

✓ I 19 *How we should act towards the powerful*

[1] A person who enjoys some advantage, or just believes they do, will invariably grow to be arrogant, especially if they are uneducated. [2] The tyrant, for example, will say to you, 'My power is supreme.'

'Will you do something for me then? I want uncurbed desire. Do you even have it to give? I want my aversion error-free. Do you have that? How about a faculty of impulse that is faultless? [3] No, you have no connection to that. Look, you entrust yourself to the pilot's expertise when on board ship, and to the superior skill of the driver when you are in a carriage. [4] It's no different with other skills. So what does *your* advantage amount to?'

'Everybody gives me their attention and respect.'

'Right, and I pay attention to my blackboard, wiping it, and washing it; and for my oil flask I'll even drive a nail in the wall. Does that make these things better than me? No – it just means that they are useful to me somehow. I look after my horse too, [5] I wash its feet and brush its coat. The fact is, everyone looks after themselves; if they curry favour with you it's as if they're currying their horse. Who is there who respects you as a human being? [6] Who wants to be like you, to emulate you the way people emulated Socrates?'

'But I can cut off your head.'

'Good point; I had forgotten that I should look out for you as I would look out for some virus or infection, and erect an altar to you on the model of the Altar of Fever at Rome.'<sup>27</sup>

[7] 'What frightens most people and keeps them subdued? It can't be the tyrant and his bodyguards; what nature has made free can only be disturbed or hampered by itself. [8] A person's own thoughts unnerve them. If a tyrant threatens to chain our leg, whoever holds his leg in high regard will beg for mercy, whereas the person who cares more for his character will answer back, "Go ahead and chain it, if that's what you want."'

'And you don't care?'

'I don't care.'

'Just wait, I'll show you who's in charge!'

[9] 'How do you propose to do that? Zeus himself has given me freedom; he was not going to allow any son of his to be enslaved. You are master of my corpse, come help yourself to *that*.'

[10] 'What about when you petition me for a favour, isn't that proof of your regard?'

'No, it's me looking after myself. If you press the point, I will concede that in the process I give you the same attention I give my dishes.

If I have it's the nature of the beast: