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A Commentary on Seneca’s
*Epistulae Morales* Book IV
(*Epistles* 30-41)

by

Mark Davies

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Latin,
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Abstract

A commentary on Book IV of Seneca’s *Epistles* needs little justification. To date there is no commentary for the entire book and only brief commentaries for some of the individual letters. A commentary on Book IV would be of use to scholars of Seneca and join the recent commentaries on other books such as Richardson Hay’s on Book I and Laudizi’s on Book III.

The thesis has three introductory chapters. The first of these looks at how Seneca’s philosophical writing has been interpreted. It argues that the literary element in Seneca’s writing and his use of Latin are integral to his philosophy and cannot be removed to leave some philosophical core that is readily pliant to reconstructing earlier Stoic thought from its fragmentary remains. Furthermore, Seneca’s own opinions on writing and style offer a more reliable guide to reading his work than forcing it to fit some modern literary theory. What emerges from Seneca’s writing when such prior agendas and assumptions are put aside is a pragmatic philosophy written to appeal to the values of Seneca’s Roman readers.

The second chapter argues from Book IV that the book divisions are relevant to the organization of the *Epistles*. Firstly, one needs to be reminded of the sequential nature of the collection, which Book IV illustrates well, as it marks a shift from the use of quotes to end letters that had been a feature of the first three books. This is an aspect frequently lost in excerpting. Then, the evidence is presented for Book IV being a unitary composition, particularly through the thematic links between the two opening and two closing letters. The third chapter lays out the scope of the commentary.

The commentary is organized with an introductory essay prefacing the commentary on each epistle; this serves to compensate for the fragmenting tendency of the commentary as a scholarly form. The emphasis in these essays and in the commentaries is to relate the letters primarily to the wider context of Seneca’s thought, and then secondarily to the broader context of ancient philosophic and literary thought.
Dedication

To my family. To my parents and grandparents, particularly to my grandfather, Max, who in many ways has made it possible. To my wife and children, Min Jeong, Ieuan and Anna, who have lived through, or grown up during its gestation. May it be a small return for their forbearance and patience.
Acknowledgements

The subject of acknowledging benefits that one has received was an important one for Seneca, so it is only fitting that someone who has been studying his works should acknowledge the help he has received from many sources.

My first debt goes to my family, who encouraged me, supported me and put up with me through the long process of writing this thesis. Therefore I want to thank my parents Ian and Francela and my wife Min Jeong, without whose help it would not have been possible to finish. I would also like to thank my children Ieuan and Anna without whose good humour the process would have been much harder.

My next debt goes to my supervisor, Marcus Wilson, whom I want to thank for his enthusiasm for the ancient world and its authors which inspired me to keep studying. He also planted the seeds for a thesis on Seneca as far back as 1989 during my undergraduate studies. As a supervisor he has benefited me hugely with his enthusiasm and knowledge on Seneca; the thesis would be immensely poorer without his help. I would also like to thank the contributions from the audiences of the various conference and seminar papers that I gave, particularly at the ASCS and PacRim conferences and in the departmental seminars.

I should also acknowledge a debt of thanks to two scholarships, the Bright Futures Scholarship and the University of Auckland Doctoral Scholarship. These provided vital financial support as well as, in the case of the Bright Futures Scholarship, funding for attending conferences that considerably enriched my research. I am also immensely grateful to Lynne Lindberg in the Education Development Unit of the University of Auckland’s Business School, who has been very supportive of my study as my boss for the time after the scholarships ended.

There is now an incredible range of technical resources available, but I particularly want to thank the people at SoftMaker for their excellent word processor, TextMaker, which puts its bigger rival to shame. It handled the formatting quickly, conveniently and faultlessly. Furthermore, with any queries their staff were always incredibly helpful.
Conventions and Abbreviations

The name or abbreviation in the left column is how these works are referenced in the commentary and in footnotes. Apart from the editions of Book IV and the reference works listed here, scholarly publications are cited by name and date and are listed in the bibliography.

Internal cross-references in this thesis are indicated by the lemma when they are to a section of the commentary, e.g. ‘Ep. 30.1 n.’ The lemma is also cited if necessary. Otherwise they are indicated by a page number. Owing to a limitation in the software used to mark these cross-references, only the start of them is indicated, whether they refer to a section of one page or more.

§ and §§ are used to indicate the section numbers of the individual epistles when which epistle being referred to is already clear.

1) Editions of Book IV:


Hense, O. (1898) L. Annaei Senecae ad Lucilium Epistularum Moralium quae supersunt, Leipsig.


2) Abbreviations:

a) The abbreviations used in OLD or OCD³ have generally been used except for a few exceptions. For example, the editions of Fronto cited here are from PHI 5.3 and are significantly different from those in OLD. In the case of Seneca’s dialogues rather than referring to them as Dial.1-12 the following abbreviations used by ARMISEN-MARCHETTI have been adopted:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brev.</td>
<td>De Brevitate Vitae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Const.</td>
<td>De Constantia Sapientis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helv.</td>
<td>Ad Helviam Matrem de Consolatione</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ira</td>
<td>De Ira</td>
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<td>Marc.</td>
<td>Ad Marciam de Consolatione</td>
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<td>Ot.</td>
<td>De Otio</td>
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<td>Polyb.</td>
<td>Ad Polybium de Consolatione</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prov.</td>
<td>De Providentia</td>
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<td>Tranq.</td>
<td>De Tranquillitate Animi</td>
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<td>Vit.</td>
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b) For clarity Seneca the Elder is abbreviated as follows:

- Sen. Rh., Con. Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*
- ---, Suas. Seneca the Elder, *Suasoriae*

c) The common elision of Arrian’s authorship of Epictetus’ *Discourses* has also been followed for the sake of concision:

- Epict. Diss. Arrian, *Epicteti dissertationes*
- Epict. Ench. Arrian, *Epicteti encheiridion*

d) Other minor variations are:

- D.L. Diogenes Laertius
- Epicurus, R.S. Epicurus, *Ratae sententiae*
- ---, S.V. Epicurus, *Sententiae Vaticanae*
- ---, Men. Epicurus, *Epistula ad Menoeceum*

e) For reference works the following abbreviations have been used:

- CIL (1863–) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin.
- IG (1873–) *Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin.
- HAASE ‘Index Rerum Memorabilium’ in *HAASE* 1853, 484-594.
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<th>Conventions and Abbreviations</th>
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Introduction
Is there anything uniquely Roman about Seneca’s philosophy? It does not appear that the answer is entirely straightforward. Veyne, for instance, takes issue with Pohlenz for seeing something very Roman in a development of the concept of the will that he attributed to Seneca. Veyne says that ‘forgetting that the Roman Empire’s culture was Greek is to falsify it profoundly’.\footnote{Veyne 2003, 177, n. 20. Rist 1989, 1012, similarly states that ‘with Seneca traditional Stoic thinking subordinates a purely ‘Roman’ attitude’ (see Wilson 1997, 62, n. 23, for an objection to this). The frequent description of philosophy from this period as ‘Hellenistic’ avoids the contrast of Greek and Roman without really acknowledging the Romanness of Latin authors.} Even allowing for exaggeration to make a point, such a claim cannot be right. The influence of Greek culture on the Romans was undoubtedly huge. However, it was not total. Firstly, Greek did not supplant Latin as the language of the Roman elite, and perhaps partly as a consequence of this Roman authors sought to distinguish themselves from Greeks, particularly in terms of their moral character.

The relationship of Roman writers to Greek models is an important one, but in the study of Roman philosophical writers it is sometimes examined with an unhelpful agenda. The fragmentary nature of the earliest texts of Hellenistic philosophy forces students of this subject to turn to Lucretius, Cicero and Seneca to fill in the gaps. Two distinctive characteristics of these authors — their use of Latin and their literary nature — are downplayed to make them more serviceable for this task. Seeking to use Seneca as a source for other authors is moreover an approach Seneca himself would have had serious objections to. In Ep. 84 he demands that Lucilius digest his sources, make them his own and show only himself: *Hoc faciat animus noster: omnia quibus est adiutus abscondat, ipsum tantum ostendat quod effecit* (Ep. 84.7). He is talking here of style, but for Seneca style and content were inseparable, both arising from and revealing the state of the writer’s mind.\footnote{E.g. Ep. 114.3: *Non potest alius esse ingenio, alius animo color*. See further, p. 182.}
To use Seneca to reconstruct what his sources wrote goes, therefore, against how Seneca intended himself to be read. It assumes he has not properly digested his sources. Yet the attitude of Ian Kidd in claiming to isolate Posidonius in Seneca by removing ‘Senecan fat, cosmetics and distortions’ assumes, in effect, that the literary qualities and the Latin language of Seneca are an accretion, or even an excrescence, on a Greek philosophical core.\(^3\)

That Seneca drew upon Greek Stoic sources for his philosophy is obvious, but he did so with an avowed spirit of independence towards them: *Non enim me cuiquam emancipavi, nullius nomen fero; multum magnorum virorum iudicio credo, aliquid et meo vindico* (Ep. 45.4). This some scholars interpret as eclecticism, an attitude that still refuses to acknowledge any real independent creativity in Seneca: his philosophy is a magpie’s nest of ideas stolen from others.\(^4\) Other scholars focus on Seneca’s use of *voluntas* and *velle* to develop a voluntaristic Roman philosophy in contrast to Greek intellectualism. That is to say Greek Stoicism posited that there was no power of the mind that was independent of reason. By contrast, these scholars see Seneca as appealing to a concept of the mind that is not totally rational. They identify this as ‘will’ and look for evidence in Seneca’s use of *voluntas*. This is not universally accepted and the debate over it will be returned to later.\(^5\)

All this, however, is to assume that Seneca was even primarily writing philosophy. His use of Latin and his literary sophistication lead some to argue that Seneca should not be seen as essentially a philosopher, but rather a littératour, or even an ideologue. Such definitions are very frequently connected with attempts to make Seneca a more amenable source for something or someone else.

Seneca as a source for lost Greek philosophers has already been touched on. One approach to this is to create a framework that clearly defines Seneca as a student of his sources. Shaw, for instance, in his influential article on Stoicism as Roman ideology disallows Seneca as evidence primarily because he is an ‘adherent’ rather than a ‘propagator’ of Stoicism.\(^6\) He is part of the

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\(^3\) Kidd 1986, 17.

\(^4\) The pejorative nature of ‘eclecticism’ has been recognised by some and its descriptive usefulness has also been questioned; cf. Inwood 2005a, 23.

\(^5\) Below, p. 27.

\(^6\) Shaw 1985, 30.
‘receptive audience’ of this doctrine. Seneca’s avowed independence has already been mentioned, but he is also extremely insistent in the Epistles and particularly in Book IV that a philosopher must teach, and that teaching is not a mere quoting of other philosophers.

Shaw, it seems, wants to bypass Seneca as the source of the claims in his article and rest them on Posidonius, a figure, apparently, of much greater weight, even though his ideas come to us in fragments quarried in good measure from Seneca! And we have already met the attitude to Seneca of one of those doing this in Kidd’s description of finding Posidonius amongst ‘Senecan fat, cosmetics and distortions’. Seneca, apparently, is writing literature characterized as a bad make-up job. This reflects a not uncommon attitude found, for example, in Sandbach, who says Seneca was not primarily a philosopher, ‘but a rhetorician, a senator, a man at the heart of public affairs’.

This is the view, too, though reflected through a very different theoretical prism, of Habinke, who situates Seneca in ‘the traditional upper-class Roman performative genre of moral exhortation’. Habinke claims this genre subsumes Seneca’s philosophy. It is a genre whose purpose is ‘to transmit the dominant ideology’. For Habinke, therefore, Seneca should be read as ideological literature. This reading of Seneca has been very effectively attacked by Wilson, who argues that it is not only reductive but also in contradiction to ancient epistolary theory as well as what Seneca himself says about his writing.

7 SHAW 1985, 19. In a similar, though more considered, way GILL 2003, 37, suggests Seneca would not have seen himself as a ‘Stoic teacher’.
8 Cf. Ep. 33.7-9 n. and below, p. 182.
9 KIDD 1986, 17. In case this quote be seen as unrepresentative of Kidd’s opinion of Seneca, he elsewhere (1978, 251) talks of Seneca’s ‘quirks and restricted philosophical capacity’.
10 SANDBACH 1989, 152, also a ‘spare-time amateur philosopher’, 149. Even a scholar sympathetic to Seneca as a philosopher, INWOOD 2005a, 31-32, views Seneca’s figurative language with caution and seeks to contain it so that it does not distort how we understand his arguments. BARTSCH 2009, 189-191, comments usefully on Inwood’s approach, comparing it to that of ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 23-26, who looks at Seneca’s use of figurative language in the light of what he himself says on the subject.
12 HABINEK 1992, 189 (= 1998, 139). Habinke’s lead has been followed by ROLLER 2001, 80, n. 21, who is explicit in seeing Seneca’s philosophy as subordinate to his social rank.
13 WILSON 2001, 169-171. Seneca devotes some space to his thoughts on writing, with some important passages in Book IV. See further p. 43.
implied audience as restricted to the contemporary Roman elite is particularly unwarranted. This, of course, is fundamental to constructing Seneca as an ideologue. It assumes that Seneca’s aim is to confirm the power and status of his peers. Yet Seneca explicitly and repeatedly states that he is writing for posterity and even for himself, statements which deserve to be taken seriously.\textsuperscript{14} Nearing the end of his life and faced with the prospect of death at the command of the emperor he wrote his later works to prepare himself for such a death and with an eye to his literary legacy. In fact Seneca appears very out of sorts with the values of his contemporaries, and in the philosophical retirement that he advises and from the perspective of his inner world their values are petty, those of the mob.\textsuperscript{15}

Finally, there are those who deny Seneca any consistent voice by labelling him a hypocrite, ‘in his books a philosopher’.\textsuperscript{16} The truth of such a label is not so easily determined — the historical record is neither unambiguous nor untendentious.\textsuperscript{17} However, of greater relevance should be the label’s usefulness: it is frequently an excuse for evading the need to engage with Seneca’s ideas. Charged with hypocrisy Seneca lacks authority and his works are rendered a source more easily plundered for excerpts by modern scholars without reference to their author’s own aims.

If such interpretations of Seneca are unsatisfactory as approaches to reading him, Seneca himself offers useful perspectives that deserve serious weight. Firstly, the topics of reading and writing are ones he gives an important place to, particularly in Book IV. They will be discussed further later, but fundamental to his approach to philosophy is the antithesis between verba and res: *Philosophia ... non in verbis sed in rebus est* (Ep. 16.3). The antithesis has two aspects. First it is a demand that philosophy be practical, and progress be measured in actions not words.\textsuperscript{18} Second it

\textsuperscript{14} For posterity at Epp. 8.2, 22.2, and very forcefully at Ep. 79.17, for himself at Ep. 27.1.
\textsuperscript{15} See below, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{16} TOO 1994, 213, makes Seneca’s hypocrisy foundational to her reading of him, which WILSON 2001, 171-173, demonstrates to be very unsatisfactory. HERINGTON 1966, 429-431, offers an intelligent perspective on the contrast between Seneca’s inner life that we have access to in his writings and the vicissitudes of his outward life.
\textsuperscript{17} GRIFFIN 1992, Appendix C, ‘Seneca’s Historians’, 420 ff., examines the evidence and RIST 1989, 1993-1999, mitigates much of the dissonance between ideals and practice, yet the caricature appears to remain influential, although it is perhaps lessening in popularity with the current growing scholarly interest in Seneca, as BARTSCH and WRAY 2009, 3, observe.
\textsuperscript{18} See Ep. 40.14 *a rebus ... ad verba* n. and SELLARS 2003, 20-21.
is a demand that philosophy not be ensnared in language. It is an antithesis used to attack both undue concern for style as well as dialectical subtlety. Both concerns reflect a very Roman self-presentation, seen for example in Sallust’s description of Romans as doers in contrast to Greek talkers (Cat. 8.5), or Quintilian’s boast that Romans surpassed the Greeks in *exempla* to the degree they were surpassed in precepts (Inst. 12.2.30). In respect of the use of language it is epitomized in the Elder Cato’s maxim: *rem tene, verba sequentur.*

In regards to both aspects of this antithesis Seneca’s views contrast strongly with prevailing views of philosophy, particularly in the English-speaking world. The practical thrust of his philosophy has been recognized as a characteristic of philosophy in the Roman period. It is also now debated whether it was in fact a characteristic of ancient philosophy generally, a debate that can involve contrasting modern views of philosophy. The other sense of the *res-verba* antithesis, the relationship of words to things, is again one of long-standing philosophical debate. Seneca’s attitude to the question draws heavily on the first sense of the antithesis, that philosophy be practical. He short-circuits the debate with an appeal for urgency and for action: *tantum nobis vacat? iam vivere, iam mori scimus? Tota illo mente pergendum est ubi provideri debet ne res nos, non verba decipiant* (Ep. 45.5). The goal is to live well and to die well, and for Seneca the essentials of this project are clear, and one must not delay actively working towards this goal through debate over details.

This practical focus of Seneca’s conception of philosophy informs his attitude to rhetoric, dialectic and technical terminology. Too great an interest in any of them is a distraction into

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19 Below, p. 67.
20 Tosi, §48.
21 Gill 2003, 33. The assumption that follows for many is that the period is uncreative, as though only theory is creative. It is an assumption that aids the enterprise of recovering earlier Stoic writers from the writers of the Roman period, as it assumes that those later writers with their practical focus were content to take over the theory without reflection.
22 Major works in this reinterpretation are Hadot 1995 and Nussbaum 1994. Sellars 2003 continues the debate, which Inwood 2004 criticizes for being drafted into a ‘foreign war’ between continental and analytical traditions in contemporary philosophy. That Seneca is viewed differently in those two traditions is well remarked on by Henderson 2004, 4.
23 It is an antithesis found in Plato (e.g. Cra. 386a-392b), and is fundamental to the theory of translation (cf. Benjamin 1989, 13).
words away from the subject. And the subjects he treats are ones for which dialectic has no practical use. This is shown vividly in Ep. 82, in which when put to dispelling the fear of death Seneca presents dialectical syllogisms as ridiculously ineffective. His presentation is rhetorical, and includes three quotes from Virgil. He does not give a definition of courage, but illustrates it with famous exempla. He does not reason away fear of death but seeks to persuade the reader to face it bravely, appealing to a sense of Roman honour.

His approach in Ep. 82 is one found throughout his writing. It is literary and it appeals to the Roman values of the reader. Before proceeding to examine this Roman element in more detail, it must be insisted that these qualities are integral to Seneca’s philosophy. They are not accidents of his time and place that the reader can remove to get at what he is really saying, namely a philosophical message rendered in consistent Greek terminology and free of literary or rhetorical embellishments. The two aspects are combined, a point missed by some who assume his choice to write in Latin over Greek, the technical language of philosophy, reflects literary, rather than philosophical aspirations. In fact, the opposite may be the case, as Seneca argues Latin is a more philosophical language than Greek. Furthermore, he is sensitive to the question of style. He treats it as a philosophical problem and devotes some of his most interesting epistles to the issues it raises. An approach, therefore, that treats the connotations of Roman values in his works, found not only in words but also in images, as mere colour to his philosophy is one that is out of sympathy with the way he understood philosophical discourse.

24 Therefore in Ep. 88 he insists that the studia liberalia are not needed for the acquisition of wisdom, which is the goal of philosophy. In the same letter, he includes the nimia subtilitas (§43); see further, Ep. 36.3 perseveret ... studia n.

25 So too at Ep. 108.12, where he comments that when seeking to bring about change in the listener: hunc illorum adfectum cum videris, urge, hoc preme, hoc onera, relictis ambiguitatibus et syllogismis et cavillationibus et ceteris acuminis inriti ludicris.

26 For a fuller analysis of this letter see Wilson 1987, 110-118 and Hamacher 2006.

27 As touched on already (above, p. 3, n. 10), what Seneca writes about figurative language is relevant to how this language is treated in his own work; cf. Bartsch 2009, 189-191.

28 Long 2003, 192, for instance, suggests that the rhetoric is an accident of Roman education.

29 E.g. Griffin 1992, 7. Bowersock 2003 discusses his Greek. There were plenty of examples of Romans writing philosophy in Greek for him to have followed.

30 Below, p. 367, and Ep. 40.11 n.

31 This is seen in the connection he saw between style and character (below, pp. 189 and 365).
Seneca’s choice of Latin reflects his belief that the matter of philosophy is not something that can be got at through careful definitions, but must use a bolder and a more straightforward style:

\[Ego\ non\ redigo\ ista\ ad\ legem\ dialecticam\ et\ ad\ illos\ artificii\ veternosis\ noda;\ totum\ genus\ istuc\ exturbandum\ judico\ quo\ circumscribi\ se\ qui\ interrogatur\ existimat\ et\ ad\ confessionem\ perductus\ alius\ respondet,\ alius\ putat.\ Pro\ veritate\ simplicius\ agendum\ est,\ contra\ metum\ fortius (Ep. 82.19).\]

Such an approach to language is one that makes many modern philosophers uncomfortable; it is seen as unphilosophical. Yet it is one of the advantages Seneca found in writing philosophy in Latin that he could explore the subject in a language in which the hold of a technical terminology was not so strong. Indeed, his approach to the terminology of his Greek sources contrasts with that of Cicero, who attempted to find Latin equivalents for Greek terms, and offered some of the translations apologetically.\(^{33}\) Seneca discusses the translation of Greek terms on a number of occasions. Two of the most important are his discussion of euthymia (Tranq. 2.3) and apatheia (Ep. 9.2). In the first he offers tranquillitas, saying that one must express the force (vim) of the word rather than match its appearance (faciem). In the second he rejects inpatientia as implying the wrong idea. He does not offer a Latin translation of the term but rather gives a description and concrete examples.\(^{34}\)

In his approach to translation Seneca shows that he did not only do his writing in Latin, but his thinking too.\(^{35}\) He was not translating, but true to his digestive metaphor,\(^{36}\) he thoroughly absorbed his sources and reproduced them not only in Latin, but as Seneca. This needs to be emphasized: Seneca rejected using terms that could not be understood in their own right as Latin without knowing their Greek source.\(^{37}\) This is too often forgotten by students of Seneca who

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\(^{32}\) So too at Ep. 87.41 he rejects trying to ensnare the passions (circumscribere) with logic, but rather advises assaulting them (expugnare), concluding: *Si possumus, fortius loquamur; si minus, apertius.* The contrast in approach is nicely put at Ep. 71.6 where he rejects those who strive to make philosophy appear difficult rather than great.


\(^{34}\) His approach in this passage is discussed by *WILSON* 1997, 60-62.

\(^{35}\) *INWOOD* 2005a, 20.

\(^{36}\) Ep. 84.7 (quoted above, p. 1).

explain him by offering the Greek terms he seems to be referring to. What is lost here are the changes that happen when ideas cross languages, the lack of fit between a word in one language and the one used to translate it, the resonances in one language that a word has that are not found in the translation, and particularly important, the reverse of this, the resonances that the translation has that the original did not. To think that a verbal artist of such abilities as Seneca was not aware of this seems remarkably naive: Seneca wrote in Latin to a Roman audience with a full awareness of the nuances of the words and images he used.

Finally, we should not expect to find key concepts only where Seneca has used the term we expect it to be referred to by. It is rather flat-footed to expect Seneca to signpost these concepts for a Roman audience familiar with them, however helpful for audiences at a further remove! For instance, the examination of Roman values that follows will devote some attention to the concept of martial steadfastness, which is at times described by *constantia*, but appears in many other places without this term.

In the *Epistles* Seneca encourages and directs his friend Lucilius in his progress in living a philosophical life. Adopting such a life involves changing one’s attitudes away from popular values and accepting ideas that were developed in the Hellenistic world in Greek. Yet Seneca presents this move as actually one not towards Greek values but back to core Roman ones, values that the Romans idealized as having rustic origins and as explaining their rise to greatness.

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38 How to translate Seneca is a challenge, which is given more attention below, p. 56.

39 CLASSEN 2000 is a good example of someone who seems to expect this. He looks for Roman virtues such as *pietas* and *fides* where they are named, and does not look for allusions to them.

40 The *De Constantia*, for example, does not use *constantia* or its reflexes anywhere in the body of the text, yet it clearly discusses this quality. In his study of concepts, ADAMPOULO 1996, 28-31 has adopted a similar approach. By contrast, the issue of the will in Seneca has arguably been hampered by studies that focus too much on the use of *voluntas*/*velle*. A slightly different sort of reductionism is present in WYSZOMIRSKI 1993, 6, who sees *virtus* in Seneca’s prose works as equivalent to philosophical *aretē* and feels able to ignore the sense of *virtus Romana*. On a slightly different tack, SMITH 2000, 51, shows more sensitivity when he points out that it is perhaps impossible to separate when Seneca is translating the Greek *euthymia* and when he is influenced by the natural connotations of the Latin *tranquillitas*.

41 E.g. SMETHURST 1949, 1, describes this self-image as, ‘A simple, hardy race of peasants, long uncontaminated by the seductive arts and manners of Greece, they held fast to their rustic virtues: sanctity of family life, sobriety of conduct and demeanour, a stern sense of discipline.’
These virtues need a short description before moving on to the use Seneca made of them. Roman virtues have been variously organized by scholars in an attempt to identify the core ones. *Virtus*, *fides* and *pietas* are the three that Meister singles out as the foundation of Roman moral thinking. Each of these, along with quite a number of others, received religious cult in Rome. *Fides*, a person’s loyalty to his given word, and *pietas*, dutifulness to the gods, fatherland and parents, will be looked at later. *Virtus* and its attributes will be discussed first. As an abstract formed from *vir*, its root meaning is manliness and it is very clearly a martial virtue, roughly akin to valour. *Virtus*’ reward was *honos*, and it is no accident that the two concepts received joint religious cult. By extension *virtus* was seen as the basis of the *honores* of a traditional Roman public career. Through contact with the Hellenistic world the word developed the additional sense of Greek *aretē* or excellence. However, the base meaning remained alive in the language. As it is revealed to us in their *exempla*, it has its own quality, which Büchner captures nicely:


It is a quality of steadfastness that is perhaps epitomized in the Romans’ reaction to the defeat at Cannae. It is this quality of *constantia* that Curtius asserts is the true core of *virtus*.  

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42 Meister 1967, 4 (= 1930, 6).
43 Fears 1981, 841, n. 67, is a good source for the scholarship on these virtues.
44 See below, p. 15 (*fides*) and p. 188, n. 464 (*pietas*).
46 Bieber 1945, 31.
47 Weinstock 1971, 230.
48 Büchner 1967, 378. Eisenhut 1973, 40–41, takes issue with this definition of *virtus*. But although an aggressive sense to the term should not be excluded, the sense of steadfastness does occupy a very prominent place in the *exempla* that the Romans celebrated.
49 Curtius 1967, 373. Maso 1999, 19, n. 6, offers further support for this association of *virtus* and *constantia*.
Seneca has a lot to say about *virtus* as a philosophical concept, but the basic Roman senses of the word remain present. They are seen in the *exempla* and the martial imagery he uses and in his descriptions of the Stoic sage, although it is perhaps true that he seldom uses the term with the original sense predominating.\(^{50}\)

It is within the language of nobility that Seneca’s use of Roman values is set. As is also the case in English and many other languages, terms such as ‘noble’ have both a moral and a social sense. Seneca’s use of this language rested on two fundamental antitheses. The first was the contrast between philosophers as noble in contrast to the mass of society.\(^{51}\) The second was the contrast between the mind being the only thing genuinely one’s own against the erroneous popular belief that one’s possessions were part of one’s self.\(^{52}\) The antithesis of philosophers and the crowd leads to a number of other antitheses, such as philosophers serving wisdom against the mass of humanity enslaved to folly.\(^{53}\) The understanding of the mind as one’s only true possession is the basis of a philosopher’s self-sufficiency or freedom.\(^{54}\) These two antitheses are closely linked, as it is the popular values of the crowd that teach us the false value of things external to the mind.\(^{55}\) Before going on, it should be stressed that the contrast between philosophers and the mob is not simply a matter of social elitism, as some attempt to make it.\(^{56}\) The mob is everyone from high to low who is not a philosopher.\(^{57}\) The impression that Seneca creates is that the false

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\(^{50}\) Eisenhut 1973, 136, 221, finds few cases of *virtus* with the sense of bravery or industry in Seneca. This is the justification for Wyszomrski 1993, 6, ignoring this sense in his study (above, p. 8, n. 40). However, see further below, pp. 21 and 26, and Ep. 31.5 *virtus* n. Furthermore, McDonnell 2003, 239, points out occasions that Eisenhut wrongly interprets *virtus* as non-martial in earlier literature.

\(^{51}\) See below, p. 110.

\(^{52}\) This is an important theme of *Epp.* 31 and 41, especially *Ep.* 41.6-8, where it is seen in the common antithesis between *suum* and *alienum*. In *Ep.* 33 the same antithesis occurs, but in the context of owning ideas.

\(^{53}\) *Ep.* 30.6 *demens* n.

\(^{54}\) *Ep.* 31.3 *sibi fide* n.

\(^{55}\) Below, p. 112.

\(^{56}\) Habiniek 1998, 137-138, for instance, sees this contrast as one that creates an ‘aristocracy of virtue’, an ideology that is in the service of the existing social elite (as noted above, p. 3).

\(^{57}\) Below, p. 111, n. 372.
values of society are pervasive, we take them in from our very parents, and there is only a small
group of philosophers who resist these values.\textsuperscript{58}

Seneca’s use of the language of nobility involves a fundamental reinterpretation of the
concept. Whereas the popular concept of nobility was founded on wealth, birth and social status,
Seneca stressed that the nobility of the philosopher was radically independent of any of these
supports. He speaks approvingly of nobility.\textsuperscript{59} He uses the terms nobilis and
generosus frequently and with a positive connotation; very frequently he uses
\textit{generosus} to describe the animus.\textsuperscript{60} And
he stresses that the possession of a noble soul is not dependent on one’s birth.\textsuperscript{61} He mentions this
at \textit{Ep.} 31.11, but develops it most fully \textit{Ep.} 44, where he explicitly rejects a link between birth and
nobility.\textsuperscript{62} Nobility is a quality of the mind. It is bestowed by \textit{philosophia}, who does not look at
lineages. Furthermore you can have all past philosophers as your ancestors (\textit{maiores}) if you act
worthily of them. A few letters later in \textit{Ep.} 47, Seneca complements this by arguing that by the
same yardstick, that of the mind, the distinction of slave and free is equally immaterial. Wealth
too, another traditional foundation of nobility, is equally not important, when nobility is a quality
of the mind.\textsuperscript{63} Seneca works hard to bring his friend to a state of indifference towards wealth,
particularly in Book II, where a fear of poverty is a major obstacle in adopting a life of
philosophical leisure, or \textit{otium}. Ultimately, a sick mind will bear either wealth or poverty badly,
while a healthy mind will bear either well (\textit{Ep.} 17.12).

Furthermore, Seneca assures his friend that a life of philosophical retirement will lead to
fame, an essential quality of nobility: \textit{Studia te tua clarum et nobilem efficient} (\textit{Ep.} 21.2). He follows
this up by offering Lucilius fame by proxy: his name will endure like the name of Idomeneus, the
recipient of Epicurus’ letters, and that of Atticus, the recipient of Cicero’s (\textit{Ep.} 21.5). Even victory,
so closely associated by the Roman mind with nobility and \textit{virtus}, is achieved in a more genuine

\textsuperscript{58} Below, p. 111.

\textsuperscript{59} Another term closely related to nobility is honour and Seneca makes frequent appeals to the
reader’s sense of the honourable; below, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{60} E.g. \textit{Ep.} 31.4 n.

\textsuperscript{61} Hellegouarc’h 1972, 234-5, discusses \textit{genus} as an element of \textit{nobilitas}.

\textsuperscript{62} Summers 1910, 207, has some useful comments on literary parallels for this idea.

\textsuperscript{63} Hellegouarc’h 1972, 235-7, discusses \textit{divitiae} and \textit{opes} as elements of \textit{nobilitas}. 
sense, Seneca argues, with the aid of philosophy. Of the philosopher Stilbo, for example, he says: *Ecce vir fortis ac strenuus! Ipsam hostis sui victoriam vicit.* (Ep. 9.19). Stilbo’s victory surpasses that of Demetrius Poliorcetes. It is a trope Seneca uses frequently, for instance to contrast victory in war with a superior internal victory over one’s passions. Of Hannibal’s undoing in Campania, for example, he says: *armis vicit, vitiis victus est* (Ep. 51.5).  

Seneca, therefore, reinterprets the basis of nobility rather than rejects it as an ideal. This basis, consonant with Stoic philosophy, is the mind, and needs no external support, but Seneca gives the mind a nobility and virtue of a very Roman cast, and within the mind he finds a context for traditional Roman virtues, even a context for the display of martial virtues.

It is in conflict with *fortuna* that Seneca describes the opportunity for the display of martial *virtus*. In its pithiest form he expresses this as (Ep. 96.5): *vivere militare est*. The image of the philosopher as a soldier in a war against *fortuna* is pervasive in the *Epistles*. In terms of Seneca’s basic antitheses Fortune represents popular values and their incorrect attachment to things external to the mind.  

Fortune is frequently personified by Seneca. However, it is perhaps more correct to say that this personification invokes her as a goddess. *Fortuna* was an old and popular goddess in Rome, one that had many shrines and dedications. Her favour was seen as crucial to success in public life, and therefore she was associated with the imperial household in their coinage. *Fortuna*’s very popularity makes her even more appropriate as the representative of the popular values Seneca sets philosophy in opposition to.

Fortune is frequently used by Seneca to portray the contrast between what is ours and what is external to us. He does this in terms of what is ours and what is within the realm of Fortune. Fortune is frequently described as a ruler, one with power. This power is over the external world, and Fortune is often described as giving material gifts, which as they are in her power she

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64 At *Ep. 71.37* such a victory over one’s passions is superior to any imperial conquests.

65 *Ep. 36.6 In mores ... habet n.*

66 WEINSTOCK 1971, 112 and ASMIS 2009, 118.

67 WEINSTOCK 1971, 126-127.

68 *Ep. 39.3 fortunae n.*
is free to take back: *nihil eripit fortuna nisi quod dedit* (*Const. 5.4*);⁶⁹ and her attention is, of course, notoriously fickle.⁷⁰ Seneca underlines the radical nature of Fortune’s power by frequently driving home the point that her power extends even over our bodies. The dividing line between what is truly ours and what is not separates our mind from our body. The body, therefore, is useful for Seneca, as it puts this contrast in its most extreme terms: *hoc [sc. corpus] ... oppono fortunae* (*Ep. 65.21*). The vicissitudes that the body is subject to, illness, pain, even death, are strictly indifferent things, neither good nor bad. Fear of these things can make one a slave to Fortune.⁷¹ In a similar way desires, which are often to satisfy bodily pleasures, are another means for Fortune to control us.⁷²

The struggle for the philosopher-soldier, then, is to free himself from incorrect attachment to anything external to his mind. Fortune can have power over us only in so far as we believe that these externals are integral to us. Fortune’s attacks are described in two forms: in her favourable guise her gifts are snares (*Ep. 8.3*), and what she gives can be taken away (*Ep. 8.10*); in her hostile guise she can bring exile, torture, disease, war and shipwreck (*Ep. 91.8*), death, chains, fire and the other weapons of Fortune (*Ep. 85.26*).⁷³

The weapons of Fortune (*tela fortunae*) is a phrase used quite frequently by Seneca without further development.⁷⁴ These weapons are her power over events external to our mind, but they can touch us only through the passions, principally fear and desire.⁷⁵ The battle with Fortune is, therefore, an internal one against the passions, and her weapons are powerless against a mind that has been fortified by philosophy to be properly indifferent towards externals (*Ep. 82.5*). Philosophical training is likened to military exercises (*Ep. 18.11*). The alternative to war against

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⁶⁹ See further, Motto, *Chance: Fortune* §5.
⁷⁰ Below, p. 17, n. 91.
⁷¹ *Ep. 66.16*, and Inwood 2007a, 165.
⁷² *Ep. 51.8*; see further, *Ep. 39.5 Qui hostis ... suae sunt?* n.
⁷³ *Ep. 18.11*, 36.8 (by implication), 45.9, 53.12 (again by implication), 85.26 (*mortem, vincula, ignes, alía tela fortunae*), 99.32, 104.22.
⁷⁴ E.g. Marc. 16.5.
⁷⁵ Herington 1966, 435, stresses this identification of Fortune with externals.
Fortune is to be her slave (Ep. 51.8). Surrendering to Fortune is through surrendering to the passions. The war is fought for *libertas*, a central value in the Roman aristocratic vocabulary:

*Libertas proposita est; ad hoc praemium laboratur. Quae sit libertas quaeris? Nulli rei servire, nulli necessitati, nullis casibus, fortunam in aequum deducere. Quo die illam intellexero plus posse, nil poterit: ego illam feram, cum in manu mors sit? (Ep. 51.9)*

The primary martial quality that is needed to face Fortune is the characteristically Roman one of steadfastness. In *Ep.* 36 Seneca discusses the education of a friend of Lucilius, who has abandoned a promising public career for philosophical retirement. Seneca mentions (§7) the education he would have got if he had been born in Germany or Parthia or in the time of their Roman ancestors. It is a weapons-training, a training for battle, a training to meet an armed enemy. This is then contrasted with what the friend needs (§8) — a training effective against all weapons and all types of enemy, that is *mortem contemnere*, despising death, the fear of which is the most difficult of the passions to overcome.76

Seneca acknowledges the difficulty of the task (§8) — it goes against the instinct of self-preservation, but then you would not have to train for it if it did not! It is needed for remaining steadfast under torture and for standing guard even though wounded and without leaning on your spear, whose slight support might leave you vulnerable to sleep (§9). In these images Seneca suggests that effective philosophical training should not be totally different from a warrior’s education.77 It can be applied to all circumstances, but it should still draw on similar mental resources to resist and overcome pain, fear and other difficulties. He demands the same type of *virtus* that Büchner described, the quality of *constantia*.78 The basic martial sense of this word must be emphasized. Like steadfastness in English it refers to a posture, that of standing firm to meet an attack.79 It is one of a number of terms derived from the verb *stare* that Maso well observes is

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76 Below, p. 64, n. 322.

77 Military courage is compared to philosophical training at *Ep.* 24.5, where Seneca remarks of Mucius Scaevola that he had no philosophical training beyond a soldier’s courage: *Vides hominem non eruditum nec ullis praeceptis contra mortem aut dolorem subornatum, militari tantum robore instructum*. There is an element of challenge to the reader in this that with his philosophical training he be able to equal this simple courage.

78 Büchner 1967, 6 (quoted above, p. 9).

79 With the intensifying sense of *con*- (*OLD* §5).
the essence of virtue for Seneca.\textsuperscript{80} To it, for instance, can be added \textit{resistere}, the proper stance to meet Fortune and \textit{stabilitas} (e.g. Ep. 71.27).\textsuperscript{81} The imagery also extends to commands to stand up, which are emphatic for Seneca: \textit{surge!}\textsuperscript{82}

In Stoic terminology \textit{constantia} is assumed to be equivalent to \textit{karteria}, perseverance, a sub-virtue of the cardinal virtue \textit{andreia}, bravery. It is sometimes claimed that this is a prominent Stoic virtue, and certainly it has come to shape the sense of ‘stoic’ in English. Yet it is scarcely prominent in the summaries of Stoic ethics preserved by Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus.\textsuperscript{83} Nor does it figure as prominently in Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius, who also make less use of martial imagery.\textsuperscript{84} It might be more appropriate to say it is a prominent Senecan value, a value that would be picked up by Neo-Stoics such as Lipsius, most notably in his very popular \textit{De Constantia}.

However, Seneca draws upon another sense of Roman \textit{constantia} in \textit{Epp.} 34 and 35. It is the quality of \textit{constantia} in relationship to \textit{fides}.\textsuperscript{85} It is the quality that a noble displays in keeping his word, a steadfastness to one’s word in the face of danger and temptation, a quality exemplified by Regulus in keeping his word and returning to Carthage to face death by torture. It is also adumbrated in \textit{Ep.} 36.9: \textit{ut tormentis non summittat fidem}.

In \textit{Ep.} 34.3 Seneca defines someone as good who cannot be made bad by any force or necessity. This arises from ensuring that one’s words and actions are in accord with themselves (§4). This is the fundamental basis of mental health in Stoicism, expressed by the Greek term \textit{homologia}, often rendered as ‘consistency’. As Long and Sedley say:\textsuperscript{86}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{80} MASO 1999, 22-23.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} BUSCH 1961, 70, n. 47, adds \textit{obsistere, obstare} and \textit{stare contra}. Even \textit{stare} on its own is used prominently, e.g. \textit{Epp.} 36.9, 71.26, 74.30, 82.21. English idiom around standing, such as ‘stand up to’, etc., is similarly productive, and likewise often has an underlying martial origin.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Cf. \textit{Ep.} 31.4 n.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} D.L. 7.92-3, and Stob. \textit{Ecl.} 2.7.5b2 (= W 2.61) both mention \textit{karteria} only as part of the discussion of the subdivision of virtue, although, Cic. \textit{De Orat.} 3.62 shows how closely Stoics were popularly associated with \textit{duritia} and \textit{patientia}; see further, below, p. 117, n. 397.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} SOMMER 2001, 59-60, points out that Seneca’s use of martial imagery is in contrast to both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus favours athletic over martial imagery (cf. TRAÏNA 1987, 67). In contrast SCARPAT 1970, 263, n. 11 claims military imagery to be widespread in Stoicism. See further, below, p. 294.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} HELLEGOUARC’h 1972, 285.
  \item \textsuperscript{86} L-S, v. 1, 383; cf. D.L. 7.89 (= L-S 61A).
\end{itemize}
[it] was ideally suited to capture the essence of Stoic virtue, since its linguistic form (*homo-logia*) is interpretable as ‘harmony of (or with) reason.

In Stoic theory all the virtues rested on this concept. Therefore, the sub-virtue *karteria* arises from *homologia*. However, the sense of *constantia* is different. Although it is one of the terms used by both Cicero and Seneca to translate *homologia*, it does not refer back to *logos* or reason.\(^8^7\) It is one of a number of Roman moral qualities that suggested reliability and appeals to qualities that are not essentially rational. These were the qualities that Rome’s ancestors had surpassed all others in, as Cicero says at the start of the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.2):

\[
\text{Quae enim tanta gravitas, quae tanta constantia, magnitudo animi, probitas, fides, quae tam excellens in omni genere virtus in ullis fuit, ut sit cum maioribus nostris comparanda?}
\]

*Constantia* in the sense of keeping one’s word rested firmly on its more martial sense of steadfastness. It should be asked, however, whether Seneca expected his audience to read the end of *Ep. 34* in the sense of the Greek *homologia*. It is a reading many modern critics of Seneca rush to, because they frequently read Seneca through the lens of Greek Stoicism. Yet surely the more obvious associations for a Roman reader are to the concept of *constantia* as a quality of character that underlies one’s *fides*. This is even more clearly seen in the next and linked letter, *Ep. 35*. At the end of that letter (§4) Seneca returns to the notion of *constantia* as fundamental for moral progress (*ante omnia hoc cura, ut constes tibi*). It is achieved through observing your desires to see if they are stable from one day to the next.\(^8^8\) He continues (*Ep. 35.4*):

\[
\ldots \text{mutatio voluntatis indicat animum natare, aliubi atque aliubi apparere, prout tuit ventus. Non vagatur quod fixum atque fundatum est: istud sapienti perfecto contingit, aliquatenus et proficienle provectoque. Quid ergo interest? hic commovetur quidem, non tamen transit, sed suo loco nutat; ille ne commovetur quidem.}
\]

Central to this image of *constantia* is the notion of unchangingness, a quality Seneca valued

\(^8^7\) A number of terms are used (cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 219-220, FISCHER 1914, 40-42 and LIŞCU 1930, 140-148). *Convenientia* is a frequent one, e.g. Cic. *Fin*. 3.21 and Sen. *Ep.* 74.30, but *constantia* also occurs, e.g. Cic. *Tusc*. 4.10 (GRAVER 2002, 136) and Sen. *Ep.* 92.3, 102.13, 120.11. Cicero uses *constantia* to translate the Greek *eupatheia*, but Seneca does not seem to make direct reference to such a term.

\(^8^8\) That Seneca describes this constancy as of one’s desires (both here and importantly at *Ep. 20.5*) rather than one’s knowledge (cf. VOELKE 1973, 172, BELLINCIONI 1978, 20 and DIHLE 1982, 134) will be looked at later (below, p. 23, n. 123).
highly. In contrast to a change of one’s desire (mutatio voluntatis), Seneca portrays the sage as immovable. The metaphor used to describe this immobility is suggestive of the gravitas of a Roman noble in its root sense of weightiness. Gravitas like constantia was a quality that vouched for one’s fides, gave weight to it, so to speak. Both constantia and gravitas were frequently evoked together and were seen as particularly Roman in contrast to a levitas frequently attributed to Greeks.

Constantia, then, is a concept that has in Latin quite different resonances and associations from either homologia or karteria. It is one of several concepts that Seneca draws upon that contribute to a very Roman idea of philosophy. At the start a contrast was mentioned between Greek intellectualism and Roman voluntarism that many students of Seneca have observed. The words voluntas and velle have been the focus of their study and a similar situation to constantia has been noted: voluntas carries meanings not present in the Greek terms that it is used to translate. The implications of constantia support the arguments of those who see a voluntaristic force to Seneca’s philosophy, one that arises from his use of Latin and his expression of philosophy through Roman moral concepts. This is particularly so as for Seneca it is specifically in respect of one’s desires that constancy must be achieved.

Before proceeding to link what has been said about constantia to Seneca’s concept of the mind, the concept’s outstanding attributes should be summarized. Basic to the sense of constantia is its martial meaning of steadfastness in battle, which is obviously linked to the most basic sense of virtus in Latin and to a key image of philosophical progress for Seneca, that of soldiering

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89 As he says at Ep. 20.2: maximum hoc est et officium sapientiae et indicium, ut verbis opera concordent, ut ipse ubique par sibi idemque sit.

90 HELLEGOUC'CH 1972, 283-7, sees constantia as an aspect of gravitas. The two occur frequently together (Groß 1983, 756). In terms of the wider imagery drawn from standing noted above, p. 14, it links obviously to stabilitas.

91 WEISCHE 1966, 50-52. Levitas is also a defining quality of Fortune against whom the philosopher sets himself (cf. Ep. 13.11 and MOTTO, Chance: Fortune §11). It can also be seen as a quality of the mob, who follow Fortune.

92 INWOOD 2005a, 135-136, sets out the various positions on this question.

93 cf. GRIMAL 1992, 155 ff. It is frequently assumed that Seneca follows Cicero in using voluntas to translate boulēsis, but is this really warranted? See further, Ep. 34.3 volo n.

94 Above, p. 16, n. 88 and below, p. 23, n. 123.
against Fortune. Linked to this sense is that of keeping one’s word, a value that underpinned one’s *fides*. *Constantia* is also related to other fundamental Roman moral qualities, such as *gravitas* and *probitas* that are not essentially rational. Like *homologia* it can lie at the base of one’s moral character, but in its root sense it refers back not to rationality but to some sort of mental strength that could be described as willpower.

The contrast between *homologia* tied to *logos* and *constantia* founded on *virtus* reflects a basic contrast between Seneca and his Stoic sources on how the mind was seen to function. It is a topic that has already been alluded to. It is also something Seneca set himself in opposition to his Stoic sources over. His claim to intellectual independence at *Ep*. 45.4 is followed by an attack on the study of dialectic, and it is this attack on the role of logic in philosophy that lies close to the heart of a contrast between Seneca and his sources.95

Before going on, a few words should be said about the Stoic view of the mind. The Stoics had a materialist view of the universe; the mind was something physical and identified as a type of breath, or *pneuma*.96 This *pneuma* pervades the universe to different degrees: it is present in a rock as cohesion, whereas a plant has in addition growth. In humans it is present as reason, which they share with the gods. In gods this reason is perfect, in humans perfectible.97 The measure of a human’s progress towards perfecting reason is the quality of the *tonos* or tension of his soul’s *pneuma*.98 Finally, through a tendency to syncretism prominent in Stoic thought, this *pneuma* was seen as able to be identified as god, nature, reason and fate.99

95 INWOOD 2005a, 143, n. 35, feels Seneca did not see himself as innovating in respect of the will; however in his valuation of dialectic he differs significantly from his sources (contra BARNES 1997, 17; see further below, p. 25), and it is possible to see this as representing a different understanding of the operation of the mind.


97 *Ep*. 49.11 and *Ep*. 41.8 *Rationale enim ... nascitur n.*

98 Cf. SELLARS 2003, 125-126.

99 Sen. *Nat*. 2.45.1-3 is the most comprehensive for Jupiter = *spiritus* = *fatum* = *providentia* = *natura* = *mundus*. Sen. *Ben*. 4.7.1-2 has *natura* = *deus* = *divina ratio* = *luppiter* = *fatum*. At *Ben*. 4.8.3 he expands this to include even *fortuna*. See also *Helv*. 8.3 and *D.L*. 7.135-6 (= L-S 46B and SVF 1.102).
One of the most contentious claims that Stoics made about the mind was that it was monistic, in the sense that it was not divided into a rational and an irrational part.\textsuperscript{100} Emotions, therefore, had a rational element. In that they were viewed as unhealthy disturbances of mental equilibrium they were interpreted as the mind incorrectly giving rational assent to ideas such as, ‘it is appropriate for me to be angry in this circumstance’. Thus the strict sense of irrational for a Stoic was action that was not in accord with right reason. This right reason, as breath at a proper degree of tension, was also divine or perfect reason.\textsuperscript{101}

Such a view was dissented from by the later Stoic, Posidonius, who adopted a dualistic psychology. Seneca had, therefore, two strands to draw on in his Stoic sources. Much effort has been put into examining his writing to see whether he follows Posidonius or the earlier Stoics. The question has some bearing on arguments about the voluntaristic character of Seneca’s philosophy. Some scholars have worked a number of passages in Seneca hard to try to prove a dualistic psychology yet, from the work of Inwood, Seneca appears to have been committed to a monistic concept of the mind,\textsuperscript{102} and not to have conceived of the \textit{voluntas} as a mental organ independent from reason.\textsuperscript{103}

If it is accepted that Seneca uses a monistic psychology, does it follow that it is wrong to see his philosophy as voluntaristic? No, and a key to the answer lies in his attitude to dialectic. Scholars, using the sort of pin-prick, syllogistic argument that Seneca was so critical of, seek to prove or disprove that he innovated in positing a concept of the will. Yet this is surely to make a travesty of him, to arrive at what he meant by reading him in a manner he mocked so harshly:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{quote}
\textit{Erige te, Lucili virorum optime, et relinque istum ludum litterarium philosophorum qui rem magnificentissimam ad syllabas vocant, qui animum minuta docendo demittunt et conterunt … qui docent et id agunt ut philosophia potius difficilis quam magna videatur} (Ep. 71.6).
\end{quote}
\end{footnotesize}

If Seneca is scathing of technical language as the path for philosophy, perhaps we would be better to rely on it less. The term ‘will’ is somewhat problematic in English. Its use in popular speech has

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{100} See \textit{Inwood} 2005a, 24, n. 3, for the definition of this psychological monism.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Long} 1986, 175-178.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Inwood} 2005a, ch. 2.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Inwood} 2005a, ch. 5.
\end{footnotesize}
diminished, and it is overshadowed by its use as a technical term in philosophy and theology.\textsuperscript{104}

For the modern reader the word is associated with something more technical than popular, more difficult than grand. What was grand for Seneca was the mind, the \textit{magnus animus}. For him the acquisition of this greatness of spirit was crucial for philosophical progress.\textsuperscript{105}

Grand too should be the philosopher, like Quintus Sextius (\textit{magni ... viri}, Ep. 64.2), who puts the reader in the frame of mind to pick a fight with Fortune, unlike some philosophers who \textit{instituunt, disputant, cavillantur, non faciunt animum quia non habent} (Ep. 64.3). Too much attention is focused on the word \textit{voluntas}. What is the sense of \textit{animus} here? Is not Seneca’s use of \textit{ratio} less convenient to some scholars’ purposes than they would wish?\textsuperscript{106} What about his appeals to the reader’s emotions? Seneca is unambiguously voluntaristic in his style: he writes passionately and seeks to activate the will.\textsuperscript{107} The voluntaristic force of Seneca’s philosophy is not something revealed through the forced interpretation of a few passages using \textit{voluntas} or \textit{velle}, although his focus on desire is not without importance. Rather, true to the type of writing he admires, it is found squarely in how he describes the mind, in how he interprets reason, and in his appeals to the emotions. And it is to the fuller discussion of these topics that I will now turn.

Seneca’s view of the mind has been nicely observed by Traina, who contrasts him with a Greek intellectualism seen in the opinion of Epicurus that it is through the operation of the \textit{logismos} that the wise man is freed from the interference of Fortune:\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Βραχέα σοφῷ τύχη παρεμπίπτει, τά δὲ μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα ὁ λογισμός διώκηκε καὶ κατὰ τὸν συνεχῆ χρόνον τοῦ βίου διοικεῖ καὶ διοικήσει.}
\end{quote}

For Seneca it is the \textit{animus} that is more powerful than any kind of fortune: \textit{Valentior enim omni fortuna animus} (Ep. 98.2). The mind is viewed as possessing a strength to prevail against Fortune. Mental strength is a concept found in other Stoic writers, in whom this strength is understood to

\textsuperscript{104} It is similar, though to a lesser extent, to ‘virtue’, which Annas 1993, 5, n. 9, notes is largely restricted to use by philosophers.

\textsuperscript{105} For more on greatness of spirit, see below, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{106} On this difference, see below, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{107} Traina 1987, 39, says of his use of language that it speaks ‘non solo alla mente, ma anche al cuore e alla volontà’.

\textsuperscript{108} Traina 1987, 120-1 on D.L. 10.144 (= Epic. R.S. 16).
be founded on rationality. Yet in Seneca this strength appears to be drawn from sources beyond narrow rationality. To interpret Seneca in this way is to give the full force to the range of meanings that \textit{animus} has in Latin generally. Grimal stresses that the dynamism inherent in the range of meanings of \textit{animus} contrasts with the intellectualism of his sources and extends into the rest of his vocabulary of interiority. This needs to be stressed because, as noted, in Stoic thought the mind was understood as a type of breath that was identical with reason. As such an identification could act as a brake on interpreting Seneca’s concept of the mind in this broader sense, we must examine more closely how Seneca understood \textit{ratio}.

For Seneca one of the images of the goal of philosophy is seeking to perfect one’s \textit{ratio}. Yet the nature of Senecan \textit{ratio} is no more a straightforward correspondence to our idea of rationality than is the Greek \textit{logos} of his sources. In particular Seneca strongly stresses both that \textit{ratio} is the perfect order of the cosmos, synonymous with the mind of god and that human \textit{ratio} is a portion of this divine \textit{ratio}: \textit{ratio} ... \textit{nihil aliud est quam in corpus humanum pars divini spiritus mersa} (Ep. 66.12). What Seneca does not do is develop the idea that this \textit{ratio} is essentially dialectical rationality — that is something that many readers of Seneca feel at liberty to fill out for themselves. It does not, however, appear justified, as is seen most clearly in Seneca’s opposition to dialectic.

Perhaps the most important way that Seneca changes the sense of \textit{ratio} is through its syncretic relationship to \textit{virtus}. As mentioned, in the Stoic system \textit{pneuma} is equivalent to \textit{ratio}, amongst other things. It is also equivalent to \textit{virtus}, as Seneca says on a number of occasions: \textit{nihil}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Stob. Ecl. 2.7.5b4 (= W 2.62 and SVF 3.278), which ARNOLD 1911, 247, writing before some of the modern debate, described simply as ‘will’.
\item SORABJI 2000, 330-331, talks of the intellectualization of this willpower, citing Epictetus, but he does not look at Seneca in this context.
\item GRIMAL 1992, 152. See also GRIFFIN and ATKINS 1991, xlvii and MAURACH 1987, 15-16, who is emphatic that the \textit{animus} is ‘Denken, Entscheidungskraft und auch die Energie des Strebens’.
\item e.g. Epp. 49.11, 76.9-10 and Ep. 92.27:
\item RIST 1969, 25, cautions against seeing Stoic reason and our own sense of it as identical. So too BELLINCIONI 1978, 143, n. 8. SØRENSEN 1984, 232-233, makes a similar contrast between \textit{ratio} and modern reason.
\item The nature of \textit{ratio} is a subject that is introduced into the \textit{Epistles} gradually. It first appears in Book IV in the sense of divine mind. The attack on dialectic that begins in Book V can be seen as a corrective to any idea that \textit{ratio} is dialectical reasoning. See further below, p. 52.
\end{enumerate}
... aliud est virtus quam recta ratio (Ep. 66.32).\textsuperscript{115} On occasions, Seneca can be seen to substitute virtus for ratio, for instance at Ep. 31.8, which Scarpat sees as introducing a Roman element, in which virtus, as the practical faculty is substituted for the theoretical faculty, ratio.\textsuperscript{116} More generally Seneca talks of virtus more frequently than ratio,\textsuperscript{117} and when he does so its practical and martial Roman associations are present.\textsuperscript{118}

Seneca’s hostility to dialectic fits squarely within a Roman suspicion of the subject. Cicero, \textit{Fin.} 4.7, for instance, had criticized syllogisms as unpersuasive and at \textit{De Orat}. 3.58 he mentions it as a leisure pursuit on the same level as music or poetry. Seneca also cites with approval two other writers that were formational in his education for their hostility to dialectic.\textsuperscript{119} At Ep. 64.2, Seneca approves of the style of Q. Sextius, in contrast to the dialectical style of others.\textsuperscript{120} At \textit{Brev}. 10.1 he quotes Fabianus for his rejection of subtlety in fighting the passions: \textit{contra affectus impetu, non subtilitate pugnandum, nec minutis vulneribus sed incursu avertendum aciem; non probabat cavillationes; vitia enim contundi debere, non vellicari.}

For Stoics, logic was a vital component of moral progress. Long says that for Epictetus it was the ‘measuring instrument’ of our logos, our rational faculty.\textsuperscript{121} A study of logic refines our faculty of judgement; it is central to fully understanding and perfecting the essence of our human nature, which is logos. It is fundamental to achieving homologia, harmony with divine logos and harmony of one’s own logoi.\textsuperscript{122} By contrast Seneca stresses that this constancy lies with one’s desires, and

\textsuperscript{115} See also \textit{Epp}. 76.10 and 76.16; \textsc{Inwood} 2007a, 206 and \textsc{Wyszomirski} 1993, 52-72.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ep}. 31.8 \textit{virtus} n. \textsc{Scarpat} 1983, 38-39, goes on to contrast virtus as an active element that contrast with ratio that can appear passive and acquired \textit{gratis}.

\textsuperscript{117} Below, p. 407.

\textsuperscript{118} Below, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{119} \textsc{Griffin} 1992, 40.

\textsuperscript{120} See further, below, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{121} \textsc{Long} 1978, 120, following Epict. \textit{Diss.} 1.17, a discourse on the necessity of logic not matched by any similar statement by Seneca.

\textsuperscript{122} This is clearly described by \textsc{Graver} 1996, 110-117, who describes progress as a process of creating logical coherence amongst one’s belief sets.
dialectic is ineffectual in modifying them: *hanc constantiam cavillationes istae de quibus paulo ante loquebar praestare non possunt* (Ep. 111.4).

It is a regret for some scholars that Seneca does not describe the workings of reason. What perhaps they would have liked is some confirmation that it was syllogistic in its operation. That Seneca’s Reason should reveal a training in rhetoric, rather than dialectic, is an affront to such a wish. For many modern scholars the stress Stoics placed on reason is very important. Nussbaum, for instance, takes issue with ‘Foucault and other affiliated writers’ for ‘obscuring the dignity of reason’. Seneca is a valuable source for the therapeutic role of philosophy, but his value is compromised if he shares a significantly different conception of reason. In fact his conception differs importantly in three aspects: he does not describe *homologia* as occurring through dialectical reasoning; in contrast his *ratio*, and *homologia* with it, has a strong religious, even mystical aspect; and there is a place for seeing it as containing a positive role for what we would call emotions.

Although Seneca describes man as an *animal rationale* (Ep. 41.8), he does not conceive of *ratio* functioning as *logos* does for Epictetus. For Seneca moral progress is less about training our faculty of judgement through reason and more a matter of having a *magnus animus*, a great spirit, a concept that Knoche saw as relating closely to nobility, *virtus* in its original sense, and

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123 Rist 1969, 226-227, quoting Plut. *Comm. nat. 1061f* (SVF 3.542), argues that the contrast between Senecan consistency of wishes and Chrysippean consistency of judgements is insignificant. Perhaps so, but it is different from the type of logical consistency that Graver 1996, 110-117 (above, p. 22, n. 122), outlines. Also the focus on wishes is consistent with Seneca’s practical aim: whereas seeking constancy of one’s thoughts can spiral out into abstractions, constancy of one’s desires is concrete, and with understanding they can be minimized. Furthermore, achieving this consistency is not merely through a harmony, but consistent with the association of *constantia* with steadfastness requires a mental strength to resist inappropriate desires. Cancik-Lindemaier 1998, 99, takes valid issue with Rist’s approach here of analysing Seneca’s ideas as though they were a series of fragments.


125 Along the lines that Graver 1996, 110-117 (outlined above, p. 22, n. 122), describes.


127 Nussbaum 1994, 353.

128 Nussbaum 1994, draws extensively on Seneca for her description of Stoicism.

129 Graver 1996, 133, imports the Chrysippean mechanics of cataleptic impressions to interpret the influence of a good person in *Ep*. 94.42-3 as not being, ‘extra-rational, conveyed by “emotive” rather than cognitive means’. Such an approach seems unwarranted.
constantia. This magnitudo animi arises from an awareness of the divine origin of one’s soul. This divinity is the source of one’s claim to nobility, and when one adopts the perspective of this divine soul, one can look down on earthly concerns, that is, adopt the all important Stoic view of externals as indifferent. Furthermore from this perspective one can look at gods as one’s equals (Ep. 41.4):

Si hominem videris interritum periculis, intactum cupiditatibus, inter adversa felicem, in mediis tempestatibus placidum, ex superiore loco homines videntem, ex aequo deos, non subibit te veneratio eius? non dices, ‘ista res maior est altiorque quam ut credi similis huic in quo est corpusculo possit’?

This passage occurs just after Seneca has evoked the sense of religious awe occasioned by natural phenomena, such as sacred groves and deep pools. He suggests a religious response is appropriate also in the presence of a virtuous person. The idea of a religious response to philosophy is also found in the occasions that he personifies philosophia, often in opposition to fortuna. In Ep. 52, he develops this idea in contrasting the incorrect teaching of philosophy in public recitations to an appropriate attitude of worship: philosophia adoretur (§14). He concludes the letter by saying that for public viewing philosophia needs a priest not a pedlar: si modo non institorem sed antistitem nancta est (§15).

This religious response is firmly founded on reason and god being identical. If the divine quality of reason is stressed, as Seneca does, the homologia that perfecting reason creates is a cultivation of one’s divine spirit and a matching rejection of the worship of deified Fortune.

One response to this imagery is to see it as mere imagery, a colourful way of presenting the perfecting of one’s rationality. However, in the letters of Book IV where religious imagery is prominent, this is to diminish the significance of what Seneca is saying.

The fundamental precept of Stoicism is to live in accordance with nature. Given that nature is identified both with god and reason, this precept has a religious aspect. It also explains Seneca’s interest in the study of nature. He wrote his Natural Questions on this topic, and he

130 KNOCHE 1935, 1.
131 Ep. 120.15 and HACHMANN 1995, 305.
132 This view of homologia is described by SCARPAT 1983, 34-40 and SCARPAT BELLINCIONI 1986, 27-28. For its relationship to the fundamental demand to follow nature, see below, p. 418.
133 See below, see, pp. 47 and 405. See also RICHARDSON-HAY 2001, 25-27.
134 Cf. Ep. 41.9 n.
affirms its relevance for making moral progress — the study of nature is a study of god and ratio and helps attune one’s microcosmic ratio to the macrocosmic ratio.\textsuperscript{115}

Ratio, then, for Seneca is principally this divine element in us that can be perfected to accord with universal reason. He is very explicit that dialectic is not useful in acquiring a mind attuned to the divine mind. This is the essence of his frequent attacks on dialectic that start in Book V.\textsuperscript{136} For Seneca logic is not the measuring instrument of our rational faculty. However, Barnes in an influential book on logic in the imperial era feels he can save Seneca from inconsistency in his use of logic and see him as having a utilitarian attitude to logic that sees logic as subservient to ethics.\textsuperscript{137} However, this is to ignore Seneca’s strong and repeated objection to logic. For Seneca, logical arguments are not effective ones; in place of logic he offers something richer: consilium (Ep. 48.7): Vis scire quid philosophia promittat generi humano? consilium.

Consilium is a term that is freighted with all the not purely rational elements of Roman morality, constantia, auctoritas, gravitas and fides.\textsuperscript{138} It is also a concept that explains Seneca’s use of rhetoric: advice seeks to persuade and the art of persuasion is useful for this. Such persuasion appeals to more than the narrow rationality of Seneca’s readers; as Traina says, he appeals to their heart and to their will.\textsuperscript{139} Finally, in offering consilium, Seneca justifies the literary form he has chosen: the epistle is an ideal genre for presenting himself and in so doing presenting all the persuasive force of his rhetorical ethos.\textsuperscript{140}

Seneca’s rhetoric appeals to the values of his readers, and these values contain an emotional element. Seneca appeals to his readers’ sense of honour, a sense whose strength Lendon notes

\textsuperscript{115} The microcosmic-macrocosmic contrast is clear at Ep. 65.24. The arguments against the fear of death drawn from nature at Ep. 36.10-12 n. relate to this.

\textsuperscript{136} In the next book dialect is criticized in Epp. 45, 48 and 49. See MOTTO, Dialectic §2, for later letters in which he criticizes the subject.

\textsuperscript{137} BARNES 1997, 21; it is an attitude that he feels makes Seneca a philistine. MORFORD 2002, 184-185, is an example of the acceptance of Barnes’s views. In a similar fashion both NUSSBAUM 1994, 348-350 and GRAVER 1996, 120-121, wish to retain Seneca’s attitude to logic within the bounds of Stoic orthodoxy. The account of SCARPA 1970, 171-191, is better. WILSON 2007, 428, rejects Barnes’ interpretation of Seneca’s view of logic, while RICHARDSON-HAY 2001, 18-21, examines Seneca’s treatment of syllogisms in Ep. 83.

\textsuperscript{138} Cf. HELLEGOUC’H 1972, 254-6.

\textsuperscript{139} TRAINA 1987, 39 (above, p. 20, n. 107).

\textsuperscript{140} Below, p. 35.
modern audiences have trouble recognizing. Stoicism could appeal to this sense powerfully in that it identified the good as identical to the honourable. Its novelty is in a radical reinterpretation of the nature of the honourable. Seneca will spend a good deal of time explaining the nature of the honourable, but he does not need to explain how one should behave towards it. In his criticism of unphilosophical values the comment, ‘it is shameful …’ (turpe est) contains a powerful appeal to action, one that is emotional and liable to be underrated by a modern reader. The sense of honour is also appealed to in another judgement, non est viri. The force of this is even harder to capture in modern English, as it appeals to a sense of honour attached to having a position of privilege, that of being free, adult, a citizen and male, each a positive attribute in contrast to its opposite. It is an appeal to the virtus of the reader, the quality formed from vir. It is the strength that such an appeal might have had on its contemporary reader that should be noted, and that this appeal had an emotional element.

Seneca also makes positive appeals to the honourable: consonant with the definition of philosophy as a love of wisdom (sapientiae amor, Ep. 89.4) or zeal for virtue (studium ... virtutis, Ep. 89.5), he exhorts his reader to love reason (Ama rationem! Ep. 74.21) and virtue (virtutem adamaveris, Ep. 71.5). The positive desire to follow the honourable was present in Roman culture in the desire to emulate one’s ancestors and to achieve exemplary status. As mentioned, Seneca uses philosophy to redefine both who one’s ancestors are and what is truly exemplary, yet he maintains a very traditional Roman desire to emulate these reinterpreted ancestors and models, and he seeks to awaken a similar desire in the reader. Finally, Seneca, both by choosing the epistolary genre and by repeated arguments throughout the letters, makes friendship basic to

141 LENDON 1997, 26-27.
142 Ep. 31.4 honesta n.
143 See further below, Ep. 37.1 virum bonum n.
144 MASO 1999, 19, n. 16. GRIMAL 1953, 101-102, notes the use of such an appeal with the emphatic use of viri at Const. 19.3, and cites further examples. SCARPAT 1983, 39, notes the contrast an appeal to virtus makes over one to ratio (above, p. 21).
145 Seneca’s attitude to women or slaves should not be inferred from his use of such an appeal; cf. MOTTO and CLARK 1993, 173-180 and GRIFFIN 1992, 256-285.
146 Above, p. 11, for ancestors; for becoming an exemplum, see Ep. 98.14: nos quoque aliquid et ipsi faciamus animose; simus inter exempla.
philosophical progress. That there is an emotional element to friendship is perhaps too obvious to be mentioned.

In discussing the uses of emotion in Seneca’s philosophy, it should be stressed that these are not instead of, but in addition to appeals to rationality. Seneca seeks to reshape one’s understanding, but appeals to emotions to do this. Such an approach can be seen to contradict the negative opinion of emotions in Stoicism. However, not all emotions were condemned as passions. Some were part of the perfected mental make-up of the sage. Love was somewhat anomalously not treated as a passion, although only the sage knew how to love correctly. The sage also experienced three good emotions, joy, caution and volition. Kamtekar notes that Epictetus appeals to his students’ sense of shame, a sub-category of caution, to make progress. In a similar way Seneca seeks to awaken in his readers who are making progress emotions that only the sage was supposed to experience. These were not only a reevaluated sense of shame, but a redirected love, and even a sense of joy in the unfolding experience of a healthy mind. In line with his practical focus for philosophy he was not willing to let theoretical scruples prevent the use of such valuable forms of motivation.

Having discussed the voluntaristic force of Seneca’s philosophy that is found in his conception of the mind, reason and the emotions, I will conclude by tying this to his use of the word *voluntas* and our concept of the will. What I have said may seem tangential to a lot of the study of this concept, which is concerned more with the will as a faculty of the mind independent of reason and the emotions. The incredible range of senses that ‘will’ can have makes discussion of it ‘slippery’ as Inwood has observed. Scholars often seem to be talking at odds

147  Knoch 1954 is excellent on this. See further below, p. 243.
148  Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11m (= W 2.108 and SVF 3.630) and Inwood 1997.
149  Kamtekar 1998, 147.
150  For this joy, see *Ep.* 35.3 *gaudium* n.
152  Inwood 2005a, 132.
over different senses of it. Mansfeld concentrates on the idea of will in the sense of willpower or
strength and I believe that this is one of the senses that is most important in Seneca.\textsuperscript{153}

*Voluntas* has been identified by Grimal and others as equivalent to Stoic *tonos*, the tension of
the mind’s *pneuma*.\textsuperscript{154} The degree of tension equated to the degree of mental strength;\textsuperscript{155} and it is
this strength of the mind that Seneca is so concerned to develop in order to resist Fortune. Sedley
in his comments on Mansfeld’s paper asks the question whether this mental strength can be seen
by earlier Stoics as independent of the state of reason in a soul.\textsuperscript{156} Sedley feels that for neither
Posidonius nor Chrysippus was this the case.\textsuperscript{157} Is it true for Seneca? In a sense, no: the soul’s
strength depended on the quality of its *ratio*, but as has been argued above,\textsuperscript{158} Senecan *ratio* is not
the same as our idea of reason and seems to appeal to mental resources that, falling outside the
scope of our idea of reason, more comfortably stand alongside a concept of willpower.\textsuperscript{159}
However, if this interpretation of Senecan reason is accepted, then the need to deny that Seneca
posits the concept of a separate mental organ called ‘will’ becomes less urgent: this willpower is
rational in the broadest sense that Seneca gives the term, but not in ours.\textsuperscript{160} Seneca did not set
will in opposition to reason: his innovation was rather to contrast his view of reason synonymous

\textsuperscript{153} Mansfeld 1991, 111-112. Much of the scholarship on the will in Seneca is overly technical and off
the point. It is the strong contrast Seneca makes between syllogisms appealing to dialectical rationality
and his own approach that appeals to the whole mind (Grimal 1992, 152, discussed above, p. 21, n. 111) or
the heart and the will (Traina 1987, 39, quoted above, p. 20, n. 107) that is central. That Seneca is not
appealing to reason in the terms that modern philosophers would like to use it should be indisputable. To
.go on to argue whether he posited a separate faculty called the will is really to systematize his thought in
a way he did not appear to feel was necessary, leaving attempts to do so, such as Zöller 2003 open to the
criticisms of Smith 2004. Magnitudo animi with its associations with virtus and constantia is a concept that
Seneca is interested in much more than *voluntas* (cf. Hachmann 1995, 284 ff.). It is a concept that also bears
some relationship to our idea of willpower.

\textsuperscript{154} Grimal 1992, 156, following Voelke 1973.

\textsuperscript{155} Cf. Sellars 2003, 125-126.

\textsuperscript{156} Sedley 1991, 148.

\textsuperscript{157} Sedley 1991, 148-150.

\textsuperscript{158} Above, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{159} It is consonant with Seneca’s appeal to the broader faculties of the *animus* that *voluntas* is a term
that denotes intention whether rational or non-rational. In this it contrasts with similar Greek terms; cf.
Diile 1982, 132-134 and Ep. 34.3 *volo* n.

\textsuperscript{160} In connection to this, Cancik-LinDemaijer 1998, 99, argues that finding a separate faculty of will is not
a requirement for seeing Senecan philosophy as voluntaristic.
with the mind and its will-like qualities to a narrower dialectical view of reason, a view with which philosophers today are more comfortable.

The study of martial steadfastness or *constantia* in Seneca offers a way into his transformation of Roman moral values. These values are still admired by Seneca and seen as relevant, but their sphere is now internal. For this, Seneca has been recognized as developing a vocabulary of ‘interiority’. Seneca’s use of the Roman concept of *constantia* supports the intimations of those who have seen something novel in his use of *voluntas*. It is possible to read Seneca by means of a close reference to surviving Greek sources for Stoicism and to translate him in effect into Greek, but what survives is a shadow of how he demanded to be read,¹⁶¹ a shadow open to all the criticism of inconsistency and distortion that has been directed at him. However, when read with full weight given to the Latin and Roman cast of his work, he achieves, I believe, a high degree of *constantia* in the senses I have been arguing for.

¹⁶¹ Above, p. 1.
The Structure of Book IV

An important thesis of this study is that the book divisions of the Epistulae Morales constitute a significant aspect of the work’s structure. This structure has been the subject of a number of recent studies, which have generally looked for the structure in large sections of the work, and their conclusions are not always in agreement on points of detail. This commentary provides an ideal opportunity to examine a small unit, Book IV, and through this examination, both to establish that Seneca used book divisions as structural units, and to identify what devices he used to give the work structure.

That Book IV might be a unit is suggested by its marking a change in practice from the first three books, namely the end of the provision of quotes at the end of each letter. This change has been frequently noted, but how Seneca marks it has not received any detailed attention. Furthermore, the role of the first letter of the book, Ep. 30, has been variously treated. For some it seems to stand more with the previous 29 letters than with the rest of Book IV, the consequence of which is to undermine any sense that Book IV is a compositional unit. Special attention, therefore, must be given to this letter. Although the letters to Lucilius form a sequence, scholars have debated what features give them a sense of development or progression. One approach is to look for an artfully concealed curriculum of philosophy that develops steadily in complexity. Another is to explore what ordering is used of a literary, as opposed to doctrinal, nature. The two methods need not be exclusive, though nobody appears to have tried to combine them and both will be examined here. I will begin by outlining some of the general features of the work that arise

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162 See below, p. 37.

163 It is very likely that the book divisions go back to Seneca. Composition by book was regular, and the work was certainly intended for publication (there are references to posterity and fame (Epp. 8.1 and 22.5). Russell 1974, 78, notes the book divisions are at least as old as Aulus Gellius. It is the convention to cite letters by number not by book and number (perhaps as the book divisions are lost at two points). Some editors, such as Gummere, go so far as to ignore the book divisions entirely.
from its epistolary nature, and then reviewing the scholarship on how the *Epistles* are structured before offering arguments that Book IV is a unitary structural division in the work.

Although it is obvious that the *Epistulae Morales* is a collection of letters, and that these letters are all addressed to the same person and that the letters come to us in a developing sequence, these three features of the collection are very frequently overlooked as guides to the nature of the work in favour of other descriptors. Yet it is these three characteristics of the work that best describe its genre, that of ‘serial epistolography’ as described by Wilson, who argues that only such a description avoids the simplification, indeed misrepresentation, inherent in seeing the epistolary character of the work as a front for writing essays, or something that is essentially hortatory or pedagogical.164 As ‘epistolary’ is a term of wide scope Seneca’s use of this genre needs further description.

Seneca did not innovate in using the epistle as a philosophical genre: it was already well established with important letters attributed to Plato and written by Epicurus.165 Seneca’s innovation, judging from what has come down to us, was in composing a series of letters to one addressee. Very likely his model for this was Cicero’s correspondence with Atticus, which he cites twice in the *Epistles*.166 Another innovation is that the correspondence was almost certainly not ‘genuine’ in the sense that it is a collection of originally private letters actually sent to Lucilius, but was almost certainly composed from the outset for publication, which is an argument in itself that the work might have a degree of overall structure and design.167

The epistle is generally thought to be a genre that was very congenial to Seneca’s style.168 It was suited to a loose and open-ended type of argument, which should not, however, be mistaken

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164 Wilson 2001, 186, a description that has been recognized by both Henderson 2004, 1 and Edwards 2005b, 277.

165 The scholarship on Seneca’s generic models is reviewed by Mazzoli 1989, 1856-1860.


167 Mazzoli 1989, 1846-1850, is a good source for the debate on this. It appears most English-speaking scholars are now persuaded that it is fictional, but Armisen-Marchetti 2002, 17, is a reminder that some still disagree. Suggesting that the work is literary, or even fictional, is not to say that the correspondent, Lucilius, is also a fiction (below, p. 457).

for careless.\textsuperscript{169} Seneca frequently touches on a number of topics in one letter, or he discusses a topic over a number of letters in a way in which the subsequent discussion can be seen as arising from reaction by Lucilius to the earlier discussion.\textsuperscript{170} However, as the starting point of each letter is often an item of news from either Seneca or Lucilius, and as these items vary immensely, one is never sure what to expect next.\textsuperscript{171} A topic of a previous letter may be returned to from a very different, perhaps even contradictory, perspective.\textsuperscript{172} It is the reader’s job to make the connections and to think over any contradictions.\textsuperscript{173}

Despite the diversity of approaches to the topic that the epistle permits, there is clearly an overarching topic to the correspondence, one signalled in the opening letter, that of Lucilius’ philosophical progress. Lucilius’ progress is central to the letters, but it is not so straightforward to determine how one should characterize the relationship between Seneca and his correspondent, and in turn, perhaps, the reader at the next remove. This relationship has been described in a number of ways. One of these is to describe Seneca as a spiritual guide.\textsuperscript{174} This role can be developed with the analogy of the doctor; the spiritual guide provides therapy for the soul, in the same way as the doctor does for the body.\textsuperscript{175} This therapeutic analogy was of long standing in philosophy. It is one used by Epicurus and by Chrysippus.\textsuperscript{176} Cicero adopted it in a number of places in his \textit{Tusculan Disputations}, and it occurs quite frequently in Seneca as well.\textsuperscript{177} At \textit{Ep.} 27.1

\textsuperscript{169} Coleman 1974, 285. Reed 1997, 178, notes that letters were recognized as not restricted to a single subject. The format may have also been very congenial to Seneca given his age and the threat to his life from Nero. The correspondence has no necessary end and could be continued for as long as Seneca wanted to or was able to; cf. Mazzoli 1989, 1863.

\textsuperscript{170} Lucilius’ request for \textit{commentarii} at the start of \textit{Ep.} 39 can be seen as a response to \textit{Ep.} 38; cf. Graver 1996, 85 and below, p. 330.

\textsuperscript{171} Mazzoli 1999b catalogues the variety of openings to the letters.

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Epp.} 34-35, for example, deal with a similar subject, the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius, but with great differences in mood and perspective; cf. below, p. 242.

\textsuperscript{173} For instance, the contrasting topics of self-sufficiency (\textit{Epp.} 31-33) and friendship (\textit{Epp.} 34-36) are juxtaposed, below, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{174} For example, Misch 1950, v. 2, 419, Guillemin 1952, Hadot 1969a and 1986.

\textsuperscript{175} E.g. Nussbaum 1994 and Voelke 1993.

\textsuperscript{176} Epicurus in Porph. \textit{Ad Marcellam} 31 (= Us 221) and Chrysippus in many places, e.g. in Gal. \textit{Plac.} 5.2.22-24 (= SVF 3.471); see further, Graver 2002, 205-206 and Laudizi 2003, 202-203.

\textsuperscript{177} For Cicero, e.g. \textit{Tusc.} 3.1, 3.23, 3.83; for Seneca, see \textit{Ep.} 40.4.
Seneca, however, subverts the relationship; rather than being the doctor to his patient, Lucilius, he describes himself as a fellow patient: *non sum tam improbus ut curationes aeger obeam, sed, tamquam in eodem valetudinario iaceam, de communi tecum malo colloquor et remedia communico.*

Another way their relationship can be characterized is that of the teacher to the student, as Too does. Certainly Seneca wishes to give useful advice to Lucilius, and on occasions takes credit for his progress. However, again the model does not seem very sound as an overarching one. Seneca sees the benefit from their correspondence as mutual; he also sees himself as benefiting from his own advice, and he does not set himself up as an expert, but as someone also making progress. Related to characterization of their role as teacher and student is the possibility that Seneca is offering a course in philosophy. Teaching and learning clearly figure in the *Epistles*, and there are some passages that are strongly didactic. But is it therefore appropriate to make this the core of the collection and see the non-didactic sections as merely pleasant interludes, changes of pace, or, in Lucretius’ image (1.935 ff.), a sweetener for philosophy’s bitter pill? As has already been argued and as will be expanded on, clearly no.

How the relationship between Seneca and his reader is characterized is important, yet none of those described so far can claim a good fit with what Seneca does in the work. Indeed, the fit becomes poorer when one considers the martial and self-sufficient character Seneca frequently demands of the reader. Also, as noted, Seneca describes himself as writing for himself. And this claim can be an informative perspective for understanding some of the emphases in the work, such as the attention he gives to overcoming the fear of death and to suicide.

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178 Similar is *Ep.* 8.2.
179 For Too 1994, 212-213, Seneca is a pedagogue, albeit a hypocritical one.
180 For advice, see *Ep.* 23.1, and for credit for Lucilius’ progress, see *Ep.* 34.2.
181 He claims to benefit from his own advice at *Ep.* 27.1, while at *Ep.* 6.1, where he celebrates the progress he has made, he also emphasizes that much still remains for him to do; see also *Ep.* 57.3 and Wilson 2001, 171.
182 Above, p. 6 and below, p. 44.
183 As Wilson 1997, 62-65, argues strongly, for Seneca the therapeutic model is overshadowed by a martial one.
184 Above, p. 4, n. 14.
The topic of progress is undeniably central to the collection, yet when one tries to use this topic to find the primary character of the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius the results are unsatisfactory. The incomplete manner in which the various characterizations above describe the entire work argues strongly that this topic must remain subordinate to the epistolary genre. In contrast to the partial fits shown above, the epistolary mode fits all the aspects fully, and it does so through two features of Seneca’s approach to acquiring philosophy which were recognized by ancient theorists as ideally suited to the epistolary genre. These are friendship and self-revelation.

The primary relationship that Seneca emphasizes as existing between himself and the reader is one of friendship. More insistent than any characterization of Lucilius as pupil or patient is that of Lucilius as Seneca’s friend. The philosophical significance of friendship is a concept that Seneca explores in the Epistles, and in particular in a number of the letters of Book IV. In ancient epistolary theory friendship was understood to underlie personal letters. Letters were described as one half of a conversation. And Cicero, for instance, in a number of his letters to Atticus, describes writing even when he has nothing to say as bringing him a pleasure similar to conversation. Seneca, too, makes use of this analogy between conversation and letters, although he denies writing without something to say, and reproaches Cicero on this count.

Self-revelation is closely related to friendship in the Epistles. By revealing himself to the reader in his letters Seneca offers himself as someone to be befriended. And in befriending Seneca we are open to philosophical progress. Furthermore, this self-revelation is transmitted in some measure through the style of one’s writing, making style for Seneca philosophically significant. Book IV, in fact, marks a pivotal advance in the explication of how this happens, as will be described below. That letters were particularly suitable for the revelation of one’s character is

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185 For instance, Epp. 30, and 34–6; see further below, p. 239.
186 Cf. Demetr. Eloc., 223 and 225 (in Malherbe 1988, 16–17): a letter is a dialogue and there is an appropriate way to talk to a friend. See also Trapp 2003, 40.
187 E.g. Cic. Att. 9.10.1; others are collected by Malherbe 1988, 20–27. Reed 1997, 178, lists a number of topoi for such ‘friendly’ letters.
189 Below, p. 44.
noted by the theorist Demetrius (§227): σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἐκαστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. And it is doubtless that this was one of the reasons that attracted Seneca to the genre.

The sequential nature of Seneca’s correspondence to his friend Lucilius creates an important structure to the reading experience. After each letter is assumed a reply from Lucilius that includes reaction to Seneca’s letter and an update on Lucilius’ progress. That we do not have Lucilius’ replies can be taken as an invitation to us as readers of the correspondence to imagine them ourselves. Such an invitation accords with one of Seneca’s characteristic devices for closing a letter, offering a thought that invites, almost demands, the reader to continue its thread. In fact, the absence of the letters from Lucilius can be seen as a key structural feature of the collection, one that makes an independent reaction by the reader essential.

Discerning a structure to the correspondence within the variety of topics is not straightforward. The usual approach is to look for progression in the sophistication of the philosophical arguments presented to the student Lucilius. Clearly there is a general progression from simpler ideas at the start of the collection to longer and more difficult discussions in latter

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190 In rhetorical terms, Seneca’s use of self-revelation could be seen as persuasion by means of his ethos. Cf. Cic. De Or. 2.182-184 and the comments of May and Wisse 2001, 34-35, on how this contrasts with Aristotle’s definition. However, as will be explained below, the significance of self-revelation is greater than just this.

191 Certainly self-revelation is an important part of what Seneca offers in the letters, as Edwards 1997, 28, observes.

192 Although this sequentiality is not really in dispute, there is a strong tendency to feel it can be ignored, which is seen in the way the letters are frequently presented: leaving aside the excerpting of passages in the reconstruction of Stoic philosophy, the Epistles are frequently presented in selections that make no reference to their place or function in the correspondence (to which tendency Maurach 1987 is a notable exception). Yet Seneca in Ep. 33.5 insists that Lucilius must read works of philosophy in their entirety, an expectation he doubtless also had of his epistles; see below, p. 181.

193 Ep. 50.1 is a reply to a letter that is slow in arriving, a common occurrence with ancient letters. Significantly, and an argument in itself for the fictional nature of the correspondence, there is no mention of letters arriving out of sequence or not at all.

194 Grauer 1996, 82-83.

195 Wilson 1987, 118 and e.g. Ep. 30.18 n.
letters. However, revealing an artfully disguised system to the presentation of topics in, for instance, the early letters is not straightforward. There is possibility for disagreement over which arguments to give prominence to for this structure, or even what constitutes an argument.

The scholarship on the structure of the Epistles has received a valuable overview from Mazzoli. The two seminal works are by Cancik and Maurach. Cancik takes the books as compositional units and provides brief notes on their structure. By contrast Maurach rejects such divisions in favour of cycles of letters (Briefkreisen) that are independent of the book divisions. Hachmann favours Maurach’s approach, but differs over points of detail. In particular, his book-cycles follow the book divisions more closely.

In addition, there are a number of other works that look at Book IV as a unit, but do not really argue the basis of this unity. Hengelbrock recognizes that Book IV marks a new stage in Lucilius’ philosophical development. And on this account he devotes a section to its discussion, but his concern is not really to explain its structure. In a similar way, Loretto has a ‘Nachwort’ on Book IV in his edition of the book, which has a useful discussion on aspects of the individual letters, but nothing on the book’s unitary structure. Finally, Henderson vigorously promotes the relevance of book divisions in the work, but has nothing to say on Book IV.

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200 Maurach 1970, 128, takes issue with Cancik over this point, allowing that the book divisions do follow a unity of sense, but that the cycles he observes are independent of them.

201 Hachmann 1995, 6.

202 Hachmann 1995, 7, gives an outline of his three cycles. The first comprises Book I, the second (Epp. 13-29) Books II and III, and the third (Epp. 31-65) leaves Ep. 30 as intermediary between the two cycles and ends in the middle of Book VII. Hachmann does, however, treat the bulk of Book IV and all of Book V each as subsets of this cycle.

203 Hengelbrock 2000, 151.

204 Loretto, 78-90.

At the most general level, the structure of books as compositional units has begun to receive more scholarly attention of late. For instance, Garthwaite’s study of Martial’s epigrams has demonstrated that the books are units of composition, and that there is thematic unity within books.\textsuperscript{206} Such work encourages us to expect a similar use of books by Seneca.

Support for seeing Book IV as a single unit can be gained by noting that other books in the collection have been interpreted as such. This is particularly the case for Book I, which Hachmann argues is a single unit providing an introduction to the whole work.\textsuperscript{207} Other books have not been so intensively studied, but the notes on the structure of Books II and III by Cancik are quite extensive, and they show each book possesses a unity of design.\textsuperscript{208}

Book IV has a number of outstanding characteristics that an explanation of its structure should take some account of. These fall into three areas: the length and the number of letters in the book, the focus on Lucilius in the book, and the use of Aufidius Bassus in the first letter. In respect to the number and length of letters in the \textit{Epistles}, statistics on this have been compiled by Mazzoli and Lana.\textsuperscript{209} Book IV is one of the shortest books in the collection. Yet its complement of 12 letters is equalled only by Book I as the most in any one book. As a consequence it has the highest number of short letters in the collection.\textsuperscript{210} This concentration of short letters is one of the book’s distinctive features and some explanation of it should be offered in any discussion of the book’s structure. Another distinctive feature of the book is that aside from the opening letter all the news of the book is about Lucilius. Only in \textit{Ep.} 30 does Seneca describe what he himself has been doing. The rest start from news about Lucilius, either with requests that he has made of Seneca (\textit{Epp.} 33, 38 and 39), or with Seneca’s reaction to what Lucilius has been doing (\textit{Epp.} 36 and 40) or with encouragement and other reactions by Seneca to signs of Lucilius’ progress (\textit{Epp.} 31,

\textsuperscript{206} Garthwaite 2006.

\textsuperscript{207} Hachmann 1995, 117-121. This has been upheld with additional arguments by the study of this work by Richardson-Hay 2006, 17-33.

\textsuperscript{208} Cancik 1967, 141-147. With the exceptions of Books I and III, there are no commentaries devoted to an individual book. The commentaries on Book III (Germani 1996, Laudizi 2000 and 2003) do not examine its structure.

\textsuperscript{209} Mazzoli 1989, 1824-1825, Lana 1991a, 290-304. These are presented in graphic form in Appendix III (below, p. 465).

\textsuperscript{210} Short letters are interspersed throughout the work. The only concentration comparable to that in Book IV is the group \textit{Epp.} 60-62 at the end of Book VI.
Although this is distinctive, it is not unique. Letters that relate Seneca’s own activities, such as Epp. 7 and 12 do not predominate in the first three books, but the focus on Lucilius does contrast with the sequence of letters that starts in Book V that relates Seneca’s travels around Campania (Epp. 49-87). Bassum Aufidium are the first words of the book, and as such give a special prominence to Seneca’s historian friend. This prominence is all the more pronounced as the first words of ancient books were often used as their titles, so that this book might have been called the ‘Aufidius Bassus’. Furthermore, the scarcity of named contemporaries in the work makes Bassus’ name even more prominent. Yet despite this prominence both Maurach and Hachmann see Bassus and Ep. 30 as relating to the previous letters and not to the rest of the book it is in. An argument for the structural unity of Book IV needs to show how this letter relates to the rest of the book.

A frequent feature in the composition of the Epistles is Seneca’s use of pairs of letters to treat a topic. It is particularly prominent in Book IV. The middle letters of the book are grouped into four pairs, Epp. 31-32, 34-35, 36-37 and 39-40. The details of these pairings will be explored within the commentary. However, generally they treat a similar topic but in a contrasting tone. Further linking is seen in the continuance of the emphasis on self-sufficiency in Ep. 33 from Epp. 31-2. Similarly the theme of friendship in the pair Epp. 34-35 is continued in Ep. 36. The letters that stand outside these pairings are the first and last (Epp. 30 and 41), which are discussed next and Epp. 33 and 38. This second pair share very similar themes, those of texts and education, and

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211 Strictly Ep. 40 starts with a discussion of writing, not Lucilius’ listening to Serapio.

212 Cf. OCD3, 251; few other books, however, start with a memorable title (the only other is Book XIX: Ex Nomentano meo, Ep. 110.1).

213 See below, p. 62.

214 Maurach 1970, 115-116, sees Epp. 30-32 relating to a letter-cycle that began with Ep. 16, and does not discuss any sense in which it relates to the following letters. Hachmann 1995, 212-219, disagrees with him on some of this. He accepts that there is much reference to earlier letters, but also some reference forward. He sees this as making Ep. 30 an intermediary letter (‘Zwischenbrief’, 212).

215 Maurach 1970, 15, n. 21, sets out the scholarship on this.

216 Below, pp. 165 (Epp. 31-32), 242 (Epp. 34-35), 296 (Epp. 36-37) and 335 (Epp. 39-40).


218 Below, p. 260.
can be taken as an example of a pair separated by a number of intervening letters.\textsuperscript{219} They are also related to neighbouring letters, \textit{Ep.} 33 to the preceding pair, as noted, and \textit{Ep.} 38 in the theme of reading to the following pair \textit{Epp.} 39-40.\textsuperscript{220}

The closing letter of the book, \textit{Ep.} 41, can be seen to act very clearly as a recapitulation of many of the themes of the book.\textsuperscript{221} In particular, it develops ideas introduced in \textit{Ep.} 31, and for this reason, as noted, Hachmann treats \textit{Epp.} 31-41 as a unit. That Book IV is given such a clear conclusion with \textit{Ep.} 41 is an argument for unitary structure, which would be made complete if it can be shown how \textit{Ep.} 30 introduces the book. The bulk of the arguments for this will be given later, but there is one feature of note that \textit{Ep.} 30 shares with the first letters of the first three books. In each of these letters Seneca addresses the recipient of his letter repeatedly with vocatives.\textsuperscript{222} By this Seneca seems to wish to stress the epistolary nature of the work in the first letters of these books.

This stress on the epistolary in \textit{Ep.} 30 is also evident in that it relates an item of news, Bassus’ illness and approaching death, that is particularly suitable for a letter.\textsuperscript{223} It is a characteristic that it shares with \textit{Ep.} 40, which is the only other letter in the book to mention contemporaries (Serapio) or near contemporaries (Vinicius, Varius, Haterius and Fabianus). These two letters, strongly marked in comparison with the rest through containing news and anecdote, precede the two most markedly doctrinal letters of the book (\textit{Epp.} 31 and 41). In this way it is possible that Seneca sought to keep a balance between the doctrinal and epistolary qualities in the book.

A prominent theme in Book IV is the emphasis on Lucilius’ progress.\textsuperscript{224} It figures in the opening sections of six of the letters (\textit{Epp.} 31, 32, 34, 35, 37 and 41). It also figures in \textit{Ep.} 33, where Seneca insists that quotes are no longer appropriate to the stage that Lucilius has reached. The

\textsuperscript{219} Below, p. 316.

\textsuperscript{220} Below, pp. 330 and 357.

\textsuperscript{221} CANCIK 1967, 5.

\textsuperscript{222} At \textit{Ep.} 30.4,30.15 and 41.2. MAZZOLI 1991b, 77-78, notes that the higher frequency of direct addresses to Lucilius is a regular feature of the initial or final letters of the collection’s books.

\textsuperscript{223} Below, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{224} HENGELBROCK 2000, 150-165, notes the prominence of this theme in the book.
theme of reading and learning appropriate to this new stage ties in Epp. 38, 39 and 40. This leaves only Epp. 30 and 36 outside this theme, yet they can be related to the topic of education in as much as Ep. 30 shows Seneca as a student, and Ep. 36 has Seneca advising Lucilius on being a teacher, indicative of Lucilius’ progress.

It is possible to relate this emphasis on progress to two other characteristics of the book, the number of short letters in the book and a frequently protreptic tone. Looking at the length of the letters in Book IV, six of them are shorter than the shortest letter in Books II-III.225 In this they are closer in length to the letters of Book I, though on average they are slightly shorter.226 In Book I Seneca sets out the main themes of the collection in a number of relatively short letters.227 In a similar way in Book IV Seneca sets out the framework for the next stage in Lucilius’ progress. This framework covers two major themes, as will be examined next, that of reading and learning at the new stage in progress, and that of the mind’s divine origin and how this makes one self-sufficient. The second of these themes is treated most fully in Epp. 31 and 41, which have a strongly protreptic character; Seneca does not argue out these new ideas, but presents them to the reader as an exciting prospect.

In Book IV, then, Seneca is presenting a new stage of the reader’s progress; it is an introduction, not an exhaustive exposition. Of the six shorter letters, two serve to offer a different perspective on a theme treated at greater length in the previous letter (Epp. 32 and 37 to Epp. 31 and 36) and one shows form matching the message with the seed analogy (Ep. 38). The other three touch on themes already examined in letters in earlier books and by building on these previous letters they can be short. One of the topics of Ep. 39 is the dangers of too great success, which had been treated in a number of letters in Book II, when Seneca was urging Lucilius to retire.228 The other two (Epp. 34 and 35) touch on the importance of constantia for friendship and progress, an idea that had been dealt with more thoroughly in Ep. 20.

225 Epp. 32, 34, 35, 37, 38 and 39 are all shorter than Ep. 25, the shortest letter in Books II-III (below, p. 469).

226 Both books have the same number of letters, but Book IV is 569 words shorter than Book I (below, p. 466).


228 These are Epp. 17-21 in Book II. The start of Book III, Ep. 22, shows Lucilius convinced, but unsure of how to extricate himself from his public roles.
Book IV contains a clearly marked break with the first three books in that Seneca abandons the practice of closing each letter with a short quote, a feature that clearly separates Ep. 30 from Epp. 1-29 and links it with the rest of Book IV. This development on the plot of the correspondence provokes much of the content of the book, which will be examined in three areas. First, the end of quotes is seen as progress in Lucilius’ learning of philosophy, which leads to discussion of reading and learning at this new stage (Epp. 33 and 38-40). Next, Seneca adds some new and markedly Stoic teaching on the nature of the mind (particularly, Epp. 31 and 41). And finally, as if to balance this teaching, the centre of the book is particularly concerned with the concept of constantia (Epp. 34-37).

The quotes that had ended each letter of the first three books are drawn almost entirely from Epicurus. These quotes were dramatized as though a debt Seneca owed Lucilius, and they were introduced with a good deal of humour and variety. Seneca signalled an approaching change in Ep. 26.8, when he promised soon to pay from his own house. And at the final quote (Ep. 29.10) he chides Lucilius for not forgiving the final instalment of this debt. As Hengelbrock rightly observes, the end of the quotes was clearly signalled in Ep. 29 and marks the end of a stage in the work.

Book IV goes for three letters before Seneca reacts to a complaint over the absence of quotes. That Lucilius asks for quotes from ‘our chief men’ (Ep. 33.1: aliquas voces nostrorum procerum) makes it clear that he understood there had been a development, but that he was confused about its nature. In Ep. 33 Seneca argues that isolated quotes cannot be used to understand the minds of Stoic authors, who must be read as wholes (§5). Quotes are only


231 Si pudorem haberes, ultimam mihi pensionem remisses; sed ne ego quidem me sordide geram in finem aeris alieni et tibi quod debeo impingam.

232 Hengelbrock 2000, 151. Despite this clearly signalled end, Maurach 1970, 112, rejects this ‘communis opinio’ arguing that the end does not come until Ep. 32. He asserts later, p. 129, that the words prioribus epistulis in Ep. 33.1 mark off the prior 32 letters as a unit, yet he then undermines this claim by admitting that the letters after Ep. 29 are lacking in the common characteristic of the earlier ones, namely a quote (Winterbottom 1972, 225). For the arguments against seeing Epp. 30-32 as belonging with any prior cycle, see below, p. 44.
appropriate for beginners (§§6-7). He also argues forcefully for an attitude of self-sufficiency towards one’s teachers: they should be guides, not masters (§11), and progress involves becoming a teacher oneself (§9).

Clearly these instructions for how to read should be applied to how the Epistles themselves are to be read. I will argue later that the image here accords with what Seneca says elsewhere about befriending authors, and it is significant that in the immediately previous letter he should have suggested that the reader live as though Seneca would be observing him, an idea that suggests the reader has come to know Seneca in the course of the preceding letters sufficiently to have him available as an internal commentator on his actions.

The ramifications of the change in approach to reading, from extracts to wholes, that Seneca demands in Ep. 33 are explored in a group of letters at the end of the book. In Ep. 38 Lucilius’ request for an intensification of the correspondence wins an approving reaction from Seneca, and leads him to argue the merits of the epistolary form: letters are like conversation, a mode well suited for instruction, and illustrated with an appropriately very short letter, they are also like seeds, which in a suitable mind can grow large from a small beginning.

The start of Ep. 39 is a request for summaries of philosophy. In the discussion of reading that follows the strongest advice is that which Seneca closes with, that contact with even just an index of the names of philosophers who have laboured on his behalf should stir the reader to emulation. As in Ep. 33, Seneca’s interest is on the philosophers as people, as sources of inspiration, rather than on their doctrines.

Epp. 39 and 40 are linked by a concern with the virtue of moderation. However, the link with Ep. 38 at the start of Ep. 40 is perhaps more striking. There (§1), the interest in the educational potential to the letters is continued: the increase in the frequency of the correspondence requested in Ep. 38 is observed to have happened, and this is followed by an important statement in Ep. 40.1 on the self-revelation that occurs in letters. The rest of the letter, which is concerned with oratorical delivery, relates closely to this self-revelation: if you reveal

233 For some of those who have drawn this conclusion from this passage, see below, p. 181, n. 440.
234 Below, p. 187.
235 MAURACH 1975, 352.
your truest self through your words you should take care that they are moderated and controlled. Furthermore, you should look to models that also show the same moderation. This letter is the first of a number in the corpus to discuss style. Its placement in Book IV is significant: the move from reading quotes to whole authors raises the question of what the criteria should be by which these authors are assessed. For Seneca one criterion is style, as he argues it is a reliable indicator of the quality of a person’s mind. The mind’s complexion cannot differ from that of the talent revealed in one’s words: *non potest alius esse ingenio, alius animo color* (*Ep.* 114.3). 236

Book IV, then, marks an important development in the way Seneca expects his reader to approach philosophical texts, including, of course the *Epistles* themselves. This is not a development that has received any attention. Scholars instead focus on the development in the doctrinal content of Lucilius’ philosophical education. This is the approach of Maurach, who constructs his letter-cycles around developments in philosophical doctrine. He is followed in this by Hachmann, who differs only over detail. What follows is essentially in agreement with Hachmann’s analysis of the structure of the book. Where it differs is that it sees this as only one aspect of the book’s structure among several, rather than the sole determinant.

As far as the difference between Hachmann and Maurach goes, it consists principally in Maurach seeing *Epp.* 30–32 as concluding the previous cycle. There is some validity to such a claim, yet this element of conclusion can also be seen as a form of recapitulating introduction. 237 Hachmann argues that *Ep.* 30 is not simply concluding what has been said in previous letters, but also introduces ideas that are developed in later letters. 238 Hachmann, however, leaves *Ep.* 30 as an intermediary letter between two letter cycles. As for *Epp.* 31–2, at the start of each of them there is a sense that Seneca acknowledges his friend has completed a stage in his education, as Maurach observes. 239 However, while these letters do conclude themes in the earlier books, they also introduce a new one, the distinctly mental nature of the happy life in Stoic philosophy. 240

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236 See further below, p. 182.

237 This is a point that *WINTERBOTTOM* 1972, 225, makes of *Ep.* 30.

238 In particular the natural cycle of growth and decay at *Ep.* 30.11 is picked up again at *Ep.* 36.10-11 and *Ep.* 71.12-16 (*HACHMANN* 1995, 216-219 and *Ep.* 36.11 *Sed posteas . . . mutari n.*).

239 *MAURACH* 1970, 126.

240 Below, p. 165.
With *Ep. 31* Seneca introduces explicitly a core aspect of Stoicism, the concept of indifferents and the correct valuation of them as the basis of a sage’s self-sufficiency.\(^{241}\) The understanding that only things internal to one’s mind have the status of genuine good or evil makes one’s possession of the good immune from outside attack. Prior to this letter discussion of such self-sufficiency had not been presented within the overarching context of the indifferents.\(^{242}\) This marks a development in Lucilius’ education from a general concept of philosophy in the first three books to a specifically Stoic philosophy.\(^{243}\) This development is further evidence that Book IV is a significant structural unit in the collection. The development is stressed in *Ep. 33*, where the reader is said to have moved beyond reading quotes, which Seneca had characterized as common property, or general, to reading wholes, which is a requirement to learn Stoic philosophy.\(^{244}\) That this movement is actually happening in Book IV is shown by this introduction of the Stoic concept of indifferents, but also by the presentation of the mind as divine in Stoic terms, as outlined next.

Seneca expands on the theme of Stoic self-sufficiency in the next two letters. In *Ep. 32* he relates it to the rejection of wealth and to the valuation of goods that are possessed in the mind. In *Ep. 33* he expands it to the process of learning philosophy by removing the prop of quotes, which he then develops to deny one should rely on one’s teachers: one must be self-sufficient in one’s learning and show this by not just learning from other philosophers, but actually being a teacher oneself.

That true value for a human exists only in the mind is one of the important concepts introduced in *Ep. 31*, and as Hachmann has very properly stressed, it forms part of a development starting in Book IV in which the reader is presented with the fundamental details of the nature of the mind, in particular its relation to Stoic *ratio*.\(^{245}\) These details have already been outlined.\(^{246}\) Consonant with what he writes on ideas being seeded in *Ep. 38*, Seneca’s presentation of these

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\(^{241}\) Below, p. 112.

\(^{242}\) E.g. *Ep. 9* (and others).

\(^{243}\) Below, p. 180.

\(^{244}\) Quotes are described as common property, for instance, at *Ep. 8.8* (See further, *Ep. 33.2 Itaque nolo nostrae n.*), while reading wholes is a requirement to the study of the Stoic *proceres* in *Ep. 33*.

\(^{245}\) HACHMANN 1995, 238.

\(^{246}\) Above, p. 18.
ideas is neither comprehensive nor explicitly interlinked. In particular he does not mention the Stoic equation of \( \text{ratio} = \text{deus} = \text{natura} \), but instead begins in the book to describe two elements in the equation separately, namely the mind’s connection to the divine and the importance of \( \text{ratio} \).

In *Epp.* 31, 39 and 41 Seneca reveals the divine nature of the mind and that this divinity is the source of a philosopher’s greatness of spirit. The context for this topic is that of rejecting popular values. In *Ep.* 31 Seneca vigorously scorns the objects that are commonly prayed for (§2).\(^{247}\) He then rejects at §10 the popular measures of greatness by showing how none of them will make one equal to a god, before revealing that the thing which makes one equal is the \( \text{animus} \), provided it is \( \text{rectus, bonus, magnus} \) (§11). Each of these qualities is significant, in particular the first and the third are aspects that are developed in the two later letters. Seneca then reveals that the \( \text{animus} \) is none other than a god dwelling in the human body.\(^{248}\) The presence of this divine element explains why one does not need any external help to achieve the happy life, one can be self-sufficient.\(^{249}\) Finally, Seneca stresses that the possession of such a soul is in no way linked to one’s birth; it can equally be possessed by slave, freeman or someone of equestrian rank (§11).

In *Ep.* 39 Seneca returns to the qualities of the \( \text{animus} \) noted in *Ep.* 31. He describes it as like a flame, which is upright and always in motion, picking up the \( \text{rectus} \) at *Ep.* 31.11.\(^{250}\) Properly directed, he goes on, the energy of the soul can put one beyond the power of fortune. He then refers to another of the mind’s important qualities, its greatness, as something that allows one to scorn ‘great’ things and to prefer what is moderate to what is excessive (§4): \( \text{magni animi est magna contemnere ac mediocria malle quam nimia} \).

The theme of the mind’s divinity is most fully developed in the book’s final letter (*Ep.* 41). As at *Ep.* 31 the initial context is the rejection of popular ideas of the divine. The divine is not something external to us (§1). The presence of this internal divinity makes the good man superior to fortune (§2), and when someone is described as looking down upon earthly concerns at §§4-5,

\(^{247}\) And again at *Ep.* 32.4.

\(^{248}\) *Ep.* 31.11: \( \text{quid aliud voces hunc [sc. animum] quam deum in corpore humano hospitantem?} \)

\(^{249}\) As Seneca says at *Ep.* 31.5: \( \text{quid votis opus est? fac te ipse felicem.} \)

\(^{250}\) *Ep.* 39.3: \( \text{quemadmodum flamma surgit in rectum, iacere ac deprimi non potest, non magis quam quiescere, ita noster animus in motu est, eo mobilior et actuosior quo vehementior fuerit.} \)
the source of this greatness of spirit is revealed to be a divine and heavenly power.\footnote{Ep. 41.5: \textit{vis ... divina} and \textit{caelestis potentia}.} The image of the upright flame at \textit{Ep. 39.3} is also developed with the analogy of a sun rays at \S 5; the soul’s relation to us and the divine is like that of sun rays to the earth.

Parallel with this description of the mind’s divine element Seneca begins in Book IV to describe reason in distinctly Stoic terms. At \textit{Ep. 37.4} Reason follows Philosophy and Wisdom in a series of personifications: Philosophy shows the way to the happy life, Wisdom frees one from the control of the passions, and if one makes oneself subject to Reason one can make all things subject to oneself; Seneca suggests here that \textit{ratio} is in a sense distinct from us, and something grand and powerful, suggestive of Stoic macrocosmic \textit{ratio}.\footnote{Below, p. 298.} In the next letter the operation of reason in the mind is likened to the action of a seed (\textit{Ep. 38.2}), suggestive of the Stoic description of god as \textit{logos spermetikos}, the seminal principle of the world.\footnote{D.L. 7.136 (= SVF 1.102 and L-S 46B).} In the book’s last letter, which opens with strong emphasis on the divine element in the mind, Seneca reveals that it is the mind and perfected reason in it that is the distinguishing quality of the human:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Lauda in illo quod nec eripi potest nec dari, quod proprium hominis est. Quaeris quid sit? animus et ratio in animo perfecta. Rationale enim animal est homo; consummatur itaque bonum eius, si id implevit cui nascitur} (\textit{Ep. 41.8}).
\end{quote}

This passage is as close as Seneca comes in the book to identifying reason with the god that dwells within us — by implication. He allows the reader’s understanding of the nature of reason to continue to develop in the next books.\footnote{Below, p. 52.}

Despite rejecting popular forms of worship, Seneca does not reject a religious response to philosophy. Indeed, in his personifications of \textit{mens bona}, \textit{sapientia}, \textit{philosophia} and \textit{fortuna} he brings a strongly religious aspect to philosophy.\footnote{Above, p. 24.} This is seen in \textit{Ep. 37.4} just mentioned, but most strongly in \textit{Ep. 41}, which argues that the divine element of the mind is able to be apprehended with one’s native religious instinct.\footnote{Below, p. 410.} It is also possible to see this in the range of meanings
possible to the verb *colere*. At *Ep*. 36.3, for instance the injunction *colere virtutem* could be interpreted in a religious sense, a possibility that is developed more explicitly in later letters.\(^{257}\)

The central block of letters in the book (*Epp*. 34-37) emphasizes the importance of the reader’s relationship to Seneca for making progress and the need to achieve a consistency in one’s words, actions and desires, a consistency which, as already noted, is described in imagery that correlates it to martial steadfastness.\(^{258}\) This need for support conflicts with the idea of self-sufficiency emphasized in the preceding three letters (*Epp*. 31-33). As noted, however, Seneca does not seek to resolve this contrast, but rather leaves them juxtaposed.\(^ {259}\) Although in a later letter (*Ep*. 88), Seneca defends the theoretical possibility to achieve wisdom, the basis of the happy life, unaided, elsewhere he argues strongly for the utility of making progress through mutual support: *nemo per se satis valet ut emergat; oportet manum aliquis porrigat, aliquis educat* (*Ep*. 52.2), and this is very clear in how he describes the mutual progress of himself and Lucilius. Elements of this support that are particularly prominent in Book IV are praise for progress made and encouragement to persevere, elements that relate to Lucilius’ having reached a new stage in his progress.\(^ {260}\) The strongly mutual character of this progress is stressed also by the contrasting letters *Epp*. 30 and 36. In the first Seneca is shown learning from someone more advanced, Bassus, while in *Ep*. 36 he gives advice to Lucilius on counselling his own less advanced friend. Finally the prominence of martial imagery in *Epp*. 36-37 is important beyond its relation to the focus on martial steadfastness. Firstly, it makes a strong contrast with the intellectual element of Stoic progress introduced in *Ep*. 31. It helps emphasize the need for progress to be practical rather than merely theoretical.\(^ {261}\) It is also rhetorically effective in arguing that philosophical retirement is not soft, but actually analogous to military service, something both very Roman and very respectable.

Having outlined the distinctive features of the three themes of epistolary learning, the nature of the mind and martial steadfastness that are developed in Book IV, it is time to see what

\(^{257}\) Below, p. 417.

\(^{258}\) Above, p. 14.

\(^{259}\) Above, p. 33.

\(^{260}\) This is most pronounced in the pair *Epp*. 34-35, but is also found in the first sections of *Epp*. 31-2.

\(^{261}\) Above, p. 4.
relation *Ep. 30* has to them. This letter’s distinctive features have already been touched on, in particular its focus on Seneca and on a named contemporary, Bassus. For Hachmann the letter’s function is intermediary, serving to link together the second and third of his letter cycles.\(^{262}\) And the letter does indeed mediate between the first three books and those that follow, but it does so in a way that makes it integrally part of Book IV.\(^{263}\)

The figure of Bassus is central to *Ep. 30*, and Seneca repeats emphatically the nature of his importance: it is his presence as a living *exemplum* of how to overcome the fear of death that Seneca finds much more effective than any arguments in the abstract.\(^{264}\) However, Bassus is not the only *exemplum* in the epistle; Seneca himself models how to learn from an *exemplum* in his own behaviour, in his enthusiasm, for example to seek Bassus out (*Ep. 30.13*).\(^{265}\) A major part of the learning Seneca seeks to promote in the *Epistles* is of this exemplary kind, and through epistolary self-revelation he offers himself to the reader as an *exemplum* of how to approach philosophy.\(^{266}\) In the remaining letters of the book he appears in the role of teacher and advice-giver, and although he does not relate any other of his own activities he is strongly present through the repeated use of 1\(^{st}\) person verbs. This is very prominent, for instance at the start of *Ep. 34*, in which he explores his feelings in response to hearing of Lucilius’ progress.

The figure of Bassus serves to mediate between the use of quotes in the early books, largely drawn from Epicurus and the new style of learning expected by Seneca from the reader. He is a liminal figure who mediates the move from Greek Epicurean quotes to a Roman Stoicism. He does this in a number of ways. Firstly, although he quotes Epicurean doctrine, he does so in his own voice. Unlike in the earlier letters, Seneca does not acknowledge Epicurus as the source of these ideas, but attributes them to Bassus as lived principles. And then in the way Seneca describes

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\(^{263}\) WINTERBOTTOM 1972, 225, suggests that *Ep. 30*, as with *Ep. 22* for Book III, can be seen as a recapitulatory introduction to the book.

\(^{264}\) Below, p. 68.

\(^{265}\) In this he contrasts with the negative *exemplum* of Marcellinus in the preceding letter, below, p. 51.

\(^{266}\) See further below, p. 68.
Bassus’ demeanour at the approach of his death he does not appear Epicurean, but rather a traditional Roman or even a Stoic.  

_Ep._ 30 and Bassus, therefore, form an important part of the shift that occurs in Book IV in how Seneca expects the _Epistles_ to be read. Moreover, the unitary nature of the book is reinforced by some important links between its first and last letters. Just as _Ep._ 30 serves to introduce the book in a number of ways, so too _Ep._ 41 very clearly concludes it. The two letters also share a number of themes that serve to highlight how much the reader’s understanding has advanced in the course of the book. The first of these is that Bassus on a number of occasions is explicitly presented as equivalent to a sage. It is this sage-like quality that gives what Bassus says such _auctoritas_ for Seneca. At _Ep._ 41.4 Seneca describes someone that possess all the qualities of a Stoic sage. This person, however, possesses something more than _auctoritas_; meeting him, Seneca argues, would provoke religious veneration. The contrast between these two sage figures underlines the advance in understanding, and indeed the change in approach to philosophy occasioned by the teaching on the mind’s divine nature. A similar development is seen in Seneca’s interest in Bassus’ _vigor animi_ (§13); at _Ep._ 41.5 he shows that it is a _vis divina_ that empowers the soul.

Having shown how Book IV is a unitary whole, it remains to mention its relationship to the other books in the collection. Its relationship to the first three books has been touched on already. They form a unit that shares the common feature of each letter closing with a quote. That these quotes are frequently taken from Epicurus gives these books an introductory nature, an introduction to philosophy generally, as opposed to more specifically Stoic philosophy that begins to be emphasized in Book IV. The closing letter of Book III hints at a number of thematic developments in the next book. That it signals that it is the last to have a quote has been

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267 This occurs at §13 _qui sic ... appropinquat n._

268 At §§5 and 8.

269 Although pointedly Seneca does not call him a sage ( _Ep._ 41.2 _Bonus ... vir n._).

270 Above, p. 45.

271 This is how Seneca appears to judge them in _Ep._ 33, when he argues quotes are for beginners; cf. _Wilson_ 2001, 183.
It also presents Marcellinus as a negative exemplum in his relationship to Seneca. He avoids Seneca and the salutary counsel he offers (§1), whereas Seneca himself seeks out Bassus for his positive influence. Finally, in Seneca’s criticism of the indiscriminate preaching of Cynic philosophers (Ep. 29.1–3) he foreshadows his more extensive treatment of the proper manner of teaching that he outlines in Epp. 38–40.

This closing letter ends with an invocation of philosophy’s gifts, which prefigures many of the themes of Book IV (Ep. 29.12):

\[
\text{Quid ergo illa laudata et omnibus praeferenda artibus rebusque philosophia praestabit?}
\]

\[
\text{scilicet ut malis tibi placere quam populo,}
\]
\[
\text{ut aestimes iudicia, non numeres,}
\]
\[
\text{ut sine metu deorum hominumque vivas,}
\]
\[
\text{ut aut vincas mala aut finias.}
\]

The motif of praise (illa laudata and, in the next sentence, his description of popular praise) is returned to at the end of Book IV, where Seneca describes what is popularly praised as opposed to what should be praised.\(^{273}\) The emphasis on self-sufficiency, so prominent in Book IV, is in the passage above, as in Book IV, set in the context of rejecting popular values (quam populo). It is described here firstly as self-satisfaction (tibi placere) and then as an independence in viewing the opinions (iudicia) of others, a strong demand in Ep. 33.\(^{274}\) Mention of the lack of fear of gods or men reflects the criticism of popular ideas of the divine in Epp. 31 and 41, and the revelation of one’s own divine soul. Finally the ability to either conquer, or end, evils is something expressed in Epp. 30, 36 and 37, particularly at Ep. 37.3: effugere non potes necessitates, potes vincere.

For a number of authors the working of the ratio that Seneca had revealed to be divine in Book IV is explicated in the letters of the next two to three books. These letters develop the nature of the consilia that the sacer spiritus in Ep. 41.2 provides, or the correct and incorrect use of ratio.\(^{275}\) The incorrect use of ratio is clear in the attack on dialectical reasoning in three letters of

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\(^{272}\) Above, p. 42.

\(^{273}\) Ep. 41.6 Quid enim ... possunt? n.

\(^{274}\) On tibi placere, see Ep. 32.5 ut placeat sibi n.

\(^{275}\) MAURACH 1975, 353, n. 59, (sacer spiritus) and HACHMANN 1995, 252, (ratio).
Book V (Epp. 45, 48 and 49).\footnote{276} This attack relates to all the major themes of Book IV. Firstly, it forms part of the developing understanding of reason: for Seneca it is not essentially dialectical. It also forms part of the development in how philosophy is acquired: in the move beyond learning from quotes to reading whole texts, Seneca argues for the importance of style, which gives a place for rhetoric, but he rejects the dialectical form of argumentation as overly subtle and ineffective. Finally, this attack on logic can be related to the suggestion that the constancy of one’s desires is not founded on syllogistic reasoning, but is analogous to martial steadfastness.\footnote{277}

Book V continues the theme of learning from texts, not only in the attack on dialectic, but in a number of letters that discuss reading (Epp. 45–46) and importantly in Ep. 52 in the discussion on learning that can be related to the theme in the same manner that Ep. 40 is. In regard to the nature of the mind, the nature of true nobility, touched on in Ep. 31.11, is much more fully developed in Epp. 44 and 47.\footnote{278} Another form of patterning between the books is one observed by Cancik, who suggests that Book IV offers theoretical advice, while Book VI, most of whose letters describe incidents in Seneca’s trip around Campania, show Seneca himself putting this advice into practice.\footnote{279}

The contrast between popular and philosophical values, running through all of Seneca’s works but very prominent in a number of letters in Book IV, is emphasized in the question with which Seneca leaves the reader at the book’s end (Ep. 41.9): \textit{quomodo autem revocari ad salutem possunt quos nemo retinet, populus impellit?} The implied answer is for the bulk of humanity nobody. However, Seneca does hold out salvation or health (\textit{salus}) for the followers of \textit{philosophia}, whose religious qualities are developed in a number of the following letters, continuing the religious theme of Book IV. This is particularly prominent in the closing letter of Book V (Ep. 52) and the opening letter of Book VI (Ep. 53). Seneca ends Ep. 52 (and the book) with the demand that philosophy should be worshipped (§13) and that she needs a priest, not a pedlar (§15).\footnote{280}
The next letter (Ep. 53) seems to invite comparison with the last letter of Book IV in a number of ways.\(^{281}\) Firstly the image of the man worthy of veneration at Ep. 41.4 contrasts strongly with Seneca’s own reaction to sea-sickness, particularly as this man was described as *in mediis tempestatibus placidum*. Seneca uses his recovery from physical sickness to contrast the workings of physical and mental illnesses (Ep. 53.7), which might recall the mention of *salus* at the end of Ep. 41. Only *philosophia* can awaken us from our illness, which is like a deep sleep, answering his closing question of Ep. 41. Seneca continues that philosophy should be worshipped (Ep. 53.11): *hanc cole* and finishes the letter with a dramatic personification of philosophy defending her followers from the weapons of fortune (Ep. 53.12).

From what has been argued it is clear that Book IV is a single and important structural unit of the *Epistles*. Its unity is built around the development of two major themes, whose development can be seen to represent a movement from general philosophy in the first three books to specifically Stoic philosophy starting in this book. These are the themes of learning from texts and of the mind’s divine origin. This unity is also made explicit in links between the book’s opening and closing letters, which serve to underline the progress made by the reader in the course of the twelve letters.

\(^{281}\) Below, p. 413.
The Scope of the Commentary

To write a commentary is to be part of one of the oldest and most enduring forms of writing in classical studies. It is a genre that is perhaps most closely associated with traditional philology, an approach to literature that both its defenders and critics often characterize as theory-free, although commentary-writing recently has received a measure of critical attention. In the course of this study the close analysis of a relatively small section of text has shaped my understanding of Seneca’s *Epistles*. Particularly in examining some of the shorter letters of Book IV I developed a position on the scholarship on Seneca that has been argued in the previous two chapters. There I have set out the main parameters and the guiding principles of this study. Firstly, the Romanness and literary quality of Seneca’s text are not separable qualities that can be removed to look at a philosophical core. Secondly, the letters of the book form a unitary whole and their study should include their relationship firstly to each other and then the other letters of the collection, both those that precede and those that follow. And finally, Seneca himself, as revealed to us in the *Epistles*, is an integral part of his approach to philosophy.

None of the letters in this book have received extensive commentaries. Indeed, the *Epistles* generally have been slow to receive such detailed treatment. In this commentary an essay precedes the commentary on each epistle. It functions as an introduction to the letter and provides a compensation for the fragmenting tendency of the commentary structure by bringing

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283 E.g. Gibson and Kraus 2002.

284 These qualities are not the icing on a cake to borrow an image used by Moles in criticizing those who believe the literary qualities of the texts of Roman historians are similarly detachable; cf. Ash 2002, 269.

together otherwise scattered themes and relationships.\textsuperscript{286} Within the commentaries, apart from a couple of the shorter letters, a division of the letter is given, and each division receives a short overview. As for the commentaries themselves, the focus is on trying to explain how each letter serves to develop the unfolding narrative of Seneca’s correspondence to his friend.\textsuperscript{287} As such, parallels are first sought within the Epistles to illustrate developments in themes, and then further parallels are adduced from Seneca’s other writings to show common interests. Reference to philosophical texts beyond Seneca’s corpus are used to illustrate his ideas within a broader context within the ancient world. They are not used, however, to fill in what Seneca has not said in order to make him conform to a Stoic orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that is itself to a good measure the work of modern speculative reconstruction.\textsuperscript{288}

In this study a number of conventions have been adopted. One is to refer to the reader of the Epistles with the masculine pronoun, on the basis that it is addressed to Lucilius and written to some degree for Seneca himself.\textsuperscript{289} This is not to suggest that a female readership is excluded by this, but in that Seneca does frequently appeal to the reader’s sense of masculine pride, this would be diluted by adopting a more gender-neutral usage.\textsuperscript{290}

Many lemmata are given a reference to a dictionary definition (generally from the OLD). These serve to show that other examples of such a usage can be found, but such definitions should not be taken to preclude Seneca’s frequent metaphorical plays on the word’s root sense.\textsuperscript{291} In terms of translation I have generally sought to avoid leaving terms untranslated. In particular I have avoided making repeated use of Greek terms such as eudaimonia and autarkeia. But also I have not left terms such as animus, ingenium or labor invariably untranslated. In doing so it is not always possible to be totally consistent, but then such consistency does not appear to have been

\textsuperscript{286} A similar procedure can be seen in the commentaries of Laudizi 2003 and Scarpat 1975.

\textsuperscript{287} This approach is particularly instructive in regard to those texts in Book IV that have been analysed in isolation as proof-texts for a Senecan theory of the will; cf. Epp. 34.3 n. and 37.5 n.

\textsuperscript{288} Inwood 2005a, 25-26, comments well on the fundamental assumptions that guide this reconstruction.

\textsuperscript{289} Above, pp. 4, n. 14, and 34.

\textsuperscript{290} Above, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{291} The objection of Heidegger to the lexical presentation of language as found in dictionaries is relevant here; cf. Benjamin 1989, 23.
valued by Seneca either. In fact, on occasions, applying consistent terminology to Seneca’s language risks significantly changing the sense. In Ep. 41, for example, he describes a figure with the characteristics of the Stoic wise man, but he does not once in the letter call this figure a sapiens. To refer to this person with the shorthand of ‘sage’ or ‘wise man’ is to obscure what Seneca has done in his choice of terms. Another aspect of this is the issue of capitalizing words when they are used as personifications, such as fortuna and philosophia. I have avoided capitalizing the Latin except when it refers to the goddess that received cult, so that mens bona is the term, even when personified, but Mens Bona is the cultic goddess. Of course, the division between these two is not impermeable, and in translation I have sometimes used the lower case form of the word, but retained the feminine pronoun for it to reflect this.

An assessment of the scholarship on Seneca has been made to a large measure in the previous two chapters. Here it is appropriate to acknowledge the help gained from a number of research tools. The bibliographies of Senecan scholarship by Motto and Clark and by Chaumartin have been invaluable. For the period after these studies the yearly bibliographies of BstudLat and L’année philologique have been extremely useful. These were supplemented by a couple of useful reviews of Senecan scholarship. In addition in recent years a number of scholars have produced books of their collected articles on Seneca.

A number of reference tools have aided this study. Most notably PHI 5.3 and TLG-E which have made older print concordances of Seneca obsolete. In addition the extensive lists of images and metaphors by Armisen-Marchetti and Smith have been indispensable, and the sourcebook of

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292 Bellincioni 1979, 331, prefaces a catalogue of terminology with the remark that the procedure is perhaps ‘un-Senecan’.

293 Motto and Clark 1989 covers the period 1900 to 1980, while Chaumartin 1989 extends this period out until 1985.

294 Those in BstudLat were prepared by G. Cupaiuolo until 1997 and by F. and G. Cupaiuolo from then until 2006, and then by just G. Cupaiuolo thereafter.


296 These are Albrecht 2004, Inwood 2005a, Motto and Clark 1993, Motto 2001, Maso 1999 and Setaioli 2000. Along with these are two collections of articles on Stoicism by Striker 1996 and Long 1996. I have cited these collections rather than the separate articles that make them up.
The Scope of the Commentary

Motto has been very useful. These have been supplemented by a number of collections of the fragments of Hellenistic philosophy that have become standards.

I have used Reynolds for the text of Book IV, and a list of variants adopted is given in Appendix I.

These, then, are the parameters within which this commentary has been composed.

297 ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, SMITH and MOTTO.

298 These are L-S and I-G, along with Us and SVF, which have both been handily reprinted with Italian translations.
Commentary
As a historian Aufidius Bassus was attributed with *auctoritas* by Quintilian.\textsuperscript{299} *Auctoritas*, furthermore, was an important attribute for a historian; Cicero in his famous letter to Luceceus asking him to write a history of his consulship stressed that it was Luceceus’ *auctoritas* that would make this work valuable.\textsuperscript{300} *Auctoritas* as a concept has attracted a lot of attention in studies of the sources of Augustus’s power.\textsuperscript{301} It was a peculiarly Roman term, which Cassius Dio confessed his inability to translate.\textsuperscript{302} It shares a similarly extra-rational character to other key Roman concepts such as *constantia*, *fides*, and *gravitas*, with which it is closely associated.\textsuperscript{303} Furthermore, it is a fundamentally positive quality, the polar opposite of *vis* and *potentia*.\textsuperscript{304} Finally, it is the quality that makes its possessor’s advice both credible and to be followed.

*Auctoritas* is also a central quality with which Seneca invests Bassus in this letter, and it is an important key to understanding what Seneca is doing in the letter. The role of Bassus in structuring Book IV has already been discussed and will not be unduly repeated here.\textsuperscript{305} Rather I will focus on what this letter has to say on the role Seneca saw for *auctoritas* in making philosophical progress and how it related to exemplarity. Finally, the major discussion in *Ep.* 30, of death, is relevant to these issues, as learning to face it with equanimity was such a difficult task: *Magna res est, Lucili, haec et diu discenda, cum adventat hora illa inevitabilis, aequo animo abire* (*Ep.* 30.4).

\textsuperscript{299} Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.103.
\textsuperscript{300} Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.
\textsuperscript{301} cf. Galinsky 1996, ch. 1: ‘A principal concept: *auctoritas*’.  
\textsuperscript{302} Cass. Dio, 55.3.5.
\textsuperscript{303} Above, p. 25, and Hellegouarc’h 1972, 296-297.
\textsuperscript{304} Hellegouarc’h 1972, 309.
\textsuperscript{305} Above, p. 49.
Epistle 30 has a number of prominent characteristics. In contrast to many of the Epistles it has a very even tone, as though Seneca wished to suggest by this the calm composure of its subject, Bassus. In a similar manner it is also marked by a strong thematic unity: both Bassus and the discussion of facing death are central throughout. Furthermore, in contrast to topics of a more specifically philosophic nature, elements of Epistle 30 are appropriate more generally to the epistolary genre. First of all it relates an item of news, Seneca’s visit to a mutual friend, Bassus, the essentials of whose characterization are given in the first sentence, a very good man near the end of his battle with old age. Seneca is full of praise for the philosophical composure of his friend in the face of his imminent death, and it is more than likely that when the letter was published Bassus was dead, making the praise able to be read as eulogy to his friend. Such eulogy was very appropriate to letters, and it fits with many letters from antiquity that relate the recent death of a friend, praising the manner of his death and his character.

There is little scholarship devoted to this letter. The focus of Maurach and Hachmann is on where the letter fits into their schemes on the corpus’ organization and has been dealt with already. There is a basic commentary on the letter by Maurach and on §4 of it by De Caria. Scholarship on old age, death and suicide in Seneca refers to the letter occasionally, and it is used by historians and historiographers for the information it gives on Bassus.

The prominence given to Bassus by being the first words of the epistle and the first words of Book IV has already been discussed. He is also prominent as one of only a handful of named contemporaries in the work. There are perhaps eight more contemporaries named outside of

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306 The following letter, Epistle 31, is a good example of a contrasting style of epistolary composition marked by sudden changes of tone and theme.

307 There would be some irony to this situation, as Bassus, the historian, was the one who regularly passed judgement on people’s lives, and here it is Seneca doing it to him.

308 E.g. Plin. Ep. 3.7 on Silius Italicus.


310 Maurach 1987, 70-78 and De Caria 1977, 78-79 and 120-121.

311 This scholarship is referred to in the commentary, where relevant; for that on Bassus, see below, p. 458.

312 Above, p. 39.
Seneca’s household in the Epistles, and only three of these are known from other sources. More often Seneca talks of ‘your friend’ (e.g. Epp. 11.1 and 36.1).

Bassus’ fame as a historian is confirmed by both Quintilian and Tacitus. We only have the merest fragments of his work, the most interesting of which are on Cicero. Seneca’s father records both Bassus’ description of Cicero’s death and his summation of the man. The passages show an interest in dying with dignity, similar to that which Seneca portrays him as displaying in this letter. These passages would be known to Seneca, as his father dedicated the work to him and his brothers.

How much does Seneca add to our knowledge of Bassus? He tells us he was sickly all his life (§1). However, the major impression of Bassus that Seneca gives is that he is well prepared for his death and he owes this to philosophy. In addition it must be stressed that in Seneca’s presentation Bassus is foremost a philosopher and his allegiance to Epicurus, mentioned towards the end of the letter (§14) is not emphasized, though much is made of it by others.

It is perhaps more interesting what Seneca does not mention. He makes no mention of Bassus as a historian, or indeed mention of any of his life beyond his preparedness for death. Seneca’s silence on Bassus’s status as a historian fits, perhaps, with his general disdain for history. His harshest criticisms are in his Natural Questions, and in the context of Ep. 30 it is interesting that he should disagree with both Cicero and Quintilian in saying that auctoritas is anything but the characteristic of a historian: nec magna molitione detrahenda est auctoritas Ephoro: historicus est (Nat. 7.16.1). Seneca does, on a few occasions, have nicer things to say about historians. But it

314 Below, 458.
315 Sen. Rh. Suas. 6.18 and 6.23 (given below, p. 460.)
316 An example of the stress placed on Bassus’ Epicureanism is Syme 1958, 274-276, who uses it as evidence, along with his sickness and the lack of any positive evidence, for the claim that he had no political career. This for Syme makes him less valuable as a source than the ex-consul Servilius Nonianus, and therefore less likely to have been used by Tacitus. None of this is in any way conclusive: Seneca was sickly and Julius Caesar an Epicurean! The fact that what Bassus says accords with Epicureanism will be returned to (below, p. 72).
317 On Cicero and Quintilian, see above, p. 61. Galbi 1924, records more examples. Seneca’s attitude to history is also discussed by André 1995, Armisen-Marchetti 1995a and Wilson 2007, 429-430.
318 E.g. Marc. 1.3-4 and Tranq. 7.2.
is likely he chose to portray Bassus as a philosopher and to suggest by this that it was here that the true grounds for respecting him lay.\textsuperscript{319}

Having looked at what is known of Bassus, it is possible now to examine what role he serves for Seneca in the epistle. He is both a subject in his own right, and he is central to the other one: learning how to die. As I have already suggested, the letter can be read in part as a eulogy to Bassus. The praise of Bassus is extremely generous. In the detached way he views his approaching death, he displays \textit{magnitudo animi}, nobleness of spirit. At §3 he looks upon his death as one might look on someone else’s death. At §8 Seneca says his steadfastness in the face of death is something only a sage can offer. Again at §12 his calm cheerfulness in death’s approach personifies \textit{tranquillitas}, an attribute of the happy life that is philosophy’s goal.\textsuperscript{320} This is great praise, given that sages are as rare as the phoenix. Bassus is also implicitly compared to the likes of Socrates and Cato the Younger — and all for the way he faces death from old age! So too, as Préchac notes, there are many similarities in the portrayal of Bassus to that of Canus, whom Seneca also immortalized for his philosophical composure in the face of death by execution at Caligula’s order.\textsuperscript{321}

Learning how to die is a central part of ancient philosophy. A key expression of this is found in Plato’s \textit{Phaedo} 67e, where Socrates says: Τῷ ὄντι ἀρα, ... ὦ Σιμία, οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσι, καὶ τὸ τεθνάναι ἥκιστα αὐτοῖς ἀνθρώπων φοβερόν. Learning to die is learning to overcome the fear of death. Furthermore, to conquer this fear was to conquer all fears, as it was seen as the root of them,\textsuperscript{322} and thereby to achieve freedom from care, \textit{securitas}.\textsuperscript{323} Achieving such freedom is a major theme in Seneca’s works, especially in the \textit{Epistles}.\textsuperscript{324} As an old man and someone aware that Nero may soon decide he should die, the task has an especial

\textsuperscript{319} See further, below, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{320} See below, p. 258.
\textsuperscript{321} Préchac, 132. The death of Canus is described at Tranq. 14.4-10.
\textsuperscript{322} Maurach 1987, 14, describes fear of death as the ‘Ur-Angst’. Cf. Helv. 13.3: \textit{ex quo pectore metum mortis eieceris, in id nullius rei timor audebit intrare}. See also Ag. 605-610 for the praise of someone not afraid to die.
\textsuperscript{323} Below, p. 259.
\textsuperscript{324} cf. Brev. 7.3: vivere tota vita discendum est et, quod magis fortasse miraberis, tota vita discendum est mori, and Williams 2003, 157.
urgency for him.  

Death was a topic not just of philosophical and personal importance to Seneca; it was a topic that had a special prominence in Seneca’s age and for his social class. In the course of the letter Seneca mentions how listening to Bassus is like being at the scene of the action and goes on: *quid ergo? non multos spectavi abrumpentes vitam? Ego vero vidi* (§15). Seneca seems to suggest he had been in the audience of many suicides. Griffin comments on this theatricality of suicide in this age; the presence of an audience of friends is a regular feature. Suicide was one way that an aristocrat in the Principate could display virtue, when many of the traditional avenues had been closed. In particular, Seneca represents death as *libertas*, something that had been lost with the end of the republic: ‘*meditare mortem*: *qui hoc dicit meditari libertatem iubet. Qui mori didicit servire dedidicit; supra omnem potentiam est, certe extra omnem* (Ep. 26.10).

Seneca also suggests that dying well is harder than living, quoting with approval a Stoic friend’s advice to someone contemplating suicide: *non est res magna vivere: omnes servi tui vivunt, omnia animalia: magnum est honeste mori, prudenter, fortiter* (Ep. 77.6). It is this sort of attitude that explains much of Seneca’s exclusive attention to Bassus’s preparation for death over any achievement in life. It is an attitude not unique to Seneca, but shared by other authors of his age. Tacitus, in particular, gives great attention to the death scenes of prominent Romans, Seneca’s, of course, being one of the most famous. In the preface to the *Histories* he describes these suicides as one of the few instances of virtue that the age offered.

Coping with death was the main topic in the philosophical genre of the *consolatio*. A number of the arguments against fearing death that Bassus uses regularly appear in consolatory

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325 In the sense that the *Epistles* are in part composed for Seneca himself, this explains the mention of suicide in Ep. 30, which is not an inevitable consequence the discussion of death, but rather was a type of death of particular relevance to Seneca.

326 Griffin 1986, 65.

327 Seneca’s views on death being able to vindicate one’s freedom are shared by other ancient authors, such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio (Edwards 2007, 126).

328 Tac. Hist. 1.3: *non tamen adeo virtutum sterile saeculum ut non et bona exempla prodiderit. ... supremae clarorum virorum necessitates fortiter toleratae et laudatis antiquorum mortibus pares exitus* (cf. Edwards 2007, 36.)
literature. The paradoxical situation of Bassus offering a consolation to his friends for his own death.

The focus of most studies of Ep. 30 are the arguments against fearing death that Seneca puts in Bassus’s mouth. These studies tell us that Seneca has given these arguments before and they show us where he gave them. This is really to point out what Seneca takes the trouble to stress twice: they are saepe dicta et saepe dicenda (§7 and again at §15). Seneca is much more interested in how we can truly absorb these lessons, and this, surely, is where the real emphasis of the letter lies. This is in keeping with his concern to deal with the res of philosophy over the verba. One regularly gets the sense that for Seneca the precepts of philosophy are not difficult to express; it is actually internalizing them that is the challenge.

This challenge is reflected in the structure of the letter, in which Seneca alternately describes Bassus and quotes him speaking about death and then reflects on how he felt about what he saw and heard. After each of Bassus’s quotes, apart from the concluding one, Seneca reflects on how effective Bassus is as an exemplum and why. Given that the arguments are known to the reader, it is surely this exemplarity that is the emphasis of the epistle.

As a major subject of the Epistles, learning to die is something that Seneca approaches from many angles. In attempting to deal with the res of facing death, he rejects syllogistic reasoning as an effective tool, most particularly in Ep. 82. Seneca sought more effective ways to prepare himself and Lucilius for death. Perhaps the most important of these was the use of exempla.

In Ep. 6 Seneca claims exempla are much more effective than precepts. He promises to send some books to Lucilius, but goes on to say:

Plus tamen tibi et viva vox et convictus quam oratio proderit; in rem

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329 These are at §5 Nam de morte ... mortis n., §6 Tam ... sensurus n., §11 Mors necessitatem ... invictam n. and §14 Ceterum succursurum ... posse n.

330 In a similar way, Seneca’s Ad Helviam is a consolation to his mother for his own exile. This situation of offering consolation to friends for one’s approaching death is, of course, something that Socrates had famously done (cf. §9 Libentissime ... indicantem n.).

331 Above, p. 4.

332 Bassus speaks at §§6, 14 and 16 and Seneca’s reflections follow at §§7 and 15.

333 See above, p. 21.
praesentem venias oportet, primum quia homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt, deinde quia longum iter est per praecpta, breve et efficax per exempla. Zenonem Cleanthes non expressisset, si tantummodo audisset: vitae eius interfuit, secreta perspexit, observavit illum, an ex formula sua viveret. Platon et Aristoteles et omnis in diversum itura sapientium turba plus ex moribus quam ex verbis Socratis traxit; magnos viros non schola Epicuri sed contubernium fecit (Ep. 6.5-6).

Exempla were a recognized form of argumentation in rhetoric — they could be used to supply the proof of a claim.334 This is what Seneca has done in this passage. But the exempla he cites are also examples of another way exempla are used, as role models, correct models of behaviour. The examples he cites, Zeno, Socrates and Epicurus, are interesting in another sense. Apart from Socrates, who Seneca makes a model to some who never knew him alive, the other two are shown as models to students who lived with them. Seneca even likens the relationship of Epicurus to his disciples to the peculiarly Roman institution of contubernium, in which younger officers were placed under the care of a senior commander, from whom by observation they learnt to be soldiers. A similar institution existed in civic life, tirocinium fori, in which a young aristocrat would attend a leading public figure to learn civic business. Mayer stresses that in both these institutions the senior figure was conscious of being a model and the learning was by imitation.335

Mayer and Chaplin cite additional texts to argue that the use of exempla was a fundamental part of Roman education.336 Romans prided themselves on their superior resources of exempla: Quantum enim Graeci praecptis valent, tantum Romani, quod est maius, exemplis.337 They occupied a more prominent place than they did in the Greek world. In particular, Mayer stresses the institutions just mentioned and remarks that Greek exempla were more fossilized, while Romans drew also on the recent past.338 Furthermore, he says, ‘the Roman tradition encouraged not just learning from exempla but setting an example oneself’.339 Having said all this, the Romanness of exempla is a question of degree. Zeno, for instance, is recorded as saying, not irrelevantly to the topic of Ep. 30, that he would rather see a single Indian roasted over a slow fire than learn in the

334 They were also recognized as a form of instruction in historiography (Chaplin 2000, 5-11).
335 Mayer 1991, 143. In earlier Greek education learning was of a similar sort, through the contact with the adult world, synousia. It was superseded by the education conducted by specialists (Hadot 1995, 13).
337 Quint. Inst. 12.2.30.
abstract all the theses and arguments people have developed about suffering.\textsuperscript{340} And after his death Zeno is recorded by Diogenes Laertius to have been honoured by the Athenians in a decree that noted he had set up his life as a model.\textsuperscript{341} Exemplarity, therefore, was also seen as important by the founder of the Stoic school and was something for which he was recognized by his contemporaries.

Before turning to look at Bassus as an exemplum, three more points should be made. Firstly, exempla can have auctoritas. Indeed the word from which auctoritas is derived, auctor, can actually mean pattern or model.\textsuperscript{342} This connection is made explicit at the end of Ep. 11, when Seneca urges Lucilius to choose an internal guardian whose auctoritas will influence him to act correctly:

\begin{quote}
Hoc, mi Lucili, Epicurus praecepit; custodem nobis et paedagogum dedit, nec immerito: magna pars peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis testis assistit. Aliquem habeat animus quem vereatur, cuius auctoritate etiam secretum suum sanctius faciat (Ep. 11.9).
\end{quote}

Such a guardian is synonymous with an exemplum as Seneca says a few lines later, where he urges Lucilius to choose Cato or Laelius for this role and goes on: illum tibi semper ostende vel custodem vel exemplum (Ep.11.10). Secondly, in Ep. 120 Seneca suggests that we form our conception of virtue by analogy with brave, generous or humane actions from the past, from exempla. Mayer sees in this an instance of Seneca’s originality, saying:

\begin{quote}
If this formulation is Seneca’s own, then we may say that he is trying to do what no philosopher had done before him, namely, to create a basic function for exempla within a moral system.\textsuperscript{343}
\end{quote}

Lastly, Seneca in the Epistles is himself an exemplum, not of a sage, but of someone making moral progress, a proficiens.\textsuperscript{344} At Ep. 27.1, for instance, he describes himself to Lucilius as a fellow patient discussing his illness and its treatment with another patient. Many other passages can be cited where he describes himself not as Lucilius’s teacher, but companion in philosophy.\textsuperscript{345} However,

\textsuperscript{340} Clem Al. Strom. 2.20.125.1: Καλῶς ο Ζήνων ἐπὶ τῶν Ἰνδῶν ἔλεγεν ἕνα Ἰνδὸν παροπτώμενον ἐθέλειν <ἄν> ἰδεῖν ἢ πᾶσας τὰς περὶ πόνου ἀποδείξεις μαθεῖν.

\textsuperscript{341} D.L. 7.10: παράδειγμα τὸν Ἰδιον βίον ἐκθεὶς ἄπασιν ἀκόλουθον ὁντα τοῖς λόγοις οἳς διελέγετο.

\textsuperscript{342} OLD, auctor §§4 and 8.

\textsuperscript{343} Mayer 1991, 165. For a philosophical commentary on this letter, see Inwood 2007a, 322-332.

\textsuperscript{344} Cf. Maurach 2000, 175. That the letter was the ideal genre for such self-presentation has been mentioned already, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{345} This companionship is seen in the importance that Seneca places on his friendship with Lucilius (above, p. 35).
although it is not a point consistently stressed, Seneca’s greater philosophical experience is an underlying assumption of the correspondence. Here, however, through the device of Bassus, he is able to present himself as an exemplum of a good student to someone of greater experience.

Having looked at how Seneca used exempla in the Epistles, it is possible to see the role of Bassus in Ep. 30. Clearly he is an exemplum in Roman terms, a role model for how to meet death. But Bassus is exemplary not only in his action but also in his words. His words are not original, but Seneca is at pains to stress how effective they are because of his auctoritas. How does Seneca describe this auctoritas of Bassus? Bassus’ auctoritas could have a number of sources, but in the sources that Seneca ascribes to him a clear contrast can be seen in terms of popular and philosophical values. Earlier, I commented that Seneca’s description of Bassus is limited to his status as a philosopher. Yet Bassus would possess auctoritas in the eyes of his contemporaries from his age, his social rank and his literary achievements. None of these are mentioned by Seneca, who when he first discusses Bassus’s auctoritas, says (§7):

\[\text{Haec ego scio et saepe dicta et saepe dicenda, sed neque cum legerem aequi mihi profuerunt neque cum audirem iis dicentibus qui negabant timenda a quorum metu aberant: hic vero plurimum apud me auctoritatis habuit, cum loqueretur de morte vicina.}\]

This construction with apud and habere is used twice more in the epistle: Plus, ut puto, fidei haberet apud te, plus ponderis, si ... (§9) and sed plus momenti apud me habent, qui ... (§15). He uses terms closely linked to auctoritas in these constructions, and in each of them he specifies with the apud whom the influence works on, either himself or Lucilius. This usage is significant, as it underlines that auctoritas is something perceived. It may not be a rational quality, but it is not mindless, but rather reflects the perceiver’s values. Each time Seneca stresses that the auctoritas arises from proximity to death and calmness in that proximity. In the first Bassus has it in speaking de morte vicina. In the second someone returned from the dead would have it and Bassus

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346 Seneca has no shortage of these. Cato and Socrates are used frequently. In another letter (Ep. 70.20 ff.) he describes gladiators who commit suicide so that they may die more honourably. For commentary on this letter, see SCARPAT 2007.

347 For this contrast, see above, p. 10.

348 On the auctoritas of age, see Ep. 4.2, on that of historians, above, p. 61.

349 For the links between auctoritas and fides, see HELLEGOUARC’H 1972, 296-297. The terms pondus and momentum, refer more to gravitas, which is also closely linked to auctoritas, HELLEGOUARC’H 1972, 299-300. See also above, p. 25.
is then explicitly likened to such a person. And in the third it is possessed by those who invite an approaching death in rather than drag it in.

Finally, as noted, Seneca likens Bassus to a sage, the highest status possible for a human in philosophical values. This status is also contributed to by implicitly associating Bassus with the most famous philosophical death-scene in philosophical literature, that of Socrates in the Phaedo. For instance at §9: *libentissime itaque illum audiebam quasi ferentem de morte sententiam et qualis esset eius natura velut propius inspectae indicantem* (§9). Like Socrates, Bassus discourses on death when close to it himself. However, Seneca gives him a distinctively Roman cast. For instance, the idiom *ferentem de morte sententiam* is taken from the language of Roman politics. It describes the action of a senator offering his opinion on a subject in a senatorial debate. Such an image is basic to the traditional exercise of *auctoritas* in Rome, but here it is contrasted by being shown performed by a possessor of philosophical *auctoritas* in a private context.

Another way the status of Bassus is increased in the letter is by his being prominent throughout the letter. This is also a mark of eulogistic respect to Seneca’s friend, but it contrasts with the use of Claranus in Ep. 66, who figures only at the start of the letter. Bassus occupies Seneca’s attention for the whole of the letter, and is presented as someone worthy of great credence in philosophical terms.

Having described the nature of Bassus’ *auctoritas*, we can ask what is the significance of it for Seneca. As much as Bassus is an *exemplum*, so too is Seneca, and even more so, as has been said. He is an *exemplum* of the sort described previously in Ep. 6.5-6. In his letters he models the philosophical progress of a *proficiens* and presents himself as a friend to the reader, who offers advice on making progress. He does not claim always to be perfect: in Ep. 63.14, for example, he admits to inappropriate grief at the death of his friend Serenus. In Ep. 30, by contrast, he portrays himself as behaving as a proper philosopher who is keen to visit his friend for the benefits to moral progress that such a visit offers. He is modelling how a philosopher keeps his philosophy

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350 This also increases the eulogistic element (cf. Ep. 30.9 *Libentissime ... indicantem* n.).
351 Ep. 30.1 Bassum Aufidium n.
352 Above, p. 49.
353 Above, p. 49 and below, p. 189.
practical.

Seneca’s behaviour, and that of Bassus too, contrasts with what he described in the immediately preceding letter, which concluded Book III. There, he describes a friend, Marcellinus, who is avoiding Seneca out of fear of hearing the truth (Ep. 29.1). Seneca, by contrast, seeks out Bassus. There is also a contrast in the two letters in the exercise of auctoritas. At Ep. 29.3 Seneca criticizes Cynics for lecturing indiscriminately: hoc, mi Lucili, non existimo magno viro faciendum: diluitur eius auctoritas nec habet apud eos satis ponderis quos posset minus obsolefacta corrigere. Cynics dilute and wear out their auctoritas. Bassus, by contrast, in talking to friends, such as Seneca, is an example of well-applied auctoritas.

Seneca stresses repeatedly the effect that Bassus had on him through his personal contact, but what are readers whose contact with such exempla is restricted to books to make of this letter? This will be dealt with more fully when examining Ep. 33. However, as has already been said, one way of understanding the Epistles is to see them as an invitation to friendship, a getting to know Seneca by seeing him in different situations and hearing him in different moods. It is an epistolary contubernium that can affect the reader in the same way that association with good men can.

Furthermore, the reader could be influenced by the auctoritas of Seneca. Like Bassus, but to a greater degree, Seneca possessed much auctoritas through his social status, his political career, his wealth and his eloquence, but he regularly devalued the significance of all of these. Rather he valued only actions that had philosophical value. In the next letter (Ep. 31) he would explain the fundamentals of this distinction between popular and philosophical values. However, on the importance of facing death well, these two value-systems shared much common ground. Both in Stoic and in traditional Roman terms how one died was very significant, and it is on these grounds that Seneca can be seen to possess auctoritas, recognized in both values-systems. Like Bassus, he could speak on death at close hand. In Ep. 54 he says he no longer fears death after a long and serious bout of asthma: he is like Bassus and those others he describes in Ep. 30.9 who have stood in death’s path and seen it coming. Also, given the great emphasis Seneca places on

354 Below p. 187.
355 Seneca discusses the improvement caused by association with good men at Ep. 94.40-41 (see further, below, p. 364).
dying well as a means of validating one’s life, seen in this letter and elsewhere in his work, his own death, vividly described by Tacitus and consciously enacted and prepared for, endows Seneca with a great deal of auctoritas. It confirmed that he actually practised philosophy, rather than just wrote about it. If we accept the terms Seneca used for the conferring of auctoritas, we may still only be reading a text, but we are reading one endowed with great auctoritas.

In other letters Seneca gives explicit advice on how a student should relate to exemplary models. In Ep. 30 this advice is implicit in the way Bassus relates to Epicurus and Seneca to Bassus. Instead of the quotes from dead authorities, mainly Epicurus, included at the end of each of the previous letters, each with its author named, Bassus expresses ideas, recognizably Epicurean, but attributed to him by Seneca. The teachings are scarcely original, but Bassus has made them his own. He has digested them in the way Seneca recommends in Ep. 84. He utters them in his own voice; he is an auctor, in contrast to those of whom Seneca says ‘numquam auctores, semper interpretes’ (Ep. 33.8). In a similar way it is not always easy to tell when Bassus stops being quoted in the epistle and Seneca himself is talking. Von Albrecht observes a similar melding of Seneca with his model at the end of De Vita Beata, where it is unclear whether it is Socrates or Seneca talking. This is not due to confused or egotistical composition, but reflects rather a very Roman approach to the philosophical tradition. It is consistent with imagining the relationship to the philosophical tradition in terms of family and fatherhood. As he says of style (Ep. 84.8), Seneca’s likeness to his models is that of a son to his father.

Bassus is significant in another way; he is quoted repeatedly in this letter, and, as noted, he

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356 The idea of dying well validating one’s life is seen, for example, at Ep. 26.6, where Seneca describes death as passing judgement on a student of philosophy. The idea is present prominently in Tacitus, who records, Hist. 3.54.3, a centurion committing suicide as a means of validating his report (EDWARDS 2007, 142-143).

357 Importantly Epp. 33 and 84; see below p. 186.

358 This development is foreshadowed at the close of Book III, where Seneca says philosophy offers ut aestimes iudicia, non numeres (below, p. 51).

359 Particularly at §§10 n. and 17 n.

360 ALBRECHT 2004, 64-65. This fusing of the words of Seneca and Bassus is furthered by Seneca’s not giving Bassus any dramatic long speech; he is mostly quoted in indirect speech with just a few short statements in oratio recta.

speaks philosophical ideas in his own voice, though it is his *auctoritas* that most impresses Seneca. This can be related to the sense that Book IV marks a significant development in the reader’s philosophical progress.\(^{362}\) In the first three books Seneca closed each letter with a quote, generally from a dead Greek. By contrast, Bassus is both living and a Roman. However, as was noted earlier, it is not the precepts that Bassus speaks that Seneca dwells on, but rather his exemplarity and his *auctoritas*, both notably Roman qualities.

The exemplarity and the *auctoritas*, then, of Bassus are central features of *Ep. 30*. As such the letter makes an effective introduction to Book IV, a number of whose letters will further explore learning from *exampla* in the context of epistolary friendship. Furthermore, Bassus, by internalizing the teachings of Epicurus and speaking them in his own voice effects a transition from the quotes of earlier books to a new style of learning that is demanded of the reader in Book IV. In addition his Romanness is significant: he replaces the precepts of a Greek philosopher with the lived experience of a Roman.

\(^{362}\) Above, p. 49.
Division:

- A (§§1-4): Aufidius Bassus’s nearness to death.
- B (§§5-6): His composure in meeting death.
- C (§§7-9): The value in listening to him.
- D (§§10-12): The fairness of death.
- E (§§13-15): The continued mental strength of Bassus in contrast to his failing body.
- F (§§16-18): The nearness of all of us to death.

**SENeca **LVCILIO **SVO **sALVTEM: a conventional greeting with which Seneca begins all his letters to Lucilius. In most editions of the text it is printed in the form of a heading, perhaps alongside the Epistle number and is slightly separated from the main body of the letter where it can easily be overlooked. Its somewhat tenuous or decorative status in the minds of many editors is shown by how frequently translators choose not to translate it; Gummere, for example, has it facing the titles he gives each letter. It is, however, an important confirmation that each of these texts is indeed written in the form of a letter (WILSON 2001, 164). For more on Lucilius, the addressee of all the letters in the collection, see below, p. 457.

**Section A (§§1-4).** In the first four sections of the letter Seneca sets the scene. In the first three Aufidius Bassus is characterized and in the fourth the particular importance and difficulty of facing death from old age are described.

§1. This letter imparts an item of news of interest to his friend. Seneca has met their mutual friend Bassus. The qualities of Bassus that interest Seneca are revealed in this first section: that he is a good man and he is near the end of his battle with death through old age.

**Bassum Aufidium ... obluctantem:** in the opening sentence Seneca sets out the essential character of Bassus and the aspect of his own relationship that is prominent in the letter, that of an observer (*vidi*). *Bassum Aufidium:* a prominent historian and slightly older contemporary of Seneca (see further, p. 458 and p. 39). The first two words of the letter are also the subject of this epistle. The letter can be compared to the start of *Ep. 66,* which describes a friend, Claranus, in very similar terms (*Ep. 66.1: viridem animo ac vigentem et cum corporisulo su colunctantem*). There Claranus serves only to lead into a topic. In this epistle, however, Aufidius Bassus remains central to the discussion of old age and death that follows. *Virum optimum:* a synonym for the *vir bonus* (*Ep. 37.1 virum bonum* n. and Hellegouarc'h 1972, 496). The positive description of Bassus is perhaps directed more towards future readers than the putative recipient, as *Scis* below and *Bassus noster* (§3) suggest he is well known to Lucilius. This positive opinion of Bassus’ character is confirmed by every reference to him throughout this letter. *Vidi:* Seneca’s first action of the letter is viewing. Viewing is prominent in this letter and is established here early (cf. §9 *viderunt,* §12 *vides,* §15 *spectavi ... vidi,* to highlight the main references). Such use of the vocabulary of viewing is a regular feature of Seneca (Solimano 1991). *Quassum, aetati obluctantem:* both participles portray Bassus as embattled. In the first passive one he is shaken but in the second he is active and likened to a wrestler, manfully struggling against old age. Both participles are central to the portrayal of Bassus as a model in his response to difficulty. The image of wrestling is used of Claranus (above, *Bassum Aufidium* n.) and at *Ep. 28.7* of people who go out looking for difficulties to struggle with. Seneca disapproves of this, and Bassus, in struggling with the unavoidable, is an example of proper conduct. Smith, 74-75 and Armisen-Marchetti, 81-82, catalogue other uses of the wrestling metaphor, which like military imagery (above, p. 12) is associated with the philosopher’s struggle against fortune, but has some Greek connotations that are not present in the military images.

**Sed iam ... incubuit:** age shifts from being something that is wrestled against to a weight that is bowing Bassus down (cf. Cic. *Sen.* 4 for the same image of age as a weight and burden). Such an image is found also in English idioms, such as ‘bowed down by old age’, that are suggestive of the crouched gait of old people. *Attolli:* (*OLD* §3, ‘assist to rise from the ground’) Bassus is the
subject and the verb suggests he has collapsed under the weight. It also suggests he cannot be assisted. Seneca and Lucilius can only observe.

Scis illum ... defecit: after the abstract description of Bassus’ situation comes some more concrete details about his health and the recent change to it. infirmi corporis: this description of Bassus’ body will be contrasted repeatedly with the state of his mind. exsucti: a vivid adjective from the past participle of exsugere, ‘lacking juice, dried up’. illud: sc. corpus. ut ... concinnavit: Seneca makes frequent use of this device of correcting his thought (LANHAM, correctio). It creates a sense of the colloquial, and more importantly a sense of a mind thinking rather than having thought (WILSON 1987, 106; so too LANHAM, Senecan Style). concinnavit: (OLD §3) has a sense of makeshift repair that is brought out by the similes in the following section.

§2. Bassus’ situation is then further described through two similes, both of which are unsentimental in their treatment of old age and the body. The proper attitude to the body was set out clearly at Ep. 14.1-2: Sic gerere nos debemus, non tamquam propter corpus vivere debeamus, sed tamquam non possimus sine corpore. Sinking ships and collapsing buildings were not infrequent occurrences in the ancient world and would suggest a more real image of death and danger to ancient readers than they do to modern ones. Seneca does not stress the dangers, however, so much as their inevitability when they reached a certain point. Cicero, Sen. 72, uses the image of a house and a ship together in relation to death from old age, but with a very different point, that they can be unmade more easily by their maker, and that old ones are also easier to unmake.

Quemadmodum in nave ... fulciri potest: this comparison of an old person’s body to a ship taking on water suggests that while the leaking can be plugged up to a certain point, when it goes beyond that point, nothing can be done. Bassus’ body has clearly passed that point. Seneca ties the imagery of the simile closely to what he has just said about Bassus. The succurri non potest repeats the sense of quam quod possit attollit and the verbs of makeshift repair, obsistitur and fulciri, echo concinnavit. The sense of inevitability is the point of comparison in the simile: no attempt is made to compare taking on water with the details of fighting old age. Nautical imagery is
common in Seneca; it has been used already in *Epp.* 4.7, 14.8, 16.3 and 28.3 (cf. *Smith*, 124-126 and *Armisen-Marchetti*, 142-143). Smith suggests that nautical imagery often has a serious or even tragic tone, which is appropriate here, though the humorous use of it in *Ep.* 53 shows it is not always so for Seneca. *Quemadmodum ... ita:* this correlative construction, along with the variant with *sic* occurs frequently in the *Epistles*. Seneca uses it less frequently in his other prose works and it is most commonly found in technical writers such as Vitruvius or in Justinian’s digest. As such, it is an example of the colloquial element in the *Epistles*. *Sentinam:* bilge-water. *Trahit:* (*OLD* §7). *Obsistitur:* (*OLD* §2b). *Laxari:* (*OLD* §4b). *Coepit:* *Setaioli* 2000, 86 notes such use of the active voice of *coepi* with passive infinitives as an example of colloquial usage. *Dehiscenti:* (*OLD* §1a). *Fulciri:* (*OLD* §3).

*Ubi tamquam ... exes:* the second simile takes the thought a stage further. Just like with a rotten building when a body is on the point of collapse it is time to get out. The comparison is closer than in the first one, as the *iuncturae* which are vividly described can refer to both the building and the body. Elsewhere Seneca describes at *Ira* 2.28.4 the body as a crumbling tenement and at *Ep.* 58.35 he says that he would abandon the body like a rotten building if the mind began to fail. For other metaphors of the house as the body, see *Armisen-Marchetti*, 110 and *Smith*, 55-56. *Circumspiciendum:* circumspection was an important philosophical attribute for Seneca, one that he argued the Latin language had to a greater degree than the Greek (below, p. 367 and *Ep.* 40.11 *Romanus sermo ... aestimandum* n.). *Exes:* a verb frequently used metaphorically for death (*OLD* §7), making it appropriate to its immediate context and to the analogy of the body to a house. *Armisen-Marchetti*, 162-163, lists other uses of exiting as an image of death. In the context of the simile this suggests that you (the subject of *exes* could be Lucilius or more probably a general ‘you’) should actively look at how to die. Suicide was certainly countenanced by Seneca, but when he touches on it later in this letter (§12), he favours waiting for death cheerfully. Despite the simile’s context it might make sense to read this rather as suggesting you look around for what will finish you off.

§3. Bassus tamen noster alacer animo est: hoc philosophia praestat, in conspectu mortis hilarem <esse> et in quocumque corporis habitu fortem laetumque nec deficientem quamvis deficiatur. Magnus gubernator et sciso navigat velo et, si exarmavit, tamen reliquias navigii aptat ad cursum. Hoc facit Bassus noster et eo animo vultuque finem suum spectat quo alienum spectare nimis securi putares.

§3. After the focus on Bassus’ physical health in the first two sections, this one describes his mind. Bassus is cheerful and this is something he has obtained from philosophy.
Bassus tamen ... est: when Seneca uses Bassus’ name as the subject of a sentence he follows it with nostro (e.g. §3 and §5). This underlines the shared relationship Bassus has with both Seneca and Lucilius. As a literary effect it adds to the epistolary character of the letter. The tamen announces a contrast that is then drawn between the state of Bassus’ body and his mind. alacer animo: as a phrase this often means ‘enthusiastic’ (OLD §2). However, as alacer means ‘lively’ or ‘active’ when applied to the body (OLD §1), Seneca is contrasting Bassus’ active mind with his frail body. In a similar way Seneca had earlier given thanks that despite the frailty of his body, his mind was still well (Ep. 26.1).

hoc philosophia praestat: philosophy is here personified, as she is frequently in the correspondence (above, p. 24). This phrase recalls closely the closing image of Book III (Ep. 29.12), where the gifts of philosophy are listed (above, p. 51). It is an important aspect of Bassus’ characterization that his composure is the gift of Philosophy, not Epicurus (above, p. 63). hoc: (OLD §12b) this points forward to the infinitive phrase that follows.

in conspectu ... deficiatur: philosophy’s gifts are presented in a carefully chosen tricolon. The quality of magnitudo animi (above, p. 24) needed to face death is evoked through the choice of adjectives. Two of them, hilarem and laetum, recall the true joy that arises from this quality, which was described as a res severa in Ep. 23 (HACHMANN 1995, 213). The other, fortem, indicates the cardinal virtue of bravery, but is also an aspect of magnitudo animi (KNOCHE 1935, 54). In the last two phrases the body is viewed as something separate from the person, an idea that is given greater stress in the next letter (Ep. 31.10-11) where the mind is identified as the location of true value in a person. in conspectu mortis hilarem: death is personified here as something one can see, an idea returned to in §10 (venientem [sc. mortem] ... viderunt). in quocumque ... laetumque: here the contrast is on the constancy of the mind against the inconstancy of the body. The body, being in the realm of fortune, is subject to change, whereas the mind through philosophy can attain a state above this (above, p. 12); the phrase habitus corporis contrasts with that of habitus animi, a concept that has received a good deal of scholarly attention (below, p. 183). There is also a play on the sense of fortém, which can refer to physical strength, but here clearly does not. nec deficientem quamvis deficiatur: the virtue of constancy is expressed again using polyptoton.

Magnus gubernator ... cursum: the pilot as a person who used an ars to do his job was a popular image in ancient philosophy (cf. BELLINCIONI 1979, 230). The analogy of the relationship of
the soul or of reason to the body as like a pilot to a ship is old (e.g. Pl. Phdr. 247c). Seneca introduces the image of the pilot coping with adversity as a new idea. Only in the next sentence does he explicitly tie this image into his argument, a not infrequent technique of his (e.g. below, §§9-10 and Ep. 36.7-8). By this technique the reader is encouraged to relate the image to other passages in the Epistles: in particular, it picks up the simile of the sinking ship at the start of the letter. And it also refers back to Ep. 16.3 where Seneca had likened philosophy to a pilot who *sedet ad gubernaculum et per acipiit fluctuantium derigit cursum*. See ARMSEN-MARCHETTI, 148, for the pilot in other passages. *scisso ... velo ... exarmavit*: the pilot making make-shift repairs to a ship continues the imagery noted in *concinnavit* and the two similes above. Like the tear in the sail *navigat* separates *scisso* from *velo*, matching the word-order to the sense. The verb *exarmavit* refers to throwing the *armamenta*, or tackle, overboard in an attempt to make the ship more manageable. The pilot is made the agent of this act, though in reality it would be performed at his order. Such a usage underlines his power in running the ship. Cf. SMITH, 128-129, for more on *exarmare* here and in other passages.

**Hoc facit ... putares**: just as the pilot continues to sail the ship as best as its condition allows him, so Bassus adapts his lifestyle to the condition of his body (*hoc facit*). *eo animo ... putares*: Bassus’ view of his approaching end is presented as a paradox with strong antithesis between *suum* and *alienum*. He has a detachment that you would think the mark of someone too carefree when watching another’s end. The image of viewing death is continued in the choice of verbs. And the inclusion of *vultu* suggests that Seneca can vouch for this outward manifestation of the mind’s serenity. *securi*: genitive of characteristic. This quality, *securitas*, a lack of fear, is distinguished by some from *tranquillitas* (§12 n.) and is seen as the product of *magnitudo animi* (below, p. 259).

§4. Magna res est, Lucili, haec et diu discenda, cum adventat hora illa inevitabilis, aequo animo abire. Alia genera mortis spei mixta sunt: desinit morbus, incendium extinguitur, ruina quos videbatur oppressura deposuit; mare quos hauserat eadem vi qua sorbebat eiecit incolumes; gladium miles ab ipsa perituri cervice revocavit: nil habet quod speret quem senectus ducit ad mortem; huic uni intercedi non potest. Nullo genere homines mollius moriuntur sed nec diutius.

§4. After setting the scene of the letter in the preceding three sections, this section underlines the importance of the need to face death from old age with equanimity. The section is
structured to climax with the startling and disconcerting image of old age leading someone to be executed.

Magna res ... abire: Seneca emphasizes the final phrase *aequo animo abire* with hyperbaton: the vocative, *Lucili*, separates *haec* from its clause, giving it more emphasis, then a phrase and a clause come between the *haec* and the phrase that depends on it. *Lucili*: Seneca often addresses Lucilius directly at important points in a letter. As Lucilius is a spectator in this letter, such a device is effective in making him more involved. *diu discenda*: the need to prepare oneself for death is one of the major themes of the *Epistles* and ancient philosophy generally (above, p. 64 and Cic. *Sen.* 66 and 74). In Ep. 4.5 Seneca suggests daily meditation on certain thoughts to allow one to leave life with equanimity and in Ep. 24 much attention is given to such *meditatio mortis*. In this letter the need for long preparation is returned to at §12 and again at the letter’s close (§18). At Ep. 107.4 Seneca stresses the importance of preparation for facing dangers. *inevitabilis*: this is a relatively rare word in classical Latin. It occurs again at §8. Ovid has the first recorded usage (*Met.* 3.301) and Seneca makes the most frequent use of it (10 times) of any classical author. *aequo animo abire*: the metaphor of departing from life is extremely common (e.g. Ep. 4.5). Here it continues the imagery of *quomodo exeas* in §2 above. *aequo animo*: a synonym of *securus* (*NEWMAN* 1989, 1488 and *SCARPAT* 1975, 84). *adventat*: (*OLD* §4) this iterative form is normal for periods of time and events.

Alia genera... sunt: having introduced the lesson he wants to teach. Seneca starts to draw out the special nature of death from old age: it is unavoidable. The examples he gives to prove this are characteristically introduced with asyndeton. An identical set of images occurs at *Ep.* 13.11, where the capricious power of fortune to take or spare life is emphasized.

desinit morbus ... revocavit: the five examples are organized towards a climax with each clause increasing in length. The types of death also progress from those most outside human control (disease and fire) to ones increasingly under human control. The third and fourth examples echo images used earlier in §2. One has some measure of control over where one lives to reduce the chance of death by collapsed buildings and there is even greater choice over whether you go to sea or not. The tense of the verbs switches from present, *desinit* and *extinguitur*, to a gnomic perfect, *depositu*, *eicet*, *revocavit*, (*G-L* §236 n.). The switch occurs as the illustrations become more vivid. Such use of perfects is common in similes and illustrations (*SUMMERS* 1910,
The sea is personified through the choice of verbs of drinking (*hauserat* and *sorbebat*, OLD §3b). *gladium ... revocavit*: the sword is personified as the recipient of an order, an image which suggests a reprieve from execution. The mention of *cervix*, which occurs in phrases such as *praebere cervicem* (*Epp*. 4.9, 82.9 and *Tac. Ann*. 15.67) reinforces this. Furthermore, *miles* is used in a wider range of contexts than the English equivalent, ‘soldier’. Here a soldier performs the function of an executioner, while in *Ep*. 5.7 one acts as a guard. The participle *perituri* also leaves indeterminate who is about to die, whether an enemy or a criminal. Finally, the image of execution is reinforced by the next two clauses, which use language to evoke a judicial setting. Such an image of execution is particularly pertinent under a tyrannical emperor such as Nero, and the power of a tyrant has a capricious character to it in keeping with the earlier images. *perituri*: a substantival participle (*Woodcock*, §101); for Seneca’s frequent use of them, see *Summers* 1910, lix-lx.

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**nil habet ... potest**: the *nil* is placed emphatically first to emphasize the contrast with the other forms of death. The idea of execution latent in the image before is made vivid in this clause. Old age is personified and made like a prison guard, leading somebody to death. Furthermore, by describing old age as though a human agent, the move from non-human to human causes of death in the preceding sentence is continued. The image also refers back to *Ep*. 4.9, where Seneca said that from the moment we are born we are being led like prisoners to our deaths. Seneca placed great stress on this idea, suggesting that Lucilius mull it over (*haec et eiusmodi in animo versanda sunt*). There the image completed a catalogue of possible deaths; here it also comes at the end of a similar type of series. Death by execution is an undignified way to die and perhaps the aspect that causes the most fear is the helplessness of the condemned person to prevent it. In *Ep*. 4.9 Seneca saw it as a particularly effective image to dwell on in order to overcome the fear of death. Here, by linking death by old age to this most disquieting of images, Seneca wants to build up its fearsome aspect that must be overcome if it is to be faced with equanimity. *ducit*: an idiom for execution; e.g. *Ep*. 4.9, *Ira* 3.22.2 and *Tranq*. 14.4-10. *intercedi*: (OLD §5b) intercession was the action of magistrates, especially tribunes of the plebs. It is another example of judicial language that contributes to the personification.

**Nullo genere ... diutius**: the section of the letter concludes with a sententia, which has an antithesis between *mollius* and *diutius* that is highlighted by the use of homoioteleuton. There is also marked alliteration and assonance in *mollius moriuntur*. The use of *sententiae* to bring a topic
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to an end is a characteristically Senecan form of argument (Maurach 1970, 12, n. 4). Here, as often, it does not summarize the thought of the section but rather adds an extra observation on the uniqueness of death from old age. In commenting on the gentleness of this death Seneca makes a strong contrast with the image of old age escorting someone to his execution. The gentleness of death from old age is alluded to again at §§12 and 14.

Section B (§§5–6). Seneca comments again on his perception of Bassus’ composure, and then moves to support this by quoting Bassus on the subject of death. At this stage the arguments are against fearing the state of death; later in the letter (§14) he argues against fearing the act of dying.

§5. Bassus noster videbatur mihi prosequi se et componere et vivere tamquam superstes sibi et sapienter ferre desiderium sui. Nam de morte multa loquitur et id agit sedulo ut nobis persuadeat, si quid incommodi aut metus in hoc negotio est, morientis vitium esse, non mortis; non magis in ipsa quicquam esse molestiae quam post ipsam.

§5. Bassus’ composure towards his approaching death is presented as a paradox: he appears to Seneca to have witnessed his own funeral. The evidence for this is Bassus’ zeal to persuade that death is not an evil.

Bassus noster … sui: the paradox has two elements, the funeral and its aftermath. prosequi: (OLD §1b) describes accompanying the body in its funeral procession; a similar image occurs in Ov. Tr. 1.8.14. componere: (OLD §4c) describes laying the body out for cremation after the procession. This image of having staged one’s own funeral in one’s mind suggests a form of meditatio mortis and contrasts with the disapproving description at Ep. 12.9 of Pacuvius staging his own funeral publicly. The second part of the paradox is to appear to live as though he had survived himself (superstes sibi) and to bear wisely the desire for himself (desiderium sui). The verb componere is used prominently on a number of occasions in this letter (cf. §12 composuerat n.). sapienter: the mark of a sage. Bassus’ character in this letter is given a consistently positive presentation. Bassus in his attitude to death seems to have achieved the status of a sage.

desiderium: (OLD §1b) this longing for someone deceased brings to mind the literary genre of the consolatio. It is also a regular term for the longing for someone absent (e.g. Epp. 40.1 and 49.1).

Nam de morte … mortis: by way of explanation of Bassus’ state we are given his repeated insistence that death is not an evil. Seneca quotes two claims about death that are then supported
with arguments in §6. Arguments that death is not an evil were a regular part of the consolatory tradition. For instance at *Marc.* 19.5 Seneca writes, *Mors nec bonum nec malum est*, going on to explain why. See *Motto*, *Death* §27, for other instances of this argument. **multa loquitur ... persuadeat:** the scene is described in the historic present tense. Although Bassus said many things, Seneca only reports a few of them in this letter (§§7-9 n.). The *nobis* might suggest there were other friends with Seneca and Bassus. **id agit sedulo:** this idiom is a frequent one with Seneca. On its own it denotes effort (*OLD ago* §27), and here that sense is reinforced by an adverb. The emphasis on effort and the need to persuade are regular and important components of how Seneca viewed philosophy. **si quid ... mortis:** the first claim about death by Bassus; there is antithesis between *morientis* and *mortis* that is strengthened by polyptoton. The specific fault of the person dying is to have an incorrect perception of death. In earlier letters Seneca had explained how to come to a correct understanding of things that are feared, especially death (e.g. *Ep.* 24.12-13). Both *incommodi* and *metus* are significant and relate to earlier letters in the correspondence: in *Ep.* 24.17, Seneca had argued that death removes us from *incommoda*; here through Bassus he argues that death itself is not an *incommodum*. In *Ep.* 13.5 Seneca discussed fears of things either in the future or totally groundless. **Hachmann 1995, 215**, observes that here Seneca gives a concrete application to the general precepts of that earlier letter. **incommodi:** at *Ep.* 36.9 Seneca again asserts that death has no *incommodum*. This is a frequent word in Seneca. In the technical Stoic vocabulary it is the opposite of a preferred indifferent (*proëgmenon*); cf. *Fischer* 1914, 111 and *Bellincioni* 1979, 124. **negotio:** (*OLD* §12) neither *Armisen-Marchetti*, 98, nor *Smith*, 107, mention this in their discussions of commercial imagery. **Ker** 2006, 35-36 comments on Seneca’s use of economic metaphors. **est:** the retained indicative in indirect discourse is frequent in Seneca (cf. *Summers* 1910, Ixii, *Setaioli* 2000, 55 and *Woodcock*, §§286-288). **morientis:** §4 *perituri* n.

**non magis ... ipsam:** the second claim about death by Bassus has an antithesis between *in ipsa* and *post ipsam*, which is expanded on and explained in the next section. A similar prepositional antithesis occurs below at §8 and at *Ep.* 41.7 in ... *circa* n. This idea is presented with characteristic point and brevity. The two arguments in the next section expand this to ensure it is understood. Death itself is not painful, though what leads to it may be, a topic is treated in §14. **quicquam ... molestiae:** there is a sense in the choice of words here and earlier (*incommodi ... negotio*) that Bassus is depreciating this fear, which is next identified as the mark of the fool.
§6. Bassus argues that the state of death is not to be feared as the end of sensation must also be the end of suffering. This is a particularly Epicurean argument against fearing death and is therefore consistent with Bassus’ loyalty to Epicurus revealed later (§14). Here, however, it is the gift of philosophy (§3) and in a later letter he stresses the idea that such ideas are, in fact, public property (Ep. 33.2 n.). The arguments are already familiar to the reader from Ep. 24.8, and such repetition is particularly relevant for what Seneca goes on to say. These Epicurean arguments are offered as a consolation by the second chorus at Tro. 371-408.

Tam … sensurus: this sentence is written so that the two qui clauses are identical apart from the stems of the two future participles, which are similar through the homoiototon of their endings. The virtually identical structure of the two sentences matches the argument that absence of sensation is the same as absence of suffering. It assumes we are nothing upon dying and cannot therefore experience or feel (cf. Epicurus, Ep. Men. 125 (= Us 125, D.L. 10.125 and L-S 24A). At Tro. 397 this is more starkly presented as, post mortem nihil est ipsaque mors nihil. Examples of this argument in consolatory literature are at Marc. 19.5 and Polyb. 9.2. demens: BORGO, 56-57. Here and again at §10 (dementis) the opposite of a philosophical attitude to death is presented as the mark of a madman. At §10 Seneca also talks of such fear as the mark of a fool (stultus).

Although the two terms are not identical, they tend in the same direction. The demens lacks mens bona, while the stultus lacks sapientia. One (mens bona) describes the perfected mind of the wise man (sapiens), the other (sapientia) his defining quality. The antithesis between the wise man and the fool is fundamental in Stoicism, which divided humanity into sages and the rest who are fools (e.g. Stob. Ecl. 2.7.11g (= W 2.99, SVF 1.216 and L-S 59N; SELLARS 2003, 61). It is also marked in Epicureanism, which allowed, however, for grades of progress (cf. ANDRÉ 1969, 472).

An quisquam … sentiatur?: if death removes sensation then death itself cannot be felt (cf. Epicurus, Ep. Men. 124 (Us 124, D.L. 10.124 and L-S 24A). The idea is expressed as a rhetorical question with the repetition of sentiatur underlining the antithesis between nihil and ea. The implied answer is no one sane, or only a fool, would believe this. hoc: (OLD §12b) this points forward to the epexegetic ut clause (OLD ut §39) that follows.
‘Ergo’ inquit ‘... metum’: as in §5 Seneca concludes this section with a sententia. An antithesis between death and fear is created with the use of extra. Death is not just not an evil but offers freedom from all evils and therefore freedom from the fear of them. The same idea had been expressed by Seneca in Ep. 24.11: Mihi crede, Lucili, adeo mors timenda non est ut beneficio eius nihil timendum sit. This idea is expanded on later in that letter (Ep. 24.17) where death is explained to end a number of specified ills. The idea occurs also in the second Troades chorus (Tro. 399): spem ponant avidi, solliciti metum. Even more positively death can be freedom, as Cassandra declares at Ag. 796: libertas adest (above, p. 65).

Section C (§§7-9). Having established the topic of the letter in the earlier sections and having shown that Bassus has a lot to say about how to meet death calmly, Seneca moves on to discuss in these three sections why Bassus is worth listening to. Seneca is at pains to stress the authority of Bassus to speak about death as one near it. The arguments here relate centrally to Seneca’s concern with the res and verba of philosophy (above, p. 4). Nowhere is this contrast more acute than when discussing death. At Ep. 24.15 he said:

Haec in animo voluta, quae saepe audisti, saepe dixisti; sed an vere audieris, an vere dixeris, effectu proba; hoc enim turpissimum est quod nobis obici solet, verba nos philosophiae, non opera tractare.

Again at Ep. 26.6-7 he says he constantly tells himself that when death stands in judgement of him the mere words of philosophy will not reveal the strength of his soul:

Ita dico: disputationes et litterata colloquia et ex praeceptis sapientium verba collecta et eruditus sermo non ostendunt verum robur animi; est enim oratio etiam timidissimis audax (Ep. 26.6).

What is needed to make genuine progress in facing death is the internalization of such words and Seneca suggests here that this can occur in the company of those close to death. There are a lot of 1st person verbs here, emphasizing Seneca’s reaction to being with Bassus. He is modelling the making of progress through friendship with someone more advanced, something present from the first letter of the collection (Ep. 1.4). This contrast is seen again in later letters of Book IV (below, p. 186), where Seneca suggests such learning can occur through befriending people, revealed to us in their writing.

§7. Haec ego scio et saepe dicta et saepe dicenda, sed neque cum legerem aeque mihi profuerunt neque cum audirem iis dicentibus qui negabant timenda a quorum metu aberant: hic vero plurimum apud me auctoritatis habuit, cum loqueretur de morte vicina.
§7. Haec ... dicenda: the polyptoton of *dicta* ... *dicenda* and the repetition of *saepe* ... *saepe* make the words more memorable while in themselves containing an element of the repetition described. Seneca emphasizes what the reader hopefully already knows, that these have been said many times before (cf. *saepe* ... *saepe* at *Ep*. 24.15). He also emphasizes that they need to be said often, echoing the *diu discenda* of §4. The idea had been expressed forcefully at *Ep*. 27.9:

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\text{Hoc saepe dicit Epicurus aliter atque aliter, sed numquam nimis dicitur quod numquam satis discitur; quibusdam remedia monstranda, quibusdam inculcanda sunt.}
\]

sed ... aberant: the efficacy of hearing from Bassus is contrasted with reading and hearing lectures. Both forms of media are discussed in Book IV (*Epp*. 33, 38-40). Their mention here prepares for a more complex theory of learning through reading to be advanced later (below, p. 182). *mihi profuerunt*: this is all presented as a 1st person opinion. Seneca portrays himself as still learning the tranquillity to meet death.

hic vero ... vicina: Bassus (*hic*) is presented as someone with *auctoritas* (above, p. 61, where the importance of this concept is discussed). It is a quality that draws upon non-rational forces of persuasion and has more influence on Seneca than the logic of the arguments presented earlier, which he had heard and read before uttered by those not in death’s presence. Bassus’ *auctoritas* is presented here as arising from his proximity to death, but as mentioned (above, p. 69), a contemporary reader might add his age, social rank and literary achievements as additional sources. *vero*: (*OLD* §5b) adds emphasis to the preceding pronoun. *plurimum apud me auctoritatis*: for the construction with *auctoritas*, see *Hellegouarc’h* 1972, 301. *vicina*: stands in contrast to *aberant*, personifying death as next door. At §17 the idea of death ever being closer or more distant is denied.

§8. Dicam enim quid sentiam: puto fortiorem esse eum qui in ipsa morte est quam qui circa mortem. Mors enim admota etiam imperitis animum dedit non vitandi inevitabilia; sic gladiator tota pugna timidissimus iugulum adversario praestat et errantem gladium sibi attemperat. At illa quae in propinquuo est utique ventura desiderat lentam animi firmitatem, quae est rarius nec potest nisi a sapiente praestari.

§8. Having contrasted Bassus as someone close to death favourably with those distant from it, Seneca makes another contrast with people at the other extreme. He contrasts people who are *circa mortem*, like Bassus, with those at the point of unavoidable death, *in ipsa morte*. In doing so, the discussion moves from talking about death to facing it. He suggests that on the point of death
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even the unskilled can display courage, but only a sage can display steadfastness. He illustrates this with the image of a cowardly gladiator meeting the final blow bravely. No example is offered for the contrasting courage, as it is clearly being displayed by Bassus.

**Dicam enim quid sentiam:** this gives a spoken tone to the letter, drawing attention to Seneca’s desire to express himself honestly and emphatically. The same construction occurs at *Ep.* 16.2. The congruence of one’s words and one’s feelings is fundamental to Seneca’s philosophy expressed memorably at *Epp.* 24.19 and 75.4.

**puto fortiorem ... mortem:** Seneca offers as his own opinion that someone is braver at the very point of death than when near death. *in ... circa:* see above, §5 for a similar antithesis using prepositions. The sense of them can be taken as both temporal or locative. The sense of closeness in place is what is emphasized in the next image. See also, *Ep.* 41.7 *in ... circa n.*

**Mors ... inevitabilia:** death is personified and paradoxically presented as giving the very thing it usually takes away, courage. So too the choice of *animus* for courage allows, perhaps a play on *anima* and another contrast with what death normally does, taking life (*animam eripere*).

**animum dedit:** (*OLD, animus* §13) the tense is the gnomic perfect (*§4 desinit morbus ... revocavit* n.). The *OLD* does not offer examples of this usage with a dependent gerund. *inperitis:* these contrast with the experts, who have done their *meditatio mortis*, represented by the *sapiens* in the next sentence. *inevitabilia:* *§4 inevitabilis* n.

**sic gladiator ... adtemperat:** this common kind of courage is illustrated by the image of a gladiator *tota pugna timidissimus* who offers his neck to his opponent and guides the wandering blade to its mark. Defeated gladiators were commonly killed by a stab in the neck (*EDWARDS* 2007, 58). This scene is discussed by *EDWARDS* 2007, 68-69, who also notes, 213-214, that the death of Perpetua is described in very similar terms (*Perp.* 21.9-10). *adtemperat:* (*OLD, attempero*) a rare term in Classical Latin, with only one other occurrence. The image is described with disturbing vividness, as Seneca can do so well (e.g. *Ep.* 24.5 of Mucius). He makes use of imagery from gladiatorial combat fairly frequently in his writing (cf. *ARMISEN-MARCHETTI*, 124-126 and *SMITH*, 74-76). The imagery has two particular virtues: it comes from an area of life familiar to his audience and it deals with facing death, one of his fundamental concerns. On occasions, most notably in *Ep.* 7, he is highly critical of the inhumanity of the institution. On other occasions, as here, he makes
use of the imagery for its immediacy and familiarity. The focus is on facing death, not the institution. This has not stopped Wistrand 1990 and Cagniart 2000b trying to argue, however implausibly, that Seneca is never actually critical of gladiatorial combats: they say his familiarity with the institution betokens approval and deflect his criticism in Ep. 7 on to the crowd. Richardson-Hay 2004b, reveals the unsoundness of their arguments and maintains the integrity of Seneca’s stance against a popular and pervasive institution of his day.

At illa ... praestari: the fast approach of death that those like the gladiator face is contrasted with a death personified that is in the neighbourhood (in propinquo) and approaches slowly, but inevitably (utique, OLD §3). This death is not given any of the grim vividness of the gladiator’s death, but paradoxically it is presented as requiring a superior type of courage. It is a courage of a less common sort (rarior), one that only a sage can offer, the sort, namely, that is the gift of philosophy ($3) and that takes a long time to learn ($4). This superiority is further underscored by a contrast between the mind and body made with the verbs praestat and praestari: the unskilled gladiator offers his neck, the sage his firmness of mind. animi firmitatem: (OLD firmitas, §3) this is a fairly frequently used synonym of constantia (Hellegouarc’h 1972, 284). lentam: (OLD §6, ‘enduring’) is similar in sense to the noun it modifies, reinforcing it. sapiente: Ep. 37.1 virum bonum n. Even if, as Loretto, 63, suggests, this is being used in a less technical sense than the sapiens perfectus of Ep. 35.4, it is still high praise.

§9. Libentissime itaque illum audiebam quasi ferentem de morte sententiam et qualis esset eius natura velut proprius inspectae indicantem. Plus, ut puto, fidei haberet apud te, plus ponderis, si quis revixisset et in morte nihil mali esse narraret expertus: accessus mortis quam perturbationem adferat optime tibi hi dicent qui secundum illam steterunt, qui venientem et viderunt et receperunt.

§9. Having presented Bassus’ credentials for speaking on death, namely his steadfast composure, Seneca describes his pleasure in hearing him speak on it. He also characterizes Bassus’ discourse with a pair of images that contribute to his stature as an authority on death. Seneca continues by suggesting that someone returned from the dead might have more authority with Lucilius to speak on death than Bassus, but that Bassus is among a group who, through their experience of death, can speak extremely well on it. At this point the focus is on the fear caused by being forced to confront death’s inevitability.
Libentissime ... indicantem: this image paints a picture of a very old and sick man discussing death with his friends and being more insightful as he can see it from close up. The discourse itself is not reproduced, but rather Seneca gives us his reaction to the meeting. The image of calm and scientific curiosity about death recalls Socrates, immortalized in Plato’s Phaedo. A similar image occurs in the attitude of Canus to his death by execution (Tranq. 14.4-10). Libentissime: made prominent as a superlative and its initial position. Seneca places great emphasis on his own reactions in this letter. Earlier the stress was on benefit (profuerunt, §7); here it is on his attitude. The importance of a positive attitude is stressed in the correspondence and relates to the important role of the will in making progress (below, p. 223).

illum ... ferentem ... indicantem: Seneca depicts Bassus with two images; the first is a simile from the political sphere. sententiam: (OLD §3) this reinforces the image of Bassus as a possessor of auctoritas, as only those senators who possessed it were asked to give an opinion in the senate (Hellequin-Ch 1972, 305). The image modifies that in Ep. 26.4, where it is the day of one’s death that will pass judgement on all Seneca’s years: laturus sententiam de omnibus annis meis. qualis ... natura: the second image, that of a teacher describing the nature of death to students, recalls the last days of Socrates very clearly (cf. Cic. Tusc. 1.71). velut propius inspectae: the participle agrees with eius (sc. mortis). The comparative conjunction implies that such an inspection is not physically possible. Cicero has Cato make a similar claim of being able discern death better as he is closer to it (Sen. 77).

Plus, ut puto, ... expertus: having spoken enthusiastically about the effect of Bassus on himself, Seneca appears concerned to persuade Lucilius of Bassus’ authority. He suggests Lucilius might be influenced more by someone returned from the dead. He then goes on to suggest that some people have encountered death in such a way to be able to talk reliably on the disturbance its approach brings. These people are the next best thing to this hypothetical revivified person.

apud te ... tibi: having described how he has reacted in the presence of Bassus, Seneca now presents Lucilius with a hypothetical situation to evaluate. Seneca seeks to involve the reader directly and elicit his reaction to the situation that he himself has been in. Plus ... plus: the word is placed emphatically first, recalling the plurimum of §7. fidei: (OLD §9b) ponderis: (OLD §6) see above, p. 69, for discussion of these terms. The emphasis gained by the repetition of related terms is increased by the spoken interjection, ut puto. nihil mali: picks up si quid incommodi aut metus at §5. expertus: placed emphatically last. Seneca uses this verb in relation to death on two other
occasions, at Ep. 54.4 in relation to his asthma, and at Ep. 91.21 when commenting that no one who complains of death has experienced it.

accessus mortis ... receperunt: the subject of the indirect question is placed emphatically first ahead of its conjunction. The effect of this is heightened by asyndeton: death’s approach is made prominent and only afterwards is the phrase’s grammatical relation to the thought of the sentence made clear. Details are added in a cinematic manner, as if with the camera panning out from a close focus on death’s approach to reveal the disturbance this causes, and then further out to reveal the frame of Lucilius being spoken to well on this phenomenon by people whose qualities are then described. The last stage is to add that Bassus is one of these (§10). The reaction of these people continues the personification of death. These people have stood near death, reminiscent of Bassus at his own funeral (§5). They have seen death coming (venientem), and physically welcomed him into the house, an image that is repeated later with exceptit (§12) and admittunt (§15). It is an image that shows a suitably dignified response to the inevitable. The image also makes the welcomers active, with a measure of initiative. Seneca portrays himself as being one of these at Ep. 54.7. accessus mortis: this is suggestive of a personified death making an adventus like an important personage into a town, an image that fits with the disturbance caused. perturbationem: BORGIO, 142. The term is bivalent; as generalized confusion it fits well (OLD §2) with the preceding image. As emotional disturbance (OLD §3) or even the technical coinage of Cicero for a Stoic pathos (OLD §4), it fits with the people describing death that follows. optime ... dicent: presented in a hypothetical future tense. The optime implies authority to speak. secundum: SUMMERS 1910, lxx, remarks that this is used here ‘somewhat curiously’; it has the sense of ‘next to’ or ‘near’. receperunt: (OLD §1).

Section D (§§10-12). This section is concluded with the same image of offering a dignified welcome to death that concluded §9. It expands on that idea, providing justifications for such a response and contrasting it with an undignified attitude.

§10. Inter hos Bassum licet numeres, qui nos decipi noluit. Is ait tam stultum esse qui mortem timeat quam qui senectutem; nam quemadmodum senectus adulescentiam sequitur, ita mors senectutem. Vivere noluit qui mori non vult; vita enim cum exceptione mortis data est; ad hanc itur. Quam ideo timere dementis est quia certa exspectantur, dubia metuuntur.

§10. Bassus is one of those whose acceptance of death qualifies him to speak on it. This leads Seneca to quote him. What is interesting here, and again at §§16-17 is that it is difficult to
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determine when Bassus stops and Seneca takes over (above, p. 72). A string of arguments is offered on the foolishness of fearing what is inevitable, only the first of which is definitely attributed to Bassus.

**Inter hos ... noluit:** this sentence links the previous section with the following. Seneca assures Lucilius that Bassus can be considered one of those who speak with authority on death. He then describes Bassus’ attitude to his friends, which as at §5 leads into a discussion of what he said. **nos:** this includes Lucilius, and the general reader, as part of Bassus’ audience. **decipi:** Seneca offers this not as an assurance of Bassus’ honesty, but of his desire that we know the truth of the subject. **noluit:** the past tense locates this desire at the time Seneca met Bassus, rather than as a general characteristic of Bassus. It moves the time of the narrative back to that meeting in preparation for the arguments against fearing death that Seneca quotes next.

**Is ait ... qui senectutem:** the stupidity of fearing death is paralleled to fearing old age. **tam ... quam:** the construction echoes that of Bassus’ earlier quote at §6. The regular ellipsis of the second verb in this construction adds brevity and gives greater prominence to the final word, *senectutem*. The argument prepares for a defence of old age, popularly feared and disliked for its proximity to death (Cic. *Sen.* 15 and 66). A regular progression is presented of old age following youth, and death, old age. The stages of life are presented here as a progression, and may be compared with the image of the circles of life at Ep. 12.6-9 (*MOTTO*, *Life* §6, lists other references to this image). **quemadmodum ... ita:** §2 n. **stultum:** *Borgo*, 167-169. Not as strong a term of disapprobation as *demens* (§6 n.), but it denotes a similar lack of Stoic *ratio*.

**Vivere noluit ... vult:** being unwilling to die is presented as having been unwilling to live, a paradox in that death is the extinguishing of life. As Seneca frequently does, the paradox is explained in the next sentences. As you cannot have life without death, Seneca argues that to reject one is to reject the other. This alludes to a commonplace in literature that fear of death destroys the ability to enjoy life (e.g. *Ep.* 4.5 and *Distichs of Cato*, 1.22). However, the stress here is more on a misapprehension of the nature of life: as he says at *Ep.* 77.19, *unum esse ex vitae officiis et mori*.

**vita enim ... est:** life is described as a gift qualified by the requirement of death. The giver is not stated here, but is made clear at §11 that it is nature. **exceptione:** (*OLD* §1, ‘qualification’ or
‘reservation’) the term can have a legal sense that fits with the following imagery of death being part of nature’s law.

ad hanc itur: death is the end of the journey as imagined in cursum and finem at §3. In other places in this letter Seneca portrays it as a departure (§§2 and 4). The impersonal form of ire continues the generalising of the previous passive.

Quam ideo … metuuntur: the preceding argument is summed up in this sentence (ideo). The idea of the foolishness of fearing death is repeated from the start of this section. The reason is expressed in a sententia with an antithesis between certa and dubia and the homoioteleuton of the two verbs. The generalising use of passives is continued. This argument ridicules popular beliefs by their own standards, as, strictly speaking, fearing is not appropriate for a Stoic, and at Ep. 13.4-13 Seneca argues that even following a popular logic, fear for future ills can be offset by a hope they will not happen. dementis: §6 demens n.


§11. Having argued that fearing death is folly as it is part of life and then it is inevitable, Seneca takes the argument a step further to argue that death is also fair. The fairness arises from it being in accordance with nature, which is, of course, the goal of Stoic ethics (above, p. 24). The tone of this section is legalistic, which is appropriate to the argument that death is just, and it is acknowledged directly when Seneca forbears to argue Nature’s case.

Mors necessitatem ... invictam: death has an inevitability that is both fair and immutable. The rule is stated simply before it is defended. Seneca returns to this idea regularly in his writing (cf. Mott, Death §18); an example of it in a consolatio is at Marc. 10.5. necessitatem: (OLD §2). invictam: (OLD §4b).

quis queri ... est?: a question follows with asyndeton that asserts, in the tone of a challenge, the truth of the preceding statement. The restatement it offers also functions as further explanation of the idea. condicio: (OLD §6) the basic sense of this word, a contract or agreement, contributes to the legal tone. Nemo non: the litotes underlines that there are no exceptions (cf. Traina 1987, 29-30).
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*prima autem ... aequalitas:* the idea is then expressed in the form of a legal maxim with alliteration of *prima* ... *pars* and polysyndeton of *aequitatis aequalitas.* Equity is a basic principle of justice (cf. *Bellincioni* 1979, 144, on *Ep.* 94.11).

*Sed nunc ... agere:* Seneca stops himself from trying to argue Nature’s case, acknowledging the legal tone of the preceding argument. Nature is personified, but Seneca argues she needs no advocate. Mention of nature facilitates the shift from arguing the fairness of death to arguing its naturalness, but the legal imagery is not abandoned (cf. *legem*). *supervacuum:* (*OLD* §2b) cf. *Williams* 2003, 151-2 and *Scarpat* 1970, 189-190, on Seneca’s use of this post-Ciceronian word.

*causam agere:* *Armisen-Marchetti,* 156 and *Smith,* 138, catalogue this particular image, but do not note the wider use of legal language.

*quae non ... suam:* the personification of nature is maintained: she is concerned for humanity’s wellbeing, wanting us to have no other law than hers. Mention of nature’s law introduces a large topic that is ably handled by *Inwood* 2005a, 224-248. Inwood remarks, 226, that the phrases ‘natural law’ and ‘law of nature’ have become so familiar that we are apt to forget that the two concepts, law and nature, were juxtaposed by Callicles in *Pl. Gorg.* 483. Such a contrast for Seneca reflects the vitiated state of popular values that fails to live according to nature’s law, which is to express in other words the fundamental goal of Stoicism: *secundum naturam vivere.* *Inwood* 2005a, 237-238, discusses other passages, particularly in the consolations, where Seneca refers to a *lex mortalitatis.*

*quidquid composit ... iterum:* nature’s law regarding death is described as a *sententia* with homoioteleuton, polyptoton and chiasmus of the four verbs and anaphora of *quidquid,* both of which contribute to the antithesis between *componere* and *resolvere.* The personification of nature is maintained; she is the subject of the verbs. *Hachmann* 1995, 216-217, sees a development here on the decomposition of nature at *Ep.* 26.4, in that here nature recomposes what has decomposed. For further development see *Ep.* 36.10-12 n. The process of death is put into a grander context, and Lucilius is offered in brief form a view of life and death not unlike passages such as *Brev.* 19 that have been described as the ‘view from above’ (cf. *Hadot* 1995, 238-250). The cyclical re-use of matter is both Stoic (*L-S* 44 D-E) and Epicurean (*L-S* 4).

§12. *Iam vero si cui contigit ut illum senectus leviter remitteret, non repente avulsum vitae sed minutatim subductum, o ne ille agere gratias diis omnibus debet quod satiatus ad requiem*
homini necessariam, lasso gratam perductus est. Vides quosdam optantes mortem, et quidem magis quam rogari solet vita. Nescio utros existimem maiorem nobis animum dare, qui deposcunt mortem an qui hilares eam quietique opperientur, quoniam illud ex rabie interdum ac repentina indignatione fit, haec ex iudicio certo tranquillitas est. Venit aliquis ad mortem iratus: mortem venientem nemo hilaris exceptit nisi qui se ad illam diu composuerat.

§12. The discussion of nature appears to move Seneca to something like rapture to argue that death from old age is something to be welcomed. It is a type of death to be grateful for. Seneca then makes a contrast with those who pray for death, bringing Lucilius into the discussion (vides) and drawing out the relevance of all this to making progress: steady composure gained through training is a model that gives more courage.

Iam vero... perductus est: this whole sentence has a measured, gentle and balanced structure in contrast to stereotypical Senecan point and brevity. The use of adverbs makes the verbals fuller and there is balance between avulsum and subductum each with an adverb that contributes to the contrast; the same balance is found with necessariam and gratam, each with a dative. The style fits appropriately to the thought of death as a gentle departure. Despite these measured tones, Seneca suggests the strength of his feeling by expressing the apodosis as an exclamation. He works hard to try to portray something that is naturally repellent as actually attractive. Old age is personified here in a portrayal that contrasts strongly with the menace at §4. The thought of the closing sententia at §4 is matched very closely, particularly in the adverbs: diutius with minutatim and mollius with leviter. remitteret: (OLD §6). avulsum: (OLD §1, ‘wrench away’) is contrasted with subductum, ‘withdraw’. A similar contrast occurs at Ep. 19.1: si potes, subduc te istis occupationibus; si minus, eripe. Each of the verbals is given an adverb for added emphasis: the last two, repente and minutatim, strengthen the contrast between the two participles. The sense of ease in leviter is returned to in §14. The gradual dissolution in minutatim subductum is described more fully at Ep. 26.4. o ne ille ... debet: gratitude is the proper response to the good fortune of dying from old age and contrasts with the complaint implied in queri at §11. The gratitude is also expressed towards the gods; the proper attitude to them figures importantly in later letters of Book IV, particularly the next one. ne: (OLD ne², ‘truly, indeed, assuredly’) an affirmative particle that is almost always followed, as here, with ille, iste or a personal pronoun. diis omnibus: for this reference to deities in the plural, see Ep. 31.9 deo n. satiatus: the idea of satiety making an old person ready for death is developed more fully by Cicero (Sen. 76 and 84). It draws upon the image of life as a banquet, which is a common one, e.g. Ep. 77.8 and Summers 1910,
253 and 254, for more examples. Satiety is also an aspect of the happy life in Ep. 34.2. For Seneca’s use of food imagery more generally, see Richardson-Hay 2009.

requiem ... gratam: a contrast is made between homini and lasso, between the general human condition and the particular condition of the elderly. necessiam: although this refers to the necessitatem at §11, in association with rest it becomes favourable. lasso gratam: such weariness had not been mentioned before; Seneca favours the image of death as a release from torment (e.g. Ep. 54.4-5 and Motto, Death §23, for others). perductus est: this recalls ducit at §4, but without the threatening connotations.

Vides quosdam ... vita: Seneca interrupts the train of the discussion to mention people who desire death. These are the reverse of those who do not want to die at §10. In a similar way to §§7-9, in §§10-12 Bassus is contrasted with two extremes. vides: the verb draws Lucilius back into the discussion. Placed first, the word helps signal the new topic. The present tense suggests such people are not so uncommon, as multos at §15 also suggests. optantes mortem: such people are apparently readily known by both Seneca and Lucilius. In Ep. 24.25 Seneca described a lust for dying (libido moriendi) as an emotion (affectus) that had taken control of many. Griffin 1986 offers more discussion of this phenomenon. Suicide is a frequent and important topic for Seneca; Ep. 70, in particular, focuses on the topic (Scarpat 2007); a useful overview on the scholarship is provided by Evenepoel 2004; see also Motto, Suicide, Coates 1998 and Hill 2004, ch. 7. et quidem ... vita: this idea appears as an afterthought, giving the sense of a mind at thought (§1 ut ... concinnavit n.). An undue desire for life is a fault that philosophy seeks to cure, but the reverse is no less a fault (Ep. 24.22-25). The final placement of vita heightens the antithesis with mortem at the end of its clause.

Nescio utros ... opperiuntur: the sense of ideas coming to Seneca as he writes is continued. He suggests he is unsure which contribute more to giving us courage, those who seek death or those who await it quietly. The device also allows Seneca to return to the group who meet death wisely in §9. These two groups are contrasted with a series of antitheses over the remainder of the section, and the preference of Seneca is made clear in the vocabulary he uses. nobis: this continues the involvement of Lucilius from vides above. animum dare: §8 n. deposcunt: a forceful word, ‘demand peremptorily’; the suggestion that they are petitioning the gods contrasts with the proper display of gratitude to them earlier. hilares ... quietique: Bassus was described as hilaris in
the face of death §3. The quieti anticipates the tranquillitas next. opperuntu:

this suggests a similar image to §9, that of awaiting a guest.

quoniam illud ... tranquillitas est: the two clauses contrasting the motivation of the two
groups are balanced to put particular stress on the two verbs (est ... fit). Each clause has a pronoun
and a prepositional phrase with ex. The verb esse is seldom emphatic, but here by position and contrast it is; the change suggested by fit contrasts with the stable state of est. This contrast
between philosophical constantia and popular levitas is fundamental to Seneca (above, p. 17). rabie
... repetina indignatione: the desire for death is characterized as arising from unstable passion,
madness and anger. In Stoic theory vulnerability to such passions was the mark of the fool, as is
made clear at Ep. 37.4. By contrast philosophical acceptance of death arises from a stable
judgement (ex iudicio certo) which is a foundation of the happy life (cf. Vit. 5.3 and Grimal 1978,
374-379) and it is represented by tranquillity, which is one of the happy life’s manifestations
(above, p. 259). By such a word choice Seneca is associating Bassus with a number of sage-like
 qualities that he displays in the face of death. tranquillitas: consistent here with its contrast to a
mad desire for death, tranquillitas was associated with a freedom from unhealthy desire, and was
thought to come from a stable willing for what was right, or constantia (Hachmann 1995, 297-300).
Together with securitas (§3 securi n.), which was a freedom from the other main passion, fear, this
formed the basis of the happy life (Ep. 31.3 beatae vitae n.).

Venit aliquis ... composuerat: the contrast between the two approaches to death is summed
up in a pair of clauses linked by asyndeton. The important contrast between the clauses is marked
by the forward placement of venit and venientem in each, which emphasizes the contrast between
who is approaching whom. The use of this metaphor of travel links this image to that at the end
of §9. The crucial antithesis that motivates this contrast is that between the two adjectives iratus
and hilaris. Such a contrast in mental states is in keeping with the idea that philosophy is a mental
training (below, p. 183). hilaris: another defining quality of the composed state is given. exceptit:
(OLD §8) the verb recalls receperunt at §9. nisi ... composuerat: this requirement recalls the diu
discenda of §4 and the lentam animi firmitatem of §8. composuerat: (OLD §12) it is possible that the
earlier uses of this verb in the letter are intended to be recalled here. The image of laying oneself
out for burial in §5 is striking and might be seen as a type of training that contributes to the
composure here. Similarly the verb receives emphasis in its repetition in the image of nature
compounding and resolving at §11, and it is possible that the sage’s composure here can be seen
as something in accordance with nature: he is composing himself in preparation for nature to
dissolve him. In the previous letter also Seneca instructed Lucilius in facing death: *compone mores
tuos* (*Ep*. 29.9). See further *Ep*. 40.2 *composita n*.

**Section E (§§13-15).** Seneca admits to visiting Bassus regularly to see if the strength of his
mind weakens with his body. He finds, by contrast, that Bassus is like a chariot racer approaching
the finish line. He then records what Bassus expects at the point of death before reiterating to
Lucilius why he feels Bassus’ words have such force and influence for him.

§13. *Fateor ergo ad hominem mihi carum ex pluribus me causis frequentius venisse, ut scirem*
an illum totiens eundem invenirem, numquid cum corporis viribus minueretur animi vigor;
qui sic crescebat illi quomodo manifestior notari solet agitatorum laetitia cum septimo spatio
palmea adpropinquant.

§13. *Fateor ergo ... vigor:* Seneca now reveals an almost scientific interest in whether Bassus
will remain steadfast as death nears. *ergo:* (*OLD* §5) has transitional force, introducing a new
topic. *carum:* this is the most explicit statement of Seneca’s affection for his friend, though it is
apparent from the use of ‘*noster*’ earlier. In part it perhaps serves to balance what follows, which
suggests a more detached interest in Bassus rather than one of friendship. *frequentius:* the letter
opened with Seneca saying he had seen Bassus; one might take from this that he had a single visit
in mind. Here he reveals that he has been visiting him quite frequently. It is relevant to his
portrayal of Bassus’ authority that it is not based on one impression. For the contrast of Seneca’s
practice here with that of Marcellinus in *Ep*. 29, see above, p. 71. *ex pluribus causis:* (*OLD* §7)
Seneca is careful to preface that his interest in how Bassus meets death is not his only motive for
visiting. *ut scirem ... vigor:* Seneca wishes to ascertain that Bassus’ steadfastness is stable. This is
expressed first as an enquiry whether he will find him the same (*eundem*), an expression that
places no value on Bassus’ physical state, as is made explicit in the next antithesis between the
respective strengths of Bassus’ mind and the body. A similar contrast was implied at the start of
the letter (§§3). At *Ep*. 26.2 Seneca was grateful that his mind was unimpaired by the weakening of
his body; here he is interested to see if the same is the case for someone considerably older. For
unchangingness as a fundamental attribute of constancy, see above, p. 17. *totiens:* with the
*quotiens* not expressed, this has the sense of ‘each time’ (cf. *Ep*. 33.8). *numquid:* paratactically
following *an*, it depends on *scirem*. *vigor:* mental strength is an important image in Stoicism (*ἰσχύς
ψυχῆς*, cf. Stob. *Ecl*. 2.7.5b (= *W* 2.62, *SVF* 3.95 and L-S 60K) and 2.7.5b4 (= *SVF* 1.563)). See above, p.
28, for its relationship to *tonos* and willpower. Armisen-Marchetti 1996, 83–84, notes that Seneca
favours *vigor* or *robur* to express this rather than *vis*. Seneca reveals the source of this strength at *Ep*. 41.5 n.

**qui sic ... adpropinquant:** Seneca likens Bassus’ joy to that of a charioteer on the last lap of a race approaching the finish line. Imagery from charioteering and chariot racing had a long history in literature, starting with Homer, and used famously by Plato in an analogy of the soul (*Phdr*. 246). It had been an aristocratic pursuit in Greece. In Seneca’s day it was a popular entertainment at Rome and something the emperor took part in, to the disapproval of his peers (Tac. *Ann*. 14.14). For Seneca’s other uses of this imagery, which are relatively infrequent, see Armisen-Marchetti, 92.

This image is an important one in the presentation of Bassus. In two respects it presents Bassus in non-Epicurean terms, and it is interesting that only after this does Seneca mention, as if in passing, that Bassus is an Epicurean. Firstly Epicureans saw death as the end of the existence of both the soul and the body. As such it was a finish, but not really a goal. Stoics, however, could see death as a goal — the ultimate trial of one’s virtue in life seen as a series of such trials. Secondly, Epicurus, *Ep. Men*. 126–127 (= Us 126–127, D.L. 10.126–127, L-S 24A), emphasized that it was life that was to be enjoyed, whereas death was neither to be feared, nor to be sought. By contrast, Stoics often emphasized the discomforts of life, and the release death gave from them. The sense of rising joy and image of death as a victory are therefore more appropriate to Stoics. Hachmann 1995, 218–219, sees Seneca using this image to separate Bassus from his Epicurean friends and move him among the Stoic sages. However, at this stage of the letter his Epicurean affiliation has not been stated and although what he has said accords with Epicurus, Seneca did not attribute it to him explicitly (above, p. 72). Furthermore, Bassus in his view of death is not simply Stoic, but can also, and perhaps more naturally, be seen as behaving like a traditional Roman (above, p. 71).

**crescebat:** far from waning in proportion to the decline of Bassus’ physical strength, his mind’s strength was growing. **notari:** (OLD §13). **agitatorium:** a generalizing plural. **laetitia:** placed emphatically last in its clause. In the context of the discussion of death, this word relates to *verum gaudium* in *Ep*. 23.1–8 (§3 *in conspectu ... deficiatur* n.). **septimo spatio:** each circuit of the arena was a *spatium* and seven of them was the common length of a race. **palmae:** the victor was given a palm and it was often used by metonymy to refer to the victory itself. **adpropinquant:** another instance of the image of death in the context of travel.
§14. Dicebat quidem ille Epicuri praeceptis obsequens, primum sperare se nullum dolorem esse in illo extremo anhelitu; si tamen esset, habere aliquantum in ipsa brevitate solacii; nullum enim dolorem longum esse qui magnus est. Ceterum succursurum sibi etiam in ipsa distractione animae corporisque, si cum cruciatu id fieret, post illum dolorem se dolere non posse. Non dubitare autem se quin senilis anima in primis labris esset nec magna vi distraheretur a corpore. ‘Ignis qui alentem materiam occupavit aqua et interdum ruina extinguedus est: ille qui alimentis deficitur sua sponte subsidit.’

§14. With the image of the charioteer approaching the finish line, the discussion shifts to the act of dying and what is to be feared in it. Bassus takes comfort in Epicureanism over the possible pain and he notes, in addition, that in his frail condition he doubts the separation of body and soul will be difficult. Before modern anaesthetics pain was a more serious problem (As Douglas 1990, 1, notes).

Dicebat ... obsequens: the whole section that follows this lemma is in indirect discourse apart from the closing statement, which is in direct speech; the effect of this shift (above, p. 72) is lost in the translation of Gummere, 219-221, who makes the whole passage direct speech. Dicebat: the imperfect tense suggests emphatic repetition (cf. aiebat (§16). Epicuri ... obsequens: this aspect of Bassus, our only source for his Epicureanism, is introduced here only after his status as a philosopher has been clearly established (above, p. 63). It is offered as explanation of the arguments that follow, on coping with the possible pain of death. This is important as the highest goal of Epicureanism, pleasure, was defined as the absence of pain (Epicurus R.S. 4 (= D.L. 10.139 and L-S 21C). For Stoics, by contrast, it was technically an indifferent, and indeed a popular Stoic epithet, philoponos, could have the sense of ‘pain-loving’ (below, p. 117, n. 397). obsequens: an appropriate word for an Epicurean, because as Seneca will stress in Ep. 33.4, Epicureanism was a very hierarchical school.

primum sperare ... anhelitu: Bassus’ first choice (primum) is that there be no pain in the final breath. This, however, is presented only as a wish (sperare) in keeping with Epicurean values, from which he took as his goal a life free of pain, but from which he also acquired teachings more substantial than mere hope with which to face any pain if necessary. Furthermore, from the way Seneca has presented Bassus, we could expect him to cope with pain if required.

si tamen ... solacii: if hope does not suffice, Bassus has some arguments to console him in confronting this possible pain. aliquantum ... solacii: this limits the amount of comfort and, as with succursurum below, suggests that it is in no way foundational to Bassus’ composure.
nullum enim … magnus est: this thought, presented as an antithesis between *longum* and *magnus*, is one Seneca repeats on a number of occasions (cf. *Motto, Pain* §5). He explains it most fully at *Ep.* 78.7-10, where he presents it as a scientifically observable truth. It is also, however, a basic Epicurean doctrine (V.S. 4 (= I-G I-6, 4) and R.S. 4 (= D.L. 10.140), and therefore appropriate to Bassus’ adherence to Epicurus. *est*: a retained indicative (§5, est n.) stressing this as a fact.

Ceterum succursurum … posse: the confidence that death is annihilation, expressed in §§5-6, is the basis of this reassurance, now applied to the particular sensation of pain. As mentioned (§6 Tam … *sensurus* n.), the argument that death is annihilation is also used in *consolationes*. *succursum sibi*: the subject of this infinitive is the final infinitive phrase. *distractione*: this is a strong image. In other places Seneca describes the soul as departing from the body (*Prov.* 6.9 and *Ep.* 76.33). It is repeated with the use of *distrahiretur* in the next sentence. The verb can be used to describe the action of the rack (cf. *Ep.* 78.14) and such a sense is picked up by *cruciatu* in the next clause.

Non dubitare … corpore: after describing his preparedness to face a painful end if his soul must be wrenched from his body, Bassus denies this will be necessary on account of his age. The same vocabulary of the previous phrase is repeated (*anima* … *distrahiretur* … *corpore*) and the litotes of *non dubitare* and *nec magna vi* underlines his conviction. *senilis anima*: the state of Bassus’ body is applied to his *anima* as well, increasing the suggested ease of separation. By contrast the strength of his *animus* has been described as growing. (§13). *in primis labris*: the only other occurrence of this phrase in classical Latin is in Seneca (*Nat.* 3.pr.16), as an image of preparedness to die. The phrase reflects the ancient idea of the soul as breath which departed through the mouth. It is an image that Seneca makes effective use of when describing his asthma at *Ep.* 54.2. Lucretius, 3.607-614, in the context of denying any afterlife to the soul, attacks the idea of the soul departing from the mouth.

‘Ignis qui … subsidit’: Bassus’ comments are concluded with direct speech. The extinguishing of two types of fires is contrasted: one that has fuel must be actively extinguished, one that lacks fuel goes out on its own. In contrast to the same analogy in Cic. *Sen.* 71, where the two types are applied explicitly to *adulescentes* and *senes* explicitly, Seneca leaves the reader to relate this analogy to the soul. *Armisen-Marchetti*, 116-117, gives more examples of the soul as an internal fire. There are a number of echoes of words and images from the start of the letter:
imagery of fire and collapsing buildings at §§2 and 4, *deficitur*, recalling the word’s use at §§1 and 3, and finally the quiet dying down of the fire recalling the idea of death from old age being gentle at §§4 and 12. The verbs used in the two images create an antithesis between the violence of *occupavit* and *extinguendus*, increased by *ruina* and the gentleness of *deficitur* and *subsidiit*. **alimentis**: (OLD §3) this might recall the image of satiety in §12. **sua sponte**: occurs also in Cicero’s analogy and stresses its naturalness. **subsidiit**: (OLD §6, ‘die down’).

§15. Libenter haec, mi Lucili, audio non tamquam nova, sed tamquam in rem praesentem perductus. Quid ergo? non multos spectavi abrumpentes vitam? Ego vero vidi, sed plus momenti apud me habent qui ad mortem veniunt sine odio vitae et admittunt illam, non attrahunt.

§15. Seneca concludes this section with a reiteration (cf. §§7 and 9) of arguably the most prominent idea of the letter, the particular benefit he himself gets from hearing Bassus, which he relates to Bassus’ *auctoritas* that is revealed in his composure (above, p. 69). This composure is again, as at §12, contrasted to those who seek death. However, the ones wishing for death that in the earlier section Lucilius was said to have seen, are replaced here by Seneca’s claim to have actually witnessed people killing themselves.

**Libenter haec, ... perductus**: the language and imagery of §§7 and 9 are repeated closely, from §7 the idea of being in the presence of death and that what is being said is not new (*non tamquam nova*), and from §9 the idea of listening with pleasure (*libenter ... audio*). **mi Lucili**: this address serves effectively to emphasize the change in topic, as well as the importance of what follows (§4 Lucili n). **in rem praesentem perductus**: so in §7, *de morte vicina*, but here Seneca adds the suggestion that he also is in its presence. This phrase is used a number of times to stress the immediacy and personal contact Seneca felt was necessary for learning. It was something that *exempla* offered (cf. Ep. 6.5, quoted above, p. 66). It is also used at Ep. 98.18 in a letter where the concept of exemplarity is prominent. Furthermore, the phrase is also used at Ep. 59.6, where Seneca argues such immediacy is something useful that metaphors achieve for the reader (cf. BARTSCH 2009, 192-193 and KER 2009, 178-179).

**Quid ergo? ... vitam?**: Seneca interjects upon himself, perhaps sensing the reader’s impatience at getting the same idea yet again. **Quid ergo?**: a frequent idiom to introduce an interjection, usually, as here a rhetorical question. It is also an example of Seneca’s colloquial style (cf. SUMMERS 1910, 1). **spectavi**: BOYLE 1994, 229, notes this is a technical term for theatre
viewing and can be related to the importance of the theatrical in Seneca (cf. Hijmans 1966), but it also stresses that he has witnessed many people taking their lives. For the literature on Roman suicide, see §12 *vides quosdam ... vita* n. and above, p. 65. The suicides described in literature, including Seneca’s own, were a form of spectacle, viewed by the friends of the person dying, and Seneca could have been in attendance at some of these. His meetings with Bassus are implicitly compared to such attendances on someone’s death (Griffin 1986, 198). *multos*: the *multos* is possibly hyperbole, and the frequency of the theme in literature is not a reliable reflection of what might have been happening (Griffin 1986, 199-200). *abrumptentes vitam*: the idiom is used at *Ep*. 78.2 for contemplated suicide by Seneca. The violence of it echoes that of *distraheretur* at §14 above. The phrase and its variant with *lucem* is fairly frequent in literature and often applied to suicide: cf. Sen. *Tro.* 939, Tac. *Ann.* 16.28, Verg. *Aen.* 4.631, 8.579 and 9.497.

*Ego vero vidi*: Seneca answers his own question, continuing the conversational tone and underlining the claim to have witnessed many suicides. *vero*: the same use as §7 n.

*sed plus ... adtrahunt*: the contrast between seeking death and awaiting it is repeated from §12. *momenti*: (OLD §8) see above, p. 69, n. 349, for discussion of this term. *ad mortem veniunt*: in contrast to §12 it is they who approach, rather than death. *odio vitae*: the same idea is expressed as *libido moriendi* at *Ep.* 24.25. *admittunt ... adtrahunt*: the imagery is similar to §9, where death is received into a house. In this, death is similarly personified and the person committing suicide drags him in, displaying the same lack of composure as those seeking death in §12.

*Section F (§§16-18).* For much of the letter Seneca had made a lot of the image of Bassus being close to death or death being close to Bassus. Here he adds a twist to this by having Bassus say that death is always close to us. The idea that we should be prepared to die at any time is a frequent one in Seneca (e.g. *Epp.* 4.7-9, 12.6 and 26.7 in earlier epistles and Motto, *Death* §19). The corollary that death is also close is mentioned in *Ep.* 24.15. Here it brings the letter towards a close, preparing for the need to meditate on death to overcome the fear of it. In *Ep.* 49.11 he uses the same idea in a similar place in the letter to emphasize the need for urgency in pursuing philosophy. At first sight this claim that death is always close seems inconsistent with ideas of it being nearer or further in the earlier part of the letter, but the inconsistency that Seneca deals with in this section is really one between appearances and reality: those described earlier as
closer to death (e.g. §9) have really gained a true appreciation of the mortality that eludes those who have not been forced to confront it.

§16. Illud quidem aiebat tormentum nostra nos sentire opera, quod tunc trepidamus cum prope a nobis esse credimus mortem: a quo enim non prope est, parata omnibus locis omnibusque momentis? ‘Sed consideremus’ inquit ‘tunc cum aliquia causa moriendi videtur accedere, quanto aliae propiores sint quae non timentur.’ Hostis alicui mortem minabatur, hanc cruditas occupavit.

§16. The direction Bassus’ comments take is not predictable from what has gone before. The phrase, illud ... tormentum and the verb sentire pick up the imagery of torture in §14, suggesting that the topic of pain will be resumed, only for Bassus to apply it to a different subject. Throughout this passage Bassus uses the 1st p. pl., which both generalizes the condition and does not exclude himself from it.

Illud quidem ... opera: that it is by our own doing that we are miserable is emphasized by the hyperbaton and forward placement of nostra. It is a common theme in ancient philosophy, and one that followed from the idea that the happy life was in our own power (Ep. 31.5 Quid votis ... felicem n.). tormentum: (OLD §4) the use of opera makes this metaphorical; we devise a form of torture for ourselves.

quod tunc ... mortem: on its own this reason is more provocative than explanatory, preparing for an explanation that follows of why a belief in death being close at times is mistaken. The verbs of this sentence and the following one are retained indicatives in indirect discourse, (§5 est n.), which contributes to the difficulty of deciding who is speaking, Bassus or Seneca. tunc ... cum: the mention of a particular time (tunc) emphasizes that this is an occasional state of awareness as opposed to a constant reality that we remain unaware of, as is spelt out in §17. The construction is used again in direct speech of the next sentence. credimus: this is a belief, as opposed to reality. mortem: placed emphatically last.

a quo ... momentis?: Bassus challenges the belief that death is only sometimes close with a rhetorical question. The sense is completed at est, where the constant closeness of death is insisted on, and the parata phrase serves to personify death as an enemy, prepared at all times and in all places.
‘Sed consideremus ... timentur’: the last words of Bassus are given in direct speech, as in each of the preceding quotes (§§6 and 14). Earlier in the letter it is death that has been described as approaching (e.g. §§9 and 12). Here Seneca makes this more precise with a distinction between death and the causes of death (causa moriendi ...causae): the causes can appear to approach or be closer, but death, as he says in the next section, is always at the same distance from us. Bassus presents this idea in the form of a paradox that underlines our blindness to reality: we notice one form of death approaching, but remain unaware of others that are actually closer. tunc cum: above, tunc ... cum n. videtur: the use of videtur is picked up in the next section: alias esse, alias videri.

Hostis alicui ... occupavit: as with the next section, it is not clear whether it is Bassus or Seneca saying this. Bassus’ general statement is vividly illustrated, and expressed with a rapidity in keeping with the suddenness of the death. The image of an enemy threatening death, but being beaten to it by indigestion has an element of humour to it, as well as being very undignified, in contrast to the dignity that Bassus has achieved. Indigestion is a symptom both of luxury and of overeating, both frequent targets of Seneca’s criticism (Motto, Eating §1 and Luxury §14 and Richardson-Hay 2009). mortem ... hanc: death here is shorthand for one of the causae moriendi just identified, as hanc is contrasted with the one that indigestion brings. occupavit: (OLD §11, ‘catch (a person) before he is able to carry out his purpose’). Indigestion is personified as launching an attack. Another instance of the gnomic perfect (§4 desinit morbus ... revocavit n.).

§17. Si distinguere voluerimus causas metus nostri, inveniemus alias esse, alias videri. Non mortem timemus sed cogitationem mortis; ab ipsa enim semper tantundem absumus. Ita si timenda mors est, semper timenda est: quod enim morti tempus exemptum est?

§17. As with the last sentence of §16, editors treat these as the words of Seneca, not Bassus. In fact, along with that sentence all of this section could be interpreted as continued direct speech by Bassus. As at §10, it is not immediately clear who is talking (above, p. 72); Seneca continues to use 1st p. pl. verbs. The argument proceeds rapidly with characteristic Senecan urgency; the misapprehension of the person killed by indigestion is revealed as a more general mistake over what really threatens us. Therefore it is not really death we fear, but thinking about it, something we only do when forced to by it appearing closer. The logic of death’s continual presence is then pursued to make fear of death look foolish: if it is something to be feared it must always be feared.
Si distinguere ... videri: this is the sort of analysis of what we fear that Seneca had recommended to Lucilius in Ep. 13. At §§4-5 of that letter he argued many fears would be revealed as vain or exaggerated. voluerimus: An important qualifier that suggests we are generally unwilling to make such an analysis. esse ... videri: the antithesis between reality and appearance is explained by the antithesis of mortem and cogitationem mortis in the next sentence.

Non mortem ... absumus: this is a paradoxical claim that seeks to reveal our misunderstanding of the nature of death. There is an implicit connection between death as reality and the thought of death as only an appearance. This is explained by saying that death is always the same distance from us, which Maurach 1987, 77-78, explains with reference to the idea that our fate is predetermined and unalterable. In respect of this, Seneca’s advice on certa and dubia at §10 is relevant. What we actually fear is not this death but the phantoms of it conjured by our minds as we guess and fear that it might be present in potential threats. cogitationem: is picked up by the last word of the letter, cogita. tantundem: the imagery in this letter of us approaching death or death approaching us is at this point revealed to be appearance, not reality. And in respect of this the idea that Bassus is close to death reflects not a reality, but rather the greater understanding Bassus has of the actual reality.

Ita si ... timenda est: the logic of the previous distinction is driven home to show that fear of death is foolish. The thought is tightly packed. mors: this is the ever-present death in contrast to the thought of it. Once the true nature of death is recognized, that it is ever-present, then the foolishness of fearing it is also recognized, as it would always need to be feared. That this is seldom understood is a reflection of the common reluctance to look at death properly, implied by voluerimus above.

quod enim ... exemptum est?: A rhetorical question is given to reinforce the previous argument. It reiterates the image of death being prepared at all times at §16.


§18. As with many of Seneca’s letters, this one ends with an idea that he does not develop, but leaves for the reader to continue to think on (cf. Wilson 1987, 118). He draws an analogy between letters and a life, that is both paradoxical and humorous. However, the nature of that relationship is left for the reader to pursue.
Sed vereri debeo ... oderis: the first two words capture two of the major themes of the letter: fear and a sense of propriety. After arguing at length that death should not be feared, we discover that writing overly long letters should be *(vereri debeo)*! A similar reversal in expectations is contained in the idea that Lucilius would hate these letters more than death. The humour serves to relax the reader after the serious discussion of the letter. It reminds the reader of the relationship of epistolary friendship: Seneca is concerned not to bore his friend. Both the humour and the suggestion of concern make the reader more receptive to the closing imperatives (for more on Seneca’s use of humour, see GRANT 2000). *tam longas epistulas*: a generalizing plural. It does not invalidate Seneca’s point, but this epistle is by no means the longest in the collection so far (Epp. 9, 13, 14 and 24 are longer), although it is the longest of Book IV. Indeed the book is distinctive for having a higher than normal proportion of short letters (above, p. 41). This joke suggests that this is consciously so, and Seneca presents himself as diligent in maintaining epistolary propriety in respect of length in the following letter.

*Itaque finem faciam*: again the theme of the letter is alluded to in choice of vocabulary, and through it the analogy between a letter and life is continued. *finem*: had been used as a term for death at the start of the epistle (§3). At Ep. 58.37 Seneca closes the letter with the same analogy, and a similar use of humour:

*Sed in longum exeo; est praeterea materia quae ducere diem possit: et quomodo finem inponere vitae poterit qui epistulae non potest? Vale ergo: quod libentius quam mortes lecturas es. Vale.* (Ep. 58.37)

Knowing how to die properly is likened to knowing how to end a letter properly. The playfulness with which Seneca closes letters has been seen already in the first three books, where the concluding quotes are described as debts in a wide variety of images (cf. SPINA 1999a, 25-26). As the contrast of long letters with death is left for the reader to ponder, it is not unreasonable to pursue it further. One could do this by using what Seneca had said about time at Ep. 12.6. There he described units of time as being complete in themselves, but being encompassed by larger similarly complete units, ranging from a day to an entire life. This analogy could be applied to his letters: each is like a day, complete in itself. They, in turn, are encompassed by the larger unit of the book. The entire work, made up of these books, unlike some sorts of literature, had no obvious end point, beyond the death of its author, and in this they matched a life. As such, it is possible that the *Epistles* as a work were congenial to Seneca at this stage of his life, given the uncertainty around how much longer he might live; they could coherently continue for as long as he lived,
Commentary on Epistle 30

and equally coherently end when he died.

**tu tamen ... cogita:** contrasted by asyndeton with Seneca’s own action (*faciam*), the letter closes with instruction for Lucilius. The injunction matches closely that of Epicurus given twice at the close of *Ep. 26:* *meditare mortem* (§§8 and 10). Such a directive refers to a fundamental exercise in philosophy (above, p. 64). Here this exercise is presented as a paradox; the way to overcome what we fear, revealed at §17 as thinking about death, is in fact to think about it! *cogita:* the importance of meditating on certain topics has been stressed in this letter (§4 *diu discenda n.*), one of the most important of these was death. The imperative of *cogitare,* as here, and similar verbs is often a signal that the reader is being presented with a *meditatio* (*Newman* 1989, 1494). Here it is a paradoxical thought to be reflected on after the letter ends. The verb occurs four more times in Book IV. At *Ep. 31.11* it is fairly similar, signal a idea to be reflected on after the letter ends. In the other three instances (*Epp. 32.3, 35.3 and 36.10*) it is offered as a thought either to help with a problem or to encourage a different attitude. Of these the most developed is at *Ep. 32.3,* where the verb is an instruction to imagine a hypothetical scenario. For more on the *meditatio,* see *Newman* 1989, 1483–1495 and *Bartsch* 2009, 194–200.

**Vale:** standard close to a Latin letter. Found in all letters of the collection.
Essay on Epistle 31

Ep. 31 in many ways could be described as a stereotypical Senecan letter. It is thematically diverse, touching on the status of prayers, the importance of toil, the nature of the good, the need for self-sufficiency, the nature of the divine and its contrast with popular values — to give a list that is not exhaustive.\(^{363}\) It also has frequent variations in tone; Seneca shifts suddenly from fairly relaxed didactic description of fundamental philosophical concepts to urgent exhortation, as at the end of §6. There is, however, a unity to the letter, but one that is basic to the whole work, that of Seneca offering guidance to his friend in living a philosophical life.\(^{364}\) This recourse to the wider collection for the letter’s unity has a number of important aspects. In particular, it provides a context for a theme that is both introduced at the very start of the letter and also explains to a very great measure the rest of its content. This is the theme of Lucilius’ philosophical progress, a progress that is measured particularly in terms of the rejection of the popular values of contemporary Romans, but also in the adoption of philosophical ones.

That this letter depends for its unity so markedly on the broader context of the whole work is an argument in itself for the letter marking a development in the correspondence.\(^{365}\) The basic importance of the contrast between philosophical and popular values in this letter, along with the extensive use of exhortation, make it a good vehicle for looking more critically at the claims of Habinek that Seneca’s writing is all ‘hortatory’ and that it aims to ‘transmit the dominant ideology’.\(^{366}\) The contrast between the two value systems is also the appropriate context for

\(^{363}\) The letter is a good illustration of the trouble translators have with providing a heading for each letter. GUMMERE, 223, cautiously opts for an impressionistic ‘On siren songs’.

\(^{364}\) This to reiterate what has been said earlier, that ‘serial epistolography’ is the best definition of the genre (above, p. 32).

\(^{365}\) See above, p. 45.

examining Seneca’s attitude to religion and Rome’s past as it is revealed here. Finally, an explanation for the prominence Seneca gives to toil in the letter will be offered.

This epistle has two fairly brief commentaries by Maurach and Wagenvoort.\textsuperscript{367} It has attracted a fairly high level of attention from the three authors who have analysed the organization of the Epistles.\textsuperscript{368} Needless to say, their interest is mainly on the development in either Lucilius’ progress (principally in §1) or the doctrinal arguments. Maurach and Hachmann disagree on whether this letter concludes a cycle or introduces a new one.\textsuperscript{369} The doctrinal statements of this letter are quoted on occasions in discussions of Stoic theory,\textsuperscript{370} but there is no analysis that I have seen that attempts to treat the letter as a literary whole and to give equal weight to the literary and the philosophical aspects of the letter.

Lucilius’ progress is the topic of the letter’s opening sentence. It is described as a rejection of popular goods (\textit{popularibus bonis}) for all that is best (\textit{optima quaeque}). This antithesis is basic to Seneca’s view of philosophy: philosophical progress is a process of rejecting the vitiated values of society for the healthy values of philosophy. In the Epistles a basic first step in this is abandoning the false allure of a public career for a life of philosophical retirement.\textsuperscript{371} This was a theme of particular importance in the first three books, which Seneca summarized at the end of the last letter of that series:

\textit{Quis enim placere populo potest cui placet virtus? ... Quid ergo illa laudata et omnibus praeferenda artibus rebusque philosophia praestabit? scilicet ut malis tibi placere quam populo, ut aestimes iudicia, non numeres (Ep. 29.11-12).}

Virtue and society in general are irreconcilably opposed. To seek to gain the favour of society is to be alienated from virtue. Philosophy teaches the ability to disregard popular opinion in preference to a self-regard (\textit{tibi placere}) that is a more reliable touchstone for true value than society in general, a contrast that is also expressed in the ability to form one’s own opinions,

\textsuperscript{367} MAURACH 1987, 79-87 and WAGENVOORT 1948, 100-106. The notes accompanying the texts of BOUILLET, 227-232, PRÊCHAC, 136-141 and LORETTO, 64-67, are also useful on a number of individual points.


\textsuperscript{369} Maurach stresses the links back to previous letters as a way of concluding a cycle. However, this is to avoid seeing the ways that the letter serves to introduce a new cycle (cf. above, p. 45), which is what Hachmann has argued for, against Maurach, and supported by Hengelbrock.

\textsuperscript{370} Principally at §§5 and 8.

\textsuperscript{371} See further, below, p. 258.
rather than follow those most widespread (aestimes iudicia, non numeres). Although Seneca often describes philosophers as noble and focuses his disapproval of popular values on the crowd (turba), it is not adequate to reduce this antithesis to one between the common mob and an aristocracy, as this letter shows: at §2, Seneca says, Surdum te amantissimis tuis praesta. The vox ... publica that Seneca’s aristocratic correspondent must avoid is one possessed by his very parents. 372

What is the basis for this antithesis between popular and philosophical values? For Stoics this dichotomy of values is explained through the theory of oikeiōsis, a theory that seeks to explain ethical development as something natural that proceeds from our primary impulse. At Ep. 121.17 Seneca describes this primary impulse as an attachment to oneself, a concern for one’s safety:

Primum sibi ipsum conciliatur animal; debet enim aliquid esse ad quod alia referantur. Voluptatem peto. Cui? mihi; ergo mei curam ago. Dolorem refugio. Pro quo? pro me; ergo mei curam ago. Si omnia propter curam mei facio, ante omnia est mei cura. Haec animalibus inest cunctis, nec inseritur sed innascitur.

Seneca referred this ‘primary attachment’ to oneself by a number of phrases, such as cura sui, conciliatio sui and amor sui. 373 He goes on to argue (Ep. 120.18-19) that this instinct can be seen in the way nature has instilled in animals from birth a sense of what is dangerous to them. This attachment consists of an awareness of one’s constitution, something Diogenes Laertius describes as nature attaching the animal to itself. 374 For a human the attachment to oneself developed as one grew. With maturity a human should realize that what was most truly oneself was not one’s body, but one’s ratio, that one was rationalis. 375 In addition, when it was understood that this ratio had a divine source, one had the basis for acquiring magnitudo animi. 376 The development, then, of a human into a fully animal rationale was for Stoics part of nature’s blueprint.

372 This point is well argued by BELLINCIONI 1978, 26-27, who citing Ep. 94.53-54, points out that the populus is everyone, which can become distorted into the more vitiated form of the crowd. Vit. 2.2, as well as Ep. 114.12, make clear that even the crowd includes every social class.

373 ‘Primary attachment’ is the translation of INWOOD 2007a, 339; L-S, 351, prefer ‘appropriation’. Examples of Seneca’s various ways of denoting this concept are at Ep. 116.3, cura sui, at Ep. 121.24, conciliatio sui, and at Ep. 82.15, amor sui at; caritas is also used (Ep. 121.24); FISCHER 1914, 69-71. For the affective implications of some of these terms see below, p. 241.


375 Cic. Fin. 3.21 (= L-S 59D) and Sen. Ep. 121.14-16.

376 Above, p. 24.
The understanding that the mind was the only thing that was truly one’s own was the basis of the Stoic system of values. From this understanding they could define the good and the bad as entirely mental, related to virtue and vice, as Seneca explicates for the first time to his friend in this letter (§5). What are popularly believed to be goods are revealed not to match this philosophical criterion (§10). Technically they form a class of ‘indifferents’, neither good nor bad, but in this letter Seneca only makes a passing reference to such a concept at §3.\(^{377}\) Although one can see that Seneca is introducing a new stage of philosophy that is specifically Stoic in this letter, he does so by way of sketching what lies ahead, rather than in any detailed lesson.

That it was by nature’s agency that this occurred was fundamental to the consistency to the Stoic conception of the world — Stoic ethics were built around the imperative to follow nature. Yet this transition to valuing reason over what should be seen as having merely instrumental value, though in theory natural, was not smooth. Its perfect realization, the sage, was exceptionally rare. To follow nature was to be on the path to sagehood; the metaphor of progress as travel is one of the most frequent in Seneca’s works. To turn aside from this path in the Greek sources is \textit{diastrophē}, a turning away or a distortion. Seneca expresses this as either \textit{error}, wandering from the correct path, or \textit{pravitas}, the opposite of what is \textit{rectus}.\(^ {378}\) For Stoics there were two causes of this error, either being misled by external things, and thereby valuing what should be means as ends in themselves, or through the influence of associates.\(^ {379}\) Of these for Seneca by far the most emphasized is the bad influence of society; we are influenced by the bad example of others, while acting as a bad example ourselves:

\textit{Nemo sibi tantummodo errat, sed alieni erroris et causa et auctor est} (Vit. 1.4).\(^ {380}\) However, the influence of pleasure was an example of the other source; it held the danger of becoming an end in itself (Ep. 116.3):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Curam nobis nostri natura mandavit, sed huic ubi nimium indulseris, vitium est. Voluptatatem natura necessariis rebus admiscuit, non ut illam peteremus, sed ut ea sine quibus non possumus vivere gratiora nobis illius faceret accessio: suo veniat iure, luxuria est.}
\end{quote}

\(^{377}\) See below, §§3–8 n.

\(^{378}\) The basic source for this is \textit{Grilli} 1963, which is more directly applied to Seneca by \textit{Bellincioni} 1978, 15–31 and \textit{Lotito} 2001, 69–75.

\(^{379}\) E.g. D.L. 7.89 (= \textit{SVF} 3.228).

\(^{380}\) Frequently society is distilled into its most virulent form, the crowd, as the most pernicious teacher of false values, as at \textit{Epp.} 7.1 and 8.1; see below, p. 186.
The theory of oikeiōsis, then, was fundamental to the Stoic ethical system. Not only did it give the authority of nature as its basis, but with the additional idea of diastrophē it explained how humans came to live in error, to be divided, that is, into the majority living foolishly contrary to nature and a small group struggling to free itself from this error and follow nature with the aid of philosophy. Seneca is at pains to emphasize the pervasiveness of this error. It has some analogy to original sin, in that all humans absorb these erroneous values, although not before birth, certainly in all their dealings with other humans, from those closest to them, their parents, out to the wider society.\textsuperscript{381} It is an error that Seneca by no means excludes himself from, nor his addressee, and presumably any other reader. It is an error that we all must try to eradicate from our souls, but it is one with the most tenacious roots, requiring all the help of philosophy divinized, other philosophers and friends to remove.\textsuperscript{382} It is an error that has us believing that our self includes somehow our position in society, our possessions, or even our bodies, whereas we need actually to understand that it is only our minds that are truly our own (Ep. 41.6-7).

Error as a disease of the mind fitted well with native Roman concepts of mental health, which Seneca exploited in describing the goal of philosophy as mens bona, translatable as a 'healthy mind'.\textsuperscript{383} Seneca in his philosophical works exploits the Stoic syncretism of concepts that in explaining virtue as a mental state makes it possible to describe this mental health simply as virtus.\textsuperscript{384} I have already argued how effectively Seneca exploits the crossover of Stoic values to traditional Roman values through this identification of Stoic virtus as having much in common with virtus Romana. There I also argued that Seneca does not simply stoicize these Roman ethical values, but through Stoicism changes them by arguing forcefully for their radical independence from traditional aristocratic qualities of wealth, birth and social status.\textsuperscript{385} Such arguments are, in fact, very prominent in this letter, especially in §10.

\textsuperscript{381} So at Ep. 94.55: erras ... si existimas nobiscum vitia nasci: supervenerunt, ingesta sunt. S\O RENSEN 1984, 224, compares the end of the Golden Age in Seneca to the Christian Fall, though with avarice rather than carnal desire being responsible (e.g. Ep. 90.38).

\textsuperscript{382} The use of friendship with philosophers past and present is discussed below, p. 186, and divinized philosophy, below, p. 415.

\textsuperscript{383} Ep. 37.1 bonam mentem n.

\textsuperscript{384} It is not until Ep. 66.6 that Seneca directly equates the perfect mind with virtue. At Ep. 31, however, he stresses that virtus is the ultimate good (§§6 and 8), and that this good for humans is mental (§11).

\textsuperscript{385} Above, p. 11.
Given all this, what are the grounds for seeing Seneca as writing Roman aristocratic ideology? Basic to such a view is interpreting the antithesis between the mob and philosophers as a social one: making the mob everyone but Seneca’s social peers, and making Seneca a spokesman for the values of his social class. That this is erroneous has already been argued. Seneca includes everyone, even himself, as part of the mob. He differentiates himself and his addressee insofar as they are seeking to change and to follow philosophical values. He is able to appeal to his class to change, and make a very effective appeal in that he does not totally reject their conception of honour, but rather fundamentally reinterprets its basis. Equally effectively he is able to argue that such a reinterpretation is in line with traditional Roman conceptions of these values as exemplified in the actions of great figures from their history.

It is much more meaningful to see Seneca as writing counter-ideology, an attack on the dominant ideology of his society.\[386\] This can be illustrated from a number of angles. Firstly, his contrast between the mob and philosophers differs from how Cicero presents a similar contrast. Secondly, the interpretation of Stoicism as ideology generally, as advanced by Shaw, is open to serious question, in that it minimizes the relevance of the fundamental Stoic conception of values. And finally, a more obvious candidate for Roman ideology exists, that found in a number of their works of rhetorical theory.

Cicero provides an important contrast to Seneca’s insistence that he himself, his addressee, Lucilius, and by implication anyone else reading the work, are mired in the common errors of society at large. Cicero in the De Finibus has the interlocutor, Cato, argue that his audience has a clear sense of what is honourable and what is not, a sense moulded by the models of their ancestors and provided by good upbringing in honourable households:

\[Aut quis est, qui maiorum, aut Africanorum aut eius, quem tu in ore semper habes, proavi mei, ceterorumque virorum fortium atque omni virtute praestantium facta, dicta, consilia cognoscens nulla animo afficiatur voluptate? Quis autem honesta in familia instituts et educatus ingenue non ipsa turpitudine, etiamsi eum laesura non sit, offenditur? (Cic. Fin 3.37-38).\]

That such honestae familiae exist is suggested at the start of the book. The dialogue is set in the library of Lucullus’ villa and Cicero takes the time to praise the character of the younger Lucullus.

\[386\] The project of Habinek 1998 to define the entirety of Roman literature as ideology is bold—playful perhaps, if he had any of the self-irony that Henderson 1999 notes as missing from the work. Wilson 2001 has dismantled his portrayal of Seneca in that work, as has Davis 2002 his portrait of Ovid as a colonist in Tomi.
(Fin. 3.8–9), growing up, as he is in such a household, with such a library and under the guidance of the upright characters of both Cato and Cicero.

Seneca is in agreement with Cicero over some of this: past Romans provided models of aspects of virtue (Ep. 120.5–8), and he is, of course, insistent on the virtue of Cato. However, what is strikingly in contrast to Cicero is the sense that one’s access to these models is not mediated by environment, by one’s upbringing or by tradition. Rather one forms a one-to-one personal relationship with the models (e.g. Ep. 11.10). Such a relationship is open to anyone to form; it is not controlled by one’s lineage or social position, as Seneca makes clear at Ep. 44.5. In his pessimistic appraisal of human society, vice is the norm that makes instances of virtue all the more brilliant: *Omne tempus Clodios, non omne Catones feret. Ad deteriora faciles sumus* (Ep. 97.10).

In contrast to this negative opinion of society, Seneca does seem to view the general character of earlier Romans as more virtuous, less affected in particular by the vices of greed and luxury. At the close of this letter (§11), for example, he reveals a positive opinion of traditional Roman morality as expressed in their former religious customs: this comes through in the approving evocation of the *simplicitas* in the Virgilian quote and it is continued in the closing reference to the gods being favourable when their worship was simpler. This is an opinion he shares in common with both Polybius and Cicero. Yet Seneca does not imagine that such a state can be returned to through an appeal to tradition, and in this also he contrasts with Cicero. Rather he makes use of the current reality as he sees it to exhort the reader, as an individual, to see the potential for greater glory in resisting the appeals of a more deeply vitiated society. Similarly, rather than viewing Roman *exempla* as something that Romans possess in some inherent sense, he uses them for their persuasive power with a Roman audience through their

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387 This relates to his insistence in Ep. 31.10 that the raw material for virtue, the mind, is possessed equally by all and unaffected by birth. See above, p. 11.

388 SCARPAT 1983, 29–34. This respect for the morals of earlier Romans contrasts with the complete absence in any of Seneca’s works, even in the *De Clementia*, of any praise for Rome’s empire or military power, as LANA 1955, 288, points out. By contrast, see, for example, the criticism of genocide at Ep. 95.30.

389 MASO 1999, 80, notes that whereas Cicero saw society as able to be reformed through appealing to tradition, Seneca sees no possible reform for society, but only for the individual, and that reform comes through distancing him from the harm society causes. Similarly, for Cicero the term *boni* gave moral authority to a political grouping of the aristocracy; for Seneca the term is a moral one, applicable to people whatever their rank (§11 *Hic animus ... cadere n.*).
appeal to the reader’s sense of pride in this heritage.\textsuperscript{390}

Turning from the contrast between Seneca and Cicero in their treatment of Roman tradition, the idea that Stoicism generally is Roman ideology is open to serious challenge. The argument for its ideological status was one made by Shaw, who argued that it was particularly formulated by Posidonius as a way of constraining the new political masters of the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{391} Shaw is quoted by Habinek as support for his own use of Seneca as ideology.\textsuperscript{392} Yet Shaw’s views themselves have been effectively challenged by Wilson, who argues persuasively that Shaw’s interpretation depends in effect on reversing the Stoic concepts of value, the very concepts that are the centrepiece of this letter.\textsuperscript{393} Shaw’s interpretation rests upon seeing the preferred indifferents as having real value over the apparently more symbolic value of virtue. Applying such an interpretation to Seneca can only be allowed to stand if one assumes that what Seneca says about values is fundamentally hypocritical, an assumption many seem tacitly to make.

Furthermore, the argument that Stoicism is the logical vehicle for the ideology of the Roman elite overlooks the role of rhetorical training and theory as a more obvious vehicle for such ideology. The elite devoted most of its schooling to the development of eloquence, and it also rewarded outstanding rhetorical skill with public office, for which Seneca himself is the perfect example. Furthermore, some rhetoricians could claim that it was the power of eloquence that had created human society, a claim that powerfully validated the status of those who possessed such power:

\begin{quote}
Hoc enim uno praestamus vel maxime feris, quod conloquimur inter nos et quod exprimere dicendo sensa possumus. ... Ut vero iam ad illa summa veniamus, quae vis alia potuit aut dispersos homines unum in locum congregare aut a fera agrestique vita ad hunc humanum cultum civilemque deductore aut iam constitutis civitatibus leges iudicia iura describere? Ac ne plura, quae sunt paene
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{390} Although Seneca rejects the possibility of a general reform of society, he does create an alternative society of philosophers, whose nature will be examined later, p. 186. In a related way the implications of the rejection of society’s values in respect of guilt and conscience will be explored later (\textit{Ep. 32.1 Sic vive ... visurus n.}).

\textsuperscript{391} \textsc{Shaw} 1985, 37-39.

\textsuperscript{392} \textsc{Habinek} 1992, 200 (= 1998, 148). This is even though \textsc{Shaw} 1985, 30, specifically excludes Seneca from his study, due to his Stoicism having ‘a peculiar slant to it’.

\textsuperscript{393} \textsc{Wilson} 2003a, 536-537.
Cicero paints a positive picture celebrating the creation of human society and the orator’s role in it; Seneca’s pessimism, by contrast, has already been noted; he emphasizes rather that much of what is considered civilization is a work contra naturam that is to be distrusted for its tendency to invert the proper ordering of one’s values. When rhetorical theory offered such a convenient justification for the elite’s position in Roman society, why seek to recruit Stoicism, particularly that expressed by Seneca, as Roman ideology? It reflects, perhaps, the desire of some scholars to give a monolithic unity to all Roman cultural artifacts, and not to allow any ability to disagree within such a system. Once, therefore, so many of the planks on which Habinek’s argument is built have been shown to be unsound, the claim that Seneca is writing ‘hortatory literature’ becomes untenable.

Seneca makes the bold claim that the good is actually the scorning of toil (§4: contemptio laboris). Why does he give so much prominence to toil? Certainly it is an example of a Stoic indifferent, but its significance goes beyond that. In the first instance, and importantly, it is an antidote to seeking the good life or success as an unearned gift through prayer, as many wished (§3). For Seneca philosophy involves effort, which can be seen in his repeated insistence that philosophy is active and progress in it demands action. Secondly, in the context of a shift from general philosophy in earlier books to a more specifically Stoic philosophy, toil is the antithesis of the ultimate good of Epicurean philosophy. Finally, as a concept used to illustrate what a Stoic indifferent is, toil had a number of advantages. In popular values most other concepts are more clearly viewed as either good, such as wealth, or bad, such as death, but the status of toil was more variable: it was the antithesis of leisure and held in contempt by aristocrats as the mark of

\[\text{innumerabilia, consecter, comprehendam brevi: sic enim statuo, perfecti oratoris moderatione et sapientia non solum ipsius dignitatem, sed et privatorum plurimorum et universae rei publicae salutem maxime contineri (Cic. De Or. 1.33-34).}\]
inferior social status. However, for those same aristocrats it was a valued quality when displayed in political and military endeavours. A good example of this is given in Ep. 22.7: *Non est vir fortis ac strenuus qui laborem fugit.*

This popular view of toil as the antithesis of leisure served another important function for Seneca in this epistle. He had devoted much effort in the earlier books to persuading his friend to abandon public life for philosophical leisure. Here he is emphasizing that this philosophical life is by no means as free of toil as popular values would suggest. As §7 makes clear his *contemptio laboris* is not the disdain of toil by a leisured aristocrat, who endures it only for its perceived rewards. Rather it is undertaking toil with a great-hearted disregard for the cost. To be a man, a *vir bonus*, one must seek it out: *posce* (§6). In a closely analogous way contempt of death for Seneca is described as manfully welcoming it when the occasion warrants.

For all these reasons toil is prominent in this letter; in particular as Seneca wishes to stress that philosophical leisure is not a retreat from it, but rather requires it be embraced to achieve its reward of genuine happiness. In fact, just as *securitas* requires *contemptio mortis*, this letter suggests progress rests upon *contemptio laboris*. Furthermore, toil can be seen as synonymous to the action that someone making progress needs in order to truly integrate the knowledge acquired through philosophical contemplation, as is explained below. It provides the perfect foil to the theoretical element of the letter, reminding the reader that *philosophia ... non in verbis sed in rebus est* (Ep. 16.3).

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398 Cf. OCD³, *labour*, 809-810.
399 Hellegouarc’h 1972, 248-251 and Burck 1951.
400 Above, p. 41.
401 This is seen in other letters in Book IV, e.g. Ep. 37.1.
402 The *occupationes* of public life are portrayed by Seneca as being sought for their rewards (e.g. Ep. 22.9). Ep. 86 is important for Seneca’s own view on manual labour, both in his admiration that Scipio Africanus performed it on his farm (§6) and in his interest in the details of transplanting olive trees (§§14-21).
403 This contempt is a quality of the *magnus animus*; e.g. Ep. 36.1. At Tranq. 12, however, Seneca warns against toiling pointlessly (*aut in supervacuis aut ex supervacuo*).
404 Cf. Ep. 77.6.
405 §6 rerum scientiae n.
Linked to the notion that progress takes effort and therefore requires one to embrace toil is the frequent use of images of self-fashioning in this epistle.⁴⁰⁶ These are found at the start of the letter with the imagery in moliebaris and fundamenta.⁴⁰⁷ They are continued in the injunction fac te ipse felicem.⁴⁰⁸ And they come back at the end starting with the exhortation te quoque dignum finge deo.⁴⁰⁹ These images of the goal of philosophy as a making or moulding of the self are also found in the qualifying adjective Seneca uses frequently, perfectus.⁴¹⁰ Such making, though mental, fits well with the emphasis on toil in this letter,

There is a sense of excitement to Seneca’s description of what lies ahead for his friend as he moves to a new stage of philosophical progress. He sets before the reader the vision of being equal to god. And he does this by attacking popular concepts of good at §10, wealth, social status and renown. When he reveals that the divine is resident in the mind, he uses this to drive home his point that social status is in no way connected with virtue (§11):

\[ Hic animus tam in equitem Romanum quam in libertinum, quam in servum potest cadere. Quid est enim eques Romanus aut libertinus aut servus? nomina ex ambitione aut iniuria nata. Subsilire in caelum ex angulo licet: exsurge modo et te quoque dignum finge deo \]

Social status is the product of a fallen world, specifically of a vice, ambitio, that brought down the republic.⁴¹¹ The reader, in seeking to live a philosophical life, is invited to recall the virtues of a better age, those expressed in the quote taken from Virgil’s Aeneid. Seneca certainly is keen to enthuse the reader in this letter, but it would be special pleading to claim that this enthusing was in any meaningful sense a manifestation of Roman aristocratic ideology.

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⁴⁰⁶ Edwards 1997, 29-30 and Bartsch 2009, 208-212, have useful commentary on this imagery.
⁴⁰⁷ Ep. 31.1 moliebaris n. and fundamenta n.
⁴⁰⁸ Ep. 31.5 fac n.
⁴⁰⁹ Ep. 31.11 exsurge ... deo n.
⁴¹⁰ In Ep.31 at §8 perfecta n.
⁴¹¹ §11 ambitione n.
Commentary on Epistle 31

Division:

• A (§§1-2): Lucilius’ progress.
• B (§§3-8): Toil and its relation to the true value of things.
• C (§§9-11): What makes one the equal of god.

Section A (§§1-2). To provide a sketch of this letter’s direction is to provide what Seneca himself does not give; rather he appears to surprise the reader with the unexpected directions his thought moves in. The letter opens with praise for Lucilius’ progress and encouragement to persevere (§1). Seneca then presents his friend with the possibility of sagehood if he shall have rejected public values, characterized as the prayers of those dearest to him (§2). This antithesis between public and philosophical values continues throughout the letter.


§1. Seneca fairly frequently starts his letters with some encouragement for Lucilius. In the prior letters he had done this at Epp. 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 10.2, 13.1, 16.1, 19.1 and 22.1 (also MOTTO, Progress §8). The encouragement here has been fairly closely analysed by MAURACH 1970, 116-117, who uses verbal echoes of the encouragement at Epp. 10.3 and 16.6 and 16.8, to argue that Seneca is marking the close of a cycle (See further, above, p. 44). Although his analysis is overly schematic, it seems clear that the praise is specific to aspects of Lucilius’ progress that have been mentioned in these earlier letters. Perhaps of greatest note is how this is described in images that will be reused throughout the letter: travel, construction and toil.
Agnosco Lucilium ... exhibere: Seneca, as the subject of the verb, and Lucilius are the letter’s first words. This contrasts with Ep. 30 and its concentration on Aufidius Bassus and Seneca’s relationship with him. There Lucilius was a spectator to the action; here he and his progress are the letter’s focus. However, in this first sentence Seneca describes Lucilius to himself in the third person. Lucilius is distanced from himself by this and Seneca takes ownership for some of the progress. Agnosco: this recognition implies that it is something Seneca perceives from a letter from Lucilius. Recognition is a significant concept in the Epistles (cf. Epp. 5.5, 29.11, 40.1 n. and SCARPAT 1975, 108). meum: MAURACH 1970, 116, suggests that this be interpreted in the light of Ep. 20.1 (mea enim gloria erit, si te istinc ubi sine spe exeundi fluctuaris extraxero) and Ep. 21.5. It is an idea even more strongly presented in Ep. 34.2 (meum opus es). Seneca is recognizing the Lucilius he has been fostering as opposed to another one, mired in false values. promiserat: able to have two senses, that of showing promise of this future state (OLD §7) and that of Lucilius himself having made a commitment to achieve this state. This second sense can be related specifically to such statements by Lucilius that Seneca records at Ep. 10.3. exhibere: Lucilius is beginning to show proof for Seneca’s confidence in him. This marks progress from Ep. 16.2 where Seneca had hope rather than confidence in Lucilius (see also Ep. 32.2 fiduciam n.). The specific details that give him this confidence are not stated, which is suggestive of the composition of the correspondence with publication in mind (WILSON 1987, 103-104).

Sequere illum ... ibas: Seneca now addresses Lucilius in the 2nd p. with a command to follow the impulse on the path he has been travelling towards the best things. The image of progress as a path is fundamental in Seneca (cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 88-89). Lucilius is already on this path, and continuing on it is what is needed, rather than something new (see further below at non desidero ... moliebaris n.). impetum animi: (OLD §5, ‘impulse, urge, effort’) as an element in progress this term gets stressed in Ep. 16.6:

illo nunc revertor, ut te moneam et exhorter ne patiaris impetum animi tui delabi et refrigescere. Contine illum et constitue, ut habitus animi fiat quod est impetus.

A large element of progress is maintaining this impulse towards the good and consolidating it until it becomes something stable (below, p. 183). The habitus animi is not referred to directly in Ep. 31, but is picked up in the following building metaphors. quo: an ablative of cause, the antecedent is impetum. optima quaeque ... popularibus bonis: this antithesis of philosophical values, presented as ‘all the best things’, with popular ones is a fundamental one to Seneca’s view
of philosophy (above, pp. 10 and 110). It is the major theme of this letter, presented in terms of the question, ‘what is the good?’, which is prepared for here by the use of reflexes of bonum (optima ... bonis).

**optima quaeque** suggests the goal of the journey. This reference to the best things prepares for the discussion of indifferents that is an important topic of the letter. **popularibus bonis:** contrasts with the true good just mentioned. (cf. Motto, Crowd). **calcatis:** (OLD §7b) learning to reject the opinion of the majority is a theme of many of the early letters. Seneca uses calcare frequently as a vigorous image for this rejection (e.g. Ep. 16.8). Smith, 34-35, says that this sense of ‘spurn, despise’ is comparatively rare and poetic in Latin apart from Seneca. Here it fits neatly with the metaphor of travel.

**non desidero ... moliebaris:** supporting what he has just said, Seneca stresses the adequacy of Lucilius’ plans. This is an idea that he had stressed in Ep. 16.1 in relation to perseverance and study: plus operis est in eo ut proposita custodias quam ut honesta proponas. **maiorem melioremque:** these qualities are repeated at the end of the letter as the properties of the animus (§11 magnus and bonus nn.). **oliebaris:** this verb frequently has the sense of striving, which is present here, but its basic sense is one of construction, which fits with the following imagery. Both senses figure strongly in the rest of the letter: striving as toil, and this toil seen as a form of mental construction.

**Fundamenta tua ... occupaverunt:** the bivalent sense of moliebaris is elaborated upon; the sense of striving continues in conatus es and the construction metaphor is expanded. **Fundamenta:** foundations are an important metaphor for stability for Seneca (e.g. Vit. 15.4 and Armisen-Marchetti, 111). These foundations are a metaphor for constantia in contrast to the levitas of a life ruled by fortune (above, p. 17). This is a metaphor that had been used already in the work (Epp. 10.3, 13.16 (in contrast to levitas), 23.1 and 23.5). It is also a metaphor for making progress: the foundations of Lucilius’ philosophical life have been laid; now he needs to build on them, a suggestion that prepares for the new idea in this letter and the sense of moving from one stage to the next in this book (above, p. 45). **occupaverunt:** (OLD 7, ‘fill’).

**tantum effice ... tracta:** the approval for the foundations that Lucilius has laid is qualified by a reservation already noted in the previous sentence: there is the restraint to build on these
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foundations (tantum ... quantum) and not seek to build others, to complete what has been started. This is an aspect of constantia, to persevere with a task rather than constantly to start on new ones (cf. Ep. 20.4). effice: continues the imagery of construction in fundamenta. in animo tulisti: as with the previous past tenses, this confirms that Lucilius’ intentions are known to Seneca and approved of. tracta: (OLD §7) this shifts the image from construction to more general action. The imagery of mental construction is returned to at the close of the letter (§11 Finges ... fuisse n.).

§2. Ad summam sapiens eris, si cluseris aures, quibus ceram parum est obdere: firmiore spissamento opus est quam in sociis usum Ulixem ferunt. Illa vox quae timebatur erat blanda, non tamen publica: at haec quae timenda est non ex uno scopulo sed ex omni terrarum parte circumsonat. Praetervehere itaque non unum locum insidiosa voluptate suspectum, sed omnes urbes. Surdum te amantissimis tuis praesta: bono animo mala precantur. Et si esse vis felix, deos ora ne quid tibi ex his quae optantur eveniat.

§2. The danger of public values, suggested by calcatis above, is expanded on: blocking our ears to them is to become a sage. Yet this is a task harder than Odysseus resisting the sirens, as these voices are everywhere; they are even the voices of our parents’ prayers.

Ad summam ... aures: the shift to a new idea is sudden and the image is remarkable: sagehood, the very pinnacle of philosophical progress, is actually just a matter of closing your ears. The idea is expressed in the 2nd p. and offered as a goal to Lucilius. Ad summam: (OLD summa §7c) this signals a summary of what has preceded. sapiens: the goal of philosophical endeavour alluded to by optima quaeque is now presented in the figure of the sage. For the term’s use in earlier Latin see LIŞCU 1930, 161 and HELLEGOUARC’h 1972, 271-274. For the difference in connotation it has to its synonym, the vir bonus, see Ep. 37.1 n.

quibus ... ferunt: the bizarreness of this image is then increased by suggesting that wax is not enough for the job. Something stronger than what Odysseus used for his crew is needed. This incongruous act is suddenly presented as a challenge of greater than mythical proportions. spissamento: a stopper or plug, a word from the technical language of medicine and cooking, that increases the contrast with the unexpected introduction of a figure from epic poetry. Ulixem: the name is delayed to heighten the surprise. This image of Odysseus and the sirens is one that Seneca uses twice more in the Epistles. At Ep. 123.12 it is used with very much the same sense as here, but at Ep. 56.15 it is used humorously to deflate his own epic pretensions in resisting the distractions presented by a noisy bathhouse (cf. MOTTO and CLARK 1993, 181-188).
Illa vox ... circumsonat: having done everything to build up the reader’s resistance to his claim, Seneca finally starts to explain it. He contrasts the two voices (illa ... haec): the one Odysseus resisted was seductive, but not public; it came from one crag, not every part of the world. This idea is a fundamental one for Seneca: the false values of society are hard to resist because they are pervasive (above, p. 112). It is expressed very clearly at Ep. 94.54:

Non licet, inquam, ire recta via; trahunt in pravum parentes, trahunt servi.
Nemo errat uni sibi, sed dementiam spargit in proximos accipitque invicem. Et ideo in singulis vitia populorum sunt quia illa populus dedit.

Rejecting these values had been presented as avoiding the crowd (e.g. Ep. 7.1), but also in devaluing the prizes that are popularly held worthy of gaining (Ep. 22.9). It is presented clearly in an antithesis at the close of the final letter of the first three books: ut malis tibi placere quam populo (Ep. 29.12). A similar idea to Lucilius facing a greater challenge than Odysseus is found in the contrast between the greater dangers facing Cato than Hercules at Const 2.1–3. publica: it is to be stressed that the sense of this, as shown by Ep. 94.54 above, includes all levels of society. scopulo: earlier editions of Reynolds, 89, have scpoulo with no comment in the apparatus criticus.

Praetervehere itaque ... precantur: Seneca gives Lucilius two exhortations that continue the metaphor from the Odyssey. The two instructions pick up the previous contrasts in a chiastic arrangement. The first continues the nautical image with an instruction to sail past all cities, not just one place. unum ... suspectum: every word chosen to describe the Sirens’ rock contains an implicit contrast with the cities. The first is clear and stated (unum ... omnes), but that the rock is mistrusted (suspectum) and its pleasure lies in ambush (insidiosa) contrasts with the dangers of cities being public and neither hidden nor generally recognized. Furthermore, the Sirens must be sought out, existing in a region away from human society, whereas public dangers are all around us. voluptate: Borgo, 198–206; this is an important word in the context of this letter. As the highest good of Epicureanism it contrasts with the Stoic values that are presented in this letter. In particular, labor is close to its antithesis ($3 labor n.). It is possible to see this reference to voluptas as something the Lucilius must avoid as part of the shift from a general philosophy in the first three books that was positive towards Epicurus to a more specifically Stoic one in Book IV (above, p. 45, and Hachmann 1995, 241).

Surdum ... precantur: In Seneca’s second exhortation he underlines the pervasive influence of the vox publica in the instruction to be deaf to the prayers of those closest and dearest (cf. Ep.
94.53-54). Through this he effects a shift from the general (omnes urbes) to the specific instance of Lucilius’ family and drives home that these values are not just those of society ‘out there’, but also of the parents and close family who have educated us and shaped our values (above, p. 111).

Although the introduction of prayers is a little unexpected, it illustrates that popular values are fundamentally misguided in their ignorance of the nature of the divine. The theme of prayers is returned to in the letter (at §§5 and 8) and is also prominent in Ep. 32.4-5. For Seneca’s use of prayers elsewhere, see Motto, Prayer and Scarpat 1983, 44-50; on the Stoic attitude to prayer, see Algira 2003, 174-176. Surdum: continues the Odyssean imagery. amantissimis tuis: the tuis has the same force as the objective genitive tui (cf. G-L §304 n. 2). bono animo mala: the antithesis between bono and mala creates a paradox. The bono is used in its normal sense rather than in any special philosophical sense, whereas the mala can be understood also in the philosophical sense of the word.

**Et si ... eveniat:** the paradox in bono animo mala is driven home forcefully: Seneca does not just counsel indifference to these prayers, but demands that Lucilius actively pray they not come to pass. The use of paradox is a characteristic device for concluding a section (cf. Ep. 30.4 Nullo genere ... diutius n.). felix: felix and felicitas can be synonyms for beatus and vita beata (Fischer 1914, 36-39). However, Hengelbrock 2000, 59, argues felix has more emotive and less rational connotations than beatus. It is difficult to find a modern English equivalent that captures the range of meanings of the word. Some of the common senses are ‘wealthy’ and ‘fortunate’ (OLD 3 and 6). Perhaps ‘successful’ in modern usage is nearest to the force Seneca gives to this word.

deos: here and at §§5 and 8 Seneca uses the plural, gods, but from §9 on he switches to the singular (see §9 deo n.). ex his: i.e. the amantissimis.

**Section B (§§3-8).** Criticism of popular attitudes to prayer leads Seneca to offer a number of definitions of the good: first self-confidence (§3) and the contempt of toil (§4), and then a further two, more abstract, definitions (§§5-6). Finally, he offers a definition of the supreme good (§8). Such a summary overlooks two points at which the focus of the discussion is shifted. On both occasions Seneca offers a counterpoint to his devaluation of toil. At the start of §5 he again attacks prayers and insists that toil actually nourishes noble minds, and that it is by our own efforts that we can become happy. And in §7 he demands Lucilius seek toil, as any sort of toil is an opportunity to display endurance (tolerantia).
In this section Seneca introduces for the first time in the correspondence core concepts of Stoic ethics: the nature of the good and of the bad and the idea of other things that have no relation to either of these two poles. That this represents a clear progression in Lucilius’ education has already been made clear (above, p. 45). What is significant is that it is not presented in technical language. Not until Ep. 82.10 does Seneca use the terms adiaphora and indifferentia. Furthermore, as has been discussed (above, p. 112), the ideas are introduced obliquely: Seneca is not offering a discussion of these ideas in the abstract, but as a means of persuading Lucilius to an attitude towards toil. Although Seneca avoids technical language in the discussion of the indifferents, the passage does contain ideas that accord with technical Stoic ones, but receive only indirect discussion. Most notable are scientia rerum (§6) and the description of perfecta virtus (§8).

§3. Non sunt ista bona quae in te isti volunt congeri: unum bonum est, quod beatae vitae causa et firmamentum est, sibi fidere. Hoc autem contingere non potest, nisi contemptus est labor et in eorum numero habitus quae neque bona sunt neque mala; fieri enim non potest ut una ulla res modo mala sit, modo bona, modo levis et perferenda, modo expavescenda.

§3. Seneca’s criticism of the things people pray for leads on to a discussion of the good. He starts by denying the status of good to the objects of people’s prayers, and then claims self-confidence is the sole good, which he proceeds to argue can only be acquired through an understanding of a category that are neither good nor bad.

Non sunt ... congeri: the criticism of misdirected prayers is brought around to the specific fault that what is prayed for is not truly good. ista ... isti: the demonstrative pronoun of the 2nd person (G-L §306) adds to the directness with which Seneca is addressing Lucilius. bona: the word can have a broad range of meanings, including benefits and possessions (OLD §§2 and 8; see also PITTET, 143-144), which are popularly understood as good things in a moral sense, something Seneca, consistent with Stoic theory, does not allow. congeri: (OLD §7).

unum bonum ... fidere: that genuine good is a singularity in contrast to the plurality of popular goods is emphasized by the use of unum. bonum: (OLD §1c) PITTET, 142-145. beatae vitae causa et firmamentum: this phrase locates the genuine good as fundamental to living well, and also states the proper domain for describing what is good. beatae vitae: see §2 felix n. This is only the second use of the term in the Epistles, the first being at Ep. 16.1. That the term has a slightly more technical tone than felicitas is suggested by its use as the title of one of Seneca’s dialogues.
At the start of this dialogue, Vit. 1.1, Seneca claims that achieving this state was the goal of everyone, though they are in the dark as to how. At Ep. 90.1 he says that it is by philosophy’s gift that we reach this goal. causa: (OLD §9, ‘cause’). firmamentum: (OLD §2, ‘support’), not quite the same as fundamenta (§1 n.), but still a metaphor from construction. In relation to self-confidence the metaphor is also suggested in sibi inniti (Ep. 33.7 innitatur n.) a synonym for sibi fidere. sibi fidere: trusting oneself, or self-confidence, relates directly to self-sufficiency, the means by which the happy life is secured and a concept that figured prominently in Ep. 9. There it was referred to by the term se contentus, but that does not exhaust the variety of ways it is evoked (see e.g. Ep. 32.4). Trust in oneself means not trusting in externals, a point made nicely by Cicero in a number of places (Tusc. 5.40-41, Fin. 2.86). More broadly, Seneca argues at Ep. 41.6-8, self-sufficiency is a matter of correctly understanding what is truly your own, and not mistakenly believing that you are in any sense your possessions, an understanding that Seneca on occasions identifies as libertas (e.g. Const. 19.2 and Ep. 75.18). Self-confidence (cf. Motto, Confidence §1) has a place in the technical language of Stoic ethics: tharraleotēs (fiducia) is one of the subordinate virtues of bravery, Stob. Ecl. 2.7.5b2 (= W 2.60 and SVF 3.264); see Bellincioni 1979, 182, on Ep. 94.46, for a discussion of it. The relation of self-sufficiency to the happy life is made fundamental here. In other places a more detailed underpinning of constantia and magnitudo animi is described (see below, p. 259).

Hoc autem ... mala: Seneca has been educating Lucilius to value correctly many things that are popularly valued incorrectly (e.g. death, Ep. 4 and wealth, Ep. 18). At this point he offers a definition of how the reader can understand whether an item falls into this category, marking, as noted (above, p. 45), an important development in the complexity of Lucilius’ education. See above, p. 117, for why toil is used to explain this. contingere: (OLD §8). contemptus est: the term contemnere is used frequently by Seneca to express the attitude one should show to things commonly valued, but which a philosopher should treat as indifferent. The term is usefully discussed by Lotito 2001, 78-79, Armisen-Marchetti, 262-263 and Busch 1961, 73, n. 53. labor: toil is the most adequate translation of this term (cf. Douglas 1990, 69). At Ep. 19.8 Seneca noted that it was associated with seeking public office, and suggests Lucilius should be prepared for effort to obtain philosophical leisure as well. In relation to progress it had been alluded to earlier (§1 moliebaris n.). Maurach 1987, 81, suggests that Seneca is demanding that only toil expended on outer rewards is to be condemned, a claim that makes what follows in §7 ambiguous. See above, p.
117, for a fuller discussion that avoids such ambiguity. **numero**: (OLD §11, ‘category, class’). **quae neque ... mala**: at this point Seneca specifies a category (**numero**) distinct from good things and bad things, but does not give it a name. In a similar way to his discussion of **apatheia** at Ep. 9.2 (above, p. 7) he describes the concept rather than offering a label for it. This is in accord with his concern to focus on the matter of philosophy over the words (above, p. 4). For more on Stoic indifferents, see **ANNAS** 2006, 160-161 and L-S 58.

**fieri enim ... expavescenda**: Seneca provides the explanation of why toil is not a good: it lacks the unchanging character that is essential for any good. The antithesis between what is changeable and what is not is not a fundamental one for Seneca (see above, p. 17). The repeated use of **modo** underlines this instability. The qualities that follow are all applicable to toil, rather than being general qualities of indifferents. Seneca describes the reaction to toil at opposite extremes of a scale between trifling tasks and major ones. Toil is objectionable when it is trifling, but a task of great scale can be daunting. Of these two sorts, those of great scale offer one the ability to display virtue and can be recognized as possessing some good, but the trifling ones are merely irksome, an attitude Seneca challenges at §7. **mala ... bona**: are used here in the popular sense, rather than the strict Stoic sense, which is explained in §§5-6. **levis et perferenda**: the link between these two characteristics is that a trifling (**OLD levis** §13) thing needs to be put up with (**perferenda**). **expavescenda**: in antithesis to trifling things, it describes the emotional reaction of quailing before a task of immense proportions. The use of the prefix **ex-** with this verb makes it more emphatic and is a usage found first in Livy (**MAURACH** 1987, 81).


§4. The start of this section seems to suggest that the letter will move into a didactic mode: a short statement that offers a conclusion to the preceding section is followed by the question of what is the good. However, the abrupt reply, despising toil, is not followed by 3rd person explanation, but is urgent and direct. Seneca gives his opinion in the 1st person. He singles out two groups for censure and praise, the **in vanum operosos** and the **ad honesta nitentes**. He devotes the most attention to the second of these, addressing them directly with a series of imperatives. In this exhortation to persevere he makes clear that **contemptio laboris** is an attitude that
disregards the expenditure of effort towards a goal. It is significant that Seneca devotes most of his time to the positive image of praise for well-directed effort. The encouragement is vivid and, although directed to an unnamed individual, is both applicable to Lucilius in his efforts and relevant to the theme of progress with which the letter opened. Seneca concludes the section with the unequivocal statement that toil nourishes our spirits.

**Labor bonum ... bonum?** although the earlier section had indeed shown that toil is not a good, that was not the focus of it, but rather that toil must be disregarded to achieve the happy life. Furthermore, there he stated that *sibi fidere* was the sole good, but now the reader discovers that the nature of the good is in for more extensive treatment. The short simple statements effect a rapid progression of the argument, and are used again at the start of §6.

**laboris contemptio:** what is meant by this has been described above, p. 118. The attitude that is praised in the following sentence and again in §7 is very similar to the *philoponia* of the sage in Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.11k (= W 2.105 and SVF 3.683), who is described as being unhesitating in undertaking a task without regard for the toil. *contemptio:* §3 contemptus n.

**Itaque in vanum ... culpaverim:** the *itaque* insists that Seneca’s reaction to these two groups is strongly connected to the idea that disregard for toil is good, which is true inasmuch as he reserves censure and praise for the goal; the effort, of itself, is not significant. This group deserve censure not specifically because their goals are misguided, which is true of the majority of humanity for Seneca, but because they mistakenly believe their effort is praiseworthy. In a similar way Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.4.41-42, reserves the term *philoponos* solely for someone toiling after an appropriate goal, namely one’s governing principle (*hēgemonikon*), and not reputation or money (similarly *Diss.* 4.1.176). *in vanum:* (OLD vanus §5b) for MAURACH 1970, 117, a major theme of *Epp.* 16–23 is the rejection of *vana*, for which toil is commonly expended (cf. *Epp.* 16.9 and 23.1). *culpaverim:* a potential subjunctive, for which WOODCOCK, §119, notes the perfect tense is common when referring to a future possibility.

**rursus ad honesta ... nitentes:** the parallelism of this clause to the earlier one is strengthened in a number of ways: firstly through the adverb *rursus* (OLD 6), then with the continued 1st person verbs and a matching object that is similarly plural and has its own prepositional phrase. This clause, however, is expanded with a correlative clause and an
apostrophe to one of the nitentes. **honesta**: a noun made from the adjective formed from *honos* has added point here in contrast to those *in vanum operosos*, as some of the *vana* they strive for are actually the *honores* of public office. Cicero had adopted *honestum* as a translation of the Greek *kalon* (Lișcu 1930, 148-152 and Fischer 1914, 9-13), a practice Seneca also followed. In origin *honestus* reflected its derivation from *honos* and described someone held in high esteem, usually on account of his high political position (Hellegouarch 1972, 462-463). These connotations remain in the term in its political usage and distinguishing it from *kalos* with its aesthetic basis. Seneca’s use of *honestus* is overwhelmingly of the nominal form *honestum*. On a few occasions he uses the adjective with its popular meaning of well-born, as at *Ep*. 47.15, though not without irony, or of someone of high rank, as at *Ep*. 123.7, but more often Seneca’s use of the term represents a fundamental reinterpretation of the basis of the term as at *Ep*. 21.8 where he contrasts the association of the term to *honores* with a philosophical sense: *si vis Pythoclea honestum facere, non honoribus adiciendum est sed cupiditatibus detrahendum*; and he is emphatic that the popular sense of *honos* is fundamentally vitiated (e.g. *Ep*. 115.10). Although a technical distinction between *bonum* and *honestum* can be made (cf. *Ep*. 118.11), in this letter they are practically synonymous (e.g. §5 *bona* n.).

**quanto magis ... clamabo**: the first verb (*incubuerint*), like the previous *nitentes* is fairly generally suggestive of effort or application at any task, but with the next verb (*vinci*), Seneca evokes the imagery of struggle; *strigare* and those in his apostrophe are more suggestive of a race. However, they all fit with the metaphor of a journey that is so common with philosophical progress (above, §1 *Sequere illum ... ibas* n.). **quanto**: (*OLD quantum* §4) a correlative clause that modifies the verbs *admirabor et clamabo*, for which *eo* or *tanto* can be understood. **sibi vinci**: the need for an unyielding attitude is returned to at §6 (*invictus* n.). It fits with the martial imagery of Senecan philosophy (above, p. 12) and is vividly evoked in the image of the boxer taking a pummelling in *Ep*. 13.2. **strigare**: the basic sense of this rare word appears to derive from ploughing and refers to a pause taken at the end of a furrow (*striga*) (cf. Plin. *Nat.* 18.177). Phaedrus (3.6.9) uses it in the context of running, which fits with the following apostrophe. **admirabor et clamabo**: this pair of verbs are the antithesis of *culpaverim* in construction and sense. The reverse attitude to censure is expressed by *admirabor* and the strength of the response it evokes by *clamabo*, a verb Seneca uses to introduce forcefully stated direct speech on a number of
occasions in the Epistles (Epp. 8.3, 27.2, 73.15 and 77.14); this use of clamo is not one found in his other prose works.

‘tanto melior ... exsupera’: Seneca makes a direct address to one of this group. The choice of the singular makes it more direct, and potentially able to be read as addressed to the reader. The imperatives are all suggestive of physical effort and form a sequence of connected actions: ‘stand up, breath in deeply and attempt to surmount the hill in a single go’. The sibilants and plosives of the sound contribute to the sense of effort and breathing. Seneca is addressing a proficiens on the journey of philosophical progress and offering encouragement, but also issuing a challenge (si potes) that seeks to inspire even greater effort. The hill is an obstacle on the path of this journey. It is encouragement of this sort that can be imagined as being given in Ep. 34.2. By contrast, the interpretation of Cagniart 2000a, 165, that we should understand this as drawing an analogy with the training of runners has a number of disadvantages: the sense of progress on a journey is lost, the hill becomes something used for training and Seneca is offering encouragement for effort expended in training, not expended in the real thing. tanto melior: (OLD tantum §5a) an idiomatic phrase of encouragement that Seneca also uses at Ep. 71.28 and Tranq. 16.3. surge: a favourite word of Seneca’s, along with the form strengthened with ex-, used twice more in this letter (§§9 and 11). It refers to a physical action, that of standing up, in order to meet a challenge, and as has been noted (above, p. 14), Seneca draws heavily on the imagery of standing to illustrate the concept of virtue. uno ... spiritu: although Armisen-Marchetti and Smith, 36, make no mention of this, it seems more probable to see this as referring to a single effort (‘spurt’ as Gummere, 225, suggests) than a single breath. clivum: is often used metaphorically of a task (cf. OLD 1b); Smith, 168, records other uses. The steepness of the approach to philosophy is emphasized at Const. 1.2.

Generosos animos ... nutrit: a sententia that sums up what Seneca has been saying about toil. Mention of the mind and nobility foreshadows further and important discussion of them at §11. Generosos: in its basic sense this means noble by birth (genus), but for Seneca’s reinterpretation of the sense of nobility see above, p. 10, below §11 and most emphatically, Ep. 44.5: Quis est generous? ad virtutem bene a natura compositus; also Epp. 39.2, 76.30 and 102.21. animos: in one sense this is synecdoche (cf. ingenia in Ep. 34.1 for a similar usage), but Seneca is also very precise in designating the part of a person that is nourished. As animus in its root sense is connected to breath, the nourishment may be intended in one sense as quite literal, and therefore picks up the focus on breathing of the previous apostrophe. nutrit: in its basic sense of suckle this makes a
striking metaphor combining two very dissimilar actions. Such an image goes beyond the more neutral one of seeing the gifts of fortune as the material for virtuous actions (e.g. Ep. 98.2). Toil strengthens us for the display of those actions.

§5. Non est ergo quod ex illo <voto> vetere parentum tuorum eligas quid contingere tibi velis, quid optes; et in totum iam per maxima acto viro turpe est etiam nunc deos fatigare. Quid votis opus est? fac te ipse felicem; facies autem, si intellelexeris bona esse quibus admixta virtus est, turpia quibus malitia coniuncta est. Quemadmodum sine mixtura lucis nihil splendidum est, nihil atrum nisi quod tenebras habet aut aliquid in se traxit obscuri, quemadmodum sine adiutorio ignis nihil calidum est, nihil sine aere frigidum, ita honesta et turpia virtutis ac malitiae societas efficit.

§5. Seneca now ties in his attitude to toil to his criticism of popular prayers that had begun the discussion (ergo). Prayers that seek to avoid hardship and to gain wealth easily are unmanly. As he will say later, his prayer for Lucilius is (Ep. 96.4): neque di neque deae faciant ut te fortuna in delicis habeat. The relation between toil and self-sufficiency is also expanded on: you make yourself successful through your own efforts. Finally, this success is achieved through understanding the true nature of virtue and vice.

Non est ... optes: in returning to the subject of prayer, Seneca is more specific this time: the prayer is that of Lucilius’ parents (parentum tuorum). Seneca makes use of parental prayers on a number of occasions (Epp. 32.4, 60.1, 115.11, and Bellincioni 1979, 197, on Ep. 94.53). Here he seeks to convince the reader that wishing to live according to such a prayer is unbecoming of a mature man. non est ... quod: (OLD quod 7b). Hine 2005, 225, analyses this construction, noting that Seneca uses it more frequently for negative prohibitions than noli(te) or ne with the perfect subjunctive. He adds that it is merely a guess to class it as colloquial, as Summers 1910, l, does. vetere: the prayer is old perhaps in two senses; first in the sense it was made when he was young, and then in the sense that it is a common one, a sense which Wagenvoort 1948, 102-103, illustrates from Pers. 2.31-40. Such prayers are closely connected with the nurse (e.g. Ep. 60.1 and Hor. Epist. 1.4.8). The verb nutrit of the previous sentence plays with this idea: as a man Lucilius should spurn the prayers for him made when he was being nursed and seek the nurture of toil.

e t in totum ... fatigare: a strong rhetorical appeal to Lucilius’ sense of achievement to date and to his sense of identity as an adult Roman male, somebody expected to possess virtus. A similar appeal can be seen at Epp. 33.7 and 36.4. in totum: (OLD totum §2c). per maxima: as Maurach 1987, 82, observes, these can refer to both political honours and dangers. In addition they can be
related to the list of places at §9 that Lucilius is described as having traversed in pursuit of his political career (per Poeninum, etc.). *acto*: (*OLD* §3a, ‘go’) this passive usage is a variant on the reflexive. *viro*: an important term in Seneca’s rhetorical appeal, used again at §7 (see above, p. 26 and Ep. 37.1 *virum bonum* n.). *turpe*: in a technical sense this is the opposite of *honestum*, and is used as such in the next section. However, Seneca most frequently uses it, as here, to appeal to the reader’s sense of shame either to avoid or adopt an action or attitude. It works closely with *viro* towards that end here, especially as the use with a dative is less common, giving *viro* more emphasis. *iam ... etiamnunc*: an insistent emphasis on time that suggests impatience (in a similar way to the use of *quousque* in Ep. 33.7 and 9). Along with the use of *viro* Seneca here emphasizes that Lucilius is no longer the baby he was when these prayers were made. *fatigare*: an appropriate term to the context of toil; Lucilius should be the one getting tired, not making the gods tired! Preisendanz 1908, 92-93, notes that this usage of *fatigare* was popular in rhetorical writing of Seneca’s age (e.g. *Sen. Rh. Con.* 1.8.3).

*Quid votis ... felicem*: a sentence that perfectly combines two of the main themes of this letter: the need to embrace toil and the ideal of self-sufficiency, summed up in the concept that the happy life is achieved by one’s own agency. As it is shameful to wish to avoid the difficulties of life, there is no real need for prayers, an idea that Seneca poses in a rhetorical question. He follows this up with an imperative directed at his friend which succinctly indicates the goal of life (*felicem*), and the route to it through effort. *fac*: for more on self-fashioning, see above, p. 119. *te ipse*: the self-sufficiency that is required to achieve the happy life is emphasized by *ipse*, which in the nominative stresses that it must be Lucilius, and not another, who does this fashioning (G-L §311). *felicem*: §2 *felix* n. As only the sage is truly successful, Seneca is again encouraging his friend with the goal of sagehood, held out at §2. In relation to the demand to block out popular values, the most important voice that must be blocked out is the one that teaches that success lies in the hands of others, even the gods, when in fact it is one’s own to grasp through one’s own efforts.

*facies autem ... coniuncta est*: Seneca expresses a direct optimism in the possibility of Lucilius achieving the goal of sagehood with the use of *facies* picking up the *fac* of the previous sentence. Having introduced the idea that there is a category of things neither good nor evil, Seneca now gives the Stoic definition of good and evil. Fundamental to this is that they deny the status of good to anything but the honourable (Cic. *Parad.* 1.6-16 and *Fin.* 3.21), or evil to anything
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except vice (Vit. 16.1 and Cic. Fin. 3.29). See further L-S 60. Despite this close connection, the honourable and the good are capable of distinction, something that Seneca does not, however, do in this passage, though he does devote a great deal of attention to the concepts in his writings (cf. MOTTO, The Good, The Honourable, etc.). In the Epistles he begins to treat the topic at much greater length in Ep. 66. intellexeris: the same verb is used in the same context in Ep. 32.5. Taken in isolation this sentence accords fully with the intellectualist character of Stoicism. However, see above, p. 21 and §6 rerum scientia n. for its sense in a broader Senecan context. bona ... turpia: Seneca avoids careful technical language here, as strictly the antonyms of bona and turpia are mala, and honesta respectively. virtus: the first use of the term in Book IV, though already used fairly frequently in earlier letters. Here apparently, the meaning is strongly that of virtue in its most philosophical sense, yet its use is flanked (§§5 and 7) by prominent uses of vir that praise the manliness of toil, so that even here the most basic and Roman sense of the word should not be ignored (above, p. 10). malitia: Seneca uses this here as the opposite of virtus. Cicero, Fin 3.39, rejected it as a translation of the Greek kakia in favour of vitium.

Quemadmodum ...efficit: Seneca proceeds to illustrate his point with two analogies from nature. Both draw upon Stoic physics for their explanations, and in that the Stoic system was a unified whole (cf. Cic. Fin. 3.74), the analogies provide a measure of proof for the claim. The analogies work from the Stoic understanding of the four elements. Of these fire and air were seen as active, and earth and water passive (L-S 47D and SVF 2.418). Each element had its own quality: fire was hot, air cold, earth dry and water moist (L-S 47B and SVF 2.580). In addition light and dark were associated as the qualities of the two active elements: fire being bright and air dark (L-S 47T). This model explains why cold and dark are not seen as mere absences of their opposite, but rather indicate the presence of the element of air.

The ordering of the analogies is significant, as the first one uses terms that have strong moral connotations and acts as a link between the purely moral sphere and the purely physical sphere of the second analogy. It is probably an overanalysis of the analogy to explain the existence of evil on the model of cold and dark (cf. MAURACH 1970, 118, n. 161), yet it is consistent with the analogy to see evil, like cold, as being something more than the absence of good; if evil is understood as basically error, it is certainly active (cf. BELLINCIONI 1978, 21 and Vit. 1.2). The illustrative function of these analogies does not, of course, depend on the reader knowing their
consistencies with more advanced Stoic thought. The imagery of light and dark, in particular, exists in the traditional Roman value system (below, *splendidum* n.).

The analogies predicate adjectival qualities on respective nouns, and conclude that the honourable and the base are similarly predicated on virtue and wickedness. Each quality is described with a type of anaphora in *nihil*, and are linked to their noun using *sine*, except for the second, which avoids too tidy a balance with a * nisi* clause. The phrases following * sine* are also varied: the first two have *mixtura* and *adiutorio* respectively, but the third has *aere* on its own.

*Quemadmodum* ... *obscuri*: the analogy of light and dark to both good and evil and to honourable and base is a very common one. As such it makes a very apposite analogy. Although Seneca does not show the underlying Stoic connection of light and dark to the elements of fire and air, his analogy in no way contradicts it. *Quemadmodum* ... *ita*: Ep. 30.2 n. *splendidum*: along with other terms connected to light this is a synonym for the honourable (*Lendon* 1997, 274 and ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, *lumière*, 131-132). *atrum*: as many of the senses in the OLD attest, this word has many negative connotations, such as ‘ill-omened’, ‘funereal’ and ‘terrible’. *tenebras ... obscuri*: Seneca frequently relates darkness to error (cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, *obscurité*, 144-145), but as error is the root of evil, the analogy here is very similar (cf. §6, Quid malum ... *imperitia* n.). The sense of darkness not being just light’s absence is seen in a poetical context at *Oed*. 585, where Seneca describes true night, *noctem* ... *veram*, as existing in the underworld.

*Quemadmodum* ... *frigidum*: the second analogy, as mentioned, lacks the strong moral overtones of the first, yet drawing more directly on Stoic physics, which Seneca valued highly (above, p. 24), its persuasive value for himself should not be underestimated. *ignis*: cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, *feu*, 116-118. In Stoic physics fire was the most important element, either on its own (*L-S* 47A §3) or blended as the dominant element with air to create breath (*L-S* 47H). *aere*: Seneca devotes some attention to the nature of air at *Nat*. 2.10.1. *frigidum*: cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, *froid*, 124.

*ita honesta ... efficit*: in completing the analogy, Seneca’s avoidance of a too technical style is evident. He repeats *virtutis* and *malitiae* as the same terms as those used in the previous sentence, but in using the pair *honesta* and *turpia*, he changes *honesta* for the earlier *bona*. * societas*: again in keeping with a non-technical style appropriate to letters, and in particular to this stage
of Lucilius’ education, this term is the last of a number he uses to define the connection between a quality and its cause, the earlier ones being *admixta, coniuncta, mixtura* and *adiutorio*.

§6. Quid ergo est bonum? rerum scientia. Quid malum est? rerum imperitia. Ille prudentis atque artifex pro tempore quaeque repellit aut eliget; sed nec quae repellit timet nec miratur quae eligit, si modo magnus illi et invictus animus est. Summitti te ac deprimi veto. Laborem si non recuses, parum est: posce.

§6. Seneca summarizes what has just been explained (*ergo*) with definitions of good and evil in terms of knowledge and ignorance. He follows this with an image of an idealized figure choosing and rejecting things without irrational fear and desire, with the crucial proviso that he possess a great and unconquered spirit. It is upon mention of this great spirit that Seneca addresses Lucilius, commanding him, in effect, to have a similar spirit and not to allow himself to be defeated by toil, not to face it with a resigned acceptance, but to actively seek it out.

In this passage Seneca starts from a purely intellectualist definition of philosophy, but in introducing the requirement of a great spirit to enable the intellectual understanding to be practised he appeals to those extra-rational elements of psychology that lead many to describe his philosophy as voluntarist (above, p. 17).

**Quid ergo ... scientia:** this definition and the next one are offered as consequences of the previous discussion. For the orthodox Stoics, as for Socrates, good and evil were seen as fundamentally knowledge or error (cf. Sandbach 1989, 41 and Pl. *Prt*. 357d). For Seneca knowledge is only a step on the way to wisdom; it needs to be fully integrated into one’s character, to become a *habitus animi*, to be effective (below p. 183, Bellincioni 1979, 188 ff. on *Ep*. 94.48 and *Vit*. 8.3). Furthermore, as the requirement for great-spiritedness in this section makes clear, the effort to achieve this integration draws upon more than solely the rational faculties of the mind (above, p. 21). **rerum scientia:** to what does the *rerum* refer? Some (e.g. Wagenvoort 1948, 103) take it as shorthand for *divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia*, used by Cicero on a number of occasions (*Fin*. 2.37, *Tusc*. 4.57 and 5.7), as a definition of wisdom. Seneca uses a similar formula on occasions (e.g. §8 below and *Epp*. 74.29, 89.5 and 110.8). As such it is a fundamental Stoic definition of wisdom (cf. L-S 26A). Yet here a more limited sense seems more appropriate. It is more specifically the knowledge of the true nature of good and evil, just outlined (cf. Scarpat 1983, 38). This sense is one formulation used for this philosophical knowledge; e.g. *Ep*. 88.28: *scientia bonorum ac malorum inmutabili*. At *Ep*. 115.18 Seneca closes the letter by describing true knowledge
in more practical terms as proportionate to one’s freedom from desire and fear: *tantum scire se iudicet quantum non cupit, quantum non timet*. At *Ep*. 109.5 Seneca points out that the sage does not know everything.

**Quid malum ... imperitia:** consistent with good being knowledge, its antithesis is a lack of knowledge. It is an antithesis that explains the basic Stoic division of the world into sages and fools (*Ep*. 30.6 *demens* n.). Very frequently Seneca expresses this ignorance with the image of error, or wandering (*Armißen-Marchetti*, 89-90), which can be understood in terms of *diastrophē* (above, p. 112). **rerum imperitia:** rather than using *inscientia*, Seneca chose this close synonym, which perhaps reflects a desire to avoid a too technical style, but also adds the sense of ‘lack of skill’ reflecting that virtue is not only knowledge but also a skill, as the definition in §8 makes clear (§8 *ars* n).

**ille prudens ... elegit:** the shift is abrupt from the two abstract definitions to the description of an unnamed figure with sage-like qualities. A similar unnamed figure is described in *Ep*. 41.4. This figure here requires both prudence and skill to recognize correctly things that are good or evil and to react appropriately. **prudens:** this is the first quality required to react to situations appropriately; it is discussed in detail by *Borgo*, 148-150. Although *Fortner* 2002, 84, is correct to argue that Seneca uses *prudentia* and *sapientia* interchangeably, *prudens* is very appropriate here as it denotes more specifically the practical wisdom that is needed for this choosing and rejecting. **artifex:** indicates that virtue is a skill, specifically the *ars vitae* (*Ep*. 95.7), making the sage an *artifex vitae* or *vivendi* (*Epp*. 90.27, 95.7 and *Vit*. 8.3. cf. *Pittet*, 113, *Smith*, 91 and *Bartsch* 2009, 209-210). Horace makes use of the related *opifex* when parodying this particularly Stoic characterization of the sage (*Sat*. 1.3.133). **pro tempore:** in adding this condition Seneca indicates that while one’s reaction to good and bad should be absolute, the reaction to indifferent things varies with the situation. Elsewhere this distinction is expanded to explain that some indifferent things are advantageous and some are disadvantageous (*Ep*. 74.17; cf. *Motto*, *Indifferent Things* §2 and *Long* 1986, 193). **repellet:** the action appropriate for bad things and, depending on the circumstances, disadvantageous things. At *Ep*. 71.2 he use the stronger *fugere* for this. **eligit:** the action appropriate for good things and, depending on the circumstances, advantageous things. At *Ep*. 71.2 he use the stronger *petere* for this.
sed nec ... eligi: the impassiveness of this sage-like figure in the face of events, either good or bad, is what makes his happiness secure; it is described on a number of other occasions in Book IV (Epp. 36.6, 39.3 and 41.4). timet ... miratur: these two emotions relate to the two primary passions of fear and desire (below, p. 298). In using mirari for desire Seneca alludes to the maxim nil admirari (Hor. Ep. 1.6.1 and Cic. Tusc. 3.30) derived from the Greek μηδὲν θαυμάζειν, for whose use by various philosophical schools, see Dilke 1954, 92-93.

si modo ... animus est: Seneca adds a very significant requirement for this person to be able to display impassivity, the possession of a great spirit. Intellectual understanding is not sufficient on its own. The mention of the animus at this stage in the letter prepares for its prominence at the end (§11). magnus: That such great-spiritedness was a key quality for Seneca’s conception of the sage has already been discussed (above, p. 24). invictus: (OLD §4b) this is an important quality of the soul that embodies virtue, described at Ep. 66.6 as asperis blandisque pariter invictus.

Summitti ... veto: as though to head off an anticipated objection by Lucilius, Seneca closes this section with a provocative and uncompromising demand (veto) for Lucilius to display the type of unconquerable mind just described. After the extended excursus on the nature of the good in 3rd p. Seneca concludes with a 2nd p. address to his correspondent. In a similar way mention of toil in the next sentence serves to return the letter to the topic from which that discussion began. After the long sentence of the preceding section this and the next one are short and direct. Summitti: (OLD §7c) surrender, in contrast to the invictus animus, is inappropriate for the philosopher-soldier (so too Epp. 36.9 and 37.2). deprimi: (OLD §4) such humbling is inappropriate for the generosus animus, which should be lifted up (extollere, Ep. 39.2; cf. Epp. 10.4, 39.3, 66.6, 72.9 and Tranq. 2.4).

Laborem ... posce: offered as an expansion on his prohibition on becoming dejected, Seneca concludes this section by focusing on the attitude Lucilius should have to toil. Making an antithesis between non recuses and posce, he insists that not objecting to work is insufficient; Lucilius must demand it. This demand does not follow obviously from the preceding discussion (Maurach 1970, 118, calls it a ‘Korrecturschluß’), although it does move the discussion from the abstract to the concrete. There is a suggestion in this demand that Lucilius is perhaps malingering, and it provokes an objection from Lucilius in the next section.
§7. ‘Quid ergo?’ inquis ‘labor frivolus et supervacuus et quem humiles causae evocaverunt non est malus?’ Non magis quam ille qui pulchris rebus impenditur, quoniam animi est ipsa tolerantia quae se ad dura et aspera hortatur ac dicit, ‘quid cessas? non est viri timere sudorem’.

§7. Lucilius is made to interject an objection to seeking out toil, asking whether effort expended on trifling matters is not bad. The objection seems valid given Seneca’s criticism of those toiling in vain at §4. It also seems valid as from a philosophical view it is just this sort of toil that the occupationes of public life create, and Seneca has been arguing for a retirement from public life. However, Seneca’s response meets the use of the term ‘bad’ (malus) to describe the toil spent on such affairs by insisting on the philosophical sense of the word that he has just taught: what the effort is expended on is not important, as whatever the task it is an opportunity to exercise the virtue of endurance (tolerantia). With virtue as the only good, indifferent things can only ever be the material for displaying virtue (cf. Ep. 66.15). Seneca describes the attitude to toil of a man perfected and possessing virtue at Ep. 120.12. Epictetus, Diss. 3.12.7, suggests one may have to train to overcome an aversion to toil.

‘Quid ergo?’ ... malus?': the various causes that might have led Lucilius to ask this question have already been described. The adjectives used to describe toil are given in a tricolon crescens, with the final member being expanded as a relative clause, a characteristic pattern for Seneca; while the first two stress the unimportance to the work, the third adds an element of social judgment on it. Quid ergo?: Ep. 30.15 n. frivolus: cf. SCARPAT 1975, 82 on Ep. 4.4. supervacuus: Ep. 30.11 n. humiles: the social connotation of this word (cf. Ep. 47.1 and 47.13) is very relevant to the topic of toil, which was closely associated with slavery (above, p. 117). This sense of the ignoble is also seen in Epp. 37.4 and 39.2. evocaverunt: (OLD §4c) these affairs are given agency, suggesting a legal metaphor of summoning toil to appear in court (OLD §3b), an image that fits with the use of causae; court appearances were also one of the demands made on the time of a public figure (cf. Ep. 8.6).

Non magis ... impenditur: toil remains an indifferent even when expended on noble objectives, a corrective to a possible impression from Seneca’s praise of those striving for good ends at §4 that this changed the nature of toil. pulchris: (OLD §3) here used as a synonym for honestus, one that more closely matches the Greek equivalent, kalos, cf. FISCHER 1914, 13-14.
impenditur: (OLD §2) a regular metaphorical usage with words such as labor (cf. Ep. 27.4 and SMITH, 106, who misses this example).

quoniam animi ... dicit: the placement of animi is emphatic, stressing that such endurance is a mental quality. As with the magnus ... animus at §6 this prepares for the central role of the mind that is revealed at §11. The virtue of endurance is personified and made to speak, urging itself to undertake arduous and demanding tasks. Seneca then quotes a bit of this exhortation, one that appeals strongly to a traditional Roman concept of virtus. tolerantia: not a terribly common term, found only once in Cicero (Parad. 4.27) and four other times by Seneca, all in the Epistles. At Ep. 67.10, he describes it as a sub-category of patientia. dura et aspera: these two adjectives occur quite frequently paired, e.g. Epp. 36.3, 82.2, 98.3, 120.12, 123.14 and Prov. 5.9.

‘quid cessas? ... sudorem’: as with Reason at Ep. 84.11, the speech of a Senecan virtue is rhetorical rather than dialectical (cf. WILSON 2007, 432-433). The challenge that Endurance makes appeals to Lucilius’ identification of himself as a Roman male who possesses, or should possess, Romana virtus. It appeals to this identification to argue that it is unmanly to be afraid, let alone of sweat, which for Seneca is the badge of honest toil. ‘quid cessas’: a provocative challenge, which Seneca offers to Fortune at Ep. 64.4. It is used on a few other occasions by Seneca, twice in the Dialogues (Brev. 9.2 and Polyb. 2.2) and twice in the Tragedies (Ag. 198 and Med. 895). In extant literature the phrase is not very common: after Seneca Terence makes the most frequent use of it (e.g. Phorm. 882), but it is used emphatically once both by Cicero (Phil 2.110) and by Virgil (Aen. 11.389). viri: §5 viro n. sudorem: other occasions where this word is used in the Epistles show that it is more than ‘merely a case of metonymy for laborem’ (SMITH, 36). It is toil that should produce a sweat, not a hot bath (Ep. 51.6); bathing should be to wash away an honest sweat, not perfume (Ep. 67.12); and finally the proper religious offerings for virtus are blood and sweat (Ep. 86.11). At Vit. 25.8, however, Seneca suggests a preference for practising virtues that do not require blood and sweat.

§8. Huc et illud accedat, ut perfecta virtus sit, aequalitas ac tenor vitae per omnia consonans sibi, quod non potest esse nisi rerum scientia contingit et ars per quam humana ac divina noscantur. Hoc est summum bonum; quod si occupas, incipis deorum socius esse, non supplex.

§8. From the need to embrace toil Seneca moves to a new topic, the requirements for perfecting virtue. This expands on the discussion of the nature of virtue at §6, but it is not
something that of necessity follows from what has been discussed so far; as such it continues the unpredictable course of the letter. The first of the requirements for perfecting virtue is a constancy that is one of Seneca’s basic concerns: the contrast between unchanging perfection and the changing realm of fortune. This constancy is only possible through the possession of a certain type of knowledge and skill (ars), which relate to the fundamental idea that virtue is teachable. This is then revealed to be the highest good, which Seneca caps by saying that by learning it one becomes the gods’ ally (socius), rather than their suppliant.

In this brief description of the nature of virtue, Seneca sets out what lies ahead. It is the subject of latter letters to define the nature of the knowledge that is both wisdom and virtue and how it must be assimilated (notably Epp. 88, 89, 94 and 95), but Seneca combines the description of what lies ahead with the incentive that, at its end, one achieves a special relationship with the divine.

Huc et ... virtus sit: hoc provides the link to the previous section, referring to the tolerantia. The pronoun illud designates the thing that is added to it. The hyperbaton of this pronoun from the nominal phrase in apposition to it adds emphasis to that phrase, a common Senecan device (e.g. Ep. 30.2 Magna res ... abire n.). As opposed to displaying endurance in regard to toil, perfected virtue must be possessed in all areas and at all times, which is the essence of the constancy that Seneca so prized. However, the formulation in this sentence suggests that such an attitude to toil is a prerequisite for acquiring perfect virtue, or a first step on the path to it — without accepting hard work you cannot get any further (so too Vit. 25.5-6). perfecta: The verb implies that this state is achieved through work (above, p. 119 and Ep. 34.3 perfectum n.). virtus: SCARPAT 1983, 39, notes that this is an instance of Seneca using virtus in preference to the ratio that might be more expected.

aequalitas ... consonans sibi: This phrase is one of the most extended formulations of what was for Seneca a fundamental quality (cf. Ep. 120.18-22). It is the tenor that is the central attribute of this description and for Seneca it is a quality to be sought for one’s life (as here, Ep. 23.7 and Ot. 1.1) or for one’s soul (e.g. Epp. 20.4 and 59.14). In itself tenor suggests something even (OLD §1), but Seneca frequently reinforces this with an adjective with a similar force, often aequalis (e.g. Ot. 1.1, Ben. 7.31 and Nat. 3.11) or as here through hendiadys with aequalitas (so too Nat. 7.25.6). The adjectival phrase per omnia consonans sibi adds specificity to this quality. It is one that is in
harmony with itself in all things. The necessity of this quality had been a regular theme of earlier epistles, most strongly in Ep. 20, but it relates also to the need for coherence between one’s actions and one’s words (Epp. 16.2-3, 20.1-2, 24.15 and 34.4 n). **aequalitas:** PITTE, 63-64, describes this as a synonym of **tenor.** **tenor:** (OLD §1) the sense of movement inherent in this term fits with the recurring image of a philosophical life being a journey (LAUDIZI 2003, 90). This sense is also strong in its synonym **cursus** (e.g. Const. 8.2 and Tranq. 2.4). As WILLIAMS 2003, 65-66, on Ot. 1.1 observes, this smooth progression of life mirrors the course of the celestial bodies (Nat. 7.25.6) and matches the idiom εὕροια βίου that defined the happy life for earlier Stoics; cf. Stob. Ecl. 2.7.6e (= W 2.77, SVF 1.184 and L-S 63A). Apart from **aequalis,** Seneca qualifies this word with similar adjectives, such as **placidus** and **continuus** (Ep. 23.7), or **quietus** and **compositus** (Ep. 100.8). **per omnia:** such consistency is what is required in the face of both good and bad fortune (§6 sed nec ... eligi n.). **consonans sibi:** one of a number of expressions used by Seneca to describe the quality of self-consistency. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI 1989, 219-220, notes that Seneca’s usage for describing this concept differed from Cicero’s (see also FISCHER 1914, 40-42 and LIŞÇU 1930, 140-143). As opposed to Cicero’s **convenientia,** Seneca favoured **concordia** and related forms, while the use of **consonans** here suggests a harmony analogous to that in music. This musical image was used by Chrysippus (Stob. Ecl. 2.7.5b1 (= W 2.60 and SVF 3.262)). Such a harmony was achieved by the proper tension (**tonos**) of a lyre’s strings, and LONG 1996 202-223, argues that music was the particular craft that Stoics had in mind when envisaging philosophy as the craft of getting the proper tension (**eutonia**) of the soul.

**quod non ... divina noscantur:** Seneca proceeds to state that such constancy is impossible without a certain knowledge and a certain skill. It was a fundamental tenet of Stoicism, one which it took from Socrates, that virtue was a sort of knowledge or skill and that it could be taught; cf. Stob. Ecl. 2.7.5b5 (= W 2.63, SVF 3.280 and L-S 61D), D.L. 7.91 (= SVF 3.223 and L-S 61K) and LONG 1986, 200. The individual sub-virtues are themselves types of knowledge (e.g. Ep. 85.28). **rerum scientia:** as at §6 above, what the things (**rerum**) are is not directly specified. However, if a contrast is to be made between this knowledge and the skill with which it is linked, it seems best to take it to be the same as at §6, namely the knowledge of the nature of good and evil. **ars:** closely related to the idea that wisdom is a type of knowledge that can be taught is the idea that the knowledge is like a craft or skill. It was alluded to at §6 with **artifex** and more explicitly in the last letter of Book III at Ep. 29.3, (**sapientia ars est**), and 29.12. Later he refines this by saying that wisdom is the art of
living (ars vitae, e.g. Ep. 95.7; Bellicioni 1979, 230). It is within the concept of philosophy as a craft that the need to integrate and habituate the knowledge is found, as few skills are mastered without practice (cf. Ep. 94.47, where virtue is acquired through a combination of exercitatio and disciplina, and Hengelbrock 2000, 41-42). In contrast to wisdom, Seneca does not so directly call virtue an ars. He comes closest at Ep. 90.44: non enim dat natura virtutem: ars est bonum fieri. Otherwise he talks of virtue or virtues needing to be learnt (Epp. 50.7 and 123.16). In the broader Stoic framework it was a fundamental doctrine that virtue was an expertise (technē), Stob. Ecl. 2.7.5b5 (= W 2.63, SVF 3.280 and L-S 61D), or something that could be taught, D.L. 7.91 (= SVF 3.223 and L-S 61K), a concept the Stoics inherited from Socrates (Sanbach 1989, 41).

**humana ac divina:** a basic division of the topics of philosophy, designating the areas of ethics (humana) and physics (divina); cf. Hadot 1969a, 108. In Nat. 1.pr, Seneca argues that of these two the study of physics is by far the grander. At Ep. 8.6 he uses the phrase humana divinaque to describe what is studied in philosophical retirement. nescantur: although at times Seneca uses the phrase scientia divinorum humanorumque (e.g. Ep. 74.29), the formulation used here, besides providing a way of including ars in it, also suggests that philosophy is the craft of discovering the knowledge, rather than the knowledge itself. Such a distinction fits with Seneca’s insistence that much still remains to be discovered (Ep. 33.11 n.).

**Hoc ... supplex:** from the state of self-sufficiency acquired without dependence on prayer that he held out at §5, Seneca now offers Lucilius the status of an ally of the gods. The antithesis between supplex and socius, reinforced by alliteration, reminds one of that earlier passage, and just as the status of the philosopher is now more exalted, so too is the status of the one relying on prayer more demeaning. There is a martial tone to this passage: force is suggested in the image of Lucilius seizing the summum bonum, while both socius and supplex can refer to one’s status in a conflict. summum bonum: the technical term for the end of ethical philosophy (cf. Fischer 1914, 29-31). For other formulations of it, see Motto, The Good §§23-24. occupas: Seneca presents this goal as something that can be seized, as though by military force. Such military imagery is continued in §10 instruxit n. and deserueris n. deorum socius: the philosopher as an ally of the gods, by implication, participates in the work of divinity, an example of the religious element to Seneca’s philosophy (above, p. 47). By contrast the fool was an enemy of the gods (Stob. Ecl. 2.7.11k (= W 2.106 and SVF 3.661) and Algra 2003, 176). Traditionally the obligation of a Roman ally was military service (cf. OLD socius §4). In a broader sense the word could refer to such associates
of the gods as Hercules; for the contrasting use of the plural and singular of *deus* in this letter, see §9 *deo n.* 

supplex: the posture not only of those praying to gods, but also of defeated enemies to their conquerors, a posture Seneca found most unsuitable for a free Roman (*Ben. 2.12.2*).

**Section C (§§9-11).** In this final section Seneca develops the idea at the end of §8 that one who attains the highest good is equal to a god; he does this in answer to an interjection from Lucilius, who asks how this parity is attained. His explanation that follows can be seen as an application of the *scientia rerum* that had been outlined in the middle of the letter. He works through a succession of popular concepts of the good and the divine, contrasting each with the philosophical concept of god, finally arriving at an understanding of both what is truly divine and what is the appropriate attitude to it. In returning to themes that the letter opened with, popular concepts of success and the divine (in relation to prayer), Seneca concludes this letter with a form of ring composition.

§9. ‘Quomodo’ inquis ‘isto pervenitur?’ Non per Poeninum Graiumve montem nec per deserta Candaviae; nec Syrtes tibi nec Scylla aut Charybdis adeundae sunt, quae tamen omnia transisti procuratiunculae pretio: tutum iter est, iucundum est, ad quod natura te instruxit. Dedit tibi illa quae si non deserueris, par deo surges.

§9. Lucilius interjects with a question that reverts to the journey metaphor of the start of the letter. Seneca’s reply starts by evoking a series of exotic locations that he says Lucilius has traversed for the sake of his procuratorship. He then claims the journey is both safe and pleasant. Moreover Nature, personified, has given Lucilius equipment for the journey with which he can become the equal of god. This section has been well analysed by Vassileiou 1971, who by having proper regard for its context shows how misguided are the attempts to interpret the list of places as locations where Lucilius served as procurator; they are rather difficult parts of a number of journeys, places traversed to reach a goal. Each name is evocative of the difficulties and perils of travel, making their use to reconstruct the travels of Lucilius problematic.

‘Quomodo’ ... *pervenitur*?: Lucilius interjects into Seneca’s description of the state that is the goal of philosophy to demand how one gets there. His question returns to prominence the metaphor of travel for progress. *isto*: equivalent to *istuc*.

**Non per Poeninum ... sunt:** Seneca offers a literal reply to Lucilius’ metaphorical question. The geographical references are organized into two pairs. The first two are linked by the
anaphora of the preposition *per* ... *per* and describe the mountainous regions of two major land routes: the St. Bernard Pass to the Northern frontier and the start of the *Via Egnatia* leading to the East. The next two are geographic hazards to maritime travel. **Poeninum Graiumve montem:** VASSILEIOU 1971, 221-223, argues these accurately describe the two routes of the St. Bernard Pass to Germany, the Great (*Poeninum*) and the Little (*Graium*). Such an interpretation makes the use of -ve fully meaningful. In popular etymology the names commemorate two famous crossings of the Alps, by Hercules and Hannibal (cf. Liv. 21.38, Nep. Han. 3.4 and Plin. Nat. 3.123). **deserta Candaviae:** VASSILEIOU 1971, 223-224, points out that far from being a poetic designation of Epirus or Macedonia, this is not a term used by poets. It rather indicates the start of the *Via Egnatia* to the East, which furthermore was the most difficult part of that long mountainous route, as it left the Adriatic and passed through what is now Albania. **Syrtes:** the dangers to shipping of these shallows and shoals along the coast of North Africa were notorious. They are also prominent in Roman literature, being, for example, part of the storm in *Aen.* 1.111 and 146, and used by Hor. *Carm.* 1.22.5 as an example of a dangerous journey. Seneca himself makes use of them in his tragedies on a number of occasions (*Ag.* 64, 480, *Her F.* 323 and *Thy.* 292). In his prose works they are referred to on two other occasions (*Marc.* 25.3 and *Vit.* 14.1). **Scylla aut Charybdis:** as a mythological reference to the straits of Messina that separated Seneca from his friend in Sicily, this reference is certainly to one journey Lucilius made, to the province of Sicily, where he was procurator. Seneca makes reference to these mythological figures on two other occasions in the *Epistles* with respect to Lucilius’ presence on that island (*Epp.* 45.2 and 79.1). The literary references, numerous in both Greek and Latin literature, begin with Odysseus (*Hom. Od.* 12.85 ff.), which provides a link to the start of the letter where that hero is mentioned.

**quae tamen ... pretio:** it is this remark that provides the justification for reading the places named as ones that Lucilius had been to, yet when they are understood as hazards of travel, and when full weight is given to their literary associations, little is gained from doing this. Seneca is not trying to give the reader an informative list of where his correspondent has been but an impressionistic one of dangerous places to travel through. **procuratiunculae:** the diminutive belittles the significance of this office, suggesting it is not worth the dangers, an approach consistent with Seneca’s suggestion to his friend of escaping from *occupationes* by despising their rewards (*Ep.* 22.9).
**tutum ... instruxit:** in contrast to the dangers of the journeys in pursuit of popular success, just described, Seneca uses a tricolon crescens of which the third member is a relative clause (§7, ‘Quid ergo?’ ... malus?’ n.). Each adjective tops the last: the journey is not just safe, it is even pleasant, and finally it is a journey that Nature herself has equipped us for. **tutum:** cf. Ep. 32.2 n. **iucundum:** after the earlier demand to seek out toil and not to fear sweat (§§6-7), such a claim is surprising, almost Epicurean, but it serves to heighten the contrast between the pursuit of philosophical as opposed to popular goals. **natura:** this is an idea already stated at Ep. 13.15: *Non in diversum te a natura tua ducimus: natus es ad ista quae dicimus*. Being natural carries the suggestion of being easy, an idea made explicit at Ep. 41.9. Nature is personified and described as fitting out the philosopher with the equipment with which to make the journey. Nature’s role is fundamental to Stoic ethics, whose goal was to live in accordance with nature (*Ep. 31.11 qua non ... suam n.*).

**instruxit:** this verb has a wide range of meanings, the most obvious here is equipping with resources for a journey (*OLD §7*), but it can also mean equipping with knowledge (*OLD §8*), or with military equipment (*OLD §7b*); the last of these fits with one of Seneca’s favourite images of the philosopher and with the connotations of deserueris in the next sentence. Elsewhere Seneca makes use of the phrase *instrumenta vitae* (e.g. *Ep. 88.20* and *SCARPAT 1975, 220* on Ep. 9.15) to indicate those indifferents that are necessary for living, in contrast to virtue, which is all that is needed to live well.

**Dedit tibi ... surges:** Seneca does not reveal the exact quality of Nature’s gift until the next two sections. **deserueris:** the image suggests that of a soldier abandoning the standards of his unit (*OLD §2d*), which would betoken a failure of martial steadfastness. At Ep. 95.35 Seneca develops exactly such an image in suggesting that one must feel towards virtus the same deserendi nefas as a soldier towards his standards. **par:** the sage’s parity to a god is one that Seneca describes in a number of ways. At its most literal it is achieved through the bringing of his mind to a state of perfection. The stuff of his mind is transformed by divine Reason (cf. *SCARPAT 1975, 116* on *transfigurari* at Ep. 6.1), and he achieves homologia with this Reason (cf. *SCARPAT BELLINCIONI 1986, 28*). This transformation is also frequently described as self-fashioning through images of construction (see further §11 *finge* n.). Along with the image of parity, found in other places (Ep. 48.11), Seneca also speaks of similitude (*Const. 8.2* and *Prov 1.5*) and close proximity (*Const. 8.2* and *Helv. 5.2*) to the gods. However, whereas the gods possess their state as a gift of nature, the sage surpasses them by achieving this state through his own effort (*Ep. 53.11*). This appeal to the
reader’s competitive sense is also found in the image of the sage as the *aemulator dei* (Ep. 124.23 and Prov. 1.5). For the god-like status of the sage in other Stoics, see D.L 7.119 (= SVF 3.606) and Stob. Ecl. 2.7.11g (= W 2.98 and SVF 3.54). *deo*: at this point Seneca switches from the plural gods of earlier in the letter (§§2, 5 and 8) to the singular. For the translator this creates a problem of deciding whether to treat it as referring to the Stoic god, as most opt for, or a single god (so *APELT* 2004, v. 3, 118). Certainly the *deus* of §10 is the Stoic one, and it is possible that by changing to the singular Seneca is marking a shift from reacting to popular concepts of the divine to setting out his own view of the nature of god in the next section. However, even from a Stoic viewpoint the plural ‘gods’ can be accurately used, as celestial bodies were accorded this status (e.g. *Ben.* 4.23.4). Also he can speak of god creating subordinate gods (*Sen.* F86a V (= F16 H) in *Lactant.* Div. Inst. 1.5.27). On Seneca’s use of such plurals generally, see *MAZZOLI* 1984, 959-960 and *SETAIOLI* 2007, 347-348. *surges*: the image of rising is repeated forcefully at §11, when what was given here as a conditional is presented as a command. It presents a movement that Seneca makes frequent use of (cf. *TRAINA* 1987, 61-62), away from human and mortal concerns and up to the realm of the divine and the immortal. This movement is capable of a literal interpretation, one alluded to directly at *Epp.* 48.11 and 73.15: *sic itur ad astra*. It is the movement of the apotheosized soul to the celestial regions (Suet. *Iul.* 88), and as such puts the pinnacle of the philosophical life in opposition to the pinnacle of the honours achieved in political life. Less literally it is the tranquillity of the superlunary world of these celestial beings that the sage creates in his soul (*Ep.* 59.16).


§10. Seneca uses the mention of equality with god to provide a benchmark against which to measure popular ideas of value: against it money, social status, renown, strength and beauty are all measured and rejected, an argument that foreshadows Juvenal’s *Satire* 10. There is a pattern to the passage, but one whose regularity is deliberately varied. Seneca presents five categories that do not give this equality, each followed asyndetically by a reason for this. The first four clauses share a common structure with ellipsis of *parem te deo* after the first clause and the verb itself being gapped in the fourth. The explanations are also similarly patterned with the subject being *deus* and coming first in all but the third of them. In the third the uniformity is broken by having
deum as the object and in third place and then, although initially it appears to match the pattern of a short three word explanation like the first two, it continues with a further explanation added paratactically, which itself is expanded with et impune to give a conversational style. The final category varies the pattern further; introduced by ne ... quidem, suggesting that it is climactic, the ellipsis is not continued, with beatum te instead, and the tense shifts from the future to the present of posse. The final explanation also breaks with the pattern; although still given in asyndeton, its criterion is no longer god.

In presenting this set of contrasts, Seneca proves both that these popular goods are not true goods and that if god does not have them, they are not necessary to become his equal. The comparisons that are set up seem to suggest an anthropomorphic god (particularly the first two), but the final answer shows how different from this the philosophical conception of god is. A similar play on these two conceptions continues in §11 on the sense of imago. Furthermore, the contrast with god creates a heightened antithesis between the dependence on worldly goods of popular success and the complete self-sufficiency of god, who needs nothing (cf. MOTTO, God §31), a contrast that goes beyond that of Epicurean poverty commended in earlier letters (Epp. 4.10, 16.7, 25.4 and 27.9). The elements of popularly understood prestige that Seneca chooses in this section are very regular ones (cf. LENDON 1997, 36-37).

Although there is a didactic tone to this passage, it is elliptical: the reader is not told how god is naked or has nothing, but must puzzle out for himself how these paradoxes are true.

Parem ... non faciet: that this is an expansion on the basis for rising to equality with god is shown by the close verbal echoes: most obviously in the use of parem ... deo, but also in the use of the future tense and the continued address to Lucilius (te). pecunia: wealth was a major component in social status, as shown by the property qualifications required for membership to the highest orders. As an equestrian, Lucilius was already very wealthy. However, one of his major concerns in abandoning a public career was the threat of poverty that could follow from it, and Seneca devoted a lot of space in the earlier books to countering this fear (starting at Ep. 1.5, but particularly Epp. 17-18). In the next letter, Seneca strongly criticizes wealth as arising from theft (Ep. 32.4). At Ep. 115.10 he argues that respect (honos) for money caused the ruin of the correct valuation of things. In other places he argues wealth is preferable to poverty for the greater opportunity for beneficence it affords (e.g. Vit. 7.21-26).
**deus nihil habet:** the strongest antithesis possible to wealth, going beyond the frugality of earlier letters in which Seneca had exhorted Lucilius to live simply (e.g. *Epp.* 4.10 and 18.12); such simple living was in accordance with nature (*Ep.* 16.7), and also described as becoming familiar with poverty. The requirements of nature are modest (*Ep.* 16.8), yet strictly these are only the requirements for living; for living well only virtue (e.g. *Ep.* 85.17), synonymous with *mens bona* (*SCARPAT* 1975, 244, on *Ep.* 10.4), is required and in this the Stoic sage can indeed achieve the same self-sufficiency as god in needing nothing external to himself. Later in the collection (*Ep.* 73.14), Seneca rephrases this idea to say god has everything but has no use for any of it, a state the sage can achieve by having no wish for any of it. The point that wealth is irrelevant for happiness is elsewhere reframed as a statement that wealth is not part of one’s self, notably at *Ep.* 41.7 n.

**Praetexta non faciet:** the *toga praetexta* was worn by curule magistrates, making this metonymy for the highest political offices (so too at *Brev.* 20.2). At *Const.* 12.2, Seneca suggests the sage would view seeking this and the other insignia of office as a mark of childishness. The *toga praetexta* denoted the rank of the senatorial class, one above the equestrian rank that Seneca suggests Lucilius had achieved through his own efforts (*Ep.* 44.1). At *Ep.* 114.12 he contrasts a more cultivated mob as differing from the common one only in togas, not in opinions: *togis ... inter se isti, non iudicis distant*.

**deus nudus est:** again the most extreme antithesis possible in clothing. It plays, perhaps, with the popular conceptions of a god seen in cult statues, which were on occasions naked. A similar observation is made at *Tranq.* 8.5, where the gods are celestial bodies. The emulation of such a state is not by being naked, or doing as many want-to-be philosophers do and dressing shabbily (*Ep.* 5.1-3), but by choosing to dress neatly (*Ep.* 92.12), which is in accord with human nature, and in accord with the fashion of one’s ancestors, rather than current fashion (*Tranq.* 9.2). Nature’s requirements for dress are simple (*Helv.* 11.1). At *Vit.* 2.2 one’s clothes are no guide to the state of one’s soul. See *MOTTO, Dress* and *COSTA* 1994, 193, on *Tranq.* 9.3 for Seneca’s other comments on unnatural dress habits.

**Fama ... notitia:** in an tricolon crescens (§7, ‘Quid ergo?’ ... *malus?’ n.) Seneca presents three different means for someone to become renowned: by word of mouth (*fama*), through showing oneself in public (*ostentatio*) and through communications sent abroad (*dimissa notitia*). For Seneca the popular renown presented here rests on the unstable foundation of popular opinion.
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(Ep. 95.58), whereas true renown depends only on the judgement of the good (Ep. 102.17) and will be recognized at some time by posterity (Ep. 79.17). Fama: although *fama* is capable of being used in a positive sense, it very readily has a negative one (e.g. Verg. Aen. 4.173 ff.). In Ciceronian oratory it is often the antithesis of *gloria* (Hellegouarc’h 1972, 364-365 and 375), the contrast being between *fama* as a popular form of renown and *gloria* vetted by those whose opinions counted (Earl 1967, 30). At Ep. 95.54 Seneca rejects *fama* in the measure of the value of things. In Ep. 102 he discusses in more detail the nature of true renown, which depends on the judgement of the *boni* (Ep. 102.9). Such a definition would accord with that of Cicero, but Seneca viewed the *boni* not as any social class, but one created by philosophy (above, p. 115). It is such renown that Seneca had held out to Lucilius in Ep. 21.3 as being gained from his correspondence with Seneca. ostentatio: ( OLD §2) the display of self that Seneca is rejecting is the unphilosophical understanding of self, explicitly rejected at Ep. 41.8. The sorts of display could vary, from public display of verbal brilliance to the display of one’s wealth with splendidly outfitted retainers. Tranq. 1.8 offers a good summary of the range. At Ep. 16.3 Seneca rejected the use of philosophy for such ends, and he is frequently critical of the use of wealth for display (e.g. Ep. 110.17). Such display, by the likes of Trimalchio in Petron. Sat. 26.9 ff., came in for frequent criticism in Roman literature. in populos: ( OLD §1b) the suggestion that knowledge of one is sent worldwide creates a contrast with renown at Rome, a contrast explicit in a similar phrase in Mart. 12.2.1. dimissa: Maurach 1987, 85, notes this phrase is used of letters (e.g. Caes. Civ. 3.79.4) sent to all the provinces. Such letters would be used to communicate who held the highest civic offices in a particular year. nominis … notitia: with these two words Seneca plays on their close association with fame (OLD §6 and §11 respectively) and with nobility (Hellegouarc’h 1972, 224, notus, and 225, n.2, nomen). At Ep. 114.12 he talks of someone famous as a *vir magni nominis*.

nemo … impune: Seneca implies a contrast here between the worship shown to the gods by those who do not know them and who treat them as exalted humans and the proper worship by those who do know them. It is made very explicit later at Ep. 95.47: *Vetemus salutationibus matutinis fungi et foribus adsidere templorum: humana ambitio istis officiis capitur, deum colit qui novit*. He goes on to insist that the knowledge of the gods will also lead to imitating them (Ep. 95.50), a linkage also seen in Ep. 90.34, which reflects the importance Seneca placed on philosophical actio following contemplatio (Bellincioni 1979, 291). nemo: in contrast to the following multi Seneca exaggerates to strengthen the antithesis. novit: the key element of renown is to be known, picking up notitia that
closed the previous clause. Seneca, however, suggests that god, who ought to occupy the highest place in a system of honour, is unknown. existimant: (OLD §2d) as mentioned above (Fama ... notitia, n.), central to the concept of renown was valuation, and this was one of the primary terms for expressing it (Hellegouarc’h 1972, 362-363). impune: such a claim contrasts with the prevailing belief that gods were angry (Feeney 1998, 81) and would punish such impiety. This popular expectation is seen at Phaed. 972-977, where Seneca’s chorus laments the failure of Jupiter to punish the wicked. The chorus then claims that it is rather Fortune who rules human affairs (978-980). This impunity relates to the ingratitude of many towards god’s gifts, which they nevertheless continue to receive (Ben. 1.1.9, 4.26.1 and 6.23). At Ep. 95.49 Seneca is explicit that gods cannot do harm.

Non turba ... portantium: Seneca now rejects the exalted way that Roman nobles are accustomed to travel as being a mark of success. It serves to weave in once more the theme of travel that runs through the letter. Seneca creates an image of ostentation, and also an antithesis between the multitude of slaves and the one person they serve (tuam). The detail in the clause builds up the sense of human effort exerted by the slaves on behalf of one man in an activity he could carry out for himself, to heighten the contrast with the way god acts. turba: the term has a negative connotation, but was also used for the entourage of someone important (OLD §3), even of the minor gods attending upon a god (Feeney 1998, 85). Such expensive entourages were a regular form of ostentation (above, ostentatio n.) and Seneca criticizes them at length in Ep. 87.2-10; and similarly at Ep. 123.7. servorum: it was not just expensively attired slaves that accompanied such litters, but also the great man’s clients (cf. Ep. 22.9 and Tranq. 12.4). In mentioning only the slaves Seneca keeps the focus on the mechanics of carriage in preparation for the contrast with god. The mention of slaves here, and the implication that their possession does not ennoble someone perhaps prepares for the contrast in §11 that even a slave can possess true nobility. lecticam: at Ep. 80.8 Seneca focuses on the way litters raise men above the mob, but their ostentation is only an actor’s mask for a misery they share with their inferiors. per itinera urbana ac peregrina: the contrast between renown both at Rome and abroad is continued from the previous sentence (in populos n.).

deus ... omnia: first with the demonstrative pronoun (ille) and then with two superlatives Seneca builds up god in a manner similar to a religious invocation (e.g. Iuppiter Optimus Maximus). He creates an antithesis between the singularity of ipse and the totality of omnia. Whereas the
previous descriptions of god had focused on a lack, it is not god’s lack (of retainers to carry him) that is focused on, but his activity. This serves to draw attention to the passivity of the nobles, who need others to walk for them. They lack self-sufficiency. God, however, is more than simply self-sufficient, he carries everything. Seneca explains what this means at Nat. 1.pr.13: *opus suum et intra et extra tenet*, and Nat. 2.45: *ipse enim est hoc quod vides totum, partibus suis inditus, et se sustinens et sua*. Both these passages come from sections where Seneca expands on the various ways of explaining what is god and Jupiter respectively. The image in Stoic terms is of god as *ratio* diffused throughout the cosmos, but being present as the commanding faculty (*hēgemonikon*) of the cosmos in the heavens, D.L. 7.138-139 (= L-S 470 and SVF 2.634) and Cic. N.D. 2.30 (= L-S 47C)).

**vehit:** (*OLD* §1a) although Seneca’s image is capable of the Stoic explanation of god as *ratio*, this verb creates a very anthropomorphic image of a god such as Atlas carrying the universe on his shoulders. By this Seneca maintains a contrast between the passivity and indolence of the noble with the active toil of god. As he regarded imitation of god as the proper form of worship (above, *nemo ... impune n.*), this image adds strong support to his attitude to toil in this letter. The antithesis between god and the noble can also be related to another frequent image of god: in contrast to a noble being served by his slaves, Seneca’s god toils on behalf of all creation. It is this divine beneficence that he argues should be imitated (*Ben*. 3.15.4): *Generosi animi est et magnifici iuvere, prodesse; qui dat beneficia, deos imitatur* (see also *Ep*. 95.47).

**Ne forma ... possunt:** Seneca rejects physical qualities as pertaining to happiness. However, the move from one’s status and possessions to one’s body prepares for the next stage of the argument, that it is one’s soul that makes one blessed. Beauty and strength are regularly picked out as Stoic indifferents in later letters (e.g. *Epp*. 76.9, 82.14 and 95.58). It is a mistake to cultivate them, as one can be outdone in both by animals (*Ep*. 124.22). **forma:** (*OLD* §5) Seneca at *Ep*. 66.2 claims that his sickly friend Claranus seems *formosus* to him on account of the power of the beauty of his mind. In contrast to the Greek *kallos* this word has few moral connotations, though Seneca occasionally uses its adjective as a synonym for *honestum* (*FISCHER* 1914, 13-14). **vires:** the reader already knows the philosophical status of physical strength from *Ep*. 15, which discusses this at some length. And in the previous letter the example of Bassus’ frailty shows it is not a necessary quality (esp. *Ep*. 30.13). Physical strength is a quality beyond the mere absence of illness (*Nat*. 1.pr.6), and the concept of mental strength is formed on analogy to it (*Ep*. 120.5).
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nihil ... vetustatem: as noted (§10 n.) this reply varies the pattern of the previous four sentences. Instead of making reference to god it shifts to a criterion for measuring excellence that is picked up in the next section. It is a single criterion, not being able to endure aging, that excludes these qualities from relevance to happiness. It is being affected by change that concerns Seneca, the opposite of the constancy that he prized (above, p. 16). The fleetingness of beauty was a commonplace (Ov. Ars 2.113, Tosi, §509). A major agent of this change was age, making strength and beauty the particular qualities of youth (e.g. Cic. Sen. 27); by contrast wisdom, associated with old age, was a philosophically prized quality. patitur: although Seneca rejects inpatientia (Ep. 9.2) as a translation of apatheia, this verb reflects the sense that what is good must be immune from external powers. vetustatem: (OLD §3) in contrast to senectus this term emphasizes the sense of age as being something destructive.


Finges autem non auro vel argento: non potest ex hac materia imago deo exprimi similis; cogita illos, cum propitii essent, fictiles fuisse. Vale.

§11. This section brings the letter to a climax by introducing the key concept of the mind as the location of genuine or philosophical value, which Seneca expands by claiming that it is also the dwelling place of the divine. With these claims he introduces important ideas that will be developed in later letters. Such development is gradual through explaining the relation of these ideas to Stoic theology and physics. At Ep. 65.23–24 this is explicit, though the macrocosmic-microcosmic connection of ratio begins to be hinted at in Epp. 37.4 and 41.5 (above, p. 47).

This is, however, not all there is to this section. Seneca continues from §10 his strong critique of popular values. Indeed, he brings this to a climax too by claiming all social status results from vices, the very vices, in fact, that were blamed for the decline of the Republic. This attack is coloured with nostalgia for the simplicity of earlier times, as lauded by Virgil.

The closing section, beginning with the Aeneid quotation, recalls the start of the letter in a number of ways. Firstly it recalls the epic setting evoked by the reference to Odysseus at §2. Then through the repeated use of construction imagery (finge ... finges ... fictiles), earlier language of
progress as inner construction in §1 is recalled. And finally, the theme of one’s relation to the divine, introduced earlier in the form of how to treat prayers (§2), is also returned to in this very closing idea.

Quaerendum ... obstari: the search for a definition of the good becomes more direct with two criteria, marking a shift from the earlier rejection of popular concepts. Both criteria are negatives, which relates them to the previous section, where attributes were rejected on various negative grounds. This makes them appear a distillation of those grounds. The first criterion is that of not changing for the worse (quod non fiat in dies peius), whose positive expression is constancy, the quality Seneca valued so highly. The second is that of not being able to be resisted (cui non possit obstari), which is the quality of self-sufficiency that had been foregrounded in §3 of this letter. fiat: the passive suggests a change of a negative sort, one outside of one’s control. Philosophical change, by contrast, is frequently expressed with the reflexive to suggest self-directed change (e.g. §5 fac te ipse felicem). Analogous to this is the contrast between ire and ferri at Ep. 37.5. peius: there is a textual problem here (cf. HARRISON 1909, SONNENSCHEIN 1908 and ALEXANDER 1940, 70-71). REYNOLDS and PRÉCHAC have followed a text that has peius, a reading argued for by Sonnenschein. The reading of eius was argued for by Harrison and Alexander. However, their reading makes only one criterion out of the two that are otherwise so clearly central both to Seneca’s philosophy and the themes of this letter. obstari: for Seneca the quality of constancy also contains the ability to remain steadfast, to resist (above, p. 14). Rather than the quality of resistance (cf. animus ... invictus at §6), however, this phrase expresses a quality of irresistibility. This has the effect of making the quality active, rather than reactive. In terms of the mind it can be explained, although somewhat allusively, as its not being able to be obstructed from its possession of virtue.

Quid hoc est?: In a short question Seneca brings to a head the process of discovery of the preceding section. The question is followed in short order by two more. These questions serve to make the letter both more intimate, involving the reader more, and more direct.

animus ... magnus: a single word answer is given that is then qualified by three adjectives, each of which is significant. animus: given prominence by being on its own. Although quickly made conditional it is initially surprising, as it is something all humans already possess. hic: repeated in the next sentences (hunc ... hic). Seneca points out a particular type of mind almost as
though physically indicating it. This is important, as the next sentences should not be generalized to all minds, except in the potential. At Ep. 41.6 animus is similarly qualified.

**rectus:** a multiply-nuanced word (cf. Armisen-Marchetti, 159). Firstly it has an established usage in Latin as morally right, and in Seneca morally right actions are a product of a right mind (Ep. 34.4 n. and Ep. 95.57). One of its basic metaphorical senses is that of straightness, as opposed to crookedness (pravitas). For Seneca this is frequently applied to the sense of the straight path of philosophy that is in accordance with nature in contrast to the wandering of error (cf. rectum iter, Ep. 8.3, Scarpat 1975, 173 and above, p. 112). Although the imagery of the path has been strong in this letter, it does not seem the dominant sense here.

More directly applicable is the sense of uprightness. Seneca often uses erectus in this sense, but rectus (OLD §7b) occurs too (cf. Ep. 37.2). It is a sense applied prominently to the mind at Ep. 23.3, and was of long standing in philosophy, where the upright posture of humans is contrasted with that of animals (cf. Laudizi 2003, 80 and Bellincioni 1978, 144-145). For Seneca it has an extra resonance as the upright stance is the proper one for facing fortune (above, p. 14). And in this letter it also fits with the repeated command to stand up. Uprightness is linked to observing the heavens, and in later letters, Seneca alludes to this idea in a different context. At Ep. 39.3 he describes the mind as being like a flame, upright, which Hachmann 1995, 240, n. 2, explains in the context of Ep. 41.5 as being a striving for connection to its heavenly source. This image can also be interpreted in the context of the Stoic idea of recta ratio (cf. Scarpat 1970, 225 ff.). In this sense the recta is paired or synonymous with terms for perfection (consummata / perfecta), and the microcosmic human ratio is striving for connection to the macrocosmic heavenly ratio.

Finally, rectus is the past participle of rego, and the sense ‘directed’ can be meaningfully applied to it. This can be clearly seen in relation to a couple of passages in Book IV. At Ep. 37.4 Seneca plays with the term recta ratio to produce: multos reges, si ratio te rexerit, while at Ep. 40.4 such control is required in the context of one’s speech. The animus rectus, then, is one governed by divine reason.

**bonus:** an obvious moral qualification which in connection with Seneca’s comments at §5 denotes the presence of virtus. **magnus:** applied to the animus this refers to the quality of magnitudo animi, a quality whose centrality to Seneca (§6 n.) is confirmed by its presence here. It
was a particularly aristocratic virtue, and it is significant that Seneca challenges these associations with his attack on status later in this section.

Quid ... hospitantem?: the revelation of the mind’s divine character makes this the climax of the letter. It also marks a new stage in the reader’s education. However, as with so much in this letter Seneca only touches on the idea and does not explore it in depth. It serves as a signpost for the greater expansion in Ep. 41 (above, p. 40). Quid aliud voces: Seneca addresses a rhetorical question to Lucilius. The quid makes the entire mind divine in contrast to the body. However, in Ep. 41 Seneca gives the impression in his language that only a portion of the mind is divine, that there is a divine element to it (below, p. 408). hunc: as noted above Seneca is referring to the perfected mind. deum: cf. Ep. 41.1 deus n. corpore: cf. Ep. 41.4 corpusculum n. hospitantem: ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 126, notes this as an example of the idea of the soul as a temporary resident of the body. The idea occurs also at Ep. 120.14 where the body is not a home but a hospitium. At Ep. 65.16 ff. Seneca is more critical of this relationship, likening the body to a prison. More generally at Ep. 87.21 Seneca stresses that the mind must be pure and holy in order to receive this god: quis sit summi boni locus quaeris? animus. Hic nisi purus ac sanctus est, deum non capit (SCARPAT BELLINCIONI 1986, 27).

Hic animus ... cadere: from hic it is clear that Seneca’s focus is still on the perfected mind, but he now turns to consider its relation to social status. He lists three tiers of status, the eques, the freedman and the slave. tam ... quam: by contrasting the eques with the two other statuses Seneca keeps the address to his reader very direct, juxtaposing Lucilius and his peers with two despised social classes. equitem: the eques was Lucilius’ class and the second highest in the Roman world. As stressed in Ep. 44.2, it was a very exclusive rank. The other two were at the other end of the scale. libertinum: the freedman carried the stigma of having been a slave. Some freedmen, furthermore, came to be feared and despised for wealth and power beyond that of well-born individuals. Petronius’ Trimalchio is a caricature of one, while the imperial freedmen of Claudius (Pallas and Narcissus) were notorious for their power. servum: the slave was by definition unfree, a possession and bereft of most rights. Seneca’s attitude to slavery has attracted a great deal of attention, particularly in BRADLEY 1986, GRIFFIN 1992, ch. 8 and EDWARDS 2009. The point here that humans are equal in respect of their access to virtue is one he repeats elsewhere (Ben. 3.18.2, 3.20.1 and 3.28.1 and Epp. 44.2 and 47.16). True slavery is slavery to the passions (Ep. 37.3 liber n.) and it is philosophy that bestows nobility (Ep. 44.3). cadere: (OLD §25) an element of chance is
sometimes implied in this idiom (cf. Ep. 33.2 cadit n.), but here that would suggest that the possession of a perfected mind, rather than social status, is a matter of chance (cf. Ep. 47.15).

**Quid ... nata:** Seneca continues with another question, repeating the three ranks but without opposing the *eques* to the others. The question serves to introduce a justification for the previous claim. This justification continues the attack in §10 on the popular values that sustained his culture’s ideology. Seneca’s claim here is somewhat different from his more frequent one that we are all equal in our access to virtue (above, *servum* n.). A similar claim is made in the following letter that wealth arises from theft (Ep. 32.4). **nomina ... nata:** the two causes can be related closely to the three statuses with equestrian status arising from *ambitio* and *iniuria* leading to servitude and its offshoot the freedman. There was an earlier time in which the names did not exist. At Ep. 90.3 Seneca blames greed (*avaritia*) for the end of the partnership (*consortium*) that existed between humans in the Golden Age. Social rank was not totally absent, however, as that age did have kings, who became tyrants with the rise of vices (Ep. 90.6). Such views stand in contrast to Aristotle’s concept of natural slaves (*Pol. 1.2 and 1.5–6*). Seneca echoes Plato’s claim that everyone’s ancestry has included slaves and kings (Ep. 44.4). He may also have argued that the Roman citizenry descend largely from freedmen (in *Tac. Ann.* 13.26–27, where Grimal 1978, 181–182, argues for Seneca’s influence in the emperor’s response). Seneca the Elder reported a similar idea used by Albucius (Con. 7.6.18):

> Albucius et philosophatus est: dixit neminem natura liberum esse, neminem servum; haec postea nomina singulis inposuisse Fortunam. Denique, inquit, scis et nos nuper servos fuisse. Rettulit Servium regem.

**ambitione:** discussed by Borgo, 25–26, Laudizi 2003, 53, on Ep. 22.10 and Pittet, 84–85. It denotes a lack of moral control that makes one restlessly discontent with one’s status. For Sallust (Cat. 10.1) it was one of the principal causes of the Republic’s decline. **iniuria:** Seneca devoted a dialogue (*De Constantia*) to explaining how a sage was immune to either *iniuria* or *contumelia*. Neither can touch one’s *virtus*, but they only touch those things that are external, in fortune’s realm, including wealth and status.

**Subsilire ... licet:** with an antithesis between the confines of *angulo* and the immensity of the heavens Seneca restates the possibility (*licet*) of anyone acquiring divinity as a dynamic act (*subsilire*). **Subsilire:** Traina 1987, 62, notes that Seneca uses the verb *salire* with varied prefixes to denote the dynamic movement from the mortal to the immortal state. Here it is rather from
human to divine. **angulo**: (*OLD* §5) used twice at *Ep.* 28.4, and also at *Ep.* 86.5 of Scipio’s bathhouse, with the implication of insignificance.

**exsurge ... deo:** Seneca switches to imperatives and the *modo* injects a note of impatience. The dramatic tone is raised by quoting Virgil. **exsurge**: §9 *surges n.* This verb continues the dynamic movement in *subsilire*, but adds the connotation of the erect posture that for Seneca was the proper stance for facing fortune. At *Ep.* 39.3 (*surgit in rectum*), he uses this image of a flame as being similar to the proper movement of the soul — seeking its heavenly source.

Seneca has already used this quote, from *Aen.* 8.364-365, once before at *Ep.* 18.12, where he gave its fuller form when urging Lucilius to embrace poverty:

*auđe, hospes, contenmère opes et te quoque dignum finge deo, rebusque ueni non asper egenis.*

Here the quote is further abbreviated from the full utterance. It resonates on a number of levels. Firstly, Seneca’s use of Virgil has received a fair bit of attention (*MAZZOLI* 1970, 215-232 and *MOTTO* and *CLARK* 1993, 123-132). He quotes Virgil very frequently (*MOTTO*, *Authors: Vergil*), more often than any other poet and, in fact than any philosopher (*MOTTO* 1993, 125). This frequent use of Virgil suggests both Seneca’s high regard for the poet and perhaps the rapid rise of his poems to the status of something close to sacred text. Also the context of this quote, Evander’s exhortation to enter his humble dwelling, appeals to the reader’s self-identification as a Roman. Evander urges Aeneas to adopt the *simplicitas* that was seen as fundamental to Rome’s rise to greatness (cf. *Ep.* 87.41); at a remove the reader is reminded of the importance of this virtue, and urged, perhaps, to seek to regain it. Finally, the quote serves to create a link to the letter’s start and its mention of Odysseus who occupied the same mythic time period. It is significant to the development in the collection of the letters that here as in *Ep.* 30 there is a shift from a Greek to a Roman *exemplum* (above, p. 49). In addition, the quote frames this letter with *Ep.* 41, which both resumes the discussion of the divine nature of the soul and has a quote at §2 from the same section of the *Aeneid*.

The image has two aspects, self-fashioning (above, p. 119) and making oneself worthy of a god by creating a dwelling for him. This image picks up the idea of a *deum ... hospitantem*, and is expanded in the next section with the idea of creating a statue of a god or a shrine. **finge:** cf. *SCARPATI BELLINCIONI* 1986, 28, for more images of construction. In a literal sense according to Stoic...
physics this fashioning is making one’s microcosmic ratio perfectly in harmony with the macrocosmic ratio.

**Finges ... argento:** this represents a rejection of cultivating the divine through cult statues, continued at Ep. 41.1. Although the *dignum* in the Virgil quote suggests this fashioning might be of some internal shrine (cf. Sen. F88 V (= F123 H) in Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 6.25.3), the development of the image that follows is on the making of an *imago* of the divine, the centrepiece of such a shrine rather than the shrine itself. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.8.12-22, contrasts one’s inner divinity with external statues, but in contrast to Senecan self-fashioning, develops the image in terms of seeing Zeus as one’s fashioner. As argued on Ep. 41 (below, p. 417), the religious connotations of this image deserve to be taken seriously and not be treated as a rhetorical flourish. If this is done, it suggests that Senecan self-fashioning has a non-rational even mystical quality to it. *Armisen-Marchetti*, 79, mentions this passage in relation to the image of sculpture. At F94 V (= F120 H) in Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 2.2.14 Seneca notes the incongruity of valuing a cult statue, while despising its fabricator. For more on his attitude to civic religion, see *Setaioli* 2007, 357-358. **Finges:** Seneca follows up his injunction with an expansion that repeats the verb, but in the future — as though giving more on how this is done (cf. §5 *fac ... facies*). **auro ... argento:** Seneca regularly stresses that one’s possessions are not one’s self (*Ep.* 41.7 n.), and the need to despise wealth to be worthy of god was a conclusion he drew from his earlier use of the Virgil quote (*Ep.* 18.13). Gold and silver are for Seneca a powerful example of the perversion of values away from nature, who had hidden them from us (*Ep.* 94.57-58 and *Motto*, *Minerals*).

**non potest ... similis:** the reason why fashioning from such materials cannot be done is suggested in the next sentence in terms of the corruption caused by greed for these materials. But it is obviously impossible too, as anything so fashioned will be external to one’s mind. **imago:** Seneca rejects the external images of the divine found in traditional cult. He is not explicit how his alternative image will be made, but he does himself in a number of places create pictures of the divine for the mind’s eye (e.g. *Ep.* 115.2-5). **exprimi:** (*OLD* §6b). **similis:** this word suggests that the image is not the real thing, but only similar. This is perhaps so either in that the *imago* is the microcosmic equivalent of the Stoic divine, or else in that, as at Ep. 115.2-5, our imagination, can only encompass an approximation.

**cogita ... fuisse:** Seneca characteristically ends with an allusive passage intended to leave the
reader with much to continue thinking on. He uses a *figura etymologica* with *fictiles* on the earlier *finge ... finges*. According to Pliny, *Nat.* 34.34, the gods of Italy were usually wood or terracotta until the early second century BC. The contrast between current luxury and these simple statues was a commonplace, cf. *Liv.* 34.4.4, *Sen. Con.* 2.1.18, *Juv.* 11.115-116 (terracotta) and *Tib.* 1.10.17-20 (wooden). Seneca includes the same antithesis at *Helv.* 10.7 in an emphatic contrast between the unfavourable present and a better past alluded to here. Such a contrast between the present and an earlier Roman virtuous simplicity is also an element of the Virgil quote. An implication in this closing thought is that the idea of self-fashioning being internal can be related to imitating the virtuous simplicity of Roman ancestors. The sentence also suggests why one cannot construct an image similar to a god out of gold or silver, as the vice of greed was introduced with these statues (*Liv.* 34.4.4). *cogita:* *Ep.* 30.18 n. *illos:* after the singular for god from §9 this returns to the plural. As at §10 Seneca continues to contrast playfully the philosophical and cultic concepts of god.

*propitii:* implied here is the idea that in Seneca’s day the gods are no longer favourable. Such a contrast in times picks up a similar one in §2 between the present and Odysseus’ day, and adds to the ring composition. *fictiles:* also contrasted with gold and silver for tableware (*Helv.* 12.3, *Ep.* 5.6), in particular with respect to Tubero’s use of them at a religious feast (*Ep.* 95.72-73 and *Bellincioni* 1979, 328-329).
Essay on Epistle 32

*Ep. 32* is the first of the short letters in Book IV. It follows two long letters and forms a pair with the second of these, *Ep.* 31. This pairing can be seen in the continuation of a number of topics: progress, prayers, true values and the status of the mind. However, by approaching these topics from a very different perspective, Seneca creates a contrast to the preceding letter.

The only scholarship that looks directly at this epistle as a whole is that by the three who have written on the structure of this section of the *Epistles*.\textsuperscript{412} Otherwise passages of the letter are referred to in passing in discussions of its main themes: time and interiority.\textsuperscript{413}

The letter has a ring structure that fits the section divisions of the letter quite well. In the first section Seneca comments on Lucilius’ progress, while in the closing section (§5), he returns to his interest in Lucilius, expressing a wish for him. In the second section Seneca warns of the danger of keeping bad company, specifically the danger caused by delay. One’s relationship to society is returned to at §4, where popular and philosophical values are contrasted. As elsewhere popular values are taught by one’s parents.\textsuperscript{414} Here, it is the popular desire for wealth, which, by contrast, the philosopher should scorn. The centre of the letter is at §3, a dramatic image that seeks to jolt the reader into a state of alertness so that the need for urgency in making progress is acted on. Lucilius is exhorted to imagine that a cavalryman is in hot pursuit of him.

It is this image of being pursued that I feel is the letter’s centre.\textsuperscript{415} The letter contains little...

\textsuperscript{412} \textsc{Maurach} 1970, 120-122, \textsc{Hachmann} 1995, 241-243, 274-755 and \textsc{Hengelbrock} 2000, 154-155.

\textsuperscript{413} The bibliography on time is substantial, to which \textsc{Williams} 2003, 20-22, is a good introduction. No-one makes significant use of this letter, though \textsc{Gagliardi} 1998, 73-74, quotes a large piece of it.

\textsuperscript{414} *Ep.* 31.2 *Surdum … precantur n.*

\textsuperscript{415} \textsc{Hengelbrock} 2000, 154 and \textsc{Hachmann} 1995, 241, differ over this. Hengelbrock sees the centre as the commands to hasten and evade, whereas Hachmann places it at the command to contemplate a life perfected before death.
that could be called new teaching. Rather it appears to reiterate the need for urgency and it is the shock value of the image of the fugitive that makes the message effective.

If the letter contains little new teaching, it is nevertheless significant in the unfolding narrative of Lucilius’ progress. This has two aspects. The first relates to Seneca presenting himself as able to act as an internal monitor of Lucilius’ actions and the second is the reference to Seneca’s increased confidence in his friend’s progress.

In the opening section (§1), Seneca says, Verba dare non potes: tecum sum. Sic vive tamquam quid facias auditurus sim, immo tamquam visurus. As Maurach observes, this strongly echoes Seneca’s instruction at Ep. 25.5 to choose a historical figure to act as an internal monitor. Seneca now appears to suggest that Lucilius knows Seneca well enough for Seneca to act as such a monitor. This is perhaps of greater importance if we are to imagine Seneca addressing the reader of the literary work, as it suggests that after 31 letters Seneca feels he has disclosed himself to the reader in such a way as to be available as an internal monitor.

In Ep. 41.2 Seneca reveals that we also possess a divine internal monitor. One could see a progression from historical exempla in Epp. 11.8-10 and 25.5-6 through Seneca himself in Ep. 32.1 to a divine spirit in Ep. 41.2. However, rather than seeing the earlier two as being superseded, it seems better to see all three of these as remaining available to the reader as sources of inspiration.

At Ep. 32.2 Seneca remarks, Habeo quidem fiduciam non posse te detorqueri mansurumque in proposito. As some commentators note, this marks an important advance in Seneca’s confidence in his friend’s commitment to the philosophical life from Ep. 16.2, where he said, iam de te spem habeo, nondum fiduciam. Such increased confidence seems appropriate at a point when Seneca starts to introduce specifically Stoic teachings.

Perhaps only obliquely at §4 where Seneca adds time to the category of indifferents that had been introduced in Ep. 31.

MAURACH 1970, 120-121.

See below, p. 187, for how this development seems to fit with Seneca’s use of models that are available to us only through writing.

For Maurach these two references form the start and finish of a cycle of epistles. *Ep.* 31 completes a stage in Lucilius’ education and *Ep.* 32 marks the completion of a stage in his progress.\(^{420}\) He draws further support for this view from the density of echoes of earlier letters that he sees in *Ep.* 32, echoes that are not found in the following letters.\(^{421}\) However, the majority of these references are slight, so slight that they have not warranted notice in this commentary. They are an example, I feel, of the over-subtlety for which Maurach’s work has been criticized.\(^{422}\)

There is an element of transition from one stage to the next in the early letters of this book, and such a transition does, as Maurach suggests, involve bringing earlier themes to a close.\(^{423}\) However, these letters also clearly look forward to a new and more overtly Stoic stage of philosophy. Both *Epp.* 31 and 32, as mentioned, form a pair. The most important theme that they share in common is the description of the happy life, and Seneca gives a distinctly Stoic quality to this, in that he stresses its mental nature. The good is entirely mental, a point that the close of *Ep.* 31 builds up to and the close of *Ep.* 32 returns to. For Hachmann this marks a significant development upon what he said in *Epp.* 23-24, and provides the grounds for rejecting Maurach’s interpretation of the pair.\(^{424}\)

Although the two epistles share a common focus on the happy life, *Ep.* 32 complements the earlier and longer epistle both in content and tone. *Ep.* 31 describes the foundation of the happy life as the skill of recognizing the true value of things and the *tranquillitas animi* this brings (§8). To this *Ep.* 32 adds the happy life’s *securitas* and *gaudium* (§4).\(^{425}\) The two contrast also in that *Ep.* 31 stresses the mind’s relationship to the divine and makes god a measure of true happiness (§§10-11), whereas in *Ep.* 32 Stoic happiness is related rather to freedom (§5).\(^{426}\)

\(^{420}\) Maurach 1970, 126.
\(^{421}\) Maurach 1970, 121.
\(^{422}\) E.g. Winterbottom 1972, 225.
\(^{423}\) Above, p. 44.
\(^{424}\) Hachmann 1995, 243.
\(^{426}\) Hachmann 1995, 243.
It is in terms of tone that the two letters contrast most. In Ep. 31 Seneca seeks to enthuse Lucilius at the prospect he holds out to him. He moves from one topic to the next quickly, as though moved by impatient excitement. By contrast in Ep. 32 he seems to intend to disconcert and confront the reader, which he does with numerous paradoxes and the alarming warning that Lucilius is pursued and must be urgent in making philosophical progress. Another contrast is suggested by Hengelbrock, who observes that in Ep. 31 Seneca makes use of standard Stoic phrases, whereas Ep. 32 is more personalized to Lucilius. This is only partially true, as such personalization is also very present in Ep. 31, with frequent use of the 2nd person singular, and examples relevant to Lucilius’ situation.

Ep. 32 touches on two major themes in Seneca’s Epistles, time and possession. Both of these themes figure prominently in the collection’s opening letter. On time Seneca says relatively little in this letter. His focus is on the need for urgency, which he underlines by mention of life’s brevity (§2). One’s goal is to achieve the understanding that time is one of the Stoic indifferents (§4), an idea to which Seneca gives greater emphasis by twice posing the paradox of the happy life being a life finished or completed before death (§§3 and 5).

The theme of possession in Seneca is closely linked to the idea of self-possession, the idea that the goal of philosophy is to wrest back ownership of yourself from people and things that come to possess you. A fundamental part of this idea is the continual stress on the contrast between possession of oneself and possession of external things. This is nicely expressed in Ep. 41.7, where Seneca observes on external wealth, nihil horum in ipso est sed circa ipsum. Ep. 32 refers to self-possession a number of times and with a variety of idioms. However, the letter closes not with the contrast between self-possession and possession of (or even by) externals, but rather with a contrast between true goods (veris bonis), whose possession only requires understanding, and the false goods that others desire, ones that can only be gained by theft. In this it continues criticism of popular values from Ep. 31.

Referring to such phrases as rerum scientia, HENGELBROCK 2000, 154, calls these ‘Formulierungen’.

Traina 1987, 11. Edwards 2009, 155, suggests that for Seneca possession of one’s self is an aspect of philosophical freedom.

The emphasis on possession varies, but the focus on the self is constant: tui satietate, sibi contigit (§4), tui facultatem, placeat sibi (§5).
Ep. 32 forms a pair with Ep. 31, a frequent practice of Seneca’s. Both praise Lucilius’ progress and both criticize popular material values while promoting genuine values as being mental. Both in closing promote the mind as the locus of true and lasting value. Whereas the first of the letters seeks to motivate the reader with enthusiasm for the rewards philosophy promises, the second offers a counterpoint, attempting to shock the reader into action by claiming he is pursued.
Commentary on Epistle 32

§1. Inquiro de te et ab omnibus sciscitor qui ex ista regione veniunt quid agas, ubi et cum quibus moreris. Verba dare non potes: tecum sum. Sic vive tamquam quid facias auditurus sim, immo tamquam visurus. Quaeris quid me maxime ex iis quae de te audio delectet? quod nihil audio, quod plerique ex iis quos interrogo nesciunt quid agas.

§1. The epistle opens with Seneca relating that he has been inquiring after Lucilius from people that have been in his part of the world. As with Ep. 31, the focus is on Lucilius and his progress, and this continues throughout the epistle. Seneca is pleased that most whom he asks do not know what Lucilius is doing. This is a confirmation of his philosophical progress: he is less caught up in his occupationes (below, p. 258). It also suggests that what he has been doing — improving himself philosophically — is not visible to outsiders; it is something private to Seneca and Lucilius.

Inquiro de te ... moreris: Seneca wants to know three things about Lucilius — what he has been doing and where and with whom he has been. The relevance of this is that Seneca is insistent that progress must be measured by one’s actions (cf. p. 4). The importance of keeping the right company has also been stressed (e.g. Ep. 7.8), and it is something that Seneca picks up in the next section. ex ista regione: it is not stated exactly where this is, though it is known to be Sicily from elsewhere in the correspondence (below, p. 457). This avoidance of too many particulars is an aspect of the literary nature of a work intended for publication (Wilson 1987, 103-104).

Verba dare ... tecum sum: (Old verbum §6, ‘deceive’) Seneca asserts that Lucilius cannot hide what he has been doing from him. In fact, it is as though Seneca was with him. tecum sum: this is a paradox that is at other times asserted to happen through the agency of letters (e.g. Ep. 40.1).

Sic vive ... visurus: the correction with immo gives this a spoken tone, while the antithesis of the two participles is strengthened through homoiooptoton. This injunction is similar to one
Seneca has made earlier at *Ep. 25.5*: *sic vivere tamquam sub alicuius boni viri ac semper praesentis oculis*. In that letter he went on to advise choosing someone from the past to be this guardian: Cato, Scipio or Laelius. Here he suggests he himself has come to occupy such a position. *Maurach* 1970, 121, suggests that such a progression reflects Seneca’s belief seen in *Ep. 6.5* that living contact, the *res praesens*, is more effective than these *exempla* from the past (see above, p. 66). Yet arguably this development suggests more strongly that Seneca offers in the *Epistles* a type of self-disclosure that makes his mind more immediate to the reader than other *exempla* (see further, p. 187). *Ep. 50.1* suggests Seneca continues to be interested in enquiring after Lucilius, and repeats as a hope that Lucilius should live as though Seneca were observing him. The awareness that you are watched can be a powerful spur to behave well, and Seneca makes much use of it, as do many other Roman writers (*Lendon* 1997, 41). This obviously relates to one’s sense of shame, but it is problematic to assume as some modern writers, such as *Barton* 2001, 200, do, that Roman culture was a ‘shame culture’, as opposed to a ‘guilt culture’ (cf. *MacMullen* 2002 and *Wilson* 2003b). The validity of such a dichotomy has been well criticized by *Cairns* 1993, 27-47. In Seneca’s case, when the watcher is someone imagined (as here), or actually dead (as in *Epp. 11.9* and 25.5), are you dealing with shame, or has it been so internalized that it is more like guilt? In short, is the dichotomy in fact useful?

*Quaeris ... quid agas*: Lucilius is made to interject with a request to know what has been said about him, specifically, what pleases Seneca most about what he has heard. That Seneca is happy to report that he has been able to learn nothing is, in epistolary terms, a clever paradox, as a primary motivation for letter writing is to learn what one’s friend is doing. Such an answer is a sign for *Maurach* 1970, 121, of Lucilius’ introversion. Lucilius is less involved with outward *occupationes* and can devote himself to self-development.

§2. *Hoc est salutare, non conversari dissimilibus et diversa cupientibus. Habeo quidem fiduciam non posse te detorqueri mansurumque in proposito, etiam si sollicitantium turba circumeat. Quid ergo est? non timeo ne mutent te, timeo ne impediant. Multum autem nocet etiam qui moratur, utique in tanta brevitate vitae, quam breviorem inconstantia facimus, aliud eius subinde atque aliud facientes initium; diducimus illam in particulam ac lacinamus.*

§2. Seneca is pleased with Lucilius’ progress, but urges him to avoid people who could delay him in his goal. He stresses the importance of this as life is short and we further shorten much of it through our misuse of time.
Commentary on Epistle 32

**Hoc est ... cupientibus:** as the philosophical life is fundamentally a rejection of popular values, as has been described above (p. 110), a large part of progress is in avoiding those who do not share those values. These are most frequently described in the form of the crowd (cf. below, p. 186), but here Seneca stresses that one must also be careful in choosing those one is familiar with. **hoc:** (*OLD* §12b) this points forward to the following infinitive phrase. **salutare:** an image relating to the analogy of philosophy as therapy of the soul (above, p. 33). **dissimilibus et diversa cupientibus:** this picks up the ancient conception of friendship as based on similarity, in particular of one’s desires (e.g. *Ep.* 6.3, Sall. *Cat.* 20.4 and Cic. *Amic.* 15 and below, p. 240). For the idea of being dissimilar to the crowd, see *Ep.* 25.7.

**Habeo quidem ... circumeat:** Seneca asserts his confidence that Lucilius cannot be torn away from his purpose, which contains an element of praise for his progress. **Habeo ... fiduciam:** this is a key phrase for *MAURACH* 1970, 121, in proving that this epistle concludes a cycle in the corpus (see above, p. 165). It marks a development in Seneca’s confidence in Lucilius’ progress from *nondum habeo fiduciam* in *Ep.* 16.2. **detorqueri:** (*OLD* §2, ‘divert’) this image draws on the idea of progress as a path in contrast to the wandering of error (*ARMISEN-MARCHETTI*, 88-89 and above, p. 112). **sollicitantium turba:** an image that combines two elements: the mob as a negative element in itself (Ep. 34.1 *turbam n.*) and the troubles they bring with them. This represents a more negative portrayal of the earlier *dissimilibus ... cupientibus*. Such a mob could be likened to the critics of Lucilius’ friend at *Ep.* 36.1-3.

**Quid ergo ... faciamus:** Seneca interjects a question, ‘What’s the problem?’ It is not that such a crowd will change Lucilius, but that they will delay him and that is considerable harm as we use our time so badly ourselves. With **utique** the tone becomes urgent and Seneca includes himself, Lucilius and us in the group who misuse time through the use of 1st p. pl. verbs. **Quid ergo est?:** a colloquial usage (*SUMMERS* 1910, 329). **impediant:** the metaphor of travel implied in *detorqueri* is continued. **utique:** (*OLD* §6). **in tanta brevitate vitae:** the use of time is fundamentally related to our mortality: it is the scarcity of time that our mortality creates that makes it a topic of such urgency and importance for Seneca. It was, of course, the topic of an entire dialogue, but figures prominently elsewhere; cf. *MOTTO, Life* §9. **inconstantia:** this inconstancy of purpose is the opposite of the *constantia* described earlier (above, p. 17). At *Ep.* 20.4-5 it was contrasted with a definition of *sapientia* as *semper idem velle atque idem nolle*. It is a state presented dramatically in
Tranq. 1, where it contrasts with the tranquillitas that constantia brings. subinde: (OLD §2) a frequent usage in Seneca, but not seen in Cicero (SUMMERS 1910, 180).

aliud ... lancinamus: this inconstancy is expanded on with the idea of constantly making a start on life. Seneca then changes the image to one of dividing life into pieces. aliud ... initium: this has been a topic of earlier letters (e.g. Epp. 13.16 and 23.9; MOTTO, Life §13 misses the first of these, whereas KNOCHE 1954, 90, cites them both). In those earlier letters he expounds on quotes from Epicurus on the folly of always beginning to live; here he only refers to the idea again in passing. The related idea of delaying living is a commonplace, e.g. Epp. 22.14, 45.13 and Brev. 9.1 (MOTTO, Time §6), which is also seen in poetry, e.g. Mart. 1.15.11-12, and 5.58, Hor. Ep. 1.2.41 ff. diducimus: (OLD §3). particulae: (OLD §1) this first image of division is neutral and indeterminate, in contrast to the violence of the following one. lancinamus: A rare word for which Seneca provides almost half of all the classical instances of its use (8 out of 18 occasions in PHI 5.3). It is associated with the savage violence of animals and depraved humans (cf. Brev. 13.6, SMITH, 152 and WILLIAMS 2003, 205). The increase in the violence of the imagery prepares for the following exhortation and image of a pursuing enemy.

§3. Propera ergo, Lucili carissime, et cogita quantum additurus celeritati fueris, si a tergo hostis instaret, si equitem adventare suspicareris ac fugientium premere vestigia. Fit hoc, premeris: accelera et evade, perduc te in tutum et subinde considera quam pulchra res sit consummare vitam ante mortem, deinde exspectare securum reliquam temporis sui partem, nihil sibi, in possessione beatae vitae positum, quae beatior non fit si longior.

§3. Seneca now shifts to exhortation, prefaced with a vocative and delivered with six imperatives. Lucilius should imagine he is pursued by a cavalryman and make haste to remove himself to safety. From the place of safety he should imagine enjoying the vita beata that is not subject to time.

Propera, ergo, ... vestigia: in order to encourage haste, Lucilius should imagine he is pursued by an enemy, whom Seneca first describes generally as a hostis before adding the detail that he is a horseman who is then given concrete and accurate detail — a horseman approaching and pressing on the heels of those fleeing. The pursuit of a fleeing enemy was an important role of cavalry. This image makes use of one of Seneca’s favourite ideas, life as military service (above, p. 12). Seneca is insistent that philosophy must be practical and it has urgent matters to deal with. The presence of an enemy is again evoked at Ep. 49.6 when he attacks dialectical subtlety. Here he succeeds in dramatizing the situation and evoking a scenario of urgency and danger, and by this,
makes imminent the end of life suggested by the mention of its brevity. It is in this context that he then offers his advice, advice that might be compared to commands (given as imperatives) offered by a commander to his troops (cf. Wilson 2007, 431-432). A similar description of pursuit occurs in Marc. 10.4 and for its literary technique it can be compared to the vivid and fearful evocations of death and pain in Epp. 24.14 and 82.7 that take the discussion of these concepts out of the abstract. Seneca’s technique here can be compared to the suggestion at Ira 2.36.3 that an angry man looking at himself in the mirror might be shocked back to a calmer state of mind (Bartsch 2009, 215). Propera: haste is also enjoined at Ep. 35.4. cogita: Ep. 30.18 n. hostis: by implication this enemy is death, the enemy of life, but Seneca leaves this unstated. premere vestigia: (OLD premo 15b) another example of this idiom occurs at Vit. 14.3. additurus ... fueris: for this construction see G-L §597 5(a).

Fit hoc ... in tutum: what Seneca had first offered as an incentive to alacrity he suddenly declares is the reality. The urgency of this is stressed with a rapid succession of imperatives. The enemy is still not named and is more menacing for that. Fit hoc, premeris: the passive leaves the agent unstated. The image of death as an enemy who is both close and unceasingly prepared is found at Ep. 30.16. accelera et evade: Seneca maintains the urgency with the imperatives; he enjoins the appropriate reaction to pursuit, continuing the metaphor. Epictetus, Diss. 3.12.12, counsels flight, but as an act appropriate to philosophical neophytes. perduc te: (OLD 4) again the use of imperatives and the metaphor are continued. in tutum: (OLD tutus §4b) Seneca does not state here where this safe place is, but it is explained in many passages: sometimes it is philosophy, e.g. Ep. 14.11, ad philosophiam ... confugiendum est, and Ep. 37.3 Ad hanc ... liber n. At other times it is made clear that it is the mind (e.g. Ep. 23.6), or it is a place removed from the dangers of occupationes (Ep. 22.8). At Ep. 82.5, for example, he develops this into the image of the mind as a citadel fortified by philosophy; so too Cicero Tusc. 5.41 (= L-S 63L) and M. Aur. Med. 8.48. A particular context for seeking safety in earlier letters had been in urging Lucilius to retreat from his occupationes to the security of philosophical otium (e.g. Ep. 19.11). At Thy. 365 in a chorus Seneca describes a true king as occupying a similar place, tuto positus loco.

et subinde ... mortem: with this last imperative the tone changes suddenly from that of the earlier two to describe the happy life that can be enjoyed in this place of safety. This is expressed as a paradox, that life’s completion is other than death, referring to the idea that the true goal is to enjoy the vita beata, which is not dependent on duration for its enjoyment, a point Seneca
makes repeatedly, particularly in Ep. 93 (e.g. Ep. 49.10, Brev. 11.2 and Motto, Life §10). This is also expressed in the pointed contrast, non ... vivere bonum est, sed bene vivere (Ep. 70.4 (Scarpat 2007, 61-62); so too Ben. 3.31.4 and Ep. 93.2 and 93.7). The sense that it is quality that matters, not quantity is one that Seneca quotes Posidonius for at Ep. 78.28 saying, ‘unus dies hominum eruditorum plus patet quam inperitis longissima aetas’. consummare: (OLD 3, ‘make complete, finish’) one of a number of verbs for describing perfection, used again at Epp. 39.6 and 41.8. The idea has been expressed earlier in Ep. 19.2: in freto viximus, mortiamur in portu.

deinde expectare ... longior: Seneca continues to particularize on the nature of the happy life. nihil sibi: how this phrase is to be read has occasioned various attempts to emend the passage. None are fully satisfactory. Reynolds adopts Hense’s reading of it being governed by the earlier expectare, which then must govern both partem and nihil. This can be mitigated by taking reliquam ... partem as an accusative of duration of time, as does Alexander 1940, 71-72. securum:

Ep. 30.3 securi n. sui ... sibi: this is a shift from the earlier 2nd p. pronominals. Gummere ignores this in his translation (your ... yourself). Seneca is asking Lucilius to picture someone in this state even as he is fleeing (subinde considera). Imagining such an idealized figure is a regular device of Seneca’s (e.g. Ep. 41.4). beatae vitæ: Ep. 31.3 n. positum: taken as dependent, like securum, on the imagined happy man. Alexander 1940, 71-72, proposes to make it dependent on nihil (cf. OLD pono, -ere §23b), but the explanation he offers for this is not convincing. quae beatior ... longior: Seneca rounds this out with another paradox on the nature of the happy life. It is perfect, and what is perfect cannot be made more perfect by duration. This is an idea that Seneca develops in more detail in relation to virtue in Ep. 66.7-9; cf. D.L. 7.101 (= L-S 58A and SVF 3.92).

§4. O quando illud videbis tempus quo scies tempus ad te non pertinere, quo tranquillus placidusque eris et crastini neglegens et in summa tui satietatæ! Vis scire quid sit quod faciat homines avidos futuri? nemo sibi contigit. Optaverunt itaque tibi alia parentes tui; sed ego contra omnium tibi eorum contemptum opto quorum illi copiam. Vota illorum multos compilant ut te locupletent; quidquid ad te transferunt alicui detrahendum est.

§4. The mention of someone achieving the state of happy security causes Seneca to exclaim on it at greater length. Seneca continues to express his ideas in paradoxes. Underlying them is the understanding that time is an indifferent in the terms outlined in Ep. 31.3-5. The state that comes from understanding this has three elements, a calmness, a lack of concern for tomorrow and sense of satiety of oneself. Seneca relates this idea closely to Lucilius — the exclamation can be taken as a wish for Lucilius. Seneca then asks the question why people are greedy for the future
and says it comes through not possessing themselves. This leads on to a prayer for Lucilius that he may despise the goods his parents have prayed for him. Seneca then justifies this wish with the strong and unexpected criticism of wealth as theft.

O quando ... satietate!: Seneca makes an exclamation, expanding on the description of someone having achieved true happiness and asking when Lucilius will attain it. tempus ... tempus: a play on the word used in two different senses, as a particular time and as time as a concept. ad te non pertinere: by contrast at Nat. 1.pr.12 he uses the same idiom to suggest that the study of the heavens does pertain to us, an idea alluded to at Ep. 41.5. tranquillus placidusque: these relate to the state of tranquillitas animi (Ep. 30.12 tranquillitas n.). Both adjectives can refer to calm weather. crastini neglegens: concern for the future can destroy the enjoyment of the present (e.g. Ep. 24.1). It is a regular theme for Seneca (cf. MOTT, Time: Future). in summa tui satietate: (cf. satiatus, Ep. 30.12 n.) a word closely connected with satisfying desires, especially for food. Such satisfaction relates to the idea discussed in Ep. 23.3 of pleasure being something born at home. For HACHMANN 1995, 242, this refers to the gaudium that is a component of the happy life. Such joy is sharply contrasted with the voluptates (Ep. 31.2 voluptate n. and SCARPAT 1983, 40). Seneca had wanted Lucilius to wish for something similar at Ep. 20.8: ut contentus sis tempus nostrum est te nascentibus bonis.

Vis scire ... contigit: Seneca contrasts the general 'greed for the future' with the state of contentment in the present that he has outlined. The fault goes back to a lack of self-possession, which relates centrally to the opening idea of the work: vindica te tibi (Ep. 1.1). There, possession of oneself is a matter of taking possession of one’s only true possession, time: Omnia, Lucili, aliena sunt, tempus tantum nostrum est (Ep. 1.3). quid sit quod: creates a spoken element, being less concise than quid faciat. Nemo sibi contigit: (OLD §8, ‘fall to one’s lot, be granted to one’; TLL 3, 718, 49f., ‘nemo se in potestate habet’) the phrase refers a concept of central importance to Seneca, self-possession (cf. TRAINE 1987, 14). However, rather than being simply a variant of nemo suus est (as GAGLIARDI 1998, 89, n. 14), the phrase perhaps alludes to the roots of the present human condition. The past tense is significant, as it refers to a past action, which might be taken as our birth and to suggest that at that time we do not fall to our own lot, but are born into a preexisting social value system that holds us in thrall (cf. above, p. 113). Self-possession is a process of wresting back control from the false values we are born into (above, p. 110).
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Optaverunt itaque ... copiam: Seneca contrasts the prayers Lucilius’ parents have made for him with those he now makes. The use of paradox continues in suggesting that the prayers of those closest to you should be strongly rejected. The word order puts contemptum into emphatic antithesis with copiam. Seneca uses prayers frequently to highlight the incorrect popular valuation of things (cf. Ep. 31.5 Non est ... optes n.). Here he underlines its pervasiveness by attributing the prayers to parents. In other places Seneca makes use of the strongly positive connotations of Roman parents, and especially fathers (cf. MOTTO, Father and Parents and ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 147). In Ep. 60.1 he is even more forceful; their prayers are curses: inter exsecrationes parentum crevimus. Such a criticism would doubtless be more provocative to an ancient reader, than a modern one, given the status and respect given to the Roman father, symbolized in the dutifulness of pius Aeneas to his father. itaque: (OLD §1) the parents’ prayers follow directly from this general lack of self-possession. contemptum: Ep. 31.3 contemptus n.

Vota illorum ... locupletent: Seneca employs a dramatic personification to make prayers the active agents of robbery. This image reflects an idea that wealth stays at a constant state and only possession changes, what has been called a zero-sum game by SALLER 1998, 18. One aspect of this situation was the scarcity of money (LEVICK 2003, 222). The hostile analysis here of the acquisition of wealth matches a similarly unsympathetic description of social status at Ep. 31.11. At Ep. 87.38 Seneca analyses a syllogism that argues from similar premises, while at Ep. 90.38-39 he traces the condition’s origins to the birth of greed (so too at Ep. 115.8-17). The impermanence of wealth had been stressed early on (cf. Ep. 8.10). This is not an attitude Seneca argues uniformly; at Vit. 23.1 he suggests that the philosopher can be rich, provided the money is honourably acquired. Criticism of wealth and praise of poverty are a theme in Roman literature; see, for example, the treatment of it by the various declaimers recorded by Seneca the Elder on Con. 2.1. te ... ad te: Seneca does not describe this as a generalized issue, but relates it directly to Lucilius. The injustice of it is underlined by the contrast of multos with te.

quidquid ad te ... detrahendum est: the idea is reinforced by repetition in less dramatic language. However, it underlines the idea that wealth is not created, but merely transferred from one person to another. The idea is expressed in similar terms at Ira 2.8.2: nulli nisi ex alterius iniuria quaestus est. Wealth and its reverse, poverty, were viewed in the ancient world as moral or political, not economic problems (SALLER 1998, 15). From this perspective luxury, the normal outcome of wealth, was also a moral problem, one Seneca refers to frequently (Ep. 39.5 Qui hostis ...
suae sunt? n.). By contrast, Gibbon, *DF* 1.2 ‘Arts of luxury’, could see luxury, though imperfect, as useful as a form of wealth redistribution from the land-owners to the artisans. Gibbon was influenced in his ideas by the work of Adam Smith, whose works lie at the base of our modern capitalist ideology. Wealth in this ideology is seen as something generated, and poverty’s cure lies in generating more wealth. There is, of course, some truth to this, and our economy does indeed generate much wealth, in contrast to the limited one of the ancient world that led to the view, already mentioned of wealth distribution as a zero-sum game. However, the perspective of Seneca is not without value, even today, and much economic activity, or so-called wealth generation, is, when laid bare, essentially a matter of one person or group taking from another with all the moral implications that brings.

§5. Opto tibi tui facultatem, ut vagis cogitationibus agitata mens tandem resistat et certa sit, ut placeat sibi et intellectis veris bonis, quae simul intellecta sunt possidentur, aetatis adiectione non egeat. Ille demum necessitates supergressus est et exauctoratus ac liber qui vivit vita peracta. Vale.

§5. Seneca expands his prayer from the negative rejection of popular values to the embracing of the genuine values that had been presented in *Ep.* 31.5. This is described as self-mastery, and it has two outcomes: firstly a stability that can resist wandering thoughts, and then a self-satisfaction that possesses true intellectual goods and does not require additional time.

Opto tibi … certa sit: the outcomes of self-mastery are portrayed as activities performed by Lucilius’ mind (*mens*). *tui facultatem* (*OLD* §1, ‘power (over), command (of)’) rather than stressing self-ownership as in such idioms as *sibi contigit* above, here Seneca stresses power over oneself, self-mastery, the power to resist one’s wandering thoughts. *vagis cogitationibus agitata mens*: wandering as the reverse of constancy is frequent in Seneca (e.g. *Epp.* 2.2 and 35.4 and *ARMISEN-MARCHETTI*, 89). *Ep.* 28 criticizes travel as an outward symptom of such inconstancy. As at the end of *Ep.* 31 Seneca shifts the focus here to the mind, the locus of genuine values. The *agitata* picks up the mention of *inconstantia* at §2. The *vagis cogitationibus* acts as an ablative of instrument with *agitata* before becoming the dative object of *resistat*. *tandem resistat*: the *tandem* nicely stresses that this will end what has been a long period of wandering. *et certa sit*: cf. *Ep.* 23.2 where someone is *incertus sui* who places his *felicitas* in another’s power.

*ut placeat … non egeat*: Lucilius’ mind continues as the subject. *ut placeat sibi*: (*OLD* 1c) while here Seneca presents this self-satisfaction as a manifestation of *tui facultas*, it is elsewhere a
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frequent idiom for self-sufficiency itself (cf. Maurach 1970, 46, n.72). In popular language it can have a negative sense (e.g. Ep. 88.37). However, to be in a stable state and to think well of oneself continuously requires that one’s thoughts are not disturbed by regrets, fears and desires. The reverse of this self-satisfaction, sibi dislicere, is the source of the opposite of tranquillitas animi in the dialogue of that name (Tranq. 2.7). At Ep. 29.12 Seneca suggested that through philosophy Lucilius will prefer to be pleasing to himself rather than to the populus. et intellectis veris bonis: these are the bona discussed in Ep. 31.5. They contrast with the vagae cogitationes. quae simul intellecta sunt possidentur: this interior possession is in contrast to the externals at §4 above. Here Seneca seems to stress the ease with which mental goods are acquired in contrast to physical ones; however, elsewhere (Epp. 33.8 at contra ... quaeque n. and 94.48) he stresses that knowledge (scientia) must be turned into a stable state (habitum animi). aetatis adiectione non egeat: the status of time as an indifferent (at §4) is reiterated.

Ille demum ... peracta: as at §3 Seneca imagines some unstated person (ille) having passed beyond the influence of all constraints. Only the false valuation of things outside of one’s mind can produce such restrictions, and the proper internalizing of the values presented in Ep. 31.5 ensures this freedom. necessitates: these constraints only have power in the realm of Fortune, beyond the mind (above, p. 12). At Ep. 12.10 he makes clear that suicide ensures freedom from any restriction. supergressus est: (OLD §3). exauctoratus: the sense is to be released from military service, echoing the military imagery of the middle of the letter. liber: Senecan freedom is a mental state of freedom from Fortune (above, p. 14). The mind’s role is nicely stressed at Ep. 61.4: ut satis vixerimus, nec anni nec dies faciunt sed animus (cf. Ep. 93.2). vita peracta: Seneca concludes with yet another paradox, that of someone still being alive when their life is complete; it is one already used at §3 and serves to close the letter in a regular way with an idea that provokes the reader into continued reflection (Ep. 30.18 n.). The completion that Seneca suggests is one captured by the preceding adjectives. In contrast to other letters where Seneca makes death the means of achieving this freedom and of overcoming these constraints (e.g. Epp. 12.10, 24.7 and 26.10), here he suggests it can be achieved in the mind prior to death. At Epp. 61.4 and 93.2 rather than stressing completion, Seneca talks of life’s fullness in meeting death, a fullness that only the mind, and not externals, can achieve.

Seneca makes the final word of the letter peracta, ‘completed’.
It is not until this letter, the fourth of Book IV, that Lucilius reacts to the end of the quotes that had closed the letters of the previous three books. This provides the context for Seneca to explain the type of reading appropriate for his friend at this new stage in his learning. The quotes of previous books are only appropriate to beginners (§6), a stage that Lucilius has left behind. In explaining how one should read other philosophers at this new level Seneca is clearly also setting out how he expects his own corpus of epistles to be read. I have already argued that Ep. 33 offers some of the clearest evidence for a discernible structure to the Epistles, one for which the book divisions are relevant. In what follows I will seek to relate two of Seneca’s demands in this letter to his broader thought: that Lucilius begin to teach and that authors be read as wholes.

Ep. 33 is one of the few epistles in Book IV that has received much scholarly attention. It has a commentary by Summers, as well as detailed notes in an article by Maso which are in places of similar scope and detail to a commentary. Much of the interest in the epistle has centred around Seneca’s relationship with Epicurean thought, in that this letter responds to a change from the use of predominantly Epicurean quotes in the first three books. Seneca’s claims to intellectual independence in respect of the philosophical tradition at the end of this letter is also quite often quoted. Nussbaum generalizes Seneca’s position in this letter for what she sees as an important facet of Stoicism: the ‘strongly symmetrical and anti-authoritarian’ teacher-pupil relationship.

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430 Above, p. 42.
431 Summers 1910, 197-201 and Maso 1999, 83-105, which is a reprint of his article. Grazer 1996, 165-178 also has a fairly detailed treatment of the letter.
433 E.g. Motto and Clark 1968, 37.
relationship.\(^{434}\) The place of the letter in the corpus of the Epistles has been examined by Maurach, who insists that the letter is a *themafremder Trennbrief*.\(^{435}\) He then goes on to make a somewhat precious distinction between an outward lack of connection to themes of the Epistles and an inward importance to the development of the overall work. The letter’s place in the corpus has been better treated by others, of whom the work by Wilson is particularly insightful.\(^{436}\)

In rejecting Lucilius’ request for quotes Seneca suggests that a habit of excerpting from an author is un-Stoic (§1). He then proceeds to contrast Stoics and Epicureans in a series of antitheses, the point of which is that he had drawn almost all the quotes he had used before from Epicurus. The importance of Epicurus, however, goes beyond being a source for the quotes, as he was also the source for the approach to reading that Seneca had taught in the earlier letters. At *Ep.* 2.4 Seneca instructed Lucilius to select one excerpt from his reading to digest for the day (*unum excerpe quod illo die concoquas*). It is something Seneca himself was doing (§5). Later at *Ep.* 6.5 he said he would send books to Lucilius with the memorable passages identified. Such a style of reading was taught in the Epicurean circles, where Epicurus’ precepts were collected and students were instructed to meditate on them.\(^{437}\)

Seneca contrasts Stoics with Epicureans in two main ways. Firstly, Stoic writing is manly (*virilis*, §1) and all of it is of a standard to excerpt. By contrast, Epicurus’ writing only has the odd memorable quotation, made all the more surprising coming from a man professing effeminacy (*mollitiam*, §2). Although Seneca distances himself from such a view of Epicurus, he still notes his irregular dress (§2 *manuleatus* n.). Stoics also contrast strongly with Epicureans in their independence. Stoics are not under a king (*sub rege*, §4); each reclaims himself for himself (*sibi quisque se vindicat*, §4), a close echo of the command to Lucilius that opens the collection of the Epistles (*vindica te tibi*, *Ep.* 1.1). This antithesis between freedom and subservience runs through the whole letter in different forms. In this letter Seneca is developing the theme of self-sufficiency that had been so important in *Epp.* 31-32. In those letters it is a self-sufficiency from

\(^{434}\) Nussbaum 1994, 344-353. See further *Ep.* 33.4 *sibi quisque se vindicat* n.

\(^{435}\) Maurach 1970, 128, n. 169. His analysis of this letter in Maurach 1975, 342-343, merely repeats verbatim a portion of this note.


external, even divine, support (e.g. Ep. 31.5), whereas in this one he now demands a self-sufficiency even from one’s teachers.⁴³⁸

Seneca’s initial refusal (§§1-4) to send Lucilius more quotes is framed in terms of Epicurus and his method of learning, as just outlined. However, at §6 he grants a certain utility to quotes. They are appropriate for children at school, but it is disgraceful for an adult male to depend on the memorized *sententiae* of others (§7). Seneca here steps beyond the earlier Stoic-Epicurean contrast to criticize his contemporary society, which placed such a premium on *sententiae*. Seneca’s own father is a good example of this; as an old man he filled 12 books with the *sententiae* of men he had heard, and memorized, as a young man.⁴³⁹

At §§7-8 Seneca characterizes knowledge drawn from quotes as mere memorization (*meminisse*). It is not to be self-sufficient, but to hide under another’s shadow. He contrasts such memorization with speaking or knowing. Knowing in his terms is making something one’s own and not depending on a teacher. In fact, he demands, one should teach (§9). Self-sufficiency of this sort, as he says in closing the letter, makes past philosophers one’s guides, not one’s masters (§11).

In contrast to learning from quotes Seneca talks of reading Stoic authors in their entirety (§5):

> Quare depone istam spem posse te summatim degustare ingenia maximorum virorum: tota tibi inspicienda sunt, tota tractanda. <Continuando> res geritur et per lineamenta sua ingenii opus nectitur ex quo nihil subduci sine ruina potest.

This is a particularly important passage for Seneca’s concept of proper reading, a concept that naturally should be applied to his own work.⁴⁴⁰ He is insistent on needing to engage with these authors’ philosophies in their entirety (*tota ... tota* and *nihil ... sine ruina*). He emphasizes the *ingenium* of the writers, first as metonymy for the works produced (*ingenia*) and then as the agent

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⁴³⁸ This portrayal of Epicurus and his school represents a modification of a previously more positive estimation, e.g. at Ep. 6.6 Epicurus’ followers are *magnos viros* and at Ep. 21.7 Seneca talks of the *nobilem sententiam* and at Ep. 21.9 of the *egregia dicta* of Epicurus.

⁴³⁹ §7 *turpe est ... sapere* n. Seneca had hinted at this demand not to rely on quotes at the close of Ep. 29, when he talked of one of philosophy’s gifts being that Lucilius learn to assess opinions rather than count them, *ut aestimes iudicia, non numeres* (above, p. 51).

⁴⁴⁰ As MAURACH 1975, 24, n. 54, and WILSON 2001, 181, both observe.
of a work being created (ingenii).

Such a focus on ingenium is consonant with his view that style is not separable from ideas. The classic definition of this in Seneca is the proverb, talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita (Ep. 114.1). The words you use reveal who you are, and therefore after instructing Lucilius to read authors as wholes he goes on to allow an aesthetic appreciation of these authors, as suggested by the analogy of female beauty, provided the whole person is viewed. What is striking here, as with his description of ingenia earlier, is that the book vanishes and the reader is imagined to have direct access to the writer.

A reader of Ep. 33 might accept Seneca’s argument that quotes are no longer appropriate for the new stage of philosophical progress, but still be surprised by his demand that one should start to teach: quousque disces? iam et praecipe (§9). After all, three books into the Epistles Lucilius is still somewhat a novice at philosophy. However, Seneca’s demand that one must not just learn, but also teach accords with many other areas of his thought. One of these areas has already been touched on, that of self-sufficiency. In demanding that one teach, Seneca is saying, ‘Don’t look for teachers, be one!’ Lucilius, therefore, is encouraged to see himself on par with, or as a colleague of, past philosophers.

Seneca saw teaching and learning as fundamentally reciprocal and an essential part of friendship. At Ep. 6.4 he relates that his delight in learning is integrally related to being able to share, or teach, what he has learnt. He goes so far as to say he would reject wisdom if he could not share it. The mutuality of teaching and learning and their basis in friendship is again stressed in Ep. 7.8:

\[
\text{Recede in te ipse quantum potes; cum his versare qui te meliorem facturi sunt, illos admitte quos tu potes facere meliores. Mutuo ista fiunt, et homines dum docent discunt.}
\]

441 Socrates is credited with first expressing this idea, by Cicero, Tusc. 5.47, among others (Tosi, §158); it is spoken by him in Pl. Resp. 400d, and Tosi, §158, shows the frequency that is found elsewhere. However, as Traina 1995, 46, notes, Seneca expressed the concept more energetically than anyone else in antiquity, so that it is no surprise that it should pass into the Middle Ages through compilations of Seneca in the even more aphoristic form, qualis vita, talis oratio (Ps.-Sen. De mor. 72-73 and Monita 42; see Trillitzsch 1971, 402 and 406). See further Laudizi 2004, 43, n. 20.

442 Seneca is addressing here an adversarius that has many similarities to Lucilius (§7. n.). Though the criticism is also intended for some teachers (§9 Quid est ... possum n.), it is also a demand the reader should not ignore.
This mutuality is reflected in many incidents in the *Epistles*, and the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius appears as the sort Seneca recommends here. Indeed, in *Ep.* 34, directly after the rebuke of the current epistle, he says how he is rejuvenated whenever he learns of Lucilius’ progress and he likens Lucilius to a runner whom he has been urging on, but who is now, in turn, also urging on Seneca: *et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem* (*Ep.* 34.2). Furthermore, Lucilius has friends he is encouraging to live philosophically, one of whom is discussed in *Ep.* 36.

Given, then, this expectation of mutuality Seneca cannot be suggesting that Lucilius stop learning in favour of teaching, but rather that one activity must complement the other. The interconnectedness of the two activities is similar to that which he saw between reading and writing (*Ep.* 84.2); one activity supports the other. It also relates to the contrast between *verba* and *res*. Seneca had already demanded at *Ep.* 20.1 that Lucilius test what he had learnt with action: *verba rebus proba*.

The requirement that one apply what one learnt relates to how Seneca understood philosophical development to occur. He devoted the two longest letters of the collection to an important aspect of this question. *Epp.* 94 and 95 discuss the relationship between philosophical dogmas (*decreta*) and precepts (*praecepta*). He argued that virtue, what the philosopher sought to acquire, consisted of two things, action and contemplation of the truth (*Ep.* 94.45). These, however, are complementary: *Pars virtutis disciplina constat, pars exercitatione; et discas oportet et quod didicisti agendo confirmes* (*Ep.* 94.47). The contemplation, equivalent to instruction, *disciplina*, provides knowledge, but this must be made secure (*confirmes*) through action. The goal of this is to create a *habitus animi*, a permanent state of mind from which right actions would be performed automatically. Action in this passage corresponds to training (*exercitatio*). Such training, *askēsis* in Greek, has been termed spiritual exercises by Hadot, who argues they were fundamental to the ancient conception of philosophy. Seneca used a number of analogies, such as digestion and the

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443 Above, p. 4.

444 At *Ep.* 94.48 Seneca equates *scientia* to contemplation and action to the *habitus animi*. Bellincioni 1979, 336, gives a useful summary of the varied ways Seneca refers to these two poles in *Epp.* 94-95.

445 Hadot 1995, 82.
repeated dying of wool, to describe the process by which such exercises turned *scientia* in these terms into the *habitus animi*.446

In *Ep.* 33, rather than the poles of contemplation and action, Seneca has memorization and speaking ($\S$7). Knowing replaces speaking at $\S$8, and at $\S$9 he contrasts teaching and learning. Memorization and learning fit with contemplation, but what of the relation of knowing, speaking and teaching to action? The first of these, knowing, he describes as *sua facere* ($\S$8). This suggests a type of knowing, an integrated one. As such it is not the *scientia* contrasted with the *habitus animi* in *Ep.* 94.48, but the habituated knowledge of the *habitus animi* itself.447 Likewise both speaking and teaching in the sense Seneca gives them in this letter must proceed from this integrated sort of knowledge.

Speaking and teaching in such terms may not of themselves constitute action, but rather they are evidence that such action has occurred. Yet inasmuch as Seneca was at pains to stress that philosophy is not something that you learn or receive, but something that you do, it seems he saw the fundamental activity of a philosopher as being a teacher. At *Ep.* 8.2-6, for example, he portrays himself in his writing as giving salutary advice to posterity. Such epistolary advice-giving was of benefit not only to the recipient, but to oneself and can be seen to constitute a form of training.448 However, probably the major way in which he hoped to teach was by being an *exemplum*, which brings us to the next topic.

Having shown how Seneca’s demand that Lucilius teach fits with his broader thought, we can now turn to how Seneca saw such teaching happening. This involves analysing what Seneca means by his requirement that past philosophers be read as wholes. His attitude to these philosophers is ambiguous. In general terms he praises them: they are chiefs (*proceres*, $\S$1), and very great men (*maximi viri*, $\S$5). He rolls off the names of them in lists of praiseworthy

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447 Rather than see some inconsistency between the two letters it seems better not to press Seneca for such terminological consistency; see above, p. 7.

448 So at *Ep.* 27.1; FOUCAULT 1997, 241.
philosophers.\textsuperscript{449} However, in the course of the \textit{Epistles} he quotes them relatively infrequently, and then very often to hold up their syllogisms to ridicule.\textsuperscript{450}

Yet, despite this criticism for some of the details of their works, in \textit{Ep. 33} Seneca is exhorting Lucilius to read them, and read them in their entirety. How, then should we correlate this somewhat abstract respect for these past philosophers with his criticism of their ideas? A major clue lies in the passages in which Seneca lists their names. Stoic writers such as Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and Posidonius occur alongside people whom we might not today acknowledge as philosophers, people not famous for what they wrote but for living philosophical lives: the two Catos, Laelius, or even Socrates.\textsuperscript{451}

Seneca accorded these past Stoic writers respect on a similar basis that he accorded it to Socrates and Cato — because they too lived philosophically; they practised what they preached. What follows will argue that Seneca encourages us to develop a relationship with these figures based on his ideas of friendship and \textit{exempla}. Yet it must not be forgotten that he, like us, knew these people only through texts. Furthermore, Seneca devoted much space in the \textit{Epistles} to questions of reading, writing and style, and his views on these subjects add support to this interpretation of his ideas on friendship and \textit{exempla}.

Friendship is a major theme of the \textit{Epistles}.\textsuperscript{452} The friendship of Seneca and Lucilius is one conducted through letters. Their physical separation is a requirement to justify the exchange of letters. Yet Seneca suggests in \textit{Ep. 55.9} that it is possible to be intimate (\textit{conversari}) even with an absent friend: \textit{Conversari cum amicis absentibus licet, et quidem quotiens velis, quamdiu velis}. A friend should be possessed in the mind: \textit{Amicus animo possidendus est; hic autem numquam abest; quaecumque vult cotidie videt} (Ep. 55.11).

From this perspective, he goes on to claim, complete letters are not necessary; his intimacy with Lucilius is so great he should only be sending him notes. Nor even is death a barrier to such

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{449} E.g. \textit{Ep. 104.21-22}; quoted below, p. 186.
  \item \textsuperscript{450} E.g. \textit{Ep. 83.9}, where in the context of what follows his praise of Zeno is heavily ironic (something \textsc{Morford} 1999, 148, n. 5, misses). His hostility to logic-chopping philosophy has already been mentioned (above, p. 21).
  \item \textsuperscript{451} E.g. \textit{Epp. 64.9-10} and \textit{104.21-22}.
  \item \textsuperscript{452} Above, p. 35.
\end{itemize}
enjoyment of a friendship, as he argues in Ep. 99.4. In the light of this it is less of a surprise that he recommends living with dead figures from the past, with great and exemplary philosophers:

\[ Si \text{ velis vitiis exui, longe a vitiorum exemplis recedendum est. Avarus, corruptor, saevus, fraudulentus, multum nocituri si prope a te fuissent, intra te sunt. Ad meliores transi: cum Catonibus vive, cum Laelio, cum Tuberone. Quod si convivere etiam Graecis iuvat, cum Socrate, cum Zenone versare: alter te docebit mori si necesse erit, alter antequam necesse erit. Vive cum Chrysippo, cum Posidonio: hi tibi tradent humanorum divinorumque notitiam, hi iubebunt in opere esse nec tantum scite loqui et in oblectationem audientium verba iactare, sed animum indurare et adversus minas erigere (Ep. 104.21-22). } \]

These exempla must be internalized as an antidote to the vicious ones already present in us, exempla that press upon us from all sides in the form of the people around us. On occasions Seneca describes this mass of influence as the crowd, and counselled avoiding it (e.g. Ep. 7.1).\footnote{453}

To oppose the influence of the popular values of the crowd, Seneca can be seen as proposing what has been called a countersociety of philosophers.\footnote{454} Those talking of such a society, however, have not noted that for Seneca it was one not just of the living, but also of the dead, as in the passage just quoted, and again in more detail at Brev. 14.2 and 14.5. There he suggested that someone retired from public life could choose as patrons the great philosophers of the past, with whom he could develop a more genuine friendship than with anyone in public life.\footnote{455}

Seneca saw exempla as able to function in a similar way to friends: they are able to dwell in one’s mind.\footnote{456} At Ep. 11.9-10 and again in Ep. 25 Seneca recommends adopting an exemplary figure, such as Cato or Laelius to be a guardian (custos) of one’s thoughts and actions.\footnote{457} In Ep. 32,
he puts himself in a similar role: *Verba dare non potes: tecum sum. Sic vive tamquam quid facias auditurus sim, immo tamquam visurus* (Ep. 32.1).

This is an interesting development, because Seneca is implying Lucilius would know how Seneca would view his actions. This is a knowledge of Seneca’s mind that has been gained, in some measure, from Seneca’s epistles. If we, as readers, were to put ourselves in Lucilius’ situation, the case is even clearer: leaving aside other historical sources on Seneca, we know Seneca’s mind through his writings. In effect, Seneca seems to imply that he has become an internal guardian for Lucilius in a similar way that Cato or Laelius would. After all, knowledge of those two exemplary figures would be available to Lucilius only through texts, whether written or oral.458

The image of *exempla* and friends known through texts who live in one’s mind is an important one in Seneca. And it is in the light of this that some important passages in Ep. 94 can be read. In Ep. 94.40-41 he suggests that the association with good men (*boni viri*) or wise men (*sapientes*) can lead to moral improvement in a process that is not entirely obvious, but definitely occurs. The point of this is to suggest that precepts can function in a similar way. But if we were to read this also as a suggestion for making progress, where would we find these wise men? In books, surely, as Ep. 104.21-22 clearly implies. Similarly, in a number of places in that same epistle, he counsels having a guardian to monitor one’s actions.459 This could be taken literally, as a personal philosopher of the sort he describes Julius Canus, condemned to death by Caligula, as having (*Tranq. 14.4-10*).460 It can also, and perhaps better, be understood in terms of the internal guardian of earlier letters.

For Roman aristocrats *exempla* occupied a very prominent place — in their *atria*, in fact, as the funeral masks (*imagines*) of their famous ancestors. The very term *nobilis* relates to the renown attached to somebody whose ancestors had won the right to have these masks made (the *ius imaginum*). Sallust suggests they were powerful spurs to emulation.461 Seneca was conscious of

458 It is perhaps significant that Seneca’s philosophical Romans are ones used by Cicero in his philosophical dialogues: the Catos and Laelius in particular.

459 *Ep.* 94.8, 10, 52, 55, 59 and 72.

460 This is how ROLLER 2001, 95-96, reads it.

461 Sall. *Iug.* 4.5. See also Polyb. 6.53.
this very Roman institution when he argued for a reinterpretation of nobility. In Ep. 44 responding to Lucilius’ feelings of inferiority over his relatively humble status, he argues that nobility is not something inherited; rather it is something conferred by philosophy, and in contrast to the highly restricted entry to the upper social classes of the Roman state, this nobility is open to all. It is the mind, not our ancestors, that makes us noble: Non facit nobilem atrium plenum fumosis imaginibus ... animus facit nobilem (Ep. 44.5). In fact, Seneca suggests, all previous philosophers can be your ancestors: Omnes hi maiores tui sunt, si te illis geris dignum (Ep. 44.3).

In this reconception of nobility, the example of past philosophers as one’s ancestors carries with it the same stimulus, even duty, to emulate that lay on a Roman noble. At Ep. 39.2, Seneca suggests that simply seeing how many have laboured on Lucilius’ behalf will inspire him to emulation. In a similar way in Ep. 64.7 Seneca sees himself with the responsibility of a good pater familias to pass on the inheritance received from past teachers greater than he received it. Furthermore, he goes on (Ep. 64.9-10), he keeps statues of these philosophers and celebrates their birthdays, analogous to the respect appropriately paid to one’s patron, or, indeed, the emperor.

However, these are outward shows of respect, and Seneca concludes Ep. 64 with the observation that he welcomes these men into his mind with the highest honour. Seneca acknowledges the efficacy of imagines as spurs to conduct, but in Ep. 40.1 he suggests that texts, in particular letters, offer a more genuine image of a person. The recognition (agnoscere) that one has in a letter is more significant than that from a picture, which Seneca implies is merely an image of the body in contrast to a letter, an image of the mind.

Ep. 33 focuses particularly on reading in a philosophical context. Contemporary views on reading were somewhat ambiguous. Some, like Epictetus, saw reading as having little educational value, an attitude that went back to Plato. Others, however, placed great value on the written words of past philosophers, an attitude that was growing and would continue to grow, an attitude
that led to the production of commentaries on these texts.\textsuperscript{466} As has been seen, Seneca describes reading in §5 as giving one direct access to the minds of past thinkers, an image that fits with how he viewed friendship and \textit{exempla}. At §9 Seneca rejects speaking as having some special status simply by virtue of itself. It can be no better than a book, which implies that writing on occasions can be as good as speech.

Seneca’s view that one’s speech and one’s life share the same quality has already been touched on.\textsuperscript{467} The link between these two is one’s mind, the seat of rationality, the health of which is revealed both in one’s words and one’s deeds. In \textit{Ep.} 100 he illustrates how Papirius Fabianus’ style reflects the healthy state of the mind, while in \textit{Ep.} 114 he makes use of the binary opposition of the king and the tyrant to explain bad style: the mind is like a king, but if it is unhealthy its kingship becomes tyranny (§§23 ff.), and degenerate style is a symptom of this.

The conjunction between a person’s speech and his life gives texts a revelatory character that Seneca seems very aware of. He believes letters had this characteristic to a great degree. In \textit{Ep.} 38 he contrasts conversations as more effective in effecting moral change than orations. This is a contrast regularly made by Plato in his criticism of rhetoric. However, in this letter Seneca is making an implicit comparison between letters and conversation that gives an effectiveness to written texts that Plato denied them in the \textit{Phaedrus}.\textsuperscript{468} This revelatory character of letters is noted clearly by Seneca: ... \textit{quo uno modo potes te mihi ostendis. Numquam epistulam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus} (\textit{Ep.} 40.1). In the text of the letter Lucilius is revealing himself to Seneca, and by clear implication Seneca in turn is revealing himself to us. In the act of reading the two are, like close friends, in each others’ company. Such an idea fully supports his images of befriending exemplary philosophers through their texts that has been discussed above.

\textit{Ep.} 64.2-4 is worth quoting in full as an illustration of Seneca’s reaction to reading a philosophical text. It is an example of Seneca modelling reading for the reader, being an \textit{exemplum}, and it illustrates the types of things he valued in a text, which in turn show the type of texts he valued:

\begin{quote}
\textit{... quo uno modo potes te mihi ostendis. Numquam epistulam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus} (\textit{Ep.} 40.1). In the text of the letter Lucilius is revealing himself to Seneca, and by clear implication Seneca in turn is revealing himself to us. In the act of reading the two are, like close friends, in each others’ company. Such an idea fully supports his images of befriending exemplary philosophers through their texts that has been discussed above.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{466} §7 Zenon ... Cleanthes n.

\textsuperscript{467} Above, p. 182.

\textsuperscript{468} Below, p. 316.
Lectus est deinde liber Quinti Sextii patris, magni, si quid mihi credis, viri, et licet neget Stoici. Quantus in illo, di boni, vigor est, quantum animi! Hoc non in omnibus philosophis invenies: quorundam scripta clarum habentium nomen exanguia sunt. Instituunt, disputant, cavillantur, non faciunt animum quia non habent: cum legeris Sextium, dices, ‘vivit, viget, liber es, supra hominem est, dimittit me plenum ingentis fiduciae’. In qua positione mentis sim cum hunc lego: fatebor tibi: libet omnis casus provocare, libet exclamare, ‘quid cessas, fortuna? congredere: paratum vides’. Illius animum induo qui quaerit ubi se experiatur, ubi virtutem suam ostendat, spumantemque dari pecora inter inertia votis optat aprum aut fulvum descendere monte leonem (Ep. 64.2-4).

The martial tone is important. It fits with redefining Roman nobility: ‘vivere … militare est’, as he says in Ep. 96.5. The Roman martial ethos is retained, but the enemy is now Fortune and the battlefield is internal. Issuing a challenge to fortune is a striking image that seems to demand a similar response in the reader of Seneca’s epistle. Seneca has attempted vividly to transfer his own mental state to the reader. In this passage he illustrates through himself the proper way to read philosophy — that is with a view to applying it. He also passes judgement on what constitutes good philosophy: it should facere animum, literally make or construct mind. It is relevant that here, as in his appreciation of a book by Lucilius in Ep. 46, he blurs the distinction between a text and its writer. The claims he makes about Sextius, ‘vivit, viget, liber est’, can be true only of his mind in as far as it resides in the text they have just read, the author being dead at the time Seneca heard his book read. But here Seneca proclaims that he is alive, alive like the other philosophers and exempla that we are exhorted us to live with.

It is appropriate that Ep. 33, a letter on learning from texts, should be such a brilliant example of how Seneca infuses his own personality into his writing and makes it a large part of how the text both teaches and persuades. Very obviously Seneca is not telling us what others think, but is doing as he instructs his reader to do, speaking in his own voice. Seneca moves the reader from seeing other Stoic writers at the start as chiefs (proceres, §1) to just those who have gone before (priors, §10) or guides (duces, §11) at the end. Along the way to this change in perception, he has encouraged Lucilius to see himself as past the use of quotes, to see being interested in quotes as beneath him (§§6-7). Then through the device of the adversarius (§§7-9), he mocks the sort of person Lucilius seems to want to emulate, a nobody, living in the shadow of others. Finally, at the close Seneca presents his own attitude to past writers (§§10-11), one that the reader might be inspired to emulate. The arguments rely importantly on emotional appeals to the reader’s self-perception and to his desire to win the good esteem of Seneca. It balances
criticism, skillfully directed towards the *adversarius* so that Lucilius could avoid it, and inspiration in the form of the goal of being one of the *auctores* (§8), someone who forges new paths to the truth (§11). The tone of Ep. 33 is lively and in reading it Seneca could fairly said to be alive in the way he describes Sextius.

Seneca aspired himself to become an *exemplum* (Ep. 98.13), a goal that he clearly achieved at the end of his life. In his death Tacitus quotes him as saying he passed on the image of his life (*imago vitae suae*) to his friends. Seneca had spent a long time preparing himself for his death, particularly with *exempla*, and he could, as a result, pass on his life and death as an *exemplum* to others. The Romanness of Seneca’s conception of philosophy, his stress on *exempla* and his idea that past philosophers were the *maiores* of the present ones, seems to accord with the actions of other prominent Roman Stoics. Seneca joined his hero Cato as an *exemplum* of rational suicide in the face of tyranny. In turn, Thraesia Paetus and Helvidius Priscus would follow their example. Tacitus records Thraesia at his death, like Seneca offering a libation to Jupiter the Liberator and then counselling his son-in-law Helvidius on the need to strengthen his mind with steadfast *exempla*. Of particular relevance to the relationship between *exempla* and texts is that Tacitus records in his *Agricola* that the biographers of these two Stoics were both executed and had their books burned. It appears that Domitian shared Seneca’s views on the efficacy of exemplary texts!

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Commentary on Epistle 33

Division:

- A (§§1-5): Quotes are no longer appropriate for Lucilius.
- B (§§6-9): Lucilius should not just learn, but teach.
- C (§§10-11): More remains to be discovered.

Section A (§§1-5). In the first half of the letter Seneca deals with the request for continued quotes at the end of each letter. He frames the argument in a contrast between Stoics and Epicureans, which climaxes in §4 with the contrast between Stoic self-sufficiency as independence in contrast to Epicurean subordination to Epicurus. In §5 this contrast is left behind to concentrate on one aspect of reading, that authors must be read and understood as wholes.

§1. Desideras his quoque epistulis sicut prioribus adscribi aliquas voces nostrorum procerum. Non fuerunt circa flosculos occupati: totus contextus illorum virilis est. Inaequalitatem scias esse ubi quae eminent notabilia sunt: non est admirationi una arbor ubi in eandem altitudinem tota silva surrexit.

§1. The introduction is not ornate (in contrast to Epp. 32.1 and 34.1). Lucilius’ request is given very directly and simply. Seneca does not pause to answer the request directly, but proceeds to argue against it by characterizing Stoic writing in a number of ways. In all the analogies Seneca increases the scale, majesty and quality of the new field of study on which Lucilius is embarking.

Desideras ... procerum: this request underlines that the Epistles follow a sequence and have a developing plot, a fact that is emphasized by prioribus. voces: (OLD §8) such quotes were a feature of the first three books, where each letter closed with one. Seneca explained their use in Ep. 2.4-5, as things to meditate on. For the development by Hadot 1969a, 52, of an elaborate reading plan
from such references, see below, p. 329. For Seneca’s *sententiae* being of a similar quality, see §7 *flosculos n. nostrorum*: that it is Stoic quotes Lucilius seeks shows he is aware he has reached a new and Stoic stage in his progress. This pronoun is used prominently on its own at §§2-3 to refer to the Stoics (cf. SCARPAT 1970, 87). At §§3-4 this identification is continued with the use of the 1st p. pl. *procerum*: (*OLD* 1b) a word used infrequently by Seneca. At Vit. 7.3 he uses it similarly to refer to Stoic leaders.

**Non fuerunt ... occupati:** Seneca begins his answer immediately. The subject is understood as the *proceres*, the last word of the previous sentence. This gives a serious, urgent and not very friendly tone to the reply, a tone which continues throughout most of the letter. The tone also matches the seriousness of the Stoic *proceres*, who are not concerned with trifles. *flosculos*: §7 n. The diminutive gives this a pejorative sense. It contrasts in scale with *silva* below (cf. ANDRE 1969, 475). Such a contrast is also perhaps suggested by a *figura etymologica* on the height of the *proceres*. *occupati*: this past participle is usually used with a pejorative sense by Seneca to describe those busy with unworthy pursuits (e.g. Ep. 19.11 and *Brev*. 7.1).

**totus ... virilis est:** the first reference to Stoic writing is characterized in three words, all of which are significant to the subsequent argument, and stand in antithesis to the quotes and to Epicurus with whom they will be especially associated. *totus*: this stresses the idea that Stoic writing is a whole, and is referred to again by *continuum* at §3 and then developed at §5. *contextus*: (*OLD* §4) a metaphor in origin from weaving (*SMITH*, 99), and used again at §5 *nectitur* and §6, *contexta*. The interrelated nature of Stoicism is what makes their excerpting difficult, an idea developed in §§3-4. The word is also used by Cicero to describe the interconnectedness of Stoic thought (*Fin*. 5.83). *virilis*: the manliness of Stoicism reflects a *figura etymologica* on their highest good, *virtus*, and is a quality consonant with the stress Seneca placed on life as military service (above, p. 12). It contrasts here with the *mollitia* of Epicurus, §2 below. In *Const*. 1.1 a similar contrast between the two schools is made.

**Inaequalitatem ... sunt:** the ability to detect quotes in a work is made to indicate a weakness, that of unevenness. *Inaequalitatem*: the opposite of *aequalitas* (*Ep*. 31.8 n.), which is an attribute of Stoic *constantia*. *scias*: a jussive subjunctive (cf. SUMMERS 1910, lxii).
non est ... surrexit: the quality of unevenness is illustrated with an example contrasting a single tree with a forest: the antithesis between arbor and silva is underlined by the opposing modifiers: una ... tota. The contrast in scale with flosculos above has already been commented on. The contrast between the parts and the whole is personalized at §5, where Seneca suggests that it is the overall appearance of a beautiful woman that impresses, not individual features. eandem: in contrast to the earlier inaequalitatem.

§2. Eiusmodi vocibus referta sunt carmina, refertae historiae. Itaque nolo illas Epicuri existimes esse: publicae sunt et maxime nostrae, sed <in> illo magis adnotantur quia rarae interim interveniunt, quia inexpectatae, quia mirum est fortiter aliquid dici ab homine mollitiam professo. Ita enim plerique iudicant: apud me Epicurus est et fortis, licet manuleatus sit; fortitudo et industria et ad bellum prompta mens tam in Persas quam in alte cinctos cadit.

§2. Quotes are found in works of history and in poetry. Those that are found in Epicurus should therefore be treated as public. Seneca then pauses to give a brief evaluation of Epicurus and his writing.

Eiusmodi ... historiae: the eiusmodi indicates that these quotes are the same as those that Lucilius wants and the analogy of the wood suggests that they also abound in Stoic authors. The point perhaps that Seneca is making is that the presence of quotes is not a measure, or even a characteristic of philosophic writing, as such quotes are found in other genres of literature (cf. Ep. 8.8). Here Seneca puts poetry and history on the same level. However, his attitude to them was not identical. He never wrote history and his scorn for it has been mentioned (above, p. 63). He wrote poetry and he quotes poets in his letters (as in this one at §5); at Ep. 8.8 in defending his right to use Epicurus he says: Quam multi poetae dicunt quae philosophis aut dicta sunt aut dicenda! See further MAZZOLI 1991. referta ... refertae: the anaphora gives greater force to this word, which is frequently pejorative, suggesting cramped disorder. It is used often of places crammed with people (e.g. Const. 2.13), but can be used neutrally of literary works (e.g. Ep. 59.6). The word with both senses is used by Cicero (e.g. N.D. 1.6 and 1.34).

Itaque nolo ... nostrae: Epicurus is introduced into the discussion. The itaque makes this follow from the preceding statement. This is a claim that Seneca has made repeatedly in earlier books. At Epp. 8.8 and again at Ep. 21.9 he had stressed that quotes taken from Epicurus were common property (publicae), while at Ep. 12.11 he goes further saying what is true is his own: quod verum est meum est and finishing by reiterating that the best things are common property
Here, however, Seneca is less charitable towards Epicurus; there is no mention of his *egregia dicta* as at Ep. 21.9, and by going beyond saying the quotes are *publicae* to saying they are actually *nostrae*, he gives Epicurus the appearance of having nothing, suggesting that it was not Seneca quoting Epicurus, but Epicurus quoting the Stoics!

**sed <in> illo ... professio:** Seneca proceeds to give a more extended characterization of the quotes in Epicurus’ writing. With the first two, their rarity and their unexpectedness, Seneca suggests a perhaps unfavourable comparison with how he had characterized poetry and history. With the third he makes a stronger criticism in the antithesis between *fortiter* and *mollitiam*. The sense of *fortiter* is closely synonymous to that of *Romana virtus*, as the further uses of related forms in the next sentences makes clear (§4 *fortitudo*, n.). For the link between one’s style and one’s character, see below, p. 182. **<in>:** CHARNEY 1953, 235, argues that this emendation first proposed by Erasmus is unnecessary as the *illo* can be taken as causal pointing to the following *quia*. The difference either way is not terribly significant. **adnotantur:** picks up *notabilia* above. **mollitiam:** Seneca alludes to the centrality of pleasure in Epicureanism, but later Seneca notes that such softness is popularly attributed to the philosophical life in general (Ep. 37.1). EDWARDS 1993, 63-97, has a detailed discussion of the term, noting that although it can connote sexual passivity and effeminacy its frame of reference is broader. Here, in contrast to Stoic virility, it refers to the lack of the martial toughness that comprised Roman *virtus*.

**Ita enim ... manuleatus sit:** Seneca contrasts himself with popular attitudes to Epicurus, distancing himself from the earlier statements. Even here Seneca comments that Epicurus’ courage is at variance with the way he dresses. Praise for Epicurus is also found at Vit. 12.4 ff., where he defends his *voluptas* as *sobria* and *sicca* against those attracted to it for dishonourable ends (similarly, Ep. 21.9). Even Cicero, basically hostile to Epicureanism, admitted the probity of Epicurus’ life (Off. 3.116, Tusc. 3.46, Fin. 2.96-99). **fortis:** picks up the *fortiter* in the previous sentence and is repeated in *fortitudo* in the next. It is often used as the adjective of *virtus* (HELLEGOUARC’h 1972, 248), as seems appropriate here. **manuleatus:** long sleeves were regarded as effeminate (cf. Suet. Calig. 52). The use of dress as a marker of moral character is continued in the next sentence (*alte cinctos*). It is possible the term is used metaphorically of the way Epicurus is popularly viewed, his superficial appearance.
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fortitudo ... cadit: a tricolon crescens (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’ ... malus?’ n.) to present a set of attributes that are not basically philosophical, but martial and traditional. The first two attributes (fortitudo et industria) evoke the image of the vir fortis ac strenuus. The collocation of the adjectives of this phrase goes back to at least the time of Cato (cf. Cato Orig. 4.7 (= F83 PETER 1914) and LAUDIZI 2003, 50). The phrase had been used by Seneca previously in the correspondence (Epp. 9.19 and 22.7; also Ep. 77.6 and Ben. 5.24). On the earlier two occasions a more philosophical sense is possible, but on this occasion the following phrase (ad bellum prompta mens) makes the context clearly more general with specifically martial overtones. The contrast between the dress and character of Epicurus is continued in the antithesis Seneca draws between Persians and those girt for action. fortitudo et industria: both are important aspects of traditional Roman virtus (HELLEGOUARCH 1972, 247-248 and 253-254), but also prized by the Stoics. Persas: this is Seneca’s only mention of the national character of the Persians; elsewhere it is the character of individual kings that is described (e.g. Ira 3.15). Here it is their loose dress and reputation for luxury along with their martial distinction that makes them useful: alte cinctos: as an idiom for preparedness of action this occurs also at Ep. 92.35 applied to Maecenas. Its reverse, discinctus, is also applied to Maecenas at Ep. 114.4 (cf SMITH, 59). cadit: MASO 1999, 89, argues this word makes Seneca’s defence of Epicurus somewhat ambiguous, putting the conjunction of fortitudo and mollitia in the sphere of chance (cadit) rather than of consciousness, the will or certainty. However, though Maso quotes Ep. 31.11 in support, the same idiom there suggests that the construction does not strongly suggest an element of chance, as it would work against the sense of the earlier example (Ep. 31.11 cadere n.).

§3. Non est ergo quod exigas excerpta et repetita: continuum est apud nostros quidquid apud alios excerptur. Non habemus itaque ista ocliferia nec emptorem decipimus nihil inventurum cum intraverit praeter illa quae in fronte suspensa sunt: ipsis permittimus unde velint sumere exemplar.

§3. Seneca resumes the discussion of quotes to repeat the claim that Stoic writing is all of a similar impressiveness. He then uses a commercial image to imply that quotes are like enticing goods displayed at the storefront to tempt the customer to come in, only to be deceived by the lack of anything more inside. Implicit in this image is a suggestion of deception and lack of substance to those writers, among whom he includes Epicurus, who rely on sententiae.

Non est ... repetita: Seneca finally gives an explicit reply to Lucilius’ request, saying it is unnecessary. For the change from his earlier instructions and the Epicurean character of such
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excerpting, see above, p. 180. **Non ... quod**: Ep. 31.5 n. **repetita**: Summers 1910, 198, suggests ‘oft-quoted’; however, the word is also suggestive of the use these quotes are put to in meditation (cf. *concoquas* at Ep. 2.4).

**continuum ... excerptur**: the contrast made at the start of the letter is reiterated, though *alios* makes its application broader than merely between Stoics and Epicureans. Seneca suggests that all Stoic writing is of the standard of the *sententiae* of other writers. This is an unusual claim, as a more common characterization of the style of Stoic writers was that it was dry and overly technical, as Cicero, *Fin*. 4.5-6, says (see further, GraVER 2002, xxviii). **continuum**: this image suggests that these authors possess an evenness in contrast to the *inaequalitas* of other authors. It also picks up the sense of interrelatedness in *contextus*, which will be stressed in §§4-5.

**Non habemus ... sunt**: it is a consequence (*itaque*) of the quality of Stoic writing, Seneca claims, using an extended commercial metaphor, that these writers have no need of special devices to tempt their customers into their shop. This has the effect of making those whose works are of the sort from which excerpts may be taken both deceptive (*decipimus*) and lacking substance (*nihil ... praeter*). That this criticism is capable of application beyond solely the Epicureans is discussed below, §7 *captare flosculos* n. The commercial metaphor fits nicely with the playful description of quotes as debts in earlier letters (Wilson 2001, 183, n. 35). **habemus**: the use of the 1st p. pl., which is continued through this and the next section, includes Seneca among these writers more explicitly than the earlier uses of *noster*. **ocliferia**: the only occurrence of this word in extant literature. Berno 2003 speculates that it is a colloquial term, not a Senecan neologism. **inventurum**: an example of the predicative use of the future participle, common in Seneca, but rare in authors before Livy (Woodcock, §90 and Summers 1910, lxvii).

**ipsis ... exemplar**: this freedom of choice is developed in the next section through the contrast of Stoic freedom and Epicurean subjection to authority. **ipsis**: (OLD §7, ‘of their own accord’) this has the sense here of emphasizing their autonomy of choice.

§4. This section abounds with verbal echoes from the start of the letter. In it Seneca makes two important claims. Individual Stoics are autonomous, unlike Epicureans who subordinate themselves to the school’s founder. And it is not possible to extract quotes from the body of Stoic ideas, because it is not possible to determine to whom they should be assigned. Seneca also colours the contrast between Stoics and Epicureans with language that likens Epicureans to the nobility under the principate, which could no longer hold military commands under their own auspices, but rather were legati Augusti, serving under the auspices of the princeps. By implication Stoics have the autonomy that the Republican nobility had possessed, though transferred from politics to the higher, in Seneca’s view, realm of philosophy. Such an appeal to the reader’s identification as a Roman noble is constant in Seneca (above, p. 10).

Iam puta ... adsignabimus?: this argument appears to be somewhat elliptical. One interpretation (MASO 1999, 98) is that isolating the sententiae compromises the coherence (unitarietà) of Stoicism and the complexity of the positions. Yet Seneca does not continue down this line but supports the argument with non sumus sub rege, which appeals to the reader’s pride and self-identification. It is an argument that ties in with his demand at §7 to hear his addressee’s own words, not those of Zeno or Cleanthes. His interest is less on whether such assignation is strictly possible, but on setting up a contrast with Epicureanism and in the light of §7 on whether it is useful. sententias: a synonym for the voces used earlier, but here in connection with Stoics it is perhaps a grander word; see Ep. 30.9 sententiam n. turba: (OLD §§2-3) stressing quantity, like §1 silva. In this context it is closely synonymous with multitudine a few sentences on below. Both can be used of things and animals, making the passage, particularly retrospectively in the light of the Ovidian quote, able to be seen as a metaphor from herding animals. separare: (OLD §4b) a regular usage for differentiating thoughts and ideas. adsignabimus: (OLD §3) again a regular usage for ideas. In its basic sense it refers to the assignation of land to colonists and soldiers (cf. SCARPAT 1970, 72).

Zenoni ... Posidonio?: Seneca gives a list of the most prominent Stoics in chronological sequence, starting with the founder, Zeno, and then the two subsequent heads of the school in Athens, Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Panaetius was also a head of the school (129–110 BC) and the teacher of Posidonius. In the periodization of Stoicism, the first three are Early and the last two Middle (cf. SEDLEY 2003a). MOTTO, Philosophers, lists the places Seneca cites these figures, as does SETAIOLI 1988a, 257 ff. Seneca’s general attitude to them has been discussed already (above, p. 184).
**Non sumus sub rege:** set in antithesis with asyndeton to an echo of the opening words of the collection, this phrase contrasts Epicureans negatively in respect of self-sufficiency, presented here in terms of liberty. This portrayal of Epicureans’ attitude to their founder is confirmed in other sources (Nussbaum 1994, 130-131): he is someone to be obeyed. However, in calling him a rex, Seneca is able to associate him with all the negative connotations the word had in Rome (cf. Griffin 1992, 141-148), though it should be noted he does use the word positively on occasions in antithesis to the tyrannus (e.g. Ep. 114.24 and in Cl. frequently, e.g. Cl. 1.3.3; cf. Braund 2009, 199). Certainly in this passage the emphasis is on the lack, in such a relationship, of libertas, a prized gift for Seneca of philosophy (see Ep. 37.3 n. and above, p. 14).

**sibi quisque se vindicat:** the opening words of the collection are reiterated, no longer as the programmatic goal of philosophy but as a fundamental demand on each Stoic. The attempt of Nussbaum 1994, 344-345, to make this a universal characteristic of Stoicism should be qualified by the suggestion of Sedley 1989, 97-103, that Stoics were every bit as respectful of Zeno as their school’s founder, as Epicureans were of Epicurus. When analysed, the arguments of these Stoics are not with Zeno, but with his correct interpretation. However, intellectual independence is certainly a crucial aspect of how Seneca conceived philosophy, though one that Quellenforscher choose to ignore (above, p. 2). Also, his respect for Zeno is sometimes heavily ironic, e.g. Ep. 83.9 (above, p. 185, n. 450). For the other places where he asserts his intellectual independence, see §§10-11 n. **vindicat:** (OLD §3) the idiom is drawn from the field of legal terminology, referring to asserting property rights, and is directly connected with the theme of freedom, being used in connection to liberating slaves. As an idiom that opens the collection and is repeated with insistence throughout it, the phrase has attracted a good deal of scholarship (cf. Traina 1987, 12, Scarpat 1970, 78 and below, p. 297).

**Apud istos ... referetur:** by contrast, Epicureans (istos) treat the words of even major pupils of Epicurus as spoken by Epicurus himself (unum). Such subservience to Epicurus is noted by other authors, e.g. Cic. N.D. 1.72. See §7 ‘Hoc Zenon dixit’: tu quid? n. for the echoing of the phrase quidquid Hermarchus dixit, quidquid Metrodorus. **Hermarchus ... Metrodorus:** both were students of Epicurus (cf. Ep. 6.6). Hermarchus was his successor as head of the school and Metrodorus was quoted quite frequently by Seneca, most notably in Epp. 98–99 (Wilson 1997, 57). See Mottom, Philosophers, under their respective names for Seneca’s other references to them. **referetur:** (OLD §11).
omnia ... dicta sunt: the same idea is repeated with an antithesis between *omnia* and *unius*, and with *unus* being emphatically repeated from the previous sentence. The image of Epicurus as a king (*rex*, above) is continued with the use of military imagery, the king as a military leader. A similar idea is presented neutrally at Ep. 14.17: *Epicuri est aut Metrodori aut alicuius ex illa officina. contubernio*: the military associations of this term have been mentioned (above, p. 67); it was used positively of Epicurus and his friends in Ep. 6.6. For further on it, see DeWitt 1936. ductu et auspiciis: the two form a regular phrase (*OLD auspicium* §4). Seneca suggests with this phrase that Epicureans lacked the autonomy that the nobility in the principate also lacked. As military commanders they no longer held command in their own right, but under the auspices of the *princeps*. Seneca portrays Stoic *virtus* as in essence the same as the traditional *virtus Romana* (above, p. 10), and the philosophical life is the cultivation of true *virtus*. Here, as very frequently, he is appealing to the reader to identify as a Roman with the best in their traditional values. Stoicism offers the prized quality of *libertas* (above, pp. 14 and 65), whereas Epicureans, he hints, are merely changing masters from the emperor to Epicurus.

Non ... multitudine: Seneca repeats the claim at the start of this section, that it is not possible to excerpt from Stoic authors. However, here he both echoes the image of a tall forest that opened the letter and changes the reason for the impossibility to excerpt: Stoic writing is all of the same standard. inquam: (*OLD* §2b) this interjection both adds emphasis and signals a return to the topic of excerpting after the contrast of Stoics and Epicureans. educere: (*OLD* §3b). aequalium: cf. §1 inaequitatem. multitudine: cf. §2 rarae.

*pauperis est numerare pecus*: from Ovid, *Met. 13.824*, spoken by Polyphemus when courting Galatea. Seneca concludes this section of the argument in a characteristic way with a *sententia* (Ep. 30.4 *Nullo genere ... diutius* n.). On top of all the faults of using quotes, Seneca now makes them a sign of poverty. The contrasting wealth of Stoic doctrines had been hinted at already in the contrast of *arbor* and *silva* (§1) and in the emphasis on quantity (§4 *turba* and *multitudine*). It is returned to at §6, non ... mendice. Given that Seneca had argued that quotes are not a distinctive quality of philosophical writing (§2 *Eiusmodi ... historiae* n.) there is some irony to using a quote from such a non-philosophical author as Ovid, and one from such an inconspicuous context, as if to stress that quotable thoughts can be found in nearly every genre. It is possible that the phrase draws out herding metaphors latent in the earlier idioms *ex turba separare* and *educere ex ... multitudine*, in which case they may have helped suggest this quote to Seneca.
Quocumque ... legeretur: the image of casting one’s eye (miseris oculum) initially recalls the analogy of the shop in §3; this is developed with an image that recalls Seneca’s comparison between the tree and the forest at the start (eminere, §1 eminent and paria, §1 eandem). It is only with the closing word, legeretur, that the precise context is revealed, that of reading. In this way he concludes the arguments of the first four sections of the letter. miseris: (OLD §7b).

§5. Quare depone istam spem posse te summatim degustare ingenia maximorum virorum: tota tibi inspicienda sunt, tota tractanda. <Continuando> res geritur et per lineamenta sua ingenii opus nectitur ex quo nihil subduci sine ruina potest. Nec recuso quominus singula membra, dummodo in ipso homine, consideres: non est formonsa cuius crus laudatur aut brachium, sed illa cuius universa facies admirationem partibus singulis abstulit.

§5. Having dealt with the impossibility of studying Stoic philosophy through quotes in the first part of the letter, Seneca now begins to describe how he believes it must be studied. Arguably this section forms the letter’s centre, offering an important image for how reading should be done at this new stage of progress. That this image should be applied to reading Seneca himself has been frequently noted (above, p. 181), but seemingly more frequently ignored.

There are three parts to the section. Firstly Seneca insists that the minds of great men cannot be dipped into, but must be engaged with as wholes. He then gives an image of a work being constructed, one that is a unified whole, though he leaves it to the reader to decide who is doing the construction. And finally he expects the quality of an author to be assessed as a totality, making an analogy with judging physical beauty by the whole figure, not by individual limbs.

Quare depone ... virorum: the quare suggests Seneca feels he has presented Lucilius with an argument that should have persuaded him. Lucilius’ request is now described as a hope (spem) that should be put aside as impossible given the foregoing arguments. It is also possible that in the light of Ep. 31 (particularly Ep. 31.5) such a hope may be seen as trying to do things the easy way, as shamefully seeking to shirk work. However Seneca does not develop such an argument, but rather further on applies shame to wishing to remain a child (§7, turpe est).

Digestive metaphors (degustare) are used by Seneca elsewhere of reading (especially Epp. 2.4 and 84.7; cf. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 143-144), but here he changes the metaphor in the second half to visual (inspicienda) and tactile (tractanda) imagery, appropriate to the analogy of physical beauty that follows. summatim: such summary learning is also criticized at Ep. 39.1 summarium n. degustare: (OLD §1c) Seneca uses the word to describe his attempting such a perusal of Lucilius’s
book at Ep. 46.1, though with the intention of closer reading later. ingenia: (OLD §5) a very useful term for Seneca; by metonymy it refers to the works of the authors, but it also indicates the mental quality in those works that Seneca is interested in, the writer’s talent or character. As Graever 1998, 628, nicely puts it, it is a term ‘capable of mediating between the strictly psychic realm and the external products of talent’. maximorum virorum: Seneca refers to the Stoic writers in the most positive terms. Calling them viri is in keeping with their virile style (§1 virilis n.) and is a term of praise, but its force is increased by the use of maximi, the superlative of magnus. The vir magnus, Hellegouarch 1972, 291, notes, was for Cicero a member of the nobility. Seneca, however, as Ep. 44 makes very clear, saw nobility as something bestowed by philosophy. Seneca describes authors as viri maximi at Polyb. 2.6, and at Ep. 83.9 he calls Zeno a vir maximus, though he then goes on to ridicule his syllogism on drunkenness. At Ep. 6.6 he describes Epicurus’ pupils as viri magni.

tota tibi inspicienda sunt, tota tractanda: for the first time in the letter Seneca turns from explaining how reading cannot be done to describing how it should be done. He places great emphasis on tota, not only through its anaphoric repetition, but also its alliteration with tibi and tractanda. The need to see these authors as wholes stands in contrast to the summatim of the previous sentence. A similar contrast with the rejected approach to reading of the previous sentence is found also with the choice of verbs, both of which suggest a thorough consideration of the works, not a sampling. inspicienda: used mostly of a mental vision, as here (Solimano 1991, 113-114). tractanda: used again of appropriate speech in Ep. 40.4. Its root sense is tactile (Smith, 34).

<Continuando> res ... potest: this is one of the most important images Seneca offers for the process of philosophic composition and it has attracted a fair bit of comment. There is a stress on creating a unified structure, something Stoic philosophy was noted for (Cic. Fin. 3.74). The present tense of geritur presents a problem in relating this image to the previous sentence. It suggests that the opus ingenii is still being created. Yet as this sentence seems to offer support for the claim in the previous sentence that the talents of great men must be examined as wholes, one might see the opus ingenii as being constructed by one of them. However, from Lucilius’ point of view the works of those men are all complete, assuming maximi viri refers to the likes of Zeno and Cleanthes mentioned in §4. Perhaps the best way to retain the sense of an unfolding work is to see the image as referring to the work that Seneca is creating in his correspondence with his friend.
The textual corruption has attracted much attention in the last century. The phrase *res geritur* is not generally used without some additional modifier, and one seems necessary here. The emendation of Axelson 1939, 180-181, n. 32, has been widely adopted, including by both Reynolds and Préchac as the best fix. Alexander 1950, 285-286, offers an elegant solution:

*res geritur ita ut per lineamenta sua ingenii opus nectitur...*

‘the business is conducted just as a masterpiece is developed by the interweaving ...’

He gives a plausible explanation for the scribal error leading to *et*. A weakness, however, is that what is otherwise described as actually happening is turned into only an analogy; furthermore it is not as though the analogy is clearly with any one visual art, as both *nectitur* and *ruina* seem to be used figuratively, and for this reason I have followed Axelson. Maso 1999, 88, n. 11, appears to follow the suggestion of Summers 1910, 33. *lineamenta*: (OLD §2) these are the outlines of an image. Smith, 93, sees the metaphor as architectural. Cicero uses the term at Brut. 70 for one of the qualities we praise in a painting. Maurach 1970, 24, n. 54, suggests Seneca intentionally uses the term here to create in conjunction with *nectitur* an echo of *linea*, with which nets were made.

*ingenii*: §5. *ingenia* n. *nectitur*: (OLD §6, ‘join into a single mass’). §1 *contextus* n. *opus*: (OLD §2). Ep. 34.2 n. where the term is applied to Lucilius. *ruina*: (cf. OLD 3a) the idiom occurs also at Vit. 22.3.

**Nec recuso ... consideres:** Seneca now offers a slight qualification to his instruction that authors must be read as wholes. He allows appreciation of the individual components of a work, provided they are viewed as part of a whole person. It is a feature of the multivalent nature of Seneca’s language that this sentence could be as easily applied to viewing a person, or a statue of a person, as to a written work. It is really only the context that makes the sense of the written work primary. The next part of the sentence makes this analogy explicit.

As with the previous image of the work under construction this qualification seems very relevant to the Epistles themselves. Seneca is demanding that the reader look for the unity to the work beyond the brilliance of the individual *sententiae*, a unity that is found in the picture of Seneca that comes out of the work (*in ipso homine*). Such a concern for how he is read is particularly apt given Seneca’s critics who saw him as a collection of vivid but poorly coordinated *sententiae* (Wilson 1987, 107-108, offers a convenient selection of these critics). The qualification is
also perhaps a concession to Lucilius’ wish for *sententiae*. Seneca gives permission to appreciate the turns of phrase provided their connection to the overall work is not lost.

By choosing to relate the *membra* not to the work but to the writer (*in ipso homine*), Seneca hints at an idea that he develops more fully elsewhere (e.g. Ep. 40.1 n.), that of gaining a mental image of the writer through reading, a mental portrait. The basis for such an idea is given in Ep. 114.1 (above, p. 182): one’s words are of the same quality as one’s life. *membra*: the word allows for two senses to this sentence; its basic sense of parts of a body permits the sense of viewing a person, but it is also a regular term for the parts of a speech or written work (*OLD* §5b), which in the context is its primary meaning. *hominе*: as the word can refer to a human of either gender it provides a good bridge between the *viri* whose talents were being examined before and the women in the next clause. *considerеs*: a verb whose basic sense is visual (*SOLIMANO* 1991, 120-121), which along with *membra* and *hominе* contributes to the multivalent sense of this sentence.

*non est … abstulit*: the contrast between a person and the bivalent term *membra* is now developed in regards to an aesthetic appraisal of human beauty. Two women are contrasted. The one with a nice leg or arm is by implication like a work containing the odd good quote; it lacks proportion and balance. The contrast suggests the saying, ‘the sum of the parts is greater than the whole’. Catullus, 86, has a contrast on similar grounds. However, whereas Catullus compares two named women, Seneca gives no more than the criteria for a judgement. Possibly Seneca has in mind Horace’s unflattering appraisal of a woman at *Sat*. 1.2.92–93: ‘*o cruс, o bracchia.*’ *verum* | *depugis, nasuta, brevi latere ac pede longo est* (BЕRТHЕT 1979, 944). Given the passages of Catullus and Horace, it is possible that Seneca is appealing to something of a commonplace, taking a regular method of assessing human beauty and using it as the criterion for assessing the quality of a text. Although such a commonplace may lie behind this analogy, it is an extraordinary one to make in the context of the letter, in that after stressing the *virilitas* of Stoics (§1) in contrast to Epicurean *mollitia* (§2), Seneca now indirectly likens the style of the *maximi viri* to feminine beauty.

In that he describes the praise that physical beauty wins (*laudatur … admirationem*), Seneca appears to endorse at least partially an aesthetic response to reading. He is not criticizing the response, but the criteria used to make it, and at *Ep*. 100.8 he defends the writing of Fabianus on very similar grounds to here. Fabianus may lack the power of oratorical *sententiae*, but his quality emerges when one views his *totum corpus*, which is both *comptum* and *honestum*. Such an aesthetic
response can perhaps be related to Seneca’s stress on philosophy as *amor virtutis* or *amor sapientiae* (above, p. 26 and below, p. 241) inasmuch as aesthetic appreciation can lead to love. *crus* ...

**brachium**: these two limbs are appropriately selected as they form a link to the earlier *membra*. **universa facies** ... **partibus singulis**: the antithesis works on both the nouns and their modifiers. The *universa* repeats the stress on wholes in the earlier *tota*.

**Section B (§§6-9)**. In the second half of the letter Seneca changes tack: if Lucilius insists, he can provide a plenitude of quotes, but his friend should be ashamed, as such quotes are for children. This section has a series of striking antitheses. Memorization is negatively compared to knowledge, both of which terms Seneca gives his own definition to. This comparison is then developed as contrasting dependence on a teacher against an independence that is presented in the requirement to teach. And finally Seneca denies any special status to the spoken word, as he argues that someone speaking memorized ideas is like a book. True speech by implication comes from genuine knowledge. This is an important claim by Seneca, and will be further examined below. It suggests Seneca did not privilege speech over writing to the extent many other ancient writers did.

§6. *Si tamen exegeris, non tam mendice tecum agam, sed plena manu fiet; ingens eorum turba est passim iacentium; sumenda erunt, non colligenda. Non enim excidunt sed fluunt; perpetua et inter se contexta sunt. Nec dubito quin multum conferant rudibus adhuc et extrinsecus auscultantibus; facilius enim singula insidunt circumscripta et carminis modo inclusa.*

§6. Seneca softens his stance on quotes, offering to provide some. There is a strong implication, however, that Lucilius will have been persuaded by Seneca and not make such a demand. In particular, such a demand would involve Lucilius admitting, according to how Seneca now characterizes quotes, that he was still a beginner, even a child. That in fact Lucilius does not request quotes is borne out by Seneca’s praise for him in *Ep.* 34.2. However, making this offer is an important part of Seneca’s portrayal of himself as a friend in the *Epistles*. In this section Seneca seems to reverse his earlier claim that excerpting is not possible. However, the inconsistency should not be pressed, as Seneca is rather suggesting that using such quotes would not be learning at the level Lucilius is now at, but continuing at his old one.

*Si tamen ... fiet*: the *tamen* emphasizes that such a demand would only now come if all that has been argued thus far has been to no avail. The understood *quam* clause of the *tam* is the...
modest quantity of quotes that Lucilius has requested, the quantity that had been given in the letters of the first three books. **exegeris:** repeats *exigas* from §3. **mendice:** the term echoes the commercial metaphors used in relation to quotes in earlier letters (cf. Graver 1996, 171), drawing attention to this free provision of quotes in the context of friendship, in contrast to the earlier commercial context that Seneca had jested about. **agam:** (*OLD* §37b). **plena manu:** (*OLD manus* §18d) such generosity is in keeping with friendship.

**ingens … contexta sunt:** although Seneca now grants the possibility of Stoic quotes, he characterizes them with the same imagery he had used earlier of Stoic texts. The two antitheses of this section are arranged chiastically to the clauses that support or expand on the assertions. In the first of two antitheses, the quotes are likened to something that can be handled. There are so many that they are lying around (*passim iacentium*); they simply need to be picked up (*sumenda*) rather than gathered together (*colligenda*). A similar claim is made of *exempla* at *Ep*. 24.3. **turba:** §5. n. In the second antithesis the quotes are likened to a fluid; they flow (*fluunt*) rather than drip (*excidunt*). Besides suggesting quantity the image also suggests the connectedness of the quotes, which picks up the sense of *continuum* in §3. It is this quality that is emphasized with the two adjectives. Finally the quotes’ quality is related to what is an essential characteristic of Stoic ideas, their fundamental interrelatedness. **excidunt … fluunt:** the same words occur at *Ep*. 100.1 when discussing style. See *Ep*. 40.3 n. The words are similarly used, though not contrasted, at *Ep*. 1.1 of lost time. **perpetua:** carries the same idea as *continuum* in §3 n. **contexta:** the quality of interwovenness to Stoic ideas had been touched on at §1 with the same word; it is also seen with the use of *nectitur* in §5 n.

**Nec dubito … auscultantibus:** Seneca continues his reevaluation of quotes. He now allows them some place for beginners (*rudibus*) and those not admitted to the inner mysteries of philosophy. Although not saying so directly, Seneca implies that the quotes in the earlier letters had then been appropriate to Lucilius’ stage of learning. This explains the change in attitude to quotes and excerpts from *Epp*. 2.4 and 6.5 (above, p. 180). It is further confirmation of the sense that Book IV marks a new stage in Lucilius’ progress, a stage that includes a new approach to reading (above, p. 42). Finally the association of philosophy and religion in the final metaphor is a frequent one in Seneca (above, p. 24). **conferant:** (*OLD* §10) this sense of ‘help’ is a post-Augustan idiom (Summers 1910, 200). **rudibus:** (*OLD* §5) the term is also used of military recruits. **extrinsecus**
auscultantibus: the religious context that Summers 1910, 200, notes for this phrase seems unambiguous, particularly given Seneca’s frequent use of religious imagery.

facilius enim ... inclusa: the effectiveness of quotes lies in the manner of their expression. They sink in more easily, which suggests that their verse-like quality makes them easier to memorize. Doubtless this is one of the reasons poetarum enarrationem formed a large part of the grammaticus’ task. However, at §8 Seneca distinguishes memorization from true knowledge. Other places where Seneca notes the utility of verse form are at Ep. 94.27, where he argues that precepts derive much of their impact from their form: carmini intexta sunt aut prosa oratione in sententiam coartata, and at Ep. 108.10 where he quotes Cleanthes, who likens the effect of the verse form on ideas to that of a trumpet on one’s breath. singula: the separate ideas contrast with the contextus of Stoic doctrine. insidunt: (OLD §5) the same word and sense recur at Ep. 40.3 (along with facilius) on the proper speed of delivery, while at Ep. 38.1 Seneca describes submissiora verba working in a similar way: facilius intrant et haerent. circumscripta: regularly used of style (e.g. Cic. de Or. 3.19).

inclusa: (OLD §7b) the same idiom occurs in Cic. de Or. 3.184, verba versu includere.


§7. Seneca continues describing the utility of quotes — for children. With that, however, his tone shifts. He becomes urgent, almost annoyed, conveyed by repetition: turpe ... turpe, tu quid? ... tu quid? It is as if the effort of offering to continue quotes in §6 has caused him to lose his patience. The section has a progression structured by references to age: pueris ... viro ... seni. When Seneca moves to criticism at certi profectus viro, Lucilius is left to wonder for a while if he is being addressed directly. By sibi it is clear someone else is being talked about, but someone uncomfortably similar to Lucilius. Seneca is making use of one of his favourite stylistic devices, the adversarius (Richardson-Hay 2006, 107–108). In this letter this person is largely mute, as is suitable for someone Seneca characterizes as having no independent voice. He is granted only a short, plaintive, reply at §9. For a more voluble adversarius see Ep. 47. The device of the adversarius shows regard for the feelings of Lucilius, who can take note of the criticism and avoid any possible later direct censure by not behaving as this figure is said to.
**Ideo pueris ... capit**: Seneca offers this as seemingly neutral expansion on the utility of *sententiae*: memorization is appropriate for boys as it is all they can handle. However, he also sets up the attack on the inappropriate style of learning by adults. In particular, with the verb *damus* he opposes himself and the reader to children, suggesting that this is not a style of learning ‘we’ do, something that he then proceeds forcefully to expand on. *sententias ... chrias*: both formed part of the preliminary exercises (*progymnasmata*) of rhetorical training (Kennedy 1994, 204). Quintilian, *Inst*. 1.9.3, describes them both and suggests they could also be taught by the *grammaticus*. *has ... vocant*: not an unusual phrase in Seneca (e.g. *Epp*. 58.2 and 95.1). However, what distinguishes its use here is that in the other places where Seneca offers a Greek term he also gives a Latin one. Here, though there is no Latin alternative, Seneca still wishes to mark the term as Greek. *complecti*: Smith, 34. *capit*: (OLD §29) it also includes the sense of ‘able to contain’ (OLD §25), which is prominent in the similar context of *Ep*. 108.2.

**Certi profectus ... innitatur**: Seneca now directly criticizes reliance on memorized quotes. They are disgraceful (*turpe*), the antithesis of the *honestum* after which both the philosopher and the Roman noble strive. Seneca specifies to whom it is disgraceful, the *certi profectus vir*. Firstly this person is in contrast to the earlier *pueris* to whom such behaviour is appropriate. But this is not just an adult male, but one of assured progress. Such an identification at first sight seems to refer to Lucilius, whose progress had been praised in the previous two letters, but as noted, Seneca chooses to apostrophize this person, leaving the reader the chance of avoiding making the criticism applicable to himself. Seneca uses three images for the unbecoming behaviour: plucking little flowers, leaning on quotes and standing with the support of memory. The first of these is presented as a frivolous behaviour, but the next two form an antithesis with the injunction that this man should depend on himself, an antithesis between self-sufficiency and dependence. Self-sufficiency had been a prominent theme of the previous two letters (above, p. 45), whereas dependence was the state of a child, among others, and to be avoided by the Roman male. Mention of memory in the third of these prepares for the contrast that is developed in the next sections (§§7-9). *profectus*: sometimes used as a technical term from Stoicism, translating *prokopē*; see Hengelbrock 2000, 125-126. *viro*: *Ep*. 31.5 *viro* n. *captare flosculos*: Seneca repeats this dismissive term for quotes from the letter’s start (§1). *Ep*. 108.6 provides an example of this activity, describing people who attend the lectures of philosophers with notebooks to collect sayings; their concern is with *verba* not *res*. Such an interest in quotes was widespread among
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educated Romans; as mentioned (above, p. 181), Seneca’s father had published many that he had remembered as a young man. It is also worth noting that Seneca’s own style is eminently excerptible, which is to say in Seneca’s terms one can read him for the *verba*, not the *res*. As at §6 (*Nec recuso ... consideres* n.), Seneca offers instruction on how he should be read. Rather than insisting on seeing an author as a whole, here (as at §5) he is concerned about the priorities one brings to reading him. **fulcire:** (*OLD §4*) similar in sense to *inniti* in the next clause. **notissimis ac paucissimis:** both are attributes of quotes that have been stressed repeatedly earlier (e.g. §1 *notabilia* and the *arbor ... silva* contrast). They are emphasized here with the superlatives. They provide a support that is both common and insubstantial. **memoria stare:** a regular use of *stare* (*OLD §21b*), meaning ‘depend on’, but Seneca also frequently uses standing as an element of the portrayal of steadfastness (above, p. 14). True steadfastness is self-sufficient, in contrast to a dependence on memory. **innitatur:** (*OLD §4*) an idiom for self-sufficiency; also at Ep. 92.2: *sibi innixus* (*TRAINA* 1987, 18 and 60).

**Dicat ista, non teneat:** as with the previous *innitatur*, Seneca continues an indirect apostrophe of the *certi profectus vir*. He now contrasts memorizing with speaking. The sense of this contrast is developed over the next few sentences. The abrupt criticism suggests Seneca’s annoyance. **Dicat:** there is a clear contrast between being praiseworthily active in speaking and being passively receptive to the words of another, but the suggestion that *dictet* is meant here (*SUMMERS* 1910, 200), limits too much the contexts in which one might speak memorably. **non:** although Seneca’s use of *non* with the jussive subjunctive goes beyond what is considered classical (*SUMMERS* 1910, lxiii-lxiv), here before a single word it is not unusual (G-L §270 r. 1), particularly when there is a contrast. **teneat:** (*OLD §24*).

**turpe est ... sapere:** Seneca repeats the term of opprobrium, *turpe*, and increases the level of disgrace by increasing the age of the addressee. The person referred to is now an old man or one in view of old age, a designation that again can refer to Lucilius, who is not much younger than Seneca (below, p. 457). It is not contradictory to refer to the same person as both *vir* and *senex*, as Seneca is focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the terms, and as such in many respects a *senex* can still be a *vir*. **prospicienti:** (*OLD §3*) *SUMMERS* 1910, 200, suggests a nautical metaphor here (see also *SOLIMANO* 1991, 115). A similar visual metaphor for the approach of old age occurs at Ep. 26.1. For the participial usage see Ep. 30.4 *perituri* n. **commentario:** (*OLD §3*) Seneca promises to send *commentarii* to Lucilius at Ep. 39.1 n. The precise nature of the books there is disputed, but
here, given the ironic nature of the comment, a textbook is suggested. sapere: an ironic usage, given that this verb denotes the exalted state of the sapiens, the possessor of sapientia, something not acquired from a textbook.

**Hoc Zenon ... tu quid?:** the tone becomes yet more urgent when Seneca shifts from 3rd p. imperatives to direct address. Seneca throws the adversarius’ words back in his face, demanding to know what he himself thinks. Commentators draw attention to similar phrases in Epict. Diss. 2.19.5. However, the differences are more striking. On a logical conundrum the roles are reversed: it is Epictetus who states the opinion of others and when pressed for his opinion (‘οὐ οὖν τί;’) says that he himself does not have a position on it.

This phrase echoes quidquid Hermarchus dixit, quidquid Metrodorus at §4. It also has a link to the earlier mention of chriae, as many of these are in the form, ‘somebody said ...’. The antithesis here between one’s own opinion and that of authoritative philosophers expands the earlier one of speaking and memorizing. Quoting philosophers is only memorizing; one must speak, but what Seneca means by speaking is only really made clear in the following sentences. At Ep. 108.38, however, he identifies what makes words one’s own as doing what one says:

Omnia quae dicunt, quae turba audiente iactant, aliena sunt: dixit illa Platon, dixit Zenon, dixit Chrysippus et Posidonius et ingens agmen nominum tot ac talium. Quomodo probare possint sua esse monstrabo: faciant quae dixerint.

**Zenon ... Cleanthes:** for the names, see §4 above. These are Stoics, implying that some studied Stoicism in a manner Seneca disapproved of, supporting Sedley 1991, 97-103, who argues against universalizing Seneca’s attitude to teaching to Stoics generally. In particular, as Hadot 2002, 149-153, citing Gel. 1.9.8, observes, in Seneca’s day ancient philosophy was beginning to move towards reliance on commentaries and handbooks, so Seneca is mimicking the language of many contemporary teachers. When Seneca had himself used quotes in the earlier letters, while acknowledging the source, he typically interpreted the quotes in his own way, true to this injunction (as Grafer 1996, 177-178, notes).

**Quousque sub alio moveris?:** Seneca continues the direct address with a question that gets to the heart of his concept of self-sufficiency — freedom. sub alio: echoes sub rege at §4. As with Epicureans earlier, to rely on quotes is to be subordinate to another. moveris: at Nat. 2.21.1 Seneca uses the verb in the same sense and in the same context of independence from one’s teachers.
impera ... tradatur: Seneca begins to expand on what he means by going beyond reproducing another’s words. The military connotations of the previous sentence are continued with impera. Antithetical to his current behaviour, the addressee is instructed to be the commander not the receiver of commands. Again antithetically, Seneca explains this in terms of speaking something quotable, becoming the producer rather than the consumer of quotes. impera: (OLD §7). memoria: (OLD §8b).

aliquid ... profer: in this demand Seneca acknowledges that the addressee, in offering something, is in some sense active, but Seneca demands that he go beyond this (et) and offer something from his own works or ideas. de tuo: this phrase has occurred already at Epp. 8.10 and 23.6. At Ep. 8.10 Seneca jokes that a quote by Lucilius will not be counted towards the ‘debt’ of quotes that he keeps. Earlier (Ep. 8.7) he had joked that he was still not quoting de meo but stealing from Epicurus. In the light of these quotes the de tuo, though directed to the adversarius, could serve to remind us that Lucilius is also a writer. The second occurrence (Ep. 23.6) speaks of delighting in what is truly one’s own (de tuo gaude). Seneca defines de tuo in that context: Quid est autem hoc ‘de tuo’? te ipso et tui optima parte. It is doubtful, though, that such a definition need be understood here.

§8. Omnes itaque istos, numquam auctores, semper interpretes, sub aliena umbra latentes, nihil existimo habere generosi, numquam ausos aliquando facere quod diu didicerant. Memoriam in alienis exercuerunt; aliud autem est meminisse, aliud scire. Meminisse est rem commissam memoriae custodire; at contra scire est et sua facere quaque nec ad exemplar pendere et totiens respicere ad magistrum.

§8. The itaque signals an abrupt change in tone and Seneca now shifts from attacking the adversarius to offering his opinion of people like him as a group (istos). His criticism continues to focus on the lack of self-sufficiency of such people and it also appeals to the reader’s aristocratic desire for renown. With this less impassioned and controversial tone Seneca finally expands on what he understands as the opposite of memorization, which is a self-sufficient type of knowledge.

Omnes itaque ... didicerant: Seneca faults these people with a lack of self-confidence (ausos), implying cowardice and a lack of ambition directed towards proper goals. He presents this in absolute terms (numquam ... semper). auctores ... interpretēs: Seneca uses metaphors taken from Roman law (ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 129). An auctor presents legislation in the senate, which an
interpres iuris might later expound on. Given that in public life one sought to be an auctor, Seneca is appealing to traditional sensibilities for personal success, though now directed into the sphere of philosophy. It is a theme picked up in §11 at the letter’s close. interpretētes: (OLD §3c) SETAIOLI 1988a, 456-457, discusses Seneca’s use of this term in the context of terms he uses to describe translation and in comparison to Cicero. Epictetus Diss. 2.9.14 makes a similarly negative judgement with ἐξηγηταὶ ... ἀλλοτρίων δογμάτων. Cicero, Off. 1.6, denied that he was merely an interpretes in his philosophical writing, yet it is quite possible that Seneca is here making a veiled criticism of his approach to philosophy, in which he openly acknowledged his sources, though including his own judgement of them (e.g. Fin. 1.6; cf. OCD3 §Tullius Cicero, Marcus, 1562-1563). sub aliena umbra latentes: such shade stands in contrast to the claritudo that accrues as an auctor. At Ben. 4.13.1 Seneca uses this idiom (sub densa umbra latitare) as part of a critical description of Epicureans (cf. BELLINCIONI 1984, 99-100). aliena: the contrast between suum and alienum is a fundamental one for Seneca (above, p. 10), and is repeated three more times below (§8 sua and §8 and §9 alienis). generosi: Ep. 31.4 Generosos n. Seneca challenges such people’s credentials to be part of philosophy’s aristocracy. numquam ... didicerant: the antithesis lies in both aliquando and diu, and in facere and didicerant. Such a distinction relates to Seneca’s emphasis on the contrast between res and verba and actio and contemplatio (Ep. 40.14 a rebus ... ad verba n.). ausos: beyond implying cowardice, this can be related to the sense in Seneca that action requires willpower (below, p. 223).

Memoriam ... exercuerunt: A pointed summation of the previous sentence, one that leads into the distinction between remembering and knowing. exercuerunt: The verb suggests effort (a major subject of Ep. 31). However, the gain does not go to oneself, but to others (alienis). Furthermore it is the memory that has been trained, not the mind. alienis: §8 aliena n.

aliud ... scire: Seneca moves the discussion towards a sententia that sums up the distinction he has been making since §7, a definition that is expanded on in the next sentence. However, he alters one half of the distinction, changing from speaking to knowing (scire).

Meminisse ... custodire: Seneca defines remembering. It is the guarding of something entrusted to you. Picking up the earlier aliena and alienis, the mention of ownership is important, as a Stoic seeks to find and cultivate what is truly one’s own. commissam: (OLD committo §12).
at contra ... quaque: Seneca offers a definition of knowing that breaks into two parts, the first describing what it is and the second what it is not. In the first the contrast in ownership is driven home (sua facere), as is the sense that this involves action. Scientia more frequently stands in contrast to the habitus animi (cf. Ep. 94.48 and above, p. 183). Here, however, Seneca’s definition of knowing is more like the habitus animi elsewhere. At Ep. 84.7 Seneca likens such knowing to digestion, distinguishing it from memorization: Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium. Epictetus also makes use of such a metaphor (Diss. 2.9.18; cf. Sellars 2003, 121-122).

Again at Ep. 75.7 Seneca equates memorizing with mere knowing in contrast to what is acquired by doing: Non enim, ut cetera, memoriae tradidisse satis est: in opere temptanda sunt; non est beatus qui scit illa, sed <qui> facit.

nec ad exemplar ... ad magistrum: in the second part of his definition of knowing Seneca contrasts it with the style of learning that might occur in a schoolroom (Smith, 77). The schoolroom learning that Seneca rejects here is of a piece with the knowledge of the adversarius that he criticized earlier (§7). Seneca expands on the idea of knowledge as one’s own possession by specifying what it must be free from, namely teachers and their models. pendere: (OLD §13b) generally this verb takes abl., ab, or ex, but here Seneca has used ad (OLD §36) with the sense ‘in accordance with’. totiens: Ep. 30.13 n. respicere: (OLD §7).


§9. After his aside to the reader explaining what he thinks of the adversarius and his type, Seneca returns to addressing the adversarius. The demand to be independent from one’s teachers is taken further in the demand that his addressee should actually teach. Seneca also introduces a new topic, that his addressee should differentiate himself from the book he reads. In this he argues against the blind belief that personal contact is always better than the contact that is mediated through a book. For Seneca only speakers who have integrated what they have learned can properly be said to speak. And this implies that just as someone can fail to speak in these terms, conversely a book from someone who has integrated what he has learned can have the qualities of real speech.

‘Hoc ... praecipe: Seneca’s repetition of the words, ‘Hoc dixit Zenon, hoc Cleanthes’, which opened his direct address to the adversarius in §7 serves effectively to mark the end of his aside to
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the reader. Instead, however, of the ‘tu quid?’ of his earlier apostrophe, Seneca now demands that the addressee differentiate himself from his reading: aliquid inter te intersit et librum. He goes on in characteristic antithetical style to demand his addressee not learn but teach. The repeated quousque and the imperative echo those earlier (§7), carrying the same tone of impatience. However, memorizing is here equated with learning and speaking is made more specific as teaching. The demand to teach is not responded to by the adversarius, who instead tries to answer the demand to differentiate himself from his reading that is repeated in the next sentence. The requirement that one teach is, however, one that Seneca makes elsewhere (above, p. 182).

Quid est … possum?: repeating his demand that his addressee differentiate himself from what he reads, Seneca challenges the assumed superiority of speech by asking what he can get from listening to someone quoting authorities that he could not get in a book. Although the addressee appears to be much like Lucilius, a student of philosophy, such a question might be levelled against many teachers, from Seneca’s day up to our own, making the previous iam et praepice more pointed (cf. §7 Zenon ... Cleanthes n.). Seneca is also raising the point with this question that a reader has choices and is able to choose what he reads. This sense of autonomy and self-directed philosophical progress is stressed in Seneca’s profession of intellectual independence at the end of the letter. This statement can be read as a challenge to the traditional oral discourse model of ancient philosophy in favour of a reading-based model, controlled by the reader himself.

‘Multum … facit’: Seneca’s dismissal of this reply makes it appear rather forlorn. Yet it was an idea that held the weight of popular opinion (in fact Tosi, §89, cites Seneca’s words here as becoming a proverb). The attitude that held books of little value compared to speech goes back at least to Plato, Phdr. 274 ff., in the story of Theuth and Thamus. Seneca’s near contemporary, Epictetus, shared it. He wrote nothing himself, surviving, like Socrates, through the work of his pupil Arrian. At Diss 2.19.9-10 he is scathing in his contempt of someone’s book learning (cf. Graver 1996, 59 and 91-92). Viva vox: at Phdr. 276a Plato makes the written word only an image of the living word (τὸν τοῦ εἰδότος λόγον λέγεις ζῶντα καὶ ἐμψυχον). Both Quint. Inst. 2.2.8 and Plin. Ep. 2.3.9 argue that the viva vox adds to what might otherwise be read. For Quintilian the teacher’s voice should carry great authority with his students because of their affection for him:

Licet enim satis exemplorum ad imitandum ex lectione suppeditet, tamen viva illa, ut dicitur, vox alti plenius, praecipueque praeeptoris quem discipuli, sī
modo recte sunt instituti, et amant et verentur. Vix autem dici potest quanto libentius imitemur eos quibus favemus.

At Ep. 6.5 Seneca had said, *Plus tamen tibi et viva vox et convictus quam oratio proderit*. However it is the *convictus* that differentiates *viva vox* there from here. It is this *convictus* that he goes on to focus on at Ep. 6.6 when he contrasts mere hearing with living in the presence of an exemplary person.

**Non quidem ... fungitur:** Seneca rebuts the interjection to argue that spoken philosophy need not have any inherent advantage over written. It is the speaker who gives words authority and just as this authority is only there in proxy to some speakers, so by implication can it be in a book. Some saw the written word as essentially lifeless (below, p. 316), and therefore gave primacy to the spoken word. Seneca, however, uses a different criterion to measure authenticity. To be authentic one’s words should not be borrowed or second-hand, and by this criterion spoken philosophy can be as derivative as written, perhaps even more so. *alienis:* §8 *aliena* n. *actuari:* ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 110. DUNBABIN 1917, 180-181, in arguing that this should be *actarius*, a spelling that has not been taken up by anyone, suggests that such a person here is not so much a shorthand writer, but the person who reads aloud the *acta diurna* (e.g. Petr. 53.1), a task that brings out the sense of putting one’s voice to another’s words.

**Section C (§§10-11).** The closing sections of the letter push the demand for self-sufficiency beyond internalizing what one learns and teaching it in one’s own voice to viewing the philosophical endeavour as something not complete. Seneca switches at the end to speak of his own procedure: he follows the path of earlier philosophers, but will forge an easier one if he should find it.

These sections are much quoted for Seneca’s expression of two ideas fundamental to his thinking, his independence as a thinker and his belief that much in philosophy remains to be discovered. The ideas are linked, as here, inasmuch as the belief that much remains to be discovered reduces the authority of past thinkers; they do not know it all. MÔTTO, *Philosophy* §29 lists passages where Seneca stresses his intellectual freedom (what Motto calls eclecticism).

For LANA 1988, 59-64, ‘la vita come ricerca’ is the dominant theme in Seneca’s writing. At Epp. 38.2 n., 45.4, 64.7, 80.1, 84.1 and 104.16, Ot. 3.1 and Nat. 6.5.3, Seneca stresses either that much remains to be found or that he desires to find more himself. At Nat. 7.25.4-5 in discussing research
in natural philosophy Seneca suggests that we are hampered as time for study is taken up in vice and that future generations will be amazed at his generation’s ignorance. These are ideas he develops at the close of that book, ending pessimistically by suggesting (Nat. 7.32.4): *Philosophiae nulla cura est. Itaque adeo nihil invenitur ex his quae parum investigata antiqui reliquerunt ut multa quae inventa erant oblitterentur.* And even if we were all to apply ourselves soberly, *vix ad fundum veniretur in quo veritas posita est, quam nunc in summa terra et levi manu quauerimus.*

At Ep. 79.6 Seneca talks of discovery and innovation in relation to literary work with regard to Lucilius possibly writing about Mount Aetna. Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.2.4-8, offers an interesting comparison in discussing imitation, insisting that one must not work from a belief that the models cannot be surpassed.

§10. Adice nunc quod isti qui numquam tutelae suae fiunt primum in ea re sequuntur priores in qua nemo non a priori descivit; deinde in ea re sequuntur quae adhuc quae sequeretur. Numquam autem invenietur, si contenti fuerimus inventis. Praeterea qui alium sequitur nihil invenit, immo nec quae sequeretur.

§10. Seneca now addresses the reader again, talking as at §8 of such students or teachers of philosophy as a type (*isti*). The criticism continues, but it moves on to a new topic, that of their blind obedience to their teachers, and the consequences this has for philosophy.

_Adice nunc ... quaeritur:* Seneca ridicules these people as metaphorically not being of legal maturity, and following people from the past both in matters where everyone else has abandoned that path and in matters still being researched. Metaphors of journeying are some of the most frequent in Seneca (cf. Ep. 31.1 *Sequere illum ... ibas n.*). Though Seneca is probably criticizing a sizable number of his contemporaries, the _nemo non_ is probably an exaggeration. _Adice:* (*OLD* §11) this construction, frequently used, as here, with *nunc quod* is also an example of a Senecan colloquialism (*Summers* 1910, 1). _qui ... fiunt:* inserted at the start as an explanatory aside. _tutelae:* (*OLD* §3b and *Armisen-Marchetti*, 168) the implication of lack of maturity echoes that of the criticism of their learning style in §7. _primum ... deinde:* the first of these two failings is the more remarkable; Seneca puts it first as it is the second that he will continue to explore. _priores:* these are those further ahead, a term that fits with the metaphor of the journey or path. It also has a regular temporal sense, but suitably to the context it gives the predecessors no special status, lacking the emotional weight of a term like _maiores_ (e.g. Ep. 44.3). It also marks a subtle change
from the proceres of the letter’s opening sentence (above, p. 190). nemo non: Ep. 30.11 n. quaeritur: (OLD §9).

Numquam ... inventis: having introduced the idea that such people are followers in areas that are still being investigated, Seneca continues by insisting that being content with what has been found will lead to nothing more being discovered. This implies that a certain attitude is required, one not content with what has been found. As already mentioned (§§10-11 n.), Seneca stresses in a number of places that he has this attitude. The polyptoton of invenietur and inventis is emphasized by both words being final in their clauses.

Praeterea ... quaerit: beyond just being content with present discoveries (Praeterea), being a follower means one does not find anything. Indeed, Seneca corrects himself (immo), such a person is not even looking. To view the past in such an inert and passive way is anathema to Seneca’s conception of philosophy, where one should aspire to add to the inheritance of one’s maiores (Ep 64.7 and above, p. 188). invenit ... quaerit: at Ep. 45.4 the same contrast occurs. nec: (OLD §2b) for ne ... quidem.

§11. Quid ergo? non ibo per priorum vestigia? ego vero utar via vetere, sed si propriorem planioremque invenero, hanc muniam. Qui ante nos ista moverunt non domini nostri sed duces sunt. Patet omnibus veritas; nondum est occupata; multum ex illa etiam futuris relictum est. Vale.

§11. Having finished his attack on the style of learning that he disapproves of, Seneca switches to the 1st person to conclude the letter with his own attitude to philosophy, continuing the metaphor of the path from §10. He goes beyond his statements in earlier letters on his attitude to past thinkers, where he had described the quotes he took from Epicurus as public (§2 Itaque nolo ... nostrae n.). Now, in relation presumably to books, Seneca states emphatically his opinion that past figures, his sources, are only guides. Such a statement fits with the new stage of progress that this book marks (above, p. 42). In later letters his attitude to such writers will become on occasions critical, e.g. Ep. 45.4. Seneca closes the letter with an optimistic image for the reader: the field of philosophical endeavour lies open to all. One is invited to leave one’s mark on it (cf. Ep. 98.13).

Quid ... vestigia?: Seneca anticipates with a rhetorical question a challenge that his advice suggests one ignores the work of past thinkers, similar to the stock modern objection: ‘why
reinvent the wheel?’. **Quid ergo?** Ep. 30.15 n. 

**ibo ... per ... vestigia:** this idiom echoes the three earlier uses of *sequi* and continues the metaphor of the journey. The mention of footsteps creates an elegant development of the preceding metaphor of following people and prepares for the next one of using a path. **priorum:** §10 *priors* n.

**ego vero ... muniam:** Seneca does not reject the work of earlier thinkers, but unlike those he criticizes he is looking and if he finds a better way he will use it. **vero:** Ep. 30.7 n. 

**propriorem planioremque:** Seneca can be seen seeking a more direct and level way, for instance, in rejecting the dialectical approach that he felt some had wasted their time on (Ep. 45.5) or that made philosophy appear difficult rather than great (Ep. 71.6). At Ep. 84.13 Seneca contrasts the way to wisdom as both loftier and *per planum* in contrast to the way to popular success, which is *per difficiles ... et arduos tramites*. So too at *Ira* 2.13.1 is the approach to the virtues level. At Ep. 50.9, however, he talks of the start towards them as *arduum*, while at Vit. 15.5 the path Virtue takes is full of dangers, though she teaches us to meet them willingly (*volens*); similarly *Ben*. 2.18.2, *Prov*. 5.9-10, Vit. 20.2. 

**muniam:** (OLD §6) perhaps of interest in terms of Seneca’s choice of metaphor is that one definition Zeno gave of a *technē* was a *hexis hodopoīētikē*, ‘a habit of roadbuilding’ (*SVF* 1.72, *Sparshott* 1978, 281-282). As wisdom was defined as a skill (Ep. 31.8 *ars* n) it is appropriate that Seneca as a student of her, should present himself as engaged in making mental pathways to her for himself and others. Roadbuilding was a noteworthy civic activity, one for which Tibullus, 1.7.57-62, chose to praise Messalla in preference to his military victories.

**Qui ... duces:** following the 1st p. statement of his attitude to philosophy, Seneca turns to characterizing the role of his predecessors. He does this with a relative clause describing what they did and then describes them as guides (*duces*) rather than masters (*domini*). In this he sums up one of the basic antitheses that has run through the letter, that of freedom versus subjugation to another (§4 *sub rege*, §7 *sub alio*, §8 *sub aliena umbra*). 

**moverunt:** (OLD §17, ‘set on foot, initiate’).

**Patet ... relictum est:** Seneca closes the letter with three short clauses on truth. They read as a challenge or an appeal to the reader to seek to uncover more truth (cf. Ep. 98.13). The *futuris* in the last clause makes this appeal broader, directing it to posterity, the later readership, who will be Seneca’s *futuri*. 

**omnibus:** as at Ep. 31.11 *Hic ... cadere* n., where he stressed that the perfected mind was not restricted to any social class, here he talks of truth being open to all. 

**veritas:** at Ep. 71.16 Seneca quotes Socrates for virtue and truth being the same, a view he endorsed. What is
noticeable is how infrequently he mentions truth compared to virtue (one measure is 2/3 of a page in Motto against nearly 4). The most frequent references to truth are when speaking of the language appropriate to those seeking it (Ep. 40.4 n.) and that it is not yet all discovered (§§10-11. n.). *occupata*: perhaps making a link by ring-composition to those at §1 not *circa flosculos occupati*. The word may also suggest a military metaphor (Ep. 31.8 *occupas* n.), appealing to the reader’s desire for the renown that accrues from such an achievement, a desire that contrasts with that of those at §8 who remain in obscurity.
Essay on Epistle 34

Seneca is tremendously excited at the start of Ep. 34: *cresco et exsulto et discussa senectute recalesco*. So excited, in fact, that he claims that Lucilius’ progress has rejuvenated him. That this progress has reached a new stage is stressed by each of the analogies Seneca with which chooses to express his joy. He is not terribly specific about the nature of the progress, beyond saying that his friend no longer needs to be urged on but is now moving under his own volition and, in fact, is in turn urging on Seneca. Such willingness, Seneca insists, is a big part of becoming good: *pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum* (§3). This one sentence has attracted much scholarship as evidence or otherwise for Senecan innovation in the theory of the will. To date, however, none of the scholarship has looked at how the sentence works in the entirety of the letter. In this essay such an analysis will show that if the sentence is to have any adequate force it must be seen as supporting Seneca’s voluntaristic take on philosophy.

Only Hengelbrock has much to say on this letter as a whole.471 Others make some note of it in relation to what Seneca writes on friendship.472 Otherwise, as mentioned, a small fragment of the letter has been used as evidence for Seneca’s voluntaristic philosophy. The most recent work on this is by Zöller, who summarizes the earlier scholarship.473

The focus of the first half of the letter is on Seneca’s feelings. He is elated, indeed rejuvenated, by what he perceives of Lucilius’ progress. One aspect of this focus is that it emphasizes the mutual nature of their progress. Just as Seneca tries to write what will benefit both of them (*Ep. 23.1*), so too does Lucilius’ progress benefit them both. It is one of the

471 HENGELBROCK 2000, 97–99. MAURACH 1975, 343–344, in his brief paragraph on this epistle seeks to establish that it stands in relationship to *Ep. 35* as a pair. HACHMANN 1995, 246, is also brief.

472 Below, p. 239.

paradoxical ways Seneca presents his friend’s progress that he should emphasize particularly its benefit to himself as well as present it as his own work: meum opus es (§2). The balancing of this picture, Lucilius’ reaction to his progress, is left to us as readers to imagine.

Each of the analogies Seneca uses in §1 to describe his joy relates to a stage being reached or a transformation occurring: a tree producing fruit and a flock offspring, a ward becoming a young man, and the tender minds of students becoming mature. It is the last of these that is presented as closest to Seneca’s situation. Such a transformation recalls the one Seneca described as having happened to himself in Ep. 6.1. Seneca’s use of analogies of natural growth or change is appropriate, as for a Stoic philosophical progress is something natural; it is following nature. And his emphasis in his analogies on the sense of transformation is another argument for Book IV marking the beginning of a new stage in Lucilius’ development.

The most specific Seneca is as to the nature of Lucilius’ newly achieved maturity is at §2:

\[
Ego cum vidisset in dolorem tuam, inieci manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed subinde incitavi; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem.
\]

Seneca uses forceful language to suggest that his urging of Lucilius had not been gentle. Such urging he had said at Ep. 23.1 was of benefit to both of them. Although he still continues to urge Lucilius on, there are now two changes in his friend: Lucilius is making progress under his own steam (iam currentem) and he is providing encouragement to Seneca (invicem hortantem). The importance of such motivation in relation to the will be explored shortly.

Although Seneca in the first half of this letter examines Lucilius’ progress from his own perspective, his hand in it and its benefit to him, the strength of the joy that he expresses can also be seen as motivating for Lucilius. Such motivation is what Seneca describes himself as having

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\text{For other elements of paradox see, §2 Adsero ... opus es n.}
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\text{HACHMANN 1995, 247-248.}
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\text{Below, p. 241.}
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\text{The concept of philosophy as a process of self-transformation is something emphasized by EDWARDS 1997, 29-31 (above, p. 119).}
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\[
\text{Below, p. 223.}
\]
been giving Lucilius (§2). Here it is positive; Seneca’s description of his joy is encouraging, as is his optimism at §4 in the prospect of Lucilius becoming a *vir bonus*. It contrasts with the previous letter, where he was highly critical of his friend’s desire to continue receiving excerpts. Such criticism is in line with his claim not to have been gentle in his urging (§2). Also in respect of the previous letter, Seneca now acknowledges that Lucilius is offering him encouragement; Lucilius is, one might say, speaking in his own voice as Seneca had required of him.479

The emphasis on Seneca’s relationship with his friend in this letter is continued in the next.480 The themes of friendship and constancy also link the letter to *Ep.* 36, where the progress of Lucilius’ friend is discussed. The shared focus of this group of letters contrasts with that of the preceding three (*Epp.* 31–33), in which self-sufficiency was particularly prominent. The goals of friendship and self-sufficiency in many respects are in opposition and in *Ep.* 9 Seneca discussed at length how they might be reconciled. In Book IV he does not attempt any such reconciliation, but rather urges self-sufficiency in the first triad, and in the second emphasizes friendship’s role in making mutual progress.

Seneca relates the importance of motivation to the will. Lucilius’ transformation that he celebrates in this letter is in becoming self-motivated (§2). He then imagines his friend as not being content with his progress to date, and wanting more: ‘*Quidni? Aliud inquis adhuc volo.*’ Such a desire, the desire for the good, Seneca says, is a big part of becoming good: *pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum.* The reason for this is that Seneca saw progress as a matter of changing one’s desires. One must free oneself of the desire for external things and learn to love virtue.481 This was not something that could be accomplished by learning a few syllogisms, as he stressed repeatedly.482 Rather one had to recruit all the mind’s powers to overcome these false

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479 Above, p. 182.
480 Below, p. 239.
481 Below, p. 241.
482 Above, p. 25.
Therefore, wanting, or the will, was central to progress and Seneca sought as many ways as possible to motivate the reader.

To see Seneca as attempting to strengthen the reader’s will, or to build up his willpower raises the question of whether Seneca had a sense that he was innovating on his Greek predecessors in emphasising the role of the will over reason in making progress. Or to go back a step further, one might ask whether Seneca had a sense of the will as a distinct mental faculty, one separate from reason. I have already set out my position on this and will not revisit it here. Inwood, however, does not see the will as especially prominent in §3 of this letter, saying:

Is there a traditional will at work here? Hardly, Seneca merely claims that desire for a given result is crucial, especially when the matter in hand is intrinsically mental.

Such an analysis makes Seneca’s point anticlimactic. Seneca is overjoyed at Lucilius’ progress. Lucilius has achieved something significant, which as I have argued is to become self-motivated. Yet Inwood does not consider this broader context and gives the impression in his analysis that Seneca is making it all seem easy: wanting is mental and once you want it you are almost there. This, however, elides the difficulty in achieving such wanting; shifting one’s desires that are strongly entwined by the passions to material objects and turning them towards the good is indeed mental, but is in no sense easy, and as I have already argued is not exclusively rational.

Inwood in his review of Zöller’s book takes issue with a number of ‘traditional assumptions’ regarding Seneca’s philosophy. One of these is:

Seneca as a Roman writer is to be understood through a filter of Roman cultural assumptions which invite a number of polar contrasts with Greek philosophical approaches and that his Roman-ness is the key to his innovation in moral psychology.

Inwood is cautious of denying such an approach outright, but in describing such an approach as

\[483\] Above, p. 21.

\[484\] Below, p. 243.

\[485\] Above, p. 27.

\[486\] INWOOD 2005a, 138.

\[487\] INWOOD 2005b.

\[488\] INWOOD 2005b, 724.
both ‘traditional’ and an ‘assumption’ he is attempting to suggest it is somehow uncritical, and now surpassed.\textsuperscript{489} However, it is possible to see in the approach of Inwood, and many other scholars like him, a desire to keep Seneca within a Hellenocentric philosophical context. Inwood differs from many in his sympathy for Seneca and his desire to show that he is in fact a genuine philosopher.\textsuperscript{490} However, it is revealing, perhaps, of the prejudices of the audience that Inwood is primarily addressing that Seneca’s philosophical credentials are best proven by minimizing his Romanness. An approach that emphasizes this quality in Seneca’s writing perhaps risks being dismissed as literary rather than philosophical. Nevertheless, I have not adopted the importance of Seneca’s Romanness uncritically, but have already argued for its validity.\textsuperscript{491}

Inwood is also reluctant to see Seneca as opposing his own school.\textsuperscript{492} However, as I have already argued, in his opposition to logic Seneca can be seen as both opposing members of his school and innovating.\textsuperscript{493} Furthermore, this innovation is importantly related to a contrast in character in which Seneca opposes Roman \textit{gravitas} and \textit{constantia} to a Greek \textit{subtilitas} that shows itself in a fondness for syllogisms.\textsuperscript{494} And this contrast adds weight to distinction that has been made by a number of authors between a Senecan voluntaristic philosophy and a Greek intellectualistic one.\textsuperscript{495} Therefore, it is not appropriate to dismiss this contrast as some sort of unreflective xenophobia.\textsuperscript{496}

\textsuperscript{489} INWOOD 2005b, 724, qualifies himself by saying that while none of these assumptions are manifestly wrong, they are not manifestly correct.

\textsuperscript{490} As he says in the introduction to his collection of essays (INWOOD 2005a, 5).

\textsuperscript{491} In ch. 1, above. The other assumptions that INWOOD 2005b, 724, questions, with good reason, are that a complex theory underlies Seneca’s prose works which can be reconstructed from parts of the corpus, and the importance of Posidonius on the Roman tradition through Cicero.

\textsuperscript{492} INWOOD 2005b, 725. So too at 2005a, 143, n. 35 (discussed above, p. 18, n. 95).

\textsuperscript{493} Above, p. 21. INWOOD 2007b, 140, does not endorse Barnes’ view on Seneca and logic, but he tries to see Seneca as avoiding the subject as inappropriate to the genre (along with physics). Yet Seneca does not reject physics, or even ignore it in the \textit{Epistles}, and Inwood’s attempt to link physics to logic so as to defuse the criticism of logic is disingenuous.

\textsuperscript{494} Below, p. 368 and Ep. 35.4 \textit{Quid ergo ... ne commovetur quidem n.}

\textsuperscript{495} Above, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{496} As INWOOD 2005a, 18, does, and again at INWOOD 2005a, 92, n. 68.
Seneca closes the letter with an emphasis on the need for consistency, in particularly with one’s words and deeds (§4). It is described as the requirement for Lucilius to become a good man. The importance of such consistency is returned to at the end of the next letter, where its link to progress is again stressed.497

Seneca is excited that his friend has gone beyond needing to be motivated to progress; he now makes progress willingly. This, says Seneca, is very important, as the desire to be good is a large part of becoming good. Such a claim is either rather bland and deflates the momentum of the letter, or it states clearly Seneca’s belief that the will was vital in making philosophical progress. Such a claim still meets with resistance from some, mainly English-speaking, scholars. Yet it is this emphasis on the will that provides Seneca with much of the Roman cast of his philosophy.

497 See further below, p. 240.
Division:

- B (§§3-4): Lucilius needs constancy to become a good man.

Section A (§§1-2). The first half of the epistle focuses on Seneca and his feelings about Lucilius’ progress, which he relates in an excited tone.

§1. Cresco et exulto et discussa senectute recalesco quotiens ex iis quae agis ac scribis intellego quantum te ipse — nam turbam olim reliqueras — superieceris. Si agricolam arbor ad fructum perducta delectat, si pastor ex fetu gregis sui capit voluptatem, si alumnum suum nemo aliter intuetur quam ut adulescentiam illius suam iudicet, quid evenire credis iis qui ingenia educaverunt et quae tenera formaverunt adulta subito vident?

§1. This section has two parts, an opening section that provides the epistolary context and an extended analogy that describes Seneca’s mood. Epistolarity is prominent in the first part: Seneca describes his joy on learning of his friend’s progress. Although Seneca is specific that this is a regular reaction (quotiens), his language gives a sense of his excitement at receiving a specific letter. Furthermore such a topic is natural for a letter and emphasizes the basis of friendship that underlies the correspondence: pleasure in a friend’s success is natural, as is reporting it in a letter. A similar tone of excitement and joy occurs in Ep. 19.1. The long second sentence slows the pace down and in the analogy Seneca seems to savour, with a string of images, his pleasure in his friend’s progress.

Cresco … recalesco: these verbs open the letter, and by coming first Seneca gives prominence to his mood over its cause, Lucilius’ progress. The heightened rhetorical intensity is indicated by a characteristic tricolon crescens (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’ … malus?’ n.). The imagery of the language is picked up in the analogy that follows. Cresco: (OLD §3c, ‘swell with pride’) the idea
of growth suggested here is picked up in the following agricultural imagery. **exulto:** (*OLD* §3) also used in *Ep.* 19.1. The verb is often used in a negative sense (*e.g.* *Ira* 2.21.5), which suggests the strength of Seneca’s feelings. **discussa senectute:** this image of becoming young through a student’s progress is suggested also in *adulescentiam* below and in *Ep.* 35.2, though there in the context of friendship. **recalesco:** Seneca is revivified by the letter, literally rewarmed. The association of old age with a cooling of the body is common (*e.g.* *Juv.*, 6.325 *iam frigidus aevo*; *Parkin* 2003, 251), and Seneca imagines himself being rewarmed by the spark of youth.

**quotiens ... superieceris:** Seneca insists that this is a regular event by the use of *quotiens.* Lucilius’ progress is presented as a paradox: he has surpassed himself, an image Seneca had already used at *Ep.* 15.10: *cogita quam multos antecesseris. Quid tibi cum ceteris? te ipse antecessisti.* The self-transformation that this suggests is returned to in the imagery of §2. **agis ac scribis:** Seneca rejoices in what he reads Lucilius to have written (*scribis*) and to have done (*agis*), reported presumably by both Lucilius and others (*e.g.* *Ep.* 32.1). This pairing of words, here in the form of writing and actions, is found again at the end of the letter (*§4: facta dictaque*). **turbam:** this mention of the crowd can relate to *Ep.* 32.2; Seneca is perhaps indicating that Lucilius is indeed not keeping bad company. This is the first unqualified use of this noun in Book IV; earlier uses are either qualified (*Epp.* 31.10 and 32.2 nn.) or do not refer to humans (*Ep.* 33.4 and 33.6). The crowd was one pole of a fundamental antithesis in Seneca’s philosophy (above, p. 10) and Lucilius had been warned against the dangers of associating with it at *Epp.* 7.1 and 8.1.

**superieceris:** (*OLD* §3b) in contrast to *antecedere* of *Ep.* 15.10, this suggests surmounting rather than just surpassing some obstacle.

**Si agricolam ... vident?:** a tricolon of subordinate clauses maintains its parallelism with the anaphora of the conjunction *si.* To each image, including the final one of the main clause, there is a consistent contrast between the agent and the object of his concern. Furthermore it is the reaction of this agent that is described. The implication is that Seneca experiences these feelings too. The images proceed from the vegetable kingdom through the animal to that of humans, where there is also a transition from pre-rational children to adults. Such an ordering fits with the idea of a scale of creation (*scala naturae*), cf. *L-S* 47Q and *Inwood* 1985, 19 ff. A similar progression is made in the images of §2 n.
Si agricolam ... delectat: the image emphasizes the delight of the farmer (delectat) and that this is caused by a tree brought to fruition. Armisen-Marchetti, 149-150 and 235, lists other uses of agricultural imagery in Seneca, particularly that of the bonus cultor (Ep. 38.2 Seminis modo spargenda sunt n.). It also has Platonic allusions (Knoche 1954, 161). fructum: when the analogy is turned around to the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius, there is a suggestion of having reached a definite stage, rather than making general progress. perducta: (OLD §4) a regular agricultural idiom (Col. Arb. 2.1). The construction, implying but not stating the farmer’s agency, emphasizes that the process is mutual — it is the tree that does the growing, though the farmer’s help is instrumental.

si pastor ... voluptatem: as with the farmer, the shepherd experiences joy, and as with the tree’s fruit, the joy is for something tangible, an offspring from the flock. Armisen-Marchetti, 84, gives only one other use of the shepherd at Ben. 6.12.2. fetu: (OLD §3) as with fructum above, this suggests Lucilius has achieved a particular, though unspecified, milestone. voluptatem: Ep. 31.2 voluptate n. this is an example of the occasional use of this term to denote an acceptable form of pleasure (Borgo, 203).

si alumnum ... iudicet: the image shifts from joy to rejuvenation (from cresco and exulto to recalesco) and the action is universalized (nemo aliter ... quam): everyone views the youth of their foster-sons as their own (suam). alumnum: this word can be used to describe the pupils of philosophers or orators (OLD §4), but here it must be meant in its more general sense of foster-son. It is significant that Seneca has not chosen to apply this analogy to the father-son relationship; as with the farmer and the shepherd the relationship is not biological. adulescentiam: Seneca picks up the image of having his youth restored in discussa senectute. iudicet: in contrast to the joy and pleasure of the farmer and shepherd the foster-parent is presented as making a judgement.

quid evenire ... vident?: the construction implies that the reaction of the generalized iis will surpass those of all the previous analogies. It is also implied that the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius most closely matches this one. credis: Lucilius is invited to judge (as at Ep. 30.9). ingenia: (OLD §1) Ep. 33.5 n. The sense here (as with indolem below) is of one’s natural disposition that has been formed and improved through education (Bellincioni 1979, 162-163, on Ep. 94.30 and Scarpat 1975, 258, on Ep. 11.1). formaverunt: (OLD §4) the minds of the young are tender and easy.
to form (Ep. 25.1, Laudizi 2003, 161). Such shaping of the mind was a central metaphor for Seneca’s concept of philosophy (above, p. 119). **adulta:** this maturity continues the suggestion of a new stage of development in the earlier analogies. **subito:** the achievement of maturity, Seneca suggests, is something sudden, like birth, that follows the largely hidden period of gestation. In a similar way the transfiguration Seneca describes at *Ep.* 6.1 suggests a sudden change, or a change that one becomes aware of suddenly.

§2. Adsero te mihi; meum opus es. Ego cum vidissem indolem tuam, inieci manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed subinde incitavi; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem.

§2. The previous long rhetorical question in the 3rd person is followed by two short firm assertions in the 1st person. What were presented as analogies in the earlier sentence is made concrete in a startling claim that turns Lucilius into an object of Seneca’s own creation (*opus*). Seneca describes what he has done for Lucilius in images that follow a progression on the *scala naturae* and make Lucilius first a creation, like a statue (*opus*), a horse (*stimulos*), and finally a human and an equal to Seneca in offering him encouragement. This movement suggests a process of self-transformation by Lucilius, one guided by Seneca, but also one having reached a particular point, a point at which Lucilius is presented as Seneca’s equal. Such a point appears to relate closely to the subject of the previous letter: in giving encouragement Lucilius is no longer Seneca’s pupil, but his colleague.

**Adsero ... opus es:** Seneca makes a jarring shift from analogies to direct claims that make Lucilius his slave (*Adsero* n.), or creative work (*opus*). Rather than see such claims as belittling Lucilius, it seems better to see them as capturing Seneca’s excitement. They are intended more to reveal how Seneca is feeling than what he thinks of his friend. Such an interpretation is supported by noting that as at the letter’s start Seneca uses the 1st p. and the present tense. There is an element of paradox to Seneca’s claims: he is celebrating that Lucilius is in a state that in the previous letter he had railed against him to leave. There is also something ironic to the claims, as Seneca goes on to describe Lucilius in terms that suggest that he has matured to a point beyond such subordination — at the point he makes such a claim it is no longer true! Also the implication is not on Lucilius being Seneca’s possession, but rather his creation. **Adsero:** (OLD, assero §1) this is a term used in Roman law in relation to claiming somebody as free or slave. It is very similar in force to *manum inicere* in the next sentence. **opus:** (OLD §9) Armisen-Marchetti, 79, suggest that this
is an image of sculpting. The emphasis here is on Lucilius being a creation by Seneca, rather than an object; in this sense he is similar to the *opus* described at *Ep.* 33.5. Seneca compares the *sapiens* at *Ep.* 9.5 to the sculptor Phidias, calling him *a faciendarum amicitiarum artifex* (cf. BARTSCH 2009, 210). He then goes on to draw an analogy between the pleasure of making and having friends and the pleasure of an artist working on a painting and finishing it. As in this letter there also he uses an agricultural analogy. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.19.29-31, describes his relation to his pupils as that of a craftsman to his work, though less baldly.

*Ego cum vissem ... incitavi:* Seneca now looks back in time to describe the process that brought Lucilius to this state. The analogy he uses is one of his most frequent, that of the journey (*Ep.* 31.1 *Sequere illum ... ibas* n.). Seneca first noted his friend’s talent, claimed him as his own, exhorted him, used goads and did not allow him go slowly, but urged him to greater speed. Seneca seems to want to stress that he has not been gentle in the training he has given his friend. Beyond suggesting being on a journey, the imagery fits with that of Lucilius as a horse being ridden. This looking back can be seen as a characterization of the *Epistles* themselves. The first three books involved Seneca urging his reader on, but there is a change in Book IV, as Seneca suggests in the next clause, where Lucilius is more actively reciprocating by providing encouragement in turn to Seneca. *Indolem:* *(OLD §1)* §1 *ingenia* n. *inieci manum:* *(OLD, manus* 1 §15b or *inicio* §6b) a term from Roman law used to assert a property right to a person or thing. ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 107, cites Seneca’s other uses of the idiom. *Exhortatus sum:* below *hortor* n. *stimulos:* ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 91-92. As with a horse, the goads prevent Lucilius from going slowly (*lente ire*). *Subinde:* *Ep.* 32.2 n. *incitavi:* *(OLD §1)* fitting with the image of goads, the basic meaning is to urge to greater speed, often of a horse (below, *currentem* n.).

*Et nunc ... hortantem:* Seneca uses a proverb that picks up the *incitavi* of the previous sentence. He says he is still urging Lucilius on, but now he is whipping on a running horse. That Lucilius is now running picks up the implication of change contained in the analogies of §1. Such a change relates to the idea that the approach to philosophy is difficult, and students often need to be compelled to start (e.g. *Ep.* 50.9; cf. *Ep.* 33.11 *propiore planiore* n.). Clearly Lucilius is now past such a stage. But Seneca does not stop with Lucilius now moving under his own steam, but adds that he is in fact urging on Seneca too. The potential mutuality of their progress was something Seneca stressed as far back as *Ep.* 6.6: *Nec in hoc te accerso tantum, ut proficias, sed ut*
prosis; plurimum enim alteri conferemus. It also shows Lucilius doing what Seneca expected of him in Ep. 33 (above, p. 182). currentem: (OLD §1c) Tosi, §480, lists the numerous occurrences of the phrase currentem with incitare or similar verbs. Its base sense of urging on a willing horse is seen in a number of occurrences in the younger Pliny (Epp. 1.8.1 and 3.7.15 with the reference to calcaria and stimuli). In Greek a similar idiom, which was also proverbial, occurs at Hom. ll. 8.293, ὀπεύδοντα ... ὀτρύνεις. In the context of the previous sentence (esp. stimuli) it seems clear that it is neither Homer nor, as Cagniart 2000a, 165, suggests, a foot race (cf. Ep. 31.1 ‘tanto melior ... exsuperā’ n.) that Seneca has in mind but the original sense of the proverb. Cagniart’s reading of Seneca as a spectator also makes no sense of the et invicem hortantem. hortor: both here and in the previous exhortatus sum Seneca portrays himself as exhorting his friend. However, already at Ep. 13.15 Seneca closes a letter by suggesting that Lucilius only needs reminding not exhorting (Nimium diu te cohoritor, cum tibi admonitione magis quam exhortatione opus sit). So too at Ep. 47.21 (non est enim tibi exhortatione opus), where he admits indirectly in closing that the letter was not really for Lucilius but other readers! Encouragement is a big part of Ep. 34 (above, p. 222) and might at first sight seem to support the interpretation of Habinek 1992, 188-189 (= 1998, 138-139), that the mode of the Epistles is primarily hortatory, yet as mentioned (above, p. 117) such a characterization of the work is fundamentally selective and unsound.

Section B (§§3-4). The second half of the letter opens with an interjection from Lucilius. The tone changes and becomes somewhat more didactic, as Seneca moves from describing his pleasure in Lucilius’ progress to outlining what lies ahead.

§3. ‘Quidni? Aliud’ inquis ‘adhuc volo.’ In hoc plurimum est, non sic quomodo principia totius operis dimidium occupare dicuntur. Ista res animo constat; itaque pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum. Scis quem bonum dicam? perfectum, absolutum, quem malum facere nulla vis, nulla necessitas possit.

§3. Lucilius’ interjection marks a change in the letter. Despite a measure of textual uncertainty here, it seems clear that Seneca portrays his friend as questioning the extent of his progress: might not the enthusiasm be overdone? Lucilius has a good way to go, which Seneca presents as Lucilius wanting more. The response Seneca gives to this has been dragged into the debate about his voluntarism or otherwise (above, p. 224). Regardless, Seneca stresses that such wanting is important; a large part, in fact, of goodness lies therein. Seneca then describes the good man in terms of constancy.
‘Quidni? Aliud ... volo.’: the device of interjecting Lucilius response to Seneca’s enthusiastic reaction to Lucilius’ letter allows a change in direction and tone. The focus moves from Seneca and his feelings to Lucilius and what remains to be done. That Lucilius wants more fits with the previous analogy of spurring on a willing horse. He no longer needs to be pushed to make progress. The emendation of this passage has attracted a number of proposals. The interjection has to fit with Seneca’s response. It has to have something for the *In hoc* to refer to. A few let the manuscript stand (*Quid aliud?*, e.g. HENGELBROCK 2000, 98, n. 21 and INWOOD 2005a, 138). However, such a phrase is without parallel in Seneca. The emendation of AXELSON 1939, 172-173 (*Quid <illud>*), has been widely followed (e.g. REYNOLDS, 96 and PRÉCHAC, 148). However, this phrase too is without any direct parallel in Seneca, as AXELSON 1939, 173, confesses. SHACKLETON-BAILEY 1970, 351, suggests either *Quid <enim>*? or *<Quidni?>*. Both have parallels, of which there are more for *Quidni?*, which is also shorter. This emendation allows *aliud* to remain as the object of *volo*: Lucilius is not content with his state and wants more. For these reasons I have followed this emendation. **Aliud**: (OLD *alius*^2^ §6). **volo**: this word, along with its reflex, *voluntas* (*Ep*. 36.4 *voluntate* n.), has received much attention in the debate about the possible voluntaristic innovation in Latin philosophy. DIHLE 1982, 132-144, gives a good summary of the difference in meaning, the ‘voluntaristic’ sense, that *velle* and *voluntas* have that is not found in the Greek *boulomai* and *boulēsis*. Whereas *boulomai* cannot idiomatically be used with adverbs of intensity, *velle* can (cf. Cic. Att. 14.1.2, ‘vale volet’). Cicero used *voluntas* to translate the Stoic term *boulēsis*, which was one of the positive emotional states possessed by the sage (DIHLE 1982, 133 and LISCU 1930, 199). It is often assumed that Seneca follows Cicero in this (e.g. HACHMANN 1995 294 ff.); however, Seneca only ever refers to these states indirectly and it is dangerous to assume that the technical Stoic concept of *boulēsis* lies behind his use of *voluntas*, let alone *velle*.

*In hoc plurimum est*: in his reply to Lucilius’ interjection, Seneca seems to come back down to earth. Yet he stays very optimistic. The *hoc* refers to Lucilius’ desire for more, which Seneca argues is of the greatest importance (*plurimum*). He goes on to argue that because the task at hand is mental it is more self-contained than other tasks, making wanting to be good a big part of goodness.

*non sic ... dicuntur*: in what sense is Lucilius’ wanting not like ‘well begun is half done’? Seneca adds by way of explanation that it is mental, which is taken to mean that it therefore does
not depend on any external things for its accomplishment. HENGELBROCK 2000, 98, makes sense of this contrast by saying that the will is not simply part of the preparation, but actually part of the end result. Such an interpretation would square with Seneca’s definition of wisdom at Ep. 20.5 (below, p. 240). principia ... dimidium occupare: Tosi, §802. The Greek form, Ἀρχὴ ἡμίου παντός, is found in many Greek authors (e.g. Pl. Leg. 6.753e). Horace’s rendition of it, dimidium facti, qui coepit, habet (Ep. 1.2.40), has had an enduring influence on the proverb’s form in later Latin. principia: (OLD §5). occupare: (OLD §7b).

Ista res animo constat: Seneca offers this by way of explanation of the previous contrast. That nothing beyond the mind is needed for moral improvement Seneca illustrates clearly again at Ep. 80.3-4, where in contrast to physical training he says: tibi continget virtus sine apparatu, sine inpensa. Quidquid facere te potest bonum tecum est. Quid tibi opus est ut sis bonus? velle. Ista res: this refers to Lucilius’s desire for philosophical progress (ista has 2nd p. force, ‘that of yours’, G-L, §306). animo: HENGELBROCK 2000, 157, suggests that Seneca emphasizes here the rational element in progress. However, the animus refers to more mental activities than simply rational ones (above, p. 21), and what we might refer to as willpower could equally be intended.

itaque pars magna ... bonum: Seneca offers this as a consequence of progress being mental (itaque). The mental quality that he focuses on is desire (velle), which picks up Lucilius’ volo. As noted (above, p. 22), Seneca’s focus on having the proper desires is consonant with his practical concept of philosophy. That he felt that the strength of one’s desire was important is shown by his going on to make Lucilius’ progress conditional on effort (§4 si perseveraveris ... id egeris n.). It is also seen in a passage that follows this idiom closely (Ep. 71.36):

Instemus itaque et perseveremus; plus quam profligavimus restat, sed magna pars est profectus velle proficere. Huius rei conscius mihi sum: volo et mente tota volo.

The idiom is almost identical except that profectus ... proficere is used for bonitatis ... fieri bonum. As here, this is set in a context of striving (Instemus ... perseveremus). In addition Seneca talks of wanting mente tota; casual desire is not enough. The construction occurs for a third time in Phaed. 249 in the nurse’s plea to Phaedra to check her mad love: pars sanitatis velle sanari fuit. The same polyptoton is used (sanitatis ... sanari) with a different word. bonitas: in Ep. 31 (§§5 and 11) Seneca made clear to the reader that true goodness is synonymous with virtue (§5) and is mental (§11). The use of the term here provides a lead in to the definition of the vir bonus that follows.
Commentary on Epistle 34

Scis quem bonum dicam?: taking the opportunity the mention of goodness in the previous sentence provided and building on Ep. 31, where what was good was discussed (§§4 and 6, quid ... est bonum?), Seneca now asks who is good. Such a question refers to the vir bonus, who though syncretically the same in Stoic thought as the sapiens (Ep. 31.2 n.), was a term with deeper roots in the Roman value system (Ep. 37.1 n).

perfectum ... possit: Seneca defines the good man firstly by two adjectives that denote perfection and then specifies what the essential quality of this perfect state is. It is steadfastness (above, p. 14), a resilience to any external force that would make one do evil. Seneca adds weight to the point he makes here with repetition, using two synonymous adjectives and two closely synonymous terms for force (vis ... necessitas). perfectum: as a term derived from facio the choice of this word reflects perhaps Seneca’s emphasis on self-transformation being a sort of ‘making’ (above, p. 119). absolutum: essentially synonymous with perfectum, but the two are not infrequently used together; e.g. Cic. Fin. 4.37: qui sapientes sunt, absolutos et perfectos putamus.

malum facere: Seneca offers an essentially negative definition of the good man, describing what he does not do rather than what he does do. vis: as a term that ranges from ‘brute human strength to constrain’ (OLD §1) to ‘divine influence’ (OLD §12), suggesting the power of Fortune, this term is particularly apposite here. necessitas: like vis this can range from the constraint of merely external circumstances (OLD §3) to constraint by what is inherent in the nature of things (OLD §2); cf. Ep. 30.11. At Ep. 32.5 Seneca talks of someone having passed beyond the influence of necessitates, appropriate to the image of having reached a place of refuge in that letter. Here no such contextual image is provided, yet the focus on no force being able to influence the good man suggests an image of his resistance to these unspecified powers, human or otherwise. How necessity can be escaped is something Seneca explained at Ep. 12.10; he quotes Epicurus, ‘Malum est in necessitate vivere, sed in necessitate vivere necessitas nulla est’ and goes on, Quidni nulla sit? patent undique ad libertatem viae multae, breves faciles. Agamus deo gratias quod nemo in vita teneri potest: calcare ipsas necessitates licet. He refers, of course, to suicide (above, p. 65 and also SCARPAT 1975, 302-303 and GRIMAL 1978, 231).

§4. Hunc te prospicio, si perseveraveris et incubueris et id egeris ut omnia facta dictaque tua inter se congruant ac respondeant sibi et una forma percussa sint. Non est huius animus in recto cuius acta discordant. Vale.
§4. Seneca brings the letter to a close with encouragement for his friend. He sees Lucilius becoming a good man. However, reaching this goal depends on perseverance and effort. And such effort must be directed towards achieving a coherence of one’s words and deeds. Seneca describes the internal state one must achieve to be invulnerable to external forces. The logic of this is that such external forces only have power inasmuch as they are able to exploit weaknesses in one’s mind, which were seen as the passions (Ep. 37.4 n.). The letter finishes as it started with rhetorically forceful language, having two sets of tricola in the penultimate sentence.

Hunc te prospicio: Seneca relates the general concept of the good man directly to his friend. The vision of his friend as a *vir bonus* is something he sees in the future and is held out as an incentive to keep persevering in philosophical progress. *prospicio*: Solimano 1991, 115.

*si perseveraveris ... id egeris*: Lucilius’ becoming a *vir bonus* is conditional on effort. Seneca underlines this with a tricolon of verbs that all emphasize striving and perseverance. *perseveraveris*: perseverance is frequently emphasized by Seneca as necessary for moral progress (e.g. Ep. 16.1 and 27.4). *incubueris*: (OLD §6). Also at Ep. 31.4. *egeris*: Ep. 30.5 *id agit sedulo* n.

*ut omnia ... percussa sint*: Seneca demands that Lucilius’ efforts be directed towards bringing about a consistency in his words and deeds. He underlines the importance of this with another tricolon *crescens* (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’ ... *malus?’ n.). Achieving such coherence is one of Seneca’s fundamental demands (above, p. 16), and had been drummed into his reader repeatedly in earlier books. Whereas earlier the emphasis was often on making one’s deeds match one’s words (below, *facta dictaque* n.), here the verb that introduced this thought, *prospicio*, refers to a future span of time and requires the reader’s words and actions to be consistent with each other over that time. This is a requirement that is picked up at the end of the next letter too (below, p. 243). The importance to Seneca of consistency over time is one remarked on by Long 2006, 371-374. In an earlier letter, Seneca had insisted that such concordance must be achieved in all areas of one’s life (Ep. 20.3), adding later in that letter that it is such an agreement that makes Demetrius *non praeceptor veri sed testis* (Ep. 20.9; cf. *Epp*. 20.1 and 24.15). It is, therefore, a requirement familiar to the reader, one that can be alluded to rather than explained. The fundamental importance of this consistency to Stoic ethics is explained at Ep. 74.30: *Virtus enim convenientia constat: omnia opera eius cum ipsa concordant et congraunt* (cf. Ep. 31.8 *aequalitas ... consonans sibi* n.). Although clearly Stoic concordance lies behind this idea, would the Roman
reader need to know of this to make sense of this image? After all, it makes as much sense to see this as requiring the reader to display the thoroughly Roman concept of *fides*, which required *constantia* (above, p. 15), another example of Seneca creating a Roman philosophy. *facta dictaque*: whereas these two are more usually opposed (e.g. *Ep*. 20.1 and *Ep*. 40.14 *a rebus ... ad verba n.*), here they are put alongside each other suggesting that one’s words should agree both with one’s deeds and with themselves and vice versa. *congruant*: (*OLD* §2b) one of the terms also used by Cicero for *homologia* (*FISCHER* 1914, 40). *respondeant*: (*OLD* §12). *forma*: (*OLD* §14). *percussa sint*: (*OLD* §5) in alluding to the stamping of coins Seneca makes reference to an activity of mass production that had probably the highest level of consistency from one item to the next that could be found in the ancient world.

*Non est huius ... discordant*: Seneca brings the letter to an abrupt close, leaving the reader to think through alone the ramifications of this final demand. *animus*: as with *Epp*. 31 and 32 Seneca closes this letter with the focus on the *animus*. *in*: (*OLD* §38 + abl. neut. s. of an adj. forming a predicative phrase). *recto*: such right alignment was an essential quality of the perfected soul (*Ep*. 31.11 *rectus n.*). *acta*: as with *facta dictaque* in the previous sentence, Seneca does not oppose words to deeds, but demands they all accord with each other, as he had demanded at *Ep*. 20.3. *discordant*: as the opposite of *concordare*, Seneca used this verb to denote the absence of consistency (*FISCHER* 1914, 42).
Essay on Epistle 35

Each of the first six letters of Book IV emphasizes in some way the idea that Lucilius has reached a new stage in his progress. Such emphasis is particularly prominent in the pair Epp. 34 and 35, where Seneca links Lucilius’ progress to their relationship and to a need for a consistency that is related to constancy. Seneca assumes in the reader an understanding of friendship as discussed in previous letters. In what follows I will explore the nature of the connection Seneca saw between friendship, progress and a constancy of one’s desires.

The most detailed scholarship to date on this letter is a short chapter by Hengelbrock on Epp. 34 and 35 in relationship to the themes of friendship and progress. Hachmann’s treatment of the letter is also quite full, focusing on its relationship to Ep. 6. Otherwise, there are a number of studies on Seneca and friendship, some of which make reference to this letter.

Seneca’s essential argument in this letter is the paradox that Lucilius should hurry to become a friend for friendship’s sake. That Lucilius is not yet Seneca’s friend is consistent with a Stoic paradox that only a sage is a friend. Seneca quotes this paradox later in the collection. The reader, however, need not know it to understand the claim being made. In earlier letters Seneca had discussed friendship and at Ep. 6.3 described a true form of it (vera amicitia) as: animos in societatem honesta cupiendi par voluntas trahit. Such friendship requires that both friends be

498 HENGELBROCK 2000, 96-102.
499 HACHMANN 1995, 246-249; similar ideas are found also in HACHMANN 1997, 139-141. MAURACH 1975, 344-345, is very brief.
502 Quoted at Ep. 81.12: solus sapiens scit amare, solus sapiens amicus est. See also Ben. 2.21.2 and 7.12.2.
attracted to honourable things (*honesta*). This a crucial requirement, which explains why Seneca in the last half of *Ep*. 35 should stress the need for constancy of the will to achieve true friendship. Unless one’s will is constantly directed toward the honourable it cannot always be in accord with one’s friend (the *par voluntas* of *Ep*. 6.3 above). Seneca explains this indirectly at *Ep*. 20.5 where he reworks a proverb on friendship:

\[ \textit{quid est sapientia? semper idem velle atque idem nolle. Licet illam exceptiunculam non adicias, ut rectum sit quod velis; non potest enim cuiquam idem semper placere nisi rectum.} \]

Only what is right or honourable can be consistently and constantly desired by any individual. By contrast, what the rest of us desire, as he goes on to say (§6), is hopelessly variable and inconstant; and a change in circumstances will reveal what Lucilius’ false friends truly desire: not him but his wealth (§7). Wisdom, therefore, for Seneca rests on a constancy of desires, or of the will.\(^{503}\) And inasmuch as he had adapted a proverb on friendship to claim this, he had hinted that true friendship rests on this constancy too.\(^{504}\) In *Ep*. 35.4 he makes that dependence explicit. The precondition of true friendship is self-perfection. At *Ep*. 6.7 he called this becoming a friend to oneself, which in turn allows one to become a friend to all.\(^{505}\)

In *Ep*. 35.1 Seneca distinguishes friendship from love. He treats friendship as only properly applied to true friendship, while love is a broader category that includes such friendship but also unhealthy manifestations (*amor aliquando etiam nocet*).\(^{506}\) Seneca, however, seems to have seen a use for Lucilius’ love for him. He is counting on it here to motivate his friend to greater effort in self-improvement.\(^{507}\) But the role of love and friendship in philosophical progress goes beyond their use to motivate, and this larger role explains why in relation to the theme of progress Seneca should emphasize his relationship with his friend so much in this letter and the previous one.

\(^{503}\) Above, p. 22.

\(^{504}\) Tosi, §1310.

\(^{505}\) *Ep*. 34.4 *Propera ... ad te prius n.*

\(^{506}\) Such as the ability of love to turn to anger, which Seneca noted at *Ep*. 18.15.

\(^{507}\) Below, p. 243.
Philosophical progress for Seneca had a strong affective element. It involved coming to love virtue. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than at Ep. 95.35. Those wanting to live the happy life must have a love for virtue like that of soldiers for their standards: Huius [sc. virtutis] quadam superstitione teneantur, hanc ament; cum hac vivere velint, sine hac nolint.508 Such an idea can be related to the Stoic theory of oikeiōsis. It involves recognizing that virtue is what is truly one’s own and valuing it above all else.509 However, descriptions of oikeiōsis are frequently bloodless and technical. In favouring amor when describing the concept Seneca gets closer to the reality of what is involved.510 One must realign one’s desires to salutary objects, from worldly objects to virtue.

Loving virtue was a goal that Seneca approached from a number of directions. One part was recognizing that it dwelt in one’s mind, was one’s own in some sense. This was introduced to Lucilius in Ep. 31. As a concept such recognition is perhaps somewhat abstract and on its own unlikely to generate strong feelings. However, one’s mind was only a part of the greater whole that was Stoic virtue, which was synonymous with god.511 Such an understanding had a religious dimension, which Seneca drew upon to engage the reader’s religious sensibilities in loving virtue, notably in Ep. 41. A particularly concrete way of loving virtue is to love its manifestations in others. This, surely, is an aspect of what attracted Seneca to exempla. And certainly it is a large part of the reason for friendship being such an important ingredient in Lucilius’ progress.

If oikeiōsis is the process of identifying with virtue, loving it, this process can be done by coming to love the virtue of a friend. Seneca alludes to this idea in Ep. 35 when he says that the greatest joy in being with a friend is in seeing him how you would like, which is to say embodying virtue.512 In addition, as Seneca presents it here, one has the same goal in philosophical progress

508 For other examples of this appeal see above, p. 26.

509 Above, p. 111.

510 FISCHER 1914, 70 and ARMISEN-MARCHETTI 1996, 81. In that the Stoics allowed an important place for erōs in their theory (SCHOFIELD 1999, 29), he is perhaps not unorthodox in this. However, what is perhaps elided by making such an observation is the distinctly impassioned manner of Seneca’s writing; Seneca writes to provoke the reader’s emotions (above, p. 25). While earlier Stoics might have allowed a place for erōs in their theory, Seneca very clearly gave a place to amor in his practice.

511 Above, p. 21.

512 Ep. 35.3 n.
as in seeking to acquire a true friend, as one can only become a true friend when one has perfected oneself. However, beyond working on oneself for the sake of a friend, the mutuality of philosophical progress in friendship had another advantage, which is that in seeking to improve one’s friend one was making philosophy practical, one was doing the actio that had to accompany contemplatio.\(^{513}\)

To show how the abstract Stoic theory of oikeiōsis can be related to the specific friendship of Seneca and Lucilius is to note only one aspect of friendship in Seneca’s writing. Its importance to the nature of the Epistles has already been mentioned.\(^{514}\) Moreover, as a topic it was one common to all the philosophical schools, and perhaps just as importantly for Seneca in seeking to write to a Roman audience and to appeal as much as possible to a common sense morality, amicitia was not simply, or even primarily, a philosophical idea, but was also an important Roman social ideal.\(^{515}\) It is a reflection of Seneca’s pessimism about the society of his time that he should argue that the friends that his reader had acquired through his public life were not to be regarded as genuine.\(^{516}\) Public life was a great hindrance to the finding and cultivating of genuine friends. By contrast, Cicero saw no such conflict.\(^{517}\)

Although this letter has its main themes of progress, constancy and friendship in common with the previous one, Seneca’s approach and tone in them contrast markedly. In both, however, Seneca describes Lucilius’ progress almost entirely from his own perspective. In Ep. 34.1-2 Seneca describes how he feels at seeing his friend’s progress and in Ep. 35.1 Lucilius is urged to hurry so that Seneca can have a friend. Seneca mentions the benefits not to Lucilius of his progress, but to himself. This is somewhat striking, but by doing this Seneca is exploring the less obvious ramifications of that progress, as it is surely fairly evident that Lucilius stands to benefit in his own right. In effect Seneca is showing how mutual the benefits of Lucilius’ progress are.

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\(^{513}\) Above, p. 183.

\(^{514}\) Above, p. 35.

\(^{515}\) BRUNT 1965, 1-4, has argued persuasively that Cicero’s De amicitia is not a thoughtless rehash of Greek philosophical theory, but draws upon Cicero’s own knowledge of Roman practice.

\(^{516}\) Ep. 20.7; quoted above, p. 240.

\(^{517}\) This contrast matches a similar one over their belief in the possibility of social reform (above, p. 115).
Another way that these two letters are linked is the stress on the need for constancy with which they close. The requirement of this quality for true friendship has already been mentioned; however, an aspect of this requirement, the need to display consistency over time, is also in common; it is alluded to at the end of Ep. 34, but developed more fully at the end of this letter. At §4 Seneca instructs the reader to check that one’s wishes are constant from one day to the next, *observa an eadem Hodie velis quae heri*, as inconstancy is a sign of a mind that is at sea. By contrast a fixed purpose is evidence of progress, and Seneca closes with the encouraging image of the mind of someone making progress, which while not totally fixed, only moves in place.\(^{518}\)

The two letters contrast in mood. Joy is very prominent in Ep. 34. It rejuvenates Seneca and it surpasses the joy of others in a series of comparisons (§1). Seneca portrays himself as experiencing it as he writes. By contrast, the mention of joy in Ep. 35 is something Seneca hopes for (§2): *sed tamen re quoque ipsa esse laetus volo*. It is in a desired future, and Seneca seems somewhat anxious. As in Ep. 32 he urges his friend to haste, but whereas in that earlier letter it was so that Lucilius could enjoy the happy life before he died (§3), here it is lest Seneca die before he gets to enjoy the pleasure of true friendship with Lucilius (Ep. 35.2-3)!\(^{518}\)

Although Epp. 34 and 35 are both concerned with the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius, the context in each is very different. In Ep. 34 it is the context of Seneca as Lucilius’ teacher, Seneca as the one who has made Lucilius, although this has a shift at the end of §2 to mutual help. By contrast the context of Ep. 35 is that of friendship, a relationship between equals. It is a relationship, however, that Seneca describes as not yet achieved, but one that he seeks to motivate Lucilius to achieve.

That Seneca should so frequently use persuasive strategies to motivate his friend to make philosophical progress is evidence for the voluntaristic nature of his philosophy.\(^{519}\) In a couple of letters he shows his actions being influenced by love of others, or their love for him.\(^{520}\) The appeals that Seneca makes are varied. In Book IV, for example, he seeks to inspire a desire for

\(^{518}\) Seneca’s interest in the self and consistency over time is something that Long 2006, 371-374, explores.

\(^{519}\) Above, p. 223.

\(^{520}\) Epp. 78.2 and 104.2.
emulation (Ep. 39.2) or a desire to live up to the behaviour befitting the martial demands of philosophy. At Ep. 34.3 he offered the relatively abstract goal for Lucilius’ efforts of becoming a vir bonus. In this letter, by contrast, he seeks to motivate the same effort towards the concrete goal of becoming Seneca’s true friend.

In discussing friendship in Ep. 35 Seneca returns to a number of ideas that he had raised in Ep. 6. Hachmann identifies four common themes:

1) True and superficial friendships are contrasted.
2) The mutuality of their progress is emphasized.
3) One must first find one’s true self in order to become a true friend.
4) Friendship is intensified through personal proximity.

Of these only the final one is disputable. Hachmann sees Ep. 35 as standing at a midpoint between Ep. 6 and Ep. 55.9-11 on this theme. In the later epistle Seneca suggests that physical proximity is not necessary for friendship (§11): Amicus animo possidendus est; ... video te, mi Lucili; cum maxime audio. Seneca can see and hear Lucilius in his mind. By contrast in Ep. 35, Hachmann claims, Seneca expresses an urgent wish for physical nearness to his friend, which echoes the summons in Ep. 6.6 (te accerso). This wish for physical nearness, Hachmann says, is appropriate to the beginning phase of their friendship. However, it is not certain that Seneca actually expresses such a wish. Hachmann is not specific about where this wish is, but presumably he means Propera ad me at §4. However, as Hengelbrock argues, it seems better to interpret this in the light of the preceding qualem velis, which qualifies what Lucilius should enjoy in a friend — not his mere

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521 Epp. 36.7-9 and 37.1-2. See further below, p. 295.
523 Ep. 35.1 Qui amicus ... amicus est n.
524 Ep. 6.6: Nec in hoc te accerso tantum, ut proficias, sed ut prosis, and above, p. 242.
525 Ep. 34.4 Propera ... ad te prius n.
presence, but the presence of virtue in him.\footnote{HENGELBROCK 2000, 100, n. 38.}

Therefore \textit{Ep. 35} does not sit as closely with \textit{Ep. 6} on the importance of physical closeness for friendship as Hachmann feels. If Seneca is not as explicit as \textit{Ep. 55} that physical proximity is not necessary, in subsequent letters in Book IV he is suggesting that genuine closeness can be achieved through their letters. At \textit{Ep. 38} Seneca implies the letters are like conversations. And at \textit{Ep. 40.1} he says he is together with his friend whenever he receives a letter from him: \textit{Numquam epistulam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus.}

A short letter like \textit{Ep. 35} really only makes sense in the sequence of correspondence in which it is found. Firstly, it is paired with the preceding letter, presenting Seneca’s feelings on Lucilius’ progress in a very different light. Then only in that context of sequential letters is its focus on Lucilius’ progress meaningful. And finally, though the letter is a whole on its own, the themes in it can only be fully understood with reference to earlier letters in the correspondence.
Commentary on Epistle 35

§§1-4. The theme of this letter is consistent throughout: Seneca urges his friend to make progress so that they can enjoy true friendship. Seneca appeals to his friend’s love to do this and adds urgency to it by stressing his own age. Finally, the letter closes by reiterating that this goal is reached by achieving a constancy of one’s desires. This focus on the relationship between Seneca and Lucilius is seen in the large number of 1st and 2nd p. s. verbs, while the urgency is conveyed by many imperatives, some also being verbs of hurrying (§2 festina and §4 propera). Finally the importance of progress and its relationship to one’s desires is seen in two verbs and their reflexes that occur frequently in this letter: proficere and velle (see below, §1 volo n. and profice n.).

§1. Cum te tam valde rogo ut studeas, meum negotium ago: habere amicum volo, quod contingere mihi, nisi pergis ut coepisti excolere te, non potest. Nunc enim amas me, amicus non es. ‘Quid ergo? haec inter se diversa sunt?’ immo dissimilia. Qui amicus est amat; qui amat non utique amicus est; itaque amicitia semper prodest, amor aliquando etiam nocet.

§1. In the opening section Seneca presents the paradoxical idea that in urging Lucilius to improve himself it is to Seneca’s own benefit. He then makes a contrast between friendship and love. The contrast rests on the assumption that amor and amare are used in their widest sense while amicus and amicitia refer only to a true form of friendship that had been described in earlier letters (e.g. Ep. 3.2 and above, p. 239). Love is the broader term of which true friendship is a subset: a correct form of love. Seneca sees love as something that can lead to friendship, and in this letter he tries to harness Lucilius’ affection for him to this end.

Cum te ... ago: it is paradoxical to present Lucilius’ progress as not being for his own sake, though it is consistent both with Seneca’s emphasis on the mutuality of progress (above, p. 242) and with the motivational strategy of this letter: Lucilius’ affection for Seneca will urge him on.

rogo: such urging is of course a constant part of the Epistles, found in the very first words of the collection: ita fac (Ep. 1.1). studeas: (OLD §4) a frequent term in Seneca for putting effort into
philosophical improvement (cf. Ep. 5.1). This absolute usage is a post-Augustan one. **negotium:** in Seneca’s *otium* his *negotium* is urging Lucilius to self-improvement. The idea that the *otium* of philosophy is a genuine form of *negotium* in contrast to popular concepts is made forcefully at *Epp.* 8.2 and 36.1 *otium* n.), and it would be perverse to see the use of *negotium* here as a commercializing of philosophy, as perhaps HABINEK 1992, 193-14 (= 1998, 142-143) might.

**habere amicum ... non potest:** Seneca explains the meaning of the first paradox with another one. He wants to have Lucilius as a friend, that is as a true friend in the philosophical sense, as is made clearer in the next sentence. Such a wish is an appropriate one even for a sage (*Ep.* 9.3). **volo:** the first of seven uses of this verb in this letter. Although it is a frequent word, it is appropriate here in relation to the discussion of friendship, which is itself a form of desire and whose philosophical form is founded on a constancy of desires (above, pp. 22 and 240). In using it here Seneca is presenting his own desires, which are philosophically appropriate ones. **coepisti:** the reference to Lucilius continuing what he has begun is a little unusual coming in the middle of the fourth book of the correspondence. It echoes the mention of beginnings in *Ep.* 34.3. **excolere:** (*OLD* §2) as with *studeas* above this is another term for the task of philosophical improvement. At root it is an agricultural metaphor of long standing in philosophy (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 2.13). ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 235-237, has a very good discussion of Seneca’s use of it. In relation to *Ep.* 4.1 there is a shift from Seneca as the implied cultivator of Lucilius to Lucilius doing it to himself (*te*). For the religious connotations of the metaphor see below, p. 417.

**Nunc enim ... amicus non es:** Seneca explains the paradox in terms of a contrast between *amicus* and *amare.* The contrast is related directly to Lucilius, who is stated to love Seneca, but not to be his friend.

‘**Quid ergo? ... dissimilia:** Seneca imagines Lucilius’ response to this statement, asking if there is any difference, a not unreasonable question given the close etymological relationship in Latin, as Cicero, *Amic.* 100, notes: *ex quo exardescit sive amor sive amicitia; utrumque enim dictum est ab amando.* **Quid ergo?:** *Ep.* 30.15 *n.* **diversa:** (*OLD* §5). **dissimilia:** Seneca denies the similarity suggested by the words’ shared root. The contrast between these *diversa* and *dissimilia* is not apparently inherent to the two words, as at *Vit* 7.3 when speaking of pleasure and virtue Seneca reverses them: *Quid dissimilia, immo diversa componitis?*
Qui amicus ... amicus est: Seneca generalizes in a chiastic contrast between the one qui amat and the amicus: all friends love, but not all who love are friends. Seneca does not specifically say he is speaking of true friendship, but the contrast rests on such a distinction (above, p. 239).

utique: (OLD §3b).

itaque amicitia ... nocet: Seneca moves by way of inference (itaque) from the generalization to abstractions, amicitia and amor. The antithesis between these two terms is through the opposition of semper and aliquando and of prodest and nocet. Friendship is always beneficial; love sometimes harms. semper: such immutability is a crucial element of the constancy underlying true friendship, above, p. 240 and Ep. 20.5. amor: love occupied an ambivalent position in Stoic theory, as Stoics saw something positive in erōs (Schofield 1999, 29), yet recognized that only the sage truly knew how to love, so that for the rest of humanity it remained a passion, something dangerous and best avoided (Inwood 1997). This view is found at Ep. 116.5, where Seneca quotes Panaetius’ opinion of love’s danger with approval; Cicero (Tusc. 4.68-76) also was emphatic that it should be treated as a passion. nocet: the paradox that love can lead to harm had been presented earlier at Ep. 31.2, where Seneca says that those that love one most (amantissimi) pray with good intentions for bad things (bono animo mala precantur). Such harm had also been illustrated at Ep. 18.15, where love could lead to anger.

§2. Si nihil aliud, ob hoc profice, ut amare discas. Festina ergo dum mihi proficis, ne istuc alteri didiceris. Ego quidem percipio iam fructum, cum mihi fingo uno nos animo futuros et quidquid aetati meae vigors abscessit, id ad me ex tua, quamquam non multum abest, rebiturum; sed tamen requoque ipsa esse laetus volo.

§2. In Epp. 31-2 Seneca held forth the goal of progress as the self-sufficiency of sagehood and the happy life that accompanied it (e.g. Epp. 31.2-3 and 32.4). Here, by contrast, he seeks to inspire Lucilius to effort directed, however, towards achieving true friendship (for the tendency of the ideals of friendship and self-sufficiency to be in opposition see above, p. 223). The theme of seeking to motivate the reader is strong in this section: both in the urge to hasten before Seneca dies and in the image of their future mutual unanimity.

Si nihil ... discas: Seneca urges his friend to make progress so that he can learn to love. It is unusual to see something considered instinctual being described as able to be learned. This relates to the Stoic idea of oikeioskis (above, p. 241 and Armisén -Marchetti, 212-213). In this sense learning to love is unlearning the false attachment to popular goods and learning to love true
goods, essentially virtue (cf. Ep. 89.8). nihil aliud: Seneca does not exclude other possible motives for progress. ob hoc: (OLD hic §12b) this points forward to the epexegetic ut clause (OLD §39) that follows. profice: this is the first use of the verb in Book IV (but profectus in Ep. 33.7). See HENGBROCK 2000, 121, for detailed discussion of the word. It occurs three more times in this letter.

Festina ergo ... didiceris: the first call for urgency in the letter, which is consequent upon Lucilius’s understanding of the contrast between true friendship and love (ergo). At Ep. 27.4 a similar need for urgency was stressed. dum mihi proficis: not entirely spelt out, but implied in this letter, is the idea that Lucilius’ achieving of sage-status would be a mutual one with Seneca, who is, of course, not viewing his friend’s progress from the security of sagehood, but rather making progress himself and grateful for Lucilius invicem hortantem (Ep. 34.2). istuc: sc. amare. alteri didiceris: the sage’s friendship is usually thought of as universal, a friend to all (cf. Ep. 6.7), yet Seneca seeks to motivate his friend to achieve sagehood for the somewhat selfish sake of a particular friendship.

Ego quidem ... rediturum: this image recalls the opening of Ep. 34, not only in general in its focus on Seneca and his feelings but in particular in the enjoyment of the fruit of Lucilius’ progress and in the rejuvenation this effects. percipio: Seneca goes beyond the delight of the arboriculturist’s delight in Ep. 34.1 to actually pluck the fruit (OLD percipio §1). SMITH, 86, misses this agricultural metaphor. fingo: (OLD §8). uno nos animo: the uno ... animo embraces the nos, so that sense and word order coincide. The image reflects the concept of friendship being a sharing of common desires (e.g. Ep. 6.3). vigoris: whereas at Ep. 30.12 Seneca distinguishes between mental and physical strength, here he does not, implying that true friendship would effect a rejuvenation of both mind and body. quamquam ... abest: Lucilius is not much younger than Seneca (below, p. 457). rediturum: this recalls the image of Seneca being rejuvenated at Ep. 34.1: discussa senectute recalesco. However, now Seneca imagines this as being a future event, not one that happens each time he reads one of his friend’s letters.

sed tamen ... laetus volo: Seneca deflates somewhat his optimism that comes from imagining such a future. He does not reject this joy (quoque), but he stresses his desire for the genuine experience (re ... ipsa). Such stress serves to recall Lucilius to the sense of urgency to achieve this goal for his friend. laetus: this word recalls the stress on joy at the start of Ep. 34, which had not
been explicitly alluded to in the previous image. Its mention prepares for the discussion of joy that follows. \textit{volo}; §1 n.

\textit{§}3. \textit{Venit ad nos ex iis quos amamus etiam absentibus gaudium, sed id leve et evanidum: conspectus et praeuentia et conversatio habet aliquid vivae voluptatis, utique si non tantum quem velis sed qualem velis videas. Adfer itaque te mihi, ingens munus, et quo magis instes, cogita te mortalem esse, me senem.}

\textit{§}3. Seneca indirectly explains what he means by his desire to be genuinely happy. He contrasts the pleasure we get from absent and present friends. That he is speaking of common, not true, friendships is made clear by the \textit{quos amamus} in terms of the contrast made at §1. Absent friends give us a weak pleasure, present ones somewhat more, but he then makes this pleasure conditional, and in the context of explaining his desire for true happiness this condition has great weight. It is not so much who one sees that gives joy, but what sort of person one sees. In this he alludes to the joy brought through the presence of virtue in one’s friend. The need for virtue to be present overshadows the contrast between physical absence or presence and Seneca leaves it open whether such physical presence is even needed. Having stated what he desires, he urges Lucilius to bear in mind his mortality and Seneca’s age and hasten to offer himself to Seneca. What such an offering involves is developed in the next section.

\textit{Venit ad nos … evanidum:} Seneca grants that we derive pleasure from common friends even when absent, but it is weak and insubstantial (\textit{leve et evanidum}). \textit{quos amamus:} this usage picks up the contrast between \textit{qui amat} and \textit{amicus} at §1. \textit{gaudium:} such joy is not the \textit{res severa} of genuine, or Stoic, joy at Ep. 23.4 (Ep. 32.4 \textit{in summa tui satietate n}). \textit{leve:} as here this is usually a term of opprobrium. It can denote a lack of \textit{gravitas} (above, p. 17).

\textit{conspectus … voluptatis:} Seneca gives three qualities in contrast to absence: sight, presence and intimacy. These have a certain amount (\textit{aliquid}) of living pleasure. \textit{vivae:} such liveliness makes this pleasure more substantial than the earlier joy. \textit{voluptatis:} Ep. 31.2 n.

\textit{utique si … vides:} although presented as a condition for experiencing pleasure in a friend’s presence, in effect Seneca presents a third situation in which one experiences pleasure, a situation that surpasses the previous two. The \textit{qualem} is not very specific as to what precisely is to be looked for in a friend. But in the context of the start of a letter that specifies that philosophical progress is required for real friendship, it is clear that someone of good progress is sought, or as
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ENGELBROCK 2000, 100, n. 38, suggests, it is the presence of virtue in a friend that one wants. Such pleasure in the presence of a friend’s virtue fits with the analogies used at the start of Ep. 34.1 to describe Seneca’s pleasure in Lucilius’ progress. velis: the use of velis twice here is significant, as friendship and desires are intimately related (above, p. 240).

Adfer itaque ... munus: as a consequence of understanding what brings true pleasure (qualem above), Seneca asks Lucilius to offer himself to Seneca. As with propera in the next sentence, such offering is obviously not physical, and clearly alludes to a process that must happen to allow Lucilius to do this. Such a process is further philosophical progress so that he can find his true self (the special sense of te here). Such finding can also be seen as a purification from false identifications (cf. Ep. 41.7). mihi: the use of the dative rather than ad me makes it clear Seneca is talking of giving oneself not betaking oneself. munus: in its most immediate sense this can be related to the rejuvenation suggested at §2, but more broadly the idea of offering oneself as a beneficium to one’s teacher is described in great detail in Ben. 1.8.1, in which Seneca relates the anecdote of Aeschines, a student of Socrates, offering himself as a gift to Socrates, a gift that he says outdid all those of wealthier students such as Alcibiades. In Ep. 36.5 a similar repayment of the teacher is suggested.

et quo magis ... senem: Seneca gives two reasons for Lucilius to make haste to perfect himself before either of them dies, his old age and his friend’s mortality. Both reasons he frequently uses to motivate haste. Here, however, he is repeating an idea more explicitly that he touched on in §2 alteri didiceris n. instes: (OLD §8). cogita: Ep. 30.18 n. mortalem: at Ep. 32.3 death’s pressing on one’s heels was used to encourage haste in making progress. In connection to Seneca’s old age at Ep. 12.6 he reminded Lucilius that death does not call us ex censu. senem: Seneca’s old age is a frequent topic in the letters, though usually in relation to how Seneca will face his own death, not how others will face it, as here.

§4. Propera ad me, sed ad te prius. Profice et ante omnia hoc cura, ut constes tibi. Quotiens experiri voles an aliquid actum sit, observa an eadem hodie velis quae heri: mutatio voluntatis indicat animum naturae, aliubi atque aliubi apparete, prout tulit ventus. Non vagatur quod fixum atque fundatum est: istud sapienti perfecto contingit, aliquatenus et proficienti provectoque. Quid ergo interest? hic commovetur quidem, non tamen transit, sed suo loco nutat; ille ne commovetur quidem. Vale.

§4. Seneca continues his exhortation to his friend to make haste in becoming his genuine friend. He asks Lucilius to hurry to Seneca, but to himself first, which suggests that such
movement is meant figuratively. He closes, as in the previous letter with the demand that Lucilius see constancy as the key aspect in his progress. As in that letter Seneca’s focus is on achieving consistency over time, although here he does not speak about this consistency in respect of words and deeds, but of one’s desires, which he describes as a stability, a groundedness.

Propera ... ad te prius: in the first half of this sentence Seneca urges his friend to hurry to him, seeming to echo such a desire for his presence in Ep. 6.6. However, in the second half he asks his friend to hurry to himself first, which must be understood figuratively. As with the te in the previous sentence, Seneca is asking his friend to hurry to his true self, his perfected self. In doing this he will be hurrying to Seneca also, who will be able to enjoy him as a true friend. Therefore it is extremely doubtful that the first half of this sentence is literal (above, p. 244). The need for Lucilius to hurry to himself first is similar in sense to what Seneca says of himself at Ep. 6.7: amicus esse mihi coepi: a good relationship with oneself is the prerequisite of true friendship. Aristotle, Eth. Nic. 1169 a, argues that a good man should love himself, but does not make this a prerequisite for friendship.

Profice ... constes tibi: Seneca repeats the injunction to make progress (profice); at the start of the letter he provided the motivation for it (ob hoc ... ut); here he gives its chief task (ante omnia), linking the command paratactically to an instruction to strive for self-consistency. Such self-consistency (homologia) was the foundation of Stoic happiness. However, as noted already in connection to this passage (above, p. 15), it makes more sense to see Seneca appealing to a Roman reader within the framework of Roman moral values. In such a framework the quality he is demanding is readily understandable as constantia. hoc ... ut: §1 ob hoc n. constes: (OLD §10) this idiom with the reflexive is used at Ep. 66.45 and in Ira 1.8.6 and 3.27.1 to describe the perfected mind as being self-controlled or well-balanced.

Quotiens ... quae heri: Seneca offers here a way for Lucilius to gauge his progress, to see whether he has accomplished anything. It involves checking whether he desires the same things today as yesterday. Such self-examination (observa) is reminiscent of the searching of one’s conscience he recommends at Ira 3.36. Seneca’s focus on desires in this letter continues (velis); one’s desires must remain constant, a shift in emphasis from the demand for consistency in words and deeds at the close of the previous letter. That only salutary desires are stable ones was spelt
out at Ep. 20.5. Therefore, the more one’s desires remain stable the more one has made them salutary. an: (OLD §6). actum sit: (OLD §19).

**mutatio ... tulit ventus:** Seneca proceeds to describe the fault of an inconstant will. It reveals a wavering mind, one moving in all directions blown by the wind. Such inconstancy was invoked in very similar terms at Ep. 23.7-8. There, however, as at Ep. 37.5, such random movement is contrasted with purposive movement, not immobility. The urge to travel is seen as a sign of mental inconstancy; it is evidence for the inability to spend time with oneself. Seneca uses this idea in a number of places (Tranq. 2.13-15, Epp. 2.1, 28.1, 69.1 and 104.7-8; at Helv. 6.6-8, however, it is a natural part of the human constitution). The idea is a common one, found also in both Lucretius (3.1053-1075) and Horace (particularly at Ep. 1.11.27, caelum, non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt, but also at Carm. 2.16.18-20, Serm. 2.7.111-115 and Ep. 1.14.13). At the start of Ep. 53 Seneca describes himself making a short sea voyage that puts him in the power of wind and wave (cf. MO Th and CLARK 1971). At Polyb. 9.6 he describes life with all its dangers as like being at sea. voluntatis: the focus on one’s desires is continued from the previous velis. natare: (OLD §5, of a mind wavering) the verb is also appropriate for continuing the image of something being blown to and fro on the water. apparere: this verb picks up the sense of being observed in observa before. tulit: the same use of ferre occurs at Epp. 23.8 and 37.5. This is either a gnomic perfect (Ep. 30.4 desinit morbus ... revocavit n.) or one can imagine it as an action that has already occurred and is now being observed. In his poetry Seneca compares being driven by a passion, like fury, to being carried along by a wave, e.g. Phaed. 181-184:

\[
\text{sic, cum gravatam navita adversa ratem} \\
\text{propellit unda, cedit in vanum labor} \\
\text{et victa prono puppis aufertur vado.} \\
\text{quid ratio possit? vicit ac regnat furor.}
\]

**Non vagatur ... fundatum est:** Seneca contrasts the movement of an unsteady will with something established and with foundations (fixum atque fundatum). Both these past participles suggest something achieved through human agency. The image that this evokes is not definite. Clearly there is a contrast between levitas and its opposite, either gravitas or constantia. If not for the choice of words (fixum atque fundatum), which are appropriate in describing a state achieved through effort, one might otherwise think of a natural object or, for instance, of the Roman god Terminus, to whose immobility even Capitoline Jupiter had to yield, and who, DUMÉZIL 1952, 26, suggests, was closely associated with the concept of gravitas; one might equally think of a sea cliff.
resisting wind and sea. As a simile suggesting steadfastness this image goes back to Homer (Il. 15.618 ff.) and is also used by Virgil (Aen. 7.586 ff. and 10.693 ff.). Seneca makes use of it in Vit. 27.3:

\[
\text{Praebeo me non aliter quam rupes aliqua in vadoso mari destituta, quam fluctus non desinunt, undecumque moti sunt, verberare, nec ideo aut loco eam movent aut per tot aetates crebro incursu suo consumunt. Adsilite, facite impetum: ferendo vos victam. In ea quae firma et inexsuperabilia sunt quidquid incurrit malo suo vim suam exercet: proinde quaerite aliquam mollem cedentemque materiam in qua tela vestra figantur.}
\]

Seneca puts these words in the mouth of Socrates, who was the paradigmatic sage for Seneca (Albrecht 2004, 53 ff.), and it is to the sage that such steadfastness is attributed in the next clause. *vagatur*: wandering is the opposite of movement towards a goal, and is often used in respect of the metaphor of progress as a path, representing movement off or away from the path (Ep. 32.5 n.). Armisen-Marchetti, 89, lists only examples of *errare* in this sense, but though its sense is not always as negative, *vagari* occurs too, e.g. Vit. 1.2, Tranq. 12.3 and Ep. 45.1.

*istud sapienti ... provectoque*: Seneca brings the letter to a close by relating the previous image of fixedness to the sage (*sapienti*), and also to some degree (*aliquatenus*) to the person making progress (*proficienti provectoque*). The idea that those making progress can possess a constancy that approaches that of a sage is an important one, as it suggests that the friendships of those making progress can likewise approach the perfection of those between sages. *proficienti provectoque*: this is the fourth use of *proficere* in this letter, and perhaps to dilute its technical flavour (Ep. 33.7 *profectus* n.) Seneca combines it with a non-technical synonym. The *proficiens*, a student of philosophy, is someone between the state of the sage and the unreformed fool. At Ep. 75.8 ff. Seneca explains that there are three stages of such people. The use of *provecto*, often used of sailing, can also be seen to continue the nautical imagery in *natare* and *ventus*. This person is not blown about by the wind, but is on a voyage to a destination.

*Quid ergo ... ne commovetur quidem*: Seneca anticipates a request to explain the contrast in fixedness between the sage and the one making progress. Seneca concedes that the *proficiens* is affected by unstable desires, but is not shifted from his place of progress (*non ... transit*), but is only rocked in place. By contrast with the *conduplicatio* of *commovetur quidem* from the previous clause Seneca emphasizes the immovability of the sage. *hic ... ille*: these are the *proficiens* and the sage respectively. Whereas in the previous sentence Seneca had been referring to the unstable mind,
now he talks of the persons. Such a shift allows the image to suggest a resistance to external forces as at Ep. 34.3 *perfectum* ... *possit* n. The stability that the sage exhibits here is referred to again at Ep. 71.27 where, when talking of the mind (cf. INWOOD 2005a, 41), he says: *In hac positum est summum illud hominis bonum. Antequam impleatur, incerta mentis volutatio est; cum vero perfectum est, immota illi stabilitas est.* The unperfected mind is like that carried by the wind, having an *incerta* ... *volutatio*, whereas the perfected mind, the sage’s, possesses an *immota* ... *stabilitas*. As suggested in the first lemma on the previous sentence, this is a quality of Roman *gravitas*, and Seneca makes frequent use of the contrast between such weightiness and its opposite *levitas*, for example at Ep. 82.24 in criticizing syllogistic subtlety. *commovetur*: a verb that continues the metaphor of movement in the description of the mind carried by the wind, but is also appropriate as it can be used of being emotionally affected. *transit*: Seneca is fond of using the prefix *trans* for its sense of movement from one place or state to another (SCARPAT 1975, 77-78 on Ep. 4.2).

Seneca leaves the image of the unshakeable sage as the letter’s closing image, along with the encouraging thought that the student of philosophy has a stability not so very far different.
The opening words of this letter, amicum tuum, announce the letter’s topic. As with the first letter of the book that opened with Bassum Aufidium, the focus of this letter is a third person, specified as someone other than Seneca and Lucilius. That person is the unnamed friend of Lucilius, who has just chosen philosophical retirement. This event gives Seneca the opportunity for some revision. In offering Lucilius advice to pass on to the friend, Seneca goes over topics that had been covered in earlier letters, but from a different perspective: Lucilius is now Seneca’s colleague, a philosophical mentor.

The revisory tone of this letter is very suitable to its placement in the book: standing at the start of the second half of the book, the letter serves to bring together themes from earlier letters and to prepare them for further development in the book’s second half. Those themes are success, measured by popular and philosophical standards, philosophical progress in retirement from public life, the role of friendship and the need for martial steadfastness in that progress, and one’s place in the cosmos.

Beyond what Hachmann, Hengelbrock and Maurach have to say, this letter has received little scholarly attention. What attention it has received is focused on the talk of rebirth in §§10-11. Hachmann gives this letter an important place in his scheme for the work’s structure: it is a ‘milestone’ in the explication of the theme of bona mens perfecta. Maurach’s section is quite full and gives a useful discussion of the thematic relationship of the letter to its neighbours.

530 BAMMEL 1996 gives further bibliography on this topic.
531 HACHMANN 1995, 275.
Seneca sets up an antithesis at the start of this letter between popular success (*felicitas*), that was success in a public career, and a life of retirement (*otium*) and the genuine success it brought. Popular success was unstable, which was only to be expected as it was in the control of Fortune. Furthermore, its effect on those who receive it was unhealthy (§1). Such arguments were by now familiar to Lucilius, whom Seneca had spent much of Book II trying to persuade to retire from public life. By the start of Book III Lucilius appears convinced, but was still working to extricate himself from his public responsibilities. What Seneca has to say about false success and philosophical retirement in this letter builds on the background of these earlier letters but is related more closely to the letters of Book IV.

The choice between public life and retirement was a major topic for ancient philosophers, one which Seneca wrote on with experience of both styles of life. It is a topic that he discussed in a number of his dialogues. At the time of the *Epistles* Seneca himself had retired from high office on the grounds of age and ill health. And in an early letter he describes himself as promoting retirement, having only lately found the right path (*Ep*. 8.3). Retirement was closely connected to true success for Seneca. Genuine *felicitas* was synonymous with the happy life, the *vita beata*. Theoretically this inner state was achievable regardless of one’s outer circumstances. Practically, however, retirement was a great aid to philosophical progress, as one withdrew from the harmful influence of the crowd.

Retirement was a great help to achieving tranquillity of mind, which was one of the two pillars of the happy life. At *Ep*. 92.3 Seneca describes this life as: *quid est beata vita? securitas et*

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532 Above, p. 12.

533 *Ep*. 22.1: *iam intellegis educendum esse te ex istis occupationibus speciosis et malis, sed quomodo id consequi possis quaeris*.

534 These are *De Brevitate Vitae*, *De Otio* and *De Tranquillitate Animi*. *GRIFFIN* 1992, ch. 10, analyses his views on retirement in these.

535 Seneca’s speech to Nero asking to retire and Nero’s reply are given by Tacitus, *Ann*. 14.52-56.

536 Seneca’s defence of retirement at the start of this letter can be read, perhaps, as justification of his own retirement (§1 *Amicum tuum ... obiurgant n.*).

537 *Ep*. 31.2 felix n.

538 *HADOT* 1969a, 138. Such a conclusion might be drawn from *Ep*. 56.15.
perpetua tranquillitas. Hanc dabit animi magnitudo, dabit constantia bene iudicati tenax. For a number of scholars this is used as an important definition, one used to systematize Seneca’s thought: the happy life consists of two qualities, a calmness of the mind and a freedom from fear (securitas et perpetua tranquillitas). Freedom from fear is achieved through greatness of spirit (animi magnitudo), and calmness of mind through constancy of purpose (constantia). \(^{539}\)

Both of these qualities are discussed in Ep. 36, but it is the second that relates to retirement. A firm purpose contrasts with the changeability of the majority of humanity, whose decisions are ruled by greed and political ambition. The choice to retire represents a renouncement of such desires and the adoption of a settled and salutary philosophical lifestyle. \(^{540}\) Constancy of purpose was an important theme to the two preceding letters, although they include no mention of retirement. It is at §6 that there is the strongest reminder of these two letters. Seneca describes the future state of the mind of Lucilius’ friend: it will be tranquillus, the product of constantia and, whatever external events it meets, it will be in eodem habitu, the very state that Lucilius is urged to achieve at the end of each of the previous two epistles.

The contrast between popular and philosophical values is fundamental for Seneca. \(^{541}\) It is the basis for Seneca’s dismissal of criticism of the friend’s decision to retire at the start of the letter. Such a contrast, specifically in relation to the popular concept of success, had been sharpened for the reader in Ep. 31, particularly at §10. The sense of such success being bad is developed in a later letter in the book, Ep. 39, where at §§4-6 Seneca argues one must practise moderation to mitigate its harmful aspects.

The need for constancy of purpose was something that Seneca related to friendship, particularly in the previous letter. \(^{542}\) Friendship is without doubt central to Seneca’s view of

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\(^{539}\) This distinction between securitas and tranquillitas is one that Hadot 1969a, 137, makes. Smith 2000, 47-49, however, feels this is over-subtle and they are much more synonymous. However, in that each represents the state of having overcome one of the two core passions, fear (securitas) and desire (tranquillitas), the distinction is a useful one; cf. Hachmann 1995, 297-300.

\(^{540}\) Ep. 20 illustrates this, as the importance of constancy at Ep. 20.5 is followed by arguments that the poverty that would follow such a choice is not bad.

\(^{541}\) Above, p. 10.

\(^{542}\) Above, p. 240.
philosophy. He related it to the process of making philosophical progress in the previous two letters. Philosophical progress is mutual: improving oneself helps to improve one’s friend. At Ep. 36.4 Seneca frames philosophical progress differently, it is a beneficium. Assuming the responsibility for a friend’s philosophical guidance is a benefit that is as good to give as it is to receive.

Friendship is also the justification for the content of this letter, advice for a friend to help another friend. The mention of this unnamed friend makes the letter distinctive; it serves to link it to the first letter of the book, which had as its focus another friend, Bassus. The link is made more prominent because these two are the only contemporary actors besides the two correspondents that have any real space in this book. Overcoming the fear of death provides a further thematic link between the two letters. Otherwise the two contrast. In Ep. 30 Bassus is older than Seneca, and Seneca is portrayed as, in a sense, his student. The friend, by contrast, is younger than both Seneca and Lucilius. This allows Seneca to talk about the type of education appropriate to that age group (§§3-4). Yet even here, through mention of the elementarius senex, the stress is as much on the need for people the age of Seneca and Lucilius to be using their education, picking up a major theme of Ep. 33.

This mention of education continues a theme that will be returned to in more depth in the group of letters, Epp. 38-40. Finally, the device of offering advice on mentoring the friend is a way of showing Lucilius’ progress: he is no longer just a student, but more nearly Seneca’s equal. He is shown as attentive to Seneca’s advice; he is doing as instructed by beginning to teach, as Seneca demanded at Ep. 33.9.

543 Above, p. 242.
544 Discussed below, p. 263.
545 §4 Turpis ... utendum est n.
546 At Ep. 74.25 Seneca talks generally of an idealized pupil, an adulescens. This longer letter touches on topics in Ep. 36 at a number of places, the need for steadfastness and the cosmic view in facing death, most importantly at §§12-16 (below, p. 263); in addition the mention of Persians at §37 might remind the reader of Parthians at Ep. 36.7.
547 Above, p. 182.
548 Above, p. 43.
549 As suggested by the image at Ep. 34.2 n.
There is a marked change of tone in the second half of the letter. The interjections cease and the language becomes grander: there is the exotic detail of education in places remote in either space or time to the contemporary reader (§7), there is the elaborately wrought description of the wounded sentry (§9), and finally there is the solemn evocation of nature’s flux and flow, particularly in the heavens (§§10-11). This shift can be interpreted as a shift from a focus on the role of constantia in the first half to a focus on magnitudo animi in the second half.\footnote{To adopt the distinction of HACHMANN 1995, 297-300 (mentioned above, p. 259, n. 539).}

After an elaborate introduction in §7 Seneca posits the question of what the friend should study that is effective against all forms of attack. It is as if in the first half of the letter Seneca has dealt with why one should study philosophy and in the second turns to what one should study. The answer, to scorn death, picks up a major theme of the Epistles and the focus of the first letter of Book IV. Although some of the lessons of Bassus on death are revisited in this section of the letter, in §§8-9 Seneca seeks to prove the necessity of training to face death rather than explaining in depth how to, which was something he had already done in a number of letters.\footnote{Particularly Epp. 4, 24, 26 and 30. Echoes of Ep. 30 are at §9 Mors ... incommodum n. and §10 cogita ... consumi n.} However, there is an important implied method in this section, one that has already been alluded to, that a philosopher must cultivate a martial steadfastness to meet death.\footnote{Above, p. 14.}

The argument that philosophers need martial toughness is one Seneca develops further in the following letter.\footnote{Below, p. 295.} Lucilius is bound by a sterner oath than that of the gladiator to face death without asking for quarter (Ep. 37.1-2). In that letter Seneca describes this toughness as winning through to libertas (Ep. 37.3-4), a prized possession for a Roman.\footnote{Above, p. 65.} This is something positive in contrast to the essentially negative quality of what Seneca offered in Ep. 36, whether not to be made less (\textit{minor non fit}, §6), or to despise of death (\textit{mortem contemnere}, §8), or to be free from worry (\textit{securitatem}, §12).\footnote{Maurach 1975, 348.}
In contrast to the appeal to the reader’s sense of pride as a Roman to live up to the prized qualities of his ancestors, in the last part of the letter Seneca offers a cosmic perspective on death. At §§10-11 Seneca invites the reader to see in the cosmic cycles of nature a reassurance to face death calmly. These arguments are prefaced as ones to counteract a lust for longer life (Quod si tanta cupiditas te longioris aevi tenet), something that he had recently stressed was irrelevant to the quality of one’s life.\footnote{At Ep. 32.3-4; see Ep. 36.10 Quod si ... tenet n.} Despite this ironic introduction, there is no doubt that the cosmic perspective mattered for Seneca. In the preface to Book I of the \textit{Natural Questions} he put the study of nature on a higher plane than other philosophy: it was the study of god as against the study of humans.\footnote{Nat. 1.pr.1.} And at §11 there is no irony to his claim that from this perspective one should depart with equanimity, destined to return.\footnote{Aequo animo debet rediturus exire.}

In the \textit{Epistles} Seneca reveals the cosmic perspective gradually. It has a number of elements. It is one thing to say that human affairs viewed from the heavens look petty.\footnote{As he does at Nat. 1.pr.9.} However, the full force of such a claim is gained if it is understood that the heavens are a realm of perfection, free from the failings of the terrestrial sphere.\footnote{The contrast is nicely caught at Nat. 1.pr.1 in the distinction between the two branches of philosophy: \textit{Altera docet quid in terris agendum sit}, \textit{altera quid agatur in caelo}.} Furthermore, the heavenly sphere is actually where the human mind is properly at home.\footnote{Nat. 1.pr.11-12.} or to use a slightly different analogy, the human mind possesses the seeds of Stoic \textit{ratio} that can be cultivated to a perfection equal to god.\footnote{Epp. 49.11 and 73.16. Ep. 92.27: \textit{Ratio vero dis hominibusque communis est: haec in illis consummata est, in nobis consummabilis.}} It is the consciousness of the mind’s divine origin that gives the philosopher greatness of mind, a sense of being bigger than any of the vicissitudes of terrestrial fortune.\footnote{Particularly at Ep. 41.5 he makes it clear that it is this that gives the virtuous man his greatness of soul. Above, p. 24.}
Unlike in the preface of Book I of the Natural Questions, in the Epistles Seneca does not introduce this perspective all at once. However, it is in Book IV that he begins to adumbrate these ideas. He touches on them rather than fully arguing them out, and the connections between ideas found in separate letters are left for the reader to make. At Ep. 31.11 he reveals the divine nature of the soul, which he develops further in the last letter of the book.\textsuperscript{564} As for the cosmic perspective on the fear of death, he described it as part of a cycle of change at Ep. 30.11: \textit{quae [sc. natura] non aliam voluit legem nostram esse quam suam: quidquid composuit resolvit, et quidquid resolvit componit iterum.} The nature of this cycle is developed at Ep. 36.10-11, where Seneca changes the metaphor to one of movement; what appears as destruction is actually part of a journey, and the proof of this is the cycle of seasons viewable in the heavens. The rising and setting of stars is part of their journey, one that in time will bring them back to the same spot again. We are invited to see our own lives as moving in a similar pattern, though the nature of the life that follows death is not spelt out in detail.

At Ep. 71.12-16 Seneca keeps a promise he made in Ep. 36.11 to explain this pattern in greater detail. There he echoes the language of dissolution and recomposition in Ep. 30.11 and the contrast between our perception of destruction and the reality of dissolution.\textsuperscript{565} The immediate purpose there is the same; these arguments are proposed by Cato the Younger in order to face death calmly. However, he gives a larger context to this cycle: there is a greater cycle that sees the periodic destruction of the earth and the cosmos, one the Stoics described as \textit{ecpyrōsis}.\textsuperscript{566}

At the end of this section of Ep. 71, Seneca expresses uncertainty about the survival of the soul after death. It either goes to the heavens or is dissolved into its constituent elements (§16):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Magnus animus deo pareat et quidquid lex universi iubet sine cunctatione patiatur: aut in meliorem emittitur vitam lucidius tranquilliusque inter divina mansuras aut certe sineullo futurus incommodo, si naturae remiscebitur et revertetur in totum.}
\end{quote}

Seneca offers these two outcomes as a contrasting alternative quite regularly. Hoven describes it

\textsuperscript{564} Discussed at Ep. 36.11 Sed postea ... mutari n. and HACHMANN 1995, 216-217.

\textsuperscript{565} Ep. 36.10-12 n.

\textsuperscript{566} SVF 2.596.
as the Socratic alternative.\textsuperscript{567} It is used also by Marcus Aurelius and serves to underline that either way death is not a bad thing.\textsuperscript{568} Either alternative, the Stoic ascent or the Epicurean dissolution, can be fitted into the sense of cyclical change. However, at Ep. 36.10-11 Seneca does not hint at the Epicurean alternative. In the Stoic system the soul on death, being composed of fiery stuff, would return to the heavens where that element was most present. How long it persisted there depended in what relation to virtue it had, but it would not survive the ecpyrōsis; instead it would be absorbed into the deity to be created again in the next cycle.\textsuperscript{569}

At Ep. 36.10, however, Seneca seems to hint at something that goes beyond Stoic orthodoxy with the phrase, \textit{quem multi recusarent nisi oblitos reduceret} (§10). The verb \textit{recusarent} suggests souls with the possibility of choice and the awareness of a previous life.\textsuperscript{570} This reflects a strand to Seneca’s thought on the afterlife that occurs elsewhere, particularly in Ep. 102, a strand Hoven describes as mystic or Pythagorico-Platonic.\textsuperscript{571} Given Seneca’s varied descriptions of the afterlife, it is no easy task to determine what weight to give this hint. Setaioli, however, offers a convincing approach to resolving Seneca’s attitude to the afterlife.\textsuperscript{572} He suggests that however much Seneca may have desired an afterlife of the Platonic sort, he did not subordinate the self-sufficiency of virtue to such an existence.\textsuperscript{573} Like death, immortality was an indifferent in his system.\textsuperscript{574} This is perhaps reflected in the ironic way Seneca presented the hope of an afterlife in this letter: it does not change the reality that facing death requires a steadfastness, a \textit{Romana virtus}, something more visceral and basic than any such hope.


\textsuperscript{568} Hadot 1998, 148.

\textsuperscript{569} Sandbach 1989, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{570} §10 \textit{recusarent} n.

\textsuperscript{571} Hoven 1971, 118-123.

\textsuperscript{572} Setaioli 2000, 275-323.

\textsuperscript{573} Setaioli 2000, 322.

\textsuperscript{574} Setaioli 2000, 319.
Another aspect of the cosmic perspective is that Stoics saw in the divine element of humans a microcosmic version of the place of god in the universe. One descriptor of god was ratio, a term that bridged this microcosmic-macrocosmic divide perfectly, remembering, of course, the danger of too easily treating this term as equivalent to modern reason. It is not until Ep. 65.24 that Seneca makes this connection explicit: *quem in hoc mundo locum deus obtinet, hunc in homine animus.* However, the elements to this equation were introduced in stages before then. In *Epp.* 39 and 41 the connection between the soul and the heavens is introduced. And at the end of the present letter (§12), *ratio* is used for the first time with a particular Stoic sense. He concludes:

*... esse turpissimum si eam securitatem nobis ratio non praestat ad quam stultitia perducit.*

He contrasts ratio with stultitia. The immediate sense is of the microcosmic ratio. However, in the context of the preceding two sections on the ordered changes in the cosmos there is a sense that the macrocosmic ratio could also be meant, or the microcosmic structured by an awareness of the macrocosmic.

This closing reference to *ratio* and the implication of the rational ordering of nature creates a contrast with the opening of the letter. There Seneca had described the dissolution wrought by false success, the success that stultitia sought. The scale of nature’s majestic cycles might also make the contrasts in time and space made at §7 seem petty. In this way Seneca creates a development in the letter; looking back over the letter from the vantage point of the cosmic view the scale of cultural differences at §7 is reduced and the folly of false felicitas magnified.

In the next letter Seneca develops the importance of *ratio* to making progress (*Ep.* 37.4-5). However, he does so in the continued context of the need for a warrior’s steadfastness to face death and the other challenges in this life. The device of advising someone more junior in philosophy than his correspondent is important to how *Ep.* 36 letter functions. In setting out a

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575 Above, p. 21.


577 HACHMANN 1995, 238, n. 1, points out that *ratio* in the letters in the first three books did not have the sense of reason, or in the few cases it did (*Epp.* 13.9, 14.2 and 24.24) the Stoic dimension of the concept is not certain. So too MAURACH 1975, 349, n. 42.

578 At *Nat.* 1.pr.9 and 13 Seneca takes this view of human boundaries.
curriculum in rough form for the friend, Seneca was able in this letter to give an overview of where Lucilius had been as well as what lies ahead.
Commentary on Epistle 36

Division:

- A (§§1-3): Lucilius’ friend should be encouraged to persevere with his retirement from a public career.
- B (§§4-6): This friend is at the right age to be a student, unlike those who are old.
- C (§§7-9): What needs to be learnt is a martial constancy.
- D (§§10-12): Viewing the cycles of nature can help one view death with equanimity.

Section A (§§1-3). The letter opens with Seneca giving advice to Lucilius on encouraging his friend. This advice shapes the whole letter, although the friend does drop out of sight towards the end of it (§10 τε n.). In the first three sections the focus is very much on encouraging the friend’s perseverance in a decision to abandon a public career in favour of philosophical retirement. This encouragement is shaped by the presence of critics of this decision and much of it is given in the form of rebuttals to their criticism, whether imagined as reported by Lucilius or sometimes seeming to be interjected directly. The three-way dynamic between Seneca, Lucilius and the friend creates a new context for presenting the contrast between popular and philosophical values. This device is particularly useful as Seneca has suggested that Lucilius has really progressed beyond such stuff (Ep. 34.1: turbam olim reliqueras).

§1. Amicum tuum hortare ut istos magno animo contemnat qui illum obiurgant quod umbram et otium petierit, quod dignitatem suam destituerit et, cum plus consequi posset, praetulerit quietem omnibus; quam utilitter suum negotium gesserit cotidie illis ostentet. Hi quibus invidetur non desinent transire: alii elidentur, alii cadent. Res est inquieta felicitas; ipsa se exagitat. Movet cerebrum non uno genere: alios in aliud inritat, hos in inpotentiam, illos in luxuriam; hos inflat, illos mollit et totos resolvit.

§1. Seneca presents the dramatic situation of advising Lucilius’ friend to persevere in the face of criticism. He describes the rewards of public office that the friend has abandoned as a false and unstable felicitas.
Commentary on Epistle 36

Amicum tuum ... obiurgant: the main actors of the first section of the letter are introduced very quickly: Lucilius’ friend (Amicum tuum) and his critics (istos). That neither of these is named is a regular and distinctive feature of the Epistles, to which Henderson 2004, 5, draws particular attention. Henderson has an appendix, 171-174, of people and places named, which could have been interestingly supplemented by a list of all those left unnamed. Therefore, of itself the fact that neither the friend nor his critics are named is not exceptional. To a degree this is part of producing a text for publication, where specific information that is not relevant to the general reader is avoided (below, p. 317, n. 627). However, this friend’s situation, his planned retirement, parallels that of Seneca himself, and that of Lucilius. And his anonymity suggests he might be a fiction that allows Seneca to address his own situation through this device, justifying the choice of retirement. hortare: Seneca instructs Lucilius to do for his friend what they have been doing for each other (Ep. 34.2). magno animo: such greatness of soul (above, p. 24) is needed here to resist popular values, but it is also more central to philosophical progress and §§7-12 of this letter can be seen as discussing how it is acquired. contemnat: Ep. 31.3 contemptus n. This action is closely associated, as here, with greatness of soul.

quod umbram ... omnibus: that these are the reported reasons of the friend’s critics is clearly marked by the subjunctive. The criticisms form a tricolon crescens (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’... malus?’ n.), the first two members of which are opposite poles of the one movement: seeking leisure and deserting renown. The final member presents the action as a choice to favour leisure over them all. This criticism makes a strong appeal to the friend’s loyalties, both to his sense of honour and to his friends. umbram: such shade is the opposite of the claritudo sought in public life (cf. Ep. 33.8 sub aliena umbra latentes n. and Armisen-Marchetti, 146-7). otium: as the reverse of negotium, this is often stigmatized popularly as sloth (inertia, Ep. 8.1). dignitatem: this is the renown sought in public life (Hellegouarc’h 1972, 388). Its importance to a Roman public figure can be gauged by Julius Caesar justifying civil war in defence of his (Civ. 1.7 and Lendon 1997, 50). destituerit: (OLD §3) the dishonour of such a choice is increased by characterizing it as desertion, with all the cowardice and lack of loyalty that implies. plus consequi: that popular values are insatiable was well described in Ep. 16.7-9. quietem: (OLD §4) a frequent metonymy for otium. omnibus: the critics, who are presenting themselves as friends. Such friends, Seneca says, follow not the person but his position and possessions (Epp. 19.4 and 20.7).
**Commentary on Epistle 36**

**quam ... ostentet:** the directness of Seneca's response is increased by asyndeton. It is the friend's actions that will reply to the critics and in so doing satisfy a fundamental requirement of Senecan philosophy, that it be measured in actions not words (Ep. 24.15 and above, p. 4). **utiliter suum negotium:** Seneca reverses the popular sense of these words, as he had done in Ep. 8.2, by insisting that philosophical *otium* is actually a more genuine *negotium* than the popular concept of it (Epp. 35.1 n. and 49.9 and Scarpat 1975, 161). The use of *utiliter* can be related to the stress given to *prodesse* in Ep. 8.2. The classic instance of this reversal in Latin literature is by Sallust, Jug. 4.4: *existumabunt ... maiusque commodum ex otio meo quam ex aliorum negotio rei publicae venturum*.

**Hi ... cadent:** Seneca shifts from the particular of the friend to the general in a description of the state occupied by those (*Hi*) who have the prominence that the friend has abandoned. The continued use of the future links the two sentences. As a group these people are defined as objects of envy (*quibus invidetur*), and their state is one of instability and change. The dangers of such prominence were particularly stressed in Ep. 19. **transire:** this word gives a verbal link to the end (§4) of Ep. 35 (Maurach 1975, 345, n. 27). Although Ruhkopf (Bouillet, 246-7) understands this as meaning a change from one plan to another, or to one’s style of life, it is able to suggest a range of actions, particularly that of passing away (OLD §13), which fits better with the verbs that follow. **elidentur ... cadent:** Seneca illustrates the passing away of these people with two violent images, crushing and falling. Both are suggestive of the actions of Fortune, who is alluded to in the next sentence by *felicitas*. Epithets of Fortune that refer to these actions are *caduca* (Apul. Soc. 4) and *gravis* (Ov. Her. 15.59); cf. Kajanto 1981, 533. Interestingly, in the medieval iconography of the Wheel of Fortune these are the actions that symbolize Fortune's disfavour, though with one following the other rather than as alternatives. The wheel as a symbol of Fortune's instability was part of the ancient iconography, both in art and in literature; Seneca, for instance at Ag. 72 says, *fortuna rotat* (Kajanto 1981, 520-521 and 530 and Galpin 1909, 332-333). However, as none of the ancient references to the wheel are developed in the way it became in the medieval period, it is hard to insist that Seneca has this specific image of Fortune in mind.

**Res ... felicitas:** using a *sententia* Seneca takes the argument from the generalized state of prominent people to the abstract, *felicitas*. **inquieta:** this epithet aptly brings out the contrast to the *quies* of *otium*. **felicitas:** here Seneca is talking of a popular concept of *felicitas*, the success that in Seneca's eyes is in the gift of Fortune (above, p. 258). It contrasts with his use of the word in Ep. 31.2 *felix* n.
ipsa se exagitat: Seneca with characteristic asyndeton expands on success’ restlessness. He personifies felicitas and with the reflexive makes her act on herself, suggesting that instability is inherent to her very nature. Such turbulence is the opposite of the philosophical constantia that figured so prominently at the close of the two previous letters. exagitat: Ep. 32.5, mens agitata n.

Movet ... genere: Seneca continues the personification. The instability is seen by the plurality of its manifestations, which he illustrates in the rest of the sentence. Such plurality contrasts with the singularity of the good (Ep. 31.3 unum bonum ... fidere n.). cerebrum: (OLD §3) though this is an established usage to refer to the seat of the intelligence, it far less common than ‘brain’ is in English. non uno genere: the litotes underlines the inconstancy of popular success.

alios ... in luxuriam: Seneca continues to personify felicitas, who remains the agent of this and the next clause. The alios in aliud highlights the multiplicity of forms popular success has — there is no fixed outcome. The in aliud is expanded with two specific examples. inritat: (OLD 2b). inpotentiam: the emendation of potentiam to inpotentiam proposed by AXELSON 1939, 173-174, has been adopted by REYNOLDS and PRÉCHAC. As BORGÓ, 86, notes, Seneca saw it as a common outcome of felicitas. The vice of lawlessness or lack of self-restraint is epitomized by the tyrant, who felt above or beyond any restraint. As such, inpotentia is closely associated with superbia and at Tro. 266-269 Seneca has Agamemnon say:

Fateor, aliquando impotens
regno ac superbus altius memet tuli;
sed fregit illos spiritus haec quae dare
potuisset alis causa, Fortunae favor.

Agamemnon spells out the connection between success and lack of self-restraint. In his case, however, he goes on to say that Priam’s fall sobered him. At Ag. 248 Seneca describes fortune as superba et impotens. luxuriam: BORGÓ, 119-120. That success led to luxury was conventional (Ep. 114.9, Nat. 1.17.10, Sall. Cat. 12.2 and more generally, Motto, Luxury). Luxury itself bred vice (Ep. 90.19).

hos ... resolvit: Seneca expands on the action of success in succinct rapid language that concludes his defence of the friend’s retirement with a sententia. The hos ... illos are repeated from the previous clause. Each receives a disyllabic verb which explains the action of the two previous vices. The final clause creates a tricolon that is concluded with a heavier, trisyllabic verb. The totos gains emphasis both in contrast to the repeated hos ... illos and through the clash between the
earlier sharp contrast and this unexpected similarity: the differences are the surface manifestations of a deeper common malaise. **inflat:** (OLD §5) through *inpotentia* success causes a form of inflation or being puffed up. As such it is false and unhealthy and is the opposite of Senecan *magnitudo animi* (above, p. 24), which in some respects it appears to mimic. In a similar way at *Ep.* 94.64-65 Seneca describes Pompey being driven by false greatness (*insanus amor magnitudinis falsae*). **mollit:** through luxury success softens, leading to a loss of discipline and toughness (*Epp.* 33.1 *mollitiam* n. and 37.1 *mollem* n.). An *exemplum* for Seneca of the dangers of success was Maecenas, someone who was talented but whom success enervated, even castrated (*Epp.* 19.9 and 92.35). And for all its luxury this same excessive success gave him no rest (*Prov.* 3.10-11). **resolvit:** in contrast to the natural dissolution this word describes in *Ep.* 30.11, where it contrasts with *componere*, here it suggests a dissolution of character that is the opposite of the self-formation that *componere* can denote (*Ep.* 30.12, *composuerat* n.).

§2. ‘At bene aliquis illam fert.’ *Sic,* quomodo vinum. *Itaque* non est quod tibi isti persuadeant eum esse felicem qui a multis obsidetur: *sic* ad illum quemadmodum ad lacum concurritur, quem exhauriunt et turbant. ‘Nugatorium et inertem vocant.’ *Scis* quosdam perverse loqui et significare contraria. Felicem vocabant: *quid ergo? erat?*

§2. Seneca continues to rebut the friend’s critics, but now his arguments arise in response to interjections from Lucilius. These interjections seem to be what Lucilius imagines the critics are likely to say. Alternatively they can be seen as Seneca’s way of responding to parts of Lucilius’ letter. Seneca’s response to the first of these interjections is emphatic: popular success is unhealthy. His response to the second interjection shows impatience: these objections are perverse and stem from a fundamental misconception of the nature of genuine *felicitas*.

‘*At bene … fert.*’: Seneca is interrupted by an objection to his generalization: some take success well. The identity of the interjector is not directly stated. However, it seems simplest to take it as Lucilius, both as it is to him that Seneca responds (*Itaque … tibi*) and as his is clearly the second interjection, due to the *vocant*. **aliquis:** the interjector suggests somebody could be named, though Seneca’s response squashes any chance of this happening. **fert:** (OLD §18) The same sense is found at Hor. *Carm.* 3.27.74-75: *bene ferre magnum / discere fortunam.*

**Sic, quomodo vinum:** Seneca meets this objection with humour exploiting the various senses of *fert.* The interjector intends a more neutral sense such as ‘takes’ or ‘reacts to’ (*fert,* above), but Seneca understands it in the sense of endure (OLD §19). The analogy serves to deflate
the importance of *felicitas*: dealing with success well is likened to the not entirely creditable ability to drink a lot of wine without ill effect. However, by the choice of analogy Seneca is not suggesting *felicitas* is wholly bad, but rather something best had, like wine, in moderation. After all, Seneca speaks favourably of wine further on (§3), and at *Tranq.* 17.9 enjoins moderation in its use (see further, *Ep.* 83, Richardson-Hay 2001 and Motto, *Drinking*).

*Itaque … obsidetur:* Seneca feels the foregoing arguments should be persuasive (*itaque*). He appears to envisage that it is Lucilius (*tibi*) that the friend’s critics (*isti*) are attempting to persuade. Such mobbing, Seneca had stressed, was not a measure of true success (*Ep.* 31.10 non *turba … portantium* n.). And he had already urged Lucilius not to value such friends, who were attracted not to him but his position and wealth (*Epp.* 19.4 and 20.7). Such friends, or clients, were often seen as a burden that resulted from success, as Seneca notes repeatedly in *Brev.* 2.4, 7.6 and 14.3-4. *Non est quod:* *Ep.* 31.5, n. *felicem:* §1 *felicitas*, n. *obsidetur:* at *Ep.* 9.9 Seneca describes a similar mobbing by fair-weather friends: *florentes amicorum turba circumsedet*.

*Sic … turbant:* as with the comparison to handling wine Seneca again belittles success with his choice of comparison. The sense of the victim of popular success being besieged or mobbed (*obsidetur*) is developed in an implicitly agricultural analogy of livestock draining and muddying a watering hole, an image neither Smith nor Armisen-Marchetti discuss. *Sic … quemadmodum:* *Ep.* 30.2 n. *illum:* this is the *eum* of the previous clause. *Lacum:* a term that describes pools and even artificial reservoirs. *Exhauriunt:* this verb is also used to describe the draining of one’s resources, for which clients might be blamed. *Turbant:* this is the regular term for stirring up water to make it muddy (*OLD* §3), but it is also very apt as it is derived from *turba*, a frequent term of opprobrium for Seneca (*Ep.* 30.10 n.) and the agent of the confusion to which this analogy refers. The verb is the root of *perturbatio* (*Ep.* 30.12 n.), which is the opposite of the *tranquillitas* sought in *otium* (above, p. 258).

*Nugatorium … vocant:* the second interjection returns the focus to criticism of the friend. The interjector is more clearly Lucilius this time, who reports the words of the same group of unnamed critics (*vocant*). They accuse the friend of idleness, a particularly damning fault for a public figure, since Roman public values put great stress on *industria* and *labor*, as already noted (above, p. 117). *Nugatorium:* used very infrequently by Seneca, but is strongly critical. At *Ep.* 117.30, for instance, he describes syllogisms as *sollertissimas nugas* at the start of a criticism of
them that concludes that letter. **inertem**: a regular term for idleness for Seneca. At *Ep.* 76.4 he describes the popular opinion of those attending philosophical lectures as: *hi plerisque videntur nihil boni negotii habere quod agant; inepti et inertes vocantur*. Here as at *Ep.* 8.1 (above, §1 *otium* n.), the term is contrasted with *negotium*.

**Scis ... contraria**: Seneca in his response counters the critics at a fundamental level, ignoring the specifics. The critics are subsumed under a broader category (*quosdam*) and the criticism is described as essentially misguided in terms that reflect the level of theory introduced in *Ep.* 31. That Lucilius is familiar with this is stressed with the initial *scis*. Seneca, it appears, has lost patience with meeting the criticisms one by one and instead goes for the heart of the critics’ error: their values are at odds with reality. Characteristically this disjunction is for Seneca one between words and what they signify (*loqui ... significare*), a disjunction that he often reflects in the contrast between *verba* and *res* (above, p. 4). **perverse**: this is a less frequent synonym for *prave*. It is the opposite of *recte* (cf. *Ep.* 31.11 *rectus* n.) and refers to popular values stemming from the turning away from nature or divine reason (above, p. 112).

**Felicem ... erat?**: Seneca illustrates what he means by the critics’ contrariness by echoing the words of Lucilius’ interjection (*vocabant*). There is a sense of impatience to the reply. Seneca ends this section of the letter with an abrupt one word question (*erat?*). The answer should be obvious given Seneca’s critique of popular success in §1 and in *Ep.* 31. The critics can no more accurately describe the friend’s present state than they could his previous one. **Felicem**: §1 *felicitas*, n. **quid ergo?**: *Ep.* 30.15 n.

§3. Ne illud quidem curo, quod quibusdam nimis horridi animi videtur et tetrici. Ariston aiebat malle se adulescentem tristem quam hilarem et amabilem turbae; vinum enim bonum fieri quod recens durum et asperum visum est; non pati aetatem quod in dolio placuit. Sine eum tristem appellent et inimicum processibus suis: bene se dabat in vetustate ipsa tristitia, perseveret modo colere virtutem, perbibere liberalia studia, non illa quibus perfundi satis est, sed haec quibus tingendus est animus.

§3. Seneca softens and relaxes his tone now. He mentions a new criticism of the friend, his harsh and stern character. This, it seems, is something we are to imagine Lucilius told Seneca in his previous letter. Rather than with an abrupt interjection Seneca introduces the criticism in a more relaxed way and further slows the mood with the analogy to wine that he attributes to Aristo. Stern characters, we are told, mature better. With this Seneca finishes meeting criticism and moves to outline the study the friend must undertake to make progress. The nature of this
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study is the topic of the rest of the letter, and has echoes in language and themes from the previous three letters (Epp. 33-35).

Ne ... tetrici: the illud suggests that Seneca is bringing up an item from Lucilius’ last letter, particularly as Seneca had stated at the start that the friend is Lucilius’ (tuum), rather than a mutual one, making it unlikely this is an observation Seneca makes from direct acquaintance with the friend. Seneca describes the character of the friend with two adjectives that in origin describe one’s appearance, rough and frowning. horridi: (OLD §5) Cicero, Fin. 4.78, applies this epithet to Stoics both in their language and their way of life. animi: (OLD §14). tetrici: properly this describes the appearance of a person’s face, ‘frowning’ or ‘twisted’.

Ariston ... turbae: To support his point that a harsh character is not a disadvantage for a student of philosophy Seneca notes Aristo’s preference for such a character. This provides a lead into the topic of what Seneca feels is the appropriate education for the friend. As already noted, it also offers a change of tone from that of the adversarial and urgent opening sections. Ariston: Aristo of Chios was roughly contemporary with Zeno, whose pupil he was. In his development of Zeno’s ideas he was not seen as orthodox; his biography is in D.L. 7.160-164. What survives of him is in SVF 1.333-403, this passage being SVF 1.388. In a number of amusing analogies (SVF 1.391-393; cf. also D.L. 7.161) he appears to have shared Seneca’s contempt for dialectic. Marcus Aurelius credits reading him for his conversion to philosophy (Fro. Ad M. Caes. 4.13). Seneca quotes him a number of times (MOTTO, Philosophers: Aristo); most significantly it is his negative opinion of precepts, quoted at Ep. 94.2, that provides the launching for a discussion on precepts and doctrines in the two longest letters of the collection (Epp. 94-95). Diogenes Laertius, 7.163, gives a list of Aristo’s works, but notes that some considered only his four books of letters to Cleanthes genuine. adulescentem: §4 iuveni n. hilarem et amabilem turbae: the first of these qualities is neutral, or even positive, but the second is clearly undesirable, as Seneca stressed at the end of Book III (Ep. 29.12). Such popularity was achieved through aligning oneself with popular values, values inimical to philosophical ones (above, p. 10).

vinum ... placuit: Aristo makes an analogy between youths of stern character and wine that is harsh and bitter when fresh. Aulus Gellius, 13.2.5-6, records a similar analogy by the poet Accius, who compares a writer’s talent to fruit:
‘quod in pomis est, itidem... esse aiunt in ingeniis; quae dura et acerba nascuntur, post fiunt mitia et iucunda; sed quae gignuntur statim vieta et mollia atque in principio sunt uvida, non matura mox fiunt, sed putria. Relinquendum igitur visum est in ingeni, quod dies atque aetas mitificet.’

The two infinitives (fieri...pati) show the analogy is Aristo’s. For the retained indicative of the two verbs in the relative clauses see Ep. 30.5 est n. bonum: such goodness is, of course, the goal of philosophical education too. durum et asperum: at Ep. 63.5 Seneca quotes Attalus as saying that some fruit can be suaviter aspera and it is the bitterness itself of old wines that pleases. non pati aetatem: early promise can be deceptive, just as excessive good fortune can lead to destruction (Ep. 39.4).

Sine...tristitia: with this advice Seneca brings to a close the topic of the friend’s character, having first given his own opinion and supported it with the more general observations of Aristo. As at §1 quam...estentet there is the suggestion that time and the friend’s deeds will prove false the opinions of the critics. With this advice Seneca concludes his response to the criticism of the friend’s choice, and with the extended proviso that follows he leads into the next topic, the nature of the friend’s education. Sine: the imperative addressed to Lucilius, along with appellant referring to the critics, brings the more general thoughts back to the specific epistolary context. The instruction is really to ignore what the critics say as false. As such it repeats the thought at the end of §2 that popular statements are at odds with philosophical ones. inimicum: Seneca gives the critics a word very appropriate to their argument: their friend is unfriend-like to the advancement of his career. The word is also used with processibus at Polyb. 9.4. processibus: Hengelbrock 2000, 120-121. Although able to have a philosophical sense, here in the mouths of the critics it makes an ironic contrast with genuine progress. bene se dabit: (OLD §21b). ipsa tristitia: the final placement of the sentence’s subject makes it emphatic. The abstract is personified and transformed from a pejorative to a positive sense. With this choice of word Seneca links explicitly the analogy of wine to the friend.

perseveret...studia: Seneca makes the good outcome to the friend’s character provisional on perseverance. This perseverance must be directed at the cultivation of virtue and the thorough absorption of liberal studies. The first of these requirements is straightforward; for Seneca one’s relationship to virtue was fundamental (above, p. 241). However, he then distinguishes two sorts of liberal studies without explaining what the difference between them is.
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C. ANCIK 1967, 5, n. 13, is content to see this as a foreshadowing of the explanation that occurs in Ep. 88: for philosophers such studies are only preparatory (§1) and he goes on to insist (§2):

unum studium vere liberale est quod liberum facit, hoc est sapientiae, sublime, forte, magnanimum: cetera pusilla et puerilia sunt.

Therefore, only the study of philosophy is truly a liberal study. And if it is with philosophy that Seneca intends the soul to be imbued here (so LORETTO, 72, n. 3 and PRÉCHAC, 152, n. 3), then the contrast between such study and the cultivation of virtue is perhaps one between action and contemplation (above, p. 183). However, in reading the Epistles in sequence it is not obvious that the far later Ep. 88 should be used to understand this section. In other places Seneca is more favourable to liberal studies (especially HELV. 17.3-4) or to literature as part of them (Ep. 82.3), and he wrote favourably of Lucilius’ efforts expended in producing literature (EPP. 46 and 79). Therefore it seems reasonable to see here a distinction between a useful engagement with liberal studies and a trivializing one. perseveret: the verb is placed emphatically ahead of its conjunction. As at Ep. 34.4 where the bright future Seneca foresees for Lucilius is conditional on perseverance, so too here is effort the precondition of the friend’s progress. So also at Ep. 41.1. modo: (OLD §4). colere virtutem: Ep. 35.1 excolere n. and below p. 417. perbibere … perfundi …
tingendus: the first of these could be taken as a metaphor of digestion, a frequent one for learning (cf. SELLARS 2003, 121-122), but that would involve a change of metaphor for the next two. However, perbibere can also be used of dyeing (Ep. 71.31), and if it is taken in this sense the metaphor is then continued with the next two words (SMITH, 99). Marcus Aurelius, Med. 3.4, uses a similar metaphor for thorough learning: δικαιοσύνη βεβαμμένον εἰς βάθος. liberalia studia: these subjects were modelled on the Greek enkyklíos paideia (Ep. 88.23). This is the first reference to these studies in the Epistles. The only other mentions outside of Ep. 88 are at EPP. 59.15 and 62.1, the second of which is very positive. A Stoic precedent to Seneca’s devaluation of these studies in Ep. 88 is attributed to Zeno, D.L. 7.32 (= L-S 67B).

Section B (§§4-6). Having finished meeting the criticisms of the friend’s retirement, Seneca looks at the student-teacher relationship between Lucilius and his friend. He states that the friend is at the right age to be instructed and the instruction that Lucilius is giving him is a benefit of the first order, one that is as good to give as receive. He expands on this by showing that the repayment of such a benefit, unlike with business debts, lies beyond the control of Fortune, as it requires only the proper intention (voluntas). This invulnerability to Fortune is developed at the
letter’s centre with an image of the mind brought to perfection and unshifted by fortune, whether
good or bad.

§4. Hoc est discendi tempus. ‘Quid ergo? aliquod est quo non sit discendum?’ Minime; sed
quamadmodum omnibus annis studere honestum est, ita non omnibus institui. Turpis et
ridicula res est elementarius senex: iuveni parandum, seni utendum est. Facies ergo rem
utilissimam tibi, si illum quam optimum feceris; haec aiunt beneficia esse expetenda
tribuendaque, non dubie primae sortis, quae tam dare prodest quam accipere.

§4. Seneca gives some detail about the friend’s age: he is a iuvenis, which is a suitable age to
be receiving instruction. He expands on this to delineate what age is not appropriate to being
taught, before then defining the instruction Lucilius is giving as a benefit, one that is mutual. This
stress on mutual benefit reminds the reader of the previous two letters in which Seneca stressed
the benefit he gained from Lucilius’ progress.

Hoc ... tempus: from stating the necessity for study as a prerequisite for progress, Seneca
now adds that it is also appropriate to the friend’s age.

‘Quid ... discendum?’: Lucilius is given his final interjection, one which gives Seneca the
opportunity to distinguish between study and receiving instruction. Quid ergo: Ep. 30.15 n.

Minime ... institui: Seneca distinguishes between study and instruction in a pointed
observation. The antithesis between studere and institui is increased by the final placement of
institui and the contrast between omnibus annis and non omnibus. Quemadmodum ... ita: Ep. 30.2 n.
honestum: the term of moral approval (Ep. 31.4 honesta n.) that contrasts with turpe in the next
sentence. studere: Ep. 35.1 studeas n.

Turpis ... utendum est: the image of the elementarius senex is very reminiscent of the satire in
Ep. 33.7. There Seneca used turpe to describe the targets of his disgust. Here he adds derision with
ridicula. He concludes with a sententia antithesizing the young man and the old man and defining
the proper activity for each, preparing and using. Designating the friend as a iuvenis leaves us
with an age of up to his mid forties (OLD s.v.). He is younger, then, than Lucilius, but we should
not imagine his instruction is as basic as the elementarius senex might suggest. We could also ask if
it is exclusively philosophical education that is indicated. Finally, do we assume that Lucilius is
the teacher, the one giving the instruction? If he is, how, then, does what Seneca teaches in the
Epistles fit the paradigm? After all, Lucilius is not a iuvenis and is, or very nearly is, a senex. In
teaching, or at least mentoring, his friend, Lucilius is shown properly as using what he has learnt. At Ep. 33 and again in Ep. 39 Seneca indicates that his friend’s education is not merely the letters, but the entire works of other philosophers (Ep. 33.5). However, as has already been argued (above, p. 34), Seneca does not shape the Epistles as a textbook nor portray himself as a teacher. The work is more varied, and the relationship that is most stressed is that of friendship. Therefore, it is better to think of Seneca offering his reader advice (Ep. 38.1 consilium n.) as opposed to instruction, especially after Book III. Turpis ... res: Ep. 31.5 turpe n. As at Ep. 33.7 Seneca appeals to the reader’s sense of dishonour, something he does again in the next section (§5 minus ... decoquere n.).

Facies ... feceris: Seneca introduces a new idea that Lucilius is benefiting himself in working to improve his friend. This, of course, was a prominent theme to the previous two letters, where Seneca focused on the benefit he obtained from Lucilius’ progress. Now, however, it is Lucilius who will benefit and as such he is showing himself acting on the challenge in Ep. 33.9, iam et praecipe. The importance Seneca places on this activity is shown by the repeated superlatives (utilissimam ... optimum).

haec ... accipere: the reference to Lucilius’ benefit is expanded by observing that the gift of moral instruction is a beneficium and one of the first order, one that should be both bestowed and received. Why this is so had already been shown in the previous pair of letters, but Seneca also spends the next section contrasting such a benefit from material transactions. aiunt: the plural suggests that this is a commonly held notion among philosophers. sortis: (OLD §9c) used to denote the grade of something. It appears again at Ep. 52.3 along with its synonym nota.

§5. Denique nihil illi iam liberi est, spopondit; minus autem turpe est creditori quam spei bonae decoquere. Ad illud aes alienum solvendum opus est negotianti navigatione prospera, agrum colenti ubertate eius quam colit terrae, caeli favore: ille quod debet sola potest voluntate persolvi. In mores fortuna ius non habet.

§5. Seneca adds a new detail, the friend is bound by oath. The exact nature of it is not explained, though this is not the only place that Seneca likens adopting a philosophical life to taking an oath. He goes on to explain that it would be more shameful to default on the promising future the oath entails than on a commercial transaction. The reason for this is that the ability to repay a commercial transaction lies in the power of Fortune, but the only prerequisite for the friend’s repayment is the proper intention (voluntas), over which Fortune has no power.
Denique ... spopondit: the denique suggests that Seneca offers this as the culmination in a series of arguments on the necessity or importance of study for the friend. Whether Seneca intends the oath as literal or figurative is hard to say. Certainly he opens the next letter by suggesting Lucilius is similarly bound (Ep. 37.1 sacramento n.) by a military oath and at Ep. 95.35 he suggests that such a bond to virtue is a precondition for progress. In evoking such an oath Seneca is appealing to the friend’s sense of fides, an example of how Seneca recruits the emotive power of Roman values for the end of philosophical progress (above, p. 25). liberi: the use of this word echoes liberalia earlier and suggests the paradox that the friend no longer has any freedom in choosing to study the subject by which he will acquire true freedom. Freedom is stressed strongly in the following letter, and a similar paradox is created §3 si vis ... rexerit n. spopondit: the context for such a pledge is judicial or commercial (OLD §1), which fits both with the context of the friend retiring from public life and the commercial language used to describe it (e.g. §1 negotium); it also fits with the two commercial transactions with which it is next contrasted.

minus ... decoquere: the commercial context of spopondit is developed in the contrast Seneca suggests between becoming bankrupt to a creditor and to a promising future. The contrast is the degree of disgrace (minus ... turpe). The reason it is more disgraceful to default on the good hope is explained next. spei bonae: this is the hope that Seneca has for the friend, hope which he had expressed at §1 that the friend’s deeds would silence his critics and at §3 that even his stern character would develop into something good. Such hope might be shared by Lucilius and reported to the friend where it could serve to motivate, as the friend would be keen not to disappoint such good regard. Hope for his progress was something that Seneca had earlier expressed of Lucilius (Ep. 16.2), a hope that had developed into confidence by Ep. 32.2. turpe: the second appeal to the reader’s sense of honour in short succession (above, §4 Turpis ... res n.) decoquere: (OLD §5b).

Ad illud ... persolvi: Seneca uses two analogies from the commercial sphere to explain the greater stigma of failure to fulfil moral promise. Repayment of a loan for a sea voyage is dependent on a favourable trip, and repayment by a farmer depends on the fertility of the land and good weather. These preconditions are, as the next sentence makes explicit, within the power of Fortune to alter. The level of uncertainty present in both activities was much higher in the ancient world than now (Nat. 4a pr. 7), and sea voyages in particular were seen as particularly risky (e.g. Ot. 8.4, Tranq. 11.8 and Ep. 49.11). That moral promise can be repaid by one’s will alone
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(sola ... voluntate) can be understood in two senses. The first is that a benefit, unlike a loan, is truly repaid by a grateful attitude, an idea Seneca develops at length in Ben. 2.30-35, e.g. gratus ... homo esse potest voluntate (Ben. 2.31.1). The second sense, as MAURACH 1975, 345, n. 28, notes, is that the will is the precondition of progress, analogous to favourable weather and fertile land for the farmer. The will is what is needed to make progress as Seneca had insisted in Ep. 34.3. And as the will is something that Fortune has no power over, failure to utilize it lies with the individual alone. negotianti ... colenti: substantival participles (Ep. 30.4 perituri n.). ille: this pronoun, referring to the friend, is emphasized by standing outside the relative clause of which it is part.

voluntate: as mentioned above, Seneca gives great stress to this term in the De Beneficiis (GRIMAL 1992, 155). It had an important sense in Roman law (DIHLE 1982, 135-142), where the tendency to leave laws unchanged and instead to interpret them led to the need to distinguish between the intention (voluntas) of a law or a legal text, such as a will, and its words (verba). DIHLE 1982, 142, notes that no distinction was made between the source of this intention, whether from cognition or emotion. persolvi: in contrast to the simple payment of the earlier solvendum the prefix per-stresses that this is a payment in full.

In mores ... habet: in this sententia Seneca crystallizes the essence of the distinction he had been developing. It is a fundamental Stoic one, between what one has power over and what one does not, between the internal and the external. However, rather than as a dry schoolbook distinction (e.g. Epict. Ench. 1.1), Seneca presents it here as a confrontation with a threatening deity, Fortune (above, p. 12). mores: a similar contrast between character as revealed by one’s habits (mores) and Fortune occurs at Ep. 47.15: sibi quisque dat mores, ministeria casus assignat.

fortuna: this is the first use of the word in Book IV, and it is a personification, able to refer to the goddess. She had figured prominently in previous books, but only indirectly in this book with reference to the second-rate nature of popular success (Ep. 36.1 felicitas n.). ius: SMITH, 141. The judicial and commercial language of this section is continued. The authority of fortune in legal terminology is repeated at Ep. 39.3. Seneca also speaks of the ius of fortuna at Ep. 57.3 and Brev. 10.2.

§6. Hos disponat ut quam tranquilli... sed in eodem habitu est quomodocumque res cedunt; cui sive adgeruntur vulgaria bona, supra res suas eminet, sive aliquid ex istis vel omnia casus excussit, minor non fit.
§6. This vision of the goal towards which the friend is striving is the centre of the letter. It brings to a close the opening section on why the friend should study and in setting out the endpoint of such study it prepares for the focus of the rest of the letter, what the friend should study. The focus on the mind picks up a similar focus at the end of Ep. 31. However, rather than defining goodness as he did in that letter, here Seneca delineates a constancy that is unaffected by any change in fortune. The martial connotations of such constancy are developed in the next half of the letter.

Hos ... cedunt: Seneca uses calm and measured language to describe the way in which the friend should arrange his mores so the animus in him may come to a state of perfection, a state unaffected by changes in fortune. tranquillissimus: such tranquillity is one of the key attributes of the happy life, Ep. 30.12 tranquillitas n. ille animus: the shift in subject is significant. It is not the friend who comes to perfection. Furthermore, the ille suggests a degree of autonomy and separateness to the animus, as Gummere, 249, puts it ‘that spirit within him’. For a similar duality in Ep. 41, see below, p. 408. perfectum: (OLD §3c), this nominal usage also occurs at Epp. 69.5 and 94.39. ablatum ... adiectum: the calmness with which these changes are accepted is reinforced by these two neutral unemotive terms. sentit ... est ... cedunt: the present tense gives this a universalizing sense. Just as Seneca frequently has a retained indicative in O.O. (Ep. 30.5 est n.), so here these verbs resist the attraction into the subjunctive from being in clauses depending on a subjunctive (G-L §663). in eodem habitu: such an unchanging state is the quality of constantia that was emphasized at the close of the two preceding letters (Epp. 34.4 and 35.4; Maurach 1975, 345). cedunt: (OLD §7a).

cui sive ... non fit: it is in terms of magnitudo animi (above, p. 24) that Seneca frames this expansion to the previous sentence: the soul is not overshadowed by possessions nor reduced by their loss. vulgaria bona: these contrast with the true good explicated in Ep. 31. eminet: the great soul, conscious of its divine origin views possessions from the elevation of a cosmic view that makes them petty (Williams 2003, 10-12). casus: although roughly a synonym for fortuna, it is less elevated, not being a divinity, and is less threatening than the other term. As such it is suited to the tranquil state being described. From this perspective Fortune is seen as only ‘chance’ (below, p. 416, n. 792). excussit: (OLD §8c) so too at Ep. 45.9. minor: the great soul is not made smaller by this.
Section C (§§7-9). Seneca begins the next section of the letter with references to the education of youth from the most threatening cultures that bordered the Roman world. They are set alongside the education of the Romans’ forefathers. Their education prepares for the question what should the friend learn. The answer draws some of its essence from the martial education outlined, as it is a martial constancy to despise death that is needed. Seneca stresses that such contempt is not easy to learn and its martial character is confirmed by the situations he describes of where it is needed (Armisen-Marchetti, 77).

§7. Si in Parthia natus esset, arcum infans statim tenderet; si in Germania, protinus puer tenerum hastile vibraret; si avorum nostrorum temporibus fuisset, equitare et hostem comminus percutere didicisset. Haec singulis disciplina gentis suae suadet atque imperat.

§7. In a tricolon crescens (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’… malus?’ n.) Seneca presents Lucilius with what the friend’s education would be were he born in a different time or place, namely among Parthians, Germans or early Romans, who are all mentioned as training their young to be warriors. The two major military threats to the Roman Empire are described alongside those whose martial character created the empire. Interestingly, Seneca makes no mention of present day Romans, or of Greeks. As such the dominant rhetorical education of the day is ignored. The types of education described are foreign to Seneca and his audience, with the added poignancy that their Roman ancestors are as foreign to Seneca and his contemporaries as distant barbarians.

Si in Parthia ... didicisset: Seneca’s focus is on the physical actions that the friend would have learnt, stretching a bow, brandishing a spear or learning to ride a horse and fight hand-to-hand. Only the Roman is elevated somewhat by the note that this is learned (didicisset); the others engage, perhaps, in something more instinctual. As with the surface variation and underlying similarity of the effects of success in §1, they all receive a warrior education, though the weapons vary. This variation might suggest that something fundamental has been missed, something that only philosophy can properly remedy. There is a progression in age from infans to puer to an undefined age for the Roman. Seneca creates a picture of humorous exaggeration in the idea of archery being the first activity (statim) that Parthian boys undertake. The bow, of course, was their characteristic weapon. There is similar urgency with the Germans (protinus), suggestive perhaps of their barbarian levity. tenerum hastile: the spear is appropriate to the child’s age and size (tenerum). avorum nostrorum temporibus: the greater degree of dignity bestowed on the education of Roman ancestors is reflected by this sonorous announcement of the shift in time and
place. equitare: this detail suggests the activity of the class to which Lucilius belongs, the equites. hostem: along with the element of learning for the Roman there is slightly more depth to the education, going beyond weapons training to actually facing an enemy and one close at hand.

Haec ... imperat: Seneca closes the section with a sententious summary. He personifies disciplina, who persuades, even orders these activities upon the individuals of each nation.
disciplina gentis suae: the local and limited nature of disciplina’s imperatives is emphasized by this phrase. In the next section Seneca distils something more universal from philosophy.

§8. Quid ergo huic meditandum est? quod adversus omnia tela, quod adversus omne hostium genus bene facit, mortem contemnere, quae quin habeat aliquid in se terrible, ut et animos nostros quos in amorem sui natura formavit offendat, nemo dubitat; nec enim opus esset in id comparari et acui in quod instinctu quodam voluntario iremus, sicut feruntur omnes ad conservationem sui.

§8. The training described in the previous section is particular to time and place, so Seneca asks what it is that the friend should practise. The answer is despising death, a training that is effective against every enemy or threat, though one that takes hard work to acquire as it goes against a natural instinct for self preservation.

Quid ... meditandum est?: implicit in this rhetorical question is that the previous types of education are to be rejected. However, the context Seneca has created by referring to them means that an answer to the question he now poses is unlikely to be a training in public speaking, which was central to the elite education of the Mediterranean world of Seneca and his correspondent. It is as though by going to the extremes in time and space of the Roman world Seneca wants to suggest that contemporary Roman culture has nothing to offer. Although his answer is drawn from philosophy it was not as ‘recommended and prescribed’ in Seneca’s age as Gummere, 251, suggests. huic: the friend. meditandum: (OLD §5) at root a verb that refers to a mental activity, which contrasts with the physical training of §7. At Ep. 26.8 Seneca quotes Epicurus’ command, ‘meditare mortem’. Such meditatio mortis would lead to the contemptio mortis demanded here.

quod ... contemnere: Seneca builds up the answer by delaying it with two clauses that explain how it is effective. These clauses continue the martial imagery of §7 (tela ... hostium) and are linked by the anaphora of their first three words. Seneca claims for it a universal efficiency (omnia ... omne) in contrast to the training that is at best effective only in battle. Learning to face death was fundamental to ancient philosophy, as already noted (above, p. 64). Elsewhere, the
training is seen as needed against Fortune (above, p. 13). **facit:** *(OLD §30)* SETAIOLI 2000, 20, argues that this use with *facere* with *adversus* is colloquial. It is adopted in the technical language of medicine, ‘effective against’, which would not be totally inappropriate here. **contemnere:** Ep. 31.3 contemptus n.

quae ... dubitat: Seneca hastens to add that the fear of death has a natural basis. In doing this he makes use of the Stoic concept of *oikeiōsis* (above, p. 111). The instinct for self-preservation was natural, as Seneca stresses here (*natura formavit*). However, in humans with maturity this should develop into an awareness that what was most deserving of preservation was the *virtus* present in one. In this letter Seneca does not develop such an argument; it is found in essence in *Epp.* 71 and 74. He had already discussed the proper limit to the care of the body at Ep. 14.1-2, and examined death in numerous letters (above, p. 64). Instead, in this letter, he seeks to inspire a boldness in his reader in response to the *exempla* he uses. **amorem sui:** this phrase is a term used to refer to *oikeiōsis* (above, p. 241). **nemo dubitat:** this is universally agreed and Seneca does not deny it.

nec enim ... ad conservationem sui: Seneca draws out the point that the training that has been discussed would not be necessary if it were for something we would choose of our own free will. He illustrates the sort of freely chosen action he means with the exact opposite of despising death, namely the instinct for self-preservation. **comparari et acui:** these two verbs suggest two different aspects to the preparation Seneca envisions. The first is a very matter of fact getting ready; the second adds that such preparation includes being roused to face the danger *(OLD §3)*; this concern to involve the student’s emotions is an important one for Seneca and had been emphasized in the previous two letters (above, p. 243). Both verbs are appropriate to a military context — getting one’s equipment ready and sharpening one’s weapons. **instinctu ... voluntario:** that is a prompting from one’s own free will, one not influenced by external compulsion. To align the sense of this phrase with the example Seneca gives, it seems that a prompting that also coincides with one’s will is meant. **ad conservationem sui:** Cic. *Fin.* 3.16 on the same topic has *ad se conservandum.* **iremus ... feruntur:** Seneca uses the same words to make a similar contrast between self-directed and passive movement at *Epp.* 23.8 and 37.5. Self-preservation is not something we have to work at. There is a subtle distinction between the ‘we’ of the *iremus*, the students of philosophy who are preparing, and the *omnes* who are carried along passively.
§9. Nemo discit ut si necesse fuerit aequo animo in rosa iaceat, sed in hoc duratur, ut tormentis non summittat fidem, ut si necesse fuerit stans etiam aliquando saucius pro vallo pervigilet et ne pilo quidem incumbat, quia solet obrepere interim somnus in aliquod adminiculum reclinatis. Mors nullum habet incommodum; esse enim debet aliquid cuius sit incommodum.

§9. Seneca continues by illustrating the sorts of situations that one prepares for in disregarding death. Staying true to one’s fides under torture and keeping watch while wounded require a martial steadfastness that the Romans particularly admired. He concludes the section with a sententia that death is not a hardship, preparing for the more contemplative arguments against the fear of death that follow.

Nemo ... iaceat: Seneca is particularly concerned to stress that something must be learned and it is not something easy. He uses satire to do this: the build-up of si necesse fuerit aequo animo adds to the ridicule of training to lie on a bed of roses. aequo animo: Ep. 30.4 n. in rosa: this was a commonplace for the height of pleasure (Hor. Carm. 2.5.1). Cicero, Fin. 2.65 and Tusc. 5.73, contrasts it, as here, with facing torture.

sed in hoc ... fidem: the first example of what a philosopher must train for is a commonplace of the philosophical tradition, established as such, perhaps, by Plato, Rep. 361e, as something the sage must be happy while enduring. In the Roman tradition the outstanding exemplum of constancy under torture was Regulus (Prov. 3.9-11). Concern to face torture well was not of academic or antiquarian interest to Seneca and his audience, as the Pisonian conspiracy would show. duratur: (OLD §2); the passive can have either a middle sense or suggest the unexpressed agency of the training or the teacher. in hoc: Ep. 35.2 ob hoc n. fidem: as already noted fides was a key attribute of a Roman noble (above, p. 15), and it was in maintaining his that Regulus displayed his great constancy (Ep. 71.17).

ut si ... reclinatis: the second example Seneca develops at greater length. There is pervasive alliteration, particularly in pro vallo pervigilet. The detail of not even using the spear for support draws out the contrast between this sentry and the figure on a rose strewn couch: he is standing (stans) not lying, and in contrast to the couch he spurns even the uncomfortable support of a spear. The image of the guard is a powerful one for Seneca; he has wounded ones at Prov. 5.3 and at Helv. 5.3 he describes himself as having taken refuge in the camp of philosophers and been ordered to stand guard, ever vigilant against Fortune. Such vigilance or preparedness was
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necessary to avoid being taken unawares by Fortune (e.g. Epp. 18.8-11 and 70.5; HACHMANN 2000, 311 and BUSCH 1961, 74). The image can be related to one with very early antecedents in philosophy: at Phd. 62b Plato says that the human condition is like being in a phroura, which Seneca, along with many others, interprets as being in a guard station (INWOOD 2007a, 151). Seneca uses the analogy for the philosopher’s role at Epp. 51.6, 65.18 and 120.12. At Const. 19.3 the analogy is rather to holding one’s post in the line of battle. ut si necesse fuerit: this phrase is repeated from the earlier mocking example, reinforcing the contrast and preparing for a longer example. stans: standing was for Seneca the proper stance in which to meet Fortune (above, p. 14). pervigilet: the prefix, besides assisting the alliteration, emphasizes the length of the watch — all night. incumbat ... reclinatis: the contrast to the couch is increased as both these words can also be applied to lying on a couch.

Mors ... incommodum: the sententia with which Seneca closes this section is expressed as a paradox: death is not a hardship. However, he explains, what no longer exists cannot be inconvenienced, an idea he had expressed prominently at Ep. 30.5-6, where its association to the Epicurean tradition and its use in consolatory literature were noted; similarly it is at Ep. 24.11. See also Cic. Tusc. 1.12. For the use of a sententia to conclude see Ep. 30.4 nullo genere ... diutius n. incommodum: Ep. 30.5 n.

Section D (§§10-12). Having looked at what must be learned by the friend, contempt for death, and why, Seneca continues by looking at how one may do this. Implicit in the earlier examples was an appeal to the reader to seek to emulate the constantia of his Roman forebears. In this concluding section Seneca offers some arguments drawn from Stoic physics to allay the reader’s fear of death. Seneca closes the letter with the observation that it would be shameful for these arguments not to achieve the equanimity in the face of death the young and the mad possess.

The cycle of nature Seneca describes here was earlier alluded to at Ep. 30.11 and as he promises at Ep. 36.11, is developed in further detail at Ep. 71.12-16, where he describes the Stoic idea of palingenesia (HACHMANN 1995, 216-217), which occurs through the cyclical transformation of the world from divine fire into the elements first air, then water, then earth and back again (ecpyrōsis, L-S 37). This idea was touched on briefly at Ep. 9.16, but is given great space in Nat. 3.27 ff. where Seneca describes the end of the world through flood. Descriptions of the afterlife, such
as appear here in brief, are a regular feature of the consolatory tradition, for example, the images with which Seneca concludes his consolation to Marcia (Marc. 25-26). AHLBORN 1990 and BAMMEL 1996 discuss this passage in relation to its use by Roman Christian authors.

§10. Quod si tanta cupiditas te longioris aevi tenet, cogita nihil eorum quae ab oculis abeunt et in rerum naturam, ex qua prodierunt ac mox processura sunt, reconduntur consumi: desinunt ista, non pereunt, et mors, quam pertimescimus ac recusamus, intermittit vitam, non eripit; veniet iterum qui nos in lucem reponat dies, quem multi recusarent nisi oblitos reduceret.

§10. Seneca suggests that if the reader is consumed by such a great desire for a longer life he can look to the cycles found in nature for reassurance that we will be reborn.

Quod si ... tenet: there is ironic exaggeration, perhaps, in the way Seneca offers a perfectly serious cure to a sickness that the reader should not now possess. Firstly the quod si suggests that the foregoing arguments should have been persuasive. Then Seneca suggests that the reader may be in the grip of a passion (cupiditas) for a longer span of life, something at Ep. 32.3-4 he had stressed was irrelevant to the quality of one’s life. Although such exaggeration serves to cue the reader to these previous arguments, the cosmic perspective Seneca now offers is one he valued highly (HERINGTON 1966, 439). cupiditas: BORGO, 42-45. te: it is notable that Seneca suggests it is Lucilius, or perhaps the reader at the next remove, who might have this desire. From this point on the friend drops from sight and Seneca addresses the reader with a pair of imperatives (cogita ... Observa).

cogita ... consumi: Seneca describes the cycle of life in terms of movement: things go from our sight (abeunt) and are put back into nature (reconduntur) from where they proceeded or will proceed (prodierunt ... processura sunt). This sense of movement contrasts with the language of change at Ep. 30.11, but fits with the description of the movement of the heavens that follows. A similar idea is expressed at Ben. 5.8.5. For the retained indicative of the four verbs in the relative clauses see Ep. 30.5 est n. cogita: Ep. 30.18 n.

desinunt ... eripit: having established the metaphor of movement for the cycle of life Seneca uses it to offer milder words to explain death. What appears to perish only halts and death does not snatch life from us but rather interrupts it. In both of these the metaphor of ceased or paused motion is offered in contrast to destruction or theft. As at Ep. 30.17 esse ... videri n., Seneca is contrasting reality and appearance. The promise of an afterlife here is not something Seneca is
consistent or even certain about (above, p. 263). mors: death is personified and characterized by two relative clauses that delay the description of its action. pertimescimus ... recusamus: Seneca characteristically includes himself and the reader as having these habits. They are, of course, what must be overcome by learning to disregard death (mortem contemnere).

veniet ... reduceret: the word order in which the verb comes first and the relative clause precedes its antecedent creates a dignified effect. We are destined to be born again, which Seneca describes as a day coming again — one of the smaller units of time used to describe the largest one, the world-cycle or great year (L-S 52, Long 1986, 168 and White 2003, 141). veniet: earlier editions of REYNOLDS, 100, have venient with no comment in the apparatus criticus. This typing mistake is corrected by the 9th impression at the latest. lucem: (OLD §6) this idiom of being returned to the light of life carries the suggestion of coming out of some place where it is absent, some underworld. recusarent: the repetition of this verb from the previous sentence creates an ironic contrast: we do not consent to death, but many would not consent to being reborn! Aeneas in Verg. Aen. 6.721 is a memorable example of such unwillingness, while Augustine, Civ. 10.30, 12.14 and 12.21, objected to the idea at length. Setaioli 2000, 292, notes that the sense of choice this implies fits with the Platonic idea of the soul’s survival from one life to the next, rather than the Stoic concept, in which ecpyrosis interrupts any survival between lives (so Bammel 1996, 8-9). oblitos: examples of this are found in Pl. Rep. 621a and Verg. Aen. 6.713-715. Lucretius, 3.856 ff. grants the possibility of being recreated, but with no memory of the previous life.


§11. Seneca promises to treat this subject in greater detail later, enough for now that one should depart calmly as one will come back again. He then illustrates the concept of change and return with the example of the heavenly bodies.

Sed postea ... mutari: the antithesis between perire and mutare gets to the essence of what has been discussed above. The videntur reiterates the contrast between appearance and reality. Although Préchac, 154, n. 4, feels this promise is not kept, it seems clear that it refers to Ep. 71.12-
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16 (Hachmann 1995, 216-217 and Maurach 1975, 346, n. 30). In particular at Ep. 71.13-14 Seneca stresses the point that destruction is only an appearance created by the feebleness of our minds:

\[
\text{quidquid est non erit, nec peribit sed resolvetur. Nobis solvi perire est; proxima enim intuemur, ad ulteriora non prospicit mens hebes et quae se corpori addixerit; alioqui fortius finem sui suorumque patet, si speraret, ut> omnia illa, sic vitam mortemque per vices ire et composita dissolvii, dissoluta componi, in hoc opere aeternam artem cuncta temperantis dei verti.}
\]

Two alternative suggestions for where this promise is kept that seems less plausible are at Ep. 58.23-24 (Donini 1979, 201, n. 15) and Ep. 77 (Gummere, 77). This forward reference supports both the idea that the Epistles have an overarching structure and the requirement that they be read sequentially.

Aequo ... exire: Seneca gives the lesson to be drawn from observing the cycle of change in nature. Given that he had introduced this section as something to satisfy a desire for longer life, it is fair to assume that the hope of return would be a comfort. However, he had also just said that many would not want to return unless they had forgotten, so such a thought is not invariably going to be a consolation. For reference to the cyclical rebirth of one’s self in Stoic theory see SVF 2.627 (= L-S 52E). exire: departing as a metaphor for death is common and Seneca uses a very similar phrasing at Ep. 30.4. debet: Maurach 1975, 346, n. 31, takes this to refer to the friend. However, this seems somewhat awkward after the shift to second person singular, and a generalized ‘one’ seems better, as Préchac, 154, uses; Gummere, 253, goes so far as to say ‘you’. rediturus: Ep. 33.3 inventurum n.

Observa ... surgere: Seneca now seeks to prove his claim of cyclical recurrence. As someone who seeks to follow nature, he properly draws his argument from the observation of the world (rerum ... mundo) and in particular the heavens. The observation of nature figured prominently in Seneca’s philosophy; its place is well shown in his description of the perfect soul that encapsulates virtue at Ep. 66.6: toti se insersens mundo et in omnis eius actus contemplationem suam mittens. Seneca also made use of the argument that the physique of humans was designed for viewing the heavens (Ot. 5.4 and Ep. 94.56, Scarpat 1970, 252, n. 9). He continues the metaphor of movement in contrasting the appearance of destruction (extingui) with a reality of regular descending and ascending. Observa: Slightly differently from cogita at §10 earlier, this instruction, while similar in effect to a meditatio, can actually involve physically observing the heavens, though one could also simply recall to mind these phenomena.
Aestas … abiget: Seneca now gives some concrete examples of this cycle. He starts with the succession of the seasons, choosing summer and winter, and finishing with the alternation of day and night. The style is quite grand, with personification of the periods of time: summer departs, but another year leads her back. Such personification also fits with the identification of the seasons with the stars of the zodiac to which they are related. Such stars could be thought of as sentient beings for Seneca, gods, who bestowed benefits on humanity through their work (Ben. 6.22). The grand style is also seen in the variation with which Seneca describes the celestial change: another year will lead back (adduct) summer, while winter is given back (referent) by her months; night is made to attack the sun (obruit), but it will be chased off (abiget) in turn by the day. Seneca expresses the sense of recurrence through driving home the point of a familiar idea three times. He makes reference to this cycle also at Epp. 24.26, 58.24 and 107.8. Aestas … hiemps: the binary opposition of these two seasons picks out the two most contrasting seasons and forms a pattern with day and night next.

Stellarum … mergitur: Seneca sums up by referring to the mechanism by which the alternations of time are marked, the movement of the stars. The stars are described as passing by one point (quidquid) only to make for it again. levatur … mergitur: as with the previous two verbs the present tense shows this as a simultaneous action in contrast to the alternations marked by future tense verbs in the previous sentence. The passive tenses suggest an unnamed agency to this process, the stars perhaps. The movement of the heavens is something happening continuously (adsidue), though we mostly only mark the divisions in seasons (at Ben. 4.23 Seneca comments on the work of the stars going largely unnoticed).

§12. Denique finem faciam, si hoc unum adiecero, nec infantes [nec] pueros nec mente lapsos timere mortem et esse turpissimum si eam securitatem nobis ratio non praestat ad quam stultitia perducit. Vale.

§12. Seneca brings the letter to a close with a pointed observation that it would be shameful if ratio could not offer us the same freedom from the fear of death that the very young and the mad have.

Denique … perducit: Seneca adds to the implied appeal to one’s sense of honour at §9 to show Roman steadfastness against death with a paradox that the very young and the mad do not fear death, so it would be extremely shameful (turpissimum) were ratio not able to give us the same security. The reader might see this paradox as comparing the arguments against fearing death
offered in the previous three sections, in which the mention of ratio here refers to the arguments taken from viewing the workings of divine ratio in the natural world (below, ratio n.). In that Seneca offered this cosmic view somewhat ironically as a cure for something unworthy, and as fools get by without such arguments, it is possible he is suggesting that old-fashioned constantia ought to be enough. The antithesis of ratio and stultitia prepares for their prominent role in Ep. 37. Here, as there, they are both personified. hoc unum: points forward to the following acc. and infin. phrase (Ep. 35.3 ob hoc n.). et: Seneca relates these two idea paratactically. praestat ...

perducit: for the retained indicative see Ep. 30.5 est n. securitatem: Ep. 30.3 securi n. ratio: this is the first use of this key concept with its Stoic sense in the Epistles (above, p. 265). Its microcosmic sense, our personal rationality, is perhaps most immediate, but given the cosmic view, just outlined, that describes the working of divine ratio, the macrocosmic one is present too. stultitia: Ep. 30.10 demens n. BORGO, 167.
Seneca’s focus in this letter appears to be to motivate his reader to persevere with his progress in the philosophical life. He does this by describing this life in very Roman terms and by appealing to a Roman sense of pride. This is very evident in the appeal to see the philosophical life as military service. Such an appeal is frequently seen as Stoic, but I will argue it is more Senecan and has a very Roman cast. Also of note in this letter is the emphasis Seneca places on libertas as well as on ratio, both of which will also be examined.

Scholarship on this letter has concentrated on two parts: the antithesis of rule by reason or rule by the passions (§4), and the closing image of the person unable to say how he got to where he is (§5). The first of these is seen by Hachmann as an important stage in Seneca’s developing description of the mind.\textsuperscript{579} It has also received attention as evidence for Seneca having adopted a Posidonian psychological dualism in contrast to early Stoic insistence on the unity of the soul.\textsuperscript{580} The second of them has been used in the debate on Seneca and his possible voluntarist innovation.\textsuperscript{581} Maurach argues that this letter forms a pair with Ep. 36, a view that Hachmann follows.\textsuperscript{582} Maurach also writes usefully on other correspondences this letter has with the rest of Book IV. Motto has a short commentary on the letter and Hengelbrock gives some weight to the martial imagery in this letter.\textsuperscript{583}

\textsuperscript{579} HACHMANN 1995, 276.
\textsuperscript{580} INWOOD 2005a, 37-38, mentions this text in his article on this question.
\textsuperscript{581} §5 Neminem mihi ... velle n.
\textsuperscript{582} MAURACH 1975, 347-349 and HACHMANN 1995, 276.
\textsuperscript{583} MOTTO 1985, 60-61 and HENGELBROCK 2000, 159-160.
It is usually assumed that Seneca’s military metaphors are part of a common Stoic heritage. However, the evidence is actually fairly weak for this. Obviously Seneca is not unique in making use of military metaphors; they are as ubiquitous to human languages as warfare itself. Also clearly martial metaphors are found in Greek philosophers. However, Seneca innovates both in the degree he makes use of them and in the way he appeals to Roman sentiment with them.

The subject of martial metaphors in Stoicism is often examined by New Testament scholars looking for a Greek, or specifically Stoic, source for the concept of *militia spiritualis* found in New Testament epistles. It is possible, however, that such references can be explained with reference to the Old Testament. The fragmentary nature of early Stoic texts means that students such as these biblical scholars are forced to look to imperial sources: Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Most of the evidence cited is Senecan. Furthermore, there is a difference in tone between the three writers.

Epictetus prefers metaphors drawn from athletics. Soldiers are often portrayed by him as foreign, even hostile, as objects of dislike and fear. At *Diss.* 1.14.15-17 he suggests that a philosopher should swear allegiance to his internal divinity as soldiers swear to Caesar. However, whereas Seneca gives no indication in *Ep.* 37 that the military oath Lucilius has sworn is anything other than good and honourable, Epictetus makes the philosophers’ oath superior at the expense of the soldiers’ one. Indeed, Epictetus describes the soldiers in terms reminiscent of those Seneca

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584 EMONDS 1938, 30. SHERMAN 2005a, despite the title, does not examine the use of this metaphor in the ancient sources. See also LAVERY 1980.

585 MANNING 1981, 62, suggests that the comparison of life to a battle is Cynic in origin and had become a commonplace by the time of Cicero, who in *Fam.* 5.16.2 describes as *consolatio pervulgata* the idea that our life is exposed to all the weapons of fortune (*ut omnibus telis fortunae proposita sit vita nostra*).


587 SEVENSTER 1961, 162-163, sees Paul’s use of such imagery as very different from Seneca’s and able to be explained with reference to passages in the Old Testament. MALHERBE 1983, however, sees allusions to Cynic ideas in 2 Cor. 10.3-6 at least.

588 ADAMOPOULO 1996, 137-149, cites only Seneca, while EMONDS 1938 has 11 pages (31-42) on Seneca and only 7 on Epictetus and all the other Stoics (43-49).


590 REGENBOGEN 1936, 115 and e.g. Epict. *Diss* 4.1.79. See also ASMIS 2009, 135-136.
reserves for gladiators at §2; they receive wages (Diss. 1.14.15) and their oath is of an order incomparable with the philosophers’ (Diss. 1.14.17).

Marcus Aurelius makes even less use of military metaphors and belittles his own genuine military activities.\(^{591}\) Likewise Musonius Rufus makes no use of martial imagery in what survives of his words.\(^{592}\) Of contemporary philosophers a possible influence on Seneca’s use of martial imagery are the Sextians, though the evidence for this comes largely from Seneca and is not plentiful.\(^{593}\)

It is among the Cynics that we find a model for Seneca’s soldier-philosopher. Antisthenes emphasizes the warrior virtues of his sage.\(^{594}\) Seneca quotes Posidonius about fighting Fortune, so the idea did not originate with him.\(^{595}\) However, it is only with Seneca that we can see these metaphors as part of a complete body of work.\(^{596}\) And for Seneca, in contrast to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the metaphor of life as military service enobles the philosopher. It makes his activities heroic. The philosopher achieves a more authentic virtus than that which Roman commanders had achieved on the battlefield.\(^{597}\)

How closely Seneca equated the philosophical life with military service is illustrated at Ep. 94.35:

\[
\text{Quemadmodum primum militiae vinculum est religio et signorum amor et deserendi nefas, tunc deinde facile cetera exiguntur mandanturque iussurandum adactis, ita in iis quos velis ad beatam vitam perducere prima fundamenta}
\]


\(^{592}\) This is appropriate for someone whose attempt to preach peace to a Flavian army that was marching on Rome almost got him killed (Tac. Hist. 2.81).

\(^{593}\) The main examples are Sextius’ simile of a wise man being like an army marching in a square (Ep. 59.7) and Fabianus’ description of the appropriate language with which to confront the passions (Brev. 10.1). It is on the strength of these that a fondness for martial imagery is attributed to the Sextians, (e.g. LANA 1952, 20).

\(^{594}\) ADAMOPOULO 1996, 120-126.

\(^{595}\) Ep. 113.28. Also mention of Stilpo conquering his conqueror, Ep. 9.19, is probably pre-Senecan.

\(^{596}\) WILSON 1997, 62-65, comments usefully on the importance of military imagery to Seneca and the Roman cast that he gives it.

\(^{597}\) Victory over the passions, for instance, outdoes terrestrial conquests (Ep. 71.37). At Ep. 94.64-66 he describes Pompey, Marius and Caesar as enslaved by the passions.
iacienda sunt et insinuanda virtus. Huius quadam superstitione teneantur, hanc ament; cum hac vivere velint, sine hac nolint.

The devotion to virtus that Seneca recommends to neophyte philosophers is reminiscent of Lucilius’ oath in this letter. One is instilled, the other sworn, at the early stages of military service. In this context it is significant that philosophia is introduced for the first time in Ep. 4.2 as about to enrol Lucilius in her city, or given the close connection between citizenship and military service, her army. Arguably this association reflects Seneca’s philosophizing of Romana virtus. He retains its martial origins, but employs it in new fields of conflict.598

Seneca, therefore, contrasts with contemporary Stoics in the extent to which he uses military metaphors, and although examples of these metaphors can be found before him, he is unique in the degree to which he used them. In doing this, Seneca appears to be maintaining the original martial sense of virtus, though now exercised in a philosophical context.

Ep. 37 is paired with the preceding letter. It shares a number of themes in common.599 However, it is as much by way of contrast that it relates to that letter. Firstly, the focus is relentlessly on Lucilius: tu and its reflexes are used insistently.600 This contrasts with the focus on Lucilius’ friend in the previous letter. Also the verbs are mostly future tense; Seneca is mapping out Lucilius’ future. In Ep. 36 he outlined the friend’s future study, which was to a large degree retracing ground that Lucilius had already covered. The urgent and insistent tone of this letter contrasts with the more relaxed previous letter. Seneca presents Lucilius with the perhaps unpalatable demand to face death without asking quarter. As such the letter provides a balance to the cosmic view that closed Ep. 36. We might imagine Ep. 37 as a response to a letter from Lucilius who had embraced this view too warmly and was inspired to take his oath. This letter is a corrective: ‘all that contemplatio is all very well, but don’t forget the rest of what you have signed up for — the actio!’

Seneca sets out Lucilius’ future through an extended allegory (§§3-4). Philosophy, Wisdom and Reason are personified and each given roles in Lucilius’ philosophical journey. They counter

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598 Above, p. 10.
599 MAURACH 1975, 348-349.
600 12 times not counting second person verbs.
the Passions and Folly. Philosophy shows the way, Wisdom dismisses the Passions, and Reason, if Lucilius submits to her, will make him a ruler over things and people.

Wisdom is also equated with Freedom (libertas), and the opposition of freedom to the passions introduced in this letter is an important aspect of Seneca’s philosophy. It is alluded to in the Epistles’ opening words: vindica te tibi (Ep. 1.1). At Ep. 37.3 Seneca presents freedom as the crowning gift of philosophy, going beyond mere safety or even happiness: Ad hanc te confer si vis salvus esse, si securus, si beatus, denique si vis esse, quod est maximum, liber. Seneca in his use of libertas appears, in the opinion of Grimal, to innovate in a number of important ways on his Greek predecessors. Our surviving early Stoic sources make little use of the concept of eleutheria. Among earlier writers, Xenophon, for instance, spoke of freedom and slavery in relation to being ruled by bodily pleasures. However, the emphasis there was not so much on freedom itself but on conduct becoming of a free man. By contrast, Seneca emphasizes freedom as being an independence from the passions, from external things and from powers. Furthermore, Grimal argues that unlike the Greek opposition of freedom to slavery, Seneca presents freedom as an attitude of the mind, a habitus animi. Such an attitude freed one from bondage even to life, which Seneca alludes to at Ep. 37.3: potes vincere. Such a doctrine, Grimal argues, had no Greek antecedent and was most appropriate at the time of the Pisonian conspiracy.

In Ep. 37.4 freedom is contrasted with a degrading servitude to the passions. These passions for the first time in the Epistles are here presented as a group. Previously only individual passions had been mentioned: greed, ambition, fear and so on. The passions were a Stoic technical term.

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601 As Maurach 1975, 348, observes, such freedom is a positive concept that moves beyond seeking the essentially negative absence of care that securitas offered in Ep. 36.


603 Grimal 1992, 152.

604 Xen. Mem. 4.5.1-12.


606 Grimal 1992, 154. Roller 2001, 227, would deny such separation of freedom from actually slavery, a view rightly criticized by Mackay 2003, 351. However, as Edwards 2009 shows, Seneca’s metaphorical use of freedom is closely tied to metaphorical forms of slavery.


608 Borgo, 13-16.
The passions were viewed as erroneous judgements about external things either present or expected. Although some writers identified four as cardinal (desire, fear, pain and pleasure), fear and desire were the primary ones. These are the two to which Seneca most frequently referred, the two that were countered by magnitudo animi and constantia respectively. In mentioning the passions as a single undifferentiated group in Ep. 37.4 Seneca presents the reader with a new level of abstraction, an increase in philosophical sophistication, one consonant with Book IV representing a new stage in his progress.

Another increase in philosophical sophistication in this letter is the first extended mention of ratio with its specifically Stoic sense at §4. Ratio appears as part of the extended allegory of this section. It is personified and, as such, appears as something external to us. Rather than presenting the reader with ratio in the sense of one’s microcosmic reason, this seems to be more the macrocosmic reason present in everything. As such, this separateness of ratio can be understood in two ways: firstly it is a divinity that is in us but also in some sense apart from us, an idea that is expanded on in Ep. 41, and secondly it is the divine order of the cosmos visible to the observant philosopher.

As has already been argued, Senecan ratio is not the dialectical reasoning emphasized by many students of Stoicism today. However, it is possible that the reader, encountering ratio here briefly, might make this mistake. If he did, Seneca would quickly disabuse him of it in a number of letters in the following book, where he attacks dialectic. Furthermore, the martial context in which ratio is introduced in this letter suggests that Seneca expects the reader to have recourse to a mental toughness that draws on more of the mind’s resources than mere reasoning. Finally, Seneca hints at his sense of ratio as consilium in this letter when he contrasts

609 Stob. Ecl. 2.7.10 (= W 2.88, SVF 3.378 and L-S 65A) and INWOOD 1997, 63.
610 Above, p. 259.
611 The mention at Ep. 36.12 n. was really just a prelude to its use here.
612 Below, p. 408.
613 Above, p. 21.
614 Epp. 45 and 48.
615 Above, p. 17.
the person *consilio adductus* with someone *impetu inpactus* (§5). In the next letter this idea is further expanded: *philosophia bonum consilium est* (*Ep*. 38.1).616

To focus on matters of doctrine in *Ep*. 37 is to misrepresent it. Seneca does not seek to persuade with argument, but by creating an emotional effect. Lucilius is exhorted to see himself as a soldier fighting for *libertas* against the passions. Although such an image accords more broadly with Seneca’s philosophy elsewhere, it is presented here for inspiration rather than explanation.

616 Above, p. 25.
Commentary on Epistle 37

Division:

- A (§§1-2): Lucilius has made an oath more rigorous than that of a gladiator.
- B (§§3-5): Lucilius’ path to safety lies in submitting to Reason.

Section A (§§1-2). Seneca resumes the major theme of the close of the previous letter, facing death. He presents the reader with a very uncompromising scenario. Lucilius has taken an oath; he is in military service and the oath is more demanding than that which a gladiator takes. As a philosopher Lucilius has signed up not just to face death but to do so willingly and gladly, with no hope of remission.


§1. Seneca claims his friend has sworn an oath to be a good man, presumably some hint of it was in Lucilius’ letter (above, p. 296). This is the strongest bond to *mens bona*. The oath is a military one; Lucilius has enlisted and Seneca warns him that the service is neither easy nor soft. His oath has the same wording as that of a gladiator, but it is as honourable as that one is disgraceful.

*Quod maximum ... rogatus es*: in the opening sentence of this letter Seneca signals that his focus has returned to Lucilius (after being on Lucilius’ friend in the previous letter). Each of the nouns in this sentence picks out a significant aspect of the letter. The *vinculum* is picked up by mention of freedom (§§3-4) and the need to subject oneself to *ratio*. *Bona mens* is the first of a number of feminine nouns in this letter that can be taken as personifications or as references to a divinity. Becoming the *vir bonus* is the goal of philosophy and much of this letter sets out the road
to that goal, as the frequent use of the future tense shows (above, p. 296). Finally in the sacramentum, Seneca insists on the military nature of this commitment, developed particularly in §§1-2. It also appeals to the reader’s identification as a Roman who will strive with all his constantia to keep the fides given in this oath (above, p. 15). Quod: the antecedent of this relative clause is the phrase virum bonum, whose infinitive is understood. vinculum: (OLD §6b). bonam mentem: LAUDIZI 2003, 75-76, gives a good overview of the various senses of this term. Acquiring mens bona is one way of describing the goal of philosophy (e.g. Ep. 16.1). It is a term that does not have a clear Greek equivalent (GRIMAL 1992, 149). Like many important Roman concepts, Mens Bona received religious cult (FEARS 1981, 836). It is possible to see Seneca here alluding to philosophy as the proper cult of this goddess (below, p. 416). BURCK 1972, 84 quotes Heinze as suggesting that the Romans saw the concept as basically normal and innate, like bodily health, in contrast to the Greek idea of sōphrosynē, whose acquisition required much difficulty and unceasing labour.

Cicero’s claim (Tusc. 3.9-11) that insanity as mental ill health is described more clearly in Latin than Greek may relate to this. Seneca would seem to agree with this, with the important proviso that the corrupt nature of modern society makes this natural health hard work to acquire (Ep. 41.9 n.). promisisti: such a promise seems similar to the one Lucilius’ friend made at Ep. 36.5. At Ep. 31.1 promiserat n. Seneca alludes to an early promise of Lucilius. virum bonum: in Stoic thought this term is syncretically the same as the sapiens (Cic. Tusc. 5.28). However, the vir bonus was a term with deeper roots in the Roman value system (HELLEGOUARCH 1972, 484-493 and the elder Cato’s definition of the orator as a vir bonus dicendi peritus, quoted a number of time by later writers, for instance, Sen Rh. Con. 1.pr.10). The term’s greater emotional appeal makes it more attractive to Seneca in this context. One distinction between the two terms is that whereas the sapiens, referring to someone possessing sapientia, is a term closely associated to philosophy, the vir bonus, someone possessing virtus, is a term of broader use. In the Epistles the term had occurred at Epp. 11.8 and 25.5 in relation to selecting a guardian, and was there associated with Cato, Laelius and Scipio. Elsewhere Seneca appears to be careful in his choice of vir bonus or sapiens, something not always noticed by readers. In Ep. 41, for instance, sapiens is avoided, but vir bonus is not (Ep. 41.2 Bonus ... vir n.). sacramento: (OLD §2) along with rogare (OLD §7b) this is a military idiom for taking the oath of allegiance to one’s commander (e.g. Caes. B.G. 6.1). Seneca uses it at Ep. 65.18 and Vit. 15.7 (ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 77). Epictetus Diss. 1.14.15-17 compares the military oath to the oath a philosopher should swear to his internal divinity. His belittling of the dignity of
the military oath sworn by the Emperor’s soldiers contrasts with Seneca’s positive evocation of military service (above, p. 294). For the extensive use of the metaphor of philosophy as military service by Seneca see above, p. 12 and p. 295.

Deridebit te ... facilem: Seneca continues the characterization of allegiance to mens bona as military service (militiam) that was present in the mention of an oath in the previous sentence. In a similar way Lucilius’ friend was criticized at Ep. 36.1-2. There, however, the emphasis of the criticism was on what he was abandoning rather than what he was adopting. The description of a philosopher’s lifestyle as soft reflects a popular perception, but in conjunction with military service (mollem ... militiam) it draws on a criticism of elegists. The otium of the elegist was considered very effeminate. It was the very antithesis of military service. In fact, Roman etymologists had even derived militia from mollitia through antiphrasis (Cairns 1984, 212-213). This gave added point to the elegists’ claim that a lover was in service to Love (e.g. Ov. Am. 1.9.1, militat omnis amans). In contrast to the elegists’ varied and ironic use of this topos, Seneca will insist that the militia philosophiae is genuinely hard (Armisen-Marchetti, 76). mollem ... facilem: of these mollem is the adjective with the most force; its sense here, as at Ep. 33.1 mollitia n., is of unmanliness.

Nolo te ... necari’: Seneca sounds almost anxious to clear up a misunderstanding about what Lucilius has got himself into (Nolo te decipi). He likens Lucilius’ oath to the one sworn by volunteer gladiators when they made a contract (auctoramentum) to their master (Edwards 2007, 80). Such an oath is perhaps the most extreme that could be made in the ancient world. Seneca makes mention of it here to argue that the philosopher’s oath is in fact even more uncompromising. honestissimi ... turpissimi: Wistrand 1990, 34, sees in this contrast ‘social contempt’, a comment that is a prelude for the implausible thesis that he goes on to construct that Seneca has no opposition to gladiatorial combats, a thesis thoroughly discredited by Richardson-Hay 2004b (see further, Ep. 30.8 sic gladiator ... adtemperat n.). It is possible that some social contempt could be present, as it was an infamous profession (Dig. 28.2.3.pr). However, surely more important for Seneca is that the terms are the fundamental ones of moral value, as the reader of Ep. 31 would know (Ep. 31.5 ita honesta ... efficit n.). In the terms of that letter the philosopher’s oath is one of allegiance to virtue, and so very honourable, while the gladiator’s oath involves making oneself a slave for the sake of food and money, a slave, perhaps, to one’s passions. Certainly Seneca strongly disapproved of
teaching philosophy for money (Ep. 52.15). ‘uri, vinciri ferroque necari’: a slightly fuller version of this oath occurs at Petr. 117.5: uri, vinciri, verberari ferroque necari. Seneca alludes to this oath at Ep. 7.4 and 7.5 (Scarpia 1975, 144), and at Ep. 71.23.

§2. Ab illis qui manus harenae locant et edunt ac bibunt quae per sanguinem reddant cavetur ut ista vel inviti patiantur: a te ut volens libensque patiaris. Illis licet arma summittere, misericordiam populi temptare: tu neque summites nec vitam rogabis; recto tibi invictoque moriendum est. Quid porro prodest paucos dies aut annos lucrificare? sine missione nascimur.

§2. Seneca sets out the contrast between how a gladiator and a philosopher must fulfil their oaths. Fundamentally it is a matter of willingness. Gladiators must suffer the conditions of the oath (ista) even unwillingly, but Lucilius must meet them willingly and gladly. This idea might be pressed to suggest that unless one is willing, one is not a philosopher; the will is central. However, Seneca seems more concerned to motivate the reader to feel that a philosopher must be absolutely staunch in his convictions. Seneca seeks to draw on a sense of pride in the reader’s self-identification to do so. This is emphasized by the demand that he meet death with an upright posture, aware that he cannot beg the crowd to be spared.

Ab illis ... patiaris: Seneca continues the legal language of oaths: surety has been received from the gladiators that even unwillingly they will suffer to be burned, bound or killed by the sword. The same surety has been given by Lucilius to suffer these things willingly and gladly. Such willingness to meet what fate sends is part of Cleanthes’ hymn to Zeus that Seneca quotes at Ep. 107.11: Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt. The sentiment appealed to Epictetus too, who quoted the earlier part of the hymn on a number of occasions (SVF 1.527). At Ep. 61.3 Seneca explains the advantage of such an attitude more fully:

Da operam ne quid umquam invitus facias: quidquid necesse futurum est repugnanti, id volenti necessitas non est. Ita dico: qui imperia libens excipit partem acerbissimam servitutis effugit, facere quod nolit; non qui iussus aliquid facit miser est, sed qui invitus facit. Itaque sic animum componamus ut quidquid res exigit, id velimus, et in primis ut finem nostri sine tristitia cogitemus.

Welcoming fate contrasts with resisting fortune (above, p. 416, n. 792). Here in Ep. 37, however, the enemy of the philosopher is left unnamed. The relative clause used to describe the gladiators contributes to their portrayal as ignoble; they are characterized in purely physical terms: hands, food, drink and blood. In terms of Seneca’s opinion of gladiators it is interesting that at Prov. 2.8-12 he does not contrast Cato meeting his fate nobly with a gladiator. Rather he says it is a
spectacle enjoyable for the gods to view, which he compares to humans viewing not a gladiator, but a hunter, and one whose honourableness contributes to the pleasure (Prov. 2.8). A hunter, of course, need not be viewed only in an arena, so the gods need not be compared there to the spectators at an amphitheatre. manus: (OLD §6b); in the same way Cleanthes is described as hiring himself out as a garden labourer.

Illis licet ... moriendum est: Seneca continues the antithesis between gladiators and Lucilius. In the arena a gladiator might submit and ask the crowd for his life to be spared. The granting of such a request depended on how bravely or well the crowd felt the gladiator had fought. Such a reprieve was called a missio (below, sine missione n.). By contrast, Seneca stresses, Lucilius as a philosopher can neither submit nor ask to be spared; instead he must die upright and undefeated. Facing death is the ultimate test for a philosopher, one that reveals his true mettle (Ep. 26.4-6); and who better to be measured against than a gladiator, who made a living and earned fame doing this? At Ben. 5.2.3-4 Seneca notes that the vir bonus does not surrender but dies at his post.

summittere: (OLD §7c). recto: Ep. 31.11 rectus n. invicto: Ep. 31.6 invictus n. The sense is picked up at §3 vincere.

Quid porro ... nascimur: having presented a requirement to die without asking quarter, a requirement that appeals to the reader’s sense of pride to be fulfilled, Seneca continues with a rhetorical question that depreciates the value of what is being sought — longer life. The wish for longer life had already been revealed as misled in Ep. 32.2-4 and was alluded to again at Ep. 36.10. That we are all mortal is a fairly trite observation, but Seneca gives it a twist here by continuing the gladiatorial imagery and suggesting we are born into a gladiatorial contest in which no quarter can be given (sine missione). paucos dies aut annos: Seneca belittles what is sought: the length of time that may be gained is uncertain (Ep. 15.11), measurable perhaps only in days, and a few at that (paucos). lucrificare: the commercial term adds to the disparaging tone. This is a rare word, elsewhere only found in B. Hisp. 36.1. sine missione: this is the term for a gladiatorial contest to the death (OLD missio §2b and Edwards 2007, 36-37), e.g. Liv. 41.20.12. Seneca records Caligula challenging Jupiter to such a fight (Ira 1.20.8).

Section B (§§3-5). The intensity of the demand for Lucilius to honour his oath and meet death bravely reaches a crescendo in §3. Seneca outlines his friend’s path to safety with an extended allegory. To Lucilius’ worried query about how to extricate himself he offers the
promise of victory, a victory to which Philosophy will provide the way. At this point the sense of threat vanishes, and Philosophy is described as offering a haven of safety, and beyond this even freedom. In the next section the enemy of freedom is introduced, stupidity. It is subject to the passions, which are both numerous and savage. These are dismissed by Wisdom, synonymous with Freedom. The route to her is through submitting to Reason. She will be both teacher and guide, so that Lucilius, unlike the vast majority of humanity, will make his own way rather than be carried along by events.

§3. ‘Quomodo ergo’ inquis ‘me expediam?’ Effugere non potes necessitates, potes vincere. Fit via <vi>;
et hanc tibi viam dabit philosophia. Ad hanc te confer si vis salvs esse, si securus, si beatus,
denique si vis esse, quod est maximum, liber; hoc contingere aliter non potest.

§3. Lucilius’ interjection brings the first part of the letter to a head. Seneca is triumphant in his reply; as though a general addressing soldiers before battle, he insists that Lucilius cannot flee but can conquer. There is an unexpected reversal in the Virgilian quote. In the Aeneid Greeks burst in on the sanctuary of Priam’s palace by force to destroy it. In Seneca Philosophy personified opens this way, and with her Lucilius can take refuge, becoming safe, even free.

‘Quomodo ... me expediam?’: in his interjection Lucilius appears nervous or reluctant. One might imagine that Seneca’s talk of death is unnerving him. Perhaps he is having second thoughts about the oath. expediam: the ergo connects Lucilius’ reply to the previous statement on being born sine missione, although more generally one might take it as a question of how to free himself from the oath he had made. The term looks forward to the language of freedom in Seneca’s reply. Griffin 1992, 348, takes this phrase to refer to Lucilius’ desire to retire from public life, yet that seems to jar both with the immediately preceding lines and with Seneca’s reply.

Effugere ... potes vincere: Seneca continues the martial imagery in speaking of flight and conquest, the antithesis of which is increased by the placement of the two infinitives at opposite ends of the sentence. The choice is stark: flight is impossible, so one must fight. Victory is possible, though Seneca is silent on the consequences of defeat. Effugere: at Prov. 6.7 Seneca imagines god alluding to suicide as flight: si pugnare non vultis, licet fugere. necessitates: the allusive yet indefinite quality of this word is frequently exploited by Seneca, Epp. 32.5 n. and 34.3 n. vincere: victory is a frequent image in the Epistles (above, p. 11). Elsewhere the victory is over fortune (Ep. 71.30) or the passions (Ep. 71.37).
Fit via <vi>: at *Aen*. 2.494 Virgil describes Pyrrhus and his followers breaking down the gates of Priam’s palace. It is a dramatic moment, the point before the inner sanctuary of Troy is exposed to destruction and looting. Such a reminiscence is created by the emendation <vi>, which *Alexander* 1940, 74, argues is unnecessary; the phrase making sense without it; he also adds that the Virgilian reminiscence is inappropriate. However, it is at just such a high point of dramatic tension in a scenario that Seneca likes to use a Virgilian quote (e.g. *Ep.* 82.7). The quote facilitates a shift in metaphors between the two halves of the letter. The violence of the quote fits with the preceding martial imagery. And the mention of a way is picked up in the metaphor of travel in this and the next sentence and at §5. Finally, as mentioned (above, §3 n.), the quote is given extra point by Seneca’s reversal of its sense from its Virgilian context.

et hanc ... philosophia: Philosophy makes a dramatic entry. She is personified as providing Lucilius the way that was made by force (*hanc ... viam*). This is only her second appearance in Book IV. The first was also personified at the start of the book (*Ep.* 30.3). At this point the tension of the first half of the letter begins to drop.

Ad hanc ... liber: with this sentence Seneca appears to defuse all the earlier tension. He offers Philosophy to Lucilius as someone able to provide sanctuary. Unexpectedly he offers safety having previously denied the possibility of quarter or escape. At *Ep.* 14.11 he encouraged the reader to retreat to Philosophy: *ad philosophiam ergo confugiendum est.* Seneca goes on to provide a list of four good qualities that Lucilius can attain through seeking refuge with Philosophy. These are linked through the anaphora of *si.* There is great emphasis on the final one by its build-up firstly with *denique,* then with the repetition of *vis esse* and finally with a relative clause that precedes and describes it. The first of these qualities, appropriately after all the threatening imagery of the start of the letter, is safety (*salvus ... securus*), then happiness (*beatus*) and finally, and as noted with the most build-up, freedom (*liber*). *liber:* freedom for Seneca was to be enslaved to nothing: *Quae sit libertas quaeris? Nulli rei servire, nulli necessitati, nullis casibus, fortunam in aequum deducere* (*Ep.* 51.9, similarly *Ep.* 75.16; cf. *Edwards* 2009, 154). Philosophy gave the ability to meet fortune on such equal terms through the understanding that rationally chosen suicide was a guarantee of this freedom. Death and freedom are equated at *Ep.* 26.10, and Seneca often linked freedom with a pathway; at *Ep.* 12.10 he announced: *patent undique ad libertatem viae multae, breves faciles,* and at *Ep.* 70.14 he describes suicide as *libertatis viam* (so also *Prov.* 2.10, 6.7, *Ira* 3.15.3 and
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Ep. 70.16; cf. Scarpat 2007, 79). What at first sight, then, appears a disjunction between the earlier insistence on no retreat and no quarter and this refuge of philosophy vanishes. Philosophy offers no escape from death, only from enslavement, even through death (see further, above, p. 297).

Freedom and philosophy had been linked earlier at Ep. 8.7, where Seneca quoted Epicurus: ‘philosophiae servias oportet, ut tibi contingat vera libertas’ (Richardson-Hay 2006, 286-288), an idea that is repeated here in relation to ratio (§4 Si vis ... rexerit n.).

Hoc contingere ... potest: only through philosophy are true safety, happiness and freedom to be found. Seneca contrasts here the popular and the philosophical senses of these words.

Underlying Seneca’s argument here is the idea that freedom, in particular under the principate, was only possible through philosophy; as Traina 1987, 10, puts it, freedom lay through either committing suicide with Cato or seeking the interior freedom of philosophy.

§4. Humilis res est stultitia, abiecta, sordida, servilis, multis affectibus et saevissimis subiecta. Hos tam graves dominos, interdum alternis imperantes, interdum pariter, dimittit a te sapientia, quae sola libertas est. Una ad hanc fert via, et quidem recta; non aberrabis; vade certo gradu. Si vis omnia tibi subicere, te subice rationi; multos reges, si ratio te rexerit. Ab illa disces quid et quemadmodum adgredi debes; non incides rebus.

§4. Seneca does not develop freedom’s connection to death, but rather explains its antithesis to foolishness and the passions. The personifications continue: stupidity, the passions, wisdom, freedom and reason all become actors in Lucilius’ development. The metaphor of the path is continued and the section closes with particular emphasis on reason as Lucilius’ guide.

Humilis res ... subiecta: although Seneca describes stupidity as a thing (res), he personifies it through the adjectives he applies to it. Just as Lucilius in service to philosophy is characterized by four adjectives at §3, so stupidity is delineated by five. They all are applicable to social position and work in crescendo. The first three adjectives denote generally lowly ignobility, while the final two focus on the position of slavery, the bottom of the social ladder. It is these two closing ones that form a link to the final attribute of Lucilius in §3; they are the antithesis of freedom. So too, stupidity is the antithesis of philosophy, which confers nobility (Ep. 44.3 and above, p. 11), and in connection to the start of the letter it should be added that nobility and military service were closely linked in ancient thought. In earlier citizen armies, the higher one’s social status the greater one’s military obligations to the state.
In the final characteristic Seneca reveals the source of stupidity’s enslavement, its subjection to the passions. Although Seneca had spoken of individual passions in earlier letters, particularly fear and those that caused Lucilius to want to stay in public office, this is the first mention of them as a group. It represents, therefore, a new level of abstraction in the presentation of philosophical doctrine (above, p. 298). Their characterization is continued in the next sentence; here it is their plurality and their savagery that he highlights. Such qualities are, of course, absent from the wisdom and reason that are mentioned next (the singular-plural contrast is one found also at Ep. 31.3 unum bonum ... fidere n.). The passions’ connection to slavery had been adumbrated at Ep. 22.11: paucos servitus, plures servitutem tenent, and it is reiterated explicitly at Ep. 47.17. Genuine slavery is to the passions rather than to any human master. Seneca presents the Stoic view on the passions in more detail in Ep. 116 and the three books of the De Ira are devoted to suppressing one of the most serious passions. anger. stultitia: Ep. 36.12 n. servilis: ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 114-115. adfectibus: BORGIO, 13-16, PITTET, 74-75.

Hos ... libertas est: in keeping with the allegorical tone, Seneca personifies the passions as harsh masters (graves dominos) that issue commands (imperantes). In contrast to wisdom, which Seneca had earlier described as a consistent desiring (Ep. 20.5), the passions are anything but consistent; sometimes one gives orders, sometimes another, sometimes they all do at once. This passage is used by some to argue that Seneca saw the soul as possessing a separate appetitive part that is the source of the passions. However, as INWOOD 2005a, 37, argues, the allegory here is best not pressed for such an interpretation, though see BARTSCH 2009, 189-191, for useful comment on Inwood’s approach to figurative language. sapientia: wisdom, also personified, replaces philosophy from the sentence before. This creates a direct antithesis with stupidity from the previous sentence, recalling the fundamental Stoic division between fools and sages (Ep. 30.6 demens n.). libertas: §3 liber n. Stepping down from the level of abstractions this idea is frequently expressed in the Stoic paradox that only the sage is free, Cic. Parad. 5.33-41, D.L. 7.121 (= L-S 67M and SVF 3.355). Seneca’s allegory is aided by the strong syncretic strain to much Stoic thought (above, p. 18).

Una ad hanc ... gradu: Seneca returns to the image at §3 of the path that philosophy provides. Now it has a goal (ad hanc), wisdom, which is also freedom. The characteristics of the path are that it is a singularity (una) and that it is straight. The first of these fits with wisdom
being the only form of freedom. The second relates to the idea of following nature being a form of path that humans have deviated from (diastrophē: above, p. 112). Seneca further promises that Lucilius will not wander from this path and he will advance at a steady pace. Such confidence accords with the idea that following nature is easy, found at Ep. 31.9 tutum ... instruxit n. where the image of travel had also been used, and at Ep. 41.9 Quid est ... vivere n. where Seneca adds that paradoxically it is made hard by the pervasiveness of error. For other uses of the path metaphor see Ep. 33.11 ego vero ... muniam n.

Si vis ... rexerit: Seneca changes from the metaphor of travel to a political one. The two verbs used for this are regere and subicere. As noted (subicere ... subice n. and reges ... rexerit n.), they are strongly suggestive of the military force that often underlies political power, and as such they recall the military metaphors from the beginning of the letter. Wilson 1997, 64-65, describes Seneca’s use of the political analogy as augmenting the military one. Despite this link, the military and political analogies differ in the qualities they highlight. The military analogy frequently emphasizes performing one’s assigned task, the role of an obedient subordinate (as at Ep. 36.9), while the political analogy puts one in the role of a ruler, and emphasizes the qualities of independence and self-rule that were intimately connected with the notion of libertas (above, p. 14). The power and control Seneca promises is the reverse of enslavement to the passions. It is the corollary of freedom that wisdom represents. The allegory of this section continues: reason, as it were, is someone to whom Lucilius must submit. The fruits of this submission go beyond freedom to encompass the suggestion of wealth and power (below, omnia ... multos n.). The two sententiae in which Seneca expresses this idea have strong alliteration, aided by polyptoton, but also by the repeated r’s and t’s in tu, ratio and regere. The paradox of gaining power by surrendering it is similar to one Seneca attributed earlier to Epicurus (Ep. 8.7): ‘philosophiae servias oportet, ut tibi contingat vera libertas’ (Edwards 2009, 154). Such paradoxes have similarities to the Pauline one of slavery to Christ being an emancipation from sin, e.g. Rom. 6.16-22 (Sevinter 1961, 191). subicere ... subice: these verbs echo subiecta from the section’s start. Smith, 67, locates the metaphor as that between master and slave; however, the term can also refer to political authority and is suggestive of the power gained by military subjugation, which fits the context of military imagery from the letter’s start. omnia ... multos: in promising control over things (omnia) and people (multos) Seneca alludes to two Stoic paradoxes. The first is that only the wise man is rich (Cic. Parad. 6). At Ben. 7.8.1 Seneca says everything belongs to the wise
man: *omnia illius esse*. The idea is also in Cic. *Fin.* 3.76: *recte eius omnia dicentur, qui scit uti solus omnibus*. The second paradox is that the wise man is a king, D.L. 7.122 (= L-S 67M and SVF 3.617). Similarly Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.11m (= W 2.108.26-28 and SVF 3.617), and Cicero, *Fin.* 3.75, describe the wise man as more truly a king than Tarquin. At *Ep.* 108.13 Seneca says his old teacher Attalus called himself a king, *reges ... rexerit*: SMITH, 137, lists these as examples of metaphors from the political sphere, but politics and war are not unconnected (cf. Pl. *Leg.* 626a), and as with *subicere* above, there are military connotations to these phrases. *rationi ... ratio*: for further on this important term see above, p. 21 and p. 298.

Ab illa ... rebus: the allegory continues with reason now a teacher. She teaches what to undertake and how. Lucilius will not rush into things. The style of her teaching is captured at *Ep.* 84.11. It is rhetorical rather than dialectical (*WILSON* 2007, 432-433). *adgredi ... incides*: the contrast between purposeful and impetuous movement in the Latin is picked up in the next section. Both verbs can be understood to continue the military imagery of the previous sentence. With reason as his commander Lucilius will attack things with a considered assault rather than with a headstrong rush.


§5. Seneca brings the letter to a close by elaborating on the contrast at the end of the previous section between action that is planned and action that is undertaken on a whim. It is the action of the unphilosophical majority that he focuses on, nicely capturing the sense of amazement at wondering how one came to be in such a situation.

Neminem mihi ... velle: the context to this sentence is the most important guide to its meaning. Following on from stating that with reason’s help Lucilius will not rush into things, Seneca emphasizes the ubiquity of such unpremeditated behaviour. Can Lucilius point out anyone who knows how he started to want what he wants? The thoughts of the majority of people are a muddle and they cannot sort out the start of their desires. This passage should be compared with *Ep.* 23.8:

*Pauci sunt qui consilio se suaque disponant: ceteri, eorum more quae fluminibus innatant, non eunt sed feruntur; ex quibus alia lenior unda detinuit ac*
mollius vexit, alia vehementior rapuit, alia proxima ripae cursu languescente deposuit, alia torrens impetus in mare eiecit. Ideo constituendum est quid velimus et in eo perseverandum.

The contrast is between *pauci* and *ceteri*. The majority are carried along passively by events, an image Seneca develops at some length, and which he repeats at the end of *Ep. 37* (below, *Turpe … ferri n.*). By contrast the minority organize their affairs according to a set purpose (*consilio*), and it is such a purpose which in *Ep. 37* Seneca goes on to note that is usually lacking (*non consilio*). The conclusion Seneca draws in this passage is that we need to decide on what we want and persevere with it. Such settled purpose was, of course, the hallmark of Senecan *constantia* (above, p. 240).

The similarities between the passage at *Ep. 23.8* and the one at *Ep. 37.5* are such as to make the use of the passage in *Ep. 37* as support for Seneca’s theory of the will implausible. For *Voelke* 1973, 175-176, the passage in *Ep. 37* provides evidence for Seneca’s belief that the origins of willing are unknowable and the will has roots that the consciousness cannot reach. He is not alone in this view (see *Inwood* 2005a, 139-140, for the bibliography). It is the use of *velle* in this passage that has drawn the attention of scholars, but its use in a very similar context at *Ep. 23.8* (*constituendum est quid velimus*), where no such theory is adducible, has been overlooked.

**Neminem**: to be useful for their theory, Voelke and others must interpret this with its full literal force, yet it is as likely to be a rhetorical exaggeration, as *nemo* at *Ep. 31.10*, and close in force to the *pauci* of *Ep. 23.8*. **dabis**: *Scarp* 1975, 36, on *Ep. 1.2* notes this as a frequent Senecan usage. **vult**: for this retained indicative see *Ep. 30.5 est n.*

**non consilio ... impactus est**: with characteristic asyndeton Seneca expands on what he means by people not knowing how they came to want what they want. He creates an antithesis between planning (*consilio*) and impulse (*impetu*), which is reinforced by the choice of verbs. The sense of guidance inherent in *adductus* contrasts with that of forceful collision in *impactus*. A military image can be seen in this contrast; unlike a soldier led by a plan this person is forced there by an attack. The antithesis here between planning and its absence makes it hard to see that Seneca is suggesting that this person is being driven by the unfathomable impulses of the will, as is seen by those who interpret this passage as evidence for Seneca describing an independent mental faculty called the will; rather the emphasis is on this person lacking the guidance of good counsel. **consilio**: (*OLD* §6) just as the use of *ratio* in this letter was prefigured at the end of *Ep. 36*, so this use of *consilium* prepares for its prominent use in *Ep. 38*, where Seneca defines philosophy
as bonum consilium (Ep. 38.1 n.). Later it is consilium that Seneca will contrast with the ineptitudes of syllogisms (Ep. 48.7, above, p.25). impetu: in places this word appears to correspond to the Greek Stoic technical term hormê (FISCHER 1914, 87-90). However, given the rhetorical context here it seems rash to assume Seneca has used the term with this sense, as INWOOD 2005a, 140, n. 29, rightly notes.

Non minus saepe ... in illam: Seneca now adds fortune to the contrast between planned and impetuous action. He personifies fortune and in a chiasmus between her and us (nos) he suggests we are as prone to running into, or attacking (ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 94), her as she is us. Seneca had earlier emphasized the need to be prepared to meet the attacks of fortune, and for that reason a watchful stance was needed (Ep. 36.9 ut si ... reclinatis n.). At Ep. 71.3 he makes a similar observation on the power of fortune in the absence of planning: necesse est multum in vita nostra casus possit, quia vivimus casu. incurrit: as with the earlier incides (§4) and impactus this verb suggests violent contact, even that of a military charge.

Turpe ... ferri: Seneca now passes moral judgement on the unplanned action of the majority. It is disgraceful (turpe, Ep. 31.5 n.). It involves being passively carried, rather than actively forging one’s own way, an antithesis already used in Ep. 23.8 (above, Neminem mihi ... velle n.). This is a fairly frequent antithesis in Seneca, whose other uses of it are listed by TRAINA 1987, 94, n. 3. ferri: at Ep. 35.4 tullit is used to describe the mind that is unsettled in its purpose. It is contrasted there, however, with something unmoving rather than, as here, with something moving under its volition.

et subito ... veni?: Seneca brings the letter to a close with a vivid evocation of the bewilderment of those who live without the guidance of reason. This bewilderment, a consequence of being carried along by events, is also disgraceful. It represents an unawareness of the true nature of things. TRAINA 1987, 20, suggests that the turbo rerum is the kingdom of fortune, whose instability is captured in a similar image in Thy. 621-622: res deus nostras celeri citatas | turbine versat. In contrast to this amazed fool, the philosopher is aware of the true value of things and watches the unfolding of events disinterestedly. subito: brings out the sense that this is a question that arises, like the speaker’s action, on a whim. turbine: at Nat. 5.13.2-3 Seneca explains how whirlwinds occur. The term is also applied to rushing crowds (OLD §2c), and as such can continue the martial imagery of this section; the fool is in confusion at the onrush of fortune’s
forces, the forces that the philosopher must resist. *stupentem*: this person’s amazement recalls *stultitia* in §4. It is presumably the same person who was *impetu impactus* earlier. Seneca closes the letter with emphasis not on the philosopher who is making progress, but on this foolish individual, representative of the misled majority of humanity. ‘*huc ... veni?*’: although not uttered by a philosopher, these closing words are likely to resonate with the reader, who may wonder too at how he came to be where he is. By such a device Seneca leaves the reader with something to keep him thinking (Ep. 30.18 n.). At *Ep.* 120.22 Seneca brings the letter to a close with a similar surprised question.
Essay on Epistle 38

In *Ep. 38* there is an abrupt change in tone from the previous letters. In discussing style and its significance for the dissemination of philosophy Seneca returns to a topic explored in *Ep. 33* from a different angle. The topic of style is one he will stay with for the next two letters, making it one of the major themes of Book IV. Implicit to understanding this letter properly are two contexts well known to ancient readers: in ancient epistolary theory letters are the literary equivalent of conversation (*sermo*), and Plato in *Phdr. 275-277* used the imagery of sowing to disparage writing as a suitable medium for philosophical instruction.

Seneca applies the metaphor of the seed to philosophical conversation. He seems to intend the metaphor to be applied also to his letters and he makes this one a perfect example of it. The letter is very short, yet when the reader reflects on it in the context of the developing correspondence it has the potential to grow into a substantial set of ideas.

This epistle is something of a rarity in Book IV, an epistle that has received fairly full and adequate commentary.617 There are two full treatments of the epistle: Graver examines Seneca’s arguments for the therapeutic efficacy of his literary epistles, and Schönegg looks in detail at Seneca’s use of Platonic and Stoic imagery in the letter, as well as its relationship to *Epp. 8* and 84.618 There are brief commentaries by Motto and Trapp.619 Hachmann and Hengelbrock offer only brief paraphrases; Maurach, however, has some useful commentary.620

617 The only others are *Epp. 33* and 41.


619 Trapp 2003, 96-99, 249-251 contains observations aimed at a fairly general reader, while Motto 1985, 62-63, contains no observations at all.

The quiet tone of this letter fits with Seneca’s analogy of letters as conversation: it is conversational.621 It also offers a respite from the martial imagery of the two preceding letters. Instead, it has an echo of one of the letters before these two: the image of growth that is stressed in the seed metaphor in this letter echoes Lucilius’ growth that Seneca celebrates in Ep. 34.1 using a number of agricultural analogies.622 In its themes Ep. 38 returns to a subject that Seneca had written on in Ep. 33.623 That epistle was Seneca’s response to Lucilius’ complaint at his declining to end letters with quotes from philosophers. Seneca stressed that Lucilius had now moved on to a new stage in his philosophical progress. At the start of this new phase Seneca takes an interest in explaining how he conceives of philosophical instruction being able to occur through the medium of writing, an interest also seen in the next two letters of the book.624

In this letter Seneca responds to a criticism of writing as a medium of instruction that had been famously formulated by Plato in Phdr. 275-277.625 There Plato had Socrates say that written words are dumb and cannot respond to questioning (§275d). Plato then used the image of the sensible farmer (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων γεωργός, 276b) who plants his seeds with care to argue that someone with the knowledge of the just, the beautiful and the good would be equally careful in how he imparts this knowledge to suitable minds (276c). Seeds sowed in ink cannot help themselves with argument (ἀδυνάτων ... αὐτοῖς λόγῳ βοηθεῖν, 276c) and cannot teach the truth effectively. Therefore a teacher will employ the dialectical method to plant in a fitting soul words together with understanding, which can help both themselves and the sower (276e). This prejudice against instruction through writing appears to have been widely held among

621 Conversational also is Seneca’s eschewing of the epistolary past tense, KER 2002, 35-36.
622 Such echoing is continued with agricultural analogies at Epp. 39.4 and 41.7.
623 MAURACH 1975, 350, stresses the relationship between the texts.
625 Plato’s view on writing has received a great deal of attention by scholars who argue that his philosophy is somehow part of a ‘literate’ in contrast to an earlier ‘oral’ Greek culture. The seminal works on this idea are HAVELock 1963 and GOODY and WATT 1963. One might think that what Plato says in the Phaedrus would be closely analysed by them, but aside from GOODY and WATT 1963, 327-329, treating what he says there as evidence of nostalgia, the Phaedrus is ignored. Instead the focus is on the treatment of poetry in The Republic. HALVERSON 1992a and 1992b very effectively demolishes the arguments of Havelock that logic and of Goody that the Greek Enlightenment were dependent on writing generally and the Greek alphabet in particular.
philosophers in the classical world; books were seen as only ancillary to instruction by a teacher.626

Seneca had already made important claims about the readership and efficacy of his writing. In Ep. 8 he said he was transacting business with posterity (Ep. 8.2: posterorum negotium ago) and he was giving them the recipes to effective medicines that had worked for him. He opened the third book (Ep. 22.1-2) by indicating that Lucilius had accepted the lessons of the preceding book on the need to retire, but was not sure how to do so. He went on to say that some advice had to be given in person, just as a gladiator makes his plans in the arena, but other more general advice can be given not just to absent people, but even to posterity (Ep. 22.2):

*Quid fieri soleat, quid oporteat, in universum et mandari potest et scribi; tale consilium non tantum absentibus, etiam posteris datur: illud alterum, quando fieri debeat aut quemadmodum, ex longinquo nemo suadebit, cum rebus ipsis deliberandum est.*

This is the advice that Seneca is offering Lucilius and, in turn, us, his *posteri*. In Ep. 38 he responds to Plato’s criticism of writing by adopting in detail his image of the sower at Phdr. 275-277. Firstly he argues for the efficacy of a particular type of writing — the letter. However, as Graver brings out very well, it is not enough to claim that letters are like conversations, something of a commonplace, as that would only work for the immediate recipient of a real correspondence.627 Seneca must argue for their efficacy for other readers, his *posteri*. He uses a number of arguments to do this.

The first of these is to require that the seeds be received by a suitable mind. He repeats this and draws attention to the repetition (§2): *idoneum locum; si illa animus bene excepit and tantum, ut dixi, idonea mens rapiat illa*. Plato imagines this as occurring through the teacher’s careful selection of his pupils (276c). Seneca had made a similar observation at Ep. 29.3. However, here he is implying that in the absence of a suitable mind the seeds will not grow. In that the epistolary

626 The attitude of Epictetus, for example, in such discourses as 1.4 is set out well in GRAVER 1996, 57-61. Seneca himself makes much of the living presence of the teacher (Ep. 6.5-6), though see above, p. 187. Boethius at the other end of antiquity in Consol. 1.5.p.6 has Philosophy talk of her books, showing writing by that time as a fundamental and unproblematic element of philosophy.

627 GRAVER 1996, 77. Her point is that a real correspondence is one that involves answers to questions specific to the recipient and not applicable to others. Seneca justifies his provision of general and avoidance of specific advice a couple of times (at Ep. 22.2, quoted above, and again at Ep. 75.1). Such a lack of specifics was also a regular feature of letters intended for publication (WILSON 1987, 103-104 and LIEBESCHUETZ 1972, 19-23).
format offers only seeds that require effort to make them grow rather than pre-digested philosophy, there is perhaps a reduced chance of a reader being able merely to appear wise, as Plato feared (Phdr. 275b). Secondly, some of the virtues of a letter apply also to its wider audience, in particular its conversational tone (the *submissiora verba*), and the ability to offer arguments in small letter-sized amounts, amounts that the mind can gradually (§1 *minutatim*) assimilate.

In the image of scattering words, Seneca alludes to another quality of the letter — the looser style of organization it allowed, a quality he took full advantage of. It is up to the reader to organize the ideas, to let them grow into a system. Graver well observes that the epistles as we have them put the reader into this position to a greater degree than the literary dialogue form. Rather than being listeners to someone else’s conversation, we as readers are invited to take the position of Lucilius and to create his responses for ourselves.

Seneca also argues against Plato’s devaluation of writing through the way he expands the seed analogy. He claims that the seed is like both *ratio* and *praecipita*. In this he implies that there is something inherent in the way the precepts function and in the way *ratio* works in the mind that is not limited to the medium. These seeds can unfold in the suitable mind regardless of the medium by which they came there, whether by listening or reading.

What sense might the reader give to *ratio* in this passage. It is only the third time it has been used in the *Epistles* with a Stoic sense, the previous times being in the two previous letters. In this passage, and in the previous two, two senses to the word can be understood, a macrocosmic sense, *ratio* as the controller of the universe, and a microcosmic one, *ratio* as the controller of the mind. However, is it natural to assume the reader, coming to these sections in sequence, would

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It is perhaps unfair to observe that neither Socrates nor Plato was faultless in his selection of pupils, but to do so is to show that the contrast between the unsuitable reader and the unsuitable pupil is perhaps not so great. Another defence against one’s work finding an inappropriate reader, is at *Ben.* 4.28.4 where Seneca uses a medical analogy to suggests that the fear of a bad person reading one’s work should not stop one from publishing. Perhaps, however, the primary defence is that for Seneca philosophy is about deeds not words, and if many do not observe this the fault is found in individuals not in writing.

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628 Rosati 1981, 12.


631 Above, p. 265.
be aware of the macrocosmic sense? It is not until Ep. 65.12 that Seneca makes explicit mention of this sense. It is possible the reader would recognize it from other reading, particularly as also addressed to Lucilius are the *Natural Questions*, where this sense is spelt out clearly at Nat. 1.pr.13-14. Regardless, however, of whether the reader is already aware of the Stoic concept of *ratio*, in this passage, and in the previous two, there is the implication that *ratio* is something greater than simply human rationality.

Seneca describes both reason and precepts as having the organic quality of seeds. In a suitable mind they grow and in turn produce more seeds. What Seneca does not offer is the image of these seeds growing into some sort of whole or system. He does use such an image in Ep. 84 where he adopts the metaphor of digestion. His subject is style, but as style for Seneca is inseparable from the mind it has a wider application (Ep. 84.7):

> Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium.  
> Adsentiavmum illis fideliter et nostra faciamus, ut unum quiddam fiat ex multis,  
> sicut unus numerus fit ex singulis cum minores summas et dissidentes conputatio una conprendit. Hoc faciat animus noster: omnia quibus est adiutus abscondat, ipsum tantum ostendat quod efficet.

We should digest everything we get from many sources and make it both our own and one. Seneca’s letters, in that they are not pre-digested philosophy, force the reader to do this digesting, to take an active response to the work, something Seneca highlights in this letter in his description of the activity of the reader’s mind (*rapiat et in se trahat*). Furthermore, Seneca says *ratio* grows *in opere* (§2). It seems natural to relate this to his demands elsewhere that philosophical progress is a matter of actions, not words, that precepts are learnt, or is properly internalized, by being put into action.632

Seneca’s use of letters as a medium of teaching contrasts with two of his contemporaries. Both Epictetus and Musonius are known not to have written books, but to have delivered discourses that have been recorded by others.633 That Seneca makes his teaching available in letters can be aligned with his emphasis on self-sufficiency; he liberates the reader from the need for an in-person teacher. Rather than trying to create the artificial appearance of a dialogue,

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632 Above, p. 4.
633 Epictetus’ suspicion of books has already been noted (above, p. 317, n. 626).
Seneca uses the natural conventions of letters, which he claims in this letter are superior to lectures or discourses before an audience.

In the first three books of the Epistles, Seneca had sometimes used financial metaphors to describe the exchange of ideas, something Habinek describes as the commodification of advice. However, overlooked by Habinek is another metaphor for the exchange of ideas, one that could be seen to supersede the previous one. In this epistle, Seneca likens praecepta to semina and, with the image of planting seeds in the mind, offers an organic metaphor for the giving of advice. This image is consistent with the frequent use of natural imagery both in Book IV of the Epistles and elsewhere in Seneca’s works.

On the surface Seneca offers his reader his opinion on the suitability of conversation for learning philosophy. However, these brief comments are the kernel of an argument for the particular efficacy of his own style of writing, a kernel, one might say, that in an idonea mens can be grown into a response to Plato’s prejudice against the written word.

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635 Ep. 38.2: eadem est, inquam, praeceptorum condicio quae seminum.

636 Prominent use of natural images occurs at Epp. 34.1, 36.11, 39.4 and particularly 41.2; other examples in the book are Epp. 31.5, 33.1, 36.3 and 41.5-7. For examples elsewhere in the work, see ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 69-201.
Commentary on Epistle 38

§1-2. Ep. 38 is exceptionally concise and allusive. The justification for the letter is Lucilius’ desire for more frequent correspondence. Seneca supports this and justifies it by arguing for the efficacy of epistolary communication. He does this, however, indirectly by arguing for the usefulness of conversation and leaving implicit its equation with letters.

The first half of the letter argues that sermo is the appropriate mode for teaching philosophy. Seneca does this by contrasting it with disputationes and contiones. Such speeches are less effective, as they are less intimate, but they have their use in urging on the waverers or in creating within people the desire to learn. However, when one wants to teach, it is the gentle words of conversation that should be used. They enter the mind more easily and cling to it. In this section Seneca equates philosophy with good counsel, and argues that such counsel is only ever delivered in conversation.

In the second half Seneca responds indirectly to Plato’s criticism of the written word. He makes use of his image of the teacher as a sower of seeds. He first likens the words to seeds, then to ratio and finally to precepts. He emphasizes the organic nature of all these. They must find suitable soil in the mind of the listener. They have their own power (vires suas) and grow from something small to something large. In fact, in the right mind they will give back more than they received. Seneca stresses repeatedly that not many words are needed, only effective ones, and he reinforces this argument by means of the short and allusive nature of the letter itself.

§1. Merito exigis ut hoc inter nos epistularum commercium frequentemus. Plurimum proficit sermo, quia minutatim inrepet animo: disputationes praeparatae et effusae audiente populo plus habent strepitus, minus familiaritatis. Philosophia bonum consilium est: consilium nemo clare dat. Aliquando utendum est et illis, ut ita dicam, contionibus, ubi qui dubitat impellendus est; ubi vero non hoc agendum est, ut velit discere, sed ut discat, ad haec submissiora verba veniendum est. Facilius intrant et haerent; nec enim multis opus est sed efficacibus.
Merito ... frequentemus: Lucilius’ request for an intensification of the correspondence provides the pretext for the rest of the letter. Looking within the Epistles for a reason for such a request, one might imagine that it was provoked by the sense of threat present in Ep. 37. Seneca makes his approval emphatic by the initial placement of merito. Such requests were something of an epistolary topos (Ker 2002, 16-17), and Seneca uses one at Ep. 118.1 as a pretext to discuss appropriate topics for the correspondence. commercium: (OLD §4) a term more frequently used in this context of spoken language, and therefore appropriate to the comparison Seneca goes on to make. frequentemus: (OLD 4b).

Plurimum ... familiaritatis: Seneca explains his approval for the increased correspondence by stating the efficacy of conversation. The relevance of this to communication by letter is not directly drawn out. Rather it is left for the reader to infer that the qualities of conversation are present in letters. This is the natural way to read this sentence, rather than making it adversative to the previous one, as Gummere, 257, does. The comparison of letters to conversation is a regular topos for Seneca (Thraede 1970, 68-74), one that is also seen in other authors. Cicero uses it on a number of occasions (Canck 1967, 51 n. 89) describing, for example, at Phil. 2.7 a letter as amicorum conloquia absentium. Demetrius, Eloc. 223, similarly defined the letter as one side of a dialogue. Additionally the appropriate style of the letter was held to be that of conversation (Reed 2001, 185). In a later letter Seneca will describe his correspondence with Lucilius as a conversation (Ep. 67.2):

Cum libellis mihi plurimus sermo est. Si quando intervenerunt epistulae tuae, tecum esse mihi videor et sic adficiar animo tamquam tibi non rescribam sed respondeam. Itaque et de hoc quod qu aeris, quasi colloquar tecum, quale sit una scrutabimur.

It is intimacy (familiaritas) that creates this closeness, as he says at Ep. 38, and two letters later, when affirming that the correspondence has become more frequent, he makes a similar claim to Ep. 67.2: Numquam epistolam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus (Ep. 40.1). At Ep. 55.11 he suggests that such intimacy even transcends letters (above, p. 185).

Seneca creates a strong antithesis between strepitus and familiaritas in that he presents the contrast between conversation and oratory as a paradox in that quantity and volume do not achieve best results (Trapp 2003, 249). Conversation is very effective (plurimum) through the way it enters the mind in small quantities (minutatim). By contrast, he implies oratory’s greater volume
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(strepitus) and quantity (effusae) achieves inferior results. **sermo:** this word can refer both to conversation (OLD §3) or the style appropriate to such conversation (OLD §6b). As such it refers both to the type of discourse that was made popular for philosophy by Plato and Xenophon, the dialogue, and then imitated by Cicero in Latin, and to the style appropriate to such discourse, as Cicero *Orat.* 64 says: [oratio philosophorum] *sermo potius quam oratio dicitur.* For Setaioli 2000, 111-120, the contrast here between *sermo* and *disputationes* is one between two types of discourse: *sermo* and *admonitio.* Although two sentences later Seneca describes the *disputationes* as appropriate for protreptic, the use of *admonitio* is broader than that granted to protreptic in its contrast with dialogue (for which, see Schenkeveld 1997, 204). **inrepit:** (OLD §4). **disputationes:** Seneca identifies two qualities to the speeches: they are prepared in advance and are delivered before a crowd, which in turn gives them more noise than intimacy. Trapp 2003, 250, expands on this to suggest that such speeches are inflexible, unable to be questioned and answer back. He further suggests that such shortcomings were first observed by Plato. However, these are faults Plato finds rather with writing (*Phdr.* 275d). At *Prot.* 328d-329a he compares orators to books in similar terms, but he implies it is a fault of the person rather than the medium. He also has Socrates claim (*Prot.* 334c) as a fault of long speeches that he cannot remember their start. However, this is apparently a personal failing, which does not prevent him giving Socrates long speeches on occasions, as Vickers 1988, 126, rightly observes. **familiaritatis:** this is a key term, as it stresses that conversation works within a context of friendship (above, p. 35), as does *consilium* below.

**Philosophia ... clare dat:** Seneca offers a definition of philosophy that adds further support for conversation as its appropriate medium. In defining philosophy as good advice Seneca argues for its practical focus. Philosophy is advice aimed at action, which relates to his frequent *res-verba* antithesis (above, p. 4). He reiterates this at *Ep.* 48.7, in the context of rejecting syllogistic reasoning (above, p. 21). **consilium:** as already noted (above, p. 25), the term implies that the person giving advice has the proper qualities of *auctoritas* and *gravitas* to make it worth heeding. Furthermore, *consilium* could refer to the group of advisers that any important Roman was expected to consult before making an important decision. Seneca alludes to this at *Ep.* 17.2 when he says: *Mihi crede, advoca illam [sc. philosophiam] in consilium: suadebit tibi ne ad calculos sedeas.* Later at *Ep.* 22.5 he summons past philosophers in this role to advise Lucilius. In the same letter he had specified the advice that can be given in letters as only of a general sort (*Ep.* 22.2), which,
however, was also valid for people in the future (above, p. 317). The term *consilium* can indicate not just the advice leading to a decision (*OLD* §2) but the decision itself (*OLD* §4-6). The importance of making correct decisions was an important idea in earlier letters. For example, at *Ep* 16.3, Seneca says, *innumerabilia accidunt singulis horis quae consilium exigant, quod ab hac [sc. philosophia] petendum est.* As in this letter *philosophia* is the source of such decision making. See also, *Epp.* 14.16, 23.7 and 37.5.

**Aliquando ... veniendum est:** Seneca distinguishes between public addresses used to make the listener want to learn and the quieter words of conversation used to teach a willing listener. *Asmis* 1990, 220, sees in this distinction one between a text such as Seneca’s *De Vita Beata*, which has the character of a *contio*, and the *Epistles*, which employ *verba submissiora*. However, the use of the singular (*qui dubitat*) for the audience of such words is significant. It suggests that Seneca is thinking of a context like that between himself and Lucilius. The contrast he makes is between teaching (*ut discat*) and creating the will to learn (*ut velit discere*). There is a sense in which the public language might be seen as something preparatory, something used to create the desire to learn. However, it seems that Seneca in his practice did not use it this way. Rather he appears to have seen the will to be in need of regular strengthening with less quiet language. The preceding epistles, *Epp.* 34-35 and 37 contain examples of such language, which is also found in many later letters. For this reason, the broader distinction of *sermo* and *admonitio* used by *Setaioli* 2000, 111-120, is more useful. *Impellendus:* *Trapp* 2003, 250, notes a possible play on the Greek term for speeches of moral exhortation, *logoi protreptikoi*. *Ut ita dicam:* here and twice more below (§2 *inquam* and *ut dixi*) Seneca uses verbs of speaking to refer to what he is writing. This is, of course, in accordance with normal usage, but it is also in keeping with the assumption in this letter that letters are conversation. *Contionibus:* Seneca chooses a term that is ironically grander than he really means. The qualification of *ut ita dicam* draws attention to this and adds to the pejorative sense he is giving the term. *Submissiora verba:* used to denote quietness and restraint either of the voice or the style (*OLD* *submissus* §3). At *Ep.* 13.4 Seneca had talked of a *lingua summissior* in contrast to a Stoic one, which was by implication sterner. Here as a description of the style of his letters in contrast to *contiones* appropriate to exhortation, it provides additional evidence of the unsoundness of the characterization of the collection by *Habinek* 1992, 189 (= 1998, 139), as essentially hortatory (*Wilson* 2001, 171).
Facilius intrant ... efficacibus: Seneca continues by describing the nature of the quiet words of conversation. In this he returns to what he said at the start (minutatim inrepit animo), which in a form of ring composition serves to bring this section on the contrast between conversation and oratory to a close. Furthermore in stressing the need for only a few but effective words it leads into the next section on the seed analogy. Seneca states here more directly what had been alluded to earlier; words do not only enter the mind easily, but also cling to it, a result of the calm words and intimacy of conversation. multis ... efficacibus: the need for only a few words was hinted at with minutatim earlier and its contrast to the sense of prolixity in effusae. The seed analogy brings out powerfully the extent to which Seneca imagines them being effective.


Seminis modo spargenda sunt: the image of words being scattered like seeds suggests that careful arrangement of arguments is not the key factor. It is, perhaps, the job of the mind that receives them to do this ordering. At Ep. 29.2 Seneca uses the image of sowing to describe the Cynic style of public lecturing. He is critical there of this way of talking, as he feels one’s audience should be chosen with care lest one’s auctoritas be diminished. seminis: in other places Seneca talks of virtue existing in seed form in the soul (Ep. 73.16) and vices too being scattered like seeds by bad conversation (Ep. 123.8 and Bellincioni 1978, 42). See further Smith, 158 and Armisen-Marchetti, 149. It is certainly Plato’s use of this image (Phdr. 276b) that Seneca is alluding to here (above, p. 316); however, it had become something of a commonplace. Trapp 2003, 250, lists other uses of it in Imperial literature, though most of these are more general agricultural or horticultural metaphors of teaching, rather than specifically about sowing. In comparing these analogies, Trapp 2003, 250, says that Seneca’s version ‘puts more stress on the innate power of the teacher’s words than on the need for any answering effort from the pupil’. However, this seems incorrect, as Seneca notes that the seeds must find suitable soil (below, quod quamvis ... diffunditur n.) and twice stresses that the pupil’s mind must receive them appropriately (below, Pauca ... exsurgunt n. and Tantum ... acceperit n.).
**quod quamvis ... diffunditur:** an important precondition of the seed’s growth is that it find a suitable place (*idoneum locum*). Such a requirement might suggest the more passive quality of the listener possessing an appropriate aptitude. However, twice later on Seneca describes the mind being active in this reception (*above, seminis n.*). There is an antithesis in size between the seed and the plant it becomes. This can be related directly to the idea that letters can be short (*exiguum*), as he emphasizes by the extreme brevity of this one. *Ex minimo in maximos:* both the superlatives and the contrast between the initial singular and the resulting plural emphasize the seed’s growth. This is also stressed with the three verb forms, the unfolding (*explicat*) of the seed’s power, its growing (*auctus*), and its spreading (*diffunditur*).

**Idem facit ... crescit:** Seneca now applies the analogy of the seed to *ratio*. He observes the same similarity, that *ratio* is small (*non late patet*) and that it grows, adding that it grows while working. Such an analogy alludes to the Stoic syncretism of god and nature with reason. God was sometimes described as the seminal principle (*logos spermatikos*) of the world, D.L. 7.136 (SVF 1.102 and L-S 46B). The working of *ratio* on the macrocosmic scale was thought of as occurring similarly in the microcosm of the human soul. Therefore Seneca describes virtue as being present in seed-form at *Ep. 108.8:* *omnibus enim natura fundamenta dedit semenque virtutum*, while at *Ep. 73.16* such seeds are *semina ... divina.* *Ratio:* See above, p. 318, for more on how *ratio* might be understood here. *In opere:* (*OLD opus §2*) it is ambivalent who is doing the work here. The first and most natural sense is that it is *ratio*, similar to the word-seed earlier that unfolds its power. However, it is also possible that Seneca is alluding to the central idea that philosophy is something that is acquired through action (*above, p. 184*), and that it is the student who is working. In this context Seneca uses the phrase *in opere* at *Ep. 75.7* and *Ep. 98.17:* *Hoc est, mi Lucili, philosophiam in opere discere.* In a sense to insist on making a clear distinction between who does the work is unhelpful, as it is a co-operative activity: the seed’s work is to grow, but the student’s work is to cultivate that growth correctly (*as Ep. 73.16 makes clear; below, p. 417*).

**Pauca ... exsurgunt:** Seneca returns to describing conversation (*quae dicuntur*), repeating the point that not many words are needed (compare *pauca* with *nec ... multis* at §1). Again the need for the words to be appropriately received is stressed (*si illa animus bene exceptit*), and continuing the metaphor of plant growth he suggests that in such soil these words grow strong and sprout upwards. *Convalescunt:* at *Ep. 2.3* Seneca uses this verb to describe plants in an unfavourable
environment: *non convalescit planta quae saepe transfertur*. **exsurgunt:** appropriate of plants but a favourite verb for Seneca to describe rising up to proper human stature (*Ep.* 31.9 *surges* n.).

**Eadem est ... angusta sunt:** Seneca now says that seeds have the same nature as precepts, and repeats for emphasis the two outstanding qualities that seeds have: they are small (*angusta*), yet they produce (*efficiunt*) much. Although Seneca gives the appearance of a relaxed conversational style with the *inquam* and the repetition of the qualities of a seed, he actually adds a new element to his picture. By comparing seeds to teaching he bridges the earlier analogies of seeds to conversation and to *ratio*. The medium is *sermo*, the content *praecpepta* and the action that brings about change in the student’s mind is that of *ratio*. **inquam:** above, §1 *ut ita dicam* n.

**praecceptorum:** in *Epp.* 94-95 *praeccepta* are contrasted with *decreta* as two different types of teaching, and each *SETAIOLI* 2000, 118, argues, has its appropriate style, *sermo* for *decreta* and *admonitio* for *praeccepta*. However, it is unlikely that such precision is intended here, particularly as at *Ep.* 94.43 Seneca notes that precepts have a brevity and efficacy that he here applies to *sermo* (*BELLINCIANI* 1979, 176). In terms of their comparison to seeds, at *Ep.* 94.29, Seneca describes how the mind carries the seeds of everything honourable which are stirred to growth by *admonitio* (a synonym for precepts in that letter; *BELLINCIANI* 1979, 128): *Omnium honestarum rerum semina animi gerunt, quae admonitione excitantur.* **condicio:** (OLD §8).

**Tantum ... acceperit:** in the letter’s closing image Seneca relates the seed analogy to the learner’s mind. He stresses two points. Firstly, the learner must have a suitable attitude (*idonea mens*) and be active in internalizing the precepts. And secondly, he leaves the reader with the image of the mind producing a crop greater in quantity to what it had received. **ut dixi:** above, §1 *ut ita dicam* n. For the third time Seneca stresses that the suitable mind is a prerequisite. **rapiat ... trahat:** Seneca personifies *mens* by making it the subject of these two verbs, which are themselves, particularly *rapiat*, quite violent. By this, perhaps, he emphasizes the effort involved in properly internalizing another’s teachings. **ut dixi:** this interjection reiterates the conversational mode right to the end of the epistle. **multa:** what specifically is produced by the student’s mind?

**PÉCHAC,** 158, n. 1, taking it to refer to *praeccepta* relates it to the close of *Ep.* 33.11 on philosophical discoveries. It can also, however, be broader than this. If the earlier *in opere* is given the sense of philosophical *actio*, then this crop could also be of deeds, which, however, can include teaching and the production of precepts (above, p. 184). **invicem:** Seneca includes mention of the
reciprocity of philosophic progress, an important idea in Epp. 34-35 (above, p. 242). *generabit*: a verb that has a suitably organic sense of production. *reddet ... acceperit*: Seneca chooses terms appropriate to the language of agriculture (*reddet* below) and of benefactions (e.g. *Ben*. 1.4.3), which Seneca had alluded to in respect of education at *Ep*. 36.4. *reddet*: (OLD §15).
How does a request for philosophical notes at the start of this letter lead on to a description of the process of moral depravity caused by unbridled success? Seneca does not approve entirely of Lucilius’ request. The heart of philosophy is not about learning theories, but about being filled by a desire to emulate past philosophers. Desire is central to this letter. Well-directed desire is philosophy, while desire directed by popular values leads to the situation that the letter closes with, one in which the customary values by which people judge right and wrong, their mores, are in fact vices.

This epistle relates, therefore, importantly to a number of major themes both generally in the Epistles and specifically in Book IV. Seneca continues his exploration of appropriate philosophical reading from Epp. 33 and 38. He expands on the overview of proper values at Ep. 31 by describing the consequences of following popular values, and, in the emphases he gives this description, he builds on the importance he gives to the will in progress at Epp. 34 and 35.

The main scholarly interest in this letter has been in trying to reconstruct from the first few sentences Seneca’s reading plan for his student. Otherwise, Hengelbrock and Maurach are fairly brief. Hachmann gives some attention to the middle of the letter for Seneca’s treatment of magnitudo animi and temperantia in it.

As mentioned, the start of this letter has attracted some attention from scholars trying to reconstruct what reading method Seneca had in mind for his student. The main one of these is Hadot, who reconstructs a reading programme from comments in the Epistles. It has three

639 HADOT 1969a, 54-55, which she expands on at 1969b, 350-352.
stages: I: sententiae, II: breviaria, III: commentarii. The commentarii are the philosophia moralis promised in Epp. 106 and 108 and such works addressed to Lucilius as De Providentia, Quaestiones Naturales and De Beneficiis. A major problem in her reconstruction, besides the sparseness of the comments on which it is built, is that it depends on reading commentarii in this letter in a way that cannot be sustained. For the contrast that Seneca goes on to make between the ratio ordinaria and breviaria to make any sense, it depends on one of these relating to the commentarii that Lucilius has requested. It does not seem likely that Seneca would suddenly start talking in the second sentence about two entirely new types of text. In that Seneca seems to disapprove of the commentarii and feel that the ratio ordinaria is better, it seems clear that he feels the breviaria equate with the commentarii.

The contrast that Seneca goes on to make is between summaries, which are only of use in reminding someone of something already known and the ordinary method (ratio ordinaria), which can teach. Graver, translating ratio ordinaria as ‘regular exposition’, suggests that Seneca is concerned to correct a misapprehension of Lucilius’ from Ep. 38. Perhaps Lucilius took Seneca’s comments on the efficacy of philosophy in small amounts as approval for breviaria. However, just as Seneca said Stoic works must be read as wholes, here he argues for a contrasting form of reading to the breviarium, one that demands more depth and perseverance, something he is explicit upon in a letter in the next book.

There is another possible contrast between Epp. 38 and 39. While the commentarii, like a seed, are tightly packed (in angustum coactos), they are also carefully organized (diligenter ordinatos), which contrast with the loosely organized words of a letter that can be scattered in the manner of seeds. Lucilius, in seeking these summaries, has perhaps latched on to one characteristic of the seed, but missed another. It is possible that part of Seneca’s disapproval of

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640 LEEMAN 1953 is most occupied with what this philosophia moralis might have been.
641 ROSATI 1981, 14 n. 27, argues against Hadot’s interpretation too. See also Ep. 39.1 Commentarios n.
642 GRAVER 1996, 85-86.
643 Ep. 45.1: lectio certa prodest, varia delectat. Qui quo destinavit pervenire vult unam sequatur viam, non per multas vagetur: non ire istuc sed errare est.
644 Ep. 38.2: Seminis modo spargenda sunt.
the summaries is that he felt the mind learns by making links for itself, rather than getting things prepackaged.645

What does Seneca mean by the *ratio ordinaria*? Perhaps that is the wrong question. It is one that leads one away from the *Epistles* to try to reconstruct what sort of reading might be intended. More useful might be to ask how this passage contributes to Seneca’s presentation of himself.646 After all, if his intention really was to provide a reading course, might he not have been clearer? He seems less interested in providing for the reader at the next remove the details of what Lucilius should read than to show what sort of reading he himself approved of. And he becomes very forthright and clear about this in §2, a passage overlooked in the desire to pin down what the *ratio ordinaria* might be. In commenting on what texts Lucilius already has, Seneca says, *interim multos habes quorum scripta nescio an satis ordinentur*. He describes Lucilius as in some sense possessing the authors themselves (*multos habes*), rather than just their texts, an idea that fits well with his demand for texts to be read as wholes.647 Moreover, the mere act of reading the index of these authors should fill Lucilius with a desire to emulate them.

This inspirational quality to reading is one that Seneca models at *Ep*. 64, where he shows the sort of inspiration he himself draws from reading the works of the philosopher Quintus Sextius.648 Furthermore, the desire to emulate is an important idea in *Ep*. 33, where Seneca was insistent that Lucilius should be not just learning but teaching.649 The idea is also found in slightly different form in *Ep*. 36.4 where he condemns the idea of an old man still studying elementary things, saying, *iuveni parandum, seni utendum est*. In the valuation of the inspirational effect of reading philosophers there is an implied recognition that literary effects have a philosophical value: they contribute to *magnitudo animi*, whose acquisition Seneca goes on to examine in the next part of the letter. By contrast the summary, reducing philosophy to bare doctrines and arguments, is less valuable as it fails to inspire this.

645 At *Ep*. 39.2 he goes on to say of the works that Lucilius has, *nescio an satis ordinentur*; however, this possible insufficient ordering does not hinder the utility that he sees for them.

646 A more reasonable question might be how the *ratio ordinaria* is to be related to the contrast between *decreta* and *praecepta* in *Epp*. 94–95 (*Ep*. 39.1 admonet n.).

647 See further, §2 *multos* n. and above, p. 181.

648 Above, p. 189.

649 Above, p. 182.
The desire to emulate past philosophers is the proper impulse of the noble soul towards the honourable. Such an impulse can be related to the theoretical model of *oikeiōsis*, described earlier. It is significant, however, that Seneca describes the impulse as a strong desire (*concupisces*). This also fits with the voluntaristic sense Seneca had of progression within the model of *oikeiōsis*; progression is properly directed desire.

The mind, he continues, can be likened to a flame. This simile can be related to the gradual explication in Book IV by Seneca of the mind’s divine origin. At *Ep*. 31.11, he described the mind as a god residing in the body, and in the final letter this image is developed more fully. Between these two letters the flame image is suggestive of the soul seeking to rise upwards to its divine source. The divine nature of the mind is the most important underpinning of one’s greatness of spirit. Without making this connection explicit in *Ep*. 39, Seneca puts considerable emphasis on the proper desires and the proper choices arising from this greatness of spirit: at §2 he notes what attracts and repels the *vir excelsi ingenii* and then at §4 the proper choices are those of the *magnus animus*.

The objects of one’s desires lead to very different results. The two poles of these are very familiar to the reader as those arising, on the one hand, from popular values and, on the other hand, from philosophical ones. The philosopher is truly happy in directing the impetus of his mind to what is better, and this takes him beyond the authority of Fortune (§3). By contrast the rest of humanity, led on by the popular conception of happiness, if it achieves the success it desires is destroyed by it. These humans are attracted, it seems, to the *humilia* and *sordida* that the philosopher rejects at §2. These mean and dirty things are almost certainly the pleasures,

§2: *habet enim hoc optimum in se generosus animus, quod concitatur ad honesta.*

Above, p. 111.

Above, p. 241.

*Ep*. 41.5 *Quemadmodum radii ... interest n.*

HACHMANN 1995, 279.

Above, p. 24.

Above, p. 10.

They delight (*delectant*) in *turpia* at §6; the same verb is used at §2 of the reaction that the philosopher does not have to *humilia* and *sordida*.
which Seneca associated primarily with the body, in contrast to the more noble mind with its 
divine origin.\textsuperscript{658} These humilia and sordida inflame the passions and lead to a progression that is 
the very opposite of proper oikeiōsis, namely diastrophē or error.\textsuperscript{659}

Seneca devotes more space to describing this process of moral disintegration than he does 
to its reverse. He spends the final half of the letter on it. The end point of the process is that 
people who have taken this path come to base their customs, their criteria for judging right and 
wrong, on what should properly be recognized as vices: quae fuerant vitia mores sunt (§6). Central 
to this process in this description is the role of the pleasures. Given that pleasure was the highest 
good in Epicurean philosophy, this emphasis serves to stamp the philosophy of Book IV as more 
specifically Stoic, as opposed to the more general philosophy of the three previous books, which 
used frequent quotes from Epicurus.\textsuperscript{660}

Earlier Seneca had suggested that luxury was the natural outcome of felicitas.\textsuperscript{661} At Ep. 116.3 
he described luxury as pleasure sought as an end in itself. Luxury, then, is the link between 
felicitas and the pleasures.\textsuperscript{662} Success provided the resources for luxury, making success 
something dangerous. Seneca’s views on success are reminiscent of what Sallust says at Cat. 10.2, 
where he says: qui labores, pericula, dubias atque asperas res facile toleraverant, iis otium divitiaeque, 
optanda alias, oneri miseriaeque fuere. He goes on to remark that through wealth Rome’s youth were 
attacked by luxury and greed.\textsuperscript{663} Seneca’s concern about success was one shared by other Roman 
authors. However, felicitas had important positive connotations in contemporary Rome. It was 
associated with the golden age, and was regularly evoked at the start of a new emperor’s reign.\textsuperscript{664}

\textsuperscript{658} §5 Qui hostis ... suae sunt? n.
\textsuperscript{659} Above, p. 112. Therefore, at Ep. 94.74 Seneca can describe mens bona and bona fortuna as being opposed.
\textsuperscript{660} Above, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{661} Ep. 36.1 luxuriam n.
\textsuperscript{662} Ep. 39.5 Qui hostis ... suae sunt? n.
\textsuperscript{663} Sall. Cat. 12.2: ex divititis iuventutem luxuria atque avaritia cum superbia invasere; see also Cat. 5.8 for the 
pairing of luxury and greed.
\textsuperscript{664} For example, in Sen. Cl. 2.1.4 (felici ac puro saeculo) and Apoc. 1.1 (initio saeculi felicissimi), 4.1.9 and 
4.1.23; cf. Braund 2009, 387 and Eden 1984, 62-63. Felicitas was a quality commemorated on imperial coinage 
from the reign of Galba on (Fears 1981, 897). Felicitas had also been associated with some Roman statesmen 
since the time of Sulla (Fears 1981, 878-879).
As he had also done with fortuna, Seneca clearly marked an important imperial value as the antithesis of philosophical ones.665

Concern about the dangers of success or prosperity may be one that Seneca shared with other writers of his age, but it is not a concern that attracts much serious attention today. As with his attitude to wealth, what separates Seneca from us are the economic ideas that Adam Smith pioneered.666 These economic ideas value material abundance, and much as Seneca says of luxury, economic growth has become an end in itself. The system works by having consumption ever increase. Yet the problems that this system causes are arguably not able to be solved by economic means but by a change in attitude, however unlikely, similar to what Seneca advocates.

The danger of too great success was not a new one to the reader of the Epistles. A series of letters at the end of Book II had been devoted to it in an attempt to get Lucilius to retire from public life.667 At Ep. 19.5 Seneca says of Lucilius that tutil te longe a conspectu vitae salubris rapida felicitas. He goes on a little later to note that Maecenas was a great man castrated by felicitas (Ep. 19.9). The path out of this dangerous state is to be able to accept poverty, to see it as no evil.668 This might involve practising for poverty by eating and dressing simply (Ep. 18.5). Seneca goes on to say that in a similar way a soldier practises in peacetime (Ep. 19.6), and such practice is to seize Fortune’s weapons in advance of her: hoc est praeoccupare tela fortunae (Ep. 18.11). At Ep. 39 there is a slightly different emphasis, as Seneca counsels the need for moderation: magni animi est magna contemnere ac mediocria malle quam nimia (§4). Such moderation is opposed to the unbounded success (immoderata felicitas, §4) of popular valuation, that leads eventually to its very opposite, infelicitas (§6).669 Moderation was also the virtue that controlled the pleasures, the cause

665 Below, p. 12.
666 As noted at Ep. 32.4 quidquid ad te ... detrahendum est n., Gibbon reflects this shift when he sees luxury as performing a positive function.
668 In a later letter, Ep. 87.41, Seneca describes paupertas as the foundation of the Roman empire: fundamentum et causam imperii sui.
669 This is the paradox of felicitas, that Motto 2001, 45-54, describes.
of this infelicitas.\textsuperscript{670} This emphasis on moderation is a theme that is continued in the next letter, where it is applied to one’s speech, and it is for this reason that Maurach sees these two letters as a pair.\textsuperscript{671}

Et desinit esse remedio locus ubi quae fuerant vitia mores sunt (§6). Seneca closes on a despairing note for the bulk of his contemporaries. They are doomed to live according to false values. This mismatch between what things are called and what they actually are had been introduced in a small way at the start of the letter, when Seneca complained that the summarium had been replaced in common speech with the breviarium (§1). Besides the pleasing ring-composition this creates, the earlier reference is significant for what it reveals of Seneca’s sense of where reliable values could be found. With contemporary society hopelessly vitiated, it was in the past that one must look for models, exempla, to follow. As he had said earlier when encouraging Lucilius to choose someone to be his custos: opus est, inquam, aliquo ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant: nisi ad regulam prava non corriges (Ep. 11.10). Without some measure of virtue, error cannot be corrected. Both at Ep. 11 and elsewhere, whether explicitly stated in theory or not, the models Seneca looked to for this measure were from the past and it is through literature that these were known. At the close of Ep. 39 and again at the close of the book (Ep. 41.9) Seneca draws the lines starkly between philosophers and the mass of his contemporaries. Their values are separated by a chasm.

\textsuperscript{670} Fortner 2002, 175. A short definition of the virtue is given at Ep. 88.29: temperantia voluptatibus imperat, alias edit atque abigit, alias dispensat et ad sanum modum redigit nec umquam ad illas propter ipsas venit; scit optimum esse modum cupitorum non quantum velis, sed quantum debeas sumere.

\textsuperscript{671} Maurach 1975, 352; not that he wishes to be too unqualified in saying this: ‘Man könnte nun vielleicht, bei aller gebotenen Vorsicht, mit einigem Recht behaupten, daß ep. 39 und 40 nicht ganz beziehungslos nebeneinander stehen, daß wir es auch hier wie im Falle von ep. 34/35 und 36/37 mit einem Paare zu tun haben’.
Division:
- A (§§1-2): Lucilius asks for commentarii.
- B (§3): Our soul is like a flame.
- C (§§4-6): The danger of unbridled success.

Section A (§§1-2). As with the previous letter, Seneca takes his lead from a request from Lucilius. To this request, however, he is less enthusiastic. Lucilius wishes to get from Seneca a certain type of text, one that Seneca does not value. Seneca nevertheless promises to supply such a text along with a sort that he does approve of. In contrast to the previous letter, Seneca explicitly discusses written texts rather than alluding to them in a discussion of conversation. However, as in Ep. 33 he manages to focus on the writers of these texts over the texts themselves, and he concludes this discussion by noting that Lucilius should be filled by a desire to emulate the previous philosophers when he sees how many have toiled on his behalf. He leads into the next section by commenting that this is the mark of a noble mind.

§1. Commentarios quos desideras, diligenter ordinatos et in angustum coactos, ego vero componam; sed vide ne plus profutura sit ratio ordinaria quam haec quae nunc vulgo breviarium dicitur, olim cum latine loqueremur summarium vocabatur. Illa res discenti magis necessaria est, haec scienti; illa enim docet, haec admonet. Sed utriusque rei tibi copiam faciam. Tu a me non est quod illum aut illum exigas: qui notorem dat ignotus est.

§1. What can we say about the type of texts that Lucilius has requested? We do not have these texts, and if the correspondence is basically fictional it is doubtful they were ever composed. Rather than trying to speculate on the exact nature of them, as some commentators have done (above, p. 329), it seems better to focus on the contrast that Seneca is making. Lucilius wants summaries, which Seneca regards as not able to teach, but as being only really good for reminding someone who already knows the material. By contrast what Seneca calls the regular
method can teach. He promises to send Lucilius both sorts of texts. He does not want, however, to provide authorities for the theories in the summaries. To ask for them is to be still at a stage not far from that of asking for excerpts in Ep. 33.

Commentarios quos ... componam: the beginning of this letter is very matter-of-fact (similar to those of Epp. 33 and 38). Seneca assures his friend he will provide the books that he has requested, and he further describes these as both carefully organized and confined in a small space. For the similarities and contrast with the seed analogy of the previous letter see above, p. 330. Commentarios: that these are further defined as in angustum coactos confirms their identification as the breviarium or summarium in the next sentence. See above, p. 329, for the difficulty of separating these commentarii from the summaries, as Hadot 1969a, 55, proposes. Hadot does not argue from the text of Ep. 39, but from the meaning of hypomnēma and epitomē, which she appears to see as determining the sense of commentarios and breviarium respectively (Hadot 1969a, 52, and nn. 69 and 71). Seneca’s disdain for notebooks, commentarii, had been expressed at Ep. 33.7 turpe est ex commentario sapere n. ordinatos: the sense here contrasts strongly with the image of the scattering of seeds in Ep. 38.2. It is also a verb often used in an agricultural context, that of making rows of trees. Furthermore the word recurs two more times in this section (ordinaria ... ordinentur). See above, p. 330, for the possibility that Seneca did not regard this as a necessary quality in philosophical writing. Seneca uses it at Ep. 108.1 of composing a work on moral philosophy. vero: Ep. 30.7 n. componam: a verb that conveniently leaves it indeterminate whether Seneca is composing this material himself (OLD §8) or simply arranging it (OLD §5d), although scribam at §2 is less ambiguous.

sed vide ne ... vocabatur: directly on having agreed to supply the texts to Lucilius, Seneca adds a reservation. He warns his friend that these texts are less beneficial than what he calls a normal method (ratio ordinaria). He adds to the sense of disapproval by striking a curmudgeonly tone with a note of disapproval that the popular term for these texts no longer accords with the good Latin of former times. ratio ordinaria: Smith, 136. What Seneca means by the regular method is either assumed to be common knowledge or is to be inferred by contrast with the texts that Lucilius had wanted. Certainly from before Seneca’s day and increasingly over time philosophy became associated with the study of the canonical texts of earlier philosophers (Sedley 1997). That Seneca intends Lucilius to read these philosophers accords with his insistence on treating authors
as wholes at *Ep.* 33.5 and the reference below to *multos n.*.  

**breviarium:** ALLEN 1966, 347, notes that the term has a commercial sense, being used by Suetonius, *Aug.* 101 and *Gal.* 12, to refer to the sort of daily notes that would be made in a cashbook, yet this is unlikely to be its primary sense, which would be more general.  

**olim ... loqueremur:** Seneca contrasts the popular usage (vulgo) unfavourably with archaic usage. SETAIOLI 1988a, 39, notes that such respect for the Latin of earlier times by Seneca occurs elsewhere. It fits with the concept of *diastrophē* (above, p. 112), whereby usage in earlier times was less corrupt and therefore there was a more accurate relation between a word and the thing indicated. As time passed and corruption increased, the discrepancy between these also increased. This view of language change coincides with what Seneca says at *Ep.* 114.10, where he describes changes in vocabulary being driven by a corrupt desire for novelty that both coins new words and resurrects obsolete ones.  

**summarium:** such a term picks up a similar contrast at *Ep.* 33.5 with *summatim*. For all the antiquity that Seneca accords the word, this is its first surviving use (SETAIOLI 1988a, 39 n. 125).  

**illa res ... admonet:** Seneca explains his reservation with a pair of antitheses between the two types of texts. The first antithesis is between the types of reader they are suitable for. The regular method is suitable for someone learning, and the summary for someone who already knows. In the second antithesis Seneca personifies the texts; the regular method teaches and the summary reminds.  

**illa res ... haec:** the natural reading of these is to take the *illa res* as referring to the ratio ordinaria (‘the former’) and the *haec* to the commentarii, also called a breviarium or summarium (‘the latter’; cf. G-L §307). Alternatively, if the former, the ratio ordinaria, is viewed as being more important, the *haec* could refer to it (G-L §307). However, although Seneca places great importance on both knowing (scienti) and advice (admonet), this reading seems harder to sustain.  

**discenti ... scienti:** substantival participles (*Ep.* 30.4 perituri n.).  

**admonet:** in *Ep.* 94 Seneca used admonitio as a synonym of praecepta (BELLINCIONI 1979, 128). At *Ep.* 94.25 Seneca makes a similar comment on the function of precepts as he says here of the summary: *Non docet admonitio sed advertit, sed excitat, sed memoriam continet nec patitur elabi.* If one were to use this passage to equate the summary with precepts, it suggests a different character to the summary than a series of dry and abbreviated points. If the summary, then, is taken to be in the form of precepts (so ROSATI 1981, 14), it does not follow that the ratio ordinaria, on the basis of the discussion in *Epp.* 94-95 must be wholly dogma. Rather, it is better to see it as a blending of the two, as Seneca says is necessary at *Ep.* 95.34: dogma without precepts, he says, are ineffective. Such a blending, in fact,
seems to match very well Seneca’s own style of writing in the Epistles, which may actually be what Seneca expected of the ratio ordinaria.

**Sed utriusque ... faciam**: despite his reservation on the utility of summaries, Seneca reiterates that he will comply with his friend’s request. He adds, however, that he will also supply his friend with the texts he feels are more beneficial. For more on the effect of Seneca’s repeated assurances of compliance to Lucilius’ request see below §2 *Scribam ergo ... more n.* **utriusque rei ... copiam**: there is a suggestion of generosity in the abundance implied by *copiam*. It is also possible to understand *rei* in two senses, one is in the sense of an opportunity for both activities (*OLD* §8), that is learning and revision (so *Gummere*, 259). The other is more concrete in the sense of a supply of both types of material (*OLD* §9). As the second of these implies the first, both senses are able to be present without any strain.

**Tu a me ... ignotus est**: this passage provides more detail about what Lucilius was requesting from Seneca, which is either specific authors, or more probably the authors or sources of various doctrines. Seneca, however, is critical of such a request. Using a commercial analogy he argues that providing a guarantor (*notorem*) for one’s statements is to be an unknown. This has a number of implications. Firstly, Seneca stresses the relationship that exists between the two of them by putting the phrase *tu a me* at the start of the sentence and outside of its clause. This relates to the idea that Lucilius, and also the reader at the next remove, should know Seneca through what he has revealed of himself through the letters (above, p. 187), and therefore the reader should be able to accept the *fides* of Seneca for what he says — he is not an unknown (*ignotus*). Indeed, this statement echoes a confidence in his enduring fame expressed at *Ep*. 21.5: *habebo apud posteros gratiam*. Secondly, Lucilius’ interest in the authorities for ideas reveals an attitude not very different from that criticized at *Ep*. 33.7: ‘*Hoc Zenon dixit*: tu quid?’ He may not be asking for excerpts, but he appears to be asking for names, the authority of whom he trusts rather than striving to assimilate their ideas and become self-sufficient in what he believes.

Self-sufficiency is the goal, and when it is fully achieved Seneca would no longer be an authority but a friend. On the way, though, the philosopher making progress should not rely on the name of a past philosopher as authority for a belief, but one could extrapolate from Seneca’s injunction at *Ep*. 33.4 on reading authors that one might come to recognize the *auctoritas* of previous philosophers when one had come to know them through their texts read as wholes.
Finally, the charge of being an unknown could be turned around on to Lucilius. If he is seeking authorities for ideas he is like those in Ep. 33.8 who are *numquam auctores, semper interpretes, sub aliena umbra latentes*. *non est quod*: Ep. 31.5 n. *illum aut illum*: this request for the works of named individuals is what Graver 1996, 85, n. 44, uses to argue that the *commentarii* requested at the start might be commentaries in our sense. However, Seneca specifically refuses to give names, saying he should be authority enough, so this seems impossible to maintain. Rather the *commentarii* must be notebooks and summary in form (above, p. 330).

§2. *Scribam ergo quod vis, sed meo more; interim multos habes quorum scripta nescio an satis ordinentur. Sume in manus indicem philosophorum: haec ipsa res expergisci te coget, si videris quam multi tibi laboraverint. Concupisces et ipse ex illis unus esse; habet enim hoc optimum in se generous animus, quod concitatur ad honesta. Neminem excelsi ingenii virum humilia delectant et sordida: magnarum rerum species ad se vocat et extollit.*

§2. Seneca concludes his reply to Lucilius’ request with a final reassurance that he will send what has been asked for, although significantly prepared in his own way. He makes a contrast to the idea of being an unknown in the previous sentence by suggesting that one important function of the writing of previous philosophers is a spur to emulation, to seek renown. He continues by noting that such a desire is a mark of the well-born soul, the characteristics of which provide the tangent for the rest of the letter.

*Scribam ergo ... more*: Seneca sums up (*ergo*) his response to Lucilius’ request. He will write what Lucilius wants, as he had already promised twice earlier. In addition, the qualification that he will do it in his own way reflects his reservation about the utility of summaries and his unwillingness, expressed in the previous sentence, to cite names in the summary he prepares. In this Seneca appears to wish to show a desire to be seen as motivated by generosity in complying with a friend’s request, but also by a concern for what is really best for him. *scribam*: unlike the less definitive *componam* at §1, this verb suggests that the summary is something that Seneca will be writing himself, rather than just compiling. *meo more*: this is an expression of the self-sufficiency that Seneca saw as central to being a philosopher. Seneca has already appeared in opposition to the vitiated Latin usage of his day (above, §1). Such a stance is also in opposition to that of the mass of people described at the end of this letter, for whom their vices have become their customs, with *mores* being the last content word of the letter.
interim multos ... ordinentur: Seneca offers advice while Lucilius is waiting for the promised texts (interim). Lucilius has plenty of authors to read, though not terribly well organized. multos: while the metonymy of authors for their works is perfectly common, nevertheless it serves to emphasize the particular quality Seneca appeared to value in them, the authors themselves and their characters revealed in the texts (above, p. 182). nescio an: the sense here is the negative, ‘possibly not’ (OLD nescio §4), rather than the positive, ‘possibly’. ordinentur: such implied lack of organization contrasts with one of the particular qualities of the notebooks Lucilius has requested from Seneca, above, §1 ordinatos n.

Sume in manus ... laboraverint: arguably it is here that Seneca offers his most emphatic advice on reading to Lucilius. Whereas there is debate about the nature of the texts he contrasts at the start of the letter (above, p. 329), his advice here is unambiguous and forcefully expressed (below, expergisci n.). This provides a key as to what the letter is principally about: rather than being concerned to give comprehensive instruction on what Lucilius should read, Seneca wishes to stress the attitude towards texts that he thinks is important. He sees here a use for texts that is inspirational rather than doctrinal. He orders his friend to pick up a catalogue of philosophers, the very act of which, by making him see how many have toiled on his behalf, will awake his attention. Sume in manus: Seneca focuses on a physical act, as though the very size of the catalogue will impress itself on Lucilius’ senses. indicem: (OLD §5) presumably this is a catalogue to Lucilius’ own books, even though Seneca believes them to be not very organized. It could, however, be a more generalized list, as Prêchac, 159, n. 2, suggests, noting the one Quintilian, Inst. 10.1.81-84, 123-131, makes of Greek and Roman philosophers. expergisci: in oratory such a word is used to focus the listeners’ attention on a key issue and to evoke an energetic response, e.g. Sall. Cat. 20.14 and 52.6; Seneca uses the word with this sense elsewhere only at Ep. 53.8. Here Seneca supports this sense of urgency with the choice of coget; the action of picking up the list compels this response. multi: repeats multos from the previous section. Again Seneca moves past the texts to the people who produced them. laboraverint: this image of toil fits with the Cynic and Stoic valuation of hardship (above, p. 117). Seneca makes a similar point in more reverent, even religious terms, at Brev. 14.1: Nisi ingrattissimi sumus, illi clarissimi sacrarum opinionum conditores nobis nati sunt, nobis vitam praeparaverunt. Ad res pulcherrimas ex tenebris ad lucem erutas alieno labore deducimur.
Concupisces et ... esse: in sense this goes closely with the previous sentence. The future tense shows that it is in effect another apodosis of that sentence’s conditional. Seneca uses concupisces to describe the attitude he expects of his friend. It is a forceful word and one that identifies the unStoic passion of intense desire. It is paradoxical that Seneca should choose to present an attachment to philosophy in such terms, when its goal is a freedom from the passions. However, this is consistent with the affective element that Seneca saw as important to progress (above, p. 241). Cooper 2006, 45, notes something of this in describing Seneca’s ‘almost impassioned’ concern in moral improvement. Cooper, however, cannot approve of Seneca’s favouring of rhetoric, which, he concludes, leads to a failure to grasp the importance of logic, as for Cooper (2006, 51) ‘understanding’ is something that can only come from logical arguments. However, this does not really reflect Seneca’s understanding of the mind (above, p. 21). Furthermore, Cooper betrays his own opinion of what is a philosopher when he suggests (2006, 55) that Seneca is not writing to philosophers, but non-philosophers, ‘people making progress’. Real philosophers, it appears, are academics. Yet this is surely not Seneca’s opinion, who in this very passage expects his reader to desire to become one! A desire to be numbered among the philosophers is a desire for lasting renown, a more genuine renown as Seneca makes clear at Ep. 79.13-17 and Brev. 15.4-5. At Ep. 100.12 Seneca notes that a young person reading Fabianus would be filled by a desire to emulate him without despairing of being able to surpass him.

habet enim ... honesta: Seneca now offers an explanation (enim) for why he expects that Lucilius will behave in such a way. Seneca sets the explanation in a more theoretical context: Lucilius’ behaviour is the product of a well-born soul (generosus animus). At one level this is encouragement for Lucilius, praise for the nature of his soul, but more importantly it refers to the idea introduced in Ep. 31.11 that the soul is well-born because it has divine origins. There are other echoes of Ep. 31 here. The sense of ‘rouse to action’ in concitatur (OLD §4) fits with the idea of toiling in the company of past philosophers in the previous sentence. It also echoes the idea that it takes effort to acquire the honourable, found at Ep. 31.4 rursus ad honesta ... nitentes n. An earlier mention of the generosus animus is also at Ep. 31.4; again, as here, it is mentioned in connection with toil: generosos animos labor nutrit. honesta: Ep. 31.4 n. In Latin usage generosus and honestus are to some degree synonymous (OLD honestus §2, ‘well-born, of high rank’), making such an inclination natural, which shows a properly Stoic concord between sense and language, one that is obscured in popular usage (above, §1 olim ... loqueremur n.).
Neminem ... extollit: in relating what appeals to a great-spirited person Seneca continues to focus on the mind. He creates an antithesis between what is mean and low and what is great; such an antithesis relates to the fundamental Senecan one between philosophical and popular values (above, p. 10). The two poles of the contrast are evocative here rather than concrete; as such they invite the reader to pause and consider what they refer to, recalling in the process depictions of these values in previous letters of Book IV (below, humilia ... sordida n. and magnarum rerum species n.). Seneca also contrasts the reaction to these two objects of attention. Popular things arouse a shallow pleasure (delectant), whereas the spectacle of great things summons the philosopher (vocat), recalling the sense of movement in expergisci, and lifts him up (extollit), suggestive of being taken out of the sphere of mortal concerns into a higher one. neminem: adjectival (OLD §5, G-L §317 2). excelsi ingenii: although largely a synonym for the magnus animus (above, p. 24 and ARMSEN–MARCHETTI 1996, 83, n. 48) that is prominent below at §4, as MAZZOLI 1970, 48-49, observes, it also refers to magnitudo ingenii, an inspired height of feeling (altezza ispirata di sentire) and an especially aesthetic virtue, which is particularly relevant to the context of literary emulation that Seneca’s explanation here grew out of. humilia ... sordida: these adjectives were two of the particular qualities of stultitia (Ep. 37.4 Humilis res ... subiecta n.). Here they might be described as denoting the objects to which Foolishness gives her attention. Seneca had given concrete examples of such objects at Ep. 31.10. They contrast strongly with the honesta in the previous sentence. magnarum rerum species: one of the grandest spectacles for Seneca was viewing the cosmos (HIJMANS 1966, 247, n. 38), which he had described recently at Ep. 36.10-11. He would return to this in a slightly different context when describing the effects of experiencing, primarily by viewing, the divine in nature and in humans at Ep. 41.3-5. The immediate context is also relevant and the magnae res may also be those seen in philosophy; just as the ipsa res of picking up a list of philosophers is inspiring, so too, one assumes, are their books, and the great deeds of philosophers found in them. ad se: although this clause is not subordinate grammatically to the previous one, it is subordinate in sense and Seneca has used the reflexive pronoun to refer to the principal subject of this sentence as if the clause was in fact grammatically subordinate as well.

Section B §3. Mention of the noble soul at §2 leads Seneca to speak more generally on the nature of the soul. At the centre of the letter he likens the soul to a flame in not being able to lie down or be crushed. Similar to a flame it is active; but true success, Seneca argues, is in directing
the energy of one’s soul towards the true good, an activity that places oneself outside the control of fortune. He describes such activity in the contrasting pair of ideas: tempering favourable things and diminishing unfavourable; he then rounds this contrast out with the instruction not to esteem things popularly valued.

§3. Quemadmodum flamma surgit in rectum, iacere ac deprimi non potest, non magis quam quiescere, ita noster animus in motu est, eo mobilior et actuosior quo vehementior fuerit. Sed felix qui ad meliora hunc impetum dedit: ponet se extra ius dicionemque fortunae; secunda temperabit, adversa comminuet et aliis admiranda despiciet.

Quemadmodum flamma ... vehementior fuerit: Seneca draws an analogy between a flame and the soul. He notes a number of characteristics of the flame that the soul shares. Firstly it is upright and cannot lie down or be depressed. This image is suggestive of its nobility, particularly as iacere (OLD §5) and deprimi (OLD §4) suggest being brought low or humbled. It is the third quality, however, that Seneca focuses on when he turns to the soul. Just as a flame cannot rest (quiescere), the soul is active, and the more energetic it is, the more active and busy it is. This analogy provides support for Seneca’s approval in Ep. 31 for labor: such toil accords with the nature of the soul, as he suggests at Tranq. 2.11. The analogy had a basis in Stoic physics, as the soul was a fragment of the divine, which was sometimes defined as a designing fire (L-S 46A). The upward movement of a flame could be matched by the soul’s movement towards its celestial origin, something Seneca makes explicit in Ep. 41 (above, p. 332). At Ep. 57.8 Seneca describes the nature of the soul in greater detail, again with analogy to a flame. At Helv. 6.6 Seneca explains the mobility of the soul as a quality of its divine origin. Quemadmodum ... ita: Ep. 30.2 n. surgit: Ep. 31.9 surges n. in rectum: uprightness was an important stance for Seneca (Ep. 31.11 rectus n.). vehementior: (OLD §4) at Ep. 66.6 Seneca lists vehemens as one of the qualities of the perfect soul.

Sed felix ... fortunae: discussion of the mind’s energy leads fairly naturally to the use to which that energy should be put. Seneca sets this in the context of felicitas and fortuna. True felicitas is described as something beyond the control of fortune. Such felicitas Seneca urged Lucilius to acquire in Ep. 31.5, and it contrasts with the popular felicitas he urged Lucilius’ friend to reject in Ep. 36.1-2. This sentence is near the letter’s centre and is given emphasis by the Virgilian echo (below, felix qui n.). It provides the topic for the remainder of the letter. felix qui: this phrase is distinctive for the elision of the verb. It is the phrase’s only occurrence in Classical prose, though it is found a number of times in verse, the earliest and most famous being Verg. Georg.
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2.489. ad meliora: these generalized better things had been described in earlier letters, particularly Epp. 31 and 32, where truly good things are specified as being mental (Ep. 32.5) and associated with virtue (Ep. 31.5). impetum: this urge could be related to the Stoic theory of oikeiōsis; it is a natural one, but one more frequently perverted by society towards false goods (above, p. 111). fortunae: Seneca personifies fortuna as a terrestrial ruler with authority (ius dicionemque) in a circumscribed sphere. With such language Seneca legitimates fortuna’s power over popular goods at the same time as he diminishes her status: what she controls is not of true value. He had described her power in similar terms at Ep. 36.5 ius n. Fortune is described by Seneca in a number of places as having a kingdom, something ASMIS 2009, 120-124 discusses well.

secunda temperabit … despiciet: Seneca outlines the reaction of the genuinely successful person to three different circumstances. The first two are opposites, prosperity (secunda) and adversity (adversa), and correspond to the two faces of fortune (utramque fortunam, Ep. 71.37; see also Vit. 25.5-7). The last one is taken from the perspective of the philosopher, popular goods (aliis admiranda), indicating the comparative worthlessness of anything fortune offers. At Ep. 41.4-5 Seneca describes the reaction of a virtuous person to external events in similar terms. Fabianus is recorded as saying that prosperity needs its limit (Sen. Rh. Suas. 1.9): modum inpondendum esse secundis rebus. secunda … adversa: these two are used at Ep. 98.3 with a similar contrast; see also Polyb. 17.5, Helv. 5.1 and 5.5. temperabit: the noun formed from this verb is a virtue, temperantia; it is the quality needed to handle prosperity well (BORGIO, 170). despiciet: an occasional alternative to contemnere (LOTITO 2001, 78).

Section C (§§4-6). In developing the need to react appropriately to fortune whether favourable or unfavourable, Seneca focuses on the challenges of favourable circumstances. This calls for moderation, having enough, the importance of which occupies the last half of the letter. Seneca draws examples from nature, and specifically agriculture, to illustrate the dangers of too much. He then applies this to humans, whom unbounded success makes vulnerable through the pleasures, which come to exceed the natural and have no limit.

§4. Magni animi est magna contemnere ac mediocria malle quam nimia; illa enim utilia vitaliaque sunt, at haec eo quod superfluunt nocent. Sic segetem nimia sternit ubertas, sic rami onere franguntur, sic ad maturitatem non pervenit nimia fecunditas. Idem animis quoque eventit quos immoderata felicitas rumpit, qua non tantum in aliorum inuriam sed etiam in suam utuntur.
§4. Seneca argues that it is a mark of a great spirit to favour moderation. Excess, he goes on, actually harms, which he illustrates from nature. In the same way un gov erned success harms people, both to the person who receives it and those around. For the consonance with other Roman writers that this idea has, and its contrast with modern attitudes to success, see above, p. 333.

Magni animi ... nimia: Seneca creates an antithesis, expressed as a paradox, between moderation and excess (mediocria ... nimia). Excess is linked to the great things (magna) that the great spirit looks down on. Such an attitude to success had been stressed in earlier letters where Seneca was urging his friend to retire from public life (above, p. 334). The ultimate source of greatness of spirit for Seneca comes from a sense of one’s divine origin (above, p. 24), and this is a theme developed in this book (above, p. 46). However, the role for greatness of spirit in exercising moderation had already been stressed at Ep. 18.11. con temnere: Epp. 31.3 contemptus n. and Ep. 36.1 n.

illa enim ... nocent: the mediocria (illa) are both useful and life-giving, whereas the nimia (haec) are harmful to the extent that they are superfluous. In what follows of this contrast between the useful and the superfluous, Seneca focuses on the superfluous and the harm it causes, and for this reason it is this point that is made last. However, at §6 the contrast is referred to again in the mention of usefulness (utilitas). illa ... haec: §1 illa res ... haec n. superfluunt: these are the supervacua at §6.

Sic segetem ... fecunditas: the anaphora of sic serves to relate these three examples from nature to the problem of excess in a tricolon crescens (Ep. 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’ ... malus?’ n.). The repetition of nimia underlines this link. The third example generalizes on the first two: grain is laid flat and fruit causes the branch to break and as a result such excessive fruitfulness causes neither to reach ripeness. With these images Seneca conveys powerfully the sense that the outcome of such early bounty is not only not fulfilled, but actually ends in ruin. These analogies follow that of the flame, making natural imagery prominent in this letter; such arguments from nature are particularly appropriate and persuasive for Seneca, as he takes nature as his guide (above, p. 24, Ep. 36.11 Observa ... surgere n. and Ep. 41.7 n.). ubertas: the dangers of excessively fertile soil Virgil warns against at Georg. 2.252-253.
Idem animis ... rumpit: Seneca next claims that in the same way success itself works against the minds of those afflicted by too much of it. By linking this idea to the analogies on plant growth he claims that such an outcome is inherent in nature, both generally and specifically to human nature. **immoderata**: BORGO, 132. In moving to describe the human condition Seneca switches to this term from *nimia*. The lack of moderation to one’s success underlines that it is not a naturally occurring state but one created by the lack of a virtue, moderation. The term from which *immoderata* is derived, *modus*, was an important one for Seneca; it represented a mean between two extremes (cf. RICHARDSON–HAY 2009, 89). See also Ep. 40.8 *moderatas* n. and Ep. 41.5 *moderatum* n. **felicitas**: Ep. 31.2 *felix* n. The harm of such popular success had been stressed at Ep. 36.1. See further above, p. 333. **rumpit**: the verb picks up the destructive force of the verbs *sternit* and *franguntur* in the earlier analogies.

qua non tantum ... utuntur: Seneca makes the interesting observation that such success is harmful not just to the person who receives it, but also those around him. The reader might be reminded of a number of Julio-Claudian emperors; Caligula, in particular, fits such a description. Seneca uses him as an *exemplum* on a number of occasions (HAASE, 498), usually for his cruelty, but does not suggest he is a product of unmeasured success. **utuntur**: the plural subject of this verb will recur a number of times in the next two sections. The victims of too great success were presumably a type easily recognizable to the reader.

§5. Qui hostis in quemquam tam contumeliosus fuit quam in quosdam voluptates suae sunt? quorum inpotentiae atque insanae libidini ob hoc unum possis ignoscere, quod quae fecere patiuntur. Nec inmerito hic illos furor vexat; necesse est enim in immensum exeat cupiditas quae naturalem modum transilît. Ille enim habet suum finem, inania et ex libidine orta sine termino sunt.

§5. Seneca personifies the pleasures, who show more insulting behaviour to those they rule than any enemy. He goes on to suggest that the perpetrators of the vices these pleasures provoke deserve pardon only because they suffer the effects of their actions. Seneca relates this to moderation in observing that the root vice of desire, once it exceeds the limits of nature has nothing to moderate it.

Qui hostis ... suae sunt?: Seneca now brings in a new element, the pleasures, asking the reader if he knows of any enemy that caused as much humiliation as the pleasures have to some people. It is through the pleasures that unbounded success humiliates people. In this sense they
are quite similar to the passions Seneca had described in Ep. 37.4 (see further, below §6 Serviunt itaque ... fruuntur n.). Pleasures provoke the passions and in the next sentences Seneca makes mention of libido, furor and cupiditas as arising from them. The nature of the connection between success and the pleasures is not stated; rather it is assumed to be obvious, though he is explicit elsewhere. At Ep. 114.9 he notes that luxury is spread by success, and it leads to excessive care of the body (ubi luxuriam late felicitas fudit, cultus primum corporum esse diligentior incipit). The pleasures are largely seen as physical ones (Ep. 23.6: corpusculum ... vanas suggerit voluptates, breves, paenitendas ac ... in contrarium abituras and BorGO, 198). And it is to these pleasures that luxury panders (Ep. 90.19). fuit: shows that Seneca is inviting the reader to think of past examples.

voluptates: Ep. 31.2 n. suae: referring to the actual subject (quosdam), rather than the grammatical one (G-L §309, 2).

quorum inpotentiae ... patiuntur: the potential for pleasures to cause harm was something Seneca had already observed on a number of occasions (Epp. 23.6, 24.16 and 27.2). Here Seneca gives a judicial frame to this harm: these people can be forgiven because they are in effect punishing themselves, an image that contributes to the portrayal of their pathetic and humiliating condition. At Ep. 22.12 Seneca has a similar paradox when he notes that the gods grant things that harm people, which is excusable only because this is in answer to prayers.

quorum: the quosdam. inpotentiae: here, as at Ep. 36.1 n., this term is associated with popular success. insanae: commonly associated, as here, with the passions (BorGO, 101). libidini: usually this is a moral fault that marks the tendency to abandon oneself to physical pleasures (BorGO, 117), as Seneca indicates when introducing the story of Hostius Quadra (Nat. 1.16.1).

Nec inmerito ... transilît: Seneca underlines with the litotes nec inmerito his approval of the punishment that these people suffer. What harasses them is a madness. And it is a madness that is created by allowing desire to exceed the limits nature intends for it. Such a limit had been introduced at Ep. 16.9: Naturalia desideria finita sunt: ex falsa opinione nascentia ubi desinant non habent; nullus enim terminus falsa est. Via eunti aliquid extremum est: error immensus est. There Seneca distinguishes between natural desires and those arising from false opinion. Here such a distinction is suggested in the next sentence. Both here and at Ep. 16.9 the unbounded excess of desire when it exceeds this limit is emphasized. The need for limit is frequently emphasized, in relation to pleasure at Ep. 23.6. At Helv. 10.11 it is wealth that needs limits as, cupiditati nihil satis
Commentary on Epistle 39

est, naturae satis est etiam parum. And at Tranq. 10.6, in the context of advancement, a limit is needed both to one’s advancement and to one’s desires. furore: as here this term is primarily associated with the effects of the passions (Borgo, 78). immensum: an appropriate term here, being formed from the past participle of metior and denoting a lack of measure. It was used also at Ep. 16.9. cupiditas: Ep. 36.10 n. transilít: the prefix trans emphasizes the movement from one sphere, that of nature, to another, that of error (Ep. 35.4 transit n.). The dynamic nature of this movement is stressed by the root verb (Ep. 31.11 Subsilire n.).

ille enim ... termino sunt: Seneca uses an antithesis between nature (ille, see below n.) and superfluous things (inanitas et ex libidine orta), which are the nimia of §4. The contrast between them is the same as that made at Ep. 16.9: nature has a limit, something the superfluous lacks: things that are not within the limit of nature become superfluous and they are without any limit once that boundary is crossed. At Ep. 59.4 pleasure’s unbounded character is one of its defining features. At Ep. 119.10 Seneca also talks of a natural measure (naturalem modum), and adds that it is difficult to observe, as what we think is within this measure actually contains some superfluous things. Epictetus, Ench. 39, also talks of there being no limit beyond the proper measure: τοῦ γὰρ ἀπαξ ὑπὲρ τὸ μέτρον ὅρος ὅμοιος ἐστὶν. Ille: this refers back to naturalem modum. It agrees with modum in gender, but in sense it really refers to the adjective of that phrase and refers to natura.


§6. The last section is marked by a series of striking paradoxes and antitheses; popular values result in the absolute opposite of what they intend. Seneca describes the progression of superfluous pleasures hardening into customs, a state that he bleakly observes has no cure, and a state, the reader might reflect, to which most of his contemporaries are doomed. In a form of perverted oikeiosis (diastrophé) Seneca highlights the role of misdirected love; the victims of immoderata felicitas come to love their vices, culminating in such success becoming its reverse, infelicitas.
**Necessaria metitur ... redigis?:** Seneca raises the intensity of the concluding rhetoric with a rhetorical question. He shifts from the metaphor of a boundary to one of measuring. He uses an antithesis between *necessaria* and *supervacua* to describe the things that are on either side of the boundary. The essentials have a measure, usefulness. By contrast the obvious answer to the question that Seneca leaves unanswered is that the superfluous, having exceeded this measure (above, §5 *ille enim ... termino sunt n.*), cannot be brought into line with any standard of judgement. *metitur:* a sense of measure had already been present in *immensum* and *modum* in §5 above. *utilitas:* picks up *utilia* at §4 above. *supervacua:* Ep. 30.11 n. *redigis:* (OLD §11).

**Voluptatibus itaque ... possunt:** Seneca resumes the description of those people who have been afflicted by ungoverned success. He describes a progression whereby they have buried themselves in pleasures until they become accustomed to them and cannot do without them. This is a consequence (*itaque*) of the lack of limit to the superfluous. *Voluptatibus:* Ep. 31.2 n. *mergunt:* (OLD §9) the use of the reflexive maintains the agency and therefore culpability of these people for this state.

**et ob hoc ... necessaria:** Seneca describes something paradoxical to popular values, that people immersed in pleasures are wretched (*miserrimi*). Here and in the next sentences Seneca stresses that these people have reached (*pervenerunt*) a significant point in their moral decline. They are now totally confused about the true value of things. What in the past they were able to discern were superfluous they now believe to be essential. It is probable that with these plurals Seneca is indicating the mass of his contemporaries, and is offering a pessimistic assessment by saying they have passed a point of no return, as he restates forcefully at the close of the letter. *miserrimi:* at Thy. 427 arrives at a similar contrast from the opposite perspective: *esse iam miserum iuvat.* *supervacua ... necessaria:* in a similar way at Ep. 45.10 in a hypothetical proposition Seneca presents himself as someone confused over this distinction and challenges a dialectician to sort it out: *ecce tota mihi vita mentitur: hanc coargue, hanc ad verum, si acutus es, redige. Necessaria iudicat quorum magna pars supervacua est.*

**Serviunt itaque ... fruuntur:** Seneca draws out the implication of this situation (*itaque*) in an antithesis between *Serviunt* and *fruuntur.* There is paradox that these people do not derive pleasure from (*fruuntur*) pleasures, but are instead enslaved to them. The use of *Serviuntur* raises the emotive level, adding all the connotations of discomfort and degradation that slavery evoked.
for the ancient reader. As at §5 above (Qui hostis ... suae sunt? n.), this reference to slavery recalls clearly the imagery of Ep. 37.4 of stupidity being servile and dominated by the passions, underlining the close connection that the passions had to pleasures in Seneca’s thought.

voluptatibus: Ep. 31.2 n.

et mala sua ... et amant: in identifying love of one’s wrong actions as the most extreme of these wrong actions, Seneca hints at what he makes explicit in the next sentence, that in other wrong actions there is an awareness by the perpetrator of their wrongness. amant: although love can be a problem, as Seneca makes clear in Ep. 35.1, it is really the object of love that is important and loving virtue is vital (above, p. 241). Therefore here Seneca is describing the endpoint of misdirected love, or diastrophē (above, p. 112). By contrast, he had earlier stressed the importance of properly directed desire (§2 Concupisces et ... esse n.).

tunc autem ... etiam placent: the point at which these people start to love their vices is the point at which their popularly understood success (the immoderata felicitas of §4) becomes paradoxically its very opposite, infelicitas. The reason for this is that they have lost a sense of shame. Seneca implies that earlier while they took delight (delectant) in their pleasures, they still recognized them as disgraceful (turpia), but now they even approve (placent) of these activities. Just as in this sentence the felicitas of §4 has ended up as its opposite, so too have popular values led people to approve of turpia, the opposite of the honesta of §2 with which this discussion began. delectant: the same verb was used at §2 of a reaction that the great-spirited man did not have (above, p. 332, n. 657). consummata: Ep. 32.3 consummare n. turpia: Ep. 31.5 turpe n.

et desinit ... mores sunt: Seneca closes by offering one of his more memorable sententious judgements on contemporary habits. There is a despair of a cure that will be repeated in the closing thought of the book (Ep. 41.9 n.). Whose mores are being considered? The term seems to invite the reader to apply it not simply to the group that had been under discussion previously, but to Seneca’s contemporaries generally. Such a broadening of focus is characteristic of the ends of Senecan letters. There is an oxymoron in linking vitia and mores: vices are made the customary standards for judging right conduct. This implies that the lack of virtue creates an inability to recognize virtue. Seneca had suggested such an idea at the end of the previous book, where he said that those who like virtus cannot be liked by the crowd (Ep. 29.11): quis enim placere populo potest cui placet virtus? Their values are of a different order. Seneca describes this more fully at Ep.
50.3, where he suggests we are all like Harpaste, a female clown inherited by his wife, who does not realize she is blind:

Hoc quod in illa ridemus omnibus nobis accidere liqueat tibi: nemo se avarum esse intellegit, nemo cupidum. Caeci tamen ducem quaerunt, nos sine duce erramus et dicimus, ‘non ego ambitiosus sum, sed nemo alter Romae potest vivere; non ego sumptuosus sum, sed urbs ipsa magnas impensas exigit; non est meum vitium quod iracundus sum, quod nondum constitui certum genus vitae: adolescentia haec facit’.

He continues by noting in less absolute terms than here that this lack of awareness makes a cure so difficult because we do not realize we are sick (cf. Ep. 28.9). Similarly at Ep. 53.8 he says we are like people in a deep sleep, oblivious to our faults. At Ep. 116.8 he is less sympathetic: vitia nostra quia amamus defendimus et malum excusare illa quam excutere. It is a lack of will that is to blame, not of capacity. Near contemporary Roman historians shared a similar attitude to Roman values. Sallust, Cat. 10.2, and Livy, 1.pr.12, talk of the corruption caused by wealth and Tacitus (Ger. 19.3) makes an implied contrast to contemporary Roman values when he says of the Germans: nemo ... illic vitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi saeculum vocatur. remedio: this use of the language of medicine and remedies is reminiscent of Livy, 1.pr.9, who when commenting on the decline in Roman mores says that his contemporaries can no more endure the remedia than the vitia: donec ad haec tempora quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possimus perventum est.
Essay on Epistle 40

*Summa ergo summarum haec erit: tardilocum esse te iubeo. Vale.*

With this advice Seneca closes the second longest letter of Book IV. The statement is striking for a couple of reasons. Firstly it contains a probable neologism, *tardiloquus*, which might appropriately be expressed by the neologism tardiloquence, on the model of grandiloquence. Secondly, Seneca actually does capture the essence of the letter in this brief injunction, which makes it a somewhat uncharacteristic way for him to end an epistle: he most frequently closes with a new twist on the discussion that invites the reader to continue the thread in his own mind.

If the letter can be so aptly summarized, that one should speak slowly, why does Seneca spend so long on the idea? He does so because through the development of the theme of tardiloquence he brings together ideas that he has been presenting in Book IV as well as introducing ideas that will be further developed, particularly in Book V, but also in later letters. One particular way that he broadens the relevance of this theme is by its juxtaposition with the opening section of the epistle. This section has received a fair amount of attention as an independent idea, but has not been treated as integral to the rest of the letter. There are three major areas to which this letter can be related; the first is the contrast between the style appropriate for a philosopher and that admissible to an orator, the next is the moral significance of style for Seneca and the final one is the development of a more assertively Roman philosophy in the *Epistles*.

672 It is at least a word not elsewhere recorded in the extant classical corpus; below §14 *tardilocum* n.

673 *Wilson* 1987, 118.

674 *De Vivo* 1996, for instance, in a most thorough treatment of the epistle makes not a word of reference to it, starting his discussion at §2. *Nussbaum* 1994, 338 and 354, is an example of someone who uses this section on its own.
Two commentaries treat the entirety of Ep. 40. Of the three authors that write on the structure of Book IV, only Maurach has much to say; the other two, particularly Hachmann, are very brief. There are a number of articles and chapters that focus on this epistle. All of them, however, start from §2 and not one of them makes reference to the opening section. The letter is also mentioned in a number of the numerous articles and works on Seneca and style.

A fundamental opposition that Seneca sets up in this letter is that between the style of speech of the orator and of the philosopher. He is provoked to this by Lucilius’ apparent interest in a philosopher he heard, Serapio, who spoke with a rapidity that Seneca felt was both unbecoming and inappropriate for a philosopher. After marking his disapproval Seneca alludes to a commonplace drawn from Homer that assigned a Homeric speaker to each of the three genera dicendi. He refers to the orator (Odysseus) as the representative of the genus grande and the old man (Nestor) as the representative of the genus medium. The association of the grand style with forensic oratory was standard in the ancient world, although Seneca’s target appears to be more a decadent form of it, tumor, or an unrestrainedly passionate style, which at §8 he suggests is not really appropriate even for an orator. The association of the middle style with philosophy is one that Cicero had made. It contrasted with the grand style in not having its vigour, but having, in contrast to the plain style, a sweetness that came from rhetorical ornamentation.

For Seneca the hallmark of this middle style is its restraint. This is very clear at §8 where he insists that even when philosophy becomes more elevated in tone she always maintains her

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679 Below, §2 Itaque oratio ... profuit n.
680 The third, the genus tenue, Seneca does not mention, but was assigned to Menelaus.
681 Shuger 1984, 33.
682 Cic. Or. 95; Shuger 1984, 18-19.
683 Cic. Or. 91.
dignity (*salva dignitate morum*). Such restraint was linked for Seneca to the important philosophical virtue of moderation.\(^{684}\) Such moderation is evident in the way Seneca in *Ep. 100* describes Fabianus’ style, which is there repeatedly described as occupying a middle position, short of any stylistic vice. For example, *Fabianus non erat neglegens in oratione sed securus* (*Ep. 100.5*).

Nestor as the exemplar of the middle style is significant for a couple of reasons. In the *Iliad* the two outstanding attributes of Nestor are his age and his good counsel.\(^{685}\) For Cicero, *Sen. 67*, these qualities were linked: *mens ... et ratio et consilium in senibus est; qui si nulli fuissent, nullae omnino civitates fuissent*. Nestor’s association with good advice is significant for Seneca, as only two letters earlier he had described philosophy as just that: *philosophia bonum consilium est* (*Ep. 38.1*). Nestor, then, is an *exemplum* of the practical type of philosophy that Seneca promoted. The other way Nestor is significant again links back to *Ep. 38*, as well as drawing support from Cicero’s *De Senectute*. At *Sen. 28*, Cicero has Cato observe that the voice of orators as they age loses its force, which requires physical strength, but gains in sweetness.\(^{686}\) In effect their *oratio* becomes *sermo*, the style of speech that both Cicero and Seneca saw as particularly appropriate for philosophy.\(^{687}\)

Seneca is emphatic that the rapid delivery of Serapio is not appropriate: *hoc non probo in philosopho* (§2). In respect of the contrast just discussed between the orator and the philosopher, one would imagine that such speech would be appropriate for the orator rather than the philosopher. However, Seneca’s disapproval goes beyond that. Having set up that opposition he goes straight on to say that such a style is that of a *circulator*, a street vendor or performer: *istam vim dicendi rapidam atque abundantem aptiorem esse circulanti quam agenti rem magnam ac seriam docentique* (§3). The disapproval implicit in this reference is worth contextualizing more broadly by relating it to Seneca’s opinion elsewhere on other teachers of whom he disapproved. This

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\(^{684}\) See further, below, p. 363.

\(^{685}\) At *Il. 1.250-253* he remarks on his having outlived two generations of men and at *Il. 2.370-374* Agamemnon praises his counsel by saying that had he ten counsellors such as Nestor Troy would fall forthwith. These qualities were recognized as exemplary by later authors, for example, Cic. *Sen. 31*; see further, *De Vivo* 1996, 502, n. 43.

\(^{686}\) Cic. *Sen. 28*: *Orator metu ne languescat senectute; est enim munus eius non ingenii solum, sed laterum etiam et virium. Omnia canorum illud in voce splendescit etiam nescio quo pacto in senectute, quod equidem adhuc non amisi, et videtis annos; sed tamen est decorus senis sermo quietus et remissus factique persaepe ipsa sibi audientiam diserti senis cocta et mitis oratio. Quam si ipse exequi nequeas, possis tamen Scipionem praecipere et Laelio. quid enim est iucundius senectute stipata studii iuventutis?*

\(^{687}\) *De Vivo* 1996, 503 and *Ep. 38.1 sermo* n.
disapproval is particularly evident in the last letter of the next book (Ep. 52). The teachers that Seneca disliked fall into two main groups; the first are declaimers and the other are philosophers who lectured for pay. These two groups, though in theory distinct, had a number of features in common, as will emerge below.

Looking at declaimers first, in Senecan terms such individuals were closely associated with popular values. Declamation was an important part of the rhetorical education of Seneca’s day, as it would continue to be for a long time to come. Such education was seen as the pathway to success in public life. Declamation was not only training for students of rhetoric, but something of a spectator sport for the Roman political elite. Teachers of rhetoric used declamations as a way of promoting their skill and attracting students. However, it was not only teachers that took part in declamation. It seems the popularity of the practice attracted figures in public life who declaimed either for pleasure or because it offered an arena for competitive self-promotion. In between these two groups of teachers and politicians (declaimers and orators, perhaps), there were also some with a foot in both camps, teachers who were also involved in public life as lawyers.

Seneca’s opinion of declaimers is clear at Ep. 20.2, where he contrasts them with philosophers in terms of their aim: Aliud propositum est declamantibus et assensionem coronae captantibus, aliud his qui iuvenum et otiosorum aures disputatione varia aut volubili detinent. Both audiences of declamation are mentioned, the students at school and the adults listening to the public declamations. The second of these are referred to unfavourably as idlers (otiosorum). The speakers aimed to impress with their speed (disputatione ... volubili), much like Serapio. For Seneca

688 That rhetoric was seen this way is perhaps obvious, but it is nicely expressed by the Elder Seneca to his son Mela, when he says, Con. 2.pr.3-4, that Mela should study eloquence as it prepares well for other arts, even though he has no ambition for politics, unlike his brothers who foroque se et honoribus parant. The Younger Seneca is, of course, the outstanding example of the popular success that eloquence could achieve. See also SINCLAIR 1994, 96 and 108, n. 10.

689 KENNEDY 1994, 168.

690 SINCLAIR 1994, 98-99, stresses well the place of competition in declamations.

691 KENNEDY 1994, 170.
such speed was virtuosity for its own sake. At Ep. 40.6 he likened it to a form of low stunt and later at §8 he suggested that it was not very useful to the orator, who needed to remain conscious of the capacity of his audience to keep up. It is interesting that although the natural arena for such speech was declamation, Seneca pointedly avoids any direct mention of that activity. Instead he focuses on a contrast between forensic oratory and philosophic discourse. This can be seen in the comments at §8 on the jurors who make up an orator’s audience, but also in his choice of *exempla* at §§9-12. These are, on the one hand, a philosopher, Fabianus, who had declaimed in his youth and, on the other, figures prominent in public life, practising orators who also declaimed. This antithesis between philosophy and oratory seems to create a hierarchy in which clearly philosophy is favoured, but oratory serves a valid purpose, while declamation, ignored, comes even lower and, it is implied, serves no reputable purpose.

In fact, as mentioned, the context for which Seneca suggests such rapidity might be appropriate, that of a *circulator*, can be read as a barb against declamation. The *circulator* was a term Seneca used of teachers he disapproved of. Its basic reference was to some sort of street vendor or entertainer. However, it seems Seneca might have had in mind a recognizable type, the wandering philosopher, without a school or patron and having to find, therefore, an audience by preaching to passers by. Seneca disapproved of the Cynics for such indiscriminate preaching (Ep. 29.1-2); he also disapproved of such philosophers for their ostentatiously unkempt appearance (Ep. 5.1-2):

> I*llud autem te admoneo, ne eorum more qui non proficere sed conspici cupiunt facias aliqua quae in habitu tuo aut genere vitae notabilia sint; asperum cultum et intonsum caput et neglegentiorem barbam et indictum argento odium et cubile humi positum et quidquid aliud ambitionem perversa via sequitur evita.*

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692 Seneca contrasts with his father in his attitude to such speech. This is clear in their comments on Haterius. Seneca at Ep. 40.10 has nothing good to say about him, whereas his father (Con. 4.pr.11), while recognizing Haterius’ faults is on the balance positive. The fame of Haterius is good evidence for the popularity of rapid speech.

693 Three of them, Vinicius, Varius and Haterius, were all senators (two consular and the other *praetorius*), while the other, Asellius (below, p. 461) was at least a forensic orator. Although the two anecdotes about Vinicius were most probably made in a declamatory context, Seneca avoids specifically mentioning it.

694 *Ep. 40.3 circulanti n.*

It is this desire to be seen rather than to make progress that for Seneca unites this low-class group with a more elegant philosopher, a type in which Serapio might be included. He devotes some time to these teachers in the second half of Ep. 52. They talk with great rapidity and behave like *circulatores* even before a select audience (§8): *verba magna celeritate praecipitant et communes locos volvunt et in privato circulantur.* Seneca sees their behaviour as more suited to the theatre than to the philosophical school, and it is this attention-seeking theatricality combined with a rapid delivery that they shared in common with those philosophers that might more obviously be termed *circulatores.*

Another criticism Seneca made of these popular philosophers was that they taught for pay, implying that it was money they sought, not their students’ moral improvement. This is the sort of criticism that Plato had made of the Sophists. It is largely to Plato that we owe the development of the teacher of rhetoric and the teacher of philosophy as distinct professions out of the earlier Sophists. However, important overlaps continued. In particular, just as Sophists had given public lectures on philosophical topics, teachers of rhetoric continued to give similar lectures and to use such topics, called *theses,* as a training for their students. Moreover, many schools of philosophy made use of the thesis as well.

Given this area of overlap it is possible to see some teachers of philosophy as competing with teachers of rhetoric for the same audience in the same medium and using the same style.

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697 For example, from the two epistles just mentioned, Ep. 29.7: *Hos mihi circulatores qui philosophiam honestius neglexissent quam vendunt in faciem ingeret,* and Ep. 52.15: *Damnum quidem fecisse philosophiam non erit dubium postquam prostituta est; sed potest in penetralibus suis ostendi, si modo non institorem sed antistitem nancta est.*


699 Bonner 1949, 10. Closely related were the *communes loci* (cf. Quint. *Inst.* 2.1.9), which Seneca, Ep. 52.8, criticised some teachers for holding forth on.

700 Particularly the Peripatetics and the Academics; Fairweather 1981, 105-106.

701 Although Seneca is at pains to distinguish proper philosophical style from the ostentatious style of declamation, in rhetorical theory they shared some common ground. Theoretically declamation was a form of *epideixis,* for which the *genus medium* was seen as particularly appropriate (Cic. *Or.* 42 and 96; Shuger 1984, 18-19); and as already noted (above, p. 356), the *genus medium* was also closely associated with philosophical discourse.
Seneca’s aversion to these teachers is not for their speaking to the public. Indeed, he himself describes attending the lectures of the philosopher Metronax in Naples (Ep. 76.1-4). Rather what matters is the intention of the teachers in speaking publicly (Ep. 52.9):

\[\text{Nec ideo te prohibuerim hos quoque audire quibus admittere populum ac disserere consuetudo est, si modo hoc proposito in turbam prodeunt, ut meliores fiant faciantque meliores, si non ambitionis hoc causa exercent. Quid enim turpius philosophia captante clamores?}\]

They should be seeking not acclaim but the improvement of their listeners.\(^702\) Returning to the subject of Ep. 40, the style of the likes of Serapio is one for ostentation (§8) rather than for healing one’s audience (§5): \text{quis medicus aegros in transitu curat?}

A philosopher’s style of speech, then, was important in distinguishing him from a teacher of rhetoric, a teacher, that is, of popular, not philosophical values. However, for Seneca the style of one’s speech was important for another reason; it had a moral significance, as it reveals the state of the speaker’s, or writer’s mind. Such an idea was neither unique to Seneca nor new to him, but it is one to which he gave great prominence in a number of letters.\(^703\) Seneca alludes to this idea in Ep. 40 when he says that a philosopher’s speech, like his style of life, should be composed (§2).\(^704\) This concept is developed in two ways as the letter progresses: firstly the reader should take care who he imitates, and secondly he should strive to exhibit moderation in his speech.

Before looking at these two aspects of style, the very start of Ep. 40 needs further examination. As already mentioned no study of this letter pays any attention to the opening section.\(^705\) However, this section provides a context for the discussion of style that makes that discussion relevant to reading and writing as well as to Lucilius’ philosophical progress. First of all the opening words of the letter bring to mind the discussion of letters in Ep. 38. The \textit{frequenter}

\(^702\) From this it can be seen that Seneca’s interest in declamation is quite narrowly focused; it is not so much on declamation, but on the mistaken goals of the teachers that used it. Other contemporary, or near contemporary, writers, talked about declamation more than he did, in connection with a perceived decline in Roman eloquence. Generally it was seen as a symptom of the decline, which was attributed to a general moral decline (e.g. Petr. 1-4). The close connection between morals and style is one that Seneca insisted on (discussed next and \textit{WILLIAMS} 1978, 13-14). However, some saw declamation as to some degree contributing to the decline (e.g. Tac. \textit{Dial.} 35 and Quintilian in a number of passages, such as \textit{Inst.} 2.10).

\(^703\) See above, pp. 182 and 189.

\(^704\) Ep. 40.2: \textit{Hoc non probo in philosopho, cuius pronuntiatio quoque, sicut vita, debet esse composita.}

\(^705\) Above, p. 356.
of Ep. 40.1 recalls the request for a more frequent correspondence that began the earlier letter. In that letter Seneca does not explicitly say that a letter is like a conversation, rather that is an implication that most readers make. In a similar way the discussion of delivery in Ep. 40 is set in the context of the initial reflections upon epistolarity. Next Seneca claims that letters have a particular ability to reveal: *quo uno modo potes te mihi ostendis.* Unlike pictures, which recall the physical appearance of someone absent, letters reveal to the reader the writer’s mind. Obviously this has especial relevance for how Seneca intended his letters to be read. But it also importantly reinforces Seneca’s point in the next section that a philosopher should be composed of speech: Lucilius is revealing himself in his letters and he should be aware of the sort of person that he reveals himself to be in them.

At Ep. 114.3, having introduced the proverb *qualis vita talis oratio,* Seneca explains what he means as follows:

> Non potest alius esse ingenio, alius animo color. Si ille sanus est, si compositus, gravis, temperans, ingenium quoque siccum ac sobrium est: illo vitiato hoc quoque adflatur.

One’s style (*ingenium*) reveals the state of one’s mind (*animus*). Therefore style is important as an index of the mind’s health, and paying attention to style can help in making philosophical progress. Such attention to style does not mean being worried about it; that would be to divert attention from *res* to *verba.* Rather what is required is a self-consciousness or self-awareness of one’s speech that will allow a healthy and natural sense of shame and propriety to monitor it.

The awareness of shame and propriety formed part of an important philosophical virtue, which Seneca regards as important in this letter. In Latin there was no single term that covered the whole range of qualities that was encompassed by this virtue. In Greek it was *sōphrosynē,* the...
fourth of the cardinal virtues. Cicero when discussing this virtue could not decide on a single Latin equivalent. At *De Officiis*. 3.116, for example, he describes it as follows: *Restat quarta pars, quae decore, moderatione, modestia, continentia, temperantia continetur.* Seneca does not seem interested in trying to offer a single Latin equivalent for the concept, but in *Ep*. 40 he is clearly interested in the cluster of qualities that it denoted.

The particular sphere of the fourth cardinal virtue was control of the passion of desire and control of the pleasures which most frequently provoked it. This control required moderation and a sense of measure, and it is this sense of measure that leads fairly naturally to a concern for propriety (*decorum*). In *Ep*. 40, it is in the centre of the letter that Seneca directly addresses the need for propriety. Rapidity of speech is not seemly for philosophy personified (*§*7, *nec satis decora philosophiae*) and even when more elevated language is used dignity of character must be maintained (*§*8, *salva dignitate morum*).

What is needed is control, in contrast to a style of speech that is uncontrolled. At *§*4 he says this rapid speech cannot be governed (*oratio ... quae regi non potest*). At *§*6 he is even more forceful: *oratio perturbata et immissa est nec potest reprimi.* The speech is impassioned (*perturbata*), having been given a free rein (*immissa*) and cannot be restrained. Both here and in the next analogy of it to people running downhill (*§*7), Seneca describes this type of speech in the same terms that he would a passion. This reflects the connection between one’s style and one’s mind; the rapid

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711 His first definition at *Off*. 1.93 was even longer: *Sequitur ut de una reliqua parte honestatis dicendum sit, in qua verecundia et quasi quidam ornatus vitae, temperantia et modestia omnisque sedatio perturbationum animi et rerum modus cernitur. hoc loco continetur id, quod dici latine decorum potest, graece enim prepon dicitur. Another long discussion of how to translate this term is at *Tusc*. 3.16. See further, Lišcu 1930, 260-271.

712 On occasions Seneca does list the four cardinal virtues and then he uses *temperantia* (e.g. *Epp*. 90.46, 115.3 and 120.11), but he displays none of the interest in defining the virtues and cataloguing them into sub-virtues that is found in Greek authors, for example, Stob. *Ecl*. 5b2 (= W 2.60 and *SVF* 3.264) and *D.L*. 7.92 (= *SVF* 3.265). Fortner 2002 in his study of the cardinal virtues in Seneca takes *temperantia* as the fourth virtue unproblematically, neither considering Cicero’s discussion of *sōphrosynē*, nor Seneca’s treatment of concepts such as *decorum*, beyond the ambit of *temperantia*.

713 The emphasis on moderation in this letter is a thematic link to *Ep*. 39, above, p. 335.

714 Cicero in the *De Officiis* gives a good deal of space to the importance of propriety, *Off*. 1.93-151, and specifically propriety in speech at *Off*. 1.132-137. The term is also one used in rhetoric (Quint. *Inst*. 11.1); philosophical style is one appropriate to its subject, philosophy, and to its speaker and audience, philosophers.
delivery reflects the unhealthy state of the speaker’s mind. Similarly, given the close association of passions with pleasure, it is significant that at §5 Seneca seeks to discredit this association.\footnote{Ep. 40.5: Quod quod ne voluptatem quidem ullam habet talis verborum sine dilectu ruentium strepitus?}

By contrast the philosopher seeks to maintain seemliness and control at all time. His speech displays \textit{vires ... moderatas} in contrast to \textit{violenta} and \textit{nimia vis} (§8). In a similar way restrained gait (§14, \textit{incessus modestior}) contrasts to the earlier image of people running downhill (§7). The philosopher will also keep alive a sense of shame or modesty to aid in maintaining this seemliness (§13). Modesty was one of the group of virtues linked to seemliness and moderation in Cicero’s \textit{De Officiis}.\footnote{Cic. Off. 1.93 and 3.116.} In enlisting its help, along with the seemliness and moderation we have already seen, it is clear that Seneca is arguing for a moral sense of style. Good style is something that arises from good morals. When moral qualities are nurtured through attention to the fourth cardinal virtue a good style will be apparent. This is seen in the final \textit{exemplum} Seneca uses, the philosopher Fabianus, whom he describes as \textit{vir egregius et vita et scientia et, quod post ista est, eloquentia quoque} (§12). His eloquence is subordinated to his style of life, made, in effect, a product of it. As Seneca says in a later letter about Fabianus, \textit{mores ille, non verba composuit} (Ep. 100.2); his style is a product of philosophical progress, not rhetorical training.\footnote{Of course, we know from the testimony of Seneca’s father that Fabianus had put much energy into rhetorical training; however, it is a matter of priority (Ep. 40.12 Fabianus n.).}

Fabianus is offered by Seneca as an \textit{exemplum} of good philosophical style. The importance of \textit{exempla} to Seneca’s conception of philosophy has already been stressed.\footnote{Above, pp. 66 and 186.} It is clear that Seneca, in criticizing the speech of the likes of Serapio, is not just advising Lucilius on those he should listen to, but also those he should imitate, as he makes explicit on a couple of occasions.\footnote{At §6, \textit{quid imitari velit?} and at §9, \textit{Quidni malis tu sic dicere quomodo Vinicius?}} The two activities overlap; firstly, imitation in Roman literary culture was natural and expected. It would be expected that one would imitate those one heard and admired. At \textit{Ep. 84.8} Seneca anticipates the amazed response of an interjector to the idea that the people one has imitated should not be apparent in one’s writing.\footnote{Ep. 84.8: ‘Quid ergo? non intellegetur cuius imiteris orationem? cuius argumentationem? cuius sententias?’} Secondly, imitation, adopting someone as an \textit{exemplum}
to imitate, is partly a matter of the people one associates with. At Ep. 94.40-41 Seneca suggests that the way that such association benefits someone is not clear, but it is definitely effective, concluding (§41): *Idem tibi in conversatione virorum sapientium eveniet: non deprehendes quemadmodum aut quando tibi prosit, profuisse deprendes.* The efficacy of such association is emphasized at Ep. 108.4, where Seneca suggests that philosophy’s power is such that it benefits not just those studying it, but even those associating with philosophers.\(^{721}\) The reverse, of course, is also true and to become free of vice one must avoid vicious *exempla* (Ep. 104.21): *si velis vitiis exui, longe a vitiorum exemplis recedendum est.*\(^{722}\)

Although Seneca does not explicitly say it, it seems reasonable that style, as a mirror of the soul, would be one of the ways that association with a person can affect one’s character. In effect, style is not separable from moral character, and when one imitates someone’s style one adopts some of the virtues or vices of that person. To talk in the impassioned way of Serapio would be to allow an opening for passion in one’s soul. To adopt the style of Fabianus would be to imitate a virtuous propriety in one’s language that might seep into the rest of one’s life.

Both imitation and style take on greater relevance in Book IV of the *Epistles* as Seneca expects his reader to progress from reading quotations from authors to reading authors as wholes. This was an important argument of Ep. 33.\(^{723}\) Much of Ep. 40 is devoted to establishing criteria for assessing appropriate style. Although the focus is on one aspect of style, rapid delivery, these criteria are capable of wider application.

Fairly obviously many qualities of our speech are discernible in our writing; however, it is evident that Seneca felt qualities that are primarily aural, such as rate and flow of speech, were also able to be seen in someone’s writing, as is clear from the start of Ep. 100, where Seneca describes the style of Fabianus in the context of his written works. In particular the metaphor of flow, which is applied also to Serapio in Ep. 40.2, is used repeatedly.\(^{724}\) For Seneca, rate and flow of

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\(^{721}\) Ep. 108.4: *ea philosophiae vis est ut non studentis sed etiam conversantis iuvet.* In a similar way at Tranq. 4.3-7 he describes the effect of a good man’s conduct as being effective even when prevented from speaking.

\(^{722}\) Above, p. 186.

\(^{723}\) Above, p. 181.

\(^{724}\) At Ep. 100.1-2; for further discussion see Ep. 40.3 *Aeque stillare ... obruat n.*
speech were perceptible both to the listener and the reader. Next, the need for seemliness in one’s language is obviously of broader application. So also is the requirement that the language be appropriate for teaching rather than display. In particular, that it should allow itself to be inspected, and it should be unaffected.  

Seneca is asking the reader to look at the character of the writer and see whether it is authentic or not. Authenticity is precisely what the non-philosophical style lacks (§4): *haec popularis nihil habet veri.* A philosopher with his words is important to his audience as much for the impression he makes as for the content of what he says, and for that impression to be effective it should be of the speaker’s authentic character, not an alluring construct. Arguably also, for that character to be most effectively revealed the appropriate style is, as Seneca says, a simple and unaffected one. Such a style would also have an appropriate concordance of words and character; there is something similar in candid self-revelation and unadorned language.

In *Ep. 40,* then, Seneca is giving the reader the tools to assess the quality of authors he reads as he moves to reading authors in their entirety. The letter also contributes to a developing argument in the letters of Book IV that the epistolary form is particularly suited to philosophical progress as Seneca envisions it. The criteria that Seneca presents in *Ep. 40* for measuring an author’s worth are ones that the epistolary genre as he uses it scores very highly on, most especially in its being well suited to the candour of self-revelation.

Seneca’s criticism of rapid speech began with a criticism of one person, Serapio, a Greek-speaker. At §11 he expands this criticism to create a contrast between the national characters of Greeks and Romans. The rapid style, he argues, is more suited to Greeks, an idea he supports by noting that even when writing, Romans space their words.  

He then uses Cicero as an authoritative example for the character of Roman speech. Cicero was a *gradarius,* a steady goer, not a race horse. Then personifying the Roman language he says (§11): *Romanus sermo magis se*

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725 Unlike the popular style (§4), which *tractandum se non praebet,* it should be *incomposita ... et simplex.*

726 The sense of this is, ‘the popular style is totally fake’. Here, as well as in the mention of *veritas* in the previous clause, it is possible that Seneca is more interested in the author’s authentic self rather than the abstract concept of truth.

727 Above, p. 35.

728 Another instance of Seneca linking speech and writing in this epistle.
circumspicit et aestimat praebetque aestimandum. Latin more naturally has the attributes Seneca demands of proper philosophical style. More generally, he is arguing that Latin is more naturally self-reflective in a manner that is required for philosophical progress. The type of self-reflection that philosophy demands is illustrated in Ep. 28.10: *ideo quantum potes te ipse coargue, inquire in te; accusatoris primum partibus fungere, deinde iudicis, novissime deprecatoris; aliquando te offende.* Such self-reflection is an important quality in Seneca’s writing and it has received a good deal of scholarly attention. It is a major stimulus to the development of a vocabulary of interiority that has been attributed to him. In this respect it is not an empty boast: Seneca lies at the start of a Western tradition of autobiography in Latin. His emphasis on interiority and the self would be followed by Augustine, whose influence both philosophical and literary has been profound and continuous.

Yet to say this is a contrast inherent in the languages is a major and provocative claim, and one that takes the comparison between the suitability of the two languages for philosophy in a new direction. This contrast had usually focused on the richness or otherwise of Latin’s vocabulary compared to Greek’s. Lucretius had complained of the *patrii sermonis egestas* on a number of occasions. It was a criticism that Cicero fought against, arguing, for example, at *N.D.* 1.8 that Romans were not surpassed by Greeks in their *copia verborum.* Nevertheless, it was a frequent criticism, and Seneca himself, at Ep. 58.1, complains of the difficulty of developing Latin equivalents for some Greek terms. However, although many Roman authors conceded to Greek a more voluminous vocabulary, Seneca, here presents a new criterion for deciding what makes a language superior for philosophy. To do this he builds here on a fairly regular contrast by Roman

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729 He had used a phrase synonymous to *se praebet aestimandum* earlier in criticizing the popular style (§4).

730 *Traina* 1987, 11, describes Seneca as forging the Latin language of interiority. See also *Cancik* 1967, 131-135 and *Thévenez* 1944.

731 *Edwards* 1997, 25, notes that Seneca, as an influence on Augustine, stands at the start of the Western tradition of autobiography; see also *Henderson* 2004, 4 and *Long* 2006, 376; *Inwood* 2005a, 346, appears to see more contrast between Augustine and Seneca than continuity, denying that Seneca, unlike Augustine, is truly autobiographical.


733 See further, *Setaioli* 1988a, 18.

734 *Setaioli* 1988a, 17-20. See also above, p. 7.
authors between the character of the two languages, though one that had not been previously applied to their suitability for philosophy. This contrast was between the grace and subtlety of Greek and the power and weight of Latin.\textsuperscript{735}

For Seneca, in keeping with his view \textit{talis oratio qualis vita}, this contrast in language was seen to reflect a contrast in character. He makes the point that the difference between the two languages is one of licence (\textit{licentia}). The word had an established usage in regard to language that has come into English (e.g. ‘poetic licence’).\textsuperscript{736} This is doubtless the primary sense, but as Seneca links style and morals the moral sense is also present, that of immoderate behaviour. The virtue of moderation that Seneca requires of philosophers in their language is imposed to a degree by the Latin language itself. It is reflected also in the Roman language of morality, in which the \textit{vir gravis} embodied a seriousness and measured behaviour that the Romans saw as peculiar to themselves. Such \textit{gravitas} was manifested in one’s language as well as one’s bearing, and as mentioned earlier, was closely associated with other Roman qualities such as \textit{constantia} and \textit{auctoritas}.\textsuperscript{737} Seneca described such national qualities being present in the philosopher Sextius and his school. They had a \textit{Romanum robur}, a moral vigour that Sextius was able to maintain even when writing in Greek.\textsuperscript{738}

By contrast Greek \textit{subtilitas} was reflected in their proneness to \textit{ineptiae}, absurdities. Cicero (\textit{De Or}. 2.18) remarked that Greeks were so blind to this fault that they did not even have a term for it.\textsuperscript{739} The \textit{ineptiae} that Seneca is particular annoyed with are the logical problems raised by dialecticians. These philosophers are more sadly foolish (\textit{tristius inepti sunt}) than lyric poets (\textit{Ep}. 49.5), because whereas the lyric poets know they are frivolous, the dialecticians believe they are

\textsuperscript{735} E.g. Sen. Polyb. 2.6: \textit{quam dui steterit aut Latinae linguae potentia aut Graecae gratia} and Quint. Inst. 12.10.36: \textit{non possamus esse tam graciles, simus fortiores: subtilitate vincimur, valeamus pondere}. \textsc{Leeman} 1963, 270-271, suggests that such a comparison, along with the expression of anti-Greek sentiment, represents a growing awareness among Latin authors of the early Empire of their language’s different character that had been suppressed somewhat in earlier periods through imitation of the Greeks.

\textsuperscript{736} \textit{Ep}. 40.11 \textit{licentiam n.}

\textsuperscript{737} Above, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{738} Sen. Nat. 7.32.3: \textit{Sextiorum nova et Romani roboris secta} and \textit{Ep}. 59.7: \textit{Sextium ... virum acrem, Graecis verbis, Romanis moribus philosophantem}.

\textsuperscript{739} Cic. \textit{De Or}. 2.18: \textit{Hoc vitio cumulata est eruditissima illa Graecorum natio; itaque quod vim huius mali Graeci non vident, ne nomen quidem ei vitio imposuerunt}. 
engaged in something serious.\textsuperscript{740} As was noted earlier, these attacks on dialectic start in Book V and can be seen as continuing a growing assertiveness that begins in Book IV in which Seneca presents his philosophy as distinctly Roman and superior for that fact.\textsuperscript{741} This starts in the first epistle of Book IV, where Bassus is presented as an \textit{exemplum} of Roman philosophical virtue in the face of death. Philosophical maxims are attributed to him that had in the first three books been taken from Epicurus. The contrast of the Greek and Latin languages in \textit{Ep}. 40 continues this trend, and the attacks on the \textit{ineptiae} of the dialecticians in Book V give concrete substance to it.\textsuperscript{742}

In instructing Lucilius to be tardiloquent Seneca summarizes a number of demands he has made in the letter, demands that are central to his conception of philosophy and to the literary and philosophical project of the \textit{Epistles}. Speaking slowly is seemly, part of the virtue of moderation; it is the outward and appropriate manifestation of a harmonious soul. It is the speech philosophy herself uses at the letter’s centre. Such speech is proper to philosophical discourse, and it does no harm to remember that speaking in such a way will put oneself at odds with popular conceptions of style. In the criticism of its opposite, the reader is given criteria for assessing good philosophical writing, writing that is seemly and has a serious purpose, writing that reveals the writer’s character. In short, the sort of writing Seneca himself offers in the \textit{Epistles}. Finally, Seneca suggests to his Roman audience that the moral qualities visible in style are qualities native to the Roman language. This letter marks an important step in Seneca’s presentation of a Roman mode of philosophy, one that would be developed in the next book. By rejecting Greek subtlety and demanding that subject matter be given precedence to words, Seneca aligns himself with that almost stereotypical example of Roman virtue, Cato the Elder, whose maxim was: ‘\textit{rem tene verba sequentur}’.

\textsuperscript{740} \textit{Ep}. 49.5: \textit{Negat Cicero, si duplicetur sibi aetas, habiturum se tempus quo legat lyricos: eodem loco <pono> dialecticos: tristius inepti sunt. Illi ex professo lascivium, hi agere ipsos aliquid existimant.}

\textsuperscript{741} Above, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{742} Dialectic is not a specifically Greek thing in Book V, although in a later letter (\textit{Ep}. 82.8) he describes it as \textit{ineptias Graecas}. 
Commentary on Epistle 40

Division:

- B (§§3-8): Fast-talking is not appropriate for a philosopher.
- C (§§9-12): Appropriate speech and its opposite are illustrated with exempla.
- D (§§13-14): In order to learn to speak fast Lucilius would have to lose his sense of shame.

Section A (§§1-2). Seneca uses the first two sections to introduce the letter’s main topic. Although many treat the first section as a self-contained discussion of letter-writing, as already noted (above, p. 361), it can be seen as providing an important frame for the whole letter. In the second section Seneca uses an item of news from Lucilius, about a visiting philosopher, Serapio, as the starting point for his discussion of the appropriate tempo for a philosopher’s speech.

§1. Quod frequenter mihi scribis gratias ago; nam quo uno modo potes te mihi ostendis.
Numquam epistulam tuam accipio ut non protinus una simus. Si imagines nobis amicorum
absentium iucundae sunt, quae memoriam renovant et desiderium [absentiae] falsa atque
inani solacio levant, quanto iucundiores sunt litterae, quae vera amici absentis vestigia, veras
notas adferunt? Nam quod in conspectu dulcissimum est, id amici manus epistulae impressa
praestat, agnoscere.

§1. The reference to the frequency of Lucilius’ correspondence provides a link back to the request for greater frequency that opened Ep. 38. And the comments on self-revelation that follow are important for showing what Seneca valued in letters and are frequently quoted in secondary sources (above, p. 356, n. 677).

Quod frequenter ... ostendis: thinking back to Ep. 38 it might come initially as a surprise that Seneca should be doing the thanking for the frequency of the correspondence; after all it was Lucilius who asked for Seneca to write more often. However, here, as in the earlier letter, this opening creates the context for a discussion of epistolary style. Seneca is quick to explain why he
is grateful: Lucilius is revealing himself to Seneca in the only way he can. **uno**: in its weakest sense this could mean that given their physical separation letters are the only way for this revelation to happen. However, in the context of Seneca and the reader at the next remove from Lucilius, there is the added point that the idea can be turned around and it is primarily through his letters that Seneca can reveal himself to the reader. Furthermore, as already noted (above, p. 35), letters were considered a particularly good medium for such self-revelation. In a similar vein Cicero, *Fam.* 16.16.2, says to his brother *te totum in litteris vidi*, and Philostratus of Lemnos (Malherbe 1988, 42) talks of Marcus Aurelius’ firmness of character (*τὸ ἑδραῖον τοῦ ἔθους*) being imprinted into his letters.

**Numquam … una simus:** this is the first of the expansions on how Lucilius shows himself to Seneca. Through letters the two of them are in each other’s presence. Seneca’s language is emphatic: it is every letter that does this (*numquam … non*) and the effect is immediate (*protinus*). This is a claim that Seneca repeats elsewhere. He is slightly less emphatic at *Ep.* 67.2 when he says *si quando intervenerunt epistulae tuae, tecum esse mihi videor et sic adficiar animo tamquam tibi non rescribam sed respondeam*. In a more subdued way this is a sentiment Cicero shares when on a number of occasions, although he has no news to impart, he writes to Atticus, because he feels that in this way he is conversing with his friend: *quasi tecum loquor* (*Att.* 8.14.1; see also *Att.* 9.10.1 and 12.53). So too Turpilius, 213, describes the letter’s function as: *sola res quae homines absentes *<nobis>* praesentes facit*. Jerome, *Ep.* 29.3, similarly says: *epistolare officium est — quodammodo absentes inter se praesentes fieri*. At *Ep.* 75.1 Seneca describes the style of his letters to be as though he and the reader were sitting or walking together (*si una desideremus aut ambularemus*). Writing in such a way, as though the recipient is present, is recommended by theorists (Malherbe 1988, 64 and 74, has the texts of Julius Victor, *Ars Rhet.* 27 and Ps. Libanius, *Epist. Styles*, 2.58 respectively); see further *Ep.* 38.1 *Plurimum … familiaritatis n.*

**Si imagines … adferunt?:** Seneca draws a parallel between pictures and letters and contrasts the pleasure they bring. From the rhetorical question it is clear that the pleasure afforded by letters is much greater. This is underlined by the antithesis between the false and empty solace (*falso atque inani solacio*) pictures provide and the true traces of one’s friend provided in a letter (*vera … vestigia, veras notas*). This antithesis relates to the contrast between the mind and the body, which is very prominent in Seneca’s thought (above, p. 13). A picture, Seneca implies, only
provides us with a reminder of a friend’s physical appearance, but a letter gives the more genuine presence of his mind. This is an important modification of a claim in Ep. 35.3 that the pleasure one took in an absent friend was insubstantial (gaudium ... leve et evanidum). Here, in contrast he is saying there is something genuine of a friend present in a letter and the joy it brings is not downplayed. Both Tac. Ag 46 and Plin. Ep. 2.7.7 contrast physical pictures with a superior mental or abstract image. They do not, however, specifically suggest that this other image is found in writing. [absentiae]: although Alexander 1932b, 159, defends this word as a use of the abstract for the concrete found in Ep. 74.23, Suet. Calig. 55 and elsewhere, there is a stronger argument for its deletion: Dunbabin 1917, 181, argues that it arose from a confused absentiae iucundae in the line above, which was written as a marginal variant and then inserted in the wrong place. litterae: Seneca much more frequently uses epistula in this sense. However, here the word is able to have an additional, more general, sense of ‘writing’ and, in its basic sense of the building blocks of writing, it prepares for the emphasis on its physical production in the next sentence. vestigia ... notae: both of these can have the sense of ‘traces’, suggesting the writer’s presence in composing the letter. The second has the additional sense of what identifies one, most concretely one’s handwriting (Summers 1910, 202), but also the turn of one’s mind as revealed in one’s words. These are one’s mental ‘features’; at Tro. 1113, Seneca makes use of notae in respect of one’s physical features.

Nam quod ... agnoscere: Seneca supports the superiority of letters to images by claiming that what is most pleasurable (dulcissimum) in actually seeing a friend, rather than his image, is something that is present also in a letter. This he calls recognition. What is striking here is the emphasis Seneca places on the physical: if it is the friend’s mind that is made visible in a letter, it is made visible by his hand impressed on to the letter. Such an emphasis could suggest that it is through his handwriting that the friend is recognized. It might even lead one to speculate on ancient ideas about graphology. However, just as the remainder of the letter will consider the philosophical significance of style from one of its most mechanical aspects, the speed of delivery, here Seneca illustrates his claim about letters with a similarly mechanical image; no less than the hand the mind is imprinted in a letter. At Att. 7.2.3 Cicero comments on the pleasure he takes in reading a letter by Atticus’ hand, but chiefly as an indicator of his health. conspectu: this was one of the aspects of physical presence noted at Ep. 35.3; by stressing here that the pleasure it brings is actually present in a letter, Seneca is suggesting that intimacy does not require physical
presence, but can be achieved through letters (above, p. 244). **agnoscere:** the word is made emphatic by its placement at the end of the sentence. **SCARPAT** 1975, 108, on Ep. 5.5 comments usefully on this verb. It is one with both a philosophical and a legal usage. Recognition assumes some prior knowledge of the thing being recognized, and at Ep. 29.11 Seneca suggests that the mob do not approve of the philosopher as they do not recognize him; their values are of different orders (above, p. 335).

§2. *Audisse te scribis Serapionem philosophum, cum istuc adplicuisset:* ‘solet magno cursu verba convellere, quae non effundit [ima] sed premit et urguet; plura enim veniunt quam quibus vox una sufficiat’. Hoc non probo in philosopho, cuius pronuntiatio quoque, sicut vita, debet esse composita; nihil autem ordinatum est quod praecipitatur et properat. Itaque oratio illa apud Homerum concitata et sine intermissione in morem nivis superveniens oratori data est, lenis et melle dulcior seni profluit.

§2. Seneca continues with his reaction to more news from Lucilius. It appears that Lucilius wrote with approval of a philosopher that he had heard, Serapio, whom he describes as speaking in a great rush. Approval for such delivery seems to have been widespread (Ep. 52.8); however, Seneca believes one’s words should match one’s life and be composed. In proof of this he alludes to a rhetorical commonplace taken from Homer that contrasted the speech of Odysseus and Nestor.

*Audisse te ... sufficiat*: Lucilius reports that he has heard the philosopher Serapio deliver a lecture during his visit to where he is. What he goes on to say about his delivery provides the pretext for Seneca’s long response. Lucilius describes Serapio’s delivery using the metaphor of a river, a technical metaphor in rhetoric (so ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 122, and n. 128 and JONES 2005, 51-54, though it might be more precise to describe it as substitute for a technical term); Quintilian, for instance, uses it at Inst. 12.10.60-61 when describing two types of speaking styles. Serapio’s words are like stones and logs caught up (*convellere*) by the torrent, which is too strong to carry them off (*effundit*), but rather ‘grinds and pounds’ them (*premit et urguet*, SUMMERS 1910, 202). This, Lucilius says, he does as more words come than one voice is sufficient for. Such an impression was one that according to Quintilian, Inst. 11.3.56, some orators strove for:

*Sunt qui crebro anhelitu et introrsum etiam clare sonante imitentur iumenta onere et iugo laborantia: quod adfectant quoque, tamquam inventionis copia urgeantur maiorque vis eloquentiae ingruit quam quae emitti faucibus possit.*

For more on the metaphor of speech as a flowing river, see MÜLLER 1910, 17. It is possible that
there is a hint of criticism of Serapio in Lucilius’ comment, particularly in the idea that he produced more words than one voice could manage, but given that the image of his speech as a river is one that is used to positively characterize the grand style, it seems more likely that Lucilius is expressing admiration for Serapio’s style, an admiration that accords with popular values. If Lucilius’ comment is read as criticism, it does not stop Seneca reinforcing it at length in a similar way to what he does on the topic of slavery in Ep. 47, which he begins with the remark that Lucilius is friendly with his slaves (§1) and concludes by noting that Lucilius had no need for the exhortation that he had just received (§21). Serapionem: below, p. 460. istuc: as with ista regione at Ep. 32.1 Seneca refers to Lucilius’ location, Sicily, in general terms (below, p. 457).

adplicuisset: (OLD §4b). convellere: in contrast to Vinicius at §10 singula verba vellenti, it is the prefix and the magno cursu which give the sense of strength to this phrase: snatching rather than plucking. In a similar way Quintilian, Inst., 12.10.61, describes an orator using the grand style of speaking, one intended to move: ille qui saxa devoluit ... multus et torrens. This force is intended to carry along the juror, willing or not: iudicem vel nitentem contra feret, cogetque ire qua rapiet. See below, §4 Movere ... rapere n. The elder Seneca, Con. 4.pr.11, likened the speech of Haterius to a torrent (§13 Eo autem ... velis n.). effundit: by contrast Seneca says of Fabianus, Ep. 100.2, that his speech flows rather than moves like a torrent: Fabianus mihi non effundere videtur orationem sed fundere. [ima]: deletion, as proposed by DUNBABIN 1917, 181, seems the best solution. In effect it is very similar to Russell’s [quae] ... illa (in REYNOLDS, 104, and favoured by DE VIVO 1996, 489, n. 2). SUMMERS 1908, 27-28, argues effectively against una (found in some later mss). Other solutions are tamen (SUMMERS 1908, 27-28), unda (SUMMERS 1910, 35), iam (SHACKLETON-BAILEY 1970, 352) and <sens>in (WATT 1982, 400). premit: MÜLLER 1910, 17, suggests that the metaphorical sense of this word in connection to speech is unique to Seneca.

Hoc non probo ... properat: Seneca is emphatic in his disapproval. It is because he has been described as a philosopher that Seneca disapproves of Serapio’s mode of delivery. Those for whom such a mode is appropriate are described in unflattering terms at §3, but clearly such delivery was popular (above, p. 359, n. 692). By contrast a philosopher must show himself well ordered in his speech just as in his life. Seneca continues by claiming that to rush works against such order. The congruence between one’s speech and one’s life was fundamental to Seneca’s understanding of language (above, p. 182). Striving to make one’s speech well ordered was to strive for constantia, which ultimately must be present in all aspects of one’s life (Ep. 20.3 and Ep.
34.4 ut omnia ... percussa sint n.). **pronuntiatio:** in rhetorical theory this term covers not only the voice but also expressions and gestures: *pronuntiatio est vocis, vultus, gestus moderatio cum venustate* (*Rhet. Her.* 1.3); see also *De Vivo* 1996, 490. Seneca switches to the term of wider significance, *oratio*, after this point. **composita:** this term has a technical rhetorical sense (*Armisen-Marchetti* 1996, 83) that is appropriate here. It could describe an orator who made good use of *compositio* (e.g. *Cic. Orat.* 232 and *Qinst.* 10.1.119). However, it is the word’s moral sense that Seneca is using through the comparison to one’s life. When applied to the mind it describes one that is well constructed, an image that accords with the Stoic idea of a mind in harmonious tension (*Grimal* 1978, 422 n. 596). The word also suggests a fortified state (*Laudizi* 2003, 247 on *Ep.* 29.9), one immune to external distractions: *tunc ergo te scito esse compositum cum ad te nullus clamor pertinebit*, etc. (*Ep.* 56.14). For *Scarpat* 1975, 74 on *Ep.* 4.1, *componere* along with *emendere* refer to the two basic tasks in philosophical development (see also *Scarpat* 1975, 48 on *Ep.* 2.1). At *Ep.* 100.8 Seneca defends Fabianus’ writing as *ad animi tenorem quietum compositumque formata*. **ordinatum:** fairly synonymous with the earlier *composita* (*Vit.* 8.3: *compositum ordinatumque ... virum*). Whereas in *Ep.* 39.1 when applied to written works (above, p. 330), it was possibly not an essential quality, when applied to one’s speech as a reflection of one’s mind it is clearly positive. Although not exclusively, the image suggested here is perhaps of a military formation (*ordino, OLD §2*) that would become disordered if it rushed.

**Itaque oratio ... profluit:** Seneca expands on the idea that fast-talking is not appropriate to a philosopher by alluding to two contrasting styles of speaking, those of Odysseus and Nestor. For the association of these speakers with two of the *genera dicendi* being a commonplace, see *De Vivo* 1996, 493. Some scholars have felt this contrast between the orator and the *senex* was suspect and proposed various emendations to *oratori*, such as replacing it with *iuveni*. However, in the context of Seneca’s argument the contrast is perfectly clear (see further below, *oratori* n.). Odysseus’ style, like Serapio’s is appropriate to oratory, whereas the philosopher should use a style like Nestor’s. This repeats a contrast found in *Ep.* 38.1 between oratory and philosophical conversation (above, p. 357). The antithesis recurs through the rest of the letter, although the focus is primarily on the philosopher rather than the orator. **concitata ... oratori:** the orator’s delivery is described with a tricolon crescens (*Ep.* 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’... *malus?’ n.): rapid, without pause and coming down on top like a snowfall. This alludes to Homer’s description of Odysseus’ speech at *Il.* 3.221-223:
In later times this passage was used as illustrative of the grand style of oratory. Each of the three styles was assigned a Homeric analogue, alluded to in Cic. Brut. 40 and 50 and presented succinctly by Aulus Gellius, 6.14.7, as:

sed ea ipsa genera dicendi iam antiquitus tradita ab Homero sunt tria in tribus: magnificum in Ulixe et ubertum, subtile in Menelao et cohibitum, mixtum moderatumque in Nestore.

For more references to this analogy see, De Vivo 1996, 493, n. 13. The origin for it was most likely in the debate between rhetoricians and philosophers over whether rhetoric was an art, and if it was, why it was present in Homer before the art was invented (Kennedy 1957, 34-35). One aspect of these styles was the appropriate speech tempo, and it is on this that Seneca focuses. Whereas most authors emphasize the force (vis) of Odysseus’ speech and only secondarily its speed (celeritas), e.g. Quint. Inst. 12.10.64-65, Seneca gives speed the first place and leaves the sense of force latent in the snowfall metaphor. oratio: a term of broader scope than pronuntiatio (De Vivo 1996, 492), which from here on Seneca uses rather than pronuntiatio, a change which Slušanschi 1969, 113, suggests underlines that Seneca is interested above all in the moral aspects of language. concitata: (OLD §2b) frequently used of rapid speech and occurs again at §12. oratori: as De Vivo 1996, 495-497, and Müller 1910, 19-22, have argued well for retaining this reading it seems unnecessary to repeat all their arguments, except to note that the contrast being made is between oratorical and philosophical style; furthermore a contrast between a young and an old speaker has no relevance within the context of Ep. 40 and nowhere is Odysseus’ eloquence presented as that of a young man, but rather as an exemplar of the ideal orator (De Vivo 1996, 496-497). lenis ...

profluit: the qualities of Nestor’s speech that Seneca notes are its smoothness (lenis), its flow (profluit) and its being sweeter than honey (melle dulcior). The last two of these were qualities that Homer had ascribed to his speech at Il. 1.249: τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ρέεν αὐδή. These had become proverbial (De Vivo 1996, 493, n. 13); in Rhet Her. 4.33.44, for instance, this simile is quoted: ‘cuius ore sermo melle dulcior profluebat’. As noted above (concitata ... oratori n.), this description of Nestor was quoted in relation to his being representative of the middle style. seni: by referring to Nestor as old, Seneca possibly alludes to the idea that according to Cicero an old man’s oratio became sermo and had the qualities appropriate to philosophical discourse (above, p. 357).
**Section B (§§3-8).** Seneca expands on why fast-talking is not appropriate for a philosopher. He quickly deals with the other extreme, speaking too slowly, and proceeds to offer a series of situations for which philosophical discourse is intended, explaining how in each such speed is inappropriate as it hinders accomplishing these tasks. Finally, Lucilius is made to interject and ask whether such discourse can ever rise to something grander. To this Seneca responds that the philosopher’s discourse should indeed have power, but it must never be out of control. Even the orator, he adds, should not go beyond what the listener’s ears can cope with.


§3. Seneca continues his criticism of rapid speech by appealing to the reader’s self-respect, suggesting it is more appropriate to a travelling salesman or performer than a teacher of something important. He then condemns the other end of the spectrum, excessively plodding speech, which makes the listener bored and less attentive. However, it seems better to err on the side of slowness, as ideas that one has to wait for sink in better than those that fly past.

**Sic itaque ... docentique:** Seneca suggests that the style of Serapio is one more suited to the travelling salesman or performer. The epithet *circulator* for such showmen philosophers is a regular one for Seneca (below *circulanti* n.). By contrast the real philosopher is doing two things; he is doing something important (*agenti rem magnam ac seriam*), stressing the regular demand that one not just talk but do (above, p. 4), and he is teaching (*docenti*), something that Seneca demanded of Lucilius repeatedly in *Ep. 33* (above, p. 184). [ut]: Vivona 1933, 24-25, proposes reading *habe ut* as *habeto*, observing that *sic habeto* occurs a number of times in Cicero’s letters (*Fam. 2.6, 2.10 and 16.4*). However, *habeto* occurs only once in Seneca’s surviving corpus (*Polyb. 8.3*). Elsewhere he uses *habe*. Therefore, it seems better to follow the omission of Reynolds and others. *abundantem*: (OLD §4) regularly used of style in rhetoric. It continues the metaphor of the river in §2. *circulanti*: this is the verbal form from which *circulator* is formed. The *circulator* describes a street vendor or performer. Apuleius, *Met. 1.4*, describes one as a sword-swaller, and in Sen. *Ben. 6.11.2*, the *circulator* is also some sort of performer, one that a slave on an errand stops to watch. Seneca paints a vivid picture of such vendors (*institores*) and their voices at *Ep.*
56.2. The volubility of these street vendors is used regularly as a contrast to true verbal facility. Quintilian, for instance, at Inst. 2.4.16, talks of *circulatoria iactatio* and, at Inst. 10.1.8, of *circulatoria volubilitas* in contrast to true facility. It is not a term, however, that Cicero uses; rather he talks of *clamatores* (e.g. De Orat. 1.202). At Ep. 29.7 when Seneca describes as *circulatores* those who put philosophy up for sale, the emphasis is on their disgraceful money-making (Laudizi 2003, 245-246); his detestation for such people is repeated at Epp. 52.15 and 108.36. It is at Ep. 52.8 that Seneca offers the most extended description of these showmen teachers: *eligamus non eos qui verba magna celeritate praecipitant et communes locos volvunt et in privato circulantur*. As here he emphasizes their speed of delivery and uses *circulare* to underline their exhibitionism, *agenti … seriam*: in a similar fashion Seneca’s father used a similar phrase (Con. 1.pr.5, *seriam rem agenti* and 10.pr.1, *non seriam rem agam*) to deprecate his work on declamations.

Aequo stillare … *obruat*: the opposite tendency, to speak too slowly, is noted as a fault too. Whereas one overloads (*obruat*) the ears with excessive speed, the other, with excessive slowness, keeps them stretched (*extendat*). The median between two such extremes is something that Quintilian stressed at Inst. 11.3.52:

> Nec volubilitate nimia confundenda quae dicimus, qua et distinctio perit et affectus, et nonnumquam etiam verba aliqua sui parte fraudantur. Cui contrarium est vitium nimiae tarditatis: nam et difficultatem inveniendi fatetur et segnitia soluit animos, et, in quo est aliquid, temporibus praefinitis aquam perdit. 

*Promptum sit os, non praeceps, moderatum, non lentum.*

He makes a similar demand at Inst. 11.3.33 to avoid swallowing words or over-pronouncing them. The metaphor of rate of speech as a flow of liquid seen at §2 is continued with the first antithesis: one’s speech should neither rush nor drip forth. For a similar metaphor see Ep. 100.1 where Seneca says in respect of Fabianus: *multum ... interesse existimo utrum exciderit an fluxerit*. Clearly Fabianus is on the slow side of the contrast, but Seneca continues by claiming that his words flow (*fundere*) rather than gush (*effundere*). For Seneca, Fabianus maintains a happy mean (so also at Ep. 100.10). He had used the contrast between dripping and flowing earlier at Ep. 33.6 in respect of the volume of quotes available: *non ... excidunt sed fluunt*. **illum**: the one *agenti ... docentique* in the previous sentence. *stillare*: Armisen-Marchetti, 108; dripping provides the maximal contrast of fluid movement with the image of a river at §2. *currere*: a verb often used of speech (*OLD §5*), but also of liquids (*OLD §4c* and with *cursu* above, §2). *extendat*: (*OLD §3*, ‘strain’) there are no other instances of its use with ears, but Summers 1910, 203, offers as similar Claud. Cons. Olyb. et Prob. 65:
anxia mentem | spes agit et longo tendit praecordia voto. **obruat:** Cicero at Tusc. 2.3 uses this verb to describe being buried by *copia sententiarum et verborum.*

**Nam illa ... praetervolat:** Seneca explains why excessive slowness is likewise (*quoque*) detrimental in terms of how the audience reacts: they are made less attentive through boredom with the halting slowness (*taedio interruptae tarditatis*). However, he tempers this criticism by noting that what is waited for sinks in more easily than what flies past. Therefore, he implies, it is better to err on the side of slowness. Pliny in a letter to Tacitus on *brevitas* argues in similar terms for the efficacy of a fuller style: Ep. 1.20.3: *Nam plerisque longiore tractatu vis quaedam et pondus accedit, utque corpori ferrum, sic oratio animo non ic tu magis quam mora imprimitur,* and Ep. 1.20.18: *relinquere ... aculeum in audientium animis is demum potest qui non pungit sed infigit.* **inopia et exilitas:** the image of words dripping forth gives rise to the style being characterized as poor and thin. Both terms are regularly applied to style; the second is not always negative in sense, e.g. Ep. 100.10: *sit aliquid ... comice exile.* At Ep. 75.3 Seneca uses similar terms to describe an unattractive style: *ieiuna et arida.* **interruptae:** picks up the lack of flow in the previous image of dripping. **insidit:** this is a common verb for the concept of ideas sinking into the mind, e.g. Ep. 33.6 and 95.37. The ability to easily enter and remain in the mind is a virtue of speech that Seneca stressed twice in Ep. 38.1: *minutatim irrepit animo* and *facilis intrant et haerent.* **praetervolat:** similar in sense to *fugit* in the next sentence. Both are used by Cicero, Orat. 197, in the sense of escaping someone’s notice: *eaque [sc. verba et sententias] dum animali attentis admirantes excipiunt, fugit eos et praetervolat numeros.*

**Denique tradere ... fugit:** the image of words flying past leads Seneca to observe that such a situation is not congruent with the role of a teacher. He bases his argument on linguistic usage (*homines ... dicuntur*), creating the amusing image of someone attempting to hand over a fleeing precept. The description of the philosopher as a teacher picks up the earlier *docentique.* **tradere:** the idiom of teaching as a handing over is found also at Epp. 104.22 and 123.8 and Cic. De Orat. 1.18.84: *eos ... qui dicendi praecepta traderent.* **fugit:** above, *praetervolat n.*

§4. Adice nunc quod quae veritati operam dat oratio incomposita esse debet et simplex: haec popularis nihil habet veri. Movere vult turbam et inconsultas aures impetu rapere, tractandam se non praebet, aufertur: quomodo autem regere potest quae regi non potest? Quid quod haec oratio quae sanandis mentibus adhibetur descendere in nos debet? remedia non prosunt nisi inmorantur.
§4. Seneca continues with a contrast between speech concerned with the truth and a popular style. He says the philosophical style should be simple and unaffected, and goes on to devote more attention to the deficiencies of the popular style. By contrast it aims to sway the crowd, even carry them off, with its force, it does not offer itself for inspection, and as it is out of control, it cannot control others. Returning then to the role of philosophical speech, he makes use of the medical analogy to suggest that cures can only work if they linger.

Adice nunc ... simplex: Seneca uses a traditional idea here that he uses elsewhere on a number of occasions. The classic form of it is Eur. Phoen. 469: ἄπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἐφύ (Tosi, §302), which Seneca translates at Ep. 49.12 as ‘veritatis simplex oratio est’, where it is part of his criticism of dialectic (see below, simplex n.). Here in addition to simplex, he adds incompposita in the sense of unaffected. Such a description of style is one that he says he aims for at Ep. 75.1; the sermo ... inlaboratus et facilis matches the oratio incompposita ... et simplex closely. In both of them the first adjective describes the style negatively and the second one describes it positively (Laudizi 2005c, 141). Chrysippus is said to have thought one should cultivate something similar, when arguing for a frank and unaffected word order: τοῦ ἐλευθερίου και ἀφελοῦς κόσμου, Plut. St. rep. 1047a (= L-S 31H and SVF 2.297). Adice: Ep. 33.10 n. veritati: it is possible that a sense that is equally or more important here than the abstract one of truth is the idea of authenticity, something more personal to the individual speaker (above, p. 366). incompposita: the use of this adjective seems to many to contradict the requirement in §1 that a philosopher’s pronuntiatio be composta. However, as noted, the sense here is very clearly that of inlaboratus at Ep. 75.1.

Furthermore, as De Vivo 1996, 500, n. 36, notes, Seneca uses incompposita again in this positive sense at Nat. 4a.pr.11: Coepisti mirari comitatem et incompositam suavitatem, quae illos quoque quos transit abducit, gratuitum etiam in obvios meritum. simplex: this adjective is closely associated with veritas. Horace, Carm. 1.24.7, has nuda ... Veritas with a similar force. Variations on the sense are also found at Epp. 79.18, veritas in omnem partem sui eadem est, and 102.13, veritatis una vis, una facies est. It is significant that Seneca makes use of this collocation in connection with his attacks on dialectic. For Stoic writers dialectic was alēthē legein, which some described as eu legein (e.g. L-S 31D), thus conflating the definitions of dialectic and rhetoric (Long 1978, 102-103). Seneca agrees that speaking well and speaking the truth are the same, as he alludes to at Ep. 24.21: numquam tamen acrior quam ubi veritati commodas verba, dixisti. However, he emphatically does not see speaking truthfully as speaking dialectically, as his use of the Euripidean proverb above makes clear. So too
at Ep. 82.19 in criticizing dialectic, he makes use of *simplex* again to say: *Pro veritate simplicius agendum est*, *contra metum fortius*. Elsewhere Seneca contrasts *simplicitas* with *subtilitas* associated with dialectic (e.g. Ep. 106.11-12).

*haec popularis ... aufertur:* Seneca characterizes speech not concerned with the truth as *popularis*, concerned with influencing the crowd (*turbam*). This reflects Seneca’s fundamental antithesis between popular and philosophical values (above, p. 10). In the context of speech, the contrasting perspective had been raised at Ep. 20.2 where philosophers were set up in opposition to popular declaimers: *Aliud propositum est declamantibus et assensionem coronae captantibus, aliud his qui iuvenum et otiosorum aures disputatione varia aut volubili detinent*. There, however, his concern was to have Lucilius focus on doing, not saying: *facere docet philosophia, non dicere*. Similarly, at Ep. 29.10-12, he said the acquisition of *popularis favor* required the speaker to become like the mob so it could recognize him. By contrast, the philosopher should address a different audience, as was implied at Ep. 38.1 when contrasting philosophical speech to declamations delivered *audiente populo*. Implicit in all this is that the concern here to influence a popular audience is to gain popular goods, the sort that Lucilius has rejected (Ep. 31.1). Seneca further argues that such speech does not allow itself to be examined, but rather, returning to the earlier river analogy, it is carried off (*aufertur*) by the force of the flow of words. *veri*: (*OLD* §1c, ‘authentic’); for the inauthenticity of this popular style, see above, p. 366. *inconsultas ... impetu:* similarly at Ep. 37.5 *consilio* and *impetu* are opposed, and it is often the *impetus* that is *inconsultus* (e.g. *Epp.* 74.21, 74.31 and 76.20). *rapere:* some see a contradiction in the negative valuation of this word here and its positive use at Ep. 100.3 where Seneca says of Fabianus, *Praeterea ipso dicente non vacasset tibi partes intueri, adeo te summa rapuisset*. However, the contrast is explicable, as *SETAIOLI* 2000, 121, notes, by the contrast between the two orators. For Fabianus the rhetoric is in the service of his philosophical purpose; for the likes of Serapio it risks becoming an end in itself. *tractandam:* (*OLD* §8) the requirement here that philosophical speech be available for close inspection is made a characteristic of the Latin language at §11 *Romanus sermo ... aestimandum* *n*. It should still persuade on second consideration.

*quomodo autem ... potest?:* Seneca rounds off his criticism of popular orators’ persuasive goals with a *sententia* phrased as a question. The grammatical subject continues to be the *popularis oratio*. Seneca suggests that this style is not even very good at its aim to sway the mob.
Remembering what he said at Ep. 37.4 (Si vis ... rexerit n.), in very similar language on the need to be ruled by ratio to rule others, it is clear that here he is saying that, in a real sense, popular orators do not rule the mob since the same passions control both of them. And in terms of the talis oratio qualis vita correspondence, the ungoverned language of these orators is a reflection of their own lack of rule over their own minds. Implied in this criticism is an important characterization of what philosophical style should possess. To command respect a philosopher’s style must show it can control itself.

Quid quod ... inmorantur: Seneca shifts the discussion from the perspective of philosophical speech being concerned with the truth to a medical analogy, which he stays with for the next four sentences. Philosophical speech should be like effective medicine, which has two qualities: it gets into us and stays with us, qualities that rapid speech fails at. This medical analogy had been used at Ep. 2.3 in the context of reading a few books, rather than many: Non prodest cibus nec corpori accedit qui statim sumptus emittitur; nihil aeque sanitatem impedit quam remediorum crebra mutatio. So too at Ep. 69.2 he says, plurimum remedia continuata proficiunt. For Seneca’s use of the medical analogy more generally, see above, p. 33. Quid quod: (OLD quis §13c) as with the phrase in §5 below, this marks the shift to a new perspective on the argument. In neither case do the established section divisions make this clear. sanandis mentibus: the dative of purpose here is quite regular with adhibere in a medical context (WOODCOCK, §67), though WAGENVOORT 1948, 109 and 195–196, cites it as an example of Senecan encroachment of the dative of advantage on the dative of purpose (see also SUMMERS 1910, lvi–lvii). descendere: (OLD §5) this image of entering the mind is strong in Ep. 38.1, though not with the analogy of medicine. prosunt: used at Ep. 75.5 in a similar verbal context. inmorantur: so too at Ep. 2.2: Certis ingenis inmorari et innutriiri oportet.

§5. Multum praeterea habet inanitatis et vani, plus sonat quam valet. Lenienda sunt quae me exterrent, conpescenda quae irritant, discutienda quae fallunt, inhibenda luxuria, corripienda avaritia: quid horum raptim potest fieri? quis medicus aegros in transitu curat? Quid quod ne voluptatem quidem ullam habet talis verborum sine dilectu ruentium strepitus?

§5. Seneca interleaves into his extension of the medical analogy a comment that this style is more noise than substance, something he expands on at the end of this section and into the next, where he argues that such noise is not even enjoyable to hear. The centre of this section is a characteristic exhortation on the ills that philosophical language should be applied to healing, and that such healing cannot be done rapidly or in passing.
Multum praeterea ... valet: this observation interrupts the medical analogy, serving to foreshadow the more extended treatment (Quid quod ... strepitus) that follows the exhortation to treat mental ailments. His criticism in the contrast between sonat and valet sits squarely with his regular demand that a philosopher be concerned with res not verba (above, p. 4). inanitatis et vani: this pairing of close synonyms provides emphasis. It is found elsewhere only once in Seneca’s works at Ep. 110.10: ceteris aeque vanis et inanibus. sonat: the contrast of noise over substance is also found at Ep. 52.11 where Seneca approves of applause for Fabianus because it arises from the greatness of the topic (rerum magnitudo) not the sound of his speech (sonus ... orationis). At Ep. 114.14 he is critical of style that chooses words for their sound and a little further on at Ep. 114.16 of word arrangements that in vanum exequunt et sine effectu nihil amplius quam sonant. MÜLLER 1910, 28, gives further examples of other authors describing as jingling (tinnulos, e.g. Quint. Inst. 2.3.9), those speakers of more sound than substance.

Lenienda sunt ... curat?: Seneca, adopting the pose of one of the listeners to the likes of Serapio, breaks into an indignant appeal that he needs relief from fears, desires and falsehoods. None of these can be treated hastily or in passing. Such impatient appeals are a fairly frequent feature of Seneca’s philosophy. He uses them particularly in his criticism of syllogistic reasoning (e.g. Epp. 48.9 and 49.12), but also at Brev. 13.9 and Ben. 1.4.4-5 against mythological and antiquarian studies and again at Ep. 88.29 against liberal arts. At Ep. 100.10 he quotes Lucilius as desiring Fabianus to attack a similar range of vices. There, however, Lucilius is told not to look for the force to reside in the words, but in the subject matter. The homoioptoton of the five gerundives underlines a sense of frustration in Seneca. And the use of me emphasizes what he expects as a listener to a philosopher. However, it does more than that: as at Ep. 27.1 where he describes himself as a fellow patient he uses the therapeutic metaphor not to make himself the doctor, the one with superior knowledge, but to put himself on the same level as the reader, superior only perhaps in his awareness of what is really needed (above, p. 33). Lenienda ... corripienda: variety is kept in the construction by the switch for the last two subjects from neuter plurals to feminine abstracts. discutienda: used also at Ep. 34.1 of old age, and at Ep. 55.2 of bile. Summers 1910, 204, suggests the image is that of a fog or mist. raptim: the opposite of tractim (at §9), and picking up rapidam (§3) and rapere (§4). medicus: at Ben. 6.16.2-5 Seneca contrasts a doctor working out of professional duty with one working out of personal concern. in transitu: so
too at *Ep. 2.3*. **Summers** 1910, 204, suggests that the idiom is first found in the Elder Seneca (*Suas. 1.8*).

**Quid quod ... strepitus?:** returning to the earlier aside on the inanity of such speech, Seneca attacks it at one of its strongest points. Perhaps to the surprise of his contemporary Roman reader he claims that such speech is not even pleasurable. Clearly such speech enjoyed a lot of popular appeal, which the fame of Haterius (below §10) confirms. For many, then, it was enjoyable, and Seneca’s dislike appears quite personal. The *ne ... quidem* suggests that pleasure is the least it could have and, not having that, it is worthless. His language is highly critical in describing such speech as a clamour (*strepitus*) rushing uncontrolled (*ruentium*) and without any arrangement (*sine dilectu*). Pleasure, it is implied, should come at least from pleasant sound and proper arrangement. **Quid quod:** §4 n. **voluptatem:** *Ep. 31.2* n. The pleasures and their association with popular values had figured prominently in the previous letter (*Ep. 39.5-6*). **ruentium:** continues the image of rushing water from §2. **strepitus:** so too at *Ep. 38.1* used critically of public speeches. See *Ep. 123.10*, *verborum inaniatem crepitus*, with a similar sense. The Elder Seneca uses it of Albucius, *Con. 7.pr.4*, who *nihil detrahebat ex supervacuo strepitu*. So too Petronius, 1.2, talks of declaimers’ *sententiarum vanissimo strepitu*. Often the word has the sense of the noise of a crowd (e.g. *Cic. Brut. 317, fori ... strepitus*), and Cicero, *De Orat. 3.50*, uses the verb to describe unclear speakers ‘shouting themselves down’ (*sibi obstrepere*).

§6. **Sed ut pleraque quae fieri posse non crederes cognovisse satis est, ita istos qui verba exerceru...**

**Sed ut ... audisse:** Seneca draws an analogy between such rapid speakers and unbelievable things that it is sufficient merely to witness to prove they are possible. **Gummere**, 266, suggests that rather than *paradoxa* Seneca may have in mind ‘juggler’s tricks’, which would add to his
dismissal of such speaking to the level of street performance, as already implied with reference to the circulatores at §3. Indeed he puts them on an even lower level, as abunde, contrasting with satis, suggests that once is more than enough. exercuerunt: §14 n. Rather than training words, one should train one’s mind, Ep. 82.8: Faciet autem illud firmum adsidua meditatio, si non verba exercueris sed animum (similarly Epp. 82.16, 90.46 and 124.21. De Vivo 1993, 501, n. 38, also notes that the verb can often have the negative connotation of trouble or vex, and that Seneca could be suggesting that these speakers torment their words!

Quid enim ... reprimi?: Seneca then asks three questions whose answers are implied to be all unfavourable. The first two are similar and ask what one could possibly imitate of such a speaker. Imitation was a central part of how Romans envisioned education; they followed exempla (above, p. 66). It was a particularly important aspect of developing one’s style, and it is a topic that Seneca addresses in detail in Ep. 84, where he says that one’s sources should be digested and one should resemble a model not like a picture, but like a son (Ep. 84.8): similem esse te volo quomodo filium, non quomodo imaginem. The third question asks after the state of the mind of someone whose speech is so disturbed and uncontrolled. The correlation between mind and speech made at §2 is returned to and the reference to control (regi) at §4 is picked up. Here again the discussion of the passions at Ep. 37.4 is relevant. In this context it is clear that if a mind does not control itself then it is controlled by the passions. Seneca describes the lack of control with two adjectives (perturbata et inmissa) and a verbal clause (nec potest reprimi) each of which builds on the previous one and is progressively worse: the speech is disturbed, then given a free rein and as a consequence cannot thereafter be restrained. How this works is drawn out in the following analogy of the person running downhill. perturbata: Ep. 30.9 perturbationem n. inmissa: (OLD §9) the metaphor is of letting the reins go slack (e.g. Ov. Met. 1.280). The image of giving a free rein to a horse is one used by a number of Stoics to describe the process of reason surrendering control to the passions (e.g. Ira 1.7.3; see further Graever 2002, 142). reprimi: (OLD §3) used both of one’s course or one’s voice; the first of these is used in the analogy of the next sentence.

§7. Quemadmodum per proclive currentium non ubi visum est gradus sistitur, sed incitato corporis ponderi servit ac longius quam voluit effertur, sic ista dicendi celeritas nec in sua potestate est nec satis decora philosophiae, quae ponere debet verba, non proicere, et pedetemptim procedere.
$7$. Seneca illustrates what is meant by being unrestrained in one’s speech with the analogy of people running downhill who cannot stop when they want to but are carried forward by the weight of their bodies. This leads him on to reiterate that philosophy is controlled in her language, something he then expands on by adding that it should also be appropriate (decora), a term important in both rhetorical theory and Stoic philosophy.

Quemadmodum per proclive ... effertur: Seneca compares the lack of control a hasty speaker has with people running down a hill. Controlled (servit) by the momentum of their bodies they are carried far beyond where they wanted to stop (longius quam voluit). This analogy of a running man was used by Chrysippus to explain how someone in the grip of a passion did not respond to rational control, SVF 3.462 (= L-S 65j). It is an analogy Seneca made use of at Ira 1.7.4. In contrast to a runner Chrysippus likened the rational control of the wise man to somebody walking, something Seneca refers to next with pedetemptim procedere and again perhaps at §14. The other image used to describe the control of the passions, that of a horse given free rein, was alluded to in the previous sentence (above, §6 inmissa n.). currentium: the plural contrasts here with the singular philosophiae. It is suggestive of the confused mass of the mob. servit: this emendation was proposed by AXELSON 1939, 174-176. In the context of the passions it is particularly apposite as Seneca frequently describes them as enslaving (e.g. Ep. 37.4).

sic ista ... procedere: applying the analogy to rapid speech Seneca insists on two similarities. The first is that such speech is not under its own control (in sua potestate) and the second is that it is not sufficiently proper (decora) for philosophy. The first of these is obvious in the simile, but the second depends on propriety being seen as self-controlled. It is this sense of propriety that Seneca focuses on when personifying philosophy with marked alliteration and homoioteleuton. She invests words rather than squanders them, and she proceeds at a cautious pace. potestate: by contrast at Ep. 59.4 Seneca says to Lucilius, habes verba in potestate, and goes on with an image similar to the one used here, non effert te oratio nec longius quam destinasti trahit. decora: this reference to decorum is relevant to Seneca’s topic as it is important as a concept not only in rhetoric but also in ethics (above, p. 363, n. 714). ponere ... proicere: such a contrast is found in a number of places: at Ep. 100.1 when discussing Fabianus’ style Seneca makes the contrast, effundi verba, non figi; Cicero, at Or. 199, says of ending a period, ponendus est ... ille ambitus, non abiciundus; while at Ep. 75.2 Seneca says, sensus meos ... nec exornassem nec abiecissema, where the second of these
is similar in sense to *proicere*. *Summers* 1910, 204, suggests there might be a financial metaphor here, one seen more clearly at *Ben.* 1.1.2, *beneficia sineullo dilectu magis proicimus quam damus*, where the *sine ... dilectu* is matched by a similar phrase at §5. Similar in sense, though not in phrasing is Seneca’s condemnation at *Ep.* 29.2-3 of the Cynic style of scattering words before any audience rather than being selective. *pedetemptim*: *De Vito* 1996, 501, n. 40, suggests that this word, besides continuing the alliteration, has an archaic slowness that contrasts philosophy’s movement to the likes of Serapio.

§8. ‘Quid ergo? non aliquando et insurget?’ Quidni? sed salva dignitate morum, quam violenta ista et nimia vis exuit. Habeat vires magnas, moderatas tamen; perennis sit unda, non torrens. Vix oratori permiserim talem dicendi velocitatem irrevocabilem ac sine lege vadentem: quemadmodum enim iudex subsequi poterit aliquando etiam imperitus et rudis? Tum quoque, cum illum aut ostentatio abstulerit aut affectus impotens sui, tantum festinet atque ingerat quantum aures pati possunt.

§8. This section of the letter is brought to a close with an interjection from Lucilius, who asks if philosophy cannot become elevated in her language on occasions. Seneca allows that it can provided always that propriety is maintained. The power that such language provides should for philosophy always be controlled and steady. The inappropriateness of such uncontrolled speech is driven home by the suggestion that Seneca would scarcely permit it to the orator, whose audience may not be able to follow it. Speed of delivery even for the orator should never outrun the capacity of the audience’s ears to cope. Such speed for its own sake, it is implied, has no creditable purpose.

‘Quid ergo? … torrens:’ Lucilius interjects with a tone of disappointment, asking whether such a cautious delivery ever allows for something more elevated, more sublime. As *Loretto*, 75, n. 11, notes, Lucilius continues Seneca’s personification of philosophy, a personification that Seneca also continues in his reply. Philosophy is given centre stage at roughly the middle of the letter. The concern for propriety that had marked her introduction in the previous section is continued; even when roused to loftier language she remains conscious of her position (*salva dignitate morum*), and the power displayed in that language is always controlled (*moderatas*). This concern with moderation is a clear echo of that theme in the previous epistle, *Ep.* 39.4-6 (Hachmann 1995, 251). Power (*vis*) is a feature of the grand style (above, §2 *concitata ... oratori* n.). However, Seneca contrasts the excessive and violent power of the likes of Serapio with a strength that is great, but controlled. It is like a spring that never dries up (*perennis*), one fed by a steady source, unlike one
that gushes after rain but runs dry in summer (below, torrens n.). Such a contrast fits with Seneca’s idealization of constantia over the fickleness of fortune. The rapid speaker may appear to have more force, to be more impressive, but philosophy is more effective; in a similar way Quintilian, Inst. 2.12.1, comments on the popular belief that untrained orators have more force (maiorem vim). As noted at §2 Audisse te ... sufficiat’ n. the metaphor of flowing water had a semi-technical quality in rhetoric. At Ep. 100.10 Seneca says of Fabianus’ speech, non est violenta nec torrens, quamvis effusa sit, while at Ep. 115.18 in the context of an ideal style he says, oratio fluens leniter. Quid ergo?: Ep. 30.15 n. This interjection, along with its answer, contributes to Seneca’s colloquial style, particularly in the sense of a letter being a form of conversation. insurget: (OLD §4) Guillemin 1954, 260, suggests that this verb has the sense, ‘employ the sublime style’, e.g. Ep. 46.2: Dicerem ’quid impetus!, si interquievisset, si <ex> intervallo surrexisset. See also Quint. Inst. 10.1.96, Horatius insurgit aliquando. vis ... vires: Seneca contrasts the two types of power not only in their associated adjectives but in the terms themselves: in using vis to describe the speech of the likes of Serapio the contrast is strengthened through the many negative associations of that word. By contrast, vires, lacking such associations, is rather neutral, or even positive, in its associations.

exuit: neither Smith, 60, nor Armisen-Marchetti, 173, mention this as a metaphor, yet the image of someone being stripped naked by the excessive force of his speech contributes to the sense of this being undignified. moderatas: somewhat similar is the contrast in Ps-Long, Subl. 12.3 between the more passionate Demosthenes, possessing fieriness and ardour (τὸ διάπυρον ...καὶ θυμικῶς ἐκφλεγόμενον), and the more aloof Plato, who, though not cold, is not as vehement. See also Ep. 41.5 moderatum n. torrens: this adjective as a noun referred to a type of stream that flowed fast after rain, but could run dry in the summer (Plater and White 1926, 8, n. 2).

Vix oratori ... possunt: Seneca continues by suggesting that even for an orator such speed is hardly appropriate, asking first how the juror, sometimes inexperienced and untrained (imperitus et rudis), will be able to follow what is being said. He then sets to the rapidity of speech a limit of what the ears can cope with. It is significant that even though Seneca talks of a desire for display (ostentatio) leading one to get carried away, he sets this in the context of a law court, rather than a declamation. Philosophical speech is made to appear more serious and important in its contrast to oratory used in public life, while declamation, in being ignored, might appear to be seen as beneath notice (above, p. 359). oratori: mention of an orator here is for De Vivo 1996, 502, further evidence that oratori at §2 does not require emendation and that a contrast between oratorical
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and philosophical speech runs through the whole letter. velocitatem: this speed recalls that of someone running downhill (§7); at Ira 2.35.2, having likened anger to a clumsy, hard to control weapon, he says, Ea demum velocitas placet quae ubi iussa est vestigium sistit nec ultra destinata procurrit flectique et cursu ad gradum reduci potest. sine lege: lack of control is described in terms appropriate to the judicial context. subsequei: (OLD §4b). iudex: Quintilian, Inst. 4.2.45, warns against brevity for the same reason; the jurors frequently come from the countryside. ostentatio: Ep. 31.10 n. For Seneca it is closely associated with popular values, e.g. Ep. 16.3, non est philosophia popolare artificium nec ostentationi paratum (see also Ep. 59.15). It was also an important term in declamation (MÜLLER 1910, 30-31). ingerat: along with the sense ‘heap upon’ this can also mean ‘pour into’, which seems appropriate for the ear (cf. Ep. 83.18).

Section C (§§9-12). Seneca moves from precepts to examples. He offers two consulars from the reign of Augustus, Vinicius and Haterius, as antithetical models of speech. Lucilius should prefer to listen to Vinicius, even to imitate him, even if his slow speech attracted derision. By contrast the rushing style of Haterius should be avoided. This leads to the observation that in contrast to Greek, Latin is not suited to such licence. It is more circumspect, and like Cicero, its great exemplar, sedate. This part of the letter is concluded with the example of Fabianus, who in contrast to the two previous speakers is described in positive terms. However, it is consistent with Seneca’s repeated emphasis on doing over saying, that it is Fabianus’ life and knowledge that Seneca gives prominence to over his eloquence. The change from precepts to exempla is effected with three anecdotes about Vinicius. The humour in these makes for a relief in the seriousness and tone. Furthermore, there is interest created by this sudden intrusion of a number of famous figures from the recent past. Vinicius is described, in the text as it survives, entirely through the anecdotes. The other orators, by contrast, Haterius, Cicero and Fabianus, after the break in mood created by Vinicius, are characterized less dramatically by Seneca himself.

§9. Recte ergo facies si non audieris istos qui quantum dicant, non quemadmodum quaeant, et ipse malueris, si necesse est, vel P. Vinicium dicere, qui ... itaque cum quaereretur quomodo P. Vinicius dicaret, Asellius ait ‘tractim’. Nam Geminus Varius ait, ‘quomodo istum disertum dicatis nescio: tria verba non potest iungere’. Quidni malis tu sic dicere quomodo Vinicius?

§9. Having devoted some space to why precipitate speed is inappropriate for philosophical discourse, Seneca offers a convenient maxim for judging whom to avoid listening to. He then
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insists that Lucilius should prefer Vinicius, although he was the butt of criticisms for his halting speech.

Recte ergo ... quaerunt: Seneca presents the conclusion (ergo) of all his previous arguments. Lucilius would do right if he does not listen to those concerned not with how, but how much they say. This offers a pithy yardstick for measuring the speakers to avoid. It passes a severe judgement on the likes of Serapio. In a later letter he will criticize Lucilius for being concerned with style over content (Ep. 115.1): quaere quid scribas, non quemadmodum. These speakers, however, he suggests, are not even concerned with style (quemadmodum), but only sheer volume of output (quantum). Content (quid) in this context is not even at issue. There is perhaps a barb here, as arguably the audience of such speakers was very concerned with style, yet Seneca is suggesting that subordinated to speed even style suffered. audieris: given the corrupt state of the text that follows this word is significant for the context in which Seneca offers the examples. Primarily they are examples of whom to listen to, though perhaps implied in the act of listening to someone is the idea that one might imitate him.

et ipse ... ‘tractim’: rather than the likes of Serapio, Seneca feels Lucilius should prefer, if he must choose (si necesse est) the speech of Vinicius, a speaker so deliberate that his delivery was the butt of humorous comment. For the significance of Vinicius being a senator, see above, p. 359. vel P. Vinicium ... itaque: REYNOLDS, 106, obelizes this section suggesting that the textual problems in it are probably beyond repair. The nature of them is nicely set out by SUMMERS 1908, 28, and ALEXANDER 1932a, 262. The first problem is the untidy repetition of Vinicius’ name close together and the second is the sense of qui. These are best solved as ALEXANDER 1948, 296, suggests, by assuming a lacuna of some length. This would explain the repetition of the name and the meaning of qui, which cannot be adverbial, as some editors have suggested. The sense of the lacuna is proposed by DUNBABIN 1917, 181, as:

... qui ita lentus erat ut volgo mirarentur posse quemquam tam tarde loqui.
Itaque cum ...

Vinicius: below p. 460. Such slow speech is suggested by his careful nature, which Sen. Rh. reports, Con. 7.5.11: Vinicius, exactissimi vir ingeni, qui nec dicere res ineptas nec ferre poterat. tractim: ALEXANDER 1948, 297, translates as ‘by slow degrees’. Cicero uses the participle tractus to describe a style of speech, De Or. 2.64: genus orationis fusum atque tractum et cum lenitate quadam aequabiliter profluens (see also Or. 66: tracta quaedam et fluens). Such a smooth style is the very opposite of
Vinicius’ halting delivery, yet *tractim*, which Alexander 1948, 296-297, notes is so close in form and origin to *tractus*, is remote from it in meaning, making for an appropriately sophisticated jibe. **Asellius:** some, such as Préchac, 165, assume textual corruption and take this to be Arellius Fuscus, a famous declaimer, but that seems unnecessary as Asellius Sabinus was noted for his wit (below, p. 461).

**Nam Geminus ... Vinicius?:** Seneca explains (*nam*) what Asellius meant by *tractim* with another anecdote, this time from Geminus Varius, who plays on the hesitancy of Vinicius’ delivery with the expression that he cannot string three words together; they come out disconnected. Varius’ opinion, however, is not a unanimous one, as he offers it to refute those who think Vinicius is eloquent (*disertum*). Yet Seneca does not offer any counter arguments to these anecdotes, although Vinicius was clearly a respected speaker (see above, *Vinicius* n. for the opinion of Seneca’s father). Instead, his silence makes the rhetorical question why Lucilius should not prefer even to imitate Vinicius that much more challenging. Why should Lucilius care, he implies, about popular opinion rather than the opinion of philosophers? For the close relation of listening and imitating here, see above, p. 364. **Geminus Varius:** another senator of the Augustan period (below, p. 461), described by Jerome, *Adv. Iovinian* 1.28 (= Balbo 2004, 190), as *sublimis orator*. **tria ... iungere:** a proverbial expression in Greek and Latin of someone’s inability to speak, first recorded in Ar. Nub. 1402 (Tosi, §63). Seneca, *Apoc.* 11.4, has Augustus say of Claudius, *tria verba cito dicat et servum me ducat*. See also Mart. 6.54.2.

§10. Aliquis tam insulsus intervenerit quam qui illi singula verba vellenti, tamquam dictaret, non diceret, ait ‘dic, †numquam dicast?’ Nam Q. Hateri cursum, suis temporibus oratoris celeberrimi, longe abesse ab homine sano volo: numquam dubitavit, numquam intermisit; semel incipiebat, semel desinebat.

§10. The third anecdote about Vinicius is both anonymous and introduced as the sort of criticism one would have to endure if one spoke like him. By contrast, any sane person, Seneca insists, should avoid the manner of Haterius, who was, however, the most famous speaker of his day. These contrasting examples are suggestive of Seneca’s regular antithesis between philosophical and popular values. The popular opinion of Haterius is mad, while philosophical opinion, which should match that of the sane person, should be unmoved by the misguided criticism of the ignorant.
Aliquis tam … dicas†?: Seneca answers his question with an example of the sort of remark that speaking like Vinicius might provoke. Much can be written on how to emend this passage without succeeding in indicating more than the merely possible. What, however, is the effect of presenting as a model someone so roundly ridiculed? It seems likely that Seneca has done this to challenge the reader’s inherited values. For Seneca the values instilled by a rhetorical education were fundamentally popular rather than philosophical (Ep. 36.3 perseveret ... studia n.). However, it is likely the anecdotes would appeal to the reader’s rhetorical education and amuse him, making him sympathize with those saying them. These anecdotes would make philosophical eloquence as Seneca presents it look rather unpalatable and force the reader to examine his values more thoroughly than would otherwise happen. In short, Seneca is characteristically making his reader think.

Any attempt at repair of this passage must solve a number of problems. Firstly there is the repetition of dicere and dictare; as SUMMERS 1910, 37-38, notes, the interjection cannot be a repetition of the tamquam dictaret, non diceret, but something for which this is required to make sense. Then there is the force of nam in the next sentence; does it refer back to the previous sentence, making this one parenthetical (ALEXANDER 1932a, 263), or is the corruption of the obelized text responsible for the loss of force? Finally, there is the question of what is witty in this remark. None of the proposals seems able to claim more than being plausible. SUMMERS 1910, 37-38, proposes: alius … ait ‘dic’: numquam a me audias?; someone else might say ‘speak’, as though he were the scribe you were dictating to, but you will never hear that from me. ALEXANDER 1948, 298, follows the idea of dictation to emend it to, ‘dic, num umquam dictas?’, ‘Say, you don’t ever dictate, do you?’. TUCKER 1913, 56 proposes, ‘dic, numquid manducas?’, DUNBABIN 1917, 181: ‘dic, numquid dictas?’, KRONENBERG 1923, 42: ‘dic, num neniam dictas?’ and WAGENVOORT 1953, 226-227, ‘dic, numquid chriam dictas?’. insulsus: there is a degree of irony in using this epithet; literally it means ‘unwitty’, the very opposite of what he aspires to be. Certainly he is boorish in his focus on verba, not res. vellenti: (OLD §3b) above, §2 convellere n.

Nam Q. Hateri … desinebat: Seneca supports his suggestion that if one of the two extremes must be chosen, it should be Vinicius that is imitated by arguing that the other extreme was extremely unhealthy: it should be avoided by a sane person (homo sano). This other extreme also has an exemplum, another orator of consular status from the time of Augustus. In contrast to his
silence on the popularity or otherwise of Vinicius, Seneca notes Haterius’ great contemporary fame (suis temporibus oratoris celeberrimi). Perhaps in this contrast is the point that popular acclaim is not something attracted to a style of speech appropriate to philosophy, such as that of Vinicius. Something of Haterius’ speed is caught by Seneca’s description of it: it is given rapidity by the asyndeton of the four clauses and a galloping rhythm conveyed through the anaphora of the adverbs. Haterii: below, p. 462. The speed of his speech is noted by Seneca’s father, who describes it as achieving a Greek quality (see below, §11). It attracted an anecdote from Augustus, who suggested he needed a brake (Con. 4.pr.7):


Significantly, in respect of the lack of self-control that Seneca criticized such delivery for (above, §§6-7), his father said of Haterius that he was unable to control himself (Con. 4.pr.8, regi autem ab ipso non poterat), but took his cue from a freedman! cursum: (OLD §4a) although this word can also describe the flow of water, Seneca is here using a different metaphor for rate of speech, that of the movement of animals, particularly of horses; it had been used at §§6-7 when describing lack of control and is used in the description of Cicero later (below, §11 gradarius n.). It is also present in Augustus’ anecdote on Haterius. suis ... celeberrimi: Tacitus in his obituary, Ann. 4.61, confirms this, describing Haterius as eloquentiae quoad vixit celebratae. He goes on to say that as this resided in his voice and arose from vigour rather than care (impetu magis quam cura vigebat) it died with him. By contrast real fame, renown from one’s virtue, Seneca argued would be recognized by some later generation (Ep. 79.17 and Ep. 31.10 Fama ... notitia n.).


§11. The argument from exempla leads on to a generalization that some styles suits some peoples more than others. Rapidity of speech suited Greeks, whereas Latin was more measured, and as Seneca provocatively suggests, better displays the qualities he expected of philosophical language at §4; it is self-conscious, assessing itself and allowing itself to be assessed.
Quaedam tamen ... adsuevimus: what is suitable varies from country to country; speaking fast is permitted among Greeks, but Romans even in writing space their words. As noted (above, p. 368), this contrast rests on the congruence of manners and speech expressed in *qualis vita, talis oratio*. There were contrasts between the character and the speech of both cultures of long standing. Roman seriousness was contrasted with a Greek proneness to absurdity (above, p. 368); such a contrast is implied here as circumspection can be a consequence of seriousness, while as Seneca goes on to make clear (§§13-14), a rush of words carries with it things better not said, the *ineptiae* that some Romans criticized Greeks for. *in Graecis*: this contrast may have been prompted by the prior mention of Haterius, whose speed Seneca’s father had described as being Greek. Talkativeness is made a common failing of Greeks by Romans; Cicero, *De Or*. 1.102, talks of a *graeculus loquax* as a type, while Valerius Maximus, 2.2.2, and Pliny, *Ep*. 5.20.4, talk of the *volubilitas* of the Greeks. Juvenal, 3.73-74, focuses on the speed of delivery, describing Greek speech as more gushing than a famous contemporary rhetorician, Isaeus: *sermo | promptus et Isaeo torrentior*. *licentiam*: as noted above (above, p. 368), this word has both a rhetorical sense and a moral sense, both of which are present here. Seneca’s father, *Con*. 10.4.23, makes *licentia* the point of difference between the two languages: *cogitetis Latinam linguam facultatis non minus habere, licentiae minus*. *interpungere*: Geymonat 1984, offers a useful summary and bibliography on ancient punctuation. This passage is an important one for ancient evidence of writing practices. Geymonat 1984, 998, suggests that Seneca is contrasting the Greek *scriptio continua*, in which there was no break between the letters of one word and the next, with the practice in Latin of distinguishing written words with a dot between each of them. Geymonat goes on to argue that Seneca is not here referring to other punctuation marks. Although the primary sense of the verb appears to refer to this writing practice, it has survived more often in reference to pauses in spoken language (e.g. *Cic. Or*. 53, *De Or*. 3.173 and 181). Desbordes 1990, 227-247, discusses Roman writing practices in detail, making, however, no mention of this passage. As already noted (above, p. 366, n. 728), this analogy is evidence for the close connection between speech and writing in this letter.

Cicero quoque ... fuit: Seneca continues the equine metaphor of speakers in respect to the speed of their delivery (above, §10 *cursum*), and makes an argument from authority in claiming that the font of Roman eloquence, Cicero, was himself a slow pacer. The high regard for Cicero that Seneca expresses here depends for its persuasiveness on it being widely held; Leeman 1963, 249, records this as a common opinion in this period. Velleius Paterculus, 1.17.3, for example,
says, oratio ac vis forensis perfectumque prosae eloquentiae decus ... sub principe operis sui erupit Tullio. And the Elder Seneca, Con. 1.pr.6, says, quidquid Romana facundia habet quod insolenti Graeciae aut opponat aut praefuerat circa Ciceronem effloruit. noster: the approval that this term suggests is noted by MAZZOLI 1970, 114, n. 9, who observes that Seneca generally reserves this appellation for Virgil or Stoics (Ep. 33.1 nostrorum n.). In a fragment of Book XXII of the Epistles, preserved in Gell. 12.2.5, Seneca describes Cicero, perhaps somewhat ironically, as summus orator, while at Ep. 100.9, with the attention on style, he acknowledges Cicero as the greatest Latin philosophical stylist. exiluit: (OLD §3) SUMMERS 1910, 205, suggests that the metaphor is one of a spring, found also in Velleius’ praise of Cicero above and in Fronto ad M. Caes. 4.3.3: caput atque fons Romanae facundiae. See also Quint. Inst. 10.1.109. gradarius: a rare term, explained in Nonius, p. 25 LINDSAY 1903, as a horse mollis gradu et sine successatura nitens. Nonius preserves the only other surviving use of the word, recording Lucilius, 476, ipse ecus ... gradarius. Fronto, De Or. 2, in his criticism of Seneca quotes a similar equine image: sententias eius tolatares video nusquam quadripedo concito cursu tenere. Similarly Novius, Com. 38, has tolatiloquentia (below, §14 tardilocus n.).

Romanus sermo ... aestimandum: Seneca personifies Latin, the Roman language, to show it inspecting and appraising itself, as well as allowing itself to be appraised. This is something Latin does more (magis) than, it is implied, Greek. For the significance of this claim see above, p. 367. Such self-inspection and self-appraisal were central to how Seneca envisioned philosophy. At Tranq. 6.1–2 when discussing activities suitable to each individual he says, inspicere ... deebimur ... nosmet ipsos and necesse est se ipsum aestimare (INWOOD 2005a, 144). At Ira 1.11.8 circumspection is central to virtus personified: Illa certissima est virtus quae se diu multumque circumspexit et rexit et ex lento ac destinato provexit. Offering oneself to be inspected by others is particularly relevant to the criticism of Serapio’s speech at §4 (tractandam se non praebet, aufertur). Seneca does not specify who would be doing the assessing, but obviously it would be those holding philosophical values, not popular ones (Ep. 29.12). One also assumes the listeners would be intimate ones in the context of conversation, rather than oratory (Ep. 38.1). circumspicit: (OLD §4) a similar sense occurs at Ira 3.4.5.

§12. Fabianus, vir egregius et vita et scientia et, quod post ista est, eloquentia quoque, disputabat expedite magis quam concitate, ut posses dicere facilitatem esse illam, non celeritatem. Hanc ego in viro sapiente recipio, non exigo; ut oratio eius sine impedimento exeat, proferatur tamen malo quam profluat.
§12. Seneca now offers his last exemplum, one of his earliest philosophical influences, Papirius Fabianus. Seneca stresses that he was foremost for his way of life and his learning, and that his eloquence was secondary to these. As a model he is of the same period as Haterius and Vinicius, being someone the Elder Seneca listened to; however, he falls between their extremes in the rate of his delivery. His style is described in a number of antitheses that consistently described his delivery as easy rather than fast. Both in this moderation and in the detail in which he is described, he is the most attractive of the exempla, and a suitable conclusion to them.

Fabianus ... celeritatem: for Fabianus’ exemplarity Seneca gives priority to his philosophy (below, vita et scientia n.) over his eloquence. Similarly at Ep. 52.8 he argues that one must choose as helpers people one admires more when seeing them than when hearing them, a demand consonant with his regular insistence on deeds over words (above, p. 4). Fabianus is described as being fluent or easy in his speech rather than rapid. Such moderation was what Seneca encouraged in Ep. 39.4 and it was appropriate both to the rhetorical and the philosophical concept of decorum (above, p. 363). It suggests that Fabianus’ speech was in harmony with his way of life, as Seneca had demanded of a philosopher at §2. Fabianus: below, p. 463; although he began his career as a declaimer, Seneca the Elder described him as a deserter to philosophy (Con. 2.pr.5). At Ep. 100.12 Seneca says his comments on Fabianus’ style are based on his memory of hearing him: cum audirem certe illum, talia mihi videbantur. The verb audire includes the usage of ‘listening to lectures’ and by extension ‘being a student’ (OLD §6) and it is on the basis of this passage that Fabianus is frequently described as one of Seneca’s teachers (e.g. GRIFFIN 1992, 43). This is possibly so, yet if he was Seneca’s teacher, this is a very cursory reference, compared to what Seneca says about Attalus (e.g. Ep. 108.2). At Ep. 52.11 Seneca describes how Fabianus’ public speeches were listened to. It is not clear whether these are ones delivered while still a declaimer, and therefore like those of Haterius and Vinicius known to Seneca only by report, or ones made when he was a philosopher and heard by Seneca himself. vita et scientia: this coupling of his way of life and his learning seems a reference to the two linked parts of philosophy, actio and contemplatio (above, p. 183). At Tusc. 2.11 Cicero opposes the two: qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientiae, sed legem vitae putet? eloquentia: the Elder Seneca, Con. 2.pr.5, points out that after his adoption of philosophy, study of eloquence was for Fabianus not an end in itself, but, one might say, a tool: sed cum iam transfugisset, eo tempore quo eloquentiae studebat non eloquentiae causa. expedite: the sense of ease indicated here is confirmed by the following facilitatem. Quintilian, Inst. 11.3.52, makes a
similar observation: *Promptum sit os, non praeceps, moderatum, non lentum*, where *promptum* matches *expedite* here. Given the fondness of Fabianus and other Sextians for martial imagery (see below, p. 463), this is an apt term, as it is derived from *expeditus*, which refers to troops unencumbered and ready for action. Suetonius, *Aug.* 89.1, uses it in reference to Augustus’ limited fluency in Greek. *concitare*: above, §2 *concitata n.* *facilitatem*: (OLD §2) such ease corresponds to one aspect of the style Seneca sought, *sermo inelaboratus et facilis* (*Ep.* 75.1; see above, §4 *Adice nunc ... simplex* n.). Seneca the Elder, *Con.* 2.pr.2, talks of Fabianus’ *facultas* in a similar sense: *in summa eius ac simplicissima facultate dicendi*. For Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.1, the Greek equivalent of *facilitas* is *hexis*. MÜLLER 1910, 36, notes that Quintilian distinguishes two sorts of *facilitas*, one he calls *firma* brought about by training (*Inst.* 10.1.1, 10.1.59 and 12.9.21) and a natural *facilitas* (*Inst.* 12.10.77 and 10.2.12). MÜLLER also observes that it is a concept frequently linked to *copia* (Quint. *Inst.* 12.5.1 and Prop. 1.9.15).

**Hanc ego ... profluat:** Seneca is careful to make clear that such ease (*hanc*) is something he finds acceptable in a wise man rather than a requirement. Similarly at *Ep.* 75.5 he does not spurn eloquence if it is readily available: *si tamen contingere eloquentia non sollicito potest, si aut parata est aut parvo constat, adsit et res pulcherrimas prosequatur: sit talis ut res potius quam se ostendat*. That it is not necessary relates importantly to Seneca’s insistence on the self-sufficiency of wisdom, argued at length in *Ep.* 88 (*Ep.* 36.3 *perseveret ... studia* n.). Seneca then goes on to add that he would prefer the speech of a wise man to be deliberate rather than flowing. In this he echoes his earlier endorsement of Vinicius, though he makes the proviso that the speech should be unhindered. **in viro sapiente:** this collocation is one that Seneca uses a number of times in his prose works. WILLIAMS 2003, 120 on *Brev.* 1.2, suggests it means ‘philosopher’ in contrast to *sapiens*, which, Williams says, refers specifically to the Stoic wise man. However, the phrase actually conveys some of the sense both of the *vir bonus* and of the *sapiens* (*Ep.* 37.1 *virum bonum* n.). As such, rather than being generic, it may have a more Stoic, or perhaps Roman, flavour, suggestive of the *Stoicorum rigida ac virilis sapientia* Seneca mentions at *Helv.* 12.4 (see *Ep.* 33.1 *virilis* n.). The phrase is used again at §14 and suggests a higher standard than *in philosopho* at §2. **ut:** (OLD §31). **sine impedimento:** similar in sense to *expedite* in the previous sentence. **proferatur ... profluat:** the two words contrasted here were perhaps chosen partly for their alliteration, as at §2 Seneca used *profluat* positively of Nestor’s speech (and more generally see OLD §3), and *proferatur* does not carry strong connotations of deliberateness or circumspection. What deliberateness it has is a
product of its frequent use in the sense of walking (e.g., *pedem proferre*), often marching, which contrasts with the more uncontrolled sense of flowing. A similar sort of contrast is made of Fabianus at *Ep*. 100.5: *Fabianus non erat neglegens in oratione sed securus.*

Section D (§§13-14). Seneca brings the letter to a close by returning his focus to Lucilius (*te*) after the long section of *exempla*. The focus remains on Lucilius right until the end of the letter, where he uses arguments against speaking fast that focus on the further implications of adopting such a style. Firstly, Seneca argues, he would have to lose his sense of shame, and then because of the practice required, his focus will be diverted from the subject matter to words. Finally, if such a manner of speech comes naturally to Lucilius, returning to his demand at §8 he argues that even so propriety must be maintained.

§13. *Eo autem magis te deterreo ab isto morbo quod non potest tibi ista res contingere aliter quam si te pudere desierit: perfrices frontem oportet et te ipse non audias; multa enim inobservatus ille cursus feret quae reprehenderes velis.*

§13. Seneca seeks to dissuade his friend from this disease, as he calls it, by telling him he would have to abandon his sense of modesty. Modesty acts as a monitor on one’s speech and such monitoring is incompatible with rapid speech; there is no time for it and at speed one will say much that modesty would seek to prevent. Here, more than anywhere else (although, see §6), it is clear that Seneca is concerned not just to discourage his reader from listening to the likes of Serapio, but from seeking to emulate them.

*Eo autem ... velis:* Seneca argues that such rapid speech cannot be attained while retaining a sense of shame; if Lucilius wanted to attain it he would have to rub all shame from his face and not listen to himself. However, awareness both of one’s shame and of what one says are important facets of philosophical progress (above, p. 362). Seneca then explains that the flow of speech, being unobserved, carries much that Lucilius would wish to correct. Seneca’s father, *Con*. 4.*pr*.11, made a similar criticism of Haterius’ speech: *multa erant quae reprehenderes, multa quae suspiceres, cum torrentis modo magnus sed turbidus fluieret*. However, on the balance, Seneca’s father saw the positives outweighing the faults of this style. Quintilian, *Inst*. 2.4.16, also sees shame as something that young students would first have to lose when allowing a false facility to develop into a conceited bad habit. morbo: ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 135 and BORGO, 136. In a similar way Seneca describes Lucilius’ passion for poetry as a disease at *Ep*. 79.4. *pudere:* BORGO, 151. One’s sense of
shame was classified by the Stoics as a good emotion; Diogenes Laertius, 7.116, describes it (aidōs) as a subcategory of caution (eulabeia). For Seneca shame is connected with one’s regard for one’s internal guardian; discussion of such a guardian at Ep. 11.8-10 arises from the earlier discussion of shame (verecundia) and blushing (Hachmann 1995, 301). For the related use of shame by Epictetus, see Katekar 1998. perfriceres frontem: as blushing was seen as something natural and not subject to wisdom (Ep. 11.1), this idiom reflects the idea that one can hide this reaction to shame by rubbing one’s face beforehand. As an idiom it occurs a number of times in Latin (Sen. Nat. 4a.pr.9, Cic. Tusc. 3.41, Petr. 132.13, Mart. 11.27.7 and Quint. Inst. 9.2.25). Müller 1910, 37, records some examples of a similar idiom in Greek. inobservatus: shame is closely linked to being observed; and a sense of being observed is harnessed by Seneca to encourage progress (Ep. 32.1 Sic vive ... visurus n. and Ep. 41.2, where the internal guardian is described as an observator). As in the case of this guardian, the observing itself need not be by someone external; here it can be by the speaker himself, giving the sense ‘unselfconscious’ to inobservatus. Closely related to this need for observation elsewhere in this letter is Seneca’s demand that a philosopher’s speech be available for inspection (§4) and the valorization of Latin’s circumspection (§12). cursus: above, §10 cursum n. Seneca makes this the grammatical subject of the sentence as it takes on a life of its own, out of the control of the speaker.


§14. Seneca emphasizes the importance of maintaining a sense of shame by reiterating that such a style cannot be attained without losing one’s modesty. He adds a further argument against it as it involves a misvaluation of verba over res. Finally he demands that decorum be maintained, even if such facility be available to Lucilius without effort. In short, he concludes with a neologism, let Lucilius be tardiloquent.

Non potest ... verecundia: this sentence acts as a reiteration of the claim made in the previous sentence and as such belongs more logically as part of §13, inasmuch as sections reflect discreet units of argument. The sentence repeats the first half of the quod clause in the previous sentence, adding an inquam for further emphasis. The salva verecundia of its second half repeats the sense of the end of the earlier clause while also having a verbal echo of §8 salva dignitate.
Commentary on Epistle 40

morum. A sense of decorum and a sense of shame are by no means identical, but they are closely linked and it is to decorum more specifically that Seneca next turns.

Praeterea exercitatione ... ad verba: in this additional reason for disapproving of such a style Seneca refers to his fundamental demand that philosophy is something practical, involved with action. The contrast between res and verba has two important senses (below, a rebus ... ad verba n.), both of which are present here. One’s attention and exercise should be on the subject matter of philosophy not its words, so style should not be one’s primary concern. However, more than this one should focus on and practise actually living in accordance with philosophy. As Seneca says of Fabianus, mores ille, non verba composuit (Ep. 100.2). exercitatione ... cotidiana: Quintilian, Inst. 2.13.15, agrees that eloquence took much time and effort to master: multo labore, adsiduo studio, varia exercitatione, plurimis experimentis, altissima prudentia, praesentissimo consilio constat ars dicendi. Seneca uses the topic of physical exercise in Ep. 15.5 to argue the point that the priority should be to exercise the mind; he did, however, allow some voice exercises as a form of physical exercise (Ep. 15.8). As opposed to rhetorical exercises, priority should be given to exercises for the mind, called ‘spiritual exercises’, by Hadot, which were a major part of philosophy for Seneca (above, p. 183). a rebus ... ad verba: the contrast between res and verba is an important one for Seneca, one which has two main emphases. In any one passage one of these senses is generally more prominent than another, yet they are interrelated and able to be present simultaneously. One sense is the contrast between the subject matter and the style. This is a basic one to rhetoric, which Quintilian expounds on at Inst. 8.pr.18-33; in Greek it is the contrast between logos and lexis (Arist. Rh. 3.1.2). Places where this contrast is prominent in Seneca are Ben. 7.8.2, Tranq. 1.13, Epp. 52.14, 75.7, 108.8 and 100.10. However, Seneca gives another twist to this contrast in making dialectical argumentation a matter of verba (e.g. Epp. 45.5, 83.27 and 87.40). Fundamentally, he argues at Ep. 88.32, wisdom deals with the subject matter, not words: res tradit, non verba, something that Cicero, Or. 51, takes as an established principle. However, Seneca makes use of another sense present in res to make this antithesis encompass another contrast, that between words and deeds. Sellars 2003, 20-21, notes this contrast in Greek authors, one between erga and logoi. In Seneca, however, as already noted (above, p. 4) the use of res is able to unite two ideas into one overarching demand for a practical Roman philosophy: the heart of philosophy, its subject matter, are deeds. This linkage is seen in the need to have both actio and contemplatio (above, p. 183), and it can also be related to the idea that one’s speech matches one’s life (Laudizi
The start of Ep. 20 brings this out clearly, as well as illustrating some of the other terms used to express the contrast. Seneca demands that Lucilius prove what he has learnt in his actions (§1) *verba rebus proba* (see *Epp.* 16.3, 26.5, 88.30 and *Ira* 3.10.4 for similar contrasts). He supports this demand by saying (§2), *facere docet philosophia, non dicere*; only occasionally are *facta* and *dicta* contrasted (e.g. *Vit.* 24.4); instead they are usually simply paired (e.g. *Ep.* 34.4). Finally he concludes that the greatest proof of wisdom is *ut verbis opera concordent* (§2); other uses of *opera* with *verba* are at *Epp.* 24.15 and 108.36. The contrast is also found in a number of fragments, F77 V (= F18 H) in Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 3.15.11-12 and F79 V (= F19 H) in Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 3.15.3; See MAZZOLI 1977, 33-34.

_Haec autem … audax:_ having stressed the need for daily practice to achieve such a style, Seneca now meets the possibility that Lucilius might be able to speak fast without any such effort. In that case, control is still needed, which he illustrates with the analogy of gait. This analogy is effective on two levels. Firstly it picks up the metaphor of speech as movement used here (*decurrere*) and earlier in the letter (above, §10 *cursum* n.). Then it also links back to Seneca’s opening demand that a philosopher’s speech should conform to the rest of his way of life and be composed (above, §2 *Hoc non probo … properat* n.). At *Ep.* 114.3 he makes clear that the state of one’s mind is revealed in one’s gait:

_Non vides, si animus elanguit, trahi membra et pigre moveri pedes? si ille effeminatus est, in ipso incessu apparere mollitiam? si ille acer est et ferox, concitari gradum? si furit aut, quod furori simile est, irascitur, turbatum esse corporis motum nec ire sed ferri?_

He goes on (§4) to note the congruence in Maecenas between gait and speech. An appropriate gait is one in keeping with decorum. Cicero, in his discussion of decorum, had discussed appropriate gait at *Off.* 1.131; it should be one that was neither too languid to appear effeminate, nor too hurried to risk becoming puffed. Cicero moves on after gait to discuss decorum in speech, and SETAIOLI 2000, 137, sees Seneca’s analogy here as influenced by the Ciceronian passage. The emphasis on moderation here provides a link to the theme of the previous letter (above, p. 335).

**decurrere:** literally meaning running downhill, reminding one of the analogy at §7, and therefore out of control. The Elder Seneca had said of Haterius, _Con._ 4._pr._7: _non currere sed decurrere videbatur_ (above, §10 _Hateri_ n.). See also Quint. _Inst._ 11.1.6. **temperanda:** the verb from which is derived _temperantia_, the virtue needed to control the passions (BORGIO, 170). **sapienti viro:** §12 above.

**incessus:** as with _decurrere_ this provides a link back to the image at §7; the wise man’s controlled
gait is in marked contrast to such running. Gait as a sign of one’s character is an idea found regularly in Roman literature. Besides Cic. Off. 1.131 and Sen. Ep. 114.3 noted earlier, there are Epp. 52.12, impudicum et incessus ostendit, and 114.22, ab illo [sc. animo] nobis est ... incessus, Nat. 7.31.2, tenero et molli ingressu suspendimus gradum, Petr 119, omnibus... scorta placent fractique enervi corpore gressus, Quint. Inst. 5.9.14, fractum incessum ... dixerit mollis et parum viri signa and Juv. 2.17, vultu morbum incessuque fatetur. pressa: (OLD §6b) frequently used of style, but Quintilian, Inst. 11.3.111, uses it of speed: alius locis citata, alius pressa conveniet pronuntiatio. Regarding conversational speech, Cicero, Off. 1.133, encourages his son to imitate those who speak presse ... et leniter.

Summa ergo ... iubeo: as at the close of the other long letter in Book IV, Ep. 30, Seneca closes with some humour. There is a comic or Plautine flavour to the instruction through the use of summa ... summarum, the compound adjective tardilocum and perhaps the choice of verb, iubeo. Seneca ends the letter on a lighter tone. As noted at the start, it is relatively unusual for Seneca to conclude a letter with a summary of what has been the letter’s main topic. The sentence’s first half (Summa ... erit) acknowledges that the letter has been quite a long one and could do with a summation. The second half is somewhat ironic in suggesting that all the preceding arguments can be boiled down into the four words of advice to speak slowly. Along with the emphasis that the neologism, tardilocum, gives to this advice, such a pithy condensation perhaps serves to provoke the reader to reflect on the many preceding arguments to see if they really can be so summarized. summa ... summarum: (OLD §7b) the phrase used in Pl. Truc. 25 suggests it had an accounting origin (SUMMERS 1910, 206). tardilocum: the term is not found in any earlier writer, although there are various other compounds with loquus or loquens. In the two sole later occurrences it is used more with the sense of being not concise (macrologic or long-winded) rather than slow in speech (tardiloquium, Donatus, Comm. Ter., 321, on Hecyra 741, and tardiloqua, Alcuin, Orthographia, 311). It is likely Seneca is being tongue-in-cheek with this compound adjective, as he appears self-conscious about the archaism of such expressions in a fragment of a later letter in which he criticized Cicero for using the Ennian terms suaviloquens and breviloquentia (Gell. 12.2.7, = REYNOLDS, 540).
Essay on Epistle 41

The gulf that separates Seneca’s philosophy from that of many of his commentators today is at its widest in this letter. Seneca reveals the deity resident in the human soul as a mystery and describes the person in whom this deity dwells as a figure of religious veneration. Yet it is this very letter that some commentators use to show Seneca’s disdain for religion. However, the imagery present here cannot be dismissed as rhetorical excess in the aid of protreptic, but clearly fits consistently with a Senecan conception of philosophy that to a modern mind can really only be described as religious.

Religion and philosophy seem at odds today, where religion often appears as blind faith, even fanaticism. The two might seem to have been at odds in Seneca’s day too. Seneca himself wrote a book attacking superstition, which survives only in a few quotes kept by Christian apologists. However, the Stoicism to which Seneca adhered aligned religion and philosophy in a remarkable way by syncretically relating the very core of philosophy, *ratio*, to their supreme god. And in Seneca’s writing, at least, this conjunction invites a religious response to our internal divinity.

This letter has received perhaps the most detailed scholarly attention of any of the letters of Book IV. It has two commentaries, as well as a detailed analysis of its colometry along with an interpretation of its structure by Hijmans. Hachmann, Hengelbrock and Maurach each devote much attention to this letter, which they see as the keystone to the sequence of letters in Book

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743 This is the *De Superstitione*, Sen. T64 and F65-F75 V (= F30-F44 H), whose remaining fragments are mainly from August. *De civ. D.* 6.10-11.

744 Above, p. 21.

745 MAURACH 1987, 88-93 and WAGENVOORT 1948, 113-117; MOTTO 1985, 64-67, is very brief.

746 HIJMANS 1976, 21-29 (the colometry of the text), 142-145 (analysis of its structure).
IV.  The image of the divinely aided person at §§4-5 in this letter has led to its mention in studies of Seneca’s conception of the sage, particularly the sage’s ‘Sakralisierung’.748

The protreptic quality of Book IV generally, the sense that Seneca at this new stage in his reader’s progress is outlining what lies ahead and seeking to enthuse the reader for the challenge of reaching the next goal, has already been remarked upon.749 This quality is especially prominent in Ep. 41, where Seneca introduces clearly for the first time the idea of the internal god present in each of us and tries to inspire Lucilius to make the cultivation of this god his first priority. In doing this, as Hengelbrock observes, Seneca does not attempt to explain the concepts he touches on in this letter; his aim is rather protreptic.750 And as will be argued here, an important part of this protreptic is the religious context Seneca develops.

Modern scholars do acknowledge that Stoic logos or ratio is not identical to modern rationality.751 Yet the effect of such an acknowledgement on their interpretation of ancient philosophy seems small. I will leave it to others to decide how appropriate such an approach is for the Greek sources, but for Seneca it results in a distortion of how he imagines ratio. Seneca is quoted to support arguments without regard for the particular meaning he gives to ratio. Nussbaum, for instance quotes the start of Ep. 41 as support for the Stoic rejection of conventional religion. She says of reason: ‘Reason is not just the most important thing about humans: it is also something that is fully their own, in their power to cultivate and control’.752 Certainly the letter starts with an attack on superstition, but the second half of what Nussbaum quotes offers an image of the mind’s divine element that does not correspond obviously with modern rationality (Ep. 41.2):


749  Above, p. 41.

750  Hengelbrock 2000, 162.


752  Nussbaum 1994, 325.
prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est. Ita dico, Lucili: sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos; hic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat.

Such an internal god seems unlike modern rationality, and even more it appears something too grand to be simply ‘in our power ... to control’ or ‘fully our own’, as Nussbaum would have it. Nussbaum and many other scholars seem to treat the making of ratio divine as merely elevating the dignity of human reasoning, yet that seems far from what Seneca is doing.753

Curiously, if one is to equate Senecan ratio with modern rationality, it is something we are commanded to love: *ama rationem* (Ep. 74.21). A similar affective relationship is enjoined with virtus, syncretically equivalent to ratio in Stoicism.754 In marked contrast to Epictetetus, who makes little use of aretē, Seneca uses virtus very frequently, twice as often, in fact, as ratio in the Epistles.755 As a term for one’s internal divine element virtus was very effective for a Roman audience; it was both a core Roman quality and also a goddess with cult at Rome. As has been argued earlier, the use of the term virtus changes the character of Senecan ratio more profoundly than the sense of virtus is changed by the equivalence with ratio.756 In the phrase *ire ad bonam mentem* at the start of Ep. 41 Seneca uses another term for the divine element in a human’s soul. Mens bona is particularly effective here as she too was a Roman goddess, and Seneca can contrast superstitious cult of her with proper observance.757 So not only does Seneca expect his audience to form an affective relationship with the mind’s divine element, but he also frequently refers to it with terms full of cultural resonances to a Roman audience, both of which should serve to warn the reader against reading back the modern sense of rationality into Senecan ratio.

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753 The dignity of reason is something that NUSBAUM 1994, 353, feels is very important (above, p. 23). The sense that modern scholars do not want to treat Seneca’s use of ratio on his terms comes through, for example with the frustration of some that Seneca does not give the sort of descriptions of ratio that they want (noted above, p. 23, n. 124).

754 For example at Ep. 71.5: *virtutem adamaveris*, and even more strikingly at Ep. 95.35: *Si volumus habere obligatos et malis quibus iam tenentur avellere, discant quid malum, quid bonum sit, sciant omnia praeter virtutem mutare nomen, modo mala fieri, modo bona. Quemadmodum primum militiae vinculum est religio et signorum amor et deserendi nefas, tunc deinde facile cetera exiguntur mandanturque iusturandum adactis, ita in iis quos velis ad beatam vitam perducere prima fundamenta iacienda sunt et insinuanda virtus. Huius quadam superstitione teneantur, hanc ament; cum hac vivere velint, sine hac nolint.* See further above, pp. 26 and 241.

755 316 and 156 times respectively using PHI 5.3; LONG 2002, 33, comments on Epictetus use of aretē.

756 Above, p. 10.

757 *Ep. 37.1 bonam mentem n.*
Much is written on the Stoic concept of the mind as a single entity with no divisions within it, in particular with no division between a rational and an irrational part. Yet in Ep. 41 Seneca has a dualism between us and the divine element in us. When a similar dualism occurs in Epictetus Long feels it is best taken as metaphor. However, in Seneca to do so would be to reduce the religious impact of this language. For Seneca at §2 this dualism serves to animate the divine, which becomes a sacer spiritus that sits intra nos. It is an observator and custos of our deeds, suggesting it both thinks for itself and may think differently from us. Finally, it treats us as we treat it; we have a relationship with it. All this serves to surround the divine element with a sense of religious awe and imbue it with a personality separate from ‘us’. Assuming Long is correct in his reading of Epictetus, the religious quality of Seneca’s philosophy marks an important contrast with his near contemporary recorded in Greek. Certainly Long seems ill at ease with Seneca’s language, wishing to bracket it off as rhetoric that obscures his point.

The antithesis in the letter’s opening sentence between optare and a te inpetrare echoes the exultant celebration of a Stoic wise man’s self-sufficiency that was emphasized in an earlier epistle in Book IV, Ep. 31: Quid votis opus est? fac te ipse felicem. Self-sufficiency was one of the gifts of philosophy that Seneca prized most highly. It was the quality of the wise man that made his happiness dependent on nothing external to him. However, it was also one that conflicted with other values. In particular, friendship was fundamental to Seneca’s concept of philosophy. The entire shape of the Epistles, one side of a correspondence between friends, illustrates this. There is a tension between Seneca on the one hand urging his friend to cultivate self-sufficiency and on the other hand reminding him how important friendship is to his philosophical progress. A pat resolution to this is to point out that self-sufficiency is a goal, something only fully possessed by the wise man, whereas friendship can be seen as a means to that goal. However, Seneca seems to prefer to keep the tension, to highlight it in letters that contrast the opposing demands of each quality. In Book IV he does this in Epp. 33-35. In the first of these, Ep. 33, he demands a self-sufficiency that treats no philosopher, particularly no previous one, as one’s superior. However, in contrast to this ideal, in the next two epistles Seneca emphasizes the mutual nature of

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758 LONG 2002, 166.
759 LONG 2002, 177, writes of Seneca’s religious language with barely concealed distaste.
progress, even exulting in Ep. 34 on the crucial importance he himself has had in Lucilius’ progress.\footnote{Above, p. 48.}

In contrast to self-sufficiency from human aid, Ep. 31 celebrates the wise man’s self-sufficiency from divine aid, and urges Lucilius not to depend on prayer for progress and finally to recognize his own mind as able to become divine. Ep. 41 starts in a similar vein, dismissing conventional prayer as irrelevant. However, in his description of the divine in the rest of the letter Seneca speaks positively of religious sensibilities.

The religious interpretation of Ep. 41 is reinforced by what follows after the point at which Nussbaum stops quoting it:

\begin{quote}
Bonus vero vir sine deo nemo est: an potest aliquis supra fortunam nisi ab illo adiutus exsurgere? Ille dat consilia magnifica et erecta. In unoquoque virorum bonorum
(quis deus incertum est) habitat deus.
\end{quote}

Firstly, Seneca leaves off reference to us and introduces the \textit{vir bonus}, who remains a point of focus for much of the letter. And he begins to talk of the divine element as a \textit{deus}, a term that Latin’s lack of a definite article makes ambiguous: it can be both a personal divinity, akin to a \textit{genius} or \textit{daimōn} as well as the Stoic god, also described as \textit{ratio} and \textit{natura} among other terms.\footnote{See above, p. 18, n. 99, and Ep. 41.1 \textit{deus} n.}

Secondly, Seneca’s language creates the impression that there are others who, unlike the \textit{vir bonus}, do not have such a \textit{deus}.\footnote{Similarly at Ep. 31.11 only the \textit{animus rectus, magnus, bonus} is a \textit{deus hospitans}.} One could reconcile this with Stoic philosophy and suggest that others have their rationality in such poor repair that it is as though it had deserted them, but that would be a form of decoding.\footnote{For an image fairly close to this, however, see Ep. 87.21 (quoted below, Ep. 41.2 \textit{hic prout … tractat} n.).} What, in particular, to make of Seneca’s quote from Virgil at the end of §2? It adds a sense of mystery to this god: what is its nature? We know the god is there but its identity is veiled.\footnote{It might be said that the mention of \textit{animus et ratio in animo perfecta} (§8) explains the identity of this god, thus removing the mystery, but Seneca does not make the connection explicit, and it might be seen rather that an element of mystery adheres to his concept of \textit{ratio}.} Is this how we feel about rationality? The reader, knowing Virgil, recognizes the passage as referring to the site of the future temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Aeneas’
visit to the site of future Rome, which serves to increase the god’s dignity. Yet the sense of mystery seems out of place with rationality and more akin to mysticism, more akin, in fact, to the Neoplatonic daimōn, evoking the image of some religious intuition on the fringes of our consciousness.  

If one puts aside the preconception of many modern scholars that it is rationality being described, one finds imagery of an internal divinity that must be cultivated. Such imagery is found elsewhere in Seneca and will be returned to. Besides describing this divinity in terms grander and more powerful than mere rationality in the modern sense, it is something, perhaps, that Seneca expects us to come to know, cognoscere, not acquire knowledge about, scire. That is not to deny an element of rationality to it: it provides consilia magnifica et erecta (§4). Yet it is the power the divine gives that Seneca seems more interested in. This power allows the vir bonus to rise superior to fortune. Further on, such a characterization is reinforced; at §5 it is a vis divina and a caelestis potentia. It seems that Seneca saw in the divine content of our mind not something that clarified one’s reason, made it homologos, but something that strengthened the will, gave it constantia.

Seneca continues the letter, taking his lead, it appears, from the suggestion of primitive religious awe in the presence of a numinous location contained in the Virgil quote. Seneca comments in a carefully structured passage that the numinous quality of places such as groves, caves, the source of rivers, hot springs and deep pools inspires religious awe and religious rites (§3). The description of such places was a not uncommon in contemporary literature, and

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765 Dowden 1982 comments usefully on the duality that talk of a daimōn creates: is it internal nous or external daimōn?

766 Below, p. 417.

767 Such a sense can be related to Seneca’s demand for actio to complement contemplatio; progress is something experiential (above, p. 183).

768 Such counsels, of course, should not be confused with syllogisms, above, p. 25.

769 Above, p. 22.

770 Coleman 1974, 280, sees such a link.

771 Bernert 1961, 117 n. 8, sees this as appealing to Roman religious sensibility rather than Hellenistic ones. For the careful structuring of the passage, see Cancik and Cancik-Lindemaier 1991, 217, n. 70.
Armisen-Marchetti has listed parallels in both poetry and prose. Though the description of natural locations is common, the use that Seneca puts them to here, is far less so; he manages to convey a sense of genuine religious feeling. What is perhaps most striking is that in contrast to his criticism of prayer at the start of the letter, Seneca portrays the behaviour these places evokes as natural. Particularly in the two first and fullest descriptions it is the sites themselves that are the grammatical subjects and they force their numinosity on to the viewer’s senses: *fidem tibi numinis faciet* and *animum tuum quadam religionis suspicione percutiet*. Yet in these and in the other examples in §3, we are not given the precise nature of the divinity, but rather Seneca maintains the sense of awe and mystery heralded by the Virgil quote. Furthermore, the awareness of divinity in these locations is not one mediated by any modern sense of rationality. It comes directly through the senses, in modern terms an intuition from the emotional brain. It contrasts with the more rational recognition of the divinity of nature, for instance, in Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum* 2.95.

It is significant, of course, that it should be in nature that the divine is recognized as, for Stoics, living in accordance with nature was a human’s proper aim. Seneca, then, is providing an argument from nature that we have a natural instinct for recognizing the divine. And its naturalness vouchsafes its trustworthiness. However, Seneca does not stop at recognizing the divine. He continues through his choice of verbs, *veneramur, aras habet, coluntur* and *sacravit*, to indicate our response to it, one of worship. Both the unbroken flow of the passage and the impersonal nature of the verbs suggest that such a response too is natural and proper.

Having made the claim that we have a natural religious instinct, Seneca moves the argument in an unexpected direction. One might think he would argue that such an instinct will recognize the divine in us, but instead he puts the image of a virtuous person before the reader

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772 Armisen-Marchetti 1990, 92.

773 The parallels that Armisen-Marchetti finds are given in the commentary (§3 ff.); however, as is noted there, what is distinctive is the very different mood that Seneca evokes in most of these.

774 Mazzoli 1984, 975-976.

775 Seneca saw the study of nature as having a restorative effect, one that lifted one out of the terrestrial realm into the divine (*Ep. 65.16*): *corpus hoc animi pondus ac poena est; premente illo urgetur, in vinculis est, nisi accessit philosophia et illum respirare rerum naturae spectaculo iussit et a terrenis ad divina dimisit*. See also *Nat. 1.pr.1*–3 and above, p. 24.
and argues first that one would venerate such a person, and then that the reader would draw the conclusion that such a person must have the help of a *vis divina*, a *caelestis potentia* and the *adminiculum numinis* (§5). Such a move has the effect of evoking the majesty of the end goal of philosophical progress rather than describing the more vitiated manifestation of the divine in the rest of humanity. However, beyond this it adds the detail that this idealized person is worthy of, even demands, a religious response. In a later letter Seneca describes himself as making such a response to past philosophers (*Ep.* 64.9):

*Multum egerunt qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non peregerunt. Suscippiendi tamen sunt et ritu deorum colendi. Quidni ego magnorum virorum et imagines habeam incitamenta animi et natales celebrem?*

He goes on to say that he venerates in such a way both of the Catos, Laelius, Socrates, Plato, Zeno and Cleanthes.\(^776\)

The veneration of past figures contrasts with portraying them as one’s equals, even one’s friends, as he does in other places.\(^777\) It also offers a contrast to the promise that Lucilius will rise equal to a god at *Ep.* 31.9. The actions of named past philosophers Seneca often describes for their exemplary value. However, he also, as here in *Ep.* 41, uses the figure of the perfected human, who seems to serve a different purpose. Seneca seems to want to evoke in the reader a sense of religious awe for the wise man.\(^778\) The most striking example of this is at *Ep.* 115.3-5. There Seneca describes in detail the reaction that would happen to viewing into the soul of a *vir bonus*. He suggests that such a sight would occasion worship (§4): *nonne velut numinis occursu obstupefactus resistat et ut fas sit vidisse tacitus precetur, tum evocante ipsa vultus benignitate productus adoret ac supplicet*. He goes on to increase the majesty of the passage by suggesting one would be moved to utter in prayer words directed to Venus in Virgil’s national epic (*Aen.* 1.327 ff.).\(^779\) This is what Cancik and Cancik-Lindemaier describe as Seneca’s sacralization of the wise man’s function.\(^780\)

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\(^776\) Above, p. 188.

\(^777\) These figures are described as patrons, but ones that you could be most intimate with, e.g. *Brev.* 14.5 (above, p. 186).

\(^778\) This is what LONG 2000, 177, dislikes.

\(^779\) Another example of the ideal sage is at *Ep.* 120.10, where by contrast the tone is far more subdued (INWOOD 2007a, 327).

\(^780\) CANCIK and CANCIK-LINDEMAIER 1991, 214-216.
The descriptions Seneca gives at *Epp.* 41.4 and 115.3-5 of the reaction to viewing a divinely aided person raise the question of where one is expected to see such a person. It seems that for Seneca this person was someone that one accessed through literature. There is an implication in both these scenes that such a vision would not be possible in real life. In real life, as Seneca offers it, the vision we are given is of Seneca as someone comically far from this ideal. This is especially so in the first letter of Book VI (*Ep.* 53) in a position that perhaps invites contrast with *Ep.* 41.781

Unlike the figure at *Ep.* 41.4 that is calm in the midst of storms (*in mediis tempestatibus placidum*), Seneca describes himself as being unmanned by seasickness in a storm off Puteoli. He is anything but calm, insisting upon being put ashore despite the danger to the ship and crew, and he describes himself in his eagerness to make land as scrabbling ashore over rocks in an undignified way (§§3-4). Seneca manages to find something educational in this unedifying event, going on to describe how ailments of the soul differ from those of the body: the more serious they are, the less we perceive them (§7): *Contra evenit in his morbis quibus adficiuntur animi: quo quis peius se habet, minus sentit.* Against such diseases Seneca evokes philosophy personified as a goddess that one should devote oneself to, even worship.782 Doing this will put one a great distance away from other mortals and not far behind the gods (§11). He then describes how the *sapiens* actually surpasses the gods by achieving through his own efforts the state the gods possess by nature. The final image is of philosophy, personified again, effortlessly brushing off the attacks of fortune (§12):

*Incredibilis philosophiae vis est ad omnem fortuitam vim retundendam.*

*Nullum telum in corpore eius sedet; munita est, solida; quaedam defètigat et velut levia tela laxo sinu eludit, quaedam discutit et in eum usque qui miserat respuit.*

The letter changes in tone in the two halves; there is comic abasement in the first half and heroic exaltation in the second. The letter’s progress is artistic, rather than logical.783 Indeed, its progression is religious in the salvational function given to philosophy. However, it is significant that the letter moves from the real events as described by Seneca to an imagined world occupied by philosophy and the *sapiens*. And this is the world in which a similarly idealized figure moves in

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781 Above, p. 53.


783 Motto and Clark 1971, 223.
Epp. 41.4 and 115.3-5. It is as if that is the only place for Seneca that the realization of the end goal of philosophy can be found.\textsuperscript{784}

Seneca next draws an analogy between the rays of the sun and the \textit{animus magnus ac sacer} (§5). Both remain linked to their source despite being sent down from it. In this model the Stoic god, though infused throughout the world, has its source in the heavens. Slightly earlier the dualism of the start of the letter, that between ‘us’ and the divine, had shifted slightly to be between the divine force and the soul, the \textit{caelestis potentia} as distinct from the \textit{animus} (§5). Now there is another shift; the ‘us’ returns, but the \textit{animus} takes the place of the \textit{deus}. This singular of \textit{animus} has a striking effect; there is one \textit{animus}, but a plurality of us. Even though we can make sense of this by seeing the \textit{animus} as a unity, as Stoic ratio infused throughout the world, it is significant that the divine content in each of us remains singular entity and remains to some degree separate.

Seneca then asks what is this soul, that is to say the soul that is both great and of divine origin (\textit{magnus ac sacer}), or in other words what makes this soul \textit{magnus} and \textit{sacer} (§6). It is, of course, self-sufficiency, depending on no good but one’s own. It is the mark of a fool to depend on externals, which he then goes on to prove with two examples drawn from nature. The training to wear a gilded mane weakens a lion’s true nature and in the arena such a lion would not be favoured over a wild one (§6). Likewise a vine to which golden fruit and leaves have been attached lacks what is a vine’s true excellence, fertility, and would not be preferred to a vine that possessed it (§7). Both these examples criticize what was presumably done on occasions in contemporary Rome. The contrast is explicit here, but it continues one implicit in the earlier description of a naturally occurring cave, one \textit{non manu factus}, as artificial ones were often a feature of gardens of that time.\textsuperscript{785}

These two examples set the scene for the close of the letter, where Seneca sets out what is the particular excellence of humans. The contrast between what is external and innate continues. Wealth, therefore, is rejected as external.\textsuperscript{786} Rather it is \textit{animus et ratio in animo perfecta} (§8). This is

\textsuperscript{784} Not too different are the exemplary philosophers from the past, who also exist through literature (above, p. 187).

\textsuperscript{785} ARMISEN-MARCHETTI 1990, 92; Seneca describes some in Vatia’s villa, \textit{Ep.} 55.6.

\textsuperscript{786} At \textit{Ep.} 31.10 it was rejected as not being a quality of god.
the first use of *ratio* in this letter, although *animus* has been prominent. It is left, however, for the reader to equate this *ratio* with the divine element of the soul discussed in the first half of the letter. Such an equation is perfectly reasonable. However, it appears tempting for some to quote this passage in isolation from the rest of the letter and to treat the reference to *ratio* as essentially synonymous to our reason.\(^{787}\) Yet as this letter shows, and as other parts of the collection confirm, for Seneca the divine nature of *ratio* gives it a character that would be deformed if expressed as simply our modern sense of rationality. Note too that here, as in the rest of the letter, Seneca maintains a dualism, although it is shifted from us and the *animus: ratio* is something in the *animus*, something seemingly separable.

Seneca then ends the letter by describing what our *ratio* demands of us (§9), to live in accordance with nature, which is of course the fundamental tenet of Stoicism. This allows him to make explicit a contrast that had been present in the last half of the letter, one between what is natural and what vitiated human society has created. He presents this as a paradox by noting that living in accordance with nature is something very easy (*rem facillimam*), but humanity’s general madness makes it difficult (*difficilem*).

The paradoxical difficulty of living in accordance with nature is what justifies the rhetorical mode of Seneca’s philosophy.\(^{788}\) He seeks to persuade the reader of what is natural and this requires forceful language to break through the reader’s habituated error. However, one could go further and see in Seneca’s imagery a mythology. This mythology adds to the persuasive appeal of Seneca’s message, as it gives a religious context for the drama of philosophical progress as Seneca describes it.

The principal image of Seneca’s mythologized philosophy is life as a choice between two deities, *fortuna* and *natura*. Most of humanity are the slaves of *fortuna*; through the false values they hold they are vulnerable to her attacks and beseech her favour. However, a small group of humanity, students of philosophy, reject her rule, they are soldiers against her, they resist her.\(^{789}\) Syncretically linked to *ratio* and *deus* and in accordance with whom a Stoic seeks to live, *natura* is

\(^{787}\) E.g. Nussbaum 1994, 325.

\(^{788}\) This is what Hadot 1995, 21, sees rhetoric being used for, though, as noted (Ep. 39.2 Concupisces et ... esse n.), it is a use of rhetoric that troubles some modern students of philosophy, such as Cooper 2006.

\(^{789}\) Above, p. 12.
clearly the opposite pole to fortuna. Seneca, however, more frequently invokes philosophia as a goddess whom the philosopher will serve (e.g. Ep. 8.7). At the start of the collection she enrols the reader into her city or, perhaps more appropriately as a soldier against fortuna, her army (Ep. 4.2): cum ... te in viros philosophia transscripserit.\textsuperscript{790} In Ep. 52 she should be worshipped (§13) and has need of a priest (§15). In the next epistle she is described as protected against all missiles, a protection one feels extends also to her followers.\textsuperscript{791} The antithesized values of fortuna and natura in Seneca have not gone unnoticed. Armisen-Marchetti, for example, has described them well. She sets out the contrasting worlds of foolishness and wisdom; their exterior forms are respectively fortuna and natura, and in the interior world of the soul they are the passions and virtus.\textsuperscript{792} The guide between these worlds is philosophia.\textsuperscript{793}

As Armisen-Marchetti observes, there was a literary tradition of personification.\textsuperscript{794} However, it is more subjective to ask how seriously the reader was supposed to take such personification in Seneca. As already mentioned, most modern students of philosophy seem to prefer to treat it as no more than figurative language, a way of elevating the dignity of the concepts personified. To suggest that personifications form part of a consistent appeal to the reader’s religious sensibilities is likely to be criticized for ‘obscuring the dignity of reason’ as Nussbaum puts it.\textsuperscript{795} Certainly ancient philosophers, as mentioned at the start, were frequently critical of what they called superstition, none more so than Seneca himself. However, their criticism of much religious practice is no longer generalized as evidence for the lack of genuine piety amongst literate Romans. In some genres of literature, religious appeals are no longer so

\textsuperscript{790} Of course citizenship and military service were closely linked in the ancient world.
\textsuperscript{791} Ep. 53.12, quoted above, p. 413.
\textsuperscript{792} At Ep. 41.2, the phrase supra fortunam ... exsurgere suggests that each of these deities dwells in separate realms. Fortuna’s is terrestrial, while philosophia’s is celestial, a division that can also be related to the ‘view from above’ (Ep. 41.4 Si hominem ... eius? n.). Another perspective on this contrast is in the De Vita Beata, where Seneca talks of a divine kingdom (Vit. 15.7) and the kingdom of fortune (fortunae regnum, Vit. 25.6; cf. ASMIS 2009, 116-122). Fortuna and natura are actually syncretically the same in the Stoic system (above, p. 18, n. 99), but they represent a different perspective on the same phenomenon. It may seem a contradiction, therefore, to follow natura, or fatum, but to resist fortuna. However, it can be reconciled if one sees the resistance to fortuna as more precisely to the world view she represents.
\textsuperscript{793} ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 258-260.
\textsuperscript{794} ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, 255-258.
\textsuperscript{795} NUSSBAUM 1994, 353.
readily dismissed as mere literary embellishment.\textsuperscript{796} It is not such a stretch, therefore, to treat such appeals in Seneca’s prose works with more regard. It is rather, perhaps, the prevailing way of reading philosophy, particularly in the English-speaking world, that resists, or perhaps more accurately ignores, such a reading. By contrast, most scholarship that acknowledges the religious dimension of Seneca’s philosophy is continental, and Grimal, for instance, can describe Seneca as a Stoic mystic and a profoundly religious philosopher.\textsuperscript{797}

The preceding sections have argued that for Seneca ratio is something to some degree separate from us and something we are encouraged to have a religious response to. Such a view is further supported by the way Seneca develops this perspective with agricultural imagery. The verb colere has a range of meanings not matched by any one English equivalent. The two important meanings for our purpose, to cultivate and to worship, are linked.\textsuperscript{798} There is a relationship between a farmer and his crop that matches that of a worshipper and a god. In that relationship the human tries to create the conditions for the other partner to do as he wants, which is the sense of colere, but ultimately the response of the god or the growth of the crop are self-powered.

The c\textit{ultor} must cooperate with the other power to gain the desired result. Seneca seems to have seen our relationship with our internal divine element as that of a c\textit{ultor}, particularly in the phrase \textit{virtutem colere}.\textsuperscript{799} This element is not ‘in our power ... to control’ in any simple sense,\textsuperscript{800} rather we are free to form a proper relationship with it. Seneca uses an agricultural analogy for this at \textit{Ep. 73.16}: \textit{Semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quae si bonus cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt et paria iis ex quibus orta sunt surgunt}. Efforts to direct ratio or \textit{natura} as we would wish will bring an unproductive outcome. After all, Stoics taught that nature was to be followed, not bent to one’s will. We must rather seek to conform ourselves to the divine. This is how Seneca

\textsuperscript{796} FEENEY 1998 is a convenient source for this change in modern criticism.
\textsuperscript{798} In Book IV the verb is used at \textit{Epp. 35.1 (excolere te)} and 36.3 (\textit{virtutem colere}).
\textsuperscript{799} \textit{Ep. 36.3 colere virtutem} n. See also \textit{Ep. 115.5} where we are encouraged to cultivate the image of the sage’s soul, and \textit{Ep. 53.11}, where the reader is instructed to worship philosophy (\textit{hanc cole}).
\textsuperscript{800} Above, p. 406, n. 752.
understands Stoic *homologia*. The passage promises a good outcome if we cultivate the divine well, but what the divine seeds grow into is already set by nature.

The analogy of the seed suggests that philosophical progress is about allowing the divine to grow organically within one. This image contrasts with Seneca’s frequent portrayal of progress as strenuous self-effort. As is frequent with Seneca, the two images are not reconciled. However, they might be if one imagined that the strenuous effort is analogous to all the toil of the ancient farmer, and is required for creating the appropriate growing conditions for *virtus*. Such effort, as has been already suggested, is not predominantly one of reason but rather of will, the will to break free of false values as well as conforming one’s will to divine reason.

The idea that progress is a matter of conforming oneself to the divine that is suggested by the metaphor of cultivation is not used directly in Ep. 41. However, it can be seen to inform the profusion of natural imagery with which the letter abounds. The philosopher seeks to follow nature, to conform himself to the model that nature has provided. Seneca gives substance to this idea by drawing repeatedly from nature for his imagery and analogies: groves, caves, rivers, hot springs, sun rays, lions and grapevines make up at least half of the letter and give it a vitality that can be felt by the reader even today.

The final letter of Book IV ties together many thematic strands of the book, as has been set out earlier. It also attempts to enthuse the reader with a sense of what lies ahead in his philosophical progress. And what this essay has tried to stress is the religious context that Seneca develops for this progress. The divine exists in an internal relationship with humans. As such it is no mere tool of our intellect, but acts according to its own nature. Therefore, for Seneca philosophical progress is a matter of creating a good relationship with one’s divine nature. And to do this he encouraged the reader to draw on his religious imagination.

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801 Above, p. 24.
802 Above, p. 408.
803 Above, p. 223.
804 Above, p. 24.
805 Above, p. 40.
Finally, it should be stressed that in contrast to a popular perception of religion today, Seneca, as he takes pains to point out on many occasions, does not have a dogma he must rigidly defend, nor is he the slave to past philosophers and their texts.\textsuperscript{806} Rather he sees himself as in relationship with them. As von Albrecht suggests, he sees himself as the descendent of a philosophical \textit{familia}, one rich in \textit{exempla}, but one that he continues to enrich.\textsuperscript{807} It is a mark, perhaps, of how little serious regard most modern scholars have for Seneca’s profession of independence that his characterization of \textit{ratio} should go unnoticed. The points at which he appears to differ from other Stoics are explained away as rhetorical excess. Yet if proper weight is given to these passages Seneca displays a religious approach to philosophy that marks a significant contrast with his contemporary Epictetus.

\textsuperscript{806} \textit{Ep.} 33.11 n.

\textsuperscript{807} \textsc{Albrecht} 2004, 66–67.
Commentary on Epistle 41

Division:
- A (§§1-5): God is inside us.
- B (§§6-9): This divine element is what is truly ours and what is essentially human.

Section A (§§1-5). The letter follows a clear, though not always expected, progression through the first four sections to culminate in the revelation of a virtuous man’s relation to a divine power in §5, the letter’s centre.

§1. Facis rem optimam et tibi salutarem si, ut scribis, perseveras ire ad bonam mentem, quam stultum est optare cum possis a te inpetrare. Non sunt ad caelum elevandae manus nec exorandus aedituus ut nos ad aurem simulacri, quasi magis exaudiri possimus, admittat: prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est.

§1. Seneca begins this letter, as many in Book IV, with mention of Lucilius’ progress. Using the metaphor of a journey he assures his friend of the benefits of persevering in travelling towards bona mens. This journey takes an inward turn when he contrasts the foolishness of those who seek the divine outwardly, since god is within us.

Facis rem ... mentem: Seneca opens the last letter of the book with a congratulatory response to Lucilius’ report of his progress (ut scribis). Progress is an important theme in this book and it features at the start of many of the letters (above, p. 38), so it is appropriate that this letter provide a capstone to the theme, picking it up here and continuing by offering a vision of what lies ahead if Lucilius perseveres. Such perseverance (perseveras) was emphasized as important to progress in earlier letters (Epp. 34.4 and 36.3). The need for it is picked up at the end of this letter, when the reason for it is given (§9 Sed hanc ... trudimus n.). Seneca makes use of a regular metaphor for progress by describing it as a journey (ire), see above, Ep. 31.1 Sequere illum ... ibas n. Seneca is forthright here about how Lucilius benefits from his progress. It is a thing that is both excellent
(optimam) and wholesome to him (tibi salutarem). This contrasts with earlier references to progress, particularly at Epp. 34.1 and 35.2 where it is its benefit to Seneca himself that is emphasized. The goal of this progress is described as bona mens, something Seneca had said his friend had bound himself to at Ep. 37.1. Its mention here recalls that letter and the serious commitment being a philosopher involved. The term was also the name of a goddess (above, Ep. 37.1 n.) and this religious sense is immediately developed in the sentence’s continuation.

**salutarem:** this word is echoed at the close of the letter by salutem (§9 n.), creating a ring composition. Hijmans 1976, 144, describes such a structure in some detail, without noting this link.

**ire:** this verb denotes purposeful movement, in contrast to being carried along (above, Ep. 37.5 ferri n.) or wandering (errare, Ep. 45.1). **bonam mentem:** Ep. 37.1 n.

**quam stultum ... inpetrare:** with this comment Seneca recalls the contrast between popular prayer and philosophical self-sufficiency that had been prominent in Epp. 31 and 32, particularly at Ep. 31.5: quid votis opus est? fac te ipse felicem. As in that earlier statement Seneca addresses this comment to Lucilius directly: a healthy mind is something he can demand from himself (a te). The comment also recalls Ep. 27.8 where he says that a healthy mind cannot be bought or sold. As already noted, mention of prayer supports seeing an allusion to mens bona as a divinity earlier: progress is seen as travelling towards this goddess but, as Seneca will make clear, such travel is not outward towards any temple or statue, but inward. **stultum:** Ep. 30.10 n. This term is a marker of unphilosophical, or popular, values. As such, it underlines the antithesis that Seneca is describing here between a philosophical understanding of the divine and a popular one. The word occurs again, along with its synonym demens at §6. **a te:** as at Ep. 31.5 self-sufficiency is shown by the use of the reflexive.

**Non sunt ... admittat:** Seneca ridicules the popular understanding of appealing to the divine. He presents two ways to do this. The first is to lift one’s hands to heaven, where the gods were thought to dwell, and the other is to ask access to the inner sanctuary of a temple to speak into the ear of the god’s statue. This criticism of how one prays picks up earlier criticisms of what is prayed for in Epp. 31 and 32 (see above, Ep. 31.2 Surdum ... precantur n.). He is more generally critical of public religious ritual in his fragmentary De Superstitione, which Augustine, De civ. D. 6.10 (Sen. F69.2 V (=F36 H)), quotes. In particular in these fragments he describes those asking the gods for help in court: sunt qui ad vadimonia sua deos advocent, sunt qui libellos offerant et illos causam suam doceant. **ad caelum:** raising hands to heaven as an element of prayer is present also at Ben.
4.4.2, *Nat.* 3.pr.14 and *Oed.* 790. *aedituus*: the temple keeper controlled access to the inner part of the temple and would therefore have to be begged to allow such access. *ad aurem simulacri*: the desire to get close to the ear recalls Seneca’s criticism of people whispering shameful prayers to gods at *Ep.* 10.5.

*prope est … est*: Seneca reverses the distance that is popularly thought to exist between the divine and man. In three stages he brings god closer and closer; first close (*prope … a te*), then accompanying (*tecum*) and finally within (*intus*) Lucilius. In this way he gradually subverts the metaphor of a journey that he began with. A physical journey is not possible but rather, in his words, Seneca makes one for the reader, bringing him to this god in stages. It is a journey inwards. Mention of this god recalls the description of the *animus ... rectus, bonus, magnus* as a *deus in corpore humano hospitans* at *Ep.* 31.11. In that letter it is a special sort of mind that is a god; here Seneca suggests that such a mind is present in Lucilius and the reader too, though as the letter progresses his attention shifts to depicting the divine in a more idealized individual, someone who has made more progress (above, p. 412). *deus*: the lack of a definite article makes it ambiguous whether Seneca is talking of an individual god, like the Greek *daimōn*, or the Stoic universal god (above, p. 409). What follows in the next sentence favours an individual one. For the relation of this god to the wider Stoic system and to Roman concepts of god, see §2 *custos* n.

§2. *Ita dico, Lucili*: sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos; hic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat. Bonus vero vir sine deo nemo est: an potest aliquis supra fortunam nisi ab illo adiutus exsurgere? Ille dat consilia magnifica et erecta. In unoquoque virorum bonorum (quis deus incertum est) habitat deus.

§2. Seneca continues by expanding on the nature of the divine within us. This internal god is a singular while the people it interacts with, we, are a plural. In this section Seneca builds on his concept of the internal *custos* that had been present last in *Ep.* 32. He makes a sudden switch from discussing us to describing the internal god of the *vir bonus*. There is an emphasis on power and nobility in this section, rather than rationality, and this emphasis is particularly prominent in the Virgilian quote. The drawing together of themes from previous letters is continued with mention of *fortuna* (*Ep.* 36) and *consilia* (*Ep.* 38).

*Ita dico ... sedet*: Seneca places great emphasis on this point with both an *ita dico* and a vocative address to his friend. There is also marked alliteration of the key words. The perspective
is broadened, however, by using *nos* rather than the earlier *te*. In *Ep.* 31.11 this indwelling divinity had been the *anima*; here the use of *spiritus* has an important emphasis on power (below, *spiritus* n.), one that is picked up at §5, when he talks of a *vis ... divina* and a *caelestis potentia*. *Ita dico:* *Summers* 1910, l, notes that this preparatory phrase has a colloquial tone. *Lucili:* for the frequent occurrence of vocative addresses to Lucilius in the final letters of books, see above, p. 40, n. 222. *sacer:* (*OLD* §6b, *ArmiSen-Marchetti* 1990, 89-93) placed emphatically first, this word combines both the sense of divine origin and the proper religious response it should evoke. It occurs again at §5. *intra:* the preposition picks up *intus* of the previous sentence. *Traina* 1987, 22 and 73-76, gives great attention to Seneca’s use of this preposition. As he notes, the usage is not Ciceronian (cf. *Cic. Tusc.* 1.74), but has the advantage over *in* of being more precise and of providing a clear antithesis to *extra*. *spiritus:* (*OLD* §4b) *Parker* 1906 gives a good discussion of Seneca’s choice of this word here. He asks the question why Seneca chose the word over *anima*, and suggests that it has two associations appropriate to his argument in this letter. Unlike the associations that spirit has for modern readers, for Romans it had strong associations with energy. This is seen in its use in the *Natural Questions*; for example at *Nat.* 6.21, where in asserting that *spiritus* causes earthquakes he says, *nihil in rerum natura potentius, nihil acris*. Seneca is particularly concerned in this letter to emphasize the power that the divinity provides us, exemplified by the *vir bonus* in the next sentence and the virtuous man at §4 (above, p. 410). The other sense that is particularly apt to Seneca’s purpose is the idea that *spiritus* is perceived frequently as a self-caused energy (*Parker* 1906, 155), which fits with Seneca’s emphasis on self-sufficiency in this letter (above, p. 408). This usage, a fairly rare one in the *Epistles*, is suggestive of the technical sense of *spiritus*, equivalent to *pneuma* in Greek (above, p. 18). Two significant examples of it are at *Ep.* 50.6 on the mind (*quid enim est aliud animus quam quodam modo se habens spiritus?*) and *Ep.* 66.12 on *ratio* (*ratio autem nihil aliud est quam in corpus humanum pars divini spiritus mersa*). See also below, §6 *spiritus* n. *malorum bonorumque ... custos:* Seneca provides more detail about this holy breath. It is a guardian and an observer of our actions, good and bad. Such a figure is very similar to the historical *exempla* Seneca had advised Lucilius to imagine watching his actions in earlier letters (*Epp.* 11.8-10 and 25.5-6). Rather than being asked to imagine an internal guardian, whether Seneca, as in *Ep.* 32.1, or an *exemplum* from the past, the reader is now told that such a guardian does actually indwell him and is divine. This can be seen as a progress, as *Maurach* 1975, 353, n. 58, says, but as suggested earlier (above, p. 164), this new view of the guardian need not
supersedes, but can rather complement the earlier ones. Scarpat 1975, 255, for instance, suggests that the exempla put a human appearance on this sacer spiritus. Mention of an observer might remind the reader of the importance of self-reflection as emphasized in the previous letter (above, p. 367). custos: the impression that Seneca gives here is strongly that this guardian is a personal one, which is an idea found in other Stoics, who talk of daimones concerned with human affairs, cf. D.L. 7.151 (= SVF 2.1102) and Algra 2003, 171, n. 50. Seneca elsewhere talks of such spirits at Ep. 90.28: Quid sint di qualesque declarat, quid inferi, quid lares et genii, quid in secundam numinum formam animae perpetitae. It is the lares and genii that correspond to these daimones (Setaioli 2007, 358), and at Ep. 110.1 he suggests that the traditional Roman belief that everyone had a personal genius, or iuno if female, was Stoic. However, while the impression of a personal divinity is prominent here, the passage is not inconsistent with the idea that this internal god is in fact the divine breath present in everyone (above, p. 18), and as such much less individual. Seneca, however, as is fairly characteristic, allows both of these possibilities to coexist. This custos can also be seen as the conscience (Mazzoli 1984, 970-971 and Scarpat Bellincioni 1986, 25-26), although this is debated by Molenaar 1969, 179-180, who holds that the custos and conscientia are separate concepts for Seneca. Hijmans 1970, 190-191, however, points out weaknesses in Molenaar’s position. observator: in describing the practice of a nightly examination of one’s conscience (Ira 3.36), Seneca talks of a speculator sui censorque secretus, without, however, any mention of a divine aspect to this.

hic prout ... tractat: the internal divinity treats us as we treat it. Such an idea accords completely with the notion of reciprocity in ancient thought. The obligation of reciprocating favours was fundamental to Roman society, and to their religious thought too; sacrifices are a form of gift-giving integral to one’s relationship with the gods (Dowden 1992, 3). The idea is also present in the image of the treatment of divine seeds in Ep. 73.16. Properly cultivated these seeds grow to be equal with their source; poorly treated they produce noxious weeds (purgamenta). How the internal divinity might be appropriately treated is suggested at Ep. 65.15-16, where Seneca suggests that examining oneself and the world lightens the soul and helps it to return to its divine source. In a similar way at Ep. 88.35 he suggests that the soul needs a lot of room for the study of virtue, and the superfluous must be discarded to make room for it: haec tam multa, tam magna ut habere possint liberum hospitium, supervacua ex animo tollenda sunt. Non dabit se in has angustias virtus; laxum spatium res magna desiderat. Finally, at Ep. 87.21, he suggests that only a pure and sanctified
soul has room for this god: *Quis sit summi boni locus quaeris? animus. Hic nisi purus ac sanctus est, deum non capit.*

**Bonus vero ... est:** Seneca reverts to talking of a god after describing the divine breath. He also switches from talking about us to describing the good man. He is emphatic (*vero*) in saying that no good man is without god. The litotes, even given the previous discussion of the internal god, leaves open what the relation between this god and the good man is. It makes for a more impressionistic image. In addition it implies that some of us are without god (above, p. 409).

**Bonus ... vir:** this is what Lucilius is seeking to become (*Ep. 37.1*); the term is used again a sentence later and it is significant that Seneca uses it as a term for the end goal of philosophy in this letter while avoiding the alternative, *sapiens*, a choice overlooked by most scholars of the letters. There are a number of possible reasons for this choice. Firstly, it is specifically the *vir bonus* that Lucilius was encouraged to imagine as his internal observer at *Epp. 11.8* and 25.5. The term offers a way of recalling without comment the contrasting ways of understanding this internal figure. Secondly, as the *vir bonus* refers back to *virtus*, rather than *sapientia* (*Ep. 37.1 virum bonum n.*), it is a more appropriate term, given the emphasis Seneca places on power in this letter (above, p. 410). The term is prominent in the next letter, which opens with the surprised query whether Lucilius has been convinced by a friend’s claim to be a *vir bonus* (*Ep. 42.1*). *Veyne 2003, 68,* appears to take Seneca’s reaction to this claim to mean that the *vir bonus* is a second tier to the *sapiens*. However, it seems better to assume there are two tiers to the perfected philosopher, whether called *vir bonus* or *sapiens*, particularly as here in *Ep. 41* the idealized *vir bonus* seems to be of the first tier.

**nemo:** *Ep. 39.2 neminem n.*

**an potest ... exsurgere?:** Seneca supports his argument that every good man has an internal god with a rhetorical question. This question reveals what he saw as the characteristic activity of the good man, conflict with fortune (above, p. 12). Previous mentions of fortune in this book had emphasized her circumscribed field of control (*Epp. 36.5* and 39.3), and the vulnerability of humans to her through not planning (*Ep. 37.5*). Seneca integrates the role of the internal god into both of these ideas in this sentence and the next. The god offers advice, the sort, at the very least, which would avoid blundering into fortune’s power. And it is only with the aid of this god that one can avoid doing so. Indeed, one goes beyond just avoiding fortune, one rises above her; her realm is now located somewhere lower; it is terrestrial as opposed to heavenly (above, p. 416, n. 792).

**aliquis:** as the implied answer is negative, *quisquam* might be expected (*Wagenvoort 1948, 1966,*).
Ille dat ... erecta: the importance of making correct choices had been emphasized in earlier letters (above, Ep. 38.1 consilium n.). At Ep. 23.7, for example, Seneca suggested that one element of happiness came ex honestis consiliis. In earlier letters the advice leading to these decisions was the province of philosophy (e.g. Ep. 16.3 and particularly Ep. 38.1), although Seneca also summoned past philosophers in consilium to help (Ep. 22.5). Now, however, he unveils an internal source for such advice, a source that he describes in terms that might be equally applied to the mind. At Ep. 31.11 the animus was described as rectus and magnus; here these counsels might be seen as the cause of such qualities (below, magnifica and erecta nn.). As Maurach 1975, 353, n. 59, observes, the nature of these consilia is a subject of the next letters. In particular, in Book V Seneca is adamant that it is not syllogistic reasoning (e.g. Ep. 48.7 and above, p. 52). consilia: Ep. 38.1 consilium n.
magnifica: although this adjective is appropriate to describing the quality of ideas (OLD §1b), it is possible that Seneca also intends its most basic sense: the advice makes one’s mind magnus. Five of the previous six uses of the adjective in the Epistles either described quotes (Epp. 13.16 and 22.13) or were used in connection with them (Epp. 15.9, 20.9 and 25.5). One might relate this to the shift away from quotes; Lucilius now has access to a self sufficient supply of something equivalent to them. Indeed, in the next book at Ep. 46.2, Seneca conflates Lucilius with his writing and describes him in nearly identical terms: grandis, erectus es. erecta: this term is normally used to describe the mind. For example, see Ep. 23.3: animus esse debet alacer et fidens et supra omnia erectus. See also its synonym rectus at Ep. 31.11 n. Similarly, at Ep. 39.3 Seneca compares the nature of the mind to a flame that surgit in rectum. Here, by contrast the adjective is applied to the mind’s actions, its decisions.

In unoquoque ... deus: Seneca repeats the idea from the first half of the previous sentence, this time without the litotes. Instead, he works into it a line from Virgil’s Aeneid. The use of the plural (virorum bonorum) causes one to think of a group of such figures, actual historical figures as opposed to a single idealized one. As with the earlier statement, the status of the divine in good men is clear, but its status in the rest of us is left unstated (above, p. 409). The quote emphasizes that we recognize the presence of the divine in good men, something that Seneca expands on in §§3-4, but suggests that we are unclear as to the precise nature of this divinity (above, p. 409). This surely is the force of the quote, as Seneca has already stated that there is an internal god; but
now he emphasizes that its exact nature is not clear (*incertum est*), an idea reinforced by the language used in §3 on how we sense the divine in nature. It is an emphatic statement of the mysterious nature of the divine and it works against modern scholars who try to identify in precise philosophical terms the nature of the *deus* Seneca has in mind. *quils deus ... deus*; the quote occurs in a speech to Aeneas by Evander (*Aen*. 8.352). He is referring to the Capitol and in the line before he specifies that it is a grove in which this god dwells:

> ‘hoc nemus, hunc’ inquit ‘frondoso vertice collem *(quils deus incertum est)* habitat deus; ...

The images that follow in this letter (§3 below), of a numinous grove, may remind a reader of this earlier line (Coleman 1974, 280). That it is the site of the future temple to Jupiter that Virgil is referring to is appropriate too, as Stoic theology identified the macrocosmic god personified as Zeus with the microcosmic divine reason in the soul, a concept that Seneca alludes to again at §5 with the analogy of the sun rays. However, neither Evander nor his listener in the poem knows the identity of the god, although the future identity of this god is known to Virgil’s readers, leaving it open, if the analogy is pushed, whether the reader might expect the nature of this god to be revealed in later letters. Finally, the quote from Evander’s speech might remind the reader of other quotes from that speech, particularly the one quoted at Ep. 31.11. Both these quotes occur at important points in Seneca’s development of the teaching of the soul’s divine nature. The use of the quotes serves to heighten the tone of the passage (see Ep. 31.11 *exsurge ... deo n.* on the status of Virgil’s poems), and the shared context also serves to put the reader of Ep. 41 in mind indirectly of what Seneca had said on the soul’s divinity in the earlier letter.

§3. Si tibi occurrerit vetustis arboribus et solitam altitudinem egressis frequens lucus et conspectum caeli <densitate> ramorum aliorum alios protegentium summovens, illa proceritas silvae et secretum loci et admiratio umbrae in aperto tam densae atque continuae fidem tibi numinis faciet. Si quis specus saxis penitus exesis montem suspenderit, non manu factus, sed naturalibus causis in tantam laxitatem excavatus, animum tuum quadam religionis suspicione percutiet. Magnorum fluminum capita veneramur; subita ex abdito vasti amnis eruptio aras habet; coluntur aquarum calentium fontes, et stagna quaedam vel opacitas vel immensa altitudo sacravit.

§3. Seneca makes a sudden shift in topic, though one facilitated by the quote from the *Aeneid*. The soul and the god in good men vanishes and is replaced by the description of natural places and the religious awe this evokes. The three sentences describe three types of natural phenomena, a grove, a cave, and sources of water. Seneca dwells on the first two images, creating word pictures in a pair of long slow periodic sentences that conclude with Lucilius’ reaction (*tibi ...*
The next four descriptions are briefer and Seneca makes the agency more general, starting with a 1st p. pl. (veneramur) and then leaving the agency unstated for the final three. The purpose of these descriptions in relation to the preceding argument does not become clear until the next section. However, they immediately serve to provide a change in tone, a slowing down, from the density of the information in the opening sections. Seneca’s description and reaction to pristine nature contrast with the different aesthetic of Cicero, *Off.* 2.12-15 (Berner 1961, 116), while there is nothing comparable in Epictetus at all. As already noted (above, 411) Armisen-Marchetti 1990, 91-93, demonstrates that such descriptions were popular in contemporary Roman literature. This popularity is also seen in the sacro-idyllic landscape paintings of contemporary Roman art, the atmosphere of which Seneca may also be evoking in these descriptions, though there the mood is generally lighter (Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 182).

*Si tibi ... faciet:* in marked contrast to the preceding succession of short rapid sentences, this one is slow and periodic. The weight of both clauses is in the grammatical subjects; the first clause is developed by two adjectival phrases (*frequens ... summovens*) modifying *lucus*, and the second has a tricolon crescens (*Ep.* 31.7 ‘Quid ergo?’ ‘... malus?’ ‘n.’) of subjects. The qualities of the grove that are picked out in the description are the age and height of trees and the gloom created by their density. Of these it is the height of the trees and the gloom, along with the place’s seclusion that creates a sense of religious awe in the viewer. In Latin prose the religious veneration of such groves is seen in Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.88, who likens Ennius to one such grove:

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Ennium sicut sacros vetustate lucos adoremus, in quibus grandia et antiqua
robora iam non tantam habent speciem quantam religionem.
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Also in prose is Tacitus’ description of the sacred grove of the Suebi at *Germ.* 9.3. In poetry of the period there are many more (Armisen-Marchetti 1990, 97-98, nn. 11-12). Seneca himself in *Thy.* 650-682 describes the dread grove at which Atreus sacrificed Thyestes’ children, and at *Oed.* 530-547 in a similar grove he relates Tiresias’ summoning of Laius’ shade. In both of these, important elements of the description are the age and height of the trees and the grove’s darkness. For example, the opening description of the Theban grove is *lucus ilicibus niger* (*Oed.* 530); this gloom is returned to near the close of the description at *Oed.* 545. The height of the trees is emphasized at *Oed.* 532 and at *Oed.* 534-535 the oaks are not just old (*quercus ... annosa*), but their branches are rotten with age (*putres situ ... ramos*). Although the elements picked out by Seneca in these examples from his tragedies are similar, the response evoked there is darker and more eldritch
than here. Yet the contrast should not be overdrawn, as here Seneca is not celebrating some warm and cuddly version of nature, but the non-human power of a numinous location. The elements noted are also found in the descriptions of other authors (ARMISEN-MARCHETTI 1990, 92) and Ovid, Am. 3.13.7-8, for example, describes a numinous grove in more neutral terms: Stat vetus et densa praenubilus arbo re lucus; | adspice — concedas numen inesse loco. For the particular resonance with Roman religious beliefs of Seneca’s description here, see above, p. 410, n. 771. in aperto: this serves to emphasize the exceptional character of the grove’s shade. It is in the open and receives no support in blocking the sun’s light from, for example, surrounding hills (WAGENWOORT 1948, 114). numinis: (OLD §5) the word occurs more frequently in Seneca’s tragedies than his prose works (in PHI 5.3 of the 46 occurrences, 32 are in the tragedies).

Si quis ... percutiet: the pattern of a conditional clause is repeated from the previous sentence; this example is reinforcing the preceding one. Also the slow and periodic style of that sentence is repeated. The features of the cave that are singled out for attention are its size (penitus and in tantam laxitatem), the way it supports the mountain (montem suspenderit), and that it is natural, which receives the most attention (see below manu n.). As with groves, caves occur in contemporary literature, distinctive in their size and being the location for the divine, such as the entrance to the underworld at Verg. Aen. 6.237-238: spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu, | scrupea, tuta lacu nigro nemorumque tenebris (present here is also a dark grove and a black-watered lake, both singled out by Seneca in the preceding and following sentences as locations of the sacred in nature). suspenderit: (OLD §4c). manu: (OLD §21) the contrast of the man-made and the natural is something that is returned to at §§6-7 where the natural is contrasted with adulterated nature. Artificial caves were a popular addition to the grounds of Roman villas at this time (ARMISEN-MARCHETTI 1990, 92); Seneca mentions two in Vatia’s villa (Ep. 55.6). Such imitation of nature was a regular object of criticism. Fabianus describes how mountains, woods, sea and rivers were found in houses (Sen. Rh. Con. 2.1.13): Quin etiam montes silvasque in domibus marcidis et in umbra fumoque viridia aut maria amnesque imitantur. He goes on to suggest that those who delight in these have never seen the real thing and are like children with a toy, things small enough for small minds to grasp! See also Ep. 122.8 and Sen. Rh. Con. 5.5 and Quint. Decl. 298.14. religionis: as MAURACH 1987, 90-91, observes, this word refers both to the quality of the place that causes the sense of awe (OLD §7), and to the awe itself (OLD §6). suspicione: at Ira 1.16.7 Seneca uses this word to describe the pre-rational sensations that when assented to become passions, sensations that
occur even in the wise man. Whereas there the sensations are described as weak, here the verb *percutiet* ensures that the sensation, while still ill-defined, is far more substantial. The reaction to the sight of the cave is a natural one similar to those described in *Ep*. 57.3-4.

**Magnorum fluminum ... sacravit:** after setting the context in the first two sentences, Seneca fills out the picture of humans’ natural apprehension of the divine in nature with four more examples describing the cult given to bodies of water. The way this cult is described has a progression away from humans as the agents, from the 1st p. pl. (*veneramur*) through two verbs with no expressed agent (*aras habet* and *coluntur*) to finish with one in which the agent of the lake’s consecration is no human but a quality of the lake itself (*vel opacitas vel immensa altitudo*). The cult given to sources of water is, of course, well known in the ancient world. Seneca emphasizes here the cult given to large rivers (*magnorum fluminum* and *vasti amnis*), but springs of all size might receive cult. We have the younger Pliny’s description of the shrines at the source of the Clitumnus (*Ep*. 8.8) and Horace’s ode to the *fons Bandusiae* (*Od*. 3.13), while Varro Ling. 6.22 describes the *Fontinalia*, a festival to the god *Fons*. At *Ben*. 4.5.3 Seneca describes such rivers, springs and lakes as instances of god’s beneficence.

§4. Si hominem videris interritum periculis, intactum cupiditatibus, inter adversa felicem, in mediis tempestatibus placidum, ex superiore loco homines videntem, ex aequo deos, non subibit te veneratio eius? non dices, ‘ista res maior est altiorque quam ut credi similis huic in quo est corpusculo possit’?

§4. Seneca resumes the conditional sentences from §3 to suggest by analogy that veneration would be a natural response towards a person who is free from fear and desire, calm in the midst of troubles, one who looks at humans from above and gods from on the same level. However, it is perhaps significant that the protasis is framed as a question; there is the suggestion that, while this is the proper response popular values have so dulled humans that this might not be the actual response; we cannot recognize true human good.
Si hominem ... eius?: the first word, si, recalls the conditional clauses of §3, making them implicit support to this claim. The second word, hominem, makes an emphatic contrast with the preceding natural phenomena. Seneca describes this person with five adjectival phrases that build up his majesty. The sentence ends with the emotional reaction that Seneca expects the reader would have, a reaction similar to that in the presence of numinous natural sites. The first four of the adjectival phrases modifying this person are linked by a form of anaphora, each beginning with in-. The first two of these show this person’s invulnerability to the passions, of which the key ones were fear and desire (above, pp. 259 and 298). The next two show the person’s indifference to the vicissitudes of fortune. This is the core of a philosopher’s self-sufficiency; one’s happiness lies entirely in one’s control, as Seneca had said at Ep. 31.5, fac te ipse felicem. And as he stressed at Ep. 36.5-6 and again at Ep. 39.3, a properly composed internal state was beyond fortune’s power. Hachmann 1995, 278, sees these second two qualities as relating to securitas and tranquillitas animi respectively, a distinction that is perhaps overly subtle.

The final quality noted in this person is the ability to look at human concerns from a higher position, a position of equality with the gods. This is the quality of magnitudo animi (above, p. 24). This figure has attained the viewpoint of the gods, a cosmic perspective, described as the ‘view from above’ (Williams 2003, 10 and Hadot 2002, 206-207). In a similar way at Ep. 59.16, Seneca describes the wise man’s mind as having a superlunary quality, one above all the confusion of life on earth: Talis est sapientis animus qualis mundus super lunam: semper illic serenum est; see also Ira 3.6.1 and Ep. 92.3 (Scarpat 1983, 58). Straight after describing how this person views humans, Seneca takes the reader back to his reaction in viewing such a person, suggesting that the sight of him would cause a sense of religious awe to come over the reader. He frames this reaction in the form of a question to which an affirmative answer is expected. However, the question is appropriate in that whereas hallowed natural places may have been seen by the reader, such a person would probably not have been. Also there is perhaps the suggestion that for the majority of humanity popular values would make this manifestation of true good go unrecognized (see above, p. 335). hominem: this person clearly exhibits the qualities of a Stoic sage, or the vir bonus of §2. Yet nowhere in the description of him, does Seneca call him either of these things. In doing so he perhaps makes the status of this figure seem more attainable. It is perhaps better, therefore, to see this figure as possessing mens bona, a quality that Seneca had suggested at the letter’s start was within the reader’s grasp. tempestatibus: appropriate both in a literal and a figurative sense.
The reaction of a philosopher to storms at sea may have been something of common subject; there is an anecdote concerning Aristippus at sea (D.L. 2.71) and a later one in Gel. 19.1. Certainly a context of such stories would give added point to Seneca’s portrayal of himself in Ep. 53, yet Berno 2006 in her commentary on the letter makes no reference to other such stories. Slightly differently Lucretius, 2.1-2, describes someone fortified by the **doctrina sapientium** as being on shore calmly watching the troubles of someone at sea (Ronnick 1995 sees this passage as being echoed in Ep. 53). **placidum**: Ep. 32.4 n. Seneca brings out the meteorological sense frequent in this word with the antithesis to **tempestatibus**. This figure is calm in the midst of storms. **subbit**: (OLD §11). **veneratio**: so too at Ep. 115.3 after describing the appearance of the soul of the **vir bonus**, Seneca says, *Nemo illam [sc. faciem animi] amabilem qui non simul venerabilem diceret*. He goes on in §§4-5 to elaborate on this reaction of worship (above, p. 412).

**non dices, ... possit?**: the sight of such a person would evoke from the reader the disbelieving comment that this person is a thing (**res**) too great and too lofty to be thought to be of the same stuff as the feeble body in which it dwells. The reader recognizes that the essential quality of what he is seeing, what makes it great and lofty, is not the body but something in it, and something not like it. **maior ... altior**: these are both key terms in relation to the ‘view from above’ (above, *Si hominem ... eius?* n.). The first refers to the greatness of spirit that was needed for this view and the second to the location of the soul when it adopted this view. The grandeur that the reader recognizes in this figure confirms what is implicit in the juxtaposing of that person with natural places that arouse awe. Such juxtapositions are frequent in Seneca, who, for instance, at *Helv*. 6.7 explains the microcosmic mobility of the mind from the macrocosmic view of heavenly bodies (see further, Herington 1966, 464, n. 19). **res**: refers most naturally to the earlier **hominem**. It is used again at §5 (**res tanta**). The term suggests that such a person is something more than, or other than, human; the English word ‘being’ captures this indeterminacy well. Also the person is described as other than the body in which it dwells. See Ep. 95.33 for another example of **res** used to refer to a person: *homo, sacra res homini*. So also *Nat*. 1.pr.5. **corpusculum**: this diminutive of **corpus** is a Senecan neologism (Bourbery 1922, 277). It is used by Seneca with a pejorative sense (Laudizi 2003, 85, on Ep. 23.6), particularly in relation to the soul, e.g. *Ep*. 66.1 (see *Ep*. 30.1 *Bassum Aufidium* n.). Hachmann 1995, 278, n. 1, sees the term as always occurring at significant places in the *Epistles*. 

§5. *Vis isto divina descendit; animum excellenterum, moderatum, omnia tamquam minora transeuntem, quidquid timemus optamusque ridentem, caelestis potentia agitat. Non potest*
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res tanta sine adminiculo numinis stare; itaque maiore sui parte illic est unde descendit. Quemadmodum radii solis contingunt quidem terram sed ibi sunt unde mittuntur, sic animus magnus ac sacer et in hoc demissus, ut propius [quidem] divina nossemus, conversatur quidem nobiscum sed haeret origini suae; illinc pendet, illuc spectat ac nititur, nostris tamquam melior interest.

§5. Seneca continues by confirming the reaction he suggests the reader would have at the end of §4, at the same time confirming the appropriateness of a religious response: there is indeed something more than terrestrial to that person. Within him there is a divine power, one with celestial origins. At this point Seneca describes in more detail what he had simply affirmed earlier at Ep. 31.11, and more obliquely at Ep. 39.3.

Vis isto … agitat: the viewer’s intuition that there is something more than human in such a scene is quickly confirmed. Twice Seneca stresses that it is a power (vis and potentia) that has come into this person. It is heavenly (caelestis) and has descended (descendit) to earth. Seneca again characterizes this individual; this time, however, it is precisely his soul he describes, rather than his person. He defines the soul with a pair of adjectives followed by a pair of participial phrases. These show different aspects of the ‘view from above’ that this person has evinced. The first and third describe the soul in that position: it is lofty (excellentem) and passing over everything as though smaller (omnia tamquam minora transeuntem). The second and fourth describe how this ‘view from above’ expresses itself in human life. The first of these, the quality of moderation (moderatum), at first sight seems incompatible with loftiness: preeminence and a sense of measure tend in opposite directions. However, it is the ‘view from above’ that allows this person to look down on the objects of desire and exercise control towards them. The final participial phrase broadens this perspective, displaying an attitude of amusement to the objects not just of desire, but also fear, the two primary passions (above, p. 298).

The notion that the soul has its origin in heaven is one that Seneca asserts in this letter rather than argues for. He seems more interested to evoke a kind of emotional response to mystery, rather than explain precisely how this is so. Yet this notion can be seen as compatible with philosophical ideas of the soul’s origin. In particular, this heavenly origin can seem Platonic, as INWOOD 2007a, 327, suggests. However, it is not incompatible with Stoic ideas (ALGRA 2003, 167 and INWOOD 2007a, 328). The human soul was considered to be pneuma able to be perfected to the same state as god’s (above, p. 18). As such it could be described as a part of god’s mind immersed in the human body (e.g. Ep. 120.14). Furthermore in Stoic cosmology, although god was diffused
through all the universe, his mind was understood to be located in the \textit{aether} of the heavens, D.L. 7.138-139 (= \textit{SVF} 2.634 and L-S 470) and Cic. \textit{N.D.} 1.36 (= \textit{SVF} 1.154). Therefore in such a world the human soul, as a part of god’s mind could be imagined as descending from the \textit{aether} of heaven into the human body. Although Seneca does not specifically describe the heavens as the mind of god, he is insistent on the celestial origins of the human soul; for example at \textit{Helv.} 6.7: \textit{Quod non miraberis, si primam eius [sc. mentis] originem aspexeris: non est ex terreno et gravi concreta corpore, ex illo caelesti spiritu descendit;} see also \textit{Epp.} 66.12 and 73.16). \textit{Isto:} \textit{Ep.} 31.9 n. \textit{moderatum:} \textit{Borgo,} 131-132 and \textit{Hellegouarc’h} 1972, 263-265.

\textbf{Non potest … descendit:} Seneca restates the idea of the previous sentence: such a person could not exist without divine aid. This time the link to the description of divinity in §3 is provided with the echo of \textit{numinis} from the description of the grove. New and prominent in this sentence is the idea that the soul is connected to its heavenly source. Seneca is very positive here about this connection; it is described briefly with a sense of immediacy which is filled out in the next sentence, and there is no hint of the body being a prison (cf. \textit{Ep.} 31.11 \textit{hospitantem} n.). This fits with the enthusiastic, perhaps protreptic character of the letter (above, p. 406). There is, however, a suggestion that the mind is superior to the body in \textit{maiore sui parte} (below, n. and above, p. 13). \textit{Res:} §4 n. \textit{numinis:} \textit{Ep.} 41.3 n. \textit{Stare:} along with the sense of ‘exist’ (\textit{OLD} §17), this word is one of Seneca’s favourites for expressing in a warrior’s stance the character of the \textit{virtus} that such a person would embody (above, p. 14). \textit{Maiore sui parte:} Seneca uses phrases with \textit{pars} fairly regularly to describe the mind and its superior status in relation to the body. Prominent among these is \textit{Ep.} 23.6: \textit{ad verum bonum specta et de tuo gaude. Quid est autem hoc ‘de tuo’? te ipso et tui optima parte} (see \textit{Laudizi} 2003, 84-85 on this). He uses the phrase \textit{pars melior [hominis]} at \textit{Ben.} 3.20.1 in relation to the idea of the connection of the mind with the heavens; such a mind can become a companion of celestial bodies (\textit{comes caelestibus}); similarly \textit{optima sui parte} of the wise man at \textit{Ep.} 65.18.

\textbf{Quemadmodum radii … interest:} at the centre of the letter Seneca offers a carefully constructed vision of how the soul of this individual is connected to the divine. In a long sentence he constructs an analogy between the sun and its rays and heaven relation to this person’s soul. The first third describes the relation of sunrays to the sun, the next third the character of the person’s soul, and the final third the activities of this soul that are analogous to sunrays.
The central point of the analogy is that the rays of the sun both touch the earth and remain in contact with their source of origin, the sun. In a similar way the soul dwells on earth but maintains a link with its celestial origin. The possible Platonic influence noted earlier is also present here, yet the analogy clearly remains within a Stoic monistic view of the universe. And as in the previous sentence, this influence, while detectable, is suppressed in favour of a less philosophical, more emotional and religious impression. This analogy occurs in other writers, and Setaioli 2001, 133-135 and 2007, 342-343, shows how it would be transformed by later Neoplatonic writers, such as Porphyry, 261F Smith 1993, who is at pains to stress the differences in the analogy, between the sun in the material world and god in the spiritual world of the soul. The analogy occurs in a number of later writers; Min. Fel. Oct. 32.7-9, and in particular, Macr. Somn. 1.21.34, who is likely to have got it from Seneca, as he clearly used Seneca in his Saturnalia (Setaioli 2001, 133, n. 29). The case for seeing Posidonian influence in this passage, as Theiler 1982, v. 2, 249 and 304, does, seems tenuous. Its use by the later writers just mentioned suggests that it might have been quite common, making attribution to any one originator essentially groundless.

This analogy of the divine as light suggests different associations from those created by the more normal Stoic images of the divine as breath or fire. Whereas breath emphasizes a diffuse immanence, the image of the sun emphasizes the idea of the divine having a particular location or source. The analogy of the soul to a flame, at Ep. 39.3, where its inherent upright nature is stressed, gains an extra dimension in the context of this image, as now we can see the reason it strives to go upwards; it seeks to return to its source (Hachmann 1995, 279).

The focus at this point changes from the caelestis potentia to the soul itself. However, the dualism continues; whereas the heavenly power was distinct from the soul, now it is the soul that is distinct from us (nobiscum; see above, p. 414). The animus is now described as magnus, suggestive of strength, and sacer, echoing caelestis (OLD, sacer §6b). The animus magnus may be the proper and natural state of the soul (above, p. 111), but is not an automatic state; rather, it is an achieved one, a perfected one, the state of the wise man’s soul. The third quality of this perfected soul is that it has been sent down here (demissus) that we may know the divine more nearly. Such a knowledge of the divine is important, as it allows us to know our truest nature, which is divine. As Seneca says at Nat. 1.pr.12 about the mind’s contemplation of the heavens:
Knowing the divine accords with the Stoic tenet of following nature, or as Seneca puts it at the end of this letter, living according to one’s own nature, *secundum naturam suam vivere* (§9), which is revealed here as being divine. Seneca develops the way this perfected soul matches the sun’s rays in three ways. He comments that it associates with us, but it clings to its origin, which is developed in the contrast between *illinc* and *illuc*; it depends on that source and gazes up at it and strives towards it. He finishes by reiterating the idea of association with us, but modified now by observing that it does so with an awareness that it is superior (*melior*) to our affairs. Such superiority is stressed at *Ep.* 65.16-24. **in hoc:** *Ep.* 35.2 n. **spectat:** with its close link here to *nititur* the sense is metaphorical as in remaining engaged with one’s divine source. However, in other places, this engagement is often in the form of viewing, such as at *Nat.* 1.pr.7-12, where Seneca describes the mind as being transported into the heavens where it appreciates their true majesty and looks down on the earth as petty. Similarly at *Ep.* 65.16 Seneca describes human existence as wretched unless philosophy comes to transport the soul from the terrestrial to the divine: *nisi accessit philosophia et illum [sc. animum] respirare rerum naturae spectaculo iussit et a terrenis ad divina dimisit* (HACHMANN 1995, 265-266). **nititur:** striving is a common image in Senecan philosophy. It is an aspect of the willpower needed to make progress. It is emphasized, for example, in *Ep.* 34.4, *Hunc [sc. virum bonum] te prospicio, si perseveraveris et incubueris et id egeris.* There is a sense that the goal of such effort is now subtly changed: cultivating one’s divine soul is loftier than becoming a good man. **nostris:** the relationship that this soul has with our affairs (*nostris [sc. rebus]*) contrasts with the *divina* earlier. Our affairs are similar to the *terrena* contrasted with *divina* at *Ep.* 65.16 (above, **spectat** n.). Similarly at *Nat.* 1.pr.5 Seneca says, *O quam contempta res est homo, nisi supra humana surrexerit,* going on at *Nat.* 1.pr.12 to insist that the *divina* are in fact one’s own (*suis*). Paradoxically, the *humana*, like the *nostris* here, are not our truest nature.

**Section B (§§6-9).** Having identified that the soul is divine, and that it is this divinity that makes the figure in §§4-5 great and an object of religious awe, in the letter’s second half, Seneca identifies self-sufficiency as the essential quality of that person’s soul. From here he expands his argument, using examples from nature, to insist that for all humans what is essentially theirs is their soul and the *ratio* in it when it has been brought to perfection. The book ends with one of its
central themes, self-sufficiency as a goal, revealed to be something in accordance with humans’ essential nature.

§6. Quis est ergo hic animus? qui nullo bono nisi suo nitet. Quid enim est stultius quam in homine aliena laudare? quid eo dementius qui ea miratur quae ad alium transferri protinus possunt? Non faciunt meliorem equum aurei freni. Aliter leo aurata iuba mittitur, dum contractatur et ad patientiam recipiendi ornamenti cogitur fatigatus, aliter incultus, integri spiritus: hic scilicet impetu acer, qualem illum natura esse voluit, speciosus ex horrido, cuius hic decor est, non sine timore aspici, praefertur illi languido et bratteato.

§6. Seneca next asks what is such a soul, quickly answering that it is one that is self-sufficient, specifically one whose magnificence comes from nothing external. This leads to criticism of the folly of praising what is not one’s own. Seneca illustrates this with a couple of examples from the animal kingdom, dwelling particularly on a comparison between a wild lion and one trained to wear a gilded mane.

Quis est … nitet: with this question Seneca refers back to the animum excellentem … ridentem of the previous section. The essential quality he chooses to emphasise in his answer is self-sufficiency (suo). However, it is a particular sort of self-sufficiency. One’s noteworthiness is measured not by external attributes; one must shine (nitet) from one’s own source; this picks up the earlier celestial image; the virtuous person’s soul is likened to a star. The image of shining also gives a context for the images from nature that follow, where Seneca compares animals and plants in their natural state with those that have gained a false lustre by being gilded. bono: this is one of the vera bona of Ep. 32.5, whose character was explained at Ep. 31.5. nitet: as noted the sense of this word continues the metaphor of the sun from the previous sentence. However, as MAURACH 1975, 354, n. 63, observes, it can also suggest being rich (e.g. Cic. Agr. 1.21 and Hor. Sat. 2.5.12), a sense that is prominent in the examples that follow.

Quid enim … possunt?: Seneca explains (enim) what he means by self-sufficiency, which had been a defining mark of the wise man in Ep. 9, with two rhetorical questions from the opposite end of the philosophic spectrum, the behaviour of fools (dementius … stultius; see Ep. 30.6 demens n.). He focuses on two aspects of their behaviour. The first of these is praising people for what is not truly theirs. Praise is a prominent motif in the following section, with laudare occurring three more times. The second aspect, which drives home why such praise is foolish, is the marvelling by people at possessions that can so quickly pass to someone else. For the link to the end of Book III that the motif of praise provides see above, p. 51. The mutability of possessions is a frequent topic
for Seneca; in the next letter (Ep. 42.9) he offers advice on how to view such changes (see also Motto, Chance: Fortune §19c). At Ep. 115.8 he mocks this habit of being enraptured by possessions, likening us to children, only with more expensive toys. **aliena**: the antithesis of the *suo* in the previous sentence.

**Non faciunt ... freni**: this is the first of Seneca’s examples drawn from nature, and it is the shortest. A gilded rein does not make a horse better. At Ep. 95.67-68 Seneca quotes Verg. *Georg*. 3.75-85 for the marks of a fine horse, while at Ep. 47.16 he comments that the buyer of a horse is foolish if he inspects its harness rather than the horse itself. **equum**: images drawn from horses and riding are fairly frequent in Seneca, see **ARMISEN-MARCHETTI**, 90-92. **aurei**: gilding is the point of contrast in both the next two images, the lion (§6) and the grapes (§7). **freni**: this word occurs fairly frequently in Seneca’s prose works, but *habenae* occurs only in his poetry. **HINE** 2005, 230, sees the absence of *habenae* in prose as probably accidental, saying the use of imagery of horse-riding is rare in Seneca’s prose. This seems mistaken. Seneca uses *freni* 17 times in poetry, 14 times in prose and he uses *habenae* 7 times in poetry and once in the *Apocolocyntosis*. These statistics seem to suggest that *habenae* was perceived as somewhat poetic.

**Aliter leo ... bratteato**: Seneca contrasts how lions are viewed to illustrate what self-sufficient magnificence is. The image evokes the amphitheatre games, drawing a philosophical lesson from the real or imagined experience of a Roman spectacle. He suggests that the spectators would recognize the true splendour of a wild lion and bet on it in a fight against one trained to wear a gilded mane. Significant in the context he has chosen is that it suggests that the non-philosophical audience can recognize the true worth of wild animals, while leaving unspoken the question of whether they can similarly recognize the true worth in humans. In describing the gilded lion the focus is on the compulsion and wearying (*fatigatus*) required to train it. By contrast with the other lion, which is unadorned (*incultus*), the stress is on it being the way nature intended (*qualem illum natura esse voluit*); its spirit is undamaged (*integri spiritus*). In a fight its fierceness in attack (*impetu acer*) contrasts with its enfeebled or spiritless (*languido*) opponent. Furthermore, as opposed to the decoration of the gilded mane it has a genuine magnificence (*decor*) that comes from the fear its appearance causes. In Stoic terms the wild lion is superior as it follows nature, whereas the tamed lion has wandered from its nature through human interference. Such *diastrophē* (above, p. 112), is common in humans, but in animals it requires human intervention. **mittitur**: with *in harenam* understood; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 72.2. **incultus**: besides the
sense of unadorned obvious here, also present is the sense uncultivated, even uncouth. **spiritus:** has the sense of zeal or energy (OLD §7b) but the sense of the word in §2 is not entirely absent either. **speciosus ex horrido:** BERNERT 1968, 116-117, observes that the identification of horror as something beautiful was something outrageous in antiquity. In this letter it forms a piece with Seneca’s description of natural sites at §3 (above, p. 410). **praefertur:** the agent of this verb is not given, but by implication it is the spectators who would be placing bets on the outcome. **bratteato:** covered in *bratteae*, thin sheets of gold leaf. The term is used to suggest a false covering at *Ep.* 115.9, where Seneca talks of *bratteata felicitas*.

§7. Nemo gloriari nisi suo debet. Vitem laudamus si fructu palmites onerat, si ipsa pondere [ad terram] eorum quae tulit adminicula deduct: num quis huic illam praefert vitem cui aureae uvae, aurea folia dependent? Propria virtus est in vite fertilitas; in homine quoque id laudandum est quod ipsius est. Familiam formonsam habet et domum pulchram, multum serit, multum fenerat: nihil horum in ipso est sed circa ipsum.

§7. Seneca provides a third illustration of self-sufficiency taken from nature, this time from the plant world, and a plant useful to humans, the vine. What should be preferred in a vine, what should be praised, is its **virtus**, which is its fertility. He then begins the process of identifying the **virtus** of humans, with which he will end the letter, starting by rejecting all that is not truly one’s own, all that is around someone rather than in him.

**Nemo gloriari ... debet:** the succession of examples of contrived and natural magnificence is interrupted by a brief reiteration of the main point — one should only take pride in what is one’s own. MAURACH 1975, 354 n. 65, thinks this is a marginal comment that has found its way into the text. Yet this sentence, with the *nisi suo* repeated from §6, serves to recall the argument before giving another illustration.

**Vitem laudamus ... dependent?:** as with the lions Seneca takes it as common sense that we recognize the true value of an agricultural plant. He first says that we praise a vine if its branches are loaded with fruit, and then develops this image further by describing a vine so loaded with fruit that the weight of them is dragging down the plant’s support poles. This second image brings to mind the crops breaking under their own weight at *Ep.* 39.4. Seneca follows this image with a rhetorical question: surely nobody would prefer a vine with gilded leaves and grapes to this vine? The gilding is the common element with the two previous images, the horse and the lions. One wonders if such gilded vines were not actually constructed in some contemporary
villas. It is of a piece with the sorts of faux nature described by Fabianus in Sen. Rh. Con. 2.1.13 (see above, §3 manu n.). The agricultural image is not only appropriate to the argument of following nature, as the next sentence makes clear, but also reflects Seneca’s interest in agriculture, which is seen in a number of places in his writing; at Nat. 3.7.1 he describes himself as *vinearum diligens fessor*, and at Ep. 104.6 he describes himself as feeling rejuvenated when he reached his vineyards (*Quantum deinde adiectum putas viribus postquam vineas attigi*?). At Ep. 86.17-21 he describes the transplanting of olive trees in detail. As the analogies at the start of Ep. 34 show, the relationship of farmer to plant was one that Seneca saw as particularly apt to illustrate the relationship of someone helping another to progress philosophically, and at Ep. 112.2 he uses such an analogy in advising Lucilius in his attempts to help a friend. *ipsa ... adminicula*: used here in their most basic sense as props for a vine (*OLD §1*); see also Cl. 2.7.4. Elsewhere in this book it has a more general sense (Ep. 36.9) or a metaphorical one (Ep. 41.5).

**Propria virtus ... ipsius est**: Seneca brings the three examples to a conclusion by stressing the special character of the vine, its fruitfulness. He then moves on to humans (*in vite ... in homine*) and demands that what should be praised must also (*quoque*) be one’s own (*ipsius*). **Propria**: particular stress is placed on this word by its initial position. It is a word used again (*proprium*) in a small ring composition to conclude the discussion of what qualities human excellence must have to be comparable to the fruitfulness of a vine. The term has two important senses that are both present here. The first is that it describes what is inalienably one’s own, what cannot be taken away, as Seneca stresses in the next two sentences. The second describes what is peculiar to something; this is the sense of the term stressed at Ep. 76.9-11: *quid est in homine proprium? ratio* (Ep. 76.10). Such a sense is seen at §8, where Seneca describes the human as a *rationale animal*. However, unlike in Ep. 76, where the scalar progression of *pneuma* from the inanimate to god is adumbrated, with human *ratio* near the top of the ladder (above, p. 18), here in Ep. 41 this is an idea that is more asserted than argued. **virtus**: (*OLD §5*). **fertilitas**: this fruitfulness is something positive, in contrast to the *nimia fecunditas* of Ep. 39.4. The vine is used again in Ep. 76.8 as an example of a plant, and its *fertilitas* is again its special quality: *omnia suo bono constant*. Vitem *fertilitas commendat et sapor vini, velocitas cervum. laudandum*: as noted (above, §6 *Quid enim ... possunt?* n.), praise is closely connected with what is good. This is also seen at Ep. 76.10, where Seneca argues that the perfection of one’s good is *laudabilis*. 
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**Familiam formonsam ... ipsum:** Seneca gives four attributes to describe a wealthy man: attractive household slaves (*familiam formonsam*), a beautiful home, large quantities of arable land and much money out on loan. He then repeats in a characteristic formulation (below, *in ... circa* n.) that none of these truly pertain to the possessor. All these attributes are common indicators of extreme wealth, which Seneca uses on a number of occasions, either to criticize greed (e.g. *Epp.* 2.6 and 60.2) or to contrast with an accurate assessment of the good (e.g. *Ep.* 76.15) or of true wealth (e.g. *Ep.* 87.7). In this last passage he points out that the rich man, is in fact heavily in debt to fortune:

> cum omnia dixeris, pauper est. Quare? quia debet. 'Quantum?' inquis. Omnia; nisi forte iudicas interesse utrum aliquis ab homine an a fortuna mutuum sumperit.

The error of falsely identifying one’s wealth as part of oneself is highlighted at Vit. 22.5 where the foolish critics are made to gape at the loss of themselves when they lose their wealth: *mihi divitiae si effluxerint, nihil auferent nisi semet ipsas, tu stupebis et videberis tibi sine te relictus, si illae a te recesserint.* Juvenal, 3.141-143 describes a person’s wealth in similar terms. *Familiam formonsam:* at Ep. 119.13 Seneca comments on the superfluity to nature whether food is served by attractive slaves (*quam paribus ministeriis et levibus adferatur cibus*). *in ... circa:* Seneca focuses on the essential interiority of the good with a characteristic contrastive use of prepositions, something *TRAINA 1987, 71,* notes has been called ‘the metaphysics of the prepositions’. The antithesis gains point by being focused entirely on these two small words. Seneca had used the same verbal contrast at Ep. 30.8, and it occurs again at Ep. 117.18 (*omnia ista circa sapientiam, non in ipsa sunt*). Alternative vocabulary for the same contrast are *apud* and *intra* (*TRAINA 1987, 71-2*).

§8. Lauda in illo quod nec eripi potest nec dari, quod proprium hominis est. Quaeris quid sit? animus et ratio in animo perfecta. Rationale enim animal est homo; consummatur itaque bonus eius, si id implevit cui nascitur.

§8. Seneca concludes the application of the vine analogy to humans by specifying the quality that human excellence must have in order to be praised; it is integral and unique to humans, something unable either to be taken away or given. He then finally reveals what this is, the soul and *ratio* perfected in it. He supports this by saying that the perfection of one’s *ratio* is a fulfilment of one’s nature. Seneca’s statements here on the relationship of *ratio* to the human are sometimes quoted in isolation from the rest of the letter, giving the impression that he means by them nothing very different from modern rationality. However, as has been argued already (above, p. 415), this is to deform what *ratio* means for Seneca.
Lauda in illo ... est: in his choice of words Seneca echoes the transitional sentence on the vine (laudandum ... lauda and propria ... proprium). Having rejected the qualities popularly praised in humans, Seneca stresses that true excellence is something both peculiar to humans and something not detachable from them. in illo: picks up the in ipso of the previous sentence. eripi ... dari: the antithesis of giving and taking is one that Seneca uses to emphasize not only the transience of property, but also its value relative to the true good. Such transience had been noted earlier at §6 with transferri. In Const. 5.4 Seneca points out that such giving and taking is the role of fortune, who can neither give nor take virtue: nihil eripit fortuna nisi quod dedit (so too Ep. 59.18; see further, MOTTO, Chance: Fortune §19c). The proper indifference to such gifts and losses was praised at Ep. 36.6. The nature of human excellence is also described in similar terms at Helv. 8.4: quidquid optimum homini est, id extra humanam potentiam iacet, nec dari nec eripi potest. proprium: §7 Propria n.

Quaeris quid ... perfecta: having built up to explaining what is human excellence, Seneca asks the reader if he wants to know what it is. Quite possibly the reader does already know, but certainly Seneca has prepared well to arouse his interest. The use of questions at such important parts of a letter is a regular device, seen, for instance, at Ep. 31.11, where after an even longer preparation Seneca finally asks, quid hoc est? The answer that Seneca gives here is one prepared for by a number of earlier letters in the book. Seneca identifies two things, the mind (animus) and perfected ratio in it. The importance of the mind had been revealed at Ep. 31.11, when it was a god lodging in the human body. Starting from the end of Ep. 36 ratio is introduced; First it is something that should give Seneca and the reader the same freedom from care that folly did for children and madmen (Ep. 36.12). Then at Ep. 37.4 it is described as something one should submit to, something powerful, but also something above and beyond the reader. Finally in Ep. 38.2 ratio is described as like a seed, something small planted in the human mind that in the right conditions could grow strong. Earlier in the present letter (§5), the reader is told that a heavenly power animates the mind (animus). Although Seneca is not always clear about the distinction between ratio and animus, and which of them is divine, the idea of ratio as something in the mind might suggest to the reader that it is the divine force mentioned earlier. This is of course what it is explicitly called later (Ep. 66.12): Ratio ... nihil aliud est quam in corpus humanum pars divini spiritus mersa. However, the way ratio has been described in the previous letters might also lead the reader to such a conclusion. As mentioned at Ep. 37.4, it is something powerful that appears to be
separate from us, and at Ep. 38.2 in the analogy of the seed, it appears as something introduced into us. In both cases they share qualities in common with the divine force in us. ratio: in interpreting what is meant here by ratio, and in the next sentence by rationale, it must be remembered, as has been argued earlier (above, p. 28), that ratio for Seneca draws upon mental resources different from what is covered by the modern notion of rationality; in particular its divine source, stressed indirectly in this letter was very important (above, p. 24). perfecta: Ep. 34.3 perfectum n. As Seneca makes clear later in the next book, we are not given perfected ratio; rather it is our job to perfect it (Ep. 49.11): natura ... rationem dedit imperfectam, sed quae perfici posset. At Ep. 124.8-9 Seneca discusses the distinction between rational, non-rational and not yet rational beings. It is possible to see in the next books the teaching of how ratio should be perfected, which is certainly not by syllogisms (above, p. 52).

Rationale enim ... nascitur: Seneca supports the argument that human excellence resides in the mind and in perfected ratio with a definition and the conclusion that can be drawn from it. A human is a rationale animal, an animal that possesses ratio. The possession of ratio is a characteristic attribute of humans. This is an argument developed more fully at Ep. 76.8-11 (see above, §7 Propria n.). At Ep. 92.27 Seneca stresses that ratio is something that humans share with the gods; the difference is that for gods it is perfect, for humans perfectible: ratio ... dis hominibusque communis est: haec in illis consummata est, in nobis consummabilis (see also Ep. 49.11).

cui: Wagenvoort 1948, 195-196, sees this as an example of the encroachment of the dative of advantage on the dative of purpose (see Ep. 40.4 sanandis mentibus n.). nascitur: implied in this expression is what Traina 1987, 30, calls a figura etimologica, a figure popular in Latin and very popular with Seneca. The verb recalls the noun natura; in perfecting one’s ratio one fulfils one’s nature. The figure occurs more directly at Ep. 13.15: non in diversum te a natura tua ducimus: natus es ad ista quae dicimus.

§9. Having revealed ratio as human excellence, Seneca concludes the letter by asking what this ratio demands of us, which, he reveals, is to live in accordance with nature, something that in the first book he had identified as the fundamental demand of Stoicism. Characteristically, Seneca leaves the reader with something to think on, pointing out the paradox that ratio’s demand is on the one hand very easy, because it is natural and on the other difficult, because nature’s values are in conflict to those of society. He then closes with the somewhat pessimistic question: who will call back to health those no one restrains and popular values drive on?

Reynolds omits this final section division, either inadvertently or deliberately, making it part of §8. However, it is the text of Haase that introduced the divisions, and this division is found there and in others, such as Préchac.

Quid est ... vivere: Seneca asks what ratio demands of a human, and replies that it is to live according to his nature, Stoicism’s basic tenet, something very simple. In the next sentence, however, he will stress the paradox that, due to the vitiated state of human society, this is in fact no easy thing at all. Nature had been prominent in the letter, firstly with the images of natural places that aroused religious awe (§3), and then in the image of the untamed lion who was as nature wanted him (§6). This second example is particularly close to the sense here, where two senses of nature can be seen: one is universal nature and the other is the particular nature of the lion. Earlier Stoics had differed in their interpretation of the formula to follow nature as to whether this meant both these natures, the common and the particular. Diogenes Laertius 7.89 (= L-S 63C) reports that Chrysippus felt it included both, while Cleanthes made mention of only the common one. As the particular one was felt to accord with the universal one, the difference is perhaps slight. The formula was first mentioned in the Epistles at Ep. 5.4: propositum nostrum est secundum naturam vivere. It was adumbrated earlier in Book IV at Ep. 30.11 quae non ... suam n. At Ep. 66.39 Seneca expresses the idea slightly differently: ‘Quod est summum hominis bonum?’ Ex naturae voluntate se gerere. As in the instances before Ep. 41.9, this refers only to universal nature (Hachmann 2006, 167). ratio haec: as in all the other appearances of the term in Book IV, ratio is here personified, making demands on us. rem facillimam: in a similar way at Ep. 31.9 Seneca stressed that the journey to the greatest good is a pleasant and safe one, one that nature has
equipped us for. **suam:** the qualification of *natura* by this is unusual; generally the formula is given without it (e.g. *Ep.* 5.4, *Vit.* 8.2 and *Ot.* 5.1). Its use here stresses the particular quality of human nature, which Seneca had just emphasized differs from other creatures on account of its possession of *ratio*.

**Sed hanc ... trudimus:** immediately on telling us that what *ratio* demands from us is very easy, Seneca introduces the paradox that in fact through a public madness we make it difficult for one another. Two ideas are referred to here. The first is that all but the sage are fools (*Ep.* 30.6 *demens* n.), and thence the public madness (*communis insania*). The second is that this madness is a result of turning away from the path intended by nature, a *diastrophē* (above, p. 112). This turning away is something that for contemporaries comes about from following the vitiated example of those around them. Therefore at *Ira* 2.8-9 Seneca can describe vice as growing daily: *certatur ingenti quidem nequitiae certamine. Maior cotidie peccandi cupiditas, minor verecundia est* (*Ira* 2.9.1). Later in that work, at *Ira* 3.26.4 he counsels indulgence to one’s fellow humans as we are all wicked: *mali inter malos vivimus*. The idea that popular values represent a path contrary to that of philosophy is prominent at the start of *De Vita Beata*; we do not follow the right road, but the road that everyone else is on: *Nihil ergo magis praestandum est quam ne pecorum ritu sequamur antecedentium gregem, pergentes non quo eundum est sed quo itur* (*Vit.* 1.3). The communal effect of erroneous choices is well illustrated at *Ep.* 94.53-54, where similarly to *in vitia alter alterum trudimus*, he says (§54), *Nemo errat uni sibi, sed dementiam spargit in proximos accipitque invicem* (see further BELLINCIONI 1978, 15-31). This comment summarizes an important strand of Book IV on popular values and prayer in *Epp.* 31, 32, 36 and earlier in 41 itself. The power that popular values exercises upon us explains the need for perseverance that is also stressed in this book, for example, above at §1 *Facis rem ... mentem n.* **communis insania:** there is a medical sense to *insania* that is picked up by *salutem* in the next sentence. The sense is stressed at *Ep.* 94.17:

*inter insaniam publicam et hanc quae medicis traditur nihil interest nisi quod haec morbo laborat, illa opinionibus falsis; altera causas furoris traxit ex valetudine, altera animi mala valetudo est.*

The *publica* in this example shows that *communis* (OLD §5) here is a synonym for it. **trudimus:** characteristically Seneca includes himself and the reader in this judgement (cf. *Epp.* 36.12 and 37.5 for a similar use of the 1st p. pl. at the end of the letter). This is a point worth emphasizing as it changes the sense of *populus* in the following sentence: the *populus* is not the lower classes (as it can be in some authors), but society in general whose values the philosopher must reject (above,
Quomodo autem ... inpellit?: characteristically Seneca closes the letter, and indeed the book, with something for the reader to continue to think on (above, Ep. 30.18 n.). He finishes with a question: how can they be recalled to health, whom no one restrains and the general public drives on? The reader on reflecting on this question is likely to answer it with the pessimistic assessment that they cannot. For the bulk of the population, as Seneca had more or less concluded at the end of Ep. 39, there is no hope. Their morals are so corrupted, so far from where they should be, that they are blind to their faults. For Seneca, Lucilius, and perhaps the reader, there is philosophy and progress in philosophical friendship, but for the rest there is nothing. This can be seen at the end of Ep. 53, where Seneca shows personified philosophy in a salvational role, defending her followers from the weapons of fortune (above, p. 413).

Hinted at in this closing thought is the paradox that although it is ratio that makes us human, it is not this ratio, however, that rules the lives of the mass of us. The final words of the letter, populus inpellit, bring the reader back down to earth after being uplifted with Seneca’s vision of the divine he described as being the most genuine part of human existence. Previous mentions of popular values in §§6-8 had been indirect or general. Now the reader is left in the real world needing to struggle with human vices if this vision of the divine is to be realized. salutem: beyond the medical analogy in the immediate antithesis to the previous insania, this term provides a link back to the start of the letter in two ways. Firstly there is the verbal echo of rem salutarem that Seneca opened with (§1 salutarem n.). Then there is the allusion to a goddess again. Salus was a Roman goddess (OLD §7 and FEARS 1981, 859 and 929), and just as Lucilius is travelling towards Mens Bona, so too there is a need of others to be recalled towards Salus. As a goddess she was particularly associated with safety, but other aspects of the concept are also present, namely health and even salvation. As such the reader might think of mens sana, an analogy to the mens bona at the start of the letter. populus: (OLD §3, ‘general public, populace, multitude’) one recalls the emphasis on popular values in Ep. 31; it was these values that needed to be trampled underfoot (calcatis popularibus bonis) at Ep. 31.1 to make progress.
Conclusion
Conclusion

A commentary by its nature does not lend itself naturally to the presentation and examination of overarching arguments. From this commentary, however, a number of claims can be made that are not always original, but can be said to have survived the closer scrutiny that a commentary invites. These conclusions revolve round two main ideas, that Book IV represents an important unit in the structuring of the work and that Seneca’s philosophy is in no superficial sense Roman.

The case for seeing Book IV as an integral structural unit consists principally in arguing against Maurach, who sees the first three letters as being part of an earlier unit, and to a lesser extent against Hachmann, who leaves Ep. 30 in an intermediary position between two structural units. An important argument for seeing Book IV as a coherent unit is the contrast it makes with the previous letters through the cessation of concluding quotes, which is both signalled at the end of the previous book (Ep. 29.10), and is justified in Ep. 33. Another argument for the book being a unit is the thematic unity of the epistles in it, which is seen in the particular emphasis on progress, epistolary learning, self-sufficiency and friendship.

As the book comes to a suitably climactic end with Ep. 41, it remains only to show that Ep. 30 introduces it. This is done through the person of Aufidius Bassus, who serves to mediate between the earlier letters that used quotes drawn principally from Epicurus and the letters that follow. Bassus is portrayed as primarily a Roman, one with great auctoritas from his philosophical values. Only in passing is he mentioned as an adherent of Epicurus. Although he repeats sayings of Epicurus, they are no longer attributed to that man; rather they are given as the words of Bassus, and their validity is vouched for by his auctoritas. The figure of Bassus can also be contrasted with that of the person in the last letter of the book described as inspiring religious awe (Ep. 41.4). Through this contrast the extent that the reader has been introduced to a religious aspect of philosophy is underlined. Bassus’ human auctoritas contrasts with the divine power of the figure
The shift in Book IV away from concluding quotes prompts Seneca to look at reading as an important aspect in making philosophical progress. The topic is discussed from different angles in a number of letters in the book, *Epp.* 33, 38, 39 and 40. In *Ep.* 33 Seneca insists that authors must be read as wholes, not as excerpts. There is a sense in this letter that what Seneca values in such a reading is the character of the writer that is revealed in his words. Similarly in *Ep.* 39, Seneca stresses the inspirational value of other writers. The power of words to reveal one’s character makes the style of one’s speech, and therefore one’s writing, philosophically important to Seneca and the subject of style is explored in *Ep.* 40. Finally in *Ep.* 38 and at the start of *Ep.* 40 Seneca argues for the particular virtues of letters as a medium of communication. Their style is conducive to learning (*Ep.* 38) and they are particularly suited to the revealing of character (*Ep.* 40).

The development in the sophistication of reading that Seneca demands of the reader in Book IV is given a Stoic aspect. It is part of self-sufficiency that Seneca describes as Stoic. Being self-sufficient involves not being reliant on anything or anyone else. Therefore quotes must be put aside as props; indeed, Seneca goes further, demanding that one not be reliant on one’s teacher. This presentation of Stoic self-sufficiency forms part of a development in Book IV from general philosophical ideas, presented in the first three books, to specifically Stoic ones starting in Book IV. Besides the stress on self-sufficiency, in Book IV Seneca introduces the Stoic concepts of indifferents and Stoic ideas about the mind’s divinity. As such, one can see that Book IV is more than a structural unit in the collection, but represents a major shift in the sequence of the letters.

The Romanness of Seneca’s philosophy is not something always acknowledged by modern scholars. Even Inwood, a scholar sympathetic to Seneca as a philosopher, questions whether it is relevant to understanding Seneca. However, in Book IV Seneca suggests that Latin is in an important sense a more philosophical language than Greek, as it is more naturally circumspect (*Ep.* 40.12). Circumspection fits within a spectrum of Roman virtues such as *gravitas* and *constantia* to which Seneca appeals in order to motivate his reader. The importance of giving weight to the connotations words such as these have in Latin was stressed in the introduction and is borne out in the commentary. Seeing them as essentially translations of Greek words destroys much of the force of Seneca’s ideas.
Another aspect of Seneca’s Roman philosophy is the pragmatic quality that he gives it. He argues for an emphasis on *res* over *verba*, and he seeks to persuade and motivate with *exempla*, a form of argumentation that Romans saw as one they were particularly strong in. *Exempla*, of course, are not uniquely Roman, so their use and status in Seneca’s work is a question of degree. So too Seneca’s insistent imagining of the philosophical life in a martial context is a question of degree and is something to which Seneca gives a Roman quality.

The religious quality Seneca brings to his vision of philosophy is not necessarily distinctly Roman, but it contrasts with that of his near contemporary, Epictetus, reported by Arrian in Greek. The mystical aspect to Seneca’s evocation of the divine in *Ep.* 41 is distinctly Senecan, and is given a Roman flavour by the use of the Virgilian quote in §2. Similarly distinctly Senecan is his presentation of *ratio* in Book IV as a supra-personal force rather than as something able to be simply equated with rationality.

Related to Seneca’s presentation of *ratio*, is the voluntaristic slant to his philosophy. *Ratio* as a divine force within us is what gives us a *magnus animus*; it is this quality of mind that allows us to see difficulties as petty. In a similar way Seneca often stresses that progress is a matter of mental effort, of willforce, rather than intellectual understanding. Commentators argue about the precise nature of the will in Seneca and *Ep.* 34 is one letter that has been used to try to prove or disprove its existence in his writing. In looking at this letter in its entirety its voluntaristic character is strongly apparent, though it can be obscured by arguments that focus narrowly on Seneca’s use of *volo* and *velle* in §3. This voluntaristic quality is seen in Seneca’s focus on marshalling all the resources of the *animus* to bring about philosophical change, particularly those mentioned earlier, such as *constantia* and *gravitas*, that fall outside the modern idea of rationality. This focus relates clearly to the pragmatic emphasis of Seneca’s philosophy.

At the start of *Ep.* 32 Seneca suggests that he knows what his friend is doing. In fact, he suggests, Seneca is with him. This statement, when one examines it, suggests that Seneca knows this because of what Lucilius has revealed to him in his letters. It is a statement that the reader might be expected to apply to himself; Seneca has revealed himself to us so fully in his letters that we might be expected to know what he is thinking. He is able to be present to us as an internal guardian of the sort that he suggested one adopt in a number of earlier letters (*Epp.* 11 and 25). However, it is possible that Seneca hoped he might go beyond such a role to become the reader’s
friend; in the Epistles Seneca argues for the possibility of conducting a friendship through letters (Ep. 55.11); indeed not even death need be an obstacle to such friendship (Ep. 99.4). It is possible that it was Seneca’s intention in composing the Epistles to offer himself to the reader as such a friend, someone the reader could befriend and have as a mentor in making philosophical progress.
Appendix I
The Text

The text used is the first edition of Reynolds with the following exceptions. Two of these are typographical errors that have been corrected in subsequent printings. However, they are included for the benefit of those referring to this earlier edition. Discussion of these readings can be found in the commentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reynolds</th>
<th>Davies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ep. 31.2: scpoulo</td>
<td>scopulo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep. 34.3: ‘Quid illud?’</td>
<td>‘Quidni? Aliud’</td>
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<td>Ep. 36.10: venient</td>
<td>veniet</td>
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<td>Ep. 40.2: †ima†</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep. 40.9: †vel P. Vinicium dicere qui itaque†. Cum</td>
<td>vel P. Vinicium dicere, qui ... itaque cum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep. 41.8: Quid est ...</td>
<td>This is the start of §9 missed in Reynold’s text.</td>
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Appendix II
People and Places in Book IV

As Henderson 2004, 6, has remarked, there are few names in the Epistles. This appendix gives some details on the less common of them. The following people are named, who need no further comment: Odysseus (Ep. 31.2), Homer (Ep. 40.2) Cicero (Ep. 40.11), and a number of Greek philosophers: Epicurus (Epp. 30.14 and 33.2) and his followers Hermarchus and Metrodorus (Ep. 33.4), the Stoics Zeno and Cleanthes (Epp. 33.4, 7 and 9), Chrysippus, Panaetius and Posidonius (Ep. 33.4), and Aristo (Ep. 36.3). Furthermore, Odysseus and Nestor are referred to indirectly through a commonplace at Ep. 40.2.

Named places occur only twice in the book; at Ep. 31.9: per Poeninum Graiumve montem nec per deserta Candaviae; nec Syrtes tibi nec Scylla aut Charybdis, and at Ep. 36.7: in Parthia ... in Germania.

On three occasions in the book Seneca elides the name of a place or a person: at Ep. 32.1 (ex ista regione) and Ep. 40.2 (istuc) Lucilius’ location is not named, and at Ep. 36.1 Lucilius’ friend (amicum tuum) and his critics (istos) are left unnamed.

1) Lucilius Iunior


Seneca’s friend and correspondent in the Epistles is also the recipient of two other works, The Natural Questions and On Providence. He is generally addressed as Lucilius, except for two occasions in the Natural Questions where Seneca addresses him as Junior (Nat. 3.1.1 and 4a.pr.9). What we know of him comes entirely from what Seneca chooses to tell us in these works. Delatte 1935 has used this to create an extensive biography, yet as pointed out by Maurach 1970, 11, n. 1, what we are told should be treated with scepticism. For instance, the places in Ep. 31.9 do not form a list of where he served as a procurator, as Vassileiou 1971 rightly argues (Ep. 31.9 n.).
Without going so far as to suggest that he is in any sense fictional, given that he is someone whose presentation is shaped by Seneca himself, one might ask what makes Lucilius an appropriate recipient of the *Epistles*. One answer might be his name. Just as Seneca dedicated *On Benefits* to the appropriately named Liberalis, it is possible that Lucilius was chosen in part as his name is the diminutive of Seneca’s *praenomen*. In this respect, as Ker 2002, 19, notes, Lucilius serves in some respects as the mirror of Seneca.

In the *Epistles* we are told that Lucilius, like Seneca, is a *senex*, e.g. Ep. 19.1, though slightly younger, e.g. Ep. 35.2 (Griffin 1992, 91, n. 4). He seems to have been from Campania, perhaps from Pompeii or Naples (Epp. 49.1, 53.1 and 70.1). Ep. 19 is one of the most important sources for how Seneca presents his friend. He describes Lucilius as achieving prominence through his talent, the elegance of his writing and his important friends (Ep. 19.3: *in medium te protulit ingenii vigor, scriptorum elegantia, clarae et nobles amicitiae*). He attained the rank of *eques* by his own efforts (Ep. 44.2), or similarly despite the limitations of his birth (*angustiae natalium*, Nat. 4.pr.15). At the start of the *Epistles* he was a procurator in Sicily (Ep. 45.2 and Nat. 4.pr.1), but Seneca was urging him to retire from this public position. By Ep. 69.2 he seems actually to have retired: *interrumpenda non est quies et vitae prioris oblivio* (Griffin 1992, 348).

Of Lucilius’ literary works, Seneca praises one of his books in Ep. 46 without quoting it or telling us what its contents are. He is described as a poet at Nat. 4.pr.14 and at Ep. 79.5-7 he is described as keen to write a poem on Aetna. What survives of his works are some verses at Epp. 8.10 and 24.21 and possibly at Nat. 4.2.2. It is also possible that an inscription in Greek by *Iunioros* is by him (IG 14.889 = Epigr. Gr. 810).

2) *Aufidius Bassus*

Relevant bibliography: *PIR*² A §1381, *RE* 15, *OCD*³, 214, Schanz-Hosius, §336.7 and *Peter* 1906, cxxv-cxxvii, 96-98.

Aufidius Bassus is the subject of Ep. 30. In the absence of any surviving evidence of a public career, Seneca is an important source for what we know about Bassus. On the basis of Seneca’s reporting that he was always sickly (Ep. 30.1), an inscription to Asclepius and to *Valetudo* in Athens is thought to be by him (*CIL* 3.7279 (suppl.) = *ILS* 3832). Also, Syme 1958, 274-276, questionably uses this ill health, along with Seneca’s report that he is Epicurean (Ep. 30.14) to argue that he had no public career.
Otherwise, what we know of Bassus comes to us through mention of his status as a historian. Tacitus, Dial. 23.2, has Marcus Aper mention Bassus along with Servilius Nonianus as ‘modern’ authors disliked by antiquarians: *quibus eloquentia Aufidii Bassi aut Servilii Noniani ex comparatione Sisennae aut Varronis sordet*. At Inst. 10.1.103, Quintilian mentions him, again in connection with Servilius:

> Servilius Nonianus ... qui et ipse a nobis auditus est, clari vir ingenii et sententiis creber, sed minus pressus quam historiae auctoritas postulat. Quam paulum aetate praecedens eum Bassus Aufidius egregie, utique in libris belli Germanici, praestitit genere ipso, probabilis in omnibus, sed in quibusdam suis ipse viribus minor.

This passage occurs as part of Quintilian’s comparison of Greek and Roman historians. He compares Sallust and Livy to Thucydides and Herodotus, after which he mentions only four more Roman historians: Servilius Nonianus, Aufidius Bassus, an unnamed contemporary (probably Fabius Rusticus) and Cremutius Cordus, who committed suicide under Tiberius to avoid prosecution for treason for his praise of Cassius and Brutus. Quintilian feels that Bassus better maintained the *auctoritas* of history than Servilius, though he did not always do his powers full justice.

Mention of Bassus by both Quintilian and Tacitus suggests that he was one of the outstanding historians of Seneca’s generation. His status as a historian is also confirmed by Pliny the Elder’s decision to start his history ‘*A fine Aufidi Bassi*’ (Plin. Ep. 3.5.6 and Plin. Nat. pr.20).

Quintilian’s comment that Bassus slightly preceded Servilius in age (*paulum aetate praecedens*) gives us a probable *terminus ante quem* for his birth, as Servilius is thought to have been born around 2 BC (*OCD*³, 1394), suggesting he was born c. 5-10 BC. As the Elder Seneca quotes from Bassus’ works in the *Suasoriae*, he either wrote them while quite young or he is older than Quintilian suggests.

From Quintilian we know that Bassus wrote at least two works, some books on the German war, and a history (the one Pliny the Elder decided to start his own one from where it ended). The attested remains of these work are collected in *PETER* 1906, 96–98, and besides a mention in Pliny, *Nat. 6.27*, on the size of Armenia, and another in Cassiodorus’ history as one of the sources for his list of consuls, the only passages of any length or interest are recorded by Seneca the Elder and are a description of the death of Cicero and a short eulogy to Cicero:
Appendix II: People and Places in Book IV

Bassus Aufidius et ipse nihil de animo Ciceronis dubitavit, quin fortiter se morti non praebuerit tantum sed obtulerit. **Aufidi Bassi.** Cicero paulum remoto velo postquam armatos vidit, ‘ego vero consisto,’ ait; ‘ accede, veterane, et, si hoc saltim potes recte facere, incide cervicum.’ Trementi deinde dubitantique: ‘quid si ad me’ inquit ‘primum venissetis?’ (Sen. Rh. Suas. 6.18)

**Aufidi Bassi.** Sic M. Cicero decessit, vir natus ad rei publicae salutem, quae diu defensa et administrata in senectute demum e manibus eius elabitur, hoc ipsius vitio laesa, quod nihil in salutem eius aliud illi quam si caruisset Antonio placuit. Vixit sexaginta et tres annos, ita ut semper aut peteret alterum aut invicem peteretur, nullamque rem rarius quam diem illum quo nullius interesser ipsum mori vidit. (Sen. Rh. Suas. 6.23)

3) Serapio

Relevant bibliography: PIR² S §363.

Serapio is mentioned at Ep. 40.2, and beyond what Seneca tells us there, PIR², S §363 can add nothing beyond the possibility that he may be the same person as a Sarapion that Stephanus of Byzantium, Ethn. 327, recorded as a Stoic from Hierapolis in Syria. From what Seneca says we know that Serapio was a philosopher and lecturing in Sicily in the early 60s.

4) P. Vinicius


P. Vinicius is mentioned at Ep. 40.9. He was the son of M. Vinicius, a novus homo from Cales in Campania who achieved the consulship in 19 BC. He commanded an army in Macedonia where the historian Velleius Paterculus, who dedicated his history to Vinicius’ son, served under him (Vell. 2.101). In AD 2, as the son of a consul he was a consul ordinarius. He was then proconsul of Asia.

His style is described by the Elder Seneca Con. 7.5.11 as very precise and his character as serious: *Vinicius, exactissimi vir ingenii, qui nec dicere res ineptas nec ferre poterat.* He is quoted a number of times by Seneca’s father (Con. 1.2.3, 1.4.11, 7.5.11-12, 7.6.11 and 10.4.25), who reports that he usually used the witticisms of others (Con. 1.4.11) and that he was a great admirer of Ovid (Con. 10.4.25): *summus amator Ovidi.*

There are a couple of mentions of his work as an advocate. In AD 20 he was asked by Gn. Calpernius Piso to be his advocate in the case in the senate following the death of Germanicus, an
assignment that he refused (Tac. Ann. 3.11). He also appears to have been the one who brought a case on behalf of the Colony of Narbo in AD 25 against Votienus Montanus for insulting the emperor Tiberius (Tac. Ann. 4.42 and Sen. Con. 7.5.12).

5) Asellius Sabinus


Asellius is mentioned at Ep. 40.9 and appears to have been noted for his wit. The anecdote that Seneca gives here fits well with what his father says of him. At Suas. 2.12 he calls him venustissimus inter rhetorares scurra and at Con. 9.4.17-21 he records a number of his witticisms, even when he was in prison or standing trial. The Elder Seneca records these to show how hard he found it not to jest, even when he knew he should not. It is likely this Asellius is also the one that Suetonius describes as being awarded 200,000 sesterces by the Emperor Tiberius for a dialogue in which a mushroom, a fig-picker, an oyster and a thrush competed (Suet. Tib. 42): Asellio Sabino sestertia ducenta donavit pro dialogo, in quo boleti et ficedulae et ostreae et turdi certamen induxerat. In PIR², A §1213, it is suggested he may also be mentioned in a letter by Augustus in which he says to Agrippina the Elder that he has sent her son Caligula to her with an Asillius as an escort (Suet. Cal. 8.4).

6) Q. Varius Geminus


Varius is also mentioned at Ep. 40.9. His civic career is known from an inscription put up in Superaequum, modern-day Castelvecchio Subregio (CIL 9.3306 = ILS 932). From this we learn that his father was Quintus and that he is described as the first Paelignian senator as well as the patron of Superaequum. He was, therefore, a novus homo, and WISEMAN 1971, 183, puts the probable date of his entry into the senate between 18 BC and AD 3. He had a successful senatorial career: though he did not achieve the consulship, he was a praetor, a proconsul in an unknown province and a legate of Augustus twice. That the inscription describes Augustus as divus suggests that Varius died some time after Augustus.

His status as an orator is reported by Jerome, Adv. Iovinian. 1.28 (= BALBO 2004, 190), who describes him as a sublimis orator. He is cited a number of times by the Elder Seneca; at Suas. 6.11
the realistic advice (*vivium consilium*) he offers Cicero is praised by Cassius Severus, a harsh critic of declamatory fancifulness (cf. Sen. *Con. 3.pr.12*). Varius is mentioned in some 11 *controversiae*, frequently more than once in these (see the entry for him in the index of *Winterbottom* 1974); however the passages reveal little of his character. The most interesting is *Con. 6.8* where he praises Augustus elegantly: *Varius Geminus apud Caesarem dixit: Caesar, qui apud te audent dicere, magnitudinem tuam ignorant, qui non audent, humanitatem.*

7) Q. Haterius


Q. Haterius is mentioned at *Ep. 40.10* and was of a senatorial family. His father was a *novus homo*, senator in 43 BC (*Wiseman* 1971, 234, §200). He was *consul suffectus* in 5 BC and prominent in the Senate under Tiberius. *Syme* 1986, 145, postulates that he married a daughter of Marcus Agrippa. He is said to have offended Tiberius in the Senate and when attempting to apologize afterwards tripped the emperor and was almost killed (*Tac. Ann. 1.13* and *Suet. Tib. 27*). He is recorded as delivering an attack in the Senate on luxury (*Tac. Ann. 2.33*). Later his suggestion that the decrees honouring Germanicus be set up in the Senate House in golden lettering was greeted with scorn by senators as sycophancy (*Tac. Ann. 3.57*) and disapproval by the emperor, who viewed it as *contra patrium morem* (*Tac. Ann. 3.59*). He died in AD 26 (*Tac. Ann. 4.61*). Jerome, *Chron.* on the year 2040 (*Schoene* 1875, v. 2, 147), records him as having nearly reached the age of ninety: *Q. Haterius promptus et popularis orator usque ad XC prope aetatis annum cum summo honore consenscitet.* His oratorical fame is recorded also by Tacitus, *Ann. 4.61*, who noted that it did not carry into posterity:

> Fine anni excessere insignes viri Asinius Agrippa, ... et Q. Haterius, familia senatoria, eloquentiae quoad vixit celebratae: monimenta ingeni eius haud perinde retinentur. Scilicet impetu magis quam cura vigebat; utque aliorum meditatio et labor in posterum valescit, sic Haterii canorum illud et profluens cum ipso simul extinctum est.

Seneca’s father devotes some space to describing his rhetorical qualities (*Con. 4.6-11*). It is the speed of his delivery that is stressed, as already mentioned (*Ep. 40.11 Hateri n.*). The Elder Seneca relates a number of amusing anecdotes at Haterius’ expense that were a result of the uncontrolled flow of his words, but is overall approving of him; in particular, he frames his description of Haterius with approving comments on a declamation in which he burst into tears on
remembering his son’s early death. He is cited in eight controversiae and four suasoriae (see his entry in the index of WINTERBOTTOM 1974), often with approval. His longest quotes are Suas. 6.1-2, advising Cicero not to beg Antony for his life, and Suas. 7.1, advising Cicero not accept pardon from Antony at the price of burning his works.

8) Papirius Fabianus


Fabianus is mentioned at Ep. 40.12. There is a possibility that he was a Spanish provincial, like the two Senecas (GRIFFIN 1972, 16). Unlike the other speakers mentioned in Ep. 40, Fabianus does not seem to have had a prominent public career. In his early career he was famous as a declamer (Sen Rh., Con. 2.pr.1), but soon gave his allegiance to philosophy, studying under Sextius (Sen. Rh., Con. 2.pr.4). As a philosopher he wrote a large number of books, more than Cicero (Sen. Ep. 100.9). Only the titles of some of these survive: one is recorded by Seneca (a) libri civilium (Ep. 100.1), the others in the works of grammarians (b) libri causarum naturalium, (c) de animalibus (RE 18.3.1057-1058 and SCHANZ-HOSIUS 2, 359-360). Pliny the Elder cites him frequently, calling him naturae rerum peritissimus (Nat. 36.125).

Seneca’s father devotes the preface of his second book of controversiae to Fabianus (Con. 2.pr.1-5). He then cites him in six controversiae in that book and also in a suasoria (see his entry in the index of WINTERBOTTOM 1974). He notes, Con. 2.pr.2, that the opportunity to criticize the age inspired Fabianus, something borne out by his first quote, a lengthy attack on luxury and praise of poverty that leaves the controversia far in the background (Con. 2.1.10-13). Likewise, at Con. 2.5.7 criticism of luxury occurs unexpectedly. His philosophical values come through prominently in his arguments at Con. 2.5.18 and 2.6.2.

Besides Ep. 40.12, the Younger Seneca devotes an entire letter to discussing Fabianus’ style (Ep. 100) and elsewhere talks about him on a number of occasions: Epp. 11.4, 52.11 and 58.6, Brev. 13.9, Marc. 23.5 and Nat. 3.27.3. One of his most important characterizations of him is at Brev. 10.1, where he says:

Solebat dicere Fabianus, non ex his cathedrariis philosophis, sed ex veris et antiquis, contra affectus impetu, non subtilitate pugnandum, nec minutis vulneribus sed incursu avertendum aciem. Non probabat cavillationes: vitia enim contundi debere, non vellicari.
Fabianus is described approvingly as one of an old-fashioned and genuine type of philosopher and his quotes are forthright and have a 'pervasive military diction' to them (Williams 2003, 175). This fondness for military imagery seems to be one shared by other Sextians, e.g. Ep. 59.7 where Sextius is quoted (Lana 1953, 20).
Appendix III
Epistle Length Analysis

The data for this is taken from the appendix to LANA 1991a, 253-311, whose statistics have sorted the epistles by length (shortest to longest, etc.). MAZZOLI 1989, 1824-1825 displays the epistles in a similar format, but counts the paragraphs.

In the following charts the epistles are listed in sequence and by book along with their word length, firstly in a table and then in a series of charts. In these charts the book divisions are shown by colour coding (where this is not known black is used).
Appendix III: Epistle Length Analysis

Word Count by Book with a Total for Each Book

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Appendix III: Epistle Length Analysis
Appendix III: Epistle Length Analysis
Instances of a chapter for which the editor is also the author have not had the date suffixed with a letter, as there can be no confusion (e.g. GRIMAL 1992 as opposed to ABEL 1981a).


ANDRÉ 1962

ANDRÉ 1969

ANDRÉ 1979

ANDRÉ 1995

ANDREONI FONTECEDRO 1992

ANNAS 1992

ANNAS 1993

ANNAS 2006

ANTON and PREUS 1983

APELT 2004 [1923-1924]

ARMISEN 1981

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