book) is about improving personal and societal anger-management. A growing

concern of mine: the church's potential for helping families to improve their anger-management. The patriarchal family's style of anger-management--a style productive of peace, joy, productivity, survival, and injustice--won't do for the modern family, which rightly concerns itself with improving justice but has not evolved an appropriate anger-management style (and so lives in chaos, or ceases to live at all, i. e., disintegrates, whether or not divorce ensues). How use the anger of hope to avoid falling into the anger of despair? (The book's only notes on the author: 20, "my husband, his teenage son"; 51, "my own particular Tribe, Eastern European Jews.")

5. Ventilationism ("letting it all hang out," "getting it off your chest") is wrong but to the individual looks right because "the imperial 'I'" takes doing its thing more seriously than maintaining relationship(s). So millions ventilate themselves into loneliness. (I say "individual" for skinbag + mind, and "person" for skinbag + mind + relationships: "persons" don't get lonely.) The metaphysics behind ventilation therapy is from vonReimholtz's physics (conservation of energy) via Freud, and it's untrue: emotions don't have to "go somewhere," sometimes they just dissipate (as--my figure--water evaporating behind a dam). Further, expressed emotions, far from being released emotions, are intensified emotions: violent sports correlate with warlike nations, e.g. Life-embracing, life-sustaining relationships put a premium on civility, politeness and badmouth incivility and self-gratifying temper (which are considered childish as well as socially destructive). Traditional societies may overdo it, but emotions need damping down to socially tolerable levels--esp. anger. For like muscles, emotions grow with exercise. 173: "When an emotion is encouraged and the rules permit it, it is perpetuated, not 'drained.'"

6. CT's last paragraph (253): "The moral use of anger...requires an awareness of choice and an embrace of reason. It is knowing when to become angry...and when to make peace; when to take action, and when to keep silent; knowing the likely causes of one's anger and not berating the blameless. For most of the small indignities of life, the best remedy is a Charlie Chaplin movie. For the large indignities, fight back. And learn the difference."

7. Everybody has an "anger problem," 'cause nobody's perfect in anger-management. Because the biblical God calls us to strive for justice and peace, the lethargic oppressed have an anger problem, viz., not enough anger (if any). 227: "The sense of injustice is made, not born." (Aquinas: Most underlings feel fear and sorrow but not anger.) 243: "For anger to arise..., a person must have a coherent explanation: a new way to integrate all grievances, a theory that the individual can apply to his or her own life, and alternatives to that life that the individual thinks are feasible." Malcolm X (238): "I believe in anger. The Bible says there is a time for anger."

8. 234f: YHWH and Allah "are angry gods, who require anger to be used freely in their service against enemies, infidels, and the wicked; but anger within the community is to be suppressed." Good Mid-East theopolitics, then and now: small nations surrounded by great powers. "In contrast, the religions of Taoism, Vishnuism, and Buddhism advocate complete eradication of anger and any other emotion that serves a this-worldly desire, such as lust and greed." As all's predestined, no point to getting "riled up about evil, war, and sin," or to "protest one's caste" (since by obedience one gains a caste-upgrading in the next reincarnation); history is not important enough for anger and war to be important. Christianity's in between the martial and the pacific religions: "anger is good or bad depending on its use, not its nature."