

What are seneca's views on anger essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Seneca who was a Spanish-born Stoic philosopher and a good public speaker between 4 B.

C and 65 B. C has given his opinion about anger in his essay ' On Anger'. This essay will illustrate his views on anger by looking at his definition on anger, the discordances of anger with nature, the decision to start anger, the causes of anger, and the process of anger, the good and bad consequences of anger and the remedies of it. It will then critically analysis his views by looking at the consistence with stoicism, the practicability of his remedies and some oversights of his views. Stoicism was a philosophical system started by Zeno. The belief of stoicism was a ruling principle underlay reality and permeated all things.

It accounted for the orderliness of nature (Perry, Chase, Jacob, Jacob & Lane 1996: 112). It believed that happiness came from the disciplining of emotions by the rational part of soul and individuals should progress morally (Perry et al. 1996: 113)In the essay, Seneca gave the definition of anger. Anger is " a burning desire to avenge a wrong" or " a burning desire to punish him by whom you think yourself to have been unfairly harmed.

"(Seneca On Anger Extracts 12). These were the definitions of anger given by Seneca. Seneca then talked about the accordance of anger with nature. He said " Man was created for mutual assistance, anger for mutual destruction.

The one would flock together with his fellows, the other would break away. The one seeks to help, the other to harm...

" (Seneca On Anger Extracts I5). Therefore, anger opposed to the common definition of nature which is helping each other. Also, " anger is greedy for punishment. That such a desire should reside in that most peaceful of dwellings, the breast of man, is utterly out of accord with his nature." (Seneca On Anger Extracts I5).

These suggested that anger was totally disaccord with nature. Anger was actually started with a decision from the view of Seneca. He said anger undertakes nothing on its own, but only with the mind's approval (Seneca On Anger Extracts II1). He said involuntary movements, like recoil at the touch of something, cannot be overcome or avoided but anger was eliminated the commands of reasons. " For it is a voluntary fault of the mind and not one of those which occur through some quirk of the human condition" (Seneca On Anger Extracts II2). Therefore, anger was actually started with a decision.

The prime cause of anger was the opinion that we had been wronged (Seneca On Anger Extracts II22). Apart from that, the second thing which aroused anger was a sense of the ' unfairness' of the thing done to us. " People judge things to be ' unfair' either because they ought not to have suffered them or else because they did not expect to do so.", this was due to excessive of self-love because we thought we ought not to be harmed, even by enemies (Seneca On Anger Extracts II31). The contrary of hope and expectation caused anger to occur.

The process of anger was an impression received of a wrong done and then the agitation of mind to exact retribution. In his opinion, " anger is a complex [process] with several parts- realization, indignation, condemnation,

retribution." (Seneca On Anger Extracts II1). " To receive an impression of wrong done to one, to lust for retribution, to put together the two propositions that damage ought not to have been done and that punishment ought to be inflicted, is not the work of a mere involuntary impulse." (Seneca On Anger Extracts II1).

Anger was actually a process which had several parts. Once anger started, it usually brought out some consequences and losses. Although anger could have some good effect and maybe useful like " rouses and spur on the mind." (Seneca On Anger Extracts I7). It still caused " oblivious of decency, heedless of personal bonds, obstinate and intent on anything once started..

., incapable of discerning fairness or truth, it most resembles those ruins which crash in pieces over what they have crushed..." (Seneca On Anger Extracts I1). Anger could lead to more bad consequences than good.

Therefore, it was necessary to find out the remedies of anger so as to minimize its hurt. Seneca suggested some remedies for anger. He divided it into two parts: not fall into anger and not to go wrong in a state of anger (Seneca On Anger Extracts II18). First of all, we should avoid anger and not to fall into it, " it is best to beat back at once the first irritations, to resist the very germs of anger and take care not to succumb"(Seneca On Anger Extracts I8). Therefore, it was better not to become angry in the first place.

Secondly, one should not trust the impression of wrong done immediately. " We should not accede at once even to things that are open and clear; falsehoods sometimes have the look of truths." We should give ourselves time to reveal the truth (Seneca On Anger Extracts II22). When one stopped

and thought twice, the initial heat could be reduced and the darkness that oppresses the mind could be subsided or thinned out (Seneca On Anger Extracts III12). Therefore, postponement was a great remedy for anger. The third remedy was to fight with ourselves and restrict anger.

" We should suppress its symptoms and keep it hidden and secret" and " It should be hidden in the most remote corner of the breast and carried along, rather than carrying us along" (Seneca On Anger Extracts III13). Also, we could turn anger to mirth and merriment (Seneca On Anger Extracts III10). We should relax our faces, gentle our voices and slow our paces. Little by little, the externals will be matched by our inner feelings (Seneca On Anger Extracts III13). Then we can free ourselves from anger.

There are some consistencies in the views of Seneca with the stoicism. Both of them think anger can be controlled by one's mind. Seneca said anger was actually started with a decision and required a reason to make it occur. It is under the control of rationality.

Stoicism believes that the universe contained a principle of order and humans are under control of divine reason: Logos (Perry et al. 1996: 112). Also they think that reason can overcome emotion so anger can be controlled rationally. To discuss the practicability of his remedies, the possibility to control anger should be considered firstly.

It is impossible to control anger as humans can completely lose control of themselves because they are either reasonable or unreasonable (Sorensen 1984: 101). Therefore, it is hard to restrict anger by turning it into joy. Once anger starts, it refuses to be controlled. Also, it is natural for one to express

<https://assignbuster.com/what-are-senecas-views-on-anger-essay/>

his feelings and it is impossible to hide anger. Therefore, his remedies are not really practicable in daily life.

Apart from that, there is also oversight in Seneca's views. He did not distinguish between righteous and unrighteous indignation, he just simply rejected both (Sorensen 1984: 102). Sometimes, indignation is necessary as it is the motive to fight for justice. Also, it is false for Seneca to equal revenge and punishment. There is a difference between them. Punishment could improve the one being punished and not just to satisfy one's punishing (Sorensen 1984: 102).

Therefore, it is not true to say "punishment ought to be inflicted" after the mind had made the decision to revenge. In conclusion, Seneca has defined anger as the desire to avenge or punish a wrong done received by one. It is disaccord to nature and required the mind to make a decision to start. It is a process which contains several parts.

Anger can bring plague and ruin to one's mind. The remedies he suggested are to avoid anger, postponement and fight with ourselves to restrict anger. There is consistency between his views and stoicism. However, the remedies are not all possible to carry out as he neglects the impossibility for one to control his emotions.

There are some oversights in his views such as rejecting all the righteous and unrighteous indignation and equal the meaning of punishment and revenge.