

MSt in Ancient Philosophy Thesis

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1. Introduction

From the first word of the *Iliad* to the first systematic chapter on an individual emotion in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, anger is given prominence out of all emotions that caught literary and philosophical attention in the classical world. The ubiquity of this emotion is reflected in humanities of all times: whether in history or mythology, we see men and women of different culture and social status get angry for all sorts of reasons, bringing inconceivable disasters to families and states with their vengeful actions. Observing phenomena like this, from Aristotle onwards, philosophers have kept seeking solutions to fitting this outrageous emotion into the frame of their ethics and philosophy of mind. Although the linguistic terms used to signify anger vary from author to author, the idea about an emotion of such distinctive nature remains a universal topic of discussion. Knowing the nature of anger – what it is, how is it caused, and what it will lead to – is of crucial importance, since it constitutes the fundamental basis for deciding whether this specific psychological force can be made use of, controlled, or extirpated in ethical life.

Such is the common approach of the two Roman philosophical works dedicated to anger that my thesis is about to examine. I choose the Epicurean Philodemus and the Stoic Seneca as objects for this comparative study, not only because they wrote in proximate times and each represents the maturity of the theory of an eminent post-Aristotelian school, but their two works of *On Anger* display substantial comparability in insights behind the veil of opposite doctrines. The two works are similar in structure and approach, both containing a notable part of diatribe against the evil of anger, offering therapeutic suggestions to prevent the corresponding results in practice, meanwhile criticizing other ways of understanding and treating the emotion. More importantly, as I shall elaborate in this thesis, essential parallels can be found between the two

authors' explication of the cognitive and motivational nature of the emotion, which tend to be overlooked or misinterpreted at face value.

The argument of my thesis will be divided into three main sections, each dealing with one comparative problem across the two works of *On Anger*: (1) the “definitional” problem, which outlines the deciding factors that makes anger what it is and distinguishes it from all the other non-anger psychological processes; (2) the “cognitive” problem, which clarifies the relationship between anger and the judgments that cause, underlie, and constrain the occurrence of the emotion; (3) the “motivational” problem, which focuses on the involvement of desire in anger and how it leads people to feel and act in certain ways. By investigating how Philodemus and Seneca each handles the three problems in their works, I aim at giving a thorough examination of the two authors' understanding of the nature of anger, especially in the cognitive and motivational respects, meanwhile demonstrating the intersections and differences between the two theoretical systems.¹

2. The Definitional Problem

When starting a comparative study of philosophy, the first important task is to make sure that the philosophers writing in different languages and times are talking about the same thing. Usually such need for a basis of comparison can be fulfilled when the texts provide definitions, with which we can identify the similarities and distinctions in the concepts used across individual schools. In the case of the two works on anger, however, things turn up differently. From the literary representation of the emotion in the diatribes of both works, we can easily

¹ Although therapeutic treatment takes up substantial length in both works of *On Anger*, and both authors regard it to be one of their aims of writing the works, my focus of the present thesis will be limited to the topic about the “nature of anger”, which is of more theoretical interest and paves the way for further research on ethics and philosophical therapy.

tell that what has been brought up is the same type of psychological phenomenon that every ordinary person will encounter in life, but figuring out each author's definition of that specific object of their philosophical treatment becomes one of our problems, since neither of the works explicitly gives such a statement.

What is the thing that Philodemus and Seneca call anger (ὀργή / ira)? How is it distinguished from all the other psychological events within human mind? Solving the definitional problem is essential, as it allows us to make comparisons between the two authors' attempts of characterizing the emotion without needing to worry about a latent change of the object item. As we shall see, many apparent distinctions between Philodemus' and Seneca's accounts of anger come from the difference in the scope that they use this concept. My investigation in this section starts with Philodemus, who though offers no clearly definitive account in what survives of his work, famously distinguishes two species of anger under the genus of this emotion, both meeting with certain standards in being called "anger (ὀργή)". Then I turn to Seneca, who (as cited by Lactantius) shows erudite inclusiveness in summarizing his predecessors' definitions of anger, but meanwhile exhibits clear tendency to reformulate others' definitions in effect-directed language, which corresponds with his own approach of limiting the concept of "anger (ira)" to a rather strict sense.²

2.1 Philodemus' sketch outlines of anger

The difficulty of determining how Philodemus defines anger arises from three aspects. First, the surviving text of *On Anger* in the Herculaneum papyri is obscure and highly fragmentary,

² My discussion about definitions of anger in the following will focus on what Aristotle calls "the dialectician's definition" that describes the "form and the account (τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸν λόγον)" of the emotion, as opposed to the natural scientist's way of defining anger as "boiling of the blood around the heart and heat (ζέσιν τοῦ περὶ καρδίαν αἵματος καὶ θερμοῦ)." (*De Anima* 403a29-b2.)

while much of its content is dialectical, where the author presents one of his opponents' view to which he is going to object. This sometimes makes the identity of speakers of many assertions uncertain. Second, Epicurus is notorious in the ancient records to “abolish definitions (tollit definitiones)” (Cic. *Fin.* 22), but uses only conventional language based on “preconceptions (προλήψεις)” to refer the objects of search.³ In line with this, what we can find in Philodemus' *On Anger* are only some “sketch outlines (ὕπογραφαί)” that indicate the most relevant features of the emotion, without showing attempt to fix the complete account.⁴ Finally, for Philodemus, to give a general definition of anger requires reconciling two drastically different species of the emotion that are discussed under the same name – natural and empty anger.⁵ This even leads some scholars to believe that it is simply inappropriate to try to cover both with a unified definition of anger.⁶

Nevertheless, it is not at all groundless to infer a sketched idea of anger from the claims that Philodemus himself has made. The most explicit clue is found in Col. 41, where a specific situation is marked as “the thing as such we call anger.”⁷ The context of this column, together with Col. 40, is Philodemus' argument against Nicasicrates that the Sage, just as any human being, falls into the type of anger that is “inescapable for human nature”.⁸ Although the situation in question mainly concerns the natural type of anger, the description of its cause and effect is most like a general account of anger: “when he has been intentionally harmed by someone or has received the impression that he will be harmed”, “he will have a biting feeling and come back at him (the wrongdoer) in one way or another.”⁹ From this description, we can

³ Cf. *Ep. Hdt.* 37-8.

⁴ Cf. Armstrong & McOsker, 2020: 36, Asmis, 2011: 159, 1984: 42-4.

⁵ I shall discuss in detail about the difference between these two types of anger in both the “cognitive” and “motivational” sections. For the present, our goal is to find commonalities across Philodemus' accounts of both.

⁶ Cf. Annas, 1989, 1995; Sorabji, 2000: ch. 15.

⁷ τὸ δε τοιοῦτο[ν ὀργήν] [κ]αλοῦμεν. (Col. 41.8-9.) Translations of both Greek and Latin texts in this thesis are mine unless otherwise specified.

⁸ ἀνέκφευκτον ἀνθρώπων [ἡ] φύσει. Col. 40.20-2.

⁹ βλαβεῖς ὑπὸ τινος ἐκουσίως ἢ λαβὼν ἔνφασιν τοῦ βλαβήσεσθαι (Col. 40.32-5,) ἔλθοι πάλιν καθ' ἓνα γέ τινα τρόπο[ν] δακῶν (Col. 41.6-8.)

gain some preliminary information that anger, at least in some cases, is connected with the subject's suffering of intentional harm or supposition of future harm. As an emotion, it feels like "biting (δάκνων)", and people having this feeling will react against the adversary.

The above information about anger finds correspondence in Philodemus' writing here and there. That the cause of anger is a supposition (ὑπόληψις) or belief (δόξα) about harm is extensively indicated in Fr. 24.6, Col. 6.14-5, 47.29-31, 49.28-30, and 49.40-50.1, where both the natural and empty types of anger are mentioned, and specifically, in Col. 49.28-30, "a supposition of having being (intentionally) harmed" is used as a necessary condition of the occurrence of anger.¹⁰ It is worth noting that Philodemus lays stress on the element of intention (τὸ ἐκούσιον) concerning the cause of harm, especially in the case of the Sage's anger: If a Sage will be grateful to those who have treated him well out of their own will, he will also become angry with those who have intentionally harmed him... just as the intentional element provokes gratitude, so also it provokes anger (Col. 46. 18-22, 28-30)."¹¹ The phenomenological feeling of the emotion depicted as "biting (δάκνων / δακνηρός)" also shows up elsewhere, along with the characterization of "painful or analogous to something painful (Col. 37.27-9)."¹² In the diatribe in Col. 12, anger – to be specific, rage (θυμός) – is said to "bite" at the subjects (Col. 12.18), making them still more inferior (χείρονας), "so that they take up vile language and little by little sink so low as even to throw stones, and not only that, but sometimes they attack those much stronger than themselves."¹³ This suggests that the "biting" feeling in empty

¹⁰ τοῦ τὴν ὀργὴν χωρὶς ὑπολήψεως τοῦ βεβ[β]λάφθαι μὴ γίνεσθαι. Col. 49.28-30. And immediately following this, "intentionally (ἐκούσιως)" is added: καὶ τοῦ τὸν σοφὸν ἐκούσιω[ς] βλάπτεσθαι. (Col. 49.30-2.) The context is Philodemus demonstrating the invalidity of someone else's argument that the sage will necessarily get into anger when he is intentionally harmed. Instead, Philodemus suggests that "being intentionally harmed" is a necessary condition for anger, but not a sufficient one. For discussion on this issue, see Asmis, 2011.

¹¹ εἰ τοῖς καλῶς παρ' ἑαυτοῦς κ[ε]χρημένο[ις] εὐχαριστήσῃ σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, καὶ τοῖς ἐκουσί[οι] ὄν[τε]ς βλάψασιν αὐτὸν ὀργισθήσεται ... καὶ κινεῖ, καθάπερ τὴν εὐχαριστίαν, οὕτω καὶ τὴν ὀργὴν τὸ ἐκούσιον. (Col. 46.28-30.) Tr. Armstrong & McOskey, 2020, with my modifications. Cf: Procopé, 1998, 177.

¹² λυπηρόν ἐστιν ἢ ἀνάλογον λυπηρῶι. (Col. 37.27-9.) This specific character makes anger, no matter natural or empty, taken in isolation an evil for the Epicureans. Cf: Col. 37.24-7. For detailed discussion concerning the "biting" feeling, see Tsouna, 2007: ch.2.

¹³ ὥστ' ἐπὶ ἐπιλαμ[βάνεσθαι] ἀτόπων κατὰ [δὲ] βαι[όν] καὶ καταφέ[ρεσθ] εἰς λί[θ]ων βολάσ. οὐ μὴν [ἀ]λ[λ'] ἐ[ν]ί[ο]τε καὶ παρὰ πολ[ύ]ν συμβάλλουσιν ἰσχυρ[ο]τέρ[οι]ς. Col. 12. 18-25. tr. Armstrong & McOskey, 2020. I will discuss in detail about the distinctions between anger (ὀργή) and rage (θυμός) in the next section.

anger also has the force to motivate the subject to react hostilely, which in a few other places (Col. 8.25-6, 23.27-8, 41.38-9) is identified as a “desire for revenge (ἐπιθυμία τοῦ μετελθεῖν).” However, in the contexts of all these places, what is under discussion is clearly the empty type of anger, but no textual mentioning of desire is found to be connected with natural anger.¹⁴ For this reason, a “desire for revenge” may not be suitable for describing the effect of anger in general, but is better to be replaced by “motivation to react against the adversary”.

Based on these textual clues, it is reasonable to assume that, the concept of anger for Philodemus consists of three essential elements: a supposition of intentional harm, which serves as the cause of anger; a “biting” feeling, which describes the mental state of anger as painful; and the subject’s motivation to react against the adversary, which is the effect of anger.¹⁵ To sum up, perhaps a general account of Philodemus’ concept of anger can be given as follows: anger is a “biting” feeling that results from a supposition of intentional harm and motivates one to react against the adversary. It limits the emotion in the tripartite dimensions of cause, feeling, and effect, meanwhile allowing anger (ὀργή) thus defined to be a fairly wide concept, flexible over further specification in each dimension to distinguish between different types of anger – natural and empty anger, moderate anger and excessive rage, etc.¹⁶

¹⁴ I shall elaborate this point in the section dealing with the “motivational” problem.

¹⁵ This is in accordance with the philosophical tradition from Aristotle onwards to divide the discussion of an emotion into three parts: the cognitive cause of this emotion, the mental state or phenomenological feeling related to it, and the motivational force it generates towards an action against its object (cf: Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.1.9). The third aspect has been modified here, which according to Aristotle should be the person at whom the emotion is targeted. In a rhetorical context where Aristotle brings up his discussion of emotion, this personal element plays a critical role, but as we shall see in Philodemus’ and especially Seneca’s accounts, the essence of anger is more closely tied with its motivational effect.

¹⁶ I regard this tripartite way of defining anger as clearer and more accurate than some other scholarly attempts, for example, that made by Ringeltaube (1913), who pioneered in modern scholarship to have concluded a Philodemean definition of anger by ingeniously rephrasing the Greek terms used in Col. 40-1, 47, and 49 in the following way: ὀργή ἐστὶν ἐρεθισμὸς ἐπακολουθῶν ὑπολήψεσιν βλαπτόντων ἢ βλάψειν μελλόντων.” Ringeltaube, 1913: 47. From what we have observed, this attempt of definition accurately identifies the cause of anger, but is deficient in characterizing the mental state of this emotion merely as an “irritation (ἐρεθισμὸς)”, which comes from the verb “to irritate (διερεθίζω)” in Col. 47.30, but without further discerning what the subjective feeling of anger is like and what effect such irritation will lead to, thus making it a less informative definition.

2.2 Seneca's narrower concept

It is a shame that Seneca's own definition of anger can nowhere be found in the preserved text of *On Anger*, but a quotation by an early 4th century author Lactantius in his *On the Anger of God* (17.13) suggests that Seneca has probably considered four definitions of anger in the lost part of his book:

Ira est *inquit* cupiditas ulciscendae iniuriae aut, ut ait Posidonius, cupiditas puniendi eius a quo te inique putes laesum. quidam ita finierunt: ira est incitatio animi ad nocendum ei qui aut nocuit aut nocere voluit. Aristotelis finitio non multum a nostra abest: ait enim iram esse cupiditatem doloris reponendi.

Anger is, he (Seneca) says, a desire to revenge an injury or, as Posidonius says, a desire to punish the person by whom you consider yourself to have been unjustly harmed. Some people have defined it in this way: anger is an agitation of the mind to harm someone who either has harmed you or intended to harm you. Aristotle's definition differs not much from ours; for he says that anger is the desire to pay back pain. (tr. Procopé, 1995: 19-20, with my modifications.)

If we trust Lactantius' record, the very first definition is probably Seneca's own, which features the psychological content of a desire and designates its motivational force towards revenge. From this we already have the impression that Seneca's overall focus of discussion about anger is on its effect, rather than the cause or the phenomenological feeling. This is well attested in his voluminous rhetorical presentation of the evil consequences of anger throughout the work. Although in the citation of Posidonius' account the cause of anger and the person as its object have been mentioned, these elements, as well as the subjective feeling of anger are left out completely in the last definition labeled to be from Aristotle (also preserved in *De Ira* I.3.3), despite that the latter is known to have given extensive illustration about them.¹⁷ This actually

¹⁷ Aristotle's complete definition of anger in *Rhetoric* II.2 is as follows: "Let anger be [defined as] desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one." (1378a30-1, tr. Kennedy, 2007: 116.) We can see that the subjective mental state, cause,

makes the comment that “Aristotle’s definition is not far from ours (I.3.3)” seem rather dubious. The third quotation is formulated in a similar way. Scholars like Procopé (1995, 1998) have noticed that it has “striking affinities with phrases in Philodemus”, and thus “looks very much like an Epicurean definition”.¹⁸ However, neither Seneca nor Lactantius has specified that this definition derives from Philodemus or any other Epicurean, nor is there any evidence except for certain textual correspondence to confirm such a source. From the quotation alone we can only gain information that much attention has still been put to the motivational prospect of anger, which is in line with Seneca’s own emphasis of argument in his *On Anger*.

I shall concentrate on Seneca’s own account in the preserved text now. Despite the lack of an official definition of what actually is anger, Seneca has at least provided very useful instructions about what is not anger. In I.3.3-8, right after the quotation of Aristotle’s definition, Seneca excludes non-rational animals’ aggressive impulses from anger, claiming that anger “should be the enemy of reason, and therefore cannot be generated except where there is a place for reason (I.3.4).”¹⁹ Later in II.2.2-3.3, a group of human conditions regarded as the “first mental jolts which affects us when we think ourselves wronged (II.2.2)” have been excluded as well, since “they are more of what the mind suffers rather than does (II.3.1).”²⁰ The author continues to state: “Emotion is not a matter of being moved by impressions received, but of surrendering oneself to them and following up the chance movement (II.3.1).”²¹ This is an important claim that highlights the voluntary nature of emotion, thus clarifying the implication of the previous claim that emotion is something that the mind “does (facit)” rather than suffers.²² Further, since anger is singled out as the “most hideous and frenzied of all

and effect of anger have all been included in this definition. In another famous Aristotelian text where anger is defined, *De Anima* I.1 (403a29-32), the physiological nature of anger of is underlined as parallel to the dialectic account, which is less likely to be the source of Seneca’s citation here.

¹⁸ Procopé, 1998: 176. Cf. Procopé, 1995: 20.

¹⁹ nam cum sit inimica rationi, nusquam tamen nascitur nisi ubi rationi locus est. (I.3.4.)

²⁰ primus ille ictus animi ponendus est qui nos post opinionem iniuriae movet (II.2.2.) ista patitur magis animus quam facit. (II.3.1.)

²¹ affectus est non ad oblatas rerum species moveri, sed permittere se illis et hunc fortuitum motum prosequi. (II.3.1.)

²² For discussion about this part of Seneca’s theory as answering Philodemus, see Sorabji, 2000, ch. 4. I will return to this

emotions”, which is “all excitement and impulse” but has nothing quiet and placid in it (I.1.1), it is said to override all the other emotions in that it “must not only be set in motion but has to go excessive (II.3.4).”²³ Such a declaration is assisted by an example in II.3.4, where Seneca denies the supposed case to be anger, when “someone thought himself harmed and wished to be avenged, being dissuaded by something, immediately calms down (II.3.4).” “This I do not call ‘anger’,” he remarks.²⁴

From all this textual information we are able to conclude that, Seneca’s definition of anger, following the orthodox Stoic tradition, limits the emotion to rational animals, and takes it as something that the mind voluntarily “does”. More importantly, Seneca regards anger as a specifically effect-directed mental act. Of all mental motions set off by impressions of harm in rational beings, only the most outrageous type that is excessive in desiring revenge and refuses to be controlled by reason is right to be called “anger”. Based on this clarification, we now see that Seneca’s use of the word “anger (*ira*)” is much narrower in scope than Philodemus’ general idea of anger (*ὀργή*), but close to the latter’s concept of the most excessive type of anger – rage (*θυμός*). It thus dissolves the confusing question why Seneca denies the existence of any natural occurrence of anger, but calls all instances of anger unnatural and irrational – he simply defines anger to be the latter.²⁵

problem later when dealing with Seneca’s three-stage cognitive model of anger.

²³ *adfectum pertimuisse maxime ex omnibus taetrum ac rabidum ; hic totus concitatus et in impetu est. (I.1.1.) Ira non moveri tandem debet sed excurrere. (II.3.4.)*

²⁴ *putavit se aliquis laesum, voluit ulcisci, dissuadente aliqua causa statim resedit : hanc iram non voco. (II.3.4.)*

²⁵ See *De Ira* I.5.2-3 on Seneca’s denial of any occurrence of anger to be natural.

3. The Cognitive Problem

Having defined what anger is for each author, the next important question to ask is how they regard such an emotion to be founded. This is exactly what our “cognitive” problem is about. Ever since Aristotle established the methodology of “dividing the discussion of an emotion into three parts” in *Rhetoric* II.1, the cognitive problem that concerns the cause and object of emotion has become the core of every philosophical theory on this topic. Historically, the idea that emotion involves cognitive content can be traced still back to the central part of Plato’s *Philebus*, where mental pleasure and pain are said to derive the qualification of truth and falsity from the correlated judgments that cause their occurrence.²⁶ This specific line of thought is seen to be adopted by Philodemus, who makes the distinction between natural and empty anger on the basis of the truth value of the two suppositions that underlie anger, one about the factual cause of the emotion, and the other on the calculated consequence of potential reactions.

Arguably from Annas’ 1989 article on, the cognitive distinction between natural and empty anger has become the most discussed theme in Philodemus’ *On Anger*.²⁷ The general idea that the Epicurean Sage will admit a natural type of anger based on true beliefs and natural desires has aroused substantial interest in modern scholarship, as it provides a rather palatable view of the emotion, which contrasts the more well-known but most radical Stoic proposal of eradication of all emotions, regarding it impossible for any of them to have such natural cause. As we have mentioned in the last section concerning the definitional problem, at least with Seneca, such a contrast between the two doctrines is not as striking as people think, since despite the definitional difference of what counts as anger, the cognitive models that Philodemus and Seneca conceive about what causes the emotion are rather similar to each other.

²⁶ Cf: Plato, *Philebus*, 36c-40c. Also see discussion in Armstrong & McOsler, 2020: 20-1.

²⁷ Cf: Annas, 1989, 147 ff.; Armstrong & McOsler, 2020: 13.

In this section I will elaborate the cognitive accounts of anger that each author characterizes the nature of this emotion upon. By determining what shapes the cognitive traits of anger, I also aim at finding out what cannot be explained in the cognitive way, about which both authors have to seek help from some other factors as part of their explanation – “disposition” for Philodemus, and the motion of impulse for Seneca.

3.1 Philodemus’ natural and empty anger

Within Philodemus’ extant text, the most explicit cognitive account we can find about anger concerns the causal distinction between natural and empty anger. In an important passage in Col.37-8, certain occasion of anger is described to “combine ‘seeing what the nature of things is’ and ‘not having any false beliefs in our comparative calculations of our losses and in our punishments of those who harm us’ (Col. 37.32-9).”²⁸ Here the text does not specify the subject under discussion, but there are several reasons that lead us to infer that this is the natural type of anger.²⁹ The context of Col. 37 is to decide whether the emotion in question should be regarded as good or evil. Despite that it is “painful or analogous to something painful (Col. 37.27-9),” thereby an evil taken in isolation, Philodemus agrees to call such kind of emotion as a good when “taken in conjunction with one’s disposition” (Col 37.29-32).³⁰ Immediately after, it is contrasted with empty anger (κενή ὀργή), which “we call an evil in the same way, for it comes from an utterly base disposition and entails countless troubles (Col. 37.39-40.5).”³¹

²⁸ συνίσταται γὰρ ἀπὸ το[ῦ] βλέπειν ὡς ἡ φύσις ἔχει τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ μηδὲν ψευδοδοξεῖν ἐν ταῖς σ[υ]μμετρήσεσι τῶν ἐλα[ττ]ωμάτων καὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι τῶν βλαπτόντων. (Col. 37.32-9.)

²⁹ Many scholars take it for granted that Col. 37.32-9 is a description of natural anger, including Gill, 2010: 158; Procopé, 1998: 180-1; Armstrong & McOsker, 2020: 275-7.

³⁰ ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πάθος αὐτὸ κατὰ διάληψιν ἀποφαινόμεθα κακόν, ἐπειδὴ λυπηρόν ἐστιν ἢ ἀνάλογον λυπηρῶι, κατὰ δὲ τὴν συνπλοκὴν τῇ διαθέσει κἂν ἀγαθὸν ῥηθῆσθεσθαι νομίζομεν. (Col. 37.24-32.)

³¹ ὥστε καθ’ [ὸ]ν τρόπον ἐλέγομ[εν] τὴν κ[εν]ὴν ὀρ[γ]ήν κακόν, ὅτι ἀπὸ διαθέσεως γίνεται πανπονήρου καὶ μυρία δυσχερῆ συνεπισπᾶται. (Col. 37.39-38.5.)

A few more lines later, the term “natural anger (φυσική ὀργή)” appears in Col. 38.21-2, which is spoken to be “from something good (ἀπὸ σπουδαίας)”, and therefore a good but not evil, while not to accept it is an evil.³² The feminine expression of “something good” in Col. 38.18 can very plausibly be a contraction of “good disposition (σπουδαία διάθεσις)”, thus making the claim almost the same as that in Col. 37.29-32. If the subject of Col. 37.29-32 is natural anger, then we can reasonably infer that the subsequent explanatory account in Col. 37.32-9 also refers to natural anger.

For the reasons above, if we grant that what is said in Col. 37.32-9 is about natural anger, this type of anger should combine “seeing what the nature of things is” and “not having any false beliefs in our comparative calculations of our losses and in our punishments of those who harm us.” It implies that natural anger has two suppositions as its cognitive content: one is about the “nature of things”, which refers to the intentional harm as the cause of anger, and the other is a result of the Epicurean way of practical reasoning (συμμέτρησις) that calculates the pros and cons of prospective reactions to anger.³³ In natural anger, both of these suppositions need to be true: if the “nature of things” is judged wrong, the cause of anger will be empty; if the result of reaction is miscalculated, the effect of anger will bring more evil than good. Correspondingly, what constitutes the emptiness in empty anger is also its cognitive content: the supposition of being greatly harmed or that external things are of great importance (Col. 47.23-5, 37-9), and the false belief that punishing others can bring about the greatest good (Col. 42.25-6). This shows that for Philodemus, each occurrence of anger involves two cognitive judgments: what causes anger to happen is always a factual judgment, which can be concluded as “a supposition of having been or will be intentionally harmed” (cf: Fr. 24.6, Col. 6.14-5, 47.29-31, 49.28-30, 49.40-50.1), while what puts the effect of anger into action is a

³² δὲ τ[ὸ] ἀπὸ σπουδαίας, οὐ κακόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθόν, οὕτως κακόν ἐροῦμεν τὸ μὴ τὴν φυσικὴν ὀργὴν ἀναδέχεσθαι. (Col. 38.18-22.)

³³ For discussion about the Epicurean συμμέτρησις, see Armstrong & McOskey, 2020: 41.

belief that results from the subject's practical reasoning about the consequence of punishing those who induced the harm (Col 37.32-9, 42.25-30). These two judgments are present in both natural and empty anger but differ in truth value, thus bringing the difference of quality in the two types of anger.

However, this only tells part of the story. As it turns up, given the tripartite definition we have made in the last section, instead of two, there can be a whole range of varieties of ways to distinguish different types of anger, either on the basis of the truth or falsity of the suppositions that cause the emotion, or on the intensity of the "biting" feeling and the level of disturbance it brings to the mind, or on the value of the calculated consequence of punishment to the satisfaction of the emotional mind. What characterizes natural anger is not merely the two portions of cognitive content, but they should also be taken in conjunction with the agent's good disposition, which together contribute in effect to limit the occurrence of the "biting" feeling to the shortest time period (*περὶ ἐλάχιστα γίνεται*, col. 38, line 8). Such a person, possibly an Epicurean Sage, though being angry, will "not experience great disturbance in any way (Col. 42.4-6)," and will not fall into the misfortune of those evil consequences that are listed in the diatribe of anger (Col. 42.19-20).³⁴ On the contrary, empty anger, which happens to someone who has a base disposition, starts from one's false supposition that he himself has been greatly harmed. Further, he takes revenge to be the greatest good, which is in itself worthy of pursuing, and believes that he cannot punish others in any other way (Col. 42.25-30). In such cases the great intensity of the emotion can drive the person into madness, causing an impulse to revenge as if to something enjoyable (Col. 44.7-11), but in the end it merely brings bitterest disturbance and evil to the subject himself.

³⁴ οὐ μέντοι γε παρα[χ]ῆν ἀνα[δ]έχεται μεγάλη[v]. (Col.42.4-6.)

From the above accounts we can already observe that the distinction between the two types of anger is not purely cognitive. In Column 45.33-7, Philodemus talks about rage (θυμός) as different from anger (ὀργή) in both magnitude and quality (καὶ καθὸ μεγέθει καὶ καθὸ ποιότητι).³⁵ Here it is worth first clarifying a terminological issue, that Philodemus uses the terms “empty anger (κενή ὀργή)” and “rage (θυμός)” interchangeably: here in 45.33-7, the difference between anger and rage can be equally put between natural and empty anger, while in Col. 38.1. 39.8, where “empty anger” is used to describe cases of anger that bring about evil consequences, such consequences are also the distinctive effect of rage. Although empty anger (κενή ὀργή) by its name has clearer cognitive indication that it is based on false suppositions, while rage (θυμός) is related more often in a context where the excessive magnitude of anger is underlined, both are opponents of the Sage’s natural anger that is simultaneously true in cognitive quality and moderate in magnitude (Col. 44. 5-8, 45.8, 46.2).³⁶

It is not implausible to conclude that the dimension of magnitude mentioned in 45.33-7 that separates natural anger from rage / empty anger is not a cognitive criterion, but a phenomenological one. The other criterion, quality, may refer to the cognitive distinction between naturalness and emptiness in the cause of anger, but whether the painful feeling of the emotion will bring about great disturbance and leads one to have a violent desire for revenge seems to have more to do with one’s disposition (διάθεσις).³⁷ At this point, we have reached the border of the cognitive problem. At face value, neither of the two judgments that cause anger can decide the magnitude of the emotion – only the distinction between natural and empty anger is cognitive, but that between moderate anger and intensive rage is not. The situation that what is opposite to natural anger is both empty anger and rage at the same time guides us to

³⁵ “It is clear that both in magnitude and quality it (rage) differs from anger (ὀργή), nor is rage (θυμός) natural.” δῆλον δ’ ὅτι καὶ καθὸ μεγέθει καὶ καθὸ ποιότητι διαφέρει τῆς ὀργῆς, οὐδὲ φυσικός ἐστὶν ὁ θυμός. (Col. 45.33-7.)

³⁶ Philodemus also makes it clear that when the word “rage (θυμός)” is occasionally used by Epicurus and other masters of the school to characterize the Sage, it is used in the general sense to mean anger (ὀργή) that includes the natural type (Col. 45.16-32,) which is distinct from Philodemus’ own way of classification.

³⁷ Cf. Col. 38.1-5, 41.36-9, 42.31-2.

think about the emotion in ways beyond cognitivism. Since the two variables provided – magnitude and quality – in combination entail four possibilities, why does Philodemus only acknowledge two species of anger? Logically there can also exist intense anger with a natural cause, as well as empty but inert anger. It seems that what ignites the emotion should not also be responsible for how wildly it will burn. Even if we grant some people’s reasoning, that the belief of being greatly harmed will generate in the mind a violent desire for revenge (Col. 41.31-9), it is still insufficient for Philodemus to implant in the Sage’s mind an angry feeling that has greater magnitude (Col. 42.1-6).

Then, does the truth value in the cognitive judgments have any relation to the phenomenological feeling of an emotion? Philodemus’ answer to this question is by seeking help from the concept of “disposition (διάθεσις)”. In Epicurean philosophy, disposition is described as one of people’s inborn characters in parallel with their natural capability to act and think. As Epicurus writes in Book 25 of *On Nature* (1056,6,3):

ἀπ[ὸ τῆς πρ]ώτης ἀρχῆς σπέρμ[ατα ἡμῖν ἀγ]ωγά, τὰ μὲν εἰς ταδ[εῖ], τὰ δ’ εἰς ταδεῖ,
τὰ δ’ εἰς ἄμφ[ω ταῦ]τά [ἐ]στιν ἀεὶ [κα]ὶ πράξεων κ[αὶ] διανοήσεων καὶ διαθ[έσε]ων
καὶ πλεί[ω καὶ ἐ]λάττωι.

From the very first beginning seeds leading at any given time, some to this, some to that, some to both, whether that be actions and thoughts and dispositions, to a greater or smaller extent. (tr. Laursen, 1997: 53.)³⁸

The account above is itself obscure, but it gives the impression that disposition in Epicurean natural philosophy has deeper relationship with the implanted “seeds” in human beings, which also have influence on people’s actions and thoughts. In *On Frank Criticism*, we find similar usage of the term by Philodemus himself, who combines the teachers’ disposition with their

³⁸ Erler (2012: 119) gives an incisive summary that “the term διάθεσις represents the Epicureans’ attempt to develop a concept of stability and individuality on an atomistic basis.” „Der Begriff διάθεσις steht für den Versuch der Epikureer, auf atomistischer Grundlage ein Konzept von Stabilität und Individualität zu entwickeln.“

ability to “perceive what is preferable” to demonstrate that they are better in life matters than those who surpass only in theoretical arguments (Col. 20a).³⁹ This further indicates that Philodemus considers disposition as interwoven with one’s cognitive ability. In the specific cases of anger, this is manifested in the fact that the Sage who is “most gentle and most reasonable (Col. 44.26-8)” “never receives an impression of being greatly harmed (Col. 47.39-41).” As it turns out, the influence of the factor of disposition can be found in all three definitive aspects of anger: one’s ability to receive true impressions about external facts, one’s sensitivity to pain, and one’s tendency in choices of reactions as a consequence of the emotion.⁴⁰

Thence we see why the contrast between the Sage’s and the fool’s anger is so dramatic: because their dispositions vary greatly, whatever they judge, feel, or desire will relate to this. The Sage’s good disposition stipulates that she will not be greatly disturbed even in great pains (Col. 42.7-12), and thus her naturally caused anger will be moderate and brief (Col. 45.8-12, 47.37). Also thanks to the good disposition, she will never miscalculate the appropriate amount of punishment or judge the act of punishing others as something pleasurable (Col. 44.32-5). Therefore, the Sage’s anger is always true in its cause, mild in its magnitude and appropriate in its reaction. But the foolish man, who has a base disposition and supposes that he has been greatly harmed, will be “driven mad (ἐξίστημι)” (Col. 47.29), and further miscalculate the value of his vengeful reaction, as if punishing others will bring to him pleasure (Col. 42.30-2). In effect, the anger of such a basely disposed person will always be empty in its cause, intense in magnitude, and disastrous in consequence.

³⁹ ἐν δὲ τῇ διαθέσει κ[α]ὶ τῷ συννοεῖν τὰ κρείττω καὶ μάλιστα τὰν τῶ[ι] βίῳ, πολὺ βελτεῖους ἑαυτοῦς ὑπάρχειν. (Col. 20a.)

⁴⁰ Procopé, 1998, 181; Asmis, 2011, 161-2; Erlen, 2012, 119-120; Armstrong & McOsker, 2020, 19-20, 41-4, 91-8 offer extensive discussion about the Epicurean concept of “disposition”.

3.2 Seneca's three movements

The “cognitive” problem for Seneca is interwoven with his conception of anger as a specific mental motion. At the beginning of II.1, Seneca raises the programmatic question of the book about how the motion of anger starts:

quaerimus enim ira utrum iudicio an impetu incipiat, id est utrum sua sponte moveatur an quemadmodum pleraque quae intra nos insciis nobis oriuntur. (II.1.1.)⁴¹

For we are asking whether anger begins with a judgment or with an impulse, that is, whether it is set in motion willingly or in the same way as most things within us which arise without our knowing it.

This question is very pertinent to our topic, as what has been asked is just the cognitive problem: whether anger is cognitively caused or not. If anger merely happens within us like hunger and other physical impulses, there can be no solution to it with philosophy. But if anger begins with a judgment that we ourselves make, we may be able to prevent it from the start. Soon in II.1.3, the author affirms the cognitive option: “it is no doubt indeed that anger is set in motion by an impression (oblata) received of a harm (iniuria).”⁴² The formulation is quite similar to what Philodemus puts in Col. 41.32-5, but for Seneca this only answers half of the causal question. The reception of an impression is certainly cognitive, “but we are asking whether it (anger) follows immediately on the impression itself and breaks out without the mind approaching it, or should it be moved by the mind assenting to it (II.1.3)?”⁴³ Here Seneca takes the distinctive

⁴¹ Another common version of text has “intra nos <non> insciis nobis oriuntur.” The word “non” is added by Hermes (1905) and adopted by later editors and translators like Basore (1928), Reynolds (1977), and Procopé (1995). Hermes (1905: 72, note 6) comments that the addition is for avoiding the relevant option of the answer to the question being the same with the other (ne in utroque quaestionis membro idem diceretur). Kaster (2010: 110, note 127) in his translation does not accept the emendation, taking the adverb “sponte” to mean “voluntarily” or “willingly”, parallel with “iudicio”, and the last part of the sentence to correspond to impulses without been willed. I regard Kaster’s reasoning as more acceptable here.

⁴² iram quin species oblata iniuriae moveat non est dubium. (II.1.3.)

⁴³ sed utrum speciem ipsa statim sequatur et non accedente animo excurrat, an illo adsentiente moveatur quaerimus. (II.1.3.)

Stoic standpoint, that every impression that comes to our mind “undertakes nothing on its own, but only with the mind’s approval (II.1.4),”⁴⁴ When receiving an impression of harm, the mind has to take the initiative to “combine both that the damage ought not to have been done and that punishment ought to be inflicted (II.1.4),” and only then the burning desire for punishment can be effectively caused.⁴⁵ These statements in the dense paragraphs of II.1.3-4 reveal to us that Seneca reckons the cognitive cause of anger to be consisting of three levels: one is the initial impression of harm, which the mind only passively receives; the second is the mind’s voluntary assent to this impression; and the third is a practical judgment following the assented impression of the harm, that punishment should be inflicted.

Corresponding to the three-level cognitive process, the development of the angry emotion in mind is conceived as a three-movement motion model in II.4.1:

Et ut scias quemadmodum incipiant adfectus aut crescant aut efferantur, est primus motus non voluntarius, quasi praeparatio adfectus et quaedam comminatio ; alter cum voluntate non contumaci, tamquam oporteat me vindicari, cum laesus sim, aut oporteat hunc poenas dare, cum scelus fecerit ; tertius motus est iam impotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci vult, sed utique, qui rationem evicit. (II.4.1.)

And if you want to know how emotions begin, grow, or get carried away, the first movement is not voluntary, as if a preparation for emotion and a kind of threat; the next is voluntary but not insistent, as much as that it is right for me to be avenged because I have been harmed, or for him to be punished because he has committed a crime; the third movement is already out of control, which wants to revenge not as if it is appropriate, but by all means, which has subdued reason.

From the quotation above, we see that the most conspicuous characteristic of the first movement is that it is not voluntary.⁴⁶ By comparing it to the body’s shiver when sprinkled

⁴⁴ placet nihil illam per se audere sed animo adprobante. (II.1.4.)

⁴⁵ nam speciem capere acceptae iniuriae et ultionem eius concupiscere et utrumque coniungere, nec laedi se debuisse et vindicari debere, non est eius impetus, qui sine voluntate nostra concitatur. (II.1.4.)

⁴⁶ By translating non uoluntarius directly into “not voluntary” I am trying to avoid the terminological controversy between non-voluntary and involuntary actions. However, I consider non-voluntary as a suitable description of the first movement, along with other non-rational mental reactions, which is also how I read the participle of “nolo” in the claim of II.2.5 that “all these are movements of minds that are moved without being wished (moueri nolentium).”

with cold water (II.2.1), the mind's movement after receiving an impression of harm is described as something among those "occur through some quirk of the human condition and can therefore happen to the very wisest of men (II.2.2)."⁴⁷ Although it is possible to lessen those through habituation and constant attention (II.4.2), failing to do so will not undermine one's moral integrity, for "all the movements that are not made out of our own will (non uoluntate nostra fiunt) are unconquerable and inevitable (II.2.1)."

Nonetheless, the first movement of emotions like anger should be distinguished from those reactions such as incitement produced by music and those that happen to non-rational animals, for none of the latter has a cognitive cause that can be spelled out in *lekta*, nor do they provide any rational impression for the mind to make further judgements. This point is easily missed in Seneca's rhetorical style of writing, which mixes examples of the type of mental movements aroused by music and found in animals (II.2.4; II.2.6) with those that contain rational impressions about superficial injury or potential harm in theatrical and real-life contexts (II.2.1; II.2.3; II.2.5; II.3.2-3.) Although both types of movements of the mind, in so far as they are non-voluntary, unconquerable, and inevitable, can be compared with physical reflexes like shiver, blinking and recoil (II.2.1; II.4.2), only the type that involves rational impressions can be transmitted to the next voluntary stage of emotion by the agent's assent.

Therefore, the first movement of anger is non-voluntary and inevitable, but involves a rational impression of a harm, which waits for the mind to voluntarily affirm or reject. Even the Sage will experience the first movement of anger (II.2.2), "as if a preparation of emotion and a kind of threat (II.4.1)," but there is no necessity that the real emotion will follow, since

⁴⁷ est enim uoluntarium animi uitium, non ex his quae condicione quadam humanae sortis eueniunt ideoque etiam sapientissimis accidunt, inter quae et primus ille ictus animi ponendus est qui nos post opinionem iniuriae mouet. (II.2.2.) I am inclined to take Seneca's choice of the word "opinio" here as unintentional, meaning not "opinion", but instead rational impressions that have a linguistic form but without having been assented to. This can be supported by the similar claim in II.1.3, where the word for "impression (species)" is used for the initial cause of anger. Otherwise, to claim that the first movement involves "opinion" in the strict sense within Stoic epistemology is at the risk of either rendering the Sage vulnerable to unthoughtful opinions or depriving the Sage of the first movement of emotions completely, if the necessary condition of such movement should be some untruthful thing that has been assented to.

the next step – whether to give assent or not – is up to the agent herself. It is worth noting that this first movement is said to be analogous to a “threat (comminatio) (II.4.1),” which moves the mind while serving the function of an inner warning before anger gets to grow. Whether the first movement will develop into the second one depends on how people react to this threat. The Stoic Sage, being warned by the threat, can escape unscathed at this initial stage, since she will never go wrong with her own judgment and assent to a false impression that something other than impairment of her own virtue can be truly harmful. Still, the Senecan Sage may, say, for the sake of the society, judge that the criminal is right to be punished, but she herself will never desire the punishment in the same way as those who take the harm personally do. Hence, even if the Sage assents to an impression of harm, she does it only impersonally, and her mental state does not amount to the second movement of anger. On the other hand, a foolish person who ignores the warning and gives assent to the impression of harm to himself, will set off the second movement of anger. Nevertheless, before reason takes the initiative, the impression received has already moved the soul without being willed, resulting in the first mental jolt that is unconquerable and inevitable, just as how bodily reflexes happen.

In the text of II.4.1 (quoted above), the second movement of anger is labeled as voluntary as opposed to the first movement, but not insistent, contrary to the third movement. At the occurrence of the second movement, the agent’s mind has made the following cognitive judgment: “it is right for me to be avenged because I have been harmed, or for him to be punished because he has committed a crime (II.4.1).” Here we see a complex process of practical reasoning that combines both an assent to the impression of a harm and a judgment about the appropriateness of the avenging reaction. It is in accordance with such reasoning that the second movement of anger is said to be voluntary, because it is set off by the mind’s

voluntary assent to the impression of a harm, but not insistent, because this sort of movement, being “produced by judgment, is removed by judgment (II.4.2).”⁴⁸

It is a shame that Seneca has given little account to characterize the second movement other than the brief cognitive depiction in II.4.1. However, we find an example in II.3.4 that probably talks about what the situation in the second movement of anger is like:

Putauit se aliquis laesum, uoluit ulcisci, dissuadente aliqua causa statim resedit: hanc iram non uoco, motum animi rationi parentem: illa est ira quae rationem transsilit, quae secum rapit.

Suppose that someone thinks himself harmed and wishes to exact retribution, that something dissuades him and he promptly calms down: this I do not call “anger”, since it is a motion of the mind obedient to reason. Anger is that which outleaps reason and drags it along.

The text above shows evidence that in the second movement, although the agent has made a voluntary assent to the impression of a harm and even generated the wish to revenge, so far as she can still be appeased through rational persuasion, anger has not yet occurred. The destructive emotion is in growth indeed, but so long as the impulse has not yet broken out (*excurrere*, II.3.4), anger has not grown mature, and thus allows a brief break for the right reason to take back control. But if this one last opportunity is missed, the third movement will follow and irreversibly overturn reason.

At this point we may wonder: if the mind’s voluntary assent to the impression of harm and the appropriateness of revenge is only enough for establishing the second movement, under what circumstances will it develop into the third movement? Notice that from what Seneca has

⁴⁸ *alter ille motus, qui iudicio nascitur, iudicio tollitur.* (II.4.2.) The context of this sentence is contrasting the non-rational and non-voluntary first movement with another type of movement that follows a judgment. Although Seneca does not make clear whether “that other movement” is the second or the third movement, since he regards the third movement to have “subdued reason” (II.4.1), it should not be available to be removed by judgment.

said about the second movement, not any mentioning of an impulse or strong desire can be found. It makes this account seem closest to the textbook version of Chrysippus' interpretation of the emotions, which are "corrupt opinions and judgments (δόξας καὶ κρίσεις πονηράς)" (LS65G=SVF 3.459), or, as in the case of distress (λύπη), "a fresh opinion that something bad is present" (LS65D=SVF 3.463).⁴⁹ This is not like any of Seneca's own statements about full-fledged anger – "a desire (cupiditas) for inflicting punishment (I.3.2)," or "an impulse (impetus)...which outleaps reason and drags it along (II.3.4)." Although Seneca claims that the impulse of anger "not only accepts but affirms the impression of harm (speciem iniuriae non tantum accepit sed adprobavit) (II.3.5)," merely an affirmative judgment that follows the impression of harm is not sufficient for invoking the strong impulse towards a revenging action, not to say immediately letting the emotion go out of control and subdue reason. (II.4.1)

Then, what is missing between the second and third movements? Simply looking from the text of II.4.1, Seneca's accounts of the second and third movements are poorly connected. While the second movement receives a cognitive explanation through its underlying judgments, what reinforces those judgments and transforms the "voluntary but not insistent" motion into something "out of control (impotens)" is not found anywhere. What is exhibited to us is only the final product: "the third movement is already out of control, which wants to revenge not as if it is appropriate, but by all means, which has subdued reason (II.4.1)." It seems that what we have here is no longer only a cognitive problem. To make a better explanation for what leads to such an effect calls for a further investigation into Seneca's understanding of impulse and desire, which will be the focus of our "motivational" problem.

⁴⁹ Although in other records Chrysippus also highlights the motivative power of emotion as an impulse, the claim that emotion is equivalent to a value judgment is extremely influential and has been taken as the main target of criticism of the Stoic theory of emotion since antiquity.

4. The Motivational Problem

As our discussion in the previous sections has demonstrated, Philodemus and Seneca both make clear attribution of the cause of anger to a group of cognitive judgments, but their views are ambiguous in stipulating the scope of the influence of those judgments in the emotional consequence. For Philodemus, the truth or falsity of the underlying judgments determine the naturalness or emptiness of anger by its cause, but how those judgments, the “biting” feeling, and the subjective reaction relate to each other is not yet clear. For Seneca, much has been said to exclude both the first and second movements from what counts as anger, but given that the second movement has already satisfied the cognitive condition – the mind’s voluntary assent to the impression of harm – to cause anger, it is hard to see where the boundary line between the second and the third movements lies from a purely cognitive perspective.

This is what I regard as the limit of cognitivism in both theories of emotion. To the extent that the emotion can be reduced to the causality between cognitive judgments, the magnitude of the feeling should have a limitation, and its consequence in action should always follow the command of reason. However, as we have seen from the diatribes of both works, and especially in Seneca, what makes anger an extraordinarily troublesome emotion is that it involves a desire that tends to grow out of control and lead one to act against one’s own reason. What makes a rationally caused mental event develop into something that has the power to subdue reason? How does the emotion motivate one to desire punishment? Is there a desire involved in the Epicurean Sage’s natural anger as well? Answering these questions will not only help disclose the much-overlooked non-cognitive nature of anger, but it will also provide important clues for us to further examine the basis of both authors’ therapies of anger.

My approach to the “motivational” problem takes a route from the two authors’ postulation of the role of desire in their psychology of anger. I shall demonstrate that Philodemus’ conception of both natural and empty anger involves a desire for the pleasure of eliminating the pain caused by the supposed harm, although the desire in each type of anger has a different nature. Then I turn to the Stoic notion of desire as an excessive impulse that forms the basis of Seneca’s third movement of anger, which is an accelerating motion towards an alien cause that has “been granted authority of the mind (*Ep.* 85.11).”

4.1 Desire in natural anger

As a key term that appears in almost every other philosophical school’s definition of anger, “desire” occurs repeatedly in Philodemus’ work in relation to the empty type of anger. It is widely agreed that the motivational power towards punishment in empty anger comes from an empty desire, which is characterized by Epicurus as “neither natural nor necessary but occurring as a result of an empty belief (*K.D.* XXIX).”⁵⁰ The empty belief that causes empty desire in empty anger is the miscalculation of the end of punishment, in which the consequence of punishing others is taken as something pleasurable and worthy of pursuit. Such pleasure taken as the goal of revenge is comparable to the pleasures of extravagance (ἄσωτος) or luxury (ἀπόλαυσις) that are believed to be pleasant only “from ignorance and disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation (*Ep. Men.* 131).”⁵¹

⁵⁰ αἱ δὲ οὔτε φυσικαὶ οὔτ’ἀναγκαῖαι ἀλλὰ παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν γινόμεναι. (*K.D.* XXIX). Cf. Annas, 1989, 1995, Procopé, 1998: 178-9, Tsouna, 2007: 228, 2011: 194-5, Asmis, 2011: 174.

⁵¹ ὡς τινες ἀγνοοῦντες καὶ οὐχ ὁμολογοῦντες ἢ κακῶς ἐκδεχόμενοι νομίζουσιν. (*Ep. Men.* 131.)

However, the extant text of Philodemus nowhere combines the concept of natural anger with the word “desire”.⁵² Does natural anger involve a desire? The answer can only be given on a basis of the Epicurean understanding of the term. Historically, different schools give different explanations about what counts as the “desire” in anger, and the more neutral Greek word used by Aristotle expressing a “longing”, “ὄρεξις”, has been intentionally changed into “ἐπιθυμία” from the early Stoics onwards, which specifies that anger is an intense desire for revenge or punishment that is mistakenly judged as some apparent good.⁵³ In Epicurus’ writings, the word “ἐπιθυμία” is widely used to express one’s intentional pursuit of all kinds of things. Based on the two criteria of naturalness and necessity, desires are divided into three categories: natural and necessary desires, natural but non-necessary desires, and neither natural nor necessary ones, which are also said to be empty (κεναί) (*Ep. Men.* 127; *K.D.* XXIX). As we have seen, the last type of desire is just what is involved in empty anger, which occurs “as a result of an empty belief (παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν γινόμενα) (*K.D.* XXIX).” If natural anger should also involve a desire, it can only be among either of the two types of natural desires, since there is no empty belief involved. Meanwhile, even the type of natural desire that is not necessary is also said to be “produced by an empty belief (*KD* XXX).” They are characterized by the trait that they “do not lead to a feeling of pain if not fulfilled, and about which there is an intense effort (*KD* XXX).” This excludes this type of desire from the Sage’s natural anger as well, since the Sage will not put any intense effort into punishing the wrongdoer because of anger. Also, the punishment led by natural anger is approached by the sage as “something most necessary but most unpleasurable (πρὸς ἀναγκαιότατον, ἀηδέστατον δὲ παραγίνεται) (*Col* 44.19-20),” which apparently cannot be an object of an unnecessary desire.

⁵² Cf. Asmis, 2011: 174, 177.

⁵³ Cf. Armstrong & McOsker, 35; for the early Stoic definitions of anger, see Seneca *De Ira*, I.2.

The only option left is the “both natural and necessary” branch of desire, which further includes three disjuncts: those “necessary for happiness, for freeing the body from troubles and for life itself” (*Ep. Men.* 127)⁵⁴. Can there be a desire necessary for life itself in anger? It is not impossible, for if the person who intends to harm the other does it in the sense of murder, the victim who rightly supposes that her life is at risk will have a desire most natural and necessary for life, wanting to fight for herself and punish the suspect. In such cases even the Sage who “never takes any external thing to be all that important (οὐδὲν εἶναι παρὰ μέγα τῶν ἕξωθεν ἡγού[με]νος) (Col. 47.39-41)” will be motivated by a natural and necessary desire to react, not for any pleasure, but for life itself.

The other two possibilities are that natural anger may involve a desire either for happiness or for “freeing the body from troubles (*Ep. Men.* 127).” As Cooper (1999: 101) comments, the necessary desire for happiness can just be “the bare desire for pleasure and the desire to avoid pain”, since that is absolutely necessary for anyone following the Epicurean doctrine to attain happiness, according to which living happily just is to live pleasantly in the static sense.⁵⁵ However, if such is the only way that a desire is involved in natural anger, it seems not to add anything to make the emotion any more special than a rational judgment that motivates our ordinary actions in life. To “desire” to punish a criminal for the ultimate good in a way like this can be equally said about the law, which is completely impersonal and non-temporal, but gives sober verdicts according to the scale of the good – this is nothing to be compared with the “burning desire to revenge” in empty anger or other schools’ definitions of anger, especially when it shows no relevance at all to the subject’s own feeling.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν. (*Ep. Men.* 127.)

⁵⁵ For the distinction between the Epicurean “static” and “kinetic” types of pleasure, see Cic., *De Fin.* 2.9-10 and DL, 10.136-7.

⁵⁶ Hence, I disagree with Asmis (2011: 174), who identifies the desire involved in Philodemus’ natural anger as the type that only aims to prevent future harm and therefore for the teleological good.

I shall argue that the remaining type of “both natural and necessary” desire, the one not only “for freedom of the body from troubles (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν) (*Ep. Men.* 127,)” but also for “freedom of the soul from disturbances (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν) (*ibid.* 128)” is what constitutes the emotional state of natural anger. This specific type of desire arises when the organism feels pain, or the soul has disturbances. In a mental context, the objective of such a desire is the kinetic pleasure in the restoration of calmness from a painfully disturbed state. This corresponds to what has been said about anger, which is “painful or analogous to something painful (λυπηρόν ἐστὶν ἢ ἀνάλογον λυπηρῶι) (Col. 37.27-9).” Although the mental disturbance in the Sage’s natural anger is brief (Col. 40.2) and not great (Col. 42.5-6), a desire for its removal is still natural and necessary, since the emotion is something “biting” and painful, and thereby an evil taken in isolation (Col. 37.27-9).

However, confirming the existence of a desire like this in natural anger does not imply that the Sage’s action of punishment is motivated by this desire. Although natural anger induces pain in the Sage’s mind, there is no proof that such pain can be removed by means of punishment, nor is it likely that the Sage will believe so. It seems that the pain in natural anger needs no subjective reaction for the sake of its dismissal, since it is both brief and moderate – neither will it cause great disturbance that requires extra measures to restore calm in the mind, nor is there any extra pleasure to be gained in the act of punishing others, as Philodemus repeatedly stresses. Then, if not desire, what motivates the Sage to exact punishment? The example in Col. 41.2-8 provides helpful evidence that in the Sage’s natural anger, what fundamentally motivates the reaction of punishment is the thoughtful aim for checking the wrongdoer for further harm and giving a warning to the others:

εἰ δ’ ἀλλότριον καὶ γινώσκει, διότι κολασθεὶς ἀνασταλήσεται καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐπιστήσει, μανικῶς οὐκ ἂν ἔλθοι πάλιν καθ’ ἓνα γέ τινα τρόπο[v] δακῶν.

But if it is painful, and he (the Sage) knows that, when punished, he (the adversary) will be checked and will stop the others, he (the Sage) will be insane not to come back in one way or another when having the biting feeling.

From the description above, we see that the “biting” feeling only co-occurs with the Sage’s reaction of “coming back” to the wrongdoer, but no further indication about whether this feeling or a desire to remove it is causally related to the act of punishment. What we clearly find as a motivation is the rational judgment about the beneficial effect of such an action, thus keeping the intended amount of punishment under the control of practical reason.

4.2 Excessive impulse and external authority

We shall now start again with Seneca from where we stopped at the cognitive problem. At the end of Section 3.2, we raised the question about what transforms the “voluntary but not insistent” second movement of anger into the third movement that is “out of control (impotens) (II.4.1).”

It is time to look closer at what has been said about the third movement:

tertius motus est iam impotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci vult, sed utique, qui rationem evicit. (II.4.1.)

The third movement is already out of control, which wants to revenge not as if it is appropriate, but by all means, which has subdued reason.

In this vivid depiction the third movement of anger has almost been personified, as if an independent subject that has subdued reason and dominates the agent’s mind with its own will. This is simply captivating. Just one sentence before, the subject of those evaluative judgments in the second movement is the agent herself – “as much as that it is right for me to be avenged

because I have been harmed (tamquam oporteat me vindicari, cum laesus sim)” – and apparently such judgments can only be made through reason. How comes the sudden shift of mental authority from the agent herself to the personified third movement of anger?

First, it is worth restating that what Seneca characterizes here is the *fait accompli* of fully grown anger. It is not necessary that each time when one assents to an impression of harm and gets into the second movement of anger, her reason will immediately lose control. Within the limit of the second movement, since the motivative wish that constitutes the mental movement is made according to reason, it should be available to be retrieved in the same way. It is only when reason has been subdued (notice the perfect tense in text), and the movement of anger is now (*iam*) out of control (*impotens*) that the latter can command the mind to do whatever it wishes. As Seneca puts in another critical source of his theory of emotion, *Ep.* 85.9: “if reason is effective, the emotions will not even get started; if they have begun against reason, they will persist against it.”⁵⁷

It is also after the third movement has been set off that Seneca claims that “if it is not in our power whether there are emotions, then neither is it under our control how great they are (*Ep.* 85.12).”⁵⁸ Full-fledged emotions like anger, according to Seneca, “grow along with their causes and their sizes will be as great as they (the causes) are (*Ep.* 85.12).”⁵⁹ This sounds particularly bizarre: what does it mean by saying that the emotions will grow along with the causes? To answer this, we need to first find what these causes are. The passage of *Ep.* 85.11 offers important clues about this:

Deinde si das aliquid iuris tristitiae, timori, cupiditati, ceteris motibus pravis, non erunt in nostra potestate. Quare? Quia extra nos sunt, quibus iritantur. Itaque crescent, prout magnas habuerint minoresve causas, quibus concitentur. Maior erit timor, si plus,

⁵⁷ si ratio proficit, ne incipient quidem adfectus; si invita ratione coeperint, invita perseverabunt. (*Ep.* 85.9.)

⁵⁸ si in nostra potestate non est, an sint adfectus, ne illud quidem est, quanti sint. (*Ep.* 85.12.)

⁵⁹ cum causis suis crescent tantique erunt, quanti fient. (*Ep.* 85.12.)

quo exterreatur, aut propius aspexerit, acrior cupiditas, quo illam amplioris rei spes evocaverit.

Next, if you grant any authority to grief, fear, desire, and the other vicious motions, then they will not be in our power. Why? Because the things by which they are provoked are outside us. In this way they grow, in proportion to the sizes that the causes by which they are agitated have. The fear will be greater, if the thing that one is frightened by is greater, or one looks at it from closer up; the desire will be sharper, by which a hope summons greater gain.”

We see in this passage a new type of cause for the emotions, which is very different from what we have previously specified as the “cognitive cause” of anger. Here what provokes the emotions is recognized as the objects of those emotions, which are “outside us (*extra nos*)” and have definitive magnitude in themselves. Although anger is not explicitly included in the list of emotions at the beginning of this passage, since it is classified under the group of desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) in the Stoic fourfold division of emotions, it should also follow the above law and “grow in proportion to the sizes that the causes have.”⁶⁰ Therefore, we can reasonably think that the magnitude of anger in the Senecan model is defined by the size of the object of desire, which happens to be something without a limit – punishment of others, for which “the gravity of the occasion is irrelevant (III.1.5).”⁶¹ This is why anger is regarded as able to “outdo bad will and envy”, since “worse than self-indulgence which revels in its own pleasure, anger revels in the pain of others (III.5.5).”⁶²

At the beginning of the quoted passage of *Ep.* 85.11 we encounter the conspicuous expression of “granting authority” to an emotion. Looking in combination with the description about the third movement of anger in II.4.1, it is natural to take the “authority” to be of the mental state, which was originally held by reason, but passed to the emotion in some way. It is

⁶⁰ Cf. Stob. 2.90,19-91.9 = LS 65E = SVF 3.394.

⁶¹ nec refert quantum sit ex quo surrexerit. (III.1.5.) tr. Procopé, 1995.

⁶² vincit malignitatem et invidiam; peior est quam luxuria, quoniam illa sua voluptate fruitur, haec alieno dolore. (III.5.5.) tr. Procopé, 1995.

worth noticing that the verb “to grant (dare)” in this sentence is used actively, which suggests that emotion’s taking control instead of reason is a result of our voluntary permission. In the case of anger, this presents the crucial move from the second movement to the third.

Still, we need to find out how this process of “granting authority” is like, and what immediate effect does it have. At first glance, this reminds us about what we have dealt with between the first and the second movements of anger. There we mentioned that an impression received by perception needs to be “assented to” before a judgment can be formed. In fact, as I shall demonstrate, the Stoic concept of assent is used across the border between their theories of cognition and action, for which the case of anger provides an excellent specimen. Recall that anger is defined as a species of desire (*cupiditas/ἐπιθυμία*): according to the Stoic theory, a desire is a specific type of rational impulse (*impetus/ὄρμη*), which is a “movement of thought towards something in the sphere of action.”⁶³ Further, the Stoics reckon that “without assent there is neither action nor impulse (Plut. *St. rep.* 1057A).”⁶⁴ It is reasonable to draw the inference that when the emotion has been “granted authority”, as in the case of anger, the mind gives assent to the desiring impulse and thus sets off the third movement.

There remains only one unsolved problem: why does the emotion like anger, once taken authority of mind, immediately go out of control? An answer to this can be found in the early Stoic idea of emotion as “an impulse in excess”.⁶⁵ The problem about excessiveness is twofold: whether the impulse, once set off, will be unretrievable, and how far it will go. According to Galen’s record, Chrysippus in his *On Emotions* famously compares the irrational and excessive impulse of emotions to the running movement: when someone walks in accordance with his

⁶³ τὴν δὲ λογικὴν ὄρμην δεόντως ἂν τις ἀφορίζοιτο λέγων εἶναι φορὰν διανοίας ἐπὶ τι τῶν ἐν τῷ πράττειν. Stobaeus, 2.86.17-87.6 (SVF 3.169 = LS 53Q.)

⁶⁴ μήτε πράττειν μήθ’ ὄρμῶν ἀσυγκαταθέτως. (Plut. *St. rep.* 1057A, SVF 3.177 = LS 53S.)

⁶⁵ Cf. Stobaeus, 2.88,8-90,6 (SVF 3.378, 389, part = LS 65A). Sorabji (2002: 223) attributes this conception of emotion specifically to Zeno, regarding his view as the more commonplace one than that of Chrysippus, who made the unusual move to identify emotions with false judgments.

impulse, the movement of his legs is not excessive and can be stopped whenever he wants to. But when he starts to run, the movement has exceeded the impulse and is unable to change obediently once started.⁶⁶ Zeno is also recorded to have made an exquisite analogy when defining emotion as follows:

ὥς δ' ὁ Στωικὸς ὠρίσατο Ζήνων· πάθος ἐστὶν ὀρμὴ πλεονάζουσα. οὐ λέγει „πεφυκυῖα πλεονάζειν,“ ἀλλ' ἤδη ἐν πλεονασμῷ οὔσα· οὐ γὰρ δυνάμει, μᾶλλον δ' ἐνεργείᾳ. ὠρίσατο δὲ κάκεινως· „πάθος ἐστὶ πτοία ψυχῆς,“ ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν πτηνῶν φορᾶς τὸ εὐκίνητον τοῦ παθητικοῦ παρεικάσας. (Stobaeus *Ecl.* II 7, 1 p. 39, 5 W.)

When the Stoic Zeno defines “emotion is an impulse in excess”, he is not saying “of a nature to be in excess”, but it already is in excess, for it is not in potentiality, but rather in actuality. He defines in that way: “emotion is a flutter of the soul,” describing the agility of the affective faculty on the basis of comparison with the motion of birds.

This is closest to Seneca’s description about the third movement of anger: when being characterized as excessive and “out of control (impotens)”, the impulse of the affective faculty has already rushed out in an excessive way, taking revenge as its object of desire and grows along with it without a limit. The comparison between emotion as a flutter of the soul’s affective faculty and the motion of birds is even more vivid than that of the runner’s legs. When the assent that sets off the excessive movement has been given, it is like when the bird has flapped its wings and rushed up to the sky, which can hardly be caught back to the ground again. In the same manner, once the mind’s authority has been granted to the excessive motion of anger, it refuses to be called back by reason.

⁶⁶ Cf: Galen, *PHP* 4.2.10-18. (SVF 3.462 = LS 65J.)

5. Conclusion: a case study

Now that we have made a close examination of each author's view about what constitutes the cognitive and motivational bases of anger, it is time to put everything together and find intersections between the two theories. I shall conclude the present thesis with a case study of anger, where different people react differently to a single situation, and presume how Philodemus and Seneca would interpret those cases.⁶⁷

Suppose that right before the final exam, three college students sharing the same house were deprived of sleep for the whole night by their noisy neighbours who were inexhaustibly partying and singing in the garden.

Lying in bed, eyes widely open, Student A thought herself greatly harmed, because she could not get enough sleep, which is vital for restoring energy before the morning exam. She had a burning desire to find out who those neighbours were and punish them at all costs. Supposing it to be a most pleasant end-of-term event, she indulged herself making plans for the revenge, while anxiously worrying whether she would succeed. Her anger lasted for the entire morning, which disturbed her so greatly that impaired her performance in the exam and made her even more painful.

Also lying awake, Student B thought herself harmed as well, but not greatly. "There will be plenty of time to sleep after the exam," she told herself. Still, being deprived of sleep is painful, and she wanted to give those neighbours some punishment – not for avenging herself, but because they ought to be checked, lest such bad behaviours recur in the future. Nonetheless, B was not disturbed for long, and she fell asleep as soon as the partiers went silent at dawn.

⁶⁷ The following case study is based on a real-life occasion in Oxford. I would like to express my gratitude to all my housemates, not only for their inspiration to me on that special night, but also for the entire year of mutual emotional care that lightened up my life during the pandemic.

Sitting at the desk reviewing the last chapter of course materials, Student C felt some disruption at the impression that the noise was making her unable to focus. “Well, that is something out of my control,” she thought, “but it does no harm to me, since I cannot be harmed lest I do anything wrong myself.”

Can each of these cases find a place in the two category systems of anger that we have been looking at? Student A’s anger is the absolute target of the diatribes in both works, as her case can fit into both Philodemus’ concept of rage and Seneca’s third movement. A’s initial judgement that she has been greatly harmed by the neighbours will be regarded as wrong by both authors, since neither of them deems external matters that important. Her further supposition that punishing the neighbours will be pleasurable is again based on miscalculation, since the result of her anger turns out to be more pain. Up till then, what she has in mind is empty anger according to Philodemus, and the second movement according to Seneca, based on the cognitive mistakes she has made. It is what comes next that finally leads her into full-scale rage and the third movement: the burning desire for undeserved punishment that brought great disturbances to her, and made her indulge herself in those irrational thoughts for a long time. For what causes this, Philodemus’ explanation would be that A has a folly disposition, which makes her tend to experience rage, not knowing that the bitterest vengeance one takes in rage is on her own self.⁶⁸ Seneca, on the other hand, will find faults with A’s assent to the excessive impulse, by which way she voluntarily grants the authority of her own mind to the uncontrollable desire.

Student B’s mental state would be praised by an Epicurean Sage. She is neither completely indifferent to her sleepless pain, nor does she pay too much attention to it. Feeling such pain does not cause substantial disturbance to her mental state, and there is no way that she will

⁶⁸ Cf: Col. 42.35-9.

think such pain is worthy of avenging, not to say taking pleasure in avenging it. Nevertheless, she calculates that punishing those unscrupulous neighbours would help check them from future misbehaviours, and therefore be beneficial to the overall happiness of the neighbourhood. For this reason, she wishes punishment to be inflicted, but she does not eagerly desire it. Such is a standard case of Philodemus' idea of natural anger. It is moderate, brief, and sober, but meanwhile satisfying all the conditions within Philodemus' definition of anger, which involves a supposition of harm, a painful feeling, and a motivation to punish the wrongdoer. However, this does not count as anger for Seneca. By assenting to the impressions that she has been harmed by the neighbours and that the latter should be punished, B has entered the second stage of anger. But so long as she dissents from the excessive impulse of desire, true anger in the third stage will not occur, and her mind is still under the control of reason.

It is patent that Student C's reaction represents that of a Stoic Sage. Although hearing great noises after midnight causes disruption to her mind, it is merely the involuntary and inevitable first movement, which involves no subjective assent or supposition, and therefore does not amount to an emotion in either theory. Faced with the dispreferred impression, C refuses to assent that she herself has been harmed, and her reason is a classic Stoic one: nothing other than impairment of her own virtue is truly harmful. Therefore, although Philodemus might consider C's reaction as unnatural, Seneca will congratulate her that the evil of anger has been stifled at the very start.

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Declaration of Originality of Authorship of a thesis submitted for examination in the MSt in Ancient Philosophy in the academic year 2020-21

I,Jingyi Yang....., affirm that my submitted thesis entitledPhilodemus and Seneca on Anger..... is my own original work, except where otherwise stated, and that I have only shown drafts of it to my supervisor, Dr/ProfAlexander Bown....., in approximately four hours of supervision, and that I have received help in its preparation from Dr/ProfN/A..... *(please list all Oxford Philosophy Faculty members you received help from and specify the sort of help received, or write "N/A")*.

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