Aristotle - *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV Chapter 5

Good temper is a mean with respect to anger; the middle state being unnamed, and the extremes almost without a name as well, we place good temper in the middle position, though it inclines towards the deficiency, which is without a name. The excess might called a sort of 'irascibility'. For the passion is anger, while its causes are many and diverse.

The man who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and, further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought, is praised. This will be the good-tempered man, then, since good temper is praised. For the good-tempered man tends to be unperturbed and not to be led by passion, but to be angry in the manner, at the things, and for the length of time, that the rule dictates; but he is thought to err rather in the direction of deficiency; for the good-tempered man is not revengeful, but rather tends to make allowances.

The deficiency, whether it is a sort of 'inirascibility' or whatever it is, is blamed. For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons; for such a man is thought not to feel things nor to be pained by them, and, since he does not get angry, he is thought unlikely to defend himself; and to endure being insulted and put up with insult to one's friends is slavish.

The excess can be manifested in all the points that have been named (for one can be angry with the wrong persons, at the wrong things, more than is right, too quickly, or too long); yet all are not found in the same person. Indeed they could not; for evil destroys even itself, and if it is complete becomes unbearable. Now hot-tempered people get angry quickly and with the wrong persons and at the wrong things and more than is right, but their anger ceases quickly-which is the best point about them. This happens to them because they do not restrain their anger but retaliate openly owing to their quickness of temper, and then their anger ceases. By reason of excess choleric people are quick-tempered and ready to be angry with everything and on every occasion; whence their name. Sulky people are hard to appease, and retain their anger long; for they repress their passion. But it ceases when they retaliate; for revenge relieves them of their anger, producing in them pleasure instead of pain. If this does not happen they retain their burden; for owing to its not being obvious no one even reasons with them, and to digest one's anger in oneself takes time. Such people are most troublesome to themselves and to their dearest friends. We call had-tempered those who are angry at the wrong things, more than is right, and longer, and cannot be appeased until they inflict vengeance or punishment.

To good temper we oppose the excess rather than the defect; for not only is it commoner since revenge is the more human), but bad-tempered people are worse to live with.

Friedrich Nietzsche - *On the Genealogy of Morality* First Essay Chapter 14

14

— Is there anyone who would like to take a little look down on and under that secret how man *fabricates an ideal* on earth? Who has the courage for that? . . . Come on, now! Here’s an open glimpse into this dark workshop. Just wait a moment, my dear Mr. Nosy and Presumptuous: your eye must first get used to this artificial flickering light. . . . So, enough! Now speak! What’s going on down there? Speak up. Say what you see, man of the most dangerous curiosity—now *I’m* the one who’s listening.—

—”I see nothing, but I hear all the more. It is a careful, crafty, light rumour-mongering and whispering from every nook and cranny. It seems to me that people are lying; a sugary mildness clings to every sound. Weakness is going to be falsified into *something of merit*. There’s no doubt about it—things are just as you said they were.”

—Keep talking!

—”And powerlessness which does not retaliate is being falsified into ‘goodness,’ anxious baseness into ‘humility,’ submission before those one hates to ‘obedience’ (of course, obedience to the one who, they say, commands this submission—they call him God). The inoffensiveness of the weak man—cowardice itself, in which he is rich, his standing at the door, his inevitable need to wait around—here acquires a good name, like ‘patience,’ and is called virtue *itself*. That incapacity for revenge is called the lack of desire for revenge, perhaps even forgiveness (‘for *they* know not what they do—only we know what *they* do!’). And people are talking about ‘love for one’s enemies’—and sweating as they say it.”

—Keep talking!

—”They are miserable—there’s no doubt about that—all these rumour-mongers and counterfeiters in the corners, although crouched down beside each other in the warmth—but they are telling me that their misery is God’s choice, His sign. One beats the dog one loves the most. Perhaps this misery may be a preparation, a test, an education, perhaps it is even more—something that will one day be rewarded and paid out with huge interest in gold, no, in happiness. They call that ‘blessedness’.”

—Go on!

—”Now they are letting me know that they are not only better than the powerful, the masters of the earth, whose spit they have to lick (*not* out of fear, certainly not out of fear, but because God commands that they honour all those in authority)—they are not only better than these, but they also are ‘better off,’ or at any rate will one day have it better. But enough! Enough! I can’t take it any more. Bad air! Bad air! This workshop where man *fabricates* *ideals*—it seems to me it stinks of nothing but lies.”

—No! Just one minute more! So far you haven’t said anything about the masterpiece of these black magicians who make whiteness, milk, and innocence out of every blackness:—have you not noticed the perfection of their sophistication, their most daring, most refined, most spiritual, most fallacious artistic attempt? Pay attention! These cellar animals full of vengeance and hatred—what exactly are they making out of that vengeance and hatred? Have you ever heard these words? If you heard only their words, would you suspect that you were completely among men of ressentiment? . . .

—”I understand. Once again I’ll open my ears (oh! oh! oh! and hold my nose). Now I’m hearing for the first time what they’ve been saying so often: ‘We good men—*we are the righteous*’—what they demand they don’t call repayment but ‘the triumph of *righteousness*.’ What they hate is not their enemy. No! They hate ‘*injustice*,’ ‘godlessness.’ What they believe and hope is not a hope for revenge, the intoxication of sweet vengeance (something Homer has already called ‘sweeter than honey’), but the victory of God, the *righteous* God, over the godless. What remains for them to love on earth is not their brothers in hatred but their ‘brothers in love,’ as they say, all the good and righteous people on the earth.”

—And what do they call what serves them as a consolation for all the suffering of life—their phantasmagoria of future blessedness which they are expecting?

—”What’s that? Am I hearing correctly? They call that ‘the last judgment,’ the coming of *their* kingdom, the coming of ‘God’s kingdom’— but *in the meanwhile* they live ‘in faith,’ ‘in love,’ ‘in hope.’”

—Enough! Enough!