

Currently, a little old lady on Cape Cod is making a nuisance of herself by laying for and both verbally and physically attacking hunters--for the sake of nonviolence (to animals)! And antiabortionists are blowing up abortion clinics for the sake of nonviolence (to fetuses)! Two instances of hypocrites? Yes, but they wouldn't grant you that: at most, they'd plead selective violence in the interest of hindering what they consider higher violence....This thinksheet is to show that (1) everybody's more or less crazy and (2) nobody's crazy within their own paradigm (=inner picture of "the situation"). My example is the Goetz case, which surfaced everybody's paradigm all over the place and is therefore a grade-A item for use in case-method re-training in thinking.

1. If your paradigm is in good health, it can eat anything--no digestive problems (diagnosis) or metabolic failures (suggestions for "cure").
2. My letter (30Jan85 CCNews) tries to comb burrs out of a columnist's hair: his paradigm, to preach a sermon, took over: "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts."
3. The hotter the case, the harder to be honest and rational and fair. E.g., I've seen no clear thinking on either side of the present black/white confrontation in S.Africa: both sides are ideologizing and calling it thinking. And to any ideology, compromise is betrayal of the cause!

Goetz vs. Frankel

To the editor:

Today's Jim Frankel column can't cheer "the subway vigilante": "Anger is 1/7 of the deadly sins."

How does Jim Frankel know that Bernhard Goetz was angry? He may have shot in cold blood: in comparison with that, wouldn't anger be not a vice but a comparative virtue, or at least only a weakness? Or doesn't terror seem even more likely than either anger or cold blood?

And why the rush to psych Goetz out? As of this writing (January 16), he has not gone public as to his motivation — and even if he had, would his explanation be (1) honest and (2) accurate (without unconscious distortion)?

However, I thank Jim Frankel for his groundless speculation, as it has stirred up this theologian-ethicist to the above and these further comments:

1. The out-of-hand bad mouthing of anger is effete and debilitating. In contrast to keeping your stoic "cool," the biblical emphasis is on emotional honesty in God (whose "wrath" gets aroused) and in humanity (for we are to share God's emotional freedom, a correlate of moral seriousness: "Be holy, for I am holy").

2. For years I commuted on the New York subway, and the Goetz case has triggered in the public a healthy anger against (a) muggers and (b) an inadequate police force and (c) courts that coddle criminals. Till in 1825 Sir Jn. Peel invented the modern police system, it was assumed that the citizen would go armed to protect both

self and society against crime: on what ground does the system consider this naughty if the system is not protecting the public? What was Goetz supposed to do?

3. Black muggers hit mainly blacks, so Goetz is getting a groundswell of support from blacks. At New York Theological Seminary, my black students feared mainly black muggers. Of course thuggery is raceless as well as faceless, and we'd better be cautious about using racism as an analytic tool in the Goetz case.

4. Once burned, twice shy: once mugged (or someone close to you mugged), always tense in situations one feels may be mugger-infested. The emotional components of that tension are many, a prominent one in all cases being animal wariness — necessary in all jungle creatures (and is not the New York subway, with woefully inadequate police protection, a jungle?).

5. Besides healthy anger, relief is a factor in Goetz's public support. "If they hadn't tried to hit Goetz, or if they'd succeeded, I might have been next — and I don't carry a weapon, and I'm not physically able to defend myself bare-handed against four muggers." Give the Goetz-supporters credit for healthy gratitude.

6. In his pop-psyching of Goetz, Jim Frankel returns to his attack on the man, accusing him of "vengeance." How does he know vengeance was a motive? He's judging an untried man, and hypocritically taking a moral stand polluted with an unfair prejudice (literally, "pre-judgment"): Goetz is guilty of vengeance unless he can prove himself innocent!

7. And how does Jim Frankel know that subway riders arming themselves would be "contributing to a more savage society"? In the opinion of many, including me, the opposite would be true. But Jim Frankel accuses Goetz of being "downright wrong, dangerous, offensive and uncivilized"! How does he know all that? It sounds to me like bad-naughty-boo-hiss naive moralism.

8. Jim Frankel, in theorizing about the Goetz case, is insensitive to the man's actual situation. It's all very well to say the police should have been there: they weren't, Goetz was on his own, not "trying to do surrogate work" for the police (as Jim Frankel accuses him of), just trying to survive (survival psychology probably being his mind-set: we'll just have to wait and see).

9. Jim Frankel has it upside down. We're not talking about "delegating police responsibility to" the citizenry: the citizenry delegates protection responsibility to a cadre of social functionaries, and stands in judgment as to whether they adequately perform their function. The Goetz case will almost certainly upgrade the subway police: let's give him credit for that spin-off.

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