

SENECA (c. 1 BC – AD 65)

A selection from *On Anger*

TO NOVATUS ON ANGER

You have importuned me, Novatus, to write on the subject of how anger may be allayed, and it seems to me that you had good reason to fear in an especial degree this, the most hideous and frenzied of all the emotions. For the other emotions have in them some element of peace and calm, while this one is wholly violent and has its being in an onrush of resentment, raging with a most inhuman lust for weapons, blood, and punishment, giving no thought to itself if only it can hurt another, hurling itself upon the very point of the dagger, and eager for revenge though it may drag down the avenger along with it. Certain wise men, therefore, have claimed that anger is temporary madness. For it is equally devoid of self-control, forgetful of decency, unmindful of ties, persistent and diligent in whatever it begins, closed to reason and counsel, excited by trifling causes, unfit to discern the right and true - the very counterpart of a ruin that is shattered in pieces where it overwhelms. But you have only to behold the aspect of those possessed by anger to know that they are insane. For as the marks of a madman are unmistakable - a bold and threatening mien, a gloomy brow, a fierce expression, a hurried step, restless hands, an altered colour, a quick and more violent breathing - so likewise are the marks of the angry man; his eyes blaze and sparkle, his whole face is crimson with the blood that surges from the lowest depths of the heart, his lips quiver, his teeth are clenched, his hair bristles and stands on end, his breathing is forced and harsh, his joints crack from writhing, he groans and bellows, bursts out into speech with scarcely intelligible words, strikes his hands together continually, and stamps the ground with his feet; his whole body is excited and "performs great angry threats"; it is an ugly and horrible picture of distorted and swollen frenzy - you cannot tell whether this vice is more execrable or more hideous. Other vices may be concealed and cherished in secret; anger shows itself openly and appears in the countenance, and the greater it is, the more visibly it boils forth. Do you not see how animals of every sort, as soon as they bestir themselves for mischief, show premonitory signs, and how their whole body, forsaking its natural state of repose, accentuates their ferocity? Wild boars foam at the mouth and sharpen their tusks by friction, bulls toss their horns in the air and scatter the sand by pawing, lions roar, snakes puff up their necks when they are angry, and mad dogs have a sullen look. No animal is so hateful and so deadly by nature as not to show a fresh access of fierceness as soon as it is assailed by anger. And yet I am aware that the other emotions as well are not easily concealed; that lust and fear and boldness all show their marks and can be recognized beforehand. For no violent agitation can take hold of the mind without affecting in some way the countenance. Where, then, lies the difference? In this - the other emotions show, anger stands out.

Moreover, if you choose to view its results and the harm of it, no plague has cost the human race more dear. You will see bloodshed and poisoning, the vile countercharges of criminals, the downfall of cities and whole nations given to destruction, princely persons sold at public auction, houses put to the torch, and conflagration that halts not within the city-walls, but makes great stretches of the country glow with hostile flame. Behold the most glorious cities whose foundations can scarcely be traced - anger cast them down. Behold solitudes stretching lonely for many miles without a single dweller - anger laid them waste. Behold all the leaders who have been handed down to posterity as instances of an evil fate - anger stabbed this one in his bed, struck down this one amid the sanctities of the feast, tore this one to pieces in the very home of the law and in full view of the crowded forum, forced this one to have his blood spilled by the murderous act of his son, another to have his royal throat cut by the hand of a slave, another to have his limbs stretched upon the cross. And hitherto I have mentioned the sufferings of individual persons only; what if, leaving aside these who singly felt the force of anger's flame, you should choose to view the gatherings cut down by the sword, the populace butchered by soldiery let loose upon them, and whole peoples condemned to death in common ruin as if either forsaking our protection, or despising our authority. Tell me, why do we see the people grow angry with gladiators, and so unjustly as to deem it an offence that they are not glad to die? They consider themselves affronted, and from mere spectators transform themselves into enemies, in looks, in gesture, and in violence. Whatever this may be, it is not anger, but mock anger, like that of children who, if they fall down, want the earth to be thrashed, and who often do not even know why they are angry - they are merely angry, without any reason and without being injured, though not without some semblance of injury and not without some desire of exacting punishment. And so they are deceived by imaginary blows and are pacified by the pretended tears of those who beg forgiveness, and mock resentment is removed by a mock revenge. "We often get angry," some one rejoins, "not at those who have hurt us, but at those who intend to hurt us; you may, therefore, be sure that anger is not born of injury." It is true that we do get angry at those who intend to hurt us, but by the very intention they do hurt us; the man who intends to do injury has already done it. "But," our friend replies, "that you may know that anger is not the desire to exact punishment, the weakest men are often angry at the most powerful, and if they have no hope" of inflicting punishment, they have not the desire. In the first place, I spoke of the desire to exact punishment, not of the power to do so; moreover, men do desire even what they cannot attain. In the second place, no one is so lowly that he cannot hope to punish even the loftiest of men; we all have power to do harm. Aristotle's definition differs little from mine; for he says that anger is the desire to repay suffering. To trace the difference between his definition and mine would take too long. In criticism of both it may be said that wild beasts become angry though they are neither stirred by injury nor bent on the

punishment or the suffering of another; for even if they accomplish these ends, they do not seek them. But our reply must be that wild beasts and all animals, except man, are not subject to anger; for while it is the foe of reason, it is, nevertheless, born only where reason dwells. Wild beasts have impulses, madness, fierceness, aggressiveness; but they no more have anger than they have luxuriousness. Yet in regard to certain pleasures they are less self-restrained than man. You are not to believe the words of the poet:

The boar his wrath forgets, the hind her trust in flight,
Nor bears will now essay the sturdy kine to fight.

Their being aroused and spurred to action he calls their "wrath"; but they know no more how to be wroth than to pardon. Dumb animals lack the emotions of man, but they have certain impulses similar to these emotions. Otherwise, if they were capable of love and hate, they would also be capable of friendship and enmity, discord and harmony; and some traces of these qualities do appear in them also, but the qualities of good and bad are peculiar to the human breast. Wisdom, foresight, diligence, and reflection have been granted to no creature but man, and not only his virtues but also his faults have been withheld from the animals. As their outward form is wholly different from that of man, so is their inner nature; its guiding and directing principle is cast in a different mould. They have a voice, it is true, but it is unintelligible, uncontrolled, and incapable of speech; they have a tongue, but it is shackled and not free to make many different movements. So likewise in them the ruling principle itself is lacking in fineness and precision. Consequently, while it forms impressions and notions of the things that arouse it to action, they are clouded and indistinct. It follows, accordingly, that while they have violent outbreaks and mental disturbances, they do not have fear and anxiety, sorrow and anger, but certain states similar to them. These, therefore, quickly pass and change to the exact reverse, and animals, after showing the sharpest frenzy and fear, will begin to feed, and their frantic bellowing and plunging is immediately followed by repose and sleep.

What anger is has now been sufficiently explained. The difference between it and irascibility is evident; it is like the difference between a drunken man and a drunkard, between a frightened man and a coward. An angry man may not be an irascible man; an irascible man may, at times, not be an angry man. The other categories which the Greeks, using a multiplicity of terms, establish for the different kinds of anger I shall pass over, since we have no distinctive words for them; and yet we call men bitter and harsh, and, just as often, choleric, rabid, brawlsome, captious, and fierce - all of which designate different aspects of anger. Here, too, you may place the peevish man, whose state is a mild sort of irascibility. Now there are certain kinds of anger which subside in noise; some are as persistent as they are common; some are fierce in deed but inclined to be frugal of words some are vented in bitterness of speech

and curses; certain kinds do not go beyond a word of complaint and a show of coolness, others are deep-seated and weighty and brood in a man. There are a thousand different shapes of the multiform evil.

Hitherto we have inquired what anger is, whether it belongs to any other creature than man, how it differs from irascibility, and in how many aspects it appears; let us now inquire whether anger is in accordance with nature; whether it is expedient and ought, therefore, in some measure to be kept. Whether, it is in accordance with nature will become clear if we turn our eyes to man. What is more gentle than he while he is in a right state of mind? But what is more cruel than anger? What is more loving to others than man? What more hostile than anger? Man is born for mutual help; anger for mutual destruction. The one desires union, the other disunion; the one to help, the other to harm; one would succour even strangers, the other attack its best beloved; the one is ready even to expend himself for the good of others, the other to plunge into peril only if it can drag others along. Who, therefore, has less knowledge of the ways of Nature than the man who would ascribe to her best and most finished work this cruel and deadly vice? Anger, as I have said, is bent on punishment, and that such a desire should find a harbour in man's most peaceful breast accords least of all with his nature. For human life is founded on kindness and concord, and is bound into an alliance for common help, not by terror, but by mutual love.

"What then; " you say; "is not correction sometimes necessary?" Of course it is; but with discretion, not with anger. For it will not hurt, but will heal under the guise of hurting. As we apply the flame to certain spearshafts when they are crooked in order to straighten them, and compress them by driving in wedges, not to crush them, but to take out their kinks, so through pain applied to body and mind we reform the natures of men that are distorted by vice. Manifestly, a physician, in the case of slight disorders, tries at first not to make much change in his patient's daily habits; he lays down a regimen for food, drink, and exercise, and tries to improve his health only through a change in the ordering of his life. His next concern is to see that the amount is conducive to health. If the first amount and regimen fail to bring relief, he orders a reduction and lops off some things. If still there is no response, he prohibits food and disburdens the body by fasting. If these milder measures are unavailing he opens a vein, and then, if the limbs by continuing to be attached to the body are doing it harm and spreading the disease, he lays violent hands on them. No treatment seems harsh if its result is salutary. Similarly, it becomes a guardian of the law, the ruler of the state, to heal human nature by the use of words, and these of the milder sort, as long as he can, to the end that he may persuade a man to do what he ought to do, and win over his heart to a desire for the honourable and the just, and implant in his mind hatred of vice and esteem of virtue. Let him pass next to harsher language, in which he will still aim at admonition and reproof. Lastly, let him

resort to punishment, yet still making it light and not irrevocable. Extreme punishment let him appoint only to extreme crime, so that no man will lose his life unless it is to the benefit even of the loser to lose it. In only one particular will he differ from the physician. For while the one supplies to the patients to whom he has been unable to give the boon of life an easy exit from it, the other forcibly expels the condemned from life, covered with disgrace and public ignominy, not because he takes pleasure in the punishment of any one - for the wise man is far from such inhuman ferocity - but that they may prove a warning to all, and, since they were unwilling to be useful while alive, that in death at any rate they may be of service to the state. Man's nature, then, does not crave vengeance; neither, therefore, does anger accord with man's nature, because anger craves vengeance. And I may adduce here the argument of Plato - for what harm is there in using the arguments of others, so far as they are our own? "The good man," he says, "does no injury." Punishment injures; therefore punishment is not consistent with good, nor, for the same reason, is anger, since punishment is consistent with anger. If the good man rejoices not in punishment, neither will he rejoice in that mood which takes pleasure in punishment; therefore anger is contrary to nature.

Although anger be contrary to nature, may it not be right to adopt it, because it has often been useful? It rouses and incites the spirit, and without it bravery performs no splendid deed in war - unless it supplies the flame, unless it acts as a goad to spur on brave men and send them into danger. Therefore some think that the best course is to control anger, not to banish it, and by removing its excesses to confine it within beneficial bounds, keeping, however, that part without which, action will be inert and the mind's force and energy broken. In the first place, it is easier to exclude harmful passions than to rule them, and to deny them admittance than, after they have been admitted, to control them; for when they have established themselves in possession, they are stronger than their ruler and do not permit themselves to be restrained or reduced. In the second place, Reason herself, to whom the reins of power have been entrusted, remains mistress only so long as she is kept apart from the passions: if once she mingles with them and is contaminated, she becomes unable to hold back those whom she might have cleared from her path. For when once the mind has been aroused and shaken, it becomes the slave of the disturbing agent. There are certain things which at the start are under our control, but later hurry us away by their violence and leave us no retreat. As a victim hurled from the precipice has no control of his body, and, once cast off, can neither stop nor stay, but, speeding on irrevocably, is cut off from all reconsideration and repentance and cannot now avoid arriving at the goal toward which he might once have avoided starting, so with the mind - if it plunges into anger, love, or the other passions, it has no power to check its impetus; its very

weight and the downward tendency of vice needs must hurry it on, and drive it to the bottom.

The best course is to reject at once the first incitement to anger, to resist even its small beginnings, and to take pains to avoid falling into anger. For if it begins to lead us astray, the return to the safe path is difficult, since, if once we admit the emotion and by our own free will grant it any authority, reason becomes of no avail; after that it will do, not whatever you let it, but whatever it chooses. The enemy, I repeat, must be stopped at the very frontier; for if he has passed it, and advanced within the city gates, he will not respect any bounds set by his captives. For the mind is not a member apart, nor does it view the passions merely objectively, thus forbidding them to advance farther than they ought, but it is itself transformed into the passion and is, therefore, unable to recover its former useful and saving power when this has once been betrayed and weakened. For, as I said before, these two do not dwell separate and distinct, but passion and reason are only the transformation of the mind toward the better or the worse. How, then, will the reason, after it has surrendered to anger, rise again, assailed and crushed as it is by vice? Or how shall it free itself from the motley combination in which a blending of all the worse qualities makes them supreme? "But," says some one, "there are those who control themselves even in anger." You mean, then, that they do none of the things that anger dictates, or only some of them? If they do none, it is evident that anger is not essential to the transactions of life, and yet you were advocating it on the ground that it is something stronger than reason. I ask, in fine, is anger more powerful or weaker than reason? If it is more powerful, how will reason be able to set limitations upon it, since, ordinarily, it is only the less powerful thing that submits? If it is weaker, then reason without it is sufficient in itself for the accomplishment of our tasks, and requires no help from a thing less powerful. Yet you say, "There are those who, even though angry, remain true to themselves and are self-controlled." But when are they so? Only when anger gradually vanishes and departs of its own accord, not when it is at white heat; then it is the more powerful of the two. "What then?" you say; "do not men sometimes even in the midst of anger allow those whom they hate to get out safe and sound and refrain from doing them injury?" They do; but when? When passion has beaten back passion, and either fear or greed has obtained its end. Then there is peace, not wrought through the good offices of reason, but through a treacherous and evil agreement between the passions. Again, anger embodies nothing useful, nor does it kindle the mind to warlike deeds; for virtue, being self-sufficient, never needs the help of vice. Whenever there is need of violent effort, the mind does not become angry, but it gathers itself together and is aroused or relaxed according to its estimate of the need; just as when engines of war hurl forth their arrows, it is the operator who controls the tension with which they are hurled. "Anger," says Aristotle "is necessary, and no battle can be won without it

- unless it fills the mind and fires the soul; it must serve, however, not as a leader, but as the common soldier. "But this is not true. For if it listens to reason and follows where reason leads, it is no longer anger, of which the chief characteristic is wilfulness. If, however, it resists and is not submissive when ordered, but is carried away by its own caprice and fury, it will be an instrument of the mind as useless as is the soldier who disregards the signal for retreat. If, therefore, anger suffers any limitation to be imposed upon it, it must be called by some other name - it has ceased to be anger; for I understand this to be unbridled and ungovernable. If it suffers no limitation, it is a baneful thing and is not to be counted as a helpful agent. Thus either anger is not anger or it is useless. For the man who exacts punishment, not because he desires punishment for its own sake, but because it is right to inflict it, ought not to be counted as an angry man. The useful soldier will be one who knows how to obey orders; the passions are as bad subordinates they are leaders.

Consequently, reason will never call to its help blind and violent impulses over which it will itself have no control, which it can never crush save by setting against them equally powerful and similar impulses, as fear against anger, anger against sloth, greed against fear. May virtue be spared the calamity of having reason ever flee for help to vice! It is impossible for the mind to find here a sure repose; shattered and storm-tossed it must ever be if it depends upon its worst qualities to save it, if it cannot be brave without being angry, if it cannot be industrious without being greedy, if it cannot be quiet without being afraid - such is the tyranny under which that man must live who surrenders to the bondage of any passion. Is it not a shame to degrade the virtues into dependence upon the vices? Again, reason ceases to have power if it has no power apart from passion, and so gets to be on the same level with passion and like unto it. For what difference is there, if passion without reason is a thing as unguided as reason without passion is ineffective? Both are on the same level, if one cannot exist without the other. Yet who would maintain that passion is on a level with reason? "Passion," some one says, "is useful, provided that it be moderate. "No, only by its nature can it be useful. If, however, it will not submit to authority and reason, the only result of its moderation will be that the less there is of it, the less harm it will do. Consequently moderate passion is nothing else than a moderate evil. "But against the enemy," it is said, "anger is necessary." Nowhere is it less so; for there the attack ought not to be disorderly, but regulated and under control. What else is it, in fact, but their anger - its own worst foe - that reduces to impotency the barbarians, who are so much stronger of body than we, and so much better able to endure hardship? So, too, in the case of gladiators skill is their protection, anger their undoing. Of what use, further, is anger, when the same end may be accomplished by reason? Think you the hunter has anger toward wild beasts? Yet when they come, he takes them, and when they flee, he follows, and reason does it all without anger. The Cimbrians and the Teutons "who poured over

the Alps in countless thousands -what wiped them out so completely that even the news of the great disaster was carried to their homes, not by a messenger, but only by rumour, except that they substituted anger for valour? Anger, although it will sometimes overthrow and lay low whatever gets in its way, yet more often brings destruction on itself. Who are more courageous than the Germans? Who are bolder in a charge? Who have more love of the arms to which they are born and bred, which to the exclusion of all else become their only care? Who are more hardened to endurance of every kind, since they are, in large measure, provided with no protection for their bodies, with no shelter against the continual rigour of the climate? Yet these are they whom the Spaniards and the Gauls and men of Asia and Syria, uninured to war, cut down before they could even glimpse a Roman legion, the victims of nothing else than anger. But mark you, once give discipline to those bodies, give reason to those minds that are strangers still to pampered ways, excess, and wealth, and we Romans to mention nothing further - shall assuredly be forced to return to the ancient Roman ways. How else did Fabius restore the broken forces of the state but by knowing how to loiter, to put off, and to wait - things of which angry men know nothing? The state, which was standing then in the utmost extremity, had surely perished if Fabius had ventured to do all that anger prompted. But he took into consideration the well-being of the state, and, estimating its strength, of which now nothing could be lost without the loss of all, he buried all thought of resentment and revenge and was concerned only with expediency and the fitting opportunity; he conquered anger before he conquered Hannibal. And what of Scipio? Did he not leave behind him Hannibal and the Carthaginian army and all those with whom he had reason to be angry, and dally so long in transferring the war to Africa that he gave to evil-minded people the impression that he was a sensualist and a sluggard? What, too, of the other Scipio? Did he not sit before Numantia, idling much and long, and bear unmoved the reproach to himself and to his country that it took longer to conquer Numantia than to conquer Carthage? But by blockading and investing the enemy he forced them to such straits that they perished by their own swords. Anger, therefore, is not expedient even in battle or in war; for it is prone to rashness, and while it seeks to bring about danger, does not guard against it. The truest form of wisdom is to make a wide and long inspection, to put self in subjection, and then to move forward slowly and in a set direction.

"What then?" you ask; "will the good man not be angry if his father is murdered, his mother outraged before his eyes?" "No, he will not be angry, but he will avenge them, will protect them. Why, moreover, are you afraid that filial affection, even without anger, may not prove a sufficiently strong incentive for him? Or you might as well say: "What then? if a good man should see his father or his son under the knife, will he not weep, will he not faint?" But this is the way we see women act whenever they are upset by the slightest suggestion of danger. The good man will perform his

duties undisturbed and unafraid; and he will in such a way do all that is worthy of a good man as to do nothing that is unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered - I will defend him; he is slain - I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but because it is my duty. "Good men are made angry by the injuries of those they love." When you say this, Theophrastus, you seek to make more heroic doctrine unpopular - you turn from the judge to the bystanders. Because each individual grows angry when such a mishap comes to those he loves, you think that men will judge that what they do is the right thing to be done; for as a rule every man decides that that is a justifiable passion which he acknowledges as his own. But they act in the same way if they are not well supplied with hot water, if a glass goblet is broken, if a shoe gets splashed with mud. Such anger comes, not from affection, but from a weakness - the kind we see in children, who will shed no more tears over lost parents than over lost toys. To feel anger on behalf of loved ones is the mark of a weak mind, not of a loyal one. For a man to stand forth as the defender of parents, children, friends, and fellow-citizens, led merely by his sense of duty, acting voluntarily, using judgement, using foresight, moved neither by impulse nor by fury - this is noble and becoming. Now no passion is more eager for revenge than anger, and for that very reason is unfit to take it; being unduly ardent and frenzied, as most lusts are, it blocks its own progress to the goal toward which it hastens, Therefore it has never been of advantage either in peace or in war; for it makes peace seem like war, and amid the clash of arms it forgets that the War-god shows no favour and, failing to control itself, it passes into the control of another. Again, it does not follow that the vices are to be adopted for use from the fact that they have sometimes been to some extent profitable. For a fever may bring relief in certain kinds of sickness, and yet it does not follow from this that it is not better to be altogether free from fever. A method of cure that makes good health dependent upon disease must be regarded with detestation. In like manner anger, like poison, a fall, or a shipwreck, even if it has sometimes proved an unexpected good, ought not for that reason to be adjudged wholesome; for oftentimes poisons have saved life. Again, if any quality is worth having, the more of it there is, the better and the more desirable it becomes. If justice is a good, no one will say that it becomes a greater good after something has been withdrawn from it; if bravery is a good, no one will desire it to be in any measure reduced. Consequently, also, the greater anger is, the better it is; for who would oppose the augmentation of any good? And yet, it is not profitable that anger should be increased; therefore, that anger should exist either. That is not a good which by increase becomes an evil "Anger is profitable," it is said, "because it makes men more warlike." By that reasoning, so is drunkenness too; for it makes men forward and bold, and many have been better at the sword because they were. the worse for drink. By the same reasoning you must also say that lunacy and madness are essential to strength, since frenzy often makes men more, powerful. But tell me, does not fear, in the opposite way, sometimes make a man bold, and does not the terror of death arouse even

errant cowards to fight? But anger, drunkenness, fear, and the like, are base and fleeting incitements and do not give arms to virtue, which never needs the help of vice; they do, however, assist somewhat the mind that is otherwise slack and cowardly. No man is ever made braver through anger, except the one who would never have been brave without anger. It comes, then, not as a help to virtue, but as a substitute for it. And is it not -true that if anger were a good, it would come naturally to those who are the most perfect? But the fact is, children, old men, and the sick are most prone to anger, and weakness of any sort is by nature captious.

"It is impossible", says Theophrastus, "for a good man not to be angry with bad men." According to this, the better a man is, the more irascible he will be; on the contrary, be sure that none is more peaceable, more free from passion, and less given to hate. Indeed, what reason has he for hating wrong-doers, since it is error that drives them to such mistakes? But no man of sense will hate the erring; otherwise he will hate himself. Let him reflect how many times he offends against morality, how many of his acts stand in need of pardon; then he will be angry with himself also. For no just judge will pronounce one sort of judgement in his own case and a different one in the case of others. No one will be found, I say, who is able to acquit himself, and any man who calls himself innocent is thinking more of witnesses than conscience. How much more human to manifest toward wrong-doers a kind and fatherly spirit, not hunting them down but calling them back! If a man has lost his way and is roaming across our fields, it is better to put him upon the right path than to drive him out.

And so the man who does wrong ought to be set right both by admonition and by force, by measures both gentle and harsh, and we should try to make him a better man for his own sake, as well as for the sake of others, stinting, not our reproof, but our anger. For what physician will show anger toward a patient? "But," you say, "they are incapable of being reformed, there is nothing pliable in them, nothing that gives room for fair hope." Then let them be removed from human society if they are bound to make worse all that they touch, and let them, in the only way this is possible, cease to be evil - but let this be done without hatred. For what reason have I for hating a man to whom I am offering the greatest service when I save him from himself? Does a man hate the members of his own body when he uses the knife upon them? There is no anger there, but the pitying desire to heal. Mad dogs we knock on the head; the fierce and savage ox we slay; sickly sheep we put to the knife to keep them from infecting the flock; unnatural progeny we destroy; we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal. Yet it is not anger but reason that separates the harmful from the sound. For the one who administers punishment nothing is so unfitting as anger, since punishment is all the better able to work reform if it is bestowed with judgement. This is the reason Socrates says to his slave: "I would beat you if I were not angry." The slave's reproof he postponed to

a more rational moment; at the time it was himself he reproved. Will there be any one, pray, who has passion under control, when even Socrates did not dare to trust himself to anger? Consequently, there is no need that correction be given in anger in order to restrain the erring and the wicked. For since anger is a mental sin, it is not right to correct wrong-doing by doing wrong. "What then? you exclaim; "shall I not be angry with a robber? Shall I not be angry with a poisoner? "No; for I am not angry with myself when I let my own blood. To every form of punishment will I resort, but only as a remedy. If you are lingering as yet in the first stage of error and are lapsing, not seriously, but often, I shall try to correct you by chiding, first in private, then in public. If you have already advanced so far that words can no longer bring you to your senses, then you shall be held in check by public disgrace. Should it be necessary to brand you in more drastic fashion, with a punishment you can feel, you shall be sent into exile, banished to an unknown region. Should your wickedness have become deep-rooted, demanding harsher remedies to meet your case, to chains and the state-prison we shall have resort. If with mind incurable you link crime to crime and are actuated no longer by the excuses which will never fail the evil man, but wrong-doing itself becomes to you pretext enough for doing wrong; if you have drained the cup of wickedness and its poison has so mingled with your vitals that it cannot issue forth without them; if, poor wretch! you have long desired to die, then we shall do you good service - we shall take from you that madness by which, while you harass others, you yourself are harassed, and to you who have long wallowed in the suffering of yourself and others we shall gladly give the only boon still left for you, death! Why should I be angry with a man to whom I am giving the greatest help? Sometimes the truest form of pity is to kill. If with the training of an expert physician I had entered a hospital or a rich man's household, I should not have prescribed the same treatment to all, though their diseases differed. Diverse, too, are the ills I see in countless minds, and I am called to cure the body politic; for each man's malady the proper treatment should be sought; let this one be restored by his own self-respect, this one by a sojourn abroad, this one by pain, this one by poverty, this one by the sword! Accordingly, even if as a magistrate I must put on my robe awry and summon the assembly by the trumpet I shall advance to the high tribunal, not in rage nor in enmity, but with the visage of the law, and as I pronounce those solemn words my voice will not be fierce, but rather grave and gentle, and not with anger, but with sternness, I shall order the law to be enforced. And when I command a criminal to be beheaded, or sew up a parricide in the sack, or send a soldier to his doom, or stand a traitor or a public enemy upon the Tarpeian Rock, I shall have no trace of anger, but shall look and feel as I might if I were killing a snake or any poisonous creature. "We have to be angry," you say, "in order to punish." What! Think you the law is angry with men it does not know, whom it has never seen, who it hopes will never be? The spirit of the law, therefore, we should make our own - the law which shows not anger but determination. For if it is right for a

good man to be angry at the crimes of wicked men, it will also be right for him to be envious of their prosperity. And what, indeed, seems more unjust than that certain reprobates should prosper and become the pets of fortune - men for whom there could be found no fortune bad enough? But the good man will no more view their blessings with envy than he views their crimes with anger. A good judge condemns wrongful deeds, but he does not hate them. "What then?" you say; "when the wise man shall have something of this sort to deal with, will not his mind be affected by it, will it not be moved from its usual calm?" I admit that it will; it will experience some slight and superficial emotion. For as Zeno says: "Even the wise man's mind will keep its scar long after the wound has healed." He will experience, therefore, certain suggestions and shadows of passion, but from passion itself he will be free.

Aristotle says that certain passions, if one makes a proper use of them, serve as arms. And this would be true if, like the implements of war, they could be put on and laid aside at the pleasure of the user. But these "arms" which Aristotle would grant to virtue fight under their own orders; they await no man's gesture and are not possessed, but possess. Nature has given to us an adequate equipment in reason; we need no other implements. This is the weapon she has bestowed; it is strong, enduring, obedient, not double-edged or capable of being turned against its owner. Reason is all-sufficient in itself, serving not merely for counsel, but for action as well. What, really, is more foolish than that reason should seek protection from anger - that which is steadfast from that which is wavering, that which is trustworthy from that which is untrustworthy, that which is well from that which is sick? Even in matters of action, in which alone the help of anger seems necessary, is it not true that reason, if left to itself, has far more power? For reason, having decided upon the necessity of some action, persists in her purpose, since she herself can discover no better thing to put in her place; therefore her determinations, once made, stand. But anger is often forced back by pity; for it has no enduring strength, but is a delusive inflation, violent at the outset. It is like the winds that rise from off the earth; generated from streams and marshes they have vehemence, but do not last. So anger begins with a mighty rush, then breaks down from untimely exhaustion, and though all its thoughts had been concerned with cruelty and unheard-of forms of torture, yet when the time is ripe for punishment it has already become crippled and weak. Passion quickly falls, reason is balanced. But even if anger persists, it will often happen that having taken the blood of two or three victims it will cease to slay, although there are more who deserve to die. Its first blows are fierce; so serpents when they first crawl from their lair are charged with venom, but their fangs are harmless after they have been drained by repeated biting. Consequently, not all who have sinned alike are pushed alike, and often he who has committed the smaller sin receives the greater punishment, because he was subjected to anger when it was fresh. And anger is altogether unbalanced; it now rushes farther than it should, now

halts sooner than it ought. For it indulges its own impulses, is capricious in judgement, refuses to listen to evidence, grants no opportunity for defence, maintains whatever position it has seized, and is never willing to surrender its judgement even if it is wrong.

Reason grants a hearing to both sides, then seeks to postpone action, even its own, in order that it may gain time to sift out the truth; but anger is precipitate. Reason wishes the decision that it gives to be just; anger wishes to have the decision which it has given seem the just decision. Reason considers nothing except the question at issue; anger is moved by trifling things that lie outside the case. An overconfident demeanour, a voice too loud, boldness of speech, foppishness in dress, a pretentious show of patronage, popularity with the public - these inflame anger. Many times it will condemn the accused because it hates his lawyer; even if the truth is piled up before its very eyes, it loves error and clings to it; it refuses to be convinced, and having entered upon wrong it counts persistence to be more honourable than penitence.

There was Gnaeus Piso, whom I can remember; a man free from many vices, but misguided, in that he mistook inflexibility for firmness. Once when he was angry he ordered the execution of a soldier who had returned from leave of absence without his comrade, on the ground that if the man did not produce his companion, he had killed him; and when the soldier asked for a little time to institute a search, the request was refused. The condemned man was led outside the rampart, and as he was in the act of presenting his neck, there suddenly appeared the very comrade who was supposed to have been murdered. Hereupon the centurion in charge of the execution bade the guardsman sheathe his sword, and led the condemned man back to Piso in order to free Piso from blame; for Fortune had freed the soldier. A huge crowd amid great rejoicing in the camp escorted the two comrades locked in each other's arms. Piso mounted the tribunal in a rage, and ordered both soldiers to be led to execution, the one who had done no murder and the one who had escaped it! Could anything have been more unjust than this? Two were dying because one had been proved innocent. But Piso added also a third; for he ordered the centurion who had brought back the condemned man to be executed as well. On account of the innocence of one man three were appointed to die in the selfsame place. O how clever is anger in devising excuses for its madness! "You," it says, "I order to be executed because you were condemned; you, because you were the cause of your comrade's condemnation; you, because you did not obey your commander when, you were ordered to kill." It thought out three charges because it had grounds for none.

Anger, I say, has this great fault - it refuses to be ruled. It is enraged against truth itself if this is shown to be contrary to its desire. With outcry and uproar and

gestures that shake the whole body it pursues those whom it has marked out, heaping upon them abuse and curses. Not thus does reason act. But if need should so require, it silently and quietly wipes out whole families root and branch, and households that are baneful to the state it destroys together with wives and children; it tears down their very houses, levelling them to the ground, and exterminates the very names of the foes of liberty. All this it will do, but with no gnashing of the teeth, no wild tossing of the head, doing nothing that would be unseemly for a judge, whose countenance should at no time be more calm and unmoved than when he is delivering a weighty sentence. "What is the need," asks Hieronymus, "of biting your own lips before you start to give a man a thrashing?" What if he had seen a proconsul leap down from the tribunal, snatch the fasces from the lictor, and tear his own clothes because some victim's clothes were still untorn! What is to be gained by overturning the table, by hurling cups upon the floor, by dashing oneself against pillars, tearing the hair, and smiting the thigh and the breast? How mighty is the anger, think you, which turns back upon itself because it cannot be vented upon another as speedily as it desires! And so such men are seized by the bystanders and begged to become at peace with themselves.

None of these things will he do, who, being free from anger, imposes upon each one the punishment that he merits. He will often let a man go free even after detecting his guilt. If regret for the act warrants fair hope, if he discerns that the Sin does not issue from the inmost soul of the man, but, so to speak, is only skin-deep, he will grant him impunity, seeing that it will injure neither the recipient nor the giver. Sometimes he will ban great crimes less ruthlessly than small ones, if these, in the one case, were committed not in cruelty but in a moment of weakness, and, in the other, were instinct with secret, hidden, and long-practised cunning. To two men guilty of the same offence he will mete out different punishment, if one sinned through carelessness, while the other intended to be wicked. Always in every case of punishment he will keep before him the knowledge that one form is designed to make the wicked better, the other to remove them; in either case he will look to the future, not to the past, For as Plato says: "A sensible person does not punish a man because he has sinned, but in order to keep him from sin; for while the past cannot be recalled, the future may be forestalled." And he will openly kill those whom he wishes to have serve as examples of the wickedness that is slow to yield, not so much that they themselves may be destroyed as that they may deter others from destruction. These are the things a man must weigh and consider, and you see how free he ought to be from all emotion when he proceeds to deal with a matter that requires the utmost caution - the use of power over life and death. 'Tis ill trusting an angry man with a sword.

And you must not suppose this, either - that anger contributes anything to greatness of soul. That is not greatness, it is a swelling; nor when disease distends

the body with a mass of watery corruption is the result growth, but a pestilent excess. All whom frenzy of soul exalts to powers that are more than human believe that they breathe forth something lofty and sublime; but it rests on nothing solid, and whatever rises without a firm foundation is liable to fall. Anger has nothing on which to stand; it springs from nothing that is stable and lasting, but is a puffed-up, empty thing, as far removed from greatness of soul as foolhardiness is from bravery, arrogance from confidence, sullenness from austerity, or cruelty from sternness. The difference between a lofty and a haughty soul, I say, is great. Anger aims at nothing splendid or beautiful. On the other hand, it seems to me to show a feeble and harassed spirit, one conscious of its own weakness and oversensitive, just as the body is when it is sick and covered with sores and makes moan at the slightest touch. Thus anger is a most womanish and childish weakness. "But," you will say, "it is found in men also." True, for even men may have childish and womanish natures. "What then?" you cry; "do not the utterances of angry men sometimes seem to be the utterances of a great soul?" Yes, to those who do not know what true greatness is. Take the famous words: "Let them hate if only they fear," which are so dread and shocking that you might know that they were written in the times of Sulla. I am not sure which wish was worse –that he should be hated or that he should be feared. "Let them hate," quoth he; then he bethinks him that there will come a time when men will curse him, plot against him, overpower him - so what did he add? O may the gods curse him for devising so hateful a cure for hate! "Let them hate" - and then what? "If only they obey?" No! If only they approve? No! What then? "If only they fear!" On such terms I should not have wished even to be loved. You think this the utterance of a great soul? You deceive yourself; for there is nothing great in it - it is monstrous.

You need put no trust in the words of the angry, for their noise is loud and threatening, but within, their heart is very cowardly. Nor need you count as true the saying found in that most eloquent writer, Titus Livius: "A man whose character was great rather than good." In character there can be no such separation; it will either be good or else not great, because greatness of soul, as I conceive it, is a thing unshakable, sound to the core, uniform and strong from top to bottom - something that cannot exist in evil natures. Evil men may be terrible, turbulent, and destructive, but greatness they will never have, for its support and stay is goodness. Yet by speech, by endeavour, and by all outward display they will give the impression of greatness; they will make utterances which you may think bespeak the great soul, as in the case of Gaius Caesar. He grew angry at heaven because its thunder interrupted some pantomimists, whom he was more anxious to imitate than to watch, and when its thunderbolts - surely they missed their mark - affrighted his own revels, he challenged Jove to fight, even to the death, shouting in the words of Homer:

Or uplift me, or I will thee.

What madness! He thought that not even Jove could harm him, or that he could harm even Jove. I suppose that these words of his had no little weight in arousing the minds of conspirators; for to put up with a man who could not put up with Jove seemed the limit of endurance!

There is in anger, consequently, nothing great, nothing noble, even when it seems impassioned, contemptuous alike of gods and men. Else let him who thinks that anger reveals the great soul, think that luxury does the same; it desires to rest on ivory, to be arrayed in purple, to be roofed with gold, to remove lands, to confine the waters of the sea, to hurl rivers headlong, to hang gardens in the air. Let him think that avarice also betokens the great soul; it broods over heaps of gold and silver, it tills fields that are provinces in all but name, and holds under a single steward broader acres than were allotted once to consuls. Let him also think that lust betokens the great soul; it swims across straits, it unsexes lads by the score, and despising death braves the husband's sword. And let him think that ambition also betokens the great soul; it is not content with annual office; it would fill the calendar with only one name if that might be, and set up its memorials throughout all the world. Such qualities, it matters not to what height or length they reach, are all narrow, pitiable, grovelling. Virtue alone is lofty and sublime, and nothing is great that is not at the same time tranquil.