

Selected Passages Discussing Anger From Stoic Perspectives

Take heed that courage have in your thought the least possible connection with rage, inasmuch as anger is of no weight; nor is that to be deemed courage, which lacks reason. . . . I know not what courageous service I myself may have rendered in the commonwealth; if any, it has certainly not been in anger. Is there anything more like insanity than anger, which Ennius rightly called the beginning of insanity? What symptom of a sound mind is there in the complexion, voice, eyes, breath, lack of self-command in word and deed, of him who is angry? What is more unseemly than Homer's Achilles and Agamemnon in their quarrel?

– **Cicero**, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.22-3

Reason grants both parties time for a hearing and then seeks an adjournment for its own sake, so that it has time to search out the truth. Anger is in a hurry. Reason wants its judgment to be fair; anger wants its judgment to appear fair. Reason keeps its eye solely on the matter under consideration; anger is moved by empty and irrelevant imaginings. . . . It often condemns the defendant out of pique at his counsel; even if the truth is shoved in its face, it fancies and upholds error. It doesn't want to be refuted: when it's made a bad beginning, it takes stubbornness to be more honorable than second thoughts.

– **Seneca**, *On Anger* 1.18

“This man who has been mistaken and deceived about the most important things, and blinded, not in the faculty of vision which distinguishes white and black, but in the faculty which distinguishes good and bad, should we not destroy him?” If you speak thus, you will see how inhuman this is which you say, and that it is just as if you would say, “Ought we not to destroy this blind and deaf man?” But if the greatest harm is the privation of the greatest things, and the greatest thing in every man is the faculty of choice such as it ought to be, and a man is deprived of this, why are you also angry with him? . . . Pity him rather: drop this readiness to be offended and to hate, and these words which the many utter: “these accursed and odious fellows.” How have you been made so wise at once? And how are you so peevish? Why then are we angry? Is it because we value so much the things of which these men rob us? . . . If you dismiss these things and consider them as nothing, with whom are you still angry? But so long as you value these things, be angry with yourself rather than with the thief and the adulterer.

– **Epictetus**, *Discourses* 1.8

Begin the morning by saying to yourself, I shall meet with the busy-body, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him who does wrong, that it is akin to me, not only of the same blood or seed, but that it participates in the same intelligence and the same portion of the divinity, I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him.

– **Marcus Aurelius**, *Meditations* 3.1