

Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities)

By Robert A. F. Thurman

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Heated words, cool malice, deadly feuds, the furious rush of adrenaline-anger is clearly the most destructive of the seven deadly sins. It can ruin families, wreck one's health, destroy peace of mind and, at its worst, lead to murder, genocide, and war.

In *Anger*, Robert A. F. Thurman, best-selling author and one of America's leading authorities on Buddhism and Eastern philosophy, offers an illuminating look at this deadliest of sins. In the West, Thurman points out, anger is seen as an inevitable part of life, an evil to be borne, not overcome. There is the tradition of the wrathful God, of Jesus driving the money-changers from the temple. If God can be angry, how can men rid themselves of this destructive emotion? Thurman shows that Eastern philosophy sees anger differently. Certainly, it is a dreadful evil, one of the "three poisons" that underlie all human suffering. But Buddhism teaches that anger can be overcome. Indeed, the defeat of anger is not only possible, but also the only thing worth doing in a lifetime. Thurman shows how to recognize the destructiveness of anger and understand its workings, and how we can go from being a slave to anger to becoming "a knight of patience." We discover finally that when this deadliest emotion is transmuted by wisdom, it can become the most powerful force in freeing us from human suffering.

Drawing on the time-tested wisdom of Buddhism, Robert A. F. Thurman ranges from the individual struggle with anger to global crises spurred by dogmatic ideologies, religious fanaticism, and racial prejudice. He offers a path of calm understanding in a time of terrorism and war.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Thurman, professor of Buddhist studies at Columbia University and author of *Inner Revolution*, contributes to Oxford's outstanding series on the seven deadly sins with this brief meditation on anger. Thurman identifies two extreme positions on the subject: on the one side are the people who believe that anger is a healthy, constructive force that can right wrongs and overturn social injustice. On the other side are those who would like to see anger be entirely eradicated, because playing with fire means we'll only get burned. Not surprisingly, Thurman draws upon Buddhist precepts to navigate a more nuanced "middle way" between those extremes. "Our goal surely is to conquer anger, but not destroy the fire it has misappropriated," he writes. "We will wield that fire with wisdom and turn it to creative ends." Thurman says at the outset that he, like many people, has a problem with anger, and that his temper (which he traces to a "paternal lineage of Southern rednecks") still flares despite decades of Buddhist practice. (Some of that character becomes apparent when Thurman rails against war, which he calls "politically organized anger.") At times, his generalizations about Western religions are unfair—such as when he says that the angriest character in the Hebrew Bible is God himself—but his Buddhist perspective makes a valuable counterpoint to the mostly Christian points of view we've seen so far in this series.
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From Booklist
Anger has lost status since the 1960s, when it was imperative to let it all hang out. Now Buddhist scholar-teacher Thurman sees nothing good about anger, not even--indeed, perhaps especially--when it is the motor that drives soldiers into combat. He allows, however, that anger's burning energy "cannot be avoided altogether," but can we not purge anger yet retain its fire "to burn away the suffering of others?" In his contribution to a lecture series on the seven deadly sins, this book's source, he argues that we can, and he presents a Buddhist way of so doing. Drawing extensively on the didactic quatrains of the eighth-century Buddhist saint Shantideva, he is very persuasive, especially in the three chapters on the varieties of patience to cultivate to overcome anger. Many may wish, however, that he had refrained, in his early dismissal of Western religion, from caricaturing God in the Hebrew Bible and Jesus in the Gospels as figures of wrath, which seems to project more onto them than the texts, and Christian theology, justify. *Ray Olson*
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Review

"What midsummer night's feast would be digestible without Francine Prose's *Gluttony*; what weekend jaunt to your best friend's chateau would be survivable without Joseph Epstein's *Envy*? And you'll need Wendy Wasserstein's *Sloth* (wickedly subtitled 'And How to Get It') while you're struggling out of your deck chair."--*O, The Oprah Magazine* (on the series)

"Whimsically packaged exminations of Lust by Simon Blackburn, Gluttony by Francine Prsoe, Envy by Joseph Epstein, Anger by Robert Thurman, Greed by Phyllis Tickle, Sloth by Wendy Wasserstein and Pride by Michael Eric Dyson become playgrounds for cultural reflection by authors and playwrights in Oxford's Seven Deadly Sins series."--*Publishers Weekly* (on the series)

"From little books come great hopes for the future of mankind!"--Susan Salter Reynolds, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"Anyone can benefit from Robert Thurman's masterful and engaging guide to grappling with that deadly emotion, anger. In *Anger*, Thurman brilliantly offers heart advice from ancient inner sciences that can help us all as we endure the maddening grind of modern life." --Daniel Goleman, author of *Destructive Emotions*

"*Anger* is a brilliant elucidation of how to transform the blindness of compulsive anger into sustained energy for change. Anyone who has been challenged by resentment, disappointment, impatience or rage would benefit from reading this book." --Sharon Salzberg, author of *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*

"This brilliant, passionate, supple and profound book is the most formidable exploration and analysis of anger that I have ever read, and a small masterpiece of psychological and spiritual truth. I cannot recommend it highly enough." --Andrew Harvey, author of *The Direct Path* and *The Sun at Midnight*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Davis:

This Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities) book is simply not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is usually information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This particular Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities) without we understand teach the one who reading it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't be worry Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities) can bring once you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities) having fine arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Gabriel Harris:

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